

Vitality Contra Fatality:
Calibrating Globalectics in the Age of Becoming-minor

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« Ce quêteur d'aventure, toujours aux frontières de l'illimité »

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Who would have predicted—over the past three centuries--that the hidden agenda of Eurocentric domination would accompany the Enlightenment project of universal science and reason? Ironically, the quest for the burgeoning of human rationality and cosmopolitan well-being, as envisioned by Kant and Diderot has served to justify the economic and military invasion of the non-European other. Even postmodernism, with its fragmentary and decentered maxims, seems to have missed the mark by failing to support the non-European peoples whose social relations and linguistic structures have undergone substantial change. In his effort to eliminate this heritage from modernity, Paul Gilroy captures the Eurocentric element in modern Western thought: “If popular writers like Jürgen Habermas and Marshall Berman are to be believed, the unfulfilled promise of modernity’s Enlightenment project remains a beleaguered but nonetheless vibrant resource which may even now be able to guide the practice of contemporary social and political struggle” (Gilroy 46). The postmodern disposition, in Gilroy’s diagnosis, “holds no promise for those who retreat from the suggestion that all modes of life are irreconcilable and the related idea that any ethical or political position is as valid as any other” (Gilroy 46).

In the light of Gilroy’s argument, this essay argues that the initiation of a catharsis of the colonial past and the regain of self-determinacy pertaining to cultural and ethnic identity demands ongoing efforts from oppressed people internally. An essential step would be

debunking a colonizing tactic that fabricates a rhetorical device of fatality and determinedness regarding the native people to justify the act of colonization. Then, how do we approach the concept of vitality? In his two treatises *Decolonizing the Mind* and *Globalectics*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o stresses the necessity for sustaining the autonomy and vitality of native languages on the local and global scales. Mother tongue, for wa Thiong'o, does not merely consist of a system of speech and written signs and serve as a means for communicative productions; instead, it functions as an essential component of a vital and evolving local culture. On the planetary level, Wa Thiong'o deploys the term globalectics to designate how vibrant and yet peaceful intercultural understandings and exchanges might thrive. In this essay, I turn first to the epistemological, encyclopedic, and cosmopolitan projects of Diderot and Kant and claim that both philosophers caution their readers about the human tendency to appropriate the Other due to innate partiality and self-interest, and hence that the concept of globalization formulated under their theoretical influence need not be seen as static and perpetual. In the second part of the essay, I reflect on the importance of native languages as a force in liberating the post-/neo- colonial mind, on the basis of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's theory of globalectics. In the final section, I consider globalectics through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy and contend that global linguistic interactions are rhizomic and that liberation within such interactions requires a minor usage of language itself.

The dark side of human nature, or, can the Enlightenment ever be completed?

The rapid advancement spread across the European continent in the studies of natural sciences at the turn of the eighteenth century—later known as the Scientific Revolution—provides an enabling condition for the coming to maturity of a radical and self-reflexive philosophy of human nature and the faculty of reason. This new philosophy departs from the lackluster and rigid scholastic philosophy that prevailed during the Middle Ages. Dan Elderstein aptly synthesizes two significant aspects of the Enlightenment in the course of intellectual history: first, on the spiritual level, it designates the beginning stage of a philosophical discourse that “gave members of the educated elite a new kind of self-awareness” (Elderstein 3); secondly, with respect to social and cultural circumstances, the notion of the Enlightenment encloses the cluster of “enlightened texts, institutions, debates, individuals, and reforms that appeared in the Eighteenth century” (Elderstein 3). One consequence of the Scientific Revolution lies in

investigating the capacity of reason as well as castigating the material body due to the limits it sets for the extension of knowledge: true knowledge finds its origin and ground only in the *a priori* concepts preceding our experiences. The grand project underlines a seemingly intentional and collaborative philosophical attempt to move beyond cultural and national restraints and engage themes concerning all humanity on global cartography. Edelstein continues, “the defining feature of the Enlightenment was not so much a new outlook on the world as a new outlook on the way in which people—in particular the educated elite—looked at the world” (Elderstein 23). Hence, bolstered by the certainty of the universal potency of reason and the tendency to generalize and apply knowledge, a global imagination—more refined than the self-conflicting idea of “citizen of the cosmos” construed by the Cynics¹ (Appiah xiv)—emerged to guide intellectual practices. Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert’s ambitious task of composing an encyclopedia of all human knowledge in arts and sciences as well as the Kantian formulation of a cosmopolitan history stand out as notable exemplars. In addition to the shared spirit of rationalism, the two planetary and philosophical pursuits from Kant on—as Louis Dupré asserts—signify a moral endeavor to free man from all unexamined political authorities. Citing the prominent Kantian definition of the Enlightenment as “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage” (Dupré 7), Dupré views the educational objective behind the *Encyclopédie* as a continual scholarly effort to achieve self-independence and social autonomy, “The ideal of a full human emancipation through uncensored knowledge had already supported the program of the editors of the *Encyclopédie*. They regarded themselves in the first place as educators. Diderot’s description, however self-serving, expressed a keen awareness of the social role of the intellectual” (Dupré 8). The Enlightenment, therefore, by no means denotes simply an epistemological investigation of the mind that parallels and responds to the rise of science in the eighteenth century; rather, written in the agenda is the moral thesis of the philosophers to better human conditions by confirming humans’ given capability for intellectual maturity and political freedom.

Witnessing the burgeoning expansion of human intellect and the fact that “the sciences and the arts are mutually supportive, and that consequently there is a chain that binds them together” (D’Alembert 5), Diderot and d’Alembert undertook a laborious project of reflecting on and engaging the world with an encompassing map of knowledge titled *Encyclopédie*, which would collect and manifest all knowledge in commerce, arts, and sciences. D’Alembert demonstrates, in

the preface to the first volume, the two fundamental purposes of the compilation of the work—both as an encyclopedia in the form of a map of human knowledge and a dictionary that gathers universal principles that condition all subjects—that consequentially constitute its necessity:

The work whose first volume we are presenting today has two aims. As an *Encyclopedia*, it is to set forth as well as possible the order and connection of the parts of human knowledge. As a *Reasoned Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades*, it is to contain the general principles that form the basis of each science and each art, liberal or mechanical, and the most essential facts that make up the body and substance of each. (D’Alembert 4)

The awareness of the gradual fragmentation and disconnectedness as a consequence of the Scientific Revolution leads to D’Alembert’s efforts in the *Encyclopédie*: to establish relations and connections and enclose the globe within a network of knowledge. After a genealogical tracing of the historical development of human rationality and knowledge, in line mostly with the British empiricist tradition of John Locke which affirms the primacy of sensation as the ground for reflexive knowledge, D’Alembert explicates the function of the *Encyclopédie* among the scattered fragments of knowledge: “it remains for us only to make a genealogical or encyclopedic tree which will gather the various branches of knowledge together under a single point of view and will serve to indicate their origin and their relationship to one another” (D’Alembert 45-46). The *Encyclopédie*, therefore, is not merely a collection of condensed and summarized knowledge: it also includes an organic system that imitates the vital form and mechanism of nature, which consists of both individual items and relations. The knowledge contained in the *Encyclopédie* actively reflects and interacts with the world, serving as a comprehensive cartography that explains and expands the information accumulated as human history moves on. The curious metaphor D’Alembert explores — “encyclopedic tree”— entails an enduring belief in the vitality of the encyclopedic system that grows and expands with time.

The epistemological cartography Diderot and d’Alembert aim to accomplish covers both horizontal and vertical dimensions, concerning the historical accumulation of individual concepts and the rhizomic connections they develop in conjunction with other concepts as well as with the readers: “Our metaphysical analysis of the origin and connection of the sciences has been of

great utility in designing the encyclopedic tree; an historical analysis of the order in which our knowledge has developed in successive steps will be no less useful in enlightening us concerning the way we ought to convey this knowledge to our readers” (D’Alembert 60). The authors are indeed formulating a palimpsest diagram that actively keeps track of the advancement of human knowledge:

From there he can see at a glance the objects of their speculations and the operations which can be made on these objects; he can discern the general branches of human knowledge, the points that separate or unite them; and sometimes he can even glimpse the secrets that relate them to one another. It is a kind of world map which is to show the principal countries, their position and their mutual dependence, the road that leads directly from one to the other. (D’Alembert 47)

Additionally, the manifesto of global knowledge presented by Diderot and d’Alembert is by no means static and definite: the authors have envisioned the potential for continuously remodeling and revising the encyclopedia, chiefly due to the acute awareness of the partiality and arbitrariness of human nature that unavoidably participates in all action:

It is a kind of world map which is to show the principal countries, their position and their mutual dependence, the road that leads directly from one to the other. This road is often cut by a thousand obstacles, which are known in each country only to the inhabitants or to travelers, and which cannot be represented except in individual, highly detailed maps [...] Thus one can create as many different systems of human knowledge as there are world maps having different projections, and each one of these systems might even have some particular advantage possessed by none of the others. (D’Alembert 48-49)

The openness to the world maps of knowledge constructed in accordance with various perspectives and systems already finds its root in the authors’ brief but insightful epistemological account stated earlier in the treatise. Similar to a later phenomenological disposition, d’Alembert insists on the primacy of sensory input in the process of knowledge formation, which provides

primitive materials for the reflexive faculty to work upon, and, as a result, engenders a deep consciousness of the subjective self before extending our understanding to the objective environment: “The fact of our existence is the first thing taught us by our sensations and, indeed, is inseparable from them. From this it follows that our first reflective ideas must be concerned with ourselves, that is to say, must concern that thinking principle which constitutes our nature and which is in no way distinct from ourselves” (d’Alembert 8). The sensory bias innate to the production of knowledge seems to be in connection with, as the authors continue to elaborate, “the law of the strongest” that is “so difficult not to abuse, though the practice of it likens us to animals” (d’Alembert 12). The violent and primitive aspects of our human nature preceding the more holistic theory that Charles Darwin offers condition the prevalence of utilitarianism during the mid-nineteenth century, implementing a latent and dangerous tendency to view and treat the other with an instrumental reason and purposiveness.²²

Such ethics for warding off the self-interestedness and utilitarian exploration of the other is underlined more saliently in Immanuel Kant’s postulation of cosmopolitanism. In the essay “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” he explains the function of history as tracing and explaining the events and phenomena that are “determined in accordance with natural laws” (Kant 41), under the guidance of reason, which is understood as a universalizing and categorical faculty that “enables that creature to extend far beyond the limits of natural instinct the rules and intentions it follows in using its various powers, and the range of its projects is unbounded” (Kant 42). Regarding the highest goal for the wellbeing of all humans as the maximum actualization of natural capacities, Kant stresses the necessity of political and civil institutions in the realization of such a goal and promotes a cosmopolitan theory based on the interconnected and external relationships between states and universal ethics. In addition, Kant proposes a perhaps different theory of war in the planetary context. For him, even if the barbarian conflicts and wars between nations brought forth detrimental hindrances to the development of human natural capacities, the speculation of the lingering tension would nonetheless help establish “a law of equilibrium to regulate the essentially healthy hostility which prevails among the states and is produced by their freedom” (Kant 49). A cosmopolitanism gradually comes into being by “introducing a system of united power” (Kant 49). Similar to Diderot and d’Alembert’s encyclopedia of knowledge, the cosmopolitan political institution that Kant constructs will reach the state of perpetual peace only when a collective

achievement of individual self-governing moral law ripens, and Kant obviously holds a reserved observation—if not pessimistic of his time: “We are *cultivated* to a high degree by art and science. We are *civilised* to the point of excess in all kinds of social courtesies and proprieties. But we are still a long way from the point where we could consider ourselves *morally* mature” (Kant 49). While the vision of planetary and perpetual peace may fall under criticism for its idealism and abstraction and the way it embeds latent conflicts between universal principles and their particular manifestations, the postulation of what Louis Dupré terms “social universalism” undoubtedly undergirds an eighteenth-century thought experiment on the human life that “moved beyond the supremacy of the state as social body and prepared the globalist thought of the late twentieth century” (Dupré, 186).

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o: towards an egalitarian cosmopolitanism of language

Apologetic as it may sound, the two examples of the global and cosmopolitan imagination in both its epistemological and political aspects outline a thoughtful and cautious theory of globalization during the Enlightenment. The course of history which marches in the opposite direction to a global harmony through slave trade and colonization may serve as proof of d’Alembert and Diderot’s lamentation that “philosophy is often powerless to correct abuses” (D’Alembert 41). The discourse of the Enlightenment, as it turns out, has been utilized as the moral grounding for military and political transgressions and domination, and can never be entrusted with the hope for the genuine progress of a cosmopolitan order. Such reasoning finds its echo in Achille Mbembe’s analyses of the historical disqualification and instrumentalization of the African people under the dominance of European colonialists. One observes a distorted and rhetorical manipulation of knowledge and philosophy—what Mbembe terms “black reason” in the service of alienating and denouncing African identity. As he writes:

Black reason consists of a collection of voices, pronouncements, discourses, forms of knowledge, commentary, and non-sense, whose object is things or people ‘of African origin.’ It is affirmed as their name and their truth (their attributes and qualities, their destiny and its significance as an empirical portion of the world) (Mbembe 27).

Black reason is not only displayed and packaged as a set of vacant academic discourses, but also “the reservoir that provided the justifications for the arithmetic of racial domination” (Mbembe 27). In other words, pseudo-knowledge helps construct a circular system of racial discourse that generates instrumental reasoning as well as affirms and justifies its validity. Thus, instead of freeing the captive mind, knowledge and philosophy colonize and suppress the hope of the people and help sustain and expand the mechanism and desire of the empire in a series of efforts that aim at building connecting universalization with colonization: “It presented itself, at least rhetorically, as the daughter of the Enlightenment and as such proclaimed a form of governance that followed from universal reason. Universal reason assumed the existence of subjects of the same name, whose universality was founded on their humanity” (Mbembe 97).

True liberation and rigorous decolonization need to find their source of strength from within, an enduring project Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has taken on to confront the “fatalistic logic” of accepting the neo-colonial western “cultural bomb,” designed and marketed in the European languages. To eradicate the remnants of the imperialist past and re-establish confidence in the mind of the formerly oppressed, according to wa Thiong’o, the reactionary and passive acceptance of the fatality and actuality of the post-colonial sequence needs to be challenged to its termination, and the long-lost belief in the native language, culture, and identity demands a holistic process of restoration. In his original and provocative thesis titled *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, wa Thiong’o exposes his radical doubts about the end of the colonial stage and formulates a dialectical understanding of the status quo: on the one hand, the effect of colonialism continues to linger on, “imperialism continues to control the economy, politics, and cultures of Africa” (wa Thiong’o *Decolonizing* 4); on the other, one observes a widespread yearning for the arrival of true freedom and independence on the African continent. Essential to the eventual achievement of self-determinacy of the African people, wa Thiong’o remarks, is the revitalization and enrichment of the obliterated mother-tongues that are central to the formation of national identity. Exposing fierce discontents and disagreements with the stance of many African writers who have unconditionally embraced “the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature” (wa Thiong’o *Decolonizing* 7), wa Thiong’o insists that the preservation and practice of native mother-tongues in the of literary works are obligatory for annihilating the neo-colonial propensity for effecting political and mental subjugation:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as a medium of expression [...] For, from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people. (wa Thiong'o *Decolonizing* 8)

Such a schema as wa Thiong'o outlines entails a fervent hope for the relocation of the linguistic and cultural center back to the African natives themselves, due to his contemplation of the communicative function of language in the formation of culture and their inseparable ties:

Language carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world [...] Language is thus inseparable from ourselves as a community of human beings with a specific form and character, a specific history, a specific relationship to the world (wa Thiong'o *Decolonizing* 16).

The principal colonial technique that imperialism explores to control and dominate the mind of the African people, wa Thiong'o argues, lies precisely in the deprivation of the right of utilizing the mother-tongues by devaluing their presence and engendering a sense of inferiority to the European languages: "The domination of a people's language by the languages of the colonizing nations was crucial to the domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (wa Thiong'o *Decolonizing* 16).

"But African languages refuse to die" (wa Thiong'o *Decolonizing* 23). Out of the imperialistic fatality of the coercive and strategic substitution of aboriginal languages springs the eternal vitality of the language. Though the social elites and writers have conveniently transformed themselves into reactive fatalists, the vernacular mother-tongues continue to thrive in the ordinary usages of the working class. The neo-colonial conspiracy to control and enslave the mind of the African people through alienation of the native languages is doomed to fail, as

long as a collective and deterritorializing force generated from the assemblage of the working people keeps counteracting and fighting back. The vitality of language, wa Thiong'o asserts, is best sustained and enriched in the genre of theatre, as the dynamic and dialectic interactions that condition the life form: "Life is movement arising from the inherent contradiction and unity of opposites [...] Drama encapsulates within itself this principle of the struggle of opposites which generates movement" (wa Thiong'o 1986:54). With such optimism for the arrival of true freedom and autonomy of the African people, at the end of his treatise, wa Thiong'o delineates his version of a self-sufficient social and literary system for cultural production in the African continent:

The future of the African novel is then dependent on a willing writer (ready to invest time and talent in African language); a willing translator (ready to invest time and talent in the art of translating from one African language into another); a willing publisher (ready to invest time and money) or a progressive state which would overhaul the current neo-colonial linguistic policies and tackle the national question in a democratic manner; and finally, and most important, a willing and widening readership. (wa Thiong'o 1986:85)

Decolonizing the Mind, thus, functions as a radical attempt to parry the continuing neo-colonial effort to alienate the African people from their native tongues and thereby facilitate the instrumental and capitalist purposes of the imperialists. Nearly three decades after the first publication of this manifesto, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o extends his vision from East Africa to the globe and contemplates a paradigm for the cohabitation of native languages across the planetary dimension. Following the Taoist tradition, which deems nature as a current of flow, in which nothing is static, wa Thiong'o conceives a dynamic, affective, and egalitarian model of global language interactions—what he terms as "globalectics":

On its surface, there is no one center; any point is equally a center. As for the internal center, all points on the surface are equidistant to it—like the spokes of a bicycle wheel that meet at the hub. Globalectics combines the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-logue, in the phenomena of nature

and nurture in a global space that's rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region [...] Globalectics embraces wholeness, interconnectedness, equality of potentiality of parts, tension, and motion. It is a way of thinking and relating to the world, particularly in the era of globalism and globalization. (wa Thiong'o *Globalectics* 8)

Unlike *Decolonizing the Mind*, the new manifesto does not decode the notion of postcolonialism in terms of a historical fact taking place in the third world from the eighteenth century onwards; on the contrary, no longer confined by the social and economic status of the nation, it is understood as a limited way of acquiring knowledge under the influence of the globalization of the English language, an inclination to encyclopedia-forming that covers the process of production, circulation, and consumption of knowledge across the globe: "In reality the postcolonial is not simply located in the third world. Literally rooted in the intertextuality of products from all the corners of the globe, its universalist tendency is inherent in its very relationship to historical colonialism and its globe for a theatre" (wa Thiong'o *Globalectics* 55). Unifying languages directly impacts how we understand and perceive the world. The tendency in World Literature courses to treat literatures solely in English translation leads wa Thiong'o to remark: "Doing justice to world literature, in terms of languages, regions, and periods, is especially difficult when one is thinking of a single course within an otherwise national literature structure. Here, the expansion of the postcolonial component would be an adequate beginning," he continues to warn us. "Every department of literature should take cognizance of the new synthesis and have it reflected in its organization of literary knowledge" (wa Thiong'o *Globalectics* 55). Therefore, colonialism in wa Thiong'o vocabulary no longer merely stands for the set of capitalistic and imperialistic tactics for exploiting labor and accumulating wealth; rather, it has morphed into a tendency to territorialize and homogenize multiplicities and heterogeneous assemblages and stifle their ability to generate difference and vitality. Its static essence is counterintuitive to accelerating and multiplying the progress of global interactions and communications. Hence, wa Thiong'o urges literary scholars to foster a "globalectic vision" to better address the multifaceted worldliness across space and time. Specifically, reading globalectically signifies an endeavor to seek "a way of approaching any text from whatever times and places to allow its content and themes form a free conversation with other texts of one's time

and place, the better to make it yield its maximum to the human. It is to allow it to speak to our own cultural present even as we speak to it from our own cultural present. It is to read a text with the eye of the world; it is to see the world with the eyes of the text” (wa Thiong’o 60). Here, thus, wa Thiong’o is calling forth an openness to other literatures and cultures with care for their wellbeing and respect for the temporal, spatial, as well as linguistic conditions of their creations. In addition, he furthers his model by invoking and mildly toning down Deleuze and Guattari’s radical concept of rhizome, emphasizing the existence of a common ground in all literatures: “In a network there is no one center, all are points balanced and related to one another by the principle of giving and receiving. The pedagogical organization of literature should reflect that sense of a common heritage of simultaneously taking and giving assumed by a network” (wa Thiong’o *Globalectics* 60).

Beyond colonialism: on the necessity of minorizing language

The colonial experience and the intense desire to reconstruct ethnic and native identities in the age of globalism and globalization ground wa Thiong’o’s advocacy of language independence and an egalitarian vision of the diverse languages of the world. Recall the warnings in the planetary writings of Diderot, d’Alembert, and Kant: a drive out of self-centeredness always tends to appropriate and do violence to the other, and the theoretical framework of the synchronic and vitalistic globalectics that wa Thiong’o proposes is particularly pertinent. The notion of globalectics, however, concerns primarily the dynamism of interactions *between* languages and literatures on the global sphere. Does the local not simultaneously belong to the global? Do all languages not function as given assemblages of enunciation that run the risk of becoming political apparatuses? Should language itself not undergo examination?

Theoretical inquiries into the tensions and variations of major and minor powers are particular characteristics of the post-structuralist era, manifest in the writings of Derrida, Deleuze, and Jean-Luc Nancy. Ontological difference and linguistic trace are no longer understood as ignorable and redundant but bear the potential for overthrowing the paternal dominance of the powerful. Such a new line of thought that reverses the Platonist metaphysical doctrine that privileges identity or being over difference or becoming, perhaps, leads to Foucault’s famous prediction in the article “Theatrum Philosophicum”: “[...] perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian” (Foucault 164). What—to inquire further—does the qualifier “Deleuzian”

really denote? It surely designates not some philosopher-person but rather a particular mode of thought—the inclination to become minor. Foucault further elaborates that Deleuze’s rejection of the position of any higher and dominant being over individual difference—drawn from the writings of Spinoza and Duns Scotus—formulates a type of reversed Platonism. The weak and powerless are unbound and now carry the potentialities to initiate the collective process of overturning and replacing the absolute or categorical, *ad infinitum*:

The univocity of being, its singleness of expression, is paradoxically the principal condition which permits difference to escape the domination of identity, which frees it from the law of the Same as a simple opposition within conceptual elements [...] Being is that which is always said of difference; it is the *Recurrence* of difference. (Foucault 192)

The *Zeitgeist* of the age of becoming-minor, hence, resides in the collapse of static hierarchy and the free transition between power poles. Every entity—concrete or abstract—simultaneously faces a twofold examination that operates upon both its relational nexus to the heterogeneous other and the power valences in itself. In their collaborative work *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari remind us of the structural nature of language and the enforcement of social order and obedience through the dogmatic rules of language. They remark, “The elementary unit of language—the statement—is the order-word [...] A rule of grammar is a power marker before it is a syntactical marker” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 76). Apart from communicating and expressing, therefore, language, at the same time, executes the political or social function of practicing power and setting in motion the fluidity of power in hierarchies:

We call *order-words*, not a particular category of explicit statements (for example, in the imperative), but the relation of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions, in other words, to speech acts that are, and can only be, accomplished in the statement. Order-words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a “social obligation” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 79).

Any language, thus, contains a vulnerability to the imposition of a social and territorializing order so that political acts would proceed. Within a language itself, a rigorous decoding and deterritorializing effort is rendered central to preventing the language from being manipulated for political and instrumental usages. Inspired by the writings of Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari formulate the concept of minor literature to designate an internal decoding of the order-inscribing endeavor. They observe that there is a persistently repressed minor usage of expression and enunciation, existing simultaneously in a major language and endangering consequentially a conflictual intensity in between: “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language” (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 16). The difference in degrees of intensity between the major and minor poles of expression enables the writer to compose with indifference to the strict confinement of the political and grammatical orders. Deleuze and Guattari add that one should understand the meaning of minor as a political term, and the subsequent minor expressions and enunciations as direct political acts. The minor usages of language by no means present themselves as singular and individual; on the contrary, they function collectively in the form of an assemblage to challenge the organization and stratification of major linguistic usages from within (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 17-18). The codification of language and its simultaneous decoding constitute the vitality of any language; as Ronald Bogue summarizes, “Every language presumes collective assemblages of enunciation, nondiscursive machinic assemblages and an abstract machine that distributes and interrelates these assemblages” (Bogue 109). Only in such a dynamic process where minor usages are ceaselessly produced does the vitality of a particular language retain, since, “the order-word is a death sentence; it always implies a death sentence, even if it has been considerably softened, becoming symbolic, initiatory, temporary, etc.” (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 107). Synthesizing the idiosyncratic styles of such experimental writers as Antonin Artaud, Samuel Beckett, and Céline, Deleuze and Guattari identify the chief characteristics of minor literature as a self-alienating form that challenges and calls forth linguistic revolution within the dominant language, as if the writer were “a foreigner *within* his own language” (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka* 26). To resist the fatal logic of the linguistic colonization of writers, the procedure of recalibration of literary reflection and invention should take place both outwardly and inwardly. The task of the writer—in line with wa Thiong’o’s critique in *Decolonizing the Mind*—is not to be equipped with the majoritarian and passive goal of receiving “the role of

depoliticized individual that the social order assigns the artist” but to take on the flight of becoming-minor by creating a style that “directly engages the collective assemblages of enunciation” (Bogue 109). The practice of literary expression, thus, helps both generate a counterforce to the propensity for an accumulation of power within a language and eradicate the remainder of colonial traces.

In sum

By surveying the philosophical works of Wa Thiong’o and Deleuze/Guattari, I have sought to confront the colonial rhetoric of fatality, prevalent since Enlightenment, which views non-European cultures as primitive and barbarian. To overcome such a negative influence, an innate force of vitality needs to be awakened and cultivated. Wa Thiong’o aptly approaches the concept of vitality through language and literature and expands his theoretical scope from the local to the global in his two principal treatises. In his first treatise, he stresses the dialectical drama framed in ordinary local languages, which is sufficient to sustain and enhance the identity of the people. In the second treatise on globalectics, he emphasizes the vitality and independence of all languages within a global network. The coexistence of the local and the global, however, is by no means static. We must resist both neo-colonial homogenization, such as the enterprise of World Literature, and the danger within each language of codes that reinforce asymmetrical power relations. Hence, literary creation must serve as more than entertainment. Instead, it must record and reveal the ongoing conflicts between the territorializing power of the solidification of language and the minor writers who resist and deterritorialize the fixed and captive mind. Such a vigorous will-to-life resides not only in the precursors of the Enlightenment but also peoples in the rest of the world, which together may fashion a true *cosmopolis*.

¹ As Kwame Antony Appiah points out in the introduction to his study of cosmopolitanism, the Cynics’ skepticism regarding custom and tradition seems incompatible with the cosmopolitan imagination. He then explains that the phrase “citizen of the cosmos” is meant to be paradoxical and suggest “a rejection of the conventional view that every civilized person belongs to a community among communities” (Appiah xiv).

² However, as recent scholarship has shown, a transition of attitude toward non-European countries is apparent in his oeuvre. Madeleine Dobie remarks that Diderot’s earlier views on Africa and America are inclined to a commercial perspective: “Diderot effectively reduces these two continents to sites of European commerce,

offering little critical commentary on the forms of exploitation that this commercial activity entailed” (Dobie 8); whereas after 1770, he “returned to an earlier literary project [...] rereading and rewriting it in ways that testify to the genesis of globally-conscious ethics” (Dobie 9).

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