

## BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Jacobus, Laura (2019) Flying pigs, fiery whirlwinds and a 300-year old virgin: costume and continuity in a sacred performance. In: Feltmann, J. and Thompson, S. (eds.) The Long Lives of Medieval Art and Architecture. AVISTA Studies in the History of Medieval Technology, Science and Art. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. ISBN 9780815396734.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/20509/>

*Usage Guidelines:*

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>  
contact [lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk).

or alternatively

## Chapter 3

### Flying Pigs, Fiery Whirlwinds and a 300-year old Virgin: Costume and Continuity in a Sacred Performance

Laura Jacobus

In medieval and Renaissance Padua it was the custom to hold a sacred performance or *sacra rappresentazione* on the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25<sup>th</sup>), in front of the church of Santa Maria della Carità in the old Roman arena in Padua. The origins of the event, and the precise forms it took over the centuries, are unknown, but the fragmentary evidence that survives admits glimpses of elements of the performance, including its costuming. This article presents evidence gathered from wills, inventories and pictorial sources in order to follow the changing fortunes and associations of the Virgin's dress over three centuries of continuous use in performance. It shows how the performance was quite literally invested with meaning through its costuming, and how such meaning changed over time along with the very fabric of the actors' clothes. When meaning and materiality are so intertwined, and when both meaning and material change over time, the article suggests that the idea of the original becomes expanded, but not lost.

The church which formed the backdrop to the *sacra rappresentazione* is best known today as the Arena Chapel (or Scrovegni Chapel), and the history of the sacred performance is closely bound up with that of the church and its patrons, the Scrovegni family. The church's founder was the businessman Enrico Scrovegni, who had begun building it around 1302 for the use of his bride, the Marchioness Jacopina d'Este. As a member of the region's highest aristocracy she was something of a 'trophy-bride,' and the coincidence of the

marriage and the building of the chapel may be considered as a calculated strategy to boost the family's social standing. The initiation of civic festivities on the Feast of the Annunciation, immediately in front of the family's palace and chapel in the old Roman arena (which Enrico had bought in 1300), was part of the same strategy of social advancement (Fig.1).<sup>1</sup> Although the religious celebrations at the site may have had antecedents prior to the Scrovegni's involvement, the combination of a civic and religious procession culminating in a *sacra rappresentazione* on the Arena outside the church cannot be documented any earlier than the Arena Chapel's consecration on the Feast of the Annunciation, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1305 (modern date). By that date Enrico Scrovegni had already successfully lobbied for a papal grant of indulgences to visitors on the Marian feasts, ensuring that the *sacra rappresentazione* would be well-attended by the populace.<sup>2</sup> It was probably also as a result of his lobbying that the sacred performance and its accompanying procession of ecclesiastics and government officials were made statutory by the podestà Pontino de Picinardi in 1306.<sup>3</sup> Enrico's close involvement with developing the event is confirmed by the fact that in 1307 he is recorded as paying half of the Cathedral's expenses associated with clerical participation in the festivities.<sup>4</sup> Effectively, he and his family played hosts to a sacred drama which, by 1445 was a spectacular high-point of the civic-religious calendar. . In that year, Michele Savonarola described how

...the round courtyard [the Arena] is of such breadth, that when the glorious feast of the day of the Incarnation comes, all the clergy and all the people are enclosed in that place for the glorious and devout representation of the Annunciation to Mary by the angel...<sup>5</sup>

The earliest account of what happened during the festivities is found in a copy of a statute dated "before 1332," but very probably corresponding to Pontino's statute of 1306. This primarily concerns arrangements for the impressive procession of civic and religious

dignitaries that accompanied the costumed Angel and Virgin through the streets of the city to the Arena on its outskirts, but it does contain a brief indication of the nature of the *sacra rappresentazione* itself:

[In the chapel of the city hall] two boys should be clothed, that is one in the form of an angel with wings and a lily, the other in female form (wearing) the virginal garb of the blessed Virgin Mary, in such a way that one of them represents the angel Gabriel, the other the Virgin Mary; and the Lord Bishop, or his vicar, should congregate in the cathedral church together with the chapter and the clergy of Padua, and with each and every religious brother of the convents of Padua, each carrying his cross, and then they (should) come in procession to the Palace of Justice of the commune of Padua. And there should be gathered the *Podestà* of Padua, together with his judges and council and all the judges and officials of the commune of Padua, as well as all the knights, doctors and honourable citizens of the city. And when all these people have been gathered together, then the said angel should be seated on a throne, and Maria should be seated on another honourable throne chosen for these purposes. And seated thus on the said thrones, they (should) be carried according to custom from the said palace to the Arena, preceded by the trumpeters of the commune and the clergy of Padua, and followed by the *Podestà* and all the citizens, and with the *gastaldiones* of the guilds, artisans and merchants in procession. And there in the enclosed area of the Arena, in the usual places prepared for the purpose, the angel should greet Maria with the angelic salutation. And all the other things that have been introduced and customarily take place for an annunciation being represented in this manner should also take place.<sup>6</sup>

The form of the Virgins' "virginal garb" is not specified in the statute, and the first evidence of what it consisted of comes years later from the will of the Marchioness Jacopina d'Este, Enrico Scrovegni's wife. . She seems to have felt a special connection to the festivities performed in front of the chapel, which is unsurprising since the inception of both the building and the performance were associated with the occasion of her marriage. Her will, made in 1365, reveals that she had long been loaning her clothes and jewels for the *sacra rappresentazione*, and now confirmed their permanent donation. She wrote:

I desire and make provision that my crown, with the precious stones fixed in it and all its embellishments, and all my clothes, and in general all my other accoutrements, which I have been accustomed to give and provide for the festival of Mary and the Angel of the Arena when the said feast is celebrated during the course of the month of March, and which should always be [used] for the *sacra rappresentazione* of the Annunciation to the Virgin; and I desire that they [be] used for the said pious end for as long as possible.<sup>7</sup>

From around 1330, and perhaps earlier, the *sacra rappresentazione* in the Arena had become the responsibility of a lay confraternity, and it is this group who were implicitly charged with her bequest.<sup>8</sup> As will be shown, they fulfilled Jacopina's last wishes faithfully. Their surviving records are patchy, but by using two of their inventories dated 1421 and 1537 we can gain an idea of how the Virgin Mary was costumed from at least the time of Jacopina's death—and quite plausibly for several decades to either side of these dates. We can also get an idea of the costumes' appearance from images produced in Padua, or connected to it, around the time that Jacopina lived.

Jacopina's crown, loaned during her lifetime and bequeathed to the confraternity in 1365 "with the precious stones fixed in it and all its embellishments" is most easily traced. It

appears in the confraternity's 1421 inventory as "a gilded silver crown with precious stones with fourteen parts (?), for Mary."<sup>9</sup> The 1537 inventory gives more detail, describing "a silver crown of the Madonna in fourteen pieces with a gilded-silver cross with two bows (*fiochi*) of pearls with thirty-six sapphires including one false one, with a hundred and fifty-nine garnets and seven *peraisne* (?) with eighty-five old and small pearls."<sup>10</sup> By this date the crown had been restored and remodelled. It had lost one of its precious stones (replaced with a false sapphire) and its gilding may have worn away (it is described as "silver" rather than "gilded silver"). Pearl bows (more commonly called "hoops" or "arches") supporting a gilded cross at the centre of the crown had probably been added over the years, as they are unlikely to have featured on Jacopina's original marchioness's crown. This would have been of typically medieval open circlet form; bows appear to have become a feature of Western European crowns only during the later renaissance period. This and other entries in the 1537 inventory indicate that the confraternity periodically updated the Virgin's costume, remodelling Jacopina's original wardrobe according to the changing times. In this instance, her crown may have begun to appear too simple for a modern Queen of Heaven, and the stage-Virgin's honor demanded a taller, more embellished crown.

We may in fact be able to gauge the form of Jacopina's original crown from Giotto's painting known as the *Ognissanti Madonna* (c.1305/10, Florence, Uffizi,) (Fig. 2). This painting is datable to the period when Giotto painted the Arena Chapel, and it is noteworthy that the painted crown is a striking set-piece of perspectival painting, unlike any object previously painted. The careful combination of complex occlusions and foreshortenings suggest that Giotto painted it from observation of an actual crown. If so, that crown must surely have been Jacopina's. There are few other circumstances that can be envisaged under which Giotto could have studied a crown at close quarters at this date, and moreover the crown fits the description of Jacopina's crown in having fourteen points (a rarity among

painted crowns), and being embellished with small pearls and gems. The *Ognissanti Madonna's* crown may have been painted with a degree of artistic licence, but it is probably one of the first demonstrable instances of observational still-life painting in medieval art. The importance of this fact for the history of naturalism in art lies beyond the scope of this article; it suffices to point out that other instances of observational still-life painting in the work of Giotto and his contemporaries may be posited, but none can be linked to a known object in this way.<sup>11</sup> If it is the case that Jacopina d'Este had once loaned her crown to Giotto for the purpose of its being painted and offered to the Virgin in the *Ognissanti Madonna*, the painting affords us a good idea of what this lost object once looked like. It also suggests that Jacopina's loan of her dresses and jewels to the confraternity which staged the *sacra conversazione* was not the only instance of her putting her personal possessions to pious use through the medium of art.

Other items of clothing left by Jacopina to the *sacra rappresentazione* can also be tracked through the confraternity's inventories. One item is recorded in 1421 among various items for the performance as a "mantle of white cloth-of-gold with two winged sows."<sup>12</sup> By 1537 it—or a similar replacement—was described as a "mantle of the Madonna of damask, figured in false gold with an edging of gold, well-lined with green taffeta."<sup>13</sup> A mantle of flying pigs is an extraordinary-sounding garment for the Virgin Mary to wear! The strange description can, however, be explained. It must have been a garment incorporating the arms of Jacopina d'Este (a spread eagle) and her husband Enrico Scrovegni (a rampant sow) by "impaling" them, an armorial practice which combined the arms of a husband and wife along a central vertical axis. In this case, impaling would have produced a hybrid animal or chimera; a rampant sow with eagles' wings on its back.<sup>14</sup> Surviving medieval textiles suggest that conventional chimera such as griffons and basilisks were frequently employed as repeat motifs in silk weaves, such as the nearly contemporary white-and-gold brocade shown in

Figure 3, but the incorporation of heraldic devices into the weave was rarer, and they were more usually embroidered onto items. In this case, the similar wording of other entries in the inventory suggests that the winged sows were embroidered at intervals onto white cloth-of-gold.<sup>15</sup> If this was this case here, then the mantle worn by the Virgin in the *sacra rappresentazione* must have been one of Jacopina's own, personally bespoke garments. Combining her patrilineal heraldry with that of her husband, the mantle was most probably commissioned as part of her dowry or counter-dowry, and may have been part of her wedding outfit.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that the Virgin Mary was represented at a grand public event wearing a crown and mantle that were uniquely and identifiably Jacopina's is striking. During Jacopina's lifetime she would have lived a life mainly hidden from public view, yet she had inserted herself into public discourse by means of her patronage. In front of the huge crowds assembled in the Arena of Padua for the festival of the Annunciation, and in front of the palace and chapel occasioned by Jacopina's marriage, the Virgin's loaned costume advertised its aristocratic lender's considerable social prestige: Jacopina was probably the highest-ranking woman in Padua during her lifetime. The Virgin's costume also signalled Jacopina's piety, ultimately imparting a more enduring significance to her gift when seen in a commemorative light. After her death, as Jacopina clearly intended, the display of her personal crown and clothing during the *sacra rappresentazione* not only preserved the memory of her life, but also preserved the memory of her pious benefaction and so boosted the efficacy of prayers for her soul. Attending mass in the chapel or at temporary altars outside it, visitors to the sacred performance were prompted by the sight of the splendidly-clad Virgin to include prayers for Jacopina's soul. The cultivation and maximization of prayers for her soul is the reason that Jacopina's will said, "I desire that [my crown, clothes and accoutrements] be used *for the said pious end for as long as possible* (my italics)." For

the same reason, the very next clause in her will left money to the priests of the Arena Chapel to say a daily mass for her soul.

In leaving not just one or two items of costume but “*all* my clothes, and in general *all* my other accoutrements” and “desir[ing] that they [be] used for the said pious end *for as long as possible*,” Jacopina would have expected the valuable fabrics and trimmings of her wardrobe to be adapted, unpicked, taken apart, reconstructed and generally transformed (or sold) as was normally the case with bequests of secular textiles for pious purposes.<sup>17</sup> This complicates the task of tracing the fate of her bequest as the years drew on. The “mantle of white cloth-of-gold with two winged sows” described in the 1421 inventory bears some relationship to the “mantle of the Madonna of damask, figured in false gold with an edging of gold, well-lined with green taffeta” described in the inventory of 1537, but we cannot be sure what that relationship is, or what the relationship of either is to the garments first loaned by Jacopina c. 1306 or bequeathed by her in 1365. It may be the case that a single mantle remained materially unchanged throughout the life of the *sacra rappresentazione*, but that it was described in different ways in 1421 and 1537. Alternatively, the mantle described in 1537 may have retained some of the stuff and physical form of an earlier mantle, but replaced elements of it. Over time, cloth of gold seen in 1421 may have become tarnished and so revealed itself to have used false gold thread. Or it may have been replaced with a cheaper material once it became worn, or once its heraldry appeared dated or undesirable. It may have been re-lined with green taffeta and re-trimmed in the intervening years, in much the same way as the crown had been re-fashioned. It may even be that materially, by 1537, the mantle worn by the Madonna contained not a thread of that lent by the Marchioness in c. 1306. This complicates the idea of the original, and the task of reconstructing the costuming of the performance, but it is nevertheless clear that an element of continuity existed in the Virgin’s costuming from the *sacra rappresentazione*’s inception well into the sixteenth-century. For

most (and probably all) of that time, the Virgin wore a fourteen-point crown and a white-and-gold silk mantle.

The combined evidence of inventories and images allow us to explore the question of the Virgin's costuming still further when considering her dress. The 1421 inventory describes, "A dress of *blava* silk with gold stars with six *presuri* of pearls, for Mary, and thirty planets of pearls on the sleeves for Mary."<sup>18</sup> The 1537 inventory is once again more detailed, and again diverges slightly from the earlier inventory. It describes, "A dress of the Madonna of *turchin* samite woven with gold stars with five large *tondi* in front and twenty-four button-like and larger *tondi* on the sleeves, all embroidered with seed pearls."<sup>19</sup> Like Jacopina's crown and mantle, the dress appears to have been restored and possibly remodelled over the years, although to what extent is hard to gauge. Certainly, between 1421 and 1537, "six *presuri*" had been reduced to "five *tondi*," and "thirty planets of pearls on the sleeves" had become "twenty-four button-like and larger *tondi* on the sleeves"—altogether a loss of one *presur* or *tondo* and six planets. Less certainly, the colour of the Virgin's dress appears to have also changed from "*blava*" to "*turchin*," and the material may have changed from a plain silk to a patterned one. If so, the dress must have undergone a radical re-working in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, yet it retained its most distinctive elements of stars, "*tondi*" and planets described in both inventories.

Closer examination of the terms used in the two inventories is needed to determine the extent of the dress's reworking over the centuries. In a pre-modern context, color words often related to the material pigments and stuffs of industrial processes, and those used to describe dyed textiles usually conveyed subtle differences of saturation and texture. Either "*blava*" or "*turchin*" might today be translated as "sky-blue," but the use of the different terms indicates that the material of the dress was perceived as slightly darker and more intense at the later

date. This makes it unlikely to have faded with age, and more likely that the material had been replaced. The term “*blava*” is etymologically related to terms for pale or weak tone rather than a specific hue.<sup>20</sup> Around 1400, Cennino Cennini used the term “*biavo*” to describe a very light blue made from white with a small quantity of indigo, and in later poetic works the term had connotations of light-reflective qualities at the blue end of the spectrum.<sup>21</sup> “*Turchin*” was a more intense mid-to-light blue which probably got its name from one of the common colours used in imported Turkish (Iznik) pottery.<sup>22</sup> The “*blava*” silk of the Virgin’s dress in 1421 thus appears to have been a pale, perhaps silvery blue, while the “*turchin*” samite of 1537 appears to have been a truer, azure blue. A further distinction lies in the fact that in 1421 the base material was “silk with gold stars,” but in 1537 it was “samite woven with gold stars.” Samite was a silk-twill into which a design could be woven in metal thread, making it clear that the gold stars were integral to the fabric in the later instance. The form of words used in 1421, when compared to other descriptions in the same inventory, makes it likely that at that time the gold stars were not integral to the weave but were embroidered as a pattern.<sup>23</sup>

The most likely explanation for these discrepancies between the two inventories is the dress underwent at least one transformation between 1421 and 1537—from a pale blue dress with embroidered gold stars and pearly planets and other motifs, to a light-blue and gold star-patterned dress with similar embroidered motifs. It seems as if the figurative elements were embroidered onto the pale or silvery blue silk ground of the original dress. Then, as the original plain “*blava*” base material deteriorated, individual motifs could have been detached and re-applied to a more intense light blue star-patterned material. Both inventory descriptions favour this possibility. The figurative elements of “*presuri*,” “*tondi*,” and “planets” are all embroidered with pearls but are not evenly distributed (as they would be if part of the weave), with larger elements placed on the front of the dress and a mass of smaller

ones on the sleeves. Some are described as “button-like,” which suggests that they had a three-dimensional quality, achieved through a variety of techniques.

Detaching an entire motif such as this was relatively simple when the original base fabric became worn. The star-mantle of Emperor Henry II, made in 1020 and featuring stars embroidered with gold thread on purple silk, was re-invigorated 430 years later by detaching and re-applying the stars to a blue damask.<sup>24</sup> The relationship of this to the original, like the Virgin’s dress in 1537 to that inventoried in 1421, bequeathed 1365, or loaned in 1306, is closer to the idea of restoration or re-making than replacement (Figs 5,6).

Two images, each unique in the clothes they depict the Virgin wearing, may provide further indications of how the clothes that Jacopina left to the *sacra rappresentazione* in 1365 may have changed over time. One is a fresco of the Madonna del Latte painted by Giusto de’ Menabuoi in the Arena Chapel (Fig. 7); the other a triptych by him, now in the National Gallery, London (Fig. 8). The fresco in the Arena Chapel is close to Jacopina’s tomb there. It has been plausibly dated to around the time of her death, and may have served a commemorative purpose as a number of tombs are located at the foot of the fresco.<sup>25</sup> The Virgin is wearing very light colors. Both her mantle and dress are painted using white modelled with light green (probably *terre verde*), but the dress has additional tints of light blue (probably azurite mixed with white) suggesting that a distinction may have been intended between the cloth of a white mantle and a nearly-white dress with a bluish-green tinge. The costume is in strong contrast to other *trecento* images of the Madonna del Latte, which depict her wearing her traditional colours of red and/or dark blue during her earthly life. In fact, the only other instance of a similarly-clad Madonna del Latte that I am aware of also occurs in the Arena Chapel, directly opposite this one.<sup>26</sup> The break with convention can probably be explained by local circumstance.

As we have seen, by 1421 the Virgin is known to have been wearing a *blava* dress in the performance that took place immediately outside the chapel, and we also know that costumes had been loaned by Jacopina d'Este from a time well before the fresco's creation and the marchioness's death in 1365, and probably since her marriage c. 1306. Her loans during her lifetime must surely have included the heraldic mantle described in 1421, and it is quite possible that they also included the *blava* dress described in the same inventory. If so Giusto may have depicted the Virgin dressed in a way that makes reference to the radiant costume she wore in the *sacra rappresentazione* in the years prior to Jacopina's death.

It is noteworthy that the silks of the Madonna's white mantle and near-white dress are plain, not patterned, whereas those described in 1421 were a white mantle embellished with personal heraldry and a pale dress decorated with celestial bodies. Giusto's fresco draws on a very local tradition of performance which saw the Virgin costumed in white and pale blue, but it does not exactly reproduce the costume that she wore in the *sacra rappresentazione*, which took place immediately outside the chapel. Giusto does not depict Jacopina's heraldic mantle "with winged sows" despite the likelihood that generations of boy-actors in the *sacra rappresentazione* had worn it since the performance's inception, or at least from the time of Jacopina's marriage at around the same time. Nor does the dress shown in the fresco feature the stars, planets and '*presuri*' first described in the 1421 inventory. However, it is possible that the frescoed dress closely recalls the one actually worn up to that date, since during Jacopina's lifetime her loaned dress may plausibly have been made from a plain but still luxurious pale blue silk, and may only have been embroidered after her death.

A second image, a tiny triptych by the same artist painted two years after Jacopina's death, possibly for a Paduan context, shows the Virgin in a very similar costume which is now covered with suns, moons and stars (Figs 9,10,11).<sup>27</sup> The dress and matching mantle that

she wears now appears to be a very drab color, but in *trecento* art the Virgin at her Coronation is always shown in light, radiant fabrics. White, pink, lilac or blue are most commonly used to clothe her, sometimes applied in *cangiante* combinations suggestive of shot silk. That must have been the case here too. The original predominant color of the Virgin's outfit in Giusto's triptych cannot be determined with certainty, but it is clear that it was created with white mixed with a fugitive pigment, which has discoloured to a greyish brown. Indigo behaves in this manner, and was the most common fugitive blue in use at the time, although a fugitive red (or, less plausibly, yellow) cannot be ruled out. Scattered traces of ultramarine blue and red lake pigment survive mixed into the predominant color in shaded areas, and the deepest folds appear to have been overlaid with a red lake glaze. This would have given a purple or violet tint to the cloth, conjuring the luminosity of silk.<sup>28</sup> The patterned fabric is unique among paintings of the Coronation of the Virgin, which usually showed the Virgin in brocaded silks with repeat abstract/floral motifs, never planetary bodies as here. Giusto distributed evenly-sized celestial bodies over the surface of the fabric in the traditional manner of depicting woven silks, whereas we know that at least some motifs on the real dress were of varied size and placement. Nevertheless, the reference to the embroidered dress later described in the inventories of 1421 and 1537 is unmistakable. The "*presuri*" described fifty-four years after this painting was made are here revealed to be spinning red and gold sunbursts, with sun faces at their centre (Fig. 10). The word must be a derivation of the Latin "*prester*," meaning "a fiery whirlwind," which in Renaissance Italy came to describe the sun bursting through the clouds.<sup>29</sup> This aptly describes the motif. The "*tondi*," of the later description are here shown as radiant round blue moons enclosing gold crescents and stars (Fig. 11). The word "*tondo*," meaning "a round thing," was associated with the full moon in Venetian dialect, which accounts for the fact that the inventory compiler used it quite freely to describe all celestial bodies decorating the dress.<sup>30</sup>

Care must of course be exercised in interpreting these images in relation to the actual costume worn by the Virgin in the *sacra rappresentazione* in Padua during the medieval and early modern periods. Artistic licence decrees that neither of the outfits shown should be understood as accurate copies of the clothing loaned and then bequeathed by Jacopina to the sacred performance, and their distance from the real objects may be greater than the distance between Giotto's *Ognissanti Madonna* crown and Jacopina's real one. Nevertheless, the unusual nature of the costumes in both of Giusto's paintings, combined with his known patronage by the Scrovegni family at the time of Jacopina's death, means that both images do pertain to the subject under discussion. By contemporary standards of likeness, they contain close-enough "portraits" of real costumes for us to take them seriously as evidence of the colors, pattern and forms of the dress and mantle worn by the Virgin in the *sacra rappresentazione*.<sup>31</sup>

The change from a plain light-colored silk dress painted in the fresco c. 1365, to a decorated one painted in the triptych of 1367 chimes with the likelihood that Jacopina's 1365 bequest of "all her clothes and...accoutrements" made it possible for any embroidered items in her wardrobe to be un-picked. Silks, gold thread and pearls could all be reutilised. The costumes depicted in the two paintings reinforce the suggestion that the *blava* silk dress of 1421, with its applied gold stars, fiery whirlwinds, and pearly planets was created from the amalgamation of items from Jacopina's wardrobe shortly after her death. If so, this points to Virgin's dress having been deliberately created as a theatrical costume. With its crown, its Pale or silvery blue and white silks, and its heavenly-themed embroideries it was a costume more suitable to the *Regina coeli*, the celestial Queen of Heaven, than the earthly Virgin Annunciate. This further suggests that the sacred performance outside the Arena Chapel was not always a simple enactment of the Annunciation but at some point became a more fully-staged event including a scene of the Coronation of the Virgin. The pre-1332 statute's

mention of “the angelic salutation...[a]nd *all the other things that have been introduced*” (my italics) lends support to this idea.<sup>32</sup>

Although the latest surviving inventory relating to the *sacra rappresentazione* dates to 1537, the event itself continued to be staged for another six decades, before being abolished by Marco Cornaro, bishop of Padua in 1597.<sup>33</sup> Jacopina’s “original” clothes, crown and accoutrements, in their various permutations, were probably in continuous use in the *sacra rappresentazione* for much if not all the performance’s existence, a period of some three hundred years. True to Jacopina’s wishes, her clothes were re-sewn and used “for the said pious end for as long as possible.” But as the centuries passed, and the memory of Jacopina herself lapsed from collective consciousness, the meaning of her garments must have changed. Jacopina’s descendants were banished from Padua in 1443, weakening the association of the performance with its benefactor and her family. It may be for this reason that her personal heraldic mantle, with its “winged sows,” disappears from the record. The celestial connotations of the dress and crown became the Virgin’s alone, and any residual allusions to Jacopina’s own hopes of salvation must have gradually fallen away. In their place, perhaps, crept new associations.

These associations, we may speculate, were both secular and spiritual. In 1367, when Giusto painted his version of the Virgin’s *blava* silk dress in the triptych, its close-fitted neck- and bust-lines were in line with contemporary fashion. It is probable that when the dress was re-made in *turquin* samite some time before 1537, it was re-styled at the same time. The crown was also updated at some point with pearl-covered bows, and the mantle probably also underwent changes. Nevertheless, these periodic, secularly-oriented updates over the ongoing life of the outfit were tempered by a sense of continuity with the past, so that the essential elements of the costume—the crown, the white-and-gold mantle, and the starry light-blue

dress—remained stable over a very long period of time. For the fashion-conscious denizens of Renaissance Padua, occasional restoration or updating is unlikely to have prevented the Virgin's costume from seeming old-fashioned and generic, and these qualities must have been meaningful in the context of a *sacra rappresentazione*. Symbolically, the Virgin's archaic costume spoke of a heavenly realm beyond time, enhancing the sacred mystery of the event. But her clothes' obvious antiquity also suggested the secular realm of times passed, and the history of a city that was steeped in a sense of its own past. Even once the performance was disbanded, Paduan historians continued to write of the *sacra rappresentazione* in accounts of the city's Roman Arena, since the antiquity of both was a source of civic pride ultimately rooted in the belief that Padua was of pre-Roman foundation.<sup>34</sup> Commentators also found moral satisfaction in the fact that the Christian drama was performed in the ruins of an ancient amphitheatre which had once hosted Roman spectacles.<sup>35</sup> The fabric of the Virgin's 'original' costume, which changed and yet remained essentially the same through centuries of restoration and reworking, was thus perceived in terms of a continuous thread of history which led back into an idea of the city's origins. In secular terms her costume's silk and gold threads connected the citizens of early modern Padua to their medieval and even pre-Roman past, and in spiritual terms, the same threads bound the living audience of the *sacra rappresentazione* to the long-dead bride who had once witnessed its first performance.

---

<sup>1</sup> Arguments relating to these matters are found in Jacobus, *Giotto*, 9-10 (on the marriage), 17-35 (on the social implications of the project to build the church and sponsor the *sacra rappresentazione* in the Arena). At the time of writing, I accepted the prevailing idea that the festivities pre-dated the church, but while this idea needs qualification (see note 3), my interpretation of the social implications of the events remain the same.

<sup>2</sup> The bull, issued by Pope Benedict XI on 1 March 1304 is published with translation as Appendix 6 in Jacobus, *Giotto*: 355. It granted indulgences of one year and forty days for visitors making confessions at the church on the feast-days.

<sup>3</sup> Chronicles recorded in the Codex Zabarella, a now-lost fourteenth-century manuscript, and Milan, MS Ambrosiano D149 inf. cc. 164-179, Carducci and Fiorini, “Codex Zabarella”, 215–55. state that the ‘festum sanctae Mariae de Arena’ was initiated in 1306 (Paduan time, in which 25<sup>th</sup> March was the first day of the new year) by the new podestà ‘Pontino de Picinardi’, who had only been appointed at the beginning of February. It has previously been assumed that two statutes relating to the festivities could be dated to 1278 and 1298, and since they refer to established ceremonies it would follow that the *sacra rappresentazione* pre-dated the building of the church. However, the dates of both statutes are uncertain. They are preserved in later statute-books which have been organised thematically, and so their proximity to other datable statutes in these books does not imply contemporaneity.

“Statutorum...Carrariensis 1362” 104r-104v, and “Volumen Statutorum ...1420” 304r–304v; published with translations as appendices 2 and 3 in Jacobus, *Giotto*: 346-349).

<sup>4</sup> Zanocco, “L’Annunciazione”. Reprinted in translation in Stubblebine, *Giotto*.

---

<sup>5</sup> ‘Tante ... latitudinis curia rotunda est, ut, cum gloriosus Incarnationis dies festus venit, totus clerus totusque populus eo in loco claudatur, nam gloriosa atque devota nimis representatio Annuntiationis per Angelum ad Mariam...’ Savonarola, *Libellus*, 50.

<sup>6</sup> ‘...vestiantur duo pueri, videlicet unus in formam angeli cum alis et lilio, alter in formam femineam virginalem habitum beatissime virginis Marie, ita quod unus eorum angelum Gabrielem, alter Mariam virginem representet, et debeant in ecclesia catredali congregari dominus episcopus vel eius vicarius cum capitulo et clero paduano et cum omnibus et singulis fratribus religiosi conventuum de Padua cum crucibus suis et inde processionaliter venire ad palacium iuris comunis Padue. Et ibi debeat esse congregatus dominus potestas Padue cum omnibus iudicibus et curia sua et cum omnibus iudicibus et officialibus comunis Padue, et cum omnibus militibus, doctoribus et honorabilibus civibus Padue. Et facta omnium congregatione poni debeant dictus angelus super una catreda, et Maria super una alia catreda honorabili ad hec deputata. Et sic super dictis catredis secundum consuetudinem [debeant] portari de dicto palacio usque ad Arena precedentibus tubatoribus comunis et clero paduano et sequentibus domino potestate et omnibus civibus ac cum gastaldionibus artium artificibus et mercatoribus processionaliter. Et ibi in curtivo Arene in locis preparatis et solitis Angelus salutet Mariam angelica salutatione. Et cetera fiant que ad representandam huiusmodi annunciationem introducta sunt et fieri solent’. The text of the fifteenth-century copy is identical to that recorded in the reformed statutes of 1420 (see n.3), but is annotated ‘prima ad 1322’. It is contained in a collection of miscellaneous papers connected to the church. Archivio di Stato, Venezia [ASVe], Gradenigo Rio-Marin 205, fasc.28 ‘Arena Prepositura T<sup>o</sup>1’ 58r-59v

<sup>7</sup> ‘Volo et ordino quod corona mea cum lapidibus in ea fixis et omnibus suis ornamentis et omnes vestes mee, et generaliter omnes alia mea ornamenta que et quas dare et concedere solita sum pro festo Marie et Angeli delarena [*sic*] quando dictum festum celebratur de mense

---

Marcii pro representatione salutacionis virginis semper sint, et eas et ea esse volo donec durare poterunt dicto reverendo usui deputata'. ASVe, Notai, Busta 1023, *Giovanni da Caresini*, No. 14. This extract and translation is from an edition in preparation by Joseph Spooner, based on a draft transcript kindly provided by the late Benjamin G. Kohl. The provision was first noted by Hueck, "Zu Enrico Scrovegnis", 282, n.25.

<sup>8</sup> The existence of the confraternity was noted by Simon, "Giotto and after". I have yet to publish my research into the confraternity, some of which is outlined in a conference paper: Jacobus, "A Fourteenth-Century Paduan Confraternity".

<sup>9</sup> 'una corona de argento aureato cum lapidibus cum quatuordecim pasetis[?] pro Maria' Archivio di Stato, Padova [ASPd], Archivio notarile, reg. 522, fols.108r-109v.

<sup>10</sup> 'Una Corona darzento in peci quatordexi con una croxeta de arzento in dora con dui fiochi de perlle con trentasie safille computa uno falso con granate cento e cinquantanove e [per/puraisne?] sete con perlle otantacinque vechie e picolle' ASPd, Scuola di SS Annunziata, Busta 27, T<sup>o</sup> 31

<sup>11</sup> A parallel is seen in the Antique statuette at the feet of *Faith* in the Arena Chapel, which may be a study of an object once owned by Enrico Scrovegni

<sup>12</sup> 'unus mantelus de pano auro albo cum duobus susiis alatus' ASPd, Archivio notarile, reg. 522, 109r

<sup>13</sup> 'Uno manto dela Madona dalmascho figurado de oro falso con uno frixo de sorafillo de oro fodra de ormexin verde', ASPd *Scuola di SS Annunziata*, Busta 27, T<sup>o</sup> 31

<sup>14</sup> Neubecker, *Heraldry*, 230 notes that impalings resulting in hybrid animals were common in early heraldry

<sup>15</sup> Items which were made of silk woven through with gold thread are described as cloth of gold, without description of the woven pattern : 'unus faciulus de auro'; '[una]stola et manipolo de pano sirici deaurato'; 'unus velus de auro et sirico'; 'una planeta de pano aureo';

---

‘tres palii ab altaro de pano sirico deaurato’; ‘una stricta viridis de pano aureato’. Items with embroidered motifs state the type of cloth, followed by ‘cum’ to suggest the addition of imagery: re ‘unam planetam de veluto alexandrino cum una cruce de auro, cum sanctis’; ‘unum palium de sirico albo cum rosis nigris’.

<sup>16</sup> Medieval wives had legal rights to their dowries and hence could dispose of them in their wills (King, *Renaissance Women Patrons*, 48-75. Medieval bridal garments could be a range of colours, but the Virgin Mary is shown wearing white at her wedding in Giotto’s frescoes in the Arena Chapel, and in *The Virgin Returning from her Wedding* is escorted from the ceremony by liveried servants wearing the Scrovegni colours of blue and white (my thanks to Joanne Anderson for pointing this out). The fresco sets up intriguing parallels between the wedding of the Virgin Mary and that of Jacopina d’Este as it shows the fictive wedding procession on the verge of entering the squint chamber where Jacopina would have worshipped (Jacobus, *Giotto*, 180-181).

<sup>17</sup> For numerous instances in an English context see French, "I Leave My Best Gown" and Lowe, "Women’s Devotional Bequests".

<sup>18</sup> ‘Vestis de sirico blavo cum stelis de auro cum sex presuris de perlis pro Maria et triginta planetas de perlis ad manicas pro Maria’

<sup>19</sup> ‘Una vesta dela madona de samito turchin tesu constelle doro con cinque toni grandi denanci e vintiquattro toni in forma de botoni e maggiore ale manege rechama tuti de perlle da onza menude’. In Venetian dialect, ‘onza’ is ‘a fractional measure’ and ‘menusa/menuzzo’ means ‘tiny’, hence seed pearls seem intended (Boerio, *Dizionario*)

<sup>20</sup> ‘Blave’ is an Old French term for ‘pale’ (Godefroy, *Lexique*). My thanks to Natasha Voake for her help with this term.

---

<sup>21</sup> ‘un biavo ben chiaro, cioè biacca assai e poco indaco’; Cennini, *Il Libro Dell’arte*.  
Bioardo (d.1494) wrote that *blava* could be used by painters to conjure the illusion of silver  
(cited in Battaglia, *Grande Dizionario*).

<sup>22</sup> According to John Florio in *A Worlde of Wordes*, ‘turchino’ was defined as ‘blew,  
azure, watchet or bisse colour’ ‘Watchet’ was a light blue ([www.merriam-  
webster.com/dictionary/watchet](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/watchet), accessed 5/8/17) and ‘bise’ (modern blue bice) a strong mid-  
blue used by Nicholas Hilliard in the background of his miniatures, and described in  
Norgate, *Miniatura*, 34

<sup>23</sup> See n.14

<sup>24</sup> Ganz, “Pictorial Textiles”.

<sup>25</sup> Delaney, “Giusto de’ Menabuoi”, 98

<sup>26</sup> It is a direct copy of it, commissioned in commemoration of another Scrovegni  
bride, identified by her nearby arms as a member of the Da Baone family. The condition of  
the painting is less good, but her mantle and dress were clearly white or near-white.

<sup>27</sup> Based on Martin Davies’ reading of an inscription on the back of the central panel,  
the triptych is usually thought to have been made for a Milanese patron (Gordon, *The Italian  
Paintings before 1400*, 261-71. However, in my opinion this reading cannot be sustained, and  
other factors favour a Paduan provenance. I plan to publish my arguments at a later date.

<sup>28</sup> I am greatly indebted Rachel Billinge of the National Gallery Conservation  
Department for discussing the painting with me, and for the technical information presented  
here.

<sup>29</sup> Smith & Lockwood *Chambers Murray...Dictionary*. John Florio defined the Italian  
word ‘prester’ as ‘a kind of raging storme in Summer, the firmament seeming to open and  
burne’, in *Queen Anna’s new World of Words*.

<sup>30</sup> Boerio, *Dizionario*.

---

<sup>31</sup> For an overview of medieval concepts of likeness in art see Perkinson, “Likeness”.

<sup>32</sup> It may be noted that a motet by Marchettus of Padua, in praise of the Virgin as *Regina Coeli*, has been associated with the *sacra rappresentazione* of the Annunciation and the consecration of the Arena Chapel. Walters Robertson, “Remembering the Annunciation”. The possibility that the performance included a Coronation of the Virgin is one that I plan to explore more fully elsewhere.

<sup>33</sup> ASVe Gradenigo Rio-Marin 85 BIS fasc.2

<sup>34</sup> An image of the Arena forms the frontispiece of Pignoria, *L’Antenore*, published in 1625. The link is also made in Portenari's, *Della Felicità di Padova* of 1623 (p.486 Lib.9, Cap 42), and Cittadella's, *Descrittione Di Padoa* of 1606.

<sup>35</sup> Ongarello, “Cronica” n.d., BP 396, BCPd. (seventeenth-century manuscript copy of a late fifteenth-century work); Pignoria, *Le Origine Di Padova* (1625), 113-20; Sberti, *Saggio degli Spettacoli*, (1768), x-xi.

## Bibliography

Battaglia, Salvatore. *Grande Dizionario Della Lingua Italiana*. Torino: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1961.

Boerio, Giuseppe. *Dizionario del dialetto Veneziano*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Venice: Cecchini, 1856.

Carducci, Giosue, and Vittorino Fiorini, eds. “Codex Zabarella,” Rev. ed., 8, Part 1:215–55. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores: Raccolta Degli Storici Italiani Dal Cinquecento Al Millecinquecento*. Città di Castello: Lapi, 1903.

Cennini, Cennino. *Cennino Cennini’s Il Libro Dell’arte: A New English Translation and Commentary with Italian Transcription*. Edited by Lara Broecke. Archetype Publications, 2015.

Cittadella, Andrea. *Descrittione Di Padoa e Suo Territorio Con l’inventario Ecclesiastico*. Padua: Boni, 1606.

Delaney, Bradley Joseph. “Giusto de’ Menabuoi: Iconography and Style.” Columbia, 1972.

---

Edward Norgate. *Miniatura; or, the art of limning ... Edited from the manuscript in the Bodleian Library and collated with other manuscripts by Martin Hardie*. Edited by Martin Hardie. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1919.

Florio, John. *A Worlde of Wordes, or most copious and exact Dictionarie in Italian and English*. London: A. Hatfield, 1598.

———. *Queen Anna's new World of Words; or, Dictionarie of the Italian and English tongues*. London: Melchior Bradwood, 1611.

French, Katherine. "‘I Leave My Best Gown as a Vestment:’ Women’s Spiritual Interests in The Late Medieval English Parish." *Magistra* 4, no. 1 (1998): 57–77.

Ganz, David. "Pictorial Textiles and Their Performance: The Star Mantle of Henry II." In *Dressing the Part: Textiles and Propaganda in the Middle Ages*, edited by Kate Dimitrova and Margaret Goehring, 13–29. Turnhout and New York: Brepols, 2014.

Godefroy, Frédéric. *Lexique de l'ancien Français*. Paris: Welter, 1901.

Gordon, Dillian. *The Italian Paintings before 1400*. National Gallery Catalogues. London: National Gallery, 2011.

Hueck, Irene. "Zu Enrico Scrovegnis Veränderungen Der Arenakapelle." *Mitteilungen Des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 17, no. 2/3 (1973): 277–94.

Jacobus, Laura. "A Fourteenth-Century Paduan Confraternity and Its Images." Venice, 2010. [https://www.academia.edu/2375761/\\_A\\_Fourteenth-century\\_Paduan\\_Confraternity\\_and\\_its\\_Images\\_Text](https://www.academia.edu/2375761/_A_Fourteenth-century_Paduan_Confraternity_and_its_Images_Text).

———. *Giotto and the Arena Chapel: Art, Architecture & Experience*. Turnhout and New York: Brepols, 2008.

King, Catherine. *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy c. 1300-c. 1550*. Manchester, UK; New York, NY, USA: Manchester University Press, 1998.

Lowe, Nicola A. "Women’s Devotional Bequests of Textiles in the Late Medieval English Parish Church, c. 1350–1550." *Gender & History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 407–29. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2010.01597.x>.

Neubecker, Ottfried. *Heraldry: Sources, Symbols and Meaning*. Translated by Nicholas Fry. London: Macdonald and Jane’s, 1977.

Ongarello. "Cronica," n.d. BP 396. BCPd.

Perkinson, Stephen. "Likeness." Edited by Nina Rowe. *Special Issue: Medieval Art History Today- Critical Terms-Studies in Iconography* 33 (2012): 15–28.

Pignoria, Lorenzo. *L'Antenore*. Padova: Tozzi, 1625.

---

———. *Le Origine Di Padova*. Padua: Tozzi, 1625.

Portenari, Angelo. *Della Felicità di Padova*. Padova, 1623.

Robertson, Anne Walters. “Remembering the Annunciation in Medieval Polyphony.” *Speculum* 70, no. 2 (1995): 275–304. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2864894>.

Savonarola, Michael. *Libellus de magnificis ornamentis regie civitatis Padue Michaelis Savonarole*. Edited by Arnaldo Segarizzi. Vol. 24 part 15. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores: Raccolta degli Storici Italiani dal cinquecento al millecinquecento*. Città di Castello: Lapi, 1902. <https://archive.org/details/libellusdemagni01savogoog>.

Sberti, Antonio Bonaventura. *Saggio degli Spettacoli, e delle Feste che si facevano in Padova*. Padova: Seminario, 1768.

Simon, Robin. “Giotto and after: Altars and Alterations at the Arena Chapel, Padua.” *Apollo* 142, no. 406 (1995): 24–36.

“Statutorum Paduae Codex II Carrariensis 1362,” n.d. MS BP 1237. Padua, Biblioteca Civica [BCPd].

Stubblebine, James H., ed. *Giotto: The Arena Chapel Frescoes*. New Ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.

“Volumen Statutorum Mag. Civit. Pad. Refformatorum Sub Anno 1420,” n.d. MS BP 1236. BCPd.

William Smith, and John Lockwood. *Chambers Murray Latin-English Dictionary*. Edinburgh : London: J.Murray, 1976.

Zanocco, Rizieri. “L’Annunciazione All’Arena Di Padova (1305-09).” *Rivista d’arte* 19 (1937): 370–73.