

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

THOMAS HARDY



EDITED BY ROBERT C. SCHWEIK

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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THOMAS HARDY
FAR FROM
THE MADDING CROWD

AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT
BACKGROUNDS
CRITICISM



Edited by

ROBERT C. SCHWEIK

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For Jo, Sue, and Char

A Note on the Frontispiece

The frontispiece is one of Helen Paterson Allingham's woodcut illustrations of *Far from the Madding Crowd* in the *Cornhill Magazine*. A former student of John Everett Millais and Frederick Leighton, her work was praised by both Carlyle and Ruskin. Mrs. Allingham's marriage took place in the same year as Hardy's to Emma Gifford, and, looking back on that time in a letter to Edmund Gosse in 1906, Hardy made these comments about her and her work:

The illustrator of *Far from the Madding Crowd* began as a charming young lady, Miss Helen Paterson, and ended as a married woman—charms unknown—wife of Allingham the poet. I have never set eyes on her since she was the former and I met her and corresponded with her about the pictures of the story. She was the best illustrator I ever had. She and I were married about the same time . . . but not to each other, which I fear rather spoils the information. Though I have never thought of her for the last 20 years . . . you might hunt her up and tell me what she looks like as an elderly woman. If you do, please give her my kind regards, but you must not add that those two almost simultaneous weddings would have been one but for a stupid blunder of God Almighty.

Foreword

Thomas Hardy began the composition of *Far from the Madding Crowd* in 1873. It was the culmination of a five-year apprenticeship in the writing of fiction that was certainly remarkable for its diversity if not always for high achievement. Hardy began his career as a novelist by writing a clumsy, satirical attack on the upper classes; that first novel, titled *The Poor Man and the Lady*, was completed in 1868, but it was so flawed that, on the advice of a publisher's reader, he set it aside and turned his hand to produce a second novel, full of melodramatic mystery and sensational turns of plot, for which, under the title *Desperate Remedies*, he finally found a publisher in 1871. *Desperate Remedies* received mixed reviews, but one particularly savage attack no doubt helped to turn Hardy in the new direction he took in his next novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), whose delicate rural charm and slight story of almost-innocent rustic courtship were about as far removed from the tone and manner of *Desperate Remedies* as they could possibly be. The favorable reception of *Under the Greenwood Tree* led, in turn, to an invitation to write a novel for serial publication, and the result was a departure in still another direction—a novel titled *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), which combined wit-battles between the sexes with sharply drawn dramatic scenes to create a bittersweet romance with a highly ironic ending.

A Pair of Blue Eyes was set in Cornwall, where Hardy had been making visits to court his future wife, Emma Lavinia Gifford. Those visits had grown out of Hardy's work as an architect's assistant, but, in 1874, having completed his next novel, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy abandoned architecture to devote himself to his writing. *Far from the Madding Crowd* was the beginning of a sequence of novels that was to include *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *The Woodlanders* (1887), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). During the time that he wrote these, Hardy produced other novels of often much lower quality, but the six major novels that began with *Far from the Madding Crowd* surely constitute a most extraordinary achievement in the history of English fiction, and one that was distinctively his.

Yet no single novel of Hardy's can be said to typify that achievement fully, for his is a complex art, and each of the major works has its own peculiar richness which gives it a special quality of its own. Even the features that go to make up the distinctive character of *Far from the Madding Crowd* are themselves remarkably varied. There is, first of all Hardy's lavish treatment of the pastoral setting: many of his novels

have a rural backdrop, but never again would he allow himself such lovingly detailed accounts of rural activities, and, although rustic characters are another of the staple features of Hardy's fiction, in *Far from the Madding Crowd* they rise to heights of such extraordinarily rich comedy that, of their kind, they have scarcely been equaled in the history of English literature. This is not, of course, to suggest that *Far from the Madding Crowd* is a flawless work of art. In rushing to finish it before his impending marriage, Hardy slipped briefly into the melodramatic mode of *Desperate Remedies*; but, far more frequently, he used sensational elements in a way that subordinated them to more serious artistic purposes. Hence, it is perhaps worth emphasizing that, in spite of its comic elements, *Far from the Madding Crowd* is a serious novel, and although its plot involves a rural romance that begins on a note of almost lighthearted comedy, it turns gradually to a more stark tale of rash thoughtlessness, unhappy marriage, abandonment, death, and derangement; even the relative happiness of its ending is muted by a sober awareness of past pain and a tempering of hope that the grim unpredictability of life has imposed upon the survivors. With *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy began placing an increased emphasis on the stern inexorability with which apparently trivial actions and small chance events bring about consequences of disproportionate severity—an emphasis that would in various and highly distinctive ways be embodied in every one of the major novels he would subsequently write.

It was in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, also, that for the first time Hardy adopted the term "Wessex" to designate the geographical area in the south of England that was to serve as the locale for so many of his later works in prose and poetry. What Hardy created in "Wessex" is a remarkable compound of the partly real and partly fictional, but, of course, even the "realities" that Hardy imports into his fictional world are treated freely, creatively, and, above all, selectively, with an eye to such details as contribute to the total effect of the work of art. Hence, although this edition provides maps of Hardy's "Wessex" that reveal the many ways it conforms to the real geography of southwest England (Hardy himself began the practice of supplying such maps for his readers), it is important to keep in mind that Hardy's allusions to features of the southwestern countryside are only one element in the wide range of materials that he orchestrated to evoke his fictional world.

Those materials comprise an unusual mix—of minutely particular descriptions, often with rich symbolic overtones, alternating with broad, direct, and relatively abstract authorial generalizations; of much distinctive local detail, but often so freely adapted and modified as to render it scarcely recognizable; of occasionally stiff and ponderously formal character descriptions interspersed amid a wealth of shrewdly phrased and perceptive observations on the human condi-

tion; of allusions to the Bible, to Greek and Roman myth, and to works of art, often made with remarkable point and aptness, though they sometimes seem awkward and artificial; and of narrative modes sometimes loose and occasionally slack, but joined with more leisurely developed passages that are finely detailed and can rise to an extraordinary lyric intensity. In short, Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* is a compound of such highly diverse materials and narrative modes that it would be surprising if there were not occasionally passages a reader might feel flat or awkward. But for those, such as they are, there are more than ample compensations: for again and again in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy manages to convey a vision of human life so honest and so deeply rich and circumstantial that it resonates with a dense and subtle suggestiveness that all too easily slips through the crude nets of critics' formulations but remains for readers one major source of its greatness.

That remarkable suggestiveness and dramatic power that Hardy so often achieved in *Far from the Madding Crowd* is certainly no accident; it is clearly the result of Hardy's unremitting concern for the details of his text—a concern amply attested by the history of his repeated and extensive revisions of *Far from the Madding Crowd* from its earliest manuscript drafts to the last printings over which he had any control. In this Norton Critical Edition, I have attempted to take that process of revision into account and to provide a critical text that represents in every respect Hardy's final deliberate intention. The procedures followed in preparing this edition are described in notes that follow the text of the novel itself; there, editorial principles are briefly set forth; the texts collated are listed; the copy-text adopted is specified; and emendations of that copy-text are recorded. In addition, certain variant readings that were not adopted for this edition, but that I judge to have a special interest in their own right, are discussed in the essay *Textual Notes*; these include readings both from the manuscript and from later texts.

In preparing this edition, I have incurred many indebtednesses I am happy to acknowledge here. I wish to thank the Trustees of the Hardy Estate for permission to make quotations from unpublished materials. To E. Thorne I am especially grateful for permission to examine the manuscript of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and to quote from it. Mr. G. H. Ballantyne of the Signet Library, Edinburgh, and Mr. Roger Peers, Curator of the Dorset County Museum, have graciously provided access to special materials held in their collections. Many of the problems of locating and obtaining materials were smoothed by the fine cooperation of John Saulitis, the Director of Library Services at Fredonia State University College, and by the faculty of Reed Library, particularly Gary Barber, Margaret Pabst, and Yvonne Wilensky. Of the many colleagues who provided help with special questions and/or with the reading of proof, I wish particularly

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ROBERT C. SCHWEIK

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Preface

In reprinting this story for a new edition I am reminded that it was in the chapters of "Far from the Madding Crowd,"¹ as they appeared month by month in a popular magazine,² that I first ventured to adopt the word "Wessex"³ from the pages of early English history, and give it a fictitious significance, as the existing name of the district once included in that extinct kingdom. The series of novels I projected being mainly of the kind called local, they seemed to require a territorial definition of some sort to lend unity to their scene. Finding that the area of a single county did not afford a canvas large enough for this purpose, and that there were objections to an invented name, I disinterred the old one. The region designated was known but vaguely, and I was often asked even by educated people where it lay. However, the press and the public were kind enough to welcome the fanciful plan, and willingly joined me in the anachronism of imagining a Wessex population living under Queen Victoria;—a modern Wessex of railways, the penny post,⁴ mowing and reaping machines, union workhouses,⁵ lucifer matches,⁶ labourers who could read and write, and National school children.⁷ But I believe I am correct in stating that, until the existence of this contemporaneous Wessex in place of the usual counties was announced in the present story, in 1874, it had never been heard of in fiction and current research, if at all, and that the expression, "a Wessex peasant," or "a Wessex custom," would theretofore have been taken to refer to nothing later in date than the Norman Conquest.

I did not anticipate that this application of the word to a modern story would extend outside the chapters of these particular chronicles. But it was soon taken up elsewhere, the first to adopt it being the now defunct *Examiner*, which, in the impression bearing date July 15, 1876, entitled one of its articles "The Wessex Labourer," the article turning out to be no dissertation on farming during the Hep-tarchy, but on the modern peasant of the south-west counties.

Since then the appellation which I had thought to reserve to the horizons and landscapes of a partly real, partly dream-country, has

1. Hardy's title alludes to the following lines from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard":

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life / They
kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

2. The *Cornhill Magazine*, where *Far from the Madding Crowd* was serialized monthly from January to December of 1874.

3. The name Hardy gave in his fiction to an area of southwest England whose central county is Dorset; see the maps of Hardy's "Wessex" and the locales of *Far from the Madding Crowd*

included in this edition, pp 325–326.

4. The "penny post"—whose innovations included postage stamps and uniform postal rates based on weight—began in 1840.

5. Brought into being by the Poor Law of 1834, which obliged adjacent parishes to unite in constructing and supporting workhouses to which paupers were required to go for relief.

6. The first practical friction matches, invented by John Walter in 1826.

7. Children attending units of an Anglican elementary school system originated by Andrew Bell in 1811. By 1851 some 3,400 National Schools were in existence.

become more and more popular as a practical provincial definition; and the dream-country has, by degrees, solidified into a utilitarian region which people can go to, take a house in, and write to the papers from. But I ask all good and idealistic readers to forget this, and to refuse steadfastly to believe that there are any inhabitants of a Victorian Wessex outside these volumes in which their lives and conversations are detailed.

Moreover, the village called Weatherbury,⁸ wherein the scenes of the present story of the series are for the most part laid, would perhaps be hardly discernible by the explorer, without help, in any existing place nowadays; though at the time, comparatively recent, at which the tale was written, a sufficient reality to meet the descriptions, both of backgrounds and personages, might have been traced easily enough. The church remains, by great good fortune, unrestored and intact⁹ and a few of the old houses; but the ancient malt-house, which was formerly so characteristic of the parish, has been pulled down these twenty years; also most of the thatched and dormered cottages that were once lifeholds. The heroine's fine old Jacobean house¹ would be found in the story to have taken a witch's ride of a mile or more from its actual position; though with that difference its features are described as they still show themselves to the sun and moonlight. The game of prisoner's-base, which not so long ago seemed to enjoy a perennial vitality in front of the worn-out stocks, may, so far as I can say, be entirely unknown to the rising generation of schoolboys there. The practice of divination by Bible and key,² the regarding of valentines as things of serious import, the shearing-supper, the long smockfrocks,³ and the harvest-home, have, too, nearly disappeared in the wake of the old houses; and with them has gone, it is said, much of that love of fuddling⁴ to which the village at one time was notoriously prone. The change at the root of this has been the recent supplanting of the class of stationary cottagers, who carried on the local traditions and humours, by a population of more or less migratory labourers, which has led to a break of continuity in local history, more fatal than any other thing to the preservation of legend, folk-lore, close inter-social relations, and eccentric individualities. For these the indispensable conditions of existence are attachment to the soil of one particular spot by generation after generation.

1895-1902.

T. H.

8. "Weatherbury" is one of the many places cited in *Far from the Madding Crowd* that were based, more or less closely, on real locales in and around Dorset, the center of Hardy's fictional "Wessex." For identifications of the real locales upon which Hardy's fictional locales are based, see the maps provided in this edition, pp. 325-326.

9. This is no longer the case (1912) [*Hardy's note*].

1. Probably based in part on Waterston House

near Puddleton, the hamlet that served as the model for Hardy's "Weatherbury."

2. In chapter 13, Bathsheba and Liddy use a Bible and key to attempt to foretell whom Bathsheba will marry.

3. A long, loose-fitting garment formerly worn by rural workers—so called because it was traditionally decorated with the kind of needlework called "smocking."

4. Getting drunk (dialect).