

## Fantasy and Ambiguity in Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code: A Structuralist Reading

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### ABSTRACT

Dan Brown is a highly successful American author known for his suspenseful thriller novels that often incorporate elements of history, art, symbolism, and cryptography. One of his most famous and influential works is *The Da Vinci Code* (2003). The current study employs Tzvetan Todorov's insight to examine *The Da Vinci Code*. Todorov is a Bulgarian-French literary theorist, philosopher, and cultural critic known for his influential contributions to the fields of literary theory, semiotics, and structuralism. He played a significant role in shaping the way we analyze narratives and understand the underlying structures and meanings within them. Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* has been analyzed from different perspective but not Todorov's structuralist theory. This research argues that Brown's characters deploy ambiguity and element of fantastic to create suspense. It focuses on the use of hesitation and uncertainty as a tool of fantastic to create ambiguity in Brown's novel through Todorov's theory of narrative ambiguity. The use of multiple narrators, conflicting accounts of events, and references to real historical figures and events create a narrative that blurs the line between fact and fiction. The ambiguity in the narrative serves as a way for Brown to explore complex themes related to religion, power, and history without taking a definitive stance. By leaving the truth open to interpretation, Brown encourages readers to engage with the narrative on a deeper level, prompting them to question their own assumptions and beliefs.

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## Introduction

Dan Brown is an American author of thriller novels with elements of suspense and ambiguity. His *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), is a mystery thriller novel centered around the character Robert Langdon, a Harvard professor of symbology and religious iconology. The story follows Langdon as he becomes embroiled in a quest to unravel a series of clues and symbols related to the murder of a curator at the Louvre Museum in Paris. Langdon, along with a cryptologist named Sophie Neveu, discovers that the curator's death is connected to a secret society and a hidden message left behind. The duo follows a trail of codes and riddles that lead them through historical artworks, religious texts, and hidden symbols, all while being pursued by law enforcement who suspect them of the murder. As they delve deeper into the mystery, Langdon and Sophie uncover a controversial theory about the role of Mary Magdalene in Christianity and her potential marriage to Jesus Christ. This theory challenges established religious beliefs and has the potential to shake the foundations of the Church. The story involves a race against time to reveal the truth before it falls into the wrong hands.

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Newheiser et al. in "The Functional Nature of Conspiracy Beliefs: Examining the underpinnings of belief in Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* conspiracy", delve into a contemporary conspiracy theory that found in Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*. They draw inspiration from Alex Jones's conspiracy theories. The researchers' primary objective is to dissect the psychological factors and individual variations that can predict one's inclination toward embracing conspiracy theories. They also examine how steadfast these beliefs can be in the face of contradictory evidence. One of their key findings suggests that, "belief in *The Da Vinci Code* conspiracy may be linked to an individual's effort to grapple with existential threats and anxiety related to mortality" (Newheiser et al., 2011, p. 1007). Additionally, they observe that the strength of one's belief in this conspiracy is correlated with the endorsement of compatible "New Age Spiritual" beliefs and, interestingly, with opposing "Christian Religious" beliefs, albeit in opposite directions. Furthermore, their research highlights that exposure to evidence countering the conspiracy theory tends to diminish belief, especially among individuals who are more religious and thus strongly adhere to a competing belief system. The finding shows that, the idea that belief in contemporary conspiracy theories can serve as a means for individuals to establish or sustain a sense of purpose, control, and security in their lives (2011, p. 1010).

Similarly, Widodo et al. in "Between Fact and Fiction in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*: Reader Response Analysis", examine the strategies employed by readers to engage with Dan Brown's novel. They draw upon Richard Beach's Reader Response Theory. The study focuses on four main objectives: firstly, to identify the specific strategies of reader response that readers utilize when engaging with *The Da Vinci Code*; secondly, to expound on how these reader response strategies are employed in the context of Brown's novel; thirdly, to delineate the prevalent themes that readers emphasize as they employ these response strategies with regard to *The Da Vinci Code*; and fourthly, to ascertain the reasons behind the contentious nature of these highlighted themes (2003, p. 34). The findings underscore the diversity of reader response strategies employed to interact with Brown's narrative. These strategies encompass judgment, connection, engagement, and interpretation. Furthermore, a significant focal point that arises from the readers' engagement is the debate surrounding the novel's interplay between fact and fiction. This theme is potentially problematic due to Brown's initial assertion at the start of the novel, which asserts "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate" (2003, p. 56).

Rini et al. "The Roles of Sophie Neveu as Reflection of Women's Equality in Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* Novel", examine the portrayal of women's issues in Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*. They adopt Betty Friedan's Liberal Feminism Theory as the framework for their analysis. Rahayu posits that Sophie's character, through her reliability in diverse situations, embodies the essence of feminism (2019, p. 1). The research findings that, Sophie Neveu's embodiment of eleven qualities traditionally associated with masculinity, including "strength, competitiveness, courage, determination, confidence, independence, a spirit of adventure, aggressiveness, assertiveness, intelligence, and leadership capabilities" in which these qualities are attributed to Sophie's educational background (2019, p. 7). In their conclusion, they suggest that these masculine characteristics are not exclusive to men but can be embraced by both women and men. To promote individual advancement, it is imperative that women have equal access to education and opportunities, paralleling those available to men, emphasizing the critical importance of education in achieving gender equality and fostering the development of empowered women within society.

In spite of the different analyses of *The Da Vinci Code*, the novel has not been analyzed from a structuralist perspective, focusing on how the use of Todorov's fantasy and ambiguity contributes to the effectiveness of the narrative. By exploring these elements, this study seeks to provide a new understanding of *The Da Vinci Code* as a work of fiction, and to shed light on the literary techniques used by Dan Brown to create an engaging and suspenseful story.

### Theory

Structuralism is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that emphasizes the underlying structures that shape social behavior and culture. It is based on the idea that society is made up of interconnected systems and patterns, and that these structures can be analyzed and understood through the examination of the relationships between their various elements. Central to structuralism is the idea that societies are composed of interconnected systems that function in harmony to create a cohesive whole. These systems encompass various aspects of human life, including language, kinship, economics, politics, and more. Structuralists believe that these systems are not just independent components but are interdependent, with each part influencing and being influenced by the others. This emphasis on interconnectivity underscores the importance of analyzing relationships and patterns between different elements.

Todorov was born in Sofia, Bulgaria in 1939 and became a naturalized French citizen in 1970. He received a Ph.D. in linguistics and literature from the University of Paris and went on to become a professor of literature and language at various universities in France and the United States. Todorov's work on structuralism extended beyond literature analysis to encompass anthropology, psychology, and other fields. He argues that the study of structuralism could provide a framework for understanding the underlying structures of society, culture, and human psychology. Todorov's work has been instrumental in the development of semiotics and has influenced literary and cultural theory.

Todorov argues that narratives can be broken down into simple propositions that are related to each other through a causal structure. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the relationships between these propositions in order to gain a deeper understanding of how a story functions. In his book "*The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*" (1970), Todorov applies structuralist principles to the analysis of the fantastic genre. He discusses that the fantastic genre is characterized by a "hesitation" between the supernatural and the natural, and that this hesitation creates a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty that is characteristic of the genre. According to Todorov, this ambiguity and uncertainty serve to challenge the reader's perceptions and beliefs, leading to a deeper understanding of the text. He states that, "The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (1970, p. 25). Thus, Todorov's observation suggests that the fantastic thrives on the ambiguity of a specific event or occurrence. When confronted with an event that challenges the boundaries of the natural world, individuals experience a state of hesitation.

Creating ambiguity can be a powerful literary and creative tool, allowing writers and artists to engage their audience on a deeper level and provoke thought and interpretation. In literature, ambiguity often arises through the use of symbolic language, allegory, and open-ended conclusions. It is created when the reader is presented with multiple possible interpretations of a narrative event or situation, leading to confusion and uncertainty about the meaning of the text.

In fantastic literature, ambiguity is often a central characteristic that amplifies the allure of the genre. Writers of fantastic tales frequently blur the line between reality and the supernatural, presenting scenarios that challenge the audience's perception of what is possible. By leaving certain events, characters, or phenomena ambiguous, authors invite readers to explore various potential explanations, thereby deepening the sense of wonder and mystery.

Fantasy is “a literary term ... given to any literary work that does not present a realistic representation; this definition includes: myths, legends, fairy tales, detective story, horror stories, and science fiction” (Borges, 2013, p. 21). Rosemary Jackson states that “All imaginary activity is fantastic, all literary works are fantasies” (1981, p. 8). Furthermore, Nebbou (2018) states that, “Fantastic work reveals un-natural phenomena or presents supernatural beings. The author exploits the resulting fear that would have an impact on the reader. The latter confronts a given situation that is described as a not-everyday reality. The works of fantasy are generally supernatural in theme, presented in disorder, breaking out the daily routines by exposing the reader to fright, abnormal situations and mysteries” (p. 2).

According to Todorov (1970) “If the literary work truly forms a structure, we must find on every level consequence of that ambiguous perception by the reader which characterizes the fantastic” (p. 76). Thus, the structure of a literary work reflects the consequences of the ambiguous perception, characterizing the fantastic sheds light on the intricate relationship between reader interpretation and narrative construction. The presence of uncertainty at every level of the narrative structure deepens engagement and encourages multifaceted interpretations. The fantastic genre's ability to manipulate ambiguity offers readers a unique lens through which they can explore themes, characters, and narrative intricacies, all while being captivated by the perpetual uncertainty that defines the genre. In Todorov's view, the fantastic genre is characterized by a particular type of ambiguity, often referred to as the "hesitation" or "uncertainty" of the reader. He defines hesitation as in “The universe evoked by the text, an event — an action — occurs which proceeds from the supernatural. This action then provokes a reaction in the implicit reader. It is this reaction which we describe as hesitation, and the texts which generate it, as fantastic” (1970, p. 103). He outlines a framework for understanding the structure of fantastic narratives, arguing that the fantastic emerges when there is an unresolved tension between the supernatural or inexplicable elements and a rational explanation within the narrative.

According to Todorov, the concept of hesitation is a crucial element in literature, where both the character and the reader share a similar experience of uncertainty. Todorov's concept of hesitation reveals the nuanced interaction between characters and readers. Characters often grapple with dilemmas, conflicting emotions, and ambiguous situations, reflecting the uncertainties of real life. As readers immerse themselves in the narrative, they become emotionally invested in the characters' experiences, mirroring their hesitations and doubts. This shared sense of uncertainty engenders empathy and a deeper connection between readers and characters, allowing readers to relate to the characters' internal struggles. Todorov (1970) writes:

This hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus, the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work in the case, of naive reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character (p. 33).

Thus, Todorov is suggesting that sometimes, characters in a story can feel unsure or hesitant about what's happening, and this feeling can also be felt by the reader. This creates a special

connection between the reader and the character. The reader's role almost merges with that of the character, and this sense of hesitation becomes an important topic in the story itself. This is especially true when a reader is new to reading and takes the character's perspective as their own. In this situation, the reader starts feeling like they are the character in the story. By employing these concepts, the current paper shows how Brown creates a complex narrative through the use of these concepts.

## Discussion

### Hesitation in *The Da Vinci Code*

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown (2009) uses hesitation as a literary means of fantasy to create ambiguity. He writes, “Langdon hesitated a moment. Sophie, you realize that if this is indeed the keystone, your grandfather's access to it implies he was exceptionally powerful within the Priory of Sion. He would have to have been one of the highest four members” (p. 182). The subject of hesitation is subtly woven into the dialogue between Langdon and Sophie. Langdon's hesitation here is multifaceted. On one level, it reveals his awareness of the profound implications of the keystone's authenticity and its connection to Sophie's grandfather. The pause allows him to carefully consider the potential ramifications of his words on Sophie's perception of her family history and her grandfather's role within the secretive Priory of Sion. Langdon (1970) recognizes that his forthcoming statement is not only surprising but could also challenge Sophie's preconceived notions. Furthermore, Langdon's hesitation echoes the reader's internal conflict, “The reader's hesitation is therefore the first condition of the fantastic” (p. 31) as they grapple with the dual possibilities presented in his statement, the idea that Sophie's grandfather held significant power within the Priory of Sion or that there may be an alternative explanation for his access to the keystone. In other words, Langdon's (1970) hesitation gives rise to a palpable sense of ambiguity “The fantastic refers to an ambiguous perception shared by the reader and one of the characters” (p. 46). That mirrors the reader's own uncertain position within the narrative. The use of hesitation serves as a narrative tool that reflects the mysterious and intricate nature of the story, inviting the reader to share in Langdon's moment of doubt and reflection.

Brown employs hesitation as a potent tool to delve into multifaceted themes related to intellectual boundaries, societal norms, and exposure to unconventional historical perspectives. Brown's strategic incorporation of hesitation adds depth and intricacy to his narratives, enabling readers to explore these complex themes from various angles. Through characters' internal struggles and doubts, readers are invited to examine their own attitudes toward novel ideas, societal expectations, and historical truths. Brown's skillful incorporation of hesitation allows readers to traverse the intricate landscapes of uncertainty and introspection, providing a rich and thought-provoking reading experience. Brown (2009) writes:

Faukman hesitated. Langdon's newest manuscript—an exploration of the history of goddess worship—included several sections about Mary Magdalene that were going to raise some eyebrows. Although the material was well documented and had been covered by others, Faukman had no intention of printing Advance Reading Copies of Langdon's book without at least a few endorsements from serious historians and art luminaries (p. 258).

In the passage above, the theme of hesitation takes center stage as Faukman, a character within the story, grapples with a decision of considerable consequence. The element of hesitation

in this context serves as a conduit for conveying the complex interplay of scholarly rigor, social perception, and personal judgment that lies at the heart of Langdon's manuscript about goddess worship and Mary Magdalene. As the reader encounters Faulkman's hesitation, they are prompted to pause and reflect on the significance of the manuscript's subject matter. Todorov (1970) says, "The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect" (p. 26). Thus, the relationship between the reader and the character is marked by emotional immersion. As characters experience doubt and uncertainty, readers share in their emotional turmoil. This connection enhances the reader's sense of connection to the characters' experiences, making the narrative events feel more visceral and relatable. Readers may find themselves empathizing with the characters' struggles and uncertainties, forging a bond that heightens the overall reading experience.

Furthermore, the exploration of goddess worship and its connection to Mary Magdalene raises a sense of intrigue and curiosity, mirroring the intellectual tension that often accompanies the exposure to unconventional historical perspectives. Just as Faulkman (1970) is cautious about proceeding without endorsements, the reader may find themselves hesitating in their own judgments "The fantastic, we have seen, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from reality as it exists in the common opinion" (p. 41). considering the implications of the manuscript's claims and its potential to challenge established narratives. The reader's hesitation is further heightened by the acknowledgment that the material in the manuscript is well-documented and has been explored by others.

Brown portrays hesitation as a vehicle for conveying complex interpersonal dynamics, moral quandaries, and the delicate balance between tradition and compassion to create ambiguity. He uses hesitation to offer insights into the characters' internal conflicts and provides a thought-provoking commentary on the intersection of authority and empathy within a traditional setting. Brown (2009) writes:

The altar boy hesitated, well acquainted with Father Knowles' deep observance of church tradition... and, more importantly, with his foul temper when anything cast this time-honored shrine in anything but favorable light. Maybe Father Knowles had simply forgotten these family members were coming. If so, then there was far more risk in turning them away than in letting them in. After all, they said it would only take a minute. What harm could it do? (p. 309)

In the passage above, hesitation becomes a conduit for ambiguity, inviting readers to consider the interplay between tradition, compassion, and authority. The uncertainty surrounding the altar boy's internal deliberations mirrors the larger themes of the novel, where hidden truths and complex motivations abound. The ambiguity stemming from the altar boy's hesitation is rooted in the conflicting forces at play. On one hand, his familiarity with Father Knowles' strict adherence to church tradition suggests that turning away the family members might align with the established norms. This adherence to tradition is juxtaposed with the uncertainty brought about by the altar boy's consideration of Father Knowles' forgetfulness. This hesitation introduces a layer of doubt and ambiguity, as readers are left wondering "There exists another variety of the fantastic, in which the hesitation occurs between the real and the imaginary" (p. 36). The ambiguous nature of the situation is encapsulated in the altar boy's contemplation of the family members' request: "What harm could it do?" This question lingers in the air, leaving readers to ponder the potential consequences, both positive and negative as Todorov says

“Ambiguity is sustained to the very end of the adventure: reality or dream? truth or illusion”? (p. 25). Absence of a clear answer intensifies the ambiguity, inviting readers to speculate on the broader implications of the altar boy's decision.

### Uncertainty in *The Da Vinci Code*

The second element of fantasy that contributes to create ambiguity is uncertainty. Uncertainty is a fundamental aspect of the fantastic genre, often used by authors to weave intricate narratives that leave readers questioning the boundaries between reality and the supernatural. In the context of creating ambiguity, uncertainty plays a pivotal role by fostering a sense of doubt and unpredictability within the story. This uncertainty can manifest in various ways throughout the narrative, affecting both the characters and the readers. Todorov highlights how language can be used not only to convey information but also to indicate the speaker's attitude towards that information. In this case, the uncertainty expressed by the speaker becomes an integral part of the message being conveyed. He says:

Ambiguity also results from the use of two stylistic devices which suffuse the entire text: imperfect tense and modalization ... For example, the two sentences “It is raining outside” and “Perhaps it is raining outside” refer to the same fact; but the second also indicates the speaker's uncertainty as to the truth of the sentence he utters (Todorov, 1970, p. 38).

In essence, Todorov is pointing out that the way a speaker phrases their statement can reveal their level of certainty or uncertainty about what they're saying. Take the sentences “It is raining outside” and “Perhaps it is raining outside.” Both sentences convey the same information – that it's raining outside. However, the second sentence, through the use of the word "Perhaps" goes beyond just stating the fact; it also shows that the speaker is unsure about whether it's actually raining.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Brown employs uncertainty as a tool to create ambiguity. Uncertainty is not merely a plot device but a philosophical exploration. It delves into the notion that embracing uncertainty can lead to personal growth, expanded perspectives, and the unraveling of hidden truths. The characters' journeys mirror the reader's own confrontation with ambiguity, prompting them to question preconceived notions and embark on a quest for deeper understanding. Sophie says, “Do not react to this message. Just listen calmly. You are in danger right now. Follow my directions very closely. Filled with uncertainty, Langdon had decided to do exactly as Sophie advised” (p. 58). In this context, Brown employs uncertainty to create a pervasive sense of ambiguity that captivates the reader's imagination. The directive to "Do not react to this message" immediately introduces an air of mystery and intrigue, prompting readers to question the source, intent, and potential consequences of the message. By withholding immediate reactions, readers are left in a state of uncertainty, unsure of how to emotionally respond, thus fostering a sense of ambiguity that mirrors the characters' predicament “The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty” (Todorov, 1970, p. 25).

The proclamation that "You are in danger right now" injects a sense of urgency, yet the lack of explicit context shrouds the nature of the danger in ambiguity. Readers are compelled to speculate about the possible threats, creating a heightened sense of anticipation and curiosity. This ambiguity not only engages readers' attention but also involves them in a mental puzzle, much like the characters who must decipher enigmatic codes and symbols throughout the story.

By juxtaposing uncertainty and decisive action, the passage underscores how ambiguity can be a driving force in the narrative. Langdon's decision to heed Sophie's advice "Filled with uncertainty" amplifies the ambiguity further. This uncertainty reflects the complex interplay between instinct and reason that often characterizes decision-making. Readers find themselves mirroring Langdon's cognitive struggle, empathizing with the challenge of navigating unfamiliar and potentially perilous situations. This shared experience deepens the emotional connection between the reader and the characters.

Todorov (1970) states, "there exists another variety of the fantastic, in which the hesitation occurs between the real and the imaginary. In the first case, we were uncertain not that the events occurred, but that our understanding of them was correct" (p. 36). Thus, the ambiguity created by the hesitation between the real and the imaginary invites readers into a shared exploration of the narrative. As readers are confronted with events that challenge their comprehension, they are drawn into the same state of doubt and uncertainty as the characters. This shared experience becomes a powerful tool for deepening the emotional connection between the reader and the characters. Moreover, when readers find themselves grappling with the same questions and uncertainties as the characters, it creates a sense of empathy and intimacy. Readers begin to identify with the characters' struggles, fears, and doubts, leading to a heightened emotional engagement with the story. The process of trying to decipher the blurred lines between reality and imagination becomes a joint endeavor between the reader and the characters, forging a stronger bond.

Brown utilizes uncertainty to reveal the power of knowledge and hidden truths, creating ambiguity in the reader. He says:

It's a nautilus," the bio major said. "Acephalopod mollusk that pumps gas into its chambered shell to adjust its buoyancy."

"Correct. And can you guess what the ratio is of each spiral's diameter to the next?"

The girl looked uncertain as she eyed the concentric arcs of the nautilus spiral. Langdon nodded. "PHI. The Divine Proportion. One-point-six-one-eight to one."

The girl looked amazed (p. 83).

In the above passage, uncertainty is strategically utilized to create an air of ambiguity, inviting readers to engage with the characters' pursuit of knowledge and discovery. The dialogue between the bio major and Langdon sets the stage for a moment of revelation, with uncertainty acting as a catalyst that drives curiosity and intellectual exploration. The bio major's initial uncertainty in response to Langdon's question serves as a reflection of the broader theme of the unknown and the complexity of nature. As she hesitates, readers are drawn into the enigmatic atmosphere of the scene, mirroring her uncertainty and prompting them to share in the challenge of deciphering the intricate mysteries being unveiled. Langdon's affirmative response, "PHI. The Divine Proportion. One-point-six-one-eight to one," not only confirms the answer but also underscores his confidence in his expertise. This juxtaposition of certainty and uncertainty creates a sense of contrast that heightens the curiosity. Langdon's unwavering assertion against the backdrop of the bio major's initial uncertainty creates a dynamic tension that propels the narrative forward, as readers are compelled to reconcile the differing perspectives "Fantastic therefore implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters: that world is defined by the reader's own ambiguous perception of the events narrated" (Todorov, 1970, p. 31). The girl's subsequent amazement amplifies the impact of uncertainty and ambiguity. Her

transformation from uncertainty to amazement highlights the power of knowledge and the allure of discovering hidden truths. This emotional journey resonates with readers, who may themselves experience a similar transition as they navigate the complexities of the narrative alongside the characters. Brown's skillful use of uncertainty in this passage taps into readers' innate curiosity and desire for discovery. By intertwining uncertainty with moments of revelation, he creates a layered reading experience that not only mirrors the characters' intellectual journey but also invites readers to participate actively in deciphering the mysteries presented. This engagement with ambiguity draws readers deeper into the narrative, fostering a sense of connection with the characters and the thrill of uncovering profound insights.

### Functions of Ambiguity in *The Da Vinci Code*

Ambiguity can serve various purposes, including creating suspense, conveying complex emotions or ideas, and reflecting the complexity of real-life situations. Additionally, it can be used to challenge readers and prompt them to question their assumptions or beliefs. Despite its potential to confuse or frustrate readers, ambiguity is a powerful tool in the hands of skilled writers and can add depth and richness to their works. Lihong and Weijie (2017) states that, ambiguity is a “common phenomenon in nature. It means that a word, phrase or sentence has at least two distinct meanings. In extremely informational communication it will cause barriers to understand. Sometimes it will cause divergence or dispute” (p. 247). In Todorov's framework, ambiguity is a necessary element of narrative because it allows for multiple interpretations and meanings. According to him, the presence of ambiguity in a story invites the reader to participate in the process of meaning-making, as they are forced to consider multiple possibilities and interpretations. Todorov (1970) states that “but if each of the passages begins in the present, the final proposition once again occurs in the imperfect tense and it thus reintroduces ambiguity into the reader’s perception” (p. 40). In other words, by reintroducing ambiguity in the conclusion, the reader is encouraged to reevaluate the events and characters, leading to various possible interpretations. This technique adds complexity to the story and engages the reader's imagination as they attempt to make sense of the overall narrative.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, ambiguity plays a significant role in contributing to the novel's intrigue and captivating storytelling. Brown employs ambiguity to allow readers to interpret events and characters in different ways. Ambiguity occurs when a narrative presents two or more interpretations of an event or character, and the reader is left uncertain as to which interpretation is correct. This ambiguity creates a sense of unease and tension for the reader, who must constantly reassess their perception of the character. This uncertainty keeps readers engaged throughout the story. According to the Priory (2009), Teabing claims:

Mary Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion. For the safety of Christ's unborn child, she had no choice but to flee the Holy Land. With the help of Jesus' trusted uncle, Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene secretly traveled to France, then known as Gaul. There she found safe refuge in the Jewish community. It was here in France that she gave birth to a daughter. Her name was Sarah (p. 277).

The above passage mentions, Teabing's betrayal shocks both the protagonists and the readers. His actions display a clear hidden agenda throughout the novel. This revelation underscores the extent of his ambiguous loyalty and the lengths to which he was willing to go to achieve his goals, even at the expense of those who trusted him. Teabing presents an alternative perspective on the historical figure of Mary Magdalene, suggesting that she was pregnant with Jesus' child during the crucifixion. This interpretation aligns with the Priory of Sion's belief in a

hidden bloodline of Christ, kept secret for centuries. In this narrative, Teabing's account challenges traditional religious beliefs by proposing a different version of Mary Magdalene's role in history. The ambiguity arises from the fact that while the Priory of Sion is a fictional organization in the novel, the historical context and events mentioned have real-world connections. By blending factual elements with fictional interpretations, the passage presents a complex narrative that keeps readers questioning the validity of the claims "ambiguity is sustained to the very end of the adventure: reality or dream? truth or illusion?" (1970, p. 25). The ambiguity in this passage arises from the multiple layers of meaning: the historical context of Jesus and Mary Magdalene, the fictional portrayal of the Priory of Sion's beliefs, and the implications of a hidden bloodline. This structural ambiguity leaves readers uncertain about the "truth" within the novel, encouraging them to question historical narratives and consider alternative possibilities.

Brown utilizes ambiguity to create a complex and engaging narrative in his novel, encouraging readers to speculate and engage actively with the story. By leaving certain elements open to interpretation, Brown invites readers to immerse themselves in the plot, drawing them deeper into the captivating world of his novel. Brown (2009) writes:

The fond memory caused Sophie a pang of sadness as the harsh reality of the murder gripped her again. Grand-père is gone. She pictured the cryptex under the divan and wondered if Leigh Teabing would have any idea how to open it. Or if we even should ask him. Sophie's grandfather's final words had instructed her to find Robert Langdon. He had said nothing about involving anyone else. We needed somewhere to hide, Sophie said, deciding to trust Robert's judgment (p. 200).

In the passage above, the initial sentence sets the tone by introducing Sophie's conflicting emotions: the "fond memory" stirs sadness, yet it remains uncertain what exactly causes her distress. This ambiguity creates a sense of depth to her character, leaving readers to wonder about the nature of the memory and its connection to her grandfather's murder, which is briefly mentioned but not fully explored. The phrase "Grand-père is gone" succinctly conveys the profound loss Sophie experiences, but the lack of further context or detail surrounding her relationship with her grandfather amplifies the sense of mystery. The mention of a "cryptex" hidden beneath the divan adds an intriguing element of mystery and symbolism to the narrative. Its presence remains ambiguous, leaving readers to speculate on its significance and potential role in the unfolding events. Sophie's contemplation about seeking Leigh Teabing's assistance in opening the cryptex introduces a layer of uncertainty regarding Teabing's character and motives. The question of whether they "should ask him" hints at potential risks and hidden agendas that could impact the characters' journey.

Moreover, Sophie's grandfather's final words instructing her to find Robert Langdon provide a central plot point, but the lack of specific details leaves readers questioning the purpose behind seeking Langdon and the potential implications of involving him "Fantastic therefore implies an integration of the reader into the world of the characters: that world is defined by the reader's own ambiguous perception of the events narrated" (1970, p. 31). The absence of any explicit mention of involving others, combined with Sophie's decision to trust Robert's judgment, creates ambiguity around the level of trustworthiness and reliability of the characters. This raises questions about the dynamics of their relationships and the potential consequences of their actions. The interplay of the characters' motivations, the cryptex's symbolic significance, and the

enigmatic aspects of the murder all contribute to the narrative's richness and intrigue, enticing readers to delve deeper into the story's hidden meanings.

Furthermore, Sophie plays a central role in the discovery of the account number, keeping readers engaged and curious. Her actions and the revelation of the number create a sense of ambiguity and mystery, heightening the intrigue of the narrative. The ambiguity begins with Sophie's actions at the keypad. She enters a different number, seemingly from memory, indicating that she might have prior knowledge or a personal connection to this particular account number. However, the specific reason for her familiarity with the number remains undisclosed, leaving readers to speculate about her past and her relationship with her grandfather. Brown (2009) writes:

Sophie was at the keypad again, entering a different number, as if from memory. "Moreover, with my grandfather's love of symbolism and codes, it seems to follow that he would have chosen an account number that had meaning to him, something he could easily remember." She finished typing the entry and gave a sly smile. "Something that appeared random... but was not." Langdon looked at the screen. ACCOUNT NUMBER:1123581321. It took him an instant, but when Langdon spotted it, he knew she was right (p. 167).

The quote above reveals the mystery surrounding Sophie's actions and her grandfather's cryptex quest. She is familiar with the keypad and her ability to enter a different number from memory which piques readers' curiosity, leaving them to wonder about the source of her knowledge and its connection to the cryptex. Sophie's statement about her grandfather's love for symbolism and codes adds another layer of complexity to the narrative. This account number itself might be symbolic or hold some cryptic meaning significant to her grandfather. Readers are prompted to speculate on what the number might represent and how it fits into the larger context of the story. The phrase "something he could easily remember" heightens the enigmatic nature of the account number. It raises questions about the personal significance of the chosen digits and whether they hold sentimental value or encode a hidden message. Sophie's sly smile after typing the entry intensifies the sense of secrecy and intrigue. Readers are left to speculate on the reason behind her amusement and what she has uncovered through her actions. The account number "appeared random... but was not" challenges the reader's perception of randomness, suggesting that beneath the surface lies a carefully planned and meaningful arrangement of numbers. This ambiguity creates an aura of mystery "This ambiguity turns on madness, certainly" (Todorov, 1970, p. 40) around the cryptex's contents and what secrets it may hold. As Langdon looks at the screen and instantly recognizes the significance of the account number (1123581321), readers are given a glimpse into his understanding and expertise. However, the specific meaning behind the number remains obscured, leaving room for further interpretation and speculation.

### **Fantasy in *The Da Vinci Code***

Brown uses reality and fantasy to captivate the readers with the allure of the unknown by using supernatural elements as a tool to create ambiguity. Supernatural elements refer to phenomena, beings, or events that are beyond the natural laws or explanations of our world. These elements are often associated with the realm of fantasy, mythology, and the paranormal. The supernatural elements not only drive the plot forward but also invite contemplation of the deeper mysteries that lie beneath the surface of history and human understanding. Langdon (2009) says:

King Godefroi was allegedly the possessor of a powerful secret—a secret that had been in his family since the time of Christ. Fearing his secret might be lost when he died, he founded a secret brotherhood—the Priory of Sion—and charged them with protecting his secret by quietly passing it on from generation to generation. During their years in Jerusalem, the Priory learned of a stash of hidden documents buried beneath the ruins of Herod's temple, which had been built atop the earlier ruins of Solomon's Temple. These documents, they believed, corroborated Godefroi's powerful secret and were so explosive in nature that the Church would stop at nothing to get them." Sophie looked uncertain (p. 139).

As indicated in above passage, mysterious elements are intricately woven into the storyline, creating an aura of ambiguity and mystery. The presence of these mysterious elements contributes significantly to the overall plot and the sense of enigma surrounding the narrative. At the heart of the mysterious elements is the "powerful secret" that has been passed down through King Godefroi's family since the time of Christ. The concept of a secret possessing such ancient lineage and being closely guarded by a secret brotherhood, the Priory of Sion, evokes a sense of the mystical and the unexplained. It hints at a hidden knowledge that goes beyond conventional understanding, fueling the reader's curiosity and fascination with the unknown. Priory of Sion, a secret brotherhood charged with protecting the powerful secret through generations, adds an element of secrecy and mystique to the story. The very existence of such a brotherhood suggests a mysterious longevity and a higher purpose guiding their actions throughout history.

The idea of quietly passing on the secret implies a connection to ancient traditions and hidden forces at work, elevating the storyline into the realm of the extraordinary. The discovery of "hidden documents" buried beneath the ruins of Herod's temple further enhances the supernatural atmosphere as Todorov (1970) claims that, "the text must oblige the reader to hesitate between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described" (p. 33). The documents are believed to corroborate the powerful secret, indicating the existence of ancient truths that challenge conventional historical and religious accounts. These hidden documents become symbols of ancient wisdom and lost knowledge, tantalizing the reader with the prospect of revelations that could reshape history. The phrase also "explosive in nature" used to describe the documents heightens the sense of supernatural intrigue. It suggests that the contents of these documents could potentially disrupt the established order and create profound upheaval. The Church's relentless pursuit of these documents adds to the aura of the religious mystery, as it hints at a centuries-long struggle between powerful institutions and hidden truths. The revelation of such profound secrets challenges their perception of reality and forces them to grapple with questions beyond the natural world's boundaries. This ambiguity adds emotional depth to the narrative, allowing readers to empathize with the characters' experiences as they navigate the mysteries of the supernatural.

### Conclusion

Structuralism is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that emphasizes the underlying structures that shape social behavior and culture. It is based on the idea that society is made up of interconnected systems and patterns, and that these structures can be analyzed and understood through the examination of the relationships between their various elements. Structuralism emerged as a dominant theoretical perspective in the 1950s and 1960s, and has had a significant impact on fields such as anthropology, sociology, and literary criticism. This study has attempted to offer a structuralist reading of Brow's *The Da Vinci Code*. While his works have been commercially successful, they have also faced criticism for their historical accuracy

and controversial interpretations of religious themes. However, the novel has not been analyzed from Tzveran Todorov perspective. Therefore, for its theoretical framework, I deployed a fresh lens and used Todorov's concepts of suspense and ambiguity.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown masterfully employs Todorov's concept of ambiguity to craft a narrative that captures readers' imagination and compels them to delve deeper into the story. Ambiguity is indeed a powerful tool in literature, particularly in the realm of fantastic literature, where the blurring of reality and the supernatural often invites readers to explore various interpretations and possibilities. Ambiguity engages readers on multiple levels, encouraging them to delve into hidden meanings, question established norms, and contemplate different perspectives. Through the strategic use of ambiguity, Brown achieves several goals: he creates mastery, introduces complex emotions and ideas, and prompts readers to question their assumptions and beliefs. The narrative is woven with layers of ambiguity that enhance the intrigue of the plot. The revelation of hidden secrets, like the account number and the powerful secret of the Priory of Sion, keeps readers engaged as they try to decipher the meanings behind these enigmatic elements.

The presence of mysterious elements, intertwined with historical context, adds an extra layer of mystery that challenges readers' perceptions of reality and invites them to explore the boundaries of the known and the unknown. Sophie's actions and emotions are shrouded in ambiguity, compelling readers to question her motivations and her connection to the cryptex and her grandfather's past. Teabing's ambiguous loyalty and motives create tension, keeping readers uncertain about his true intentions until the plot unfolds further. This ongoing sense of uncertainty aligns with Todorov's notion that hesitation between interpretations generates the fantastic effect. Furthermore, Brown's narrative structure reintroduces ambiguity at key moments, inviting readers to reconsider their interpretations and driving their engagement with the story. This technique allows readers to actively participate in the process of meaning-making, as they navigate the multiple possibilities presented. Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, for example, illustrates how hesitation and uncertainty are utilized to create narrative ambiguity. In these examples, hesitation serves as a bridge between the reader and the characters, fostering emotional immersion and making the narrative events feel more relatable. The use of uncertainty creates an atmosphere of intrigue and curiosity, challenging readers to consider alternative viewpoints and question their assumptions.

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