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The Cowherd
(*Le bouvier*)

126 x 195 (4¹⁵/₁₆ x 7¹¹/₁₆)

R-D8, BLI8, KI24, D8

COLLECTIONS: AIC AO AV BK
BM BN MFA MMA NGA RA

A. First state

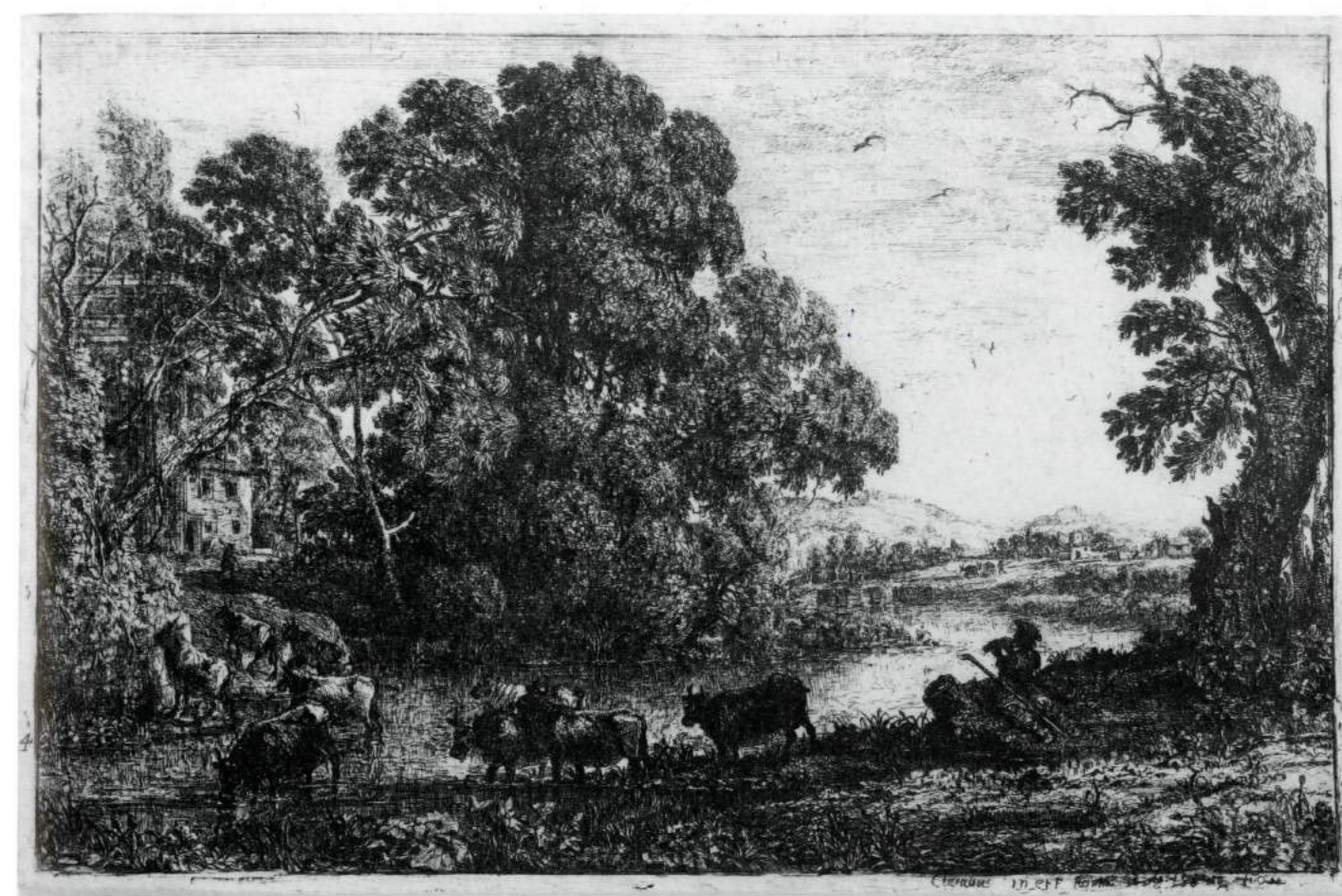
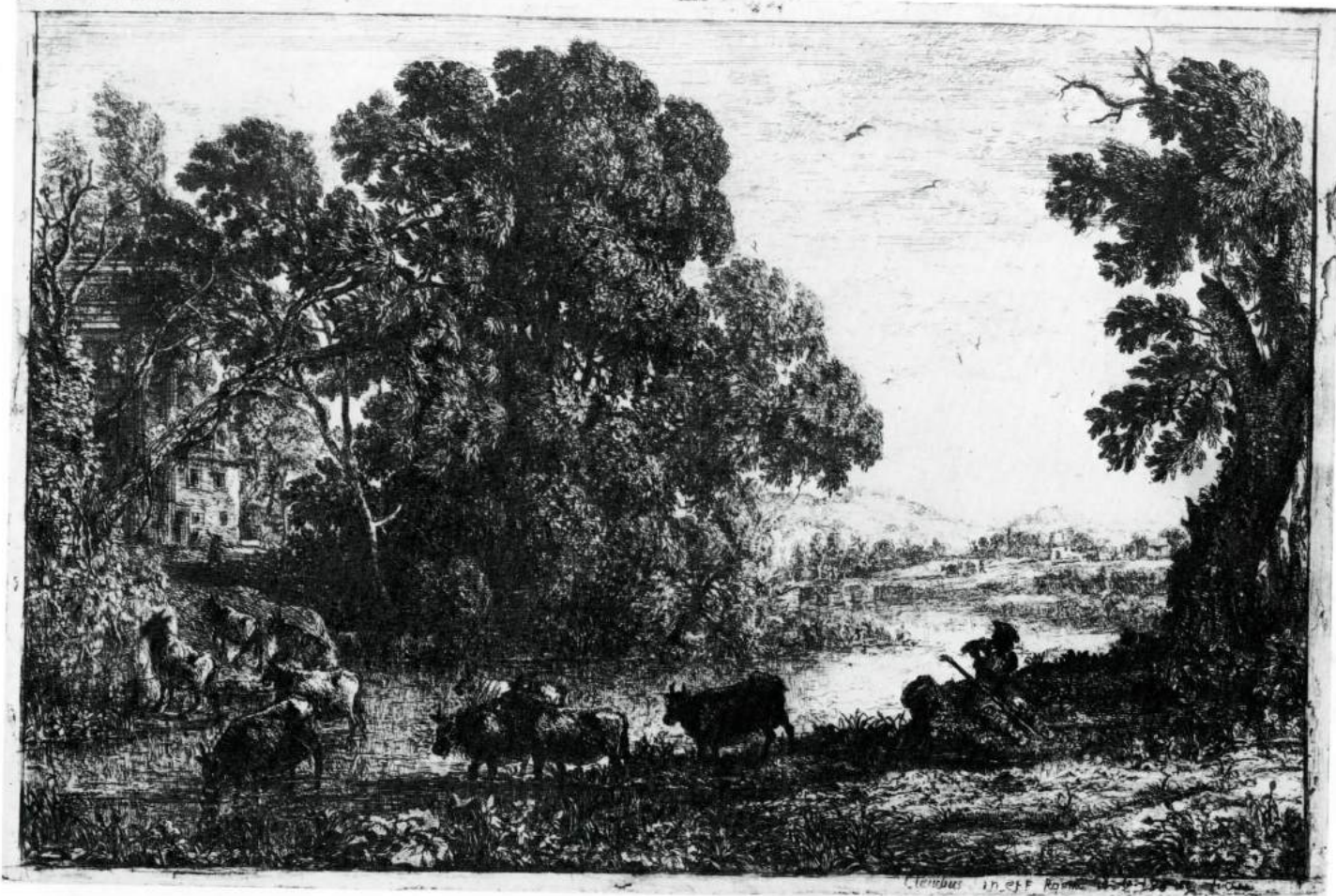
The Visitors of the Ashmolean
Museum, Oxford

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 cat. no. 47B. 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.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, *The Cowherd* was greatly admired by a number of print connoisseurs.¹ Its idyllic, bucolic mood allies it with Giorgione's art, of a century earlier, and calls to mind a passage on Giorgionesque works by Walter Pater, the nineteenth-century aesthete. Putting forth the view that all art aspires to the condition of music, Pater goes on to say: "and, in the school of Giorgione, the perfect moments of music itself, the making or hearing of music, song or its accompaniment, are themselves prominent as subjects. . . . In such favorite incidents . . . music or music-like intervals in our existence, life itself is conceived as a sort of listening."²

The considerable quantity of impressions that were printed in Claude's lifetime indicates that the etching must have been widely admired, as well, in the seventeenth century. The plate, executed in what Knab has called the "fine manner," gave a large number of very good impressions.³

The first state, A, before the inscription was added, is very rare and undoubtedly was taken by Claude for proofing purposes. The light gray tone of the ink must be due to a light biting of the plate; since the lines were not very deep, only a small amount of ink accumulated, and this affected its color.⁴



B. Second state
 Inscribed on the plate, lower right:
*Claudius in. et f. Romae 1636 138 ne
 ficcen.* (the designations beginning
 with the date are blurred and difficult
 to read).
 Musée du Louvre, Paris, Collection
 Edmond de Rothschild, Inv. 4976 L.R.
Exhibited Paris only

The intense areas of very black ink (as along the tree trunk at the right, and in the foreground) in the second state, B, appear to indicate that the plate was rebitten, rather than reworked. All of the lines found in B seem also to appear in A, but the lines in B are wider and deeper. Rebiting after taking a proof meant that a new ground had to be applied, and Claude is likely to have proceeded in the manner of modern etchers: by laying a transparent ground on the plate with a roller. Only the very finest lines would have been closed by this procedure, the others remaining open to the acid.⁵ At the same time, the ink in B was more heavily applied, and perhaps indeed more intensely black in color, to achieve the strong shadows that Claude was seeking.

A. M. Hind suggested that Claude may have used a pumice stone on this plate, to roughen the surface at certain points, and then a scraper to create white highlights.⁶ This does not seem to be the case. The dense foliage in the large mass of trees to the left of the shepherd when magnified consists of a great many irregularly spaced lines, some of them short flicks, and all seem to be handwork.

In the third, and most common, state, shown here in two impressions C and D, the number 4 was added in the left margin. Of the two, D is probably the later one, since in various areas where the lines are especially delicate, less ink has adhered to the paper; for example, below the feet of the shepherd, in the distant view, and at the extreme left, to the right of the numeral. Nevertheless, the sky in D printed more clearly, and the differences in the two prints emphasize the fact that no two impressions are ever truly identical.

Aesthetically, both are highly satisfactory, but they create rather different moods in the viewer. Darks are dominant in C, linking the land, shepherd, and

C. Third state.
 Inscribed on the plate as in B, and in
 the left margin: 4.
 National Gallery of Art, Washington,
 Rosenwald Collection, 1943, B-7258



fig. E 12 Mark of the firm of Armand-Durand, appearing on the versos of its reproductions. Library, National Gallery of Art, Washington.



fig. E 11 Claude. Photogravure of *The Cowherd*, second state, published by Armand-Durand. Library, National Gallery of Art, Washington.



D. Third state
Inscribed on the plate as in C.
Cleveland Museum of Art, Bequest of
John L. Severance Collection, 42.742

cows tightly together and suggesting a certain somberness. In D, darks and lights are more balanced, shepherd and animals are more separate from each other, and the mood effected is purely tranquil.⁷

By the time E was printed, wear to the fine lines of the plate was pronounced, so they no longer held the ink well, and deeply bitten lines (for example, the contours of the cows) stand out rather sharply. In the impression exhibited, wash has been brushed over various areas, no doubt to disguise the weaknesses of this posthumous impression. In the fourth state, a small bird to the right of the mass of trees, and just above the hills, is no longer present, as is the case in E. Lorenzen, however, has noted that a fifth state exists, with the number 4 nearly burnished out; since the margin of this impression is clipped off, one cannot be certain of the state.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the firm of Armand-Durand issued a portfolio of photomechanical reproductions of Claude's etchings, as it had done and continued to do with the works of other important printmakers.⁸ While the fidelity of these reproductions can still be admired today, their merit quickly fades when they are juxtaposed with Claude's originals (fig. E 11). However, since they were made the same size as the originals and were hinged into the portfolio in the manner of an original print, they have sometimes caused confusion for novice collectors. Anticipating this, the firm stamped its mark on the versos of all its reproductions (fig. E 12).

1. Pattison, *Claude*, pp. 168-169, gives a rhapsodical description of it. Haden, *About Etching*, p. 39, calls it the "greatest of Claude's etchings." Wedmore, *Etchings*, p. 36,

E. Fourth or fifth state
Inscribed on the plate as in B, but with
the left margin clipped off. Wash has
been added by hand to areas of the
landscape.
Boston Public Library, Print
Department

comments that it is "a piece whose merits Mr. Hamerton by no means exhausts or overstates when he pronounces. . . . 'For technical quality of a certain delicate kind, this is the finest landscape etching in the world.'" Hind, *Engraving and Etching*, p. 163, wrote: "His wonderful power in the expression of atmosphere is seen perhaps at its best in the *Cow-herd* of 1636." Lumsden, *Etching*, p. 167, on the other hand, found it "a laboured plate containing some very poor draughtsmanship." Other of his plates have, of course, received warm praise, especially cat. nos. 23 and 47.

2. Pater, "Giorgione," pp. 150-151; the essay was first published in 1877. For other comments on Giorgione, and on the particular alliance of music and landscape, see the Introduction.

3. For an explanation of Knab's use of the terms "fine manner" and "broad manner," and this author's comments, see the prefatory note to this section.

4. Claude's "gray print" was intentional, but grayed ink commonly occurred in sixteenth-century etchings, before it became technically possible to make multiple bitings of the plate. On biting, see Hind, *Engraving and Etching*, pp. 6-8. Inexperience with etching also accounted for underbiting and subsequent gray lines; see, for example, Ackley, *Age of Rembrandt*, cat. no. 20, on a print by Jan Pynas (c. 1583/84-1631).

5. Hind, *Engraving and Etching*, pp. 7-8.

6. Hind, *Engraving and Etching*, p. 163 and n. 1. Some form of roulette instrument would more likely have been used. Hind incorrectly refers in n. 1 to Seymour Haden's remarks, which are not about this etching but rather about cat. no. 20.

7. The extent to which Claude purposely varied the inkings of these two impressions may be debatable, but he was acutely aware of the possibilities of doing so; see, especially, cat. no. 28.

8. Duplessis, *Eaux-fortes*, pl. VIII. On Armand-Durand's reproductions of Rembrandt's prints, see comments by Arthur M. Hind, *A Catalogue of Rembrandt's Etchings*, 2nd ed. rev. (London, 1923; reprint New York, 1967), pp. 24-25, p. 25, n. 1.