

THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

THOMAS HARDY



EDITED BY PHILLIP MALLETT

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION
SECOND EDITION

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UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY

New York • London

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Printed in the United States of America.

The text of this book is composed in Fairfield Medium
with the display set in Bernhard Modern.

Composition by PennSet, Inc.

Manufacturing by the Maple-Vail Book Group, Binghamton.

Production Manager: Benjamin Reynolds.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Hardy, Thomas, 1840–1928.

The return of the native: authoritative text, backgrounds and
contexts, criticism / Thomas Hardy; edited by Phillip Mallett.— 2nd ed.
p. cm. — (A Norton critical edition)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0–393–92787–3 (pbk.)

1. Wessex (England—Fiction. 2. Hardy, Thomas, 1840–1928. Return
of the native. 3. People with visual disabilities—Fiction. 4. Mothers
and sons—Fiction. 5. Mate selection—Fiction. 6. Heathlands—
Fiction. 7. Adultery—Fiction. I. Mallett, Phillip, 1946–
II. Title. III. Series.

PR4747.A2M35 2005
823'.8—dc22

2005053925

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110-0017
www.wwnorton.com

W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., Castle House,
75/76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QT

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Preface to the Second Edition

In 1879 the reviewer in the *New Quarterly Magazine* noted, astutely, that *The Return of the Native*, Hardy's sixth published novel, presented "a new phase, and perhaps a new departure in the development of Mr. Hardy's genius." So it has seemed to most later readers. Since its first publication in 1878, it has been widely translated, re-edited, dramatized, and adapted for film and television; it has even inspired a piece of music, Gustav Holst's symphonic "Egdon Heath." It remains both a popular classic—it is, like *Wuthering Heights* or *Jane Eyre*, one of those novels that seems to excite a passion for reading in those who discover it—and a favorite set text for book clubs, schools, and colleges. *The Return of the Native*, wrote D. H. Lawrence in his *Study of Thomas Hardy* (1912), was Hardy's "first tragic and important novel."

Hardy probably began work on *The Return* toward the end of 1876, after he and his wife Emma had moved to Sturminster Newton in Dorset; it may well have been completed by the time they moved to London in March 1878. Despite the somber tone of the novel, this was a period he remembered later as the happiest time of their marriage, but he was in his thirty-seventh year, his previous novel, *The Hand of Ethelberta*, had been neither a popular nor a critical success, and his standing as a full-time writer was still not wholly secure. Nor, perhaps, was he himself quite sure of the direction he wished to take. After his first, unpublished attempt at prose fiction, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, he had written five novels in as many years. *Desperate Remedies*, published in 1871, is an exercise in sensation fiction, with a plot that includes illegitimacy, a lesbian scene, a fire, murder, and attempted rape. *Under the Greenwood Tree*, published a year later, is a much quieter book, pastoral and self-consciously charming, which traces Dick Dewy's only slightly troubled courtship of Fancy Day, one rung above him on the social ladder. *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) is a romance, albeit one tinged with tragedy; like much of Hardy's fiction, it explores the trials of a woman wooed by several men, and the demands on her to meet male expectations. *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), solicited by Leslie Stephen for the prestigious *Cornhill Magazine*, brought a return to the pastoral, as Stephen had required, but with a deeper

exploration of love, and a darker treatment of rural life; the plot includes the death in childbirth of an unmarried woman, as well as a murder and a mental breakdown. *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1875), also written for the *Cornhill*, was an experiment in a very different direction: a comedy of social manners, satirical rather than pastoral or tragic, but with elements of disguised autobiography in a plot that explores the boundaries between a rural working world like that in which Hardy had grown up, and the urban middle and upper class to which his success was beginning to win him the right of entry.

The Hand of Ethelberta disappointed the critics, who would have settled for another novel in the style of *Far from the Madding Crowd*. The literary marketplace was as competitive as any other, and Hardy must have known that he had ground to make up, but rather than return to the pastoral mode he determined upon another change of direction. His next novel, *The Return of the Native*, was to be an ambitious attempt at high tragedy. During 1877, with a substantial part of the novel written—a different version of what came to form the first two books of the published text—he offered it unsuccessfully to a number of magazines, including the *Cornhill*, *Blackwood's*, and *Temple Bar*, before finding a home for it in the far from prestigious *Belgravia* and at a significantly lower price than he had received for *Ethelberta*. It appeared in serial form through 1878, with illustrations by Arthur Hopkins, and in America in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* from February 1878 to January 1879. As was customary, the first volume publication came just before the completion of the serial, in November 1878. The reviews were mixed, and the note of metropolitan condescension never far to seek, but they were by no means so unfavourable as has sometimes been assumed; a selection is included in this edition. There were objections, from one quarter or another, to almost everything—to the language, characterization, setting, mood, and tone; yet most critics, even those who least liked the novel, continued to place Hardy alongside George Eliot and the young Henry James as an author to be reckoned with. In 1879 the *New Quarterly Magazine* published the first article that set out to survey Hardy's work in its entirety, and did so sympathetically (though with some reservations about *The Return*). Others were soon to follow: among them Havelock Ellis in the *Westminster Review* in 1883, J. M. Barrie in the *Contemporary Review* in 1889, Edmund Gosse a year later in *The Speaker*. By now it was clear that Hardy was to be thought of as a "tragic novelist," and the importance in his development of *The Return of the Native* was widely acknowledged. Its status as one of the half-dozen books on which Hardy's reputation as a novelist chiefly rests is now beyond question.

The first aim of this Norton Critical Edition has been to provide a reliable text. Here I have agreed with James Gindin, who edited *The Return of the Native* for Norton in 1969, in basing the text on that of the Wessex Edition of 1912; my reasons for doing so are set out in the Note on the Text. This edition, however, unlike its predecessor, includes the illustrations that accompanied the novel's first, serial publication, as well as the sketch map of the scene of the story drawn by Hardy himself for the 1878 volume edition; neither the illustrations nor this map were included in the Wessex Edition. In preparing the annotation, I have drawn on Gindin's work and on that of other editors of the novel, in particular Simon Gatrell and Tony Slade, but at times I have differed from all of them, both in matters of substance, and in the choice of what to annotate and what to leave without comment. Such decisions inevitably reflect our varied experiences as readers of Hardy, and as teachers of English literature, as well perhaps as cultural differences between the two sides of the Atlantic. Further remarks on the notes may be found in the Note on the Text.

The other main difference between this and the earlier Norton edition is to be found in the selection of modern criticism of the novel, where I have included a number of essays written after 1969, including work by Gillian Beer, Pamela Dalziel, Jennifer Gribble, Simon Gatrell, Rosemarie Morgan, Andrew Nash, Richard Swigg, and Michael Wheeler. Three of the essays are, in their present form, published for the first time in this edition. Rosemarie Morgan revisits questions raised in an earlier chapter on the novel, in *Women and Sexuality in the Novels of Thomas Hardy*, first published in 1988; Simon Gatrell draws together work done in his introductions to the Garland edition of the manuscripts of *The Return of the Native*, and to the World's Classics edition of the novel, and in two monographs, *Hardy the Creator: A Textual Biography* (1988) and *Thomas Hardy's Vision of Wessex* (2003); Andrew Nash has revised an article originally published in *The Library* in 2001 to take account of Gatrell's essay in the form in which it appears here. Inevitably, in order to make room for the new material I have had to exclude some pieces that Gindin included; I have done so with regret, but in the confidence that many of the issues they addressed are taken up and re-examined by the critics represented here. I have also included a rather larger selection of Hardy's non-fictional writing, including letters, and his third-person autobiography. Here I have had the advantage, as Gindin did not, of being able to consult the seven volumes of Hardy's *Collected Letters*, edited for the Clarendon Press by Richard Purdy and Michael Millgate.

I owe thanks to a number of people. The community of Hardy

scholars is a wide and generous one; I have sought and received advice from, in particular, Pamela Dalziel, Kathleen Huggett, Caroline Jackson-Houlston, Peter Millington, Birgit Plietzsch, Martin Ray, Angelique Richardson, Peter Robson, and Terry Wright. To all of them, my thanks.

Lilian Swindall, at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester, has been, as always, unfailingly welcoming, resourceful, and informed; there could be no better guide to the Museum's collection of Hardy materials. Everyone I have dealt with at Norton has been friendly, patient (above all, patient), and efficient, and it is a pleasure to say so here; I am grateful especially to Brian Baker.

I should not have completed the work on this edition without the support, quietly, graciously, and generously given, of Margaret Craven. I owe her more than she would ever allow me to say.

A Note on the Text

Like its predecessor, this Norton edition of *The Return of the Native* is based on the Macmillan Wessex Edition of 1912. In the General Preface he wrote at the time, Hardy described this as the “definite edition.” Most readers have taken this to mean definitive, following Richard L. Purdy in his influential *Thomas Hardy: A Bibliographical Study* (1954), and definitive has been taken to mean authoritative—authoritative enough to provide the base text for most of the editions currently available. This seems uncontroversial: we expect to read, say, *Great Expectations* with the ending Dickens finally chose for it, not the one he rejected on the advice of his friend Bulwer Lytton; or George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* in the revised edition of 1874, rather than in the 1872 first edition. But with the exception of *Desperate Remedies* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*, all of Hardy’s novels, including *The Return of the Native*, had a complicated publishing history, allowing for significant changes to be made at a number of different stages. These stages typically include a serial version, often substantially revised from the manuscript to comply with the demands of editors, or Hardy’s guesses as to what those demands might be; a first volume edition, in which the text was revised back toward its pre-serial form; and then the two collected editions, the “Wessex Novels” from Osgood, McIlvaine in 1895, and the “Wessex Edition” from Macmillan in 1912, each marked by extensive revisions. This is complex enough, but the issues are often further involved by substantial differences between the first English and the first American book versions, as is the case with *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, or between first and second volume editions, as with the 1891 and 1892 editions of *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.

There are at least three orders of change here, overlapping but still analytically distinct. There are, first, those made by Hardy’s own decision, most of them for the 1895 and 1912 editions, in an effort to impose, retrospectively, a unified idea of “Wessex,” which had in fact developed in piecemeal fashion. Second, there are those that were forced on Hardy by the need to avoid offending the more prudish sections of his audience. This was a pressure he came increasingly to resent, and one that contributed to his decision to

abandon prose fiction after the hostile reception given in some quarters to *Jude the Obscure*: the chapter of the *Life* which deals with *Jude* is called "Another Novel Finished, Mutilated, and Restored." Third, and often most fascinating, there are those that reflect a refueling of Hardy's creative energies as he worked on the texts and felt compelled to re-imagine and re-write characters and situations.

Each kind of change is apparent in the textual history of *The Return of the Native*. When Hardy began work on the novel, probably toward the end of 1876, he had no reason to suppose that he would for the next twenty years restrict his focus to the southwestern counties of England. But "Wessex" soon became an expected, and marketable, feature of his fiction, and in the process of revising the novel for the Osgood, McIlvaine edition of 1895 he incorporated a number of place-names which were by now familiar to his readers—Anglebury (Wareham), Casterbridge (Dorchester), and Weatherbury (Puddletown)—which he had not included in 1878. These serve to locate Egdon Heath, the arena of the novel's action, and to D. H. Lawrence "the great, tragic power in the book," more precisely in relation to other parts of Wessex, but they also qualify the sense of its size, age, and remoteness, and not all readers have welcomed the change.

The interview between Wildeve and Eustacia in Book First, Chapter VI, provides an example of the kinds of change associated with (self)-censorship, interwoven with others that signal a deeper re-thinking of the novel. Eustacia protests against Wildeve's abandonment of her in favor of Thomasin. In 1878, in the first volume edition, the passage reads:

"you . . . deserted me entirely, as if I had never been yours!"

This leaves open the question of what degree of sexual intimacy there has been between them. In the 1895 edition, the text is seemingly more explicit:

"you . . . deserted me entirely, as if I had never been yours body and soul so irretrievably!"

It seems reasonable to assume that Hardy was now making clear what he had felt obliged to veil in 1878, that Eustacia and Wildeve had been lovers. But for the 1912 edition he made another change:

"you . . . deserted me entirely, as if I had never been yours life and soul so irretrievably!"

Whatever one takes to be the effect of substituting "life and soul" for "body and soul"—perhaps an emphasis on the emotional rather than the sexual aspects of the relationship—this later change

clearly owes little to editorial pressure and much to Hardy's renewed engagement with the novel, as "revising" modulated into "re-visioning."

This is revision on a local scale; other and larger changes more obviously affected plot and characterization. Two examples must suffice, one made early on, between the spring of 1878, when Hardy probably completed work on the serial version, and the publication of the first volume edition on 4 November the same year, and the other after an interval of seventeen years, for the Osgood, McIlvaine edition of 1895. The first concerns the episode of the misdirected guineas. In the *Belgravia*, Book Third closes with a scene deleted from the book versions, in which Venn, having won back the guineas gambled away by Christian, tells him to assure Mrs. Yeobright that the money has been "safe delivered . . . into the proper hands." Taking this to mean that both Clym and Thomasin have received their share, Mrs. Yeobright is puzzled not to hear from her son, and visits his cottage hoping for an explanation. Her opening comment to Eustacia, though "coldly" spoken, is not in itself offensive: "I was coming on business only . . . If you or my son had acknowledged the receipt of the money, it would not have been necessary for me to have come at all." Eustacia replies, truthfully, "We have received nothing"; the ensuing quarrel turns not on questions of money, but on her mortification at Mrs. Yeobright's refusal to attend the wedding. In the 1878 and all subsequent editions, however, Christian admits to Mrs. Yeobright that he has gambled away the guineas to Wildeve, including those intended for Clym; in this revised version of events, he knows nothing of Venn's intervention and can merely hope that Wildeve will have restored to Clym the fifty he is due. Mrs. Yeobright's question to Eustacia now is very different: "Will you excuse my asking this—Have you received a gift from Thomasin's husband?" This question, coming without explanation, is offensive, and Eustacia's anger is wholly understandable. As rewritten, the scene does much to justify Eustacia's unwillingness to come to terms with her mother-in-law, and, with fatal consequences, her reluctance to open the door to her on her second visit.

The second example concerns the relation between Wildeve and Eustacia toward the close of the novel. Wildeve's conduct during their final interview, in Book Fifth, Chapter V, is more scrupulous in 1878 than in the 1895 edition. Eustacia worries that in accepting help from him she might lay herself open to gossip. In 1878 he replies:

"Well, there's no preventing slanderers from having their fill at any time; but as there will be no evil in it you need not be

afraid. I believe I am now a sobered man, and whatever I may feel I promise you on my word of honour never to speak to you about—what might have been. Thomasin is quite helplessly dependent on me now; and I know my duty to her quite as well as I know my duty to you as a woman unfairly treated. I will assist you without prejudice to her. What shall I assist you in?"

In 1895 this is more ambiguously worded:

"Well, there's no preventing slanderers from having their fill at any time; but you need not be afraid. Whatever I may feel I promise you on my word of honour never to speak to you about—or act upon—until you say I may. I know my duty to Thomasin quite as well as I know my duty to you as a woman unfairly treated. What shall I assist you in?"

Eustacia is correspondingly more alive to Wildev's continued sexual interest in her in the 1895 edition. In 1878 she tells him that she needs time to consider:

"I will think of this," she said hurriedly. "Whether I can honestly make use of you as a friend—that is what I must ask myself."

In 1895 this becomes:

"I will think of this," she said hurriedly. "Whether I can honestly make use of you as a friend, or must close with as a lover—that is what I must ask myself."

The significance of these changes is underscored by others in Chapter VII, as Eustacia crouches in the rain on the heath. The 1878 text reads:

To ask Wildev for pecuniary aid was impossible to a woman with the shadow of pride left in her: his assistance in driving her to Budmouth had become almost distasteful to her during the last few hours, and was of the nature of humiliation.

In 1895 this becomes:

To ask Wildev for pecuniary aid without allowing him to accompany her was impossible to a woman with the shadow of pride left in her: to fly as his mistress—and she knew that he loved her—was of the nature of humiliation.

In effect, in the 1878 edition Eustacia is beaten down by the thought of leaving alone, and without money, for an uncertain future; in 1895, what defeats her is the recognition that if she leaves she will do so as Wildev's mistress.

Whether the later version provides a clue to what Hardy had al-

ways intended, but in 1878 had not dared present to the public, or whether it reflects a change in his view of Eustacia, or of the dynamics of the novel, must remain an open question. The mere fact of such a question, however, makes it difficult to consider any text as "definite," or fixed. The 1912 text, it might be argued, rather than being definitive, should be seen as the last-produced layer in a record or palimpsest of Hardy's creative moods and decisions at different phases of his working life: as a relative newcomer to novel-writing, still, as he acknowledged, unsure of his way, and constrained by the need to write nothing that might alarm the publishers and reviewers (1878); as an experienced hand at the form, grown impatient with the demands of his audience, and emboldened by the sexual radicalism of the 1890s (1895); and as the Grand Old Man of Letters, the author of three volumes of poetry and a verse-epic, *The Dynasts*, who had long since turned his back on prose fiction (1912).

This might suggest an argument for using the first volume edition as the base text: free from the constraints of serial publication, but free too from later accretions. There are, however, countervailing arguments, not least that Hardy did not always return to his original conception in the first volume edition. In the serial version of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, for example, Henchard and Lucetta marry on the mistaken assumption that Henchard is a widower; in the first book version, they have a nonsexual relationship; and it was not until the Osgood, McIlvaine edition that they have the irregular sexual liaison Hardy seems initially to have intended. It is at least possible, as suggested above, that a similar case might be made about the 1895 edition of *The Return of the Native*. Fortunately, unlike (say) architectural restoration, revisions to the text of a novel do not involve the destruction of its previous forms, and those who wish to consult earlier versions of Hardy's novels are able to do so. In the absence of a variorum edition, however, an editor must choose the text as it stood at one moment in time, and the decision has been taken here to use the 1912 edition, though regarding it as rather the closing than the culminating stage in the evolution of the novel. This, it is true, is not the edition the reviewers had before them in 1878; but it is the text most often cited in contemporary critical discussion, and, more important, the form in which the novel has been read, adapted, loved, and hated for the best part of a century.

There is a strong case for incorporating manuscript readings at one or two points where it seems likely that the printed text reflects compositorial errors made at an early stage and subsequently overlooked. To do so, however, would be to produce an eclectic text, one that Hardy himself never saw, and on these grounds the temp-

tation has been resisted. These instances, and some of the more significant differences between editions, are mentioned in the notes; a fuller account of the publication and textual history of the novel is given in the essays by Andrew Nash and Simon Gatrell later in this volume. A few obvious slips, in the form of omitted speech marks or full stops, have been silently corrected.

It remains to add that the illustrations included here are from the first, serial publication, in (to give its full title) *Belgravia: An Illustrated London Magazine*, but omitted from all later editions; they are discussed in the essay by Pamela Dalziel, also included in this volume. The Map of Wessex (pp. 338–39) comes from the Macmillan Wessex edition of 1912; Hardy's sketch-map of the action of the novel (p. 4) formed the basis of the frontispiece of the 1878 volume but was not included in later editions.

A Note on the Notes

There are some 500 notes in this edition of *The Return of the Native*. About one in ten of these are glosses of dialect words, ranging from the relatively familiar, if still potentially misleading—"ballet" for ballad, "chiel" for child, "tatie" for potato—to the decidedly rare: "mollyhorning," for example, meaning idling, wasting one's time, seems to be unique to Hardy, while he himself was doubtful about the origin of "chips-in-porridge," used to denote someone or something of no significance. In the General Preface of 1912, he insisted on the accuracy of his representation of Wessex life: "things were like that in Wessex; the inhabitants lived in certain ways, engaged in certain occupations, kept alive certain customs." But ways, occupations and customs were all changing, and the local dialect along with them; one of the impulses behind Hardy's fiction was to preserve a record of a world that would soon be gone. The dialect scenes helped to anchor the story in the location he knew best, and loved most.

The reviewers of his previous novel, *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1875), had been dismissive of his knowledge of London life and urged him to keep to the rural world, or, as the *London* put it, offensively, "the world of boors" rather than "society." The dialect scenes were one way of meeting that criticism. But the suggestion that Hardy lacked formal education, made by these same reviewers, clearly rankled. He was in any case unsure about the direction he wanted to take as a novelist. In March 1876 he told the publisher George Smith that he intended to pause "for a few months, until I can learn the best line to take for the future"; around the same time he sought advice from Leslie Stephen, the editor of his two previous novels, on what to read in order to improve his writing.

Stephen replied, wisely, that he had no need to emulate anyone, but over the next year or so Hardy undertook a deliberate course of reading and note-taking, which can now be traced in *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Lennart Björk (1985). Twenty or more of these notes, as Björk points out, are used in *The Return of the Native*. It is possible, just, that Hardy intended his reading to lend him the cultural authority that his reviewers—for the most part London-based and Oxbridge-educated—assumed as their birthright. The effect, however, in *The Return of the Native*, is to disintegrate (say) Matthew Arnold's unitary Culture, defined as "the best that is known and thought in the world," into a series of fragments, as diverse as the marital adventures of the actress Lavinia Fenton, the animation of a brass statue by Albertus Magnus, and the appearance under bright light of the tiger-beetle. Hardy's reading included such works as Cassell's *Popular Educator*, Charles Mackay's *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions*, and J. G. Woods's *Insects at Home*, as well as "the great writers—Shakespeare, Goethe, Scott, &c. &c" recommended by Leslie Stephen. Stephen's confidence is implicit in that "&c. &c"; but like Ethelberta in his previous novel, Clym in this, or Jude in his last, Hardy saw Culture as contested ground. It is unlikely that any reader, of his time or later, would have been fully at ease with the assortment of ideas Hardy draws upon in the novel; it would be rash to assume that he blunderingly supposed otherwise.

Other notes in this edition address more familiar cultural territory, including Hardy's numerous references to artists (among them Pheidias, Raphael, Perugino, Dürer, Antoon Sallaert, Denis Van Alsloot, and Rembrandt), and to such writers as Homer, Sappho, Vergil, Dante, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Thomson, Gray, Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats. But here too Hardy disrupts the notion of Culture, with upper case C, by interspersing allusions to these canonical figures with others from the popular literary tradition, including ballads and songs such as "Earl Marshall," "As Down among the Meadows," and "The Foggy, Foggy Dew." It is to neither the high nor the popular tradition, however, that Clym turns for a song when he is working as a furze-cutter, but to a little-known French comic opera, *Gulistan*, with music by Nicolas-Marie Dalayrac and a libretto by Charles-Guillaume Etienne and A.-E.-X. de la Chabeaussière. Clearly such matters have a bearing on how the reader responds to Clym's aspirations to "educate" the inhabitants of Egdon.

One other cluster of allusions deserves particular notice. There are more than fifty references to or quotations from the Bible in the novel. Strikingly, in Books I and II, there is only one clear allusion to the New Testament—Eustacia's schoolgirl question whether

Pontius Pilate was "as handsome as he was frank and fair"—while the same two Books yield some twenty references to the Old Testament. Many of these are insignificant in themselves: for example, Psalm 133 is mentioned only as a means to recount the musician-ship of Thomasin's long-dead father. But the cumulative effect of a series of such references, to Goliath's greaves of brass, Belshazzar's feast, the Witch of Endor, the mark of Cain, Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, and the belief systems of the ancient Chaldeans, casually mingled with others to classical literature and mythology—the overthrow of the Titans, Scylla and Charybdis, Tantalus, the Cretan labyrinth, the blinding of Oedipus—is to suggest both the extreme ancientness of Egdon Heath and its isolation from those progressive tendencies of nineteenth-century thought that Clym encounters in Paris. Conversely, after Clym's emergence as a main character, and the elaborate description of him at the opening of Book Third, references to the New Testament predominate: Clym is likened to John the Baptist by the narrator, and to St. Paul by Eustacia; he himself quotes or alludes to the epistles (Romans, Galatians, and 2 Corinthians) as well as the Sermon on the Mount, the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and even Christ's words on the Cross; he is, in later editions, thirty-three years of age when the novel ends, traditionally the age at which Christ died. Readers will draw their own inferences from this; but the shift of mood and tone, between the first two Books and the later ones, is palpable. The immediate purpose of the notes is of course to identify or elucidate passages that might otherwise be unfamiliar or unclear, but taken as a whole they suggest areas for further critical inquiry.

References to Shakespeare are to *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, edited by Stanley Wells and others for Oxford University Press (1988); references to the Bible are to the Authorized King James's Version of 1611. The two volumes of *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, edited by Lennart A. Björk (London: Macmillan, 1985), are cited as *Literary Notebooks*. The seven volumes of the *Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy*, edited by R. L. Purdy and Michael Millgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978–88), are cited as *Letters*.

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