

Toward a Postmodern Cultural Criticism (The Question of Implicit Frameworks)



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مستخلص الدراسة

يشكّل منهج النقد الثقافيّ أحد أبرز المناهج التي ضمّت تحت لوائها عدّة اتجاهاتٍ نقديةٍ بعد حداثة، وقد كان ظهوره في العالم العربيّ محاطاً بجملة من المبالغات والأسئلة والجدالات حول إمكانية موت السّؤال الأدبيّ، واستبداله بالسّؤال الثقافيّ، وحول التّقييدات الأساسية له كمنهج يعمل على كشف العيوب النسقيّة، والحيل الثقافيّة التي تحملها الخطابات، وترسخها في الوعي الجمعيّ بطريقة لا واعية وممتدّة، حيث تتبّع هذه الأنساق المضمرة الباحث عبد الله الغداميّ، الذي رأى في الخطابات أنساقاً خفية غير بريئة نابعة من الموروث الأيديولوجي والثقافي والقَبلي في ذاكرة وقناعة مُرسِل الخطاب، تفرض سلطتها على الخطاب بإيقاعها غير الواعي والمؤثّر.

ومع أهميّة هذا المنهج، إلّا أنّه صبّ كل جهوده في كشف المضمّر النسقيّ القبليّ، وألغى اعتباراتٍ أخرى داخل الخطاب وخارجه، لذا جاءت هذه الدّراسة لتتّرح موازنة عبر مجموعة من المستويات لتحليل ودراسة الخطاب (النص الأدبيّ تحديداً)، تمكّنا من فهمه داخلياً وخارجياً،

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وتتبع المضمّر التّسقي فيه بإيجابيّته أو قبّحه، إضافة إلى اقتراحها توسيع حدود مفهوم التّسق، تمامًا كما اقترحت توسيع اشتغال النّظرية، وهذا التّوسيع لن يخرج النّظرية من إطارها التّقافي، بل سيجعلها أكثر شمولًا وتحررًا لتغدو أداة مركّزة تتجاوب مع كافّة المتغيّرات وتستطيع تحليل كل جوانب الخطاب.

Abstract

The cultural criticism approach is considered one of the most significant approaches that has brought together several trends in postmodern criticism under its umbrella. Its emergence in the Arab world has given rise to many exaggerations, questions, and arguments about the possible death of the literary question and its replacement by the cultural question, and about establishing its theoretical foundations as an approach that aims at revealing the flaws of systematicity and the cultural tricks carried by discourses and encrusted stealthily into collective consciousness. These implicit systems are carefully examined by the researcher Abdullah Al Ghatami, who has recognized hidden and artful structures within discourses; these are subtle structures that stem from the ideological, cultural, and tribal heritage ingrained in the memory and convictions of the discourse producer that eventually impose authority on the said discourse through their unconscious but touching rhythm.

Despite the importance of this approach, it has poured all its efforts into revealing the negative implicit systematicity and eliminated other considerations inside and outside discourse. Therefore, this study aims to propose a multilevel harmonization to analyze and study discourse (literary discourse in particular) to understand it internally and externally and examine the implicit systems in it in both their positive and negative aspects. It also suggests expanding the definition of systematicity as well as extending the scope and applicability of cultural criticism. This expansion will not take the theory out of its cultural framework. It will rather make it more inclusive and at liberty to become a focused tool that can respond to variables and can analyze all the aspects of discourse.

Introduction

Cultural criticism is viewed as a postmodern reaction to modernist critical methodologies, especially structuralist ones, which prescribe a complete separation of the text from its context. Researchers argue that it





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represents a range of critical approaches, including New Historicism, Post-Colonialism, Feminist criticism, and others.

Looking at its emergence in the Arab world, some scholars have incorporated cultural methodology into their writings, yet they have not fully established a theoretical framework for cultural criticism. Among them, Edward Said, particularly in his book "Orientalism," and Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri, in his trilogy on the critique of Arab thought, are notable. However, sources suggest that Abdullah Al-Ghathami was the first to attempt to systematize the theory and utilize its critical tools in analyzing discourses (texts).

The term "culture" is known for its generality and vagueness, and the appearance of the term "cultural criticism" in the Arab context was surrounded by a series of questions and debates. While several researchers and scholars have well-received the theory, it still falls short of encompassing many aspects included in creative discourse. Therefore, this is an attempt to trace, describe and propose the integration of literary and cultural inquiries within the theory.

The significance of this study lies in its attempt to discern the mechanisms of cultural criticism as a critical methodology that approaches a range of cognitive discourses. This is done by examining Abdullah Al-Ghathami's experience and exploring the possibility of considering cultural criticism as a self-standing method. This involves discussing what Al-Ghathami has proposed regarding defining the concept of structure and his focus on the grotesque only within the discourse.

The study stems from the following central question:
Within the framework outlined by Al-Ghathami, can cultural criticism be considered a self-standing theory capable of decoding texts and tracing them critically through their internal and external structures, or does the theory require expansion to encompass other levels in the reading and analysis of discourse?

The study assumes that the methodology in cultural criticism is an indistinct approach, lacking clear and stringent methodological steps, and it needs to broaden its procedural and critical tools to encompass several levels of critical discourse treatment, including the level related to implicit cultural frameworks.



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Furthermore, the study assumes that exploring the implicit framework requires a broader understanding beyond the definition established by Al-Ghathami. Additionally, it involves incorporating the positive or aesthetic framework (culturally good, contrasting the grotesque). The study will use the term "positive system" as opposed to the grotesque framework acknowledged by Al-Ghathami. The term "aesthetic framework" will not be used to avoid confusion due to its various connotations in literary criticism.

To substantiate the hypothesis and discuss the problem, a descriptive-analytical method will be employed, combining descriptive and analytical approaches. It **"concerns the description of data, terms, and results while simultaneously conducting analytical operations to present additional, refining, interpretive, or similar information."**¹

In addition to the method of "critique of critique" or "explanatory critique," as termed by Gaber Asfour, which refers to **"writings that review critical activity in practice from a perspective of description, interpretation, and evaluation."**² The early origins of the term "critique of critique" can be traced to Todorov in his book "Critique of Critique," where he sought to articulate and review some critical works from a perspective that re-examines how literature was deconstructed during the period studied. **For him, criticism is the convergence of two voices, the voice of the writer and the voice of the critic, with neither having precedence over the other. Hence, the critic must not forget that their critical reading of the creative text will later become a text to be studied by another critic.**³

The study relies on Abdullah Al-Ghathami's work, "Cultural Criticism: An Examination of Arab Cultural Frameworks," as a primary and fundamental cornerstone from which Al-Ghathami's theories are derived. However, it also draws on previous studies that attempted to address the same subject through application, explanation or criticism, including:

1. **Nasser Al-Yadeem, "Mechanisms of Formation of Patterns in Cultural Discourse,"** a doctoral thesis at Hassan II University in Casablanca, published by Al-Qalam Al-Maghribi Publishers, Casablanca, 2019. This study attempted to examine the mechanisms shaping implicit patterns in cultural discourses and the interaction of cognitive





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representations, especially in highlighting the semantic function of the pattern, its stages of formation, and the substitutions of cultural texts within cognitive discourses.

2. **Malha Bint Ma'alth Al-Suhaimi, "The Theory of Cultural Criticism: Its Pros and Cons,"** published in the Journal of the Faculty of Arts at Taibah University, Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah. This study attempted to follow the theory of cultural criticism and provide expansive proposals for the theory.

First: The Emergence of Cultural Criticism

Cultural criticism is estimated by some researchers to have emerged in Europe as early as the 18th century. However, recent changes, especially in the latter half of the 20th century, have endowed it with limited characteristics on both the cognitive and methodological levels, setting it apart from other forms of criticism. **"The word 'culture' entered, considering it as the patterns of values of behavior and meanings that constitute human beings and live within them."**⁴

In its general sense, cultural criticism is **an intellectual activity that takes culture in its entirety as the subject of its research and thinking, expressing positions regarding its developments. In this sense, it can be said that various cultures, including Arab culture, have known cultural criticism.**⁵ A group of writers contributed to this since the 19th century, provided that cultural criticism is understood in its general sense and not in the post-structuralist sense proposed by Leitch. This is evident in history, literary, social, and political criticism, among others, which intersect with culture, as articulated by the works of Taha Hussein, Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad, Adonis, and others.⁶

The American critic Vincent B. Leitch is considered the first to contribute to the formulation of the term "cultural criticism" as a theoretical concept for a postmodern and post-structuralist critical project. However, he notes that Theodor W. Adorno was the first to use this term. Leitch believes that cultural criticism is a method for examining values that are unrecognized, unnoticed, and integrated into the mental system, studying them within the framework of ethics, beliefs, categories, economic representations as well as political, philosophical, educational, family, and religious beliefs:



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"To say that cultural criticism engages in cultural critique is to indicate that it regularly scrutinizes and assesses—in its examinations of objects, events, and practices—the often unacknowledged or un-noticed values compacted in regimes of reason, attending to linguistic, ethical, economic, political, historical, philosophical, legal, educational, familial, religious, and aesthetic beliefs, categories, and representations operating in cultural works and activities."⁷

Leitch considers the task of cultural criticism to be the analysis of discourse outside the scope or idols of literary analysis:

"In this light, a paramount task of cultural criticism is discourse analysis committed to inquiry and critique rather than idolatry of literature."⁸

He further adds that the task of cultural criticism is to analyze and evaluate the social roots and the successive institutional impacts and ideological ramifications in texts and discourses. He emphasizes that the focus of modern literary criticism on the aesthetic masterpieces of world literature will be met by the focus of cultural criticism on marginalized, less popular, and populist cultural discourses.

"The task of cultural criticism is to analyze and assess the social roots, institutional relays, and ideological ramifications of communal events, institutions, and texts. Against the weakening but still regnant scholarly focus on aesthetic masterpieces of canonized high literature, cultural criticism advances the claims of "low" working class, marginal, popular, minority, and mass cultural discourses."⁹

He often emphasizes that if the goal of modern criticism is the aesthetic evaluation of texts, then the goal of cultural criticism is the investigation and evaluation of governing and opposing beliefs, practices, and representations. It also involves studying patterns of circulation and consumption of discourses within linguistic, social, economic, political, historical, ethical, religious, legal, scientific, philosophical, educational, familial, and aesthetic institutions:

"Whereas a major goal of New Criticism and much other modern formalistic criticism is aesthetic evaluation of free standing texts, a primary objective of cultural criticism is cultural critique, which





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entails investigation and assessment of ruling and oppositional beliefs, categories, practices, and representations, inquiring into the causes, constitutions, and consequences as well as the modes of circulation and consumption of linguistic, social, economic, political, historical, ethical, religious, legal, scientific, philosophical, educational, familial, and aesthetic discourses and institutions."¹⁰

Al-Ghathami summarized the characteristics of cultural criticism based on Leitch as follows:¹¹

1. Cultural criticism does not confine its activity within the framework of the institutional categorization of the aesthetic text. Instead, it opens up a broad range of interests beyond what is accounted for by the institution and beyond what is considered aesthetic within the institution, whether it is discourse or phenomenon. Thus, cultural criticism's concern is not limited to recognized and accepted literature but extends beyond that.
2. This form of criticism benefits from traditional critical analysis methodologies of interpreting texts and studying historical references, in addition to benefiting from cultural criticism and institutional analysis.
3. The most distinctive feature of post-structuralist cultural criticism is its primary focus on discourse systems and textual disclosure systems, derived from post-structuralist trends as evident in the works of Barthes, Derrida, and Foucault, specifically. Leitch presented his concept of mental and non-mental systems as an alternative to the term ideology, referring to conflicting connotations. Thus, the practical application of analysis will reveal cohesive and disintegrated mental and non-mental systems simultaneously, complex and conflicting... **Leitch's aim in this was to simultaneously open up broader possibilities for cultural criticism in both its holistic and deconstructive treatment of the text or phenomenon.**

Based on this, we can say that Leitch did not advocate the idea of replacement or abandonment of literary aesthetic criticism, although he considered it a hindrance. Literary criticism throughout its history confined itself to studying the external influences (such as society, environment, and the author's persona) on the text or the formal and structural study of the text within the linguistic framework. However, cultural criticism attempted to provide another function for criticism, which is to address literary works in the light of cultural contexts,

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stemming from the text itself in dealing with the impact of major cultural discourses, the dominance of major cultural and ideological expressions in this text, and the role of the text in embedding them in the receivers' consciousness, without neglecting the importance of creating interactions and integration between critics within the framework of cultural criticism as a comprehensive postmodern concept.

Many researchers attribute the emergence of cultural criticism to several main pillars or indications, most notably the emergence and circulation of the term "cultural studies." Arthur Asa Berger refers to the fact that **"the term cultural studies is not a new term, as the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham began publishing a journal in 1971 that addressed media, popular culture, subcultures, ideological matters, literature, and semiotics."**¹²

The series of cultural studies originates from philosophical, anthropological, and sociological theories, with perhaps its first instalment being cultural materialism, which is considered a development of Marxist theory. It explores the relationship between the base and superstructure in society. It emphasizes the **"necessity of interaction between cultural creations such as literature and their historical context, including social, political, and economic elements."**¹³ Then came the New Historicism, which was directly influenced by Geertz's anthropology, Foucault's interest in power relations, and Derrida's deconstructive theory. **"The New Historicism does not work on the principle of subversion and demolition of the previous approach but adopts the principle of integration, construction, and accompaniment."**¹⁴ Steven Greenblatt, an American, was particularly interested in this direction and coined the term **"Cultural Poetics"** as a renewal of New Historicism in 1980. All of this was in the pursuit of studying Renaissance discourse, aiming to uncover the methods by which collective beliefs and experiences are shaped, how expression moves from one expressive tool to another, and how boundaries are drawn. Cultural practices are categorized between those considered artistic and those deprived of this status.¹⁵

Certainly, we must also refer to the fundamental and primary role played by **Edward Said** in establishing cultural criticism through several terms and themes. He sees the **need to trace the political impact of**





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writing through a cultural reading that reintegrates criticism into the world. For him, "the text is a cultural phenomenon that must be linked to the world's political, social, and cultural aspects."¹⁶

Additionally, he emphasizes the connections that unite texts with the existential realities of human life, politics, societies, and events. He distinguishes between the concepts of affinity and approximation, or affiliation according to translation. Affinity is "everything that describes the components of the text. It is an internal analysis of its aesthetics and structure. As for affiliation, it gives the text its range of movement... it is the re-creation of the relationships between texts and the world."¹⁷

In his book "Reflections on Exile," Said asserts through various approaches that he supports or agrees with limiting structural domination in the study of literature in favor of approaches based on restoring the historical experience that has been misrepresented and marginalized to a great extent by the prevailing paradigm.¹⁸ In another context, he clarifies his conception of the text, stating, "My position is that texts are worldly, to some extent events, and they are above all this and that, a share of the social world and human life, and definitely a share of the historical moments that have occupied their place in it, interpreted them even when they seem to deny all of that."¹⁹ Continuing in the same context, he asserts, "This kind of criticism can only be practiced behind and outside the framework of the consensus controlling this field."²⁰ The assertion that texts are worldly has led a group of researchers, including Al-Ghathami, to believe in Said's pioneering role in crystallizing the concept of the **civic critic**²¹, or the worldly, or the **secular critic**²², which is one of the first manifestations of cultural criticism. After describing the reality of the critical movement during that period and confining it to four directions, Said surpasses these directions towards worldly criticism: "**Criticism has its pause because it is skeptical and worldly.**"²³ Therefore, Said attempted to withdraw the text from textualization to the worldly, starting from the premise that we live in a "worldly history," which is the domain he talks about and in which the texts exist. Thus, he theorized about comprehensive and unrestricted cultural criticism.

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Edward Said first used this term in his book "Orientalism," where he included it as a subtitle in the third chapter, titled "Orientalism Worldness,"²⁴ referring to the worldliness of Orientalism.²⁵ Edward Said meant by this the extent to which Orientalists, in their writings, submit to the conditions of objective reality and life.

Regarding Said's perspective, Muhammad Berrada says, **"The concept of literature does not concern him much, and what concerns him is the literary discourse in general. Therefore, he analyzes texts in all fields using comparison, surpassing artificial boundaries... What preoccupies him is the common links between literature and other discourses, which makes him deviate from distinct texts or the single text, as he prioritizes a series of texts to analyze how the major textual collections that occupy the social space on which literature is based accumulate, especially the writings that are considered marginal compared to the dominant culture..."**²⁶

This was part of the memory that shaped the term, and thus, I can say that cultural criticism is a Western approach that brings together all the previous preliminary orientations. It emerged as a natural reaction to the exclusion of cultural dimensions by literary criticism, as the analysis of texts **"passed through a stage that did not pay attention to its cultural content. This is a problematic situation that cultural criticism seeks to analyze and ultimately suggest a solution."**²⁷ Thus, the analysis of texts overlooked the cultural components of the text as an aesthetic structure. Therefore, cultural criticism is a comprehensive intellectual theoretical framework that utilizes other theories, concepts, and cognitive systems to achieve what may escape literary methods or delve into it, **"and because cultural criticism is effective, not just a cognitive branch, it seeks to reach other knowledge by using a wide range of theories and concepts that allow for proximity to the cultural act in societies."**²⁸ It did not call for complete subversion or replacement but came as a qualitative addition aimed at familiarizing with all possible aspects of discourse or text, and it was in line with postmodern and postcolonial trends based on a set of previous literary and intellectual theories. It is not a flaw to say that this criticism has taken from existing theories; the complete transcendence is impossible, but deconstruction





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and systematic, more logical, harmonious, and capable reassembly is what cultural criticism has sought.

In the Arab world, the matter was somewhat mixed. The direction of criticism towards the culture of society led some critics to believe that it was a return to social criticism or civilizational criticism, as practiced by Taha Hussein, Al-Akhdar, Adonis, Mohammed Abid al-Jabri, Abdullah al-Arwi, and others. Until the Saudi thinker Abdullah al-Ghathami tried to theoretically systematize it based on the theories of Leitch and others and using literary critical tools, he shifted from studying the text in itself and for itself to studying the pattern. He began to see the text as a carrier of cultural patterns.

Al-Ghathami says, **"We are going through a phase of self-critical review in our current cultural stage, as imposed by the skeptical transitional question on the theories of criticism and modernity ... And this requires us to establish a cultural theory."**²⁹

Second: Al-Ghathami's Fundamental Foundations for Cultural Criticism

Al-Ghathami presents his thesis by mentioning some compelling justifications that prompted him to crystallize it. He believes that the literary term and literature must be freed from the constraint of institutional perception so that questions and conditions of aesthetics and types of discourses that reflect this aesthetics are reconsidered. He adds that **there must be an inclination to expose the flaws of aesthetics and to reveal what is repulsive in discourse. Just as we have theories in aesthetics, there must be theories in the repulsive, that is, in the flaws of aesthetics.**³⁰ Al-Ghathami sees that throughout the history of criticism, the critical tool remained harnessed to serve this aesthetics, justify it, market it, and pave the way for its cultural consumption. He believes that this tool has the experience, competence, and expertise that enable it to perform this role, so he does not see any possibility or necessity to abandon it but rather to work on bringing about a **"qualitative leap that touches the very critical question... and this will not be achieved unless the critical tool itself is transformed."**³¹ He believes that liberating the critical tool entangled with the literary necessitates liberating the term of criticism from its institutional constraint and



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directing the critical question and the critical tool to study what is cultural.

Al-Ghathami sees that effecting such a leap requires **"making adjustments and modifications in the term so that it performs the new task... and it will not rid itself (meaning the critical tool) and we will not rid ourselves along with it from the domination of terminology except through this transformation, which is an actual liberation process for us and the tool."**³² To achieve this shift, he proposes a number of procedural operations, including:³³

1. A shift in the critical term itself.
2. A shift in the concept (pattern).
3. A shift in the function (from textual criticism to pattern criticism).
4. A shift in the application.

We will only discuss the shift in the concept and function because they serve this paper:

The shift in the concept (pattern)

Al-Ghathami believes that the term "pattern" is widely used in public and private discourse to an extent that may distort its meaning. It initially seems simple as it refers to what is on a single system, as in the definition of the intermediate lexicon. It may also be synonymous with the meaning of "structure" or "system," according to the term by de Saussure. He believes that for him, the pattern has a set of characteristics, including:³⁴

1. The pattern is defined through its function, not just through its mere existence. The pattern function only occurs in a specific and constrained situation, which happens when two patterns or systems of discourse conflict, one of which is explicit and the other implicit. The implicit contradicts and annuls the explicit, and this is due to the project's aim to reveal the tricks of culture in passing its patterns. Therefore, there are four conditions (specifiers) to fulfill the pattern function:
 - a. Two patterns must occur simultaneously in one text or within the context of a single text.
 - b. The implicit must be contradictory and counter to the explicit. If there is no implicit pattern beneath the explicit one, then the text does not fall within the scope of cultural criticism.
 - c. The text must be beautiful and consumed as beautiful because aesthetics is the most dangerous trick of culture in passing patterns.



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d. The text must be popular and enjoy broad readership to observe the public action of the patterns striking the social and cultural mind.

2. This practically requires us to read texts and patterns in a particular way from the perspective of cultural criticism, meaning to read them as a cultural case. The text is not only a literary and aesthetic text but also a cultural event. Since so, the pattern indication will be the theoretical basis for disclosure and interpretation.

3. The implicit meaning is not manufactured by the author, but it is written and ingrained in discourse, composed by culture, and consumed by the masses of language users, including writers and readers.

4. The pattern has a narrative nature, moving in a sophisticated plot. Therefore, it is hidden and implicit and capable of always disappearing, using many masks, the most important of which is the mask of linguistic aesthetics. Through rhetoric, patterns pass safely and confidently.

5. These cultural patterns are eternal and entrenched historical patterns that always prevail. Their mark is the audience's rush to consume the cultural product that involves this type of pattern.

6. There is a kind of symbolic tyranny with a completely figurative and collective nature that constitutes the collective implicit. It plays the role of the active driving force in the cultural mind of the nation, being the hidden component of its taste, thinking patterns, and formulation of dominant patterns.

7. The condition of the existence of conflicting patterns in a single text does not refer to the text in its initial concept. Rather, it refers to discourse, namely the system of expression and disclosure, whether in a single text, a complex long text, an epic, a set of a certain author's productions, or a behavioral phenomenon.

The shift in function (from textual criticism to pattern criticism)

Al-Ghathami believes that the function of cultural criticism is to criticize the cultural consumer, not just culture in general, especially when aesthetics is in opposition and contradiction with reason and intellect, creating a kind of emotional conflict resulting from the contrast between thought, intellect, and consciousness, and the implicit patterns that govern our collective emotions and deep responses. He illustrates this by referring to the fact that "**the conscious and intellectual imaginit**



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believes that women are not just bodies but also minds and emotions, yet despite the presence of this proclaimed belief, there remains a subtle sensuality that is aroused by any joke or discourse that portrays the feminine body as a sensual object alone."³⁵ Consequently, Al-Ghathami sees that the self-aware culture does not have the power to nullify the effect of the pattern "because it is implicit on the one hand and deeply embedded since ancient times, and its disclosure requires continuous and intensive critical effort."³⁶

For all these reasons, he sees the need to shift the critical effort from text critique to pattern critique, or cultural text critique, and to elucidate the pattern tricks that culture resorts to in order to enhance its semantic values. He gives some examples of these tricks, including:³⁷

1. Suppressing reason and emphasizing emotions. This is one of the most dangerous rhetorical and poetic tricks, through which many things have been passed off in favor of irrational thinking in our culture.

2. The exaggeration maxim, and here we also invoke the maxim "The sweetest poetry is the most deceitful." If we consider these two maxims carefully, we find that they have created a rift between language and thinking, giving aestheticism a superiority over intellectualism, not only in poetry but also in coloring the cultural persona of the nation.

3. In our culture, every poetic saying and every poetic persona has been justified until ingrained patterns of values continued to pass unnoticed, granting them lasting dominance and a magical allure, which continued to be produced even by those described as enlightened and modern.

Al-Ghathami believes that cultural criticism is a branch of general textual criticism focused on critiquing the underlying patterns embedded within cultural discourse in all its manifestations, patterns, and forms. Its purpose is to uncover the hidden ugliness beneath the facade of aesthetics. He likens it to the science of reasons known among the scholars of Hadith, and he sees that his engagement will also be on readability, serving as a foundation for cultural consumption.





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Third: Theoretical Suggestions

After presenting the key principles and foundations of cultural criticism as clarified by Al-Ghathami, the paper will propose the alignment of cultural criticism as perceived by Al-Ghathami with Edward Said's perspective and within the literary framework based on the features of postmodernism. The true understanding of cultural criticism is that it is an **"interrelated, interconnected, transcendent, and diverse task... Cultural criticism can encompass literary theory, aesthetics, and criticism, as well as philosophical thinking, media analysis, popular cultural criticism, semiotic theory, psychoanalytic theory, Marxist theory, social theory, anthropology, communication studies, and other diverse means that characterize contemporary and even non-contemporary society and culture."**³⁸

Therefore, this paper is based on the idea that cultural criticism can include literary criticism, considering all criticism is a conscious cultural practice. It also considers that the question of the death of literary criticism is not possible, as the cultural one has not provided alternative answers for understanding, analyzing, and interpreting texts and discourses. It confined itself to the search for repugnant patterns.

We can argue that there are texts that have transcended repugnant patterns and other texts that sought to establish positive and more humane and tolerant patterns, which have rid themselves of the complex of the self and the other, for example. Other patterns have reconciled with human fragility, renouncing the inflated self in Arabic poetry and even praising fragility as the true nature of the anxious, fearful, suspicious, and skeptical human being in his major issues and affiliations, the forsaken and the abandoned.

Therefore, the first suggestion that will be made by this study is to expand the concept of "pattern" (or "nasaq" in Arabic), which, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, Al-Ghathami defined the conditions for considering it a pattern and the conditions for fulfilling its pattern function as follows:³⁹

1. Two patterns occurring together simultaneously in one text or by virtue of the same text.



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2. The implicit content should be contradictory and opposed to the explicit content. If there is no implicit pattern beneath the surface, then the text does not fall within the scope of cultural criticism.

This paper sees the pattern as a series of intellectual conceptions stemming from human beliefs, affiliations, or ideologies. It can carry the sedimentations of ideology, its repressions, the offspring of ugly ideas, and the biased or religious view of a matter, issue, person, or body. Just as the pattern can encompass all these, it will also encompass the pattern of human revolution against its ideology, constraints, and preoccupations of its larger society. It will also include patterns with relatively agreed-upon ethical values, considering the relativity of things that the self has deemed good, such as sharing, accepting the different other, and the call to renounce violence and murder, among other things. Moreover, ordinary things can become patterns, and nature can become a pattern in the voice of a poet, the earth, anxiety, the complex relationship with things, fears, death, and deficiency.

Regarding the contradiction of the patterns, the paper does not see a necessity for this. Implicit patterns always give signals that refer to them, or hints, or are left for interpretation and understanding. Therefore, assuming the necessity of an underlying contradiction would lead us to face a discourse or textual hypocrisy that conceals what it does not declare, and it would make us doubt any text, any statement, and any letter as to whether it is a reference to some conscious or unconscious underlying matter. However, liberating the implicit from the necessity of contradiction would make us more at ease with texts and discourses. We would find flexibility in tracking these patterns with their ugliness or beauty, with their consciousness or lack thereof. All of this involves assumption, interpretation, and the cultural reproduction of these texts through an approach that integrates discourse analysis, literary analysis, and cultural analysis.

A group of researchers before this paper attempted to make numerous alignments for a comprehensive and unifying theory or to reconcile without relying on the theory of canceling the other or the death of literary criticism. The researcher, Malha Al-Suhaimi, saw the urgency of reconciliation through the adoption of four methodological steps for analysis:⁴⁰



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1.The stage of cultural contextualization: This stage studies all the cultural thresholds surrounding the author, title, introduction, and dedication.

2.The stage of internal division: Here, we analyze the text aesthetically, structurally, semiotically, and stylistically, focusing on all that is artistic, linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical to understand what is cultural.

3.The stage of cultural monitoring: This stage relies on monitoring the underlying cultural metaphors.

4.The stage of cultural interpretation: In this stage, we rely on humanities and criticism to reveal the cultural dimensions, expose ideologies, criticize illusions and institutional myths, and do so in the form of cultural judgments, summaries, and conclusions.

Undoubtedly, in this suggestion, we perceive a certain contradiction. For instance, interpretations cannot produce judgments and conclusions. The role of the critic is to illuminate, not to judge. In addition, a number of observations led this paper to consider expanding the framework through levels of analysis, with flexibility that allows the critic to choose the level in which they wish to operate. The study sees that it is not necessary to practice all levels at once, but it is necessary that post-modern critical practice encompasses them all and that it is comprehensive and integrated, giving us a complete comprehensive understanding and a complete critique of all aspects of the text or discourse. Accordingly, we can propose it as follows:

First level: Study of the discourse or text from the outside, including:

1.Preliminary introduction about the author, their affiliations, and the most important information that may indicate something during the analysis.

2.Study of the work's thresholds: Such as the cover, the name (the speaker of the discourse), the panel, the font, the dedication, and the back cover, a semiotic study, considering that "the title gives the reader an idea of the content of the work, intertwined with the visual image placed on the cover... It is the first entry to the text, as it gives it identity and forms the central point... From it, the reader crosses into the text."⁴¹

Second level: Studying the text from the inside, including structure, rhetoric, form, and beauty.

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Third level: Study of textual correlations. Relations include the relationship between texts established in history and heritage or religions. It necessarily includes quotations, such as paying attention to the relationship between a poem and the Song of Songs in the Torah or between a novel and the novel "Season of Migration to the North," as it carries an institutional theme in the narrative. This can give us an initial glimpse of the possible patterns generated through the texts.

Fourth level: Research into cultural patterns, as we clarified our concept of the pattern earlier. During this level, which is a level of interpretation and possibility, we can glimpse or assume the existence of a proliferating pattern that is reinforced or hidden, ugly or beautiful, that promotes or condemns. Through this, we can refer to all the cognitive and cultural baggage that the text evokes and invoke it into the space of analysis.

Conclusion and Results

This study attempted to propose levels for studying the text or the content in a post-modern critical study that does not stem from the concept of the death of literary criticism, nor from the search for the grotesque pattern, but from the alignment of all the propositions to come out with a comprehensive and clear critical practice. This study opens the door to an attempt to apply its practical approach through the study of texts where patterns are traced, and many narrative transformations and evolving patterns are observed.

The research has reached a set of results that can be summarized as follows:

1. The American critic, Vincent B. Leitch, is considered the first to contribute to formulating the term cultural criticism as a theoretical concept for a post-modern and post-structural critical project.
2. Leitch did not call for the idea of replacement or abandoning aesthetic literary criticism, although he considered it an obstacle. Cultural criticism, however, attempted to give criticism another function, which is addressing literary works in the light of cultural contexts.
3. Al-Ghathami attempted to present a series of leaps in terminological, conceptual, functional, and applied levels.
4. The study believes that Al-Ghathami's cultural criticism did not provide alternative answers for understanding, analyzing, and interpreting texts and discourses, limiting itself to the search for grotesque patterns.
5. The study proposed expanding the scope of cultural criticism to include four levels: the study of discourse or text from the outside, the study of





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the text from the inside, the study of textual interrelations, and the study of cultural patterns.

6. The study sees that assuming the necessity of the existence of an implicit contradiction in the pattern will put us in front of a discourse or a text understood as hypocritical, concealing what it does not declare. However, liberating the implicit from the contradictory necessity will make us more comfortable with texts and discourses, and we will find flexibility in tracing these patterns in their ugliness or beauty, with their consciousness or unconsciousness, all of this being an assumption and interpretation, and a cultural reproduction of these texts through an a

footnotes

¹ Zainab Saleh Al-Ashwah, (Ways and Methods of Scientific Research), Arab Group for Arabization and Publishing, Cairo, 2916, p. 88.

² Jaber Asfour, (Contemporary Theories), Family Library, Cairo, PT, p. 267.

³ Tzvetan Todorov, (Criticism of Criticism), translated by Sami Suwaidan, House of General Cultural Affairs, Baghdad, 1986, p. 64.

⁴ Ibrahim Fathi, (Cultural Criticism), Fosool Magazine, Issue 63, Egyptian General Book Authority, 2004, p. 131.

⁵ Previous Reference

⁶ Previous Reference

⁷ Vincent B.Leitch, (Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, PostStructuralism), Columbia University Press, New york, 1992, p 3

⁸ Vincent B.Leitch, (Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, PostStructuralism), previous reference, p 39

⁹ Previous Reference p167.

¹⁰ Previous Reference p8.

¹¹ Abdullah Al-Ghathami, (Cultural Criticism: A Reading of Arab Cultural Patterns), p. 32.

¹² Arthur Asa Berger, (Cultural Criticism: An Introduction to Basic Concepts), Translated by: Wafaa Ibrahim and Ramadan Bastawisi, Supreme Council of Culture, Cairo, 2003, p. 31

¹³ Abdul Aziz Hamouda, (Out of the Labyrinth: A Study in the Authority of the Text), The World of Knowledge, Kuwait, 2003, p. 242.

¹⁴ The previous reference p223.

¹⁵ Abdullah Al-Ghathami, (Cultural Criticism: A Reading of Arab Cultural Patterns), previous reference, p. 32.

¹⁶ Edward Said, (The Scholar, the Text, and the Critic), p. 8-9.

¹⁷ Amina Rashid, (Edward Said), Fosool Magazine, Egyptian Book Authority, Cairo, Issue 64, 2004, p. 103.

¹⁸ Edward Said, (Reflections on Exile), translated by: Thaer Deeb, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 2004, p. 30.

¹⁹ Edward Said, (The Scholar, the Text, and the Critic), previous reference, p. 8

²⁰ The previous reference, p8.



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²¹ Abdullah Al-Ghathami, (Cultural Criticism: A Reading of Arab Cultural Patterns), previous reference, p. 50.

²² See Faryal Jabouri Ghazoul's presentation of the book *The Scholar, the Text, and the Critic* by Edward Said in *Fosool* magazine, volume 64, 2004, p. 150.

²³ Edward Said, (*The Scholar, the Text, and the Critic*), previous reference, p. 31

²⁴ Edward Said, (*Orientalism*), London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 226.

²⁵ As translated by Kamal Abu Deeb, for example, in the Arab Research Foundation's translation of *Orientalism*. See: Edward Said, (*Orientalism*), translated by Abu Deeb, Arab Research Foundation, Beirut, 2005, p. 234.

²⁶ Muhammad Barada, (*The Arab Critic, the Text, the Context: Paradoxes*), Moroccan Culture Magazine, Ministry of Culture and Youth, Issue 28, 2005, p. 5

²⁷ Nabila Ibrahim, (*Cultural Criticism within the Framework of Feminist Criticism*), Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Literary Criticism held in Cairo in November 2000, Dar Gharib for Printing and Publishing, Cairo, 2003, p. 261.

²⁸ Mohsen Jassim Al-Musawi, (*Theory and Cultural Criticism*), Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 2005, p. 12

²⁹ Abdullah Al-Ghathami, (*Cultural Criticism: A Reading of Arab Cultural Patterns*), previous reference, p. 15-16.

³⁰ Abdullah Al-Ghathami, (*Cultural Criticism: A Reading of Arab Cultural Patterns*), previous reference, p. 59.

³¹ The Previous Reference, p60-61.

³² The Previous Reference, p62.

³³ The Previous Reference, p62.

³⁴ The Previous Reference, p77-81.

³⁵ The Previous Reference, p82.

³⁶ The Previous Reference, p82.

³⁷ The Previous Reference, p82-83.

³⁸ Arthur Asa Berger, (*Cultural Criticism: An Introduction to Basic Concepts*), previous reference, p30-31.

³⁹ Abdullah Al-Ghathami, (*Cultural Criticism: A Reading of Arab Cultural Patterns*), previous reference, p. 77.

⁴⁰ Malha bint Ma'alth Al-Suhaimi, (*The Theory of Cultural Criticism: Its Pros and Cons*), Journal of the Faculty of Arts at Taibah University, Medina, undated, p. 27. See: <https://bit.ly/3Q0qjVb>.

⁴¹ Ahmed, Nafla, (*Semiotic Analysis of Narrative Art*), Modern University Office, Cairo, 2012, p. 39.

pproach that combines discourse analysis, literary analysis, and culture.

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