The Consciousness of Guilt
in Tragic Experience

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis is an attempt to understand tragic guilt. My starting point is a comparison of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* with Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The question of "guilt" is treated very differently in these two plays. Oedipus' guilt is a result of an action which is discovered, not chosen. He is the victim of a curse which lies upon his family and thus his own guilt is an ambiguous thing. He suffers against a background of a Law which demands punishment and a promise from a god that he shall be "saved". *Oedipus at Colonus* begins, as does *Oedipus Rex*, after the decisive act of murder and incest has been committed. But *Macbeth* begins before anything has been done; Macbeth is presented with a possibility and he chooses to believe that he can make it a reality. We are allowed to see the moment at which guilt appears in the individual. Macbeth becomes guilty before the very image of himself murdering Duncan. In Greek tragedy the guilt is often blood-guilt, a curse which descends from one member of a family to another and may devastate an entire house. But in *Macbeth* the guilt begins in the desires of one man. Macbeth is left with a personal despair which is different from the suffering that Oedipus undergoes.

In the novels of Thomas Hardy, the perspective on guilt has shifted from the privacy that surrounds Macbeth at his death to the social world of nineteenth century England. Michael Henchard is perhaps closest to Macbeth in that he is destroyed more by the forces in his own person-
ality than by the pressures of external society. But with Tess we have a heroine who is "pure", a woman who is defeated more as a result of the failings in a society than by any personal faults. There is little feeling of her having any particular "guilt". Jude Fawley's particular "tragedy" also must be seen in terms of the society that moves around him, its laws and conventions. The guilt is never entirely his own, nor is he simply an innocent victim.

The presence of a definite society is hardly felt at all in the two novels of Conrad. Jim is a "romantic", a young man barely past adolescence who is obsessed with a concept of honour which he feels he has betrayed in a moment of cowardice. But he seems to become guilty in a deeper sense because of this obsession; he betrays others by choosing to live in an imaginary world of romantic achievement. Nostromo is also obsessed with a dream: to be a Man of the People. If Conrad's characters become guilty, it is because of their intense egoism, their inability to escape their passion for an idea.

In Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* the guilt of an individual seems less important than the guilt present in a society. That guilt is an illusion based on a fear of not conforming to a rigorous law. We are left with the tragedy of a society which must find a victim to appease its own feeling of guilt. John Proctor is one of the chosen victims; a man who must die to save his integrity. But his death is the result of a web of guilt spread through an entire society.
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INTRODUCTION

A man who was once asked what he thought of *King Lear*, replied that the play was about the difficulty of being human. This remark might be applied to any tragic work and there are many who would be content not to say any more, believing that what is said or thought will always be so much less than what is known. And yet any one of the works I am dealing with exerts a fascination which draws one on, as if there were something present in the work and one could never be satisfied until it was caught. Any writing on tragedy seems to become entranced by the hope that there is a center to tragic experience and that individual works only present variations upon it. But my purpose is not to propound a theory nor to sacrifice closeness to the original work for the sake of consistency.

I am approaching these works on the basis of two preoccupations: guilt and self-knowledge. They are closely related and might even be drawn together in one phrase: the consciousness of guilt. But in looking at the particular works it becomes obvious that guilt is not a simple or absolute thing; the blood-guilt which Oedipus suffers under is different from the guilt of Macbeth or the guilt present in the members of the community of Salem, Massachusetts. Oedipus suffers against a background which is cosmic in scope but Miller's play moves against the more narrow confines of a New England community. There are differences here both in what the author is given and in what he does
with it. Sophocles may be working out of a very different understanding of the nature of man than Shakespeare. But their work isn't an illustration of a theory of human nature; it passes beyond that. And here something must be said on the question of intention in a work of art. For a play or novel is not produced accidentally; it can only be given life by the strength of the intention working through it, whether it be conscious or otherwise. Unconscious intention may seem like a contradiction; but intention exists at a level deeper than that of a man writing a tale for the sake of a tidy moral lesson. In an essay largely devoted to *King Lear*, Frank Kermode chose to speak of the text of the play as "obsessive".¹ The word wasn't used in any pathological sense but rather to describe those concerns in the play which are driven towards one again and again until they exert some deep fascination on the mind. The idea of authority and the body of the king or the recurrence of the simple word "nothing" in *Lear* suggest a deliberate pattern, not one whose coordinates are neatly plotted out before the play is written but a pattern which is only completed in the play and which gives the text that "obsessive" quality which seems to be pressing against the very limits of thought. All writing begins within the limits of what one knows and yet it may bring into question that very knowledge. One can write a tragedy using very specific rules of construction and so fulfill one kind of intention with admirable consistency but this is nothing compared with the deeper intention that animates *Macbeth* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge* or *Lord Jim*. This concern with intention is not an attempt to reduce the work to the neuroses of its author. *Macbeth* is not a "personal" play in
that sense; the writer is not caught so easily. Such a reading speaks of a work of art as if it were the expression of certain problems which could be cured leaving the patient "normal"! But the difficulty of being human is not a thing which should be cured. Despair may be made less offensive by covering it with a euphemism like "depression" but it remains despair all the same.

One likes to think that a work of art reflects human nature as it was, is, and shall be. To a certain extent this is true; one must live a very "safe" life to escape human nature. But what I have said of intention suggests that any given work is a combination of an inherited way of understanding human experience and an ability to go beyond what is simply given. A work of fiction may be based upon very elaborate metaphors of human nature but there is an element of free play within the work which prevents a simple reduction of the work to a set of easily stated ideas. If there is some center of experience where guilt and suffering lie close together, it can only be approached through the metaphors of a fiction. And this fiction will be a game of pursuit and capture, a hope that what matters is finally said.

Neither what is given nor what the author does with it can be ignored in comparing these works. Oedipus moves against a background of cosmic law and he knows himself and his suffering as part of that pattern. Behind Lord Jim there is no such pattern; his nature is reduced to something purely subjective. Miller's play turns away from this kind of intense privacy and presents a man who lives within a society and refuses to be alone. It is not enough to ask how far each character is
conscious of whatever guilt he may feel. One is also led to ask whether Sophocles and Conrad, for example, have a different understanding of the limits of human personality. This is not an inquiry into different theories of human nature, for what we have in a fictional work is not theory. The blood guilt that haunts Oedipus is not an idea but a powerful presence, equal to that of the law he has offended. In *Oedipus at Colonus* we have the sacred grove where Oedipus meets the god who comes for him but in a work like *Lord Jim* there is no "place" where any reconciliation can occur, for Conrad's characters seem to live completely within their own vision of things and that privacy can find no external representation. In these works a particular vision is explored to its limits. An author may not escape what is given him by temperament or society but he may exhaust its possibilities.

To give a clearer example of what I mean by different understandings of the limits of human personality I would like to present some of the questions that arise from a reading of *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Macbeth*. There is a greater period of time between these two works than between any of the others I am dealing with and there seems to be an equally great difference in the understanding of what "guilt" involves. Why does personal guilt never really become a question for Oedipus? Does he ever think upon his errors in the way that Macbeth does? Is there even a word in Greek which is the equivalent of the word "sin" and what it would imply in Christian belief? Is the kind of despair that Macbeth falls into conceivable in Greek drama? Is there such a thing
as "remorse" in the latter? Is it important that there are no "individuals" in a play like Oedipus at Colonus? To ignore these questions, or to read Sophocles for the sake of the kind of psychological insights one might expect in Shakespeare, could only lead to confusion. To speak of the god who comes for Oedipus in the grove in the same terms as the "grace" which Macbeth despairs of, is to confuse things which may be irreconcilable. But these problems must be left to the opening chapter.

Northrop Frye has remarked that tragedy "seems to elude the antithesis of moral responsibility and arbitrary fate, just as it eludes the antithesis of good and evil". This is an important thought to keep in mind even before the small selection of works I am dealing with.

A man who was totally responsible would be inhuman; he would have limitless consciousness which understood every act he committed. A victim of an arbitrary fate would only be pathetic and of no deeper interest. So too with good and evil: they cannot be absolute. There is always something ambiguous in the guilt which the protagonist suffers under. This is not to say that they escape judgment for tragedy is, in a sense, profoundly moral. There is something in it more vital than the prospect of limitless pain and suffering. To call Macbeth a wicked man because of his ambition is a rather glib judgment. But to think that he isn't judged and condemned in a deeper sense is a worse error. This judgment is not a matter of applying given standards to what one sees. The despair which Macbeth finally succumbs to is a result of a series of choices by which he has condemned himself. One is left with the certainty that he is lost. The work does not become a statement on
the futility of life; it has to do with a more particular judgement, a more particular despair.

A closer look at the works I am concerned with will give a clearer idea of this quality of judgement. After that has been done we may be in a better position to compare the origins of the particular guilt that lies behind each of these characters. If there is a common element, it might be called "possession": The desire for mastery, ambition, or honour is pursued at terrible cost. Often the thing which the protagonist most desires escapes him while a thing of far greater value is betrayed and lost as a result. At the center of the tragic figure there often seems to be a great egoism which has all its desire fixed upon some vanishing point. It is only just that what is betrayed is usually something which cannot be possessed at all. But the degree to which the protagonist understands the source of his suffering will obviously vary. The forces which drive Oedipus or Macbeth towards their end are quite different from the fabric of social law which someone like Jude must contend with. With Conrad all society seems stripped away and the private visions of his characters threaten to swallow everything. Jim dies in the triumph of his own vision. His imagination almost succeeds in recreating the world about him but there is still this shadow of guilt about him as if he too were finally judged. Arthur Miller chooses to move away from this privacy and go beyond the disclosure of guilt to prove that it is the greatest of our illusions. A society in itself now becomes the focal point where guilt and the consciousness of that guilt are studied.
In the introduction I said that there was a great difference between these two works in their respective treatments of guilt. The awareness of this difference arose from an attempt to answer the question, How is Oedipus "saved"? It is possible for Oedipus to be saved but in reading *Macbeth* one knows that he will never be. Why? Why is it more difficult to speak of guilt in connection with Oedipus than with Macbeth? Is guilt understood differently in the former? And if so, what is the origin of the difference?

We may as well begin with the story itself. It is deceptively simple, and abrupt. The house of Labdacus has offended the gods and brought upon itself a curse, revealed to Laius in the prophecy that his son will kill him. The son, Oedipus, is left on a mountain-side and raised in a foreign court; he is told of the prophecy but, being ignorant of who he is, he comes to fulfill it. In *Oedipus Rex* this situation is fully revealed and Oedipus is driven from Thebes. *Oedipus at Colonus* is the consummation of this suffering as the forces which demanded the fulfillment of the curse come to draw Oedipus into the earth.

The story is bare in outline yet it opens up an ambiguity surrounding the question of guilt which we must come to terms with. Oedipus is caught in a family curse; the whole pattern which he is to enact is already there waiting for him. He does not choose to commit
any evil act. He has heard the oracle's warning that he will kill his father but he doesn't know who he is and so unwittingly fulfills the pattern. His guilt, if it may be called that, is discovered not chosen. It is only after the discovery that he wishes, out of a feeling of self-contempt, to take all the guilt upon himself. But it is not so much self-contempt as a feeling of being unclean. He is the same man, there is no change within.

Martin Heidegger's fascinating essay on the play develops the idea that the work is a "tragedy of appearance". This phrase is very accurate provided one understands all that it implies. For in these plays guilt is not understood as an inward corruption of the will as it appears to be in Macbeth. It is not the result of a conscious choice made by a character. When Oedipus Rex begins the principal actions have already been committed. This is not just a matter of Sophocles being able to depend on his audience for knowing the story. For suppose Sophocles had written a play in which he showed Oedipus killing his father and marrying his mother. There would have been nothing remarkable in these incidents, no question of a man forced to the kind of choices that Macbeth must make. When Oedipus Rex begins everything is already finished; the decisive actions have been committed, the curse has been fulfilled. All that remains is the powerful movement of disclosure, of bringing things into the light. The beginning is so different from the opening scene of Macbeth in which nothing has yet been done, where Macbeth is faced with the baffling prophecies of the witches and chooses to believe that he will be king.
This element of choice is important for Macbeth is deeply implicated in his guilt in a way that Oedipus is not. Oedipus cannot escape the curse; he is never faced with the choice of avoiding it. It is true that he leaves Corinth in the belief that he is escaping the curse. But in fact he is walking directly into it. And the choice he makes is not any weighing of possibilities within himself. It is simply a decision to avoid something which he has been told will happen. Despite his decision to leave the city there is never any possibility that he can escape. One can't help but feel that Macbeth has chosen his destruction in a way that makes him responsible or guilty in a pro-founder, or at least different, way than Oedipus. Behind Oedipus is the family curse which he inherits but for Macbeth the action begins within himself, in a decision which he makes out of some personal corruption. The element of will is now present.

But we can consider these ideas in more depth by looking at Oedipus at Colonus. Here I must return to this word "appearance", for in the play so many of the important problems are given a strange immediacy. The drama itself presents us with masked characters, not fully realized individuals. One cannot treat Oedipus as if he were a particular man with particular problems. For Oedipus has no private history; his actions don't result from any weighing of possibilities. The very manner in which he is finally "saved" says a great deal about the nature of his suffering. Just as he became the victim of the curse through a kind of necessity outside of himself, so too the "consummation" which he is granted in the grove comes as a promise. It is important that Apollo,
when he foretold the curse to Oedipus, also gave him the promise of the
final resting place. The blessing and the curse came in the same
breath; no freedom of choice was allowed in either case. But the very
phrase "freedom of choice" seems out of place here, as if it were not a
question of that kind of freedom.

As *Oedipus at Colonus* begins, we are not presented with anything
resembling a choice; Oedipus' situation is before us with a visual imme­
diacy. It is almost the complete reverse of the beginning of *Oedipus
Rex*. There we find the suppliants coming to Oedipus because the city of
Thebes and the surrounding countryside have been stricken with the plague.
In the later play, Oedipus has been reduced to a beggar who comes upon the
sacred grove as was foretold. We are not led into the private thoughts
of Oedipus as we are with Macbeth. So much seems to exist on the level
of action. And this quality is not restricted to *Oedipus at Colonus*.
Elsewhere in Sophocles' dramas an actual physical condition will set the
protagonist apart from others. Philoctetes comes upon a shrine by
accident and is bitten by a snake, as a result of which he has a running
sore on one leg. The putrefaction becomes so bad that he must be aban­
doned on an island. Antigone risks death because her brother's body is
unburied and serves as food for dogs and birds. Oedipus' error reveals
itself as a plague upon his country. Yet the hero usually has a strange
ability which makes him necessary to others. Philoctetes has his bow,
Oedipus his ability to solve the sphinx's riddle and later, the holiness
of his person. A curse or a blessing is often revealed in a very dis­
tinct outward sign. We cannot then speak of whatever guilt the pro-
The protagonist may have as a "state of mind". We could use this phrase of Macbeth in referring to the element of choice which he has before committing murder. But Oedipus' "guilt" is imposed upon him or, as I said above, discovered, not chosen.

The play begins with the approach to the grove. This apparent accident is linked to fate by the prophecy of Apollo just as Oedipus' murder of his father, which first appears as a terrible trick of chance, reveals itself to be part of a design. The grove is sacred to the Eumenides. Since they are central to the play, we must come to some understanding of what they represent. They are presented as a force capable of both tenderness and power. At one point they are called "daughters of darkness and mysterious earth"(40) and the "ladies whose eyes are terrible"(84). But the chorus will call them the "gentle of heart"(487). In the great choral ode describing the grove and ending in the praise of Athens, it is possible to see the role of the Eumenides set in a larger context. It begins by describing that enclosed place where the god moves. It is "untrodden"(673), undisturbed, and rich with leaves, berries and ivy. No wind or rain disturbs it and among the shadows may be seen Dionysus and his maenads. The original prophecy that Oedipus would come to the grove was spoken by Apollo and yet within the quietness of the grove there is some dark, wild thing, a violence of emotion that belongs to Dionysus and is shared in part by the furies. But the ode doesn't dwell on this quality; it moves toward images of bright, brilliant things. We have the clusters of the narcissus, the blooming crocus, then the "divinity of love"(692) with the gold reins in
her hand. The praise of the olive tree and Athens leads to the final image of the beauty of the wild horses tamed and the oarsmen rowing across the water in steady rhythm. The possible terror hinted at in the opening passage is taken up into this bright world at the conclusion of the ode. But the terror is contained, not done away with. It seems to wait quietly, with the force of a law more basic than any human law.

But what is this presence of the law which seems so powerful? It is found throughout Greek thought. In Heraclitus there is the following description of the furies: "The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out." Does Sophocles also look upon the furies as this force of nemesis? Is the phrase "kindly ones" simply used to appease a force which is anything but kindly? And does Apollo represent something which is a part of this force or is he opposed to it as in Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*?

The concluding scene of the play, in which Oedipus is finally taken by the god, may bring us closer to an answer. After Polynices has left, the chorus can only conclude that they have witnessed a "new form of terror"(1449) working through a destiny they can hardly understand. Their thoughts are suddenly interrupted by a lightning flash and "wild thunder" begins to break about them. Their prayer to the god who will bring a "sword of darkness" is a simple supplication: "Come not for our confusion"(1483). About Oedipus stand the "tireless furies", the representatives of a violated law that demands retribution. And yet Oedipus has been promised fulfillment. It is important here that no one seems certain whether the voice that calls through the grove comes from "above"
or "below", whether it is a kind of forgiveness or a judgement. Once the chorus has made its prayer for mercy, Oedipus hopes that Theseus will come quickly and receive his blessing. When Theseus comes, Oedipus reveals that the place of his death will be sacred and his body will keep Athens safe from enemies. Once he has left, the chorus begins another prayer addressed to the underworld, finally to death itself, asking that Oedipus may have final peace. Then the messenger enters and gives his famous account of Oedipus' death. After the libation to the dead and the promise from Theseus to take care of his daughters, the grove is filled with the wild call of the god as the messenger and girls withdraw. They look back only to see Theseus with his hands before his face, hidden from something unendurable. Once again there is uncertainty as to the origin of what he has seen. While Antigone sees only "bewildering mystery"(1678) in this event, Theseus adds a more definite comment: "Retribution comes"(1753). The law is satisfied in an act which seems both judgement and benediction. Can these things be reconciled or does the play drive towards some paradox that frustrates further thought? The difficulty present here is not unlike that found in Oedipus' suffering. At one point he says the following:

And yet, how was I evil in myself?
I had been wronged, I retaliated: even had I
Known what I was doing, was that evil?
Then, knowing nothing, I went on. Went on.
But those who wronged me knew, and ruined me.(270-4)

There is the contradiction in his guilt, the fact that the crime was both his and not his, that his actions were the revelation of a violated law
which he was not directly responsible for. Is it possible to escape that relentless law? Is that what Oedipus' meeting with the god signifies? It is difficult to talk of it as "forgiveness" for the word seems to make no sense here. Oedipus undergoes a change in status, from the humiliated beggar to the legendary figure whose body gives protection against enemies. In death he is granted a powerful influence on the living. His value is understood in terms of its effects on others. We are not led into his private thoughts or emotions as we are with Macbeth. The latter is brought down to a private despair and this is at the center of the play as it draws to its conclusion. But at the end of *Oedipus at Colonus* one seems to be left with great contending forces which are larger than any individual.

The law which demands punishment for blood guilt and the promise from Apollo of a "consummation" can never be finally reconciled. At the end of the play they appear like two lines which are about to converge, but the point at which they meet is hidden. The great conception of law embodied in the Eumenides can never be at one with the consummation promised by Apollo for the punishment which the law demands is never finished. It is interesting that in Aeschylus' play, *The Eumenides*, the furies can not be answered on their own terms. Their endless circle of crime and punishment can only be stopped by an act on the part of some force greater than themselves. And yet that force, represented by Apollo and Athene, is barely equal to the furies and only succeeds in the end by persuasion. Sophocles does not present the opposition between the furies and Apollo in such clearly recognizable form nor does he drive it
towards the kind of conclusion found in *The Eumenides*. But the tension between a law demanding punishment and a hoped for consummation is at the center of the play.

As I said before, these concerns are presented with a power of appearance; they are not fought out on some personal level. Oedipus does not fear guilt as something that he is personally responsible for. He has more fear of being thought guilty by others. But Macbeth finds himself in a private despair where he is quite beyond the reach of others.

Oedipus finds his consummation in the sacred grove of the Eumenides, a place set off in space and time where personal will and destiny may meet. The closest thing to the furies in *Macbeth* would be the three witches who also have some relation to "destiny". But to what space and time do they belong? They begin the play with the question, "When shall we three meet again?" And the answer is like a riddle: "When the hurlyburly's done,/When the battle's lost and won." The repetition of "when" gives us a time which is uncertain. The location seems to be anywhere on the heath and until they meet they will wander through "fog and filthy air". The Eumenides offer a resolu-
tion to Oedipus' life but the three witches can hardly be called an end to anything. Like the Greek oracle, they predict what will come. But Oedipus was not faced with the choice of interpreting the prediction as he pleased. He was simply told he would kill his father and marry his mother. In Macbeth's meeting with the witches the importance lies in what he chooses to believe. And that choice is not determined simply by what the witches offer him, but by something in his own nature which forces him in a certain direction.

The witches offer him a possible fulfillment of his own desires. They seem much closer to a fatal process working within Macbeth himself than to some independent force of destiny. The very language they use is part of a pattern whereby things are doubled or tripled into reality and false appearances: there is the confusion of fair and foul, the image of the two swimmers who "cling together and choke their art" (1.2.9), the strokes of Macbeth in battle which are "doubly redoubled" while he surrounds himself with countless "images of death". The play begins like an entry into a hall of mirrors where the mirror images tend to be more fascinating than the figure that causes them. But there is more at stake here than just the difference between what is illusory and what is real. Macbeth must come to terms with a world that is equivocal, a world that eludes any attempt to grasp it.

Banquo's question for the witches is, "Are you aught that man may question" (1.3.42). Do they see into the "seeds of time" or are they nothing more than a false projection? They at least bring things within the "prospect of belief", within that space where the mind will see them
as a possibility. When Macbeth is first confronted by the sisters he is cautioned by Banquo:

\[
\text{But 'tis strange:} \\
\text{And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,} \\
\text{The instruments of Darkness tell us truths;} \\
\text{Win us with honest trifles, to betray's} \\
\text{In deepest consequence. (1.3.122-6)}
\]

The weird sisters come out of darkness and then return to it. They offer a man something which answers to his own desire to collapse time into the present. They aren't the agents of some god but only the instruments of a darkness which conceals human possibility.

Macbeth is at first baffled by their predictions but very soon the idea of fulfilling those predictions himself comes to him. But it hardly comes by any direct act of will; a "horrid image" of himself murdering Duncan arises as suddenly as the witches from the heath. This sudden inclination to murder can't be explained as arising from any flaw, such as ambition, in his character. When we speak of a "flaw", we are trying to explain evil. But the idea of a flaw only sets a boundary around evil and gives it a definite place. I could say that Macbeth is subject to the corruption of the will as a result of original sin. But again I have simply given evil a name. At what point does guilt begin in Macbeth? Perhaps this question can never be answered for it would require more than the play gives us. Here we can only look at the forms that guilt takes and follow them to their end. Despite his feeling of horror he is, at the same time, fascinated by this image, or rather he allows it to affect him. The result of this movement of fascination/repulsion is that "function is smother'd in surmise,/And nothing is, but what is not"
The equivocation of the witches is taken over by Macbeth, who enters into a deliberate distortion of the world around him. Murder presents itself as an image which is as false and yet compelling as the "air-drawn dagger". He will be ruined by these very doubles and illusions which his mind creates.

At the end of Act I, Scene 1 Macbeth is still willing to allow "Chance" to crown him: "Come what come may, Time and the hour runs through the roughest day" (1.3.147). Time and its movement is accepted here; he still feels no need to take it in his hands and shape it to his own will. But at the end of the next scene his desire has taken another turn:

Stars, hide your fires!
Let not light see my black and deep desires;
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see. (1.4.50)

He will have his desire work in secret so creating a division in personality itself. He wants to give himself the strength of pure intention untouched by doubt. Lady Macbeth tries to do the same when she asks to be unsexed but her attempt ends in madness. This disintegration cannot be separated from the problem of time which runs parallel to it. In his letter to his wife, Macbeth tells of how the sisters referred him to the "coming on of time". They offer him the possibility of becoming king but, "when I burn'd in desire to question them further, they made themselves into air, into which they vanished" (1.5.5). Macbeth will defy this "coming on" by trying to draw the future into himself. By a terrible irony his actual fate will be to enter a small room where there is only a clock ticking on the wall, marking out an endless series of
tomorrows.

"If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well/It were done quickly..."(1.7.1) Once the action is decided upon speed becomes a necessity. Macbeth must lift the act out of time altogether, for otherwise he will be betrayed by the consequences. The repetition of "here" in this opening speech serves to emphasize that temporal world that Macbeth will never get beyond. The struggle with this unresisting world produces such false images as the dagger. This is appropriately called a "fatal vision" since it will draw him on to his doom. It seems to be only a "dagger of the mind" produced by the "heat-oppressed brain" (2.1.39). This is accompanied by a confusion in the world of nature, the macrocosm. Nature now seems dead and dreams become nightmares; murder is like a ghost moving toward his "design". This is the dark world Macbeth evoked when he wished that his desires might work in secret. Only in the darkness can they be completed for here all acts will have the quality of suddenness. They will appear to be without either origin or consequence. Murder will come like a ghost, yet with "ravishing stride", and fall upon its victim with the suddenness of an animal. Macbeth wants a world where there is no continuity, where every act is separate and alone.

The results of this desire are a terrible sense of confinement and a feeling of being divided against oneself. Once Macbeth has committed the murder, everything around him seems to threaten his peace. Macbeth feels that Banquo is an enemy, "and in such bloody distance,/That every minute of his being thrusts/Against my near'st of life"(3.1.115). The
metaphor here is taken from fencing, the "distance" being the space between combatants. Here Macbeth imagines himself and Banquo drawn into a terrible circle from which neither can escape until one dies. And this threat comes to him every minute in time. To dispel this fear he will kill Banquo but this only drives him deeper into fear since Fleance escapes: "Then comes my fit again: I had else been/perfect..."(3.4.20).

To be perfect he would have to step out of time altogether, instead of which he finds himself confined in a smaller and smaller space as his fears circle about him. Only death seems to answer his need for peace:

Better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy.  
(3.2.20-3)

Failing to achieve this peace, he is left "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in/To saucy doubts and fears"(3.4.23). Macbeth is the victim of this "ecstasy" in a small space. The word implies that he has lost himself and hence can no longer control the fears that surround him.

But this fear is really a dread before nothing, before the illusions of a "heat-oppressed brain". Rosse will speak closer to the heart of the matter than he can imagine when he describes the present time:

I dare not speak much further:  
But cruel are the times, when we are traitors,  
And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour  
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,  
But float upon a wild and violent sea  
Each way....  
(4.2.17-22)

This violence gives way finally to the despair of a life in endless time. In such a world there can be no forgiveness since, like grace, forgiveness is an act which willingly forgets the consequences of an act
in time. Without it, there is only a deeper and more unrelieved guilt.

Macbeth never speaks of any guilt, rather he feels its presence in terms of a loss of freedom. He feels a kind of suffocation and sickness at heart. Such a feeling may produce fear, pettiness and silence, and the imagery of the play as it draws to its close tends to give this impression; Macbeth's title becomes "like a giant's robe/Upon a dwarfish thief"(5.3.21-22). Nevertheless Macbeth decides to fight to the end, but it is a resolution born of desperation and solitude.

And this solitude is part of a sense of limitation unlike anything in the tragedies of Sophocles. Whatever lies beyond man seems to be less stable, more a reflection of personal doubt or confusion. There is no god who comes forward to meet the hero at any point. In fact as Macbeth moves towards the darkness that the weird sisters come out of, he seems to meet only a reflection of his own errant desires.
In November of 1885, Hardy made the following entry in his notebook: "Tragedy. It may be put thus in brief: a tragedy exhibits a state of things in the life of an individual which unavoidably causes some natural aim or desire of his to end in a catastrophe when carried out." The most obvious thing about this passage is that it is a description of a process or a plot. As such, it could apply to almost any tragic work. But when we turn to some apparently innocuous phrase like "a state of things" we are involved in something more complex, for behind that phrase lies an understanding of human suffering or human guilt which may change with time. The "state of things" within Oedipus is quite different from that within Macbeth. Oedipus cannot escape his fate; he is not put in the position where he can make any definite choice. He discovers what he has done only after the act is committed. But Macbeth is given a prophecy which allows him to believe that certain deliberate actions on his part will make it come true. He believes that he can possess power just as he believes that he can collapse all time into the present. But the result of his belief that he can control time is to find himself in a world where time is endless. This element of free will, even if it proves illusory, makes a great difference in how we understand these two figures.

But what is the "state of things" within Michael Henchard or Tess
Durbeyfield or Jude Fawley? Has the perspective on suffering shifted as the understanding of the individual and nature changed? Jude's suffering develops against a background of social convention; there are no supernatural forces trying to destroy or save him. When the protagonist is no longer caught up in a struggle with such forces, the reasons for his fall may be seen in terms of human compulsion. When Hardy wants to give a name to that "vague thrusting or urging internal force in no predetermined direction" which, he feels, lies behind natural appearances, he chooses the word "will". He admits that the word may be inappropriate since what he is describing involves no choice but rather works from some inner compulsion. But I think it is important that his metaphor for the forces working through nature should be almost an objectification of human desire. In Sophocles, and to a lesser extent in Shakespeare, there is the possibility that the protagonist may be released from the circle of crime and guilt by a force from beyond the natural world, whether that force be called "Apollo" or "grace".

But if the external world is capable of the same dark confusion as human emotion, then there is no hope.

These problems are better understood by looking at the novels. I want to begin with a short passage from *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. It occurs in the chapter describing the death of Mrs. Henchard. Elizabeth-Jane has been sitting at her bedside during the night:

> Between the hours at which the last toss-pot went by and the first sparrow shook himself, the silence in Casterbridge—barring the sound of the watchman—was broken in Elizabeth's ear
only by the timepiece in the bedroom ticking frantically against the clock on the stairs; ticking harder and harder till it seemed to clang like a gong; and all this while the subtle-souled girl asking herself why she was born, why sitting in a room, and blinking at the candle; why things around her had taken the shape they wore in preference to every other possible shape. Why they stared at her so helplessly, as if waiting for the touch of some wand that should release them from terrestrial constraint; what that chaos called consciousness, which spun in her at this moment like a top, tended to, and began in. Her eyes fell together; she was awake, yet she was asleep.3

The passage comes like a pause in which the powerful movement of the novel is suddenly brought to rest. Everything is quite still, from the girl sitting alone in the room, to the furniture which seems to be waiting for some kind of release, to the darkness of the streets without. The ticking of a clock becomes a kind of obsession; its sound is made all the louder by the silence in which it is heard. Apart from this certainty of time passing, there are very few things that appear to be stable. If we begin with the outer darkness in the streets, we hear nothing but the cry of a watchman as he passes. Within the room itself, where one might expect the familiar and reassuring, everything seems detached. Objects seem to stare at the girl as if they refused to be a part of any familiar world. Finally we come to Elizabeth herself but she has only questions. Why was she born, why is she suffering, where does consciousness begin and end? She is in that strange state between sleeping and waking, a state where one is repeatedly losing and finding one's self.
This passage describes the limits of her suffering. At the limit of that suffering there is only a feeling of a personal world breaking apart. Michael Henchard seems, at first appearance, to have a firmness of conviction which is the opposite of the strange nebulous state described above. But that very firmness is a kind of compulsion, the origins of which may be as indefinite as those of guilt. And Henchard is often described as moving through a world as dark as the one that Elizabeth experiences. They are not allowed the assurance that there is anything beyond that world that could save them.

One is also led to ask exactly what it is that Hardy's characters struggle against. I mentioned earlier that the external world seems to be divided between the force of social law and a larger natural world which is either indifferent or capable of a blind cruelty. In Sophocles and Shakespeare, though the tensions may be very great, there is still some feeling of integration between the personal, the social and the natural orders. One cannot speak of the "polis" in Greek life without realizing that it implies more than just a world of social law. In Shakespeare, words such as "honour" and "nobility" tend to reach beyond the social sphere. But in Hardy the tragic figure may be locked in a struggle with social laws which have no meaning beyond the society in which they operate. Tess and Jude are obvious examples of this shift towards social tragedy. Henchard seems closer to a struggle with natural forces, though even here the natural world may remain indifferent or reflect the emotional forces struggling within the man.

All events in the novel seem to point towards a kind of personal
fatalism, an impulse within the man which must work itself out to the end. When he first appears walking down the road with his wife he suggests a "dogged and cynical indifference personal to himself". This indifference is complicated by his insistence on suffering, on extenuating nothing. Sometime in his past life, for whatever reason, he made some terrible decision against himself which results in a refusal to accept or tolerate certain things in himself or others. He dies "self-alienated", a phrase which applies quite accurately to his life. External events seem created out of the man himself. The terrible coincidences of the conclusion of the novel—the sight of his effigy in the stream when he is about to kill himself and the reappearance of the furmity woman—seem to be called up by Henchard himself. "Character is fate": that idea is confirmed in the novel. Henchard is compared to Faust, but the devil he bargains with is entirely within himself.

This personal fatalism is apparent in his reaction to his wife's letter telling him that Elizabeth is not his child: "His usual habit was not to consider whether destiny were hard upon him or not—the shape of his ideas in cases of affliction being simply a moody 'I am to suffer, I perceive'. 'This much scourging, then, is it for me?' But now through his passionate head there stormed this thought—that the blasting disclosure was what he had deserved:" He accepts suffering then, almost chooses it, going on to conclude that perhaps it is deserved. Soon the night becomes a "fiend": "Henchard, like all his kind, was superstitious, and he could not help thinking that the concatenation of events this
evening had produced was the scheme of some sinister intelligence bent on punishing him. Yet they had developed naturally." In these passages, Henchard has discovered fate, or at least his fate. It appears as a fiend which seems to be grinning back at him from the darkness. But behind this thought of something waiting for him in the dark lies his own need for punishment. This need will lead him so far as to dramatize his own ruin. Thus, when the Royal Personage passes through Casterbridge, Henchard appears dressed in his old, worn clothes and makes his way up to the carriage, waving a small Union Jack in his hand. Later, when he wanders alone over the countryside, he will choose to wear the fine clothes that remind others of the state he has fallen from. He deliberately chooses to humiliate himself. In so doing, he imagines his actions as having a kind of tragic significance. But that significance is only recognized by himself, not by others.

The events which stirred up these feelings were said to have "developed naturally". The relation between events and internal feelings raises important problems in the novel. In Sophocles and Shakespeare the tragic struggle takes place in a natural world where events may have some symbolic reference to the protagonist. When Oedipus finds his way into the sacred grove, his own struggle, his own desire, is answered by something which comes out to meet him. In Hardy events may be part of a social fabric or they may be "chance" occurrences, seemingly arbitrary punishment which may be chosen. Two important passages will serve to make this clearer. The first is a description of Farfrae's introduction of the horse-drill to Casterbridge. Lucetta is
trying on some new clothes in her room: "Suddenly, after a rumbling of wheels, there were added to this steady light a fantastic series of circling irradiations upon the ceiling, and the companions turned to the window." The light is the result of the horse-drill being drawn up in the street opposite the window: "The machine was painted in bright hues of green, yellow, and red, and it resembled as a whole a compound of hornet, grasshopper, and shrimp, magnified enormously". What is the purpose of introducing this fantastic piece of machinery? Machinery of this kind is often used by Hardy to suggest the influence of new methods of farming and their tendency to destroy the old communities. This is even more apparent in the description of the threshing machine in Tess. But the machine also points to what is happening between Farfrae and Henchard. The former appears simultaneously with the machine and soon after comes Henchard. He condemns the thing as another "new-fangled" idea introduced by Farfrae. The latter is associated with an industrious society which in Tess, is even more given to relentless mechanism and vicious pleasures. The relation between Farfrae and Henchard is thus given a social dimension, but this does not account for all that is happening, for there exists more between the two men than the conflict of an old and a new society. The introduction of the machine is another proof of Farfrae's boundless confidence. His assurance is presented like some glittering piece of machinery which is far removed from the violent self-denial that seems to be present in all of Henchard's actions.

The Skimmington ride offers perhaps the best example of the way
in which external events are used to comment on personal life. The ride has its origins in Lucetta's refusal to secure a position for Joshua Jopp. The latter is given Henchard's love letters and told to deliver them to Lucetta. He stops off at the tavern where the letters are opened and read. The skimmity-ride is planned for the purpose of disgracing Lucetta. At this time Newson happens to be passing by the tavern on his return to Casterbridge. He hears of the ride and contributes some money to the "performance," not knowing whom it is intended for.

Out of this strange mixture of coincidence and deliberate intention comes the ride itself. It seems to materialize suddenly out of the darkness of the streets of the town, instigated by people who only half understand what lies behind the effigy they have made. Lucetta is sitting alone in her room, content with the thought that she is finally free of her past life. Two maid-servants are heard calling to one another as they catch sight of the procession. The identity of the figures is only guessed at first, like the appearance of a face forming in the dark as the person moves closer. Lucetta suddenly sees all her past returning in the terribly distorted form of a "stuffed figure with a false face" seated on a donkey. She breaks into hysterical laughter then collapses. The procession vanishes as quickly as it had appeared. In the search that follows no one will confess to having taken part and the sole piece of evidence is a tambourine found hidden in a stove at the tavern.

In these events there is a fascination with coincidence, with
chance occurrences which yet reveal themselves as determined in some way. We have this feeling again when Henchard is about to commit suicide and sees his own effigy in the water. Just before this he is wandering towards the moors: "The whole land ahead of him was as darkness itself; there was nothing to come, nothing to wait for." In this state he plans to kill himself, but as he stands at the edge of the pool a figure appears in the water, the effigy of himself from the skimmity-ride. He sees his own wish completed, his own double brought before him as a drowned figure in the cold water. It is an "appalling miracle" and one which prevents his suicide. Again we have a chance occurrence which functions at a deeper level than chance. Lucetta's fear at seeing the effigy is that she will lose Farfrae's love in the ensuing scandal. Henchard believes himself to be entirely without love and meets, not a scandalous effigy, but the dead double of himself. The events waver between coincidence and a pattern which seems quite deliberate.

The incidents of the novel are driven forward by an inner compulsion which makes nothing accidental. Hardy is fascinated by the chance occurrence, the terror of coincidence. But, as with Oedipus and Macbeth, the coincidence conceals a definite pattern which, once set in motion, is inescapable. There is nothing arbitrary in Oedipus' meeting at the crossroads, Macbeth's meeting with the witches, or Henchard's seeing his own effigy in the water. But the origin of that "pattern" seems to change. Oedipus must fulfill a curse upon the house of Labdacus, but Macbeth's fall has an element of personal choice while Henchard acts out of a compulsion within himself. But events within the external world always
preserve this double-faced quality. They appear to be purely chance but they are actually a reflection of an inner process working towards its end. When Henchard finds himself returning to former sites it may both be an accident and an expression of his inability to escape himself, a need to repeat past sins. This feeling of compulsive repetition which he is trying to work against comes through strongly at the end: "To make one more attempt to be near her: to go back; to see her, to plead his cause before her, to ask forgiveness for his fraud, to endeavour strenuously to hold his own in her love; it was worth the risk of repulse, ay, of life itself." But for Henchard this is impossible: "how to initiate this reversal of all his former resolves without causing husband and wife to despise him for his inconsistency was a question which made him tremble and brood." It is really himself which he fears to betray. He will not let go of that consistency, that secret will in himself which he but half understands. He can only resort to the pathetic gesture of presenting a goldfinch in a wire cage as a gift to Elizabeth. In the face of her accusations, he chooses not to defend himself, he chooses consistency. He dies "self-alienated," unwilling to extenuate anything.

The events of the novel all tend to point in towards the destructive path Henchard is following. With Tess of the D'Urbervilles the tragic focus has shifted from the self-condemned man to the innocent victim. The obvious danger of such a work is that the victim may become the object of sentimental pity while the terror felt before the great possibilities of human desire is lost. The force of inner compulsion is replaced by the force of social law. Even personal guilt may become
the result of allegiance to a dying creed. We move into an area where social law is given considerable force. Social tragedy now appears as the inability or refusal of the protagonist to come to terms with that law.

But this may be too simple a judgement of what happens in *Tess*. The novel begins with the tenuous link of Durbeyfield to the noble family of d'Urberville. A past is conjured up which has now been lost beyond recovery and survives only in the fantastic hope of nobility in which Tess' father indulges as he rides about the countryside in his carriage. This feeling of a dying world is sustained throughout the novel, re-appearing in more serious forms than Durbeyfield's hope that he is the descendant of nobility. Tess is caught between the older world and the new "nobility" represented by Alec d'Urberville. She is sent to the latter by her mother, who knows that Tess will now have a chance to "get on", not because of any noble blood she may have, but because of her face, her beauty. But Tess finds something different from what she expected. 'The Slopes', where the d'Urberville seat is found, is not an established and venerable mansion. It is a "country-house built for enjoyment pure and simple". The house is of recent construction, all "bright, thriving, and well-kept; acres of glass-houses stretched down the inclines to the copses at their feet. Everything looked like money—like the last coin issued from the mint". It is a pleasure palace, built by Simon Stoke, a northern merchant who decided that he needed a "name" and so adopted one along with a country manor. But everything is contrived; the old nobility is replaced by a false one built on money. Near the house is an area
called The Chase. This is associated with Tess' entry into the d'Urberville world and it continues the idea of a victim of the hunt which began in the early pages of the novel with the mention of the forest where a "white hart" is hunted and killed. Her own pursuit begins with this entry into a world "all new" where the natural is replaced by the creations of money. "Thus the thing began"; the inevitable process, the "thing" which will ruin her, is set in motion. Again Hardy emphasizes that strange confusion of chance and necessity: "it was not the two halves of a perfect whole which confronted each other at the perfect moment; a missing counterpart wandered independently about the earth waiting in crass obtuseness till the late time came. Out of which maladroit delay sprang anxieties, disappointments, shocks, catastrophes and passing-strange destinies." The necessity is now less a part of Tess than of a social machinery in which she is trapped. She is destroyed not because of some error she must repeat endlessly but simply because of what she is, the "pure" woman, the character whose very life force will become impossible within the world surrounding her.

The peasants have an expression which they would use to describe Tess' fall: "It was to be". But there is no accounting for it in terms of a definite plan. The "guardian angel" who might have protected her "was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not be be awaked." What is left is a feeling of inevitable mechanism, all the more frightful because it is inexplicable; the hand turning the machine is never seen, the god who might stop it is hidden somewhere
and not to be found. The obsession with chance seems to come from a cleavage opening between oneself and the outer world so that one is left with the accidents of circumstance and one can only guess as to whether it is all a part of a "well-judged plan" or whether it is purely arbitrary. The "secret" cause of suffering seems to have split between subconscious compulsion on the one hand and social laws destroying spontaneity on the other. The individual is then left in a different and perhaps greater solitude. Tess is often described as being alone: "She was not an existence, an experience, a passion, a structure of sensations, to anybody but herself. To all humankind besides, Tess was only a passing thought." She is reduced to a personal experience which doesn't extend beyond herself. Even the burial of her child is an act of personal will which, to the "eye of mere observation" comes down to a bunch of flowers in a bottle of Keelwell's Marmalade.

Even Tess' relation to "nature" seems ambivalent. In the world of the Greek tragedies the social and the natural were integrated in a way which they are not here. Tess is seen as a part of nature, a "white shape" in a dance, a figure wandering through the fields and feeling at home there. But nature is also the cold pulse of the stars in "serene dissociation" from human life. Nature is a baffling presence, now reflecting human suffering now ignoring it completely in some cold pulsing beauty. When we turn to some of the great descriptive passages of the novel this will become clearer.

It is the crumbling social world, seen briefly in the vision of the peasants dancing in the glittering dust, which Tess is in immediate
contact with. This collapse involves more than just social custom as may be seen in Tess' meeting with the fence painter. He belongs to a creed which is dying, an ethics which has been reduced to dogma and prohibitive rules. The painter goes about the country, painting his message on any available place: "Thy, Damnation, Slumbereth, Not'. Against the peaceful landscape, the pale, decaying tints of the copses, the blue air of the horizon, and the lichened stile-boards, these staring vermilion words shone forth. The discrepancy between an allegiance to an idea of suffering and a natural background completely indifferent comes through strongly. The force of the words works on Tess. She seems divided between feeling the guilt which is expected of her and a more genuine guilt for her affairs with d'Urberville and her dead child. But in both cases she is more sinned against than sinning.

In the character of Angel Clare the pressure of this outworn creed is combined with the possibility of a different and more open view of life. His early reading and experience lead him away from dogma and preconceived ideas. "Hodge", the stereotype of the peasant, gives way before a vision of endless variety:

The typical and unvarying Hodge ceased to exist. He had disintegrated into a number of varied fellow-creatures-beings of many minds, beings infinite in difference; some happy, many serene, a few depressed, one here and there bright even to genius, some stupid, others wanton, others austere; some mutely Miltonic, some potentially Cromwellian--into men who had private views of each other, as he had of his friends; who could applaud or condemn each other, amuse or sadden themselves by the contemplation of each other's foibles or vices; men every one of whom walked in his own individual way the road to dusty death.
Clare prefers this to the "chronic melancholy" of a dying faith. His new "faith" reduces everything to private experience, to an infinite variation in character and personality as it moves towards death. But Clare's allegiance to this life can never be complete, because he still adheres unconsciously to that "dying creed" which he thinks he has passed beyond.

The most intolerant part of his father's faith survives just below the surface in Clare; when he is under pressure, it rises and exerts complete control over him. His father's forebears are Wycliff, Huss, Luther and Calvin. He is an Evangelical, a man who "in his raw youth made up his mind once and for all on the deeper questions of existence and admitted no further reasoning on them thenceforward." His faith is "less an argument than an intoxication". His creed is one of determinism and renunciation, held in complete sincerity. A part of this faith survives in Clare as is clearly seen when he finds out about Tess' "impurity". His love for her is overcome and he suddenly feels compelled to denounce her; he has no control over this feeling. And it is this intolerance which he brings against Tess as she well understands: "What have I done--what have I done! I have not told of anything that interferes with or belies my love for you. You don't think I planned it, do you? It is in your own mind what you are angry at, Angel; it is not in me." But he cannot turn against what is driving him on. When she asks him to forgive her, he replies: "I do forgive you, but forgiveness is not all." He believes Tess' suffering is only fit for "satirical laughter" and is not tragic. Clare's "faith" denies tragedy and reduces
human suffering to human vanity. He can never forgive the human for its violation of the purity of faith.

This intolerance has almost completely separated itself from the faith which could once contain it. At the heart of Clare there is a "hard logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it."\(^{19}\) He is an anachronism, a force of intolerance set loose in a world where he can only be destructive. Tess remains "pure", but her purity comes from not being humanly "incomplete" in the way that Clare is. The latter feels the need to return to her, but the "social ordinances" he accepts prevent him: "it was a sense that despite her love,...the facts had not changed. If he was right at first, he was right now."\(^{20}\)

Implicit in Clare's actions is a condemnation of religious dogma and social law. The idea of having to suffer under a more natural form of cruelty, appears in Tess' discovery of some dying pheasants left over from a hunt. These birds have been raised to satisfy the cruelty of the hunters. Before them, Tess feels that her suffering is unimportant, that it is only the result of an "arbitrary law of society." But what is the relation between this law and the natural world which is described in powerful detail throughout the novel? This relationship of law and nature is an important one and goes through significant changes in the different works we are considering.

The first thing that is noticeable in Hardy's descriptions of the natural world is that they are often least convincing when his own ideas on fatalism dominate the passage. This is obvious near the begin-
ning of the novel when Tess and her brother are looking at the stars. The "blighted world among the stars" seems too forced, as if the allegiance to an idea had got in the way of a natural description. It seems as if the descriptive passages must be freed from this kind of thought before they can become effective. A passage describing the coming of winter will make this clearer. Tess is now working at Flintcomb-Ash farm. The first frost comes and gives the landscape a kind of spectral beauty. Then "strange birds" begin to arrive from "behind the North Pole". They are "gaunt, spectral creatures with tragical eyes" which have seen natural disasters and cataclysms which they can never describe. But it seems that Hardy is imposing upon the passage a weight that it can't bear. This is similar to what happens in the "blighted world" passage I mentioned earlier. With the coming of the snow the description regains an integrity which it briefly lost. For a good example of what I mean by "integrity", I will turn to a passage which occurs just after Tess has visited Durninster vicarage to learn of the whereabouts of Clare. She rings the door-bell but receives no answer. As she stands there the wind beats about her:

The wind was so nipping that the icy-leaves had become wizened and grey, each tapping incessantly upon its neighbour with a disquieting stir of her nerves. A piece of blood-stained paper, caught up from some meat-buyer's dust-heap, beat up and down the road without the gate; too flimsy to rest, too heavy to fly away; and a few straws kept it company.

The rattling ivy leaves and the blood-stained scrap of paper which can neither be still nor be lifted easily by the wind reflect Tess'
situation in a way that the northern birds or the blighted worlds in the stars can never do. The passage comes close to that "new kind of beauty, a negative beauty of tragic tone" seen at Cross-in-Hand or in the great descriptive passages of the heath in The Return of the Native. In such passages, Hardy succeeds in creating this tragic beauty by treating nature as a collection of impressions pointing towards something which can hardly be described, a sense of fate or will working through the natural world. But what relation is there between these descriptive passages and the "law" or social force which works against Tess?

These laws are usually best found in the actions of the characters, but they may also receive a poetic treatment that lifts them to the level of demonic forces. One of the best examples of this treatment is the threshing machine and the engineer who operates it. One morning at Flintcomb-Ash farm, Tess and Izz Huet come to help with the threshing and find the threshing machine, "a timber-framed construction, with straps and wheels appertaining", already at work. Beside it is the engineer, a creature of "fire and smoke... He travelled with his engine from farm to farm, from county to county, for as yet the steam threshing-machine was itinerant in this part of Wessex. He spoke in a strange northern accent; his thoughts being turned inwards upon himself, his eye on his iron charge, hardly perceiving the scenes around him and caring for them not at all."23 He comes from the industrial north, as did Alec d'Urberville's father. Tess is set to work, but she finds herself caught in a perpetual motion: "for Tess there was no respite; for as
the drum never stopped, the man who fed it could not stop, and she, who had to supply the man with untied sheaves, could not stop either unless Marian changed places with her...." The piece of machinery seems to work on endlessly; once started it claims its operator entirely and demands complete attention from him in order that its progress may continue uninterrupted. It is similar to the horse-drill introduced by Donald Farfrae to Casterbridge. But what was then only a novelty has now become a terrible mechanized force which once started cannot be stopped. The machine originates in the industrial world that Simon Stokes came from, which is a world of industry expanding without restraint.

In the character of Alec d'Urberville we find the extremes of self-indulgence and authority which seem to be the products of that world. He tells Tess that he couldn't imagine an "ethical system without any dogma." He cannot be responsible for his passions if there is no one to be responsible to. And so he is split between reckless self-indulgence and submission to authority. His conversion to the faith can never be less than fanaticism; it is just a development of his own passionate temperament, a swing from extreme indulgence to extreme submission. Before him, Angel Clare is a "mythological" figure, a man who chooses to believe in a dying faith. But as the novel draws to its conclusion, Clare has a change of heart. His old faith drops away before a new understanding: "The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay not among things done, but among things willed." But this new
knowledge has come too late for the trap is tightening around Tess. She is reduced to a vision of life as "degrading personal compulsion". But the compulsion is not like that of Henchard, who must carry some destructive impulse in himself to its conclusion. Tess is caught in a web of outmoded beliefs and social laws; she is driven along as much by external circumstance as by personal choice. The novel leads her to a series of dead ends with no solution to the struggle. She comes to Sandbourne with Alec and here we have a reappearance of that cheap newness found in the d'Urberville mansion. It is another pleasure palace, a "glittering novelty" set close to Egdon Waste. Alec claims her as his own, but, provoked by an insulting remark about Clare, Tess kills him and flees to live with Clare in an abandoned house. They flee from this abandoned place only to come upon Stonehenge in the dark. Tess is offered as victim on the Stone of Sacrifice as the police encircle her like the hunters who pursued the white hart. But this final scene seems exaggerated and false. Hardy is trying to reinforce the social tragedy with an almost cosmic sense of the power of fate. But the two seem to be pulling apart rather than complementing one another. This process is carried even further in Jude the Obscure, to the point of creating an "artificially manufactured" tragedy.

It is possible that the strain we feel in the concluding pages of Tess is a result of an attempt to impose an idea of tragic suffering on the novel which it cannot bear. The same problem arises in Jude the Obscure. Hardy intended the novel as a tragedy but it can also be regarded as an acute study in the psychology of failure or the effect
of social custom on sexuality. The fine descriptive passages that occur in Tess seem to have given way before the struggle of social law and personal weakness though the pattern isn't quite that simple. Jude is closer to Tess than to Henchard. Like her, he is a victim, but this is complicated by the fact that whereas Tess was a victim of the thought and beliefs of others, Jude is a victim of both social law and his own character.

When Jude first appears, as a small boy, he is sensitive and vulnerable. He suffers from a certain "weakness of character" which will involve him in suffering before his "unnecessary life" draws to a close. The isolation which characterized Tess is present in Jude as well: "As you got older, and felt yourself to be at the center of your time, and not at a point in its circumference, as you had felt when you were little, you were seized with a sort of shuddering, he perceived. All around you there seemed to be something glaring, garish, rattling, and the noises and glares hit upon the little cell called your life, and shook it, and warped it." The feeling of being alone in your life with the world passing like a cruel, bright thing remains with Jude throughout his life. His "dream" as a young man is to go to Christminster, which he imagines to be a city of great learning. But he learns of the city through an itinerant quack, a charlatan. His first efforts to study prove to be more difficult than he imagines and he wishes that he was out of this world. His childhood is based upon a desire for withdrawal combined with a love of an impossible ideal.

His desire to get into the academic world is frustrated by his
involvement with Arabella Donn. She combines beauty with an ability to handle people and get what she wants, a talent which a person of Jude's sensitivity might call cruelty. When she is walking down the street with a friend, their conversation is described as follows: "As usual they laughed before talking; the world seemed funny to them without saying it." This laughter is typical of Arabella, the laughter that seems to know the secret of everything, to know that none of it really matters. Under a threat of pregnancy, Jude marries her but he soon regrets it. He feels that he is caught in a social ritual as a result of a "new and transitory instinct" which has him at the mercy of social law.

At this point he meets Sue Bridehead, a woman who, in characterization, often surpasses even Jude in interest. But she is less fascinating as a tragic heroine than as a study in a particular kind of sensibility. Her suffering can not really be separated from Jude's. The two of them complement one another and form a circle which neither can escape.

Jude's desire to go to Christminster is a dream which, as he fears, may be based only on a restlessness which is the "artificial product of civilization". Sue appears to be opposed to this; she flatters herself with the thought that she is an Ishmaelite, a born outcast, free of all convention and law. But her descriptions of her behavior often conceal a fastidiousness, a refusal to commit herself which may be based on fear. As she talks with Jude she describes a strangely asexual life in which she mixed with men "almost as one of their own sex". She
presents this behavior as an example of her emancipation from what women are expected to feel in the presence of men. But with Sue there is usually an ulterior motive. Beneath her actions is a combination of fear and petulance, a capriciousness which can adopt an emotional pose in a moment and then destroy it just as quickly. Her fastidious nature leads her to treat emotion as a pleasure to be indulged in, much like a person who possesses a piece of fine glassware which he puts to no use other than aesthetic appreciation. When she becomes engaged to Phillotson she goes with Jude to the very church that she will be married in and "rehearses" the ceremony:

The too suggestive incident, entirely of her making, nearly broke down Jude.
'I like to do things like this,' she said in the delicate voice of an epicure in emotions, which left no doubt that she spoke the truth.
'I know you do!' said Jude.
'They are interesting, because they have probably never been done before. I shall walk down the church like this with my husband in about two hours, shan't I!' 'No doubt you will!'29

There is no deliberate cruelty here. For Jude this is part of her "colossal inconstancy" which leads her to inflict pain on others and on herself.

Hardy develops their relationship not just in personal terms but in social as well. Again we are presented with characters who cannot reconcile themselves to a social scheme and so are driven to the edge of the conventional world. Just as Tess and Alec flee Sandbourne, so Jude and Sue go to the town of Shaston, a town which seems to reflect their own predicament. It is the "city of a dream", a remnant of a past world now forgotten, like the ruins of Jude's vision of Christminster.
The town combines this ruined quality with a touch of modern restlessness: it is the winter residence for the "wandering vans" that play at different fairs in the country. Significantly, it is these very people who later support Phillotson when he argues against strong marriage laws in order to justify his letting Sue return to Jude. Jude's dreams of something that is lost and Sue's modern ideas both belong to this unformed world.

Her arguments on marriage are an example of this rootlessness and the personal fear that lies behind it. She claims that marriage is a "sordid contract" and that she is the victim of a "tragedy artificially manufactured", insofar as she is the victim of the laws and beliefs of others. But what does this argument amount to? When Jude asks her to marry him, she backs off, saying that an "iron contract" would kill the "tenderness" between them. They must continue as lovers indefinitely. She has again submitted unconsciously to her own fears: by remaining lovers the partner is made attractive through inaccessibility, thus avoiding the familiarity that marriage brings. But Sue does not simply want to preserve tenderness. Behind this wish lies a fear of any closeness, emotional or sexual. Jude wants her to make a simple confession: "he had never once had from her an honest, candid declaration that she loved or could love him." But when he tries to force this from her she turns away from him like a child and answers in a mock-tragic tone of voice: "I don't think I like you to-day so well as I did, Jude!"

Like Sue, Jude believes himself to be the victim of the "artificial
system of things" which even turns normal sexual impulses against those who want to "progress". But Jude is uncertain as to what he is moving towards; he has only the certainty that he and Sue are lost.

Phillotson makes one of the most pertinent comments on what is happening between Jude and Sue when he refers to them as "one person split in two."\(^{32}\) They need one another and yet that need is destroying both. Jude is well aware of the kind of unintentional cruelty which Sue is capable of, but he cannot get free of her. She will always answer to some need in himself. Both are trapped, as much by the futility of their dreams and their own fears as by the pressure of conventional morality. Jude's idealism derives from that "weakness of character" mentioned earlier while Sue's liberal ideas are based in a fear which probably arose in her childhood. This fear gives a quality of frustration to all of Jude's conversations with her. After leaving Phillotson she adopts a conventional morality which offers her the satisfaction of punishment. When they meet after she has left Phillotson, she refuses to stay with Jude, and this refusal prompts him to remark that she is incapable of love. She repeats with Jude her "handling" of the "poor Christminster graduate" and his "torturing destiny". What this handling amounts to is leading the man on and then breaking with him followed by self-punishment:

'I didn't marry him altogether because of the scandal. But sometimes a woman's love of being loved gets the better of her conscience, and though she is agonized at the thought of treating a man cruelly, she encourages him to love her while she doesn't love him at all. Then, when she sees him suffering, her remorse sets in, and she does what she can to repair the wrong.'
'You simply mean that you flirted outrageously with him, poor old chap, and then repented, and to make reparation, married him, though you tortured yourself to death by doing it.'

Jude now understands that she will always be unapproachable. Her gesture to Phillotson at one point is so characteristic: "It grew dusk quickly in the gloomy room during their intermittent chat, and when candles were brought and it was time to leave she put her hand in his— or rather allowed it to flit through his; for she was significantly light in touch."

Sue flirts with her liberal ideas much in the way that she flirts with men. When the consequences become too difficult she withdraws into convention. But Jude comes to a greater acceptance of these ideas. He believes that Sue and himself are "queer sort of people" in whom all spontaneity is destroyed by domestic ties. Sue asserts that this is not so unusual: "'Everybody is getting to feel as we do. We are a little beforehand, that's all.'" Her fastidious nature withdraws in horror at the thought of human life being multiplied. "Father Time", the child of Arabella and Jude, is an exaggerated version of the fruit of such a belief. He is a child with no youth, a child for whom the world is a dark, dead place, a collection of abstract shapes, without color, smell or taste.

Against Jude's relation with Sue is set off his relation with Arabella. The latter is almost a female counterpart of Alec d'Urberville and is stronger than either Jude or Sue. At one time she is seen as part of the natural cruelty of life as in the pig-killing episode, at other times as an affirmative woman who is capable of acceptance of life. In
conversation with Phillotson she reveals that hardness or ability to survive which she often shows. She tells Phillotson that he should never have let Sue go: "But you shouldn't have let her. That's the only way with these fanciful women that chaw high-innocent or guilty. She'd have come round in time. We all do! Custom does it! It's all the same in the end!"36 Again we hear that laughter that seemed to find everything funny without having to say it. When Phillotson concludes that cruelty is the law of nature, she doesn't give any answer, saying only that the next time he has a woman he must handle her better.

Arabella is unaffected by the confusion that Jude is brought to. He returns to Christminster and delivers an impromptu sermon to a crowd. The choice he proposes is between accepting a position in society or finding out what one's natural inclination is and following that. It would appear to be a choice between the restrictions of social law and the freedom of natural instinct. Jude has chosen the latter and failed, leaving himself in a "chaos of principles...Eight or nine years ago when I came here first, I had a neat stock of fixed opinions, but they dropped away one by one; and the further I get the less sure I am. I doubt if I have anything more for my present rule of life than following inclinations which do me and nobody else harm, and actually give pleasure to those I love best."37 Even the simple opposition of social convention and natural instinct cannot be taken at face value as Jude himself realizes: "I was, perhaps, after all, a paltry victim to the spirit of mental and social restlessness, that makes so many unhappy these days!" Both Jude and Sue are led into bewilderment. Jude's dream
is now like the glittering city of Sandbourne on the edge of a great waste. Yet he never completely abandons it: "'I wish I could get in!' he said to her fervidly. 'Listen--I may catch a few words of the Latin speech by staying here; the windows are open.'" He feels thwarted by "something wrong somewhere in our social laws". But he isn't certain what it is. Sue now sees him as a "simple-minded man" with a "ruling passion" which ruins them all. He never hears the "freezing negative that those scholared walls had echoed to his desire".

Once reduced to these circumstances, Sue recoils into her desire for punishment, saying that they had taken instinct as good and now must be punished because of that. The "wrath of the Power" is now to be vented upon them but Jude answers by saying that it is only "man and senseless circumstance". There are no great powers, there seem to be only half-understood forces within oneself and events. Hardy begins accentuating the feeling of entrapment with such things as the episode of the rabbit caught in the trap. Jude is given a Job-like dignity as he revokes all his past life. But Arabella remains as indifferent to this as ever. When they are passing the Martyr's burning place, Jude remembers a sermon:

"'Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.'--Often think of it as I pass here. Ridley was a --'

'Yes. Exactly. Very thoughtful of you, deary, even though it hasn't much to do with our present business.'

'Why, yes it has! I'm giving my body to be burned! But-ah-you don't understand!--it wants Sue to understand such things...'

Arabella has got him back as a "prize" to remarry. But he will go through with the ceremony to protect a woman's "honour".
In these final pages Jude becomes almost inaccessible, a man who can be touched by no one. Sue returns to Phillotson and her "duty" as a wife while Arabella, though she is with Jude almost to the end, can understand nothing of his broken references to what his life has become. He is now "obscure", a center of conflicting forces complicated by his own weakness and leading to a growing confusion. Jude's recitation of the passage from Job as he lies on his death bed has an almost melodramatic tone, like that of a man who thought too much of his own suffering: "'Why did I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? For now should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept: then had I been at rest!'" Even in these words one can't help but hear an echo of the young boy's wish to be out of the world because it seems to be a cruel place. A gap opens up between his own idea of his suffering and the world around him which moves in complete indifference. His final attempt to renounce his life is accompanied by the hurrahs of the crowd in the street.

Jude dies as an obscure man who is hardly known to others. When Macbeth falls, he is still at the center of the action. The army that gathers to defeat him knows that, almost up to the end, he is still a force to be reckoned with. But as Jude dies, the social world of the Remembrance games continues with a bright gaiety that cares nothing for his pain. And yet within his own life that pain is not a small thing; the downward course that he and Sue followed was not just a result of "senseless circumstance". It had its own necessity, even if the social world threatens to cancel it or ignore it.
In the author's note to *Lord Jim*, Conrad mentions a complaint which a certain lady made regarding his novel: "'You know, I she said, 'it is all so morbid.'" After giving this some thought, Conrad concludes that no Latin temperament could have found anything "morbid" in his story. The subject of the tale is the "acute consciousness of lost honour". This "consciousness" may be condemned as wrong or artificial but for Conrad it involves something more important, something to be found in that ubiquitous phrase that Conrad, and later Marlow, uses to described Jim: "He was 'one of us'." Conrad makes no mention of any social code involved in this "honour". Instead, he refers us to a figure he saw in an Eastern roadstead, a man who was the original for Jim: "I saw his form pass by--appealing--significant--under a cloud--perfectly silent. Which is as it should be. It was for me, with all the sympathy of which I was capable, to seek fit words for his meaning."¹ After reading the novel one can see how appropriate these words are in describing Jim. One understands why this secretive quality is all "as it should be". For Jim is a "romantic" and his story is one which is curiously lacking in the "externals" by which one could judge a man's success. At the conclusion of *Jude the Obscure* it was obvious that a gap was opening up between Jude's personal vision of his "tragedy" and a world of facts which continued in indifference to that vision. The
passage from Novalis that Conrad uses to begin his novel could almost serve as an epitaph to Jude's struggle: "It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it." The obscurity that surrounds Jude is even deeper and more baffling with Jim. The title that Jim acquires, and which becomes the title of the novel, is an odd combination of grandeur and banality. The distance between "Lord" and "Jim" is the painful distance between a vision and a factual world that it cannot contain. Yet it is the "pain" in that distance that makes Jim's presence felt for Marlow.

We should begin by asking why Jim must be presented through Marlow. The protagonists we have been looking at in previous works have all shared this quality of isolation. But with a figure like Oedipus, one feels that at the center of his solitude he makes contact with something beyond the understanding of those around him. Jim too makes contact with something at the heart of his vision. But it is difficult to say that something comes for him as the Eumenides come for Oedipus. It is more probable that at the center he only meets himself or rather that conception of himself that he pursues throughout the novel. And that conception seems to be born of an "intimate need" which may, in the end, be completely inaccessible to others. The presence of Marlow only deepens the sense of never finally knowing Jim.

What reasons does Marlow give for telling Jim's story? At one point Marlow tells his listeners that we "exist" only insofar as we stay together. Jim was a "straggler": "he had not hung on; but he was aware of it with an intensity that made him touching, just as a man's more
intense life makes his death more touching than the death of a tree. I happened to be handy, and I happened to be touched. That's all there is to it...He existed for me, and after all it is only through me that he exists for you."² But of course that is not "all there is to it". Marlow has a deeper concern in Jim's fortunes as we shall see. For despite the privacy that always covers Jim, that desire not to be "touched" by anything, Marlow has a deep sympathy, a knowledge of that "pain" that Jim feels. Otherwise there would be no story to tell. Jim's story might have some interest but there would be nothing important at stake in it.

The first major part of the novel deals with the Patna incident and the trial following it. Here we have opened out before us the secret that lies behind that "dogged self-assertion" that surrounds Jim when he first appears. This assertion is directed at himself; it is a chosen attitude which must be sustained in the face of "facts". Before the Patna incident Jim lives in the dreams of possible adventures and "imaginary achievements". "They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with an heroic tread; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself. There was nothing he could not face."³ It is as if he saw himself making some magnificent, final gesture that would reconcile vision and action. It is inevitable that he should be alone and share nothing with his shipmates: "The quality of these men did not matter; he rubbed shoulders with them, but they could not touch him; he shared the
air they breathed, but he was different... The life was easy and he was too sure of himself...

"Facts" can never explain anything for Jim. As the trial begins he withdraws from factual matters to the point where words themselves are of "no use to him". Even his own "truthful statements" can never quite describe what is within.

As the inquiry begins, Marlow takes over the narration of Jim's life. I mentioned before a possible reason for Marlow's interest in Jim. Now something deeper appears in Marlow's interest as he speaks of his desire to "find something". "Perhaps, unconsciously, I hoped I would find that something, some profound and redeeming cause, some merciful explanation, some convincing shadow of an excuse". He wants to lay a terrible doubt, "the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct". The moral concern here is a passion for Marlow for it touches on his own youth, his own understanding of himself. He wants very much to give expression to Jim's struggle, to make that "final utterance" which shall capture Jim's "meaning". Is any kind of moral conduct only a deliberate attitude, an exercise of imagination and if so, how does one reach the intimate human need that lies behind that attitude? With Jim's story before him Marlow feels that this question becomes all the more pressing; Jim affords him a chance to reach the center of human conduct and to catch it finally in words.

Marlow's meetings with Jim all seem to provide brief glimpses of the center he is looking for. I will begin with that curious incident outside the courthouse when Jim makes his first definite contact with Marlow. The latter is walking with a companion when a yellow dog
suddenly appears and prompts the companion to remark, "Look at that wretched cur". The incident passes unnoticed until Marlow finds himself confronted by Jim who bears an expression of "maturing violence". He is bewildered, even exasperated at first and cannot understand the source of Jim's bitterness. He only knows that Jim is blundering hopelessly: "A single word had stripped him of his discretion—of that discretion which is more necessary to the decencies of our inner being than clothing is to the decorum of our body." He comes to realize Jim's mistake but the incident cannot be brushed off that easily. Why should this "name" cause Jim such anguish when he can put up with the court? It seems that the personal insult was a violation of something very deep, that personal concept of honour that will tolerate no cowardice. He can put up with the court proceedings because they do not "touch" him just as the sailors of the Patna could not touch him. But now he has exposed himself, lost his "discretion" and given a brief glimpse of that fear of violation, that pain in which he will come to live simply because the dream can never wholly contain the facts. Marlow is given a brief glimpse at the heart of the man; to use his metaphor, it was like seeing through a rift in the clouds and catching sight of the country beneath. But Jim recovers very quickly. When the incident is explained, Jim's only comment is "Altogether my mistake." This can only astonish Marlow for Jim has reduced to a "trifling occurrence" something that exposed him completely, if only for a moment. Marlow can only conclude that Jim is "misleading".

He invites Jim to dine with him in a further attempt to under-
stand him. There is a strong tone of appeal in all that Jim says yet the answers he provides seem to be read off "the body of the night". They are spoken out of his own vision of things: "It is all in being ready. I wasn't; not—not then. I don't want to excuse myself; but I would like to explain—I would like somebody to understand—somebody—one person at least! You! Why not you?"

Marlow finds this appeal both solemn and ridiculous, a last attempt to save the notion of "moral identity" with its grand assumption of "unlimited power over natural instincts." For Marlow, that identity is only "one of the rules of the game" but for Jim it has a seriousness that is absolute. He believes so completely in his idea of himself, even to the extent of accepting the "awful penalties of its failure". Yet there is a poignancy in his appeal which can only deepen the sense of isolation. He is alone in his belief. His obsession with the missed opportunity is so great because that opportunity would have laid all doubts and finally brought vision and action together. Even while Marlow is watching him, Jim seems to accomplish that in imagination: "He was very far away from me who watched him across three feet of space." Suddenly he is moving into the "impossible world of romantic achievements". A deep smile comes over his features: "He had penetrated to the heart—to the very heart."

One can only imagine what he sees there. At that center there could be nothing tragic; it would be a place of darkness, free of the appalling light of day, where the separation between what we are and what we would be vanishes. It would be free of the circumstances that destroy the dream; it would have the complete simplicity of a gesture.
at once careless and magnificent. Jim waits in a state of readiness throughout the later part of the novel, looking for that opportunity which will bridge the gap between vision and action that opened up when he leapt from the Patna.

For Marlow, Jim's struggle is fought out with an "invisible personality" within him. And this personality is "another possessor of his soul". The struggle within Jim cannot be judged, for it concerns the "true essence of life" (a phrase which could mean nothing or everything). Jim is a "romantic", yet he is inescapably "one of us" and what he does may very well involve, at least for Marlow, "mankind's conception of itself". These rather grandiloquent phrases can only mean something to someone who has known Jim's pain. That pain is born of a simplicity in the man which is combined with a tremendous egoism. In the Patna incident Jim claims that he was simply taken "unawares"—"Everything had betrayed him".

But what does that "betrayal" amount to? What was happening within Jim in those moments before he jumped? As he retells the incident to Marlow we find first that he was fascinated with the possibility of death. This is true of much of what he does; his mind feeds on possibility and will never rest with the actual. He is a "finished artist" and his thoughts go out with a "faculty of swift and forestalling vision". Though he seeks "absolution" in telling this to Marlow, he knows it would be "of no good to him" for the missed opportunity must come again if he is to have peace. His sin is so very much his own, a result of that perpetual quarrel going on within himself. His mind has foreseen the end and
has decided that it must be. But the end does not come; things are never finished for him. "He wanted it over", and he actually tells the ship to sink. But it does not and he is exasperated that his vision of the end should be denied him. As usual, Jim has taken up a solitary position as these thoughts fill his head: "there was nothing in common between him and these men—who had the hammer. Nothing whatever." But the separation is never complete; there is something that still touches him: "In this assault upon his fortitude there was the jeering intention of a spiteful and vile vengeance; there was an element of burlesque in his ordeal—a degradation of funny grimaces in the approach of death or dishonour." He seems to fear the appearance of dishonour more than the thing itself. Marlow touches on this quality when he says that Jim made so much of his disgrace when it is the guilt alone that matters. I shall return to this important remark later.

Jim's actual account of the moment in which he jumped has a feeling of childlike hopelessness about it. Jim describes it very simply: "'I had jumped...' he checked himself, averted his gaze... 'it seems,' he added." There is a feeling of dismay and incredulity present in that one word "seems", as if he could never accept the fact that it actually happened. Marlow calls it a "childish disaster", but not entirely out of ridicule: "You had to listen to him as you would to a small boy in trouble. He didn't know. It had happened somehow. It would never happen again." The banal tone of these words is in one way appropriate, for Jim is "simple". His "saved life" has now been brought to an end and
he can only wait for another opportunity in which to gain it all back. The privacy of the disaster is so complete: "all the time it was only a clouded sky, a sea that did not break, the air that did not stir. Only a night; only a silence."  

Marlow is again left with the feeling that he is dealing with something inaccessible yet close to him. As they sit together, Marlow's vision goes past Jim to the dark night behind him and the "retreating planes" of the stars only to see the "depths of a greater darkness". He speaks of this darkness as having "lured the eye" as if he were being tempted towards some heart of darkness which is not only visual but moral as well. A last "conception" of himself wavers and almost gives way. Against the darkness is the faint glitter of Jim's "boyish head" which again makes its desperate appeal: "You don't know what it is for a fellow in my position to be believed...." Marlow feels drawn to Jim partly because his failure seems to have robbed their "common life" of its "glamour", of all the great expectations Marlow himself once felt. Because he understands the nature of Jim's desire, the need to look for another chance in which he may win back a belief in himself which is inviolable and permanent. Suicide is no answer to Jim's plight because it "would have ended nothing". And Jim is obsessed with the need for an end in which he possesses himself entirely. The death he finally receives amounts to suicide, but it provides him with an effective ending, a triumph of sorts.  

When Marlow thinks back on that "communion in the night" when they talked together, he thinks of Jim as a condemned man: "He was
guilty, too. He was guilty—as I had told myself repeatedly, guilty and done for; nevertheless, I wished to spare him the mere detail of a formal execution."^{16} What is Jim's guilt? Under the law he is guilty of desertion but what is the law to Jim? If Jim were to think of himself as guilty it would be because he was never "good enough". It would involve the fear of having lost his honour. But that honour is a conception that answers to a personal need and so his guilt would arise from the inner dissatisfaction of wanting to live within the dream but always falling short of doing so. But does Marlow's "judgement" of Jim's guilt involve something more than this? Marlow speaks of Jim's having touched the "secret sensibility of my egoism", an egoism which seems present in Jim as well and by virtue of which he is "one of us". Within himself, there is a "moral simplicity" which has its right and wrong. But Jim cannot conceive of himself as a criminal independent of his own understanding of himself. Marlow rightly says that Jim makes so much of his disgrace when "it is the guilt alone that matters."^{17} Again Marlow seems to suggest that Jim has violated something greater than either the social law or his personal belief in honour. When Marlow speaks of Jim's achievements in Patusan he mentions honour and happiness but that is all: "I won't say anything about innocence". It seems that Jim has become guilty, or has violated something important by virtue of his obsession with honour and his desire to live in a world of possibility rather than an actual world. The idea of "betrayal" is very important here and it recurs in Nostromo. Jim's closest relation to another, his relation to the woman on Patusan, ends by his betraying her. That
betrayal of another seems to involve a deeper guilt than anything resulting from a violation of honour.

The betrayal results from that great egoism that Marlow understands so well. When the latter thinks of the "idea of death" he says that what makes it supportable is that it "exorcises" the shadow of fate from life. But what can "fate" mean here? Jim has created or discovered his own fate. All that happens to him seems to arise out of his conception of himself. The rest is chance occurrence. Jim can only wait for the decisive moment in which he may complete himself and gain the finality he seeks.

He wants a chance to "get it all back again". To have lost it "all" is to be guilty of not conforming to his own vision of life. Beyond that Jim understands little of guilt. Marlow knows that Jim is lost, that he is going down to the "bottomless pit". He himself has no "illusions" and yet—again Marlow draws toward Jim in sympathy even while recognizing his error—Marlow will not let Jim go. He has a "fear of losing him" and a feeling that he could "never forgive himself" if he did. He feels an absolute need to give some "final utterance" on what has happened as if he needed to justify himself, or something he once believed but has now lost. When Marlow tells Jim "You must live", Jim replies: "That isn't the thing". This is a simple yet incredible thing to say. Why can it never be enough simply to live? Jim is overcome by the dream and Marlow feels a strange sympathy with that "deep idea" that Jim can never let go of; he understands the need behind it even though it remains like "a pool of water in the dark" whose bottom can never be
found.

When Marlow visits Stein the important question appears again: "strictly speaking, the question is not how to get cured, but how to live."\(^{20}\) For Stein, Jim exists by virtue of that "inward pain" that "makes him know himself", the pain felt in the failure to make the dream include everything. Stein himself was a dreamer who pursued his desires with a reckless assurance. But now that is past and he has become a collector of objects of horror and beauty. The beautiful fragility of the butterfly is like a captured dream, but the thing is dead; collecting defeats its own purpose. Stein has passed through the same kind of defeat Jim feels and has survived. But his survival is a questionable thing and leaves one wondering what would have become of Jim if he had never found his opportunity.

Jim exists for Marlow "by virtue of his feeling".\(^{21}\) He will even go so far as to insist that Jim achieved "greatness". But that greatness is a solitary thing, for his success, as Marlow points out, has no "externals" by which it may be recognized. And the telling of the story is never adequate; one can't assume that the minds of others will receive it faithfully or understand it. Marlow is amazed by the very "solitude of his achievement", that "belief in himself snatched from the fire".\(^{22}\) On Patusan that belief is confirmed and Jim's very loneliness seems to add to his stature. At this point there is nothing "tragic" about Jim. He has again reached the heart of the vision; he has excluded all that could touch him. It is only when the world returns, when he becomes involved with the woman and finally betrays her, that anything tragic
appears. That betrayal is a strange mixture of blindness and triumph.

When Marlow speaks with the woman he finds himself trying to justify Jim to her. She knows that "there is something he can never forget." And she fears the betrayal that is coming: "You all remember something! You all go back to it. What is it? You tell me! What is this thing?" But she can never be made to understand. Her questions remain little more than "sounds wandering in the dark". The only answer Marlow can give her is that Jim is "not good enough", the same answer that Jim has given to her questions. But it only raises her contempt and she calls the answer a lie. Marlow can only repeat that "nobody is good enough" and then leave. The woman persists in her refusal to accept this. As Jim leaves her to go to Doramin she cries out to him, "You are false." Jim makes a last appeal: "Forgive me." But the answer returns: "Never".

But does Jim ever feel that she has given the lie to his greatest need? His triumph seems assured at the end. The islanders believe in him and as long as he remains within that belief he is "safe". And that "safety" amounts to a "faith" greater than any laws of order or progress. Jim has confessed to this faith but the confession is effective because he "had no dealings but with himself". Marlow suspects that it is human imagination that sets loose upon us an "overwhelming destiny". The woman suspects this as well: "She had said he had been driven away from her by a dream,—and there was no answer one could make her—there seemed to be no forgiveness for such a transgression. And yet is not mankind itself, pushing on its blind way, driven by a dream of its
greatness and its power upon the dark paths of excessive cruelty and of excessive devotion? And what is the pursuit of truth, after all?24

There can be no forgiveness for Jim's "excessive devotion" and its betrayal of others yet Marlow refrains from judging him, believing that the dream is inevitable. At the conclusion of the novel we are given a sight of the darker form that the dream may take. The world that Jim wanted to exclude returns to him in the character of Brown. It is appropriate that he should have a name as common as Jim's for the two share a secret knowledge: "And there ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts."25 What guilt and what knowledge do they share? It involves that refusal to live, that deliberate denial of everything that interferes with the dream. Jim and Brown share a vast egoism that Jim believes in a heroic self whereas Brown's is anti-heroic. He is obsessed with punishment, with destroying all that has wounded him or embittered him out of a deep "righteousness of will". He is the negative version of Jim's idealism, the "excessive cruelty" rather than the "excessive devotion". But cruelty and devotion are really present in both men for Jim's triumph involves an inevitable cruelty that cannot be forgiven. The woman asks him, before he leaves her, if he will defend himself. But he replies with a last gesture of "superb egoism": "Nothing can touch me".

Nostromo is a novel which is constructed on a much larger scale
than Lord Jim yet the concerns present in it are not unlike those found in Lord Jim. The obsession with the dream and the failure of that desire before a complexity in life and events which will always "betray" it is again present and is worked out in an elaborate series of variations.

Rather than attempt to discuss all of these, I will concentrate on the figure of Nostromo.

Who is Nostromo? Conrad gives a description of the original he was based on in the preface: "In his firm grip on the earth he inherits, in his improvidence and generosity, in his lavishness with his gifts, in his manly vanity, in the obscure sense of his greatness, and in his faithful devotion with something despairing as well as desperate in its impulses, he is a Man of the People, their very own unenvious force, disdaining to lead but ruling from within."26 Again we have a figure of supreme egoism yet with a "devotion" that has something of despair at its heart. Jim wants to live in a heroic conception of himself but Nostromo wants to lose himself in the "People". But this doesn't make Nostromo less solitary or less proud than Jim. His desire to lose himself in the "People" is like an inverted pride for its final end is to further his own magnificence. It is only just that despair should lie at the center of this wish for one cannot lose oneself so completely. Captain Fidanza grows wealthy and respectable yet carries a "knowledge of his moral ruin" within him. And this ruin again involves betrayal: "In his mingled love and scorn of life and in the bewildered conviction of having been betrayed he hardly knows by what or by whom, he is still of the people, their undoubted Great Man--with a private history of his own." There is the
unbearable contradiction, the Great Man with a private history; for
Nostromo wanted to have no history, no secrets, only to move confidently
and magnificently in the people's opinion of him. But the greatness is
corroded from within and becomes a sham. It seems the inevitable
tragedy of a romantic who reaches middle age. Devotion and betrayal are
the central facts that this tragedy turns upon and we must look at them
in detail.

Nostromo is, in some ways, the simplest character in the novel.
The interest one feels for him is partly expressed by Decoud: "Exceptional
individualities always interest me, because they are true to the general
formula expressing the moral state of humanity." He is a focal point
of the novel where the desires driving the other characters may be seen
writ large. Decoud makes the astute observation that for Nostromo there
seems to be no difference between speaking and thinking. There is no
private world of thought which may contradict the outward appearance.
Jim wanted to live entirely within a private vision but Nostromo wants to
be all exterior. He wants to become his name in fact, the Magnificent
Capataz de Cargadores. Throughout the novel he is often referred to by
his title but this becomes increasingly ironic as Nostromo develops a
private history and thought and action begin to drift apart.

There are two central incidents in the "history" of Nostromo
that mark the beginning of that moral ruin which befalls him: the trans­
portation of the silver to the island and Nostromo's awakening after it
has been concealed. Nostromo has been given charge of the silver of the
San Tome mine and told to prevent it from falling into the hands of the
Monterists. But even as he sets out with Decoud he realizes that the treasure will become a "deadly disease" for him. It will come to be a possession which he cannot escape. The idea of possession is important here for we find that throughout the novel the possessor is always, or at least very nearly, destroyed by the thing he possesses. One can't understand what guilt or betrayal mean in the novel without coming to terms with this idea of possession. For surely Nostromo's great conception of himself as a Man of the People is his most prized possession, as valuable to him as the belief in the San Tome mine is to Charles Gould. The silver, with its quality of incorruptibility, is an image of that very simplicity he seeks in his own life. It is by virtue of his desire to possess that simplicity that he will become "guilty". We shall see this more clearly when we speak of his relation to Teresa and his belief that the silver is the only thing standing between himself and her curse. Here I want to note that the obsession with an idea, with an inviolable conception of oneself or one's purpose, leads to the betrayal of others and a personal guilt which cannot be forgiven.

Nostromo is determined to save the silver, to undertake this action for the sake of making it the "most famous and desperate affair of my life". Decoud sees in Nostromo's desire a "complete singleness of motive"; he is a man who will remain "simple in the jealous greatness of his conceit". But as Nostromo and Decoud sit in the lighter, a "complication" enters into Nostromo's behavior. The latter is beginning to suspect that he has been used, that the affair is a "desperate" one. Suddenly he tells Decoud that with an axe he could cut through the
lighter's side down to the waterline in three strokes. And he tells Decoud of this with a "vindictive excitement" in his voice. Why "vindictive"? What is the "something deeper" which now appears in his character? The usual quietness of the man disappears because it is "not equal to the situation as he conceived it". It seems that the idea of betrayal has suggested itself to Nostromo. He will sink the lighter so that no one may get hold of the silver. It would be a final gesture of revenge against those who have used him, betrayed him. To speak of the situation as Nostromo "conceived" it is very accurate for he cannot look upon any situation independently of that great egoism that cannot accept simple facts. Decoud understands well enough the extent of that egoism: "this man was made incorruptible by his enormous vanity, that finest form of egoism which can take on the aspect of every virtue." He knows that Nostromo would rather die than "deface the perfect form of his egoism". "Such a man was safe". He is "safe" because he is perfectly consistent and, up to this point, incapable of duplicity. He is still the magnificent Capataz, his conception of himself as yet untouched.

But his ruin has begun and to understand what it involves we must look at his awakening after the silver has been concealed. Nostromo has sunk the lighter and swum to Hermosa where he has slept for fourteen hours. His awakening is the turning point between the magnificent figure of the first part of the novel and the "ruined and sinister Capataz" of the later part. The description of his awakening is important:

Nostromo woke up from a fourteen hours' sleep, and arose full length from his lair in the long grass. He stood knee deep amongst the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just
born into the world. Handsome, robust, and supple, he threw back his head, flung his arms open, and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast. Then, in the suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing from under a thoughtful frown, appeared the man.30

He is "reborn" and has all the appearance of an achieved greatness. To be absolutely free of evil, "unconscious" of self, by becoming a part of the People was always his greatest desire. But almost in the same moment that this figure rises before us, there is suddenly a "thoughtful frown" which betrays the man beneath it. The Man of the People suddenly has a private history. When he awakes he finds a vulture waiting to prey upon him, just as this newly found private history will prey upon his former conception of himself. He drives it off with the words, "I am not dead yet". And so he isn't. But nothing can be the same now: "The Capataz of the Sulaco Cargadores had lived in splendour and publicity up to the very moment, as it were, when he took charge of the lighter containing the treasure of silver ingots." His last act in Sulaco, when he gave his last dollar to an old woman, was "in complete harmony with his vanity, and as such perfectly genuine". It was a gesture out of a life which is no longer possible for him. He has now passed into a different world with a feeling that it is "the end of things". A certain "necessity of living" which he has kept concealed, "for God knows how long", has now broken out and made the past appear like a "flattering dream".

The silver, which comes to be an obsession for Nostromo, is nothing in itself. But for him it is "incorruptible"; it presents
him with the flattering but inaccessible image of his own grandeur. This is a different form of the kind of interest that Charles Gould has in the silver. The latter sees it as "an accomplished fact fulfilling an audacious desire." The silver mine is the embodiment of his desire to make a "vigoros view of life prevail". Finally it becomes a symbol of that "abstract justice" Gould has a passion for.

As Decoud says of him, he is an idealist, a man for whom the world is never "good enough". Nostromo's obsesion is no less grand even though it is limited to himself. Now he is left "rich in glory and reputation" but all this is only dust and ashes in his mouth. For the first time he feels poverty. The passion in which he saw himself completed is now broken and he feels it like death itself: "The confused and intimate impressions of universal dissolution which beset a subjective nature at any strong cheque to its ruling passion had a bitterness approaching that of death itself. He was simple. He was as ready to become the prey of any belief, superstition, or desire as a child." His mind wanders and looks for something to fix itself upon; it comes to rest on the idea of betrayal: "The Capataz de Cargadores, on a revulsion of subjectiveness, exasperated almost to insanity, beheld all his world without faith and courage. He had been betrayed!" But the idea of betrayal, of being used by others, only conceals a deep failure in himself. When he is on his deathbed he tries to tell the others what has betrayed him. But he cannot finish the sentence, he cannot name the thing that betrayed him.

Nostromo remains completely self-centered even in defeat. The "realities" that made up his "force" are now gone but he brings everything
back to his "betrayed individuality". His conception of himself has been broken. It is important that as he feels himself being torn apart his desire to save the treasure becomes the greater since it is the last incorruptible thing left to him. That and the "clear and simple notion of betrayal" preoccupy him. The latter accounts for that "feeling...of being done for, of having inadvertently gone out of his existence on an issue in which his personality had not been taken into account. A man betrayed is a man destroyed." He fastens upon Teresa's curse for not having brought her a priest for a death-bed confession. But the very "guilt" he feels over this is something he falls into like a child. He is ready for guilt now that his other beliefs have failed him. But can he ever know in what sense he is guilty of betraying Teresa? The guilt is changed into a superstitious feeling of doom. He makes so much of his disgrace, of the fear that the curse may take effect. The real source of his feeling of betrayal is never understood by him. And what of this "personality" that has not been taken into account? Isn't it only that conception of himself which he can no longer sustain, partly because he is now alone and deprived of the glittering world of praise and public adulation that he wanted to lose himself in?

When Nostromo meets Monygham, after his return to Sulaco, the doctor asks him about his experiences and Nostromo feels a momentary elation for the doctor's interest seems to restore his "personality", "the only thing lost in that desperate affair". But Monygham pursues his own interests and Nostromo feels himself again forgotten. Monygham knows nothing of Nostromo's change of heart and still looks upon him as
a model of incorruptibility: "it was impossible to conceive him otherwise". But Nostromo reveals, unnoticed by the doctor, the terrible depth that has now opened up within him. The doctor asks Nostromo about what they shall say of the treasure and the latter replies that Sotillo must be told that it was sunk. He will then waste valuable time looking for it. What is interesting is Nostromo's account of why he will persist in looking for it:

'There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man's mind. He will pray and blaspheme and still persevere, and will curse the day he ever heard of it, and will let his last hour come upon him unawares, still believing that he missed it only by a foot. He will see it every time he closes his eyes. He will never forget it till he is dead—and even then—Doctor, did you ever hear of the miserable gringos on Azúera, that cannot die? Ha! ha! Sailors like myself. There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind.'

Nostromo says this in a "changed tone" of voice and seems to forget the doctor's presence completely. For he is describing his own lost "personality", that "treasure" he must regain if he is ever to be whole again. The desire for it is as frustrating and painful as Jim's search for an opportunity.

Once Nostromo has lost touch with his "treasure" he becomes obsessed with the possible effects of Teresa's curse on him. She always looked upon him with a "curious bitterness" mixed with respect and when he refused to bring a priest for her death bed confession, she cursed that cruelty in him which made him "think of nobody but himself". He cannot free himself from the "obscure superstition of personal fortune" which haunts men of action. So begins the "moral ruin" which is hinted
at in the preface. As a result of keeping the whereabouts of the silver a secret, the "genuineness of all his qualities was destroyed". His former magnificence becomes a sham hiding a secret. Nostromo cannot bear the "concentration of his thought upon the treasure" and yet it is all that remains, the last "incorruptible" thing he can touch.

He believes that the silver is the only thing that stands between himself and the effects of Teresa's curse. The man whose very "essence" consisted of seeing his reflection in the eyes of men now has a secret, a private thing, the "only secret spot of his life". For the treasure has become the "secret of his safety", the thing that will protect him from all misfortune and betrayal. Nothing can touch him. But this is all an act of desperation and he realizes he is like the gringos on Azuera with their "unlawful treasure". And it is unlawful by virtue of the man's desire for what it represents, not for any quality inherent in itself. Nostromo considers suicide as a means of escape but his egoism is such that he cannot imagine himself dying. His own existence will continue forever; the only question is whether he will survive in shame or in glory.

His subjection to the treasure is only relieved by the love of Linda. That love affords him a last "exulting conviction of his power". He will give her everything and is overcome by the "supreme intoxication of his generosity". But he cannot escape the treasure nor the feelings of fascination and despair that it arouses in him. As he lies on his deathbed, a sound of the "old magnificent carelessness" enters his voice. He comes back to the question of what overcame him, what betrayed him:
'I am not angry. No! It is not Ramirez who, overcame the Capataz of the Sulaco Cargadores.'

He paused, made an effort, and in a louder voice, a little wildly, declared:

'I die betrayed—betrayed by—'

But he did not say by whom or by what he was dying betrayed. 38

He cannot be certain as to what has defeated him. Finally his thought fixes upon Mrs. Gould and all he did for her to save the silver only to find that it was "nothing of importance". Though there is something "accursed" in it, he will still, with a "pained, involuntary reluctance" offer the silver to her with its shining, incorruptible brillance. But Mrs. Gould replies: "'No Capataz.... No one misses it now. Let it be lost forever."' He never loses that feeling of baffled pain before the silver. He will never know what betrayed him because he can never look into himself. He is "simple".

But he is granted a final triumph. Linda, who cannot understand how he could have preferred her sister to herself, vows that she will never forget him. He becomes his name at last as Linda throws all her faith and bewildered pain into the cry, 'Gian Battista!' It is the last triumph, the "greatest, the most enviable, the most sinister of all". 39
In *The Crucible*...there was an attempt to move beyond the discovery and unveiling of the hero's guilt, a guilt that kills the personality. I had grown increasingly conscious of this theme in my past work, and aware too that it was no longer enough for me to build a play, as it were, upon the revelation of guilt, and to rely solely upon a fate which exacts payment from the culpable man. Now guilt appeared to me no longer the bedrock beneath which the probe could not penetrate. I saw it now as a betrayer, as possibly the most real of our illusions, but nevertheless a quality of mind capable of being overthrown.¹

This passage is a summary of Arthur Miller's intentions in writing *The Crucible*. The play leads one to speak of "intention" for certainly it gives the impression of being addressed to a particular problem which is then thought out in dramatic terms. The play is given much of its strength by Miller's understanding of the workings of guilt within a community. In the introduction I spoke briefly of this question of "intention*. *The Crucible* is an obvious example of a work in which the intentions of the author cannot be ignored, otherwise one could be led to expect the wrong things of the play.

Miller is concerned with the origin of guilt within a community. Obviously, each work so far discussed has approached the question of tragic guilt differently. Oedipus violates an order greater than any human one and his very suffering seems to confirm the presence of
an overriding law or pattern in events. The background against which he suffers cannot be ignored in any attempt to understand his "guilt". With Lord Jim we are in a very different world where the final measure of things seems to be an all-encompassing subjectivity. We are faced with a reduction of things to the individual man whereas in Greek tragedy there seem to be no "individuals", only masked figures moving against a backdrop of powers greater than themselves. Miller is writing of men living in a community and of the emotions of terror and guilt which exist within the community. Kenneth Burke has remarked that social drama tends to fall into a fundamental error: it "dissolves the person into a non-person" by dealing with characters in terms of the reaction of the environment on an organism. \(^2\) Miller hopes to avoid this by dealing with the "psychological question" of that guilt present in Salem before the trials. He is well aware that this approach also has its dangers, particularly the tendency to "deny all outer forces until man is only his complex". \(^3\) Somewhere between these two extremes lies the answer to this puzzle of a community which creates its own guilt along with the need of victims to relieve that guilt.

Miller's experiences in the McCarthy "witch hunts" certainly lie behind this "quality of mind" that he is describing in Salem. In the introduction to the Collected Plays he gives a remarkable account of a network executive who was called to the head office and asked whether he had any connections with the Left. When he answered that he had none, he was told that that was precisely what was wrong. He didn't have anything to give his accusers. They assumed he was guilty and fired him;
he returned to his house and was unable to recover any desire to leave it for a year afterward. Here the mind of the accuser presumes to know the most secret thoughts of the accused. There can be no witnesses or external evidence for everything is based upon what remains unseen. There is a remorseless kind of judgement present here, a refusal to allow freedom even to thought, a need to reach the most intimate parts of human life.

The Salem community is based on this kind of ceaseless vigilance. It is an incredibly closed world where one never escapes others or the judgements of others. The guilt felt before the trials often comes from a fear of not being good enough, of not measuring up to the law. The parallel within the individual might be found in the man of strict moral conscience whose sense of guilt becomes deeper as he recognizes the many transgressions which are inevitable. The hysteria surrounding the trials then becomes a means of release whereby personal guilt takes the form of accusations against victims. And here a strange paradox appears, for in taking a victim, the society confirms those very laws that created the guilt which required a victim to be relieved. It becomes an endless and vicious circle.

The morality present in Salem is inconceivable without some idea of sin. It would seem that any strict rule of conduct can only succeed by rigid self-denial. And what is denied inevitably returns as "sin". To understand the Puritan morality and the state of mind it involves, it would be best to look at two of its major representatives: Reverend Hale and Deputy Governor Danforth. When Hale first appears weighted
down with books on demonology, he is almost a comic figure. He has a vain pride in the secret knowledge of the devil which may be found through diligent study. He fully believes that "the Devil is precise", that he leaves definite marks of his presence and that only he is qualified to recognize these marks. When he speaks of his books he reveals a definite passion for secret knowledge: "Here is all the invisible world, caught, defined and calculated. In these books the Devil stands stripped of all his brute disguises...Have no fear now—we shall find him out if he has come among us, and I mean to crush him utterly if he has shown his face." But Hale's desire to catch the "invisible world" is more intellectual pretention than deep conviction. When the first doubts appear, his ideals begin to collapse rather quickly. He begins to suspect that private vengeance is working behind the individual testimonies. When Proctor asks him how anyone could believe a woman like Rebecca Nurse capable of murder, he answers, but "in great pain", "Man, remember, until an hour before the Devil fell, God thought him beautiful in heaven". It is an important remark for it returns to the idea of judging the most private thoughts. Beneath the beauty there must be corruption and Hale will not be content until he has found it and impressed others with his knowledge of it. He advises Proctor to think on the "cause", the "secret blasphemy" of those who are punished by the court. The assumption lying beneath his argument is very similar to that which underlies Danforth's remark to the effect that where there is fear there must be guilt. But Hale lacks the deep conviction of Danforth and he is brought to the point where his beliefs have collapsed to leave
him with a view of their terrible consequences. Whatever he has touched with his "bright confidence" has died. Now he can only abandon all principles for the sake of "life": "It is mistaken law that leads you to sacrifice. Life, woman, life is God's most precious gift; no principle, however glorious, may justify the taking of it." But when he says that Proctor should confess to a crime he hasn't committed for the sake of "life", Elizabeth answers him: "I think that be the devil's argument." She knows that more is at stake here than just the question of life or death. Hale is not wrong to argue for the sanctity of life but his argument overlooks the fact that for Proctor life is not enough. He must have his honour, his "name", as well.

The doubts that destroy Hale's beliefs lead him to abandon those beliefs and fall back on the value of "life". Danforth is subjected to those same doubts but overcomes them. He is a considerably impressive figure, a man who will uphold the law at all costs. Miller seems to have been particularly interested in this man as may be seen by some of his own comments on the character. Before looking at these let us turn to some of Danforth's own pronouncements within the play to understand what his "faith" involves. Shortly after his first appearance in Act 3, he describes the times as follows: "This is a sharp time now, a precise time—we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up and them that fear not light will surely praise it." Danforth cannot accept this "dusky afternoon", this confusion of good and evil of which human nature is made. He chooses to deny that confusion;
evil may come so far but no further, all that falls beyond this line will be good. There must be a blinding light which makes everything "precise" and divides human nature into the good and the bad. He will presume to know the secrets of the heart. And he follows this belief with terrible consistency.

The kind of judgements he makes when he first appears are very much like Hale's but they come from a deeper conviction. Hale suggests that there is great fear of the court in Salem to which Danforth replies "Then there is a prodigious guilt in the country." In a sense he is right, but the source of this guilt is very different from what he imagines. It comes not from their having practiced witchcraft, but from their fear of not conforming to the judgements of the court. The ultimate source of their fear is the rigour of the Law.

Danforth's remarks on witchcraft are also important here. Witchcraft is an "invisible crime". There can be no witnesses apart from the witch and the victim. But this puts the "witch" wholly at the mercy of the accuser. Any plea of innocence on the part of the accused cannot be accepted for it is expected that they will deny the crime. Yet to remain silent would also be condemnation. Either way, one is lost. All this is implied in that simple yet terrible remark of Parris': "We are here, your Honour, precisely to discover what no one has ever seen." But it is immediately after this remark that Danforth is brought up against the kind of doubts that destroyed Hale's beliefs. Abigail is brought forward as a witness against Mary Warren's confession that no apparitions or devils were ever seen by any of the girls. Danforth proceeds to question
Abigail but his attempt to get at any truth is suddenly undermined by the suspicion that Abigail as Proctor puts it, is "not a child", but a woman with private desires and private grievances of her own. Her position as an unimpeachable witness is shaken by Parriss' testimony that he saw the girls dancing in the woods. The simple trial suddenly becomes a "nightmare". Danforth looks intently at Abigail, disturbed by the fact that he now sees more in her than an innocent child. That confusion of good and evil which he cannot accept has returned. He is brought close to seeing a truth which does not conform to his beliefs but at the last moment he is duped (almost willingly) by Abigail into believing her testimony. She stages a scene in which she pretends to be possessed and Mary Warren breaks under the pressure and gives in to her. Danforth believes her and in doing so refuses, as Proctor puts it, to "bring men out of ignorance" by recognizing "fraud". Proctor can only add that he and Danforth will "burn together" because of this.

Once the executions begin, Danforth will not retreat from his position. There can be no end to the process of judgement for to pardon any of those still living would only cast doubt on the guilt of those already sentenced: "I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang...Postponement now speaks of floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now. While I speak God's law, I will not crack its voice with whimpering. If retaliation is your fear, know this—I should hang ten thousand that dared to rise against the law, and an ocean of salt tears could not melt the resolution of the statutes." If
carried to its extreme, Danforth's "law" would destroy everything for who could escape condemnation? The very "perfection" of the law demands punishment.

In a letter to Sheila Huftel, Miller has made some interesting comments on Danforth. He criticizes Jean-Paul Sartre's film version of the play on the grounds that his treatment of Danforth lacks "moral dimension". For what Miller wants in Danforth is a man who willingly chooses evil, knowing it as evil. To know what he has done and to accept it as a good thing is what constitutes evil in Danforth. But in the play, it seems that Danforth doesn't choose to judge or punish because it is "good" but because it is necessary. That necessity comes from deep within himself for human nature would no longer be intelligible to him if he admitted any doubts as to the Law. This necessity does not make his actions any less terrible. In his speech on his refusal to grant any pardons he seems to realize that the course he has chosen may involve some profound error but he cannot turn back for he would lose hold on himself. He would be cast into that "spinning world" of confusion that surrounds Proctor and Elizabeth. And so he must choose evil out of an inner necessity.

Danforth's beliefs require judgement of others. John Proctor is brought to the point where he refuses to judge another. He is the central "victim" of the play, the one who must be sacrificed to "mistaken law". But he is not an innocent victim. His "goodness" is based neither on naivety nor on that righteousness that is completely intolerant of human error. When he first appears, it is his own judgement against himself
that he suffers from. His own failure and consequent infidelity to Elizabeth are a source of shame. She rightly refuses to judge him for she knows that he has already condemned himself for acting against his own honesty or integrity. He sees clearly what is happening in Salem and knows what "private vengeance" lies beneath Abigail's accusations. When the trials begin, nothing is changed for him: "we are what we always were, but naked now." For Proctor there is no battle of devils and angels in Salem, only a very human struggle. As an answer to any criticism that he is too "good" we have only to look at his reply to Francis Nurse when he confesses to lechery: "I wish you had some evil in you that you might know me." Proctor asks for a sympathy which assumes that Nurse has also "sinned", has known "evil". He speaks out of that world which is so intolerable to Danforth, the human world where good and evil are never "precise".

A man like Danforth never deals with others directly, they are "naked" for him only when they confess their sins before the law. But Proctor's most important dealings are with another human being, his wife Elizabeth. When they meet for the last time in Act 4 they stand in a "spinning world", above sorrow. They have only one another now and their central concern turns around the question of judgement and forgiveness. Proctor thinks it would be hypocrisy for him to die at the hands of his accusers for it would give him the appearance of a saint. He puts the terribly simple question to Elizabeth: "What would you have me do?" But she will not answer; she won't give him the satisfaction of any judgement; it is for him to forgive himself. The conversation finally comes down to
the painful facts of their own marriage. But it never comes to a simple choice of life over death. For Proctor must retain his "name". That is what is so intolerable in having to sign the confession. By signing it he would live divided against himself. He is torn between accepting a death which would make a false martyr of him and signing a confession that would destroy whatever remains of his integrity. But he chooses to die rather than sell himself to confirm the beliefs of his accusers.

To Hale's statement that he cannot let himself be hanged, he answers: "I can. And there's your first marvel, that I can." He accepts that "shred of goodness" in himself which leads him to defy his accusers. Hale makes a last plea for "life": "What profit him to bleed? Shall the dust praise him? Shall the worms declare his truth? Go to him, take his shame away."

But Elizabeth, in effect, allows him to die, to have his "goodness".

Hale cannot understand why Proctor should choose to die and can only call it pride and vanity. But Proctor has broken free of that strange complicity between the accuser and the accused whereby the latter is caught up in an illusion of guilt. Proctor will not die to confirm the righteousness of his accusers; he will not give them anything. It is a simple matter to hang a man but they cannot touch his essential freedom, his "name". As Proctor is taken out Hale collapses into prayers and weeping. But Danforth sweeps out of the room with these final words: "Hang them high over the town! Who weeps for these, weeps for corruption!" One feels a great suppressed anger in these words. For Danforth must know, even if he will not admit it to himself, that he has failed, that Proctor has escaped him in the end.
CONCLUSION

Miller chooses to see the guilt present in Salem as illusory, but could guilt be illusory in a work like Macbeth? The Crucible presents a man who refuses to share the guilt of others because he knows it is based on fear. Proctor is not a "tragic" figure in the sense of a man who must go further into despair, knowing that he is lost. He chooses to defend his own integrity against the fear and guilt of others. He dies because he chooses to be "good" whereas Macbeth dies almost in defiance of any possible goodness. Proctor wants to be able to live with himself, to accept himself. But Macbeth moves in the opposite direction, towards a disintegration in himself.

Proctor must die at the hands of society in order to protect his integrity. But many of the protagonists I have been discussing die as a consequence of wanting to protect something very different from integrity. Danforth is perhaps closer to the tragic quality that surrounds figures like Macbeth or Henchard. Danforth cannot break free of his belief in a Law which makes life comprehensible at the cost of destroying it. Macbeth's dream of power, Henchard's desire for "consistency", or Jim's obsession with honour seem to have something in common, perhaps that desire for "possession" that I spoke of in the introduction. Each man hopes to find himself in the thing that he acquires. Jim comes closest to succeeding for at the end he feels a kind of triumph and yet he has simply entered into a private dream, a grand illusion which is present in
the very contradiction in his name.

Such a desire for possession seems to be based upon a great egoism. In Richard III there is a very brief and accurate expression of this quality: "Richard loves Richard that is, I am I."(v.iii.184) When someone like Henchard chooses to be consistent he repeats that simple phrase. The solitude of the protagonist is inevitable because the tragic hero deals only with himself, with his own passion. He completes the terrible circle that Richard expresses. He is then left alone, possessing himself at last. There is a strong similarity between these words of Richard's and those of Satan in Paradise Lost, when he is first thrown out of heaven. He dismisses the place in which he finds himself as of no importance:

The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same...(I.253-5)

But Satan is in hell; no effort of thought can make it heaven.

When one is alone all things are possible; any action may be completed in imagination. Where then does the guilt begin? It isn't simply the consequence of an action. The guilt is more sudden; it precedes the act itself. Macbeth becomes guilty before the image of himself murdering Duncan; he becomes guilty before a possibility. There could be some similarity to this in the case of a man who was too cautious before life and so lived under the fear of an unnamed terror that could fall upon him at any moment. He would become guilty because of this fear, guilty of refusing to risk anything. But Macbeth is neither cold nor timid; he chooses to make himself king. Once he begins to act his guilt
is only confirmed on a deeper level and his fall becomes a certainty.

Are these characters allowed any knowledge of their guilt and can that knowledge save them from it? It seems that once the process has begun there is no turning back. And yet, in the beginning at least, the character must be free to sin. Otherwise his fall would simply be a matter of personal compulsion. But whatever freedom is present in the beginning is soon lost; the protagonist seems to be left in a position where he is conscious that he is falling deeper into some great error but is unable to stop, as if a part of himself were still sane and sat watching the other part do what it must. There are exceptions to this, the most obvious being Oedipus at Colonus. In that play the force that determines the course of events is projected outside of the protagonist in the form of a Law governing events. Thus guilt becomes a shadowy thing which doesn't seem to apply to Oedipus. As I said in the chapter on the play, he does not choose his own destruction in the same way as Macbeth does.

I began with the problem of the consciousness of guilt; but it is now apparent that we cannot speak of the "guilt" that surrounds any of these figures in general terms. It must be understood that there is a difference between the tragedy of a single individual and the tragedy of a society; that difference will affect the way in which we speak of the protagonist's "guilt". Individuals like Macbeth or Henchard, though they are very much a part of a society, seem to destroy themselves out of the very energy of their own characters. They leave one with the inevitable question, Can a man be judged guilty simply because of what he is?
Judging a man guilty suggests that the man had a free choice between alternatives and was willing to accept the consequences of his decision. But with a character like Macbeth or Henchard there seems to be no freedom of the will; each man's decision seems to arise out of something very basic in his own character. The same cannot be said of figures like Tess or Jude or John Proctor. When we speak of guilt in relation to them, we are dealing with a guilt which is shared by an entire society. Tess and Jude are only guilty in the eyes of a society which has no place for them. Proctor finds that personal integrity is impossible in the society in which he lives. The cost of that integrity is his own death.

But whether a man is destroyed by the force of his own character, or by the forces in society which are beyond his control, the experience of reading the work does not leave one with any feeling of absurdity as to what has occurred. Marlow says of Jim that he had an intensity of life that made his death matter. The pain felt by any of these characters leaves one with the assurance that they were alive, that their death was not that of a hunted animal.
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


CHAPTER 1


CHAPTER 2

5. *The Mayor*, p.117.


27. *Jude the Obscure*, p.69.


34. *Jude*, p.274.


CHAPTER 3

4. *Jim*, p.16.
5. *Jim*, p.31.
12. *Jim*, p.64.
15. *Jim*, p.78.
22. *Jim*, p.166.
CHAPTER 4

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED


