190. Giovanni de' Vecchi, *Virgin and Child enthroned with two saints*, *c.*1589(?), pen and bistre, 29.8 × 22.5 cm., Florence, Uffizi, 7369F.

Gli errori degli pittori

Cardinal Farnese emerges from his extensive campaign of ecclesiastical patronage as one of the foremost promoters of reform and refurbishment in the Roman churches from the 1560s on. We have also seen that there is evidence that he became more devout, at least at the end of his life, and that his concern to be seen to be acting in a manner appropriate for a Counter-Reformation cardinal was deeply felt. At this time some patrons were increasingly having the walls of their palaces and villas frescoed with religious subjects, turning away from the mythological iconography that had prevailed in earlier years. Moreover, a number of treatises were appearing which stressed the need for decorum in painting, and complained about what they regarded as irreverent treatment of religious subjects by 'ignorant' artists. In this context we may enquire how far Alessandro conformed to such trends in the later decoration of his secular buildings. Unfortunately, however, the evidence is somewhat scanty and difficult to interpret, so that firm conclusions cannot be drawn.

The decorative programmes at Caprarola might seem to indicate a change in attitude after about 1570. As we have seen, the frescoes executed during the 1560s depicted almost entirely secular subject-matter, mostly drawn from classical mythology, while that of the following decade was very largely religious, with the major exception of the Sala del Mappamondo, which belatedly follows the pattern set by some other Roman patrons.[265]

By the late 1560s a trend towards religious iconography was certainly well established in Roman villa and palace decoration. The interior of the Casino of Pius IV, for example, had been frescoed from 1561 to 1563 almost entirely with biblical scenes, in marked contrast to Pirro Ligorio's pagan exterior.[266] Similarly, Cardinal Ricci, who had close ties with Alessandro Farnese, had three rooms in his villa on the Pincian Hill decorated with friezes showing Old Testament episodes around 1564–5. Somewhat earlier, around 1552–3, he had also had Salviati paint a cycle of the life of David in his palace in Via Giulia, now Palazzo Sacchetti, although the treatment of the subject is remarkably secular in character, with overtly erotic scenes such as Bathsheba bathing, and Bathsheba visiting David.[267] At the Villa d'Este a shift in the type of iconography employed occurred almost contemporaneously with that at Caprarola. Until 1567–8 the rooms there were decorated with mythological subjects. A break then occurred in the overall programme for the villa, and the iconography of the later rooms was all religious.[268]

But not all patrons rushed to adopt biblical subject-matter. The Villa Lante at Bagnaia is an important example, since this commission had many links with that for Caprarola. The villa was built by Alessandro's close friend Cardinal Gambara, who requested the loan of his architect Vignola, and also borrowed one of his painters, Raffaellino da Reggio.[269] As late as the mid-1570s Cardinal Gambara was commissioning mythological and astrological frescoes, which once again recall Caprarola. It was, then, perhaps not absolutely *de rigueur* during the 1560s and 1570s to decorate secular interiors with religious subjects. It may therefore be appropriate to regard the trend towards sacred subject-matter in villa decoration more as a symptom of the general shift in the spiritual climate, though not one that was universally adopted.

The change in Alessandro's iconography at Caprarola does not coincide precisely with the growth of his overt public piety and the increase in public ecclesiastical commissions. But it is debatable how far this alteration was motivated by Counter-Reformatory pressures, rather than a mere desire for *varietà* or a change of adviser. Alessandro may not have felt any pressing need to reform the decoration of his public apartments, although the images chosen for the second apartment at Caprarola, which dwell on themes of penitence and divine power, would seem admirably suited to his new public persona.

Aside from the *appartamento d'inverno*, the evidence for Alessandro's attitude to religious iconography in private contexts is very scarce. This results partly from the overall lack of commissions for easel paintings other than portraits.[270] Giulio Clovio continued to produce small devotional paintings for his patron until his death in 1578.[271] These included a *Christ holding the Cross* and a *Calvary*,[272] the miniatures of the *Towneley Lectionary*,[273] a *St Francis* and a *St Jerome*.[274] Of these, only the *Towneley Lectionary* survives. There one can see the simplified religious iconography developed by Michelangelo and adopted by such artists as Marcello

191. El Greco, *Christ healing the blind man*, 1570–6, oil on canvas, 336 × 247 cm., Parma, Galleria Nazionale (Photo: Soprintendenza per i beni artistici e storici, Parma).

Venusti, Scipione Pulzone and Jacopino del Conte, which has often been seen as a product of the Counter-Reformation. In this case, however, it seems likely that it results more from Clovio's dependence on Michelangelo as a visual source than from any specification on the part of the patron.[275]

Another important painter of religious images who worked for Alessandro in the 1570s was El Greco. He apparently painted the *Christ healing the blind man* (pl. 191) for the Cardinal, but we unfortunately know nothing of the circumstances in which the work was executed, except that Clovio introduced the artist to Alessandro in 1570.[276] We cannot even be certain that Alessandro actually commissioned this work, or whether it might have been presented to him in the hope of obtaining further commissions. The only other picture that El Greco painted for him was a small genre work, the *Boy lighting a candle* (Naples, Capodimonte).[277] Zeri has suggested that El Greco's work might have appealed to Alessandro because of the mystical qualities it shared with that of Giovanni de' Vecchi, but the absence of further commissions indicates either that Alessandro did not, in fact, particularly like his work, or that he was simply not interested at this time in acquiring further devotional pictures.[278]

Three more major religious works were obtained for his collection by the

192. Titian, *Penitent Magdalen*, 1567, oil on canvas, 128 × 103 cm., Naples, Gallerie Nazionali di Capodimonte (Photo: Soprintendenza per i beni artistici e storici, Naples).

Cardinal during the latter part of his career, although in none of these cases did Alessandro himself intervene in the choice of subject. One was Titian's *Penitent Magdalen* (pl. 192). The painting was sent unsolicited in 1567 by the artist, who wanted the Cardinal's help in obtaining a benefice.[279] We have already seen how Titian had exploited an earlier version of this composition (pl. 142) as little more than the excuse for titillating nudity, scarcely different in character from the *Danaë* that he had painted for Alessandro. On this occasion, however, the artist made his Magdalen far more decorous, clothing her fully and increasing the devoutness of her expression. One wonders to what extent these alterations were made in response to what Titian had heard about his former patron's altered attitudes.

The other sacred works acquired by the Cardinal around this period – the 'Giorgione' *Christ carrying the Cross* and Penni's *Madonna del Divino Amore* – are similarly uninformative about his attitude to religious images, since they appear to have been purchased primarily at the instigation of Fulvio Orsini.[280] It is thus difficult to judge whether or not Alessandro's ideas about religious iconography in private commissions altered significantly during the latter part of his life. But such evidence as survives, including the infrequency of such commissions, tends to indicate that this was not an issue that particularly concerned him. He certainly does not seem to have felt that there was any incongruity in continuing to collect antique sculpture on a grand scale, unlike some of his contemporaries, notably Pius V, who so keenly desired to remove all the pagan deities that he regarded as defiling the Vatican palaces.[281] Nor did Alessandro feel any inhibition in keeping an erotic mythological work such as Titian's *Danaë* in his bedroom.[282]

It is an interesting problem to gauge how inappropriate Alessandro's practice would have seemed to most of his contemporaries. The treatises on painting and on correct behaviour for a cardinal that were published during the second half of the Cinquecento do not insist specifically on religious subjects for the decoration of ecclesiastics' palaces. Greater stress is laid on providing the right kind of example in their decoration, whilst pleasing the eye. Thus Armenini recommends heroic deeds for public rooms in the palaces of prelates, citing the Sala di Costantino, Salviati's Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani, and his David cycle in Palazzo Ricci-Sacchetti.[283] For *camere*, or private rooms, on the other hand, he particularly recommends 'moral virtues'.[284] Similarly, F. Albergati, in a treatise written in 1597 for the 'Cardinal born a Prince', which he dedicated to the young Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, urged that a cardinal's pictures should 'confirm man again in the habit of his own virtue'. Best of all, they should be 'appropriate to the life of an ecclesiastical Prince', and certainly not 'full of lasciviousness', a recommendation that was clearly followed in Odoardo's commission for the Camerino Farnese, but spectacularly ignored in that for the 'Loves of the Gods' in the Farnese Gallery.[285]

The majority of the treatises on images published during this period were primarily concerned with decorum in religious paintings for public places, rather than for private dwellings.[286] One of these treatises, Giovanni Andrea Gilio's *Dialogo . . . degli errori e degli abusi de' pittori circa l'historie*, was dedicated to Alessandro in 1564. Regrettably we have no record of the Cardinal's response to the ideas put forward in this book and can only guess at the reasons why Gilio chose to dedicate it to him. The dialogue was paired with a short treatise on the moral qualities necessary for a *letterato*, and on the usefulness of *letterati* for princes. This reads like a blatant appeal for patronage. It laments the misery of the present day, in comparison with the magnificence of earlier princes, although it naturally includes an extended eulogy of Cardinal Farnese.[287]

The dialogue on painting argues that painters have fallen into dangerously mistaken ways of representation, especially of religious subjects, largely through their ignorance. Gilio divides painters into three different categories.[288] The first is the historical painter, who is responsible also for all religious paintings, of which Gilio's chief examples are the Sistine and Pauline Chapels in the Vatican. The poetic painter deals entirely with the fabulous, where he is permitted to exercise his imagination and to create 'poetic fictions', including events that cannot have happened, and bizarre forms such as grotesques. Gilio here refers to Raphael's frescoes in the Farnesina and the Logge, as well as to the decoration of the Villa Giulia. The third kind of painter is the 'mixed painter', who combines the two types of painting. As examples, Gilio here quotes the Sala dei Cento Giorni and Salviati's Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani, making it clear that he is discussing the kind of allegorical history painting that combines real figures with personifications.[289]

Gilio's main interest is naturally in the historical painters, and his most hostile criticisms are aimed at Michelangelo's *Last Judgement*. His complaints are of two kinds. Firstly, he suggests that artists no longer follow their textual sources faithfully: 'the historical painter is none other than a translator'.[290] This is particularly culpable when they are dealing with biblical themes, the gravity of whose subjects cannot leave room for invention or embroidery. But artists have taken to introducing extraneous or, worse still, apocryphal matter. Gilio's attack on the

Last Judgement illustrates well his narrowly theological viewpoint: he goes beyond the usual objections to excessive nudity in the particular location and protests, for example, that certain draperies appear to flutter – although it is certain that on the Day of Judgement no wind will blow – and that Christ is shown standing, not seated as Scripture tells us.[291] Gilio would thus allow the historical painter no freedom of invention whatsoever. His other major objection to contemporary painting is stylistic. He evidently deeply disliked the artifice of Mannerism and complains at length that painters are excessively concerned with showing off their skills at foreshortening and describing elaborately twisted poses, at the expense of verisimilitude and clear narrative.[292]

It may be significant that all the examples of erroneous painting that Gilio cites were either owned by Alessandro or would certainly have been known to him. This scarcely seems tactful on Gilio's part, and one wonders to what extent the writer regarded Alessandro as being insufficiently committed to reform in religious iconography. The dialogue was, moreover, written around the time that the notion of covering up some of the figures in the *Last Judgement* was being discussed. Indeed, the year after Gilio's treatise was published, Daniele da Volterra was employed to paint 'trousers' on some of Michelangelo's figures.[293] Alessandro's attitude to the *Last Judgement* was, as I have suggested, one of enthusiasm rather than disapproval, and possibly Gilio wished to alter this.

The *Last Judgement* apart, Alessandro seems to have shown a fairly conformist attitude to sacred images commissioned for public places. Examples are the apostles and church fathers at Farfa and the scenes of martyrdom at S. Lorenzo in Damaso. The latter type of subject, dwelling on Christian suffering, was singled out for particular praise by Gilio, and a contemporary source attests to Alessandro's approval of the grim martydoms in S. Stefano Rotondo.[294] The iconography of the Gesù, as one would expect, emphasised Counter-Reformation ideals, although here the overall programme was controlled by the Jesuits.[295] Admittedly, the choice of the *Circumcision* for the high altar was controversial, but this was evidently a Jesuit decision.[296] Alessandro does, however, seem to have been conforming to pressure when in 1574 he ordered the naked figure of Justice on the tomb of Paul III to be covered, a gesture that would have been entirely in accord with Gilio's ideals.[297]

Arte senza tempo?

We have seen the difficulties involved in determining the extent to which Farnese adopted reforming ideals with regard to iconography. The question whether he actively promoted a new style of Counter-Reformation art is similarly complex to respond to. Federico Zeri, in what remains one of the most stimulating discussions of Cinquecento religious art, proposed in 1957 that later Roman Mannerism provided a figurative art that fully satisfied the ideals of the post-Tridentine theorists. He further suggested that this style formed the basis of an international 'arte sacra', which came to dominate Europe as the art of the reformed church.[298] Zeri argued that a key event in the development of this style was an encounter, nowhere documented, but circumstantially plausible, between Giovanni de'

Vecchi, Alessandro's great protégé, the Flemish artist Anthonie Blocklandt and the young El Greco, which was conjectured to have taken place in Palazzo Farnese early in the 1570s.[299] Zeri certainly demonstrated some remarkable affinities in the religious works of these painters, which he characterised as the 'supreme flame of pictorial mysticism'.[300] One should not, however, over-emphasise de' Vecchi's mystical style, characterised by flickering shadows and elongated, ethereal figures, at the expense of a more prosaic style which he tended to use in secular contexts, such as the frescoes at Caprarola.[301]

It is difficult to believe that Cardinal Farnese was actively responsible for the development of a single 'Counter-Reformation' style, beyond providing the opportunities for these artists to work. Indeed, he seems never to have made any demands about style of his artists, and the painters who worked for him differ greatly in manner, even when working on the same commission. For example, at S. Lorenzo in Damaso he employed the 'mystical' de' Vecchi alongside Circignani, whose work is much less spiritual and has greater affinities with the reformed Tuscan Mannerism of, say, Santi di Tito. Together with these was the young Giuseppe Cesari, painting in yet another, radically different manner, prefiguring the bland Sixtine style, which he was to develop.[302] The only painter whom Alessandro patronised consistently over some twenty years was de' Vecchi, though even he was dropped for the Gesù altarpiece in favour of Muziano. De' Vecchi's style of 'pictorial mysticism' is, as Zeri rightly observed, particularly suited to a more devotional approach to painting, and this may explain his success as the Cardinal's painter. One would think that this manner would be especially appropriate for a patron who had become 'entirely spiritual'. But there is no evidence to suggest that the reasons for Alessandro's choices of painter were ever primarily stylistic.[303] That he was able to employ such diverse artists on the same commission must argue against their being employed to paint in a specifically 'Counter-Reformation' style.

It is impossible to discover much about Alessandro's religious beliefs from his correspondence, since, perhaps wisely, they were rarely set down on paper. His artistic patronage provides the clearest evidence of his altered preoccupations, but even here his motives seem ambiguous. He may not have promoted a specific style of 'arte sacra', but there can be little doubt that he intended to make his contribution to Roman reform primarily by means of his magnificent embellishment of the city's churches. At times, however, his religious commissions appear to have been motivated more by his ambitions and a desire to display status and wealth. Arguably, what we find is a shift in the manner of expressing his *magnificenza* to accord with the new spiritual climate in Rome rather than patronage that sprang from a genuine conversion. The appearance of new-found spirituality is to be explained by the religious function of the buildings that were now to receive his patronage, not by a change of heart within the patron himself. We may attribute a uniform and continuous driving force as the motive for both the earlier, secular commissions and the later, religious ones. Whatever Alessandro's reasons, the surviving results testify to the extraordinary quality and magnitude of his achievement.

V

THE ADVISERS

> One does not therefore trust an ignoramus in his whims, when he thinks it is enough to know well how to combine colours, and to use the brush, which is not sufficient. But one should have some ingenious *letterato* describe the story and order the combination he desires to make.[1]

THROUGHOUT ALESSANDRO'S CAREER as an artistic patron, many decisions that affected the eventual appearance of the works of art commissioned by him were delegated to *letterati* attached to his household, usually in such positions as secretary or librarian. These included, as we have seen, such important intellectual figures as the historian Paolo Giovio, the poet Annibal Caro and the antiquarian scholar Fulvio Orsini. In addition to their administrative duties, they essentially performed two kinds of function relating to the creation of works of art, though in practice these were usually carried out by the same man. First, they would select and arrange the subject-matter of decorative cycles, and, second, they would supervise the execution of a project, from the recommendation, and sometimes even the choice, of an artist through to its completion. The degree of autonomy they were permitted would vary according to the importance of the commission in the patron's eye. Sometimes the advisers would feel obliged to refer problems back to the patron, but often they made decisions themselves that had important consequences for the finished work of art, and they enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom.[2] All these men were highly educated. They were particularly qualified for their artistic tasks by a keen interest in the visual arts, and they almost invariably enjoyed close friendships with artists and architects. Their own pecuniary means were inevitably limited, certainly by comparison with those of their employer, but none the less, most of them formed notable collections of their own, often acquiring pictures as gifts from grateful artists whom they had helped.

Employing specialist advisers to construct iconographic programmes and to assist the patron was a practice that became widespread all over Italy during the early years of the Cinquecento, although there are earlier precedents, such as Guarino's *invenzioni* for Leonello d'Este's *studiolo* of 1447.[3] The need for such specialists seems to have arisen with the growth in demand for works of art with secular subjects, and particularly subjects derived from classical literature.

Renaissance patrons began to feel that it was of paramount importance to ensure that their pictures were 'correctly' painted, following, as far as possible, all indications in antique sources about the appearance of ancient characters. It should be stressed, however, that contemporary notions of what constituted a classical text do not always coincide with the twentieth-century view, and Renaissance advisers often exploited material from early medieval mythographers and encyclopedias.[4] Nor were these subjects imposed on reluctant artists. On occasion, artists would seek further advice as to how to represent a subject, as when Matteo de' Pasti wrote to Piero di Cosimo de' Medici in 1441, begging for more detail about appearances in Petrarch's *Trionfi*.[5]

With the fashion for immensely complex and sophisticated cycles of secular fresco decoration, covering many square metres of courtly walls, which accompanied the flourishing of Mannerism in Central Italy, the need for learned advisers became ever more pressing.[6] The advisers were helped considerably in their task by the publication from the late 1540s onwards of well-organised handbooks of mythology, such as Cartari's *Le Imagini . . . de i dei degli antichi* (Venice, 1556), a manual specifically written with painters in mind, which brought together all known classical literary references to a large number of deities. These saved the advisers much time in searching for particular details and enabled them to invent ever more elaborate sequences of images. Eventually, towards the end of the century, artists came to use them to devise their own iconography,[7] but during the period in which Cardinal Farnese was commissioning such cycles it was more usual for *letterati* to be employed. For example, Duke Cosimo de' Medici regularly employed such men as Vincenzo Borghini and Cosimo Bartoli to compose extensive programmes both for ephemeral festival decorations and for monumental schemes such as the decoration of Palazzo Vecchio.[8] So too, Julius III put a member of his court, Hieronimo Soperchio, in charge of the decorative programme for a grotto at the Villa Giulia in 1551, though he then turned to an acknowledged expert, Annibal Caro, for further suggestions.[9] On another occasion Julius seems to have had Anton Francesco Rainerio devise a scheme for a loggia in Palazzo Firenze.[10] Caro was also borrowed from Cardinal Farnese by Vicino Orsini, the creator of the Sacro Bosco at Bomarzo, to work out a programme for his castle showing the Fall of the Giants.[11]

Even if an adviser was not appointed by the patron, artists of the mid-Cinquecento sometimes liked to turn to a humanist for advice, though practice at this time varied according to the nature of the commission. For example, when Vasari, who always had a penchant for unusual imagery, wanted an extra-special *invenzione* for Bindo Altoviti's loggia, which he had apparently been instructed to decorate with a cycle of the months, he turned to Caro, who provided him with something suitably *recherché* – twelve personifications based on a description by the twelfth-century Greek writer, Eustathius Macrembolites.[12] It is, of course, entirely possible that artists would on certain occasions collaborate in the evolution of such programmes: it is hard to believe that sophisticated, learned artists like Vasari and Salviati were not capable of suggesting clever images.[13]

Alessandro's practice of employing advisers was no different from that of other contemporary patrons. Over the years four men in particular were influential: Giovio during the early 1540s; Caro from the middle of that decade until his death

in 1566; the antiquarian Onofrio Panvinio during the early 1560s; and Orsini, from 1566 until Alessandro's death. Others also offered advice on individual commissions. The amount of artistic responsibility accorded to these men is such that at times one has the impression that Alessandro's taste is indistinguishable from that of a committee of advisers. As a group, they are therefore very important, and only by determining in detail the extent of their influence on the finished product can we hope to isolate the taste of the patron himself. In this chapter I shall examine the careers of the Farnese *consiglieri*, their position in Alessandro's court and their duties with regard to the execution of artistic commissions, as well as their practice as iconographers. We shall then be in a position to consider how far they had different styles of behaviour and different artistic interests, and the extent to which these impinged upon Cardinal Farnese's own visual concerns.

Paolo Giovio

Alessandro's first known artistic mentor was Paolo Giovio (1483–1552) (pl. 193).[14] Giovio had come to Rome as a professor of philosophy under Leo X, and the Medici were thereafter to remain his major patrons throughout his career. He enjoyed only moderate success within the church hierarchy. Clement VII made him Bishop of Nocera in 1527, but the greatest disappointment of his life was his failure to obtain the see of his native Como from Paul III.[15] He himself described his limitations as a prelate in a letter to Alessandro Farnese: 'I am not a valiant cloak and dagger theologian, nor a resolute cavalier in ancient literature, nor full of canon law.'[16] In fact, his intellectual interests were predominantly secular, and he is chiefly remembered as the author of the *Historiae* (Florence, 1552), together with many other historical works.[17] In 1551 he also wrote the first treatise on *imprese*, which was dedicated to Duke Cosimo I de' Medici.[18]

Giovio's attitude to religious learning accorded well with the tenor of Alessandro's entourage in the early years, when it was characterised by its highly secular and antiquarian propensities, contrasting with the more severe, reforming qualities of many members of the papal court. Giovio held no official position in the Farnese household, unlike Alessandro's later artistic counsellors, but he associated very closely with the young Cardinal from an early date.[19] As Vasari remarked, he was one of those *letterati* who 'were always there to amuse [Alessandro] with beautiful and honourable discussions'.[20]

The numerous letters to his young patron which survive in Giovio's *carteggio* testify vividly to the kind of entertainment he would provide. Always highly erudite, they were written in a playful, bantering, often gossipy style, full of neologisms and extravagant comparisons, as when he compared his being forced to leave his rooms in the Vatican to Lucifer's brother's being driven from Paradise.[21] Most members of the papal court received nicknames from him: Alessandro himself thus became 'Hephaestion', perhaps alluding to his status as the elder Alessandro Farnese's most trusted subordinate. Giovio also would jokingly refer to Paul III, Pier Luigi and the younger Alessandro as the Holy Trinity, 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.[22]

Giovio amassed his own remarkable collection, which included works by Titian,

Bronzino, Pontormo, Vasari, Gentile Bellini and Mantegna.[23] They were almost entirely portraits and were arranged at his villa on the shore of Lake Como in a manner both influential and novel (though not entirely without precedent, as the contemporary collection of Marco Mantova Benavides in Padua suggests). They were hung according to the nature of their subjects' achievements as men of letters and arms, following the arrangement of Giovio's *Elogie*, and beneath each was placed one of Giovio's epigrams.[24] The close connection between word and image in this arrangement was, as we shall see, an essential characteristic of his attitudes to the visual arts, which recurs both in his discussions of *imprese* and in his iconographic programmes.

193. Francesco da Sangallo, monument to Paolo Giovio, 1560, marble, Florence, S. Lorenzo, cloister (Photo: Author).

Many of Giovio's friends were artists, including several Florentines who worked in the Medici court, such as Bronzino, Salviati and Pontormo. He would on occasion put his connections to good use, introducing his friends to new patrons. For example, he probably played some part in the introduction to Cardinal Farnese of an artist who was to work for him for many years, Giovanni Bernardi da Castel Bolognese.[25] Certainly, Giovio was responsible for introducing another of his artistic protégés, Giorgio Vasari, to the Cardinal in 1543.[26] Vasari and Giovio had by then known each other for over ten years, and they shared many intellectual interests and ideas.[27] Thus, Vasari's conception of immortality achieved via literature, which is expressed constantly throughout the *Lives*, evidently owes much to Giovio.[28] History itself was, of course, one of their most significant shared interests. The original idea of writing a set of biographies of Renaissance artists was, as we have seen, Giovio's, and he had already written short Latin biographies of Michelangelo, Raphael and Leonardo.[29] Though he allowed himself to be persuaded that Vasari was much better qualified to undertake the project, he provided the artist with much literary support, along with other friends, including Annibal Caro.[30]

Giovio and Vasari shared also an interest in iconography. Characteristically, Vasari's first surviving letter to the historian is a detailed allegorical *invenzione*.[31] Over the years they were to combine forces on several projects. Among their most important joint works were the programmes for the Cancelleria – the *Justice* and the Sala dei Cento Giorni (pls II, 42, 46, 49, 51).[32] The extent to which each

contributed to the iconography is a matter for speculation, given the limited evidence. In the case of the *Justice*, it is likely that the invention was mostly Vasari's, but for the Sala dei Cento Giorni, I would suggest that Giovio probably devised the history scenes single-handedly, and that Vasari was chiefly responsible for the attributes of the personifications. It is plausible too that Giovio decided on the ultimate disposition, and therefore the final selection, of the allegorical figures.[33]

If Giovio contributed relatively little to the *invenzione* of the *Justice*, he took a much more active rôle in promoting Vasari in his first commission for the powerful Cardinal. He praised him abundantly to his new patron for his skill in invention, as well as his efficiency and determination.[34] He may well have known that these were qualities that would particularly appeal to Alessandro. He also stressed Vasari's colouristic abilities, citing the example of his work at San Michele in Bosco in Bologna, which Alessandro might well have known.[35] Giovio mentioned in the same letter that he had urged Vasari to attempt a *paragone* with the great painters of antiquity in the *Justice*, a proposal that would indeed have come close to the painter's aesthetic ideals.[36]

In addition to composing the programme for the Sala dei Cento Giorni, Giovio was left to oversee the actual execution, since Alessandro was absent from Rome on a legation throughout the entire period. Giovio would report at intervals on the work's progress. He also took decisions about the detailed content: for example, which portraits to include in *Paul III distributing benefices* (pl. 49).[37] The standard of portraiture was, as one would expect of a man of his expertise and interests, a matter of considerable importance to Giovio, and the correspondence abounds in references to his attempts to raise it. Here we see symptoms of conflict between his need to carry out the patron's wishes, which were simply to have the room decorated as fast as possible, and his own standards. Even after the room was completed, he continued to complain to the unfortunate Vasari that the portraits should have been better.[38] His responsibilities covered also matters of decorum: it was he who prevented Vasari from painting the personification of the Vatican completely naked, on discovering the scandalised reaction of Alessandro's majordomo, Curzio Frangipane.[39]

On one occasion Giovio also reported the activities of a rival patron to Alessandro. In 1545 he wrote from Florence describing Cosimo I's most recent commissions, and in particular Salviati's Sala delle Udienze, whose iconography he unfortunately did not fully understand.[40] Alessandro might well have been interested to hear about Salviati, whom he would have known in the period up to 1543, while the artist was working for his father, Pier Luigi.[41] One wonders whether the painting of Cosimo's room in any way influenced Alessandro's project to have the Sala dei Cento Giorni decorated, perhaps spurring him on to compete by having a room painted in the new grand manner which Salviati and Vasari were developing at this time.[42]

Too little is still known about the ways in which iconographic programmes were devised during the sixteenth century. Although, as has been mentioned, humanist advisers were evidently employed with increasing frequency as the century progressed, very few actual iconographic texts have survived from the earlier part of the Cinquecento.[43] Giovio is one of the few who is actually named

as a composer of programmes. But beyond this, the evidence is exiguous. It is certain that he contributed to three *invenzioni* – those for the Salone at the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano, for the façade of Tommaso Cambi's house in Naples and for the Sala dei Cento Giorni – and it is likely that he devised the scheme for Vasari's allegorical portrait of Lorenzo de' Medici.[44] Unfortunately, only one written programme, that for the Cambi façade, has survived, and that seems to be a work of collaboration, in which Giovio was improving upon someone else's suggestions.[45] Our knowledge of his style is increased by the survival of a description of the Cancelleria frescoes written by A.F. Doni in 1547, shortly after their completion, which was apparently derived from the written scheme. Like the Cambi façade, this too was a joint project, devised with some assistance from Vasari himself.[46] Despite the limited nature of the remaining sources, we may make some deductions about the principles on which Giovio composed his *invenzioni*.

All Giovio's programmes closely reflect the intellectual preoccupations of his writings, both historical and emblematic. He preferred to use historical subject-matter whenever possible. In the case of the Cambi façade, he enthusiastically endorsed the patron's original suggestions for the deeds of Charles V. Such a choice is the more striking at a time when most painted façades followed the tradition established by Polidoro da Caravaggio for *all'antica* subjects. But, as in the Sala dei Cento Giorni, history was used not merely to record exploits, but to provide moral *exempla*. This treatment resembles the use of ancient history in many Cinquecento fresco cycles, such as Beccafumi's Sala del Concistoro in Siena.[47]

In Giovio's earliest programme, that for Poggio a Caiano, the subjects have an essentially historical purpose, although the images used to convey the historical message are of a rather indirect nature. Our understanding of Giovio's precise intentions is hindered by the fact that the programme was revised by Vincenzo Borghini between 1578 and 1582, when Alessandro Allori completed the room's decoration, adding two *storie* and all the personifications, as well as expanding the scenes by Andrea del Sarto and Franciabigio. The programme may also have been altered when Pontormo resumed work in 1531, although he did not get beyond the cartoon stage.[48] Unfortunately, Vasari is vague on this point: he merely informs us that *storie antiche* were given to Andrea, Franciabigio and Pontormo.[49]

We may assume, in my view, that all four wall *storie* were devised at the same time, since they can be made to cohere into a programme devoted largely to Lorenzo il Magnifico, to whose memory, according to Vasari, the room was dedicated.[50] But on this occasion, Giovio did something quite new in monumental painted decoration, by choosing subjects from ancient history which were made to prefigure specific events in the life of a modern character.[51] This device had precedents in ephemeral festival decorations, and was adapted in another monumental Medici cycle, Salviati's Sala delle Udienze, where the life of Furius Camillus was exploited to suggest a parallel with the career of Cosimo de' Medici, though not systematically.[52] As with festival decorations, the resulting sequence of images in both cycles is rather different from that which would have been painted had the ancient historical subjects been painted as the principal theme.

The subjects in the Salone at Poggio a Caiano are in fact very unusual episodes, depicted uniquely here, and there are inevitably certain awkwardnesses in achieving an exact correspondence between these secular types and their antitypes. The episodes that we know Giovio to have chosen are *The Return of Cicero from exile*, painted by Franciabigio, and *Julius Caesar receiving a tribute of animals in Egypt* by Andrea del Sarto. Neither of these episodes is recorded in ancient literature in the form in which it was painted, but sixteenth-century sources make it clear that these subjects were invented to stand respectively for the return of Cosimo Pater Patriae from exile and for the gift of exotic animals presented by the Sultan of Egypt to Lorenzo de' Medici in 1487. Whether the subjects painted by Allori were included in the original programme or not, they were interpreted in a similar manner by the artist himself. *Titus Flaminius at the Council of the Achaeans* was thus said to represent Lorenzo's diplomacy at the Diet of Cremona of 1482, while *Scipio Africanus meeting Hasdrubal* stood for Lorenzo's 1480 trip to Naples. The ultimate choice of subjects thus devoted three *storie* to Lorenzo and one to Cosimo Pater Patriae.[53] This lack of consistency was presumably dictated by the impossibility of devising four classical subjects that could be made to allude to events in Lorenzo's life, but I would doubt whether at this date such asymmetry in the programme would have troubled either the iconographer or the beholder.[54]

A major feature of programmes devised by advisers rather than artists is that they are often over-literary, the adviser failing fully to imagine how his inventions might be translated into a visual medium.[55] Giovio's essentially literary interests emerge constantly in his iconography. He was usually reluctant to allow the visual image to stand on its own, characteristically insisting that it should be accompanied by text.[56] The combined use of words and image of course governed the display of the portraits in Giovio's *Museo*, each with its *elogium* written beneath. This tendency also recalls his precepts on the good *impresa*, which should, he declared, maintain a 'just proportion between soul and body', in which body and soul are, respectively, image and motto.[57] The metaphor employed here by the humanist, moreover, implies a belief in the superiority of the written word, which would explain his desire for accompanying inscriptions to paintings. So in the Cambi programme he observed of the *storie*: 'It is necessary to bring it to life with four honourable inscriptions, with a few good words, such as I know how to invent.'[58] The Cancelleria walls are replete with inscriptions which at every point emphasise the significance of the image. Each *storia* is accompanied by a moralising *sententia*, which is amplified still further by those of the virtues and portraits of ancient exemplary figures.[59]

A further parallel may be found between Giovio's attitudes to *imprese* and to the legibility of visual imagery. In his dialogue on *imprese* he prescribes that devices should not be too obscure, but neither should they be such that 'any plebeian' could understand them.[60] Similarly, in the Cambi programme he stated:

> And since there are few spaces for many words with letters big enough to be legible, I shall put only those pregnant words that will indicate the stories to educated men, and we shall leave the rest of the crowd to imagine with their brains.[61]

The resemblances between the principles for the construction of *imprese* and those

for fresco cycles are more developed in Giovio's programmes than in those of any other Farnese iconographer, and may indeed be regarded as an identifying hallmark.[62] But it is widely accepted that in one of his *invenzioni* he went even further, and that in Pontormo's lunette at Poggio a Caiano the imagery is a painted expansion of a Medici device, Giuliano's and subsequently Leo X's GLOVIS *impresa*.[63] This is an unnecessarily sophisticated explanation. The iconography of the lunette may be interpreted as depicting a group of rustic deities, including Vertumnus and Pomona, identified by Vasari and originally inspired by a line from the *Georgics*, 'Diique deaeque omnes studium quibus arva tueri' ('All gods and goddesses whose task it is to look after the fields'). These are entirely appropriate to the location and to the villa's function, for they survey and protect (*tueri* in both senses). At the same time the imagery forms a conceit for the *cognoscenti*, based on Medici literary panegyric, which harmonises with the intended meaning of the images on the walls. This takes as its starting point a poem by Ariosto, in turn derived from the Virgilian passage just quoted. In Ariosto's poem the gods and goddesses depicted by Pontormo were called upon to succour the sickly Medici laurel. Virgil's line also provided, in abbreviated form, the motto of the lunette.[64] The presence of the GLOVIS motto may be explained not as providing the key to a further level of meaning in these images as referring to the passage of time, and with it the rejuvenation of the Medici stock, but rather as recording the patron, like so many devices in Cinquecento fresco cycles.[65]

Giovio's other programmes thus suggest that the Cancelleria scheme is entirely typical. His interests as an iconographer seem rather restricted, and his *invenzioni* are always remarkably bookish, even for an age characterised by its literary iconography. He was rarely concerned with visual appearances, except in the case of portraits, and his attitude to *disposizione* seems rather casual. Thus in the Sala dei Cento Giorni the personifications were not matched with their historical subjects until very late in the planning.[66] A similar looseness appeared, as we have seen, in the choice of subjects for Poggio a Caiano. In this Giovio's practice contrasts markedly with that of a meticulously precise iconographer such as Caro or Borghini.[67] He was certainly the obvious person to consult for a patron who wanted accuracy of historical detail, but was not apparently willing, or at any rate not asked, to devise other kinds of subject, either religious or mythological. For these both Cardinal Farnese and the Medici had other, better qualified advisers, and it is one of these whom we shall now consider.

Annibal Caro

Annibal Caro (1507–66) (pl. 194) was probably the single most important influence on Alessandro's early artistic patronage.[68] From the mid-1540s onward, the Cardinal's career as a patron falls into two distinctive halves, each with rather different styles, coinciding more or less with the periods in which it was controlled by first Caro and then Fulvio Orsini. Many features of his taste may then be attributable to the sway exerted by the two men. But to suggest that this was the only factor involved would be to over-simplify.The patterns and types of his commissions were, of course, much affected by external historical circumstances,

194. Antonio Calcagni, *Annibal Caro*, 1566–72, bronze and marble, 76.8 cm. high, London, Victoria and Albert Museum (By courtesy of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

not least, as we have seen, by the end of the Council of Trent, which also coincides with the transference of power from Caro to Orsini. None the less, the two advisers did have a very considerable influence on the final appearance of many of the Cardinal's works of art.

Renowned in his lifetime as a writer of elegant letters, as a poet and as a translator of classical literature, Caro has continued to enjoy this reputation.[69] He was also very knowledgeable about art and took great delight in the company of artists, making him the ideal adviser for an ambitious, but as yet relatively inexperienced patron. His own collection was fairly modest, and it is difficult to identify specific works that belonged to him, although we know that he commissioned at least one painting from Vasari, and had his portrait painted by Salviati and by Bronzino.[70] Caro entered the Cardinal's service as his chief secretary in

1547, following the assassination of Pier Luigi, for whom he had worked since 1543, and after a brief spell working for Ranuccio. At that time he expressed his trepidation, as well as his excitement, at the prospect of working for the 'Gran Cardinale':

> My desire would be to serve that Lord . . . His kind nature, the affection that he bears me, his application to his studies, the knowledge and intimacy that I have already had with his house . . . attract me wonderfully. And on the other hand, the greatness of Farnese terrifies me.[71]

Once he had conquered this fear, he enjoyed a most successful career, until he retired in 1563 to his villa at Frascati to pursue his literary studies. Alessandro rewarded him with many lucrative benefices and eventually made him a Knight of Malta. On his death his brother and nephew had a monument erected to him in Alessandro's titular church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso, with an effigy by Giovanni Antonio Dosio and an inscription recording his loyal service to the Farnese.[72]

Like Giovio, Caro had many friends who were artists, particularly sculptors. These included Benvenuto Cellini, Niccolò Tribolo, Raffaello da Montelupo, Bartolomeo Ammannati, Vasari and Michelangelo. He had already known several artists who worked for Alessandro, such as Clovio, Cesati and Salviati, even before he entered the Cardinal's employ.[73] To my knowledge, there are no documented examples of Caro's introducing a new artist to Alessandro. Nevertheless, it is more than likely that he was responsible for acquainting him with Daniele da Volterra. The date of the frescoes painted by Daniele in Palazzo Farnese cannot be established with certainty, but Vasari explicitly mentions Caro's support of the artist.[74] Caro was certainly active in his support of Salviati, who had painted his portrait in 1541.[75] On the return of the artist to Rome in 1548, Caro – together with Clovio – was instrumental in obtaining for him the commission to paint the Cappella del Pallio.[76] On that occasion he presumably supervised the commission, and probably devised the iconographic programme as well, although lack of documentation leaves some uncertainty about this.[77] He would thus have stood in exactly the same relation to the artist as Giovio had to Vasari over the Sala dei Cento Giorni. It is tempting to speculate whether Salviati, known to have been well educated and 'of most subtle wit', might similarly have contributed to the evolution of the programme, though Caro was perhaps a more independent iconographer than Giovio.[78]

Caro certainly performed the two usual rôles of the adviser during the early stages of the commission for Paul III's tomb (pl. 11), and here his acquaintance with so many sculptors may have been particularly valuable. But he was allowed very little decision-making power, since all the issues had to be referred to a committee of cardinals. Numerous reports to the committee and to Alessandro explain the painfully slow progress of the tomb's composition and construction.[79] The commission was fraught with difficulty. Caro acted diplomatically as intermediary in the complicated and delicate negotiations between the various parties and eventually proposed a solution very close to the one that was finally adopted, although this was not achieved until a decade after his death.[80]

He also contributed to the iconography of the tomb, which evolved over a number of years, suggesting suitable personifications, and rejecting other proposals

on grounds of decorum, as being 'neither ecclesiastical nor moral', as well as devising their attributes.[81] The tomb project is revealing about his attitudes to iconography. He always took great pains over iconographic decisions, researching them carefully, like Vincenzo Borghini, to ensure that they were classically correct, as well as contributing to a coherent scheme without repetitions.[82] Thus he rejected a proposal to include figures of Minerva and Prudence because they duplicated the same concept, and he overturned another suggestion for a statue of *Buon Evento*, on the grounds that it was ambiguous and open to misinterpretation.[83] He also stated that he had determined the appearances of all the agreed personifications according to the descriptions of classical authors, and he even devised an alternative set of attributes so that his superiors could decide which they preferred.[84] In fact, as he later admitted in a letter to Fulvio Orsini, he took the attributes not directly from antique texts, but from some ancient coins, together with one of the recently published mythographic handbooks, L.G. Giraldi's *De deis gentium* (Basel, 1548).[85] Caro was indeed one of the first iconographic advisers of the Cinquecento to realise the possibilities offered by books such as this and Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini*.

The project for the Farnese pope's tomb was the only commission involving architectural considerations in which Caro intervened on the Cardinal's behalf. Although he had some knowledge of architecture, and was friendly with Francesco Paciotto, suggesting that he should produce an alternative design for the tomb, he otherwise had very little to do with architects.[86] There is, for example, no record of any contact with Vignola, although he must surely have known him. One reason for this is that he was clearly more interested in painting and sculpture; but perhaps more significant is the fact that the Cardinal himself was very knowledgeable about architecture and took a much more active part in the planning of his buildings than his paintings, preferring to employ an intermediary in the case of architectural schemes only for the day-to-day supervision, which he was too busy to undertake for himself.[87]

The enthusiasm and dedication that Caro demonstrated in assisting with the iconography of Paul III's tomb was to find outlets on a number of other occasions during his career, of which the most celebrated are the programmes he devised for various rooms at Caprarola. He had already developed his talent in previous years, inventing several other schemes, including those for a medal reverse for Giovanni Guidiccione, executed by Alessandro Cesati on a design by Perino del Vaga, for the loggia above the *nymphaeum* of the Villa Giulia to be painted by Vasari, and for another loggia at Palazzo Altoviti, decorated once again by Vasari.[88] The two programmes for rooms at Caprarola that have survived, those for the Camera dell' Aurora and for the Stanza della Solitudine (the latter written jointly with Panvinio (pls 90, 94)), are vitally important for our understanding of Caro's activity as an iconographic adviser, and indeed of Cinquecento attitudes to visual imagery in general. Both surviving texts are composed of a series of highly ingenious and erudite variations around a single *concetto*, which had been chosen according to the principle of decorum to reflect the function of the room: images concerning sleep for the bedroom and contemplative solitude for the study. Once again he preferred images derived from classical mythology, although the scheme for the Stanza della Solitudine is a mixture of pagan and Christian subjects.[89] Here he developed to

the full his method of arranging complex, interrelated sequences of *all'antica* images, brilliantly exploiting the freedom offered by the mythographical handbooks.

During the 1560s Caro was not the only iconographer working at Caprarola: Fulvio Orsini and Onofrio Panvinio also contributed to programmes there.[90] But at least one other scheme, that for the Stanza dei Lanefici, may be attributed to him, not only on the circumstantial ground that it was decorated in the interval between the decoration of the two rooms for which programmes survive, but because of its marked similarities to those two programmes. I believe also that he was the author of the iconography for the Gabinetto d'Ermatena (pl. 96). Although the room was not painted until after Caro's death, it was certainly planned while he was alive,[91] and it has just the kind of bizarre theme that would have appealed to him, though, to judge from the clumsy rendering, Federico Zuccaro does not appear fully to have understood it. That Cartari's *Imagini* is the probable source might seem a further pointer here, given Caro's known enthusiasm for this text as an iconographic source.[92] Clearly this cannot be decisive, since there is no reason why the other iconographers could not have used this book, and in any case, all of them would have been acquainted with the Cicero letters from which the image was ultimately derived. Other considerations, however, increase the likelihood of Caro's authorship. Of the possible inventors, Fulvio Orsini can certainly be eliminated: his reconstruction of the Hermathena, which was engraved in his *Imagines et elogia* (1570), is quite different, showing a torso of Athena on a herm base (pl. 195).[93] Caro also seems a more likely author than Panvinio, who generally appears to have been less happy with mythological subjects.

195. *Hermathena*, engraving from Orsini, *Imagines et elogia*, 1570, p. 85 (Photo: Warburg Institute).

In addition to his duties as an iconographer, some evidence suggests that another aspect of Caro's job was the care of Alessandro's *studiolo*. In this respect he anticipates Fulvio Orsini, whose major contribution to the Cardinal's collection was to build up his holdings of small antiquities and coins. Caro, too, was an acknowledged expert on numismatics, and it was he who compiled the inventory of antiquities in the *studiolo* at Caprarola.[94] He was probably also in charge of the *studiolo* in the Cancelleria.

Onofrio Panvinio

The Veronese Augustinian monk, Onofrio Panvinio (1530–68) was distinguished above all as an ecclesiastical historian, and for his antiquarian and epigraphical skills, although Fulvio Orsini was to refer to him slightingly as a 'carrot planter' among antiquarians.[95] He was probably introduced to Alessandro during the late 1550s by Curzio Frangipane, Alessandro's majordomo, after the publication of his *Fasti consulares* in 1558.[96] The Cardinal favoured him greatly, supporting him for the rest of his short life with a monthly stipend of ten *scudi* so that he might pursue his scholarly interests.[97] Panvinio sometimes accompanied Alessandro on his travels, and it was on the trip to Sicily of 1568 that he fell ill and met his tragically early death.[98] His likeness is known from only two sources. One of these is the portrait now in the Galleria Colonna (pl. 196), which was for many years regarded as a Titian, but has more recently been convincingly attributed by Zeri to the young Tintoretto.[99] This strongly resembles the funerary monument in S. Agostino in Rome, which was sculpted by Francesco Maratta.[100]

Like Giovio, Panvinio was particularly interested in portraiture, collecting images for a volume of engravings that was published as a sequel to his biographies of the popes.[101] Amongst those who contributed was Vincenzo Borghini, who sent him a portrait of Innocent VII in 1567.[102] Borghini also introduced Panvinio to Vasari, but otherwise, unlike most of Alessandro's advisers, Panvinio does not appear to have cultivated friendships with many artists.[103] At one point, anticipating the relationship of Cassiano dal Pozzo and the young Poussin, he employed a painter to record classical antiquities, but little other evidence points to an enthusiasm for the visual arts comparable with that of, say, Caro and Orsini.[104]

Panvinio probably contributed to several of the iconographic programmes for Caprarola. Unfortunately, the only such scheme to have survived is somewhat uninformative. This is a plan for a title-page consisting of many personifications with rather conventional attributes which, he stressed, were derived from antique coins and sculpture.[105] He certainly collaborated with Caro on the programme for the Stanza della Solitudine in Alessandro's villa. By 1565 Caro had retired from Farnese service, and Panvinio had been entrusted with inventing the subjects for this room. Evidently, however, he did not feel equal to producing a sufficiently ingenious programme without expert assistance. As a result, at least some of the images for the decoration seem to have been suggested by Caro rather than Panvinio.[106] The precise amount contributed by each is uncertain. In his letter to Panvinio containing the complete programme as executed by the painter, Caro introduced the scheme as 'your invention', but on occasion it is obvious that he was spelling out the individual images for Taddeo Zuccaro's benefit, more than for Panvinio's.[107] He made it clear that Panvinio had suggested the inclusion of the four hermit sects, Hyperboreans, Essenes, Gymnosophists and Druids, but the detail in which he laid out the whole programme suggests that he may have devised the rest himself. At the very least he seems to have created the disposition of the subjects within the framework designed by Zuccaro. Likewise, the manner in which he gave alternatives for figures and for the way in which they were to be dressed suggests that the detailed working out of the programme was Caro's, and

196. Jacopo Tintoretto, *Onofrio Panvinio*, *c.*1555, oil on canvas, 112 × 89 cm., Roma, Galleria Colonna (Photo: Arte fotografica, Rome).

that Panvinio's rôle may have been restricted to suggesting an initial theme and a few of the individual figures.

In general the limited evidence available suggests that Panvinio, like Giovio, may have been happier writing historical programmes, as one might expect from his scholarly interests. Indeed, by 1562 he was the natural choice to invent a cycle of Farnese deeds. Before he was asked to work on the Stanza della Solitudine he had already written the programmes for the Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani at Caprarola, and presumably that for the Anticamera del Concilio, since the iconography of the two rooms was probably planned together.[108] Even in the case of the Sala dei Fasti, Panvinio did not apparently feel entirely confident in his own abilities, and called in Paolo Manuzio to compose the inscriptions.[109]

The Anticamera del Concilio provides the most interesting example of collaboration between the Farnese iconographers. While the historical *storie* must have been decided upon at the same time as those for the Sala dei Fasti, the personifications or, at any rate, their attributes were apparently worked out later, as had occurred in the Sala dei Cento Giorni.[110] These were to be derived from allegories on the reverses of ancient coins. In September 1562 Cardinal Farnese, who was at Caprarola, requested both Fulvio Orsini and Panvinio to send him information about either the reverses of certain coins, or the coins themselves. The subjects of these reverses correspond almost exactly with the allegorical figures depicted in the

Anticamera del Concilio.[111] Panvinio in Rome evidently had some difficulty in persuading Alessandro's *guardarobba* to release the relevant coins from the Farnese collection.[112] Orsini, who was at Capranica, away from his library and his own collection, wrote urgently to Caro for advice. He received in reply a long account of all the possible alternatives known to Caro for each personification. But Orsini must have failed to inform his correspondent about the purpose for which they were intended, otherwise Caro would presumably not have suggested an elephant as a suitable embodiment of *Munificentia*. This apart, Caro's descriptions provided most of the attributes actually painted in the Anticamera.[113]

Panvinio's authorship of the programmes for the two rooms of Farnese history raises the difficult issue of his involvement in the planning of the Sala dei Fasti in Palazzo Farnese, many of whose subjects, particularly those painted after 1564 by Taddeo Zuccaro, are related iconographically as well as compositionally to those depicted at Caprarola. One of the problems is that it is impossible to date the beginning of Salviati's work in the palace. Vasari's chronology throughout the Life of Salviati is not entirely satisfactory: in this case he places the project in the busy period between the frescoes in S. Salvatore in Lauro, painted after the election of Julius III in 1550, and those in the Palazzo Sacchetti Salone, which have been dated around 1552, or 1553.[114] Later suggestions have ranged from as early as 1549 up to the early 1560s, though on stylistic grounds, the frescoes surely belong to the latter part of Salviati's career, after the trip to France of *c.*1555/6 to 1557/8.[115] As a result of this uncertainty about the dating of the frescoes, it is impossible to know to what extent Salviati's scheme preceded that at Caprarola, although he must have begun work before Taddeo started his cycle of Farnese *Fasti*.

There may have been a change in the programme after the break caused by Salviati's death, though this cannot be conclusively proved. The two walls painted by him have an altogether more coherent iconographic structure, with all the *storie* relating to the central figure – Paul III or Ranuccio/Aeneas (pl. 52) – and contrasting two different kinds of Farnese achievement – military glory and religious service.[116] This kind of contrast also appears on the ceiling of the Sala dei Fasti at Caprarola.[117] Some of the subjects on the Paul III wall were repeated from the obvious precedent, the Sala dei Cento Giorni. These included the Truce of Nice, Paul III being presented with a plan of St Peter's by a figure of architecture, and Paul III distributing benefices. The remaining scene, the expedition against the Schmalkaldic League, is a subject that may have appeared here for the first time in Farnese iconography, though it was used again at Caprarola.[118] Precedents were lacking for the Ranuccio wall, whose subjects evolved gradually. Two preparatory drawings by Salviati (pl. 197 and col. pl. XIII) indicate that he had originally planned to place *Ottavio's siege of Parma* to the left of the Ranuccio/Aeneas figure.[119] This subject was probably dropped on the grounds that it was politically insensitive, and it was replaced by a more neutral event, *Eugenius IV making Ranuccio Farnese papal commander*, a subject that had previously appeared in the family's iconography.[120]

The two walls painted by Taddeo lack the iconographic coherence of those by Salviati, showing more miscellaneous deeds of past members of the family. This lack of unity may, of course, simply result from a shortage of suitable subjects. That it may be due to a change of iconographer is suggested by the different

treatment of the historical subject-matter in the later frescoes. Salviati had allowed historical and allegorical figures to mingle freely. This conception of history painting, the category termed by Gilio *pittura mista*, has much in common with Vasari's Sala dei Cento Giorni.[121] On the two walls painted by Zuccaro, by contrast, the personifications were banished to the flanking niches, and there is a greater preoccupation with accuracy of historical depiction, which also characterises the frescoes at Caprarola. The divergence is attributable to more than the stylistic differences between painters of two generations.[122] One is tempted to ascribe it to the rise of the *verismo* advocated by Gilio in his treatise on painting of 1564. Although this was dedicated to Alessandro, we have no means of knowing whether it was specifically influential or whether, as seems more likely, given the earlier date of the Caprarola frescoes, Gilio was merely reflecting current doctrines.[123]

Panvinio's responsibility for at least the second half of the programme is further suggested by the fact that on the east wall, between figures of Honour and Virtue, which were derived from classical coins, is depicted the *Foundation of Orbetello on the ruins of the town of Cosa by Pietro Farnese in 1100.*[124] This episode had been invented by Panvinio around 1560, apparently in order to link the family with an ancient Roman victory over the Etruscans at Cosa. But the Farnese connection with Orbetello was a more modern one, since Orbetello was controlled by the abbey of the Tre Fontane, of which Ranuccio was at that date commendator.[125] The choice of virtues to accompany this scene may also refer to the patron, since Ranuccio's *impresa* showed the temples of Honour and Virtue.[126] The treatment of the personifications themselves supports the hypothetical break in the programme. Salviati's are far more inventive, and less strictly classical, a fact that has impeded the precise identification of some figures. The conventional nature of Zuccaro's allegories recalls Panvinio's surviving title-page programme, and the fact that they were based on coins is analogous to the procedure in the Anticamera del Concilio. While the question of Panvinio's authorship must remain open, the similarities between the two cycles of family history suggest vividly the keen jealousy between Ranuccio and Alessandro.[127] In the Palazzo Farnese cycle and at Caprarola we see them competing fiercely to present themselves as the worthiest heirs of the great Farnese tradition.

Fulvio Orsini

Alessandro inherited his last major adviser, Fulvio Orsini (1529–1600), together with the use of the family palace, from Ranuccio on his death in 1565. An impassioned collector and scholar of antiquities, especially of coins and engraved gems, and a distinguished epigrapher and bibliophile, Orsini had worked as Ranuccio's librarian and had lived in Palazzo Farnese since 1558. After Ranuccio's death, he retained his post as librarian and took on the curatorship of Alessandro's antiquities.[128] Caro had effectively retired from the Farnese court by this date, and Orsini readily assumed most of his duties as Alessandro's chief artistic mentor. His own interests were more narrowly antiquarian than Caro's, and he was particularly keen on the minor arts, a taste that accorded well with that of his new patron.

197. Francesco Salviati, *Siege of Parma*, *c.*1557/9–before 1563, pen and brown ink and brown wash, with white heightening, 14.9 × 11.1 cm., Coll. Duke Roberto Ferretti (Photo: Christie's).

Partly as a result of Orsini's influence, we find Alessandro collecting considerably more old masters and antiquities, though not at the expense of new commissions.

Orsini obviously had many contacts amongst the Roman antiquaries and dealers and kept a constant eye on whatever came up for sale. Many of his letters include news of another valuable gem or medal, which he would urge Farnese to buy.[129] Less frequently he would advise him on the purchase of modern works, such as the 'Giorgione' *Christ carrying the Cross*.[130] On one occasion in 1573 he took charge, together with Giulio Clovio, of selecting drawings for Alessandro from the collection of Count Lodovico Todesco, the Cardinal's recently deceased majordomo.[131] It was also Orsini who sent Alessandro Giacinto Vignola's engraving of his father's design for the Gesù façade.[132]

Besides increasing the contents of the collection, Orsini was greatly concerned with the ordering of the *studiolo*, where the small objects were displayed.[133] The formation of an *antiquario* in Palazzo Farnese was apparently planned in 1566, very probably at Orsini's instigation. Here the Cardinal desired to have his collection arranged in such a way that it might be accessible to visiting scholars, as a 'scuola publica'. Orsini's pride in his work here is evident in a letter that he wrote to the Duke of Parma after Alessandro's death, urging him to maintain the *studiolo* in the palace as the Cardinal would have wished:

XIII. Francesco Salviati, *Siege of Parma*, *c.*1557/8–before 1563, pen and brown ink and brown wash over traces of black chalk, 15.3 × 11.5 cm., Katrin Bellinger Kunsthandel, Münich (Photo: Katrin Bellinger).

I shall not lack faith and due diligence in this care, as much through respect for the rare and precious things there, as for the sake of scholars, for whom this studio should be a public school, according to the intention of Cardinal Farnese.[134]

Orsini's own collection of paintings was remarkable, and his artistic friendships were closely allied with his interests as both antiquarian and scholar. He drew up an inventory of his paintings and drawings, which were valued at a total of over 1,700 *scudi*.[135] Many of the paintings were portraits, including a studio version of Titian's *Portrait of Cardinal Bembo*, which is now in Naples,[136] a self-portrait of Sofonisba Anguissola,[137] and three portraits of Clement VII, said to be by Sebastiano del Piombo.[138] Many of these portraits were of friends, such as that of Gentile Delfini, Orsini's earliest protector, by Jacopino del Conte,[139] and the beautiful portrait of Giulio Clovio holding the *Farnese Hours* by El Greco (pl. 16).[140] The collection also contained sixteen paintings and drawings attributed to Raphael, thirteen given to Daniele da Volterra, eleven Sebastianos, and twenty Michelangelos.

Clovio was a friend for many years and one of the privileged few with whom Orsini shared Palazzo Farnese.[141] As well as El Greco's portrait of the artist, Orsini owned five miniatures, a drawing, and a portrait of the celebrated beauty Faustina Mancina by Clovio.[142] No documentary evidence relates whether the El Greco portrait was originally commissioned by Orsini or by Clovio himself, but Orsini must have tried to help El Greco when he was in Rome, since among his collection were several of his works. These were a portrait of a young man, and four *tondi* painted on copper with portraits of Cardinals Alessandro and Ranuccio Farnese, Bessarion and Cervini (all of which are lost), together with a landscape of Mount Sinai, which is probably to be identified with a work formerly in the Hátvany Collection, Budapest (pl. 198).[143] All these works were presumably commissioned while El Greco was staying in Palazzo Farnese, and one wonders whether Orsini, like Clovio, was instrumental in obtaining commissions from the Cardinal, just as Caro and the miniaturist had done for Salviati.[144]

Another friend with shared interests whom Orsini tried to help was Pirro Ligorio. Orsini recommended him strongly to Alessandro – though without success – as Vignola's successor, in the hope of bringing the architect back to Rome.[145] At the time of Ligorio's departure from the city Orsini had lamented to his friend Antonio Agustìn, 'if we lose Pirro from Rome, little more will remain there'.[146] But he did draw the line at selling Ligorio pieces from his own collection when the architect was trying to furnish the Duke of Ferrara's library.[147]

Although most of Orsini's artistic activity on Alessandro's behalf was concerned with the collection, he was often asked to organise commissions, especially as Alessandro was increasingly absent from Rome at Caprarola during the latter part of his life. For example, he was frequently required to find painters for Alessandro, who was usually willing to accept his recommendations without question. Sometimes, indeed, the chosen artist was not even named in the correspondence.[148] Occasionally this gave rise to difficulties, if Orsini went ahead without further reference to the patron, who might in the meanwhile have given different instructions, as happened over the decoration of the casino in the Orti Farnesiani.[149]

198. El Greco, *View of Mount Sinai, c.*1570, tempera and oil on panel, 41 × 47.5 cm., formerly, Budapest, Hátvany Collection (Photo: courtesy of Sotheby's).

Another task that Orsini was often asked to perform was to compose inscriptions. Thus he wrote epitaphs for the monument by Giacomo della Porta that Alessandro had erected to Ranuccio in S. Giovanni in Laterano, and for Alessandro's own tomb, as well as legends for several fresco cycles, always insisting on correct classical usage.[150]

The last important aspect of Orsini's artistic work for Alessandro concerns iconography, though it occupied a less significant place in his activity than it did for Caro, at any rate while Alessandro was alive. Orsini was particularly interested in classical portraiture and iconography, publishing his *Imagines et elogia* in 1570.[151] He was also involved in the composition of iconographic programmes for both Palazzo Farnese and Caprarola during Caro's lifetime. For Palazzo Farnese he apparently devised some of the *storie* for the projected decoration of the Salone in conjunction with Caro, while at Caprarola he was asked to provide information about personifications for the Anticamera del Concilio, as we have seen.[152] In addition, he acted as an intermediary between Alessandro and a specialist iconographer for the Sala del Mappamondo in 1573. Interestingly, it was felt necessary

to call in an expert in astrological imagery to devise the zodiacal subjects of the frieze. Orazio Trigini de' Marii was a friend of Orsini, who recommended him warmly for both his classical erudition and his willingness to serve the Cardinal:

> The learning and experience of this friend of mine is good and based on good authors, not to mention the advantage of being well versed in Roman antiquity, from which he will take much concerning celestial signs; for this purpose he also has an ancient Hyginus, written in a very old hand, with coloured illustrations, as to how the constellations should be. And he will serve Your Lordship solely to obtain your grace, and for no other reward.[153]

Orsini was asked to compose the inscriptions for this room, as we learn from a letter in which he informed Alessandro that he had been reading 'writers on naval exploration' and consulting experts on the subject. This was done with a view to writing *elogii* in couplets to accompany the portraits of famous explorers. His effort was largely wasted because the Cardinal changed his mind, preferring to have inscriptions in larger letters, which would leave room only for the explorers' names.[154]

Orsini did not automatically take up the post of chief Farnese iconographer after the deaths of Caro and Panvinio. The only programme for Caprarola for which we can be reasonably sure he was totally responsible is that for the Sala d'Ercole.[155] This is of a common type, used, for example, in the Sala d'Amalthea, which illustrates a rather *recherché* myth with a topographical significance, in a standard narrative way.[156] This mixture of erudition and banality is wholly characteristic of Orsini's iconography, as far as we can tell. The Sala d'Ercole programme is remarkably similar to another topographical programme devised by him – the *historie palatine* of Hercules and Cacus which he invented for the casino of the Orti Farnesiani.[157]

We do not, unfortunately, possess a single iconographic text by Orsini. Overall, he is rather difficult to characterise as an iconographer, largely because of the lack of evidence, but also because this was evidently not his major interest. Attention to classical detail and antique visual precedents seem to be his most distinctive hallmarks, as one might expect of a man so devoted to collecting. But in other respects he appears to have followed fairly standard practice in devising an iconographic programme.

Two other programmes, both executed for Alessandro's successor, Odoardo, have been attributed to him. These are the schemes for Annibale Carracci's Camerino Farnese, planned as a study for the young Cardinal, and for his Farnese Gallery. Were he indeed the author of both programmes, we should be much better informed about his iconographic style, but only that for the Camerino can be demonstrated in a plausible way to be entirely Orsini's work. The scheme consists of an unusual combination of moralising myths, with personifications to emphasise their significance. The ceiling is dominated by *Hercules at the crossroads*, while the subsidiary subjects represent two scenes of Hercules in action and resting, Ulysses' encounters with Circe and the Sirens, Perseus beheading Medusa, and the Catanian brothers rescuing their parents from the eruption of Etna, a common *exemplum* of filial piety. The documents for this room show no more than that Orsini supervised the commission and composed inscriptions for the

storie.[158] But, as J.R. Martin has shown, a number of the subjects were based on objects in Orsini's own collection, and this seems reasonable evidence to make him the likely author.[159]

Recent studies have proposed interpretations for the Camerino scheme which, if correct, would make it quite different not only from that of the Sala d'Ercole, but from the programmes of all earlier rooms commissioned by the Farnese, requiring it to convey a message on several different levels of meaning. Martin has proposed a Neoplatonic reading, while Charles Dempsey has suggested that it belongs to a genre of 'visual encomium', in an argument centred on the meaning of Odoardo's *impresa*.[160] Bellori, however, writing in 1672, quite correctly described the programme as a sequence of allegories of virtue and vice, 'a theme . . . worthy of a room destined for a prince, that he may always have before his eyes examples of virtue'.[161] This conforms to a quite familiar type of study decoration, of which the most relevant examples are the Stanza della Solitudine and the Stanza della Penitenza at Caprarola. The subject-matter in the Camerino is to be read allegorically in a very general way, without necessarily making specific references to the patron. This follows a long-established Renaissance tradition of exegesis of painted mythologies. Caro, for example, had interpreted the Gigantomachy that he devised for Vicino Orsini as a rather vague and obvious allegory of bad rulers, dismissing further discussion of possible meanings.[162] More explicitly, Giuseppe Betussi related the personifications in a room dedicated to the deeds of the Obizzi family not to the patrons, but to the 'states of man'.[163] Orsini, therefore, seems to have followed the practice of other Cinquecento iconographers, including one who worked for the Farnese, in devising for the Camerino an ingenious combination of rare mythological subjects based on a rather obvious *concetto*, chosen for the sake of decorum.

The question of authorship of the programme for the Galleria (pl. 199) is more complex. Orsini was certainly the most obvious person to have chosen the subjects, as some scholars have agreed.[164] If he was the adviser, his relationship with the painter was rather different from that in the Camerino. Both visual and documentary evidence suggest rather that this was a programme to which an artist contributed significantly, and it is most likely that Annibale himself took a considerable degree of responsibility for the exuberant *invenzione* based on the *concetto* of *omnia vincit amor*.[165] At any rate, if Orsini was involved at all, there was evidently far more collaboration than usual between Annibale and whoever wrote the programme. Of the three stages into which the creative process had been divided by Alberti, invention, disposition and composition, it had been common for the Cinquecento adviser to take control of the first two, though there was often conflict over disposition, with the artist demanding some say in the way in which the spaces he was to paint were to be divided up.[166] But in the Galleria it is likely that Annibale took over *disposizione* entirely, as well as many aspects of the *invenzione*. This is suggested by Bellori's account:

> In [the Gallery], however, Annibale did not restrict himself, as he had done in the Camerino, to a predetermined order, but adapted himself to the locations and to the framework [*accompagnamento*] of the inventions in placing them.[167]

It is, moreover, confirmed by early drawings for the ceiling, in which Annibale

199. Annibale Carracci, vault of the Farnese Gallery, 1597–1601, fresco, Rome, Palazzo Farnese (Photo: I.C.C.D.).

was evidently concentrating on establishing the decorative system without reference to a programme and subjects were moved from one location to another.[168] Artistic rather than iconographic motives in fact governed the final arrangement of the subjects overall, which one might not expect had a humanist adviser been in full control. One reason why Annibale was able to proceed in this manner lies in the nature of the programme, and the universality of its subject-matter. Unlike a typical humanist's programme, structured around the principle of decorum, the scheme for the Farnese Gallery is not tightly knit around its *concetto*, but rather is open-ended: if more spaces had been provided, more related subjects could easily have been proposed, since the chief classical source, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* could provide an almost infinite number of examples of love's power. We must therefore conclude that if Orsini was involved in the Galleria project, his part was limited merely to suggesting potential subjects illustrating the theme of *omnia vincit amor*, while offering opportunities for witty parody or allusion to more serious literature in a manner that is thoroughly seicentesque.[169] But the inclusion of all these subjects would have depended ultimately on the number of available spaces. The Farnese Gallery programme thus represents one of the first examples of the artist's liberation from the dominance of the Cinquecento iconographer.

Cardinal Sirleto

Alessandro employed at least one other person to write programmes for the remaining rooms at Caprarola. That the erudite Cardinal Sirleto devised *invenzioni* for at least one room, and possibly several, emerges from a letter of July 1570, in which Alessandro expressed his gratitude.[170] The room(s) in question must at this

date have been the Stanza della Penitenza, the Stanza dei Sogni and/or the Stanza dei Giudizi.[171] The iconography of these three rooms is entirely consistent in style and tone, and it is not impossible that Sirleto was responsible for all of them. Sirleto's example may have influenced other aspects of Alessandro's patronage, particularly in religious commissions. He was one of the first cardinals to start building and decorating new churches, with S. Lorenzo in Panisperna around 1565 and with the decoration of the Madonna de' Monti, which was widely imitated in Rome, in particular in two of Alessandro's churches, S. Lorenzo in Damaso, and the Gesù.[172]

Other agents

Another group of intermediaries played a significant part in the organisation of Cardinal Farnese's artistic commissions. These are the majordomos and financial agents, who were often sent instructions about commissions and required to report on their progress when the patron was away from Rome. Numerous letters survive in which such men as Tizio Chermadio or Lodovico Todesco, reporting on a variety of matters concerning the running of the household, refer to artistic projects currently in hand. Their function was essentially to relieve the patron of unimportant issues, once a commission had been agreed and payment to the artist fixed, so that the artist would only have to communicate with Alessandro directly if, for any reason, he felt his treatment was unsatisfactory.[173]

Many of these men were very interested in art and they often owned distinguished collections themselves. Chermadio, for example, had a palace opposite the church of S. Eustachio, whose façade was frescoed by the young Federico Zuccaro with scenes from the life of St Eustace.[174] Count Lodovico Todesco, who had been Ranuccio's majordomo in 1564,[175] and who continued to work for Alessandro after Ranuccio's death, owned what was evidently a large collection of drawings, which Alessandro later bought from his heirs.[176] Unfortunately, we know nothing about Todesco's background, the content of the collection, the means by which he acquired the drawings, or whether he collected anything else.

So too, the most interesting of the Cardinal's majordomos, Alessandro Rufino, Bishop of Melfi, owned a collection of classical sculpture which was sufficiently important to be included in Aldrovandi's 1550 guide to Roman collections of antiquities.[177] His correspondence reveals an appealing, impulsive character with a talent for getting into scrapes. On one occasion he and Fulvio Orsini even imported an alchemist into Palazzo Farnese, in the hope of turning base metal into gold![178] Rufino enjoyed a long career in Farnese service: before he worked for Alessandro, he had been a *cameriere* of Paul III. He was involved in the appointment of Michelangelo at St Peter's in 1546, and he was also a friend of Alessandro Cesati.[179] It was he who had built the Villa Rufina at Frascati (pl. 7), probably on the design of Nanni di Baccio Bigio.[180] Unfortunately, to maintain this rather grand lifestyle, it would seem that Rufino was stretched somewhat beyond his means: in spite of selling the villa in 1563, on his death in 1579 he left enormous debts.[181]

The majordomos were rarely given as much authority with regard to big

decisions as a Caro or an Orsini. Rufino's part in the installation of the tomb of Paul III in St Peter's is paradigmatic in this respect, limited as it was to negotiating with the Deputati alla Fabbrica according to Alessandro's instructions, and then reporting the results to the patron.[182] On occasion he would take an initiative himself as, for example, when he urged the Cardinal to have the *Farnese Hours* removed from the aged Clovio, lest it should come to harm.[183] But sometimes his independence would incur Alessandro's wrath, as when he unwisely had the altars removed from the nave at Grottaferrata, thinking to please the Cardinal with this act of reform.[184]

One figure who would often act on his own initiative was Alessandro's treasurer Giulio Folco. He was thus given overall charge of work in S. Lorenzo in Damaso,[185] and he was authorised to supervise the acquisition of land, the construction and ornamentation of the Gesù, and to negotiate with the Jesuits in the Cardinal's absence.[186] Generally, he would just relate the possibilities to the patron.[187] But he might also offer advice: thus he urged Alessandro to buy up the land in front of the church to form a beautiful piazza, adding that if Farnese did not, he would do so himself.[188] His involvement in the Gesù project did not cease with his responsibilities on the Cardinal's behalf, and he took over the patronage of the decoration of the first chapel on the right in the Gesù, although his plans were not actually executed.[189] He was responsible for calculating the amount of alms distributed by Alessandro towards the end of his life, on the advice of the Jesuits.[190] He was also apparently involved with the Arciconfraternità di S. Caterina de' Funari, which inherited his papers.[191]

A friend who would offer advice to Cardinal Farnese was Bishop Garimberto. We have seen how he would write at length with suggestions to improve Alessandro's projects relating to both the Gesù and the *studiolo*.[192]

But men such as Folco and Garimberto were rare in offering Alessandro advice on architectural matters: usually he preferred to make his own decisions, after consulting the architect and, if necessary, asking the opinion of another architect.[193] In commissions for paintings, the power of his favourite humanist advisers was very considerable, and they were able to exert great influence in terms of both subject-matter and style. However, Alessandro was far from being entirely passive as a patron: in certain respects he held strong views about both art and architecture, and was ready to assert them. In the following chapter we shall consider what can be deduced about the positive aspects of Alessandro's own taste.

VI

CONCLUSION

> The fame so great of the great Cardinal Farnese resounds in the ears of the world in such a way that no one speaks of anything else, or praises anything else.[1]

THERE ARE MYRIAD CONTEMPORARY testimonies of this sort to the *grandezza* of Alessandro Farnese. Sixteenth-century writers continually stress his liberality in his support of 'ogni virtuoso', and his court was renowned for its splendour and cultivation.[2] This is not simply rhetorical *amplificatio*, as is abundantly evident from the catalogue of the buildings and paintings he commissioned. Although the emphasis of his patronage shifted from decade to decade, one feature remains constant, the pursuit of *magnificenza*, or magnificence, as he commissioned immense numbers of works of art and buildings, strove to maintain his prominent social position and advanced his ambitions in the altered climate of Counter-Reformation Rome.

As we have seen, he had relatively little executed before the mid-1550s. Such works as he did commission were small, but exquisite, and he spent a fortune on objects like the *Cassetta Farnese* and the *Farnese Hours*. Such a taste is not unusual for a wealthy patron at the beginning of his career: Ippolito d'Este, for example, began his artistic activity primarily as a patron of the decorative arts and remained for many years a faithful patron and supporter of Cellini, after the goldsmith's break with Paul III and Pier Luigi.[3] It is a taste closely allied to the common Renaissance enthusiasm for collecting small antiquities, gems, coins and small bronzes.[4] Alessandro was particularly able to indulge this predilection, since at this stage he had little need of grand architectural projects. While Paul III was alive, he had full use of the various palaces belonging to the papacy, as well as the Farnese castles and villas in Lazio. He also, of course, had the Cancelleria as his main residence, and his first monumental commissions were for its decoration, with Vasari's Sala dei Cento Giorni of 1546, and Salviati's Cappella del Pallio, two years later – its jewel-like qualities reminiscent of the small decorative pieces in his collection. He also at this time commissioned minor works for his titular church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso.[4] Thus his patronage up to about 1550, though costly and refined, has a strongly private, personal character and exhibits little inclination to undertake public commissions.

The death of his grandfather in 1549 and the problems with Julius III inevitably affected his patronage. In his unsettled state, and with a temporarily reduced income, while his benefices were confiscated, it was difficult for the Cardinal to begin major projects. From the mid-1550s, however, he began to build on a spectacular scale, perhaps feeling the need to reassert the family's, and still more his own position. Initially his commissions were largely secular: vast sums of money were poured into the building and decoration of Caprarola, and other gardens, castles and villas were gradually acquired as spectacular places of leisure. Meanwhile, he continued to amass miniatures, gems and goldsmiths' work.

Only from the mid-1560s, under the influence of Counter-Reformatory pressures, and perhaps increased desire for the papal tiara, did he emerge as a patron of religious buildings and paintings. From this time until the end of his life, his patronage grows in scale and ambition, with secular projects, such as those for the Farnese Gardens and the completion of the family palace, continuing alongside the ever-increasing number of sacred commissions. Of these the most significant were the refurbishing of his titular church of S. Lorenzo in Damaso, the building and decoration of the Gesù, the most influential church of Counter-Reformation Rome, and the construction and adornment of the Oratorio del SS. Crocefisso and S. Maria Scala Coeli. The scale on which he was operating is apparent from the surviving account books. For example, in 1569 he spent the immense sum of 13,300 *scudi* on new works of art, most of it on buildings and salaries to artists. This represents about one sixth of his total expenditure for that year. The overall pattern of his patronage from the 1550s suggests that if his ledgers had survived from this period we should find that this level of expenditure was consistently maintained.[5]

By any standards Alessandro is a most remarkable patron, and he is all the more prominent against the background of post-Tridentine Rome, where patronage was in relative decline, in a lull between the extravagance of the reigns of Julius II and Leo X, and the munificent patronage of the early Seicento popes.[6] Very few contemporary Roman patrons were able to compete, though it is noticeable that on a number of occasions Alessandro tried to outdo patrons whom he apparently saw as rivals: Cardinal Cesi, a notable collector of antiques, and the builder of S. Caterina de' Funari, is a good example.[7] So too, Alessandro seems constantly to have striven to compete with the other notable villa builder in Rome at this time, Ippolito d'Este.[8] Among the few other Roman patrons who were in a position to vie with him, most were popes, in particular Julius III, Gregory XIII and Sixtus V. But the great building popes had access to the papal treasury to finance their projects, and a sense of urgency dictated by the knowledge that their reigns would be of limited duration.[9]

Of the cardinals, only Ippolito d'Este could rival Alessandro in both wealth and scale of secular patronage, but even he never achieved a comparable range of religious commissions.[10] As a patron of secular buildings and frescoes, he seems to have been a constant source of inspiration for Alessandro and a model to emulate. Ippolito, as the patron of architects who included Serlio and Pirro Ligorio, and responsible for commissions not only in Rome but in Ferrara and France, seems to have experienced a wider range of visual culture than Alessandro, which often makes him appear more adventurous as a patron than his Farnese competitor.

He was certainly an incessant builder: he commissioned work at the Palace of S. Francesco in Ferrara, and the Este Villa at Belfiore, as well as a number of palaces in France, of which the most important was Serlio's 'le Grand Ferrare' at Fontainebleau.[11] This was decorated by Primaticcio and Niccolò dell' Abate, and his acquaintance with the Fontainebleau School may again have broadened his aesthetic taste. Certainly, when he began to commission work in Rome, he was wide-ranging in the artists he employed. For the influential villa on the Quirinal, with its gardens filled with antique sculpture, he may have employed Ligorio, who was later to work for him at the great villa at Tivoli, and he had it decorated by Muziano and Raffaellino da Reggio, whom Alessandro was subsequently to seek out.[12] As we have seen, there are many other aspects in which Alessandro apparently imitated Ippolito's secular patronage.

Another cardinal whose patronage has significant points of contact with that of Alessandro was Giovanni Ricci. They shared a number of artists, notably Salviati and Guglielmo della Porta, and Ricci's fresco cycles on occasion had a similarly secular air, as in the David cycle of the Salone of Palazzo Sacchetti.[13] In 1561 he sent a set of twelve modern marble busts of emperors to Philip II – recalling the sets commissioned by Alessandro from Tommaso and Giovanni Battista della Porta – as well as a painting by Muziano, an artist in whom Alessandro was very interested.[14] Ricci was also a patron of Daniele da Volterra, commissioning the Ricci chapel in S. Pietro in Montorio from him.[15] In other respects, however, he developed a distinctive and unusual taste, fervently collecting exotica of many kinds, including Oriental art, to which Salviati alluded in his David cycle.[16] No such phenomenon is found in Alessandro's artistic activity.

But though such parallels can be drawn with other patrons in Rome, overall the splendour of Alessandro's patronage resembles rather that of the great European rulers of the sixteenth century, in particular, Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, Francis I and Philip II. Yet the sources suggest that Alessandro was commissioning and collecting on such a scale more for the sake of appearances, to enhance family magnificence, or simply because this was expected of a man in his position, than from any highly developed aesthetic interest. This is, for example, reflected in the choice of themes of family glory for the decoration of his public rooms and was clearly an important reason why his contribution to the Counter-Reformation took the form of grandiose building projects rather than more modest, pious acts. The concept of magnificence had long been important for Italian patrons, and Renaissance architectural theorists stressed its significance in providing moral justification for vast and conspicuous expenditure.[17] In his constant emphasis on magnificence, Alessandro, like Ippolito d'Este, recalls very much the cardinals of the earlier part of the century, and his ideals accord very closely with those expressed in Cortesi's *De cardinalatu*, on how a cardinal should live.[18] For these men it was entirely acceptable to assert one's status through fine buildings, but such an opinion seriously conflicted with post-Tridentine attitudes. After Trent, such ostentatious display was considered less appropriate for the spiritual leaders of the church, and only those like Ippolito d'Este, who had effectively retired from the political forum, continued in this highly secular vein. Alessandro adapted to the extent that his artistic commissions became predominantly religious, but this, as discussed above, may have been owing to his designs on the papacy.

The motives of a patron are, of course, bound to be complex, and they are particularly difficult to determine when there is but fragmentary evidence. One cannot exactly prove that he did not prefer his artists for primarily aesthetic reasons rather than for the sake of *grandezza*.[19] It may be anachronistic to expect a patron of this period to behave like a modern collector, but certain counter-examples, notably Duke Cosimo de' Medici, who seems quite deliberately to have cultivated the image of the grand Maecenas, suggest that this is not entirely so. It may be significant that Alessandro never had himself depicted in an act of patronage, as did Cosimo or, indeed, Paul III.[20] Conspicuous also is the absence of any project to collect sets of acknowledged masterpieces, in contrast with the voracious Isabella d'Este, or Alfonso d'Este with his construction of the Camerini d'Alabastro, or Philip II with his commission to Titian for the *poesie*.[21] Reconstructing Alessandro's taste is difficult, because of the lack of sources on this subject, but so far as is possible, I shall now consider what can be determined about his aesthetic views, and then try to measure his attitudes to the visual arts against contemporary standards of what made a good patron.

Farnese was apparently, as has been frequently indicated above, far more conversant with the technicalities of architecture than he was with painting. As Vignola wrote in the dedicatory letter of the *Regola delli Cinque Ordini*: 'in this particular art your great judgement is equal to the greatness of your spirit and the regal sums which you are continually pleased to spend on it'.[22] That this was not mere flattery is demonstrated by Alessandro's discussions with Vignola, in which he revealed both very firmly decided ideas about the forms he wished his buildings to take and, in the case of the Gesù, how innovative those ideas could be.[23] Alessandro would rarely consult an 'amateur' adviser about architectural projects, and negotiations for these, unlike those for pictures, were usually conducted directly with the architect himself. The Cardinal would, of course, seek a second opinion on important issues, following Paul III's practice, but he would invariably consult a second architect. His expertise was recognised, and he himself was regularly asked for architectural advice by other patrons over major schemes, including the fortification of the Papal States, of which he had obviously gained considerable knowledge under Paul III, and the basilica of St Peter's.[24] In a sense none of this is surprising, given the expense involved and the importance in terms of prestige of his own commissions, but it is worth stressing that architecture was considered a much more gentlemanly, less manual pursuit at this time than painting or sculpture.

Alessandro's decisiveness in architectural matters is also evidenced in his choices of architect. He must have had plenty of experience of Vignola's work and ideas long before he actually employed him. Once he had chosen his architect, he stuck faithfully to him, and Vignola was to remain in his service for some twenty years. In vain on Vignola's death did Alessandro's *familiari* recommend other architects for the position of personal architect to the Cardinal, or for the post of architect of St Peter's, which was in Alessandro's gift. The hopeful applicants included most of the young architects in Rome, and some older, more established ones. Alessandro was already certain that he wanted Giacomo della Porta, although he would tactfully reply that he had no intention of making an appointment, since Caprarola was almost finished, and he, in fact, left its completion in the hands of the former

head of the *scalpellini*, Giovanni Antonio Garzoni da Viggiù.[25] As with Vignola, Alessandro was already thoroughly familiar with della Porta's work from the Oratorio del Crocefisso and the Gesù façade, and he was to employ him on most of his subsequent major commissions until his death.[26] The only exceptions were projects entrusted to Garzoni, and occasional garden schemes, on which Giacomo del Duca was employed.[27]

In Alessandro's choices of architect one may discern a preference for a rather restrained and austere style, which lacks the flamboyance of much contemporary architecture, not least that of Michelangelo. But it would perhaps be misleading to suggest too strong an opposition, since della Porta was Michelangelo's closest follower in Rome during the latter part of the century, and del Duca had also been a pupil. This certainly made della Porta the ideal choice for the completion of Palazzo Farnese. But in most of the commissions that he executed for Alessandro, he significantly demonstrates his equal ability to use the language of Vignola: thus the façade of the Gesù in some respects represents a synthesis of Vignolesque ideas, as does the architecture of S. Maria Scala Coeli.[28]

All the available evidence therefore indicates that while Alessandro was erecting buildings for manifold reasons, mostly linked to his political prestige and ambitions, his social standing and his desire for reform, he also had certain consistent stylistic ideals in architecture. His choices of architect, as far as we can tell, seem to be based on aesthetic criteria, though presumably considerations such as efficiency and speed of execution must also have been important. But it would be incorrect to suggest that he used style as a vehicle for ideology: although he had strong views about the form the Gesù should take, these were apparently based largely on practical considerations of function, together with motives of self-promotion, rather than a sense of what the ideal Counter-Reformation church should be. For those reasons he would use his own expertise to impose his views on the appearance of his buildings, and contemporaries would habitually praise his judgement in architectural matters. There is a marked contrast when one considers his attitudes to painting and sculpture.

In one of his *Roman Dialogues* the Portuguese miniaturist Francisco de Holanda reports Michelangelo's advice to him on where to find good patrons:

> You should rather live in France or Italy where talent is recognised and great painting is highly thought of. For there you will find private individuals and lords who do not at this moment appreciate painting . . . like Cardinal Farnese, who does not know what painting is, but who made very reasonable conditions for Messer Perino [del Vaga], simply so that he could be called his painter, giving him 20 *cruzados* a month and maintenance for himself, a horse and a servant, in addition to paying very well for his works.[29]

The authenticity of Holanda's *Dialogues* as a record of Michelangelo's views has long been controversial.[30] For our purposes, however, it is unimportant whether Holanda is actually reporting Michelangelo's words: what is significant is the fact that Cardinal Farnese could be considered by an artist in 1548 to be an ignorant but generous patron of painting.[31] Certain examples suggest that there may have been some truth in Holanda's statement. Thus one might want to regard the disappointing result of the Sala dei Cento Giorni frescoes as caused by the patron's unwisely

putting excessive pressure on the painter to finish at all costs. The débâcle over the choice of painter for the Orti Farnesiani further suggests that Alessandro's judgement was sometimes at fault.[32]

In fact, as I argued in the previous chapter, Alessandro was apparently much more willing to rely on advisers in all matters concerning painting, and he showed few decided preferences of his own. As a result, the works executed for him varied quite considerably in style, and their appearance depended more on the taste or connections of the adviser in question than on those of the patron. It is therefore difficult to identify anything at any stage that one might term an 'Alessandrine' style.[33] Thus when Alessandro first began to commission paintings he frequently followed the suggestions of his *consiglieri*, as in the employment of Vasari and Salviati, encouraged by Giovio and Caro respectively. But he would also accept popular consensus on an artist's ability, and he often commissioned work from painters whose reputations were already well established in Rome. The example of Perino is suggestive: according to Vasari, the artist had an introduction to the Cardinal, but months went by without his being offered employment; only after his success in the Massimi chapel did Alessandro commission work from him. Significantly too, the work then commissioned was simply an adaptation of the Massimi frescoes for a decorative work.[34] Vasari mentions also that the poet Francesco Maria Molza was among those who comforted the painter while he was unemployed. Since Molza was a *familiare* of the Cardinal, it may be that he encouraged Alesssandro to take up Perino. So too, it was apparently Clovio's fame in Rome that caused Alessandro to commission work from him, though Giovanni Gaddi and his circle may also have been influential in this respect.[35] It may be relevant that in these cases where Alessandro relied on reputation rather than advice, he was planning to commission works of decorative art, for which he generally displayed rather more independence from his advisers. Although his interests overlapped here much more closely with theirs, particularly in the collection of small antiques, it is notable that in commissions for miniatures and engraved crystals he would deal directly with the artists themselves. He apparently had firmer views about what he wanted on these occasions than he did with larger-scale paintings.

The pattern of Alessandro's employment of new artists in his early years does on the whole suggest a degree of unadventurousness which reinforces Holanda's characterisation. After the 1540s we are ill-informed about the means by which the Cardinal came to employ his major painters. There is no evidence that he himself ever made a choice without his advisers' help, and one would assume that the advisers continued to introduce friends or artists they knew of. On the other hand, we have no documentation of direct contact with Alessandro's *familiari* for any of the more important painters who worked for him during the latter part of his career before they entered his service. One can only guess at the kinds of considerations that were involved in any individual instance, but if one examines Alessandro's choices during this period, the picture that emerges tends to confirm that the considerations were not necessarily aesthetic. Factors such as social skills may also have been important: Titian's manners were particularly commended by one of Alessandro's advisers, and Salviati, despite his moods, was known as an affable and witty speaker. The Cardinal liked to be surrounded by learned men,

and Vasari was probably not the only artist to be invited to discourse at his dinner table.[36] Alessandro sometimes enjoyed close friendships with his artists, and on occasion they would maintain contact with him long after they had ceased to produce works for him. For example, he would stay in Giovanni Bernardi's house when he went to Faenza.[37] Similarly, Vasari came to stay at Caprarola in 1572, and Titian, in spite of being insufficiently rewarded by the Farnese, did not hesitate to write to Alessandro in 1567 when he wanted assistance.[38]

That visual considerations were often secondary in Alessandro's choices of artists is further suggested by the fact that no occasion is known of his holding a competition to choose an artist, though Fulvio Orsini did so at least once.[39] So too, the only time when a drawing is recorded as being submitted at the beginning of a commission for a painting was when Vasari sent a sketch to accompany his programme for the *Justice*.[40] On another occasion we learn that Alessandro rejected a design when it had reached the cartoon stage, awarding the commission for the high altarpiece of the Gesù to Muziano instead of Giovanni de' Vecchi, but he would presumably have seen *modelli* at an earlier stage, and so the reasons for his rejection remain obscure.[41] Otherwise there is no further evidence to suggest that Alessandro regularly demanded drawings.

In most cases it is difficult to ascertain precisely why he chose to employ a particular artist. The reasons for his originally choosing Muziano for Caprarola may or may not have been stylistic. If such factors governed his preference for the Brescian painter, what he presumably admired was the warmth of Venetian colour that Muziano had injected into Roman Mannerism, as well as the new emphasis on landscape. The subsequent work at the villa by Tempesta and various Flemish artists confirms his liking for this genre.[42] The tendency of cardinals to promote artists from their own cities may also have played a part: Muziano may well have been recommended by Alessandro's close friend, the Brescian Cardinal Gambara, builder of the Villa Lante at Bagnaia.[43] Equally, the fact that the artist had worked for Ippolito d'Este may have influenced Alessandro.

But Muziano may have been chosen merely *faute de mieux*. A certain lack of enthusiasm for Taddeo Zuccaro in the Farnese family is implied in Vasari's report that, when Zuccaro was commissioned by Ranuccio to work in Palazzo Farnese, he was employed for want of a more interesting painter in Rome: 'Since the most excellent [painters] were lacking in Rome, that lord [Ranuccio] resolved to give the commission for painting the great hall of that palace to Taddeo, there being no others.'[44] To some extent Vasari is grinding an axe here in defending his friend Salviati as a better painter, as Federico Zuccaro's angry marginal note to Vasari's text makes abundantly plain.[45] On the other hand, the fact that Taddeo Zuccaro was Alessandro's second choice for Caprarola need not imply a rejection of the Roman *maniera*. Taddeo was, in fact, the most sought-after painter in Rome in the early 1560s, and Alessandro may have been worried about getting him to commit himself to a project of this size.[46] Otherwise, there really was not much choice. Vasari was now fully committed to Cosimo de' Medici, and Salviati was tied up with the commissions for Palazzo Farnese and the Sala Regia until his death in 1563.[47] In any case, from experience of Salviati's unstable temperament, Alessandro may not have felt he could entrust him with such a large undertaking.

A continuing shortage of painters in Rome apparently caused Alessandro to turn

to his brother's court at Parma after Taddeo's death and his quarrel with Federico in 1569. Ottavio presumably recommended Bertoja, who had already completed several works for him.[48] The Parma court had many links with the Low Countries through Margaret of Austria, and it also seems to have supplied some of the Flemish artists who worked for Alessandro at this period, though others had already worked for Ippolito d'Este.[49]

It has been suggested that the painters engaged by Alessandro after 1569 formed a coherent stylistic movement, and that they were chosen to promote a directed 'politica culturale farnesiana', which rejected and temporarily eclipsed the prevailing Toscano-Roman Mannerism, whose over-intellectual qualities are exemplified in the work of Federico Zuccaro.[50] It has been further proposed that a possible reason behind Federico's abrupt dismissal from Caprarola was the Cardinal's awareness that the painter's style was unsuited to the new contemplative spirit of the decorations planned for the later rooms.[51] But this seems implausible. Federico's relationship with Alessandro had never been altogether happy, and the artist was notoriously difficult.[52] Furthermore, the evidence suggests that stylistic considerations were not of paramount importance in this instance. The Cardinal did, after all, subsequently employ painters such as Circignani and Raffaellino da Reggio, who had been a pupil of Zuccaro, but about whose work Alessandro was evidently enthusiastic.[53] The only other painter for whom he demonstrated real admiration and whom he patronised consistently for some twenty years was Giovanni de' Vecchi, and even in this case, his preference need not necessarily have been connected with the promotion of a religious style.[54] Moreover, Giovanni himself was not immune from having his works rejected on occasion.[55]

In all these choices the lack of adventurousness that has been observed in his earlier career continues. It is surely significant that most of the painters he employed after the 1560s had first worked for Ippolito d'Este. In his last years the taste of Gregory XIII seems also to have influenced Alessandro. He and the Boncompagni pope were close in both artistic and architectural policies. Since Farnese was high-priest of St Peter's, they would inevitably have discussed the completion of the basilica – which Gregory was keen to achieve – by Giacomo della Porta, Farnese's architect. Gregory also contributed to the decoration of the Gesù.[56] In general he was perhaps architecturally more forward-looking, as his patronage of Mascherino and Longhi suggests, but this may simply have been the result of Alessandro's constant monopolisation of della Porta. Gregory apparently provided Alessandro with a number of painters, including Circignani and Giuseppe Cesari, and both men commissioned very similar schemes for rooms decorated with maps.[57]

Alessandro thus consistently reveals a reluctance to employ any painter who had not already proved himself in his work for another major patron or come strongly recommended by one of his advisers. The variety of artists he employed suggests no strong orientation towards any particular style, though there is, of course, no reason why a patron should not be eclectic in his tastes, particularly at a time when, as Vasari emphasises, artistic ideals favoured the development of a distinctively individual *maniera*.

Alessandro's sculptural commissions are remarkable chiefly for their paucity. Apart from the tomb of Paul III, which had been started by Paul himself, and

some garden sculpture for Caprarola, he commissioned virtually nothing. In this respect, he does not differ significantly from many contemporary Roman patrons.[58] The number and quality of the antique sculptures in his collection must have been the chief reason for his not commissioning new ones. Alessandro did employ several sculptors on a regular basis, but this was primarily to restore the antiques, and only occasionally to produce new works. These included Giovanni Battista di Bianchi and Giovanni Franzese, who was probably responsible for executing the great marble table designed by Vignola, now in New York.[59]

Subject-matter was rather more important to Alessandro than style, as far as one can tell, although even here much was entrusted to the advisers, and the Cardinal contributed relatively little to the final form of a painting. If he was, in fact, the author of the 'programme' for the *Cassetta Farnese* it was probably as well that he later entrusted the task to the professionals, since the early draft reveals a rather incoherent scheme of antique and modern subjects, which had to be improved.[60] For the monumental decorative projects one may assume that at the very least Alessandro gave his approval to the theme to be depicted. In his public rooms the type of subject-matter is invariably of a fairly conventional nature: cycles of family history, though not particularly common in Rome itself, had been much used elsewhere in Italy since the fifteenth century both as a propaganda device emphasising the legitimacy of a family's claim to rule and as a celebration of the dynasty's magnificence.[61] One can readily understand why Alessandro should have desired to introduce such themes in his palaces, particularly after the death of Paul III and the War of Parma, when the family was losing some of its none too well-established power. Family history in fact occupies the majority of Alessandro's public rooms, and when, as in the Sala del Mappamondo, he did opt for variety, he chose simply to imitate a recently painted room in the Vatican.[62]

For all these public rooms it is likely that Alessandro took a rather more active part in deciding on the type of iconography he wanted than for the private rooms. This, of course, largely reflects the functions of painted decoration in the two types of room.[63] In the former it would contribute to the presentation of an 'image' to the world,[64] whereas in private rooms it was intended more to provide entertainment, if not merely ornament.[65] In the latter the influence of the men who devised Alessandro's iconographic programmes was very considerable. They were apparently responsible for both the detailed elaboration of a *concetto* and the disposition of the chosen subjects, thereby significantly controlling their eventual appearances, even when the artist had determined the compartmentation.[66]

Such evidence as survives suggests that the kind of complex allusive imagery employed by the advisers was entirely in accord with Alessandro's taste. Thus Caro wrote to Taddeo Zuccaro that the iconography as well as the execution of the decoration in Alessandro's bedroom should be unusual: 'Since [the Camera dell'Aurora] is destined for the bed of his most Illustrious Lordship, it is necessary to create there things that are appropriate to the place and out of the ordinary.'[67] So too, on the only known occasion on which the patron's own comments on iconography are recorded, unconventionality is the quality that he particularly praised.[68]

This attitude apparently applied also to private, but not public, religious commissions. The extent to which standard sacred iconography could be varied was

obviously somewhat constrained. This was especially so during the period in which most of Alessandro's religious commissions were executed, after the publication of the Tridentine decrees, and above all for art intended for a public setting. Alessandro's willingness to conform under these circumstances is attested by his orders that the figure of Justice on the tomb of Paul III should be covered.[69] In his private commissions, however, he apparently encouraged or certainly approved rather less conventional iconography, which shares all the qualities of *difficoltà* and *varietà* that characterise his secular programmes. The Cappella del Pallio is a good example. A justification for such treatment may be found in Cortesi's prescriptions for erudite imagery in a cardinal's private chapel:

> Now it should be understood that the more erudite are the paintings in a cardinal's chapel, the more easily the soul can be excited by the admonishment of the eyes to the imitation of acts, by looking at [painted representations of them].[70]

In following Cortesi's precepts, Alessandro seems once more to be adhering to the ideals of an earlier generation, and to be out of step with the prevailing attitudes of his own day.

I have argued so far that, especially with regard to painting, but to a much lesser extent with architecture, Alessandro showed little inclination to influence the ultimate appearance of his commissions. A number of factors – the amount delegated to his advisers, the changes in the pattern of his patronage under different counsellors, his tendency to rely on trends set by other patrons, and his relative lack of adventurousness in his choices of artist – all incline me to believe that aesthetic values were, on the whole, of secondary importance, and that Alessandro's taste was highly eclectic. This is not to suggest that he was indifferent to his works of art, nor even that he was incapable of appreciating stylistic quality, *pace* Michelangelo. On the contrary, as we have seen, he would require constant reports of the progress of his commissions, if he was away, and he showed particular enthusiasm for both commissioning and collecting works of decorative art. We are unfortunately almost entirely without information on his reactions to works of art. Only three occasions on which he expressed a judgement are recorded – his praise of the 'bellezza delle figure' of Vasari's *Justice*, his disappointment at the quality of the Sala dei Cento Giorni frescoes, and his admiration for Raffaellino da Reggio's satyrs.[71] But the terms of approbation and blame reported in the sources are so conventional that it is difficult to infer much about his personal opinions.

Alessandro seems in all this generally to conform to the contemporary notion of a patron as one who would encourage the artist and provide him with opportunities but not dictate how his work should look. Thus, Michelangelo, as reported by Holanda, though disapproving, evidently did not consider patrons who knew nothing of painting unusual. Caro had warned Salviati that patrons tended not to understand the subject, but none the less to be demanding, and Vasari used his own example in the Cancelleria, as well as Perino's, to reinforce the point that the pressure of patrons on artists tended to spoil the quality of their work.[72] Vasari himself had a clear notion of what constituted the ideal patron, which is emphasised throughout the *Lives*.[73] The enlightened, liberal patron who was well

educated in artistic matters, but also assisted by knowledgeable advisers, and who took a keen interest in the technicalities of art and their development, was embodied for Vasari by Martin V, Nicholas V and, above all, Duke Cosimo de' Medici.[74] Alessandro falls short of these ideals, as the artist's implicit criticism over the Cancelleria suggests. He certainly provided the opportunities for the visual arts to flourish, but he fails on understanding, showing real interest only in the detailed planning of architectural projects and not painted decoration, though he did at least have advisers for the latter of whom Vasari would have approved. Another serious defect seems to have been a reluctance on occasion to pay artists. This ran in the family. Thus there is evidence that Titian was not paid for his work for the Farnese, and Giovanni de' Vecchi's letters resound with similar complaints.[75] In general, however, his artists seem to have been relatively satisfied, though often paid less than by other patrons, and happily there is nothing to compare with his great-nephew's shocking treatment of Annibale Carracci.[76]

Alessandro's intentions as a patron seem in many respects to conform to those of the pre-Sack generation, and these ideals were evidently developed during his long 'apprenticeship' as a patron under Paul III. The environment in which the Cardinal grew up, which looked nostalgically back to the Golden Age before 1527, was very much one in which great men should be seen to be encouraging the arts, both for the public good and for their personal *magnificenza*. Alessandro, appointed to high public office at a very early age, seems always to have been conscious of his public persona, rarely allowing his individuality to be visible, as the report of his overnight conversion at his consecration forcefully reminds one.[77] To some degree this must account for the difficulties of distinguishing many signs of a personal taste in the works of art commissioned for him, especially since our sources are almost entirely of an official or semi-official nature, from which his private judgements are inevitably absent. One might even suspect that his promotion so young and the fact that he then spent the rest of his life dealing with bureaucrats had a profound effect on his approach to commissioning works of art. This might explain why he was prepared to delegate so much to his advisers, and why so many of his commissions have a rather impersonal feel.

Although the pattern of Alessandro's patronage altered roughly in correspondence with the major politico-ecclesiastical events of his time, his own direct influence on stylistic change seems to have been slight. In general, his secular patronage had little effect on subsequent developments in Rome. Contemporaries certainly admired his commissions, especially Caprarola, for their grandeur, and Caprarola was, indeed, frequently compared with the Escorial.[78] But even here Alessandro seems to have been following the lead of other patrons. One reason for Caprarola's relative lack of influence was the change in the emphasis of architectual patronage, and a temporary decline in secular building: little villa-building on such a scale was undertaken after Caprarola until the seventeenth century, principally as the result of the changed religious climate, and during the Seicento the villa developed in a rather different direction.[79]

Far more influential was the pattern that Alessandro set whereby an ecclesiastical patron could respectably, indeed laudably, continue to display his wealth and prestige on a major scale, whilst being seen to assist the church by his lavish patronage of religious buildings. The austerity imposed by the atmosphere of

Counter-Reformation Rome must have been difficult for him to assume, but by his unconstrained patronage Alessandro was able to continue to promote his *magnificenza* in the style of the patrons to whom he looked back, and to anticipate the extravagance of the early seventeenth-century popes. The pursuit of *magnificenza* as a major aim is underlined by the constantly recurring presence of the Farnese lilies emblazoned on decorative works and frescoes, churches, castles, villas, gateways and fountains across the city of Rome and the towns of Lazio, a grand reminder of this most splendid of patrons. Writing of Cosimo de' Medici (il Vecchio), Machiavelli said: 'His magnificence appeared in the abundance of buildings built by him.'[80] His words could have been written for Alessandro Farnese.