PATRONS AND PAINTERS

A Study in the Relations Between Italian Art and Society in the Age of the Baroque

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

FRANCIS HASKELL

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW HAVEN AND LONDON
1980

For Larissa

and my friends in Italy

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Printed in China

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Haskell, Francis, 1928–2000
Patrons and painters.

Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
1. Art, Italian. 2. Art, Baroque—Italy.
3. Art patrons. 4. Art and society. I. Title.
N6916.H37 1980 709.45 80–5213
ISBN 0–300–02537–8
ISBN 0–300–02540–8 (pbk.)

Preface to Second Edition

SINCE *Patrons and Painters* was first published in 1963 a very great deal has been written about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian art (though much less about the social and economic history of the period) and as my own interests have sometimes strayed from the field, I have certainly not been able to keep abreast of all new developments. However, although many of the emphases in *Patrons and Painters* would necessarily be very different were I now writing the book for the first time, I have the impression that there has not appeared any radically different interpretation of the whole period and that there has only been published one criticism of it so substantial that I feel the need to discuss it at some length.

I have, therefore, thought it best to respond to the challenge of a new edition in three separate ways. I have corrected in the text itself such errors of fact and judgement (as well as misprints) as can be altered without difficulty—a process which I began in the Italian edition of 1966. I have in a new introduction tried to face the specific problem to which I have just referred. And, rather than incorporate new material into the substance of the book itself and thus seriously distort the structure of the original narrative, I have in a postscript devoted an extended commentary to those new publications, or publications newly seen by me, which have a direct bearing on its theme—and where possible I have estimated as fairly as I can the impact made by this new material on my original arguments. In this section I have not aimed to mention works, however intrinsically important, on the art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which are not immediately relevant to my purpose, and this has meant the conscious exclusion of many significant monographs. Nor have I made references to the excellent *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* which has begun appearing over the last few years because I have taken it for granted that anyone interested in the figures I describe will want to make use of it as, like some noble glacier, it slowly moves down the alphabet. I am, however, all too aware that I will have omitted many other contributions that should have been included, and for this I apologise both to the authors concerned and to the readers of this new edition. For the sake of convenience I have divided my commentary according to the original chapters, and the publications mentioned in the notes to it have been incorporated into a new bibliography covering the whole book. The index also has been revised to take this additional material into account.

By far the most gratifying part of what has necessarily been a difficult and somewhat tendentious labour of revision has been the discovery of how many pictures which in 1963 were only known to me from documentary sources have subsequently come to light, and I am very happy to be able to add reproductions of a number of these to my original illustrations.

I am deeply grateful to the directors of Chatto and Windus (and especially to Mrs Norah Smallwood) for the constant support and encouragement I received from them when we worked together on the first handsome edition of this book. And I would also like to thank John Nicoll for proposing a new edition and for giving me so much help over it. Robert Enggass, Howard Hibbard and especially Anthony Blunt stand out among the many people who have pointed out to me some of my more glaring mistakes, and I am most grateful to them as well as to Bruce Boucher, Marco Chiarini, Ann Sutherland Harris, Pierre Rosenberg and Marianne Roland-Michel for suggestions in the preparation of my bibliography and illustrations and for help in many other ways.

One special cause of sadness has marred my satisfaction in preparing this new edition: the deaths of Tim Munby and Ben Nicolson, two very close friends to whom I turned so often for advice when writing this book, and the lack of whose assistance will certainly make itself felt in the present version.

Oxford,
November 1979

Preface to First Edition

ONE of the problems that has caused me most trouble in preparing this book has been the choice of a suitable title. It is because the present one is so inadequate that I have found it essential to write a short explanatory preface.

For the sake of convenience I have termed 'Baroque' that whole phase of Italian art which came into being in Rome early in the seventeenth century, reached a climax during the pontificate of Urban VIII and lingered on in Venice until the downfall of the Republic. However, I soon saw that a mere list of the art patrons and their collections during this period would have filled much of this book and that rigorous selection was essential. Here I was faced with a vital problem of method. Should my concern with patrons be determined by the intrinsic interest of their personalities and tastes or by the quality and importance of the art they commissioned—for the two do not always coincide? Inevitably I was forced to compromise and in so doing I ran into some obvious difficulties. The chief of these was the relative amount of space to be allotted to the various figures with whom I was dealing. Every reader will see that very often —and especially in Part 2—this bears little relation to the actual merit of the work for which they were responsible. But this is not intended to be a history of painting, and it seems to me that some men and organisations were of such importance in helping to prepare the ground for later developments, and have been so little studied, that the method I have adopted is the correct one. And by accepting a compromise I soon found a pattern which governed my general principles of selection.

The first section of the book deals entirely with Rome and, for the most part, with the pontificate of Urban VIII and the various forces that helped to mould taste during his rule. After a chapter describing the relative decline of Rome I then leave the city altogether, never to return. This decision to neglect eighteenth-century Rome was a difficult one, and it has troubled some of those who have read this book in its early stages. Yet I believe it to be justified on the grounds that no new type of patronage emerged during the earlier years of the period and that thereafter, with the dawning of neo-classicism, a different artistic style began to emerge which could not legitimately be studied in a book which is essentially concerned with the Baroque.

The whole of the middle section deals with the vacuum that resulted from the decline of Rome. In these two chapters I am concerned to show that the most significant developments in art were largely fostered by two new and very different kinds of patron from any considered in the earlier part of the book: the foreigners, who now for the first time made an overwhelming impact on Italian painters, and a number of isolated individuals in remote provincial towns who built up small collections of contemporary art. These men I believe to be important because they inherited what had been the most fruitful elements in Roman patronage—its international character and its

refusal to be bound by dogmatic principles. There was, it is true, a coarsening of this inheritance, and except for Grand Prince Ferdinand of Tuscany none of them showed the delicacy and sureness of taste that had once been the glory of the great metropolitan patrons. None the less, it was their reaction against (or at least their ignorance of) contemporary, and now sterile Roman principles, and their appreciation of Neapolitan 'anti-classical' painting that prepared the ground for a new surge of the Baroque which spread from Venice to many parts of Europe.

The last part of the book is entirely concerned with the rise and fall of this great phase of Italian art. After the earlier chapters, in which the subject is treated in depth, I have adopted a more narrative form to show the encroachments into the Baroque of the neo-classical and other styles brought about by economic causes and new social ideas. It is because of this that in these later chapters I have gone beyond my title and have discussed architecture, sculpture and even gardens as well as painting. This was necessary because in my opinion many of the most interesting patrons of the period were deliberately turning their backs on painting since they no longer found in it a suitable medium for the expression of their 'enlightened' beliefs—a situation not unfamiliar in our own times. When planning this last section I was worried because the final chapters became shorter and shorter and followed each other in quick succession before petering out altogether. But this now seems to me to reflect with such perfect accuracy the actual situation of painting at the time that I decided not to manipulate the material in any other way despite its inelegant appearance.

Any attempt to 'explain' art in terms of patronage has been deliberately avoided. I have also fought shy of generalisations and have tried to be severely empirical—even at the cost of shirking certain problems which have deeply interested me and which I know to be vital. Inevitably I have been forced to think again and again about the relations between art and society, but nothing in my researches has convinced me of the existence of underlying laws which will be valid in all circumstances. At times the connections between economic or political conditions and a certain style have seemed particularly close; at other times I have been unable to detect anything more than the internal logic of artistic development, personal whim or the workings of chance. I hope that the bringing together of so much material may inspire others to find a synthesis where I have been unable to do so. Nor have I gone to the opposite extreme and tried to trace or describe all the pictures to which I have referred. With few exceptions the most general knowledge of an artist's style is all that is required to appreciate the points that are made about the tastes of particular patrons.

Although my publishers have been most generous, the illustrations are far fewer ideally than I would have wished. But much care has gone into their arrangement in the hope that each Plate will in itself help to explain many of the arguments which are more laboriously elaborated in the text. Here too this has sometimes resulted in a grotesque disproportion between merit and available space, and the reluctant omission of a number of masterpieces. I am deeply grateful to my friend Dr Enzo Crea of Rome for the trouble he has taken in helping me to organise this side of the book.

In writing about a subject which falls half way between History and Art History I am well aware of the risks I run in disappointing readers who are interested in either of these branches of knowledge. It is difficult to keep abreast of research in two fields, especially to-day when seventeenth-century studies are so active. But whatever the deficiencies of the final result I have no doubt whatsoever about the value of the attempt or the enjoyment I have derived from making it. Much of this enjoyment has sprung from the large number of friends I have made in Italy and England over the last few years, so many of whom have given me the most generous help.

All the libraries and archives which are referred to on a later page have received me with great kindness, and to these I would like to add especially the library of the Warburg Institute in London where I have always received so much encouragement and advice from everyone concerned with that great organisation. I am also deeply indebted to the Provost and Fellows of my own College who have made it possible for me to undertake and continue this book over a very much longer period than they originally bargained for. Mr A. N. L. Munby, the librarian, has solved countless problems for me and Mr G. H. W. Rylands has read much of the typescript and the whole book in proof and made many suggestions and corrections. I would like, too, to thank Mrs Elizabeth Orna for the trouble she took in compiling a full and necessarily rather complicated Index; and Messrs T. and A. Constable Ltd., the printers of the book, for their great care in setting and checking my text.

I have benefited from conversations with so many people that it is impossible to thank them all and I apologise to all who have been inadvertently omitted. In Italy I would like to single out especially Dr Terisio Pignatti, who has given me such marvellous facilities for working in the Correr Library in Venice, Dr Alessandro Bettagno, Dr Gianfranco Torcellan, Professors Franco Venturi and Gaetano Cozzi, and—above all—Professor Alessandro Marabottini Marabotti, in whose company I have seen so many of the works discussed and whose repeated hospitality has made the writing of this book such a pleasure. In England I am especially grateful to Professor Ellis Waterhouse, Mr Denis Mahon and Mr Peter Calvocoressi, all of whom have read the typescript and greatly improved it, to Professor Nikolaus Pevsner, who first interested me in the subject of art patronage, and to Sir Anthony Blunt and Mr Michael Levey, with whom I have had so many stimulating discussions. But my greatest debt of all is to Mr. Benedict Nicolson who has taken endless trouble with my text at every stage and whose encouraging but severe attitude has helped me more than I can express.

FRANCIS HASKELL

King's College,
Cambridge,
July 1962

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Introduction to Second Edition

THE most serious objection made to this book concerns its treatment (or rather lack of treatment) of eighteenth-century Rome. My original preface shows that I was aware of this potential weakness from the first, and in a generous review Hugh Honour pointed out that I preserved 'a charmingly old-fashioned distaste for Neo-classicism'.[1] Since then I have overcome this distaste and I would now certainly modify the tone of my few comments on the art of the second half of the eighteenth century. More to the point, however, is the issue of whether my 'anti-Roman' prejudices falsified my historical sense. Ellis Waterhouse has suggested that they did.

In an article, whose central theme was to refute Rudolf Wittkower's claim that 'the history of Italian eighteenth-century painting is, above all, the history of Venetian painting', Waterhouse commented that my 'splendid book has a fundamental defect in the author's desire to bring the great period of Roman patronage to an end about 1700, in order to support the view that this was taken over by other parts of Italy, in particular Venice'. Waterhouse emphasised that 'a number of the ablest painters in Italy, Conca, Giaquinto and Batoni for instance, moved to Rome from Naples or Tuscany; and the argument used by Francis Haskell to support the thesis of a decline of Rome in the eighteenth century from the fact that such minor personalities as P. G. Piola, Viani, or Lazzarini, refused to settle in Rome, though strongly pressed, is more likely to be explained by the fact that they feared competition. In the seventeenth century, Guido and Guercino, for instance, had refused to stay in Rome, at a time when this argument would have been absurd.'[2]

This criticism must certainly carry much weight, and I have thought about it carefully. In the end, however, I find it unpersuasive. The list of distinguished Italian artists who (unlike Guido and Guercino much earlier) either failed to paint anything of consequence for the principal churches and palaces of Rome or did not even visit the city as other than tourists is a formidable one—it includes Crespi and Solimena, to name only two who are surely superior to Conca who arrived in 1707 and did not receive his first public commission for seven years. Giaquinto and Batoni came only a generation later by which time the situation had begun to change—but by which time also Tiepolo was embarking on some of his most splendid works in the Veneto.

'Innocent XI (1676-1689) went to great efforts to keep money from the arts and he succeeded as no post-renaissance pope ever had', it has recently been claimed,[3] and though the situation improved after his death it remained bleak. Clement XI (1700-1721) 'kept himself free from all nepotism', which may be a relief for a modern historian of the papacy[4] but cannot have been very encouraging for painters looking for employment, and it is surely clear beyond doubt that the attractions of Rome as a centre of

[1] *Apollo*, December 1963.
[2] Waterhouse, 1971.
[3] Conforti, p. 557.
[4] Pastor (English edition), XXXIII, p. 13.

art patronage declined very seriously at this time. Indeed, in 1708, Charles-François Poerson, director of the French Academy in the city, wrote gloomily: 'Je crois, Mgr, que ce qui a beaucoup contribué à ce pittoyable relâchement [of painting in Rome] est le peu de fortune qu'il y a à faire en ce païs-cy. D'ailleurs les affreuses guerres, dont toute l'Europe est affligée, empêchent les Etrangers de venir icy, et c'étoient ces étrangers qui récompensoient les vertueux, car, pour MM les Italiens, ils ne sont magnifiques qu'en embrassades . . .'[1]

In the last analysis, however, it is a qualitative judgment that has to be made. In the second decade of the eighteenth century Pope Clement XI had the church of his patron S. Clemente freshly decorated.[2] As he bore a particular affection for the church we can assume that he went out of his way to employ the best artists available. The list of those chosen is therefore indicative: Sebastiano Conca, Pietro di Pietri, Giovanni Odazzi, Pier Leoni Ghezzi, Tommaso Chiari, Giovanni Domenico Piastrini and Giacomo Triga. I find it as impossible to believe to-day as I did in 1963 that such a commission can compare in quality with similar ones made in the previous century or with others being given elsewhere in Italy—and notably Venice.

Waterhouse himself and the late Anthony Clark have indeed shown us how many fine painters did work in Rome during the eighteenth century, but neither in the general opinion of the time (nor, yet, in that of our own day) was it accepted that their achievements dominated European art in a way that was even remotely comparable to what was happening in the age of Pietro da Cortona with which I was mostly concerned. I therefore believe that an opinion which would indeed have been absurd in a book dealing with architecture or sculpture is quite justified in one devoted to painting.

[1] Montaiglon, III, p. 240.

[2] Gilmartin.