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DESIRING-MACHINES, COMMUNITY POLITICS AND THE THREAT OF REVOLUTIONARY DESIRE IN TONI MORRISON'S *PARADISE*

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In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer a complex yet intriguing interpretation of capitalist and patriarchal structures. By affiliating the structure of community systems with the function of bodily organs, Deleuze and Guattari identify desire as the connective force of subject-subject relations (Coles 5). In that sense, socio-political structures react to the manifestations and shifts of the subjects' desires the same way a body does to the signals of its organs. Thus, community politics are understood as a direct product of the linear process of desiring-production (Deleuze and Guattari 14). Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge desire as the central piece in the mechanism of social production (296), subsequently rendering it both a facilitator and a threat (116) to the function of social formations. The linearity that connects desiring and social production is further highlighted in the examination of community narratives, where the infiltration of subject desire can either sustain or disrupt the life of the community body. In Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, community narratives compose a tale of hunger (Morrison 262)—of desire both repressed and unleashed—which causes connections and fragments equally. Morrison presents two opposing social formations, the strict all-black town of Ruby in Oklahoma, and the Convent, a sanctuary for wayward women. As the stories surrounding the two spaces unfold, Morrison's text paints a devastating yet realistic picture of community life by highlighting the complex, traumatic, fragile and transformative bonds of interpersonal and social relations that develop between these two communities. By creating the elective affinities between Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical analysis of the body of organs and Morrison's narrative of these two communities, this essay will explore the journey

of each respective community and how it becomes a straight line of either decay or evolution, following the linear processes of desiring and social production.

For Deleuze and Guattari, desire is inherently present in all social subjects and serves a connective purpose. This suggests that the desire of one subject connects to the desire of another, thus creating what Deleuze and Guattari call a "desiring-machine" (5). Deleuze and Guattari depict desire not as a static entity, but as a dynamic flow that is continuously produced and reproduced, and the subjects as the machines that constitute its agentic energy. The connective function and productive flow of desire are further displayed in the fact that desiring-machines connect to other desiring-machines, thus creating an entire body of desire-production, which acts as foundation for social-production (296). In that sense, when a current of desire flows through a number of desiring-machines—when desire is shared and reproduced by a group of individuals—the foundations for a community are being laid down.

To represent the manifestation of desire, Deleuze and Guattari establish the most ambiguous and, at the same time, theoretically enabling term of their entire theoretical approach: "the body without organs" (9). The term refers to an independent and shifting entity, not bound by any organic restrictions, that both attracts and repels the desiring-machines (9). The "body without organs" is the map of desire-production (11), whilst desiring-machines are the organs trying to attach themselves to it, sometimes successfully and, at other times, unsuccessfully. When the interaction between the body without organs and the desiring-machines is peaceful, the reproduction of the flow of desire is achieved. On the other hand, when the body without organs "repels the organs [the desiring-machines] and lays them aside" (329–30), the result is death. A cautious interpretation of the body without organs could frame it as the embodiment of the ideal, the collection of goals and principles towards which the members of a community strive. In a related statement, Deleuze and Guattari claim that "capital is […] the body without organs of the capitalist" (10), which both reproduces and expands itself through the process of desiring-production. In the framework of the capitalist system, then, the desiring-machines produced by the capitalist subjects attach themselves to the organless body of the capital and through the process of desire-production fuel, develop and perpetuate it (12). A network of disjunctions is established to sustain the flow of desire from the desiring-machines to the body without organs and vice versa,

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but when the connection between organ-machines and the body without organs is unstable, the system is disturbed (12).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, in order to further understand how the body without organs participates in the process of desire-production, one must understand the notion of "the socius" (10). The socius—"the body of the earth, that of the tyrant, or capital" (10)—are also bodily formations, full bodies as termed by Deleuze and Guattari, just like the body without organs (281), and represent the element of anti-production whose existence completes the process of production (10). Whilst the body without organs functions as the map of desiring-production, the socius functions as the map of all production (10). The body without organs "haunts" (281) the socius, meaning that desire haunts the social structure because it represents its unattainable mission.

By applying Deleuze and Guattari's terms to Morrison's *Paradise*, I explore how the concept of desire functions as the main motive for social formation in the plot. My purpose is to highlight how Morrison's *Paradise* depicts the ways in which desire connects units into a whole, driving subjects into creating a community, while, at the same time, a community can be corrupted by the desire of its subjects. I aim thus to showcase how literature in general, and Morrison's text in particular, can reflect the inner workings of socio-political mechanisms. Before moving forward, it is important to relate the novel's intricate plot with Deleuze and Guattari's theory of desire. As mentioned above, the plot of Morrison's *Paradise* revolves around the formation of two respective communities: the town of Ruby and the Convent. In the nineteenth century, a group of nine families, led by Zechariah Morgan, founded an independent community called Haven, Ruby's predecessor, after being discriminated for their dark black skin color. By establishing a "community 'kitchen'" (Morrison 99) in the form of a public Oven, the town's men ensured that their women would not have to work in white households and thus would not be assaulted (99). As the nine families connect through their mutual desire for a secure, autonomous and prosperous community, they are rendered "desiring-machines" (Deleuze and Guattari 5) whose desire-production results in social-production (296) in the form of Haven. The Oven, as the physical symbol of their desire for community belonging (Morrison 15) and racial autonomy (99), becomes the map of their desire-production (Deleuze and Guattari 11) and the embodiment of their community goals. In that sense, it is read as a "body without organs" (Deleuze and Guattari 9) and the townspeople as the organs trying to attach themselves to the ideal it represents. As the events

of World War II lead Haven to collapse, the townspeople are forced into another migration. This time led by the descendants of Zechariah, Deacon and Steward Morgan, the former citizens of Haven seek to further isolate themselves from the ever present threat of racism. Deep in the Oklahoma desert, they found "New Haven" (Morrison 17), which is later renamed "Ruby" (17), after the Morgans' late sister. With the Morgans financing the town (Morrison 115) and a silent "blood rule" (196) keeping the all-black town racially pure, Ruby becomes an 8-rock patriarchy. As a social formation, Ruby might have started as the product of collective desire, but the body without organs and the desiring-machines are not interacting peacefully this time around, as indicated by the condition of the Oven. After being relocated, the Oven loses its utilitarian purpose (Morrison 103), becomes a fossilized shrine (103) and a point of conflict (85–7), reflecting the town's inner turmoil that will be further analyzed in the following passages.

Ruby's mirror image is the community of the Convent. The Convent is a former embezzler's mansion which Catholic nuns turned into a boarding school to convert Indian girls. After losing its funding, the school is slowly abandoned, until the only original inhabitant left behind is Consolata, also known as Connie, a woman the Convent's Mother Superior had abducted as a young child. As the Convent becomes desolate, women start seeking refuge in it to escape from problematic relationships of the past. These women—Mavis, Gigi, Seneca and Pallas—turn the Convent into their safe haven and start treating Consolata as a benevolent mother figure "who locked no doors and accepted each as she was" (Morrison 262). In spite of their differences, a common desire to no longer be "haunted" (Morrison 266) brings the Convent women together, putting down the foundations for the social formation of their own community. The Convent starts attracting people from Ruby into its orbit, providing a safe space from Ruby's intolerance. Nonetheless, the leaders of Ruby are threatened by this group of women that have no need for men and blame the Convent for their own community's disruption. In the end, nine of the town's male leaders attack the Convent with the intent of getting rid of the women. It is unclear whether the Convent women died or survived, as no bodies were recovered. Nonetheless, their presence haunts the narrative until the last page. Following Deleuze and Guattari's line of thought, I aim to analyze the communities of Ruby and the Convent as full bodies whose social trajectory is a direct reaction to the desires of their subjects—the organ-machines. As desire shifts, the process of desiring-production is affected and the connections between the organ-subjects and the body without organs of their respective

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community become compromised. The way character subjects adapt to these new disjunctions determines whether the body without organs will regain stability or repel the organs completely, resulting in death.

An initial meeting point between Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and Morrison's *Paradise* is what appears to be the problem of incest—metaphorically in the former, literally in the latter. In their work, Deleuze and Guattari employ the Freudian concept of the incestuous Oedipal triangle of "daddy-mommy-me" (51) to analyze the modes of social repression and the revolutionary function of desire (116). By utilizing the Oedipal triangle as a metaphor for social oppression, they depict how power structures deem desires deviant and worthy of repression when they threaten social form with revolutionary ruptures (116). In *Paradise*, the fictional town of Ruby is the victim of an incestuous genealogy, produced by a set of strict "blood rules" (Morrison 196) forbidding outsiders from entering the town's bloodlines. The town's 8-rock patriarchs enforced them as a means of ensuring the town's racial purity and moral superiority over those who have othered them—and whom they have othered in return. Yet, their obsession with "unadulterated and unadulteried 8-rock blood" (217) results in biological and ethical stagnation. Either as a political metaphor or as a product of black exceptionalism, the concept of incest serves an identical purpose in each text: to depict the harmful effects of repression in the body without organs of a community.

Deleuze and Guattari remove the concept of Oedipus from the psychoanalyst's couch and place it within the theoretical framework of desiring and social production in the late capitalist era. As Edward Thornton points out, Deleuze and Guattari view the Freudian model of the incestuous family as a product of despotism (5). Desire is inherently revolutionary and "capable of calling into question the established order of a society" (Deleuze and Guattari 116). Despotic power structures appropriate desiring-production and enact social repression via the system of social production to persevere the status quo. Finally, despotic power structures enact psychic repression through the control of the family unit, thus subjects learn to desire repression and the despotic system is perpetuated (119). In that sense, the Oedipus complex (119) does not represent a sexual desire for the mother or the father, but a manifestation of desire that has been stifled, repressed and rendered deviant in the mind of the subjects. The Oedipal family is revealed to be a mechanism for sustaining social stability (120). This repression of desire—whether it may be sexual, political or otherwise socially revolutionary—leads to a reproduction of sameness by desiring-machines, which renders the process of desiring-production

stagnant—since desire cannot "survive cut off from the outside, […] from its economic and social investments and counterinvestments" (357)—and eventually leads to a disturbance in the delicate connection between the body without organs and its organ-machines.

In the case of Ruby, the archetype of the Oedipal complex is perfectly exemplified in the 8-rock agenda of keeping the community pure. In an attempt to protect their community from the dangers of Out There (Morrison 16), the town's despotic 8-rock patriarchs establish repression and isolation as the principles of Ruby's social production. Found deep into the Oklahoma desert, far enough that not even buses pass through it (54), the geography of Ruby implies the desire for no physical outside forces to infiltrate its "fortress" (213). On a similar note, the 8-rock exceptionalist agenda does not allow any ideological outside influences to enter Ruby. According to Donald E. Pease, exceptionalism occurs when nations define themselves as exceptional compared to others (8) based on fantasies of ethical and ontological superiority (5). Such is the case of Ruby whose people are "free and protected" (Morrison 8) in their "peaceable kingdom" (276) and where nobody dies as long as pure 8-rock blood resides in the town (217). By rendering Ruby exceptional, any desire deviating from the 8-rock agenda of black exceptionalism is considered Oedipal—socially and morally reprehensible—and worthy of repression, ensuring a biological and ideological reproduction of sameness within the body of Ruby (Deleuze and Guattari 116).

The ideological and ethical stagnation that occurs due to the constant reproduction of sameness inevitably leads Ruby to incorporate familiar models of social formation. In Morrison's text, the Morgan brothers, as the town's main capital owners (115), have the "resources" (115) to manage both the town's finances and its principles, establishing a capitalist system identical to the one Ruby's citizens were trying to escape from in the first place. According to Deleuze and Guattari, "precapitalist social machines are inherent in desire" (139), indicating that all societies based on desiring-production may develop capitalist tendencies, especially since capitalism "liberates the flows of desire" (139). A static community like Ruby offers an ideal space for capitalist tradition to flourish as it is a "deterritorialized socius" whose subjects have no other choice but to "throw themselves into desiring-production" in order to preserve the body without organs (Deleuze and Guattari 140). In the case of Ruby, its citizens have no higher purpose than trying to attach themselves to the body without organs that is the ideal of 8-rock black exceptionalist patriarchy. Following Deleuze and Guattari's theory, Ruby's Utopia becomes problematic, a fact which

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is in agreement with Morrison's text criticizing "modern and postmodern forms of Utopia" (Tabone 141). According to Tabone, *Paradise* confronts the limitations of existing within a Utopia by highlighting "its fatal shortcomings of paradigmatic isolation and exclusion" (141). Capitalism corrupts a society by mechanizing it and appropriating its desiring-production (Deleuze and Guattari 33), which eventually leads to its destruction. In Morrison's text, this phenomenon becomes evident in the fact that capitalism is one of the main motivations behind the slaughter of the Convent women that seals Ruby's fate (277). According to Dalsgård, the "exceptionalist belief in perfection" (245) perpetuated by Ruby's leaders and reinforced by a capitalist reproduction of sameness destroys their utopia instead of preserving it. By deconstructing Ruby's "exceptionalist tradition," Morrison's text exposes the "the mechanisms of violence and marginalization" that are also present in seemingly Utopian settings (Dalsgård 246).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, in a patriarchal and capitalist society "Oedipus is a sure thing" (174–5). "Patricia," which refers both to the chapter and the archive that the character is constructing, reveals the effects of Oedipus—the incestuous reproduction of sameness—in Ruby's social production. Patricia Best Cato is the town's self-proclaimed historiographer who attempts to create an archive of the town's family trees. She is treated with hostility and suspicion, though, when she pries for information. A woman examining the town's history goes against Ruby's patriarchal status quo. By challenging the will of Ruby's patriarchal figures, Patricia declares her insubordination to Ruby's despotic body, thus performing an act of revolutionary desire. In that sense, the shutting of "invisible doors" (Davidson 363) at her face exemplifies the despotic power structures enforcing social repression to sustain stability. Nonetheless, Pat manages to collect enough information to conclude that everyone in Ruby is related to each other by blood in some capacity. Furthermore, by mentioning the case of Menus Jury—who turned into the town's drunk after being forced to abandon the woman he loved (Morrison 195)—and the treatment her own father received after marrying a woman of lighter skin color (196), Pat reveals the frigidity of Ruby's "blood rules" (196). In a sense, marrying outside the community, let alone outside the 8-rock bloodlines, is considered an ethical violation against Ruby's male leaders and their oppressive politics of stability that renders the offender a pariah. The ones who break the blood rules and go against Ruby's politics of purity are eventually rejected and erased by the town's social production, as highlighted in the Christmas play scene, where the birth of Christ is paralleled with the journey of the original 8-rock

families. Pat recalls that all nine 8-rock families used to be depicted in the play yet they keep getting "fewer and fewer" (215), silently proving that families who have allowed either non-Rubians or lighter blacks to enter their bloodlines have been removed from the town's history altogether (Davidson 366). As Deleuze and Guattari argue, it is through the interpellation and regulation of the family unit that social and subsequently psychic repression is achieved. By dictating the couplings, the 8-rock despots ensure that Ruby's ethical and racial superiority is further propagated.

"Patricia" also serves as a recording of successful cases of psychic repression. When Pat confronts her father about the standard of skin color, he offers "a curt denial followed by a long silence" (Davidson 368), like the rest of the community when confronted with their elitism. Even Pat falls victim to psychic repression, as seen when she defends Ruby against the words of Richard Misner (Morrison 213) and when she burns her archive at the end of her chapter (217). Even though Patricia expresses revolutionary desire in her unveiling of the town's despotic structure (214), she realizes that if she opposes the narrative of the 8-rock patriarchs, she too will be stigmatized and exiled, like her daughter Billie Delia (Davidson 369). At the thought of having to live outside of Ruby, the revolutionary and liberating aspect of her desire is extinguished and she falls back in line (369). Pat acknowledges her desire as deviating from the ideal of the despotic body and experiences fear at the thought of being rejected by it, thus triggering the Oedipal complex and allowing psychic repression to take hold.

Deleuze and Guattari emphasize that the reproduction of sameness and the enclosure of desire lead to a stagnation in the production of desire, affecting social production in the process and eventually leading to a disturbance in the relationship between the full body of the socius and its organ-machines—meaning the community and its subjects. In Ruby, this disturbance to the body is manifested both biologically and socially, facilitated, as pointed out by Dalsgård, by their "own version of the exceptionalist narrative" (236). Not only has Ruby's incestuous genealogy resulted in reproductive sterility as indicated by the many instances of miscarriages (Morrison 96) and "defective" children being born (191), but the obsessive reproduction of sameness in ideology and narrative has also resulted in a rift between the Fathers and the young men of Ruby (86). The despotic practices of the 8-rock patriarchs prevent "new life" (Dalsgård 242) from entering Ruby both from the inside and the outside, thus creating a town where nobody dies but nobody truly lives either. According to Dalsgård, Ruby's agenda of black exceptionalism and the "insistence on maintaining

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a morally superior master narrative" (233) are what inevitably cost Ruby its ideal of the "perfect paradise" (233). In an attempt to fix the sterile and stagnant body of Ruby, the despotic figures of the 8-rocks enact repression through violence, exemplifying "the inextricable connection between the exceptionalist striving for perfection and a repressive and ultimately violent isolationism" (Dalsgård 241). Thus, they instigate the total disconnection of the organ-machines from the body without organs and the eventual death of their community. As highlighted by Dalsgård, the critique of black exceptionalism in Morrison's text, serves "as a warning" about "the mechanisms of violence and marginalization" that are also employed "in counter-discursive national historical narratives" (246).

Deleuze and Guattari describe the fall of despotic systems as "the organs […] detaching themselves from the despotic body, the organs of the citizen risen up against the tyrant" (211). In Ruby, the patriarchal system enforced by the 8-rock Fathers is the despotic body, whilst the younger generation of Ruby subjects represents the organs who protest against it (211) and aim to detach themselves from its death-inducing control. Suddenly, the despotic body of the 8-rocks starts experiencing the problem of revolutionary desire as Billie Delia Cato decides to leave home (Morrison 153), K. D. Morgan becomes involved with an outsider (147), and the young people of Ruby start questioning the meaning of the town's motto (87). The despotic body is faced with the threat of insubordinate organs desiring to escape and become self-sufficient, private (Deleuze and Guattari 211). To prevent this mass detachment from happening, the despotic figures enact repression through the law of the Fathers—as in the case of K.D. (Morrison 148)—and through threats of violence—as shown when Steward Morgan vows to "blow the head off" of anyone who tries to alter the words written upon the mouth of the Oven (87). According to Deleuze and Guattari, despotic structures become self-destructive and enact war against their own body's organ-machines when threatened, as it is better "than for a single organ to flow outside […] the body of the despot" (213). The 8-rocks as despotic figures exemplify these self-destructive tendencies in the fact that they are willing to sacrifice their own next generation (Morrison 94) for their agenda to be perpetuated.

Yet the despotic body of 8-rock patriarchy identifies another "enemy" (Deleuze and Guattari 211) as the one worthy of elimination: the town's neighbor and "imperfect other" (Dalsgård 241), the Convent. The Convent becomes a refuge for women who are on the run, lost or escaping from abusive situations (both outsiders and insiders). Five women

end up living in the Convent: Mavis (a mother fleeing her former life after the accidental death of her children), Gigi (a woman carrying the burden of a child's death on her conscience and the one K.D. has an affair with), Seneca (a traumatized foster child prone to self-harm), Pallas (a pregnant teen abandoned by her lover and a survivor of rape), and Consolata. The Convent women originally reside in the chaotic space between conflict and peace (Morrison 168), each too engaged in her own narrative of longing and grief to fully acknowledge a common desire among them and come together through desire-production. With desiring-production, and subsequently social production, stifled by trauma, the Convent takes a while to create a full body and start resembling a proper community. Yet it is precisely that chaotic aspect of the Convent that threatens the 8-rocks' agenda of peace through sameness. The Convent is outside the town's limits and its residents are vagabonds; hence, they are completely separate from the community rules of Ruby. They are thus effectively rendered organs flowing outside the despotic body of 8-rock patriarchy, rising up "before" it in challenge and "against" it in defiance, and identified as the "enemy who brings death" through differentiation ("an eye with too steady a look, a mouth with too unfamiliar a smile" [Deleuze and Guattari 211]). With no influence over them, no way of controlling or interpellating their desires, no way of asserting the fear of the Oedipus and the power of repression over them, the 8-rock Fathers feel threatened by the presence of the women in the Convent and the destructive change they have come to represent in their minds. What follows resonates with what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the punishment-become-vengeance of the despotic body (212): the nine 8-rock Fathers invade the Convent and slaughter its residents so that no "rotting" influence can penetrate the body of their community again (Morrison 5).

It is, however, neither the organs of the body nor the outside desire creeping in that have caused the community of Ruby to become destabilized. It is the existence of dividing, binary, and revolutionary desire within the despotic body itself that has caused the rupture. The destruction of the despotic body from within is best represented in the relationship between the two Morgan brothers, Steward and Deacon. The Morgans are the economic, political and ethical leaders of Ruby, due to their pure 8-rock blood and their position as the town's bankers and major property owners. In the world of Deleuze and Guattari, the legacy of the 8-rock ancestors is the body without organs and the Morgan twins are the desiring-machine attached to it, due to their common goal to preserve and honor it. In the Oven debate (Morrison 85–7), the Morgans are keen on keeping things as they

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have always been and not disturb the dream of the original 8-rock founders. Their economic and political privilege also raises the issue of the Morgans' superiority over the rest of Ruby (115). Thus, they are rendered the representatives and enforcing hands of both the body of capital and the despotic body—representing both the power of money and the power of repression. As Anna Flood states, the Morgans "act like they own" (115) the town and everyone in it; they thus represent themselves as the body of the tyrant and the subjects of Ruby as the organs whose desire has to be regulated, filtered and repressed. Even though they give the impression of a unified whole (116), the chasm between them is at first implied in the form of jealousy and petty differences (155) and eventually fully materialized in the revelation of Deek's relationship with Consolata. By engaging in an adulterous affair with a racial outsider and a Convent woman no less, Deacon momentarily breaks away from the body without organs of Ruby tradition (279), inevitably creating a rift between himself and his brother and ensuring that their desires shall never be in full agreement again. This way, their connection to the ideal of the Old Fathers and their legacy is compromised.

Deacon and Consolata temporarily embark on the creation of a new social body, the one shaped by the desiring-machine of two lovers, yet its full realization fails as Deacon experiences the fear of Oedipus and retreats back to the safety of familiar flows and bodies. Consolata inviting Deacon to join her in the wine cellar (237) signifies her desire to achieve a complete union with him—the creation of a full body—but her biting of his lip stifles his desire by triggering the Oedipal complex. Feeling threatened at the idea of being devoured and sucked out of life by her passion, Deacon realizes how much he has deviated from the ideal of his and his brother's "youthful memory" (279) and detaches himself from the body of lovers (Atieh 95–6). In the end, Consolata dying by Steward's hand, despite Deacon's effort to save her by stopping him, solidifies the disunity (Dalsgård 242) between the two despotic brothers as they now stand in opposition to one another (Morrison 291). In the aftermath of the Convent massacre, Deek is remorseful of their actions and seeks out Reverend Misner for guidance (300–1), a gesture that indicates a full disconnection between the two brothers ("the inside difference was too deep for anyone to miss" (299)) and a disembodiment of the despotic body, hinting at an unfixable crack in the very foundation of Ruby (Dalsgård 242–3).

In the words of Pat Cato, "everything that worries them must come from women" (Morrison 217), suggesting that Ruby's patriarchal despots are threatened by the revolutionary desire of women.

As Pease argues, exceptionalism demands that the nation considers itself an exception to the judgment it enacts on others (12). In Ruby's case, their exceptionalist ideology is best exemplified in the branding of the Convent women as the "enemy" (Deleuze and Guattari 211) to the health of Ruby's patriarchal despotic body. When the younger generation of Ruby subjects questions the town's motto, they are threatened with violence (Morrison 87), yet it is the Convent women who eventually receive a violent attack (3–18, 286). Reverend Misner is an outsider like the Convent women and an equally threatening presence. He invites newness to enter Ruby through liberal ideas (210) and even clashes with the Morgans and their fellow 8-rock Fathers on numerous occasions. Yet he is not the one getting chased out of town, not even when he sides with the younger generation during the Oven debate (86) or when he makes a spectacle during K.D. and Arnette's wedding (144). Instead, it is the presence of the Convent women at K.D. and Arnette's wedding that scandalizes the patriarchs (275–6). They are the ones being blamed for Billie Delia fighting with her mother (276) and the Poole boys fighting over her (277). They are accused of poisoning Sweetie Fleetwood and killing Arnette's baby (275), even held responsible for the death of sick infants (11). Yet, none of these events were the Convent women's fault. It was Pat Cato that assaulted her daughter, causing her to flee (203), whilst Arnette aborted her baby (250) and the dead infants were rendered defective by the town's incestuous genealogy. In the spirit of their exceptionalist ideology, the people of Ruby create an Other to blame for their self-destructive exceptionalism and "exempt" (Pease 9) themselves from any judgment. The 8-rock men conclude that the Convent "witches" (Morrison 276) are what threatens the life of their community (11).

The Convent women do pose a threat to Ruby's order, but not because they are witches. It is because they represent the Oedipal complex of the 8-rock patriarchs in the sense that they portray a deviation from the complex which they have enforced as necessary normality. Ruby is a community ruled by despotic men, but the Convent is a community without men and with no need for them either (276)—a terrifying deviance from the 8-rock agenda. The Convent represents the possibility of a desire opposite to the flow of desiring-production already established in Ruby, namely the desire for a community void of patriarchal control. Combined with the many times Ruby women have walked the road to the Convent (270) and the unlikely friendship (266) formed between women such as Soanne Morgan and Consolata, the despotic body can feel its organs detaching and the body without organs starts rejecting the desiring-machines.

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On that note, perhaps the true threat the Convent women pose to the politics of Ruby, is the fact that the Convent represents Ruby's haunting failures. On the one hand, Ruby, as a full social body, represents the repression, enclosure and stifling of the flow of desire that results in stagnation and decay. Whereas, on the other hand, the Convent as a body without organs represents openness and inclusivity, a space where desire is not cut off from the outside, thus creating a proper map for desiring-production to be inscribed upon (Atieh 92). It is a self-revitalizing body that attracts desiring-machines to it, as indicated by the four women finding refuge in it. It is a space that awakens desire as loud as hunger, expressed by the women feeling their appetite for food renewed the first time they step foot into it (93). Nonetheless, the Convent starts off in too chaotic a state for desiring-machines to develop, as explained by Deleuze and Guattari. Even though its subjects are inter-connected by their common desire for healing and liberation from the ghosts of their pasts, their respective traumas keep their desires from meeting and developing desiring-machines. Thus desiring-production and, subsequently, social-production are delayed. It is only after Consolata takes over as the women's leader that they can remove the barrier between them (98–9). The key difference between Ruby's and the Convent's social production lies in the matter of repression. Consolata invites the other women to follow her in her journey of healing and even gives them the choice to leave if they want to. In the end, they all choose to stay and follow her instructions by their own free will and desire to free themselves (Morrison 262). This is the first instance of the women's desires meeting and connecting in the form of a desiring-machine, of a productive force aiming towards a common goal. When they are asked next to experience the loud dreaming (264–5) they do so again and again willing and conscious of the emotional toll it will take on them. Through it they experience the second instance of their desires coming together, when they bond over their bodily experiences drawn on the templates on the floor (Daemmrich 226). As the current of desiring-production flows, social production is achieved, not through repression as in Ruby but through consent. Consolata becomes the leader and guide of the Convent women, but not their despot. She does not force them to stay, does not try to regulate the flow of their desire, she lets them express themselves on their own terms. They thus manage to heal themselves and each other from the wounds of the past (Morrison 266), which constitutes the foundation of their community bond, the "lifting of the veil of exclusion and dichotomy that fixates Ruby's residents"

(Atieh 100). Finally, when they gather in the rain (Morrison 283), all walls between them have been demolished, their desires are in full bloom and in full accordance with each other. The full body of their community is healing and harmonious, because, unlike the body of Ruby, the desiring-machines of the women—their mutual desire for healing and feeling alive—is compatible with the body without organs of the Convent, a space where desire is housed but never trapped.

The Convent is successful in everything that Ruby fails to do, which, tragically, is the true reason behind its inevitable eradication. As an inviting, open and welcoming space of free desiring-production, the body without organs of the Convent attracts the women of Ruby too, as implied by the character of Lone (270). Lone establishes a connective link of desire between the Ruby women and the outsiders women who have all walked the same road towards the Convent (Christopher 90). It is a vitalizing link for the body of the Convent, as it enables the attachment of new desiring-machines in the form of the Ruby women. Yet, with this link comes the possibility for a detachment from the dismembering (Deleuze and Guattari 211) body of Ruby, something which the 8-rocks cannot abide by. Just like fathers prefer their wives to give birth in a place where "men are in charge" (Morrison 272), the 8-rocks prefer the Convent women not interfering (272) in their peaceable kingdom (276). What the men of Ruby do not realize is that they can destroy the women, but not the body of the Convent. The body without organs of the Convent will remain a beacon of desire, inviting those who wish to be free in (Daemmrich 226), and thus will continue to haunt the socius of Ruby with the reminder of its failed mission (Morrison 306–8). The processes mentioned above that infiltrate the two communities' narratives are mapped and inscribed upon micro-representations of bodies without organs in the form of the Oven and the Convent's cellar. Both spaces operate as manifestations of community desire, as maps on which the desiring-production of each full social body is represented and finally as depictions of each community's respective fate.

The Oven serves as a map of Ruby's journey of desiring-production throughout the different stages of its formation. Originally built in Haven, the Oven was both a space of nourishment and a monument for the men's achievements. As a place for baptisms, it brought the community together (Morrison 103), while its use as an outdoor kitchen by the women of Haven symbolized their freedom as black women (Evans 388). It came to symbolize both the bond of the community and the success of the men in protecting their women from

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white men's abuse. As such, the Oven is transformed from a mere utility into an idea, the manifestation of Haven people's desire for a close and thriving community and a body without organs attracting the desiring-machines of the community's subjects. When they are forced to leave Haven, the decision to take the Oven apart and take it with them is what causes a disturbance in the relationship between the body without organs and the desiring-machines. According to Soane Morgan, the Oven was no longer useful as a utility in Ruby since technology had advanced and it was not worth the trouble of carrying it along (103). Nonetheless, the men had decided to take it apart and rebuilt it in their new home as a token of their 8-rock legacy. The women feeling resentment (103) when a former space of utility, a place of nourishment, care and affect, becomes a shrine indicates the body without organs of the Oven repelling the desiring-machines of the women subjects. It also constitutes the first instance of opposing desire manifested between the men and women of Ruby. The body of the Oven becomes the map of Ruby's social production as well, in particular its modes of social and psychic repression, as highlighted in the debate scene between the younger generation and the New Fathers of Ruby (85–7). When the younger generation of Ruby men attempts to offer their own interpretation of the town's motto that's inscribed upon the lip of the Oven, the New Fathers view it as a threat to their very existence (Evans 389). This not only means that the younger people are rejecting the ideals Ruby was built upon but also that they are determined to challenge the New Father's despotic power. To sustain the status quo, the narrative of the younger generation must either be suppressed or eradicated, as Steward Morgan argues (87). In this case, social repression only manages to drive even more desiring-machines away from the body without organs by separating the younger generation from Ruby's ideal (Dobbs 116). It is inevitably upon the body of the Oven that Ruby's eventual disconnection is inscribed, as the flow of the men's destructive desire manifests in the Oven cracking and shifting after they have slaughtered the Convent women (Morrison 287). The body without organs has repelled the machines and committed suicide (Deleuze and Guattari 329).

Unlike the Oven, the Convent's cellar is the body where desire is manifested, inscribed and perpetuated. Even though it starts off as a space of unfulfilled desire where Consolata banishes herself after being rejected by Deek (Morrison 237), the cellar becomes the space of healing for the five women in the Convent. It is on the cellar's floor where the loud dreaming takes place, the women's desire for healing

is expressed in full volume (264). Thus, their community that was formed on a sense of belonging out of unbelonging becomes solidified. It is on the cellar's floor that the women create the templates of their bodily experiences, thus exorcising their past trauma (264–5). Even after their slaughter, the current of their desire still flows through the templates on the floor and the memory on the walls of their loud dreaming (303). The embodiment of their desires remain in the form of their bodies' painted remains (303), thus keeping the desiring-machines attached to the body without organs of the cellar and sustaining desiring-production even after the end of the Convent women (Atieh 105–6). Social production, the process of creating a community through shared desires, is still viable in the Convent as indicated by the final chapter of the novel. Mavis, Gigi, Seneca and Pallas return in spectral form to revive the severed connections with their loved ones, thus establishing connective links of desiring-production (104) and expanding their community even beyond death, whilst Consolata watches in spirit as "another ship" ports in search of Paradise, indicating that the body of the Convent is still alive and continues to attract desiring-machines to it (Morrison 318).

The story of *Paradise* is a story about desire and its capability to both establish and eradicate social formation. The two communities, drawing from the theory of Deleuze and Guattari, depict linear processes of desiring and social production. Assembled by the connectiveness of the subjects' libidinal energies—meaning their collective actions towards a common goal—the communities of *Paradise* resemble full bodies, as described by the authors of *Anti-Oedipus*, whose different treatments of desire lead to either a life after death or a death in life. When faced with the possibility of change, brought by instances of revolutionary desire, the town of Ruby chooses repression and containment as the means of preserving their all-black exceptionalism, enacting the despotic model that Deleuze and Guattari analyze. Inevitably, the enclosure of desiring-production leads the flow of desire to drain and the body of the community to die. The Convent never faced the threat of revolutionary desire as a community, the same way Ruby did, because no desire was considered revolutionary to the point of destruction in the Convent. As a space free of repression and coercion, the model of the Oedipal complex—the fear of deviancy and social rejection—was never established within the Convent so no mode of desire was ever placed as the standard for deviance. Without the restriction of the Oedipal complex upon the body of the Convent, there are no repulsive desiring-machines and the reproductive flow of desire between the body and its organ-machines is uninterrupted.

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In the end, these two texts establish an organic critique of contemporary power structures and the harmful effects of the oppressive reproduction of sameness in the context of the late capitalist and patriarchal colonial modernity.

Abstract: In their work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer an analysis on the formation of political and economic structures in capitalist societies based on the interpellation of subjects via a system of controlling physical and psychological desires. Their analysis showcases how desire control produces effective labor in a capitalist system, creates psychological massification and achieves political hegemony in a community of interpellated subjects. For the machine of society to function properly, desire needs to be filtered and commodified, otherwise it threatens the system with revolutionary ruptures. In Toni Morrison's *Paradise*, the concept of community relates Ruby (a small all-black town cut off from the rest of the world) and the sign of its ontological other, the Convent (a house for wayward women), with the history of racial conflict and the politics of gender. Following Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of how desire politics affect community politics, I attempt to examine how both the interpellating and revolutionary functions of their respective "desiring-machines" lead the communities in Paradise either to decay or evolution. I propose a parallelism between the signs of Ruby and the Convent with the sign of the despotic body (as explained by Deleuze and Guattari) in an attempt to represent the distorting and unifying processes that transform the experiences of both communities. By exploring the restoring flow of desire represented in the dance of the Convent women, I draw attention to the revolutionary changes desire causes in both the physical bodies of the character subjects and the organless bodies of the two communities. As a final point, by applying Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the body without organs to the symbolic spaces of the Oven and the Convent's cellar, I highlight the linearity of the process of social-production via desire-production.

Keywords: Toni Morrison, Paradise, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, desiring-machines, "the body without organs," desiring-production, social production, the despotic body, 8-rock, patriarchy, repression, consent, community, gender, race

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