

An Analysis of Clym Yeobright  
In Hardy's The Return of the Native

A Research Paper  
Submitted to the Faculty  
Of Saint Meinrad College of Liberal Arts  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

Timothy Francis Cassidy  
May, 1974  
Saint Meinrad College  
St. Meinrad, Indiana



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I	INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II	CHARACTER ANALYSIS THROUGH TEXTUAL EXPLICATION.....	5
CHAPTER III	AN ANALYSIS OF CLYM.....	10
CHAPTER IV	CONCLUSION.....	22
FOOTNOTES.....		24
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		26

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly one of Thomas Hardy's most neglected and most misunderstood novels is The Return of the Native. Written in 1878, it is a stark, heart-disturbing tragedy, as steady and irresistible in its progress as a Greek drama.<sup>1</sup> And although this novel was well received by Victorian readers, it has in the past several decades fallen into much disfavor.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons for this disfavor stems from the fact that many readers encounter in this novel the difficult problem of the hero versus the anti-hero. Is Clym Yeobright, the main character in the plot, really a positive individual; or does he totally lack those virtues which make a great literary figure? While there is certainly no simple answer to such a question, this essay will, by means of analysis through textual explication, study the character of Clym closely, in order that some solution to this problem may be found.

When it was mentioned that The Return of the Native was received favorably by Hardy's readers, this was not meant to imply that the critics of his period thought highly of this work, for that was not true. One of the earliest reviews, written by W. E. Henley in November of 1878, stated that this work was all too mournful, and very very cruel. It viewed the characters as hopelessly lost in situations which were totally unreal. Clym was seen as a man burdened with a great double remorse, completely dejected and miserable. He was a failure. His plans have been utterly destroyed, and he was left to live on and make the best of his pathetic

life.<sup>3</sup>

In an unsigned article which appeared in "Saturday Review", January 4, 1879, another critic viewed Mr. Hardy as an extraordinary talent whose latest effort had not been worth his trouble. This particular critic believed that the primary objective of any story was to amuse the reader, and he felt that Hardy had failed this task miserably. The review described Clym as a moon-struck dreamer, who was totally out of place among the practical population of Egdon. In short, this critic stated that as a character Clym would have been better off if he had changed his plans and had finally returned to Paris.<sup>4</sup>

Another contemporary, in an unsigned review which appeared in Spectator, February 8, 1879, considered Clym as a lost individual. The problem with the novel, as he saw it, was a lack of character growth and development. For this critic, Clym was far too static. He was unreal. No man could have been so passive amidst so much pain and suffering.<sup>5</sup>

For a better understanding of what lies behind these critical reviews, it is first necessary to take a brief look at Hardy's own thoughts concerning this particular novel and prose fiction in general. Bruce McCullough states that Hardy manifests the usual Victorian tendency to make the novel an organ of social criticism. Hardy takes a highly intellectual view towards life and devotes himself to the problems of individual adjustment and development. The Return of the Native, like all of Hardy's works, reflects an age of spiritual renovation, during which men of thought were casting about in various directions seeking new sources of inspiration and new formulas of belief.

In his own life, Hardy was disturbed by the absence of sympathy for human aims that seemed to him to be characteristic of the universe. Man,

he believed, was as outcast in his own world. Life was certainly hard and not a theme for rapture. The purpose of this novel then, as Hardy saw all of his novels, was to express these beliefs, his impressions of reality. Hardy believed that all prose fiction, if it was to be a valid form of literary art, had in some way to reflect the author's own personal attitudes and beliefs.<sup>6</sup>

At times Hardy saw himself as a strong believer in a divine supreme being, especially when he wrote; at other times he was not so sure. And while this doubt often appeared in his novels, it in no way lessened the "message" or the impact of his works. In many ways Hardy's works were ahead of their time and were therefore difficult for critics to accept. His characters reflected doubt, changing times, and man's struggle to overcome the cruelty of the universe, all of which was far too complicated and new for the Victorian critics to appreciate.<sup>7</sup>

The particular edition of The Return of the Native used for this thesis is the Airmont Publishing Company's text, copyright 1964. Supervision for the Airmont edition was performed by Seymone J. D. Pansick, and it is complete and unabridged. Any questions of textual discrepancy were checked with the Dell edition of the novel, copyright 1962, and the Scribner and Sons' edition, copyright 1917. The discrepancies are insignificant. Therefore, all textual references in this essay will refer to the pagination in the Airmont edition.

Every other source used for the writing of this essay is listed in the bibliography. However, three main critical sources, because of their major importance in the writing of this thesis, merit being mentioned at this time. They are: Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage, a collection of reviews edited by R. G. Cox; Thomas Hardy, Literary Critiques, a

recent book on the life and works of Hardy by Trevor Johnson; and Representative English Novelists, Defoe to Conrad, a survey text by Bruce McCullough.

## CHAPTER II

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS THROUGH TEXTUAL EXPLICATION

Because the novel is a highly complicated structure of artificially formed contexts paralleled to real human experiences, the characters in a novel must in some way be reflections of what has been experienced in real people. The questions to be answered, therefore, are: how do people experience other persons in real life, and how does this differ from their experience of characters in a novel? In real life a man has intrinsic knowledge only of himself. He knows his fellow human beings only through events and self-revelations on the part of others. And these events and revelations are always projected, that is occur, in a particular context. Readers also come to know characters through context.<sup>1</sup>

The author is not to his characters as we are to other people; his relationship to them is not human, but god-like. However invisible he may make himself, whatever narrative techniques he may use to conceal his existence from his fiction, the novelist must be both omnipotent and omniscient.<sup>2</sup>

When an individual is said to be omnipotent, it means that he has virtually unlimited authority and influence. And when a person is said to be omniscient, it means that he has infinite awareness, understanding, and insight. Speaking analogously, as this is true of God in relation to his creation, so this is true of an author and his created world, his characters. Through the novel the author to varying degrees shares his god-like quality of omniscience with his readers, and therefore it is possible for a reader to have some intrinsic knowledge of the characters in a

given plot.

Surely the fact that we are allowed intrinsic knowledge of other characters is a prime reason for our enjoyment of fiction; the imaginative release from our actual imprisonment within our own single point of view is one of the greatest consolations of art.<sup>3</sup>

What has been said so far in this chapter should be considered as ground-work or as a foundation for the understanding of character analysis through textual study. For unless one can see that through the text itself a reader can truly come to know some of the reality of a particular character in a very real way, the purpose of this thesis would be fruitless.

To begin the analysis of a character by an explication of the text, the first thing that must be done is to determine what techniques of narration have been used by the author. Narration plays an important role in determining how much of the author's intrinsic knowledge he is willing to share with his readers. In The Return of the Native, Hardy uses the method of narration known as third-person omniscient: the narrator is present and comments on the characters and their actions throughout the entire novel, yet he is detached from the story itself and is, therefore, able to see things in the plot which the characters themselves cannot see. This method of narration makes any character analysis by means of textual study easier, because with this method the author shares his intrinsic knowledge with his readers to a greater degree than with any other narrative technique.<sup>4</sup>

Coupled with the use of third-person omniscient narration, Hardy has also chosen to use a method of characterization known as direct exposition. By direct exposition, the reader is given insights into the actions and motives of characters themselves either in huge introductory

blocks or more often, as in Hardy's case, in a more piecemeal fashion as sort of a commentary on the action as it occurs.<sup>5</sup>

In a study of a character by textual explication, there are four main levels or areas of development by which a character must be analyzed, if the analysis is to be comprehensive. The first and most basic level concerns itself with physical traits such as sex, age, appearance, and manner. On the second level, known as the social level, is found such information as a character's economic status, his profession or trade, beliefs, family, and personal relationships. In general it concerns itself with those factors which place a character in his environment. The third level of investigation is the psychological. Here the reader is provided with information concerning the habitual responses, attitudes, desires, motivations, likes and dislikes of a particular character. The fourth level is that of morality. In the novel, moral decisions cause a character, much as in real life, to examine his own motives and values. And because the reader is allowed to share in this process, the author reveals yet another unique side of his character's total personhood.<sup>6</sup>

Having completed the character study along these four levels, there is still one area of investigation to be dealt with before any analysis is complete. This area of investigation centers around the position of the character in relation to the novel itself. In a novel the five categories in which a character may be placed are: the protagonist, the antagonist, the chorus, the card, and the ficelle. The most important of these positions is clearly that of the protagonist. He is the character whose motivation and history are most fully established, who changes as the story progresses, and who engages the reader's responses more fully and steadily in a way more complex than any of the other characters.<sup>7</sup>

Protagonists are the vehicles by which all the most interesting questions are raised; they envoke our beliefs, sympathies, revulsions, they incarnate the moral vision of the world inherent in the totality of any novel. In a sense they are the end products; they are what the novel exists for; it exists to reveal them.

At the other end of the spectrum are those many different kinds of characters lumped together as background. Alone they may be merely useful cogs in the mechanism of the plot, but collectively they may establish themselves as a chorus to the main action. Hardy's rustics are a fine example of this category.<sup>9</sup>

A third slot or function a character may fill is that of a card. This is not a demeaning term, but rather as a playing card is flat, so in many ways is the character who functions as a card. The card is a relatively changeless character, and in this sense he has his own very peculiar sense of freedom. Constancy is the key to this character.<sup>10</sup>

Another character slot which provides a necessary function in any novel is that of the ficelle. (Ficelle is the French word for the strings of a marionnette.) Like the background characters, he too may serve a purely mechanical role in the plot. He is usually a transitional agent between the protagonist and his society. By his own misunderstanding and partial view he helps to focus the protagonist's dilemma more clearly. And at times, by a flash of insight or simply by being the spokesman of sober reality and common sense, he may illuminate the protagonist's blindness and his folly.<sup>11</sup>

The fifth position is that of the antagonist. His purpose is simply to contrast and oppose the position or even the very being of the protagonist. An antagonist is the first mover in any novel. And he is the one to which all other important character must react.

This chapter is a preparation and explanation of what will be pre-

sented in the next chapter, where the character of Clym Yeobright will be analyzed with the four important areas of textual study and the belief that he is the true protagonist of The Return of the Native.

### CHAPTER III

#### AN ANALYSIS OF CLYM

The first indication of Clym's physical appearance is found in a rather lengthy passage of direct exposition early in the text.

The face was well shaped, even excellently. But the mind within was beginning to use it as a mere waste tablet whereon to trace its idiosyncrasies as they developed themselves. The beauty here visible would in no long time be ruthlessly overrun by its parasite thought, which might just as well have fed upon a plainer exterior, where there was nothing it could harm. Had Heaven preserved Yeobright from wearing a habit of meditation, people would have said, "A handsome man." Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, "A thoughtful man." But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his looks as singular. (page 124)

From these lines, he is presented as a man whose facial appearance, though pleasant, is already starting to show the strains of much thought.

While Hardy never explicitly provides his readers with such basic facts as Clym's height, his hair coloring, etc., from the text it is possible to determine that he is a well-built individual, a man of exceptional stature. "Tis his mother's side where Master Clym's figure comes from, bless ye," said Timothy. "I knowed her brothers well. Longer coffins were never made in the whole county of Wessex." (page 126.) From his ready acceptance by the rugged men of Egdon as one of their own, and by Eustacia's attraction to him as a lover, there can be little doubt that Clym is a manly man. His ability to endure the rigors of manual labor, after his blindness, is certainly an indication of his physical strength. On this first level of characterization, the only other information given

by Hardy is Clym's age. He is described as being a man of less than thirty-three years (page 349).

On the social level, the character of Clym is presented as a successful businessman, a manager to a diamond merchant. As the novel begins, he has been living in Paris for the past several years and is returning to his native Egdon for a visit. Clym's family, the Yeobrights, forms the prominent social class in this novel. But while they are representative of the upper class, they are neither nobility nor landed gentry. They are simply one of the oldest and most respected families on the heath. As a sign of this respect, Hardy always has the locals refer to Clym as "Master Clym" and to his mother as "Mrs. Yeobright." In comparison with the lower class, which is composed in this story of farmers and furze cutters, the Yeobrights lead a sophisticated and gentle life. It is noteworthy that they are one of the few families in Egdon who are able to afford servants, a sign of prestige in Victorian England.

Clym's father died when he was a young boy. He was an only child, and his mother never remarried after her husband's death. However, at some point in Clym's childhood (the novel never really makes this clear), his cousin Thomasin came to live with them, and she became like a daughter to Mrs. Yeobright and a sister to Clym. From every indication in the text, Clym's childhood was most enjoyable, and his family was very close knit.

When Clym makes his decision not to return to Paris, but chooses instead to remain in his hometown and to become an educator of the poor, he bases this decision on his beliefs in the dignity of humanity and on the importance of a man's doing something worthwhile with his life.

"But you mistake me," pleaded Clym. "All this was very depres-

sing. But not so depressing as something I next perceived—that my business was the idlest, vainest, most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to. That decided me: I would give it up and try to follow some rational occupation among the people I knew best, and to whom I could be the most use. 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. (pages 152-153)

As a key to Clym's characterization, this is a most significant passage. Not only is his great disgust for his life in Paris expressed, but in this passage, Hardy also states two important factors which will help to serve as a guiding force for Clym's actions throughout the entire novel: his desire to choose a mode of occupation which will give his life meaning and satisfaction, and his desire to be of service to others. Clym views his becoming a teacher of the poor as a viable means of fulfilling these needs. His feelings for his fellow man are obvious.

Yeobright loved his kind. He had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence. He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. What was more he was ready to be the first unit sacrificed. (page 153)

These strong convictions of Clym's, as presented in the story, are in many ways the driving power behind the novel itself. His decision to remain at Egdon was to change the entire course of his own life and the lives of those he loved. It is this decision which gives this novel its very direction.

The psychological level is without a doubt the most complex of all the levels of characterization, as stated in the previous chapter. Elements of characterization on this level are most easily analyzed in comparison and explication of a given character's relationships with other characters in the novel. In this analysis of Clym, three important

relationships must be considered: his relationship with his mother, his marriage to Eustacia, and his relationship with the people of Egdon Heath.

Mrs. Yeobright is an elderly woman who, since her husband's death many years before, has lived her life solely for Clym and Thomasin. She is a woman of quick temper, but she also has a warm and generous heart which easily makes one forget the times when she is angry. Her one desire is to see Clym and his cousin happy. And it is out of this desire of hers that the conflicts with her son arise.

From the very beginning Mrs. Yeobright is not pleased with Clym's decision to give up his occupation in Paris. "And you might have been a wealthy man if only you had persevered. Manager to that large diamond establishment--what better can a man wish?" (page 156.) She is unable to comprehend her son's values or priorities. And she cannot understand his decision to pursue a career, which would pay little, when he could have been so materially well-off.

Clym's mother often speaks for what society would call common sense. It is she who predicts to her son that his fancies will be his ruin, but Mrs. Yeobright has little influence upon him in this matter. Clym, in this instance, has the vision to see beyond the norms of general common sense. He is able, for the most part, to see with greater depth than his mother. Because of his high ideals, Clym realizes full well that conflict with his mother is inevitable. And while this hurts him deeply, he believes that the goal is worth the price.

The second point of contention between Clym and his mother is over the young woman he marries, Eustacia Vye. Mrs. Yeobright, like the majority of the townspeople, has very little if any use for Eustacia, and cannot help but feel that his marriage will be even more disastrous for

Clym than his idea of a new profession. When Clym finally tells his mother that he will not change his marriage plans under any circumstances, a break in their relationship occurs that is so great and so complicated that it is never healed.

Mrs. Yeobright pleads with Clym not to marry Eustacia, but to no avail. "Mother," said Clym, "whatever you do, you will always be dear to me--that you know. But one thing I have a right to say, which is at my age I am old enough to know what is best for me." (page 179.) The irony of this statement is immediately evident to the reader. For once the character of Clym's mother is correct; Eustacia will not make a good wife for him. Here again, Hardy allows his readers to see beyond the confinements and limitations which he has created for a given character, namely Clym.

A few days later Clym leaves home. "He kissed her cheek and departed in great misery, which was several hours in lessing itself to a controllable level." (page 186.) Both Clym and his mother are very hurt by his leaving home on such bad terms. And this hurt haunts them throughout the continuation of the novel. Mrs. Yeobright is unable to realize that it was not because Clym hated her that he left home but rather because he loved her so dearly that he could not bear to see her in such pain.

When it was stated that this division between mother and son was never bridged, it was not because attempts were not made, but because these attempts come too late and are prevented by an unfortunate set of events. After Clym has been married for several months, his mother walks five miles in the hot sun to visit him and his new bride in order to make peace. But upon arriving at Clym's house, by a chance of fate, she is unable to see her son and believes that he has deliberately turned her

away. Mrs. Yeobright starts home a bitter and broken woman.

Clym, too, on that very same day, decides it is time that he make an effort at reconciliation. And he begins that evening to walk across the heath towards his mother's house. While walking on the heath, Clym finds his mother unconscious and dying. She has been bitten by a poisonous snake. Picking his mother up and carrying her to a small shack, he holds her in his arms until she dies. Though Mrs. Yeobright never regains consciousness before her death, a young boy who had made part of the return journey with her that day relates to Clym by accident his mother's last words. "She said I was to say that I had seen her, and she was a broken hearted woman cast off by her son" (page 264).

From a psychological standpoint in Clym's characterization, his reaction to his mother's accusation is one of his most interesting traits. He does not defend himself as falsely accused; nor does he give vent to his anger at his mother's mistaken judgment, or at the "fate" that they did not meet earlier in the day. Rather, he accepts full responsibility for his mother's attitude. Even when Clym finally discovers the truth surrounding the circumstances that had prevented his mother from seeing him that day, Hardy never allows him to forget the heartache she has suffered. Clym knows that he has been terribly wrong in not seeking to make his peace with her sooner.

Hardy uses the relationship of Clym and his mother to create a strong character of high moral quality. He gives him the virtues of love, perseverance, determination, and the ability to undergo and to withstand pain if it is necessary to achieve his goal. In this relationship, Hardy presents Clym as a level-headed character who possess the ability to think his actions through carefully, and who can accept, though with some

difficulty, the consequences of these actions even when they are wrong. However, if any analysis of Clym's character development on this third level were to end here, the reader would unfortunately be left with the impression that he is a slightly dull, one-sided literary figure. And this would definitely not be a complete picture of Hardy's Clym. To further the analysis, his relationship to his wife Eustacia must now be considered. From this relationship, the character of Clym Yeobright will come into fuller perspective, as Hardy presents him in juxtaposition to Eustacia, his complete opposite.

Of all of Hardy's female characters, perhaps none is as sensuous or as mysterious as Eustacia Vye. She is the beautiful and aloof young woman who lives on the hill over-looking the heath. In her, Hardy creates the epitome of a lonely girl who lives in her daydreams and who constantly hopes for a brighter future. For Eustacia the heath is a prison, and she longs to escape from it. She sees in Clym her chance for this freedom. Eustacia feels sure that once they are married, she can convince Clym to give up the idea of the school and return to Paris. "O, if I could live in a gay town as a lady should, and go my own ways and do my own doings, I'd give the wrinkled half of my life" (page 86).

If love at first sight is possible even in fiction, then Eustacia loved Clym from the moment she first saw him. Her love for him is true, and this should not be mistaken by the reader. While she did hope that Clym would return to Paris, she marries him, not for what he can offer her, but because he is a kind, warm, and tender man. From the text, there can be little doubt of Clym's love for Eustacia. He loves her most passionately, and is willing to risk everything to possess her as his own.

Yet, it is over the subject of love that the first major contrast

between these two characters becomes apparent. Clym believes in the eternity of love; Eustacia does not. As she states: "Yet I know we shall not love like this always. Nothing can insure the continuance of love. It will evaporate like a spirit and so I feel full of fears" (page 174).

When they are first married, Clym and Eustacia are quite happy.

They, in their little house at Alderworth were living on with a monotony which was delightful to them... They were like those double stars which revolved round and round each other, and from a distance appeared to be one. (page 209.)

Nonetheless, this "Edenistic" happiness does not last for very long, for in a few short months Eustacia is bored with their country life and once again renews her plans to coerce Clym into returning to Paris.

This brief passage concerning their early life together at Alderworth is really quite significant to Clym's characterization, when it is understood in the context of Victorian literature. In the England of Hardy's day, the late 1800's, the discussion of sex and matters pertaining to sex was strictly taboo. And the use of sexual images in literature was definitely frowned upon. Hardy, being the clever writer that he is, manages to get his point across very successfully without being offensive to his Victorian audience. By means of this passage, Hardy informs his readers that Clym and Eustacia had a very enjoyable and fulfilling sex life. The image of the two stars becoming one is certainly graphic enough, when thought about carefully. As pertaining to Clym as a character, it is interesting to note that up until this point in the text, he has appeared to be a rather dull and bland figure. And yet surprisingly, he proves to be an excellent love maker. It is also important to note that it is Eustacia, and not Clym, who first loses interest in this aspect of their marriage.

Clym has no intention of returning to Paris, and he vows to study all the harder, in order to obtain his teaching permit as soon as possible. He truly believes he can make Eustacia happy once again, by offering her a better life as the wife of a school-master. Clym studies night and day with very little rest, until the pain in his eyes grows to be unbearable and his sight has grown dim. Upon an examination by a doctor, Clym is told that he has put such a strain on his eyes by over studying, that he will have to give it up completely or go totally blind.

While it is not easy for him to do, Clym accepts this upset in his plans, and tries to make the best of the situation by earning a living as a furze cutter, the lowest and most humble occupation a man could undertake on Egdon Heath.

Yeobright placed his hand upon her arm. "Now, don't you suppose, my inexperienced girl, that I cannot rebel, in high Promethean fashion, against the gods and fate as well as you. I have felt more steam and smoke of that sort than you have ever heard of. But the more I see of life the more I do perceive that there is nothing particularly great in the greatest walks, and therefore nothing particularly small in mine of furze cutting. If I feel that the greatest blessings vouchsafed to us are not very valuable, how can I feel it to be any great hardship when they are taken away?" (page 222)

Eustacia, unlike her husband, could not accept the fate which had befallen him. Once again, Hardy clarifies Clym's character by contrasting him with his wife.

It shocked her. To see him there, a poor afflicted man earning money by the sweat of his brow, had at first moved her to tears, but to hear him sing and not at all rebel against an occupation which, however satisfactory to himself, was degrading to her, as an educated lady-wife, wounded her through. (page 220)

By means of contrast, Hardy creates a complex psychological construct showing two entirely different ways of dealing with disaster. Clym could

tolerate and even accept pain and suffering, and see beyond it. Eustacia, in harmony with her character development, simply could not.

Coupled with her despair over her husband's infirmity and a violent argument between them over the death of his mother, in which Eustacia had accidentally been the cause of her not being admitted into their house, Clym and Eustacia separate. At first Clym is openly hostile towards his wife and feels in his heart that he will never be able to forgive her. But as time passes, he realizes that he still loves Eustacia and writes her a letter asking her to return home. In the meantime, however, Eustacia, believing her situation to be hopeless, decides to flee to Paris with the help of her former lover on the very night that Clym's letter comes to her grandfather's house, where she has been living since the separation. Again by a twist of fate, Eustacia never sees the letter. And that night she and her former lover drown in a terrible accident on the heath.

From a study of Clym's relationship with Eustacia, his character development certainly becomes much fuller. After establishing Clym's habit of patient acceptance, Hardy makes his character even more believable by the use of his anger and hostility towards Eustacia. Here, Clym is given greater depth than is seen in his relationship with his mother. As a character, Clym is not only governed by thought and reason, but also by the heart, and this gives any fictional figure a sense of reality.<sup>1</sup>

Once more Clym has to endure the loss of one he has loved. Again, Hardy allows him to know the pain of having failed at reconciliation. And this new anguish, linked with the pain surrounding his mother's death, burns in his troubled soul. One of the true beauties of this novel is the manner in which Hardy designs this pattern of division, failure to

reconcile, and ultimate separation, to be repeated in Clym's life.

Throughout the novel Clym constantly draws his strength from those around him, the common people. He truly loves them, and although he is unable to serve them as a school master, Clym chooses a new profession which he believes will be of even greater service to them. Almost two years after his wife's death, he finally begins his new occupation. Clym has become an itinerant preacher, and by his preaching, he will share with them the painful lessons that he has learned from his own life.

On the moral level, Clym's actions show that he is a character of upright virtue. He stands for honesty and truth, regardless of how painful the truth may be. In his dealings with others, Clym always tries to be fair, and his desire for serving mankind is presented as the greatest proof of his personal integrity.

It would seem that the world of Hardy's readers, at the time when this novel was first published, was far more Christian oriented than the world of the present. For these early readers morality had certitude. Some actions were right and others were wrong. And they saw this certitude reflected in Clym. Therefore, it would appear that these readers were able to understand his motives and actions more clearly, and were thus more easily able to identify with him, than most modern readers. Perhaps this ability to identify with Clym accounted for the popularity of this novel among the common Englishmen of the Victorian Period.<sup>2</sup>

One valid interpretation of Clym, though it is certainly not the only interpretation, is to see him as a Christ figure. Like Christ, Clym undergoes his own personal death and resurrection as an example for others. However, regardless of one's acceptance or rejection of this interpretation, any reader, if he is to see Clym as a hero figure, should

try to understand his characterization in the light of Christian virtues and, granted, for some this will be difficult. Clym's sense of morality is definitely Christian. And whether or not Hardy consciously intended for Clym to be a model of Christian values is debatable, but, nonetheless, this does not discredit the fact that Clym's whole life style is very basically Christian.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

This analysis has shown the depth and complexity of the character Clym Yeobright created by Thomas Hardy in his novel, The Return of the Native. Throughout the entire plot, as Clym's characterization developed, he has known the joys and the pains of love; he has suffered, and he has grown. His dreams and visions were modified as he was beset by events, created by Hardy, over which he had no control. But in spite of his misfortunes, Clym's belief in the dignity of man never wavered. He was truly the protagonist of the novel around whom all the other characters revolved. And it was from his relationships with these other characters that Clym's own development was made whole.

In this novel, Clym is the character given the highest sense of moral right; he is the one who possess the broadest spectrum of reality outside himself. Clym is certainly not a passive character, but rather, Hardy allows him to work consistently to carry out his plans, as best he can, despite any or all opposition. Therefore as a literary figure, Clym is a hero. He is constantly pointing the path which others should follow. His one desire is to bring all men to inner peace, truth, and happiness. Yes, Clym is a hero; he is the quiet hero, the native returned.

As a quiet hero, Clym is in many ways similiar to another of Hardy's character, Giles Winterborne, from the novel, The Woodlanders. Giles, tenderly in love with Grace Melbury, a married woman, works continually to save her unhappy marriage, never once allowing his own feelings to

become known. And in the end, he even gives up his life to preserve her honor. Hardy creates in Giles those same virtues which are found in Clym, the greatest of which is self-sacrificing service to one's fellow man. Like Clym, Giles is gentle and loving, and yet at the same time he is determined and confident; a character whose belief in truth and honesty is beyond the reader's reproach.

A study of character analysis by means of textual explication incorporating the four levels of development may be helpful to the reader of this novel, or any other novel such as The Woodlanders, for example, because it will give him greater insight into the workings of the character or characters involved. It will allow him to understand, as fully as he possible can, the true meaning of the work which he is reading, thus adding to his enjoyment of the novel. For the student of English literature, this method is a valuable tool that, once mastered, endows him with a greater ability for literary scholarship. The use of this method opens new doors of study to the student, teaching him the intricacies of characterization and its role in fiction.

## FOOTNOTES

### NOTES TO CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup>Grant C. Knight, The Novel in English (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 236.

<sup>2</sup>Trevor Johnson, Thomas Hardy, Literary Critiques (New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1971), p. 92.

<sup>3</sup>R.G. Cox (ed.), Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1970), p. 49.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 51-54.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 57-58.

<sup>6</sup>Bruce McCullough, Representative English Novelists, Defoe to Conrad (New York, Harper and Brothers Inc., 1946), pp. 231-235.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 242-243.

### NOTES ON CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup>W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel (New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Gerald Lareau, (class notes)  
January 17, 1972.

<sup>5</sup>C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1972), p. 91.

<sup>6</sup>Oscar G. Brockett, The Theater: an Introduction (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1969), p. 34.

<sup>7</sup>Harvey, Character and the Novel, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup>McCullough, Representative English Novelists, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup>Johnson, Literary Critiques, p. 94.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Walter. The English Novel. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1954.
- Brockett, Oscar G. The Theater: an Introduction. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1969.
- Cox, R. G. (ed.). Thomas Hardy: The Critical Heritage. New York: Barnes and Noble Inc., 1970.
- Hardy, Thomas. The Return of the Native. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917.
- Hardy, Thomas. The Return of the Native. New York: Dell Publishing Co. Inc., 1962.
- Hardy, Thomas. The Return of the Native. New York: Airmont Publishing Co., 1964.
- Hardy, Thomas. The Woodlanders. London: Macmillian and Co. Ltd., 1964.
- Harvey, W. J. Character and the Novel. New York: Cornell University Press, 1966.
- Holman, C. Hugh. A Handbook to Literature. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1972.
- Johnson, Trevor. Thomas Hardy, Literary Critiques. New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1968.
- Karl, Frederick R. The Nineteenth Century British Novel. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1964.
- Knight, Grant C. The Novel in English. New York: Richard R. Smith Inc., 1931.
- Lareau, Gerald R. (Instructor of English). English 204, "The Novel", Saint Meinrad Seminary College: Unpublished Notes, II Semester of 1972.
- McCullough, Bruce. Representative English Novelists, Defoe to Conrad. New York: Harper and Brothers Inc., 1946.
- Minot, Stephen. Three Genres: the Writing of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1971.
- Weber, Carl J. "Introduction to Tess of the d'Urbervilles". New York: Random House Inc., 1951.



ARCHABREY LIBRARY

3 0764 1002 9075 3