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RE-VISITING CONTEXT

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Edited by
Ezzedine Saidi and Jawhar A. Dhouib
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The participants are solely responsible for the ideas expressed in this volume.

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Ezzeddine Saidi & Jawhar A. Dhouib, eds.

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Introduction

E. Saidi & J.A. Dhouib

This collective work is the outcome of the scholarly contribution of researchers to the international conference “Re-Visiting Context,” held at the University of Gabes, Tunisia on 18-20 April, 2013. Established scholars and junior researchers affiliated to different, yet intertwined areas of study, have sought to re-visit context and to interrogate its literary, aesthetic and ideological foundations. The texts collected in this volume cover a large scope, aiming at opening venues towards a rich, diverse and interdisciplinary view of language, literature and culture. This collection is divided into two parts. While the first concentrates on linguistics-related issues, the second adopts a critical literary framework.

The first essay of this initial part focuses on cross-cultural pragmatics in the context of bilateral translation. In this essay, Mounir Triki offers a critical overview of the state of the art, exposes the major challenges involved in the process of bilateral translation and considers the possibilities of formulating this training into a pedagogical program. Drawing on the input of research on cross-cultural pragmatics and translation studies, Mounir Triki advocates that awareness of cultural differences represents a prerequisite to “efficiently pre-empt cases of pragmatic failure.”

In the second essay, Ezzeddine Saidi explores the impact of context on training activities practised in professional development programs for EFL teachers. The article offers a classification of training programs based on the context in which they are implemented, and lists some of the most recurrent training activities in these contexts. The classification of training settings is based on the types of relationships that prevail between EFL teachers and their trainers, or EFL teachers and other participants in programs

for professional development, such as fellow teachers and administrators.

The essay makes distinction between three different contexts that require EFL teachers to adopt different plans for professional development. The first context, *the trainer centred context*, is the type of setting where all plans for professional growth are devised and tightly controlled by trainers and supervisors, and where EFL teachers' personal convictions about effective language teaching are completely overlooked. The second context, on the other hand, is *the collaborative context*. It includes all settings where EFL teachers view professional development as a shared endeavour, and where they are encouraged to adopt collaborative plans that can be implemented away from the evaluative lenses of trainers and supervisors. The third and last context is *the independent-teacher context*. It includes all settings where EFL teachers are completely free to adopt professional development plans and training modes that they consider most effective. For each of these contexts, there are training activities that help achieve different types of goals. The article offers detailed descriptions of these activities and analyzes how they help teachers grow more professional.

Awatef Boubakri's essay hinges on the notion of context in relation to the growing body of literature that emerged post-9/11. Boubakri offers a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of the overlap between text, context, and the act of reading in a post-9/11 novel, with particular focus on Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005). The study of Foer's novel is based on Fairclough's (2001) critical analytical toolkit in an attempt to show how the political context is well exploited in the text for ideological reasons. The essay sheds light on the rhetorical devices that characterize the dominant discourse in the 9/11 novel, aiming at clearing misconceptions and resisting stereotypical representations targeting the Arab-Muslim identity.

Still, within the American context, yet adopting a distinct analytic standpoint, Olfa Zairi argues that despite the hardships that Arab-Americans have experienced during the assimilation process, they have in turn shown commitment to their Americanness while preserving elements of their Arab origins. Zairi attempts to analyse the predicament of Arab-Americans caught in the twoness of cultures, identities and origins. The essay attempts to answer these tricky questions via examining a selection of the writings of Arab-Americans, while arguing that the socio-cultural and political context of the United States is what defines how Arab-Americans perceive their past, a perception that cannot be merely judged in binary terms as “right” or “wrong,” but more importantly as an American context-based one.

In the last essay in this part, Ameni Hlioui explores the relationship between the use of prepositions and context in legal discourse. She starts her analysis from the assumption that prepositions are highly polysemous, and that prepositional choice depends mainly on co-text and context. Hlioui maintains that the division of prepositions into positive and negative paradigms adds to the intricate nature of this word class. Accordingly, the paper attempts to study prepositions from semantic and pragmatic perspectives to investigate the effect of context and prepositional polysemy on the choice of prepositions. For a detailed analysis of the data, quantitative and qualitative methods are adopted to study the distribution of positive and negative prepositions in a Blackwater court hearings corpus. The pragmatic framework of face theory is used to interpret the data analysis to find out how each participant negotiates his/her own power to reach a specific end. The purpose of the paper is to see whether legal practitioners use positive prepositions in positive contexts and negative prepositions in negative contexts.

The second part of this collection features six essays that analyse, revise and expose thoughtful consideration of a wide array of texts affiliated to different literary genres and traditions. The contributors have sought to apply novel visions in their attempt to address the intricate relationship between literary texts and context.

In the opening essay of this part, Abdelhamid Rhaïem examines the trope of the voyage in Virginia Woolf's first novel *The Voyage Out* (1915). In his essay, Rhaïem attempts to remap the routes taken by the female character in her journey from London to South America towards an understanding of herself. The essay also seeks to gauge the extent to which Virginia Woolf employs the trope of the voyage to revise the conventional travel narrative and to undermine the male-centered journey paradigm. Rhaïem argues that within a discourse of travel, Virginia Woolf formulates the aesthetics of a movement that mirrors her departure from a whole culture. Reading the metaphor of the voyage in the novel is meant, then, to trace Woolf's maiden voyage during the early twentieth century and her 'coming out' as novelist.

Under the rubric of postcolonial studies, Imen Mzoughi's essay addresses the alliance between text and context with special reference to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*. Mzoughi argues that Conrad's representation of Africa as an 'empty space' inhabited by 'savage brutes' is deliberate to match with the race-based expectations of his readership. *Season of Migration to the North*, argues Mzoughi, is a direct counter-narrative where Salih evokes the inextricable link between context, politics and culture. The last part of this essay demonstrates that postcolonialism is 'accused' both of compressing differences and shadowing subjects who deviate from the postcolonial template.

Within the same framework, Jawhar Ahmed Dhouib attempts to assess Caribbean-born writer Caryl Phillips's re-vision of the Middle Passage episode. The essay is con-

cerned with making equivalence between the writer's critical re-vision of the historical journey through the Atlantic and its figurative contemporary version. The argument holds that Phillips's strategy to replicate a disfigured avatar of the Middle Passage in his stage adaptation of *Rough Crossings* (2007) draws on the pragmatics of resistance, aiming at granting agency and prominence to the African subject. The second part of this essay brings into discussion Phillips's creative transposition of the topos of the Middle Passage in the context of clandestine immigration as represented in *A Distant Shore* (2003) and *Foreigners: Three English Lives* (2007). In the course of his analysis, Dhouib attempts to highlight the crossovers between the historical experience and its contemporary version, and to foreground the continuity of the predicament, albeit under different circumstances.

In "‘Ash Wednesday’: The Poem in Context," Radhia Besbes-Krid starts her analysis from the premise that T.S. Eliot's poetry has a great potential for interaction with its readers (Besbes-Krid, 2011), which presupposes combined efforts on the part of both, poet and reader, to construct meaning. What is meant by 'context' in this essay, argues Besbes-Krid, is the interpretive context wherein the reader interacts with the poet through and within the space of the poem. The Cognitive Pragmatic model adopted by Besbes-Krid aims at studying the reading process in which extralinguistic data, such as the poet's communicative intentions inferred from the use of language, imagery and style, influence the reader's interpretation. This essay is an endeavour to answer two major questions. First, to what extent does the literary work reveal about the writer's intentions? Second, what type of associations do non-native readers bring to a deeply-contextualized text?

In the essay entitled "Text and Context in Dr. Johnson's Criticism of the Comedy of Romance," Aida Haddad brings under scrutiny one of Dr. Johnson's periodical essays *Rambler* 4. In her analysis, Haddad focuses mainly on

Dr. Johnson's attitude towards the value of contextual analysis of literature, the role of readers, the process of interpretation and "meaning making." The essay brings to light Dr. Johnson's criticism of the sentimental novel as a new genre. Haddad attempts to demonstrate that Dr. Johnson's conception of context is distinguished if compared to that of his contemporaries. Dr. Johnson, according to Haddad, associates context to reality and, therefore, to what he calls "utility," which constitutes an open call to reconsider the relationship between author, text and context.

The final essay of this collection revisits Victorian England via examining the literary value of Charles Dickens' works. In this essay, Abdesslem Hamzaoui seeks to re-evaluate the critical assumptions about the nineteenth century novel, or what is commonly known as the "Classic Realist Text," as represented in the later novels of Charles Dickens. The essay offers focused consideration to identity and speech presentation in *Great Expectations* (1861), one of Dickens' widely acclaimed novels. This essay celebrates the Dickensian text and aims at questioning and clarifying misconceptions related to nineteenth century fiction, generically portrayed as forming a homogeneous form of discourse.
