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# THE CHALLENGES OF BIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH IN ART HISTORY TODAY

EDITED BY

RENJA SUOMINEN-KOKKONEN

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MICHAEL VIKTOR SCHWARZ

## FIGURE OF MEMORY AND FIGURE OF THE PAST. GIOTTO'S DOUBLE LIFE – WITH A SIDE-GLANCE AT JOSEPH BEUYS

Giotto (d. 1337) is the first artist about whose life there is a substantial body of knowledge, and one that is full and rich in detail. But why is there so much more information about Giotto than about other (earlier or contemporary) artists? To what extent is this knowledge supported by facts rather than beliefs? Where, in terms of sources, do which areas of information come from? Above all: how do the elements relate to one another – where is there agreement, where is there contradiction, and why?

As I began in the mid-90s with a research project on Giotto's life – supported by Pia Theis – these problems seemed impenetrable.<sup>1</sup> But then in Jan Assmann's book, *Moses der Ägypter*, we came across a concept that proved helpful: Assmann's main characters (alongside Sigmund Freud) are two pioneers of monotheism – Moses and the pharaoh Akhenaten. These are figures whose existences have come down to us in strikingly different ways.<sup>2</sup> For Moses no contemporary evidence survives: no letters, documents, inscriptions, images, or other relicts from his lifetime; theoretically, one could dispute his very existence. But the Bible contains a long series of texts, which describes his life in detail from birth to death, while also subjecting it to historical and spiritual interpretation. For Akhenaten, the situation is reversed: since later pharaohs imposed a *damnatio memoriae* on the "heretic king", his deeds remained untold and uninterpreted within Egyptian historical narratives. But through the work of archaeologists, we now know numerous images, inscriptions, and

other relicts relating to him. As much as it was desired to destroy all memory of him then, so undeniable is his existence today.

Assmann said: Moses is known to us as a figure of memory (*Figur der Erinnerung*) and only as a figure of memory, whereby of course memory is formed not just by what is remembered, but also, and often still more, by the person remembering, and by the situation stimulating the memory and its narration. Our Moses was conceived by the authors of the biblical texts for their contemporaries and fellow countrymen: he certainly bears the mark of fiction, but is coherent and, in terms of his actions, comprehensible. Akhenaten, by contrast, according to Assmann, is (only) known to us as a figure of history (*Figur der Geschichte*). Since the term "history" is ambivalent, referring both to history as it happened and as it is recounted, I prefer to use the term "past". Thus: we know Akhenaten as a figure of the past, and only as a figure of the past. That in fact means not so much a person with a destiny as a name *plus* disconnected, uninterpreted fragments of information, which are, however, facts, and have survived the millennia in deep-frozen form.

The reader may ask what that has to do with Giotto and artists' biographies. To start with Giotto: in terms of evidence Giotto is both Moses and Akhenaten. Or, to put it more precisely: there are two Giottos – a Giotto of memory and a Giotto of the past. The first – the Giotto of memory (the Moses Giotto) – is probably strongly fictional, but complete and comprehensible in terms of his actions. The

*Left page: Protocol book of the notary Francesco di Buoninsegna (NA 7871) f. 38: entries for 3 February 1320. The protocol relating to Giotto is the third from above; Giotto's name and the information about his father can be found in the second and third line. (Florence, Archivio di Stato).*

second – the Giotto of the past (the Akhenaten Giotto) – is empirical, but fragmentary, and not necessarily comprehensible. Seen from this perspective, one of the questions raised earlier suddenly becomes penetrable, and now puts itself as follows: which knowledge belongs to which Giotto?

#### THE FIGURE OF MEMORY

To start with the Giotto of memory: who is he, how has he been produced? The facts are largely first-year undergrad knowledge; much depends on the contexts and the assessment. The Giotto of memory was codified influentially on two occasions: firstly, around 1450, by the sculptor and humanist Lorenzo Ghiberti in his *Commentarii* (II a 4)<sup>3</sup>; then, in 1568, by the painter and writer Giorgio Vasari in the second edition of his *Vite* (II a 10; I shall not be dealing here with the Giotto vita in the first edition, which lost influence after the appearance of the second edition).<sup>4</sup> Ghiberti's codification occurred more than 100 years after Giotto's death, and remembered Giotto as an artist who shared the – shall we say – consciously avant-garde endeavours of Florentine artists of the early to mid-quattrocento, and paved the way for them. Vasari's Giotto, by contrast, was orientated towards members of the Michelangelo generation, their lives at the courts, and their sovereign gestures (a fact to which Hayden B.J. Maginnis has already referred).<sup>5</sup> Both codifications thus have ideological bases: historical narration as illustration and verification of ideology. The sources used can be divided into two groups: literary on the one hand, local knowledge and artists' knowledge on the other.

The important role played by literary tradition is primarily the consequence of Giotto's appearance in Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Boccaccio's *Decameron*.<sup>6</sup> Still more important than the two or three pages in Boccaccio are the three lines in Dante (II e 1, which have been quoted by all Giotto biographers since Vasari, and thus can hardly be excluded here):

“Credette Cimabue nella pittura  
Tener lo campo, e ora ha Giotto il grido,  
Sì che la fama di colui è scura.”

“In painting, Cimabue believed he  
Held the field, and now Giotto has the applause,  
While the other's fame has darkened.”

This part of the *Purgatorio* deals with progress in artistic matters as part of a discourse on the pursuit of fame, where Dante is ultimately concerned with his own position at the pinnacle of Italian poetry: one poet had surpassed another and Dante now surpasses this one, and thus both of them. Two comparative pairs are introduced, (not triplets, meaning that the Dante position is lacking in both cases, and thus also the teleology). One pairing comprises Cimabue and Giotto. Much has been read into the three verses dedicated to them: Cimabue was Giotto's teacher, Dante held Giotto in high esteem, the two were friends. None of this, however, can be found in the text, which says simply: Cimabue was widely applauded, and became arrogant, but now Giotto is the darling of the public.

The notion that Giotto was Cimabue's pupil – and everything concerning a personal connection between Dante and Giotto – emerged from interpretations of this passage in the numerous Dante commentaries, which amount to a literary genre in themselves. The need felt by the authors to provide a minimum of information on each of the many hundred Dante figures often led to the listing of facts, but resulted still more often in suppositions, or sometimes even free improvisations, which then found their way from the Dante commentaries into other writings. The three verses in the *Purgatorio* and their commentaries were the fundamental reason that stories clustered around the name Giotto. It is also significant in this context that the fourteenth-century Florentines increasingly regretted that they had chased their greatest poet from the city, and even condemned him to death in his absence. The closer the texts brought Giotto and Dante together, the greater the consolation for the Florentines: this was why it came to Dante

visiting Giotto in Padua and elsewhere, to portraits of Dante by Giotto, to Dante's design of programmes for Giotto's frescos etc.<sup>7</sup>

Giotto's appearance in a long story in the *Decameron* is also significant (II d 3, although it probably would not have come about without the Dante passage). Here the painter is described as unusually ugly, but amusing and quick-witted. He embarks on a discussion with the legal scholar and nobleman, Forese da Rabatta, proves himself the latter's intellectual equal, and then has the last word in their dispute. Unlike the section in Dante, the Boccaccio passage is posthumous – written around fifteen years after Giotto's death. It triggered Giotto's numerous appearances in fourteenth-century literature, where he became a popular figure who always had something witty to say. The fictional figure also found its way on one occasion into a Dante commentary – that of Benvenuto da Imola from around 1400 (II e 4). This related to the same three verses: in trying to explain who Giotto was, the commentator said he had been a friend of Dante, and added the following story: Dante visited Giotto at home, and noticed that the man famous for painting the most beautiful figures had very ugly children. Giotto's retort: it is because I paint my pictures by daylight, but make my children when it is dark. The motif of ugliness was here transferred to the children; in other cases it stuck to the artist.<sup>8</sup>

Alongside literary traditions, the other important body of sources on the Giotto of memory (the Moses Giotto) can be described with the terms artistic and local knowledge. These pieces of information were largely managed orally before the codifications of the early to mid-fifteenth century. They comprised, in the first place, traditions about the authorship of works. Locally and particularly in Florentine churches and public buildings, knowledge about Giotto's activities sometimes survived for several generations; this would perhaps have been different without Dante's mention of the painter (and here one sees again the dynamics

of traditions becoming entwined). In any case, anyone who was interested could ask around, whether in his hometown or at places where he had something to do – and so gradually put together a list of works. But the answers received were not always clear. Ghiberti's formulation “*tutta la parte di sotto*” (the whole lower part) is notorious (II a 4). I suspect this was what he was told by a Franciscan in Assisi when he asked what Giotto had painted there. Whether this meant the Lower Church, the lower wall of the Upper Church, or the bays next to the main entrance in the Upper Church, was probably no clearer to Ghiberti than to his readers in the centuries thereafter.<sup>9</sup> And then there is the question of whether the informant in Assisi really knew what he was saying.

The core of Ghiberti's biography of Giotto is such a list of works, divided into (firstly) works outside Florence, and (secondly) those in Florence. This is preceded by a history of Giotto's youth, which ultimately goes back to the Dante passage and the resulting interpretation of Cimabue as Giotto's teacher – a piece of information that first appeared in the Dante commentary of the Anonimo Fiorentino from the late fourteenth century (II e 6). Here it is said that Giotto was apprenticed by his father to a wool weaver, but apparently snuck off from work to hang around in Cimabue's workshop, before eventually becoming his pupil. Ghiberti does not take on this narrative setting, but rather gives the well-known story of Giotto's discovery: Giotto, the son of a poor peasant or rural worker, child of nature, tends sheep, draws one on a stone; this is seen by Cimabue, who happens to come by – and so on. If Ghiberti thus takes the Giotto portrayed as a burgher's son by the Anonimo Fiorentino, and turns him into a peasant's son, then this serves to emphasize the origins of art and artistry in nature – and so affirms a central aspect of quattrocento artistic doctrine. This variation is developed from two models: the first is the story of a child prodigy. Around 1400, the humanist Uberto Decembrio described in his treatise *De Republica* how the

Milanese painter Michelino da Besozzo had drawn lifelike ants and other small animals before he had learned to speak, and thus rendered art connoisseurs speechless.<sup>10</sup> The transfiguration of these insects into Ghiberti's sheep relates back to the second model, which also has its origins in the Dante tradition: Boccaccio's *Tratatto in laude di Dante* presents the poet as the tragic national hero of the Florentines, and upgrades the story of his birth accordingly. Before going into labour, his mother is said to have dreamt she saw the child as a shepherd plucking berries from a laurel tree. The figure of the shepherd was interpreted by Boccaccio as follows: a spiritual leader who increased the wisdom of Antiquity through his own literary achievements; in short, a (proto-) humanist conforming with the self-perception of the likes of Boccaccio and Petrarch.<sup>11</sup> While it is hard to say how much of this exegesis resonated in Ghiberti's text on Giotto, the motif of the shepherd itself is certainly indebted to Boccaccio's Dante.

So much for the manufacture and substance of the Giotto of memory in his first codification. Derived from Ghiberti and modified, the codification in Vasari then determined the Giotto image of the modern period, while also, however, raising the question of whether all this was correct. The impoverished family background, for example, which Vasari took on from Ghiberti, did not make sense to some readers.<sup>12</sup> No wonder: the story had lost much of its ideological sting, and now there was less to distract from the largely implausible facts. In the seventeenth century, the doubts led to systematic archival research. It was anticipated that this would modify Vasari's Giotto, and remove errors, but the findings proved frustratingly irrelevant. The sources dealt with matters completely different to what had been expected from the Giotto of memory. This brings us to the other Giotto, the Giotto of the past (the Akhenaten Giotto), on whom material has been collected for more than four hundred years.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE FIGURE OF THE PAST

In Florentine and other archives, there are around a hundred charters (or copies of charters) that reveal Giotto's behaviour as a legal person: buyer, seller, borrower, creditor, witness. About another hundred documents relate to his family: wife, children, brother, father. What do we learn? Several circumstances might be mentioned here: as two newly discovered documents show, he was one of at least two sons of a Florentine blacksmith, who belonged to the parish of S. Maria Novella (I a 19, 23). These documents are from the notary, Francesco di Buoninsegna, notorious for his bad Latin and bad handwriting but nevertheless often used by Giotto. They provide the connection between the group of sources relating to the painter Giotto and the group relating to the blacksmith Bondone. The one in better Latin names the client: "Giottus filius quondam Bondonis fabri populi sanctae Mariae Novellae" (see p. 14).

The paternal family had contact with a prominent painter of the time, but rather than Cimabue his name was Vanni di Duccio (I a 3). He can be described as prominent because he held high offices within the guild, not because of his artistic production, of which nothing has been preserved or can be identified. Only in 1311 – when Giotto was certainly well into his thirties – was he emancipated from his father, that is enjoyed full civil rights (I a 10). He then made extensive use of these through financial and property transactions. One interesting source reveals him lending a loom of French production or style (I a 11): this happened at a time when the Florentine weavers had finally been able to match the quality of French cloth by imitating its method of production.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, he built up an estate in the countryside at Vespignano in Mugello (I a 18 and *passim*). His family, his wife and six children, seems to have spent much time there from around 1320 on. Two sons became priests, and Giotto secured good positions for them in Vespignano through his connections to the pa-



pal curia (I e 1). However, both subsequently dropped out. A third son died young, and left debts. A daughter joined the Dominican Third Order, and lived in the orbit of S. Maria Novella. Another daughter married the painter, Ricco di Lapo.<sup>15</sup> The family was prosperous, but very much on the scale of an artisan family. Giotto was not necessarily much better off than his father, the blacksmith. This can be inferred, for instance, from the following circumstance: in 1326, Giotto paid a dowry of 340 Lire for his daughter, Chiara; in 1295, the wife of his brother, Martino, had brought with her a dowry of 300 Lire. Calculated in silver, Giotto spent less than his brother's father-in-law had thirty years before (I a 46).

As for his stays outside Florence, three become tangible: he must have been in Assisi shortly before 1309, since he – along with a local painter – had borrowed money which he paid back in that year: a type of business loan (I a 9). He must have stayed in Rome shortly before 1311, since in this year the remains of his household there were transported to Florence (I a 12). Finally, from 1328 to 1332 or 33, he worked in the service of King Robert the Wise in Naples, and decorated two chapels in the royal castle with mural and panel paintings (b 1-7). According to the sources, the Neapolitan years changed Giotto's life considerably. At the age of fifty or sixty, he gave up the house in the parish of S. Maria Novella. No stay in Vespignano is documented in the following years, where his sons seem to have been in control. Nor does his wife appear there; she probably went with him to Naples. On returning to Florence, Giotto then had to establish himself anew. The annuity he received from the king of Naples may have made this easier. There was also a solid salary as the master architect in charge of the cathedral and city works; it was perhaps the prospect of this position that tempted him back. His documented presence in the cathedral lodge shows, moreover, that he fulfilled the responsibilities assigned to him (I a 112). It might be doubted that he could

have re-established a serious painter's enterprise alongside this.<sup>16</sup>

This source-based Giotto of the past has some unfamiliar traits: the length of time under his father's authority, the clever business man and shady deals (such as circumventing the ecclesiastical ban on interest through feigned purchases, I a 106), the little successful and little scrupulous sons. This is not the material of an artist's biography, but traits of an average existence. Moreover, the Giotto of the past is full of holes: to start with he has no birth year. This knowledge gap, however, is realistic, since while there were baptismal registers by Vasari's time, there had not been any during Giotto's life. Giotto himself had probably not known the year of his birth, and it is probably right to say that pre-fifteenth century men and women as a rule simply did not have a birth year. The really painful gap is that the Giotto of the past painted so little: apart from his Roman and Neapolitan works, very few works are documented in the primary sources; and the Neapolitan material is completely lost. Only three paintings are signed and thus undoubtedly his – namely the Francis panel from Pisa in the Louvre, the altarpiece in Bologna, and the Baroncelli altarpiece in S. Croce in Florence (I f 2) – none of which, however, is enough to underpin Giotto's rank as a renewer of painting. If these works alone had been preserved, there would not be any fuss about a painter called Giotto. All in all, the Giotto of the past appears a pale and deeply disappointing figure, who cannot touch Vasari's Giotto in terms of relevance and significance.

#### BRIDGES

There are, however, several ways of relating Giotto-Moses to Giotto-Akhenaten, as long as it is borne in mind that these are two different existences. If this is overlooked, if it is attempted to fuse the information, then the product is a Moses inflated with Akhenaten material – a figure that indeed prevailed for a long time, but is now finally rendered ab-



Florence, S. Maria Novella, Titulus of the Giotto cross with text in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. (Giotto: La Croce di Santa Maria Novella, ed. by Marco Ciatti and Max Seidel, Florence: EDIFIR 2001).

surd by the sheer amount of recent archival finds.<sup>17</sup> A more constructive approach is to ask whether the paradigmatic value of the lives written by Ghiberti and Vasari (the Early and the High Renaissance ideas of Giotto) can be contrasted with a similar paradigmatic value in the empirical life of Giotto. And indeed this is the case: if the remembered Giotto grew up as a child of nature before being discovered by a painter – from whom he was certainly not to learn anything and so be infected by the *maniera greca* (a dated and foreign art), or indeed by artistic traditions at all<sup>18</sup> – then the historic Giotto grew up in a milieu in which knowledge and technology were important. The smith is widely regarded as the engineer of the Middle Ages; his art was high technology.<sup>19</sup> Anyone wishing to understand this need only reflect on the transformation of a few bars of iron and sacks of charcoal into a sword, helmet, key, lock, grill, knife, fork, and some packs of sewing needles; and to consider the potential here for efficiency and creativity. Moreover, Giotto did not grow up in poverty and oppression: the smiths belonged to the middling guilds, and were able to play a role in government around the time of Giotto's birth in Florence.<sup>20</sup> While the shepherd boy Giotto must have grown up illiterate, the smith's son could certainly have learned to read and write.

Peter Burke and Werner Jacobsen have shown

that most quattrocento artists came from artisan families.<sup>21</sup> In the fifteenth century, this was a milieu that favoured education and generated upward mobility. It was also the milieu that produced Giotto's biographers Ghiberti and Vasari: Ghiberti's step-father was a goldsmith, Vasari's grandfather and (probably) father were potters; in both cases, the talent of the child was recognized early on and generously supported.<sup>22</sup> Thus if we swap the peasant's son for the smith's son, this means that we have understood the reality behind the artistic myths of the early Renaissance (not only behind the Giotto myth). We also understand that this reality was of long historical duration. It prevailed from the thirteenth century probably into the sixteenth century or even longer, but certainly from the fifteenth century was suppressed and concealed behind romantic stories.

Another opportunity to connect Giotto-Moses and Giotto-Akhenaten arises from a previously unknown source of 1336 (I a 113): in order to divide up a piece of land among themselves, Giotto's neighbours in Vespignano needed an independent mediator, and found one: it was Forese da Rabatta, the renowned legal scholar with whom, to follow the *Decameron*, Giotto went riding and had a witty exchange of words. According to Boccaccio, the two rode from their rural estates in Mugello

back to Florence. That Giotto had such a property is well known. But, as the source shows, it seems that Forese did too, and Forese's land must have been so close to Giotto's that he was a neighbour of Giotto's neighbour. It is also interesting that Giotto had already died by the time Boccaccio wrote the story, and was thus a defenceless victim of literary ambition. Forese, however, was still alive, and numbered among the elder statesmen of Florentine politics.<sup>23</sup> In other words: the literarily structured story, which belongs to the germ cells of Giotto memory, has more empirical substance than expected. I would not want to suggest that the ride in the rain took place in exactly this manner, or that the two men – not only Giotto, it seems, but Forese as well – were objectively ugly, or that Boccaccio provides a protocol of a real conversation. But, firstly, it is plausible that Giotto and Forese knew each other, and, secondly, the story must have been acceptable for the surviving protagonist. Boccaccio's quick-witted Giotto is thus probably close to the social reality of Giotto in his late years. He was somewhere between patrician and court jester of the patricians. What is often passed over in the text, but is fundamental, is the fact that Forese addresses Giotto with the informal "you" (*tu*) and calls him "Giotto", while Giotto uses the formal "you" (*voi*) and addresses Forese as "Ser".<sup>24</sup> Further proof of Giotto's social ambition and success comes from his activity as a singer and poet, an interest he shared with many members of the Florentine elite. The surviving evidence takes the form of a theologically provocative canzone, which deploys refined arguments against the Franciscans' vows of poverty (I f 1). Doubt has been cast on the authenticity of the work, but seems to lack any real basis.<sup>25</sup>

Another way of bringing together the Moses-Giotto and the Akhenaten-Giotto – and one that is particularly interesting for art historians – is through his works. The Giotto of memory carries much knowledge of the artist's oeuvre, some of which can be verified and in-

corporated within our knowledge of the Giotto of the past. A certain amount can also be learned about individual works. To show this, it is necessary to elaborate a little.

A fundamental aspect of the Giotto of the past is his socialization in the orbit of the Dominican convent of S. Maria Novella, which also played a role for his pious daughter, Bice. The theologically competent and anti-Franciscan canzone also fits into this milieu. The Giotto of memory, by contrast, is close to the Franciscans. Vasari was the first to insinuate this, and, with the passage of time, the connection became stronger: what Bach had been for Luther, Giotto had been for Francis – so the German art historian, Henry Thode, claimed in 1885.<sup>26</sup> In what follows, however, we will be dealing with a work executed by Giotto for the Dominicans of his local parish, which was probably the first major commission won by the emerging artist in his hometown. The great cross in S. Maria Novella features as a Giotto work both in the charters and traditions. If one were to seek the event that inspired the three famous lines in Dante's *Purgatorio*, then it is clear that it took place before 1302. In this year, Dante was banished from Florence, and lost contact with events in his hometown. Shortly before this, in 1300 and 1301, Giotto is known to have painted the cross for S. Maria Novella, while Cimabue's cross for S. Croce had probably been created in the years immediately before 1300. The two works are in fact the largest of all painted crosses, although Giotto's cross – *nota bene* – is slightly larger. Furthermore, the trilingual inscription – considered the earliest correct titulus of its type – reveals the superiority of Dominican scholarship, which apparently even extended to the mastery of Hebrew, an unusual accomplishment at that time.<sup>27</sup> (See Fig. on p. 20.) The Dante passage is thus probably a concrete reference to the competition of the crosses for the main churches of the Franciscans and Dominicans in Florence – a contest of spiritual attractions in the medium of cult images, which, in the eyes of Dante and

probably others too, became a contest between the painters commissioned. So interpreted, Dante's verse speaks not only of two painters, but also of the attention devoted to religious images in Florentine society.

#### THE EMERGENCY LANDING

Perhaps no other artist led such an eventful double (after-)life as Giotto. Yet many prominent artists probably have something of a biography "of memory" laden with meaning and desires, which accompanies the verifiable facts about their lives. A critical approach is required particularly when the life itself seems to become a work of art in its own right. The miracle of extreme creativity can occur in unexceptional circumstances, hardly different to those in which most people live. To allow these circumstances to become concealed by fables and kitsch does little to improve our understanding of artists and their works. Nonetheless, a study such as *Die Legende vom Künstler* by Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz shows that it is illuminating to investigate the processes by which wishful thinking takes root in an artist's biography.<sup>28</sup>

This proves at least as productive for the twentieth century as for earlier times, if not more so. By way of example, I refer to a key event in the life of Joseph Beuys, which he described on a number of occasions: during his service as an aerial gunner, he crash-landed on the Crimean peninsula, and was apparently found severely injured by Tartars, who then nursed him for eight days: "The tents – you see, they had felt tents –, the manners of these people, that with the fat [...] that practically went into me; it is something I have really experienced."<sup>29</sup> For decades, and even after Beuys' death (1986), almost every text on the popular and controversial artist included this story, and referred to the seductive connection with his work.<sup>30</sup> Since Jörg Herold published his research on Beuys' war service in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in 2001, however, it has become clear that the episode was largely

invented: German troops reached the plane wreck in a matter of hours rather than days.<sup>31</sup> The story was conceived as part of an artificial figure that served as a front for the less meaningful figure of a Neo-Dadaist and appointed academy professor – the latter being a role from which Beuys repeatedly broke away and then returned to. What might have appeared contrived and epigonal coming from the real Beuys was rendered existential and personal by the Tartar adventure of the other Beuys. Further investigation into the difference between the Beuys of memory and the Beuys of the past would reveal much about artistry and the art world in West Germany in the 1960s to 1980s, but also about how even among artists and intellectuals the actions of the Wehrmacht could be transfigured into adventures.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 The results of this work have been presented in the following publications: Schwarz, Michael Viktor and Theis, Pia, Giotto's Father: old stories and new documents. *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 141, 1999, 676-677; Schwarz, Michael Viktor and Theis, Pia, *Giottos Leben: mit einer Sammlung der Urkunden und Texte bis Vasari* (Giotto's pictor 1), Vienna: Böhlau, 2004; Schwarz, Michael Viktor and Theis, Pia, Giotto. In: *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon: Die Bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, vol. 54. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007, 471-477; Schwarz, Michael Viktor, Poesia e Verità: una biografia critica di Giotto. In *Giotto e il trecento: "il più sovrano maestro stato in dipintura"* (Exhibition at the Complesso del Vittoriano, Rome), ed. by Alessandro Tomei. Milan: Skira, 2009, I saggi, 9-29. Unlike these publications, the focus of the present article is not on the content of Giotto images, but on understanding their genesis. I would like to thank Tim Juckes for the translation into English.
- 2 Assmann, Jan, *Moses der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur*. Munich and Vienna: Fischer, 1998, 18, 47 and passim. English edition: *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997. Assmann critically developed specific ideas of Sigmund Freud: Freud, Sigmund, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion*, Amsterdam: Allert de Lange, 1939.
- 3 This and subsequent data are taken from: Schwarz and Theis 2004. Abbreviated references to the relevant texts, commentaries, and literature are given in brackets. Fundamental for any treatment of Ghiberti's text: Schlosser, Julius von, *Leben und Meinungen des Florentiner Bildners Lorenzo Ghiberti*. Basel: Holbein 1941; and Krautheimer, Richard, *Lorenzo Ghiberti*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956.
- 4 Fundamental for any treatment of Vasari's texts: Kallab, Wolfgang, *Vasaristudien*. Vienna and Leipzig: W. Grasser & Kie, 1908; see also Blum, Gerd, *Giorgio*

- Vasari: *der Erfinder der Renaissance*. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2011.
- 5 Maginnis, Hayden B.J., Giotto's World through Vasari's Eyes. *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 56, 1993, 385-408; Maginnis, Hayden B.J., *Painting in the Age of Giotto. A Historical Reevaluation*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997, 8-13.
  - 6 Falaschi, Enid T., Giotto: The Literary Legend. *Italian Studies*, vol. 27, 1972, 1-27.
  - 7 All these assumptions were listed as facts in an unusually comprehensive but entirely uncritical manner in an exhibition catalogue of the Casa di Dante in Abruzzo (Torre de'Passeri): Gizzi, Corrado, *Dante e Giotto*. Milan: Skira, 2001. The connection between the Dante and Giotto biographies was recognized by Falaschi 1972 and by Ernst Gombrich, who, however, still underestimated the implications of his insight: Gombrich, Ernst, Giotto's portrait of Dante? *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 121, 1979, 471-483.
  - 8 Land, Norman E., Giotto as an Ugly Genius. *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, vol. 23, 1997, 23-36.
  - 9 Schwarz and Theis 2004, 22.
  - 10 Pfisterer, Ulrich, Erste Werke und Autoportraits. Der Topos künstlerischer Frühbegabung im 16. Jahrhundert., In *Visuelle Topoi. Erfindung und tradiertes Wissen in den Künsten der italienischen Renaissance*, ed. by Pfisterer, Ulrich and Seidel, Max. Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003, 263-302, esp. 266; Jenni, Ulrike, Der Beginn des Naturstudiums. Eine Legende vom zeichnenden Hirtenknaben. In *Von der Macht der Bilder*, ed. by Ullmann Ernst, Leipzig: Akademie Verlag, 1983, 129-135.
  - 11 Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, ed. by Luigi Sasso. Milan: Garzanti Libri. 1995, 12 and 79.
  - 12 Barocchi, Paolo, *Studi Vasariani*. Turin: Einaudi 1984, 75-82. At first Vasari himself also questioned the impoverished background (in the edition of 1550), only to return later to Ghiberti's version and its programme. Schwarz 2009, 10.
  - 13 For the first collection of sources on Giotto and his family: Baldovinetti, Filippo, *Notizie de' Professori del Disegno da Cimabue in qua*, vol. 1, Florence: Sani Franchi, 1681, plate on 44. In later editions, the plate was replaced by a list. Vasari also sometimes referred to sources, but never collected them systematically.
  - 14 Hoshino, Hidetoshi, *L'arte della lana in Firenze nel basso medioevo*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1980, 133-134.
  - 15 Schwarz and Theis 2004, 50-55.
  - 16 Schwarz, Michael Viktor, *Giotto's Werke* (Giotto's picture 2), Vienna: Böhlau, 2008, 539.
  - 17 See, for instance, the vita mixing both strands in Previtali, Giovanni, *Giotto e la sua bottega*. Milan: Fabri Editori, 1993, 151-155; and in Boskovits, Miklos, Giotto di Bondone. In *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 55. Rome: Treccani 2000, 401-423. Cf. also: Gilbert, Creighton, Giotto (di Bondone). In *Dictionary of Art*, ed. by Jane Turner, vol. 12. London: Grove's Dictionaries, 1996, 681-696, where a critical, if unsystematic, distinction is made between the groups of sources.
  - 18 Cf. Schwarz, Michael Viktor, Giotto's Byzantium. In: *ΣΥΜΜΕΙΚΤΑ. Collection of Papers dedicated to the 40th Anniversary of the Institute for Art History, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade*, ed. by Ivan Stevović. Belgrade: Faculty of Philosophy 2012, 157-170.
  - 19 Gies, Frances and Joseph, *Cathedral, Forge and Waterwheel: technology and invention in the middle ages*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994, passim.
  - 20 Najemy, John M., *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.
  - 21 Burke, Peter, *Tradition and Innovation in Renaissance Italy: a sociological approach*. London: Fontana, 1974; Jacobsen, Werner, *Die Maler von Florenz zu Beginn der Renaissance*. Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2001, 71-74.
  - 22 Krautheimer 1956, 3; Kallab 1908, 7-9.
  - 23 Forese is mentioned in sources until 1359: Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Il Decameron*, ed. by Vittore Branca. Turin: Einaudi, 1980, 736-737. His death is often dated to 1348 because of the will he made in that year.
  - 24 Falaschi 1972, 8.
  - 25 Attention was first drawn to the text by Rumohr, who also presented the first edition: Rumohr, Carl Friedrich von, *Italienische Forschungen*, vol. 2. Berlin and Stettin: Nicolai'sche Buchhandlung 1827, 51-54. The text is not included in the English translation of the section edited by Peter Wortsman: Rumohr, Carl Friedrich von, On Giotto. In *German Essays on Art History*. ed. by Gert Schiff. New York: Continuum, 1988, 73-94. The canzone plays no role in English-speaking research on Giotto.
  - 26 Thode, Henry, *Franz von Assisi und die Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*. Berlin: G. Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1904, 572. The assumption that Giotto was close to Francis has been the raw material for many studies up to the present day, e.g.: Cacciari, Massimo, *Doppio ritratto: San Francesco in Dante e Giotto*. Milan: Adelphi, 2012. Cacciari refers directly to Thode. According to Cacciari, the Francis of Giotto and Dante together form the intellectual foundation of the modern European.
  - 27 Sarfatti, Grad, Pontani, Anna and Zamponi, Stefano, Titulus Crucis. In *Giotto: La Croce di Santa Maria Novella*, ed. by Marco Ciatti and Max Seidel. Florence: EDIFIR, 2001, 191-202; Schwarz, Michael Viktor, Intensität, Differenz, Authentizität: Zwei Florentiner Tafelkreuze im Vergleich, *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana*, vol. 38, 2007/08 (appeared 2010), 131-150.
  - 28 Kris, Ernst and Kurz, Otto, *Die Legende vom Künstler*. Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1934. English edition: *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
  - 29 Beuys in interview, 1976: "Die Zelte, also die hatten Filzzelte, das ganze Gehabe von den Leuten, das mit dem Fett [...] das ist praktisch so in mich hineingegangen; ich habe das wirklich erlebt!" Jappe, Georg, *Beuys packen: Dokumente 1968-1996*. Regensburg: Schmid + Lindinger, 1996, 208-209.
  - 30 As did: Adriani, Götz Konnertz Winfried and Thomas, Karin, *Joseph Beuys: Leben und Werk*. Cologne: Dumont 1981, 23 and Stachelhaus, Heiner, *Joseph Beuys*. Düsseldorf: List, 1998, 26.
  - 31 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 6.4.2001 (82), B56.