Original Research Article

The Study of Three Paintings of the Annunciation of Christ by Martini, Da Vinci, and Rossetti Using An Iconographical Approach

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Abstract

Problem statement: The subject of the announcement of the birth of Christ to Maryam by Gabriel, among other narratives with religious subjects such as the crucifixion of Christ has always been the focus of painters in the past. There are different narratives in the holy books about the time when God informed Maryam about the pregnancy of Christ. These narrations are found in the Holy Quran, the texts of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Gospel of Luke. In this article, three works in three different periods with the theme of the birth of Christ by three artists, Simone Martini, Leonardo da Vinci, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, are studied based on the iconology point of view. Iconology is a kind of qualitative research method and also a branch of art history, whose founder is Erwin Panofsky, a prominent figure of the Warburg school. The questions of this research are: Based on the principle of iconography in the representation of the gospel story, which symbolic values have the artists explained? According to the narratives of religious books, why is there no sign of Joseph's presence in most of the paintings of the gospel of Christ? Regardless of the different narratives about how Gabriel announced the birth of Jesus Christ, The explanation of symbolic values has caused a difference in the form and semantic concepts in the visualization of this story, which is the basis of the answer to the definition of the problem in this research.

Research objective: The purpose is to describe the structure of Figures and to identify the role of elements and relationships between them, as well as to examine subject and theme, relying on historical sources and finally explaining symbolic values.

Research method: The research method in this article is historical-descriptive based on the model of Panofsky

Conclusion: The analysis reveals a convergence of artistic interpretation with the Gospel of Luke and the Quran in the portrayal of the Annunciation, excluding Joseph's presence. Symbolism, such as the white lily and Mary's attire, effectively conveys spiritual and religious messages in these artworks. Each artist brings a distinct perspective to this sacred event, reflecting their unique creative approaches and providing valuable insights into the narrative's essence and significance.

Keywords: *Annunciation of Christ, Martini, Da Vinci, Rossetti, Panofsky.*

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Introduction

The subject of the Annunciation of the birth of Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary, alongside other narratives and stories with religious themes such as the Crucifixion of Christ and the Resurrection, has consistently captured the attention of artists and painters throughout various periods in the history of art. Regardless of the differing accounts regarding the manner and means through which the birth of Jesus Christ was announced by the angelic messenger of God, Gabriel, the principles and aesthetic structures inherent to each era have led to formal variations and nuanced semantic and content-driven interpretations within the tableau of the painted narrative. This research is grounded in examining this theme. This article not only delves into the analysis of three works from three distinct historical periods, all centered around the Annunciation of Christ's birth, but also scrutinizes and studies these works from an iconographic standpoint. Iconography, a qualitative research method and a branch of art history was established by Erwin Panofsky, a prominent figure of the Warburg School. He introduced a new approach to visual studies, focusing on content, meaning, and subject matter in artworks, in contrast to their form, through the publication of an article titled "Studies in Iconography: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance" in 1932. In the literary section of this research, after elucidating the iconographic approach and its stages in the analysis of a visual work, three depictions of the Annunciation of Christ's birth by three artists—Simone Martini, Leonardo da Vinci, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti—in three distinct historical periods, will be studied. To this end, an initial description of the Figure's structure and the identification of motifs and relationships between them are undertaken. Subsequently, the subject and content, supported by historical sources, are examined. The research questions are as follows: Based on which criteria

of iconographic structural analysis have artists elaborated the symbolic values in depicting the Annunciation story? Why is there an absence of Joseph in the Annunciation paintings of Christ?

Research Method

The data collection method employed in this study is a combination of library research and an (online) survey. The data collection tools include textual analysis and Figure interpretation through textual excerpts and visual scrutiny. The data analysis method in this research is both quantitative and qualitative, employing a comparative and inductive approach. This approach is utilized in historical, descriptive, case study, and library-based research.

Research Background

Several pertinent studies are outlined below. (Etemadi, 2002) article titled "The Annunciation of Christ in the Artwork of Simone Martini" was published in Issue 19 of the Journal of Visual Arts Studies in February 2003. He introduces this tableau as emerging from both aristocratic taste and the skilled craftsmanship of Martini; all while being influenced by the divine atmosphere of the Gothic era. Another article, " Iconology of Saint Mary's Figurine in Renaissance Era Paintings and Comparing that with Saint Mary's Traits in Quran Verses," authored (Mosavi Lar, Hesami & Khosravi Rad, 2018) was published in the Journal of Women in Culture and Art. The focus of this article is the transformation of sacred texts into visual depictions. Panofsky's interpretive method in symbolic representation is highlighted, asserting that in the early Renaissance period, the figures of Mary exhibit a stronger alignment with Quranic narratives. In the book "Art Methodology," translated by Ma'sousi Lori Adams dedicates pages 54- 65 to the analysis of three works based on the Panofskyan approach, centered around the theme of the Nativity of Christ. These three works and their

common symbolic aspects are interpreted through the Panofskyan model. The distinctiveness of the current paper from the aforementioned writings lies in the fact that none of the three studied paintings has been previously examined from a Panofskyan iconographic perspective. This emphasizes the necessity and significance of conducting such research.

Narratives of the Annunciation of Christ in the Scriptures

Various accounts of the divine revelation to the Virgin Mary about the conception of Jesus Christ exist within the Scriptures. Among these, the Holy Quran, in Surah Al-Imran, conveys the Annunciation in the following manner: "Behold! The angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of [the company of] those nearest to Allah'" (Quran, 2010, Al-Imran Surah, verses 45-47). Additionally, in Surah Maryam, it is stated: "She placed a screen [to screen herself] from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects" (Quran, 2010, Maryam Surah, verses 17-21).

In the texts of the New Testament, the Gospel of Matthew recounts the Annunciation of Christ's birth as follows: "When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man saw an angel of the Lord in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.' When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he named him Jesus" (Gospel of Matthew, 1, 18-25). Likewise, in the Gospel of Luke, it is recorded: "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!' But she was greatly troubled at the saying and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom, there will be no end.' And Mary said to the angel, 'How will this be since I am a virgin?' And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God'" (Gospel of Luke, 1, 26-38).

Iconology, Iconography, Definition, and History

"The fundamental goal of iconology is, on one hand, to expound and differentiate between 'content or meaning' and 'form,' on the other hand" (Abdi, 2011, 14). "In historical terms, the studies under the title of iconography date back to the 16th century. Originally, this term referred to volumes of markers and descriptions of artistic themes and allegorical characteristics, which were compiled and organized for the use of artists and art enthusiasts" (Turner, 1996, 82). Based on these explanations regarding the linguistic construction of these two terms, it can be stated that "iconography" pertains to the description of an Figure, while "iconology" is dedicated to the interpretation of an Figure (Panofsky, 1955, 18). Gombrich reconstructs iconology as a whole program or field, encompassing more than just one text, and these texts pertain to an artistic and cultural milieu (Adams, 2008, 52-51).

Panofsky Outlines three Stages in Perceiving and Interpreting any Work of Art

In the first stage, attention is given to the fact that when confronted with a work of art, only description takes place, regardless of whether one possesses knowledge of the subject matter of the work or the work itself. This stage focuses on the sensible forms of artwork. In the second stage, unlike the first, the components present in the painting possess a meaning beyond what we observe in the external world. In essence, the understanding of the Figure's meaning becomes evident through the semantic conventions of a culture or tradition. In the third stage or iconology, when we are not in pursuit of conscious matters, our approach becomes a synthesis. In this approach, we separate various data from the work

of art and interpret this data together. However, it must be noted that the prerequisite for such interpretation is coherence. Panofsky states: "At this juncture, we confront the worldview of that era" (Panofsky, 1955, 38).

Description of the Visual Structure of the Three Panels

• Annunciation, Simone Martini

The panel depicting the Annunciation of Christ by Simone Martini, a Sienese painter born in 1284-1344, a disciple of the Duccio School, was painted in the year 1333 for the high altar of the Cathedral of Siena, known as the Uffizi (Fig. 1). In the central portion of the composition, Mary is seated facing Gabriel, who is kneeling. The Holy Virgin, while in profound shock at the presence

Fig. 1. Simone Martini, Annunciation, 1333 CE, Tempera on Wood, 267 x 305 centimeters. Source: Gombrich, 2000, 203.

of the angel, has pointed her thumb, indicating a page that seems to suggest that she had been reading it at the moment of the Annunciation and has paused upon the arrival of the angel. Her raised finger, however, remains pointed to the page of the Holy Scriptures, indicating her intention to resume reading after the angel's visitation. Mary is attired in a red gown and a blue mantle, the hem of which is decorated with a fine, gold border, executed in the manner of her master Duccio. A golden hue is dispersed across the background, a technique that forms an embossed pattern to capture and radiate light. Even the expected two columns that might have supported the central arch have been omitted, as if the archivolts are suspended by a mere suggestion. A dove representing the Holy Spirit descends downward and to the side of Mary, encircled by a group of seraphim (angels), their wings forming a cross-like pattern, as the sharp angles of the feathering contour their inverted frame, a captivating dance (Hart, 2003, 573).

Mary's right hand, which signifies a protective gesture, is drawn towards her chest and around her face. While a palpable sense of fear is evident on her countenance, she turns slightly to her left, as if safeguarding her heart from a potential threat, holding it at bay. The bending and curvature of Mary's body in Martini's painting correspond harmoniously with the wings of the Archangel Gabriel. At the center of the panel, within the space between the Holy Virgin and the Archangel, I perceive a vase of lilies containing four blossoming branches. Archangel Gabriel is adorned in a resplendent garment that seems woven from intricate white and gold fabric. He wears a golden, checkered mantle draping over his shoulders, and he holds an olive branch, which serves as a crown upon his head. Golden-hued wings also allude to his celestial nature.

In the central arch of the composition, a circular arrangement of birds comes into view through their synchronized movement. At the heart of this circular formation, a bird is depicted in flight, heading towards Mary.

• **The Annunciation, Leonardo da Vinci**

Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece of the Annunciation, painted for the Church of San Bartolomeo, represents his initial foray into the world of art. Executed between 1472 and 1475, this painting Fig. 2 showcases the innovative use of oil and tempera on wood, an unconventional technique for the time. In this work, Leonardo undertook his early explorations into perspective,

Fig.2. Leonardo da Vinci, Annunciation, 1472-1475, Oil on wood, 98 x 217 cm. Source:https://fa.wikipedia.org .

point of view, and color theory. His mathematical and analytical approach to "seeing" derived from the artistic heritage of Florence. An angel, positioned on the left, and the Holy Virgin on the right, are divided by a lectern. The entire composition is structured around a unique architectural setting that opens onto a scenic vista. The kneeling angel is exquisitely young and beautiful, adorned with a high forehead, gracefully formed wings, a splendid garment, and a white lily. The holy virgin is reading something with wonderment and raises her uplifted hand while her countenance conveys astonishment and a hint of coldness. Her open hands and knees, draped in delicate fabric, lend her an unforgettable presence (Frere, 2008, 54).

The scene of the Annunciation of the birth of Christ takes place in the garden of the Florentine palace. "Da Vinci has placed the Virgin Mary in the corner of the Figure and depicted three-fourths of her face. All three points converge at the corners. Accordingly, the painter not only increases the depth of the scene but also emphasizes the significance of the role of the Virgin Mary. The radiance of her head contrasts starkly with the dark wall. Additionally, her body is under the influence of certain stones that, with their parallel lines, exert greater pressure on Mary." A marble table stands between Mary and Gabriel. On the table, a holy book is placed, and Mary holds her hand in the presence of Gabriel. Behind the kneeling angel, there is something resembling a cavity in the distance of a wall that opens towards the garden, fading into the boundless expanse of the angel.

• **Annunciation to You, O Servant of the Lord, by Dante Gabriel Rossetti**

Rossetti (1828-1882), an English poet, writer, and painter, was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, along with William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais (Pakbaz, 2011, 252). One of the religious themes created by Rossetti two years after the establishment of

the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is the painting "Annunciation to You, O Servant of the Lord" or simply "Annunciation" (Fig. 3). This painting depicts a scene where Gabriel delivers the glad tidings of the birth of a child named Christ to Mary. What initially captures the viewer's attention is the enclosed and confined space in which this religious narrative event has taken place. On the right side of the painting, we see the figure of the Virgin Mary, who is depicted sitting on a small wooden bed with short legs, leaning back and towards the wall, as if the presence of the angel has awakened her from sleep. This painting is a kind of exaggerated representation of the subject of the Annunciation. Rossetti
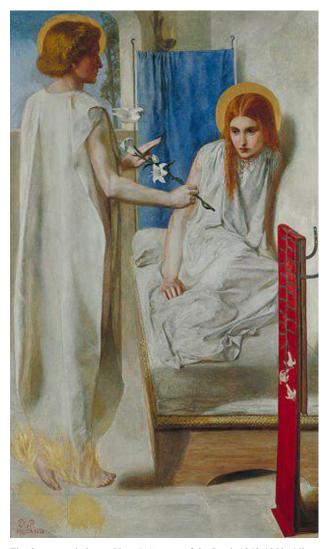

Fig. 3. Annunciation to You, O Servant of the Lord, 1849-1850, Oil on canvas, 72.6 x 41.9 cm. Source: Gombrich, 2000, 501.

rejects the passive portrayal of the Virgin's face at the time of receiving the message. Instead, he aims to present a rarefied and otherworldly representation of the divine and supernatural. In contrast to Dutch painters as well as da Vinci and Martini, who have expanded the action space in their paintings in a way that not only draws the viewer towards them but also allows the eye to rotate from the surface to the depth of the painting, Rossetti places Mary in a confined space.

The application of perspective in this work is not convincing: Mary's bed appears to be on the verge of tipping over and sliding out of the frame. The angel in this composition is depicted as wingless, with a visible half-face cast in shadow, surrounded by tongues of yellow fire around its feet. Another innovation in this pictorial scene is the portrayal of Mary, seated on the bed. She appears overly youthful, with clusters of chestnut hair pulled around her neck and cascading over her white gown in loose tendrils. Her smooth, long hair, her frail childlike figure, her uncertainty, fear, and sorrow—all of these are responses to the glorious annunciation by Gabriel.

Analysis of the Three Paintings and Their Implicit Meanings

In the second stage, which is referred to as steganography in the iconographic analysis, the discussion goes beyond form and iconography to address the subject and theme. To unveil the hidden meanings within the paintings, one must first recognize the subject through texts and narratives that have been preserved and deduce the underlying concepts from historical sources. As previously mentioned, the subject of the three mentioned paintings traces back to the story of the annunciation of the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary. The meaning and content of the iconography of these paintings can become comprehensible when one is familiar with the content of the Gospel. "This is why we always

perceive forms in association with conventional meanings and concepts, relating the artistic iconography and compositions of these Figures to the subject or concept. We read shapes that we recognize through secondary and conventional meanings. The composition of the constituent Figures is a narrative that we also read as a story and allegory. This is the very concept that the old art theorists and Renaissance thinkers called invention" (Panofsky, 1972, 6).

In describing the narrative of the annunciation of Christ's birth, there are differences between the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Among the four canonical Gospels of Christians, only Luke and Matthew address the account of the birth of Jesus Christ. These two Gospels differ from each other in most cases, except for a few instances such as the marriage of Mary and the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. As stated in the Gospel of Matthew: Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was betrothed to Joseph, was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit before they came together in marriage. Joseph, a man of strong moral principles, decided to divorce her quietly, but he wanted to do this discreetly so that Mary's reputation would not be tarnished. An angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and dissuaded him from this course of action. The angel spoke to him about the child in Mary's womb and gave him tidings. When Joseph woke up from his dream, he acted according to the angel's command and took Mary into his home to be his wife. However, they did not come together as husband and wife until after the child was born. Joseph named the child Jesus, as the angel had instructed him. (Summary of Matthew 1, 18-25 and 2, 1- 23 from the Gospel of Matthew).

In the Gospel of Luke, we read: God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The angel said to Mary, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus." Mary asked, "How can this be since I am a virgin and have not

known a man?" The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you..." (Summary of chapters 1 and 2 from the Gospel of Luke).

In addition to the differences between these two Gospels in the account of Jesus's birth, the Quran does not mention the name of Joseph as the fiancé or husband of Mary. Unlike the Gospel of Matthew, where the angel speaks to Joseph, the Quran states that the angel spoke to Mary, which is also mentioned in the Gospel of Luke. Based on these three written sources, it appears that the three artists examined in this study have drawn upon the narrative mentioned in the Gospel of Luke and created their visual compositions. This means that in these three paintings, the conversation between Mary and Gabriel takes place, and the Virgin Mary becomes aware of the presence of Jesus within her. Almost all the artists who have addressed this subject in different historical periods have not included a portrayal of Joseph in their paintings. Additionally, in the Quran and the Gospel of Matthew, Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary in a human-like form, while in the two paintings, the angelic face of Gabriel is symbolized with wings and a halo, embodying its sacred nature, rather than a human countenance. Therefore, the artists have entered the story and visualized it according to their own taste and artistic interpretation.

Specific themes and subjects derived from religious narratives take on different forms and appearances in various historical contexts. In the first painting, it seems that Simone Martini, in addition to his wall painting, engaged in creating panel paintings with religious themes, including the annunciation of Christ. The details of this panel painting show that Simone, with the finesse of his brushwork, skillfully captured the compositions with reverence and, above all, had a good grasp of the visual needs of his time. "Simone, by harmonizing imaginative but ornate patterns, was appealing to his aristocratic taste in the style of French Gothic" (Gardner, 2008, 367).

The human form of the angel may have originated from a conventional tradition where Western painters created beings by combining human and bird wings, with a yellow halo around their heads, and named them angels. Depicting the angel Gabriel with a human-like aspect in the paintings of these artists might emphasize the humanity of the Virgin Mary. By contrasting these two characters in the painting with their visual attributes, one can better grasp the dichotomy between materiality and divinity within a single scene.

In Leonardo's Annunciation painting, the elements employed create a more distinct boundary between the realm of humanity and matter and the realm of the divine. Leonardo places Gabriel at a distance from Mary, on a bed

Fig. 4. The Marble Table, Part of the Work. Source: https://fa.wikipedia.org.

of flowers. The space around Mary is confined by the imposing walls of a building behind her. It seems that in this painting, two contrasting spaces coexist. One is the space surrounding Gabriel, which appears to be in a desert-like tumult, and the other is the human-structured space between Mary and Gabriel, containing a marble table on which Mary rests her hand on a book. This marble table actually stands at the center of the meeting between the heavenly and human realms (Fig. 4). The grandeur and expansiveness of the divine are crystallized in the movement and gesture conveyed from the angel to Mary.

Leonardo lived in a period when artists had newly acquired a social status. The Renaissance society, in addition to celebrating artistic inspiration, embraced the concept of the "universal" human – skilled in all arts, knowledgeable in classical works, adept in engineering, and even well-versed in military tactics, considering them as desirable perfection. The culmination of these historical conditions affirms that the Annunciation of Christ was not merely a religious narrative but also the backdrop for the emergence of the dexterity of Martini and Leonardo. During the times of Martini and Leonardo, there are more similarities in their implied meanings due to their temporal proximity.

However, Rossetti's story and his analysis of the artwork are distinct. His first masterpiece, "Servant of the Lord," though realistically detailed, seems to carry intentional accumulations of antiquity (Jensen, 1980, 485-486). Rossetti aimed to revisit the medieval mindset but without copying their Figures. He intended to present the ancient story with a mind free from prior influences (Gombrich, 2000, 499-501). In fact, among the three studied paintings, only in this one does Gabriel appear in a human-like majesty, in accordance with Luke's narrative, albeit slightly subdued by the yellow flames under his feet. The red fabric beside the Virgin Mary's bed (The Girlhood of Mary Virgin) Fig. 5 indicates that she

was in the process of sewing it (a reminder of the Christian tradition where altar cloths must be embroidered by women). Growing up in a family with English-Catholic beliefs, Rossetti's spiritual presence, influenced by this very Catholic religious thought, can also be observed in his childhood depiction of Mary.

Interpretation of the Symbolic Values in the Figures

To delve into the most hidden inner meanings within the three mentioned paintings, we turn to the exposition of their shared symbolic values in the third layer of iconography. Common visual elements that embody similar symbolic values are present in these three works. Among them is the presence of the white lily. The white lily is a symbol widely accepted for purity in the Western context. As a symbol of Mary, it signifies virginity and notably represents the Virgin Mary herself. Therefore, it stands out prominently in the Annunciation celebration, either being held by Gabriel or placed in a vase (Hall, 2014, 294).

Fig. 5. Part of the artwork. Source: www. https://fa.wikipedia.org.

In Martini's painting, the white lily is placed in a vase behind and between Mary and Gabriel, while in the other two paintings, it is held by Gabriel. In the Annunciation painting, "a busy frame, adorned with Gothic gables, ornate pinnacles, and multi-feathered crests—all adorned in pure gold—encompasses the most sacred scenes related to Christian art. According to the teachings of theologians and tradition, the corporeal manifestation of Christ—the second person of the Trinity—as a human figure took place at that pivotal moment when the words of the archangel Gabriel reached the ears of the Virgin Mary. By bringing to life the shapes and colors with fervor and fervency, Simone has added a dramatic influence to this event" (Hart, 2003, 573). The visual structure of Mary's cloak in Martini's and Leonardo's paintings has similar features. The blue mantle of the Virgin Mary signifies spirituality, while the red robe symbolizes the blood of Christ. In Martini's painting, the olive branch is held by Gabriel and forms a crown-like structure over his head, symbolizing the peace and union between God and humanity. It seems to herald the presence of a man who, with his appearance, aims to establish peace in the world. The vase of lilies in this painting contains four flowers, symbolizing the four Gospels (Fig. 5).

Together with the central arch of the wooden panel, its flowing lines create a shape resembling an egg, symbolizing the life-giving and liberating nature of Mary. A bird within this form is depicted flying towards the Virgin Mary (Fig. 6). If this bird is considered to be a dove, it symbolizes the Christological representation associated with the depiction of Christ (Hall, 2014, 28). These flowing and fluid lines accentuate the prominence of the lateral space of the Figure. A space that, saturated with a wave of words, is set in motion by Martini from the archangel towards Mary. Two guards, seemingly close associates given the halo of light around their heads, are shown holding feathers on both sides

Fig. 6. Part of the artwork. Source: www. https://fa.wikipedia.org.

Fig. 7. Part of the artwork. Source: www. https://fa.wikipedia.org.

of the central panel. This could symbolize peace and reconciliation. Moreover, the cross held by the guard on the right could symbolize faith and Christ himself. In this vividly represented space, what Martini skillfully portrays more than ever, is the delicacy and detail. It depicts a startled Mary, her index finger pointing to a page of the Bible, indicating that during the Annunciation, she was reading that page. With this same gesture, Martini suddenly and unexpectedly captures the

Fig. 8. Part of the artwork. Source: www. https://fa.wikipedia.org.

impactful nature of this encounter, concurrently portraying the humanity of Mary. When Gabriel appears to Mary, this sense of confusion and fear is extraordinarily grasped and embodied by Martini and Memmi.

However, in his Annunciation painting, Da Vinci, right from the outset, alludes to the act of Mary's virginity by depicting an enclosed garden. Gabriel is depicted kneeling in a posture of respect, his right hand raised in a welcoming gesture towards Mary. His action heralds a divine pregnancy. Yet, based on the hand movements in Christological art, Gabriel's hand posture could also carry another interpretation. Raising the right hand with two extended fingers signifies the representation of the Trinity fig 7 as observed in Da Vinci's Annunciation. Similarly, regarding the Virgin Mary, this posture could imply that her left hand is open and facing outward. "Hands raised and spread, palms turned outward, signify acceptance" (Hart, 2003, 226-228). It is as if the Virgin Mary, having drawn her attention from reading, responds positively to this Annunciation by raising her left hand, displaying a movement born from deep respect (Fig. 8). The radiance around her head contrasts starkly with the dark

background wall. Her body is pressed by a series of parallel lines, transferring a sense of pressure to Mary. Da Vinci places Gabriel at a distance from Mary, perched on a bed of flowers. This bed of flowers serves as a symbol of Mary's virginity and her fertility. It is noteworthy that Leonardo meticulously studied the anatomy of certain birds to accurately depict the angel's descent to the ground. In contrast, Da Vinci portrays the wings in a partially closed state, capturing the moment of closure. The posture of the angel's garments accurately conveys his process of alighting on the ground. This painting magnificently showcases Da Vinci's level of talent and precision.

However, in Rossetti's 19th-century Annunciation painting, which can also be categorized as Symbolist, he draws upon common symbolic elements from Gothic art (such as the lily, radiant halo, and white gown) to convey spiritual and chaste concepts within a worldly scene. This profusion of symbolism appears to stem from intentional archaisms (Pakbaz, 2002, 381). The Latin title of this painting is a quote from a place where the Virgin Mary accepts the message from the Lord, conveyed by Gabriel, about the divine birth of a child through the will of God. For this oil painting, Rossetti intentionally chooses a restricted color palette. The dominance of white, symbolizing virginity is complemented by cheerful blue and vibrant red colors (Blue is associated with Mary, although not used in his other painting titled "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin"). The model standing in for Mary, as in previous years, was his sister Christina Rossetti. However, her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti altered her hair color, and he continued using his distinctive red palette. For the figure of Gabriel, his brother William Rossetti stood as the model. White is the predominant color in this artwork, symbolizing feminine purity and sanctity. This whiteness is accentuated by the red fabric embroidery on the side of the bed (Fig. 9). Rossetti depicts a dove in his painting, representing

Conclusion

There exist different narratives regarding the Annunciation of Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary in the sacred texts. However, it seems that the closest narrative in the three discussed paintings in this study is that of the Holy Quran and the Gospel of Luke, as there is no indication of Joseph's presence in the Annunciation scenes depicted in the three artworks. In fact, among the four canonical Gospels of Christianity, only the Gospels of Luke and Matthew address the birth of Jesus Christ in their accounts. In the Gospel of Matthew, the Annunciation of the birth of Jesus (peace be upon him) is given to Joseph in a dream. However, in the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, the angel goes to Mary and gives her the glad tidings of a child named Jesus, meaning the Savior. The name of Joseph is not mentioned in the Quran, and it is stated that the angel conversed with the Virgin Mary. Therefore, in response to the second question of this study, it appears that all three artists (Martini, da Vinci, and Rossetti) have relied on the narrative of the Gospel of Luke, in which there is no reference to Joseph's presence in the Annunciation scene. The dialogue is based on the conversation between Mary and Gabriel, and Gabriel informs the Virgin about the presence of Jesus within her. Consequently, none of the three artists have depicted a role for Joseph in their portrayal of the Annunciation of Jesus Christ.

In response to the first question and in examining the relationships between narrative, Figure, and symbolic values, the obtained results are as follows: In Simone Martini's panel, the posture of Mary signifies fear and anticipation of the Annunciation, while her open book of the Holy Scripture indicates her trust and faith. The use of religious symbols such as the golden background and the dove as the Holy Spirit in Martini's artwork aims to convey a spiritual message to the viewer and evoke a deeper sense than just a visual representation. In Leonardo

Fig. 9. Part of the artwork. Source: www. https://fa.wikipedia.org .

the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, which he retains as a traditional symbol. While Rossetti emphasizes many of the symbols included in the painting scene, he maintains a connection to previous traditions. Yet, his approach to using these symbols, along with the representation of space, particularly the portrayal of the two figures present in the painting, demonstrates a significant departure from his earlier tradition.

Fig. 10. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, The Girlhood of Virgin Mary, 1849, Part of the artwork. Source: www. https://fa.wikipedia.org.

of the white lily in Martini's panel differs from the other two artworks. It is situated in a vase behind and between Mary and Gabriel, whereas in the other two panels, it is depicted in Gabriel's hand. Additionally, the visual structure of the Virgin Mary's attire in Martini's and da Vinci's panels bears similarities. The blue mantle of the Virgin Mary represents spirituality, while the red robe symbolizes the blood of Christ. The olive branch held by Gabriel, forming a crown-like halo, signifies the peace and unity between God and humanity. In Martini's panel, the vase of lilies contains four blossoms, symbolizing the four Gospels. Other symbolic arrangements, such as the golden multi-winged minarets and the raised two fingers of the angel signifying the Trinity in da Vinci's panel, and the enclosed space in Rossetti's panel, symbolize the virginity of the Virgin Mary. The presence of the bird in all three Annunciation paintings embodies the representation of the Holy Spirit. These collective explanations of symbolic values enabled the three artists to effectively convey the essence of the narrative and take hold of its meaning and significance.

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da Vinci's Annunciation, the symbolic values are influenced by da Vinci's inquisitive nature, as evidenced by his use of perspective and his analytical and mathematical approach to religious concepts. Overall, this artwork reflects religious contemplations with a connection between humans and nature, in accordance with the artist's Renaissance perspective. In Rossetti's Annunciation, the symbolic elements in conveying religious concepts through innovative aspects of the supernatural are observable. Rossetti endeavors to fuse religious concepts and human emotions by incorporating religious symbols into everyday life in a different way. Moreover, common visual elements are embodied in the three discussed artworks, sharing similar symbolic values. Among these, the element of the white lily can be noted, symbolizing purity in the Western context. However, the placement

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