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When Incest Is Not A Taboo: Desire and the Land in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*[*]

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The American playwright Eugene O'Neill, who had an Irish-born father, can be studied with profit alongside Marina Carr, a contemporary Irish woman dramatist, in that both of them present not only a distinct Irish heritage in their works but also a shared interest in the theme of incest in Greek tragedies and mythology. Although their plays are not on the grand scale of *Phaedra*, *Oedipus*, or *Electra*, O'Neill, having been an editor for a collection of Greek dramas, and Carr, who has written over thirty adaptations of Greek tragedies, both dramatize the incestuous lust of their countrymen respectively in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) and *On Raftery's Hill* (2000). The difference is that the two playwrights, across decades and of different genders, challenge this taboo by critically examining the puritanical ethos to which their protagonists are subject, particularly in relation to the land. Specifically, O'Neill and Carr, to differing degrees, penetrate the forbidden desires of their characters in distress, reassessing how human complexities are conditioned by a mixture of external forces, in an attempt to ignite a new understanding of taboos.[1]

By adapting Greek tragedies and featuring the lust of women characters in New England and the Irish midlands, in a religious setting, the two playwrights have,

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1 The premiere of *Desire Under the Elms*, in particular, irritated the audience, and had the whole cast arrested and convicted for performing a play that was "mere smut, and filth. . . , morbid, lewd and obscene," qtd. in Sophus Keith Winther, "*Desire Under the Elms*, A Modern Tragedy," *Modern Drama* 3 (1960): 326. *On Raftery's Hill*, though not banned as was its earlier American counterpart, was no less controversial for having redrawn the line between affection and sex within blood relationships: "Should the incestuous abuser be regarded as mentally ill, morally reprehensible and/or a criminal?" Eamonn Jordan, "The Theatrical Representation of Incest in Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*," *Journal of Applied Social Care* 3.1 (2001): 138. I would like to express gratitude to Prof. Eamonn Jordan for his generosity of sending his article on Carr to me.

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to differing degrees, questioned the Freudian qualification of the Oedipus and Electra complexes, theatrically liberating human desires from puritanical, patriarchal, and/or colonial conditions. Rather than reinforcing accepted ethical values, their plays, as Cathy Leeney suggests, contribute to "the power to disrupt, overthrow and overwhelm narrative or story," which would "impress upon an audience not defeat, silence or obliteration but thrilling, moving, exhilarating life."[2] What should not be ignored is that both O'Neill and Carr, having a familial connection with Ireland, distant or close, have manifestly explored those desires castrated by the given morality, examining whether the forbidden desires as portrayed are imperative and "necessary for historical progress" for an immigrant/emigrant community.[3] Both communities inevitably reinforce patriarchal authority which, in their works, is often either too weak or too powerful, and thus demanding to be interrogated.

Before this article illustrates the intertextuality of the two plays, providing an alternative reading of the shared plot concerning incestuous desire, it should be noted that O'Neill and Carr can be placed in a long writing tradition in which morally forbidden desire has been one of the repeated themes from early oral culture and mythology onwards, and continues to be a subject of interest in world literatures.[4] For instance, Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad* both mention the myth of Oedipus, who marries his own mother after killing his father by accident, and later dies in exile. Aeschylus's Oedipus trilogy, Sophocles's *Oedipus the King,* John Dryden's *Oedipus* (1678), and a modern opera by Jean Cocteau and Igor Stravinsky, are examples that are often discussed. The Greek myth of Electra, in which a daughter intends to avenge the death of her father, Agamemnon, by killing her mother, also inspired Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides in (re-)writing her tragic story. Some modern psychoanalysts believe that the affection between Electra and Agamemnon is, ambiguously, incestuous.[5]

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[2] Cathy Leeney, "Feminist Meanings of Presence and Performance in Theatre: Marina Carr's *Portia Coughlan*," in *Opening the Field: Irish Women, Texts and Contexts*, ed. Patricia Boyle Haberstroh and Christine St. Peter (Cork: Cork University Press, 2007), p.92.

[3] Kelly Younger, "Irish Antigones: Burying the Colonial Symptom," *Colloquy: Text Theory Critique* 11 (2006): 152.

[4] A survey of the presentations of incestuous desire in world literatures can be found in the entry for "incest" in Jean-Charles Seigneuret ed., *Dictionary of Literary Themes and Motifs A-J* (New York: Greenwood, 1988), pp.651-665.

[5] Although Electra does not openly develop an incestuous relationship with Agamemnon in the myth, modern psychoanalysts, including Carl Jung, have argued that her hidden sexual attraction to her father was one of the causes of her mother being murdered. To illustrate how women had similar emotional attachments for their fathers as men, according to Freud's Oedipus Complex, had for their mothers, Jung used the myth of Electra as a metaphor; however, Freud did not exactly agree with this analogy. See details in Michale Mikos and David Mulroy's "Reymont's *The Peasants*: A Probable Influence on *Desire Under the Elms*," *Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* 10.1 (1985): 4-15.

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The theme of incest is not usually accepted as allowable, and is most often regarded as taboo or prohibited in religious scriptures,[6] with fear of castration, condemnation, or death. It is a desire which, interestingly, draws the attention of modern psychoanalysts when diagnosing undeveloped or suppressed mental syndromes. Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Jacques Lacan, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, for instance, have openly dissected this particular desire but with disparate interpretations.[7] By cross-examining O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*, this article will argue for a non-Freudian reading of the Oedipus and Electra complexes in these two modern adaptations, exploring how the two playwrights' Irish connections have made their works significantly intricate, and demonstrating how suppressed passion, to a certain extent, helps to operate the "desiring machine," as Deleuze and Guattari observed in their *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Specifically, the numerous adaptations of this incestuous myth, and psychoanalysts' attempts to decipher its impacts, have suggested an imaginative solution to, or escape from, the protagonists' dilemmas in these highly puritanical communities—in the Old and New Worlds on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. Although the playwrights did not portray the lust, guilt, and pleasure of the characters explicitly, the hidden consequences of incest will be deciphered more delicately in this article, so as to reveal how unspeakable desire can prompt the desiring machine to operate in a manner more complex than Freudian critics might have assumed.

O'Neill's *Desire* has been considered the "first important tragedy to be written in America,"[8] and won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936, along with his other works, for its successful attempt at portraying a New England farming community, "hardened by the passing of generations into a type of Puritanism that had gradually come to forfeit its idealistic inspiration."[9] Although O'Neill did not demonstrate Irishness very visibly in his works, his characters have often been analyzed and compared with the playwright's own family upbringing.[10] That is, given a middle

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[6] Noted passages about incest in the Bible, for instance, include Genesis 19:15, 19:32-36, 39:1-23; Leviticus 18:6, 20:11-12, 14, and 2 Peter 2:7-8. Incest is condemned as an act of wickedness, lewdness, unlawfulness, and would cause "the iniquity of the city" (Gen 19:15). If not for biological and genetic concerns, this is a much forbidden human desire in all other societies. The Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers," the story of Bellerophon and Stheneboea, and the tale of Peleus, the father of Achilles, from Apollodorus's *Library* II.3 and III.13, all suggested incestuous passion.

[7] These interpretations, not always congruous, have contributed to an in-depth understanding of the human psyche, and have led to new explorations of its subtlety.

[8] Travis Bogard, *Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.200.

[9] Horst Frenz ed., *Nobel Lectures: Literature* (Amsterdam: Elsvier, 1997), p.332.

[10] To name a few, works which discuss the implicit Irishness of Eugene O'Neill include Albert Bermel's "Art and life in Apposition"; John Henry Raleigh's "O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into*

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name, Gladstone, by his father, in honor of the British Prime Minister, W E Gladstone, for his support of Irish Home Rule at around the time of O'Neill's birth, and bestowing two on his own son, Sean Rudriaghe, O'Neill illustrated his Irishness in an interview: "One thing that explains more than anything about me is the fact that I'm Irish. And, strangely enough, it is something that all the writers who have attempted to explain me and my work have overlooked."[11]

In discussing O'Neill's dramas and his Irish connection, critics have also stressed that the playwright's unfailing interest in familial subjects has a cultural connotation as shared by most Irish Americans. They are known to have maintained strong familial and communal commitments, and continued their Irish traditional practices in the foreign land.[12] The strong family-oriented culture thus prescribed the emigrants' perception of the New World, and might have prompted O'Neill to compare the attitudes taken by his community with those found in Greek tragedies, for the joys and agonies of both seemed to be more self-contained than those of other foreign groups which merged more quickly with one another in America. These Irish Americans did "not so much leave Ireland as bring Ireland to America."[13] The poverty of, and prejudice against, Irish Americans gave O'Neill an outsider's perspective of the troubles and impulses of his American fellow-countrymen,[14] which has given many of his works a more autobiographical than simply imaginative nature.[15] His

Night and New England Irish-Catholicism"; Dorothy MacArdle's "The Dual Nature of Man"; Charles A. Merrill's "Eugene O'Neill, World-Famous Dramatist, and Family Live in Abandoned Coast Guard Station on Cape Cod"; Kristin Pfefferkorn's "Searching for Home in O'Neill's America" and Louis Sheaffer's *O'Neill: Son and Playwright*.

11 Charles A. Merrill's "Eugene O'Neill, World-Famous Dramatist, and Family Live in Abandoned Coast Guard Station on Cape Cod," rpt. in *Conversations with Eugene O'Neill*, ed. Mark W. Estrin (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), p.40.

12 Kristin Pfefferkorn, "Searching for Home in O'Neill's America," in *Eugene O'Neill's Century: Centennial Views on America's Foremost Tragic Dramatist*, ed. Richard F. Moorton, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1991), p.123.

13 John Henry Raleigh, "O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night and New England Irish-Catholicism," in *O'Neill: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Gassner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p.126.

14 Due to the poverty and religious issues, Irish immigrants in America suffered from "anti-Irish racism," which placed them on the margin of the job market. The signs which read "HELP WANTED - NO IRISH NEED APPLY" traumatized the Irish community in the early days. For details, see Maureen Murphy's "From Scapegrace to Grasta: Popular Attitudes and Stereotypes in Irish American Drama," in Irish Theatre in America: Essays on Irish Theatrical Diaspora, ed. John P. Harrington (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009), p.27, and Ignatiev Noel's *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

15 More specifically, O'Neill's father, James O'Neill, was born in Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1849, and emigrated to America in 1854. The obsession of the Tyrone family with penury and hunger in

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style of observation was also applicable to his Catholic community, earning him the name of the "Black Irishman," who "has lost his Faith and . . . [is] searching for . . . a philosophy in which he can believe again as fervently as he once believed in the simple answers of the Catholic Catechism."[16] His skepticism about religion is, presumably, mixed with his adaptations of Greek tragedies in the context of the immigrant community of New England in the first half of the twentieth century.

That Carr's drama can be intertextual with O'Neill's, apart from both being modern adaptations of a classic theme, lies in their shared highlighting of familial subject matters. The former, specifically, focuses more on the experiences of would-be Irish emigrants and their struggles for family fortune and land, whereas the latter deals with the forbidden desires in a family of Irish immigrants surviving the harshness of New England.[17] Both rural communities, one in the Irish midlands and the other in New England, are factually self-contained. The "close-knit" landscape, as described by Carr, does not simply serve as a background but as a character that interacts with other protagonists in her works.[18] Metaphorically, the landscape foreshadows the unnamable and inescapable destiny that the hero(ine)s have to strike against, and by which their sense of individuality, desires, and futures are dominated. In other words, the Irish midlands suffocate the characters, so that most of their desires and emotions become the source of physical, mental, and sexual torment. Incest, mental breakdown, and broken marriages fall into a cycle from one generation to another, and a series of family scandals is the underlying cause of current tragedies. As Carr's play presents, escaping from this suffocation, though not to be encouraged, would only be possible under the surveillance of family members and villagers. In *Raftery's*, the wish of

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Long Day's Journey into Night (1956) was part of the upbringing which O'Neill received.

16 qtd. In Mark W Estrin, *Conversations with Eugene O'Neill* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), p.204.

17 A conventional reading of O'Neill's *Desire* often includes a cross-reference to the Hippolytus-Phaedra-Theseus legend in Greek mythology. Comparative studies of the intertextuality of O'Neill's play, Euripides's *Hippolytus* and *Medea*, Seneca the Younger's *Phaedra*, and Sophocles's *Oedipus Trilogy*, also demonstrate the canonity of these tragedies in classic and modern literatures. King David in the Bible has also been a subject of comparison with Ephraim in *Desire*, both of whom incur sexual competition with their sons for women who are considerably younger than themselves. See 1 Kings 1-6. The names in *Desire Under the Elms* also bear biblical references which reincarnate "the rural New England setting of 1850, but resonate well with the legalistic, Old Testament ethos." Patrick Bowles, "Another Biblical Parallel in *Desire Under the Elms*," *Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* 2.3 (1979): 11. To name a few, Eben is a shortened form of "Ebenezer," which means "stone of help" in commemoration of the divine assistance to Israel in its battle against the Philistines (See 1 Sam. 7:3-12; John 11:32-44). The name Ephraim suggests the progenitor of the Israelites. Abbie is a diminutive of Abishag the Shunhamite, a young virgin brought to King David as "nurse, lover, and, symbolically, mother, to an aging ruler." Bowles, p.12.

18 Murphy, p.45.

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Shalome, the grandmother ill in bed, to return to Kinneygar, India, where her parents emigrated and where she spent a happy childhood, is prohibited by her family. Barred from leaving the house, she is "like an auld record that's stuck in the groove."[19] With a son who "put stop to all . . . [and] never liked to see people enjoy themselves,"[20] most of the other characters in *Raftery's* are trapped in the household, with the exception of the deceased daughter-in-law (who is also Dinah's mother and Ded's wife).

Before the article dwells upon the different ways in which the two playwrights have approached the forbidden desires differently, it might be necessary to review briefly how desire has long been a topic of interest for modern psychoanalysts. Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, R.D. Laing, Wilhelm Reich, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, among others, have all attempted to dissect the development and distortion of human mentality by unearthing desires in conflict.[21] Freud, for instance, argues that the cause of neuroses resides in either suppressed and unfulfilled sexual desire or an unsolved castration complex that originates during the formation of selfhood in childhood.[22] However, this assumption has drawn its share of attackers, among whom the radical French Marxist critics, Deleuze and Guattari, explicate a "Desiring Machine" in their *Anti-Oedipus* monograph. This "Desiring Machine" invalidates the existence of a family triangle as the ground of the Freudian Oedipal complex, contending that human desires actually operate collectively as a machine, but at the same time "interrupt or partially drain off" another mechanism in this machine.[23] Deleuze and Guattari also claim that desires should not be circumscribed within the family. As they observe, the overemphasis on the influence of family on individuals has inappropriately separated people with psychological problems from a larger social sphere, and deterritorialized them from the community.[24] In their observation, Freud's Oedipal model of human desires can only be a derivative, rather than an alternative,

19 Marina Carr, *On Raftery's Hill* (London: Faber & Faber, 2000), p.12.

20 Carr, p.11.

21 Freud's Oedipus Complex and Lacan's Mirror Stage, for instance, illustrate that our selfhood is formulated with sexual desire-suppressed during infancy and early childhood. Laing and Reich take a Freudo-Marxist approach by arguing that the social-economic structure is underlaid with all forms of sexual repression, which thus reinforce bourgeois morality and consciousness.

22 For details, see Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, vol. 1, pp.27, 245, 359-360.

23 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p.5.

24 To replace the familalism which Freudian psychoanalysis promotes, Deleuze and Guattari propose a new paradigm, "Body with Organs," or *BwO*, arguing that desire resembles an "amorphous, undifferentiated fluid," which is "smooth, slippery, opaque, taut." Deleuze and Guattari, p.9. Foucault, in support of Deleuze and Guattari, recognizes that desires are, by nature, nomadic, and the Oedipus complex, having been overemphasized, "subjugate[s] the multiplicity of desire to the twofold law of structure and lack," p. xiii.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

of the multidimensional and multivalent desiring machine.[25] This article, while not negating Freud's psychoanalytic assumptions, will present a non-Freudian reading of the two plays in wider social and economic contexts, as they relate to hidden desires in Irish emigrant/immigrant communities.

It should be noted that studies of O'Neill's *Desire* often refer to the Hippolytus-Phaedra-Theseus legend in Greek mythology for their similar storylines. What overwhelms the protagonists in these works, however, is the forbidden desire to which they are committed and which makes them behave rather eccentrically. However, it can be argued that Freud's Oedipus complex might have inappropriately convinced the critics and audiences that *Desire* is *no more than* a modern family tragedy. O'Neill, at the beginning of the play, in fact illuminates the social network wherein all forms of desire are interlocked under the enormous shadow of the elms. That is, the two "enormous elms [which] brood oppressively over the house" have "a sinister maternity" that makes life "appalling," "sagging," and "monotonous."[26] The elms act more than as shadows, or props, but as a powerful character that predetermines the flow of desire which either expels the characters far to the west for gold, or prompts them to be lustful and greedy for property as a token of patriarchal authority and legacy. If the maternity of the shadow is "sinister," as O'Neill presents it, what makes the maternity bitter can be not only "a crushing, jealous absorption" between lovers or intimate family members, but proprietorship over the farm.[27] More specifically, the fight between Ephraim Cabot and the family of "Eben's Maw. . . . [for] [h]er folks was contestin' me at law over my deeds t' the farm—my farm!"[28] and the failed wish of her relatives for claiming back the farm, is apparently a breakdown within the desiring machine, which insistently torments every member of the Cabot family.

What is noteworthy is that this farm is located on infertile land with limited financial prospects: "We been slaves t' stone walls here."[29] The reason for claiming the farm for both sides is, presumably, not for capitalistic profits but to fulfill an implicit sense of attachment to the land, which was part of the essential cultural convention for Irish immigrants. Although O'Neill did not particularly specify the Cabots as being an Irish immigrant family, Eben and Ephraim, like most newcomers to New England in the mid-nineteenth century, have both endeavored to bring wasteland under cultivation.[30] The reason why their attachment to the land may reflect an implicit but deep-seated Irish rural convention, "where farmers farmed on their own

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25 Deleuze and Guattari's desiring machine does not necessarily supersede that of Freud's. Lacan, however, expands his Oedipal model to all social dimensions that contribute to the desiring machine. I would like to credit the reviewers of this essay for this reminder.

26 Eugene O'Neill, *Three Plays* (New York: Vintage, 1959), p.2.

27 O'Neill, p.2.

28 O'Neill, p.32.

29 O'Neill, p.15.

30 *Desire Under the Elms* is set "in the Cabot farmhouse in New England, in the year of 1850," p.2.

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behalf with the help of relatives. . . . [and were] engaged in raising cattle, sheep and pigs,"[31] is because the traditional inheritance system in rural Ireland had been a factor determining success, status, and security. The inherent values of the land and the family were thus brought to the New World with Irish immigrants. That is, the sons who were not entitled to any land nor got a job elsewhere would be forced into emigration, with famine being another impulse.

Fear of losing proprietorship of the land to their colonial lords had also contributed to the immigrants' attachment to the land, even though it was never a profitable commodity.[32] It can thus be posited that O'Neill's portrait of Eben and Ephraim's struggle for the lawful inheritance of the land derives from his observations of the practice and sentiments of his Irish-American countrymen in the New World. In other words, Eben's insistent claim to the land, and refusal to share it with his own father and siblings, are not entirely because of his unsolved Oedipus complex, but because the land, as a crucial element of the food chain, would bring forth all kinds of social interactions in the future—with promising fringe benefits. That is to say, in *Desire* the land is a prerequisite for the unfailing operation of the "Desiring Machine," in which all social networks are interlocked but antagonistic at the same time. For instance, the tension and lust between Eben and Abbie have ignited physical and emotional rivalries that pertain to two American social networks: one from the east and the other from the west.

The desire for land (and its adjunct properties) draws these figures together, attracting and fighting against one another, even though Abbie and Eben originate from different immigrant communities. Eben's half brothers, Simeon and Peter, leave home to seek gold in California, because the land is too meager to assure any success. Although O'Neill did not specify whether Simeon and Peter earn what they wish for with the six hundred dollars they get from Eben, the money represents their desire for

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31 Terence Brown, *Ireland: A Social and Cultural History 1922-1985* (London: Fontana, 1985), pp.22-23.

32 The anxiety about, or grief for, the loss of the land to colonial (land) lords is also reflected in many Irish dramas and novels. W.B. Yeats' *The Countess Cathleen* (1892), *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902, coauthored with Lady Gregory), *The Hour Glass* (1904), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1904), and *Deirdre* (1907), exemplified the retrieval of the land in either realistic or mythic manners. What is worth noting is that major Irish writers and orators who lived through the fervent political upheavals during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries all expressed opinions on the land issue. To name a few of these figures, James Clarence Mangan, Herald Griffin, Isaac Butt, Sean O'Casey, Padraic Colum, J.M Synge, R.C. Murray, George Sigerson, George Russell, Thomas MacDonagh, John O'Leary, Michael Davitt, and Patrick Kavanagh. Popular novels on the Irish Famine and the decline of Big Houses suggest how insecure the Irish felt about their power over their native land. What I would like to argue is that Irish immigrants' strong attachment to the land was a prevalent cultural phenomenon in which the land serves as the basic element of a coherent identity to be claimed.

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land in the hope of finding more promising wealth in the west. It can be noted that Simeon and Peter, after leaving home, would still have to deal with immigrants who—with their own dreams—join this collective "desiring machine" from all parts of the world. The social and cultural networks which the Cabots belong to would continue forming a melting pot in which mingle the different prospects of this state of settlers.

The desire for land also troubles the characters in Carr's *Raftery's*, despite the fact that the female Oedipus complex, or Electra complex in Jung's terms, inevitably causes them great distress and leads to bitter consequences.[33] Unlike the newcomers to America and Irish immigrants' strong attachment to the land, the female characters in *Raftery's* appear more resentful towards the claustrophobic Irish midlands, and would like to escape from them. The land, also not promising any fertility, imprisons the female protagonists who fail to accept any gentleman suitors but, sexually and emotionally, identify with the father who deflowered them at a young age. Dinah Raftery, for instance, lost her virginity to her father after the death of her mother, assuming the wifely role and giving birth to her sister/daughter, Sorrel. Red Raftery, the father, however, was also born from an incestuous relationship between his grandfather and his mother, Shalome (Shalome is therefore the grandmother of Dinah).

The home "land" therefore initiates a cycle of sexual violation which is acquiesced in and re-enacted through different generations of the Raftery family. Although critics may argue that it was the Oedipus complex that prompts Dinah and Shalome to fall in love with their own fathers, the land itself and the inheritance system encourage the enactment of this unspeakable desire. In particular, Shalome's affair with her own father confirms the inheritance of the farm to Red, their son/grandson. Dinah's incestuous relationship with Red also reflects a similar case, because Dinah's mother, who died young, did not give birth to a son who was fit enough to inherit the farm. Ded Raftery, the only son of Red and his deceased wife, is not eligible for heirship due to being under medication for his mental problems, and has been forced to live on his own in a cowshed with "cowdung all over his clothes."[34] He is prevented from inheriting the farm, as his father observes:

> Any other father'd have him in an asylum. Not me though, whah am I to do wud the farm, Isaac? There hundred acre a the finest land this side a the Shannon and west a the Pale. And me only son and heir can't tell night from day, oak from

[33] Jung coined the term, the Electra complex, to explain female psycho-sexual development. The idea largely derives from Freud's Oedipus complex but refers more to female libidinal attachment to the father figure and hostility towards the mother, after the girl realizes her lack of a penis and develops "penis envy." Freud, however, explicitly rejected this term, for it "seeks to emphasize the analogy between the attitude of the two sexes" (p.3), and simplifies the complex relations between children and their parents and siblings. Freud insisted on using the phrase "feminine Oedipus attitude" in his own writing.

[34] Carr, p.7.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

ash, he'd milk a bull and drink ud in his tay and never know the differ.[35]

It can be put forward that the claustrophobic, or self-centered, Irish midlands are the background cause of these incestuous relationships in relation to the legitimate inheritance of the land, in that inheritance, as a social mechanism, is operated in order to fulfill personal and/or communal desires, and *vice versa*. Conflicting but prohibited desires in both plays can be deduced as initiating a cycle of mental and sexual violence hidden in the "most sordid and mean blind alleys of life," whereas both playwrights dramatize the forbidden incestuous desires through an examination that is more poetic than moral.[36] The authority over, or desire for, the land serves as an imperative for those involved in the "desiring machine." Freud's interests in boys' and girls' identification with their mothers or fathers, therefore, cannot always be tenable, as the proprietorship is most likely confirmed or to be confirmed when one is born and regardless of gender differences. My argument is that, since most newborns have an instinctive claim of a "territory" by engaging themselves with a nipple, the Oedipus complex is activated *after* they realize the existence of their fathers as potential competitors.

More specifically, in *Desire*, Eben tenaciously "maks stone walls . . . to fence us in,"[37] and his insistence on sole inheritance of the farm, and Ephraim's denial of his lawful right, suggests their strong sense of territoriality, but in conflict. Ephraim's attachment to the land as an instinct can be understood from his contentment at spending many hours with the livestock: "I slept good—down with the cows. They know how t' sleep. They're teachin' me."[38] Apparently, his sense of security about the land is always reconfirmed by contact with the domesticated livestock, which produce no threats against his ownership of the farm.

In *Raftery's*, although the land has been much contaminated by human "carnage," none of the family members would ever consider disowning it: "We were big loose monsters . . . hurlin through the air, wud carnage in our hearts and blood under our nails."[39] It is no longer a farm as "purty/pretty" as the New World described in *Desire* and as praised by those having recently arrived in America. The famine-racked Irish midlands, though they carry bitter memories as well as hopes, are desirable for every member of the Raftery family.

The issue of inheritance of the land becomes more insistent when Sorrel plans to get married to Dara Mood: "Why doesn't he sell ud? I've enough saved to buy half ud is and the banks'd give me the rest. Wan day I'll own all this, Sorrel, you'll see."[40] Regardless of whether Sorrel and Dara plan to settle down on the land they are about

35 Carr, p.17.

36 Eugene O'Neill, *Three Plays* (New York: Vintage, 1959), p.450.

37 O'Neill, p.4.

38 O'Neill, p.38.

39 Carr, p.30.

40 Carr, p.31.

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to inherit, or to sell it for immediate income, the land is the basis upon which most human desires can be fulfilled, and which will (re-)confirm their social standing as the local gentry. What is more interesting is that Red, the father, akin to Ephraim in *Desire*, is very resistant to letting the farm go to an outsider, namely Sorrel's fiancé. His instinct of territoriality is manifest in his argument with Sorrel: "I heard you and Dara Mood scheming again me, tryin to stale me farm, next thing yees'll pisin me."[41] With reluctance, Red still grants the couple "fifty acre(s) and a cheque for twenty grands," in case his daughter would be "peg[ged] . . . into the world like a broken cup," and on condition that they "don't come lookin for more when they put me bones down."[42]

What should be pointed out is that Red's incestuous relationship with Dinah, his daughter, is not necessarily due to the Electra complex, as Freud and Jung presumed, or because of their love for Sorrel: "For eigheen years I watched you and minded you and kept ya safe!"[43] It is, initially, her mother's demand that she sleep with the husband: "she comes in behind me and says ouh a nowhere, you're to sleep in wud your father tonigh. . . . I was twelve. . . . we don't aither buh we want ud to stop. Ud's just like children playin in a field ah some awful game."[44] Although Dinah and Red do feel tormented by their guilt, the Electra complex is not evidently an instinct between Dinah and Red. The intimate relationship—which lasted for a couple of years—eventually started when Dinah was too young to find her own lovers in the culturally closed Irish midlands.

The incestuous relationship, though morally unacceptable, can nonetheless be examined in a broader scope as a social mechanism, rather than from only a Freudian perspective. In Deleuze and Guattari's view, the land, or territory, is the basis of capitalism which may bring forth a schizophrenic social system. This system prompts the individual to subvert or deterritorialize, and then re-territorialize, social groupings, so as to confirm one's own standing. That is, the church, the family, or any communities which occupy a practical or theoretical "territory," are liable to be restructured or re-territorialized in this desiring social machine at some point of history: "what they deterritorialize with one hand, they reterritorialize with the other."[45]

The inheritance or division of the farm in both plays could, therefore, facilitate the operation of a capitalistic society, and fulfill desires at both personal and public levels. In *Desire*, Eben's incestuous affair with his stepmother is ignited partially by lust and attraction, but also partially in expectation of securing the farm for their shared benefit, by means of the heirship of their *own* son. Nonetheless, Ephraim, resisting any manner of re-territorialization through marriage, insists that Eben "ought t' be marrin'

41 Carr, p.34.
42 Carr, p.51.
43 Carr, p.57.
44 Carr, p.57.
45 Deleuze and Guattari, p.257

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

[someone else] . . . . [to] 'arn a share o' a farm that way."[46] Ephraim's attachment to the land is further reinforced by his own twisted interpretation of Abbie's wishes about driving Eben away:

> she says yew'n me ought t' have a son—I know we kin, she says—an' I says, if we do, ye kin have anythin' I've got ye've a mind t'. An' she says, I wants Eben cut off so's this farm'll be mine when ye die!"[47]

Ephraim's interpretation may be partially true but not at all defensible, especially after Abbie and Eben, falling in love, assume they could secure their rights over the farm with a newborn son. Apparently, their desire to re-territorialize the farm has to be censored by the community, as the neighbors have suspected their honesty. The gossip and jeers that are flying about, and the interference of the police, function to keep the social desiring machine running. In Deleuze and Guattari's words, the social mechanisms usually function simultaneously with "[d]ecoded desires and desires for decoding [which] have always existed," and thus capitalism and its breakdown can be operated universally by "the conjunction of deterritorialized flows" over centuries.[48] The infanticide which Abbie commits is thus an embodiment of decoded desire—subject to the puritanical sense of morality in New England.

In *Raftery's*, the land is also securable with an incestuous affair between Red and Dinah, while the forbidden relationship is immorally encouraged by the deceased mother/wife. Similarly to Ephraim in *Desire*, Red is also very reluctant to part with *his* farm, proposing to give a substitute for the land—as part of the dowry for Sorrel—in the shape of a check for twenty pounds. Red's parsimony lies in the fact that the land, capitalistically speaking, could earn him pecuniary profits for the foreseeable future. Put in another way, if he lost the land to Sorrel and her fiancé, he could never easily retrieve it, but the twenty pounds is easily recoverable. As a result, the land is the capital which Red, Sorrel, and Dara all want to (re-)territorialize, or hold on to, so as to maintain or create the maximum benefits.

The Rafterys' sole tie with the farm is further confirmed by the incestuous behavior between Red and Dinah, even though their mutual attachment is mixed with guilt and pleasure. This tie is further recognized after they give birth to Sorrel as both their daughter and sister. Although both Dinah and Red would like to quit this immoral relationship, Dinah, having been deflowered by her own father, knows well that she should expect no other suitor, having such a familial scandal behind her.[49] The

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46 O'Neill, pp.45-46.

47 O'Neill, p.46.

48 Deleuze and Guattari, p.224.

49 In her youth, Dinah did have a love affair with Dara Mood's brother, Jimmy, whereas the incestuous relationship with her own father deeply troubled her, so "I brok id off wud Jimmy fierce sudden and fierce hard . . . things was rickety for me thah time. Ud's allas the wans you're fondest of ya drop the axe on," Carr, p.55. Apparently, Dinah was so tormented about the socially forbidden relationship that she could not, and would not, feel mentally free to date any gentleman

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

imperative of re-territorializing the farm is therefore postponed almost infinitely due to this ongoing incestuous relationship. Not until Sorrel and Dara plan to get married is the desire for the land raised again, so that this incestuous affair has to fall under the social or moral supervision of the desiring machine—which interlocks the desires of all its members in one way or another. It can thus be judged that what the father contributes to the Raftery family, after the passing of his wife, is that he successfully secures the land for as long as he can, unlike Ephraim in *Desire*, who makes the land immediately available to the new wife. The price Red pays, which is hard to justify, is Dinah's virginity and her chances of getting married.

It is also evident that, having been, respectively, an editor of an anthology of Greek tragedies and a writer of over thirty adaptations of Greek dramas,[50] O'Neill and Carr demonstrated their interest in contextualizing the Oedipus and Electra themes in a modern framework, incorporating elements of Greek mythology despite the different perspectives and endings that they introduced. What drew them to the re-dramatization of human complexities in a modern context, as O'Neill noted in the introduction to his edition of *Seven Famous Greek Plays*, is the universality of these human emotions: "Equally astonishing is the pervading obscenity, so abundant and so varied that it cannot be ignored or excised. It is so closely interwoven into almost every part of these plays that to expurgate is to destroy."[51] What differentiates the plays of O'Neill and Carr from those of their Greek predecessors, however, is the way in which they provided an alternative understanding of the forbidden desire, which, in different cultural scenarios, might not have had to end so tragically, giving a new perspective to their contemporary audiences.

In *Desire*, the infanticide which Abbie commits, Eben's call for police investigation and his falsely admitted complicity, Ephraim's curse on the couple that they be hanged, and Eben's admittance of his moral sin, indeed characterize Eben as a hero with tragic flaws. Ostensibly, Eben resembles Hippolytus in the myth of Phaedra, who blackens her stepson for raping her due to her unrequited love for him. Eben and

caller.

50 As stated earlier, O'Neill had a scholarly interest in Greek drama, editing *Seven Famous Greek Plays* with Whitney J. Oates in 1938. Marianne McDonald surveyed Irish playwrights' interests in Greek mythology, among whom Carr has written over thirty adaptations of Greek mythology for different occasions. Frank McGuinness observed that Carr "knows what the Greeks know.. .. I am certain... she writes in Greek." See McDonald's "Classics as Celtic Firebrand: Greek Tragedy, Irish Playwrights, and Colonialism," *Theatre Stuff: Critical Essays on Contemporary Irish Theatre*, ed. Eamonn Jordan (Dublin: Carysfort, 2000), pp.16-27, and M.K. Martinovich's "The Mythical and the Macabre: The Study of Greeks and Ghosts in the Shaping of the American premiere of *By the Bog of Cats*…," in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: "before rules was made,"* ed. Cathy Leeney and Anna McMullan (Dublin: Carysfort, 2003), pp.114-127.

51 Eugene O'Neill and Whitney J. Oates eds., *Seven Famous Greek Plays* (New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. xxiii.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

Hippolytus are both cursed by their fathers and die tragically, Phaedra commits suicide, and Abbie is about to be executed for infanticide. Nonetheless, the ending in *Desire*, though also tragic with the foreseeable death of the couple, can be seen as profoundly redirecting the desiring machine to some positive results. That is, Ephraim, at the end of the play, albeit much disillusioned but somehow illumined by the disastrous love affair, decides to free all the cows and burn down the farm to which he has been so insistently attached:

> T' hell with the farm! I'm leavin' it! I've turned the cows an' other stock loose! I've druv 'em into the woods whar they kin be free! By freein' 'em, I'm freein' myself; I'm quittin' here today! I'll set fire t' house an' barn an' watch 'em burn. . . . an' I'll will the fields back t' God, so that nothin' human kin never touch 'em.[52]

As elaborated earlier, the land has been an object of desire for all the parties intending to lay a firm social foundation in the desiring machine. The idea of claiming territory, as an instinct, can be the origin of desires and emotions that are unlikely to be erased but indeed sustained, even if they are not morally approved. Ephraim's disclaimer to the land and talk of "freein' myself" suggests his extended resistance to the subjugation of the land, which has initiated his animosity toward his sons, lust for women, and uncertain belief in God. Realizing that Eben has already "swapped it t' Sim an' Peter fur their share o' the farm—t' pay their passage t' Californi-a,"[53] Ephraim, who seems to be indefatigable, finally recognizes his own weakness: "I kin see [God's] hand usin' Eben t' steal t' keep me from weakness."[54] The farm in flames and Ephraim's recognition of his own weakness imply the purification of the desiring machine after all the relevant parties have admitted their own sins: greed, lust, incest, dishonesty, ambition, and betrayal.

Unlike the myth of Phaedra, the ending of *Desire* sheds positive light on characters in suffering, given that all of them lose their right to the land after the infanticide. They are freed from the burden of the land as capital, and the lesson of compassion is manifest after Abbie and Eben are arrested and are about to be sent under guard to different places: "They kiss. . . . Eben takes Abbie's hand. They go out the door in rear . . . . They both stand for a moment looking up raptly in attitudes strangely aloof and devout."[55] The couple are reconciled and learn to appreciate the goodness of life: "Sun's a rizin'/ Purty, hain't it?" says Eben as his last words to Abbie.[56] What is most profound, however, is that O'Neill does not negate the cycle of

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52 O'Neill, p.57.

53 O'Neill, p.57.

54 *bid*. The overwhelming elms, justifiably, contribute a counterforce to the strong ego of the aging father, Ephraim, who constantly refers to the God of the Old Testament for uncompromising moral guidance.

55 O'Neill, p. 58.

56 O'Neill, p. 58.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

de-territorialization and re-territorializaion in human history. The farm will probably be taken over by the sheriff as an external force who is "looking around at the farm enviously. . . . Wished I owned it!"[57] The reclaiming of the free land may therefore bring forth a new cycle of sins and pleasure, so that the desiring machine will continue to function, regardless of the presence of the Cabot family.

The ending of *Raftery's* is unconventional, with a rather philosophical insight into forbidden desire and the issue of love. The division of the land to create a dowry for Sorrel is dismissed after Dara realizes that he will not get a substantial portion of the land, but only a check for twenty pounds from his future father-in-law. He argues with Sorrel, for his current social status as "a scrubber from the Valley" will not be improved, should he not be gifted with the profitable land.[58] Unable to bear with Dara's pride, and knowing that her fiancé was more interested in the land than in herself, she calls off the wedding without much hesitation. Regarding Dinah's incestuous relationship with her father, the playwright, not following the traditional characterization of Phaedra as a tragic heroine, reconsiders the significance of love in a modern context. Specifically, Carr does not particularly victimize Dinah, as most sociologists and psychiatrists might have done, but presents her as a mature woman who is brave in the face of her own forbidden desire and its consequences. That she and Sorrel can consider their incestuous family with humor, instead of being ashamed or judgmental, implies a new insight which the playwright would like to introduce:[59]

> Dinah . . . . We're a respectable family, we love wan another and whahever happened ya happened ya be accident. D'ya honestly think we'd harm wan another?
>
> Sorrel Spare me your Legion a' Mary canter. We're a band a gorillas swingin from the trees.[60]

Sorrel's humor about her family as a band of gorillas may be taken to show how the playwright justifies the issues of human desire and sense of territory. Put in another way, the sense of territory by which human desires are driven can be strengthened either through marriage or an incestuous relationship. Shalome's undying motivation in leaving home in search of her deceased father, who has behaved incestuously with her daughter, suggests desire for the home land, or instinct of claiming the territory, even though she is portrayed as being mentally disordered. As to the former, the territory can usually be enlarged if one marries into a family with land. Dara in *Raftery's* and Ephraim's expectation of Eben's marriage with some other woman in the town in *Desire* both suggest the intention of creating or enlarging one's territory as an

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57 O'Neill, p. 58.

58 Carr, p.54.

59 Dinah and Sorrel's father, Red, was given birth by their grandmother, Shalome, who committed incest with their great grandfather. Sorrel is both Dinah's daughter and sister, with Red as the biological father of both of them.

60 Carr, p.58.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

instinct—which is applicable to most creatures. As to the latter, an incestuous affair, if not to be judged moralistically, would not necessarily break down the operation of the desiring machine, but would at least secure the given size of the territory. The loving human relationships—with mixed desires and affection, as Shalome/her father, Dinah/Red, and Abbie/Eben have experienced heartily—therefore contribute to social stability, rather than creating an ethical crisis, to some extent, provided that morality does not have to be forced upon them and confine the natural course of desire.

In particular, Sorrel's humor about humans being not much different from gorillas, and Ephraim's contentment at being with the cows in his barn, disclose their ignorance of human nature, as well as their human fear of desire if not under social control. The negation of desire on the part of ourselves and others has not only ostracized and condemned those in socially unfavorable relationships and sexual activities, but has also created walls, visible and invisible, among people of different ethnicities, sexual orientations, or/and classes. Wars between nations and religions, or fights within a family and community, can thus break out, and are followed by more hatred and resentment.

What O'Neill and Carr were attempting to achieve by rewriting the classical myths was, justifiably, to rebuild universal understanding of tragic heroes and heroines from a more humane perspective, leading the audiences to approach human complexities with compassion. By appreciating how both Carr and O'Neill re-interpreted classical myth, we can see how the former was the inheritor of the latter, as she specified in an interview in which she talked about exploring the conflict of human desires: "It's hard to beat . . . Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey into Night.*"[61] Following O'Neill's representation of Abbie as a self-determined and compassionate woman, rather than a sinner, Carr rewrote the experiences of women in the Irish midlands, "inverting the actions of the Poor Old Woman in the earlier drama and refusing the myth of an idealized Mother Ireland."[62]

In other words, both playwrights individualize these mythical characters by exploring their desires in conflict and redefining their significance for contemporary audiences. It can also be understood that both playwrights, writing in the contexts of emigrant/immigrant societies in connection with Ireland, were more interested in the relation "between man and God, [than] between man and man," as the puritanical

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[61] Carr is a well-read playwright. In her interview with Mike Murphy, she mentioned Sean O'Casey, Samuel Beckett, and J.M. Synge, from all of whom she received positive influence. She also mentioned Anton Chechov, Henrik Ibsen, Tennessee Williams, and O'Neill, whose observations on human nature might have deepened and/or renewed Carr's understanding of delicate human complexities which her predecessors had not unearthed so carefully. Mike Murphy and Cliodhna Ni Anluain, *Reading the Future: Irish Writers in Conversation with Mike Murphy* (Dublin: Lilliput, 2000), p.56.

[62] Melissa Sihra, "Introduction," *Women in Irish Drama: A Century of Authorship and Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2007), p.19.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

ambiance serves to reinforce emotional taboos.[63] Carr's realistic approach to women in the Irish midlands therefore interrogates the patriotic nature of Kathleen ni Houlihan, who was dispossessed of her farmhouse and "four beautiful green fields," as dramatized in the 1902 play by Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats.[64]

O'Neill's portrait of Ephraim as a harsh and hypocritical father (about his lust) also questions the fatherly authority of Puritanism in New England. What O'Neill and Carr have brought forth is a form of deconstruction of the given desiring machine whereby men and women of chastity do not always meet but are maneuvered, often indefinitely. The resistance of the Cabots and Red to re-territorialization can also be seen symbolically as being against patriarchal, patriotic power, or the entire social structure, as these immigrants and emigrants have to either claim a piece of land from the natives or give it up to the colonizers. Implications such as these may be more complicated than those defined by the Oedipus or Electra complexes.

Part of the shared significance of the two plays lies in the fact that some of the protagonists, for example Ephraim and Ded, can retrieve a sense of security when retreating to the barns. The intention which O'Neill and Carr shared in depicting this seeming congeniality between humans and domestic animals may have been to remind the audience of an ignored perspective whereby humans should act as part of the natural world, rather than as dominant social or political beings. Satirically, that humans can interact with farm animals more peacefully than between themselves is because animals cannot produce real threats against people, whose superior position is thus reinforced, whereas interpersonal interrelations are always frustrating and fragile.

What should also be noted is that both playwrights, through presenting a more agreeable interaction between humans and nature at the end of their dramas, suggest how human expectation of, or desire for, the companionship of domesticated animals is actually more subject to the natural temperament of the latter. Therefore, human desire can hardly be freed from external forces, or the human-centered desiring machine, as Deleuze and Guattari phrased it. Religion, for instance, does not alleviate the sufferings of the protagonists, nor is it able to stand in a position beyond the far-reaching desiring machine. Having said this, what subjugates the desires of members of the emigrant and immigrant communities unceasingly, however, is the silent but forceful land—which haunts in the background. Only love and compassion, as presented by O'Neill and Carr through Abbie and Dinah, can strategically countervail the domination of the land—*who* has been playing the role of a demanding operator of the desiring machine—for peace and justice.

63 Joseph Wood Krutch, "Introduction," *Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill* (New York: 1954), p.450.

64 William Butler Yeats, *Collected Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p.81.

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

如果亂倫不是禁忌：論尤金・歐尼爾的《榆樹下的慾望》與瑪麗納・卡爾的《在拉夫特利的山坡上》中的土地與畸戀

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英美學界向來將尤金・歐尼爾（Eugene O'Neill）界定成美國劇作家，鮮少細究其愛爾蘭移民背景，如何影響劇作中所呈現以土地爲中心之倫理價值，及所扭曲之人性。生活常處於「流放」狀態的歐尼爾，如同其他厭棄愛爾蘭之封閉文化而前往他國追尋創作自由的藝術家們，對人性底層之慾望均有深刻的描摹，尤其當赤裸裸的情慾與社會道德相衝突，終至逾越界線時的掙扎與矛盾，尤其令觀眾駭異不知所措。然而，當代愛爾蘭本土劇作家瑪麗納・卡爾（Marina Carr）對禁忌情慾卻有不同的詮釋：亂倫成爲一種「必要的惡」，是一種與生俱來，隱晦但非不值得救贖的情愫；它也是來自人類內心情慾極限的眞實情感，不應一味加以譴責。本文除了探索兩位劇作家如何突破傳統希臘悲劇處理亂倫情結的框架，並透過心理分析家如佛洛依德（Sigmund Freud）、德勒茲（Gilles Deleuze）、瓜塔里（Félix Guattari）等人對「私密慾望」之剖析，重新定義亂倫爲「慾望機器」（The Desiring Machine）的打火石，是人理解自己、宗族、社會時必須直視的慾望，不能視而不見。

關鍵詞：尤金・歐尼爾　瑪麗納・卡爾　愛爾蘭裔美國人　佛洛依德　德勒茲與瓜塔里　慾望機器

臺灣大學學術期刊資料庫

When Incest Is Not A Taboo: Desire and the Land in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Marina Carr's *On Raftery's Hill*[*]

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The American playwright Eugene O'Neill, who had an Irish-born father, can be studied with profit alongside Marina Carr, a contemporary Irish woman dramatist, in that both of them present not only relevant Irish heritage in their works but also a shared interest in the incestuous relationships in Greek tragedies. Although their plays are not on the grand scale of *Phaedra* or *Oedipus*, O'Neill, having been an editor for a collection of Greek dramas, and Carr, who has written over thirty adaptations of Greek tragedies, both dramatize the incestuous lust of their countrymen in *Desire under the Elms* (1924) and *On Raftery's Hill* (2000), respectively. Incestuous passion, however, is not simply, as Sigmund Freud suggests, an expression of inherent but repressed sexual love between family members, but is mixed with desire for the legitimate inheritance of land and self-recognition. Although O'Neill and Carr both apply social ethics to these tragic family affairs, they introduce an unconventional, and not necessarily celebrated, presentation of incest, so as to challenge this taboo and the patriarchal violence to which the father figures in both plays resort and impose on their families. O'Neill's and Carr's reinterpretations of incest in rural settings across the Atlantic Ocean and almost seven decades both question the stereotypical, often male-privileged depiction of resentful female victims in Greek tragedies. This paper will therefore examine how the two playwrights—with Irish connections abroad and at home—dramatize the Oedipus and Electra complexes of the characters, and the playwrights' interrogation of the social mechanisms to which their characters are subject.

Keywords: Eugene O'Neill Marina Carr Irish-American Sigmund Freud Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari The Desiring Machine

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