

JOHNNY VAN HAEFTEN

OLD MASTER PAINTINGS

CS0471

CLAUDE GELLÉE, CALLED CLAUDE LORRAIN

(Chamagne c. 1604/05 – 1682 Rome)

The Embarkation of Saint Paula for Jerusalem

Inscribed, lower centre: *NOBMA. ROMANA ST*

PAVOLA IM- BARCHI PER GIERVSALEMME

Oil on canvas, 39¾ x 53¼ ins. (100.9 x 135.2 cm)

Framed dimensions: 50 ½ x 63 ½ ins. (128 x 161 cm)



PROVENANCE

Commissioned by Cardinal Domenico Cecchini (1589-1656), Campo Marzio, Montecitorio, Rome.

(Presumably) either John Damer, 1st Earl of Portarlington (1744-1798), Emo Park, County Leix, Ireland, or

Joseph Damer, 1st Earl of Dorchester (d. 1798), Milton Abbey, and by inheritance to

Henry Dawson-Damer, 3rd Earl of Portarlington (1822-1889), Emo Park

William Henry Smith, M.P. (1825-1891), or his son, William Frederick Danvers Smith (1868-1928), 2nd Viscount Hambleden, Hambleden Manor, Buckinghamshire

And by descent in the family until 2013

Anonymous sale, Christie's, London, 3 December 2013, lot 21

Private collection, New York, until the present day

EXHIBITED

London, Royal Academy, *Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters, Winter Exhibition*, 1882, no. 149, as Claude, *The Pilgrimage of St. Paula* (lent by The Earl of Portarlington).

LITERATURE

Mme. M. Pattison, *Claude Lorrain. Sa vie et ses oeuvres*, Paris, 1884, p. 233 (unnumbered).

M. Röthlisberger, *Claude Lorrain. The Paintings*, London, 1961 and New York, 1979, vol. I, pp. 297-9, under no. LV120, erroneously as a version after the picture in the Musée des Vosges in Épinal, partly splitting the picture across two entries, no. 2 and 3.

M. Kitson, *Claude Lorrain, Liber Veritatis*, London, 1978, pp. 128, no. 120.

M. Wood, John Fowler, *Prince of Decorators*, London, 2007, p. 158.

ENGRAVED

Richard Earlom [after the drawing] by Claude Gellée, *Coast scene with the Embarkation of Saint Paula*, etching and mezzotint, in *Liber Veritatis; or a Collection of Prints after the Original Designs of Claude Lorrain; in the Collection of His Grace the Duke of Devonshire* 2 vols., London, 1777, no. 120; reprinted in Rome, 1815.

Claude Gellée, known as Claude Lorrain, or simply Claude, rose from humble beginnings to become one of the greatest landscape painters of the seventeenth century. Born around 1604/05 in the independent Duchy of Lorraine, he was orphaned at an early age. Around 1617, he travelled to Rome, and shortly afterwards to Naples, where he studied for two years with the German-born landscape painter Goffredo Wals (c. 1595 – c. 1638). Returning to Rome, he completed his training in the studio of the landscapist and architectural specialist Agostino Tassi (c. 1580-1644). Claude went back to Lorraine in 1625 only to return two years later to Rome, where he spent the rest of his life. Contemporary accounts describe him as a quiet, good-natured, disciplined and hard-working man: he apparently lived rather simply and never married, but shared his life with a close circle of family and friends.

From the outset Claude specialised in landscape. His earliest dated painting of 1629 (*Landscape with Cattle and Peasants*; Philadelphia Museum of Art) shows that the essential features of his style and technique were already well established. His biographer Joachim von Sandrart, who knew him well at this time, tells us that Claude was in the habit of making regular excursions into the countryside around Rome in the early mornings and evenings in order to record the effects of the rising and setting sun. In the next few years Claude began to meet with success. The French ambassador in Rome was an early patron, and by the mid-1630s, his work was attracting the attention of wealthy Roman patricians and cardinals. When prestigious commissions from Pope Urban VIII and King Philip IV of Spain came his way, his reputation was secured. “From this moment on”, according to Baldinucci, “access to his paintings was blocked for anyone who was not a great prince or a great clergyman, or who could not gain access with the aid of such a person, at a very high price or with diligence and great patience”.ⁱ

Beginning around 1635, apparently in order to distinguish between his own work and forgeries, Claude took to recording his paintings in a bound book that he called his *Liber Veritatis* (book of truth). The artist made free-hand copies of his paintings, often inscribed on the verso with the name of the patron for whom the painting was destined and, in later years, with the date. He maintained this book until his death in 1682, when it was bequeathed to his adopted daughter Agnese. Today, the book is preserved in the British Museum.

Claude’s idealised vision of nature, with its emphasis on beauty, harmony and order, came to be especially revered in England in the eighteenth century. A great many of his paintings were acquired by English aristocrats on their Grand Tours and brought back to Britain to grace the walls of grand country houses, such as Holkham Hall, in Norfolk, where Thomas Coke, Earl of Leicester (1697-1759), created a cabinet room devoted exclusively to landscape paintings. Indeed, such was the enthusiasm for Claude’s work that by 1830, some two thirds of his paintings and drawings were in British collections, although many of these have since been dispersed abroad. Thanks to the abundance of Claude’s art in Britain that it exerted a powerful influence not only on native landscape artists from the mid-eighteenth century to Turner and beyond, but also on the theory and practice of English landscape gardening.

The Embarkation of Saint Paula was painted in Rome in 1650. The composition is recorded by Claude in his *Liber Veritatis* (Fig. 1) in a pen and wash drawing, signed on the verso “*Claudio. i.v.f.*”, numbered 120, and inscribed “*Cardinale/csequin*”. The latter refers to Domenico Cecchini (1589-1656), who commissioned the work. A member of a not especially affluent

Roman patrician family, Cecchini earned a doctorate from the University of Perugia, and made a career in the papal court, rising in the ranks through several pontificates. He was made Cardinal by the newly elected Pope Innocent X Pamphilj in 1644. Cecchini received lavish endowments and served as Datary to His Holiness (the pope's personal banker), but fell from grace in 1649 after a confrontation with the powerful Donna Olympia Maidalchini, the sister-in-law and principal advisor of the pope, and mother of the pope's nephew Prince Camillo Pamphilj. Cecchini participated in the conclave of 1655, which elected Pope Alexander VII, but died suddenly of apoplexy on 1 May 1656 in his palace in the Campo Marzio, Montecitorio. He is buried in the church of S. Maria in Trastevere, Rome. The present painting is the only work by Claude owned by Cecchini, who is not otherwise noted as a collector of art.



Fig. 1. Claude Lorraine, *Coast Scene with the Embarkation of St. Paula*, 1650. Pen and brown ink, with brown wash, on blue paper, 197 x 257 mm, from *The Liber Veritatis*. British Museum, London, Inv. No. 1957,1214.126 (LV120).

Cecchini's introduction to Claude most probably came through Camillo Pamphilj, who between 1646 and 1650 was the artist's most assiduous patron. In these years, Camillo commissioned five major canvases from Claude, and it is indeed likely that Cecchini may well have seen some of the paintings when they were still in the artist's studioⁱⁱ. Around 1647/48, Claude was working on a pair of very grand, large-scale paintings on the theme of marriage, depicting a *Landscape with the Marriage of Issac and Rebekah*, and *The Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* (Fig. 2) (both, National Gallery, London, 1648), a work that bears strong similarities to the present *Embarkation of Saint Paula*. In the event, Camillo never took possession of the two paintings: they were completed and sold to another patron. It nevertheless seems highly probable that Cecchini saw *The Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* in Claude's studio and requested something comparable, albeit less grand and on a smaller scale.



Fig. 2. Claude Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba*, 1648.

Signed, dated and inscribed, oil on canvas, 149.1 x 196.7 cm.

National Gallery, London, Inv. No. NG14.

The subject of Cecchini's painting, based on an episode in the life of the ancient Roman saint, Saint Paula of Rome (347-404), was rarely depicted in 17th-century art. The story of the saint is told by Saint Jerome (347-420 AD) in his letters (CVIII), and partially cited in the popular *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine (c. 1230-98), a collection of hagiographies that would have been readily available to Claude. After the sudden death of her husband and that of her eldest daughter, Paula, a Roman matron of noble birth, underwent a dramatic religious conversion. Renouncing all worldly wealth and pleasure, she adopted a life of poverty, charity and prayer. In 382, she met Saint Jerome when he visited Rome and, under his influence, she decided to leave the bustle and distractions of the Eternal City. She departed for the Holy Land in 385.

Claude sets the scene in a Mediterranean seaport, notionally that of Ostia. The sun is rising over a bay, suffusing the sky with a radiant glow and casting its rays across a broad expanse of rippling sea. A round tower and the masts of sailing vessels are silhouetted against the sky. Hazy blue mountains appear in the left background. The central vista is framed on the left by massive, fluted columns and the entablature of a semi-ruined antique building, and on the right by a stand of trees rising from a rocky shoreline. Behind the portico on the left, a large ship is being prepared for a sea voyage: the crew is busy in the rigging, hoisting the sails. Atop the colonnade, a small figure, his arms leaning on the parapet, observes the scene below. Scattered across the ground in the immediate foreground are seashells and fragments of broken masonry. The backlit figures and saturated colours - the intense blue in the figures'

clothing is due to the use of ultramarine, a precious pigment made from lapis lazuli - focus our attention on the unfolding story of Saint Paula's departure for the Holy Land.

With great fidelity to the ancient accounts, Claude captures the poignant moment when Paula takes her leave from her grieving family: "she went down to the port, and her brother and close relatives and friends, and, more important than these, her children, followed her and tried to dissuade their most loving mother [from leaving]"ⁱⁱⁱ. Paula appears on the quay in the centre foreground, dressed simply in brown and holding a rosary. Her eldest daughter Eustochium, her only companion on the journey, is by her side, and just behind are three figures: a man, with upraised hands, who could be her brother, and an elegantly dressed woman, perhaps Paula's fourth daughter, Rufina, "who was about to be married, [and] held back her tears and begged her mother to wait for her wedding"^{iv}. With her back to the viewer, the young woman surveys the distant horizon, shielding her eyes from the brilliance of the sun. To her left is another young woman, possibly Paula's other daughter, Paulina, who inherited her mother's property. In the left foreground, close to the viewer, are two seated figures: a pensive man who gazes out to sea, and a young woman, with a young child "with outstretched, pleading hands"^v, who is recognisable as Paula's only son, Toxocius. The gesture of young Toxocius is mimicked by a slightly older boy to his left, who with outstretched hand is receiving alms from a woman. This anecdotal motif is no doubt intended as foreshadowing Paula's activities in the Holy Land, where she devoted her life to looking after the poor.

Paula sailed first to Cyprus, and then to Syria and Jerusalem, before settling in Bethlehem in 386. There, she lived in a poor house, and built a hospital, three convents for woman and a monastery for Saint Jerome and his monks. She died in Bethlehem, aged 56, on 26 January 404, the date on which her feast day is celebrated.

Although the story of Saint Paula was rarely depicted in 17th-century European art, it seems to have had a particular resonance for Claude. Indeed, he made it the subject of several of his landscapes, beginning with a large canvas in vertical format (Fig. no. 3) that formed part of a set of four landscapes with religious subjects, executed in 1639-40, for King Philip IV of Spain for his new palace of Buen Retiro on the outskirts of Madrid, now in the Museo del Prado, Madrid. The Buen Retiro *Embarkation of Saint Paula* marked a new phase in Claude's development, introducing a complex construction of space, and a monumentality, solemnity and grandeur previously unexplored in his work. Around 1642, Claude took up the subject again in a smaller, simplified version of the Buen Retiro composition that later belonged to the Duke of Wellington^{vi}.

In the present painting, undertaken almost a decade later, Claude reconfigured and reemployed figures and architectural elements from both of the earlier *Saint Paula* paintings, but also from the *Queen of Sheba* seaport and several other earlier seaport and harbour scenes. The figure group of Paula and her daughter Eustochium, as well as several other figures, are repeated almost precisely, but in reverse from the Buen Retiro painting. The general disposition of the scene resembles that of a much earlier painting of a coastal view^{vii} from around 1633 or 1634, with a colonnaded building on the left, a grove of trees on the right and an open coast view in the centre. The portico with the ships on the left is first found in the Buen Retiro painting, then adapted with slight variations for the Wellington picture.

Here, the broad sweep of the seaport is closest to the *Queen of Sheba* port scene of two years earlier.



Fig. 3. Claude Lorrain, *The Embarkation of Saint Paula*,
c. 1639. Oil on canvas, 211 x 145 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Inv. No. P002254.

Although the early provenance of this painting is well known, the next few chapters in its history are undocumented. Like so many of Claude's paintings, it made its way to England, where it appeared in public in 1882, when it was lent by Henry, 3rd Earl of Portarlington (1822-1889) to an exhibition at the Royal Academy, in London. However, it most probably came to Britain at a much earlier date. Judging from the pattern and style of the fine carved and gilded English frame, which must have been made for it around 1725-35, the painting probably arrived here in the first half of the eighteenth century. Precisely how it came to be in the possession of the 3rd Earl of Portarlington is not entirely clear largely because the formation of his collection is far from straight forward. Nevertheless, several possibilities present themselves: not only did the third Earl inherit the house and collections at Emo Park, in County Leix, Ireland, from his grandfather, John Damer, 1st Earl of Portarlington (1744-1798), but he was also bequeathed Milton Abbey and the considerable estates in Dorset belonging to his great grandfather Joseph Damer, 1st Earl of Dorchester (d. 1798). Both earls had made the Grand Tour and been painted in Rome by Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) and furthermore both were capable of making expensive purchases. The situation is further complicated by the effective fusion of the two Earls' collections following the sale of Milton Abbey in 1852 to Baron Hambro. It is also not clear whether the Claude was sold by the 3rd Earl between 1882 and his death in 1889, or by his first cousin Lionel Dawson-Damer, 4th Earl

of Portarlington, or indeed whether it was sold directly to William Henry Smith, M.P. (1825-1891), or to his son William Frederick Danvers Smith (1868-1928), who on his mother's death in 1913 succeeded as the 2nd Viscount Hambleden. In any event, the picture remained in the Smith collection at Hambleden Manor for several generations until 2013, when it reappeared in a sale at Christie's in London.

The reemergence of the Hambleden Claude, a masterpiece of Claude's maturity, was hailed at that time as a major rediscovery. Although not entirely unrecorded, the picture had been inaccessible to modern scholars, even in photographic reproduction, and had not been seen in public since the Royal Academy exhibition in 1882. Over time, claims of authenticity had been advanced for various copies of the composition, and a badly damaged version in the Musée des Vosges, in Épinal^{viii}, which had once belonged to the Prince de Conti, came to be generally accepted as authentic. However, the obvious superiority in quality of the Hambleden Claude almost immediately dispelled this claim. Writing in 2013, Marcel Röthlisberger, author of the *catalogue raisonné* of the artist's paintings, declared the picture to be a "great Claude" and "a truly sensational discovery, all the more so as the picture is in such wonderful condition, luminous, visible down to every detail, complete with an elaborate figure scene, the brilliant sun, rippling waves, a Roman temple, trees and rocks"^{ix}. The painting in Épinal has since been downgraded to "School of Claude".

Besides the absolute mastery of execution evident throughout the painting, technical examinations of the Hambleden painting in 2013^x revealed further evidence that it is Claude's unique autograph version of the composition. The painting was executed on a buff-coloured ground on a herring-bone weave canvas typical of the artist's authentic works. Infrared reflectography also revealed evidence of extensive *pentimenti* beneath the final layer of paint, indicating that Claude was still working out some of the details of the composition here. The alterations include changes in the position of the sun, the lowering of the classical entablature on the left, and the reduction in size of the round tower in the distance.

BIOGRAPHY

Claude Gellée - or Claude Lorrain as he is better known - was born in the small village of Chamagne, then in the independent Duchy of Lorraine. His biographers, Joachim von Sandrart (1606-1688)^{xi}, and Filippa Baldinucci (1625-1697), knew him personally in Rome, but give differing accounts of his early life and artistic education. His date of birth may have been as early as 1600, but it is generally accepted that he was born around 1604/05. One of five sons born to Jean Gellée and Anne Padoze, who were of peasant stock, he was orphaned at an early age. According to Sandrart, he was first apprenticed to a pastry baker, while Baldinucci, on the other hand, reports that he initially received instruction in drawing from an older brother who was a printmaker in Freiberg. Around 1613, he travelled to Rome and shortly afterwards to Naples, where he studied for two years with the German-born landscape painter Goffredo Wals (c. 1595 – c. 1638). He returned to Rome, and from 1622 to 1625, worked as a studio assistant to the Italian landscapist and painter of illusionistic architectural decorations Agostino Tassi (c. 1580-1644). Baldinucci tells us that in 1625 Claude went back to Lorraine to work with Claude Déruet (c. 1588-1660), only to return to the Eternal City in 1626/27, where he spent the rest of his long life. In the spring of 1627, he is recorded as living in via Margutta in the foreign artists' quarter of the city.

His first dated painting (*Landscape with Cattle and Peasants*, Philadelphia Museum of Art) is from 1629. In 1633, he became a member of the Accademia di San Luca in Rome. In the same year, Gian Domenico Desiderii entered his household as a servant: he is mentioned in 1638 as the assistant of Claude. In the 1630s, Claude's reputation grew steadily and he began to receive commissions from major clients. By the mid-to-late 1630s, his patrons included Cardinal Bentivoglio, Pope Urban VIII, and other ecclesiastical and aristocratic figures. In 1634/35, Claude was one of the painters, together with Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) and a group of Roman artists, who were commissioned to paint a series of landscapes for Phillip IV's new palace at Buen Retiro near Madrid.

In 1643, Claude became a member of the exclusive *Congregazione dei Virtuosi*, a papal institution for the cultivation of the fine arts. In 1650, he took up residence in a house in the nearby Via Paolina (today Via del Babuino) in which he lived until his death. Claude never married, but in 1658, he adopted a five-year-old girl, Agnese, who lived in his house until his death: she may have been his natural daughter by a servant of the same name. In 1658, Gian Domenico Desiderii, left the household, apparently following a dispute. In 1662, his nephew Jean Gellée joined the artist in his house in Via Paolina, and about 1680, another nephew, Joseph, also moved in. In 1663, Claude, who suffered badly from gout, became seriously ill and made his last will, but he nevertheless recovered and lived for nearly another twenty years. He died on 23 November 1682 and was buried in his parish church of Trinità dei Monti. Shortly after his death, an inventory of his belongings was drawn up. The latter mentions the *Liber Veritatis*, which he bequeathed to Angese in his will. In 1840, his mortal remains were transferred to the French national church, San Luigi dei Francesi.

ⁱ Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua*, 5 vols, Florence, 1845-47, p. 91.

ⁱⁱ Suggested by Marcel Röthlisberger in correspondence with Christie's in 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend*, compiled around 1259-1266.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Claude Lorrain, *Seaport with the Embarkation of Saint Paula*, 1642. The Duke of Wellington, Stratfield Saye, Hampshire.

^{vii} M. Röthlisberger, *Claude Lorrain. The Paintings*, London, 1961 and New York, 1979, no. LV 2.

^{viii} School of Claude Lorrain, *The Embarkation of Saint Paula from Ostia*, oil on canvas, 106 x 150.5 cm, Musée départemental d'Art Ancien et Contemporain, Épinal, inv. No. 4720; MR 1749: D.1956.1.1.

^{ix} Correspondence with Christie's, 19 September 2013.

^x Examination report carried out by Simon Howell of RMS Shepherd Associates, 24 September 2013.

^{xi} Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie*, 1675.