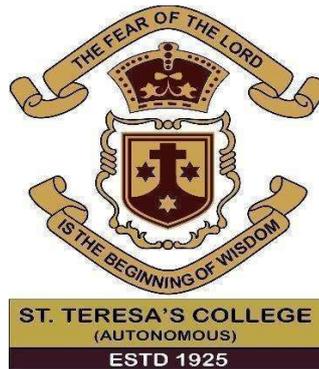


**Unravelling The Hermeneutic Code: A Cultural Analysis On The Fictional
World Of Dan Brown**



*Project submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University in partial fulfilment of the
requirement for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in
English Language and Literature*

By

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March 2023

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I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled “Unravelling The Hermeneutic Code:A Cultural Analysis On The Fictional World Of Dan Brown” is the record of bona fide work done by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Jisha John , Assistant Professor, Department of English and Centre for Research, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma or any other similar title of recognition.

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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this project entitled "Unravelling The Hermeneutic Code: A Cultural Analysis On The Fictional World Of Dan Brown" is a record of bona fide work carried out by Ayana Girish under my supervision and guidance.



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An Abstract of the Project Entitled
Unravelling The Hermeneutic Code: A Cultural Analysis On The Fictional
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The introductory chapter forays into the fictional world of Dan Brown. It is followed by an elaborate account on Roland Barthes the structuralist critic and his critical acumen with a thrust upon the narrative codes especially the hermeneutic code which is the chief tool used in the study to examine the texts. The introductory chapter is rounded off by an insight into the broad area of focus – culture studies and Barthes' contributions to the field and how the researcher has made use of Barthes' critical insights to analyze Dan Brown's select novels. The project is divided into five chapters, chapter one titled structuralism and cultural studies is an enquiry into the theories of structuralism connecting it with cultural studies especially the concept of popular culture, the chapter explores how religious icons rituals scientific truths cultural objects and agencies have been used to contrive the gripping narrative chapter three titled unravelling hermeneutic code in the selected text, charts the enigmatic code within the core respective and elaborates upon the cultural significations in the text and how they are intertwined with the basic themes within each text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Alphonsa Vijaya Joseph, Principal, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam for her help and support.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my Supervisor Dr. Jisha John, Department of English and Centre for Research, St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), without whose guidance and encouragement this project would never have been completed.

I acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. Preeti Kumar, Head of the Department of English and Centre for Research, and all the faculty members for their encouragement and support.

Ayana Girish

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Introduction

The thesis titled “Unraveling the Hermeneutic Code: A Cultural analysis on the Fictional World of Dan Brown”, proposes to conduct a cultural analysis of the structure of the first two Langdon series novels of the renowned writer Dan Brown by making use of the hermeneutic code propounded by the French theoretician, Roland Barthes. The study has chosen the first two Dan Brown Langdon series, which includes *Angels and Demons* (A&D), and *The Da Vinci Code* (DVC) for analysis. The thesis is split into three chapters of which the introductory chapter forays into the fictional world of Dan Brown. It is followed by an elaborate account on Roland Barthes the structuralist critic and his critical acumen with a thrust upon the narrative codes especially the hermeneutic code which is the chief tool used in the study to examine the texts. The introductory chapter is rounded off by an insight into the broad area of focus – culture studies and Barthes’ contributions to the field and how the researcher has made use of Barthes’ critical insights to analyze Dan Brown’s select novels.

Roland Gerard Barthes was a French literary critic, literary and social theorist, philosopher, and semiotician whose works permeated into many fields. He influenced the development of schools of theory including structuralism, semiology existentialism, Marxism, and post-structuralism. Jonathan Culler remarks in his book *Barthes: A Very Short Introduction* that Roland Barthes is, “a figure of contradiction, with an intricate range of theories and stances that we must elucidate” (3). Barthes was extraordinarily well versed in classical literature and linguistics. The contributions of Barthes in the field of literary criticism is credited to the English translations made by Richard Miller, The contributions of Barthes in the field of literary criticism is credited

to the English translations made by Richard Miller, Annette Lavers, Richard Howard, Susan Santog to name a few and also to the theoreticians like Jonathan Culler, Graham Allen who unearthed the findings of Barthes. Sartre and Saussure have had a great impact upon Barthes' early writings. Barthes' "decidedly structuralist period" was marked by his move to L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes in 1960 (Onega 267). John Sturrock is of the opinion that Barthes "is not rigorously or consistently Structuralist but he shows, very hearteningly, how a basically Structuralist method may be built on to by a critic of his own very high intelligence and insight" (118).

Most of his structuralist works were the result of the debates he had with Raymond Picard, the French thinker. By the late 1960s, Barthes had established himself as a reputed thinker with the publication of his essay, "*The Death of the Author*". With this essay Barthes points out that the text can have multiple meanings or interpretations and the author does not limit or define the meaning. Barthes strongly argued that the meaning of the text comes or is generated by the reader through a process of analyzing the text. It was with the publication of S/Z, that Barthes explicitly elaborates the notion of the plurality of meaning. S/Z was actually a "dense critical reading of Honore de Balzac's Sarrasine" (Roland Barthes). Henceforth, Barthes continued to develop and improve his concepts of textuality, and literary criticism.

Barthes has identified that each narrative generates meaning through a system of signs or codes. Jonathan Culler, the famous cultural theorist through his Structuralist Poetics elaborates about Barthes findings regarding the narrative pattern in S/Z. Culler states that, "Each code is 'one of

the voices of which the text is woven” (236). The five codes identified by Barthes are the proairetic code, the hermeneutic code, the semic code, the symbolic code and the cultural code. The number of codes identified can vary according to the perspective chosen and the nature of the text one is analyzing. The codes are not “exhaustive” or “sufficient” (237) but they are a means of establishing Barthes’ argument that the text can have multiple meanings which are to be produced by the reader. “By themselves, the codes are merely expressive; but as they are intertwined artistically, they are both manipulated and act upon each other to form that kind of meaning which results from a narrative work of art” (Lesage). “The five codes create a kind of network, a topos through which the entire text passes (or rather, in passing, becomes text)” (Miller 20). Each code is the voice of the text. The first code listed by Barthes is the hermeneutic code represented as HER by Barthes. The thesis focuses on this code, hence the researcher proposes to elaborate it in detail, after presenting the other codes. The proairetic code represented as ACT by Barthes is the second code, the code of actions. Pramod Nayar in his text *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory* articulates that, it refers to the sequence “in which the events of a story unfold” (24). The plot construction is governed by this code.

This code enables the reader to find meaning in the sequence. Barthes states that a traditional readerly text would obviously provide a logical and sequential order of events. This code along with the hermeneutic code is significant for the structuring of the text and in maintaining the suspense of the plot. Barthes also states that, of the five codes it is the hermeneutic code and the proairetic code that “tend to be aligned with temporal order” (Feluga)

The semic code represented as SEM is also called “the connotative code” (Barry 49). The code employs hints through signifiers. It draws upon a set of stereotypes which help the reader to identify a parallel with the character. The code is primarily applicable to the realm of character. The symbolic code represented as SYM is closely related to the semic code. It “guides extrapolation from text to symbolic and thematic readings” (Culler 237). This code helps in construing the theme of the text through a series of parallels or contrasts. The cultural code or referential code represented as REF is applied to “an established body of what the author takes to be ‘common knowledge’” (Hawkes 96). It points towards the cultural background of the text. The function of this code is to point out what is common cultural knowledge, that is, it may refer to any cultural object or common proverb. Culler calls this code as “the most unsatisfactory of all codes” (237) because it fails to explain every cultural referent. The hermeneutic code, according to Barthes, refers to all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution. (Miller 17)

Terence Hawkes in his work *Structuralism and Semiotics* mentions that, the book refers to this code as the “story-telling” code which poses certain “questions” in the narrative, triggers elements of “suspense and mystery” and proceeds to “resolve” the enigma (94). Culler is of the view that “the hermeneutic code involves a logic of question and answer, enigma and solution, suspense and peripeteia” (237). The hermeneutic code is thus significant in shaping the plot structure. The hermeneutic code is elucidated through a series of processes which Barthes calls as “hermeneutemes” (Miller 96). These are presented in the earlier

part of the text as follows: The proposition of truth is a “well-made” sentence; it contains a subject (theme of the enigma), a statement of the question (formulation of the enigma), its question mark (proposal of the enigma), various subordinate and interpolated clauses and catalyses (delays in the answer), all of which precede the ultimate predicate (disclosure). (84)

This “hermeneutic sentence” permits a freedom of universal of order of the signifiers and even permits a condensation of the semes (85). The code helps in arriving at the truth of the events hence he calls it as the “Voice of Truth” (209). Barthes has identified ten hermeneutemes of the hermeneutic process to be as follows: (1) thematization, or an emphasizing of the subject which will be the object of the enigma; (2) proposal a metalinguistic index which by signalling in a thousand different ways that an enigma exists, designates the hermeneutic(or enigmatic) genus;(3) formulation of the enigma; (4) promise of an answer (or request for answer); (5) snare a pretense which must be defined, if possible, by its circuit of destination (by one character for another for himself, by the discourse for the reader); (6) equivocation, or double understanding, the mixture in a single statement of a snare and a truth; (7) jamming, acknowledgment of the insolubility of the enigma; (8) suspended answer (after having been begun); (9) partial answer, which consists in stating only one of the features whose total will form the complete identification of the truth; (10) disclosure, decipherment, which is, in the pure enigma (whose model is always the Sphinx's question to Oedipus), a final nomination, the discovery and uttering of the irreversible word. (209-210)

Barthes himself has made it explicit when he talks about the task of the interpreter and the purpose of the text to be as follows, the text, in its mass, is comparable to a sky, at once flat and smooth, deep, without edges and without landmarks; like the soothsayer drawing on it with the tip of his staff an imaginary rectangle wherein to consult, according to certain principles, the flight of

birds, the commentator traces through the text certain zones of reading, in order to observe therein the migration of meanings, the outcropping of codes, the passage of citations. (Miller 14) An interesting observation made by Jonathan Culler regarding Barthes' hermeneutic process is that "the dominance of hermeneutic elements gives the detective story its coherence" and also helps maintain the unity of the text, at the same time allowing plot, character and description to be "loosely structured" (248). Barthes' S/Z introduced a new way of analyzing prose narratives. An interesting aspect of Barthes the writer is "his constant tendency to probe and undermine his own arguments..." (Onega 267). He realized the shortcomings of the structuralist school of thought and S/Z was instrumental in his drift towards "a post structural position", which he established with the publication of *The Pleasure of the Text* (271).

In *Roland Barthes: Structuralism and After*, Annette Lavers states that there are four phases in Barthes' career as a writer, the first being a period marked by "a statement of general attitudes", the second was his "structuralist period", the third period was "a passage 'from semiology to semanalysis'" and by the fourth phase he became a "message-receiver" (26-27). Graham Allen regards S/Z to be the culminating point where, Barthes's theory of the text is fully articulated and, as a consequence, it is in this seminal work that the move from the structuralist analysis of narratives to a post-structuralist approach to narratives, and indeed to literary language in general, can be fully appreciated. (79) *Mythologies* is the seminal book that elaborated Barthes' open outlook regarding the French culture and society of his days. In other words, Barthes slowly and consciously drifted towards greener pastures by the publication of his *Mythologies*. Jonathan Culler asserts that *Mythologies* helped Barthes to use linguistics to discern "a new perspective on cultural phenomena, and he enthusiastically embraced the possibility of studying all human

activity as a series of ‘languages’” (57). It was during this period that there emerged an impetus in the cultural analysis of the society. According to Martin Mc Quillan, in his *Roland Barthes* states that, “Barthes, knowingly or not, invented cultural studies” (5).

It was a gradual evolution and one must mention the events that assisted in moulding Barthes the culturist. Barthes was a heterogeneous writer and it is this characteristic aspect that gains him readership even today. The point here is that Barthes and Sartre were contemporary figures but Sartre was more of a public figure while Barthes was more of a recluse. Mc Quillan attributes the dynamic shift in Barthes’ writing to the events in Barthes life (12-13). Barthes’ intellectual fervour fostered outside the university because he earned his living by working as a librarian and journalist. He had published his first essay *Writing Degree Zero* during this period. It was his association with Greimas that brought Barthes into the academic arena. Together they had worked at a French university, for a short period. It was Greimas who introduced Saussure to Barthes. Greimas also helped him attain a grant to pursue his research work. Barthes work as a librarian, journalist, a government clerk, and lecturer helped chisel his insights and critical outlook of the French society of his days, by the late 1960’s that Barthes had become a prominent and influential literary figure. Jonathan Culler in his book *Roland Barthes: A Very Short Introduction* notes three significant factors pointed out by Barthes himself about his life. The first was the “undramatic, nagging poverty of a middle-class family in reduced circumstances”, secondly his tuberculosis which “twice prevented him from taking the road to an academic career and, more important, imposed a special way of life” and the third phase was his instable professional period (12-13). Culler relates these biographical incidents to Barthes’ writing pattern. Barthes’ shift from being a critic of French

writers like Michelet and Racine to being a critical analyst of the French culture and society contributed amply to his shifting perspectives.

Although Barthes died in 1980, his contributions to the field of critical theory especially in the field of cultural analysis, lingers on. Barthes association with Philip Sollers led to his contributing in *Tel Quel*, which was predominantly leftist in its outlook. Francois Dosse in his book *History of Structuralism* says that these intellectual associations paved the way for the fruition of “structuralist Marxism” (Glassman 91). Roland Barthes moved by the new developments in Birmingham promoted the technique of interpreting every day culture objects. Jean-Michel Rabate in his *Writing the Image After Roland Barthes* contends that “today's developments in cultural studies and neo-Marxist theories of the media and popular culture ...” (2) can be traced to Barthes’ writing. Richard Johnson et al., note in their work *The Practice of Cultural Studies* that Barthes’ extension of literary analysis to advertisements, wrestling matches, food and architecture was a basis for later textual cultural studies, but he did not question Marxist orthodoxies about the cultural effects of capitalist production. (139) as elaborated above, Barthes the creative writer was responsible for the emergence of interest in what makes up culture. Although he preferred not to relate to any singular line of critical perspective, one can undoubtedly assume that he was the unchallenged master of culture studies during his last days. One may wind off by reasserting Graham Allen’s proposition that Barthes the writer’s impact can be felt by his readers whenever a theorist or a novelist, a philosopher or a photographer, a student in an essay or a designer of an advertisement campaign, does something with the available language which is not expected or not supposed to happen. (140). The first two Langdon series novels have been chosen for analysing the plot structure and the interwoven cultural relations.

The novels rekindled an interest in the interrelations between history, art, science and religion. The fascinating narratives filled with intriguing discoveries and endless thrills have widened his readership. Dan Brown offers his readers refreshing and enlightening reading experiences. As religion is the base upon which Brown has built his thrilling plots, one may discern that the cultural attributes within these works have often made readers rethink and re-evaluate their religious groundings. Popular cultural texts have been instrumental in shaping or shaking the beliefs, structures, or practices of religious groups. Dan Brown's works contain within them a formula of mysteries in which there is a fusion of historicity and fictionality subjecting both into question. The researcher tries to explore these planes within the select texts.

The present study attempts to establish the relationship between the cultural attributes embedded in the texts and the plot progression of the texts. Dan Brown's texts have gripping structures that hitch the reader with a series of questions which lead him on to make certain speculations regarding the possible outcome. A systematic pattern of events and motives can be identified within these texts. Barthes hermeneutic code turns out to be the apt tool not just to see into the discursive world of Dan Brown, but also in enabling to unearth the multiple layers of significations which lie embedded in the folds of the Brownian textual world. The enigma that sets the text on its course, the mysteries and the secrecies that invite the reader onto the baffling ride and the curious resolution that keeps the momentum till the close of the text, become the perfect site for the deployment of the Barthesian code. The The project is divided into five chapters, chapter one titled structuralism and cultural studies is an enquiry into the theories of structuralism connecting it with

cultural studies especially the concept of popular culture, the chapter explores how religious icons rituals scientific truths cultural objects and agencies have been used to contrive the gripping narrative chapter three titled unravelling hermeneutic code in the selected text, charts the enigmatic code within the core respective and elaborates upon the cultural significations in the text and how they are intertwined with the basic themes within each text.

Chapter 1-Structuralism and Cultural studies

Literature and its associates like music, theatre, dance, painting and every other form have always intrigued readers. Reading a text can mean interpreting, inspecting and interrogating the elements within it. The reading process led to the evolution of theoretically studying any text or texts. The twentieth century provided fertile ground for the sprouting of “new perspectives and ways of thinking” (Waugh 3). One major reason for this was the social, political, scientific, philosophical and literary environment of the century. Controversies, discoveries and conflicts of the previous century gave rise to bold experimentations and confutations of hitherto upheld notions. The post war period led to the development of New Criticism with the works of John Crowe Ransom, I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot, Yvor Winters, W.K. Wimsatt and Beardsley have also been included in this school.

Structuralism, as a movement, emerged from the renowned Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s posthumously published book *Course in General Linguistics*. Saussure’s work became a highpoint for structuralism only by the 1950’s primarily because the two world wars made it practically difficult to produce an English translation. Terence Hawkes has mentioned in his work *Structuralism and Semiotics* that the movement “is the result of a momentous historic shift in the nature of perception which finally crystallized in the early twentieth century, particularly in the field of the physical sciences, but with a momentum that has carried through to most other fields”

(6)

Structuralism can be better understood by focusing on how renowned theorists' have defined it. John Sturrock says that: Structuralism in the broadest sense may be said to describe a mode of enquiry common to very many if not all disciplines; Structuralism in the narrow sense is a fairly assertive intellectual movement which came into existence at a particular moment in time and undertook to persuade those of other allegiances that Structuralist methods are the soundest and most productive on offer in such disciplines as linguistics, or history, or literature. (23)

By the 1950's, structuralism encouraged an objective approach towards textual analysis. Structuralism does not claim that by applying the method to a text, one might arrive at its structure. Literature is simply a means "for exploring the complexities of order and meaning" (Culler 308) and the reader deciphers the meaning by studying the text. Structuralism relies on the basic concept that every discourse will have a meaning. They contended that human actions or productions have a meaning and according to them, the novel genre is an apt discourse in and through which the world is articulated. To put it plainly, they focus on the way in which novels participate in the production of meaning. Structuralist criticism deals mainly with the narrative. Lois Tyson has stated in her work *Critical Theory Today* that, "narratives provide fertile ground for structuralist criticism because.... (they) share certain structural features such as plot, setting and character" (220).

John Sturrock in his book *Structuralism* claims that structuralists believed in the dictum that "everything that the text contains has to be seen as of potential consequence..." (116). The text, according to the structuralists contains several signs that can be interpreted in umpteen ways and

the structuralist mode of prose analysis was something that had not been done before (117). A notable aspect of structuralism is that it is objective in its mode of analysis or, in other words, Structuralism paved the way for a wholesome analysis of the text. The structures within the texts are identified and studied to produce meanings. According to Guerin et al., The structuralists have encouraged us to reread, rethink and restudy all literary works and to equate them with all other cultural and social phenomenon-for example, language, landscaping, architecture, kinship, marriage customs, fashion, menus, furniture and politics. (369) This statement throws light on the inherent link between structuralism and Culture Studies.

It was the French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss who first applied the Saussurean linguistic concept in the analysis of cultural phenomena. In his seminal work, *Structural Anthropology*, Levi-Strauss identified repeated motifs and contrasts in analysis of myths of aboriginal people of central Brazil. Levi- Strauss thereafter noted a link between the myths of the world. The technique imbibed by him was the typical structuralist modus operandi of moving from the particular to the general. This is why “most explanations of structuralism identify Levi Strauss as its major founding father” (Guerin et al. 373). Levi-Strauss’ findings triggered a shift from a purely linguistic perspective to a broader cultural view point. In other words, any phenomena, its rituals, ceremonies, dance, food, and so on can be looked at as an organized set of signs or units that have a deeper signification. Semiotics or the science of systems thus became synonymous with structuralism. C.S. Peirce, Charles Morris and Noam Chomsky are a few who have contributed widely to semiotic theory.

Francois Dosse elaborates about the evolution of structuralism in his work entitled *History of Structuralism*. He starts off by referring to how in 1967, many linguists mistook Chomsky to be the person to declare a “radical break with the first structuralist period” (Glassman 3), while he was actually improving upon Saussure’s linguistic concepts. Dosse points out that Chomsky's concern with syntax was perceived at once as a sign of progress, as if a new and long ignored field of analysis was being opened up, but also as a closure, because all other possible approaches-phonetics or semantics, for example-were eliminated. (12) With the advent of structuralism in the 1960’s, linguistics became the standard by which narratives were interpreted especially by Todorov and Barthes. Barthes, had given up the scientific framework of structuralism only to moult into a post structuralist position. In literary theory hermeneutics refers to the theory of textual interpretation. Originally used as a tool to reveal the meaning of Biblical texts, hermeneutics, today has become a technique to interpret secular works. It evolved from structuralism and one may say that the dividing line between these two areas is often thin or invisible, so much so that they tend to intermingle at many places. Bo Pettersson clearly demarcates the distinction between hermeneutics and narratology through his essay “Narratology and Hermeneutics: Forging the Missing Link”. Pettersson gives a rough outline of the development of hermeneutics and structuralism as independent yet similar disciplines. He remarks that Friedrich Schleiermacher, a scholar in religion was the one “who devised the first universal hermeneutics” through his posthumously published work *Hermeneutik*.

By the 1990’s narratology had broadened its borders and began to include within its purview, all human sciences and meanwhile structuralism drifted into post structuralism. Roland Barthes in his essay, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative” had used the structuralist narrative

pattern to analyse narratives. In his later years, Barthes continued his art of interpreting narratives but not in his initial scientific, structuralist mode but in a distinct post structuralist tenor. Plainly speaking, hermeneutics involves interpretation and interpretation means a widened, elaborate reading of the deep structures within a text. Structuralist narratology always focussed on interpretation and analysis of texts and hermeneutics also operates in a similar way. Critics like Brian C.J. Singer in his essay, "Claude Levi Strauss" assert the point that structuralism and hermeneutics can be combined, provided each approach is conscious of its limits when he remarks that, structuralism is deemed better suited to the study of societies whose myths are classificatory and synchronic, and hermeneutics to societies whose myths would narrate a common history, which entails traditions with reservoirs of meaning open to continuous reinterpretation. (258) *Mythologies* is the seminal book that elaborated Barthes open outlook regarding the French culture and society of his days. In other words, Barthes slowly and consciously drifted towards greener pastures by the publication of his *Mythologies*. Jonathan Culler asserts that *Mythologies* helped Barthes to use linguistics to discern "a new perspective on cultural phenomena, and he enthusiastically embraced the possibility of studying all human activity as a series of 'languages'" (57). It was during this period that there emerged an impetus in the cultural analysis of the society. According to Martin Mc Quillan "Barthes, knowingly or not, invented cultural studies" (5). It was a gradual evolution and one must mention the events that assisted in moulding Barthes the culturist.

Cultural Studies, an interdisciplinary approach to the study and analysis of culture, came into being in the late 1960's and 70's. As a field of academic study it finds its beginnings in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, United Kingdom. Critics like Raymond Williams,

Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall to name a few, were instrumental in the development of this field of study. The early works of these writers emerged in the 1970's and it had a New Left touch to it. They, especially Raymond Williams pointed out that the working-class background or culture had no definite role in the literary study programmes at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, England became the melting pot for studies focusing on culture also because of the significant social and political changes in post war Britain. Stuart Hall's essay "Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms" is regarded to be the trendsetter in the arena of Cultural Studies. With this essay began the focus on the cultural identities, relationships within and without the society and discourses. Culture is seen as "a text made of signs and generating meaning" (Nayar 22) and cultural studies analyses the production of meaning.

Today, Cultural Studies is regarded as a discipline that is continuously shifting its interests and methods. Everyday life is still the object of study. Questions related to meaning production are the methods of analyzing the cultures. Cultural Studies area of interest is not limited or restricted to countries, in fact, it has moved across national borders. Transnational Cultural Studies has evolved as a new area of study. Globalization has triggered the mixing, enhancement and expansion of cultural markets. The reach and extent of Cultural Studies is unimaginable. Thus, it is evident that for the Culture Studies scholar, any object of everyday life starting from a soap dish, comb, advertisement, uniform or anything –becomes the focal point for analysis. Literature also comes within the ambit of analysis because a literary text is replete with cultural signifiers. Cultural Studies is regarded to be "a new way of engaging in the study of culture" (Longhurst et al. 1). The substance and method of cultural studies includes the collaboration of different disciplines like

Sociology, History, Geography, English and Anthropology. This interdisciplinary mode of analyzing any cultural text or piece has become one of the key factors in the development of Cultural Studies as a discipline. Culture Studies contains within its purview elements of Marxism, structuralism, post structuralism, feminism, gender studies, political science, sociology, race, postcolonial studies and much more.

By the 1960's Stuart Hall emerged as a significant cultural theorist. The Birmingham University Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies included within its domain the combined ideas of culture analysis derived from Hoggart, Williams, Thompson, and Hall. The Centre served as the meeting place for intellectuals pertaining to different classes which encouraged research in wider areas of culture. Structuralism and Marxism exhibited their stronghold upon cultural readings of the sixties. Storey also refers to the contribution of the Frankfurt School in the emergence of popular culture theory. The Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt was characterised by the writings of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, Leo Lowenthal and Herbert Marcuse. Storey points out that while Arnold feared that popular culture was a threat for the elite, the Frankfurt School believed that it was not so (63). The Frankfurt school studied about power and influence of popular culture upon day to day events. Louis Althusser's contributions have been remarkable in the study of popular culture because he paved the way for reading the texts from ideological perspectives.

Structuralism has been a strong force upon popular culture analysis. The Saussurean principles of language analysis helped chart out the cultural reading of texts. Claude Lévi-Strauss has been the first of the many structuralists who came under the spell of popular cultural reading. Storey substantiates this by saying that "his analysis of myth that is of central interest to the student of

popular culture” (114). Storey also notes how Barthes the structuralist became a post structuralist culture theorist with his essay “The Death of the Author” (126). Storey details the contribution of Derrida and Foucault in moulding popular culture studies. Towards the concluding part of his book, Storey talks about popular culture in the postmodern world, by referring to Jim McGuigan’s claim that “the study of popular culture within the realm of culture studies is in the throes of a paradigm crisis” (213).

In the essay titled “Theorizing Culture, Reading Ourselves: Culture Studies”, Kenneth Womack provides an exhaustive account of the evolution of Culture Studies. He is of the view that “the interpretative lens of cultural studies provides us with means for exploring the cultural codes of a given work, as well as for investigating the institutional, linguistic, historical, and sociological forces that inform that work’s publication and critical reception “(243). Technological advancements of the post war period have promoted the theoretical enquiries pertaining to culture studies. The post structuralist period of the 1980’s, according to Kenneth is marked by the arrival of the multicultural movement. The new right movement of America and Britain initiated discussions upon the political differences or clashes between monoculturalism and multiculturalism which Kenneth terms as “culture wars” (246). The culture wars were aggravated because the period between the 1980’s and 1990’s was an era of globalisation. The wars enhanced interest in the analysis of the heterogeneity of cultures. Kenneth regards the essays of J. Hillis Miller, Iain Chambers and Alan Sinfield, as essays that “demonstrate the interdisciplinary possibilities of cultural studies” and “the theoretical elasticity of the paradigm” as a way to decipher our “ cultural identity” (249).

In their book on *The Practice of Cultural Studies* Richard Johnson et.al, chalk out the methodology of culture studies. They too agree that post modernism has been instrumental in the interdisciplinary trend in culture studies (36-37). They have come up with a cultural circuit diagram to explicate the diverse yet interconnected cultural methods for analysing everyday activity (41). They conclude by stating that “a multiplicity of methods is necessary because no one method is intrinsically superior to the rest and each provides a more or less appropriate way of exploring some different aspect of cultural process” (42). Cultural research thus points towards interpreting texts and encouraging dialogues based on the interpretations. The authors remark that the structuralist analytical technique is the most effective pattern for culture analysis of a text because “Culturally inflected structural readings” will take into account “the wider social and cultural relations that a text seeks to represent or to which it refers” (166).

The impact of structuralism upon culture studies is evident in the works of Claude-Lévi Strauss and Roland Barthes. Strauss was an anthropologist who applied structuralist methods to analyze cultural systems, while Barthes was renowned for the practical application of Saussurean concepts to read culture products. Tudor is of the view that Barthes’ “work on narrative, along with that of other French ‘narratologists’ such as Bremond, Genette, Greimas and Todorov, was crucial in stimulating a growing interest in the subject within cultural studies” (72) and Barthes was responsible for clubbing narratology with structuralism and cultural studies. This is asserted when he adds that, “Just by making narrative into a distinct topic of study in itself, Barthes and the French narratologists did a considerable service to the youthful enterprise of cultural studies” (72-73). Religion provides the foundation for the beliefs, customs, and practices of a society. Popular culture analyses how these topple, disrupt, or revise when new products arrive. Christianity is one

religion where these can envisage, primarily because most of the western culture was “fundamentally Christian” (33). Twentieth century marked the dawn of a de Christianisation in the western culture. Lynch refers to how the Catholic theologian, Tom Beaudoin’s book discusses about reviving western Christianity by seriously focussing upon the ideals or concerns about the populace that are presented through popular culture forms. Lynch affirms that popular artefacts as pop music, TV, computer games, books and the like, have filled up the gap or void generated by the waning impact of traditional religious symbols and practices (35). Bryan S Turner in his book *Religion and Social Theory* says that “contemporary western society is marked by the diverse forms of religion which is the outcome of the “diminution of traditional Christian culture” (200).

Turner contends that this decline is because the Church no longer serves as the power agency that conserves and distributes wealth and property (201). The clergy enjoyed a prestigious and powerful position in the pre capitalist society, and in the present capitalist society, they are just mere spiritual facilitators rather than spiritual leaders and political advisers. The advent of pluralistic society has brought about these changes. Plurality lessens the dependence on church to support and chastise, and it in turn makes things simpler and restriction free. There have been vigorous attempts by religious organizations to bring back the lost faith and popular culture forms like radio, TV, movies, and music are used as vehicles of transformation. In the present era of globalization, the concept of religion has undergone considerable alterations. Mark Juergensmeyer writes in his essay “Nationalism and Religion” that multiculturalism has sprouted as a result of globalization and hence cultural boundaries have overlapped, eroded or merged. “Religion and ethnicity have stepped in to redefine public communities” (360) because there has evolved a growing interest in nationalism. Social theorists like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber

have defined religion and its changing roles in society. Recent theorists like Peter Berger, Rodney Stark and John Caputo have also studied the different aspects of religion. All these definitions underline that religion is a social phenomenon that affects every aspect of human existence and behavior. It is bound to society and hence societal changes or developments will be consequently be reflected through the religion. History has helped us realize that religion has been constantly evolving through varied manifestations like doctrines rituals, worship, architecture, icons, symbols and so on. Variations in beliefs and practices has resulted in the mushrooming of different religions like Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and the like.

There are a number of religions in the world and Nye has pointed out in *Religion: The Basics* that there are certain distinct characteristics like “texts”, “foundational ideas”, “histories” and “identities” that help discern the differences in these religions (8). The differences will widen based on geographical and cultural variation, hence it is difficult to talk about any one religion in particular. It is a known fact that the history of Christianity is marked by the birth and events related to the life of Jesus Christ followed by the establishment of the primitive Christian church. The Bible is the central driving document of Christianity, Andreas Mauz affirms in his essay “Theology and Narration: Reflections on the “Narrative Theology”-Debate and Beyond” that the Bible provides stories relating to genesis, the plight of the chosen people, Jesus Christ, revelation and much more. These narratives helped in the evolution of Christian tradition and in charting out the history of the church (261). The church is the basic element and today there are many subdivisions within Christianity. The subdivisions are based on geographical and cultural distinctions along with specific distinctions in theological beliefs which lead to differences in worship. In the West, the Roman Catholic Church is the oldest institution of Christian faith. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, it is one among “the three major branches of

Christianity” (Cunningham). The researcher has chosen the Roman Catholic Church, a subdivision of Christian faith, as the point of reference to analyse the cultural elements within the texts, specifically because the texts chosen for study deal with characteristics that can be attributed to and pertain to the Catholic faith on a broader plain.

Chapter 2 - Unraveling The Hermeneutic Code In The Selected Texts

The framework of all three novels by Brown taken for study is characterised by the waking up of Langdon due to a distress call, followed by his presence in a crime scenario, his quest to resolve the mystery and the ultimate resolution with a few questions left unanswered. The dexterity of the author lies in the fact that, despite the recurring plot order, the unveiling of the events possess the potential to draw the readers along with the plot progression. Even though Vladimir Propp has listed out thirty-one possible functions and propagated the seven spheres of action, it takes a real effort to produce thrillers with the same protagonist in the same framework of action. This uniqueness of Browns plots is the foci of this chapter.

In his work *S/Z*, Roland Barthes has developed a detailed mode of narrative analysis by breaking the text into five groups or narrative codes. The Balzac's short story *Sarrasine* is split into lexias or units to bring out the narrative pattern inherent in it. Barthes has specified in the opening pages that texts are of two types. The readerly and writerly and he values "writerly" texts (Miller 4) because they provide ample scope for multiple interpretation by their wide array of signifiers. Balzac's story is a text centred on realism and Terence Hawkes mentions in his book *Structuralism and Semiotics* that, "The exercise Barthes performs on Balzac's short story has in essence the effect of turning a 'readerly' text into a writerly' one" (96). The five codes identified by Barthes can be regarded as different means of entering into the text because the text contains a number of signifiers. The reader, while reading can make use of any code as a means of entering the text and unlock the elements within the text. Barthes has already stated that these codes serve as "one of the voices out which the text is woven" (Miller 21).

The present chapter proposes to understand the text by focussing on the form which is in line with Roland Barthes' analytic technique propounded in *S/Z*. Barthes asserts that the hermeneutic code has the primary function of providing an answer to the enigma or problem raised at the beginning of the story, through a series of hermeneutemes and thereby revealing the truth (Miller 75). When Barthes identifies codes within the text, he also mentions that there is no hierarchy pattern among them (75). This is Barthes' way of stating that a text can have multiple layers of meanings. An attempt is made to identify the organisational structure within the texts and mark a common pattern running through all the texts *A&D*, *DVC*, and *TLS*. Dan Brown the writer elaborately plans and researches about the structure of his novels. Aspiring writers usually approached him to get tips on how to write or publish. This made him come up with an outline of tips on writing which Lisa Rogak has mentioned in her book *Dan Brown: The Man Behind The Da Vinci Code* (75). This framework closely parallels Roland Barthes hermeneutic code elements. Brown's aim is to inspire and enlighten his readers and he aims to do so by heightening the element of suspense. The hermeneutic code raises a problem or a question and Barthes says that the answer to this leads to the unravelling of truth. According to Barthes, it is the title *Sarrasine* that "initiates" the question and the ambiguity inherent in the title is resolved by the end of the narrative (Miller 17). Barthes asserts in his analysis that the opening sentence and the title provide the framework for his analysis. Looking at the select texts of Dan Brown, from Barthes' perspective, here too, one can identify the enigmatic issue and its formulation. *A&D*, *DVC*, and *TLS* clearly serve as signifiers that prompt the readers to read and arrive at a probable answer to the meaning implied in the title. The questions raised by each text sums up as follows – Who are the angels and demons? What

distinguishes them from each other? What is the link between Da Vinci and the code in his paintings? What is the lost symbol and why is it called so?

Dan Brown has artfully imbibed real-life experience of Langdon's ordinary days by turning into extra ordinary event filled days. He is distanced from his investigative materials while the reader, on the other hand happens to know that there is an issue somewhere and gets a preview of the scenario into which Langdon is about to delve into. As in a typical classical detective fiction, the readers can sense the amount of emotional disturbance and violent situations that Langdon will be going through in the ensuing chapters and it is contended here that it is Brown's technique of involving the readers right from the start of the text, not only as a passive reader of the text, but also as being the sole supporter of Langdon in his solitary, daunting ordeal.

The opening sentence of A&D begins thus, "Physicist Leonardo Vetra smelled burning flesh, and he knew it was his own (Brown 17)", while DVC flags off with the statement, "Renowned curator Jacques Sauniere staggered through the vaulted archway of the museum's Grand Gallery"(13) and in TLS, Brown starts off with the words uttered by the "thirty -four-year-old initiate," which is , "The secret is how to die" (17) will not fail to notice that all the opening lines describe the death or near-death experience of the main objects of enigma within each text.

Brown's mastery in presenting the puzzling element at the outset is commendable because the development and maintenance of the enigma or suspense is what makes readers proceed through each chapter. Barthes has mentioned in his S/Z that a readerly text can be compared to a musical score (Miller 28) made up of many parts and accordingly, the development of an enigma is really like that of a fugue; both contain a subject, subject to an exposition, a development (embodied in

the retards, ambiguities, and diversions by which the discourse prolongs the mystery), a siretto (a tightened section where scraps of answers rapidly come and go), and a conclusion. (29) The primary texts are known as the Langdon series because they all revolve around the leading protagonist Robert Langdon. Robert Langdon, makes his debut appearance in the novel *Angels and Demons*. Langdon is presented as “a professor of religious iconology at Harvard University” (20) who is picked up from his home on a specially chartered flight to the site where his service is needed most. The text revolves around the theme of science versus Christian belief and Barthes’ hermeneutic code governs the plot construction. The hermeneutic code is the voice of truth because it reveals the enigmatic element within the plot through a series of procedures. The proposition of truth, according to Barthes, is a “well-made” sentence; it contains a subject (theme of the enigma), a statement of the question, (formulation of the enigma), its question mark (proposal of the enigma), various subordinate and interpolated clauses and catalyses (delays in the answer), all of which precede the ultimate predicate (disclosure). (Miller 84)

The hermeneutic code is generally applicable to thriller fiction and Dan Brown’s novels are characterised by their thriller element. It is the suspense element that keeps readers hooked to the novels. The digressions in the plot also adds to the codes as it delays the dawn of truth before the reader. The intricate deployment of the hermeneutemes is not visible to a passive reader, but, to the discerning eye it becomes an unveiling of a series of revelations, that render the text a highly planned and organised structure, simultaneously leaving no room for any voids or gaps.

In *A&D*, *DVC* and *TLS*, the events in the Prologue is narrated by Brown the writer and Langdon’s conversations are presented from chapter one onwards within inverted commas. In all the three texts, once Langdon plunges into full action, then he carries on the narration only to be taken up again towards the close of all events, by Brown the writer. Bal has presented this condition through

the statement, “the narrative voice associates then dissociates itself from, characters who are temporarily focalizing” (29).

Most of the action in the novel takes place in Rome and the Vatican. The vivid description of its geographical features and architectural expertise at one is informative and intriguing, because the reader who gets familiar with the style of Brown can easily anticipate that every information provided is going to be vital at some point in the movement of the plot. The novel is also remarkable for its insights on the group called the Illuminati and on the CERN. The next chapter of the dissertation elaborates on the cultural significance of the place of action, Brown has pleasingly let out the torrent of events by invoking in the readers an essence of tension, doubt, and riveting suspense right from the opening presentations of the three texts. The murder of the lead physicist, Leonardo Vetra sets the pace of the novel and Langdon, the genius symbologist saves the Vatican by unravelling the mystery and disclosing the culprit. The daunting task before the novelist is to arrest the enigmatic element within the text. The hermeneutic code reveals the truth after a series of delays and obstacles. The hermeneutic code constituted of ten elements or hermeneutemes heightens the reader’s curiosity without disturbing the intriguing spirit of the work. The novel comprises of one hundred and thirty-seven chapters, in addition to a prologue. It has been identified that the chapters are interpolated with the hermeneutic code inventory adjacently dotted with cultural objects. The cultural objects are bi functional in the sense that they enhance the reader’s interest by providing welcoming thoughtful insights and aids in sustaining the suspense element for a longer period. The analytical process of the researcher is an amateur’s attempt at discerning the nuances within the readerly text.

Barthes himself has mentioned in *S/Z* that the act of interpretation is not to identify one meaning within a text, because a plural text "... is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signified; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one..." (Miller 5). The whole text is divisible into cultural objects followed by the ten hermeneutemes. Nine cultural object divisions have been identified within the narrative along with the ten steps involved in plot disclosure. The forthcoming chapter will elaborate upon the cultural elements mentioned in the texts and their link with the theme. After the initial cultural setting, the plot now moves along the hermeneutic pathway. The very first stage is that of thematization. Thematization refers to the object of enigma or to what in the narrative is puzzling. The elements of suspense, agony, anxiety, pressure mixed with a tightening feeling keeps the readers glued to each page and this occurs in the second chapter of *A&D*. An attempt has been made here to identify Brown's plots as following a systematic progression corresponding to a dramatic performance. Barthes ten hermeneutemes is divisible into three movements, in Brown's plot development as studied by the researcher. Phase one presents the rising action and it includes the first three hermeneutemes which are thematization, proposal and formulation. Phase two corresponds to the middle action of the plot which includes the stages of snare, equivocation, jamming and suspended answer. The final denouement consists of the last three processes of the plot development which contains the stages of suspended answer, partial answer, and disclosure.

Chapter two presents the object of enigma when Langdon receives a fax message of the Illuminati brand on a human corpse. The narrative has been set in motion when Brown remarks that, Langdon looked again at the fax- an ancient myth confirmed in black and white. The implications were frightening... but the view looked somehow different this morning. As an odd combination of fear

and exhilaration settled over him, Langdon knew he had no choice. (25) The need to resolve the situation demands Langdon's service and so he agrees to the condition put forth by the unknown caller. Although mentioning of the object of enigma is in the early chapter, the second stage of positioning the problem occurs only by Chapter thirteen. Barthes calls it "proposal" (Miller 209) as it refers to an indication in many ways, usually complicated, that there is a mystery or a problem that must resolve. The proposal is a signal that there is an issue within the narrative. Here it is that Langdon learns that the dead man Vetra was a Catholic priest and physicist whose ground breaking discoveries had created many enemies both within and without his circle. Langdon also realises that long clash between science and religion could have been the reason behind the Illuminati instigating Vetra's murder. He examines the corpse and, "... Langdon cried, stumbling back in horror. Vetra's face was covered in blood a single hazel eye stared lifelessly back at him and the other socket was tattered and empty. 'They stole his eye?'(67). The missing eye thereby indicates the presence of a puzzling mystery. Even though the problem is plainly hinted Langdon is still not convinced that the Illuminati could be behind the murder and neither is he aware of what could be the motive of the killer. Clarity is given on the problem by Chapter twenty-seven, which is the formulation stage or the third step. It is in this chapter that Vittoria learns about the Illuminati's involvement in her father's death. The "calling card" (121) of the killer, the ambigram, is the sole evidence for the link. Formulation is the last stage of phase one and it refers to an explicit statement of the enigmatic issue: Her father had been murdered. CERN had suffered a major breach of security. There was a bomb counting down somewhere that she was responsible for. And the director had nominated an art teacher to help them find a mythical fraternity of Satanists. (123)

The next stage occurs only about twenty chapters later but the novelist keeps us on pins with his deft strokes of cultural digressions which is dealt in detail in the next core chapter. The narrative gathers momentum by the fourth stage, which is the first step of the middle of the plot. The object of enigma has already been laid out in Chapter twenty-seven but it is only by chapter forty-five we get a “promise of an answer” (Miller 209). This stage provides a probable reply for the question raised in the first part of the narrative-Who is behind the murder and what are they to do to rescue everyone. When Vittoria’s heart cries out by commenting that if they are able to catch the Illuminati assassin “everything is solved” (A&D 200) and Langdon requests permission to enter Vatican’s Secret Archives to figure out where the cardinals are going to be murdered (202), the possible solution for the problem that evolved at the beginning of the story has been arrived at the next level labelled by Barthes as snare is a misleading stage. The element of suspense elongates by complications or obstacles in the plot. Another term to denote the stage is the fraud stage because the readers were until then, are under the impression that there will be a resolution without much delay. By chapter sixty-two, Vittoria and Langdon realise that they have followed the wrong cue. Suddenly, Langdon tells Vittoria, “I misunderstood the clue. It is not Raphael’s burial site we’re looking for, it’s a tomb Raphael designs for someone else. I can’t believe I missed it...” (282). They were on the trail of seeking the first altar of science and had arrived at the Pantheon by misunderstanding the clue laid by the poem they had got to reveal the site where the cardinals could be located. The subsequent stage is the sixth hermeneuteme, also known as the level of “equivocation or double understanding” (Miller 209) and is close to the fifth stage probably because it is a combination of snare and truth. This stage thickens the enigma and it presents itself in Chapter sixty-five. The gruesomeness of the killer is obvious when Langdon and Vittoria arrive late at the right spot. They had set out to rescue the cardinal but before they arrive, the killer did

the deed. When Brown writes, “Langdon had no idea, but he couldn’t imagine who else it would be...” (304), the readers are now at the crux of the plot, that is the complicated situation sends chills through the reader’s spine. The action runs on smoothly onto the next stage by Chapter sixty-seven. This level is the last step of the middle action.

It is known as “jamming” or “acknowledgement of the insolubility of the enigma” (Miller 209). The events from Chapter sixty-five to chapter sixty-seven are heart pounding in the sense that Brown has artistically maintained the tempo of suspense and tension. By the end of stage seven, there is a feeling of an insolubility of the problem. The reader can sense the helplessness of the protagonist involved in solving the issue. The mystery has become knotty and even more intangible when Langdon examines the branded chest of the first cardinal in the Chigi Chapel and realises that there are three more victims waiting for the ordeal by the killer within the next few remaining hours. When Vittoria tries to console Langdon, that they could catch hold of the killer in the next attempt, Langdon indirectly admits his defeat or incapability for not being able to save the cardinal which can be understood from the following words, “There is no next time! We missed our shot!” (A&D 316). Brown has interpolated the scenes with adjacent chapters which divert the reader’s attention to the Conclave going on at Vatican. Brown the master plotter has kept up the moment of suspense puzzling by juxtaposing Langdon’s actions with the movement and conversation of the journalists Glick and Marci.

The last phase of the hermeneutic code is subdivided into three divisions, of which, the “suspended answer” (Miller 75) is the first step. It is at this stage, in chapter ninety-three that there is an interruption in the pathway of disclosure. Langdon has almost succeeded in tracing the clues placed

by the killer, but there occurs a hindrance to the complete answer- Langdon the only one capable of resolving the issue is shot by the murderer, he manages to escape but only ends up being trapped “amidst a pile of bones” (A&D 417). The ninth stage is known as “partial answer” (Miller 210) and the researcher locates it to be in Chapter One hundred eighteen of the novel. The Camerlengo reveals that the dreadful antimatter is placed on St Peter’s tomb by the Illuminati, probably to destroy the “core of Christendom” (A&D 529) and by the next chapter he emphatically says that he was ready to risk his life to save the Church. The drama following the retrieval of the antimatter canister keeps up the suspense characteristic till the answer is arrived by the last five chapters of the text.

The final stage is that of revelation or as Barthes says “disclosure” or “decipherment” (Miller 210). The whole truth behind all the previous enigmatic situations, is unfurled through the last five chapters of the novel that is from chapter one hundred and thirty-three to one hundred and thirty-seven. The reader gets an answer to all the doubts and unanswered questions. The question raised at the beginning of the text is as to who killed Vetra and why was it done. The truth is revealed to a close circle of cardinals within the Sistine Chapel by Langdon and Vittoria. The cardinals come to know that the chief instigator of all the incidents that occurred at the Vatican was the Camerlengo. He learns in the first phase of revelation that he was the Pope’s son from the words of Mortati. This disturbs him tremendously and Brown expresses the shock as follows “The Camerlengo covered his eyes, trying to block out the words. He stood paralyzed on the altar. Then, with his world yanked from beneath him, he fell violently to his knees and let out a wail of anguish” (A&D 596). The grief stricken and guilt ridden Camerlengo’s confession and crafty plotting is elaborated in the next chapter. He gives up his life but the public gathered outside the Vatican

in the St Peter's Square, know nothing about the drama that occurred within and for them it was just an eventful miraculous evening. Brown concludes the chapter in the following manner: It raged for what seemed like an eternity, the whole world bearing witness.... The camerlengo was gone. Whether he had collapsed behind the balustrade or evaporated into thin air was impossible to tell. All that was left was a cloud of smoke spiraling skyward over Vatican City. (606) In Chapter one hundred and thirty-five, Brown presents Cardinal Mortati placing the ash filled urn of the camerlengo by the side of the Pope's dead body. For the world the events of the previous night were awe ridden but the readers know very well that Mortati had covered up things wisely, leaving no trace of doubt regarding the death of the camerlengo. Towards the close of the novel, all loose ends are tied- Mortati has been elected as the new Pope, the news reporters declare the death of four cardinals and officers and thereby they help in moulding a new version of the truth. The last chapter's opening lines, closely parallel with the first lines of the opening chapter. Langdon's reverie is mentioned in both chapters. High atop the steps of the Pyramid of Giza a young woman laughed and a younger man!" Her smile was magic. He struggled to keep up, but his legs felt like stone. "Wait," he begged. "Please..." As he climbed, his vision began to blur. There was a thundering in his ears. I must reach her! But when he looked up again, the woman had disappeared. In her place stood an old man with rotting teeth. The man stared down, curling his lips into a lonely grimace. Then he let out a scream of anguish that resounded across the desert.(19) Brown has ended where he began. "Robert Langdon awoke with a start from his nightmare"(19), while in the closing chapter, he hears someone knocking at the door of his hotel room (615).

The first call was to ask him to resolve the mystery while the last one was to offer him a token of

appreciation for all the service he did. The main issue is resolved but Brown the writer has left many things unanswered probably he has, like Langdon, no called down to him. “Robert, hurry up! I knew I should have married a younger man!” Her smile was magic. He struggled to keep up, but his legs felt like stone. “Wait,” he begged. “Please...” As he climbed, his vision began to blur. There was a thundering in his ears. I must reach her! But when he looked up again, the woman had disappeared. In her place stood an old man with rotting teeth. The man stared down, curling his lips into a lonely grimace. Then he let out a scream of anguish that resounded across the desert.

(19) Brown has ended where he began. “Robert Langdon awoke with a start from his nightmare”(19), while in the closing chapter, he hears someone knocking at the door of his hotelroom (615). The first call was to ask him to resolve the mystery while the last one was to offer him a token of appreciation for all the service he did. The main issue is resolved but Brown the writer has left many things unanswered probably he has, like Langdon, no interest to “shatter the wonderment with scandal and doubt” (617). He closes off by providing a key to his next novel (620). Brown matures by the time he writes his next novel DVC .The codes are systematically organized in this novel and this is why Stephen Clark asserts in his book *The Da Vinci Code On Trial: Filtering Fact and Fiction* that, “Dan Brown is an extremely gifted writer: he knows how to create believable characters, maintain suspense and hold interest all the way through” (20). The organisational pattern of this work makes it much more structured than the first Langdon series work. This piece too proceeds with a prologue which presents the enigmatic element but also establishes the link between the central theme of the text and its structure. The thematic aspect of this text is about the significance of icons in establishing and developing religion. The primary site of action is the Louvre Museum in Paris which houses classic art pieces and Langdon, as in the previous text, is woken from his slumber by an urgent telephone call.

In A&D, the object of enigma is presented earlier in the second chapter but in DVC, the thematization stage occurs only in chapter eight. Brown has packed the early pages with cultural objects which will be elaborated in the next chapter. As in the first text, here too Langdon is called to find out the mystery behind the murder of the chief curator Sauniere. It is the message left by the dead man, that provides the puzzling object. The message appeared to be a random text which included digits and letters which makes Langdon realise that “it would take him hours to extract any symbolic meaning” (65). The ambiguity and unlikeliness of the message triggers a long trail of secret codes that must be deciphered before he arrives at the final truth. Barthes says that the second hermeneuteme, which is named as proposal, “tells us, in one way or another, “There is an enigma,”” (Miller 31). This occurs in the text only after a comparatively longer gap than in the first text, that is it is only by chapter thirty of *The Da Vinci Code* that the reader gets an indication that there is a mystery. Here, Langdon reads the note but, initially, he does not have any inkling as to what it might be pointing towards. He engages in a series of assumptions as to what it might mean but only arrives at Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous sketch, *The Vitruvian Man*. Sophie Neveu, the curator’s grand daughter and a cryptologist by profession, reads the coded message on Mona Lisa’s face and decodes it by this chapter. She gets a key from behind the “*Madonna of Rocks*” painting and Brown comments that, “Sophie now realized that the entire purpose of tonight’s word game had been this key” (180). The thrill is maintained when Brown describes the adventurous escape of Langdon and Sophie from the Louvre Museum(182).

Five chapters later, we arrive at the last step of the rising action of the narrative. The stating of the problem is seen in the third stage labelled by Barthes as “formulation” (Miller 31). Langdon and

Sophie are out of the museum, they manage to slip away from the officers who were closely following them. They study the key and find out that there was an address inscribed on at the back of the key. When Brown says that, “Sophie looked back at the key and wondered what they would possibly find at 24 Rue Haxo” (DVC 209), we are at the juncture where the enigmatic element of the narrative is plainly presented. The initial ground work is laid and the narrative moves on faster by the mid-section. As in the first text, the middle stage of the hermeneutic code development in DVC too is the most spirited section of the text. Chapter forty presents us with the fourth hermeneutemes which is as Barthes called “promise of an answer” (Miller 210) for the question raised in the first section. When Brown says, “At least the mystery was solved. Sophie and Langdon were holding the key to a Swiss bank deposit box” (DVC 231), the readers are relieved that a probable reply has been arrived at. The peace is disturbed when by Chapter forty-four, we arrive at the fifth stage or the snare stage. The truth is not arrived at easily, it is delayed at many places and this stage delays the outcome by providing a misleading reply. Sophie and Langdon get access to her late grandfather’s secret bank locker and get to see a mysterious container, which they misjudge to be the chalice but upon opening the box, as Brown writes, “The object inside was unlike anything Langdon had ever seen. One thing was immediately clear to both, however. This was definitely not the Cup of Christ” (256). The enigma is unresolvable in chapter forty-six. This stage is the sixth hermeneuteme propounded by Barthes and a combination of snare and truth or the equivocation. The reader’s attention is drawn towards Silas, the man who murdered Sauniere, under the orders he received his patron Bishop Aringarosa. Silas undertakes the mission by considering it to save the Church and when he fails to do it well, he loses his confidence. As revealed by Brown, Silas cries out that “I have failed the church. Far worse, I have failed the bishop” (262). This stage highlights the equivocation stage because just as the readers are consoled

that the mystery will be resolved within a few moves, it wavers between the truth by confusing or delaying it even more. This delay is heightened when Chapter fortysix ends with the Teacher's statement that, "... The secret lives. Jacques Sauniere transferred information before he died. I will call you soon. Our work tonight is not yet done" (264). Chapter forty-eight of the text brings us to the seventh stage where the insolubility of the mystery is presented. This is known as the jamming hermeneuteme and which Barthes himself has said is commonly found in detective fiction (Miller 47). Barthes has further claimed that this jamming code is the masterpiece (115) because it classically stops the disclosure of truth. Brown's texts as already explained by the researcher in the introductory chapter of the thesis, bears characteristics or features common to detective fiction. Langdon has almost arrived at the point of unknitting the complicated codes, but when he thinks aloud that, "A piece of this puzzle is missing" (DVC 278), one will not fail to recognise the tone of an admission of defeat from his words. Barthes labels the suspended answer stage as the eighth hermeneutic code and according to him it is so because there is "an aphasic stoppage of the disclosure" (Miller 75). The difference between this and the previous code is that, in the earlier jamming stage there was a feeling of insolubility but by this stage there is an interruption of the discovery. The narrative is on the verge of winding off and another remarkable aspect of the narrative is that the element of suspense is continued without interruptions. In other words, chapter sixty-four and sixty-five smoothly glide over without breaking the enigmatic element. The earlier hermeneutic codes would be revealed only after a break and the break was always presented by the chapters that dealt with cultural objects pertaining to the main theme. Brown has kept up the intriguing suspense element by balancing the structure with the main quest or thread line of the story. A few chapters later, the narrative will tie up all the loose ends of the plot but before that the readers are furnished with a series of information about the Holy Grail, the Opus Dei, The Priory

of Sion, to name a few. It is in this chapter that Teabing, “a religious historian” (DVC 290) and an expert on the Grail legend, presents the significance of the code in Da Vinci’s painting titled “The Last Supper” to Sophie and Langdon at his house. While they were conversing Silas breaks into their room and holds all three of them at gunpoint only to be shortly outwitted by Teabing (369). After the initial confusion, Langdon remarks that the note on the inlay he had removed from the box might tell them “how to open the keystone” (370).

The excitement to arrive at the answer leads us to Barthes’ “partial answer” hermeneuteme (Miller 210) and that happens in chapter seventy-eight. A series of events helps Langdon and his friends unlock each code and the message in the cryptex gives them an assurance that they were on the right track. The readers also realise, along with Langdon that “... Teabing’s plan to come to Britain was going to pay off” (426). As in *A&D*, here too Langdon and his female companion set out to resolve the mystery by unknowingly tagging the main culprit along with them. In the first text it was the camerlengo who knew their moves, while in the second text it is Teabing. He, like the camerlengo gives the readers and Langdon the impression that he is their accomplice, but the truth is revealed in both these works only towards the second last stage of plot development. The declarations made by the camerlengo on the church and science, in *Angels and Demons* can be closely paralleled with Teabing’s statements on the secret hidden behind Da Vinci’s paintings and its impact upon Christian beliefs. The final disclosure stage occurs in the Epilogue of the novel. In *A&D*, the last five chapters of the text presented the final disclosure while, Brown’s maturity is unveiled when in *DVC*, he does so by presenting the answer to the many questions that evolved in the initial stages of the narrative. The closing part of *DVC* flags off by referring to Langdon’s startled awakening from his dream and one is spontaneously

reminded of the first chapter when Langdon is awoken from his sleep slowly. Both these chapters refer to the “HOTEL RITZ PARIS” monogram on the bathrobe “hanging on his bedpost” (17) and “beside his bed” (585). Waking from sleep seems to be Brown’s way of plunging his hero into full action as we will see in *The Lost Symbol* too that there are episodes in the beginning and at the end of the story where Langdon wakes from his daydream or sleep.

The disclosure stage, according to Barthes is like the denouement stage of a drama (Miller 188), what had been delayed so far through snares or jamming, has now been completed. The first step of revelation in this text, occurs when Langdon walks out of Hotel Ritz, in search of an answer to the many questions that were clogged in his mind. The researcher contends that when Brown notes that Langdon went “...directly out of the front door into the gathering Paris night” (585), it is the initial stage of disclosure. Again, a little later, Brown adds the statement that, “The revelations were coming now in waves” (586), and the researcher summates that it indicates the second stage. The third step of revelation is when Langdon is moving towards the Louvre Pyramid and he could feel the “Rose Line beneath his feet, guiding him, pulling him toward his destination” (587). The excitement rushes in the readers, when by the fourth stage of revelation, “Langdon felt himself awoken fully now to the thrill of unthinkable possibility” (588). The last and final stage of disclosure is evident when Langdon “understood the true meaning of the Grand Master’s verse” (589), and that occurs when he is at the Louvre Museum. When Brown closes off by bringing Langdon to the Louvre Museum, the readers are immediately reminded of the time and place mentioned in the Prologue. Brown has deftly merged the opening scene with the concluding scene of the whole narrative. The study attempts to examine the structural framework of Brown’s novels and thereby decipher that the texts contain a similar plot progression. An elaborate examination of

the novels' structure illustrates that there is a symmetrical pattern in them. To put it plainly, the similarity in pattern also helps substantiate the researcher's hypothesis that Brown is an ingenious plot designer. The study also helps discern that the recurrent narrative pattern does not in any instance create monotony in the process of reading because, with each text, Brown has improved upon his way of presenting the events categorically, at the same time creatively balance the framework of action according to Barthes' code.

Chapter 3 -Analyzing The Cultural Elements In The Selected Texts

Dan Brown offers his readers refreshing and enlightening reading experiences probably because religion is the base upon which Brown has built his thrilling plots and one may discern that the cultural attributes within these works have often made readers rethink and re-evaluate their religious beliefs. The Bible has been the core text of Christian theological studies and the latter half of the twentieth century brought about a sudden emergence of Biblical figures in popular literature texts. A retelling or revision of Biblical tales has in turn brought about an innumerable amount of interpretations and critical reviews in the academic circle where The Bible is regarded as a text outside the boundaries of religion. Elaine. M Wainwright mentions in the Introduction of the collection of essays titled *The Bible in/and Popular Culture: A Creative Encounter* that one of the reasons for the evolution of their collection of essays is that, “popular culture has been a significant arena for the analysis and interpretation of contemporary biblical interpretation”(3).

Architecture, Icons, Symbols, Rituals, Secret societies and much more constitute the framework for religious beliefs and cultural dissemination. This has been used in all works of fiction in varying degrees but what makes Brown’s texts remarkable is how skilfully he has employed secret societies, codes, hidden mysteries, icons and symbolic objects to produce a thriller fiction. A significant point to be mentioned here is that the technologically advanced twitter generation read Brown’s writings and he has mastered the art of getting his books sold by incorporating much that caters to the readers of today Brown has used diagrammatic representations, algebraic symbols,

and inscriptions in different fonts within the folds of his text and so one can undoubtedly label Brown's novels as a multimodal novel. Wolfgang Hallet mentions in his essay "The Multimodal Novel: The Integration of Modes and Media in Novelistic Narration", about a new form of novel, "the multimodal novel", that evolved during the last twenty years, which "incorporate a whole range of non-verbal symbolic representations and non-narrative semiotic modes" (129). Hallet goes on to say that, "multimodality is a communicative practice that incorporates various modes and media in discursive acts of meaning-making or in the cultural negotiation of meaning... (140)". The employment of these aids has made it a means for the reader to frame new meanings about objects he sees around him and thereby widen his perceptions and perspectives. Apart from the verbal and nonverbal significations, Dan Brown's works also contain within them a formula of mysteries mixed with historical aspects and realistic issues. An attempt is made to explore these facets within the select texts.

In DVC, as Langdon is on his way to the museum, he nonchalantly thinks of what he told his symbology students about "the world as a web of profoundly intertwined histories and events" (28). Here, Brown is delicately pointing towards icons and symbols that form an integral part of the cultural history of religions, in this case it is Christianity. It is found that most of the cultural attributes in the first text A&D pertain to science and culture. Debates and studies on the intersection between science and religion have been going on for quite a long time. Christianity focusses on the dialogue between science and religion and one may have to add here that Christianity is not the only religion that engages in discussions. J. B. Stump and Alan G. Padgett have remarked in the introductory chapter of their edited book *The Blackwell Companion to*

Science and Christianity that historically speaking, Christianity "... has been the dominant religious system interacting with modern science, because of the dominance of the Christian faith when early modern science got going in Europe" (xviii). The novel *Angels and Demons* galvanises upon the central debate between science and religion. The text contains an array of cultural objects pertaining to the field of scientific knowledge. When Vittoria remarks that, "Science tells me God must exist. My mind tells me I will never understand God. And my heart tells me I am not meant to..." (134), Brown presents an invigorating statement on the issue of faith, religion, and belief in the contemporary world. The seventeenth century paved the way for rapid scientific inventions like the telescope, microscope, and thermometer, barometer, pendulum clock and the air pump. Scientific discoveries disturbed the power balance of the church and thus ensued a raging war between science and religion. Brown asserts in *A&D* that, If our Christian Churches are to give our society what it needs, a system of enlightened beliefs which is not at odds with contemporary science and which will lead us to a more coherent view of the world, then they should actively welcome science as an ally. (183) The text only affirms that science and religion are not at odds with each other, it is a misinterpreted reading of scientific discoveries that triggers trepidation within the religious circle. Towards the end of the narrative, when Vittoria says that, "We all seek God in different ways... Religions evolve! The mind finds answers, the heart grapples with new truths (585)", she was actually being Dan Browns' mouthpiece voicing the solution for ending the discord between science and religion.

In *A&D*, The Prologue and first Chapter provide the primary cultural objects pertaining to science and religion. Langdon, the leading protagonist in the text, is presented as man whose house resembled "an anthropology museum" and "His shelves were packed with religious artifacts from

around the world...”(21). The Great Pyramid of Giza (19) initiates the conglomeration of science and religion followed by religious artefacts like the “ekuaba from Ghana” and the “cycladic idol from the Aegean” (21) and the word “Illuminati”(23) branded on the corpse, constitute the major cultural objects at the outset of the text. Each cultural artefact, identified in this section, has a particular significance that blends well with the central theme of science and religion. Egypt has been the cradle of the world’s oldest civilisation and the Great Pyramid of Giza has always been an architectural wonder. “It is a testament to human ingenuity and strength, and its size and near-perfect proportions must have been awe-inspiring to behold” (Writer873). The pyramid functioned as a necropolis for the Egyptian kings. The ancient Egyptian monuments provide ample proof of the fact that the Egyptians were well advanced in science and technology. The pyramids are also evidence for the mathematical prowess of the ancient Egyptians. In A&D, Langdon dreams that a young woman is standing on the top steps of The Pyramid at Giza, and encouraging him to come towards her, but as he approaches her, “In her place stood an old man with rotting teeth”(19). This vision is immediately followed by Langdon waking up and noticing his reflection in the window and thinking “that his youthful spirit was living in a mortal shell”(21).

The point of enquiry here is as to why Brown has mentioned objects related to fertility rites and burial at the outset. It may be surmised that these may prepare the reader for the catacomb scenes which are to figure later in the narrative. Death in many cultures is an indication of rebirth. Death rituals have proved that death or afterlife is something that has always perplexed the ancients. Science has helped in delaying death caused by sickness and pain; hence people have shifted their allegiance to scientific knowledge rather than spiritual or philosophical knowledge. The untimely death of the Pope of Vatican paves the way for summoning a conclave to elect the new Pope. Death

and fear are the driving elements in the narrative of *Angels and Demons*. The missing antimatter canister is supposed to be in the St Peter's Basilica, Vatican and Langdon and Vittoria arrive at Vatican to save the city from being destroyed. When Langdon notices the word *Illuminati* marked on the chest of the dead man's body, he was totally disturbed. Brown adds that, "Instantly, the breath went out of him. It was like he had been hit by a truck" (23). It is only by chapter nine that the readers understand through Langdon's explanations to Kohler that the *Illuminati* refers to a secret brotherhood "dedicated to the quest for scientific truth" and they met "secretly to share their concerns about the church's inaccurate teachings" (50). Secret societies generally function under the pretext of modifying the society and alleviating fears imposed upon society by overpowering religious systems. It was the dawn of renaissance and later movements like Enlightenment that promoted free and open thinking which enabled breaking away from organised religion. The *Illuminati* brotherhood, founded by Adam Weishaupt, to promote free and radical thinking, was inspired by the ideals of enlightenment.

He was disillusioned by the state machinery and strongly felt that a secret society was necessary to uphold freedom of thought. Weishaupt was born in Bavaria, a part of Germany, and he believed that the conservative Catholic Church and monarchy were repressing freedom of thought. Gordon Lynch refers to Roland Barthes' essay "Death Of an Author" in his book titled *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, where he affirms Barthes' argument about interpretation by saying that, "The act of interpretation, of finding meaning in a text, is not therefore made possible by discerning the mind or intentions of the author, but by the act of reading the collection of signs, symbols, images, and sounds in front of us" (137). Such an act of interpretation has been undertaken here by reading the cultural significations in the text. The title of the novel *Angels & Demons* also

provides a way for the cultural reading of the text. Angels and demons are regarded to be complementary figures. Similarly science and religion can be regarded to be complementary aspects. The text contains characters that house angelic and demonic attributes. It is left to the reader to discern who justifies the title. Brown has wisely kept away from making any judgemental remarks about the characters or even about the central debate revolving around science and religion. Dan Brown's second Langdon series novel *The Da Vinci Code* revolves around the mystery behind Leonardo Da Vinci's painting. It is set forth in the thesis that the text has maintained its intrinsic element of suspense by carefully balancing the narrative with cultural significations that reveal the link between religion and symbols or icons. The text achieved more success than his first Langdon series novel, because of the secret codes and conspiracies mentioned in it. The mystery or secret elements in the text, have not been formed part of this study. Instead, it is a steady analysis of the points of cultural significations in the text that have been carefully laid out by the author. Brown has improved from his first text as it is clearly evinced in the layout of the plot narrative. The present chapter presents how the author has set all the icons or symbols pertaining to religion in a systematic and coherent manner. Another notable point is that in the previous text (*A&D*), the central argument of the text (science-religion) was clearly defined in the nineteenth chapter but in *The Da Vinci Code* it is hinted much earlier in chapter three. In *The Da Vinci Code* the first set of cultural objects are placed right from the Prologue to Chapter seven. The Louvre Museum (13), Hotel Ritz (17), church of Eglise de Saint Sulpice (24), April (24), Paris (18), astrology (32), Delphi (38), bishop's ring (45) pentacle (55), Venus (57) and apple (64) are the cultural signifiers establishing the interrelationship between religion and symbols. Brown makes an honest statement about symbols and their meaning in this part of the text when his

character Langdon says that, “Symbols carry different meanings in different settings” (56). This sentence is the cue for the analysis of cultural objects that serve as symbols related to religion.

All the incidents in the novel happen in Paris and the Louvre Museum (13) sets off the action. Museums are a culturally relevant locale since it is the site where artefacts are arranged or exhibited for public viewing in a pattern. Viewing these pieces will acclimatise the viewers to the world displayed before them and thereby create new meanings. Michelle Henning mentions in her book *Museums, Media, and Cultural Theory* that it is only by the late eighteenth century that “museums presented their objects as the wealth of peoples and nations rather than of individuals” (12). Henning says that museums served as a symbol for nation building through worship of artefacts displayed in the museum. She explains that the objects presented in the museum will attain a role when they turn out to be objects or symbols that initiate awe, regard, and discourses. Michelle refers to Karl Marx’s commodity fetishism concept to substantiate her argument (8). In the text under study, the curator of the museum is found dead and Langdon, the symbologist arrives at the location to find an answer to the codes or symbols left by the dead man.

Langdon has arrived at Paris (DVC17) to “talk about the power of symbols” (20) at the American University of Paris. On his way to see Sauniere’s body, Langdon was reminded of the promise he and Vittoria had made and that was to meet again at any “romantic spot on the globe” and the Eiffel Tower in Paris “would have made their list” (28). Brown is presenting the cultural significance of Paris alongside with how Langdon, the American symbologist’s presence in Paris becomes mandatory (22). Paris has always been one among the most charming cities of the world. According to the contributors of the article “Paris”, the city earned the title “The City of

Light” because of its cultural and intellectual significance. They write that Paris became a prominent political, religious, and cultural hub during the reign of the Capet Dynasty. Other than the Eiffel Tower, Brown mentions many other prominent artistic creations like the “Tuileries Garden” (29), the “Arc du Carrousel” (30), the “four finest museums in the world” (30), which included the site of action, the Louvre Museum, the church of Saint –Sulpice (24) the Bois de Boulogne(212), “The Depository Bank of Zurich”(236),the Chateau Villette (295). The narrative passes through all these spots and Brown’s details about each of them makes the reading process all the more exciting and enlightening. Many religions around the world have the three-fold representation of God. The concept of trinity was known amongst the Persians, Hindus, Egyptians and Babylonians and it emerged from the worship of the Sun God. Religions imbibed into the cultural activities of the people in the form of symbolic representations like the trident (Issitt 69). The trinity also represents the triple goddesses in many cults and “the trinity of womanhood was an ancient archetype that linked the lives of women to the greater patterns of nature”(504). DVC speaks about the sacred feminine and associated symbolism of the number three, hence trinity as a cultural symbol establishes how it is present in religions around the world. The next symbol is “the heavily forested park known as the Bois de Boulogne” (212). To reach the address mentioned on the back of the key (209), Langdon and Sophie must drive through the pathways of the park which was once a “forest and royal hunting reserve” (“Bois De Boulogne”). The large forested area was under the direct control of the royalty but in 1854, according to Richard S Hopkins’ article, “From Place to Espace: Napoleon III’s Transformation of the Bois de Boulogne”, when opened into a park for the public, the park became “the epicentre of Parisian society”. Forests have always been associated with the Divine probably because forests contain trees which are symbols of life. In the article “Forest and Tree Symbolism in Folklore” Judith Crew notes that, “Trees have

frequently held great religious significance...” and she explores the different realms of interpreting the religious and cultural significance of forests.

It is while they traverse through the Bois de Boulogne that Langdon provides details about the legends related to the Knights Templar, The Grail and The Priory of Sion (DVC 212-222). Brown thus uses the forest as the fitting locale to narrate the history of the symbols thereby presenting the religious significance of all the symbols mentioned in the story. China and Greece. In DVC, Brown focusses upon the hidden Sacred Feminine and he has aptly used Sophie, the female protagonist in the text to decipher the writing on her grandfather’s rosewood box. Thus, we understand that cultural attributes identified in the text like religion and science, religion and symbols, religion, and rituals, blend well into the fold of the text to give the text its aesthetic and structural coherence. Maria La Monaca writes in her essay “Literature” included in the subsection of the main topic “Popular Culture and Catholicism”, about Dan Brown’s novel DVC being an example of “how effective popular fiction can be for disseminating ideas about religion, not just for the purposes of slander and stereotype, but also for defending one’s faith and sharing an alternative worldview” (658). The remark can be applied to all the texts selected for study because as elaborated above each text provides an “alternative worldview” of the hidden connectivity between religion and culture. Hilary.P. Dannenberg writes in *Coincidence and Counterfactuality That*, The pleasure of the reading experience can therefore be grasped by conceiving of it as a journey of exploration into a new world—a journey whose very attraction resides in the exhilaration of jumping across and transgressing ontological boundaries and mentally relocating oneself far away from one’s true spatiotemporal or ontological level. (21) This statement summates the reading experience the

reader gets while reading the first three Langdon series texts of Dan Brown. Each text is a journey marked by revelations, assimilations, and relocations on the part of the reader.

Conclusion

The primary objectives of the thesis has been to identify the narrative pattern prevalent in the primary texts by employing Barthes' hermeneutic code. This in turn leads to an exploration of the structural pattern evident in the two texts under focus. The next objective is to identify the cultural objects, symbols, and ritual aspects within the text. The analysis and identification of the cultural attributes helps to establish a link between the plot structure and throws light on how each attribute blends. In other words, it helps to highlight how the structure of the narrative goes hand in hand with the cultural objects, thereby revealing the mastery of the novelist in contriving a techno thriller.

Dan Brown studies hitherto have focused on the controversial aspects that the novels touch upon. The present research is a study of the organizing pattern within the novels and for that the structuralist method has been employed. Structuralism evolved initially in the field of linguistics and hence a structuralist analysis is scientific in approach and presentation. An attempt has been made to unleash the narrative organization of the select texts and hence the modus operandi is essentially scientific, although the text is literary. Dan Brown's texts have an element of mystery inherent in them and these mysteries are blended with religion. Religion is the backdrop of each text and different aspects of religion are presented in each text. Each of the texts selected have a spellbinding structure and the researcher has identified that there is a regular pattern in which the episodes are arranged to establish and maintain the element of suspense and thrill. It has been identified that this pattern corresponds to the hermeneutic code defined by Roland Barthes. While unlocking the element of mystery, every reader is transported into the world of twists and turns

that augment the suspense characteristic of the text. Another observation is that Brown has employed religion related aspects to delay and design the unfolding of the mystery and the findings of the study are elaborated in the ensuing paragraphs.

The first finding is the similarity in the plot outline of the two texts under study. In all the two texts, the lead figure, Langdon is awakened from a disturbing dream followed by a call from the site of crime at an unusual hour. The only difference noted is that with each call he is at different times of wakefulness. For example, in the first text, A&D, he “awoke with a start from his nightmare” (19), while in DVC, the opening line of the first chapter is “Robert Langdon awoke slowly”(17). Another aspect noted is that Dan Brown as a writer improves his writing technique with each text and makes a reference to earlier texts and future texts in the text he writes. For example, in A&D, we have a gist of the next book DVC when Langdon remarks that he was doubtful whether he was “the kind of man who could have a religious experience” (A&D 620). When it comes to DVC, Langdon is reminded of Vittoria when he sees the Eiffel Tower in France (28) and when he is reminded of his experience in the Vatican library (53). In other words, Brown the writer matures with each of the Langdon series selected for analysis. The first novel is the bulkiest in the sense that it starts with a Prologue and concludes with the hundred and thirty seventh chapters, whereas, DVC, too begins with a Prologue but ends with an Epilogue and there are about a hundred and five chapters in between. In the latter texts, Brown has mentioned the time and place of action while in the first text, this is not indicated. The texts have religion or church as its backdrop but thorough reading of the texts show that the author speaks about the common characteristics of religions around the world. Interconnectedness is the mantra of Dan Brown the writer, as observed in his plot and thematic presentation. The texts

revolve around the pivot of religion but what makes each work distinct is that each one delves on specific features like the link between science and religion, symbols and religion and ritual and religion. Each of the texts present Langdon as the person who unfolds the enigmatic issue, but he is assisted by three different women in each of the text. Langdon is connected to a dead man or mutilated man in the text and it is the harm done to them that brings him to the site of action. In resolving the complicated problem, Langdon is assisted, each time by a female figure who is either the daughter, granddaughter or even sister of the man who is or has been in distress. Each action takes place in a different site and these locales are culturally significant spots. The spectacular descriptions of the monuments and other important sites in each of the locale has made the reading even more fascinating. Another notable factor of the story world formulated by Brown is that the antagonists are not ordinary human beings. Each one is under the wrong notion that killing or hurting a person will help them attain greater heights. Brown, the writer might be expressing his philosophy as a writer through these dark figures. Each one is drawn into the crime under the influence of another person or situation and although the readers are relieved when they are removed from the scene, there seems to be no feeling of disgust or aversion towards them.

Brown has succeeded in presenting the gravity of the crime and channelling the reader's attention towards the crime rather than upon the criminal who is basically just an innocent figure. Each of the criminals are focussed and dedicated in their mission and Brown has excelled in charting out these characteristics as the story unfolds. Alongside the antagonists, another significant entity in the plot development is the presence of the officers who are present at the site of the crime, along with Langdon to solve the issue. Each of them, be it Olivetti with his eyes that burned with "hardened determination" (A&D153), or Fache with his "unmistakable authority" (DVC 33), are

presented as figures who have the capacity to get things done their own way. They are formidable figures initially but towards the last part of the text, the readers understand that they are on Langdon's side. This is another technique of Brown identified in the text. Brown has been able to focus the reader's attention upon these formidable figures and alongside, he has deftly veiled the movements of the real instigator of all the events who happen to be the camerlengo (A&D) and Teabing (DVC) respectively. Another common factor in the three texts is that Langdon the problem solver also turns out to be the best secret keeper. In each of the texts, Langdon is considered worthy enough to be privy to the secrets known only by the persons included in the inner circle of trustworthy members as revealed in the sealed letter Langdon receives from Mortati (A&D 616) and when Mary, the late Saunier's wife says that she trusts him (DVC 575). The hermeneutic code steps in the texts have been pointed out and alongside, there are cultural objects related to different aspects of religion. It has also been observed that each of the antagonists in the text function as carriers of the specific religio- cultural facets.

In A&D, the Assassin is working as an agent of the Illuminati group (86), the origin of which can be traced to men of science. Again, in DVC, Silas, the albino monk is a member of the Opus Dei (79). Brown has thus remarkably blended the character with the plot progression thereby giving each text a sense of wholesomeness. The same element of uniformity is maintained in the three influential figures in each text, who become the victim of the antagonists. Leonardo Vetra of A&D is a scientist (46) and Jacques Saunier of DVC is a Grandmaster (277) of the Priory of Sion, a medieval church brotherhood. Issues of faith and belief have inspired, troubled, and even redefined the everyday life of man irrespective of time, age, or gender. Writers of the present century have realised that to get their works read by the public, they must touch upon aspects that will create a

seismic change in the day to day activities of contemporaneity. In this regard, Brown has achieved considerable success because, as that Brown has achieved considerable success because he has the “gift for making the outrageous and arcane seem natural and accessible”. Michael Haag also adds that On top of that, though Dan Brown seems to share the deep-seated doubts and half-realised thoughts of the public mind, often on the most serious and daunting of matters, and he is able to form them into compelling and enjoyable stories. (236) The philosophy of Brown the writer, as deciphered, is to emphasise the universality of faiths. Brown presents through each of his works that there is inherent in all religions around the world the common thread of oneness and Brown affirms that all religions lead towards the search for the ultimate Truth. Religion is a means for man to define himself and assign a certain amount of meaning to his life.

In A&D, Vittoria tells Langdon that, “Religion is like language or dress... In the end, though we are all proclaiming the same thing. That life has meaning” (133). When it comes to DVC, Langdon comments that, “...The Bible represents a fundamental guidepost for millions of people on the planet, in much the same way the Koran, Torah and Pali Canon offer guidance to people of other religions” (449-450). It may thus be surmised that Brown has been able to retain a continuing interest in his works by urging the reader to be swept by the ebb and flow of the fictional world he has meticulously contrived, alongside consciously reminding the readers that his primary motive is to enlighten through rapt involvement.

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