

# **Point of View in *The Da Vinci Code***

## **A Stylistic Analysis of *The Da Vinci Code***

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### **Abstract**

Many readers have been confused by what is fact and what is fiction in the hugely popular novel *The Da Vinci Code*. This paper aims to provide an explanation for alleged readers' confusion through stylistic analysis of the novel. I would argue that the manner in which point of view has been constructed has influenced readers in their perception of fact and fiction. Stylistic analysis has shown that the protagonist of *The Da Vinci Code* is the reflector of the fiction throughout most of the narrative and it is hence argued that, as narrator, he is able to guide the reader through the narrative and present the reader with information that might seem factual but is fiction.

### **1. Introduction**

*The Da Vinci Code* is a novel by American author Dan Brown, originally published in 2003 by Random House. Immediately after its publication it became exceedingly popular, millions of copies of the novel were sold and the book has been labelled as one of the most-read but also one of the most controversial novels of our time (Gordon, 2005: 94; Cowley, 2004: 18).

*The Da Vinci Code* tells the story of Harvard professor of symbology Robert Langdon, who is woken up late at night by the police whilst on a business trip in Paris, because the man with whom he had an appointment earlier that day has been murdered. This man is Jacques Saunière, the curator of the Louvre, whose body has been found lying in an unnatural position inside the Louvre. Near the body the police have also found a mysterious code. Together with Saunière's granddaughter, Sophie Neveu, Langdon tries to uncover the secrets surrounding Saunière's life and death. In doing so he gets involved with the mysteries of the Priory of Sion, a European secret society, with the Catholic sect Opus Dei, and with finding the location of the Holy Grail.

*The Da Vinci Code* has been labelled controversial because it suggests Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus Christ and had children with him. It is further suggested that the descendants of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene emigrated to what is now France and became the Merovingian dynasty, a well-known royal family in France. Whilst *The Da Vinci*

*Code* is a work of fiction, the idea of a possible marriage between Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene have been treated as factual and discussed for their factuality in worldwide debate (Beck, 2001: 19; Bock, 2004: 22; Gilmour, 2004: 6; Kemp, 2004: 370; Kulman, et al., 2003: 45; Miranda, 2004: 23; Rose, 2005: 26; Sheler, 2006: 44; Wilson-Smith, 2004: 4).

Discussions have appeared in all kinds of media including magazines, newspapers and internet forums, and have involved many different participants, including reviewers as well as readers. A basic search on Google reveals the extent of these discussions. On Amazon there are 3,959 reviews by readers of the novel, and there are countless additional websites on which the novel is discussed, including Dan Brown's official webpage. Many religious figures have also reacted to the novel on behalf of their organisations, including the Vatican. A variety of articles, books, films and sermons have furthermore been published to counteract or set straight the claims made in *The Da Vinci Code*, and to engage readers in a dialogue (Budlong, 2006: 165; Gilmour, 2004: 6).

In the course of a few years, several explanations for why *The Da Vinci Code* has led to so much confusion among readers have been put forward, and although much has been published concerning *The Da Vinci Code*, virtually all published material has been written for a non-academic audience and published in non-academic magazines, newspapers and websites. It would seem no work on *The Da Vinci Code* has yet been conducted in the field of Stylistics.

Because of the popularity of the novel, the worldwide debate it caused, and the lack of academic research concerning *The Da Vinci Code*, I conducted a stylistic analysis of a selection of chapters from the novel to examine whether there could possibly be a correlation between readers' confusion and the manner in which point of view is constructed in the novel. In this paper I will argue that the manner in which point of view is constructed in *The Da Vinci Code* has influenced readers into confusing fact and fiction in *The Da Vinci Code*. The evidence I will present in support of my thesis will be demonstrated in the analysis section of this paper. First I will outline the methodology used for the analysis, then I will discuss my analysis and findings, and finally I will present my conclusion.

## **2. Methodology**

In the field of stylistics a great number of works exploring point of view have been published, such as the works by Uspensky, Fowler and Simpson (Fowler, 1977, 1986; Uspensky, 1973; Simpson 1993). Simpson's (1993) framework has been used in the analysis discussed here. His framework of point of view has been highly influential in the field of point of view and is

readily applicable. It is also particularly useful for *The Da Vinci Code* because of the prominence of epistemic modality in *The Da Vinci Code* and Simpson's focus on modality in point of view.

Simpson identifies and describes four modal systems of English: the deontic system, the boulomaic system, the epistemic system and the system of perception modality, which is a subsystem of the epistemic system (1993: 47). The deontic system of modality refers to a modal system of duty. This modality is concerned with a speaker's attitude to the degree of obligation with regards to the performance of certain actions (permission, obligation, and requirement). It is expressed in persuasion and politeness (Simpson 1993: 48). Boulomaic modality is concerned with desire and is constructed primarily by modal lexical verbs indicating the wishes and desires of the speaker (Simpson, 1993: 48). The third modal dimension is the epistemic dimension, which is concerned with the narrator's and characters' level of certainty concerning a proposition as expressed in the text (Simpson, 1993: 50). Simpson defines perception modality as being characterized by some in relation to the truth of a proposition (1993: 50).

In Simpson's model of point of view significant emphasis is placed upon modality and especially on epistemic modality (1993: 48). He divides narratives into the Categories A and B, with narratives that belong to Category A being first person narratives and narratives that belong to Category B are third person narratives (Simpson 1993: 55). Category B is further divided into two modes: Narratorial and Reflector. This means that the narrator in category B can be either outside the consciousness of a particular character or characters (Narratorial mode) or inside the consciousness of a particular character or characters (Reflector mode). This is in contrast to Category A narratives because in these narratives the narrator is always inside the consciousness of a particular character or characters. Both Category A and Category B Narratorial and Category B Reflector are further subdivided. Subdivisions are made on the basis of three broad patterns of modality, called Positive, Negative and Neutral in Simpson's framework (1993: 55).

Category A and Category B Positive narratives are similar to Fowler's internal type A. There are several characteristics for recognition of such narratives, namely *verba sentiendi*, foregrounded deontic and boulomaic modality, and a high number of evaluative adjectives and generic sentences that possess "universal or timeless reference" (Simpson, 1993: 39; 56).

Category A and Category B Negative narratives exhibit exactly those features absent from Category A and Category B Positive. These characteristics are the use of epistemic and perception modality systems. Epistemic modal auxiliaries, modal adverbs and modal lexical

verbs, as well as perception adverbs, such as ‘evidently’ and ‘apparently’ are characteristic of Category A and Category B Negative. Simpson also states that phrases with a basis in human perception such as “it appeared”, “it looked as if” and “it seemed to be” are more prevalent (58). Words of estrangement are also frequent in these texts and because epistemic and perception modal systems are highlighted as well, an atmosphere of alienation and bewilderment is created (Simpson, 1993: 64).

The third type of shading in Category A and Category B is Neutral. It is noticeable for its “complete absence of narrational modality” (Simpson, 1993: 60). This is the most impersonal category, in which the narrator provides little or no modalized language. There is a complete absence of direct description or analysis concerning the thoughts and feelings of characters (Simpson, 1993: 67). The above outline of Category A and B is summarised in the diagram below.

*The Da Vinci Code* has not been analysed in its entirety due to space limitations. Instead, a selection of chapters has been made from the chapters in the beginning (Chapter 1, 9 and 12), the middle (Chapter 54-58 and 60-62), and end of the novel (Chapter 104, 105 and the epilogue) in order to be able to compare and contrast the findings in these chapters. The selection of chapters was made on the basis of several criteria. First, it was deemed important that the protagonist Robert Langdon was present in every chapter in the selection because the events of the narrative have mainly been narrated from his point of view; the exception to this are the chapters that involve the characters Bishop Aringarosa, Silas and Rémy Legaludec, and short sections that are narrated from the point of view of Sophie Neveu, Bezu Fache, Sister Sandrine and police officer Jerome Collet. Furthermore, chapters with interaction between protagonist Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu were deliberately chosen because the representation of Sophie Neveu was deemed significant in relating point of view to the confusion of the readership of *The Da Vinci Code*.

I would argue that *The Da Vinci Code* is narrated in Category B Reflector Negative. Robert Langdon is the character from whose point of view the story is narrated with the exception of the occasional use of other point of view. This makes him the reflector of the fiction according to Simpson’s model.

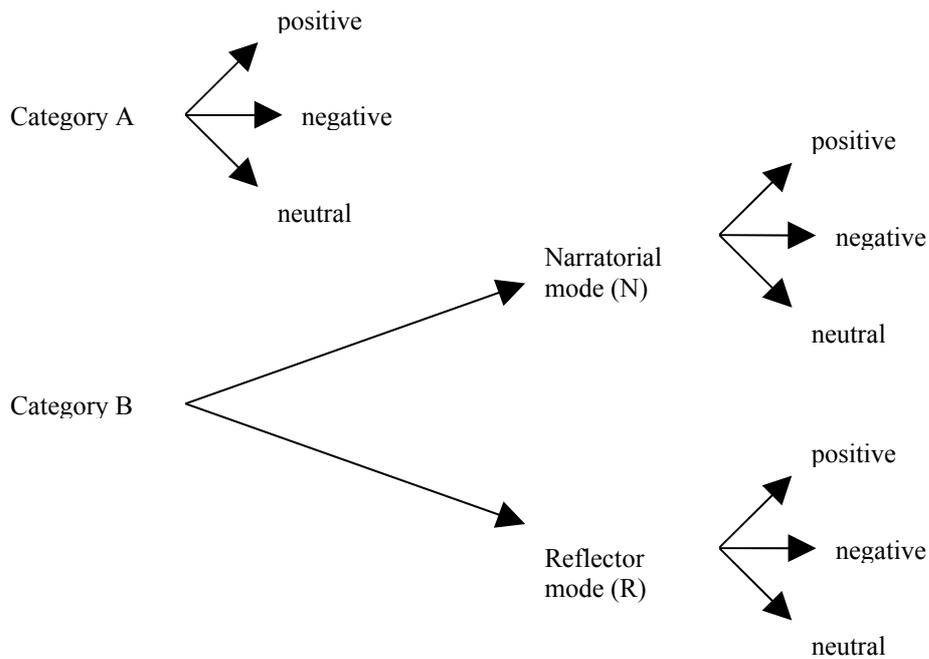


Fig. 1: Simpson's model of point of view (1993: 56).

### 3. Analysis and Findings

In Chapter 1, Langdon asks several questions, most of which are foregrounded graphologically by the use of italics: "*Where the hell am I?*"; "*a visitor?*"; "*Where the hell did she get that?*"; "*The judicial police?*" (Brown, 2003: 21; 23; 25). It is also noticeable that there is a repetition of the phrase "where the hell", which emphasises the incomprehensible, almost ridiculous situation in which Langdon has apparently just found himself, namely that of being woken up in the middle of the night by the police. Apart from the many questions posed by Langdon in this chapter he also frequently makes statements concerning certainty or uncertainty. At first Langdon assumes that the person has come to visit him it is just another professor who is angry about Langdon's controversial work, trying "to pick a fight" (Brown, 2003: 22). It is stated that Langdon "had little doubt" that the person who tried to contact him

was an important man since he, Robert Langdon, knew he was well-known in the art world: “his books on religious paintings and cult symbology had made him a reluctant celebrity in the art world” (Brown, 2003: 22). It is additionally remarked about Langdon’s grey hair that “although his female colleagues insisted the grey only accentuated his bookish appeal, Robert Langdon knew better”. In these examples about himself and his career, Langdon seems certain. They are all relevant to Langdon’s state of mind concerning himself and his career, and less so about the events taking place at that instant (Brown, 2003: 22; 23; 24). This is important because the description makes him seem a more trustworthy and knowledgeable character, which makes readers more liable to trust him.

Apart from expressions of certainty with regards to Langdon and his career, there are also phrases that express a low level of certainty in chapter 1. Some examples are phrases such as “uncertain, Robert Langdon slid off the bed” and “Robert Langdon hesitated, feeling uncertain as the stranger’s sallow eyes studied him” (Brown, 2003: 23; 25). Together with the many questions Langdon asks himself, these phrases create a high degree of alienation and unfamiliarity about what is happening.

Langdon thus expresses a high degree of uncertainty concerning the situation he is in but a low degree of uncertainty concerning himself and his career at the beginning of the novel. Readers are in this way introduced to Robert Langdon as a character who knows much about himself and about symbology, allowing them to sympathise with him and his situation, as they do not know what is going on themselves. Langdon’s certainty about some particular domains of knowledge combined with the uncertainty he shares with the reader about the current situation might make the reader more accepting towards Langdon and liable to trust him more easily. If even an accomplished well-known scholar with a demonstrated high degree of self-knowledge accepts the information provided in *The Da Vinci Code*, a reader might be likely to do so as well.

The second chapter that I have analysed is chapter 9. In this chapter Langdon is at the Louvre together with Bezu Fache, the head of the judicial police. Fache suspects Langdon of the murder of Jacques Saunière, the curator of the Louvre, and he intends to question Langdon about the murder. Langdon is unaware of the fact that he is a suspect. Just as Fache wants to start his interrogation he is interrupted by cryptographer Sophie Neveu who comes to warn Langdon. She tells him that there is an urgent message waiting for him from the embassy. When Langdon calls the number, he reaches Neveu’s answering service instead of the

embassy of the United States. He tries to tell Neveu that she made a mistake but Neveu gives him a silencing glance.

Chapter 9 is narrated in Category B Reflector mode with negative shading. Robert Langdon is confused in this chapter just as he was in the first chapter. His uncertainty is manifested by the many questions he asks himself. These questions are related to his own knowledge and that of Sophie Neveu; “she [Sophie] broke the code?”, “A message from The States?” (Brown, 2003: 80). That Langdon is confused is also literally stated in this chapter; “Confused, Robert Langdon turned back to Sophie” (Brown, 2003: 81).

Whereas Robert Langdon is confused, Sophie Neveu seems to be very sure of herself. This is especially explicit in the following excerpt:

[Langdon:] ““I’m sorry, Ms Neveu? I think you may have given me” – “no that’s the right number, ” Sophie interjected quickly as if anticipating Robert Langdon’s confusion. Robert Langdon stared. “But” “It’s the three-digit code on the paper I gave you.” Robert Langdon opened his mouth to explain the bizarre error, but Sophie flashed him a silencing glare that lasted only an instant. Her green eyes sent a crystal-clear message. Don’t ask questions. Just do it” (Brown, 2003: 82).

The fact that Neveu interrupts Langdon, that she seems to anticipate his confusion, that for Langdon some “bizarre error” seems to have been made and that she is able to silence Langdon with her look, shows that Neveu is more knowledgeable in this chapter than Robert Langdon.

Sophie Neveu is seen mostly through Langdon’s eyes in chapter 9. This is explicit in the following sentences: “She was moving down the corridor toward them with long, fluid strides... a haunting certainty to her gait” and “Unlike the waifish, cookie-cutter blondes that adorned Harvard dorm room walls, this woman was healthy with an unembellished beauty and genuineness that radiated a striking personal confidence” (Brown, 2003: 82). That she was moving toward Langdon with “a haunting certainty to her gait” demonstrates that Langdon sees Neveu as sure of herself, that she was “unlike the waifish, cookie-cutter blondes that adorned Harvard dorm room walls” shows that he sees her as real and confident, as does the text that she was a woman with an “unembellished beauty and genuineness that radiated a striking personal confidence” (Brown, 2003: 82). Because Langdon sees her as certain of herself, the reader is more likely to see Neveu in this way as well, since the chapter is narrated

from Robert Langdon's point of view and as I have argued, the reader is likely to trust Langdon.

In Chapter 12 Langdon goes to the restroom and unexpectedly Neveu enters the restroom as well. Her purpose is to explain to Langdon that he is in danger because he is the main suspect in the murder of Saunière. She also tells him that a GPS tracker has been planted on him. Langdon subsequently checks his pocket and finds the tracker dot there. He wants to throw it away but Neveu stops him. She convinces him it would be suspicious if the dot stopped moving. She also tells him that the coded message found by Saunière's body contained another line that the police erased before Langdon came, which stated "P.S. Find Robert Langdon" (Brown, 2003: 101).

Chapter 12 again is narrated in Category B Reflector mode with negative shading. Langdon is as confused in chapter 12 as he was in chapter 9. Neveu is the certain and knowledgeable character, as she was in chapter 9. This is demonstrated by the fact that Langdon is "filled with uncertainty" and that he also has decided "to do exactly as Sophie advised" (Brown, 2003: 98). Nevertheless, he feels "his apprehension rising," and he feels lost (Brown, 2003: 98; 100). The reader knows just as much as Robert Langdon, because there is no access to Neveu's mind. As Langdon follows Neveu's advice, his initial scepticism is expressed in sentences like "*what the devil did you expect?*" and "he began wondering if Sophie might just be insane after all" (Brown, 2003: 99). This initial scepticism disappears when his fingers brush "something unexpected", which is the tracking dot, at which he "stares in astonishment" (Brown, 2003: 99). Langdon is "surprised" to see that Neveu not only is a strong, hard woman, but that her "strong air actually radiated from unexpectedly soft features", and that just her gaze was sharp (Brown 2003: 98). This is relevant because it demonstrates how the reader comes to know Sophie Neveu through the eyes of Robert Langdon, since Langdon is the reflector of the fiction. The reader might therefore get the idea that Sophie Neveu is also a very knowledgeable character, who is sure of herself and hence can be trusted.

In the middle of the novel an important change occurs: Sophie Neveu is no longer much more knowledgeable than Robert Langdon. In Chapter 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61 and 62 a shift can be noticed with regard to which characters are more knowledgeable. In these chapters Neveu and Langdon meet Sir Leigh Teabing, a former British Royal Historian. Teabing also is an expert on the Holy Grail. Langdon and Teabing explain to Neveu everything there is to know about

the Holy Grail (Brown, 2003: 310). They explain that the Holy Grail is not an object but a specific woman, namely Mary Magdalene, and that it also is a metaphor for the embodiment of the sacred female. Teabing furthermore explains that Mary Magdalene had children with Jesus Christ and that the Merovingian dynasty, a royal family in France, are descendants from the Bloodline of Mary Magdalene and Jesus Christ. From the beginning of chapter 55 and throughout the following chapters Neveu is 'used' to explain the theory of the Holy Grail. Because Neveu (like the reader) is the ignorant character who does not know much about the Grail, she needs an explanation. The explanation that Langdon and Teabing provide for Neveu functions as an explanation for the reader as well.

The explanation given to Neveu in the chapters about the Holy Grail often starts from historical facts or from a non-fictional reference. Because the readers might be familiar with part of the information provided (i.e. the part that is factual) they might take the rest of the information for factual as well. Additionally, information is often placed in the mouths of 'scholars'. Langdon, a symbologist, is associated with Harvard, a 'real' highly prestigious educational institution. Harvard in *The Da Vinci Code* is a fictional counterpart according to Text World Theory. Counterparts are "entities in different worlds that are equivalent with respect to some function" (Werth, 1999: 294). The fact that Langdon is connected with the fictional counterpart of Harvard might give the readers the impression that he therefore also is very knowledgeable, as people that graduated from the real Harvard are supposed to be, and that information provided by him is factual. Sir Leigh Teabing is also characterised as a scholar in the novel. He is portrayed as the world's most well-known Grail researcher, and has received a knighthood because of his research. Langdon speaks of him very positively as well and because the readers are likely to trust Langdon and because the story is narrated mainly from Langdon's point of view, readers are more easily inclined to trust Teabing as well. This might make it easier to believe information provided by both Langdon and Teabing.

In Chapter 104 Langdon and Neveu are going to Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland. They have received a clue that the Holy Grail might be there. This chapter is narrated in Category B Reflector mode with Negative shading. Most of the time, Langdon is the reflector of the fiction in this chapter. He seems to be asking himself questions and he appears unsure about the situation he is in. He comments that he "had been left feeling more off balance than enlightened" and that in his eyes "Rosslyn Chapel seemed far too obvious a location" (Brown, 2003: 565). He does not think the Holy Grail will be at Rosslyn Chapel, and wonders what Rosslyn chapel is trying to hide instead, and why Saunière would "go to such effort to guide

us to so obvious a location?” (Brown, 2003: 565). To Langdon “there seemed only one logical answer”, namely that there still was “something about Rosslyn we have yet to understand”. He “sensed there remained some facet of this mystery yet to reveal itself” (Brown, 2003: 566; 573).

Soon enough Langdon finds out what this mystery is, as Neveu begins to feel that she has been here before. She wanders toward the house nearby the Chapel. Langdon meanwhile is talking to a young man who works at the Chapel, who asks him where he got the box Langdon is holding. The young man says his grandmother has one exactly like it. Langdon asks the young man about his family, and the reply is that he lost parents, sister and grandfather in a car accident. It becomes clear that an idea dawns on Langdon when he asks “do you mind my asking what happened to your parents?” (Brown, 2003: 574). Langdon here seems to figure out, together with the reader, what is going on, but because he asks this question it becomes clear that the idea has formed in his mind already, perhaps before it has formed in the mind of the readers. The point of view then shifts to Sophie Neveu, who enters the house and finds a woman crying. When their eyes meet they recognise each other; the woman is Neveu’s grandmother. The young man is Neveu’s brother.

In Chapter 105 Langdon is with Sophie Neveu in Scotland. Neveu’s grandmother tells Langdon the story of the family’s separation. She recounts that Neveu’s parents are in fact of the blood line of Jesus and Mary and that they had changed their names for safety. When they died in a car accident the grandparents suspected it was not an accident. In order to keep their grandchildren safe they reported to the police that Neveu’s grandmother and brother also died in the car accident. Sophie’s grandmother and brother subsequently moved to Scotland. In this chapter Langdon is still wondering whether the Grail is really at Rosslyn Chapel.

As Chapter 105 is narrated in Category B Reflector mode, Robert Langdon is again the reflector of the narrative. The chapter contains many words of estrangement and a high number of epistemic and perception modality expressions. There are several examples of negative shading which are related to epistemic modal expressions, such as that Langdon “had no idea how to respond”; “sensed the story went far deeper” and “sensed she was toying with him” (Brown, 2003: 578; 580; 582). Langdon asks himself still some questions, some of which are graphologically foregrounded through italics, such as “*Is the grail really here at Rosslyn??*” (Brown, 2003: 580). However, Langdon seems to be more certain than in previous chapters. He asks himself fewer questions and there is more positive shading present

in this chapter. There are *verba sentiendi* present, characteristic of Category B Reflector Positive. An example of this is the fact that “Langdon felt himself flush” (Brown, 2003: 587).

There are several examples of boulomaic referencing in the chapter as well, characteristic of positive modal shading (Brown, 2003: 587). One example is that Robert Langdon “felt an unexpected sadness” (Brown, 2003: 587). Indeed, Langdon is often silent in this chapter. He had “no idea how to respond”, he “fell silent”, he “remained silent” and both Neveu and Langdon “stood in silence” (Brown, 2003: 578; 582; 586).

Additionally, it is interesting to note that Neveu’s grandmother says to Langdon in this chapter: “*my husband obviously trusted you, Mr Langdon, so I do as well*” (Brown, 2003: 578). This is another example of a justification for the reader to trust Langdon. The grandmother’s statement as an older and therefore wiser person could be taken as persuasive.

In the epilogue of *The Da Vinci Code* Robert Langdon is back in the Ritz Hotel in Paris. He wakes up with an idea in mind which the reader knows nothing about. At first he cannot believe it might be possible, but he goes out to follow his idea nonetheless and starts walking in specific direction. As he walks he becomes more certain of his idea. More and more excited, he arrives at the Louvre. He goes to the inverted pyramid that hangs over another, smaller pyramid and realizes that the two pyramids represent the Chalice and the Blade, the ancient symbols of female and male. He now realizes he knows the truth and falls to his knees. It is implied that this is the place where Mary Magdalene, the Holy Grail, has been buried.

This epilogue is narrated in Category B Reflector mode. Robert Langdon is again the reflector of the fiction. The shading is mostly negative, with epistemic and perception modalities foregrounded. There is also positive shading in this chapter, because the chapter has many *verba sentiendi*, which is characteristic of positive shading. Some examples of this in the chapter are “He could feel the air grow cooler”, “he thought he heard a woman's voice” and “Langdon's body felt warm and deeply contented” (Brown, 2003: 588; 591; 593). Extra emphasis is placed on Robert Langdon’s feelings. Langdon feels “oddly lucid”; “a growing excitement” and “as if he were crossing into another world” (Brown, 2003: 588; 589; 590).

In the beginning of the epilogue Robert Langdon still asks himself questions, but these questions are self-reflective. That an idea has formed in his mind which he ponders and about which he steadily becomes more certain is demonstrated by: “*Could it be?*” and “*is that why Saunière needed to talk with me? Had I unknowingly guessed the truth?*” (Brown, 2003: 588; 590). These questions are again foregrounded by italicisation and therefore draw the readers’ attention. Epistemic modality is also foregrounded in the epilogue. However, instead of

expressing uncertainty as he did in chapter 1, 9, 12, 104 and 105, now Langdon expresses certainty. It is for example stated in the epilogue that “within seconds, he found what he knew was there”, he “could feel his destination within reach”; “he knew that at the end of the tunnels stood the most mysterious of Parisian monuments” and “now at last, he sensed the true meaning of the Grand Master’s verse” (Brown, 2003: 589; 590; 592). It is very interesting that Robert Langdon now expresses such a high level of certainty about the situation he is in. This is in complete contrast to the chapters in the beginning of the novel, in which the level of uncertainty expressed by Robert Langdon was very high. Robert Langdon thus seems to have become much more certain at the end of *The Da Vinci Code*.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In my analysis it was found that *The Da Vinci Code* is mainly narrated from the point of view of Robert Langdon. Langdon is also portrayed as a trustworthy and knowledgeable character. Firstly, he is connected to a fictional counterpart of Harvard, a well-known as a highly prestigious institution. The fact that the character Robert Langdon is connected with a fictional counterpart of Harvard will be likely to give the readers the impression that Langdon is very knowledgeable. Secondly, Langdon demonstrates that he is knowledgeable concerning his career and knowledge about himself. Thirdly, other characters seem to trust Langdon.

My analysis of *The Da Vinci Code* shows that Langdon does not know what is going on during most of the narrative, but that he becomes more knowledgeable throughout the novel and understands fully by the end. In the chapters that have been analysed there is a contrast between Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu in terms of their level of knowledge and awareness of the situation they are in.

In the first chapter of the novel Langdon expresses a high degree of uncertainty about the situation in which he has found himself. This is also the case in Chapter 9 and Chapter 12. In Chapter 9 and in Chapter 12 Sophie Neveu, who does not appear in Chapter 1, expresses a high degree of certainty about the situation she is in. In the chapters in the middle of *The Da Vinci Code* Langdon expresses a much lower degree of uncertainty than Neveu. Langdon still expresses his immediate uncertainty, but he does display a high degree of certainty about the Holy Grail, which is related to his polemical life. Neveu on the other hand does not know anything about the Holy Grail.

Langdon seems to be less confused in the final chapters and the epilogue of *The Da Vinci Code* than at the beginning of the novel. Even though he still has questions in the final

chapters that are unanswered, his feelings and actions are foregrounded much more. In the epilogue his uncertainty towards the situation disappears completely. When Robert Langdon is uncertain, as in chapter 9 and 12, Sophie Neveu seems to be self-assured. A shift can be noticed in the chapters in the middle of *The Da Vinci Code*. In these chapters Robert Langdon is the knowledgeable and more certain character while Sophie Neveu is the uncertain and more ignorant character.

Robert Langdon seems to know just as much as the reader does throughout the greater part of *The Da Vinci Code* about the events taking place in the novel. At any given moment in the narrative some character will be present who expresses a high degree of uncertainty about the situation or events taking place in *The Da Vinci Code*. Most of the time this character is Langdon, but sometimes this character is Neveu. In this role, the character asks for and needs to be given an explanation of what is taking place. The given explanation allows readers to get an idea of what is going on as well. Readers are in this way able to see events evolving from the perspective of the uninformed character. The character, whether it is Langdon or Neveu, is sceptical and uninformed about the events taking place. They keep asking sceptical questions and the information is therefore presented to them – and thus also to the reader – in a step-by-step manner. Langdon and Neveu put forward many objections that question the information given, but both Langdon and Neveu are finally always persuadable that the information provided is true.

By presenting the information in a step-by-step way readers can also to discover what is going on in a gradual manner. It is not only the development of events in this way gradually becomes clear to a character (and consequently to the reader), but also that other information is communicated in *The Da Vinci Code*, for example information about the Holy Grail. Langdon and Neveu are initially sceptical but eventually believe that the information provided is true. Alongside the fact that Robert Langdon is the reflector of the narrative for the majority of the text, this explains why readers might be more easily persuaded to take the information provided as true. My analysis of the selected chapters from *The Da Vinci Code* using Simpson's framework supports this.

One aspect brought up in the questions section of the presentation of this paper was that questions don't necessarily convey uncertainty, but that they can actually project a sense of certainty. In addition, affirmative sentence with epistemic modality can also hint at some sort of uncertainty, rather than a sense of certainty. Whilst I have not addressed this in my analysis, I would suggest that future research could investigate these avenues in more detail. If one thing is clear from this, it is evident that much more work is still to be done on *The Da*

*Vinci Code*, both with respect to the function of questions and affirmative statements, and in light of readers' conceptions of what is true, what is not, and why they feel that way.

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