



**NINETEENTH-CENTURY EUROPEAN PAINTINGS
AT THE STERLING AND FRANCINE CLARK ART INSTITUTE**

VOLUME TWO

Edited by Sarah Lees

With an essay by Richard Rand
and technical reports by Sandra L. Webber

With contributions by Katharine J. Albert, Philippe Bordes, Dan Cohen,
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James Rosenow, Zoë Samels, and Fronia E. Wissman

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decade was chief curator at the Clark, suggested a different artist, Félix-Hippolyte Lanouë (1812–1872), as the painting's author. George Heard Hamilton, then director of the Clark, demurred, pointing out the different way the two artists painted foliage and also stating that too little is known about Lanouë's work overall to draw any firm conclusions.⁸ In short, a firm attribution—to Troyon or another painter—must await further research and the discovery of additional early paintings by Troyon. FEW

PROVENANCE [C. Lepoutre, Paris, sold to Clark, 2 Mar. 1921]; Robert Sterling Clark (1921–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956a, no. 133, pl. 50; Williams-town 1981a, no cat.

REFERENCES Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute 1963, no. 152, ill.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is moderate-weight laid paper, with the lighter screen lines running vertically through the image. Pinholes around the perimeter and uneven cut edges on the top and bottom suggest that the picture was painted while the paper was pinned flat to a board. The old glue lining and five-member stretcher are grimy but stable, and were presumably added to stabilize the fragile support and the horizontal cupped cracks in the sky. The lining fabric is a moderate-weight linen (19–22 threads/cm). There are old breaks and losses in the paper at the edges and corners, and old fills and new inpainting have been applied to extend the edges of the original paper support to the present squared-up dimensions. Some frame abrasion is visible, and gold and bronze powder deposits are scattered along the lower edge. Age cracks in the paint layer can be seen together with very fine, dark, closely spaced cracks, possibly associated with the paper support or a layer of preparation below the paint. In 1978, several layers of streaky discolored varnish and grime residues were removed and the picture was revarnished.

The ground is an off-white color, whose brightness contributes to the luminosity in the sky. Under the microscope, some charcoal deposits can be seen near the buildings, but no underdrawing lines are detectable using infrared reflectography. There are two possible changes in the center foreground, now quite visible in normal light as pentimenti. There appear to have been two figures seated on the lawn, which were then painted out and followed by a child's hoop, perhaps the beginnings of the child with a hoop now seen further to the left. The paint is a paste consistency, applied wet-into-wet, with low impastos. The left-hand trees were painted before the bright avenue to the chateau was laid in. Thin stippling applications and subtle blending were used to produce the transparent color gradations in the sky. Dark scumbles were used to soften the shadows.

1. Miquel 1975, vol. 2, p. 322.
2. Dunlop 1985, pp. 253–70.
3. Charles-François Daubigny, by contrast, when commissioned by the government in 1862, painted the cascade. See Philadelphia–Detroit–Paris 1978–79, pp. 284–85, no. VI-38.
4. He showed five such paintings in the Salon, and five more are included in a list of his works that appeared in public sales up to 1900, as are one watercolor and two pastels. See Miquel 1975, vol. 2, under Troyon, and Soullié 1900b.
5. Soullié 1900b, p. vi: “n’ont même laissé aucune trace dans le souvenir de ses amis.”
6. Photographs of all these works are in the Clark's curatorial file.
7. Miquel 1975, vol. 2, p. 326.
8. Correspondence in the Clark's curatorial file.

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Oil on panel, 46.2 x 37.1 cm

Lower left: C. TROYON.

1955.550

In the meager literature on Troyon, it is often implied or even stated that he began introducing animals into his paintings as a result of his trip to Belgium and Holland in 1847 and his exposure to the animal paintings, especially those of cows, by Aelbert Cuyp and Paulus Potter.¹ This appealing but false interpretation of Troyon's career began as early as the year after he died. In a short notice in *L'Artiste*, Pierre Dax, although not mentioning the trip to the Lowlands, stated that animals appeared in Troyon's Salon paintings beginning in 1849.² Dax can be excused for not knowing that in 1838, when Troyon was still exhibiting views of Saint-Cloud at the Salon, he was also showing paintings with animals; in fact, he was awarded a third-class medal that year as an *animalier* for his *Country Fair in the Limousin* (location unknown).³

By the time Troyon painted this picture, probably in the early 1850s, his art had undergone a fundamental change. Sometime in the 1830s, he met Camille Roqueplan (1800–1855), a painter and lithographer, in the park at Saint-Cloud. Roqueplan advised him to give up the tight, linear, topographic technique he had been using in his views of the chateau and park



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of Saint-Cloud and to “interpret what he felt” while looking at nature.⁴ Under the influence of artists to whom Roqueplan introduced him in Paris, such as Jules Dupré and Théodore Rousseau, Troyon’s brushwork loosened, became freer, more spontaneous, and less detailed, even rough. In this picture, impasto is used to replicate the look of feathers, while thinner paint indicates but does not describe foliage. Color contrasts are stronger than in Troyon’s earlier works; shadows are dark, feathers in sunlight are white, and the blue smock is rich, dark, almost turquoise. The thinly painted foliage suggests the fresh breezes of spring. The active brushwork also functions as a metaphor for the movements of the geese looking around alertly as they waddle down the rutted road.

Troyon’s concentration on animal paintings after 1850 evidently struck a responsive chord with the

French public, and he was inundated with commissions. He was a tireless worker. It was said that “his studio became a veritable factory for pictures; he produces paintings as a chicken does eggs.” His facility allowed him to paint a picture a day.⁵

The extent of Troyon’s oeuvre is difficult if not impossible to assess; the only twentieth-century study dedicated to his career is the twenty-five-page section in Pierre Miquel’s compendium *L’École de la nature, 1824–1874*. Yet it is clear that Troyon’s favorite animals to paint were cows, followed closely by sheep. Barnyard fowl—ducks, chickens, turkeys, and geese—appear in his work only seldom. It is likely that he explored the bird motif early in the mature phase of his work, beginning in the late 1840s, and, as did Charles-Émile Jacque (1813–1894), moved on to the larger sheep and cows, perhaps because they proved more popular.⁶

The Clark's picture differs from the others with the bird motif known to us only by title in the fact that the person tending the geese is a young man or even a boy; girls or women oversee the geese in all the other examples. Presumably because geese are small animals, little given to roam, tending them was a task that could be given to young children. Like the subject matter, the location of the man and his flock is also hard to explain, as they make their way down a road with neither departure point nor destination in sight.

It could be the case that Troyon was experimenting with the motif of boy and geese. Sold from the Ludwig Lobmeyr collection in Vienna in 1917 was a startlingly similar composition.⁷ Horizontal rather than vertical, set in a field rather than on a road, and seemingly more sketchily painted and smaller than the Clark's panel, the Lobmeyr painting nonetheless features the same boy and many of the same geese. In this painting, probably also from the early 1850s, Troyon was already practicing what he called *retourner son veau* (turning his calf around), that is, making four or five paintings from a single animal study.⁸ Enriching the genesis of both the Clark and Lobmeyr pictures is the reminiscence of Adolphe Charroppin, who confided to Philippe Burty: "Year after year I went with Troyon to Barbizon. On rainy days, when we were unable to sketch in the forest, we visited the farms where the watchers of cows and the tenders of geese posed as our models."⁹ Significantly, Charroppin used the masculine form, *gardeurs d'oies*, for the tenders of geese, so perhaps the Clark's gooseherd lived in Barbizon. FEW

PROVENANCE Viscount de Saint Pierre, Paris (until 1872, his sale, Drouot, Paris, 22 Jan. 1872, no. 14, as *Jeune garçon conduisant un troupeau d'oies*, sold to Pillet-Will); Count Frédéric Alexis Louis Pillet-Will, Paris (1872–d. 1911); Maurice or Frédéric Pillet-Will, his son, by descent (1911–19); [Galerie J. Allard, Paris, sold to Knoedler, 1919]; [Knoedler, Paris, sold to Clark, 31 Oct. 1919]; Robert Sterling Clark (1919–55); Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 1955.

EXHIBITIONS Williamstown 1956a, no. 134, pl. 51.

REFERENCES Soullié 1900b, p. 72, as *Jeune garçon conduisant un troupeau d'oies*.

TECHNICAL REPORT The support is a commercially prepared laminate wood panel, with a light-colored, unidentified hardwood face (0.2 cm thick) glued to a piece of mahogany (0.5 cm thick). The original cradle was removed in 1981 as it had caused splits through both wood layers. The back is coated with varnish, and in 2010, the reverse was coated, in addition, with paraffin wax. The more obvious splits in

the wood are visible along the lower edge and in a line from the top center edge running 24.1 cm down into the image. There are also internal splits, especially on the left half of the panel, which seem to be in the face veneer alone. The panel has a complex warp, with the upper right corner lifting forward. The paint layer shows drying traction cracks in the green, stress cracks parallel to the panel splits, and fine aperture age cracks throughout. There is solvent abrasion to some thin dark passages and to the tree foliage where it overlaps the sky. The old varnish was reduced during the 1981 cleaning, leaving large and small expanses of old natural resin varnish remaining over much of the surface. The larger center split was inpainted during the last treatment.

There is no ground layer detectable, although there may be an oil or resin layer between the panel and the paint layer. The wood grain is visible throughout the image as a warm tan color. No underdrawing was detected, though some changes in the upper right tree trunk positions, now covered by sky color, were seen using infrared reflectography. There may be a thin transparent brown paint sketch below the final colors. The paint is primarily a variable thickness paste consistency, with some dark glazes. Moderate levels of impastos were used to create the feathers of the geese. A sgraffito line drawn through the wet sky paint outlined some of the tree trunks, and leaves at the edges of tree foliage were painted after the sky paint had set.

1. Munich 1996, p. 473; Lanoë and Brice 1901, p. 152.
2. Dax 1866, p. 168.
3. Miquel 1975, vol. 2, p. 324; Dumesnil 1888, pp. 34, 184: "Première composition où l'on voit des animaux."
4. Dax 1866, p. 168: "interpréter ce que l'on sent." The timing of this anecdote has been disputed. When Pierre Dax reported it in 1866, as relayed to him by Camille Roqueplan's brother Nestor, he did not specify the year of the meeting. Miquel 1975, vol. 2, pl. 322, places it in 1831 or 1832, rejecting Jean-François Gigoux's date of 1837 (Gigoux 1885, p. 272). The exact date is not important; rather, Troyon's meeting Roqueplan precipitated a change in his art.
5. Lanoë and Brice 1901, p. 153: "son atelier devient une véritable fabrique de tableaux; il pond des tableaux comme une poule des œufs."
6. Soullié lists only a handful of pictures with geese, and some of them have sale dates in the early 1850s. A large example in the Musée du Louvre, Paris, *Pasture with a Goose Girl*, is, extraordinarily for Troyon, dated to 1854. See Soullié 1900b, pp. 23, 39, and 42, and Musée du Louvre 1979–86, vol. 4, p. 243.
7. Soullié 1900b, p. 14, as *Paysan conduisant un troupeau d'oies*, wood, 24 x 31 cm, Troyon sale 1866, no. 122; sale, Galerie Gsell, Vienna, 1872; Ludwig Lobmeyr sale, Wawra, Vienna, 22 Oct. 1917, no. 77, ill.; current location unknown.
8. Lanoë and Brice 1901, p. 153.
9. Burty in Soullié 1900b, p. viii; translation from New York 1895b, p. 8.