

# Beyond Formalism: Epistemic Genealogies and the Politics of the Implicit Pattern in Cultural Criticism

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## Abstract

Cultural criticism emerged from a broad reorientation in the humanities that displaced the autonomous literary text from the exclusive centre of critical attention and redirected analysis toward culture, discourse, ideology, institutions, and everyday practices. This article reconsiders that transition by examining the epistemic genealogies that made cultural criticism possible and by focusing on the concept of the implicit cultural pattern as one of its most productive yet methodologically demanding categories. Rather than presenting cultural criticism as a single, unified theory, the study treats it as an interdisciplinary critical practice formed through the convergence of British cultural studies, interpretive anthropology, New Historicism, cultural materialism, poststructuralist critique, and later Arab appropriations of these traditions. The discussion pays particular attention to the Birmingham tradition, Raymond Williams's cultural materialism, Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism, Vincent Leitch's poststructuralist cultural criticism, and Abd Allah al-Ghadhami's formulation of the implicit pattern in Arab criticism. Through a qualitative conceptual analysis of major theoretical texts and selected Arabic critical writings, the article argues that the significance of cultural criticism lies in its ability to relate textual form to the social circulation of power and meaning. At the same time, it cautions against treating every aesthetic structure as evidence of a hidden ideological pattern. A defensible cultural reading must demonstrate how a pattern recurs, how it is socially intelligible, how it interacts with explicit discourse, and how it is sustained through institutions or collective habits. The article therefore proposes a more disciplined model of cultural criticism in which genealogy, contextualization, textual evidence, and reflexive interpretation operate together.

**Keywords:** cultural criticism; cultural studies; implicit pattern; New Historicism; cultural materialism; postmodern criticism; Arab criticism.

## Introduction

The transformation of literary and cultural criticism in the second half of the twentieth century cannot be reduced to the replacement of one school by another. It involved a deeper redefinition of the object of criticism itself. Structuralism, formalism, and several text-centred approaches had made the internal organization of the work a privileged site of interpretation. Later critical formations did not simply reject textual analysis; they questioned the assumption that the text could be adequately understood as an autonomous system detached from history, institutions, social conflict, and the practices through which meaning is produced and circulated. The result was an enlarged critical field in which literature became one cultural practice among others rather than an isolated aesthetic object.

Cultural criticism developed within this enlarged field. Its intellectual force derives precisely from its refusal to accept a rigid boundary between literary discourse and the wider systems of representation that organize collective life.

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Berger (1995) presents cultural criticism as a practice that draws on multiple theoretical traditions, including Marxism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, sociology, and literary theory. Leitch (1992), from a poststructuralist perspective, similarly argues for a cultural criticism capable of moving beyond narrowly formalist accounts of literature toward the analysis of discourse and social formations. Such positions do not abolish the literary; rather, they relocate it within networks of power, convention, ideology, representation, and institutional authority.

The same intellectual movement altered the status of popular culture and everyday practices. British cultural studies expanded the legitimate archive of criticism by treating mass media, working-class culture, subcultures, race, gender, and ordinary consumption as serious objects of knowledge. This shift was inseparable from a changed understanding of culture itself. Culture was no longer restricted to canonical artistic production or elite taste; it could be approached as a lived, contested, and socially organized field of meaning. Hall's work on representation later clarified how meanings are produced through signifying systems rather than merely reflected by them (Hall, 1997). In this sense, cultural criticism investigates not only what a text says but also the conditions under which certain statements, identities, values, and hierarchies become intelligible.

The present study develops a conceptual reconsideration of cultural criticism by connecting its epistemic genealogies to the methodological problem of the implicit cultural pattern. An earlier study by Boubasla (2026) surveyed major references, the emergence of cultural criticism, and the concept of cultural pattern. The present article takes a different path: it asks how these genealogies can be integrated into a coherent critical practice and what methodological safeguards are necessary when critics claim to uncover meanings that are latent rather than explicitly announced. The problem is therefore not only historical or terminological. It concerns the validity of cultural interpretation: by what reasoning does a critic move from textual form to cultural pattern, and how can that movement avoid becoming arbitrary?

This question is particularly important in the Arab critical context, where al-Ghadhami's project gave the implicit pattern a central place. His work shifted attention from the declared aesthetic function of discourse toward the cultural systems that may operate beneath it. The proposal was intellectually provocative because it challenged the assumption that aesthetic value is ideologically innocent. Yet the strength of this critical gesture also creates a methodological risk. If the implicit is defined only as what the critic suspects behind the visible, interpretation can become self-confirming. A stronger cultural criticism must therefore connect the implicit to recurrence, social recognizability, institutional history, textual contradiction, and demonstrable relations of power.

## **2. Research Problem, Objectives, and Method**

The central problem addressed in this article is the relationship between the historical formation of cultural criticism and the analytical use of the cultural pattern. The literature on cultural criticism often combines three different operations: reconstructing the emergence of the field, defining its interdisciplinary identity, and applying concepts such as ideology, representation, hegemony, or implicit pattern to particular texts. When these operations are merged without distinction, genealogy may be mistaken for method and theoretical vocabulary may be treated as evidence. The study therefore separates them analytically in order to show how intellectual history can inform, but cannot replace, a procedure of interpretation.

The article pursues four objectives. First, it reconstructs the major intellectual lineages that enabled the movement from textual autonomy toward cultural reading. Second, it clarifies the distinctive contributions of British cultural studies, New Historicism, cultural materialism, and poststructuralist cultural criticism. Third, it examines the Arab reception of cultural criticism, with particular emphasis on al-Ghadhami's concept of the implicit pattern. Fourth, it proposes methodological criteria for using the category of pattern without reducing criticism to speculation. These objectives shift the article from a descriptive inventory of schools toward a comparative and methodological argument.

Methodologically, the study adopts qualitative conceptual analysis and critical synthesis. It reads foundational and representative theoretical works as arguments situated within specific intellectual problems rather than as a sequence of isolated definitions. The analysis therefore asks what each tradition understood by culture, what it considered a legitimate object of criticism, how it conceptualized the relation between text and context, and what role it assigned to power. The study also compares these positions with selected Arabic critical formulations drawn from the existing manuscript's reference base, including al-Ghadhami, al-Ruwayli and al-Bazi'i, Qansuwa, Alimat, Hamza, and al-Ahmar. The aim is not

to claim complete coverage of the field, but to construct a theoretically coherent map adequate to the methodological question posed here.

### **3. From Textual Autonomy to Cultural Reading**

The emergence of cultural criticism is best understood as part of a broader crisis of textual autonomy. Formalist and structuralist procedures had produced powerful tools for describing textual organization, but their methodological success also encouraged the idea that the internal relations of the text could supply the principal explanation of meaning. The cultural turn challenged this assumption by insisting that language is never socially empty. Genres, metaphors, narrative conventions, classifications, and aesthetic norms are historically produced; they carry traces of the institutions and conflicts through which they become authoritative. The point is not that context mechanically determines form. It is that form itself participates in culture.

Interpretive anthropology contributed to this reorientation by treating culture as a symbolic field that must be interpreted rather than as a collection of external facts. Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) advanced an interpretive conception of culture and the well-known practice of thick description. For cultural criticism, the significance of this move lies in the refusal to separate an action or sign from the network of meanings that makes it intelligible. A literary image, a ritual, a fashion practice, a political slogan, or a television genre can therefore be read as part of a larger symbolic order. Such an approach encourages contextual density: the critic must reconstruct the codes and social assumptions that allow a cultural sign to operate.

At the same time, the cultural turn was profoundly shaped by Marxist questions about ideology and social power. The issue was not simply whether literature reflects society, but how cultural production participates in social relations. Williams's *Marxism and Literature* (1977) is crucial because it develops cultural materialism as an account of culture as a material social process rather than a decorative superstructure. Concepts such as hegemony, dominant, residual, and emergent formations allow the critic to understand culture as internally differentiated and historically dynamic. Cultural criticism inherits from this tradition a suspicion of apparently natural values and an interest in the processes through which particular meanings become dominant.

Poststructuralism intensified the challenge by destabilizing the idea that meaning is secured by authorial intention or by a stable linguistic centre. Leitch's *Cultural Criticism, Literary Theory, Poststructuralism* (1992) explicitly connects poststructuralist theory with a renewed cultural criticism concerned with social formations, authorship, genre, convention, minority discourse, and the social text. This model does not abandon close reading. It changes the questions asked of close reading. Instead of treating textual complexity as an end in itself, the critic examines how textual operations participate in systems of inclusion and exclusion, authority and resistance, normalization and difference.

The movement from formalism to cultural criticism should therefore not be narrated as a simple victory of context over text. Such a binary would reproduce the very simplification cultural criticism seeks to overcome. The more productive position is relational: text and context are mutually constitutive. Discourses emerge in history, but they also help organize historical perception. Institutions authorize certain genres and voices, but texts can rework or contest institutional meanings. A cultural reading consequently requires attention to both rhetorical construction and social circulation.

### **4. Genealogies of Cultural Criticism**

#### **4.1 British Cultural Studies: Culture as Lived and Contested Practice**

The Birmingham tradition is one of the most decisive genealogies of cultural criticism because it transformed the scale on which culture could be studied. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, associated with figures such as Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, and Stuart Hall, made popular culture, media, youth, race, class, and everyday life legitimate objects of rigorous analysis. The importance of this move was epistemological as well as political. It rejected the equation of culture with elite artistic achievement and redirected criticism toward the practices by which ordinary subjects negotiate social meaning.

This expansion of the archive also changed the critic's relation to value. Rather than asking only whether a cultural object satisfies inherited aesthetic standards, cultural studies asks who produced those standards, what social distinctions they maintain, and whose practices they exclude. Such questions help explain why al-Ahmar (2019) describes cultural studies as an extraordinarily expansive field. Its openness is not methodological disorder by necessity; it reflects the fact that cultural meaning is generated across many sites - schools, media, markets, religious institutions, families, subcultures, state discourse, and

artistic production.

Hall's work on representation is especially useful for clarifying this orientation. Representation is not a neutral mirror that simply duplicates a pre-existing reality. It is a signifying practice through which objects, identities, and differences become meaningful within cultural codes (Hall, 1997). This insight gives cultural criticism a precise task: it must analyze how descriptions, images, classifications, and narrative forms produce intelligibility. A pattern becomes culturally significant not simply because it recurs linguistically, but because recurrence contributes to a structured way of seeing people and the world.

The Birmingham genealogy also directs attention toward hegemony. Cultural power is often effective not because it speaks only through explicit commands but because it becomes embedded in common sense, taste, routine, and expectation. This dimension is directly relevant to the later concept of the implicit pattern. The implicit is not merely a hidden message buried by an author. It may be a normalized cultural relation that neither author nor reader needs to formulate consciously in order for it to remain active.

#### **4.2 New Historicism: Textuality, History, and the Circulation of Power**

New Historicism introduced another decisive challenge to autonomous textuality. Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (1980) became emblematic of an interpretive practice that examined literary selfhood in relation to religious, political, institutional, and colonial discourses. Later work described literature as participating in the circulation of social energy rather than occupying a privileged realm outside historical power. Greenblatt's publications and the subsequent reflections of Gallagher and Greenblatt (2000) show that New Historicism developed less as a closed theoretical system than as a practice of juxtaposing literary and non-literary materials in order to expose unexpected relations.

This practice matters for cultural criticism because it changes the status of evidence. A literary text may be read alongside legal documents, travel writing, medical discourse, ritual, political performance, or anecdote. The purpose is not to collapse all documents into sameness but to investigate the discursive conditions under which they become mutually intelligible. Gallagher and Greenblatt (2000) emphasize features such as the use of anecdotes, attention to representation, ideological analysis, and the recovery of neglected details. These features encourage a cultural critic to look for discontinuities and minor traces rather than beginning with a totalizing account of the age.

The relevance of New Historicism to the study of patterns lies in its insistence that recurrence must be historically located. If a critic identifies a recurring image of authority, gender, race, or marginality, the next question should not be merely what that image means inside the text. The critic should ask how the image resonates with other discourses circulating in the same historical field. Such contextual triangulation helps distinguish a culturally organized pattern from an idiosyncratic interpretive impression. Nevertheless, New Historicism also warns against reducing history to a stable background. Historical knowledge is itself mediated by documents and interpretive practices. Cultural criticism therefore works with representations of history, not with an unfiltered past. This insight is important in discussions of implicit patterns because it prevents the critic from treating context as a final authority that automatically resolves textual ambiguity.

#### **4.3 Cultural Materialism: Ideology, Institutions, and Contestation**

Cultural materialism shares with New Historicism an interest in historical context, but its political emphasis is often more explicit. Williams's formulation of cultural materialism emerged through a long engagement with Marxism and sought to understand cultural activity as part of the material processes of social life (Williams, 1977). The field later became associated with readings that foreground institutions, ideological struggle, class relations, and the possibility of dissident interpretation. In the Arabic critical literature represented in the source manuscript, Hamza (2017) and Ba'li (2011) similarly situate cultural materialism within the postmodern and poststructuralist expansion of critical practice.

One of cultural materialism's enduring contributions is the refusal to treat culture as a harmonious totality. A society contains dominant meanings, residual practices inherited from earlier formations, and emergent forms that may not yet have institutional stability. This model complicates the idea of pattern. A cultural pattern is not necessarily universal within a society; it may belong to a dominant group, a particular institution, or a contested historical moment. Critics who speak of 'the cultural pattern' in the singular risk flattening this heterogeneity.

The institutional dimension is equally important. Patterns persist because they are carried by practices - education, publishing, ritual, law, media, family arrangements, aesthetic canons, and everyday repetition. To identify an implicit pattern responsibly, therefore, the critic should ask what material or institutional

processes reproduce it. Without that question, the concept can drift into an abstract psychology of collective culture. Cultural materialism reminds us that cultural power requires sites of transmission.

#### **4.4 Poststructuralist Cultural Criticism: Discourse beyond the Literary Canon**

Leitch's intervention gives cultural criticism a distinctly poststructuralist articulation. His 1992 study responds to the turn from literature toward discourse and argues for a critical practice capable of examining social formations, textual conventions, authorship, minority literatures, and the institutional organization of interpretation (Leitch, 1992). This orientation is valuable because it resists both aesthetic isolation and simplistic sociological reduction. The text remains a complex rhetorical construction, but it is approached as part of a wider social text.

Berger (1995) reaches a related conclusion from a more introductory and interdisciplinary direction. Cultural criticism, in his formulation, uses concepts from several fields rather than constituting a single self-contained theory. This plurality helps explain why the term is sometimes difficult to define. Cultural criticism is less a doctrine with one vocabulary than a problem-oriented mode of inquiry. It selects concepts according to the cultural object and the question under investigation. Its coherence derives from its concern with meaning, representation, power, institutions, and social life rather than from allegiance to one theoretical master system.

The advantage of such openness is methodological flexibility. The danger is theoretical eclecticism without justification. A critic can too easily assemble concepts from incompatible traditions and treat their coexistence as interdisciplinarity. A rigorous cultural criticism must explain why a particular concept is necessary, what level of the object it illuminates, and how it relates to other concepts used in the analysis. Interdisciplinarity should increase explanatory precision rather than substitute for it.

#### **5. Cultural Criticism in the Arab Critical Field**

The entry of cultural criticism into Arab critical discourse followed a pattern familiar from earlier encounters with Western literary theory: translation, terminological negotiation, adaptation, resistance, and attempts to locate indigenous antecedents. The source manuscript rightly notes that the reception of the term was accompanied by uncertainty over whether earlier Arab studies of society and culture should retrospectively be classified as cultural criticism. This question is not merely terminological. It concerns the difference between writing about culture in a general sense and adopting a critical procedure specifically oriented toward the operations of cultural discourse.

Al-Ruwayli and al-Bazi'i (2005) define cultural criticism broadly as an intellectual activity that takes culture in its comprehensiveness as an object of examination. Qansuwa (2007) similarly resists treating it as one closed method among others and describes it as a practice capable of engaging the wide range of texts produced by culture. These definitions preserve the interdisciplinary openness associated with Berger and cultural studies. They also show why the boundaries of the field remain porous: almost any meaning-producing practice can, in principle, become an object of cultural criticism.

The most influential attempt to give cultural criticism a more specific Arab critical identity is al-Ghadhami's project. *Cultural Criticism: A Reading in Arab Cultural Patterns* combines theoretical declaration with application to a broad corpus of Arabic poetic discourse. The importance of the project lies less in the claim that literary criticism should literally disappear than in the critical provocation contained in that claim. Al-Ghadhami redirects attention from the celebrated aesthetic surface of canonical discourse toward the cultural values and repeated dispositions that may travel through that surface (al-Ghadhami, 2015).

This shift generated significant debate. Supporters saw in the project a means of exposing cultural authority hidden behind eloquence and canonical prestige. Critics questioned the sharp opposition between aesthetic reading and cultural reading and asked whether the concept of pattern had been adequately defined. The source manuscript notes Abd al-Nabi Istif's objection that a concept so central to the project requires greater definitional clarity. That objection remains methodologically important. If the pattern is the principal analytical unit, the critic must be able to distinguish it from theme, motif, ideology, stereotype, discourse, and simple recurrence.

The Arab reception also demonstrates that theories change when they migrate. Cultural criticism in Arabic cannot be understood as a passive copy of Birmingham cultural studies or American New Historicism. Its categories are refracted through debates about the Arabic canon, rhetoric, modernity, heritage, identity, and institutional authority. Al-Ghadhami's emphasis on the implicit pattern is one example of this transformation. It gives cultural criticism a distinctive focus on the contradiction between declared aesthetic value and culturally sedimented assumptions. That focus is productive, but it becomes

most persuasive when linked back to the broader genealogies of hegemony, representation, discourse, and historical context.

## **6. The Implicit Cultural Pattern as an Analytical Category**

### **6.1 From Recurrence to Cultural Function**

The term pattern is frequently used in criticism, but cultural criticism assigns it a stronger function than ordinary recurrence. A pattern is not simply a repeated word, image, or narrative device. It becomes culturally significant when repetition participates in a socially intelligible organization of values. Alimat (2015) stresses the systemic character of the pattern and its capacity to operate through aesthetic and figurative forms. Al-Ghadhami (2015) likewise treats the implicit pattern as something that can work beneath the declared discourse and can exploit aesthetic attractiveness as a vehicle for cultural transmission.

This formulation can be strengthened by distinguishing four levels. At the textual level, the critic identifies recurring relations, contrasts, metaphors, roles, or narrative distributions. At the discursive level, these recurrences are connected to recognizable ways of speaking about identity, authority, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, or other cultural categories. At the institutional level, the critic investigates where such discourses are reproduced and authorized. At the historical level, the critic asks how the pattern changes across time and what conflicts or alternatives accompany it. A pattern that cannot be traced beyond a single isolated textual effect should be treated cautiously.

The distinction between manifest and implicit patterns is analytically useful when it describes a contradiction rather than an invisible essence. Boulkaibat (2017), as cited in the source manuscript, differentiates between a manifest pattern available on the textual surface and an implicit pattern that withdraws into the deeper or unsaid structure. The difficulty is that the implicit cannot be verified by visibility. It must be argued through evidence. The strongest evidence arises when explicit declarations are systematically undermined by narrative roles, recurring evaluative language, structural exclusions, or patterned outcomes.

### **6.2 Aesthetic Form as Vehicle, Not Enemy**

One of the most provocative claims associated with Arab cultural criticism is that the rhetorical-aesthetic surface may mask cultural defects. This insight should not be interpreted as a reason to abandon aesthetic analysis. On the contrary, cultural criticism needs formal analysis because cultural patterns do not travel outside form. Rhythm, metaphor, genre, focalization, irony, character distribution, visual composition, and narrative sequence are among the mechanisms through which cultural meanings acquire force. The aesthetic is therefore a vehicle of cultural operation, not merely a decorative screen.

The opposition between literary criticism and cultural criticism becomes unproductive when it assumes that the former studies beauty while the latter studies ideology. Literary form is itself historical and ideological without ceasing to be aesthetic. A cultural critic who neglects form may identify an ideological proposition but fail to explain how the text persuades, naturalizes, disrupts, or complicates it. Conversely, a purely formal reading may describe intricate organization without asking what cultural work that organization performs. A stronger model integrates both levels.

This integrated position also answers part of the controversy around al-Ghadhami's critique of literary criticism. The problem is not that aesthetic criticism is inherently incapable of ideological insight; rather, any criticism becomes limited when it treats its preferred level of analysis as sufficient. Cultural criticism contributes an additional question: what social meanings become effective through the aesthetic organization being described?

### **6.3 Pattern, Power, and the Problem of Intentionality**

The implicit pattern is especially valuable because it separates cultural function from conscious authorial intention. A writer may reproduce a hierarchy that the explicit argument appears to reject, just as a popular genre may normalize assumptions no individual producer deliberately planned. This idea is compatible with the broader poststructuralist critique of intention and with cultural studies accounts of ideology and common sense. The critic's task is therefore not to accuse an author of secretly intending a hidden message. It is to show how discourse participates in a cultural logic larger than individual intention.

Yet removing intention does not remove the burden of evidence. The critic must avoid a circular procedure in which the existence of a hidden pattern is inferred from the critic's suspicion and the suspicion is then treated as proof of the pattern. A defensible argument should establish textual recurrence, contextual plausibility, and a relationship to recognizable social structures. Ideally, it should

also consider counter-evidence: moments in which the text resists, ironizes, or destabilizes the very pattern being proposed.

Power, moreover, should not be understood only as domination imposed from above. Cultural patterns can be contradictory and negotiated. Audiences may appropriate a dominant form for resistant purposes; marginalized discourse may reproduce some dominant assumptions while contesting others. Hall's model of representation and the cultural studies tradition encourage precisely this attention to struggle over meaning. The implicit pattern is therefore best conceived as a field of pressure rather than an automatic ideological command.

## **7. Toward a More Disciplined Practice of Cultural Criticism**

Because cultural criticism is interdisciplinary, its methodological standards are sometimes less explicit than those of more narrowly defined approaches. This does not mean that cultural reading is necessarily subjective or impressionistic. It means that the critic must state the inferential steps that connect textual observation to cultural claim. The following principles can make the practice more disciplined without converting it into a rigid formula.

First, the object of analysis should be clearly delimited. Culture in the broadest sense is too large to function as an explanation. The critic needs to identify the discourse, institution, social category, historical formation, or representational practice relevant to the text. Second, the pattern should be demonstrated through recurrence or structural organization rather than asserted from a single example. Third, contextualization should be evidential: the critic should use historically and socially relevant materials that illuminate the pattern rather than accumulate background information with no analytical function.

Fourth, the critic should distinguish between pattern and theme. A theme is an explicit or recurring subject, such as exile, gender, authority, or memory. A cultural pattern concerns the structured relations through which such a subject is valued, distributed, normalized, or contested. Fifth, the analysis should explain mediation. If a pattern is said to belong to a wider culture, by what channels does it reach the text and its readers? Institutions, genres, educational traditions, media forms, religious discourse, law, or family practices may provide that mediation.

Sixth, interpretation should remain reflexive. Cultural critics are themselves positioned within institutions, languages, and theoretical traditions. The concept of the implicit can encourage the illusion that the critic occupies a privileged external position from which hidden truth becomes transparent. A more cautious practice recognizes that critical vocabularies also select, organize, and exclude. Reflexivity does not paralyze interpretation; it makes the grounds of interpretation more visible.

Seventh, cultural criticism should preserve contradiction. A text may carry dominant and resistant meanings simultaneously. Williams's distinction among dominant, residual, and emergent formations offers a useful reminder that cultural objects are not ideologically homogeneous. Similarly, New Historicist attention to minor details and discontinuities can prevent a reading from forcing every textual element into one predetermined pattern. The aim is not to discover a single secret meaning, but to explain the relations among competing cultural logics.

These principles also clarify the role of comparison. If the critic claims that a pattern is culturally established, comparison across texts or discourses can strengthen the argument. The comparison need not be quantitative, but it should show that the proposed relation exceeds one isolated passage. Comparative evidence is particularly valuable in studies of canonical literature, popular culture, media discourse, and institutional language, where repeated representational habits can be traced across genres.

## **8. Discussion: Cultural Criticism between Openness and Method**

The genealogy reconstructed above shows that cultural criticism is not the product of one founding moment. It is better understood as a convergence of transformations: the anthropological interpretation of culture, Marxist theories of ideology and hegemony, the Birmingham expansion of legitimate cultural objects, poststructuralist critiques of stable meaning, New Historicist attention to textualized history, and cultural materialist emphasis on institutions and conflict. Leitch's 1992 intervention gave the term a programmatic poststructuralist articulation, but the practice draws on a much wider intellectual history. This explains both its strength and its recurring conceptual ambiguity.

Its strength lies in its capacity to connect domains that specialized criticism often separates. Cultural criticism can place canonical literature beside popular media, examine aesthetic value alongside institutional authority, and relate textual form to the production of social identities. It can also make visible cultural assumptions that become effective precisely because they are ordinary, pleasurable, or aesthetically prestigious. In this respect, the concept of the implicit pattern captures a genuine critical

problem: culture often works through what appears self-evident rather than through explicit doctrinal statement.

Its ambiguity arises when interdisciplinarity becomes unlimited. If every cultural object can be read through any available theory, the criteria for choosing concepts become unclear. The proposed solution is not to narrow cultural criticism into a fixed method, because such closure would contradict its historical formation. The solution is to make the logic of each interpretation explicit. Concepts should be selected in relation to the research problem; evidence should operate at textual, contextual, and institutional levels; and claims about hidden patterns should be proportionate to the evidence available.

The Arab critical reception makes this methodological question particularly visible. Al-Ghadhami's project was productive because it forced criticism to ask what cultural work might be concealed by aesthetic prestige. At the same time, objections concerning the definition of pattern reveal the need for operational clarity. By reconnecting the implicit pattern to hegemony, representation, material institutions, and historical discourse, the concept can be made more analytically robust. It then becomes less a metaphor for hidden ideology and more a testable interpretive proposition about recurring cultural relations.

This reconnection also reduces the false opposition between Western theory and Arab application. Arab cultural criticism is not simply a later local echo of Western schools. Its questions emerge from particular debates over the Arabic literary canon, rhetoric, modernity, heritage, and cultural authority. The productive task is comparative translation: concepts should be adapted to local intellectual problems while their theoretical assumptions remain visible. Such translation produces new critical knowledge rather than derivative repetition.

## 9. Conclusion

Cultural criticism emerged from a decisive expansion of the critical field. It challenged the isolation of the literary work, broadened the archive of legitimate cultural objects, and redirected attention toward the relations among representation, power, institutions, history, and everyday life. Its genealogy includes British cultural studies, interpretive anthropology, Marxist cultural theory, New Historicism, cultural materialism, and poststructuralist critique. These traditions do not form a single doctrine, but they share a refusal to treat meaning as socially innocent or textually self-contained.

Within Arab criticism, the concept of the implicit cultural pattern provided a particularly influential means of translating this expanded critical orientation into a procedure of reading. Its value lies in drawing attention to cultural relations that may operate beneath explicit statements and through aesthetically persuasive forms. Its weakness appears when the implicit is invoked without definitional precision or sufficient evidence. The present study has therefore argued that a cultural pattern should be demonstrated through recurrence, contextual intelligibility, institutional mediation, historical location, and interaction with explicit discourse.

A methodologically mature cultural criticism does not need to choose between form and culture, aesthetics and ideology, or text and history. Its distinctive contribution lies in explaining their interaction. It should preserve close attention to language and form while asking how those forms circulate within wider systems of meaning and power. It should also remain open to contradiction, counter-patterns, and resistant readings. Such a practice retains the emancipatory ambition of cultural criticism while strengthening the evidential basis of its interpretations.

Seen in this way, the future of cultural criticism depends less on multiplying theoretical labels than on refining critical procedures. The field is most persuasive when it turns interdisciplinary openness into analytical accountability: clear research questions, explicit concepts, contextual evidence, comparative reasoning, and reflexive interpretation. The implicit pattern can remain a central tool within this framework, but only when it is treated as an argument to be demonstrated rather than a hidden truth assumed in advance.

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