

THE 'SOFT TIME' OF DICKENS' *HARD TIMES*
(Antithetical Values)

COKETOWN

1. urban
2. hard-edged/dictatorial
3. facts
4. productive work
- 5 statistically-measured time
- 6 disjunctive (competitive)
- 7.fixed facilities

SLEARY'S CIRCUS

- 1 suburban
- 2 soft/consensual
3. fancy
- 4.play/recreation
- 5 wasting time
- 6 conjunctive
- 7 transient performers

(Shared Values)

1. production depends upon efficient use of time/horsepower
2. oil is the smell of Coketown
- 3."break" children who define "horse" incorrectly
4. industrial pollution obscures identity
5. abandoned children (to education)
6. hidden past (Boulderby)
- 7.homeless (multiple homes)

1. missed "tips" (timing) is inefficient for acrobats/wasted horsepower
- 2."Nine oils" needed to lubricate joints of Sissy's father.
- 3 "break" horses for child riders
4. cosmetic pollution obscures identity
5. abandoned child (to education)
6. hides the present (Tom)
7. homeless (only a portable tent)

Harthouse is a member of a "wonderful hybrid race" (*HT* II, ii), a vanishing mediator who reveals the differences between Coketown (work) and circus (play) to be imaginary rather than real. In the process, Dickens deploys a new kind of unitary character combining antithetical traits who can imaginatively bond with anyone, precisely because he has no "self," having already lost it—not as a consequence of oppressive institutions or systems—but because he has made an *a priori* renunciation of all opinion and ideology. The implications of this "type" will be discussed.