



Giotto's World through Vasari's Eyes

Author(s): Hayden B. J. Maginnis

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Hayden B. J. Maginnis
Giotto's World through Vasari's Eyes

»When I first undertook to write these Lives, it was not my intention to make a list of the craftsmen, and an inventory, so to speak, of their works, nor did I judge it a worthy end for these my labours... to discover their numbers, their names, and their countries, and to tell in what cities, and in what places exactly in those cities, their pictures, or sculptures, or buildings were now to be found; for this I could have done with a simple table, without interposing my own judgment in any part. ... I have striven not only to say what these craftsmen have done, but also, in treating of them, to distinguish the better from the good and the best from the better, and to note with no small diligence the methods, the feelings, the manners, the characteristics, and the fantasies of the painters and sculptors, seeking with the greatest diligence in my power to make known ... the causes and origins of the various manners and of that amelioration and deterioration of the arts which have come to pass at diverse times and through diverse persons« (Vasari, *Preface to the Second Part*, 1568).

For centuries Vasari's *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors and Architects* was mined as a quarry for historical fact; in our own times it has frequently been scorned as a mine of historical error. Now, slowly, we are coming to see that the book was precisely what Vasari always claimed it was: an interpretive account of art's rebirth and maturation in which the better is distinguished

from the good and the best from the better, and wherein Vasari seeks to lay forth the causes and the origins of the amelioration and deterioration of the arts. We are also coming to realize that Vasari's conception of historical writing was not our own. He sought to reveal the larger truths of history and the truths of art in a manner that mingled fact with what we would term historical fiction. To that end he employed many a literary device, and many a fanciful invention. Some of these are unique, designed to make a particular point; others are elements in a larger scheme, devised to give the *Lives* literary structure.

For our new understanding of Vasari we are indebted to several scholars and a variety of discussions¹. Generally, however, recent writers have focused on Vasari's accounts of quattrocento and, even more, cinquecento artists, leaving the matter of early Italian art to one side and dealing with the *Prima Parte* of the *Lives* only as an element in larger considerations. Indeed, it seems reasonable to say that no one since Roberto Longhi has looked at Vasari's account of the ›first age‹ entirely for itself, as a history of the earliest phase of the Renaissance. But readers who once knew their Vasari, knew it as a whole; they read from the beginning and watched the tale unfold chronologically. As biography followed biography and section followed section their understanding of the course of the arts was cumulative. Their sense of history was shaped by the history of their reading.

¹ See, for example, C. M. Soussloff, »Lives of Poets and Painters in the Renaissance«, *Word and Image*, VI, 2, 1990, 154–162; P. Rubin, »What Men Saw: Vasari's Life of Leonardo da Vinci and the Image of the Renaissance Artist«, *Art History*, XIII, 1990, 34–46; C. Goldstein, »Rhetoric and Art History in the Italian Renaissance and Baroque«, *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIII, 1991, 641–652; D. Cast, »Finishing the Sistine«, *The Art Bulletin*, LXXIII, 1991, 667–684; and Paul Barolsky's trilogy: *Michelangelo's nose: a myth and its maker*, University

Park, Pa. 1990, *Why Mona Lisa smiles and other tales by Vasari*, University Park, Pa. 1991 and *Giotto's father and the family of Vasari's Lives*, University Park, Pa. 1992. One must acknowledge the very early anticipation of modern discussion by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz in their brilliant *Die Legende vom Künstler: ein historischer Versuch*, Vienna 1934. An English translation, with some additions, is available as *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*, New Haven and London 1979.

Thus the *Prima Parte* was not merely a chronicle of the first artists; it also provided a perspective and a set of contrasts and comparisons for the *Vite* to follow. It was the foundation of the *Lives* not merely in the sense that it recorded the lives and accomplishments of the artists of the ›first age‹, but also in that it provided conceptual parameters for the constructions of the second and third parts. And so the *Prima Parte* deserves, indeed requires, much more attention than it is normally accorded.

Thus, as a student of early Italian art, I turn to Vasari's account of the ›first age‹ of the Renaissance in order both to consider its unifying themes and to discuss the historical vision that it embodies. Those themes will alert us to Vasari's craft as a writer, and that vision will prove both complex and puzzling.

I Giotto's Portraits

Giotto »became so good an imitator of nature that he banished completely the rude Greek manner and revived the modern and good art of painting, introducing the portraying well from nature of living people, which had not been used for more than two hundred years« (Vasari, *Life of Giotto*, 1568).

Vasari's statements that Giotto painted a portrait of Dante and that, for Petrarch, Simone Memmi painted a portrait of Laura have long been the subject of attention². As often happens when painters and poets are linked by tradition, both works have stimulated a large bibliography, now stretching back over centuries. Art historians and literary scholars have weighed into the discussion, providing arguments and counter-arguments, facts and hypotheses, trying to establish the archetype of each and generally attesting to the fascination of images, especially when those images were reputed to have been likenesses.

² For a recent discussion of Giotto's image, see E. H. Gombrich, »Giotto's Portrait of Dante?« in *New Light on Old Masters*, Oxford 1986, 11–31.

In order to avoid, insofar as possible, confusion between the biographies of Vasari's *Lives* and modern knowledge and conception of the artists he discusses, in the following I shall employ the names that Vasari gave the artists. Thus: »Simone Memmi« rather than Simone

There is no need to rehearse what has been said so well by others. Suffice it to note that there is reason to believe that the portrait of Laura once may have existed. Petrarch himself, in two sonnets written before November of 1336 and thus within Laura's reputed lifetime, says that Simone »la ritrasse in carte« with a »stile«, thereby informing us not only of the portrait but also of its technique. And in *De Contemptu Mundi* St. Augustine reproaches Petrarch for carrying about a likeness of Laura³. It is of course possible, as some scholars have argued, that all this is part of an elaborate literary conceit, that Laura herself is a poetic invention, but given the facts that Simone worked for Petrarch in another context, to produce the famous Virgil frontispiece, and that we do have some identifiable portraits on panel and in miniatures from the early trecento, if we grant the one-time existence of Petrarch's heroine, perhaps we should keep reins on our scepticism.

The evidence for the Dante portrait is rather less compelling. Antonio Pucci (c. 1300–c.1388) tells us, in one of his sonnets, that Giotto painted the likeness of Dante, but this is rather late testimony for a work that, if we accept Vasari's entire description, must have been painted before the end of the dugento. Nonetheless, the advent of portraiture, in the true sense of likeness, was an important development in the early trecento. To cite but the most famous examples: we have surviving portraits of King Robert the Wise of Naples, of Cardinal Jacopo Stefaneschi, and of Enrico Scrovegni. We might therefore be inclined to extend credence to Vasari's testimony were it not that the Dante portrait is so clearly part of a larger issue.

Giotto's image of Dante is but one of the portraits that Vasari attributes to the artist. He tells us that it was found in the chapel of the palace of the Podestà

Martini, »Pietro Laurati« rather than Pietro Lorenzetti, etc.

The following paper ranges so widely in the *Prima Parte* of the *Lives* that specific citations would be unwieldy. Therefore I would direct the reader to G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori scultori e architettori*, ed. R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, *Testo II*, Florence 1967, where the texts of both the 1550 and 1568 editions of the *Lives* are

of Florence and was accompanied by portraits of Brunetto Latini, Dante's master, and of Corso Donati, »a great citizen of those times«. In the palace of the Parte Guelfa, Florence, there was a likeness of Pope Clement IV; in the frescoes of the story of Job in the Camposanto of Pisa (actually painted by an anonymous Bolognese artist and a follower of Taddeo Gaddi) Giotto introduced a portrait of Farinata degli Uberti, and while in Avignon he created a portrait of Pope Clement V. In Verona, he painted a portrait of »Messer Cane« (Can Grande della Scala), and in Naples, in the »hall of the king«, he made portraits of »many famous men«. »Signor Malatesta« was depicted in a scene in the cloister of San Francesco in Rimini, and in a panel of *St. Louis*, for the rood screen of S. Maria Novella in Florence, Giotto portrayed Paolo di Lotto Ardinghelli and his wife »from life«. In the *Life of Simone*, Giotto is credited with a portrait of Pope Benedict XI, and in the *Vita* of Arnolfo di Lapo with a portrait of the architect. According to Vasari, Giotto created no fewer than three self-portraits: in the »hall of the king« in Naples, in the Lower Church of San Francesco in Assisi, and in the church of the Annunciate in Gaeta.

Now this list is significant in a variety of ways, not least among them in that it constitutes an explosion of portraiture within the *Lives*. Prior to the *Vita* of Giotto, portraits are scarce indeed. Cimabue produced a portrait »from nature« of St. Francis. Marchionne had portrayed Honorius III and Giovanni Pisano had »portrayed from nature« Pope Benedict IX (i.e. Benedict XI) on his tomb. Andrea Tafi had made portraits of Pope Celestine IV, Innocent IV, and Alexander IV and Margaritone is credited with a portrait »from nature... in marble and in painting« of Pope Gregory IX and »a S. Francis

portrayed from nature on a panel«. But no earlier artist had rivalled Giotto's achievement.

Within the *Vita*, Giotto's portraits fulfil various functions. First, the portrait of Dante (and in some ways that of Latini) creates a visible association of poet and painter that Vasari makes explicit in the text: »Dante Alighieri, a contemporary and his very great friend, and no less famous as poet than was in the same times Giotto as painter«. Here Vasari invokes, albeit indirectly, Horace's famous simile *ut pictura poesis* and claims for the painter a stature equal to that of poets⁴. Painting and poetry are not only alike, here they are bound by friendship. Other portraits tell us of Giotto's almost universal relations within his society. Popes, great lords, prominent citizens and private families: all these are not only patrons of the artist, they are on terms of intimacy sufficient that the painter can take their likenesses.

But perhaps most important of all, the portraits are central to Vasari's definition of the painter's achievement. Vasari opened the *Giotto Life* with the tale, borrowed from Ghiberti, of Cimabue discovering the young Giotto drawing a sheep »from nature«, and the catalogue of works he assembled in the *Vita* is meant to index the high naturalism that Vasari saw as Giotto's great and consequential contribution. Yet a sixteenth-century audience, almost as much as a twentieth-century viewer, was unlikely to see naturalism in the trecento depiction of sheep or even in the fourteenth-century conception of the figure. Portraits, however, were another matter. What could better signal an early artist's mastery of nature than his ability to capture a likeness, to render individuals »from life«? And Giotto's pre-eminence is embodied in the number of portraits he created.

printed. My principal concern is with the second edition but we shall have occasion to discuss aspects of the first. English translations of the relevant *Vite*, from the second edition, are found in G. Vasari, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors and Architects*, trans. G. De Vere, Vols I and II, London 1912 (reprinted New York 1976). My quotations are based on De Vere's translation although I have corrected some minor inaccuracies.

³ See A. Martindale, *Simone Martini: Complete Edition*, Oxford 1988, 183. St. Augustine says: »But what is more

insane than that you, not content with the presence of the likeness of that face, have sought to have made another likeness by the skill of a famous artist which you have hanging on your person everywhere you go, the theme of permanent and continual tears.«

⁴ On the renaissance life of Horace's simile and theories of art deriving therefrom, see R. W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York 1967.

There is, however, something that Giotto's portraits do not do, and this we discover from the following *Vite*. Vasari tells us that Simone Memmi (in his view Giotto's disciple) portrayed Giotto's master, Cimabue, next to himself and Count Guido Novello, Lord of Poppi, in the frescoes of the Spanish Chapel of S. Maria Novella, Florence. In the same location Simone supposedly included portraits of Cardinal Niccola da Prato, Petrarch, Laura, the architect Lapo and his son Arnolfo, whose model for the cathedral of Florence, S. Maria del Fiore, Simone had used for his depiction of that structure in the same frescoes. Even Giotto was indirectly present, inasmuch as another of Simone's portraits in the Spanish Chapel, that of Pope Benedict XI, was based on a likeness painted by Giotto in Avignon and given to Simone. For Signor Pandolfo Malatesti Simone had gone to Avignon to portray Petrarch. Taddeo Gaddi, in the Baroncelli Chapel of S. Croce, is said to have included portraits of his father, Gaddo Gaddi, and Andrea Tafi, Gaddo's friend. In the same church he portrayed his master and god-father Giotto, Dante, Guido Cavalcanti »and, some say, himself«. In San Francesco in Pisa, he included a self-portrait and on one wall of the Spanish chapel he made a portrait of Clement V. Pietro Laurati (another of Giotto's pupils, according to Vasari) was portrayed by his disciple Bartolommeo Bologhini. Jacopo di Casentino, pupil of Taddeo Gaddi, produced a portrait of Pope Innocent VI, and was himself portrayed by his pupil Spinello Aretino, who also painted portraits of Innocent IV, Gregory IX, and Margaritone. Cavallini, in S. Marco in Florence, portrayed pope Urban V »from the life«⁵. Neri di Bicci portrayed himself and his father together in the Lenzi Chapel of Florence's Ognissanti.

Many of these portraits elevate the status of the artist through connections with popes, prelates and great lords, just as Giotto's portraits had done, and they attest to the conquest of nature. But

others, particularly in the early *Vite*, contribute to what Paul Barolsky has called »The Family Tree of Art«. They form a web of connections through an extended family, acknowledging masters, blood relatives, and friends. In the case of Simone Memmi, the sense of artistic lineage is strong enough to warrant a portrait of his artistic grandfather, Cimabue. And these relations, these pieties, are largely, although not exclusively, Florentine. In the case of two Sienese painters, Duccio and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, there is only one portrait: a self-portrait by Ambrogio in the predella of a panel in S. Procolo, Florence. Berna, another Sienese painter, portrayed Ciuccio di Vanni Tarlati da Pietramala kneeling at the bottom of a large crucifix for the Vescovado of Arezzo, and himself and some noble friends in the church of S. Bartolommeo, Arezzo.

Giotto's portraits do not tie him to other painters, not even to his own master, Cimabue. The one image of an artist he created was not of a painter but of the architect Vasari styled Arnolfo di Lapo, who was supposedly depicted in the scene of the *Death of St. Francis* in the Bardi chapel of S. Croce, Florence. Thus is he set somewhat apart. He is linked in this case with the creator of Florence's great cathedral (in part because he was to design the campanile), but his towering stature distances him from art's extended family and very clearly from other painters.

To avoid confusion, it must be said that I am not suggesting Vasari took a programmatic approach to portraiture and rigorously applied it to each and every *Vita*. Stefano, »The Ape of Nature«, is credited with no portrait, and there are instances when the bonds of family and friendship seem to warrant portraits that were not painted. Rather, I am suggesting that Vasari used portraiture as a means of emphasis, as an underscoring of circumstances he wished to stress.

The way in which the portrait is, for Vasari, a literary device is revealed by problems of chronol-

⁵ Vasari says that this portrait was later copied by Fra Angelico.

⁶ Vasari makes reference to Giovanni Villani who, in his chronicle, indicates the visit of Niccola da Prato occurred in 1303, but in the *Life* of Nicola and Giovanni

Pisano Vasari says he was in Florence in 1300. Using Villani's date would only multiply the number of the deceased in Simone's fresco.

⁷ When, in the *Vita* of Simone, Vasari says that Giotto gave him this portrait which he had painted in Avignon,

ogies, even Vasari's own. Although many of the associations between painters and portraits are plausible, there are also cases where they are not. The portrait of Dante itself raises difficulties inasmuch as the poet was banished from Florence in 1301, never to return. In the same year, Corso Donati suffered a similar fate. But if the triad of portraits in the palace of the Podesta were »from nature« and »of living people«, it would have had to be painted in or before 1294, the year of Brunetto Latini's death. According to Vasari's reckoning, Giotto would have been eighteen-years old at the time. Even more remarkable were his portraits of Clement IV, who had died in 1268, and Farinata degli Uberti, who died in 1264.

Simone Memmi seems to have been equally precocious, not to say miraculous. Through references to a visit to Florence by Cardinal Niccola da Prato, Vasari dates Simone's work in the Spanish Chapel to 1300⁶. According to Vasari, Simone was fifteen. Yet the painter managed to create portraits of Cimabue, Arnolfo di Lapo and Guido Cavalcanti who all died in that year, and Lapo who, in Vasari's account, died in 1262. In 1300 Petrarch was not yet born. The portrait of Benedict XI is also remarkable as the pontiff had not yet been elected. But the prize must surely go to Spinello Aretino who managed portraits of Innocent IV (1243–54), Gregory IX (1227–41) and the dugento painter Margaritone.

Now, perhaps we are mis-reading Vasari. He tells us that in the Pieve of Arezzo Giotto »portrayed from nature a S. Francis and a S. Dominic« but in the *Life* of Arnolfo di Lapo he has told us that the basilica of San Francesco in Assisi was built after Francis's death by Lapo, who himself died in 1262. In the *Life* of Lorenzo Monaco Vasari tells us that the artist »made from nature the portraits of Dante and Petrarch« in the Ardinghelli Chapel of Sta. Trinita. As there can be no question of these portraits being true likenesses of »living people«, perhaps in using »from nature« (»di naturale«) Vasari

he forgets that he has already said, in the Giotto *Life*, that the artist went to Avignon with Clement V. Indeed, Benedict XI (whom Vasari calls Benedict IX in that life) had called Giotto to Rome. It is, perhaps, indicative of

only means that a living model was used? Unfortunately, this cannot be a universal solution, for the phrase is used in cases where it is clear Vasari means to suggest the portrait is an actual likeness of the living person. Indeed, at times, he is at pains to assure us that, in what seem unlikely circumstances, portraits are true likenesses. Thus, in the *Vita* of Buffalmacco we learn that Bruno di Giovanni painted the story of S. Maurice »for Guido Campese, then Constable of the Florentines, whose portrait he had made before he died in the year 1312; in that work he painted him in armour...« When he later tells us that Spinello Aretino, in San Francesco, Arezzo, included »from nature the portrait of Innocent IV« (d. 1254) he adds »from whatever source he had it«, indicating the existence of a lost prototype. And in discussing the panel of St. Thomas Aquinas that he gives to Francesco Traini he says it shows »St. Thomas seated, portrayed from the life: I say from the life, because the friars of that place [S. Caterina, Pisa] had an image of him brought from the Abbey of Fossa Nuova, where he died in the year 1323« (Aquinas actually died in 1274).

There are other instances where Vasari makes it clear that portraits of the deceased are dependent on earlier images. In the *Life* of Buffalmacco we learn that the artist was left portraits of Celestine IV, Innocent IV and Alexander IV by his master, Andrea Tafi, and that he used them in his pictures in S. Paolo a Ripa d'Arno. Simone's portrait of Benedict XI, in the Spanish Chapel, was based on a portrait that Giotto had given him⁷. And we must assume that Taddeo Gaddi's image of Clement V (d. 1314) was dependent on the portrait Giotto gave him as the artist was born only in 1300. But there are several cases where no such indication is given and where the problem of chronology exists.

The matter is relatively simple. To try to discern a systematic approach in Vasari's account or to try to separate fact from fiction is to approach the »problem« in the wrong way, to pose the wrong questions. Giotto's portraits are metaphors for the

our veneration for Vasari that many editors do not note or correct Vasari's mistake regarding Benedict. Benedict IX was intermittently pope from 1032 to 1048.

conquest of nature and a means to elevate the status of the artist. Simone's portrait of Laura cautions us, for there fact may be mingled with fiction, but altogether we would be well advised not to search for likenesses of Farinata degli Uberti, Brunetto Latini, or even Arnolfo⁸. For Vasari, Giotto's portraits are much more a literary conceit than an historical reality.

II *The Fraternity of Art*

»And it is seen clearly that works concerted between those who, in their friendship, are not veiled with the mask of duplicity (although few so made are to be found), arrive at much perfection; and the same men, conferring on the difficulties of the sciences that they are learning, purge them and render them so clear and easy that the greatest praise comes therefrom. Whereas some, on the contrary, diabolically working with profession of friendship, and using the cloak of truth and of lovingness to conceal their envy and malice, rob them of their conceptions, in a manner that the arts do not so soon attain to that excellence which they would have if love embraced the minds of the gracious spirits; as it truly bound together Gaddo and Cimabue, and in like manner Andrea Tafi and Gaddo...« (Vasari, *Life of Gaddo Gaddi*, 1568).

For Vasari, then, the portrait is a device that underscores an artist's conquest of nature and, in so doing, significantly helps define the character of the new art. But it can also make manifest friendships and/or artistic lineage. In this second function, portraiture speaks of the fraternity of art, a notion central to Vasari's conception of the *trécen-*to and of the way in which the new art was created.

Within the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century *Vite*, there are three major lines of artistic descent: 1) from the Greek painters who came to work in Florence and in the Gondi Chapel of S. Maria Novella, and who took Cimabue as their apprentice; 2) from Jacopo Tedesco, known as Lapo, who was the father of Arnolfo; and 3) from the Greek

sculptors who worked on the cathedral and baptistery of Pisa and who trained Nicola Pisano. A fourth, minor line we shall examine later. The second of these, the Lapo/Arnolfo line, was apparently destined for immediate extinction. Arnolfo had no disciples. The third, that of Nicola Pisano, was more vital and yet in a strange way peripheral, and truly fruitful only in one branch. Nicola trained his son, Giovanni, and a certain Maglione, the latter credited with the church of S. Lorenzo and part of the Piscopio in Naples. Maglione had no followers, but Giovanni trained »certain Germans«, Lino of Siena, and Agostino and Agnolo of Siena. This last pair produced six disciples: Pietro and Paolo of Arezzo, Jacopo Lanfrani of Venice, Jacobello, Pietro Paolo of Venice, and the Pesarese.

Unquestionably, however, it is the lineage of the Greek painters/Cimabue that forms the centrepiece of Vasari's tale. Cimabue trained Giotto, and Vasari indicates that their relationship was particularly close. He tells us that Giotto was ten when discovered by the older painter, and he says that Giotto, after Cimabue's death, occupied the latter's house in the Via del Cocomero. Thus Vasari suggests Giotto was Cimabue's heir, that the relationship of the two resembled that of father and son. In this way the origins are made to parallel the origins of the two other principal lines established by the father and son teams of Lapo and Arnolfo, Nicola and Giovanni; yet for reasons that will later become apparent, an actual blood relationship would have been inappropriate for the Cimabue/Giotto line.

From this hardy stock arose ten painters, including six of major stature: Puccio Capanna, Pietro Laurati (Lorenzetti), Simone Memmi (Martini), Stefano, Taddeo Gaddi and Pietro Cavallini. Pietro Laurati was to train Bartolommeo Bologhini; Cavallini taught Giovanni da Pistoia; Stefano gave first instruction to his son Tomasso (Giotto) who had four disciples. Taddeo taught or formed at least four painters including his son, Agnolo, who in turn taught five, and Jacopo di Casentino who

⁸There is, at minimum, the possibility that Vasari's »identification« of portraits by early painters was prompted by Petrarch's remarks on the portrait of

Laura, that having testimony for one case before him, Vasari felt the need of indicating that other artists, Giotto in particular, were capable of such images.

taught Spinello Aretino. Thus Giotto became artistic grandfather to some seven painters and artistic great-grandfather to at least ten.

But Vasari is far from content with a genealogy. Mapping art's history depended on welding a vision more complex and more complete than that suggested by the master-pupil relationship. Thus the barren Arnolfo is at least related to a stronger lineage inasmuch as he gave »attention under Cimabue to design in order to make use of it in sculpture« and the two became co-architects of S. Maria del Fiore in Florence. Presumably it is, at least in part, for the sake of this intimacy that Simone portrayed Cimabue, Arnolfo, Arnolfo's father and himself (as well as Arnolfo's model for Florence cathedral) in the Spanish Chapel, thus grafting the spent Lapo/Arnolfo lineage to his own. Giotto himself offered precedent for this adoption in his portrait of Arnolfo in the Bardi Chapel of S. Croce, in the scene of the *Death of St. Francis*.

Taddeo Gaddi represents a rather special case in Giotto's relations to his disciples. Taddeo was the son of Gaddo Gaddi and Vasari suggests he had some preliminary training with his father. Therefore, to strengthen the relation to Giotto, Vasari cites Cennino Cennini's remark that Taddeo spent twenty-four years with Giotto, who was also his god-father, once more decisively grafting an artist to the main stock who might otherwise have remained detached from it.

A figure who seems otherwise isolated, Fra Jacopo da Turrata, introduces us to yet another means Vasari uses to shape his larger picture. Jacopo became part of art's family when he was assisted by Gaddo Gaddi and Andrea Tafi in the execution of mosaics in the Duomo of Pisa, but the connection was cemented when, in 1308, Gaddo was called to Rome to finish »certain works in mosaic left imperfect by Fra Jacopo da Turrata«. The completion of »imperfect« works is a way by which Vasari stresses the bonds of art, not only forging direct links among artists but also suggesting the obligations

owed to other members of the fraternity. In fact, the Pisa cathedral mosaics, by Jacopo, Andrea and Gaddo were left »little less than wholly imperfect, and they were afterwards finished by Vicino« of Pisa, a disciple of Gaddo Gaddi. Margaritone, another rather isolated figure, continued building the Vescovado of Arezzo, begun by Lapo. Giotto finished works that Cimabue had begun, but left incomplete, in Assisi. Andrea Pisano executed many of the designs of his mentor and great friend Giotto for the facade of Florence cathedral, the campanile, and the baptistery; Taddeo Gaddi supervised the continuing construction of Giotto's campanile. Simone Memmi's supposed brother, Lippo, completed several works that Simone left unfinished at the time of his death; similarly Orcagna's unfinished works were completed after his death by his brother Bernardo. Nino Pisano's first work was to finish a marble Madonna in S. Maria Novella that had been begun by his father Andrea. And this theme reaches a climax when Agnolo Gaddi, possessing his grandfather's tools, restores the mosaics of his grandfather's great friend, Andrea Tafi, in the baptistery of Florence, although Giovanni da Asciano has yet to complete the works left unfinished by Berna in San Gimignano.

There are other ways in which objects can signal special relations among artists. For example, Giotto, in 1314, carried a bronze cross by Andrea Pisano to the pope in Avignon. Lippo of Florence, an artist without master, added wings to Andrea Pisano's shrine in the Florentine baptistery. Then, of course, there are the portraits that are handed on. Andrea Tafi left Buffalmacco portraits that he would later use. Giotto gave Simone Martini a portrait of Benedict XI and Taddeo Gaddi a portrait of Clement V. And perhaps it is not without significance, and irony, that Vasari tells us that Giotto's *St. Louis*, painted for Paolo di Lotto Ardinghelli, stood over the tomb of the Gaddi family in S. Maria Novella, Florence, built by the financially successful but inferior painter of the family, Agnolo⁹.

⁹ In the *Vite* of Gaddo and of Taddeo, Vasari signals that the family tomb was in S. Croce, specifically in the first

cloister, and that it eventually contained the bodies of both father and son. The undistinguished Agnolo Gaddi

Beyond all this, there is something else that binds the fraternity of art and to which we have already alluded: friendship. This theme is strongly stated at the very beginning of the *Lives*, as Vasari deals with his fourth and minor foundation lineage, that of Andrea Tafi and Gaddo Gaddi.

Gaddo Gaddi, in the *Vite*, has no master; instead he has two great friends. One of these is Andrea Tafi, who brought a Greek painter, Maestro Apollonius, from Venice in order to teach him, Andrea, the art of mosaic. Together, Andrea and Apollonius decorated the cupola of the Florentine baptistery, with the assistance of Gaddo Gaddi. Andrea and Gaddo subsequently assisted Jacopo da Turrita in his mosaics for the apse of Pisa cathedral. But Gaddo also had an »intimate friendship« with Cimabue, whose manner he studied. In Vasari's scheme of things this friendship is critical. It not only explains, in part, why Cimabue's great disciple Giotto might be asked to stand as god-father to Taddeo Gaddi, it also ties Andrea Tafi and his principal follower, Buffalmacco, to the Cimabue-Giotto lineage. That connection will be underscored when Taddeo, in the Baroncelli chapel of S. Croce, portrays his father and his father's friend, Andrea, in the *Marriage of the Virgin*.

Friendship, in Vasari's account, is often as important as family ties and a significant addition to master-pupil relations, for it extends beyond the obligations of blood or training, making the fraternity a matter of free choice. As the quote that opens this section indicates, it seems it may also contribute to art's development.

We do not know whether, when Giovanni Pisano went to Florence »to see Giotto«, the two artists became friends; we do know that Giotto was a friend of the illuminator Vasari called Oderigi d'Agobbio, a friend of Agostino and Agnolo of Siena, and a »very great friend« to Andrea Pisano. Buffalmacco was a companion and friend of the painters Bruno di Giovanni and Calandrino. Taddeo Gaddi and Simone were such great friends that

was to build another family tomb in S. Maria Novella. This is one of Vasari's most egregious inventions. In fact, Agnolo Gaddi was buried in S. Croce; the tomb in

they happily divided the decoration of the Spanish Chapel in S. Maria Novella, and Taddeo must have regarded Giovanni da Milano and Jacopo di Casentino as friends as well as followers when, at his death, he recommended his sons to them: »to Jacopo di Casentino for ways of life and to Giovanni da Milano for instruction in the art«¹⁰.

Now, the reader should not be left with the impression that Vasari's vision is all encompassing. Just as with his use of portraiture, his conception of the fraternity of art is balanced (we might say, heightened) by accounts where it is absent. It is, however, not those cases that command our attention so much as the pervasiveness of Vasari's device. With remarkable success, and few exceptions, he managed to intertwine painters, sculptors and architects of the early *Vite* of the *Prima Parte* in a manner that attached many of them to the Cimabue/Giotto tradition, to the core of Florentine art, and thus to the core of his vision regarding the origins of what we call the Renaissance.

III *The Importance of Place*

In Vasari's account of the »first age«, there is yet another element that unifies art and artists: place. But because specific sites perform a variety of functions in the *Vite*, the matter of location deserves separate attention. We have already noted how Margaritone is credited with continuation of the Aretine Vescovado, begun by Lapo, and how several artists completed »imperfect« works and were thus active in the same places. We have seen how Simone and Taddeo Gaddi divided the decoration of the Spanish Chapel. All these are aspects of the fraternity of art. But Vasari also describes what might be termed a viewer's world, the collective visual experience of an ideal and peripatetic student of the arts.

Take, for example, the experience of a visitor to the great basilica of San Francesco in Assisi. According to Vasari, the church and convent had been built by Lapo. Cimabue and »certain Greek mas-

S. Maria Novella was that of Agnolo di Zanobi, Agnolo's nephew, as the inscription still testifies.

¹⁰ There is an inconsistency here as Vasari, in the *Life of*

ters« had painted part of the vaults and scenes from the lives of Christ and St. Francis on the walls of the Lower Church. Cimabue, subsequently working by himself, had frescoed the apse of the Upper Church, the vaults of the nave, the upper walls of the nave, and the end (entrance) wall. He had then begun the decoration of the lower walls of the nave but had been called to Florence and left his work incomplete. »Many years afterwards«, this area was finished by Giotto with »thirty-two scenes of the life and acts of S. Francesco«. In the Lower Church Giotto painted »the upper parts of the walls at the sides of the high-altar« and the vaults of the crossing. He also painted a self-portrait and a *Stigmatization of St. Francis*. Vasari suspects that he was assisted by his disciple Puccio Capanna who, after Giotto's death, painted »many works« in San Francesco, including »some scenes of the Passion of Jesus Christ« and the Chapel of St. Martin. Also in the Lower Church, the visitor would have seen a great frescoed *Crucifixion* by Pietro Cavallini, a *Coronation of the Virgin* and some stories of St. Nicholas by Giottino, a *Celestial Glory* in the apse by Stefano, and the figures at the altar of St. Elizabeth begun by Simone but finished by Lippo Memmi. The Lower Church in addition contained a sculpted effigy of Napoleone Orsini's brother by Agnolo of Siena who also created the chapel in which that effigy stood, the Chapel of St. Catherine frescoed by Buffalmacco, the »tomb of the Queen of Cyprus« by Fuccio, and the frescoes in the chapel of St. Anthony by Pace da Faenza, pupil of Giotto¹¹. In the Upper Church, there was a crucifix by Margaritone. In the refectory of the convent Simone had painted »many little scenes and a crucifix in the shape of a Tree of the Cross« (unfinished).

A visit to Assisi was thus a pilgrimage to a site that offered the viewer immediate introduction to most of the Cimabue/Giotto lineage; San Francesco was a pantheon. It is particularly the discussions of the Lower Church that reveal how purposeful Vasari

Jacopo, says that Jacopo taught Spinello Aretino what he had learned from Agnolo. Are we to assume that Jacopo had two masters?

was. By dividing the authorship of the frescoes in the left transept (actually painted by Pietro Lorenzetti) among Giotto, Puccio Capanna and Cavallini, and by noting the contributions of Stefano, Giottino and Simone, Vasari brought many of the most significant painters of that lineage into the most significant area of the church, over or near the grave of the saint.

There are other instances where such unification occurs. In Pisa it was the cathedral complex that afforded the visitor a similar, though more various, array of the best talent. Nicola Pisano and the Greek sculptors had worked »the figures and other carved ornaments« on the cathedral and the baptistery. Nicola created the pulpit of the baptistery years later, while his son Giovanni had made the pulpit of the cathedral as well as a *Madonna with Saints and Donor* over the main door and another *Madonna* over the side door, opposite the campanile. The cathedral contained the chapel of S. Ranieri and a baptismal font by Lino of Siena, Giovanni's disciple, the mosaics by Jacopo da Turrita, Gaddo Gaddi, and Vicino of Pisa, and panels by Giovanni Tossicani, disciple of Giottino, son of Stefano, pupil of Giotto. In the chapel of the Annunciate there was a fresco of the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* by Taddeo Bartoli. The cathedral also held »many panels« by Bernardo Nello di Giovanni Falconi, disciple of Orcagna.

But the major Pisan monument was Giovanni's Camposanto, for it provided place for the art of the great painters. Giotto began the decoration with frescoes of the stories of Job. Our imaginary visitor would also there have seen »all the lives of the Holy Fathers« by Pietro Laurati, four scenes depicting the events from the creation of the world to the Flood and the Passion of Christ, including the *Resurrection* and *Christ's Appearance to the Apostles* by Buffalmacco, an *Assumption of the Virgin* and three scenes from the life of S. Ranieri of Pisa by Simone Memmi, and the continuation of the S. Ranieri cycle by Antonio Viniziano. Below Pietro

¹¹ It is, in fact, unclear whether Vasari is placing the chapel of St. Anthony in San Francesco or not. He simply speaks of »the Chapel of S. Antonio at Assisi«.

Laurati's frescoes, Antonio painted a fictive tomb for the body of the Blessed Oliverio, and below the S. Ranieri stories, Aretino had painted »six stories of S. Petito and S. Epiro«. In the Camposanto, Orcagna had painted a *Last Judgement* and a subject we know as the *Triumph of Death*, while his brother Bernardo had executed a fresco of *Hell*. There was a *Madonna* by Stefano and Taddeo Bartoli had painted a *Coronation of the Virgin* over the chapel of the cemetery, which chapel had been completed by Tommaso Pisano, disciple of Andrea Pisano.

In fact, in the early portion of the *Prima Parte*, Vasari is weaving a tale such that there are few entirely isolated monuments, associated only with one artist. For example: an architect named Bruno supposedly founded the Castel Capuano and the Castel dell'Uovo in Naples; both were finished by a certain Fuccio »architect and sculptor of Florence«. The Castel dell'Uovo was later to be decorated by Giotto. In Arezzo, work on the Vescovado, founded by Lapo, was continued by Margaritone. That complex eventually was to house works by Margaritone, Buffalmacco, Taddeo Gaddi, Berna, Jacopo di Casentino, Giovanni Pisano, Giotto, Lippo Memmi, Agnolo and Agostino, Lippo of Florence, Giovanni Tossicani and Forzore di Spinello Aretino. Marchionne Aretino built the Pieve of S. Maria in Arezzo, a church that contained works by Margaritone, Giotto, Pietro Laurati, the Aretino goldsmiths Pietro and Paolo, Jacopo di Casentino, Berna, Giovanni Tossicani, Giovanni del Ponte, and Spinello Aretino. In Pistoia the church of S. Jacopo was built by Nicola Pisano, although its campanile was designed by his son Giovanni. The church, in time, acquired pictures by Stefano, and sculpture by Andrea Pisano and Lionardo di ser Giovanni. In a slightly dissimilar but related vein, Vasari tells us that the piers of the original Orsanmichele were founded by Arnolfo in 1284; the piers were refounded in the fourteenth century by Taddeo Gaddi.

There is, however, another aspect to Vasari's use of place that arises from his understanding of the centrality of Florence in the story of art's progress. Although Nicola and Giovanni of Pisa »swept away in great part the old Greek manner« and

although Giotto granted approval to their artistic legacy when he asked Agostino and Agnolo of Siena to execute the tomb of Guido Tarlati in Arezzo, their lineage was destined to be supplanted by Andrea Pisano. Thus the entire line is more or less excluded from Florence. Nicola and Giovanni executed comparatively minor works in the city; Agostino and Agnolo apparently received no Florentine commission. Instead, this lineage shaped the fabric of Siena. Vasari, in a somewhat unusual statement, says Nicola Pisano was present at the foundation of the cathedral (»Si trovò Nicola alla prima fondazione del Duomo di Siena«). Nicola is credited with the design of the baptistery. His son, Giovanni, was responsible for the cathedral's west facade and the cathedral pulpit, and Giovanni's disciples, Agostino and Agnolo, designed the north facade and the structure we call the Duomo Nuova. Agostino and Agnolo designed the church of S. Francesco; they designed the Porta Romana and rebuilt the Porta a' Tufi; they were in charge of the water-ways for the Fontegaia. Apparently Agostino alone designed the Palazzo Pubblico, although both brothers contributed to its interior and designed the great tower of the palace, the Torre del Mangia.

The importance of Florence is also signalled by the way in which major artists are gathered in single Florentine structures, particularly the churches of the mendicant orders and at the cathedral complex. The church of S. Maria Novella, according to Vasari, contained works by Cimabue, Gaddo Gaddi, Giotto, Ugolino, Andrea and Nino Pisano, Buffalmacco, Bruno di Giovanni, Taddeo Gaddi, Simone Memmi, Stefano, Andrea and Bernardo Orcagna, and Giottino. S. Croce, designed by Arnolfo, held works by Cimabue, Margaritone, Giotto, Stefano, Ugolino, Bartolomeo Bologhini, Lippo Memmi and Simone, Taddeo Gaddi, Giottino, Giovanni da Milano, Orcagna, Jacopo di Casentino, Spinello Aretino and Starnina. We could go on multiplying examples, but they are easily located by the reader.

Vasari's extraordinary blend of fact and fiction serves to embody the idea of a harmony among the productions of early artists. As those artists were

united in friendships, by training, or through familial ties, so the new art is united in specific sites. But beyond that, Vasari adumbrates the notion of »key monuments« in the history of art. Although a poor student hardly needed to leave Florence, a student with limited time and money could make the journey: Florence – Assisi – Siena – Pisa – Florence, and learn of the essential contributions of both the dugento and the fourteenth century.

In a related fashion, Vasari has provided a history of discriminating patronage. Florentines employed the best artists, but other centres did as well. Beyond this, we learn that the great cathedrals of the communes and the churches of the mendicant orders that had arisen in the thirteenth century were the principal sites of the new art.

Finally, we should note that Vasari's discussions of 1568 might be said to anticipate the guide-book genre. In his attempt to offer comprehensive accounts of the origins and contents of major structures, and in his separation of the traditions of Siena and Florence, he prepared the way for Francesco Bocchi's *Le Bellezze di Firenze* (1591) and such sixteenth-century works as Fabio Chigi's list (1625–26) of works in Siena, G. Piccolomini's *Siena illustre per antichità* (before 1649) and G. Cinelli's expanded edition of Bocchi (1677)¹².

IV *Art's Progress?*

How, we must ask, did Vasari see the history of art during the first age? It is often stated that Vasari's vision was structured by notions of artistic progress, and that underlying principle certainly determines the overall shape of the *Lives*. But the matter, upon closer examination, is far more subtle and far more complex.

It is a commonplace that the foundation stone of Vasari's history is the *maniera greca*, critical for the rise of painting and to a lesser extent sculpture. As midwife to the new art, it required acknowledgment. Indeed, Vasari is so convinced of its importance that even in his »minor« lineage of Gaddo

Gaddi and Andrea Tafi he must introduce Master Apollonius, that Greek brought from Venice to teach Andrea the art of mosaic. But Vasari's attitude toward the idiom is ambivalent. It facilitated the rebirth of the arts and thus is central to the early biographies, yet essentially it is present to serve another purpose: to act eventually as counterpoint to the accomplishment of the trecento. Vasari aspires to the definition of an indigenous Italian art; both its origins and its character will acquire greater clarity of profile for being contrasted with what came before.

His epic opens with the *Life of Cimabue*, the tale of a boy born to an artistic wilderness and called to painting by native inclination and genius. The story is centred on the Dominican church of S. Maria Novella, where the youth was sent to study grammar but where the arrival of »certain Greek painters« afforded opportunity for apprenticeship to the art of painting. And after the travels and commissions that arose from his extraordinary success, Cimabue returned to S. Maria Novella to create his masterpiece, the work we know as the Rucellai *Madonna*, wherein »certain angels...show that, although he still had the Greek manner, he was going on approaching the line and method of the modern«. After a brief sojourn in Pisa, he again returned to Florence, to become co-architect with Arnolfo di Lapo in the building of the cathedral, S. Maria del Fiore, and subsequently be buried therein.

The concluding paragraphs of this *Life* introduce us to Arnolfo, whose *Vita* will immediately follow. We are also told that Giotto, Cimabue's disciple, came to occupy the latter's house. And then we receive a preview of the great change ahead, when Giotto will eclipse the fame of his master and, in painting, open »the gate of truth to those who have brought her [painting] to that perfection and majesty wherein we see her in our century«.

The *Life of Arnolfo di Lapo* is much more than a biography of the architect. Vasari first directs us to a series of monuments whose authors he does not

¹² F. Chigi, »L'Elenco delle Pitture, Sculture e Architetture di Siena compilato nel 1625–26«, ed. P. Bacci, *Buletino Senese di Storia Patria*, N.S. X, 1939, 297–337;

G. Piccolomini, *Siena illustre per antichità*, Siena, Biblioteca Comunale, MS C.II.2; G. Cinelli, *Le bellezze della città di Firenze*, Florence 1677.

know, and then to Buono, of whom he has little personal information, but for whom he assembles an impressive collection of works: »many palaces and churches and some sculptures in Ravenna« in 1152, the founding of the Castel Capuano and the Castel dell'Uovo in Naples, the founding of the campanile of S. Marco in Venice, the church of S. Andrea in Pistoia, the enlargement of S. Maria Maggiore in Florence, and the palace of the »Lords of Arezzo«. There follows discussion of Guglielmo, Bonanno, and Marchionne Aretino, then an account of Arnolfo's father, Jacopo Tedesco, known as Lapo, who was responsible for an impressive production, including the basilica of San Francesco at Assisi.

All this is somewhat surprising, for we have already been told that when Cimabue was born in 1240 »there had... been ruined everything that could truly claim the name of building«; yet most of these works antedate Cimabue's birth. Vasari admits that these structures are »neither in a beautiful nor in a good manner« but they are »vast and magnificent... [and] worthy none the less of some consideration«.

Now, Arnolfo was clearly the significant architect of his time; he was responsible for changing the face of Florence. He founded the last circuit of city walls, designed the original loggia of Orsanmichele, founded the Loggia de' Priori, built the new choir and campanile for the Badia (which he renovated), and designed S. Croce and its convent, S. Maria del Fiore, and the Palazzo Vecchio. But the lengthy preface of this *Life* has set him firmly within an architectural tradition. Indeed, he began the Palazzo Vecchio »in resemblance to that which his father Lapo had built in the Casentino for the Counts of Poppi«. Moreover, a part of his reputation he owed to the fact that he had »also given attention under Cimabue to design in order to make use of it in sculpture.« Thus we here have something that approaches a native art, although it needs the new design of Cimabue as its complement.

The *Life of Nicola and Giovanni of Pisa* gives these sculptors and architects still more independence. Although Nicola worked with »certain

Greek sculptors«, both he and Giovanni »swept away in great part the old Greek manner«. In Nicola's case this was because he had the opportunity to study »certain ancient sarcophagi that are today in the Campo Santo« of Pisa, especially a sarcophagus with the story of Meleager and the Calydonian Boar, and »pondering over the beauty of this work and being greatly pleased therewith, put so much study and diligence into imitating this manner and some other good sculptures that were in the other ancient sarcophagi, that he was judged, after no long time, the best sculptor of the day«. Giovanni's art, it seems, rose entirely on his father's example; he was responsible for a truly astonishing production before his death in 1320.

After this opening trilogy, there follow the *Lives* of Andrea Tafi, Gaddo Gaddi and Margaritone. In some ways, these three *Vite* represent a pause in the narrative. Andrea Tafi »not being in truth the most able man in the world« produced works in mosaic that were much admired by »these people not thinking... that better work could not be done in such an art«. Tafi's contribution was really only technical for it was by »putting the pieces together with much diligence and executing the work smooth as a table, which is of the greatest importance in mosaic, that he opened the way to good work to Giotto, among others...«. Gaddo »displayed at this same time more design in his works, wrought after the Greek manner« and in painting and mosaic he made »many passing good works«, but all this was due to his friendship with Cimabue. Margaritone represents the sad case of an artist left behind by art's progress. Although he was »held excellent among the painters of these times who were working after the Greek manner«, he was fated to die »at the age of seventy-seven, disgusted, so it is said, to have lived so long, seeing the age changed and the honours with the new craftsmen«.

This interlude tells us of the world of painters surrounding Cimabue. Only where his influence is strongly felt, through the ties of friendship, does something »passing good« occur. The Greek manner is spending itself. We still await a hero, and a new dawn. Both we are to meet in Giotto.

The *Vita* of Giotto Vasari filled with echoes of the *Life* of Cimabue. The latter appeared, by the will of God, after the infinite flood of evils that had extinguished all craftsmen, in order to bring the first lights to the art of painting; Giotto appeared »after the methods of good paintings and their outlines had lain buried for many years under the ruins of the wars, [so that] he alone, although born among inept craftsmen, by the gift of God revived that art...«. Sent to study at S. Maria Novella, Cimabue spent his time drawing »on books and on other papers, men, horses, houses and diverse other things of fancy«. Sent to tend his father's sheep, the ten-year-old Giotto passed his time »for ever drawing, on stones, on the ground, or on sand, something from nature, or in truth anything that came into his fancy«. In Cimabue's case, his father and the Greek masters working in the Gondi Chapel of S. Maria Novella judged him »to be in such wise fitted for painting that there could be hoped for him, applying himself to this profession, an honourable success«. It was, of course, Cimabue who recognized the young Giotto's potential and took him to Florence to be trained, such that he »became so good an imitator of nature that he banished completely the rude Greek manner and revived the modern and the good art of painting«. Later, we will be told that »Giotto was born in order to give light to painting« (»Giotto nacque per dar luce alla pittura«), just a Cimabue was born »to give the first lights to the art of painting« (»per dar e' primi lumi all'arte della pittura«).

Thus, as it were, we begin again.

It is central to Vasari's overall conception that his tale involve a »second dawn«. Cimabue is the precursor, come to announce the advent; he is a voice crying in the wilderness and an artist sent ahead to make straight the paths. It is for this reason that Giotto and Cimabue cannot be related as father to son. Indeed, Vasari takes pains to separate the two, telling us that Giotto, although a pupil of the good Cimabue, is »well deserved to be called the disciple of nature and not of others«, and that »truly it was a miracle in those times that Giotto had so great loveliness in his painting, considering, above all, that he learnt the art in a certain measure

without a master«. This is indigenous talent distinguished from that dependent on the *maniera greca*. Giotto, we recall, was the son of a »tiller of the soil«; Cimabue came from the noble and urban classes. Cimabue drew while in school and thus presumably from his imagination; Giotto, living on the land, drew from nature.

The Giotto *Vita* is, at heart, a tale of naturalism and narrative. It begins with the story of the boy discovered drawing a sheep and almost immediately moves to the portrait of Dante although, as we soon discover, this was not necessarily among Giotto's »first pictures«. Instead, his early works included the decoration of the main chapel of the Badia of Florence, and creation of its altarpiece, as well as four chapels in S. Croce, the altarpiece of the Baroncelli Chapel, a crucifix, an *Annunciation*, a »tree of the Cross«, »stories of S. Louis and a Last Supper« and the panels of the lives of Christ and St. Francis on the sacristy cupboard, all in the same church. With a very brief interlude in Arezzo, we pass to San Francesco in Assisi, where Giotto completed the Legend of St. Francis, and in the Lower Church »the upper part of the walls at the sides of the high-altar, and all the four angles of the vaulting above in the place where lies the body of S. Francis«. We are then on to the panel of the *Stigmatization of St. Francis* in San Francesco, Pisa, and next to the decorations in the Camposanto. Nearly all of the narrative works receive extensive discussion and description.

We might continue in this vein, but these observations map the essential structure of the *Life*. The Giotto *Vita* not only marks an explosion of portraiture, it also marks an explosion of narrative art.

With the Lapo/Arnolfo line extinct, Vasari turns to the tradition of Nicola and Giovanni, and to Agostino and Agnolo of Siena who, »adding great betterment to the manner of Giovanni and Nicola of Pisa, enriched the art with better design and invention«. This *Life* is the occasion for Vasari to introduce the theme of brothers. Agostino, in 1284 and at the precocious age of fifteen, attached himself to Giovanni Pisano (as he was already inclined to this art and to architecture). Soon after, Giovanni was commissioned to do a marble panel for the

high altar of the Vescovado of Arezzo and Agostino »contrived to bring there the said Agnolo, his brother, who acquitted himself in this work in such a manner that when it was finished he was found to have equalled Agostino in the excellence of his art«. Thus, Giovanni subsequently used both of them in many of his works. The question of brothers will arise again in the lives of Simone and Orcagna.

The *Vita* is also the opportunity for Giotto to signal his approval of the new sculpture and of the Pisani tradition. Passing through Orvieto, in 1326, Giotto not only made friends with Agostino and Agnolo, but he recommended them to execute his own design for the tomb of Guido Tarlati in Arezzo¹³.

Yet for all of this, the art of Agostino and Agnolo, and thus the tradition of Nicola and Giovanni, was destined for a final dispersion. Agostino's and Agnolo's disciples were men of Arezzo, Venice, and Pesaro. »All these and many other sculptors went on, for a long space of time, following one and the same method, in a manner that with it they filled all Italy«, but »there is not any benefit of much account for our arts from such works«.

Now Vasari can begin his great theme: all that matters most in painting of this first age flows from Giotto. And he demonstrates this in the paired lives of two friends, Stefano and Ugolino. Stefano, Giotto's disciple, »was so excellent that he not only surpassed all the others who had laboured in the art before him, but outstripped his own master himself by so much that he was held, and deservedly, the best of all the painters who had lived up to that time«. In fact, »he went on trying to do something that had never been done before – namely, to suggest the nude form of figures below new kinds of folds, which, as I have said, had not been thought of even by Giotto«. By contrast, Ugolino »held ever in great part to the Greek manner, as one who, grown old therein, had wished by reason of a certain obstinacy in himself to hold rather to the manner of Cimabue than to that of Giotto«. Need-

less to say, his accomplishments were significantly less than those of the »Ape of Nature«.

In these *Lives* there are vague reminiscences of the stage set by those of Andrea Tafi, Gaddo Gaddi and Margaritone. But there is also a profound difference, for it is here that Vasari's understanding of the dynamics of art takes over. Giotto is the great pioneer, the second founding father of the art of painting, and adherence to his example only can lead to improvement. We may be surprised that Stefano is, by Vasari's account, better than Giotto, but without that evaluation Vasari's tale cannot move forward. And, indeed, he will stress this fact in the immediately following *Life*, that of Pietro Laurati, when he tells us that in the scenes Pietro painted for the Ospedale di S. Maria della Scala in Siena »he imitated in such wise the manner of Giotto, then spread throughout all Tuscany, that it was believed with great reason that he was destined, as afterwards came to pass, to become a better master than Cimabue and Giotto and the others had been«.

With the principal theme of the *Prima Parte* now established, Vasari turns to the sculptor and architect, Andrea Pisano, because: »The art of painting never flourished at any time without sculptors also pursuing their exercise with excellence... because these two arts are truly sisters, born at one and the same time, and fostered and governed by one and the same soul«. This opening sentence alerts us to the major themes that emerge concretely in the *Life*. Painting and sculpture are »born at one and the same time« as witnessed by the fact that Andrea practiced sculpture »in the time of Giotto« and that earlier sculptors had produced only »sculptures... so uncouth and worthless that whosoever saw them in comparison with those of this man judged the last a miracle«. Thus, much to our puzzlement, the achievements of Arnolfo, Nicola, Giovanni, Agostino and Agnolo are all dismissed.

The opening of the *Vita* tells us we have reached a new beginning, a second dawn, now in the art of sculpture. For this reason Andrea had no master; instead, he turned to study of those »many antiquities and sarcophagi that are still round the Duomo and the Campo Santo« of Pisa. As Giotto's

¹³This statement is one in which Vasari creates a chronological tangle, for in the *Life* of Giotto he has told us that Guido Tarlati died in 1327.

boyhood experience echoed that of Cimabue, so Andrea's early study paralleled that of Nicola. Yet this was not enough to form the artist. He also studied »the new method of design of Giotto«, just as Arnolfo had profited in his sculpture by study of design under Cimabue. Now, however, sculpture and painting are indeed »fostered and governed by one and the same soul«, inasmuch as they fuse in the invention of Giotto. And Vasari early includes a parallel to indicate the underlying similarities between the two : Andrea's first work in Florence was a portrait »from the life« of Pope Boniface VIII; the Dante portrait appears near the beginning of the Giotto *Vita*.

Andrea went to Florence because there was no one to execute the designs that Giotto had made for the facade of S. Maria del Fiore; he was given the opportunity to design the castle of Scarperia because Arnolfo was dead and Giotto was not in Florence; he was eventually chosen to execute the bronze doors of the Florentine Baptistery »for which Giotto had already made a very beautiful design«; and subsequently he executed »little figures in marble that act as adornment for the door of the Campanile of S. Maria del Fiore« after »the design of Giotto«. It is not that he fails to produce his own creations, but rather that here the new art of sculpture and the new art of painting meet: once more in the context of friendship. For did not Andrea send the bronze cross to the pope in Avignon through this »great friend«, Giotto?

The arts also meet and fuse in Florence. Andrea was so honoured by the Florentines »that it was no hardship for him to change country, relations, property and friends«. His greatest works were accomplished in the city; he was made a citizen; and where Nicola and Giovanni were buried in the Camposanto of their native town, Andrea was buried in the cathedral of Florence, as were Cimabue and Giotto.

After this second »new dawn«, this synthesis of modernity, the *Life of Buonamico Buffalmacco* seems to follow as comic relief. Vasari has, from Boccaccio and Sacchetti, all the stories of a painter »humourous and gay«. But there are more profound lessons in the story of »a man of passing

good judgment in his art of painting«. Buffalmacco was »a person very eccentric and careless both in dress and in the manner of his life«. Indeed, he was a wastrel and a spendthrift, fond of practical jokes and of sleeping late. He himself produced works that »were prized while he lived, and since then, for works of that age, they have been ever extolled«, but this »good friend« was a pernicious influence on both his companion Bruno di Giovanni and his disciple Giovanni del Ponte.

The interlude is continued in the *Life of Ambrogio Lorenzetti*. The *Vita* is a short but eloquent sketch of an artist, a gentleman and a philosopher who had »given attention in his youth to letters«. Vasari juxtaposes Ambrogio and Buffalmacco, for Ambrogio's life, learning, and art are a demonstration that »every man should make himself no less beloved in his ways that with the excellence of his art«. Yet although Ambrogio »showed beautiful and great invention in grouping and placing his figures thoughtfully in historial scenes«, he was a solitary, without master, disciples or friends. He therefore represents an accomplished artist who, through isolation, has no impact on the course of art.

The following lives of Pietro Cavallini, Simone Memmi and Taddeo Gaddi, resume that story of art's course initiated in the *Vite* of Stefano and Pietro Laurati, although we shall discover that Vasari's enthusiasm has modified somewhat. Cavallini was, after Giotto, the artist who restored painting in Rome; thus, Vasari begins the *Life* with an echo of the beginning of both the Cimabue and Giotto biographies: »For many centuries Rome had been deprived not only of fine letters and of the glory of arms but also of all the sciences and the fine arts, when, by the will of God, there was born therein Pietro Cavallini...« We are assured, however, that the painter was no merely local phenomenon. He had studied with Giotto and he worked in Florence, Assisi and Orvieto, although his first and last works were for his native city. Simone was even more effective in spreading the new art, for he worked in his native Siena, in Rome, Avignon, Florence, Pisa, Ancona and Assisi.

As Giotto had a friend in Dante, so Simone's fame owed most to his relation with Petrarch. The *Life*

opens with Simone's portrait of Laura as Giotto's had opened with the portrait of Dante, and it ends in a refrain, for Simone »took much delight in drawing portraits from life; and in this he was held so much the greatest master of his times that Signor Pandolfo Malatesti sent him as far as Avignon to portray Messer Francesco Petrarca, at the request of whom he made afterwards the portrait of Madonna Laura, with so much credit to himself.«

The biography of Simone's friend, Taddeo Gaddi, is somewhat peculiar. Taddeo was the godson of Giotto, with whom he worked for twenty-four years, and the relationship would seem to justify further parallels with the early *Vite* of father and son teams. But beyond the fact that Taddeo's early works were for the Franciscans of S. Croce, where Giotto had created several works, that is not the case. The artist's independent career spanned a mere fourteen years, between Giotto's death in 1336 and his own in 1350 and included several collaborative efforts: frescoes in Arezzo carried out with his disciple Giovanni da Milano, a chapel of the church at Sasso della Vernia in the Casentino where he was »assisted in the minor details by Jacopo di Casentino«, and the decoration of the Spanish Chapel in S. Maria Novella that he shared with Simone. Indeed his very first project involved stories of the Magdalen in the chapel of the sacristy of S. Croce, created »together with his companions, disciples of the dead Giotto«. Beyond these and other paintings, Taddeo supervised continuation of Giotto's campanile, re-founded the piers of Orsanmichele, built the wall of the Costa a S. Gregorio, and reconstructed both the Ponte Vecchio and Ponte S. Trinita.

Vasari's estimate of Taddeo is restrained. The *Vita* lacks comments such as those extolling Stefano and Pietro Laurati; moreover, it begins and ends on different notes. Although we are early assured that after the death of Giotto, Taddeo »remained among the first in the art of painting and greater than all his fellow disciples both in judg-

ment and in genius«, at the end we learn that Taddeo »adhered constantly to the manner of Giotto, but did not better it much save in the colouring«.

In the following *Life of Andrea di Cione Orcagna* we meet the last sculptor and last architect of the *Prima Parte*. We also turn to the legacy of Andrea Pisano inasmuch as Orcagna »began while still a child to give attention to sculpture under Andrea Pisano«. In painting he was largely an autodidact, »assisted by nature, who wished to make him universal«, although he was also aided by his brother Bernardo. Apparently he taught himself architecture. He was, in addition, a poet.

The *Vita*, that includes discussion of Andrea's brothers and his disciple Francesco Traini, has something of the ambivalence found in the *Life* of Taddeo Gaddi. We are told of his tabernacle in Orsanmichele that »although it is in a German manner, for that style it has so great grace and proportion that it holds the first place among works of those times«. His Loggia d' Priori was constructed from a design »greater, more beautiful, and more magnificent than all the others« submitted in competition, but it was built facing north, thus defeating the purpose for which it had been commissioned. Orcagna's frescoes in the Camposanto of Pisa were filled with marvellous detail, but also filled with inscribed scrolls, a practice that originated from a joke Buffalmacco perpetrated on Bruno di Giovanni and a device that Vasari has previously decried. Orcagna's enthusiasm for the written word was in fact so great that in his old age »he wrote some sonnets to Burchiello, then a youth«.

There was one final flowering of the great tradition in the *Life* of »Little Giotto«, Giottino, who after first instruction with his father Stefano chose to emulate Giotto and thus acquired a manner »much more beautiful than that of his master« because he revealed »the thoughts of the intellect with beautiful dexterity of mind«¹⁴. He was »mel-

¹⁴ Giottino's relation to Giotto is complicated by Vasari's chronology. Giotto died in 1336; Giottino was born in 1324, and thus was only twelve years old at the time of his

»master's« death. Thus his emulation of Giotto cannot have been based on a long apprenticeship; he cannot have been shaped by Giotto in the sense of trained.

ancholic in temperment and very solitary« but he was »with respect to art devoted and very studious«. There was »in him the spirit of Giotto himself«. But this account, that ends with a lengthy discussion of Giottino's *Lamentation* in S. Romeo in Florence, is the swan-song of art's progress. Vasari is about to map, gently but clearly, the decline of the arts.

With the biographies of Giovanni del Ponte and Agnolo Gaddi, things begin to deteriorate. Giovanni »gave contentment to his friends, but more in his pleasures than in his works«. He was a friend of good and diligent painters, »and although he had not sought to have in himself that which he desired in others, yet he never ceased to encourage others to work valiantly«. Agnolo Gaddi, it was hoped, »would become very excellent in painting; but he, who in youth showed promise of surpassing his father by a great measure, did not succeed further in justifying that opinion«. These *Vite* begin in inevitable denouement. After Agnolo, Vasari turns to Berna about whom, one feels, the author is less than enthusiastic. He was »passing dexterous in draughtsmanship and was the first who began to portray animals well«; the works »he left were made in such a way, that it may well be believed from this showing that he would have become excellent and rare if he had not died so soon«. In the *Life* that follows, that of Duccio, we discover an artist who worked in the »old manner« and whose only real achievement seems to have been that »in the pavement of the Duomo of Siena he made a beginning in marble for the inlaid work of the figures in chiaroscuro, wherein to-day modern craftsmen have made the marvels that are seen in them«.

With the *Life* of Antonio Viniziano we seem to re-enter the Giottesque tradition, but we do so in a very odd way. Vasari simply says that Antonio »betook himself to Florence in the wake of Agnolo Gaddi (»dietro a Agnolo Gaddi«) in order to learn painting.« It is difficult to decide what »in the wake of« means. In the *Life* of Agnolo, Antonio has not been numbered among the former's disciples, and here the relationship is not further specified. And although the artist had followers in Starnina and in Paolo Uccello, he himself eventually abandoned

painting for medicine. It is Jacopo di Casentino who, as pupil of Taddeo Gaddi, firmly returns us to Giotto's legacy. But this *Vita* too is rather lacklustre, interrupted by an account of an aqueduct and a fountain Jacopo built in Arezzo, by an account of the formation of the painters' guild in Florence and another of Bernardo Daddi. The few specific paintings mentioned (most of them lost) receive little praise, and we remember that Taddeo commended his sons to Jacopo as an example »for ways of life«, not for instruction in painting.

Jacopo did, however, have a significant pupil in Spinello Aretino. Spinello was a rather special case for Vasari as he was, after Margaritone, the only other Aretine artist of the *Prima Parte*, and Vasari, although disinclined to bestow superlatives upon the painter, wished him to have a prominent place. In the first edition of the *Lives*, Vasari said Spinello was »called by heaven to revive in his native land an art very ingenious and beautiful«. In the second edition that remark was omitted and we learn that »Spinello knew much better how to draw than to execute a painting«. The reevaluation finds a balance, however, when Vasari says that he was »so much inclined by nature to be a painter, that almost without a master, while still a boy, he knew what many exercised under the discipline of the best masters do not know«. Moreover, in 1568, Vasari produces a remarkable chronology for the painter. Spinello's first works, apparently created when he was approximately twenty years old, were finished in 1334. Thus he was born circa 1314. As he lived to be ninety-two, he died in 1406. His career therefore extended from just before the death of Giotto into the fifteenth century.

Starnina and Lippo of Florence were both born in 1354. Lippo's life »lasted but a little time«; »His pictures date about 1410«. Starnina died in 1403. These dates alone suggest that we are to read the two biographies in conjunction, but these painters were connected by more than chronology. Starnina »being nobler in blood than in nature, and very harsh in his manners, brought more harm thereby on himself than on his friends«. Fortunately he went to Spain, returned a reformed character, won fame and repute for his works and »the sweetness

of his manners«, and was given an honourable burial. Lippo, by contrast, was »a litigious person and fonder of discord than of peace«. The painter was stabbed to death and »the greater part of his labours are now thrown down, having gone to ruin in the havoc of the siege of Florence«.

The last three *Lives* of the *Prima Parte*, those of Don Lorenzo Monaco, Taddeo Bartoli, and Lorenzo di Bicci, need not concern us greatly. For reasons discussed below, Vasari, in spite of the disclaimer in the preface of the *Parte Seconda*, essentially falls into the compilation of inventories. His desire for a larger interpretive structure wanes as he deals with that which is very much the end of a tradition.

V *The Two Versions*

Discussion of Vasari's *Lives* has so long and often focused on the 1568 edition of the text that we almost ignore the reality of there being another version, merely eighteen years older. In large part this is because the second edition has been regarded as more complete and as evidence of the pains Vasari took better to inform himself. On the analogy with modern scholarship, it has seemed as if Vasari was prompted to corrections, emendations and revisions as a result of dramatically increased knowledge. Now, Vasari undoubtedly did know more by 1568. He had travelled more widely and travelled again to specific sites, and he had plagued others to provide him with more information. Sometime after 1550 he had read the chronicle of Giovanni Villani and the manuscript by Cennino Cennini that we know as *Il Libro dell'Arte*. In some important cases he had learned of other artists, of earlier unknown family relationships, and of chronological errors in the first edition. The new material needed place alongside the old. But the two editions are distinguished by more than the quantity of information.

The most radical differences are apparent in the opening biographies. In 1550 there were no *Lives* for Arnolfo di Lapo or Nicola and Giovanni of

Pisa. Arnolfo makes a brief appearance at the end of the *Life* of Cimabue as one who »among others« founded S. Maria del Fiore. Nicola and Giovanni, not related as father to son, appear simply among Andrea Pisano's followers and are given only one work apiece: Nicola's pulpit for the Pisa baptistery and Giovanni's Camposanto. Two of the three later lineages are thus missing, as is the entire early history of Italian architecture and sculpture. This absence, in turn, means that Andrea Pisano does not represent a »second dawn«. And without the *Life* of Nicola and Giovanni, there is no *Life* for Agostino and Agnolo.

Integration of new material required Vasari find a way of expanding his text without abandoning his original vision. In 1550 he had mapped the Cimabue/Giotto relationship that appears again 1568 and specifically established the theme of precursor and redeemer of the arts. Similarly the relation of Giotto to Andrea Pisano, as well as the story of Andrea's study of the antiquities of Pisa, is the same in both editions. Vasari simply made these the determining *topoi* that shape the two new lineages of 1568. Arnolfo is paired with Cimabue; Nicola Pisano studies the sarcophagi of the Camposanto. For all that we may regard the latter as a perceptive comment on Nicola's style, it is essentially present to create a parallel with the biography of Andrea. Yet, as neither the Lapo/Arnolfo nor Nicola/Giovanni lines were part of Vasari's original pattern, both eventually expire to leave the substance of that pattern in place.

There are, however, much more meaningful changes that occur, many of them related to the very themes we have earlier discussed. In the 1550 edition Margaritone is responsible for a portrait of St. Francis, Giotto for portraits of Dante and »signor Malatesta«, Puccio Capanna for a self-portrait, Simone for portraits of Laura and Petrarch, Taddeo Gaddi for portraits of Giotto, Dante and Guido Cavalcanti, and Lorenzo Monaco for portraits of Dante and Petrarch. Neri di Bicci portrayed himself and his father, Lorenzo¹⁵. These

¹⁵Taddeo Gaddi's portraits of Giotto and Dante were first mentioned by Ghiberti and that report repeated by

Antonio Billi and the Anonimo Magliabecchiano. Simone's portraits of Petrarch and Laura were mentioned

comparatively few examples link portraiture and thus naturalism with the accomplishment of the first age and, in the cases of both Giotto and Simone, link painters and poets, but their distribution is such that portraiture does not distinguish the nature of Giotto's individual achievement. And with the exceptions of Taddeo Gaddi and Neri di Bicci, the portrait as an expression of *pietas* and/or a manifestation of art's fraternity is absent. Moreover, the number of portraits and self-portraits, including those of sculptors, varies significantly between the two editions. In 1550 there are a mere fifteen. By 1568 a meandering stream has become a flood and Vasari has identified a total of ninety-two portraits and self-portraits in painting and sculpture.

In a similar fashion the outline of Vasari's fraternity of art is sketched in 1550, but not in a way that it emerges as a unifying theme or a decisive factor in the creation of the new art. There are friendships: Cimabue, Gaddo Gaddi and Andrea Tafi; Simone and Taddeo Gaddi; Buffalmacco, Bruno di Giovanni and Calandrino. But without the other elements that, in 1568, characterize the fraternity, these appear as mere personal choices. In 1550 only four artists complete works begun by others. Nino Pisano created a *Madonna* for S. Maria Novella, but it was not a work begun by his father.

What of place? It is perhaps in this matter that we most clearly recognize a new mentality at work. In 1550 we learn of San Francesco in Assisi only that Cimabue »left a work that he had begun, and which was well finished after his death by other painters«, that Giotto worked on that project and painted »all the church from the side below«, and that Stefano left a half-finished *storia* in the church. Of the Camposanto we are told that it was designed by Giovanni Pisano and that Buffalmacco, Taddeo Gaddi, Orcagna and Antonio Viniziano worked

there. This group of artists is far smaller than the later assembly. Moreover, in 1568, Vasari reveals his new purpose when he changes the attribution for the Camposanto stories of Job, originally given to Taddeo Gaddi, to Giotto in order that the founder of modern painting should be present¹⁶. The various webs of interconnection that bind artists through a single monument, such as Bruno, Fuccio and Giotto in the Neapolitan Castel dell'Uovo, are missing in 1550.

Comparison of the two editions alerts us to the fact that, in 1568, Vasari aimed to make the *Lives* more of a comprehensive guide book. This is particularly evident in the case of Florence, as numerous additions inform the reader of the origins of the city's great structures and their decoration. Here we may cite only a few examples. The second edition tells us that Orsanmichele was founded by Arnolfo and its piers refounded by Taddeo Gaddi, after Arnolfo's design¹⁷. Its miraculous image had been created by Ugolino and the tabernacle by Orcagna and his brother. Jacopo di Casentino had provided decoration for the interior; there were also panel pictures by Taddeo and Agnolo Gaddi. The earlier edition contains nothing about the history of the building or the miraculous image, and Jacopo is credited merely with »alcune pit-ture«.

The history of other major structures in Florence similarly represent additions. Only in 1568 do we discover that the Loggia de' Priori was founded by Arnolfo in 1285 but built according to the design of Orcagna. The accounts of Florence's bridges: the Ponte alla Carraia, the Ponte Rubaconte, the Ponte a S. Trinita and the Ponte Vecchio, are all new. Moreover, knowing that the Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte S. Trinita were ruined in the great flood of 1333, and having already made Taddeo Gaddi an architect in that he continued the campanile, Vasari

in G. B. Gelli, *Sopra que due sonnetti del Petrarca che Lodano il ritratto Della sua M Laura*, Florence 1549.

¹⁶The degree to which this was a purposeful change is signalled by the fact that Albertini, Billi and the Anonimo Magliabecchino all attributed the Job stories to Taddeo Gaddi.

¹⁷There is, however, something of a confusion inasmuch as, in the *Life of Stefano and Ugolino*, Vasari mentions: »the Loggia that Lapo had built on the Piazza d'Orsanmichele«.

makes him the author of their reconstruction¹⁸. A small detail reveals Vasari's insistence on finding specific agents for changes in the Florentine fabric. In his chronicle Giovanni Villani says that in 1293 there were removed, from around the baptistery, »tutti i monumenti e sepolture e arche di marmo ch'erano intorno a San Giovanni per più bellezza della chiesa«. Vasari, in 1568, tells us that Arnolfo was responsible. Indeed, when Vasari encountered Villani's references to this project or to the founding of S. Croce, or the founding of new city walls and the Loggia of Orsanmichele in 1284, he simply extended Arnolfo's role as architect to encompass these monuments. And instead of being one »among others« who founded S. Maria del Fiore, Arnolfo now becomes the principal architect.

As noted above, the new *Lives* of Nicola and Giovanni and Agostino and Agnolo provided an earlier absent account of the history of architecture in Siena¹⁹.

It is now exceedingly difficult to read backward, to read the 1550 edition of the *Lives* as other than a preliminary version of the second. And it is of course true that the principal theme of Giotto's primacy is clearly established in the first edition. But Vasari brought a new approach to his work in 1568. When he first wrote the *Lives* he worked much in the tradition of the chronicle and the novella. Eighteen years later he aspired to a larger vision and thus to a more synthetic and »modern« history. Innumerable particulars, in addition to those cited above, alert us to the change. In 1550 Arnolfo had not studied design under Cimabue, nor was Cimabue his co-architect at S. Maria del Fiore. Buffalmacco had no disciples, so his character could hardly influence Giovanni del Ponte. Stefano and Ugolino were not friends (indeed they had separate biographies) and thus were not paired to reveal the diverse accomplishments of those

following the modern and those continuing with the old. Only in the rewriting did Vasari seek such unity. Indeed, the second edition generally makes a more concerted attempt to map the reasons for the amelioration and the deterioration of the arts in increased emphasis on character.

Attentive reading of the first edition also helps explain a number of the apparent contradictions in the 1568 version. For example, the remark that Cimabue was born after »all that could truly claim the name of building« was ruined was carried over from the first edition, creating the discrepancy with the history of early architecture found at the beginning of the *Life* of Arnolfo. By contrast, Cimabue's authorship of a portrait of St. Francis was an addition to the second edition and, creating another parallel, Vasari said Francis was »portrayed from nature (which was something new in those times)«. The remark fixed the appearance of portraiture right at the beginning of the *Vite* and in the career of the precursor, but it contradicted the statement, quoted near the beginning of this article, that Giotto was the first to create such images, »which had not been used for more than two hundred years«. The Giotto passage was, however, a variant on a statement in the first edition. In 1550 Giovanni del Ponte was said to have been a disciple of Giottino. This notion was carried over so that in 1568 Giovanni appears as a follower of both Buffalmacco and Giottino.

VI *Puzzles*

We began our discussion with the 1568 account of Giotto's portraits because it vividly illustrates Vasari's use of a literary conceit to convey what he regarded as a larger truth, and one of our principal concerns has been exploration of structures in Vasari's second and final account of art's modern

¹⁸ Vasari also tells us that in the flood of 13 September 1557 the Ponte Vecchio stood, the Ponte S. Trinita was completely ruined, and the Rubaconte and Carraia were badly damaged.

¹⁹ Ironically enough, the 1550 edition was entitled *The Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Architects, Painters,*

and Sculptors from Cimabue to Our Times. In 1568 the »architects« were moved to last place in the list. Regarding the *Prima Parte*: in the first edition architects and architecture were scarce indeed. In part, this may have been Vasari's impetus for many of the additions in 1568.

origins. Now, Vasari undoubtedly acquired knowledge of many things between the two editions of the *Lives*; needless to say, he did not acquire knowledge – in any strict sense of the word – of the dozens of portraits he added. By the same token, he did not learn that Cimabue was co-architect of Florence cathedral, that Stefano and Ugolino were friends, that Giotto took Andrea Pisano's cross to Avignon, or that many artists had left imperfect works that later were finished by friends and followers. He could not have learned that Giovanni dal Ponte was a disciple of Buffalmacco. Taddeo Gaddi's authorship of the Ponte Vecchio and the Ponte S. Trinita was not a reality to be discovered, and the notion of a harmony, a community of artistic production as embodied in shared sites was a very rich blend of fact and fiction.

It is noteworthy that Vasari's new unifying constructs in the 1568 edition largely pertain to the earlier *Vite* of the *Prima Parte*. There fathers and sons, brothers, masters and pupils, and honest friends are the creators of the new style, many of them linked by the obligations and pieties inherent in the fraternity of art. Patterns of relationship narrow significantly as we move toward the end of the 'first age'. With the exception of Jacopo di Casentino and Spinello Aretino, the artists following Taddeo Gaddi do not share great friendships with their fellows. Very few of them complete imperfect works. Similarly, with the exception of Pisa, the late artists of the *Prima Parte* are only minimally present at the great, key locations that house works of the founding fathers. Giottino decorated the last available wall space in the basilica of Assisi, and after Giottino's figure for the campanile, only Lippo provided one minor work for the cathedral complex of Florence. After the *Life* of Giottino, no one worked in the church or convent of S. Maria Novella; after that *Vita*, only Spinello and Starnina contributed to the decoration of S. Croce.

These distinctions reflect Vasari's estimate of the art of the late trecento, among its original exponents and quattrocento adherents. From approximately the mid-trecento we note an unravelling of

the tradition that can reach only one conclusion. The introductions of the last three *Vite* speak eloquently of what is come to pass. As we meet Lorenzo Monaco we learn that »For a good and religious person, I believe, there must be real contentment in having ready to his hand some honourable exercise, whether that of letters, or of music, or of painting...« Of Taddeo Bartoli we are told: »It is due to those craftsmen who, in order to acquire a name, put themselves to much fatigue in painting, that their works should be placed, not in a dark and dishonourable position... but in some spot where, through the nobility of the place, through the lights, and through the air, they can be rightly seen and studied by all...« Or of Lorenzo di Bicci we learn: »When men who are excellent in any honourable exercise whatsoever accompany their ability in working with gentle ways and good habits, and particularly with courtesy, ...they secure without fail, together with much praise and profit to themselves, everything that in a certain sense is desirable in this world.« Rather than introducing us immediately to the art of these painters, Vasari dwells on tangential circumstances. Peace of mind, a prominent place, and »gentle ways and good habits« provide what »in a certain sense« men might wish. And this final denouement is intentional; for when Lorenzo di Bicci, »the last of the masters of the old manner of Giotto« died, c. 1460, that »old manner« had long spent itself and art's course had passed to another idiom. Many of the great masters of the *Parte Seconda* had lived – and died.

How did this decline come about?

We might assume that as divine benevolence brought forth Cimabue, Giotto and Cavallini, there was perhaps »by the will of God«, a determination that the great achievement should expend itself. After all, Giottino left only one disciple of modest account, Giovanni Tossicani; Taddeo Gaddi left Giovanni da Milano who was charged with his children's instruction but did not warrant a *Life* of his own; Simone had only his brother Lippo as companion in art; Cavallini left only Giovanni da Pistoia »who made some works of no great importance in his native city«; Pietro Laurati

had only Bolghini as a follower. Vasari has also indicated that failure of character and dedication wreaked their harm. In the midst of things, the dishonourable character of Buffalmacco had sown the seeds of decline in Giovanni dal Ponte. Taddeo Gaddi founded his family's fortune only to produce a spoiled son more fascinated by wealth and commerce than art. Antonio Viniziano was not devoted to his craft; he eventually turned to medicine. Lippo of Florence and his works fell victim to the artist's litigious character.

By the end of the *Prima Parte* two artists have become as stubbornly retardataire as Ugolino. Lorenzo Monaco »held to the manner of Taddeo Gaddi and his disciples«, as Lorenzo di Bicci held to the »old manner of Giotto«. Taddeo Bartoli did not realize his intention to become a great painter as he suffered from »an internal obstruction, which afflicted him in a manner that he could not attain to the fulness of his desire.«

These observations summarize the course of art laid forth, in more detail, in »Art's Progress?« and map the broad sweep of Vasari's history of the »amelioration and the deterioration of the arts« in the »first age«. But they also bring us face to face with the great puzzle of Vasari's tale. His epic as a whole is the story of art's progress, of amelioration, that moves from »i primi lumi« to the full glory and splendour of the cinquecento. Yet the tale of the *Prima Parte* is not a tale of steady progress. In fact, it is even less evolutionary than our earlier discussions might lead us to believe.

If we return to the particulars of Vasari's account of the early artists, we discover that his tale is one of strangely limited continuities. For the reasons discussed above, the lineages of Lapo/Arnolfo and Nicola/Giovanni disappear to leave Andrea Pisano

the renovator of sculpture, yet of Andrea's disciples only Orcagna deserved a *Vita* of his own. More startling are the circumstances surrounding Giotto. As the embodiment of a »second dawn« and as a painter who »learnt the art in a certain measure without a master«, he is separated from Cimabue. Some of Giotto's immediate followers do not advance the art. We have already noted Vasari's ambivalent, and ultimately negative, feelings about Taddeo Gaddi. When we look again at the *Life* of Simone we discover, in the very last paragraph, the remark: »As it is seen in our aforesaid book, Simone was not very excellent in draughtsmanship, but he had invention from nature, and he took much delight in drawing portraits from the life...« This is hardly a sterling recommendation for one who delighted in »drawing portraits«.

Of Giotto's disciples only four painters possessed unqualified distinction: Stefano, Pietro Laurati, Cavallini and Giottino, and of these only Stefano, Pietro Laurati and Giottino are extolled as having surpassed the master. And when Giottino died in 1356, a mere twenty years after Giotto, the great tradition was, in essence, finished.

It would require something more than hyperbole to describe this small cluster of artists and the comparatively short time-span as a vivid demonstration of historical progress. As genuine embodiments of art's progress four individuals and two generations stand alone. And as long and pervasive as Giotto's tradition may be, stretching to Lorenzo di Bicci, it is not a tradition of continuous improvement. We do not progress toward the »second age«; we merely await it. There is thus something of a paradox in the unifying devices Vasari introduced in the 1568 text. They serve to create a community, but they do not define an historical dynamic.

²⁰ An introduction to Joachim's thought, that also deals with the period of the renaissance, can be found in M. Reeves, *Joachim da Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, London 1976.

²¹ See L. R. Collobi, *Il Libro de' Disegni del Vasari*, Florence 1974.

²² Our discussion of Vasari's Giotto has altered us to the composite nature of that figure and to what, by modern standards, is an incoherent definition of the artist. But Giotto was far from an isolated case. The works includ-

ed in, or excluded from, the individual *Vite* often leave us in amazement. Cimabue is the author of both his own *S. Trinita Madonna* and Duccio's *Rucellai Madonna*. Although Vasari worked in the Pieve of Arezzo, and thus in the presence of Pietro Lorenzetti's great polypych for that church, he did not see the artist in his frescoes in San Francesco, Assisi. He recognized Simone and Lippo Memmi in the half-length figures in the right transept of the Assisi Lower Church but did not see Simone in the St. Martin's Chapel, although he found

VII *Toward Resolution*

The puzzling situation we have encountered requires explanation. How was it that a quasi-evolutionary scheme for the entire *Lives* came to be welded to the almost non-evolutionary view of the *Prima Parte*? The expansion of the first edition undeniably clouded the original clarity of Vasari's vision, but the dichotomy we have noted was not entirely the product of changes and additions; it was embedded in the 1550 text as well.

Vasari's grand, over-arching interpretation of the history of art was founded in the ideas of historical progress that, deriving from Joachim da Fiore (d. 1202), had so deeply entered into the Western imagination. Even the tripartite, and thus referentially trinitarian, structure of the *Lives* had its counterpart in the tradition of Joachite thought, in the conception of three successive ages of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost²⁰. Yet the most significant imagery of the *Prima Parte* lay in the analogy between the relationship of Cimabue and Giotto, the Baptist and Christ. We must assume that use of that analogy reflected Vasari's estimate of the historical situation, but it was obstructive imagery for a tale of millennial revelation. The New Testament parallel may well explain Vasari's concern with establishing a community among Giotto's followers and contemporaries, but that community itself did little to explain art's progress.

The more profound problem, however, lay in the nature of Vasari's Giotto. He was meant to be the fourteenth-century counterpart of Michelangelo; indeed, the opening of the Michelangelo *Vita* redirects us to Giotto. But the two artists were entirely different phenomena. As much as Vasari might tell tales of Michelangelo, the latter's production was a known quantity and thus what we would describe as his artistic personality was self-defining. Giotto

him in Andrea di Bonaiuto's frescoes in the Spanish Chapel of S. Maria Novella, Florence. Vasari saw Cavallini in Pietro Lorenzetti's Assisi *Crucifixion* and in the late trecento *Annunciation* of Florence's SS. Annunziata. He saw Taddeo Gaddi in the Baroncelli Chapel of S. Croce and in the Spanish Chapel of S. Maria Novella, but not in the artist's cupboard for the sacristy of S. Croce. Such examples easily might be multiplied, but what matters here is not so much the particulars as the

was Vasari's invention. He was not the Giotto we know: a planner of sophisticated programmes and an explorer of psychological subtleties, but rather an artist who marvellously told stories, who painted portraits, and who deceived Cimabue by painting a fly on the nose of a figure by the older painter »so true to nature« that Cimabue tried to brush it away.

One need only reflect on the catalogue of works that Vasari assembled for the artist to realize that »Giotto« was a composite and a figure far removed from any modern conception of the artist. Italian and Anglo/Germanic scholarship still disagree about the authorship of the *St. Francis Legend* in Assisi, but everyone would concur that a single artist could not be responsible for that work, Taddeo Gaddi's sacristy cupboard in S. Croce, the Job frescoes in the Pisan Camposanto, and the bizarre array of drawings (at least three of them fifteenth-century) that Vasari assembled under the name of Giotto in his *Libro de' Disegni*²¹. »Giotto« is in reality a personification of those two artistic elements, naturalism and narrative, that Vasari regarded as the highest achievements of early Italian art. As his portraits indexed mastery of the first, so the heterogenous collection of frescoes and panels Vasari gave to Giotto represented the artist's command of the second. And inasmuch as »Giotto« subsumes the universal achievement of the period, he can stand alone.

Ironically enough, given the biographical organization of the *Lives*, Vasari in the *Prima Parte* was defining what we would call period style, rather than defining artistic personalities²². Giotto, for Vasari, was Giotto's world.

For the modern-day reader, Vasari's *Lives* is a puzzling and sometimes frightening beast. Because

inevitable conclusion that none of these artists had, for Vasari, what we would regard as clarity of profile. Perhaps nothing so vividly illustrates the problem as the drawings that have been traced to Vasari's *Libro de' Disegni*. There, Cimabue was given some thirteenth-century and some fifteenth-century drawings. Sheets given to Giotto are now attributed to Parri Spinelli. The drawings Vasari gave to Giovanni dal Ponte have been attributed to Jacopo Bellini. See Collobi (note 21).

it mingles fact and fiction, because it so little accords with our notions of either history or literature, it seems poised to spring upon us, to wreak havoc, to drag us into some dark cave or to offer us false promise of enlightenment. Behind its fearful face we discern both high perspicacity and what we, approaching from another direction, may view as high deception.

When Vasari crafted the entire *Life of Cimabue* around the Rucellai *Madonna*, he recognized the most important panel picture of the thirteenth century²³. When he made naturalism and narrative the great accomplishments of the trecento he stated a truth with which few would quarrel. When he made the cathedrals of the communes and the churches of the new mendicant orders the great sites of fourteenth-century art, he stated what seems to us an obvious truth. And when he saw the late trecento as a period without vitality, he stated (*pace* the revisionists) what generations of scholars after him have discovered for themselves. But when he assembled catalogues of works for specific artists, he wandered into the land of wonders.

We must remember that when Vasari came to write his account of art's rebirth, he lived two centuries after the events he wished to record. The subjects of his attention were mentioned, in pass-

ing, by authors of the fourteenth century, by Ghiberti (writing a century before him), and by those sixteenth-century sources that he often consulted. Some of these provided him with accurate traditions regarding the authorship of specific works; none of them could provide him with explanation of the »causes and origins« of the »amelioration and the deterioration of the arts«. This he had to find for himself. And this he did, in a rare synthesis of historical fact and historical fiction, in the reading and exploration of an historian and the fancy of a novelist, with the eye of a critic – but not of a connoisseur. Through all of this Vasari laid forth a vision and an interpretation of the past so vital and deceptively convincing that it would command the attention of generations and generations to follow. In his tales of artists in the *Prima Parte* he laid forth a series of patterns, and a forest of particulars, that would condition the reading of all that was to come after it. It was a vision that in its particularity was often far removed from what we would regard as reality, but one that long dominated the history of art.

²³ See my »Duccio's Rucellai *Madonna* and the Origins of Florentine Painting«, *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, forthcoming.