

**3rd Shot:** The concept of the Oedipal detective game is one that was theorized from a close reading of several contemporary thinkers. Timothy Morton, in his essay entitled “The Oedipal Logic of Ecological Awareness,” provides a great starting point for understanding this game that plays out in the novel. Morton describes the Oedipal logic as being deeply embedded within agricultural society and allowing for these sort of contradictory experiences within such a society. Millet propels this same theory in engaging the children within this detective game: as they work so hard to conceal their identities and relations, they are only further revealed; and in the words of Morton, “every being is hobbled like Oedipus, since every being is marked by the traces of other beings” (18). The children are caught in this Oedipal contradiction where they act as both the detectives and the criminals; the detective game acts as their coping mechanism and distraction from realizing their very real roles in the climate crisis – roles that may even match the ones their parents play.\*\*

**2nd Shot:** Our usage of the term, “Oedipal detective game,” is meant to work in a couple of different ways. In terms of environmental and climate concerns, the name of Oedipus has been strongly linked by Timothy Morton to what he terms “agrilogistics,” a term meant to denote the ways in which early agricultural humanity related to the nonhuman realm by constantly striving to “delete” this region of being. Offering another term for the last roughly 11,000 years differing slightly from the more common ones of either the Holocene or the Anthropocene, Morton’s work not only connects Oedipus and the agricultural society he is “charged with saving” to questions of climate and criminality, but also to the “noir detective story” in particular (“Oedipal Logic” 16, 15). Morton’s intervention puts forward Oedipus as the main exemplar of a form of thinking that marshals this “deletion” of the nonhuman in service of a picture of humanity as itself autochthonic, as purely *causa sui*, and thus reads Sophocles’ titular character as the first of many “climate criminals.” Moreover, Morton wishes to draw an intimate connection to questions of genealogy and origin as well: “There is nothing but Oedipus and his parents, Oedipus who thinks he acts autonomously, exemplifying the agrilogistic meme *We came from ourselves*” (*Dark Ecology* 62). This triangulation of Oedipus, questions of climate and criminality, and genealogy give us sufficient warrant to speak of this “Oedipal detective game” as perfectly operative in the novel as a whole and gives us a language with which to start tying together some of the various threads in the narrative.

Although Morton’s account of Oedipus and agrilogistics here gives us some justification for our term, his treatment of the crime fiction/criminality point of the triangle needs a bit of tweaking. *Dark Ecology* is quite content to pull out what it claims is the quintessential “noir fiction” element:

I am a responsible member of this species [humanity] for the Anthropocene. Of course I am formally responsible to the extent that I understand global warming. That’s all you need to be responsible for something. You understand that this truck is going to hit that

man? You are responsible for that man. Yet in this case formal responsibility is strongly reinforced by causal responsibility. I am the criminal. And I discover this via scientific forensics. Just like in noir fiction: I'm the detective and the criminal! I'm a person. I'm also part of an entity that is now a *geophysical force on a planetary scale*. (8-9)

We cannot help but wonder if Morton doesn't beg the question here with regards to the role of one's "knowledge" and whether such a thing is somehow sufficient for anything beyond one's awareness that they too "are the criminal." As we noted earlier, the children and their parents are deeply aware of their role in the climate crisis—knowledge here in Millet's novel does not seem to be the major issue. Now, to be fair to Morton, there are spots in his text where he seems to grant that there is something deeply "unconscious" about this knowledge (58). Furthermore, Morton's mention of methods of rationality and science do quite nicely link back up with standard treatments of Oedipus—as he notes: "Oedipus' *hamartia* is his reason, and his hubris is to use his wits to command everything, as if reason could shrink-wrap the universe" (62)—so where exactly would we like to do our tweaking? The context of all of this within Millet's novel forces one to wonder quite a bit about whether all (or, frankly, any) of these methods and tools of rationality are functioning within the noir universe. The leap here from Oedipus to the "noir novel" strikes us as too quick—and we would like to turn now to a somewhat little-known text by Gilles Deleuze to help show why Oedipus and his use of reason and rationality certainly can work for one particular strain of detective fiction, the noir genre in particular is quite a different quarry.

[TRANSITION BACK INTO MaKenzie's SECTION ... WITH SOME MINOR TWEAKS AND REARRANGING, I WOULD BET ...]

### MaKenzie's Notes and Shot:

\*\*"As a result of increasing population and the inner logic of expanding technicity, humans have become an unwitting geological force on a planetary scale, just as Oedipus became the unwitting slayer of his father" (9).

"Yet it is precisely Oedipus, who, having blinded himself, wanders weirdly in the world, homeless" (12).

"In laying out their schizoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari hope to do battle with what they consider to be the repressive forces of capitalism, the ones that bind humans to Oedipal family ties, thus, in their view, reinforcing larger despotic regimes. As if it were possible to circumvent Oedipus by ignoring the syndrome altogether – as if Oedipus and agriculture had never happened, as if they could simply be wiped away by wandering freely across the fields" (14).

"It has already happened, before the play begins – it has already happened, too, before Oedipus realizes it ... Is this not also the weirdness of global warming

... the uncanny sensation that we have been here before or that it has already occurred are fully and technically correct” (14).

“Every being is hobbled like Oedipus, since every being is marked by the traces of other beings” (18).

The concept of the Oedipal detective game is one that was theorized from a close reading of several contemporary thinkers. Timothy Morton, in his essay entitled “The Oedipal Logic of Ecological Awareness,” provides a great starting point for understanding this game that plays out in the novel. Morton describes the Oedipal logic as being deeply embedded within agricultural society and allowing for these sort of contradictory experiences within such a society. Millet propels this same theory in engaging the children within this detective game: as they work so hard to conceal their identities and relations, they are only further revealed; and in the words of Morton, “every being is hobbled like Oedipus, since every being is marked by the traces of other beings” (18). The children are caught in this Oedipal contradiction where they act as both the detectives and the criminals; the detective game acts as their coping mechanism and distraction from realizing their very real roles in the climate crisis – roles that may even match the ones their parents play.

---

References:

Morton, Timothy. “The Oedipal Logic of Ecological Awareness”. *Environmental Humanities*, Volume 1 (November 2012): 7-21.

———. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. New York: Columbia UP, 2016.