18. Le Bouvier (The cowherd) 1636

131 (132) × 200 (202)

REFERENCE: R-D.8; D.8; B.18; K.124; R.27



122. (cat. no. 18.i) *Le Bouvier*. Paris (BN)

First state:

The head of the cow on the far left is completely dark with drypoint work; it becomes gradually lighter in later impressions.

The plate-corners are rectangular.
Before the inscription in the lower margin.

COLLECTIONS: London (BM); Oxford; Paris (BN)



123. (cat. no. 18.ii) *Le Bouvier*. Paris (L)

Second state:

Inscribed in the lower margin on the right: *Claudius in.et f.Romae 1636 138 ne ficcen* (difficult to decipher after *Romae*)
The plate has been reworked, but apart from the addition of the inscription, it is difficult to locate any clear differences.
Before the number *4* in the left margin.

COLLECTIONS: Paris (L, PP)

Arthur Hind (1923, p. 163, note 1) erroneously linked Seymour Haden's remarks about *La Danse villageoise* with this plate and suggested that 'Claude may in places have roughened the plate with a pumice stone and scraped out the lines of light'. H. D. Russell (1982, p. 357, note 6) notes the error and suggests that 'some form of roulette instrument would more likely have been used'.

The suggestion that 'Claude is likely to have proceeded in the manner of modern etchers: by laying a transparent ground on the plate with a roller' is probably correct. 'Only the very finest lines would have been closed by this procedure, the others remaining open to the acid' (Russell 1982, p. 354).

Third state (A):

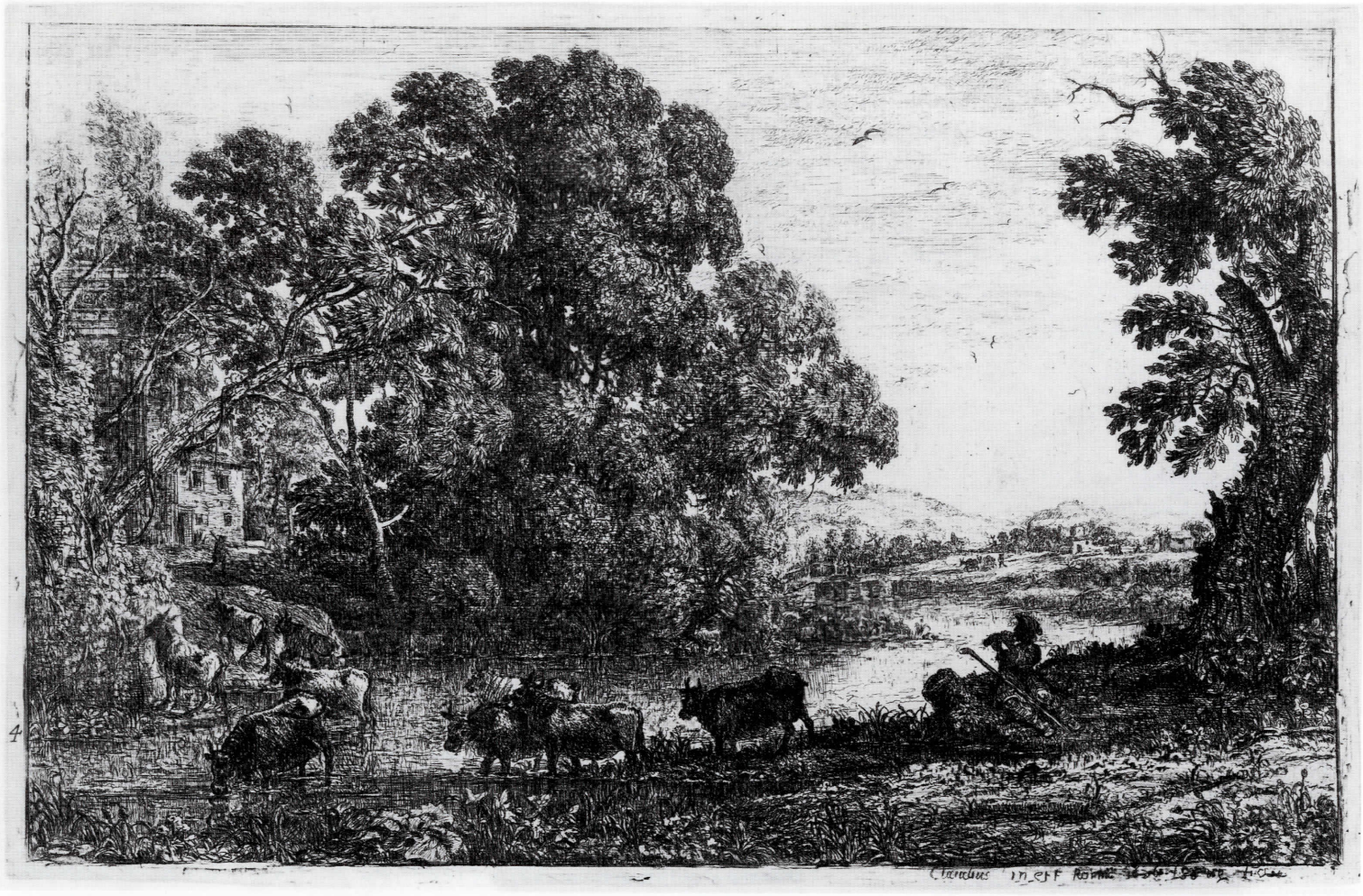
The inscription remains.
With the number *4* in the left margin.
The plate-corners have been rounded.
Before the accident in the sky at the top right.

COLLECTIONS: Boston; Cambridge, Mass.; New York (MMA, PL); Oxford; Paris (BN); Vienna; Washington

WATERMARKS: Initials *IHS* with a cross in a circle; fleur-de-lys in a crowned circle

In the earliest impressions of this state the head of the cow on the far left is still quite dark (see plate 124).

I have seen an impression with a long curved scratch in the sky on the right above the hills; the scratch gradually faded as printing of the state continued (see plate 125).



124. (cat. no. 18.iii.A) *Le Bouvier*. Washington

125. Detail from cat. no. 18.iii.A





126. (cat. no. 18.iii.B) *Le Bouvier*. London (BM)

Third state (B):

A few short curved scratches appear in the top right corner.

COLLECTIONS: Boston; Cincinnati; London (BM); Paris (PP)



127. (cat. no. 18.iv.A) *Le Bouvier*. London (BM)

Fourth state (A):

The number *4* and the inscription remain.
The sky has been reworked: the small bird to the immediate right of the trees, 1½ cm above the hill, has disappeared and been covered with several horizontal lines of drypoint.
Before the scratch in the tree.

COLLECTION: London (BM)



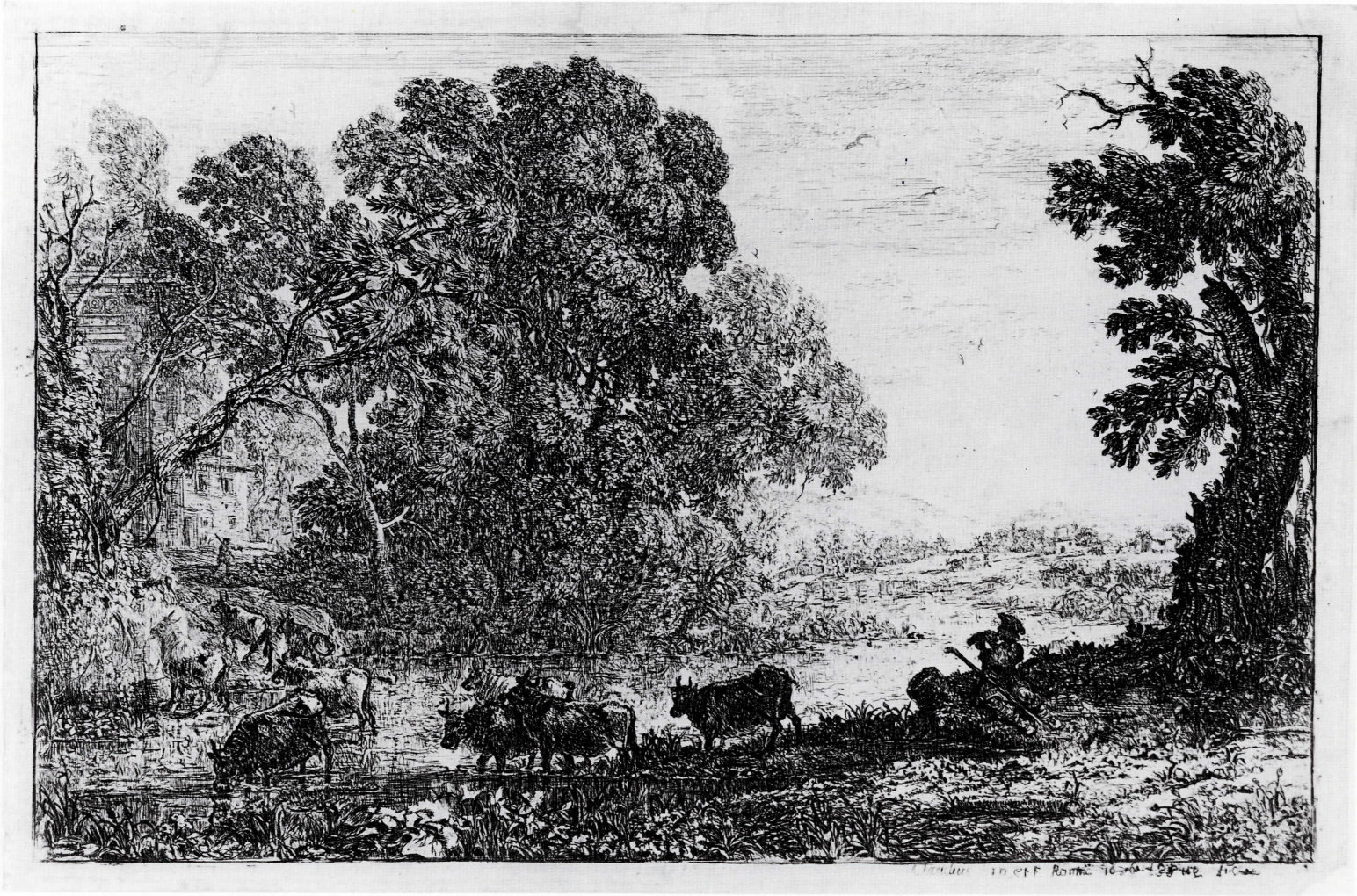
130. (cat. no. 18.v) *Le Bouvier*. Author

Fifth state:

Inscribed in the centre of the lower margin: *N 44 p 2*
The small curved scratches in the sky at the top right have almost disappeared.
The borderline at the top right corner has been considerably reinforced.
The lower borderline, just to the right of the inscription *N 44 p 2*, is now continuous.

COLLECTION: Author

Impressions of this state exist on eighteenth-century laid paper and on nineteenth-century wove paper.



131. (cat. no. 18.vi) *Le Bouvier*. London (BM)

Sixth state:

The number *4* and the inscription *N 44 p 2* have been erased, but faint traces are still visible.
The plate has been lightly re-etched and the foreground is now darker.
In some impressions there are three downward curving scratches at the top edge, 30 mm from the top left corner.

COLLECTION: London (BM)

Published in the 1816 McCreery edition of *200 Etchings* and in later editions.

The preparatory drawing for this, the most celebrated of Claude's etchings, does not seem to have survived.

Many other drawings echo the theme of cattle fording a river; the most closely related is LV 176, which records a painting, dated 1670, now in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (MRD 1018).

With unfailing regularity, students of Claude's etched work have found in this print the highest manifestation of Claude's genius as an etcher. It might be of interest to note some of their comments:

> For technical quality of a certain delicate kind this is the finest landscape etching in the world. Its transparency and gradation have never been surpassed. The most wonderful passages are in the great masses of foliage which have been, as it were, tenderly painted and glazed with the point. (Hamerton 1868, p. 178)

> 'Le lever du solei' et 'Le bouvier' qui peuvent être classées parmi les chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art du graveur. (Duplessis 1875, p. 4)

> The greatest of all Claude's etchings seems to me to be the Bouvier. In quality it is surprising, and in touch, magical – one never tires of wondering at it. Though highly finished it has the true ring of an etching, and in its texture it is what the printers of steel engravings would call 'a rotten plate'. It need scarcely be said that this rottenness is its chief recommendation. (Haden 1879, p. 39)

> Qui ne connait cette page à la fois si noble et si familière, le Bouvier? Tous nous avons eu ce tableau sous les yeux, peút-être sans le regarder . . . il restera toujours grand à côté de la vie modern. (Pattison 1884, p. 168)

> With the genius of a true poet Claude has compressed into a few square inches all the charm of Virgil's Eclogues, all the beauty of pastoral life. Stately trees, fragrant meadows, a serene sky and a silvery river combine to form an ideal home for man and bird and beast. The fragments of columns which peep from under the trees on the right, instead of provoking, as the accessories of the Claudian landscape too often do, a reminiscence of the stars, harmonise discreetly with the sentiment of the surroundings. (Grahame 1895, p. 79)

> His wonderful power in the expression of atmosphere is seen perhaps at its best in the Cow-herd of 1636 (D.8). By the delicate interlacement of line and subtle use of scraping, one is made to feel the warm mists that are rising at sundown, where the herd is standing knee-deep in the pool. (Hind 1923, p. 163)

> This may be Claude's most beautiful print. While it is highly refined technically, it retains the freshness of some of his earlier, more boldly handled images and does not have the colder perfectionism of (*Le Troupeau en marche*). Here, composition, line, and ink have been brought into a subtle, controlled harmony. Technique serves the image, and the image conveys the effect of a late and tranquil summer afternoon. A sultry heat seems to hang over the land, and the gently fading light is touched, as it were, by the tune of the shepherd's horn, calling the animals home from the pastures. (Russell 1982, p. 353)