

## *Symbolism of Purple in Emily Dickinson's Poetry*

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### 1. Introduction

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century American poet Emily Dickinson was born in a Calvinist (puritan) family in Amherst, Massachusetts in 1830 and died there in 1886. The use of color is very frequent in her poetry. This is certainly related to her being lived in a rural environment surrounded by beautiful natural scenes; amazing fantastic colors of gardens, flowers, beautiful hills around her. These made her became entrapped by magic of the colorful objects very easily and use them in creating her poetic images connecting the nature around her with her spiritual world. Chase stated, "The use of colors is one of the characteristic features of her poetic vocabulary" (1965:109).

The most frequently used color by Dickinson is the color purple. It appears that purple was her favorite color. She mentioned the color purple in her poems 54 times in 54 poems. The study discusses the various meanings of the color purple in Emily Dickinson's poetry. It tries to shed some lights on the symbolic significance of such meanings as she used this color in her life poem, in poems about natural images, and poems related to time and eternity.

### 2. The Color Purple

"The original word was likely used by the Semites, a group of ancient people comprised of Hebrews, Arabs, and Phoenicians" (Smith, n.d.). The word "purple" comes from the Old English word "purpul," which is from the Latin "purpura" and from the ancient Greek "porphyra" ( pigments through the

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ages, n.d.). *Porphyra* was “a term for the shellfish-derived dye that garment makers used to create the color” (Smith, n.d.).

Purple is a secondary color. It is a combination of the two primary colors, the warmest, stimulus, energetic, and longest wavelength color, which is red, and the calmest, coolest, soothing, and shortest wavelength color, which is blue. “It is a non- spectrum color because there is no certain wavelength associated with this color and it is not part of the spectrum of white light, it is from opposite ends of the spectrum” (Gilbert& W.,2008: 112). The scope of this color is very wide, it stretches between two opposite colors red and blue (fire and water). According to Berlin & Kay, purple is the eighth among eleven basic color terms in a language.<sup>3</sup> *Symbolism of Color Purple*

It is obvious “Colors symbolize abstract concepts and affect psychology and emotion. Each color has its positive and negative traits to influence human emotions”(Chang, 2010: 3345). In a table, Chang and Liang show positive, negative traits, and emotions of colors according to different theories and meanings of colors, they state that purple has the following traits and emotions:

Purple Trait	Positive trait	Negative trait	Emotion
Color circle (Goethe)	Active	Restless	Discomfort
Meaning of color (Claudia Cortes)	Leadership, Passive	Arrogant, Sorrow	Introspective Melancholic
Color Meaning (Color Wheel)	Nostalgic, Romantic	Frustration	Sadness
Color Codification (Shirley Willett)	Leadership	Impotence	Power
Color Psychology (Birren, 1961)	Royalty Creativity	Mystery	Flamboyance Gaudiness Mystery

The color purple may represent many different things. It represents perfect balance given since it is a combination of red (the warmest color) and blue (the coolest color). It also refers to death, mourning, and the coming of the spring. Moreover, historically, it has been considered as noble clothes colors for a long time. "During Ancient Greek and Roman time Purple was associated with supreme power in cultures from Israel to Persia" (Delamare, 2000: 31). This color was generally considered as nice and costly; only members of royal family were entitled to wear purple garments. Those who dared to break this convention were punished by capital penalty under the rule of Nero. The survival of the tradition is apparent in the employment of red on the gowns of Catholic clergy; only the highest clergymen were allowed to wear "a band of purple on their white robes" (Delamare, 2000: 37). Thus, to the western people purple has a strong historical association with royalty, "purple symbolizes power, nobility, luxury, and ambition. It conveys wealth and extravagance. It is also "associated with wisdom, dignity, independence, creativity, mystery, and magic" (Weber, 2010). On the other hand, Smith (n.d.) counts the advantageous effects of purple on humankind as a color that "uplifts us physically, calms the mind and nerves, offers a sense of spirituality, and encourages creativity".

Even in Parapsychology "people with purple auras are said to have a love of ritual and ceremony" (Panchadasi, 1912: 37). "People who are attracted to purple are people who have an aura of mystery and intrigue. Artists often prefer purple. People who like to consider themselves different from the common herd or unconventional often prefer purple" (The Meaning of the Color PURPLE, n.d.). They often have uncommon abilities. They have charisma and charm. They are tolerant, sensitive and compassionate. They are often tender and kind and may have an interest in higher realms of consciousness, magic and the dream world. Purple types are

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often free thinkers, visionaries, revolutionaries and entertainers (Find Your Color: The Role of Color Psychology, Color Symbolism and the Human Aura, 2008-2011).

In Christian art, Purple is associated with royalty and it became a symbol of royalty “because of both the striking effect and great cost of murex dye, often called Tyrant purple, its use was restricted largely to kings, emperors, and aristocrats” (Ferber, 2007:163) and also because according to Voight purple “signifies biblical royalty under Jesus Christ” (2003: 32). Moreover, “purple is the liturgical color and it is a representative of pride. “A catholic priest is “raised to the purple” when he becomes a cardinal. Purple is also the ecclesiastical color of Advent and Lent, and of the spirit of penitence and mourning” (Ferber, 2007:163).

According to (Riding the Best. com, Color Symbolism and Color Meaning in The Bible, n.d.), “in Bible, purple is used to describe hangings and fine materials. The dye was extracted from a particularly scarce family of shellfish, which made it quite valuable. Purple became a symbol of royalty and riches due to the scarcity of its dye”.

In Hindu belief, “purple is the color of the crown chakra. Perfection, integration, unity with the divine, wisdom and purpose, universal consciousness, understanding, and enlightenment are traits of purple” (Sakura, 2003).

Chinese believe that purple means, “Spiritual awareness, physical and mental healing, hence strength, abundance”, (Symbolism of Colours, Associations of the Five Elements, Chinese Beliefs, and Fang Shun, 2011).

Therefore, the meaning of the color purple through the centuries represented many aspects of life. Social, religious, biblical and Christian symbolisms were all associated with this color. However, it became symbolic with wealth and power and strongly associated with Royalty, as the dyes used for purple materials were extremely expensive to produce.

#### 4. *Emily Dickinson and the Color Purple*

Dickinson used purple in many poems about images of nature, the beautiful scenes of nature in spring, especially the scenes of sunrise and sunset. It seems she was so taken by such scenes specially the purple color of the scenes. "In late April 1873, in a letter to her cousins, Louise and Frances Norcross, Emily wrote, "Spring is a happiness so beautiful, so unique, so unexpected that I don't know what to do with my heart (L389)" (Preest, n.d.: 20). In poem (162), she relates purple to the sphere of afterlife. Even when she describes the physical scene of nature in spring, purple is connected with the life after death. Dickinson used the color purple to indicate the beauty of nature in spring as representing the life after death. In the first stanza, she says:

Some Rainbow -- coming from the Fair!  
 Some Vision of the World Cashmere --  
 I confidently see!  
 Or else a Peacock's purple Train  
 Feather by feather -- on the plain  
 Fritters itself away!

Here, although she describes the beautiful scene of rainbow, the "Peacock's purple train" she says that the coming of spring is like a rainbow with its beauties like the scattered purple feathers of a peacock, its tail is purple like royal courtiers. She ends the poem with the idea that spring is a sign of new life after death not very far away.

Such comparison indicates that purple matters much to Dickinson. It has a strong connection with her psychology, her soul. She struggles to come up with words to describe the radiant beauty of what she sees, as the unspecific word "some" clearly indicates. The use of color purple refers to the divine majesty of nature and its beauty; spring with its purple horizon could also symbolize new life.

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In poem (321), Dickinson is dealing with the sun, which is dancing, leaping, and playing over the fields throughout the day and then disappearing at night like a juggler.

Blazing in Gold and quenching in Purple

Leaping like Leopards to the Sky

Then at the feet of the old Horizon

Laying her spotted Face to die

Stooping as low as the Otter's Window

Touching the Roof and tinting the Barn

Kissing her Bonnet to the Meadow

And the Juggler of Day is gone

The sun is effectual and creates excitement as a juggler. The juggler is dressed in gold and purple, the brightness of the sun and its shadows as clouds touch it. Since purple and gold are royal colors, Dickinson regales glory of the sun that wears colors of kings and queens as it reigns over the sky and all that is in the world. Purple are the symbol of royalty and the majesty of nature. She is so amazed by the beautiful scene of the sunrise and the sunset to the degree, she regards them as something very precious and highly appreciated.

The poem entitled "A Day" again is about the beautiful scenes of sunrise and sunset.

I'll tell you how the sun rose,

A ribbon at a time.

The steeples swam in amethyst,

The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets,

The bobolinks begun.

Then I said softly to myself,

"That must have been the sun!"

But how he set, I know not.

There seemed a purple stile

Which little yellow boys and girls

Were climbing all the while

Till when they reached the other side,  
 A dominie in gray  
 Put gently up the evening bars,  
 And led the flock away. (204)

This poem is divided evenly into two metaphorical descriptions of a sunrise and a sunset on the same day. The speaker is an observer tells us how the sky changes its colors at sunrise : at first the sky is painted with light colors like a “Ribbon”; after that, it becomes purple, during the sunset time, like a painted wondrous sea of amethyst where the ship – like roofs of churches are sailing. She imagines that little yellow boys and girls are climbing up “the purple stile” as she watches the sunset slowly set.

A “Ribbon” which is the sun’s rays stands for worldly life while “the purple stile” that little boys and girls climbing to reach to the Dominie the real house stands for death. The color purple could refer to mysterious secret life after death as Davide Preest states that “ Emily’s sunset, personified as children coming home to a gray-robed Dominie, may hint at our reaching ‘the other side’ at death and joining Jesus’ flock”(103). For Dickenson, here, the color purple is associated with Jesus because when people die they join Jesus. Thus, purple denotes royalty, biblical royalty under Jesus Christ.

Another poem about a sunrise image is poem (572) entitled “The Parlor -- of the Day”

The Day came slow -- till Five o'clock --  
 Then sprang before the Hills  
 Like Hindered Rubies -- or the Light  
 A Sudden Musket -- spills --  
 The Purple could not keep the East --  
 The Sunrise shook abroad  
 Like Breadths of Topaz -- packed a Night --  
 The Lady just unrolled --  
 The Happy Winds -- their Timbrels took --

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The Birds -- in docile Rows  
Arranged themselves around their Prince  
The Wind -- is Prince of Those --  
The Orchard sparkled like a Jew --  
How mighty 'twas -- to be  
Guest in this stupendous place --  
The Parlor -- of the Day --

In this poem, the speaker is so eager to capture the excitement of daybreak. She is describing such scene by comparing the daybreak scene to the rubies long hidden away, to the winds take up their tumbrels, to the sudden flash of a musket shot, to a bolt of clothes unrolled by a lady housekeeper. The speaker is watching the scene as if she is a guest in the Parlor.

As the speaker's eagerness to the scene is so clear in the poem, she is so taken by the colors specially the purple; the reference of the purple here could be interpreted as a color, which is blissful. A color that makes its viewer gain peace of mind. A person who looks at the purple color of sunrise is the one who is a blissful man, the one who gains peace of mind, who is a wealthy person; as the reference to the words "prince", "Jew" (jewelry show) also the reference to the gems as (Ruby and Topaz). The purple color of the poem is as precious as jewels and gems.

In poem (318), Dickinson describes the sunset scene, this time she compares the sunset to a woman (housewife) whom is busy sweeping her house. The speaker is not simply referring to the dramatic colors of the sunset as it sweeps across the horizon, leaving "shreds" of color everywhere; she is dealing with the theme of death. Dickinson uses a number of words indicates that this poem is about death, for example; "Evening West," in Webster's 1845 dictionary "West" has a meaning of "departure, decline or fall," "Purple," royal robes, "East," "where the Messiah will appear," "Emerald,"



“transparent, somewhat translucent,” and “Amber,” “golden hue, Heavenly light, divine truth, splendor of resurrected things..

She sweeps with many-colored Brooms --  
 And leaves the Shreds behind --  
 Oh Housewife in the Evening West --  
 Come back, and dust the Pond!  
 You dropped a Purple Ravelling in --  
 You dropped an Amber thread --  
 And how you've littered all the East  
 With duds of Emerald!  
 And still, she plies her spotted Brooms,  
 And still the Aprons fly,  
 Till Brooms fade softly into stars --  
 And then I come away --

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza the “Purple Ravelling” and “Amber thread” is referring to the various streaks and hues in the sky at sunset. She is commenting on the changing spectacle. Again, the speaker is so amazed by the beautiful scene of sunset, she feels comfortable by looking at such scene, she thinks that she is blessed and she is wealthy; as historically, purple was related to royalty and wealthy persons. The literary interpretation of the poem is not enough. The sunset and the metaphor of sweeper could be used to portray the theme of death. The setting of the sun is just like the death of a person. When we die our life's sun is setting. As purple, symbolize royal robes, the poet wants to tell her readers that when you die you will gain that robe or that state; the state of the royal and you will be blessed there.

In poem (296) the sunset is drawn in the metaphor, the air is sea, is projected onto the sky and ultimately onto space. The purple clouds are ships that gently toss each other in a sea of daffodil.

Where Ships of Purple -- gently toss --

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On Seas of Daffodil --  
Fantastic Sailors -- mingle --  
And then -- the Wharf is still!

The color purple is used to describe the beauty of nature and the way in which the sunset creates a wonderful, indescribable set of colors on the sky and the land. Therefore, purple is used to symbolize majesty and the magnificence of nature and its inherent indescribable beauty and majesty, making us to be aware of maker and the creator of such scene.

Another poem in which the sunset is the sea, poem (297)

This -- is the land -- the Sunset washes --  
These -- are the Banks of the Yellow Sea --  
Where it rose -- or whither it rushes --  
These -- are the Western Mystery!  
Night after Night  
Her purple traffic  
Strews the landing with Opal Bales --  
Merchantmen -- poise upon Horizons --  
Dip -- and vanish like Orioles!

The sunset is the sea itself and purple is the color of its traffic, which symbolizes the mystery of night's possibility. The peaceful night that comes after the sunset, which is full of mysterious possibilities just as the color purple.

In "A Sloop of Amber slips away", Dickinson once more describes the wonderful scene of sunset.

A Sloop of Amber slips away  
Upon an Ether Sea,  
And wrecks in Peace a Purple Tar,  
The Son of Ecstasy— (1599)

At sunset moment, the sun is as reddish yellow as "amber" that "slips away", e.i. moves above the sea in the upper atmosphere and gradually vanishes "wrecks" peacefully "a purple Tar" a cloud, which is, just like a purple sailor and

thus breeds “ecstasy”, great pleasure or joy. Here, the word purple is preceded by the word peace, the association of the word peace with purple indicates that for Dickinson purple is the color that makes her to feel at ease, it makes her to gain peace of mind and spiritual rest, as it breeds her great joy that is the “The son of Ecstasy”. This poem is among many other poems in which Dickinson uses sea metaphor to describe the sun-setting scene. Freeman and Takeda state that Dickinson uses sea metaphor in order to “delve into the mysteries of life and death”, they further states that Dickinson “links pictorial beauty with the spiritual” (2006: 112), the same thing could be adopted for the reason of using the color purple since purple is a spiritual, mysterious color. The color purple is a color that indicates a deep connection to the spiritual realm.

In poem (787), Dickinson observes how the sun sets while she is writing this poem; she says

Bloom upon the Mountain -- stated --

Blameless of a Name --

Efflorescence of a Sunset --

Reproduced -- the same --

Seed, had I, my Purple Sowing

Should endow the Day --

Not a Topic of a Twilight --

Show itself away --

Here, she compares the process of setting the sun to the blooming of a flower. She can sow the seeds of any flower except to sow the seeds of sunset. She calls the process of sowing the sunset’s seeds as “purple sowing” for she feels that this process is something great, magnitude, and related to God. Therefore, purple, here, refers to royalty. She is so stunned by such scene to the degree she wants to immortalize, regal the scene in her poem to enrich her all day long, may be because she regards the color of this scene as a source for gaining spiritual fulfillment.

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In poem (1026), Dickinson imagines the purple clouds of sunset as "little Groups of Continents" coming home from school and the mountains are the stationary that tell them what has happened during that day.

The Hills in Purple syllables  
The Day's Adventures tell  
To little Groups of Continents  
Just going Home from School.

Here, purple is used to indicate the sense of stillness, calmness, restfulness. The clouds are purple because the sun is retreating home and it is the end of the day. After the clouds had learned from the day (their school), they want to have a rest after their tedious day. During the day there is a great deal of uproar, noise, and tiredness but when the sun is about to set, the clouds will turn to purple thus they bring a great deal of calmness, stillness, quietness, and peace. Dickinson finds peace in the purple clouds of sunset coming home from school to have a rest.

In all these above poems, purple is associated with sunrise and sunset scenes, sunset can represent death and sunrise represent mysterious life after death (resurrection), it is the color that links between the spiritual and the physical worlds. It is worth noting that sometimes the color purple in such poems is either preceded or followed by soothing, mild, soft or gentle expressions, for example, "in Peace a Purple Tar", "Where Ships of Purple -- gently toss". Physically, the purple color of such scenes provides Dickinson peace of mind; it is usually used to express the quietness, stillness, calmness, peace, coolness, and repletion, the opposite of revolution, emotion, and anger. While spiritually purple can refer to her awareness of mysterious life after death, for Dickinson purple is a symbol of awareness, physical and spiritual awareness.

Another poem about the image of nature is "She hideth Her the last"

She hideth Her the last --  
 And is the first, to rise --  
 Her Night doth hardly recompense  
 The Closing of Her eyes --  
 She doth Her Purple Work --  
 And putteth Her away  
 In low Apartments in the Sod -  
 As worthily as We. (564)

There is something that is personified in this poem, some say that this thing is the sun in its daily course, while others see that this thing is bee. In this poem, Dickinson appreciates the work of that thing; her hard working, she is the first creature who rises and begins her work so early in the morning, and it is the last creature to hide herself away at night when darkness falls.

In the second stanza the speaker labels the work of that thing as a purple work “She doth Her Purple Work” that is “as worthily as” human beings work. Here, Dickinson associates the color with importance and majesty, and worthiness, as something, which is precious, and worth appreciating. She tries to tell her readers that the work of that thing (the sun/ bee) is “purple” because it is so important and magnitude, that creature has an important role in nature; it helps the nature grow and produce. Therefore, purple, here; symbolize something that is important and precious.

In poem (104)

A something in a summer's Day  
 As slow her flambeaux burn away  
 Which solemnizes me.  
 A something in a summer's noon --  
 A depth -- an Azure -- a perfume --  
 Transcending ecstasy.  
 And still within a summer's night  
 A something so transporting bright

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I clap my hands to see --  
Then veil my too inspecting face  
Lest such a subtle -- shimmering grace  
Flutter too far for me --  
The wizard fingers never rest --  
The purple brook within the breast  
Still chafes its narrow bed --

The speaker reflects on the importance a summer day has on her life. The day is described as one which “solemnizes”, “transcends”, and “transports”. She does not look at that summer’s day as an ordinary day. She goes far beyond the surface of this certain day with dignity, grandeur, and pointed precision. It is the day, which she connects with her soul so greatly. The day with its “wizard fingers” that never have a rest and “the purple brook” of the breast, is the source of spiritual relieve. The characteristic features of this day and its night takes her beyond the happiness of the actual experience, to thoughts of heaven. She is looking at such a very great day to the degree she is obliged to veil her face, lest too close inspection of this certain day makes her lose it. If on one day the vision became tired, God will produce another one, is never tired.

“The purple brook” of this poem is a vein in which blood is passing; it indicates continuity, persistence, spiritual persistence. For Dickinson this certain summer’s day provides her permanent spiritual relieve that never have a rest. It is just like a brook, which is full of activity and a source of life for her.

Another poem about a summer day is poem (374)

It will be Summer -- eventually.  
Ladies -- with parasols --  
Sauntering Gentlemen -- with Canes --  
And little Girls -- with Dolls --  
Will tint the pallid landscape --

As 'twere a bright Bouquet --  
 Thro' drifted deep, in Parian --  
 The Village lies -- today --  
 The Lilacs -- bending many a year --  
 Will sway with purple load --  
 The Bees -- will not despise the tune --  
 Their Forefathers -- have hummed --

In this poem, Dickinson imagines what will happen once summer comes. For Dickinson Summer, with its purple flowers, is a sacred season, it is full of miracle and its end is just like the end of sacrament. Throughout this poem and many other poems, Dickinson surrounds herself with purple flowers such as Lilacs, Aster, and Gentians. The use of color purple, in this poem, represents the fact that purple has a special place in nature, along with the other sacred expression above mentioned; it is a sacred color in nature. It represents divinity, such flowers stated in the poem are delicate flowers. They are considered precious or valuable. The speaker is waiting for summer to return for its nature provides her the peace of mind and the existence of purple flowers in nature during summer leads her to meditate for it is the color of meditation and pure thought, it is the source for spiritual fulfillment it is a delightful and time of complete joy.

In a poem entitled "God made a little Gentian", Dickinson deals with a little purple flower that blooms late in autumn, it is called gentian.

God made a little Gentian --  
 It tried -- to be a Rose --  
 And failed -- and all the Summer laughed --  
 But just before the Snows  
 There rose a Purple Creature --  
 That ravished all the Hill --  
 And Summer hid her Forehead --  
 And Mockery -- was still --

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The Frosts were her condition --  
The Tyrian would not come  
Until the North -- invoke it --  
Creator -- Shall I -- bloom? (520)

Dickinson calls this flower as a tyrian because of its purple color and because it is as precious as ancient tire/ tyre (jewels) for it was famous for purple dye. She mocks at this small flower for it could not bloom during summer, it tries to bloom but it fails. She doubts God, she mocks God not the flower, she is skeptical as she was during her lifetime. She uses sacred images for expressing her eccentricity. She uses purple to show her unconventionality for those eccentric persons who refute the conventional religious principles use purple. She challenges the system that places "God" or religion above natural processes. She tries to tell her reader that if the flower is a sacred one, for its purple color, which is created by God, why it should bloom until the day of the frost and the north winds arrive, why not sooner, during summer, why all these flowers in such a wide quantities under somehow cold not hot conditions.

The use of purple represents dignity, nobility, and royalty but this time these qualities are used to show her dissatisfaction with religion. She expresses her rejection for religious convention. In this poem as in many other poems, by the use of religious expression, Dickinson is exploring alternatives to her religion/faith.

Another poem in which Dickinson challenges the system that places religion (especially faith) above natural process is poem (489). She says

My Faith is larger than the Hills --  
So when the Hills decay --  
My Faith must take the Purple Wheel  
To show the Sun the way --



Again, the poem seems to disprove conventional religious interpretations of natural process and events. What at first reading of the poem seems to be a celebratory gesture towards religion and faith, the phrase “My Faith is larger than the Hills” becomes immediately changed by the “decay” of the hills by being shrouded in darkness after sunset that follows. In her extended absurd tale, that makes “faith” driving the purple wheel around the earth to guide the sun, she mocks biblical and religious language.

In these poems, the color purple indicates Dickinson eccentricity, mysteriousness, and unconventional person as she regards nature as a source of her inspiration rather its creator. She proves herself as a skeptical person who doubts the notion of God, Jesus, and over all Christianity, and she regards such notions as mysteries. As she brought up in a religious Calvinist and puritan family, she used her religious education for expressing her unconventional thoughts, her mysterious feelings, and her eccentric ideas.

Another poem about natural image is “Flowers – Well – if anybody”

Flowers -- Well -- if anybody  
 Can the ecstasy define --  
 Half a transport -- half a trouble --  
 With which **flowers** humble men:  
 Anybody find the fountain  
 From which floods so contra flow --  
 I will give him all the **Daisies**  
 Which upon the hillside blow.  
 Too much pathos in their faces  
 For a simple breast like mine --  
**Butterflies** from St. Domingo  
 Cruising round the purple line --  
 Have a system of aesthetics --  
 Far superior to mine. (95)

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In this poem, Dickinson claims that confronted with the beauty of flowers makes her feel both a 'transport' of joy and a 'trouble.' "If someone could only tell her the source of these contradictory feelings, she would give him 'all the daisies which on the hillside blow'" (Preest, 41).

She herself is very affected by the emotions on the face of the flowers to make her feel relief and understand her contradictory feelings. Meanwhile, the butterflies flying over the purple line of flower can appreciate the aesthetic value of such flowers more than she does. Here, purple symbolize the sense of ease, good judgment, spiritual fulfillment, and peace of mind as it is associated with religious definition such as "St. Domingo" although, according to Emily Dickinson Lexicon the word figuratively means "tropical paradise of butterflies, fruits, and pleasing scents"(d/77). The speaker tries to tell her readers that butterflies can gain that peace of mind or the sense of ease because they are from such a sacred place as "St. Domingo" and they appreciate the aesthetic value of such flowers more than hers.

Another poem about the image of flower is a poem entitled "Purple Clover"

There is a flower that Bees prefer --  
And Butterflies -- desire --  
To gain the Purple Democrat  
The Humming Bird -- aspire -- (642)

According to Emily Dickinson's lexicon, clover is "favorite plant of the bee for pollination". It "often refers to luxurious living"(c/36). Through the bee's good judgment in which they chose the flower that is purple, purple represents the color of good judgment. The reference to the "purple democrat" could refer to the fact that all bees (as democracy) choose to prefer a flower, which brings about good judgment and peace of mind. The bees use to consider the purple clover

as the best. The speaker refers to the common clover as her “Purple Democrat” is oxymoronic combination one from folk tale with its prince in disguise, this image is interestingly tested when it is connected to a highly elevated mood of ecstasy, imploring notions of other flowers that have purple color such as lilac, orchid,...etc.

In poem (768), Dickinson regards the mountains of her country as something precious, valuable; they have “purple figures”.

The Mountains—grow unnoticed—  
 Their Purple figures rise  
 Without attempt—Exhaustion—  
 Assistance—or Applause—

She personifies the mountains because for her they are matter much. There is a sense of spirituality that connects her with them. They are as lovely as costly, precious, and valuable things. Not only precious as other tangible /concrete things, but also as something sacred and immortal those are everlasting for they have “Eternal Faces”.

Another poem in which Dickinson uses religious definition to reveal her spiritual need for help is poem (14):

As if I asked a common Alms,  
 And in my wondering hand  
 A Stranger pressed a Kingdom,  
 And I, bewildered, stand --  
 As if I asked the Orient  
 Had it for me a Morn --  
 And it should lift its purple Dikes,  
 And shatter me with Dawn!

The poem is about the theme of spirituality as the words “alms”, “kingdom” and “asked” indicate. She expresses her request as an ordinary favor from someone whom she knows, but a stranger pressed the spiritual sovereignty of God and gave her that spiritual need by utilizing nature for her. She feels that

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she can gain spiritual fulfillment / rest from nature and she really has gained such relieve for this reason she imagines herself as if she is asking for such help. In this poem purple is the symbol of hope based on the spirituality. She will gain her spiritual relieve once dawn (stands for enlightening) breaks and the dike (stands for darkness) is lift.

Poem (90) is about the theme of renewal, rebirth after death, which is quite clear from the annual return of spring.

An altered look about the hills --  
A Tyrian light the village fills --  
A wider sunrise in the morn --  
A deeper twilight on the lawn --  
A print of a vermillion foot --  
A purple finger on the slope --  
A flippant fly upon the pane --  
A spider at his trade again --  
An added strut in Chanticleer --  
A flower expected everywhere --  
An axe shrill singing in the woods --  
Fern odors on untravelled roads --  
All this and more I cannot tell --  
A furtive look you know as well --  
And Nicodemus' Mystery  
Receives its annual reply!

There is a biblical reference in the poem. Dickinson refers to Bible as an attempt to answer Nicodemus question by pointing to the return of spring every year; according to Emily Dickinson's Lexicon Nicodemus is a "New Testament pharisee; follower who asked Christ how a man may be born again" (n/8). The yearly return of spring is a sign that human beings will be reborn after they die.

Throughout the lines (1-14) the speaker, describe the beauty of nature during spring, which is a sign of man's rebirth after

death. Among these beautiful of spring is an altered look of hills, during spring the color of the hills will be changed. The sunrise process will be different from that of winter; there will be a tyrian (deep purple) light everywhere and “A wider sunrise in the morn”. “Purple finger” that grow is repeated every year. One of the characteristics of spring is that “flower expected everywhere” including purple flowers (violet, tulip, orchid ----etc) are symbol of being born again, new growth and new life. Spring could also represent the life after death it is a mysterious life for Dickinson that is why it is full of purple. Another poem about the image of renewal of the universe is poem (942)

Always Mine!  
 No more Vacation!  
 Term of Light this Day begun!  
 Failless as the fair rotation  
 Of the Seasons and the Sun.  
 Old the Grace, but new the Subjects --  
 Old, indeed, the East,  
 Yet upon His Purple Programme  
 Every Dawn, is first.

In this poem, Dickinson speaks about the Glory of God and His everlasting light. God’s light is as certain as passing of the seasons the “rotation Of the Seasons” and the coming of daylight each day. She says that God’s Grace is old but His subject (light) is renewed every dawn “upon His Purple Programme”. The word “Purple” is capitalized and it is related to God’s Programme. His programme is purple which indicates that it is a divine one. It has a divine significance, since God is naturally divine and worth to be praised so is His plan (programme). Here, the color purple is associated with divine rule and majesty of God as the color purple confers upon this programme the same kind of dignity and praise that should be conferred upon God Himself. There is another possibility for

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interpreting this poem, the Glory and the word "Grace" might be related to nature, Dickinson treats nature as God that has a divine programme.

Two other poems about spring and coming of Dickinson's favorite month March are poems (1194 and 1320). The first is

We like March, his shoes are purple,  
He is new and high;  
Makes he mud for dog and peddler,  
Makes he forest dry;  
Knows the adder's tongue his coming,  
And begets her spot.  
Stands the sun so close and mighty  
That our minds are hot.  
News is he of all the others;  
Bold it were to die  
With the blue-birds buccaneering  
On his British sky.

This poem is an ode to March. March is personified, and it has purple shoes. Purple is used again to describe the beautiful scene of nature during springtime. The blooming of the flowers those are purple. March is able to make mud for it is a rainy season; the rain can bring the flowers at the feet (on earth) of March. Because purple has a special / sacred, place in nature, flowers such as lavender, orchid, lilac, and violet are often delicate and considered precious. To Dickinson March is a sacred month for its purple shoes (flowers), the flowers that are a source for her spiritual fulfillment.

The second poem is "Dear March – Come in"

Dear March-Come in-  
How glad I am-  
I hoped for you before-Put down your Hat-  
You must have walked-  
How out of Breath you are-

Dear March, Come right up the stairs with me-  
 I have so much to tell-I got your Letter, and the Birds-  
 The Maples never knew that you were coming-till I called  
 I declare-how Red their Faces grew-  
 But March, forgive me-and  
 All those Hills you left for me to Hue-  
 There was no Purple suitable-  
 You took it all with you-Who knocks? That April.  
 Lock the Door-  
 I will not be pursued-  
 He stayed away a Year to call  
 When I am occupied-  
 But trifles look so trivial  
 As soon as you have come That Blame is just as dear as Praise  
 And Praise as mere as Blame-

The poem is an odd to March, once more, she personifies March, and this time she receives March warmly. She welcomes March at the door of her house as if it is her guest while she rejects April "Who knocks? That April. / Lock the Door". She apologizes for the hills were not the right color of "purple suitable" for March because when March had last left, he took all the purple with him as she says: "All those Hills you left for me to Hue-/ There was no Purple suitable/ You took it all with you-".

As purple refers to a color that sends a peace of mind, she is worry about leaving of March so soon and being April at the door and it does not let her to obtain that bliss (purple). She could not enjoy March and whatever he brings with himself because of April. In the last two lines she blames him as she praises him; "Blame is just as dear as Praise/ And Praise as mere as Blame". She admires March for he is full of purple that is a source for spiritual fulfillment, meanwhile blames him for he does not allow her to enjoy that peace of mind and he does not left her any "purple", he took all with himself.

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Another poem in which Dickinson finds her spiritual relieve from nature is poem (1106).

These are the Signs to Nature's Inns --  
Her invitation broad  
To Whosoever famishing  
To taste her mystic Bread --  
These are the rites of Nature's House --  
The Hospitality  
That opens with an equal width  
To Beggar and to Bee  
For Sureties of her staunch Estate  
Her undecaying Cheer  
The Purple in the East is set  
And in the North, the Star --

In this poem, Dickinson refers to nature as a divine object, which nourishes those in search for spiritual sustenance. Nature has a “mystic Bread” which allows her to strive for a union with the divinity. Among things that are existed in nature is the purple dawn, which is a characteristic of nature. The reference to the purple sky produced by rising of the sun indicates the sovereignty of nature and perpetual recurring cycle of life.

The speaker is searching for spiritual sustenance in nature rather than in her religion, she use purple as a symbol for divinity and sovereignty as an everlasting source for spiritual relieve because nature is so hospital and its cheer never decay.

In all the above poems concerning nature, Dickinson finds some relieve when she connects her feelings with the color purple along with other thing in nature. For her nature is divine, it is glorious, “Her absorption in the world of feeling found some relief in associations with nature; yet although she loved nature and wrote many nature lyrics, her interpretations are always more or less swayed by her own state of being. The



colors, the fragrances, the forms of the material world, meant to her a divine symbolism” (Shackford, 2010).

### ***Purple in Dickinson's Love Poems***

Dickinson mentions the color purple in her love poems, by its name, twice. First in poem (307) in which she says:

A solemn thing -- it was -- I said --  
 A woman -- white -- to be --  
 And wear -- if God should count me fit --  
 Her blameless mystery --  
 A hallowed thing -- to drop a life  
 Into the purple well --  
 Too plummetless -- that it return --  
 Eternity -- until --

This poem is about life after death (eternity and death). Dickinson compares the eternal life to a well that is purple. A well that is extremely deep and sometimes the hue of the color of the well turn purple because of its depth. Life after death is just like “purple well” and that is “too plummetless” for human being to comprehend. She could not comprehend the eternal life for her it is mysterious.

Purple here represent darkness, depth, unfathomable in depth. Therefore, purple well means deep or dark well, a well that its depth is not comprehend by humans. Purple well could also symbolize the mystic, holly, spiritual life, and religious depth. The speaker realizes that there is vagueness to this mystical vision in its purple depth.

The second poem is “Again - - his voice is at the door”

Again -- his voice is at the door --  
 I feel the old Degree --  
 I hear him ask the servant  
 For such an one -- as me --

I take a flower -- as I go --

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My face to justify --  
He never saw me -- in this life --  
I might surprise his eye!

I cross the Hall with mingled steps --  
I -- silent -- pass the door --  
I look on all this world contains --  
Just his face -- nothing more!

We talk in careless -- and it toss --  
A kind of plummet strain --  
Each -- sounding -- shyly --  
Just -- how -- deep --  
The other's one -- had been --

We walk -- I leave my Dog -- at home --  
A tender -- thoughtful Moon --  
Goes with us -- just a little way --  
And -- then -- we are alone --

Alone -- if Angels are "alone" --  
First time they try the sky!  
Alone -- if those "veiled faces" -- be --  
We cannot count -- on High!

I'd give -- to live that hour -- again --  
The purple -- in my Vein --  
But He must count the drops -- himself --  
My price for every stain!           (274)

In this poem, Dickinson describes females' psychological feeling, as she led rather a reclusive life; (during her life) without getting married, not having any man to share with her emotion, though she is a passionate poet and she lived a

passionate life she expresses her suffering in this poem. In the second stanza, the speaker imagines her reunion with her lover by the time she could hear her voice at the front door. According to Emily Dickinson's Lexicon, one of the meanings of purple is "blood"; figuratively it means "life –giving; vital, blood- carrying" (p/71). What the speaker wants to convey to her readers is the wish to have blood running through her veins again. She wishes she met her lover, and if she meets him, she will be spiritually restful as if the life has given to her again and the blood has returned to her vein. Therefore, purple represents good judgment, spiritual fulfillment, and peace/ rest of mind.

Her use of color in general, especially purple enabled her to create a world for herself, which is an attempt to deny the needs of the social life, and to compensate her emotional vacancy. "The characteristic response of her deprived persona is to seek for self- sufficiency, for intellectual mastery, and for esthetic sublimation of the debilitating emotions"(Pollak, 1979: 33).

*Purple in Dickinson's Poems Concerned with Time and Eternity*

Dickinson mentions the word purple in her poems about time and eternity twice in poem (77) and (169). In the first one, as in most of the times, Dickinson associated the color purple with royalty, she regarded her friend's death as coronation, as victory, rather than crucifixion was a way of being born to the purple, a coronation as much as a crucifixion, she says:

One dignity delays for all --  
 One mitred Afternoon --  
 None can avoid this purple --  
 None evade this Crown!

This poem is about the inevitability of death. She asserts that death is dignity, noble and the grace of God could not be resisted that is why she called purple. She wants to say when

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we die we will receive nobility; we will be crowned as if we are kings. All human beings will be alike by death even the simplest get great honor and dignity. She says that by death we are all united, she believes Christians are all united with Christ in death. She sees death as something that is not feared, but as something bestows honor upon us.

As she links a funeral ride of a dead person as something like coronation, purple here symbolize royalty, dignity, and nobility.

The second poem is "Wait till the Majesty of Death" in which she says:

Wait till the Majesty of Death  
Invests so mean a brow!  
Almost a powdered Footman  
Might dare to touch it now!  
Wait till in Everlasting Robes  
That Democrat is dressed,  
Then prate about "Preferment" --  
And "Station," and the rest!  
Around this quiet Courtier  
Obsequious Angels wait!  
Full royal is his Retinue!  
Full purple is his state!

Dickinson here again elevating the topic of death and links the day of death to a royal situation, she called death majesty because it conveys an equal 'democratic' dignity on all of us, and on that day talk about 'Preferment' and 'Station' will be completely out of place. Death is the only way a man can fulfill victory and triumph. Purple is a symbol of victory and success, it is also a symbol of royalty that is associated with the majesty of death, and a symbol of spiritual fulfillment.

### **5. Conclusion**

The study concludes that the poetry of Emily Dickinson commonly includes reference to the color purple. Her use of

purple is symbolic and it could be interpreted in many different ways.

For Dickinson purple is a divine and mystic color of her imagination and spirituality. She often relates the color with precious things in her world to represent nobility and dignity, things that provide her with spiritual relieve and that connect her deeply with her spiritual realms. It is an introspective color, allowing her to get in touch with her deeper thoughts. By using colors, she succeeds in using concise language and much evocative imagery. She always tries to compensate her emotional vacancy. She uses the color purple symbolically to show wide range of needs spiritual, emotional, and intellectual. The use of purple enabled her to understand the life around her, to be chiefly the discoverer eagerly hunting the meaning of life all, assuming what lay beyond purple horizon, to discover things in her world gradually until time merely became eternity.

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المعنى الرمزي للون الأرجواني في أشعار الشاعرة الأمريكية إيميلي ديكنسون

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مستخلص

هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لاستقصاء المعنى الدلالي والرمزي للون الأرجواني في أشعار الشاعرة الأمريكية (إيميلي ديكنسون) نظراً لكثرة ورود اللون الأرجواني في أشعارها. إذ هدف الدراسة إلقاء الضوء على العلاقة الترابطية بين هذا اللون ولغة الشاعرة من جهة وحالتها النفسية من جهة أخرى.

وتمّ استعمال الطرق التحليلية والوصفية في الدراسة فاتضح أن هناك ترابطاً "قويًا" بين استعمال الشاعرة للون الأرجواني ومشاعرها وخيالها وحالتها الروحية والنفسية. كما ظهر أن اللون الأرجواني هو المفضل لديها، فهو لون غامض وهو رمز للنصر والغلبة والأمل وحسن الظن والجلال والسمو من وجهة نظرها .