

## Appendix

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The little collection of ‘documents relating to Venetian painters’ already referred to (p. 47 [110]) as made with excellent judgment by Mr. Edward Cheney, is, I regret to say, ‘communicated’ only to the author’s friends, of whom I, being now one of long standing, emboldened also by repeated instances of help received from him, venture to trespass on the modest book so far as to reprint part of the translation which it gives of the questioning of Paul Veronese.<sup>1</sup>

“It is well known”, says Mr. Cheney in his prefatory remarks, “to the students of Venetian history, that the Roman Inquisition was allowed little influence, and still less power, in the states of the Signory;<sup>2</sup> and its sittings were always attended by lay members, selected from the Senate, to regulate and report its proceedings.

The sittings of the Holy Office were held in the chapel of St. Theodore, fronting the door leading from St. Mark’s Church to the Fondamenta di Canonica.”

On Saturday, the 8th July,<sup>3</sup> 1573, Master Paul Caliari, of Verona, a painter, residing in the parish of St. Samuel, was brought before the Sacred Tribunal; and being asked his name and surname, answered as above; and being asked of his profession, answered<sup>4</sup> –

“A. I invent and draw figures.

Q. Do you know the reason why you have been summoned?

A. No, my lord.

Q. Can you imagine it?

A. I can imagine it.

Q. Tell us what you imagine.

A. For the reason which the Reverend Prior of SS. Giovanni and Paolo, whose name I know not, told me that he had been here, and that your illustrious lordships had given him orders that I should substitute the figure of the Magdalen for that of a dog; and I replied that I would willingly have done this, or anything else for my own credit and the advantage of the picture, but that I did not think the figure of the Magdalen would be fitting (!!)<sup>a</sup> or would look well, for many reasons, which I will always assign whenever the opportunity is given me.

Q. What picture is that which you have named?

A. It is the picture representing the last<sup>b</sup> supper that Jesus took with his disciples in the house of Simon [fig. 39].<sup>5</sup>

Q. Where is this picture?

A. In the refectory of the Friars of SS. Giovanni and Paolo.

Q. Is it painted on the wall, on panel, or on cloth?

A. On cloth.

Q. How many feet is it in height?

A. It is about seventeen feet.

Q. How wide?

A. About thirty-nine feet.

Q. In this supper of our Lord have you painted any attendants?<sup>6</sup>

A. Yes, my lord.

<sup>a</sup> I must interpolate two notes of admiration. After all one has heard of the terrors of the Inquisition, it seems, nevertheless, some people ventured to differ with it in opinion, on occasion. And the Inquisition was entirely right, too. See next note.

<sup>b</sup> “Cena ultima che”, etc.: the last, that is to say, of the two which Veronese supposed Christ to have taken with this host; but he had not carefully enough examined the apparently parallel passages. They are confusing enough, and perhaps the reader will be glad to refer to them in their proper order.

I. There is, first, the feast given to Christ by St. Matthew, after he was called; the circumstances of it told by himself; only saying ‘the house’ instead of ‘my house’ (Matt. ix. 9-13). This is the feast at which the objection is taken by the Pharisees – “Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?” the event being again related by St. Luke (v. 29), giving Matthew the name of Levi. No other circumstance of interest takes place on this occasion.

II. “One of the Pharisees desired Him that He would eat with him: and He went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat” (Luke viii [sic = vii]. 36).

To *this* feast came the Magdalen, and “stood at His feet, behind Him, weeping”. And you know the rest. The same lesson given to the Pharisees who *forbade* the feast of Matthew, here given – in how much more pathetic force – to the Pharisee at whose feast Jesus now sat. Another manner of sinner this, who stands uncalled, at the feast, weeping; who in a little while will stand weeping – not for herself. The name of the Pharisee host is given in Christ’s grave address to him – “Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee” [Luke 7.40].

III. The *supper* at Bethany, in the house of Simon “the Leper”, where Lazarus sat at table, where Martha served, and where her sister Mary poured the ointment on Christ’s head, “for my burial”, (Mark xiv. 3; Matt. xxvi. 7; and John xii. 2, where in the following third verse doubtless some copyist, confusing her with the Magdalen, added the clause of her wiping His feet with her hair; – so also, more palpably, in John xi. 2). Here the objection is made by Judas, and the lesson given – “The poor ye have always with you”.

We cannot seriously suppose Simon the Leper to be the same person as Simon the Pharisee; still less Simon the Pharisee to be the same as Matthew the publican; but in Veronese’s mind their three feasts had got confused, and he thinks of them as *two* only, and calls this which he represents here the last of the two, though there is nothing whatever to identify it as first, last, or middle. There is no Magdalen, no Mary, no Lazarus, no hospitable Levi, no supercilious Simon. Nothing but a confused meeting of very mixed company; half of them straggling about the table without sitting down; and the conspicuous brown dog, for whom the Inquisitors would have had him substitute the Magdalen; – which if he had done, the picture would have been right in all other particulars, the scarlet-robed figure opposite Christ then becoming Simon the Pharisee; but he cannot be Matthew the apostle, for Veronese distinctly names the twelve apostles after “the master of the house”; and the text written on the balustrade on the left is therefore either spurious altogether, or added by Veronese to get rid of the necessity of putting in a Magdalen to satisfy his examiners, or please the Prior of St. John and Paul.

Q. Say how many attendants, and what each is doing.

A. First, the master of the house, Simon; besides, I have placed below him a server, who I have supposed to have come for his own amusement to see the arrangement of the table. There are besides several others,<sup>c</sup> which, as there are many figures in the picture, I do not recollect.<sup>7</sup>

Q. What is the meaning of those men dressed in the German fashion,<sup>d</sup> each with a halbert in his hand?<sup>8</sup>

A. It is now necessary that I should say a few words.<sup>e</sup>

*The Court.* Say on.

A. We painters take the same license that is permitted to poets, and jesters(!).<sup>9</sup> I have placed those two halberdiers – the one eating, the other drinking<sup>f</sup> – by the staircase, to be supposed ready to perform any duty that may be required of them; it appearing to me quite fitting that the master of such a house, who was rich and great (as I have been told), should have such attendants.

Q. That fellow dressed like a buffoon, with the parrot on his wrist, – for what purpose is *he* introduced into the canvas?<sup>10</sup>

A. For ornament, as is usually done.<sup>g</sup>

Q. At the table of the Lord whom have you placed?

A. The twelve apostles.

Q. What is St. Peter doing, who is the first?<sup>h</sup>

A. He is cutting up a lamb,<sup>11</sup> to send to the other end of the table.

Q. What is he doing who is next to him?

A. He is holding a plate to receive what St. Peter will give him.

Q. Tell us what he is doing who is next to this last?

A. He is using a fork as a toothpick.<sup>12</sup>

Q. Who do you really think were present at that supper?

A. I believe Christ and His apostles were present; but in the foreground of the picture I have placed figures for ornament, of my own invention.

Q. Were you commissioned by any person to paint Germans, and buffoons, and such-like things in this picture?

A. No, my lord; my commission was to ornament the picture as I judged best, which, being large, requires many figures, as it appears to me.

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<sup>c</sup> Yes, there certainly are ‘several others’ – some score of idlers about, I should say. But this longer answer of the painter’s was probably little attended to, and ill reported by the secretary.

<sup>d</sup> My lords have suspicions of leaning towards the principles – no less than the taste – of Holbein; and of meaning some mischief.

<sup>e</sup> He instantly feels the drift of this last question, and that it must not be passed lightly. Asks leave to speak – (usually no license but of direct answer being given).

<sup>f</sup> On the right. *One* has got all the eating and drinking to himself, however, as far as I can see.

<sup>g</sup> Alas, *everything* is for ornament – if you would own it, Master Paul!

<sup>h</sup> Very curious that no question is asked as to what Christ Himself is doing. One would have greatly desired Veronese’s answer.

<sup>i</sup> Scarcely seen, between the two pillars. I must needs admit that Raphael would have invented some more dignified apostolic action.





**Figure 39** Paolo Veronese, *The Feast in the House of Levi*. 1573

Q. Are the ornaments that the painter is in the habit of introducing in his frescoes and pictures suited and fitting to the subject and to the principal persons represented, or does he really paint such as strike his own fancy, without exercising his judgment or his discretion?<sup>j</sup>

A. I design my pictures with all due consideration as to what is fitting, and to the best of my judgment.

Q. Does it appear to you fitting that at our Lord's last supper<sup>k13</sup> you should paint buffoons, drunkards, Germans,<sup>l</sup> dwarfs, and similar indecencies?

A. No, my lord.

Q. Why, then, have you painted them?

A. I have done it because I supposed that these were not in the place where the supper was served.

Q. Are you not aware that in Germany,<sup>m</sup> and in other places infected with heresy, they are in the habit of painting pictures full of scurrility for the purpose of ridiculing and degrading the Holy Church, and thus teaching false doctrines to the ignorant and foolish?

A. Yes, my lord, it is bad; but I return to what I said before: I thought myself obliged to do as others – my predecessors – had done before me.

Q. And have your predecessors, then, done such things?

A. Michael-Angelo, in the Papal Chapel in Rome, has painted our Lord Jesus Christ, His mother, St. John, and St. Peter, and all the Court of Heaven, from the Virgin Mary downwards, all naked, and in various attitudes, with little reverence.

Q. Do you not know that in a painting like the Last Judgment, where drapery is not supposed, dresses are not required, and that disembodied spirits only are represented: but there are neither buffoons, nor dogs, nor armour, nor any other absurdity? And does it not appear to you that neither by this nor any other example you have done right in painting the picture in this manner, and that it can be proved right and decent?

A. Illustrious Lord, I do not defend it; but I thought I was doing right. I had not considered all these things, never intending to commit any impropriety; the more so as figures of buffoons are not supposed to be in the same place where our Lord is.

Which examination ended, my lords decreed that the above-named Master Paul should be bound to correct and amend the picture which had been under question, within three months, at his own expense, under penalties to be imposed by the Sacred Tribunal.”<sup>14</sup>

This sentence, however severe in terms, was merely a matter of form. The examiners were satisfied there was no malice preposse in their fanciful Paul; and troubled neither him nor themselves farther. He did not so much as efface the inculpated dog;<sup>15</sup> and the only correction or amendment he made, so far as I can see, was the addition of the inscription, which marked the picture for the feast of Levi.<sup>16</sup>

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**j** Admirably put, my lord.

**k** Not meaning the Cena, of course; but what Veronese also meant.

**l** and **m** The gist of the business, at last.

## Notes

1 The connoisseur, collector and amateur watercolourist, Edward Cheney (1803-1884) had been a close friend of Rawdon Brown's since his own period of residence in Venice in the 1840s. Ruskin had met him in England in the summer of 1850 and had benefited from his assistance while in Venice working on *SV* (Clegg 1981b, 94). At this time, as unofficial consultant to the trustees of the National Gallery, Cheney sometimes advised against purchases recommended by Ruskin (*ODNB*). The following translation of Veronese's examination is extracted from Cheney 1872-76, 78-107. In his short Introduction (3-5), Cheney reports that the idea for the volume had been suggested to him by Brown when he was the latter's guest in 1873. The transcript of Veronese's examination had been found in the Venetian Archives by Brown's friend Armand Baschet, who was the first to publish it, in a French translation (Baschet 1867; Griffiths, Law 2005, 60-1, 81). It was this translation, as Brown had pointed out to Janet Ross in a letter of 22 November 1867 (Ross 1912, 177), that had been "going the round of the papers in France, England and Italy", where it was translated back into Italian. Cheney was the first to publish the original text, in Venetian dialect framed in official Latin, together with his own English translation. Further remarks on Veronese's examination by the Inquisition are in "Carpaccio's Ape" ("Supplementary texts", 148).

2 Ruskin quotes from the final portion of Cheney's Introduction, omitting the clause "and its proceedings were closely watched, even in matters admitted to be within its jurisdiction" (Cheney 1872-76, 86).

3 The date of the examination, correctly given by Cheney, was 18 July 1573 (Cheney 1872-76, 86, 98 [see the next note]; compare the transcript of the original document in Massimi 2011 (179-81).

4 Ruskin here gives a full translation of the introductory passage in Latin, summarized in Cheney 1872-76 (98), thus: "Examination of Paolo Veronese before the Inquisition at Venice, on the 18th of July, 1573. Asked his name and profession. A. I invent [...]".

5 Cat. 203 (MM 1962, 137): Paolo Veronese, *The Feast in the House of Levi*, canvas, inscribed with the date "A. D. MDLXXIII - DIE. XX. APR.". The picture had been commissioned to replace Titian's *Last Supper*, painted for the Refectory of the Dominican convent of SS. *Giovanni e Paolo* but destroyed in a fire in 1571. Cheney (1872-76, 99n) treats Veronese's answer as a curious "mistake", from his point of view perhaps not surprising in a painter "of pageants and processions" (78): "The picture represents the banquet at the house of Levi, and not the Last Supper. The inscription, with a reference to the Gospel of St. Luke recording the event, is painted on the picture itself [see below]". Only a little less ingenuously, but rather more analytically, Ruskin takes Veronese at his word and reproaches him for slapdash conflation of three distinct feasts or suppers in which Christ took part, as recounted in the Gospels: with Matthew or Levi, as indicated by the inscription (which Ruskin suspects [see below]); with Simon the Pharisee and with Simon the Leper at Bethany. Ruskin understands Veronese to have intended "last" as meaning the later of the two suppers Christ took in the house of Simon, and to have supposed, in Ruskin's view untenably,

that Simon the Leper and Simon the Pharisee were one and the same. Yet this interpretation ignores the nub of the question, the claim that the painting represents the *Last Supper* - understandably enough perhaps, given the painter's unaccountable assumption that this took place in the house of (whichever) Simon, and given too the fact that this scriptural blunder is, seemingly, passed over in silence by the court itself. Yet it appears that the whole interrogation, on either side, may well have been a politically motivated exercise in equivocation. It has been argued in detail in Massimi 2011 that the painting was commissioned by conventual reformists within SS. *Giovanni e Paolo* as a representation of quite another supper, taken by Christ in the house of an unnamed Pharisee (Luke 11.37: "And as he spake, a certain Pharisee besought him to dine with him: and he went in, and sat down to meat"; cf. Ruskin's own description of the painting in "Carpaccio's Ape" as of "Christ at meat in the Pharisee's house"). The subject was appropriate to the painting's intended location in a refectory, but more importantly it afforded the pretext for a pictorial explication of Christ's indictment of the Pharisees and lawyers, as uttered on that occasion (and echoed, with greater ferocity and rhetorical force in Matthew 23). In an interpretative and documentary *tour-de-force* that Ruskin would surely have applauded, not least because of his own interest in the different modes of Reform and their reflection in art (explored in *AF*), Massimi 2011 argues that the composition was meticulously planned so as to constitute a sort of manifesto of resistance, on the part of the obdurately conventual SS. *Giovanni e Paolo*, towards the imposition, in the aftermath of the Council of Trent, of a mode of reform disciplined by the dictates of regular observance. It achieved this by staging an iconographical novelty: a pictorial visualization of the contrast between good and bad ministry, which, rather than narrating a particular episode in the life of Christ, called on a centuries-old theological tradition, founded in the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch, and in Patristic literature, to convene and coordinate a set of semantically opposed types, including all of the components touched on in the examination (the "inculcated dog" that was to have been transformed into the Magdalen, the dwarf buffoon, the man with the bleeding nose, the "halbardiers", St Peter, and the "server" or steward) as well as other figures not mentioned there. The problem posed the upper grades of the Dominican hierarchy and Rome by the convent of SS. *Giovanni e Paolo* was long-standing and largely a political one: their recalcitrant demands were actively supported by the Republic. Massimi 2011 suggests that the comparatively unthorough and indeed uninquisitorial character of the examination (giving rise to Cheney's perplexity as to its show of "prudery" and Ruskin's interpolated "notes of admiration") is explained by the heterogeneous composition of the tribunal, which (as Cheney pointed out) included lay members (the *Savii all'eresia*) nominated by the highest organs of the Venetian state and also the Patriarch of Venice, at this time Giovanni Trevisan, generally resentful of outside interference in the management of domestic ecclesiastical affairs. Certainly, the very specific questions regarding the meaning of certain figures in the painting (wholly evaded

by Veronese) suggest awareness of its true significance and that the claim it represented the *Last Supper* was merely a front. The same inference may be made from the fact that artist and patrons were not ultimately held either to this or to the patently contradictory claim that the painting represented Christ at meat in the house of Simon. The final solution, not specified in the examination, seems to have been a form of compromise. As Ruskin points out, amendment by means of the inscription "which marked the picture for the feast of Levi" excluded all substantial correction to the painting, allowing this – if Massimi 2011 is correct – carefully constructed pictorial homily to remain intact though veiled by nominal reclassification.

**6** In the original "Ministri", whose telling ambiguity of meaning ('administrators' or organizers of the event, 'attendants' or 'ministers' in the clerical sense) is noted in Massimi 2011 (160).

**7** Ruskin here omits a passage (Cheney 1872-76, 101-2) in which the painter is asked how many other *Last Suppers* he has painted and where. He instances one "in the Refectory of the reverend Fathers of S. George, here in Venice", i.e. *The Wedding at Cana* now in the Louvre (see "Part II", n. 81), and is promptly reminded that the question put to him regarded "the Suppers of our Lord" (in the original the noun for 'supper', *Cena*, is in the singular: "si domanda della Cena del Signore" [Massimi 2011, 179-80]). He is also required to explain the meaning of "the man going away with a bleeding nose", the figure on the stairs on the left, holding a white cloth in his right hand. To this he replies, "I intended it for a servant who from some accident is bleeding at the nose." Cheney (1872-76, 102n) incorrectly states that the "action of this figure has been changed", probably because he expected to find a figure in the painting with blood actually issuing from his nose and thus missed the red stains on the white cloth in the man's hand and on his collar. Ruskin may have noted these details: he later states that the only "correction or amendment" made to the painting was the "addition of the inscription" (see below). See Massimi 2011 (101-2) for an interpretation of this figure as a type of the 'defilement' of ministerial office.

**8** Massimi 2011 (94-6) interprets these as mercenaries, the anti-type of the good shepherd, supreme figure of the good minister.

**9** In the original "i poeti et i matti" ('poets and madmen'; cf. Baschet 1867, 381: "les poètes et les fous"). Cheney evidently interpreted "matti" to mean "buffoons" or "fools" in the Shakespearian sense. Compare "Carpaccio's Ape" ("Supplementary texts", 148); and see *Grande dizionario* 1961-2002, 9: 957. Massimi 2011 (161-4) argues that Veronese's statement is a banal and deliberately evasive citation of the *dictum Horatii*, a topos on poetic license derived from the *Ars Poetica* and current since the early Middle Ages (Chastel 1977).

**10** Massimi 2011 (86-8) holds that this figure is a type of the bad minister, by reference to sixteenth-century Italian translations from the Hebrew of a passage in Leviticus 21 proscribing those manifesting various deformities from priestly office: where the Vulgate translated *lippus* ('having watery or inflamed eyes'), these preferred *nano* or 'dwarf' (as in the King James version).

**11** Massimi 2011 (97-8) argues that Peter is represented in the act of detaching the thigh of a roasted lamb, and that this act testifies to his pre-eminence as a figure of the good minister, given that Exodus 29 and Leviticus 7 specify that the right shoulder and breast of a sacrificed animal were parts reserved for the priest, injunctions later interpreted symbolically in terms of priestly faith, good works and excellence of example.

**12** The figure is by no means "next to" ("appresso a") Peter, but at some distance from him, glimpsed between the columns to the left of the central portion of the table at which Peter, Jesus and John are seated. To draw attention to this literally marginal presence may have been a way of avoiding further discussion of the much more prominent figure in opulent red robes placed almost immediately next to Peter, identified by Veronese as Christ's host, Simon. Massimi 2011 (169-70) argues that he typifies the figure of the Pharisee, long associated by conventuals with the pedantic rigours of regular observance.

**13** Cheney 1872-76 (105n) comments, "It is strange that the inquisitor should have fallen into the same mistake, and have confounded the banquet of Levi with the Last Supper!"

**14** The closing paragraph is Ruskin's translation of the Latin conclusion to the document, not given by Cheney.

**15** Interpreted in Massimi 2011 (89-90) as a type of the bad minister by reference to Isaiah 56.10-11: "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter."

**16** "FECIT. D. COVI. MAGNU LEVI - LUCAE CAP. V". Cf. Cheney 1872-76, 107: "The injunctions of the Holy Office were only partially obeyed; the 'bleeding nose' was retrenched, but the dog remains with the dwarf, the parrot and 'the Germans', nor can I discover that Paolo materially altered his style of composition in consequence of these remonstrances, nor that he was more inclined for the future to check the exuberance of his fancy even when treating the most sacred subjects". The conclusion was added in Ruskin 1877 IIb (see "Editions of the Guide", Table 2).