THE MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN IN *HARD TIMES*

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F. R. Leavis' "Analytic Note"[1] is inevitably associated with criticism of *Hard Times:* the valuable interpretations and comments it stimulated have never superseded it, largely because it lays hold of the main point of the novel and brings out its central thesis. As a study of a novel as dramatic poem and "moral fable" it is a brilliant analysis. Yet, while praising *Hard Times* as a "masterpiece," Leavis himself is aware that the novel is not entirely satisfactory in its treatment of the working classes, trades unions and Stephen Blackpool:

> it is a score against a work so insistently typical in intention that it should give a representative role to the agitator, Slackbridge, and make Trade Unionism nothing better than the pardonable agent of the misguided and oppressed, and, as such, an agent in the martyrdom of the good working man.

But, having made this criticism, he swiftly passes it over, and then succeeds so well in analyzing the strength of *Hard Times* that we are led to forget the novel as a whole. The resulting combination of Leavis bent on "reinstating" *Hard Times* and so evading its weakest aspect, and the tendency of the novel itself, which operates in a similar way, is a potent and dominant one. Yet, as soon as we disregard the effect of these indirect tendencies, problems arise.

In seeing the novel as a dramatic poem Leavis may have passed too lightly over other elements in it, especially its narration and characterization. *Hard Times* was the first weekly serial in the latter half of Dickens' career. It is concentrated, but cramped. Dickens found the short installments difficult to manage. In some ways it intensified his powers of expression, but the conditions under which he wrote the narrative in some ways restricted the development of both character and themes. Some of these problems are centered upon Stephen Blackpool, about whom Leavis paraphrases accepted critical opinion, citing him as an example of Dickens' sentimentality:

> the good, victimised working-man, whose perfect patience under infliction we are expected to find supremely edifying and irresistibly touching as the agonies are piled on for his martyrdom.

He maintains that this has no seriously damaging effect upon the novel—but what, then, are we to make not simply of Stephen, but of his relationship to the main fable, and with Dickens' intentions? Even with so subtle a critic as Dr. Leavis, it is bound to lead to oversimplification if such an important aspect of the novel is put on one side. For Stephen is at the center of many issues which are raised in the novel: the nature of the working man, for example, or the effect on him of urban industrial life, the reasons why the worker is not properly represented by the unions and the way he is affected by problems of education. Especially (if the argument that follows may be anticipated) we should realize, perhaps, that the characterization of Stephen had greater potentialities which were sacrificed by Dickens both to his main thesis and the necessities of the narrative as the novel developed.

For in his initial conception of Stephen, it appears that Dickens seems to have taken a hero whom he did not intend to be wholly "good" or admirable. He even took pains to call attention to this, and to show Stephen's dullness in spite of his honesty, and his inadequacy in spite of all his good intentions. Yet, as the novel developed, Dickens grew sorry for him—almost as sorry as Stephen for himself. He is shown as the victim of his wife, his employer, and then of Tom, as well as of his own weakness. The resulting loss of employment and fall down Old Hell Shaft, only to be raised after three days to pass to his Redeemer's rest, "through humility, sorrow and forgiveness" (III, 7, 208)[2] makes him a martyr, but not the human being he might have been.

In general, other critics of *Hard Times* have also been content to accept Ruskin's verdict that Stephen Blackpool is "a dramatic perfection, instead of a characteristic example of an honest workman;"[3] they have seen him as idealized by Dickens almost to saintliness, a victim made more spotless to emphasize the corruption of the social muddle, which the middle classes see as a "system," even if a defective one. They too easily accept the paradox that the characters meant to be seen as the most imaginative or humane in the novel (apart from the circus people) are Stephen and Rachael—and, in some ways, Louisa—who are the products of the system at its worst. Yet a relevant inquiry here might be to ask where the critics themselves, who are so sure that Stephen is too good to be true, formed their own idea of the character of the working man. The accusation that Stephen is not representative of his class may be based on the naive assumption that it was possible to find and describe such a representative man; it certainly carries this implication.

I would rather suggest that Dickens is more subtle than his critics give him credit for, and that certainly by this stage in his career as a novelist he cannot have been entirely unaware of the problem that the idealization of Stephen would create. If his thesis were simply that slavery to "hard facts," and the abolition of fancy, were brutalizing the working classes, then why does he place the most brutal characters, Tom and

Bounderby, among the middle classes? Nor should it be too easily assumed that because Dickens rejected the moral tale, and what he called Cruikshank's "Frauds on the Fairies," that he meant to make his latest work a simple "edifying" moral story in reverse.[4]

It is possible, therefore, that critics have been dazzled by the "circle of stage fire" that illumines the dark vision of *Hard Times,* and have not looked carefully enough at the paradoxes inherent in their own judgment. We may set aside, for the moment at least, other questions and concentrate on the crucial issue of the role of Stephen in the development of the narrative. We must ask, if Stephen was not at first envisaged as one more idealized, wholly sympathetic figure—a victim of Dickensian sentimentality—then what was he? We must glance again at the genesis of the novel, and look more closely at the apotheosis of Stephen.

Just before *Hard Times* began to appear in *Household Words* there were the usual preliminary announcements; and one of Dickens' friends, Peter Cunningham, noticed that Dickens had been down to Preston to investigate the strike. Writing in the *Illustrated London News,* he naturally made the assumption that the forthcoming novel originated in the author's "recent enquiry into the Preston strike."[5] Dickens felt driven to write to Cunningham almost immediately to deny it; and he emphatically stated that "the title was many weeks old, and chapters of the story were written," before he went to Preston, "or thought about the present strike." In fact, this was patently untrue, and Dickens was evidently anxious to disclaim the connection between *Hard Times* and the Preston strike.[6] The reason is almost certainly that, though he was writing a novel with a contemporary setting, Dickens did *not* want what he said to be identified with a specific locality and a special dispute.

It is another example of an unwillingness to be tied down which is evident in the novel in several ways: in the first place because there *is* no strike in *Hard Times,* and again perhaps in the cancelled passage which was to have been directly relevant to a series of factory accidents which had already appeared in *Household Words*.[7] The novel was certainly meant to have contemporary relevance, as the title of the first edition and the dedication to Carlyle may remind us, yet it was not meant to be merely topical. As Dickens explained to Cunningham, it would have localized "a story which has a direct purpose in reference to working people all over England."[8] To have allowed Coketown to have been Preston would have been felt as limiting ways in which the novel could develop as well as opening it to misinterpretation.

An equivalent critical fallacy today is to complain that although the novel was about contemporary society, it did not offer a "solution." Sylvere Monod, for example, finds "a kind of sentimental socialism" in it, and he concludes his study with the argument that the "solutions" Dickens contemplated "were all of the benevolent, patronizing kind."[9] Paul Edward Gray has complained of the novel that it is "unpredictable"

in the way it ranges "between self-enclosed art and denotative argument," and that "it is neither self-dependent nor literally true."[10] There is much more to be said for this conclusion and, once again, the causes are partly in the characterization of Stephen. For there is a simple dilemma in the whole conception. Stephen is said to be the victim of industrialism, and yet we are presumably not only expected to sympathize with him, but to admire him. He is introduced to us only after a passage which describes where he works and lives:

> In the hardest working part of Coketown; in the innermost fortifications of that ugly citadel, where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in; at the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon courts, and close streets upon streets, which had come into existence piecemeal, every piece in a violent hurry for some one man's purpose, and the whole an unnatural family, shouldering and trampling, and pressing one another to death; in the last close nook of this exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draught, were built in an immense variety of stunted and crooked shapes, as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might be expected to be born in it; among the multitude of Coketown...—lived a certain Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age. (I, ch.10, pp. 48-49).

This clearly indicates that the reader is to see Stephen in terms of his environment.

Now, the maturer Dickens' conviction of the effect of environment is plain. It comes out, for example, in the *Speeches*.[11] It was a view which had developed slowly: clearly enough in an early novel such as *Oliver Twist,* for example the story has been fabular: it was the "Parish Boy's Progress," and Oliver himself had shown "the principle of Good surviving through every adverse circumstance and triumphing at last."[12] But Jo in *Bleak House* is a person, not a principle; and he suffers rather than survives; he is in his natural environment in Tom-All-Alone's. And although *Bleak House* is not simply realistic, this is true of many of Jo's fellow-characters in the novel — Guster, Prince Turveydrop, Guppy, and George Rouncewell, for example. It is clear that, by this time in his development, Dickens never aimed merely at the most simple effect. An environment such as Stephen's must severely restrict the potential of a man who has the will to do good.

Yet another recent critic, Ivanka Kovacevik, accepting the standard view of Stephen as unintentionally shown to be both dull and saintly, has complained that

> Dickens also contradicts his own theory of characterization. He first insists on the environmental factor in the formation of character, and then proceeds to present a character that refutes his theory.[13]

This contradiction is only present in the reader. At first, Stephen's limitations are shown deliberately, even though they may not be exactly what we expect. There are indications that it was Dickens' original intention to show how Stephen's environment threatened and inhibited his natural goodness, but that he eventually allowed himself to slip back into an attitude of rather patronizing benevolence. Even so, this relapse is not complete, for throughout *Hard Times* Stephen's virtue is seen as almost entirely negative and consisting wholly in abstaining from all that he desires most. His story may be edifying but it is never wholly admirable.

This appears, at first, in the way in which Dickens shows us the inadequacy of Stephen's response to life. He is old at forty, unfortunate, and rather unattractive in manner. On a surface reading, Dickens seems to appeal for sympathy for his hard life; but his rhetoric can sometimes have another function. Intellectual dullness or simplicity is one of Stephen's main limitations, which Dickens carefully notes:

> Old Stephen might have passed for an intelligent man in his condition. Yet he was not. He took no place among those remarkable "Hands", who, piecing together their broken intervals of leisure through many years, had mastered difficult sciences, and acquired a knowledge of most unlikely things. He held no station among the Hands who could make speeches and carry on debates. Thousands of his compeers could talk much better than he, at any time. He was a good power-loom weaver, and a man of perfect integrity (I, ch. 10, p. 49).

Taking this in context, when we go back to the beginning of the paragraph, and read again that Stephen has "a knitted brow, a pondering expression," we are led to conclude that thinking was a painful process to him. We are also, as if incidentally, shown that there were intelligent operatives, more articulate than he. This too is reinforced in the next paragraph, with its picture of Stephen standing still, "with the odd sensation upon him which the stoppage of the machinery always produced — the sensation of its having worked and stopped in his own head," (I, ch. 10, p. 49). Here he is in contrast with his surroundings, alive with sound and the homeward surge of the operatives. He is pointedly set apart, a bewildered creature on whose behalf Dickens asks for pity. And here the point must be made that it is impossible to pity and admire simultaneously.[14]

Stephen may have a simple nature, but he lives in a complex world, as Dickens makes clear. During Stephen's interview with Rachael in this chapter, Dicken insists on showing his incapacity for making judgments or decisions. When Rachael implies that she habitually avoids his company, for fear of being compromised, he looks at her "with a respectful and patient conviction that she must be right in whatever she did," (I, ch. 10, p. 50). Under other circumstances, it is virtually the same moral and intellectual submission which the feeble-minded Toots offers to Susan Nipper in *Dombey and Son*. Later in the same passage

Stephen uses the words which come, by his repeating them on every appearance in the novel, to be a cumulative expression of the frustration of the uneducated man. When Rachael anxiously remonstrates with him to "Let the laws be," he answers "with a slow nod or two," " 'Tis a muddle, and that's aw ...awlus a muddle," (I, ch. 10, p. 51). After this he falls into thinking and "biting the long ends of his loose neckerchief" — a strange action for a man of forty. He is shown in this scene as helpless and ineffectual. Returning home, he finds his drunken wife waiting for him. He lets her take the bed, and keeps his face hidden in his hands as he passes the night in a chair.

On the following day, when Stephen goes to Bounderby for advice on his problem (I, ch. 11), we are again shown the serious passiveness of his nature: having borne with his drunken wife for nineteen years, and having presumably loved Rachael for much of that time, he now comes to ask his employer how to rid himself of her. Driven to despair, he tells how he had contemplated suicide. He has paid her to stay away from him. As he goes on cross-questioning of Bounderby, he then goes so far as to suggest that he might live with Rachael without marrying her, but he cannot, because she is "so good," and because their children would suffer under the law.[15] When he finally realizes the impossibility of gaining a divorce, he reverts to his statement, " 'tis a muddle."

It is indeed a muddle, but not only in the sense Stephen intends. He wishes to free himself from the sacred vows of marriage, and is willing to pay whatever he can afford to achieve this. This in itself is easy to understand: circumstances have changed, become so radically different from what they were when he was married, that it is natural for him to wish to break his word. But after he has promised Rachael not to join the Union, to keep himself out of trouble, he finds that circumstances have changed, and the reverse of the original situation occurs. This time he finds he cannot break a promise. But it is surely Dickens' technique rather than his understanding which is at fault here. In a fuller treatment, this narrative absurdity might well have been avoided.

In explaining his "wrongs" to Bounderby, Stephen has displayed some pride and even some passion, as well as a certain crude capacity for rational thought. Yet, as he comes away from Bounderby's house, he gives "a parting polish with the sleeve of his coat" to the door-handle. This is an extraordinary action, more in keeping with the behavior of a dependent serf than with the much-admired independence of the Lancashire factory-worker, an independence which Dickens himself had already noted with praise in *Bleak House* and "On Strike."[16] There begins to be something of a muddle in the characterization of Stephen.

After this meeting Stephen returns to his loom, brooding over his misfortunes, and leaving when his work is done. Failing to find Rachael to soothe him, and dreading to go home, he wanders about in the rain, "thinking and thinking, brooding and brooding." There are two points

of his character to notice here: first, he knows that his wife needs help, and yet he does not go home. The second point emerges from his brooding:

> He thought of the waste of the best part of his life, of the change it made in his character for the worse every day ... He thought of Rachael, how young when they were first brought together in these circumstances, how mature now, how soon to grow old. He thought of the number of girls and women she had seen marry, how many homes with children in them she had seen grow up around her, how she had contentedly pursued her own lone quiet path — for him — and how he had sometimes seen a shade of melancholy on her blessed face, that smote him with remorse and despair (I, ch. 12, p. 62).

Stephen feels himself deteriorating. He knows that Rachael loves him and that his position makes it impossible for anything to come of their love, but he does not set her free, or attempt to force her to accept a freedom which might eventually give her a better life. More than that, he threatens to compromise her by seeing her so much in public. This is not the behavior of a saintly character: it is much more consonant with weak, ordinary, fallible, human nature. Nor, as we have seen, is he so irreproachable that he has not already put it to Bounderby that (if Rachael would allow it) he might live with her without marrying her.

As he goes home he thinks dangerously of the arbitrariness of death, that good women die while his wife still lives. When he enters his house he finds Rachael beside his wife, nursing her in his place. On seeing the medicine bottle with poison in it, his reaction is like Macbeth's to the witches' prophecy: "He turned of a deadly hue, and a sudden horror seemed to fall upon him," (I, ch. 13, p. 64); he sees his own weakness but characteristically relies on Rachael "to defend him from himself." Then the idea of murdering his wife returns: "His eyes fell again on the bottle, and a tremble passed over him, causing him to shiver in every limb" (I, ch. 13, p. 65). And, once more: "It seized him again; and he stood up." He has to make a great effort to control himself, and looks at Rachael for strength. When he falls asleep, his dreams suggest that he is contemplating murder. He wakes, watches his wife pour out a draught of the poison for herself, and, if Rachael had not awoke in time to stop her, he would have left his wife to drink it:

> The draught was at her lips. A moment and she would be past all help, let the whole world wake and come about her with its utmost power. But in that moment Rachael started up with a suppressed cry ...
> Stephen broke out of his chair. "Rachael, am I wakin' or dreamin' this dreadfo' night?" (I, ch. 13, p. 67).

As Rachael prepares to go home, he asks: "Thou'rt not fearfo' ... to leave me alone wi' her!" Then he tells her that she has "saved" his

"soul alive," and Rachael, sorry for him, stifles a reproof. When he is more explicit, "How can I say what I might ha' done to myseln, or her, or both!" She is terrified. The reassurance which Stephen offers her in her terror takes the form of a vow which in a way makes her even more responsible for him, as he declares that

> Evermore I will see thee there. I nevermore will see her or think o' her, but thou shalt be beside her. I nevermore will see or think o' anything that angers me, but thou, so much better than me, shalt be by th' side on't. (I, ch. 13, pp. 68-69).

While this scene does not detract from the impression that Stephen is a good man, it does show him as, again, extraordinarily dependent, merely turning to saintly Rachael for the strength he lacks. He is morally exhausted. Hence his story is, as Humphry House puts it, "a slow record of inglorious misery and defeat."[17]

Even the chairman at the trade union meeting publicly introduces him as notorious "awlong o' his misfortins," (II, ch. 4, p. 107), i.e. for having a wife who is a drunkard. Obviously this public offer of pity is grotesquely unconvincing at such a meeting. But at the same time as he appears to enjoy the sympathy of his fellow-workers, he also indulges in self-pity. This has already shown itself in the interview with Bounderby, in the scene with his wife, and it is implicit again in his reply to the chairman: "Let him give no heed to what I ha' had'n to bear. That's not for noboddy but me," (II, ch. 4, p. 108). *That* is true, and no doubt his misfortunes had better not been mentioned, for Stephen could not have been the only man there with troubles at least as bad. Yet now the authorial comment is added: "There was a propriety, not to say a dignity, in these words."

This might be regarded as a turning point in Dickens' conception of Stephen. Up to this stage he can be seen as someone who is honest but dull, unlucky but weak. Here Dickens unfortunately makes his first special plea on Stephen's behalf; and in examining this comment we come close to this crucial problem of how we are to regard Stephen. For both here and later Dickens' own authorial interpretation of Stephen's speech seems to run contrary to what the speech itself shows of Stephen. Are we simply to take both speech and commentary together and regard Stephen as an honest man whose actions are entirely admirable, or are we to regard him to some extent as the pitiable embodiment of the confusion into which the workers themselves had fallen? On the one hand, some of the workers are as deferential as Stephen and as unlikely to take matters into their own hands; they are all too respectful towards the Law, and, in some ways, have had their wills broken by attendance to the Machine: at the same time, they have the virtue of integrity and the virtues of their defects — they are peaceful and law-abiding. On the other hand, there are the majority of those at the meeting who have

"great qualities susceptible of being turned to the happiest and best account," men "gravely, deeply, faithfully in earnest," and "submissively resigning" themselves only to the "sour" and "cunning" Slackbridge. Thus neither Stephen nor his "comrades" are anything but honest; yet they are all irrational — either in blindly following Slackbridge, or as blindly keeping out of the union.

We must go on to look to Stephen's interview with Bounderby, in the chapter "Men and Masters" (II, ch. 5) to find out how Stephen himself thinks of the "vexed question" of labor and capital. First we find that if he had not made a promise to Rachael he would have joined the union, because he respects the sincerity of his fellow-workers. Then, when he explains the situation for Harthouse's benefit, he begins with a reference to the "muddle," although as he describes it, it appears to be no muddle at all:

> Look round town — so rich as 'tis — and see the numbers o' people as has been broughton into bein heer, fur to weave, an' to card, an' to piece out a livin', aw the same one way, somehows, 'twixt their cradles and their graves. Look how we live, an' wheer we live, an' in what numbers, an' by what chances, and wi' what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus a goin, and how they never works us no higher to onny distant object - ceptin awlus, Death. Look how you considers of us, and writes of us, and talks of us, and goes up wi' yer deputations to Secretaries o' State 'bout us, and how ye are awlus right, and how we are awlus wrong, and never had'n no reason in us sin ever we were born (III, ch. 5, p. 114).

The complaint is honest and straightforward, that for all the committee-work, discussion, and prosing that is done, the hands are left always as before. Yet if we take this with a statement which Stephen makes just before it, we can see again an element of self-pity:

> "How 'tis, ma'm ... that what is best in us fok, seems to turn us most to trouble an' misfort'n an' mistake, I dunno. But 'tis so. I know 'tis, as I know the heavens is over me ahint the smoke. We're patient too, an' wants in general to do right. An I canna think the fawt is aw wi' us" (II, ch. 5, pp. 113-114).

The obvious conclusion of Stephen's line of reasoning, here and in his earlier interview with Bounderby, is that the poor hands receive a raw deal from society in general and from the masters in particular. The further conclusion which Stephen points to in his argument, but never reaches, is that the hands must procure justice for themselves by some means, since the conventional machinery of negotiation has failed them. But although he does not draw this conclusion, feeling as he says he does, Stephen ought not to be standing humbly answering Bounderby's rough questions. There began to appear to be in this the inescapable

odor of either hypocrisy or weakness, — or a failure on the part of the author. It is difficult to respect Stephen, when he comes to a man like Bounderby as a suppliant, and has the naïveté to plead with someone so grossly insensitive and totally selfish, for the sympathy due to their common humanity. Stephen, like Trooper George in *Bleak House,* belongs to another era: in appealing to Bounderby he tacitly accepts and helps perpetuate an obsolete patriarchal social system.

Yet a more probable interpretation, in terms of Dickens' intentions, is that at this point he is using Stephen as representative of the opinion of the operatives in general, setting up a dialogue with Bounderby, as a representative of the hard-line employers, on the subject of trades unions. In his working plans for *Hard Times,* Dickens describes this scene as "Stephen's exposition of the Slackbridge question,"[18] which suggests that he intended to make Stephen more lucid and articulate than he has been until now — or will be again in the novel. It may well be that the narrative demands of weekly serialization forced Dickens to modify his plans for Stephen, in such a way that he had to make the development of the character subservient to the argument. It could almost equally well be that Dickens lost interest in the character, because of the limitations he had imposed on him, because of his own lack of knowledge in depth of the character of the operative, and because there was no comic potential in him. His conception was limited by what he found to be technically possible. Certainly from this point onwards there is nothing for us to learn about Stephen. The interest shifts with the introduction of Slackbridge, and the end of Stephen's "exposition" to other developments raised the serious questions of the times, and dealt with them with an undeniable urgency. Yet, in the end, we must ask how successfully Dickens managed to deliver his message. Immediately the scene of Stephen's death, such a signal failure on Dickens's part, springs to mind. In a novel which is essentially about communication, on a personal and on a class level, the occasional efficacy of silence ought to have been recognized by Dickens. But he falls into the same trap which caught Mrs. Gaskell in *Mary Barton,* one which was perhaps the hardest for the social-problem novelist with religious faith to avoid: that of offering a Christian consolation to the sufferers, which almost never fails to appear to be an over-statement of a faint and in many ways irrelevant hope. Stephen's blessed star and his prospects of paradise can only irritate us here, who are left nursing the problem which has aleady been demonstrated in all its vital urgency. His final admission, "If soom ha' been wantin' in unnerstan'in' me better, I, too, ha' been wantin' in unnerstan'in' them better" (III, ch. 6, p. 207) may be in keeping with his character, but it does nothing to deepen the reader's understanding of the condition of the operative. It is merely a trite comment in a maudlin scene.

Mrs. Oliphant in *Blackwood* was right (for the wrong reasons) when she complained that it was "a lame and impotent conclusion."[19] The

novel would almost certainly have gained in force if Dickens had resisted the fault which he was ready to criticize in Mrs. Gaskell, an over-readiness to indulge in death-scenes. Stephen has been in some ways moderately impressive in his scenes with Bounderby and Rachael; we have been able to feel that his helplessness and his impotence to alleviate his misery have been entirely his own fault. If he had had the stuff in him to struggle, he would have lost in any case, because the utilitarian society raises itself on the "weakness" of the altruist. But in death he reinforces the image of himself which has run counter to the one Dickens had ultimately tried to project, that of a man who cuts himself off from the sympathy or pity of others because he pities himself. For once, Dickens has left out of a working-class character the essential ingredient which makes him acceptable, even lovable: the ability to laugh at himself, or his circumstances, which always commands respect.

The apotheosis of Stephen does not offer much hope for the future. What hope there is in the novel, is faint and ambiguous. It appears that the fate of the nation depends on whether it is Bounderby and Slackbridge, or Stephen and Gradgrind, who confront each other over the conference-table.[20] What Dickens appears to argue for is compromise, but his artistic temperament is hardly capable of allowing him to believe in compromise. It is much easier, from what we know of their characters, to imagine Bounderby and Slackbridge negotiating an agreement which would appease, if not satisfy, both sides. Neither has any idealism to stand in the way of compromise; each has the nature which the other expects to find on the opposite side — and they speak the same hyperbolical language.[19] Bounderby talks, as the real employers did, of throwing his factory into the Atlantic; Slackbridge talks of "every man and woman" emigrating across the Atlantic. The image which lingers, long after the death of Stephen merges into one of a hundred sentimental fictional deaths, is that of Stephen and Bounderby face to face, as incapable of communicating with each other as if they had come from two different planets.

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NOTES

1. F. R. and Q. D. Leavis *Dickens the Novelist* (London, 1970).
2. The edition of *Hard Times* used throughout this study is George Ford and Sylvère Monod's (New York, 1966).
3. *Unto This Last* (London, 1862), Essay 1.
4. See *Household Words* 8 (1 October, 1853) pp. 97-100. As Ford and Monod explain, Dickens wrote this article rejecting Cruikshank's retelling of traditional fairy tales, giving them a moral slant (p. 271).
5. 4 March, 1854, 194.

6. It can easily be shown, by reference to Forster's *Life,* and to letters by Dickens to Miss Coutts and W. F. de Cerjat between October, 1853, and February, 1854, that he had been thinking about both the strike and the new novel for a long time before going to Preston.
7. See Ford and Monod, 252 for the text of the passage, and K. J. Fielding and Anne Smith, "*Hard Times* and the Factory Controversy: Dickens *vs.* Harriet Martineau," *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 24 (March, 1970) 404-427.
8. *Letters,* ed. W. Dexter (London, 1938) II 545-546.
9. "Dickens as Social Novelist," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Hard Times,* ed. Paul Edward Gray (London, 1960).
10. Introduction to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of Hard Times.*
11. See for example his speech to the Metropolitan Sanitary Association (10 May 1851), *Speeches,* ed. K. J. Fielding (Oxford, 1960), 129.
12. "The Author's Preface to the Third Edition" of *Oliver Twist,* ed. K. Tillotson (Oxford, 1966) lxii.
13. "The Ambivalence of a Generation; Dickens juxtaposed to Harriet Martineau," in *Odsek za anglistiku.* Universitet U Beogradu, Filoloski Fakultet (Beograd, 1969) 87-102.
14. Kovacevik quotes Chesterton's penetrating comment on this theme: "He is neither 'the oppressed man intensely miserable' nor 'at the same time intensely attractive and important' as Chesterton would put it" (90). It may be significant that the first name that occurred to Dickens for Stephen (as shown in the part plan) was the uninspiring "John Prodge," (see Ford and Monod, 234).
15. It is surely clear that if Stephen had taken Rachael in place of his wife (without committing bigamy) any children he might have had would not have been punishable by law. Stephen's remark is nonsense. Dickens, whose uncle, John Henry Barrow, had done this, — whose brother Augustus was to follow suit, and who had friends outside the family (such as George Cruikshank) who did the same, knew this perfectly well! There are plenty of illegitimate children in Dickens' novels, but though they may suffer from circumstances or lack of affection, they do not suffer from the law. Is this, therefore, a place where Dickens over-wrote, having developed a situation which was a false one, or is he aware that Stephen is pitifully lacking in both spirit and common sense?
16. *Household Words* 8 (11 February, 1854) 553-59.
17. *The Dickens World* (London, 1941) 206.
18. Ford and Monod, 237.
19. "Charles Dickens," 77 (April 1855) 454.
20. Dickens' premonition is fulfilled in modern American fiction. In Hubert Selby Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn* (1970), the union leaders indulge in inflated rhetoric worthy of Slackbridge, use the men for their own profit, while the management encourages the strike because they have fulfilled their contracts, and have more to gain by stopping work for a time than by producing more.