

Concealment in Thomas Hardy's Novel

The Return of the Native

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Abstract—Throughout the Return of the Native, the author uses concealment as both a plot device and a theme which has tragic results. Concealment creates tension and leads to misunderstandings that cause people to take destructive actions. It also reflects an absence of deep and lasting love, which requires openness and trust. The Return of the Native is a tale that reflects the inability of human nature to change to do the right thing, ending in tragic consequences for all involved.

Keywords-return of the native; concealment; tragic consequences

I. INTRODUCTION

The Return of the Native is Thomas Hardy's sixth published novel. He lived most of his life in rural southwest England. He was born on 2 June 1840, in a cottage in Higher Bockhampton, a village in Dorset County, near Dorchester, the setting of The Return of the Native.

On an architectural visit to St Juliot in Cornwall in 1870 he met his first wife, Emma Gifford. Before their marriage in 1874 he had published four novels and earning his living as a writer. More novels followed and in 1878 the Hardys moved from Dorset to the London literary scene. But in 1885, after building his house at Max Gate near Dorchester, Hardy again returned to Dorset. He then produced most of his major novels: The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886), The Woodlanders (1887), Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891), The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved (1892) and Jude the Obscure (1895). Amidst the controversy caused by Jude the Obscure, he turned to the poetry he had been writing all his life. In the next thirty years he published over nine hundred poems and his epic drama in verse, The Dynasts. He died on 11 January 1928. His ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey and his heart at Stinsford in Dorset.

II. THE AUTHOR

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III. THE NOVEL

A. *The Background Information of the Novel*

The Return of the Native takes place in southwest England in the 1850s, when socioeconomic status was all-important. People rarely married someone of another social class. Members of the upper class felt considerable snobbery, even contempt, for those of lower classes felt respect, even awe, for their social betters. In the novel, Hardy shows how rigid class distinctions contributed to unhappiness, especially by interfering with romantic love. Much of the book's tension arises from class barriers, which are part of a world where randomness and chance are key parts of everyday life.

B. *The main Characters of the Novel*

Clym Yeobright---A young man of about thirty who gives up a business career in Paris to return to his native Egdon Heath to become a "schoolmaster to the poor and ignorant."

Eustacia Vye---A young beauty who chafes against her life on the heath and longs to escape it in order to lead the more adventure-filled life of the world. Some of the heathfolks think she is a witch.

Tamsin Yeobright---Clym's cousin and Mrs. Yeobright's niece, a young girl of gentle ways and conventional expectations.

Damon Wildeve ---Eustacia's former lover and Tamsin's first husband. He is an ex-engineer who has failed in his profession and who now keeps an Inn, ". He has a wandering eye and an appetite for women.

Diggory Venn---A resourceful man of twenty-four and a reddleman. He selflessly protects Tamsin throughout the novel; at the end, he renounces his trade to become a dairy farmer like his father, and in doing so loses the red skin. He is then seen as a suitable husband for Tamsin.

C. *The Main Idea of the Novel*

The Return of the Native was first published as a serial in Volume 37 of the magazine Belgravia in 12 monthly installments, running from January to December 1878 inclusive, and then published as six books in three volumes. It tells the tale of Eustacia Vye, a tempestuous young woman who yearns for passionate love and freedom from the barren confines of Egdon Heath, a wild tract of land in the Dorset countryside, with only her grandfather for her company, she finds herself bored with her life and looks for the cure to this in finding the ideal man to spend the rest of her life with, hopefully away from this "prison". However, when Damon Wildeve, the only other person out of the inhabitants of the Heath who fits Eustacia's ideas, decides upon marrying the meek Thomasin Yeobright, Eustacia sets her sights on Thomasin's cousin, Clym, who is returning to Egdon Heath from living a lavish lifestyle in Paris as a jeweler. The temptation of rich luxury and escape causes Eustacia to fall hopelessly in love with a man she's looking forward to fulfilling her desire, but just a fantasy. It sounds fairly perfect, but in fact all is not well.

Clym Yeobright's decision to abandon the Parisian life for teaching, and later, becoming a heath worker alienates himself from the entire community of Egdon heath, compared to his rich beginning. This also damages his relationship with his mother, the edly and ambitious Mrs Yeobright, Wildeve and Thomasin's marriage and his own ill-fated relationship with desperate Eustacia. Through unfortunate circumstances—due to the characters' non-consideration of the outcomes

IV. CONCEALMENT IN THE NOVEL

Throughout The Return of the Native, Hardy uses concealment as both a plot device and a theme which has tragic results. Concealment creates tension and leads to misunderstandings that cause people to take destructive actions. It also reflects an absence of deep and lasting love, which require openness and trust.

A. *Diggory's Concealment*

The novel opens at twilight, when the people on Egdon Heath are becoming increasingly invisible. We meet the first person---Diggory, a reddleman. He is partially disguised by his red skin acquired through continual contact with ruddle. Just like the book described that his cap, boots, face, hands--- all were red. Because of Diggory's redness, one of the Heath folks doesn't recognize him: "I think I've seen him before," Humphrey Miller said. (Chapter 1).

Similarly, when Diggory stopped the horse and gestured to Elizabeth Yeobright to step aside with him. "You don't know me, ma'am?" "No," she said. "Why, yes, I do! You're young Venn. Your father was a dairyman" So Elizabeth doesn't immediately recognize Diggory, too. (Chapter 1)

When Captain Vye's eyes toward Diggory's wagon window. "May I look at her?" "No," Diggory said sharply. "I have no right to allow you that. I hope she won't wake up until she's home." (Chapter 1)

When Aunt and niece descended from the wagon, Elizabeth asked Diggory "Didn't your father leave you his dairy farm?" "Yes, ma'am." "Then, why did you become a reddleman?" Diggory looked at Tamsin, who blushed. "You won't be needing me anymore tonight, ma'am?" Here he changed the subject.(Chapter 2)

Although Diggory likes to remain unseen, he closely watches others."His blue eyes were as keen as a bird of prey's." Eustacia and Damon meet in secret,, Diggory spies on them. "Each of the next five nights, Diggory went to Rainbarrow to eavesdrop on them but they didn't come. On the sixth night, he saw them at barrow. He crawled near enough to overhear."He is far more eager to obtain information than to provide it. (Chapter 3)

B. *Tamsin's Concealment*

Despite her "honest"face, Tamsin also continually conceals

She doesn't tell her aunt that Diggory once proposed to her. She refused with a letter to Diggory. The letter wrote: Dear Diggory, The question you asked me greatly surprised me. If my aunt hadn't come upon us, I would have explained why I can't marry you. I like you, but I don't feel the things that a woman should feel for the man she marries. Also, my aunt never would agree to the marriage,even if I wanted to marry you. She likes you, but she wants me to marry higher than a small dairy farmer. It's best that we not meet again. I'll always think of you as a good man and care about your well-being. I remain your faithful friend. Tamsin. (Chapter 3)

After her wedding to Damon is postponed, she tries to hide the fact. So do Damon and Elizabeth. When villagers come to congratulate Tamsin and Damon on their wedding, Elizabeth cries, "Tamsin, here is a pretty exposure! We must leave at once." Before Damon has finished talking with the visitors, Tamsin and Elizabeth leave through a back window. Instead of informing the well-wishers that the wedding has been postponed, Damon accepts their congratulations.(Chapter 2)

Tamsin also conceals the incident from Clym. A letter from Clym shows his ignorance of the incident: I've heard scandalous gossip about Tamsin and Damon. I kept denying the rumors, but I wonder how they originated. It's ridiculous that a woman like Tamsin would be jilted on her wedding day. What has happened?(Chapter 6)

C. *Eustacia and Damon's Concealment*

Eustacia, too, habitually eavesdrops, spies and deceives. Using her grandfather's naval telescope, she watches people on the heath.(Chapter3)

Having kept a bonfire burning as a signal to Damon, she falsely tells her grandfather that she has maintained the fire to please a young boy. (Chapter3)

Eustacia and Damon always meet in secret,,When Damon went to Eustacia's house, He attracted her attention without

attracting her grandfather's by throwing a stone at the shutter of her bedroom window.(Chapter 4)

Eustacia eavesdrops while Sam Brown and Humphrey discuss Clym's homecoming. In order to attend the Yeobriights' Christmas party, she pretends to be a man playing the part of a knight. Disguised by her costume, she spies on Clym and Tamsin. She soon starts meeting secretly with Clym as she previously met with Damon. (Chapter5)

At the East Egdon festival, Damon danced with Eustacia. "If you don't want to be recognized, lower your veil," he advises. She does. After dancing, as Damon and Eustacia are walking home, Damon quickly leaves to avoid being recognized when Diggory and Clym approach

When Damon returned home, Tamsin asked "Where is the horse,Damon?" "I didn't buy it after all. The price was too high."(Chapter11)

When Elizabeth comes to Eustacia and Clym's home, Clym is sleeping. Damon is there, too. Damon leaves by the back door--- once again avoid being seen, Then Eustacia conceals both Damon's visit and Elizabeth's visit from Clym. (Chapter13)

While Elizabeth is dying inside the hut, Damon and Eustacia hide outside, listening. Finally, Eustacia and Damon plan to run off together secretly. But both of them die at the day they are going to run away. (Chapter18)

D. Clym's Concealment

Clym may be the most self-concealing character of all.

While claiming to love Eustacia "beyond all description," he continually disregards her wishes.(Chapter8) Eustacia wants to go to Paris. Clym refuses to take her there. When Eustacia

wants him to stop working as a field laborer,he shrugs off her pleas.When Tamsin seeks his approval regarding her proposed marriage to Diggory, Clym doesn't reveal that he himself had decided to propose to her. He objects to the marriage on the grounds that diggory is a farmer and Elizabeth would have disapproved.(Chapter11)

From the book we may well concluded that Clym isn't being fully honest even with himself. He says "I'm glad that you 've found happiness," but his words seem insincere. He can't even bring himself to attend the wedding himself.(Chapter 22)

V. CONCLUSION

In literature works, tragedy is a common theme, different writers have different opinions and understandings about it, and tragic color is embodied naturally through their whole tragic works. The Return of the Native is a tale that reflects the inability of human nature to change to do the right thing, ending in tragic consequences for all involved.

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