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Colors In Al-Sayyab's Selected Poems : A Semiotic Analysis

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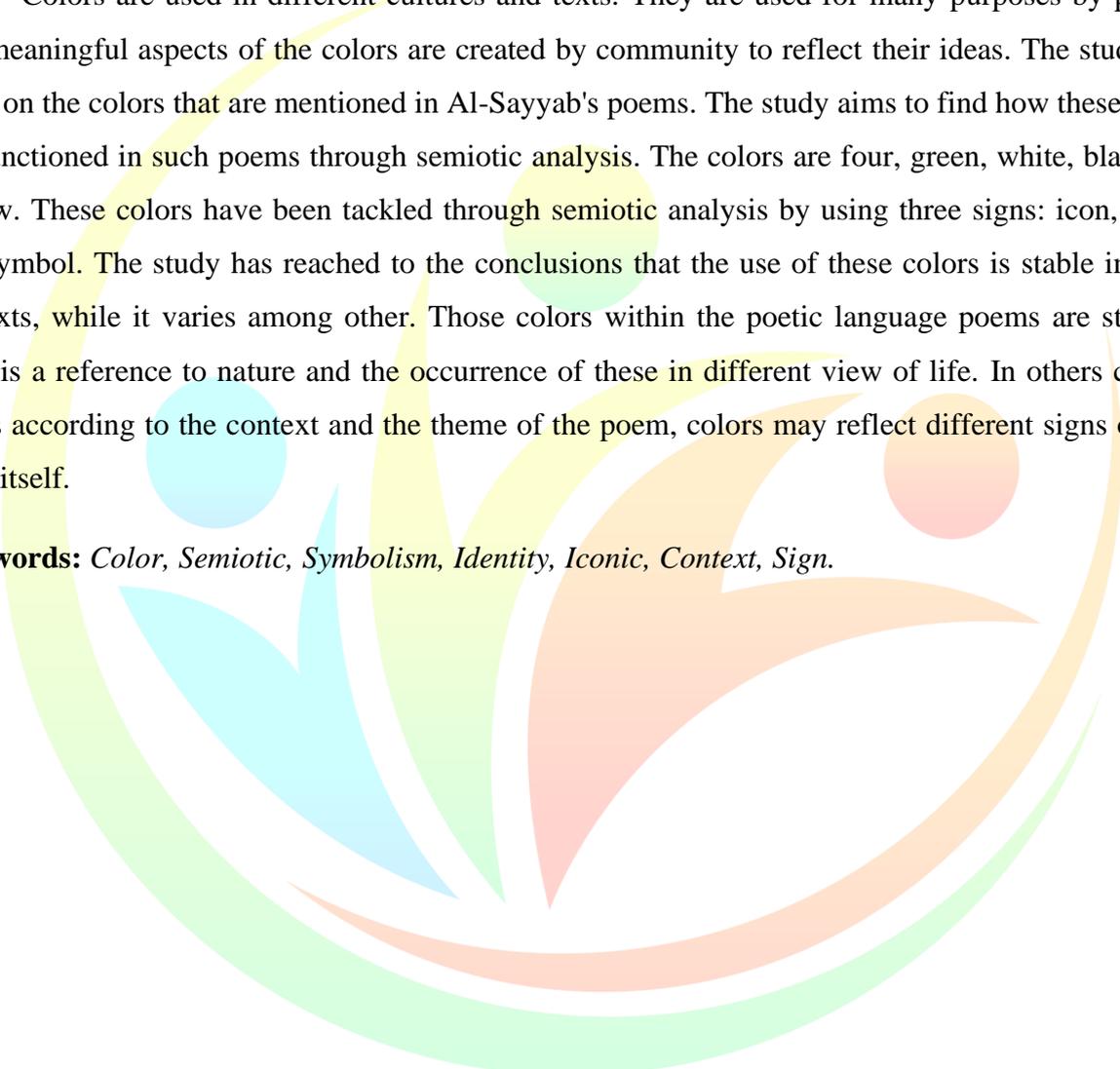


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ABSTRACT

Colors are used in different cultures and texts. They are used for many purposes by people. The meaningful aspects of the colors are created by community to reflect their ideas. The study will focus on the colors that are mentioned in Al-Sayyab's poems. The study aims to find how these colors are functioned in such poems through semiotic analysis. The colors are four, green, white, black and yellow. These colors have been tackled through semiotic analysis by using three signs: icon, index, and symbol. The study has reached to the conclusions that the use of these colors is stable in some contexts, while it varies among other. Those colors within the poetic language poems are stable if there is a reference to nature and the occurrence of these in different view of life. In others context varies according to the context and the theme of the poem, colors may reflect different signs out the color itself.

Keywords: *Color, Semiotic, Symbolism, Identity, Iconic, Context, Sign.*

The logo for the International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH) is a large, stylized graphic. It features a central figure that resembles a person or a flame, composed of several overlapping, curved shapes in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The figure is set against a background of a large, light green circle. Below the graphic, the acronym 'IJRSSH' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

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INTRODUCTION

Every culture has different functions or representations for colors. Therefore, the relation between semiotics and color is vehemently clear. Color is a kind of physical or visible stimulus, in semiotic sense, it works as a sign. The sign refers to something else in the life and this is very important and clear for people (Caivano, 1998: 390-401). Furthermore, Color can be defined as a sign that includes two things in every culture (Eco, 1985: 157-75). Kress and Leeuwen (2002: 343–368.) mention also that color is described as metafictional in terms of Halliday with ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. In some situations, colors convey these three metafictional together, but sometimes this color doesn't full these functions.

Leeuwen (2011:1-2) sustains that color represents as semiotic resource ways through its materialities and technologies. Looking at the semiotic analysis of the colors as in technologies doesn't mean that color meanings are neglected, rather the focus will be on the developments of the meaning that colors create. We can find semiotic analysis of colors in advertisements of products. In studying the meaning of colors in advertisements at three levels of semiotic theory are being applied: iconic, indexical and then finally symbolic. More importantly, the meaning of colors is recognized through the context of individual product category (Caivano, 1998: 390-401).

SEMIOTICS

The beginning of the semiotics was in twentieth century by the Swiss Ferdinand de Saussure. He is the first one who applied the scientific theory of the language. He related the application of this science to the social psychology. Saussure established the term that is called semiology by defining it as a kind of link between linguistics and psychology (Martin and Ringham, 2000: 2).

Crystal (2003: 412-13) maintains that semiotics is the scientific study of features that are related to the signaling system whether it is natural or artificial. In the past, semiotics refers to the study in the umbrella of philosophy of sign and the system of symbols in general. this approach has linguistic, psychological, philosophical and sociological properties of communicative systems which are studies together. The philosophers, Charles pierce, Charles Morris and later Rudoff Carnap state that semiotics is divided into three areas, semantics the study of relations between linguistic expressions and the objects in the world which they refer to or describe the second one is syntax and pragmatics.

De Saussure is known the one who divided the phenomena of language into two concepts, langue that represents the abstract aspect of language and parole which represents the application of langue including individual utterances and speech. Saussure explained deeply the language. Better put, he used the

structure principles to the individual signs or words. Accordingly, the linguistic sign is characterized in the way of relation between two parts, the sound-image or the concrete face of the word, he names that as signifiant (signifier) and its 'concept' or signifié (signified) (Martin and Ringham, 2000: 3)

Beyond the most basic definition as 'the study of signs', there is considerable variation among leading semioticians as to what semiotics involves. One of the broadest definitions is that of Umberto Eco, who states that 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign' (Eco 1976, 7). For Roman Jakobson, semiotics 'deals with those general principles which underlie the structure of all signs whatever and with the character of their utilization within messages, as well as with the specifics of the various sign systems and of the diverse messages using those different kinds of signs' (Jakobson 1968, 697-708).

Historically, the term semiotics is rooted in Greek, the word *semeton* which refers to sign. In the seventeenth century, the philosopher John Locke referred to *semetotia*. He defines semiotics as 'the Doctrine of Signs', that is to consider the Nature of Signs, the Mind makes use of for the understanding of Things, or conveying its knowledge to others'.¹ In modern usage the concept semiotics refers to a theory of signification (Martin and Ringham, 2000: 1).

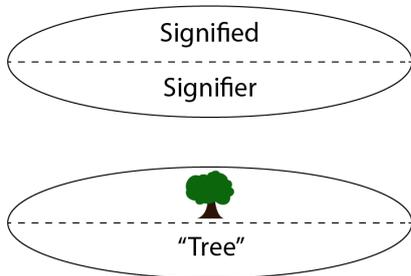
Semiotics in old texts hold different concepts that are related to the signs and letters and sometimes it is added to chemistry. It is usually related to the implements of medicine and magic (Ibin Malik, 2002: 41)

THE SEMIOTIC MODELS OF ANALYSIS

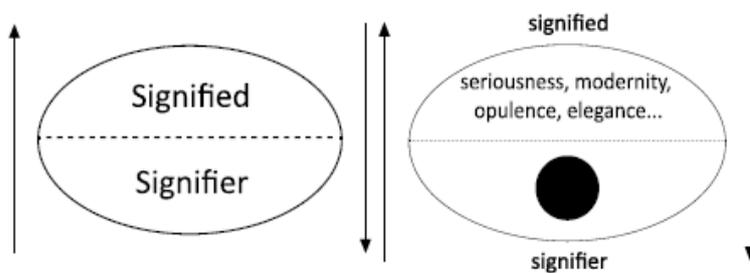
Colors are signs in fact in which they refer to something according to different cultures. Colors, in poetry are like in other concepts, hold many messages. Therefore, semiotics is the study of signs, and two primary traditions in contemporary semiotics are associated with the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914). Saussurian model, the *sign* is the whole that results from the association of the signifier with the signified (Jakobson 1963b, 1984b, 67). The relationship between the signifier and the signified is referred to as 'signification', and this is represented in the Saussurean diagram by the arrows. The horizontal broken line marking the two elements of the sign is referred to as 'the bar'. If we take a linguistic example, the word 'open' (when it is invested with meaning by someone who encounters it on a shop doorway) is a *sign* consisting of:

- a *signifier*: the word 'open';
- a *signified concept*: that the shop is open for business.

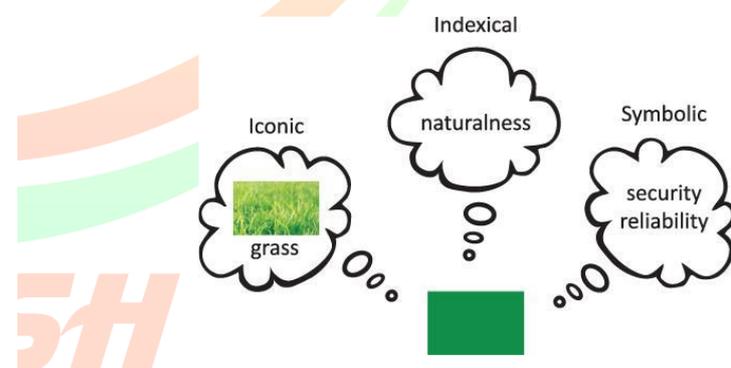
A sign must have both a signifier and a signified. You cannot have a totally meaningless signifier or a completely formless signified (ibid., 101).



Singh N and Srivastava SK (2011 :199-209) say that to apply a Saussurian model to the way of colours as visual sign, taking a particular color like black is as signifier, and the meaning of color is signified such as seriousness or modernity for the black. As a result, the color meaning includes the connotations that are related to certain colors as it is shown in this figure:



Peirce offers other side of the semiotic analysis by referring to three classifications of sign to elaborate what a sign means. These elements are icon, index and symbol. An iconic sign is related to the parallels between a sign and an object. An indexical sign is linked with a signal, clue, or a symptom that shows a physical connection between a sign and an object. Symbolic sign states the arbitrariness and conventionality between a sign and an object (Chandler,2002: 36-37). Hence, the example that will explain this is a green color in which it is related to nature so it can be an index of naturalness, it can be icon in the way that represents the green grass as a real substance, and finally it can be symbolic representation when it refers to arbitrary meanings, such as security or reliability, which have no relations physically with the colour but instead are articulated socially or culturally (Mohebbi, 2014:92:102)



THE COLOR ASSOCIATIONS FOR THE COLOR GREEN

THE SYMBOLISM OF COLORS

Colors play a significant role of attracting people's attention such as green and blue color that refer to the stability and truth in Europe (Lightfoot and Gerstman, 1998: 46-55). Colour can also be described by two very different methods or points of view, objectively by refers to the laws of chemistry, physics and physiology and subjectively, by referring to the concepts found in psychology (Feisner, 3, 2006)

Aljaheeth (1969: 59) states that colors are from black and white and the difference is in the measure of mood. It is said that colors are in reality are black and white and they decided that the black color is stronger than the white, and all the colors are stronger when they are closer to black and farer than the white, and they will be as they are till become black.

Althalaby (1992: 121-129) refers to the color in the philology of the language that color is functioned in the color of black, white, and red in humans and animals and the color of clothes as well. Ibin Saydath (1956: 209-211) says that colors are three red, black and white and other are strange colors and mysterious.

Hamdan (2008:39) refers to the definitions of color that are based on the living culture in which the color is used without scientific concepts such as: the black color is some cultures refers to the sadness and depression,

whiter refers purity, green refers to peace, red refers to revolution and love, and in the language of flowers red refers to the love, yellow refers to jealousy and finally the white refers to the purity and friendship.

Color is a form of non -verbal communication. It is not a static energy and its meaning can change from one day to the next with any individual - it all depends on what energy they are expressing at that point in time.

For example, a person may choose to wear **red** on a particular day and this may indicate any one or more of the psychological meanings of the color red, including the following:

- This is their **favorite color**, or
- It may be that they are ready to take action in some way, **or**
- They may be passionate about what they are going to be doing that day, **or**
- It may mean that they are feeling angry that day, on either a conscious or subconscious level.

The colour also refers to the concept of symbolism. Color symbolism can be in art and anthropology that is used for the color as a symbol in various cultures. There is great diversity in the way of functioning colors and their associations between different cultures and even within the same culture in

different time periods. The same color may refer to very various associations within the same culture at any time. Diversity in color symbolism occurs because color meanings and symbolism occur on an individual, cultural and universal basis.

THE DATA OF THE STUDY

The data of the study will be three poems by Badir Shakir Al-Syaab, the first one is the most well-known poem of the poet which is (The Rain Song) انشودة المطر, while the second poem will be (The will) الوصية, and third one is (Vision) رؤيا. The study applies semiotic theory on this color to find out how these colored are used to refer to the conceptual meaning in mind's readers.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The analysis of the data will be four parts the first part is the yellow color, green, white and black. The method of analysis is the Peirce's model of studying the color in three signs.

1. Yellow

The yellow color has been mentioned four times within the three poems, with different meanings with different references, the following line of the poem (The will الوصية):

منها صدى وذاب في الهواء
اخاف من ضبابية صفراء

**An echo of it, melts in the air
I'm afraid of a yellow fog.**

The yellow color in these two lines has three semiotic associations that show the meaning. The iconic one of yellow refers to the color of yellow of a fog, and the symbolic sign is that the arbitrary meaning of the yellow which is the sickness and exhausting meaning hence that cloud reflects the symbol of illness. It reflects illness, fearing and ambiguity of the future.

Within the song of rain انشودة المطر, there is an occurrence of the yellow color as follows :

في كل قطرة من المطر
حمراء او صفراء من اجنة الزهر
وكل دمعة من الجياع والعرافة

In every drop of rain

**a red or yellow buds from the seeds of
flowers**

**Every tear wept by the hungry and
naked people**

Yellow color is used also with different meanings. One of these uses is that the yellow color is used to refer to the kinds and different classes of people, since it has been merged with the red color. The yellow also defines sickness in a miserable case, waiting for life that comes after the drops of rain.

Also, the yellow color in these lines has the semiotic analysis of three signs. The iconic one refers to yellow color and that is similar to what has been mentioned, the indexical refers

to the natural existence of social classes, and the last one is a symbolic sign which refers to the arbitrary meaning of yellow color here as if it is a symbol for sorrow, poverty and disease as well as the freshness and life of yellow flowers.

يمصّ من زجاجة أنفاسه المصفّره

He sucks his yellowish breath from a bottle

The yellow color is used in the poem (The will الوصية) in order to refer to the breaths of the poet himself . The semiotic analysis of yellow color is represented through three sings . The iconic sign is that the similarity between the yellow and sick person. The indexical one is that refers to the natural existence of yellow in aspects of life and sickness of the person when his turns to yellow that (a clear sign of illness), and finally the symbolic one refers to the spiritual death and isolation and illness.

2.Green

The Green colour has been mentioned three times within the three poems, the following lines from the poem (The rain song انشودة المطر) :

عينك حين تبسمان تورق الكروم...

When your eyes smile, the vines put forth their leaves.

The green color has been referred to in the poems through the mention of the vine.

The green color in this line refers to the one of the plants. The semiotic analysis of the green refers to three sings. The iconic sign is that green color of the plant of vine and the indexical one is that the existence of nature hence the planet of vine occurs in life and finally the symbolic one is the arbitrary meaning of green which is the fertility, life and new future as well as fate that appears after the rain.

عينك غابتا نخيل ساعة السحر،
أو شرفتان راح ينأى عنهما القمر

Your eyes are two palms tree forests at the early dawn or two verandas from which the moonlight recedes.

Of the same previous poem, there is a reference to the green color, it is very important color in poetry. It refers a number of meanings. The semiotic analysis of green color here is that, the iconic sign refers to the green color of the palms, the indexical sign refers to the existence of this colour in nature, the symbolic one refers to the symbol of life and renewing.

هذا ، وهذا الربيع - قصيدة رؤيا

This, and this Spring...

Within the Poem (Vision رؤيا) , again the green color implied within the colors of Spring as an iconic natural sign, naturally the green color goes hand in hand with Spring, while the indexical sign the color of nature and flowers throughout Spring, finally the arbitrary symbolic reference is the similarity between life, birth of love and fertility. All these details reflected clearly within the main theme of the poem.

3. White

the white colour has been mentioned in both ways direct and indirect, it occurs three times throughout the three analyzed poems. The following line is from the poem (The will الوصية) :

من مرضي من السرير الابيض

Of my sickness, of the white bed

In this line the white color has the semiotic analysis of three sings . The iconic sing is that the whiteness of the bed, the indexical one refers to the real image of sickness and staying in bed, and finally the symbolic one is that it means the white color reflects the surrender to the pain and sickness as well as it reflects purity and healing.

وتغرقان في ضبابٍ من أسى شفيف

And they drown in a mist of sheer sorrow

In this line the white color is mentioned in different way, the iconic sign here with the poem (The rain song انشودة المطر) , reflects the likeness of mist and the white color, while the indexical part of meaning reflects that white color of mist within the poem is a sign of sinking in sorrow and sadness.

وترقص الأضواء... كالأقمار في نهر

And the lights dance like moons in a river

In the poem (The rain song انشودة المطر), the white color has been mentioned in the poem for prominent meanings . The semiotic analysis of the white refers to three signs, the iconic sign which shows the direct relation with white color of things in life, the indexical sing refers to the existence of the color in nature and the symbolic one refers to the meaning of purity, love, merit, life and dance.

4.Black

صباحها و ليلا من صخرة سوداء
ظلام

It's morning is darkness

It's night of a black rock

The black color in this line of the poem (The will الوصية) , has the semiotic analysis with three sings . The iconic sign refers to the similarity blackness of the rock and the black color, the indexical one is the reference to the

blackness of night and the symbolic one that refers to the arbitrary meaning of the black color which is the anguish and worry and sadness.

فيسحب الليل عليها من دمٍ دثارُ

The night draws a blanket of blood over it.

Of the poem (The rain song انشودة المطر), the black color is also mentioned in this line. The semiotic analysis of the black is represented through three signs. The iconic sign that is the similarity between being black with night, the indexical sign is the blackness of night in life and the symbolic one is that refers to the evil, illness, hurt and death.

CONCLUSION

Through the semiotic analysis of colors in the three poems by Badir Shakir AL-Sayyab, the study has reached out to a number of the

results. All the three poems use the four colors, yellow, green, black and white. These colors are used in different contexts and lines of the poems to refer for something meaningful out of the color itself. The yellow color in Al-Sayaab's poetic language refers to sickness, exhausting, death, fearing, ambiguous future and misery. The green color is used in the analyzed poetic language in order to refer to the life and new beginning, it also refers to the same meaning of new life or existence and fertility.

The white color in poems has been mentioned to reflect merit, love and dance, on the other hand it also tangled with sorrow and depression. The black color refers to the worry, sadness, destruction, death, evil and destruction.

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