

Metaphors of art in the English translations of Giorgio Vasari's *Le vite*: a software-assisted enquiry

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1. Introduction

The aim of this contribution is to present a possible application of the datasets that are being developed under the LBC (*Lessico dei Beni Culturali* – ‘Art and Cultural Heritage Vocabulary’) project¹ to the analysis of linguistic and conceptual metaphors and their translation.

The goal of the LBC project is to build a large, corpus-based multilingual dictionary focused on the language of art (Farina 2016). To this end, we are building specialised corpora of texts related to art and cultural heritage belonging to different genres (literary, informative, technical), different epochs, and in different languages, among which Italian, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish². Each language team is also extracting and annotating lemma-lists with concordance hits showing the use of the lemmas in their original context (for further details about corpus construction criteria in the LBC project, see Billero, Nicolás Martínez 2018). Also figuring among the developments of the project is the implementation of parallel corpora, which are particularly important in lexicography and translation studies (Teubert 2002), based on the Italian data. The language teams, however, are not aligned in this respect. Some have stepped into this phase

¹ www.lessicobeniculturali.net

² The monolingual corpora at their present stage of development are available online through the NoSketchEngine platform and can be accessed from the LBC project website (Note 1).

by collecting, pre-processing and aligning some of the available translations of the key reference text in the Italian corpus, Giorgio Vasari's *Le Vite* (see, e.g., Zotti 2017 on French; Carpi, Pano Alamán 2019 on Spanish); for English, parallel corpus construction involving translations of Vasari is also under way.

This chapter focuses on the metaphorical representations of the notion of 'art' in Vasari's *Le Vite*, presenting a case study of select KWIC concordance hits for «arte», extracted from the Italian LBC corpus by limiting the search to Vasari's text, and a cross-linguistic comparison with the same segments taken from two of its English translations: Gaston du C. de Vere's *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters Sculptors & Architects by Giorgio Vasari* (1912-1915), and Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella's *Giorgio Vasari: The Lives of the Artists* (1991).

Praised in their writings by personalities such as Giuseppe Parini, Ugo Foscolo and Benedetto Croce, *Le Vite* are universally recognised as a foundational text for the sub-genre of artistic biography and for art history in general, not only for the specific vocabulary introduced by Vasari, but also for his treatment of the aesthetics of art in his times and the evolution he traces of Italian medieval and Renaissance art. As noted by Bondanella and Bondanella,

Vasari was a skilful storyteller whose anecdotes could reveal the personality of an artist in vivid terms, and it is his unusual ability to combine his command of Italian prose with his mastery of the subject matter that has guaranteed him an audience for over four centuries (1991, x).

The first edition appeared in 1550, printed by Lorenzo Torrentino (hence the name «Torrentiniana») with the title *Le Vite de' più Eccellenti Architetti, Pittori et Scultori Italiani, da Cimabue insino a' Tempi Nostri scritte da Giorgio Vasari Pittore Aretino nell'edizione per i tipi di Lorenzo Torrentino*. Beginning with a detailed introduction on the «three arts of design» (architecture, painting and sculpture), this often overlooked (because older) edition includes 132 biographies, from Cimabue to Michelangelo Buonarroti (the only living artist at the time of writing). A few years later, in 1568, Vasari published a second, extended edition, the so-called «Giuntina» (after the name of the typographer, Jacopo Giunti), changing the title to *Le vite dei più eccellenti Pittori, Scultori, e Architettori, scritte da M. Giorgio Vasari Pittore et Architetto Aretino, di nuovo dal medesimo riscritte et ampliate con i ritratti loro et con l'aggiunta delle Vite de' vivi & de' morti, dall'anno 1550 infino al 1567*. Here, Vasari revises the text from the Torrentiniana in point of style, vocabulary and, most importantly, content, paying attention, among other things, to 'minor' arts such as that of mosaic, which had been neglected before. As suggested by the title, he also includes new biographies, with more living and non-Tuscan artists, thus bringing the total to 179, and adds several conclusive descriptions of artworks by different artists and schools, among which his own³. The Giuntina is the edition most contemporary

³ The two full-text editions are available for download and comparison at www.memofonte.it/ricerche/giorgio-vasari/#testi.

critical works and translations are based on, including the ones by de Vere and Bondanella and Bondanella for English.

The above-mentioned translations were deemed particularly relevant, and thus chosen for analysis among those available, for different reasons. De Vere's remains, to date, the only extant complete English translation of Vasari's work, published in ten volumes, with illustrations. Bondanella and Bondanella's is the most recent – a paperback *Oxford Classics* edition presenting a selection of the lives of the most influential artists, which in several cases are also abridged. A further reason for including these texts in a contrastive study is that they also differ in terms of the strategies adopted and overall approach towards the source text (henceforth ST), as declared by the translators themselves at the beginning of their works. On one hand, de Vere's guiding principle in translating *Le Vite* is strict adherence to the ST, to the point of impacting on the target text (TT) and its reception by the target audience – what we may nowadays define as a tendency towards «foreignisation», in Venuti's terms (e.g., 2008). In the *Translator's Preface* to his first volume, de Vere shares the following observations with his readers, which may be extended to the other volumes as well:

My intention, indeed, has been to render my original word for word, and to err, if at all, in favour of literalness. The very structure of Vasari's sentences has usually been retained [...] Throughout the earlier Lives Vasari seems to be feeling his way. He is not sure of himself, and his style is often awkward. The more faithful the attempted rendering, the more plainly must that awkwardness be reproduced (de Vere 1912, xii).

Bondanella and Bondanella, for their part, choose a critical approach that is more oriented towards the target reader, both in terms of the amount of material to be included in the TT and of the translation of culture-specific information and technical vocabulary. With reference to the first of these aspects, in their *Note on the translation*, they state:

Translating Giorgio Vasari's *Lives* presents a number of problems familiar to translators working with Italian Renaissance texts. In the first place, its voluminous length necessitates abridgement to fit into the normal format of the contemporary paperback book. [...] Paring down the enormous volume of material written by Vasari was not the least of our tasks in preparing this critical edition, and it is our hope that our readers will agree with the necessity of abbreviating some longer lives in order to make space for still others (Bondanella, Bondanella 1991, xv).

With reference to the second aspect – i.e., translation choices related to information embedded in the ST cultural context and technical terms – they add:

As far as possible, we have attempted to identify the works discussed by Vasari and to note their present location [...]. Likewise, all biographical references have been annotated. [...] The various problems involved in translating Vasari's technical vocabulary have already been discussed [...]. The reader should bear

in mind that in this translation, we have attempted to render these words by their meaning in a particular context [...] words have been chosen to render his meaning, not his precise vocabulary (Bondanella, Bondanella 1991, xv-xvii).

Although this study is not specifically concerned with the translation of technical vocabulary as such, the different approaches described above can be said to also impact on the translation of our focus word «arte» and its metaphorical representations – as was hypothesised at the preliminary stage of this research, and as we shall see below, in discussing results from analysis based on corpus linguistics methods.

Finally, a few words on the structure of this chapter. The following section lays the groundwork, with some essential remarks on the theoretical framework and on metaphor translation. Section 3 presents the methodology used in building the datasets for this study, including parallel ST-TT datasets, and in subsequent software-assisted analysis. Results are presented and discussed in Section 4. By way of conclusion, Section 5 summarises the main findings.

2. The importance of ‘transferring’: notes on metaphor and translation

The title of this section was inspired by Schäffner (2017), who underlines the etymological connection between the notions of metaphor and translation:

«Metaphor» originates from Greek, with «meta-» indicating a change (e.g. of place) and «pherein» a process of carrying. «Translate» originates from the Latin «transfere», with «trans-» meaning across, and «ferre» meaning to bear, or to carry (Schäffner 2017, 247).

The idea of transfer inherent in both notions is brought to the fore in this section, as are the challenges that it may imply from the viewpoint of the translator and translation scholar. Another correspondence between metaphor and translation lies in the fact that both fields of study are characterised by a multiplicity of approaches, making it essential to clarify one’s standpoint immediately. In this chapter, metaphor is dealt with from the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT: Lakoff, Johnson 1980), which, among other things, provides a convenient framework for classifying the occurrences of metaphor found in natural language. CMT posits that metaphor is pervasive, not just in language in general, independently of the text-type, but also, crucially, in thought. In the words of Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 3), «Our conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature». Therefore, as a theory of thought and communication, CMT encourages scholars to extend metaphor research beyond the ‘artistic’ manifestations of language (e.g., poetry or literature in general) – traditionally considered relevant for this purpose – and to address different text-types. The theory also lends itself well to applied critical studies that aim at reflecting on the functions and effects of metaphor in discourse.

In one of the most recent surveys of CMT, Kövecses defines conceptual metaphors as «understanding one domain of experience (that is typically abstract)

in terms of another (that is typically concrete)» (2017, 13)⁴. Indeed, a basic tenet in CMT is the bodily basis of metaphorical reasoning; we tend to conceptualise and understand abstract notions in terms of our physical experience, which is observable and more directly accessible. The metaphors we find in language are the visible output of the metaphorical associations (mappings) taking place between different domains in our conceptual system. Scholars working within CMT have developed terminological and graphic conventions to account for the important distinction between the linguistic and the conceptual/cognitive plane in metaphor studies. Thus, «linguistic metaphor» is used to refer to the realisation of a metaphorical mapping in language, while «conceptual metaphor», or simply «metaphor», denotes the mapping itself, which is also conventionally written in small capitals. The labels «source» and «target» are also used to distinguish the role played by the conceptual domains involved. The former refers to the typically concrete domain providing the basis for the mapping, while the latter refers to the typically abstract domain that is understood via metaphor; these, too, are conventionally written in small capitals. For instance, evidence for the mapping between the target domain HAPPINESS and the source domain UP, resulting in the conceptual metaphor HAPPY IS UP, can be found in a linguistic metaphor like «that boosted my spirits» (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 15). HAPPY IS UP is one of those metaphors that organise concepts (sometimes groups of concepts, forming coherent sets) in terms of spatial orientation: what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) call «orientational metaphors». This category provides a clear illustration of the bodily basis of metaphorical reasoning: positive emotions are 'oriented upwards' because that is also the effect they have on our bodily posture.

Another central question in CMT is the universality *vs.* cultural specificity of metaphorical mappings. In fact, while some conceptual metaphors may cut across different cultures (especially the most basic ones), others are culture-specific, either in terms of the source domain involved in a mapping, or in terms of the specific correspondences established between the source and the target domains (to put it more simply, which 'parts' of the source domain are actually 'exploited' by the metaphor). For instance, according to Kövecses (2005), AFFECTION IS WARMTH is a good candidate for universality (even if the linguistic realisations may, of course, vary), since the association between the two concepts is sanctioned by our primary embodied experience: the feeling of bodily warmth that is brought about by a loving gesture. Conversely, LOVE IS A JOURNEY is replaced in some Chinese dialects by LOVE IS FLYING A KITE. This is one of the most challenging aspects from the viewpoint of translation. Even when the conceptual metaphor may be considered universal, or is at least shared by the source and the target culture involved in translation, its linguistic realisations and the related associations are likely to be at variance, thus calling for careful consideration on the translator's part.

⁴ Though I shall not take the argument further here, for reasons of space, it is worth noting that there may also be more complex cases, where more than two domains are actually involved in a metaphorical process: see, e.g., Kövecses (2017: 15); Dancygier (2017).

Much has been written on metaphor translation, both as a process and as a product, and several strategies have been proposed (e.g., Newmark 1981) to deal with what is frequently perceived by translators as a task that is ultimately doomed to failure (see Monti 2014). An exhaustive overview is beyond the scope of this chapter (but see, e.g., Miller, Monti 2014; Manfredi 2017; Schäffner 2017); therefore, my aim in what follows is to provide a selection of recent contributions that (1) relate to CMT, and (2) focus on the contextual and cultural factors involved in translating metaphors.

The advent of CMT in the 1980s inevitably brought new perspectives into translation studies, not least because Lakoff and Johnson's approach definitively put an end to the 'ornamental' view of metaphor as a mere stylistic device. Schäffner (e.g., 1997, 2004) was among the first scholars to advocate a cognitive perspective in metaphor translation. In her words, the turning point brought about by CMT lies in translatability being «no longer a question of the individual metaphorical expression, as identified in the ST», but rather becoming «linked to the level of conceptual systems in source and target culture» (Schäffner 2004, 1258). Schäffner has also repeatedly stressed the benefits of descriptive translation analysis, both as a source of empirical data providing new insights into translation theory and practice, and as a way of stimulating new research questions and reflection. She herself has contributed extensively to CMT-informed analysis of metaphor translation in authentic texts – an area that has gained popularity in the last two decades, with scholars exploring different languages, but also different text-types (see, e.g., Shuttleworth 2014; Manfredi 2017 on popular science articles; Schäffner 2014 on financial crisis metaphors between German and British political/journalistic texts; Maldussi 2019 on the French and Italian equivalents of «hedge fund» in terminology databases and online resources).

In line with Schäffner, Arduini (2014) also underlines the contribution of a cognitive linguistic perspective to translation studies, reviewing several proposals put forward between the late 1960s and the 1980s, even by key translation scholars such as Nida, Taber, Newmark, and Snell-Hornby, which did not problematise metaphor as a matter of both cognition and cultural representation. In his view, behind these proposals lies:

the idea that meaning can shift from one culture to another without suffering too much damage. It is as if meaning were an invariable element whose central nucleus remains intact. This is an approach to meaning that is disembodied and implies a semantics that has the structure of a dictionary (Arduini 2014, 43).

According to Arduini, a cognitive approach, by contrast, enables us to take a different perspective on the translation of metaphors (especially of the more complex or innovative ones, I would add), considering it as a process of «decentralisation» whereby we introduce «new concepts and new worlds» (Arduini 2014, 49), along with new expressions, into our own context of culture.

Along similar lines, Kövecses (2014) reminds us of the importance of the cultural contexts in which conceptual metaphors are embedded, which may influence their linguistic expression and, consequently, lead to translation issues. He identifies three

«matching conditions» (Kövecses 2014, 34) that should be met for the best possible translation to be produced: (1) the set of target domains to which a source domain applies, (2) the set of specific correspondences between source and target, and (3) the knowledge associated with the elements of the source domain that is carried over to the target domain should all be ideally transferred from one language to the other. While affinity between the cultural backgrounds facilitates this process, often it is just impossible to fulfil all these conditions: when this is the case, a translator will have to look for compromise solutions in search of an optimal (rather than ideal) translation.

Another interesting position is that of Steen, who – from the specific perspective of his Deliberate Metaphor Theory (e.g., Steen 2014a) – makes a distinction between different types of metaphor, having different ‘requirements’ in translation. He argues that the metaphors that are «used as metaphors» – typically, creative or unconventional expressions that are particularly ‘eye-catching’, and thus draw the reader’s attention towards their metaphorical nature – have a more pressing need for faithful translation (Steen 2014b, 23; on this point, and on different types of metaphor having different implications for translation, see also Prandi 2010).

Overall, what emerges from the contributions reviewed above – as from the myriad others that could not be mentioned here – is a continuous and lively interest in metaphor translatability and in the strategies available (or desirable) to translate different types of metaphor. The metaphor-culture relationship and its implications for translation, to date, remain an issue open to debate.

3. Methodology

The preparation of the dataset for this study involved two subsequent steps. First, concordance hits showing the occurrences of the focus word «arte» in Vasari’s text were retrieved from the Italian LBC corpus⁵ and searched for instances of metaphor. Two small parallel datasets were then created, consisting of the concordance lines that emerged from step 1 as showing metaphor and the corresponding segments from the TTs.

3.1 Step 1: ST concordance and metaphor analysis

In step 1, I ran a simple query for the word «arte» with «Vasari, Giorgio» as author. As for the query type, I opted for a simple rather than a lemma query because I wanted to focus on the singular form, which I took as expressing the notion of «art» *lato sensu* at the lexico-grammatical level (cf., e.g., <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/arte/>)⁶. Additional parameters were also set to better define the scope of the search, in line with the initial design of the study:

⁵ corpora.lessicobeniculturali.net/noske/run.cgi/first_form?corpname=itlbc

⁶ For the same reason, occurrences where the term «Arte» (capital initial) was clearly used in the sense of ‘guild’ – the majority – were excluded from analysis. Only 2 occurrences of capitalised «Arte» in the sense focused on in this study were found, in the lives of Michelangelo and Raffaello.

- since, as we noted in Section 1, both the English translations selected for this study are based on the *Giuntina* edition of *Le Vite*, «1568» was indicated as «anno di redazione» (year of writing) of the texts;
- under «frammento» (document, corresponding to the chapters from Vasari's collection), I chose the lives included in the translation by Bondanella and Bondanella. This additional criterion was necessary for comparison purposes, recalling that, differently from de Vere, Bondanella and Bondanella limit their work to a selection of the lives of the most influential artists (see Section 1).

As a result, the final number of concordance lines to be qualitatively analysed amounted to 314, from 33 different lives; the full list is provided in Table 1 (Section 4.1)⁷. Considering the manageable size of the dataset – but also the fact that the level of accuracy in metaphor detection/interpretation that can be reached by manual scrutiny is not, at present, matched by any purely computational technique (Rai, Chakraverty 2020) – analysis was carried out manually.

The annotation scheme for this study was based on the *Metaphor Identification Procedure* (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007). For each lexical unit in the text, I determined if it had more basic meanings in other contexts than in the one under analysis, and if there were connections between these different kinds of meanings. In MIP, basic meanings are more concrete (i.e., easier to imagine or visualise), more directly linked to physical experience, more precise, and historically older, but they are not necessarily the most frequent meanings (Pragglejaz Group 2007, 3). As a general rule, when a more basic meaning could be identified and put in relation with the meaning in the actual occurrence, I marked the lexical unit as metaphorical.

The annotation scheme also took into account the degree of perceived metaphoricality: a measure of the conventionality of a metaphorical expression. It is worth recalling that one of the main tenets of CMT is that evidence for the pervasiveness of metaphor can be found in the vast array of conventional metaphorical expressions we use every day, often losing sight of their metaphorical nature; therefore, even highly conventional expressions may count as metaphors under this approach. One of the earliest systematic accounts of the cline of perceived metaphoricality can be found in Goatly (1997); this includes «active», «inacti-

⁷ It should be noted that the chapter dedicated to Fra' Filippo Lippi, despite being among those translated by Bondanella and Bondanella, could not be taken into account since apparently it was not included in the Italian LBC corpus. A simple search for «arte» AND author = «Vasari» AND frammento = «Lippi» only retrieved results from the Life of «Filippo Lippi pittor fiorentino», who is in fact Filippino Lippi, Fra' Filippo's son. At first I thought the reason might be that there were no occurrences of «arte» in the Life of Fra' Filippo Lippi, but a manual search in the electronic version of this chapter showed that this was not the case. I take this as an interesting example of cross-fertilisation between the stage of corpus design/creation, on the one hand, and corpus-assisted quantitative and qualitative studies, on the other, as the latter can help unveil, through application, potentially critical issues in the former, which can then be clarified and addressed if necessary.

ve», «dead» and «buried» metaphors. The class of active metaphors comprises lexical units being used in a creative and immediately recognisable metaphorical sense. Inactive metaphors are sub-divided into «tired» and «sleeping». The metaphorical expressions belonging to this class are more conventional, overall, but tired metaphors have better chances to activate an association with a basic meaning than sleeping ones. Finally, in dead and buried metaphors, the basic, non-metaphorical sense has been totally lost (in the case of buried metaphors, it has also become associated with a formally distinct lexical unit).

In my analysis, active metaphors were computed in the final list of results. «*Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte che m'ha fatto sempre tribolare*», from the Life of Michelangelo, is an example of an active metaphor. The basic meaning of «moglie», which is promptly activated, is 'married woman'; however, in this occurrence, the lexical unit is used with reference to the abstract notion «arte», to denote the strong relationship between it and the artist. This concordance line was thus marked as metaphorical; more precisely, as we shall see below, as an instance of personification. Within the class of inactive metaphors, tired metaphors were taken in, while sleeping metaphors were left out. «[A]lla pratica parve che *fusse stato* molti anni *all'arte*», from the Life of Pontormo, is an example of a tired metaphor. The verb «stare» has a basic spatial, physical meaning, which contrasts with the abstract nature of the notion of 'art' in the prepositional phrase «all'arte». It should be noted that «stare» is widely used figuratively, and not all abstract uses of this verb qualify as tired metaphors. For instance, common idiomatic expressions like «stare ai patti» are better analysed as sleeping metaphors, since the connection with the basic meaning has arguably become weaker with use. However, I hypothesised that, at least for the contemporary reader, «stare all'arte», as a less common expression, is likelier to evoke the verb's physical meaning (literally, «to stay» in an artist's studio as an apprentice). Therefore, concordance lines containing this and other similar expressions («accomodare/porre all'arte») were marked as metaphorical (see Section 4.2.4). Conversely, uses of «mostrare» («to show») with «arte» as direct object (as in «Per il che messovi mano Giorgione, non pensò se non a farvi figure a sua fantasia per *mostrar l'arte*», from the Life of Giorgione) were analysed as instances of sleeping metaphors. Even if the verb «mostrare» can be said to have a core physical/perceptual component (literally, «to make visible»), it is so frequently used in the sense of explaining or teaching abstract notions that the literal sense is not necessarily activated. As a consequence, concordance hits including these expressions were not marked as metaphorical. By the same token, dead and buried metaphors were not considered for the purposes of this study.

In dubious cases, the link between the lexical unit under analysis and a more basic meaning was further examined by looking at the senses of lexical units listed in dictionary entries: particularly, the Treccani online dictionary⁸ and, for historically older senses, the etymological dictionary by Cortelazzo, Zolli

⁸ www.treccani.it/vocabolario/

(1999). However, it is worth adding, in closing, that the cline of metaphoricity is not an exact science, as perceptions may vary from individual to individual. Decisions are generally more easily made at the two extremes of the cline, with active and dead/buried metaphors, but the hybrid class of inactive metaphors typically presents borderline and debatable cases. This is one of the inevitable limitations of a study like this, involving just one analyst/annotator. The full analysis is publicly available on the Open Science Framework, at https://osf.io/ufvjs/?view_only=75743dc92ab44649b1fc1e1840286495.

3.2 Step 2: building and analysing the data set

In step 2, the metaphorical concordance hits resulting from the first step were used as a starting point to build two parallel datasets, which were then analysed using the specific function available on the SketchEngine full suite⁹. I thus created two new Excel files, one per translation. Within each spreadsheet, as per SketchEngine's requirements, the first column reported the concordance hits from the ST; each was aligned, in the second column, with the corresponding segment from de Vere's and Bondanella and Bondanella's TTs.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Metaphors of art in the ST: Vasari's *Le Vite*

Let us begin by considering some preliminary quantitative findings. By applying the metaphor identification criteria described in Section 3.1, 128 out of the total 314 concordance hits under analysis (40.8%) were found to include metaphors related to «arte». Table 1 below reports the total number of analysed concordance results and the number showing evidence of a metaphorical representation of art for each life in the subset considered for this study.

Tab. 1. Total analysed concordance hits and hits with metaphors involving «arte» in the ST.

Artist/Life	LBC Italian corpus document number	Document length (approx. word tokens)	Total analysed concordance lines	Concordance lines with metaphor
Antonello da Messina	2	1900	4	3
Giorgione da Castelfranco	4	1800	2	1
Leonardo da Vinci	6	5900	18	6
Tiziano Vecellio	7	8900	12	5
Raffaello Sanzio	8	14600	37	17
Giotto	9	8600	10	6

⁹ Access granted by the University of Bologna under the ELEXIS project.

Artist/Life	LBC Italian corpus document number	Document length (approx. word tokens)	Total analysed concordance lines	Concordance lines with metaphor
Andrea Mantegna	12	2700	1	1
Simone Martini	13	2700	2	0
Masaccio	14	2900	9	3
Michelangelo Buonarroti	15	48000	84	35
Perugino	16	5500	6	1
Iacopo della Quercia	18	2300	2	0
Luca Signorelli	19	1900	2	0
Paolo Uccello	20	3300	4	3
Andrea del Verrocchio	21	3400	10	2
Cimabue	24	2700	6	3
Donatello	38	5700	12	3
Giovanni da Fiesole (Beato Angelico)	39	4100	2	0
Duccio di Buoninsegna	191	800	3	1
Luca della Robbia	197	3300	9	2
Piero della Francesca	204	2400	2	0
Andrea del Castagno & Domenico Veneziano	209	3000	6	3
Rosso Fiorentino	215	4900	7	5
Pinturicchio	220	2200	3	1
Domenico Ghirlandaio	225	5100	10	7
Filippo Brunelleschi	228	14800	14	7
Leon Battista Alberti	237	2000	2	1
Lorenzo Ghiberti	240	6800	14	4
Sandro Botticelli	248	2600	3	0
Domenico Beccafumi & Getti Senese	276	5700	5	2
Giulio Romano	306	8600	7	3
Pontormo	308	12300	4	2
Properzia de' Rossi	313	1800	2	1
Total			314	128

As can be noted, in a minority of cases (6 in total), no metaphor involving the notion of art was found: this happens in the lives of Simone Martini, Iacopo della Quercia, Luca Signorelli, Beato Angelico, Piero della Francesca and Sandro Botticelli. At the same time, two lines in the «Concordance lines with metaphor»

column emerge as eye-catching, being the only ones with two-digit numbers: these correspond to the lives of Raffaello and Michelangelo, with 17 and 35 instances, respectively. The two artists, taken together, make up almost half of the metaphorical hits in the dataset. Of course, this is linked to the higher raw number of total concordance hits for «arte» retrieved from these chapters (37 for Raffaello and 84 for Michelangelo), but also to the fact that these are among the longer lives, as shown by the «Document length» column; that of Michelangelo, who had a long-standing friendship with Vasari, is by far the longest.

As a complement to Table 1, Table 2 shows the relative frequency of the word «arte» (ratio between total word tokens and occurrences of «arte» for each document) in the lives under consideration.

Tab. 2. Relative frequency of «arte» against total document length for each life.

Artist/Life	Document length (approx. word tokens)	Total analysed concordance lines	Relative freq. of «arte», approx.	Normalised freq. per 1000 words
Duccio di Buoninsegna	800	3	1/ 267 words	3,75
Masaccio	2900	9	1/ 322 words	3,10
Leonardo da Vinci	5900	18	1/ 328 words	3,05
Andrea del Verrocchio	3400	10	1/ 340 words	2,94
Luca della Robbia	3300	9	1/ 367 words	2,73
Raffaello Sanzio	14600	37	1/ 395 words	2,53
Cimabue	2700	6	1/ 450 words	2,22
Antonello da Messina	1900	4	1/ 475 words	2,11
Donatello	5700	12	1/ 475 words	2,11
Lorenzo Ghiberti	6800	14	1/ 486 words	2,06
Andrea del Castagno & Domenico Veneziano	3000	6	1/ 500 words	2,00
Domenico Ghirlandaio	5100	10	1/ 510 words	1,96
Michelangelo Buonarroti	48000	84	1/ 571 words	1,75
Rosso Fiorentino	4900	7	1/ 700 words	1,43
Pinturicchio	2200	3	1/ 733 words	1,36
Tiziano Vecellio	8900	12	1/ 742 words	1,35
Paolo Uccello	3300	4	1/ 825 words	1,21
Giotto	8600	10	1/ 860 words	1,16
Sandro Botticelli	2600	3	1/ 867 words	1,15
Giorgione da Castelfranco	1800	2	1/ 900 words	1,11
Properzia de' Rossi	1800	2	1/ 900 words	1,11
Perugino	5500	6	1/ 917 words	1,09

Artist/Life	Document length (approx. word tokens)	Total analysed concordance lines	Relative freq. of «arte», approx.	Normalised freq. per 1000 words
Luca Signorelli	1900	2	1/ 950 words	1,05
Leon Battista Alberti	2000	2	1/ 1000 words	1,00
Filippo Brunelleschi	14800	14	1/ 1057 words	0,95
Domenico Beccafumi & Getti Senese	5700	5	1/ 1140 words	0,88
Iacopo della Quercia	2300	2	1/ 1150 words	0,87
Piero della Francesca	2400	2	1/ 1200 words	0,83
Giulio Romano	8600	7	1/ 1229 words	0,81
Simone Martini	2700	2	1/ 1350 words	0,74
Giovanni da Fiesole (Beato Angelico)	4100	2	1/ 2050 words	0,49
Andrea Mantegna	2700	1	1/ 2700 words	0,37
Pontormo	12300	4	1/ 3075 words	0,33

Both Raffaello and Michelangelo figure within the top half of the table, from Ducio di Buoninsegna to Tiziano, which includes the lives where the occurrences of «arte» are relatively more frequent. However, only in a few documents does the relative frequency of «arte» go beyond 1/1000 or 1/2000 words – something I would interpret as a quantitative confirmation of the relevance of this notion in Vasari's work.

Let us now zoom in on qualitative metaphor analysis, with Figure 1 below. Six different categories emerged from the 128 metaphorical concordance lines: metaphors based on personification (ART IS A HUMAN BEING), objectification (ART IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT), love (ARTIST/ART RELATIONSHIP or PATRON/ART RELATIONSHIP IS LOVE), competition between art and nature, usually in their capacity to produce beauty (NATURE/ART RELATIONSHIP IS COMPETITION)¹⁰, place (ART IS A PHYSICAL PLACE) and supernatural force or religion (ART IS A SUPERNATURAL FORCE/RELIGION) – these last two grouped under a single category for convenience, due to the affinities between the source domains and the small number of occurrences. As shown by Figure 1, most linguistic metaphors found in the data belong to categories showing the abstract to concrete shift that is typical of conceptual metaphors (see Section 2), whereby a more directly experienced source concept is mapped onto an abstract target concept, making it more accessible: these are objectification, personification, and place. Overall, the occurrences of metaphors found in the data can be associated with one single category in a straightforward way; linguistic metaphors instantiating more than one category at a time were only occasionally found (e.g., a few personifications also hint at a competition between

¹⁰ Both love and competition metaphors are generally based on an underlying personification of art (and, in the case of competition, also of nature).

nature and art)¹¹. Personification and objectification metaphors are by far the most numerous, with 49 and 48 occurrences respectively, followed by love (14 occurrences), place (9 occurrences), competition (4 occurrences) and supernatural force/religion (4 occurrences, exclusively in the *Life of Michelangelo*). Figure 1 visually represents this distribution, also in terms of percentage values.

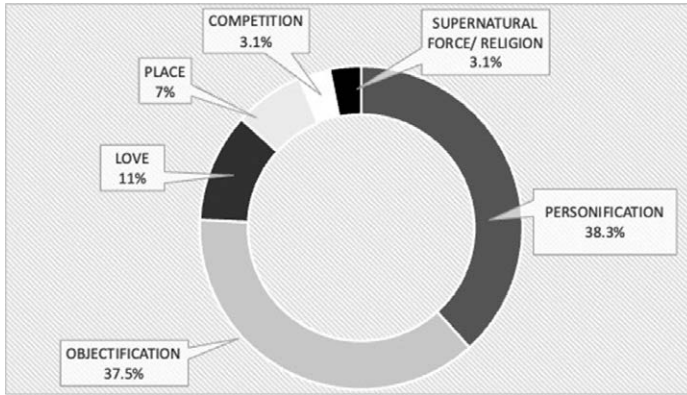


Fig. 1 Metaphors involving «arte»: categories and distribution.

Overall, results point to the polysemous nature of the word «arte» in Vasari, whose senses range from the etymologically primary «skill acquired by experience, study or observation» to «skill used in the creation of aesthetic objects»¹², but also, with a stronger focus on the practical or technical aspects, «manual dexterity, craft» (on the semantics of «arte» and on the language of art in general, see also Pano Alamán 2017). However, «arte» is also sometimes used in place of «opera d'arte» («artwork»), with a metonymic effect; we shall come back to this point below while discussing objectification metaphors. All the above-mentioned senses of the word lend themselves to metaphorical re-elaboration.

Personification and objectification metaphors also realise more specific sub-patterns besides the general mappings ART IS A HUMAN BEING and ART IS A PHYSICAL OBJECT. Several instances of personification (11 out of 49, or 22.4%) include a metonymic component that we could paraphrase as ART FOR THE ARTIST (on the metaphor-metonymy continuum, see, e.g., the review provided in Terry 2020; on the specific connections between metonymy and personification, see Viimaranta, Mustajoki 2020; Wang 2020). In these cases, it is art that is represented as (intentionally) acting, in place of the artist, who is thus de-humanised, portrayed as a tool that art itself can use, or effaced altogether, as in the following example (where art, not the artist, is described as being capable of certain accomplishments):

¹¹ In these cases, however, a primary metaphor was identified and taken into account to compute the final figures provided below.

¹² See www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art (22/12/2022).

(1) et in esso Cristo [...] è tutta quella grazia e divinità, per dir così, che può l'arte dar a una figura (*Vita di Andrea del Verrocchio*).

Another, minor sub-pattern within personification is represented by those cases (5 out of 49, or 10.2%) in which the metaphor, besides assigning human qualities to the abstract notion of art, also provides details concerning the specific relationship linking it with the artist, or with nature: i.e., art as mother, 'creator', friend, even wife of the artist; as nature's daughter; as a living body whose parts are the artists themselves, e.g.:

(2) Io ho moglie troppa, che è questa arte che m'ha fatto sempre tribolare (*Vita di Michelangelo*).

As for objectification metaphors, here too we find a few instances (3 out of 48 metaphorical concordance lines, or 6.3%) of metaphor-metonymy conflation, in the form of ART FOR THE ARTWORK, as in the following example. Here, «arte» was analysed as basically standing for «opera/opere d'arte». In fact, what Cimabue can act upon is, literally, an artwork, or a group of artworks; these then become symbolically representative of art as a whole. By the same token, art is in turn represented as an object, one that Cimabue can 'add perfection to', and 'remove rude manner from', as if these abstractions were physical entities themselves.

(3) E perché, se bene imitò que' Greci, aggiunse molta perfezzione all'arte levandole gran parte della maniera loro goffa, onorò la sua patria col nome e con l'opre che fece; di che fanno fede in Fiorenza le pitture che egli lavorò (*Vita di Cimabue*).

In other cases (8 out of 48, or 16.7%), art is not just portrayed as a generic physical object, but, more specifically, as a container, a building, even a medicine. An example of the container sub-pattern, instantiated by the metaphorical use of the verb «porre in», co-occurring with the abstract noun «arte», can be found below:

(4) come apertamente si può vedere nelle fatiche che il Rosso pittor fiorentino pose nell'arte della pittura (*Vita di Rosso Fiorentino*).

In addition, several concordance hits (5 out of 48, or 10.4%) also include a semantic component of 'light', realised by the nouns «luce», «lucerna» and «lume». In these cases, art is described as something physical that can be 'illuminated', e.g., by the artist's work, as in:

(5) Questa opera è stata et è veramente la lucerna dell'arte nostra, che ha fatto tanto giovamento e lume all'arte della pittura (*Vita di Michelangelo*).

The other metaphor categories found in the data, with fewer items, show less internal variation. The only exception is the category of metaphors based on the domain of love (see Section 4.2.3 for examples). Here – as noted above – art is invariably represented as the «loved one»; it is the «lover» that changes, being either the artist (the predominant pattern, with 10 occurrences, 71.4%) or an artist's patron (3 occurrences, 21.4%); in one case, the «lover» is unspecified.

4.2 Metaphors of art in the TTs: de Vere's and Bondanella and Bondanella's translations

Parallel data analysis mainly aimed at assessing how often the linguistic and conceptual metaphors involving «arte» in the ST were preserved in the TTs¹³, but it also took into account different solutions for translating the term «arte». To this end, the 128 metaphorical concordance lines from the ST (Section 4.1), aligned with their corresponding segments in the TTs, were examined on SketchEngine. Tables 3 and 4 below provide details for each translation, breaking down the data by metaphorical category.

Tab. 3. Metaphorical occurrences of art and their translations in BB.

Metaphor category	Tot. occurrences in ST	Maintained in TT (BB)	Not maintained in TT: metaphorical > literal	Not maintained in TT: category change	Not maintained in TT: no translation
Personification	49	31 (63.3%)	8 (16.3%)	5 (10.2%)	5 (10.2%)
Objectification	48	39 (81.2%)	3 (6.3%)	1 (2.1%)	5 (10.4%)
Love	14	10 (71.4%)	1 (7.1%)	0	3 (21.5%)
Place	9	2 (22.2%)	7 (77.8%)	0	0
Competition	4	3 (75%)	0	0	1 (25%)
Supernatural force/ religion	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)	0	0
Total	128	88 (68.7%)	20 (15.7%)	6 (4.7%)	14 (10.9%)

Tab. 4. Metaphorical occurrences of art and their translations in DV.

Metaphor category	Tot. occurrences in ST	Maintained in TT (DV)	Not maintained in TT: metaphorical > literal	Not maintained in TT: category change	Not maintained in TT: no translation
Personification	49	38 (77.5%)	2 (4.1%)	5 (10.2%)	4 (8.2%)
Objectification	48	38 (79.1%)	6 (12.5%)	3 (6.3%)	1 (2.1%)
Love	14	14 (100%)	0	0	0
Place	9	2 (22.2%)	7 (77.8%)	0	0
Competition	4	3 (75%)	0	0	1 (25%)
Supernatural force/ religion	4	4 (100%)	0	0	0
Total	128	99 (77.3%)	15 (11.7%)	8 (6.3%)	6 (4.7%)

Let us begin with a few general observations. As can be noted from the «Total» line in the two tables, the TTs for the most part maintain the metaphorical

¹³ Henceforth these are referred to as DV for de Vere and BB for Bondanella and Bondanella.

structure of the original concordance hits, preserving both the metaphorical uses of «arte» and the ST metaphor categories. This is the case in 88 out of 128 concordance hits in BB (68.7%), and in 99 out of 128 in DV (77.3%). This trend is mirrored by the data for the individual categories, except for place metaphors, the majority of which are actually turned into literal expressions in both TTs. As for the metaphors that are not maintained in the TT, these can be grouped under three headings, depending on the nature of the change taking place (columns 4 to 6): the original metaphor is replaced by a literal expression; the TT preserves a metaphorical component, but with a shift in the metaphor category (e.g., from personification in the ST to objectification in the TT); finally, no translation is provided. However, «no translations» are the outcome of different processes in the two TTs. In BB, «no translation» refers to metaphors located in textual passages (from a few lines to entire paragraphs) that were entirely omitted by the translators for reasons of space. Such omissions were found in the lives of Antonello da Messina, Duccio di Buoninsegna, Giotto, Ghiberti, Ghirlandaio, Michelangelo and Raffaello and affect all the categories except for place and supernatural force/religion. In DV, «no translation» takes the form of a 'zero translation', or «carry-over matching», in Malone's terminology (1988, 23); i.e., it refers to passages that were incorporated in the translation in the ST original language. This is de Vere's choice every time Vasari quotes from other literary texts (e.g., Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Pietro Aretino's sonnets), or introduces epitaphs in Latin into his text. «No translations» in DV were found in the lives of Giotto, Michelangelo, Properzia de' Rossi, Raffaello and Tiziano, and affect the categories of personification, objectification and competition. A comparison between the final «Total» line shows that, overall, metaphorical to literal shifts and «no translations» are more frequent in BB than in DV; conversely, category changes are slightly more frequent in the latter than in the former.

Concerning the translation of our focus word, «arte», de Vere's approach emerges as more 'conservative', in line with what he declares in his *Translator's Preface* (see Section 1). In DV, «arte» is translated as «art», with a strategy of equation – whereby «an element of the ST [...] is rendered by a TT element deemed the most straightforward counterpart available» (Malone 1988, 16) – in 119 of the 122 translated concordance lines (97.5%). In the remaining 3, we find «craftsmen» and «guilds» (1 occurrence each, co-occurring with place metaphors), and 1 instance of omission, in a concordance hit showing a personification. These translation choices inevitably impact on the original target concept, which undergoes a change (a move in the direction of concreteness and specification, in the case of «craftsmen» and «guilds») or disappears from the lexico-grammatical structure; therefore, they also determine the loss of the ST metaphors, which become literal expressions in the TT.

Conversely, in BB, where the translated passages amount to a total of 114 (columns 3 to 5 in Table 3), equation is adopted in approximately half of the cases (60 out of 114, or 52.6%). In the remaining 54 cases (47.4%), «arte» is variously rendered by items that do not attain formal correspondence, as detailed in Table 5 below. Textual evidence of this kind confirms what the translators

declare in their initial *Note*, with special reference to their decision to «render his [Vasari's] meaning, not his precise vocabulary» (Bondanella, Bondanella 1991, xvii; see Section 1).

Tab. 5. Formally different translations of «arte» in BB.

Lexical unit in TT (BB)	Occurrences (raw freq.)	Metaphor categories involved
Skill	22	Personification, Objectification
Craft	8	Personification, Objectification, Love, Place, Supernatural force/ religion
Profession	7	Personification, Objectification, Love, Place
Artistry	4	Objectification
Ø (omission)	2	Personification Place
Artistic	2	Personification, Objectification
Painting	2	Objectification, Love
Artfulness	1	Personification
Craftsmen	1	Personification
Guilds	1	Place
History (of painting)	1	Personification
Sculpture	1	Personification
Skillfully	1	Objectification
Work of art	1	Supernatural force/ religion

This lexical set is much wider than the one we find in DV. Indeed, Bondanella and Bondanella frequently opt for either items that emphasise one of the specific senses of «arte» mentioned in Section 4.1 above («skill», «craft», «artistry», «artfulness», «work of art»), or direct hyponyms («painting», «sculpture»). They also occasionally resort to lexical units that detach themselves from the original (e.g., the superordinate element «profession», «history») or belong to different grammatical classes («artistic», «skillfully»). As in DV, we also find cases of omission, along with the words «craftsmen» and «guilds», which construe the same move in the direction of concreteness and specification noted above; «guilds», in particular, appears in the same concordance in BB and DV¹⁴. Table 5 also shows that these translation shifts were found in practically all the metaphor categories, except for competition, where all the translated occurrences exhibit formal correspondence between ST («arte») and TT («art»). However, not all the above-mentioned translation choices determine, in and of

¹⁴ The concordance comes from the Life of Michelangelo and includes the only instance of «arte» (lowercase initial) explicitly meaning 'guild' in the Italian dataset; see also Note 6 above.

themselves, the loss of the original metaphors, or a change in the original metaphor category; we will consider select examples while looking at the individual metaphor categories below.

A final observation emerging from analysis is that the reiteration of «arte» as an ‘umbrella term’, encompassing all the specific senses mentioned above, realises an important lexical string running through Vasari’s ST and enhancing cohesion among its various parts (Halliday, Hasan 1976, Chapter 6; Miller 2017, 71). This is preserved in the analysed concordance hits from DV, while, in BB, it is basically abandoned in favour of a more strongly marked lexical variety. Let us now turn to a closer look at the individual metaphor categories.

4.2.1 Personification

The metaphors in this category mainly function to stress the capacity of art to impact on the artists’ work, but also on their lives as a whole. By humanising art – portraying it as endowed with intellect, consciousness, skillfulness, motivation, and also as acting intentionally – Vasari highlights the active role it takes as a ‘guide’ for the artist.

Personifications are maintained in 63.3% of the cases in BB, and 77.5% in DV. Below is an example where both TTs preserve the original category.

(6)

[ST] nella quale opera mostrò quanto *la grazia nelle delicatissime mani di Raffaello potesse insieme con l'arte (Vita di Raffaello)*.

[BB] a work which demonstrated how much *the grace of Raphael's extremely delicate hands could achieve when joined with his skill*.

[DV] in which work it is evident how much *grace, in company with art, could accomplish by means of the delicate hands of Raffaello*.

The ST illustrates one of the sub-patterns of personifications identified in Section 4.1: the presence of a metonymic component of the kind ART FOR THE ARTIST, through which the above-mentioned representation of personified art as a guiding principle emerges more forcefully. In the ST, «grazia» and «arte» are presented as the agents showing their power in the artistic creation, in place of Raffaello. The use of the verb «potere» in the ST, with the ellipsis of the infinitive, stands for ‘poter fare’, ‘poter raggiungere’; the TTs «could achieve» and «could accomplish» seem to make the component of intentionality more explicit. In BB, «arte» is translated as «skill», with the addition of the possessive «his»: a lexical choice that focuses more on ‘practical’ aspects, such as Raffaello’s expertise and manual dexterity. DV, by contrast, opts for an equation «arte» = «art», thus reproducing the original personification *in toto* (i.e., in the target concept and in its linguistic realisation); also to be noted is the translation of «insieme con» as «in company with», emphasising the personification. Interestingly, both BB and DV detach themselves from the ST in the translation of the circumstance of place «nelle delicatissime mani di Raffaello» – though with opposite effects. In BB, this is rendered with a prepositional phrase functioning

as a qualifier to the nominal group «the grace» («of Raphael's extremely delicate hands»). Grace is thus construed as a property of Raffaello's hands; the original metonymy ART FOR THE ARTIST, consequently, becomes less evident. DV, by contrast, makes Raffaello's instrumental role more explicit, thus also strengthening the ART FOR THE ARTIST metonymy, through a prepositional phrase realising a circumstance of means («*by means of the delicate hands of Raffaello*»).

Among the metaphorical expressions that tend to be maintained in the TTs are the more elaborated and less conventional ones (cf. the different levels of perceived metaphoricity described in Section 3; on creative and deliberate metaphors in translation, see Section 2, particularly work by Prandi and Steen). An example follows:

(7)

[ST] Et oltre a *questo beneficio che e' fece all'arte, come amico di quella*, non restò vivendo mostrarci come si negozia con gli uomini grandi, co' mediocri e con gl' infimi (*Vita di Raffaello*).

[BB] And besides *the benefits he conferred upon the art of painting, as a true friend of art*, Raphael while alive never ceased showing us how to deal with great men, men of middle station, and those of the lowest rank.

[DV] And in addition to *this benefit that he conferred on art, like a true friend to her*, as long as he lived he never ceased to show how one should deal with great men, with those of middle station, and with the lowest.

Example (7) illustrates yet another sub-pattern within the category of personifications (see again Section 4.1), whereby the metaphor describes the art/artist relationship – in this case, friendship. The linguistic metaphor realising the personification, «amico di quella», calls for the reader's attention, being inserted into a parenthetical clause. The TTs maintain the personification of art, though with slight differences. In BB, «arte» becomes «art of painting», through explicitation, and «art» is repeated in place of the ST demonstrative pronoun, «quella». In DV, by contrast, the choice of the pronominal form «her» for «art», showing gender, is in line with the personification already introduced by the lexical unit «friend». Interestingly, all the translators choose to expand the original nominal group, «amico», by adding an intensifying pre-modifier, «true».

As for the personifications that are lost in the TT, in BB the most frequent case is a shift to a literal expression (almost always a consequence of the substitution of «arte» with a non-direct equivalent), while in DV it is a change in the metaphor category. Two examples follow.

(8)

[ST] nel quale si dimostra lo sbuffamento et il fremito del cavallo, et il grande animo e *la ferezza vivacissimamente espressa dalla arte* nella figura che lo cavalca (*Vita di Donatello*).

[BB] In this work Donatello displayed the snorting and whinnying of the horse as well as the great courage and *ferocity vividly expressed in the artfulness of the figure riding it*.

(9)

[ST] ha aperto la via alla facilità di questa *arte* nel *principale suo intento*, che è il corpo umano (*Vita di Michelangelo*).

[DV] he opened out the way to facility in this *art* in its *principal province*, which is the human body.

In example (8), the segment in the ST begins with a relative clause, following on from the previous text, with an impersonal structure («si dimostra»). In BB, we have a new sentence (indicated by the initial capital), with the subject made explicit, and a change in tense from present to past («Donatello displayed»). More directly relevant to our metaphor analysis are the passages in italics. In the ST, the proud attitude¹⁵ of the figure riding the horse is said to be expressed by art itself. Art 'bypasses' the artist, who is not even mentioned – another instance of synergy between metaphor and metonymy. In the TT, firstly, «arte» is rendered by a nominalisation, «artfulness» ('the quality of being artful'); secondly, the prepositional phrase «dalla arte» – realising an agentive role in Italian, and thus contributing to the personification – becomes «in the artfulness»: a circumstance of place. Together, these two changes determine the loss of the original metaphor, which is replaced by a literal expression. Turning to example (9), I classified the ST as an instance of personification activated by the lexical unit «intento» ('aim'), interpreting «suo» as referring to «arte», as this seemed to be the most straightforward interpretation, due to proximity between the two items in the linguistic structure. «Intento» is rendered in the TT by «province». This lexical choice brings the English wording closer to a place metaphor, representing art as a country having provinces. Indeed, while it is true that one of the senses of «province» is «one's area of business or expertise», the etymologically primary sense of the word is that of «territory», «political or administrative division of a country»¹⁶; the move from personification to place seems to be confirmed by the choice of the neutral possessive, «its» (cf. example (7), with «her» referring to «art» in DV).

4.2.2 Objectification

Objectification metaphors emerge from analysis of the ST occurrences as complementary to personifications. By objectifying it, Vasari emphasises the physical qualities of art and its perceptible presence in the artists' work, as if art itself were among the materials from which artworks are crafted.

The percentage of objectifications that are maintained in the TT is even higher than that of personifications: 81.2% in BB and 79.1% in DV. In the following example, the two translations diverge, going against the 'conservative' trend

¹⁵ Also to be noted is Bondanella and Bondanella's choice of the lexical unit «ferocity» for «fierezza», whose meaning in Italian is actually closer to «proud attitude», or «pride» (this is the choice in DV).

¹⁶ See <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=province>

highlighted so far in de Vere's text: while BB maintains the original metaphor and its nuances, following the ST closely, DV does not.

(10)

[ST] Ma Michelagnolo, *stando saldo sempre nella profondità dell'arte*, ha mostro a quegli che sanno assai come dovevano arrivare al perfetto (*Vita di Michelangelo*).

[BB] But Michelangelo, *always standing firm in the profundity of his art*, demonstrated to those artists who are most knowledgeable how to attain perfection.

[DV] but Michelagnolo, *standing always firmly rooted in his profound knowledge of art*, has shown to those who know enough how they should attain to perfection.

The passage from the ST instantiates one of the sub-patterns of objectifications identified in Section 4.1, whereby art is specifically represented as a container surrounding and protecting the artist through the nominalisation «profondità» ('depth'), combined with the verb «stare saldo» ('stand firm') and the preposition «nella» ('in'), both expressing spatial position (on the metaphorical uses of 'in'/'out of' realising containment metaphors, see Lakoff, Johnson 1980, 31-32). Bondanella and Bondanella, while going towards the target culture by replacing «Michelagnolo» with the modern spelling «Michelangelo», choose a strategy of equation in rendering the verbal group («stando saldo» = «standing firm») and the original nominalisation («profondità» = «profundity»), thereby reproducing the objectification. DV, by contrast, opts for a congruent adjectival form («profondità» > «profound»), but introduces a new nominalisation, «knowledge», explicitly tied to «Michelagnolo» through the possessive «his». These choices have a domino effect, whereby the focus of the metaphor changes. It is not art in and of itself, but rather the «knowledge» of art (as the head of the nominal group) that is metaphorically represented as a container (metaphorical use of «in» plus «profound»). Therefore, with specific reference to «art», this was classified as a metaphorical to literal shift.

As we have seen, the objectifications that are not transferred to the TI are but a minority. In DV, the main reason in this case (differently from personifications) is precisely a metaphorical to literal shift, caused by substitutions in the lexical units co-occurring with «art», as in example (10) above. In BB, excluding no translations, we find 1 category change (2.1%) and 3 shifts to literalness (6.3%), 2 of which are determined by translation choices related to «arte», e.g.:

(11)

[ST] Alla quale opera non pensi mai scultore né artefice raro potere aggiugnere di disegno né [...] di straforare il marmo tanto *con arte* quanto Michelagnolo vi fece (*Vita di Michelangelo*).

[BB] No sculptor, not even the most rare artist, could ever reach this level of design and grace, nor could he [...] cut the marble as *skilfully* as Michelangelo did here.

In (11), the prepositional phrase «con arte» («with art») was analysed as metaphorically construing art as a physical object (a tool in the hands of Michelangelo), in view of the basic meaning of «(s)traforare», which is evidently physical («to

perforate»), and also considering that the verb co-occurs with circumstances of means realised by similar prepositional phrases in its literal uses (e.g., «(s)traforare col trivello», «con un chiodo» (www.treccani.it/vocabolario/traforare/). «Con arte» is rendered as a circumstance of manner, with the adverbial group «skillfully», in BB, causing the loss of what I have labelled as a metaphorical instance in the ST, and signalling that the translators' interpretation was probably different.

4.2.3 Love and supernatural force/religion

These two categories are here considered together in view of their similar functions; they both foreground the strength of the connection between art and its adepts and art's overwhelming power, with a 'hyperbolic' effect.

DV maintains the totality of the instances of these metaphors, as in (12), where the English text replaces the ST synonymy pair, «desiderio» and «voglia», with «desire» and «love», establishing a more explicit association with the domain of LOVE:

(12)

[ST] e gli venne subito *un desiderio grandissimo et una voglia sì spasimata di quell'arte* [...] (*Vita di Andrea del Castagno & Domenico Veneziano*).

[DV] and there came to him on the spot *a very great desire and so violent a love for that art* [...].

BB shows a preference towards maintaining these metaphors as well: this is the case in 71.4% of love and 75% of supernatural force/religion, with only 1 instance of metaphorical to literal shift in both categories. The following example is particularly interesting:

(13)

[ST] dicono alcuni, che le videro [...] non s'essere mai più veduto cosa che della *divinità dell'arte* nessuno alto ingegno possa arrivarla mai (*Vita di Michelangelo*).

[BB] some of the people who saw them declared that no other genius [...] could ever produce anything to equal *the sublime qualities of this work of art*.

In (13), the nominal group «divinità dell'arte», through the nominalisation functioning as its head ('the divinity of art'), explicitly evokes RELIGION/SUPERNATURAL FORCE as source domains: «divinità» is a nominal form from the adjective «divino», which in turn comes from «divus», «deus». The ST metaphor is lost in BB due to two interrelated choices. The first and most important, which also determines the shift to literalness, is the translation of «arte» as «this work of art», whereby the original, abstract, target domain is replaced by a physical one. At the same time, «divinità dell'arte» is translated as «sublime qualities». While it is true that the adjective «sublime» may also mean 'transcending human experience'¹⁷, the element of 'transcendence' in contemporary

¹⁷ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sublime

English inevitably echoes the development of the notion in the Romantic period, and seems to be contextually anachronistic with reference to Vasari's text, while the etymologically prior (because Latin-derived) «elevated, eminent» does not trigger any association with the original source domains. This is one of the examples in the dataset where the cultural component inherent in translating metaphors is more evident.

4.2.4 Place

As noted above, this is the only category where the original metaphors are mostly abandoned; both TTs exhibit shifts to literalness in 77.8% of the cases. This is due to the fact that, in analysing the ST occurrences, I decided to group under this category the idiomatic expressions «accomodare/porre/stare all'arte», which literally mean 'to apprentice' or 'to be apprenticed' and have no real equivalent in English. In fact, the TTs generally resort to literal wordings to render them. In just one case, DV shows again a tendency to preserve the original, wherever possible:

(14)

[ST] *alla pratica parve che fusse stato molti anni all'arte (Vita di Pontormo).*

[BB] *in terms of his skill, it seemed as if he had been painting for many years.*

[DV] *from his facility it seemed as if he had been many years in art.*

BB replaces the metaphor with a literal expression, omitting the term «arte» entirely and choosing, instead, a verbal form («he had been painting»). Conversely, DV opts for the expression «(be) in art», which probably sounds less 'natural' in English, but preserves the original metaphor (also introducing an element of 'containment'). The following is the only example from this category where the TTs are aligned in maintaining the ST metaphor:

(15)

[ST] *spinto dall'inclinazione della natura all'arte del disegno [...] (Vita di Giotto).*

[BB] *led on by his natural inclination towards the art of drawing [...].*

[DV] *impelled by a natural inclination to the art of design [...].*

In this case – which is also a less conventional realisation of a place metaphor, compared with the previous ones – both BB and DV keep the original representation of art as a place and, more specifically, a destination in a journey. Correspondence, from this viewpoint, is achieved through the choice of the two agnate verbs «led» and «impelled» for «spinto» («pushed»), and the equation between the original prepositional phrase «all'arte del disegno» and the English counterparts «towards the art of drawing»/«to the art of design», all realising circumstances of place. To be noted is Bondanella and Bondanella's translation of «arte del disegno» as «art of drawing», as some may argue (also from a culture-specific perspective) that «drawing» is not an art in and of itself, but rather a part of the 'overarching' art of «design» (see Hu 2019, 280).

4.2.5 Competition

These metaphors are numerically marginal and concentrated in just two lives (Raffaello and Michelangelo), but still interesting in their consistent construal of the same leitmotif: art rivalling nature in the creation of beauty – and invariably prevailing (on competition as a recurring theme in Vasari's *Lives*, see Clifton 1996). The linguistic realisations of this metaphorical pattern in the ST are also quite creative and are, indeed, maintained in both TTs, except for one case of no translation (which, coincidentally, affects the same concordance lines in BB and DV, from a sonnet written by Michelangelo). There is space for but one example:

(16)

[ST] Di costui fece dono al mondo *la natura* quando, *vinta dall'arte* per mano di Michelagnolo Buonarroti, *volle in Raffaello esser vinta dall'arte e dai costumi insieme* (*Vita di Raffaello*).

[BB] *Nature* created him as a gift to the world: *after having been vanquished by art* in the work of Michelangelo Buonarroti, *it wished to be vanquished through Raphael by both art and moral habits* as well.

[DV] Him *nature* presented to the world, when, *vanquished by art* through the hands of Michelagnolo Buonarroti, *she wished to be vanquished, in Raffaello, by art and character together*.

Both TTs make the same choice for translating «vinta» – «vanquished» – also preserving the original repetition which, in the ST, is responsible for stressing the lexico-grammatical parallelism between the second and the third sentence. Even if the Italian «vincere» is more neutral than «vanquish», which probably triggers a more specific association with the domain of WAR in English, the core element of competition is fundamentally preserved. De Vere's tendency to adhere to the ST (and, conversely, Bondanella and Bondanella's tendency towards a 'freer' style) emerges again in other choices; e.g., «per mano di Michelagnolo» is translated as «through the hands of Michelagnolo» in DV (with the same 'instrumental' representation of the artist), but is changed to «in the work of Michelangelo» in BB. DV also emphasises the personification of art undergirding competition metaphors by referring to it, in the third sentence, with the personal pronoun «she», while BB opts for the neutral form «it» (see also Section 4.2.1, example 7).

5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have presented a possible application of the LBC Italian corpus to metaphor translation studies, focusing on what I have called the 'metaphors of art' occurring in select concordance hits from Vasari's *Le Vite* and how (or if) these were transferred to two of its best-known English translations.

Even if metaphor, in its linguistic and conceptual dimensions, is a particularly challenging phenomenon, with an almost natural tendency to resist corpus techniques, this study has shown some of the ways in which analysis

of parallel concordance lines can be deployed to shed light on its translation, both in terms of the actual choices made by the translators and of the strategies adopted.

Corpus methods and qualitative analysis enable us to probe a translator's approach – as declared in a note, preface, or statement of purpose in general – through textual evidence. With reference to the translation of art metaphors considered here, de Vere's approach emerged from analysis as indeed more conservative than Bondanella and Bondanella's – insofar as de Vere displays a more marked tendency to maintain the original metaphors – thus confirming the translators' own statements. Results highlighted a more marked tendency to maintain the original metaphors, often also reinforcing them or making them more explicit, in de Vere's TT, and more variation in Bondanella and Bondanella's, which is more oriented towards the target culture. At the same time, a corpus approach combined with qualitative analysis made it easier to appreciate how lexico-grammatical choices can have a deep impact on the metaphorical expression, even if/when they do not directly address the source or the target concept, or are apparently 'close' to the original.

Finally, findings also stressed how metaphor can be said to function as an important cohesive device running through a text, linking its various parts in more or less 'covert' ways – this is an essential, if possibly underestimated, aspect that a translator will necessarily have to consider in producing his/her TT.

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