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### Symbolic Artistry in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*

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<b>Keywords:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Illuminati</li><li>- ambigram</li><li>- symbols</li><li>- dissimulation</li><li>-segno</li><li>-pentagram</li><li>-obelisk</li></ul>	<b>Abstract</b> In a quest of exploring his potentials and developing his personal interests, the young Dan Brown decided to direct his sails toward the world of fiction. After penning several literary pieces, such as <i>Digital Fortress</i> (1998), <i>Angels and Demons</i> (2000) and <i>Deception Point</i> (2001), he succeeded in publishing his groundbreaking thriller <i>The Da Vinci Code</i> in 2003, which quickly captured the eye of many readers around the world. Whether admirers or critics of this famous literary piece, over two hundred million copies were sold out globally for its "twisty adrenaline-fueled yet cerebral" plot (Alter, 2020). He owns a book collection of five thrillers that are labelled as 'The Robert Langdon Series.' The first book of this collection is <i>Angels and Demons</i> . It follows up the journey of a Harvard professor named Robert Langdon, who is summoned to unlock the mystery of four missing cardinals who disappeared just before the election of a new Pope in Vatican City was about to take place. With the help of Vittoria Vetra, the daughter of the anti-matter scientist Leonardo Vetra at CERN, Langdon attempts to save their lives. It requires the encryption of symbols and other forms of art to successfully reach the final whereabouts of the cardinals. Their search also implicitly reveals that there is more
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Accepted: 5-1-2021	understand about the connection between religion and science th the general population actually believes especially if the secrets the universe and the reality of God was the purpose understanding. Considering this matter, this paper shall explain ho the encryption of symbols and the analysis of religious art are in fa striking representations of grand ideas and beliefs in Dan Brown <i>Angels and Demons</i> . The effects and concluding theories shall highlighted as well to show how art and symbology encapsula more than what the eye perceives.
Available online	

## استخدام الرموز في رواية دان براون

### ملائكة وشياطين

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<p><b>الخلاصة:</b> هادفاً لاستكشاف قدراته وتطوير اهتماماته ، وجه دان براون أشرعته نحو عالم الخيال منذ صغر سنه. بعد كتابة العديد من الروايات الادبية ، مثل <i>الحصن الرقمي</i> (1998) و <i>ملائكة وشياطين</i> (2000) و <i>حقيقة الخديعة</i> (2001) ، نجح براون في نشر روايته المثيرة <i>شفرة دافنشي</i> في عام 2003 ، والذي سرعان ما استحوذ انتباه الكثير من القراء حول العالم. من المعجبين لهذه الرواية الأدبية كانوا ام النقادين ، فقد نجح براون في بيع أكثر من مائتي مليون نسخة على مستوى العالم لكونها قصة "ملتوية تغذيها الأدرينالين ولكنها فكرية" (Alter ، 2020). أول كتاب من مجموعته المؤلفة من خمسة روايات إثارة والمعروفة باسم "سلسلة روبرت لانغدون" هي رواية <i>الملائكة والشياطين</i>. تتابع هذه الرواية رحلة أستاذ من جامعة هارفارد يُدعى روبرت لانغدون الذي يواجه لغز اختطاف أربعة كرادلة قبل موعد المناسبة الدينية لانتخاب بابا جديد في مدينة الفاتيكان. بمساعدة فيتوريا فيتزا، ابنة العالم للمادة المضادة ليوناردو فيتزا في مؤسسة CERN ، يحاول لانغدون إنقاذ حياتهم. بعد تشفير الرموز وفك الالغاز المتضمنة في المعالم الدينية والاستعانة بمعرفتهم التاريخية للمدينة توصلوا ليس فقط الى الكرادلة المختطفين لكن ايضا أن العلم</p>	<p><b>الكلمات الدالة:</b> - - المتنورين - غامبيغرام - الرموز - الإخفاء - سيجنو - الخماسي - المسلة</p> <p><b>معلومات البحث</b> <b>تاريخ البحث:</b> الاستلام: 2020-12-16</p> <p><b>القبول: 2021-1-5</b> التوفر على النت</p>
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والدين لا يمكن الفصل بينهم حتى وان كان الهدف هو معرفة أسرار الكون وحقيقة الخالق عز وجل. وبذلك سيتطرق هذا البحث الى اهداف صياغة العلماء والفنانين وحتى المؤسسات الدينية لرموز فنية معينة حسب ما جاء في رواية دان براون المشهورة ملائكة وشياطين وبيان أهميتها.

## 1. Symbolic Artistry in Dan Brown's *Angels and Demons*

### 1.1 Symbolic Artistry Related to Science and the Illuminati

Within the first pages of one of his bestselling thrillers, Brown already uncovers an eye opening idea that symbols are a form of art that may be inclusive of directing signs and derivative meaning. Among the most illustrious symbols were perhaps created by the secret brotherhood of the Illuminati, an organization first formed in Bavaria, 1776 (Tucker 35). The success behind the continuation of this brotherhood lies within the extreme secrecy and the private policies its members are required to follow. The use of art and symbology is one of their strategic ways to prevent their secrecy from being exposed.

#### 1.1.1 Ambigrams

The Illuminati made use of different kinds of art in the means of symbology. One of the most pointed-out forms of art evident in the novel is the art of *ambigrams*. The main reason behind their use of this type is to have their plans hidden from the public and avoid any possible disruption (Tucker 35). Ambigram means 'both'. In other words, it reflects the idea that a symbol can be read from both sides. Their intention was to have a symmetrical reading to reflect the idea that everything the world includes is confined to the idea of duality and is therefore everything is systematically balanced. Reading their trademark ambigram of the word *Illuminati* for example is one of the most well-crafted symbols of their organization that may be read normally when face up, but when turning it upside down it will impressively result in the reading of the same word: "... reading the brand right-side up and then upside down. 'Illuminati,' he whispered (Brown 23). It is perhaps the history of this secret society that one must seek thoroughly for this art to be fully appreciated and understood. Being a reputable Harvard professor and author of several books about symbolism, the protagonist Professor Robert Langdon, introduces facts on how the Illuminati found their ray of existence. He explains to Maximilian Kohler, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CERN, that the Illuminati believed that science was the only power responsible for the origin of creation (Brown 23). Scientists like Giordano Bruno shared scientific facts that prominently became an attack on the Roman Catholic Church's teachings. Bruno was eventually murdered, which marked the beginning of a sparking outrage and a noticeable drift away of science from religion; the gap between the two was a

revolutionary gap that only grew larger over time. Scientists, astronomers and many other educated men started organizing secret meetings to discuss the Church's untruthful legacy and planning for its downfall. They also planned to illuminate the world with the truth of creation in the lights of science and proven facts rather than leaving it unexplained as they believed religion and the divine seemed to suggest. Another famous personality Langdon mentions is the famous Galileo Galilei. He was an Illuminatus by secret but also a faithful Catholic by choice. He elaborated on the significance of science, revealing that it existed not for the aim of degrading the divine but rather to reinforce God's existence and divine laws. Furthermore, Langdon assures that Galileo tried to prove that "science and religion were not enemies, but rather allies - two different languages telling the same story, a story of symmetry and balance ... heaven and hell, night and day, hot and cold, God and Satan. Both science and religion rejoiced in God's symmetry" (Brown 51).

SCIENCE AND RELIGION ARE NOT AT ODDS.

SCIENCE IS SIMPLY TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND. (Brown 91)

The Illuminati logo is clearly a representation of this idea; it was the means of duality that bewildered the brotherhood the most. Their research was secretive for that reason. They search for scientific facts until they were powerful enough to make a reappearance and to declare the wrongdoings and manipulation of the Catholic Church. The Illuminati later reached out to the Masons and successfully achieved new levels of power. The Masons were a secret society of science on their own including many prominent scientists of the rich and famous. With the Masons as protectors, the Illuminati gained access to high ranks and political positions around the world and were consequently capable of spreading their scientific knowledge rapidly. With the two secret institutions developing into even greater forces, science and religion were estranged even further and appeared to have no agreement altogether. Beside the ambigram of the Illuminati, the novel reveals five more ambigrams. They are the ambigrams of the words earth, water, fire and air; the four basic elements that early scientists had agreed upon. The fifth one might be the most eye capturing as it is called the 'Illuminati Diamond.' While it looks indeed like a diamond, the ambigram appears to be a formula of the words of the four natural elements within one ambigram. Turning it upside down would show the reading of the four words in an identical manner (Heller). The novel then reveals an ultimate collection of six ambigrams in total.

### **1.1.2 Dissimulation**

To carry on their message of enlightenment with scientifically proven facts in complete secret was the Illuminati's only safe card to play. Langdon explains: "they never revealed the location of their hideaway to anyone outside the brotherhood (Brown 206). So in order to scientists and members to find the secret location they used "symbolic markers placed in public locations around the city" (Brown 207). Only the brightest of scientist would be able to understand the secret markers and lead

themselves to the ultimate location. Langdon declares that this method of symbology is generally known as “dissimulation” (Brown 209). The use of ambigram was not safe enough so dissimulation was their next step. They called for the same artist, the Italian Gian Lorenzo Bernini, who had been making the ambigrams of the Illuminati symbols and requested him to carve four sculptures to be Illuminati markers that will lead to the secret location of ‘The Church of Illumination’ if the suggested directions were followed properly. They chose them to be four, as ancient scientists theorized that planet Earth was made out of four major elements; water, fire, air and earth (Chiu). It was symbolized as ‘the early cross’ that had equal four sides to represent each of the four elements. After Bernini completed the sculpting, the sculptures were donated to specific churches in Rome and with a little political influence, the sculptures were placed in the exact same spots they wished their artwork to be. No common person would suspect the artwork to include any other meaning other than its association with religion as it was skillfully and intentionally carved to appear religious. Langdon quickly realized that if the four cardinals were to be murdered that day, it would be at the four different churches that these four sculptures would be pointing to. This was the secret ‘Path of Illumination’ that had to be followed and the only way to know where to start this path is to find the ‘segno’ or the ‘sign.’

### **1.1.3 Segno**

Langdon declares that the segno or sign can be found in one of the most secretive books of written by the famous Galileo Galilei entitled *Diagramma*. When the book was published in Rome, it had quickly been smuggled to Holland for its controversial content. The Vatican in the meantime started burning many books in the quest of finding and taking this book down. The book was printed on papyrus, a type of very thin paper. If any none follower would try getting his hands on the booklet, any member could simply throw it in the river and it would dissolve rapidly leaving no clue behind. As Langdon and Vitoria finally found the famous book, they detected the segno which was a poem of four lines written by the famous poet John Milton. It read:

*From Santi’s earthly tomb with demon’s hole,  
‘Cross Rome the mystic elements unfold.  
The path of light is laid, the sacred test,  
Let angels guide you on your lofty quest. (Brown 252).*

So the art that the Illuminati has made use of is not only in the form of sculptures, but is also included in the art of using literary words. These lines gives a marker of each of the four Church locations where the cardinals will presumably be murdered. The first marker led Langdon to a tomb the Italian painter Raphael Santi designed and ultimately to the church of Santa Maria del Popolo in the Chigi Chapel that was previously named Capella della Terra (Chapel of the Earth). The clue of the first essential natural element, ‘earth,’ was their key of successfully finding the right location. When they reached the proper location, the poem fit the description perfectly: “The piazza seemed subtly filled with illuminati significance. Not only was it laid out in a perfectly elliptical shape, but dead center stood a towering Egyptian obelisk – a square pillar stone with a distinctively

pyramidal tip. Spoils of Rome's imperial plundering, obelisks were scattered across Rome and referred to by symbologists as 'Lofty Pyramids' – skyward extensions of the sacred pyramidal form" (Brown 291). As they keep on spectating the area they find an even more convincing clue of having the right address: "A shining star over a triangular pile of stones? ... A source of Illumination over a pyramid" (Brown 291). It was quite similar to the pyramid printed on the one dollar bill; one of the prominent Masonic symbols. Reaching a room after several clues and directions, Langdon cannot help but notice more pyramids and ellipses and finally the famous 'demon's hole' mentioned in the poem. This hole was a mysterious dark pit within the ground. Somebody had removed an artwork of mosaic that used to cover it. It was an artwork that included the image of a skeleton holding a tablet with drawings of pyramids and stars on it. Entering this hole, Langdon and Vitoria indeed found a dead cardinal half buried in earth with his throat filled up with dirt. Examining the corpse, Langdon finds the ambigram of 'earth' branded on the cardinal's chest. They successfully decrypted the symbols and the meaning of the first line of poetry, but were too late in time. With the last line of the poem, Langdon reached a new illuminati marker that will lead them on their quest. Inside the Chigi Chapel Langdon noticed two marble sculptures. They represented of "Habakkuk and the Angel" (Brown 320). Habakkuk, a prophet, was pointing towards a certain way while the angel was pointing towards a complete opposite direction. It was this direction of the Angel that should be followed according to the last line of the poem 'Let angels guide you on your lofty quest.' It quickly drove his mind that the next marker referred to science's next alter; air. They followed the direction of the angel and concluded their way towards 'Respiro di Dio' or Breath of God. It was clearly a reference to the element of air. It was an ellipse at the base of a monolith in St. Peter's Square also known as 'Bernini's West Ponente'. Only few moments later they found the second cardinal and the ambigram of 'air' was branded on his chest. Tracing down the third church in attempt of saving the third cardinal, they encrypted their next step towards the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. An artwork that was created by Bernini and had the relation to the third natural element is The Ecstasy of St Teresa. This statue was built after St. Teresa presumably had perceived a vision where an angel had visited her. Finding an excerpt of this incident in a book, St. Teresa describes it as:

... his great golden spear ... filled with fire ...

Plunged into me several times ... penetrated to my

Entrails ... a sweetness so extreme that one could not possibly wish it to stop (Brown 376).

Then more mentioning of the element of fire were made as Langdon continued reading the passages and it was not doubt that this statue that was placed in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria was the accurate place. Reaching the place, Langdon and Vitoria were not on time to save the third cardinal and another symbol of art; the ambigram of the word 'fire' was branded on the corpse. Having missed on the life of the third cardinal, there was one more cardinal they longed to save. In the Church of Santa Maria

della Vittoria, he found a statue with a spear that again matched the line of poetry. The spear was directed towards the final location of where the last cardinal would be slaughtered. It should be a reference to the last element of nature; 'water.' After gazing on the map, Langdon found the fourth location; *The Fountain of the Four Rivers*, another work of the famed Bernini had built in Piazza Navona:

A flawless tribute to water, Bernini's *Fountain of the Four Rivers* glorified the four major rivers of the Old World - The Nile, Ganges, Danube, and Rio Plata. Water, Langdon thought. *The final marker*. It was perfect.

And even more perfect, Langdon realized, the cherry on the cake, was that high atop Bernini's fountain stood a towering obelisk (Brown 445).

With this clue, Langdon took a stand back to connect the four locations together. It formed a cross of equal sides, representing the four elements of nature. Galileo's Path of Illuminati was thereby clear. It was a cross that represents religion but with all sides being of equal size to spread the idea that science is connected to religion dismissing the idea that the two are separated from each other. Hereby the line 'Cross Rome the mystic elements unfold' has been interpreted. Reaching the place, he indeed found the cardinal branded with the fourth ambigram; 'water.' However, the cardinal could not be saved in time. Searching for the kidnapped Vittoria and the ultimate Illuminati symbol in the form of a diamond, Langdon saw an obelisk near the fountain with a pigeon on its top. He quickly realizes that this pigeon, normally known as a symbol of an angel of peace if it is analyzed in the terms of paganism. It is that angel that is referred to in the four-lined poem and therefore he must follow west, exactly towards the direction this pigeon is pointing to. Finally having marked the four location as a cross, Langdon reached the ultimate hiding place of the Illuminati headquarter; *Castel Sant' Angelo*; a round castle surrounded by a square fortress. It had an outside field in the form of a pentagram. On that castle, another angel with a sword was visible. The sword pointed directly towards the castle itself. The castle was guarded with twelve statues of angels known as the 'Bridge of Angels' made by Bernini. When Langdon gained access to the castle, he reached the so called 'Church of Illumination;' a place filled with pentagrams, pyramids and symbols that the Illuminati included. In the middle of the room, as the Hassassin was holding Vittoria captive, Langdon noticed a box filled with art. It was made out of copper in the form of a pentagram holding inside the five iron tools. Four of them were used to brand the four cardinals with the ambigrams; earth, fire, water, air. The fifth one, the Illuminati brand, however was much bigger in size and had the form of a square. Langdon later discovers the existence of a sixth brand; it was the 'Illuminati Diamond.' It is another ambigram that carries the four basic natural elements of earth, fire, water and air. Reading them upside down would be the same reading as the actual one. It is as Langdon describes, a "diabolical genius" (Brown 521).

#### **1.1.4 Trinacria**

Another artistic symbol the Illuminati used is the 'Trinacria.' When Langdon and Vittoria examine the one dollar bill, this symbol is clearly printed on its backside. The

Trinacria is a pyramid with an eye which in their belief holds the aim of "the Illuminati's ability to infiltrate and watch all things. The shining triangle represents enlightenment. And the triangle is also the Greek letter delta, which is the mathematical symbol for -- -' 'Change. Transition' (Brown 136). So the aim behind the usage of all these symbols in the form of art is clearly because they want to spread their scientific facts across the world misleading people that they are the source. It is to avoid the risk of being extinguished yet again by the Vatican Church. The use of symbols is then a clever path they follow to remain as secretive as possible (Garlinghouse).

### **1.1.5 Conseil Europeen pour la Recherche Nucleaire (CERN)**

The logo of the famous scientific research facility known as CERN, also suggests several illuminati marker, the BBC reporter, Glick, notifies:

Two intersecting circles representing particle accelerators, and five tangential lines representing particle injection tubes....Although CERN had lots of accelerators, their logo showed only two. Two is the Illuminati number of duality. Although most accelerators had only one injection tube, the logo showed five. Five is the number of the Illuminati pentagram. Then had come the coup – the most brilliant point of all. Glick pointed out that the logo contained a large numeral '6' – clearly formed by one of the lines and circles – and when the logo was rotated, another six appeared ... and then another. The logo contained three sixes! 666! The devil's number! The mark of the beast! (Brown 449-450).

The aim behind the usage of the number 666, is to generate fear within the people. With their unlimited invention in technology and modern science, they make people understand that everyone has no choice but to make use of their inventions and contributions if they were planning to cope with the world's rapid development in technology. It is if their god is technology-based and their message hereby is to make people follow their law instead of God that religion has called to praise for centuries. Having the evil intention, as they are believed to worship Saturn (Satan), evil is the core of their institution (Horne 87).

### **1.2 Symbolic Artistry Related to the Catholic Church**

It is not only the Illuminati that have representing symbols and artifacts, but the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church have also its fair share in the matter. When Langdon and Vitoria finally land on The Vatican lands, the witness two keys crossing each other and at their center lies a crown and shield. This symbol represents the Vatican and the Holy seat; the throne of St. Peter specifically. Another marker that is used as a symbolic marker of the Vatican is the smoke that is released during the election of a new pope. The Sistine Chapel releases black smoke if no pope has been elected. The smoke would be white however, if a successor has been chosen. It is released to announce the welcome of a new Pope. This may be considered as a religious symbol of art the Vatican uses to express the enthusiasm and delight of conclave. This may also help in a raise of excitement of the Catholic followers to keep them engaged and loyal to their belief.



## 2. Conclusion

*Angels and Demons*, a thriller that has received admiration and backlash alike, denotes the importance of an ancient clash between religion and science. The aim of such a sensitive topic may somewhat differ from one reader. However it is undeniable that one is to admire the ingenious art of the symbols that are used by both religious and science-based organizations. The symbols are still evident in today's world and should be evaluated for what various meanings they may include. Art may hold a decorative stance in religious sites, but this novel invites the perception of symbols from a different perspective. Symbols, like the secret brotherhood of the Illuminati has demonstrated, have incorporated mysterious meaning within the symbols they make. These symbols continue to be an enigma till this day, as the Illuminati is still not determined to be existing till this day. The Illuminati have stored their messages within their symbols to continue their scientific revolt against religious teachings, while the Vatican and the Catholic Church have had a more spiritual desire in their choices of symbolic art. The aim is clearly to have a spiritual cite were worshippers feel the blessings of their faith and also to guarantee the devotion of the believers and their appreciation of the Catholic Church and the Christian teachings. The difference in their intentions can clearly be seen with their use of the cross symbol. For the Illuminati all the four sides are equal to show off not only the balanced duality the universe includes but also to declare that secret of the universe is science only. Christianity on the other hand reveals the suffering of Jesus on the cross and that upon all Jesus is the divine who should be worshipped and remembered as the savior of mankind.

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