From Psychoanalysis to Schizoanalysis: Synthesise and Virtual Machines in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and *A Mercy*

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**Abstract:** This paper is divided into three sections. In the first section I will discuss Morrison’s *Beloved* in Lacanian perspective along with Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s conception “homo sacer.” In the second section, I will discuss Morrison’s latest novel *A Mercy* with Deleuzian approach and I will focus on Deleuze’s conceptions of territorialization, deterritorialization and body-without-organs. In the third section I attempt to read both novels from Lacanian psychoanalytical approach to Deleuzian schizoanalytical one. My approach is an attempt to read Morrison’s texts beyond reading and interpretation. Just like what Deleuze believes that we should do philosophy instead of read philosophy. My aim is to read and to interpret *Beloved* and *A Mercy* in a way not just to dissect and analyze the characters and socio-cultural import in these novels but to provide solutions to the issues what may be raised in these novels and to provide possible way of change for the characters in the novels.

**Keywords:** Deleuze, homo sacer, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, *A Mercy*, body-without-organs, deterritorialization, virtual machines

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Morrison’s description about Beloved as a girl who “waited to be loved and cry shame erupts into her separate parts”(2004: 323) is the Lacanian object a. It (Beloved) is the cause of desire among the protagonists in the novel, which, as both the remainder and reminder, disrupts the presumed unity of these character, among them Sethe, Paul D, and Denver. Paul D’s expected visitation and stay at 124 on Bluestone Road and the ensuing ousting of the baby ghost by him can probably be read as the Father’s intervention of the Mother-child unity. Nevertheless, this seemingly lovely Freudian-Oedipal triad of Paul D-Sethe-Denver is replaced by the Beloved’s inhuman form in a triad of Beloved-Sethe-Denver. The place of the Lacanian Father is repulsed and occupied by the indestructible uncanny excess of life of Beloved. The story ends with the exorcism held by those live in the town related to 124. With the Sethe possessed by Beloved running to Mr. Bodwin with an ice pick.

Sethe forgets how desire works because her desire has been deprived from her long before. It is Paul D, after the coming and going of Beloved, who reminds Sethe that “You your best thing, Sethe’”(322). Sethe, however, can just respond to Paul D’s words with doubt “Me? Me?”(322). If there were a “tragedy” in this story of the life of Sethe after she escaped from the Sweet Home, I like to argue, it is because she is still caught in the web of the symbolic order woven by the white, paternal, Anglo-American Other which is based on the dialectics of positive and negative. If the life before Sethe’s escapes from the Sweet
Home is that of “homo sacer” (I will discuss it in the next section), it is the Oedipal triad which dominates Sethe that prevents her from fully understanding her own desire and instead desire Other’s desire. This Other is no longer that of white-paternal-Anglo-American but that of the Oedipal. That is the reason why I propose an anti-Oedipal reading of the story.

**Homo sacer and the lives of slaves**

The term “homo sacer” proposed by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben is his rethinking of Aristotle’s, Hannah Arendt’s, and Michel Foucault’s conceptions on biopolitics. This figure, “homo sacer,” dwells in “the zone of indistinction” between natural life and political life. As Agamben puts it; “The very body of homo sacer is, in its capacity to be killed but not sacrificed, a living pledge to his subjection to a power of death” (1998: 99). Homo sacer thus retains both religious and juridical connotations. Because it is the religious sacrifice and juridical death sentence that withholds the power to put human lives to death. Catherine Mills argues that “For Agamben, the figure of homo sacer expresses the originary political relation, as this figures recalls the memory of the exclusions that found the juridical-political sphere as the excrescence of the religious and profane, and illuminates the indistinction between sacrificial and homicidal violence that lies at the heart of sovereign power” (2008a: 72, emphasis mine). This definition of “homo sacer” implies that something is excluded, juridical-politically or religiously, and this exclusion is made by the sovereign power. As Ewa Plonowska Ziarek puts it: “Stripped of political significance and exposed to murderous violence, bare life is both the counterpart to and the target of sovereign violence” (2008b: 90).

The lives of African-Americans as slaves in the Sweet Home under the administering of Schoolteacher are in this sense stripped bare and exposed to unconditional violence. Sixo, who stole the shoot, told Schoolteacher that he stole the shoot to improve Schoolteacher’s property: “Sixo plant rye to give the high piece a better chance. Sixo take and feed the soil, give you more crop. Sixo take and feed Sixo give you more work” (224). Although Schoolteacher considers what Sixo says “clever,” Sixo is still beaten because Schoolteacher wants to show him that “definitions belonged to the definers—not the defineds” (225). In effect, the defined are not even allowed to talk. In Paul D’s memory, a black man was shot by the guard simply because “Yes, sir” is the only sound “a black man was allowed to speak each morning” (127). What may be needed to emphasize here is that those exposed to the violence of the “definders” are not in a sphere of animal-like exclusion from the human law. Homo sacer is the target of sovereign violence because it is included in the juridical-political sphere while at the same time excluded from it. Homo sacer, or bare life, Ziarek contends, “is not the same as biological zoe, but rather it is the remainder of the destroyed political bios” (2008b: 90).

Homo sacer can be destroyed unless it is first integrated into the system. And I contend that that is exactly the reason why Sethe has to kill Beloved. Sethe is fully aware that, once her little babies enter white man’s world in Kentucky, she can never love her babies: “Look like I love em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn’t love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn’t mine to love” (2004: 190). In her stream-of-consciousness monologue, Sethe reveals that the reason she kills Beloved is because she couldn’t bear what will happen to Beloved if she hasn’t killed the baby (236). After Beloved’s
resurrection, Paul D asks her if she has a last name and Beloved spelled the word “slowly as though the letters were being formed as she spoke them” (62) as an autoerotic figure who retains its desire without sacrificing it to the Other. Paul D immediately recognizes the way Beloved enunciated the letters as he does because they, as slaves, cannot read but can only memorize the letters of their names (62). But is it necessary for Beloved to enunciate her name? Since to be named is to be designated a place in the symbolic order. Paul D and Beloved inevitably go through the process of alienation, “the necessary ‘first step’ in acceding to subjectivity” (Fink 51) and Beloved’s careful enunciation of her name satisfies Paul D’s expectation to recruit Beloved into his sphere of social existence. After Beloved’s enunciation of her name, what Paul D recognizes is not only the way slaves enunciate their names but the sorrow of being driven from one place to another (63). He realizes that Beloved may be like him, deprived of the language as the protection to secure a place, waiting there as a void to be filled.

If there were a place of “man” for Paul D to fit in, it is at Sweet Home under the aegis of Garner. Garner allows the blacks at Sweet Home to correct him and “to invent ways of doing things . . . To buy a mother, choose a horse or a wife, handle guns, even learn reading” (2004: 147). He did question himself whether to be allowed to do the thing listed in the quote above can be placed in “the manhood”? He soon argues with himself that Garner is “true metal” and they are “believed and trusted” (147). And Paul D concludes that “deferring to his slaves’ opinions did not deprive him of authority or power” (147). Schoolteacher, however, teaches these blacks otherwise with words like “they were only Sweet Home men at Sweet Home” and “One step outside off that ground and they are trespassers among the human races” (147-8, emphasis mine). Schoolteacher’s statement is an assertion of the juridical-political sphere to these blacks by demarcating the boundary around the Sweet Home. His assertion of these black’s conditions outside of Sweet Home (“Watchdogs without teeth; steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses whose neigh and whinny could not be translated into a language responsible humans spoke”) provides a variety of castrated images (148). Sweet Home is thus “the state of exception” in reverse. It transforms “homo sacer” into replaceable tools inside its territory. Ziarek has discussed Orland Patterson’s Slavery and Social Death and argued that “the substitution of social death for biological death indicates a possible transformation of the sovereign ban into ownership and exchange” (2008b: 96). His contrast between “homo sacer” and slavery is especially intriguing: “If the sovereign decision on the state of exception captures bare life in order to exclude it, the biopolitics of slavery is confronted with the profitable inclusion of socially dead beings” (ibid.).

As Andrew Benjamin puts it, bare life is always “positioned in advance” and “a determination as an aftereffect” (2008b: 82). That is why I argue that Sweet Home is “the state of exception” in reverse. No matter what, most of the blacks in America before the Civil War are socially dead beings. And to become beings means to be metaphorized. Usually, the subject canceling out by the metaphor is transformed to “a sedimentation of meanings determined by the substitution of one signifier for another” (Fink 69) who subjectifies the cause of his/her existence. In the state of exception, however, the cause of the subject’s existence is not subjectified by him/her. In other words, the subject in the state of exception as bare life cannot achieve his or her fantasy of wholeness through his/her relation to object a. The culture is not theirs (the blacks) to be shared, even though
they too have to give up their desire to the Other, they can never obtain the promised (possible) satisfaction in the future.

The inclusion of the socially dead beings within the territory of the Sweet Home is a trade-off to forgo the sovereign ban spatially. Years after his leaving the Sweet Home, Paul D realizes that Garner and Schoolteacher may be the same. His reflection on the words of Garner’s and those of Schoolteacher’s makes him believe that whether Garner announces the blacks at Sweet Home men or not, the blacks are still men. But Paul D’s reflection on Garner’s announcing them as men can emerge only after he has the access to the system of the shared desire. Before this access, the blacks are “marked”, both literally and metaphorically, to be distinguished as the included exclusion. When Sethe saw the mark on her mother’s body and asked her mother to mark her, her mother slapped her and left Sethe bewildered: “I didn’t understand it then. Not until I had a mark of my own”(2004: 73).

The rooster/Mister section reveals the fact that the internalized mark couldn’t be understood by Paul D. Paul D, by observing the rooster named mister, concludes that it can stay where it is a but he can’t: “Mister, he looked so . . . free. Better than me”(2004: 86). Paul D does not realize that the rooster is nothing more than a humanized animal and is still homogenous to nature without being alienated and separated. The lives of slaves, however, are first driven to the “state of exception” and put into a state of what Lacan terms “between two deaths.” Paul D and other slaves’ lives are further transformed beyond the state of exception only when they are turned into profitable human tools. They are the symbolized animal in human form with their entire value (not just surplus value) sacrificing to the Other.

To Kill or to Create: the Undead Beloved as Lamella

The pivotal conflict in this story is the conflict between the pre-class, savage form of social organization and the capitalist social organization with the Oedipal structure. What haunts those who need to “rememory” is not slavery but their original way of lives back in their African social production. The intervention of the Father to the mother-child unity is not only the familial unity but also the socio-cultural one. In Beloved, Paul D and the Whites play the roles of the Father for the Oedipal triad of Paul D-Sethe-Denver (and Beloved) and the Whites-Africa-the slaves respectively. To be trapped in the Oedipal structure is to be trapped in fixed subjectivities. It is this yearning to reconstruct one’s own identities that dominates most of the major characters in Beloved.

Sethe’s love for Beloved is “dangerous” for Paul D because she is a “used-to-be-slave woman.” Paul’s conception of love is based on Oedipal metaphoric mode in which to love is to love “just a little bit” and thus one can have “a little left over for the next one”(2004: 54). I propose that Paul D’s conception to love is based on the reality principle. Like Freud’s fort/da game, Paul D’s conception of love is founded on its replaceability. With this replaceability, one can live a secure life without devoting one’s desire to one object. Paul D’s role in Beloved is a father figure who rifts the mother-child unity (although he does not succeed in assuming this role). His taking Sethe and Denver to the carnival demonstrates his attempt to make them enter the field of the shared desire. Sethe, on the contrary, knows that Paul D is “adding something to her life”(2004: 112). What Paul D
brings are “new pictures” and “old remembrances” that Sethe couldn’t bear. The “empty space” in Sethe’s heart without “definite news” is now filled with “a brand-new sorrow” brought by Paul D. What is the “definite news” for the “empty space” in Sethe’s heart? And why does the sorrow become “brand-new”? This “empty space” in Sethe’s heart is the void of Sethe’s understanding of those she can’t make sense of her past. Her sorrow is made anew by what Paul D brings. It can be made anew because what Paul D brings is the news for Sethe to reconstruct the story of her past.

After Paul D’s arrival at 124, the haunting baby ghost is expelled but a woman calls herself Beloved emerges from the water enters into the lives at 124. She has “new skin” which is “linesless and smooth” (2004: 61), like Lacan’s indestructible and immortal lamella with pure surface. Undead, this Beloved who emerges from the water is the one who insists in Sethe’s life. She is what Sethe cannot get rid of, and the painful past for which Sethe is compelled to repeat. Furthermore, Beloved can even invent desire: “it was Beloved who made demands. Anything she wanted she got, and when Sethe ran out of things to give her, Beloved invented desire”(2004: 283). Unlike children who ask “why” endlessly in the process of Lacanian separation, Beloved does not make her mother’s desire as the demand to her. Instead, Beloved is the one who makes demand. Beloved, I argue, is attempting to bring Sethe back to the stage before separation and before the intervention of the Name-of-the-Father, that is, to the stage of mother-child unity. However, although Beloved is the one who invents desire, she imitates Sethe in every single way. This is the paradox I find here. Although Beloved invents desire, her desire is still sacrificed to the Other, but exclusively to her mOther. In the beginning of Part Three of Beloved, readers can learn the inversion of the roles between Sethe and Beloved from mother/child to child/mother. They play more and more games with Sethe “going to work later and later each day” until Sethe’s eventual losing of job (2004: 282). Theirs is the mother/child unity to the extreme. Fink had defined separation as “a situation in which both the subject and the Other are excluded”(1995: 53), in which both the subject and the Other are castrated: “Separation results in the splitting of the subject into ego and unconscious, and in a corresponding splitting of the Other into lacking Other and object a”(61). The subject in the mother/child relationship does not subjugates to object a. Beloved’s “being”, with her intimate relationship with Sethe, does not come from “outside”, but “in” the relationship between them. No object a as Beloved’s phantasmatic complement is there to arouse her desire, Sethe is her desire.

The consequence of this mother/child unity between Sethe and Beloved is the deteriorating state in 124. MacCannell had pointed out that “Culture can satisfy needs . . . only if desire is shared”(1986: 80, emphasis original). Their unity without sharing leads to the devastating state in 124 because their needs can never function socially and culturally. Denver, in order to survive and to help her mother, must leave 124 to find help in the outside world. Denver has to sacrifice the mother/child unity to a world beyond this unity, a world of shared desire, to help her family. She realizes she needs to work and to follow the Name-of-the-Father: “Her father’s daughter after all, Denver decided to do the necessary. Decided to stop relying on kindness to leave something on the stump. She would hire herself out somewhere”(2004: 298). Denver, in the end, does not simply replace the role of Sethe and the role of her own father, as the one who tries to find help outside which leads to the eventual exorcising, in effect replace the role of Paul D in
ousting Beloved out of 124. Beloved, if one attempts to restore his/her “normal” life in 124, is what must be eliminated, first by Paul D and later Denver. It must be eliminated because it is the unbearable remainder and reminder of the painful past of the major protagonists in this story. Sethe and Beloved, however, yearn for the love between them to be exclusive. The question I pose here is that: since the slaves are not included in the Whites’ symbolic law, or that they are homo sacer as I have discussed in the previous section, why is the Oedipal structure the constituting structure for those living in 124? Furthermore, Paul D, whoousts the baby ghost from 124 as an act of father intervention, brings the “news” to supplement Sethe’s memory. The news Paul D tells Sethe, since no other witnesses are alive or present, might be Paul D’s own fabrication. Paul D himself listens to Stamp Paid telling the secret of Sethe’s infanticide with the news clipping. I do not propose that the news brings from Paul D is really a fabrication but rather that Sethe will fill whatever Paul tells her into her rememory, wheter the news is authentic or fabricated.

In effect, every major character in Beloved is hungry for the origin of their own stories. Nevertheless, the old memory does not return in a benign way. It is always distorted and painful. Images become felt emotions: “Things became what they were: drabness looked drab; heat was hot”(2004: 48). And the whole story may have to be created by themselves: “Denver spoke, Beloved listened, and the two did the best they could to create what really happened, how it really was, something only Sethe knew because she alone had the mind for it and the time afterward to shape it”(2004: 92). Paul D and Sethe are in this sense play the roles of the guarantees of truth respectively, but both Paul D and Sethe have the news to keep for themselves. The story created and reconstructed is thus forever a partial understanding. For Sethe, happiness is possible only if she can manage the news Paul D brings and the news he keeps to himself (2004:114). The Lacanian interpretation will say that there is always something beyond our control and this “something” is indecipherable. It is this partial understanding that makes mutual dependence attainable. Or, as Fink’s discussion on metaphor and symptom has it, metaphor is not “the dissolution of all symptoms, but rather the reconfiguration of the symptom, the creation of new symptoms, or the modified subjective position with respective to the symptom”(1995:70). The symptoms of characters in Beloved are reconfigured and modified through the process of assimilating various new metaphors.

The search for identity and origin is unavoidably one of the interpretations of Beloved. But what if the search for identity and origin of the major characters are looking for in Beloved are the causes of sufferings for them? One can definitely argue that the search for identity and origin for every single human being is insufferable. But what I propose here is not irrelevant with my discussion on homo sacer in the previous section of this essay. That is, the sufferings of the major characters in Beloved are the result of their misrecognitions of the Other, of the Other that will never return their love. Since the slaves are “the remainders of the destroyed political bios”, (I argue in the beginning of this essay that it is the reason why Sethe has to kill Beloved), the infanticide doe not free Sethe from the past. I believe that the search for identity and origin of the major characters are the causes of their sufferings because in the past, they are no more than the profitable inclusive socially dead. In other words, they are officially men/women only after they are no longer slaves. Their origins (in the symbolic order), begin from their completion with their phantasmatic
partners. Paul D concludes that he and Sethe get “more yesterdays than anybody” and they “need some kind of tomorrow” (2004: 322). In order to live in a world of shared desire, Beloved has to be reckoned with first before she can be forgotten.

The native American realizes that the sachem was wrong: “The Europes neither fled nor died out” (M 54). But the “Europes” did “forever fence land, ship whole trees to faraway countries, take any woman for quick pleasure, ruin soil, befoul sacred places and worship a dull, unimaginative god” (ibid.). To fence land, the Europeans make their expression to mark the land as territory. A Mercy is a story about order and disorder, organization and disorganization, and territorialization and deterritorialization among race, religion, family, and individual identities. Morrison’s writing unfolds the America before it “becomes” America—an America that is closer to nature rather than capitalistic, “modern” society. It seems to me that Morrison attempts to lead her readers into a conception of the “improvised” nature of race, religion, and individual identities through the improvised nature of Jacob Vaark’s family. This improvised nature is what Jerry Aline Flieger describes “a system of interacting force field” (1999: 222) or the Deleuzian body-without-organs. The improvised nature does not produce connection. Instead, it records. It is this characteristic of recording on the surface of the organ-machine that raises the question of “how the body is organ-ized, and how it might be actively dis-organ-ized so as to enable the production of other forms of organization” (Holland 28). All the members in the Vaark family are orphans in certain sense just like all the religious divisions are.

Organ-ization and Dis-organ-ization in A Mercy
Rebekka had experienced religion from her mother as “a flame fueled by a wonderous hatred” (M 14). She remembered that “her parents treated each other and their children with glazed indifference and saved their fire for religious matters” (ibid.). Her memory of the first hanging she saw with “the happy crowd attending” confused young Rebekka but made “permanently vivid by years of retelling and redescribing by their parents” (M 75). The indifferent attitude Rebekka’s parents treat each other and their children reveals her parents’ sacrifice for a higher cause. This higher cause provides the crowd seeing the hanging some kind of ethical grandeur by watching the hanging. They watch the hanging with elation and with the words “they deserved to be hung” in their mind. When Rebekka recalled that her parents had called the Anabaptists “the Satanists” (M 77), her parents in effect took the Anabaptists as the “monstrous Thing that cannot be ‘gentrified’” (Zizek 143). It is her attendance to the meetinghouse near their Milton plantation that makes Rebekka suddenly realize that the Anabaptists are actually “sweet, generous people” (M 77).

Like the Anabaptists, Lina, who Rebekka considers as “the raven-haired girl with impossible skin” (M 75: emphasis mine) at first and becomes her companion later, shares the similar radical Otherness as all those who cannot be “gentrified.” Rebekka herself construes three possibilities of their being each other’s companion: “Perhaps because both were alone without family, or because both had to please one man, or because both were hopelessly ignorant of how to run a farm” (ibid.). In other words, both of them are being through the double process of territorialization and deterritorialization. At first, it may
seem that it is “lack” - lack of family, lack of a man to depend on and lack of the knowledge of how to run a farm - that bind these two women together. Lina and Rebekka are assembled to form a collective (territorialized) but also deterritorialized because they have to “please one man”(ibid.). But hadn’t Lina and Sir had been assembled to form a collective while Sir was waiting for the arrival of Rebekka and laboring in Ahab’s way “to bring nature under his control”(M 49) But, he was taught by Lina to dry fish and to protect the crop? What Rebekka had witnessed on her voyage from England to the New World exemplified movement of overcoding1. It is not merely about the divisions between upper or lower-deck passengers. This overcoding is inscribed into those in the lower-deck’s “range of baggage, clothes, speech and attitude”(M 81). For those in the lower-deck, they are retereitorialized (though involuntarily) either from family (Anne), or by the country (Judith, Kydia, Abigail, and Dorothea). Even though Rebekka’s passage is “prepaid” and is “to be married”(M 82), her and her temporary friends’ lives in the lower-deck will move on with variation and ramification.

Lina’s identity appears to be fixed, even though she is admired by the Presbyterians who said that Lina works as hard as they do. Lina is in effect puzzled by the Europeans: “On the one hand they would torch your home; on the other they would feed, nurse, and bless you”(M 46). What Lina had experienced from the Europeans is “a ‘swarm of intensities’”(Colebrook). Lina perceives those Europeans around her as “a composition of fluctuating intensities”(ibid.). Those intensities are what Lina feels and experiences from them and through them. Lina’s attitude toward them, however, is neither rebellion nor submission. She associates with them in a practical way for fear of losing shelter. Lina, who is “terrified of being alone in the world without family . . . acknowledged her status as heathen and let herself be purified by these worthies”(M 47). In order to survive, Lina has to become what she is not. She needs to decide if she should agree to obey the rules of the rulers. Finding out that to obey these rules can best meet her most important interests, Lina finds her way “to be in the world” by merging “Europe medicine with native, scripture with lore”(M 48). In Sir’s village, Lina finds herself in solitude if she has not “fallen into hermit skills and become one more thing that moved in the natural world”(ibid.). Lina, I like to argue, is “becoming-animal” when she “cawed with birds, chatted with plants, spoke to squirrels, sang to the cow and opened her mouth to rain”(M 48-49). As Deleuze puts it: “There is an entire politics of becoming-animal . . . they express minoritarian groups, or groups that are oppressed, prohibited, in revolt, or always on the fringe of recognized institutions”(1987: 247). To say Lina is “becoming-animal” may at first seem to contradict her way to merge Europe with the native, a way to come to terms with or assume a new position with the big Other since “becoming-animal” refers to the “potential of every element to deviate from the standard or norm that defines that majority”(Patton 81). But doesn’t, as mentioned above, the Lina who is afraid of losing shelter, conform to the standard and norm of the majority? My answer to this question is about family and solitude. Lina does acknowledge “her status as heathen” because she is afraid of being alone. But she is once again abandoned by the Presbyterians. This abandonment for Lina is

1 “The signifier, for Deleuze and Guattari, is therefore the very form of transcendent or despotic power: the way in which a code or flow of data is subjected to some point of interpretation. When a mark becomes a signifier it becomes more than its actual force; we ask what the signifier means. We are subjected to one element in the code that seems to offer the law of code in general – the signifier overcodes.” Colebrook, Claire. Understanding Deleuze. NSW Australia: Allen& Unwin: 2002. p. 119.
not just a deprivation of shelter, it is an exclusion to a once included Presbyterian community. Becoming-animal enables Lina to gain some degrees of freedom of variation within repletion without the previous modes of desiring-satisfaction.

The mongrelized Sorrow can be given any name and the sawyer’s wife calls her Sorrow. A woman who was raised by a Captain as a crewman, Sorrow has never before set foot on land. For her, the land “was as foreign to her as ocean was to ship for shore” (M 126). Upon her arrival to Sir’s house, Lina insists on washing her hair before eating and resting. Sorrow is the only character in A Mercy who is really being treated like an animal. Lina “scrubbed the girl down twice before letting her in the house” (M 121) and Sir announced that Sorrow had to be “confined to the house at might” (ibid.). Before her child was born, Sorrow’s sole companion in the world is her uncanny double Twin. Nevertheless, on the day of her second delivery, the Twin was absent and it was Willard and Scully to help her to deliver the baby. Her connection to the world begins by the blood that attracts young cod. With her complete concentration on her daughter, Twin was gone and “unmissed by the only person who knew her” (M 134). The former fixed mode of satisfaction for Sorrow has been changed with the birth of her daughter. It is the birth of her daughter that makes Sorrow realizes what she has of her previous life is nothing more than a meager portion of the produced satisfaction. The Sorrow with her baby daughter now “attended routine duties, organizing them among her infant’s needs, impervious to the complaints of others” (M 134) because she can finally take possession of the product by herself.

The lettered Florens is like Poe’s purloined letter, at least before its content is revealed, she is a pure signifier without the signified. As soon as the content of the letter is revealed, Florens’ identity is fixed by the very words written by Rebekka: “She is owned by me an can be known by a burne mark in the palm of her left hand” (M 112). While the men and women in Widow Ealing’s house were examining the body of Florens, the way they examine her reminded her of what the Blacksmith had told her about bear. Florens seems to realize through this experience that looking as a way of connection is between humans, whereas these people look at her as a beast just like she looks at the bear. Her body and identity is at the mercy of the letter: “With the letter I belong and I am lawful. Without it I am a weak calf abandonde by the herd” (M 115). The world the bear sees is the world of immanence. Georges Bataille argues that “Between the animal that is eaten and the one that eats, there is no relation of subordination like that connecting an object, a thing, to man, who refuses to be viewed as a thing” (1989: 18, emphasis original). Man misreads the animal love for fear and anger, the Blacksmith told Florens. The Florens who is examined by the whites also arouse their fear and anger, and a woman even doubts that the letter Mistress Rebekka writes may be written by Satan (M 113). They have the feeling of doubt and terror to Florens just as Florens has the feeling of doubt and terror to the bear. Bataille puts it: “the first man were closer than we are to the animal world; they distinguished the animal from themselves perhaps, but not without a feeling of doubt mixed with terror and longing” (1989: 35).

This fear, I propose, results from the dependence on the given reality. The labor should be “steady” and “controlled” (M 30); children are “less doomed under adult control” (M 32); a master is needed because “A frequently absent master was invitation and temptation” (M 34). The whites are terrified by Florens and also mystified Lina: “He mystified Lina, All
Europeans did”(M 44). Human beings mystified those unknown to them out of fear. Fear to the supernatural power mystified the power and turn it into gods. But fear may also turn its object into the abject, like the way the whites examine Florens. I believe Morrison metaphorizes Lina into America, not just because she is a native, but her status in Sir’s home is the one who “rules.” The colonized nature is in effect the true master of mankind even though mankind believes that it is us that dominate nature. Nature rules in an immanent way which excludes external definition. This external definition is the given reality I’ve mentioned in the beginning of this paragraph. The colonized America is not shaped by the Europeans either, the Europeans are shaped by America.

In the new world, just as the first men who confronts nature, people who were not familiar with the new world had to work together. In order to work together, the shared desire binds people. Nevertheless, this shared desire hinders individual desire. To retain the minimum freedom, Jacob and his wife “drift away from others which produced a selfish privacy and they had lost the refuge and the consolation of a clan”(M 58). Rebekka believes that it is pride that makes them shape their life this way, “like Adam and Eve, like gods from nowhere beholden to nothing except their own creations”(M 58-59). The improvised Vaark family is the indeterminate group of people (orphans) which has “a capacity to be affected”(Due 2007). Through the force within this family, this indeterminate group develops consistency. But it turns out that the inconsistency within this family reveals itself: “They once thought they were a kind of family because together they had carved companionship out of isolation. But the family they imagined they had become was false. Whatever each one loved, sought or escaped, their futures were separate and anyone’s guess”(M 156). The attempt to organize this family is, however, dis-organized by the interacting force within this family.

The dis-organization suspends the connections made within the family. This disorganization may have tragic impact on each of the characters, but, doesn’t it allow other forms of organizations to emerge? Florens has changed and Sorrow attempts to flee. Lina “can no longer bathe in the river and must cultivate alone”(M 160). Florens becomes wild and free. The disorganization of the Vaark family prevents the organization and the identities of its members from being permanently fixed. Furthermore, the disorganization frees those in the Vaark family from the prohibitive system of representation. Nuclear family is, as Holland puts it, “only the latest in a long line of social institutions responsible for the construction of fixed subjectivities”(1999: 39). This construction of fixed subjectivities “segregates one set of subjectivities from all others . . .identify only with members of that restricted set: whites rather than blacks; men rather than women; Christians rather than Jews”(ibid.). Morrison’s story A Mercy reveals to her readers the “improvised” nature of race, religion, and individual identities through the improvised nature of Jacob Vaark’s family, which may inspire her readers to reconsider the segregation of fixed identities.

To read 1987 Beloved and to read 2008 A Mercy in 2010 or the years after, readers definitely need to reconstruct the historical lineage from Colonial America to the America in the 1860s - from the semi-rural America with widespread uninhabited land to the industrialized America of political divisions on the issue of slavery. America of the time in
Morrison’s *A Mercy* may be the past for the characters in Morrison’s earlier novels to search. The improvised nature of race, religion, and individual identities is possible way out for the characters in Morrison’s novels who are trapped in their traumatic past. This improvisation, as “an immense flow that each partial object produces and cuts again, reproduces and cuts at the same time” (Deleuze 2004), the characters become Deleuzian artists who no loner belong to any category.

Philip Page had argued that “underlying Morrison’s fiction is the paradox of dangerous freedom”(1995: 27). He argues that most of Morrison’s characters are “unconventional, wild,” and are “relatively free from social norms, free to create themselves, to experiment with identity formation with relationships with others”(ibid.). The paradox is, Page proposes, even though Morrison’s characters can avoid “paralyzing stasis,” the wilderness of these characters can be dangerous because it “forces the characters to rely on themselves for their continuing spiritual growth and their precarious stability, and it throws them into uncharted territories of experimental identities”(ibid.).

Page’s contention corresponds to Deleuze and Guattari’s modes of psychic functioning “syntheses.” On the one hand, Page’s assertion of the wildness of Morrison’s characters which avoid the “paralyzing stasis” can be read as the disjunctive synthesis of recording which frees pleasure from mechanical repetition and takes pleasure in improvisation. On the other hand, the characters who “rely on themselves for their continuing spiritual growth” are characters who refuse to render their identities to be distorted and categorized. To further explicate my argument, I must introduce another “syntheses” of Deleuze and Guattarri’s modes of psychic functioning - the connective synthesis of production. According to Eugene W. Holland, the connective synthesis of production is close to the Freudian notion of “drive” or “cathexis.” It makes connections and connects only part-objects: “connections are made so as to tap into a source of energy and procure a ‘charge,’” and the connections made by the connective synthesis of production are “multiple, heterogeneous, and continual”(1999: 26).

The reason why I have to introduce the connective synthesis of production is its crucial relation and reaction to the disjunctive synthesis of recording, which, as “a complementary counter-force to the connective synthesis,” can prevent the organism from locking into “instinctual or habitual pattern of connection”(ibid. 28). The reaction between the connective synthesis of production and the disjunctive synthesis of recording can “bring productive desire to a halt, to suspend or freeze the connection it has made, in order that new and different connections may become possible”(ibid.). I propose the reaction between the connective synthesis of production and the disjunctive synthesis of recording can “suspend” what Page calls the dangerous wildness of Morrison’s characters. This is what Deleuze and Guattarri call anti-production on the connective synthesis (body-without-organs), with which “a surface that records networks or relations among connections”(ibid.) is constituted.

*A Mercy* broadens the wildness of characters in Morrison’s *Beloved* to the wildness of a country. Henceforth, I will extend my Deleuzian reading from the perspective of desiring-production to that of social-production, and from its corresponding organizing plane “body-without-organs” to that of “socius.” To elaborate my argument, I would like to
distinguish three modes of “social machines” proposed by Deleuze and Guattari: the first is the pre-class form of social organization and no particular group of people is the confluence of power; the second is the social organization where power is centered on a particular group of people and those who are included into this system without power are under unconditional violence and exploitation; and the last is a world of shared desire, with which the aim of those included is to increase human life-activity generally.

What needs to be emphasized here is that for Deleuze and Guattari, these three modes of social machine (they term them as territorial, despotic and capitalist) are not successive stages but should be understood as “virtual machines which may be operative in a given social field” (Patton 88). Although America in *A Mercy* has not yet been territorialized into a nation-state, on the socus of the coordination of material flow, the recording virtual machines of kinship, despotism and capitalism can be actualized in the same social field. In both *Beloved* and *A Mercy*, the transformation of “individual biological bodies into social bodies” (ibid. 90) of the territorial machine co-exists with the “alignment with the new alliance of despot and people and the direct of despot and deity” (ibid. 92) of the despotic machine, and the capitalist machine defined by “the generalized decoding of flows” (ibid. 92).

I begin my concluding Deleuzian interpretation with two arguments I propose in the earlier part of this paper: Beloved as excess of life and the slaves’ lives as homo sacer. Beloved as lamella (the indestructible uncanny excess of life) and as excess of life is the wildest *Thing* in *Beloved*. It is dangerous because it (the excess) cannot be appropriated into the capitalistic system. But what is Beloved’s connection to homo sacer - the target of sovereign violence? The crucial definition to homo sacer is its inclusive exclusion, that is, it has to be integrated into the juridical-political sphere first. In other words, Beloved is the indestructible uncanny excess of life exactly because it is not transformed from its biological body into the social body. The time in *A Mercy* is, however, the time during which the sovereign violence had not yet imposed upon (juridically and politically) the blacks and the native Americans. It is this contrast between the wild America and the America in the 1860s which makes the recording virtual machines of kinship, despotism and capitalism perceptible. The biological bodies of the major characters in *A Mercy* are transformed into the social bodies of Colonial America. The hierarchical system of white despotic machine then integrates “the primitive” as the profitable tools of this machine in both *Beloved* and *A Mercy*.

Florens is an example in *A Mercy* who arouses the fear and anger of the whites because her biological body has not yet been integrated into the juridical-political system of the whites in Colonial America. She, even though examined by the whites with the feeling of doubt, is like the mystified Lina, not yet viewed as a thing but as someone who should be integrated. *Should be integrated* because, they are like the excess of life (Beloved), wild and untamable. Doesn’t the way to *tame* the wild Beloved similar to the way man attempts to *tame* those they can barely understand, namely, nature? It is the difference between the Deleuzian reading of the anti-Oedipal and Lacanian reading of the Oedipal - a difference between overlaying new forms of social organization and a social organization of castration.
To read Beloved and A Mercy in such an anti-Oedipal approach is to read desire in these two novels not based on lack but to read desire as productive and affirmative. The desire of Sethe, Paul D, Denver, and of other former slaves are organized not by themselves but by the white despotic system, in which the aim is to subordinate them and to make them into profitable tools. As human tools, the slaves in Beloved live in the social machines of territorial, despotic and capitalist but are excluded from the capitalist social machine while imposed by the legal codes by the despotic whites. Since the desire of the slaves is organized through the codes by the despotic whites, they are excluded from the capitalist social machine of shared desire. Forms of social machines overlay and co-exist, but the question is how can one take control of the power to define. Patton points out that the distinction between the capitalist machine and that of territorial and despotic ones “has to do with its mode of coordination and control” because “whereas the other two both involve the extraction of a code surplus, the capitalist machines extract a surplus of flux or ‘flow surplus’”(2000: 93). In the despotic machine, the one who defines owns all the surplus value. And in the territorial machine, the surplus value belongs to the earth.

The Europeans described by the sachem in A Mercy as those who “forever fence land” in Colonial America becomes the “definders” in Beloved in America of the 1850s and 1860s. The members of the improvised Varrk family are singularities who interact in the field of plantation Milton in a time America had not yet been organ-ized. Female characters in A Mercy are assembled to “please one man”(M 77) and hence are organ-ized. In effect, after Varrk’s visiting to Ortega’s plantation and his following conversation with the man in the inn about the business in sugar and rum in Barbados plantation, Varrk has gradually transformed within a despotic social machine with coded authoritative meaning in Ortega’s plantation to capitalist social machine with decoded “axiomatic” meaning on the remote islands. With this transformation, the flow of desire becomes sharable and Varrk becomes the one who “master” the regulation of desire. When Varrk dies, the women once again become “unmastered and the arrival of the freed blacksmith brings the Varrk family into dis-organ-ization again.

Blacksmith, near the end of A Mercy, accuses Florens that she is a slave because she “becomes one”: “You are nothing but wildness. No constraint. No mind”(M 141). The wildness blackness accuses Florens of is her unrestrained instinctual connection. When Florens says “I am adoring you” and blacksmith replies “And a slave to that too”(ibid.), blacksmith is blaming Florens for her subordination to slavery and to romantic love. Blacksmith is the one who in effect frees those organ-izeds in the Varrk family from being fixed permanently. Just as Sethe in Beloved cannot get rid of her painful past because she cannot suspend the given connections made in the past and make new connections. Florens is a tragic figure in A Mercy not because she is abandoned by blacksmith and is “unmasterd” as other female characters in the story but because Florens cannot terminate the connections given. Florens submits herself to such given connections. Florens’ mother realizes her status as homo sacer: “It was there I learned how I was not a person from my country, nor from my families. I was negrita. Everything. Language, dress, gods, dance, habits, decoration – all of it cooked together in the color of my skin”(M 165). Florens’
mother believes that she is not “a soulless animal” and refuses to repeat her desiring-satisfaction as the same but as difference by telling Florens that “to be given dominion over another is a hard thing; to wrest dominion over another is a wrong thing; to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing” (M 167). The last sentence by Florens’s mother “to give dominion of yourself to another” is her advice to Florens not to submit to slavery. The possibility of change may be attained if he/she can attain his/her subjectivity.

Works Cited


