

Semantic Evolution of the word “Door” in the Poems of Badr Shakir al-Sayyab

Mohammad Javad Pourabed¹

**Assistant Professor in Arabic Language and Literature, Persian Gulf University,
Bushehr, Iran**

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The term “door” means a passageway which allows someone to pass through and enter a place or hinders a person from entering a place. Closing of a “door” or its opening denotes a set of feelings, emotions and reactions to reality. As a word, “door” is one of the shared themes among contemporary poets, particularly realist ones. They have expanded the semantic field of this word, utilizing it in many various senses which are rooted in traditions and subconscious of Arab people. A large number of these senses are literal, with others being figurative and cryptic; for life has varied conditions and situations, some of which are completely tangible and real while others are implicit. Among the real and original functions of this term the following can be mentioned: It is a passage for passing through, protection and safety and a means for freedom or punishment.

contemporary poets, such as the Iraqi poet al-Sayyab, adhere to this point of view; al-Sayyab, who similar to his contemporaries lived a sorrowful, penurious, calamitous life and lived in a country which was brimming with misfortune and misery all over, has frequently used this word in various meanings, expanding its senses and using them to denote such concepts as hope, failure, anticipation, remorse, confusion, break down and etc.

This word has been used more than one hundred and fifty times in al-Sayyab's poems and is considered among the terms which he has used with high frequency. Such a high frequency of usage is a testament to its semantic evolution and its horizons of meaning, making it a versatile term capable of adhering to those horizons of meaning; drawing on the traditional backing of this word, he has utilized it in mystic and figurative senses, making it a means for transferring his emotions and experiences. However, the evolution of the word “door” in the poems of al-Sayyab are as follows: Fear and security, limitation and freedom, hope and despair, destruction and prosperity, protection and impediment, seclusion and communication

¹ Corresponding author: javad406@gmail.com

2. Theoretical Framework

Considering the literal and figurative senses of the word “door” in the Arabic heritage, the present study aims to follow the semantic evolution of this word in al-Sayyab's poems. This frequently used word in al-Sayyab's poetry is intertwined with the other words in context and the poet has deemed it appropriate for expressing emotions; therefore, drawing on the Arabic heritage, he has made his context serve the semantic evolution of this word, and has expanded its semantic field, just like other frequently used words. Another point in this regard is that al-Sayyab's views this word in a paradoxical way and the contrasting senses in which the poet has used this term in his poetry is a testament to his tumultuous, eventful life.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology used in this study is a descriptive-analytical one. First, the odes in which the word “door” has been used are extracted from the poet's oeuvre and afterward, through presentation of some examples, the semantic evolution of this word in the poems of al-Sayyab is discussed. Another point which has been considered in the analysis is the Context along with the style of the poems.

4. Conclusion

The poet has used the word “door” one hundred and fifty times. This high frequency of usage reveals that this word is not just a word, but a constellation of feelings, emotions, and reactions manifested in it and signify the paradoxical views of the poets pertaining the real world and his surroundings which are at times positive and at others negative: fear and security, freedom and captivity, hope and despair, prosperity and destruction, protection and impediment, seclusion and communication.

Following the evaluation of the word “door” and its semantic evolution in al-Sayyab's poetry it was found that:

1. The poet, owing to his sorrowful, destitute, miserable, calamitous, tumultuous life has used this word in a wide range, with various meanings. The context in which this word has been used has clothed this word in a figurative, cryptic sense, giving it varied connotations and expanding its semantic field, placing it in various domains, with some having a negative and others having a positive connotation.
2. Al-Sayyab's positive viewpoint concerning the word “door” hinges upon and is manifest in the following concepts: standing and anticipation, protection and safety, putting an end to deprivation, and finally prosperity and refuge.
3. Contrary to this positive view, al-Sayyab considers “door” in a negative way: The closure of the “door” in his opinion is synonymous with inability,

deprivation, failure, impediment, despair, fear, together with lack of affection and freedom. Al-Sayyab, through this negative point of view, delivers images of an unsuccessful, failed life to his audience; a life from which freshness and rejuvenation is all but gone, in the poet's point of view.

Keywords: al-Sayyab, poem, “door”, semantic evolution, positive meanings, negative meanings .

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