Salvator Rosa, Friendship and the Free Artist in Seventeenth-Century Italy

Alexandra Hoare

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For my parents

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Introduction

… la libertà sia avanti a tutte le cose.
(… freedom comes before everything else.)

Salvator Rosa, letter of 7 May 1661[1]

The Free Artist

On 1 April 1666, Salvator Rosa wrote to the Sicilian collector Antonio Ruffo (1610/1611–1678) to explain the delay of a painting that Ruffo had requested: "because I don't paint in order to make money but for my own satisfaction," he wrote, "I must allow myself to be carried away by the impulses of enthusiasm and take up the paintbrushes only when I feel myself rapt."[2] Rosa implored his patron's forgiveness for this "necessary inclination," reassuring Ruffo of his punctuality and obedience. The gist of Rosa's rationale to Ruffo was not, of course, entirely new. It reflected the terms laid out by earlier artists, who had already begun to stake a claim for the artist's own prerogative in dealings with patrons and clients.[3] What was different about Rosa's declaration was its urgency and exigency, and its exemplarity of a refrain that reverberates throughout Rosa's writings and the stories about the artist recounted by his contemporaries and biographers.[4]

Rosa is in many ways representative of his generation, particularly in the polymathic nature of his interests. Like many of his contemporaries, he pursued the activities of painting, printmaking, poetry and acting with equal zeal. But Rosa is also utterly unique, and his exceptionality lies in the nature of his conception and exercise of these activities and in the objective toward which he wielded their practice. A painter of both popular subjects (landscapes, battles, and genre scenes) and esoteric and often highly personal themes (scenes of witchcraft, mysterious philosophical subjects, obscure mythological and biblical stories), Rosa explored many of the same ideas in his seven poetic satires, representative of a moral-philosophical interest that pervades his work more generally.[5] Viewed from a posthumous perspective, Rosa's production as an artist and poet reveals a consistent mission on his part to establish an identity as a free painter-philosopher who prized his own creative "impulses" above all else. Apart from his landscapes (for which Rosa became especially well known in Britain during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) or his scenes of witchcraft (images that continue to fascinate), Rosa is best known for his unflinching quest for freedom. This is the sentiment underlying many of Rosa's epistolary, poetic and pictorial statements, including his declaration to Ruffo, above. In 1664, Rosa chastised his best friend Giovan Battista Ricciardi (1623–1686)—the Pisan poet, playwright and eventual Reader in moral philosophy at the University of Pisa—for his presumption in regard to matters of painting: "For painters of my condition and extravagant spirit, it's necessary—with the exception of the measurements—to leave the rest free […] and to content oneself not to presume to teach fathers to have children, and, as I said before, to indulge the inspiration of the artist."[6] Over the course of his career, Rosa refused the invitations of no less than four heads of state (Emperor Ferdinand III, Queen Christina of Sweden, Archduke Ferdinand Karl of Austria, and King Louis XIV of France) to work as a court artist, announcing to Ricciardi in 1665: "I value—and always will value—a single moment of complete freedom more than centuries, even if golden, spent working in other people's command."[7]

In his satire *La Pittura* (*Painting*) of *c.* 1651, Rosa complained about the popularity of the Bamboccianti painters, the Roman community of predominantly Dutch painters who specialized in low-life genre scenes (works that had exerted a profound influence on Rosa's early production as an artist),

Fig. 1. Salvator Rosa, *Allegory of Fortune*, 1658–1659, oil on canvas, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

lamenting their paintings and the misguided clients who purchased them.[8] In this Rosa revealed at once a loyalty to the elevated prerogatives of history painting and—underlying this, and in the longer term—a jealous frustration with the vicissitudes of an art market that privileged commonplace and easily-reproducible subjects over the obscure and personal themes that he increasingly wanted to paint. The same sort of criticism emerges in Rosa's pictorial oeuvre, in particular the various allegories of *Pittura* (Painting) that lament the fortunes of the painter, represented alternatively as dejected, misunderstood, unappreciated, indigent, or cast aside—the most monumental example of which is the large *Allegory of Fortune* (1658–1659, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) (Fig. **1**), exhibited publicly by the artist in Rome.[9] A thinly-veiled critique of the vagaries of contemporary papal patronage, the painting presents Rosa as a champion of the neglected artist, symbolized here by the roses trampled beneath the feet of ignorant animals. Collectively, such declarations comprise a veritable quest on Rosa's part to claim a substantial professional freedom, a position that Rosa managed to achieve to a significant degree within his own lifetime.

Fig. 2. John Hamilton Mortimer, *Salvator Rosa*, 1778, etching

Francis Haskell claimed for Rosa an "almost single-handed" creation of "the image of the artist as a being apart".[10] Our artist, however, is perhaps better understood as a uniquely impassioned and especially vocal representative of a larger group engaged in a more protracted mission, aimed at overcoming the restrictions—especially those of the court—that continued to determine an artist's fortunes through to the nineteenth century.[11] Rosa's comments caught the eye (and ear) of his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century admirers, who saw him as a harbinger of qualities that defined their own ambitions, especially the ideal of the fully independent and self-directed artist. Amplifying and distorting Rosa's voice, they invented an identity for Rosa that, while founded on certain truths about his person and art, removed him from the unique circumstances of his own time. In their zeal to define Rosa as one of their own (an image still to this day surprisingly difficult to dislodge in the minds of academics and the public alike), they turned him into a frustrated Romantic, an exponent of the Sublime and a political rebel.[12] They removed Rosa from the hierarchically prescriptive social world of the seventeenth century and transplanted him, like some kind of unwitting time-traveller, into their lonely garrets and dark forests. This is the Rosa of the Neapolitan biographer Bernardo de Dominici (1683–1759), the antiquarian Horace Walpole (1717–1797), the artist and clergyman William Gilpin (1724–1804), the novelist Lady Sydney Morgan (*c.* 1783–1859), and the painter and critic Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), to the last of whom the artist John Hamilton Mortimer (1740–1779) dedicated his print *Salvator Rosa* (1778) (Fig. **2**). A pictorial imagining of the Romantic Rosa *par excellence*, Mortimer's print has Rosa sitting alone in the woods like one of the bandits in the book of drawings or prints that the figure appears to be contemplating in the image.[13] Rosa's popularity as a landscape painter—a reputation he had achieved in his own time, and one that he fought hard to overturn in favour of

Fig. 3. Salvator Rosa, *Landscape with Bandits*, *c.* 1639, oil on canvas, Knole House, Kent

an image as a classicizing history painter—played a key role in his appeal to the Romantics.[14] Guided by their own whimsy, these writers and artists promoted an idea of Rosa as a misanthropic rebel, eager to undermine the socio-political norms of his day in a manner that uncannily foreshadowed later persons and events. They placed Rosa among the *banditti* of the Abruzzi mountains and amid the fray of the Neapolitan revolt of Masaniello in 1647, extolling Rosa's "roving disposition" and "savage and uncultivated nature," qualities superimposed onto his landscape paintings that, as a result, were deemed perfectly suited to the Romantic taste for the picturesque and the Sublime.[15] The subject of banditry was popular among the Bamboccianti painters in Rome, and was also treated by Rosa in a number of his paintings. However, as Caterina Volpi has pointed out, only one of Rosa's extant images of bandits features them as the protagonists of the scene—the *Landscape with Bandits* (*c.* 1639, Collection of Lord Sackville, Knole House, Kent) (Fig. **3**), a painting that could well be one of the prime pictorial culprits in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century creation of the mythological Rosa.[16] This Romanticized identity has little in common with the far more complex, paradoxical and conflicted artist that emerges from a close consideration of his own work and the documentary record of his activity. Knowledge of the "real" Rosa is a hopeless task from either a historical or epistemological standpoint. In an effort to at least get to know him better, however, and to more appropriately understand the true nature of his significance as an artist, we should return him to his own century, a period in which even staking a claim for professional freedom was no simple feat for the individual alone, and achieving such a task was an even greater challenge.

Fig. 4. Salvator Rosa, *The Death of Empedocles*, *c.* 1665–1670, oil on canvas, Eastnor Castle

The identity (or constellation of identities) that begins to materialize upon a closer consideration of the sources—Rosa's letters, his pictorial and graphic works, his poetry, and the tales and anecdotes recounted by his biographers, friends and contemporaries—certainly suggests that tantalizing parallels can be drawn with the Romantic Rosa.[17] The modern notion of the artist as a free individual—distinctive for irrational and eccentric behaviour or appearance and for a reliance on imagination, originality and ingenuity—finds ample precedent in Rosa's own assertions and undertakings, as will become clear in the pages that follow. Rosa's comment to Ruffo above, too, can be (and has been) interpreted as anticipating the Romantic conviction about the creative process as a form of self-expression that privileges freedom of individual choice over the requirements and constraints of traditional forms of patronage. Even the Romantic notion of the artist as a rebel or non-conformist—an advocate for radical social change, an anti-academic, an exhibitionist, and a persecuted martyr—finds some basis in Rosa's seventeenth-century reputation. Rosa's disdain toward courtly ritual, too, finds a not too-distant echo in the socio-political ideals of later generations. The nature, circumstances and objectives of Rosa's "rebellion," however, are a far cry from the libertarian and revolutionary goals of his successors. Rosa's Romantic enthusiasts were right to see in him something of their own passion for the awe-inspiring qualities of nature, but the "orrida bellezza" ("savage beauty") of the landscape between Ancona and Florence that Rosa described to Ricciardi in a well-known letter of 1662 should be understood more in the light of seventeenth-century currents of Neo-Stoicism and natural science than Romantic conceptions of the Sublime.[18] Helen Langdon, in particular, has carefully redirected our understanding of Rosa's "sublime" landscapes toward Tuscan and Roman academic cultures and their fascination with ideas that prefigure the nineteenth-century Sublime, a fascination derived in part from Longinus (for whom the tempest or storm—one of the most salient features of Rosa's landscape paintings that attracted his Romantic admirers—is an "elementary figure of the sublime") and closely tied to the distinctly *seicento* interest in the marvels ("meraviglie") of both the natural and artificial world, as well as to an attraction to novelty and surprise. These are interests that also characterize the work of many of Rosa's contemporaries, in art (Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Gaspard Dughet) but also in literature and science (Daniello Bartoli, Athanasius Kircher, Paganino Gaudenzi), requiring us to position Rosa squarely at the centre of a "seventeenth-century sublime," a moment in which paintings of Rosa's later years, such as the *Death of Empedocles* (*c.* 1665–1670, Eastnor Castle) (Fig. **4**), represent—as Langdon puts it—a kind of transitional imagery, poised between a seventeenth-century "passion for *novità* and the *prodigioso*" and an eighteenth-century "aesthetic of the sublime".[19] In this respect, the seventeenth-century sublime is also closely tied to contemporary notions of "genius" and invention, and that important moment (of which Rosa is a key exponent) of a nascent conception of genius as "ingenuity" and a faculty only effectively exercised under free and unimpeded conditions. As Langdon has also pointed out, this connection is once again down

Fig. 5. Achille d'Orsi, *Salvator Rosa*, 1867, terracotta as bronze, Museo di San Martino, Naples

to Longinus, who suggested that genius was the starting point for the art of the sublime, conceived along Platonic lines as a passionate burning of divine inspiration and described by Rosa's contemporaries as the prerogative of the free creator.[20] Rosa's love of solitude also finds reflection in the ideals of his Romantic admirers, but their misanthropic ideal belies the reality of Rosa's desire for, and experience of, a distinctly social brand of seclusion. Rosa was certainly not as gregarious as many of his contemporaries, and seems to have little in common with the absurdly jovial character represented by Achille d'Orsi (1845–1929) in his life-size terracotta statue of the artist of 1867 (Fig. **5**), with a docile grin and fat belly, on display at the Museo di San Martino, Naples.[21] Yet neither is he the solitary, acrimonious rebel of Mortimer's print (Fig. **2**), which clothes Rosa in the guise of one of the painter's own images of isolated figures with little regard for the fundamental distinction between the poetic ideal of solitude that Rosa frequently invoked and the social (albeit a selectively social) reality that he actually craved.

For our present purposes, the most interesting connection that Rosa's Romantic admirers drew between his ambitions and their own was the impulse toward professional freedom. There are fundamental differences here as well, in regard to the pursuit of this goal, the circumstances and conditions under which it was sought, and the relative degree of its achievement and exercise. Rosa remained bound by the conditions of seventeenth-century artistic practice, played out upon the stages of Spanish Naples, Grand Ducal Tuscany, and papal Rome, all of which perpetuated a professional ideal that subjected the artist to the jurisdiction of patrons and clients. While the Romantic artist was emancipated from "social utility" and worked in the midst of an increasingly fluid social hierarchy, characterized by a variable and flexible concept of identity and a "wholly self-determined" individualism (as Natalie Zemon Davis has put it), the seventeenth-century artist—in spite of any impulses toward, or opportunities that foreshadowed, this set of conditions—remained largely at the mercy of wealthy or powerful patrons and the influence they could wield.[22] An artist of Rosa's generation might begin to chip away at the foundations of such circumstances—and the rise of the art market and exhibition, and the new spectrum of clients these venues generated, began to offer alternative routes to fame and financial gain—but the long-established system of traditional forms of professional engagement continued to determine an artist's success to a significant degree. Rosa was one of a number of individuals navigating unstable ground, his strategy being more about poking at beehives with sticks than waiting patiently for the promised honey. The metaphor of the bee seems doubly apt: it was the well-known symbol of the Barberini family—fitting representatives of both the desired and deplored patronage of the era—whose favourite, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, became the most successful artist of Rosa's day by employing various tactics in the assertion of his own freedoms, presenting interesting points of

connection and contrast to Rosa. We will return to this matter in chapter one. That the patron continued to hold sway over the seventeenth-century artist was especially true in papal Rome, where Rosa lived for the majority of his career. Here, an artist's opportunities, achievements and survival were still largely determined (as Bernini's own circumstances amply demonstrate) by the receipt of noble favour or a papal commission.

The liberating mission of the Romantics was directed at reinforcing and maintaining the right to a self-determined space of experimentation. The quest undertaken by Rosa and his contemporaries was aimed at attaining the initial, essential privilege of recognition that would produce that very entitlement. The "mythical, free individual" that became both a political and intellectual ideal from the mid-eighteenth century onward was for Rosa's generation simply not yet conceivable.[23] Rosa's endeavour, it has been noted, was also unlike that of the Romantics in that it was not aimed at the creation of an entirely private art, "independent of the tastes of a contemporary audience"[24]—although one could well argue that it was in many ways headed in that direction. A sizeable portion of Rosa's artistic production was motivated by his own interests and was aimed at a very select and intimate group. Indeed, Rosa's desire to break free from the constraints of court patronage or the dictates of client contracts and the restrictions they imposed on his practice, together with his achievement of what Luigi Spezzaferro has called a "substantial autonomy," found their resolution in a very particular form of sociality that was simultaneously bound to the older code of the artist-patron relationship and permissive of a sense of independence from it: friendship.[25]

Freedom in Friendship

The present volume argues that the network of friends who shared Rosa's vision for his work and identity as a free artist were vital to his achievements in this regard, a feat that for the artists of subsequent generations was a *fait accompli*. The apparent incongruities that characterize Rosa's person and practice, to which I alluded above, as well as the volatility of temperament and conduct that accompanied them, can be explained in part as a result of Rosa's position, caught between the realities he faced and the ideals he sought. Rosa wanted both solitude and fame. He craved both distinction and inclusion. He disdained wealth but flaunted ostentatious possessions. He was hostile toward noble patronage yet desired the recognition and profits it conferred.[26] Friendship, as both a concept and a set of rituals, offered a path through this forest of conflict, presenting Rosa with the opportunity to achieve a persona and position of independence. In friendship, the coincident experience of separation and unity (the chance to be at once together and alone) permitted simultaneously the opportunities to abide by (or exploit) social support and to stake a claim for individuality—for creativity, authorship and a powerfully self-directed agency. Friendship allowed Rosa to display alternatively conformist and rebellious attitudes. For an artist bound to the existing structure of power relations, friendship presented the means to operate both within that realm and to achieve a very real experience of independence from it.

Friendship was ever-present in the lives of ambitious early modern men, and its nature and significance within the context of early modern history has already been illuminated by scholars, from a variety of perspectives.[27] As a vital component of philosophy and its practice, friendship was actively pursued by humanist intellectuals as an ideal and professional prerequisite as much as a desirable psychological or emotional bond. As summarized by Patricia Rubin, "amicitia," conceived as both a virtue and a practice, "was a defining ethos of social life […] a daily reality in the clientage of political and economic operations, of transactions between and among individuals, families and states."[28] Early modern friendship, following its ancient model, was considered a fundamentally male enterprise, denied to women who were deemed incapable of the requisite, and inherently masculine, *virtù*.[29] The gendered nature of friendship is an important element of the present study, which privileges a discussion of Rosa's predominantly male circle of friends over a consideration of female relationships and their impact on his life and work. To be sure, the role played in Rosa's life by his life-long partner Lucrezia Paolini (*c.* 1620–1696)—who married the painter on

his death bed in 1673 but first became involved with the artist when she worked as his model in Florence—was a vital one, as he himself acknowledged on numerous occasions in his letters.[30] The emphasis placed here on male friendship, guided primarily by the content of the early sources, is made with full awareness of the significance of other types of relationships. Rosa and his friends adhered to the prevailing contemporary notion of friendship as a masculine undertaking and a vital social constituent of masculine identity and honour, embodied most forcefully by the academies.[31]

Friends were not only in large part responsible for helping Rosa to create and sustain both an identity and experience of professional freedom, but there is evidence to suggest that Rosa actively cultivated friendships with these goals in mind, as the following chapters will reveal. Rosa's letters make clear his devotion to one of the ancient and enduring principles of friendship, in particular: the friend as a second self. The reciprocity that defines friendship (a principle to which Rosa repeatedly refers in his letters as a "Law" of friendship) produces an experience of equality—a levelling of power, or "oneness". In its inherent mutuality, friendship recognizes the unique value and power of individual agency (and permits its exercise), but situates and produces it directly "in relation" to the friend who is, ideally, a mirror image of that self.[32] A very real sense of this feature of friendship can be experienced in the sensation of feeling like a "different person" upon seeing an old friend after a long period without any contact. This "relational" feature of friendship was part of a much broader early modern conception of the fluidity of boundaries between individuals—an "embeddedness" of selfhood or a common experience that, as Davis has noted, did not "preclude self-discovery but rather prompted it," spurring the discovery of "one's own distinctive history."[33] A tenet of the Neo-Stoic philosophy that fascinated Rosa and many of his contemporaries, the principle of unity in friendship also pervades the discourse and rituals of friendship practised by the artist and his friends. It features prominently in Rosa's letters, replete with his concerns about "debts" and "obligations" between friends, as well as in the anecdotes recounted by the artist's early biographers concerning Rosa's professional dealings with clients and patrons, in which the ideal principles of friendship were applied in the service of sustaining a free identity.

A few comments about autonomy and freedom, and the way in which these concepts are defined for the purposes of the present study, are in order. The term "autonomy" is here intended in its purest, ancient Greek sense, derived from *autonomia* (αὐτονομία), or self- ("auto") law ("nomos"). It is both a state of being ("self-governance") and a set of actions aimed toward achieving that state ("self-determination"). Rosa's claims for professional autonomy are here understood as expressions of a flexible and multivalent outlook, rather than embodiments or antecedents of any one particular theory or doctrine of autonomy (the best known of which is probably the politicized definition theorized by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)).[34] Rejecting many of the aspects of traditional patronage practice that he regarded as restrictive, actively distancing himself from the same courts that might offer him fame and significant financial reward, Rosa prized above all the opportunity to determine the parameters of his own practice—to choose for whom he would and would not work, to live where he wished, and to select the subjects of his art and poetry. The present discussion of Rosa's autonomy is informed primarily by the artist's own notions about independence and freedom, notions that were deeply rooted in contemporary philosophical discourses. These discourses, in turn, were guided by the tenets of Stoic and Cynic schools of thought and seventeenth-century currents of libertinism (the philosophical culture of "free-thought"—championed in particular by French intellectuals like Gabriel Naudé (1600–1653), the librarian of Queen Christina of Sweden and Cardinal Jules Mazarin, but also taken up by many members of Rosa's circle—which challenged religious authority and sought truth in reason, logic and empiricism), the same theories that provided Rosa with much of the fodder for his poetry and images.[35] Some sense of Rosa's conception of autonomy or self-determination can be assembled on the basis of his various claims for freedom (or "libertà," the word that Rosa uses most frequently), which appear in specific but shifting contexts: in comments made within the confines of letters to close friends, in declarations attributed to Rosa by biographers eager to assert their own agendas, or in proclamations addressed to patrons at a more mature stage of Rosa's career, by which time the artist had secured a relatively safe position from

which to launch his satirical barbs.[36] Rosa's frequent epistolary use of the word *libertà*, which he applied to a broad range of types of personal and professional liberties, suggests that he conceived of freedom as a fluid concept. For Rosa, *libertà* is synonymous with familiarity and intimacy, as evidenced by his recurring demand that friends "speak freely" with one another.[37] Freedom of mind and speech is, not coincidentally, one of the prerogatives of true friendship. To speak freely in epistolary writing is to be sincere, informal and devoid of artifice—all important measures of friendship—but also to be bold, forthright and even audacious. To speak at liberty is to exist on a par with one's interlocutor, and in the process to experience a sense of individual agency and authority. Indeed, Rosa frequently implied that his free manner of speaking revealed a daringly self-assured personality.[38] The concept of *libertà* also denotes other, related types of freedom: a space devoid of the requirements and challenges of hard work, slander, illness, imprisonment or restraint; a state immune to the vagaries of fortune (another vital theme for Rosa); or a position of self-governance.[39] Rosa asserted on more than one occasion that his claims for freedom (in both personal and professional contexts) were an integral aspect of his "philosophy," his state of being, temperament, or identity.[40] *Sincerità*—that other quality essential to early modern subjectivity—features alongside *Libertà* as one of the allegorical personifications of the constituents of Rosa's identity in his self-celebratory etching of 1662, *The Genius of Salvator Rosa* (Fig. **6**).[41] As Wendy Roworth has argued, the "liberty" to which Rosa refers in this print promotes a vision of independence that is not merely a "simple freedom from slavery" but "liberty achieved through knowledge and virtue".[42] These are skills that could only be achieved, tested and endorsed in a social setting that, in Rosa's case, was comprised of a close network of intellectual friends and colleagues. In this volume, I argue that Rosa's freedom as an artist was intimately bound to *seicento* discourses and rituals of friendship, defined at their core by the concept of *libertà* and characteristic of a very particular historical moment.

Fig. 6. Salvator Rosa, *The Genius of Salvator Rosa*, 1662, etching

Salvator Rosa as *Amico Vero*

The over four hundred letters by Rosa that survive, almost all of which were addressed to friends, are more than just an illuminating record of information about the artist and his time. Presented in the accompanying two-volume publication for the first time in a complete and revised Italian transcription and annotated English translation, they underpin the premise of the present volume, which posits friendship as an essential but often overlooked context for the interpretation and understanding of Rosa's life and work. In the letters,

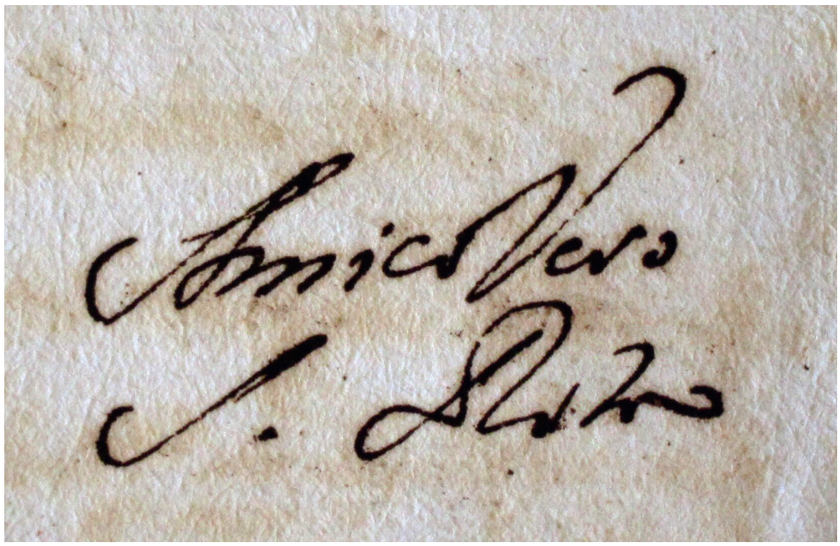

Fig. 7. Salvator Rosa, "Amico vero" valediction and signature, detail of letter 355 (5 November 1667), c. 2r

Rosa habitually pairs his signature with the phrase "amico vero" (Fig. 7), or true friend. The phrase itself was commonplace, but Rosa's "amico vero" expresses more than just an epistolary convention. His self-identification as "true friend" speaks not only to the authenticity of his intentions as a friend, but to a self-consciousness about his role as a philosophical painter—or painter-philosopher—an identity that informed every aspect of his creative activity. With the phrase "amico vero" Rosa appealed to, and aligned himself with, a particular philosophical ideal. Ancient theorists had posited three primary types of friendship, traceable to Aristotle and Cicero: the supreme type was perfect, virtuous or "true" friendship; the most deplorable, but necessary, was useful friendship; and the one that fell somewhere in between the two was enjoyable or pleasurable friendship.[43] As "amico vero," Rosa aligned himself with the first, most admirable type of amity. As Rosa frequently acknowledges in his own letters, however, friendship is a fragile and mutable entity, ambiguous, expandable and often defiant of definition. It changes and fluctuates in nature and degree, it surfaces at different stages of life or dies out, it can border on the familial or even the erotic, and it can subsist on the barest minimum of connection. It is always composed of some combination of perfection and utility, love and commerce, altruism and self-interest. The flexibility of friendship is apparent in Rosa's epistolary use of the term "amico" in reference not only to good friends but to acquaintances, colleagues, and even adversaries.[44] It is as a "true friend," moreover, that Rosa (and his friends) endeavoured to promote the ideal aspects of friendship over their utilitarian ones, in the service of sustaining a position of independence that only the truest and most perfect form of friendship could confer.

A consequence of the emphasis Rosa placed on friendship as a strategy of self-making was that the flip-side of that relation—acrimonious and hostile associations, and even outright enmity—acquired an equally important role in the crafting of a unique and liberated identity. Enmity shared with friendship the premise of equality between its participants, each vying for a position of uniqueness and superiority.[45] Indeed, the tension implicit in the "same-but-different" character of amity meant that some form of rivalry was an aspect of friendship itself. Rosa made antagonism an important feature of his self-fashioning, particularly within the context of his work as a satirist, characterizing himself as "incontenta" or "indiavolato" and frequently citing his Neapolitan identity as a point of distinction, for better or worse.[46] Rosa's frequent complaints about the criticism and "envy" directed against him by his detractors (such as the Roman academics who accused Rosa in the 1650s of plagiarising his satires) extended to an even more profound epistemology of fatalistic determinism, in which Rosa considered his life to be determined by the capricious impulses of fate and fortune.[47] This attitude might at first seem incompatible with Rosa's strong convictions about his ability—and entitlement—to govern his professional activities, but the cultivation of fatalism (manifested in Rosa's frequent grumblings about being misunderstood, unappreciated, and subject to the cruel whims of fortune, particularly at moments when his reputation, professional self-sufficiency, or financial situation were in jeopardy) should be seen as part of a strategy for creating a position of distinction and liberty. As Horace had argued in antiquity, "adversity reveals genius, prosperity conceals it."[48] While friendship offered a sense of freedom in a parity of like-mindedness, rivalry and enmity provided the opportunity for individuation via opposition.[49] For Rosa, fate and fortune were the co-conspirators of his critics and envious

detractors, and the obstacles they created presented Rosa with ample occasion to assert his individuality. Rosa was not alone in cultivating rivalry as a component of his professional practice. Opposition was implicit in the competitive nature of early modern artistic practice, more generally, wherein individual skill, iconographic choice and professional agency were determined to a significant degree by active rivalry with one's contemporaries and predecessors.[50] It was also a feature of the cultural phenomenon of "dissent" that Luigi Salerno first identified and elucidated as an important context for understanding Rosa's activity and production. In Salerno's estimation, the "pittore del dissenso"—an epithet used to describe not just Rosa but a small group of artists of his generation—tempered orthodoxy with libertinism, an interest in magic and the occult, and radical new modes of scientific inquiry.[51] Salerno's study is important as the first sustained analysis of one aspect of the phenomenon of the autonomous artist in the seventeenth century.[52] His presentation of Rosa as a paragon of social dissidence, however, offers a rather limited view of the complexity of our artist's position. While Rosa's quest for autonomy was antithetical to certain power structures of the establishment, it was nonetheless required to operate within those structures, and was to a significant extent supported by them.[53]

Rosa made his claims for freedom at a moment when a discernible shift has been detected in the conception and definition of subjectivity, a shift located by the literary historian Raymond Stephanson in the years between *c.* 1650 and 1800, during which the self and its making moved from a realm of social reputation and "collective structures" to an increasingly interiorized or psychological sphere. The interim witnessed a transitional self, characterized by the experience of a "double sense of internal and reputational status."[54] Stephanson's theory is one of a number of sociological proposals that may prove useful for interpreting and understanding the nature of Rosa's identity and its evolution. In arguing for the usefulness of certain social theories in this endeavour, however, it is not my intention to make any sort of claim for the authority of one approach or another. Rosa's identity was shaped by a variety of forces and can be understood in myriad ways. The present study aims to illuminate one particular component of an otherwise prismatic identity, various facets of which have already been explored: Rosa as a satirist, Rosa as a landscape painter, Rosa as a philosopher, Rosa as a pre-Romantic, or Rosa as a Neapolitan, for example.[55] Such an undertaking profits from an exceptionally rich archive of material by and about Rosa: a uniquely copious quantity of paintings, prints, drawings, letters, poems, biographies and other forms of contemporary testimony, the variety of which compels and perhaps necessitates the adoption of a plurality of methods and approaches. In drawing attention to this particular facet of Rosa's identity—the free artist forged in the social bond of friendship—I draw upon the insights of theorists who define subjectivity as the product of community or who describe the individual as a product of interdependency, conceptions of selfhood that also reflect one of the dominant narratives of early modern thinking on the subject.[56] The self is here understood as a multifaceted, malleable and changeable entity, historically and culturally contingent, and a result of both the internal and external forces that act upon it. Rosa's own identity—multifaceted and frequently paradoxical—is in many ways a product of his social engagement. Often self-centred, defensive, phobic, irritable and pedantic, Rosa was also sensitive, insecure, affectionate, generous, loyal and light-hearted. He continually sought social validation for his self-aggrandizing claims about his talents, exhibiting a self-preoccupation and desire for reputation that Rosa's biographer Giovanni Battista Passeri (*c.* 1610–1679) amusingly attributed to the artist's Neapolitan background.[57] In describing the social foundations of Rosa's self my intention is not to deprive him of any personal agency, but rather to show how one particular social bond offered opportunities for, and inflected the process of, self-creation within a considerably socially-prescribed world. A social theory of the self is certainly not the only way to understand early modern identity or autonomy, and other lines of inquiry have already expanded (and will assuredly continue to enrich) our understanding of the formation of early modern selves. The present study takes as its point of departure the documentary evidence, which amply demonstrates the importance of social engagement and experience to Rosa's identity and achievements. Hoping to avoid the pitfalls of psychohistorical and microhistorical approaches (both of which have been accused of producing a narrow-minded set of conclusions), I venture a "social psychology" of Rosa as one of

a number of promising routes toward understanding the nature and value of his achievements and his pivotal position within the history of art.[58]

What is claimed here about Rosa may also be true of many of his contemporaries. Indeed, Rosa was not the only artist or intellectual of his time to stake a claim for freedom, nor to take advantage of friendship in this endeavour. Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), for example, deployed academic amity in an effort to manipulate his relationships with patrons and carve out a position of relative professional independence.[59] Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) mastered the rhetoric and rituals of friendship in all spheres of private and professional life, fully cognizant of its challenges, particularly as a mechanism of diplomacy.[60] The astronomer and antiquarian Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637) made amity a central component of his patronage practice, in the service of cultivating a democratic ideal for himself, his friends, and his clients.[61] Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) found professional success with the support of a close network of intellectuals, clients and patrons with whom he formed friendships, pursuing a mode of self-fashioning guided in part by Michel de Montaigne's (1533–1592) ideas about amity.[62] And Pietro Testa (1612–1650), who shared Rosa's melancholic inclinations and his disdain for the procedures of traditional patronage, sought in friendship a strategy for dealing with both.[63] Rosa also shares with certain other early modern artists the honour of a distorted legacy of rebellion, courtesy of the Romantics: Benvenuto Cellini (1500–1571), for example, was likewise turned into a heroic antecedent of the emotionally-compelled and "fiercely independent" artist of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[64] What is extraordinary about Rosa is the unwavering and programmatic nature of his claims, the particular intensity of his friendships (for which his letters, in particular, offer indispensable evidence), and the wealth of information about him that survives, both from his own hand and those of members of his circle. The nature and value of Rosa's friendships has been considered by other scholars, to varying degree and from different perspectives.[65] These relationships and the formative role they played in the development of Rosa's identity, in the implementation of his professional strategies, and in his achievements as an artist, however, have yet to receive attention as a discrete category of analysis.

This volume is divided into five chapters. Chapter one considers the performative dimension of Rosa's self-fashioning, a natural place to begin as theatrical performance was the earliest of Rosa's strategies for professional self-manufacture and self-promotion. Performance spread from the stage to other areas of Rosa's life, where an audience was essential to achieving a unique identity and a praiseworthy reputation. Among the most important of these was the setting comprised by Rosa's private academy in Florence, the Accademia dei Percossi, the subject of chapter two. Removed from the court and its control, the academy and its members—their activities focused upon poetry and comedic performance—provided Rosa with pivotal friendships and a self-centred environment from which to launch a distinctive professional persona. Alongside the Percossi, Rosa formed close friendships with members of various other academies, including the Accademia degli Stravaganti in Pisa, which devoted much of its attention to the theatrical productions of Giovan Battista Ricciardi. Rosa's experience of the Roman academies in the mature and later phases of his career can be understood as an extension of his Tuscan academic moment, friendships now mixing with enmities in the creation of the fully-formed painter-philosopher. Chapter three examines more closely the rituals that defined academic sociality in the seventeenth century: letter writing, poetry and conversation. Chapter four considers the importance of one friendship in particular to Rosa's formation as a painter-philosopher, and the manifestation of this bond in a painting executed as a gift: the *Poet-Philosopher* (*c.* 1647, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) (Fig. **121**), painted by Rosa for his close friend Giovan Battista Ricciardi. An ode to their unique friendship—perhaps the most important of Rosa's life—the painting is a complex visual essay on friendship as both a locus and constituent of identity. The painting belongs to a larger group of images that Rosa made as gifts for friends, patrons and clients in an effort to promote his identity as a free artist. Chapter five considers Rosa's professional strategies in greater detail, comprising as they do a veritable "business of friendship": the art market, the public exhibition, printmaking, the pursuit of novel and self-directed subject matter, the making of copies, the solicitation of advice and assistance

from friends, and the promotion of an image of *stravaganza* and liberality via the practice of gift-giving. Friendship offered Rosa an escape from the structure of older forms of patronage, and his relationships with art dealers, clients, and patrons alike were defined or re-cast in the terms of affective bonds in the service of levelling an otherwise uneven system of exchange.

The two volumes of the accompanying publication comprise the first comprehensive edition and fully-annotated English translation of Rosa's extant letters, together with a revision of the Italian transcriptions. These volumes include a number of previously unpublished letters held in American collections, in addition to offering a new and more extensive critical and historical apparatus. Written between 1641 and 1673, the majority of Rosa's extant letters were addressed to two of his closest friends: the Pisan poet and dramatist Giovan Battista Ricciardi, mentioned above, and the Volterran merchant Giulio Maffei (died 1654).[66] Among the most important surviving autobiographical testimonies and historical documents of the Italian *seicento*, Rosa's letters have long been an important resource for scholars familiar with the artist. Much of their content, however, has been overlooked even within the field of Rosa-studies, as has the letters' status and significance as documents of a distinctively social identity. The historical notes aim to expand upon current scholarly knowledge, and philological notes signal existing errors of transcription or interpretation. The English translation attempts to offer the reader access to Rosa's idiosyncratic epistolary writing, often impenetrable even for native speakers of Italian.

These three volumes are a development of my doctoral thesis, researched and written between 2005 and 2009, years that saw a significant boom in the study of Rosa with a series of important publications, exhibitions and conferences. This renewed attention to the artist has in many instances validated and affirmed my own scholarly efforts, yielding many fruitful conversations. It has also brought many new archival discoveries and insightful interpretations on the part of researchers. Among the most important of these recent scholarly contributions are: the 2005 exhibition, *Salvator Rosa: Wild Landscapes*, held at Compton Verney House and the Wallace Collection, London; the 2007 exhibition, *'Filosofico umore' e 'maravigliosa speditezza': pittura napoletana del Seicento dalle collezioni medicee*, and the accompanying catalogue edited by Elena Fumagalli, in which Rosa's Florentine paintings receive a long-overdue reanalysis and a number of important archival discoveries are published; the 2008 monographic exhibition in Naples, *Salvator Rosa, tra mito e magia*, and its accompanying catalogue with a series of important essays by various authors; a 2009 publication by Franco Paliaga that includes an important discussion of Rosa's Pisan network of academic friends and colleagues, complimented by the publication of a wealth of related archival documents; a 2009 colloquium on Rosa, *Salvator Rosa e il suo tempo 1615–1673*, hosted by the Università di Roma, La Sapienza, and the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome, accompanied by the publication of an extensive collection of essays in 2010; the carefully curated 2010 exhibition *Salvator Rosa (1615–1673): Bandits, Wilderness and Magic*, held at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, and the Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, with an exhibition catalogue edited by Helen Langdon; a 2010 publication by Viviana Farina on the subject of Rosa's early years as an artist, recently expanded with an exhibition and accompanying catalogue in 2015; the publication and analysis by Caterina Volpi and Franco Paliaga in 2012 of a corpus of letters written to Rosa's friend Giovan Battista Ricciardi, which has offered valuable new insights into Rosa's own work and his network of friends; a 2014 monograph on the artist by Floriana Conte, which assembles a series of new and revealing archival and documentary discoveries; Caterina Volpi's catalogue raisonné of 2014, which offers a much-needed revision of the artist's extant pictorial oeuvre, continually plagued by misattributions, and includes a number of new additions uncovered in recent years; and the 2014 exhibition *Rosa-rame*. *Salvator Rosa incisore nelle collezioni dell'Istituto nazionale per la Grafica*, an important showcase of Rosa's prints and materials relevant to his printmaking activity held by the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome, and accompanied by an equally important catalogue edited by Maria Rosaria Nappi that offers new discoveries on this subject and the most comprehensive consideration of Rosa's work as a printmaker since Richard Wallace's publication of 1979.[67] The present volumes therefore have a two-fold aim: to provide the reader with an outline of the current state of research, and to make a new and meaningful contribution to this ongoing conversation.