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## The semantics of colors in Arabic and English poetry: A comparative study of Al-Mutanabbi's poems and Shakespeare's sonnets

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#### Abstract

The study aimed at interpreting the concept of color across cultures with reference to Arabic and English. It investigated the semantic denotation of colors by the type of emotions conveyed in the poems of Al-Mutanabbi and the sonnets of Shakespeare with respect to the symbolic meaning. The study focused on the lines in which color appeared in a symbolic sense. The poetic evidence for color existence in the poems were collected. The study followed the descriptive-analytical approach to investigate and clarify the aspects of the significance of colors and their denotations. The study revealed that studying the semantic denotation of colors could be a confusing subject even within the one culture, as some colors had different associations in different occasions. The two poets sometimes used the same color to convey different meanings, and sometimes more than one colors were used in the same poetic line or verse to reflect the inner-self of the poets. Color denotations were determined according to personal or public intuition and culture but there were no clear-cut linguistic universals for the symbolic use of colors. The study recommended that more studies should be conducted on the denotation of colors to reach a semantic universal concept.

**Keywords:** color, denotation, semantic, symbolic, universal



### Public Interest Statement

This study sought to find and sort out the similarities and differences in understanding colors as language denotative phenomena. It was expected that the results would raise the linguists' awareness to the differences and other factors among languages with regard to colors. Within the limits of the researcher's knowledge, the study was the first of its kind to be carried out in Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. It constituted a key-factor in providing insightful information to linguists, researchers and those who were interested in the field of semantics and color symbolism. It contributed to exhibiting a shared social identity of colors.

### Introduction

The study investigated the basic color denotations in Arabic and in English with reference to Al-Mutanabbi and Shakespeare to minimize the linguistic cross-cultural gap between Arabic and English. It looked to bring the language users of both Arabic and English to a semantic confidence related to the literal use of colors. Colors had a noticeable presence in the poetry of both languages and one could hardly find a single poet who abandoned the use of color. The study of the semantics of colors provided language scholars with the basic tools for studying the principles and parameters of language. The study revealed the poets' philosophy on how they dealt with the artificial world and the linguistic and social heritage through colors. The use of colors revealed the extent of the writers' transgression of colors present in the visible world with regard to their cultures and the memory of their communities. Although the number of colors vary from one language to another, it was a consensus that all languages had color terms, at least black and white. In Arabic, there were eleven basic colors, Cope and Kalantzis (2020, p.141). Colors were used in the pre-Islamic era in their declarative meanings most of the time, but more poets used color in a symbolic sense in modern times. In English there were also eleven terms for the basic colors as in Arabic. English color terms were used frequently in declarative and symbolic denotations. Mottaqizadeh and Khatrih (2014, pp. 131-150) mentioned that all the colors existing in this or that culture, no matter how many of them were used, belong to the list of the eleven colors. Hamdan (2008, p. 28) mentioned that all colors had a lexical meaning and a semantic meaning which resulted from the environmental, social, historical, political and other situations. The color red, for example was associated with blood at one time, and with pleasure and joy at another. Paul Kay and Terry Regier (2006, pp. 51-54) concluded their review of a debate on colors:

*There are universal constraints on color naming, but at the same time, differences in color naming across languages cause differences in color cognition and/or perception.*

In "The Semantics of Color: A New Paradigm" Wierzbicka (2006:1-24) dealt with main critiques of the Universalist approach, stating that they were three:

1. *The inability to prove the existence of true color terms (i.e., those based on variations in hue) in languages that lack a superordinate word for color in their taxonomies*
2. *The lack of inquiry into the semantic range of any given languages assumed color naming.*
3. *That the Western universalist tradition "[imposes] on other languages and cultures one's own conceptual grid" and does not reflect "the native's point of view"*

Color perception determined language rather than the language determined color perception. The number of color terms used in a language varied from two to eleven. Cope and Kalantzis (2020, p. 141)

mentioned that English and Arabic were top place with eleven color terms in the lexicon of the language. [[Black and white] + [Red]+ [Yellow and green] + [Blue] +[Brown] + [Purple, pink, orange, grey]] It should also be mentioned that deviation from the mentioned above scheme was also possible. In some languages green and blue colors were not differentiated.

### Literature Review

As visual representations, colors had meaning but in literary genres, colors were used to convey other meanings according to the context in which they were used. For example, the color red was associated with hot emotions like ‘love, lust, anger, or violence’. Yellow denoted ‘happiness, optimism, and warmth’, green denoted ‘health, renewal, and rebirth’. Blue had positive meanings such as ‘calmness, peace, and harmony, it also had negative meanings such as ‘coldness and depression’. Black conveyed evil, bad, and in contrast, white was common for peace and good as well as lack of emotions. In some cultures, white was associated with ‘mourning’. The color gold was a mark of success and high statuses but usually color denotations relied on the context.

Fityan and Azcutia (2017, pp. 930-938) stated that the psychological influence of color on people needed to be studied from different perspectives. Theories based on psychology and culture investigated colors from various angles. In Ancient times, Aristotle and Leonardo da Vinci contributed to the study of colors. It was more than a visual representation. According to them, colors influenced the person in impression, feeling and expression. Mottaqizadeh and Khatrih (2014, pp. 131-150) explained that the color white was devoted for hope that sprang from the midst of darkness and it suggested honesty and trustworthiness, innocence and sincerity. In pre-Islamic era, Arabic poetry, white was considered as one of the frequent colors, and associated with the beauty of women, majesty of men, grace of swords and shields. The color black was a symbol of sadness, pain and death, fear of the unknown and the tendency to concealment. It was a symbol of disappointment, and pessimism. Hamdan (2008, p. 62) clarified that color saturation or its emphasis on related color terms was widely spread in the language, symbolic or declarative. This scope of language was due to the nature of colors, the human relationship with colors, and the wide spread of these colors in the nature. In addition to their reflections in light and shadows, and as was the case with language utterances in general, the semantics of those utterances were delineated with what might occur in terms of semantics or other relations. According to Khalifa (1992, pp. 7-44) the color yellow was one of the basic colors, a warm color that carried strong meanings and influence, and successful in attracting attention. Yellow indicated the sharpness of intelligence. Khalifa, stated that green was the color of fertile nature, represented renewal, growth, and days full of vain and young men. It was also associated with defense and self-preservation, as it was closer to negativity than to positivity and characterized by moderation.

Wierzbicka (1990, pp. 99-150) discussed color concepts in relation to “universals of human experience”. Color sensations did not occur in the world outside; rather they occurred in the brains. The nature of these sensations was probably determined by the human biology, and they were projected onto something in the shared environment (Kumar, 2020; Jabeen et al., 2022). Haji and Mumtahan (1390 A.H., p. 88) stated that the color blue evoked a feeling of relaxation and contrasts with excitement. It aroused a sense of comfort and peace, and it affected the human body, causing it to produce a chemical substance that caused numbness in feelings and stability in emotions. Colors could reveal the human personality because they were related to certain concepts and had special connotations. Bright colors expressed happiness, while, dark colors expressed sadness. They were images that express the subjects of life and the artist’s emotions.

Among the studies relevant to the topic, Li (2020), Qtaishat and Al-Hyari (2019), Delmonte (2016), Azmi and Mehawesh (2013), Al-Adaileh (2012), Hasan, Al-Sammerai and Abdul Kadir (2011), Allan (2009), Omar (2009), Xing (2008) and Hun and Chenciner (2006). Li (2020, pp. 84 - 91), Kumar

(2021) conducted a relatively systematic study of the color metaphors to investigate the similarities and the differences between English and Chinese color denotations. The similarities of color metaphors in the two languages demonstrated the cognitive meanings of metaphors with regard to the color white and the dissimilarities were referred to according to the influence of cultural variation. Qtaishat and Al-Hyari (2019, pp. 56- 73) studied the different associations of meanings of colors in Arabic and American cultures. He focused on the use of colors in connotations and tested the understanding of the associations of selected colors. The study concluded that the connotations of the basic color terms were not identical. Delmonte (2016, pp. 61-95) analyzed the collection of Shakespeare's sonnets, dealing with 'color-sound-mood relation'. The study used a quantitative computationally based analysis to discover what features of a poem characterized most popular sonnets. Results showed that the use of colors could account for the underlying mood and attitude in the poem. Azmi and Mehawesh (2013, pp. 107 -116) conducted a study to investigate the color idiomatic expressions in the translation of Mahfouz's "The Thief and the Dogs" from Arabic into English. They stated that colors played a vital role in communication; they enriched the cultural characteristics of each nation. Arabic idiomatic color expressions were collected from the novel and compared with their equivalents in English. It was found that there were different associative meanings of colors in different cultures and people reacted to the use of colors differently. Al-Adaileh (2012, pp. 1-18) investigated the Arabic color terms with reference to Jordanian Arabic. He adopted color-based metaphors. The study found that colors had many orthophemistic connotations, and the dysphemistic connotations were more common than euphemistic connotations. The use of some colors including black, yellow, red and green was mostly dysphemistic. As for white and green, the former had some euphemistic connotations, while the latter connotations were both euphemistic and dysphemistic.

Hasan, Al-Sammerai and Abdul Kadir (2011, pp. 206-213) studied how meanings of colors were identified in the Arabic and English cultures. They found that a color could imply more than one meaning even in the same place. Allan (2009, pp. 626-637), Kumar (2021) investigated the figurative use of basic and other miscellaneous colors, whether the phrases in which color terms occurred were typically orthophemistic, euphemistic, or dysphemistic. The study found that black had more dysphemistic connotations than the other colors and it was connected to evil deeds, death and decay. White denoted positive connotations and symbolized light; other dysphemistic uses might include fear and cowardice and rarely denoted euphemism. As for grey, it was located between white and black. Yellow was used for both positive and negative expressions. Red was associated with blood, life and celebration. Green expressed life and autumn as well as illness or jealousy. Blue was balanced and mostly used for euphemism. Golden and silver often had positive connotations. Omar (2009, pp. 69- 82) stated that red was one of the warm colors which symbolized strength, energy, vitality, and activity. It also symbolized joy, happiness, and self-confidence. The appearance of the red color frequently in the human aura meant the tendency to use physical force. Red provoked the physical system towards attack, and in the heritage, it was always associated with strong mood, courage and revenge. Xing (2008, p. 88) argued that, the original or etymological, extended or metaphoric denotations that were associated with each color were abstract. Hun and Chenciner (2006, pp. 458-465) analyzed indirectly color associations by a study of oral traditions and legends. They found that a specific color could have different associations in different conditions and color associations were more abstract than concrete.

### Designs/Methods/Findings/Results

This study was a comparison between the denotations of colors in Arabic and English cultures with reference to the poems of Al-Mutanabbi<sup>1</sup> and the sonnets of Shakespeare<sup>2</sup>. It examined analytically the

similarities and differences of denotation of colors as symbols in both Arabic and English, through selecting the poetic lines in which colors as symbols were present. The study was prepared to contribute in enriching the semantic field of language. The study followed the descriptive-analytical approach. The poetic lines containing color terms of the symbolic meaning were collected from all of Al-Mutanabbi's poems and all of Shakespeare's sonnets, sorted out, classified systematically and analyzed contently and statistically. First, the color significance in each line was interpreted and analyzed. Then, statistical tables were created in which colors were counted. Colors that carried symbolic connotations were divided into two groups, one group carrying positive denotations and the other carrying negative ones. The connotations of each color were classified separately. Among the statistical procedures were the percentages of use of each color, of positive and negative connotations, and the color covered area. Then, a comparison was made between the presence of colors in Al-Mutanabbi's poetry and in Shakespeare's poetry in terms of the nature of the color, the number of appearances, the proportion of its use, its indications and the factors that affected the usage of the specific color in the poetic line.

Results showed that Al-Mutanabbi and Shakespeare frequently used colors in a symbolic manner. The lexicon of each of them included eight colors and they shared; white, black, blue, red, green and yellow. Affected by their surroundings, Al-Mutanabbi used blond and grey other than those shared with Shakespeare while Shakespeare used golden, silver and violet other than those used by Al-Mutanabbi. The presence of colors in Al-Mutanabbi's and Shakespeare's works showed semantic discrepancy, change and a deviation from the customary denotations in the language. The same color might range between positive and negative denotation, especially the colors black and white which were often used in contrast. The color black was used in praise with a positive connotation and in satire with a negative connotation. At times both of Al-Mutanabbi and Shakespeare preferred the color black to the color white. In al-Mutanabbi's poems there was a dominance of the color white over all other colors, just as the dominance of darkness over the expressions associated with the color of the poet, and this indicated his optimism and cheerful view towards life. In Shakespeare's sonnets there was a dominance of the color black over all other colors, just as the dominance of darkness over the expressions associated with black, and this indicated his pessimistic and melancholic view towards life. They both referred to color red as a symbol to define the social and economic level of women. Affected by his environment, Al-Mutanabbi used other indications such as the colour of blood in the description of his praiseworthy, swords, spears, and the like. Al-Mutanabbi did not refer to golden and silver which were used by Shakespeare while Shakespeare did not refer to the colors blond and grey which were used by Al-Mutanabbi and this was related to the environment and society. Al-Mutanabbi used the symbols of colors in the last position of the line of poem, while, Shakespeare color symbols appeared elsewhere in the line of poetry, the meaning was stressed at the end of the line.

## Discussion

### 1- Al-Mutanabbi colors

#### The color white

- 1-1. *'iidha al-shurufa'u al-beedu mattu biqtwihi 'ata nasabun 'a'ala min al-abi wa aljaddi\**L632. Al-Barqouqi (2017, p. 406). In the above line (1-1), 'al-beedu' meant the white skinned, noble people (positive/beauty), Al-Barqouqi (2017:562).
- 1-2. *innama aljildu malbas wa baidadu alnafus khayrun min abyidad alqba' \*L103.* Al-Barqouqi (2017:121). In the above line (1-2), 'baiad' meant whiteness, it denoted purification from defects (positive/praise), Al-Barqouqi (2017:150)
- 1-3. *layaly ind al-beedi fu'aday fitnatun wa fakhrun wa dhak al-fakhr eindi a'abu\* L532*



Al-Barqouqi (2017:185). In the above line (1-3), 'al-beedi' meant the white skinned women (positive/beauty), Al-Barqouqi (2017:313)

1-4. *asafna bihim yawm al-liqani wa suqnahum bihinzeeta hatta abyadda bi-sabyi amidu*\*L53

Barqouqi (2017:381). In the above line (1-4), 'abyadda' meant white, it indicated happiness and victory in the war, (positive/victory). Al-Barqouqi (2017:419)

1-5. *lahum awjhun ghurrun, wa aidin karymtun wa marouftun idun, wa alsntun luddu*\*L374.

Al-Barqouqi (2017:394). In the above line (1-5), 'ghurrun' meant white. It denoted cleanliness and purity, (positive/beauty) Al-Barqouqi (2017:509).

### The color black

1-6. *yfdahu a-shams kul'lama dharrat al-shamasu bishamsin muneeratin sawdaa*\*<sup>3</sup> L101.

Al-Barqouqi (2017, p. 121). In the above line (1-6), 'sawdaa' meant black. In his blackness, the praiseworthy shined and exposed the sun, (positive/beauty). Al-Barqouqi (2017:150)

1-7. *wa ajajatan tarak alhdeed sawadaha zanjaan tabassam aw qadhalaan shay'iba*\* L31. Al-Barqouqi (2017:174). In the above line (1-7), 'sawad' meant blackness. Weapons shined through the dust like the white teeth of the Negro in his black face. (positive/beauty). (2017:264- 265).

1-8. *kal'kas basharha al-mizaj f'abrazat zabadaan yadur ala sharabin aswad*\* L448

Al-Barqouqi (2017:398). In the above line (1-8), 'aswad' meant black. The poet symbolized the quality and authenticity of the nectar, (positive/purification). Al-Barqouqi (2017:521)

1-9. *wa sawda' manzumun alayha la'aliun laha surat albitiykhi w'hiya min al-nidi*\* L448. Al-Barqouqi (2017:398). In the above line (1-9), 'sawdaa' meant black, it indicated beauty and purity (positive/purification) Al-Barqouqi (2017:521)

### The colors white and black together

1-10. *falyly heena qadimta feeha 'abydun wa assubhu mundh rahalta anha aswadu*\*L215

Al-Barqouqi (2017:388). In the above line (1-10), 'abyadan' meant white and 'aswad' meant black. There were two contradictory colors for praise. (white was Positive/praise and black was negative/satire). Al-Barqouqi (2017:473)

1-11. *man al'lama al'aswd almkhsi makrumatan a qawmuhi albeed 'am abawhu allseed*.L561

Al-Barqouqi (2017:403) In the above line (1-11), 'al-aswad' meant the black and 'al-beed' means the white. The poet presented the black color at the height of insolence (white was positive/praise and black was negative/satire) Al-Barqouqi (2017:546)

1-12. *labisa alththuluju biha ala masaliki fa'kannaha bi-bayadiha sawda'u*\*L52 Al-Barqouqi (2017:119)  
In the above line (1-12), 'bayadiaha' meant its whiteness and sawda'u meant black. White was a symbol of guidance, purity and happiness. (white was positive/purification while black was negative/mysterious) Al-Barqouqi (2017:140)

1-13.

### The color red

1-14. *min elja'adhir fi zei ala'areebi humru alhuly wa al-mataya wa al-jalabeeb*\* L438.

Al-Barqouqi (2017:182). In the above line (1-13), 'al-humr' meant the red colored which denoted beauty, wealth. (positive/ luxury) Al-Barqouqi (2017:293)

1-15. *wa latalama anhamalat bima'in ahmarin fi shafratayhi jamajimun wa nuhuru* L199.

Al-Barqouqi (2017:588). In the above line (1-14), 'ahmar' meant red it denoted blood (positive/praise), Al-Barqouqi (2017:632)

1-16. *wa yawmin wasalnahu bilylin ka'anama alaa 'ufuqihi min brqihi hulalun humru*\*L276

Al-Barqouqi (2017: 593). In the above line (1-15), 'humr' meant red. The poet described the horizon of the sky that night (positive/beauty), Al-Barqouqi (2017: 647).

### Three colors white, red and black

1-17. *aa'unjun mahajiruhu, duajun nawaziruhu humrun ghafayiruhu, sudun ghadairuh*\* L133. Al-Barqouqi (2017:585). In the above line (1-16), there were three colors in the poetic line, 'duajun' denoted white, 'humrun' meant red and sudun meant black. The colors black, red, and white carried positive overtones. (positive/praise). Al-Barqouqi (2017:619)

#### The color green

1-18. *wa ardiatun khudrun wa malkun muta'atun wa markwzatun sumrun wa muqrabatun jurd.* \*L.375. Al-Barqouqi (2017:394) In the above line (1-17), 'kudrun' meant green it denoted sovereignty and kingship. The color green indicated activity, freshness and fertility, (positive/sovereignty) Al-Barqouqi (2017:509-510)

1-19. *wa laylin wasalnahu biauwin ka'annama ala matnihi min dajnihi hulalun khudr*\*. L277. Al-Barqouqi (2017:593). In the above line (1-18), 'dajnihi' denoted the blackness of night. For its darkness that day, as if the clouds were black decor. (positive/beauty), Al-Barqouqi (2017:647).

### Red and green together

1-20. *yalqak murtadya bahmara min damin dhahabat bkhundrtihi attullay wa alakbudu.*\*L232. Al-Barqouqi (2017:388). In the above line (1-19), 'ahmara' meant in red, alakbudu meant green. The redness of the sword was a sign of the bravery of their owners and their participation in battle. The greenery of swords meant that these swords were fair and did not kill the innocents. Both colors referred to the praise (positive/praise) Al-Barqouqi (2017:477)

1-21. *khadra' hamra' alrruabi kannaha fi khaddi aghyad.* \*L423. Al-Barqouqi (2017:397).

In the above line (1-20), 'khadra' and 'hamra' referred to green and red respectively. The poet symbolized the greenness of the grass on the redness of soil, with the greenness of the virgins on the redness of their smooth cheeks. (Positive/beauty) Al-Barqouqi (2017:518).

### The color Yellow

1-22. *qalat wa qad ra'at isfirari man bhi wa tanahadat fajibtuha al-mutanabhidu.* \*L199 Al-Barqouqi (2017:387). In the above line (1-21), 'isfirari' denoted my yellowness. The yellowness of the color indicated wilting, pallor, dryness and disease, when he suffered the pain of parting with his beloved. (negative/ weakness) Al-Barqouqi (2017:469)

### The color Blue

1-23. *wa ma talabt zurq al'asinati ghayrahu wa lakin qustantyna kan labu alfida*\*. L86 Al-Barqouqi (2017:382). In the above line (1-22), 'zurq' meant their color was blue. Blueness was a characteristic of the spears, and this indicated their sharpness. (positive praise) Al-Barqouqi (2017, p. 428).

### The color blond

1-24. *wa yamshi bihi al'ukazu fi ad-deerr tayiba wa ma kan yarda mashy ashqar ajrada*\* L88.

Al-Barqouqi (2017:382). In the above line (1-23), 'ashqar' meant blond-haired (for the horse). The blond horse of the praiseworthy was one of the best types of Arab horses. (Positive/praise). Al-Barqouqi (2017:428)

The color grey

1-25. *wa ma tab hata ghadara alkaru wajhah jryhun wakhlla jfnahu alnnaqu armada.* \*L89 Al-Barqouqi (2017:382). In the above line (1-24), ‘armada’ denoted grey. The grey color indicated that the fate of the enemy was not clear. (negative/uncertainty) Al-Barqouqi (2017:428)

Table (4-1) the denotation of Al-Mutanabbi’s colors<sup>4</sup>

	Color	Ps. denotation	fq	%	Ng. denotation	fq	%	To	To%
1	white	3beauty, 1 victory, 4praise, 1purification	9	100.0	NA	0		9	29.30
2	black	1praise 2beauty 2 purification	5	62.50	2satire, 1mystery	3		8	25.80
3	blue	1praise	1	100.0	NA	0	0	1	03.23
4	Red	1Luxury,2praise,1beauty, 1praise, 1 beauty	6	100.0	NA	0	0	6	19.35
5	green	Sovereignty, beauty, 1praise, 1 beauty	4	100.0	NA	0	0	4	12.90
6	golden	NA	0	00.0	NA	0	0	0	00.00
7	yellow	NA	0	00.0	weakness	1		1	03.23
8	Silver	NA	0	00.0	NA	0	0	0	00.00
9	blond	1praise	1	100.0	NA	0	0	1	03.23
10	grey	NA	0	00.0	Uncertainty	1	0	1	03.23
Total			26	83.87		5	16.13	31	100.0

\*The number before the denotation refers to its frequency

Colors were frequently mentioned in poems of Al-Mutanabbi, the color terms appeared (31) times in a symbolic way. Table (4-1) revealed, Al- Mutanabbi employed colors for praise and satire, he used colors as symbols to express his thoughts and feelings. In his poetry there were eight colors: white, black, red, green, blue, yellow, blond and grey. They were used for positive denotations; beauty, victory, praise, purification and luxury, and negative denotations; satire, mystery, weakness and uncertainty. The common denominators for the positive denotations were praise and beauty while the common denominators for the negative denotation was satire. The statistics showed that, the color white was the most frequent, with (29.30%) denotations all of them were positive (100%), from the most frequent indication to the least frequent one, the color white included; praise, beauty, victory and purification. The color black came in the second place (25.80) it conveyed five positive, and three negative denotations. The positive denotations were beauty, purification, and praise according to their frequency. Black had two negative denotations satire and mystery. The third rank was color red with (19.35%) all were positive denotations, that conveyed praise, beauty, and luxury, and there was no negative denotation. The color green came number four with (12.90%) denotations all of which were positive, they conveyed beauty, praise, and sovereignty, and there was no negative one. Each of the colors blue, yellow blond, and grey appeared once (03.23%). The colors blue and blond appeared positively in praise while yellow and grey appeared negatively in weakness and uncertainty.

Table (4-1) showed that; praise was the top theme which was symbolized by many colors; white, black,



red, blue, green and blond. It was noticed that Al-Mutanabbi's colors for praise included the color black. The colors yellow and grey did not symbolize any positive connotation and this could be attributed to the environment which surrounded the poet. The society related the color grey to things which were not clear, so it had nothing to do with praise. The theme of beauty was represented by four different colors white, black, red and green. Black symbolized both the good and the evil; the poet's mood determined the denotation of color. The colors white, blue, red and green were positive colors of celebration. Blond color was rare but positive and used in Arabic for horses. Yellow denoted a negative attitude such as weakness, dryness and illness and the poet used it within these limits. Al-Mutanabbi sometimes used two or three colors in the same poetic line to draw an image, e.g. the use of red, green and white, red and black. In his poems, Al-Mutanabbi used the colors to symbolize his ideas sometimes naturally, according to the social norms or according to his own mood.

## 2- Shakespeare colors

### The color White

1-1. *Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard, (12,8)*

In the above line (2-1), the white color was used to indicate the progression of the seasons or life stages (negative/ dissolution), Bennett (2007:22).

1-2. *Nor did I wonder at the lily's white, (98,9)*

In the above line (2-2), the color white symbolized the return of nature (positive/delight), Bennett (2007:166).

1-3. *One blushing shame, another white despair; (99,10)*

In the above line (2-3), white indicated the moods of colors (negative/despair), Bennett (2007:168).

1-4. *If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun; (130,3)*

In the above line (2-4), the color white denoted the opposite of dark (negative/satire), Bennett (2007:219).

### The color Black

1-5. *Makes black night beauteous and her old face new (27,12).*

In the above line (2-5), the color black denoted darkness (negative/ugliness), Bennett (2007:48).

1-6. *His beauty shall in these black lines be seen, (63,13)*

In the above line (2-6), the color black denoted the blank ink. (positive/immortality), Bennett (2007:105).

1-7. *That in black ink my love may still shine bright. (65,14)*

In the above line (2-7), the color black denoted long life (positive/immortality), Bennett (2007:108).

1-8. *Which by and by black night doth take away, (73,7)*

In the above line (2-8), the color black denoted the fading of youth's light (negative/mortality), Bennett (2007:122).

1-9. *In the old age black was not counted fair, (127,1)*

In the above line (2-9), the color black denoted beautifulness (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:213).

1-10. *But now is black beauty's successive heir (127,3)*

In the above line (2-10), the color black denoted praise (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:213).

1-11. *Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black (127,9)*

In the above line (2-11), the color black symbolized the "foul" (negative/mockery), Bennett (2007:213).

1-12. *If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. (130,4)*

In the above line (2-12), the color black denoted extraordinary variety of natural beauties (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:219)

1-13. *Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place. (131,12)*

In the above line (2-13), the color black denoted praise (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:220).

1-14. *In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds, (131,13)*

In the above line (2-14), the color black denoted bad (negative/evil), Bennett (2007:220).

1-15. *Have put on black and loving mourners be (132,3)*

In the above line (2-15), the color black denoted beauty 'was dark' (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:221).

1-16. *Then will I swear beauty herself is black (132,13)*

In the above line (2-16), the color black denoted beauty (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:221).

1-17. *Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.(147,14)*

In the above line (2-17), the color black denoted that the black beautiful appearance had proved false (negative/ugliness), Bennett (2007:247).

### The color violet

1-18. *When I behold the violet past prime, (12,3)*

In the above line (2-18), the color violet denoted Spring and the new growth, the nature to humankind. It suggested the fade of life (negative/mortality), Bennett (2007:22).

### The color Red

1-19. *Coral is far more red than her lips' red; (130,2)*

In the above line (2-19), the color red denoted dull (negative/ paleness), Bennett (2007:219).

1-20. *Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose; (98,10)*

In the above line (2-20), the color vermilion denoted the rich crimson color in the rose which was a characteristic of passion (positive/delight), Bennett (2007:166).

### The colors red and white

1-21. *A third, nor red nor white, had stol'n of both (99,10)*

In the above line (2-21), the colors red and white indicated shame and despair (negative/shame and despair), Bennett (2007:168).

1-22. *I have seen roses damask'd, red and white (130,4)*

In the above line (2-22), the colors red and white denoted fairness and loveliness (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:219).

### The color green

1-23. *And summer's green all girded up in sheaves (12,7)*

In the above line (2-23), the color green symbolized youth (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:22).

1-24. *And they shall live, and he in them still green (63,14)*

In the above line (2-24), the color green denoted youth (positive/ immortality), Bennett (2007:105).

1-25. *Making no summer of another's green, (68,11)*

In the above line (2-25), the color green denoted beauty (positive/youth), Bennett (2007:113).

1-26. *Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green. (104,8)*

In the above line (2-26), the color green denoted youth (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:175).

1-27. *So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow? (112,4)*

In the above line (2-27), the color green denoted youth (positive/indulgence), Bennett (2007:188).

### The color golden

1-28. *Despite of wrinkles this thy golden time. (7,8)*

In the above line (2-28), the color golden referred to the reflection of beauty (positive/beauty), Bennett

(2007:6).

1-29. *And often is his gold complexion dimm'd; (18,6)*

In the above line (2-29), the color gold denoted the light of the sun (negative/ pessimism), Bennett (2007:32).

1-30. *As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air: (21,12)*

In the above line (2-30), the color gold in 'gold candles' symbolized the stars (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:38).

1-31. *Before the golden tresses of the dead, (68,5)*

In the above line (2-31), the color golden referred to the color for the dead's hair, (negative/pessimism) Bennett (2007:113).

1-32. *Reserve their character with golden quill (65,3)*

In the above line (2-32), the color golden denoted reverse (positive/beauty), Bennett (2007:143).

**The colors golden and green**

1-33. *Kissing with golden face the meadows green, (33,3)*

In the above line (2-33), the colors golden and green referred to the light of the sun on the grass (positive/ beauty, and nobility), Bennett (2007:58).

**The color Yellow**

1-34. *So should my papers yellow'd with their age (17,9)*

In the above line (2-34), the color yellow denoted being old (negative/age), Bennett (2007:30).

1-35. *When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang (73,2)*

In the above line (2-35), the color yellow denoted dryness (negative/decay), Bennett (2007:122).

1-36. *Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd (104,5)*

In the above line (2-36), the color yellow symbolized dryness (negative/decay), Bennett (2007:175).

**The colors Silver and white**

1-37. *And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white; (12,4)*

In the above line (2-37), the colors sable, silver and white denoted the power of time upon man. Sable hair was a rich dark brown or black. Silver over white symbolized the damage of life. (Negative/age), Bennett (2007:22).

1-38. *Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud; ( 35,2)*

In the above line (2-38), the color silver denoted lovely (positive/nature), Bennett (2007:62).

**Table (4-2). The denotation of Shakespeare colors<sup>5</sup>**

	Color	+denotation	fq.	%	- denotation	fq.	%	Tot	%
1	White	1Delight, 1beauty	2	33.34	1dissolution, 1despair, 1satire 1shame	4	66.66	6	13.95
2	Black	6Beauty, 2immortality	8	61.53	mortality, mockery, evil, 2ugliness	5	38.47	13	30.23
3	Violet	NA	0	00.0	Mortality	1		1	02.35
4	Red	1Delight, 1beauty	2	50.00	1paleness,1despair	2	50.00	4	09.30

<sup>5</sup> To = total, fq= frequency, + = positive, - =negative, NA = not available

5	green	1beauty with gold 2 beauty/wealth/nobility1 immortality 1youth, 1indulgence	6	100.0	0	0	00.0	6	13.95
6	golden	6Beaut	6	75.0	2pessimism	2	25.00	8	18.60
7	yellow	NA	0	00.0	2decay, 1age	3		3	06.97
8	Silver	Nature (with white)	1	50.0	age	1	50.0	2	04.65
9	blond	NA	0	00.0	NA	0		0	00.00
10	grey	NA	0	00.0	NA	0		0	00.00
Total			26	60.47		17	39.53	43	100.0

\*The number before the denotation refers to its frequency

Colors were frequently mentioned in Shakespeare’s sonnets they were used about (43) times in a symbolic way to express his ideas emotions and feelings. They expressed positive and negative denotations. The above table (4-2) revealed that Shakespeare used eight colors: white, black, violet, red, green, golden, yellow and silver. The positive denotations included delight, beauty, wealth, nobility and immortality, and nature. The negative denotations include; dissolution, despair, satire, mortality, mockery, evil, ugliness, paleness, pessimism, age and decay. The common positive denotation were youth and beauty while the common negative denotation were pessimism and satire. From the most frequent color to the least frequent one, the color black had the top place with (30.23%) denotations; it had positive denotations and negative ones. The denotations of black included; beauty and immortality, the negative denotations included immortality, mockery, evil and ugliness. The color golden was the second place with (18.60%) denotations that conveyed positive ones for beauty and negative ones for pessimism. The colors white and green were ranked in the third place (13.95%). White appeared with positive denotations to convey delight and beauty, and negative denotations for dissolution, despair, satire and shame. Green as well appeared six times (13.95%) all of which conveyed positive denotation; beauty, immortality, youth, indulgence. Red appeared in the fifth rank (09.30%) with positive denotations ‘delight and beauty’ while the negative ones were ‘paleness and despair’. The color yellow was the sixth place (06.97%) with negative denotations ‘decay and age’. The color silver appeared two times in the seventh rank (04.65%), for a positive denotation describing nature and negative denotations, which were related to age. In the eighth and last rank, came the color violet (2.35%) for one negative denotation which was mortality. Shakespeare did not refer to the colors blond and grey. Among the colors used by Shakespeare were white, black, red, green, golden and silver, yellow and violet. All the colors were used to express beauty and nature except the colors yellow and violet. This meant Shakespeare did not have clues for the use of color as symbols in his sonnets. As for the colors yellow in Shakespeare’s sonnets and in the nature, it represented dryness and weakness. The color violet, which denoted a negative meaning as in the language, was not common in the sonnets but in English idioms it referred to a shy or timid<sup>6</sup> person, it had a negative denotation. The color white sometimes symbolized the good and other times the evil, and the same was true for the color black. Here, the poet’s mood determined the denotation of color. Shakespeare symbolized the color green as a completely positive color and this was natural. The colors violet and yellow were used within the social and cultural norms to denote negative attitudes. It could be said that Shakespeare in his poems used colors to symbolize his ideas, spontaneously, according to his own mood and according to the culture or the nature.

### Conclusion

Colors had special presence in the poems of both Al-Mutanabbi, as one of the most important poets of Abbasid era and Shakespeare the most influential sonnet writer in his era. Al-Mutanabbi symbolized colors (31) times and Shakespeare symbolizes colors (43) times. Each poet referred to eight colors, six of which were shared. The color denotations for both poets included positive and negative ones. The colors white and black appeared at the top and for contradicting symbols in the poems of both poets. The color green for both poets was positive and yellow was negative. With regard to the semantic cross-cultural denotations in Arabic and English, both poets' color denotations were confusing and had different associations in different contexts according to the occasion. For both poets, color denotation was developed intuitively and many factors affected their choice of colors. Their choice was influenced by the society, the cultures, the environment and color personal preferences. Generally, there were no clear-cut linguistic universals for the use of colors as symbols the in poetry.

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### Authorship and Level of Contribution

The paper was conducted by one corresponding author only.



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