

**Title:** Rethinking “Minor Literature” and “Small Literature” as “Secondary Zone Literature”

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to address the limits of the “minor literature” of Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari and Pascale Casanova’s “small literature”, meanwhile rethink “minor & small literature” as Michel Ragon’s “secondary zone literature” from three perspectives. Firstly, it will be argued that “minor and small literature” began to lose its theoretical capacity with the advent of globalization after the new millennium, which is why scholars like Theo D’haen and David Damrosch tended to move away from the initial ideas of Deleuze, Guattari and Casanova. Secondly, the problems of “minor literature” and “small literature” will be updated. There are three problems with “minor literature”: 1) D & G’s “minor literature”/“littérature mineure” is an incorrect translation of Kafka’s work, because Kafka’s original word, “*klein*”, means “small” in German; 2) The first feature of “minor literature” that “a minority uses a major language in a context outside that language” runs the risk of not only dismissing all literature written by minorities in “minor languages”, but also diminishing the possible meanings of the term, “minority”; and 3) The second and third characteristics of “minor literature”, its “political” and “collective” nature, are unable to explain why only non-European arts, such as African American and Soviet literature, are perceived to be political and collective. In terms of “small literature”, there are two problems: a) it fails to explain why countries such as China and India, which hardly qualify as ‘small’, face problems similar to those of “small literature” in the international literary context; and b) it does not have the capacity to explain the literature of minority and marginal groups within a nation or country. Thirdly, “minor and small literature” will be reconsidered as “secondary zone literature”, not only in an attempt to emphasize cultural dynamics and power relations based on the visibility of various “minor & small” related literary works, but also to demonstrate that literature may be minor or small, but it always has quantitative implications. Henceforth, in order to solve the limits of “minor and small literature”, it is necessary to back to D & G’s source term, which is Ragon’s “secondary zone literature”.

**Keywords:** Minor Literature, Small Literature, Secondary Zone Literature, Gilles Deleuze, Pascale Casanova, Michel Ragon

**Word Count:** 7,918

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<sup>①</sup> The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: I would like to thank The National Social Science Fund of China ('Boris Groys' Theory of Literature and Art', No. 16CWW002)

## 1. What is “Minor Literature” & “Small Literature”?

“Minor literature” in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and the “small literature” of Pascale Casanova are literary terms that have influenced literature scholars worldwide. They have not only inspired many scholars to find a way to make various literatures or literary periods visible, which would otherwise have been ignored, but also to further develop notions to embrace a larger panoply of literatures than that normally included in standard literary histories, often moving away from Deleuze, Guattari and Casanova’s initial ideas. For example, David Damrosch’s “minor literature” mainly points to the literature of those countries that are not “members of the controlling body of the United Nations”, as well as that of ancient texts that are hardly found in North American syllabi. Theo D’haen’s take on “minor literature” is based on Dutch literature in Holland and Europe, among others, while Galin Tihanov and Yordan Ljuckanov use a mixture of “minor & small literature” to interpret Bulgarian literature. Nevertheless, none of these four scholars point out the problems or limitations of Deleuze, Guattari or Casanova’s theories, but simply follow their own trajectory, often ignoring the potentially significant difference between “minor” and “small” literature. Hence, the purpose of this article is firstly to explain the nature and shortcomings of the notions of Deleuze/Guattari and then closely examine the four aforementioned attempts before suggesting how these terms can be used in a contemporary context.

Deleuze and Guattari published a book entitled *Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure* in 1975 and Dana Polan translated it into English in 1986 as *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, translating “littérature mineure” as “minor literature”. In their book, Deleuze and Guattari suggested that “minor literature” has three basic features, the first of which is its language: “minor literature does not come from a minor language, it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language”, so that, in minor literature, “language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization”(16). The second feature is “that everything in them is political”, more precisely, minor literature’s “cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics”(Kafka 17), while the third is “that in it everything takes on a collective value”, because “talent isn’t abundant in a minor literature, there are no possibilities for an individuated enunciation that would belong to this or that ‘master’ and that could be separated from a collective enunciation”(17).

Deleuze and Guattari used two writers, Franz Kafka and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch to substantiate the definition of “minor literature” and located it on two levels. Firstly, “minor literature” is “a political literature of minorities”; secondly, “we might as well say that minor literature no longer designates specific literature, but the revolutionary conditions for all literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature”(18). Masoch and Kafka shared the same minority identity. Masoch was a Bohemian, who took a strong interest in the social struggle of

minorities, such as maids and prostitutes and the Jews in Poland and Hungary, with a keen eye on their suffering and oppression. Therefore, he wanted to construct “minor literature” based on “decisive political intentions”. Kafka was a Czech Jew in a situation similar to that of Masoch, so he used the term “minor literature” in relation to “literature that is considered to be minor, for example, the Jewish literature of Warsaw and Prague”(16).

On the other hand, Casanova published *La république mondiale des lettres* in 1999, in which she used the term “petite littérature” to discuss the writings of Kafka and Deleuze and Guattari. In 2004, M. B. DeBevoise translated the book into English as *The World Republic of Letters*, translating “petite littérature” as “small literature”. Casanova had deviated from Deleuze and Guattari by choosing the term “petite littérature”, rather than Deleuze and Guattari’s “littérature mineure”.

Casanova gave two reasons for her new term. Firstly, since Kafka used the word “*klein*”, meaning ‘small’ in German, he obviously chose “small literature”, not “minor literature” to describe “developments in the nascent Czechoslovakia and Yiddish political and literary movements, which is to say the complex mechanisms that bring forth all new national literatures”. According to Casanova, “minor literature”/“littérature mineure” is just a term “found in a translation by Marthe Robert, another translator of Kafka”. Although Bernard Lortholary called Marthe Robert’s translation “inexact and tendentious”, it seems that this critique failed to influence Deleuze or Guattari. They simply accepted the translation.

Secondly, according to Casanova, Deleuze and Guattari adopted a particular and perhaps biased idea of Kafka’s political thinking in two ways. On the one hand, Deleuze and Guattari defined “minor literature” as a notion that “no longer characterizes certain literatures”; rather it points to “the revolutionary conditions of all literature called great (or established)”, and that is the “glory of such literature to be minor”. On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari “fail to grasp the content that Kafka actually gave to the notion of politics”; instead, they “fall back upon an archaic conception of the writer in order to justify their position”. More precisely, they “hold that Kafka was political, but only in a prophetic way: he spoke of politics, but only for the future, as if he foresaw and described events to come” (Casanova 201), such as Fascism, Stalinism and Americanism. In short, Deleuze and Guattari “created a political and critical catchword, ‘minor literature’ out of the whole cloth and freely attributed” it to Kafka, and the deep reason for this misattribution is proof that “anachronism is a form of literary ethnocentrism used by the center to apply its own aesthetic and political categories”(Casanova 203) to the text of small literature.

Casanova reverted to Kafka’s original term “small literature”, specifically to his idea of emerging national literature in order to avoid Deleuze and Guttari’s misreading. As a Jew born in Prague, but writing in German, Kafka had an astute feeling of his intellectual predicament when he tried to speak for his nation, which had

a long history of suffering from “the major political preoccupation throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1850 and 1918”(200). Hence, in his diary on the First World War, Kafka tried to “describe small literature with a view to exposing the general mechanisms underlying the emergence of young national literature” (Casanova 198). Following Kafka, Casanova placed “small literature” as “small countries’ literature”. Meanwhile, Casanova specifically identified “small” as “literarily deprived”. She also depicted the characteristics of “small literature” using five keywords: “smallness”, “poverty”, “backwardness”, “remoteness” and “invisibility”(183). However, “smallness” is not understood in “quantitative” terms; rather, it “describes a situation, a destiny”. “Poverty”, “backwardness” and “remoteness” imply that small countries lack a national press and their publishing industries suffer from an absence of history and tradition; hence, they can not promote outstanding talents. “Invisibility’ refers to the status of the literature of small nations in an international literary space that is dominated by large ones. As a result, permanently facing the “arrogant ignorance of the large nations”(184), writers of small nations can only choose to use their pens for two reasons, one of which is to fight for their nation in the larger literary landscape, such as Kafka, C.F. Ramuz and Janine Matillon, and the other is to fight against the constraints of their nation, such as Samuel Beckett, Henry Michaux and E. M. Cioran.

## **2. Problematizing “Minor Literature” and “Small Literature”**

The term “minor literature” was mainly used by Deleuze and Guattari to refer to two aspects. One is minorities’ literature and the other is “the revolutionary conditions for all literature in the heart of what is called great (or established) literature.” For them, the opposite of “minor literature” is “major literature”, while for Casanova, “small literature” refers to “small countries’ literature” or “small nations’ literature”. Hence, for her, “small nations” usually overlap with “small countries”, rather than minority groups within a country. The contrasting term of “small literature” is “large nations’ literature”. Casanova’s changing of the terms indicates that her focus is different from that of Deleuze and Guattari, thus implying that she wishes to discuss issues that cannot be limited to ‘minor literature’.

As seen above, Casanova highlights two critical points. The first is that “minor” is an incorrect translation from Kafka, while the second is that Deleuze and Guattari totally mistook Kafka’s political situation because they perceived that he was not preoccupied with contemporary national problems, but with the emergence of small national literature based on future international political problems, including Fascism, Stalinism, Americanism, and bureaucracy, and here, one cannot avoid agreeing with Casanova.

However, it is important to discuss the problem with the basic three features of “minor literature” as presented by Deleuze and Guattari: 1) minor literature is the literature of a minority using a major language in a context outside that language; 2) it

is political; 3) it assumes a collective value. The first feature is mainly descriptive and calls for additional nuance rather than disagreement, while the other two can be criticized as discussed below.

Nevertheless, before starting the discussion, it may be helpful to still add a nuance to the brief description based on Kafka's specific situation. If the language of "minor literature" is "major language", and the subject of "minor literature" is the "minority", this description runs the risk of not just eliminating all literature written by minorities in "minor languages", but also diminishing the possible meanings of the term "minority". This becomes clear when moving from Europe to colonial and post-colonial settings.

A case in point is the change in the position of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who fluctuated between using three languages: Gikuyu, Kiswahili and English. Ngũgĩ was recognized by the international literary fraternity for his English writings in the 1960s, including his novels, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), *The River Between* (1965), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), his plays such as *The Black Hermit* (1963), and so on. Among those writings, *Weep Not, Child* was the first novel in English published by an East African writer and, after its publication, Ngũgĩ won a scholarship to study for a Master's degree at Leeds University. He published his second English novel, *The River Between*, while he was still in the UK and his thesis at Leeds University was devoted to Caribbean literature, specifically focused on George Lamming. However, Ngũgĩ left Leeds without finishing his thesis because he found that his relationship with English was complex. More precisely, based on his studies of Caribbean literature and intellectuals like George Lamming and Frank Fanon, Ngũgĩ began to perceive his English baptized name, James Ngugi, and his English writings as the fruits of colonialism. Therefore, he changed his name to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and began to write in his native Gikuyu and Kiswahili, and from there, he began his complex journey with English.

After his novel entitled *Petals of Blood* was published in 1977, Ngũgĩ said farewell to the English language as the vehicle of his writing of plays, novels and short stories and began to write directly in the Gikuyu language. However, he continued to write "explanatory prose in English", such as *Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary* (1981), *Writers in Politics and Barrel of a Pen* (1983) in order to facilitate international publication. For the five years from 1981 to 1986, Ngũgĩ continued to awaken his nations by rejecting English and, as a political gesture, he called on all African writers to revert to their African language with the aim of creating a new sense collectivization. In 1986, Ngũgĩ published one of his most important books in Gikuyu entitled *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. In this book, he formally and finally stated that he would stop writing in English, calling it "my farewell to English as a vehicle for any of my writings. From now on it is Gikuyu and Kiswahili all the way". Nevertheless, Ngũgĩ did not say farewell to translation: "I hope that I shall be able to continue dialogue with all

through the age old medium of translation.” (*Decolonizing forward*)

Ngũgĩ bade farewell twice to his major international language, English, between 1977 and 1986. His book entitled *Decolonizing the Mind*, originally written in Gikuyu had already been translated into English, Swedish, German, French and so on before 1991 and it has been reprinted at least ten times (1988, 1989, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005). Then from 1986 to 2004, Ngũgĩ published many of his native writings, including novels and children’s literature; for example, novels like *Matigari ma Njiruungi* (1986, translated into English by Wangui wa Goro as *Matigari* in 1989) and *Mũrogi wa Kagogo (Wizard of the Crow, 2004)*, children’s stories such as *Njamba Nene na Mbaathi i Mathagu (Njamba Nene and the Flying Bus, 1986)*, *Njamba Nene na Chibu King'ang'i (Njamba Nene and the Cruel Chief, 1988)* and *Bathitoora ya Njamba Nene (Njamba Nene's Pistol, 1990)*. Compared to his English writings, these “minor language” writings earned Ngũgĩ international literary recognition. From 1989, Ngũgĩ began to own his literary space as a distinguished professor or hold the chair or a directorship in world class universities, such as Yale, New York and California Universities in one of the most powerful English-speaking countries.

Following Deleuze and Guattari’s definition, most of Ngũgĩ’s major language writings, including English novels, short stories, plays, essays, memoirs, and non-fictional theoretical publications, could be labeled “minor literature”, since they were written in a major language within what some would call a ‘minor language’. This leads to the question of whether Ngũgĩ’s “minor language” writings, including his Gikuyu and Kiswahili novels and children’s letters, belong to “minor literature”. This is a difficult question to answer, since Gikuyu is a local language spoken by as many people in Kenya as English in the UK, but not in an international context. In other words, Deleuze and Guattari’ s term “minor literature” is heavily based on Europeanism and cannot be extended to a global term.

Another case does not involve a writer, but a local or national literature in the form of Dutch literature, discussed by Theo D’haen in his article entitled “*Major Histories, Minor Literatures, and World Literature*” (2014). Here, D’haen referred to the “minor” situation of Dutch literature. Although European literature has a long-standing track record of occupying most of the space in most anthologies of world literature, there is room within European literature for “minor language” literature, such as Dutch literature, although it must be exceptional to be selected for inclusion in world literature anthologies. According to D’haen, “in Europe alone there are some 22 to 23 million speakers” of Dutch; yet, this “minor language” literature still faces the historical question of “whether there is any hope for any of its authors or works to be included in any of the newer world anthologies, even if only in the category of ‘resonances’ or ‘perspectives’ as we find them in interpretation would fit that of ‘major literature’”. Because, the simple truth is that “in any ‘major’ history of the world’s literature there is no room for ‘minor’ literature unless it serves ‘major’

interests”(D’haen 7). Here, the notion of minor is challenged in the European context; therefore, as in the case of Ngūgĩ wa Thiong’o, it is revealed to be more associated with visibility and cultural and political power than with quantity.

This leads to a discussion of the second and third of Deleuze and Guattari’s three features of minor literature: its “political” and “collective” nature. This article argues that these two features are both true and untrue for two reasons: on the one hand, minor literature is always treated as “political” and “collective” by mainstream “highbrow” standard, even though massive minor writings are pure art. This standard is a vicious trap that settle down the goal and spirit of minor literature, which is using literature as a tool to fight against the “highbrow” standard. Therefore, the deep reason why minor literature is “political” and “collective” is because the major standard per se is “political” and “collective”. On the other hand, major literature is also “political” and “collective”, rather than pure aesthetics. Two literary scholars, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Boris Groys, highlight the complexity of the troubled political and collective position of literature under pressure from alleged major languages, literature and culture by focusing on the capacity of literature to fight against mainstream cultural bias and hegemony. Both scholars analyze the political and collective oppression of periphery cultures under the thumb of mainstream cultural standards. Gates criticizes the “White” hegemony that the Black suffered from for centuries, while Groys addresses the problem of Soviet literature, trapped by the dominant Western standards in the international literary scene.

According to Gates, since at least since the 1600s, Blacks have shouldered a cultural burden enforced on them by Whites whereby they were not able to read or write; hence, they were born to be slaves. This racist cultural presupposition tightly restricted African and African American literature from three perspectives. Firstly, it locked the political and collective goals of Black writings because, under the strict racist presupposition, when Blacks began to read and write and started to grab their pen, they could only have one motive, which was the deconstruction of racist hegemony. Consequently, every Black writing became a national weapon devoted to showing the world that Blacks could read and write, just like Whites. Secondly, it restrained the literary theory’s general argument of the center. More specifically, the center always focused on the political and collective elements of Black writings, rather than their aesthetics and individual contributions to the literary form of Black literature, such as language, sentences, structures, and so on. Thirdly, it confined the theoretical argument within Black nations about the two most basic literary questions, namely, how to write and how to interpret Black letters.

Many African American scholars committed their time and energy to finding the answers to these two questions between the 1890s and the 1950s. After non-stop arguments for generations, the answers were mainly two-fold, namely, art for art’s sake or art for propaganda. Most scholars, such as W.E.B Dubois and James Weldon Jonson, chose to interpret Black letters as propaganda, while only a few of them, such

as Robert A. Stepto and Gates, chose to interpret them as art. In short, most Black people unconsciously agreed with the racist hypothesis that their nations suffered from being born to be slaves, even though they had fought against this unfair hypothesis for many generations. Based on these three restrictions, Gates labeled the complex relationship between minority literature and mainstream literary theories “Naipaul Fallacy”. Specifically, minorities will always be victims of the majority’s cultural system since, on the one hand, they have to resist racist systems for the sake of their national literary property; on the other hand, they need to rely on the majority’s system in order to legitimize the identity of their minor culture in the world literary space.

According to Groys, West Europe and the United States, questioned whether Soviet art was really “art”. He began himself to speak for the Soviet Union and became engrossed in rethinking the artistic frame of socialist realism. Having been born in East Germany in 1947, Groys emigrated to Russia when he was around eight years old and attained his higher education there. In 1981, he emigrated to West Germany and found a job at the University of Münster where he originally planned to teach Sots-Art. However, West German students were shocked to hear of the existence of Soviet art and questioned his teaching. Groys too was shocked by their reaction when they asked him, “What is Soviet art?” and he realized that “the art of Moscow conceptualism (Soviet unofficial art) was a non-topic for Western audiences at that time”. Because “for the art world per se”, Sots-Art simply “could not exist”, since “the Soviet Union was seen as a totalitarian desert where the population was too unfree, too thoroughly cut off from the outside world, and simply too poor to be able to make art”. This perception did not change until the “dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the end of the cold war”, because until that time “many Russian artists came to the West for a visit or to stay”. Then “the Western art world became interested”, and “a series of exhibitions of Russian art took place” (*History Become Forms*, 10).

There were two reasons for the West German students’ question. Firstly, “who is the artist?” became the center of Western interest in the Soviet Union. From a Western perspective, “the artist is understood as a professional”, who “makes one’s living by selling one’s art production”. However, there were no professional artists in Soviet Russia because “art markets and galleries did not exist” and “museums and the media did not let them in”(11). Secondly, for the Western world, the only legitimate art form that could exist in the Soviet Union was socialist realism, which was merely political propaganda with no aesthetic value at all. Since “the Union of Soviet Artists was a partner of the state and acted like a large corporation delivering its product to the state authorities”, this kind of corporation could only produce “a collective, anonymous artistic product”. After all, all members “shared certain aesthetics -- the collective Soviet aesthetics”(13). This kind of aestheticism was not real because it was just based on the will of the party’s political power and leaders’ personality cult.

Groys went back to the cultural conflict between Europe and Russia in the



eighteenth century in order to determine the real reason for the Western bias against Soviet official and unofficial art. In his words, European values became universal humanistic values because of the Judeo-Christian legacy and the tradition of European Enlightenment. Under this universal frame, non-European cultures “must be considered antihumanistic by nature, that is, as inherently inhuman, antidemocratic, intolerant, and so on”(174). Meanwhile, this kind of European humanism was deeply connected to European art criteria, at least in two respects.

Firstly, in keeping with the dominant conventions of the European understanding of art, only that made by human hands can be considered art. Secondly, works of art are ultimately distinguished from other things only in that they are exclusively contemplated and interpreted, but not practically used. The taboo against using a work of art, against consuming it, is the basis of all European art institutions, including museums and the art market. That is why the question of what art is or is not in the context of European culture is a question purely specific of art. The criteria used to distinguish works of art from other things are not dissimilar from the criteria applied to distinguish the human from the inhuman (175).

However, the Soviet Union, as a Socialist State that needed to build a new State in an artistic way for its people, was “interested only in one kind of art – socially-useful art that appealed to the masses, that educated them, inspired them and directed them” (*Art Power* 145). Therefore, since Soviet art did not match European artistic criteria, it was hard for those West German students to recognize it as art. So how did West European students label Soviet art? It was generally accepted by the West as political propaganda with no aesthetic value and it also did not care about “concentrated, individual contemplation”.

It is not difficult to sense the problem of the “political” and “collective” characteristics of “minor literature” from Soviet cases and Groys’ analysis. These two characteristics are paradoxical in at least two aspects. On the one hand, under “highbrow” standard, all non-European arts are political and collective, no matter they come from minor or major nations; hence, it is improper to locate them as the characteristics of “minor literature”. On the other hand, the Soviet Union was one of the biggest superpowers at that time, so to say Soviet art was Major Art, but Soviet art still suffered from the cultural bias of Western Europe and the United States as having no artistic value and also blind to the individual rights and social engagement. Henceforth, according to Deleuze and Guattari’s theory that minor literature is “political” and “collective”, Soviet literature could also be partially classified as “minor literature” based on these two characteristics, especially since a great many small countries that originally did not use Slavic as their national language belonged to the Soviet Union. Therefore, if Soviet literature was minor literature, what about many writers’ writings within this Union shared the same identity problems as Kafka showed, such as Ivo Andrić (1961 Nobel Prize winner in literature), Czesław Miłosz (1980 Nobel Prize winner in literature), Jaroslav Seifert (1984 Nobel Prize winner in

literature), and so on? Put in another way, if Soviet literature was “minor literature” because it’s “political” and “collective” characteristics, the real question should be what about these writers’ works? How to define them under the Soviet hegemony?

In this direction, the limitations of Casanova’s “small literature” are based on her keywords, “small countries” and “small nations”. Firstly, Casanova refers to small countries like Belgium, Ireland, Finland as examples of typical “small literature”. There are many ways in which writers in small countries could legitimize their national literature, such as being awarded the Nobel Prize, moving to the World Literary Capital, which according to Casanova is Paris, being recognized by the major language countries in Europe, such as the UK, France, Germany, and so on. According to Casanova’s theory, “small literature” means “small countries’ literature” and it is hard for this kind of literature to merge into the world literary space. However, some countries, such as China and India, which hardly qualify as ‘small’, face the same problem of being identified as “small literature” in the international literary context. For example, only two Chinese writers and two Indian writers were awarded the Nobel Prize in the last hundred years.

In fact, only one of the two Chinese winners, the Chinese writer Mo Yan, won the Nobel Prize in 2012, because Gao Xingjian had become a French citizen by the time he became Nobel Laureate in 2000. As for the Indian winners, India was a UK colony, rather than an independent country, when Tagore received a Nobel Prize in 1913, solely based on translations into English. Also, the Nobel Prize winner in 2001, V.S. Naipaul, was not even born or raised in India. He was born in Trinidad and Tobago of Indian parents, but had become an English national. Hence, it was difficult for these Chinese and Indian writers to validate their literature in the Nobel Prize space. Although Chinese and Indian writers are in a similar cultural situation, it is much easier for Indian writers to be acknowledged in Europe, because English is an official language of India. Hence, because of the language barrier it is, compared to India, more problematical for China to earn its visibility in the Nobel Prize space.

The relationship between China and the Nobel Prize in literature has always been a complex one. When Wole Soyinka became the first Third World Writer to receive the Nobel Prize in 1986, China became even more obsessed with winning the Nobel Prize in literature, as illustrated by Wend Larson & Richard Kraus and Julia Lovell in their paper entitled "*China's Writers, The Nobel Prize, And The International Politics of Literature*," in which it was said that "one measure of international cultural success taken very seriously by Chinese artists and intellectuals is the annual Nobel Prize for literature, a sign of recognition which many Chinese intellectuals now desire for their nation"(143).

The Chinese initiative followed four steps. Firstly, "the Chinese government translated the writings of a popular author into a Western language in order to read Esperanto" ('world language' in Chinese). However, the poor translation caused a

Swedish sinologist to "first mistake the Esperanto for Romanized Chinese, then protest that he could not help with its meaning, as his specialty was to *pronounce* Chinese, not to interpret its meaning". Secondly, "one of China's newspaper proposed ignoring the Nobel Prize and setting up a Chinese literary prize for a work written in any of the Chinese dialects, including the Japanese of spoken Qingdao, the English of Hongkong and Shanghai, and the Russian of Harbin". Thirdly, Chinese scholars bought, translated, edited and published Nobel Prize collections to let the "Chinese reading public be well aware of both the literary standards of the prize-winning writers and the narrow international distribution of the prize"(147-149). Fourthly, "China sent a delegation to the Royal Swedish Academy to press its case in October 1987". The information given by Bai Dao and other delegates was "if the Nobel Prize proves unobtainable, China will make do with the Pegasus Prize for Literature, awarded by the Mobil Oil Corporation of Hong Kong. The Chinese Writers' Association signed an agreement to try for Mobil's medal and money with the American publication of the winning book"(160).

These four steps demonstrated China's determination, which unavoidably made the world well aware of the relationship and distance between the Chinese and the Nobel Prize. This topic even received scholarly attention from the 1980s to the 2000s, such as in Julia Lovell's book entitled "*The Politics of Capital: China's Quest for a Nobel Prize in Literature*"(2007,280pp), in which she called China's quest for the Nobel Prize its "Nobel complex", and defined it as "a preoccupation with the Nobel Literature Prize and China's anxiety about its international status". Lovell used 4 chapters to describe China's obsession with the Nobel Prize from the Qing dynasty to the year 2000. The main purpose of this book was to answer two questions: "Why should China win a Nobel Prize?" and "Why should China care about, or even find anything illogical or unfair in the fact that a group of Swedish judges, almost all lacking the ability to read Chinese, had failed to appreciate its modern literature?" Even though, the Nobel Prize is not given to nations, but to writers, and is not given to make a nation proud of itself.

Also, when "China's Nobel Complex" became visible for Western eyes, some scholars even thought that the reason Soyinka became the first Third World Nobel Winner was because China had pushed the Swedish Academy so hard that it had to do something to re-balance the Western and non-Western side. Nevertheless, Soyinka's prize did not give Chinese writers much of a chance and they were still invisible in Nobel Prize space, especially after a smaller country, Japan, won the second Nobel Prize in 1994. Hence, Casanova's theory of "small countries' literature" as "small literature" could not explain why "big countries' literature" shoulders a similar cultural burden.

Secondly, according to Casanova, “small nations” equal “small countries”, which tends to ignore the inner differences within a nation or country. More specifically, Casanova’s “small literature” (small countries/small nations’ literature) cannot explain the literature of minority and marginal groups within a nation or country; for example, the literature of Prague Jews like Kafka in Czech, Saami literature in Northern Europe, African-American literature in the United States that Gates is fighting for, fifty-five minority groups’ literature in China, Maori literature in Australia and New Zealand, Indian literature in North and South America, and so on.

### **3. Rethinking *Minor* and *Small*: “Secondary Zone Literature”**

Both the basic terms, minor literature and small literature, and the cultural entities on which they are supposed to rely, minorities and small countries or nations, clearly opened new doors in literary studies; yet, they clearly showed their limitations when the perspective moved beyond their own historical context and beyond the Western Europe continent. A rethinking of these terms is proposed in order to provide them with a globalized potential.

Firstly, the terms, “minor literature” and “small literature” should be replaced by the term, “secondary zone literature”, in order to simultaneously cover both “minor” and “small” literature and transcend the inherent quantitative core. Michel Ragon used “secondary zone literature”(seconde zone littérature) in his book: *Histoire de la littérature prolétarienne en France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1974), to discuss the need to use a new literary term to interpret the proletarian writings in France, because the mainstream criteria of “primary zone literature”(première zone littérature) lost its capacity to explain proletarian writings. French proletarian writings had a close relationship with Soviet writings, because since the October Revolution in 1917, the French communists started to work with Soviet scholars, even officially invited to Moscow to attend the First Soviet Writers’ Congress in 1934. In short, French proletarian writings were socialist system oriented, therefore they were alien to French mainstream literature -- capitalist culture system. In Deleuze and Guattari’s book: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, they mentioned Ragon’s “secondary zone literature” in their footnote. Therefore, it is impossible to notice that Ragon’s “secondary zone literature” was one of the original theoretical source of Deleuze and Guattari’s “minor literature”. This article uses “secondary zone literature” to cover both “minor literature”, “small literature”, and related terms, such as “ultra-minor literature”, “ultra-small literature”, and so on. The opposite term of “secondary zone literature” is “primary zone literature”, which includes “major literature”, “big literature”, “world literature” and other related literature that dominated the mainstream and central literary spaces in world letters.

“Minor literature” mainly means “minority literature” and “small literature” mainly refers to “small countries’ literature”. However, “minor literature” and “small literature” share a similar theoretical quest, namely, to understand what it means to speak from the cultural periphery and with a marginal, or rather marginalized, voice within the centralized mainstream literary space. Therefore, the term “secondary zone literature” could not only focus on cultural dynamics and power relations with regard to the visibility of various “minor & small” and related literatures, but could also define the minority or smallness that literature may have.

Three dimensions of the characteristics of “secondary zone literature” will be emphasized to reveal the term’s potential. The first characteristic is related to the literature of minority groups and small nations constructed within a major or minor language. This dimension includes Ngũgĩ’s case when he rejected writing in English and reverted to his two native African languages and will also capture the focus of both Damrosch and D’haen on the language problem of “minor literature”. Damrosch used the term “minor literature” in a threefold sense: 1) “minority- group writings, such as Gaelic or Yiddish, within major powers”; 2) “small countries’ literature”, such as “Guatemala or Hungary”; and 3) “more general works from languages and regions rarely represented in North American syllabi” (194). As for D’haen, although European literature is naturally accepted as world literature, the literature of Holland or Belgium or in the Dutch language is “the most minor of the minors, the most peripheral of peripherals” (4) in Europe.

The second characteristic of “secondary zone literature” is that it always uses collective political strategies to seek equal aesthetic rights, no matter what kind or size of countries, nations or groups and it also fights for the balance of its related international, national and individual artistic power. This characteristic could explain Gates’ “Naipaul Fallacy” and Groys’ theory of rethinking Soviet art, because both “minor/small” and “major/world” literature are “political” and “collective”, and more importantly, the “highbrow” standard is always “political” and “collective”, so the only proper way to deconstruct it is also to be collective and political. Meanwhile, with time flies, no art can stand in the “primary zone” forever; all arts, whether in the periphery or the center, must undergo the historical processes of fighting for their cultural rights. The most difficult processes normally involve two kinds of fighting stages and strategies, the first of which is usually connected to a political strategy, while the second is mainly tied to artistic means. Because of this fighting obligations, “secondary zone literature” always seek to talk to “primary zone literature”, rather than to each other, in order to be recognized by the “primary zone”. Ljuckanov discussed this phenomenon and analyzed its context since the colonial period: “the colonized are portioned to communicate with the colonizer but with each other. They produce knowledge about themselves for him; they produce it neither about nor for each other”(Ljuckanov 285). So his article entitled “Towards Paired Histories of Small Literatures: To Make Them Communicate”, had two goals, the first of which was to “help literary cultures like Bulgaria to escape the mentioned trap”, meaning the

situation in which “secondary zone literature” to look up to the “primary zone”, while the second was to build a platform to make “secondary zone literatures” communicate with each other. Another case is why in the 1990s when East European scholars began to concern about their literary national identity, their way was (re)read Kafka, who was a Major character in the West, also his “small literature” that analyzed by Deleuze and Guattari, as Stanley Corngold mentioned: “The ongoing Central and Eastern European use of Kafka aims chiefly to open a source of political and polemical impulses heightening the self-consciousness of peoples living on the margin of great powers. In all this, another sort of reading of Kafka is implicitly taking place. For when Central and Eastern European intellectuals address questions of ethnic or national identity, they are commenting willy-nilly on Kafka’s now famous essay on the literature of small nations. This essay -- a five-page diary entry written in 1911 -- also occupies a central position in Deleuze and Guttari’s account of Kafka’s own work as the project of someone writing within the boundaries of minor literature. Both inside and outside Central and Eastern European countries, it is used to justify the claim that ethnic and linguistic difference can *as such* resist hegemonic powers, institutions, and discourses” (Corngold 145).

The third characteristic of “secondary zone literature” could be described as a limited lifespan, therefore situated within a related limited literary space, however, with the development of literary, cultural and social processes, the limited space of “secondary zone literature” would be shifted. As Tihanov demonstrated: “ the concept of ‘minor literature’ is an historical construct with a specific (limited) lifespan”(Tihanov 169). Generally speaking, “secondary zone literature” covers the literature of large countries and majority nations, as well as that of small countries and minority nations. However, no matter what kind of countries or nations, “secondary zone literature” only exists for a limited time in world literary space; for example, Soviet literature that only existed from 1922 to 1991 or the ancient classic texts mentioned by Damrosch, such as Roman literature, that do not represent any extant cultural entity for contemporary readers. Compared to “primary zone literature”, which occupies the center of the large world literary space, “secondary zone literature” is located in the periphery & marginal and generally follows Casanova’s paradigm of literary space. More precisely, “secondary zone literature” only occupies a limited and small literary space as world republic letters or is sometimes even invisible in the world literary space. However, as Tihanov mentioned, on the one hand, with the development of the media and globalization, many aspects of “secondary zone literature” and related traditional literary distinctions and their foundations would be change. For example, ”the pattern of the consumption of literature underwent a significant alteration”, since “the accessibility of the classics through low-budget television versions gradually came to bridge the gap between high and popular literature that the discipline of literary history has depended on all along”. Meanwhile, with the “all-too-powerful presence of the new electronic media”, the “foundation of reception theory and the traditional literary history with its rigid value distinctions” were erased in some extent. Also, “the global network creates a vast electronic library,

where national traditions and loyalties are quickly destabilized” (181-183). On the other hand, those changes does not “say that inequalities disappear”, rather “globalization does create and reveal new sets of inequalities”(187). And in this new sets of inequalities, the literary space between “secondary zone literature” and “primary zone literature” would be shifted.

In short, “secondary zone literature” simultaneously covers both “minor literature” and “small literature”. Hence, it has, on the one hand, the capacity to interpret new literary events and phenomena after Deleuze, Guattari and Casanova, such as Damrosch, D’haen, Tihanov’s new definitions and discussions of “minor” and “small” literature. On the other hand, it indicates fields, concepts and characteristics overlooked by Deleuze and Guattari’s “minor literature” and Casanova’s “small literature”, such as the new theories and analyses of “minor and small literature” as presented, for example, Marta A. Skwara’s “Between ‘minor’ and ‘major’, The case of Polish Literature”(2015), Christopher Prendergast’s “World Republic of Letters”(2004), and Stanley Corngold’s “Kafka and the Dialect of Minor Literature” (2004).

Last, but not least, “secondary zone literature” challenges the French- centered and Eurocentrist focus of Deleuze, Guattari and Casanova’s theories of “minor and small literature”. At the same time, the new term offers a platform on which to rethink and reinterpret “minor and small literature” from various non-Western perspectives, such as Xavier Garnier’s book: *The Swahili Novel: Challenging the Idea of ‘Minor Literature’* (2013), Meenakshi Bharat’s article: “ ‘Major’ and ‘minor’ literature: Indian cases” (2015), Miceala Symington’s article: “A ‘minor’ language in a ‘major’ literature: Contemporary Irish literature” (2015).

In summary, “secondary zone literature” not only represents new ways to interpret the contemporary use, re-use and deconstruction of Deleuze and Guattari’s “minor literature” and Casanova’s “small literature”, but also suggest ways to re-construct, re-define and define “major”, “minor”, “small”, “large”, “world” literature from multiple perspectives in a globalized world. Those perspectives include orientations both from the “primary zone” and the “secondary zone”, such as European, non-European, Western, Eastern, Northern, Southern, central, marginal and related angles as exemplified in Theo D’haen, Iannis Goerlandt and Roger D. Sell in their book entitled “*Major versus Minor? Languages and Literatures in a Globalized World*” (2015).

However, “secondary zone literature” is bound to lose some of its theoretical potential in the flow of literary quests from different countries and nations. On the one hand, the borders and binary opposition between “primary zone literature” and “secondary zone literature” are unstable. More precisely, “primary zone literature” and “secondary zone literature” will switch positions and relationships over time. Nevertheless, the relationship and division between the “primary zone” and the

“secondary zone” followed some basic patterns throughout human history. For example, the “primary zone” is always tied to powerful economic and political countries, nations and groups that have absolute international cultural discourse and authority, even though the “secondary zone” is consistently bigger than the “primary zone”. Also, since the advent of globalization, the world has continued to shrink until it has become like a village that tightly connects the West, East, North and South, but among these four poles, the West and the North have unquestionably held the cultural power and “primary zone” position for the past few centuries.

Nevertheless, literary capital is not fixed within the Western and Northern hemisphere; on the contrary, it invariably changes with the flow of cultural capital. Some countries have even lost their “primary zone” position because of poor economic conditions, such as Madrid and Rome with Spain and Italy coming close to the edge of bankruptcy in the last few decades. However, compared to the East and South hemisphere, Spain and Italy have not quite entered the “secondary zone” yet; rather, they are in a semi-position. How to deal with literatures situated between the “primary zone” and the “secondary zone”? For example, Ljuckanov describes the relationship between Bulgarian literature and other literature as a trichotomy of literature consisting of “hegemonic / dominant / big--minor--small literature; imperial, colonial, in-between literature”, and “our--alien--semi-alien literature” (Ljuckanov 288). This leads to a follow-up question: are there still some differences between “secondary zone literature” and sub-secondary literature? When discussing Danish literature, Bergur Rønne Moberg introduced a new term as a kind of answer: “ultra-minor literature”. He used it to describe the real situation of Faroese literature in Denmark. Is there any “ultra-secondary zone literature” within “secondary zone literature”? This is a question that need to be answered in the future.



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