

DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v5i4.635

Semiotic Analysis of Place and Time in Poems of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab

Razi Boezar¹

Mohammad Shayegan Mehr*²

Fariborz Husseinjanzadeh³

Abstract

Place and time play an important role in Sayyab poetry that is closely related to literature and social life and this is regarded as an important element in Sayyab poetry. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the time and place in poems of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab as well as his semiology in creating the comprehensive artwork. Semiology creates communicational – psychological effect on listener and puts a photographic form in mind and through verb between the speaker and the listener. Sayyab used spatial cues of aesthetic particles in poem subjects for himself. Spatial semiotics has recently come to the attention of linguistics that Swiss scientist Ferdinand de Saussure used it for symptoms of knowledge in the process of communication and exchanging the information. This study analyzes poems of Sayyab by using descriptive-analytical method from this perspective. The spatial cues help us to locate beauty in Sayyab poetry and the treasures of intellectual knowledge that is hidden amidst his poems through the village, town and where he met with his beloved have been found out. In this study, we rely on the full poetry implementation of Badr Shakir Sayyab.

Keywords: Semiotics, Time and Place, Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, Town, Village, Jakor.

¹ Department of Arab Language and Literature, Kashmar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kashmar, Iran.

² Corresponding Author, Department of Arab Language and Literature, Kashmar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kashmar, Iran.

³ Department of Arab Language and Literature, Kashmar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kashmar, Iran.

Introduction

Badr Shakir al-Sayyab is considered as the original founders of modernism movement in contemporary Arab poetry, the most radical representative of modern poetry. His personal modern view and expressing strong semiology of time and place of woman presence, with his new symbolism had a great impact on today Arab poetry and the work of poets after himself.

In the element of place, the nostalgia and passion of poet to his hometown has a significant image. The village reminds the memory of morning and the city reminds the memory of night. However, time and place require a considerable research to explore the implications and developments as a tool that the poet can show his perspectives. It motivated us to study the symbols of time and place and the presence of woman in BAS poems to show their semiology and through the poems of this great poet and his relationship with women, childhood and revolution.

Therefore, in this study by interpreting the semiology of time and place and the presence of woman in Sayyab poems and relying on French approach particularly de Saussure that believed symbols have mental and emotional connection on listener. However, semiology has significant effect on approach and contemporary thoughts and ideas to fix many problems of nowadays human being. In addition to that semiology has opened new insight into analyzing the human problems, from different angles that include all human activities in every field.

The semiology of time and place with presence of women can be found in all poems of Sayyab but what is noteworthy is that Sayyab in using place and time in his poetry did not act the same but first just as a form and through expression his thoughts and feelings towards women and then by expanding the life and political affairs of his community and then developing his thoughts his poem elements has improved significantly.

Sayyab has made many efforts during his life and to reach love but it seems that he followed a mirage. He soon loses each beam of love that he reaches, his mistress chains in town and village or his treatment places are indicative of this fact.

In this paper, researchers are trying to use the poems of the poet and analyze the symbols of place and time, and the presence of women.

The semiology of time and place with the presence of women

Bu discussing and searching the anthology of pre-Islamic period so far we can realize that most of the meeting between poets and their beloved was the same type and the meetings were at the specific time and place that proves the true emotions and feelings and emphasis on these events (Abushaqra, 2005: 137). Time and space are two basic elements that depict existential and epistemological moments of the poet. Sayyab has made many efforts during his life and to reach love but it seems that he followed a mirage. He soon loses each beam of love that he reaches, his mistress chains in town and village or his treatment places like Beirut, London and Kuwait are indicative of this fact (Almovash, 2006: 360).

I do not used to forget the past

But before you whoever I proposed my love, did not like me

And was not kind to me

I loved seven people who have feelings for me sometimes

That takes me to China

Ships of their breasts perfume, in a sea of doubt and seriousness, I get drown in it

I collect oysters searching for a pearl

Then they leave me alone

The palm hair long (Sayyab, 2000: 336).

Sayyab's love is a Marxist love in true meaning of the word in which the hero suffers all kinds of hardships and calamities and never reaches the end (Labib, 2009: 31).

Sayyab, in an ode of "blind prostitute", refers to the victims of Arab society. Victims of oppression and beliefs and desires, and everything that is related with people's lives depend. And it seems that people are living in caves and tombs or wolves den. That is why Sayyab to highlight the ignorance and unawareness starts the ode with darkness and blindness and from the beginning by selecting the blind prostitute name, emphasized that this darkness does not only belong to the prostitutes and town, but it covered the whole Iraq (Abouhaghe, 1979: 213).

Night disappeared again, and the town covers that

The passengers are going to get broth, like a sad song

And blossom like Oleander flowers

Lanterns roads like Medusa's eyes, every heart is hardened with hatred and tricks

Apparently heralding the Babylonians with fire (Sayyab, 2000: 269).

In this way the dark night cover the town, so the embarrassed ones use the light of lanterns of the road that are shining like Oleander flowers and the prostitutes who are the victim tired and disappointed in their nests are waiting for "blind wolves". The poet, by portraying brothel mentioned the violated classes of society, who are not born just to suffer from pain (Abouhaghe, 1979: 215-6).

In another part of the ode he mentions:

*The policeman passes wretched and the wanderers are tires
Sleep like a caged bird, appeared in their eyes
They are smiling and presentations on their face
With a face apparently happy, are crying
With the eyes of others and laughter rustling
And if the bare breasts owners
Are pieces of dead soldier is decorated with flowers
And if they are stairs of lust, full of gaps
Until they are destroyed, fragments of such dogs* (Sayyab, 2000: 270).

Among these darkness and sadness that spot to his tent, in his point of view the whole city is a brothel, a bird seller passenger who is an example of the victims have passed through the ally and the blind prostitute hear his voice and by seeing him reminds all her memories as she was young happy and innocent teenager. His father was a farmer and was working in his farm and was hunting some birds to feed his hungry family. One day she went looking for her father and found him dead because he was accused of stealing wheat from a landlord. These memories are remembering to torture her more (Abouhaghe, 1979: 419).

*Oh memories, why did you came back to a blind dream?
Do not immune it, because torture in what hurt you when you are buried alive
Tell her how died and how he was in blood
She and the grapes of wheat and the sky
Farmers' eyes were full of tremble and fear
And whispering: he was seen while stealing and other talking
They were taking his body and shouting, Oh God, God
If he was not a sheikh, and fell on a body*

*While she was kissing his lips with love
And the tempting words of grains, streams and palms
And the whisper of bodies who are saying: she caught him when he was stealing in a farm
While the harvest reap the dead and wonder (Sayab, 2000: 247).*

The poet in his long poem, by using dramatic methods and reliance on reference to examples of the presence of women in brothel visualizes the victims of Iraqi society.

But by searching the poems of this great poet we found that how Sayyab his lyrical odes, has created a relationship between beloved and country in a way that love of one of them relates to another one. That is why we see how he begins his famous ode (Rain Song):

*Your eyes are forest of palm trees in the early morning
Or two long porches that the moon shines in their hands
Your eyes when they smile
Are like a vineyard full of leaves
And dancing lights in the eyes is like dancing the moon in pond
Like an oar has unleashed a wave on them
In the morning
And like stars shining in depth of your eyes
And floating in a vague fog of sadness
Like a sea that is touched by sunset (Sayyab, 2000: 253).*

They are the romantic stars that the poet begins his ode with them, so the eyes of his beloved that are likened to palm trees entered the Iraqi territory. While the night covered it with dark cloak and at dawn disappears gradually so the morning light comes into them. Or they were likened in two porches of Iraqi houses that the moon is far away from them and they are surrounded by darkness. In both cases of light and dark are combined together in an illustration of the nature and beloved eyes.

The poet continues the relationship between the eyes of his beloved and nature, and those eyes, that smile to the vineyards full of light dancing on the dance like leaves or months in water ponds, will resemble a row when the wave is thrown on them.

This talking about the magic of nature in the eyes and palm groves, and the porch of the house, and dance of moons in water ponds, and stars twinkle, all rooted in the depths of his

conscience and his feelings which reminds us of the romantic poets and their methods. Moreover, this type of poetry, romantic poetry is a reminder of another matter that the beloved of the poet is the poet is a real woman, or a symbol of their homeland and the beloved can be the poet homeland or the woman who he loved (Abouhaghe 1979: 404-405).

Dr. Ali Abbas Alavan expresses his ideas on this beautiful picture by saying that Sayyab presented this beautiful picture to us not as a part of nature but to cause a rational relationship but presented that while the truth behind this essential unity has been achieved on his own and imagination is involved in the study of the relationship between man and nature. Sayyab did not only mention the locational relationship between nature but also used the time (Alavan, Belata: 37). As Zakaria Ibrahim in his book (Moshkelatol Fan) states that this poem is a spatial structure, from which the theme of beauty and structure of the time appears as a secret human movement (Zakaria, Belata: 42). But the poet writes sonnets to talk the emotion of love to the woman who spoke his heart. Thus sonnet is talking about the emotion of love, the love that have busied people from old time and the poets imagine that as heaven and hell (Alhavafi, 1973; 126). And when the famous ode of Rain Song of Sayyab with his mythical warning language writing experimental poems did not enter that level (Almaghaleh, 2000: 80). As we can see, Sayyab in the ode of “Hanin Fi Roma” also established a relationship between home and his beloved, according to this story, Antar ibn Shadad, illustrated around an oven that remind him of his beloved and homeland (AliAbdolreza, 1978: 77):

I shall return and jump the stairs

To embrace you, my eternal love

Thou, the light of beach that guide the heart when it is lost

The story of Antar, when he is around the oven

I feel the smell of your amber in my body

That rings like a bell (Sayyab, 2000:105).

In an ode of “In an old market”, in fact Sayyab determined the time of his meeting with his beloved:

The only thing that I have from her, is a meeting we had last year

In the evening light she embraced me

Then her hands left me and she said quietly

And the darkness is dense and tragic lanterns are off, and the road, are you walking alone in darkness? You are going at night with no friends?

Then he answered while a wolf was howling in a long distance, I look for that and find that I will make two home in a mirage and there (Sayyab, 2000: 46).

In these stanzas we see that the peak of symbols and signs are at the time of the poet meeting with his beloved, and the poet appointed the time; one in the past “in a year before” and the second one “in the evening”. Perhaps renew this two time regarding the implications of the passing of time is the first time, was in the past that finished and the evening time which is the end of the day and beginning the darkness (Alghoran, 2009: 86).

However, the structure of "evening" is to show the end signifies that peaked when he says:

*I will go, leave me and I will find you there
Near the mirage
So she hugged me and quietly said: you are not going
What you want is me, so where do you go from the wolf's eyes
Shall we touch the distance path?
I shall shout and leave
Until the passion of mirage
Is in my thirsty heart, leave me so I can pass the distance path
So she will be waiting for me; no the eyes of the wolves
Are worse than candles to me
In a wedding night that you are waiting for that, not the darkness
And winds and the ghosts, are cruel than you or the people
I will go, so her hands left me
And the darkness overflows...
I am standing and my eyes are full of tears* (Sayyab, 2000: 47-8).

This sign of saying goodbye that combined the nature of the poet with the woman under the light of the road, illustrate the distance between them. This is created by applying the hands of the woman leaving him. There is the peak of the semiology to the last act between the woman and the poem. And it is shown by showing the maximum power of the darkness over the meeting place (Alghoran, 2009: 87).

This is while the oldest love experience of Sayyab belongs to Hile, a rural girl, her love has particular position among those who loved them (Naman, 2006; 32):

*I ask the pottery for water, but the pitch is empty
The water was splashed after the sweet drop
Drop by drop
Two hands com toward me from the pitch, a nice smell is released
Is she Hile or Vafighe or Ighbal?
Nothing remains for me but names (Sayyab, 2000: 340).*

There was a deep and rich experience in his mind, Abdoljabbar Basari mentioned about him that the roots of love spread, and the reasons are multiple meetings, and then the meetings, sometimes are held at the beach or in a road or in the village or in the palm trees, and they like to spend morning with each other without no sadness and unhappiness and in a wooden hut that hid them from the eyes of nosy people. And this rural love becomes stronger in his heart that you can see the palm trees, the sparrows' nests and the sound of water. This rural love revealed some rural signs for him and its roots were deeper and cause the beach, the path and palm trees witnessed of his love.

His heart was full of love, and flow among the organs of his body, and he gave his heart to his beloved. She was walking with him on the beach, under the shadow of palm trees, and among the nature that its signs were in the poem, but one day that he was waiting for her, he was informed that she married someone else because of the traditions of her tribe and this shock saddened the Sayyab and his poem changed into an elegy (Albasari, 1966: 98-9).

It was the evening that we memorized the memories, yesterday it was my life and now it is gone. Is love disappeared? Are the songs being dead on lips? Are we leaving while the palm trees are still green and the shepherds still are there?

It was story for those who sit around the fire; it is so sad to love each other and loose each other.

This sad ending love had a great impact on him, he used so many natural elements such as river, tree, oyster, the green nature, and all his following love has a sign of his first experience (Naaman, 2006: 34).

*That village, can you see the palm trees and hear its songs?
And that boy who became a poet when he was young and the girl taught him passion
She is the art from the body; she is a love from the sources of sorrow
Who saw her in the herd while she was singing like a pipe
That attracted the lovers (Sayyab, 2000: 41).*

Beside the memories and a river that her commuting was on its bank

Nothing was left for him

A river that was loved and was a witness of the best moments of his love

A river that they both stand on its bank watched the waves that were their witness (Naaman, 2006: 35).

Thou stream, came back to you

A young man who is losing his passion

A wondered that looks at your bank with regrets

And passion almost killed him

How his steps became familiar with you at the time of their meetings

Do you remind him of her?

Or you forgot him

His girl forgot him

And you too

While he dedicates his life to you both (Sayyab, 2000: 39).

Badr Shakir al-Sayyab was looking for a pearl in oysters that illuminates his path of life for thirty years until his hands got bloody and reached nothing but mud, and a smile of hope that has changed into tear, finally he reached the beach of kindness in his wife, and realized that the love he was looking for was nothing but sympathy (Naaman, 2006: 45).

Oh my spouse, was my destiny sickness?

That made me sits, if I am a dead body without that?

And I offer my love to everyone before you, but they did not like me

And you? Maybe it is sympathy

I do not forgive

That it was sympathy that satisfied me, not love

Cup of Paradise

Oh love, show it to me (Sayyab, 2000: 367).

However, women in his life, developed with his growth, his relationship with women in Jakor was like a dream, that changed in the town and got close to them. If his relationship in the village was through shepherding, in the city it was through poem, then policy that was not lead to love, so he had to look for love in brothel (Almovash, 2006: 363).

Conclusion

The time and place symbols were paid attention by different poets, but place in Sayyab poems has emotional and idealistic presence. He could change Jakor into poetic utopia, the village that he spent his beautiful childhood and was the sign of peace and comfort. It has the cognitive spirit to stand against the materials of the city.

But the time that last from morning till evening, hid the certain beauty and light, this extension is a manifestation of the trappings of worldly pleasures and heavenly hardness. And as the night, the morning has an active and dynamic presence. Morning in the contemporary poetry is a symbol of modification and change.

By investigating the sonnets of the poet, reminds us of romantic poets and their styles, the beloved of the poet is the poet is a real woman, or a symbol of their homeland and the beloved can be the poet homeland or the woman who he loved.

Therefore, the poet in his poems not only applies spatial structure, from which the theme of beauty and structure of the time appears as a secret human movement. And by investigating his poems we see that the peak of symbols and signs are at the time of the poet meeting with his beloved.

References

Abouhaghe, Ahmad (1979). *Engagement in Arab Poetry*. Beirut: Darallm Limlayn.

Aboushaghra, Moheyoldin (2005). *Semiology Study Arabic Literature*. Aldaralbyza, Maghrebi: Arabic Cultural Center.

Alhofi Muhammad Ahmad (1973). *Sonnets in the Ignorant Era*. Egypt: the Center of the Movement.

Zakaria, Ibrahim (2007). *Problem of art, printing facility in Egypt*. Cairo: Balata.

Sayyab, Shakir Badr (2000). *Dar Horrieh*. Baqdad:

Alavan, Abbas Ali. *The Development of Contemporary Arabic Poetry in Iraq*: Cultural Centre, Baghdad. Balata

Ali, Abdolreza (1978). "The Myth of the Poet Badr Shakir Sayyab", Iraq: the Ministry of Culture and Art.

Alghoran, Aref Fayez (2009). "Sayyab Case of Metaphor in Poetry". Urdon: Kitab al-Hadith Scholar.

Almagheh, Abdolaziz (2000). *Review Trilogy*. Beirut: Institute of Academic Research.

Labib, Taher (2009). *Semiology of Sonnets*. Beirut: Unity Arabic Research Center.

Naaman, Rashid Khalaf (2006). "Sorrow in the Poetry of Badr Shakir Sayyab". Beirut: Institute of the Academy Arabic.