



**Pour citer cet article :**

Richard Quaintance,  
" Unnamed Celebrities in Eighteenth-Century Gardens: Jacques Rigaud's Topographical Prints ",  
Cycnos, Volume 11 n°1,  
mis en ligne le 17 juin 2008.  
URL : <http://revel.unice.fr/cycnos/index.html?id=1370>

[Voir l'article en ligne](#)

---

**AVERTISSEMENT**

*Les publications du site REVEL sont protégées par les dispositions générales du Code de la propriété intellectuelle.*

**Conditions d'utilisation - respect du droit d'auteur et de la propriété intellectuelle**

*L'accès aux références bibliographiques et au texte intégral, aux outils de recherche ou au feuilletage de l'ensemble des revues est libre, cependant article, recension et autre contribution sont couvertes par le droit d'auteur et sont la propriété de leurs auteurs.*

*Les utilisateurs doivent toujours associer à toute unité documentaire les éléments bibliographiques permettant de l'identifier correctement et notamment toujours faire mention du nom de l'auteur, du titre de l'article, de la revue et du site Revel. Ces mentions apparaissent sur la page de garde des documents sauvegardés sur les postes des utilisateurs ou imprimés par leur soin.*

*L'université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis est l'éditeur du portail REVEL@Nice et à ce titre détient la propriété intellectuelle et les droits d'exploitation du site.*

*L'exploitation du site à des fins commerciales ou publicitaires est interdite ainsi que toute diffusion massive du contenu ou modification des données sans l'accord des auteurs et de l'équipe Revel.*

## Unnamed Celebrities in Eighteenth-Century Gardens: Jacques Rigaud's Topographical Prints

Richard Quaintance

Rutgers University

In the first half of the 18th century Jacques Rigaud turned his military-draughtsman's eye, and his skills with genre scenes, to a lucrative career as leading engraver of the chateaux and gardens of the court of Louis XV. Although Paris bouquinistes beside the Seine still sell reproductions of his teeming, wideangle views of its banks, some of the most interesting traits of Rigaud's work remain quite unacknowledged. In the past century, the two French studies of the career<sup>1</sup> ignore his importance for British topography, and the ways his work in England during 1733-34 altered both his own style and the vistas of British engravers immediately after him. To inspect his life's work more comprehensively brings to light its particular professionalism, including Rigaud's businesslike stimulation of a buying public susceptible to hints, through his staffages, of humor, narrative, and a playful snobbism.

For, beyond his verifiable — and gratifying — topographical accuracy, this craftsman from Marseilles knew how to bring his public with him “sur les lieux.” Through the crowds in his silvery souvenir vistas, he could make available to his middleclass clientele a sense of contact with the power and style of the palaces or country houses just then opening to an enhanced tourism industry. While Rigaud's captions for his engraved vistas may tell us more than we care to know about the height of any fountain-jet at Versailles, they never mention an actual historical figure to be glimpsed among the garden's pictured strollers. Yet along with the artist himself at work (as the captions brag) “sur les lieux” we can spot, as further authentication of his truthfulness, and as teaser to his purchasers, a score of uncited real “celebrities.” Among these are the French and English proprietors of six outstanding sites, the landscape-designer Charles Bridgeman who brought Rigaud to England, the castrato Senesino, and the poet Pope. To my knowledge two of these identifications had been guessed at but none substantiated in scholarly terms before George B. Clarke's 1987 republication of the Stowe engravings in facsimile, with “descriptive notes to each view.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Ginoux, “Jacques Rigaud, dessinateur et graveur marseillais, improprement prénommé Jean ou Jean-Baptiste (1681-1754),” *Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts des Départements* (Session 22) (Paris: Plon, 1898), pp. 726-40 (also published, same year and publisher, as a 16-page monograph); and Pierre Gusman, “Jacques Rigaud, Peintre-Graveur (1681-1754)/ Fonds de la Chalcographie du Louvre,” *Byblis*, I (1922), pp. 15-18. Rigaud's illumination of English landscaping c. 1733 is saluted by Peter Willis, “Jacques Rigaud's Drawings of Stowe in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *ECS* 6 (1972-73), 83-98, augmented and exhaustively illustrated in his *Charles Bridgeman and the English Landscape Garden* (London: A. Zwemmer Ltd., 1977); and by Jacques Carré, “Through French Eyes: Rigaud's Drawings of Chiswick,” *Journal of Garden History*, 2 (1982), pp. 133-42.

A scholarly listing of all Rigaud's drawings (at least 35 accounted for as recently as 1976), the various states of his prints, the piracies and imitations they have sustained, his collaborators and his studios on the rue St. Jacques, must await another chercheur. But to help put what follows in perspective for someone unfamiliar with his work, Jacques drew and engraved, quite certainly within the dozen years bracketing his English sojourn, at least 72 views of royal French chateaux and their gardens or surrounding terrain; another 26 such views markedly inferior in composition and treatment of both buildings and persons were executed by “J-B Rigaud,” usually (without justification) understood to be Jacques' nephew, and to be named “Jean-Baptiste.” Complicating matters: responsibilities for several jobs were shared; hence Jacques did the second of two views of St. Germain-en-Laye, the last two of Sceaux's six. The subjects of another hundred or so professedly “Rigaud” engravings will be partly hinted in what follows but may be found in standard authorities like E. Bénézit, Thieme-Becker, and Henri Cohen.

<sup>2</sup> *Stowe Gardens in Buckinghamshire Laid out by Mr Bridgeman . Fifteen Perspective Views Drawn on the Spot by Mons. Rigaud* (London: BW Publications Ltd, 1987). Other thanks are coming, but I'm happy that my first acknowledgement should be to George Clarke's rich and steady correspondence these ten years.

Unlike the portraitist in oils Hyacinthe Rigaud (older by a generation, and unrelated) with whom even historians confuse him, Jacques lacked skill in facial likenesses. Thus neither his own claim nor any conjectural identification scribbled on one of his engravings,<sup>3</sup> by some alert contemporary like Horace Walpole, confirms the operation of this hide-and-seek game of celebrity-consciousness which Rigaud played with his purchasers. The evidence for the game is varied in type, it is cumulative, and it convinces me. But before unfolding that evidence, across his most productive decades (1720-40), it's best to outline those dimensions of his work that make such a tacit tickling of his public likely. I propose first to try to settle the physical basis on which 18th-century buyers commonly experienced his works; then, to exemplify a career-long interest in depicting through his staffage what I shall call a "momentariness"; thirdly, to spy a narrative thread within some prints, or through a series of prints; and then, identify some mischievous touches of humor, including satire of the conditions of that very tourism on which his career flourished. After which we'll spot some famous people in famous places over the shoulder of this paparazzo of the ancien Régime.

Figure 1 represents perhaps the central tenth of Rigaud's engraved "Veue du Chateau de Meudon et du Vilage. Prise de la hauteur oposée du Coté d'Issy" (1733). The distant, sweeping view of the chateau itself is just off the upper left corner of my detail. To show us that, and the long promenade to Meudon's observation-point for brilliant views of Paris and the Seine (which another Meudon view displays), Rigaud has to pull far back across this valley of orchards and farm-buildings. The vista might be dull, and we dozing over it like those women in the wagon... but wait! What is happening just beyond the sketching draughtsman's head? A half-dozen militiamen gawk and point at a man and woman in the woods below. Are they fighting, or about to embrace? We'll never know, even with a magnifying glass, for their figures are no higher than 1/4 inch or 0.63 cm. The vedutas of a Piranesi might be mounted on a wall to admire, but the minuscule detail which Rigaud wrought into his engravings must mean he anticipated they would be peered at, pored over, passed around, and "consumed" far more likely in albums or folders than hung in frames which simply distance his handiwork to a blur.

Peering at them, one cannot long assume that staffage in an engraving by Jacques Rigaud merely provides either scale to distant vistas, or distraction, "busyness," in a foreground left by circumstances (as in Figure 1) of low architectural interest. A quality which distinguishes his views from those of his predecessors Sebastien Leclerc, Louis de Châtillon, the Perelles, Israel Silvestre or his late contemporaries Piranesi and Belloto, is the care with which, against his backgrounds of architecture to be presumed timeless, Rigaud scatters a foreground of people (and dogs!) in motion that seems barely arrested. The gesture a woman makes to her escort as he mounts the steps of Stowe's Pyramid — just dedicated as memorial to its designer Vanbrugh — says, as clearly as if she'd spoken, "Oh, you're going inside? I'll await you here."<sup>4</sup> A solitary visitor stands nearby beneath Lord Cobham's recently engraved inscription for his dead architect and friend. He's rapt in thought, as if another gnomon marking man's mortality, for his time-altering shadow stretches behind him halfway across the Pyramid's base (in Rigaud's drawing, not in his print). Motion, and stasis: this kind of contrast in Rigaud's crowds — a bit more subtle than his common gesticulators and pointers, who always

---

<sup>3</sup> At least in 11 collections I've visited: Avery, BL, BN, Calcographie du Louvre, Dumbarton Oaks, Library Company of Philadelphia, National Gallery, NYPL, Morgan, Princeton, Yale. Note that at least one of Rigaud's captions, for his engraving of the Bassin de Neptune at Versailles, runs to over 200 words.

<sup>4</sup> Plate No. 4 in the Stowe suite of 15 views drawn later that same year his "Meudon" was published, 1733. Henceforth my text designates illustrations of the drawings for those engravings by the numbers of their plates in Willis (1977); this is Plate 133, also appearing in Willis (1972) as Figure 6. See Willis or Clarke for essential information on the nine-year lag between Rigaud's drawing and Sarah Bridgeman's publication of *Stowe Gardens*, on Charles Bridgeman's commissioning of this work, and on Bernard Baron's participation as engraver of five of the 15.

seem to have just discovered a fresh spectacle — makes for a candid-camera sense that his engravings just might disclose some private action in these public places.

The little which his work tells us about Rigaud's life before he reached Paris in 1720 suggests that this interest in letting the body-language of his staffage express "momentariness" was part of his drafting skills from the start. By the time his career took off he had had occasion to observe two, probably three major Mediterranean ports fighting for their very lives, and to record these struggles with a professional eye. The earliest piece of his we have, an inked drawing 43 x 126 cm. on two sheets of glued paper, is his "Veüe de Toulon, et du Bombardement" by the forces of the Duke of Savoy and Prince Eugene in August, 1707. Signed "Jacques Rigaud," thus one of only two pieces from which the artist's first name is ascertainable,<sup>5</sup> this is dedicated to Louis XIV's "Intendant" in Languedoc in hope of assignment as military draughtsman. Indeed, the detail with which the 26-year-old depicts and identifies 39 numbered features of the month-long siege would seem to support that hope. But when we note, beyond his placement of gunboats and batteries, the tracing of shells' trajectories and even the puffs of cannonsmoke, that this would-be apprentice fills his center foreground with swarming cavalry and infantry marching from the distant city *toward* those batteries, the military draughtsman has revealed aspiration to the status of history painter. Without his saying so in his manuscript dedication it seems most likely that Rigaud represents here the decisive moment of the siege, one of the six counterattacks ordered by Marshal Tessé for August 15, which convinced the ground forces to over-rule their British naval allies and withdraw from Toulon in a week, and from France, at a loss of a fifth of their strength.

Seven years later another episode of the War of the Spanish Succession, really a tragic postlude to it, was the desperate Catalan resistance to the siege of Barcelona by James Stuart, Duke of Berwick, the year after the Peace of Utrecht. This time we'd expect Rigaud's sympathies to lie with the Bourbon besiegers. If he did not actually observe this action, the six engravings he published in 1732 as based on "un des sieges de Barcelone, et [qui representent] les Veues de cette place" with their didactic captions on its successive stages, borrow a firsthand style of detail as they zoom us from the coastal range a safe distance behind the lines, into the very streets of the fallen city. Rigaud's Barcelona skyline passes for authentic in a recent history,<sup>6</sup> but what power or sensitivity commissioned him to show, as thoroughly as he did, the human as well as architectural casualties of this event, on both sides? Especially touching is the fourth view, where officers on a mound safely out of range observe their troops attacking two breaches in the city's walls, as their shells blow defenders' bodies skyward over one of the bastions; in a trench below the officers' feet a grinning infantryman waves a plucked chicken at his mates. But the suite does not close with "L'assaut donné au Corps de la Place" which illustrated that recent historical account of Barcelona. His final siege piece might excite the envy of a photo-journalist: "La Place Laissée au pillage" shows not only the usual round-up of prisoners, and looting in a major square, but a soldier smiles at the pleas of a Franciscan, two men settle with swords which will have a shrieking girl, and in a cinematic impression, near her a man hustles a struggling woman toward a doorway beyond which we glimpse a third woman raped. If the other five siege views had some potential usefulness for training army engineers, each has details in the staffage it's hard to imagine contributing to military discipline.

---

<sup>5</sup> Now at the Musée du Vieux Toulon; see Ginoux. The other signed work, interestingly for its hints of his self-regard, is his engraved "Representation de la Joûte qui s'est Faite sur la Rivière de Seine, le Jour de la Feste . . ." his biggest crowd scene of all, royally commissioned for the *Description des Festes Données par la Ville de Paris, à l'occasion du Mariage de Madame Louise-Elizabeth de France, et de Dom Philippe . . .* [29 and 30 August 1739] (Paris: P. G. Le Mercier, 1740), p. 1. This latter is perhaps best consulted at the Pierpont Morgan Library.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Hughes, *Barcelona* (New York: Knopf, 1992), p. 182.

The third city Rigaud witnessed threatened with extinction was his native Marseilles, and from an enemy, as he shows us, yet more terrifyingly capricious than bombardment: Europe's last major episode of bubonic plague struck it in the summer of 1720, with a lesser recurrence two years later. How Rigaud's two engravings<sup>7</sup> might indeed launch his Paris years becomes clear enough when we remember the public demand for pirated versions of those,<sup>8</sup> the paintings of parallel views of Marseilles by Michel Serre and Paulin Guérin, the engraving which Thomassin made (1727) after Jean-Baptiste de Troy's painting of the bold Chevalier de Roze near la Tourette, and how a German engraving, and even Defoe's pseudo-history of London's plague of 1666, allegorized the ordeal. Rigaud's prints capture the moment with such grim vignettes as a Franciscan administering last rites to a naked woman, or the traditional babe suckling a dying mother; a pirated version improves on these by adding a second corpse lowered from an upper window, and angels in the gloomy sky, armed with flagellant rods. Most importantly for my present purpose, Rigaud (in common with Serre and the pirates) prominently displays two actual historical persons about the risky work which made them Marseilles' genuine heroes of that moment.

Figure 2, a detail of the lower right tenth of Rigaud's engraving of Marseilles "Cours", shows (his face lifted to catch the light beneath the canopy of an improvised hospice) "un Prelat, Mgr. [Henri-François-Xavier] de Belzunce sans doute, entouré de prêtres, et d'infortunés." To the left of some Moorish galley-slaves swinging corpses upon a wagon beyond them, a hat-doffing soldier "reçoit des ordres d'un personnage à cheval, probablement le chevalier [Nicolas] Roze."<sup>9</sup> Both men staked their lives and wealth far beyond their assigned responsibilities. Belzunce took on enough of the attributes of St. Carlo Borromeo to merit mention in Pope's *Essay on Man* IV, 107-8. Roze, having earlier witnessed how North Africans dealt with the plague, volunteered to command the men who had been offered their freedom for burying its victims. Rigaud may show him in another cinematic stroke to the left of this detail, galloping (his back still to us) toward that upset cartload. Both men appear in the other Rigaud print and its copy by "Ingens.," again distinguishable through foregrounding

<sup>7</sup> (1) "J Rigaud inv. sculpsit.": "Vuë de l'Hostel de Ville de Marseille et d'une partie du port / Dessiné sur le lieu pendant la Peste arrivée en 1720/ à Paris chez l'Auteur rue St. Jacques" and (2) "J Rigaut inv. et sculpsit": "Vüe du Cours de Marseille / Dessiné sur le lieu pendant . . . [as above]" (both at Princeton, MMA, National Gallery, Washington, and B. N. vol. Ve17).

<sup>8</sup> (1. "Ingen") Crediting "J. R. Ingen. inv. et sculp." at bottom left, and at the right in wiry engraved script "Rigaud inu. sculp." This "Veuë de l'Hôtel de Ville de Marseille, et d'une Partie de son Port" is "Dessiné sur le Lieu pendant la peste arrivée en 1720. A Paris chez Jean, rue Jean de Beauvais, N 10." (British Museum 1871.8.12.5247). A slightly finer impression, possibly of an earlier state, same credits (B. N. Hennen t89n 7758 or #M95488, B. M. E.c.8.21, MMA 53.600.1305) is to be purchased "a Paris chez Limosin Md [i.e. "Marchand"] et Privilegié du Roy rue de Gêvre au grand Cœur." (2. "Ingen") As with Rigaud's pair of Marseilles prints, the pendant "Veuë du Cours de Marseille . . ." crediting "I. R. Ing. in. sculp." and similarly at right "J. Rigaud inue. sculp." (B. N. QB1 #M95489; B.M. E.c.8.22; MMA 53.600.1306), shows the city's major concourse better known as "la Canebière." (3. "Inconnu") An even cruder pirating of this last is "La Peste de Marseille/ Vüe du côté du Cours Dessinée sur le Lieu en 1720./ a Paris chez Basset rue St. Jacques a Ste. Genevieve" (B.N. Qb1 août 1720, #M95490). What can only be my guess is that "Ingen." alias "Ing." is not a surname but short for *ingenu*; that granted, perhaps this self-effacing parasite, no relation to Jacques, found it wise to change his shop's location, and to add at right the full surname of his source. Juxtaposition of these images can leave no doubt of their order of precedence and quality, but my main point in listing them is to show Rigaud tapping a continuing market for quasi-journalistic images of this disaster.

<sup>9</sup> Ginoux, p. 736. This view may show typical events of August 1720 when 1000 died each day, a quarter of the city's population within three weeks; see Monique Lucenet, *Les Grandes Pestes en France* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1985), pp. 215-38. On pp. 265-6 is most of "Ingens" "Veuë de l'Hotel de Ville." For the celebrities see Georges Imann, "Nicolas Roze et Monseigneur de Belsunce (La Peste de Marseille en 1720)," *Revue de Paris*, 43, tome 4 (juillet-août, 1936), 383-416; and on pictorial traditions, Raymond Crawford, *Plague and Pestilence in Literature and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1914), esp. pp. 171-5 and 204.

and deeds rather than portraiture. So probably before he even saw a chateau, this draughtsman had been drawing actualities.

Moments of arrested action, set in sequence, render narrative. Probably a dozen years before he published his six stages of a siege (and within that, three stages of a rape), Rigaud portrayed the life-cycles of the men o' war and galleys of Toulon and Marseilles, from keel-laying through launching and commissioning to warfare and death, six steps apiece. He early illustrated six Biblical scenes and, in 11 prints, *l'Astrée*. As a narrative thread lends pretext to the landscapes and seascapes of his *Livre de Paysages et Marines, Ou sont Representez les Aventures des Voyageurs*<sup>10</sup> so, through five prints of his Versailles series, file (or stop to rest!) from three to five wheeled and curtained conveyances for single visitors, each propelled by two harnessed men. With sensitivities like these to time and space, it need not surprise us to find Rigaud, as we shall, portraying the succeeding generations of the proprietors of the Tuileries and Luxembourg Gardens, Stowe, Chantilly, and perhaps Claremont.

Rigaud's self-portrayal at Meudon (Fig. 1) and nine other sites<sup>11</sup> may vouch for his Johnny-on-the-spot observation of those scenes, a gesture of professional self-advertisement. Yet one of those, "St. Cir" at the end of the Versailles "Jardin" suite, verges on self-caricature: glimpsed one way he faces directly away from us, but a second glance reveals a partial profile distorted in concentration. An impression readily dismissed if one hadn't noted other symptoms of irreverence in the work of Rigaud's peak years. "L'Abreuvoir de Marli" foregrounds at each side Coustou's paired statues of horsetamers, with a guide pointing them out to a Turkish visitor and sober mention in the caption — yet in the central middle distance live horses drink and bathe in a canal while husky drays bring a laden haywagon along it to the right: a witty conceit re-enacted frequently between humans and statues as well. In the last of 12 "Vuës des Bosquets du Jardin de Versailles," after all that display of highly controlled water, in the center foreground of "L'Arc de Triomphe" a swimming dog retrieves a gentleman's cane as another watches, his front paws on the pool's edge. In one of his otherwise most formal engravings, of a royal wedding in St. James's Chapel, Rigaud seems to satirize the very *libido speculandi* which supports his career: while the bride and her family stand in all their dignity in the distant chancel, near the left foreground a man has turned from them, screwing a spyglass to his eye in order to ogle the women above him in the gallery.<sup>12</sup> And some details eliminated from the Stowe drawings before engraving could make us wonder what else we're missing. Of the two seated men chatting in the shade, left foreground in the drawing (Willis 131) engraved as "View of the Great Bason," the one facing us has the head of a spaniel. In the "View from the Brick Temple" one man seated at left gesticulates toward another urinating into the shrubbery in plain view of the ladies (Willis 137); both are gone from the engraving.

Another touch in both drawing and engraving of Stowe's "Great Bason" treats an episode in family touring not to be found among other Rigauds: a perky girl, the only one to notice her brother is pilfering an apple from a strolling fruitseller, protests to her mother at center foreground as other children catch sight of a possible treat. The "View at the Entrance

<sup>10</sup> Twelve episodes, "c. 1720" according to NYPL catalogue and attached sales catalogue.

<sup>11</sup> All of the French sites are "royal": Anet, Amboise, Blois, Choisy, Monceaux, St.Cir, and Vincennes; in England, Hampton Court and Stowe.

<sup>12</sup> "Nuptias Ceremoniales inter Annam ..." is the royally commissioned commemoration of Princes Anne's marriage to the Prince of Orange 14 March "1733" (O. S.), published 24 October 1734 (MMA 57.614.19, and B.L.). William Kent's preparatory drawing of the wedding party (British Library), from which the engraving omits a central table, otherwise is followed carefully. But the remaining hundred-odd figures (including a full-face man under the gallery at right, possibly a portrait) seem fully within Rigaud's skills despite the "Gulielmus Kent Decoravit et Delineavit/ J. Rigaud Sculp." Perhaps Kent witnessed and drew a wedding rehearsal but Rigaud did the bulk of the drawing as well as the engraving. See Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life Art, and Times* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), I, 314-18, for the amusing story of how Rigaud won this assignment.

between the Pavillions” (Willis 132) shows Stowe’s gatekeeper jangling his keys officiously as he leads some timidly peering tourists up the steps past an august assemblage (of which more later). All is not perfect amidst these elysian fields: in Rigaud’s admirably delicate treatment of the famous cascade at St. Cloud (1730), toward the right foreground a burly major domo takes his stick in two hands to thrust women out of the way of some plainly more important visitors arriving. Our very first view of Versailles, the grand east entrance seen from between the stables, seems to contrast to the standard royal coach arriving, a lumbering basketlike “busload” of tourists or servants paralleling its path in the foreground. The disappointments of chateau-visiting as clarified by magnifying glass return us to an earlier point: on either side of “Le Bassin d’Apollon” are turnstiles blocking pedestrian approach to the chateau — that on the left roped or chained shut, on the right, attended by a woman. On so tiny a scale or larger, Rigaud loads his staffage with circumstance to be savored by a clientele apparently as concerned with the conditions of house-visiting, the sensations of *being there*, as with reminders of where the temples stood. Hence the staffage’s remarkable hint at interaction, a social dance which puts one in mind of Watteau or Lancret.

Figure 3, a detail of the left corner of “Les Promenades du... Palais des Thuilleries,” shows a male group on the platform overlooking the parterre and the Seine. In this social dance only one man has his hat on, and despite apparent youth is the object of everyone’s attention including the dog’s. (In the print he’s 1<sup>1/4</sup> inches or 2.175 cm. tall.) Among the hundred men in the print only five others are hatted. Another figure is almost as conspicuous as he, however: a woman near the lower left foreground, holding a fan, remarkable for the dark outlines of her dress and veil against a white ground, the strength of her features, and her movement toward this corner, attended by another young man. Dedicated to “son Altesse Serenissime Monseigneur le Prince de Conty,” with his crowned crest centered below the print, this work is undated, but another published “1729” with identical dedication and crest displays another property of the Prince’s: “Les Promenades du Luxembourg”<sup>13</sup> has two young men prominent in that lower right corner, among many women one of whom wears a similarly knotted dark veil. I believe Rigaud wanted his clientele to suspect the youth was Louis-François de Bourbon, Prince de Conti, twelve that year, and the prominently veiled woman his mother, two years a widow.

At all events within a year Rigaud’s work on the royal chateaux was well launched, and if my next speculation has merit each will reinforce the other, and so on. In the second of four views of St. Cloud (1730: the first view taken inside its domain) we find again a single hatted figure surrounded by others paying court, while on the fringes still others point at him (Figure 4). Standing directly beneath the royal arms over a gateway which frames him, is he meant to remind us that the proprietor of this chateau, the Duc d’Orleans — son of the Regent, grand-nephew of Louis XIV — may sometimes be seen here? Crushed by his wife’s death four years earlier, the 27-year-old duke was already something of a learned recluse. This figure is in profile, and noticeably shorter than the men around him, but why would Rigaud distinguish him thus if not to puzzle us about who he was?

Now to ground already well-explored by Willis and Clarke. The reliable witness George Vertue tells us that Queen Caroline’s designer Charles Bridgeman commissioned Rigaud to come to England in early 1733, to draw and engrave four views of royal domains at Greenwich, St. James’s Palace, and Hampton Court Palace (and Rigaud did publish these in Paris, 1736). And, apparently to celebrate work bearing more of his own personal stamp, Bridgeman hired Rigaud to produce 15 views of Stowe — an enterprise unmatched by any European publishing venture except Rigaud’s own two suites of Versailles views at twelve each. Though Bridgeman was to lose money badly on it, this deal between two independent agents rather than a patron and his dependant marked important developments in both the

---

<sup>13</sup> The drawing upon which, image reversed, this was based was sold by Drouot in December, 1981.

professionalization of landscape design and the orientation of the production of topographical engravings to a bi-national, middleclass, house-visiting clientele. But another distinction directly affects what I have to show next: for reasons not wholly clear, there was a delay of as much as six years between Rigaud's drawing Stowe's vistas and Bridgeman's widow's publishing them in late 1739; and further, since Rigaud returned apparently permanently to France in 1734, perhaps the supervision of publication, and surely the skillful engraving of five of the Stowe prints, was the work of Bernard Baron, a member of Bridgeman's club, former acquaintance of Watteau, and possibly the contact who had brought the other two together. It's impossible to assign responsibility for changes in the images between drawing and engraving, but two of those visible changes provide the strongest support for my thesis that offhand yet deliberate portrayals slip into Rigaud's vistas.

The "View of such parts as are seen from the Building at the Head of the Lake" — as its title may betoken — with its oversize dimensions and wide angle of vision proves to offer the most comprehensive embrace of the Stowe scene. Originally intended to conclude the suite ("15" is legible on the drawing, Willis 133), as engraving it is numbered to appear first.<sup>14</sup> For all its fastidious concern with the architectural signals which Vanbrugh and Bridgeman had broadcast before us, this view acknowledges through reflected trees and floating net-corks the kind of serenity which operates independently of human ingenuity. Thus the foreground concert champêtre seems apt. In Rigaud's drawing a key figure, though turned from us, is the bespectacled conductor who seems to beat time with a rolled score, so it's hard to miss his replacement in the engraving (Figure 5) by a stout singer. Antonio Maria Zanetti had caricatured the castrato Francesco Bernardi, commonly called Senesino after his Sieneese birthplace, in a pose reversed (Figure 6) but so like the singer at Stowe in his dress, weight and posture as to have surely afforded a tracing-image for Rigaud or Baron. Certainty thickens when we recall that as Senesino's celebrity in England crested, from 1733 till 1735 at least, Lord Cobham of Stowe patronized (in rivalry to Handel's royal patronage) the "Opera of the Nobility" for which Niccolò Porpora composed and conducted, and Senesino was a star singer. Another such opera-patron was Lord Burlington, who happened to commission Rigaud to draw and engrave eight views of his Chiswick. So when the fat singer reappears on Burlington's grounds (Figure 7) it's a signal that the musical culture and munificence of the Whig oligarchy thrives as independent of the Royal Opera as their domains are independent of the style and power of Richmond and Westminster.

Once we acknowledge the presence of the famous singer it is easy to observe the carryover of other figures from this Stowe vista to others. The tall if featureless youth pointing, just behind the violinist, will reappear in five views (Willis 129-30, 132, 137, 142, and possibly 141). That frequency is topped only by the dignified, almost always hatted gentleman whose eight appearances begin with a glimpse of his ramrod-straight back at the right side of this view but beyond my detail, overlooking the ha-ha and listening to a bareheaded man with a tasseled cane (Willis 145). If as I believe the hat-wearer is meant to make us think of Cobham, his companion may be Bridgeman; they consult together in two other views (Willis 129, 132). At different spots around Stowe the youth and Cobham appear in relationships sufficiently more intimate (touching milord's chair in Willis 137, leaning on milady's in 129, greeting guests beside them in 142) to recommend him as Cobham's nephew Richard Grenville, who would become, as Earl Temple, the childless Cobhams' heir to Stowe. The lady standing behind the violinist in my detail wears in the drawing a nosegay at her breast and carries a tasseled cane, both attributes of Lady Cobham in other views but inexplicably gone from this engraving.

---

<sup>14</sup> The dimensions of the print are 13<sup>7/8</sup>" x 29<sup>1/2</sup>" (35.24 cm. x 74.93 cm.), the angle at least 170° as determined by the Plan which accompanied the published views. "15," partly effaced, appears on the flat-faced stone in the midst of the musical group.

Balancing Lord Cobham at far left outside my detail is a hatless man with a stick, evidently the major domo, who reappears of course in several of the prints.

In the drawing (Willis 135) and engraving (Figure 8) of the “View from Gibbs’s Building,” an introduction occurs in the right foreground, in front of the belvedere and Temple of Fame for Whig culture-heroes, recently completed by James Gibbs. The lady with the tasseled stick and nosegay may, as suggested, be Lady Cobham, and “it would be appropriate,” as George Clarke says, if the man bowing to her were the architect Gibbs, “but there is nothing to prove that it is.” I see a resemblance between the other hatless man and the Roman bust which Scheemakers did of Cobham within months of these depictions, or Jean-Baptiste Van Loo’s portrait (Willis 112a). And as Clarke suggests the portly man with preaching tabs must be milord’s chaplain Conway Rand, his wife and dog Signor Fido beside him (to reappear in Willis 130).<sup>15</sup> Another “typical” social event about the grounds would be the reception of guests arriving by carriage at the North Portico overlooking the Park (Willis 142), and here, suitably attended though with backs to us, are surely Lord and Lady Cobham again, accompanied by another man tall enough to be the husband whom Lady Temple would call her “dearest long man,” and his neighbors “Squire Gawkey”: Richard Grenville at 22. In another view he looms behind a lady wearing a conspicuous dark veil, who may be his widowed mother, Cobham’s sister, or perhaps Lady Vanbrugh (Willis 130).

The “View from Nelson’s Seat” (Willis 141), which shows Rigaud at work sketching, also brings the veiled lady before us again as the center of a merry interlude. But the engraving after this drawing makes even more definite the features of the man facing us at dead center. He “must be someone” (George Lyttelton, another Cobham nephew and political ally?) but so far no plausible original have I found. As this is one of the five plates engraved by Baron, those features could have been worked up as late as 1739.

Yet all meetings are not so formal in this English country house. Opposite that North Portico and facing the terrace dotted with visiting strollers (Willis 129), sit (Figure 9, on the South Portico) Lady Cobham at her embroidery, one foot raised on a stool, her nephew leaning behind her, and Lord Cobham in what may be a characteristic pose: legs crossed, right hand on thigh with middle fingers curled up (invisible in the engraving, where “No. 16” appears on his sleeve to set this print at the end of the suite). Toward his beckoning approach two hatless men; the leader with an unfurling plan in hand must be Cobham’s landscape designer and Rigaud’s employer Charles Bridgeman.<sup>16</sup> Similar consultations, with the principal couple similarly seated and attended, are foregrounded in two other views, Willis 132 and 137. In the latter it is Lady Cobham in the cane-backed chair who leans her elbow pensively behind her husband’s shoulder, and two or three other figures in each of these look like efforts toward portrayal of their friends or members of the household. And it may well be, as George Clarke argues, that the couple being pushed in three-wheeled chairs (the front wheel steered by a tiller-like crank: Willis 136, 139) past Vanbrugh’s Pyramid and Rotunda represent one more acknowledgement of the owners’ debt to their dead architect.

That would leave five of the fifteen Rigaud-Baron views in which no member of the Cobham family appears: Willis 131, 134, 138, 143, and 140. Figure 10 is an enlarged detail of this last “View at the Queen’s Statue” from just left of the center foreground. While the mature figure at left stands on the very edge of Rigaud’s image he is markedly shorter than the man and woman conversing with him. The curvature of his back exactly matches that of William Hoare’s red-chalk portrait of Alexander Pope “*ad vivum*” some seven years later in Bath (Fig. 11). It is well known from correspondence that Pope’s “rambles” frequently took him to Stowe as well as Chiswick in the periods Rigaud worked at each, and this happens to be the

---

<sup>15</sup> Fourth and fifth unnumbered pages of Clarke’s descriptive notes. Rand died, incidentally, in 1734.

<sup>16</sup> Four contemporary portraits support, or at least do not thwart, this thesis. They are reproduced as Willis 1, 19, 21 and 22a.

kind of Stowe vista Pope singled out for praise: contrasting “proud Versailles” to the sensitivity to Nature of English landscaping initiatives,

The vast Parterres a thousand hands shall make,  
Lo! COBHAM comes, and floats them with a Lake.<sup>17</sup>

But the most persuasive forensic certification of this portrait mirrors the earlier evidence for Senesino’s: in the engraving the humpbacked man is replaced by a stripling. Whether the veto came from Cobham, Baron or Bridgeman, or the poet directly, we may learn why it came, from the inked inscription on the back of Pope’s friend William Hoare’s drawing:

This is the only Portrait that was ever drawn of Mr Pope at Full-length. It was done without his knowledge, as he was deeply engaged in conversation . . . Pope would never have forgiven the Painter had he known it. He was too sensible of the deformity of his Person to allow the Whole of it to be represented. This Drawing is therefore exceedingly valuable, as it is an Unique of this celebrated Poet.<sup>18</sup>

Still almost true. Lady Burlington’s late drawing of Pope, not quite a caricature — they abound, of course — also displays his back frankly and apparently truthfully, while the poet is “deeply engaged” in cards. This drawn by Rigaud in mid-1733 makes the third *ad vivum* portrait so far reported to show the poet’s trunk from the side. Since it never left Stowe’s muniments until this century there was little opportunity for a tell-it-all to pencil “A.P.” below it. My argument may not gain much but loses nothing when, returning to the Chiswick scene before a riverside basin (Figure 7), we notice the relative proportions of the castrato and a man at right walking toward the group which seems also to include Lady Burlington. To Jacques Carré’s hint that “the little hump-backed figure walking with a stick in the foreground could very well be an effigy of Pope himself,”<sup>19</sup> inspection of the drawing at Chatsworth prompts me to add that the eyes of this short man have received special attention from the draughtsman. “Sir! you have an *Eye* —”

Almost certainly during this sojourn in England Rigaud executed two other fine drawings, never engraved, of the Duke of Newcastle’s Claremont. When astutely attributing one of these to Rigaud rather than John Rocque, A. P. Oppé entitled the work “Claremont, with portrait of Thomas Holles Pelham, Duke of Newcastle,” making no fuss at all about that identification.<sup>20</sup> It’s worth noting that the foreground figure likely to remind us of the powerful politician sweeps his left hand back commandingly, an oddly curved stick in his right; that he wears a sword, and eyes steadily the young man hatted to his right (possibly a son or relative), while another man waits at his left, hat doffed and papers under his arm — all of this centered quite conspicuously below Vanbrugh’s hilltop Belvedere Castle and the forecourt and entrance to the house.

---

<sup>17</sup> “Moral Essays. Epistle IV. To... Burlington,” lines 73-74, where *floats* is a technical term for “inundate.” In earlier versions Pope wrote “Bridgeman” for “COBHAM.”

<sup>18</sup> Cited as “possibly in the hand of Prince Hoare,” the artist’s relative, by John Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1977), I, 217. See also, of course, William K. Wimsatt, *The Portraits of Alexander Pope* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 298-311.

<sup>19</sup> Carré, p. 135; Carré shows the whole of my Figure 7 as Figure 2, “Riverside basin overlooking a pavilion... .” Lady Burlington reappears prominently on a bench before Chiswick House in another Rigaud drawing, Carré’s Figure 7. My paragraph concludes, of course, with Pope’s self-mockery in “An Epistle... to Dr. Arbuthnot,” line 118, for his eyes challenged any portraitist.

<sup>20</sup> *English Drawings Stuart and Georgian Periods in the Collection of His Majesty at Windsor Castle* (London: Phaidon, 1950), p. 84 and Figure 95. Though Oppé reports “the title as given” was “Inscribed in pencil in a modern hand,” that might have been only a hopeful salesman’s guess, so Jane Roberts’ title for this piece in the Royal Collection (17463) is simply “Claremont” in *Master Drawings in the Royal Collection* (London: Collins Harville, 1986), pp. 150-51. Though the context of Mark Girouard’s use of two of Rigaud’s Stowe drawings (pp. 6, 152) might suggest his granting their staffage to be as historical as the servants and peers elsewhere among the photographs of *A Country House Companion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), his text too is silent on the Cobhams’ identity. Such apt reticence may fade once the portrayal of potential proprietor-types about their business of estate-management and entertainment is seen as integral to this decade of Rigaud’s career.

Rigaud's interest in salting his vistas with real people may have been stimulated by the smashing success of Hogarth's publication in 1732 of "The Harlot's Progress," with its invitingly recognizable portrayals of the real-life London bawd Mother Needham, the notorious rake and rapist Chartres, the edgy magistrate Gonson who eased Moll's downward progress, and the quacks who presided over her death. On quite the other hand, in the dimension of encomium rather than satire, Bridgeman surely knew, and may have told Rigaud of, the century-old genre of the country-house poem. The four years preceding Rigaud's arrival at Stowe had seen publication of three important verse celebrations of Stowe and its owner — of the owner *through* his landscape. Since two of these were by Cobham's close friends Congreve and Pope and the third by his nephew Gilbert West, something of the private as well as the public Cobham informs them (especially the aging Congreve's meditation on Time).<sup>21</sup> For Rigaud then to image the proprietor about the business of managing his estate, relaxing outdoors *en famille*, and receiving his guests (some of whom seem to admire its beauties along West's very sight-lines), created a wordless country-house poem. Another pertinent tradition current in both France and England these years is of course the conversation-piece, yet here a distinctiveness about Rigaud's representation of his wealthy Whigs and their French counterparts deserves stress. Even when a typical conversation-piece shows a family at tea or music or whatever activity, one or more pairs of eyes are likely to meet our gaze, often somewhat smugly, assuring us this is the work of no snooping interloper but a commissioned portrait of a family quite in charge of its own leisure. For such a glance to meet the eyes of most purchasers of Rigaud's prints would compromise the portrayed and embarrass, possibly even threaten, the purchaser. No eyes meet ours from his staffage.

While Vertue hints some bad personal chemistry between Burlington and Rigaud, and Baron and Rigaud, the facts are quite unclear. What surely changed Rigaud's approach to his work was to have been commissioned twice by his fellow-professional Bridgeman, and one of these the suite of 15 Stowe views enshrining in a manner unprecedented in Europe the work of that single designer. Then to be hired by the rival designer, and jack of all skills, William Kent, and by two such aristocrats as Newcastle and Burlington who — more than their French counterparts perhaps — put their personal stamps on the vistas and agendas around them. To have to watch Bridgeman's publishing venture fail (probably through overambition and undersubscription), and the Stowe views go for two guineas instead of four. To have to accept the change of motives altering the Stowe suite those six years between drawing-board and publication. Many of these thoughts may have guided his remaining enterprises until, the year before he died in 1754, Rigaud invested 16,000 livres at 5%, to Gusman's dry observation that he must have had "bénéfices en rapport avec ses travaux."<sup>22</sup>

A detail of the first of the six Chantilly views published in 1739, Figure 12 produces my best evidence that what demi-portraiture Rigaud had ventured in England informed his later work in France. The brooding hatless figure, alone in company, could scarcely be centered more squarely over the crest and dedication pertaining to the man I think he is, the Duc de Bourbon-Condé, virtually exiled from the court in house arrest here some 13 years. The downed tree on which he leans supports a dynastic hint we've found typical of these vistas, since it's the pivot for a see-saw on which the lad who could be his three-year-old son (by a second marriage) ignores his schoolmaster's summons. The massive stables visible across the water but outside my detail actually were not completed until 1740, the year the Duc died, but the final print in this set seems to show him inspecting them, hatted, his wife on his arm, a parade of children behind them — quite a happier group. Not only does this "Veüe particuliere des Ecuries" demonstrate how well Rigaud could liven up a broad flank of a

---

<sup>21</sup> Edited by George Clarke in *Descriptions of Lord Cobham's Gardens at Stowe 1700-1750* (Aylesbury: The Buckinghamshire Record Society, 1990), pp. 24-27.

<sup>22</sup> Gusman, p. 18.

building by attention to angle, light, and diversionary detail. The handling of the figures in their “momentariness” is superb, and since a skittish horse in the manège has just caused a girl to faint to the ground, the narrative undertow is strong.<sup>23</sup> Though the long-range Paris vistas which Rigaud went on to do bustle with the street-life of vendors and traffic they may lack the steady-eyed finesse and anecdotal zest of his commissioned landscapes.

One agreeable aftermath of his career, during the decade of his death, the 1750s, Rigaud could not have known: the interestingly diverse ways that English topographical artists put famous faces (or attributes) into the famous places they engraved. In the center foreground of Nathaniel Parr’s print of Kensington Palace in 1751, the year Prince Frederick suddenly died, stands an especially splendid youngish figure who might be he, surrounded by the kind of attentions we’ve noted. In 1754 the finest suite of topographical engravings of the decade, by Thomas and Paul Sandby, reveals the royal Ranger of Windsor Great Park, the Duke of Cumberland, at his supervisory or hospitable pastimes on his newly improved grounds called Virginia Water, in four out of eight views. Cumberland’s heavy build was hard to disguise or mistake, especially as he greeted his little nephew and future sovereign George beside the man-made lake. In Luke Sullivan’s “View of the Terrace” at Oatlands Park (1759), a long-range vista shows us the water which the terrace overlooks as well. Yet the foreground is not idle, for besides some ladies at their diversions we spy a separate cluster of four men, two seated, animatedly discussing the plans in their hands: a reminiscence surely of the Bridgeman-Cobham conferences we’ve seen, with one of the seated men perhaps intended to make us think of the 9th Earl of Lincoln. A fourth example may be the most interesting of all since it complicates the game of celebrity-hunting with possible commercial motives beyond those of the engraver. Figure 13 shows the center foreground of John Donowell’s “View of the Orchestra ... in Marybone Gardens” (1755), which offers no explanation for why the elderly couple are “worked up” so much more than the generic staffage around them. Two other gentlemen in the view wear swords, but lack the trimmed underjacket, full wig, and brilliance of this man’s shoebuckles. The couple’s features are neither flattery nor caricature, just distinctive, as they gaze from the middle of the “Grand Walk” steadily over our shoulder. I believe they are William Bentinck, 2nd Duke of Portland, and his lady Margaret Cavendish Harley. They have nothing to do, save the mark, with the commercial venture which is Marybone Gardens, but are Lord and Lady of the Manor in which it has been a popular resort for two decades. Apparently someone, whether the artist or the Gardens’ management or “a friend of the family,” thought their appearance here would say something interesting about this pleasure-garden. Their nameless presence must owe something to the precedent Rigaud developed. Whatever the motives and whosoever they were, after the Duke’s death in 1762 a pirated version of Donowell’s print eliminated the couple just as conspicuously as they had first appeared.

What have we seen? A craftsman dependent on the “custom” of a middleclass public has changed appreciably the content and meaning of his product. Other craftsmen in a neighbor country have understood the shift and extended it to a still wider sphere of productivity and consumption. The need of a rising class to “own,” to feel close to, a certain zone of magic privilege identified as “aristocratic” has found a wordless language.

## Liste des illustrations (cf. l’édition imprimée)

Fig. 1. Jacques Rigaud, “Veue de Meudon et du Vilage” (detail). Engraving. Photo: Richard Quaintance.

---

<sup>23</sup> Illustrated in Gusman. It is a pleasure to thank here my friend, colleague and photography coach Irwin Primer, and the directorates and staffs of the many archives upon which this study depended, most particularly the Photographie de la Bibliothèque Nationale, Suzanne Boorsch, Anne-Marie Logan, the Directress and Staff of the Marquand Library of Princeton University, the Hon. Jane Roberts, Joan Sussler, and Annie Thacher.

- Fig. 2. Jacques Rigaud, “Vüe du Cours de Marseille. Dessiné sur le lieu pendant la Peste arrivé en 1720” (detail). Engraving. Photo: Quaintance.
- Fig. 3. Jacques Rigaud, “Les Promenades du Palais des Thuilleries” (detail, prob. 1729). Engraving. Photo: Quaintance.
- Fig. 4. Jacques Rigaud, “Veue du Chateau de St. Cloud. du Costé de l’Orangerie” (detail). Engraving. Photo: Quaintance.
- Fig. 5. Jacques Rigaud, “View... from the Building at the Head of the Lake” at Stowe (detail). Engraving. Photo: Quaintance.
- Fig. 6. A. M. Zanetti, “Senesino.” Drawing. Photo courtesy the Toronto Art Museum.
- Fig. 7. Jacques Rigaud, “Riverside basin overlooked by a pavilion...” at Chiswick (detail). Drawing, at Chatsworth. Photo courtesy of the Trustees of Chatsworth.
- Fig. 8. Jacques Rigaud, “View from Gibbs’s Building” at Stowe (detail). Engraving. Photo: Quaintance.
- Fig. 9. Jacques Rigaud, “View of the Perterre from the Portico of the House” at Stowe (detail). Drawing. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1942. [42.79(15)]. Photo: Quaintance, by permission of MMA.
- Fig. 10. Jacques Rigaud, “View at the Queen’s Statue” at Stowe (detail). Drawing. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1942. [42.79 (14)]. Photo: courtesy of MMA.
- Fig. 11. William Hoare of Bath, “Mr. Pope.” Drawing, red chalk on paper. National Portrait Gallery.
- Fig. 12. Jacques Rigaud, “Veue Prise du Coté de La Principale Entrée” at Chantilly (detail). Engraving. Photo: Quaintance.
- Fig. 13. John Donowell, “View of the Orchestra... in Marybone Gardens” (detail). Colored engraving. Photo: Quaintance.