

SYMBOLIC MEANING OF *BLACK* AND *WHITE* IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETRY

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***Abstract:** The article seeks to illuminate the symbolic meaning of black and white in contemporary English poetry. The paper suggests that, when used in a poem, black symbolises some negative feelings or states, while white – positive ones. Data analysis shows that, on the one hand, black and white oppose each other and represent contradictory forces, two extremes, which is the basic idea of Western dualism. Furthermore, the poets often juxtapose black and white with chromatic colours. On the other hand, they embody two complementary forces, the union of which helps to maintain the balance of life – Chinese dualism.*

***Keywords:** black and white, dualism, metaphor, symbolic meaning*

1. Introduction

A human eye perceives a great variety of colours. They surround us everywhere and we can't imagine our life without them. Colours have a profound, long-lasting effect on our emotional and psychological states; they easily evoke memories and associations as well as strong positive and negative feelings. It has long been acknowledged that colours mean different things in different cultures, which stems from their geographical position, historical development, social and political events, religious context. Consequently, “the uses and meanings of colour have never been totally consistent across cultural boundaries” (Harshani 2019). Even though the symbolism of colours across cultures around the world varies greatly, there are still some universal, generally accepted symbolic meanings of basic colours. My paper is focused on the symbolism of two primordial ones – black and white.

The choice of the object of my study is not random. Black and white are achromatic colours. According to MAU art & design Glossary (n.d.):

Depending on the presence or absence of saturation, colours can broadly be divided into chromatic and achromatic. An achromatic colour is a one that lacks hues such as white, grey and black, and a chromatic colour is a colour which has even the slightest amount of hue.

Moreover, most languages of the world have colour terms that refer to black and white. There is one more fact that has greatly influenced the choice of colours: it has been proved that the evolution of colour terms began with only two terms, black and white, all the others (there are 11 basic colour terms) developed gradually:

Stage I in the evolution of lexical color categories is represented by just two terms, (i) black plus most dark hues and (ii) white plus most light hues. For convenience, we will call these categories BLACK and WHITE. (Berlin and Kay:14)

This in turn means that:

In the lives of all human beings, light [white] and dark [black] are fundamental experiences, and there is no culture which has not built an edifice of symbolic meanings and value systems upon this fundamental experience – even though different cultures have done so in different ways. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002: 355-356)

The present paper aims to outline the universal symbolic meanings of black and white fixed in dictionaries of symbolism and research articles and distinguish the symbolic meanings that dominate in contemporary English poetry.

2. Universal symbolic meaning of *black* and *white*

In the current research, I use the words *symbolism* and *symbolic meaning* interchangeably and consider the latter to be a connotative secondary meaning that does not have any motivated connection with a primary denotative meaning (Alekseev 2016: 107).

Colour symbolism is one of the most universal of all types of symbolism, and has been consciously used in heraldry, art, and literature (Cirlot 1997: 52). In general, the symbolism and semantics of colours are based on the objective features of our intellect. In psychology, there is a theory of associations (associationism), which states that complex mental processes can be wholly or mainly explained by the associative links formed between ideas (APA n.d.). Primitive peoples related colours to the most important elements and substances that surrounded them, such as: fire, water, earth, milk, and blood. Thus, traditionally, green represents spring, awakening, and hope; blue – sky and purity; yellow – sun and life; red – fire and blood; black – darkness, fear, and death. This motivation is complemented by mythological, religious, and aesthetic views, historical, national, and regional features, the level of spiritual and cultural development of society (Pryshchenko n.d.).

White is a basic achromatic colour that fully reflects visible wavelengths of light. It is the colour of snow, bone, and milk. The symbolic potential of white is pointed out in a Dictionary of symbols (Protas n.d.):

White may be defined either as the absence of all colour or the presence of all colours of the light spectrum, and can represent either innocence or the ultimate goal of purification. White is often the heavenly, while BLACK is the underworld. It is LIGHT, AIR, life, holiness, love, redemption.

On the one hand, white is the colour of purity, divinity, eternity, and light, and is said to promote creative thoughts (a blank whiteboard) and is also synonymous with fresh beginnings. On the other hand, this sacred colour can symbolise death, disease, alienation, and suffering, due to the fact that in some countries it is worn during funerals and is strongly associated with ghosts and

phantoms, as the souls of dead people are traditionally depicted as transparent white (Lenina and Ivanov n.d.; Potapenko 2015: 66).

White is conventionally regarded as the opposite of black. According to the Dictionary of symbols (Protas n.d.),

Black represents a lack of colour, the primordial void, emptiness. It can also mean sorrow or mourning, in the Christian tradition of wearing black to funerals. In this respect it can also symbolise death. Black is also linked to witchcraft (Black Magic), evil, and the unknown, as the predominant colour worn by "evil witches" in colonial America. The stock market crash of 1929, dubbed "Black Tuesday" further links the colour with loss, depression, and despair.

Evidently, black is a universal symbol of death, mourning, and slavery. Nonetheless, a new symbolism of black has firmly established itself in the modern world, namely power, wealth, authority, and strength.

As can be seen, both black and white have positive as well as negative connotations, but they are traditionally viewed as complete opposites. Thus, Cirlot (1997: 56) points out that:

The conception of black and white as diametrically opposed symbols of the positive and the negative, either in simultaneous, in successive or alternating opposition, is very common. Black and white often represent the contrast between light and darkness, day and night, male and female, good and evil.

This understanding of black and white is reflected in the philosophy of Western dualism.

However, there is an alternative vision of these extremes that can be traced in Chinese dualism. In Taoism, two complementary natures of the universe, yin and yang, are drawn in black and white. The yin-yang is a symbol of opposites in balance – dark and light, passive and aggressive, female and male, cold and hot etc. The union of yin and yang illustrates an endless life circle. It shows that all is in harmony in nature, and nothing exists by itself. The end of one stage is the beginning of another (Mark 2016). This concept is emphasised by the fact that yin and yang include the dot of the opposite colour, in order “to symbolise that every mode must contain within it the germ of its antithesis” (Cirlot 1997: 380).

The concept of the dualistic nature of the world is inherent in many cultures. For example, in Ukrainian mythology there are two gods: Belobog and Chornobog that symbolise an eternal struggle of good with evil, life with death. They represent the very essence of the world and its laws, and exist as an indivisible unit, inseparable and contradictory opposites. Life is born and fuelled from the struggle and cooperation of these forces (Dovbnia 2015: 67).

Thus, there are two points of view on the correlation between black and white that I attempt to delve into: on the one hand, they are two extremes that oppose each other; on the other hand, they complement each other and, consequently, exist as one close-knit unit.

3. Data gathering and processing

The data for the analysis are derived from 33 poems retrieved from the Internet site Hello Poetry, “a community built around sharing... an uncluttered, peaceful space to read and share poetry” (Hello Poetry n.d.). The site promotes

poetry sharing, and each poem starts with the name or nickname of its author and the date it was posted. Initially, I planned to select a corpus of poems that had one main thing in common: either *white* or *black* as key word. When I started choosing the poems from the site, I noticed that a lot of them contained both key words, so I decided to focus on them and identify the symbolic meanings that the achromatic colours convey within each poem. I have selected poems that were written over the period of 2019 to 2020, grouped them according to the symbolic meaning of the two words, and carried out linguistic and stylistic analyses, to ensure that my interpretation was explicit and as grounded in facts as possible. In my research, I have tried to preserve the authentic graphical representation of the poems.

4. Western dualism: two opposite forces

As has been pointed out in the previous paragraphs, the symbolic potential of *black* and *white* is varied, and each meaning is realised in accordance with the poet's intention. In different cultures, and English is not an exception, from time immemorial *black* and *white* have existed as two opposites: negative-positive, dark-bright, hell-heaven, male-female etc., and this division forms the basis of Western dualism. Berce states that it started with Rene Descartes's body-mind dualism and was later transferred to all themes; "this polarisation is very strict and does not allow any big or small interconnection and/or interdependency." (Berce n.d.)

All the poems where *black* and *white* embody the principles of Western dualism can be divided into two groups:

- Two extremes – BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)
- [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS.

4.1. Two extremes – BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)

(1) Depression

I see black everywhere I look
 but I know people that see white
 and people who understand my black
 and I envy their white (Blackmay 2020)

This very short poem clearly renders the ideas that *black* and *white* embody. Thus metaphor "I see black everywhere I look", refers to the poet's state of mind and foregrounds his deep sadness, misery and an acute sense of melancholy. The pessimistic and hopeless mood influences the poet's perception of the world. Consequently, everything around him becomes black – depressing and irritating. In the poet's view, people who surround him are content with their lives, they look on the bright side of the situation and "see white". The closing line contains the metaphor "I envy their white" that underscores the poet's deep-seated desire to be happy, optimistic and fully enjoy his life. Thus, black symbolises misery and sadness, white, on the contrary, – positivity and happiness. The juxtaposition is highlighted by the division of the poem into two dimensions – I (my black) ::

PEOPLE (their white). Hence, a depressed artist distances himself from the fulfilled and contented people. It can also be assumed that the choice of verbs in the poem is not random. Almost all of them are state verbs (*see, know, understand, envy*), which emphasises the depth of the feelings, pointing out the poet's constant state of depression.

(2) Monochrome

Paint me white,
Let all the colors splash.
To mark their presence
and show the colossal
happiness of soul.

Paint me black,
Let all the color disappear.
To mark their absence
and hide the immense
pain of soul. (SimPrey 2020)

The poem consists of two dramatically opposing parts and is built on vivid contrasts. The first part is a mirror reflection of the second. Taken together, they present an astonishing artistic form of the poet's self-examination. If one part of the poem is layered over the other, the difference in one word in each line can be easily seen. These words (or, more precisely, their opposition) form the semantic core of the poem and are put together to bring forth the polarity between *black* and *white*. The poet makes perfect use of lexical antitheses by means of absolute antonyms: white::black; to splash::to disappear; presence::absence; to show::to hide; happiness::pain. Thus, white symbolises happiness, the splash of colours that is metaphorically used to denote enjoyable experience and abundant emotions. The first part of the poem sheds light on the poet's vision of happiness as something that people tend to share. When the author refers to the concept of *white*, he uses verbs of outward movement, which in turn creates some strong kinaesthetic associations. For example, when we hear the verb *to splash*, we imagine the drops of liquid going in different directions and, as a result, everything gets covered in them. The same kinaesthetic association is triggered by the verb *to show*, because we can show something only if it hasn't been seen or noticed before, if it has been hidden or kept away from prying eyes. The poet astutely conjures up the image of a fountain when he describes positive emotions and feelings, stating that they gush out briskly. *Black* stands in stark contrast to *white* and employs a different kinaesthetic potential, as it is expressed by means of verbs of inward movement. Thus, when something *disappears* or *hides*, it can't be found or seen, it vanishes from sight. Consequently, *black* symbolises sadness and pain, the absence of emotions, and a burning desire to run away. These negative feelings make us want to hide and disappear; they are so unbearable that we naturally try to suppress them. Unsurprisingly, the clash of *black* and *white* is created not only by lexical and syntactical stylistic devices, but also by graphical means. Hence, the space between two parts of the poem enhances the poetic effect of the dichotomy.

(3) white & black

your mind
 like canvas
 pure white
 till you get
 hurt
 and paint it
 deep black
 (Cassandra 2020)

The poem entitled “white & black” provides further insight into the opposition BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive), which is based on the antithesis that is reinforced by the simile “your mind like canvas pure white” and the metaphor “[you] paint it deep black”. Simile underscores the affinity between the human mind and a canvas, and the ground for the comparison is the colour “pure white”. It discloses the poet’s general perspective on the quality of thoughts and emotions, presupposing that initially they are impeccable and free from moral faults. In the poet’s perception, the human mind stays untouched until someone harms it (physically or emotionally). Once it is hurt, negative feelings take over and cloud our judgement, “paint it [the mind / canvas] deep black”. The qualifier “deep” presents the intensity of the negative emotions caused by the offence.

4.2. [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS

Apart from a traditional dualistic interpretation of *black* and *white* as two extremes, the analysis of English poetry reveals that a number of poems contain the opposition [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS. A brief explanation may be required here. The opposition BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive) illustrates the struggle between two timeless notions: good and evil. Yet, *black* and *white* as two extremes oppose other colours (usually bright, chromatic ones).

(4) Monochromatic

All your cards are black,
 And all your thoughts are white.
 All the colors you see,
 Are found in an old movie.
 This pallet of thought renders you blind.
 The world is made of many shades,
 Stop thinking in one hue.
 And think of the entire spectrum,
 That is screaming out at you. (MisfitOfSociety 2019)

The first line of the poem can be said to refer to the status of the addressee, as we know that a black card is an exclusive card that is given only to the privileged, wealthy clients. It can stand for a serious and conservative personality, who works a lot in order to make a living, and sometimes, in pursuit of money,

forgets about real life. The metaphor “your thoughts are white” suggests that the person is fair and honest; however, it can also imply that his / her mind is not preoccupied with deep thoughts. The neutral mood of the first two lines gradually changes. The poet addresses the reader, highlighting the lack of emotions and scarce pleasures of the life he leads “All the colors you see / Are found in an old movie”. This prolonged metaphor develops in the next lines: “This pallet of thought renders you blind / The world is made of many shades”. It is common knowledge that an ordinary palette contains a wide range of different colours that an artist mixes together to bring his ideas to life. By saying that the person’s thoughts are limited to two colours – *black* and *white* –, the poet emphasises the idea of an incomplete, run-of-the-mill life, as he is convinced that the addressee doesn’t live his life to the fullest, experiencing various emotions and feelings. The final lines, “Stop thinking in one hue / And think of the entire spectrum”, encapsulate the essence of the poem and contain an electrifying call to action. The poet motivates the reader to follow the powerful urge to transcend all the limitations and plunge into emotionally abundant life, as the world around is full of extraordinary, offbeat emotions.

(5) Black and white

Chain smoking in the car
 Life’s hard
 But I’m livin large
 Just tryna make a means
 I don’t know what all this means
 So all I can do is try to live my life
 In the best way, sometimes I know it ain’t right
 Bad habits and good times
 Just may be the death of me
 But all I’m lookin for is the light
 Because this world just doesn’t seem right

I know there has to be more
 Than simply black and white (Bluejay 2019)

This poem tells the story of the poet’s life, full of daily struggles to survive, earn a living, and lead an existence that makes very little sense. Danielle Bluejay tries to enjoy her life, but life on the edge of “Bad habits and good times” can only inflict pain and trouble – “Just may be the death of me”. The poet understands that life should be different and searches for “the light”. Light figures significantly in the poem as the symbol of “optimism, energy, and enlightenment” (Protas n.d.) and it stands for everything the poet strives for. The modal verb *has to* reveals the artist’s strong conviction that life consists of various moments and can’t be comprehended just in terms of good and bad, *black* and *white*; it has plenty of hues, as it is more complex and diverse: “I know there has to be more / Than simply black and white”. The line “Because this world just doesn’t seem right” contributes to the overall meaning of the poem, pointing out that life should be purposeful, well-balanced and full of various activities and events. It is indicative of the poet’s unshakable belief that we have to grab every opportunity our life offers us and enjoy what we are doing at a given moment. Yet, most importantly, the poet believes that despite the aridity of life, of drudgery and false pretences, this world

is wonderful and everybody should strive for more, and not allow adversities, our dark imaginings, and ignorant people get us down.

(6) Add

You can't
add
black and
white
and end up
with
gold.
(Yurkevich 2019)

It goes without saying that, if we mix *black* and *white*, we get grey. Evidently, the poet seeks to explain that if we see only the *white* (positive, good) and the *black* (negative, bad) side of a situation, we obviously can't expect to get gold, a chromatic colour that is symbolic of life in all its nuances. The poet chooses gold to intensify the opposite. It is a bright colour that is associated with "illumination, passion, wisdom and luxury" (Protas n.d.). Everything that gold embodies represents the diversity of life.

Poems (4), (5), and (6) lay bare an urgent psychological problem that a lot of people face in their daily life: this is called *Black and white thinking (dichotomous or polarised thinking)*, when the person thinks in absolutes. It is considered a cognitive distortion, because it keeps us from seeing the world as it often is: complex, nuanced, and full of all the shades in between (Stanborough 2020). This way of thinking can hold us back from experiencing some of the richness of our lives and relationships (Gattuso 2018). The poems reflect the poets' deeply held beliefs in the necessity of change that will bring about the liberation from the strict rules and dogmas of a modern society that generates the problem of dichotomous thinking.

5. Chinese dualism: two complementary forces

According to Chinese dualism, yin and yang (two contradictory opposites) complement each other. They are interdependent and inseparable. In turn, life is born in/out of their fight and cooperation.

(7) LIFE

Everybody say life is a series of moments
Be it good or bad
Your life is void without moments
So today let's talk about mine
It got both good and bad moments blended
When I look at the good ones I feel so delighted
When I look at the bad ones I feel so gratified
Because if the bad ones wouldn't have been there
This black shadow would have never been laminated
And white shadow would have never been born
So I am contented to have this life. (White Shadow 2019)

In the poem solemnly entitled “Life”, the poet maintains that life consists of sequences of different events, as she later adds, both bad and good. She creates an eye-catching metaphor “Your life is void without moments”, underscoring that life is empty, meaningless and pointless without them. The poet deliberately emphasises that each moment, good or bad, is precious. Bad and good things that happen to us leave a deep imprint on our memory and without them our existence gets bland and emotionless. Parallelism and anaphora in the lines “When I look at the good ones I feel so delighted / When I look at the bad ones I feel so gratified” create a certain rhythm and reinforce the affinity between these stages of life, showing their equal significance, since both moments evoke positive feelings (*delighted, gratified*). The final lines deepen our understanding of the balance between *black* and *white*. They conjure up the image of a circle: one is born out of the other, one is impossible without the other, a life circle that cannot be broken. These lines are illustrative of the major principle of modern life: only after we endure severe hardship, are we able to fully appreciate every moment of our life. The deep meaning of the closing lines intensifies the key idea of the poem and encourages the readers to perceive the world as a unified whole. The poet calls on us to be grateful for the little things in life that we sometimes take for granted and find something pleasant in the annoying and frustrating situations that we get into. If we take a cursory glance at the poem, we shall see that the poet seems eager to disclose that all the dire perils that people face in their daily life provide them with powerful impetus for further achievements and fulfilments, personal expansion and growth.

(8) Black and White

The only difference between
black and white
is that
The danger hiding within black is visible,
while the danger within white is not.
(Goswami 2020)

This poem is very contradictory, but still I included it in this group because, according to the Chinese yin-yang concept, yin contains a particle of yang and vice versa. There is nothing completely negative and totally positive in this world, everything is relative. In the poet’s vision, *black*, since the dawn of time, is associated with danger and darkness, so everybody intuitively expects *black* to pose a threat and is cautious of it. Undoubtedly, *white* symbolises truth and innocence and nobody foresees as a source of danger. Still, according to the yin-yang concept, there is a white dot in yin and a black one in yang, so everything contains an amount of its opposite. Consequently, there is nothing totally bad in this word and nothing completely good, it is a matter of perception. It must be noted that the lines “The danger hiding within black is visible, while the danger within white is not” contain an antithesis and pose something of a paradox. As mentioned earlier, *black* is the absence of colour, everything *black* is without light, so nothing can be seen on a black background, and a hidden danger is not an exception. It gets visible, so to speak, only because people associate *black* with negative things and stay alert when encounter them. On the contrary, *white* reflects all colours, and everything can be easily seen on a white background, but, as we

usually associate *white* with positive and harmless things, we tend to miss the danger. Paradoxically, the poet alters the traditional understanding of *black* and *white*: *white* acquires negative connotations, because it conceals the menace, while *black*, on the contrary, sparks off neutral or even positive associations, as it makes the threat visible and, thus warns us about it.

(9) Dualities

having the audacity
to accept the duality
of man, of time, of life
rather a causality
in itself
of things, of people, of emotions
you can finally let go
the loss of innocence
before you even know
not hopelessly muddled anymore
like the grey colour
in the middle of black and white
no more under the pressure
now off to where the air is fresher. (Shubhankar 2020)

The duality of the world is brought into the spotlight in this poem. The first lines “having the audacity/ to accept the duality” show the poet’s point of view on the issue. Being both good (white) and bad (black) is an “audacity”, as according to the standards of the modern world, we should be perfect. It can be assumed that the poet’s choice of form is not random, as he actually highlights that accepting the duality of everything is inevitable and parallelism contributes to the idea. Life is diverse in all its forms. The metaphor “the loss of innocence” refers to the idea of growing older and getting more experience of the world, even if it means facing some unknown, terrifying things, and overcoming our deepest fears. The poet uses simile and draws parallels between a person and grey colour - “not hopelessly muddled anymore like the grey colour”. Grey is a mixture of *black* and *white*, it is something that is neither the former nor the latter, so the poet genuinely believes that a person who doesn’t understand himself/herself is confused, disoriented and, evidentially, dejected. The closing line is an impassioned call to action, a friendly word of advice to accept who we are – complex thinking creatures, human beings whose contradictory uniqueness is our greatest value. If we embrace our binary nature, we will let go of all our worries and uncertainties. As soon as this happens, we will be free “now off to where the air is fresher” and other people’s expectations won’t weigh on us anymore. The poet is firmly convinced that we don’t have to conform to the existing social and ethical norms (i.e. be only white/good); on the contrary, he emphasises our need to achieve liberation from old dogmas and finally set ourselves free. Thus, the poem generates a new modern ideal of a person – one who has accepted his/her own duality and has come to terms with it.

(10) Piano Keys

Piano keys are like humans,
Both black and white
Alone as notes,

Just producing sounds
But together as chords,
They produce symphonies. (Shubhankar 2020)

The last poem, “Piano keys”, is based on a simile that the poet expands on, so there is no difficult interpretive work involved in understanding its hidden meaning, but still I feel obliged to highlight some points.

The simile “Piano keys are like humans / Both black and white” suggests that people are different. As individuals, they are unique, but not always capable of incredible achievements and discoveries. Hence, when people come together and unite to achieve a common goal, they work miracles. I can’t help but add that in music “the white keys represent the musical tones and the black keys represent the half step intervals between those musical tones. The coloured keys help pianists decipher between the natural pitches and semitone pitches” (Ross n.d.). Only the combination of *black* and *white* piano keys makes the creation of symphonies possible, as they perfectly complement each other. The same is true for people; we are unique and, due to this, all together, we are capable of extraordinary things.

6. Conclusion

It can be stated that *black* and *white* are basic colours that have corresponding colour terms in most languages, which can be explained by the fact that our ancestors imagined the world as a constant fight between good and evil. This contrast indicates the duality of the world and everything in it and is as perennial as life itself. The concept forms the basis of Western dualism, the philosophy of the binary nature of the world. My study demonstrates that, in contemporary English poetry, *black* symbolises some negative feelings and states, while *white* ☐ positive ones. Basically, when used together within one poem, they oppose each other. The opposition BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive) can be traced in the poems under consideration, where *black* symbolises depression, hopelessness, pain and an overwhelming desire to hide, while *white* symbolises happiness, positivity and a burning desire to share these emotions.

The most interesting finding, though, was the second opposition [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS. This consists of two constituents: the first dichotomy, BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive), establishes opposing relations with the chromatic colours (usually bright). The resulting opposition reveals an urgent problem that has engulfed the modern world, and the English-speaking countries in particular. It is the issue of polarised thinking, which is a kind of cognitive distortion and a great psychological problem. People who suffer from this disorder perceive the world in contrasts, they are either happy or depressed, and everything is either very good or extremely bad for them. These people can’t enjoy life in all its manifestations. Thus, in the opposition [BLACK (the positive)::WHITE (the negative)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS, *black* and *white* symbolise life in contrast, while other colours are associated with an extraordinary, joyful existence, with all its ups and downs. The poets use this juxtaposition to induce the readers to appreciate every moment of their life and not follow the principle “all or nothing”, because they strongly believe that the world and human life is much more complex than that.

My study also reveals that BLACK (the negative) and WHITE (the positive) can be presented as complementary forces. This principle lies in the heart of

Chinese dualism. The dualistic nature of *black* and *white* does not always render the idea of good against evil. Sometimes it embodies the general principle of existence, interdependence of everything in the world. The most common application of this correspondence in the poems concerns the binary nature of people and the life they lead. The poets allude to the uniqueness of every man and woman on Earth, emphasising that we have to accept our strengths and weaknesses, embrace the concept of our own duality and, by doing so, together, we can make this world a better place to live in.

To sum up, when used in one poem, *black* and *white* usually present their conventional symbolic meanings: *black* ☐ the negative, *white* ☐ the positive. Still the correlations of these meanings are very complex. They can be depicted as complete opposites, they both can oppose chromatic colours, and, most importantly, they may form one indivisible unit.

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