



A Study of Concept of Cultural Schema in Arab Literary Criticism

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Abstract

Subjects like linguistics, anthropology, and literary theory have extensively examined the complex relation between cognition and culture, with a specific focus placed on how subjects perceive literary texts and narrative forms. This study examines how mid-20th-century Arab societies shifted from critiquing literature to critiquing ideas, analyzing the role of cultural schemas in shaping thought, influenced by religious and traditional factors. The research explains the role played by a literary critic in revealing dormant ideologies in heritage literature including both modern and traditional thinking. Employing a qualitative and analytic-descriptive model with a basis in social theory, and specifically utilizing Parsons' model, it reveals dominant ideologies in Arab literature in its long and rich heritage. Literature is understood in terms of cultural artifacts that transmit such ideations. This study promotes inter-disciplinarity in revealing hidden ideologies in works of Arabic literature. It paves the way for a wide range of forms and eras to investigate and understand social identity and long-lasting impacts of literary and cultural structures in society.

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Introduction

The concept of cultural schema, developed over a long period, forms a critical basis for explaining the development of beliefs, shared experiences, and, in turn, perception and behavior. The domain areas like linguistics, anthropology, and literary theory have extensively examined the complex relation between cognition and culture, with a specific focus placed on how subjects perceive texts and narrative forms. In a general sense, such a theoretical position holds considerable importance in critical studies concerning Arab culture, offering a model for understanding the interrelatedness of cultural constructs and texts in both consumption and production phases. Through an examination of such complex interrelations, researchers seek to reveal underpinnings of philosophies supporting critical practice and interpretative reading (Khudr, 2021). Cultural schema theory plays a critical position in studying Arab literary criticism, acting as an integration of cultural studies and theory in relation to literature. Scholars studying the intersection between literature and culture present a thorough analysis of the way a society's shared values and customs become represented in its literary practice. According to such a view, critical analysis is enriched through heightened awareness of specific dynamics in a region that impacts its development in terms of literature. In addition, such a field of study enriches academic inquiry through its development of a basis for methodologies in relation to dissemination, analysis, and critique of literature in both academic and cultural studies (Alshammari, 2023).

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Although its effectiveness in resolving critical concerns in the humanities earns increased awareness, its examination in critical studies concerning Arab culture encounters numerous significant obstacles. First and foremost, such questions are hindered by a lack of a unifying theoretical model that can effectively represent the complexity involved in cultural schemas in Arab society. In fact, many studies promote contextualization of sources in relation to respective cultures in analysis; yet such studies often lack a unifying model that enables them to discern and illustrate patterns in individual cases. That lack underlines a critical need for a deeper investigation into the role of cultural schema in reading processes and, in general, its contribution towards critical methodologies. Despite the growing prominence of cultural schemas in modern thinking, many studies have been narrowly focused on Western frameworks, tending to exclude the Arab view in many cases. Conclusions drawn through Western literary conventions have a bias towards generalization, tending to overlook complex dynamics specific to critical discourse in Arabs. In addition, many studies have a strong bias towards textual analysis and overlook the cultural frameworks underpinning such works of literature, and therefore, an incomplete picture prevails. That fact re-emphasizes the urgency for studies explicitly dealing with cultural and contextual factors governing Arab criticism.

In linguistics and pragmatics, the inquiry into cultural schemas and its intersection with literary criticism has seen significant development in modern discourse, fueled by a growing awareness of background, especially cultural background import in interpretative approaches to literature. In a new development, academic studies have focused on gauging the impact of shared social values in both producing and consuming works of literature, and therefore, generating new information regarding both modern and traditional narrative forms. Notably, increased use of cultural schemas as an analytical tool in such studies, including architectural settings in environments other than Arabs, warrants specific consideration. A comprehensive analysis of cultural schemas necessitates a strong grasp of both theoretical and contextual aspects. It necessitates an acquaintance with relevant theoretical constructions, namely, cognitive schema theory, and its implications in a variety of cultural studies. An integral part involves an in-depth review of background information regarding Arab criticism with a view to situating critical methodologies in relevant cultural and situational frameworks. Together, these form a strong basis for evaluating the impact and role of cultural schemas in critical analysis of Arab works (Rahahleh, 2022).

There is a widening research gap in current studies which needs to be filled up by investigating cultural schemas in relation to Arab criticism, and the establishment of coherent methodologies in dealing with this issue effectively. There are also a few studies (Ababneh, 2024) in this domain but they lack cohesion and need thorough analysis in relation to the impact of cultural schemas in critical analysis. Bridging this gap requires deepening consideration of cultural factors in Arab criticism. The present work is prompted through an intention to deepen the understanding of cultural schemas and its relation to literary criticism in Arabs' environments. It is important to examine the meeting point of these two domains, the Arab cultural schemas and literary criticism, to build a theoretical model, particularly with respect to Arabs' specific cultural aspects, and design such useful tools to analyze both domains.

For this purpose, the study framed the following objectives: (1) to discuss the necessity of studying literature from a cultural perspective. (2) to analyze the concept of cultural schema and explore the mechanism of its formation. (3) to examine the influence of implicit cultural schemas in literary works on shaping collective thought and guiding it toward specific ideologies. To achieve these objectives, it was essential to examine the big question of how the concept of cultural schema shaped the methodologies and interpretative practices in Arab literary criticism. The following questions, therefore, guided this study: (1) To what extent is cultural criticism relevant in the discussion of literature? (2) What distinguishes cultural criticism from literary criticism, and what is the role of the cultural critic? (3) How are cultural schemas conceptualized, manifested, and developed within societies?

Problem Statement

The notion of cultural schema has recently received increased attention in modern cultural and literary criticism, emerging as a powerful tool for the analysis of collective social beliefs and interpretative frameworks in use with texts. In the specific cultural environment of Arab literary criticism, such a concept carries even more weight, allowing for an examination of the impact of cultural values and customs on both the production and consumption of fiction and literary works. Nevertheless, in view of its usability, theoretical underpinnings of cultural schema in Arab criticism have yet to develop and have not been addressed effectively enough. That lack of a full-fledged theoretical model restricts critical analysis and reveals a need for deeper investigation of specific criticism dynamics in Arab cultures.

Existing studies in the field of Arab literary criticism often rely on frameworks derived from western sources, possibly not representing native processes of cultural interaction in Arab communities effectively enough. This dependence on external paradigms raises concerns about their applicability and relevance to the complex historical and cultural heritage of Arab literature. Widening this gap is the absence of a culturally specific approach to Arab literary criticism, which has resulted in a theoretical discourse detached from the practical realities of Arab critical practices. As a consequence, basic questions important for an understanding of Arab literature go unanswered (Sherif et al., 2023). Scholars involved in critical discourse of Arab literature

have increasingly acknowledged the value of bringing in cultural frameworks for analysis. This development comes in reaction to the weakness in traditional approaches, ones that fall short in representing in full the multidimensional manner in which linguistic and cultural factors shape literary practice.

Increased awareness about cultural schemas has been triggered through studies in canonical works, socio-political underpinnings of literary criticism, and approaches focused on specific, distinguishing factors in Arab cultural environment and the linguistic landscape. The efforts, despite widening the breadth of the field, have not yet addressed in filling the gaps in terms of understanding how cultural schemas impact critical approaches, and how texts have been understood in terms of Arab literary cultures. These ongoing gaps confirm the imperative for an integrated approach in studying cultural patterns and dealing with overall theoretical and methodical concerns in Arabs literary criticism. In an attempt to bridge such gaps, in this current work, an investigation needs to be conducted into the contribution of cultural schemas in shaping discursive and critical practice in Arab literary criticism (List et al., 2024).

Literature Review

The beginning of cultural critique in Arab literature can be traced back to 1950s, when western critical works were translated into Arabic language (Al-Shamaa, 2007). Critique then developed into a sophisticated practice, combining theoretical constructions and terminologies adopted from a range of academic discourses, with a view to overcoming weaknesses in traditional criticism of literature (Rashwan, 2024a). Culturally critical methodologies in specific cases of Arab literature reveal deep-rooted social, political, and subjective factors present in narrative forms. Analyzing the intersection between cultural processes and textuality, such an approach promotes a rich model for both cultural and textual analysis, particularly in literary studies. In addition, cultural criticism carries a lot of potential in language studies through heightening awareness and raising consciousness, but its contribution in such an arena can be maximized with additional interventions. In its view, cultural criticism disavows culturalism in political analysis and promotes an activist re-evaluation of cultural factors and a flexible tool for political analysis.

There is a significant tension between modernity and traditionalism in modern Arab literature, and particularly in its poetic forms (Al-Shamaa, 2007; Boullata, 1975). Recommendations promote a balanced use in its application towards developing innovation at no expense to cultural heritage. In conclusion, academic communities agree that cultural criticism works in a multidisciplinary manner, unearthing hidden trends and ideologies in fiction works. Furthermore, they emphasize the necessity of integrating cultural analysis with textual analysis in literary studies (van Gelder, 2023). The debate surrounding the precise methodologies and frameworks employed in cultural criticism remains ongoing. While the focus on theoretical discussions of cultural criticism, apply frameworks such as semiotics and implicit pattern analysis to literature within the Arab region. Furthermore, a range of approaches prevails regarding the level at which political analysis overlaps with cultural critique. For instance, Amengay (2024) rejects cultural interpretations of authoritarianism and political atrophy in Arab society, whereas other studies avoid taking a definite stance in regard to this claim.

Several studies are evidence of the evolution and development of cultural and literary criticism in Arab literature. These studies mark the development and progression of literary and cultural criticism in theory and practice in Arab literature and its real-life implementations. For instance, Saeedyan Tabar et al. (2024) explain the theoretical underpinnings of such a critical practice and present a thorough analysis of its evolutionary development in a chronological manner. The study emphasized promoting the 'cultural reading' of Arabic poems to expose the tacit frameworks and underpinnings present in each poem. Likewise, Hopkins (2024) studies the Arab literary criticism and identifies its development into an inter-disciplinarian analysis combining theory and conceptions derived from several schools of thinking and resolving traditional criticism's weakness in its methodologies and theoretical approaches.

Besides, a few empirical studies have examined Arab literary and cultural criticism frameworks. For instance, Al-Habishi & Al-Shudayfat (2024) integrate semiotics into cultural criticism, viewing every text as a system of interconnected relationships and codes. In the field of semiotic analysis, Khassenova & Sarkulova (2024) introduce cultural schema as a new part of its theoretical model, which can be utilized to analyze pre-Islamic poetry through a new analytical model. In another recent study, Awadh (2023) studied the mechanisms of literary and cultural criticism and implicit patterns in the poetry of Kholoud Al-Falah. The study found deep social, political, and subjective underpinnings in the poems. A two-way interaction between cultural and textual dimensions also prevailed in these poems. This study showed the need to combine both cultural studies and textual analysis for critical appraisal in literature. Likewise, Ibrahim, Almazaidah, & Allawzi (2024) extend the borders of cultural criticism to both traditional and modern poetry, starting with Nizar Qabbani's masculine romantic poems and then moved towards masculine panegyric poems.

Rofida & Fauji (2023) have also studied cultural factors in language studies in schools through a cultural content analysis of volumes of language textbooks. Islamic cultures have been effectively incorporated in these language studies, and these textbooks have a significant role in raising awareness about a variety of cultures

through a single educational tool. The authors propose that these approaches can be applied to other educational materials to make language education more culturally inclusive. [Ritonga et al. \(2021\)](#), however, argue that despite focusing on a single textbook and offering a limited analysis of cultural criticism in language education, there should be emphasis on cultural critical work within the context of language education.

These studies contribute to the understanding of the emergence and growth of cultural critique in Arab literature; however, most studies are primarily theoretical in nature and do not provide empirical evidence to support the claims they make. As useful studies in illuminating the use of cultural criticism in specific spheres of Arab literature, these studies also lack a balanced view regarding overall trends and structures defining discursive practice in Arabs' studies in literature.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative research method utilized in this study seeks to explore the concept of cultural schema in relation to Arab literary criticism. This model of inquiry encourages a thorough analysis of textual sources, cultural events, and theoretical frameworks, and through it, a deeper level of interpretative practice and its relation to cultural schemas can be understood. The incorporation of both inductive and descriptive methodologies in this inquiry further enabled a thorough analysis of the concept of cultural schema in relation to its use in literature. Descriptive methodology helped in describing and explaining the several dimensions of cultural schemas in relation to its depiction in Arab literary criticism, and inductive thinking is utilized in formulating general conclusions and critical interpretations in relation to specific cases in analyzed texts.

Sampling and Procedure

The study sampled a few Arab literary works that presented cultural schemas in the field of Arab literary criticism and discussed this overall theme from a variety of angles. These works showed the dominant trends and the strengths and weaknesses of cultural and literary criticism in Arab literature. Various steps were followed to conduct this research. First and foremost, such cultural trends were identified in the selected works of Arab literary criticism that showed cultural matrices and represented critical Arab thinking. Next, the theoretical and pragmatic aspects of Arab literary criticism were examined to identify the intersection and differentiation between cultural schemas of Arab literary criticism. Furthermore, the study tracked the cultural schema across the selected critical works to identify the cultural and contextual factors that have impacted Arabs' literary criticism over centuries. Finally, the research deepened its focus into the existing literary frameworks to explore the possibility of singularity of literary criticism within the Arab cultural studies framework.

Data Analysis

A descriptive-analytic model was utilized to analyze the specific works of literature to discern and interpret cultural trends. In a critical examination, such trends were analyzed to expose underlying cultural matrices, which underpinned critical thinking and appraisal in terms of Arabs' critical work over centuries. This analytical approach enabled to examine the theoretical and pragmatic aspects of Arab literary criticism with high flexibility. Further, the comparative model was adopted to analyze the intersection and differentiation between cultural schemas in Arab literary criticism and different competing forms of literary practice. Through the comparative analysis methods, this study also compared various existing literary frameworks and argued for the singularity of criticism when its results were placed in a broader cultural development in Arab critical work over centuries.

Definitions of Key Terms

Several key terms like cultural criticism, cultural schema and dual authorship were used in this study with specific meaning. Cultural criticism, for instance, is introduced in this study as a multidisciplinary field of study focusing on studying the interconnection between ideology, culture, and power, specifically in relation to works of art and fiction. It specifically studies the socio-political underpinnings in such works and, in addition, studies how discursive cultures shape social interpretations and understandings. Another term, cultural schema forms a theoretical model intended to map out structures present in dominant forms of culture and governing perception, interpretation, and social conduct. Schemas include a society's manner of dealing with and understanding texts and narratives and, through them, shed light on collective cognitive structures. Likewise, the term dual authorship involves both explicit and implicit social and cultural settings surrounding a work of fiction. Theory holds that fiction arises out of an intersection between individual producers and social and cultural structures in which such producers work, and therefore shape their ideology and manner of expression ([Brown, 2022](#)).

Results

From Literary Reading to Cultural Reading

The transition towards cultural analysis in criticism represents a critical shift in studying the intersection between texts and cultures producing and consuming them. This new development demands a transition from literary reading to cultural reading, to take a move from mere evasion of meaning to a scrutiny of the text and investigation of processes through which texts respond to cultural trends. Being a multidisciplinary exercise, cultural criticism expands analysis over mere aesthetic concerns, including social, political, and ideological factors in both literary and non-literary works. By providing for an analysis of texts as cultural works both reflecting and distorting cultural ideology and practice, a deeper analysis of relations between cultures, powers, and meanings can be discerned. The field of literary criticism has developed immensely over centuries, fueled by its inherent analysis of literary works. Often, such questions have been re-evaluated in terms of political, psychological, and social development in general in relation to overall human development. Their relevance continues in modern times, with new methodologies and theoretical approaches emerging, creating new standards and avenues for critical inquiry.

The shift from the previous century's primary focus on the question, "*What does the text say?*" to "*How does the text say what it says?*" exemplifies this transformation. Ultimately, this progression culminates in the central question of cultural criticism: "*What cultural patterns does the text convey?*" The legitimacy of this latter question arises from the growing necessity of applying cultural criticism to both literary and non-literary texts. The contemporary intellectual, social, and economic landscape demands interdisciplinary collaboration, as no single discipline can adequately address the complexities of a fragmented reality. Consequently, cultural criticism, as an integrative critique engaging specialized fields of knowledge, operates across multiple dimensions to analyze texts from varied perspectives.

Cultural criticism is broadly defined as "an intellectual activity that examines culture in its entirety as a subject of inquiry, expressing positions regarding its developments and characteristics. The expansive character of such a definition render pinpointing a specific origin for cultural criticism challenging, in that its forms can be seen in both modern and past cultures. Nevertheless, post-structuralism, a modern theoretical school of thought in academia, grew out of a development of the cultural studies model. This conceptual split relates to the social and cultural traits defining postmodernism that emerged through the 1960s period. The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, with their post-structuralist intellectual critics, made substantial contributions during those developments (Lowe, 2023). The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies launched its operation during 1964 under leadership from Richard Hoggart who handed over to Stuart Hall before becoming a facility for cultural research across multiple disciplines (Zeli, 2023). The Birmingham Centre utilized radical analytical frameworks from Marxism and feminism along with semiotics to create innovative paths of research that developed deeper understanding of culture (Booker & Daraiseh, 2023).

The Frankfurt School, too, made significant breakthroughs. Consisting of German American theorists, Frankfurt School participated in in-depth studies of social transformation in Western capitalist settings, extending its range of analysis to include dimensions overlooked in traditional Marxist criticisms. In the 1920s and 1930s, Frankfurt's Institute for Social Research's scholars, including Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowenthal, and Erich Fromm, examined a variety of cultural affairs, including mass culture, communications practice, and interpretations of classical works (Garlitz & Zompetti, 2023).

The development of cultural criticism continued through successive waves of scholar and intellectual breakthroughs, developing its methodologies and widening its range (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023). The modern expression of cultural criticism corresponds with a view espoused by an American critic, he describes in suggesting criticism must break free of its traditional confinement in its location in the field of literature to grasp its deep ties with society at large (Bhatt et al., 2024). Cultural criticism, with its expansive view of texts, positions itself as a multidisciplinary endeavor. It integrates a variety of tools and approaches to analyze cultural manifestations in both literary and non-literary texts. Cultural studies encompass literary studies while extending their boundaries (Risdiyanto et al., 2024). While literary criticism primarily concentrates on high literary texts and adheres to the aesthetic standards established by literary institutions, cultural criticism broadens its scope to include both literary and non-literary texts—whether elite or popular—as cultural documents that reflect the societies from which they emerge. It operates at the confluence of texts and institutions, aesthetics and social analysis, and meanings and power structures (Dogramacioglu, 2024).

Cultural criticism focuses on examining the relationship between texts and dominant cultural practices, whether these practices are political, social, cultural, or rooted in other societal discriminatory frameworks. This methodological orientation prioritizes the importance of interconnectedness in textual relations and larger cultural practice, such that each part feeds into and is in turn shaped by processes involved in creating and reading texts. Analysis of culture is an important path for accessing a range of types of information, including texts, persons, rituals, and ideational frameworks. According to Boutyline & Soter (2021), "patterns of culture" refer to a specific kind of model in relation to methodology.

Reasons for the Shift Cultural Criticism

Cultural criticism represents the increased prominence of cultural studies, and its critics can best be understood as a reaction to a changing literary environment and its new requirements. For instance, according to Newfield (2023), in *The Death of Literature*, the future direction of literature, in terms of its orientation towards current affairs, will depend upon its awareness of its role as a social artifact both shaping and reflective of collective consciousness and constructs of culture. Literature is obliged to confront its inescapable social settings in a positive manner. Thus, literature can then be examined in terms of sociocultural theory, one firmly grounded in Marxist theory. In such theoretical frameworks, society and culture have a deterministic relation (Luft, 2023). We concur with Luft in asserting that, while we support Das (2023) emphasis on integrating literature with cultural studies to produce new and distinctive outcomes compared to traditional literary studies, we also maintain that the essence of literature remains firmly rooted in its traditional study. Openness to innovative fields, such as cultural studies, does not imply the inadequacy, demise, or irrelevance of literary studies. On the contrary, it complements literature's core objective: the appreciation of its aesthetics. This dual approach, where literary studies coexist with other perspectives, generates significant insights across various domains.

A cultural researcher emphasizes how novelists' function beyond being vessels for one-dimensional thinking because they actively develop social awareness among people. Through its cultural constructs, fiction reveals the dominant social ideology since it contributes to the very formation of that social construction. Information and fiction coexist as cultural and cognitive frameworks by joint representation and development of shared beliefs. The synthesis of individual elements results in collective expressions by means of shared critical evaluation of social experiences and observations. Another theory presented by Louis Althusser about "ideological state apparatus" emerged during the 1960s. According to Althusser, ideology emerges in distinct institutional formations that maintain their ideology by numerous social mechanisms. Dominant ideologies find their support within five structures: the family, educational institutions, religious organizations, the state, and mass communication channels, which operate as ideological apparatuses for their delivery. The approach of cultural criticism proves essential because it expands research coverage through literary understanding of evolving social and cultural developments. Literature can achieve academic expansion by absorbing social knowledge, which helps it become more integrated into public discussions. Data shows this reality is spreading rapidly, which demands its acknowledgment as a concrete social phenomenon (Zwart, 2022).

Consequently, parallels can be drawn between these ideological apparatuses and the cultural, social, and religious norms of tribal society during the pre-Islamic era and beyond, which reflect the dominant culture of the time. The role of the cultural critic is to explore the deeper layers of the text. Criticism does not represent a mere transfer of meaning from the text to the reader. Its purpose is not to enhance the reader's understanding of the text, nor is it to collaborate with its subject in a rhetorical conspiracy. Brandist (2023) supposes that "the implied reader is a theoretical one, but the actual reader lives in history, at the mercy of fluctuations in cultural conventions. On occasion, such conventions can become surprisingly flexible and at times infuriatingly unchangeable. That statement reveals the imperative for cultural critics to use two disparate reading positions: one as an actual reader and a theoretical one as a receptive reader, allowing because reading practice informs them in terms of interpretative processes. From this viewpoint, cultural-critical approaches to heritage literature reveal the dominance of cultural norms in shaping the ways we receive and produce narratives, thereby influencing our literary and critical tastes. Literary works, irrespective of their form, can be analyzed from various perspectives, including aesthetic, anthropological, psychological, social, economic, political, and beyond. In this context, we align with Ferdinand de Badreddine, Blount, & Amrollahi (2023) assertion: "Every literary language is a cultural production".

Examining the relationship between cultural criticism and reception reveals that the cultural critic/reader, much like in feminist narrative theory, represents two distinct entities: the "implied reader," also known as the "author's audience," and the actual (real) reader, a physical entity shaped by historical and cultural norms, particularly those related to gender and sexuality. Mulvey (1975) states: "The implied reader is a hypothetical figure, whereas the actual reader lives in history, subject to the fluctuations of cultural norms. These norms can sometimes seem strikingly mutable and at other times frustratingly static. This emphasizes the cultural critic's need to adopt dual reading stances: one as an actual reader and the other as a receptive reader, thereby allowing the act of reading to shape their interpretation. The actual reader analyzes the text to uncover the author's word choices, explanations, both direct and indirect discourse, and textual gaps to derive cultural meanings. This reading strategy ensures a balanced and thoughtful cultural interpretation, illuminating the mechanisms of cultural frameworks within the text.

Concept of Cultural Schema

The notion of "cultural schema" is important in the field of cultural criticism and holds significant implications. It is important to know what constitutes a "schema," and in what manner cultural schemas have developed in social settings. Based on traditional lexicons, "schema" is: "The arrangement of speech, in which terms are interrelated and follow a coherent system". In a general manner, schema is "what arises through development of parts in a definite environment, or through relations between parts of a structure. Yet such a

development takes place in a definite system, one capable of being manifested and disclosed". The term carries various meanings across disciplines: for linguists, it represents a linguistic schema; for formalists, it refers to a literary schema; and for sociologists, it denotes a social schema. In cultural criticism, the focus of this study is on the cultural schema (Gu, 2024). The notion of "linguistic schema" was first proposed by Ferdinand by Bakiner & Özdemir (2023) in his investigation of language's basic nature. According to him, it is "a system of signs conveying meanings, such as writing, sign language, ritualistic symbols, forms of literature, and recognized military signals. In social sciences, specifically in anthropology, the concept first entered use in "social schema," a "set of organized relations present in local communities, or between groups of humans, and tending to reproduce themselves over a period of time" (Krause, 2024). Scholars, however, saw in such terminology a bias towards society over cultures in shaping humans and, in a move to avoid sociological and cultural determinism, opted for "sociocultural schema" as seen in Clifford (2017) academic works.

Literary schema emerged in literary theory, and most prominently through work in and with Russian Formalists like Yuri Tynyanov (Ivanov, 2013) who defines literary schema as the network of relationships among texts that form a unified entity: literature. This schema differs from literary events, as formalists distinguish between material and function, where language corresponds to material, while speech relates to literary function (Khalid, 2022). In cultural criticism, the concept of the "cultural schema" is defined by its collective nature, shaped by communal rituals and ceremonies. These rituals, influenced by hegemonic forces, evolve into cultural schemas that become ingrained in social structures as collective values. Khalid (2023) coined this phenomenon "illusory domestication," a deep compliance with conventional forms that can cover over deep vulnerabilities through long-term internalization (Khalid, 2023). Schemas in cultures include structures that impact individual psychological processes and group life, and in doing so, shape behaviors and shape social and psychological processes.

Schemas can be seen in a variety of discourses and texts and represent important markers of cultural identity for groups. "Hegemony," developed through work with Antonio Gramsci, describes the processes through which dominant meanings, ideology, and practice become consolidated, sustained, and reiterated in a specific cultural environment. Ideologies produced through processes of hegemony have a powerful impact on cultural schemas through symbolic powers, even when such an impact tends to occur in covert and tacit forms through texts. According to Gramsci, the state of hegemony is inherently fragile, with its variable character susceptible to discursive, pragmatic, and social factors. He identifies two facets of cultural schema. The first seeks to understand and interpret human experiences, offering a worldview—referred to as the aesthetic aspect of cultural analysis. The second pertains to its role in regulating individual behavior, discussed in a previous analysis. Considering its significant impact, a key question arises: What processes enable such schemas to develop, and through what processes do they gain consolidation and longevity in social structures over several generations? (Scott, 2024).

A question arises about how cultural systems are formed in society. The cultural systems develop through an extended and cumulative process. To shed light on processes through which such systems become part of collective consciousness, one can refer to Talcott Parsons' model of social action (Chotim, 2022). According to this model, social action consists of four subsystems: 1) The cultural system, 2) The social system, 3) The personality system, and 4) The biological organism system. The interaction among these subsystems illustrates how societies are constructed and internally aligned. Social action arises from the interplay between these systems. The cultural system, for example, embodies meaning or symbolic structures, which are reflected in phenomena such as religious beliefs, societal rituals, languages, and shared values. These values clarify the influence of the cultural system on the social system. When individuals embed specific values into the social fabric, transforming them into a form of social contract, socialization becomes a crucial mechanism for fostering social cohesion and establishing cultural traditions within society. Thus, a system maintains its presence within the social structure and ensures its continuity by fulfilling the necessary conditions for its survival.

Parsons also identifies four essential conditions or stages for this process: (i) Adaptation: The system must adapt to its environment. (ii) Goal attainment: The system must possess mechanisms to mobilize resources in pursuit of its objectives. (iii) Integration: The system must achieve harmony among its components to sustain unity and coherence (iv) Pattern maintenance: The system must preserve balance and ensure continuity (Chotim, 2022). These conditions encompass the components of the system and their respective functions. According to Parsons, a system consists of various subsystems, each performing specific roles that, together, form the broader cultural system. The process begins with the general system of action, progressing through the adaptation stage, where action becomes an organic entity that links the natural world to the meanings shaping the realm of action. Subsequently, during the goal attainment stage, the personality system is formed through socialization processes, which absorb general cultural values and social norms. This enables the personality system to function as a tool for achieving the objectives of the general system.

The goal of cultural research is to understand the linguistic meanings individuals assign to objects and events within specific historical contexts, allowing analysts to uncover significant cultural aspects of a given group. For example, interpreting "cutting the forelock" or "the scar at dawn" in ancient Arab culture today necessitates an understanding of the linguistic and cultural perspectives of its practitioners. Culture is understood in terms of collective social significations, and these form a specific worldview. Such significations

arise not in single, discrete form, but in a variety of signs; therefore, studies of culture necessarily overlap with studies of semiosis, and these explore signification processes in terms of cultural structures. Scholars in cultural studies posit that language is not simply a passive tool for creating meanings and realities but actively engages in creating them through assigning meanings to social practice and artifact.

Hence, studies in cultural studies seek to explore processes of meaning creation, including production, circulation, and interpretation in social settings. The structural aspects of language contribute towards the maintenance and continued pertinence of such frameworks in society. Berger holds that language confers an objective character to such frameworks and incorporates them in the shared consciousness through social processes. There are specific forms of language utilized in such processes, and through them, social relationships develop, and historiography and humanity's shared heritage develop through such systemic linguistic basis. The next stage, integration, witnesses the evolution of the personality system into a social system governed by norms that define permissible and prohibited actions. Finally, in the pattern maintenance stage, the social system transforms into a cultural system, which shapes the ideas, ideals, and values of a given society (Muhammed & Shaiaa, 2021).

At this stage it is important to examine the concept of culture and its connection to the system. The concept of culture constitutes one of the most complex and widespread frameworks in terms of its interpretation. For this reason, its specific definition is often placed in specific contexts in terms of its use. In its most general terms, culture can be defined as "a system of subjective meanings that people use about themselves and the surrounding environment". In the field of cultural studies, "culture" is about significations pertaining to society, politics, and structures of power, including "the whole range of a community's meaningful practice, including rituals, stories, forms of amusement, forms of life, sports, customs, norms, beliefs, forbidden actions, and values. Culture consists in the meanings that underline such practice". For this reason, not only concrete goods and structures of a sociocultural character, but even the outlooks developed through processes of human cognition, become part of its contents. In fact, culture is not a static entity but can even be seen and analyzed in a systemic manner. According to this view, then, culture forms a shared memory designed for and shared with communities, combining mental, psychological, and behavioristic dimensions having become firmly rooted in both consciousness and subconscious awareness.

Societal culture is inescapable for individuals unless they choose to forget memory or remain isolated. Consequently, Arthur (2021) underscores the significance of psychoanalysis in cultural studies, asserting that many cultural elements transition from individual unconsciousness to collective unconsciousness, thus making them difficult to recognize or articulate. Berger (2022) posits that social construction of culture arises out of human activity in creating frameworks for cultures in reaction to environments with a lack of biological sufficiency. As it evolves, it is incorporated into the "social system," a derived consequence of human behavior, both in terms of behavior and cognition, and can be placed in a variety of theoretical frameworks and models. They do not merely organize; they also govern human behavior, resist radical change, and consistently impose control. This governance evolves into compulsory laws, supported by mechanisms of social control, exerting influence not only through coercion but also through both implicit and explicit claims of legitimacy. These systems have moral legitimacy; therefore, compliance with them constitutes a moral imperative, and transgression of these conventions is deemed unethical. Thus, it is important to examine the tension between ethics and culture, acknowledging that culture tends to distort moral values, and therefore its critique is necessitated.

Cultural criticism has several functions to perform while it focuses on revealing the intellectual underpinnings in works of literature. Its foremost function is to reveal the manifold intellectual aspects, searching for the undergirding principles in a quest for concealed factors and shedding light on deeper structures and meanings. In its view, aesthetic works of literature represent a powerful ideological tool, one that, in terms of impact, trumps any competing forms of expression. In such a case, aesthetics has the potential to impact an audience's feelings and subconscious spheres, and in so doing, mold an audience's cognition and worldview. It can bypass an individual's protective shields of consciousness and, through its impact, force an audience to confront and react to concerns addressed in such works. The postmodern era, with its plethora of political, financial, and social transformations, changed our worldwide perception of reflection and inquiry about deep-rooted presumptions in a significant manner. Scholars started a critical evaluation of authority in its numerous forms, starting with Eurocentric political and financial structures and moving towards a prevalence of traditional literary and cultural discourses. In addition, these scholars questioned any kind of authority involved in creating such centrality. One such case in point took place in 1988 when Stanford University organized a discussion to revise its compulsory reading list. As part of its drive, the university proposed substituting many traditional works composed by dead white males with works composed by female, African American, and Southern authors. In reaction to such advocacy, Stanford University's faculty and administration agreed to substitute works of literature composed by such authors as Homer and Dickens with works composed by Simone de Beauvoir (Ahmed & Sultana, 2023).

The critique of works of literature tends to reveal deleterious cultural imprints incorporated in them. In addition, such critique clarifies the function and purpose of works of literature and its changing social role, conferring a specific efficacy on its language and allowing it to have a significant impact on society's collective

subconscious. By such critique, theoretical frameworks for modern works of literature become apparent, and such works must, therefore, exercise continuous critique and reformulation to maintain suitability in modern settings. In modern society, works of literature represent one of the complex mechanisms that shape and inform social constructs in a manner consistent with modern sensitivities (Rashwan, 2024b).

Thus, limiting cultural criticism to uncovering hidden cultural flaws within texts neglects a crucial aspect of analysis. When deployed by literary criticism, it reveals cultural dimensions that literary criticism has not been able to perceive due to its lack of aesthetic rhetorical standards. However, this neglect has marginalized many texts that express cultural values present in society, values that both shape and are shaped by society. Analyzing these cultural dimensions illuminates the text, decoding its symbols and revealing its very substance, thereby enriching the reading of it. Of interest, in the Arab context, recent years have witnessed some cultural studies marginalizing aesthetic analysis and limiting cultural criticism to the discovery of cultural flaws in literary texts. In many of these studies, flaws have been explored to such an extent that cultural patterns are equated with concealed cultural flaws within the texts. This association has led to the identification of such flaws becoming regarded as the primary function of cultural criticism, such as Book (Al-Kateia and Takfir from structural to anatomical) theories. However, cultural criticism is not solely concerned with revealing positives or negatives for their own sake, as this study demonstrates. It does not aim to interpret these aspects in isolation but rather to clarify humanity's cultural perception of them and the criteria by which they are classified. The goal is to uncover the forces that produce these underlying meanings and contextual implications inherent in culturally practiced meanings.

Concept of the "Dual Author"

The concept of "the dual author" is a key principle in cultural criticism. Alexandra (2024) describes the dual author principle by saying, "We read, produce, and consume two writers in all that we read, produce, and consume: one being the familiar we know, the other being the culture itself". What this statement reveals is that individual consciousness is conditioned both through individual agency and through one's larger society with whom one identifies. Essentially, each reading, writing, and creation act involves not only one's individual perspective but, in addition, the cultural customs, traditions, and philosophies that shape and inform perception and expression (Schulz & Lyubimova, 2023). Moreover, such a principle proposes that works of literature, and particularly works considered canon in terms of Arab society, impart tacit cultural paradigms that go beyond individual work of respective authors. Instead, such paradigms arise through the overall impact of dominant cultures specific to eras in which such works have been produced.

What such a principle affirms is in consonance with the developed "dual author" principle in cultural criticism, in which narrative voice and dominant cultural environment become intertwined in the work of literature. What such an intersection often covers over is both the subconscious of both the author and the reader, utilizing masculine hegemony to posit a definite picture of women, one reduced to mere flesh and contained in male imagination. According to cultural studies, literary heritage is governed by dominant institutions that shape its structure, circulation, and use it to maintain privileges and construct societal identities. Literary creations have structures that allow them to maintain meanings that extend both geographically and temporally, and in that manner, extend beyond the specific contexts in which they initially developed. Zain (2022) asserts that the return to heritage has consistently marked the beginning of cultural and civilizational renaissances, both ancient and modern, in the East and the West, and across Arab and Islamic cultures. He notes, however, that this process is often challenging, as it strives for renewal and progress rather than mere repetition or imitation. Salih emphasizes that a conscious, intentional sense of collective identity is deeper and paves the way for meaningful renewals essential to this process. This property helps them become tools for shared meaning and shared experiences, and in that manner, contributes towards their conservation and dissemination over future generations. Due to its dual aims and inbuilt dangers, a critical re-evaluation of traditional literature and Arab cultural heritage is warranted, having an impact in modern cultural life.

Discussion

In line with the broader consensus in cultural criticism, the findings of the current study confirm the shift from traditional literary readings to a cultural perspective. While Awadh (2023) limits his discussion to the role of cultural criticism in uncovering implicit patterns within literary texts, he also explores the interrelationships between social, political, and subjective dimensions. The current study further demonstrates how literary texts serve as cultural artifacts that reflect societal ideologies. However, whereas he focuses on methodological aspects, the present study adopts a more inclusive approach, considering both literature and non-literature as corporal for investigation. The comprehensive theoretical model promotes an increased understanding of the role of cultural criticism in a variety of forms of media. As defined through the work of da Silva Oliveira (2023) and that of cultural criticism forms an interdisciplinary field that incorporates aspects of sociology, semiotics, and theory in language.

In keeping with modern studies of cultural criticism as a cognitive activity that takes a trans-disciplinary stance, this model is developed in the current study through an analysis with a basis in Talcott Parsons' social

action theory, providing a theoretical lens for studying social processes through which cultural schemas become institutionally embedded in society. Likewise, political, social, and ideational aspects are examined in an investigation of a specific dramaturgical theme in plays, but through dramaturgical language, according to [Talla \(2023\)](#). By contrast, even though analysis in such a case is kept to dramaturgical language, in this current study, the analysis extends to include base cultural schemas in a variety of forms, not only confirming a congruent compatibility with similar theoretical frameworks but proving through its establishment a case for cultural schemas having an impact over a range of modalities of expression.

[Sreevarsha \(2024\)](#) explores the role of cultural studies in literary critique, with a focus on its critical role in understanding identity, power relations, and representation. That inquiry ties in with the general theme of cultural critique, specifically its ability to expose deep-rooted ideologies in works of literature. That, in fact, sets it apart, in that it takes a specific and focused stance towards Arab culture, a theme oftentimes overlooked in general academic discussion. By taking such a focused stance, the study helps enrich worldwide discussion through a critical examination of a range of cultural trends and ideologies present in works of fiction placed in an Arab environment. The theory of 'dual authorship' developed in this work is supported in studies conducted by [Anderson \(2023\)](#) both of whom shed light on discrepancies between one's lived reality and a narrative's represented cultural heritage. That, however, in its demand for a deeper investigation into a dominant cultural model's role in allowing for co-authorship through its impact on a work's underpinnings, advocates for a full and critical examination of cultural co-authorship in relation to key aspects of constructed narrative ([Anderson, 2023](#)).

Additionally, this research makes evident that cultural criticism is an academic activity, rather than a distinct discipline, that incorporates theories from various fields of knowledge. Initially, its reception in Arab contexts focused on uncovering hidden flaws within literary texts before expanding to include aesthetic dimensions. Despite its development, a notable gap persists in Arab research regarding the study and tracking of how "cultural patterns" form within society and are reflected in literature. The social sciences have also produced robust analytical tools and frameworks that cultural criticism can draw upon. All Arab critical works, from structural to anatomical, stand out having new terms and methodologies that are highly valuable in the analysis of texts. This study also introduces a sequence of significant improvements to traditional understandings in the field. It expands its methodological model through integration with social theory, namely, Parsons' social theory, and thus offering a systematic analysis of cultural schema development that extends and refines current work in the field.

In addition, the study considers the Arab environment, filling a key lack in cultural criticism studies that have long overlooked localized perspectives. The 'duality of authorship' is examined in detail, an improvement in connoisseurship about an increased consideration of the role played by cultural systems in contributing towards output in literature. Not only does this investigation corroborate previous studies but extends their ramifications, providing new insights into complex interrelationships between society, culture, and literature.

Conclusion

The present work clarifies key aspects regarding the development and use of cultural criticism in relation to Arab literature, but it is not an overall review of language studies that explore dominant trends in Arab literature in relation to cultural criticism frameworks. Future studies will include in-depth analysis of language studies that evaluate a larger range of Arabic works in a variety of forms and in terms of period, with a view to discerning dominant trends and motifs. The findings of this investigation confirm the critical role played by a model of culture in explaining works of literature, specifically works emerging out of an Arab environment. Through its analytic model, this investigation has discovered complex relationships between texts and the schemas of culture underpinning and shaping them. In addition, discussion shows that cultural criticism is an interdisciplinary tool, providing methodologies applicable not only to works of literature but to larger output through integration with insights derived in sociology, linguistics, and anthropology. By utilizing such methodologies, it enables the determination and examination of ideological underpinnings in texts, and in so doing, a direct and immediate impact on values and conventions in society.

The examination of literature, including a rich variety of poetic and narrative forms, through a lens of cultural analysis is imperative for an understanding of social constructs and key cultural motifs in heritage and in literature. Its function in unearthing biases present in dominant frameworks and creating a shared awareness deepens our grasp of modern cultural processes and identity. Common orientation defining Arab society, with its explicit religious and cultural markers, creates a strong affiliation with its forebears. The value of such an investigation is its potential to enrich theoretical frameworks applicable for critique in terms of Arab cultural studies. By situating localized cultures in relation to larger concerns regarding cultural studies, such a query addresses the disenfranchisement of Arab literature in transnational critical discourses. In addition, such an investigation creates an awareness of "the dual author," one that signifies tension between individual expression and shared cultural identifications present in works of literature. In addition, it underlines the value of structures of language in conserving and conveying cultural heritage through successive ages, in addition to providing key insights into developing cultural identity.

In summary, this work underscores the important role played by cultural criticism in providing an in-depth analysis of social ideology and practice in relation to works of Arab literature. By grounding theoretical observations in concrete settings, it creates a model for careful examination of complex relations between cultures and works of fiction. Future studies will explore such relations with even greater accuracy, focusing in detail on individual genres and eras, in an attempt to deepen awareness of the rich forms of expression of Arab literature and its impact in a variety of cultures.

Recommendations and Implications

This study makes several recommendations. First, it recommends the integration of cultural criticism methodologies in educational curricula, which will enhance the analysis of literary works immensely. With such an approach, students can become empowered to explore the broader social and cultural implications of works of literature and gain a deeper level of understanding about how literature reflects and shapes social structures and cultural ideology. With these methodologies, students can also develop critical thinking and will be in a position to explore works of literature at a deeper and contextual level. Second, frameworks must be developed specific to the unique cultural and historical settings of works of Arab literature. This would enable a deeper reading of cultural trends and towards a more strengthened voice for Arabs regarding works of literature, long underrepresented. Third, literary analysis should also include a rich variety of forms and modern works of literature. Broadening its range in such a manner will result in a deeper level of understanding regarding how cultural schemas impact a variety of forms and eras of works. Fourth, sustaining inter-disciplinarity in collaboration is important in enhancing tools for analysis of works of literature and works of culture. Integration of sociology, anthropology, and linguistics can enable new methodologies, and through them, deeper critical thinking. Finally, scholars working in cultural criticism must apply their tools of analysis in studying works of heritage, in an attempt to reveal deeper cultural trends that consistently shape works of today and social cultures. With its use, such analysis can bridge gaps between studies of modern and older works, enriching cultural awareness.

The study witnesses several implications, both theoretical and practical. As a contribution to the literary theory, this study enriches the field of literary criticism through a complex view of cultural schemas, specifically in relation to Arab literature. It aims at overcoming gaps in current theoretical frameworks through combining cultural and theoretical approaches sensitive to the Arab literary heritage. The study also provides an alternative view to dominant Western theoretical frameworks through reinterpretation and integration of cultural schemas. The research clarifies complex dimensions and deep experiences that form the heart of Arab critical practice, thus enriching global discussion pertinent to cultural studies and critical reading. This study also introduces innovative theoretical frameworks that combine cultural and historical dimensions, with a strong focus placed on cultural schemas. It promotes developing critical methodologies sensitive to the uniqueness of Arab texts, but at the same time enriching a broader and deeper theory of critical reading. By using a model of methodology, it promotes a rich diversity of critical practice that is beneficial in reading both diversity and complexity in the international sphere and its accompanying literature. Lastly, this study attempts to recognize cultural schemas as carriers of values, customs, and dominant ideology in Arab cultures. A deep grasp of such a theoretical view enables an effective reading of a work of literature as a tool through which a culture is represented and preserved.

On the practical side, this study presents a few innovations in literary analysis techniques. It shows how the existing techniques and methodologies utilized in Arab works of fiction make them imperative for a shrewd and sensitive reading of cultural schemas for both critics and instructors. Hence, this study offers practical suggestions to promote interpretations sensitive to cultural contexts in academic and educational environments. Secondly, this study explains the uniqueness of Arab criticism and creates awareness and dialogue in cross-cultural terms in the field of literature and cultural studies. It shows how it can become an important tool for international students dealing with heritage in works of fiction in Arab cultures. Third, the study emphasizes on curriculum enhancement in schools and offers suggestions to enhance curricula with a basis in cultural schema theory, allowing students to make critical evaluations of important works of Arab literature in a variety of cultural settings. Fourth, the findings of the study make an impact on the methods of translation by carefully analyzing critical cultural underpinnings present in Arab writings. It uncovers a significant contribution towards maintaining sensitive cultural awareness in translation to gain accuracy and fidelity. Lastly, this study highlighted the gaps in current literature with regard to cultural frameworks in critical analysis of works of Arab literature and thus created a basis for future academic studies. This will open doors for multidisciplinary studies in the field of cultural studies, literary theory, and historiography.

In future studies, it is hoped that this model can be extended to a range of disparate genres and eras, allowing for a deeper analysis of the impact of cultural frameworks in shaping a range of forms of literature. In addition, an interdisciplinary model, such as one adopted in this study, opens doors for future collaboration with sociology, anthropology, and linguistics, and enriches the analytic discussion surrounding works of literature. Future studies can contribute to current studies through suggesting new approaches for raising awareness about this

important issue. In addition, future investigations will seek to evaluate the viability of combining political analysis with cultural criticism and language studies and evaluate the efficacy of including cultural criticism in language studies curriculums and explore its potential implications for political processes and policymaking in the region.

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