Marcel Roethlisberger

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CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Bartholomeus Breenbergh was born in 1598 in Deventer, lived in Rome from 1619 to 1629, then worked in Amsterdam until his death in 1657. In the literature he is included with the Italianate landscape painters, usually as one among many who practised the same style. In reality, his place in Dutch art is not easily determined. Belonging to the first generation of modern landscape painters, he is, together with Poelenburgh, the initiator of the Italianizing trend, which was to continue through the seventeenth century. His beginnings are influenced by Bril, the heritage of Elsheimer, the innovations of Filippo Napoletano, by early realism, and by the study of the Roman countryside. In Amsterdam he gradually turned to religious and classical figure painting under the impact of Lastman. His works grew in importance and in human density. The southern scenery and the figurative art of the Pre-Rembrandtists led to a distinctly personal style characterized by an exquisite refinement of design and execution. If we consider the size of the output and the later influence, followers like Both and Berchem prove superior to him. On the other hand, many of his works, from the Disobedient Prophet of 1630 to Joseph Selling Corn of 1654, are more inventive and individualized than paintings by other Italianists. A work like the Predication of St. John of 1643 (203) is by all standards a summit of Durch art.

Breenbergh's painted oeuvre has never been thoroughly examined. There exists a summary article by Stechow of 1930. The only serious recent study of a selection of works is Blankert's exhibition catalog of Dutch Italianate landscape of 1965. Salerno allotted a fair place to the artist in his book on 17th century landscape painting in Rome, 1977. An investigation of the Roman phase by Schaar, written in 1959, was useful, but has now been superseded. Single paintings appear in museum, exhibition, and sale catalogs, yet a large portion remained unknown up to now. Moreover, a third of his paintings, including almost all the masterpieces, are hidden away in private collections. The true dimensions of Breenbergh have largely been ignored and obscured by countless wrong attributions.

The Italianizing artists[1] have come to be regarded as a coherent group. But despite their loose association in the Roman Schilderbent, they never formed a school; no more so than the Dutch realists, who are generally rated well above them. On closer view, little contact existed between the major exponents of the Italianate manner. Breenbergh takes part in the movement in the sense that his art is shaped by his

[1] See the exhibition catalog Utrecht, 1965, by A. Blankert. Enlarged edition 1978.

sojourn in Rome and by the southern light. Throughout his life he made use of his Italian nature drawings for specific passages of his paintings. Northern landscape motifs virtually never entered his pictures. No single type of image sums up his art, whereas the names of Both, Swanevelt, Asselijn, and Pynacker immediately call to mind a specific kind of image which characterizes each of them. More than that of other masters his Italian production differs from his mature phase, in which he eventually abandoned landscape.

Life, Personality

Our knowledge of Breenbergh is based on his works. Exterior evidence, consisting of odd bits of information gathered from archives, provide a most fragmentary picture. The same is true of most other Dutch painters. Holland lacks the Italian tradition of biographers. No contracts or records of payment exist for the small easel paintings; no wills, inventories, and letters enlighten us. Many of the most helpful facts pertaining to Breenbergh's origins, including his birth date, have only recently been discovered by H. Nalis. Bartholomeus was baptized on 13 November, 1598, in the Protestant church of Deventer, the son of the respected merchant Jan Bre(d)enbergh (Deventer c.1557—1607), who had been appointed town apothecary in 1591, and of Anna Buecker, daughter of one of the town's most prosperous families. Bartholomeus was next to the youngest of eight or more children, at least two of whom died as infants. The eldest were two sons born in 1580/87, the others were daughters. The intellectual life of Deventer, the capital of Overijssel, centered around the provincial government and the university with its theologians, writers, and lawyers. Terbrugghen was born there in 1588. Soon after the father's death in 1607, when Bartolomeus was nine years old, the Breenbergh family must have moved elsewhere; several family ties point to the small town of Hoorn, the capital of West Friesland[2].

Nothing is known about Breenbergh's training. The apprenticeship of a painter usually began at the age of fourteen and lasted about four years. No painter in Hoorn — which was never the center of a school of painting — can plausibly be regarded as his teacher. The only local painter worth mentioning at the time was the portraitist Jakob Waben. Bartholomeus may well have been trained in nearby Amsterdam. Judging from his earliest known works (1622), the circle of Lastman and of Pynas comes to mind. Poelenburgh had been a pupil of the Utrecht master Abraham Bloemaert, whom some modern authors have called the teacher also of Breenbergh. But the latter's early figure style definitely points to a different origin. Breenbergh was for

[2] See also no. 277.

the first time mentioned as a painter when he testified in October, 1619, in Amsterdam.

By the end of the same year he was in Rome, living with the Flemish painter Frans van de Kasteele and listed in the census as a Catholic. Immediately he became familiar with Paul Bril, who was the senior landscape painter in Rome, then aged 65. Breenbergh copied many of Bril's works[3]. Their contact lasted until Bril's death in 1626. In 1623, Bartholomeus was among the founders of the boisterous Dutch painters' guild, the Schilderbent, together with such artists as Jan Linsen and Willem Moll, both from Hoorn, Poelenburgh, Schut, Bor, and Crabeth. Several drawings of 1624/25 and a painting attest to his contact with the Duke of Bracciano, whose property at Bomarzo he must have visited. In addition, his Italien works indicate frequent travel in the mountainous contryside of Latium. He must have been attracted to boldly-perched hill towns like Vitorchiano or Norma. Thus is summarized all existing information concerning Breenbergh's sojourn in Italy, where he remained longer than most of his colleagues.

The date of his return to Holland is not known, Dated drawings from Italy exist until 1628; a drawing of 1630 (R 131) seems to show a Dutch ruin. In all probability he left Italy in 1629. At that point an entirely new phase of his painting began. He settled in Amsterdam, where in September 1633 he married Rebecca Schellingwou (after 1604—1667)[4]. She was one of eight or more children of the affluent Protestant cloth merchant Pieter Theunisz Schellingwou (Amsterdam 1574—April 1633; in 1631 his fortune had been assessed at fl. 15'000). Through his first wife, the latter had been the son-in-law of the composer J. P. Sweelinck. His second wife, the mother of Rebecca, whom he married in 1603, was Vrouwtje Hendriks Verwer (Amsterdam 1582—1630). Shortly before her death she converted to Catholicism. Throughout the century, the Verwer family was one of the leading Catholic families in Amsterdam. At his marriage, Breenbergh moved from the Oosterse Markt to his wife's house at the Dijkstraat, situated in the district founded in 1585 (the house had been inhabited by her father and by the latter's mother, Aeff Schellingwou-Cromhout, until her death in 1620). From 1648 the Breenberghs lived as tenants of the collector Joan Huydecoper at the Lauriersgracht, an address favored also by other artists such as Flinck and Uylenborgh. In 1652 he was mentioned as a merchant, which was not uncommon among

[3] See no. 1 and Utrecht, 1965, p. 76.

[4] I am indebted to S. A. C. Dudok van Heel for some of the biographic and topographic information. The banns of marriage were published on 27 August 1633; he was assisted by his brother Jacobus, she by a sister and by her brother-in-law Hendrik Bouwer. The parents of both were deceased. The marriage took place on 11 September, 1633. Seven of the Schellingwou-Verwer children had been baptized at the Protestant Oude and Nieuwe Kerk from 1604 to 1615, but not Rebecca, who was probably baptized in a chapel, the registers of which do not survive.

Dutch artists. In 1653 he and a son Pieter testified on behalf of the engraver Van der Laegh. The following year he lived opposite the Lauriersgracht at the Prinsengracht, near the brewery "het Roode Hart", having as tenants the otherwise unknown Antonio and Martin Lunden, Hendrik Ignacio Jacobs, and Charles Barbou. In 1655 he was again called a merchant, shipping goods to Hendrik Breenbergh, who must be his son, a merchant at Cadiz, Spain. The two sons were thus born soon after 1633. In 1657 the artist was living at the fashionable Herengracht in the now unidentifiable "Berch Tabor" (though he is not recorded as owning a house at the Herengracht). He was buried on 5 October, 1657, in the Protestant Oude Kerk. By 1659 his widow was in debt. In 1662 she drew up her will in favor of her sons Hendrik and Pieter and of her nephew Hendrik Bouwer. She died in 1667, still at the Herengracht.

What kind of a man was Breenbergh? We can only venture a guess. Backer seems to have portrayed him (Figs. 218 a, b)[5]. The drawings of 1623 at Rotterdam with 25 founding members of the Bent show him as an elegant man with waivy locks and moustache, similar to most of the others; his surname The Weasel seems to point to a quick, agile, and alert young man. Yet his Roman works offer no real clue about him. They contain some low life figures and a few nude female bathers. The full range of his personality unfolds only on his return to Holland. The painterly execution reveals a meticulous worker given to perfectionism. The attention lavished on detail, whether armor, fine clothing, sensuous nudes, or jewelry, manifests his powers of observation. Conversely, the fancy landscapes, the ancient settings, and the persistence of Italian motifs are the mark of a man with a rich imagination who cherished his memories. Many indications, such as the absence of Dutch elements, suggest that he followed his course with uncompromising determination. Like the figures he painted, he must have been more meditative than outgoing; a penetrating observer of man; reserved, controlled, not given to revealing himself; a man in constant search of beauty. His figure scenes bear witness to a deep religiosity. Beyond the expressions of sorrow, compassion, devotion, love, which animate so many of his figures, we sense an intense emotional life and a profound interest in others, their feelings and sufferings.

[5] The portraits, now in the Amsterdams Historisch Museum (93 × 72 cm; he is signed *AB/1644*, she *AB.* Cf. K. Bauch, *Jakob Adriaensz Backer,* Berlin 1926, nos. 129, 130, and A. Blankert, *Amsterdams Historisch Museum, Schilderijen daterend van voor 1800,* Amsterdam 1975/79, nos. 20 f.), were hitherto considered portraits of Backer by himself and of his wife. This tradition only goes back to the first appearance of the two pictures in 1866. As S. A. C. Dudok van Heel kindly pointed out to me, Backer was never married. On the other hand, two drawings and a print after the male portrait designate it as representing Breenbergh, a tradition which can be tracted to about 1700. With Dudok van Heel, I am thus inclined to regard the Amsterdam portraits as representing Breenbergh and his wife. This seems to be confirmed by a borrowing from Backer in one of Breenbergh's paintings of the same years (no. 210). See page 25, Note 24, for further details.

A family man in his personal life, he also appears as an outspoken lover of children. The social framework emerging from his art connotes affluence and comfort. He must have been a person of great taste, moving among the well-to-do and educated. The paintings abound with pageantry, spectacle, and great men. In addition, one cannot fail to notice a number of idiosyncrasies in the recurrence of certain motifs or shapes: twisted branches, oddly curved knolls, hills and boulders, a taste for holes and caverns, peculiar silhouettes of ruins, gesticulating small children, curiously twisted donkeys.

Drawing up a personality profile of this kind may easily be misleading. On the other hand it would be wrong to read his figure paintings merely in terms of form or style. Breenbergh attempted by every means to infuse his figures with a human dimension which not only solicits the participation of the viewer but kindles an interest in the artist as he is reflected and perceived through the paintings.

The Paintings

His oeuvre consists at present of about 125 paintings (including ten lost works known from engravings), 200 drawings, and three dozen original etchings. In addition, about 80 old descriptions of lost paintings sound trustworthy. This oeuvre is thus larger than the dozen works known by Linsen, Groenewegen, and C. de Hooch, larger also than the total of sixty small items known by Elsheimer. The number of paintings compares with Lastman and Moeyaert, but is far smaller than that of Berchem. The place taken by the graphic production, especially the drawings, is notably more important than with other Italianists. The distribution in time is uneven: hardly a fourth of the paintings are from the Italian years. The etchings date between 1638 and 1644. The rate of production is the greatest in the early 1630's, with 22 paintings from 1630/31 and five to seven from each of the following years. After that, the rate declines to one, two, or three per year, with an increase to five for each of the years 1645—47. From 1648 to 1654, no dated paintings at all survive. Only four are later; their quality is in no way inferior. Hardly fortuitous, the decreasing productivity may be the result of his activity as a businessman or of poor health. (It should be remembered that an age of 59 was beyond average; Elsheimer had died at 32, Jan Pynas at 48, Lastman at 50, Knupfer at 52.)

Serveral criteria may help us in evaluating the losses: among the drawings, nearly two thirds of the early numbered sketchbook are not known. Of about twenty paintings engraved in the 18th century, only half survice. As there has not been much research and publication in this field, many works may still remain in English and

other private collections. Concerning the sales, the main information is found in Dutch and French 18th century catalogs. Less than half of the paintings sold in these auctions are still extant; but the major figure paintings may never have been very numerous.

Considering sizes and supports, the dimensions range from very small to 99 × 171 cm. (121). Most of the paintings are small, especially in the Italian phase, or medium-sized, which means larger than the average Poelenburgh, but smaller than Moeyaert. A size of 80/100 × 100/130 cm. is large for Breenbergh; only a dozen works belong to this category. These represent the artist's major efforts and, consequently, his most important works. Most paintings are oblong, a few vertical; only four early ones are round, none are oval — shapes which were popular at the time. The greater portion of the paintings are done on panel; others, of all sizes and dates, are on canvas; copper is used mainly for small, early works, but occasionally appears later (218). Among the paintings done in Rome, two or three are signed in full *BBreenborch* (BB intertwined), two or three are dated, four are monogrammed *BB.* All of the later works were originally signed or monogrammed; many are dated. The usual signature is *BBreenberg f. A° 16—*. On account of the excellent craftsmanship, the state of preservation is as a rule good, but many works are still disfigured by layers of yellow varnish.

The quality of the handling is so outstanding that, apart from the Roman works, there are few problems of attributation, numerous wrong attributions notwithstanding. Borderline cases are nos. 81, 109. Few copies exist; at least two come perplexingly close to the originals (162, 204).

What fascinates the attentive viewer in Breenbergh's paintings is the combination of technique, light, and space. He has an *esprit de finesse,* working with infinite care and refinement. To contemplate his paintings means first of all to savour the painterly execution. The vibrating, ever sensitive brushstroke can always be felt. This does not mean that his paintings are evenly detailed from foreground to background like works of the 16th century; each element is subordinate to the whole. Like almost all Dutch painters of the time. he worked on a brownish ground prepared in broad strokes. The ground is often visible, mainly in the lower zone. Small paintings on copper show the most minute handling; but even on the smooth metal surface, the touch remains palpable, unlike the slick finish of Poelenburgh. Larger works command a slightly broader, though not basically different execution. There is a considerable range of technique from one work to the other. Some have a dense pigment throughout (142), a few are done in a particularly transparent and liquid manner which results in a tonal rather than a chromatic effect (183—198). Some of the larger Roman works are executed more roughly. Figures or buildings are at times set with a slightly more substantial touch on the translucent ground, creating an attractive sur-

face contrast. Silk dresses are rendered with a subtletly reminiscent of the best Dutch genre painters such as Ter Borch.

Compared with Claude or even Swanevelt, not to speak of the Italian masters, Breenbergh was reluctant to make large, sweeping contrasts, bold repoussoirs, or empty foreground foils. In the largest works one senses the limits of his subtle technique. He was aware of them and did not transgress the scale suited to his style. The transparency and minute quality of his brushwork also distinguishes him from the broader, less tonal handling of the younger Italianists such as Asselijn, Wyck, Berchem, and Weenix.

The coloring is directly linked to the technique and the space. Here again, we note a considerable breadth which extends from a high-pitched, luminous scale to a brownish tone with bright colors used only for the figures. Some early paintings have a harsher coloring, some are closer to the silvery grey-green tones characteristic of Poelenbourgh. The most typical works, exemplified by the landscapes of the early thirties, comprise a dark brown foreground, a yellowish green center with reddish brown buildings, blue mountains, a sky tinted blue, grey, and violet; the figures stand out as vividly colored accents.

Color is also inseparable from atmosphere and light. In his Italian drawings, Breenbergh proves a keen observer of nature as it appears under the southern sky. Most of his drawings are formed by strong contrasts of light and shade. In the post-Roman paintings, the sunlight is replaced by a subdued, northern illumination. The sun itself is never shown, and the light is often completely diffuse. No attempt is made to evoke a specific effect of light, an hour of the day, a season, or a momentary atmosphere. Almost invariably the source of the light is suggested on the left — an instinctive practice of the artist which goes hand in hand with the unfolding of the compositions from left to right. Areas of spotlight are distributed across the picture surface for compositional reasons. Brightly lit zones are most evident in the foreground or right above a dark area near the lower edge (183). Further back, the strips of light decrease in size and intensity. In many works, additional secondary zones of intense light appear on the sides, resulting in a flickering overall pattern. Breenbergh's rendering of light is thus distinct from that of Claude, who always aims at a convincing unity of light and space based on the observation of nature.

The suggestion of depth is one of Breenbergh's most persistent objectives. Every work attests to his matery in the articulation of space. Step by step recession, juxtaposition of large foreground and tiny background motifs, diagonals leading into depth, all mingle within the same picture. The viewpoint is often imagined very close to the picture plane, with a sharp clash between front and back (142). Devices like a receding road winding up to a hillock, a landscape portion undulating around a large boulder, views across gates and archways, assume an almost obsessive quality. The

landscapes which are most deeply animated by an inner movement belong to the mid and late 1630s (187). The works around 1630 show a spatial layout controlled by orthogonals, the late works are more enshrined by their architectural setting.

Except for the early view over the Tiber valley from Bomarzo, the painted sites are imaginary, though of a southern kind, revealing Breenbergh's experience of the Apennine and the Tyrrhenian coast. Yet in most cases, his primary concern was not the depiction of pure landscape: the scenery serves above all as a stage for the figures. Buildings hold an important place, to the point where certain paintings are outright architectural scenes. The landscape portions are enriched with countless details designed to make the scenes interesting and to engage the viewer in a visual peregrination (159). The settings are furnished with fountains, tombs, milliary columns, bridges, antique fragments, pastoral motifs, hilltowns, citadels, distant cities, flocks, and so forth. Despite the antique or Biblical subjects and the ancient ruins, his concept of landscape differs fundamentally from Claude's classical approach. Breenbergh does not simplify, ennoble, or idealize his landscapes, nor does he aim at recreating an antique world. He is not concerned with the Roman Campagna as an evocation of the Golden Age described in antique literature. Most of his landscapes belong to the realm of fantasy which has its inner logic but is not a compelling as that of Claude.

His use of architectural motivs is characteristic of the ambivalence between reality and fiction. In contrast with Both, Swanevelt, and many other Italianists, there is hardly a painting by him which does not contain some buildings. In certain works, their role is to strengthen the credibility of the figure scene; in others, they deliberately disregard the story, as when Christ appears in front of the dome of Florence Cathedral or the finding of Moses takes place near Ponte Rotto in Rome. As to the choice of buildings, what holds true for the drawings applies to the paintings: almost all identifiable structures are ruins from Rome, selected for their picturesque rather than archaelogical interest. Frequently in evidence are the archways from the Villa of Maecenas at Tivoli, the temple of Minerva Medica, the Basilica of Constantine, the Colosseum, ruins of the Palatine and the Forum, the so-called Frontispiece of Nero, the Baths of Diocletian, and Ponte Rotto. Other ancient landmarks like the triumphal arches or Castel Sant'Angelo are missing or appear only in the distance. More often than not, the artist varies the classical quotations according to his inclination or his needs. It is revealing to observe the changes which the ruins undergo from one picture to the next. The limit between real and fancy is undefined. Thus, the spatial distortions imposed on the Colosseum may verge on the unrecognizable (128, 214). Many buildings are altogether imaginary. The splendors of modern Rome are as absent from his works as they are from those of Claude; only the Tiber Island and, in one of the last paintings, the facade of the Aracoeli church in Rome appear. Rustic buildings are limited to the early phase. The distant portions are often adorned with

castles and citadels from Roman environs — details which could be meaningful only to the artist himself. For all extant buildings, he would make use of his nature drawings done in Italy. In the course of 25 years spent in Amsterdam, the reality of the southern landscape and light slowly receded into a mystical haze. But with a moving and unfailing ardor he continued to evoke a beloved Italy, sometimes by means of tiny details set into his images, until his final paintings.

One ingredient of landscape which Breenbergh uses only sparingly is the tree. Many of his paintings contain none at all, or only distant ones. Trees often appear not in their entirety, but as framing motifs: as stumps and dead branches (around 1630), or as large, expressive trunks. By 1635 we find transparently brushed clusters of trees, in the next decade trees with detailed foliage, but never the majestic trees or forests of Claude, Gaspard, and Both. (See Dézallier, in Note 19.)

The compositions are studied down to minute details. The most consistent and nearly obsessive guiding principle is that of contrasting left and right halves. In practice, the application of this rule takes on an infinite variety. Works anchored by solid lateral repoussoirs alternate with works dominated by a central mass and flanked by two lateral vistas (209, 211); the diagonal layout is less frequent. The left edge is often marked by an accent of some kind, be this a tree, a wall, a fountain. The right and the top may be open, the near foreground and the remote distance may clash in the center. A wavelike movement often sweeps across the entire width, particularly noticeable in a few very elongated formats (151, 154). Apart from the middle axes, there are hardly any measured proportions. To some extent the size determines the design. Small works tend to be less complex, large ones extend across more planes. In the later years, Breenbergh reverted occasionally to the old-fashioned vertical format, even adopting a mannerist layout with tall elements on the sides and an empty center (230). The treatment is detailed and minuscule throughout, especially by contrast with the more unified compositions of a master like Poussin. Only rarely are we reminded of the tectonic firmness of works by Claude (146). Unlike most painters of the time, Poelenburgh to begin with, Breenbergh did not conceive his works in pairs; only four pairs of pendants, all dating from the Italian years, are known at present, and only two of them fully conform to the accepted standards of pairing (103, 109 a), although further pairs are recorded among the lost works. In three paintings the main features of the composition are, surprisingly, taken over from Roman nature drawings: Christ Healing the Blind, Nausicaa, and Cimone (162, 199, 225); the two latter are borrowed from the verso and recto of a drawing done in the monster garden at Bomarzo, a favorite site of the artist which he also quoted in other works.

More than with artists like Poelenburgh, Both, or Gaspard, each picture shows a relentless pursuit of innovation and variety. There is never a copy or a repetition, save for one late case, requested, no doubt, by a patron. Increasingly, each work

becomes an invention of its own. This is especially obvious when we compare paintings of the same subjects such as the many representations of Cimone (147), the two versions of the Predication of St. John, Christ and the Centurion, the Stoning of St. Stephen, Joseph Selling Corn, and so on. The basic structure differs radically from work to work, as if the artist had been haunted by the fear of quoting himself; only for small background motifs would he repeatedly revert to early drawings.

In the tradition of Lastman, the narrative style of Breenbergh is based on the experience of real life. The figures express their personal participation by means of convincing, suitable gestures and facial expressions (215); though they are less emphatic and declamatory than in Lastman. Combined with this realistic language are the traditional formulas of the pictorial discourse. In the works of the first Amsterdam years, numerous figure are scattered across the image. These are soon replaced by compact groups of figures, as im Abram and Melchizedek and in Cornelius (155, 229). Large spectators commenting on the main event are at times singled out in the foreground and thus provide a personal link with the viewer (173, 203). Beginning with Joseph Selling Corn (204), some of the most representative late works revert to richly orchestrated stagings with figure platforms and elaborate trappings. The dramaturgic approach is clearly felt in Alexander with the Family of Darius, St. Lawrence, and the second Joseph. In conformity with the subjects, the figures wear the ancient Roman garb established by a tradition going back to Italian High Renaissance art. Pharisees are represented as stout figures with turbans. Apart from a few portraits, there is no contemporary or northern style of dress, although the elegant heavy silk dresses worn by some of the women bring to mind the contemporary Dutch realists. A few of the uniformed soldiers resemble Renaissance models rather than antique sources.

In Breenbergh's Dutch works, the setting and the figure theme usually form an intimate unity animated by the same spirit. The entire landscape as well as some of its components paraphrase the story in subtle ways, forming a kind of *paysage moralisé.* There are, admittedly, exceptions, as when more or less the same setting serves for Cimone and for Christ with the Centurion (186 f.). The correspondence between form and content does not involve any hidden symbolism or fixed laws. To give some examples, the setting for the Journey of the Blinded Saul (154) leads, as an extended route, from a dramatic landscape portion to a distant, almost visionary goal of the journey. In the Mourning of Abel (218), the high hills and the expressive language of the trees parallel the tension of the figures. In Hagar and the Angel (142), the trees above the figures give visual expression to the Biblical word. Many figures are emphasized by a tree or an architectural motif such as a column. In Christ and the Woman of Samaria (183), the curved forms of the building near Christ amplify His message, the sphere stands for eternal life, the crumbling fragments for the pagan world; in another picture of the same subject, a slender, rising branch circumscribes

His word (167). Archways above a figure suggest awe (186, 209) or power, as in Christ Healing the Sick (173), where the miracle is, moreover, stressed, by a single column. The joyous meeting of Eliezer and Rebecca is accompanied by a fanciful fountain consisting of an intertwined dolphin and naiad. Many further examples of analogies between form and subject could be added; all are part of the old, widespread principle of decorum.

The subjects of the paintings are predominantly religious, with the Old Testament slightly outnumbering the New. The majority of the works done in Rome are pure landscapes adorned with accessoury pastoral or genre figures such as washerwomen, bathers, or figures in turbans. Later on, the artist also did a few portraits. It may be recorded that Moeyaert painted a considerable number of portraits, and Lastman apparently produced some, too. Among the familiar classical subjects, numbering fewer than a dozen, some are from Ovid, one from the Odyssey, four from Greco-Roman history. In addition, there are at least seven representations of the Cimone and Ifigenia episode after Boccaccio and two stories from Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (176), popular subjects linked with a Dutch literary movement of the 1630s.

Religious themes dominate the Amsterdam production. This may also be connected with the family of Breenbergh's wife, who must have drawn him into Catholic circles. His choice of religious subjects compares closely with that of Lastman and his followers, in particular with Moeyaert. Like some of the Pre-Rembrandtists, Breenbergh painted certain rather rare themes such as the Disobedient Prophet or the Journey of the Blinded Saul. The episodes of Christ and the Rich Youth (123) and Cornelius Worshipping St. Peter (159) seem altogether unique. Many themes involve two protagonists, others include masses of people. Themes of violence, apparitions, visions, and hagiology are rare (Martyrdom of St. Stephen and St. Lawrence). Narrative, dogmatic, and moral aspects prevail. Some scenes exemplify punishment (Elisha and the Children, Latona). Emphasis is given to the Predication of St. John and to the teachings and the miracles of Christ, which are rendered as group scenes with a strong physiognomic and psychological characterization of the participants (Healing of the Blind, Healing of the Sick). Compared with the humanity of many of Rembrandt's interpretations, Breenbergh remains, on the other hand, within the framework of the theatrical and gestural rhetoric honored by tradition. On the whole, his subject matter is not distinctly personal. Nor can one at the time distinguish between Catholic and Protestant iconography; many more Dutch painters than is often assumed were Catholics[6].

[6] Bloemaert, Lastman, Pynas, Moeyaert, Bisschop, Honthorst, Steen, van Goyen, Weenix, Berchem, Dujardin, van de Velde, etc.

For today's viewer, Breenbergh's paintings, like those of most Dutch artists, stand unfortunately in a social vacuum. We are totally in the dark when it comes to their destination, function, and possible specific meaning. Who were his patrons, what was their relationship with the artist? No official commissions or altar paintings are known. The whole fabric of life out of which each work grew, its *raison d'être,* the people concerned, the implications of the subject, all remain unknown. The various versions of the Cimone theme were presumably ordered, small landscapes on the contrary painted for stock. But what about the religions paintings? Breenbergh's relationship with Bishop Rovenius entitles us to assume that at least the larger works and the less obvious subjects such as Saul or Elisha and the Children were painted on commission, with the size perhaps determined by the patrons. The same would be true of certain classical subjects like the Schoolmaster of Falerii or the Finding of Erichthonius. Should the occurrence of several highly emotional scenes of mourning (Silvio and Dorinda, Pyramus and Thisbe, Abel, Adonis) be attributed to the artist's initiative? Considering the great attention given to the figures, it would seem that most of his works were not products of his fancy alone, but done to the order of educated patrons. For a deeper signifiance in the religious themes, one would have to turn to the respective literature and to sermons of the period. But in the absence of any information concerning the genesis of the paintings, nothing conclusive has yet been found. In addition, many subjects must have been chosen with reference to biographic details or other factors pertaining to the patrons. These levels of meaning, which in many cases must have been the decisive motive for the existence and the form of a painting, are forever lost. All we can do is to be conscious of the limitations of our knowledge.

Development

When Breenbergh arrived in Rome at the end of 1619, the heritage of Carracci and Elsheimer, who both had died nine years earlier, was still much alive. The aged Bril was the leading master, Domenichino and Bonzi carried on the legacy of Carracci, Tassi presided over a flourishing studio. In the footsteps of Elsheimer, younger artists were in the process of creating a new kind of landscape. They were Filippo Napoletano (in Florence until 1621, together with Callot), Poelenburgh (in Florence and Rome 1617—1625/27), and Goffredo Wals from Cologne (with Tassi until 1619, then in Naples until 1630). Unlike the large, heroically composed landscapes of the Bolognese and the narrative, detailed works of the Flemish school, their usually small, smoothly finished landscapes resulted from a new contact with nature. They were concerned with atmosphere, space, color, light, and the inner coherence of land-

scape. The formal vehicles were hills, trees, rivers, and Roman ruins. Most of the time, the figures were small and accessory. Breenbergh came to Rome just at the formative stage of this new style, to which he, too, was to adhere. The evaluation of Filippo, Tassi, and Wals, all of whom had fallen into almost complete oblivion, has been one of the main problems of recent scholarship in the field. Research has been tortuous, results are far from definitive. The precedence given by Salerno to Wals (whose importance for Claude is documented) is not supported by the dates. Least known perhaps are the beginnings of Poelenburgh. Ten years later, by the time Breenbergh left Italy, the situation had changed: Bril had died, Wals and Poelenburgh left; Claude, a late starter, was experiencing his first success, combining the compositional mastery acquired under Tassi with the passionate study of nature. Swanevelt, another exact contemporary, arrived in Rome. The second generation of Italianists — Both, Asselijn, Berchem, Weenix, Pynacker, Dujardin — came only in the 1630s and 40s.

Breenbergh's Italian production remains largely a puzzle to us. Three quarters of all his drawings, but less than a quarter of his paintings, and a most uneven lot at that, date from the Roman decade. We have no indication of his activities. Did he work for Bril, was he, like the young Wals, coloring engravings, was he in the service of the Duke of Bracciano, did he paint only sporadically? The thirty exant paintings, of which only two or three are dated, do not form much of a unity. This is partly due to the youth of the artist, who was reacting to many different impulses and experimenting in various directions. The paintings range from tiny to comparatively large, the subjects from crude to religious, the handling goes from rough to exquisite. Some works are unmistakably influenced by precursors, others eminently personal, anticipating Breenbergh's later works. Already the historians of the 18th century were aware of the disconcertingly poor condition of his early works, resulting from the use of inferior materials. Today, there remains even fewer of the works originally produced. We cannot expect to close the gaps and answer all the questions. Other young artists, now unknown, were at work in Rome, although old sale catalogs almost never contain works by lesser names. The section of this book dealing with imitations gives an inkling of the problems. For example, who was responsible for the pictures grouped around no. 296? Are no. 298 and neighboring works by Swanevelt, and if so, what was his role? The situation is further obfuscated by countless wrong attributions to Breenbergh since the 18th century. (On the other hand, hardly any works by him have been ascribed to other artists.) To give two examples from the Louvre: a painting was correctly recorded as by Bril in 1683, but assigned to Breenbergh ever since (1); another was first mentioned in 1792 as Filippo, thence attributed wrongly to Breenbergh (88).

An almost inextricable confusion arose with Poelenburgh in particular. The early

historiographers never named the two artists together. The problem developed during the 18th century in France, when Breenbergh became the standard name for all early Italianate landscapes[7]. Modern writers have frequently linked the two names, like those of Poussin and Claude. There is indeed some justification for this, but it applied only to a single aspect of the two painters — the paintings and early drawings produced in Italy. Post-Italian works by Poelenburgh have almost never been mistaken for Breenberghs. (The problem there is a different one: the confusion with the numerous close imitators of Poelenburgh such as Haensbergen, Lisse, Rysen, Gelton, Vertangen, Hattich, Laeck, etc.) The influence exercized by his Italian landscapes on Breenbergh and the imbroglio created in later times between the two are the reasons for discussing Poelenburgh's early works at some length in this book (12—58). On going through the catalog entries, the reader may notice that the majority of the paintings outside Florence have been wrongly called Breenbergh. Hardly any are signed or dated (12). Circumstantial evidence entitles us to question any 18th century attribution to Breenbergh of a Poelenburghian picture.

On what data are we then to rely? A few certified works, the drawings, stylistic evidence and certain other indications are the main leads. The basic core of Poelenburgh's works are the two dozen paintings still located in Florentine galleries (23), for which he originally painted them. None is signed or documented from the time, a few bear, on the contrary, 18th century attributions to Elsheimer and to Breenbergh. The latter must in some way have known them, since he copied one or two in drawings which he signed (30, 35), as he did also with paintings by Wals and Filippo. Some of the Florentine works — in particular the vertical copper with Apollo under a large tree — have been explicitly ascribed to Breenbergh by recent writers. In my opinion, the Florentine lot forms a coherent group, without a single work by Breenbergh. The difference of sizes and the span of time, even if a short one, accounts for some differences within the group. Another factor routinely disregarded in the literature is the existence of many of Poelenburgh's (but not of Breenbergh's) compositions in several versions; many are genuine repetitions, a few are later copies. At the risk of being redundant, I have offered a few examples with all the available information.

[7] Doubts about an attribution were expressed on several occasions; thus, a now unknown landscape with a peasant leading a donkey was in the duc de Choiseul or Chabot sale, Paris, 20 Dec. 1787, lot 16, as Poelenburgh, with the remark that in the Boisset sale (lot 98) it had, "surely by mistake", figured as Breenbergh. A few now untraceable pictures were listed as landscapes by Breenbergh with figures by Poelenburgh — a collaboration which is both undocumented and unlikely. Two examples: Adoration of the Shepherds, panel, 33 × 44/48 cm., a landscape on the left; sale Paris, 15 Dec. 1777, lot 65, and abbé de Gévigney, Paris, sale 1 Dec. 1779, lot 293. Baptism of Christ, panel, 23 × 32 cm., over 20 figures, angels in the sky; sale Paris, 16 Nov. 1778, lot 80, and Gévigney, sale 1 Dec. 1779, lot 294. Both sound like Poelenburgh. Other paintings were listed as being in the manner of Breenbergh (Gévigney, sale 1 Dec. 1779, lot 302, a pair).

Poelenburgh, whose birth was indicated as 1586 by Houbraken and all the later historiographers, but who was probably as much as a decade younger, emerges in 1620 as an accomplished artist. Despite its variety, his Italian oeuvre shows, quite by contrast with Breenbergh, a great stylistic coherence. The picture types include caprices with the Forum, landscapes with extant or imaginary picturesque ruins and small pastorel or nude figures, caverns, landscape with large religious figure scenes modeled after Raphael, and three figure paintings with classical urban settings. His compositions operate with greater contrasts of forms and light than Breenbergh. Their execution is smoother, the spatial layout simpler and more obvious. The planes are neatly separated. Among his most typical motifs are rocks of bizarre, curved, and coiling silhouettes and large repoussoirs of antique fragments. Much of this imagery was worked out before 1620 in what can only have been a mutual give and take with Filippo.

As we turn to Breenbergh's earliest paintings, we are faced with surprises, Having stayed for two years in Rome, he produced two awkwardly old-fashioned, though captivating paintings in the style of Pynas (64 f.). Without date and signature, they would have remained among the anonymous schoolworks around Pynas, They have nothing Roman. To this early phase also belong the cavern scenes with washer-women, which border on the vulgar; they precede Van Laer, who arrived in Rome in 1625. The heritage of Elsheimer determines the two river views with trees, ruins, and female bathers. This first phase culminates in the View of Bomarzo, a youthful work *sui generis* with echoes of Bril, Filippo, and Poelenburgh, fascinating precisely because the elements of which it is constructed are not yet fully amalgamated. It must coincide with the first drawings from Bomarzo of 1624/25.

The landscape with Eliezer and Rebecca (82) and its pendant, of 1625, are key works of the Roman period. For the first time we meet a complex religious theme and an accomplished figure group which blends harmoniously with the landscape. Ancient architecture and sculpture enter into the picture. The influence of Pynas has given way to that of Poelenbourgh, but the sparkling colorism, the inventive use of light, and the mannered figure style are highly personal. This style leads to a small group of fine, strongly contrasted works with ruins as the main subject (84 ff.). They continue the line of Filippo and Poelenburgh in an even more assertive language and with increased spatial emphasis. One of them (90) seems directly derived from Filippo. Ruins also form the subject of a group of works (92—96) whose execution is notably less refined. To them must apply the comments about the poor quality of the early phase made by 18th century writers, who still had access to more material than we do. The course of the remaining Roman years is at times difficult to assess. Both the mediocrity of the Riverscape (102) and the refinement of the Cambridge roundels are aspects of Breenbergh's late Roman years, although the precise chronological

sequence is not clear. Some questions also arise about a few other small works. On the whole then, it is the intrinsic diversity of the Roman output and not the hazards of preservation which accounts for our impression of an erratic oeurvre. In a first phase, Breenbergh was open to influences coming from many directions. Embracing a considerable range of possibilities, his personality affirmed itself during the second half[8]. All the while, he was, moreover, steadily building up a stock of drawings for future use. In hindsight, the entire Roman period may seem a preparatory phase for the activity which was to follow.

With the move to Amsterdam in 1629/30, Breenbergh fully came into his own. The first years there were his most creative. His output soared immediately. Far from being unsettled by the contact with the city, he asserted himself brilliantly. His new production is not so much a break with the previous work as the unfolding of what had accumulated and matured in him. What is new is the steady flow of works and their uniformly high quality. At Amsterdam he faced at first no competition in the field of the new Italianate landscape. Jan Pynas died in 1631, Poelenburgh had established himself in Utrecht, Jacob Pynas in Delft and Haarlem, Groenewegen in The Hague, Moeyaert turned more to figure painting in the footsteps of Lastman. To the realist Dutch landscape and the seascape which dominated the scene, Breenbergh added a new, modern language. It is easy to surmise that his pictures must have been in demand. Of the Dutch realists, Esaias van de Velde had just died, Salomon van Ruysdael and Molijn worked in Haarlem, Seghers, Uyttenbroeck, and van Goyen in The Hague, Averkamp in Kampen. The younger Italianists were to follow a decade later: C. de Hooch, Both, and Weenix moved to Utrecht, van der Lisse to The Hague, Berchem to Haarlem, Pynacker to Delft; Asselijn, Dujardin, and Lingelbach were in Amsterdam by 1650.

The most obvious innovation in Breenbergh's Dutch paintings is the increasing importance of the figures with religious and, for the first time, mythological subjects. The production of small coppers continued, but larger formats predominate. In 1630 he painted the largest work of his career (121), certainly also with the aim of presenting himself to the public with a broad spectrum — an approach which he was not to follow. A couple of densely wooded scenes may reflect the rediscovery of northern scenery. For the first time, too, we find him mastering the composition of elaborate, sizable works. The formal resources are large, flanking repoussoirs and the intricate manipulation of space. Roman ruins continue to be a steady, almost imperative presence, but away from the site, he felt no restraints on his freedom to vary their forms

[8] I do not share Waddingham's assessment of the Roman years (1960, 38): "Breenbergh, in some ways the more original of the two [referring to Poelenburgh], is one of those curious artists who fail to live up to their early promise." If anything, this would apply more to Poelenburgh.

at will, as he did in the Colosseum fantasy. The most uniform and outstanding group of works are the oblong panels of 1630/32, mainly with Old Testament subjects (131 ff.): elegant, refined works devised in parallel planes, the figures lined up in the foreground, backed by a fully displayed ruin on one side and a smaller structure on the other, a low distant view in the center, with a delicately tinted, subdued atmosphere which differs from the sharper coloring of the Italian works.

In the next few years, Breenbergh's art grew rapidly, yet harmoniously, opening up and branching out into new picture types. The streamlined compositions give way to more individualized and articulated settings with such motifs as tall mountains (155, 167), imposing tree trunks, distant coast views. The architectural setting takes on a greater importance (162). The landscape, which in the early 1630s was still a foil, however interesting, laid out behind the figures, becomes more animated, forming a lively equivalent to the theme of the figures (165). The inner progression of each landscape also gains in smoothness and subtlety (151). Concurrently a more accomplished use of light and shade and a finer chromatic tuning appear. The delicate cloudscapes, brightening at the horizon, are at times those of a Dutch sky. Some works stand out as masterpieces: the Blinded Saul, the Predication of St. John, Christ Healing the Sick. The figures often consist of large, compact groups. The emotional intensification of the figure scenes (162) embodies a human maturity to which the artist's marriage in 1633 may have contributed. As already pointed out, this event also explains the wave of religious themes, some of them unusual. Not by chance, it is from that moment, too, that infants and children begin to appear at a frequency well beyond what was warranted by the subjects.

Historical compositions with expressive groups of figures were challenges he had not faced before. For inspiration and guidance he turned to the painter who imposed himself quite naturally, Pieter Lastman (Amsterdam c.1583—1633). Breenbergh became receptive to his art only at the very end of Lastman's life. But the prestigious art of the older master continued for as much as two decades to determine various followers, notably Moeyaert. On the other hand, Breenbergh was not a "Pre-Rembrandtist"[9], nor was he influenced by other neighboring artists such as Jan Pynas or by the mature works of Jacob Pynas, who moved to Amsterdam only after the 1630s. As to Rembrandt, who was eight years younger than Breenbergh and settled in Amsterdam in 1631/32, most of his religious works were yet to be created; in view of the difference of age, personality, and background, no contact could possibly develop between them.

[9] The best literature on the Pre-Rembrandtists — who did not form a coherent group — is A. Tümpel's monograph on Moeyaert, 1974 (in *Oud Holland*) and the exhibition *The Pre-Rembrandtists* at Sacramento, 1974 (catalog by A. Tümpel). On Lastman, see Freise, 1911. All these artists were Catholics.

The catalog contains several comparisons with Lastman; the examples could have been multiplied. Depending on the viewpoint, one may stress the similarities or the differences. The analogies concern above all the treatment of the narrative, the figure style, and the range of subject matter. Apart from the coloring and the technique, the most apparent difference is between the surface-filling arrangement of Lastman's history paintings and the spatial integration of Breenbergh's landscapes. The older master stages tightly packed masses of large figures, the younger concentrates on the human content of the themes. Regarding Moeyaert (Amsterdam c.1591—1654), Breenbergh can hardly have ignored the prolific production of this highly successful rival, who was particularly esteemed in the theatrical, intellectual, and Catholic circles of Amsterdam. Like Lastman, Moeyaert concentrated more on figure painting than on landscape. There are some affinites between him and Breenbergh, especially in the late years, but no direct links.

The paintings of the later 1630s are to some extent a regression from the momentum of the previous years. Gone are the large sizes, the crowded histories, the richly adorned landscapes. The majority of the subjects involve merely two protagonists. Breenbergh explores a few fashionable pastoral subjects from Guarini and Boccaccio, which remain a passing interest in the whole of his oeuvre. The brushwork becomes more and more transparent, the color is nearing a monochrome register of tonal brown yellow (185—199). The scenery is tighter and less detailed, the compositions are characterized by great contrasts of scale. The architectural motifs assume arbitrary shapes and expressive spatial distortions (186 f., 196). This stage temporarily influenced the art of Nikolaus Knupfer, who was a few years younger (189).

Breenbergh's art culminates in the masterpieces of his last fifteen years. As noted, the rate of production declined, but the caliber of the individual works increased. Their types show a greater variety than ever, from small, intimate works to large, multi-figured scenes. The second Predication of St. John is the epitome of the landscapes: tonal yet rich in color, firmly composed, yet with loosely distributed figures. It contains no architecture whatever. In contrast, the next major work, Joseph Selling Corn, opens the string of late architectural scenes with little or no landscape. One can only muse about the reasons for this unexpected turn. Life in the urban environment of Amsterdam must gradually have dispelled the memory of the Roman countryside. The dominance of Moeyaert and the competition of the second generation of Italianists, emerging at about that time, may be another factor. The shift to history paintings with architectural scenes signifies *eo ipso* a renewed contact with Lastman. In the same years, also Moeyaert turned again to Lastman. Single late works by Breenbergh incorporate references to Elsheimer, Backer, Titian, and Italian mannerist art. The mid forties bring about a sudden upsurge in productivity. Large engravings after three paintings were issued, the first of them by Breenbergh himself. The

major paintings are Elijah, Abel, Alexander, and St. Lawrence. The compositions gain in monumentality, the figures increase in dramatic impact. Several tragic lamentations and a spectacular miracle scene (Elijah) belong to these years. At the same time, nudes in various contexts become suddenly more numerous: the Mourning of Abel, Venus and Adonis, Cimone, classical bathers, St. Lawrence. Trees with fluffy foliage assume a new poetic quality. Several paintings are now vertical compositions. More than in his earlier works the Roman buildings are relegated to a world of vision and fantasy (220), except for the use of the magic scenery of Bomarzo (224 f.). Contrasts of extreme emotion range from scenes of despair to felicitous bathers, from a miracle of revelation to the cruelty of a martyrdom, from the Dutch group portrait to the pageantry with Alexander, from the faerie of Cimone to the business world of Joseph Selling Corn (an allusion to Breenbergh's commercial activity?).

After a hiatus of seven years follows the last masterpiece, the vertical Joseph Selling Corn, of 1654, repeated a second time a year later. The references to Italian 16th century art, found earlier in the Alexander and St. Lawrence pictures, are now even more pronounced. It is a learned, classical work full of evocations, comparable in layout to late bamboccesque works from the same years by Miel and Lingelbach, yet profoundly different in essence. The last known work with Elijah and the widow reverts in its motifs to schemes of the late 1630s, but its masterfully balanced composition, expressive architecture, and muted atmosphere blend into a mature synthesis. Breenbergh's trajectory breaks off strangely. Comparison with his early works reveals the magnitude of the change. At the time he died, most of the younger Italianists were in their best years, and the most famous realist landscape painters — Koninck, Wouvermans, Ruisdael, Wynants, Hobbema — were at the onset of their maturity.

Aftermath

The chapter of Breenbergh's influence and of his survival in the history of collecting and criticism is a rather brief one. What is surprising is the limited critical acclaim he had in his own century, the speed of oblivion, and the resurgence of his repute in France during the 18th century. He is not known to have had any pupils. Jan Linsen (1602/03—35), whose art comes closer to his than any, must have been an early colleague in Rome; on the basis of our present knowledge, a mutual exchange took place between them. One major name needs yet to be mentioned: Claude Lorrain (1600—82). The paintings of the two are, admittedly, unrelated, except for some general trends: both experienced in their early years a fascination with Elsheimer and were marginally attracted by the ambient of the first Bamboccianti. But in the field of nature drawing, Breenbergh and Claude followed much the same course, the Dutch-

man having an unquestionable lead of six to seven yers. Although the matter is not central to this book, it deserves some attention. It is more than likely that the two young artists, who for over six years lived in neighboring streets, practised the same specialty, and shared the same interest in the countryside, knew each other. No document confirms it, but we know that Claude kept company with another Dutchman, van Lear (Bamboccio), and especially with Sandrart (in Rome 1629/35), who claims to have taught him on their numerous excursions to paint with color directly from nature. The earliest extant drawings by Claude only date from about 1630 and show a rapidly growing proficiency. His expertise in this domain was thus a very recent one. It is not easy to evaluate the merits of Sandrart and Breenbergh in this development, yet the analogies with certain important drawings by Breenbergh are undeniable:[10] they have in common the passionate interest in the Roman Campagna, motifs such as rocky bluffs, hill towns, brooks, and Roman buildings, bold wash technique, and lively penmanship. The smililarities are too close to be attributed merely to the spirit of the time. It seems plausible to assume that Claude was impressed by the other's drawings. But there are also differences, which we can hardly overlook. From the beginning Claude rises above the accidents of nature by dismissing the details and unifying the forms into large surface areas of brilliantly applied wash, whereas Breenbergh adheres to a more picturesque pattern with short lines and dots.

In more specific terms, Breenbergh's late Roman and early Amsterdam style had a decisive impact on three other contemporaries — Carel de Hooch, Groenewegen, and the engraver Barata[11]. His most profound influence was on Jan de Bisschop (Amsterdam 1628—71), who in the 1640s made two large reproductive engravings after him. Van Gelder convincingly suggests that Bisschop was his pupil until 1648. This is further supported by Bisschop's drawing style, which imitated Breenbergh's Roman draftsmanship[12] and later influenced in turn the drawings of Jacob van der Ulft. In the 1640s, Nikolaus Knupfer, active in Utrecht, and seemingly Herman Saftleven, responded creatively to the art of Breenbergh. Two other artists whose biography remains very vague to us echoed in their monochrome brownish works compositional schemes of Breenbergh's landscapes: Catharina Knibbergen and François Knibbergen (1597—after 1665), both active in The Hague. Somewhat later, Gerard Hoët (1648—1733) often combined the lessons of Poelenburgh and Breenbergh in his refined works. The section of this book dealing with imitations contains a sampling of

[10] A few comparisons: R 37 and Claude 89, 361 (rocky slopes). R 76—78 and Claude 448 (urban views). R 12, 44 and Claude 18, 194 (Colosseum). R 7, 49 and Claude 71 (ruins).

[11] For these artists see nos. 277—292. The engraver Schaep, no. 115, is too insignificant to matter.

[12] See van Gelder, 1971, 6, 8, and *passim*. Bisschop went to Rome in 1655 or 1657 and still at that time remembered in his Roman drawings the style of Breenbergh.

other now anonymous but contemporary works directly derived from Breenbergh. As could be expected, his manner up to about 1640 was more commonly imitated than the personalized late style. Most of the surprisingly few copies are of inferior quality and date from the 18th, if not the 19th century. On the whole, his influence was thus rather restricted. We are left with the impression that he worked in a private sphere, that his paintings were not widely accessible, and that his art was soon regarded as outdated. In the 18th century a fortuitous affinity with his works may occasionally be found, for exmple example in delicately tinted landscapes with Italianate buildings by Franz de Paula Ferg (Vienna 1689—London 1740). Jean-Jacques de Boissieu, a gifted amateur active in Lyons (1736—1810, in Italy 1765), produced luminous wash drawings of Roman ruins which may be deliberate imitations of Breenbergh's early draftsmanship[13].

The little we know of the history of collecting does not amount to a satisfactory assessment. Unlike Poelenburgh, Breenbergh must by and large have worked only for Dutch patrons, which may, in part, account for his limited early renown. Italian museums today conserve, as I see it, only one painting (a post-Italian work) and one drawing by him. None of his Italian paintings has a reliable provenance going back to Italy. Old archives of the Orsini, then dukes of Bracciano, seem to refer to some works by him, but the information is so summary as to be of no avail. Cardinal Angelo Giori (1586—1662), a devoted collector of landscapes in Rome, owned "a fairly large landscape by Bartolomeo[14]". The artist is not present in such Roman collections as the Colonna, Doria-Pamphilj, or Pallavicini, which are so rich in landscapes. By contrast, the Colonna catalog of 1783 contains, for example, two dozen Poelenburghs. Apparently Breenbergh was not in the service of a Roman nobleman and sold little in Italy. During his lifetime, two paintings passed to Ham House (113), one belonged to the Marquess of Hamilton, three were in the 1639 inventory of Charles I of England (who had employed Poelenburgh) and six in his sale of 1649/52, all now untraceable; a St. John was in 1653 with an Amsterdam dealer. Only one painting, if indeed it is by Breenbergh, has an uninterrupted history from the artist's lifetime: no. 118, the only known of five Breenberghs bought from a dealer in 1650 by Baron van Wyttenhorst (besides 36 works by Poelenburgh).

The majority of early provenances lead to the Dutch 18th century. The records of Dutch sales up to 1770 by Hoët contain two dozen Breenberghs (against four times as many by Poelenburgh). Moreover, 119 of his drawings were sold in 1736 at The

[13] The main collections of Boissieu are in the Louvre, Lyons, Frankfort, and Darmstadt. Some lesser French landscape painters such as Michel Duplessis, who exhibited in Paris in the last decade of the century, likewise bring to mind the manner of Breenbergh.

[14] *Antologia di Belle Arti,* I, Rome 1977, 89. Presumably from the Roman phase.

Hague, several dozen more in 1767 at Amsterdam. The Bramkamp collection at Amsterdam, sold in 1771, included four of his paintings. Very little remained in Holland. Many works passed at that time to France; two now unknown ones had been in the royal collection since 1683. The trend was set by the duc d'Orléans, deceased in 1723, who owned five "Breenberghs" (and four Poelenburghs), of which only nos. 103 f. survive; the famous collection remained at the Palais Royal until it was dismantled in London in 1791. Most of the distinguished French collectors followed suit: Comtesse de Verrue 1737, Crozat 1740 (5 "Breenberghs", sold in 1772 to Russia; only no. 124 survives), comte de Vence 1760, Blondel de Gagny (7 "Breenberghs"), Boisset, prince de Conti (7 "Breenberghs", only no. 181 survives), Gaignat, abbé de Gévigney, 1779 (14 smallish "Breenberghs", several of which sound doubtful), Poullain, duc de choiseul or Chabot 1787, comte de Vaudreuil. About twenty paintings were engraved in the lavish publications of some of these collections.

In the course of the 18th century, Breenbergh gradually replaced Poelenburgh as the leading Dutch Italianist. The reasons for this shift becomes clear when we read the French biographers. They praised the taste, refinement, and charm of his small works with terms like "très spirituel" or "précieux", which are at the very core of French aesthetics of the time. Another factor for Breenbergh's ascent was the exposure given to several important paintings such as no. 204, which were of greater importance than the repetitive small coppers by Poelenburgh. As a consequence, the two artists were gradually confused, and speculative attributions increased. At the Revolution, most of these works disappeared[15], and some left the country. In the middle of the 18th century, several paintings had passed from Holland and France to Germany, in particular to the Hesse-Cassel (now Karlsruhe) and the Dresden collections.

Much less is known about the changes during the 19th century. Isolated works appeared in England, Sweden, Denmark, Russia, Spain, and elsewhere. At present the oeuvre is widely scattered. Nearly all the masterpieces are privately owned. German museums now own thirteen paintings, Russia has seven, France has six, Holland is left with two. During the past years, many works have been bought by American collectors. Five American museums also own paintings by him, beginning with the Getty Museum in 1938. Prices have soared in recent yars.

Historiography reflects the changes of taste and the erratic results of the migration of the paintings. A total absence of information on Breenbergh among the early writers is succeeded by high praise in the 18th century. Poelenburgh on the other hand is extensively discussed at the beginning but loses some of his stature later on. No

[15] Some are here listed in the section of lost paintings.

contemporary references to Breenbergh exist. The poem of C. de Bie, 1661[16], discusses Poelenburgh (with a portrait), Swanevelt, Both, but not Breenbergh. Sandrart, who probably just missed him im Rome, speaks in his *Teutsche Academie,* 1675, of Swanevelt, Both, Asselijn, but not of Breenbergh; for Poelenburgh, he offers an engraved portrait and mentions the links with Bloemaert, Elsheimer, and Rapahel which have been repeated ever since. The earliest citation of Breenbergh, however insignificant, occurs in Félibien's *Entretiens . . .*, 1666/88[17]. The painter A. Houbraken (1660—1719), the first Dutch biographer of the period, speaks at length of Poelenburgh — giving his portrait —, of his pupils, and of Bronchorst, Hoët, and Linsen, while admitting his ignorance about Breenbergh, on whom he has not a single scrap of information[18].

A different picture emerges from the French writers of the 18th century. Paintings by Breenbergh had meanwhile entered Parisian collections. Dézallier, the first (1745), is here quoted in full[19]. The only biographer to include an engraved portrait, he

[16] *Het Gulden Cabinet . . .*, Antwerp 1661, 256. Breenbergh is not mentioned in the correspondence of Christiaan and Constantijn Huygens.

[17] Paris 1666/88, II, 273; 1725, 457: [Segers] "mourut environ l'an 1660, comme aussi Bartholomée Briemberg et Asselin, dit Petit-Jean, qui ont bien fait le paysage." He speaks more at length of Poelenburgh, Filippo, Uyttenbroeck, and others, but not of Swanevelt and Claude. His passage recurs unchanged in F. Le Comte, *Cabinet des singularitez . . .*, Brussels 1702, II, 280.

[18] Amsterdam 1718/21; The Hague 1753, I, 128, 369. He merely refutes the claim according to which Breenbergh was the teacher of Poelenburgh. His lack of information is all the more astonishing as various paintings by Breenbergh were at the time on the Amsterdam market.

[19] A. Dézallier d'Argenville, *Abrégé de la vie des plus fameux peintres,* Paris 1745, 81. For the portrait see note 4.

"Bartholomé s'appellait Breenberg et naquit à Utrecht environ l'an 1620. Ses dispositions naturelles l'entraînèrent vers l'art de la peinture, et des progrès surprenants l'élevèrent en peu de temps au rang des bons peintres. Pour se perfectionner, il partit pour l'Italie, où il a presque toujours demeuré. Les environs de Rome sont autant de tableaux vivants à imiter, la quantité de ruines et d'antiquités forme des fabriques admirables pour un paysagiste; les arbres n'y sont pas si heureux pour des études; il faut choisir certains cantons tels que Genzano, Albano, Frascati, Tivoli; partout ailleurs les arbres sont rabougris et de vilaine forme pour la peinture. C'en était assez pour Bartholomé que ces belles vues; elles ont fait le fondement de ses tableux, qu'il ornait ensuite de petites figures excellentes et d'animaux qu'il avait le talent de toucher mieux qu'un autre.

Sa coutume était de peindre en petit, et lorsqu'il a voulu faire de grandes compositions, ses figures sont devenues incorrectes et de mauvais goût. Ce peintre est très spirituel, et son goût de couleur est très bon, on y trouve la force, la finesse, le suave, et la perfection des animaux et des petites figures, ce qui fait que ses tableaux sont fort recherchés. On remarque en lui deux manières différentes qui dépaysent quelquefois les amateurs, la première par l'emploi des mauvaises couleurs est devenue noire dans les ciels, dans les arbres et dans les terrasses; il s'est servi d'outremer et de meilleures couleurs dans la seconde manière qui est plus recherchée et infiniment supérieure à l'autre; ce sont toujours les mêmes animaux, les mêmes figures qui contribuent beaucoup à le faire connaître. Il mourut en 1660, âgé de quarante ans.

stresses the refinement of the artist's paintings, drawings, and etchings. He is the first to distinguish two manners which at times confuse the viewer, an early style characterized by mediocre materials and darkened color, and an "infinitely superior" mature style. He also declares the figures of the large paintings to be in poor taste and has the artist born at Utrecht in 1620. Most of these points are then repeated by later writers, starting with Descamps, 1754[20], who offers some further details. Dézail-

Son disciple Gofredy a peint différemment de son maître, sa manière est légère et spirituelle, ses figurines bien touchées, mais son ton de couleur est très faible et trop blanchâtre; on ne sait aucune particularité de sa vie, ni l'année de sa mort.

Les dessins de Bartholomé sont terminés, et presque tous au bistre ou à l'encre de la Chine avec un trait de plume. Ses fabriques, ses terrasses sont touchées d'un grand goût, ses broussailes et ses arbres pointillés et formant de petites pelottes, ses figures sont excellentes ainsi que ses animaux; on ne peut guère se tromper à tous ces indices.

Le roi a un joueur de hautbois dans une grotte et peint sur toile, avec un paysage sur cuivre représentant Mercure et Argus.

On voit au palais Royal un homme à cheval, dans un paysage peint sur bois, un berger avec des chèvres et des moutons, un paysage avec une tour ronde, la montagne, et la prédication de saint Jean, ces quatre derniers tableaux sont peints sur cuivre.

Bartholomé a gravé à l'eau-forte quelques suites de petits paysages d'une touche élégante au nombre de vingt-quantre pièces qui sont très rares, il y en a encore quelques-unes gravées d'après lui par H. Naiwinck et autres flamands. On voit aussi deux grands et beaux morceaux que Bisschop a gravés d'après les plus beaux tableaux de Bartholomé, dont un représente Joseph présidant à la vente des blés en Egypte, et l'autre le martyre de saint Laurent."

The last sentence is an addition of the 1762 edition. Except for nos. 103 f., the paintings are lost.

[20] J. Descamps, *La vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandais . . .*, Paris 1754, 301.

"Bréenberg, connu en France sous le nom de Bartholomé, naquit à Utrecht vers l'an 1620. On ne sait qui fut son maître, ni en quel temps il fut en Italie où il a formé la belle manière, et où il a presque toujours étudié les ruines et les beaux paysages des environs de Rome. Les ouvrages des grands peintres d'histoire et ceux des meilleurs paysagistes on été ses guides et ses modèles. Il a joui de son vivant d'une grande réputation. On ne nous apprend rien de plus sur sa vie; on sait qu'il est mort jeune en 1660, sans savoir le lieu de sa sépulture.

Les ouvrages de cet artiste sont plus connus en France qu'en Flandre et qu'en Hollande, où il sont fort rares. C'est un peintre précieux dans ses petits ouvrages, il n'a conservé de son pays que la finesse de la touche. Ses sujets et ses figures sont nobles; son paysage est traité comme ses figures avec beaucoup d'art et de vérité. Les paysages qu'il a peints étaient presque toujours embellis de débris d'architecture; ses figures représentaient assez souvent des sujets d'histoire. On en voit dans ce genre de composés comme ceux des plus grands maîtres. Il était cependant borné aux petits tableaux. Quand il voulait peindre en grand, il était moins correct, sa touche n'était ni si précieuse, ni aussi spirituelle. On remarque même un vide dans ses compositions. Il voulut d'abord imiter le Bamboche, et il tomba dans le noir; mais il a peint dans la suite des tableaux claires et vigoureux. Ces derniers ont beaucoup d'effet et sont les plus estimés. Il grava à l'eau-forte le paysage avec la même intelligence qui se trouve dans ses dessins, et on en recherche les belles épreuves, qui ne sont pas communes. Voici quelques-uns de ses tableaux les plus connus.

Dans le cabinet du roi, un paysage dans lequel sont représentés Mercure et Argus; un homme qui joue du hautbois assis dans une grotte.

lier and Descamps give the measure of the appreciation of Breenbergh in France during the 18th century. Poelenburgh holds about the same space in their texts. Nothing new appears in the entries of Mariette, Fontenai, Füessli and Bartsch[21], nor had the Dutch historiographers any information to add. Weyerman, 1769[22], still refers to Houbraken's ignorance and mentions four paintings. Almost a century later, Immerzeel repeats Dézallier, which Kramm completes with the mention of a few more paintings. Invention and scholarship finally meet in Havard, 1882[23], who claimed that after Italy Breenbergh settled in France, but who was also the first to publish the artist's act of marriage. Fifty years still had to pass until the beginnings of art historical research, the few steps of which are traced at the outset of this introduction.

Au Palais Royal [. . . repeats Dézallier].

A Paris, chez M. le comte de Vence, un grand tableau, paysage et architecture avec beaucoup de figures. Le sujet représente notre Seigneur et le Centenier. C'est une grande composition, et d'une belle exécution.

Chez M. Blondel de Gagny, sept petits tableaux précieux et piquants, paysages à nu d'architecture et de figures.

Chez M. de la Bouexière, un tableau capital pour le nombre de figures; on y voit Joseph qui fait distribuer du blé en Egypte; un autre paysage, où une femme tire de l'eau à un puits.

Chez M. de Gaignat, quatre paysages, dont deux petits très fins.

Un petit paysage chez M. le maréchal d'Issenghien.

Et chez M. le Noir, un petit paysage avec figures et animaux.

A La Haye, chez M. d'Acosta, une architecture ruinée dans un beau paysage, et plusieurs figures. Chez M. Verschuring, une autre ruine avec des figures. Chez M. van Brémen, des ruines de Rome avec figures.

A Dordrecht, chez M. van der Linden van Slingelandt, un tableau capital, il représente Diogène qui dit à Alexandre de ne lui pas ôter le seul bien qu'il ne peut lui donner, qui est la lumière du soleil.

A Amsterdam, chez M. Braamkamp, Diane au bain, et un S. Jean prêchant dans le désert."

For the paintings, see nos. 187 (Vence), 204 (Bouexière), 235 (Linden), and the index; many are lost.

[21] P. J. Mariette (1694—1774), *Abécédario,* in *Archives de l'art français,* Paris 1851—53, 186; Poelenburgh is granted only three lines. Abbé de Fontenai, *Dictionnaire des artistes,* Paris 1776, I, 260. J. Füesslin, *Raisonnierendes Verzeichnis . . .*, Zurich 1771, 171. A. Bartsch, *Le Peintre graveur,* Vienna 1805, IV, 159.

[22] See the bibliography. IV, 1769, 293. The discussion of Poelenburgh (I, 1723, 333) is likewise based on Houbraken.

[23] *L'art et les artistes hollandais,* Paris 1881, IV, 80.

[24] (Continuation of Note 5, added when this book was in proof). The male portrait was copied in a drawing at Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inscribed "Bartholomeus Breenberg" in a hand which Dudok van Heel recognizes as that of the art dealer J. P. Zomer (1641—1724). Another copy is a drawing in Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland, inscribed "Bartholomeus Brenberg, geboren Utrecht 1601", a third is an 18th c. French print by Huquier, as self-portrait of Breenbergh. Finally, the same head appears in Dézallier's life of Breenbergh, 1745 (Backer is not discussed). It is true that Backer's self-portraits look confusingly similar. They are an inscribed drawing of 1638 in the Albertina (Bauch, *op. cit.,* pl. 1) and a reproductive print by T. Balliu of 1649 with the mention Backer, used again in de Bie's book of 1661 (Bauch, pl. 33; Breenbergh is not discussed there).