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The Formation of Meaning in Algerian Literature: An Approach between Discourse Language and Context

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Abstract:

This article seeks to uncover the mechanisms of meaning formation in Algerian literary discourse through the interaction of language with different levels of context: textual, social, cultural, and historical. The study proceeds from the hypothesis that meaning is not a ready-made given inherent in isolated linguistic units, but rather a gradual construction shaped through the relations linking words within the text, and through the text's interaction with its extra-linguistic surroundings. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical method grounded in discourse analysis, drawing on a representative corpus of three Algerian literary genres, poetry, narrative, and drama, in order to identify points of convergence and divergence in how meaning is formed across these modes. The study concludes that literary meaning is multi-layered, moving from the level of the word to the sentence, then the passage, then the discourse as a whole, and that the distinct nature of each literary genre entails a corresponding difference in how context operates to shape meaning.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, context, literary discourse, meaning, Algerian literature.

Introduction

The question of meaning occupies an important place in both linguistic and literary studies, since any engagement with a text whether linguistic or critical ultimately seeks to explain how meaning is produced and received. This interest, however, has not remained confined to the narrow lexical view that restricts meaning to the binary relationship between the signifier and the signified. Rather, it has expanded toward a broader perspective that relates meaning to use, context, and discourse as a communicative act produced within a particular situation.

Language and discourse are two aspects of the same phenomenon, yet they are not synonymous. Language is a system of signs capable of being realized in countless instances, whereas discourse is the activation of this system within a specific enunciative context, in which linguistic and non-linguistic elements interact to produce a meaning that can only be realized through such interaction. Thus, attention gradually shifted from the study of fixed lexical meaning to the study of dynamic meaning, formed within discourse and governed by the logic of relations rather than by the logic of dictionaries.

This shift cannot be fully understood without considering context as the framework that gives linguistic units their actual significance. A single sentence may convey multiple meanings depending on the contexts in which it occurs. This becomes even more complex in literary discourse, which is fundamentally based on deviation from ordinary language and on the exploitation of its suggestive potential, making context all the more essential and influential in guiding interpretation.

Algerian literary discourse possesses a distinctive character in this regard. It emerged and developed within a complex historical, social, and cultural context marked by linguistic and cultural plurality, a long colonial experience, and a post-independence trajectory rich in transformations. These conditions have made Algerian literary texts a fertile field for examining how context, at its various levels, contributes to the construction and orientation of meaning, to the extent that reading the text can hardly be separated from reading its surrounding environment.

From this arises the central question of this study: How is meaning formed in Algerian literary discourse through the interaction between language and context? And how are the mechanisms of meaning-making manifested in poetry, narrative, and drama? To address these questions, the study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach based on the tools of discourse analysis. It draws on a corpus comprising a poetic model, a narrative excerpt, and a dramatic scene from Algerian literature, with the aim of identifying the points of convergence and divergence in the ways context operates within each genre.

1. Language and Context in the Construction of Meaning

1.1. Meaning between Language and Discourse

A. The Concept of Meaning:

The concept of meaning is one of the most problematic and ambiguous concepts in linguistic studies, given the diversity of philosophical, logical, linguistic, and semiotic perspectives through which it has been approached. Mohammed Ali Al-Khuli defines semantics, also referred to as the science of meaning, as the discipline that "studies the meanings of words and sentences, that is, the meaning of language" (Al-Khuli, 2001). In this context, Al-Khuli distinguishes between three interconnected yet distinct concepts: the word, meaning, and referent, explaining that they are "distinct from one another, yet connected to one another" (Al-Khuli, 2001, p. 14). This relationship is represented by the triangle of meaning, which links the linguistic symbol, the mental image it evokes, and the object or entity to which it refers in the external world.

This conception suggests that meaning is not an essence inherent in the object being named; rather, it is the product of a tripartite relationship between the linguistic expression, its mental representation, and its real-world referent. Such a perspective opens the way to viewing meaning as a construction rather than a ready-made entity, an idea upon which the present study as a whole is based.

B. Linguistic Meaning:

While the preceding concept outlines the general framework of meaning, its study at the level of the individual linguistic unit requires another equally important principle: the principle of relation. Al-Khuli emphasizes that "the meaning of a word basically does not depend on the situation; rather, it depends on the relationship of the word to other words within the language itself" (Al-Khuli, 2001, p. 64). This principle is fundamental to the present study, as it establishes that the meaning of an individual word is not determined in isolation, but rather through its position within a network of lexical and syntactic relations linking it to other words within the linguistic system.

From this perspective, linguistic units, however self-contained they may appear lexically, remain dependent on their position and on their relations with neighboring units. Their actual referential value may therefore change as their position changes, paving the way for the transition from isolated linguistic meaning to meaning as it is formed within discourse.

C. Meaning within Discourse:

Linguistic meaning does not reach its full realization at the level of the abstract system alone; it is also shaped by the context in which linguistic units occur. In his presentation of Firth's conception, Palmer relates the study of meaning to the context of situation, stressing that "the description of meaning in terms of the context of situation is therefore only one of the methods by which the linguist deals with language" (Palmer, 1985). This conception reveals that meaning should not be studied as a fixed entity independent of use, but rather as a significance that is determined and clarified in light of the context within which linguistic elements are organized in discourse.

Within the field of discourse analysis specifically, meaning is not examined as a collection of isolated units capable of simple aggregation, but as the overall product of the interaction among these units and between them and the context in which they are produced. In his analysis of narrative discourse, Gérard Genette emphasized that the relationship between story and its discourse is dialectical, with meaning being shaped by the perspective selected by the discourse rather than by the events themselves (Genette, 1997). From this standpoint, the study of meaning in literary discourse cannot be completed merely by listing the lexical meanings of words; it also requires examining how these words are organized and structured within the overall texture of discourse.

D. The Movement of Meaning from the Linguistic Unit to the Discourse as a Whole:

The foregoing discussion makes clear that the construction of meaning follows an ascending movement, beginning with the smallest linguistic unit and extending to discourse in its entirety. A word acquires an initial meaning by virtue of its belonging to the linguistic system; this meaning is then further specified when the word enters into syntactic relations with other words within the sentence. It is transformed again when the sentence becomes part of a broader passage with its own particular pragmatic purpose, until the general meaning conveyed by discourse as a whole takes shape. It is precisely this ascending movement that the present study will trace in its analysis of the selected Algerian models.

2.1. Context and Its Role in Determining Meaning

The Concept of Context:

The concept of context has received considerable attention in linguistic and pragmatic studies, although perspectives on it vary from one researcher to another. John Firth defined the "context of situation" as "the external situation in which communication takes place between two or more persons," taking into consideration the interlocutors, the relationship between them, the discourse preceding the utterance under analysis, and the values they share (Khattabi, 1991). Firth regarded this concept as broader than purely linguistic context, extending it to language users, intonation, and the social environment as a whole. Other scholars in the field of pragmatics have further expanded the concept to include the shared knowledge between interlocutors and the implicit assumptions upon which communication is based. In light of these perspectives, context cannot be regarded as a marginal element accompanying an utterance; rather, it is the condition that makes communication possible in the first place.

Awareness of the importance of context is not confined to modern Western linguistic thought. Its foundations can also be found deeply rooted in the Arab rhetorical tradition. Groups of Arab scholars, particularly rhetoricians concerned with the science of *ma'ānī*, examined the forces inherent in discourse in order to determine what a particular situation requires, in accordance with the principle of "conformity of speech to the requirements of the situation" (Khattabi, 1991). This principle offers a remarkably precise formulation of the concept of context before it emerged as an independent linguistic term. Al-Jahiz likewise emphasizes the relationship between the quality of speech and its appropriateness to its

situation when he cites Sahl ibn Harun as saying that "the essence of eloquence lies in seeking appropriateness of expression and knowing the proper moments for speech". (Mahbub, 2002). Thus, eloquence is associated with the appropriate choice of both place and time, a conception that closely corresponds to what modern linguists refer to as situational context or the context of situation.

In light of this convergence between Western and Arab perspectives, an operational definition of context may be proposed for the purposes of this study: it is the sum of textual and non-textual factors involved in determining the actual meaning of a literary utterance, whether these factors are internal and related to the structure of the text or external and connected to the social, cultural, and historical circumstances in which the text was produced and received. This conception is supported by Al-Khuli's view that "the meaning of a sentence is not always determined absolutely by its vocabulary and grammatical meaning, for there are factors outside the sentence that influence its meaning to a greater or lesser extent" (Al-Khuli, 2001, p. 70). This confirms that isolated linguistic meaning alone is insufficient to determine the actual meaning of an utterance. Abdessalam Al-Mesdi summarizes this idea in a comprehensive rhetorical formulation when he states that "the same opinion and the same object may vary according to the situation, context, and perspectives," adding that "meaning itself has temporal dimensions through which significance becomes multiple, diverse, and abundant" (Al-Mesdi, 2014). This establishes the idea that the multiplicity of contexts does not obscure meaning; rather, it is the very condition that allows for its renewal and richness.

Textual Context:

Textual context refers to the set of relationships linking a linguistic unit to the other units surrounding it within the text itself, whether preceding or following it. It is concerned with the internal coherence of the text, in which each element refers to other preceding or subsequent elements, thereby forming an interconnected semantic fabric in which no part can be fully understood in isolation from the rest. Al-Khuli summarizes this idea by stating that "the word affects the meaning of the sentence, but sometimes the opposite occurs: the sentence affects the meaning of the word, and this is known as contextual meaning" (Al-Khuli, 2001, p. 69). He further adds that "if a word has several non-contextual meanings, it is the linguistic context that determines the intended meaning among those meanings" (Al-Khuli, 2001, p. 69). This explains precisely how a single linguistic unit may shift among multiple meanings according to its position within the textual fabric in which it occurs.

F. R. Palmer confirms this close relationship between meaning and context when he states that "there is no evidence that knowing the meaning of a sentence does not involve knowing the context in which it is used" (Palmer, 1985, p. 58). This elevates knowledge of context from a mere aid to understanding to a structural condition for the completion of meaning itself. This interrelationship is not confined to the level of the individual sentence but extends to the text as a whole. Mohammed Khattabi, drawing on Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, explains that a "sequence of sentences" becomes a text only "provided that relations exist among these sentences," linking its elements through mechanisms of cohesion (Khattabi, 1991, p. 13). It thus becomes clear that textual context is not merely a formal accompaniment to linguistic units; rather, it is the mechanism that transforms a random succession of sentences into a coherent text capable of producing meaning.

Social Context:

Literary discourse cannot be separated from the social environment in which it is produced. It necessarily bears the traces of prevailing social relations, including classes, conventions, and values, and draws upon these relations to derive some of its implicit meanings. Scholars of discourse maintain that reading a literary text in isolation from its social context deprives many of its suggestive meanings of their depth and vitality. Literary language, however autonomous it may appear, remains connected to a social reality with which it interacts reciprocally. Hussein Akkash summarizes this relationship between linguistic expression and its surroundings by stating that semantics "is concerned with the meaning of the word and the meaning of the expression while relating them to the context in which they occur, whether linguistic or social, taking into account the environment, civilization, culture, associations, and contextual clues" (Khattabi, 1991, p. 21). This formulation brings together the various levels of context examined in this study.

Cultural Context:

Cultural context is associated with the system of values, symbols, and perceptions shared by members of a given society. It constitutes a reservoir of implicit meanings that the writer may draw upon without always making them explicit, trusting that readers who belong to the same cultural sphere will be able to retrieve and decode them. The importance of this context becomes particularly evident in texts that evoke religious, popular, or historical heritage as an implicit background to discourse.

Historical Context:

Historical context is related to the period in which a text is produced and to the events and political and social transformations that leave their imprint on literary discourse, whether directly or through suggestion and symbolism. Numerous studies in discourse analysis and literary studies have emphasized that a profound understanding of a literary text requires consideration of its historical moment, not as supplementary external information, but as an integral part of the conditions through which meaning is produced.

When attention shifts specifically to Algerian literature, consideration of Algerian frames of reference becomes indispensable. Specialized Algerian critical studies examining the relationship of the Algerian novel to history, identity, and social reality have demonstrated that this literature cannot be separated from the particularity of the Algerian experience and its political, cultural, and historical contexts. This is evident, for example, in the study by Nasser Attallah entitled *Algerian Literature during the 1970s*, which examines the relationship between literature and the social, political,

and cultural transformations experienced by Algeria. It is also reflected in Nawal Ben Saleh's study, *The Algerian Novel Written in French and the War of Liberation: The Conflict of Language and Identity*, which connects Algerian literature to the experience of colonialism, the War of Liberation, and the question of language and identity. Similarly, Kada Mabrouk's study, *The Problematic of the National Belonging of Algerian Literature Written in French*, considers the impact of the political and cultural conditions of colonialism on the formation of this literature and on questions of its identity and belonging. Consequently, Algerian literary discourse cannot be adequately understood in isolation from its historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts, including the effects of the colonial period and the transformations that followed independence, as these contexts collectively contributed to shaping its themes, forms, and modes of expression.

The Interaction of Contexts in the Construction of Meaning:

These contextual levels do not operate independently of one another; rather, they interact to produce the meaning of literary discourse in its overall form. Textual context provides the utterance with its internal coherence, while social and cultural contexts endow it with suggestive depth, and historical context gives it a temporal dimension that helps explain the moment of its production. When these levels interact collectively with the linguistic structure of the text, literary meaning takes shape in its fullest form a form that can only be grasped through a reading that brings together the internal and the external, the structure of the text and its context.

3.1. Literary Discourse and the Construction of Meaning

The Concept of Literary Discourse:

Literary discourse may be defined as a particular use of language characterized by a departure from conventional usage in order to produce an aesthetic and suggestive effect that goes beyond the direct communicative function of language. In this sense, it differs from the concept of the literary text: whereas the text refers to the written linguistic structure in itself, discourse refers to that structure as it is engaged in an act of enunciation that is, within a communicative relationship between a sender and a receiver in a specific context. The text is a fixed entity, whereas discourse is the text as it is realized in context.

This is precisely the distinction emphasized by Said Yaqtin, who carefully differentiates between the object of the novel and that of narrative discourse, asserting that "the object of narrative discourse analysis is not the novel, but discourse" (Yaqtin, 1997). The novel is a complete written text, whereas narrative discourse refers to that text as it is examined in terms of its artistic and semantic functioning that is, in terms of the way it produces meaning rather than merely as an abstract narrative structure. This distinction applies to literary discourse in general: poetry and drama, like the novel, are not studied as complete and isolated texts, but rather as discourse realized within a particular context.

The Specificity of Literary Discourse in the Production of Meaning:

Literary discourse differs from other forms of discourse in that it does not confine itself to direct meaning; rather, it continually opens onto secondary and suggestive meanings that accumulate and multiply with different readings. This makes meaning in literary discourse open-ended, subject to continuous and renewed interpretation, unlike scientific or administrative discourse, which seeks, as far as possible, to establish a single and stable meaning. Hence, deviation, imagery, rhythm, and narrative or dramatic structure all constitute mechanisms through which literary discourse generates this semantic richness.

The Relationship between the Text and Its Context:

The relationship between the literary text and its context is based on a profound reciprocity: context provides the text with the conditions of its production and its implicit frames of reference, while the text, in turn, reshapes that context and offers a particular vision of it a vision that may correspond to it, criticize it, or transcend it. This reciprocity is particularly evident in Algerian literature, where the literary text does not merely evoke historical and social reality but artistically reconstructs it. Literature thus becomes both a witness to its historical moment and, at the same time, a contributor to the shaping of awareness of that moment.

From this perspective, the following section moves on to examine, through practical analysis, how meaning is constructed in selected examples of Algerian poetry, narrative, and drama.

2. The Formation of Meaning in Algerian Literary Discourse

2.1. The Formation of Meaning in Poetic Discourse

For this section, we have selected a model from committed Algerian poetry that accompanied the period of national struggle, namely the poetry of Mufdi Zakaria, as a representative example of the organic relationship between poetic language and the historical and nationalist context in which it was produced. The poet himself described his collection *The Sacred Flame* as "the anthology of the Algerian Revolution, with its explicit reality and its legendary heroism" (Zakaria, 2007). This description provides, from the outset, a key to the contextual reading of the collection: its texts cannot be understood independently of the revolutionary moment that produced them.

The selected example is the poem "There Shall Be No Glory Until Algeria Gains Independence," composed by the poet to commemorate Algeria Day. Its opening lines read:

"We have stretched out the threads of dawn rise, let us create the dawn,

And we have fashioned the book of resurrection rise, let us write a line." (Zakaria, 2007) At the level of linguistic units, these two lines reveal a semantic correspondence between the words "dawn" and "resurrection," both of which belong, in their primary lexical sense, to the semantic field of rebirth and renewal. However, when they occur within this context of national struggle, they acquire a new national dimension. "Dawn" is no longer a neutral cosmic phenomenon but becomes a symbol of the beginning of a new historical era created by the people themselves "rise, let us create the dawn." Likewise, "resurrection" is no longer an abstract religious concept but becomes a national awakening whose lines

everyone is called upon to write "rise, let us write a line." This demonstrates how the relationships between words and expressions within a single poetic line can redirect the meaning of each lexical unit in a manner that serves the overall structure of the poem.

At the level of textual context, the repetition of the imperative form "rise" at the beginning of each hemistich creates an ascending, mobilizing semantic rhythm. It transforms the discourse from a passive description of an existing reality into an active call for action and change. This grammatical repetition is precisely what accumulates and reinforces the meaning of struggle from one line to the next. Such progression, however, cannot be fully understood without considering the poem's position within the cultural and historical context in which it was produced, namely the period of the Algerian national struggle, with its intense popular mobilization and its call to awaken collective determination.

The impact of historical context on the orientation of meaning becomes particularly evident here. Had the same words appeared in a different context, far removed from the moment of national struggle, they would have lost a significant part of their semantic and emotional charge. Meaning, therefore, does not arise from the lexicon alone, but from the encounter between lexical meaning and an exceptional historical moment that transformed the word into a weapon and an instrument of mobilization, rather than merely a means of aesthetic expression. Thus, the overall meaning produced by this poem is the result of the interaction between linguistic units, through their internal relations, and a specific cultural and historical context. Neither can be separated from the other without compromising the understanding of the text.

2.2. The Formation of Meaning in Narrative Discourse

The novel *The Earthquake* by the Algerian novelist Tahar Wattar (Wattar, 1973), regarded as one of the foundational works of modern Algerian narrative, addresses the transformations of Algerian society in the aftermath of independence through the character of El-Hadj Boualem, who embodies a social class gradually disappearing in the face of the winds of socialist change and agrarian reform.

At the level of language within the narrative context, the novel does not present meaning as fixed or complete; rather, it allows the utterance to acquire its significance gradually through the context in which it occurs. This is particularly evident in the meaning of the word "earthquake," which transcends its literal sense to acquire a significance related to the transformations experienced by the character and by the society surrounding him. Boualrouah says:

"The earthquake is a feeling; it may come early, late, or at the right moment. Belbey felt it. Nino felt it. Saadan feels it. And I? I am waiting for it..." (Wattar, 1973, p. 155)

In this context, the word "earthquake" does not refer merely to a natural phenomenon. Rather, its meaning takes shape in light of the character's experience and the transformations occurring around him. This is further confirmed by the appearance of the same word in an earlier context in the novel, when Boualrouah states:

"I, Si Abdelmadjid Boualrouah, felt the earthquake on the day when the shepherds, the barefoot, and the naked came from the countryside and the villages to kill the masters here and then leave. That was the day I felt the real earthquake." (Wattar, 1973, p. 33)

This sequence reveals that meaning is formed through the accumulation of contexts within narrative discourse. The later context does not merely repeat the earlier meaning; rather, it deepens and redirects it, allowing the word "earthquake" to move from referring to a natural event toward representing a social and historical transformation that threatens the balance to which the character remains attached. Consequently, the meaning of the narrative utterance cannot be separated from the voice that produces it or from its position within the network of relationships that structure the novel. Language, context, and personal experience thus interact to produce a meaning that transcends the individual level and reaches the symbolic.

The relationship between the different parts of the discourse is also evident in the repetitive structure employed by the novelist. Scenes depicting the character's movement through different neighborhoods of the city follow one another, gradually accumulating signs of social transformation: changing place names, the emergence of new institutions, and shifts in relationships among people. Taken together, these signs form a semantic fabric that reflects a society in the process of transformation. Each scene, considered separately, may appear to be a passing description, yet it acquires its full significance only when read in relation to the scenes that precede and follow it.

This text cannot be adequately understood apart from its social and cultural context, namely the transformations experienced by Algerian society during the 1970s, including agrarian reform, nationalization, and the redistribution of wealth. These transformations constitute an essential background for understanding the class conflict represented in the novel. Nor can the work be understood independently of its broader historical context the path Algeria undertook after independence in building a national identity and establishing a new economic and social model.

The relationship between discourse, characters, and events is evident in the fact that El-Hadj Boualem does not represent a particular individual so much as he symbolizes an entire social class. Meaning thus moves from the specific and individual level to the broader symbolic level. This transition explains how a single fictional character can become a comprehensive meaning that encapsulates a collective historical experience, through the accumulation of partial signs within the text and their interaction with their social and historical context.

2.3. The Formation of Meaning in Dramatic Discourse

Algerian dramatic discourse provides a fertile field for examining how meaning is formed through the interaction between the utterance, its position within the dramatic structure, and the cultural context that encompasses it. This relationship is clearly reflected in *The Waterskin* and *the Saints* by Ould Abderrahmane Kaki, particularly in its use of

the character of the Maddah (the traditional storyteller), whose presence is not limited to a narrative function but also plays a role in organizing the discourse and directing its semantic development.

Idris Gargour defines the function of the Maddah in Kaki's theatre as follows:

"Kaki employed the Maddah as the narrator of the events of the play. This narrator introduces the characters of the play and comments on their actions and emotions. Thus, the narrator (Maddah) becomes an intermediary between the author and the characters of the play, on the one hand, and the audience, on the other [...] In *The Waterskin and the Saints*, the narrator assumes the role of narration and controls the direction and realization of the discourse." (Gargour, 2009)

(Gargour, 2009, p. 377)

This critical observation reveals the position of the Maddah within the discursive structure of the play. He does not appear as a narrative voice detached from the course of events; rather, he forms a link between the characters and the audience. His discourse therefore becomes part of the very process through which meaning is constructed. When the Maddah introduces the characters and organizes their appearance within the discourse, he does not merely convey a ready-made narrative; he also contributes to determining the framework within which the audience receives these characters and events. Consequently, the meaning of his utterances remains closely connected to their position and function within the dramatic structure.

This is evident from the Maddah's opening discourse, in which he says:

"One day among the days and God's days are many in the Garden of Ridwan, and God's Garden is vast, three accomplished saints met before a waterskin... Whoever mentions them among three shall not be passed over by a princess." (Kaki)

This utterance does not introduce the characters directly; rather, it prepares for their appearance through a narrative formula marked by a distinctly popular tone. Expressions such as "One day among the days" and "God's days are many" immediately place the audience within a narrative space rooted in popular memory, while the references to "the Garden of Ridwan" and "the accomplished saints" establish a cultural and religious frame of reference that transcends the direct lexical meanings of the words.

Here, it becomes clear that meaning is not produced by words in isolation but is formed through their organization within a particular discourse and their relationship to the context in which they are used. The word "saints," for instance, does not merely convey a general descriptive meaning; within this context, it evokes a specific cultural image associated with sainthood, spiritual authority, and popular memory. Moreover, the position of this utterance at the opening of the play gives it an additional function: it prepares the audience to receive the characters and events within the cultural framework established by the Maddah.

The subsequent development of the discourse confirms that the meaning, initially presented in a general form, does not remain fixed but gradually becomes more specific. Elsewhere, the Maddah says:

"Sidi Abdelkader al-Sharqi Sidi Boumediene al-Gharbi and Sidi Abderrahmane... took hold of the waterskin and left the Garden of Ridwan, setting out to visit the people living in this world." (Kaki, p. 71)

Whereas the first discourse merely referred to "three accomplished saints," the later discourse reveals their identities by naming "Sidi Abdelkader al-Sharqi," "Sidi Boumediene al-Gharbi," and "Sidi Abderrahmane." This movement from generalization to identification demonstrates that meaning is not formed all at once but develops through the progression of discourse. The later information does not simply add a new element; rather, it reorganizes what has preceded it and gives it a greater degree of specificity.

The verb "to visit" in the same passage also plays a significant semantic role, as it establishes a connection between the world in which the characters initially appear and "the world of the people living in this world." The discourse thus moves from introducing the characters to defining their relationship with the world toward which they are heading. Meaning consequently expands from the mere identification of the characters to the construction of an image of their function and their relationship with society. This significance cannot be separated from the cultural framework underlying the image of the saint in the popular imagination. The presence of these names in this context does not refer merely to individual persons but evokes the representations and values associated with them in the collective memory.

The relationship between the two passages also reveals the importance of the internal context of discourse in constructing meaning. The passage on page 62 opens an initial semantic horizon, while the passage on page 71 fills some of its gaps and defines its elements more precisely. Meaning is therefore formed through textual accumulation, as the succession of utterances contributes to moving meaning from general reference to specific identification, and from introduction to the construction of relationships between the characters and the world in which they act.

This internal context cannot be separated from the cultural context upon which the discourse is based. The Maddah himself belongs to a form of popular expression founded on storytelling and the evocation of characters and events before an audience. Kaki's use of this narrative voice therefore endows dramatic language with layers of meaning that go beyond the surface meaning of the sentence, since the audience receives it within a pre-existing knowledge of the forms and references of popular discourse.

Accordingly, meaning in Kaki's dramatic discourse is formed within the space of interaction between the utterance and its context. Words provide the discourse with its initial linguistic material, while their position within the scene, their sequence in relation to other utterances, and the cultural references they evoke all contribute to directing and expanding their meaning. Meaning, therefore, is not a final entity contained independently within the sentence; rather, it is the result of a process through which discourse gradually moves from introduction to identification, and from reference to the construction of meaning.

This example demonstrates that the relationship between language and context is not an external one added to discourse after its meaning has already been completed; rather, it is a relationship that actively participates in the construction of meaning itself. The dramatic utterance acquires its significance from its position within a network of utterances, relationships, and contexts. Isolating it from this network may therefore reduce its meaning or confine it to its immediate and literal significance.

The discourse of the Maddah in *The Waterskin and the Saints* thus provides a significant example of the gradual formation of meaning in literary discourse. The linguistic structure of the utterance, its context within the scene, its sequence in relation to preceding and subsequent utterances, and its cultural references interact to produce a meaning that transcends the immediate surface of language and opens onto the broader possibilities of contextual interpretation.

3. The Interaction of Language and Context in the Production of Meaning

A general theoretical premise may be invoked here: regardless of its different forms, literary discourse remains governed by a common principle in the formation of meaning: the principle of interaction between the internal linguistic structure of the text and the various contextual levels surrounding it. In light of this premise, it is possible to compare the three models discussed above and identify the points of convergence and divergence in the way this principle operates.

3.1. Levels of Context Influencing the Construction of Meaning

When comparing the three models in terms of textual context, it can be observed that the poem relies primarily on rhythmic and repetitive coherence among its segments, whereas the novel depends on the cumulative coherence of successive scenes. The dramatic text, in turn, is based on an interactive and dialogic coherence among the utterances exchanged by the characters. Thus, textual context takes a different form in each literary genre according to its particular nature, while maintaining the same essential function: ensuring the internal coherence of discourse.

With regard to social context, the three models converge in that they all emerge from an awareness of the transformations experienced by Algerian society. They differ, however, in the perspective from which they approach this context. The poem evokes social context as a foundation for collective mobilization; the novel presents it as a field of class conflict; while the play engages with it as a subject of satirical criticism. Similarly, cultural context takes a different form in each genre: in poetry, it appears as a religious and canonical frame of reference that is reappropriated for national purposes; in the novel, it functions as a social frame of reference connected with changes in the structures of property and social classes; and in drama, it draws upon a popular and performative heritage associated with the traditions of the *qawwal* and the storyteller.

At the level of historical context, the three models share a close connection with decisive stages in modern Algerian history, ranging from the War of Liberation to the period of nation-building and the social, economic, and political transformations that accompanied it. This confirms that Algerian literature, despite the diversity of its forms, has remained closely connected to its historical moment, interacting with it through expression, criticism, and inquiry.

3.2. Variations in the Formation of Meaning According to Literary Discourse

Meaning is formed in poetic discourse in a condensed and intense manner. Significance accumulates within a limited linguistic space through rhythm, repetition, and deviation from ordinary language, making poetic meaning closer to a sudden semantic eruption than to a gradual process of accumulation. In narrative discourse, by contrast, meaning develops cumulatively and unfolds throughout narrative time, as successive events, characters, and settings interact to construct an overall meaning that requires a relatively extended process to reach completion.

In dramatic discourse, however, meaning is formed through interactive dialogue, relying on direct confrontation among multiple voices and on the contrast between appearance and underlying meaning. This makes dramatic meaning closer to the outcome of a direct conflict between opposing perspectives.

The difference, therefore, does not lie in the historical or social content addressed by these genres, but rather in the nature of discourse itself and in the mechanism through which context operates within each genre. This explains why each literary form requires analytical tools appropriate to its particular characteristics, even though they all share the same general principle underlying the formation of meaning.

3.3. From Partial Meaning to Overall Meaning

The general process through which meaning is formed in Algerian literary discourse, as revealed by the models examined in this study, can be summarized as an ascending movement that begins with the meaning of the word within the sentence. At this level, a lexical unit acquires its initial significance through its syntactic position and its relationship with the units surrounding it. This significance then expands into the meaning of the sentence within the passage, as the sentence becomes part of a larger unit with a specific expressive, narrative, or dialogic purpose.

Meaning expands further to become the meaning of the passage within the text as a whole, as each passage interacts with those that precede and follow it, producing a coherent semantic fabric. Finally, the overall meaning generated by discourse emerges within its context. This meaning cannot be reduced to any of the preceding levels taken separately; rather, it is the result of their interaction with the textual, social, cultural, and historical contexts surrounding the discourse.

This is precisely what the reading of the three models the poem, the novel, and the play reveals. Each follows its own particular logic, yet all ultimately demonstrate that literary meaning is a gradual construction rather than a ready-made given.

Conclusion

This study concludes that meaning in literary discourse is neither fixed nor independent of the text. Rather, it is gradually constructed through the relationships that connect linguistic units to one another and through the textual, cultural, social, and historical contexts surrounding the discourse. The first section demonstrated that the transition from

isolated linguistic meaning to discursive meaning is essential to any profound understanding of a literary text, and that the various levels of context interact in directing this meaning and shaping its final contours. popular theatre, revealed that the mechanisms through which meaning is formed vary according to the nature of each literary genre. In poetry, meaning develops through an intense rhythmic accumulation; in narrative, through a gradual and extended process of accumulation; and in drama, through direct dialogic interaction. The third section, through a comparison of these models, further confirmed that the differences among poetry, narrative, and drama reveal a diversity of ways in which meaning is constructed within Algerian literature, even though this diversity remains governed by a single unifying principle: the constant interaction between language and its context.

This study also opens up prospects for further research that may expand the corpus to include other examples of contemporary Algerian literature or employ more specialized pragmatic and semiotic approaches to examine the mechanisms of meaning formation. Such research may contribute to a deeper understanding of the distinctive character of Algerian literary discourse and its ever-renewed relationship with language and its multiple contexts.

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The second section, through the analysis of selected examples of committed poetry, the social novel, and Algerian