Part I

ROME

Chapter 1

THE MECHANICS OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PATRONAGE

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'WHEN Urban VIII became Pope,' wrote the art-chronicler Giambattista Passeri, looking back nostalgically from the dog days of the 1670s, 'it really seemed as if the golden age of painting had returned; for he was a Pope of kindly spirit, breadth of mind and noble inclinations, and his nephews all protected the fine arts. . . .'[1] In fact, the long pontificate of Urban VIII which began in 1623 marked the climax of a most intensive phase of art patronage rather than the opening of a new era—the sunlit afternoon rather than the dawn. For at least thirty years the austerity and strains of the Counter Reformation had been relaxing under the impact of luxury and enterprise. Intellectual heresy was still stamped out wherever possible: artistic experiments were encouraged as never before or since. The rule of Urban VIII not only led to a vast increase in the amount of patronage, but also to a notable tightening of the reins.

Urban's immediate predecessors, Paul V (1605-1621) and to a lesser extent Gregory XV (1621-1623), had set a pattern which he was content to follow. The completing of St Peter's, the building and decoration of a vast palace and villa, the establishment of a luxurious family chapel in one of the important Roman churches, the support and enrichment of various religious foundations, the collection by a favoured nephew of a private gallery of pictures and sculpture—this was now the general practice. In it we can see reflected the contrasts, and sometimes the tensions, between the Pope as a spiritual and temporal ruler and the man as an art lover and head of a proud and ambitious family.

The Popes and their nephews were by no means the only patrons, but as the century advanced their increasing monopoly of wealth and power made them at first the leaders and then the dictators of fashion. This process reached its climax in the reign of Urban VIII and was in itself partly responsible for the relative decline in variety and experiment. For until the election of this Pope change and revolution were of the very essence of the Roman scene. '. . . It [is] a strange and unnaturall thing', wrote a correspondent to Lord Arundell in 1620 towards the end of Paul V's sixteen-year rule,[2] 'that in that place, contrary to all others, the long life of the Prince is sayd to be the ruyne of the people; whose wealth consists in speedy revolutions, and oft new preparations of new hopes in those that aspire to rise by new fam.es [families] who, w.th the ould, remayne choaked

[1] Passeri, p. 293. For an enthusiastic contemporary account of art patronage—as of everything else under the Barberini—see the Abate Lancellotti's *L'Hoggidì* first published in Venice in 1627 and often reprinted.

[2] Letter from Mr Coke of 8 October 1620—Hervey, p. 183.

w.th a stand, and loath to blast their future adresses by spending to court those that are dispaired of.' Exactly the same point was made with much greater force after the twenty-one years of Urban VIII's reign.[1]

These 'speedy revolutions' and the consequent rise of new families moulded the patterns of art patronage. As successive popes came to the throne they surrounded themselves with a crowd of relatives, friends and clients who poured into Rome from all over Italy to seize the many lucrative posts that changed with each change of government. These men at once began to build palaces, chapels and picture galleries. As patrons they were highly competitive, anxious to give expression to their riches and power as quickly as they could and also to discomfort their rivals. After the Pope died they were often disgraced, and in any case their vast incomes came to a sudden end, for nepotism no longer took the form of private empires carved out of the Church's territory. 'There is no situation more difficult or more dangerous', said Pope Gregory XV, who certainly knew what he was talking about,[2] 'than that of a Pope's nephew after the death of his uncle.' With the end of their incomes went the end of their positions as leading patrons. It was especially noted of Cardinal Alessandro Peretti-Montalto, nephew of Pope Sixtus V, that he was still respected and loved even after the death of that Pope, and that artists continued to work for him.[3] This was evidently not the usual state of affairs.

Rome was a symbol rather than a nation. The nobles who formed the papal entourage still thought of themselves far more as Florentines, Bolognese or Venetians than as Romans or Italians; and as the prestige of painting was at its height, it was a matter of some importance for a cardinal to be able to produce several painters of distinction from his native city. We are told that Cardinal Maffeo Barberini (the future Urban VIII) 'was most anxious to make use of artists from his native Florence', and that Pope Gregory XV 'was a Bolognese so there was little chance for anyone from anywhere else. . . .' The artists naturally made the most of their opportunities. In 1621 Cardinal Ludovisi was elected Pope. Domenichino had some years earlier returned to his native Bologna after a quarrel with Cardinal Borghese, but 'this news caused him great excitement, as the new Pope was a compatriot of his and the uncle of one of his friends', and so he hurried back to Rome where he was made Vatican architect by the Pope's nephew Ludovico.[4]

Indeed, if we study the careers of the most important artists who followed Annibale Carracci from Bologna at the beginning of the century and introduced a new style of painting to Rome, a very consistent pattern emerges. The young painter would at first be found living quarters, in a monastery perhaps, by a cardinal who had once been papal legate in his native city. Through this benefactor he would meet some influential

[1] Ameyden, *Relatione della città di Roma 1642*—MS. 5001 in Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome. Piety, says the author, diminished under Urban VIII because of the excessive length of the papacy 'non per colpa alcuna del Prencipe, ma che la nascita del Pontificato elettivo, et ecclesiastico ricerca mutazione più spesso, acciò molti possono godere de gli onori, e dignità ecclesiastiche, ricerche, e cariche della corte'.

[2] Quoted by Felici, p. 321.

[3] Passeri, p. 27.

[4] *ibid.*, pp. 44 and 132

Bolognese prelate who would commission an altar painting for his titular church and decorations for his family palace—in which the artist would now be installed. The first would bring some measure of public recognition, and the second would introduce him to other potential patrons within the circle of the cardinal's friends. This was by far the more important step. For many years the newly arrived painter would work almost entirely for a limited group of clients, until at last a growing number of altar-pieces had firmly established his reputation with a wider public and he had sufficient income and prestige to set up on his own and accept commissions from a variety of sources. Once this had been achieved, he could view the death of his patron or a change in régime with some degree of equanimity.

This essential pattern, which will have to be expanded and modified in later pages, determined the sites of the more significant works of modern art in Rome. There were, first, the great town and country houses, all of which—Aldobrandini, Peretti, Borghese and so on—contained early pictures and frescoes by the Bolognese painters. Secondly, there were the churches. The most important was naturally St Peter's, whose decoration was under the direct supervision of the Pope, but there were many others which were maintained by rich cardinals and noble families. They fall into two classes—those of which a cardinal was titular head or for which he had a special veneration; and those where he wished to be buried. Both, however, had one feature in common: their antiquity. A titular church was, by definition, one that had been handed down from cardinal to cardinal through the centuries; and in general the Popes and their families, perhaps to refute the charge of being nouveaux-riches, chose to be buried in the most ancient and venerable of basilicas such as S. Maria Maggiore and S. Maria sopra Minerva.

There was, besides, one other way in which a noble could add to the splendour of Rome and hope to find a suitable burying place for his family: he could build a complete new church. The demand was enormous. New Orders had sprung up to meet the threat of the Reformation—the Oratorians and the Jesuits, the Theatines, the Barnabites and the Capuchins; and the various foreign communities in Rome, the Florentines, the Lombards and many others, vied with each other in the erection of magnificent new temples. Such building, however, takes a considerable time, and the original estimate of the cost is usually well below the final result. It is rare that the man who decides to have a church built will survive to supervise the decoration; it is still rarer that his heirs will take the same interest as he himself did. And so the chapels have to be disposed of to anyone prepared to decorate them. But the great cardinals were interested primarily in furnishing their own titular churches, family palaces or burial places in the older basilicas. Besides, their acute sense of precedence and rivalry made them reluctant to undertake a relatively small feature in a church which had been begun by another cardinal. 'Although it was objected to him', we are told of Cardinal Alessandro Peretti-Montalto,[1] 'that it was not suitable for him to follow in a building [S. Andrea della Valle] which had been begun by someone else, he despised such human considerations and carried on with

[1] Panciroli, p. 800, quoted by Ortolani.

his plans to the glory of God. . . .' Much more usually, however, the completion and decoration of new churches were carried out by wealthy but politically unimportant patrons, who were not in touch with the most modern artists of the day and who were thus compelled to fall back on well-established favourites. It is therefore paradoxically true that a well-informed traveller in about 1620 would have found that most of the best modern paintings in Rome were in the oldest churches.

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Within the general framework that has been outlined there was a wide range of variation possible in the relationship between an artist and the client who employed him. At one end of the scale the painter was lodged in his patron's palace and worked exclusively for him and his friends; at the other, we find a situation which appears, at first sight, to be strikingly similar to that of today: the artist painted a picture with no particular destination in mind and exhibited it in the hope of finding a casual purchaser. In between these two extremes there were a number of gradations involving middlemen, dealers and dilettantes as well as the activities of foreign travellers and their agents. These intermediate stages became more and more important as the century progressed, but artists usually disliked the freedom of working for unknown admirers, and with a few notable exceptions exhibitions were assumed to be the last resort of the unemployed.

The closest relationship possible between patron and artist was the one frequently described by seventeenth-century writers as *servitù particolare*. The artist was regularly employed by a particular patron and often maintained in his palace.[1] He was given a monthly allowance as well as being paid a normal market price for the work he produced.[2] If it was thought that his painting would benefit from a visit to Parma to see Correggio's frescoes or to Venice to improve his colour, his patron would pay the expenses of the journey.[3] The artist was in fact treated as a member of the prince's 'famiglia', along with courtiers and officials of all kinds. The degree to which he held an official post varied with the patron; though some princes might create an artist *nostro pittore* 'with all the honours, authority, prerogatives, immunities, advantages, rights, rewards, emoluments, exemptions and other benefits accruing to the post',[4] such a position was more frequent with architects than with painters. In most cases within the prince's retinue there was a sliding scale of rewards and positions up which

[1] See many references in Pascoli—I, p. 93, and II, pp. 119, 332, 417, 435, etc.

[2] Montalto, p. 295, for the important evidence of Alessandro Vasalli, a painter who testified on Mola's behalf in his troubles with Prince Pamfili: 'Io so che quando una persona di qualche professione è arrollato tra la famiglia de' Principi e tra Virtuosi de Principi con assegnamento di pane sono obbligati a preferir qualche Pnpe o Prnpessa per ogni loro operazione, ma però pagandoglieli le sue opere quello che vagliono e perciò non è obbligato a servire quel Pnpe con la sua Professione, senza una mercede, o salario, ma come ho detto deve preferire quel Pnpe ad ogni altro per il tenor dela loro professione e questo lo so perchè così ne gli insegna la ragion naturale e per haverlo anco sentito dire tra Pittori in ordine alla Professione. . . .'

[3] Pascoli, II, p. 211—Cardinal Pio sent his protégé Giovanni Bonati to Florence, Bologna, Modena, Parma, Milan and Venice; *ibid.*, II, p. 302—Cardinal Rospigliosi sent Lodovico Gimignani to Venice.

[4] The appointment of Gio. Gasparo Baldoini 'per nostro pittore' by Cardinal Maurizio di Savoia—Baudi di Vesme, 1932, p. 23.

the artist might move on promotion. Thus from 1637 to 1640 Andrea Sacchi was placed in Cardinal Antonio Barberini's household among three slaves, a gardener, a dwarf and an old nurse; in the latter year he was moved up to the highest category of pensioners with writers, poets and secretaries.[1]

A position of this kind was eminently desirable for the artist, and all writers agree on its enormous and sometimes indispensable advantages.[2] There were occasional drawbacks: some artists had difficulty in leaving the service of their employer, and there were obvious restrictions on personal freedom which might be irksome.[3] On the other hand, paradoxical though it may seem, artists placed in these circumstances had unrivalled opportunities for making themselves known, at least within certain circles. For it has already been pointed out that the patron was not wholly disinterested in his service to the arts. A painter of talent in his household was of real value to him, and he was usually quick to sound the praises of his protégé and even to encourage him to work for others. In the absence of professional critics such support and encouragement was by far the easiest way for a painter to become known. 'To establish one's name it is vital to start with the protection of some patron', wrote Passeri when commenting on the early life of Giovanni Lanfranco,[4] for it was only the great families who were in a position to get commissions for their protégés to paint in the most fashionable churches, and this was an indispensable stage in any artist's career.

In view of the powerful national rivalries that prevailed in Rome it is not at all surprising that the artist's birthplace played an even more important part in determining his chances of enjoying *servitù particolare* than in obtaining ordinary commissions. Thus we hear of the Florentine Marcello Sacchetti who, on seeing some works by Pietro da Cortona, 'asked him about himself and where he came from. And when he heard that [Pietro] was from Cortona, he called him his compatriot', and put him up in his palace.[5] In the same way, at the end of the century, Cardinal Ottoboni provided rooms for his Venetian fellow-citizen Francesco Trevisani.[6] But good manners—a paramount issue for painters in the seventeenth century—could be almost as important as nationality in securing an artist a position of this kind.

Though this sort of patronage was very desirable in a stable society, the conditions of seventeenth-century Rome with its frequent and sometimes drastic shifts of power were by no means ideal for its furtherance. Too close an association with a disgraced patron could prove a serious bar to advancement when conditions changed. And there were always artists who found the restrictions on their freedom uncongenial despite

[1] Incisa della Rocchetta, 1924, p. 70.

[2] Pascoli, I, p. 93.

[3] For the Duke of Bracciano's reluctance to let Pietro Mulier leave Rome see Pascoli, I, p. 180. Pier Francesco Mola and Guglielmo Cortese had to get special permission to leave Valmontone for a few days when they were employed there by Prince Pamfili—Montalto, p. 288.

[4] Passeri, p. 141.

[5] *ibid.*, p. 374.

[6] See unpublished life of Trevisani by Pascoli in Biblioteca Augusta, Perugia, MS. 1383 and Battisti, 1953.

the security they seemed to guarantee.[1] Besides, there were not many families able or willing to support painters on such terms. And so we often find that this extreme form of patronage was extended to an artist only at the outset of his career. Arriving in Rome from some remote city, what could be more desirable than the welcome of a highly placed compatriot offering hospitality, encouragement and a regular income? But after some years, with a considerable reputation and Rome flooded with foreigners willing to pay inflated prices, the position must have looked rather different. Fortunately a compromise was always possible: the artist could live and work on his own but continue to receive a subsidy as an inducement to giving his patron priority over all other customers.[2]

It was much more usual, however, for a painter to work in his own studio and freely accept commissions from all comers. Whether or not an actual contract was drawn up between him and the patron would depend on the scope of the commission, but by examining such documents as have survived we can see the sort of conditions under which these independent artists worked. In the following pages the items most usually stipulated will be discussed in turn.

It was natural enough that the *measurements* and site of the proposed work should be laid down in some detail when a fresco or ecclesiastical painting was required, and only one point sometimes caused difficulties: when an altarpiece was commissioned from an artist living in some distant city, the problem of the lighting in the chapel might become acute. For though the painter was naturally told the destination of his picture, it was by no means certain that he always had the chance to inspect the site himself and long exchanges would then be needed to clear up the problem.

The size of pictures for private galleries was also a matter for discussion. Those complete decorative schemes that have survived show that in many cases pictures were used to cover the walls of a room or gallery in symmetrical patterns, and that often enough they were even let into the surface. Where this was the case it was obviously important to regulate the exact measurements of any new picture commissioned, and much surviving correspondence testifies to the patron's interest in the question. Again and again artists were commissioned to paint pictures in pairs, and in many instances it is possible to see how this preoccupation with the decorative and architectural function of paintings influenced their composition as well as their size.[3]

The artist was also usually given the *subject* of the picture he was required to paint, but it is difficult to determine how far his treatment of it was actually supervised by the patron. Clearly a great deal depended on the destination of the work. Stringent control may have been exerted over the subject of a religious fresco or an altar painting, but the

[1] See later, p. 22 ff., for Salvator Rosa and p. 23 note 3 for Benedetto Luti. Paolo Girolamo Piola 'amante di sua libertà' wanted to avoid living in the palace of his fellow Genoese patron Marchese Pallavicini when he came to Rome in 1690 and 'benchè a gran difficoltà' he got permission to reside elsewhere —Soprani, II, p. 185.

[2] Cardinal Flavio Chigi gave Mario de' Fiori a monthly allowance of 30 *scudi*—Golzio, 1939, p. 267.

[3] In relation to Claude see Röthlisberger, 1958.

contracts themselves only rarely go into much detail. Indeed, a surprising degree of freedom often seems to have been left to painters, even in important commissions, and this depended a good deal on the cultural sophistication of Rome. Contracts from smaller provincial centres show far more detailed instructions than those given to painters in the bigger towns.[1] Usually the outlines of the subject would be indicated, and it was then left to the artist to add to it those elements which he found necessary for its representation.[2] Often the request for further iconographical details came from the painter. Thus, in 1665, when Guercino was required to paint an altarpiece for a monastery in Sicily, he was given the measurements and told that the figures were to include the 'Madonna de Carmine with the Child in Her arms, St Teresa receiving the habit from the Virgin and the rules of the Order from the Child, St Joseph and St John the Baptist; these figures must be shown entire and life-size and the top part of the picture must be beautified with frolicking angels.' Not satisfied with such instructions (which in fact were more specific than usual), he wrote to ask whether the Madonna del Carmine 'is to be clothed in red with a blue cloak following church custom or whether she should be in a black habit with a white cloak. Should the rules of the Order which the Child is handing to the Saint be in the form of a book or a scroll? In that case what words should be written on it to explain the mystery? Further, should St Teresa go on the left or on the right?' He also wanted to know how the picture was to be hung and what the lighting would be like.[3]

In secular works, too, there were difficulties. The artist who was given such a vague theme as the Four Seasons was often in something of a quandary as to what he should actually paint, and we know that in these circumstances he would usually apply to a scholar or poet for advice, even if not specifically required to do so in his contract. When Prince Pamfili, for instance, commissioned Pier Francesco Mola to paint the Four Elements in his country house at Valmontone, the artist went to a lawyer of some standing in the district and asked to borrow a genealogy of the gods and a Virgil with a commentary so that he could pick suitable myths for representation. Basing himself on these books and on friendly conversations, he then chose to depict the Element of Air by showing 'Juno reputed to be the goddess of Air in the act of leaving the clouds; the Milky Way; the rape of Chloris by Zephyr; the rape of Ganymede; and the apparition of Iris to Turnus.'[4]

The artist's treatment of a particular subject could be affected in another way. Because the price of a picture or fresco was often determined by the number of full-

[1] See, for instance, the terms laid down for Saverio Savini in Gubbio in 1608 published by Gualandi, IV, p. 60; or for Mario Minnitti in Augusta (Sicily) in 1617, published by Giuseppe Agnello.

[2] Thus in his frescoes for the church of S. Antonino in Piacenza in 1624 Camillo Gavasetti was given the subject by the SS. i Deputati 'con libertà al medes.o Pittore d'inventare ed ampliare con prospettive, chori d'Angioli, Sibille, Profeti e come meglio li parerà secondo l'arte e pratica di perito Maestro'—Gualandi, I, p. 91. In 1682 Sebastiano Ricci was required by the Confraternità di S. Giovanni Battista Decollato in Bologna to paint 'La Decolatione di S. Gio. Battista con figure et altre conforme richiede il rappresentare detta decolatione'—von Derschau, 1916, pp. 168-9.

[3] Ruffo, p. 109.

[4] Montalto, p. 290. There is also an undated letter from a certain Vincenzo Armanni (I, p. 215) to Camillo Pamfili with suggestions for the decoration of his villa at Valmontone.

length figures it contained, he was sometimes told just how many of these he was to include. Urban VIII, for instance, commissioned an altarpiece for the church of S. Sebastiano on the Palatine to represent 'the martyrdom of St Sebastian, with eight figures' which were evidently left to the discretion of the painter.[1]

The commissioning of pictures for a gallery would naturally leave a freer choice, for complete thematic uniformity of decoration was now only rarely insisted on. More and more the movable gallery picture was coming into its own—a largely Venetian innovation of over a century earlier which had made a decisive impact on Roman collecting. Pictures were bought, sold, inherited, speculated in and exchanged with bewildering speed so that biographers often no longer found it worth recording where a painter's works were at the time of writing. In these circumstances neither subject nor size held the vital importance of earlier days, and, with the added stimulus of connoisseurship, collectors were frequently more interested in choosing the work of specific artists than in going into great detail about what had actually been painted. Thus at the very beginning of the century the Marchese Giustiniani, whose taste is discussed in a later chapter, was such a wholehearted admirer of Caravaggio that, when an altarpiece by that artist had been rejected as unsuitable for its intended location, he acquired it for his gallery and hung it among a series of pictures which had been assembled far more for their affinities of style than for any consistency of subject-matter.[2] And some ninety years later another patron, Giovanni Adamo, when commissioning a work from the Genoese painter Paolo Girolamo Piola, gave the size and added only: 'As to the subject, I leave it to you whether to make it sacred or profane, with men or with women.'[3] We find here the culmination of an undogmatic approach to art which was characteristic of the whole century and which led to an invigorating freedom of experiment and invention. It was an approach that the more conservative patron could modify by choosing a single theme and commissioning pictures by different masters to be grouped around it—a suitable compromise between the old and the new for which there had been many precedents during the Renaissance. It occurs frequently in royal commissions where a number of painters would be required to celebrate the glories of Alexander the Great, and it was also popular with scholars collecting portraits of great men or reconstructing elaborate temples of learning. It was evidently some such scheme that the Duke of Mantua had in mind when he commissioned two Roman painters to represent for him various episodes from the story of Samson, but ordered them on no account to begin until he had told them just which ones he wanted.[4] And another great patron, the Marchese del Carpio, when Spanish Ambassador in Rome, commissioned a number of artists to draw for him any subject so long as it represented some facet of *Painting*.[5]

[1] The artist was Andrea Camassei—see the receipt published by A. Bertolotti (*Artisti bolognesi . . .*, pp. 161-2). In this connection it would be extraordinarily interesting to find the contracts for such masterpieces of restraint as Guido Reni's and Poussin's treatments of the *Massacre of the Innocents*.

[2] The significance of this has been pointed out by Friedlaender, p. 105.

[3] Letter of 3 February 1690—Bottari, VI, p. 147.

[4] Luzio, p. 292.

[5] Bellori, 1942, p. 117.

Instructions to the artist would also depend on his reputation and temperament. How great, for instance, was the contrast between Pietro da Cortona and Salvator Rosa! Pietro, recognised for years as the most distinguished painter in Rome, indeed in Italy, refused to choose his own subjects and claimed that he had never done so in his whole life[1]; whereas Rosa told one imprudent client who had had his own ideas for a picture to 'go to a brickmaker as they work to order'—though this attitude did not stop him asking his friends for suggestions.[2] And, of course, certain artists had acquired a reputation for particular subjects. Thus it was that one collector called on the French painter Valentin, who specialised in Caravaggesque genre scenes, and asked him for 'a large picture with people among whom were to be a gipsy woman, soldiers and other women playing musical instruments'.[3]

The most effective way by which a patron could keep control over an artist working for him was by insisting on a preliminary oil sketch (*modello*) or drawings, but this practice was a good deal rarer during the first half of the seventeenth century than is sometimes supposed.

It is true that in 1600 Caravaggio agreed with his patron, before executing his altarpieces of *The Conversion of St Paul* and *The Martyrdom of St Peter*, that he would 'submit specimens and designs of the figures and other objects with which according to his invention and genius he intends to beautify the said mystery and martyrdom',[4] but this was exceptional, and Caravaggio was already notorious as a difficult character. For quite different but equally understandable reasons, Rubens, who was still only an unknown foreigner, was asked in 1606 to show examples of his painting before undertaking an altarpiece in the Chiesa Nuova.[5] In general, more confidence was shown in the painter's ability, though private and unofficial discussions with the patron must have been frequent. Even for such an important commission as the altar paintings in St Peter's, it appears not to have been obligatory for artists to produce *modelli* (though presumably drawings would have been necessary); when Lanfranco wrote in 1640 to Cardinal Barberini asking to be given the chance to paint the altar picture of *Pope Leo and Attila*, he specially mentioned that he would arrange for the Cardinal to see 'in tela il disegno', but he explained that he was doing this to illustrate the difficulties of the composition, and in any case the suggestion came from him and not from his patron.[6]

None of the Bolognese artists working in Rome is known to have produced a *modello*, and no certain examples survive even from such a great decorator as Pietro da

[1] Letter from the Savoy Resident in Rome, Onorato Gini, in 1666, summarised by Claretta, 1885, p. 516: 'ma prima patto apposto dal Cortona era ch'egli non voleva indursi a far ver una proposta [as regards subject], allegando che non avevane fatta alcuna in tutta la vita e che "questo sarebbe un non mai volere il quadro" '.

[2] Pascoli, I, p. 84.

[3] Costello, p. 278.

[4] The contract has been published by Friedlaender, p. 302.

[5] See later, Chapter 3, p. 70, note 2.

[6] Pollak, 1913, p. 26. Letter from Lanfranco in Naples dated 14 July 1640. 'In tela il disegno' must certainly mean that the general composition would be sketched in on the canvas. We know that this was a regular practice of Lanfranco's—Costello, p. 274.

Cortona.[1] On the other hand, the practice became widespread during the second half of the century, and is particularly associated with the painter Giovan Battista Gaulli, who may have been responsible for introducing it from his native Genoa where it was already well established. One factor is clearly important: Professor Wittkower has pointed out that 'most of the large frescoes in Roman churches belong to the last 30 years of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century'[2] and it is obvious, as Rubens had shown in Northern Europe, that *modelli* could be exceedingly useful both to patrons and assistants in large-scale work of this kind. Moreover, the iconographical significance of these frescoes was often more complex. Ciro Ferri was required in 1670 to produce a coloured *modello* for the cupola of S. Agnese in Piazza Navona, and after it had been approved he was not to make any changes without special permission.[3] Such stringent control is exceptional, but—as will become apparent in a later chapter—the Pamfili family, who were responsible for this commission, were never altogether happy in their relations with artists. It is also possible that the insistence on sketches at this period was in some way linked to a growing appreciation of their more 'spontaneous' character—an appreciation that naturally accompanied the rise of the *amateur*, though the fashion for collecting them did not become general until the eighteenth century.

After the size of the picture and the subject-matter had been decided, there came the question of the *time limit*, a problem of particular urgency during the whole of the Baroque period. Nearly all patrons insisted that work should be finished as quickly as possible, and as often as not they were disappointed by the artists whom they employed. Some frescoes were, of course, such large undertakings that many years were required for their completion. Ciro Ferri was given four years for the cupola of S. Agnese in Piazza Navona, and Gaulli eight for the vault and transept vaults of the Gesù. Holy Years often provided a special incentive for artists to complete their work in some church,[4] and certain painters had a reputation for exceptional speed. It was claimed that Giovanni Odazzi worked faster than the notoriously rapid Luca Giordano, and Giacinto Brandi too was famous in this respect. Quick work might entitle the artist to greater rewards—we are told that Gaspard Dughet benefited in this way—but by no means always met with critical approval.[5] It was the Venetians who were especially famous for their speed and the fact earned them a certain amount of contempt elsewhere.

[1] L. Grassi published in 1957 what he claimed to be a series of *modelli* by Pietro da Cortona for the ceiling of the galleria in the Palazzo Doria-Pamfili, but these have not won general acceptance—see Briganti, 1962, p. 251. Nor is the so-called *bozzetto* for the Barberini Salone, kept in the palace, at all convincing. On the other hand, Professor Waterhouse has pointed out to me the existence of a *modello* by Camassei, *Saints Peter and Paul baptising in the Mammertine prison*, once belonging to the Barberini and now in the Pinacoteca Vaticana—No. 820, formerly 539 m. A number of *modelli* by Andrea Sacchi are also recorded. One of these, for an altarpiece in the Capuchin church in Rome, recently passed through a London gallery (Colnaghi's, May-June 1961, No. 2) and is now in the collection of Mr Denis Mahon.

[2] Wittkower, 1958, p. 218.

[3] Golzio, 1933-4, pp. 301-2.

[4] Tacchi-Venturi, 1935, p. 147.

[5] Pascoli, I, pp. 59, 61 and 132; II, pp. 390 and 395.

The final clause in any contract naturally referred to the *price* and financial arrangements. Certain formulas were always adhered to. Some proportion of the sum agreed was paid at once as a deposit. This ranged widely from a minimum of about one-seventh to a maximum of nearly a half. If the work was a picture, the artist was very often given a further payment when it was half finished and the remainder on completion, together with a final bonus. And, of course, there were many variations possible in this treatment. In the case of large-scale frescoes, the artist was usually paid at a regular monthly rate.[1]

More interesting and significant than obvious arrangements of this kind is the question of expenses incurred by the artist in his work. 'The usual thing is to pay painters for the stretcher, the priming and for ultramarine', wrote an agent to a prospective patron in 1647, and this is confirmed in many other documents.[2] Once again variations were possible[3]—sometimes the painter was responsible for all expenses; on other occasions he was given the canvas and had to pay for the ultramarine himself; very rarely he was told, as in mediaeval days, that the colours he bought must be of the very finest quality.[4] The patron invariably paid for the scaffolding needed for ceiling frescoes, and if the work took place away from the painter's residence he would also provide board and lodging for him. It was claimed of Prince Pamfili, for instance, that he treated Pier Francesco Mola, who was decorating his villa at Valmontone, like one of his own retinue, giving him 'fowl, veal and similar delicacies'.[5]

Prices for the work itself were regulated in widely different ways: many artists had fixed charges for the principal figures in the composition, excluding those in the background. Thus Domenichino was paid 130 ducats for each figure in his frescoes in Naples Cathedral and Lanfranco 100. This system was very widespread and allowed painters to make regular increases in price as their reputations grew.[6] However, the

[1] Many examples of different kinds of payment could be given here. In 1639 Francesco Albani was given an exceptionally high proportion of the total sum as *caparra*—450 out of a 1000 *lire* (Gualandi, I, p. 19). More typical is the case of Pier Francesco Mola who for his frescoes at Valmontone was to be given 300 *scudi* immediately and the remaining 1000 in stages as he worked (Montalto, p. 287); or of Ciro Ferri who was given 50 *scudi* as *caparra* and promised 180 more on completion of an altarpiece in Cortona for Annibale Laparelli (Gualandi, IV, p. 117).

[2] 'è solito che si paghi a tutti i pittori il telaro, imprimitura, et oltremare . . .'—letter from Berlingero Gessi to Don Cesare Leopardi d'Osimo, dated 10 July 1647, published by Gualandi, I, p. 40. And again: '. . . Sappia che questo è lo stile che si pratica con ogni minimo pittore, cioè consegnarli la tela impresa, e qualche denaro anticipato . . .'—letter from Carlo Quarismini to Conte Ventura Carrara, dated 11 July 1696, in Bottari, V, p. 186.

[3] In 1633 Camassei agreed in his contract with Urban VIII (see p. 10, note 1) to pay himself for 'tela colore e azzurri'; in 1639 Bonifazio Gozadini promised to supply Albani with the canvas and necessary ultramarine for his altarpiece in the Chiesa de' Servi in Bologna (Luzio, p. 48); in 1657 Prince Pamfili agreed to pay for 'il bianco macinato, pennelli, e coccioli smaltini, terra verde, verdetti, lacche fine, e pavonazzo di sole et azzurro oltramare' to be used by Pier Francesco Mola in his frescoes at Valmontone, while the artist was to pay for the remaining colours, paper, etc. (Montalto, p. 287).

[4] For instance Camillo Gavasetti agreed in 1624 to use 'colori de' più fini' for his frescoes in Piacenza —Gualandi, I, p. 91.

[5] Montalto, pp. 287 and 289.

[6] See letters from Mattia Preti and Artemisia Gentileschi—Ruffo, pp. 239 and 48.

status of the client was often as important as that of the artist in determining the price. In the 1620s the Sienese doctor and art lover, Giulio Mancini, wrote that a munificent patron would not condescend to go into the question at all, but would reward the artist as he saw fit.[1] It is true enough that we do find some examples of this. In 1617, for instance, the Duke of Mantua wrote to Guido Reni asking him for a painting of *Justice embracing Peace*. He gave the measurements, but made no mention of the price beyond saying that Guido would be 'generously rewarded'.[2] And artists were clearly glad to respond to such offers. The somewhat eccentric Paolo Guidotti used to say that he gave away his paintings as 'free gifts', but he had no hesitation in accepting the most expensive presents in return.[3] Claude Lorrain was equally shrewd: 'Or ce qui est pire', wrote Cardinal Leopold de Medici's agent in 1662 about the possibility of buying a picture by him, 'c'est qu'il faudra le payer largement car il ne fixe un prix qu'aux gens de médiocre condition.'[4] But in fact even by Mancini's date it is probable that such aristocratic largesse was the relic of an earlier age and already in decline. Painting was far more commercialised than these rare instances suggest. 'If His Highness wants to be served well and quickly,' wrote the Mantuan agent in Rome to a ducal chancellor, 'he must, indeed it is indispensable that he should, send some money here to give as a deposit to these painters. They have let it be clearly understood that they will only work for those who give them money [in advance]; otherwise it will be quite impossible to get anything good from them.'[5] And against the example of a Claude we must record the uncompromising rigidity with which Guercino enforced his own practice of charging a certain sum for every figure painted: 'As my ordinary price for each figure is 125 ducats,' he wrote to one of his most enthusiastic patrons, 'and as Your Excellency has restricted Yourself to 80 ducats, you will have just a bit more than half of one figure.'[6]

The type of patronage so far considered had done little more than modify the practice of earlier centuries: a client in direct touch with the artist; clear instructions as to size and, probably, subject; a well-established and recognised relationship. But now in seventeenth-century Rome the whole pattern was beginning to break down, for it had been evolved in relatively stable national societies based on city states and feudal courts. With the eclipse of many of these, Rome was in fact beginning to assume some of the functions of a capital. She was the richest city in Italy, and by her very nature as an international centre she attracted visitors and residents from all over the peninsula, and indeed Europe. To artists her appeal was twofold: on the one hand, as we have

[1] Mancini, I, p. 140.
[2] Luzio, p. 48.
[3] Faldi, 1957, pp. 278–95.
[4] Letter from Jacopo Salviati to Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici, dated 22 July 1662, published by Ferdinand Boyer, 1931, p. 238.
[5] Letter from Fabrizio Arragona, Mantuan agent in Rome, to a ducal chancellor, dated 9 October 1621, published by Luzio, p. 295.
[6] Letter from Guercino to Don Antonio Ruffo, dated 25 September 1649, published by V. Ruffo, p. 97.

seen, the aristocrats were anxious to have painters of their own nationality in their entourage, and so did everything possible to invite them to Rome; on the other hand, the artists themselves felt that Rome alone offered them sufficient scope and rewards for their talents. The process was self-generating: supply and demand reinforced each other. There was, further, the overwhelming attraction of the city's great monuments, ancient and modern, at a time when the classical tradition was still of paramount importance. Rome herself was notoriously deficient in giving birth to artists, and so the city became the focus of a constantly shifting population of painters and dilettantes in search of each other. Moreover, new blood—new Venetian or Bolognese or Neapolitan blood—frequently brought about drastic changes as one régime succeeded another and supplanted its favoured artists. And underlying this was one constant threat. Only the family that actually had its hand in the treasury was able to provide patronage on the enormous scale that was associated with ruling clans such as the Borghese and the Barberini. Should there be, for some reason or another, any financial restriction, it was obvious that a very large number of artists, previously engaged in regular employment, would be thrown on to the market.

One result of all these circumstances was that painters did not always work directly to commission in any of the ways described above. It soon became a regular practice for them to keep in their studios a small number of pictures, often uncompleted ones, which they showed to visiting clients as samples of their work. If found attractive, the picture would then be finished once a suitable price had been agreed upon. The activities of Fabrizio Valguarnera, a Sicilian adventurer and diamond smuggler, give us a vivid insight into the situation. He paid two visits to Lanfranco and found, among other pictures, sketched-in canvases of the Magdalene and of the Crucifixion, both of which he asked the artist to complete. In Poussin's studio he came across the *Plague at Ashdod* in a preliminary stage, and was so pleased with it that he not only arranged to have it finished but also commissioned a totally new picture of *Spring* from the same artist.[1] And we read of similar encounters with other painters. Salvator Rosa, who hated to work to commission, had his studio full of pictures ready for sale, both large and small, and admirers of his landscapes would come and visit him, routing around to see what they wanted, and infuriating the artist when they insisted on choosing his small paintings instead of the large historical scenes which he valued much more highly.[2]

It was also as a direct result of the shifting social and political pattern of Roman life in the seventeenth century that art dealing and art exhibitions began to acquire the great importance that will be analysed in a later chapter.[3]

– iii –

Enough has been said of the varying conditions of patronage in seventeenth-century Rome to make it clear that no single definition can cover the position of the artist in

[1] Costello, pp. 274-5.
[2] Baldinucci, VI, 1728, p. 581.
[3] See Chapter 5.

society. There were endless changes and nuances that must be taken into account. Moreover, the problem of the artist's status was never really solved. The doubts that had persisted ever since the discussions of the Renaissance had been temporarily obscured by the hero-worship accorded to Michelangelo and Raphael, but never settled. Now in the relatively unstable society of Baroque Rome—the first great cosmopolitan town of modern Europe—the position was still further complicated by the rise of several new factors such as the arrival of foreigners, the formation of a 'bohemian' group and the sheer quantity of painters in the city.

The one vital and constant feature of the situation was that artists really were needed and, consequently, that their rewards both in prestige and in money were liable to be great. The Bolognese writer Malvasia puts into Pope Paul V's mouth words which echo the painter's aspirations though they did not altogether correspond to the realities of the situation: '*Pictoribus, atque Poetis, omnia licent;* we must put up with these great men because that excess of spirit which makes them great is the same that leads them to this strange behaviour.'[1] We might be living in the pages of Benvenuto Cellini's autobiography; but the difficulties faced by a number of artists who failed to conform to orthodox moral standards show that this was far from being the case. None the less, the leading artists of the day were given very great authority and treated with very great respect. We have letters to Bernini from high prelates, princes and others to prove to us the esteem in which he was held,[2] and writers hostile to him complained again and again that a successful artistic career in Rome was exceedingly difficult without his support.[3] Yet he never gained the mystical admiration that had been Michelangelo's, despite the fact that his opportunities for changing the whole face of Rome, and of Europe, were much greater than Michelangelo's had been. This reflected not so much a questioning of his merits (though he always had opponents) as a general decline in the status of the artist which had set in after the High Renaissance and had never been totally reversed. The very understanding of the social rôle that could be played by the artist—an understanding due to Pope Sixtus V in the 1580s as much as to anyone—and the fact that great works of art were no longer produced essentially for the private admiration of a court of hedonists were to some extent responsible for this decline in status. Art was no longer self-sufficient, as it had been in the days of Leo X. Platonism, which had played such a part in exalting the rôle of the creator, no longer dominated philosophical speculation. In a more utilitarian society the artist won a securer place, but lost some of his mystique. Not until the eighteenth century was the cult of the 'genius' to be revived. Meanwhile he had many reasons to be satisfied with his position.

The very large sums which the leading artists could earn were in themselves

[1] Even Malvasia is rather diffident about claiming that the Pope actually spoke these words—'corre voce' is his formula for introducing them—Malvasia, II, p. 27.

[2] Fraschetti, *passim*.

[3] Passeri, p. 236, and Pascoli, I, p. 134. Both were so prejudiced against Bernini that their evidence is not altogether reliable, but Professor Wittkower (1958, p. 96) agrees that 'for more than fifty years, willingly or unwillingly, Roman artists had to bow to his eminence'.

responsible for much of their social advancement. At the height of his fame Bernini was once paid 6000 *scudi* for a single portrait bust, but this fabulous sum far higher than any paid to his rivals was wholly exceptional even in his career.[1] The very fashionable Carlo Maratta, who was considered an exceedingly expensive painter, would get 150 *scudi* for a full-length portrait, and Gaulli, his closest rival, charged 100.[2] These high prices, besides making life more comfortable for the artist, had an important symbolic function. They raised the whole status of art in the eyes of the world. The historian Baldinucci was keen to report that at auctions Rembrandt would make very high bids for paintings and drawings 'in order to emphasise the prestige of his profession', and a similar attitude existed in Italy.[3]

Certainly the winning of a place in society was an overriding preoccupation with artists in the seventeenth century if we are to believe their biographers. It was this motive that inspired their renewed efforts to put their professional association, the Accademia di S. Luca, on a sound footing. This body had suffered several generations of almost continuous decline after Federigo Zuccari's well-meant, but not very successful, attempts to bring it to life in 1593 and 1594.[4] Every time a new pope came to the throne attempts were made to improve the status of the institution and encourage discrimination between serious artists and mechanical craftsmen. The popes were lavish with magniloquent gestures: 'Painting is a most noble profession, quite different from the mechanical crafts', recognised the clerk of the Apostolic Chamber in 1601, and in 1605 Paul V granted the Accademia the annual right on the feast of St Luke to free one man condemned to death. These were steps in the right direction, but hardly decisive ones. Gregory XV was encouraging, and in 1621 he confirmed the statutes of the Accademia, but he died before he could do anything else. It was left to Urban VIII to establish its absolute authority in the art world of Rome and finally crush any opposition from the gilds.[5] Fully as important as any legal decision in the matter was the moral support given to the Accademia by the appointment of the Pope's nephew, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, as its protector, despite the fact that the Cardinal sometimes declined to take its side in subsequent disputes.[6] In 1633 the Accademia was given the right to raise taxes on all the artists in Rome, whether or not they belonged to it, as well as on picture dealers and others living on the fringes of the art world. All public

[1] By the Englishman Thomas Baker for his bust now in the Victoria and Albert Museum—Baldinucci, 1948, p. 89. A letter from Fulvio Testi to Conte Francesco Fontana published by Fraschetti (p. 108) shows the prices that Bernini could command in 1633—a statue would be worth 4000 or 5000 *scudi*; he was paid 1000 *scudi* for the head of Cardinal Borghese; he received a regular salary of 300 *scudi* a month from the Fabbrica di S. Pietro.

[2] Bellori, 1942, p. 98, and Pascoli, I, p. 205.

[3] Baldinucci, VI, 1728, p. 477. Bellori, 1942, p. 123, writes of Maratta in similar terms: 'Circa i prezzi delle sue Opere, che da alcuni sono stati riputati eccessivi, si può dire che Carlo doppo Guido abbia rinumerato la Pittura indotto da quelli, che raddoppiavano più volte il premio delle sue fatiche. Laonde si propose di convertirlo in suo utile con aprire agl'altri la via della rinumerazione particolarmente in Roma, ove i Pittori gli deono restare molto obbligati, essendosi nel suo esempio avanzati a quella ricompensa, che prima non era stata pratticata.'

[4] Pevsner, p. 64, and Mahon, 1947, pp. 157-91.

[5] Missirini, pp. 81 and 87.

[6] Hoogewerff, 1935, pp. 189-203.

commissions were to be the monopoly of the Accademia. The measures aroused furious opposition and were never fully enforced. Eventually they had to be withdrawn. But they served their purpose of giving new dignity to established artists. Indeed, quite apart from the financial benefits that accrued from Urban VIII's brief, this was certainly one of their aims, for in all their complaints the Academicians showed an unresting concern for their own social status.

Yet it is interesting that within the Accademia itself there was not nearly as much rigidity as might be expected, or as became the practice in later academies founded on roughly the same lines. Thus membership was by no means confined to 'history painters', and artists whose subject-matter was considered thoroughly objectionable had no difficulty in being admitted.[1] Moreover, even near craftsmen, such as gilders, seem to have belonged at first and did not become second-class members until 1645.[2] Indeed, it was only later, in the second half of the seventeenth century, largely under the influence of the French, that the Academy became an inflexible body closely associated with a specific doctrine. The aim of its founders and early supporters had been very different. In an age which revelled in such organisations the Accademia gave respectability to the artists who belonged to it and hence to art itself. It emphasised the intellectual aspects of creation somewhat at the expense of the mechanical. It enjoyed a prominent position in the life of Rome and played some part in bringing together artists, dilettantes and critics.[3]

But artists did not confine themselves to such 'official' steps as the reorganisation as the Accademia di S. Luca. Many of them followed a conscious policy of adapting themselves to society by observing the customs of those more securely placed than they were. As lavish spending was one of the signs of superior status, it is not surprising that this aspect of their lives should have been stressed again and again. Giacinto Brandi 'lived splendidly with servants and a carriage'; Ciro Ferri too had a carriage, a fully stocked larder, and arranged for his family always to be well dressed. Lodovico Gimignani 'treated himself in a gentlemanly way; he was well dressed with fine linen and a wig; well spoken with enviable manners and got on best with the nobility'. Giammaria Morandi 'danced extremely well, was an excellent horseman and fencer'; Andrea Procaccini lived in magnificent rooms with fine pictures, tapestries and other ornaments, and when he went to Spain, 'his style was more that of a gentleman than of a painter'.[4] Such characteristics are much more typical of the second than of the first half of the seventeenth century and they were evidently reflected in the dealings of artists with their patrons. There are sarcastic references to the difficulties of persuading Carlo Maratta 'to condescend (purely as a favour) to take our money' for a picture which was to be commissioned.[5] But, despite such grumbles, Roman society often seems to have

[1] Both Pieter van Laer and Cerquozzi (for whom see Chapter 5) were members—see the list published by Hoogewerff, 1913, pp. 49-50.

[2] Missirini, p. 115.

[3] See later, Chapter 6.

[4] Pascoli, I, pp. 131 and 176; II, pp. 128, 307, 401 and 405.

[5] See letter from Francesco Novetti to Don Antonio Ruffo, dated 22 March 1670, published by V. Ruffo, p. 290.

been prepared to accept artists at their own valuation. True enough, many of the stories we hear are merely refurbished versions of Ridolfi's account of Charles V's picking up Titian's brushes for the artist—Cardinal Barberini holding a mirror for Bernini while he worked at his self-portrait in the guise of David,[1] Innocent X handing Pier Francesco Mola a canvas, and so on.[2] Such stories have at least symbolic value. More likely to be true in a strict sense are the accounts of Queen Christina taking the same artist (a particularly successful courtier) into her carriage, and the Spanish Ambassador taking out Giuseppe Ghezzi for drives. Ghezzi was a well-educated man, and he was elected a member of the distinguished Society of Arcadia, besides being given a benefice in St Peter's by Clement XI and being made a master of ceremonies by Innocent XIII and a 'gentiluomo d'onore' by the Duke of Parma.[3] The practice of giving titles to artists seems to date back to the later years of the sixteenth century and is directly related to the new awareness of their social value. By the middle of the seventeenth century most artists of any distinction were made 'Cavaliere dell'abito di Cristo', and this too was influential in establishing art on recognised and firm foundations.[4]

Painters themselves, and especially their biographers, were keen to respond and liked to stress their intellectual attainments. Thus we hear of Filippo Lauri carefully studying the news-sheets so as to be able to make suitable conversation at the various academies he would attend.[5] This points to an essential and obvious requisite for social success: a good general education. But the need for this was carried far beyond the occasion for shining at academic gatherings. It was inextricably involved with the business of keeping art respectable. 'From such a lack of education', writes Passeri, 'arise the absurdities which we find in some painters, who have some ability in their art but who outside the practice of painting are dull, raw and uncivilised. They are derided as *tavole rase della plebe più vile*, incompetent at telling a story, with a bad pronunciation, no good in serious conversation. They bring shame not only on themselves but on the whole profession—shame enough to make even the most half-witted blush.'[6] Ability to talk well and intelligently not only served to raise the status of art; it also helped to attract powerful patrons, for this was certainly no age for the untutored genius. We can see the artists of the day as they saw themselves by looking at their self portraits. Serene, elegant, as the years go by increasingly bewigged, self-satisfied and complacent, they gaze down at us, only rarely showing us the tools of their trade; more keen to resemble their clients than to point to any singularity in themselves.

[1] Baldinucci, 1948, p. 78.

[2] Pascoli, I, p. 122, where the episode is specifically compared to Charles V's famous gesture.

[3] Pascoli, I, p. 122; II, pp. 202 and 205.

[4] There had, of course, been cases long before the seventeenth century: the Emperor Frederick III had bestowed on Gentile Bellini the dignity of Count Palatine, and in 1533 Charles V created Titian a Count of the Lateran Palace, of his Court and of the Imperial Consistory. But such honours, deeply significant though they were, had always been marks of the most exceptional favour. Towards the end of the sixteenth century in Rome the granting of titles to artists became a more routine affair with some of the attributes of our modern civil service grading and honours lists.

[5] Pascoli, II, p. 202.

[6] Of Michelangelo Cerquozzi—Passeri, p. 285.

So much anxiety to appear respectable and prosperous was all the more natural in view of the squalor that always threatened the lower ranks of painters. We know of large numbers living in destitution,[1] and it is easy enough to imagine their lives, working for unscrupulous dealers at endless, mass-produced devotional pictures and occasionally showing their work at some religious festival. Roman patrons were extraordinarily quick to encourage new artists, and just because of this, the situation of those outside the ranks of accepted painters must have been desperately bleak. There was as yet no legend of the 'undiscovered genius' to sustain them in their misery.

On a higher level, but not very edifying, were the antics of the *bentveughels*, the colony of Dutch and Flemish artists living in Rome. The *Schildersbent*, a sort of mutual aid society to protect the interests of Northern artists in the city, was formed in 1623.[2] It thus ran parallel to similar efforts made by the Italian artists to organise the Accademia di S. Luca at just the same time. But the very name of the society—'birds of a feather'—and the absence of statutes or fixed leadership point to the differences in standing between the two organisations. This did not stop the *bentveughels* (largely through influential support) from successfully resisting the Accademia's attempt to impose a tax on all artists, including foreigners, living in Rome. Most of these Northerners lived in the district around the Via Margutta near the Piazza di Spagna, and their activities inaugurated a 'Bohemian' tradition which survives in the area to this day. They indulged in lavish banquets, mock ceremonials and pagan 'baptisms' and often attracted the attentions of the police. All this must have been fairly repugnant to the respectable artists of official Rome, but it did not stop the most characteristic of the *bentveughels*, Pieter Van Laer, from being a member of the Accademia di S. Luca.[3]

The success of all these attempts to turn painting into a respectable profession can be seen in the lack of opposition shown by parents to their sons becoming artists. Although the evidence of biographers so obviously biassed must be treated with caution, it is still remarkable how little we hear of difficulties in this respect.[4] That stock figure of later mythology—the artist struggling to express himself against the wishes of his father—was as yet unknown. It is true that the ranks of society from which artists were drawn were generally low, though we are told that Andrea Pozzo's parents were 'extremely well off and of good social standing'. They were anxious that their son should make a career in letters, but reconciled themselves easily enough to his desire to become a painter. In general, apart from ecclesiastical triumphs, a successful artistic career was probably still the best way to rise in the social hierarchy. It is indicative that Mario de' Fiori, an enormously successful painter himself, should have destined one of his sons for the Church while the other was to follow in his own footsteps.[5] And

[1] Narducci, 1870, pp. 122-6.

[2] Hoogewerff, 1952.

[3] See p. 18, note 1.

[4] Pascoli, for instance (II, p. 400), said that Andrea Procaccini's parents, who were well off, found painting a profession 'non del tutto confacevole al lor genio', but they did nothing to prevent their son taking it up.

[5] Pascoli, II, pp. 246 and 6.

Gianandrea Carlone was accepted by the master of the Marchese Costaguti's household as a suitable husband for his sister—a situation which echoed the theme of a burlesque comedy, performed in 1635, concerning a prince who wished to marry his daughter to a painter.[1]

Alongside these examples of social climbing another idea was making headway. At the time it sometimes seemed to conflict with the artist's painful struggles to achieve recognition, but eventually it was to be infinitely more successful in attaining exactly the same object. This was the acceptance of the painter as an exceptional, and sometimes very strange, being. We find proof of this in the diminishing tendency in Rome—though not in other towns—for it to be taken for granted that they would transmit their talent to their children. Family ability became increasingly the sign of the craftsman rather than of the artist. Though there were very notable exceptions to this—Bernini, the son of a famous sculptor who made some use of his brother as an assistant, is the most eminent example—the contrast with previous generations is striking. And especially marked is the contrast between Rome and Venice where the social position of the artist was always considered low and where families of painters went on working, often as teams, until the end of the eighteenth century.

Yet the very nature of the contracts that have been examined shows that artists were still generally looked upon as superior craftsmen: however lenient the control actually exerted, the fact that a price was agreed in advance and that some painters charged standard rates for the number of figures to be depicted is highly significant, for it shows how closely the concept of artistic creation was linked to that of more humble and familiar skills. Despite this, several powerful forces—largely embodied in one single man—were fighting vigorously in favour of a new outlook.

The 'artistic temperament' had been frequently and explicitly hinted at by Vasari, but it was not until the seventeenth century that it came to be widely accepted, and not until the eighteenth that it hardened into an article of belief.[2] Paul V's alleged comments about Guido Reni, quoted on an earlier page, may suggest that that Pope was among the first to recognise that some degree of eccentricity was inherent in the make-up of an artist; it is, unfortunately, our knowledge that this recognition was so much more current in Malvasia's own time, many years later than the reported conversation, that encourages us to be sceptical about its probability. In 1676, for instance, the Resident of the King of Savoy, writing of the unsatisfactory behaviour of Giovanni Perugini, a characteristically feeble protégé of the court of Turin, said that 'he would be no good as a painter if he did not have some element of madness in him'.[3] It is against this background of the artist as exceptional and inspired (an idea still only rarely expressed) that

[1] Pascoli, II, p. 193. This comedy, which I have unfortunately not been able to trace, is referred to in another connection by G. Delogu, 1928, p. 40, note 9.

[2] See, apart from many more familiar examples, a letter from G. L. Bianconi of 22 November 1762 published in Bottari, VII, p. 362: 'Pare che taluno s'imagini, che sia impossibile il dipingere eccellentemente senza avere un fondo di pazzia, e di vizi singolari. . . .'

[3] Letter from Paolo Negri to Marchese di S. Tommaso, dated 24 December 1676, quoted by Claretta, 1885, p. 542.

we must consider briefly some aspects of the career of Salvator Rosa, the painter who did more than anyone else to give the notion currency. Much of the glamour that surrounded the nineteenth-century view of Rosa has been swept away. The publication of his letters has finally displaced the hero of the legendary 'Compagnia della Morte' to reveal instead a man who was clearly hypochondriac. Yet he remains a figure of quite exceptional importance and would be so had he done no more than startle and fascinate his contemporaries by the extravagance of his behaviour and thus create, almost single-handed, the image of the artist as a being apart. It is an image that finds concrete expression in his many self portraits so utterly at variance with the smooth features of his fellow-artists. But Salvator Rosa did far more than that. He was quite clearly a man (the one man) who found the restrictions inherent in the nature of contemporary patronage irksome and intolerable, and therefore set out to try and do away with them. Many artists since his day have understood the part that dramatic self-advertisement can play in winning recognition: in the still fairly closed world of seventeenth-century patronage the effect was bound to be far more striking than anything seen since. There can be no doubt at all that Salvator Rosa's craving for publicity, which was demonstrated at the slightest opportunity, was often only the outward, superficial manifestation of a shrewd determination to break beyond the bounds of orthodox patronage. Again and again we find him making use of exhibitions to establish his reputation and organising a claque to proclaim his merits to all and sundry—thus notably widening the circle of appreciation within which most artists were quite prepared to live. The exploitation and projection of his personality served exactly the same purpose.

But Salvator Rosa was engaged in a yet more serious battle. He, alone among his contemporaries, was asserting the right of the painter to artistic independence as the term might be understood today. That he was launching a revolution purely to demonstrate his conformity with the critical canons of his age is a paradox that will have to be considered in a later chapter, but that does not affect the motivation and efficacy of his tactics. We learn for instance that he would refuse to accept the deposit which, as we have seen, was universally given to painters as a guarantee of the commission. And we are specifically told that he refused it not so as to get a better offer later on but because he did not want to 'enslave his will' by committing himself to complete one work when he might have another more interesting one in mind which would have to be postponed because of his previous obligations. 'I do not paint to enrich myself,' he boastfully wrote to a would-be patron, 'but purely for my own satisfaction. I must allow myself to be carried away by the transports of enthusiasm and use my brushes only when I feel myself rapt'[1]—an astonishingly early claim of the painter's complete dependence on inspiration. In any case, he used to assert, it was no use settling the price of a picture *before* he had even begun it. The price should depend on the quality of the finished work. This blow for the vagaries of talent struck at the very roots of the

[1] See the letter from Salvator Rosa to Don Antonio Ruffo, dated 1 April 1666, published by V. Ruffo, p. 180: '. . . perch'io non dipingo per arrichire mà solamente per propria sodisfazione, è forza il lasciarmi trasportare da gl'impeti dell'entusiasmo ed esercitare i pennelli solamente in quel tempo che me ne sento violentato. . . .'

generally held conception, the implications of which have already been examined, that an artist's capabilities could be assessed in advance. By implying that a painter might well paint a bad picture rather than a good one Salvator Rosa was paradoxically making far greater claims for the superior status of art than any of his rivals who so assiduously cultivated respectable table manners. He insisted on giving only of his best. 'From the little I have had to do with him', wrote an agent, 'I can see that he would rather starve to death than let the quality of his produce fall in reputation.'[1]

This integrity, as well as his appetite for publicity, his claims to independence and inspiration, and his apparent eccentricity were all closely linked, and impressed his more serious contemporaries fully as much as his strange and irregular behaviour intrigued the gossip writers of the day. Some of them at least understood the significance of his conduct. When summing up his career, Baldinucci made the point clearly enough: 'Of few, or indeed of no, painters who lived before or after him or who were his contemporaries do I find that it can be claimed that they maintained the esteem due to art as he did.'[2]

Yet the negative part of this comment is as important as the positive. Salvator Rosa had no real followers in his attempts to change the pattern of art patronage. He created an image of the artist which was to be fully appreciated only by the romantics of the nineteenth century. In his own day he stood alone.[3]

[1] Letter from Giuseppe de Rosis to Don Antonio Ruffo, dated 22 September 1663, published by V. Ruffo, p. 172.

[2] Baldinucci, VI, 1728, p. 579.

[3] Two other artists show some signs of having rebelled against the generally prevailing circumstances of art patronage. On 19 September 1672 Ciro Ferri wrote to Don Antonio Ruffo: '. . . è stato mio costume non pigliare danaro anticipato e questa per stare in mia libertà . . .' but the effect of this is somewhat modified by the phrase that follows, 'tanto più sia detto a gloria di Dio, per la molteplicità degl'affari che tengo . . .' (Ruffo, p. 298). And of Benedetto Luti much later Pascoli wrote (I, p. 233): 'Nè pur cercò mai protezioni de' Grandi, e siccome egli andava poco da loro, essi di rado givan da lui. Diceva, che la protezione dell'uomo dabbene esser doveva quella sola del bene oprare. . . .'