

REALISM REVISITED – DICKENS’ *HARD TIMES* AS A NARRATIVIZED ARCHIVE

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Summary

The paper will show that the novel *Hard Times* (1854) by Charles Dickens is an archive in narrative form. The analysis of different discourses on multiple levels of the novel will show a collection of voices that follow the formal arch of the plot but refuse to merge into one authorial statement, or to even form temporary “understandings” to establish communicative links as joint grounds to mediate between voices or between protagonists. The method will follow Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories of dialogism to identify singular voices and to point to relationships between them. The realism of socio-historic discourses from Dickens’ *Hard Times* consequently enables us to rethink the transformation from realistic to the later forms of novel. Also, the narrative preserving its source material as in an archive is one answer to the open questions of literature in the context of new media, where the author is often forced to acknowledge a high level of autonomy to the elements that his or her cybertext consists of.

The paper will look at the novel *Hard Times* (1854) by Charles Dickens as an archive in narrative form. The wider framework for this line of reasoning is the challenging question of the new media narrative, i.e. the narrative based on algorithmic manipulation of textual elements (usually by means of computer software). Lev Manovich identified the new media (art and non-art) object in the dichotomy of the database and multiple interfaces, whereby the single linear narrative as an interface to database is marginalized in favour of a dispersed and “unordered” archive of singular elements and forking micro-narrative paths. For literary scholarship it is interesting to question, whether there are any literary works composed as archives of singular elements and therefore similar to Manovich’s databases. As it will be shown, Dickens’ novel *Hard Times* could present a promising model to bridge the gap between actual multiplicity of voices communicating in the case of an openly¹ interactive new media object and a multiplicity of voices enclosed within a single unchanging – non-interactive and non-ergodic² – literary text. What the paper seeks to achieve is to identify an archive of voices within the Dickens’ novel and to show that this feature is among the key compositional principles of *Hard Times*. Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories of dialogism will provide us with the methodological apparatus to identify singular voices and to point to relationships between them.

¹ Manovich's notion of open interactivity as opposed to closed one.

² Espen J. Aarseth's term.

The method

Bakhtin approaches his objects of study through the prism of his philosophy of language that places the world, the human and the language in a homogeneous ideological and semiotic horizon. A human is heteronomous consisting of a plethora of more or less independent voices and languages. Only from this point of view the dialogic nature of texts becomes apparent and with it specific ways of organizing literary works. Bakhtin explicates his model of literary interpretation comprehensively in his text *Discourse in the Novel* (1934/35)³ as the stylistic analysis of the novel.⁴ This stylistics has to be “metalinguistic”⁵ – as opposed to monologic nature of linguistics – in order to reach multiformness of style in novelistic prose.⁶

The novel (foremost the novels of the Second Stylistic Line,⁷ which includes Dickens’ works) is an artistic system of languages, which lie on multiple planes. The task of stylistic analysis consists in showing this mesh of relationships between languages: in uncovering all the available orchestrating languages in the composition of the novel; grasping the precise degree of distancing that separates each language from its most immediate semantic instantiation in the work as a whole (degree of objectification); showing varying angles of refraction of intentions within languages, their dialogic interrelationships; if there is direct authorial discourse, determining the heteroglot background outside the work (particularly in case of the novels of the First Line). This necessitates first and foremost an “artistic and ideological penetration into the novel”. (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 416) Historico-linguistic

³ Particularly: Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 415-22.

⁴ The typology of the hero from *Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity* (1920-24) is of less interest here since it doesn’t yet take into account issues of dialogism and heteroglossia.

⁵ Bakhtin used this term to name his methodology.

⁶ For Bakhtin stylistics considers a style to reveal the totality of belief system at hand. Aleksander Skaza points to the fact that the intentional aspect of style emphasized by Bakhtin in *Discourse in the Novel* is not in opposition to his emphasis in *The Problem of Speech Genres* (1952-54) on the genre being also linked to universalistic images of the world. (Skaza 239)

⁷ In the novels of the First Stylistic Line the language is consistently stylized and it reflects unmediated authorial intentions displacing heteroglossia outside the novel – although, as opposed to poetic stylization, the novel implicates it polemically or forensically. The early phase of the novels of the Second Line mocks the alien word – stylized and “literarized” discourse of the novels of the First Line – whereby cleansing it from the lie of pathos. In its second phase, founded in self-conscious polyglossia, the novels of the Second Line display internal dialogues in the alien word that resists author’s parodic ridicule. Alien discourse with alien intentions reflects and refracts author’s intentions (the two discourses in the language-image dialogically meet in the object and in the anticipated answer). The theme of the novel is orchestrated with words closer to the intentional centre of the work, unmediated author’s word, and those far away, completely reified, where words wind up being mere things that don’t represent anything. In between there’s a vast array of discourses that more or less distort direct author’s voice. However, the fact that the author orchestrates his intended theme doesn’t render the final meaning of the novel-utterance ambiguous and out of the author’s reach. A hierarchy between voices can still exist. The final dialogized stage of the discourse in the novel is polyphony. See chapter *The Two Stylistic Lines of Development in the European Novel* (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 366-422) and Bakhtin’s *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1963).

aspect of style has to be integrated in the research of socio-ideological meaning of different languages of the era and their hierarchies. Actually the linguistic (dialectological) features of style are not crucial – not even their connection to empirical social voices, if word is a mere voiceless thing –, they come into play as a sign for an ideological standpoint – “the novelist [...] attempts merely to achieve an *artistic consistency*⁸ among the *images*⁹ of these languages”. (366)

Bakhtin’s ideal is to reach the alien voice in its free and active form, i.e. to reduce the degree of reification of someone else’s discourse as much as possible while representing or using it (this is described also with the expression “shadow of objectification”). However the dilemma comes to the fore, how to distinguish it from direct discourse, if the heteroglossia is ubiquitous. Here the ambiguities of the notion of polyphonic novel and Bakhtin’s theories in general appear that have to be for the time being set aside in order to fruitfully employ the methodological apparatus, which gives access to language-images – partially liberated from the author’s voice – in confrontation. Bakhtin stresses “the distinctiveness of novelistic dialogues, which push to the limit the mutual nonunderstanding represented by people *who speak in different languages*”. (356, 405) The text will focus on two aspects: the ideology as refracted in multiple subjects, ideologues, and the human as his or her existence refracts in multiple languages.

The text will move away from traditional interpretations of *Hard Times* with the image of the heroine Sissy¹⁰ that doesn’t unavoidably represent the ideal struggling against the utilitarian evil. Both sides actually consist of “internally persuasive discourse” that Dickens “experimentally objectifies”. (348) A symptom pointing in this direction is the notable dilemma of interpretations of Dickens’ works that suggest that he hesitates between opposite solutions. E.g. Humphry House detected the ambivalence in the novel – on the one hand the author seemingly pleads for political economy, but elsewhere indulges in almost naïve philanthropy.

⁸ Emphasis A. V.

⁹ Emphasis M. B.

¹⁰ An analysis like this one would reinterpret Stephen Blackpool in a similar way.

Images of heroes – Sissy Jupe and James Harthouse

That Harthouse should agree so quickly to give up his pursuit of Louisa, his parliamentary activities, and his residence in Coketown, all on the strength of the conviction of a young stranger, might be called typically Dickensian. (Guiliano 1030)

It is not unusual to encounter a note of this sort while reading articles on Dickens. “Typically Dickensian” refers to weak motivation of the represented scene, melodramatic schematization that fails to persuade the reader. However, the scene in the chapter *Very Ridiculous* (B.3/Ch.2)¹¹ where Sissy decides all by herself to chase away the aristocrat Harthouse, upon which he immediately subordinates, can also be construed in a less critical light. Nevertheless, the situation is unusual: a revered aristocrat that the circles of *petit bourgeois* bow to allows a little girl from the lowest social class to banish him from town, what is more, he does that on account of “the strength of [her] conviction”. Traditional interpretations explain this as triumph of good over evil Sissy being the ideal hero and Harthouse the villain. The victory is therefore forced monologically from the outside of the novelistic world, i.e. from the axiological point of view of the author. The text will take a closer look at this scene with the emphasis on conceptual horizons of both key characters.

A crucial issue is the image of Sissy, as it unfolds in the ideological sphere.

[...] after eight weeks of induction into the elements of Political Economy, she had only yesterday been set right by a prattler three feet high, for returning to the question, 'What is the first principle of this science?' the absurd answer, 'To do unto others as I would that they should do unto me.' (B.1/Ch.9)

“The absurd answer” is a citation from the Church of England catechism.¹² Sissy is unable to grasp political economy thought at the Gradgrind school. On the other hand she takes interest in certain information that come close to sentimental and fairytale-based horizon of her circle of society, the circus people. She actively relates to stories that call for pity and compassion. Therefore she is not unintelligent, as it becomes clear from her taking underground control of the Gradgrind household and from her stubborn stance of catechism teachings against those of political economy. It would seem that there couldn't be any reason for her not understanding political economy, if she understood catechism, or maybe there could? The answer to this dilemma lies in the unbridgeable gap between different discourses of heteroglossia of contemporary England.

¹¹ Charles Dickens: *Hard Times*, Book the Third, Chapter 2. This notation will be used throughout the text.

¹² 'My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me.' (Guiliano 926)

The anarchic world of Sleary's circus (note that they do not hesitate to help the bank robber Tom) encompasses the image of Sissy, but it doesn't determine it totally. The circus director Sleary's sober understanding of Sissy's father, leaving the issue of father leaving his daughter heroically or maliciously open to debate, is in sharp contrast to Sissy's unshakable faith in her father. Anarchic sentimentality of the circus people is only secondary in Sissy's world. The foundation for her belief in love and good is her devotion to her father about whom she claims he is without any flaw. Although she possesses a vivid image of her father's unusual cruelty, this doesn't prevent her from firmly believing in his impeccable nature. (B.1/Ch.9) It is safe to say that this image is found only inside her ideological horizon. In the core of an allegedly ideal heroine dwells a sombre image of the father, which is the motive that Sleary mentioned regarding the logic of love. It is not mathematical calculation but a dark impulse of troublesome experiences. (B.3/Ch.8)

The second aspect of Sissy's image is that the narrator being highly heterogeneous sometimes uses her language. In the conclusion of the novel he says that she has "grown learned in childish lore". (B.3/Ch.9) However the instances of her mistakes do not make us believe that she might understand the situations even in general, quite the opposite, not only that she doesn't understand science, she is ignorant also in questions of human relationships. (B.1/Ch.9) Her ideological initiative in conversation with Gradgrind to teach "less" – which is also endorsed by the narrator – is problematic. It is noteworthy to mention that the scholars claim that the answers given to the problems opened up by Dickens' novels are superficial and as if they would lack the in-depth perspective – we could add, like Sissy.¹³

The second image relevant to our analysis is that of Harthouse. He belongs to the circle of aristocrats. He constantly repeats that he is without any morals and doesn't believe in anything. His stance isn't his invention, of course. Dishonesty and independence are a mere sign of belonging to a particular ideology. "In a word, he was so horribly bored by existing circumstances, that he forgot to go in for boredom in the manner prescribed by the authorities." (B.3/Ch.2) There's another thing he takes interest in, the women, after all he is a seducer. His image is determined by inseparable connection between seduction and repetition of mottos (the latter is central to most of the characters in *Hard Times*).

¹³ W. J. Harvey in the paper *Bleak House* stresses that the image of Esther Summerson appears "flat" because she is the narrator, not because of author's irony. Dyson in *The Old Curiosity Shop: Innocence and Grotesque* claims similarly for Nell from *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Oliver Twist that they are not "dull" because they are passive. We bring attention to the fact that these dilemmas were noticed. (Both papers can be found in the Dyson's collection.)

To return to the scene where Sissy persuades Harthouse to leave Coketown and all his unfinished business that have thrown him completely off balance. The Bakhtinian method offers the interpretation that this is a dialogic confrontation of two belief systems shaped by languages. Sissy's world of moral values – with which the author and the narrator sympathize, although not taking it as an *a priori*, but through its embeddedness in a particular social context – on the one side and on the other Harthouse's insight that values are essentially a lie, which hides much more individualistic intentions. Their scene begins like this. (B.3/Ch.2)

[...] Mr. Harthouse hurried into the gallery. A young woman whom he had never seen stood there. Plainly dressed, very quiet, very pretty. As he conducted her into the room and placed a chair for her, he observed, by the light of the candles, that she was even prettier than he had at first believed. Her face was innocent and youthful, and its expression remarkably pleasant. She was not afraid of him, or in any way disconcerted; she seemed to have her mind entirely preoccupied with the occasion of her visit, and to have substituted that consideration for herself.

Harthouse fancies Sissy in accordance with his erotic focus, but the quote also emphasizes her overwhelming preoccupation with the task at hand. Next she appeals to his sense of honour, and he lightly assures her that she can trust him.

The child-like ingenuousness with which his visitor spoke, her modest fearlessness, her truthfulness which put all artifice aside, her entire forgetfulness of herself in her earnest quiet holding to the object with which she had come; all this, together with her reliance on his easily given promise - which in itself shamed him - presented something in which he was so inexperienced, and against which he knew any of his usual weapons would fall so powerless; that not a word could he rally to his relief.

The narrator is fascinated with how Sissy is totally possessed by her project and is also correct in pointing to the fact that she blocks all argument, particularly Harthouse's eloquent phrases, which are directed towards a different audience. Sissy's statement that Louisa doesn't know about the meeting follows this.

'I have no charge from her.'
[Also Sissy:]
'It is still true. There is no hope.'
James Harthouse looked at her with an incredulous smile upon his lips; but her mind looked over and beyond him, and the smile was quite thrown away.

We stress that Sissy is enraptured, which doesn't escape Harthouse's attention.

'I have only the commission of my love for her, and her love for me. I have no other trust, than that I have

been with her since she came home, and that she has given me her confidence. I have no further trust, than that I know something of her character and her marriage. O Mr. Harthouse, I think you had that trust too!

Two things are clear. Sissy has driven Harthouse away without Louisa's knowledge, and she did it according to her logic and judgement, which after close examination appears to be the opposite to Louisa's. Second, Harthouse could have realized his own meanness, or maybe not, however the blank spots in his worldview became obvious. His only way out, as an ideologue is to endlessly repeat his slogans: how he is immoral, how he doesn't pretend to be a moral person, how he didn't have any evil intentions and that everything happened with diabolic smoothness. (It is noteworthy that narrator's comparison of Harthouse with the devil is a (parodic) stylization of hero's own words.) However the objectness of his principles doesn't also mean that he can emerge outside their boundaries. Not one person in *Hard Times* breaks out of his or her ideology.

[Sissy:] Therefore, though without any other authority than I have given you, and even without the knowledge of any other person than yourself and myself, I ask you to depart from this place to-night, under an obligation never to return to it.'

If she had asserted any influence over him beyond her plain faith in the truth and right of what she said; if she had concealed the least doubt or irresolution, or had harboured for the best purpose any reserve or pretence; if she had shown, or felt, the lightest trace of any sensitiveness to his ridicule or his astonishment, or any remonstrance he might offer; he would have carried it against her at this point. But he could as easily have changed a clear sky by looking at it in surprise, as affect her.

Sissy is confined in her world too; she doesn't see Harthouse's world or even his astonishment. She doesn't understand it and she rejects it. Two universes have collided, both almost impenetrably shut. Both are explicitly built on each hero's intentions. Sissy knows that Harthouse has to disappear. He sees the delicate situation concerning adultery and after realizing that Sissy has built a wall around Louisa it becomes clear to him that any hope for a favourable outcome is utopian. On the other hand there's no reason to think he had any serious intentions with Louisa, because that would oppose his mottos. Also, he erotically meditated on Sissy's beauty. He is left with no alternatives than to leave (on a cruise on the Nile). A bitter aftertaste remains of appearing ridiculous.

What happened? Did Sissy win and the goodness with her? Did Harthouse win? The event can be read in different contexts among which each provides a different interpretation. What adds to complexity of the situation is that it revolves around Louisa's happiness.

Harthouse and Sissy are different regarding their capabilities to comprehend the world around them. Sissy doesn't understand Louisa (B.1/Ch.15; B.3/Ch.1) or her father (B.1/Ch.9) or even anything that

exists outside her conceptual boundaries. Harthouse on the other hand sees through all pretences and lies. It is in his words that we read the authorial position on “Gradgrind Philosophy” of Fact and the awareness about the power and dangers of statistics that is the weapon of choice for immoral people. This important points are set not in the narrator’s discourse but in an image of a character. Harthouse also recognizes, as opposed to Sissy, the importance of Louisa’s love for her brother Tom. During courtship Harthouse knows, what is going on. Whether he completely understood Louisa can’t be said (if she loved him or not), however it is clear that Harthouse’s conceptual horizon is closer to the authorial point of view than Sissy’s. Louisa thinks Harthouse understands her, which is not necessarily true.

Upon a nature long accustomed to self-suppression, thus torn and divided, the Harthouse philosophy came [to Louisa] as a relief and justification. Everything being hollow and worthless, she had missed nothing and sacrificed nothing. (B.2/Ch.7)

He probably didn’t see that his slogans are a terrible relief to a woman that an inhuman upbringing has robbed of all interest in living. A dangerous possibility might emerge that she “crushed [her] better angel into a demon”. (B.2/Ch.12) This could mean she accepted Harthouse’s mottos and their story could unfold into an elopement. Together they could be a devilish pair and a dark end to a love theme. This happens in *David Copperfield*, where Em’ly elopes with the villain Steerforth. However here Louisa merely returns home.

All this is beyond Sissy’s comprehension. The deepest causes hidden also from Harthouse, however the fact remains that his relationship to Louisa is highly complex. Sissy’s unconditional actions are problematic from the axiological point of view. Harthouse’s depart didn’t bring Louisa happiness. It could not be said that Sissy’s mission wasn’t intended in all sincerity to help Louisa or that she could have seen the limits and the consequences of her actions. On the other hand Harthouse’s epistemological superiority is evident, i.e. he is closer to author’s perception of situations. But, Harthouse doesn’t understand Sissy at all. Her words strike him like a bolt of lightning. They don’t exist in his world. What remains open is who’s values are endorsed by the author – he certainly supports Sissy’s goodness, but can’t accept all of her world, because the issues raised by the novel *Hart Times* are not possible within the limits of her understanding.¹⁴ Harthouse synthesizes the events as follows: “He glanced at her [Sissy’s] face, and walked about again. 'Upon my soul, I don't know what

¹⁴ Sissy's mission in the name of love is structurally similar to Rachael’s advice to Stephen Blackpool that he should keep away from trouble. His banal promise – alongside his stubborn nature – is the main reason for his agony and death. The outcome of Sissy’s magnificent intervention is Louisa’s permanent misery.

to say. So immensely absurd!” (B.3/Ch.2)

At the beginning of this analysis the commentary said that the situation confronting Sissy and Harthouse is “typically Dickensian”. It could mean that it is that the “immense absurdity” of the situation, which is at the same time complicated and banal – a symbol of the grotesqueness of life – that endows the text with a special “Dickensian” flair. Within the Bakhtinian horizon the interpretation is confirmed that two voices of the heteroglossia collide that can never merge into a monologue, what is more, they cannot find any points of contact, although they act prominently in the same events.

The heroes confined in their worlds emerge constantly in the analysis of *Hard Times* from the point of view of Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism. The paper has shown the absurdity of an apparently melodramatic situation involving ideal heroes. The meeting Sissy – Harthouse is a clash of two universes and its outcome is unpredictable and beyond comprehension. An important aspect of the novel is the narrator. Bakhtin himself said that Dickens’ novels are typical examples of the comic novel (as it developed in England and Germany in 19th Century), which transplants the heteroglossia into the novel in a nonpersonalistic way. The narrator therefore assumes the masks of different voices and thereby his representing discourse becomes reified too. (Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 301, 361) He changes his positions from ironic reservation to enthusiasm for different voices of heteroglossia. However, it would not be correct to link the voices of narrators with the voices of particular heroes. E.g., the “Gradgrind Philosophy” shatters to pieces as it comes in contact with concrete ideologues.

Hard Times cynically rejects all ideologies. The world cannot be explained because of the conflicts between different social groups with incompatible interests. (B.1/Ch.5) A human cannot be understood. Each is entitled to certain dignity, but the same could not be said for the ideologies themselves. There is dignity only in living creatures as living refractions of ideologies. Each direct word, taken out of its dialogic context, is a lie. Only suffering and death¹⁵ are real. And this analysis can add that also polyglossia is real. Bakhtin’s concept of “Romantic grotesque” as described in the introduction to *Rabelais and his World* (1965) can provide a perspective on a cynical authorial position, which doesn’t cynically argue for a single (wrong) ideology, but is active in unmasking the false conclusiveness of the concepts that govern the human mastery of the world. The Romanticists discovered the openness of Romantic irony and the “interior infinite” of the romantic subject (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 37), Dickens on

¹⁵ (B.2/Ch.9)

the other hand developed his, we could call it, version of “discursive” realism, where the only real (material) reality are social ideologies and voices. He discovered a space for endless freedom for the human and the openness of the unfinished stream of life open into the future in the plurality of discourses as endless regeneration of materiality (of ideology).¹⁶

Perspectives for the narrativization of archives and the archivation of life

What the case of Dickens' *Hart Times* shows us is that the author was deliberately trying to transfer socio-historically concrete voices from extraliterary reality into a novel. In the novel the voices confronted each other whereby opening multiple relevant dilemmas pointing back to our lives outside fiction. However there is a catch involved. Four features define an utterance, the basic unit of Bakhtin's theory:¹⁷ change of speaking subjects, finalization (thematic exhaustiveness, linked to a specific authorial intent; referentially semantic content), expressiveness (the speaker's subjective emotional evaluation of the referentially semantic content of the utterance) and addressivity (the quality of being directed to someone). An utterance is always concrete, embedded in its cultural contexts (science, art, politics ...) and in the current personal situation of the speaker. The generic unit is the speech genre. Bakhtin also distinguishes between primary and secondary speech genres that are complex and composed of the primary ones. Each utterance relates to reality of speech communication only as a whole. This means that a response in a dialogue in a novel enters the ideological reality only as an ingredient of a secondary utterance. The discourse of a hero isn't author's voice but refracts in the wholeness of a secondary genre, i.e. the authorial stance as the compositional principle of the work. Author himself is outside the work, which belongs to him only as a finalized whole. This is therefore the reason for the dilemma, how to identify different voices within a single utterance, the novel. Bakhtin resolves these issues in two ways. The boundaries between primary genres within the secondary ones are not proper boundaries (since there is no change of speaking subjects) – Bahtin talks of “the seam of boundaries in secondary genres”. (Bakhtin, *Speech* 72, 119) Secondly, regarding the

¹⁶ The Romantic grotesque doesn't draw from the folk culture, but from the “carnivalized” literature; Sterne, also Shakespeare, Cervantes and other Renaissance works. The positive pole of the grotesque almost completely disappears. The laughter still liberates but doesn't regenerate. This grotesque assumes a “chamber” character, a subjective one as opposed to the universality of folk culture. Under the mask – being an essential motive – the Romantic grotesque hides not the new youth but only nothingness. “Modernist grotesque” is only a radical version of the Romantic grotesque. The “realist grotesque” draws again from the grotesque realism of folk culture (Stendhal, Balzac, Hugo, Dickens; later Thomas Mann, Brecht etc.). (Bakhtin, *Problems* 163-6; Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 236-41)

¹⁷ *The Problem of Speech Genres*. (Bakhtin, *Speech*)

problem of the polyphonic novel Bakhtin notes that the concept of coexistence of multiple discourses belongs to the author, but it is not part of his voice and his ideology. The self-consciousness of the hero is not a trait of the character as are his objective properties. The self-consciousness opens up the possibilities for the hero as a human, as opposed to the reifying characteristics determining the hero from the outside. The author has created the freedom of the hero and his word in order for him to develop the logic of his ideology. Here we touch the difficult issues of dialogism, which demands the preservation of another's freedom, also in case of an ideologue.

These questions lead away from the focus of this paper.¹⁸ What is suggested is that a tradition exists that considers literature to be a container for a multiplicity of singular voices. The unity of a novel in Dickens' case is therefore not readily apparent. It certainly isn't the unity of an ideology, since the key compositional principle is the preservation of the boundaries between embodied ideologies struggling one against the other. There is one author controlling the novel as a whole, but his relation to reality tends to preserve the living fragments of the world around him. On the other hand this approach presents us with a perspective to tackle the open problems of the new media narrative based on the underlining database and the interfacing algorithms bringing textual elements to the textual surface. In contrast to the novel it is possible for the new media object to consist of multiple utterances – each tied to a singular author. The author of a new media artwork thereby controls relationships between voices that are not his images but actual pieces of foreign reality. The issues raised by the new media theory point to the dilemma, how to bring this dispersed state of an artistic utterance to a new unity. What shows itself in the light of this analysis of *Hard Times* is a pair of mirror images, on one side a dialogised novel and on the other a new media archive composed potentially as a dialogue. As Bakhtin claims, the novel seeks the limits of understanding and so do the different agents in an interactive system – of course, without a similar effort, because the boundaries between utterances are a given. It remains for the new media artists to answer the open question of the new media art work, although Dickens' *Hard Times* can bring to light their projects from the opposite point of view, a point of view usually considered as opposing and not complementing their efforts.

¹⁸ See Vaupotič, *Philosophy*.

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