

Giotto's Salone:

**An astrological investigation into the fresco paintings of the
first floor Salone of the Palazzo della Ragione, Padua, Italy.**

Volume 1

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Arts, School of Humanities, Department of Historical Studies (History of Art), January 2014.

Word count: 79,998

Abstract

The fresco scheme of the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, Italy, originally painted by Giotto di Bondone (c.1267-1337) in c.1309 across three registers, with restoration in 1420, contains a careful arrangement of sky images and symbols that have continued to puzzle art historians, modern iconographers, and scholars alike. I reconstructed the skies over Padua in the medieval period using astronomical software, together with knowledge of poetic astronomy¹ and naked eye astronomy. This approach showed that, rather than being simple decorations, the images of the upper register of the fresco scheme are instead reflective of the constellations that dictated the seasons and the cycle of the year as seen over Padua c.1309. In addition, the imagery of the middle and lower registers contains a rich assembly of Christian saints, labours associated with each month and season, trades and skills exemplified by the Paduan workforce, images that depict the latitude bands, and theological and liturgical themes. These registers were found to contain a mixture of astrological qualities that have as their source the astrology of Abū Ma‘shar (787–886), al-Qabīṣī (fl.945–967) and Avraham Ibn Ezra (born 1089–1092, died after 1160). This methodology embraces a set of tools that takes into account the expression and understanding of medieval astrology and all its visual components, attributes, and assignments of meaning. I contend that the images of the Salone describe a world-view underpinned by medieval astrology that, through its planetary attributes, qualities, and rulership (places of strength), reflects life on earth in its seasonal and calendrical cycle. My PhD research offers original insights into the cosmological alliance between Paduan fourteenth- and fifteenth-century law and its citizens, the accord that the Commune regarded as important between the order of the celestial realms and the order of life on earth.

¹ In the tradition of Hyginus (c.64 BCE – 17 CE) and his view of an animated sky: Caius Julius Hyginus, *Poeticon Astronomicon* (Venice: Ratdolt, 1485).

Dedication and Acknowledgements

To a certain degree my PhD began when my partner and I immigrated to the UK from Australia in late 2002 and our dear friend, Professor Roger Earis, suggested I complete my undergraduate degree, begun thirty years earlier at the University of Western Australia, through the Open University. Embracing Roger's suggestion fulfilled a journey that had halted when two years of an Arts degree had been set aside for the bright lights of the Australian Film Industry, followed by training at NIDA and a career in theatre as a produced and published playwright. A year of Shakespeare at the OU was followed, to my great surprise, by two rapturous years of Italian medieval art history in which astrology, my other area of training, was acknowledged as a valid world-view. That joy has never left me and I pay my deepest respects to Roger for being the lodestar on that pathway.

Many people contributed to my thinking and supported my research in various ways and it is my great pleasure to repay that debt with the following acknowledgments.

Professor Pamela King was my first contact at the University of Bristol and instrumental to my studying here. I pay tribute to her insightful questions that arose in the two upgrade assessments and for her continued support.

For her inspiring teaching of medieval Latin and for fine-tuning my Latin translations I thank Dr Genevieve Liveley. My thanks also go to two astrological colleagues for their help, advice, and friendship: Dr Robert Hand, for applying his critical eye to the Latin in CLM22048 and offering his valuable academic insights; and Dr Dorian Greenbaum, for clarifying several Greek astrological terms, for translating Massing's 1987 article in from German into English, and for assiduous proof-reading. For translations of other articles and book chapters from German into English my thanks go to Amy Kilby and Rebecca Felgate from the MA in Translations Studies at The University of Bristol; for translations when my reading Italian was still slow, thanks go to Giovanna Tomaro from the same MA course. Grateful thanks also go to Dr Davide Banzato, Direttore Musei e Biblioteche del

Comune di Padova, for permission to photograph the Salone images. I am appreciative of my discussions with Dr John Munns regarding the Salone images of Corpus Christi. It is a pleasure to thank Dr Fabio Silva for making me aware of the equinoctial Moons when researching the orientation of the Palazzo della Ragione.

Professor Ronald Hutton took on the task of second supervisor after two interim second supervisors moved to other University posts. I am indebted to his support and unfailing zeal and the project is the richer for his invaluable historical perspective. It has been my greatest privilege to work with Dr Beth Williamson as my primary supervisor. I have relied on and deeply appreciated her academic experience whenever it seemed as if my interpretation of the Salone images were far-fetched, and, as a stalwart of precision and accuracy, she has been instrumental in shaping my academic thinking. Her enthusiasm for and devotion to the project has never wavered and it has been a pleasure and an honour to have been gifted with her guiding and steady hand at my side as I developed my academic muscles.

Thank you, my dear red-haired old friend Connor, for staying the distance.

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr Bernadette Brady, the first friend of this work and the one who has shared my ideas at breakfast, listened to me brainstorm at midnight, sustained me with constant and unconditional love, and who, over the last six years, has made room in our lives for the thousand or so characters who populate the 319 images of the Salone fresco scheme. Her advice has been critical and her patience heroic. Ultimately her enthusiasm has made the journey enchanting. Thank you.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED:..... DATE:.....

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Volume 2

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Word count: 79,998