

INFORMATION EXCHANGE
ON FLEMISH AND DUTCH ARTISTS.
GIORGIO VASARI, HIDDEN PLAGIARIST OF LODOVICO
GUICCIARDINI¹

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Vasari's *Vite* enjoyed a tremendous success since its very first publication by Torrentino in Florence in 1550 (the *Torrentiniana* edition in two volumes, entitled *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori Italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*).² Various

¹ The original presentation from which this paper derives was also delivered in Italian at the *Giornate di studio su Lodovico Guicciardini*, 11-12 November 2015, organised by the Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata and The Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome.

² All our quotes in Italian come from G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri*, Florence, Torrentino, 1550 (henceforth: *Torrentiniana* or *Vite* 1550) and G. Vasari, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori*, Florence, Giunti, 1568 (henceforth: *Giuntina* or *Vite* 1568), and not from the modern edition by R. Bettarini and P. Barocchi, 6 t., Florence, Sansoni, 1966-1987). Regarding the scholarship on Vasari, the vast available literature is not listed here. See most recently *Vasari als Paradigma. Rezeption, Kritik, Perspektiven. The Paradigm of Vasari. Reception, Criticism, Perspectives*, F. Jonietz, A. Nova eds, Venezia, Marsilio, 2016 and *La réception des Vite de Giorgio Vasari dans l'Europe des XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles*, C. Lucas Fiorato, P. Dubus eds, Genève, Droz, 2017. In the first publication, see Donatella Fratini's contribution (*Vasari, Guicciardini, Van Mander e la genesi della*

documentary sources from the former Netherlands and the Principality of Liège bear witness to its success in the 1560s, like the letters from Dominique Lampson and Lambert Lombard to Vasari.³ Lampson also paid tribute to the author of the *Vite* in a poem preserved in an eighteenth century handwritten copy, inserted in a volume of the *Torrentiniana* which is kept in the Royal Library of Belgium, under the call number VH 22345.⁴ Another indication of the reception in the Netherlands of the Tuscan historiographer can be found in the anthology entitled *Den Hof en Boomgaard der Poë sien*, composed by Ghent painter and poet Lucas de Heere (1565). In an ode dedicated to Ghent's altarpiece of *The Mystic Lamb*, Lucas de Heere quotes Vasari when he evokes Jan van Eyck's fame in Italy.⁵

storiografia artistica nelle Fiandre), heavily inspired (p. 251-252) by our oral presentation (see note 1).

³ Lombard's letter to Vasari (1565) is preserved in the State Archives in Florence (Cart. Art. II, v, 3, f° 162r°-164r°). See a critical edition by J. W. Gaye, *Carteggio inedito d'artisti dei secoli XIV, XV, XVI*, t. 3, Florence, 1840, n° 157, p. 173-178. D. Allart is currently preparing a new critical edition of this letter. A letter from Dominique Lampson to Vasari, dating from 1564, is known because Vasari reproduced it in part in the second edition of his *Vite* (*Vite* 1568, p. 860-861). On this topic, see further, p. XXXX. Lampson's second letter, dated April 25, 1565, is preserved in the States Archives in Florence. Published originally by K. Frey (*Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, K. Frey, ed, Munich, Georg Müller, 1923-1930, nr 572, p. 158-163), it is also found in *Da Van Eyck a Brueghel. Scritti sulle arti di Domenico Lampsonio*. Introduzione e note di G.C. Sciolla e C. Volpi, traduzioni di M.T. Sciolla, Torino, UTET, 2001, p. 36-40.

⁴ Until recently, this copy was thought to have belonged to Lampson, because of the poem with Lampson's signature, found at the beginning of the first volume. But this is not an autograph poem. It is in fact an Eighteenth century transcription, as clearly analysed by S. Tullio Cataldo who, building on this observation and the close examination of the handwritten annotations found in both volumes, contradicts the traditional opinion. The Brussels copy probably circulated among Italians (S. Tullio Cataldo, *Vasari et Lampson: nouveaux aspects de la réception de Vasari dans les Flandres*, in *La réception des Vite de Giorgio Vasari dans l'Europe des XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles*, *op. cit.*, p. 347-372.

⁵ Lucas de Heere, *Den hof en Boomgaard der Poë sien*, met inleiding en aanteekeningen door W. Waterschoot, Zwolle, W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink, 1969, p. 31 (*Ode* 11, verses 61-65: Lucas de Heere writes that Vasari attributes the

His contemporary, the Florentine Lodovico Guicciardini, the nephew of the historian Francesco Guicciardini, had been living in Antwerp for quite some time. He was also a keen reader of Vasari's works. The *Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi* he published with Sylvius in 1567 includes, in a hefty chapter on the city of Antwerp, a long digression on Flemish and Dutch artists worthy of consideration, in which he commends his fellow countryman.⁶ In fact, Vasari had written a little about the most famous northern artists. Building on his own first-hand observations, Guicciardini had provided a considerable amount of new data. Most of it found its way into the second edition of Vasari's *Vite*, published by the Giunti in 1568 in Florence (a three-volume edition called *Giuntina*, reworked, supplemented and with a new title: *Le Vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*).

If critics have long noted the close relationship between Guicciardini's digression on Northern artists and some passages in Vasari's first edition of the *Vite* and more so in the second edition, they disagree, however, regarding the means of the transfer of information between the authors and particularly from the

invention of oil painting to Jan van Eyck and mentions works by the artist preserved in Naples, Florence and Urbino).

⁶ Guicciardini notes that one of Antwerp's three chambers of rhetoric, that of the *Violieren*, consisted almost entirely of painters, which led him to write this several-page digression on the most remarkable artists of the Netherlands (*Descrittione di M. Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi, altrimenti detti Germania inferiore*, Antwerpen, W. Silvius, 1567 (henceforth *Descrittione*), p. 97-101). During Guicciardini's lifetime, two other editions, revised and completed, were published by Plantin in Antwerp, in 1581 and 1588. In the 1581 edition, the extract is found on pages 141-147; in that of 1588 it is on pages 127-132. The extensive bibliography devoted to the book and its author cannot be listed here. See in particular E. van Even, *Lodovico Guicciardini*, in «Annales de l'Académie d'Archéologie de Belgique», 33, 1877, p. 249-324; R. H. Touwaide, *Messire Lodovico Guicciardini, Gentilhomme Florentin*, Nieuwkoop, De Graaf, 1975; *Lodovico Guicciardini (Florence 1521 – Anvers 1589)*. Actes du Colloque International, Bruxelles, 28, 29 et 30 mars 1990, ed. P. Jodogne, Leuven, Peeters, 1991 (with a bibliography); D. Aristodemo, *Lodovico Guicciardini. Descrittione di tutti i Paesi Bassi. Edizione critica*, Academisch Proefschrift, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1994 (unpublished).

Descrittione to the *Giuntina* edition of the *Vite*.⁷ There are three hypotheses: first, Vasari may have had access to Guicciardini directly, second, he was made aware of his work through the intervention of an intermediary source, and finally there may have been a common source. Much has already been written on this issue, but no-one has yet analysed the relationship between the two works using an interdisciplinary approach both philological and art historical. In doing so, we have uncovered several surprising elements.

We compared two sections of Vasari's *Vite*. The first is in the introduction, at the beginning of chapter XXI, on the art of oil painting, in which Vasari credits (inappropriately) the invention of this technique to Jan van Eyck and names some of its major representatives in the Flanders. This passage, found in the edition of 1550 is virtually unchanged in that of 1568.⁸ The second section is an appendix entirely devoted to the *Diversi artefici fiamminghi*, which only appears in the final volume of the *Giuntina* edition.⁹

Vasari also refers to Jan van Eyck in his note on Antonello de Messina, who was very open to the Flemish tradition, an aspect the historiographer explains by invoking (erroneously) a direct

⁷ See, in particular, C. Schnaase, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste*, Stuttgart, Ebner & Seubert, 1879, p. 107; H. E. Greve, *De Bronnen van Carel van Mander voor «Het Leven der doorluchtighe Nederlandsche en Hoogduytsche schilders»*, Den Haag, Martinus Nijhoff, 1903, p. 120-121; F. Becker, *Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der Altniederländische Malerei*, Leipzig, Sellmann & Henne, 1897, p. 69; J. von Schlosser, *La letteratura artistica*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1964, p. 297; G. Bonsanti, *Gli artisti stranieri nelle Vite del Vasari*, in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*. Atti del congresso internazionale nel IV centenario della morte, Firenze, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1976, p. 717-734, p. 728; J. M. Maldague, *La part de Guicciardini dans la littérature artistique de son temps*, in *Lodovico Guicciardini, op. cit.*, p. 321-335; W. Sosef, *Filiazione o parallelismo? Il rapporto fra le Vite vasariane e la Descrittione guicciardiniana*, *Ibidem*, p. 337-348; K. van Mander, *The lives of the illustrious Netherlandish and German painters*, H. Miedema ed., t. 2, Doornspijk, Davaco, 1994, p. 172-174.

⁸ The passage is found on pages 84-85 of the 1550 edition and page 51 of the 1568 edition.

⁹ This appendix is in the second volume of the third part, p. 857-861.

contact between the two painters. Besides, in the *Vita* of Marcantonio Raimondi, in which he offers a lengthy description of the art of engraving, Vasari honours some of its proponents in the Northern region. While we do not wish to appear to underestimate or neglect the content of these two passages, we will not dwell on them because they do not lead to any pertinent observations about our topic.¹⁰ Our analysis will therefore focus on the beginning of chapter XXI of the introduction and on the appendix *Diversi artefici fiamminghi* in the *Giuntina*.

The first artist Vasari honours in Chapter XXI of his introduction, in which he describes the early days of oil painting, is the one he considers to have invented the technique, Jan van Eyck (whom he calls *Giovanni da Bruggia*).¹¹ He then lists Rogier van der Weyden (*Rugieri da Bruggia*); Hans Memling (*Ausse da Bruggia*); a certain Louis of Louvain (*Lodovico da Luano*), probably the one he refers to later, in the 1568 appendix *Diversi artefici fiamminghi*, as *Divik da Lovano*, whom we would identify as Dirk Bouts;¹² Petrus Christus (*Pietro Crista*); Martin Schongauer (*Maestro Martino*); Just from Ghent (*Giusto da Guanto*); Hugo van der Goes (*Ugo d'Anversa*).

¹⁰ On this topic, see F. Elsig, *Giorgio Vasari e l'arte al Nord delle Alpi*, in *Giorgio Vasari e il cantiere delle Vite del 1550*, B. Agosti, S. Ginzburg, A. Nova eds, Venezia, Marsilio, 2013, p. 239-245.

¹¹ Jan van Eyck's prominence had already been recognised previously by Italian authors, notably Bartolomeo Facio from Genoa who in his *De Viris illustribus*, wrote in 1456: *Jobannes gallicus nostri saeculi pictorum princeps iudicatus est* (M. Baxandall, Bartholomaeus Facius on Painting: A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of the *De Viris Illustribus*, in «*Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*», vol. 27, 1964, p. 90-107). On this topic, see also D. Allart, *Le cose de Fiandra que allora sole erano in prezzo. La faveur de l'art flamand et la diffusion de la peinture à l'huile dans l'Italie du Quattrocento*, in *Les transferts artistique dans l'Europe gothique. Repenser la circulation des artistes, des œuvres, des thèmes et des savoir-faire (XIII-XVII^e siècle)*, J. Dubois, J.-M. Guillouët, B. Van den Bossche, A. Ersek eds, Paris, Picard, 2014, p. 113-128.

¹² Vasari first mentions him as *Lodovico da Lovano Luven Fiammingo* (*Vite* 1568, p. 857), then once again as *Divik da Lovano* (p. 859), probably without realising this was one and the same artist.

His list includes the most renowned Flemish painters of the fifteenth century, to which he adds Martin Schongauer, the Alsatian engraver and painter. He is the odd one out and his inclusion reveals how a Tuscan might have struggled to understand territorial borders North of the Alps.¹³ In any case, the listed artists all enjoyed immense prestige in Italy. Vasari notes that samples of their talent were to be found in Italian princely collections. He is quite succinct on this topic in the first edition of *Vite*. This should not come as a surprise: as announced in its title, the book focused on the art of the Peninsula.

When Guicciardini addresses the arts in the Netherlands in his *Descrittione* (1567), he refers with great respect to the data contained in chapter XXI of the introduction of the *Vite*. He mentions Vasari explicitly when he writes about Jan van Eyck (*come narra Giorgio Vasari Aretino nella sua bellissima opera de' Pittori eccellenti*), even quoting the same artists and in the same order.¹⁴ He writes their names in the form used by Vasari, except for the names of Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden which he adapts according to their usage in the Netherlands, producing the following hybrid forms: *Giovanni d'Eick* and *Rugieri vander Weiden*. Like Vasari, he begins his list with Jan van Eyck, for whom he uses the work of his fellow countryman. *Mandò costui delle sue opere in Italia al grande Re Alfonso di Napoli, al Duca d'Urbino, & ad altri Principi che furono molto stimate, onde il gran Lorenzo de' Medici ne raccolse poi anche egli la parte sua.*¹⁵ Vasari writes: *Giovanni da Bruggia il quale mandò la tavola à Napoli a'l Re Alfonso; & al Duca d'Urbino Federigo II la stufa sua, & fece un san Gieronimo, che Lorenzo de' Medici aveva, & molte altre cose lodate.*¹⁶ Guicciardini is able to supplement this

¹³ Vasari likens him to the Flemish in Marcantonio Raimondi's *Vita*. For Guicciardini, there was nothing unusual about this, the Netherlands were in his eyes a Germanic land, as specified in his title. On this topic, see D. Aristodemo, *La figura e l'opera di Lodovico Guicciardini*, in *Lodovico Guicciardini, op. cit.*, p. 19-35, p. 25.

¹⁴ *Descrittione*, p. 97. See further (p. 100), where Guicciardini refers to Vasari again when he writes about stained glass.

¹⁵ *Descrittione*, p. 97.

¹⁶ *Vite* 1550, p. 84.

piece of information. He proposes an approximate date - *intorno all' anno M.CCCC.X* - for the invention of oil painting. He also cites the famous achievements of Jan van Eyck in the Netherlands, like the altarpiece of the *Mystic Lamb*, which Vasari does not mention in the *Torrentiniana*. He adds that a painter who was still alive at the time, Michiel Coxcie from Mechelen, had made a copy of this altarpiece for the King of Spain (a detail that proved to be correct): *in Guanto nella chiesa di S. Bavone l'eccellentissima tavola del trionfo dell'Agnus Dei, benché alcuni inpropriamente la nominino d'Adam, & Eva: opera nel vero maravigliosa & ammiranda, in tanto che il Re Filippo desiderandola, & non osando di la torla, la fece ultimamente ritrarre per mandare in Hispagna, dall'eccele[n]te maestro Michele Cockisien (...)*¹⁷ In his list, he introduces Hubert van Eyck, Jan's older brother, who had been passed over in the *Torrentiniana*: *A pari a pari di Giovanni andava Huberto suo fratello, il quale viveva, & dipingeva continuamente sopra le medesime opere, insieme con esso fratello*.¹⁸ Regarding the other artists selected by Vasari, Guicciardini relies on him. He includes Martin (Schongauer) who becomes *Martino d'Hollandia*. He mentions Louis of Louvain (*Lodovico da Luano*), reproducing the form of his name as it appears in Vasari's work. As for Hugo van der Goes, a famous painter from Ghent who was active in Bruges and later in the Brussels region, Guicciardini called him Hugo of Antwerp (*Ugo d'Anversa*), as did Vasari.

¹⁷ *Descrittione*, p. 97. Guicciardini's additional information is largely derived from the indications found in verses 81-92 of an ode Lucas de Heere wrote on the altarpiece by the Van Eyck brothers (vv. 81-92; De Heere, L., *Den hof en boomgaard der Poësie*, *op. cit.*, p. 32). On this topic, see also K. van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, *op. cit.*, t. 2, p. 207 and p. 211-212.

¹⁸ *Descrittione*, p. 97.

Comparative table of the names in the *Torrentiniana* and the *Descrittione*

Vasari		Guicciardini	Modern name
Giovanni Bruggia	da	Giovanni d'Eick	Jan van Eyck
		Michel Cockisien	Michiel Coxcie
		Huberto (fratello di Giovanni)	Hubert van Eyck
Rugieri da Bruggia		Rugieri vander Vveiden	Rogier van der Weyden
Ausse (creato di Rugiero)	di	Hausse (scolare di Rugieri)	Hans Memling
Lodouico da Luano		Lodovico da Lovano	Dirk Bouts
Pietro Christa		Pietro Crista	Petrus Christus
Maestro Martino		Martino d'Holanda	Martin Schongauer
Giusto da Guanto		Giusto da Guanto	Juste de Gand
Ugo d'Anversa		Ugo d'Anversa	Hugo van der Goes

Guicciardini's list is far longer: eighty more names, which reflects a vast survey of the subject.¹⁹ The information is divided into different sections: deceased painters (men and then women) followed by alive painters (men and then women), deceased glass painters, followed by the alive ones, and finally, architects, sculptors and engravers.

This list is simply invaluable and deserves to be used by art historians specialised in Flemish and Dutch art. Indeed, the Florentine's panorama of the art scene in the Netherlands was no less decisive for the posterity of Flemish and Dutch artists than Vasari's list of the *più eccellenti architetti, pittori, e scultori italiani*. Regarding the painters, it served, directly or indirectly, as the basis of the list than Karel van Mander, the famous historian of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Netherlandish painting, revived and

¹⁹ 81 in total, but 80 if we remove Divik da Lovano, who should probably be identified as Lodouico da Louano, whom he had already mentioned.

supplemented in his *Schilder-Boeck*, published in Haarlem in 1604.²⁰ Architects and sculptors were beyond the scope of Van Mander's study so Guicciardini's *Descrittione* remains to this day, an unparalleled source.

While Guicciardini was completing his *Descrittione* in Antwerp, Vasari, was putting the finishing touches to his new supplemented edition of the *Vite*, which was due the following year. Unlike the *Torrentiniana*, this new version was not limited to Italy, as indicated by the change in the title. Yet, Vasari had not amended Section XXI of the introduction which appeared in the first volume, already ready in 1564. In his short list of Northern painters, he had merely replaced the word *similmente*, after a break between two series of references, with the words *Furono similmente de' primi...*²¹ suggesting that he was aware of the incomplete and simplistic nature of his selection.

The reason for inserting the appendix *Diversi artefici fiamminghi* in the last volume was obviously motivated by his desire to provide necessary additions:

Ora ancorché - writes Vasari – in molti luoghi, ma però confusamente, si sia ragionato dell'opere d'alcuni eccell[enti] pittori Fiamminghi e dei loro intagli, non tacerò i nomi d'alcun altri: poi che non ho potuto avere intera notizia dell'opere, i quali sono stati in Italia, & io gl'ho conosciuti la maggior parte, per apprendere la maniera italiana. Parendomi che così meriti la loro industria e fatica usata nelle nostre arti²².

To begin with, the author reiterates the names which were already in chapter XXI of his general introduction, but this time he adds certain details provided by Guicciardini. Thus, about Jan van Eyck, he gives the presumed date of the birth of oil painting,

²⁰ According to H. E. Greve and H. Miedema, Van Mander built on Vasari and not on Guicciardini (whom he never mentions). The question, however, needs to be reconsidered if we recognize - as we invite to do so here - a direct relationship between the *Giuntina* and the *Descrittione*.

²¹ *Vite* 1568, p. 51.

²² *Vite* 1568, p. 857.

but makes a mistake: instead of writing 1410, the date given by Guicciardini, he writes 1510.²³ When he evokes works by Jan van Eyck preserved in Ghent, Ypres and Bruges (*molte opera di sua mano in Guanto, in Ipri et in Bruggia*²⁴), he draws directly from Guicciardini, listing the three cities in the same order. Hubert van Eyck, unmentioned in the *Torrentiniana*, makes a discreet appearance: the mention *Giovanni Eick da Bruggia, & Huberto suo fratello*²⁵ is obviously inspired by Guicciardini's *A pari a pari di Giovanni andava Huberto suo fratello*.²⁶ The passage on Rogier van der Weyden also contains certain revealing similarities with Guicciardini's work. Vasari writes about *Ruggieri Vander Vneiden di Bruselles, il quale fece molte opere in piu luoghi, ma principalmente nella sua patria, e nel palazzo de' Signori quattro tavole a olio bellissime di cose pertinenti alla Iustitia*.²⁷ But, Guicciardini had written: *Rugieri van der Vveiden di Bruselles, il quale fra le altre cose fece le quattro degnissime tavole d'ammiranda historia, a proposito & esemplo del far' giustitia, che si veggono in detta terra di Bruselles al Palazzo de signori*.²⁸ Vasari also reconsiders Lovovico da Lovano whom he had previously mentioned in his introduction, adding *Luven fiammingo*.²⁹

Vasari adds two names to his initial enumeration. The first is Albrecht Dürer, included even though he is German, which confirms, as if it were needed, that Italians in this period had trouble distinguishing the Germanic regions from the Netherlands. The historiographer warns the reader that he will not dwell much on Dürer because he has already spoken about him elsewhere (he is

²³ The error had already been noted. See Giorgio Vasari, *Les Vies des meilleurs peintres, sculpteurs et architectes*, A. Chastel ed., Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1981-1987, p. 185, n. 4.

²⁴ *Vite* 1568, p. 857.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 97.

²⁷ *Vite* 1568, p. 857.

²⁸ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 98.

²⁹ *Vite* 1568, p. 857. We have identified this artist with Dirk Bouts, a painter from Louvain, as proposed in Giorgio Vasari, *Les Vies des meilleurs peintres, sculpteurs et architectes*, *op. cit.*, t. 1 p. 175 and n. 33.

referring to his *Vita* of Marcantonio Raimondi).³⁰ He adds that the same applies for *Luca d'Olanda*, i.e. Lucas van Leyden. There follows a reference to Michiel Coxcie (*Michele Cockisien*) who is included among the old masters although he was still alive at the time, because Guicciardini had mentioned his copy of the *Mystic Lamb* in the passage in which he described great artists of the past. Vasari emphasizes the fact that he knew Coxcie personally (he writes that he met him in Rome in 1532). He is thereby able to provide information unknown to Guicciardini: in Rome, Coxcie had executed many frescoes, especially for the church of Santa Maria dell'Anima.³¹ While asserting his authority as direct witness Vasari adds other data related to Coxcie's later artistic activity. He mentions his copy of the Ghent altarpiece, executed for the King of Spain at the end of the 1550s. He could not have known this kind of information from Coxcie directly, as the Mechelen-born master had left Italy a long time ago. Vasari found these details in Guicciardini's *Descrittione*,³² even though he omits to mention it.

In the appendix on *Diversi artefici fiamminghi*, the discussion on Coxcie leads Vasari to mention Maarten van Heemskerck and Hieronymus Cock, two artists he also claims to know personally, the former indirectly, thanks to the latter: *Studiò, poco dopo in Roma Martino Emskerck, buon maestro di figure, e paesi, il quale ha fatto in Fiandra molte pitture, e molti disegni di stampe di rame, che sono state, come s'è detto altrove, intagliate da Hieronimo Cocca, il quale conobbi in Roma (...)*.³³ In the process, Vasari also mentions Jan van Calcar (*Giovanni di Calker*), whom he had the opportunity to meet in Naples and about whom he is able to offer reliable information:

Conobbi ancora in Napoli, e fu mio amicissimo, l'anno 1545, Giovanni di Calker pittore fiammingo, molto raro, e tanto pratico nella maniera d'Italia che le sue opere non erano conosciute per mano di

³⁰ *Vite* 1568, p. 294-311, particularly p. 296-299.

³¹ *Vite* 1568, p. 858.

³² *Descrittione* 1567, p. 97.

³³ *Vite* 1568, p. 858.

Fiammingo, ma costui morì giovane in Napoli, mentre si sperava gran cose di lui; il quale disegnò la sua Notomia al Vessalio.³⁴

After this *excursus* based on his own memories, Vasari resumes his evocation of the great names of the past: *Ma innanzi a questi fu molto in pregio Divik da Lovano (...)*³⁵; he mentions Dirk Bouts once again without realizing it, because he refers to him under a different (and equally wrong) name from the one he used in his initial list. Then comes a very long and somewhat unpalatable enumeration, in which he deals with artists whose names are obviously not familiar to him, with very few exceptions, and whose name he often mangles, to the point of making them sometimes unrecognizable in the first instance. These artists are almost all mentioned by Guicciardini,³⁶ if we except two glass painters, *Gualtieri e Giorgio fiaminghi*, who, writes Vasari, produced stained glass windows for the Duke of Florence after his own drawings.³⁷ Of the 76 artists he mentions by name, *Gualtieri* and *Giorgio* are in fact the only ones he knows personally, with Michel Coxcie, Hieronymus Cock, Maarten van Heemskerck and Jan van Calcar.³⁸

Vasari does not follow Guicciardini's order in the way he lists the other artists. At first glance, they seem to differ greatly - the order of the references, name spelling, the provided information - and we might come to doubt that his favourite source was the *Descrittione*. But, by examining both texts more closely and comparing them systematically, one detects correspondences that dispel any lingering doubts. Just like Guicciardini, Vasari

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ In contrast, Vasari removes 14 names listed in the *Descrittione*: 2 deceased painters, 4 living painters, 2 living women, 1 deceased glass painter, all (4) the living glass painters, 1 deceased architect.

³⁷ *Vite* 1568, p. 860.

³⁸ Stradanus and Giambologna are also mentioned, but as sources living in Florence and not as representative of the artistic disciplines practised in the Netherlands (see further).

associates artists from the same city, for example: *Dirick da Lovano (...), & Quintino della medesima terra*.³⁹ In the *Descrittione*, we find: *Dirick da Lovano grandissimo artefice, Quintino della medesima terra*.⁴⁰ The same applies to artists from the same family: *Gilis Mostaret fratello di Francesco su-detto*;⁴¹ in the *Descrittione*: *Gilis Mostaret, fratello di Francesco predetto*.⁴² Such correspondences would be inexplicable without postulating that Vasari consulted the *Descrittione*. In addition, Vasari often writes similar appreciations to Guicciardini's. A rather obvious example is Guillaume Key. Guicciardini had introduced this painter as *eccellentissimo nel ritrarre dal naturale, huomo sobrio, severo & acuto*.⁴³ For his part, Vasari writes that Guillaume Key is *huomo moderato, grave, di giudizio, e molto imitatore del vivo, e delle cose della natura*.⁴⁴

Sometimes Vasari makes mistakes when he borrows almost mechanically the pattern of Guicciardini's descriptions: this is the case when he mentions *Guglielmo Palidamo*⁴⁵ (Willem van den Broeck, aka Guilielmus Paludanus), about whom he writes that he is *fratello d'Enrico predetto*, as does Guicciardini (*Guglielmo Palidamo, fratello d'Henrico predetto*).⁴⁶ But he does not realise he forgot to add *Henrico* first. This is a typical error induced by mechanical copy, which can only be explained through direct consultation of Guicciardini's text.

In other instances, Vasari moves away from the *Descrittione* when he groups artists according to a different criterion than Guicciardini. This is the case with four painters mentioned by the latter: *Girolamo Cock [...]* *Martino di Vos [...]* ; *Luigi van Hort [...]* *et*

³⁹ *Vite* 1568, p. 858.

⁴⁰ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 98.

⁴¹ *Vite* 1568, p. 859.

⁴² *Descrittione* 1567, p. 100.

⁴³ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 99.

⁴⁴ *Vite* 1568, p. 859.

⁴⁵ *Vite* 1568, p. 860.

⁴⁶ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 101.

Iacopo Grimer, [...] *tutti nativi d'Anversa*, writes Guicciardini.⁴⁷ Vasari breaks with this series to emphasize Jacob Grimmer's and Hans Bol's skill in painting landscapes. Indeed, Guicciardini had also indicated that they were *grande artefice in paesaggi* (for Grimmer) and *eccellente ne' paesaggi a tempera* (for Bol).⁴⁸ Vasari writes about them: *Ma quanto al fare bellissimi paesi, non ha pari Iacopo Gimer* (sic), *Nanz Bolz* (sic), *et altri tutti d'Anversa* (...).⁴⁹ In fact, as Guicciardini had correctly stated, Bol was originally from Mechelen, not Antwerp. Once again, Vasari makes a factual error, which can only be explained by a direct but hasty reading of the *Descrittione*.

The case of Pieter Pourbus raises a similar issue: Guicciardini writes the following: *Pietro Pourbus, il cui figliuolo Francesco discepolo di Francesco Floris, ancor che giovanetto, apparisce eccellente*.⁵⁰ Vasari removes the allusion to Pieter Pourbus' son (Frans Pourbus), but he attributes erroneously the adjective *giovinetto* to the father, which gives *Pietro Pourbus giovanetto ha dato saggio di dover riuscire eccellente pittore*.⁵¹ Yet Pieter Pourbus was by then a mature and recognized artist. Here again, we are dealing with an error that cannot be explained otherwise than by the clumsy combination of various portions of text from the *Descrittione*.

We could add other examples to this list that reveals Vasari's "copy-paste" approach to Guicciardini's text, but the mentioned cases should be enough to establish the author's *modus operandi*. Let us add that the enumeration of architects and sculptors follows the same order in both texts, and that Vasari's list offers no more details than Guicciardini's.

The artist with whom Vasari ends his appendix is Lambert Lombard from Liège. This time, the available information came from Dominique Lampson, with whom he corresponded, as he acknowledges himself:

⁴⁷ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 99.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Vite* 1568, p. 859.

⁵⁰ *Descrittione* 1567, p. 100.

⁵¹ *Vite* 1568, p. 859.

Ma di tutti i sopradetti è stato maggiore Lamberto Lombardo da Liege, gran letterato, giudizioso pittore, & architetto eccellentissimo, maestro di Franc. Floris e di Guglielmo Cai, delle virtù del quale Lamberto, e d'altri mi ha dato molta notizia per sue lettere M. Domenico Lampsonio da Legie, uomo di bellissime lettere, e molto giudizio in tutte le cose: il quale fu familiare del Cardinale Polo d'Inghilterra, mentre visse, & ora è segretario di monsignor Vescovo e Principe di Lege. Costui dico mi mandò già scritta latinamente la vita di detto Lamberto: e più volte mi ha salutato a nome di molti de' nostri artefici di quella provincia.⁵²

The information on Lambert Lombard is actually taken from Lampson's *Vita Lombardi*, a handwritten copy of which had been sent to Vasari in 1565.⁵³ Echoes of Guicciardini's text are nonetheless detectable in his appreciation of the artist's work. The author of the *Descrizione*, who had quite clearly drawn from the same source, introduced *Lamberto Lombardo di Liege* as *uomo degno, letterato, & di gran iudicio, et non solo eccellente pittore, ma anche grande architetto, il quale fu qualche tempo maestro di Francesco Floris, & di Guglielmo Cai sopradetti*.⁵⁴

By insisting on his debt to Lampson, even mentioning the *Vita Lombardi*, Vasari demonstrates how scrupulously accurate he can be. Obviously, he wishes to commend his correspondent. One ought to mention that the latter had flattered him in a particularly complimentary letter addressed to him on October 30, 1564, a

⁵² *Vite* 1568, p. 860.

⁵³ Arezzo, Archivio Vasari, cod. LXV, ff° 93-102. It was published by A. Del Vita, *Lo Zibaldone di G. Vasari*, Roma, Istituto d'archeologia e storia dell'arte, 1938, p. 209-224.

⁵⁴ *Descrizione* 1567, p. 99. Guicciardini adds other information from the *Vita Lombardi*: *costui fra le altre sue virtù si diletta molto delle medaglie antiche et però n'ha raccolto et va raccogliendo generosamente gran numero*. The *Vita Lombardi* was published in Antwerp in 1565.

letter that Vasari transcribes in the *Giuntina*, after the passage on Lombard.⁵⁵

In contrast, he does not make the slightest reference to the *Descrittione*. Yet, Guicciardini's work was the main source for the appendix on the *Diversi artefici fiamminghi*, as demonstrated by our textual comparisons. There is therefore no doubt that Vasari had a copy of Guicciardini's work before the publication of the second edition of his *Vite*.⁵⁶ This should not come as a surprise: the *Descrittione* was available before its official dissemination since a copy was offered to Ghent's Magistrates on December 12, 1566.⁵⁷ A few weeks later, copies are attested in Florence. In a letter addressed to his brother Raffaello, dated February 8, 1566 (1567 ns.), Lodovico Guicciardini told him he was sending him a copy.⁵⁸ Previously, he had also sent a luxury coloured version, to Cosimo I de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany.⁵⁹ The latter had

⁵⁵ *Vite* 1568, p. 860-861. As mentioned above, this letter is one of the important testimonies of the reception of the *Torrentiniana* north of the Alps (on this topic, see here, note 3).

⁵⁶ It is difficult to determine exactly when the second edition of the *Vite* was actually finalised. The available documentation give us a *terminus post quem* in September 1567. The letter of Giovan Battista Adriani on the ancient artists which was included in the third part of the *Giuntina* is dated September 8, 1567 (see the clarification after the discovery of the manuscript of this letter: E. Carrara, *Giovanni Battista Adriani e la stesura della seconda edizione delle Vite: il manoscritto inedito della Lettera a Messer Giorgio Vasari*, in "Conosco un ottimo storico dell'arte". Per Enrico Castelnuovo, scritti di allievi e amici pisani, M. M. Donato, M. Ferretti eds, Pisa, Ed. della Normale, 2012, p. 281-289, p. 282. Vasari also mentions a self-portrait to be sent to the engraver Cristoforo Coriolano to finalise the iconographic content of the *Vite* (*Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, *op. cit.*, t. 2, p. 350-353) in a letter addressed to Borghini dated September 20, 1567.

⁵⁷ E. van Even, *Lodovico Guicciardini*, *op. cit.*, p. 274; R.H. Touwaide, *Messire Lodovico Guicciardini*, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁵⁸ Florence, Archivio Guicciardini, LII. See R. H. Touwaide (*op. cit.*, annexe 10, p. 128-129).

⁵⁹ He writes about it in a letter dated March 22, 1566 (1567 n. s.) sent from Antwerp to his brother Raffaello (Florence, Archivio Guicciardini, LII). This copy might be the one preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence (Legature 217); see however A. Cantile, G. Lazzi, L. Rombai,

acknowledged receipt of the work in a letter dated February 7, 1567:

Agnolo vostro fratello ci ha presentato insieme con la vostra delli 4 del passato il libro della descriptione di cotesti paesi di Fiandra composto da voi il quale ci è stato molto grato havendo parimente preso piacere che tal' opera sia stata accetta al consiglio regio et al universale onde di sì honorata fatica meritate lode.⁶⁰

Vasari, who worked for Cosme I could have easily consulted Guicciardini's work as he was finishing the re-edition of his *Vite*.

His silence on the subject is quite disconcerting. The omission is all the more flagrant that Vasari does not conceal his borrowings from other sources. He mentions Lampson, not only about Lambert Lombard – as we have seen above - but also about Frans Floris, Guillaume Key and Michiel Coxcie. Lampson, he writes, would have likened them to a musical trio: *g'agguaglia a una bella musica di tre, nella quale faccia ciascun la sua parte con eccellenza*.⁶¹ Vasari suggests that thanks to Lampson he had been put in touch with many Northern artists: *e piu volte mi ha salutato a nome di molti de' nostri artefici di quella provincia*.⁶² He also acknowledges the input of artists he met personally in Italy: Hieronymus Cock and Jan van Calcar, as well as Jan van der Straet (aka Stradanus) and Giambologna, both of whom worked just as he did for the Medici family in Florence. He refers to the latter when writing about Jan Gossart of Maubeuge:

E Giovanni di Malengt (sic) fu quasi il primo che portasse d'Italia in

Rappresentare e misurare il mondo : da Vespucci alla modernità, Firenze, Ed. Polistampa, 2004, p. 149. See also R. H. Touwaide, *op. cit.*, p. 100, n° 45).

⁶⁰ Florence, Archivio di Stato (Mediceo del Principato 225, f. 71); transcription after *The Medici Archive Project*. We thank Nina Lamal for providing us with this valuable reference.

⁶¹ *Vite* 1568, p. 859. Here, Vasari is probably referring to a lost letter from Lampson.

⁶² Passage quoted above (reference in note 52).

Fiandra il vero modo di fare storie piene di figure ignude e di poesie, e di sua mano in Silanda (sic) è una gran tribuna nella badia di Midelborgo. De'quali tutti si è havuto notizia da maestro Giovanni della Strada di Brucies, pittore, e da Gio. Bologna de Douai, scultore, ambi Fiaminghi [...].⁶³

The reference is a little suspect; once again Vasari probably found this information in Guicciardini's book. In the *Descrizione*, we find the following: *Giovanni di Mabuge, il quale fu il primo che portò d'Italia in questi paesi, l'arte del dipingere Historie, & poesie con figure nude: fece costui fra le altre sue opere quella eccellente tavola, che si vede nella gran' Badia di Middelborgo in Silanda.*⁶⁴

It is as if Vasari was trying to distract the reader's attention from the real origin of most of the data in his appendix on *Diversi artefici fiamminghi*. And, when he does not acknowledge specifically a source, the reader is lead to believe that the content is based on his own personal contact with artists he mentions, since he writes at the beginning of the said appendix: *io gl'ho conosciuti la maggior parte [...].*⁶⁵ His boasting hides in fact a lie: among the 76 artists or so he has enumerated, Vasari knew personally less than ten.

Based on these observations we suspect that he was striving to conceal his main source. If we consider them in this light, the changes that he introduces in the order of the data taken from the *Descrizione* seem to stem from a need to cover his tracks. The way in which Guicciardini's wording is paraphrased rather than faithfully reproduced further strengthens our suspicion that he was concealing what could only be termed plagiarism and one of the highest order. Paraphrases, misleading references, changes in the order of the information: Vasari's manipulation of Guicciardini's data is close to the process commonly used by deceitful copyists. His approach was effective since many readers continue to be fooled to this day. Many, having found a reference to a Flemish or Dutch painter in the *Vite*, imagine that the artists' fame extended to Italy, while in fact Vasari mentioned the name

⁶³ *Vite* 1568, p. 858.

⁶⁴ *Descrizione* 1567, p. 98.

⁶⁵ *Vite* 1568, p. 857.

of these artists without knowing them, simply because they appeared in the *Descrittione*. Vasari's *Vite*, whose success Guicciardini himself contributed to in the Netherlands by citing the work of his compatriot, contrasts strikingly with the editorial misfortune of the *Descrittione*, pillaged by Vasari, and which has always been underestimated as a source for the history of Flemish and Dutch art.

The amazing findings of our inquiry call for an attempt to clarify why Vasari concealed his borrowings from Guicciardini. Perhaps the reason is to be sought in a conflict between Guicciardini and his cousin Agnolo di Girolamo, who was close to Cosme I de' Medici. The dispute between the cousins concerned the publication of the *Storia d'Italia* by their uncle Francesco: while Lodovico and his brothers were planning to take care of it, Agnolo had stolen their project. With a manuscript of the book in his possession - the one preserved today at the Laurentian Library in Florence-,⁶⁶ Agnolo had brought it to the attention of two other influential members of the court of Cosimo I Medici, Vincenzo Borghini and Bartolomeo Concini, to obtain their help in publishing the book. His efforts were crowned with success since the *Storia d'Italia* was eventually published in 1561 in Florence, by Torrentino.⁶⁷ As Concini and Borghini were also close collaborators of Vasari, the latter could not be unaware of the quarrel that had torn apart the Guicciardini cousins. In his circle of friends, it had probably caused some prejudice against Lodovico. Thus, later on, when the *Descrittione* fell into Vasari's lap offering him a trove of exploitable and readily available information to produce a welcome addition to his own book, he could not resist the temptation. He was even less inclined to point out the origin of his information that there was no-one, in his entourage, to encourage him to be honest and give the Florentine expatriate his due.

⁶⁶ Ms. Mediceo Palatino 166.

⁶⁷ *L'Historia d'Italia di M. Francesco Guicciardini gentil'huomo fiorentino*, Firenze, Lorenzo Torrentino, 1561. The publishing history of Guicciardini's masterpiece is described in detail by R. Ridolfi, *Genesi della Storia d'Italia guicciardiniana*, Firenze, Olschki, 1939.

It is our firm belief that from now on the data gathered on Flemish and Dutch painters in the *Giuntina's* appendix ought to be considered with some caution. We have indeed shown that to a large extent it was hastily and clumsily plagiarised from Guicciardini's *Descrittione*. If this plagiarism has not been identified as such, it is because Vasari made sure to cover his tracks: most of the noticeable differences between the two texts are easily explained by the tricks he used to conceal his cribbing. There is no need to look for other explanations, such as the use of a common source or the intervention of an intermediary source. This addition that Vasari inserted *in extremis* in the *Giuntina*, plundering Guicciardini's work, was hastily put together, which explains why there are so many transcription mistakes.

The back and forth movement between the *Descrittione* and the two editions of the *Vite* also invites to think about the concept of 'Italian book' in more complex and subtle terms than previously. If Vasari's *Vite* are quite evidently an Italian work (produced in Italy and written in Italian by an Italian), what is the status of the *Descrittione*? Neither its publisher nor its subject-matter are Italian. But it is undoubtedly Italian because of its author and the language he wrote it in. It is also an Italian book due to the privileged circulation that this language induced. Admittedly, its reception in Florence was hampered - that is at least our hypothesis - because of the hostility of the entourage of Agnolo Guicciardini towards its author. But it was far from being negligible, especially as far as the pages on Northern artists are concerned. It is paradoxically because of Vasari's theft that all this data was disseminated throughout Italy. Moreover, it is thanks to this tortuous and unscrupulous path that Guicciardini's ideas on Flemish and Dutch artists enjoyed a considerably greater impact. Indeed, they benefited from the very wide outreach of the second edition of Vasari's *Vite* - in which they were clumsily inserted-, far beyond the borders of the Peninsula.

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SU LAMPSON E TIZIANO

MARSEL GROSSO

In apertura di un articolo dedicato al tema dell'influsso di Tiziano nei Paesi Bassi pubblicato nel 1964, Giorgio Faggini lamentava il debole interesse che fino ad allora la critica aveva riservato a questo argomento, sottolineando come:

Pur essendo il richiamo di Venezia per essi meno forte di quello di Roma, gli artisti neerlandesi del Cinquecento furono tutt'altro che insensibili al fascino della pittura dei grandi maestri lagunari. Lo prova anzitutto il cospicuo numero di pittori *fiamminghi* che durante tutto il secolo si trattennero a Venezia, rimanendovi in certi casi per tutta la vita. Lo attestano anche le stampe che abili incisori dei Paesi Bassi traevano da opere di maestri veneziani: ci basti addurre ad esempio quelle bellissime di Cornelis Cort da Tiziano. Tra i geni della pittura lagunare Tiziano era probabilmente il più ammirato¹.

Questo studio è stato realizzato nell'ambito del Progetto di ricerca strategico EVERE, "European and Venetian Renaissance", STPD11LHT4, Unità 2, Dipartimento dei Beni Culturali: archeologia, storia dell'arte, del cinema e della musica dell'Università degli Studi di Padova.

¹ FAGGIN 1964, p. 47.