

Fine Manner vs. Broad Manner in Two Fifteenth-Century Florentine Engravings

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RECENTLY ACQUIRED BY The Metropolitan Museum of Art, a hitherto unknown fifteenth-century Florentine engraving gives an interesting insight into printmaking practices in the early Renaissance.¹ The work in question (Figure 1) is obviously a fragment (maximum dimensions about 14.3 by 7.3 cm) of a much larger design that originally represented the Crucifixion. The complete composition, however, can be reconstructed on the basis of a contemporary version of the subject by another Florentine engraver, which is known only in a single impression belonging to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Figure 2).² As one can see, the image in its entirety depicts the Crucifixion rather conventionally. On a rocky mound that represents Mount Calvary, Christ on the cross is surrounded by five small angels that hover on stylized clouds in the sky. Three angels capture the sacrificial blood in chalices, and the other two express grief with formulaic gestures.³ Standing on the ground below, the Virgin Mary and John the Evangelist show their sorrow by means of similar attitudes, while Mary Magdalen grieves at the foot of the cross and St. Jerome, the only member of the group who was not actually present at the event, kneels penitentially at the right, gazing upward in ecstasy as he beats his bared breast with a stone.⁴

The figures of Sts. John and Jerome in the newly discovered fragment correspond exactly to the same two figures in the Boston *Crucifixion*; the only major discrepancy (aside from style and technique) is the absence from the fragment of the rather ill-conceived lion, one of St. Jerome's standard attributes, which crouches behind his right leg in the complete version. Moreover, the figures in both en-

gravings are essentially the same size, which further suggests that the fragmentary print in its pristine condition can have varied little from what the Boston engraving still shows. In view of these similarities, it is natural to assume that one of the two works served as the other's model, or that both depend on a common source that would probably have been a drawing or another engraving. But I find insufficient evidence to decide on the issue and, assuming that one derives from the other, no way to determine which version is the original and which the copy. Ultimately, however, the design may well be based on a composition, no longer extant, invented in the 1490s by the Florentine painter Filippino Lippi.⁵ Several of the figures, the angels in particular, have fairly close counterparts in a Filippino school panel of the *Crucifixion*, now in the Museo Civico at Montepulciano, where the angels are the same as those in Filippino's autograph altarpiece, formerly in Berlin and dated to about 1497, of the *Crucifixion with the Virgin and St. Francis*.⁶

The resemblances to Filippino may, after all, be coincidental, but whatever the actual circumstance, one must finally be more impressed by the stylistic differences between the two engravings than by their obvious compositional similarities. Because the compositions are identical, the differences seem especially striking. The anonymous Boston *Crucifixion*, hardly by an artist of the first rank, is relatively old-fashioned for its date, presumably the last decade of the fifteenth century.⁷ The draperies are voluminous, but their folds take the form of thin, curving lines that terminate in small, hollow, teardrop-like loops, a formula reminiscent of mid-quattrocento Florentine



1. Francesco Rosselli (1448–before 1513), Fragment of a *Crucifixion*. Engraving, $5\frac{5}{8} \times 2\frac{7}{8}$ in. (14.3 × 7.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Dr. and Mrs. Goodwin M. Breinin Gift, 1988, 1988.1102

drawings. From a technical point of view, the print is also conservative, for it is executed in a late variant of the so-called Fine Manner of engraving, prevalent in Florence since the first copper plates were engraved there in the 1460s, a style practiced sporadically until about 1500. The Fine Manner technique

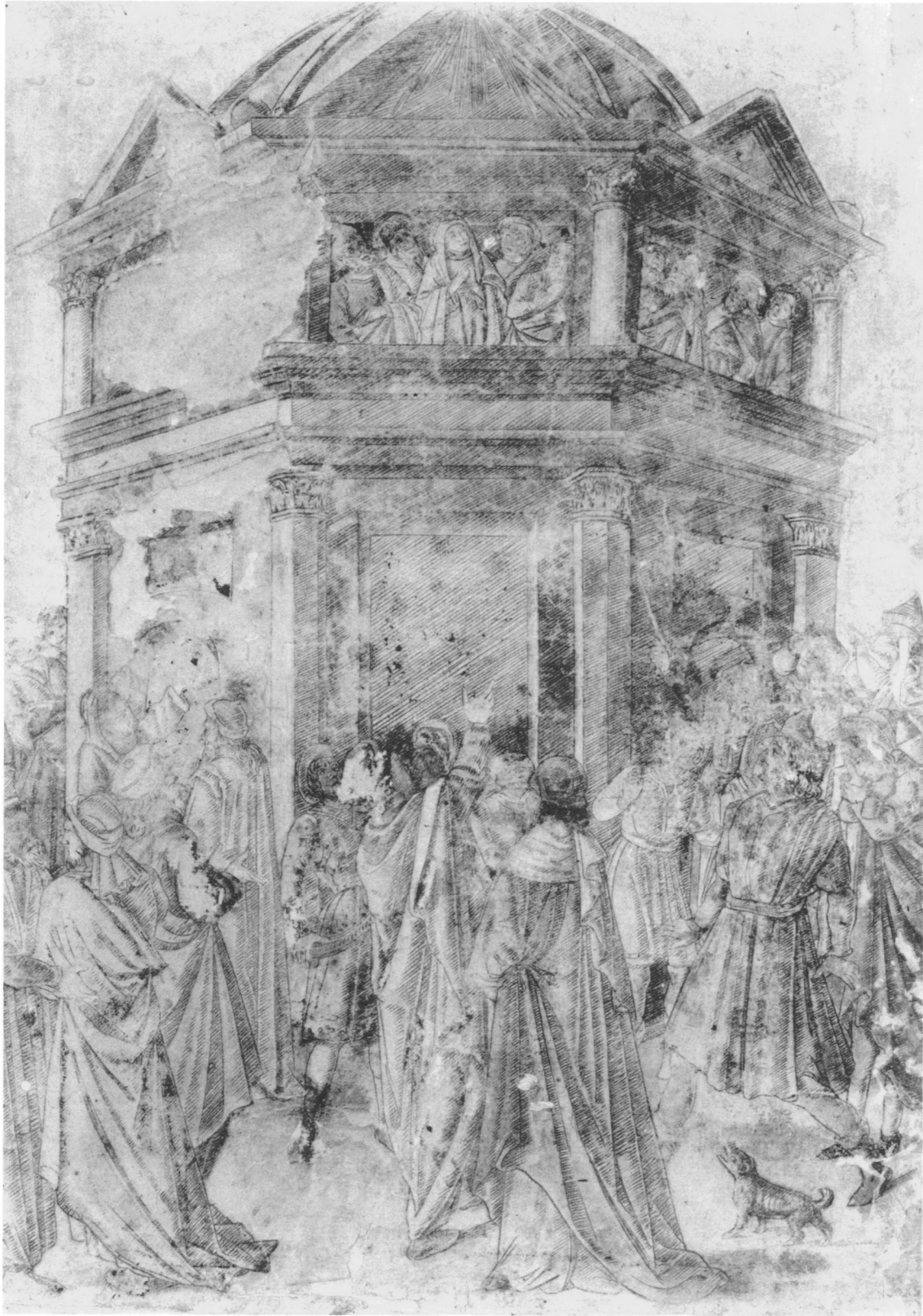
is distinguished chiefly by its system of shading with short, straight, delicately incised lines laid down in parallels or, more often than not, crosshatched. Frequently these tiny incisions are placed so close to one another that few, if any, spaces remain visible between them; and when printed they tend to create patches or bands of dark, velvety shadow, an effect sometimes likened to (and inspired by?) that of wash drawings.

All this can be seen quite clearly in the Boston *Crucifixion*. The New York fragment, on the other hand, although also conjecturally datable to the 1490s, is altogether different in style and technique. The figures seem more massive and their draperies more angular; gone are the liquid folds with their teardrop-shaped loops. Instead of the old Fine Manner shading, moreover, forms are modeled in what is known, by way of contrast, as the Broad Manner. Here we can observe that the lines are also straight but that many of them are longer and all of them are oblique and parallel—not unlike the parallel shading of quattrocento pen drawings—and the spaces between them are wider (or “broader”), so that the white of the page is everywhere visible.

Students of early Florentine prints unconsciously make certain basic assumptions when they speak of the Fine and Broad Manners, but these assumptions are not always valid. First of all, it is customary to think of the two techniques as pertaining to two different generations of engravers, the Fine Manner being succeeded and replaced by the Broad until, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a whole new approach to the medium renders both of them obsolete. There is, of course, some truth to this notion, inasmuch as the Fine Manner certainly was the earlier of the two principal engraving techniques indigenous to Florence in the quattrocento. During the 1460s, in fact, it may well have been the only one available to local artisans. By the 1480s, however, if not by the 1470s, the Broad Manner had definitely emerged, and for the remainder of the century it coexisted with the Fine Manner, never actually supplanting the latter, as we can see in the two *Crucifixions*.

2. Anonymous Florentine, *Crucifixion*. Engraving, $10\frac{1}{16} \times 7\frac{1}{4}$ in. (27.5 × 18.5 cm). Boston, Museum of Fine Arts (photo: Museum of Fine Arts)





3. Francesco Rosselli, *Descent of the Holy Spirit*, from the *Life of the Virgin* series. Engraving, $8\frac{3}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{16}$ in. (22.2×15.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1917, 17.60.4

It is a fallacy of a different sort that the Fine and Broad Manners are commonly perceived as having been practiced by a considerable number of different anonymous craftsmen, rather than by a smaller number of known masters. To some extent this is true with regard to the Fine Manner. Yet within the group of 250-odd extant Fine Manner prints, some 130 are in my opinion attributable to Baccio Baldini⁸ and nearly 25 to the so-called Master of the Vienna Passion.⁹ The remainder of the lot are by a variety of diverse hands, and the artist who produced the Boston *Crucifixion*, with whom no other works can be associated, is among them. For surviving Broad Manner prints the results are somewhat more surprising. Excluding North Italian engravings by Mantegna and his following, fewer than 90 Florentine plates are known to have been executed in the classic Broad Manner. And except for a few stray pieces, of which Pollaiuolo's *Battle of Nudes* is by far the most famous, the rest can be given to a single hand. By my count they amount to between 75 and 80 different subjects, including the fragmentary *Crucifixion* in New York.

This impressive body of work comprises many significant and highly regarded engravings: such series as the *Life of the Virgin* (Hind B.I.1-17 [see Figure 3]), the *Triumphs of Petrarch* (Hind B.II.1-6), and the *Prophets* (Hind C.I.1B-24B [see Figure 4]) and *Sibyls* (Hind C.II.1B-12B), as well as two book illustrations (Hind B.IV.1-2) and an important selection of individual items (Hind B.III.1-11, 18-20).¹⁰ A. M. Hind, the great cataloguer of early Italian engravings, saw that all of these prints were related, but he did not wish to ascribe them to one artist. Accordingly, he divided them up among five separate sections of his monumental corpus, thereby obscuring the unity of the group. The master who seems to be responsible for them must, however, be credited with having been the premier and almost exclusive practitioner of the Florentine Broad Manner. In my view he can be identified, virtually without question, as the versatile Francesco Rosselli (brother of the better-known

painter Cosimo), a mapmaker and manuscript illuminator besides being the foremost engraver of his time in Florence.

This is not the place for a full-scale treatment of Rosselli, who was born in 1448 and may have died before 1513, but the course of his career can be plotted with some degree of accuracy.¹¹ Up to a point, one can also detect a modest development in technique if not in style, and the fragmentary *Crucifixion* accords well with a date of execution in the 1490s.¹²

In any case, the engraving is manifestly by the same hand as the group of works listed above and comparable, for example, to various members of the *Life of the Virgin* series (Figure 3) or almost any of the *Prophets* (Figure 4) or *Sibyls*. There is no reason to

4. Francesco Rosselli, *Ezekiel*, from the *Prophets* series. Engraving, $7\frac{1}{16} \times 4\frac{3}{16}$ in. (17.9×10.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1929, 29.16.19



make extravagant claims for its importance in the history of Renaissance printmaking, but it is a welcome addition to Rosselli's already substantial oeuvre and, together with its relative in Boston, a convenient vehicle for reevaluating the relationship between the Fine and Broad Manners of early Florentine engraving.

NOTES

1. MMA, acc. no. 1988.1102. See "Recent Acquisitions: A Selection, 1988–1989," *MMAB* (Fall 1989) pp. 40–41.

2. The Boston impression measures ca. 275 × 185 mm (width between border lines at bottom, 165 mm). It was first described by A. M. Hind, *Catalogue of Early Italian Engravings Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*, Sidney Colvin, ed. (London, 1910) p. 584, Appendix II, no. 1; then by H. P. Rossiter, "Three Early Florentine Engravings," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* 29, no. 171 (1931) pp. 2–4; and again by Hind, *Early Italian Engraving, A Critical Catalogue with Complete Reproductions of All the Prints Described I* (London, 1938) p. 56, no. A.I.81.

3. See Moshe Barasch, *Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art* (New York, 1976).

4. For another early Italian engraving of a Crucifixion with a similar kneeling St. Jerome, see Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, no. E.III.58 (probably late-fifteenth-century Milanese).

5. In *ibid.*, Hind spoke vaguely of Filippino's influence but cited, for comparison, a Ghirlandaiesque *Crucifixion with Sts. Benedict and Romuald* in the convent of S. Apollonia, Florence (R. Van Marle, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting XIII* [The Hague, 1931] fig. 89) as by Davide Ghirlandaio.

6. Paintings illustrated by Katherine B. Nielson, *Filippino Lippi* (Cambridge, Mass., 1938) figs. 69 and 72.

7. Hind's initial date of ca. 1460, which Rossiter followed, was too early by a full generation; Hind later modified his opinion, dating the print to ca. 1480–1500.

8. Specifically, I ascribe to him the *Planets* (Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, A.III.1–9), the Fine Manner *Prophets and Sibyls* (*ibid.*, C.I.A. and C.II.A.), most of the *Otto Prints* (*ibid.*, A.IV.1–

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42), the illustrations for the *Monte Sancto di Dio* (*ibid.*, A.V.1[1–3]) and the 1481 Landino edition of Dante's *Inferno* (*ibid.*, A.V.2[1–19]), and miscellaneous individual subjects (*ibid.*, A.I.66, 68–70; A.II.1–5, 7–11, 16–20, 23–26). For Baldini, see my forthcoming *Commentary* to vol. 24 of *The Illustrated Bartsch*, as well as Oberhuber's brilliant essay in Jay A. Levenson, Konrad Oberhuber, and Jacquelyn L. Sheehan, *Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C., 1974) pp. 13ff.

9. Specifically, the Vienna Passion itself (Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, A.I.25–34), five of the six Fine Manner *Triumphs of Petrarch* (*ibid.*, A.I.19–23), and various other items belonging to no particular series (*ibid.*, A.I.1, 11, 35, 38, 40, 44; D.I.5). For the Vienna Passion Master, see also the forthcoming *Commentary* to vol. 24 of *The Illustrated Bartsch* and my article "The Madonna of Loreto: A Newly Discovered Work by the Master of the Vienna Passion," *Print Quarterly* 6 (1989) pp. 149–160.

10. The unity of this group has been recognized by John Goldsmith Phillips, *Early Florentine Designers and Engravers* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955) pp. 68ff.; and Konrad Oberhuber, *Early Italian Engravings*, p. 48.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 47–62. However, Oberhuber's chronology now needs to be revised in light of a recent discovery by Madeline Cirillo Archer, "The Dating of a Florentine *Life of the Virgin and Christ*," *Print Quarterly* 5 (1988) pp. 395–402. I shall review Rosselli's career in detail in my forthcoming *Commentary* volume cited in note 8 above.

12. Archer's findings suggest that none of Rosselli's engravings predates the 1480s, and the New York fragment is certainly not one of his earliest works; nor can it possibly be as late as his engraved map of the world (Hind, G.6), signed and dated 1506.