

# COLOUR, VICTORY AND DESTRUCTION: BLOOD IN THE BIBLICAL APOCALYPSE (THE BOOK OF REVELATION)\*

Lourdes García Ureña

*Universidad San Pablo—CEU Madrid, Spain*

Mónica Durán Mañas

*Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain*

**T**he colour red has been present in the history of humanity from its origins to the present day. Thirty thousand years before the birth of Christ, it already graced the artistic representations of the Altamira cave paintings, red dyes being obtained in Neolithic times from ochre-red earth, from the madder plant (a variety of grass with dye-producing roots) and later from minerals such as iron oxide and mercury sulphide.

The ease of its acquisition for the elaboration of pigments and dyes explains the frequent appearance of red in the artistic manifestations of antiquity, as can be observed in the Standard of Ur (Mesopotamia, 2550 BC) or the tomb of Amenemhat and his wife Hemet (Egypt, Middle Kingdom, Dynasty 12, 1976–1794 BC), as well as the literary works of the ancient world, such as the Bible, where it acquired a paradoxical symbolism: life/death, love/hate, prosperity/war, etc. Perhaps one of the reasons for this symbolism is the fact that blood, like fire, is an element of nature that is directly related to the colour red. Thus, for example, blood in the Old Testament is used to signify life, and this is stated expressly in Deut 12.23:

הדם הוא הנפש  
ולא־תאכל הנפש עִס־הבשר

blood is the life  
and you shall not eat the life with the flesh

From this the precept of not eating bloody meat, found in Lev 3.17, is derived. In other contexts, however, blood is synonymous with death, as in Gen 4.10:

ויאמר מה עשית  
קול דמי אחיך צעקים אלי מִן־הָאֲדָמָה  
He said: What have you done?  
The voice of your brother's blood  
cries to me from the ground

Blood takes a particular form when there is an indication that death has been caused by the spilling of blood (Gen 9.6). Finally, blood appears in the Old Testament as a symbol of purification, primarily in the context of cult worship, as in Lev 1.5:<sup>1</sup>

והקריבו בני אהרן הכהנים את־הדם  
...and the sons of Aaron, the  
priests, will offer blood...



Fig. 1. "Tomb of Amenemhat and his wife".  
The Art Institute of Chicago

Blood, αἷμα, appears 19 times in 17 different verses of the Book of Revelation, from the beginning of the work until practically the end (Rev 19.13). As Ugo Vanni has pointed out, after the Letter to the Hebrews, the Book of Revelation is the book of the New Testament in which the word 'blood' appears most frequently (865). Given the evocative power of its symbolism, it is logical, then, to wonder how this symbolism is used in the Book of Revelation and whether it bears some relation to the colour of the blood being described, as we will examine in the next section.

### Methodological Questions

Before turning to the Bible itself, and more specifically to the Book of Revelation, it will be useful to consider several important methodological questions: first, what exactly was intended by the use of colour in antiquity? From this question arises a series of important consequences for the lexicographical and semantic study of colour terms. Second, what are the essential characteristics of the Book of Revelation?

To respond to the first question, although until the end of the 4th c. or the beginning of the 3rd

c. BC we find no specific treatise on colour, both Plato and Aristotle showed an interest in the subject and proposed their own definitions. Plato defined colour as the element which is perceived first by the sense of sight (*Chrm.* 167c-d) and observed that it is something (φλόξ, 'a flame') directly related to the object that is coloured:

τέταρτον δὴ λοιπὸν ἔτι γένος ἡμῖν αἰσθητικόν, ὃ διελέσθαι δεῖ συχνὰ ἐν ἑαυτῷ ποικίλματα κεκτημένον, ἃ σύμπαντα μὲν χροᾶς ἐκαλέσαμεν, φλόγα τῶν σωμάτων ἐκάστων ἀπορρέουσιν (*Timaeus* 67c; cf. *Meno* 76d).

We have still remaining a fourth kind of sensation, which we must divide up seeing that it embraces numerous varieties, which, as a whole, we call 'colours'. This consists of a flame which issues from the several bodies...<sup>2</sup>

Aristotle emphasized the same two aspects, offering a concise, concrete definition of colour based on its visibility and the presence of a particular object:

τὸ γὰρ ὄρατὸν ἐστὶ χρώμα  
what is visible is colour (*De anima* 2,7.418a27)

This concept of colour, as visual perception by means of an object, is also found in the first treatise on colour in antiquity, *De Coloribus*,<sup>3</sup> erroneously attributed to Aristotle. In this work, the author argues that light is necessary for colour to be perceived (794a) and that the presence of the object is an element intimately related to colour. He goes on to enumerate the entities in which colour may appear:

γινόμενα ἐν φυτοῖς καὶ καρποῖς καὶ τριχώμασι καὶ πτερώμασι καὶ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις πᾶσιν. (792b)  
it is found in plants, fruits, hair, feathers and other similar objects.

It is especially significant that the author of *De Coloribus* perceives the relationship that exists

between colour and state, although he does not expressly mention the notion of state. He holds that there is a wide range of colours whose perception depends on the maturity of the object (794b) and that, therefore, colour changes in entities (plants, animals, persons) according to their development, degree of moistness, season of the year or the passage of time (794b-799b), using a variety of examples to illustrate this: wine, plants, flowers and fruits. Of the last of these, he notes that they are initially green in colour, but as they mature acquire diverse tonalities: white, black, grey, yellow... (795a). Finally, he observes a distinction between natural colours and pigment colours, as he examines the process of dyeing and its effect on objects (794a-b).<sup>4</sup>

Thus our research shows that in the Hellenistic world, colour was not an abstract notion, but a concrete one, as colour always appears on an entity. That is to say, 'the colour green' or 'the colour red' did not exist, but rather 'green grass', 'red blood', and so on. Colour was understood, according to Sandra Busatta, as 'what covers an object' (312). Moreover, natural colour is intrinsically related to the state of the coloured object, as it is its visible sign. Thus, in the Hellenistic world colour would be understood as the chromatic perception of a certain state, and so, for example, when in antiquity grass was described with the adjective *χλωρός*, 'green', the listener/reader in Biblical times did not only perceive colour, but also the lushness and freshness of a living plant. By the same token, when the adjective *ξανθός* was used, it was understood that the grass was dry, withered and about to die.

This concept of colour has enormous implications for the lexicographical study of colour terms in antiquity because colour terms, which always describe an entity (object, animal, person), are 'embodied' in that entity. For example, *νέκταρ ἐρυθρόν*, 'red nectar' (*Il.* 19.38); *ὕδωρ μέλαν Αἰσήπειο*, 'black (dark) water of Aesepus' (*Il.* 2.825); *ἵπποι λευκότεροι χιόνος*, 'horses whiter than snow' (*Il.* 10.437); *αὐτὸς πυρράκης*, 'he was ruddy' (1 Sam 17.42). Therefore, colour terms are always 'embodied colour terms' and it is through the entity they describe that we can arrive at their

meanings. Furthermore, colour terms that denote natural colours express not only colour, but state as well (life, death, health, sickness...), as colour is the visible sign of state.

These two aspects are particularly relevant when we study blood as it is used in the Book of Revelation. The substance itself has been defined as a "red-coloured organic fluid, essential for life and an integral part of animate beings" (Mateos and Peláez 172, s.v. αἷμα). As is clear from this definition, the tonality of blood is not accidental, not a mere association of ideas made by someone who hears the word 'blood', but rather an essential, determining element. Colour is denoted simply by mentioning the word. So much so that Hippocrates would use blood together with phlegm, bile and black bile to make his diagnoses, as each element had a particular colour: red, white, yellow and black, respectively (see Gage 29). Thus, through metonymy, blood was at times used to refer primarily to the colour red, a practice found in both Greek and Latin literature:

ἐγένετο ἡ ὁδὸς τοῦ δακτύλου ὡς αἷμα

the path of his finger became like blood. (*Asen.* 16.11)

*cum flos de sanguine concolor ortus*

when blooms a flower the colour of blood. (*Ov. Met.* 10. 734-36)

In any case, blood may present different hues according to its state, that is to say, according to its degree of oxygenation. It may have a vivid, intensely red hue (scarlet) if it has just been spilled and is still well oxygenated; if it loses oxygen, however, it acquires a darker or even brownish tonality, and a purplish or blackish hue when coagulated.<sup>5</sup> While in antiquity the scientific causes of these variations were unknown, being phenomena of experience, in Greek and Latin literature such tonalities are described with adjectives or verbs of colour. Thus, for example, to describe freshly spilled blood, in Latin we find the adjectives *purpureus* and *ruber*,

...*purpureo sanguine pulset humum*  
 ...fell to the ground with his scarlet blood (Ov.  
*Trist.* IV 2, 6)<sup>6</sup>

or

...*nam gelidos inficiet tibi rubro sanguine riuos*  
 ...then [its offspring] will dye the frozen rivers  
 with red blood (Hor. *Carm.* 3.13.7)

while in Greek, πορφύρεος and the verbs πορφύρω and φοινίσσω are used to describe the blood that gushes forth from a wound and causes death (Fountoulakis 114). In contrast to this, when referring to coagulated blood, Pliny employs the adjective *nigricans*, ‘blackish’:

...*in colore sanguinis concreti, nigricans,*  
 ...blackish, the colour of coagulated blood (Plin.  
*HN.* 9. 135)

Other authors, drawing upon the lexical richness of Latin, would use *niger* (*niger sanguis*, Cels. II 10, 17; *crur niger*, Sen. *Oed.* 189) or *ater* (*sanguis ater*, Lucil. 873; *crur ater*, Verg. *Aen.* XI 646).<sup>7</sup> The same tonality was conveyed by the Greek tragedians through the use of μέλας:

μέλαν αίμα  
 black blood (Eur. *Hec.* 536–37; Eur. *IA.* 1114)

Let us now turn to some characteristics of the Book of Revelation. The last book of the Bible was written in late 1st century BC and recounts the visions and auditions experienced by John regarding the end of the world. These visions, which take place over the course of the narrative, are infused with colour. Indeed, in the Book of Revelation colour is transformed into a language that is not merely ornamental, but essential, as it is directly related to one of the guidelines for the reading of the work that the author establishes at the outset, and this is that of faithfully transmitting ὅσα εἶδεν, ‘what he saw’ (Rev 1.1–2).<sup>8</sup> There is thus an explicit attempt to place before the ‘eyes’ of the listener events that

occurred in a real, believable world. The chromatic references it contains are therefore indispensable; without them there is no reality, and the created world that is in effect immersed in colour cannot otherwise be reproduced in a realistic way. Else it would appear to be a dream, and John’s revelation would lose its credibility.

Although John uses colour adjectives sparingly—employing only nine, his chromatic palette is notably enriched<sup>9</sup> by the use of nouns, that is, natural elements such as blood, precious stones, snow..., and verbs, like λευκαίνω, ‘to whiten’ (Rev 7.14), καυματίζω (2x), ‘to scorch’ (Rev 16.8, 9); and κάω (4x), ‘to burn’ (Rev 4.5; 8.8, 10; 19.20)—all of which denote colour within the chromatic contexts that are recreated by the eyewitness of the visions, i.e., John himself. These denotations, according to the contexts in which the terms appear, and the entities they describe, carry symbolic connotations that the narrator employs to transmit their theological message in a simple, accessible way to any type of reader. This suggests that the Book of Revelation may be considered a chromatic story.<sup>10</sup>

### Blood, Colour and Symbol in the Book of Revelation

Among the natural elements that denote colour in the Book of Revelation is αίμα, ‘blood’. On some occasions, αίμα invades nature (the moon, the sea, the rivers, etc.), causing great destruction; at other times it refers to human subjects.<sup>11</sup> In the latter case, blood, when it pertains to some specific person, has an even greater dramatic effect. As a result, the listener/reader cannot remain unmoved by what he is hearing.

From the very beginning of the work until the episode of the sign of the woman, references to the blood of the Lamb are constant: αίμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, ‘the blood of the Lamb’ (Rev 1.5; 5.9; 7.14, 12.11), appearing again almost at the end of the narrative (Rev 19.13). This chromatic melody then gives way to another that directly affects the listener/reader, i.e., the death of his own people, the believers: αίμα ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν, ‘the blood of the saints and

the prophets' (Rev 6.10; Ap 16.6; 17.6; 18.24; 19.2). Between these two melodies comes a chorus in which blood is used as an element of destruction, of both nature and humanity (Rev 6.12; 8.7,8; 11.6; 16.3, 4).

As we have already mentioned, blood has a variety of hues, depending on its state. The question, then, is whether blood denotes different tonalities in the Book of Revelation and, if it does, what symbolism each hue conveys. The author of the Book of Revelation, following the biblical tradition, does not describe the colour of blood except on one occasion (Rev 16.3). However, considering that colour in antiquity is intrinsically linked to an entity (object, person, event), when these entities and their contexts are analysed, we can postulate that both the modern and the 1<sup>st</sup>-century listener/reader will be able to perceive the different tonalities of blood and its states.

Blood appears in relation to three different entities:

1. The blood of the Lamb.
2. The blood of the saints and the prophets.
3. The blood of the cataclysms.

We will now analyse blood as it appears in each one of these entities, paying special attention to the context, which shows whether this blood is in the process of being spilled or if it has already been spilled.

### *The blood of the Lamb*

The expression αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου is found as such in the discursive sections of the book of Revelation, that is to say, in the dialogues between the characters and the songs of the chorus (5x: Rev 1.5b; 5.9; 7.14; 12.11; 19.13).<sup>12</sup> We have included Rev 1.5b because, although the personal pronoun αὐτός is used instead of 'the Lamb', the reference is obvious.

The blood of the Lamb is mentioned for the first time in the Book of Revelation after the prologue, in the opening liturgical dialogue between the reader/lector and the community, who recite a doxology before the narrative itself begins:

Rev 1.5b: Τῷ ἀγαπῶντι ἡμᾶς  
καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν  
ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ,  
To He who loved us  
and liberated us from our sins  
**by His blood** (my emphasis)

The appearance of blood in the oldest doxology dedicated to Christ in the history of Christianity (see Aune 46) is not accidental, as it reveals the profound theological significance of αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, not only at the heart of the Book of Revelation, but of Christianity in general: the love professed for us by Christ, now and today (ἀγαπῶντι—note the use of the present participle) is such that, by his blood (ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ) he liberated us (λύσαντι, the aorist participle)<sup>13</sup> from sin; that is to say, by his death we are redeemed.

In this case, blood might be interpreted simply as a metonymy for death (174, s.v. αἷμα), as occurs in Gen 4.10.<sup>14</sup> However, some verses later, in the doxology, Jesus is said to have been 'pierced' (αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, Rev 1.7). The verb ἐκκεντέω has a meaning similar to the verb νύσσω 'to traverse', which appears in the fourth Gospel when the soldiers confirm Jesus' death (John 19.34). The narrator goes on to say that ἐξῆλθεν εὐθὺς αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ, 'immediately, blood and water poured out', is thus recounting not only the death of Jesus, but the spilling of his blood, the visible sign of his death. In this sense, when the ecclesial community pronounces the words contained in Rev 1.5b, they are summoning forth an image of the blood that flowed from Jesus' side, blood that was fresh and therefore scarlet red in colour.

However, when the narrative of John's visions and auditions begins (Rev 1.9-22.5), the blood of the Lamb becomes no longer a past event, but blood which is spilled in the present, whether this is the present of the story/narrative, or the present of its liturgical reading,<sup>15</sup> as we will see next. After the theophany, the next of John's visions is that of the Lamb (Rev 5.6). He gives a concise and somewhat surprising description of this, adhering closely to the

technique used in the *καὶ εἶδον* descriptions (see my *Narrative and Drama* 69–83): first, after the formula of visual perception (“and I saw”), he indicates the place where the vision occurs (“in the midst of the throne...”), then identifies its subject (“a lamb”) and, finally, expands on this:<sup>16</sup>

Καὶ εἶδον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου...

ἄρνιον

ἑστηκός ὡς ἐσφαγμένον...

And I saw in the midst of the throne...

a lamb

standing, as if slaughtered...

Here, two characteristics essential to our study are mentioned:

- a. The Lamb is ἑστηκός, ‘standing’ (Rev 5.6); i.e., it is alive.
- b. The Lamb appears ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, ‘as if slaughtered’ (Rev 5.6).

The description—of a lamb which is alive, standing, but ‘as if slaughtered’—is so enigmatic that some exegetes have suggested a discontinuity in its symbolism. However, John is following the guidelines employed for the *καὶ εἶδον* descriptions, and therefore when he finds it difficult to reproduce his wondrous vision in words or is unable to perceive it with clarity, he chooses not to specify, as when he sees God in heaven (ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος, ‘someone seated on the throne’, Rev 4.2c), or uses a particle that allows an approximate description of what he sees (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου, ‘like a son of man’, Rev 1.13a).<sup>17</sup> Thus John does not affirm categorically that the Lamb is slaughtered, but rather that it is ὡς ἐσφαγμένον, ‘as if slaughtered’ (Rev 5.6). Later, the chorus of angels will affirm this without hesitation in their song of praise: ἄξιόν ἐστιν τὸ ἄρνιον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον, ‘worthy is the slaughtered Lamb’ (Rev 5.12), and the expression τὸ ἄρνιον τὸ ἐσφαγμένον will virtually become a formula for defining and expressing the figure of the Lamb (Rev 13.8), to the point that the Beast is described in similar terms (ὡς



**Fig. 2.** “The vision of the Lamb”, Rev 5.6. Beato San Salvador de Tábara [Morgan Library]. MS M.644, fol. 87r.

ἐσφαγμένην, Rev 13.3), as if it were a parody of the Lamb (Schüssler 83).

The Greek verb *σφάζω* has its own particular connotation when applied to animals. Its meaning is not simply ‘to kill’, but ‘to slaughter’, and even more specifically ‘to cut the throat (of an animal)’.<sup>18</sup> That is to say, in John’s vision, the Lamb is alive but at the same time its throat has been cut, with blood flowing from the open wound.

This image (Fig. 2), along with its sacrificial sense, perhaps also refers to the experience of the Apostles on finding Christ resurrected. When the Fourth Gospel recounts the apparitions of Jesus, in two of these it mentions that Christ revealed the open wounds in his side and feet (John 20.20, 27). These wounds were the signs of his identity. The image of the Lamb, standing with its throat cut open, would correspond to that of the Resurrected Christ, bearing the stigmata of the Passion.<sup>19</sup>



This blood is a vivid scarlet red, as it flows from fresh wounds, and not those that have healed. Indeed, Thomas will even insert a finger into the wound in Jesus' side (Fig. 3). The blood in this vision, then, refers not to a past event, but to one happening in the present of the stigmata of the Resurrected Christ. Its scarlet red colour reflects the present of the Resurrection, the present of the fruits of redemption. The liberation from sin is not something that happened at Golgotha, but is possible today, in the 'today' of the liturgy, much as centuries later Jan van Eyck would depict it in his polyptych *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*<sup>20</sup> (Fig. 4).

For this reason, when the liturgy is recited by the heavenly choir (Rev 5.9) or the voice from heaven (Rev 12.11) and the community listening to it hears the expression αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, 'the blood of the Lamb', they are actually contemplating the blood flowing from the Lamb's wound and can perceive its theological meaning.

We will now examine the words that the elder addresses to John to identify the multitude of the saved (Rev 7.14):

οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἐρχόμενοι ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης

καὶ ἔπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν

καὶ ἐλεύκαναν αὐτὰς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου.

These are they who come from the great tribulation,

those who have washed their robes

and have whitened them with the blood of the Lamb.

The response is both enigmatic and paradoxical, as it states that the robes have not only been washed, but purified, and besides this ἐλεύκαναν, 'have been whitened', with a mysterious detergent: ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου, 'with the blood of the Lamb'. John of Patmos, after using the Old Testament image of washing to refer to the act of purification (Num 31.24; Isa 1.16; Ps 51.4, 9), is once again employing the language of colour to transmit a profound theological message. On this



**Fig. 3.** [above]: "The incredulity of Saint Thomas". Caravaggio [Palacio de Sanssouci, Potsdam, Alemania, 1602]

**Fig. 4.** [below]: "The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb" [Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium, lower central panel, 1432]

occasion he chooses, together with the noun αἷμα, the verb λευκαίνω, ‘to whiten’, creating a powerful contrast between white and red and, what is more, between the brilliant white of λευκός and the scarlet red of the blood that flows from the Lamb. It should be noted that white, λευκός, is the emblematic colour of the Resurrected Christ in the Book of Revelation, and is described as such in John’s first vision (Rev 1.14). From this moment on, everything related to Christ will have white as an identifying feature (Rev 2.17; 3.4, 5, 18; 4.4; 6.2, 11; 7.9, 13; 14.14; 19.11, 14 [2x]; 20.11).<sup>21</sup> It is through this paradoxical chromatic interplay that John explains the idea that the death of Christ makes possible the resurrection of those who suffer tribulation, and that the scarlet red of the Lamb’s blood not only allows the multitude to be purified (ἐπλυναν τὰς στολάς αὐτῶν), but to wear the white robes of resurrection (λευκαίνω).<sup>22</sup> The language of colour with its plasticity and evocative power serves to reproduce a theological truth that also appears in the Pauline letters, i.e., the fact that resurrection is possible through the redemptive act of Jesus Christ:

1 Cor 6.14 ὁ δὲ θεὸς καὶ τὸν κύριον ἠγειρεν καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐξεγερεῖ διὰ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ.

And God, who resurrected our Lord, will also resurrect us by his power;

2 Cor 4.14 εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ ἐγειρας τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἡμᾶς σὺν Ἰησοῦ ἐγερεῖ καὶ παραστήσει σὺν ὑμῖν.

knowing that the One who resurrected the Lord Jesus will resurrect us also by Jesus and will place us at his side with you.

Let us finally turn to Rev 19.13. This pericope forms part of the vision of the rider who leads his army against the enemies of the Lamb (Rev 19.11–13). In the description, the chromatic binomial λευκός (Rev 19.11)<sup>23</sup> and αἷμα (Rev 19.13) appears again and, although, as in the doxology, there is no

explicit reference to the Lamb; the figure described is Jesus, who is even named: ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘the Word of God’.

Let us now look more closely at Rev 19.13:

καὶ περιβεβλημένος ἱμάτιον βεβαμμένον αἵματι, καὶ κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ.

And he is dressed in a robe soaked in blood, and his name is called the Word of God.

In contrast to earlier texts, here a large amount of blood appears on a garment, as the robe is said to be βεβαμμένον. The verb βάπτω is used frequently in the Septuagint (16x) and the New Testament (4x). The most common meaning in these cases is ‘to place someone or something into water or some other liquid, to immerse, to submerge’ (Mateos and Peláez del Rosal 1279–80), as in Exod 12.22; Lev 4.6, 17; 9.9; 11.32; 14.6, 16, 51; Num 19.18; Deut 33.24; Josh 3.15; Ruth 2.14; 1 Sam 14.27; Ps 67.24; Job 9.31; Luke 16.24; John 13.26 (2x). However, in 2 Kings 8.15, it has a slightly different use, as Hazeel takes a cloth, submerges it in water and then places it over the King’s face. That is to say, the narrator focuses not so much on the immersion of the fabric in water, but on the result of doing this, on the fact that the cloth (it is thought that this was a kind of mosquito net) becomes soaked, moistened so that its coolness will relieve the King’s discomfort (Hobbs; Nelson 102). In this case, βάπτω would mean ‘to submerge something in a liquid so that it becomes infused with it: to soak’,<sup>24</sup> a meaning that corresponds to the Hebrew verb לבב *tābal*<sup>25</sup> and, applied to blood, is the sense that it carries in both the Septuagint (2 Kings 8.15) and in Rev 19.13. If the robe is soaked, this blood must be fresh, newly spilled and scarlet red in colour. It belongs to the rider, although he has not yet gone into battle; his victory, then, is not over his enemies, but over his death on the cross.<sup>26</sup>

The presence of αἷμα, then, shows once again the liberation of sin through the death of Christ and his victory over evil. This last idea is expressed somewhat earlier, in Rev 12.11, by the verb νικάω, which adds to the deeper significance of the blood



of the Lamb in the Book of Revelation: the victory of man over sin:

...αὐτοὶ ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου  
...they overcame him (the Devil) by the blood of  
the Lamb

The αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, ‘blood of the Lamb’, thus becomes a simple expression with an enormous theological depth, again thanks to the language of colour. The scarlet blood of the Lamb makes humanity’s liberation from sin relevant in the present of the liturgy, in the ‘now’ of those wishing to approach the Resurrected Jesus.<sup>27</sup>

#### *The blood of the saints and the prophets*

The expression αἷμα ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν, ‘the blood of the saints and the prophets’ (Rev 16.6 [2x]) appears seven times in the Book of Revelation, along with its variants τὸ αἷμα ἡμῶν, ‘our blood’ (Rev 6.10), αἷμα τῶν ἁγίων καὶ... τῶν μαρτύρων, ‘the blood of the saints and the martyrs’ (Rev 17.6, 2x), αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων... καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ‘the blood of the prophets and the saints... and of all the slaughtered of the earth’ (Rev 18.24) and αἷμα τῶν δούλων, ‘the blood of the servants’ (Rev 19.2).

In all of these cases, except for Rev 17.6, αἷμα refers to the “blood of a human being, spilled through the violent act of another or others” (Mateos and Pelaez 175, s.v. αἷμα); in other words, it underscores the fact that a crime has been committed which involves the spilling of blood. Indeed, if we analyse each one of these pericopes, it is obvious that the death of the saints is something that happened in the past. In the first case, it is clear that it is the dead themselves who mention their death, calling to God for justice (Rev 6.10); after this, in Rev 16.6 and 18.20, it is the narrator who states that they have died; and the same is true of Rev 19.2, where it is said that the saints have been avenged. Thus, this blood is not the blood of a person in the throes of death, but of someone who has been dead for some time, not from natural causes but through violence at the hand of someone else, with blood spilled as a result. The colour of this blood, then, would be dark

red, as with the passage of time and the lack of oxygen it darkens. Its symbolism here is obvious: death, and a death caused by another; in the words of Vanni, “life taken violently by a hostile force” (*Apocalisse* 871).

We still have to analyse the description of the great Harlot, in which, surprisingly, blood is mentioned twice (Rev 17.6):

καὶ εἶδον τὴν γυναῖκα μεθύουσαν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων καὶ ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ.

And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.

The vision is both crude and terrifying; John observes a woman who is drunk with the blood of the saints, that is to say, delighting in their death (Fig. 5). The roots of this image are not only Biblical,<sup>28</sup> it can also be found in Roman literature (see Suetonius, *Tiber.* 59; Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 14.28; Josephus, *Bell.* 5.8.2.). Although at first sight one might suppose that the blood referred to is in the process of being spilled, a more detailed analysis shows the opposite to be true—it is a death that has already occurred. The reasons for this are the following: first, the woman is rejoicing over the death of the saints, not witnessing it as it happens; it is something that has already occurred. Second, John uses the image of wine to convey the colour of this blood. In the language of the Bible, the image of wine as blood and vice versa is frequent, with wine being described in Genesis as בדם ענבים, ‘blood of grapes’ (Gen 49.11; Deut 32.14). The colour of wine is explained in the verse that follows: חכלילי עיניו מין, ‘his eyes are darker than wine’ (Gen 49.12). This would mean that the wine is, according to Hartley and Noegel, חכליל *hahlil*, ‘dark red’ (Hartley 178–81; Noegel 10, note 27).<sup>29</sup> Note that the most popular tree in Biblical times was the grapevine, specifically, *Vitis vinifera*, whose grapes may be white or red (Borowski 97). In the latter case, these grapes would be dark red, violet-red or blackish red in colour (Pereira Pardo 373). Therefore, we can say that the wine/blood in Rev 17.6 has a dark red hue.



**Fig. 5.** "The woman drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus", Rev 17.6. Beato San Salvador de Tábara [Morgan Library]. MS M 644, fol. 194v.



**Fig. 6.** "The winepress was trodden outside the city and the blood flowed...", Rev 14.18. Beato San Salvador de Tábara [Morgan Library]. MS M 644, fol. 178v.

The image of blood as wine reappears in Rev 14.20, when the angel begins to harvest the grapes of the earth, now that, as explained earlier, they have ripened to maturity (Rev 14.18):

καὶ ἐπατήθη ἡ ληνὸς ἔξωθεν τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐξῆλθεν αἷμα ἐκ τῆς ληνοῦ ἄχρι τῶν χαλινῶν τῶν ἵππων ἀπὸ σταδίων χιλίων ἑξακοσίων.

And the winepress was trodden outside the city and the blood flowed from it until it came up to the horses' bridles, over an area of one thousand six hundred *stadia*.

In this agricultural context of the grape harvest, the narrator chooses αἷμα, 'blood', instead of 'wine', as might be expected. In this way, the dramatic effect of the image is heightened and further expanded by the hyperbole of quantity (Fig. 6). John's vision, as Vanni observed (521), seems to echo the prophecy of Isa 63.3–6, where the image of the winepress and the blood of the enemies is used to explain the judgment of God in the face of evil:

<sup>3</sup> I have trodden the winepress alone; of the people, none have accompanied me. I have trodden them with my wrath, have trampled them with my fury,

their juice has been sprinkled upon my garments and stained all of my raiment.

<sup>4</sup> For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.

<sup>5</sup> I looked, but there was no one there to help me, and I was frustrated that no one supported me. But my own arm saved me, and my wrath was my support.

<sup>6</sup> I trampled the people with my anger, made them drunk with my wrath, and spilled their blood upon the earth.

In the Book of Revelation, the grape harvest represents the final judgment, while the winepress is the place designated for those who have opposed the Lamb through their wicked acts (the ripened grapes) and the blood is their death. Although the pericope does not say explicitly whose blood it is in this case, the context makes it clear. By continuity, the blood that flows from the winepress is the colour of wine. Once again, this is a dark red blood, the sign of death and destruction. In contrast to the previous examples, it refers here to the death of those who do evil.

It can thus be observed that in the Book of Revelation αἷμα, ‘blood’, appears eight times in relation to human beings, whether these are saints, prophets, martyrs, or, in the contrary case, sinners. In all of these cases it is a dark red in colour and has a specific symbolic connotation: that of a violent death caused by a hostile force.

***Blood and natural elements (the moon, hail, fire, water and the grapevine)***

Lastly, αἷμα appears six times in the context of the cataclysms that take place during the opening of the seals, the sounding of the trumpets, the acts of the two witnesses and the various plagues (Rev 6.12; 8.7–8; 11.6; 16.3–4). These catastrophes occur as punishment for sin, with the presence of αἷμα helping to dramatize each cataclysm.<sup>30</sup> In all of these cases, αἷμα accompanies the other natural elements that denote colour, such as ἡ σελήνη, ‘the moon’,

during the opening of the sixth seal (Rev 6.12);<sup>31</sup> χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ, ‘hail and fire’, at the first trumpet blast (Rev 8.7); πῦρ and θάλασσα, ‘fire and sea’, at the second blast (Rev 8.8); ὕδωρ, ‘water’, during the testimonies of the two witnesses (Rev 11.6); θάλασσα, ‘sea’, during the pouring of the second bowl (Rev 16.3); and ποταμοὶ καὶ πηγή τῶν ὑδάτων, ‘rivers and fountains of water’, during the pouring of the third bowl (Rev 16.4). Its presence inevitably tinges with red the terrifying scene being described, as for example when the brilliance of the moon takes on the red colour of blood: ‘The sun turned as black as sackcloth and all of the moon became like blood’ (ὁ ἥλιος ἐγένετο μέλας ὡς σάκκος τρίχινος καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὅλη ἐγένετο ὡς αἷμα, Rev 6.12bc).

Thus, the transformation of usually counterposed elements, made visible by the colour they have acquired, serves here to highlight the cosmic disorder that is taking place (Fig. 7). An example of this is the presence of both fire and hail, which are quite different elements of nature. However, regardless of whether their origin is heat or cold, both are seen to be ‘mixed’ in αἷμα: ‘The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there was hail and fire mixed in blood’ (καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένετο χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ μεμιγμένα ἐν αἵματι, Rev 8.7). It makes for an intriguing image that we believe the translations do not capture in its full sense, as they interpret this as describing three elements—hail, fire and blood—when this is probably not the case. First of all, if fire were mixed with hail, we would expect the latter to melt and become water, at the same time that the fire would be extinguished. However, what the image proposes is in reality a fusion of elements, that is to say, that the hail absorbs the heat of the fire and is transformed into a liquid that acquires its colour and intensifies it, making it similar to blood, which is the real result of this mutual destruction. This is indicated by the neuter plural μεμιγμένα, which refers to χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ, and by the preposition ἐν, which points to the result of the fusion described. Therefore, although ἐν αἵματι has been interpreted as an additional element (in the sense of ‘with blood’), given the nature of these converging elements it is more plausible to see this as a metaphor in which a reddish liquid results from mixing hail with fire.



**Fig. 7.** “The sun turned as black as sackcloth and all of the moon became like blood”, Rev 6.12. Beato San Salvador de Tábara (Morgan Library). MS M 644, fol. 112r.

The author thus blends together two incompatible elements, the first indication of a transgression of the natural order that implies a final punishment, and accordingly tints this disruption dramatically with the colour of blood. The resulting liquid contains within it the qualities of the two elements from which it originated, and as such is an authentic aberration. In effect, it is not only its colour that represents the anomaly, but its temperature. Certainly, if we imagine this liquid to be produced by melting hail, we will immediately think of an element which is aqueous and cold. However, the fusion with fire gives it a paranormal burning quality, and this explains the final result: ‘a third part of the earth was scorched, a third part of the trees were scorched and a third part of the green grass was scorched’ (καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς γῆς κατεκάη, καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν δένδρων κατεκάη,

καὶ πᾶς χόρτος χλωρὸς κατεκάη, Rev 8.7). The scene of this catastrophe, then, is infused with red, as this colour is intensified in the case of fire, at the same time that it transforms the natural colour of the element that accompanies it in the case of hail.

Something similar occurs in the next verse, where three elements –mountain, fire and sea—converge and in their interaction are seen to be altered. In any case, the mountain is not really a mountain, but rather part of a simile that evokes the magnitude of the fire (ὡς ὄρος μέγα πυρὶ καιόμενον, Rev 8.8). This enables it to be identified with a single object, as the translators have usually rendered it: ‘an enormous hill of burning embers, like a mountain’. In fact, the presence of the dative πυρὶ, ‘with fire’, might lead one to think of an enormous mass of fire thrown in the direction of the sea (εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν). The result of this collision of counterposed elements –fire and the water of the sea—produces, as before, a fusion of diverse forces that takes visible form in the colour of the water: ‘and a third part of the sea was turned to blood’ (καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῆς θαλάσσης αἷμα, Rev 8.8). This transformation in turn connotes the death of all the beings that live in the sea, that is to say, the destruction of life in a third of the earth’s waters.

The same symbolism reappears in Rev 11, in which supernatural powers are attributed to the two witnesses who are commanded to prophesize for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, dressed in sackcloth (περιβεβλημένοι σάκκου, Rev 11.3), (Fig. 8). The blackness of their garments suggests their ability to alter the order of natural elements, while the comparison of the two witnesses with the two lampstands (αἱ δύο ἐλαῖαι καὶ αἱ δύο λυχνῖαι, Rev 11.4) adds another reference to fire-producing elements: ‘fire will come from his mouth’ (πῦρ ἐκπορεύεται ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτῶν, Rev 11.5). It is this caustic effect that explains the potential virtue of modifying the colour of the seas: ‘and they have power over the waters to change them to blood’ (ἐξουσίαν ἔχουσιν ἐπὶ τῶν ὑδάτων στρέφειν αὐτὰ εἰς αἷμα, Rev 11.6). Again, as in Rev 8.8, αἷμα evokes the destruction of the life of the sea, suggested by the allusion to the sending of plagues that immediately follows: ‘and



**Fig. 8.** “Dressed in sackcloth... fire will come from his mouth”, Rev 11.3–5. Beato San Salvador de Tábara [Morgan Library]. MS M 644, fol. 149r.



**Fig. 9.** “The sea became like the blood of a corpse”, Rev 16.3; The rivers and fountains were turned to blood, Rev 16.4. Beato San Salvador de Tábara [Morgan Library]. MS M 644, fol. 187r.

power to ravage the earth with all manner of plagues as many times as they want’ (καὶ πατάξει τὴν γῆν ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ ὅσάκις ἐὰν θελήσωσιν, Rev 11.6).

The idea that the reddened waters at the same time symbolize the death of aquatic life forms is reinforced when later the two elements of blood and death are again interrelated: ‘and the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, which became like the blood of a corpse, and all the living beings in the sea perished’ (καὶ ὁ δεῦτερος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἐγένετο αἷμα ὡς νεκροῦ, καὶ πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζωῆς ἀπέθανεν τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, Rev 16.3), (Fig. 9). Here, for the first time, the book of Revelation mentions the specific shade of the colour acquired by the sea: blood red, ‘like

that of a corpse’ (ὡς νεκροῦ), that is to say, of blood darkened by the depletion of oxygen, blood that is “putrefied” (Mounce 293) and purplish or blackish in colour. In this case, the change in the colour of the waters does not connote destruction, but causes it; and the sea in effect becomes devoid of life (πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζωῆς ἀπέθανεν τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ).

Consequently, although it is not expressly stated, the change in the colour of the waters carries with it the implicit idea of annihilation, as in Rev 18.4: ‘and the third angel poured out his bowl over the river and fountains and they were turned to blood’ (καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ εἰς τοὺς ποταμοὺς καὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων, καὶ ἐγένετο αἷμα, Rev 16.4).

Thus, in these pericopes where the white of the moon, the whitish transparency of hail and the blue of the earth's waters are transformed, causing a change of state in these elements, αἷμα denotes both colour and the destruction associated with it. From this, following the proposal of Mateos and Peláez, can be defined as 'a blood-like colour as a figure of punishment, misfortune or death' (179, s.v. αἷμα). Its hue, according to the book of Revelation, is ὡς νεκροῦ, 'like that of a corpse' (Rev 16.3), that is to say, of a dark red colour, almost a dark purple or black, as of blood which is coagulated and putrefied.

### Conclusion

The present study reveals the important role of blood in the Book of Revelation, not only for the frequency with which it is used, but for the symbolism it denotes. The repetition of αἷμα, 'blood', becomes a kind of chromatic melody that, from the beginning to the end of the narrative (Rev 19.13), tints John's visions with red and transmits a message.

As blood has more than a single hue in real life, the same is true in the Book of Revelation. Its chromatic variations are manifested in the different entities in which it appears: the Lamb, people (saints, prophets, the enemies of God), and the elements of nature. All of these and their contexts enable us to determine the state of this blood and, by extension, the hue it possesses in each case. Thus, the text becomes soaked in the vivid red blood that flows from the Lamb, the dark red blood of those who die a violent death and the dark purplish, nearly black, coagulated blood of the cataclysms.

### Notes

\* This article forms part of the research developed by the study group *The Language of Colour in the Bible* LECOBİ (PC06/0720) of the Universidad San Pablo – CEU. A first and short version in Spanish is in process of publication.

1. It should not be forgotten that God's covenant with the people of Israel was sealed with blood (Exod 24.3-8), see Potts 193. Other relevant passages are: Lev 1.5; 3.2, 8; 4.5-7, 34; 5.9, etc.

2. Walter R.M. Lamb's translation; see *Plato*, vol. 9 np.

Each hue thus becomes a means for transmitting to the listener/reader a specific theological message through the symbolism it acquires in the narrative:

- *Scarlet red* expresses the redeeming love of Christ that liberates us from sin and therefore constitutes his victory. This is the tonality that opens (Rev 1.5) and closes (Rev 19.13) the Book of Revelation, illustrating the definitive triumph of good over evil and the salvational effect for humanity of the death of the Lamb.
- *Dark red* refers to the death of saints and sinners; this tonality appears at the opening of the seals and again at the judgment of the Harlot, showing that death is an inseparable part of the human story.
- *Blackish red* symbolizes destruction, annihilation as a punishment for sin. Its presence in the Septenaries and the acts of the two witnesses show that punishment and desolation are temporary, transitory.

We can conclude, then, that the Book of Revelation, although it carries the same symbolism for blood that we find elsewhere in the Bible, examines this more deeply, recasting it with fresh nuances and giving it a unique stamp in continuity with the message of Jesus contained in the New Testament. In this way, colour and meaning become fused together, with blood referring to symbol and colour to theology. It can therefore be affirmed that the Book of Revelation is not only a chromatic story, but a chromatic revelation in which blood plays a vital role.

## Lourdes García Ureña and Mónica Durán Mañas

3. *De Coloribus* is the first treatise dedicated specifically to colour, dating from the late 4th century to early 3rd century BC. On its dating and authorship, see Ferrini, note 3.
4. Cf. García Ureña, *The Language of Colour in the Bible* (91).
5. See Longo, “[sc. il colore] del sangue coagulato e rappreso... tende al bruno cupo e al violetto, se non francamente al nero” (125).
6. On analyzing the expression *decolor* as applied to the death of Hercules in Cic. Tusc. 2.8.20 (*iam decolorem sanguinem omnem exorbuít*), Rachael Goldman comments: “In this process his blood is changed in color, from red to black and brown, suggesting his imminent death” (144).
7. See Segura (45–46).
8. Following the ideas of Umberto Eco in his *Lector in fabula*, I understand ‘reading guidelines’ to be the set of characteristics with which an author instils his work so that it is read in a specific manner. For a more detailed analysis of such reading guidelines for the Book of Revelation, see my *Narrative and Drama in the Book of Revelation* (2–65).
9. Eighty-two elements of nature appear on 208 occasions, see my “The Book of Revelation: a Chromatic Story” (399).
10. For a detailed study of this questions, see my “The Book of Revelation: a Chromatic Story.”
11. We include the Lamb here as it is the symbol of Christ in the Book of Revelation.
12. On the role of the chorus in the Book of Revelation, see my *Narrative and Drama* (135–38).
13. Important testimonies of the manuscript tradition preserve this variant (P<sup>18</sup>; the Sinaitic, Alexandrine and Ephraimi Rescriptus codices, etc.). However, the form *λούσαντι*, from *λούω*, ‘to wash’, is also found, see Biguzzi (65, note 17).
14. Vid. *supra*, p. 1.
15. The Book of Revelation has a markedly liturgical character. This is determined by the structure of the work itself, which contains two liturgical dialogues, one at the beginning and one at the end, which invite the participation of the listener/reader. This liturgy makes it possible to re-live the mystery in the here and now (see my *Narrative and Drama* 11–21; 29–32).
16. Expansion may be understood as the ensemble of elements that are used in a description. On the elements that comprise a description, see Hamon, “Qu’est-ce qu’une description?” (465–85) and *Introduction*.
17. This is something that the author of the Book of Revelation does when describing some of his visions, specifically the *καὶ εἶδον* visions (García Ureña, *Narrative and Drama* 74–77).
18. LSJ, s.v. *σφάζω*: This use had already appeared in Homer. However, in the LXX it also expresses the victim’s cultural immolation: *GELS*, s.v. *σφάζω*.
19. In a similar line, see Vanni 234–35.
20. The difference with respect to the book of Revelation can be seen in the fact that the blood is flowing from the Lamb’s side, rather than its throat.
21. In the NT, the adjective is always used to describe events that show the divinity of Jesus as the transfiguration and resurrection (see my “Colour Adjectives”).
22. In the same line, Vanni (*Apocalisse* 319).

23. According to what has been presented here, λευκός alludes to the divinity of the Resurrected Christ.
24. *DGENT* V, cols. 1280–81, s.v. βάπτω, emphasizes that the intention is for the object to be infused with another colour, for which reason I propose ‘to dye’ as a translation. This meaning is found in classical Greek (A. *Ch.* 1011; Hdt. 7.67), but not in the Septuagint (LEH y *GELS*, s.v. βάπτω), nor does the verb לבט of the Hebrew version include this meaning (BDB, *HALOT*).
25. See De Blois: ‘absorb some of the liquid and apply it elsewhere.’
26. In the same line, see Feuillet 113–32; Lupieri 303. However, in much of the existing exegesis this blood is thought to be that of the enemies, as the episode is considered to be an echo of Isa 63.1–33, see Vanni 882; Mounce 353–54; Aune, *Revelation 17–22* 1057; Decock 175 (note 46).
27. Decock affirms this in “The Symbol of Blood”: “...the violence and death which he suffered is transformed into a gift to God and an act of love for his followers” (167).
28. According to Robert H. Mounce, “in 1 Enoch 62:12 it is the sword of the Lord that is drunk with the blood of oppressors” (321). Also cf. Isa 34:5; 51:21. In the same line argue Aune (*Revelation 17–22*. 937) and Noegel (13–14). Noegel proposes that the drinking of blood as if it were wine is an echo of Isa 49.26 and Ezek 39.189.
29. Hartley proposes this chromatic denotation for the relationship of the Hebrew with the Akkadian term *ekēlu*.
30. Part of the drama here stems from John’s echoing of the plagues described in Exod 7.14–19 (Aune, *Revelation 6–16*. 615) and the punitive triad that appears in Ezek 38.22 (Belano 360).
31. See García Ureña, ‘Colour Adjectives’.

## Works Cited

- Aristotle. *I colori e i suoni*, ed. Maria Fernanda Ferrini. Bompiani, 2008.
- Aune, David E. *Revelation 1–5*. Zondervan, 1997. Accordance electronic ed.
- . *Revelation 6–16*. Word Books, 1998. Accordance electronic ed.
- . *Revelation 17–22*. Zondervan, 1998. Accordance electronic ed.
- Belano, Alessandro. *Apocalisse. Traduzione e analisi filologica*. Aracne editrice, 2013.
- Biguzzi, Giancarlo. *Apocalisse: nuova versione, introduzione e commento*. Paoline, 2005.
- Borowski, Oded, “Agriculture,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1. Ed. David N. Freedman. Yale UP, 1992. 97. Accordance electronic ed. Version 4.2.
- Busatta, Sandra. “The Perception of Color and The Meaning of Brilliance Among Archaic and Ancient Populations and Its Reflections on Language.” *Antrocom Online Journal of Anthropology* 10.2 (2014): 309–47.
- De Blois, Reinier. *Semantic Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew (SDBH)*. Web. Consulted on 5 Apr. 2021.



Lourdes García Ureña and Mónica Durán Mañas

- Decock, Paul B. "The symbol of blood in the Apocalypse of John." *Neotestamentica* 38.2 (2004): 157–82.
- Feuillet, André. "La Moisson et la Vendange de l'Apocalypse. La Signification Chrétienne de la Révélation Johannique." *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 94.2 (1972): 113–32.
- Fountoulakis, Andreas. "The Colours of Desire and Death: Colour Terms in Bion's *Epitaph on Adonis*." *Colour in the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Ed. Liza Cleland and Karen Stears. Archaeopress, 2004. 110–16.
- Gage, John. *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*. Thames & Hudson Ltd. 1993.
- García Ureña, Lourdes. "Colour Adjectives in the New Testament." *New Testament Studies* 61.2 (2015): 219–38.
- . *Narrative and Drama in the Book of Revelation. A Literary Approach*. Cambridge UP, 2019.
- . "The Book of Revelation: a Chromatic Story." *Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense LXIV. New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation, New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*. Ed. Adela Yarbro Collins. Peeters, 2017. 393–419.
- , ed. *The Language of Colour in the Bible. Embodied Colour Terms Related to Green*. De Gruyter, 2022.
- Goldman Rachael. *Color-Terms in Social and Cultural Context in Ancient Rome*. Gorgias Press, 2013.
- Hamon, Philippe. *Introduction à l'analyse du descriptive*. Hachette, 1981. 6.
- . "Qu'est-ce qu'une description?." *Poétique* 12 (1972): 465–85.
- Hartley, John E. *The Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Colour Lexemes*. Peeters, 2010.
- Hobbs, T. Raymond. *2 Kings*. Thomas Nelson, 1985. Accordance electronic ed.
- Longo, Oddone. "Porpora e sangue. Da Omero a Shakespeare." *La porpora realtà e immaginario di un colore simbolico. Atti del convegno di studio: Venezia, 24 e 25 ottobre 1996*. Ed. Oddone Longo. Istituto di scienze, lettere ed arti, 1998. 125–31.
- Lupieri, Edmondo. *L'Apocalisse di Giovanni*. 1999. Fondazione Lorenzo Valla & Arnoldo Mondadori, 2009.
- Mateos Juan, and Jesús Peláez, eds. *Diccionario griego-español del Nuevo Testamento. Análisis semántico de los vocablos DGENT*, vol. I. El Almendro, 2000.
- . *Diccionario griego-español del Nuevo Testamento. Análisis semántico de los vocablos DGENT*, vol. V. El Almendro, 2012.
- Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Eerdmans, 1997. Accordance electronic ed.
- Noegel, Scott B. "Scarlet and Harlots: Seeing Red in the Hebrew Bible." *HUC* 87.1 (2016): 1–47.
- Plato. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Vol. 9 Trans. Walter R.M. Lamb. Harvard UP; William Heinemann Ltd, 1925.
- Pereira Pardo, Lucía. *Evaluación de riesgos de la pintura mural de A Ribeira Sacra. Análisis de materiales y estudio ambiental*. Tesis doctoral. Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2015.
- Potts, Donald R. "Blood". *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Ed. David N. Freedman, Eerdmans, 2000. 193.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Revelation. Vision of a Just World*. Fortress Press, 1991.

Segura, Bartolomé. "El color de Virgilio." *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos* 26.2 (2006): 37-69.

Van Eyck, Jan. *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*. Saint Bavo Cathedral, Ghent (Belgium), lower central panel, 1432; web, consulted on 19 April, 2021.

Vanni, Ugo, *Apocalisse di Giovanni*, vol 2. Cittadella, 2018.

—. "Il sangue nel Apocalisse". *Sangue e Antropologia Biblica: Atti. Roma* 1980. Ed. Francesco Vattione. Pia Unione Preziosissimo Sangue, 1980. 865-84.