



Reception of the Anglo-Arab Novel in the Euro-American Literary World

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Abstract

This paper will explore the process involved in the transference and ‘rewriting’ of a foreign text in order to show how acculturation and domestication take on the form of censorship which ensures the prominence of dominant power discourses thereby distorting the message of the original text. Culture and language are factors that define reception; conversely, reception becomes the driving force behind a culture and its values. Literature from the Arab and Islamic world is particularly vulnerable to this differentiation and favoritism. Very few works of Arab origin make it through to become a dominant power discourse in the Euro-American literary domain and those that do make it are ‘rewritten’ to meet the demands of its receiving audience. Writers, such as Hanan Al-Shaykh (Lebanese) and Fadia Faqir (Jordanian), are amongst some of the Arab writers whose works have been ‘domesticated’ to produce discourses that meet the expectations of the receiving audience. As native informants, these writers’ works are unfortunately considered as anthropological texts that reveal ‘truths’ about the Arab world and are subsequently used to justify the saving of the Arab woman from the Arab man. In comparing the dynamics at work between culture, language and reception in al-Shaykh and Faqir’s works, the paper will also show how the acceptance of a text is dependent on how close the original text is to the language and culture it is being transferred to.

Key words: Anglo-Arab Novel; Literature from the Arab and Islamic world; Driving force; Culture and its values

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization in the twentieth century has led towards the economic and political interdependence of countries which has inadvertently fostered a false sense of universality and a misconceived sense of common cultural heritage. The move towards internationalization has affected all aspects of life, from the financial and social world to the political and literary domain. The need for international trade has impelled nations to become economically interdependent, while the world of social media has collapsed all physical frontiers allowing people to communicate according to interest and profession rather than according to geographical borders or nationality. The political and literary domain, however, have been much slower to respond to the call for internationalization as in them resides the ideology and dogma at the core of every nation and the source of its very strength and power. Foucault’s claim that “Power produces knowledge; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations,” confirms the correlation between power structures and dominant discourses as found in literary texts (2004, p.550).

In looking at the way nations inter-relate at the literary and cultural level, translation emerges as the predominant means of inter-cultural interaction. ‘Acculturation’ or the processes of adapting or borrowing traits or traditions from another culture usually starts with the translation of texts and then extends into inter-cultural transfer of traditions. Inter-cultural transfer, however, seems to be

prevalent amongst cultures that consider themselves to be of equal prestige and stature. English literature, for instance has adopted many literary texts from the French and German tradition and vice-versa. However, when it comes to cultures, like the Asian, Middle Eastern and African cultures, little has been translated or borrowed from their lore and those works that do make it over the cultural divide are subject to the rigorous process of translation, decoding, editing, 'naturlizing,' and finally re-inventing as the work of art is adapted to its new habitat. This process of adopting a text from a foreign culture and 'rewriting' it will be the subject of investigation in this paper.

The School of Manipulation, of which Lefevere and Bassnett are its most prominent figures, stipulates that all textual production involves a process of "manipulation" (1998, p.x). Their premises is that all texts, even those written by natives of the same culture, undergo a process of "selection" whereby only those works that correspond to the poetics and spirits of the time are allowed into the literary system (Lefevere, 1992, p.20). Though this selection process seems to have been more rigorous before the twenty-first century, the post-modern period has had its fair share of biases and favoritism. Works that are selected from other cultures, however, are exposed to a more selective process whereby only those works that "are acceptable to the various ideologies and poetics currently dominating those systems" are allowed passage way and only after they have been customized according to the grids and expectations of the receiving audience (Lefevere, 1992, p.21). Thus, this process of 'translation' or what Lefevere chooses to call "rewriting" becomes an intensive act of "manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society" ;"But rewriting," says Lefevere, "can also repress innovation, distort and contain" (1992, p.vii).

This paper will explore the process involved in the transference and 'rewriting' of a foreign text in order to show how acculturation and domestication take on the form of censorship that ensures the prominence of discourses that align with dominant power structures thereby distorting the message of the original text. Culture and language are factors that define reception; conversely, reception becomes the driving force behind a culture and its values. Literature from the Arab and Islamic world is particularly vulnerable to this differentiation and favoritism. Very few works of Arab origin make it through to become a dominant power discourse in the Euro-American literary domain and those that do make it are 'rewritten' to meet the demands of its receiving audience. Writers, such as Hanan Al-Shaykh (Lebanese) and Fadia Faqir (Jordanian), are amongst some of the Arab writers whose works have been 'domesticated' to produce discourses that meet the expectations of the receiving audience. As native informants, these writers' works are unfortunately considered as "anthropological

and sociological" texts that reveal 'truths' about the Arab world and are subsequently used to justify the saving of "the brown woman from the brown man" (Amireh; Spivak, 2006, p.33). In comparing the dynamics at work between culture, language and reception in al-Shaykh and Faqir's works, the paper will also show how the acceptance of a text is dependent on how close the original text is to the language and culture it is being transferred to.

TEXTUAL PRODUCTION

Before exploring how the rewriting of Hanan and Fadia's texts have been subjected to the process of distortion, it will be helpful to examine how textual production of native texts occurs, thus giving proper context to the rewriting of foreign texts and providing a backdrop against which to compare those processes. The English canon, says Weber, is usually controlled by the "logic of that culture," namely the spirit, ideology and poetics in use at a particular moment in time (1987, p.25). Lefevere explains it another way saying that writers have to "choose to adapt to the system, to stay within the parameters delimited by its constraints" and he goes on to describe those constraints as: the literary system in use (its poetics), the patronage of the publishing world and its reception by readers. Both the second and third factors pertain to the ideology adopted in the text and are very much involved with the power/knowledge dichotomy as delineated in Foucault's power discourses: "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (1980, p.119).

Once a work of art has been accepted into the system, it may or may not become part of the dominant poetics or be canonized to the level of a 'classic.' After leaving the domain and influence of the author, it becomes under the power and monopoly of critics, reviewers and most importantly the higher education system which decides which texts are worthy to represent a certain period or movement. Once classified as a 'classic,' these texts are republished, perhaps with a different preface each time, but the work of art is kept intact and complete. As 'classics' these texts become what Foucault calls 'power discourses' which "transmit and produce power" turning into "yardsticks" against which other works are measured (Foucault, 2004, p.550; Lefevere, 1992, p.19).

As to those foreign literary works that are judged to be worthy of transference into the dominant English canon, the screening and selection process is more rigorous and subject to stricter restrictions. Of course, the more 'foreign' a text, the more difficult it is to integrate into the system. Edward Said explains that the process of integration of a text into the English canon involves four stages: the

creation of a work of art, the passage of that work of art as it is translated from its original language, conditions of acceptance, and finally the allocation of the text in its new environment (1984, p.226). What needs to be emphasized here is that all four stages are a product of the ideological convictions and agenda of their subjects; the writer, translator, editor, critic, publishing houses and readers impose their own cultural and political convictions so that only those texts that align with their power discourses are allowed into the system.

Lefevere highlights the conditions of acceptance of foreign texts as: "(i) the need, or rather needs, of the audience, or rather audiences... (ii) the patron or initiator of the translation, and (iii) the relative prestige of the source and target cultures and their foreign languages" (1998, p.44). The first condition involves the spirit of the times and what the audience wants to hear, which is usually determined by their predefined cultural and political beliefs. The second condition involves the ideological and political beliefs of those working in the publishing houses, the reviewers, editors who decide what is suitable material to be launched into the public domain. This again pertains to the political agenda at hand and involves accepting those works that reconfirm Eurocentric perspectives and biases. The last condition mainly involves the status of the source language and its culture. As was mentioned before, 'rewriting' usually occurs between languages and cultures of equal prestige. Those on the outside of the power circle, like Arab culture and literature, are rewritten only if they ascertain the negative Orientalist stereotype and confirm Eurocentric premises of superiority over the backward 'other.'

AL-SHAYKH'S NOVELS

Al-Shaykh published her first novel (*Suicide of a Dead Man*) in 1970 in Lebanon. She went on to write another three novels before receiving any international attention. Of course, the fact that her novels were written in Arabic was a major obstacle. As the language spoken by Third World Muslim countries, Arabic was not a language that First World countries were interested in learning or translating from. With a long history of resentment towards Islamic and Arab civilizations, First World countries were only willing "to make the acquaintance of Islamic literature... on the basis of a dominant/dominated relationship" (1992, p.75). Lefevere explains that "Euro-American literature is seen as the 'true' literature, and whatever Islamic literature has to offer is measured against that yardstick" (1992, p.75). When Edward Said tried to interest a New York publisher in Naguib Mahfouz's work, he was turned down on the basis that "Arabic was a controversial language" (Fadia Faqir, 2010). Soon after, Mahfouz received the Nobel Prize and was then translated into many European languages.

It was only al-Shaykh's fifth novel *Scent of a Gazelle* (1988) that caught the attention of the international press and was translated, renamed and published in 1992 as *Women of Sand and Myrrh*. In reference to the three conditions that Lefevere enumerates, the transference or acculturation of her text into English literature was due to the fact that the themes she discusses in her book align with Eurocentric resentment towards Islam and by association with the Middle East. Colonial powers, like Britain, France, Italy and the United States of America have had a long history of hostility towards what they consider to be backward and uncivilized countries and their excuse for colonizing them has always been the supposed desire to 'civilize' the backward 'other' and free women from an unjust system. Al-Shaykh's novel hit the mark in that it recounts the story of four oppressed women living in a Muslim state in the Middle East. Men in this story are shown to act in an 'uncivilized' manner abusing women and denying them their rights.

Scent of a Gazelle appeared on the scene after the end of the Iranian Revolution of 1978-1989, when Ayatollah Khomeini overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty and turned Iran into the Islamic Republic of Iran. This brought the Middle East and Islam under intensive scrutiny and created an unwarranted association between Islam, violence and terror. The impact of this on the international scene was the increased fear of Islam in general and the rejection of anything that is remotely associated with fundamentalism. The works of the feminist writer Nawal el-Saadawi which appeared in 1980 had whet the appetite for literature that condemned the oppressive conditions under which the Oriental women lived. The stage was ripe and ready to absorb more works by Arab women that confirmed the backward nature of the Arab world and warranted the intervention of outside forces. Hanan al-Shaykh's novel confirmed Eurocentric prejudices about the Arab world and elevated her to the status of 'savior' who was willing to give a voice to millions of voiceless Arab women suffering under patriarchy.

As the images and themes that al-Shaykh discusses in *Scent of a Gazelle* (later *Women of Sand and Myrrh*) concurred with the spirit of the times, her novel was considered worthy of becoming part of the English canon. In order to do so, it first had to be domesticated through a process of decoding, editing, translating and restructuring in order to become less 'foreign' and meet the reader's expectations. The publishers at Anchor Books decided to invest in al-Shaykh's work because they found her text to be suitable in its ideology and political overtures with the potential to cater to what Euro-American audiences wanted to hear about the abysmal lives of Arab women. From the reordering of the events in the story to the change of title and cover page, many aspects of the book have been modified to intensify the stereotypical image of the backward 'other.'

The cover page of the English version of the book reads as such: "A small masterpiece in the psychological confines of the modern *harem*... Frank sexuality and explicit accounts of feminine alienation," while the back cover reads: "*Women of Sand and Myrrh* is a... poignant reminder of the enduring plight of oppressed women around the globe" (1992).¹ The novel has been translated and restructured in order to emphasize the alienation and oppression of women within the confines of the modern harem as found in the Middle East. As Michelle Hartman points out in "Gender, Genre and the (Missing) Gazelle," the sequence of events as recounted by the four characters has been changed so that the Lebanese Suha, the most liberal and adventurous of the four female characters, can end the story from her own perspective (2012). The original Arabic work recounts the stories of four women in the sequence of Suha, Nur, Suzanne and Tamr. This sequence introduces the story from the point of view of a Lebanese coming to visit the conservative Middle East, followed by the story of Nur, a bored housewife from this Middle Eastern country who has nothing to do expect visit her friends and drink tea. The story of the middle-aged American woman Suzanne follows. She is intrigued by everything around her and lives her Orientalist fantasies to the fullest. Tamr ends the novel on a hopeful note as she is able to set up her own business and become financially independent.

The English translation of *Scent of a Gazelle* changed the sequence of the accounts so that Suha comes first, then Tamr, Suzanne and Nur with an epilogue at the end recounted by Suha. The change in the sequence impacts the story line in that as the reader is about to end the narrative, Nur's account of her depressing and stifled life stays with the reader long after he/she has ended the narrative. The imposed epilogue at the end which had been cut off from the last chapters of Suha's story in the Arabic version frames the rest of the narrative. In this epilogue, Suha reminds the reader of the depressing conditions of this Middle Eastern country emphasizing how rigid the rules were and how vulnerable women were to men's abuse. Myra's supposed molestation by a man dressed in clothing similar to Aladdin's recalls Orientalist images of promiscuity, secrecy and inertness of the Arab world. Suha's account of Sitt Wafa and the rooster who had gone wild and the suggestion to slaughter it presents violence and terror as part of these characters very lives. Suha's last comment that she was finally leaving the "horrors of the sand" and "a way of life that revolved around human beings without possessions or skills, who had to rely in their imagination to contrive a way of making their hearts beat faster" reconfirms the bleakness, emptiness and insignificance of these Arab women's lives lost to the sand (274). Though al-Shaykh's novel draws

a bleak picture of these women's lives in her original Arabic copy, the edited English version with its reordering of accounts adds a further level of bleakness. Instead of ending with Tamr's successful accomplishments in the world of business and offering a ray of hope that things might change in the future, the publishers have decided to play up the uselessness of these women's lives through the epilogue of Suha.

The change of the title of the Arabic novel from *Scent of a Gazelle* to *Women of Sand and Myrrh* in the English version further attests to editors and publishers intent of wanting to reinforce stereotypical images of the Arab world as frivolous, undisciplined and promiscuous. The Arabic title which reads *Scent (Musk) of a Gazelle* carries very different connotations. In Arabic literature, the scent or musk of a gazelle is symbolic of purity and the divine. Prophet Muhammad was said to be always wearing the scent of musk; the Kaaba is often sprayed with musk and it is often referred to as a "Musk pod" (King, 2007, p.165). King in his book *The Musk Trade and the Near East* explains that musk "became a metaphor for the omnipotence of God and the possibility of redemption" (2007, p.281). Orientalist overtures, however, can also be attached to this title. Musk in its association with beauty and women brings to the Orientalist mind-set images of pleasure and erotica. It can also be associated with violence and abuse as gazelles are often killed to attain musk from their bodies. Both positive and negative images seem to be reflected in the Arabic version of the story. The character who is most associated with this musk is Tamr. Tamr smells the musk at her wedding and as the focal point of the Arabic version, her story indicates the possibility of achieving a happy life within the confines of a conservative society. As Tamr's account is made less important and Suha's became the focal point of the story, the title is changed to reflect Suha's disdain of these women who are as empty and desolate as the arid desert. The literal meaning of the title *Women of Sand and Myrrh* is 'women who spend their time in the sand having fun.' No longer associated with the scent of musk, these women lose any association with divinity and are presented as living hollow and inconsequential lives.

The change of title also brought with it a change in cover page. The original Arabic cover depicted a woman holding a gazelle, symbolic of these women's struggle for freedom within their oppressive environment. The English version, however, presents a picture of a woman veiled in white curtains. Her side to the camera, eyes averted, she seems imprisoned and incapable of taking any action or reciprocating the camera's gaze. Gazing blindly into space, she reminds one of Delacroix's painting "Women of Algiers" where the women seem to be in a dream-like state "absent to themselves, to their body, to their

¹ My emphasis

sensuality, to their happiness” (Djebar, 1992, p.137). Suspended in time and space, the figure in al-Shaykh’s picture becomes symbolic of the passive, silent Oriental woman who has been objectified and frozen in time. As object of the reader’s gaze, her inert position expresses the asymmetric power relations that exist between English reader and Oriental character. As in Foucault’s panoptical prison, authority becomes in the hands of those that possess the gaze projecting their own fantasies and desires on the other (2004).

Applauded for her frankness in laying “bare the unusual relations that exist in a state that denies women their humanity” and her “powerfully revealing insight into a long-cloistered world,” al-Shaykh has been hailed as “one of the Arab world’s most distinguished writers.”² In 1992, Al-Shaykh’s novel was chosen as one of the 50 Best Books by Publishers Weekly. *Women of Sand and Myrrh* catapulted al-Shaykh into the world of notoriety and brought her more fame than she ever had in the Arab world. When asked in an interview if she ever regretted making changes to the cover pages of her novels, her answer was that the choice was left to her publishers who knew the market best (Rhame, 2009). In another interview, al-Shaykh acknowledges the changes that her novels have undergone as they were ‘acculturated’ into another environment, yet she finds that her success in the West is something that she is unwilling to give up (al-Amir, 1996). Al-Shaykh went on to write other novels many of which were translated into European languages: *The Story of Zahra*, *Beirut Blues*, *Only in London*, *I Sweep the Sun Off Rooftops*, *The Persian Carpet*, *The locust and the Bird: My Mother’s Story*.

Al-Shaykh’s success has extended beyond the general public to become a regular staple in American and English universities that teach courses in Middle Eastern studies or Anglo-Arab writers. Her place in the English canon has been secured and she, like many other female Arab writers (Djavar, Faqir, Mernissi, Saadawi, Sha’rawi) has been hailed as a true savior who is out to uncover the truth and save her fellow country women from oppression and abuse.

FAQIR’S NOVELS

Al-Shaykh’s novels have been translated and ‘domesticated’ to fit Euro-American textual grids and to fulfill expectations of the audience. Fadia Faqir’s first work *Nisanit* appeared on the literary scene at the same time as al-Shaykh’s *Women of Sand and Myrrh* did (1987-1988); however, due to the fact that her work was written in the native language of the culture she was addressing, it quickly was absorbed in Euro-American literary market and brought the writer immediate recognition. When discussing Faqir’s work in relation to

Lefevere’s conditions of acceptance of a text, language becomes the defining factor which gives her work the necessary appearance of domestication. Though the writer is Jordanian by birth and her story unfolds in the Arab world, the use of the English language gives her the ‘prestige’ needed to enter the English literary canon with little manipulation or editing. Her novel *Nisanit* with its account of the violation of human rights was well received and taken as evidence of the cruelty of the homogenous group of Muslims and Arabs rolled into one.

Pillars of Salt was published in 1996 after the Gulf War and took Faqir’s fame to a new level as it highlighted the backwardness of Bedouin tribes and set them off against their superior British colonizer. Believing in sorcery and djins, the characters are presented as ignorant and demonic in their behavior and comportment, while the British colonizer is revealed to be civilized and wise in his actions. The fact that Maha’s sick oranges can only be saved by the medicine brought by the British man reconfirms the stereotypical image of the white man as savior. Even the existence of the lunatic asylum where Maha and Um Saad find themselves imprisoned is run by English doctors who tell them what to do and how to behave. In a similar manner as Foucault’s Panoptican prison, these Arab women have become under the discipline and power of their English colonizer. In conforming to the dichotomy of superior English colonizer/inferior Arab, Faqir’s work has met both its publishers and audiences’ demands and even exceeded expectations in that she not only criticizes cultural traditions and norms but also pokes fun at some aspects of the Islamic religion through her storyteller. When Maha’s mother, Maliha, dies and she is buried, the storyteller is sarcastic about the ritual prayers performed in her honor. He says, “They actually believe – I later discovered – that the Angel of Good Deeds is sitting on their right shoulder and the Angel of Bad Deeds is sitting on their left shoulder” (Faqir, 2007, p.28). Faqir’s contention that she wrote her novel to “document that magical landscape and preserve the Bedouins’ noble way of life which was fast disappearing,” takes a back seat to her desire please her Orientalist audience (Bower, 2010, p.5).

My Name is Salma was published in 2006 soon after the events of 9/11 when Muslims and Arabs as a homogenous group were considered to be terrorists and usurpers of human rights. Faqir’s choice of subject matter of honor crimes at such a vulnerable time in the clash between nations and cultures confirmed her position as an Orientalist writer within the English canon and authenticated her position as a native informant who has the knowledge and expertise to speak about her culture. As an Anglo-Arab writer of the Third World, her allegiance was clearly with her new home in Britain. Though she claims that “Jordan

²From the *Literary Review* and from *The Guardian* on the back cover of *Women of Sand and Myrrh*

is part of my landscape” and that her wish is to “change the Arab world,” her decision to fetishize the Arab characters in addition to her use of the English language point to a different premises (Bower, 2010, p.5).

Though Faqir seems to have attempted to break some of the archetypes of the violent Arab in her novels, her publishers were quick to step in and ask that she ‘domesticate’ her texts. In *My Name is Salma*, Faqir wanted to have multiple endings to the text, like John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, where her readers could choose an alternative ending that was not a violent honor killing, but her publisher refused (Bibzadeh, 2013). Faqir admits that the marketing of her books are “Orientalist,” yet she continues to give in to the demands of her publishers. When asked in an interview why she allowed her publishers to change the title of *My Name is Salma* into *The Cry of the Dove* in the United States, her answer was: “I wanted to be on Grove’s list, a respectable publisher” (Bower, 2010, p.6). The change in title exoticized her book even further and made it even more marketable in the American market. The reader starts reading with the preconceived idea that disaster and violence are traits associated with Arabs thus confirming the dominant power discourses prevalent in the political arena. What they find in the text is no less disturbing, as everything that is Arab is depicted as brutal and abusive and everything that is British is described as warm and delightful. Salma’s relationship to Hamdan is described in terms of master-slave dialectic. He “tightened his fist... imprisoning” her (Faqir, 2007, p.23). Her relationship to John, on the other hand, is described as tender and kind. He “stroked and “fondled” her with tenderness (Faqir, 2007, p.260). Even the practice of getting rid of undesirable body hair points to the differences between the two cultures. In her old country, Salma describes how “they spread a paste of boiled sugar... and yank away the hair” leaving her covered with “bruises,” while in London, she uses a lubricated razor which is “Nice and easy and washes away instantly like love in this new country, like love in the old country” (Faqir, 2007, p.12).

The cover pages of Faqir’s novels also have been domesticated to please Orientalist tastes. The book cover of the U.S. version of *Nisanit*, which depicts a woman fully covered from head to foot, has nothing to do with the theme of the story. The cover page of *Pillars of Salt* in Holland and Bulgaria depict a woman fully covered, whereas most of the other book covers of this novel show a woman in hijab imprisoned in a small room. Most of the book covers of *My Name is Salma* present a woman either fully or partially veiled with an oppressed demeanor about her. Despite the hugely divergent themes in her novels, Faqir’s book covers depict passive and forlorn women in distress. The Arab world and its issues have been reduced to a woman and her veil. Rachel Bower comments on the marketing of Arab books saying that the outside appearance of a “book can similarly be manipulated so

that only those transnational aspects that collude with constructed national mythologies are mobilized, obscuring detailed historical and political questions” (Bower, 2010, p.5). Faqir admits to this misrepresentation claiming that she “has little control over covers” and that “most of the time” she does not approve them. Faqir has achieved what she set out to do, which is to have international fame and to be included in the English canon.

CONCLUSION

Both Faqir and al-Shaykh have succeeded in making a niche for themselves in the international literary world though al-Shaykh’s novels took a much more difficult road because they were written in Arabic. The translation of al-Shaykh’s texts allowed publishers and editors to manipulate her work so that it became even more stereotypical and Orientalist in nature. Faqir’s novels, however, were subjected to less manipulation and acculturation. This fact in itself has allowed the Arabic idioms and mythological references she uses in her texts to take on a life of their own. Though her stories are originally full of Orientalist themes, her infusion of Arabic lexis has inadvertently foreignized her text making it hard for her English readers to fully comprehend. The paradox that lies at the center of the comparison of the two texts is that what started as foreign (al-Shaykh) has been easy to domesticate, while what appeared as linguistically and culturally familiar (Faqir) has turned out to be unfamiliar and challenging.

Culture and Language are both the producers and products of power equations. Faqir uses the English language to escape her native culture and to integrate with her new environment; nevertheless, this new form of Arabized-English has become a tool of empowerment through which Faqir can have the upper hand, keeping her audience at a distance neither denying or giving them full “informancy” (Diya, 2007, p.239). Within this metamorphic relationship between writer and reader, is it possible that this type of discourse can become a new tool to be used by postcolonial critics and writers to subvert dominant power discourses from within the very confines and walls of that predominant language and culture? Has the politics of reception or the process of censorship turned on itself? Can language in the postmodern world subvert its own efforts at predominance?

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