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Combining linguistic and literary perspectives on Polyphony – a methodological challenge

1. Multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches

Linguistic and literary studies are to a large extent separate research disciplines with different methods and theoretical conceptions. In the Nordic project «Linguistic and literary polyphony», we wish to bring the two perspectives together aiming at mutual enrichment. The general purpose is to investigate in what way and to what extent modern linguistic and literary theory may be combined when taking as the point of departure the notion of *polyphony*, pointing to the presence of several voices or points of view in one and the same text, a notion which is used within both disciplines.

Before going into the details of this project (theoretical and methodological starting point, objectives and preliminary results), I would like to present some general thoughts about multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches, illustrated by some examples. As for the terms, one often uses *multidisciplinary* to characterize approaches where clearly separate disciplines are involved, such as linguistics and sociology, or as in our project, linguistics and literary studies. *Multidimensional* is a term used about approaches where different dimensions or levels from one single or from several related disciplines are involved, such as syntax and semantics within linguistics.

First of all, why is it that multidisciplinary and multidimensional approaches in various contexts are considered to be preferable to more monodimensional ones? The reason is usually that one wants to clarify

a phenomenon, of verbal as well as of non-verbal nature, in a better and more comprehensive manner. A clearly stated aim is also, at least for some researchers, to break down boundaries, considered as 'artificial', between different disciplines. In this context, the notion of *eclectism* has come into use. Eclectism can be understood, in simple terms, as the practice of selecting what seems best or most fruitful from several sets of ideas, beliefs or theories.

However, multidimensional and multidisciplinary research is by nature complex and demanding. Approaches of this kind present various challenges, among which the methodological is one of the most difficult. A researcher who wants to work in a multidisciplinary perspective is in constant danger of being trapped in uncontrolled eclectism. This is a danger which one, as text or discourse researcher, must be particularly aware of. A phenomenon like for example "text in context" is clearly a challenging one. Uncontrolled eclectism means that one takes into consideration different perspectives without evaluating in what way they can work together or interact, to what extent different methodologies can work together, how different terminologies can be unified. These questions are highly relevant to our project, "Linguistic and literary polyphony".

We shall now look at some examples of methodological approaches which at first glance might seem similar but which are quite different from the one we want to try out.

To avoid uncontrolled eclectism but at the same time to enrich the analysis of verbal phenomena by introducing various dimensions, different attempts have been made. The ones I would like to mention here, very briefly, are characterized as *modular* approches.

The first one is the approach carried out by Henning Nølke, presented in his book *Linguistique modulaire : de la forme au sens* (1994). His modular approach takes sentence adverbials as its source of inspiration. It is based on a theoretical model containing a certain number of autonomous subsystems called *modules.* In each module, a well-defined specific problem is treated. Such a module can be seen as a mini-theory consisting of a system of local rules for a limited domain of application. The modules he proposes for the analysis of sentence adverbials are organised in three main components – the syntactic, the logico-semantic and the pragmatic-semantic. Nølke's main purpose is to describe the contribution of linguistic form to meaning and to explain the relations which one can observe between different linguistic forms and the meaning which these forms convey. As for the notion of interpretation, Nølke distinguishes between what he calls

1) a 'minimal interpretation', dealing with the variables at sentence level (within the frame of a 'neutral' context) – this is the level where Nølke places his model, and 2) a 'full interpretation', which is the result of a saturation where extralinguistic factors have been brought into the interpretation process.

This modular approach is a clearly controlled multi-dimensional or multi-level approach. The various dimensions taken into account, i.e. the different modules, are related to each other by means of a system of global rules, or *metarules*. I have myself been very inspired by Nølke's approach. By a modest expansion to the text level, it has proved very fruitful to the analyses of restricted linguistic phenomena like reformulation introduced by 'c'est-à-dire' (= 'i.e.', 'that is (to say)'), (see for example Fløttum 1996), and the French theme markers 'quant à' and 'en ce qui concerne' (= 'as for', 'concerning'), (see Fløttum in press a).

While Nølke's approach is definitely situated within a linguistic frame (at the 'langue'-level), the second one that I want to present here, elaborated by Eddy Roulet (1991 and 1997), is a more comprehensive model, in the sense that it has as its object of study *verbal interaction in general*. This modular approach, first presented in a programmatic article of 1991 and later in different contexts with some minor modifications (see for example Roulet 1997), is obviously of interest to a text or discourse researcher. Roulet argues against the the increased specialization in linguistics and related disciplines and recommends a global perspective; the three main dimensions in his model are linguistic, textual and situational, each with different modules.

An interesting example of how one module can be studied but still be related to a more comprehensive frame, is the study carried out by Corinne Rossari (1994) on the opening part of Diderot's novel *Jacques le Fataliste.* Rossari takes as her starting point the compositional module of Roulet's model, situated within the textual dimension. By a thorough analysis she succeeds in explaining the mechanisms giving the effect of homogeneity as well as of heterogeneity of the literary text in question.

Within the framework of discourse analysis such as the one developed by the Geneva school, Roulet proposes a modular approach of verbal interaction in general, based on the hypothesis that its properties are related to different independent domains, which are, however, in constant interaction with each other. In that sense the models of Nølke and Roulet are comparable to each other, but at the same time, there are substantial

differences between them. One of the most important concerns, of course, the object of investigation. While Nølke's interest is 'la langue' (he studies various phenomena at 'langue'-level, within the frame of the syntactic sentence, without, however, excluding phenomena within or beyond the limits of the sentence), Roulet's interest is verbal interaction in general.

A third modular model is the text type model developed by Jean-Michel Adam (Adam 1992). Adam refers to different perspectives which can direct typological studies, for example the socio-discursive one. Even if admitting that social and genre codifications are at work in all verbal communication, he rules out this perspective since the codifications in question are not strictly linguistically determined (Adam 1992:15-17), they are multidisciplinary. Nevertheless, Adam presents a multidimensional modular model. He defines a text as a configuration ruled by different modules or subsystems in constant interaction: 1) illocutionary aim (coherence), 2) enunciative traces, 3) semantic cohesion (worlds), 4) textual connexity and 5) sequentiality (prototypes of sequence), (Adam 1992:21). Of the five modules or levels presented, the first three correspond to what he calls the pragmatic organisation (or configuration) of text and the last two allow the description of a text as a succession of propositions.

Even if Adam points to the advantage of studying text types in a linguistically based modular approach, it is the level of sequential organisation (level 5) which he considers the most interesting one. He proposes at this level the five well-known types of argumentative, narrative, descriptive, explicative and dialogical text types. In a more recent article, Adam (1997) himself emphasizes the heterogeneousness characterizing various (journalistic) genres and points to the necessity of taking into consideration, in text analyses, all the five levels of textual organisation presented in his book from 1992.

What is of particular interest to our project is that all three models bring in the notion of polyphony, but in quite different ways. As for Adam's approach, the polyphonic perspective is only marginally treated, in the enunciative module (I have commented on this in Fløttum 1998b, 1998c and 1999a). When it comes to Roulet's model (Roulet 1997), both diaphony and polyphony are taken into consideration and are interestingly developed within one of the textual modules also called enunciative. To Nølke, however, the polyphony module, situated within the semantic-pragmatic dimension, is essential. It is developed not only as an interesting dimension in the semantic-pragmatic description of the sentence, but is elaborated

into a proper linguistic theory. Nølke succeeds in demonstrating its great explanatory power.

Even if the three models bring in the notion of polyphony, the aim of this presentation has not been the notion of polyphony itself; the aim has been to point to the fact that our newly started project does not have a clearly modular form. We are not searching for relations between linguistic and literary modules, relations which could be made explicit by means of global rules, or metarules in Nølke's sense. Since the general aims as well as the levels of analysis of linguistic and literary studies are quite different, such an approach would be quite hazardous and methodologically very complicated. Our project is not based on a modular approach; rather, it represents an attempt to bring two different perspectives together aiming at new analyses and theoretical development. However, we would of course not like the bringing together to be uncontrolled! Our common aim is to clarify the notion of polyphony, which in turn might reveal new ways of interpreting literature as well as new concepts fruitful to linguistics. In this sense, we could say, in very simplified terms, that we are working within one single module – the semantic module of polyphony. Polyphony has to do with semantic meaning. We hope that our research will contribute to an enrichment of the polyphonic dimension in all the three models presented above. But to us this is not the primary aim. The primary aim is the mutual enrichment between linguistic and literary studies. In fact, none of the presented models or studies – multidimensional or multidisciplinary, with or without the textual perspective, with or without integrating the study of literary texts, has taken the literary perspective fully in consideration. Their purpose has not been to integrate the epistemological and methodological basis or foundations of literary studies. This is what we want to do in our project on polyphony. Of course, our aim is very ambitious; it presents numerous challenges.

However, preliminary studies undertaken by the project's members have shown that rigorous linguistic text analysis permits more precise interpretations and thus understanding of literary values. At the same time, literary methods seem to contribute to the elaboration of theoretical linguistic tools and thus to a better understanding of linguistic structures and functions and of the importance of the concept of context.

2. The polyphony project - theoretical and methodological starting point

We shall now take a closer look at the theoretical and methodological basis of our project. As already mentioned, our general purpose is to investigate in what way and to what extent modern linguistic and literary theory may be combined when taking the notion of *polyphony* as the starting point. The source of inspiration within literary theory is the work of the Russian poetician and philosopher Mikaïl Bakhtine (see for example Bakhtine 1970), which has been developed linguistically by Oswald Ducrot and further elaborated by Henning Nølke (see below).

In spite of the common starting point and source of inspiration, the notion of *polyphony*, we are aware of the very different conception that researchers within the two disciplines have of the notion in question (see 2.1 and 2.2). We are also aware of the fact that a number of other terms are used in both camps without referring to the same phenomena. These are some of the problems we have to resolve.

2.1. Linguistic polyphony

Inspired by Bakhtine's conception of the presence of several voices in literary discourse, especially in the work of Dostojevskij, Ducrot gives this conception a linguistic reinterpretation in *Le dire et le dit* (Ducrot 1984). This is in fact the only introduction to polyphony that Ducrot has made so far. Nølke is the one who develops Ducrot's ideas for a consistent linguistic theory (see Nølke 1989, 1993, 1994 and Nølke & Olsen in press).

So why study linguistic polyphony? The theory of polyphony is in fact important to give us an escape from an idea that has dominated modern linguistics, in structuralism as well as in generative transformational theory, for a very long time. It concerns the notion of the *uniqueness* of the speaking subject. With a polyphonic conception of meaning, the aim is to demonstrate how utterances can signal the presence of several voices, or points of view in Nølke's terminology, and not only the point of view of the speaking subject (such signals can be conveyed syntactically, lexically, by connectors, modal expressions, etc.). The classic example which has been used to demonstrate this is the syntactic negation, like in *This wall is not white,* where two points of view are presented, one saying that "the wall is white" and another saying that "this is wrong".

For the interpretation of an utterance, one should determine the different points of view which are manifested and at a further stage identify

the discourse individuals (see Nølke1994: «être discursif») that are responsible for or constitute the origin of these points of view. It may be a question of various discourse individuals: the *speaker,* the *receiver* or other entities introduced in the discourse, such as general opinions (see Nølke 1994:148).

It is particularly interesting to study the *relations* between the points of view and the discourse individuals. There are three main types of relations which the sender may establish between himself and each point of view (pv) evoked by him (see Nølke 1994:150):

the *responsibility* relation (where the sender presents himself as responsible for the pv in question and associates with it), the accord or *acceptance* relation (where the sender presents himself as not responsible for the pv in question but accepts to consider it as justified for now) and the *non-responsibility* relation (where the sender presents himself as not responsible for the pv in question and dissociates himself from it).

In a textual perspective it is interesting to notice that as long as there is coherence between the points of view which the sender associates with, he can present other various contradicting points of view without making the text contradictory (see Fløttum 1997 and 1998a).

The object of the linguistic polyphony theory is what is expressed by the utterance as utterance (see Nølke & Olsen in press). The polyphonic structure is to be found at 'langue'-level (sentence level). It is a structure which is discovered by an investigation of the cotext in which it could be integrated. At the same time, the polyphonic structure gives us instructions as for possible interpretations of the utterance. In this sense, as Nølke states, the polyphonic theory is *a semantic, discursive, structuralist and instructional theory*. Thus, the theory concerns first and foremost the constitution of meaning at utterance level, this means that the polyphonic structure only gives certain instructions for possible interpretations of an utterance, not a full meaning.

The polyphony theory has a wide scope, in the sense that it describes and explains a series of linguistic phenomena – elements from different levels in the linguistic description contribute to the polyphonic structure of an utterance. Thus, the result of a polyphonic analysis can be a very complex structure, which can represent a practical problem for the application of the theory to texts. This will of course be one of the great challenges of the project.

Another important point is that linguistic polyphony is hierarchical in the sense that the utterance sender is superior to all points of view presented. He is responsible for the enunciation and for the way of presenting different points of view. This brings us naturally to the characterization of polyphony within literature.

2.2. Literary polyphony

As is well-known, the notion of polyphony has its origin in literary studies where Bakhtine has been one of the central persons, especially because of his studies of Dostojevsky's work (see Bakhtine 1970). It is in this work that Bakhtine states that the author is no more than equal to the other characters or protagonists that are presented. Bakhtine speaks of voices of equal value, independent voices.This is polyphony in a narrow sense. Bakhtine's approach is here more philosophical than textual.

However, Bakhtine also develops a broader notion of polyphony – a phenomenon where several points of view or voices manifest themselves, in one way or another, in a text.This is the conception which has been developed in the linguistic version.

According to Bakhtine, the novel is the genre of polyphony par excellence, a genre which undermines the dominating, monological status of the author's voice.　All novel discourse contains an intertextual aspect; any utterance in a novel refers in one way or another to earlier utterances. However, this does not prevent the author from trying to monopolize the discourse and dominate the other voices.

Now, to what extent can linguistic analysis support literary analysis, and to what extent can literary analysis enrich linguistic analysis?

3. Preliminary results

Until now, the main work of the group has had as its starting point *Madame Bovary,* Gustave Flaubert's novel from 1857, where questions related to polyphony and indirect free style (*style indirect libre)*, a discursive form which Flaubert uses in a creative way, have been studied. This novel may be said to show a remarquably high degree of polyphony. It can be read as a mosaic of genre-determined 'citations' from different forms of discourse: romantic, religious, positivist, political, etc. More specifically, several studies of the connectors *mais* (= 'but') and *donc* (='thus', 'therefore') have been carried out. Further, Flaubert's work is compared to other authors such as Balzac and Zola.

While the boundaries between narrator and character are quite clear in the work of Zola, these are in many cases difficult to determine in Flaubert. It also seems that the presence of the narrator in Flaubert's work is stronger than one traditionnally has thought. The narrator is, so to speak, involved in direct polemic with his characters and anonymous voices of the actual period.

It might also be fruitful to turn the questions we have asked upside down. If we take the linguistic conception of polyphony as the basis, we consider all texts as polyphonic. And this polyphony is hierarchical, one voice or point of view dominates and organizes the other ones. Would it be possible to ask the following question: How do texts become more or less monophonic? How do they come to speak in one voice?

My own interest in the notion of polyphony and its possible application to linguistic and textual phenomena, has developed over the last ten years (see Fløttum 1999b) – from a study of the polyphonic notion applied to the analysis of text summaries (Fløttum 1992), via the study of polyphonic textual coherence (Fløttum 1997) to my latest studies on polyphony in a text typological perspective (Fløttum 1998a, b, c, 1999a and in press b). What I shall bring into the project is, as I see it now, my considerations of polyphony as a central factor in text typologies. In my opinion, the distinction polyphonic/monophonic is well suited to all kinds of text, literary as well as non-literary. Each text can be situated on a polyphonic axis, even if it is difficult to classify it as argumentative, descriptive, or some other type. I see polyphony as a central factor which can enrich the traditional type- and genre-typologies (for further elaborations, see Fløttum 1998c, 1999a and in press b).

Another interesting perspective which will be brought into the project is polyphony as a factor in conversation analysis. Coco Norén will apply and develop some of her findings from her doctoral thesis *Reformulation et conversation. De la sémantique du topos aux fonctions interactionnelles* (Norén 1999) to the conversational parts in literary works. The study of the presence of the sender in such contexts will give the project new and demanding challenges.

Preliminary results of our analyses are published in the Danish book *Detaljen. Tekstanalysen og dens grænser* (Therkelsen & Klitgård (eds) 1999, papers given at Roskilde university) and in the Norwegian periodical *Tribune,* no 9, 1999 (papers given at a seminar at the Department of Romance studies, University of Bergen.). Our latest results, presented at

the Scandinavian Romanist Congress in Stockholm, august 1999, will be published in the Proceedings ('Actes') of the Congress and they are also available at the project's home site http://www.hum.au.dk/romansk/poly-foni/index.htm; finally, an article will be published in the Norwegian periodical *Nordlit,* no 8, 2000 (University of Tromsø).

4. Two examples of combined linguist and literary analyses

In this section I shall give a brief presentation of the results of two concrete analyses. These analyses are both carried out by a linguist in cooperation with a literary researcher. The first one concerns the study of the connector 'donc' in Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary,* by Henning Nølke and Michel Olsen (in press); the second one concerns a study of the short story "En ærkeskjælm" by the Norvegian author Knut Hamsun, carried out by Kjersti Fløttum and Helge Vidar Holm (in press).

4.1. The connector 'donc' in Madame Bovary

Nølke and Olsen's point of departure was that they had found numerous examples, especially in the work of Flaubert, where this connector displayed a surprising behaviour. They wanted to show that a detailed analysis of these examples could throw new light on the function of 'donc' in general, but also on the literary style of Flaubert (and of other authors). They first made a general analysis of the connector 'donc', which allowed them to establish different patterns for the analysis of authentic specific examples. In this analysis the concept of polyphony is of course essential, but other dimensions must also be considered, such as the connector's *scope* (X Con Y), the *arguments* which the connector combines (p, q, between which there is a primitive relation of succession, and where p is the antecedent and q is the postcedent or consequent) and the *logico-semantic instructions* which the connector conveys.

For the particular charcteristics of 'donc', numerous studies have of course already been carried out. However, I shall here only report on some of the factors that Nølke and Olsen have pointed to. In a simple utterance like

Il fait beau (p) DONC *Pierre se promène (q)*

(The weather is nice, therefore Pierre is taking a walk)
the two arguments p and q, which are related by 'donc', are arguments as a result of a certain interpretation. The discourse individuals responsible

for these interpretations are called *interpreters* by Nølke and Olsen. In a default reading the utterance sender is the interpreter of both arguments. As for the logico-semantic instruction, it can be formulated as follows: in the sequence *X donc Y*, the argument conveyed by Y is presented as the consequence of X; and this consequence is found by reasoning. Nølke and Olsen call the discourse individual responsible for this reasoning the *reasoner.* In a default reading, the utterance sender is also the reasoner, and, in polyphonic terms, he associates with 'donc'. Further, Nølke and Olsen use the term *source of inferences* which represents the totality of the propositions which the interpreter can turn to for his reasoning. Thus, in the example above, the source of inferences is composed of his knowledge about Pierre's habits. This allows him to conclude from the observation of the nice weather that Pierre is taking a walk. That it is a matter of reasoning and not a simple causal relation is evident from the fact that the example does not imply that the sender has observed the fact denoted by Y. Finally, Nølke and Olsen use the term *theme of DONC* to designate the semantic element which constitutes the reasoning's starting point – always conveyed by X or by a part of X. What constitutes the theme is particularly important in literary analyses.

This linguistic analysis (presented in a simplified way here) provides a better understanding of the play between author and different characters as well as of the presence of the author himself in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. What is particularly interesting to the literary analysis is that the interpreters, the discourse individuals responsible for the two interpretations connected by 'donc', can be the author as well as the characters of the novel. The same possibility applies to the reasoner. Let us consider one of Nølke and Olsen's examples taken from *Madame Bovary*:

(2)   [$_{X(p)}$ N'était-il pas, lui, l'obstacle à toute félicité, la cause de toute misère, et comme l'ardillon pointu de cette courroie complexe qui la bouclait de tous côtés ? $_{X(p)}$] *Donc*, [$_{Y(q)}$ elle reporta sur lui seul la haine nombreuse qui résultait de ses ennuis, et chaque effort pour l'amoindrir ne servait qu'à l'augmenter ; car cette peine inutile s'ajoutait aux autres motifs de désespoir et contribuait encore plus à l'écartement. $_{Y(q)}$] (II,v:154).
(Wasn't he the obstacle of all happiness, the cause of all misery, and like the sharp metal prong of this complex leather strap which encircled her on all sides? Therefore, she laid on him alone the great hatred which resulted from her grief, and every effort to diminish it only served to amplify it; for this useless pain was added to other motives of despair and contributed still more to the growing distance between them.)

In this example, the interpreter of X is Emma, and the interpreter of Y as well as the reasoner is the utterance sender; the logic is Emma's, accepted by the sender. Nølke and Olsen also propose that this is a combination of narrated monologue (X) and author's discourse (Y); thus, the utterance sender corresponds to the textual author, which probably expresses Flaubert's attitude. Flaubert 'accepts' X, the narrated monologue, but ironically.

Nølke and Olsen conclude that the linguistic analysis is useful to the literary analysis. It has been shown that the confrontation of discourses, of points of view, which is where the polyphony is born, is particularly clear in *Madame Bovary.* Flaubert enters into a polemic, but not on equal terms, with his characters. However, one can say that Flaubert gets close to the definition of 'polyphony' given by Bakhtine, even if he does not accept the characters' total independence of thoughts the way Dostojevsky does in relation to his characters. Nølke and Olsen have shed new light on the important question of the presence of the author in *Madame Bovary*, and there is reason to analyse further the question of 'absence' of the author in this novel.

They can also conclude that the linguistic version of the polyphony theory has gained a lot. First, the subtlety of the literary text has forced the linguist to refine the linguistic analysis considerably through the development of the notions of *interpreter* and *reasoner.* Second, the application of the linguistic version on examples which have been given independent literary semantic interpretations could function as a test of the theory and of the linguistic polyphonic analyses.

4.2. One or two narrators in Hamsun's "En ærkeskjælm"?

The second example, as mentioned above, concerns a study of the short story "En ærkeskjælm" (= "An old rascal") by the Norwegian author Knut Hamsun, carried out by Kjersti Fløttum and Helge Vidar Holm (in press). This is a story about one person meeting another person at a graveyard; this last person ends up as the thief of the first person's watch – we shall call him the watch thief. In their discussion of different subjects, in a rather polemic and antagonistic way, the first person narrator gives the floor to the watch thief, who becomes a second first person. The story is of course polyphonic in the not very precise sense that several voices express themselves one after the other ('successive' polyphony). However, the story also gives the impression of being polyphonic in a more precise linguistic

sense, i.e. by the presence of different voices or points of view in one and the same utterance ('accumulative' polyphony, see Fløttum and Holm in press). Some clear traces of this polyphony are the numerous negations (see Fløttum 1998a) and the extensive use of the connector 'men' (='but'; for a study of the French 'mais', see Jørgensen in press), as in the following example, at the very start of the short story:

> ”Jeg traf denne Mand paa en kirkegaard. Jeg gjorde intet for at komme i Forstaaelse med ham; men han la straks beslag paa mig.”
> (I met this man at a graveyard. I did nothing to make contact with him; but he immediately asked for my attention.)

Thus we have two different narrators in confrontation with each other – the principal narrator (N 1) and the second narrator (N 2). The interesting question in this story, from a literary point of view, is what moral attitude the author's voice incarnates, whether it really deviates from the watch thief's, and if the author's voice can be determined at all. In a more linguistically based approach, it becomes very tempting to ask if N 1 and N 2 (or sender 1 and sender 2) constitute images of the same *individual sender.* In linguistic polyphony one distinguishes between two senders with different discursive qualities (see Nølke 1994). These are

a) *le locuteur-en-tant-que-tel* (sender-as-sender or *utterance sender*), who is a sender by virtue of being responsible for the utterance, but who exists only in the uttering of it;

b) *le locuteur-en-tant-qu'individu* (sender-as-individual or *individual sender*), who, in addition to being an utterance sender also has an existence independent of the utterance, hence also other qualities than to be responsible for the utterance in question. A simple example like the following can illustrate this phenomenon:

(4) I ask myself if ...

Intuitively one can accept that the two pronouns *I* and *myself* do not concern the same speaker. While *I* "refers" to the utterance sender, *myself* "refers" to the individual sender.

One of the important functions of the individual sender is to assure textual coherence. If one imagines that every utterance in a text has its own utterance sender, one can think of the individual sender as an entity which the different utterance senders are pictures of. In this way textual coherence is created and developed. So, how could one justify such a conclusion (that N 1 and N 2, or sender 1 and sender 2, constitute images of the same *individual sender),* at the same time as it is important to point to the polemic

we get when two confronting points of view meet? Without getting into a detailed analysis here (see Fløttum and Holm in press), I shall only refer to our conclusion proposing that, in fact, sender 1, who started out by dissociating himself clearly from the points of view of sender 2, ends up with not only accepting but identifying with the points of view of sender 2 (he explicitly uses sender 2's own words).

By this little analysis, the division beween *utterance sender* and *individual sender* (first presented in Ducrot 1984 and then developed in Nølke 1989) has been tested and justified. This linguistic tool was proved to be fruitful in the analysis of literary examples. On the other hand, the literary analysis was clearly strengthened by integrating this linguistic tool.

5. Final remarks

Instead of going into a discussion of the value of this kind of interdisciplinary research – time will show how far we can get – I just want to point to some possible ways that our research can take:
an elaboration of the linguistic concepts (especially the testing of the instructions given by linguistic signals related to the context), a general elucidation of some literary concepts, a general text typologisation and more specifically typologisation of literary texts, a study of the possible relevance to reception studies.

At the heart of the project is of course also the general problem of relating the sentence and the text levels: To what extent does the linguistic polyphonic analysis allow the passage from sentence to text perspective? This is of course a crucial point for further work (for this problem, see Fløttum 1999a).

However, to sum up, I would like to postulate that the polyphony theory, in its linguistic and utterance-related version, contributes considerably to the description and interpretation of texts. It produces a linguistic basis for interpretation. By unveiling numerous points of view, it indicates different potential readings. However, as long as the analysis is linguistically based, the interpretation may be controlled and the formal foundation of the analysis makes it testable.

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