

To Jeanne Clegg



LOOKING AT
TINTORETTO
WITH
JOHN RUSKIN

A VENETIAN ANTHOLOGY
COMPILED AND EDITED
WITH A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION
by EMMA SDEGNO

Marsilio



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San Polo 3052, 30125 Venezia
tel. 041/5234864
fax 041/5242820
e-mail: snrocco@libero.it

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cover
John Ruskin, 'Magi and Cherubs', Study of Tintoretto's *Adoration of the Magi*, Venice, Scuola Grande di San Rocco, 1852, RFRL

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Nineteenth-century travellers visiting Venice – one of the special destinations for art and history lovers – seemed to be overcome by a subtle malaise, almost distress. No longer capital of a unique, multifiform and liberal republic, Venice had fallen into a condition of economic decline, social degradation and physical ruin. The long siege of the Ottoman, French and Austrian empires had defeated a political structure that was founded mainly on quality values of commerce and tolerance, inspiration and innovation. During that decisive century, only the United Kingdom shared the longing of intellectuals of the Enlightenment: George Byron and John Ruskin, but also Ugo Foscolo and Giuseppe Mazzini, just to mention a few names, who in the name of an ideal Europe desired to free Greece from the Turks and reunite Italy, still treated like a mere geographical entity. Between the 18th and 19th centuries, the previous spiritual itinerary of monks and crusaders towards Holy Jerusalem was replaced with the fashion of the Grand Tour and the descent of gentlemen on the Greek, Roman and Mediaeval sources of Western civilization. In the famous opening to The Stones of Venice, John Ruskin points at Venice as an ideal model of community life and a model his fellow Britons could look to build up a cultural and political power which would have London as its centre of gravity. Ruskin holds up the Gothic style – the popular tradition of past centuries together with the skills of the workman and the wisdom of the farmer – and compares it to the power represented by the industrial revolution, to urbanization, to the classicism understood as the imperial image of the State, proposing it as a corporative solution to social conflict. The discovery of the landscape and the picturesque that Ruskin finds in the Alps, together with his inquiry into the construction secrets of older architectural styles, bring him to propose a new cultural unification for Europe, torn apart by war and schism, by plague and succession. This is the reason behind his battle for the restoration of monumental architecture and the conservation of artworks, not through capricious integrations and arbitrary substitutions, but with the rigorous reparation of the losses undergone and respect for material identity. The comparison that he makes between other experts in the field, especially French, British, Germans and Italians is therefore a moral and political one, rather than stylistic and cultural. From this perspective, Byzantine and Gothic Venice make up a single urban fabric in which harmony is not determined by the dominant monuments but by the coherence of the overall system of water, alleyways and buildings immersed in light and space. In Ruskin's letter to his father dated 24th September 1845, he expresses his romantic astonishment at the magic of Venice whilst also declaring his distress

about the ruinous state in which the city finds itself. His is not a misogynistic aristocratic attitude, as some scholars have noted, but a critical view of the self-destructive direction Victorian modernity seemed to have taken in the name of aggressive industrial revolution.

John Ruskin's entire oeuvre – writings, paintings and appeals – is aimed at affirming the primacy of artistic sentiment, the continuity of culture as a measure of evolution. How prophetic his intuition was can be perceived today when observing the malfunctionings of technocracy, of globalization and of mercantilism taking place which tend to trivialise personal ideals and community aspirations. Hence the thought of Ruskin, artist and polemicist, seems extremely current as it forces us to reflect on the issues of today.

In the context of protecting personal individuality and dignity of art, John Ruskin discovers in Venice the work of Jacopo Tintoretto, his figurative ambiguity, transgressive existentialism, and his impressionistic passion.

Having repudiated Renaissance classicism, and facing tired 19th-century academic repetition, he seems to bring together the artisan virtuosity of the Mediaeval age – Byzantine and Gothic – with the expression of sentiment sought in the Baroque style, starting precisely from the astonishing illusionism of the great Venetian master. Ruskin was horrified by the darkness of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and the disrepair of the enormous painting cycles that illustrate the Bible of humanity and fully embrace its greatness and tragedy. Ruskin as writer, painter and commentator was so well known that his writings were read worldwide and contributed to the birth of the myth of Venice and the fame of the Scuola di San Rocco as the “Sistine Chapel of Venice”. They provided the basis of general attention that led the great Western cultures to identify with Venice (a Phoenix that falls and always arises), and to undertake the necessary safeguarding and conservation work. This is the great debt of gratitude that both Venetians and non-Venetians owe to such an illuminated, talented and generous man.

The year 2019 marks two important dates: the 200th anniversary of Ruskin's birth and the 500th anniversary of Tintoretto's. This volume is published as part of the events organised to celebrate these two great artists, and aim to recognise the importance of their contribution to the very identity of our common civilization through the comparison of the writings and drawings of the British intellectual with the paintings of the great Venetian artist. Heartfelt thanks to all those many people who have enthusiastically contributed to this project.

FRANCO POSOCCO

Guardian Grando della Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venezia

Looking through modern eyes, one might wonder how John Ruskin was so immediately overwhelmed by Tintoretto's painting, which he discovered during a visit to the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in 1845, accompanied by his friend and well-known watercolourist James Duffield Harding. Ruskin describes the fierce passion that linked him to the great Venetian painter for the rest of his life in a short passage from his 1883 Epilogue to Modern Painters “when we had got through the upper gallery, and into the room of the Crucifixion, we both sate down and looked—not at it—but at each other,—literally the strength so taken out of us that we couldn't stand!”. This passage highlights perhaps the most striking of the many apparent contradictions that marked Ruskin's long path through the study of and acquaintance with European art history, naturally not considering his love for the work of Turner. This book provides an answer to this question and is an extraordinary guide to the discovery of a hitherto virtually unknown Tintoretto, seen through the eyes of a man who had put at the centre of his life not the conception of art for art's sake but rather art conceived as progress of civilization, a meeting point with ethics, universal support to the good of mankind. This was the internal logic to the school of thought that Ruskin helped to shape together with many of his associates, including his friend Dante Gabriele Rossetti and William Morris who, member of the confraternity of the Pre-Raphaelites nourished his artistic project with utopian thought, opening up to new practices of craftsmanship, work ethics and aesthetics, both mystical and concrete, visionary and pragmatic. It was a period of small things: “the thoroughly great men are those who have done everything thoroughly, and who have never despised anything, however small, of God's making”. Embracing Tintoretto's greatness in his heart and mind, Ruskin re-lived his passion for Turner, also an outsider in his age and an inspiring prophet of a style that would play an important role in the 20th century, approaching Pollock's chaos and Rothko's moods, envisaging a modernity that Ruskin would have upheld. The publication of this volume, edited by Ruskin scholar Emma Sdegno and promoted by the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, a focal point in Venetian cultural life, promises well for the year ahead in which Ruskin and Tintoretto are the central figures commemorated in two exhibitions at the Doge's Palace. This project has been strongly supported by the Fondazione dei Musei Civici to highlight once more, after years of neglect, unknown aspects of the life and works of these two monumental figures in Venice: Tintoretto—a determined defender of integrity and its early beauty, before the era of “Renaissance evil”; and Ruskin—a maker of this beauty, and a powerful interpreter and narrator of the “Art of Man”.

GABRIELLA BELLI

Director of Musei Civici Veneziani

It did me mighty good & made me feel bigger—taken up into him as it were. With this book begins the 500th anniversary of the birth of Jacopo Robusti, the great painter known as Tintoretto. After the foretaste of the jubilee exhibitions in Cologne and Paris, the celebrations continue with a series of important cultural events including three exhibitions in Venice and one in Washington. They have been organised in collaboration with of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and Save Venice, as well as Venetian organisations: Fondazione Musei Civici, Museo Nazionale Gallerie dell'Accademia, Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Scuola Grande di San Marco, and the Patriarchate of Venice. The occasion of this publication is extremely welcome, as well as being highly relevant since, thanks to the work by Anna Laura Lepschy and Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, we know how influential John Ruskin's writing was for generations of English readers, from Henry James to Bernard Berenson. For forty years Tintoretto laid at the heart of Ruskin's interests, together with Turner, Luini, Botticelli and Carpaccio, dominating even the sublime Michelangelo. It started with Ruskin's emotional discovery of Tintoretto's work in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco on 24th September 1845, about which he writes in the letter to his father that opens the volume, to the Epilogue to Modern Painters II written in 1883 and Praeterita in which Ruskin claims that illuminating event influenced the rest of his life, inspiring The Stones of Venice, his most famous work. Ruskin's writings do not merely reflect his admiration of Tintoretto's genius: he not only provides accurate descriptions of the paintings by his beloved Tintoretto, but also records their often pitiful state of conservation. The itinerary begins with the Gallerie dell'Accademia, where Ruskin advises the visitor not to be distracted by the magnificence of Titian's Assumption but to turn instead to the pairs of paintings that hung beside it at his time – Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel – works he considered much greater than the more famous Miracle of the Slave, which will be the highlight of the exhibition from September 2018 to January 2019 dedicated to the Tintoretto's early works. Ruskin's research on the beloved painter involves several of his collaborators who create sketches and reproductions of details or of entire paintings, daguerreotypes to be used for later study, as documentation or teaching materials. Tintoretto, like Bellini, can be understood only in Venice. Ruskin offers us a slow itinerary as well as a detailed one that will be enormously useful to the visitor: "I had a good two hours sit before him this morning & It did me mighty good & made me feel bigger—taken up into him as it were" (infra, p. 160). And we accept his advice gladly, with thanks to the promoters of this event: the curator and the Scuola Grande di San Rocco.

PAOLA MARINI
Director of Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia

This year, 2018, marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of John Ruskin (1818) and the 500th anniversary of the birth of Jacopo Tintoretto (1518/1519). Ruskin was a passionate admirer of the painter, and more than anyone else was responsible for promoting Tintoretto's reputation in the English-speaking world. From his early encounter with Tintoretto's works at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in September 1845, documented in a breathless letter home to his father, through the last years of his life, when he commissioned copies of paintings by Tintoretto in the Scuola and at the Palazzo Ducale, Ruskin remained passionately engaged with Tintoretto's art. He was a sensitive and perceptive viewer of Tintoretto's pictures, and wrote eloquently about the artist in Modern Painters (1846) and The Stones of Venice (1851-1853) and its "Venetian Index," as well as his 1872 lecture "On the Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret."

This new volume published by the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and edited by Emma Sdegno provides an invaluable gift to admirers of both artists, assembling Ruskin's writings on the artist and a selection of the copies of Tintoretto paintings that Ruskin made or commissioned. These texts and images are placed in context through an introduction that explains how Ruskin's observations on Tintoretto relate to his theoretical ideas on the "imagination penetrative" – the ability to understand an idea or thing completely, both its outward appearance and inner essence. Organized as a guidebook, it will be indispensable for those wishing to consult Ruskin's insights as they study Tintoretto's pictures, whether in person in Venice or as armchair travelers.

The National Gallery of Art is pleased to collaborate with the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and other Venetian institutions in commemorating both anniversaries. As the site of Tintoretto's most important achievement, and of Ruskin's pivotal encounter with the artist, the Scuola is an essential partner in the activities to mark these important occasions. The celebration includes the first major exhibition devoted to Ruskin ever organized in Italy, John Ruskin. Le pietre di Venezia, which will open at the Palazzo Ducale in the spring of 2018, and the major Tintoretto exhibition that begins at the Palazzo Ducale in September 2018 and travels to the National Gallery of Art in March of 2019, as well as the other exhibitions, lectures, and other activities. Five centuries after his birth, the National Gallery of Art is proud to join with the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in honoring this unique artist, son of Venice and confratello of the Scuola.

EARL A. POWELL III
Director of National Gallery of Art, Washington

LIST OF CONTENTS

Approaching the figure of Ruskin in Venice is almost inevitably a question of examining not the scholar and his articulate thought, but some of his often-incisive statements. His theories and critiques are frequently taken out of context and subjected to rapid judgement, and have ended up to be “written” on the “stones” of Venice about which Ruskin wrote so prolifically. There is therefore the danger that this important writer and art critic be remembered through preconceptions rather than being known through his texts. This special anniversary that links Ruskin and Tintoretto over the three-hundred-year gap in their birth years may lead us to appreciate Tintoretto’s work, especially in the churches of Venice, through the eyes of the admiring English writer, letting him guide us through timeless Venice, a Venice Ruskin construes for us with his original and impulsive eloquence. His descriptions linger on details as if his observations were accompanied by the reading of the Scriptures that inspired the scenes depicted. Although distant from the theological-liturgical criticism we have become accustomed to after the second Vatican Council, Ruskin’s narrative skill communicates the emphatic emotion that characterizes his writing. Even when Ruskin dwells on descriptions, the aesthetic elements are expressed in such a manner as to summon up their stupefying magnitude. Ruskin’s intention is not to interpret but rather to provide an educational description of the large canvases, as if he would read them for the viewer. If Tintoretto describes through paint, Ruskin paints through words: he uses words as an instrument to allow an understanding of Tintoretto’s works, highlighting the painter’s inspiration through the narration of what he observes and admires. The great fascination Tintoretto inspires in Ruskin lies perhaps in his realism and in that immediacy of representation leading to an extreme synthesis the profound link between human and divine, spiritual and material, never counterposed but concisely expressed in the logic of the Incarnation recognized by the Christian Creed. Ruskin is enraptured by Tintoretto because evokes the divine in the human dimension, and vice versa, omnipotence in weakness, the infinite in the fragment, light and shadow, presence and absence. It is the path of beauty that Tintoretto had discovered as a slow evolution and paradigmatically expressed through his paintings of the Last Supper. Let us be guided along this path because the grounds of Tintoretto’s work are as valid today as in the past, especially for us who are often so distant from the biblical world of the great masterpieces of the Venetian churches so well known to Ruskin and Tintoretto.

DON GIANMATTEO CAPUTO
Patriarchal Delegate for cultural heritage
Patriarchate of Venice

- 12 PREFACE
CLIVE WILMER
- 14 EDITOR’S NOTE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
- 18 “MY DEAREST FATHER...”
JOHN RUSKIN
- 21 NO MERE EARTHLY PAINTER:
TINTORETTO AND THE SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN ROCCO
EMMA SDEGNO

- 56 **A VENETIAN INDEX
OF TINTORETTO**
JOHN RUSKIN

APPENDIX

- 160 THREE LETTERS FROM VENICE, 1845
- 162 A VENETIAN NOTEBOOK, 1845
- 165 “EPILOGUE” TO *MODERN PAINTERS* II, 1883
- 165 “PRAETERITA,” 1885
- 170 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 174 LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PREFACE

John Ruskin tells us in his autobiography, *Praeterita* (1885-1889), that he was ‘[forced] into the study of the history of Venice’ by his discovery, in 1845, of the then-neglected Venetian painter Jacopo Tintoretto (1519-1596). Just as he was coming to the revolutionary conclusion that the great age of Italian art was not that of Michelangelo and Raphael but the Quattrocento, an unscheduled visit to the Scuola Grande di San Rocco revealed an artist of the later period whose work was of incomparable power and majesty. What were the causes, he wanted to know, of Tintoretto’s greatness? And what, furthermore, accounted for his shortcomings? In the course of answering those questions he was led “into what else I have traced or told of the laws of national strength and virtue.” In other words, it was through Tintoretto that Ruskin came to his conviction that works of art express much more than the taste and enthusiasms of the artist: that they speak for the society in which they originate and, consciously or unconsciously, communicate its values and concerns.

That it is now commonplace to place Tintoretto with Titian and Veronese as one of the masters of Cinquecento Venice is largely due to Ruskin’s praise of him. Yet what the great Victorian had to say of him is relatively little known. The Scuola di San Rocco itself has now sought to rectify that. This collection of Ruskin’s writings on Tintoretto, published by the Scuola, has been edited by Professor Emma Sdegno of Ca’ Foscari University in Venice. She has assembled everything Ruskin says about Tintoretto’s pictures in the alphabetical index of Venetian buildings, which concludes the third volume of *The Stones of Venice* (1853). She has also added most of the comments on Tintoretto in other books of Ruskin’s. It is worth noting here that the entry on the Scuola di San Rocco in the “Venetian Index” includes a critical description of nearly every one of its sixty-two Tintoretto canvases. Thanks to the alphabetical convention of the Index, this selection can be used as a guide-book.

Professor Sdegno is not only a *consorella* of the Scuola. She is also a Companion of the Guild of St George, the utopian body founded by Ruskin in 1871, its purpose to revive a healthy rural economy and encourage fine art and craftsmanship. Ruskin has relatively little to say about the Venetian *scuole*, which were no longer active during his lifetime. It is nevertheless clear that he admired them as typifying the religious and social virtues he praised in *The Stones of Venice*: charitable institutions through which comfortable citizens of Venice were enabled to carry out their Christian duties towards their less-fortunate neighbours. Those duties are reflected in the subjects of Tintoretto’s

pictures, which thus unite a concern for ethical behaviour, religious devotion and the moral force of art.

Around the time when Ruskin founded the Guild he had been studying Carpaccio’s painting of St George slaying the dragon in the Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni and he presented his detailed copy of the painting to the small museum he created for the Guild in industrial Sheffield, his aim being to bring beauty into the lives of working men oppressed by industrialisation. St George, who represents the force of civilised values against the destructiveness of greed, is both the patron saint of England and a figure fundamental to Venetian culture. It is probable that the name Guild of St George came to Ruskin as a translation of “Scuola di San Giorgio.”

Providing copies of such pictures as the Carpaccio was an important part of the Guild’s endeavour. For Ruskin, to copy a picture was to understand it more deeply, but it also provided him with the means of communicating the virtues of Italian art to people who would never be able to visit Venice – the metalworkers of Sheffield, for instance, whose sensitivity to beauty was apparent in their world-famous cutlery. He also made copies of Tintoretto, now kept by the Ruskin Library in Lancaster, and commissioned younger artists to make more finished versions for the Sheffield museum. The present volume includes examples of this work, both Ruskin’s own studies – his details from Tintoretto’s *Crucifixion* and his *Adoration of the Magi* – and copies by a young Italian he met in Venice, Angelo Alessandri (1854-?1937), who proved to be especially sympathetic to Tintoretto and his manner. Alessandri’s copies are all still held in the Sheffield collection.

There is therefore something wonderfully appropriate in the decision of the Scuola di San Rocco and its Guardian Grando, architetto Franco Posocco, to publish this selection of Ruskin’s writings on Tintoretto as we approach the year 2019, the quincentenary of Tintoretto’s birth and the bicentenary of Ruskin’s. The Guild, like the Scuola San Rocco, is alive and well today. Its purpose is to apply Ruskin’s visionary teaching, without anachronism, to modern life. In this we look to the *confratelli* and *consorelle* of the Scuola as *our* brothers and sisters and welcome the recognition given to Ruskin’s work by the people of the city that inspired him.

CLIVE WILMER

Master of the Guild of St George

EDITOR'S NOTE

Ruskin's most important writings on Tintoretto are to be found scattered through three of his published works: volume II of *Modern Painters* (1846), in particular in the chapter "Of Imagination Penetrative", "A Venetian Index", which appeared in volume III of the *Stones of Venice* (1853), and the Oxford lecture "On the Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret" (1872). All of these enjoyed great popularity at the time they were published, and added significantly to the English public's knowledge of Tintoretto's painting. Since the early 1900s, however, they have for the most part circulated only in the form of brief extracts which have offered limited and impoverished access to this important body of critical thinking.

This edition offers readers and visitors Ruskin's major writings on Tintoretto organised in guidebook form. This is the form he himself used for the "Venetian Index" which constitutes the backbone of this volume. All the "Index" entries on Tintoretto's paintings and the buildings in which they are found are reproduced herewith Ruskin's title. Passages of architectural description, which do not occur systematically and are heavily influenced by Ruskin's anti-Renaissance prejudices, have been omitted, as have somewhat random entries on other painters. The central focus of the "Venetian Index" is on Tintoretto, and this edition aims to stay true to this intention, reinforcing it by inserting descriptions taken from *Modern Painters* II of five paintings in the Scuola di San Rocco—the *Annunciation*, the *Baptism*, the *Massacre of the Innocents* and the *Crucifixion*—and of the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* and the *Last Judgement* in the church of the Madonna dell'Orto. The "Venetian Index" passage on the *Paradise* in the Ducal Palace also complemented is one from Ruskin's 1872 lecture "On the Relation between Michael Angelo and Tintoret".

In extracting from *Modern Painters* II I have, of course, deprived the reader of a sense of the large context, namely Ruskin's discussion of the work of the imagination, which the descriptions of the paintings are intended to illustrate, but my Introduction to this volume attempts to make up for this loss. The insertions complete the "Venetian Index," while juxtaposition of passages from *Modern Painters* brings to light evident reinterpretations and changes of emphasis, as the two different types of text reveal different aspects of Ruskin's interest in Tintoretto, aspects which are expressed in correspondingly different styles.

Each extract is followed by the volume number of the 39-volume Library

Edition of *The Works of John Ruskin* edited by E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (1903-12): thus "IV" refers to *Modern Painters* II; "XI" to the *Stones of Venice* III; "XXII" to the 1872 lecture. Editorial footnotes, when reported from the Library Edition, are identified as [LE].

All references to and quotations from Ruskin's published works in my Introduction are identified in brackets in the text by volume and page number of the Library Edition. The Appendices contain three letters written by Ruskin to his father, John James Ruskin, from Venice in 1845, and the text of a manuscript notebook in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York (MA 394), which is undated but most probably of 1845, and which is here published in its entirety for the first time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For its generous support for the publication of this volume my first and warmest thanks go to the Arciconfraternita della Scuola Grande di San Rocco, and in particular to the Guardian Grando, Franco Posocco, who from the start believed in the project, to Irene Favaretto for all her warm-hearted competent advice, to M. Agnese Chiari Moretto Wiel for her precious help, and to the members of the Cancellaria. Many thanks also to Thomas Callegaro and Enrico Zane for their precision and solicitude, and to Padre Vittorio Buset for artistic and spiritual assistance. Of special value has been the long-lasting friendship of Clive Wilmer, Master of the Guild of St George, and of Stuart Eagles, until recently the Guild's exemplary secretary. For promptly supplying archive material and replying to queries over the years, I am grateful to Stephen Wildman, former Director of the Ruskin Library at Lancaster University, as well as to Jan Shepherd and Diane Tyler; to Louise Pullen, Curator of the Ruskin Collection, Museums Sheffield; and to Vicky Slowe of the Ruskin Museum, Coniston. To Geraldine Ludbrook I am indebted for her generous help with translation, and to Jeanne Clegg for carefully reading a draft of my introductory essay. Heartfelt thanks also to Jeanne, and to Paul Tucker, for their ground-breaking and enduring work and for their scholarly enthusiasm in sharing it; to James Dearden, Anna Laura Lepschy, Sarah Quill, Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, André Hélard, and Kate Genever for their own distinctive insights into Ruskin's work on Venice. Many thanks to the Marsilio staff for their highly professional caring work. In echoing the title of John Unrau's *Looking at Architecture with Ruskin*, my own title is meant to pay tribute to his work, and to the sympathetic friendship of both John and Linda. All my loving gratitude to Michele and to our daughters, Sofia and Emilia, who have given up asking when I will stop studying Ruskin.



[VENICE.] WEDNESDAY [24 SEPT.].

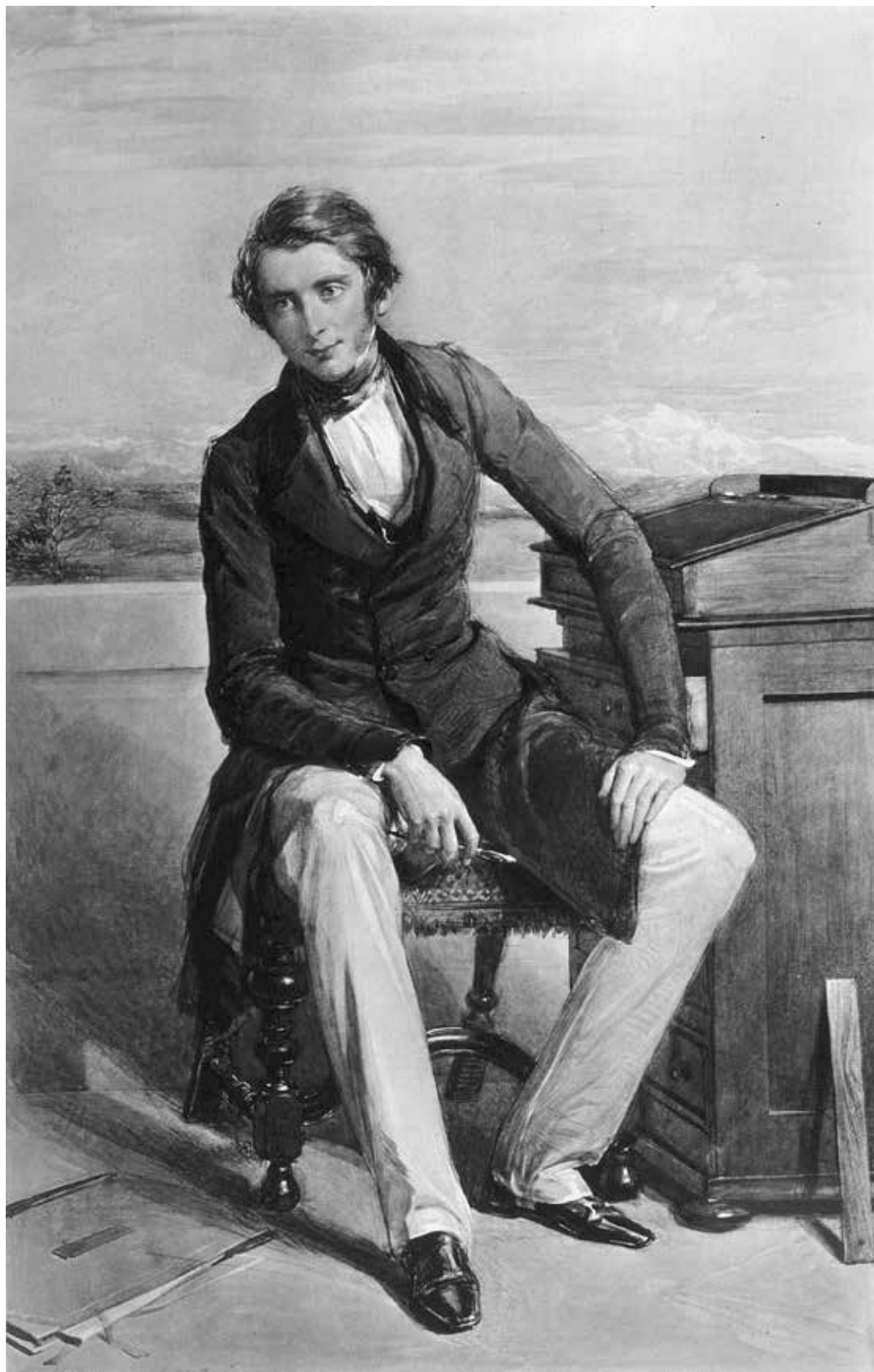
My dearest Father,

I have had a draught of pictures today enough to drown me. I never was so utterly crushed to the earth before any human intellect as I was today, before Tintoret. Just be so good as to take my list of painters, & put him in the school of Art at the top, top, top of everything, with a great big black line underneath him to stop him off from everybody—and put him in the school of Intellect, next after Michael Angelo. He took it so entirely out of me today that I could do nothing at last but lie on a bench & laugh. Harding said that if he had been a figure painter, he never could have touched a brush again, and that he felt more like a flogged schoolboy than a man—and no wonder. Tintoret don't seem to be able to stretch himself until you give him a canvas forty feet square—and then, he lashes out like a leviathan, and heaven and earth come together. M Angelo himself cannot hurl figures into space as he does, nor did M Angelo ever paint space itself which would not look like a nutshell beside Tintoret's. Just imagine the audacity of the fellow—in his massacre of the innocents one of the mothers has hurled herself off a terrace to avoid the executioner & is falling headforemost & backwards, holding up the child still. And such a resurrection as there is—the rocks of the sepulchre crashed all to pieces & roaring down upon you, while the Christ soars forth into a torrent of angels, whirled up into heaven until you are lost ten times over. And then to see his touch of quiet thought in his awful crucifixion—there is an ass in the distance, feeding on the remains of strewed palm leaves. If that isn't a master's stroke, I don't know what is. As for painting, I think

I didn't know what it meant till today—the fellow outlines you your figure with ten strokes, and colours it with as many more. I don't believe it took him ten minutes to invent & paint a whole length. Away he goes, heaping host on host, multitudes that no man can number—never pausing, never repeating himself—clouds & whirlwinds & fire & infinity of earth & sea, all alike to him—and then the noble fellow has put in Titian, on horseback, on one side of his great pictures, and himself at the other, but he has made Titian principal. This is the way great men are with each other—no jealousy there. I am going to calculate the number of feet square he has covered with his mind in Venice. There are more than 4000 square feet in three of his pictures, & I have seen about 60, large & small—no, many more it must be, but I am afraid to say how many. I'm going back today—Thursday, 24th (or 25th)—to set to work on them in earnest, one by one. . . .

Eve[r m]y dearest Father,
Your most affe Son
J Ruskin

Harold Shapiro (ed.), *Ruskin in Italy. Letters to His Parents 1845*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, pp. 211-13, Letter 132



George Richmond
Portrait
of John Ruskin, 1843

NO MERE EARTHLY PAINTER: TINTORETTO AND THE SCUOLA GRANDE DI SAN ROCCO

EMMA SDEGNO

1. “Not even Venice will keep me longer than is absolutely necessary”¹

By dating his discovery of the work of Tintoretto to a specific day in September 1845, John Ruskin gave his first meeting with the painter the quality of a cultural and personal myth. The account given in letters written at the time describes the experience in hyperbolic terms; recollecting it in his late Epilogue to *Modern Painters II* (1883) and autobiography *Praeterita* (1885) (*infra*, pp. 165–66), Ruskin was to dedicate to it a few laconic phrases, reducing the discovery to a “fatal deviation” from the safer study of landscape painting. How can we, as readers and viewers, make sense of such discordant evaluations of the importance of Tintoretto in Ruskin’s life and work?

Ruskin was born on 8th February 1819 into a middle-class family of Scottish origins. His father, a sherry importer, had a passion for English literature and art, while his Presbyterian mother instilled into him a strict religious faith that was to serve as the lens through which he interpreted Italian art until well into adulthood. In 1845, aged 26, Ruskin set out on his fourth tour of the continent, his first without his parents, on which he was accompanied by his servant George Hobbs and by his faithful Chamonix guide, Joseph Couttet, to whose care he was entrusted. The tour which lasted seven months—from April to October 1845—brought many dramatic and exciting discoveries in Italian art. It had been undertaken with the purpose of deepening his knowledge of the representation of landscape in the works of the “Old Masters”. In the course of the journey these plans were disrupted by very real revelations: first that of the spiritual or “purist” art of Fra Angelico and the early Tuscans, then, at the end, by the encounter with Tintoretto. Our knowledge of this last we owe to a variety of sources: the almost daily correspondence with his parents that in this period took the place of the diary he usually kept;² two volumes of notebooks which have been recently published under the title of “*Résumé*” of *Italian Art and Architecture* (1845),³ and nine pages of another notebook now published in the Appendix to this volume,⁴ and a set of other notes that were to be included in *Modern Painters II* (1846) and of which this volume gives the extracts relating to Tintoretto.

Ruskin had one mission during this visit to Italy: to complete what was meant

to be a great work on landscape painting, a first volume of which he had published anonymously in 1843 with the title *Modern Painters, Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to All the Ancient Masters, Proved by Examples of the True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual from the Works of Modern Artists, Especially from Those of J. M. W. Turner*. As the subtitle declared, his study of the representation of landscape by the Italian “Old Masters” was meant to show it to be stereotypical, and thus far surpassed by that of modern artists. But as Ruskin scrutinized paintings, architecture and sculpture, measuring, comparing and drawing in his notebooks, he came to immerse himself in Italian art with a passion, open-mindedness and readiness to question his assumptions that would characterize his critical approach throughout his life. His studies now led him to reverse his initial judgement, abandon his belief in the superiority of the moderns over the ancients, and remove the subtitle from the four volumes of *Modern Painters* that were to appear between 1846 and 1860. After the tour of 1845 the fundamental thesis running through this monumental treatise on modern painting was to be no longer the superiority of the moderns over the ancients, but a critical investigation of the category of modernity itself, an enquiry undertaken through wide-ranging and detailed scrutiny of art works, customs and institutions.

The 1845 tour was a turning point for Ruskin, an experience of aesthetic initiation and maturation of which each stage brought revelation. As he travelled down into Italy through Geneva and along the Tyrrhenian coast, stopping at Genova, Sestri, Lucca, Pisa, Pistoia, Florence, Bologna, Parma, Pavia, Milan and Como, he constantly informed his father of his discoveries of painters, repeatedly drawing up hierarchies of excellence which he would then modify. In Parma in July he was to list artists and schools of painting with in first place the “School of Love”, comprising Fra Angelico, Pinturicchio, Giovanni Bellini and Simone Memmi; in second place came the “Great School of Intellect”, with Michelangelo, Giotto, Orcagna, Benozzo Gozzoli, Leonardo, Ghirlandaio and Masaccio; in third place he put “the School of *Painting* as such”, with Tintoretto only in seventh position, below Titian, Giorgione, Giovanni Bellini, Masaccio, Ghirlandaio, and Paolo Veronese, though above Van Eyck, Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velasquez.⁵ The journey continued, with Ruskin passing the torrid summer months in Val d’Ossola, Macugnaga, Domodossola, Airolo and Faido. At the end of August he reached Lake Maggiore, where he was joined by the painter and water-colourist, J.D. Harding; Harding was Ruskin’s last drawing master, and had brought him nearer to Turner.⁶ Together they visited and made studies of scenes in Baveno, Desenzano and

Verona, and finally, on 10th September, arrived in Venice. Quite unexpectedly, Venice was to prove the apex of Ruskin’s whole tour.

During the journey Ruskin had carried with him and followed the itinerary suggested by the first edition of Murray’s *Hand Book for Travellers in Northern Italy* (1842), to a later edition of which he was to make significant contributions.⁷ With these guidebooks came printed forms on which travellers were invited to check entries and send in comments. Recently published correspondence has revealed the wealth of information, the careful comments, advice and criticism Ruskin sent to Murray.⁸ Travelling thus gave him opportunities to reflect on the usefulness and accessibility of his discoveries to his contemporaries. Communication was an important aspect of his 1845 tour, as emerges from all the writings that describe it, and as was to be a feature he would keep constantly in mind and experiment with in all his writings, and especially in the guidebooks of his later years, namely *Mornings in Florence* (1875), *Guide to the Principal Pictures in The Academy of Fine Arts At Venice* (1877), *St Mark’s Rest* (1877-84).

Ruskin’s aesthetic views were formed in the early 1840s through some reading and through conversations with artist friends such as John Severn, George Richmond and his brother Tom. A disciple of Blake in the early 1840s, George Richmond had introduced him to Venetian colourists, but also probably to the Tuscan primitives.⁹ The development of these interests’ preference was also indebted to Catholic Francis-Alexis Rio’s *De la Poésie chrétienne dans son principe, dans sa matière, et dans ses formes* (1836), a book that is pointed to as having done much to foster his interest in medieval art.¹⁰

Ruskin’s sojourn in Venice was initially planned to be a short one. From Baveno on August 24th he had written to his mother that he was reluctant to go at all: “only four weeks more you know, after you receive this, & I assure you it will not be longer than I can help. I’ve done some good to art already, and hope to do a great deal more”.¹¹ In this letter he refers again to the Tuscan primitives: the “sweet writing” of Simone Memmi in the Campo Santo in Pisa, his favourite Fra Angelicos “[looking] down from the walls like visions” in the cloister of the Convent of Saint Mark’s, and the “sweet, living, laughing, holy children” of Mino da Fiesole. There he had practised so hard that he could now draw “very nearly like an architect,” and “had a try at Angelico, <with > the most refined drawing of which the human hand is capable”.¹² The letter closes with an assurance that he would be home in four weeks: “not even Venice will keep me longer than is absolutely necessary—& then I hope I shall write a very nice book and one that I needn’t be ashamed of”.¹³ In

actual fact, it would be ten weeks before he returned, his notebooks crammed with notes and sketches after Venetian paintings that even shortly before he had never imagined he would collect.

If the high point of his stay in Venice was to be the meeting with Tintoretto as reported in his letters to his father (*infra*, pp. 18-19, 160-61), we should note that Ruskin first went through a long phase of gradual “acclimatization” that would lead him to reverse the opinions he expressed on first arriving in the city. No sooner had he arrived at the Hotel Europa than, in a letter of 10th September, he noted his bitter disappointment at finding “the whole open sea” and “half the city” cut off by “the Greenwich railway”, and that he had been struck by the “fearful dilapidation” of palaces “mouldering down as if they were all leaves & autumn had come suddenly”.¹⁴ Lamentations on the state of abandonment of the city and on the savage restoration in progress—“Few boats about—all deathlike & quiet, save for the scaffolding & plastering”—are followed by a reluctant declaration of surrender to the city’s beauty, expressed in the recurrent oxymoronic form that took shape with Byron and the Romantics,¹⁵ and would later characterize Venice in the Decadent imagination:

What makes me sadder is, that the divine beauty of the yet uninjured passage about the Salute & Piazzetta has struck me more intensely than ever. I have been standing (but the moment before I began this letter) on the steps at the door—the water is not even plashing in the moonlight, there is not even a star twinkling, it is as still as if Venice were beneath the sea, but beautiful beyond all thought.¹⁶

The beauty of Venice here both saddens and attracts Ruskin, impeding his return home. In subsequent letters he records, almost daily, the deterioration of its palaces, of Ca’ Foscari, the Ducal Palace, St Mark’s Basilica. The letters form a catalogue of the ruins of the city, which Ruskin claims to prefer at night when “the grand Canal looks like itself, neither decay visible nor repair”.¹⁷ Up to this point his attention had been focused on the city and its buildings; only from 20th September on would he begin to speak of painters, and then only of Giovanni and Gentile Bellini. If on the one hand he seems to have thought he had little more to learn about painting, he now begins to show a more benevolent attitude towards the city itself: he had come across beautiful churches on the islands in the lagoon, and finds the Venetians “far superior to the rest of the Italians, as far as one can judge of them from external appearances & expression of feature—they are more amiable and more busy [...]”.¹⁸ Although Venice had

fascinated Ruskin during his visit of 1841, as Jeanne Clegg observes, the city is represented in his diary of the time as Turner’s Venice: a landscape of “light and colour and monumental outlines” whose details were “beautiful and strange”.¹⁹ Now, in 1845, this place of dreams, “out of time, out of this world” exerts its seductive powers to generate a new sense of responsibility.²⁰ “I am sorry that you are expecting me to leave Venice so soon,” he wrote to his mother, “& far more sorry that I cannot do so—be assured it is misery to me to stop here, but every hour is destructive of what I most value, and I must do what I can to save a little”.²¹ The following letter, written on the morning of 23rd September, tells of the sense of frustration felt the day before while drawing the Ca’ d’Oro “while the workmen were hammering it down before my face”, and adds: “[t]he beauty of the fragments left is beyond all I conceived, & just as I am becoming able to appreciate it, & able to do something that would have kept record of it, to have it destroyed before my face”.²²



John Ruskin
Sails from Fishing Boats
Venice, 1845, RFRL



Ruskin's attention was for the moment focused mainly on architecture, the fragmented ruins of unimaginable beauty to which he would later dedicate *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones of Venice* (1852-53), books written in part from notes taken during this stay of 1845. Then, on the evening of 23rd September he wrote to tell his father of his first visit to the Scuola di San Rocco:

I have been quite overwhelmed today by a man whom I never dreamed of—Tintoret. I always thought him a good & clever & forcible painter, but I had not the smallest notion of his enormous power.²³

The next day he wrote of Tintoretto in the terms cited in the epigraph to this Introduction. The passage represents an abrupt volte-face on the part of one who, only three months earlier, had placed Tintoretto in the third class of painters, the "School of *Painting* as such", setting him below Titian, Giorgione, Giovanni Bellini, Masaccio, Ghirlandaio and Veronese.

What dominates the account of his encounter with Tintoretto written in the heat of the moment is Ruskin's impression of the artist's superhuman power. Both the state of decay of Venetian palaces and of the Scuola di San Rocco, and Tintoretto's "enormous power," are described vividly in a letter to his painter friend, Joseph Severn, written just after visiting San Rocco. Ruskin expresses his concern over the city's state of decay and that of the Scuola, and

John Ruskin
Ca' d'Oro,
September 1845, RFRL



the neglect of both by the institutions; he then re-evokes his encounter with Tintoretto, before whom modern painters fade into near insignificance:

I have been perfectly prostrated these two or three days back by my first acquaintance with Tintoret; but then I feel as if I had got introduced to a being from a planet a million of miles nearer the sun, not to a mere earthly painter. As for our little bits of RA's, calling themselves painters, it ought to stop directly. One might make a mosaic of RA's, perhaps; with a good magnifying glass, big enough for Tintoret to stand with one leg upon if he balanced himself like a gondolier (iv. 394).

In Ruskin's personal querelle between ancients and moderns, his discovery of Tintoretto was to mark a crucial moment, a turning point in his attitude. As he wrote to his father on 10th October,

I have been quite upset in all my calculations by that rascal Tintoret—he has shown me some totally new fields of art and altered my feelings in many respects—or at least deepened and modified them—and I shall work differently, after seeing him, from my former method. I can't see enough of him, and the more I look the more wonderful he becomes.²⁴

It also marks the birth of a new attitude towards drawing. Consciousness of being "last recorder of a doomed beauty" led him to mentally analyse and

John Ruskin
Moonlight
from the Lagoon, Venice,
1849, RFRL



Charles Fairfax Murray
Study of Bacchus
& Ariadne (DPV), RMC

Charles Fairfax Murray
Study of Mercury
and the Graces (DPV), RMC

focus meticulously on the decorative fragments of the buildings.²⁵ He also copied some details of the Tintoretto that struck him most strongly on his first visit to San Rocco: the central section of the *Crucifixion*, and a beautiful particular from the *Adoration of the Magi*, a painting that so fascinated him that in 1852 he was to make two more copies of details. In 1849-50 he also made a superb study of the upper portion of the Academy's *Miracle of the Slave*, a drawing that, together with San Rocco's *St Mary of Egypt*,²⁶ particularly reveals Ruskin's deep interest in Tintoretto's landscape. As I shall describe below, in the course of the years that followed, Ruskin was to commission numerous other studies from young painters. The letters to his father tell how Tintoretto had taught him *how* to draw; *what* happens to the painter as he penetrates his subject; what happens to the viewer as he or she confronts the work, all issues discussed in the chapter in *Modern Painters* II which treats "Of Imagination Penetrative," the chapter which Ruskin, writing under the impulse of his discovery, devoted wholly to Tintoretto.

**2. "A huge, obscure, endless cave of inexhaustible treasures":
The Imagination Penetrative in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco**

The impact Tintoretto made on Ruskin's work is evident in the change of style and direction taken in his researches after 1845: a comparison between the first volume of *Modern Painters* (1843) and the second, partly written after his sojourn in Venice, shows the shift away from a dominant interest in landscape painting towards the religious painting of the Ancient Masters.²⁷ Paul Tucker has recently pointed out that the foundations of Ruskin's study of religious painting had already been well established by the time the first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared, but nonetheless acknowledges that

The experience of Tintoretto at Venice does seem to have lifted Ruskin's discussion of beauty onto a new plane and perhaps prompted a (further) rethinking of the categories [...]. From a 'popular' and 'inexact' faculty motivated by affect rather than intellect, the Imagination seems to have been transformed into an organ of prophecy, generative of the Sublime.²⁸

Tucker sees in close study of Ruskin's manuscripts a means to understanding to what extent the conception of the imagination expounded in the second volume of *Modern Painters* can be directly linked to the 1845 tour.²⁹ This is



not the place for such an enquiry; I would merely note that the thirty pages that make up the manuscript of the chapter “Of Imagination Penetrative” do indeed seem to provide cues to the whirlwind effect of Tintoretto.³⁰ In this central chapter of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin develops a theory of the imagination which makes Tintoretto its master, and takes all its examples from among the paintings in the Scuola di San Rocco. It is a section of the book written in a vigorously graphic style unusual in Ruskin: the page literally explodes with thoughts that in turn give rise to other thoughts, requiring additional tongues of paper to be stuck onto the edges with sealing wax in order to make space for and capture the spate of ideas generated by his meeting with Tintoretto. It is a much re-worked text made up of variously coloured pages, notes evidently taken at different times and then collated together, whereas the descriptions of Tintoretto’s paintings are all on the same yellowish paper.

The long opening section of the chapter, in which Ruskin sets out the characteristics of the Imagination Penetrative, draws its theory from Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*, but he expands and re-shapes it seeing the artist as a prophet-like figure. Drawing from a Patristic medieval tradition common to Evangelical Protestantism, Ruskin sees the artist as the interpreter of the Scriptures who has an active role in his relationship with the sacred Text. The Scriptures must be read in the same spirit as that had inspired it, and this unique faithfulness of inspiration is now attributed by Ruskin to Tintoretto. In this section we come upon additions and deletions which are homogeneous and consistent. The chapter begins with literary references, while insertions presumably added later consist of examples taken from Tintoretto. One important addition concerns the prophetic power of the imagination, which is represented by metaphors of depth:

John Ruskin
Study of **The Crucifixion**
(SGSR), detail, 1845, RFRL

its function and gift are the getting at the root, its nature and dignity depend on its holding things always by the heart. Take its hand from off the beating of that, and it will prophesy no longer; it looks not in the eyes, it judges not by the voice, it describes not by outward features; all that it affirms, judges, or describes, it affirms, from within (iv. 251).

The depth metaphor is then developed and amplified through another topos, that of creativity: “Vials that have lain sealed in the deep sea a thousand years it unseals, and brings out of them Genii” (iv. 251). This image then calls up that of an open, endless treasure cave, into which one enters through an invisible door in the rock, another echo of the *Arabian Nights*:

It is the Open Sesame of a huge, obscure, endless cave, with inexhaustible treasure of pure gold scattered in it; the wandering about and gathering the pieces may be left to any of us, all can accomplish that; but the first opening of that invisible door in the rock is of the imagination only (iv. 252).

Considering Ruskin’s letters to his father, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the dark cave that gradually reveals its treasures as the eye becomes accustomed to the darkness, is a reference to the Scuola di San Rocco, to the treasure chest whose obscurity Ruskin and other contemporary travelers had described.³¹ The “door” of the imagination through which the painter passes to access the visions of Sacred Scripture may therefore correspond to the main door of the Scuola di San Rocco which opens up to the reader/visitor the endless obscurity in which gold is “scattered all around”. Thus obscurity is a necessary mark of Imagination Penetrative, and the very building of the Scuola di San Rocco with its paintings appears to be a physical embodiment of it, say, the camera obscura of Tintoretto’s mind that the viewer himself can penetrate and explore.

The key concept on which Ruskin bases his theory of the Imagination Penetrative is “suggestiveness”, the power to suggest and evoke. This is the capacity to illuminate proper to the artist and the critic. The artist, in a flash of inspiration, seizes the truth of the sacred episode in all its literal detail, while the critic reconstructs the form of the artist’s original vision, working the meaning of the painting out of its ‘dark side’ by restoring all the connectives that the painter, under the pressure of transient visionary inspiration, had had to



leave aside.³² Grounding his readings on his rigorous Protestant knowledge of the Holy word read through the lens of Evangelical biblical typology,³³ Ruskin gives the word “suggestiveness” “authority and inevitability” (iv. 261).

The darkness of the space in which a painting is placed is thus read as part of the composition itself, and chiaroscuro becomes an essential element in Tintoretto’s spiritual language. Ruskin praises in particular the painter’s ability to render all the dramatic force of an episode yet avoid representations of brutality, achieving suggestiveness by foregrounding minor details, such as the ass of *Crucifixion*, or through chiaroscuro, as in the *Massacre of the Innocents*. Another feature of Tintoretto’s suggestiveness is his use of a unique pictorial language which draws extensively on a humble register. This is a feature that Protestant Ruskin praises in the chapter on the Imagination Penetrative and which he would take up again in the “Venetian Index”. Noting the innovative nature of Tintoretto’s attention to the poor, the shattered, the abandoned, Ruskin sees this as manifestation of literal faithfulness to the Word of the Gospel and to the function of the building hosting his work: the charitable institution that is the Scuola Grande di San Rocco. In this Ruskin stresses something the seventeenth-century critic Marco Boschini had noticed with particular reference to Tintoretto’s San Rocco *Last Supper* in his *La carta del navegar pitoresco* (1660),³⁴ and which Tom Nichols has recently called Tintoretto’s “iconography of poverty”: “Tintoretto’s ‘positive’ representation of

John Ruskin
Study of **The Adoration
of the Magi** (SGSR), ‘Magi
and Cherubs’, 1852, RFRL



the outcast sick is not comparable with those of any Venetian painter of the period”.³⁵ Ever since De Tolnay, scholars have considered the *Biblia Pauperum* to be Tintoretto’s preferred text of reference.³⁶ Ruskin recognized immediately that the role played in Tintoretto’s paintings by beggars, the poor, the lame, the common people is no marginal role; at times they are placed in the foreground even with respect to Christ, as in the *Last Supper* in the Church of San Polo as well as in that of the Scuola di San Rocco. Writing of the *Annunciation* and also of the *Adoration of the Magi*, Ruskin bases his interpretation on the Evangelical value of the poverty of Christ. He also discerns the values of humility and poverty in the care with which Tintoretto painted the lowly animals, such as the two doves at the bottom of *Adoration of the Magi*. As for the beauty of the donkey in *Flight into Egypt*: “One of the principal figures here is the donkey. I have never seen any of the nobler animals’ lion, or leopard, or dragon—made so sublime as this quiet head of the domestic ass, chiefly owing to the grand motion in the nostril and writhing in the ears” (xi. 406); and the central position of the donkey in the background of the San Rocco *Crucifixion* is a true typological “master-stroke” (*infra*, p. 142).

The Imagination Penetrative also takes on prophetic value through references to the sacred texts that Ruskin sees as being Tintoretto’s starting point, as well as through the verses of the Psalms that he weaves – often seamlessly – into the body of his text. The Library Edition of the *Works* calls attention to these ech-

John Ruskin
Study of **The Adoration
of the Magi** (SGSR), detail,
1845, RFRL



oes in footnotes, which this volume reprints and supplements with additional references which will provide the English reader with a familiar context, adding the echoes and suggestions of sacred music and song. Verses from the Psalms are by no means rare in his descriptions: through them the collective voice of the psalmist that had rung in the ears of the artist during the creative act reaches viewers as they contemplate his work. These occurrences are not therefore to be taken as mere references or quotations, but rather as invitations to participate in the prophetic act. The passage on the *Annunciation* is a prime example. Using the contrastive formula that constitutes the structural principle of the first two volumes of *Modern Painters*, Ruskin compares Fra Angelico's painting – which had struck him so forcibly and which he had copied only a few weeks earlier in Florence – to Tintoretto's version, which places the scene in the vestibule of a ruined palace in the midst of a busy, noisy Venice. Each version is associated with a Psalm which acts as complement to it and amplifies its features: the simplicity and sweetness of Psalm 23 for the Fra Angelico version, the lively and vigorous Psalm 118 for Tintoretto's.

The complex rhetorical construction of the “Imagination Penetrative” chapter of *Modern Painters*, of which the extracts inserted into the text of this volume give us glimpses, is made clearer by comparison with the texts taken from the Notebook (see Appendix 2). These include Ruskin's notes – probably taken in 1845 –³⁷ on Tintoretto's *Paradise* in the Ducal Palace and on the *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple* and the *Last Judgement* in the Church

John Ruskin
 Study of **The Adoration**
of the Magi (SGSR, 1852,
 RFRL

of Madonna dell'Orto, recording first impressions of paintings he would develop further in the chapter “On the Imagination Penetrative”. The example of the *Last Judgement* in the Church of Santa Maria dell'Orto is of particular importance. The Notebook already records the features that characterize the work for Ruskin: the Dantean reference to Charon's ferry, the force of the painting, its whirlwind, agitated movement, the visual impressions it conveys. But in *Modern Painters* these features are emphasized, rendering the description more evocative and less detailed, and thus foregrounding the “suggestiveness” (a word not yet used in the Notebook) manifest in the power that transforms and gives vigour to Dante's rendering of the episode, modifying it with the force of the imagination. Whereas in the Notebook Ruskin identifies the significant elements of the painting – the awakening of the souls, the lapse of time between death and damnation/salvation – in *Modern Painters* he focuses on the act of reawakening, that instant when the bodies are between death and waking, when the bones recompose themselves and the bodies rise up. Both texts highlight the carnality and the sacredness of the body, which are depicted not only through anatomical description but also in the tumult of the scene, in the vision of the mystical body of Paradise: “currents of atom life in the arteries of heaven” (*infra*, p. 88). Finally, the *Modern Painters* passage defines the “locality” as Venetian. While the Notebook identifies the river of God's wrath in the middle ground, in *Modern Painters* the waters are those of the ocean. The reader is thus transported to a scene of Venetian apocalypse. Tintoretto's last judgement is a seascape of deluge unleashed, the seaweed of the lagoon “appearing here and there like swimmers in a weedy sea – hardly seen among the knotted grass of the foreground” (*infra*, p. 164). Ruskin thus captures Tintoretto's renewal of the Bible story: revelation is rooted in the present, invested with the voice of prophecy in the simplicity of everyday life, no less than it is in his *Annunciation*, the *Baptism* and the *Last Supper*.

3. Turner, “the old fox”

One influence – undeclared but nonetheless important – seems to have brought Ruskin to the doors of San Rocco. In his letter of 11th October, Ruskin triumphantly tells his father how he had found signs of Turner having stood before Tintoretto's paintings:

I find the “old fox” as Harding calls Turner, has got more out of Tintoretto's poultry yard than everybody else's put together. I find he has



been nibbling at him all over—in fact Tintoret is the only man whom I could <say> be certain Turner has studied with devotion. Usually I trace Turner in nature only, but I have caught him at the feet of Gamaliel at last.³⁸

Here Ruskin defines Tintoretto as Turner's first teacher, as Gamaliel was for Paul the Apostle. This is one of many references in his works to links between the two painters. In the letter he refers to this paternity as if to a discovery; it is as if he had been seeking proof of it in clues, suggestions, hints. Tim Hilton believes that Turner and Ruskin had frequent meetings in the winter of 1844-45 and that these meetings played an important role in the Italian journey on which Ruskin was about to embark. Although we cannot know for sure what the two discussed, Hilton claims they must have talked about the places and works the young man would be visiting.³⁹ And it is well known that during this tour Ruskin took inspiration from the drawing techniques Turner had employed in his *Liber Studiorum*.⁴⁰

Turner's admiration for Tintoretto has been studied by Ian Warrell, who in 2003 drew attention to outline renderings of San Rocco paintings in the 1819 *Route to Rome* sketchbook, and especially those of the *Crucifixion* in the Sala dell'Albergo.⁴¹ It has recently been confirmed that twenty-one of the drawings in Turner's *Route to Rome* sketchbook are from works by Tintoretto, eighteen of them in the Scuola.⁴² This identification provides further indications about those conversations between Ruskin and Turner just before the former's Italian journey of 1845. During his own tour of 1819, Turner had shown more

John Ruskin
Study of **Miracle of St Mark** (GAV), 1849-50, RMC

John Ruskin, attr.
Study of **St Mary of Egypt**, (SGSR), RMC



J.W.M. Turner
Sketch of **The Crucifixion** (SGSR), 1819, TATE

J.W.M. Turner
Sketch of **Massacre of the Innocents** (SGSR), 1819, TATE



interest in Tintoretto, and especially his use of colour and chiaroscuro, than he had in any other artist.⁴³ His sketchbook bears outline renderings which are not always easy to identify but which almost certainly refer to the paintings Ruskin focused on most: the *Annunciation*; the *Adoration of the Magi*; the *Flight into Egypt*; the *Pool of Bethesda*; the *Circumcision*; the *Assumption of the Virgin*; the *Massacre of the Innocents*; *Christ before Pilate*; the *Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes*; the *Brazen Serpent*; *Moses Striking the Rock* or *Jonah and the Whale's Belly*; the *Gathering of the Manna*; *Elijah Fed by the Angel*.⁴⁴

It therefore seems highly likely that, in typically cryptic manner, Turner was here alluding to the Scuola di San Rocco and to Tintoretto, leaving a trail that Ruskin would follow and find to be important. In other words, the “discovery” of Tintoretto can be traced back to more or less explicit directions given by Turner, a hypothesis supported by the numerous comparisons that were to feature in the “Venetian Index”.

4. The “Venetian Index”: a Tintoretto Itinerary

In 1853, seven years after Ruskin's visit to San Rocco, there appeared the third and final volume of *The Stones of Venice*. The volume book ended with ten appendices, followed by four indices – a “Personal Index,” a “Local Index,” a Topical Index, and lastly a “Venetian Index”.⁴⁵ The seemingly marginal position of the latter and its ancillary relationship to the *Stones*, has contributed to its general neglect, and its being omitted from the various Travellers' Editions of *The Stones of Venice*, and consequently from all Italian versions of the *Stones*. This is paradoxical, considering the fact that the “Venetian Index” is really an autonomous guidebook complete with all the characteristics Ruskin required from a guide, “as useful as possible to the traveller by indicating only the objects which are really worth his study” (*infra*, p. 57). Ruskin stated he had “supplied somewhat copious notices of the pictures of Tintoret, because they are much injured, difficult to read, and entirely neglected by other writers on art”. An alphabetical list of important buildings in Venice but giving prominence to the works of Tintoretto, the “Venetian Index” can be considered almost a “Tintoretto guide”. In it Ruskin records the state of conservation of the works as well as their formal and chromatic aspects, offering an account which aims to be exhaustive and objective but also express value judgements – sometimes severe ones in which he attributes weaknesses in a painting to the artist's state of nervous exhaustion.

The intention of making the “Index” a practical guide for visitors is particu-

larly evident in the treatment of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, for which the entry is extended and systematic. It discusses at full forty-one paintings and includes four plans of the walls and ceilings of the Lower and Upper Rooms, and of the Sala dell'Albergo. These plans were the first to be included in any text on the Scuola.⁴⁶ They reflect the care and dedication Ruskin paid to his task, but also his innovative ideas on guidebooks.⁴⁷ However the presence of the plans also and importantly puts a major focus on the fact that the viewer has to perceive the spaces of the Scuola's rooms in their wholeness. Thus Ruskin seems to seize on Tintoretto's intention of involving the reader and making him/her participate intimately in a total experience of multiple and interconnected readings.⁴⁸ An example of focussed and interconnected reading is provided in Ruskin's discussion of the Sala dell'Albergo. Mentioning the *Allegorical Figures on the Roof*, he does not number them consecutively, as in today's plans, but invites the viewer to alternate his or her gaze from wall to wall, thus hinting at an order structured on the basis of frontal correspondences. Moreover, he does not identify them as allegories of the Scuole – an identification that was widely accepted at the time and reported in Murray's 1847 *Hand-Book*.⁴⁹ This may be due to the fact that he did not want to divert his reader's attention away from the principal scenes in the Albergo, which portray Christ's passion, and especially not to divert attention away from the *Crucifixion*, to which he points in reticent statement: “I must leave this picture to work its will on the spectator; for it is beyond all analysis, and above all praise” (*infra*, p. 142). In *Modern Painters* (reported in the entry as first quote) Ruskin had offered a detailed iconographic and narrative reading of this painting; the silence he now substitutes for that account seems to be meaningful. In the “Venetian Index” he invites the reader to take part in an experience of “active fruition” – to borrow Melania Mazzucco's perceptive definition – and engage in a direct and possibly transformative experience by looking at the painting quietly and immersing oneself in contemplation.⁵⁰ Another original feature is the attention paid to the condition of the paintings, an aspect that was generally ignored by guidebooks of the time, and which provides us today with interesting information about the state of the environment in mid 19th-century Venice.

The “Index” thus offers a degree of recognition of Tintoretto's works in Venice that is unprecedented in terms of completeness and detail listing. To some paintings Ruskin gives title in English, while others are in Italian. The English titles are given on the basis of the subject they represent, which at times he was unable to identify. This is the case with *St Roch Healing the Animals*



in the Church of San Rocco, which Ruskin defines generically as “Cattle Piece”. Italian titles are sometimes attributed to local sources: the painting now known as *Capture of St Roch* for instance, he calls *San Rocco in campo d’armata* (San Rocco on the battlefield), a title given to it by the sacristan of the time.

Ruskin’s readings of individual paintings reveal his deep interest in Tintoretto, in his expressive use of chiaroscuro, in the creative function of surrounding darkness, in coarseness of execution as a deliberate stylistic device, or as a sign of exhaustion. He studies the compositional use Tintoretto makes of poorly-lit spaces in the building, noting how in some cases paintings are completed by the darkness in which they are placed, being “vast sketches, made to produce, under a certain degree of shadow, the effect of finished pictures” (*infra*, p. 98). In some cases he picks up on statements in the *Modern Painters* chapter in which he had claimed that darkness is congenial to an imaginative painter who rapidly paints a scene just as the vision had appeared to him, leaving it to to obscurity to complete it. At times, however, Ruskin’s comments on lighting raise questions to which he offers no answer: he notes, for example, that some of the paintings occupying dark positions are carefully painted, highly finished, whereas the *Agony in the Garden*, which is well lit, seems to have been executed very hastily. The principal intention of the “Index” is to give an account of the paintings reporting hasty or more careful brushwork and mentioning that possible causes are various, not only practical and environmental, but without drawing conclusions.

If Jean-Paul Sartre related Tintoretto’s “carelessness” with the laws of the market that imposed overwork to this “utilitarian champion du libéralism”,⁵¹ in his comprehensive socio-historical framework Tom Nichols links it to a sacred value Tintoretto gave to poverty.⁵² In all his works, especially those in the Scuola

E. C. Burne-Jones
Study of **The Meeting**
of the Virgin
and St Elizabeth (SGSR),
1862, RFRL

di San Rocco, says Nichols “Tintoretto developed what we may describe as an expressive ‘roughness’, a quality that may have been experienced by contemporaries more used to the luxuriance of earlier Venetian oil painting as an austere technical restraint fully expressive of the painter’s central concern with the sacred value of poverty”. For Ruskin this feature constitutes the most mysterious and personal stylistic figure of Tintoretto’s work. He examined it closely and was to require the young painters from whom he commissioned copies after Tintoretto to render it faithfully, as we shall see.

Ruskin’s comments on Tintoretto’s rapidity and “coarseness” link these features also to the poor state of conservation and quality of the paint used, which had left the canvasses exposed to damage due to environmental conditions, dryness and damp. He places great emphasis on the vulnerability of the paintings, the rainwater running down the frames, the sunlight falling directly on a few of them. The San Rocco canvasses, he complains, “are nothing but wrecks of what they were; and the ruins of paintings originally coarse are not likely ever to be attractive to the public mind” (*infra*, p. 98). Ruskin is probably referring here to the damage caused by the aerial bombing – the first air raids in history – launched by the Austrians on Venice during the summer of 1849 eventually causing the surrender of the city on 22nd August. Bombs struck the Scuola heavily between 29th July and 9th August, when they burst through the ceiling of the Upper Room and seriously damaged the *Gathering of the Manna* and *The Brazen Serpent*.⁵³ The condition of the Upper Room as described by Ruskin reflects the state in which he found it when staying in Venice between November 1849 and March 1850, or during his long sojourn during the winter of 1851-52 before the restoration work, approved in April 1850, was carried out – on the building in 1852, on the paintings after 1855.⁵⁴

Ruskin’s study of the distinctive features of Tintoretto’s work focuses closely on representation of landscape, thus emphasizing an aspect to which, as Cesare de Seta notes, critics have not dedicated sufficient attention.⁵⁵ Another, related avenue of research concerns Tintoretto’s handling of colour. Both were also essential to Ruskin’s study of Turner. As mentioned above, the “Venetian Index” contains numerous comparisons between Tintoretto and Turner. Exploring the mysterious paths of creativity, Ruskin identifies a “strange resemblance” between the two artists: both are unpredictable in their deep feeling for their subjects and the ways in which those feelings affect their painting. Ruskin’s notes on Tintoretto’s use of light also make reference to Turner. In the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, the peacock is in full light, and therefore depicted without colour; this Ruskin compares to Turner’s removal of colour from



the ships' flags in his seascape of Gosport. He also notes the unsystematic recording of natural effects in the two painters. The "excellent" landscape in the *Ascension*, for example, "strangely" set "in a little marshy and grassy valley, like those near Maison Neuve on the Jura, with a brook running through it", and the gradually shrinking reflection of large masses of bank above are so "scientific" as to recall Turner.

Writing of the *Temptation*, Ruskin praises both the powerful and careful nature of its execution. Although painted "very broadly", the strong light means that the colour is subdued – "the most amazing instance of Tintoret's perceptiveness", while the stones in the foreground are "the best piece of rock drawing before Turner". Tintoretto's attention to landscape is constant, as is the delicacy with which he depicts it. Comparing *Jacob's Dream* to the *Ascension*, Ruskin finds the latter more vigorous, giving the impression of a recent walk in the hills. He likens the visionary nature of Tintoretto to that of Turner; both fix images on their minds and reproduce them directly on the canvas with the same immediacy with which they received them.

Ruskin focuses on colour to a degree which, as far as I know, few other critics have done, scrutinizing it with what we might call a "Turnerian" eye. Colour for Ruskin has a symbolic significance rooted in Scriptural language, as is illustrated by his illuminating description of *Moses Striking the Rock*, which offers a detailed analysis of the material and symbolic role of colour. The figures of Moses and most of the foreground figures are painted in warm, dark colours, with black and red prevailing, while the distance, bright gold

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **The Paradise**
(DPV), 'St Jerome's Group',
1880, RCSM

touched with blue, seems to open up "like a break of blue sky after rain" (*infra*, p. 127). Ruskin notes how the expressive use of colour renders the most powerful aspect of the episode depicted: "joy and refreshment after sorrow and scorching heat". He goes on to notice the colour symbolism of the objects in the distance:

The blue in it is not the blue of sky, it is obtained by blue stripes upon white tents glowing in the sunshine; and in front of these tents is seen that great battle with Amalek of which the account is given in the remainder of the chapter, and for which the Israelites received strength in the streams which ran out of the rock in Horeb. Considered merely as a picture, the opposition of cool light to warm shadow is one of the most remarkable pieces of colour in the Scuola, and the great mass of foliage which waves over the rocks on the left appears to have been elaborated with his highest power and his most sublime invention (xi. 420).

Ruskin also notes that Tintoretto is the only painter to use effects of light and transparency to heighten the "sublimity" of his figures, and that he tends to subordinate the form of distant objects to the relations of light and shade, as in the *Plague of Serpents*. Also in the *Gathering of the Manna* Ruskin notices the symbolical-narrative use of white, and the grey of the tent not of a "vivid colour," to represent it in early morning (*infra*, p. 132). Interesting too are Ruskin's notes on Tintoretto's works as autonomous "pieces of colour" and the symbolic use of brilliant, "bright" and "chilled" colours of the *Resurrection* in the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore.

Whereas in *The Stones of Venice* Ruskin creates the myth of Venice, his extensive, complex Tintoretto "Index" would help fix in the English, and later the international, imagination, the association between Venice, city of extreme beauty in decline, and the painter who represented its power so supremely. *The Stones* opens declaring an intent to trace the last image of Venice before it disappears under the encroaching waves,⁵⁶ a declaration that gives body and voice to the widespread sense of loss and destruction the city conjured up in the mid 19th century. In the cultural imagination, Tintoretto is often identified with Venice, as a sort of synecdoche of the city.⁵⁷ Ruskin's detailed overview of Tintoretto's work in Venice, placed in marginal position as a conclusion to a book on architecture, contracts and fixes Tintoretto's role as the rhetorical figure of the part for the whole.

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **The Paradise** (DPV),
'St Jerome's Group', 1880-1881,
RCSM



5. “The Thoughtfullest painting in the world”: the *Paradise* and its copies

In later years Ruskin’s interest turned again, with the Tuscan Primitives, Giovanni Bellini and in particular Vittore Carpaccio coming to the fore, Tintoretto receding somewhat into the background. Ruskin was, however, to return to him in 1871, twenty years after the “Venetian Index”, in the last of a series of lectures on the *Elements of Sculpture* delivered as Oxford’s first Slade Professor of Art. “The Relation between Michael Angel and Tintoret” is a comparison between Tintoretto’s *Paradise* in the Ducal Palace and Michelangelo’s *Last Judgement*. Ruskin initially intended to dedicate the series entirely to the *Paradise*, and wrote to his mother: “I resolved to give my five autumnal lectures at Oxford on *one* picture, Tintoret’s *Paradise*. It will be rather too large, than too narrow a subject” (xx.L1). On this he changed his mind, however; in the end four lectures concentrate on comparisons between Greek and Florentine coins, only the last being dedicated to the *Paradise*. The lecture was a controversial one: taking his usual comparative approach, Ruskin attacks Michelan-

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **The Paradise**
(DPV), ‘St Gregory,
St Augustine, St Monica
and other Saints,’ 1880-1881,
RCMS

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **The Paradise**,
‘David,’ 1883, RFRL





gelo so as to extol Tintoretto's *Paradise*. He expresses the view that Tintoretto is as a sculptor greater than Michelangelo in the manner he conceives his human figures, referring to a particular – popularized by Marco Boschini in *La carta del navigar pitoresco* – concerning Tintoretto's employment of wax and clay models to study the spatial relations of the human figure and the effects of light upon it.⁵⁸ The lecture did not do justice to Michelangelo, who is held up to represent all the “evils” of the Renaissance, which Ruskin considered to be at the root of modern decadence.⁵⁹ But, as Jeanne Clegg points out, the lecture was intended as an indirect attack on Oxford institutions and especially the Ashmolean Museum, which had acquired studies by Michelangelo that were on show in those months.⁶⁰ The lecture also marks the growth of a sign of Ruskin's late interest in Tintoretto's Ducal Palace *Paradise*. He had most probably seen it before the Scuola di San Rocco, but in the 1845 Notebook describes it in lukewarm terms. In the “Index”, however, he describes it as “Tintoret's *chef-d'œuvre*” and “the most precious thing that Venice possesses”, while in the 1872 lecture he calls it “the thoughtfulest as well as mightiest picture in the world” (xxii.105). In the lecture he contrasts Michelangelo's “heap of dark bodies, curled and convulsed in space”, as a figure of Renaissance fracture between man and the world, to Tintoretto's *Paradise* as a vision of Medieval organic order. Ruskin concludes by identifying in detail most of the figures in the painting compounding the

Angelo Alessandri
Study of *The Paradise*
(DPV), ‘Adam and Eve
and Surrounding Saints,’
1883, RCMS

hierarchies of angels, archangels, thrones, principalities, apostles. By a repetitive act of naming he mimes the huge dimensions of the painting and the concentric shapes in which the figures are organized. Ruskin's description also aims to illustrate or be a figure of Tintoretto's creative process, of an “apocalypse of the intellect” which could conceive of mankind as a chain of hierarchically-organized individualities, “a minute and individual drama of the perfected history of separate spirits, and of their finally accomplished affections” (xxii.103). Ruskin's true interest in the *Paradise* is, however, perhaps less well expressed in this text than in the various copies of details he commissioned in the 1880s. From the 1870s Ruskin promoted a complex range of projects aimed at reproducing works of art mainly in the form of “copies” commissioned from young English and Italian painters.⁶¹ On copying he wrote in *Ariadne Florentina* (1872) that:

The common painter copyist who encumbers our European galleries with their easels and pots, are almost without exceptions, person too stupid to be painters, and too lazy to be engravers. The real copyists—the men who can put their souls into another's work—are employed at home, in their narrow rooms, striving to make their work profitable to men (xxii. 388).

The objectives of a copyist should be twofold: “record-making” and “mass education”.⁶² Through copies, often of details, paintings would be preserved from destruction. The copy thus met both Ruskin's urgent feeling of the need to conserve the artistic heritage being ruined before his eyes, and the desire to educate the working classes. The latter aim was to be furthered by making the paintings of great masters available to all in special museums, such as St George's Museum established in Sheffield in 1875.

In the 1880s Ruskin commissioned studies after paintings, details of architectural elements, and also natural landscapes from a circle of Italian and English artists including Angelo Alessandri, Giacomo Boni, Raffaele Carloforti, Wharleton Bunney, Charles Fairfax Murray, John Frank Randall, and T. M. Rooke,⁶³ in whom he instilled his own ideas on art and an acute awareness of the importance of conservation. The copyist who specialized in Tintoretto and Carpaccio was Angelo Alessandri, a promising young student at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice. Ruskin believed Alessandri to have that special affinity with the two painters he considered an indispensable requisite for a copyist. Alessandri made five studies of details from the *Paradise*: the ‘St Jerome group’



in 1880-1881; 'St Gregory, St Augustine, St Monica and other Saints' in 1881; 'St Louis, St Margaret and St George', 'David', and 'Adam and Eve and Surrounding Saints' in 1883. In 1885 Ruskin wrote to Alessandri inviting him to copy from the paintings in the Scuola di San Rocco:

Nothing would be more valuable to me [...]—do just as far as you like to finish them only don't begin with the Ador. of magi—nor massacre of innocents, nor annunciation where I don't like the Madonna —of the others do exactly what you like or can.⁶⁴

This grand project was only partially realized, resulting in three watercolour studies, 'St Mary of Egypt' (1885); 'St Sebastian' (1885); and the 'Flight into Egypt', (1885). Alessandri also painted the *Annunciation* (1889) – in this disobeying Ruskin's orders not to do so – and the *Martyrdom of St Stephen* (1891), in the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore.

The copies were accompanied by an intense correspondence by means of which Ruskin gave lessons and delivered judgements, offering particularly precise comments regarding the rendering of Tintoretto's use of colour and rapid execution, the features on which he had focused so closely in *Modern Painters* and the "Venetian Index":

Always think of the colour first, and when you've *got* it, *stop* [...] when you take the brush—and dip it in colour, remember always, its *line* is to be as good as care (by the way) and luck will make it; but its laid COLOUR IS to be Right,—whatever goes wrong to save it" (Letter 32, 1882).⁶⁵

Ruskin also strongly advised Alessandri not to be too laboured as an over-precise approach would betray Tintoretto's style of painting: "I think you will perhaps develope [sic] your power faster by sketching arrangements of colour, and main lines of form and action, than by always finishing".⁶⁶ Right into the last years of his life Ruskin continued to be fascinated by Tintoretto and to struggle to understand his secrets. Copying was a way of entering the mind and flesh of the artist. The true critic should, he thought, "put his soul" into Tintoretto's work in order to acquire the mental and technical skills that would allow him to retrace the creative act. Copying was also an act of responsibility towards Venice. The decay that in 1845 had led him to stay on and dedicate himself to the city and its art, in these late years led him to pass on to young English and Italian artists a commitment to conserving Venice's fragile heritage, a heritage symbolised in the paintings of Carpaccio, of the Bellinis and of Tintoretto, the greatest and most elusive of the painters identified with Venice.

In the late years Ruskin tended to occlude his relationship with Venice. His autobiography, *Praeterita*, surprisingly identifies the "centres of [his] life's thought in Rouen, Geneva, and Pisa" (xxxv.180), and mentions his entry into San Rocco only as a "fatal adversity" which had cast him into the "mare maggiore" of the Schools of Venetian painting. As Francis O' Gorman points out, "written from the edges of mental breakdown itself",⁶⁷ *Praeter-*

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **St Mary of Egypt**
(SGSR), 1885, RCMS

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **St Sebastian** (SGSR),
1885, RCMS



ita works by omission, omissions of passages from his life “that brought no happiness in remembering”, and whose recurring themes are “loss, the failing of pleasure, and its unreachableness through the past”.⁶⁸ Talking about Venice exclusively and synthetically through Tintoretto thus reinforces the synecdochical and variously expressed relationship between the painter and the city. At the same time this reticence should be put into perspective and related to the wealth of activities that Ruskin engaged in connection with Venice in the 1880s. The unpublished diaries and letters, the numerous studies of paintings Ruskin commissioned testify to the constant, though fragmentary, presence of Tintoretto in his work.

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **Flight into Egypt**
(SGSR), 1885, RCMS

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **The Martyrdom of St Stephen** (CSGM), 1891, RCMS





If Tintoretto, in Ruskin's late narrative, occupies a place apart in Ruskin's aesthetic, upsetting established plans and hierarchies – his is a liminal though central presence, just as the “Venetian Index” is within *The Stones of Venice* – this may be ultimately due, as Denis Donoghue has perceptively argued, to the all-inclusiveness of his sense of beauty; he “regarded nothing as a transgression that the imagination was ready to act upon”,⁶⁹ and responded by adjusting hierarchies and categories to the compelling spiritual and emotional calling exerted by its power.

Angelo Alessandri
Study of **The Annunciation**
(SGSR), 1889, RCMS

1. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 187. Letter 113.
2. All 158 letters are collected in Shapiro's edition.
3. John Ruskin, “*Résumé*” of *Italian Art and Architecture* (1845), Paul Tucker (ed.), Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2003.
4. Only extracts were published in the Library Edition and it is here published in full in Appendix II.
5. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-45. Letter 85.
6. Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 63.
7. Elsa Damien, “Ruskin vs Murray: Battles for Tourist Guidance in Italy”, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 32:1, 2010, pp. 19-30.
8. Paul Tucker, “‘Right Conclusions’: Seven Unpublished Letters (1845-46) from John Ruskin to John Murray”, *Bollettino del CIRVI*, 33-34, xvii, I-II, 1996, pp. 105-151.
9. Jeanne Clegg, *Ruskin in Venice*, London: Junction Books, 1981, pp. 51-2.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 52; Hilton, p. 93. See also Tucker, “Introduction” to “*Résumé*”, pp. XLIV-v. Francis-Alexis Rio *De la Poésie Chrétienne dans son principe, dans sa matière et dans ses formes*, Paris: Hachette, 1836.
11. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 187. Letter 113.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 198. Letter 121.
15. See Clegg, *Ruskin and Venice*, p. 28; for a general overview of Romantic influences on Ruskin, see Robert Hewison, *Ruskin on Venice*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2009, pp. 51-7.
16. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 199.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 205. Letter 125.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 208-9, Letter 129.
19. Clegg, *Ruskin and Venice*, pp. 43-8.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
21. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 208. Letter 129.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 209, Letter 130.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 210. Letter 131. See also 4: xxxvii. Note that Marco Boschini, Tintoretto's first biographer, reports a similar reaction on the part of painter Alessandro Varotari, “Soleva el Varotari dir cusi: | Co' arrivo in sto Salon Più che divin, | Devento un'oca, un zane, un mezetin; | Stago oto di, che no' xè ben de mi”.

- Boschini, *La carta del navegar pitoresco. Dialogo tra un Senator venetian dele tante, e un professor de Pitura, soto nome d'Eclenza, e de Compare, Comparti in 8 Venti*, Venetia: Baba, 1660, p. 100.
24. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 221. Letter 145.
25. John Unrau, *Ruskin and St Mark's*, London: Thames and Hudson, p. 19; Donata Levi and Paul Tucker, *Ruskin didatta. Il disegno tra disciplina e diletto*, Venezia: Marsilio, 1997, p. 89 ff.
26. This study after *St Mary of Egypt (St Mary in Meditation)* has been recently attributed to Ruskin by Paul Tucker. I wish to thank Paul Tucker for allowing me to read his unpublished notes.
27. See Michael Wheeler, *Ruskin's God*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999, pp. 52-53; Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. xviii.
28. Tucker, “Introduction” to “*Resumé*”, p. xxxvi.
29. *Ibid.*
30. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters II*, Ms Pierpont Morgan Library MA 393-397.
31. On lighting conditions in museums in the nineteenth century, including the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, see *From Darkness to Light. Writers in Museums 1798-1898*, Rosella Mamoli Zorzi and Katherine Manthorne (eds.), Cambridge: OpenBooks Publishers, 2018.
32. I have dealt with this aspect in “Reading the Painting's Suggestiveness: Remarks on a Passage of Ruskin's Art Criticism”, *The Dominion of Daedalus. Papers from the Ruskin Workshop Held in Pisa and Lucca, 13-14 May 1993*, Jeanne Clegg and Paul Tucker (eds.), St Albans: Brentham Press, 1994, pp. 100-14.
33. See George P. Landow, *The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971, pp. 445-47; see also Hewison, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-7.
34. “Quela beata Cena | De carità no' de virtude piena, | E l'humiltà de quel divin Messia. | Quel Dio, che tuto doma, etuto reze, | Se umilia in povertà, senza ambition | Coi Discepoli santi in devotion. | Soto poveri teti, humile teze”. Boschini, *op. cit.*, p. 116. Ruskin quotes from Boschini in his review of Eastlake's *History of Painting* (xii. 290).
35. Tom Nichols, “Tintoretto's Poverty”, *New Interpretations of Venetian Renaissance Painting*, Francis Ames-Lewis (ed.), London: Birkbeck College, 1994, pp. 99-110, p. 106.

36. See Ester Brunet, *La Bibbia secondo Tintoretto, Guida biblica e teologica dei teleri dei dipinti di Jacopo Tintoretto nella Scuola Grande di San Rocco*, Venezia: Marcianum Press, 2012, p. 44.

37. The hypothesis is convincingly made by Lindsay Stainton, Assistant Curator of the Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood, in a letter to Herbert Cahoon dated 9 March 1973 and preserved together with the manuscripts. See also Tucker, “Introduction” to *Rés-umé*, p. XVIII.

38. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 223. Letter 146.

39. Hilton, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-3.

40. Levi and Tucker, *op. cit.*, p. 89. See also Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

41. Ian Warrell (ed.), *Turner and Venice*, exhibition catalogue, London: Tate Britain, 2003, pp. 59-61.

42. See Nicola Moorby, “Copies of Paintings in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice”, catalogue entries, March 2010, *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, David Blayney Brown (ed.), Tate Research Publication, December 2012, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-copies-of-paintings>.

43. Martin Butlin and Evelyn Joll, *The Paintings of J.M.W. Turner*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1984.

44. John Gage, *Colour in Turner: Poetry and Truth*, London: Studio Vista, 1969, p. 91.

45. The Library Edition does not include the first three, but incorporates them in the general index of volume 39.

46. No guide I have consulted (see the bibliography) contains a plan. Ruskin’s plans are detailed and fairly precise, I have noticed only one error – namely an inversion in the relative positions of two paintings, n. 33 *Elija at the Brook Cherith* and n. 35 *Elisha Feeding the People*, on the ceiling of the Upper Room(plan 3). This error, which seems to confirm that the plans

were made from first-hand observation, is not pointed out in the Library Edition; it has been corrected in the plan reproduced in this edition (*infra*, p. 129).

47. On the need for convenience and clarity in guidebooks Ruskin wrote to Murray on 15th June 1845: “[...] the great use of a guidebook—the enabling you to find what you want, is to a hurried traveller—together lost in yours—owing to its chronological arrangement. You ought to tell him where the pictures are—and he can perfectly well—if he chooses—look at the earliest first. I took your book in my hand the first day—but to save time I had to give it up and buy the one at the place – which takes the order of succession—not of time”. Tucker, “Right Conclusions”, p. 113.

48. The viewer’s involvement in the spaces of the Scuola di San Rocco has been extensively explored by Astrid Zenkert, “Tintoretto alla Scuola di San Rocco”, *La Scuola Grande di San Rocco a Venezia. Testi* (“*Mirabilia Italiae*” 15), Franco Posocco and Salvatore Settis (eds), Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2008, pp. 85-159, p. 100 ff.

49. *Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy*, London: Murray, 1847, p. 357.

50. Melania Mazzucco, *Jacomo Tintoretto e i suoi figli. Storia di una famiglia veneziana*, Milano: Rizzoli, 2009, pp.195-96. Mazzucco lays particular stress on Tintoretto’s personal involvement of the reader in the events represented in the Sala dell’Albergo: “Each of those paintings demanded a silent contemplation, and a dialogue with the divine. Tintoretto’s characters – and Tintoretto himself – speak face to face with God, in a direct, almost unmediated conversation.” [my translation]

51. Jean-Paul Sartre, “Le séquestré de Venise”, *Situations, IV*, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, pp. 291-46, p. 312.

52. Nichols, “Tintoretto’s Poverty”, p.109. See also Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity*, London: Reaktion Books (1999), 2015, pp. 187-92.

53. Sedute di Cancelleria 1806-1849. Cancelleria 16 ottobre 1849, n. 23.

54. In the Chancellery assembly of 7th March 1852 it was decided the painting restoration would be paid for out of government revenue. In the minutes of 29th July and 30th October 1855, the agenda still lists the restoration of the paintings in the Upper Room. Cancelleria 7 marzo 1852, n. 24; Cancelleria 29 luglio 1855, n. 28; Cancelleria 30 ottobre 1855, n. 38.

55. Cesare de Seta, “Tintoretto è Venezia anche se non dipinge Venezia”, *Venezia e Moby Dick*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2016, pp. 68-82, p. 81.

56. Venice’s end had already been envisaged either as a sinking into the waves or being left high as dry as the lagoon dried up; see John Pemble, *Venice Rediscovered*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, pp. 114-15.

57. Jean-Paul Sartre’s epigrammatic ending: “La ville et son peintre n’ont qu’un seul et même visage” (*op.cit.*, p. 346), has helped fix this association in the contemporary imagination. However this identification has a long-standing history, and it is mainly due to the fact that in the mid-19th century few of Tintoretto’s paintings were present in European galleries, and little of his work could be seen outside Venice. See Anna Laura Lepschy, *Tintoretto Observed. A documentary survey of critical reactions from the 16th to the 20th century*, Ravenna: Longo Editore, 1983, pp. 11-12.

58. Boschini, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-40; also reported in Lepschy, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7.

59. In the “Imagination Penetrative” chapter of *Modern Painters II* Ruskin devotes a lengthy note to a balanced comparison between Tintoretto’s and Michelangelo’s rapidity of execution (iv. 283-86n).

60. Clegg, *Ruskin and Venice*, pp.143-44.

61. Ruskin’s role as commissioner and creator of copies of art works is a complex one. It has been described in the groundbreaking study by Jeanne Clegg, “John Ruskin’s Correspondence with Angelo Alessandri”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 60: 2, pp. 404-33, 1978 republished in *Ruskin, Venice and Nineteenth-Century Cultural Travel*, Keith Hanley and Emma Sdegno (eds), Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2010, pp. 69-107. It may be further explored and attributions revised thanks to careful studies by scholars such as Paul Tucker.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

63. See Paul Tucker’s “Introduction” to John Ruskin, *Guida ai principali dipinti nell’Accademia di Belle Arti di Venezia*, Milano: Electa, 2014, pp. 40-41.

64. Unpublished letter, Jeanne Clegg’s transcription.

65. Quoted in Clegg, “John Ruskin’s Correspondence with Angelo Alessandri”, p. 79. Clegg points out that Ruskin had high consideration for Alessandri’s use of colour and his ability to create a “paint bright”.

66. *Ibid.* Letter of January 1881.

67. John Ruskin, *Praeterita*, Francis O’ Gorman (ed.), Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012, p. xx.

68. *Ibid.* p. x.

69. Denis Donoghue, “Ruskin, Venice, and the Fate of Beauty”, *Ruskin e Venezia. La bellezza in declino*, Sergio Perosa (ed.), Firenze: Olschky, 2001, pp. 5-35, p. 20.

A VENETIAN INDEX OF TINTORETTO¹

I HAVE endeavoured to make the following index as useful as possible to the traveller by indicating only the objects which are really worth his study. A traveller's interest, stimulated as it is into strange vigour by the freshness of every impression, and deepened by the sacredness of the charm of association which long familiarity with any scene too fatally wears away, is too precious a thing to be heedlessly wasted; and as it is physically impossible to see and to understand more than a certain quantity of art in a given time, the attention bestowed on second-rate works, in such a city as Venice, is not merely lost, but actually harmful, – deadening the interest and confusing the memory with respect to those which it is a duty to enjoy, and a disgrace to forget. The reader need not fear being misled by any omissions; for I have conscientiously pointed out every characteristic example, even of the styles which I dislike, and have referred to Lazari in all

instances in which my own information failed: but if he is in anywise willing to trust me, I should recommend him to devote his principal attention, if he is fond of paintings, to the works of Tintoret, Paul Veronese, and John Bellini; not of course neglecting Titian, yet remembering that Titian can be well and thoroughly studied in almost any great European gallery, while Tintoret and Bellini can be judged of *only* in Venice, and Paul Veronese, though gloriously represented by the two great pictures in the Louvre,² and many others throughout Europe, is yet not to be fully estimated until he is seen at play among the fantastic chequers of the Venetian ceilings.

I have supplied somewhat copious notices of the pictures of Tintoret, because they are much injured, difficult to read, and entirely neglected by other writers on art. I cannot express the astonishment and indignation I felt on finding, in Kugler's handbook, a paltry cenacolo, painted probably in a couple of hours

for a couple of zecchins, for the monks of St Trovaso, quoted as characteristic of this master; just as foolish readers quote separate stanzas of Peter Bell or the Idiot Boy, as characteristic of Wordsworth. Finally, the reader is requested to observe, that the dates assigned to the various buildings named in the following index, are almost without exception conjectural; [...] It is likely, therefore, that here and there, in particular instances, farther inquiry may prove me to have been deceived; but such occasional errors are not of the smallest importance with respect to the general conclusions of the preceding pages, which will be found to rest on too broad a basis to be disturbed. [* 1881. The delay in the publication of the second volume of the "Travellers' Edition" was caused by my wish to complete this index into some more generally serviceable form. But I find that now-a-days, as soon as I begin to speak of anything anywhere, it is sure to be moved somewhere else; and now, at last,

in desperation, I print the old index almost as it was, cutting out of it only the often-repeated statements that such and such churches or pictures were of "no importance."² The modern traveller is but too likely to say so for himself. In my last edition of *Murray's Guide to Northern Italy*, I find the visitor advised how to see all the remarkable objects in Venice in a single day but the less hurried visitor is given a week. Baedeker's plan allows him "3-4 days." [XI.359-436]

1. In following Ruskin's topographical directions, the reader should remember that the *canale* is the broader, and the *rio* the narrower waterway. A *fondamenta* is a pathway alongside a canale or a rio; a *calle*, a street with houses on either side; a *campo*, a paved open place; a *campiello*, a smaller campo; a *corte*, a court; a *salizzada* is a paved street. [LE]

2. "The two great pictures in the Louvre" are *The Wedding Feast of Cana* and *The Dinner at Simon, the Pharisee's*.

ACCADEMIA DELLE BELLE ARTE

Notice above the door the two bas-reliefs of St Leonard and St Christopher, chiefly remarkable for their rude cutting at so late a date, 1377; but the niches under which they stand are unusual in their bent gables, and in the little crosses within circles which fill their cusps. The traveller is generally too much struck by Titian's great picture of the *Assumption*, to be able to pay proper attention to the other works in this gallery. Let him, however, ask himself candidly, how much of his admiration is dependent merely upon the picture being larger than any other in the room, and having bright masses of red and blue in it; let him be assured, that the picture is in reality not one whit the better for being either large, or gaudy in colour; and he will then be better disposed to give the pains necessary to discover the merit of the more profound and solemn works of Bellini and Tintoret. One of the most wonderful works in the whole gallery is Tintoret's *Death of Abel*, on the left

of the *Assumption*; the *Adam and Eve*, on the right of it, is hardly inferior; and both are more characteristic examples of the master, and in many respects better pictures, than the much vaunted *Miracle of St Mark*. All the works of Bellini in this room are of great beauty and interest. In the great room, that which contains Titian's *Presentation of the Virgin*, the traveller should examine carefully all the pictures by Vittor Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini, which represent scenes in ancient Venice; they are full of interesting architecture and costume. Marco Basaiti's *Agony in the Garden* is a lovely example of the religious school. The Tintorets in this room are all second rate, but most of the Veroneses are good, and the large ones are magnificent.* [*]. 1877. I leave this article as originally written; the sixth chapter of *St Mark's Rest* now containing a careful notice of as many pictures as travellers are likely to have time to look at. [xi.316]]



Cain and Abel

Miracle of the Slave

CARMINI, CHURCH OF THE

A most interesting church, of late thirteenth century work, but much altered and defaced. Its nave, in which the early shafts and capitals of the pure truncate form are unaltered, is very fine in effect; its lateral porch is quaint and beautiful, decorated with Byzantine circular sculptures, and supported on two shafts whose capitals are the most archaic examples of the pure Rose form that I know in Venice. There

is a glorious Tintoret over the first altar on the right in entering; the *Circumcision of Christ*. I do not know an aged head either more beautiful or more picturesque than that of the high priest. The cloister is full of notable tombs, nearly all dated; one, of the fifteenth century, to the left on entering, is interesting from the colour still left on the leaves and flowers of its sculptured roses. [xi.365]

CASSIANO, CHURCH OF ST

This church must on no account be missed, as it contains three Tintorets, of which one, the *Crucifixion*, is among the finest in Europe. There is nothing worth notice in the building itself, except the jamb of an ancient door (left in the Renaissance buildings, facing the canal), which has been given among the examples of Byzantine jambs; and the traveller may therefore devote his entire attention to the three pictures in the chancel.

1. *The Crucifixion*

On the left of the high altar. It is refreshing to find a picture taken care of, and in a bright, though not a good light, so that such parts of it as are seen at all are seen well. It is also in a better state than most pictures in galleries, and most remarkable for its new and strange treatment of the subject. It seems to have been painted more for the artist's own delight, than with any laboured attempt at composition; the horizon is so low, that the spectator must fancy himself lying at full length on the grass, or rather among the brambles and luxuriant weeds, of which the foreground is entirely composed. Among these, the seamless robe of Christ has fallen at the foot of the cross; the rambling briars and wild grasses thrown here and there over its folds of rich, but pale, crimson. Behind them, and seen through them, the heads of a troop of Roman soldiers are raised against the sky; and, above them, their spears and halberds form a thin forest against the horizontal clouds. The three crosses are put on the extreme right of the picture, and its centre is occupied by the executioners, one of whom, standing on a ladder, receives from the other at once the sponge and the tablet with the letters INRI. The Madonna and St John are on the extreme left, superbly painted, like all the rest, but quite subordinate. In fact, the whole mind of the painter seems to have been set upon making the principals accessory, and

the accessories principal. We look first at the grass, and then at the scarlet robe; and then at the clump of distant spears, and then at the sky, and last of all at the cross. As a piece of colour, the picture is notable for its extreme modesty. There is not a single very full or bright tint in any part, and yet the colour is delighted in throughout; not the slightest touch of it but is delicious. It is worth notice also, and especially, because this picture being in a fresh state, we are sure of one fact, that, like nearly all other great colourists, Tintoret was afraid of light greens in his vegetation. He often uses dark blue greens in his shadowed trees, but here where the grass is in full light, it is all painted with various hues of solber brown, more especially where it crosses the crimson robe. The handling of the whole is in his noblest manner; and I consider the picture generally quite beyond all price. It was cleaned, I believe, some years ago, but not injured, or at least as little injured as it is possible for a picture to be which has undergone any cleaning process whatsoever.

2. *The Resurrection*

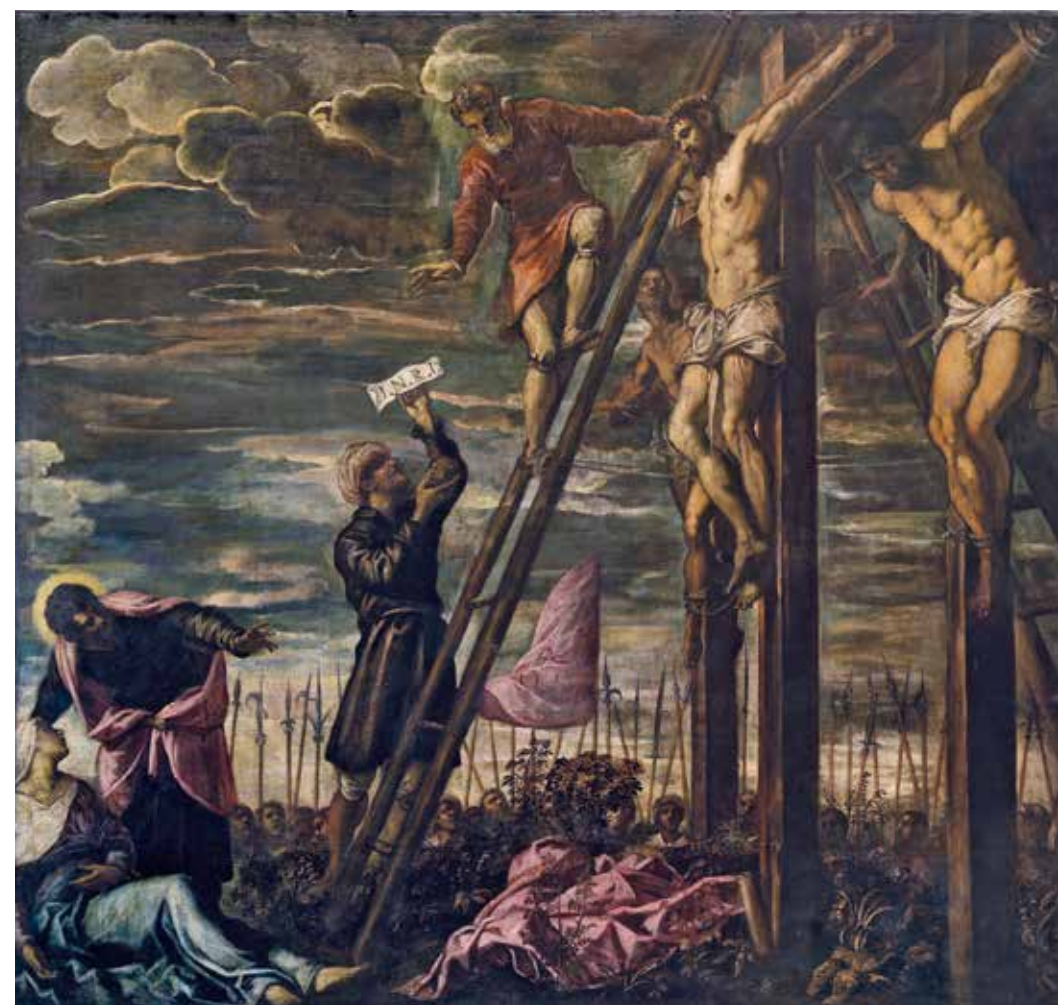
Over the high altar. The lower part of this picture is entirely concealed by a miniature temple, about five feet high, on the top of the altar; certainly an insult little expected by Tintoret, as, by getting on steps, and looking over the said temple, one may see that the lower figures of the picture are the most laboured. It is strange that the painter never seemed able to conceive this subject with any power, and in the present work he is marvellously hampered by various types and conventionalities. It is not a painting of the Resurrection, but of Roman Catholic saints, thinking about the Resurrection. On one side of the tomb is a bishop in full robes, on the other a female saint, I know not who; beneath it, an angel playing on an organ, and a cherub blowing it; and other

cherubs flying about the sky, with flowers; the whole conception being a mass of Renaissance absurdities. It is, moreover, heavily painted, over-done, and over-finished; and the forms of the cherubs utterly heavy and vulgar. I cannot help fancying the picture has been restored in some way or another, but there is still great power in parts of it. If it be a really untouched Tintoret, it is a highly curious example of failure from over-labour on a subject into which his mind was not thrown; the colour is hot and harsh,

and felt to be so more painfully, from its opposition to the grand coolness and chastity of the 'Crucifixion.' The face of the angel playing the organ is highly elaborated; so, also, the flying cherubs.

3. *The Descent into Hades*

On the right-hand side of the high altar. Much injured and little to be regretted. I never was more puzzled by any picture, the painting being throughout careless, and in some places utterly





The Resurrection

Descent into Limbo



bad, and yet not like modern work; the principal figure, however, of Eve, has either been re-done, or is scholar's work altogether, as, I suspect, most of the rest of the picture. It looks as if Tintoret had sketched it when he was ill, left it to a bad scholar to work on with, and then finished it in a hurry: but he has assuredly had something to do with it; it is not likely that anybody else would have refused all aid from the usual spectral company with which common painters fill the scene. Bronzino,¹ for instance, covers his canvas with every form of monster that his sluggish imagination could coin. Tintoret admits only a somewhat haggard Adam, a graceful Eve, two or three Venetians in court dress, seen amongst the smoke, and a Satan represented as a handsome youth, recognisable only by the claws

on his feet. The picture is dark and spoiled, but I am pretty sure there are no demons or spectres in it. This is quite in accordance with the master's caprice, but it considerably diminishes the interest of a work in other ways unsatisfactory. There may once have been something impressive in the shooting in of the rays at the top of the cavern, as well as in the strange grass that grows in the bottom, whose infernal character is indicated by its all being knotted together; but so little of these parts can be seen, that it is not worth spending time on a work certainly unworthy of the master, and in great part probably never seen by him. [xi.366-368]

¹ Bronzino's picture of the subject is in the Uffizi at Florence.

DUICAL PALACE

The multitude of works by various masters which cover the walls of this palace is so great that the traveller is in general merely wearied and confused by them. He had better refuse all attention except to the following works. [* I leave this notice of the Ducal Palace as originally written. Everything is changed or confused, now, I believe: and the text will only be useful to travellers who have time to correct it for themselves to present need.]

Paradise

At the extremity of the Great Council-chamber. I found it impossible to count the number of figures in this picture, of which the grouping is so intricate, that at the upper part it is not easy to distinguish one figure from another; but I counted 150 important figures in one half of it alone; so that, as there are nearly as many in subordinate positions, the total number cannot be under 500. I believe this is, on the whole, Tintoret's *chef-d'œuvre*; though it is so vast that no one takes the trouble to read it, and therefore less wonderful pictures are preferred to it. I have not myself been able to study except a few fragments of it, all executed in his finest manner; but it may assist a hurried observer to point out to him that the whole composition is divided into concentric zones, represented one above another like the stories of a cupola, round the figures of Christ and the Madonna, at the central and highest point: both these figures are exceedingly dignified and beautiful.

Between each zone or belt of the nearer figures, the white distances of heaven are seen filled with floating spirits. The picture is on the whole wonderfully preserved, and the most precious thing that Venice possesses. She will not possess it long; for the Venetian academicians, finding it exceedingly unlike their own works, declare it to want harmony, and are going to retouch it to their own ideas of perfection. [xi. 371-372]

I will close to-day giving you some brief account of the scheme of Tintoret's Paradise, in justification of my assertion that it is the thoughtfullest as well as mightiest picture in the world. In the highest centre is Christ, leaning on the globe of the earth, which is of dark crystal. Christ is crowned with a glory as of the sun, and all the picture is lighted by that glory, descending through circle beneath circle of cloud, and of flying or throned spirits.

The Madonna, beneath Christ, and at some interval from Him, kneels to Him. She is crowned with the Seven stars, and kneels on a cloud of angels, whose wings change into ruby fire, where they are near her. The three great Archangels, meeting from three sides, fly towards Christ. Michael delivers up his scales and sword. He is followed by the Thrones and Principalities of the Earth; so inscribed—Throni—Principatus. The Spirits of the Thrones bear scales in their hands; and of the Princedoms, shining globes: beneath the wings of the last of these are the four great teachers and lawgivers, St Ambrose, St Jerome, St Gregory, St Augustine, and behind St Augustine stands his mother, watching him, her chief joy in Paradise.

Under the Thrones, are set the Apostles, St Paul separated a little from the rest, and put lowest, yet principal; under St Paul, is St Christopher, bearing a massive globe, with a cross upon it; but to mark him as the Christ-bearer, since here in Paradise he cannot have the Child on his shoulders, Tintoret has thrown on the globe a flashing stellar reflection of the sun round the head of Christ.

All this side of the picture is kept in glowing colour,—the four Doctors of the Church have golden mitres and mantles; except the Cardinal, St Jerome, who is in burning scarlet, his naked breast glowing, warm with noble life,—the darker red of his robe relieved against a white glory.

Opposite to Michael, Gabriel flies towards the Ma-

donna, having in his hand the Annunciation lily, large, and triple-blossomed. Above him, and above Michael, equally, extends a cloud of white angels, inscribed "Serafini"; but the group following Gabriel, and corresponding to the Throni following Michael, is inscribed "Cherubini." Under these are the great prophets, and singers and foretellers of the happiness or of the sorrow of time. David, and Solomon, and Isaiah, and Amos of the herdsmen. David has a colossal golden psaltery laid horizontally across his knees;—two angels behind him dictate to him as he sings, looking up towards Christ; but one strong angel sweeps down to Solomon from among the cherubs, and opens a book, resting it on the head of Solomon, who looks down earnestly unconscious of it;—to the left of David, separate from the group of prophets, as Paul from the apostles, is Moses, dark-robed; in the full light, withdrawn far behind him, Abraham, embracing Isaac with his left arm, and near him, pale St Agnes. In front, nearer, dark and colossal, stands the glorious figure of Santa Giustina of Padua; then a little subordinate to her, St Catherine, and, far on

the left, and high, St Barbara leaning on her tower. In front, nearer, flies Raphael; and under him is the four-square group of the Evangelists. Beneath them, on the left, Noah; on the right, Adam and Eve, both floating unsupported by cloud or angel; Noah buoyed by the Ark, which he holds above him, and it is this into which Solomon gazes down, so earnestly. Eve's face is, perhaps, the most beautiful ever painted by Tintoret—full in light, but dark-eyed. Adam floats beside her, his figure fading into a winged gloom, edged in the outline of fig-leaves. Far down, under these, central in the lowest part of the picture, rises the Angel of the Sea, praying for Venice; for Tintoret conceives his Paradise as existing now, not as in the future. I at first mistook this soft Angel of the Sea for the Magdalen, for he is sustained by other three angels on either side, as the Magdalen is, in designs of earlier time, because of the verse, "There is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth."¹ But the Magdalen is one the right, behind St Monica; and on the same side, but lowest of all, Rachel, among the angels of her children, gathered now again to her for ever.





Paradise,
detail

Siege of Zara

I have no hesitation in asserting this picture to be by far the most precious work of art of any kind whatsoever, now existing in the world; and it is, I believe, on the eve of final destruction; for it is said that the angle of the great council-chamber is soon to be rebuilt; and that process will involve the destruction of the picture by removal, and, far more, by repainting. I had thought of making some effort to save it by an appeal in London to persons generally interested in the arts; but the recent desolation of Paris has familiarized us with destruction, and I have no doubt the answer to me would be, that Venice must take care of her own. But remember, at least, that I have borne witness to you to-day of the treasures that we forget, while we amuse ourselves with the poor toys, and the petty or vile arts, of our own time. The years of that time have perhaps come, when we are to be taught to look no more to the dreams of painters, either for knowledge of Judgment, or of Paradise. The anger of Heaven will not longer, I think, be mocked for our amusement; and perhaps its love may not always be despised by our pride. Believe me, all the arts, and all

the treasures of men, are fulfilled and preserved to them only, so far as they have chosen first, with their hearts, not the curse of God, but His blessing. Our Earth is now encumbered with ruin, our Heaven is clouded by Death. May we not wisely judge ourselves in some things now,² instead of amusing ourselves with the painting of judgments to come? [xxii.104-108]

2. *Siege of Zara*

The first picture on the right on entering the Sala del Scrutinio. It is a mere battle piece, in which the figures, like the arrows, are put in by the score. There are high merits in the thing, and so much invention that it is possible Tintoret may have made the sketch for it; but, if executed by him at all, he has done it merely in the temper in which a sign-painter meets the wishes of an ambitious landlord. He seems to have been ordered to represent all the events of the battle at once; and to have felt that, provided he gave men, arrows, and ships enough, his employers would be perfectly satisfied. The picture is a vast one, some thirty feet by fifteen. [xi.373]





**Triumph of Venice
as Queen of the Sea**

4. Frescoes on the roof of the Sala delle quattro Porte

Once magnificent beyond description, now mere wrecks (the plaster crumbling away in large flakes), but yet deserving of the most earnest study.³

5. Christ taken down from the Cross⁴

at the upper end of the Sala dei Pregadi.⁵ One of the most interesting mythic pictures of Venice, two Doges being represented beside the body of Christ, and a most noble painting; executed, however, for distant effect, and seen best from the end of the room.

6. Venice, Queen of the Sea

Central compartment of the ceiling, in the Sala dei Pregadi. Notable for the sweep of its vast green surges, and for the daring character of its entire conception, though it is wild and careless, and in many respects unworthy of the master. Note the way in which he has used the fantastic forms of the sea-weeds, as to his love of the grotesque.

7. The Doge Loredano in prayer to the Virgin⁶

In the same room. Sickly and pale in colour, yet a grand work; to be studied, however, more for the sake of seeing what a great man does 'to order,' when he is wearied of what is required from him, than for its own merit.

8. St George and the Princess

There are, besides the *Paradise*, only six pictures in the Ducal Palace, as far as I know, which Tintoret painted carefully, and these are all exceedingly fine: the most finished of those are in the Anti-Collegio; but those that are most majestic and characteristic of the master are two oblong ones, made to fill the panels of the walls in the Anti-Chiesetta; these two, each, I suppose, about eight feet by six, are in his most quiet and noble manner. There is excessively little colour in them, their

prevalent tone being a greyish brown opposed with grey, black, and a very warm russet. They are thinly painted, perfect in tone, and quite untouched. The first of them is *St George and the Dragon*,⁷ the subject being treated in a new and curious way. The principal figure is the princess, who sits astride on the dragon's neck, holding him by a bridle of silken riband; St George stands above and behind her, holding his hands over her head as if to bless her, or to keep the dragon quiet by heavenly power; and a monk stands by on the right, looking gravely on. There is no expression or life in the dragon, though the white flashes in its eye are very ghastly: but the whole thing is entirely typical; and the princess is not so much represented riding on the dragon, as supposed to be placed by St George in an attitude of perfect victory over her chief enemy. She has a full rich dress of dull red, but her figure is somewhat ungraceful. St George is in grey armour and grey drapery, and has a beautiful face; his figure entirely dark against the distant sky. There is a study for this picture in the Manfrini Palace.

9. St Andrew and St Jerome⁸

This, the companion picture, has even less colour than its opposite. It is nearly all brown and grey; the fig-leaves and olive-leaves brown, the faces brown, the dresses brown, and St Andrew holding a great brown cross. There is nothing that can be called colour, except the grey of the sky, which approaches in some places a little to blue, and a single piece of dirty brick-red in St Jerome's dress; and yet Tintoret's greatness hardly ever shows more than in the management of such sober tints. I would rather have these two small brown pictures, and two others in the Academy perfectly brown also in their general tone—the *Cain and Abel* and the *Adam and Eve*,—than all the other small pictures in Venice put together which he painted in bright colours for altar pieces; but I never saw two pictures which so



70



71



PREVIOUS PAGES

St Andrew and St Jerome

St Luis, St George
and the Princess

Bacchus and Ariadne

72

nearly approached grisailles as these, and yet were delicious pieces of colour. I do not know if I am right in calling one of the saints St Andrew. He stands holding a great upright wooden cross against the sky. St Jerome reclines at his feet, against a rock over which some glorious fig-leaves and olive branches are shooting; every line of them studied with the most exquisite care, and yet cast with perfect freedom.

10. *Bacchus and Ariadne*

The most beautiful of the four careful pictures by Tintoret, which occupy the angles of the Anti-Collegio. Once one of the noblest pictures in the world, but now miserably faded, the sun being allowed to fall on it all day long. The design of the forms of the leafage round the head of the Bacchus, and the floating grace of the female figure above, will, however, always give interest to this picture, unless it be repainted. The other three Tintorets in this room are careful and fine, but far inferior to the *Bacchus*; and the *Vulcan and the Cyclops* is a singularly meagre and vulgar study of common models.

14. *Marriage of St Catherine*

In the same room.⁹ An inferior picture, but the figure of St Catherine is quite exquisite. Note how her veil falls over her form, showing the sky through it, as an alpine cascade falls over a marble rock.

There are three other Tintorets on the walls of this room, but all inferior, though full of power. Note especially the painting of the lion's wings, and of the colour-

ed carpet, in the one nearest the throne, the Doge Alvise Mocenigo adoring the Redeemer.* [*]. Sala del Collegio. I was happy enough to obtain the original sketch for this picture, in Venice (it had been long in the possession of Signor Nerly): and after being the most honoured of all pictures at Denmark Hill, until my father's death, it is now given to my school in Oxford.]

The roof is entirely by Paul Veronese, and the traveller who really loves painting ought to get leave to come to this room whenever he chooses; and should pass the summer sunny mornings there again and again, wandering now and then into the Anti-Collegio, and Sala dei Pregadi, and coming back to rest under the wings of the couched lion at the feet of the *Mocenigo*. He will no otherwise enter so deeply into the heart of Venice. [x1.373-376]

1. *Luke* 15: 10.

2. "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 *Cor* 13 :31).

3. The subjects are emblematical of the Venetian Empire: Zeus giving Venice the Empire of the Sea; Padua; Treviso; Friuli, etc.

4. *Votive Painting of Doges Pietro Lando and Marcantonio Trevisan with the Dead Christ Supported by Angels and Other Saints*, c. 1582.

5. Also called Sala del Senato.

6. Now attributed to Palma il Giovane.

7. Since 1937 at Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia.

8. Since 1928 alle Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia.

9. Sala del Collegio.

73

FELICE, CHURCH OF ST

Said to contain a Tintoret, which, if untouched, I should conjecture, from Lazari's statement of its subject, **St Demetrius armed**, with one of the Ghisi family in prayer, must be very fine. Otherwise the church is of no importance. [x1.377]

GIORGIO MAGGIORE, CHURCH OF ST

A building which owes its interesting effect chiefly to its isolated position, being seen over a great space of lagoon. The traveller should especially notice in its façade the manner in which the central Renaissance architects (of whose style this church is a renowned example) endeavoured to fit the laws they had established to the requirements of their age. Churches were required with aisles and clerestories, that is to say, with a high central nave and lower wings; and the question was, how to face this form with pillars of one proportion. [...] The interior of the church is like a large assembly room, and would have been undeserving of a moment's attention, but that it contains some most precious pictures, namely:

1. *Gathering the Manna*

On the left hand of the high altar. One of Tintoret's most remarkable landscapes. A brook flowing through a mountainous country, studded with thickets and palm-trees: the congregation have

been long in the Wilderness, and are employed in various manufactures much more than in gathering the manna. One group is forging, another grinding manna in a mill, another making shoes, one woman making a piece of dress, some washing; the main purpose of Tintoret being evidently to indicate the continuity of the supply of heavenly food. Another painter would have made the congregation hurrying to gather it, and wondering at it. Tintoret at once makes us remember that they have been fed with it "by the space of forty years."¹ It is a large picture, full of interest and power, but scattered in effect, and not striking except from its elaborate landscape.

2. *The Last Supper*

Opposite the former. These two pictures have been painted for their places, the subjects being illustrative of the sacrifice of the mass. This latter is remarkable for its entire homeliness in the general treatment of the subject; the entertainment being

represented like any large supper in a second-rate Italian inn, the figures being all comparatively uninteresting; but we are reminded that the subject is a sacred one, not only by the strong light shining from the head of Christ, but because the smoke of the lamp which hangs over the table turns, as it rises, into a multitude of angels, all painted in grey, the colour of the smoke; and so writhed and twisted together that the eye hardly at first distinguishes them from the vapour out of which they are formed, ghosts of countenances and filmy wings filling up the intervals between the completed heads. The idea is highly characteristic of the master. The picture has been grievously injured, but still shows miracles of skill in the expression of candlelight mixed with twilight; variously reflected rays, and half tones of the dimly lighted chamber, mingled with the beams

of the lantern and those from the head of Christ, flashing along the metal and glass upon the table, and under it along the floor, and dying away into the recesses of the room.

3. *Martyrdom of various Saints*

Altar piece of the third altar in the south aisle. A moderately sized picture, and now a very disagreeable one, owing to the violent red into which the colour that formed the glory of the angel at the top is changed. It has been hastily painted, and only shows the artist's power in the energy of the figure of an executioner drawing a bow, and in the magnificent ease with which the other figures are thrown together in all manner of wild groups and defiances of probability. Stones and arrows are flying about in the air at random.



The Last Supper

The Last Supper,
detail

4. Coronation of the Virgin

Fourth altar in the same aisle. Painted more for the sake of the portraits at the bottom, than of the Virgin at the top.² A good picture, but somewhat tame for Tintoret, and much injured. The principal figure, in black, is still, however, very fine.

5. Resurrection of Christ

At the end of the north aisle, in the chapel beside the choir. Another picture painted chiefly for the sake of the included portraits,³ and remarkably cold in general conception; its colour has, however, been gay and delicate, lilac, yellow, and blue being largely used in it. The flag which our Saviour bears in His hand has been once as bright as the sail of a Venetian fishing-boat, but the colours are now all chilled, and the picture is rather crude than brilliant; a mere wreck of what it was, and all covered with droppings of wax at the bottom.

6. Martyrdom of St Stephen

Altar piece in the north transept. The saint is in a rich prelate's dress, looking as if he had just been saying mass, kneeling in the foreground, and perfectly serene. The stones are flying about him like hail, and the ground is covered with them as thickly as if it were a river bed. But in the midst of them, at the saint's right hand, there is a book lying, crushed, but open, two or three stones which have torn one of its leaves lying upon it. The freedom and ease with which the leaf is crumpled is just as characteristic of the master as any of the grander features; no one but Tintoret could have so crushed a leaf; but the idea is still more characteristic of him, for the book is evidently meant for the Mosaic history which Stephen had just been expounding, and its being crushed by the stones shows how the blind rage of the Jews was violating their own law in the murder of Stephen. In the upper part of the picture





Martyrdom of St Stephen

are three figures, Christ, the Father, and St Michael. Christ of course at the right hand of the Father, as Stephen saw Him standing; but there is little dignity in this part of the conception. In the middle of the picture, which is also the middle distance, are three or four men throwing stones, with Tintoret's usual vigour of gesture, and behind them an immense and confused crowd; so that, at first, we wonder where St Paul is; but presently we observe that, in the front of this crowd, and almost exactly in the centre of the picture, there is a figure seated on the ground, very noble and quiet, and with some loose garments thrown across its knees. It is dressed in vigorous black and red. The figure of the Father in the sky above is dressed in black and red also, and these two figures are the centres of colour to the whole design. It is almost impossible to praise too highly the refinement of conception which withdrew the unconverted St Paul into the distance, so as entirely to separate him from the immediate interest of the scene, and yet marked the dignity to which he was afterwards to be raised, by investing him with the colours which occurred nowhere else in the picture except in the dress which veils the form of the Godhead. It is also to be

noted as an interesting example of the value which the painter put upon colour only; another composer would have thought it necessary to exalt the future apostle by some peculiar dignity of action or expression. The posture of the figure is indeed grand, but inconspicuous; Tintoret does not depend upon it, and thinks that the figure is quite ennobled enough by being made a keynote of colour.

It is also worth observing how boldly imaginative is the treatment which covers the ground with piles of stones, and yet leaves the martyr apparently unwounded. Another painter would have covered him with blood, and elaborated the expression of pain upon his countenance. Tintoret leaves us under no doubt as to what manner of death he is dying; he makes the air hurtle with the stones, but he does not choose to make his picture disgusting, or even painful. The face of the martyr is serene, and exulting; and we leave the picture, remembering only how "he fell asleep." [xi.381-384]

1. A recollection of *Exodus* 16: 35, and *Acts* 7: 42.

2. St Benedick and Pope Gregory.

3. Members of the Morosini family.

GIOVANNI E PAOLO, CHURCH OF ST*

Our Lady
with the Camerlenghi

[*. I have always called this church simply 'St John and Paul,' not Sts John and Paul; just as the Venetians say San Giovanni e Paolo, and not Santi G., etc.] An impressive church, though none of its Gothic is comparable with that of the North, or with that of Verona. The western door is interesting as one of the last conditions of Gothic design passing into Renaissance, very rich and beautiful of its kind, especially the wreath of fruit and flowers which forms its princi-

pal moulding. The statue of Bartolomeo Colleone, in the little square beside the church, is certainly one of the noblest works in Italy. I have never seen anything approaching it in animation, in vigour of portraiture, or nobleness of line. The reader will need Lazari's Guide in making the circuit of the church, which is full of interesting monuments: but I wish especially to direct his attention to two pictures, besides the celebrated Peter Martyr:⁴ namely,

1. *The Crucifixion*

On the wall of the left-hand aisle, just before turning into the transept.² A picture fifteen feet long by eleven or twelve high. I do not believe that either the *Miracle of St Mark*, or the great *Crucifixion*, in the Scuola di San Rocco, cost Tintoret more pains than this comparatively small work, which is now utterly neglected, covered with filth and cobwebs, and fearfully injured. As a piece of colour, and light and shade, it is also

gether marvellous. Of all the fifty figures which the picture contains, there is not one which in any way injures or contends with another; nay, there is not a single fold of garment or touch of the pencil which could be spared; every virtue of Tintoret, as a painter, is there in its highest degree,—colour at once the most intense and the most delicate, the utmost decision in the arrangement of masses of light, and yet half tones and modulations of endless variety; and all executed



with a magnificence of handling which no words are energetic enough to describe. I have hardly ever seen a picture in which there was so much decision, and so little impetuosity, and in which so little was conceded to haste, to accident, or to weakness. It is too infinite a work to be describable; but among its minor passages of extreme beauty, should especially be noticed the manner in which the accumulated forms of the human body, which fill the picture from end to end, are prevented from being felt heavy, by the grace and the elasticity of two or three sprays of leafage which spring from a broken root in the foreground, and rise conspicuous in shadow against an interstice filled by the pale blue, grey, and golden light in which the distant crowd is invested, the office of this foliage being, in an artistical point of view, correspondent to that of the trees set by the sculptors of the Ducal Palace on its angles. But they have a far more important meaning in the picture than any artistical one. If the spectator will look carefully at the root which I have called broken, he will find that, in reality, it is not broken, but cut: the other branches of the young tree having *lately been cut away*. When we remember that one of the principal incidents in the great San Rocco *Crucifixion* is the ass feeding on withered palm-leaves, we shall be at no loss to understand the great painter's purpose in lifting the branch of this mutilated olive against the dim light of the distant sky; while, close beside it, St Joseph of Arimathea drags along the dust a white garment, observe, the principal light of the picture, stained with the blood of that King before whom, five days before, His crucifiers had strewn their own garments in the way.

2. *Our Lady with the Camerlenghi*

On the centre chapel of the three on the right of the choir.³ A remarkable instance of the theoretical manner of representing scriptural facts, which, at this time, as noted in the second chapter of this

volume,¹ was undermining the belief of the facts themselves. Three Venetian chamberlains desired to have their portraits painted, and at the same time to express their devotion to the Madonna; to that end they are painted kneeling before her, and in order to account for their all three being together, and to give a thread or clue to the story of the picture, they are represented as the Three Magi; but lest the spectator should think it strange that the Magi should be in the dress of Venetian chamberlains, the scene is marked as a mere ideality, by surrounding the person of the Virgin with saints who lived five hundred years after her. She has for attendants St Theodore, St Sebastian, and St Carlo (query St Joseph). One hardly knows whether most to regret the spirit which was losing sight of the verities of religious history in imaginative abstractions, or to praise the modesty and piety which desired rather to be represented as kneeling before the Virgin than in the discharge or among the insignia of important offices of state. As an "Adoration of the Magi", the picture is, of course, sufficiently absurd; the St Sebastian leans back in the corner to be out of the way; the three Magi kneel, with out the slightest appearance of emotion, to a Madonna seated in a Venetian loggia of the fifteenth century, and three Venetian servants behind bear their offerings in a very homely sack, tied up at the mouth. As a piece of portraiture and artistical composition, the work is altogether perfect, perhaps the best piece of Tintoret's portrait-painting in existence. It is very carefully and steadily wrought, and arranged with consummate skill on a difficult plan. The canvas is a long oblong, I think about eighteen or twenty feet long, by about seven high; one might almost fancy the painter had been puzzled to bring the piece into use, the figures being all thrown into positions which a little diminish their height. The nearest chamberlain is

kneeling, the two behind him bowing themselves slightly, the attendants behind bowing lower, the Madonna sitting, the St Theodore sitting still lower on the steps at her feet, and the St Sebastian leaning back, so that all the lines of the picture incline more or less from right to left as they ascend. This slope, which gives unity to the detached groups, is carefully exhibited by what a mathematician would call co-ordinates,—the upright pillars of the loggia and the horizontal clouds of the beautiful sky. The colour is very quiet, but rich and deep, the local tones being brought out with intense force, and the cast shadows subdued, the manner being much more that of Titian than of Tintoret. The sky appears full

of light, though it is as dark as the flesh of the faces; and the forms of its floating clouds, as well as of the hills over which they rise, are drawn with a deep remembrance of reality. There are hundreds of pictures of Tintoret's more amazing than this, but I hardly know one that I more love. [xi.384-387]

1. Since destroyed by fire.

2. Since 1891 at the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia.

3. Now at the Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia. It is inscribed "Unanimis concordia Symbolus, 1566." The third saint in attendance on the Virgin is now called not St Carlo but St Mark.

JESUITI, CHURCH OF THE

The basest Renaissance; but worth a visit in order to examine the imitations of curtains in white marble inlaid with green. It contains a Tintoret, *The Assumption*, which I have not examined; and a Titian, *The Martyrdom of St Lawrence*, originally, it seems to me, of little value, and now, having been restored, of none.

[xi.389-390]

LIBRERIA VECCHIA¹

A graceful building of the central Renaissance, designed by Sansovino, 1536, and much admired by all architects of the school. It was continued by Scamozzi, down the whole side of St Mark's Place, adding another story above it, which modern critics blame as destroying the "eurithmia;" never considering that had the two low stories of the Library been continued along the entire length of the Piazza, they would have looked so low that the entire dignity of the square would have been lost. As it is, the Library is left in its originally good proportions, and the larger mass of the Procuratie Nuove forms a more majestic, though less graceful, side for the great square.

[...] The continuation of the Procuratie Nuove, at the western extremity of St Mark's Place (together with various apartments in the great line of the Procuratie Nuove), forms the "Royal Palace", the residence of the Emperor when at Venice. This building is entirely modern, built in 1810, in imitation of the Procuratie Nuove, and on the site of Sansovino's Church of San Geminiano.

In this range of buildings, including the Royal Palace, the Procuratie Nuove, the old Library, and the "Zecca" which is connected with them (the latter being an ugly building of very modern date, not worth notice architecturally), there are many most valuable

pictures, among which I would especially direct attention, first to those in the Zecca, namely, a beautiful and strange Madonna, by Benedetto Diana; two noble Bonifazios; and **two groups**, by Tintoret, of the Provveditori della Zecca, by no means to be missed, whatever may be sacrificed to see them, on account of the quietness and veracity of their unaffected portraiture, and the absolute freedom from all vanity either in the painter or in his subjects.

Next, in the *Antisala* of the old Library, observe the *Sapienza* of Titian, in the centre of the ceiling; a most interesting work in the light brilliancy of its colour, and the resemblance to Paul Veronese. Then, in the great hall of the old Library, examine the two large Tintorets, *St Mark saving a Saracen from Drowning*, and the *Stealing his Body from Constantinople*, both rude, but great (note in the latter the dashing of the rain on the pavement, and running of the water about the feet of the figures): then, in the narrow spaces between the windows, there are some magnificent single figures by Tintoret, among the finest things of the kind in Italy, or in Europe. [x1.389-390]

¹. This building was re-arranged internally to receive the Marciana Library, transferred there from the Ducal Palace.

The Finding
of the True Cross

MATER DOMINI, CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA

It contains two important pictures: one over the second altar on the right, *St Christina*, by Vincenzo Catena, a very lovely example of the Venetian religious school; and, over the north transept door, the *Finding of the Cross*, by Tintoret, a carefully painted and attractive picture, but by no means a good specimen of the master, as far as regards power of conception. He does not seem to have entered into his subject. There is no wonder, no rapture, no entire devotion in any of the figures. They are only interested and pleased in a mild way; and the kneeling woman who hands the nails to a man stooping forward to receive them on the right hand, does so with the air of a person saying, "You had better take care of them; they may be wanted another time." This general coldness in expression is much increased by the presence of several figures on the right and left, introduced for the sake of portraiture merely: and the reality, as well as the feeling, of the scene is destroyed by our seeing one of the youngest and weakest of the women with a huge cross lying across her knees, the whole weight of

it resting upon her. As might have been expected, where the conception is so languid, the execution is little delighted in: it is throughout steady and powerful, but in no place affectionate, and in no place impetuous. If Tintoret had always painted in this way, he would have sunk into a mere mechanist. It is, however, a genuine and tolerably well-preserved specimen, and its female figures are exceedingly graceful; that of St Helena very queenly, though by no means agreeable in feature. Among the male portraits on the left there is one different from the usual types which occur either in Venetian paintings or Venetian populace; it is carefully painted, and more like a Scotch Presbyterian minister than a Greek. The background is chiefly composed of architecture, white, remarkably uninteresting in colour, and still more so in form. This is to be noticed as one of the unfortunate results of the Renaissance teaching at this period. Had Tintoret backed his Empress Helena with Byzantine architecture, the picture might have been one of the most gorgeous he ever painted. [x1.392]



MOISÈ, CHURCH OF ST

Notable as one of the basest examples of the basest school of the Renaissance. It contains one important picture, namely, *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet*, by Tintoret; on the left side of the chapel, north of the choir. This picture has been originally dark, is now much faded,—in parts, I believe, altogether destroyed,—and is hung in the worst light of a chapel, where, on a sunny day at noon, one could not easily read without a candle. I cannot, therefore, give much information respecting it; but it is certainly one of the least successful of the painter's works, and both careless and unsatisfactory in its composition as well as its colour.

One circumstance is noticeable as in a considerable degree detracting from the interest of most of Tintoret's representations of our Saviour with His disciples. He never loses sight of the fact that all were poor, and the latter ignorant; and while he never paints a senator or a saint, once thoroughly canonized, except as a gentleman, he is very careful to paint the Apostles, in their living intercourse with the Saviour, in such a manner that the spectator may see in an instant, as the Pharisee did of old, that they were unlearned and ignorant men; and, whenever we find them in a room, it is always such a one as would be inhabited by the lower

classes. There seems some violation of this practice in the dais, or flight of steps, at the top of which the Saviour is placed in the present picture; but we are quickly reminded that the guests' chamber or upper room ready prepared was not likely to have been in a palace, by the humble furniture upon the floor,¹ consisting of a tub with a copper saucepan in it, a coffee-pot, and a pair of bellows, curiously associated with a symbolic cup² with a wafer, which, however, is in an injured part of the canvas, and may have been added by the priests. I am totally unable to state what the background of the picture is or has been; and the only point farther to be not-

ed about it is the solemnity, which, in spite of the familiar and homely circumstances above noticed, the painter has given to the scene, by placing the Saviour, in the act of washing the feet of Peter, at the top of a circle of steps, on which the other Apostles kneel in adoration and astonishment. [x1.394]

1. "And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us." (*Mark* 14:15).

2. "And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it." (*Mark* 14:23-24).



Christ Washing
the Disciples' Feet

ORTO, CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DELL'

But I shall at present terminate our series of illustrations by reference to a work of less touching, but more tremendous appeal; *The Last Judgment* in the Church of Santa Maria dell'Orto. In this subject, almost all realizing or local statement had been carefully avoided by the most powerful painters, they judging it better to represent its chief circumstances as generic thoughts, and present them to the mind in a typical or abstract form. In the Judgment of Angelico the treatment is purely typical; a long Campo Santo, composed of two lines of graves, stretches away into the distance; on the left side of it rise the condemned; on the right the just. With Giotto and Orcagna,¹ the conception, though less rigid, is equally typical; no effort being made at the suggestion of space, and only so much ground represented as is absolutely necessary to support the near figures and allow space for a few graves. Michael Angelo in no respect differs in his treatment, except that his figures are less symmetrically grouped, and a greater conception of space is given by their various perspective. No interest is attached to his background in itself. Fra Bartolomeo, never able to grapple with any species of sublimity except that of simple religious feeling, fails most signally in this mighty theme.* [* Fresco in an outhouse of the Ospedale Sta. Maria Nuova at Florence.] His group of the dead, including not more than ten or twelve figures, occupies the foreground only; behind them a vacant plain extends to the foot of a cindery volcano, about whose mouth several little black devils like spiders are skipping and crawling. The judgment of quick and dead is thus expressed as taking place in about a rood square, and on a single group; the whole of the space and horizon of the sky and land being left vacant, and the presence of the Judge of all the earth made more finite than the sweep of a whirlwind or a thunder-storm.

By Tintoret only has this unimaginable event been

grappled with in its Verity; not typically nor symbolically, but as they may see it who shall not sleep, but be changed.² Only one traditional circumstance he has received with Dante³ and Michael Angelo, the Boat of the Condemned; but the impetuosity of his mind bursts out even in the adoption of this image; he has not stopped at the scowling ferryman of the one, nor at the sweeping blow and demon dragging of the other, but seized Hylas-like by the limbs, and tearing up the earth in his agony, the victim is dashed into his destruction: nor is it the sluggish Lethe, nor the fiery lake that bears the cursed vessel,⁴ but the oceans of the earth and the waters of the firmament gathered into one white, ghastly cataract; the river of the wrath of God, roaring down into the gulf where the world has melted with its fervent heat,⁵ choked with the ruin of nations, and the limbs of its corpses tossed out of its whirling, like water-wheels. Bat-like, out of the holes and caverns and shadows of the earth, the bones gather and the clay heaps heave, rattling and adhering into half-kneaded anatomies, that crawl, and startle, and struggle up among the putrid weeds, with the clay clinging to their clotted hair, and their heavy eyes sealed by the earth darkness yet, like his of old who went his way unseeing to the Siloam Pool;⁶ shaking off one by one the dreams of the prison-house, hardly hearing the clangour of the trumpets of the armies of God, blinded yet more, as they awake, by the white light of the new Heaven, until the great vortex of the four winds bears up their bodies to the judgment-seat: the Firmament is all full of them, a very dust of human souls, that drifts, and floats, and falls in the interminable, inevitable light; the bright clouds are darkened with them as with thick snow, currents of atom life in the arteries of heaven, now soaring up slowly, and higher and higher still, till the eye and the thought can follow no farther, borne up, wingless, by their inward faith and by the angel powers invisible, now hurled





in countless drifts of horror before the breath of their condemnation. [iv.275-277]

An interesting example of Renaissance Gothic, the traceries of the windows being very rich and quaint. It contains four most important Tintoretts: *The Last Judgment*, *The Worship of the Golden Calf*, *The Presentation of the Virgin*, and *Martyrdom of St Agnes*. The first two are among his largest and mightiest works, but grievously injured by damp and neglect; and unless the traveller is accustomed to decipher the thoughts in a picture patiently, he need not hope to derive any pleasure from them. But no pictures will better reward a resolute study. The following account of the "Last judgment," given in the second volume of *Modern Painters*, will be useful in enabling the traveller to enter into the meaning of the picture, but its real power is only to be felt by patient examination of it. Note in the opposite picture the way the clouds are wrapped about the distant Sinai. The figure of the little Madonna in the *Presentation* should be compared with Titian's in his picture of the same subject in the Academy. I prefer Tintoret's infinitely; and note how much finer is.⁷ [xi.395-396]

1. Orcagna's (one of a series now ascribed by some to Bernardo Daddi) is in the Campo Santo at Pisa.
2. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51).
3. *Inferno*, iii. 89.
4. *Apocalypse* 20, 21.
5. "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the

elements shall melt with fervent heat?" (2 Peter 3: 12).

6. "He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." (*John* 9 :11); "For as much as this people refuses the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son." (*Isaiah* 8: 6-8).

7. In his 1846 diary Ruskin works out the contrasts in detail: "Tintoret's is grey, grand and useful, no picturesqueness admitted; Titian's is brown and mean, and with all the evil of picturesqueness, without its nature; it is awkwardly chipped and stained. Tintoret puts an arabesque on the steps in gold, actual gilding with a brown touch of paint beside it; these sweeping steps are rich and delicious (perhaps suggested by the beautiful decoration of those of the Giant's Staircase). Titian's are meagre, square, and cold; his old woman with her basket of eggs is altogether vulgar, singularly inferior to Tintoret's grand sitting figure looking down on the child, though this latter even is a little hurtful as absolutely uninterested in the chief action; the profile of the upright ascending figure on the right [i.e. in Tintoret's picture] is about the most beautiful Venetian face of a certain order that I know. In Tintoret's architecture the projecting balcony above, on the perspective side of the house, is curious for its severe and not very tasteful simplicity. I think the interstices are too crowded above, and should be arranged as in the figure a below, where also the lie of the drapery is given. It casts no shadow, and is altogether poor and ineffective; yet the picture on the whole is grand and spacious; in the figures the blacks and reds are excessively violent in quantity, the former exceedingly cold. The little Madonna has a sphere or glory of light all about her; in Tintoret's it is only about her head; but tenfold more expressive and heavenly from its being brought against the light of the sky in the most daring manner." [LE]

ROCCO, CHURCH OF ST

Notable only for the most interesting pictures by Tintoret which it contains, namely:

1. *San Rocco before the Pope*

On the left of the door as we enter. A delightful picture in his best manner, but not much laboured; and, like several other pictures in this church, it seems to me to have been executed at some period of the painter's life when he was either in ill-health, or else had got into a mechanical way of painting, from having made too little reference to nature for a long time. There is something stiff and forced in the white draperies on both sides, and a general character about the whole which I can feel better than I can describe; but which, if I had been the painter's physician, would have immediately caused me to order him to shut up his painting-room, and take a voyage to the Levant and back again. The figure of the Pope is, however, extremely beautiful, and is not unworthy, in its jewelled magnificence, here dark against the sky, of comparison with the figure of the high priest in the *Presentation*, in the Scuola di San Rocco.

2. *Annunciation*

On the other side of door, on entering. A most disagreeable and dead picture, having all the faults of the age, and none of the merits of the painter. It must be a matter of future investigation to me, what could cause the fall of his mind from a conception so great and so fiery as that of the *Annunciation* in the Scuola di San Rocco, to this miserable reprint of an idea worn out centuries before. One of the most inconceivable things in it, considered as the work of Tintoret, is that where the angel's robe drifts away behind his limb; one cannot tell by the character of the outline, or by the tones of the colour, whether the cloud comes in before the robe, or whether the robe

cuts upon the cloud. The Virgin is uglier than that of the Scuola, and not half so real; and the draperies are crumpled in the most common-place and ignoble folds. It is a picture well worth study, as an example of the extent to which the greatest mind may be betrayed by the abuse of its powers, and the neglect of its proper food in the study of nature.

3. *Pool of Bethesda*

On the right side of the church, in its centre, the lowest of the two pictures which occupy the wall. A noble work, but eminently disagreeable, as must be all pictures of this subject; and with the same character in it of undefinable want, which I have noticed in the two preceding works. The main figure in it is the cripple, who has taken up his bed;¹ but the whole effect of this action is lost by his not turning to Christ, but flinging it on his shoulder like a triumphant porter with a huge load; and the corrupt Renaissance architecture, among which the figures are crowded, is both ugly in itself and much too small for them. It is worth noticing, for the benefit of persons who find fault with the perspective of the Pre-Raphaelites, that the perspective of the brackets beneath these pillars is utterly absurd; and that, in fine, the presence or absence of perspective has nothing to do with the merits of a great picture; not that the perspective of the Pre-Raphaelites is false in any case that I have examined, the objection being just as untenable as it is ridiculous.

4. *San Rocco in the Desert*

Above the last-named picture. A single recumbent figure in a not very interesting landscape, deserving less attention than a picture of St Martin just opposite to it,—a noble and knightly figure on horseback by Pordenone, to which I cannot pay a greater compliment than by saying that I was a considerable time in doubt whether or not it was another Tintoret.

5. *San Rocco in the Hospital*

On the right-hand side of the altar. There are four vast pictures by Tintoret in the dark choir of this church, not only important by their size (each being some twenty-five feet long by ten feet high), but also elaborate compositions; and remarkable, one for its extraordinary landscape, and the other as the most studied picture in which the painter has introduced horses in violent action. In order to show what waste of human mind there is in these dark churches of Venice, it is worth recording that, as I was examining these pictures, there came in a party of eighteen German tourists, not hurried, nor jesting among themselves, as large parties often do, but patiently submitting to their cicerone, and evidently desirous of doing their duty as intelligent travellers. They sat down for a long time on the benches of the nave, looked a little at the *Pool of Bethesda*, walked up into the choir, and there heard a lecture of considerable length from their valet-de-place upon some subject connected with the altar itself, which, being in German, I did not understand; they then turned and went slowly out of the church, not one of the whole eighteen ever giving a

single glance to any of the four Tintorets, and only one of them, as far as I saw, even raising his eyes to the walls on which they hung, and immediately withdrawing them, with a jaded and nonchalant expression, easily interpretable into "Nothing but old black pictures." The two Tintorets above noticed, at the end of the church, were passed also without a glance; and this neglect is not because the pictures have nothing in them capable of arresting the popular mind, but simply because they are totally in the dark, or confused among easier and more prominent objects of attention. This picture, which I have called *St Rocco in the Hospital*, shows him, I suppose, in his general ministrations at such places, and is one of the usual representations of disgusting subjects from which neither Orcagna nor Tintoret seems ever to have shrunk. It is a very noble picture, carefully composed and highly wrought; but to me gives no pleasure, first, on account of its subject, secondly, on account of its dull brown tone all over, it being impossible, or nearly so, in such a scene, and at all events inconsistent with its feeling, to introduce vivid colour of any kind. So it is a brown study of diseased limbs in a close room.





Pool of Bethesda,
detail

St Roch Heals
the Plague Victims

6. *Cattle Piece*³

Above the picture last described. I can give no other name to this picture, whose subject I can neither guess nor discover, the picture being in the dark, and the guide-books leaving me in the same position. All I can make out of it is, that there is a noble landscape, with cattle and figures. It seems to me the best landscape of Tintoret's in Venice, except the *Flight into Egypt*; and is even still more interesting from its savage character, the principal trees being pines, something like Titian's in his *St Francis receiving the Stigmata*, and chestnuts on the slopes and in the hollows of the hills: the animals also seem first-rate. But it is too high, too much faded, and too much in the dark to be made out. It seems never to have been rich in colour, rather cool and grey, and very full of light.

7. *Finding of Body of San Rocco*⁴

On the left-hand side of the altar. An elaborate, but somewhat confused picture, with a flying angel in a blue drapery; but it seemed to me altogether uninteresting, or, perhaps, requiring more study than I was able to give it.

8. *San Rocco in Campo d'Armata*⁵

So this picture is called by the sacristan. I could see no San Rocco in it; nothing but a wild group of horses and warriors in the most magnificent confusion of fall and flight ever painted by man. They seem all dashed different ways as if by a whirlwind; and a whirlwind there must be, or a thunder-bolt, behind them, for a huge tree is torn up and hurled into the air beyond the central figure as if it were a shivered lance. Two of the horses meet in the midst, as if in a tournament; but in madness or fear, not in hostility: on the horse to the right is a standard-bearer, who stoops as from some foe behind him, with the lance laid across his saddlebow level, and the flag stretched out behind him as he flies, like the sail of a ship drifting from its mast; the central horseman, who meets the shock, of storm, or enemy, whatever it be, is hurled backwards from his seat, like a stone from a sling; and this figure, with the shattered tree trunk behind it, is the most noble part of the picture. There is another grand horse on the right, however, also in full action. Two gigantic figures on foot, on the left, meant to be nearer than the others, would, it seems to me, have injured the





picture, had they been clearly visible; but time has reduced them to perfect subordination.

1. "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." (*John* 5: 8).
2. *St Roch Heals the Plague Victims.*
3. *St Roch Healing the Animals.*
4. *St Roch Comforted by an Angel.*
5. *Capture of St Roch.*



**St Roch Healing
the Animals**

Capture of St Roch

ROCCO, SCUOLA DI SAN

An interesting building of the early Renaissance (1517), passing into Roman Renaissance. The wreaths of leafage about its shafts are wonderfully delicate and fine, though misplaced.

As regards the pictures which it contains, it is one of the three most precious buildings in Italy; buildings, I mean, consistently decorated with a series of paintings at the time of their erection, and still exhibiting that series in its original order. I suppose there can be little question but that the three most important edifices of this kind in Italy are the Sistine Chapel, the Campo Santo of Pisa, and the Scuola di San Rocco at Venice: the first painted by Michael Angelo; the second by Orcagna, Benozzo Gozzoli, Pietro Laurati, and several other men whose works are as rare as they are precious; and the third by Tintoret.

Whatever the traveller may miss in Venice, he should, therefore, give unembarrassed attention and unbroken time to the Scuola di San Rocco; and I shall, accordingly, number the pictures, and note in them, one by one, what seemed to me most worthy of observation.

They are sixty-two in all, but eight of these are merely of children or children's heads, and two of unimportant figures. The number of valuable pictures is fifty-two; arranged on the walls and ceilings of three rooms, so badly lighted, in consequence of the admirable arrangements of the Renaissance architect, that it is only in the early morning that some of the pictures can be seen at all, nor can they ever be seen but imperfectly. They were all painted, however, for their places in the dark, and, as compared with Tintoret's other works, are therefore, for the most part, nothing more than vast sketches, made to produce, under a certain degree of shadow, the effect of finished pictures. Their treatment is thus to be considered as a kind of scene-paint-

ing; differing from ordinary scene-painting only in this, that the effect aimed at is not that of a natural scene, but of a perfect picture. They differ in this respect from all other existing works; for there is not, as far as I know, any other instance in which a great master has consented to work for a room plunged into almost total obscurity. It is probable that none but Tintoret would have undertaken the task, and most fortunate that he was forced to it. For in this magnificent scene-painting we have, of course, more wonderful examples, both of his handling and knowledge of effect, than could ever have been exhibited in finished pictures; while the necessity of doing much with few strokes keeps his mind so completely on the stretch throughout the work (while yet the velocity of production prevented his being wearied), that no other series of his works exhibits powers so exalted. On the other hand, owing to the velocity¹ and coarseness of the painting, it is more liable to injury through drought or damp; and as the walls have been for years continually running down with rain, and what little sun gets into the place contrives to fall all day right on one or other of the pictures, they are nothing but wrecks of what they were; and the ruins of paintings originally coarse are not likely ever to be attractive to the public mind. Twenty or thirty years ago they were taken down to be retouched; but the man to whom the task was committed providentially died, and only one of them was spoiled. I have found traces of his work upon another, but not to an extent very seriously destructive. The rest of the sixty-two, or, at any rate, all that are in the upper room, appear entirely intact.

Although, as compared with his other works, they are all very scenic in execution, there are great differences in their degrees of finish; and, curiously enough, some on the ceilings and others in the

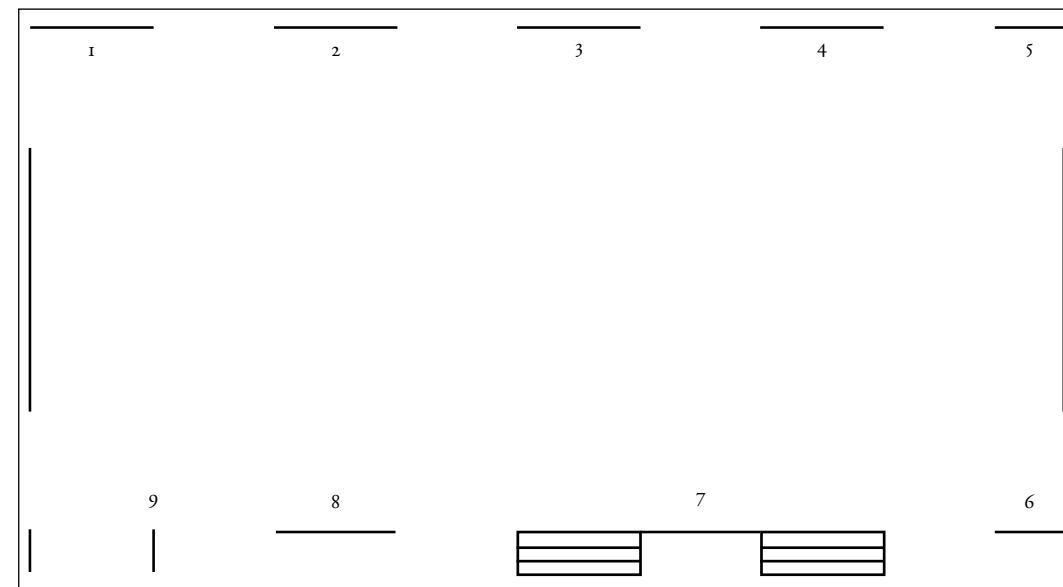
darkest places in the lower room are very nearly finished pictures, while the *Agony in the Garden*, which is in one of the best lights in the upper room, appears to have been painted in a couple of hours with

a broom for a brush. For the traveller's greater convenience I shall give a rude plan of the arrangement, and list of the subjects, of each group of pictures before examining them in detail. [x1.403-405]

First group

ON THE WALLS OF THE ROOM

ON THE GROUND FLOOR



1. *The Annunciation*
2. *Adoration of the Magi*
3. *Flight into Egypt*
4. *Massacre of the Innocents*
5. *The Magdalen*

6. *St Mary of Egypt*
7. *The Circumcision of Christ*
8. *Assumption of the Virgin*
9. *Visitation*

The Annunciation

1. *The Annunciation*

No subject has been more frequently or exquisitely treated by the religious painters than that of the Annunciation; though, as usual, the most perfect type of its pure ideal has been given by Angelico, and by him with the most radiant consummation (so far as I know) in a small reliquary in the sacristy of Santa Maria Novella. The background there, however, is altogether decorative; but, in the fresco of the corridor of St Mark's, the concomitant circumstances are of exceeding loveliness. The Virgin sits in an open loggia, resembling that of the Florentine church of L'Annunziata. Before her is a meadow of rich herbage, covered with daisies. Behind her is seen, through the door at the end of the loggia, a

chamber with a single grated window, through which a starlike beam of light falls into the silence. All is exquisite in feeling, but not inventive nor imaginative. Severe would be the shock and painful the contrast, if we could pass in an instant from that pure vision to the wild thought of Tintoret. For not in meek reception of the adoring messenger, but startled by the rush of his horizontal and rattling wings, the Virgin sits, not in the quiet loggia, not by the green pasture of the restored soul,² but houseless, under the shelter of a palace vestibule ruined and abandoned, with the noise of the axe and the hammer in her ears, and the tumult of a city round about her desolation. The spectator turns away at first, revolted, from the central object of the



picture forced painfully and coarsely forward, a mass of shattered brickwork, with the plaster mildewed away from it, and the mortar mouldering from its seams; and if he look again, either at this or at the carpenter's tools beneath it, will perhaps see, in the one and the other, nothing more than such a study of scene as Tintoret could but too easily obtain among the ruins of his own Venice, chosen to give a coarse explanation of the calling and the condition of the husband of Mary. But there is more meant than this. When he looks at the composition of the picture, he will find the whole symmetry of it depending on a narrow line of light, the edge of a carpenter's square, which connects these unused tools with an object at the top of the brickwork, a white stone, four square, the corner-stone of the old edifice, the base of its supporting column. This, I think, sufficiently explains the typical character of the whole. The ruined house is the Jewish dispensation; that obscurely arising in the dawning of the sky is the Christian; but the corner-stone of the old building remains, though the builders' tools lie idle beside it, and the stone which the builders refused is become the Head-stone of the Corner.³ In this picture, however, the force of the thought hardly atones for the painfulness of the scene and the turbulence of its feeling. The power of the master is more strikingly shown in his treatment of the subject which, however important, and however deep in its meaning, supplies not to the ordinary painter material enough ever to form a picture of high interest; the *Baptism of Christ*. [iv.263-265]

This, which first strikes the eye, is a very just representative of the whole group, the execution being carried to the utmost limits of boldness consistent with completion. It is a well-known picture, and need not therefore be specially described, but one or two points in it require notice. The face of the Virgin is very disagreeable to the spectator from below, giving the idea of a woman about thirty, who had

never been handsome. If the face is untouched, it is the only instance I have ever seen of Tintoret's failing in an intended effect, for, when seen near, the face is comely and youthful, and expresses only surprise, instead of the pain and fear of which it bears the aspect in the distance. I could not get near enough to see whether it had been retouched. It looks like Tintoret's work, though rather hard; but, as there are unquestionable marks of the retouching of this picture, it is possible that some slight restoration of lines supposed to be faded, entirely alters the distant expression of the face. One of the evident pieces of repainting is the scarlet of the Madonna's lap, which is heavy and lifeless. A far more injurious one is the strip of sky seen through the doorway by which the angel enters, which has originally been of the deep golden colour of the distance on the left, and which the blundering restorer has daubed over with whitish blue, so that it looks like a bit of the wall; luckily he has not touched the outlines of the angel's black wings, on which the whole expression of the picture depends. This angel and the group of small cherubs above form a great swinging chain, of which the dove representing the Holy Spirit forms the bend. The angels in their flight seem to be attached to this as the train of fire is to a rocket; all of them appearing to have swooped down with the swiftness of a falling star. [xi.405-406]

2. *Adoration of the Magi*

The most finished picture in the Scuola except the *Crucifixion*, and perhaps the most delightful of the whole. It unites every source of pleasure that a picture can possess; the highest elevation of principal subject, mixed with the lowest detail of picturesque incident; the dignity of the highest ranks of men, opposed to the simplicity of the lowest; the quietness and serenity of an incident in cottage life, contrasted with the

turbulence of troops of horsemen and the spiritual power of angels. The placing of the two doves as principal points of light in the front of the picture, in order to remind the spectator of the poverty of the mother whose child is receiving the offerings and adoration of three monarchs, is one of Tintoret's master touches; the whole scene, indeed, is conceived in his happiest manner. Nothing can be at once more humble or more dignified than the bearing of the kings: and there is a sweet reality given to the whole incident by the Madonna's stooping forward and lifting her hand in admiration of the vase of gold which has been set before the Christ, though she does so with such gentleness and quietness that her dignity is not in the least injured by the simplicity of the action. As if to illustrate the means by which the Wise Men were brought from the East, the whole picture is nothing but a large star, of which the Christ is the centre; all the figures, even the timbers of the roof, radiate from the small bright figure on which the countenances of the flying angels are bent, the star itself, gleaming through the timbers above, being quite subordinate. The composition would almost be too artificial were it not broken by the luminous distance, where the troop of horsemen are waiting for the kings. These, with a dog running at full speed, at once interrupt the symmetry of the lines, and form a point of relief from the over-concentration of all the rest of the action. [XI.406]

3. *Flight into Egypt*

One of the principal figures here is the donkey.⁴ I have never seen any of the nobler animals—lion, or leopard, or dragon—made so sublime as this quiet head of the domestic ass, chiefly owing to the grand motion in the nostril and writhing in the ears. The space of the picture is chiefly occupied by a lovely landscape, and the Madonna and St Joseph are pac-

ing their way along a shady path upon the banks of a river at the side of the picture. I had not any conception, until I got near, how much pains had been taken with the Virgin's head; its expression is as sweet and as intense as that of any of Raffaele's, its reality far greater.⁵ The painter seems to have intended that everything should be subordinate to the beauty of this single head; and the work is a wonderful proof of the way in which a vast field of canvas may be made conducive to the interest of a single figure. This is partly accomplished by slightness of painting, so that on close examination, while there is everything to astonish in the masterly handling and purpose, there is not much perfect or very delightful painting; in fact, the two figures are treated like the living figures in a scene at the theatre, and finished to perfection, while the landscape is painted as hastily as the scenes, and with the same kind of opaque size colour. It has, however, suffered as much as any of the series, and it is hardly fair to judge of its tones and colours in its present state. [XI.406]

4. *Massacre of the Innocents*

I have before alluded to the painfulness of Raffaele's treatment of the Massacre of the Innocents. Fuseli affirms of it, that, "in dramatic gradation he disclosed all the mother through every image of pity and of terror."⁶ If this be so, I think the philosophical spirit has prevailed over the imaginative. The imagination never errs; it sees all that is, and all the relations and bearings of it; but it would not have confused the mortal frenzy of maternal terror with various development of maternal character. Fear, rage, and agony, at their utmost pitch, sweep away all character: humanity itself would be lost in maternity, the woman would become the mere personification of animal fury or fear. For this reason all the ordinary representations of this subject are, I think, false and cold: the artist has not





Flight into Egypt,
detail

Massacre of the Innocents

heard the shrieks, nor mingled with the fugitives; he has sat down in his study to convulse features methodically, and philosophize over insanity. Not so Tintoret. Knowing, or feeling, that the expression of the human face was, in such circumstances, not to be rendered, and that the effort could only end in an ugly falsehood, he denies himself all aid from the features, he feels that if he is to place himself or us in the midst of that maddened multitude, there can be no time allowed for watching expression. Still less does he depend on details of murder and ghastliness of death; there is no blood, no stabbing or cutting, but there is an awful substitute for these in the chiaroscuro. The scene is the outer vestibule of a palace, the slippery marble floor is fearfully barred across by sanguine

shadows, so that our eyes seem to become bloodshot and strained with strange horror and deadly vision; a lake of life before them, like the burning seen of the doomed Moabite on the water that came by the way of Edom;⁷ a huge flight of stairs, without parapet, descends on the left; down this rush a crowd of women mixed with the murderers; *the child in the arms of one has been seized by the limbs, she hurls herself over the edge, and falls head downmost, dragging the child out of the grasp by her weight*;—she will be dashed dead in a second;—close to us is the great struggle; a heap of the mothers entangled in one mortal writhe with each other and the swords, one of the murderers dashed down and crushed beneath them, the sword of another caught by the blade and





Mary Magdalen

dragged at by a woman's naked hand; the youngest and fairest of the women, her child just torn away from a death grasp, and clasped to her breast with the grip of a steel vice, falls backwards, helplessly over the heap, right on the sword points; all knit together and hurled down in one hopeless, frenzied, furious abandonment of body and soul in the effort to save. Far back, at the bottom of the stairs, there is something in the shadow like a heap of clothes. It is a woman, sitting quiet,—quite quiet,—still as any stone; she looks down steadfastly on her dead child, laid along on the floor before her, and her hand is pressed softly upon her brow. This, to my mind, is the only Imaginative, that is, the only true, real, heartfelt representation of the being and actuality of the subject, in existence. [iv:272]

The account of this picture, given in *Modern Painters*, may be useful to the traveller, and is therefore here repeated. [...] I have nothing to add to the above description of this picture, except that I believe there may have been some change in the colour of the shadow that crosses the pavement. The chequers of the pavement are, in the light, golden white and pale grey; in the shadow, red and dark grey, the white in the sunshine becoming red in the shadow. I formerly supposed that this was meant to give greater horror to the scene, and it is very like Tintoret if it be so; but there is a strangeness and discordance in it which make me suspect the colours may have changed. [xi.407]

5. *The Magdalen*

This and the picture opposite to it, *St Mary of Egypt*, have been painted to fill up narrow spaces between the windows which were not large enough to receive compositions, and yet in which single figures would have looked awkwardly thrust into the corner. Tintoret has made these spaces as large as possible by

filling them with landscapes, which are rendered interesting by the introduction of single figures of very small size. He has not, however, considered his task of making a small piece of wainscot look like a large one, worth the stretch of his powers, and has painted these two landscapes just as carelessly and as fast as an upholsterer's journeyman finishing a room at a railway hotel. The colour is for the most part opaque, and dashed or scrawled on in the manner of a scene-painter; and as during the whole morning the sun shines upon the one picture, and during the afternoon upon the other, hues, which were originally thin and imperfect, are now dried in many places into mere dirt upon the canvas. With all these drawbacks the pictures are of very high interest, for although, as I said, hastily and carelessly, they are not languidly painted; on the contrary, he has been in his hottest and grandest temper; and in this first one (Magdalen) the laurel-tree, with its leaves driven hither and thither among flakes of fiery cloud, has been probably one of the greatest achievements that his hand performed in landscape: its roots are entangled in underwood, of which every leaf seems to be articulated, yet all is as wild as if it had grown there instead of having been painted; there has been a mountain distance, too, and a sky of stormy light, of which I infinitely regret the loss, for though its masses of light are still discernible, its variety of hue is all sunk into a withered brown. There is a curious piece of execution in the striking of the light upon a brook which runs under the roots of the laurel in the foreground: these roots are traced in shadow against the bright surface of the water: another painter would have drawn the light first, and drawn the dark roots over it. Tintoret has laid in a brown ground which he has left for the roots, and painted the water through their interstices with a few mighty rolls of his brush laden with white. [xi.408-409]



6. *St Mary of Egypt*

This picture differs but little, in the plan, from the one opposite, except that St Mary has her back towards us, and the Magdalen her face, and that the tree on the other side of the brook is a palm instead of a laurel. The brook (Jordan?) is, however, here much more important; and the water painting is exceedingly fine. Of all painters that I know, in old times, Tintoret is the fondest of running water; there was a sort of sympathy between it and his own impetuous spirit. The rest of the landscape is not of much interest, except so far as it is pleasant to see trunks of trees drawn by single strokes of the brush.

[xi.409]

7. *The Circumcision of Christ*

The custode has some story about this picture having been painted in imitation of Paul Veronese. I much doubt if Tintoret ever imitated anybody; but this picture is the expression of his perception of what Veronese delighted in, the nobility that there may be in mere golden tissue and coloured drapery. It is, in fact, a picture of the moral power of gold and colour; and the chief use of the attendant priest is to support upon his shoulders the crimson robe, with its square tablets of black and gold; and yet nothing is withdrawn from the interest or dignity of the scene. Tintoret has taken immense pains with the head of the high priest. I know not any existing old man's head so exquisitely tender, or so noble in





Visitation

its lines. He receives the infant Christ in his arms kneeling, and looking down upon the child with infinite veneration and love; and the flashing of golden rays from its head is made the centre of light and all interest. The whole picture is like a golden charger to receive the Child; the priest's dress is held up behind him, that it may occupy larger space; the tables and floor are covered with chequer work; the shadows of the temple are filled with brazen lamps; and above all are hung masses of curtains, whose crimson folds are strewn over with golden flakes. Next to the *Adoration of the Magi* this picture is the most laboriously finished of the Scuola di San Rocco, and it is unquestionably the highest existing type of the Sublimity which may be thrown into the treatment of accessories of dress and decoration. [XI.409-416]

8. *Assumption of the Virgin*

On the tablet or panel of stone which forms the side of the tomb out of which the Madonna rises, is this inscription, in large letters, REST. ANTONIUS

FLORIAN, 1834. Exactly in proportion to a man's idiocy is always the size of the letters in which he writes his name on the picture that he spoils. The old mosaicists in St Mark's have not, in a single instance, as far as I know, signed their names; but the spectator who wishes to know who destroyed the effect of the nave, may see his name inscribed twice over, in letters half a foot high, BARTOLOMEO BOZZA. I have never seen Tintoret's name signed, except in the great *Crucifixion*; but this Antony Florian, I have no doubt, repainted the whole side of the tomb that he might put his name on it. The picture is, of course, ruined wherever he touched it, that is to say, half over: the circle of cherubs in the sky is still pure; and the design of the great painter is palpable enough yet in the grand flight of the horizontal angel, on whom the Madonna half leans as she ascends. It has been a noble picture, and is a grievous loss; but, happily, there are so many pure ones, that we need not spend time in gleaning treasures out of the ruins of this. [XI.410]

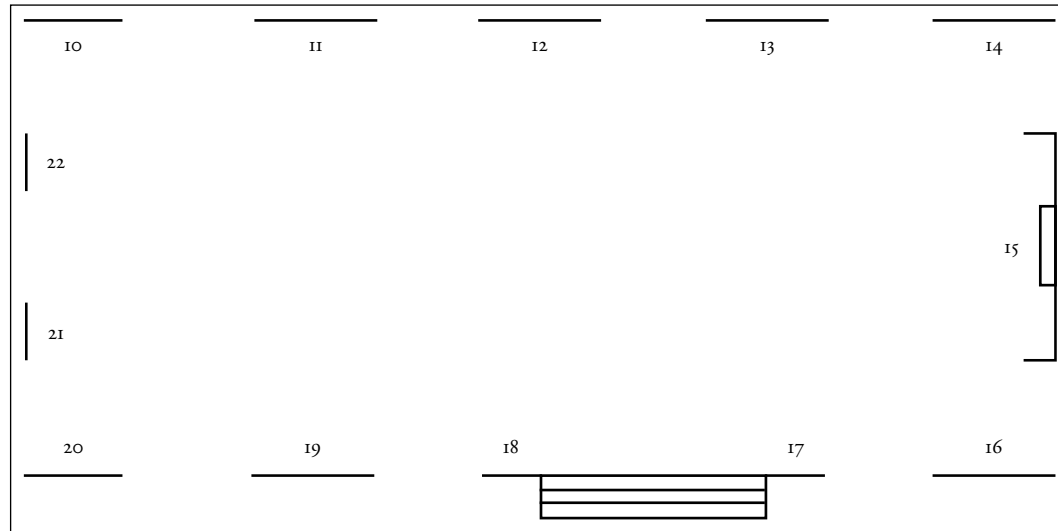
9. *Visitation*

A small picture, painted in his very best manner; exquisite in its simplicity, unrivalled in vigour, well preserved, and, as a piece of painting, certainly one of the most precious in Venice. Of course, it does not show any of his high inventive powers: nor can a picture of four middle-sized figures be made a proper subject of comparison with large canvases containing forty or fifty; but it is, for this very reason, painted with such perfect ease, and yet with no slackness either of affection or power, that there is no picture that I covet so much. It is, besides, altogether free from the Renaissance taint of dramatic effect. The gestures are as simple and natural as Giotto's, only expressed by grander lines, such as none but Tintoret ever reached. The draperies are dark, relieved against a light sky, the horizon being excessively low, and the outlines of the drapery so severe that the intervals between the figures look like ravines between great rocks, and have all the sublimity of an alpine valley at twilight. This precious picture is hung about thirty feet above the eye, but by looking at it in a strong light, it is discoverable that the St Elizabeth is dressed in green and crimson, the Virgin in the peculiar red which all great colourists delight in a sort of glowing brick colour or

brownish scarlet, opposed to a rich golden brownish black; and both have white kerchiefs, or drapery, thrown over their shoulders. Zacharias leans on his staff behind them in a black dress with white sleeves. The stroke of brilliant white light, which outlines the knee of St Elizabeth, is a curious instance of the habit of the painter to relieve his dark forms by a sort of halo of more vivid light which, until lately, one would have been apt to suppose a somewhat artificial and unjustifiable means of effect. The daguerreotype has shown "what the naked eye never could" that the instinct of the great painter was true, and that there is actually such a sudden and sharp line of light round the edges of dark objects relieved by luminous space. Opposite this picture is a most precious Titian, the *Annunciation*, full of grace and beauty. I think the Madonna one of the sweetest figures he ever painted. But if the traveller has entered at all into the spirit of Tintoret, he will immediately feel the comparative feebleness and conventionality of the Titian. Note especially the mean and petty folds of the angels' drapery, and compare them with the draperies of the opposite picture. The larger pictures at the sides of the stairs by Zanchi and Negri are utterly worthless. [XI.410-411]

Second group

ON THE WALLS OF THE UPPER ROOM



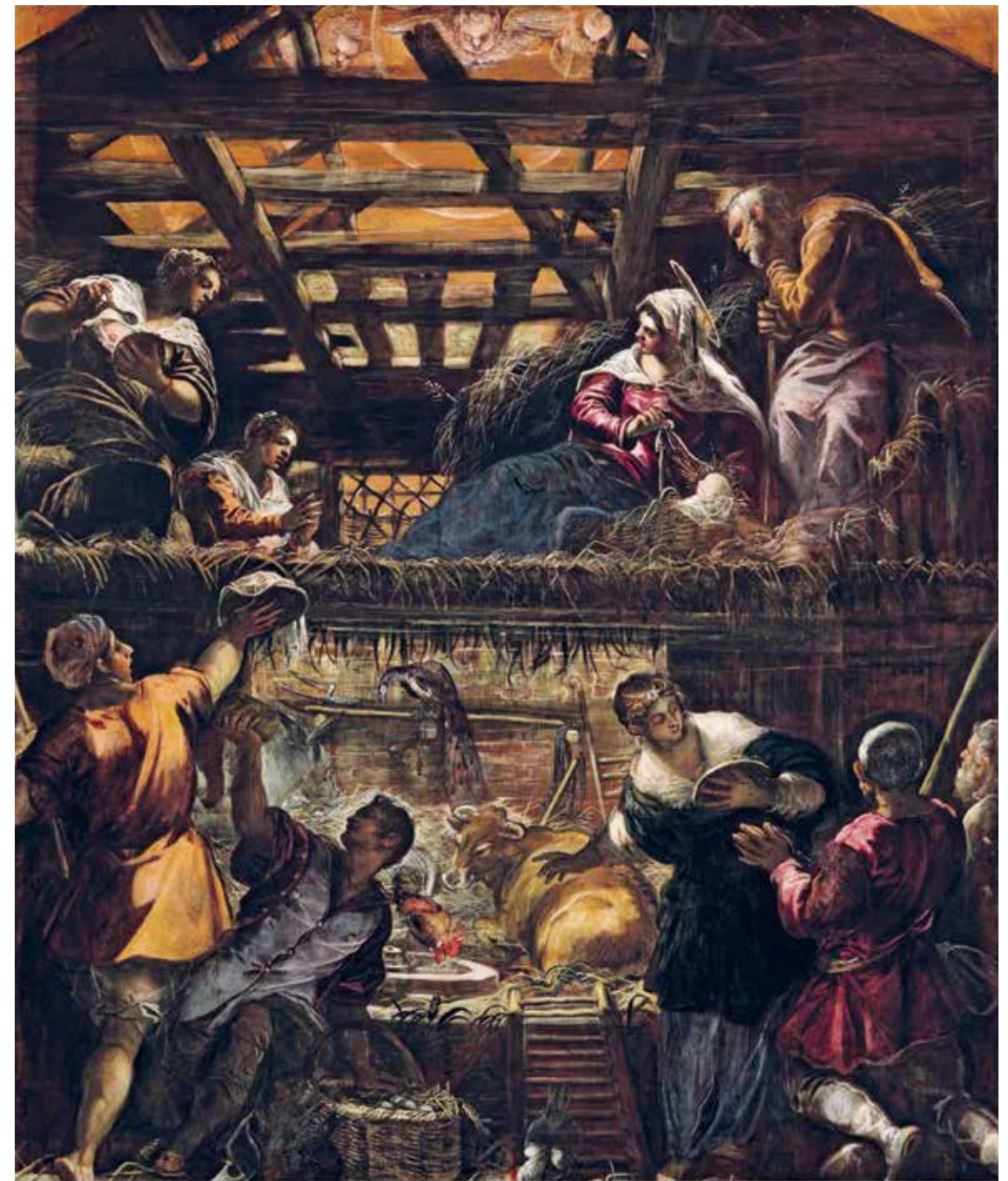
- 10. Adoration of Shepherds
- 11. Baptism
- 12. Resurrection
- 13. Agony in the Garden
- 14. Last Supper

- 15. Altar Piece: St Rocco
- 16. Miracle of Loaves
- 17. Resurrection of Lazarus
- 18. Ascension

10. *The Adoration of the Shepherds*

This picture commences the series of the upper room, which, as already noticed, is painted with far less care than that of the lower. It is one of the painter's inconceivable caprices that the only canvases that are in good light should be covered in this hasty manner, while those in the dungeon below, and on the ceiling above, are all highly laboured. It is, however, just possible that the covering of these walls may have been an afterthought, when he had got tired of his work.⁹

They are also, for the most part, illustrative of a principle of which I am more and more convinced every day, that historical and figure pieces ought not to be made vehicles for effects of light. The light which is fit for a historical picture is that tempered semi-sunshine of which, in general, the works of Titian are the best examples, and of which the picture we have just passed, *The Visitation*, is a perfect example from the hand of one greater than Titian; so also the three *Crucifixions*, of San Rocco, San Cassiano, and St John



and Paul; the *Adoration of the Magi* here; and, in general, the finest works of the master; but Tintoret was not a man to work in any formal or systematic manner; and, exactly like Turner, we find him recording every effect which Nature herself displays. Still, he seems to regard the pictures which deviate from the great general principle of colourists rather as *tours de force* than as sources of pleasure; and I do not think there is any instance of his having worked out one of these tricky pictures with thorough affection, except only in the case of the *Marriage of Cana*. By tricky pictures, I mean those which display light entering in different directions, and attract the eye to the effects rather than to the figure which displays them. Of this treatment, we have already had a marvellous instance in the candlelight picture of the *Last Supper* in San Giorgio Maggiore. This *Adoration of the Shepherds* has probably been nearly as wonderful when first painted; the Madonna is seated on a kind of hammock floor, made of rope netting, covered with straw; it divides the picture into two stories, of which the uppermost contains the Virgin, with two women who are adoring Christ, and shows light entering from above through the loose timbers of the roof of the stable, as well as through the bars of a square window; the lower division shows this light falling behind the netting upon the stable floor, occupied by a cock and a cow, and against this light are relieved the figures of the shepherds, for the most part in demi-tint, but with flakes of more vigorous sunshine falling here and there upon them from above. The optical illusion has originally been as perfect as in one of Hunt's best interiors: but it is most curious that no part of the work seems to have been taken any pleasure in by the painter; it is all by his hand, but it looks as if he had been bent only on getting over the ground. It is literally a piece of scene-painting, and is exactly what we might fancy Tintoret to have done,

had he been forced to paint scenes at a small theatre at a shilling a day. I cannot think that the whole canvas, though fourteen feet high and ten wide, or thereabouts, could have taken him more than a couple of days to finish: and it is very noticeable that exactly in proportion to the brilliant effects of light is the coarseness of the execution, for the figures of the Madonna, and of the women above, which are not in any strong effect, are painted with some care, while the shepherds and the cow are alike slovenly; and the latter, which is in full sunshine, is recognizable for a cow more by its size and that of its horns, than by any care given to its form. It is interesting to contrast this slovenly and mean sketch with the ass's head in the *Flight into Egypt*, on which the painter exerted his full power; as an effect of light, however, the work is, of course, most interesting. One point in the treatment is especially noticeable: there is a peacock in the rack beyond the cow; and, under other circumstances, one cannot doubt that Tintoret would have liked a peacock in full colour, and would have painted it green and blue with great satisfaction. It is sacrificed to the light, however, and is painted in warm grey, with a dim eye or two in the tail: this process is exactly analogous to Turner's taking the colours out of the flags of his ships in the "Gosport". Another striking point is the litter with which the whole picture is filled in order more to confuse the eye: there is straw sticking from the roof, straw all over the hammock floor, and straw struggling hither and thither all over the floor itself; and, to add to the confusion, the glory round the head of the infant, instead of being united and serene, is broken into little bits, and is like a glory of chopped straw. But the most curious thing, after all, is the want of delight in any of the principal figures, and the comparative meanness and commonplaceness of even the folds of the drapery. It seems as if Tintoret had determined

to make the shepherds as uninteresting as possible; but one does not see why their very clothes should be ill painted, and their disposition unpicturesque. I believe, however, though it never struck me until I had examined this picture, that this is one of the painter's fixed principles: he does not, with German sentimentality, make shepherds and peasants graceful or sublime, but he purposely vulgarizes them, not by making their actions or their faces boorish or disagreeable, but rather by painting them ill, and composing their draperies tamely. As far as I recollect at present, the principle is universal with him; exactly in proportion to the dignity of character is the beauty of the painting. He will not put out his strength upon any man belonging to the lower classes; and, in order to know what the painter is, one must see him at work on a king, a senator, or a saint. The curious connexion of this with the aristocratic tendencies of the Venetian nation, when we remember that Tintoret was the greatest man whom that nation produced, may become very interesting, if followed out. I forgot to note that, though the peacock is painted with great regardlessness of colour, there is a feature in it which no common painter would have observed,—the peculiar flatness of the back and undulation of the shoulders: the bird's body is all there, though its feathers are a good deal neglected; and the same thing is noticeable in a cock who is pecking among the straw near the spectator, though in other respects a shabby cock enough. The fact is, I believe he had made his shepherds so commonplace that he dared not paint his animals well, otherwise one would have looked at nothing in the picture but the peacock, cock, and cow. I cannot tell what the shepherds are offering; they look like milk-bowls, but they are awkwardly held up, with such twistings of body as would have certainly spilt the milk. A woman in front has a basket of eggs; but this I imagine to be merely to keep

up the rustic character of the scene, and not part of the shepherds' offerings. [XI.411-413]

11. *Baptism*

The Baptism of Christ. Its treatment by various painters. The power of the master is more strikingly shown in his treatment of the subject which, however important, and however deep in its meaning, supplies not to the ordinary painter material enough ever to form a picture of high interest; the Baptism of Christ. From the purity of Giotto to the intolerable, inconceivable brutality of Salvator, every order of feeling has been displayed in its treatment; but I am aware of no single case, except this of which I am about to speak, in which it has formed an impressive picture. Giotto's, in the Academy of Florence, engraved in the series just published (Galleria delle belle Arti),¹⁰ is one of the most touching I know, especially in the reverent action of the attendant angels;¹¹ and Leonardo's angel in that of Andrea del Verrocchio is very beautiful, but the event is one whose character and importance are ineffable upon the features: the descending dove hardly affects us, because its constant symbolical occurrence hardens us, and makes us look on it as a mere type or letter, instead of the actual presence of the Spirit: and by all the sacred painters the power that might be put into the landscape is lost; for though their use of foliage and distant sky or mountain is usually very admirable, yet they cannot deal with near water or rock; and the hexagonal and basaltic protuberances of their river shores are, I think, too painful to be endured even by the most acceptant mind; as eminently in that of Angelico, in the *Vita di Cristo*,¹² which, as far as I can judge, is a total failure in action, expression, and all else; and in general, it is in this subject especially that the greatest painters show their weakness. For this reason, I suppose, and feeling the difficulty of it, Tintoret has thrown into it his utmost strength, and it becomes



Baptism of Christ

noble in his hands by his most singularly imaginative expression, not only of the immediate fact, but of the whole train of thought of which it is suggestive; and by his considering the Baptism not only as the submission of Christ to the fulfilment of all righteousness,¹³ but as the opening of the earthly struggle with the prince of the powers of the air, which instantly beginning in the temptation, ended only on the cross.

By Tintoret

The river flows fiercely under the shadow of a great rock.* [* A farther examination of this picture has made me doubt my interpretation of some portions of it. It is nearly destroyed, and placed between two lights, and far from the eye, so as to render its details in many of the shadowed portions almost untraceable. I leave the passage unaltered, however, until I can obtain an opportunity of close access to the picture. The other works described are in fuller light and in better preservation, and the reader may accept with confidence the account given of them, which I have confirmed by re-examination.] From its opposite shore, thickets of close gloomy foliage rise against the rolling chasm of heaven, through which breaks the brightness of the descending Spirit. Across these, dividing them asunder, is stretched a horizontal floor of flaky cloud, on which stand the hosts of heaven. Christ kneels upon the water, and does not sink; the figure of St John is indistinct, but close beside his raised right arm there is a spectre in the black shade; the Fiend, harpy-shaped, hardly seen, glares down upon Christ with eyes of fire, waiting his time. Beneath this figure there comes out of the mist a dark hand, the arm unseen, extended to a net in the river, the spars of which are in the shape of a cross. Behind this the roots and under stems of the trees are cut away by the cloud, and beneath it, and through them, is seen a vision of wild, melancholy, boundless light, the sweep of the desert; and the figure of Christ is seen

therein alone, with His arms lifted as in supplication or ecstasy, borne of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.¹⁴ There are many circumstances which combine to give to this noble work a more than usually imaginative character. The symbolical use of the net, which is the cross net still used constantly in the canals of Venice, and common throughout Italy, is of the same character as that of the carpenter's tools in the Annunciation; but the introduction of the spectral figure is of bolder reach, and yet more, that vision of the after-temptation which is expressly indicated as a subject of thought rather than of sight, because it is in a part of the scene which in fact must have been occupied by the trunks of the trees whose tops are seen above; and another circumstance completes the mystic character of the whole, that the flaky clouds which support the angelic hosts take on the right, where the light first falls upon them, the shape of the head of a fish, the well-known type both of the baptismal sacrament and of Christ. [iv.265-70]

There is more of the true picture quality in this work than in the former one [*Adoration of the Magi*], but still very little appearance of enjoyment or care. The colour is for the most part grey and uninteresting, and the figures are thin and meagre in form, and slightly painted; so much so, that, of the nineteen figures in the distance, about a dozen are hardly worth calling figures, and the rest are so sketched and flourished in that one can hardly tell which is which. There is one point about it very interesting to a landscape painter: the river is seen far into the distance, with a piece of copse bordering it: the sky beyond is dark, but the water nevertheless receives a brilliant reflection from some unseen rent in the clouds, so brilliant, that when I was first at Venice, not being accustomed to Tintoret's slight execution, or to see pictures so much injured, I took this piece of water

for a piece of sky. The effect, as Tintoret has arranged it, is indeed somewhat unnatural, but it is valuable as showing his recognition of a principle unknown to half the historical painters of the present day, “that the reflection seen in water is totally different from the object seen above it, and that it is very possible to have a bright light in reflection where there appears nothing but darkness to be reflected. The clouds in the sky itself are round, heavy, and lightless; and in a great degree spoil what would otherwise be a fine landscape distance. Behind the rocks on the right a single head is seen, with a collar on the shoulders: it seems to be intended for a portrait of some person connected with the picture. [xi.414]

12. Resurrection

Another of the “effect of light” pictures, and not a very striking one, the best part of it being the two distant figures of the Maries seen in the dawn of the morning. The conception of the Resurrection itself is characteristic of the worst points of Tintoret. His impetuosity is here in the wrong place; Christ bursts out of the rock like a thunderbolt, and the angels themselves seem likely to be crushed under the rent stones of the tomb. Had the figure of Christ been sublime, this conception might have been accepted; but, on the contrary, it is weak, mean, and painful; and the whole picture is languidly or roughly painted, except only the fig-tree at the top of the rock, which, by a curious caprice, is not only drawn in the painter’s best manner, but has golden ribs to all its leaves, making it look like one of the beautiful crossed or chequered patterns, of which he is so fond in his dresses: the leaves themselves being a dark olive brown. [xi.414]

13. The Agony in the Garden

I cannot at present understand the order of these subjects; but they may have been misplaced. This, of all the San Rocco pictures, is the most hastily painted,

but it is not, like those we have been passing, *clodly*⁵ painted; it seems to have been executed altogether with a hearth-broom, and in a few hours. It is another of the “effects,” and a very curious one; the angel who bears the cup to Christ is surrounded by a red halo; yet the light which falls upon the shoulders of the sleeping disciples, and upon the leaves of the olive-trees, is cool and silvery, while the troop coming up to seize Christ are seen by torchlight. Judas, who is the second figure, points to Christ, but turns his head away as he does so, as unable to look at Him. That is a noble touch; the foliage is also exceedingly fine, though what kind of olive-tree bears such leaves I know not, each of them being about the size of a man’s hand. If there be any which bear such foliage, their olives must be of the size of cocoa-nuts. This, however, is true only of the underwood, which is, perhaps, not meant for olive. There are some taller trees at the top of the picture, whose leaves are of a more natural size. On closely examining the figures of the troop on the left, I find that the distant ones are concealed, all but the limbs, by a sort of arch of dark colour, which is now so injured, that I cannot tell whether it was foliage or ground; I suppose it to have been a mass of close foliage, through which the troop is breaking its way; Judas rather showing them the path, than actually pointing to Christ, as it is written, “Judas, who betrayed Him, knew the place.” St Peter, as the most zealous of the three disciples, the only one who was to endeavour to defend his Master, is represented as waking and turning his head towards the troop, while James and John are buried in profound slumber, laid in magnificent languor among the leaves. The picture is singularly impressive, when seen far enough off, as an image of thick forest gloom amidst the rich and tender foliage of the South: the leaves, however, tossing as in disturbed night air, and the flickering of the torches, and of the branches, contrasted with





The Last Supper

the steady flame which from the angel's presence is spread over the robes of the disciples. The strangest feature in the whole is that the Christ also is represented as sleeping. The angel seems to appear to Him in a dream. [XI.414-415]

14. The Last Supper

A most unsatisfactory picture; I think about the worst I know of Tintoret's, where there is no appearance of retouching. He always makes the disciples in this scene too vulgar; they are here not only vulgar, but diminutive, and Christ is at the end of the table, the smallest figure of them all. The principal figures are two mendicants sitting on steps in front, a kind of supporters, but I suppose intended to be waiting for the fragments: a dog, in still more earnest expectation, is watching the movements of the disciples, who are talking together, Judas having but just gone out. Christ is represented as giving what one at first supposes is the sop to Judas,¹⁶ but as the disciple who receives it has a glory, and there are only eleven at table, it is evidently the sacramental bread. The room in which they are assembled is a sort of large kitchen, and the host is seen employed at a dresser in the background. This picture has not only been originally poor, but is one of those exposed all day to the sun, and is dried into mere dirty canvas; where there was once blue, there is now nothing.¹⁷ [XI.415]

15. St Rocco in Glory

One of the worst order of Tintoret's, with apparent smoothness and finish, yet languidly painted, as if in illness or fatigue; very dark and heavy in tone also; its figures, for the most part, of an awkward middle size, about five feet high, and very uninteresting. St Rocco ascends to Heaven, looking down upon a crowd of poor and sick persons who are blessing and adoring him. One of these, kneeling at the bottom, is very

nearly a repetition, though a careless and indolent one, of that of St Stephen, in St Giorgio Maggiore, and of the central figure in the *Paradise* of the Ducal Palace. It is a kind of lay figure of which he seems to have been fond; its clasped hands are here shockingly painted, I should think unfinished. It forms the only important light at the bottom, relieved on a dark ground. At the top of the picture, the figure of St Rocco is seen in shadow against the light of the sky, and all the rest is in confused shadow. The commonplaceness of this composition is curiously connected with the languor of thought and touch throughout the work. [XI.415-416]

16. Miracle of the Loaves

Hardly anything but a fine piece of landscape is here left; it is more exposed to the sun than any other picture in the room, and its draperies having been, in great part, painted in blue, are now mere patches of the colour of starch; the scene is also very imperfectly conceived. The twenty-one figures, including Christ and His disciples, very ill represent a crowd of seven thousand; still less is the marvel of the miracle expressed by the perfect ease and rest of the reclining figures in the foreground, who do not so much as look surprised: considered merely as reclining figures, and as pieces of effect in half light, they have once been fine. The landscape, which represents the slope of a woody hill, has a very grand and far-away look. Behind it is a great space of streaky sky, almost prismatic in colour, rosy and golden clouds covering up its blue, and some fine vigorous trees thrown against it; painted in about ten minutes each, however, by curly touches of the brush, and looking rather more like seaweed than foliage. [XI.416]

17. Resurrection of Lazarus

Very strangely, and not impressively conceived. Christ is half reclining, half sitting, at the bottom of

The Ascension

the picture, while Lazarus is disencumbered of his grave-clothes at the top of it; the scene being the side of a rocky hill, and the mouth of the tomb probably once visible in the shadow on the left; but all that is now discernible is a man having his limbs unbound, as if Christ were merely ordering a prisoner to be loosed. There appears neither awe nor agitation, nor even much astonishment, in any of the figures of the group: but the picture is more vigorous than any of the three last mentioned, and the upper part of it is quite worthy of the master, especially its noble fig-tree and laurel, which he has painted, in one of his usual fits of caprice, as carefully as that in the *Resurrection of Christ*, opposite. Perhaps he has some meaning in this; he may have been thinking of the verse, "Behold the fig-tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth,"¹⁸ etc. In the present instance, the leaves are dark only, and have no golden veins. The uppermost figures also come dark against the sky, and would form a precipitous mass, like a piece of the rock itself, but that they are broken in upon by one of the limbs of Lazarus, bandaged and in full light, which, to my feeling, sadly injures the picture, both as a disagreeable object, and a light in the wrong place. The grass and weeds are, throughout, carefully painted, but the lower figures are of little interest, and the face of the Christ a grievous failure. [xi.416-417]

18. *The Ascension*

I have always admired this picture, though it is very slight and thin in execution, and cold in colour; but it is remarkable for its thorough effect of open air, and for the sense of motion and clashing in the wings of the angels which sustain the Christ: they owe this effect a good deal to the manner in which they are set, edge on; all seem like sword-blades cutting the air. It is the most curious in conception of all the pictures in the Scuola, for it represents, beneath the

Ascension, a kind of epitome of what took place before the Ascension. In the distance are two apostles walking, meant, I suppose, for the two going to Emmaus; nearer are a group round a table, to remind us of Christ appearing to them as they sat at meat: and in the foreground is a single reclining figure of, I suppose, St Peter, because we are told that "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve":¹⁹ but this interpretation is doubtful; for why should not the vision by the Lake of Tiberias be expressed also? And the strange thing of all is the scene, for Christ ascended from the Mount of Olives; but the disciples are walking, and the table is set, in a little marshy and grassy valley, like some of the bits near Maison Neuve on the Jura, with a brook running through it, so capitally expressed, that I believe it is this which makes me so fond of the picture. The reflections are as scientific in the diminution, in the image, of large masses of bank above, as any of Turner's, and the marshy and reedy ground looks as if one would sink into it; but what all this has to do with the Ascension I cannot see. The figure of Christ is not undignified, but by no means either interesting or sublime. [xi.417]

19. *Pool of Bethesda*

I have no doubt the principal figures have been repainted; but as the colours are faded, and the subject disgusting, I have not paid this picture sufficient attention to say how far the injury extends; nor need any one spend time upon it, unless after having first examined all the other Tintorets in Venice. All the great Italian painters appear insensible to the feeling of disgust at disease; but this study of the population of an hospital is without any points of contrast, and I wish Tintoret had not condescended to paint it. This and the six preceding paintings have all been uninteresting,—I believe chiefly owing to the observance in them of Sir Joshua's rule for the heroic, "that drapery





is to be mere drapery, and not silk, nor satin, nor brocade.”²⁰ However wise such a rule may be when applied to works of the purest religious art, it is anything but wise as respects works of colour. Tintoret is never quite himself unless he has fur or velvet, or rich stuff of one sort or the other, or jewels, or armour, or something that he can put play of colour into, among his figures, and not dead folds of linsey-wolsey; and I believe that even the best pictures of Raffaele and Angelico are not a little helped by their

hems of robes, jewelled crowns, priests’ copes, and so on; and the pictures that have nothing of this kind in them, as for instance the *Transfiguration*,²¹ are to my mind not a little dull. [xi.417-418]

20. *Temptation*

This picture singularly illustrates what has just been observed; it owes great part of its effect to the lustre of the jewels in the armlet of the evil angel, and to the beautiful colours of his wings. These are slight



St Sebastian

accessories apparently, but they enhance the value of all the rest, and they have evidently been enjoyed by the painter. The armlet is seen by reflected light, its stones shining by inward lustre; this occult fire being the only hint given of the real character of the Tempter, who is otherways represented in the form of a beautiful angel, though the face is sensual; we can hardly tell how far it was intended to be therefore expressive of evil; for Tintoret's good angels have not always the purest features; but there is a peculiar subtlety in this telling of the story by so slight a circumstance as the glare of the jewels in the darkness. It is curious to compare this imagination with that of the mosaics in St Mark's, in which Satan is a black monster, with horns, and head, and tail, complete. The whole of the picture is powerfully and carefully painted, though very broadly; it is a strong effect of light, and therefore, as usual, subdued in colour. The painting of the stones in the foreground I have always thought, and still think, the best piece of rock drawing before Turner, and the most amazing instance of Tintoret's perceptiveness afforded by any of his pictures. [xi.418]

21. *St Rocco*

Three figures occupy the spandrels of the windows above this and the following picture, painted merely in light and shade, two larger than life, one rather smaller. I believe these to be by Tintoret; but as they are quite in the dark, so that the execution cannot be seen, and very good designs of the kind have been furnished by other masters, I cannot answer for them. The figure of St Rocco, as well as its companion, St Sebastian, is coloured; they occupy the narrow intervals between the windows, and are of course invisible under ordinary circumstances. By a great deal of straining of the eyes, and sheltering them with the hand from the light, some little idea of the design

may be obtained. The *St Rocco* is a fine figure, though rather coarse, but at all events, worth as much light as would enable us to see it. [xi.418-419]

22. *St Sebastian*

This, the companion figure, is one of the finest things in the whole room, and assuredly the most majestic St Sebastian in existence, as far as mere humanity can be majestic, for there is no effort at any expression



of angelic or saintly resignation; the effort is simply to realise the fact of the martyrdom, and it seems to me that this is done to an extent not even attempted by any other painter. I never saw a man die a violent death, and therefore cannot say whether this figure be true or not, but it gives the grandest and most intense impression of truth. The figure is dead, and well it may be, for there is one arrow through the forehead and another through the heart; but the eyes are open, though glazed, and the body is rigid in the position in which it last stood, the left arm raised and the left limb advanced, something in the attitude of a soldier sustaining an attack under his shield, while the dead eyes are still turned in the direction from which the arrows came: but the most characteristic feature is the way these arrows are fixed. In the common martyrdoms of St Sebastian they are stuck into him here and there like pins, as if they had been shot from a great distance and had come faltering down, entering the flesh but a little way, and rather bleeding the saint to death than mortally wounding him; but Tintoret had no such ideas about archery. He must have seen bows drawn in battle, like that of Jehu when he smote Jehoram between the harness:²² all the arrows in the saint's body lie straight in the same direction, broadfeathered and strong-shafted, and sent apparently with the force of thunderbolts; every one of them has gone through him like a lance, two through the limbs, one through the arm, one through the heart, and the last has crashed through the forehead, nailing the head to the tree behind, as if it had been dashed in by a sledge-hammer. The face, in spite of its ghastliness, is beautiful, and has been serene; and the light which enters first and glistens on the plumes of the arrows, dies softly away upon the curling hair, and mixes with the glory upon the forehead. There is not a more remarkable picture in Venice, and yet I do not suppose that one in a

thousand of the travellers who pass through the Scuola so much as perceive there is a picture in the place which it occupies.

23. *Moses Striking the Rock*

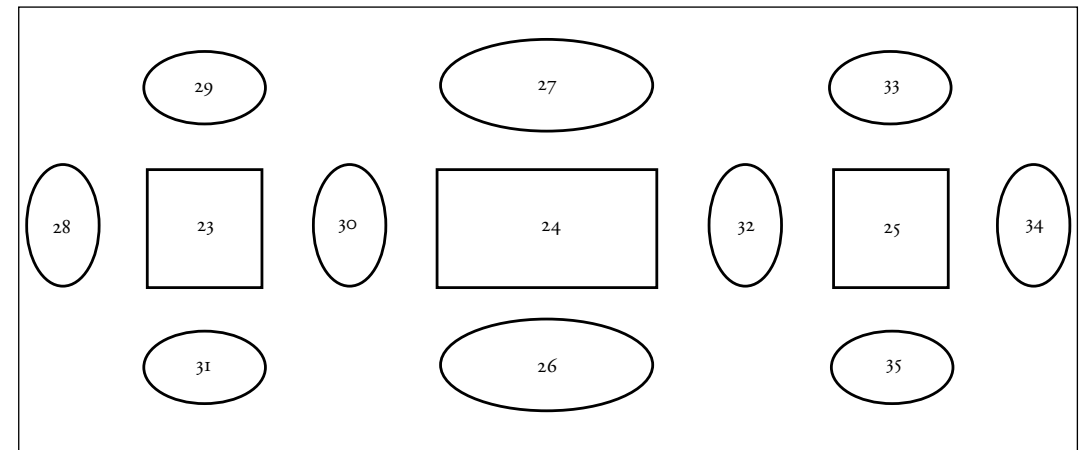
We now come to the series of pictures upon which the painter concentrated the strength he had reserved for the upper room; and in some sort wisely, for, though it is not pleasant to examine pictures on a ceiling, they are at least distinctly visible without straining the eyes against the light. They are carefully conceived, and thoroughly well painted in proportion to their distance from the eye. This carefulness of thought is apparent at a glance: the *Moses Striking the Rock* embraces the whole of the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, and even something more, for it is not from that chapter, but from parallel passages, that we gather the facts of the impatience of Moses and the wrath of God at the waters of Meribah; both which facts are shown by the leaping of the stream out of the rock half-a-dozen ways at once, forming a great arch over the head of Moses, and by the partial veiling of the countenance of the Supreme Being. This latter is the most painful part of the whole picture, at least as it is seen from below; and I believe that in some repairs of the roof this head must have been destroyed and repainted. It is one of Tintoret's usual fine thoughts that the lower part of the figure is veiled, not merely by clouds, but in a kind of watery sphere, showing the Deity coming to the Israelites at that particular moment as the Lord of the Rivers and of the Fountain of the Waters. The whole figure, as well as that of Moses, and the greater number of those in the foreground, is at once dark and warm, black and red being the prevailing colours, while the distance is bright gold touched with blue, and seems to open into the picture like a break of blue sky after rain. How exquisite is this expression, by mere colour,



Moses Striking the Rock

Third group

ON THE ROOF OF THE UPPER ROOM²³



- 23. *Moses Striking the Rock*
- 24. *Plague of Serpents*
- 25. *Fall of Manna*
- 26. *Jacob's Dream*
- 27. *Ezekiel's Vision*
- 28. *Fall of Man*
- 29. *Elijah*

- 30. *Jonah*
- 31. *Joshua*
- 32. *Sacrifice of Isaac*
- 33. *Elisha Feeding the People*
- 34. *Paschal Feast*
- 35. *Elijah at the Brook*

of the main force of the fact represented! that is to say, joy and refreshment after sorrow and scorching heat. But, when we examine of what this distance consists, we shall find still more cause for admiration. The blue in it is not the blue of sky, it is obtained by blue stripes upon white tents glowing in the sunshine; and in front of these tents is seen that great battle with Amalek of which the account is given in the remainder of the chapter, and for which the Israelites received strength in the streams which ran out of the rock in Horeb.

Considered merely as a picture, the opposition of cool light to warm shadow is one of the most remarkable pieces of colour in the Scuola, and the great mass of foliage which waves over the rocks on the left appears to have been elaborated with his highest power and his most sublime invention. But this noble passage is much injured, and now hardly visible. [XI.419-420]

24. *Plague of Serpents*

The figures in the distance are remarkably important



in this picture, Moses himself being among them; in fact, the whole scene is filled chiefly with middle-size figures, in order to increase the impression of space. It is interesting to observe the difference in the treatment of this subject by the three great painters, Michael Angelo, Rubens, and Tintoret. The first two, equal to the latter in energy, had less love of liberty: they were fond of binding their compositions into knots, Tintoret of scattering his far and wide; they all alike preserve the unity of composition, but the unity in the first two is obtained by binding, and that of the last by springing from one source; and, together with this feeling, comes his love of space, which makes him less regard the rounding and form of objects themselves than their relations of light and shade and distance. Therefore Rubens and Michael Angelo made the fiery serpents huge boa-constrictors and knotted the sufferers together with them. Tintoret does not like to be so bound; so he makes the serpents little flying and fluttering monsters, like lampreys with wings; and the children of Israel, instead of being thrown into convulsed and writhing groups, are scattered, fainting in the fields, far away in the distance. As usual, Tintoret's conception, while thoroughly characteristic of himself, is also truer to the words of Scripture. We are told that "the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people;"²⁴ we are not told that they crushed the people to death. And, while thus the truest, it is also the most terrific conception. M. Angelo's would be terrific if one could believe in it: but our instinct tells us that boa-constrictors do not come in armies; and we look upon the picture with as little emotion as upon the handle of a vase, or any other form worked out of serpents, where there is no probability of serpents actually occurring. But there is a probability in Tintoret's conception. We feel that it is not impossible that there should come up a swarm of

these small winged reptiles; and their horror is not diminished by their smallness: not that they have any of the grotesque terribleness of German invention; they might have been made infinitely uglier with small pains, but it is their veritableness which makes them awful. They have triangular heads with sharp beaks or muzzles; and short, rather thick bodies, with bony processes down the back like those of sturgeons; and small wings spotted with orange and black; and round glaring eyes, not very large, but very ghastly, with an intense delight in biting expressed in them. (It is observable that the Venetian painter has got his main idea of them from the sea-horses and small reptiles of the Lagoons.) These monsters are fluttering and writhing about everywhere, fixing on whatever they come near with their sharp venomous heads; and they are coiling about on the ground, and all the shadows and thickets are full of them, so that there is no escape anywhere: and, in order to give the idea of greater extent to the plague, Tintoret has not been content with one horizon; I have before mentioned¹ the excessive strangeness of this composition, in having a cavern open in the right of the foreground, through which is seen another sky and another horizon. At the top of the picture, the Divine Being is seen borne by angels, apparently passing over the congregation in wrath, involved in masses of dark clouds; while, behind, an angel of mercy is descending towards Moses, surrounded by a globe of white light. This globe is hardly seen from below; it is not a common glory, but a transparent sphere, like a bubble, which not only envelopes the angel, but crosses the figure of Moses, throwing the upper part of it into a subdued pale colour, as if it were crossed by a sunbeam. Tintoret is the only painter who plays these tricks with transparent light, the only man who seems to have perceived the effects of sunbeams, mists, and clouds in the far-away atmosphere, and to

have used what he saw on towers, clouds, or mountains, to enhance the sublimity of his figures. The whole upper part of this picture is magnificent, less with respect to individual figures, than for the drift of its clouds, and originality and complication of its light and shade; it is something like Raffaello's "Vision of Ezekiel,"²⁵ but far finer. It is difficult to understand how any painter, who could represent floating clouds so nobly as he has done here, could ever paint the odd, round, pillowy masses, which so often occur in his more carelessly designed sacred subjects. The lower figures are not so interesting, and the whole is painted with a view to effect from below, and gains little by close examination. [xi.420-422]

25. *Fall of Manna*

In none of these three large compositions has the painter made the slightest effort at expression in the human countenance; everything is done by gesture, and the faces of the people who are drinking from the rock, dying from the serpent-bites, and eating the manna, are all alike as calm as if nothing was happening; in addition to this, as they are painted for distant effect, the heads are unsatisfactory and coarse when seen near, and perhaps in this last picture the more so, and yet the story is exquisitely told. We have seen in the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore another example of his treatment of it, where, however, the gathering of manna is a subordinate employment, but here it is principal. Now, observe, we are told of the manna, that it was found in the morning; that then there lay round about the camp a small round thing like the hoar-frost, and that "when the sun waxed hot it melted."²⁶ Tintoret has endeavoured, therefore, first of all, to give the idea of coolness; the congregation are reposing in a soft green meadow, surrounded by blue hills, and there are rich trees above them, to the branches of one of which is attached a great grey dra-

pery to catch the manna as it comes down. In any other picture such a mass of drapery would assuredly have had some vivid colour, but here it is grey; the fields are cool frosty green, the mountains cold blue, and, to complete the expression and meaning of all this, there is a most important point to be noted in the form of the Deity seen above, through an opening in the clouds. There are at least ten or twelve other pictures in which the form of the Supreme Being occurs, to be found in the Scuola di San Rocco alone; and in every one of these instances it is richly coloured, the garments being generally red and blue, but in this picture of the manna the figure is snow white. Thus the painter endeavours to show the Deity as the Giver of Bread, just as in the *Striking of the Rock* we saw that he represented Him as the Lord of the Rivers, the Fountains, and the Waters. There is one other very sweet incident at the bottom of the picture; four or five sheep, instead of pasturing, turn their heads aside to catch the manna as it comes down, or seem to be licking it off each other's fleeces. The tree above, to which the drapery is tied, is the most delicate and delightful piece of leafage in all the Scuola; it has a large sharp leaf, something like that of a willow, but five times the size. [xi.422-423]

26. *Jacob's Dream*

A picture which has good effect from below, but gains little when seen near. It is an embarrassing one for any painter, because angels always look awkward going up and down stairs; one does not see the use of their wings. Tintoret has thrown them into buoyant and various attitudes, but has evidently not treated the subject with delight; and it is seen to all the more disadvantage because just above the painting of the *Ascension*, in which the full fresh power of the painter is developed. One would think this latter picture had been done just after a walk among hills, for it is



full of the most delicate effects of transparent cloud, more or less veiling the faces and forms of the angels, and covering with white light the silvery sprays of the palms, while the clouds in the *Jacob's Dream* are the ordinary rotundities of the studio. [xi.423]

27. *Ezekiel's Vision*

I suspect this has been repainted, it is so heavy and dead in colour; a fault, however, observable in many of the smaller pictures on the ceiling, and perhaps the natural result of the fatigue of such a mind as Tintoret's. A painter who threw such intense energy into some of his works can hardly but have been languid in others in a degree never experienced by the more tranquil minds of less powerful workmen; and when this languor overtook him whilst he was at work on pictures where a certain space had to be covered by mere force of arm, this heaviness of colour could hardly but have been the consequence: it shows itself chiefly in reads and other hot hues, many of the pictures in the Ducal Palace also displaying it in a painful degree. This "Ezekiel's Vision" is, however, in some measure worthy of the master, in the wild and horrible energy with which the skeletons are leaping up about the prophet; but it might have been less horrible and more sublime, no attempt being made to represent the space of the Valley of Dry Bones, and the whole canvas being occupied only by eight figures, of which five are half skeletons. It is strange that, in such a subject, the prevailing hues should be red and brown. [xi.423]

28. *Fall of Man*

The two canvases last named are the most considerable in size upon the roof, after the centre pieces. We now come to the smaller subjects which surround the *Striking the Rock*; of these, this *Fall of Man* is the best, and I should think it very fine anywhere but in the Scuola di San Rocco: there is a grand light on the

body of Eve, and the vegetation is remarkably rich, but the faces are coarse, and the composition uninteresting. I could not get near enough to see what the grey object is upon which Eve appears to be sitting, nor could I see any serpent. It is made prominent in the picture of the Academy of this same subject, so that I suppose it is hidden in the darkness, together with much detail which it would be necessary to discover in order to judge the work justly. [xi.423-424]

29. *Elijah (?)*²⁷

A prophet holding down his face, which is covered with his hand. God is talking with him, apparently in rebuke. The clothes on his breast are rent, and the action of the figures might suggest the idea of the scene between the Deity and Elijah at Horeb: but there is no suggestion of the past magnificent scenery,—of the wind, the earthquake, or the fire; so that the conjecture is good for very little. The painting is of small interest; the faces are vulgar, and the draperies have too much vapid historical dignity to be delightful. [xi.424]

30. *Jonah*

The whale here occupies fully one half of the canvas; being correspondent in value with a landscape background. His mouth is as large as a cavern, and yet, unless the mass of red colour in the foreground be a piece of drapery, his tongue is too large for it. He seems to have lifted Jonah out upon it, and not yet drawn it back, so that it forms a kind of crimson cushion for him to kneel upon in his submission to the Deity. The head to which this vast tongue belongs is sketched in somewhat loosely, and there is little remarkable about it except its size, nor much in the figures, though the submissiveness of Jonah is well given. The great thought of Michael Angelo renders one little charitable to any less imaginative treatment of this subject. [xi.424]

31. *Joshua (?)*²⁸

This is a most interesting picture, and it is a shame that its subject is not made out, for it is not a common one. The figure has a sword in its hand, and looks up to a sky full of fire, out of which the form of the Deity is stooping, represented as white and colourless. On the other side of the picture there is seen among the clouds a pillar apparently falling, and there is a crowd at the feet of the principal figure, carrying spears. Unless this be Joshua at the fall of Jericho, I cannot tell what it means; it is painted with great vigour, and worthy of a better place. [xi: 424]

32. *Sacrifice of Isaac*

In conception, it is one of the least worthy of the master in the whole room, the three figures being thrown into violent attitudes, as inexpressive as they are strained and artificial. It appears to have been vigorously painted, but vulgarly; that is to say, the light is concentrated upon the white beard and upturned countenance of Abraham, as it would have been in one of the dramatic effects of the French school, the result being that the head is very bright and very conspicuous, and perhaps, in some of the late operations upon the roof, recently washed and touched. In consequence, every one who comes into the room is first invited to observe the "bella testa di Abramo". The only thing characteristic of Tintoret is the way in which the pieces of ragged wood are tossed hither and thither in the pile upon which Isaac is bound, although this scattering of the wood is inconsistent with the scriptural account of Abraham's deliberate procedure, for we are told of him that "he set the wood in order" (Genesis 22:6). But Tintoret had probably not noticed this, and thought the tossing of the timber into the disordered heap more like the act of the father in his agony. [xi.424-425]

33. *Elisha Feeding the People*

I again guess at the subject; the picture only represents a figure casting down a number of loaves before a multitude; but, as Elisha has not elsewhere occurred, I suppose that these must be the barley-loaves brought from Baal-shalisha. In conception and manner of painting, this picture and the last, together with the others above mentioned, in comparison with the *Elijah at Cherith*, may be generally described as "dregs of Tintoret": they are tired, dead, dragged out upon the canvas apparently in the heavyhearted state which a man falls into when he is both jaded with toil and sick of the work he is employed upon. They are not hastily painted, on the contrary, finished with considerably more care than several of the works upon the walls; but those, as, for instance, the *Agony in the Garden*, are hurried sketches with the man's whole heart in them, while these pictures are exhausted fulfilments of an appointed task. Whether they were really amongst the last painted, or whether the painter had fallen ill at some intermediate time, I cannot say; but we shall find him again in his utmost strength in the room which we last enter. [xi.425-426]

34. *The Paschal Feast*

I name this picture by the title given in the guide-books; it represents merely five persons watching the increase of a small fire lighted on a table or altar in the midst of them. It is only because they have all staves in their hands that one may conjecture this fire to be that kindled to consume the Paschal offering. The effect is of a course a firelight; and, like all mere firelights that I have ever seen, totally devoid of interest. [xi.425]

35. *Elijah at the Brook Cherith (?)*

I cannot tell if I have rightly interpreted the meaning of this picture, which merely represents a noble figure

Temptation of Adam

Elijah fed by the Angel

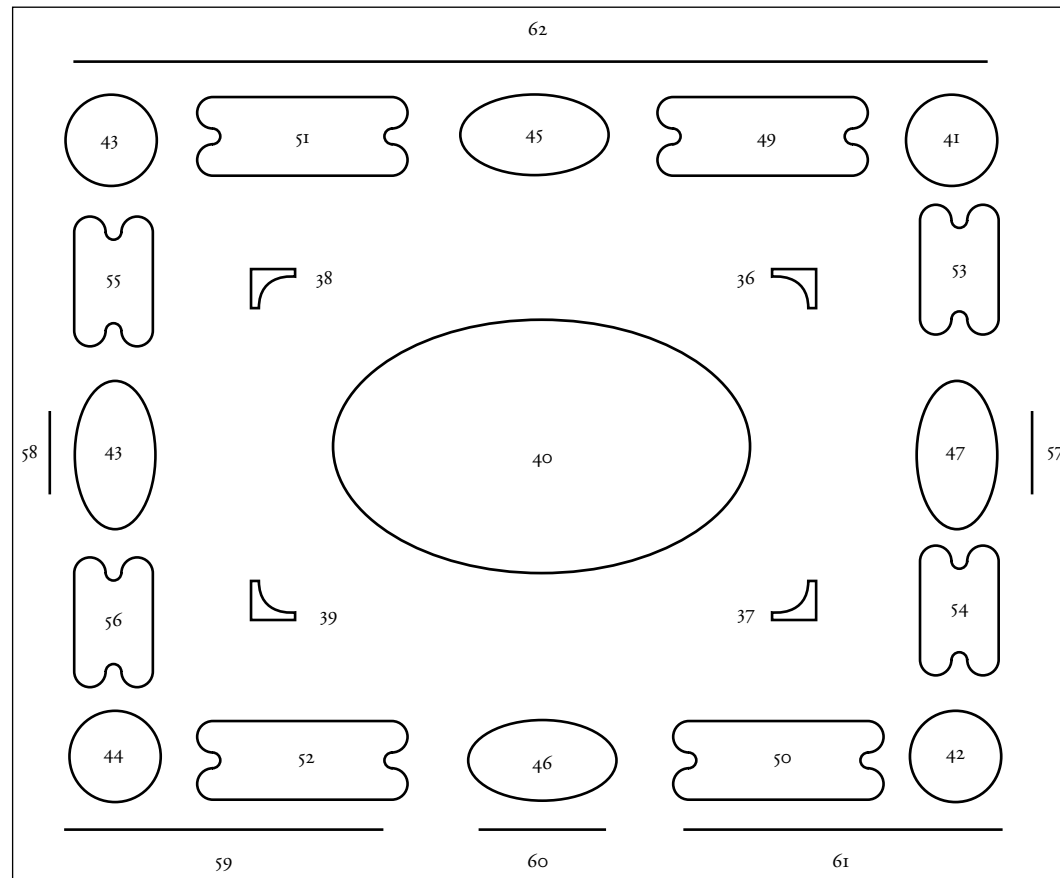
couched upon the ground, and an angel appearing to him; but I think that between the dark tree on the left, and the recumbent figure, there is some appearance of a running stream; at all events, there is of a mountainous and stony place. The longer I study this master, the more I feel the strange likeness between him and Turner, in our never knowing what subject it is that will stir him to exertion. We have lately had him treating Jacob's Dream, Ezekiel's Vision, Abraham's Sacrifice, and Jonah's Prayer (all of them subjects on which the greatest painters have delighted to expend their strength), with coldness, carelessness, and evident absence of delight; and here, on a sudden, in a subject so indistinct that one

cannot be sure of its meaning and embracing only two figures, a man and an angel, forth he starts in his full strength. I believe he must somewhere or another, the day before, have seen a kingfisher; for this picture seems entirely painted for the sake of the glorious downy wings of the angel, "white clouded with blue as the bird's head and wings are with green," the softest and most elaborate in plumage that I have seen in any of his works: but observe also the general sublimity obtained by the mountainous lines of the drapery of the recumbent figure, dependent for its dignity upon these forms alone, as the face is more than half hidden, and what is seen of it expressionless. [xi.425-426]



Fourth group

INNER ROOM ON THE UPPER FLOOR



ON THE ROOF

- 36 to 39. *Children's Heads*
- 40. *St Rocco in Heaven*
- 41 to 44. *Children*
- 45 to 56. *Allegorical Figures*

ON THE WALLS

- 57. *Figure in Niche*
- 58. *Figure in Niche*
- 59. *Christ before Pilate*
- 60. *Ecce Homo*
- 61. *Christ Bearing His Cross*
- 62. *Crucifixion*

36 to 39

Four Children's Heads, which it is much to be regretted should be thus lost in filling small vacuities of the ceiling. [XI.426]

40. *St Rocco in Heaven*

The central picture of the roof, in the inner room. From the well-known anecdote respecting the production of this picture, whether in all its details true or not, we may at least gather that, having been painted in competition with Paul Veronese and other powerful painters of the day, it was probably Tintoret's endeavour to make it as popular and showy as possible. It is quite different from his common works; bright in all its tints and tones; the faces carefully drawn, and of an agreeable type; the outlines firm, and the shadows few; the whole resembling Correggio more than any Venetian painter. It is, however, an example of the danger, even to the greatest artist, of leaving his own style; for it lacks all the great virtues of Tintoret, without obtaining the lusciousness of Correggio. One thing, at all events, is remarkable in it, that, though painted while the competitors were making their sketches, it shows no sign of haste or inattention. [XI.426-427]

41 to 44. *Figures of Children*,²⁹ merely decorative.

45 to 56. *Allegorical Figures on the Roof*³⁰

If these were not in the same room with the *Crucifixion*, they would attract more public attention than any works in the Scuola, as there are here no black shadows, nor extravagances of invention, but very beautiful figures richly and delicately coloured, a good deal resembling some of the best works of Andrea del Sarto. There is nothing in them, however, requiring detailed examination. The two figures between the windows are very slovenly, if they are

his at all; and there are bits of marbling and fruit filling the cornices, which may or may not be his: if they are, they are tired work, and of small importance. [XI.427]

59. *Christ before Pilate*

A most interesting picture, but, which is unusual, best seen on a dark day, when the white figure of Christ alone draws the eye, looking almost like a spirit; the painting of the rest of the picture being both somewhat thin and imperfect. There is a certain meagreness about all the minor figures, less grandeur and largeness in the limbs and draperies, and less solidity, it seems, even in the colour, although its arrangements are richer than in many of the compositions above described. I hardly know whether it is owing to this thinness of colour, or on purpose, that the horizontal clouds shine through the crimson flag in the distance; though I should think the latter, for the effect is most beautiful. The passionate action of the Scribe in lifting his hand to dip the pen into the ink-horn is, however, affected and overstrained, and the Pilate is very mean; perhaps intentionally, that no reverence might be withdrawn from the person of Christ. In work of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the figures of Pilate and Herod are always intentionally made contemptible. [XI.427]

60. *Ecce Homo*

As usual, Tintoret's own peculiar view of the subject. Christ is laid fainting on the ground, with a soldier standing on one side of Him; while Pilate, on the other, withdraws the robe from the scourged and wounded body, and points it out to the Jews. Both this and the picture last mentioned resemble Titian more than Tintoret in the style of their treatment. [XI.427]

61. Christ Bearing His Cross

Tintoret is here recognisable again in undiminished strength. He has represented the troops and attendants climbing Calvary by a winding path of which two turns are seen, the figures on the uppermost ledge, and Christ in the centre of them, being relieved against the sky; but instead of the usual simple expedient of the bright horizon to relieve the dark masses, there is here introduced, on the left, the head of a white horse, which blends itself with the sky in one broad mass of light. The power of the picture is chiefly in effect, the figure of Christ being too far off to be very interesting, and only the malefactors being seen on the nearer path; but for this very reason it seems to me more impressive, as if one had been truly present at the scene, though not exactly in the right place for seeing it. [xi.414-428]

62. The Crucifixion

But the most exquisite instance of [his] imaginative power occurs in an incident in the background of the

Crucifixion. I will not insult this marvellous picture by an effort at a verbal account of it. I would not whitewash it with praise, and I refer to it only for the sake of two thoughts peculiarly illustrative of the intellectual faculty immediately under discussion [Imagination Penetrative]. In the common and most Catholic treatment of the subject, the mind is either painfully directed to the bodily agony, coarsely expressed by outward anatomical signs, or else it is permitted to rest on that countenance inconceivable by man at any time, but chiefly so in this its consummated humiliation. In the first case, the representation is revolting; in the second, inefficient, false, and sometimes blasphemous. None even of the greatest religious painters have ever, so far as I know, succeeded here: Giotto and Angelico were cramped by the traditional treatment, and the latter especially, is but too apt to indulge in those points of vitiated feeling which attained their worst development among the Byzantines; Perugino fails in his Christ in almost every instance: of other men than these, after them,



we need not speak. But Tintoret here, as in all other cases, penetrating into the root and deep places of his subject, despising all outward and bodily appearances of pain, and seeking for some means of expressing, not the rack of nerve or sinew, but the fainting of the deserted Son of God before His Eloi cry, and yet feeling himself utterly unequal to the expression of this by the countenance, has, on the one hand, filled his picture with such various and impetuous muscular exertion, that the body of the Crucified is, by comparison, in perfect repose, and, on the other, has cast the countenance altogether into shade. But the Agony is told by this, and by this only; that, though there yet remains a chasm of light on the mountain horizon where the earthquake darkness closes upon the day, the broad and sunlike glory about the head of the Redeemer has become wan, *and of the colour of ashes*.

But the great painter felt he had something more to do yet. Not only that Agony of the Crucified, but the tumult of the people, that rage which invoked His blood upon them and their children. Not only the brutality of the soldier, the apathy of the Centurion, or any other merely instrumental cause of the Divine suffering, but the fury of His own people, the noise against Him of those for whom He died, were to be set before the eye of the understanding, if the power of the picture was to be complete.

This rage, be it remembered, was one of disappointed pride; and the disappointment dated essentially from the time when, but five days before, the King of Zion came, and was received with hosannahs, riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.³¹ To this time, then, it was necessary to direct the thoughts, for therein are found both the cause and the character, the excitement of, and the witness against, this madness of the people. In the shadow behind the cross, a man, riding on an ass colt, looks back to the

multitude, while he points with a rod to the Christ crucified. The ass is feeding on the *remnants of withered palm-leaves*.

With this master-stroke, I believe, I may terminate all illustration of the peculiar power of the imagination over the feelings of the spectator, by the elevation into dignity and meaning of the smallest accessory circumstances. But I have not yet sufficiently dwelt on the fact from which this power arises, the absolute truth of statement of the central fact as it was, or must have been. Without this truth, this awful first moving principle, all direction of the feelings is useless. That which we cannot excite, it is of no use to know how to govern. [iv.270-72]

I must leave this picture to work its will on the spectator; for it is beyond all analysis, and above all praise. [xi.428]

Various works in the Scuola di San Rocco

I should exhaust the patience of the reader, if I were to dwell at length on the various stupendous developments of the imagination of Tintoret in the Scuola di San Rocco alone. I would fain join awhile in that solemn pause of the journey into Egypt, where the silver boughs of the shadowy trees lace with their tremulous lines the alternate folds of fair cloud, flushed by faint crimson light, and lie across the streams of blue between those rosy islands, like the white wakes of wandering ships; or watch beside the sleep of the disciples, among those massy leaves that lie so heavily on the dead of the night beneath the descent of the angel of the agony, and toss fearfully above the motion of the torches as the troop of the betrayer emerges out of the hollows of the olives;³² or wait through the hour of accusing beside the judgment seat of Pilate,³³ where all is unseen, unfelt, except the one figure that stands with its head bowed down, pale, like a pillar of moon light, half bathed in the glory of the Godhead, half wrapt in the whiteness of the shroud.³⁴ Of these,



The Crucifixion

and all the other thoughts of indescribable power that are now fading from the walls of those neglected chambers, I may perhaps endeavour at a future time to preserve some image and shadow more faithfully than by words.³⁵ [...] [iv.274]

Now, I wish the reader particularly to observe throughout all these works of Tintoret, the distinc-

tion of the Imaginative Verity from falsehood on the one hand, and from realism on the other. The power of every picture depends on the penetration of the imagination into the TRUE nature of the thing represented, and on the utter scorn of the imagination for all shackles and fetters of mere external fact that stand in the way of its suggestiveness. In the Baptism it cuts away the trunks of trees as if they were

so much cloud or vapour, that it may exhibit to the thought the completed sequency of the scene;[* The same thing is done yet more boldly in the large composition of the ceiling, the *Plague of Fiery Serpents*: a part of the host, and another sky horizon, are seen through an opening in the ground.] in the Massacre it covers the marble floor with visionary light, that it may strike terror into the spectator

without condescending to butchery; it defies the bare fact, but creates in him the fearful feeling; in the Crucifixion it annihilates locality, and brings the palm leaves to Calvary, so only that it may bear the mind to the Mount of Olives; as in the Entombment it brings the manger to Jerusalem, that it may take the heart to Bethlehem; and all this it does in the daring consciousness of its higher and spiritual



verity, and in the entire knowledge of the fact and substance of all that it touches. The imaginary boat of the demon angel expands the rush of the visible river into the descent of irresistible condemnation; but to make that rush and roar felt by the eye and heard by the ear, the rending of the pine branches above the cataract is taken directly from nature; it is an abstract of Alpine storm. Hence, while we are always placed face to face with whatever is to be told, there is in and beyond its reality a voice supernatural; and that which is doubtful in the vision has strength, sinew, and assuredness, built up in it by fact. [iv: 278]

1. Ridolfi's story of Tintoret's connexion with the Brotherhood of St Rocco illustrates the speed at which the painter worked. About 1560 the members of the brotherhood resolved to have a great picture painted in the Refectory. The best artists of the day were invited to submit designs. When, on the appointed day, Paolo Veronese, Andrea Schiavone, Giuseppe Salviati, and Federigo Zuccaro came to show their designs, and Tintoretto was asked to exhibit his, he uncovered his canvas, with *St Rocco in Heaven* which he had cleverly hidden with a cartoon, and said that they could make no mistake about the design which he had drawn; and if his readiness displeased them, he would make a gift of it to St Rocco, who had already given him so much." The artists, who had made only designs, while Tintoret had made a picture, withdrew from the competition. So they received Tintoretto into the brotherhood, and gave him the charge of what paintings should be needful for the rooms of the Scuola. In addition they granted him an annuity of 100 ducats for life, on condition that he should provide one complete picture each year. [LE]
2. "He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." (*Psalm* 22: 3).
3. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." (*Psalm* 118: 22).

4. See letter 132, *infra*, Appendix 1, p. xxx
5. In letters to his father from Venice (March 19, April 9, 1852) he writes: "I am getting a good study of Tintoret, and am going to-day to the Scuola di San Rocco to try if I can get the feeblest likeness of the most noble piece of animal painting ever produced by man—the donkey's head in the Flight into Egypt. I like the Madonna there better than any of Raphael's, and I like the donkey all but as well as the Madonna. Tintoret seems never to have liked horses. The Ass in the Flight into Egypt is painted with as much respect as if he had been a Senator; but the horses are always neglected and, as far as it is possible for Tintoret to draw ill, even ill-drawn." [LE]
6. John Knowles (ed), *The Life and Writings of Henry Fusely*, London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831, 3 vols, II, p. 176.
7. "And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom; [...] And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood". (2 *Kings* 3: 8, 20-22).
8. The text here quotes the whole passage from *Modern Painters* II [iv:272] given above.
9. Ruskin does not seem to be aware that Tintoretto had started to paint from the Upper Room and ended with the Lower one.
10. *Galleria dell' I. e Reale Accademia delle Belle Arti di Firenze pubblicata con incisione in rame da una società artistica ed illustrata da chiare e intelligenti penne italiane*. Firenze: Società artistica editrice, 1845.
11. This is one of a series of panels, removed from vestment presses at Santa Croce, representing scenes from the life of Christ. They are now attributed to Taddeo Gaddi.
12. In the Accademia at Florence.
13. "And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." (*Matthew* 3: 15).

14. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." (*Matthew* 4: 1).
15. A coinage of Ruskin's, italicized by him.
16. "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon." (*John*, 13: 26).
17. The picture was one which Velasquez copied for the king of Spain; *The Crucifixion* was another.
18. *Luke* 21:29-30.
19. I *Corinthians* 15: 5.
20. A quotation from memory: "In the same manner as the historical painter never enters into details of colour, so neither does he debase his conception with minute attention to the discrimination of drapery. It is the inferior style that marks the variety of stuffs. With him the clothing is neither woollen, nor linen, nor silk, satin, or velvet; it is drapery; it is nothing more". Robert R. Wark (ed), Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981, Discourse IV (1771), p. 63.
21. By Raphael in the Picture Gallery of the Vatican.
22. "And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded." (1 *Kings* 22: 34).

23. In Ruskin's plan n. 33 *Elija at the Brook Cherith* and n. 35 *Elisha Feeding the People* are inverted. The error is corrected in this edition.
24. *Numbers* 21:6.
25. In the Galleria Palatina at Palazzo Pitti.
26. *Exodus* 16:21.
27. *Vocation of Moses*.
28. *Pillar of Fire*.
29. Now identified with the four seasons. 41: *Summer*; 42: *Autumn*; 43: *Winter*; 44: *Spring*.
30. Allegories now identified as follows (Brunet, *op. cit.*, p. 16): 36-39: Children; 45: Scuola della Misericordia; 46: Happiness; 47: Scuola di San Teodoro; 48: Scuola della Carità; 49: Scuola Grande di San Giovanni Evangelista; 50: Female Figure (Patience?); 51: Scuola di San Marco; 52: Female Figure (Humbleness?); 53: Faith; 54: Goodness; 55: Truth; 56: Liberality.
31. "And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon." (*Matthew* 21 :7).
32. *The Agony in the Garden*, in the Upper Room of the Scuola di San Rocco.
33. *John*, 19: 13; *Matthew* 27: 19.
34. *Christ before Pilate*, in the Upper Room of the Scuola di San Rocco.
35. Ruskin did not fulfil this purpose.

SALUTE, CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DELLA

The Marriage at Cana

On the grand canal. [...] The Church of the Salute is farther assisted by the beautiful flight of steps in front of it down to the canal; and its facade is rich and beautiful of its kind, and was chosen by Turner for the principal object in his well-known view of the Grand Canal.¹ [...] The sacristy contains several precious pictures: the three on its roof by Titian, much vaunted, are indeed as feeble as they are monstrous;² but the small Titian, *St Mark, with Sts Cosmo and Damian*, was, when I first saw it, to my judgment, by far the first work of Titian's in Venice. It has since been restored by the Academy, and it seemed to me entirely destroyed, but I had not time to examine it carefully.

At the end of the larger sacristy is the lunette which once decorated the tomb of the Doge Francesco Dandolo and, at the side of it, one of the most highly finished Tintorets in Venice,³ namely:

The Marriage in Cana

An immense picture, some twenty-five feet long by fifteen high, and said by Lazari to be one of the few which Tintoret signed with his name. I am not surprised at his having done so in this case. Evidently the work has been a favourite with him, and he has taken as much pains as it was ever necessary for his colossal strength to take with anything. The subject is not one which admits of much singularity or energy in composition. It was always a favourite one with Veronese, because it gave dramatic interest to figures in gay costumes and of cheerful countenances; but one is surprised to find Tintoret, whose tone of mind was always grave, and who did not like to make a picture out of brocades and diadems, throwing his whole strength into the conception of a marriage feast; but so it is, and there are assuredly no female heads in any of his pictures in Venice elaborated so far as those which here form the central light. Neither is it often that the works of this

mighty master conform themselves to any of the rules acted upon by ordinary painters; but in this instance the popular laws have been observed, and an Academy student would be delighted to see with what severity the principal light is arranged in a central mass, which is divided and made more brilliant by a vigorous piece of shadow thrust into the midst of it, and which dies away in lesser fragments and sparkling towards the extremities of the picture. This mass of light is as interesting by its composition as by its intensity. The ciccone, who escorts the stranger round the sacristy in the course of five minutes, and allows him some forty seconds for the contemplation of a picture which the study of six months would not entirely fathom, directs his attention very carefully to the *bell'effetto di prospettiva* [sic], the whole merit of the picture being, in the eyes of the intelligent public, that there is a long table in it, one end of which looks farther off than the other; but there is more in the *bell'effetto di prospettiva* than the observance of the common laws of optics. The table is set in a spacious chamber, of which the windows at the end let in the light from the horizon, and those in the side wall the intense blue of an eastern sky. The spectator looks all along the table, at the farther end of which are seated Christ and the Madonna, the marriage guests on each side of it, on one side men, on the other women; the men are set with their backs to the light, which, passing over their heads and glancing slightly on the tablecloth, falls in full length along the line of young Venetian women, who thus fill the whole centre of the picture with one broad sunbeam, made up of fair faces and golden hair. Close to the spectator a woman has risen in amazement, and stretches across the table to show the wine in her cup to those opposite; her dark red dress intercepts and enhances the mass of gathered light. It is rather curious, considering the subject of the picture, that one cannot distinguish either the bride or the bridegroom; but the third figure

from the Madonna in the line of women, who wears a white head-dress of lace and rich chains of pearls in her hair, may well be accepted for the former, and I think that between her and the woman on the Madonna's left hand the unity of the line of women is intercepted by a male figure: * [*]. A correspondent writes that, with a good glass, a beard is discernible on the face of this figure. (1884)] be this as it may, this fourth female face is the most beautiful, as far as I recollect, that occurs in the works of the painter, with the exception only of the Madonna in the *Flight into Egypt*. It is an ideal which occurs indeed elsewhere in many of his works, a face at once dark and delicate, the Italian cast of feature moulded with the softness and childishness of English beauty some half a century ago; but I have never seen

the ideal so completely worked out by the master. The face may best be described as one of the purest and softest of Stothard's conceptions, executed with all the strength of Tintoret. The other women, are all made inferior to this one, but there are beautiful profiles and bendings of breasts and necks along the whole line. The men are all subordinate, though there are interesting portraits among them; perhaps the only fault of the picture being that the faces are a little too conspicuous, seen like balls of light among the crowd of minor figures which fill the background of the picture. The tone of the whole is sober and majestic in the highest degree; the dresses are all broad masses of colour, and the only parts of the picture which lay claim to the expression of wealth or splendour are the head-dresses of





the women. In this respect the conception of the scene differs widely from that of Veronese, and approaches more nearly to the probable truth. Still the marriage is not an unimportant one; an immense crowd, filling the background, forming superbly rich mosaic of colour against the distant sky. Taken as a whole, the picture is perhaps the most perfect example which human art has produced of the utmost possible force and sharpness of shadow united with richness of local colour. In all the other works of Tintoret, and much more of other colourists, either the light and shade or the local colour is predominant; in the one case the picture has a tendency to look as if painted by candlelight, in the other it becomes daringly conventional, and approaches the conditions of glass-painting. This picture unites colour as rich as Titian's with light and shade as forcible as Rembrandt's, and far more decisive.

There are one or two other interesting pictures of the early Venetian schools in this sacristy, and several important tombs in the adjoining cloister; among which that of Francesco Dandolo, transported here from the Church of the Frari, deserves especial attention. [xt.429-431]

1. *Venice*, exhibited at the National Gallery.
2. *Death of Abel*, *Sacrifice of Isaac*, and *David and Goliath*: see, however, *Guide to the Principal Pictures in the Academy of Fine Arts at Venice* (1877), for a more favourable reference to Titian's work on the roof of the sacristy here. On one side, below St Mark, stand St Sebastian and St Roch; on the other, SS Cosmas and Damian.
3. This is one of two pictures which Ruskin hoped to secure for the National Gallery.

The Marriage at Cana,
detail

SILVESTRO, CHURCH OF ST

Of no importance in itself, but it contains two very interesting pictures: the first, a *St Thomas of Canterbury with the Baptist and St Francis*, by Girolamo Santa Croce, a superb example of the Venetian religious school; the second by Tintoret, namely:

The Baptism of Christ

Over the first altar on the right of the nave. An upright picture, some ten feet wide by fifteen high; the top of it is arched, representing the Father supported by angels. It requires little knowledge of Tintoret to see that these figures are not by his hand. By returning to the opposite side of the nave, the join in the canvas may be plainly seen, the upper part of the picture having been entirely added on: whether it had this upper part before it was repainted, or whether originally square, cannot now be told, but I believe it had an upper part which has been destroyed. I am not sure if even the dove and the two angels which are at the top of the older part of the picture are quite genuine. The rest of it is magnificent, though both the figures of the Saviour and the Baptist show some concession on the part of the painter to the imperative requirement of his age, that nothing should be done except in an attitude; neither are there any of

his usual fantastic imaginations. There is simply the Christ in the water and the St John on the shore, without attendants, disciples, or witnesses of any kind; but the power of the light and shade, and the splendour of the landscape, which on the whole is well preserved, render it a most interesting example. The Jordan is represented as a mountain brook, receiving a tributary stream in a cascade from the rocks, in which St John stands: there is a rounded stone in the centre of the current; and the parting of the water at this, as well as its rippling among the roots of some dark trees on the left, are among the most accurate remembrances of nature to be found in any of the works of the great masters. I hardly know whether most to wonder at the power of the man who thus broke through the neglect of nature which was universal at his time; or at the evidences, visible throughout the whole of the conception, that he was still content to paint from slight memories of what he had seen in hill countries, instead of following out to its full depth the fountain which he had opened. There is not a stream among the hills of Priuli which in any quarter of a mile of its course would not have suggested to him finer forms of cascade than those which he has idly painted at Venice. [xl.432-433]



TROVASO, CHURCH OF ST

Itself of no importance, but containing two pictures by Tintoret, namely:

1. *The Temptation of St Anthony*

Altar-piece in the chapel on the left of the choir. A small and very carefully finished picture, but marvellously temperate and quit in treatment, especially considering the subject, which one would have imagined likely to inspire the painter with one of his most fantastic visions. As if on purpose to disappoint us, both the effect and the conception of the figures are perfectly quiet, and appear the result much more of careful study than of vigorous imagination. The effect is one of plain daylight; there are a few clouds drifting in the distance, but with no wildness in them, nor is there any energy or heat in the flames which mantle about the waist of one of the figures. But for the noble workmanship, we might almost fancy it the production of a modern academy: yet, as we begin to read the picture, the painter's mind becomes felt. St Anthony is surrounded by four figures, one of which only has the form of a demon, and he is in the background, engaged in no more terrific act of violence towards St Anthony, than endeavouring to pull off his mantle; he has, however, a scourge over his shoulder, but this is probably intended for St Anthony's weapon of self-discipline, which the fiend, with a very Protestant turn of mind, is carrying off. A broken staff, with a bell hanging to it, at the saint's feet, also expresses his interrupted devotion. The three other figures beside him are bent on more cunning mischief: the woman on the left is one of Tintoret's best portraits of a young and bright-eyed Venetian beauty. It is curious that he has given so attractive a countenance to a type apparently of the temptation to violate the vow of poverty, for this woman places one hand in a vase full of coins, and shakes golden chains with the other. On the opposite side of the

saint, another woman, admirably painted, but of a far less attractive countenance, is a type of the lusts of the flesh, yet there is nothing gross or immodest in her dress or gesture. She appears to have been baffled, and for the present to have given up addressing the saint: she lays one hand upon her breast, and might be taken for a very respectable person, but that there are flames playing about her loins. A recumbent figure on the ground is of less intelligible character, but may perhaps be meant for Indolence; at all events, he has torn the saint's book to pieces. I forgot to note, that, under the figure representing Avarice, there is a creature like a pig;¹ whether actual pig or not is unascertainable, for the church is dark, the little light that comes on the picture falls on it the wrong way, and one-third of the lower part of it is hidden by a white case, containing a modern daub, lately painted by way of an altarpiece; the meaning, as well as the merit, of the grand old picture being now far beyond the comprehension both of priests and people. [xi.434-435]

2. *The Last Supper*

On the left-hand side of the chapel of the sacrament. A picture which has been through the hands of the Academy, and is therefore now hardly worth notice. Its conception seems always to have been vulgar, and far below Tintoret's usual standard. There is singular baseness in the circumstance that one of the near Apostles, while all the others are, as usual, intent upon Christ's words, "One of you shall betray me," is going to help himself to wine out of a bottle which stands behind him. In so doing he stoops towards the table, the flask being on the floor. If intended for the action of Judas at this moment, there is the painter's usual originality in the thought; but it seems to me rather done to obtain variation of posture, in bringing the red dress into strong contrast with the table-cloth. The colour has once been fine, and there are fragments of good painting still left;

Temptation of St Antony



but the light does not permit these to be seen, and there is too much perfect work of the master's in Venice to permit us to spend time on retouched remnants. The picture is only worth mentioning, because it is ignorantly and ridiculously referred to by Kugler² as characteristic of Tintoret. [xi.435]

1. The pig, one of the regular attributes of St Anthony, symbolises the evils of sensuality and gluttony which he vanquished; the crutch (marking his age) and the bell (for purposes of exorcising evil spirits) are also regular attributes. (LE)

2. Charles Eastlake (ed), Franz Kugler, *Handbook of the History of Painting, in two Parts*, II, London: John Murray, 1855, p. 463.

ZACCARIA, CHURCH OF ST

Early Renaissance, and fine of its kind; a Gothic chapel attached to it is of great beauty. It contains the best John Bellini in Venice, after that of San G. Grisostomo, *The Virgin, with Four Saints*; and is said to contain another John Bellini and a **Tintoret**, **neither of which I have seen.**¹ [xi: 436]

¹ The other Bellini is the *Circumcision*; the Tintoretto is *The Birth of St John the Baptist*.

ZOBENIGO, CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA

It contains one valuable Tintoret, namely:

Christ with Santa Justina and St Augustine

Over the third altar on the south side of the nave. A picture of small size, and upright, about ten feet by eight. Christ appears to be descending out of the clouds between the two saints, who are both kneeling on the sea-shore. It is a Venetian sea, breaking on a flat beach, like the Lido, with a scarlet galley in the middle distance, of which the chief use is to unite

the two figures by a point of colour. Both the saints are respectable Venetians of the lower class, in homely dresses and with homely faces. The whole picture is quietly painted, and somewhat slightly; free from all extravagance, and displaying little power except in the general truth or harmony of colours so easily laid on. It is better preserved than usual, and worth dwelling upon as an instance of the style of the master when *at rest*. [xi.436]

**Christ with Angels
and Saints Justina
and Francis of Paola**



APPENDIX

THREE LETTERS FROM VENICE, 1845

VENICE, TUESDAY EVENING [23 SEPT.]

My Dearest Father,

I am sending you shabby letters, but the small work requires rest of the eyes in the evening. I have been quite overwhelmed today by a man whom I never dreamed of—Tintoret. I always thought him a good & clever & forcible painter, but I had not the smallest notion of his enormous powers. Harding had been as much taken aback as I have, but he says he is “crumbled up” while I feel encouraged & excited by the good art. I think however Harding has enjoyed the Venetian pictures & that they will do him good. I had another very sufficient staggerer in Titian’s large Assumption—which is a complete Turner, only forty feet high. Tintoret’s is 60 by 24. I had altogether forgotten the Academy here—it is full of treasure—<but> it is marvellous lucky I came here, or I might have disgraced myself for ever speaking slightly of Tintoret. I look upon him now, though as a less perfect painter, yet as a far greater man than Titian ipse. I am vexed at finding nothing of Giorgione anywhere, but I am going to look at some palaces tomorrow, Harding’s last day. I hope he will give you a good report of me. [...] The weather has been everything that I could wish. St Mark’s place last night was a perfect drawingroom, or rather like an immense square theatre—you could not believe you were in the open air—in the afternoon everybody had been at Lido, it being the Festa di Lido, & when I got into such a state of vexation at my drawing, I went there to see what they were doing. Hopeless sensuality—not a single fine face nor kindly look nor appearance of wholesome enjoyment. The crowded gondolas were pretty on the lagoon, but the people have lost all national character whatsoever—no costume, only vulgar imitations of France and England. The men were chiefly employed in singing Bacchanalian songs, seated orcasks, as in our inn signs, but none of them were drunk, only riotous. I remarked this to Coutet. C’est très bien, said he, mias je vous dirai une chose—qu’on a beaucoup de peine à s’enivrer ici. Que le vin ne soit pas trop mauvais, et tous ces gens là sont couchés (sic) par terre!

I see a horrible account in Galigani’s of a workhouse investigation—bone gnawing—has anything been done about it—it is quite enough to set the lower classes all mad together. Love to my mother.

Ever my dearest Father

Your most affe Son

J Ruskin.

(VENICE.) THURSDAY EVENING, 25TH [SEPT.].

My Dearest Father,

Is this really the twenty-fifth? I don’t know at all what to do. I am so divided between Tintoret & the grand canal. I had a good two hours sit before him this morning & it did me mighty good & made me feel bigger—taken up into him as it were. I am in a great hurry now to try my hand at painting a real, downright, big oil picture. I think I am up to a dodge or two that I wasn’t—and

I must have some trees in it. Tintoret has shown me how to paint leaves—[my w]ord, he does leave them with a vengeance. I think y[ou] would like to see how he does the trunk to[o] with two strokes, one for the light side & one for the dark side, all the way down, and then on go the leaves—never autumn wind swept them off as he sweeps them on—and then to see his colossal straws, and his sublime rushbottomed chairs, and his stupendous donkey in the flight into Egypt—such a donkey—such a donkey—with ears that look as is they heard the massacre of the innocents going on in Palestine all the way from Egypt—and well he might if it had been Tintoret’s instead of Herod’s. I looked at it today till I heard the women shriek. There they are, tumbling all over each other, executioners, swords, & all, one mass of desperation & agony—nothing disgusting, nothing indecent, no blood, no cutting of throats, but the most fearful heap of human grief and madness & struggle, that ever man’s mind conceived. But my eyes are tired & I must go to bed. Love to my mother.

Ever my dearest Father

your most affe Son

J Ruskin.

VENICE, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10TH.

My Dearest Father,

I find I shall save time by going the great Milan road instead of the Como one, and I have been studying Tintoret till I find I hav’nt half studied him enough, so I stop here till Monday, and then I intend DV, to make it—Monday, Padua—Tuesday, Vicenza—Friday Verona—Saturday Cremona—Monday Milan—Tuesday—stop, I forgot. Monday’s the 13th. [I] don’t like to set off for home on 13th. I must wait till Tuesday, but it won’t make an[y] difference. DV, I shall be at Vevayon Sunday the 26th, at Paris Sunday the 3rd, and at home Sunday 10th. I have been quite upset in all my calculations by that rascal Tintoret—he has shown me some totally new fields of art and altered my feelings in many respects—or at least deepened & modified them—and I shall work differently, after seeing him, from my former method. I can’t see enough of him, and the more I look the more wonderful he becomes. Weather as bad today as it was beautiful yersterday. Love to my mother.

Ever my dearest

Your most affe Son

J. Ruskin.

1. Shapiro, pp. 210–213, 221, letters 131, 133, 145.

A VENETIAN NOTEBOOK, 1845 Pierpont Morgan Library MA 394

DOGES PALACE, VENICE

The Doges palace

Tintoret

It is difficult to distinguish the spot in Venice where the modern Italian taste is most harmful, or where the utter degradation of the nation—body & soul—is most felt & marked—but perhaps the expression of paltry tapestries “da vendere” in the Doges palace—and the sale of lottery tickets for the support of charitable institutions at the door of its council chamber—tell the story as completely & clearly as any other of their countless miseries and shamefulnes—¹ “There is nothing now to be *felt* in the Doge’s palace except simply disgust; there is not a corner undesecrated or in peace; its decaying pictures are all that can tempt one to enter, and of these there is but one of great value and importance—the Paradise of Tintoret. Noble as it is, had I seen this picture only, I should have left Venice with my feelings respecting the master little changed. Tintoret was of all men perhaps the least capable of fully rendering the feeling of a scene whose prevailing spirit was to be peace; the most energetic and fiery of all painters, he is completely defeated when he has to paint rest; neither was his own mind of the quality to understand even the lowest of the joys of heaven. Deprived of human passion and circumstance, he cannot rise to beatific expression, or vary the character and manifestation of Love—and he falls necessarily into the repetition of an unmeaning countenance—variously softened—wrinkled—bronzed or beautified, into the various ages and orders of angelic life—but in itself the same, and at last from the repetition of it in a thousand figures, becoming unmanageable in his wearied hands, and passing into mannerism and coarseness. Of all the faces in this vast picture—and they are literally countless, I saw not one of elevated cast or marked expression—not one that would in any way have rewarded the pains of a separate study. The countenance of the two principal figures ought perhaps to be excepted, for the contour and gesture of these are exceedingly fine; but the faces are too high to be seen.

Of the composition of the picture it is difficult to judge, unless one were to analyse the groups, and give the whole work

a month’s quiet digestion. At first—and for as long a time as I could spare, it must necessarily appear confused—for no composition however good, unless eminently symmetrical, could appear orderly at once, while it contains so vast a number of figures and represents not a part of heaven merely, but the filled infinity—As it is, the disposition in concentric circles, which is hardly seen except from the further end of the vast hall, is marvellously kept among the confused groups, and is I think all that the mind requires. It ought to be bewildered, and the fault of the picture is not so much looseness of arrangement as want of interest in the parts. The colour and chiaroscuro are both magnificent—both are grievously injured, but even yet the grey and golden qualities of its miraculous distances, seen through the gaps of the whirling circles, which send them back by their solid dark masses of crimson & blue—are as fine an exertion of his artistical power as I have seen—Tintoret like Turner—invariably makes mystery one of the chief qualities of his distance, but he is not so careful as Turner in the refinement and finish of that mystery. Generally his distances are comparatively sketchy, —even to mannerism—and when in high light, he does not allow the shadows to assume their proper relative darkness, so that if the distances of this Paradise, of the St Mark miracle, of the Moses striking the rock, or of the Massacre of the Innocents, were cut out from the rest of the picture, they would not look like distances, but like sketches for larger pictures, sketches exceedingly unfinished but of stupendous power.

There are many other works ascribed of Tintoret scattered about—partly entirely by other hands—some repainted—some originally feeble or slovenly—one only shows his power, the doge Loredano praying for deliverance from the plague, and this not in the principal figure, but in the painting of the blue and crimson carpet, and of the glorious plumed wings of the Lion. Both these are delicious in the extreme. The lion is as grand in conception as in execution—(broad dashes of crumbly white cast the flashes of lightening along the gloomy edge of the wing) the carpet is on the other hand a wonderful instance of the dignity which may be given to the most prosaic details by treatment at once manly, thoughtful, & truthful—(Consider however if this

could be the case without the great element of colour—which is ennobling to all things—and is an abstract quality equally great wherever it occurs.

Titian

In one of the anterooms there is a withered picture of faith by Titian—There is a semblance of dignity given by the simplicity of the figure, but it is simplicity of the vulgarest kind—the drapery is pokethandkerchief like—and would be just as agreeable, or just as disagreeable, if it were thrown any other way. The faces are utterly meaningless though not without a certain grandeur of posture, resulting as I conceive, from Titian’s society and subjects, not from his own mind.

I have not seen a single instance of real dignity in any work of Titian at Venice—His St John in the academy is a vulgar, mustachio blackened—gondolier-legged academy model,—his apostles even in the assumption are of the lowest type of feature—his St Mark in the madonna della Salute is a strutting figure cock a hoop on a throne—& the Sebastian below which is a nearer approach to the right than any, is pilfered from John Bellini, his miserable St Pietro martire well deserves to be made a martyr of—though hardly perhaps by as rascally an executioner.

And since I have seen the peculiarly vulgar and sensual character of his Paduan frescoes, and comparing all their defects with the most glaring sensuality of his Pagan subjects—I am disposed to believe him a bad-grossly minded—inherently vulgar if not vicious man—whose portraits only rise above the level of his ordinary works because they were portraits of noble people, earnestly painted by one who at least knew the mechanical part of his art. As regards the artistical part of this picture, it is a bad specimen of Titian—and the little good there is in it is destroyed by two vile figures on side scenes, put on by the modern Italians. The landscape and the lion below are equally slovenly, the former especially nearly unintelligible, and without a straight line in it, the looseness of Tintoret without his power—the obscurity of Turner without his knowledge. Faith holds an enormous wooden cross, seven feet high and half a foot square, and two little red children are on the point of being crushed to pieces by it.

P. Veronese

On the ceiling of one of the smaller rooms is a noble fresco by Paolo much injured—but resplendent in its glow of colour. Its tones are all of the warmest pitch, green stands in it for blue—scarlet for crimson, brown for grey and it might take its place beside one of the glowing bits of Masaccio or Ghirlandai—Every thing else of his in the palace is killed by it and looks cold & purply. The Europa, an oil picture in the same room, has some rich flesh qualities about it but is exposed to the same censure, it looks purply beside the fresco. Venice is not the place to see Paolo—partly because his brilliant damask and gold quality is ill assorted with the massy & sublime chiaroscuro of Tintoret—partly because the vile Venetians have cleaned away his finest things—Those in the church of San Sebastiano are no longer Paul—if he could rise from his grave he would burn them—Those in the academy are hasty and poor specimens, and cannot for a moment take place beside the cena of Paris. There is only one Paul of really high standard in Venice. That in

PALAZZO PISANI

which is well preserved and untouched and full of instructive painting, — though I know not why the Venetian costume and face put on the family of Darius hurts one more than when it views in sacred subjects. Is this because we believe less in the latter than in the history of Alexander?

CHIESA DELLA MADONNA DELL’ORTO²

It was in this church that I first became acquainted with the real genius of Tintoret. I was startled by the picture, which was luckily at the time taken down and in a side chapel, of the presentation of the young Madonna, and I saw at once that the manner of painting was more great—simple, and full of meaning than that of any other Venetian master—and that the expressions of admiration in the crowd around were more dramatically rendered than I had ever seen except by Giotto. The

“EPILOGUE” TO *MODERN PAINTERS II*, 1883

figure of the young girl—the head crowned with soft light—is made so naturally and so perfectly the centre of all, and its child simplicity and purity so preserved—even to the feebleness of the short—quiet—unconscious step—contrasted with the massy forms and firm—muscular action of the large figure in the foreground—that I know not any representation of the subject whatsoever in which so much reality and sweetness of impression is obtained.

But on passing from this to the **Last judgment** in the choir, I saw at once that it was to Tintoret, and to him only, that my time at Venice was to be given, and that I had found, what I never expected to see of any school—a work which could stand in the same category with Michael Angelo’s Last Judgment.

It shares in one respect the fault of the *Paradiso*, i.e.—that there are no figures in it which individually possess great interest—and it differs entirely from the type of the subject adopted by the older painters in that no emotions are represented, nothing but the great sensation of re-awakened life. It differs both from them, and from the work of Michael Angelo, in another respect also—that while Orcagna’s, Angelico’s, and M. Angelo’s are alike not the representation of a definite local scene—but the presenting of a series of groups to the imagination typical of the Judgment of all the earth. Tintoret’s is a definite painting of a spot of earth, and so reminds one of Bartolommeo’s—and the only appeals made to the larger faculty of the imagination are in the circle of the Apostles seen far off in the heavens (the principal figure is indistinguishable owing to the darkness, the height of the picture, and the injuries it has received) and in the traditional incident of the Charon boat—the only one which Tintoret has deigned to avail himself of—and which he has boldly varied—for the Satan instead of driving the wicked down with his spear—has seized one by the limbs and is hurling him into the boat, as in the statue of Hercules and Hylas, the suspended figure stretching its arms behind. But there is

also a wonderful meaning in the incident chosen for the middle distance, the great river of God’s wrath: bearing down with it heaps of human creatures—tossed and twisted over one another—crowds more [sic], hastening in insane, ungovernable terror from the vague wild distance—to fall into its waters and be borne away. As a piece of painting it would the bending and crashing of the torn fragments of forest at its edge. Among the foreground figures there is, as I have said before, no painting of emotions; the good and the evil are not yet distinguished—they have not yet had time to separate into groups of terror and hope—they are awakening—some ghastly skeleton figures rattling into life—others with their features of corruption shaking the clay from their hair—clogged yet with the earth—appearing here and there like swimmers in a weedy sea—hardly seen among the knotted grass of the foreground. One group on the right, in which an angel touches and wakes a youth, is very finely composed; a little more dignity in the features of both would have made it noble. The air is full of the rising bodies—I never saw anything approaching their perfect buoyancy, except by M. Angelo. The colour is throughout quiet and grey, and rightly so, as a matter of feeling, but it necessitates some little inferiority in colour to the rest of his works, neither is the light and shade very broad or grand.

Opposite to it is another noble one, the worshipping of the golden calf. The chief point of interest in it to me is the simple treatment of the cloud covered Sinai, which is reduced to a rock of size as comparatively small that Moses on the top of it is half the size of life, and yet it is kept, by its gloom & by rejecting all mean detail—in the highest degree sublime. The clouds cover it in horizontal, massy, transparent sombre flake(s?)

1. From here to “stupendous power,” in XI.372n.

2. From here to “broad and grand,” in IV, xxxvi-vii.

FROM: *MODERN PAINTERS II*

... My main work, for those two months, was in the apse of Santa Maria Novella, on Ghirlandajo; in the Brancacci Chapel, on Masaccio and Lippi; and in St Mark’s convent, on Angelico. And very solemnly I wish that I had gone straight home that summer, and never seen Venice,* [*]. Seen her, that is to say, with man’s eyes. My boyhood’s first sight of her, when I was fourteen, could not have been brighter, and would not have been forgotten.] or Tintoret! Perhaps I might have been the Catholic Archbishop of York, by this time—who knows! building my cathedral there, in emulation of the Cardinal’s at Westminster—instead of a tiny Sheffield museum.

§ 11. Fate, and the unlucky task of book-writing, ordered otherwise. For *Modern Painters* could not be finished with a study of ecclesiastical history; and, as the stress of summer came on in Florence, having gained some initiatory conception of her art, with the nature that taught it, and learned to love even the yellow sand of Arno scarcely less than the white sand of Arve, I went north to my special work again, and spent the early autumn, nearly alone, in Val Anzasca. There was little more than a châtea for inn, at Macugnaga, in those days.

§ 12. In September, Mr. J. D. Harding, who, after Copley Fielding, had been my master in water-colour, wrote to ask if he could join me in his autumn tour. I went down to meet him at Baveno; and thence we drove quietly in an open carriage by Como and the spurs of the Italian Alps to Venice, walking up all the hills, stopping at all the river sides, sleeping a night or two at Como, Bergamo, Brescia, and Padua,—with a week at Verona. A most happy time, for me; and, I believe, for us both. Harding had vivid, healthy, and unerring artistic faculty, but no depth of science, and scarcely any of sentiment. I saw him once impressed by the desolation of the great hall of the Casa Foscari; but in general, if the forms of the subject were picturesque, it was all he cared for, nor would he with any patience analyze even those. So far as his art and aim went, I was able entirely to sympathize with him; and we both liked, in one way or another, exactly the same sorts of things; so that he didn’t want to go and draw the marshes at Mantua when I wanted to draw Monte Monterone—but we

could always sit down to work within a dozen me for poring into the foreground weeds, which he thought sufficiently expressed by a zigzag, and heartily admired in him the brilliancy of easy skill, which secured, and with emphasis, in an hour or two, the effect of scenes I could never have attempted. His time in travelling was of course professionally too valuable to him to admit of much study in galleries, (which, for the rest, when a painter’s manner is once fixed, usually does him more hurt than good). But he generally went with me on my exploring days in Venice, and we saw the Scuola di San Rocco together, and both of us for the first time. My companion, though by no means modest as to his own powers, was (partly for that very reason, his confidence in them being well grounded) quite frank and candid in his admiration of stronger painters; and when we had got through the upper gallery, and into the room of the Crucifixion, we both sate down and looked—not at it—but at each other,—literally the strength so taken out of us that we couldn’t stand!

When we came away, Harding said that he felt like a whipped schoolboy. I, not having been at school so long as he, felt only that a new world was opened to me, that I had seen that day the Art of Man in its full majesty for the first time; and that there was also a strange and precious gift in myself enabling me to recognize it, and therein ennobling, not crushing me. That sense of my own gift and function as an interpreter strengthened as I grew older; and supports, and I believe justifies me now in accepting in this last cycle of life, the responsibilities lately once more offered to me in Oxford. [IV: 352-3]

FROM: *PRAETERITA*, 1885

It was only for Harding’s sake that I went on to Venice, that year; and, for the first week there, neither of us thought of anything but the market and fishing boats, and effects of light on the city and the sea; till, in the spare hour of one sunny but luckless day, the fancy took us to look into the Scuola di San Rocco. Hitherto, in hesitating conjectures of what might have been, I have scarcely ventured to wish, gravely, that it *had* been. But, very earnestly, I should have bid myself that day keep *out* of the School of St Roch, had I known what was to come of my knocking at its door.

But for that porter's opening, I should (so far as one can ever know what they should) have written, *The Stones of Chamouni*, instead of *The Stones of Venice*; and the *Laws of Fésolé*, in the full code of them, before beginning to teach in Oxford: and I should have brought out in full distinctness and use what faculty I had of drawing the human face and form with true expression of their higher beauty.

But Tintoret swept me away at once into the "mare maggiore" of the schools of painting which crowned the power and perished

in the fall of Venice; so forcing me into the study of the history of Venice herself; and through that into what else I have traced or told of the laws of national strength and virtue. I am happy in having done this so that the truth of it must stand; but it was not my own proper work; and even the sea-born strength of Venetian painting was beyond my granted fields of fruitful exertion. Its continuity and felicity became thenceforward impossible, and the measure of my immediate success irrevocably shortened. [xxxv: 371-2]



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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

CMO: Church of the Madonna

dell'Orto, Venice

csc: Church of San Cassiano, Venice

CSGM: Church of San Giorgio

Maggiore, Venice

CSGP: Church of San Giovanni e Paolo, Venice

CSM: Church of San Moisè, Venice

CSMMD: Church of Santa Maria Mater Domini, Venice

CSMZ: Church of Santa Maria Zobenigo [Giglio], Venice

CSR: Chiesa di San Rocco, Venice

CSS: Church of San Silvestro, Venice

CST: Church of San Trovaso, Venice

DPV: Ducal Palace, Venice

GAV: Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice

RCMS: The Ruskin Collection, Museums Sheffield

RMC: The Ruskin Museum, Coniston

RFRL: Ruskin Foundation (Ruskin Library, Lancaster University)

SGSR: Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice

TATE: Tate archives, London

ILLUSTRATIONS

p. 20: George Richmond, *Portrait of John Ruskin*, 1843. RF 0813: RFRL

p. 25: John Ruskin, *Sails from Fishing Boats Venice*, 1845? RF 1062: RFRL

p. 26: John Ruskin, *Ca' d'Oro*, 1845 Sept., RF 1590: RFRL

p. 27: John Ruskin, *Moonlight from the Lagoon*, Venice 1849. RF 1049: RFRL

p. 28: Charles Fairfax Murray, Study of Tintoretto's *Bacchus and Ariadne*

(DPV), pencil and watercolour. 1881?

CONRM1989.749: RMC

p. 28: Charles Fairfax Murray, Study of Tintoretto's *Mercury and the Graces* (DPV), pencil and watercolour. 1881? CONRM1989.750: RMC

p. 30: John Ruskin, Study of the central portion of Tintoretto's *Crucifixion* (SGSR), pen drawing, ink and watercolour, 1845. RF 1553: RFRL

p. 32 and cover: John Ruskin, Study of Tintoretto's *Adoration of the Magi* (SGSR), 'Magi and Cherubs', pencil and inkwash 1852. RF 1009: RFRL

p. 33: John Ruskin, Study of Tintoretto's *Adoration of the Magi* (SGSR), detail, pencil and wash, 1845. RF 1552: RFRL

p. 34: John Ruskin, Study of Tintoretto's *Adoration of the Magi* (SGSR), pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 1852. RF 1551: RFRL

p. 36: John Ruskin, Study of Tintoretto's *Miracle of St Mark* (GAV), on heavy paper, watercolour, pencil and bodycolour, 1849-1850. CONRM1989.748: RMC

p. 37: John Ruskin (att.), Study of Tintoretto's *St Mary of Egypt* (SGSR), watercolour. CONRM1989.751: RMC

p. 37: J.W.M. Turner, "Copies of Tintoretto's Paintings in the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice, including *Slaughter of the Innocents* and *Presentation at the Temple*" (SGSR) (CMO), pen and ink on paper, *The Route to Rome* Sketchbook, 1819. D 13914: Tate

p. 37: J.W.M. Turner, "Copy of

Tintoretto's *Crucifixion*" (SGSR), pen and ink on paper, *The Route to Rome* Sketchbook, 1819. D 13906: Tate

p. 40: E. C. Burne-Jones, Study of Tintoretto's *Meeting of the Virgin and St Elizabeth* (SGSR), Watercolour and gum, 1862. RF 140: RFRL

p. 42: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Paradise* (DPV), the 'St Jerome's group' detail, watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1880. CGSG00170: RCMS

p. 42: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Paradise* (DPV), the 'St Jerome's group' detail, watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1880-1881. CGSG0017: RCMS

p. 44: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Paradise* (DPV), 'St Gregory, St Augustine, St Monica and other Saints', watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1880-1881. CGSG00165: RCMS

p. 45: Angelo Alessandri, Study of 'David' in Tintoretto's *Paradise* (DPV), Pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 1883. RF009: RFRL

p. 46: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Paradise* (DPV), 'Adam and Eve and Surrounding Saints', detail, watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1883. CGSG00198: RCMS

p. 48: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *St Mary of Egypt* (SGSR), watercolour on paper, 1885. CGSG00335: RCMS

p. 48: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *St Sebastian* (SGSR),

watercolour on paper, 1885.

CGSG00336: RCMS

p. 50: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Flight into Egypt* (SGSR), watercolour on paper, 1885. CGSG00337: RCMS

p. 51: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Martyrdom of St Stephen* (SGSR), watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1891. CGSG00333: RCMS

p. 52: Angelo Alessandri, Study of Tintoretto's *Annunciation* (SGSR), watercolour and bodycolour on paper, 1889. CGSG00338: RCMS

p. 58: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Cain and Abel*, 1550-1553. GAV

p. 59: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Miracle of the Slave*, 1548. GAV

p. 61: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Crucifixion*, 1568. CSC

p. 62: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Resurrection of Christ with Saints Cassian and Cecilia*, 1565. CSC

p. 63: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Descent into Limbo*, 1568. CSC

p. 65: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Paradise*, 1588-1592. DPV, Sala del Maggior Consiglio

p. 67: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Siege of Zara*, 1582-1587. DPV, Sala dello Scrutinio

p. 68: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Triumph of Venice as Queen of the Seas*, 1588-1592. DPV, Sala del Senato

p. 70: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Saint Andrew and Saint Jerome*, 1552. [DPV] GAV

p. 71: Jacopo Tintoretto, *St Luis, St George and the Princess*, c. 1553. [DPV] GAV

p. 72: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1578. DPV, Sala dell'Anticollégio

p. 75: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Gathering of the Manna*, 1592-1594. CSGM

pp. 76-77: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Last Supper*, 1592-1594. CSGM

p. 78: Domenico Tintoretto, *Martyrdom of St Stephen*, 1593-1594. CSGM

pp. 80-81: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Virgin and Child with Saints Sebastian, Mark and Theodore Adored by Three Camerlenghi (Madonna of the Treasurers)*, c. 1567. [CSGP] GAV

p. 85: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Finding of the True Cross*, c. 1561. CSMMD

pp. 86-87: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Christ Washing his Disciples' Feet*, after 1582. CSM

p. 89: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Last Judgment*, 1559-1560 c. CMO

p. 90: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple*, 1551-1556. CMO

pp. 93-94: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Christ Healing the Paralytic (The Pool of Bethesda)*, 1559. CSR

p. 95: Jacopo Tintoretto, *St Roch Heals the Plague Victims*, 1549. CSR

pp. 96-97: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Capture of St Roch*, 1580s. CSR

pp. 96-97: Jacopo Tintoretto, *St Roch Healing the Animals*, 1576. CSR

p. 100: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Annunciation*, 1581-1584. SGSR

p. 103: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1581-1582. SGSR

pp. 103-104: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Flight into Egypt*, 1581-1584. SGSR

p. 105: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1581-1584. SGSR

p. 106: Jacopo Tintoretto, *St Mary Magdalene (St Mary Reading)*, 1581-1584. SGSR

p. 108: Jacopo Tintoretto, *St Mary of Egypt (St Mary in Meditation)*, 1581-1584. SGSR

p. 109: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Circumcision*, 1581-1586. SGSR

p. 110: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Visitation*, 1588. SGSR

p. 113: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 116: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Baptism of Christ*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 119: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Agony in the Garden*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 120: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Last Supper*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 123: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Ascension of Christ*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 124: Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Pool of Bethesda*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 125: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Temptation of Christ*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 126: Jacopo Tintoretto, *St Sebastian*, 1578-1581. SGSR

p. 128: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Moses Striking the Rock*, 1577. SGSR

p. 130: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Brazen Serpent*, 1576. SGSR

p. 133: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Gathering of the Manna*, 1577. SGSR

p. 136: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Temptation of Adam and Eve*, 1550-1553. GAV

p. 137: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Elijah Fed by the Angel*, 1577-1578. SGSR

p. 140: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Ecce Homo*, 1566-1567. SGSR

p. 141: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Christ before Pilate*, 1566-1567. SGSR

p. 143: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Ascent to Calvary*, 1566-1567. SGSR

pp. 144-145: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Crucifixion*, 1565. SGSR

pp. 149-150: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Marriage at Cana*, 1561. CSM

p. 153: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Baptism of Christ*, before 1582. CSS

p. 155: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Temptation of St Antony*, c. 1577. CST

p. 157: Jacopo Tintoretto, *Christ with Angels and Saints Justina and Francis of Paola*, 1581-1582. CSMZ

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