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Dirck Barendsz. and Hendrick Goltzius

The present article, like several others published in the last two years, traces its origins to the Rijksmuseum's important exhibition of 1986, *Kunst voor de beeldenstorm*. While the paintings that were displayed have received the lion's share of attention, in the rooms devoted to the drawings of the period there was a rare opportunity to study and compare a selection of work by draughtsmen whose few surviving sheets are widely scattered.¹ One painter to emerge more clearly as a draughtsman was Dirck Barendsz. (1534–1592), one of the artists praised by Karel van Mander as a significant importer of modern Italian styles into the Netherlands. Here was a painter who, as Van Mander tells us, had actually lived with Titian, the Habsburg monarch's favourite artist. What authority his brush must have wielded! Despite the scarcity of his surviving work, it was possible in the exhibition to sense the impact it must have had. While the sheer scale of his Gouda altarpiece was equalled, for example, by paintings by Heemskerck, no other Netherlandish painter seems to have applied his paint with such unrepentant enjoyment of the pigment itself. The marks of his brush remain undisguised. In this the impact of Venice is inescapable and in the north it was unique before Frans Hals and Rembrandt. Also Venetian was the compositional pattern, the tight figure-grouping and the crowding of incident that

seemed to owe something to Jacopo Bassano, another Venetian artist whose influence spread north of the Alps.²

Barendsz.'s works on paper tell the same story (figs. 1–3 and 8–9). Italian stylistic and compositional traditions always seem to have the upper hand. Furthermore, there is a remarkable consistency between his early and late drawings, all of which were represented in the exhibition. The *Fall of the Rebel Angels* in the British Royal collections at Windsor (fig. 1), executed before 1566, exhibits the same rugged outlines—reminiscent of the underdrawing of a panel or canvas—as the Victoria and Albert Museum's much later banquet scene, *Mankind awaiting the Last Judgment*, which is dated 1581 (fig. 2).³ The technique is similar, the most noticeable difference between them being the more painterly use of line and white heightening in the later drawing. The outlines are more fragmented and the tones applied with a lighter, more feathery touch. Yet these differences do not seem especially marked when it is remembered that the two drawings are separated by fifteen to twenty years. The function these drawings had is not known for certain. The *Fall of the Rebel Angels* (fig. 1) is believed to be a preparatory study for a painting that fell victim to the spate of iconoclasm that overtook Amsterdam in 1566. Its high degree of finish and the prominent signature suggest that it

Fig. 1. Dirck Barendsz., *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, 532 × 332 mm. Signed lower centre. Windsor Castle, Royal Library, Her Majesty The Queen.

was also viewed as an independent work, and the strongly outlined, muscular figures are reminiscent of those seen in Venetian woodcuts of the period. The later drawing of *Mankind awaiting the Last Judgment* is also signed, but unlike the *Fall of the Rebel Angels* it was engraved. The outlines of the drawing, however, are not indented for transfer to Jan Sadeler's copper plate. It may be significant that in one state the print is signed *Theodor: Bernard: Amsterod pinx.*, which might suggest that the drawing, like that at Windsor, was connected with a now lost painting (because of the word *pinx[ist]*). This argument receives some support from the existence of at least



seven painted copies of the composition (one, perhaps Judson's no. e, was sold at Christie's South Kensington on 22 January 1987, lot 107 repr.).

Be that as it may, the surviving drawings by Barendsz. that have been indented for transfer look remarkably different. They come in two types, the most common now being the monochrome oil-sketches on paper that have begun to reappear on the Paris art market over the last few years. Only a few were actually engraved, although it is clear that they were all made in preparation for a series of prints depicting the passion of Christ. Five of the sketches were exhibited in the Rijksmuseum, including one that had been indented and engraved.⁴ The British Museum has acquired two, one of which was included in the exhibition.⁵ The more recently acquired second example, showing *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, has indented outlines and was made into a print (fig. 3). In execution these sketches are paradoxically broader than the drawings considered so far, where the connection with engravings is less secure. The similarities, quite apart from the documentation provided by the prints and by the signatures on these drawings, nevertheless betray the same artistic personality. Barendsz. has sacrificed none of his breadth of style in anticipation of the linear effects of the engraver's burin. The second type of indented drawing is represented by just one sheet, the *Venetian Wedding* in the Rijksprentenkabinet (figs. 4–6).⁶ The drawing has always commanded a consensus of opinion concerning its attribution and function: the catholic view is that it was made by Barendsz. specifically for the print by Hendrick Goltzius (fig. 7), which is dated 1584; the drawing is likely, therefore, to have been made in or soon before that year, although the composition probably dates from about 1560, during Barendsz.'s Venetian years.

In fact this celebrated drawing diverges completely from those considered so far in both technique and style. The other drawings by Barendsz. which can be dated securely to the early 1580s are if anything the least comparable. They are the banquet scene of

Fig. 2. Dirck Barendsz., *Mankind awaiting the Last Judgment*, pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, 336 × 490 mm. Signed and dated 1581. London, Victoria and Albert Museum.



1581 (fig. 2) and a stylistically similar drawing in the Albertina in Vienna of *Jonah spat up by the Whale*, which is dated 1582.⁷ In view of the exceptional disparity in technique and style it is worth quoting the discussion of the *Venetian Wedding* by K. G. Boon in his catalogue of the Rijksmuseum's earlier Netherlandish drawings. How are the differences to be reconciled? *In my opinion*, he wrote, *this drawing for the print must have been made after an earlier sketch. As argument for the date, Reznicek and Judson maintain that the drawing must have been made just before Goltzius' print from the drawing made in 1584 (B247)*[here fig. 7]. *The draughtsman may then have adapted his style to that of Goltzius in this period, as it appears from a comparison with Goltzius' drawing of the Banquet of the*

Daughters-in-Law of Tarquinius Superbus of 1581 (here fig. 10). So the answer is presented in two halves: first, the drawing is a copy by Barendsz. of an earlier work (inferring that it therefore differs in style from his other sketches); secondly, Barendsz., actually tried to emulate Goltzius' way of drawing.⁸ In the exhibition, the *Venetian Wedding* seemed so alien among Barendsz.'s other drawings that it instilled the idea of taking the argument a step further: is it possible that the drawing was in fact made by Goltzius after a model by Barendsz. in preparation for his engraving? The practice was not unusual among reproductive printmakers. This article attempts to argue that this was indeed the case. No single argument is wholly conclusive and

Fig. 3. Dirck Barendsz., *Christ's Entry into Jerusalem*, grisaille in oils on paper, indented for transfer, 247 × 207 mm. Signed. London, by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.



attributions are especially fraught with difficulties when the work in question is a copy rather than an original work. Yet the preferability of the theory that Goltzius was the draughtsman can be demonstrated. The currently accepted view begs two main questions. Did Barendsz., in other copies after his own work, alter his style so radically? And was he in the habit of adapting his draughtsmanship to that of an engraver? Concrete answers cannot be provided, although it seems inherently improbable that either question should be answered in the affirmative. The unlikely idea that he should radically alter his style when copying his own work cannot be countered by clear evidence, although it should be noted that two known versions of

a drawing by Barendsz. of the *Entombment*, in the Rijksprentenkabinet and in the Bowdoin College Museum of Art are similar to each other (figs. 8–9). The second version, however, is probably only a pupil's copy based on the engraving by Jan Sadeler for which the Amsterdam sheet is a study (it is reddened on the *verso*). The copyist may have been following another, now lost drawing, by Barendsz. and not the print. This is clearly speculative, but the sheet suggests that a repetition need not necessarily deviate substantially from a preparatory work by Barendsz. On the second question, as to whether Barendsz. adapted his style to that of his engravers, a more persuasive answer in the negative is provided by the grisaille oil-sketches. They may date from about the same time as the *Venetian Wedding*, yet they make no stylistic concessions whatever towards engravers' drawings. Indeed it says much for Jan Sadeler's skill that he was able to translate these painterly sketches into line.⁹ They make it appear unlikely, to say the least, that in the *Venetian Wedding*, the fifty-year-old Barendsz. altered his habitual procedure and attempted to imitate the drawing style of an engraver, Hendrick Goltzius, who was then in his twenties.

The negative evidence is substantial enough to open the way for a reconsideration of the accepted view. The dearth of comparisons between the *Venetian Wedding* and Barendsz.'s other surviving drawings (the examples reproduced here as figs. 1–3 and 8 give a fairly complete picture of his range as a draughtsman) inspires no confidence. As is to be expected, his drawings, like his paintings, exhibit painterly qualities over line, *Venetian colore* over *disegno*. The contrast with the indented *Venetian Wedding* (figs. 4–6) could hardly be more stark. Its incompatibility remains undiminished by comparisons with Barendsz.'s most linear sketches. How could, within a few years, the *Venetian Wedding's* slim, disciplined and even pen lines have replaced the rougher calligraphy of drawings like that of *Mankind awaiting the Last Judgment* (fig. 2)? The dryer and more tentative technique freezes

Fig. 4. Here attributed to Hendrick Goltzius, *Venetian Wedding*, pen and brown ink with blue wash, partly squared in black chalk, indented for transfer, 402 × 747 mm. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.

Fig. 5. (right page). Detail of fig. 4.

Fig. 6. (below). Detail of fig. 4.





Fig. 7. Hendrick Goltzius after Dirck Barendsz.,
Venetian Wedding, engraving, (Bartsch 247) 431 × 733
 mm. Dated 1584. London, by courtesy of the Trustees of
 the British Museum.



the figures in their contours; they convey little sense of movement although engaged in a dance. Those seated at the banquet in the Victoria and Albert Museum's study move with greater vigour! Barendsz. seems as a general rule to have striven to agitate his figures, in most of his paintings as well as his drawings. The lack of movement in the *Venetian Wedding* is perplexing. And again, how could the delicate blue washes, applied with such fastidious care, for example, in the drapery of the figure seated in the lower left corner that its absence for a millimetre or two will describe the highlights (see fig. 6), how could this orderly technique be the work of the artist who produced the bold, painterly mix of wash and white heightening to be observed throughout the scene of impending doom (fig. 2)? Does it not anticipate the engraving (fig. 7) unusually exactly?

These objections are hard to counter. While the scales are not yet tipped in favour of an attribution to Goltzius, the pan that speaks

for Barendsz. swings free. Given that Goltzius indented the drawing to make his engraving, a point which has never been in dispute, the alternative attribution to him seems to merit investigation. The outcome necessarily depends on the compatibility of the draughtsman of the *Venetian Wedding* with the young Goltzius.

When Goltzius made the engraving after Barendsz.'s composition in 1584 he was only twenty-six years old and still in the process of evolving his characteristic, Spranger-inspired style. As E. K. J. Reznicek has pointed out, the decisive breakthrough came only in 1585, at least a year later than the *Venetian Wedding*, with the drawing and engraving of *Mars and Venus surprised by Vulcan*.¹⁰ Before this date, Goltzius experimented with a variety of styles and media. At one moment inspired by Anthonis van Blocklandt, at the next by Frans Floris or by French draughtsmen, the consistency of his maturity had yet to emerge.

In the present context it is necessary to

Fig. 8. Dirck Barendsz., *The Entombment*, pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white; the verso reddened, 223 × 193 mm. Signed (signature erased). Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum.



focus on drawings by Goltzius that approach the *Venetian Wedding* in style. They of course include the sheet mentioned by K. G. Boon (fig. 10; R. 140), which Reznicek dates *circa or shortly after 1580*, but at least two other drawings offer further analogies. They are the *Officer holding a Partisan*, formerly in the Springell collection (fig. 11; R. 337) and the *Christ and the Samaritan Woman* in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (fig. 12; not in Reznicek).¹¹ The ex-Springell drawing (fig. 11) is dated to around 1587 by Reznicek because of its resemblance to Jacob de Gheyn's engraved series of that year (Hollstein 353–364). Yet a slightly earlier date, perhaps *circa 1585*, is not out of the question. The Spranger influence is not complete, and in the attention given to the details of the officer's costume, like the patterned hem of his waistcoat, it is related to earlier drawings. For example, the hem of the garment worn by the seated man in the foreground of the *Banquet of the Daughters-in-Law of*

Tarquinius Superbus of 1581 is rendered in much the same way (fig. 10). This mannerism is also a feature of the *Venetian Wedding* (figs. 4–6). The costumes of the central figures display precisely the same technique, with short, detached flicks of the pen (see fig. 5). In addition, the passages of parallel hatching (see the right of fig. 6) can be compared with those in the banquet scene (fig. 10). Here, the hatching is more extensive but, in the skirts and down the right side of the foreground seated man, seen from behind, the lines overrun the modelling described by the wash to similar effect. The precision of the wash's circumvention of the highlights in the woman on the left of the *Venetian Wedding* (see fig. 6) is also echoed by the treatment of the drapery in the foreground of Goltzius's banquet (fig. 10), where the isolated bands of white reappear. In both drawings the architectural details, in particular the door frames, are lightly outlined in pen and brown ink and further articulated by leaving their profiles free of the surrounding wash. The *Venetian Wedding* is merely more exact, a trait explicable by its function as a copy. The central figures of the Rijksmuseum's drawing, among the most elaborately described in the composition (fig. 5), also marry reasonably well with the *Officer holding a Partisan* (fig. 11). Here the pen and wash exhibit the same deliberation, particularly in the rendering of the highlights on the officer's left thigh. The increased fluency in the drawing of the officer could be explained by its later date and by the fact that in the *Venetian Wedding*, Goltzius had the more mechanical task of a copyist. Also in the officer's left thigh Goltzius employed the tip of the brush to draw lines of parallel shading. The darker shadow descending to the front of the knee is executed in this technique. It appears again in the drawing of *Christ and the Samaritan Woman* (fig. 12) where it can be seen in the woman's drapery and in the vase she holds. It is particularly clear along the profile of her exposed arm. This somewhat timed method of shading is far removed from the vigorous application of the brush in drawings by Barendsz. Yet the technique exists in exactly

Fig. 9. After Dirck Barendsz., *The Entombment*, pen and brown ink and brown wash, heightened with white, on brown paper, 220 × 186 mm. Brunswick, Maine, Bowdoin College Museum of Art.



the same form in the leg of the man above the dog in the *Venetian Wedding* (figs. 4–5). The drawing of *Christ and the Samaritan Woman* (fig. 12) was recently discovered in Braunschweig by Dr. Christian von Heusinger and is not included in Reznicek's corpus of Goltzius's drawings. It is well authenticated because its outlines are indented for an engraving by Julius Goltzius, Hendrick's uncle, which is inscribed *Hendericus, Goltz, Inventor*. In style the drawing has further points of comparison with the *Venetian Wedding*, for example in the treatment of the draperies and the faces. The print is dated 1586, but the drawing was made a year earlier according to the old inscription on the step below the figures: *HGoltzius invent. Ao. 1585*. The handwriting could be Goltzius's, to judge from his signature on other early drawings (e.g. the allegory *Panacea* in Haarlem, r. 162) although whether he actually wrote it must remain uncertain. However, it is worth

noting its resemblance to the inscription—, also on the foreground step—in the *Venetian Wedding*, which reads: *Theodorus Bernardus [A]msterodamus, in[venit?]*.

Many more parallels exist between the *Venetian Wedding* and other drawings by the young Goltzius: the use of blue wash argues for him rather than Barendsz., the technique being common among Goltzius's early drawings. The foreground dog would not look out of place in Goltzius's *œuvre*; the head of the woman leaning out of the window on the left, her facial features and her hair delineated with small dabs of the pen, subtly shaded in wash, resembles the women on the right of the *Banquet of the Daughters-in-Law of Tarquinius Superbus* (fig. 10). The hand of the man above the dog, with its elongated fingers (see fig. 5), is like the hand raised by the woman in the foreground of the same sheet (fig. 10).

Further similarities exist in drawings that are not reproduced here (for example, the use of the wash with the allegory *Panacea*, r. 162, already mentioned, or the decorative details of the architecture with those in the *Apollo and Leucothea* at Hamburg, r. 104). They are not, however, more eloquent than the comparisons already made.

As already admitted, the arguments for transferring the *Venetian Wedding* from Barendsz. to Goltzius are more a question of a balanced assessment than conclusive evidence. The connection with the print surely argues for an attribution to one or the other. The style of the drawing contains nothing to commend the traditional view that Barendsz. was its author. On the other hand it has many features in common with Goltzius's early style. It therefore seems more likely that he, rather than Barendsz., drew it. Any unexpected qualities it displays can be explained as symptomatic of the variety his drawings exhibit before 1585 and by the fact that it is a copy. The conviction that this assessment is correct has only hardened since the idea was born two years ago in the Rijksmuseum's exhibition.

Fig. 10. Hendrick Goltzius, *The Banquet of the Daughters-in-Law of Tarquinius Superbus*, pen and black ink and grey wash, touched with pen and brown ink, over a light underdrawing in graphite, indented for transfer, 193 × 253 mm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum.



Notes

¹ At the time of the exhibition I benefited from discussions concerning the ideas presented in this article with H. Mielke, J. P. Filedt Kok, P. Schatborn and M. Schapelhouman.

² J. Richard Judson, *Dirck Barendsz. 1534–1592*, Amsterdam 1970 [hereafter as Judson], in particular pp. 20 and 30; W. Th. Kloek in *Art before the Iconoclasm*, The Hague 1986, pp. 125–128 [the second, catalogue volume hereafter as *exh. cat.*].

³ Judson, *op.cit.* (note 2), no. 55, pl. 24 (*exh. cat.* no. 250) and no. 57, pl. 27. The latter was not in the exhibition but there was a similar, though undated drawing of *David playing his Harp* from the Rijksmuseum's own collection (Judson, no. 54, pl. 25; *exh. cat.* no. 302).

⁴ *Exh. cat.*, nos. 303–307. The first was indented.

⁵ *Exh. cat.* no. 306. The second drawing (fig. 3) was exhibited at Colnaghi's in New York in 1987, cat. no. 10.

⁶ Judson, *op.cit.* (note 2), no. 61, pl. 29; *exh. cat.* no. 308. For a recent discussion of the drawing's iconography, see Bert W. Meijer, 'On Dirck Barendsz. and Venice', *Oud Holland* 102, (1988), pp. 142–154. He also reproduces a painting in the Ludwig Suermondt Museum, dated 1565 and attributed to Hieronymus Francken, which is clearly influenced by Barendsz.'s composition. The latter must therefore have been executed by 1565, probably as a painting, or as a drawing.

⁷ Judson, *op.cit.* (note 2), no. 56, pl. 28, engraved by Jan Sadeler, *ibid.*, no. 64, pl. 48.



Fig. 11 (left). Hendrick Goltzius, *An Officer holding a Partisan*, pen and brown ink with brown wash and flesh tints, 208 × 158 mm. Formerly Springell collection, Portinscale. Photograph courtesy of Sotheby's.

Fig. 12 (below). Hendrick Goltzius, *Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, pen in brown and grey ink, with brown wash, over indications in graphite, on paper tinted pale pink. The outlines indented. 264 × 204 mm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum.



⁸ K. G. Boon, *Netherlandish Drawings of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, The Hague 1978, no. 26, pp. 14-15.

⁹ The Rijksmuseum's *Entombment* is Judson, *op.cit.* (note 2) pl. 26A (discussed in an appendix) and Boon, *op.cit.* (note 8) cat.no. 25; the Bowdoin College version, Judson, cat. no. 58, pl. 26, is described as an early copy by David P. Becker in *Old Master Drawings at Bowdoin College*, Brunswick (Maine) 1985, no. 95. I know it only from photographs.

¹⁰ E. K. J. Reznicek, *Die Zeichnungen von Hendrick Goltzius*, 2 vols, Utrecht 1961, cat. no. 105 (the book hereafter as R.).

¹¹ The Springell drawing was sold Sotheby's, Amsterdam, 3 May 1976, lot 93 repr.; for the Braunschweig sheet, see von Heusinger's exhibition catalogue, *Das gestochene Bild, von der Zeichnung zum Kupferstich*, Braunschweig (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum) 1987, cat.no. 5 repr.