The Novel *Da Vinci Code* as a Symbolic Semiotic Model of Alternative History

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Abstract

In the novels of Dan Brown alternative history dominates. The author creates a bridge between present and past, studying existing world history and demonstrating counter attitude to the so-called history. This method that we call alternative history is one of the key features of modern novels. As we are living in a postmodern era it is understandable that modern novels tend to classic columns. It is obviously seen in the novel "The Da Vinci Code". Building the future based on the remnants of the past is considered a new approach towards art. The article studies the symbolic-semiotic model of alternative history based on this novel. The occurrences that are in the novel, the postmodern attitude towards history, and the codes that are expressed with symbolism are analyzed here. The main purpose of Dan Brown is to protect the reader from "icons". Choosing science or religion as a means for this is not essential for him. The novel is symbolic as much as it is postmodern. Important symbols such as Saint Graal, the image Jesus, Sacred Feminine define the structure and idea of the novel. The messages the author tries to deliver via the language of symbols can be the realities of today and the future. The alternative history that the author created is an attempt of historical realities to approach the truth. Though symbolic-semiotic structure decreases the literary and aesthetic value of the novel, its concept is obvious. Alternative history in the novel is analysed as the basics of the semiotic-symbolic model in the article.

Keywords: **postmodernism; symbolism; postmodern structure; semiotics**

The notion of symbolic-semiotic model highlights the changing and in some sense unchanging parts of the text structure and transforms the work into analysis and general subject of the research in all the stages. The novel "Da Vinci Code" is topical as a historical symbolic-semiotic text model as well. Though the symbols in the work are reflected in the light of the text's fundamental foundation as a whole, this symbolism later loses its symbolic value

expanding through the certain parts of the work and is imaginatevly presented to readers in a new format.

And the other side of this new imaginary view is connected with the opposite of postmodernism. This can be perceived as antimodernism at some point. "The new antimodernisms that they seek to theorize are, on the other hand, presented as liberating, democratic, open, respectful to both the human and the nonhuman, and sensitive to desire" (Brown 41).

It is of great interest that Dan Brown has mastered this model very well as a writer and applied it to the work. It is not a coincidence that the extension of truth and pseudo-truth has some impact on symbolism along the text too. The author shows us the subject by means of imaginary character Robert Langdon reflecting it. Symbolism in the paintings of Caravaco, Boccaccio, as well as Leonardo da Vinci accompanies us through the whole work. Historical roots and concept of these symbols, as well as, Saint Graal are mainly reflected in intertextual text format. The writer sets this notion as a symbol in the text of the work, on his end and main plot unambiguously creates symbolic-semiotic model of Graal. Symbols related to masonry, mysterious marks in the paintings, symbolic references to the character "Jesus" can be generally considered branches of single semiotics. Marks that indicate masonry are understood in the frame of Western codex as a whole. All these diversities paradoxically become the same in the end. "On closer inspection, the politics of difference always turn out to be a new version of what might somewhat paradoxically be called the politics of (western) uniformity" (Bertens 184).

As the writer noted in the beginning of the work "There are secret ciphers in the works of Da Vinci". Later on, these ciphers begin to be revealed through the work. The writer reveals these ciphers creating a new modern technique and successfully using postmodernism. Though this modern technique is new, it is unambigiously not guaranteed from contradictions. This makes postmodernism like a mechanism format that is hardly understood as a literary movement.

"It is true that this is a controversial position to take, but I believe that this is the central issue with postmodernism, and we absolutely must clarify our thoughts concerning it because of its grave philosophical and political consequences" (Lagopoulos 24).

The writer expresses attitude instantly indicating symbolic-semiotic notions by exact numbers in the work. This kind of issues dominate in the work. These exact numbers structurally rewrite the text through the novel and open the borderline of attitude between author and readers. The approach towards the so-called organizations and historical monuments is multi-faceted.

"Murray Hill Place – the new Opus Dei World Headquarters and conference center – is located at 243 Lexington Avenue in New York City. With a price tag of just over $47 million, the 133,000-square-foot tower is clad in red brick and Indiana limestone" (Brown 24).

When we talk about the symbols and secret ciphers described in the work, a few nuances shouldn't be overlooked. Let's view the parts related with the planet Venera and Pentacle. The writer expresses his attitude about this issue here. The writer instantly generalizes his ideas about the planet Venera and Pentacle, connects them with our contemporary age. He implies that five-pointed star is used in the US Army. Let's go on with our research about symbols and note that five-pointed star has been used as a symbol in Azerbaijan since old ages as well. There are some facts and essential details related with this. On the stone belonging to the XII century B.C. that was found in Shusha and now kept in the Louvre Museum crescent and star were carved. It is not a coincidence that five-pointed star is considered the symbol of sacred feminine. If we analyze this as a historical-genealogical classification, reflection of this process in the literature and culture of most of world peoples can provide symbolic generalizations. "Nowadays, few people realized that the four-year schedule of modern Olympic Games still followed the cycles of Venus. Even fewer people knew that the five-pointed star had almost become the official Olympic seal but was modified at the last moment – its five points exchanged for five intersecting rings to better reflect the games' spirit of inclusion and harmony" (Brown 32).

Reflecting the changing and unchanging aspects of semiotics in the structure of the work is not a coincidence. Ideas and opinions about either the character "Jesus" or other ones are changing and unchanging mechanisms in the work. Dan Brown claims that Jesus is married and "Saint Graal" is Marie Madalenie. We need more serious sources to cover all these historical facts, mainly to confirm them and these sources shouldn't be limited to religious books. Sociality is peculiar to all these sources as well. "To make an inventory we first need a collection. Collections for social semiotic research projects could be put together in several ways. In the case of walking we could make a collection of videotapes of people walking, whether secretly filmed for the purpose of the research, or taken from feature films and documentaries" (Leeuwen, 11).

Though it is not completely clear in which character the work is reflected through the novel, certain symbolic-semiotic key points are indicate in their turns. As we see in the beginning of the work, when curator (Jacques Saunière) died he left secret mysteries related with himself. This secret that is hidden in the painting of Da Vinci is coded in a symbolic-semiotic way through the work. Another side of this code was that Fache insistently claimed that star belonged to worship to satan or paganism. The last words of Saunière contained numbers that had nothing to do with testament. His last words were numbers. 13-3-2-21-1-1-8-5. The meaning of these numbers are explained along the work. Alongside with this, other symbolic elements become meaningful by joining this process.

The issue "Holy blood, holy grail" in the novel constitutes main plot and this manifests itself as a kind of a single deconstructive plane in the work. Of note, after the book "Holy blood, holy grail" that was the bestseller in 1982, Christian world was shattered in a way that wouldn't be stable for a long time again. Afterwards, this shatter was made into the novel by Dan Brown. As "Holy blood, holy grail" mentioned sacred feminine, and mainly, division of the world into two parts, this semiotic model's turning into fiction was difficult to certain extent. "When male and female were balanced, there was harmony in the world. When they were unbalanced, there was

chaos." Langdon motioned to Saunière's stomach. "This pentacle is representative of the *female* half of all things—concept religious historians call the 'sacred feminine' or the 'divine goddess.' Saunière, of all people, would know this" (Brown 31).

"Langdon tries to render a message to Fache with a mark that there are secret symbols in the murder of Saunière. Maybe he could write the name of the murderer onto the floor or some other place. But Saunière's purpose remains contradicting through the work. This doesn't mean he didn't have any purpose. Langdon's aim was not only to define the murderer for the prosecutors, but also secrets to be rendered. "Collet was not yet privy to the evidence that had cemented Fache's certainty of their suspect's guilt, but he knew better than to question the instincts of the Bull" (Brown 41).

The writer tries to render the symbolic-semiotic features of the character to readers by creating comparisons with an ox in a symbolic way. As we know, an ox is an uncontrollable and rough animal. The writer copies the features of this animal to the character and establishes an interesting symbolism. It's noted in the work that the Capitan used to go to the church very often, but these visits served to maintain the image rather than worshipping. The writer shows formal and informal aspects by building the model of religious effect with these words. This formality and informality are united from another point by means of real or potential combination.

"Originally, a symbol was prod uced by the mutual relationship of two pieces of a coin d estined to acquire their full purport through their actual or potential rejoining" (Huyssen 153).

Fache sent the photos of the crime to the cryptography department in case the specialists could reveal the secrets in this crime. Though it didn't seem that real, later it affected the development of the case. Though the author expressed his attitude towards women via an exact profession, this is the generalized model of women rights.

"Women not only lacked the physicality necessary for police work, but their mere presence posed a dangerous distraction to the men in the field" (Brown 43).

The author describes the image Fache generally into a single structure model and focuses on symbolic-semiotic issues once more. We can find appropriate colours with this structure in every behaviour and attitude of his. Phone talk of Fache with Neveu and his trying to catch Neveu and Langdon through work display his attitude. Fache who hates Sofi because she is a female continued this hate even when he learnt that cryptographer was a woman, also later when she said that "I have deciphered the digit code" his attitude was clear. It was obvious that Sophie Neveu intended to help Langdon. Sophie tried to send secret codes to Langdon. On one hand these codes served to extend the process for certain time, on the other hand rightly showed the marks of the process. The codes in these references make the readers think symbolically by the writer in a semiotic aspect. "Apparently, 454 was Sophie's remote access code for picking up her messages while away from home" (Brown 46).

As we know, symbolism was established in the late XIX century. This literary movement is also understood as the opposite of naturalist one. Because naturalists support extremism, symbolists initiated generalization method ignoring this so-called extremism and this method created new images promoting symbols as a whole. These images appear as a kind of symbolic marks. And these real characters started to bring out the symbolic manifestations in a more clear way. Dan Brown applies symbolism in his works as a literary movement as well. Dan Brown compares this method with religious symbolism, and contextually connects them with the notions "Gospel" and "Holy spirit".

"The novel, The Da Vinci Code, claims to contain the new elements of history which are in the form of controversies. For instance, the Christians strongly believe that the Holy Bible was written by human beings under the influence and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and hence, it is a product of God" (Britto et al. 11:4).

When writer adds extra details in the works that is historical novel genre or the ones contain even little attitude to historical facts, this is considered alternative history. Because writer creates a new historical attitude with namely his fantasy and opinions. We can understand the work as a

model of alternative history, and can count it an example. Even historicity is directly alternative history in every sense of the word here. Imaginations about Saint Graal, Jesus, Mary Magdalene, and Christianity give us grounds to claim that. The writer builds an interesting polemic situation by demonstrating his attitude from the very beginning of Christianity till the further development stages in the work.

On the whole, though alternative history notion is used in various ways by writers in terms of its connection with movement and methodological grounds, it is characterised in an innovative and different viewpoint for the representatives of postmodern and modern movements. Though it is a dedective novel, the events happening here are pertinent to alternative history model in terms of both volume and dynamic development of events.

According to the concept of postmodernism modernism has already completed its task and period and given the floor to postmodernism. But the most main difference is that modernists rewrite the works denying the past, writing novels and stories in a completely new format, and using existing base unlike postmodernists. Taking these all into account we can say that though the processes of both movements happen in this novel, only the points of modernism that is in accordance with postmodernism come to view. Written expression of 2 or 3 main ideas in a whole form and connection between them can be a case in point. Modernists can not build incoherence in their works as easily as postmodernists. Though they can also change the continuation of the events creating imaginary characters, manage the plot, content, form into certain structure, it doesn't mean they prefer imaginary principles like modernists and create a new movement. These matters that ease the development of symbolic-semiotic training have to be counted as one of the most important versions as well. "Within educational technology, the most noted variant of this sender-receiver model designed to facilitate the development of instruction is known variously as instructional development, instructional design, or instructional systems design" (Andrew et al. 11).

The text with which Saunière made a trace when he was murdered was Fibonacci sequence And this is connected with a mathematical formula. Anyway, this mark Saunière left that would help to solve the crime couldn't be a coincidence. There has to be an absolute mark and result here. The writer explains it and indicates that the walls of the museum are covered with Italian paintings through the work. As it's clear, Italian artists approached the art of painting in a rather modern way and created artworks in a new format and new size.

The biggest problem of Langdon's involvement in the occurence was in the code below.

13-3-2-21-1-1-8-5

O, Draconian devil!

Oh, lame saint!

P.S. Find Robert Langdon

This sentence that is repeated in the work for several times puzzles Fache, and it increases the possibility of the suspicions about Langdon in the murder. And the author expresses his attitude through the character Sophie.

P.H. in the code "Princesse Sophie, Find Robert Langdon" points to "Princesse Sophie". Her grandfather used to call Sofie Princess.

Another nuance of symbolic-semiotic model principle in the work that we talked about is connected with the digit PHI. When Langdon was running away with Sophie he gets flashbacks of the lectures he delivered at the university. All these dialogues and flashbacks could lead to open the codes. Langdon used to mention in his lectures that the digit PHI had a key role, and he explained. For instance, while talking about the digit PHI, the example of bee hive, also the fact that the ratio of an arc of nautilus spiral to the following equals to "PHİ" proves our claim. The writer continues the ideas about the digit PHI in the work and relates this to the creativity of some classics: "PHI appeared in the organizational structures of Mozart's sonatas, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, as well as the works of Bartók, Debussy, and Schubert. The number PHI,

Langdon told them, was even used by Stradivarius to calculate the exact placement of the f-holes in the construction of his famous violins" (Brown 81).

The writer creates symbolic forming about the portrait "The Vitruvian man" by Da Vinci. There are certain symbolic and semiotic marks in this painting that was drawn with the influence of the work entitled "DeArchitectura" by Roman architect and writer Marcus Vitruvius Pollio, and these affect certain processes in the work and create literary discussions.

"Man is simply playing by Nature's rules, and because art is man's attempt to imitate the beauty of the Creator's hand, you can imagine we might be seeing a lot of instances of the Divine Proportion in art this semester" (Brown 115).

<p style="text-align:center">O, Draconian devil! – Leonardo da Vinci</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Oh, lame saint! – The Mona Lisa!</p>

Though Sophie had been working in the field of cryptography for years, immediate opening of the codes by Langdon surprised her.

Genealogically formation of codes in the human mind and behaviours are unambiguously characteristic as a means that increases cognitive development at the same time. "The authors appearing in the special issue share roots in an intellectual genealogy from which they develop ethical conscience through a humanities approach" (Andrew et al. 36).

He tries to show the root and essence of the legend that is about Saint Graal. Though readers rarely come to conclusions due to activity of characters in the structure of the text, sometimes he provides readers with exact information too. Readers can not tell whether the events are truth or pseudo-truth most of the time. To tell clearly whether these truth and pseudo-truth belong to the first or the second category is not the writer's task, of course. Readers have to scrutinize the text, explore the events there in the historical aspect and gather serious information.

"Langdon felt a chill to imagine what kind of secrets a man like Jacques Saunière might keep. What an ancient brotherhood was doing with a futuristic key, Langdon had no idea" (Brown 122).

The writer shows God cult, fine lines that are invisible layers of faith in several parts of the work, and this is such a serious and important moment for the writer that the character Silas stands in the center of this kind of ideas. This character observes occurences beginning from the murder of Saunière till the end of the work and the writer shows negative sides of symbolic-semiotic model through this character. Though the character Silas is against the church in the context of alternative history, as a whole, he is among the main faces that are in the center of the events. "The measure of your faith is the measure of the pain you can endure" (Brown 63).

And the author of these words to Silas was Teacher. Silas turned this principle into life motto and believed that he could escape by bearing the pain. The more you experience pain, the more you put up with anguish, it means the more confident you are. The writer mentions this in several parts of the work and relates these with crucifixion of Jesus.

"At the age of twelve, Sophie could finish the *Le Monde* crossword without any help, and her grandfather graduated her to crosswords in English, mathematical puzzles, and substitution ciphers. Sophie devoured them all" (Brown 65-66).

The writer who presents the image Sophie in intertextual plane reveals her professional character. To compare with the works of Umberto Eco that are counted as the most powerful works symbolic-semiotic model of which contain the structure of postmodernism will bring out interesting nuances into open. Mainly codes about Christianity, and its role model Masih, as well as some other ones about this religion. All these codes were falsified by history and were about to be destroyed. "However, in the same period at the turn of the century in which semiotics asserted itself as a discipline, a series of theore tical propositions concerning the death, or at least the crisis of the concept, of sign was developed" (Eco 26).

Though dedective occurences dominate in the work, generally postmodern structure is important as a code in terms of expressing the virtues of the novel. Running away of Langdon and Sophie and being found of Graal in the end are symbolically based on human aim factor. Let's think that it was a legend and the writer obliged himself to reveal this secret.

There are interesting facts about sacred feminine and marks related with males that the writer talked about in the work. For instance, triangle indicates sexual organ of males, and reverse form of triangle shows female's. When we combine these two symbols, we get mark □. This mark is widespread in masonry. In our age this symbol is reflected in the flag of Israel Republic.

At the same time, the writer demonstrates almost obvious attitude about Opus Dei in the work. Though Opus Dei was formally a religious organization, some matters about its activities were clear. The writer criticizes the organization supporting this principle. Deconstruction process of the characters and events in the work as a postmodenist structure is carried out on the organizations and these characters become criticizer of some kind of organizations symbolically. Though Jesus's aim is totally different, the deeds of the organization do not confirm this. It becomes the problematic reflection of existing problems semiotically and symbolically. One of the important sources for opening of symbolic-semiotic model is architectural monuments. In the times when writing wasn't invented people expressed their opinions namely on the stones. "While the recent media hype about postmodernism in architecture and the arts has propelled the phenomenon into the limelight, it has also tended to obscure its long and complex history" (Huyssen 5).

Let's generalize our ideas and mention that symbolic-semiotic principles in the work are applied in the plane of both truth and pseudo-truth. On one hand displaying alternative history structure, on the other hand, turning the text into the main history format the writer creates interesting symbolic characters, both Robert Langdon, and other real and unreal characters can be a perfect example of this.

Generally postmodernist novel can also be considered a fragmentary method. Here disorganization of the events, destruction and reconstruction of the text, incoherence of the intertextual structure in a single conception is somewhat acceptable. There is not any effort to describe the realness of realizm, there is not vision of romantism or symbolism of naturalism. At

certain point there are marks of modernist structure here and on its end, these are important in the building of the text during deconstruction. Influence of symbolism on the root of the works as a general model and increasing their importance as a virtue are traditional methods. It appears as a result of the researches we conducted about the novel "Da Vinci Code" that this novel is interesting as a symbolic-semiotic novel model. Moreover, comparative shaping of postmodern elements with symbolism in the work can be considered the directions of new novel model. On the other hand, the writer avoiding the new novel model and increasing the volume of his works "doesn't care about the comfort" of readers. On the contrary, avoiding small text model, he transforms worldly occurences into a bigger novel.

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