

Original Research Article

A Comparative Study on the Meaning of the Angel Motif in Hojat Amani (as Contemporary Art) and Qajar Era*

Shohreh Shashti^{1**}, Azadeh Pashootanizadeh²

1. Master of Art Research, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Khatam University, Tehran, Iran.

2. Assistant Professor of Cultural Heritage and Tourism Research Institute, Traditional Arts Group, Tehran, Iran.

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Abstract

Problem statement: Unwillingness for objectivity and an aversion to total adherence to subjectivity in the Qajar era art, have created a real-imaginary world. The motifs of angels dressed in Qajari attire and being influenced by Western ideals have their roots in this way of thinking. Therefore, with the assumption that angels in the works of Hojat Amani have the role of angel motifs in the contemporary art of the Qajar period, this study seeks to examine the adaptation and evolution of angels in the Qajar era and contemporary art. So far the comparative role of angels has not been examined and the hidden layers of the angelic works of these two eras have not been studied. The originality of this research lies in this area.

Research objective: The main purpose of this study is to show the utilization of the role of angels and their formation process in contemporary art, to use adaptation and survey results to answer the questions raised in this study.

Research method: This comparative research uses descriptive-analytical methods, along with statistics, documentary sources, and interviews.

Conclusions: In comparison with the Qajar era art, the project of postmodern angels with the feminist view of Hojat Amani, brings wider social meanings to the contemporary era in addition to having the components of the traditional art of the Qajar period, both visually and conceptually. It also delivers a resurrection of the human desire to ascend beyond matter and to place itself above the human condition that exists in the most ancient layers of Iranian culture and the general public.

Keywords: *Angels, Hojat Amani, Qajar Art, Contemporary Art.*

Introduction

The desire to depict the surrounding world in the Qajar period and its association with subjectivism and imagination have resulted in the era paintings instigating a closer connection between the material and the imaginary worlds. When discussing angels,

we first come across the general mentality about angels in myths. These “mainly consider the angel as a pure extra-terrestrial being with two wings. These folk thoughts and myths also found their way into the art of painting during the Qajar period. In Islamic art, and

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** Corresponding Author: khatereo@yahoo.com, +989396800503

later periods before the effects of Western art on Iranian painting manifested itself, angels were sometimes depicted as young beardless men, and sometimes as young women in Iranian attire inspired by them norms at the time of the work“ (Kafshchian Moghaddam & Alipour, 2012, 2). When Western angels found their way to Qajar paintings and were placed in an intertextual relationship, their differences and similarities are revealed; these are sometimes the same angels of the Safavid period and other times the genderless angels of the Qajar period (Lari, 2013, 19).

“After more than 100 years and the emergence of many attitudes and beliefs in the cultural and artistic behaviors of Iranians, the conditions of our country are still influenced by the atmosphere provided by the Qajar dynasty. This is due to the close relationship between society and art (Qajar art) and the similarity of conditions and characteristics that created this period in the country” (Goodarzi, 2009, 9). Depending on the requirements of that day, the beliefs and events that are reflected in the artworks of every era carry a message related to each socio-political period. It is possible to find the similarities and differences between the works of the contemporary artist of our country, Hojat Amani, in the collection of Man and Angel “Angels” with Qajar paintings while considering these factors. Existing paintings from the Qajar period and the contemporary angels by Amani both project various political, cultural, and even religious developments and crises of their time. The symbols and elements used in the artworks in each period are influenced by the relationships that exist between human beings, patrons, artists, the audience, and the environment surrounding them. The angels of the Qajar period are influenced by Western art, and Hojat Amani’s angels are contemporary creations that have the cultural characteristics of the period in which they were created.

This comparative-analytical study examines the artistic language of both era artists and identifies the differences and similarities of the “the angel motif” in each period, in addition to a quantitative analysis from three survey groups: 1. People with art education ,2. People with non-art education and 3. People with high school education

and below, to answer these questions: What is the role of Hojat Amani’s angels in the contemporary era? In addition, what kind of connections can be made by comparing his works with the existing Qajar period works?

Research background

Within this arena, an article titled “Exploring the image of angels in painting of Qajar period” (Safarzadeh & Ahmadi, 2014) discusses the image and status of angels. Also, a book titled “Depicting The Secret: A Study on the Image of Women in the Thirteenth Century” (Lari, 2013) examines the role of women and the angel motif in the Qajar period. Another book titled “The Mirror of Imagination” (Goodarzi, 2009), presents an analysis of the decorations and architecture of the Qajar period. There are also interviews about Hojat Amani’s works, including Shargh newspaper (Barati & Amir Farshi, 2013) has published an interview with Hojat Amani with the headline “The Border between the Arts Will be Removed”. Eleven doctoral evangelical theology students at the University of Goethe-Frankfurt gave an angel lecture in a seminar on Angels Physics, inspired by Hojat Amani’s collection of angels; and they analysed this collection from the perspective of the religious definition of angels and collated their findings in a book titled “Angels, Messengers, Helping Souls or Doppelgangers” (Wenzel et al., 2015) which has been published in German. This book collates Angels’ essays as “The Middle Existence and the Mirror of Self, A Religions Perspective.” Several foreign magazines and newspapers have also published articles about Hojat Amani’s Angels, but no other research has done a direct comparative and definitive study of these two collections, which makes this research novel.

Research methodology

The present research used documentary (library research), field studies, and statistical methods, the results of which were presented comparatively. The analysis method is descriptive and analytical.

The quantitative analysis was conducted in three groups¹: 1. people with an art education, 2. people

educated in non-art disciplines and 3. people with a high school diploma or below, the gender of the participants is mentioned in the survey, which contains 8 questions. The results obtained were presented in this article.

Definition of key concepts

• The literal meaning of Angel

Fereshteh [Angel] is derived from the word Farishteh and is called Soroush in the ancient Persian language and culture and Malek or Hatef in Arabic (Maleki, 1997, 86). It is a being that links the unseen world and material worlds and facilitates the way to God's kingdom. In most religions, "it is a delicate and unseen entity and in Arabic, it is a spiritual creature" (Kamrani, 2006, 54).

In Persian culture and literature, the angel is the manifestation of perfection, beauty, and integrity. As opposed to the [div] demon, which is a symbol of evil and wickedness (ibid., 85).

• Depiction of Angels in human form

Literally, the depiction of an angel in the form of a human being means to imagine and represent an angel in human form in such a way that the audience sees a human (Sultani Beirami, 2014, 50). Some of the narrators of hadith have interpreted the depiction of an angel in human form as an angel transforming into the form of a human, just as human actions and beliefs in the afterlife are embodied in the form of heavenly blessings. In the depiction, the angel is truly embodied in the form of a human, and not as a fantasy, dream, or guess (Khomeini, 1999, 43). Some consider the angel to be physically delicate that can appear in various forms except for dogs and pigs. The representation of an angel is the appearance of a delicate entity in the form of a non-delicate body without changing its nature (Ashqar, 1415 AH, 11), (Fig. 1).

Angel motifs of the Qajar period

Persian painting was influenced by Western art during the Safavid period and continued the tradition of Safavid Westernisation up to the Qajar period when these influences caused profound changes in Persian art and its subset of the image of angels. The realist view



Fig. 1. Gabriel brought a ram to Abraham by Divine command to sacrifice instead of Ishmael (lithograph image). Source: Marzolph, 2020.

of the painters of this period, which was a result of the influences of European art and the social developments of the period, exists in angel painting techniques, and the painters of this period combine the features of Iranian art with the western naturalist view. In historic painting works, especially during its peak period in the 9th and 10th centuries AH, numerous angels were depicted mostly in religious and Islamic scenes, this presence in the scenes of Ascension was more colorful than all other subjects. During the Qajar period, the presence of angels is mostly observed in Christian scenes. After that, the angelic icons are the most important instances of the presence of angels (Pakbaz, 1999, 51, quoted by Safarzadeh & Ahmadi, 2014, 52), (Fig. 2). The old angel motifs in Qajar attire as well as the influences from Western angels and the imagery of women as musicians, acrobats, and dancers are also common themes of this period. By examining the images of angels in the history of Iranian art and considering the history of visual transformations in previous periods, we encounter significant visual changes in the Qajar period. The painters who dominate the nature and view of Iranian art and have challenged the conceptual and pictorial structure of the angels and have presented us with different images of angels.

Examining Angles in the “Man and Angels” collection by Amani

Hojat Amani, born in 1978, is a prominent Iranian

painter and calligrapher. He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative and Analytical History of Islamic Art, Contemporary Middle Eastern Art, and is a graduate of the Iranian Calligraphers Association. He is one of the greatest masters of Iranian calligraphy, whose efforts contributed to the revival and inscription of the “Ta’liq Script” in the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts register as an intangible cultural heritage for all Iranians. He is a multi-faceted artist with numerous works and collections. The “Man and Angels” collection with three subsets (Angels, Angels failed, and Angels in paradise, or Angels in repose) is one of his most well-known collections. The Angels collection is an emphasis on the return of good human traits in the contemporary world. This research comparatively examines these aforementioned works with the Qajar era works, since the Angels collection has been influenced by Qajar era art. However, there is a general view towards all the subsets of the collection in the quantitative analysis. These works recount different periods of Iranian painting history, so in some of them, one can see figures and signs of Qajar qahvekhaneh and saqakhaneh paintings, as well as elements of Qajar and Safavid angels that lead to a new look at the contemporary angel (Fig. 3).

Traditional and contemporary aspects of Amani’s Angels collection

By returning to the Qajar period and Iranian painting, qahvekhaneh and saqakhaneh school of painting, Amani tried to return to folk, common and religious art; and by combining contemporary art with Qajar art, he intends to show the beauties of human existence. In Qahvekhaneh² style painting (popular - imaginary) a connection was established between the painter and the audience, in contrast to the previous periods; and by changing the themes and the presentation of the paintings in public places, different groups began to use it and people considered themselves to be living as the heroes of their stories. Just like the old storytellers who wore their epic and religious veils on their shoulders, he is wearing a veil with a picture of angels’ wings and goes among the people asking them to self-identify with

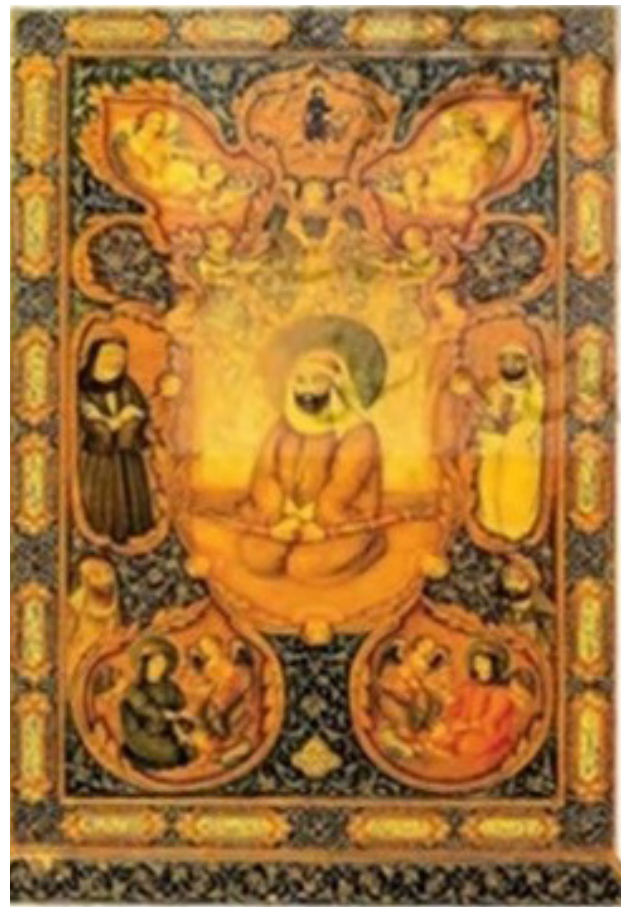


Fig. 2. Mirror frame, paint, and oil on wood, by Mohammad Ismail, 13th century AH. Source: Ehsani, 2003.



Fig. 3. From the Man and Angel collection: Accepted Angels collection. Source: Selected Catalog of Angels, 2010.

his wings. With his wings and performance and without giving any preconceptions, Amani allows his audience to reach their dream of being an angel with these wings, despite their limitations in having wings on the ground and soar in the sky of imagination on their way

to an unknown adventure of love with these colorful wings. It is here that there is no difference between a contemporary woman and a man in a ta'ziyeh dress (Fig. 4). The nature of angels is not specific to a series of human beings who we call "good" in society. All echelons of society, with various religious and behavioural traits, want to be an angel (Amani, 29/1/2021, Personal interview). Edward Lucie-Smith, a renowned English art historian, painter, and critic, on Hojat Amani's collection of works: "What Hojat Amani has done is to align these [Islamic] beliefs with modern technology and the world of today" (Amani, Catalog, 2010, 9).

Common art deals with the mystery and to understand the mysteries one must go within oneself because that is the origin of the mystery and this has become very important in the current specific art (painting, sculpture, etc.), which shows a vast, deep, varied heritage of visual, audio and intellectual symbols. Almost all Iranians share this, and painters and sculptors of the last decade have used these elements in the creation of their works. In fact, it can be said that this language of magic is linked to sacred art. (Alipoursaadani & Sheikhzadeh, 2009, 64). The Saqqakhaneh³ artists used cryptic writing and elements, which were the main tools of prayer writers to form a spell. Patterns on flags, saqqakhaneh locations, locks, pins, old objects, spell repellents, amulets and spells, incantations, and dhikr, are the main material of the work of saqqakhaneh painters. These artists wanted to bridge the new world art and the Iranian art and culture (ibid). The use of these elements is very clear in Amani's accepted collection. By combining painting and traditional elements and linking them with the saqqakhaneh art (traditional and modern), this artist has tried to connect post-modern⁴ art with Iranian art. By entering the realm of conceptual art⁵ and using various conceptual art techniques in his works, he has endeavoured to connect the new world art with Iranian art and culture. The artist's thoughts are what matters in conceptual art; the individual, special and complex ideas of the artist and their understanding by the audience is the epitome of this type of art. The view of the audience in the Angel collection (Man and Angel) is



Fig. 4. From the Man and Angel collection; Accepted Angels Collection. Source: Selected Catalog of Angels, 2010.

the conceptual view, and in more specialised echelons, is the examination of the technique and style of work. It is the author's opinion that the art of photography and its importance in conceptual art, as well as their interactions, are very apparent. Based on Lucie-Smith's opinion, Hojat Amani "Using a camera and a few simple props, encourages people to become angels" (Amani, Catalogue, 2010, 9). This aligns with the author's opinion regarding the artist employing conceptual art. This work has its roots in process art⁶ which is a branch of conceptual art and has been indicated as such by Western critics. Process art emphasises the importance of various stages of the artwork and what the artist does in each, and during the work, the artist will reach a certain understanding of the universe by observing the results of thoughts and actions (Rafiei, 2008, 55 cited in Amani, 2008) From the inception of the idea of angels until the wings backdrop was taken amongst the people and them doing performances⁷, and thinking that they are angles or rejecting the idea, this is the main point of the work. The people who engage in this process, have one point in common, and that is the unique and un-simplified body of humans. From its heyday, the performance art was exactly the human awareness that would transform into an exquisite performance in human physical form. Performing and striking poses by old and young, from doing the Sama dance to being free of the human existence with two wings, being in the centre of the art by wings made out of paintings or a collage⁸ made up of recycled materials (recycled art),

and leaves in nature, different from what was painted in the Qajar era, and being set free in nature, reminds us of land art⁹, the natural angles of shapes, the pieces of cloth snapping in the wind, the men and women who, irrespective of gender, reach their lost half who they always search in their own soul for, embracing their own angelic-ness, and if they don't believe in the angels, then, they will have an unforgettable memory of a beautiful performance for those who take part in one. This performance will be recorded by the artist's photography and will remain forever.

Discussion and analysis on Amani's Angel imagery

Some of the apparent symbols and physical behaviours have become rather important in the new world. In many post-modern cultural arenas, the physical appearance of the body is a function of constant standards on traditional criteria and the choice of attire; and, its style has been a tool for choosing individuality to some extent (Nikzadeh, 2005 cited in Adamiyan, Azimi Hashemi & Sanati Sharqi, 2013, 163). The attire and clothes of the Hojat Amani's angels are inspired by the four constituents of the contemporary Iranian women's attire: traditional religious, traditional semi-modern, fashionable, and non-traditional. These attires have been collated with the Qajar era women's attire, who have a headcover adorned with one or more jeqqeh [paisly], and are stylistically turned to one side. The upper body is covered by a half-transparent blouse with one or more openings in the front with bejeweled margins, and the lower body is covered by loose pantaloons adorned with golden brocade, using photomontage (Ravandi, 1980, 119) The Qajar era clothes cover the body, as in the body cannot be seen except for hands and face. It is as if the attire wants to clarify the particular meaning or power. Amani's wings of angels are inspired by Mir Heidar's Mi'raj Nameh [Book of Ascension], which was one of the masterpieces of the workshops of the School of Herat and related to the Timurid Dynasty (Fig. 5). This masterpiece enjoys quality in its delicacy and richness of colour. Although its angels are different from the ones drawn in the Qajar era in terms of the

shapes of wings, they are similar to them in utility and concept, which is the realism of its angels with earthly existence. The Hojat Amani's angel wings are colourful made up of painting and a collage of recycled materials (recycled art) and some leaves form nature and are different from what used to be painted in the past (Qajar era) in the Iranian paintings.

The contemporary angels of Hojat Amani are normally located in the centre of the work, the angels' feet are mostly placed on the ground and are not suspended in the air, and the emphasis on the woman as the main subject in the painting is clear. The fruit is always included in the works that feature women as the main element. The fruit does not work as a reference alongside the woman, it is a sign of social transformation and nobility. The fruit does not exist in the works outside of the court, and here it has an aesthetic value and does not enter the narrative cycle. It is very much ornamental and gives the image a lasting quality (Ahadi Koli, 2010, 57-59), (Fig. 6).

In the author's opinion, in his three angel collections (Man and Angel) Hojat Amani has used traditional shapes including ornamental and writing patterns, the imagery on astrolabes, images used as prayers and incantations, the imagery on the Iranian qalamkar cloth of the Qajar, and Safavid era, Iranian painting imagery and the qahvekhaneh style, and Qajar and Safavid era iconography, as raw materials. He has amalgamated these with the Iranian modern and traditional art (Saqqakhaneh Art), as well as branches of postmodern, conceptual, performance, process, and land art forms with a view on postmodern feminism¹⁰. he has then captured them with photography and has managed to present a new image of Iranian art, Iranian angels, and Iranian womanhood to East and West. His works have captured the attention of renowned artists and art critics such as Edward Lucie-Smith, Dominic Tino, John Dalson, Ignas Kazakovic, Kerian Adrian Reho, John Louise Hess, Benjamin Heiwette, and Gotfirt Junker. His works have been printed in respected international journals and catalogues, which show this artist's success. One cannot find that many artists who have such new and strong ideas in producing artworks



Fig. 5. Mi'raj Nameh, The meeting of The Prophet (PBUH) with the seventy headed angel of Herat 834 AH. Source: www.Tehran.ir.

as an amalgamation of several art styles and to arrange these styles next to each other, who can create artworks that becomes so durable amongst the people and the international art society and to be examined by such an extensive array of art critics¹¹ in the world. The combination of the styles mentioned before is different in each collection. This article examines the accepted angels and has passing remarks about the other two collections. Women in the society of Iran (especially during the Qajar era art) have always been defined by the social status which is different from the contemporary woman and her important role in society. Overlapping the contemporary woman and amalgamating her with the Qajar women and Qajar era angels is perhaps to fill this void. Hojat Amani's vision in this collection is feminist as part of the post-modern thought processes. Because of the reasons mentioned in this article, the postmodern feminists' vision is social harmony between men and women. In fact, the wings of Hojat Amani's angels have created this harmony between men and women. Under the current circumstances in which the Iranian women in the contemporary society of Iran are living, with their wings being taken away in the name of religion, Hojat Amani gives people his colourful wings and a chance to be free of the rules and to have a moment of freedom to fly in their imaginary world with wings of angels. It can be said that the female angels in

Iranian art (Qajar era art) have been introduced by their social status, the same way that Amani's contemporary women angels have been defined by their social status. Perhaps we can say, that overlapping women from the Qajar era, contemporary women with angels' wings in the Safavid era is an endeavour to show the similarities in the religious context and thoughts in each era. This also presents women who are endeavouring to break the isolation bubble and to move towards progress. But the important point in wing imagery for contemporary humans is to imagine a space for them that would be impossible in the material world.

Comparing Angel works in the contemporary and Qajar era

Regarding the research subject, the results of comparing the angel imagery in the Qajar era and the contemporary angels of Hojat Amani can be expressed as follows: the subjects of the Qajar era imagery includes religious texts (Christian and iconography of the saints) and subjects derived from literature. The religious and non-fiction have been placed in the same frame as the ornamental elements and the angels. They are sometimes in the sky and sometimes in the middle of the frame. Unlike the Safavid era angels that were divine, the contemporary angels are under the influence of the earthly Qajar era angels. The contemporary angels of Amani, which can also be called the post-modern angels, are different from the Qajar era angels because of the individuals performing in them and as a result, have a different subject. It seems that the portrait and body of Qajar women overlap with contemporary women, and even in works where the portrait of the Safavid period is used in photomontage, contemporary angels can be considered similar to the body of Qajar women with colored wings of the Safavid period (Table 1). The Hojat Amani's angel wings are colourful wings made up of painting and a collage of recycled materials (recycled art) and some leaves form nature and are different from what used to be painted in the past in the Iranian paintings (Table 2). The Amani angel wings are inspired by Mir Heidar's Me'raj Nameh, which was one of the masterpieces of the workshops of the School of Herat and related to the



Fig. 6. From the Man and Angles collection; Accepted Angels collection. Source: Selected Catalog of Angels, 2010.

Timurid Dynasty. And the grounding of the angels is similar to the Qajar period which enjoys quality in its delicacy and richness of colour, and although it is not similar to the Qajar era angels in terms of the wing shape, it is similar to the Qajar era in its utility and concept because of its realism of its angels and them becoming earthly. But the angels of the Qajar period have wings similar to the wings of birds and are drawn more realistically - they are depicted smaller than the body of angels - they have become softer and the dryness and sharpness of the edges and tips of their feathers have decreased compared to the Safavid period. In the Qajar era, because of the Western influence, the shape of the wings is depicted more realistically and closer to the Western method compared to the traditional ways - the wings of the angels are attached in a special order and depicted that way. The wing pieces are more than three or four pieces and unlike the Safavid era which saw the wings being depicted mostly like a string and adorned with various colours, the richness of colour and the varied use of colours is significantly reduced compared to the previous era. Also, in this era, we see angels that have a human body and do not have wings and some angels who have a very body that is completely human-like but do not have wings at all.

In Qajar paintings, the emphasis on the role of women is observed as the main subject in the painting. The fruit has an ornamental role in the paintings in which women have the centre stage as the subject. The contemporary angels have been depicted similar to the subjects of the Qajar paintings and are similar to the angel paintings in

the lithographic books. The attire and style of the Amani angels have been matched with the Qajar era women and angels.

The hairstyles and tiaras of Amani's contemporary angels are similar to the Qajar women and angels in some of the paintings; on many occasions, these angles have been depicted without any headgear while on some occasions they have headgears or tiaras. The headgears are painted in gold (Tables 1 and 2) We see warm and cold colors that have been executed with shadows and light in the methods of preparation and painting faces and clothes in the Qajar period. We can find the colour similarities between Qajar period women and angels by comparing Tables 1 & 2. Additionally, the halo which exists around the heads of the Qajari saints is not present in Amani's angels (Tables 1 & 2) Based on this comparison, the imagery elements of Hojat Amani's contemporary (post-modern) angels have been influenced by both the Safavid and the Qajar era angels. Based on the author's opinion, contemporary (post-modern) angels are in fact the body and portraits of the Qajar and Safavid women with contemporary wings that have been influenced by the Safavid school, and conceptually, it is influenced by the Qajar era angels because of their earthliness.

Conclusions

Throughout history, Iranians have always had a transcendental mentality and their view of the world and life has been spiritual. As a result, the Amani angel project is the resurrection of the wish of every human experience flight to beyond the material and to be placed on top of the human condition which has its own place in the most ancient layers of Iranian culture. In returning to the Qajar era and Iranian painting, qahvehkhaneh painting, and the Saqqakhaneh School, Amani has endeavoured to return to the common, popular, and religious art and he tries to show the beauty of humanity's existence as a concept by amalgamating the contemporary and Qajar era art. In qahvehkhaneh painting, the connection between the artist and the audience increased - unlike in previous periods - and by changing the themes and presenting the paintings

Table 1. Comparing the angels of the Qajar period and the accepted angels of Hojat Amani. Source: Authors.







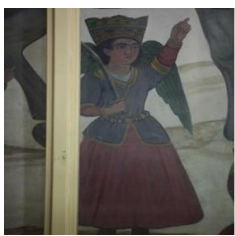



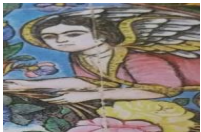









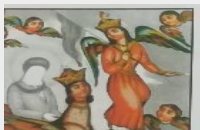





Angel Components	Images of Qajar Angels	Images of Contemporary Angels	Degree of Conformity				Description
			Conforms	Low	Medium	Does Not Conform	
Wing			×				The wings of contemporary angels are inspired by the Safavid period.
Hair and Tiara Adornments						×	Not present in this work.
Attire			×				Due to the overlap in some paintings, the similarity is present in some works.
Colour			×				Due to the overlap with the images of Qajar women, the Qajar colour scheme is used in Qajar women's clothing.
Face and body						×	Some paintings contain the figures of the Safavid period, some have figures of the Qajar period, and some have contemporary human beings.
Halo						×	Not present
Composition				×			The composition of contemporary angels is at the center of the frame.





Table 2. A Comparison between the angels in the Qajar era and accepted Angels by Amani. Source: Authors.

Angel Components	Images of Qajar Angels	Images of Contemporary Angels	Degree of Conformity				Description
			Conforms	Low	Medium	Does Not Conform	
Wing						×	Contemporary wings are the wings of the Safavid period.
Hair and Tiara Adornments	 		×				Due to the overlap with the images of Qajar women.
Attire	 				×		Due to the overlap in some paintings, the similarity is present in some works.
Colour			×				Due to the overlap with the images of Qajar women.
Face and body					×		Some paintings contain the figures of the Safavid period, some have figures of the Qajar period, and some have contemporary human beings.

in public places, different groups used it, and people identified with the heroes of their stories. In his three angels collections (man and angels), Amani has mixed

his work with modern art elements as well as traditional Iranian art (saqqakhaneh) and has managed to record all of this with photography with a postmodernist

Rest of Table 2.

Angel Components	Images of Qajar Angels	Images of Contemporary Angels	Degree of Conformity				Description
			Conforms	Low	Medium	Does Not Conform	
Halo						×	Not present
Composition						×	The composition of contemporary angels is at the center of the frame.

feminist view. This art has presented a new image of the contemporary woman within the framework of the Iranian art, angels, and women to the East and the West, despite the Qajar woman is different from the contemporary woman and her significant role in society. Overlapping the contemporary woman and amalgamating her with the Qajar women and Qajar era angels is perhaps to fill this void. Also, in the present age, Hojat Amani, gives his colourful wings to the women of the society, and by doing that presents them with an opportunity to be free of the closed and limiting rules that have been imposed on them, arriving at the possibility to fly freely in his imaginary world with angel wings. Therefore, it can be said that, considering their social status, the contemporary female angels of Amani try to show the similarity in the religious context and religious thinking in each period.

Endnotes

1. It is a term to describe a type of narrative oil painting with epic and festive themes that appeared in the post-constitutional revolution era, and it is based on the traditions of popular and religious art, influenced by the then trending naturalistic painting of that time, that was practiced by untrained artists at the time (Pakbaz, 2010, 586-587).. The statistical set in this study consists of 3

groups including 1- People with art education 2- People without art education 3- People with a high school diploma and below. Data gathering was conducted using the survey questions developed by the researcher. The questions within the survey questionnaire were produced based on the research goals and the data was recorded in MS Excel. The required calculations were performed by descriptive statistical methods. There were 100 samples in each survey group with a total of 300 people surveyed. Since Hojat Amani's works are audience-centric, I reached the goals I had set myself in this research. The percentage for each group was presented through the statistical figures.

The first group, the people with art education who were a total of 100 people, 27% male, and 73% female, with the education breakdown of 10% Ph.D., 52% master's degree, 32% bachelor's degree and 6% graduate diploma (Fig. 7). The second group of people with non-art education were a total of 100 people, 21% male, and 79% female, with the education breakdown of 13% Ph.D., 42% master's degree, 34% bachelors degree and 11% graduate diploma (Fig. 8). The third group was people with a high school diploma or below, who were a total of 100 individuals including 21% male and 79% female and 66% having a high school diploma, and 34% below a high school diploma (Fig. 9). The results are as follows:

In general, the results of this analysis and research showed that the largest number of participants were female with an average of 70.5%, the male participants constituted a 29.5% share of the total which showed a strong reception amongst women for this collection. Participating in this survey was optional, and to better compare the groups, a total of 100 samples per group had been considered. In terms of gender breakdown, 21% of the high school diploma group were male and 79% female, in the art educated group 27% are male and 73% are female, and in the non-art educated group, 40% are men and 60% are female. 73.5% of the total number of participants accepted the angels as a metaphysical force and the remaining 26.5% did not accept believe it as such. 20.3% of the total number of participants believed that angels are female and 1.3% believed that they are male. 51% believed that the angels do not have a gender and 27.3% felt that the angels can be both male and female. In the survey we observed that 5.3 of the total number of participants believed the metaphysical powers have a particular place, 23.5% said that these powers did not have a particular place and 53.6% felt that these powers could be anywhere. 5.6% considered the place to be the sky and 11.7% considered both

sky and the earth to be a place for metaphysical powers. When asked what feeling the participants had when they first encountered the accepted angels collection, 16% of them were attracted to the creativity, beauty, coquetry, and femininity of this collection, and the high school diploma group with 29% were the maximum, art-educated 15% and non-art educated with 4% were the minimum number of participants that had this opinion.

With respect to the feeling of weightlessness and spirituality, 13% of the total believed as such. 12.7% of the total number of participants believed that this collection fills the eternal gap between humankind and being angelic. With regards to the connection between the historic legends and contemporary life, 18.7% of the total number of participants have chosen this, and another choice that 28.6% of the total number of participants believed in, is that the collection is a combination of photography, painting, collage, and creating modern works with a new vision; 6% of the participants were of the opinion that this collection shows the artist's passion and a pleasant feeling emanated by the artist in creating these works. With regard to the connection between the contemporary and Qajar era women, the statistics showed that 5% of the participants believe in this option. With regards to the opinion of the people when first encountering the Fallen Angels collection, 18% of the participants voted for the feeling of freedom, contradiction, and conflict. Also, 5.6% of the participants felt a lack of identity, death, and breaking. 6.7% of the participants thought that this collection inspires a feeling of artistic photography.

32.3% of the participants believed that the angel can be different in any era and with any religious view and that the angel can appear within any face. 5.3% of the people have a feeling of forced hijab and the bitterness of the people treating the individuals without the hijab and with respect to the last choice, this collection captured the attention of 6% of the participants because of its modernity and bright colours. Regarding the first encounter with the Angles in Paradise collection, 7% of the participants felt descension, death, breaking, and disillusionment. 23% of the participants have chosen the resurrection from the soil as an angel option. 24.3% of the participants have felt calm because of the autumn colours used in this collection. 24.7% of the participants, considered this collection as a symbol and an icon of a protest against a certain movement. Also, 21% of the participants are of the opinion that this collection emphasises the mysterious elements hidden in the metaphysical world and the unnatural world. The participants were asked which collections they like best and would choose if they had to; 51% of the participants chose the Accepted Angels, and 20% of the participants liked the Fallen Angels. Also, around 29% preferred the Angles in Repose collection. The participants were asked how they would feel if they were the performers and they had a chance to have wings, and 26.3% of the participants felt free of the physical form and

its bounds. 9% of the participants felt the same with the Angels and 9.3% of the participants could not consider themselves an angel just because they have wings; regarding the feeling of solidarity and helping others, 23% of the participants believed in this option. 9.4% had the feeling of being cleansed of their sins and being in a spiritual world. 14.7% of the participants felt as if they were flying. 9% of the participants did not believe angels exist so they did not imagine themselves as one.

2. The Saqqakhaneh School: This is a term first coined by Karim Emami-translator, journalist, and critic - to describe the works of some of the Iranian artists who wanted to bridge the gap between tradition and modernity (ibid., 307).

3. Post Modernism: A term to describe the architectural, artistic, literary and philosophical tendencies after the 1960s. There is still no accurate and comprehensive definition of this term. Generally, five common and interconnecting concepts can be counted: pluralism, self-awareness, contextualism, individualism (ibid., 127).

4. Conceptual Art A theoretical framework in Western Art which appeared around the end of 1960, after minimal art and heralded the postmodern era. In this theory, the concept (the general understanding of particular matters) and the artist's thoughts take centre stage as opposed to the way these are presented, or the artistic object. The goal is to communicate the concept or the particular idea to the audience, irrespective of the method of expression (ibid., 403).

5. Process art is a sub-discipline in American Art, related to the second half of the 1960s and 1970s that emphasised the real processes of building, amassing, erasing etc. Emphasised. Works related to the process art were made up of various components and were mostly not long lasting, as opposed to the minimal art structures (ibid., 665-666).

6. Performance art, a type of "show" to present new artistic opinions and even propagate social thoughts and political beliefs, which has been trending from time to time in the twentieth century. Some call it the live art (ibid., 652).

7. A method in which the photos, newspaper cuttings, and other appropriate objects are glued onto a flat surface, sometimes a painting canvas, which is often mixed with brush strokes. The cubists were the first group of professional artists that attached objects such as newspaper cuttings to their works and gave them a dual purpose (both a real object and an element of imagery (Lynton, 2004, 491).

8. Land Art is expressing a concept by creating art in open spaces and nature (Qarehbaghi, 1999, 61).

9. Postmodern Feminism: The view of postmodern feminists is social harmony between men and women Postmodern feminists are of the opinion

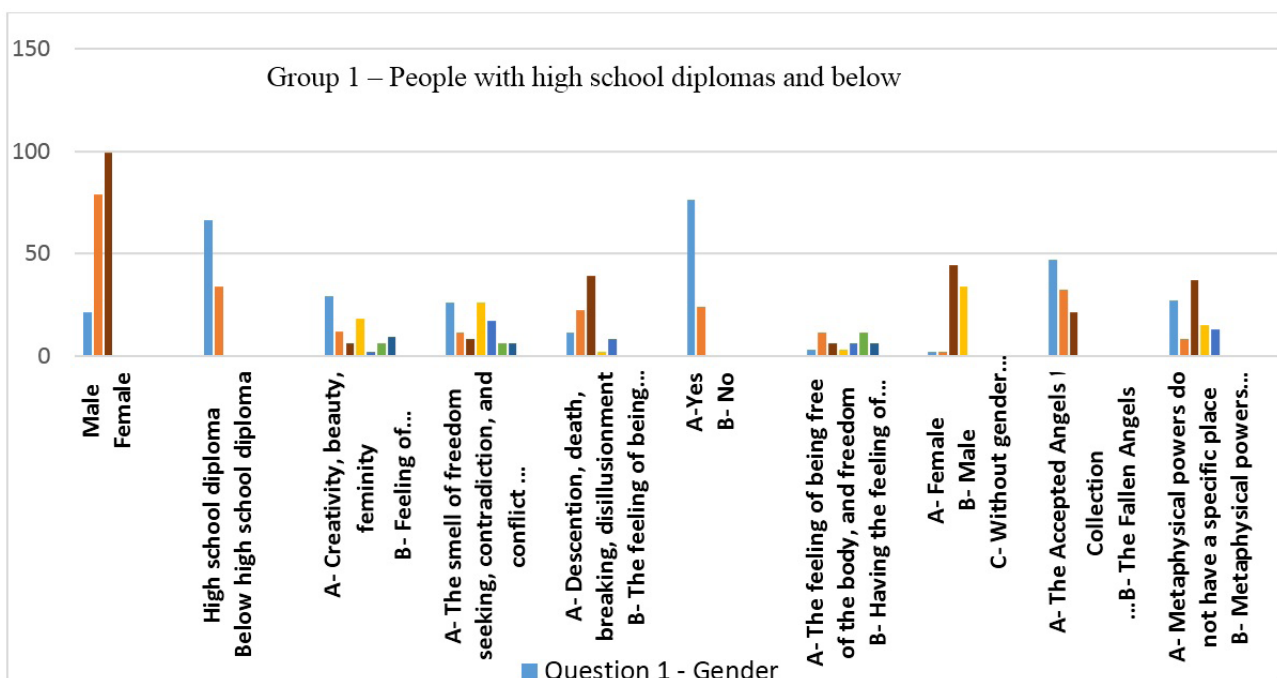


Fig. 7. Statistical population of people with art education. Source: Authors.

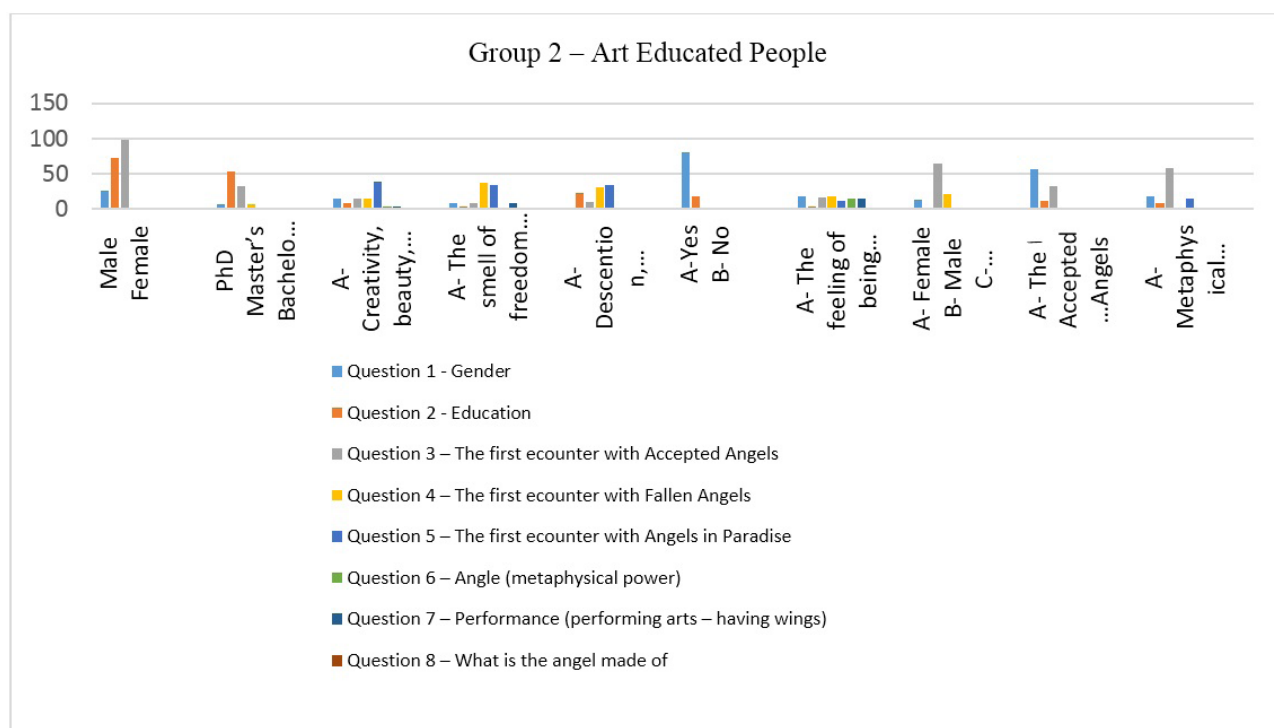


Fig. 8. Statistical population of people with non-artistic education. Source: Authors.

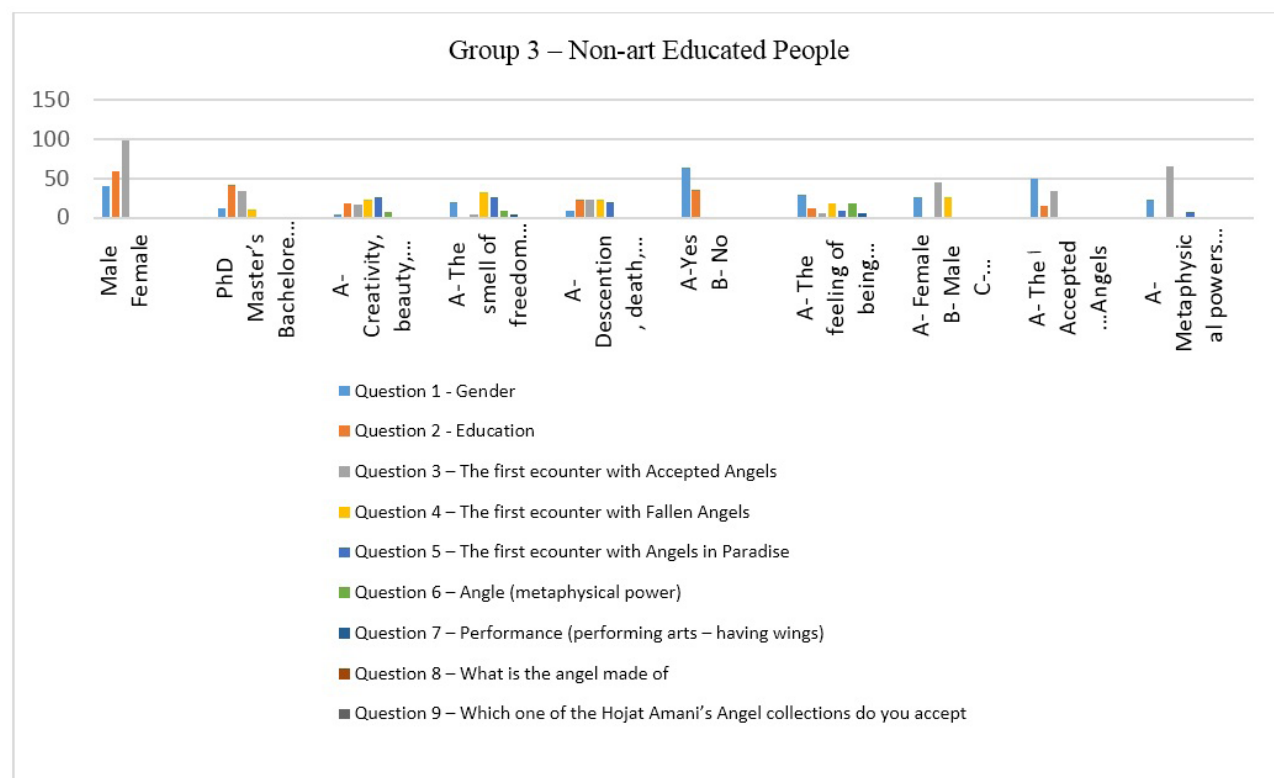


Fig. 9. Statistical population of people with diploma and lower education. Source: Authors.

that today's society has changed the meaning of gender (postmodern feminists emphasises the social harmony between men and women (Sajjadi 2006, 16-18).

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