The Detroit *Christ on Calvary* and the Cologne *Lamentation of Christ*: Two Early Haarlem Paintings by Maerten van Heemskerck

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The art of Maerten van Heemskerck has been quite literally rediscovered in the last fifteen years, the sudden, renewed attention to his oeuvre one of the happiest results of the recent and more sympathetic scholarly reception of the mid-sixteenth-century Netherlands 'Romanists'. Heemskerck's painted and graphic work has been carefully and repeatedly scrutinized since 1971 in the pioneering iconographic studies of I. M. Veldman, who has conclusively proven Van Mander's claim that the philosopher D. V. Coornhert supplied the ideas for many of Heemskerck's prints. In 1980 R. Grosshans published a full catalogue of the artist's paintings; a monumental accomplishment that provides us with our first comprehensive view of Heemskerck's painted oeuvre.

Despite the many valuable discoveries made in these and other recent publications, one important area of Heemskerck's career has yet to be fully investigated: his early Haarlem period of ca. 1527–1532. In this critical half-decade the young Heemskerck emerged as a painter, working first in the atelier of Jan van Scorel (ca. 1527–30) and then practicing briefly as an independant Haarlem master before departing for Rome in the spring of 1532. In these few years Heemskerck established under Scorel's influence an effective working vocabulary of compositional, figurative, and landscape motifs. Though he expanded and refined this vocabulary enormously during his years of study in Rome (1532–ca. 1537), he never abandoned the nucleus of images first formed under Scorel in Haarlem. From the outset of his Roman sojourn to the final creative years just before his death in 1574, Heemskerck referred constantly to his Haarlem art of 1527–32, utilizing its structural, figurative, and landscape designs again and again in his later work. These subsequent self-quotations are often so numerous and precise that they can be used, along with the primary, stylistic evidence, to prove Heemskerck's authorship of several early Haarlem paintings still wrongly ascribed to Scorel or only tentatively given to Heemskerck, among them the two works examined below (*figs. 1, 2*). In short, Heemskerck established the foundation of his art in 1527–32, and the nature of his mature, post-Roman painting will not be understood fully until this formative period is adequately researched.

The major difficulty confronting any student of this period – the extraordinarily close stylistic affinities that came to exist between Scorel's Haarlem paintings and those of his disciple Heemskerck – was already commented on in 1604 by Van Mander, who noted that Heemskerck
applied himself with such industry in Scorel’s shop ‘that he finally caught up to his forerunning master in art, with the result that their works could hardly be told apart, so perfectly had he [i.e., Heemskerck] made this manner of painting his own’.4 Separating the production of a master-painter from that of an extremely gifted and creatively imitative assistant is one of the thorniest tasks confronting the art historian, and many modern writers have shied away from Heemskerck’s early Haarlem period for precisely this reason. Those few scholars who have delved into the period have in most cases limited themselves to rather circumscribed studies of Heemskerck’s first Haarlem portraits. Through these ground-breaking studies of the 1930s, ’40s, and ’50s,5 several masterpieces of early sixteenth-century portraiture – above all, the 1529 Amsterdam pendants of husband and wife6 and roughly contemporary Kassel Portrait of Pieter Jan Foppesz, and his Family7 – have shed their Scorel attributions and been correctly reascribed to Heemskerck. Even in this relatively well-researched area, however, there have been curious omissions and blind spots. One thinks particularly of Heemskerck’s splendid 1531 Portrait of a Boy in Rotterdam, a painting still viewed by too many writers as a work of Scorel.8