THE CRITICS DEBATE

General Editor: Michael Scott

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General Editor Michael Scott

Published titles

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Philip Larkin Stephen Regan

Further titles are in preparation

HARD TIMES

An Introduction to the
Variety of Criticism

Allen Samuels

M
MACMILLAN

For my parents

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Contents

<i>General Editor's Preface</i>	7
<i>A Note on Text and References</i>	9
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	10
<i>Introduction</i>	11
 Part One: Survey	 17
The textual approach	17
The nineteenth century: a social approach	21
Ruskin	21
Socio-political approaches: twentieth century	27
'Only a surface failure'	28
Shifting the argument	31
A political note: George Orwell	33
New criticism: the great debate; one Cambridge don	38
What is the Leavisite approach?	39
The Leavisite approach to <i>Hard Times</i>	40
Leavisite practical criticism	41
A rejoinder to Leavis	46
Nice work	48
The historical approach: another Cambridge don	48
Carpets and wallpaper	50
Theoretical approaches: deconstruction; now, what I want, is theory	53
A deconstructive example: Mrs Sparsit's staircase	55
 Part Two: Appraisal	 59
What is <i>Hard Times</i> ?	60
Dickens the dramatiser	61
Relations between dramatic and satiric	62

6 CONTENTS

The dramatic scene	64
The theatrical device	65
The broad purpose	67
Writing	68
Language doubt	70
Fact and fiction	72
Bounderby's 'fictions'	78
The Pegasus's Arms	81
Language and the self	83
Self-interest	86
The inverted parable	88
Epilogue	91
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	95
<i>Index</i>	98

General Editor's Preface

Over the last few years the practice of literary criticism has become hotly debated. Methods developed earlier in the century and before have been attacked and the word 'crisis' has been drawn upon to describe the present condition of English Studies. That such a debate is taking place is a sign of the subject discipline's health. Some would hold that the situation necessitates a radical alternative approach which naturally implies a 'crisis situation'. Others would respond that to employ such terms is to precipitate or construct a false position. The debate continues but it is not the first. 'New Criticism' acquired its title because it attempted something fresh, calling into question certain practices of the past. Yet the practices it attacked were not entirely lost or negated by the new critics. One factor becomes clear: English Studies is a pluralistic discipline.

What are students coming to advanced work in English for the first time to make of all this debate and controversy? They are in danger of being overwhelmed by the cross-currents of critical approaches as they take up their study of literature. The purpose of this series is to help delineate various critical approaches to specific literary texts. Its authors are from a variety of critical schools and have approached their task in a flexible manner. Their aim is to help the reader come to terms with the variety of criticism and to introduce him or her to further reading on the subject and to a fuller evaluation of a particular text by illustrating the way it has been approached in a number of contexts. In the first part of the book a critical survey is given of some of the major ways the text has been appraised. This is done sometimes in a thematic manner, sometimes according to various 'schools' or 'approaches'. In the second part the authors provide their own appraisals of the text from their stated critical standpoint, allowing the reader the knowledge of their own particular approaches

from which their views may in turn be evaluated. The series therein hopes to introduce and to elucidate criticism of authors and texts being studied and to encourage participation as the critics debate.

Michael Scott

A Note on Text and References

All references to *Hard Times* are to the Penguin edition, edited by David Craig (Harmondsworth, 1969), and are given in square brackets. References to secondary material appear in parentheses with date of publication on the introduction of each such work. Fuller details may then be found in the bibliography where secondary works are listed in alphabetical order.

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