

Minor Voices in Salim Barakat's the Captives of Sinjar: Deleuzian Perspective

Arsalan A. Fatah ⁽¹⁾, Shajwan N. Fatah ⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ Department of Geography, College of Humanities Education, University of Sulaimani, Kurdistan Region-Iraq

⁽²⁾ Language Center, Charmo Center for Research, Training and Consultancy, Charmo University, Kurdistan Region-Iraq

ABSTRACT

Salim Barakat's *The Captives of Sinjar* (2016), is perceived as a historical narrative of Sinjar back in 2014. It appears to depict the accounts of Yazidi women who endured victimization at the hands of a collective of male perpetrators – ISIS – the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham fighters. However, in this paper, we unravel the signs and symbols of the text to show the invisible aspects of the incidents which are mediated through the perspective of the male narrator, Sarat. The narrative language employed within the novel serves to engage readers at a cognitive level that encourages contemplation and fosters a heightened mental engagement. With the blend of magic reality mode and surrealist scenes; the linguistic approach facilitates the construction of vivid imageries, particularly concerning the portrayal of the mass executions of characters, as portrayed through meticulously selected artistic representations embedded within the work's fabric. This study aims to explore alternative dimensions of the novel. Through a close reading, we seek to establish links between the analysis and the theoretical framework of minor literature as examined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Central to our findings is the discernment of an enduring and dynamic struggle between marginalized and oppressed factions, juxtaposed against those in positions of dominance. Moreover, the study examines the intricate interplay between constructed notions of identity and the subjective realities of the persons.

KEY WORDS: Salim Barakat, Sinjar, minority, Deleuze, deterritorialization

1. INTRODUCTION

Salim Barakat's *the Captives of Sinjar* was published in 2016, only touching on the surface of reading, the novel recounts the events in Sinjar – the mass murder and destruction of a group of political fighters against the Yazidis. In this study, we attempt to shed light on the philosophical frameworks of the language. In other words, one could read Barakat's literary work through historical lenses, nevertheless, here we attempt to decode the terms in the text – which could be connected to Deleuze's framework of minor literature due to its embodiment of the three key features: deterritorialization, collective assemblages of enunciation, and becoming revolutionary.

In essence, the novel exemplifies the characteristics of minor literature outlined by Deleuze. It also showcases the power of creative expression to challenge oppression, give voice to marginalized communities, and inspire social change.

1.1 Salim Barakat

Salim Barakat, a distinguished novelist and poet hailing from a Kurdish-Syrian heritage, was born in 1951 in Qamishli, a city situated in the northern region of Syria. Following a year dedicated to the study of the Arabic language in Damascus, he subsequently embarked on a transition to Beirut in 1972. During his tenure in this locale, he published a notable corpus of literary works, consisting of five volumes of poetry, two novels, and two autobiographical narratives. In 1982, Barakat moved to Cyprus, assuming a significant editorial role within the esteemed Palestinian literary periodical, *Al-Carmel*. It is essential to state that his work was under the guidance of the esteemed Mahmoud Darwish, who played an instrumental part in this capacity. During this distinctive phase, he authored an additional compendium of seven novels and five

Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (KUJHSS), Volume 6, Issue 1, 2023.

Received 18 Sep 2023; Accepted 19 Nov 2023,

Regular research paper: Published 30 Nov 2023

Corresponding author's e-mail: arsalan.fatah@univsul.edu.iq

shajwan.nariman@charmouniversity.org.

Copyright ©2023. Arsalan A. Fatah, Shajwan N. Fatah.

this is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

collections of poetry. Eventually, in 1999, Barakat made a consequential migration to Sweden, where he continues to presently reside. The literary oeuvre crafted by Barakat exhibits a profound engagement with the multifaceted cultural tapestry prevailing in northern Syria. This inclusive canvas encompasses a confluence of Arab, Kurdish, Assyrian, and Armenian influences, underscoring his expansive exploration of the diverse cultural legacies inherent to the region.¹

1.2 Yazidi's historical context

Yazidis belong to a Kurdish religious minority, primarily located in various regions such as northern Iraq, southeastern Turkey, northern Syria, the Caucasus area, and some parts of Iran. The Yazidi faith incorporates aspects of ancient Iranian religions, Judaism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam. Despite being scattered and estimated to have a population of only between 200,000 and 1,000,000, the Yazidi community possesses a well-structured society. This society is led by a chief sheikh who serves as the highest religious authority, and an emir, or prince, who acts as the secular leader.²

Zoonen and Wirya (2017) state that Yazidis represent one of the most ancient ethnic and religious groups natives to the Middle East. The majority of Yazidis reside in the northwestern region of Iraq, particularly in areas surrounding Shingal Mountain and the Shekhan district. Furthermore, Yazidi villages and towns can be found in the Talkeef and Bashiqa Districts, as well as within the Duhok Governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). There's a lack of precise demographic data. Community estimates suggest that there are approximately 550,000 to 600,000 Yazidis in Iraq. This places the Yazidis as the second-largest religious minority in Iraq, trailing only behind the Christian population (p. 8).

The scholars then focus on how the Yazidi community maintains a hierarchical social structure somewhat reminiscent of the Indian caste system. At the pinnacle of this structure, "mir," which serves as the secular leader, and the "baba sheikh," holds the position of the spiritual leader. Directly below them, there are forty "sheikhs" divided into three groups known as Adani, Achammsana, and Qatani. Additionally, there are forty "pirs" responsible for overseeing the religious affairs of the community's followers. The ordinary Yazidi followers referred to as "Mureed," are positioned

below these higher classes. It's important to note that Mureed individuals are not permitted to marry members of the Sheikh and Pir classes, and intermarriage between Pirs and Sheikhs is also restricted.

Zoonen and Wirya (2017) also claim that the Yazidis often face the unfair misconception that they worship the devil. This misunderstanding arises from a misinterpretation of their religion, which is due to the resemblance between the story of the Yazidi's archangel and the story of Satan in Islam. In Islamic tradition, the archangel refuses to bow down to Adam out of sinful pride, leading to his fall from the grace of God. Subsequently, he endeavors to corrupt mankind through temptation and other means (p.9). In Yazidism, the angel also refuses to bow down to Adam, leading to his expulsion from Heaven. There's a significant difference in the Yazidi belief: this angel weeps for 7,000 years as an act of repentance, and his tears eventually quench the fires of Hell. In the Yazidi faith, Melek Taus, the archangel, is redeemed in the eyes of God and continues to serve as a mediator between mankind and God, rather than being associated with evil or devil worship (ibid).

1.3 Magic realism

Magical Realism emerged as an art concept coined by the German photographer, art critic, and historian Franz Roh in 1925. Roh introduced this terminology to characterize artistic compositions that seamlessly amalgamated elements of realism with those of the fantastical, disquieting, mythological, and dreamlike. Subsequently, the Museum of Modern Art in New York elaborated on this notion, asserting that "Magic Realists endeavor to persuade us of the plausibility of extraordinary phenomena through their visual portrayal as if they were tangible realities." Prominent exponents of this artistic approach encompassed Italian artists Giorgio de Chirico and Alberto Savinio, several figures affiliated with the French Surrealist movement, and American painters Paul Cadmus and Ivan Albright. Additionally, Mexican artists Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo ventured into their own distinctive variants of Magical Realism. In the following discourse, we shall delineate some of the fundamental pillars that underpin this artistic style (Lesso, 2022). Magical Realism, originally established as a literary genre, has permeated various art forms. This genre is characterized by the seamless integration of fantastical and magical elements into everyday life, rendering them as ordinary occurrences. A distinctive feature of Magical Realism is its presentation of these elements within a realistic narrative framework, thereby encouraging readers to engage with the fantastical

¹ International Prize for Arabic Fiction.org <https://www.arabicfiction.org/en/node/1556> Accessed 05-09-2023.

² Britannica.com <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Yazidi> Accessed 18-09-2023.

through a lens of rationality. In Latin American literature, this genre served as a potent instrument against oppressive political regimes, much like how surrealism found expression in Latin American art. It gave rise to profoundly influential works that challenged colonial cultural impositions, delved into the microcosms of deeply ingrained socio-political constructs, and resisted the erosion of cultural identity. Some of the most renowned novels embodying the essence of magical realism in Latin America include *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *The House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende, and the more contemporary work *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (Mazaheri, 2021).

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze Salim Barakat's work. It also follows the close reading for unraveling the words and exploring new concepts and meanings rooted in the text. The major theory that is connected to the analysis is Deleuze's minor literature.

2.1 Minor Literature

In their scholarly work entitled *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975), Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze expound upon the concept of minor literature. The authors undertake a thorough examination of this concept. That is to say, breaking it down into its constituent components: 'minor' and 'literature': through a comprehensive analysis of the term 'minor,' they elucidate its philosophical connotations, particularly in relation to the notion of power. It becomes evident that 'minor literature' pertains to a group of individuals who possess less influence or authority compared to a dominant majority. The latter indicates a collection of written compositions, typically used to refer to imaginative literary works in poetry and prose. Thus, minor literature refers to a piece of literary work that is produced by marginalized groups, often in non-dominant languages or by individuals on the fringes of society. Examples include literature by ethnic minorities, women, or other subaltern groups. This philosophical perspective offers valuable insights that can be effectively applied to the discourse surrounding marginalized or minority groups. In the context of explaining minor literature, Deleuze and Guattari argue that rhizome³ (Figure 1) is a useful framework for understanding how minor literature operates, it also

opposes the notion of a centralized and hierarchical structure, such as a tree or a root system. Instead, it emphasizes a decentralized, non-linear, and interconnected network of ideas, texts, and voices. It represents a mode of organization that enables multiple entry points and connections between various elements. Regarding subaltern literature, the rhizomatic structure allows for a different kind of creativity and resistance against dominant power structures. Deleuze and Guattari argue that minor literature emerges as a form of deterritorialization,⁴ breaking away from the dominant language and literature to create new expressions and perspectives. The rhizome enables multiple connections and alliances among various minor literature writers and texts, forming a network of resistance against dominant narratives (Deleuze, Guattari, & Brinkley, 1983, p. 14-18)

In other words, this concept allows for the exploration of new ideas, the creation of new meanings, and the expression of alternative voices. By employing the rhizome as a metaphor, Deleuze and Guattari highlight the subversive potential of minor literature. It challenges the established norms and offers a way for marginalized groups to express their experiences, cultures, and identities. The rhizomatic structure of minor literature disrupts and undermines dominant power structures by embracing multiplicity, diversity, and unpredictable connections. In order to understand the notion of minor literature, it is also essential to investigate *Kafka: Toward Minor Literature*, in which the concept of a minor first appeared. Here we want to illustrate the concept through Kafka's experience - Since he was a Jew in Prague, Kafka wrote in German, not in Czech, Hebrew, or Yiddish. Strikingly, he continued in writing the poor German language. The critical point is that if he would write in a proper German language, then his works would show faithful obedience to the Germans, and if he would write in Yiddish or Czech, he would serve ethnic literature. Thus, his poverty of the language is void of ellipsis and a mutation for deterritorialization. From this perspective, minor language is not the language to be protected from the major, but a language that confronts it and makes it stammer. It is also the ability to mutate the major language that makes a dialect become a minor language. This is also the case with black English, which changes English into something very different by involving cants and slang and by using abbreviations and omissions, ambiguity, and substitution.

³ Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher, and Felix Guattari, a French psychoanalyst, introduced the concept of the "rhizome" in their collaborative work, "A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia." The rhizome is a metaphor they used to describe a particular mode of organization and thinking that contrasts with traditional hierarchical and linear structures.

⁴ Deterritorialization is a notion primarily linked to the realms of sociology and cultural studies, notably within the context of postmodernism and globalization. It denotes the phenomenon wherein the established confines and limitations related to geography, territory, and location are questioned, subverted, or surpassed.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to several characteristics of minor literature, such as deterritorialization, politics, and collective value. In the context of minor literature, deterritorialization becomes a crucial mechanism for challenging and subverting the prevailing power dynamics. By deterritorializing literature, minor literature transcends traditional boundaries and conventions, breaking free from the constraints imposed by dominant languages, forms, and themes. This process involves adopting unconventional modes of expression, experimenting with language, and exploring marginalized perspectives. In other words, minor literature becomes a means of resistance and emancipation, allowing voices from the margins to be heard and challenging the hegemony of dominant cultural narratives (p. 18-24).

Both scholars argue that deterritorialization is not simply a negation or rejection of established structures, but rather a creative process that opens up new possibilities. It involves constructing alternative spaces and modes of existence, enabling minor literature to

forge its own unique identity and forms of resistance. Collective value in minor literature challenges the prevailing notion of literature as the work of a solitary genius or an isolated individual. Instead, it emphasizes the role of communities, social networks, and shared experiences in shaping and influencing literary production. The collective, in this sense, refers to a diverse group of individuals who engage in collaborative processes of creation, interpretation, and dissemination of literature.

Deleuze and Guattari highlight the significance of collective value as a form of resistance against dominant systems of power and control. By emphasizing collective participation, minor literature disrupts hierarchical structures and provides a platform for marginalized voices to be heard. It fosters a sense of solidarity and shared purpose, enabling communities to challenge the dominance of major literature.

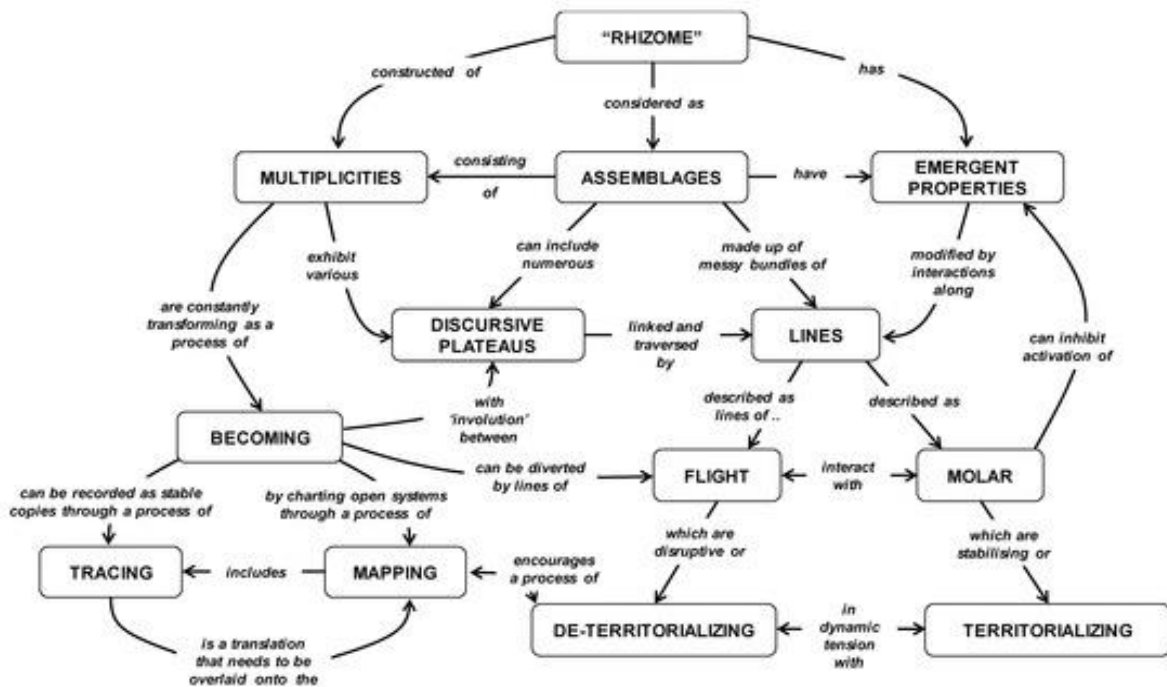


Figure 1. Putting together the language of the rhizome using the grammar of a concept map.⁵

⁵ Kinchin, I. M., & Gravett, K. (2020). Concept Mapping in the Age of Deleuze: Fresh Perspectives and New Challenges. *Education Sciences*, 3(10), 1-13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci10030082>

3. READING THE TEXT

To begin with the title, "The Captives of Sinjar," signifies the concept where a group of captives or hostages are symbolically contained within the geographical boundaries of Sinjar – Shingal in Kurdish – which is located in the Nineveh Governorate in the northern region of Iraq, strategically positioned about five kilometers south of the Sinjar Mountains. The essential meaning of the text seems to effortlessly reveal itself right from the title's appearance; the denotation of these terms suggests a group of hostages in this setting. However, the language throughout the novel reveals deeper meanings. Strikingly, the title here presents a sense of irony – in this context, the captives seem to be humans in the state of nature who are entangled and imprisoned by political and social constraints. Eventually, they have been synthesized into different groups in terms of ideology and hegemony, social structure, and power struggles. We would argue that the language of the text unravels the layers of the meanings that have been read by scholars, it shows the invisible sides of the actual details.

The novel is rooted in the artistic mode and stylistic approach of surrealism, characterized by dream-like sequences shifting back and forth between past and present – real settings, and imagined environments. The text is also based on dialogues between the speaker and a group of characters. A male narrative voice, embodied by Sarat, a painter residing in Sweden, serves as the conduit for encountering a diverse array of characters throughout the narrative journey. The etymological meaning of the name 'Sarat' or 'Saraat' from Hebrew, signifying leprosy, which stands as a persistent infectious ailment attributed to a particular strain of bacteria known as *Mycobacterium lepra* (John, 1976). The signification of the character's name functions as a metaphor that is related to visual images that are viewed on the narrator's body throughout the story. This malady predominantly impacts the integumentary system and the peripheral neural network. In the absence of appropriate intervention, the condition possesses the potential to induce gradual and enduring incapacitations. As the narrative unfolds, readers are introduced to two distinct groups of characters categorized by gender and power. Strikingly, the female characters first are depicted as passive entities, bereft of agency and voice, ultimately succumbing to violence at the hands of the opposing group – the male characters – which will be an irony for the end of each story of the characters. This gives the impression of an introduction to the conflict theory that is illustrated through Deleuze's minor literature. Technically, the novel's temporal framework initiates at daybreak and

culminates at nightfall, metaphorically, this suggests the span of a lifetime. Moreover, it seems to be connected to the mood and tone of reading the text – as the novel begins with Sarat's opening discourse on Henry Fuseli's work "The Nightmare" carries a symbolic weight, signifying the overarching narrative. Notably, the narrative voice adeptly interweaves real-life events with prominent works of Western art. Additionally, amidst the unfolding events, historical, philosophical, and political dimensions are interjected into the discourse.

The inaugural imaginary persona that Sarat encounters is Shahika, seventeen years old. It is essential to state that the origin of the female figure's name is derived from the Arabic – Muslim – name indicating the meaning of 'peak' or 'climax'. This proposes a racial and religious issue; a Yazidi girl carrying a name from another religion. In other words, Shahika as a name is a representation of an individual from a different religion. At this point, the language reveals the confusion within the reader's thoughts by the question – who are we? The identity is constructed by the means of social and religious powers. Shahika is draped in a red and white striped burqa augmented by a lengthy coat, colored in a fusion of red and brown hues (Barakat, 2016, p. 19). The garment's style and colors also serve the subaltern representations – that is to say – Yazidi women are covered in clothes that are against their heritage and the subjective reality of minor groups in terms of language and identity.

Metaphorically, this seems to be connected to Kafka's literature – Sarat's descriptive language could depict the Yazidi young women in their cultural dresses or they could be in any type of garment. Nevertheless, the burqa is chosen to show the challenge and the integration of visible racial and religious doctrine. From this perspective, one could realize the manufactured ideologies that shape the individuals within certain groups. Commencing with a conversation, Shahika recollects episodes from the lives of captives in Sinjar – those ensnared by the Islamic state within the caliphate in Iraq and Syria. Remarkably, all characters within the narrative adopt codenames or aliases, illuminating the meticulously crafted and presented personas of the captives. Shahika's revelation to Sarat that she has experienced death in response to his query about her avoidance of using her true name and her potential fear is encapsulated in her response, "I'm not scared, I'm dead" (Barakat, 2016, p.22). The female character's statement suggests two levels of signification: on the one hand, the quotation denotes the meaning that she is a dead person., yet, she still has a voice. On the other hand, the terms connote the idea that death plays a key role for the subalterns as they are represented by the

oppressors, and their silence is compared to the silence of death. Therefore, one could analyze the concept of identity into several layers that are accumulated and each layer is made from a certain doctrine: religion, culture, politics, and gender issues. Furthermore, this dialogue subtly conveys an idealistic undertone. The narrative's progression is marked by the gradual emergence of a monologue technique, which serves as a foundational element of the novel. The narrative voice explains the story of Adam and Eve, portrayed from the perspective of the Yazidi culture, while also referencing William Blake's "The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea."⁶ This gives the impression to the dominant discourse and exposes the atrocities faced by a marginalized group. By shedding light on the struggles of the Yazidi people, the novel deterritorializes the superior narrative controlled by mainstream media, thereby providing an alternative perspective that disrupts the dominant discourse and introduces new meanings and viewpoints. Moreover, the language of the text portrays the Yazidi religious practices, beliefs, and their unique cosmology, which might differ from what conventional accounts might depict. Through this detailed portrayal, the novel disrupts the common misconceptions about the minor community. Both Blake's and Sarat's narratives of the story of Adam and Eve evoke issues related to history and religion. As minor groups and throughout history, Yazidis' religion hasn't been introduced by historians and intellectuals. Once more, the philosophical problems of ethnic binary which is related to Deleuze's theory.

Subsequently, Sarat encounters Adnan, a twenty-one-year-old originating from Ramadi in Iraq (p. 63-65). Historically, Ramadi was the center of the Mesopotamian civilization. Their discourse initiates with a discussion concerning life, specifically marriage within the context of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. Adnan then diverts the conversation towards the gruesome practice of decapitating men and encouraging children, notably young boys, to engage in macabre play with the severed heads of the deceased men (p. 80-81). The horrifying details recounted bear a striking resemblance to the imagery depicted in Titian's "Flaying of Marsyas," an artwork originating from the Italian artist. This shows the concept of collective assemblages of enunciation, in which the novel not only focuses on individual characters but also captures the collective trauma and

resilience of the minor community as a whole. This communal aspect of storytelling allows the voices of the minor people to be heard collectively, highlighting their mutual struggles and resistance against oppression. Another side of both stories proposes the power relations over history; Titian's artwork and Sarat's narratives depict cultures from both ancient Greeks and Mesopotamian civilizations.

The narrative voice raises the issue of the diminishing "aura" in the realms of cinema and art. This observation might find resonance in the context of minor literature, connecting to genuine historical occurrences (p. 125). The interplay between artistic expression, politics, and warfare surfaces, highlighting the inherent limitation of narration in fully enclosing the authentic experiences of captives. Similarly, viewers encounter difficulty in truly grasping the profound essence and nuances of the images before them. At this point, Sarat illustrates this concept through the juxtaposition of iconic figures like "Mona Lisa" and "Marilyn Monroe." This also depicts the cultural hegemony of various groups and ethnics throughout history and the aura here operates as the replacement of rhizome within the Yazidi's subjective reality. Through the monologues, Sarat narrates various topics related to history, politics, and religion; he integrates the topics and shifts back to the Sinjar mountains. Laurent (2014) states that the Yezidis, an ancient and enigmatic religious group in Iraq, hold a belief that traces back to the biblical flood. According to their belief, after the great flood, Noah's ark found its resting place on Mount Sinjar, a mountain range running alongside the modern Iraq-Syria border. However, tragically, for as many as 50,000 Yezidis in Iraq, this revered territory has turned into a perilous confinement.⁷ From this perspective, Sinjar Mountain has a historical essence that turned into a battlefield, and the citizens have become minors who cannot present their identities. Rather, they have been presented through fabricated names, appearance, language, and behavioral patterns.

Strikingly, the characters consistently request Sarat to capture their likenesses through his artistic medium, prompting him to grapple with the challenge of effectively portraying them. At this point, the collective assemblages of enunciation seem to accrue, as different characters from both groups – the oppressors and the oppressed – desire to be depicted in the image that reflects their ideologies. Another encounter leads Sarat to Ihsan, a forty-two-year-old, ISIS fighter hailing from Abu Kamal City – also known as Al-Bukamal, is a city situated along the Euphrates River in the Deir ez-Zor

⁶ The Great Red Dragon and the Beast from the Sea were crafted in 1805, embodying a symbolic approach in which each symbol conveys a distinct message. In this artwork, William Blake, a gifted painter and romantic poet, illustrates a great red dragon to symbolize the warnings conveyed to Christians in the book of Revelation. Blake portrays this seven-headed, ten-horned dragon as a representation of the devil. Similarly, the creature emerging from the Sea, with its seven heads, a sword, ten horns, and a torch, is also depicted by Blake. <https://www.thehistoryofart.org/william-blake/great-red-dragon-and-the-beast-from-the-sea/> Accessed 18-09-2023.

⁷ <https://time.com/3598353/tragedy-on-mount-sinjar/> Accessed 18-09-2023.

Governorate in eastern Syria, close to the Iraq border. This city serves as the administrative hub for the Abu Kamal District and its corresponding local subdistrict. Geographically, the location appears like a bridge between two different counties, the male character at this point plays the role of the common point between different cultures, nevertheless, like Adnan, Ihsan has been given the same role of a preacher within the ranks of ISIS. This depicts the concept of minor literature in terms of collective value; multiple citizens are being followed by the same political ideology. Ihsan requests Sarat to paint him, placing emphasis on his physical attributes, particularly his hair and beard (p. 177-178). An intriguing comparison emerges between the appearances of individuals belonging to the Yazidi and Islamic faiths, notably their shared characteristic of sporting long beards. Here we would shed light on the religious shared features of having a long beard' which has a long history in Judaism, Christianity - Eastern Orthodox - Islam, Sikhism, and Hinduism.

This contrast underscores the construction of distinct ideologies within diverse nations and cultures, illustrating how individuals infuse common entities with specific meanings to advance particular objectives. In addition to the biological attributes, the painter also sheds light on their attire, particularly the "amama" (turban) and "kameez" (loose-fitting tunic), lending further depth to the portrayal. Similarly, to the 'burqa,' here the male characters are depicted in Islamic fashion - from this point, one could realize the significance of the visible appearance which plays the key role of leading different individuals to the political path. This also shows another dimension of minor literature which has been depicted in the text through these details.

Subsequently, Sarat references Edvard Munch's "Death of Marat," a work that revolves around the assassination of Jean-Paul Marat, a notable figure in the context of the French Revolution. Marat's demise, orchestrated by Charlotte Corday in 1793 while he was immersed in a bathtub, has garnered attention from numerous artists across time. Notably, Marat often assumes the role of a heroic protagonist in these artistic representations, whereas Corday is cast as a figure of betrayal (Jones, 2020). This theme of betrayal finds a parallel with the narrative's exploration of Anisha's sexuality. Anisha, fourteen years old from Sinjar. The etymological meaning of the female figure's name evokes the complexity of the text; as the fusion of the signification arises through the multiple origins of her name; that is to say, the term "Anisha" has both Greek and Arabic meanings - the first indicates 'satisfaction' and 'supreme,' the latter shows a Muslim name meaning 'deep thinker' and 'sensitive'. Moreover, the name has

Indian origins. From this angle, the characters' names once again show the illusion of social conventions. As Sarat sees Anisha and their conversation begins, her narrative trajectory is marked by a conflict between her captor and his sibling, culminating in a tragic confrontation where her master is murdered by his brother. In a twist of vengeance, the master's sister-in-law retaliates by shooting both him and Anisha. This conflict shows the sense of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic.⁸ In the contemporary setting, Anisha implores Sarat to immortalize her through a painting, evoking a sense of intimacy as she requests to be depicted while standing in a particular pose, interweaving themes of desire and artistic representation. Once more, minor literature operates, as the female oppressed character revolts against the dictators. Through Munch's painting, we can observe a portrayal of cultural dominance, similar to the plight of the captives in Sinjar. In essence, just as in the French Revolution, the conflict between the monarchy and radical revolutionaries endured brutal phases in history as they vied for power. Sexuality, desire, and violence are depicted in both magical scenes and real events. This evokes the text's essence in both the theoretical framework and also on the technical level.

In the subsequent parts of the novel, the male characters reappear as the protagonists. Among them, Ali, the Chechen preacher, the name and the role of the character appear to indicate a radical religious concept - the etymological meaning of the name 'Ali' Arabic triconsonantal root - 'emperor,' 'king of kings,' and 'champion'. This male character begins to recount his involvement with a maidservant and the subsequent murder of his brother upon realizing the latter's relationship with Anisha. Ali then delves into the topic of Yazidi girls' value and their exchange within the male ISIS members' circles. The power relations here explicitly portray the conflict theory through the synthesis of the social structure into majority and minority; from religious, political, cultural, and gender levels. Masculinity has been attached to the male character through the name that indicates power - the emperor - this also elicits Deleuze's theory of minor literature; the female figures are ruled by a male king and they are constantly represented for lacking religious faith, eventually, they turn to be the entities who lack their own patterns.

Another character who emerges in the novel as Sarat encounters her in an imaginary world that is entangled with his reality is Kedema. A thirteen-year-old from

⁸ Medium. com <https://philosophypublics.medium.com/hegels-master-slave-dialectic-in-the-phenomenology-of-spirit-4ef9f61f541d> Accessed 11-09-2023.

Sinjar has a name with Arabic origins. The name "Kedema" carries a meaning rooted in Arabic, signifying a female who possesses the ability to manage and control her anger. Paradoxically, this name evokes an irony in the character's story. It is essential to state that she has been subjected to being bought and sold a staggering eight times. Kedema's harrowing experiences include being acquired by an aggressive and volatile black man who repeatedly threatens her life. Eventually, Kedema reached a breaking point and shot both the man and herself. Although the man survived, Kedema did not. The narrative voice draws a parallel between this tragic event and Caravaggio's painting "Judith Beheading Holofernes." The painting illustrates the biblical tale of Judith, a Jewish widow, and her maidservant Abra, who together infiltrate the camp of the Assyrian general Holofernes, as he besieges the Jewish city of Bethulia. Judith, known for her beauty, beguiles Holofernes, who then invites her into his tent. Exploiting his inebriation and vulnerability, Judith seizes the opportunity to behead him, with Abra's assistance. They subsequently return to Bethulia, bearing Holofernes' head as a victorious trophy.

The narrative of Judith and Holofernes symbolizes female bravery and cleverness in the face of a formidable adversary. It has long been a favored theme in both art and literature, conveying ideas of heroism, resistance, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. Through the representation of this artwork, the bravery of Kedema is also depicted. Philosophically, this narrative appears as the rebellion of the subaltern which is related to Deleuzian theory in terms of language and identity – as a minor, Kedema left the trace of her revolt which is virtually related to Kafka's context. The black man, on the other hand, is identified as Sa'adun a twenty-nine-year-old, whose national identity is unknown, in other words, the Arabic name is attached to a male figure whose only racial background is presented. Once more, religious ideology emerges in the text. Sa'dun reappears in a later conversation involving Sarat and Ihsan. His demise at the hands of another ISIS member is reminiscent of Francisco Goya's artwork "Saturn Devouring his Son," the artwork portrays a disturbing and horrifying mythological event where Saturn (known as Cronus in Greek mythology), the Roman deity associated with time and agriculture, consumes one of his own offspring. According to Greek mythology, Cronus harbored a fear that his children would eventually overthrow him, as a prophecy foretold one of his offspring would depose him. Consequently, Cronus resorted to the gruesome practice of devouring his newborn children to prevent this from happening. In this painting, Saturn is depicted in a frenzied and grotesque state, with his mouth stained with blood and

containing the lifeless body of his son. This highlights the internal hypocrisy and darkness within these oppressors that lead them to turn against each other. In other words, this shows the concept of the collective assemblages of enunciation, as the novel goes beyond individual character stories to encapsulate the shared suffering and endurance of the Yazidi community. This is accomplished by exploring the interconnected experiences of the characters and their common experience of trauma within the community. The text's somber and shadowy atmosphere transitions readers to Theodor Gericault's painting "The Raft of the Medusa," which is a visual work that captures a true maritime tragedy. In 1816, the French frigate Medusa ran aground along the West African coast, stranding 147 passengers on an improvised raft. Over the course of thirteen harrowing days, they faced severe challenges, including hunger and resorting to cannibalism, until only fifteen individuals were ultimately rescued (Plessis, 2022). Gericault's monumental artwork vividly portrays the dire situation of the survivors and serves as a poignant commentary on leadership failures, the harshness of nature, and the indomitable human spirit. Sarat is summoned by the female characters to join them by the sea. This artwork serves as a metaphor for the minor groups who are always on the edge and represented by the majority in terms of identity. The female captives are compared to the passengers of Medusa's raft – in various aspects. Additionally, the protagonist mentions artworks from both Turkish and Iranian origins within his Kurdish-Syrian home, underscoring the intricate political landscape of the era. On the metaphorical level, it also evokes the idea of minor groups that are resisting the horror of the sea – the ideologies of the oppressors. It's also crucial to point out that the multi-characters in the novel show the readers various voices, thus, a close reading of the work, gives an indication of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "polyphony"; as he gained notable recognition for his contributions to the study of the Russian author Fyodor Dostoyevsky, particularly through his renowned work, *Problems of Dostoyevsky's Poetics*. He released this work under his own name shortly before facing arrest. This publication is widely regarded as one of the most exceptional critical analyses of Dostoyevsky's writings. In this book, Bakhtin articulated his theory in an interconnected relationship between meaning and context, where the author, the literary work, and the reader continually interact and shape each other, all while being influenced by the prevailing political and social forces of the time.⁹ Bakhtin's theory suggests that language is constructed through the discourse of various voices which each

⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica. com
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mikhail-Bakhtin> Accessed 11-09-2023.

provide a certain ideology and perspective. That is to say, meaning is conveyed through these dialogues in the work of literature – through multiple voices, hybrid identities are presented which shows the power of minorities and marginalized groups. Eventually, this also evokes Kafka's language and the dialectical relation between the superior and minor groups.

4. CONCLUSION

Salim Barakat's novel, *The Captives of Sinjar*, proposes piles of meanings; at the surface, it portrays the historical and contemporary events that unfolded in Sinjar during the ISIS attacks in the region. Additionally, the book dives into the philosophical dimensions of these incidents, exploring gender-related issues and the dynamics of master and slave relationships. In this research, our objective was to decipher the text, establishing connections to the realm of minor literature, as examined by French thinkers Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze. The text reveals three prominent characteristics: deterritorialization, the formation of collective enunciation, and a transformative process toward revolution. The language of the written work introduces a group of characters, who recount the horror they have encountered – describing the traumatic experiences they have previously lived. Barakat's work also adopts a surrealist approach, drawing comparisons between historical events and artworks created by Western artists spanning various eras. Furthermore, this paper draws links to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "polyphony," which enhances the representation of language through the incorporation of multiple voices within the text. To sum up, this text integrates history into philosophy with artistic and magical realism to explore the other side of the stories.

REFERENCES

Barakat, S. (2016). *The Captives of Sinjar. Arabic [Sabaya Sinjar]*. Beirut: al-Muassassah al-'Arabiyyah lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr

Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2023, March 3). *Mikhail Bakhtin*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mikhail-Bakhtin>.

du Plessis, A., 2023. "The Raft of the Medusa" Théodore Géricault – A Romanticism Analysis. [Online] Available at: <https://artincontext.org/the-raft-of-the-medusa-theodore-gericault/>

El Moncef, S., 2020. *Minor Literature*. [Online] Available at: <https://oxfordre.com/literature/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190201098.001.0001/acrefore-9780190201098-e-1035?rskey=FekFb5>

Anon., 2017. *Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic In the Phenomenology of Spirit*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://philosophypublics.medium.com/hegels-master-slave-dialectic-in-the-phenomenology-of-spirit-4ef9f61f541d>

Anon., n.d. *Salim Barakat*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://www.arabicfiction.org/en/node/1556>

Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. & Brinkley, R., 1983. What Is a Minor Literature?. *Mississippi Review*, 3(11), pp. 13-33.

Held, J., 2008. "Titian's Flaying of Marsyas: An Analysis of the Analyses.. *Oxford Art Journal*, 31(2), p. 179-194.

Jones, C. P., 2022. *How to Read Paintings: The Death of Marat by Edvard Munch*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://christopherpiones.medium.com/the-personal-torment-behind-edvard-munchs-murder-painting-d336e578340c#:~:text=A%20depiction%20filled%20with%20energy%20and%20emotional%20torment&text=This%20painting%2C%20titled%20The%20Death,concoction%20of%20serenit>

Kinchin, I. M. & Gravett, K., 2020. Concept Mapping in the Age of Deleuze: Fresh Perspectives and New Challenges. *Education Sciences*, 3(10), pp. 1-13.

Laurent, O., 2014. Tragedy on Mount Sinjar. [Online] Available at: <https://time.com/3598353/tragedy-on-mount-sinjar/> [Accessed 18 September 2023].

Lesso, R. (2022, July 11). *What Is Magical Realism in Art?* Retrieved from The Collector:

<https://www.thecollector.com/what-is-magical-realism-in-art/>

Mazaheri, P. (2021, September 14). *An Introduction to Magic Realism Art Movement*. Retrieved from Arcadia.org: <https://www.byarcadia.org/post/an-introduction-to-magic-realism-art-movement>

Najmi, Z., 2016. *An Analysis of Goya's "Saturn Devouring His Son"*. [Online]

Available at:

<https://medium.com/@zahraanajmi/an-analysis-of-goyas-saturn-devouring-his-son-9a65227dffb1>

Zoonen, D. V., & Wirya, K. (2017). The Yazidis. *Middle East Research Institute (MERI)*, 21, 1-26.