

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Critics of *The Da Vinci Code* have underscored that the novel is built upon a fabricated history. However, as it is revealed in my studies, there are more perspectives that are left unsaid in the novel. It is inappropriate to view *The Da Vinci Code* totally from the viewpoint of a historicist. In fact, there are actually some other elements lurking within Dan Brown's detective fiction. The novel shows the interaction between the dominating power of the Catholic Church and the disturbing resistance of the feminine.

The Da Vinci Code exposes how power is constructed and carried out throughout history. Brown offers the panorama of Foucauldian sovereign power in his novel. The novel depicts how in ancient times the ruler employed brutal punishment as a tool to secure its sovereign power control. In the Catholic Church, Pope Clement used brutal punishment to secure his control over the Knights Templar and the public. Whenever sovereign power is threatened, brutal punishment will follow. Therefore, when the pious follower of the Catholic Church, Silas, senses that the power of his church is threatened, he will rise to destroy those potential threats. Meanwhile, the purpose of the punishment has to be ritualized in order to transform the ruler's personal purpose objective and divine rule. It explains why Pope Clement has to ritualize his punishment of the Knights Templar in spite of the fact that his punishment is to secure his sovereign power and the secret of the Holy Grail.

In modern times, power control never seizes its influence. Disciplinary power replaces sovereign power. In the novel, the depiction of Big Ben and the Millennium Eye suggests power transformation from the old sovereign to a new disciplinary one. Symbolically, "the Millennium Eye—a colossal, ultramodern Ferris Wheel" (368) continues to dominate "the skyline of London" (Brown 368). As a new form of power,

disciplinary power works under three conditions. They are cellular structure, bodily training, and panoptic surveillance. The cellular structure is created to observe, guide, and supervise individuals. In this way, the structure leaves individuals no place to hide. Once visitors enter the closed structure of The Louvre, they will be observed by cameras, guided by signs, and supervised by guards. In other words, in the closed structure, individuals can never escape the control of disciplinary power. In addition to cellular structure, disciplinary power uses bodily training to inscribe its influence on an individual's body. When individuals receive bodily training, they will unconsciously drive themselves to follow disciplinary power. Silas receives bodily training as a form of disciplinary power. Having been taught by Bishop Aringarosa, Silas has been taught to perform the "sacred practice known as 'corporal mortification'" (15) whenever he senses sinful desires of his flesh. The third condition of disciplinary power is panoptic surveillance. Through the technology of panoptic surveillance, disciplinary power can always locate and control the individual at a single gaze. As a form of panoptic surveillance, the modern technique of electronic eavesdropping can help Teabing to infinitely expand his panoptic control while the individual will never realize that his information has been collected. All Teabing needs to do is just to sit in front of the computer, and then can immediately know what Sauniere and the French police are doing.

In addition to Foucauldian power control, *The Da Vinci Code* is also a novel of feminine resistance. It is a detective novel in which the search for the Holy Grail is never accomplished. According to Juila Kristeva, the subject is born with maternal influence, though it has to repress the disturbing maternal influence in order to enter the symbolic realm. When the mother is repressed as abject, the abject mother becomes the source of resistance hiding deep inside the subject. With its disturbing

characteristics, the maternal influence constantly appears to haunt the subject. The subject must force itself to repress the maternal influence within itself. Silas has to constantly repress his maternal influence so that he can be a follower of the Catholic Church. He has to continuously repress desires of his flesh by performing the sacred practice known as corporal mortification.

Though the mother is repressed and silenced, the maternal influence is transformed into another figure: the maternal imaginary father. The maternal imaginary father appears as the crucial factor which allows the continuation of the maternal resistance. The maternal imaginary father is a mixture of the father and mother, which has the characteristics of both the masculine and the feminine. In the novel, Saunier is the imaginary maternal father, guiding the detectives to discover the repressed meaning of the Holy Grail. On the one hand, by recognizing the masculine characteristics of the maternal imaginary father, the child can gain access to the symbolic world. After Sophie recognizes Saunier's masculinity as a soldier (Brown 5), Sophie often takes on the role of a heroine, protecting Langdon under dangerous circumstances. On the other hand, one can also reunite with one's mother when the maternal characteristics of the imaginary father are identified. When Langdon follows Saunier's poetic instructions, which are the maternal instructions of the imaginary father, he can ultimately discover the knowledge of the sacred feminine, and thus the meaning of the Holy Grail.

Along with sources of resistance, there are resistant elements in the text. The main clues in *The Da Vinci Code* are texts of resistance. By following the texts of resistance, detectives are guided to uncover the hidden meaning resistant to the Catholic Church. For instance, all of Saunier's poems are written in iambic

pentameter. These rhythms suggest the repressed meanings of Yin Yang, Venus, and the sacred feminine against the Catholic Church.

Furthermore, as the detectives gradually recognize the maternal imaginary father and follow the texts of resistance, leading them to become “revolutionary poets,” they will have the power to dissolve symbolic restrictions. Revolutionary poets can experience the threat of castration that forces them away from any identification with their mother. Langdon knows the brutal history of the Catholic Church. He knows how the Church will demonize and suppress those who identify with the sacred feminine. With Langdon and Teabing’s instruction, Sophie also comes to realize how the Catholic Church forces the public away from any identification with Mary Magdalene.

The narrative skill of *The Da Vinci Code* shows the way how Dan Brown makes his influential ideas attractive to so many readers throughout the world. *The Da Vinci Code* can attract so many readers due to its unexpected narrative skill: The boundary crossing skill that shifts from real to fictional and from traditional to nontraditional. For instance, Brown cites the idea of the Holy Grail in reality, but further fictionalizes the meaning of the Grail. By taking advantage of these ideas in reality, Brown is able to amplify the mysteriousness of his novel and to make readers eager to read.

By adopting both traditional and nontraditional norms of detective fiction, Brown gives readers a great sense of suspense throughout the story. On the one hand, the traditional goal of the detective is to solve crimes. Langdon, Sophie, and Teabing have a shared goal to solve crimes. Langdon’s goal is to solve the crime and find out who killed Sauniere so that he can prove his innocence. Sophie’s goal is to solve the crime and avenge her grandfather. Teabing’s goal is to solve the crime of the Catholic Church and avenge the victims killed by the Church. On the other hand, Brown

introduces nontraditional characteristics into his detective story as well. Unlike the professional detective representing the tradition of law, order and justice, detectives in *The Da Vinci Code* are not professional detectives. Langdon is a Harvard professor. Teabing is a knight and handicapped British historian. Though Sophie is a police agent specializing in cryptography, she is not a professional one in the sacred feminine.

As a consequence, with power, resistance, and the narrative skill, Brown has proved that *The Da Vinci Code* is a novel exposing conventional power control, subversive resistance, and creative narrative skill. On the one hand, the novel portrays the dimensions of power control. On the other, it introduces resistance to challenges and breaks down the domination of power. Most significantly of all, the narrative skill of boundary crossing subverts our perception towards the real world and conventional detective fiction. It brings readers to question the true meaning of everyday life. With these unsaid parts embedded in the novel, *The Da Vinci Code* transcends the rigid patriarchal beliefs of the Catholic Church and reveals the subversive fluidity of femininity.