



Akademik Eğitim ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi (AJESS Journal)

Arab Cultural Criticism between the Predicament of Importing and Translating Terminology and the Possibility of Establishing an Indigenous Framework: Towards Formulating Epistemological Foundations from within the Civilizational Context A Reading of the Maghreb Experience

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Article History

Received: 02/03/2026; Accepted: 08/08/2026; Published: 04/09/2026

Abstract:

Contemporary Arab critical discourse is witnessing a noticeable shift from a preoccupation with classical literary approaches toward an openness to cultural questions, within a context marked by the growing influence of Western cultural criticism and its expanding presence in Arab universities. However, this transformation has not proceeded as smoothly as some might imagine; rather, this project has encountered several obstacles. Accordingly, this study, entitled “Arab Cultural Criticism between the Dilemma of Importing and Translating Terminology and the Possibility of Establishing an Indigenous Framework: Towards the Elaboration of Epistemological Values from within the Civilizational Context: A Reading of the Maghrebi Experience,” seeks to examine what are generally known as the foundations of cultural criticism in the Arab world, with particular emphasis on the efforts of critics in the Maghreb and their precedence over Mashriqi critics in this field, taking the efforts of Abdelkebir Khatibi as a model. This is achieved by deconstructing the relationship between the importation and translation of terminology and the possibility of establishing an indigenous critical framework. While translation has served as a channel for circulating Western concepts such as system, hegemony, discourse, and representation, Arab theorization and foundational work have remained absent or deferred.

The paper seeks to reconsider the possibility of developing an Arab cultural criticism rooted in our own epistemological and symbolic particularities, by returning to the Arab rhetorical and intellectual heritage, not as a static legacy, but rather as a semantic reservoir capable of providing the foundations for an Arab cultural criticism with its own distinctive premises. Accordingly, the study revolves around a number of problematic questions, including: To what extent has the ready-made importation and translation of concepts affected the establishment of an Arab cultural criticism characterized by its own specificity and epistemological framework? Have Arab scholars succeeded in drawing upon their intellectual heritage to construct a distinctive form of cultural criticism? Furthermore, what is the position of Maghrebi critics within this new critical field, and can they be credited with precedence over their Mashriqi counterparts?

We will attempt to answer these and other questions throughout the different sections of the study, based on a premise that has been established in our thinking from the outset: namely, that most modern critical studies, including cultural criticism, continue to face an epistemological dilemma in terms of both usage and theoretical grounding. Overcoming this dilemma requires a transition from conceptual consumption to foundational creativity; that is, transforming the imported concept into a critical analytical tool that emerges from our own cultural reality.

Keywords: Cultural Criticism; Translation; Theoretical Grounding; Arab Heritage; Maghrebi Experience.

Introduction

Cultural criticism is considered one of the most prominent and recent critical approaches to have emerged in the Arab literary arena. It is one of the outcomes of postmodernism, which brought about a revolution across various fields. Cultural criticism likewise represented a revolution in the world of literary criticism, as it introduced the idea of undermining purely rhetorical and aesthetic foundations and shifting attention towards the artistic content, in order to search for the

hidden implications embedded within the text. Such implications require a discerning eye to uncover them, as well as analytical mechanisms that cultural criticism alone provides, including concepts such as the system, the implicit, the margin, and ideology, together with ways of applying these concepts to texts and making the fullest possible use of them. This study aims to trace the trajectory of cultural criticism in the Arab intellectual and literary arena and to examine how it moved from its place of origin into Arab culture, as well as the problems and crises that accompanied this process, particularly the issue of importing critical terminology and the ways in which such terminology is translated. It also explores the possibility of establishing a genuinely Arab cultural criticism grounded in an Arab intellectual, cultural, and terminological framework. We have therefore taken the Maghreb experience as a model for our study, which is entitled: “Arab Cultural Criticism between the Predicament of Importing and Translating Terminology and the Possibility of Establishing an Indigenous Framework: Towards Formulating Epistemological Foundations from within the Civilizational Context—A Reading of the Maghreb Experience.”

This title raises a number of problematic questions: To what extent has the ready-made importation and translation of terminology affected the establishment of an Arab cultural criticism with its own distinctive characteristics and epistemological framework? Have Arab scholars succeeded in making use of their intellectual heritage to construct a cultural criticism of their own? Furthermore, what is the position of Maghreb critics within this new critical field, and did they have a pioneering role in comparison with their Mashriqi counterparts?

The body of our study encompasses a number of titles and thematic axes, beginning with the clarification of concepts such as culture and its definitions among Arab and Western critics, as well as the concept of cultural criticism. We attempted to bring together the most comprehensive definitions of the latter, while placing particular emphasis on the definitions proposed by Maghreb critics. We then examined the characteristics of this critical approach and the distinction between it and classical literary criticism, particularly in terms of concepts such as comprehensiveness and necessity. We also delved more deeply into cultural criticism by attempting to define the mechanism of the system as a concept generated by cultural criticism.

In accordance with the narrative implied by the title of our study and in keeping with its key terms, we addressed the principal factors underlying the crisis of terminology, including the problem of translating cultural criticism terminology, as well as subjectivity and individualism in dealing with this critical approach. We then examined the efforts of Maghreb critics in developing and advancing cultural criticism, beginning with Abdelkébir Khatibi, who was among the first to theorize cultural criticism through his two works, *The Wounded Arab Name* and *Double Critique*. We also examined the contribution of the Algerian critic Hafnaoui Baali through his book *An Introduction to the Theory of Comparative Cultural Criticism*, which represents a mature Algerian experience in the field of cultural criticism. Finally, we concluded the study by presenting its most significant findings and proposed solutions.

Given the nature of the subject, we combined the descriptive-analytical approach with the historical approach, the latter serving as a secondary and complementary methodology.

Definition of Terms

A/ Culture:

The term culture has been defined in major and authoritative Arabic dictionaries and lexicons. In *Lisan al-Arab*, Ibn Manzur states: “*Thaqifa al-rajul thaqafatan*,” meaning that a man became skilled or proficient; and “*thaqifa al-shay’a*,” meaning that he mastered or understood it well. A person may be described as “*thaqif laqif*,” that is, possessing both cultural competence and intellectual acumen. *Al-thiqaf* refers to the instrument used to straighten spears. The term also appears in the Prophetic tradition, in a report narrated by the Mother of the Believers describing her father, Abu Bakr: “He straightened its deviation with his *thiqaf*,” meaning that he corrected the crookedness of the ranks of men. (Manzur, n.d)

It can therefore be inferred from this definition that the word culture in the Arab intellectual heritage denotes refinement, correction, and rectification. Although the term, in its academic sense, is relatively recent in the Arab intellectual and literary sphere, it appeared in ancient poetry. For instance, ‘*Adi ibn al-Riqā*’, who lived in the first century AH, stated:

“And a poem whose verses I spent the night assembling,
Until I could straighten its inclination and support it.
The skilled craftsman examined the joints of his spear,
Until he properly straightened and refined its shaft.”

The term also appears in the poetry of al-Shaybani, who said:

“I straightened it, leaving neither deviation nor crookedness,
Just as the spear of al-Khattā was straightened through refinement.”

At the level of literary criticism, the term appears in the writings of al-Jahiz concerning poets, in which he describes their efforts to refine and perfect their poetry:

“Nevertheless, whenever they needed to form an opinion concerning major matters of governance and important affairs, they would compose it within their minds and keep it to themselves. Then, once it had been straightened by the *thiqaf* and placed in the furnace, they would bring it forth perfected and polished, purified of impurities and refined.” (Al-Jahiz, n.d, p. 14)

As for the terminological definitions of culture, they have been largely consistent among both Western and Arab critics. For example, T. S. Eliot defines culture as follows:

“The associations of the word culture vary according to whether we mean the growth of an individual, the growth of a group or class, or the growth of an entire society. Part of my argument is that the culture of the individual depends upon

the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class depends upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs. Accordingly, the culture of the society is fundamental.”

Eliot thus relates culture to certain conditions, including cultural development at the individual level and its subsequent contribution to the construction of a collective cultural framework. In other words, he connects individual culture with the culture of the entire society, emphasizing that the latter has a significant and direct influence on the individual.

Similarly, Malik Bennabi defines culture as follows: “It is a set of moral qualities and social values that influence the individual from birth and unconsciously become the relationship that connects his behavior with the way of life prevailing in his social environment.” (Bennabi, 2000, p. 74)

A similarity can be observed between the two definitions, as both emphasize the influence of society spatially and temporally on the individual. They indicate, in one way or another, that human beings are products of their environment and cannot completely rebel against the prevailing atmosphere of their social surroundings. In other words, individuals are influenced by the laws, customs, morals, and forms of knowledge that surround them within their societies.

Accordingly, the definition of culture becomes relatively stable and resistant to change, except in terms of the manifestations through which culture is expressed, which vary from one society to another. Nevertheless, cultural differences may also exist within a single society as a result of variations in the conditions referred to above.

B/ Cultural Criticism

Cultural criticism is considered one of the purely modern Western sciences and critical approaches. It differs fundamentally from critical approaches such as stylistics and semiotics, since, if we examine the heritage of classical Arabic criticism, we find that Arab critics made significant theoretical and practical contributions to these fields through their application to literary texts. Cultural criticism, in its theoretical framework, is primarily concerned with the implicit cultural patterns embedded in the text under study, as well as with revealing the influence of bodies of knowledge such as psychology and sociology.

Many researchers agree that cultural criticism is an elusive concept whose definition cannot easily be confined to a single comprehensive and exhaustive formulation. Nevertheless, they generally agree that this approach is synonymous with civilizational and social criticism. This is what Saad Al-Bazai points to when he states: “Cultural criticism, in its general sense, can be synonymous with civilizational criticism, such as that practiced by Taha Hussein, Adonis, Al-Aqqad, Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri, and Abdullah Laroui. Accordingly, cultural criticism may be defined as an intellectual activity that takes culture in its entirety as an object of study and reflection, and expresses positions toward its developments and characteristics.” (Al-Ruwaili, n.d, p. 305)

It can be argued that this definition is among the most comprehensive attempts to grasp the concept of cultural criticism. The writings of figures such as Taha Hussein, Al-Jabri, and Adonis devoted considerable attention to criticizing the cultural structures implicit in texts. Taha Hussein, for example, in his criticism of pre-Islamic poetry, did not approach the texts solely from an aesthetic or artistic perspective, as many critics had done. Rather, he proceeded to study the pre-Islamic environment in all its cultural dimensions, employing the principle associated with Al-Ghazali and Descartes, namely, “doubt until certainty is reached.” This ultimately led him to question the attribution of pre-Islamic poetry to the pre-Islamic poets themselves. This constitutes a cultural inquiry related to the pre-Islamic environment. Likewise, Muhammad Abed Al-Jabri and Adonis, in their critical approaches to Arab reason, did not focus on aesthetic imagery; instead, they criticized the modes of thought underlying contemporary Arab reason.

Thus, cultural criticism is essentially connected to the idea of linking the text to its cultural context. What distinguishes it from structuralism or semiotics is that it is not a fixed or strictly delimited form of criticism. Rather, it changes according to the writer’s culture and intellectual orientation, as well as the tendencies of the text and its implicit and non-visible elements.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of cultural criticism is its intersection with other critical approaches, such as deconstruction, hermeneutics, and semiotics, as well as with numerous branches of the humanities. It draws upon whatever serves its principal objective: uncovering the implicit cultural patterns embedded within texts. In this regard, Muhammad Ubaydullah states: “Cultural criticism is primarily connected with intellectual and revolutionary movements, such as feminism and the Black revolution (if the term is appropriate), the clash of civilizations and cultures, and other matters that fall within the domain of the implicit discourse in the text and the underlying structure that drives it.” (Ubaydullah, 2009, p. 07)

The Saudi scholar Abdullah Al-Ghadhami, one of the pioneering Arab theorists of cultural criticism, goes even further. He suggests that this approach resembles the “science of hidden defects” (*‘ilm al-‘ilal*) in the discipline of Prophetic Hadith, which is primarily concerned with both the *matn* (text) and the *isnad* (chain of transmission) in the authentication and classification of Hadith. In this discipline, judgments such as trustworthy, sound, or weak are applied to Hadith narrators on the basis of their reputation for truthfulness or falsehood, after which an overall judgment is made concerning the Hadith itself. This description closely resembles the function of cultural criticism, which is primarily concerned with the writer’s cultural background and the ideological orientation for which he or she is known.

Accordingly, based on these definitions, we can conclude that cultural criticism examines the influences of the environment surrounding the writer, including political circumstances (the writer’s relationship with power and its impact on him), social circumstances (the culture of society and its prevailing concerns), and economic conditions, particularly in terms of the position of the writer’s society in the world. The differences in living conditions between the First World and the Third World are considerable and varied, and the themes addressed in literary works likewise vary according to

these differences. Cultural criticism, therefore, seeks to identify the themes and the underlying cultural structures embedded within the text, treating it as a cultural value rather than merely an aesthetic one.

Specific Characteristics of Cultural Criticism

Cultural criticism is distinguished by a number of elements based on logical arguments that make it different from classical critical approaches, particularly in view of its relatively recent emergence in the literary field. Among these elements are the following:

• Complementarity:

Cultural criticism is regarded as a complementary approach to other critical methodologies. Although critics have often defined it in contrast to other approaches that differ from it, it does not reject these approaches as much as it seeks to compensate for their shortcomings. These shortcomings are manifested, in its view, in their isolation of literary texts from their external contexts. Although cultural criticism rejects the evaluation of texts solely on aesthetic grounds, this rejection is justified by what it considers to be the superficiality inherent in such evaluation. In this regard, Al-Ghadhami states: "The purpose is not to eliminate the achievements of literary criticism; rather, the aim is to transform the critical tool from an instrument for reading, justifying, and promoting pure aesthetic value regardless of its systemic defects, into a tool for criticizing discourse and revealing its underlying structures. This requires a transformation in the terminological system."

(Al-Ghadhami, n.d, p. 08)

• Necessity:

Cultural criticism is no longer merely an intellectual or scholarly luxury; rather, it has become a necessity. The development of human awareness and the increasing complexity of human needs require the search for an analytical tool capable of examining contexts, implicit structures, and latent messages within the texts that writers seek to convey to readers. These ideas are often concealed either in an attempt to escape the power and control of authority or as a deliberate choice on the part of the writer.

The Cultural Structure

The cultural structure is considered one of the modern concepts generated by cultural criticism theory. It refers to a set of interacting and interconnected elements, primarily concerned with the study of the laws, customs, sacred beliefs, ethics, arts, and traditions that individuals acquire through their integration into a particular society. The concept of structure is one of the fundamental operational concepts upon which the practice of cultural criticism is based. It refers to "a set of values concealed behind texts, discourses, and practices," whether these values are ideological, political, or social.

Conditions for the Realization of the Systemic Function in Cultural Criticism

In his book, Al-Ghadhami identifies a number of conditions necessary for the realization of the systemic function within cultural criticism. These are:

"The popularity and widespread circulation of the text, so as to demonstrate the dominance of cultural structures over the collective social and cultural consciousness.

The existence of a contradiction between two structures within a single text, with one of these structures being explicit and the other implicit.

The text must possess an aesthetic dimension, not according to the classical conception of aesthetics, but according to a cultural conception. This is because the aesthetic dimension constitutes one of the cultural devices through which the underlying structure operates, and the task of cultural criticism is to reveal it."

The Crisis of Arab Cultural Criticism: Causes and Solutions

A. Cultural Translation

Translation in the Arab critical discourse has been associated with the encounter with the Other, who differs in language and identity. This practice has developed over time in response to the expansion of knowledge, the multiplicity of languages, and the increasing openness of peoples and cultures to one another. Translation "has always been a creative activity, for it is equivalent to producing original books, and everything related to the production of a translation bears a relationship and significance, in the receiving culture, that differ from those existing in the source culture." (Dimitri Gutas, 2003, p. 307) Since culture develops through hybridity and interaction with different and diverse cultures, translation has been regarded as a fundamental means of developing and enriching culture: "Translation from other languages enriches and strengthens cultural identity rather than weakening it or confusing its characteristics, nor does it bind it to the chains of cultural dependency, as some may assume. Translation is, in fact, an active constructive factor in enriching cultural identity." (Cheni, 2020, p. 159)

Despite the significant contribution that translation makes to Arab scholarship in general and to critical studies in particular, certain circumstances including the civilizational and intellectual defeat experienced by the literary field have resulted in the production of a distorted translated criticism that bears little resemblance to our distinctive Arab cultural specificity. This is evident neither in terms of the ideas, which differ between East and West, nor in terms of the contexts in which these concepts and terminologies emerged and subsequently underwent a process of cultural transfer from West to East.

Nevertheless, Arabs should not be concerned about such linguistic and cultural differences, as they constitute an incentive for exploration, development, and the expansion of intellectual horizons. The real concern, however, lies in the weakness of translators who seek to reproduce a text with all of its original characteristics, despite the fact that translation provides room for interpreting texts in accordance with the culture into which the text is transferred. "The translator who is

conscious of the translation process is not required to convey the meaning of the original text as intended by the author but rather to convey what emerges from the text's openness to the interpreter, who ultimately conveys, through his or her own perspective, what the original text says. Therefore, it is not the translator's task to reproduce all the characteristics of the original text." (Belkilaal, 2017, p. 159)

Among the reasons that have contributed to this weakness in translation is the limited familiarity with the Arab heritage. As a result, translators may find it difficult to identify appropriate equivalents for cultural terms—not because of any deficiency in the Arabic language, but rather because of the translator's own limited intellectual horizons. Consequently, the translator may resort to transferring the cultural term, together with its entire intellectual and philosophical connotations, into a different cultural environment, without taking into account the intellectual and social differences between the source culture and the target culture. This is where the terminological crisis emerges.

In this context, Shtaiwi al-Ghaithi states: "There is no solution for accepting Western literature except by accepting the culture of difference, because cultural difference is intrinsic even within a single culture. Accordingly, there is nothing strange about accepting cultural pluralism in Eastern societies, since their cultures differ from one society to another, even within Arab culture itself, which varies in its schools of thought, ethnic groups, and cultural forms from one country to another."

"Accordingly, denying cultural difference during the translation process cannot contribute to the development of cultural studies, including cultural criticism. Such denial negatively affects culture and its symbolic systems. The principle is that literary and critical texts that have failed to develop or enter the sphere of universality because of a refusal to accept translational difference are ultimately unproductive forms of literature." (Bahchouan, 2022, p. 13)

B. Subjectivity:

One of the crises affecting cultural criticism, and constituting a methodological flaw within it, is its subjectivity in the criticism of literary texts.

Most critics approach literary texts from the standpoint of their own ideologies. This view is confirmed by the critic Hafnawi Baali, who states: "Therefore, cultural criticism is always marked by a personal and non-objective character. Scholars of culture have not denied this subjective feature; rather, they have affirmed its existence. One of the shortcomings of cultural analysis is that it is limited and confined to its own society and to the subjectivity of that society. Moreover, practitioners of cultural studies are very cautious in their statements regarding the achievements of this approach. In addition, it is, always and invariably, ideological criticism." (Baali, 2005, p. 234)

The Efforts of Maghrebi Critics in Cultural Criticism:

A. The Merit of Pioneering and the Priority of Establishment: The Efforts of Abdelkebir Khatibi as a Model

The Moroccan critic, translator, and sociologist Abdelkebir Khatibi is considered the first Arab scholar to theorize cultural criticism before it acquired its current designation and to lay its initial foundations in his notable book *The Wounded Arab Name*. In this work, he moved from classical literary criticism toward a critique of identity, establishing a connection between the effects of colonialism on language and identity and issues of culture. He also analyzed the Arab self and its position toward the colonial Other.

Among his contributions to cultural criticism is the fact that he was among the first Arab writers to establish connections between literature and psychology, sociology, anthropology, as well as ideological influences.

Despite his profound engagement with and understanding of Western critical approaches, Khatibi was not unconsciously influenced by them. On the contrary, many of his ideas were opposed to Western imperialism. He even regarded European colonialism of Arab countries, together with the intellectual and cultural hegemony imposed upon us in many cases, as two major causes of our intellectual and cultural backwardness.

In order to maintain objectivity in his work, he also criticized the intellectual stagnation that had affected the Arab mind and its continued confinement within a past that had already passed. Khatibi argues that Arab culture was subjected to two factors that profoundly influenced it: the colonizer and the outcomes of Orientalism, on the one hand, and self-inflicted ignorance, on the other. This constitutes a purely cultural approach that relies primarily on sociology and psychology, and this is precisely the essence of cultural critical analysis.

In this book, Khatibi particularly focused on the Maghrebi specificity shaped by linguistic, identity-based, and cultural plurality, as well as by the factors mentioned above.

Following this pioneering precedence, Al-Khatibi soon authored his second book, entitled *Double Critique*. The book consists of a collection of articles previously published in various journals, which Al-Khatibi compiled and brought together in this work. The chapters and thematic sections of the book encompass intellectual and cultural inquiries that identify the underlying problem and propose possible remedies. Its main themes are as follows:

The Maghreb as a Horizon for Thought

In this section, Al-Khatibi addresses the state of intellectual thought in the Maghreb region. He explains that Maghrebi culture remained confined within metaphysical conceptions that resisted development and adaptation to the progress of civilization. At the same time, another conception emerged that viewed rationality merely through the lens of material development, following the Western model. Both models, however, lack objectivity. Al-Khatibi also "called for transcending all the ready-made concepts produced by the West and developing an epistemological strategy detached from theological discourses; he advocated critically examining dominant knowledge at its source, believing in the concept of difference and the existence of identity, and avoiding reproducing what the West, or even the Arabs, had previously done, because such repetition neither changes the existing situation nor goes beyond the theoretical dimension." (Al-Azzouzi, n.d)

The second theme of Double Critique is entitled “Zionism and the Western Left.” In this section, Al-Khatibi discusses the establishment of the Zionist state, which embraces a metaphysical and theological ideology associated with Judaism, as well as the role of this state in serving the Western imperialist project and waging war against the Arab and Islamic system, particularly through its occupation of Palestine. He then discusses the conflict between Marxism and the Jewish project, emphasizing that Marxism has consistently opposed authoritarian projects, foremost among them the Zionist settler-colonial project.

The third theme is entitled “Sociology of the Maghreb.” In this chapter, Al-Khatibi proceeds from three hypotheses. The first concerns the purpose of his double critique, which is to deconstruct the concepts produced by Western-oriented sociological knowledge and writing that claim to speak on behalf of the Arab world, as well as to critique and deconstruct the sociological writings produced by Arab societies about themselves.

The second hypothesis stems from Al-Khatibi’s desire to establish a rupture with Western cultural domination. This can be achieved by transforming sociological writing into a form of historical writing based on material facts, treating scientific writing as a form of knowledge grounded in independent foundations, and considering ideological writing as a parallel form of writing.

“Finally, Al-Khatibi’s third hypothesis, within the framework of his double critique, revolves around the marginal position occupied by Arab knowledge within Western knowledge. This is because Arab knowledge, first, does not depart from Western knowledge, and, second, does not establish for itself a position from which it can construct its own independent contents. Al-Khatibi argues that his double critique seeks to achieve the objective of establishing Arab knowledge outside Western knowledge by opposing it and placing it within theoretical frameworks capable of revealing the circumstances surrounding this knowledge, particularly since it has been closely associated with issues of colonialism and imperialism. This opposition, however, must remain within the scope of historical and sociological writing, as it is capable of expanding the field of reflection on this subject. Since language, as previously stated, has maintained its autonomy in relation to Arab knowledge, it constitutes a starting point for confronting Western knowledge through the creation of conceptual frameworks apprehended within a terminological system specific to that language, namely the Arabic language.” (Al-Azzouzi, n.d)

B/ Cultural Criticism According to Malek Bennabi:

Malek Bennabi was among the early contributors to cultural criticism. His contribution was particularly evident in his strong criticism of Western ideology and its civilization, with all its cultural and intellectual implications. He maintained that this civilization had become sterile and was no longer capable of offering anything new to the world. He further argued that the civilization confronting Islam was, in fact, in need of Islam in order to compensate for the deficiencies that had affected its spiritual and intellectual dimensions.

Bennabi also criticized the Arab and Islamic mind for neglecting the material dimensions of civilization. He repeatedly warned that the winds of civilization would turn away from the Arab and Islamic worlds if they persisted in intellectual stagnation. Although colonialism had succeeded in delaying the East from joining the path of civilization through the power of arms and ideas, Arabs and Muslims themselves had contributed to this endeavor through their susceptibility to colonization. In this regard, he states: “Cunning, deceit, deception, greed, and ferocity belong to colonialism, whereas baseness, degradation, maliciousness, and treachery belong to the susceptibility to colonization.”

Hafnaoui Baali as a Manifestation of the Algerian Experience in Cultural Criticism

Algeria, like other Arab countries, was influenced by cultural criticism. However, the reception of this epistemological paradigm remained rather limited, as it did not go beyond a number of academic articles and some applications to literary texts that did not reach the level of a mature critical approach. Within this context, the Algerian critic Hafnaoui Baali emerged with a book entitled *An Introduction to the Theory of Comparative Cultural Criticism*, which he divided into several themes, presented in the following order:

The Genealogy of Cultural Criticism

Cultural Criticism and Postcolonial Theory

Cultural Criticism and the Philosophy of Feminism and Post-Feminism

Cultural Criticism and the Intelligentsia (The Dichotomy of the Intellectual and Power)

Comparative Cultural Criticism and the Culture of Globalization

Comparative Cultural Criticism and the Culture of Symbolism

Cultural Criticism and the Culture of Image and Spectacle

Cultural Criticism and Ecocriticism (the Environment)

In this book, researcher Hafnaoui Baali presents an extensive study of the theory of comparative cultural criticism, taking cultural and social systems as an appropriate starting point for examining the intellectual and scientific structures of peoples. The cultural critic employs diverse concepts and theories in combinations and exchanges that relate to the high arts and textual culture.

Accordingly, “cultural criticism possesses an interconnected, interrelated, and overlapping task. Cultural critics come from different fields and employ diverse ideas and concepts. They are capable of interpreting theories and fields such as semiotics, psychoanalytic theory, Marxist theory, social theory, and anthropological theory. Cultural studies and cultural criticism have also addressed a range of prominent themes and issues, including the culture of science, which encompasses technology and society; technological fiction; science fiction; the culture of images and media; the culture industry; mass culture; critical anthropology; comparative symbolism; New Historicism; political science studies; social studies;

Orientalism; postcolonial discourse; multiculturalism theory; feminist and gender studies; ecocriticism; environmental culture; and the culture of globalization.” (Amar, 2022, p. 13)

Conclusion

Despite the shortcomings and limitations affecting Arab cultural criticism, and despite the relative novelty of this approach, the Arab and particularly Maghreb intellectual efforts in this field cannot be denied. The deficiencies that affect it at both the theoretical and practical levels can largely be attributed to the channels through which this discipline has reached us, particularly translation. Accordingly, we can draw a number of conclusions and propose solutions that may contribute to the advancement of Arab cultural criticism. Among the most important conclusions are the following:

Cultural criticism is one of the most important fields of literary studies to have emerged alongside the rise of postmodernism. It sought to undermine the aesthetic foundations of the literary text and to focus instead on its underlying and implicit cultural patterns.

Cultural criticism should not be regarded as an intellectual luxury, but rather as a necessity imposed by the demands of civilization, the development of human awareness, and the diversity of languages, religions, and ideologies.

Some critics have called for cultural criticism to replace literary criticism and for the latter to be dispensed with altogether. Such a position lacks objectivity and foresight, since cultural criticism did not emerge to abolish literary criticism, but rather to complement its shortcomings.

Some procedures and concepts associated with cultural criticism, such as the concept of the cultural pattern, remain ambiguous and become fully apparent only through practical application.

The translation of cultural criticism terminology into Arab critical discourse constituted an important project aimed at accepting and studying difference, while treating such terminology as functional and context-dependent.

Poor translations resulting from the translator's own lack of competence constitute a major reason for the complexity and ambiguity of cultural criticism terminology.

Inadequate Arabic translations have significantly distorted many texts by removing them from their civilizational and cultural contexts, with the aim of diminishing their value and maintaining cultural hegemony.

Abdelkébir Khatibi is considered a pioneer of cultural criticism. His two books, *The Wounded Name* and *Double Criticism*, represent some of the earliest cultural-critical approaches, even preceding Al-Ghadhami's experience. Their significance does not lie merely in their precedence; Khatibi's works were characterized by intellectual maturity and objectivity and devoted considerable attention to cultural terminology.

The ideas conveyed through Khatibi's intellectual production do not appear to be simple or straightforward in their relationship with the ordinary reader. What he wrote summarizes a long process of practical and theoretical reflection on intellectual texts characterized by recurring propositions, intersecting insights, and innovative approaches, and perhaps even contradictory perspectives. More importantly, however, his contribution as a Moroccan critic allows for the recovery and understanding of what he stated or addressed in his writings concerning issues of cultural identity. His writings indeed raise serious questions about Arab identity and culture.

Hafnawi Baali made a significant contribution to cultural criticism through his book *An Introduction to the Theory of Comparative Cultural Criticism*. He relied on cultural and social patterns as the basis for describing and analyzing the intellectual and scientific structures of peoples. He also addressed the various issues examined by cultural criticism, including feminism, modernity, globalization, and the duality between the intellectual and power.

To overcome the shortcomings and crises affecting Arab cultural criticism, critics and specialists must commit themselves to implementing practical solutions. The most important of these solutions include:

Training translators and enhancing their cultural knowledge so that they possess sufficient understanding to comprehend both the culture from which a cultural term originates and the culture into which it is introduced. Terminological translation in cultural criticism has sometimes shifted toward either warning against difference and retreating into the self, or dissolving into the culture of the Other; both approaches are problematic.

Increasing the number of academic conferences and forums that bring together specialists in cultural criticism, while working toward harmonizing their perspectives and adopting their solutions and recommendations in ways that serve literary and cultural criticism.

Working toward incorporating cultural criticism into the activities of Arab language academies, given that these institutions represent the highest linguistic authorities in the Arab world.

Establishing cultural criticism as an academic specialization in Arab universities in general and Maghreb universities in particular.

Moving beyond the idea of cultural hegemony and fascination with the West, while engaging more deeply with the Arab intellectual heritage and working to identify the corresponding terms, concepts, and perspectives within that heritage that can contribute to the development of cultural criticism.

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