

## The art history and methodology of Millard Meiss and the question of his lukewarm reception in Italy

Review of:

Jennifer Cooke, *Millard Meiss, American Art History, and Conservation: From Connoisseurship to Iconology and Kulturgeschichte*, New York and London: Routledge, 2021, 219 pp., 11 b. & w. illus., ISBN 978-0-367-13834-9

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In the first, book-length assessment of the American art historian Millard Meiss (1904-75), which appears in the Routledge series, *Studies in Art Historiography*, Jennifer Cooke probes the nature and influence of Meiss's fertile writing on early Italian, French and Flemish painting, and charts his remarkable commitment to the preservation of artistic monuments in Italy. Previous considerations of Meiss's scholarship have been written by close colleagues and students in the form of brief, laudatory commemorations in obituaries and longer introductions to festschrift volumes or retrospective collections of his essays. In contrast, the author of this new study is a British-Italian lecturer at the University of Turin, and is situated, therefore, at a significant distance from Meiss's academic environment in the northeastern United States. Arguably, this separation allows Cooke to undertake a more objective appreciation of Meiss. Certainly, Cooke presents an incisive and scrupulously referenced evaluation of Meiss's art-historical writing, which incorporates the fruit of her archival research in his extensive personal correspondence with many other noted art historians, heritage superintendents and art conservators.

In charting the significance of Meiss's art history, Cooke took the decision to prioritize his critical fortune in Italy. Since Meiss devoted a large part of his career to the study of Italian art, it is clearly important to understand how Italian scholars responded to his ideas and to what extent he left his mark in Italy. In fact, Cooke's investigation of the often interrupted and sometimes completely blocked flow of art-historical ideas and approaches across the Atlantic represents an original and very significant contribution to the study of art historiography. She first took up this inquiry, with a narrower emphasis on Meiss's early publications on Trecento painting in Tuscany, in her Italian Ph.D. dissertation for the Università degli Studi di Torino, which later was published as a book in Italy. For the present study, however, Cooke has broadened her investigation to highlight Meiss's complete art-historical range, comprising publications on Italian painting from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, French manuscript illumination at the Valois princely court of Jean, Duc de Berry, and Early Netherlandish painting. In addition, she has

investigated his committee work in aid of art and architectural restoration in Italy after the damage caused during the Second World War and following the catastrophic flooding of 1966. Since the Routledge book is written in English, Cooke's archival research on Meiss, her interpretive readings of his published scholarship, and her conclusions concerning his reception in Italy are now available to a different and larger audience.

This book takes its place in the Routledge series on art historiography on account of Cooke's analytical approach to Meiss's studies of late medieval and Renaissance painting, tracing his adoption of distinctive methodological strategies. Instead of charting his scholarly development chronologically, by following the stages of his academic career and research interests, as Meiss transitioned from his graduate student years at New York University to a series of professorial appointments at Columbia University, Harvard University and the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, Cooke divides her book into chapters that consider Meiss's methodological approaches to art history. She investigates his use of connoisseurship, iconography, the social history of art and technical art history, closing with a final appraisal of the reception by Italian scholars of Meiss's art-historical writings. In her close examination of Meiss's publications, Cooke emphasizes the theoretical dimensions of his argumentation. She distinguishes how the methodological strategies employed by Meiss dovetail with or diverge from the work of previous scholars and mentors. She also investigates to what extent the resulting proposals and conclusions were found to be convincing by art historians on either side of the Atlantic, paying most attention to reactions in Italy.

In the first chapter, Cooke investigates how Meiss adapted the current practice of connoisseurship to situate paintings from the early Italian period (*circa* 1190-1400) in their historical contexts, which was an essential first stage of inquiry since almost all works surviving from the period were neither signed nor dated. As Cooke explains, the young Meiss steered clear of the conflict between his Ph.D. supervisor, Richard Offner, and the famous connoisseur, Bernard Berenson, attempting to diplomatically find his way in a highly contested field. Offner had reacted against the intuitive aspect of Berenson's approach and shunned his association with inflated attributions for the art market. By involving not only style criticism or formal analysis, but also the close examination of the physical object, the scrutiny of the subject depicted and archival research, Offner sought to develop, what he held to be, a more objective means of determining authorship. Meiss became involved in several vehement debates over authorship, some of which remain unresolved to this day. Two will be featured here to explore Cooke's analysis of the methodology Meiss employed.

When Meiss was just embarking on his graduate research, Offner seems to have deliberately placed his protégé in the midst of heated quandaries, trusting he would not sink but swim. As Cooke explains, one centred on the so-called Ugolino Lorenzetti, Berenson's pseudonym for a Sieneese painter whose style blended influences from Ugolino di Nerio and the Lorenzetti brothers. Adopting Offner's

multi-faceted approach to attribution, for his Master's thesis, Meiss assembled a small corpus of paintings for Ugolino Lorenzetti. A few years later, based on impressive archival research in Siena, Meiss ventured the identification of the unknown master with Bartolomeo Bulgarini. Although Cooke does not emphasize this, it is important to note that, by publishing his discoveries in Italian and in an Italian art history journal, Meiss demonstrated, very early on, his transatlantic inclinations and his cooperative spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Meiss's achievement in connecting a group of paintings with a documented artist would later stimulate further research at his *alma mater*, Princeton University, to determine the nature of Sienese painting in the little studied decades after the Black Death of 1348. Cooke provides a footnote reference to Judith Steinhoff's Ph.D. dissertation of 1989, in which a much larger corpus was carefully assembled for Bulgarini. However, she does not mention the collaborative article of 1986, in which Steinhoff, in concert with the iconography expert, Elizabeth Beatson, and the painting conservator, Norman Muller, reconstructed the *St. Victor Altarpiece* from Siena Cathedral, for which Bulgarini painted the central panel.<sup>2</sup> The diverse but complementary methodologies that are applied in the reconstruction, which entail investigating the surviving panels of the dismantled altarpiece from formal, iconographic, and technical perspectives, are strongly reminiscent of Meiss's own, multi-pronged approach. Beatson was familiar with Meiss's methodology since she had been his research assistant at the Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton, and he credits her assistance for one of the volumes he published on French manuscript illumination under the patronage of Jean, Duc de Berry.<sup>3</sup> Although Cooke does not emphasize Meiss's reception in North America, not only does the example of this jointly-authored reconstruction illustrate his profound influence on American scholars, but it also provides support for one of Cooke's central arguments, concerning the compound methodology practiced by Meiss. Moreover, the recognition of the research performed by Meiss's assistants at the Institute in Princeton for his studies of French manuscript illumination, draws attention to the work of significant female scholars in Meiss's ambit, at least three of whom were published art historians in their own right.<sup>4</sup> The art historical environment charted by Cooke in her investigation of Meiss's mentors, colleagues, students and

<sup>1</sup> Millard Meiss, 'Bartolommeo Bulgarini altrimenti detto "Ugolino Lorenzetti"?', *Rivista d'Arte*, 18, January 1936, 113-36.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth H. Beatson, Norman E. Muller and Judith B. Steinhoff, 'The St. Victor Altarpiece in Siena Cathedral: A Reconstruction', *The Art Bulletin*, 68: 4, December 1986, 610-31.

<sup>3</sup> Millard Meiss, with the assistance of Sharon Off Dunlap Smith and Elizabeth Home Beatson, *French painting in the time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and their contemporaries*, New York: G. Braziller, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> These women scholars, who all published art historical research, were research assistants for Meiss at the School of Historical Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies, Princeton, in the years listed, as follows: Gertrude Coor Achenbach (1959-62), Kathleen Morand (1961-64), and Elizabeth Beatson (1969-76, 1986-90).

contemporaries in the United States, the United Kingdom and continental Europe is almost exclusively a male one.

Another heated attribution debate, which Meiss entered, involved the authorship of an exquisite, small panel of the *Flagellation of Christ*, acquired for the Frick Collection in New York City. Roberto Longhi, professor of art history at the University of Florence, when asked for his opinion several months before the Frick purchase in 1950, had a strong, emotional reaction to the painting. Despite its small size, as Cooke narrates, Longhi was moved by the ancient grandeur of the artist's composition and planned to publish his attribution to the early Florentine master, Cimabue. But before Longhi could air his ideas in print, an article by Meiss appeared in the *Art Bulletin*, in which he developed both formal and iconographical arguments to secure the work for Cimabue's Sieneese contemporary, Duccio. Cooke perceptively suggests that Meiss's effort to shape the 'intrinsic personality' of the painting may betray the influence of Panofsky's notion of 'typus', an artistic fusion of form and content. However, more central to Cooke's interest is the conflict that arose between Italian and American art historians because of this attribution. As she points out, there had been a long-standing debate as to whether the Florentine or Sieneese school held pre-eminence in the rise of naturalism in Tuscan painting. Only a few years before the Frick panel entered the limelight, Longhi had aggressively fanned the flames of this smoldering dispute by issuing a derogatory pronouncement on the Byzantine strains in early Sieneese painting, which he interpreted as retrograde and anti-naturalistic. Longhi adhered closely to Benedetto Croce's idealistic conception of artistic images as edifying manifestations of pure imagination, and he shunned the use of image content, or iconography, to ascertain authorship, judging that approach inappropriately formulaic. Cooke investigates the long debacle over this painting that followed, drawing attention to the nature of the arguments that were applied to the question by each scholar in turn, and referencing Meiss's personal correspondence with Berenson, Panofsky and Longhi, as well as letters in the Frick archives and numerous publications. However, Cooke does not bring into her analysis the perceptive remark of Meiss's former student, Hayden Maginnis, who, in his 1977 article on the literature of Sieneese Trecento painting, fore fronted the significance of the debate over this small panel, which lasted more than fifty years: 'The Frick Flagellation is perhaps the most extensively discussed attribution in the Duccio literature'.<sup>5</sup>

Stepping back from the question of 'who done it', one is left with a quarrel between American and Italian scholars that became personal, nasty, and political. Cooke helpfully charts how the argument unfolded. Offner had repeatedly linked what he saw as Longhi's mistakes in attribution to his Florentine patriotism. But Offner's student, Edward Garrison, took these criticisms further, offended by Longhi's adherence to Croce's idealism and his negative opinion of Byzantine art.

<sup>5</sup> Hayden B. J. Maginnis, 'The Literature of Sieneese Trecento Painting 1945-1975', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 40: 3/4, 1977, 276-309, at 278.

Pointing out that Longhi's key article had been drafted in 1939, Garrison associated the stigmatizing of Byzantine art and its influence on early Sieneese painters with racist art criticism under Fascism. Cooke does not go so far as to say this, but Garrison was alluding to the iconoclastic reaction to 'degenerate' art and artists by Fascists and Nazis in the late 1930s. Offended, Longhi reacted defensively, as did some of his students in deference to their professor.

The heated debate sparked by one small panel-painting, since it is out of proportion, should give cause for commentary. Although Cooke has chosen throughout her study to focus on intellectual debate and not to dwell in detail on the historical and political context, the conflict between American and Italian art historians, which began before but continued well after World War Two, did have political and racial dimensions. For instance, Longhi held prominent positions in art history during the rule of Prime Minister Benito Mussolini, beginning his academic career at the University of Bologna in 1935 but then moving to Florence in 1939. He was also involved in projects sponsored by the federal heritage ministry under the Fascists, including as a consultant on restoration proposals together with Cesare Brandi, who in 1939 was appointed the first director of the national institute for art restoration (Istituto Centrale del Restauro) in Rome. It was Mussolini's close relationship with Adolf Hitler, the German Chancellor beginning in 1933, that led to the institution of anti-Semitic race laws in Italy in 1938 and then to Italy's entrance into WWII as Germany's ally in June 1940. Furthermore, Mussolini's heritage minister, Giuseppe Bottai, published strongly anti-Semitic statements about the debased nature of Jewish art and the dangerous aesthetic infection Jewish artists were causing in Italy.<sup>6</sup> After the Allied invasion of Italy in September 1943, Mussolini, who had been removed from power in July, was given charge under German control of a separate Fascist state in northern Italy, which encompassed Bologna. Therefore, Bologna, where Longhi had been professor of art history, remained a Fascist city until the end of WWII. In sharp contrast to the Italian art historians and ministry officials during the Fascist years, Bernard Berenson, Richard Offner, Erwin Panofsky, and Millard Meiss were of Jewish background. Panofsky had fled to the United States from Nazi Germany, whereas Berenson had to go into hiding in Italy during the war. A fuller examination of the political and racial dynamics would help to explain the unsettling tenor of some of the art-historical debates discussed in this book, in which scholars engaged in emotional and defensive attacks, veering away from professional etiquette. Meiss, however, both in his correspondence with Italian scholars and in his published writings, typically remained more collegial and diplomatic than others in his circle.

<sup>6</sup> Giuseppe Bottai, 'L'Arte Moderna,' *Critica Fascista*, 1 December 1938, reprinted in Giuseppe Bottai, *La politica delle arti: scritti, 1918-1943*, ed. A. Masi, Rome: Editalia, 1992, 151-3; Christopher Duggan, *Fascist Voices: An Intimate History of Mussolini's Italy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 49-50, 331.

In the second chapter of her study, Cooke turns from questions of attribution to explore Meiss's approach to the meaning or subject matter of works of art, in which the pervasive influence of Erwin Panofsky is revealed. In these discussions, the thorough nature of Cooke's research is fully in view since she has mined the archives to resurrect salient passages in the personal correspondence between Meiss and Panofsky over the course of thirty-seven years. With the evidence from the letters, Cooke fashions an intimate portrait of their art-historical relationship, demonstrating how Meiss began as Panofsky's disciple, but later became a close and treasured friend.

Meiss first expressed his debt to Panofsky's iconographical interpretations of Christian symbolism in 1945 in an exquisitely written and learned article on the symbolic use of light in fifteenth-century images of the Virgin Mary. Meiss sought to elucidate the artistic reflections in Flemish and French paintings of a metaphor adopted in medieval texts to explain the miracle of the Incarnation of Christ in the Virgin womb, though Cooke accidentally describes the symbolism as that of the Immaculate Conception. The mystical event is compared to the way light passes through a glass window without breaking it. Meiss captures the subtlety of Jan van Eyck's response in his *Virgin in the Church* (Staatliche Museen, Berlin, c. 1440), where the painter simulates the effect of light filtering through stained-glass windows. In a footnote, Meiss also acknowledges the less subtle use of a glass vase to symbolize the Virgin womb in Fra Filippo Lippi's *Annunciation* (San Lorenzo, Florence, c. 1440). To enrich her analysis, Cooke presents other, seminal publications that demonstrate the defining impact of Panofsky on Meiss's interpretation of the subject matter and composition of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century paintings. These include Meiss's analysis of the adoption of the plateau composition by painters in Flanders and Central Italy, and his prolonged musing on the symbolism of the Ostrich egg in Piero della Francesca's *Brera Altarpiece*. With the support of archival documentation, Cooke also charts the steps that led Meiss towards an important career shift, when he left his position at Harvard University in 1958 to accept the challenge of succeeding Panofsky at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton.

Cooke interprets Meiss's scholarship from the 1930s and 1940s as evidencing a strong foundation in the approaches of attribution and iconography, acquired in his formative years. It was on top of this 'bedrock', as Cooke describes it, that Meiss laid two other distinctive and original methodologies, thereby developing a multi-layered approach. As she explores in Chapter Three, one of the most important ways in which Meiss enriched his inquiries was by investigating the socio-historical context of works of art, which, though now a standard component of art-historical interpretation, was innovative in the aftermath of World War Two. It was in the book, *Painting in Florence and Siena after the Black Death*, first published in 1951, that Meiss would pursue the approach of social art history in the greatest depth and most courageously.

Meiss was inspired to adopt a contextual explanation, into which he also inserted a psychological reading of artistic response, to account for the changed

style and iconography that he detected in Tuscan painting of the third quarter of the fourteenth century. Meiss contended that art created in the wake of the Black Death betrayed retrospective stylistic tendencies and an unusually intense religiosity. His innovative interpretation focused on art as a reflection of collective consciousness. Meiss believed artists working in the middle decades of the Trecento had absorbed and responded to the sustained and traumatic impact of a sequence of economic and social crises, culminating in the calamity of the Bubonic Plague of 1348, which decimated the population of Tuscany and struck dead leading artists. Among the works he considered was the Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella, Florence, encompassing Orcagna's altar-panel, with a central and hierarchical image of Christ as Judge, and the wall-paintings of the Last Judgement, Paradise, and the Inferno, attributed to Orcagna's brother, Nardo di Cione.

To gauge the reaction to Meiss's adventurous use of social art history, Cooke assembled scholarly responses, which demonstrate how several prominent art historians in Britain, France and the United States praised Meiss's interdisciplinary, historical perspective, whereas most Italians critiqued his use of social and economic circumstances to explain artistic style. As Cooke emphasizes, Italian art historians were sceptical of Meiss's social-historical interpretations. Despite repeated attempts by Meiss to have the book translated into Italian, since few educated Italians were fluent in English, the translation finally appeared posthumously in 1982, more than thirty years after the original publication. Cooke traces the reception of Meiss's book into the early twenty-first century and reflects on more recent suggestions that Meiss's vision of a religious and stylistic change in Tuscan painting after 1348 may have been a distorted impression generated by his own feelings in the post-war era, as well as his taste for contemporary American artists whose work became more spiritual following the war. Nevertheless, the great importance of Meiss's book is demonstrated by the resonance his arguments have generated in the scholarship on Trecento art over the past seventy years. In the end, whether there is agreement on the conclusions Meiss has drawn may not be as important as the questions he has posed and the innovative way in which he has approached discovering answers.

The fourth chapter of Cooke's study is devoted to Meiss's preoccupation with the approach now known as 'technical art history', namely, the investigation of the original materials and methods employed to create the work of art, its history of restoration and present condition. The technical study of art was a lifelong pursuit for Meiss, beginning when he was a graduate student at Harvard, and later he would strive to integrate the examination of materials and condition into his methodology to illuminate art-historical problems. In this very rich chapter, Cooke has gathered a substantial body of archival research to demonstrate how Meiss practiced the technical study of works of art, and to document his active involvement in coordinating and fund-raising for the salvage of Italian art and architecture that had been damaged during WWII and during the flooding of early November 1966 in Florence and Venice. Of particular importance is the strong

evidence of Meiss's enduring fascination with early Italian wall-painting, and how the desire to understand the methods of Tuscan frescoes led to collaborative research with Italian restorers. Meiss worked closely with Italian experts both to fathom questions of attribution through the study of painting technique, and to further the preservation of damaged wall-paintings.

One series of frescoes that preoccupied Meiss for many decades was the early murals in the South Corridor of the Camposanto Monumentale in Pisa. For his Ph.D. Thesis, Offner had placed Meiss squarely in the centre of an attribution controversy by supporting his research on the Pisan Trecento painter, Francesco Traini, to whom Meiss attributed the early cycle in the Camposanto, in opposition to Italian scholars, most notably Longhi. The plate Cooke uses to illustrate this section of her text, unfortunately, is labelled the *Triumph of Death*, whereas the *Last Judgement* from the same series in the Camposanto is shown. Cooke is also on shaky ground when she asserts that Meiss's attribution of these frescoes to Traini was incorrect, and that this 'misunderstanding' was rectified in 1974 when Luciano Bellosi, a student of Longhi, presented 'conclusive documentary evidence' that the murals were by Buonamico Buffalmacco (16). In fact, Bellosi provided a hypothesis, not definitive evidence, and no certain works by Buffalmacco survive for comparison. The question of authorship, which Meiss succeeded in opening up for further consideration, remains unresolved. These remarkable scenes, which seem to take inspiration from contemporary Dominican writings as well as their funerary context, merit further investigation.<sup>7</sup>

More than a decade after the completion of his dissertation on Francesco Traini, when, in the wake of WWII, Meiss was organizing the American Committee for the Restoration of Italian Monuments (ACRIM), his continuing interest in the Camposanto in Pisa came to the fore. The late medieval cemetery building was among the fifty monuments chosen to receive 1.5 million US dollars raised by the American Committee to contribute to their restoration. As Cooke explains, the Camposanto had been hit by American artillery fire, though she does not mention that the strikes were unintentional, or that the Allied Forces actively strove to preserve the medieval ecclesiastical buildings of the Piazza dei Miracoli in Pisa. It was during a battle between American and German battalions, to either side of the Arno River at Pisa, that the roof of the Camposanto was hit and a fire was sparked, causing enormous damage to the frescoes in the south and north corridors, detaching areas of the painted plaster, which bubbled up and fell to the ground. A group of restorers, among them Leonetto Tintori, worked for years to detach the frescoes from the walls for their preservation. Meiss met Tintori when he visited the Camposanto and witnessed the first stages of the detachments in 1947. Among the numerous letters preserved by Meiss, Cooke found a sequence from the Pisan heritage superintendent, Piero Sanpaolesi, in the years 1949-51, providing Meiss

<sup>7</sup> Hayden B. J. Maginnis, 'Introduction', in Millard Meiss, *Francesco Traini*, ed. and intro. H. B. J. Maginnis, Washington, D.C.: Decatur House Press, 1983, xvi-xx.

with reports on the progress of the restoration. Meiss's intimate involvement with this mural-painting conservation project and his support of Tintori's work would stimulate further collaboration.

The most critical project that Meiss and Tintori tackled together resulted in the application of 'technical art history' in the service of attribution. As Cooke remarks, one of the most heated debates in Italian art history has been whether, as most Italian scholars still advocate, the cycle of the St. Francis Legend in the Upper Church of San Francesco in Assisi was painted by Giotto and his workshop, or instead by a group of at least three different mural painters from Rome. Meiss's supervisor, Offner, had already contended in 1939 that the Italians insisted on holding onto Giotto's authorship out of patriotism, not based on rational and convincing arguments. When Tintori was engaged in the restoration of the St. Francis frescoes in the early 1960s, Meiss followed his findings, as Cooke demonstrates by referencing their steady and detailed correspondence. In 1962, on the basis of their collaborative research, Meiss and Tintori authored, *The Painting of the Life of St. Francis in Assisi, with Notes on the Arena Chapel*. Together they presented a new interpretation of how the frescoes had been executed, by examining the pattern of the application of the top layer of lime plaster. The 'giornate' or join lines for the area of plaster to be painted in one day (*giorno*) were mapped for each fresco. The way scenes had been prepared and then painted suggested to Meiss and Tintori the involvement of three different masters and their workshop assistants, but Meiss did not venture specific attributions for these hands. In Italy, however, this adventurous study met a similar fate to Meiss's book on Tuscan painting after the Black Death. From personal correspondence in the years 1962-64, Cooke traces the rejection of the opportunity to issue an Italian translation by two major Italian publishers, who cited as their reason the overly specialized nature of the subject.

In the final chapter, Cooke assembles full evidence of the response of Italians to the rich scholarship Meiss had produced over four decades, beginning a few years after his first research trip to Tuscany in 1928 and continuing until just before his death in 1975. She draws together threads from the previous chapters, subjecting the evidence to further analysis and enriching the discussion with additional commentary on specific Italians and their points of view. For instance, Cooke reiterates how Meiss, despite his diplomatic and professional demeanour, became embroiled in heated attributions debates that occasionally tarnished his relationships with Italian scholars, particularly the overly personalized confrontation about the Frick *Flagellation of Christ*. She also recapitulates the hostile response in Italy to Meiss's interpretation of the impact of the Black Death on Tuscan painters, emphasizing the pervasive influence in Italy of Croce's idealistic conception of the work of art, as well as the tendency to tar Meiss with the same brush as was used to dismiss the Hungarian scholar, Frederick Antal's Marxist reading of the relationship between Florentine painting and social class, *Florentine Painting and Its Social Background*, published just three years before Meiss's socio-historical analysis. Except for a few Italian art historians, who showed more

sympathy towards the arguments put forward by Meiss, most pushed aside or successfully ignored his contributions. This was easy to do since his major books were not available in Italian translation, which curtailed the circulation of his ideas. As Cooke recognizes, Meiss found his strongest supporters and collaborators in a few Italians, who were not academic art historians, but focused on the technical aspects of works of art, their restoration and preservation. His closest collaborator was the Tuscan mural-painting conservator, Tintori, with whom he carried out research demonstrating the presence of several artistic hands in the execution of the *St. Francis Legend* in Assisi. Ugo Procacci, who Meiss may have met in the late 1930s, was the director of the first regional conservation laboratory in Italy, which was opened in the Old Post Office near the Uffizi Gallery in Florence in 1932, as Cooke explains. Later Procacci became the heritage superintendent for the Florentine territory. Significantly, when Meiss died, Procacci's obituary was the only one to appear in Italy.

Cooke's study closes with what she describes as Meiss's '*damnatio memoriae*' in Italy. Despite a career rich in art-historical insights, as well as remarkably charitable gestures across the Atlantic with funds raised in support of Italian restoration campaigns, the American disciple of Offner and Panofsky received a lukewarm welcome at best from his Italian counterparts. Although Cooke's perspective on Meiss is original and addresses very important questions about methodological preferences and intellectual fissures, one is left with the impression that the direction she has chosen, emphasizing the response of scholars in Italy, has resulted in a conclusion that does not do Meiss justice. The festschrift published in 1977 in Meiss's honour, which was edited by Irving Lavin and John Plummer, featured a remarkable number of essays, forty-five in total, by scholars, not just from the United States and Britain, but also from several European countries including Italy.<sup>8</sup> Although it was not Cooke's objective to investigate Meiss's influence in North America, to arrive at a more balanced understanding of his contributions to the discipline of art history, one must acknowledge the strong reflections of his scholarship in the work of his immediate disciplines and the many other art historians who studied in his shadow in North America. Art historians perpetuate their ideas and methodological approaches through their publications, lectures, interactions with other scholars, curators, and conservators, and by teaching students. In the case of a scholar as inspired, eloquent, and fruitful as Meiss, perhaps those he influenced most strongly should have the last word. Indeed, Maginnis, who wrote his dissertation under Meiss at Princeton University, characterized his mentor's research and its impact on future scholars as: 'a continually expanding exploration, which linked not merely ideas to ideas, but also generation to generation'.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Irving Lavin and John Plummer, eds., *Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in Honor of Millard Meiss*, 2 vols., New York: New York University Press, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> Maginnis, 'Introduction', in *Francesco Traini*, 1983, xii.

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