The Source of a Figure Motif in the Art of the St. Lucy Master

In an article in this journal in 1976, Dirk de Vos postulated a close relationship between the art of Dieric Bouts the Elder and the Master of the St. Lucy Legend by reattributing two paintings to the Lucy Master which usually had been given to Bouts' followers.

De Vos' new attributions of these works, the St. John the Evangelist on Patmos (Rotterdam, Boymans-van Beuningen Museum) and the Adoration of the Magi (Cincinnati, Ohio, Art Museum), led him to suggest that the Lucy Master learned his art from an artist trained in Bouts' manner. The arguments that de Vos methodically marshals to prove his point are impressive, but his reinterpretation of the Lucy Master as one who inherited the Boutsian legacy creates two problems. First, it does not account for the Spanish elements in the Lucy Master's paintings. Second, the emphasis on Bouts has

1 Dirk de Vos, 'Nieuwe toeschrijvingen aan de Meester van de Luciagendé, alias de Meester van de Rotterdamse Johannes op Patmos,' Oud Holland 1976, 137-161. His article is the latest in a long series of studies which have attempted to clarify the œuvre of the St. Lucy Master. Max J. Friedlander took the first step in sorting through the Lucy Master's pictures in order to separate them from the works by other artists which had been incorrectly given to him. Friedlander ultimately listed twenty-seven works by the Lucy Master (Die altfranzösischen Malerei vol. VI, Berlin 1928, pp. 66-70; 140-142, pls. LX-LXVI; vol. XIV, Leyden 1937, pp. 104-105). For a survey of the literature on the artist after 1937 and for his current œuvre, see Vermeer-Verhaegen's editor's comments to the English edition of Friedlander's volume (Early Netherlandish Painting vol. VII, Leyden 1971, pp. 123f; nos. Add. 277-283). Especially important for our knowledge about the artist's work are two articles by Vermeer-Verhaegen herself: 'Le Maître de la Légende de Sainte Lucie: Précisions sur son œuvre,' Bulletin de l'Institut Royal du Patrimoine Artistique II, 1959, pp. 73-82 and 'Un important retable du Maître de la Légende de Sainte Lucie conservé à Tallinn,' ibid., IV, 1961 pp. 142-54.

2 In the earlier literature, the problem of Spanish characteristics in the Lucy Master's art centered on his St. Catherine altarpiece (Pisa, Museo Nazionale de San Matteo; ill. Friedlander, Early Netherlandish Painting vol. VIA, pl. 159); this work had once been attributed to the Spanish artist Bartolomé Bermejo (see Walter Dowdeswell, 'Another Painting by Bartolomé Bermejo,' The Burlington Magazine VIII, 1905-06, pp. 282-83). C. R. Post argued that the central panel and the three predellas of this work are decidedly Flemish and should be attributed to the Lucy artist (A History of Spanish Painting vol. V, Cambridge 1934, pp. 208-211). Friedlander always felt that only the central panel was by the Lucy Master ('Ausstellungen: Die Brügger Leihausstellung von 1902,' Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft XXVI, 1903, p. 85). Also attributing this work to the Lucy Master rather than to Bermejo were H. Friesen-Gevaert (La peinture en Belgique: Les premiers flamands vol. II, Bruxelles 1909, pp. 109-111) and A. von Wurzbach (Niederländisches Künstler-Lexikon, vol. III, 1911, p. 214). The dark modeling, some figure types, crowded compositions, and highly detailed brocades in the Lucy Master's pictures are indeed reminiscent of the Hispano-Flemish style. Whether he lived in Spain for a time, only visited there, or simply managed an atelier of Spanish artists in Bruges are all possible explanations for these Spanish elements. See Verhaegen, 'Sainte Lucie,' p. 82; Jacqueline Folie, Flanders in the Fifteenth Century: Art and Civilization, Detroit, Institute of Arts, October-December 1960, p. 169; J. Lassaigne, 'Les premiers flamands à Bruges,' L'Oeil no. 69, 1960, p. 72.

Colin Eisler thinks that he trained Michiel Sittow ('The Sittow Assumption,' Art News, September 1965, p. 52). Verhaegen attributes an altar in Tallinn (Estonia) to the Lucy Master that had once been given to Sittow ('Un important retable,' pp. 142-54, especially p. 150).
the effect of minimizing in our minds the importance that the motifs and compositions of Rogier van der Weyden, Hans Memlinc, and Hugo van der Goes had upon the Lucy Master. There is a figure motif used at least twice by the Lucy Master which could have originated only in Rogier’s shop. The fact that this motif was used by the Lucy Master for the first time in a triptych in which there are strong references to Bouts’ art as well suggests that whatever his connection to Bouts, the Lucy Master must still be seen as a borrower par excellence whose eyes were always open to the ideas of others. In a broader context, the sequence of copies which will allow us to trace this motif from the Lucy Master to Rogier’s art, offers us an unusually complete documentation as to how such motifs passed from artist to artist. Finally, the history of this motif shows us that an important drawing from Rogier’s shop must have been originally intended as a workshop model for later paintings.

My starting point is the Lucy Master’s *Lamentation* triptych in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (fig. 1). The attribution of this painting to the Lucy Master has never been ques-

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4 The painting (35 × 48-1/4 inches, open) was acquired from the J. R. van derlip collection in 1935 (see Flemish Primitives in the Institute, *Bulletin of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts* 1936, p. 50; ‘Rundschau,’ *Pantheon* XVII, 1936, p. 74, ill. p. 69; Minneapolis, Institute of Arts, *European Paintings*, New York 1971, pp. 130f).