

Analysis of the Psychological Motivation of the Male Protagonist—Clym

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“The Return to The Native” is one of Hardy’s famous works, which fully embodies the conflict and collision between the individual and the society. The hero Clym should have a rich and bright future. In the eyes of his neighbors and mother, the career he is engaged in is promising and enviable, including the heroine, who hopes that he will continue to work hard in this career. But Clym did not think. He thought teaching the art of knowledge to more people was more meaningful, so he gave up his business and went back to his hometown to open a school for the villagers. But as described in the book, *“Was Yeobright’s mind well-proportioned? No.”*, this decision is not a proper one. His life became difficult and people around him more or less suffered. Many tragedies, like his mother’s death, in the novel seem to have something to do with his decision. The purpose of this article is to explore what motivated the hero Clym to choose to return to his hometown to open a school. In terms of theoretical level, this article borrows Freud’s psychology to conduct multi-level analysis on the hero’s psychology.

Keywords: Freud, psychology, Clym, *The Return to The Native*

Introduction

I have come home; and this is how I mean to carry out my plan. I shall keep a school as near to Egdon as possible, so as to be able to walk over here and have a night-school in my mother’s house. But I must study a little at first, to get properly qualified. Now, neighbours, I must go. (Hardy, 1878, p. 148)

This is Clym’s plan for his future. But his plan is not a one which can satisfy his mother and partner, make his people enlightened and even bring him a comfortable life both physically and spiritually. His dream is totally a failed and unsuitable one which directly or indirectly causes tragedies of many characters in this novel.

Readers may be intensely curious to know from what sources that Clym Yeobright, the hero of *The Return of Native*, forms his plan. This paper proposes that the reasons could be as follow.

Love

The child’s best-loved and most intense occupation is with his play or games. (Freud, 1908, p. 211)

It is indicated in this sentence that a child holds a intense affection to his playing or playground. And for Clym, his homeland, the heath, is his playground which he may keenly love.

If anyone knew the heath well it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours. He might be said to be its product. His eyes had first opened thereon; with its appearance all the first images, of his memory were mingled, his estimate of life had been coloured by it: his toys had been the flint knives and arrow-heads which he found there, wondering why stones should 'grow' to such odd shapes; his flowers, the purple bells and yellow furze; his animal kingdom, the snakes and croppers; his society, its human haunters. (Hard, 1878, p. 149)

This description fully shows Clym's intimate relationship with the heath. It provides countless pleasure and comfort to him. This heath has witnessed his growth, his first seeing of the earth, his initial thinking of the truth, his clumsy interacting with this place and his childish framing of his naive world which gives him happiness.

So it is not exaggerated that Clym must maintain an imponderable love to this heath, his hometown.

This love can also be proved by people living near his town.

In fact, though they were not Egdon men, they could hardly avoid it while they sucked their long clay tubes and regarded the heath through the window. Clym had been so inwoven with the heath in his boyhood that hardly anybody could look upon it without thinking of him. (Hard, 1878, p. 145)

From many people's eyes Clym's relationship with the heath is a symbiotic one for they cannot help thinking of Clym while seeing the heath.

His faith to this heath is also highlighted by comparing with the heroin, Eustacia.

Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym. He gazed upon the wide prospect as he walked, and was glad. (Hard, 1878, p. 150)

While the heroin, may not only her, thinks this land is wired, the life there is tired and people here is bored Clym considers this place attractive and magnetic. "But as for Yeobright, when he looked from the heights on his way he could not help indulging in a barbarous satisfaction at observing that, in some of the attempts at reclamation from the waste, tillage after holding in for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze tufts stubbornly reasserting themselves". (Hard, 1878, p. 150)

It can be felt from this paragraph that Clym is always unconsciously be addicted to this heath which may carry no charming point in others' eyes.

Clym's love for this heath is both directly and indirectly mentioned in the novel. And it may be reasonable to say that this has done some contribution to the forming of his plan. That is he loves this land so he wants do something meaningful and beneficial to this land. Just like Freud said, "*Should we not look for the first traces of imaginative activity as early as in childhood?*" His imaginative activity is to hold a school in this heath to make his villagers cultivated. Even his mother cannot understand his thought and support his decision. Many people think Clym has been attracted by the fantastic and luxurious life in big city. And in accordance with their thinking habit Clym may not willing to come back to this backward and unenlightened place when he grow up. People may think that yes, it is obvious that Clym possesses intense love to this heath in his childhood but cannot it be changed when he become an adult? It is normal for a person to do this, especially for a person who has enjoyed a more fluent and extravagant life. But they are disappointed.

As Freud has said, "As people grow up, then, they cease to play, and they seem to give up the yield of pleasure which they gained from playing. But who ever understands the human kind knows that hardly anything is harder for a man than to give up a pleasure which he has once experienced." (Freud, 1908, p. 212)

It is hard for Clym to discard and even detest the heath for this place is one which provides him measureless pleasure. His love for this land has not changed, what had changed is his way to present it. Playing in this ground is a child's way to show his affection while sharing responsibility is an adult way to present his love. He thinks that he has the obligation to make his hometown a better place, to develop his town and to instruct people here.

Love for this heath makes it hard for him to forget this place after his experiencing of a wealthier life. Love for this heath transforms his childish game into an responsibility.

Depressed Wishes and Situation

We may lay it down that a happy person never fantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of fantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish. (Freud, 1908, p. 213)

It can be inferred from this quotation that an unsatisfied person whose wishes have been always ignored and rejected is more liable to create fantasies.

Clym may have experienced two unsatisfied wishes. The first one which has been formed from his childhood may be his desire to show his thoughts and the second one which has been developed after he started his business is to escape from this unsatisfied occupation and to find a more suitable and meaningful job.

Clym's plan has been regarded by many people as a naive and unreasonable fantasy. It can be proved by the listeners' conversation after Clym's declaiming of his decision to stay here and to hold a school.

He'll never carry it out in the world," said Fairway. "In a few weeks he'll learn to see things otherwise.

'Tis good-hearted of the young man," said another. "But, for my part, I think he had better mind his business. (Hard, 1878, p. 148)

While Clym considers his plan seriously and passionately, people take it indifferently and sarcastically. Because:

He had been a lad of whom something was expected. Beyond this all had been chaos. That he would be successful in an original way, seemed equally probable. The only absolute certainty about him was that he would not stand still in the circumstance amid which he was born. (Hard, 1878, p. 144)

People have witnessed Clym's growth. At seven he painted the Battle of Waterloo with tiger-lily pollen and black-currant juice, in the absence of water-colours. By the time he reached twelve he had in this manner been heard of as artist and scholar for at least two miles round, and hoped Clym to do something more dazzling and gorgeous. He has been always restricted by these thoughts from a very young age. It seems that he cannot do plain and normal things.

To his real wishes and desires no one pays attention. They impose their wishes and thoughts upon him and hope him act in accordance with their assumption.

So it is not overstated that he and his wishes have been neglected from his childhood. There is no chance for him to satisfy his wishes and what is more miserable is that he may not have the chance to find out his own wishes. He has been submerged by others' wishes and expectation. And now he may want to show that he possesses the right to do things he likes, no matter if it is plain or not.

Maybe Clym's first unsatisfied wish is to make his own decision. He also wants his decision can earn his intimate relatives' support.

Mental work is linked to some current impression, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. (Freud, 1908, p. 212)

The current situation of Clym is not a pleasant one which evokes his wishes to avoid this uncomfortable place and return to the hometown to find the feeling of belonging and honor. He has told to his mother "*all this was depressing.*"

The people he has interacted with, the business he has engaged in and the scenery he has seen every day all make him feel disappointed and depressed. His sense of disappointment and depression can be easily felt from his following sentences:

I hate the flashy business. Talk about men who deserve the name, can any man deserving the name waste his time in that effeminate way, when he sees half the world going to ruin for want of somebody to buckle to and teach them how to break the misery that are born to? I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travelling in pain, as St. Paul says, and yet there am I, trafficking in glittering splendours with wealthy women and titled libertines, and pandering to the meanest vanities- I who have health and strength enough for anything. I have been troubled in my mind about it all the year, and the end is that I cannot do it any more. But Clym's sincere illuminating of his inner thought only earn his mother's complaining "why can't you do it as well as others. (Hard, 1878, p. 151)

So it can be inferred from these clues that Clym has wanted to quit this job for a long time but this wish has not been satisfied immediately because of other people's suggestion and prevent. However, consistently suppressing his discontent for this extremely disappointed work is unavailable and his desire to fulfill this unsatisfied wish can not be controlled any longer.

his unsatisfied wish finally contributes to his creating of the seemingly fantastic plan.

These two unsatisfied wishes must have something to do with

To be a school master is a waste of talent and time in many people's eyes.

His secret wish has been repressed for a long time.

His Ambition

They are either ambitious wishes, which serves to elevate the subject's personality.

In young men egoistic and ambitious wishes come to the fore clearly enough alongside of erotic ones. (Freud, 1908, p. 214)

Freud says that young men always hold the ambition to do something valuable and impressive. The hero is the same. Clym has the determination to start an ambitious enterprise to prove his value and competence. His possessing of ambition is a key point which leads to his choosing of being a headmaster in a poor place.

Spreading knowledge and art among uncultivated people is the most meritorious and estimable career in his mind. And holding a school is an efficient method to achieve this goal.

Teaching is a career which meets the needs of villagers, satisfies his personal interest and instructs the uncivilized to make the society better in his understanding. So he wants to proceed in this occupation.

Influenced by the education he had received, Clym insists that in many people's mind knowledge is much more important and desirable than wealth. "*He had a conviction that the want of most people was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence.*" he holds that though everyone is eager for knowledge in the deepest part of his heart, out of the disadvantaged economic and geographic situation of his village people's

needs have been ignored. And now he thinks himself who has been presented by this village has the responsibility to help villagers to fulfill this desire and wish.

“Knowledge is power.” In Clym’s thought knowledge has the power to cure the pain and care the suffering. He himself can get peace and comfort from books and is willing to spend lots of time in reading rather than selling. *“I must study a little at first, to get properly qualified.”* *“I next perceived- that my business was the idlest, vainest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to.”*

These two sentences said by him succinctly and clearly show his different attitudes toward reading and selling. He is willing to take the initiative to learn without being urged and supervised by others, but even strongly forced by his mother, he still refused to continue to work in the former business.

Triggered by the unpolished and corrupted people around him, he thinks that he has the responsibility to save these people’s spiritual lives. *“I get up every morning and see the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain,”* he thought that most people are leading a meaningless life and being tortured by idle life. The people in the metropolis is hard to be saved, but the people in the villages, despite their low educational level, have not been polluted by vanity, he insisted that art and knowledge can cure, delight and improve his villagers’ spiritual life which will help to form a better society. So he decide to give up his business to cultivate his villagers, he had the determination to do the sacrifice.

Conclusion

In a word, with the help of Freud’s thought some of the psychological reasons which lead Clym to choose to return to his hometown to operate a school have been revealed. Strong love for his heath, repressed desires, and egoistic ambition were factors that could not be ignored in Clym’s decision.

Love is the love for his hometown. This love has been very strong since he was a child. When he grew up, he turned this love into a responsibility, thinking that he had the obligation to make his hometown a better place.

The repressed desire, this desire has been not noticed for a long time, even the hero himself did not know what it was, but he instinctively felt that he was suppressed and kept doing things he didn’t like. While Clym was extremely dissatisfied with his previous business. He considered it was a waste of the knowledge he had learned and the education he had received. Finally the uncomfortable business environment made him keener on insisting his determination.

Egoistic ambition, he has his own ambition, he hopes he can do a great and meaningful career, spreading knowledge and culture is a very meaningful thing in his view.

In fact, there are many reasons that prompted Clym to make this choice. It should be mentioned that the psychological factors of the male protagonist are these that cannot be ignored. From the description of the article, it can inferred that his decision is an inappropriate one, but we will not go into details about whether the hero’s decision is good or bad. But the hero’s experience has indicated that it is very important for us readers to establish a balanced psychological relationship between self and society.

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