

# Industrial Relations: Carlyle's influence on *Hard Times*

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## I. Introduction

The aim of the present paper is the strictly limited one of presenting detailed internal evidence of the nature and extent of the influence of the writings of Thomas Carlyle on Charles Dickens's anti-utilitarian novel of 1854 *Hard Times*. The principal works of Carlyle in question here are: *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4, cited as *SR*), *Chartism* (1839, cited as *CH*), *Past and Present* (1843, cited as *P&P*), and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850, cited as *LDP*), three works which return explicitly to the 'Condition-of-England question' first raised in the 1929 essay 'Signs of the Times' (cited as *Soft*), plus the *History of the French Revolution* (1837, cited as *FR*), a book less explicitly connected to the theme of industrialism but with which Dickens appears to have been especially familiar.<sup>1</sup> Specific citations in the extensive exemplification which follows refer to the Centenary Edition of Carlyle's works, published in thirty volumes by Chapman & Hall in 1898, using the abbreviation *CE*. Citations from *Hard Times* refer to the 'Charles Dickens' edition published by Chapman and Hall in 1868, using the abbreviation *HT*. Citations from the weekly family journal Dickens conducted during the 1850s, *Household Words*, are indicated by the abbreviation *HW*. The wider implications of this material, in particular with regard to Dickens's contribution to the early Victorian genre of the industrial novel and the debate on industrialisation which Carlyle called 'the Condition-of-England question,'<sup>2</sup> are here only briefly outlined but are discussed in greater detail elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

The relative literary status of Carlyle's social criticism and Dickens's novel is now almost precisely the reverse of that pertaining when they were first received by the Victorian reading public. Today *Hard Times* is perhaps the best known and most widely read of mid-Victorian documents. For this we can offer three simple explanations, at varying levels. The first is the novel's direct engagement with the key early Victorian problem of the physical, moral and social condition of England after several decades of rapid industrialization, and appropriate private and public responses to it. The second is the powerful influence of the Cambridge critic, F.R. Leavis, passionate advocate of the intellectual and social importance of English studies, on a whole generation of university English teachers, who singled out *Hard Times* as the one 'completely serious work of art' by

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Dickens's letter to John Forster of Summer 1851, where he writes that he is reading *FR* again 'for the 500th time' *LETTERS* VI pp. 452-3. (This and all subsequent brief citations in capitals in both the notes and the text refer to the list of References at the end of the paper.)

<sup>2</sup> In *Chartism* where it occurs extensively including as the title of the opening chapter (*CH* 1 *CE* XXIX pp. 118-24).

<sup>3</sup> See the arguments in Introduction to LAW ([1996]) and LAW ([1997]).

Dickens, 'for once possessed by a comprehensive vision' (LEAVIS pp. 227 & 228). The third is simply the novel's reduced length and simple symbolic and narrative organization, which give it an enormous advantage over the looser, baggier monsters which tend to make up the Victorian canon of fiction when it comes to selecting texts in schools and colleges. Although the first factor clearly applies with equal force to all Carlyle's sociological writings of the 1830s and 1840s, the prolixity and incontinence of his output, along with the extremes of 'incorrectness' exhibited in his political positions (an increasingly overt rejection of democracy in favour of strong national leaders, founded in German idealism and with clear racist overtones) today combine to make him perhaps the most embarrassing and avoided of Victorian sages, even on university courses with some claims to specialisation.

And yet in the late 1840s Carlyle could fairly claim to be the most widely respected and influential critic, historian and prophet of the Empire, while Dickens was experiencing significant resistance to that shift of roles from youthful comic genius to the sterner voice of social conscience which was marked most clearly by the appearance of *Dombey and Son* in 1848 and the commencement of *Household Words* in 1850. In particular *Hard Times*, in which Dickens comes as close as he was capable of doing to producing a novel of ideas, and which seeks to engage directly and analytically with contemporary social and political issues, was received with remarkable coolness. With the exception of that by his friend and colleague John Forster, contemporary reviews were generally disappointed or hostile.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, apart from occasional encomia from mavericks such as John RUSKIN (p. 159 note) or George Bernard SHAW (Introduction), the novel remained among the least admired of Dickens's works until Leavis's *The Great Tradition* appeared in 1948. In 1854 the negative reviews tended to attack the novel's uncharacteristically compressed ideas and dogmatic tone,<sup>5</sup> the imbalance between the power of the destructive forces depicted and the flimsiness of those intended to oppose them,<sup>6</sup> and the blurring of the focus on the central issue of social conflict by the introduction of secondary issues such as educational methodology and marriage laws.<sup>7</sup> All of these are substantial criticisms which cannot lightly be brushed aside, and which the arguments of Ruskin, Shaw, and Leavis or his followers hardly address satisfactorily. But when major writers produce what is widely regarded as inferior work, it seems important to attempt an explanation, and here the contemporary reviews offer little help.

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<sup>4</sup> See the reviews reproduced in COLLINS pp. 300-55 and in LAW ([1996]) Appendix B 1-8. Forster's unsigned review (LAW [1996] Appendix B 2) appeared in the *Examiner* (9 Sep 1854, pp. 568-9).

<sup>5</sup> See the unsigned reviews in the *Athenæum* (12 Aug 1854, pp. 992), the *Rambler* (Oct 1854, pp. 361-2), and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (Apr 1855, pp. 453-4), reproduced in LAW ([1996]) Appendix B 1, 5, & 8.

<sup>6</sup> See the unsigned reviews in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Sep 1854, pp. 276-8), and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, reproduced in LAW ([1996]) Appendix B 3 & 8.

<sup>7</sup> See the unsigned reviews in the *British Quarterly Review* (Oct 1854, pp. 581-2), the *South London Athenæum and Institution Magazine* (Oct 1854, p. 115), and the *Westminster Review* (Oct 1854, pp. 604-6), reproduced in LAW ([1996]) Appendix B 4, 6, & 7.

Dickens's private correspondence, which obviously was not available to his contemporaries, and indeed is only now appearing in comprehensive form,<sup>8</sup> suggests a number of personal explanations. Firstly, Dickens was not psychologically prepared to embark on a major new work of fiction in early 1854: having only completed *Bleak House* the preceding summer, he had planned to take an extended break but in December 1853 was persuaded by his partners on *Household Words* to contribute a serial story to revive the flagging circulation.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, his preparation of materials for the novel was rushed and inadequate: at the last minute we see him uncharacteristically requesting friends to furnish details and making a hurried journey to the cotton town of Preston in Lancashire, scene of an extended industrial dispute, in search of copy.<sup>10</sup> Finally, having abandoned the short episodes of weekly serialisation with *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841, he now found the sudden return to the demands of that form severely restricting and only managed to keep a few weeks ahead of the magazine deadline.<sup>11</sup> To these we need to add a more public dimension. The suggestion underlying this paper is that these heavy private pressures encouraged Dickens to rely to an unusual and unfortunate extent on the form and content of the social criticism of Thomas Carlyle, a writer whom he held in the greatest respect.<sup>12</sup>

Despite Carlyle's contemporary prestige, and although the volume edition of *Hard Times* was inscribed to him and added a sub-title 'For these Times' which refers unmistakably to his essay of 1829 'Signs of the Times', none of the contemporary reviews noted this powerful but unstable influence.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as Philip COLLINS has noted (p. 7) their intellectual relationship in general was commented on surprisingly little during Dickens's lifetime. More recent scholarship has obviously remedied this deficiency to a considerable extent. Dickens's most perceptive biographers, John FORSTER (pp. 202-4), Edgar JOHNSON (pp. 315-8 & 969-70) and Peter ACKROYD (pp. 301-5) all give due

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<sup>8</sup> The first volume of the superbly comprehensive Pilgrim Edition of Dickens's *LETTERS*, covering 1820-39, was published in 1965; the most recent seventh volume, covering 1853-4 and thus the period of the writing and publication of *HT*, appeared in 1993, although the next volume has been announced as coming out shortly.

<sup>9</sup> See Dickens's *LETTERS* VII: to Miss Burdett Coutts, 23 January 1854 (pp. 255-6); to Emile de la Rue, 9 March 1854 (pp. 288-9); and the Agreement of 28 December 1853 between Dickens and his partners in *HW* concerning the serial publication of *HT* (p. 911).

<sup>10</sup> See Dickens's *LETTERS* VII: to W.H. Wills requesting information on the Education Board, 25 January 1854 (p. 258); to Mark Lemon requesting help with circus slang, 20 February 1854 (p. 279); and to John Forster from Preston, 29 January 1854 (pp. 260-1).

<sup>11</sup> See Dickens's *LETTERS* VII: to John Forster, February 1854 (p. 282); and to W.H. Wills, 18 April 1854 (pp. 317-8) and 14 July 1854 (pp. 368-9).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, FORSTER pp. 202-4, JOHNSON pp. 315-8, ACKROYD pp. 301-4, the editorial comments in *LETTERS* VI p. xii, and Dickens's letters to Carlyle of 26 October 1842 and 13 July 1854 (*LETTERS* III pp. 356-7 and VII pp. 367-8).

<sup>13</sup> Dickens wrote to Carlyle for permission to inscribe the volume to him: 'I am going, next month, to publish in One Volume a story now coming out in Household Words, called Hard Times. I have constructed it patiently, with a view to its publication altogether in a compact cheap form. It contains what I do devoutly hope will shake some people in a terrible mistake of these days, when so presented. I know it contains nothing in which you do not think with me, for no man knows your books better than I. I want to put in the first page of it, that it is inscribed to Thomas Carlyle. May I?' (13 July 1854 *LETTERS* VII pp. 367-8).

weight to Carlyle's influence, although none offers much in the way of detail. Two short books devoted to the topic, both based on doctoral theses and published in 1972, offer rather more and include sections dedicated to *Hard Times* (ODDIE pp. 41-60 & GOLDBERG pp. 78-99). ODDIE offers several important discriminations and points to a number of suggestive details, which I will come back to, but uncritically takes over Leavis's judgement of the novel as 'one of Dickens's major achievements' (p. 54); GOLDBERG also tends to follow Leavis (e.g. in pp. 90-91) and is rather less discriminate in tracing influence.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the editors of recent volumes of the Pilgrim Edition of Dickens's correspondence from the late 1840s and early 1850s have offered strong hints that the depth and extent of Dickens's indebtedness to Carlyle on certain occasions has still not yet been fully explored.<sup>15</sup> The contention here is that *Hard Times* represents the foremost of those occasions. The nature and extent of the influence will be demonstrated in detail in the following section under five main headings: A. Arguments; B. Recurrent Metaphors; C. Organizing Structures; D. Stylistic Devices; and E. Casual References.

## II. Evidence

### A. Arguments

#### 1. Anti-Utilitarian

Dickens's response to industrialism in *Hard Times* lies largely outside the mainstream political reactions seen in the social criticism and fiction of the mid century--either the reformism of Liberals, or the radical rejection of both Socialists and Tories. Despite the attack on the self-interestedness and hard-heartedness of the factory owner in the figure of Bounderby,<sup>16</sup> the novel has little in common with the Christian philanthropy expressed most characteristically in Arthur HELPS's essay *Claims of Labour* (1844) or Elizabeth Gaskell's novels *Mary Barton* (1848) and *North and South* (1855). Both writers recognize the long-term social benefits of economic and technological progress, but accuse factory owners of callousness in refusing responsibility for the short-term effects on their workers' livelihoods, and insist that relations between masters and men are to be governed not merely by economic laws of supply and demand, but by Christ's teaching concerning love

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<sup>14</sup> In particular, Goldberg bases his assessment on the unlikely proposition that Dickens's advocacy of Fancy in *Hard Times* and Carlyle's transcendentalism are identical, sharing the same intellectual provenance in German Romanticism, specifically in Kant (p. 79). He also (pp. 93-9) elides Dickens's mocking dismissal of mass education in the novel with Carlyle's more balanced argument, which questions contemporary forms of such education only in the context of a strong advocacy of its necessity, e.g. in *Chartism* 10 (*CE* XXIX pp. 192-9). The books by both Oddie and Goldberg are reviewed together in FIELDING. We should also note here Barry V. QUALL's 1978 paper on Carlyle and *Our Mutual Friend*, and Patricia MARKS's recent article on the influence of *Sartor Resartus* on Dickens's fiction.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example the editorial comments in *LETTERS* VI: pp. 62-3 on the influence of Carlyle's 'Model Prisons' (*LDP* II) on Dickens's *HW* article 'Pet Prisoners' (I p. 97, 27 April 1850); and p. 312 on an echo of *CH* at the end of W.H. Wills's *HW* article 'To Clergymen in Difficulties' (II p. 606, 22 March 1851).

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Bounderby's absurd defence of smoke pollution (*HT* II 4 p. 159) and his harsh treatment of Stephen (*HT* I 11 & II 5). To anticipate our argument a little, we might note here in passing that Stephen's rebuttal of Bounderby's position in their second interview (*HT* II 5) draws heavily on Carlyle's arguments in *Chartism*. For a more detailed demonstration of this point, see ODDIE pp. 49-52.

for one's neighbour. And despite Dickens's grim, deterministic depiction of Coketown as stunting and distorting the lives of all those who live there (cf. esp. *HT* I 5, 8, & 10), there seems no consistent intention to argue that industrial capitalism *per se* is permanently antagonistic to social welfare, such as we find both in the idealism of Marx and Engel's Communist Manifesto or the Christian Socialist fiction of Charles Kingsley, and in the reactionary championing of Feudalism in the work of Benjamin Disraeli as leader of the 'Young England' movement of Tory reform or as political novelist.

Although Carlyle's indictment of contemporary English society can be shown to have had a strong indirect influence on all of the three political positions sketched above,<sup>17</sup> Dickens is distinctive in *Hard Times* in that he explicitly follows Carlyle in directing his attack primarily towards the materialist philosophy seen to underlie industrialism, that is utilitarianism, the dominant mode of consciousness of the Victorian era. There Dickens conducts a two-pronged attack on utilitarian thought as reflected in the newly developing social science of Political Economy, an attack which has strong affinities in each respect with both the intellectual content and rhetorical style of Carlyle's critique. The first prong aims at the producers of the distorting utilitarian system, represented in the novel by Gradgrind and his seconds in the fields of industry, politics, and education, Bounderby, Harthouse, and M'Choakumchild. The charge is made repeatedly against the system that it is mechanistic, rationalistic and materialistic, and neglects, distorts or destroys the living sources of humanity which are found in emotion, affection and imagination.<sup>18</sup> What Dickens presents as Gradgrind's lifeless system had been attacked repeatedly by Carlyle, as the 'Profit-and-Loss Philosophy' rejected in 'The Everlasting No' (*SR* II 7*CE* I pp. 128-35), as the 'blind No-God, of Necessity and Mechanism' (in *CH* 5*CE* XXIX p. 146), as the 'Gospel of Mammonism' (in *P&P* III 2 *CE* X pp. 144-50), and as 'the Gospel of M'Crouty ... Professor of the dismal science' in more recent writings (*LDP* 1 *CE* XX pp. 150-1).<sup>19</sup>

But Carlyle speaks most explicitly and clearly against mechanism in 'Signs of the Times' in his characterization of the present time as 'the Mechanical Age': 'the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practises the great art of adapting means to ends' (*Soft* *CE* XXVII p. 59). And when Carlyle turns to specific social institutions and the tone

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<sup>17</sup> For example, see WILLIAMS pp. 71-109.

<sup>18</sup> In particular, see: the comments on Gradgrind's system in *HT* I 1-2 pp. 1-5, I 3 pp. 10-12, I 4 pp. 19-20, I 15 pp. 107-11, II 3 pp. 150-1, III 8 p. 318 & III 9 p. 328; on M'Choakumchild's educational methods in *HT* I 2 pp. 8-9 & I 9 pp. 61-4; and the descriptions of Coketown in *HT* I 5 pp. 24-7, & I 8 pp. 54-5.

<sup>19</sup> The name M'Crouty, presumably a jab at Malthus, occurs on more than twenty occasions in *LDP*, beginning with 1 *CE* XX p. 17: 'M'Crouty the Seraphic Doctor with his Last-evangel of Political Economy'. The phrase 'the dismal science' first occurs in the essay 'Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question' (1849): 'the Social Science,--not a "gay science," but a rueful,--which finds the secret of this Universe in "supply and demand," and reduces the duty of human governors to that of letting men alone, is also wonderful. Not a "gay science," I should say, like some we have heard of; no, a dreary, desolate, and indeed quite abject and distressing one; what we might call, by way of eminence, the *dismal science*.' (*CE* XXIX pp. 353-4). It is repeated in *LDP* on at least four occasions: 1 *CE* XX pp. 44 (twice) & 45; and 4 *CE* XX p. 151.

becomes contemptuous we can glimpse the sources for the derision Dickens directs toward M'Choakumchild's training as a teacher or the Christian churches of Coketown. Compare, for example, Carlyle's

Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also. Here too nothing follows its spontaneous course, nothing is left to be accomplished by old natural methods. Everything has its cunningly devised implements, its preëstablished apparatus; it is not done by hand, but by machinery. Thus we have machines for Education: Lancastrian machines; Hamiltonian machines; monitors, maps and emblems. Instruction, that mysterious communing of Wisdom with Ignorance, is no longer an indefinable tentative process, requiring a study of individual aptitudes, and a perpetual variation of means and methods, to attain the same end; but a secure, universal, straightforward business, to be conducted in the gross, by proper mechanism, with such intellect as comes to hand. Then, we have Religious machines, of all imaginable varieties; the Bible-Society, professing a far higher and heavenly structure, is found, on inquiry, to be altogether an earthly contrivance: supported by collection of moneys, by fomenting of vanities, by puffing, intrigue and chicane; a machine for converting the Heathen. It is the same in all other departments. (*Soft CE XXVII* pp. 60-1)

with Dickens's

So, Mr. M'Choakumchild began in his best manner. He and some one hundred and forty other schoolmasters, had been lately turned at the same time, in the same factory, on the same principles, like so many pianoforte legs. (*HT I 2* p. 8)

and

You saw nothing in Coketown but what was severely workful. If the members of a religious persuasion built a chapel there--as the members of eighteen religious persuasions had done--they made it a pious warehouse of red brick, with sometimes (but this only in highly ornamented examples) a bell in a bird-cage on the top of it. (*HT I 5* p. 25)

The second prong is directed at the distorted products of the system, embodied in Gradgrind's model son Tom (cf. *HT I 9* p. 69, *I 15* p. 101 & *III 7* p. 313), and Bitzer the model pupil of the M'Choakumchild's school (cf. *HT I 1* pp. 127-32 & *III 8* pp. 316-8). Here the emphasis is much more on the moral and spiritual vacuum which is seen to lie at the heart of the 'greatest-happiness principle', and which is shown to allow only self-interested and self-centred behaviour and to preclude familial obligations or Christian virtues. In *Hard Times* 'looking out for number one' and 'calculation' are the codes which are used repeatedly to signal this consequence of utilitarian principles. Again it would be possible to trace the development of this attitude throughout Carlyle's writings, but perhaps apposite citation can most concisely demonstrate the extent of Dickens's debt. Compare Bentham's original:

II. ... By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question: or, what is the same thing in other words, to promote or to oppose that happiness. (*An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, BENTHAM I p. 1)

with Carlyle's sardonic parody:

'4. "Define the whole duty of Pigs." It is the mission of universal Pighood, and the duty of all Pigs, at all times, to diminish the quantity of unattainable and increase that of attainable. All knowledge and device and effort ought to be directed thither and thither only; Pig Science, Pig Enthusiasm and Devotion have this one aim. It is the Whole Duty of Pigs.' (*LDP 7 CE XX* pp. 316-7)

which is extended to a general attack on economic principles:

'To buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest': truly if that is the summary of his social duties, and the final divine-message he has to follow, we may trust him extensively to vote upon that. But if it is *not*, and never was, or can be? (*LDP 1 CE XX* p. 18)

and which Dickens echoes in his description of the tea that Bitzer donates annually to his mother in the workhouse:

his only reasonable transaction in that commodity would have been to buy it for as little as he could possibly give, and sell it for as much as he could possibly get; it having been clearly ascertained by philosophers that in this is comprised the whole duty of man--not a part of man's duty, but the whole. (*HT II 1* p. 129)

## 2. Anti-Parliamentary

In addition, Dickens follows Carlyle closely in seeing as products of materialist consciousness not only the physical and social problems of industrialization itself but also the dominant institutional reactions to them. This includes the response of the churches and of philanthropic organizations, but it is directed principally at the organs of national government, especially the Parliament at Westminster, which is seen as dominated by material interests and utilitarian values which together result in the 'do-nothing' policies of *laissez-faire*. In *Past and Present*, *Chartism*, and *Latter-Day Pamphlets* Carlyle argues explicitly and with increasing vehemence against the theory and practice of representative government. In *Hard Times* there is no direct attack on democracy itself but the sardonic picture of Parliament as a fools' talking shop incapable of concerted action is reproduced. Of course, Dickens's prejudice against Westminster institutions predates the mid century, probably originating during his spell as parliamentary reporter for *The Mirror of Parliament* from early 1831, and seems to continue until the end of his life,<sup>20</sup> but in *Hard Times* it takes on an explicitly Carlylean colouring. Carlyle's recurrent parody of the 'National Palaver' under the Prime Ministership of 'Sir Jabesh Windbag',<sup>21</sup> in Dickens reappears in the form of the mockery of the dusty Bluebooks and 'tabular statements' which are the sole outcome of Parliamentary process (e.g. *HT I 1* pp. 8-9, *I 5* pp. 25-7, *I 8* pp. 54-5, *I 9* p. 62, *I 14* pp. 103-4, *I 15* p. 107 & *II 2* pp. 144-5), and of the frivolity of the 'fine gentlemen' in Parliament such as Harthouse and his brother (e.g. *HT II 2* pp. 138-9 & *II 7* pp. 184-5). Again the parallel of content and tone can be seen best and most briefly in quotation.

Compare Carlyle's

What we want! Let the dullest British man endeavour to raise in his mind this question, and ask himself in sincerity what the British Nation wants at this time. Is it to have, with endless jargoning, debating, motioning and counter-motioning, a settlement effected between the Honourable Mr. This and the Honourable Mr. That, as to their respective pretensions to ride the high horse? Really it is unimportant which of them ride it. Going upon past experience long continued now, I should say with brevity, "Either of them--Neither of them." If our Government is to be a No-Government, what is the matter who administers it? (*LDP 3 CE XX* p. 99)

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<sup>20</sup> See *HOUSE* pp. 170-214, *FORSTER* pp.49-56, and *ACKROYD* pp.132-4.

<sup>21</sup> See, especially, *CH 9* (*CE XXIX* pp. 189-90), *P&P III* 13-4 'Democracy' & 'Sir Jabesh Windbag' (*CE X* pp. 209-25), and *LDP 3* 'Downing Street' (*CE XX* pp. 91-4) and *LDP 4* 'New Downing Street' (*CE XX* pp. 159-71) & *LDP 6* 'Parliaments' (*CE XX* pp. 214-28).

with Dickens's description of Gradgrind's election

Time hustled him into a little noisy and rather dirty machinery, in a by-corner, and made him Member of Parliament for Coketown: one of the respected members for ounce weights and measures, one of the representatives of the multiplication table, one of the deaf honourable gentlemen, dumb honourable gentlemen, blind honourable gentlemen, lame honourable gentlemen, dead honourable gentlemen, to every other consideration. Else wherefore live we in a Christian land, eighteen hundred and odd years after our Master? (*HT* I 14 pp. 103-4)

### 3. Positive Terms

But if there is little doubt that the negative forces depicted in Dickens's novel derive directly from Carlyle's work, the same cannot be said of the positive values which are opposed to them. Despite the ubiquitous biblical echoes and the occasional appeal to the teaching of Christ such as that encountered in the preceding citation, Dickens's religious beliefs are highly secularized and he shares little of Carlyle's stern Old Testament morality or his transcendental certainty of the presence in the Living God. Against the deadening power of industrial and social machinery, then, Dickens can only counterpoise what he understands as the better side of human nature: affection, forbearance, and fun, embodied in the novel by Sissy, Rachael, and Sleary. Similarly, despite his mockery of Parliament, Dickens explicitly refuses Carlyle's corollary, which is the cult of the hero deriving from arguments in favour of natural aristocracy and strong leadership.<sup>22</sup> And so he can only imagine, as an appropriate response to the social crisis he depicts, personal acts of charity, benevolence and paternalism, that home-made Dickensian creed which Louis CAZAMIAN has called 'the philosophy of Christmas' (pp. 117-47). That many readers of *Hard Times* have felt a deep incommensurability between the negative and positive forces opposed in the novel is not merely related to the differences between their ideational content, but also to their disparate rhetorical provenance. The picture of the converted Gradgrind at the end of the novel as 'a white-haired decrepit man, bending his hitherto inflexible theories to appointed circumstances; making his facts and figures subservient to Faith, Hope, and Charity; and no longer trying to grind that heavenly trio in his dusty little mills' (*HT* III 9 p. 328) is a curiously enervated and dispiriting image compared to the brio of the opening.

#### *B. Recurrent Metaphors*

But in the end Dickens is even less of an abstract, dialectical thinker than Carlyle, and it is unwise to base demonstration of influence entirely on the level of argument. In both writers, weight and momentum is given to the discourse above all by the recurrence and development of metaphors, and here we can demonstrate the extent of Dickens's debt with rather greater certainty and economy. There are three main extended metaphors in question here, which correspond in turn to the three subdivisions of the preceding section.

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example, his letter to John Forster of 15 May 1854 (*LETTERS* VII pp. 331-2), where he writes concerning Carlyle's 'curious distortion': 'A Tyrant is always a detestable creature, publicly, however virtuous privately, and is always a creature to give no quarter to.'



## 1. Grindstone

Dickens's repeated representation of the thinking of utilitarians and political economists as the incessant revolving of a mill which grinds out only dust and ashes can be traced to Carlyle. The name Gradgrind itself, the centre of the image, owes something to Carlyle's mockery of Benthamites as 'Motive-grinders' (*SR II 7 CE I* p. 131), or 'Dryasdust[s]' (*LDP 8 CE XX* p. 326).<sup>23</sup> For a more extended example, compare Dickens's depiction of Sissy's failure to acquire the elements of Political Economy:

Mr. Gradgrind observed, shaking his head, that all this was very bad; that it showed the necessity of infinite grinding at the mill of knowledge, as per system, schedule, blue book, report, and tabular statements A to Z; and that Jupe 'must be kept to it.' (*HT I 9* p. 62)<sup>24</sup>

with Carlyle's triumphant rejection of Benthamism:

Foolish Wordmonger and Motive-grinder, who in thy Logic-mill hast an earthly mechanism for the Godlike itself, and wouldst fain grind me out Virtue from the husks of Pleasure,--I tell thee, Nay! (*SR II 7 'Everlasting No' CE I* p. 130)

## 2. Dustheap

The dust ground out by the utilitarian mills acquires scatological overtones in Dickens's novel when it is associated with Parliamentary work. Here we must remember that, in the crowded industrial towns of the mid century before sanitary reforms had begun to be effective, 'household dust' was still often a euphemism for human waste and 'dustheap' for dunghill.<sup>25</sup> Dickens's repeated imaging of Members of Parliament as 'the national dustmen' scavenging among piles of filth (*HT II 9* p. 217, *II 11* p. 227, *II 12* p. 237 & *III 9* p. 328), can then be traced to Carlyle's savage depiction in the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* of Westminster as the Augean stables, with Peel as the only imaginable Hercules (*LDP 3 CE XX* esp. pp. 91-3 & *LDP 4 CE XX* esp. pp. 162-71). Compare Dickens's

[Gradgrind] was usually sifting and sifting at his parliamentary cinder-heap in London (without being observed to turn up many precious articles among the rubbish), and was still hard at it in the national dust-yard. (*HT II 9* p. 217)

with Carlyle's

Sir Robert Peel has in his mind privately resolved to go, one day, into that stable of King Augias, which appals human hearts, so rich is it, high-piled with the droppings of two-hundred years; and Hercules-like to load a thousand night-wagons from it, and turn running water into it, and swash, and shovel at it, and never leave it till the antique pavement, and real basis of the matter, show itself clean again! (*LDP 3 CE XX* pp. 91-2)<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> 'Dryasdust' is a nonce name borrowed from the fictitious pedant Dr. Jonas Dryasdust to whom Scott pretends to dedicate novels such as *Ivanhoe* (1819) and *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822). Carlyle seems to have first used the name in the first chapter entitled 'Anti-Dryasdust' of his Introduction to *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845) *CE VI* pp. 1-12.

<sup>24</sup> Similar instances can be found at *HT I 14* pp. 103-4, *II 3* p. 150, & *III 9* p. 328.

<sup>25</sup> On the overlap in meaning between the two phrases in the nineteenth century, see the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd Edition) entries. For graphic descriptions of sanitation problems in the period, see HAMMOND pp. 291-313, WOHL pp. 80-116, CHADWICK and ENGELS, especially the description of Manchester in the third chapter on 'The Great Towns'.

<sup>26</sup> The source of Dickens's image is confirmed by his letter to Harriet Martineau of 3 July 1850 on the death of Peel, where he writes that Peel 'could ill be spared from among the great dust-heap of imbeciles

### 3. Baptism of fire and water

Although, as we have seen, Dickens's positive values show relatively little influence from Carlyle, the process of conversion from dead mechanism to living organism, which Gradgrind and, more explicitly, his daughter Louisa undergo during the course of the narrative, is described in terms which borrow much from Carlyle's semi-autobiographical account of the rebirth of Professor Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor Resartus*. There the process occurs in two stages: first the rejection of the mechanical works of the Devil is figured as a baptism of fire in 'The Everlasting No'; and second, after a period of temptation in the wilderness, the receiving of the baptism of water from the Living God in 'The Everlasting Yea' (*SR II 7 & 9 CE I* pp. 146-57). Louisa's stirrings of rebellion against her father's system occur first at night as she stares into the burning coals of the fire (*HT I 8* pp. 55-60 & *I 14* pp. 105-6) or at the sparks flying from the factory chimneys (*HT I 14* p. 106 & *I 15* p. 111), and are brought to a head when she encounters the devil of indifference in the form of James Harthouse (cf. esp. *HT II 8* pp. 198-9); but it is only Sissy who is able to bring her to shed tears and bathe in the waters of life.<sup>27</sup> Compare the sentence which ended Book III Chapter 1 in the manuscript but was cut in subsequent published versions:

Louisa's tears fell like the blessed rain after a long drought. The sullen glare was over, and in every drop there was a germ of hope and promise for the dried-up ground. (*HT III 1* p. 249 & *LAW* [1996] Explanatory Notes)

with Carlyle in 'The Everlasting No':

'The heart within me, unvisited by any heavenly dewdrop was smouldering in sulphurous, slow-consuming fire. Almost since earliest memory I had shed no tear;' (*SR II 7CE I* p. 134)

### C. Organizing Structures

Carlyle's influence can also be detected in two of the key organizing devices of the narrative, the first being the formal division of the novel into three books which was carried out after the magazine serialization was completed, along with the addition of the sub-title and dedication to Carlyle, and the second the 'unholy trinity' of characters representing the negative forces in Dickens's industrial world.

#### 1. Sowing/Reaping/Garnering

As a quick glance through the textual notes of scholarly editions of *Hard Times* such as *LAW* ([1996]) will suggest, there is an abundance of unmistakable references to the King James Bible or the Book of Common Prayer in the text, nearly fifty in all. Such

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and dandies that there is no machinery for sifting, down in \\ (LETTERS VI p. 122). The editors of the Pilgrim Edition also comment on the origin of the image in *LDP* 3 and 4.

<sup>27</sup> See, especially, the description of Louisa's return home in *HT II 12 & III 1*, although the image is prepared for on the occasion of Louisa's prior visit to her father's house to be at her mother's death-bed (*HT II 9* pp. 217-21). Water and fire are of course also combined in the form of the rain and lightning that accompany Louisa's flight from Harthouse (*HT II 11-2* pp. 234-8). Compare ODDIE's discussion of Louisa's conversion (pp. 56-9); QUALLS (pp. 212-5) details the parallels between the rebirth of Teufelsdröckh and that of Eugene Wrayburn in *Our Mutual Friend*.

echoes are of course commonplace in early Victorian fictional discourse, but the frequency of occurrence here is unusual for Dickens, being more what we might expect from contemporary evangelical writers such as 'Charlotte Elizabeth'. A pattern begins to emerge from these references which suggests that they are often filtered through the densely biblical prose of Carlyle, whose Calvinistic background remains most evident in his rhetorical style. The pattern is at its clearest in the agricultural metaphors which head the three books of the novel: 'Sowing', 'Reaping', and 'Garnering'. These derive ultimately from the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament of the Bible; compare especially: Matthew 6:24-34 ('Ye cannot serve God and mammon'), where the metaphors occurring in verse 26 illustrate the superiority of spiritual over material values; and Matthew 3:11-12/Luke 3:16-17 (John the Baptist on the Messiah) or Matthew 13:24-30/Luke 8:4-15 (The Parable of the Sower), where there is an apocalyptic emphasis on the punishment of sin and the rewarding of virtue, i.e., the saved are gathered into God's garner and the damned are burnt as chaff. But there are several prior instances of Carlyle's using these metaphors in precisely the same way,<sup>28</sup> and the deadly threat of Mammonism and the imminent danger of apocalypse are keynotes in *Chartism or Past and Present* and the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* respectively. Further, if we look more closely at the biblical references scattered throughout the novel, we will note that they tend to form into three main groups. The two largest concern references to the apocalypse and the choice between God and Mammon respectively; the third and rather smaller group attaches to the idea of 'gentle Jesus' and is associated with the life-giving characters, most notably Rachael and Sissy, and has no obvious equivalent in Carlylean mythology.

## 2. Demonic Trinity

What I have called the novel's 'unholy trinity' is composed of the characters Bounderby, Harthouse, and Gradgrind with the last as the father figure; M'Choakumchild appears once only in the novel, is never permitted to speak on his own account, and is merely a marionette. Together these three can be seen clearly as a personification of Carlyle's evil triad of Mammonism, Dilettantism, and Mechanism, that is, respectively, the self-interested values of the industrial capitalist or the landed aristocrat, and the Godless creed of utilitarianism on which both are seen to be built.<sup>29</sup> This pattern is found repeatedly in his writings in the 1830s and 1840s, most notably in *Past and Present*, where, for example, Book II Chapters 2, 3 and 4--'Gospel of Mammonism', 'Gospel of Dilettantism', and 'Happy' (referring to the greatest-happiness principle)--are constructed around it, and where we frequently encounter rhetoric embodying it. Compare:

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<sup>28</sup> See, for example, 'The harvest is reaped and garnered; yet still we have no bread' *FR* I vi 3 (*CE* II pp. 226-7); or *P&P* I 5 (*CE* X p. 30) where Carlyle mocks the idea that an Aristocracy of Talent can be 'sifted, like wheat out of chaff' from among the general population by democratic process.

<sup>29</sup> This point is made in a similar form by *ODDIE* pp. 57-9. Compare: 'Hartouse (Dilettantism and loss of faith), Gradgrind (logic-chopping rationalism) and Bounderby (Mammonism) can be seen as three figures in a distinctively Carlylean demonology' (p. 59).

Behold, ye shall grow wiser, or ye shall die! Truer to Nature's Fact, or inane Chimera will swallow you; in whirlwinds of fire, you and your Mammonisms, Dilettantisms, your Midas-eared philosophies, double-barrelled Aristocracies, shall disappear!--Such is the God's-message to *us*, once more, in these modern days. (*P&P* I 5 'Aristocracy of Talent' *CE X* pp. 29-30)

or

Under baleful Atheisms, Mammonisms, Joe-Manton Dilettantisms, with their appropriate Cants and Idolisms, and whatsoever scandalous rubbish obscures and all but extinguishes the soul of man,-- religion now is; its Laws, written if not on stone tables, yet on the Azure of Infinitude, in the inner heart of God's Creation, certain as Life, certain as Death! I say the Laws are there, and thou shalt not disobey them. (*P&P* III 15 'Morrison Again' *CE X* p. 230)

#### D. Stylistic Devices

Next we can see Carlyle's influence in the rhetorical mode of the novel. In general, the sardonic tone which surfaces in *Hard Times* on many occasions owes much to Carlyle's voice. Of course, bitter narratorial sarcasm in Dickens's works is not limit to this novel, but occurs with some frequency in other 'dark' novels of the period, most notably *Bleak House* (1852-3) and *Little Dorrit* (1855-7). But there it is directed most characteristically against impersonal institutions (the Court of Chancery or the Circumlocution Office) and is counter-balanced by the voices of comedy, pathos, and sympathy; whereas in *Hard Times* it is directed with more personal animus against particular characters and tends to be overwhelming, particularly of the early stages of the novel. More particularly we can hear the influence of Carlyle in three rhetorical tropes which occur with some frequency in *Hard Times*.

##### 1. Apostrophe

The first and most significant is apostrophe, the rhetorical device of direct address to a personified figure by the narrator. Carlyle's prophetic stance lends itself readily to apostrophizing, and *Past and Present* is the work in which it is most extensively employed. In *Hard Times* the narrator steps aside from the action with unusual frequency not only to underline the moral of incidents, but also to accost or invoke particular characters in the drama, personified abstractions, or the reader. In both writers, apostrophe is associated with the language of the King James Bible and the mode can vary from the admonitory to the cominatory or the conciliatory, though Carlyle still understandably tends to be more peremptory and insistent. Compare Dickens:

He went to work in this preparatory lesson, not unlike Morgiana in the Forty Thieves: looking into all the vessels ranged before him, one after another, to see what they contained. Say, good M'Choakumchild. When from thy boiling store, thou shalt fill each jar brim full by-and-by, dost thou think that thou wilt always kill outright the robber Fancy lurking within--or sometimes only maim him and distort him! (*HT* I 1 p. 9)

and

Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog's-eared creeds, the poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections, to adorn their lives so much in need of ornament; or, in the day of your triumph, when romance is utterly driven out of their

souls, and they and a bare existence stand face to face, Reality will take a wolfish turn, and make and end of you. (*HT* II 6 p. 181)

or

Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be! We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires turn gray and cold. (*HT* III 9 p. 330)

with Carlyle's

May it please your Serene Highnesses, your Majesties, Lordships and Law-wardships, the proper Epic of this world is not now 'Arms and the Man'; how much less, 'Shirt-frills and the Man': no, it is now 'Tools and the Man': that, henceforth to all time, is now our Epic;--and you, first of all others, I think, were wise to take note of that! (*P&P* III 12CE X p. 209)

and

... behold the Abyss and nameless Annihilation is ready. So scandalous a beggarly Universe deserves indeed nothing else; I cannot say I would save it from Annihilation. Vacuum, and the serene Blue, will be much handsomer; easier too for all of us. I, for one, decline living as a Patent-Digester; Patent-Digester, Spinning-Mule, Mayfair Clothes-Horse: many thanks, but your Chaosships will have the goodness to excuse me! (*P&P* III 9CE X p. 187)

or

My ingenuous readers, we will march out of this Third Book with a rhythmic word of Goethe's on our lips; a word which perhaps has already sung itself, in dark hours and in bright, through many a heart. (*P&P* III 15CE X p. 237)

## 2. Repetition

Secondly, *Hard Times* also tends to rely on an almost obsessive use of repetition to emphasize key themes that is reminiscent of Carlyle, particularly in his most recent offering *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, where most readers have found the effect excessive and uncontrolled. Here I am not referring so much to bravura passages such the opening chapter of *Hard Times*, where the repeated words 'facts' and 'emphasis' are woven in a prose poem that recalls the introduction of *Bleak House*, but to more extended effects. The frequent recurrence of keynote phrases such as Stephen's 'a muddle' (e.g. *HT* I 11 p. 84), Tom's 'number one' (e.g. *HT* I 9 p. 69), Bitzer's 'calculations' (e.g. *HT* III 8 p. 317), Bounderby's 'turtle soup and venison' (e.g. *HT* I 11 p. 79), Sleary's 'make the betht of uth' (*HT* I 6 p. 45 & III 8 p. 323), and narrator's 'melancholy mad elephants' (e.g. *HT* I 11 p. 77) or 'tabular statements' (e.g. *HT* I 5 p. 26), or indeed Gradgrind's 'Facts', often seems to be a witness to mechanical exhaustion rather than sustained coherence. Here major as well as minor voices are affected and the effect is particularly insistent because of the unusual length and compression of the novel.<sup>30</sup>

## 3. Nomination

Thirdly, and even more briefly, we can see Carlyle's influence on the act of naming of persons, institutions, or abstractions. Of course, sardonic naming is not exclusive to Carlyle,

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<sup>30</sup> LEAVIS's particular emphasis on the mastery of 'Dickens's command of word, phrase, rhythm, and image' (p. 247) in *HT* seems a curious misjudgement, especially when placed side by side with his precise criticism of the over-insistence of Conrad's prose in *Heart of Darkness* (pp. 174-82).

but is common to satire as a genre from its Classical origins, and is commonplace in the narrative tradition which can be traced from Swift, Fielding, Sterne, and Scott to Dickens himself, where it can be seen again especially in the dark novels of the 1850s. But in *Hard Times*, M'Choakumchild and Gradgrind surely can be traced directly to Carlyle's M'Croudy and Dryasdust, while Sissy's unconscious confusion of 'Natural' and 'National' or 'stutterings' and 'statistics' (*HT* I 9 pp. 63-4) are founded on the same dialectic that produces 'National Palaver'.

### *E. Casual References*

But perhaps the most conclusive evidence of the powerful nature of Carlyle's influence on *Hard Times* can be seen in the many phrases which seem in the novel to be merely one-off, casual images or references, but which prove on closer investigation to be borrowed from Carlyle's personal glossary. A single one or even a small number of such cases might be put down to coincidence, but the accumulation here is overwhelming. A far from comprehensive list of major examples follows:<sup>31</sup>

1. Dickens's chapter titles '**The One Thing Needful**' (*HT* I 1) and '**Another Thing Needful**' (*HT* III 1) echo the Biblical phrase, deriving from the story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42, which Carlyle employs with great frequency, especially in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, to describe the renewal of spiritual faith as the *sine qua non* of national revival. Among many examples, see: *LDP* 3 *CE* XX p. 105; *LDP* 5 *CE* XX pp. 177 & 205; *LDP* 6 *CE* XX pp. 237 & 244.
2. Dickens's description of Gradgrind addressing the assembled school-children as a '**galvanizing apparatus**' (*HT* I 2 p. 3), referring to a machine to stimulate or simulate life by introducing electrical current, after the therapeutic technique invented by Luigi Galvani in 1792, recalls a favourite image of Carlyle's used to contrast the illusion of life created by mechanism with the real thing. Compare, for example: *SR* III 5 *CE* I pp. 184-5; *P&P* II 15 *CE* X p. 117 (twice); *P&P* III 12 *CE* X p. 207; *P&P* III 13 *CE* X p. 218; *LDP* 4 *CE* XX p. 133; *LDP* 8 *CE* XX pp. 307 & 308.
3. Dickens's description of the mechanical system of the government officer visiting Gradgrind's school as a '**bolus**' (*HT* I 2 p. 6), that is, medicine in the form of a pellet or thick paste, recycles the phrase often used in a similar contemptuous, figurative sense by Carlyle, e.g. in *SR* II 8 *CE* I p. 145.
4. Gradgrind's reference in his statistical demonstration of the unimportance of age difference in marriage, cites the example of the '**Calmucks of Tartary**' (*HT* I 15 p. 110), the Mongolian people living on the north-west shores of the Caspian sea, today more commonly transcribed as Kalmuck, whom Carlyle frequently cites as the type of mechanism in religion, for their use of a rotary calabash in reciting prayers. See, for example: *CH* 10 *CE* XXIX p. 196; *P&P* III 1 *CE* X p. 139 & *P&P* IV 7 *CE* X p. 292; *LDP* 8 *CE* XX p. 279.
5. Mrs. Sparsit's reference to the '**bread of dependence**' (*HT* I 16 p. 119), recalling similar phrases in the King James Bible ('bread of affliction' e.g. *Deuteronomy* 16:3; 'bread of idleness' *Proverbs* 31:27; 'bread of

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<sup>31</sup> A comprehensive list would obviously need to be based on computer analysis comparing the text of *HT* with all or a selection of Carlyle's works up to 1854. Unfortunately, as yet no reliable electronic versions of Carlyle's major works are available as far as I am aware.

adversity' *Isaiah* 30:20; etc.), echoes Carlyle's frequent recourse to the phrase 'bread of affliction' to describe the workhouse regime under the 1834 Poor Law in *CH*, e.g. 3 *CE* XXIX pp. 129-30.

6. Dickens's description of the heat in the cotton factories as like the '**breath of the simoom**' (*HT* II 1 p. 124), that is, the hot, dry wind sweeping across the deserts of Africa and Asia, echoes Carlyle's frequent use of the same image in *Chartism* to describe the irresistible force of Necessity, for example, the needs of industrial and agricultural workers for adequate food and shelter. See, for example, *CH* 1 *CE* XXIX p. 123 & *CH* 5 *CE* XXIX pp. 145-6.

7. Dickens's depiction of Slackbridge stirring up the cotton workers against Stephen as a '**fugleman**' (*HT* II 4 p. 159), that is, an expert soldier who leads the file and provides a model for others in the regiment during drills, exercises, etc. (from the German *flügelmann* leader of the file), recalls Carlyle's recurrent use of the image as a type of vain religious formalism, e.g. his mockery of William Laud's complaints at finding 'not the smallest regularity of fuglemanship or devotional drill-exercise' in the Scottish Church, in *Cromwell* I *CE* VI p. 43, or again in *LDP* 8 *CE* XX p. 315.

8. Dickens's description of Harthouse as only one among a '**legion**' of purposeless 'fine gentlemen' (*HT* II 8 p. 198), deriving from the words of Jesus recorded in *Mark* 5:9, recalls Carlyle's use of the same image to describe the devils of indifference in, for example, the chapter 'Centre of Indifference' *SR* II 8 *CE* I p. 145.

9. Dickens's single reference to '**red tape**' (*HT* II 8 p. 199), as an image of meaningless bureaucracy parallel to 'blue books' (such tape was conventionally used to bind legal or administrative documents), borrows the phrase Carlyle uses within monotonous repetition to damn government inaction in *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. See: *LDP* 1 *CE* XX p. 44; *LDP* 3 *CE* XX pp. 87 (twice), 100, 103 (three times), 111 & 119 (twice); *LDP* 4 *CE* XX pp. 128, 130 (twice), 156 (three times) & 169). (The phrase, still in common use today, is first recorded with this sense in the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd Edition) at the beginning of the eighteenth century, though it seems to have passed into common usage only in the mid Victorian period.)

10. Dickens's satire on Gradgrind's utilitarian '**little mean excise rod**' used in 'gauging fathomless deeps' of human motives (*HT* III 1 p. 245) is borrowed from Carlyle's 'Paralytic Radicalism ... which gauges with Statistic measuring-reed; sounds with Philosophic Politico-Economic plummet the deep dark sea of troubles' *CH* 10 *CE* XXIX p. 191, among other instances.

In addition, a number of distinctive casual references in *Hard Times*, such as those to the tale of 'The Tailor's Journey to Brentford' (*HT* I 3 p. 13), the mathematician Cocker (*HT* I 8 p. 55), and the story of the Sultan and the bucket of water (*HT* II 1 p. 133), can all be shown to have antecedents in Carlyle.<sup>32</sup>

### III. Conclusion

The evidence outlined above is intended to demonstrate conclusively that, when producing *Hard Times*, Dickens was writing under an unusually strong and deep level of influence from the social criticism of Thomas Carlyle and that this manifests itself in almost every aspect of the novel's discursive structure. Occasional reference has been made to the

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<sup>32</sup> For 'The Tailor's Journey to Brentford' see *LDP* 3 (*CE* XX p. 116); for one of several references to Cocker see *LDP* 6 (*CE* XX p. 236); for the story of the Sultan, see the essay 'On History Again' (originally published as 'Quae Cogitavit' in 1833) *CE* XXVIII p. 172.

general effects of this influence on the quality and intention of the novel; here we need then only to summarize and supplement those remarks. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that, coupled with Dickens's unusual lack of preparation, both psychological and material, for the writing of the novel, the powerful presence of Carlyle, as it were almost incessantly looking over the shoulder of the narrator, is decidedly a negative one. The problems which emerge can be divided broadly into those of coherence and those of ideology.

One effect of the pervasive influence of Carlyle on the novel's content and style is a marked inconsistency of tone, confusion of argument, and blurring of purpose, of which we have already noted a few examples in passing. A degree of confusion and inconsistency is by no means always fatal to Dickens's fictional enterprise. Indeed, in his more typically profuse and diffuse narrative mode, it seems at worst inevitable and at best a sign of richness and complexity. But in the more single-minded and aggressive mode of *Hard Times*, which aspires to the condition of a fable, that is, less a novel of ideas than a novel with a single fixed idea, it can hardly be counted as a strength. It is difficult not to feel that Stephen's 'muddle' gradually becomes more pervasive in the world of the novel in part at least because the author himself is touched by it. In the end Dickens, unable or unwilling to make the difficult choice between contradictory tendencies, has simply included both. So Carlyle's violent, sardonic, incisive rhetoric jars constantly with his own more instinctive modes of comedy, pathos and reconciliation. Similarly, there is no recognition of a need to mediate between the stern transcendentalism shaping Carlyle's social philosophy and the cheerful sensual materialism which forms the basis of his own thought. And most importantly there remains a profound contradiction at the heart of the novel's demands for a response to the sickness of industrialism: in the end the Carlylean voice insists on the need for collective action which Dickensian individualism will not countenance; the former rejects laissez-faire and demands positive acts of government intervention as a step towards spiritual renewal that the latter tends to resist as intrusive since it is seen to diminish the simple material pleasures of the people.<sup>33</sup>

The second, ideological effect concerns historical stages in the response to the industrial revolution and the unfortunate timing of Dickens's conversion to the anti-utilitarian school of Carlyle. For Carlyle, and Dickens following him, utilitarianism tends to remain a single, unitary system of thought, whereas even the simplest level of social analysis reveals two rather different trends, the distinction between them being primarily historical. The utilitarian followers of Bentham were described as 'Philosophical Radicals', but it was clearly a very different thing to be a Radical before and after the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832, together with the major progressive achievements of the new parliament under its extended franchise, such as the Municipal Corporations Reform Act of 1835 and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. Before 1832 the central aim of the Radicals could only be the removal of the bias toward an effete landed aristocracy enshrined in the

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<sup>33</sup> For a more extended presentation of this argument, see Introduction to LAW ([1996]). Compare also HOUSE pp. 183-211, and WILLIAMS pp. 92-7.



English Constitution. Towards the middle of the century the key role was to resist oligarchic tendencies among the representatives of industrial capital, which meant both going back to sort out the manifest faults and inadequacies of earlier utilitarian legislation such as the new Poor Law of 1834 and the Factory Act of 1844, as well as looking forward to ways of meeting the democratic demands of the Chartists. Earlier Carlyle's own idiosyncratic brand of radicalism, though it placed strict limits on the role of the intervention of public bodies, had a degree of sympathy with these positions and had inspired social reformers across the political spectrum, as we have seen. He had even received encouragement from the Philosophical Radicals themselves and been published on a number of occasions in their organ the *Westminster Review*.<sup>34</sup> But after 1848 which saw both the violent confusion of the last stage of the Chartist movement and the outbreak of revolution in Europe, there was a marked deepening of his pessimism about the possibility of change and his contempt for government institutions. In the eight *Latter-Day Pamphlets* of 1850, in particular, his tone became extremely harsh and shrill, as he raged against the stupidity of political economy and the evils of democracy. They were received with almost universal disapprobation in a Victorian England about to prepare for that symptom of national self-confidence known as the Great Exhibition. Thus 1854 was a peculiarly inappropriate time for Dickens to be seduced by the power of Carlyle's by then almost entirely reactionary rhetoric.

In so far as Dickens's novel is an attack on the limitations of the early utilitarianism, if hardly far-sighted, it is entirely consistent with his own best instincts of 'sentimental radicalism', in Walter Bagehot's phrase,<sup>35</sup> and with the political position he adopts publicly in the 1850s in his own journal *Household Words*. But in so far as Dickens's attack is directed at Mill and the emerging later mode of utilitarianism, he is in serious danger simultaneously of reproducing popular prejudice rather than proposing considered opposition, of antagonizing his closest political allies, and even of cutting off the intellectual branch on which he himself is sitting. There is no evidence that Dickens was acquainted with, for example, Mill's earlier essays on Bentham and Coleridge, or his recent *Principles of Political Economy*, and, from what is known of his reading habits, it appears unlikely either that he was familiar at first hand with the seminal writings of Bentham, Malthus, or Ricardo. Rather he was content to draw heavily on the caricatures of the major utilitarian thinkers which he found over and over again in Carlyle. From a letter to his statistician friend Charles Knight after the completion of the novel where Dickens writes of 'the real useful truths of political economy' (30 December 1854, *LETTERS* VII pp. 492-3), we catch a glimpse of quite how much he had to withdraw to mend fences with his political neighbours. And finally, Dickens's own social reformism as seen both in earlier novels like

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<sup>34</sup>Carlyle's first appearance in the journal was in 1831 and his last as late as 1855, but the majority appeared in the late 1830s and early 1840s. According to HOUGHTON (V p. 139) a total of eight articles were published.

<sup>35</sup>See 'Charles Dickens' *National Review* October 1858, a review of the 1857-8 Chapman & Hall *Cheap Edition of the Works of Charles Dickens*, reprinted in BAGEHOT p. 192.

*Oliver Twist* and in the journalism then appearing in *Household Words* is best understood not as a rejection of utilitarianism but as an attempt to give it a more human face, an enterprise not entirely dissimilar to Mill's own.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See HOUSE Chs. 2-4, especially pp. 36-8, 68-76, or SMITH pp.74-83. These points can also be illustrated clearly by looking at a considered response to Dickens's satire by the economist W.H. HODGSON (p.299-304) in his contribution to the series of lectures on education at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in June 1854, while the novel was still running in *HW*. There, not only does Hodgson demonstrate directly how wide of the mark Dickens was in offering the self-interested calculations of Tom and Bitzer as the key-note of contemporary utilitarian thought, but he also suggests indirectly how reactionary a position Dickens was taking in the novel in choosing to mock the Victorian enterprise of developing public policies and facilities for education, health, etc.

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