

The Algerian Novelistic Discourse from the Perspective of Reception Theory: The Novel "The Fish Does Not Care" as a Model

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Abstract

The Algerian novelistic discourse represents a fertile field for the manifestation of transformations in identity and reality. Approaching it from the perspective of Reception Theory reveals dimensions related to the dynamics of meaning production through the interaction between text and reader. This theory places the recipient at the center of the interpretive process, through their horizon of expectations and their ability to fill textual gaps and reconstruct meaning.

Based on this premise, the present study adopts the novel "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud as an applied model, aiming to uncover the narrative strategies that provoke the reader and encourage their participation in constructing meaning. It thus raises the following questions: How does the perspective of Reception Theory contribute to reading Algerian novelistic discourse? And to what extent does the novel succeed in reshaping the reader's horizon of expectations?

Keywords: Algerian novelistic discourse; Reception Theory; reader; interpretation; The Fish Does Not Care; Inam Bayoud.

1 Introduction.

The novelistic discourse is considered one of the most prominent literary genres capable of encompassing social transformations and expressing their intellectual and aesthetic concerns. The novel is no longer a closed structure sufficient unto itself; rather, it has become an interactive space that opens itself to the reader and calls for their presence in the production of meaning. From this perspective, Reception Theory has emerged as a modern critical approach that restores the reader's status, making them an active element in shaping meaning through their horizon of expectations and prior experiences, which influence the processes of understanding and interpretation.

Within the context of the Algerian novel, the narrative discourse has undergone remarkable transformations at the levels of structure and significance, influenced by the social, political, and cultural changes experienced by Algerian society. This has made it a fertile field for the application of modern critical approaches, foremost among them Reception Theory. The novel "The Fish Does Not Care" falls within this framework, as it represents a rich narrative text characterized by semantic deviations and narrative techniques that provoke the reader and push them to participate in constructing meaning by filling gaps and interpreting the signs and symbols embedded in the text.

Accordingly, this research seeks to approach Algerian novelistic discourse through the lens of Reception Theory, taking the novel "The Fish Does Not Care" as an applied model. It aims to reveal the nature of the interactive relationship between text and reader, to trace the mechanisms of meaning production, and to examine the extent to which the reader contributes to reshaping and interpreting the novelistic text in light of their various frames of reference.

Overview of the Novel "The Fish Does Not Care".

The novel "The Fish Does Not Care" by the writer Inam Bayoud begins by constructing the world of its characters through the memories of the young woman Nour, who undergoes complex experiences in which emotions and memories intertwine. The novel unfolds as a profound psychological journey, transporting the reader through Nour's experiences across two different environments: Damascus, her birthplace, and Algeria, the place to which she later moves.

The narrative delves into the details of her childhood, revealing the depth of her relationships with characters such as Rima, her close friend, and Najm, the man who enters her life and alters its course. Each character represents a different aspect of life: Rima embodies friendship and nostalgia, while Najm represents the complex relationship between love and loss. Historical and political events intertwine with personal struggles, as the novel reflects the social and economic conditions experienced by Algeria during a turbulent period, thereby enhancing the reader's understanding of the challenges faced by the characters.

Bayoud is distinguished by a well-crafted narrative style, employing poetic language to describe emotions and places, thus creating a rich experience that mirrors the reality of life with its surprises and complexities. The dialogue between characters revolves around profound philosophical issues such as identity, existence, and destiny, prompting the reader to question the true meaning of life and what lies beyond it.

The novel also conveys feelings of pain and nostalgia, yet it is not devoid of moments of happiness and optimism. For instance, Nour recalls her memories of her Damascene home, which symbolizes longing for the past, allowing the reader to feel the depth of loss and the beauty of memories that accompany the characters. The novel further highlights the theme of alienation, not only on a geographical level but also on a psychological one, as the characters struggle with feelings of belonging and loss. The questions raised by the novel, such as "Does the fish really not care?", invite the reader to reflect on the concept of existence and how to confront life's challenges.

Through her distinctive literary style, Inam Bayoud succeeds in transporting the reader into worlds of beauty and pain, shedding light on how major events affect individuals, making the novel an unforgettable literary experience that touches both heart and mind.

3.The Nature of Novelistic Discourse in "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud:

When we speak of a novel, we are engaging with life, reality, society, culture, and emotions; we stand before a self-contained world, not merely words arranged on the pages of a book. What we seek is not the analysis of the technical structure of the novel, but rather the apprehension of its essence and aesthetics. Thus, exploring the novelistic experience requires interrogating the specificity of novelistic discourse as an open structure characterized by

plurality and dialogism. This discourse calls for revelation and depth. Since "the novelistic work is a formally accomplished yet partially complete message"², it does not offer exhaustive answers nor concern itself with naïve questions; rather, it focuses on posing questions that it answers from its own perspective, through its structure and composition. The text interrogates, argues, dialogues, and provides answers in its own distinctive manner.

Accordingly, the nature of discourse is closely linked to its novelistic experience, as it is founded upon a particular system that "enables it to sever its ties with its reference, or to transcend it, thereby creating its own reference and becoming self-referential, since its reference resides within its very core and orbit that new reality it has created"³

The nature of novelistic discourse is marked by flexibility, as we engage with interwoven worlds within linguistic and semantic systems. Thus, discourse may be explicit, revealing itself and expressing its content; or concealed behind the complexity of its internal relations; or dense and laden with imagery, meanings, and symbols. From this perspective, novelistic discourse appears as an artistic and semantic reality, open to multiple possibilities, resistant to fixation, and inclined toward renewal, which renders it an infinite discourse. Reading novelistic discourse, therefore, is not a superficial act; it is not "a linear movement or merely a cumulative process, for our initial reflections generate a frame of reference within which we interpret what follows. As we continue reading, we discard assumptions, open new convictions, and construct conclusions and expectations; each sentence opens a horizon that the next either confirms, challenges, or undermines"⁴

When examining the nature of discourse, we find ourselves before a new novelistic discourse characterized by innovation, transcending the traditional structure of storytelling. This is manifested through the fragmentation of time, form, and perspective. Segmentation, interweaving, and multiplicity constitute essential technical features of this discourse, disrupting the traditional textual background and placing the reader in a state of tension rather than ease. Narration here is not straightforward, as in the traditional novel; rather, it generates a form of ambiguity in its various manifestations, whether in terms of events or character perspectives. This ambiguity requires the reader to approach the text not only horizontally but also vertically, meaning that reading must be contemplative and precise in order to uncover this ambiguity as it appears in language and style, with their poetic and tonal dimensions⁵

Thus, discourse is no longer "a closed unit, but has now become a site of penetration"⁶; it is no longer merely a linguistic structure, but rather a coherent network of structural relations. It is "a discourse distinguished by the dominance of the poetic function, for it is a discourse composed in and for itself"⁷

Our interest in the nature of novelistic discourse lies in how the narrative is presented, for discourse is the manner in which the narrative material is conveyed. Although the same narrative content may be repeated, each writer produces their own discourse according to their orientations and positions, even when characters, events, time, and space are fixed. Therefore, discourse becomes an object of analysis, necessitating the study of its components and elements⁸

The novelistic discourse in "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud is characterized by a distinctive aesthetic grounded in linguistic and poetic condensation that seeks renewal and departs from traditional narration, reflecting a new and complex vision. This is evident in the

character of Nour, who undergoes an intertwined experience reflecting deep temporal and semantic dimensions. The novelist employs a compelling style that captures the reader's attention, making the opening a decisive element in the construction of the text, as it embodies a form of complicity between the creator and the recipient. Even the title itself, "The Fish Does Not Care," carries semantic depth that demands a particular interpretation, thus encouraging the reader to immerse themselves in a textual experience that transcends the ordinary and ventures into the realm of possibility.

4.The Poetics of Novelistic Discourse in "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud:

In the novel "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud, the aesthetics of reception emerge through the use of poetic language as an expressive tool that deepens the reader's experience and enriches the meanings of the text. "The literary text is not merely a message; it is also an art that is, a system of expressive and aesthetic materials that contribute to conveying the message"⁹

Bayoud constructs a narrative world that transcends traditional storytelling, where poetic language blends with narrative elements to form an integrated and immersive experience. Through techniques such as condensation and symbolism, the novel reveals the complexities of human relationships and existential anxiety, allowing readers to explore new dimensions of the human psyche. The characters especially the protagonist interact through a rich language marked by tension and depth, exposing complex inner struggles that reveal repressed desires and contradictory emotions.

Moreover, Bayoud creates linguistic gaps that compel the reader to participate in interpretation and reconstruction, transforming the text into a dynamic interlocutor that requires the reader's engagement and interpretive intelligence to uncover hidden meanings. This adventure in language and ideas reflects Bayoud's aesthetic vision, which does not merely present events but seeks to offer an authentic human experience that engages with themes such as love, loss, and alienation. Consequently, the reader is drawn into a profound contemplative journey about the self and the world.

5.Reception in "The Fish Does Not Care": Between the Reader and the Text

It cannot be definitively asserted that any novel we read is inherently distinguished; rather, what ensures its artistic and aesthetic effectiveness is the analysis of its nature, the interaction of its elements, and their coherence, in addition to the relationship between the author and the recipient. Each constitutes a fundamental party in the production of the literary work. The relationship between the novelist and the reader is an interactive one that goes beyond mere emotional response. The literary work derives its value not only from being an intellectual and aesthetic construct but also from its ability to reflect and resonate with collective sensibility.

The interaction of the novel with the reader seeks to generate pleasure and enjoyment, as the text may be seen as a "trap" that connects the body of the writer with that of the reader, stimulating the latter to mobilize their cultural and aesthetic competencies during reading. Given the complexity of novelistic discourse, it always requires a conscious reader who reconstructs the literary experience in their mind in order to reveal its dimensions. Thus, every literary discourse represents "a communication between the creator and the recipient, with the

text serving as the mediator between them. Both parties must recognize the importance of their shared element the text which provides a space for its growth within the reader's mind".

The Reader^{5.1}

Discussing the recipient necessitates specifying the type of reader in question. Are we referring to the actual reader who interacts spontaneously with the text and expresses personal impressions? Or to the competent reader who possesses critical and intellectual tools enabling deep textual analysis? Or perhaps the aesthetic reader, who delights in literary aesthetic and responds emotionally to the work? There is also the pedagogical reader, who seeks to transmit knowledge and interpret texts for others. Additionally, one may consider the ideal reader, aspiring to a comprehensive understanding of the literary work, or the implied reader, who serves as a standard for evaluating the text's aesthetic effectiveness.

Finally, there is the symbolic reader, who interprets texts in ways that reflect deeper experiences and meanings beyond the surface.

Each of these reader types demands a different response from literary texts, thereby enriching our experience of reading and engaging with narrative works. It is well known that such classifications of readers "were primarily developed in relation to narrative fiction, as most applications of reader-response criticism and reading were situated within the novelistic text"¹⁰

These classifications underscore the importance of understanding how the novel interacts with different types of readers, revealing how each reader responds to narrative texts. Critics who have focused on reader response and reading have tended to analyze the novel as the most complex literary form, one that requires a dynamic interaction between reader and text.

Understanding these classifications helps reveal the richness of the reading experience, as each reader engages with the text in a unique way shaped by their cultural background, personal experience, and critical skills. Thus, the significance of these classifications lies in clarifying how the characteristics of novelistic texts shape both individual and collective experiences, enhancing our deep understanding of literature as a medium of human communication.

The aesthetic dimension of the literary text becomes evident through the reader's interaction with the elements of the novel, whereby the reader becomes an integral part of the reading experience, enriching the meanings of the text and enhancing its aesthetic.

What the reader does while reading the novel is not a parallel act of writing, but rather an attempt to delve into its depths and internalize the relationships that structure its textual fabric. The act of writing in novelistic discourse presupposes a distinguished reader; even if the author is "aloof and indifferent to who reads the work, the very act of writing already implies a certain type of reader as an internal structure of the text"¹¹

In "The Fish Does Not Care," the aesthetic dimension is manifested in how Inam Bayoud employs poetic and imagistic language that engraves itself in memory, allowing the reader to feel the emotions and cultural atmospheres conveyed. The reader is required not only to understand events but also to explore the psychological and social depths reflected in the characters.

On the other hand, criticism constitutes an essential part of the reading process. The reader practices criticism when engaging consciously with the text, enabling them to challenge the

ideas and perspectives presented. The more capable the reader is of uncovering the contradictory and complex aspects of the novel, the greater their ability to develop critical insights that enrich literary dialogue. Criticism thus shifts from being a mere evaluation of events to becoming a reflective act that can reshape the reader's understanding of both self and reality.

Accordingly, aesthetics and criticism intersect within the act of reading: aesthetics stimulate the reader to create new meanings, while criticism drives them to explore these meanings in depth. The novel derives its value from this continuous interaction between text and reader, making each reading a unique experience imbued with possibilities for renewal and transformation.

The gaps that permeate the narrative function as passages for the reader, enabling them to integrate their personal experience and construct a new text based on their reading strategy. Through these gaps, the reader moves beyond fragmented events in search of hidden meanings, uncovering connections between missing links, and compensating for absent details through their own experience and cultural knowledge. In doing so, the reader actualizes absence, organizes narrative chaos, and brings closer what was deferred. Upon entering the world of the novel, the reader adapts to it and merges with it, generating a sense of pleasure and aesthetic fulfillment. Through processes of discovery and dialogue, the reader transforms the text from a closed structure into an open one, capable of renewal and receptive to multiple meanings, thereby ensuring the possibility of change and reconstruction.

The Text:5.2

The novel "The Fish Does Not Care" is distinguished by complex artistic aesthetics that reflect the depth of its narrative experience. It is grounded in the concept of deviation (defamiliarization), whereby language is employed to transcend conventional meanings, creating new relationships between signifiers and their signifieds. The title itself, "The Fish Does Not Care," represents a challenge to familiar norms, raising questions about the relationship between natural beings and human emotions.

The novel is characterized by a narrative style charged with semantic tensions, where ideas are implied and certain events remain unspoken, revealing gaps that invite the reader to contemplate what lies beyond the text. The use of ellipsis and implication places the reader in a constant state of searching for hidden meanings, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the text as an interactive literary work.

The text is further enriched through characters that embody historical and cultural dimensions, including references to historical figures and their symbolic significance within social and political contexts. Gaps and tensions also emerge in the relationships between characters, as the novel records both internal and external conflicts that mirror tensions within society. This multiplicity of meanings and aesthetic layers transforms the novel from a mere narration of events into a philosophical experience that invites reflection on human and existential issues.

Thus, "The Fish Does Not Care" demonstrates literature's capacity to embody human and historical complexity through a rich and innovative language, leaving a profound impact on the reader and stimulating critical thought.

The Reader's Interaction with the Text^{5.3}

The reader interacts with the text by filling the gaps deliberately left by the novelist in "The Fish Does Not Care," which enhances their experience and makes them an active participant in the construction of meaning. The novel invites the reader to explore the complex relationships between characters and events, opening horizons for reflection and contemplation. For instance, the text contains multiple semantic tensions, where silence and implication emerge as fundamental elements in shaping meaning.

The interaction between reader and text contributes to creating a unique reading experience that transcends superficial understanding, enabling the reader to derive deeper meanings and richer interpretations of events. The novel raises questions about conventional concepts, prompting the reader to consider how characters may connect to broader meanings related to society and history. It also requires the reader to be aware of cultural and historical contexts, making the reading process both challenging and intellectually stimulating.

Moreover, the text encourages the reader to reconsider the semantic gaps and textual blanks left by the novelist, thereby creating a space for creativity and personal interpretation. In this process, the reader transforms from a mere recipient into a partner in literary creation, contributing to the formation of meaning based on their knowledge and personal experience.

Reading thus becomes a dynamic experience that allows the reader to discover the world of the text from multiple perspectives, enhancing their engagement with the literary work and enabling them to participate in constructing the novel's universe rather than merely observing it. In this way, "The Fish Does Not Care" demonstrates how the interaction between text and reader enriches the literary experience and deepens the understanding of the ideas and emotions it presents.

Entering the world of this discourse resembles an interpretive adventure; the reader here is not a passive recipient but an involved participant, drawn to follow events and navigate between times and places. Not content with the charm of language alone, the reader is required to establish an interactive relationship with the text one that begins with the act of reading but does not end at the level of comprehension, rather extending to the production of meaning.

Exploring this discourse leads us to its elusive language and seductive mechanisms, beginning with the main title "The Fish Does Not Care" and extending to subheadings such as "Nour," "Rima and Nour," "Najm and Nour," and "The Trinity." These are masked titles that entice the reader and draw them into the narrative world through a play of suggestion and ambiguity.

This discourse cannot be reduced to a single semantic structure; rather, it is built upon the interplay of opposing relations: between the referential and the imaginary, reality and dream, presence and absence, self and other. These binaries become foundational themes that enrich the text and deepen its interpretive dimensions. The more the reader engages with these textual thresholds, the more elusive the text becomes, offering apparent endings that are quickly dismantled through new titles that conceal more than they reveal, thus destabilizing the horizon of expectation rather than settling it.

Accordingly, authority shifts from the text to the reader, who recreates the text anew. "Reception theorists have designated this guiding force as the reader, and much of their work can be understood as an attempt to demonstrate how the reader is the ultimate source of

meaning and literary history"¹². The discourse of "The Fish Does Not Care" is elusive from its very threshold; it appears simple and innocent through its titles, yet this illusion soon reveals itself as a deliberate linguistic strategy based on calculated semantic choices. From the opening question "What does the fish think of that? The fish does not care" the reader finds themselves before a discourse that evades and postpones meaning, invoking multiple intellectual, cultural, and even religious worlds hidden behind dense symbolic masks.

The quality of elusiveness emerges from within the text itself: it says what it does not intend, reveals what it conceals, illuminates meaning at times only to obscure it at others. Relying on symbolic and suggestive condensation, the text unsettles the reader and compels them to decode its signs. Here, reading becomes an active interpretive practice that reduces ambiguity and unlocks the text's deeper meanings.

6.The Role of Deviation in the Reader's Reception of "The Fish Does Not Care:"

Deviation (defamiliarization) in "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud constitutes a fundamental element that enriches the reception process and enhances the reader's interaction with the text. This concept, which refers to a departure from the familiar in language and style, disrupts linguistic norms and conventional expectations, prompting the reader to reconsider the meanings and concepts presented.

The title itself, "The Fish Does Not Care," stands as a striking example of such deviation, as it links a known marine creature with the attribute of indifference. This association challenges the reader's expectations, leading them to question how indifference can be embodied in a fish. Such a semantic gap stimulates curiosity and encourages the exploration of new dimensions within the text. This gap generates a space of inquiry and multiple interpretations, allowing the reader to engage with the text in a non-traditional manner.

The greater the degree of deviation within the text, the more complex the reading experience becomes. The reader is exposed to contradictory experiences that provoke emotional responses and deepen engagement with characters and their internal conflicts. For instance, the novel foregrounds issues of existence and identity, offering the reader an opportunity to reflect on meanings that transcend the conventional.

Thus, deviation creates a tension between what the reader expects and what is actually presented, thereby intensifying the reading experience. This tension reveals the depth of creative writing, contributing to the formation of a dynamic relationship between text and reader. Deviation is not merely a linguistic disruption; it is also an invitation to reflection and the search for new meanings.

Accordingly, the role of deviation in the reception of "The Fish Does Not Care" is central: it enriches the text with new dimensions and transforms the reader into a partner in the processes of creation and interpretation. Reading thus becomes a rich experience that goes beyond conventional understanding, reinforced by the vital interaction between reader and text.

7.The Aesthetic Effect in "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud:

"The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud represents an integrated artistic model in which language and style harmonize with the profound human issues it addresses. The author's skill is evident in her use of rich poetic language, wherein the poetic function according to Arab

theorists addresses "the recipient by delighting them, that is, by arousing pleasure within them. This function appears in artistic prose, yet poetry carries it to its utmost limits, almost making it its defining principle"¹³

This poetic language reflects the experiences of the characters and the details of their daily lives, creating an atmosphere vibrant with life and movement. The novel is marked by linguistic diversity, blending Standard Arabic with colloquial speech, thereby enhancing the realism of dialogue and bringing the characters closer to the reader. This language, laden with rhetorical imagery and metaphors, conveys the characters' emotions with depth, allowing the reader to engage with their experiences, pains, and aspirations.

The novel also presents vivid visual elements through detailed descriptions of places and scenes, giving the reader a strong sense of temporal and spatial depth. Through these descriptions, Bayoud weaves artistic tableaux that transcend ordinary narration, making the reader feel as though they are moving through living paintings, each carrying its own story and emotions. The artworks referenced by the characters are not merely expressions of pain; they transcend this to become symbols of hope and beauty, reflecting the human struggle within a painful reality. This duality between pain and beauty grants the novel a profound aesthetic dimension, as each "painting" becomes a mirror reflecting universal human experiences.

In this way, "The Fish Does Not Care" takes the reader on a journey that transcends the boundaries of the text, where aesthetic vision intersects with social and existential concerns. The aesthetic effect lies not only in style but also in the text's capacity to move and inspire, making the novel a true artistic work that expresses the human spirit in all its diversity and complexity.

8. Conclusion:

In conclusion, the aesthetics of reception in "The Fish Does Not Care" by Inam Bayoud are manifested through its use of rich and expressive poetic language that seeks to stimulate the reader's senses and draw them into the depth of the text. The novel highlights a diversity of dialects, including Syrian and Algerian varieties, reflecting cultural multiplicity and lending authenticity to the characters' voices.

The multiplicity of possible readings enriches the reception process, making the reader a partner in the production of meaning. Moreover, the presence of religious and symbolic references adds further layers of meaning that require deep reflection.

Thus, "The Fish Does Not Care" offers an invitation to think and reflect and reinforces the role of literature as a means of understanding the complexities of life. It stands as a rich text worthy of exploration within the context of contemporary Arabic literature.

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