

OF MAJORS AND MINORS: REFLECTIONS ON KUWAITI LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

De mayores y menores: reflexiones sobre la literatura kuwaití en inglés

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ABSTRACT: Discussions of the dichotomy between «minor» and «major» literatures date back to the endeavors of T. S. Eliot, in his capacity as a New Critic, to theorize on the «value» of the literary text. Later discussions of minor versus major literatures, notably by Deleuze and Guattari (1975), have been more concerned with questions of linguistic choice, (de-)territoriality, individuality versus collectivity, and politics in the broad sense of the term. Reflecting on what is labelled as «Kuwaiti literature in English» rendered a number of challenges related to nationality, authorship and origin, to categorize Kuwaiti literature in English as minor literature. By so doing, discussions of the input of Kuwaiti literati in English such as Nada Faris and Mai AlNakib table issues like reception, literary merit, tradition, and canonicity.

Key words: Minor Literature; Major Literature; Kuwaiti Literature; Global English; Anglowaiti.

RESUMEN: Las discusiones sobre la dicotomía entre literaturas «mayores» y «menores» data de las propuestas de T. S. Eliot, en cuanto representante de la nueva crítica, para teorizar sobre el «valor» del texto literario. Otras discusiones posteriores, como muy singularmente la debida a Deleuze y Guattari (1975), se preocuparon más por cuestiones de elección lingüística, (de)territorialidad, individualidad frente a colectividad o política en el sentido amplio del término. Reflexionar sobre lo que se ha dado en llamar «literatura kuwaití en inglés» da lugar a una serie de desafíos relacionados con asuntos como nacionalidad, autoría u origen al categorizar la literatura kuwaití en inglés como literatura menor. En este marco, las discusiones sobre las aportaciones de escritores kuwaitíes en inglés como Nada Faris y Mai AlNakib suscita interrogantes relativos a recepción, mérito literario, tradición y canonicidad.

Palabras clave: literatura menor; literatura mayor; literatura kuwaití; inglés global; anglowaití.

On 27 June 1896, the prominent white American novelist, propagandist and critic William Dean Howells (1837-1920) wrote in *Harper's Weekly* what was believed by him and by many to be a favoring review of the collection of poems published by the then twenty-four-year-old, obscure black Paul Laurence Dunbar titled *Majors and Minors* (1895). Dunbar's poems are divided, as the title of the collection suggests, into two distinct sections: Standard English and black dialect. To Dunbar's dismay, while «the “major” poems» [the ones written in Standard English] outnumber those written in dialect [or the «minors»], it was the dialect poems that brought Dunbar the most attention» (Poet Paul Laurence Dunbar n.d.). It has become known, especially for those who are familiar with Dunbar's poetic work, that one of his most critical and agonizing career dilemmas was being coerced to reconcile his very own poetic aspirations with his audience's expectations. In other words, the incessant struggle between the «Majors» and the «Minors», not only in the strict sense of Dunbar's and Howells' usage, raises questions that are related to the authors' as opposed to their audiences' literary preferences (given the relevance of this question nevertheless). It also tables a query vis-à-vis the existence of virtual hierarchies of Literature (with capital L), where some literatures or literary texts are more major or minor than others, and what are the factors that determine such positioning. The question that I would like to raise now is: what might be the relation between such major-minor binarism in general, and Arab literature, or even more specifically Kuwaiti literature?

Before attempting the above question, I need first to tap more deeply into the discussions found in the literature that deals with the dichotomy between «major literature» and «minor literature». By far, the most wide-ranging and solid yet controversial discussion of minor and major literatures is

the chapter published by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari under the title «What Is a Minor Literature?» in their co-authored book *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (1975). But it is useful, however, to pinpoint that such a trailblazing study is not the first attempt to approach the question of major/minor poets or litterateurs; since the issue was touched by T. S. Eliot, one of the most eminent critics of the New Criticism school. In his 1946 essay «What Is Minor Poetry?» Eliot approaches minority in poetry (and presumably in literature at large) from a value-related angle¹. In his discussion of minor (and major) poetry, Eliot, clad in his New Critic attire, was preoccupied with literary judgment. He asserted that the principal difference between major and minor poetry lies in what he called «unity in [a poet's] whole work» (Eliot 1946, 14). Such unity will make a major poet's readers appreciate him, whether they read one poem only by him or his entire oeuvre; consequently their «judgment» will barely change afterwards. The opposite is naturally the case for a minor poet, as in order to appreciate him, «a knowledge of the whole» (Eliot 1946, 14) is necessary.

One useful point of departure in Eliot's essay, which is not associated with any text's exteriority, is the assertion that minor poetry/poets should not be designated as a derogatory term to describe «bad» or «poor» poetry or poets. Rather it is related to interiority; «whether this is *genuine* poetry or not» (Eliot 1946, 15; emphasis in original). Beside the work of Eliot, Deleuze and Guattari, the scholarly discussion of minor literature (or poetry) found expression in two seminal books: Louis A. Renza's «*A White Heron*» and the *Question of Minor Literature* (1984) and David Lloyd's *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (1987). Unlike Eliot, Deleuze and Guattari, Renza and Lloyd «follow their theoretical premise with a reading of a single work for its proof of *minority*» (Gilliland 1990, 10; emphasis in original).

Furthermore, and according to Gilliland, Renza's book proposes another criterion to judge minor literary works, where, he suggests, that «the truly minor piece rejects categorization altogether» (Gilliland 1994, 12). To illustrate his point, Renza gives example by maintaining that any attempt «to categorize Sarah Orne Jewett's short story "A White Heron" as "regional" or as "pastoral" fails» (12). However, Lloyd's book, a critique of early Irish nationalism by and large, taps in variably on the question of minor literature. He argued that the opposition between minor and major literatures «calls into question the

1. In his discussion of minor versus major poets, T. S. Eliot shared almost the same interest variably expressed by the other critics of the New Criticism school. See, for example, Richards (2001 and 2003), Leavis (2015), and Brooks and Warren (1938).

hegemony of central cultural values» (Bensmaïa 2017, 3; emphasis in original), particularly when it comes to canon formation. According to Lloyd, canon formation is therefore «a tradition of critical practice which perpetuates “the ideology of bourgeois individualism” and romanticized nationalism» (Williams 2003, 11). In this, Lloyd conceives of the relation between major and minor literatures as necessarily of conflict (exemplified in canon formation); a relation that pushes into the direction of understanding major literature as a literature that is «established as such precisely by virtue of its claim to representative status, of its claim to realize the autonomy of the individual subject to such a degree that that individual subject becomes universally valid and archetypal» (qtd. in Williams 2003, 11).

From a different angle, Deleuze and Guattari appeared to be more systematic in their approach of the dichotomy between major and minor literatures. Unlike Renza and Lloyd, and through their discussion of Kafka's literary works, Deleuze and Guattari were concerned with the choice of language. They propounded that «a minor literature does not come from a minor language; it is rather which a minority constructs within a major language» (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16). In their widely cited chapter «What Is a Minor Literature?» they listed three definitive characteristics of minor literature: «the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization» (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 16). Further, «[t]he second characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political», while the third and last characteristic of minor literature according to them is that «in it everything takes a collective value» (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 17). To be more illustrious, Deleuze and Guattari claimed that Kafka's use of Prague German defines what a minority (i.e. Prague's Jews) «constructs within a major language» (in this context, it is the Czech language). It is because a minority is detached from the «majority» both linguistically and territorially, so to speak, that the literature it produces is naturally «deterritorialized». Deleuze and Guattari used another term to describe the deterritorialized language used by minor literatures as the «language of paper», although they associated this paper with «artificiality or artifice but also with dryness or poverty of language» (McLaughlin 2005, 70).

The second and third characteristics of minor literatures according to Deleuze and Guattari are associated with the contrast between individuality and collectivity. Contrary to the major literatures where the «individual subject becomes universally valid and archetypal», authors of minor literature tend to be «political» in the sense that it «has to be redefined on the one hand in relation to the language and the culture and on the other hand in relation to the historical and social situation» (Garnier 2013, 2). Political

here is to be understood within the context of the opposition between major and minor literatures. In this, the minor writer to be «political», not only would she/he shy away from her/his limited subjectivity in favor of «collective identity» (which I will discuss later), but also she/he has to write «subversively», which means that they have to write «to question cultural values and institutions by uncovering and dismantling hidden sectorial interests which are promoted and sustained by those values» (Oppenheimer 2017, 107), which more or less recalls Lloyd's stance expectedly. For this political function to be fully operative, minor writers should foster a collective identity, which would leave no relevance for «individuated enunciation» (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 17). In other words, the collective value that minor writers adopt implies that «minor literature writers try to efface themselves and articulate collective voices» (Bleyen 2013, 14). From this, it can be readily discerned that any minor literature, according to Deleuze and Guattari's argument, is essentially «revolutionary», in the sense that it has to be consciously positioned or positions itself in antithesis to major literature.

Such perception of minor literature as essentially «revolutionary», however, bears its own risks of forcing us to understand it as inescapably engaged in an infinite, oppositional relation with major literature. Such argument is lucidly articulated by Louis A. Renza (1984, 36):

The Deleuzian privileging of a politicized, rhetorically inverted minor literature, a literature «neither great nor [systematically] revolutionary but minor», thus excludes a minor literature which does not show it «hate all literature by masters». [...] Deleuze and Guattari's antioedipal schema would lead us to devalue further what we could term a bourgeois or oedipal brand of minor literature

It is equally imperative to highlight that Lloyd's definition of minor literature which accentuates uncanonicity, or that it is excluded from the canon based on the aesthetic judgments related, for instance, to race, gender or ethnicity (or any other basis for labeling and discrimination). What is particularly of importance to the discussion to come is the third characteristic of minor literature according to David Lloyd, which points up that «minor literature refuses to produce “narratives of ethical identity”; instead, it works to perpetuate “non-identity”» (qtd. in Gluzman 2003, 70).

1. KUWAITI LITERATURE/LITERATURES: CHALLENGING NOMENCLATURE

The above scholarly review of the definition and scope of minor literature (contrasted with major literature) recalls the very question raised

in the beginning vis-à-vis the relation between major and minor writing and Kuwaiti literature. I think it will be beneficial and interesting to approach Kuwaiti literature (or perhaps I shall daringly dub it «literatures» in plural) from the various key topics raised in the preliminary discussion of minor literature as the literary value, canonicity, the choice of language, individuality, collectivity and identity formation.

What appears as readily axiomatic is that Kuwaiti literature simply and palpably entails literature created by Kuwaiti nationals. This does not sound self-evident as it reads though. The reason for this is the assumption that all Kuwaiti nationals, given the fact that the Arabic language is the «official» language in this Persian/Arabian Gulf country, will and should write or produce literature, and/or whatever that involves linguistic expression, using the Arabic language only. Consequently, any literary expression, written or oral, produced by Kuwaiti nationals in any other language than Arabic may not be categorized, by many, as Kuwaiti literature in the first place. Consequently, for those who believe that the «only» definition of Kuwaiti literature is that literature created by Kuwaiti nationals in Arabic; any literature created by Kuwaitis in any other language, say Chinese, will be considered as part of Chinese literature, or at best, Chinese literature written or produced by non-Chinese authors.

From a different angle, Kuwaiti literature might also refer to literature (or literatures) created by non-Kuwaitis who reside in Kuwait, especially those who had lived and worked in Kuwait ostensibly for a long period of time, enough for them to be able to be «eligible» to write literature that can appropriate the label «Kuwaiti». Such categorization of Kuwaiti literature is quite problematic. First, the sheer residency in a given country is not a prerequisite for eligibility for one's literature to be labeled after the name of some nation, for what is at stake here is to what extent this or that «resident» author is consciously and willingly interested in addressing issues of concern raised in the public sphere of this or that nation in which he/she resides. This argument, however, is more likely to get more detractors than supporters, because the very definition of literature is still defiantly and dogmatically dependent on the national aspect. To illustrate, literature is defined by the nationality or the national origins of its perceived author(s). Nevertheless, a few scholars may choose to differ with such a restricted definition, but at the end they will be regarded as exceptional cases². Second, a

2. In his book, *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (2009), Gary R. Bunt gives an example in his discussion of Islamic blogosphere in Kuwait by a blogger, namely Haitham Sabbah, who is «Jordanian national with Palestinian origins» (BUNT 2009, 138), but who was born in Kuwait.

more tenacious argument could be that a definition of literature, dependent as it is on the national and the authorial, will invoke (de-)territorialization. In her study of Moroccan comparative literature, Touria Nakkouch made a clear distinction between «francophone Moroccan literature» and other «Moroccan literatures in Arabic, Amazighi, Dutch and English» (Nakkouch 2017, 165).

Following Nakkouch's point and that of the other agreeing scholars, this will raise the question of national authors in diaspora. For Nakkouch, Moroccan authors who immigrated from Morocco to France, the Netherlands, or the United States, for instance, and whether they became citizens of those nations or not, they will be Moroccan after all, and consequently their literature will essentially be Moroccan, but in diaspora. This can be applicable to Kuwaiti literature as well. The distinction line will be quite clear between those Kuwaiti authors who write in Arabic in Kuwait, and those who write in whatever language, English or whatever, in their chosen or compulsory diasporas. Again, the question of «citizenship», in any given diasporic destination, is irrelevant here.

Further, approaching Kuwaiti literature using the above discussions will lead to two distinct conclusions which need attention: first, Kuwaiti literature created and published in exile/diaspora in the language of residence (English or otherwise); and second, Kuwaiti literature created and published, quite predominately in English, in the geopolitical space known as Kuwait. The above two categories both call up what Deleuze and Guattari label «the deterritorialization of language» (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 18). This term «connotes more than abandoning a territory or claims to a territory. It also has overtones of stripping away (one's) identification altogether, of a general "untethering"» (Hexter 2012, 38). Specifically, a Kuwaiti author who more or less chooses to write in English, whether in exile/diaspora or in his/her own homeland, is thus perceived as «abandoning [an Arabic-speaking] territory» and/or «claim[ing] to [an English-speaking] one».

2. KUWAITI LITERATURE IN ENGLISH: LITERARY MERIT QUESTIONED

Whether writing and publishing in diaspora or in their own country, Kuwaiti authors who choose to write in English are condemned with a somehow collective (ethical) verdict that the literary merit of their literary products will always be questioned and most probably downgraded. To draw on Nakkouch's study again, «a lack of representation in world literature anthologies» (Nakkouch 2017, 165) could be a criterion according to which the literary merit of such writings (i.e. Kuwaiti literature in English

to extend the analogy) is judged. The mentioning of anthologies likewise evokes T. S. Eliot's «What Is Minor Poetry?» and his inevitable, essential association between anthologization and minor literature. For him, minor poets/authors are «those who have not yet published volumes, or whose books are not yet widely known» (Eliot 1946, 2). Ironically enough, in one of handful English-language anthologies of literature of the Arabian Gulf, the editor selected literary texts by Arabian Gulf authors, which are written and published previously in Arabic. She stated that her English-language anthology «offers *representative* examples of literature from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states: Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and the Emirates, as well as from North and South Yemen» (Jayyusi 2014, 6; the author's emphasis). It seems that it became more conveniently accepted that literature produced by Arab authors in non-Arabic languages shall not find its way to any anthology of Arabic literature. Such analogy might also be applicable to other literatures around the world as well.

The «lack of representation» in «world literature anthologies», as Nakouch put it, appears to be the effect rather than the cause of the minority status of this so-called ill-represented literature, i.e. Kuwaiti literature in English. In *Identities in Irish Literature*, Anne MacCarthy clearly points to the fallacious association between literatures produced by minorities (and/or «a minority culture») and the «good-ness» of literature. Labelling minor literature as «uncanonized writing», MacCarthy (2004, 65) implied that «minor writing [...] is not “good” enough to belong to the canon because it comes from a minority culture». To decide on the goodness or the badness of literary texts, it is useful to approach the relation between canonicity and the public sphere. This will invoke the question: what makes the representative canonical, or shall the question be raised in other words: what makes the canonical representative?

It is through and within the public sphere, as described by Habermas as «an arena for rational debate about the common good» (Kohn 2004, 57), that the process of canonization (or otherwise un-canonization) of literary texts takes place. In any given public sphere, literary critics, publishers and readers debate about what texts to be regarded as «commonly» of their interest, to use another Habermasian term, to deserve to be ranked as «representative» (or canonized or simply «major»). Conversely, any texts that it would be agreed that they did not fall into the scope of interest of the public sphere participants would eventually be deemed as «non-representative» (or un-canonized or minor). In his useful discussion of minor literature and the canon, Even-Zohar tabled one significant factor, which was famously and elaborately discussed quite earlier by T. S. Eliot, namely (literary) heritage. Even-Zohar stated that canonized literature will be «preserved by the

community to become part of its historical heritage» (Even-Zohar 1990, 15). In contrast, the «non-canonized» means that «those norms and texts which are rejected by these circles as illegitimate and whose products are often forgotten in the long run by the community» (Even-Zohar 1990, 15).

When it comes to the Kuwaiti literary public sphere, literary historians, scholars and notable figures of Kuwait like ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz Al-Rushayd, Khālid S. Al-Zayd, Sulaymān al-Shaṭṭī, and Laylā M. Ṣālih³ debated and showed ubiquitous consensus that Kuwaiti literature, in the past and the present, is one that has been and is produced in the (classical) Arabic language. For them and their likes, Kuwaiti literature in Arabic is the only literature that deserves to «become part of [the Kuwaiti culture’s] historical heritage». One quite memorable incident that I feel intrigued to relate is the confrontation that took place between one of the growingly well-established Kuwaiti authors in English and a nameless man (apparently the author’s compatriot) who «waved [her] book in the air in Kuwait’s National Book Fair and cried, “Aren’t you an Arab? Don’t you have Muslim blood running through your veins? Why are you doing this?”» (Faris 2014b, 5) Of course, it is understood that the debate undergone by the concerned literary critics and more open-minded readers would be much less abrasive, but what is of importance here are the inferences that could be generated vis-à-vis the «minor» status of any Kuwaiti literature written in English (or any other non-Arabic language).

Feeling the urge to counterattack, Nada Faris, who defines herself as an «Anglowaiti», a word of her own coinage to simply refer to those Kuwaiti nationals who choose English as the language of their literary expression, set out to make it clear that being an Arab who write and publishes in English should not be perceived as treacherous to the «authentic Arab heritage» (Faris 2014b, 5). In fact, Faris’s status, along with her fellow Anglowaiti authors, as minor writers is even worse than being condemned with treason: they are doomed to be totally «forgotten» by the community; and this is effected by their subsequent «non-identity» status. Such status should not imply that the minor authors’ disavowal of the «narratives of ethical identity» (Faris’s repudiation of the «Traditionalists», as she puts it, in her article in question as an example) will essentially rip those authors off their identity.

3. See ‘Abd Al-‘Azīz AL-RUSHAYD, *Tārīkh al-Kuwayt* [The History of Kuwait] (Beirut: Matba’at al-Hayat, 1971); Khālid S. AL-ZAYD, *Udāba’ al-Kuwayt fī al-qarnayn* [Kuwaiti Scholars of the 19th and 20th Centuries] (Kuwait: Sharikat al-Rubay’an li-l-nashr wa-l-tawzi’, 1967-1982); Sulyamān AL-SHAṬṬĪ, *Al-shi’r fī alKuwayt* [Poetry in Kuwait] (Kuwait: Al-Majlis al-Watani li-l-thaqafah wa-l-funun wa-l-adaab, 2014), and Layla M. ṢALIH, *Adab al-mar’a fī al-Kuwayt* [Literature of Women in Kuwait] (Kuwait: Dar dhat al-salasil, 1978).

The question of heritage is quintessential, not only for those angry, patriotic citizens who are self-appointed as the guardians of national identity (according to their own perception of it); but it is crucial to those Kuwaiti writers to write and publish in English (or any other language) too. The principal point of cacophony between the alleged guardians of national identity and the so-called Anglowaitis is closely related to what heritage (literary or cultural at large) to go back to in order to claim as one's own. To illustrate, a typical Kuwaiti poet who writes and publishes in Arabic, whether he/she is labelled as major or minor, and whether his/her work is regarded as canonical and representative or not, is expected to appropriate, or rather «territorialize», those poets who it has been agreed that they would be his/her predecessors. In this sense, any Arab poet, as long as he/she is Arab-speaking and writes in Arabic, whether he is Kuwaiti, Saudi, Egyptian or Tunisian, cannot escape that the works of the Arab classical poets, ranging from the pre-Islamic al-Shanfarā and Imru' al-Qays, to the Abbasid al-Buḥturī and al-Mutanabbī, to the modern Aḥmad Shawqī and Abū al-Qāsim al-Shābbī, even the contemporary Maḥmūd Darwīsh, Ghāzī al-Quṣaybī, Fahd Al-'Askar and Fā'iq 'Abd al-Jalīl, to name a few, are an integral part of his/her literary tradition.

However, the case is more problematic and complex with the Anglowaiti writers (and their likes in other Arab nations). As a point of departure, T. S. Eliot's conception of (Western) tradition as «an *assembly* of one's predecessors from across the deep time of an aesthetic history that reaches back to the origins of Western culture» (Latham and Rogers 2015, 8; emphasis in original) will be drawn upon. Such assembly of one's predecessors is not coercive; but rather «self-appointed», in the sense that an author may, as Latham and Rogers (2015, 8) put it, «align [...] them into a new canon to fit one's own creative project». Nada Faris (2014b, 160), for instance, admitted that she «loved writers of young adult fiction like Roald Dahl and Enid Blyton». In another book by Faris, she seemed to reflect on her early-career poetic writings by confessing: «I used to be influenced by the structured poetry we learned in English literature at the university. I loved Shakespearean sonnets, memorized John Donne's metaphysical poems, and dreamed about becoming the next Alexander Pope» (Faris 2014a, 83).

On another note, another Anglophone Kuwaiti writer, Mai AlNakib, who works as an associate professor of English and comparative literature at Kuwait University, touches sporadically on the need to redefine both Arabic and English literature. AlNakib's article «Arabic Literature: Politics and Nothing But?» evokes the idea of «self-appointed heritage», which defies the essentialized conception of literary heritage as detrimentally static, coercive and patronizing. She advocates Salman Rushdie's idea expressed

in his *Imaginary Homelands*, where he insisted that «“Commonwealth literature” should not exist», because if it did not, «we could appreciate writers for what they are, whether in English or not; we could discuss literature in terms of its real groupings, which may well be national, which may well be linguistic, but which may also be international, and based on imaginative affinities» (Rushdie 1991, 70). In a similar vein, «all Arabic literature», AlNakib (2016, 9) contends,

whether written in Arabic or in other languages, whether its writers live in the Middle East or elsewhere, whether its content and form relate to the Middle East or not—is assumed to be a uniform block separate and distinct from other literary groupings to which it could otherwise belong (for example, English, American, or French literature, postmodern literature, comparative literature, magical realist fiction, or detective fiction, among others).

3. FINALLY, WHAT/WHO IS ANGLOWAITI?

Despite the debate about the definition of Kuwaiti literature in English, choosing the above question as the title of the final section of the discussion hereof is deliberately misleading. Much effort and time were wasted or at least disoriented to the wrong question. In opposition, it is the very genealogy of Kuwaiti literature, or Arabic literature at large, that should be put into question. To make this effective, another Deleuzian term will be used: the rhizome. If the rhizome is defined as «a meshwork in which each and every point can in principle be connected, one way or another, with any other point» (Vandenbergh 2014, 268), Kuwaiti literature in English, I dare say, is rhizomatic par excellence. In an interview with Mai AlNakib in which she spoke of her «genealogical» origins, she said that her mother «grew up in Pune, India and didn't move to Kuwait until she was 10 years old, which is when she started learning Arabic. My dad's mother was Lebanese and her mother was Turkish» (AlNakib 2017, 64-5). Such rhizomatic genealogical origins of one or some of the Kuwaiti authors who write and publish in English make approaching the question of «language choice» a strenuous task. AlNakib, for instance, refers to English in some local newspaper reports that English is her first language and writing in English is not a choice for her, unlike Nada Faris and Shahd AlShammari, for instance, who are aware of their choice of English, as a more or less second language, for literary expression.

Another feature of the rhizome, multiplicity, where «[r]hizomic elements co-exist with one another, but without structure» (Holland 2013, 39), calls for revisiting the «major» literary works that some Anglophone Kuwaiti

authors claim or appropriate as part of their self-appointed literary heritage. An assistant professor of comparative literature at the Gulf University for Science and Technology, Shahd AlShammari said that when she thinks «of writers, [she] think[s] of all the big literary names [she has] read and taught during [her] lectures». She thinks of «Shakespeare, Milton, John Donne, F. Scott Fitzgerald» (5). The multiple, structure-free rhizomatic is even more evident in AlNakib, as her self-appointed list of literary «masters» range from «Samuel Beckett, Marcel Proust, Asia Djebar, Cervantes, Salman Rushdie, Ghassān Kanafānī, Virginia Wolfe, Franz Kafka, Gertrude Stein, Carol Maisson, Kazuo Ishiguro, Milan Kundera, Dave Eggers, Hanif Kureishi, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Haruki Murakami» (AlNakib 2014, 38-39).

4. CONCLUSION

Kuwaiti literature in English, whether it is looked at by those who produce it or those who read it, and whether as a variation of an all-inclusive Arabic literature, or another national literature written in the global English, is a «revolutionary» literature, to use Deleuze and Guattari's word. It might not be revolutionary in the narrow political sense notwithstanding. On the contrary, examining the texts produced to date by Kuwaitis in English showcases that they comparatively shy away from politics or being «political» in the Deleuzian sense. But this should not imply that Anglophone Kuwaiti authors do not wish to be subversive, especially when it comes to their conscious use of English as a literary means of expression. Although in their capacity as minor authors vis-à-vis the major ones who use English as their first language, Anglowaiti authors «approach language from an underprivileged position» (Adar 2016, 21), hence the need to envision it, in view of writing back, as «a language that we can play with, change, control, and color with own ideas and culture» (AlShammari 2017, 6).

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