

Comment on the element of pathos in Hard Times

2  
F.H.  
Lear: Dickens is capable of sentimentality  
this

or  
 "Dickens is capable of sentimentality" discuss  
 Dickens does not possess unity of tone. His books are full of melodrama. This itself is <sup>not</sup> a bad thing. As F.S. says <sup>that</sup> the frontier of drama and melodrama is vague; the difference is largely a matter of emphasis; perhaps no drama has ever been greatly and permanently successful without a large melodramatic element." Some of Dickens's melodramas are very effective. The murder of Nancy in Oliver Twist, Mrs. Gaskell's Last Downy, haggard though the stormy night these are masterpieces in their way. But they are melodramas. They move us, because they give us a pleasing thrill. They do not stir the emotions of pity and terror that would arouse us if we came across them in real life. Mrs. Gaskell's pursuit of Louisa has something melodramatic about it. But his worst melodrama is less dread than his pathos. Pathos can be the most powerful of all weapons in a novelist's arsenal. But it is far the most dangerous to handle. The reader must feel convinced that the story inevitably ~~must~~ demands that an attack be made on his tender feelings. If he once feels that his emotions are being exploited, his tears will flow by a cold-blooded machination on the part of the author he will be nauseated instead of being touched. The author must take the greatest care, therefore, first that the pathos he detracts extracts from his dramatic situation is inherent in it; and secondly that he is not overstating it. But almost always Dickens sins flagrantly against the canons which govern its use. He overstates. He tries to extract a tear from the situation; he never lets it speak for itself. References may be made to the death of little Nell in "Curiosity Shop" and the reduction of Comby in "Field No. 2. I learn's notes on fiction and the Re



But Dickens is very capable of sentimentality. The scenes in which  
Richard and Stephen appear, sometimes verge on sentimentality.  
The description of Stephen's death has something sentimental  
about it; the reference to Richard's future as a virtuous  
woman in the concluding chapter of the novel also shows Dickens  
inclinations to <sup>be a bit about</sup> wallow or <sup>scatter</sup> labble in sentimentality.

Commenting on this defect in Dickens, Lord David Cecil remarks,  
"No Hollywood film-director, expert in sob-stuff, could more  
thoroughly vulgarize the simple and the tender."

His serious characters, with a brilliant exception like David  
Copperfield, are the conventional virtuous and vicious dummies  
of melodrama. Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* is a convenio-  
nally virtuous worker, whereas Bounderby is a vicious dummy  
of melodrama. In the words of Ruskin, "Mr. Bounderby is a  
dramatic monster instead of a characteristic example of a  
worldly master; and Stephen Blackpool is a dramatic perfec-  
tion instead of a characteristic example of an honest work-  
man. Dickens cannot draw complex educated or aristocratic  
types. Further, the element of exaggeration in his novels some-  
times makes his characters psychologically unsound. There  
are critics who complain that they have never met persons  
like Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby in real life.

F. R. Leavis comments, "Dickens, as everyone knows,  
is very capable of sentimentality." Pathos is a necessary  
element in the novel of Dickens. But he exaggerates it in  
all his novels. *Hard Times* is the story of the tragedy of the  
two children of Mr. Gradgrind, - Louisa and Tom. Louisa's  
career is a really tragic waste. From the very beginning, we  
are conscious of her spiritual tragedy. Her imagination  
is starved, her spirit is crushed under the heavy weight  
of her father's utilitarian system of education. She is given  
in marriage to a cad and crumplehead, Mr. Josiah Bounderby

ingenuously