
The Seventh Function of Language A Novel: The Linguistic Turn in Fiction

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Abstract

This study aims to discuss *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel (2017)* by Laurent Binet as a novel in which the semiology, the science of signs, is introduced into the fiction, in addition to the linguistic issues. Taking its source of inspiration from *The Name of the Rose* by Italian semiologist and novelist Umberto Eco, the story of a manuscript for which people are killed, semiology is emplaced into the narrative form. Again, reinterpreting and reproducing this trope of the search for a lost manuscript and installing it at the heart of the 80's intellectual arena, the novel has a conspiratorial tendency throughout its plot: the story begins with the (real-life) death of Roland Barthes in 1980. "The greatest critic", a world star of semiology, died after being hit by a laundry van after leaving lunch with François Mitterrand, who was running for the presidency at the time. Passing through reality to build the fiction, the novel parodies conspiratorial tendencies and traces the question: What if the famous semiologist was killed because he would have discovered, like a mad scientist, a seventh function of language in addition to the first six, previously highlighted by the linguist Roman Jakobson: the absolute power to persuade. It is simply the enunciatory power of shaping history. In search for this magical power of control over the addressee, the novel takes us back to the last great era of French intellectuals such as Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva by adding novelistic features to these figures. This was the time of "linguistic turn" when the conviction that philosophical questions were necessarily entangled with the limits of language dominated the humanities. With a line-up of characters plucked from the heavyweights of 20th-century French linguistic and critical theory, and a postmodern mashup of texts, facts, and falsities, Binet introduces the semiology into the narrative form. The present study explores to what extent fiction can encompass theoretical knowledge and construct its building blocks.

Keywords: Fiction, Semiology, French theory, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco

1. Introduction

This study aims to discuss *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* (2017) as a piece of fiction, in terms of some tenets of semiology and linguistics. Taking its source of inspiration from *The Name of the Rose* (Eco, 2008) by Italian semiologist and novelist Umberto Eco, the story of a manuscript for which people are killed, semiology is emplaced into the narrative form. Again, reinterpreting and reproducing this trope of the search for a lost manuscript and installing it at the heart of the 80's intellectual arena, the novel has a conspiratorial tendency throughout its plot: The story begins with the (real-life) death¹ of Roland Barthes in 1980. “The greatest critic”, the world star of semiology died after being hit by a laundry van after leaving lunch with François Mitterrand, who was running for the presidency at the time. Passing through reality to build the fiction, the novel parodies conspiratorial tendencies and traces the question “What if it wasn't an accident at all?” (Binet, 2017) What if the famous semiologist was killed because he would have discovered, like a mad scientist, a seventh function of language in addition to the first six, previously highlighted by the linguist Roman Jakobson: the absolute power to persuade.

A seventh function of language which allows the person who possesses it to convince anyone of anything in any situation. It opens up virtually infinite possibilities of becoming the master of the world. It is simply the enunciatory power of shaping history. In search for this magical power of control over addressee, the novel takes us back to the last great era of French intellectuals such as Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva, by adding *novelistic* features to these figures. This was the time of “an assertion of the primacy of language over experience and feeling” (Porter, 2021, p. 2) dominated the humanities. With a line-up of characters plucked from the heavyweights of 20th-century French linguistic and critical theory, and a postmodern mashup of texts, facts, and falsities, Binet introduces semiology into the narrative form. The present study will explore to what extent fiction can encompass theoretical knowledge and construct its building blocks.

In the present study, first of all, *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* will be introduced, general information about the work will be provided, and the plot and the style of the work will be emphasized and revealed. Two names stand out among the intellectual characters in *The Seventh Function of Language A Novel*: Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. Roland Barthes is a character who devoted his whole life to “the novel” that he could never

¹ Roland Barthes, writer and professor at the Collège de France, died on March 26 1980 at the Parisian hospital of Pitié-Salpêtrière, following a traffic accident. On February 25, he was hit by a car while crossing Rue des Écoles in a congested area and suffered head injuries. He was sixty-four years old.

write and turns into a short-lived novel hero –it is also significant that the title of the lecture Barthes gave at the Collège de France before his death was “The Preparation of the Novel”. It can be said that what Binet was trying to do was to reconcile Roland Barthes’s issue with the “novel”. Barthes becomes a character in the novel, who becomes a motive force through his death since the fiction narration begins with a story passing through a real event. This feature of the text will be interpreted under the heading “Who Killed Roland Barthes?”

As for the case of Umberto Eco, the novel is clearly a tribute to Umberto Eco and his masterpiece *The Name of the Rose*. The relationship of the work with *The Name of the Rose* is of great importance as an operative means throughout the fictionalization process. Furthermore, an Italian semiologist and novelist is the central character of the book. Laurent Binet imagines a secret society where terrible oratory duels are played out: Umberto Eco appears in the novel as “the great Protagoras”, the supreme leader of the Logos Club. We can see another intertextual relationship with *Fight Club* (Palahniuk, 1997) by Chuck Palahniuk. Binet manages, like Umberto Eco, to mix novel and scholarship. As Binet often states that *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* was written inspired by Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*. It was the story of a manuscript that everyone's looking for, and which they kill for. Binet, in this novel, “tried to apply semiology in the novel”, by his own words (libraire, 2023). Hence by emphasizing the semiological aspects of Umberto Eco’s project, the work’s relationship with another novel of semiological practice *The Name of the Rose* will be described and interpreted. Laurent Binet wanted to honor a form of debt with the pitch of his book and in a certain way relate to *The Name of the Rose*. Binet embedded semiological practice into the novel, in a semi-fictional space. But by what means and by what model did he do this? Therefore, it becomes a necessity to reveal the relationship between these two works. In order to establish that relationship, the similar features they have and those that overlap will be examined under the heading “Umberto Eco: The Great Protagoras”.

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel takes us back to the last great era of French intellectuals, such as Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva. At the period when philosophical questions were inevitably handled with the limits of language. Linguistic turn has been recognized by many disciplines of humanities. What exactly is the linguistic turn?

This is the supposed movement when various intellectual disciplines in the twentieth century, particularly in the areas of the humanities, came to recognize the role that language plays in one’s relationship to the world—that is, the fact that language plays a determining role in how a discipline conceives of itself and its relation to the world that it encounters. Many disciplines claim to have experienced this linguistic turn, including philosophy, history, literary theory and criticism, textual studies (i.e. textual criticism apart from biblical studies), a variety of social sciences, and no doubt others. (Porter, 2021, p. 1)

Philosophers, especially French post-structuralists, reflected their interest in highlighting the pivotal role language plays in theory. According to the fact that these figures from post-structuralist thought come together in this novel in search of the most influential enunciatory power and that the temporality of the narrative is the time marked by linguistic turn, an interpretation within the framework of the concept of “linguistic turn” becomes possible. This will be discussed under the heading of “Linguistic Turn in Fiction: In Search for the Most Influential Enunciatory Power”.

French post-structuralist thought is associated with the “linguistic turn” in philosophy. Also called “french theory”, the tendency focuses on linguistic issues, and has striking comments on language and meaning. In this detective novel, the hopeless police detective Jacques Bayard takes the reader on a journey through the horizons of “french theory” in search of the lost manuscript in which this very important seventh function of language is indicated. Many twists and turns take place in Paris, Bologna, Cornell University in the USA, Venice, Naples...

Interdisciplinary studies show that narrative is not only a literary form but also a way of organizing human experience and knowledge. Hence fiction never takes place in isolated conditions but always reacts to social and intellectual developments, changes and transformations in a versatile way. The present study aims to review *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* as a novel in which linguistic issues are introduced into the narrative form as well as semiology, the science of signs. The next section will try to demonstrate to what extent fiction can encompass “theory” and construct its building blocks on it.

2. The Novel of Semiology

La Septième Fonction du Langage (Binet, 2015) is a novel by Laurent Binet published on August 18, 2015, by Grasset in France. The book received the Prix du Roman Fnac and the Prix Interallié the same year. The book was translated into English by Sam Taylor and published by Farrar Straus & Giroux on 1 August 2017 in New York –the study is based on this version.

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel (Binet, 2017) takes the form of a sort of detective story, beginning on February 25, 1980, with a traffic accident involving Roland Barthes outside the Collège de France, just after having lunch with François Mitterrand, which turns out to be an assassination attempt, and continuing until the summer of 1981, after Mitterrand's first presidential election victory in May 1981. The incredible investigation is led by a policeman, Commissaire Jacques Bayard, assisted by Simon Herzog, a young doctoral student who introduces young students to semiology. The unlikely duo's research leads them to meet all the intellectuals of the Parisian and international linguistic and literary microcosm, often in comical, even ridiculous, situations.

2.1. About the Plot

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel is the story of a fantastic adventure novel, passing through reality into fiction, builds its plot on a pursuit of a manuscript which indicates the absolute power to persuade. Laurent Binet chooses to be much more playful with the course of history and changing things. The starting point for this novel is the (real-life) death of Roland Barthes, hit by a laundry van on February 25, 1980. In the world of the novel, the assumption is that it was an assassination. He was murdered because he would have discovered a seventh function of language, which is the power to convince anyone of anything in any situation.

Paris, Rue des Ecoles 1980. The literary critic Roland Barthes dies –struck by a laundry van– after lunch with the presidential candidate François Mitterrand. The world of letters mourns a tragic accident. But what if it was not an accident at all? What if Barthes was ... murdered? (Binet, 2017)

Depending on all the developments on the theory of possible worlds etc., *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* parodies a conspiracy theory: The death of the famous semiologist was not an accident. He was killed because he would have discovered, like a mad scientist, a seventh function of language in addition to the first six previously highlighted by the linguist Roman Jakobson: the absolute power to convince anyone of anything in any situation. In the intellectual and political circles of the time, everyone was under suspicion... He constructs the plot of the novel in a semi-fictional space. Who might have killed Barthes to possess this formidable secret? Mitterrand? Giscard? The CIA? The KGB? What role do the intellectuals of the era play, including Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze? As for elements of suspense that feed the fiction there are some real facts which are that the world star of semiology died hit by a laundry van after leaving a lunch with François Mitterrand, who was running for the presidency at the time, and that the keys and documents on him were missing. Binet argues that “François Mitterrand was always involved in strange things like that” (Books, 2023). Then comes the conspiracy theory.

Roland Barthes has neither his papers nor his keys on him, just after the accident. What could he have had on him that was so precious? It is supposedly the unpublished manuscript by Roman Jakobson, who theorized in his *Essais de Linguistique Générale* the functions of language, Barthes had this secret manuscript on him which is the seventh function of language, which allows the person who possesses it to convince anyone of anything in any situation. Laurent Binet explains:

Basically language has always been the most powerful weapon of the world, and I think truth and lies are very very powerful weapons both. So I mean the winner is always the one who uses the language the best. Whatever you choose between lies or truth you win if you use the language the best. (Books, 2023)

This function of language, how can one describe it? It is the performative function, when saying is doing. One says something and it becomes reality. It can happen with anything and anyone. It is the ultimate level of persuasion. So virtually it opens up infinite possibilities of eventually being the master of the world. Possessing the seventh function of language means being the absolute master of the language, the absolute master of the rhetoric and the absolute master of the world. The left wants it, the right wants it, and the intellectuals? The intellectuals of the time are holding out for this position. That means those close to Barthes (Foucault, Deleuze and then all that was called French Theory. This group of French philosophers - Derrida, Lacan, Althusser, etc. - were the first to take over this function (libraire, 2023). Indeed, stolen from Barthes and soon untraceable, this seventh function of language becomes from that moment the object of the most ardent desires which requires the investigation of a police officer, teaming up semiologist responsible for decoding all the signs and transforming the darkest trace into a luminous clue to the crime. *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* then launches into a mad race to recover this linguistic secret which will lead its characters from Paris to Venice via Bologna to end in Naples.

It is obvious that the power of this book takes us back to the last and great era of French intellectuals since these are characters who have an important burlesque potential that Laurent Binet exploited. In any case, it would have been very difficult to obscure them at the time when the death of Barthes they were part of Barthes' very close entourage. They themselves contribute a lot to the development of their own mythology in certain ways.

I have great admiration for Barthes, who contributed to my intellectual formation, which was a major one in any case. I discovered French Theory with great interest. Deleuze, Derrida, the people of French theory fascinated me. It just so happened that, as I went beyond their works and became attached to their characters, I realized that they were also picturesque, romantic characters, sometimes very truculent, like Michel Foucault, of whom I'm a great admirer. But at the same time, he's a character. Michel Foucault had a novelistic potential that I found interesting, and I also find that at that time, there in Barthes' very close entourage, such as Sollers and Kristeva. I find that Sollers in particular, he had a very strong burlesque potential. So satire was not my original intention. It was a detective story based on the death of Barthes. He was a semiologist. In other words, it was concerned with the science of signs. This science, semiology, was in fact quite simply the science of Sherlock Holmes. So the idea was to make the human science of semiology. This is the dramatic motor of my book. So, in the beginning, the intention was to write a detective story, and then satire took on great importance in the reconstruction of the 80s, which fascinated me: music, advertising, cars, and so on... (libraire, 2023)

The 80's era is reconstructed in a text, the characters, settings, atmosphere, density, music, rhythm, colors, etc., appear on the whiteness of the page. Imagination works further hand in hand with reality. Elements that provide narrative continuity are fragments. There is a fictional world in literary works, but this construction or unreality always gains meaning through the real life that surrounds it both physically and mentally. Here, the mental issue is the enunciatory power in a mode of interaction that has the potential to shape history. We

always interpret the relationships, information, and other tasks in this fictional world in the light of our real-life experiences. Just as this text carries a fictional world with its linguistic issues and organization, it also contains elements from the social and cultural structure surrounding it, past literary periods, and communication opportunities other than itself.

2.2. About the Style: The Art of Centon

Seventh Function of Language is a fantastic adventure novel in the form of a detective story. Hopeless police detective Jacques Bayard teams up with a young college professor to lead the investigation. He finds himself in search of a lost manuscript by the linguist Roman Jakobson, that indicates the mysterious seventh function of language. This function is likely to be associated with the absolute power to convince anyone of anything in any situation, a magical power of control over a listener. This case will plunge a right-wing police detective into literary theory. Everyone is under suspicion. Laurent Binet explains the process of production in an interview:

Once I realized that, I told myself the suspect's field would be in the political environment and in the intellectual environment. This again required a lot of documentation work for me to reconstruct what happened in 1980, both Barthes and his friends from French theory. I was very familiar with Barthes' thinking but not so much with his friends. French theory in the corpus. For 5 years I immersed myself in this entire corpus of Derrida and Deleuze (libraire, 2023)

Last but not least, *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* includes quotations from those thinkers of French Theory: the real characters in fiction are picturesque, romantic characters, sometimes very truculent. The whole thing is a selection of the best quotations that would fit the context: It is the pragmatic choice of what is useful for fiction. This is also for the sake of fidelity to these thinkers so that they continue to own their own words. Binet uses quotation marks. He has chosen to go systematically to the line and to mark every utterance of a character with a dash.

I had to be very very careful because I made very important, very intelligent people speaking, you know — like I used Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida as characters; Umberto Eco. So if I wanted to be — to be right I had to be very careful with the way — was making them speaking. And so the best way I found was to use their own words, you know, so a big part of my work was to read them a lot and to choose inside their own work and their own words sentences or excerpts which could fit with my plot, you know. So it was a kind of funny game of puzzling everything, like collecting quotes and using, moving them to my situation, to the situation of my plot. So it was big big work but it was fun. (Books, 2023)

The art of the centon (patchwork) in Greek is that of composing a text by juxtaposing quotations. Thus, the author of a centon speaks not with his own phrases, but with those of others. His silent presence is that of a listener. By its very nature, the centon process allows us to concretely realize “the elocutionary disappearance of the author”, which could be interpreted

as a great analogy with Barthes's 1967 essay "The Death of the Author"² (Barthes, 1967) undermining the authorial power.

3. Who Killed Roland Barthes?

The story begins with the (real-life) death of Roland Barthes in 1980. "The greatest critic", world star of semiology, who died hit by a laundry van after leaving a lunch with François Mitterrand, who was running for the presidency at the time. Passing through reality to build the fiction, *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* parodies the conspiratorial tendencies and traces the question "What if it wasn't an accident at all?" (Binet, 2017) What if the famous semiologist was killed because he would have discovered, like a mad scientist, a seventh function of language in addition to the first six, previously highlighted by the linguist Roman Jakobson: the absolute power to convince anyone of anything in any situation.

Roland Barthes who devoted his whole life to "the novel" that he could never write, turns into a short-lived novel hero –it is also significant that the title of the lecture Barthes gave at the Collège de France before his death was "The Preparation of the Novel" (Binet, 2017).

Life is not a novel. Or at least you would like to believe so. Roland Barthes walks up Rue de Bière, The greatest literary critic of twentieth century has every reason to feel anxious and upset. His mother, with whom he had a highly Proustian relationship is dead. And of course The Preparation of Novel at the Collège de France. Is such a conspicuous failure. It can no longer be ignored. All year, he has talked to his students about Japanese haikus, photography, the signifier and the signified, Pascalian diversions, café waiters, dressing gowns and lecture hall seating –about everything but the novel. And this has been going on for 3 years. He knows, without a doubt, that the course is simply a delaying tactic designed to push back the moment when he must start truly literary work, one worthy of the hypersensitive writer lying dormant within him and who in everyone's opinion, began to bud in his *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, which has become a Bible for under 25's. From St Beuve to Proust, it's time to step up and take the place that awaits him in the literary Pantheon. Maman is dead: He has come full writing Degree Zero. The time has come. (Binet, 2017)

It can be said that what Binet was trying to do was to reconcile Roland Barthes's issue with the "novel". Barthes turns into a character in the novel who becomes a motive force by his death since the narration of fiction begins with a story passing through a real fact.

In the 1950s, structuralism also meant the application of language to society and social rules. Levi-Strauss analyzes kinship relations in the field of anthropology. The semiology, the science of signs deals not only with language and literary texts, but also with every phenomenon, every object that we can read as a text. In fact, everything is a text, our way of understanding the world is how to approach signs, how to comprehend them and how to make sense of them. There are two periods of Roland Barthes: Barthes, who first adopted

² The proposition was that it is not possible to definitively understand the ultimate meaning of a text by practice of relying on the biography and intentions of the author.

structuralist thought, traced the structures in the texts. According to Barthes, culture, architecture, fashion, these are all texts. Barthes then moves from the overly scientific state of semiology to post-structuralism.

Post-structuralism is a line that progresses by destroying structuralism. The post suffix should be considered simultaneously with the preoccupation with breaking down binary oppositions. As a result of this, irregularity, discontinuity and fragmented structures emerge: One must see how it has set him up by deciphering the codes in this structure. Linguistic turn begins with an objection to structuralist understanding and perception and develops with the desire to turn the concept of meaning into a cultural and social expansion. All philosophical problems are now considered in the context of language. The limits of language are the limits of the world.

Roland Barthes's text analysis is applied as if fashion, architecture, etc. were a language. Everything is handled as text. He wanted to show how meaning is established with signs. Barthes attempts to unravel the linguistic structures above culture (Barthes, 1975). He examines contemporary myths and reveals the codes that language establishes. According to Barthes, language is a fascist expression, it imprisons us in a thought structure. He wanted to decipher the codes in this structure and see how it sets us up. It is not possible to get out of the system, structures can reveal and activate the system (Barthes, 2021, p. 42-64)

We are in a language understanding that is structured in such a way that we are trying to dictate a certain meaning. It prevents us from thinking about anything else. How to get out of that prison? It has such a structure that it tries to dictate a certain meaning both to speakers and listeners. The conceptual framework corresponds with *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel's* issue which is the story of a pursuit of the language use which serves as the means of control over simply the other. However, it is impossible to see the understanding in question only at this level. In this respect, semiology is no longer a completely technical concept. However, it begins to become an embodiment in the novel.

4. Umberto Eco: The Great Protagoras

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel is clearly a tribute to Umberto Eco and his masterpiece *The Name of the Rose* (Eco, 2008). Furthermore, an Italian semiologist and novelist is the central character of the book. Laurent Binet imagines a secret society where terrible oratory duels are played out. Umberto Eco appears in the novel as the great Protagoras, the supreme leader of the Logos Club. Laurent Binet, like Umberto Eco, manages to mix novel and scholarship.

Laurent Binet wanted to honor a form of debt with the pitch of his book and in a certain way relate to *The Name of the Rose*, which was the story of a manuscript that everyone's looking for, and which they kill for. Binet, he tried to apply semiology into the novel:

I wanted to honor a kind of debt with the pitch of my book and in a way have something to do with *The Name of the Rose*. It was the story of a manuscript that everyone's looking for, and which they kill for. In this case, I tried to apply semiology to the novel. The idea was that semiology is the science of Sherlock Holmes, and then the performative, that kind of language that creates the act in its very utterance, intersects with problems that interest me about the power of language and then reality and fiction. (libraire, 2023)

Umberto Eco had a semiological project, it is being followed by the French author from this point of view: In *The Name of Rose* there are several keys which the semiologist has introduced into the novel, into the story. Just to keep Eco alive again, Laurent Binet tries to give meaning to things, to make sense of the world, for that he undoubtedly had a weapon, which is the power language exerts. He understands that while doing this work, he thought that the ideal place to do semiology was detective novels. The novel is the story of the pursuit of that kind of language that creates the act in its very utterance, it is the enunciatory power of shaping history. The question is about the conceptual work: In which ways the conflictuality between concepts are established in the semi-fictional universe through possibilities and limitations that this genre offers him?

In *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* semiology takes part in the plot, Sherlock Holmes's science of signs will help resolve the plot. This is exactly what happens with William of Baskerville in *The Name of the Rose*. Moreover, the model of inferences as represented by the fundamental characters in *The Name of the Rose*. For Eco, he needed fiction to tell things to the reader so that he would get hooked. It was a semiological manual demonstrating the whole abstract problem of rhetoric. In *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel*, the secret manuscript that that everyone's looking for, and which they kill for indicates a certain use of language which is the absolute power to persuade. This conceptual node corresponds with the issues that linguistic turn tackles. As the plot revolves around the language use that creates the act in its very utterance, intersects with problems about the power of the language.

In *The Name of the Rose* the crime scene, it was a library. Libidini was the curator of the labyrinthine library. In *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel*, the climate of opinion is 80's French theory. In fact, the pitch of the book is that of Eco's model, the exemplification of the theories of French post-structuralist thought consists of the texts which already existed by making inferences and amusing its reader. Laurent Binet explains:

I like to play with borders, the border of these possible worlds, with the real world. Circulatory play: here we are. It's a structure of paper characters. So this involves

other issues for philosophers of language such as fainted information if we are not in this dream world. We are neither false nor true. We are in another regime which is the regime of fiction, after a while, it is true that it has such a force that it competes with the regime of reality. In any case, fiction is what is written, indeed we are no longer in reality, we are in the fiction of what we call reality. (libraire, 2023)

Laurent Binet imagines that Roland Barthes would be the unprecedented victim of a political and literary conspiracy because, a few days before this terrible accident, the famous semiologist would have discovered, like a mad scientist, a seventh function of language in addition to the first six previously highlighted by the linguist Roman Jakobson. Indeed, stolen from Barthes and soon untraceable, this seventh function of language becomes from that moment the object of the most ardent desires which requires the investigation of a police officer quickly assisted by a semiologist responsible for decoding all the signs and transforming the darkest trace into a luminous clue to the crime.

As Binet states in an interview,

I was happy to put that very academic science, out of university, and just to show, to pretend and to show — because I believe it's true — it can be useful, in the real life and not only in the faculties and universities and so... The move I did to make the book existing, you know, was to move the semiology from university to the real world and to use it as — to decide that semiology is the science of Sherlock Holmes. Then I could write the book. (Books, 2023)

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel is the product of a completely semiologic fictionalization. We are dealing with a fundamental concept of semiology, a process of hypothetical deduction. We see a sign, we try to draw a law from it, a generalization using a hypothetical method. Plus, a good explanation of how we reason. Besides, there exists the problem of the other when we draw a conclusion by a sign, by a reference, what happens when the other, that one who is in contact with me through friendship or through hate. What happens when uneven or incommensurable power and balance is wielded by one or the other?

5. Linguistic Turn in fiction: In Search for the Most Influential Enunciatory Power

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel is a novel in pursuit of the absolute power of enunciation, and semiology “the science of Sherlock Holmes” as Binet states, will help resolve the plot. However, it is impossible to see the understanding in question only at this level. In this respect, semiology is no longer a completely technical concept, it begins to become an embodiment in fiction. As fiction never takes place in isolated conditions but always reacts to social and intellectual developments, changes and transformations in a versatile way, it is examined that fictional narrative gains function as the space of “an assertion of the primacy of language over experience and feeling” (Porter, 2021, p. 2), and encompasses theoretical

knowledge that can be associated with the linguistic turn in philosophy. The linguistic turn³ is often referred to in a variety of intellectual disciplines as representing that turning point—usually seen in the 1970s or so in humanities disciplines (Porter, 2021, p. 2) as “an assertion of the primacy of language over experience and feeling, paradoxically paired with the sense that there is a crisis in language, that language can no longer be assumed as an unmediated given” (Birns, 2017, p. 293).

Linguistic turn has been recognized by many disciplines of humanities. Nevertheless, despite this, the linguistic turn appears in various ways and its significance is seen at various times within humanities disciplines. We need to make a description of humanities as a certain set of disciplines that have always associated their questions with the limits of language. But humanities also provide a climate of opinion, a culture of knowledge, something wider than these disciplines' interpretation, most of the time the one that appears in fictional writing.

Linguistic turn has a strong proposition: experience and its relationship to reality not the mention the feeling, cannot be thought of outside the mediation of language. More radically, reality remains beyond all control, and language alone constitutes reality and language alone can express it. Paradoxically linguistic turn is “paired with the sense that there is a crisis in language, that language can no longer be assumed as an unmediated given” (Porter, 2021, p. 2). The plot of *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* clearly demonstrates it. But in which context and under which conditions? Jakobson, the great Russian linguist, had theorized the functions of communication, and had identified six functions of language.⁴ Binet therefore imagines, there was a seventh that Barthes would have

³ The term appears for the first time in the title of a work (The Linguistic Turn. Recent Essays in Philosophical Method), directed by the American philosopher Richard Rorty, in which the latter insists on the importance of language in the formulation of philosophical questions. Published in 1967, it did not, however, have an explicit place in the debate concerning literary disciplines and history which would mark the 1980s (www.universalis.fr, 2023).

⁴ In Jakobson's classification each element of communication corresponds to a function of language. There are six functions of language which are: referential function (contextual information), emotive function (self-expression), aesthetic/poetic function (auto-reflection), conative function (vocative or imperative addressing of receiver), phatic function (checking channel working), and also metalingual function (checking code working). (Middleton, 1990/2002, p. 241)

The emotive function: The transmitter speaks about himself, the message is centered on him: this is the emotive function. Most lyrical texts favor it.

The conative function: The transmitter seeks to produce an impression on the receiver. The conative function is found in texts expressing an order, aiming to convince.

The referential function: The message can have as its center the referent himself: the text is then essentially informative. Certain descriptions respond to this referential function.

The phatic function: The message can be used to establish and maintain communication: this is the function of (phatic) contact. Its function is to maintain contact between the sender and the recipient.

The metalinguistic function: Certain elements of the code used by the transmitter may be ignored by the receiver. When the message aims to clarify the meaning of what is said, it is centered on the code: we speak of a metalinguistic function.

The aesthetic/poetic function: When there has been a re-creation of its content on the message, the message is centered on itself. We talk about the poetic function of language. All texts that play on words and/or their association belong to this category.

discovered, a seventh which would have such an influential function, which would have given so much power to the one who masters it. So virtually to convince anyone of anything in any situation obviously opens up infinite possibilities of being the master of the world. This is how the novel explores the crisis in language and reveals the way language exerts a hierarchical political power in fiction. Isn't this a good metaphor of effective power constituted by language, of language exerting power over the other. Isn't this an incommensurable, uneven and hierarchical kind of relationship of power, which is discursive rather than coercive? The whole plot of the book is this kind of pursuit to appropriate this power.

The enunciatory power of the language is interpreted in a certain way under the seventh function of language as a performative function which allows the person who possesses it to convince anyone of anything in any situation. Performative "kind of language that creates the act in its very utterance" (libraire, 2023) intersects with current issues about the power of language. This function, the left wants to have it, the right wants to have it, and the intellectuals? The intellectuals of the time are standing by... to recover this function. That means those close to Barthes (Foucault, Deleuze, and then everything we called French Theory. This group of French philosophers, Derrida, Lacan, Althusser, etc.)

In search for this enunciatory power of control over the addressee, the novel takes us back to the last great era of French intellectuals, by adding novelistic features to them, at the time when the linguistic turn dominated the humanities. "The role that language plays in one's relationship to the world—that is, the fact that language plays a determining role in how a discipline conceives of itself and its relation to the world that it encounters" (Porter, 2021, p. 1) has been recognized by many disciplines of humanities. Philosophers reflected her interest in highlighting the pivotal role language plays in theory, especially French post-structuralists. Linguistic turn⁵ begins with an objection to the structuralist understanding and perception and develops with the desire to turn the concept of meaning into a cultural and social expansion. All philosophical problems are now considered in the context of language. The limits of language are the limits of the world. Hence, it was in the French post-structuralist philosophy

Most literary texts involve several functions, even if one of them dominates. Identifying the different functions of language allows us to understand the different orientations of the text.

⁵ Nicholas Birns defines three periods or phases in the linguistic turn. These are what he calls "one of severity, one of skepticism, and one of amplitude." In his recounting of its development, he attributes the first period to the early twentieth century and its association with analytic philosophy and "breaking language down into concrete building blocks." The second phase, although beginning at the same time as the first, did not emerge until later and is characterized by skepticism toward language, with focus upon intrinsic rather than contextual features. The third phase, characterized by what he calls "amplitude," although also beginning at the same time as the first and second, is associated with deconstruction with its roots in synchrony, but did not come into its own until the second phase had faded. The way that the linguistic turn is perceived and described in various disciplines is in itself an interesting study" (Porter, 2021, p. 2).

of the 1970s, that this way of thinking drew its first theoretical inspirations (www.universalis.fr, 2023).

Post-structuralism has a certain set of theories which have always been associated with the linguistic turn but post-structuralism also provides a climate of opinion, a climate of knowledge. The theoretical knowledge has to symptomatically present itself in the novel in these phenomenological ways: Interrelated intellectual figures from the 80's intellectual arena form scenes, and those scenes become theoretical parodies.

“Life is not a novel” (Binet, 2017), so begins *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel*. Based on the assumption that there is always a philosophical “geist” in fictional worlds in literary works, but this fiction or unreality always gains meaning through the real life that surrounds it –greeting the claim of the novel’s first sentence. When it comes to turn the life into novel, well, can we not talk about the thought structures, or the mental categories stemming from philosophy, to abstract little more, that shape our world of ideas. Moreover, we always interpret the relationships, information, and other tasks in this fictional world in the light of our real-life experiences. Just as this text carries the experience of a fictional world with both its theoretical organization and real life characters, it also contains elements from the social and cultural structure surrounding it, current politics, past literary periods, and communication opportunities other than itself. Questions on language that are intrinsically intertwined.

A critical examination of these issues related to the language in the novel is especially relevant in the context of contemporary thought, interrelating with philosophical viewpoints that recognize the informative role of the language on philosophical issues and so on. *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel*, either by its title or by its plot is the reflection of “The linguistic turn”, whose circumstances and motivations are recognized and reinscribed by fiction. The fiction becomes an appropriate source of understanding on meaning and other hermeneutical processes: One cannot think of the experience and its relationship to reality outside the mediation of language. More radically, reality remains beyond all control, language alone constitutes reality and language alone can express it (www.universalis.fr, 2023).

Linguistic turn “defying the great paradigms of the social sciences (such as structuralism, quantitative approaches) and, beyond, virulently contesting modernity in its economic, industrial and technological foundations, in its values resulting from the Enlightenment (progress, reason, humanism, universalism, optimism). All science, but also history and, in particular, “professional” and “scientific” history, on which the “grand narratives” of modernity were established, were specially targeted. Indistinctly and not without contradiction, it is the conceptions of objectivity, truth, and universalism of historical knowledge that have been systematically called into question” (www.universalis.fr, 2023).

Fundamental realignment of methodologies has to be engaged in creating conditions through which these disciplines interpret the reality in its temporality. The novel is a space for reflecting on moral values, social cultural values in times of transition and how those values effect human life, human imagination, human aspiration, human desires. Those are extremely important in making connections between culture of knowledge and fiction. This is the reason why the linguistic turn had a major effect on how this culture of knowledge is informed, on the way people perceive the world, as an opinion shaper. Linguistic turn has to be also engaged in creating fictional works as an opinion shaper.

This famous seventh function is that beyond the six functions of language proposed by the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson, is the secret one: the absolute power of persuasion. It gives its holder a magical power of control over a listener. The idea that the novel propagates is clearly the awareness of the enunciatory power of shaping history, at the time when an election for the presidency takes place. The novel reveals something wider than tracing the structures, caused by the fundamental realignment of methodologies in humanities such as philosophy, history, literary theory and criticism, textual studies. As theoretical knowledge turns into fiction, this intertwinement likely has to be engaged in creating conditions through the enunciatory power, when the language creates the act in its very utterance.

This study examines in which contexts and under which conditions fictional narrative gains function as “an assertion of the primacy of language over experience and feeling” (Porter, 2021, p. 2), and encompasses theoretical knowledge. This gives the narrative an interdisciplinary quality above all. As humanity, we produce narratives, share them, and pass them on to new generations. At the same time, we interpret and make sense of these narratives through the sciences and philosophy. But it is also possible that we make sense and interpret scientific and philosophical knowledge through fictional narratives. Frederic Jameson considers the process of narrative production as “a fundamental function of the human mind” (Dervişcemaloğlu, 2014, p. 46). After all, a narrative is a representation, and the object of this representation follows a temporal and causal order through certain mental categories.

In this detective novel, the hopeless police detective Jacques Bayard takes the reader on a journey through the horizons of “french theory” in search of the lost manuscript in which this very important function of language is indicated. The whole of the novel is this kind of pursuit to appropriate this function. *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* expresses the mental stage of understanding and feeling of the experience in the most concrete way. The novel is about “the role that language plays in one’s relationship to the world—that is, the fact that language plays a determining role in how semiology conceives of itself and its relation to the world that it encounters” (Porter, 2021, p. 1) which is at the same time the main idea of the linguistic turn in philosophy.

Linguistic turn begins with an objection to structuralist understanding and perception and develops with the desire to turn the concept of meaning into a cultural and social expansion. All philosophical problems are now considered in the context of language. The limits of language are the limits of the world. Philosophers reflected their interest to demonstrate the central role language plays in one's relationship to the world. Highlighting the fact that language plays a determining role in how a discipline conceives of itself and its relation to the world that it encounters is of great importance.

What kind of relations are valid between the linguistic turn and the social context? It is not a kind of relationship whose structure and boundaries are clearly determined, but an activity that depends on the relations within a certain cultural system. In some historical events, literature has become an active force, a reflection of political issues, and sometimes it has become a vast field where those who produce in the field of literature test our mental limits. It is possible to monitor the changes created by these mental rotations by following such products. As a philosophical problem, for example, the effects of artificial intelligence on the human mind have been discussed in cinema and literature for longer than expected. The linguistic turn is considered as the determining factor of its era. A different integrity with linguistic features is a project, the reflection of that in the novel makes this idea of theory in fiction possible.

6. Conclusion

This study considers *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* as a novel in which semiology, the science of signs is introduced into the fiction in addition to the linguistic issues. Taking its source of inspiration from *The Name of the Rose* by Italian semiologist and novelist Umberto Eco, the story of a manuscript for which people are killed, semiology is emplaced into the narrative form. The novel reinterpreting and reproducing this trope of the search for a lost manuscript, installs it at the heart of the 80's intellectual arena. *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* is a fantastic adventure novel, passing through reality into fiction, builds its plot on the pursuit of a lost manuscript which indicates the seventh function of language, the ultimate power of enunciation.

Being the holder of the seventh function of language which allows the person who possesses it to convince anyone of anything in any situation, is the same as being the absolute master of rhetoric. So virtually it obviously opens up infinite possibilities of eventually being the master of the world. It is also a question of democracy. For in search for this enunciatory power of control over the other.

The novel takes us back to the last great era of French intellectuals, by adding novelistic features to them, at the time when the linguistic turn dominated the humanities. Two names stand out among the intellectual characters included in *The Seventh Function of Language: A*

Novel: Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco. Roland Barthes is a character who devoted his whole life to “the novel” that he could never write, and turns into a short-lived novel hero. It can be said that what Binet was trying to do was to reconcile Roland Barthes’s issue with the “novel”. Barthes turns into a character in the novel who becomes a motive force by his death since the narration of fiction begins with a story passing through a real event.

Binet tried to apply semiological practice in his work, by creating a semi-fictional space. But by what means and by what model did he do this? The novel is clearly a tribute to Umberto Eco and his masterpiece *The Name of the Rose*. Furthermore, an Italian semiologist and novelist is the central character of the book. Laurent Binet imagines a secret society where terrible oratory duels are played out: Umberto Eco appears in the novel as the Great Protagoras, the supreme leader of the Logos Club. The relationship of the work with *The Name of the Rose* is of great importance as an operative means throughout the fictionalization process. Accordingly, a model of the relationship between the two works has been established. Therefore, in order to reveal the relationship between these two works, the similar features that they have and those that overlap have been described in the study.

The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel either by its title or by its plot is the reflection of “The linguistic turn”, whose circumstances and motivations are recognized and reinscribed by fiction. The novel takes us back to the last great era of French intellectuals, such as Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Philippe Sollers, Julia Kristeva. And the fact that these characters come together in this novel in search of an enunciatory power allows an interpretation within the framework of the concept of “linguistic turn”.

Linguistic turn emphasized “the role that language plays in one’s relationship to the world—that is, the fact that language plays a determining role in how a discipline conceives of itself and its relation to the world that it encounters” (Porter, 2021, p. 1). Linguistic turn drew its theoretical inspirations from the French post-structuralist thought in which philosophical questions were necessarily dealt with the limits of language (www.universalis.fr, 2023). French post-structuralist thought is associated with the linguistic turn in philosophy, which is a tendency focused on the linguistic issues, called also “french theory” has its striking comments on language and meaning. It has also been recognized by many disciplines of humanities.

In this study, it is examined in which contexts and under which conditions fictional narrative gain function and encompasses theoretical knowledge. This gives narrative an interdisciplinary quality above all. As humanity, we produce narratives, share them and pass them on to new generations. At the same time, we interpret and make sense of these narratives through sciences and philosophy. But it is also possible that we make sense and interpret

scientific and philosophical knowledge through fictional narratives. Frederic Jameson considers the process of narrative production as “a fundamental function of the human mind” (Dervişcemaloğlu, 2014, p. 46). After all, narrative is a representation, and the object of this representation follows a temporal and causal order through certain mental categories.

Many determinants of contemporary philosophy have now become a phenomenon of social thought and a mental category. Even though it manifests either directly or indirectly and seems to be understood only when considered in its own context, the real problem is that this situation has the power to determine the daily life and the levels of thinking and the interpretation as a whole, and to affect and determine those processes as a whole, both with its implicit and explicit dimensions. Because many determinants of the modern thought structure are observed to be informed by a language-centered organization.

A work of art expresses the mind of the stage of understanding and the feeling in the most concrete way. Among the branches of art, literature is the richest one with the mental elements of expression. It is the structural repetition of philosophical thought in literature. Performing one's intelligence and understanding in proportion to that mentality, revitalizing and recreating it. Writing, which is the most indelible tool of thought, and literature, which means its architecture, have an effect that penetrates and permeates the soul of the entire climate of opinion.

Interdisciplinary studies show that narrative is not only a literary form, but also a way of organizing human experience and knowledge. Fiction never takes place in isolated conditions but always reacts to social and intellectual developments, changes and transformations in a versatile way. The present study considers *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* as a novel in which linguistic issues are introduced into the narrative form as well as the semiology, the science of signs, which leads to the idea that a correlation exists between the issues of *The Seventh Function of Language: A Novel* and linguistic turn in philosophy, which is “an assertion of the primacy of language over experience and feeling” (Porter, 2021, p. 2).

Disclosures

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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