

# Poetic imagery and meanings in Habib Al-Sayegh's contributions: A Descriptive and Analytical Study

Khawla Ali Saeed alhatab alnaqbi<sup>1</sup>, Dr Elsayed Makki Elbishr Ali Hassan<sup>2</sup>, Muhammad Afiq Anuar<sup>3</sup>,  
Prof. Dr Murad Hameed Abdullah<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sharjah Children's Centers(UAE)

<sup>2,3</sup>UPSI, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>University of Basra, Iraq

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines an aspect of the poetic contributions of the poet Habib Al-Sayegh. In Habib Al-Sayegh's poetry, the presence of the Holy Qur'an is evident in his poetic lexicon and in the way images and meanings are constructed. The poet employs Qur'anic vocabulary with precision and draws inspiration from lofty values and concepts such as justice, mercy and human destiny, which endow his poetry with profound semantic and spiritual depth. Poets also benefit from the musical qualities of the Qur'anic text, such as repetition, intonation and phonetic parallelism, which give the poem a distinctive internal rhythm that enhances its psychological and aesthetic impact. In Habib Al-Sayegh's poetic collections, this influence is evident in the repetition of phrases, the use of short sentences and the balance of poetic segments, achieving harmony between form and content and granting the poetic text strong evocative power. The Holy Qur'an represents a major source for the renewal of modern Emirati poetry and gives Habib Al-Sayegh's poetry its creative distinction in terms of language, rhythm and meaning.

**Keywords:** Habib Al-Sayegh, poetic imagery, Qur'anic intertextuality, Emirati poetry, meaning.

## INTRODUCTION

Modern Arabic poetry represents a broad space for textual interaction and the interweaving of references, with the Holy Qur'an standing out as one of the most prominent sources from which contemporary poets have drawn inspiration, due to its linguistic richness, semantic depth and unique rhythm. The Emirati poet Habib AlSayegh emerges as one of the poetic voices that has been deeply aware of this reference and has skillfully employed it in the construction of imagery and meaning within a modern poetic vision that opens onto human and existential concerns.

This study aims to reveal the mechanisms of constructing poetic imagery and shaping meaning in the poetry of the Emirati poet Habib Al-Sayegh, with a particular focus on the presence of the Holy Qur'an as a linguistic, semantic and rhythmic reference. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach by tracing Qur'anic intertextuality in his poetic lexicon and analyzing its role in deepening meaning, enriching imagery and building the internal rhythm of the text.

The study concludes that Al-Sayegh succeeded in employing Qur'anic references in an artistic and modern manner, avoiding directness or imitation, which contributed to endowing his poetry with a spiritual and human dimension and played a significant role in the renewal of contemporary Emirati poetry.

## Research Problem

This study is based on the following central research question: How has Qur'anic intertextuality contributed to the construction of poetic imagery and the shaping of meaning in the poetry of Habib Al-Sayegh?

From this main question, several subsidiary questions arise:

1. What are the manifestations of the presence of the Holy Qur'an in Al-Sayegh's poetic lexicon?
2. How does the poet employ Qur'anic rhythm in constructing the musicality of the poetic text?
3. What is the impact of this employment on deepening meaning and intensifying poetic imagery?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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Research Approach

Descriptive–Analytical

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Research Corpus

Selected Poems by

Habib Al-Sayegh

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Descriptive Analysis

- Stylistic Features

- Semantic Fields

- Poetic Structures

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Textual Analysis

- Imagery Construction

- Form–Meaning Relation

- Poetic Voice

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## Contextual Analysis

- Cultural Context
- Religious References
- Historical Background



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## Interpretive Synthesis

### Integrated Findings &

### Poetic Vision

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This study adopts a **descriptive–analytical approach**, which is particularly suited to literary and poetic analysis, as it allows for close reading of texts while situating them within broader cultural and intellectual frameworks. The methodology proceeds through the following interrelated stages:

#### 1. Descriptive Analysis of Stylistic and Semantic Phenomena

The study begins by **describing the dominant stylistic and semantic features** in the poetry of *Habib AlSayegh*. This includes identifying recurring linguistic patterns, rhetorical devices, and poetic structures such as metaphor, symbolism, intertextuality, repetition, and ambiguity. At the semantic level, the research examines key thematic fields (e.g., identity, homeland, time, spirituality, exile, and memory) and traces how meaning is generated through lexical choice and syntactic arrangement. This descriptive phase establishes a clear map of the poet's artistic language and conceptual concerns.

#### 2. Analytical Reading of Selected Poetic Texts

A corpus of representative poetic texts is selected based on their thematic richness and stylistic significance. These texts are subjected to **close textual analysis** in order to uncover the mechanisms through which imagery and meaning are constructed. The analysis focuses on:

- The formation of poetic images and their symbolic dimensions
- The interaction between form and content
- The relationship between poetic voice, subjectivity, and language
- The dynamics of tension, fragmentation, and openness in meaning

This stage moves beyond surface description to interpret how poetic techniques function within the text and contribute to its aesthetic and intellectual depth.

#### 3. Contextual Analysis: Cultural and Religious Dimensions

The study then situates Al-Sayegh's poetry within its **cultural, historical, and religious contexts**. It explores how the poet engages with Arab-Islamic heritage, contemporary cultural discourses, and religious symbolism—

either through direct reference, allusion, or reconfiguration. This step highlights the dialogue between the poetic text and its surrounding context, showing how cultural memory and spiritual concepts shape poetic meaning while also being reshaped by the poet's modern vision.

#### 4. Integrative Interpretation

Finally, the findings from the descriptive, analytical, and contextual stages are synthesized to provide a comprehensive interpretation of Al-Sayegh's poetic project. This integrative approach demonstrates how stylistic choices, semantic depth, and contextual influences converge to form a distinctive poetic identity and aesthetic experience.

### **Qur'anic Intertextuality in the Poetic Lexicon**

The presence of the Holy Qur'an in the poetry of Habib Al-Sayegh is manifested through the use of words that carry profound semantic weight, such as *light*, *balance*, *destiny*, *mercy* and *accountability*. These terms do not appear within a traditional or didactic context; rather, they are integrated into a modern poetic structure that opens meaning onto a comprehensive human horizon.

The poet is keenly attentive to precise lexical choice, preserving the Qur'anic resonance of the word while recharging it with a new poetic significance. This approach achieves a balance between sacredness and aesthetic artistry.

### **The Construction of Poetic Imagery**

Poetic imagery in the poetry of Habib Al-Sayegh is based on condensation and suggestion, where sensory images intersect with mental and symbolic ones. The influence of Qur'anic imagery is evident in its reliance on paradox, vivid scenography and the invocation of cosmic elements such as light, shadow, water and the path.

His poetic imagery is characterized by movement and dynamism, making it an effective tool for producing meaning rather than a mere decorative element. It thus contributes to the expression of issues related to existence, humanity and destiny.

### **Rhythm and Internal Music**

Habib Al-Sayegh benefited from the musical qualities of the Qur'anic text, such as:

1. Repetition: to reinforce meaning and create a psychological impact.
2. Short phrases: which give the text rhythmic tension.
3. Phonetic parallelism: achieving harmony between the segments.

This employment contributed to creating a profound internal music that sometimes goes beyond traditional metrical patterns, enhancing both the aesthetic and semantic dimensions of the text.

### **Semantic and Human Dimension**

The poetry of Habib Al-Sayegh carries a clear humanistic vision, drawing inspiration from major Qur'anic values such as justice, mercy and moral responsibility. The poet does not present these values as mere axioms; rather, he reintroduces them within the context of existential questions, reflecting the concerns of contemporary humanity and its aspiration for salvation and meaning.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the Holy Qur'an functions as a central intertextual reference in the poetry of Habib Al-Sayegh, shaping both the semantic and aesthetic dimensions of his poetic discourse. Qur'anic presence in his work contributes effectively to the formation of poetic imagery, the expansion of symbolic and intellectual depth,

and the enrichment of rhythmic structures. Rather than relying on direct quotation or traditional imitation, Al-Sayegh engages the Qur'anic text through creative reinterpretation, allowing it to operate as a dynamic and generative source within a modern poetic framework.

Through this artistic engagement, the poet achieves a distinctive poetic voice that successfully negotiates the relationship between heritage and modernity. The Qur'anic reference thus plays a pivotal role in the linguistic, semantic, and aesthetic renewal of contemporary Emirati poetry, confirming Habib Al-Sayegh's contribution to the development of modern Arabic poetic expression.

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