

Gaspard de Gueidan by Hyacinthe Rigaud

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If you have the opportunity to travel to Aix-en-Provence do not miss the chance to admire the magnificent painting "Portrait de Gaspard Gueidan en joueur de musette", exhibited at the Granet Museum in the old Provençal capital. This painting is well known to all bagpipe lovers, almost as much as the portrait of "Langlois playing musette" by Van Dyck, which is in London.

I have been visiting Provence since my childhood where I have family connections, and I have lived there for 20 years: but no trace of a popular bagpipe tradition has ever been reported to

me, except of course the *zampognari* of Lazzio who came to play for Christmas. It may therefore seem surprising to find a bagpipe in the hands of this great Provençal lawyer disguised as a shepherd. However, the pastoral genre was particularly well served in Provence and included the works of the composer André Campra (1660-1744) who flourished at the time of Rameau and who lived in Aix-en-Provence. The musette is often used in his operas¹. For a Provençal noble of the time of Louis XV, playing the musette was as much a symbolic gesture as it was for entertainment.

This is a good opportunity for me to give you a short overview of the enigmatic character of Gaspard de Gueidan and to shed light, using some recent discoveries, on how this gentleman found himself portrayed as a "shepherd playing musette" by the official artist of Louis XIV : the portrait is by Hyacinthe Rigaud, the great painter of Louis XIV and Louis XV.

Gaspard de Gueidan (1688-1767), great-grandson of a beef merchant, became President of the Parliament of Provence and his story depicts the social rise of a man from a wealthy bourgeoisie gaining a noble title... at the cost of some adjustments with history! As I began my research on this intriguing character, I discovered a particularly thorough publication by an American academic. This is Christopher Currie's PhD thesis on the social evolution of the Marquis de Gueidan. Currie talks about Gueidan's "making" and his research has confirmed the political dimension of this painting, placed in its historical context. I urge the reader to consult this remarkable study, which is easily found on the web².

This type of portrait was a flourishing genre in the 18th century and Hyacinthe Rigaud (1659-1743) was the most famous and prolific of the portrait painters with nearly a thousand works attributed to him. The whole Court of France has been immortalized by this major artist: he is credited with several portraits of Louis XIV and Louis XV at different ages of their lives, their wives, mistresses, and all the entourage of the Court over a period of sixty years. Rigaud was also, and for a long time, a portraitist of the wealthy lawyers of Aix en Provence. It is therefore not surprising that in 1735 Gaspard de Gueidan commissioned this prestigious painter to paint his portrait and that of his wife (finally done by Largillierre). He paid 3000 livres, a considerable sum, for this exceptional painting. In 18th century France, appearing as a man of culture was then an element of social distinction and a mark of aristocracy, far more than wealth or economic power, for a true aristocrat had to master the discourse on the arts, literature, music, dance or painting. The "preciousness" that initially developed in the Provençal and Parisian literary salons in the 17th century saw a renaissance in the 18th century following the death of Louis XIV.

By the 17th century the nobility had established the rules of the "honest man": propriety, moderation, and sensitivity to the simple rules of nature. The affected refinement of Gueidan in the painting, his pose, his costume, his gestures are of this kind - precious and studied in order to respect the canons of the cultivated nobility. But the "aristocracy" affected by Gueidan went further. His character was a construction, a permanent effort to forget his origins. From the research of Currie and Ariane James-Sarazin, we now know that he published a fake genealogy of his family, claiming that his nobility came from the Crusades, a nobility of warriors, knights. He even ordered a tomb, a mausoleum of his fictitious ancestors from the Provençal sculptor Jean-Pancrace Chastel. But Gaspard de Gueidan was of lowly birth, to a rich peasant family from Reillanne in Haute-Provence, who had made a fortune through the cattle trade: they were rich merchants. Reillanne, a small village in Provence located a few miles from my home ... it came as a great surprise to me.

The Gueidan's strategy of social climbing was in many ways very effective because in two generations they became lawyers and then Gaspard was appointed as President of the Parliament of Provence. However, he was harshly criticized by some of his contemporaries, notably his nephew (Pierre-César de Charleval) and some anonymous poet who broadcast a "virelai" in Provençal, a manuscript poem that ridiculed him and that the nobility of Aix-en-Provence should be mocked.

It was through the judiciary that his father became part of the Aix bourgeoisie, and in turn Gaspard gained notoriety though the quality of his speeches. He pretended to the « quartiers de noblesse », until he obtained a marquisate, and sent his three sons into the Catholic Order of the "Chevaliers de Malte". And here again he falsified their origins because the mother of his wife, Madeleine de Trets, was Jewish, converted to Christianity. Her Jewish roots, had they been known, would have prevented her descendants becoming part of this powerful, influential and prestigious religious brotherhood. Thus, he made every effort to assert himself as a member of one of the oldest families in



Claude Secret de Gueidan, son of Gaspard, dressed as a Knight with the Cross of the Chevaliers de Malte, by Claude Arnulfy (1697-1786). Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence.

France. Gaspard de Gueidan was the image of a new nobility, wanting to give himself the polish of the old, responding to the aspirations of a nobility “de robe” (dress : lawyers), and wishing to appropriate the distinction of the nobility “d’épée” (sword : knights, warlords)



Angélique de Gueidan en costume de Flore, by Nicolas Largillierre, ca 1735. Musée Granet of Aix-en-Provence.

Presenting himself in the role of “Celadon”, the hero of *L’Astrée*³, accompanied by his faithful dog, Gueidan signifies his literary culture as an honest man, but also his attachment to a French nobility enamored of freedom against absolute power. Gueidan ordered a portrait of the same dimensions of his wife Angélique, shown as “Flore”, another arcadian figure.

L’Astrée was a testimony to the “cultural and political role of a nobility that is different from the Court and which codifies the forms corresponding to aristocratic good manners⁴”; this “propriety” was appropriated by Gaspard de Gueidan. For the art historian H. Kohle, this staging was also a political gesture: “At Versailles, the nobility of

Court could, through the life of the shepherds, remember a dream of independence from the central power. The rural character of pastoral care made it possible to evoke sadly the seigniorial autonomy that the aristocracy had lost as a result of the modernization and centralization of the state in the sixteenth century. Nostalgia is attached to the pastoral myth, to the kind refuge it offers to an aristocratic society that has passed under the tutelage of the absolute monarch. It is therefore better understood why this culture of the rural world made an important reappearance after the death of the “Sun King” and already during the two preceding decades, at the precise moment when the power of the centralizing body began to vacillate⁵”.

Rural life as a philosophical theme found its artistic transposition in the first half of the eighteenth century, and was later developed by Rousseau and the Lumières, to oppose the original and the true to depravations of the Court. “Despite Boileau’s assurance that the witnesses of preciousness had indeed died, they reappeared after 1690 and flooded the country in the early eighteenth century. It is also

the sign of the resurrection of an artistic genre that opposed the absolutist attempts to centralize taste and society. It was the desire of a salon elite to create a second artificial and highly sophisticated personality, whose anti-naturalism announces the type of romantic dandy but also refers to the aristocracy of the classical era⁶.

Indeed the type of musette played by Gueidan is also a rarity, a large musette more sophisticated than the common model - another mark of arrogance. This large musette, also called "musette à ravalement" had a longer chanter with a long bell and three keys allowing for three more notes in the bass. There are only three models of this type which have survived.



Musette "à ravalement", anonymous, 18th century. Col. Musée de la Musique, Paris. D.AD. 34674.



Musette "à ravalement" de Gueidan.

The portraits of Gueidan by Coypel.

I recently discovered that two portraits of Gueidan as a musette player were much less known than Rigaud's painting and therefore subject of few studies⁷. The first is a nice pastel by Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752), preserved today in an American collection. Coypel was a close friend of Rigaud. We may suppose that the date of this drawing is quite near the Rigaud's portrait, c1735. Gueidan is represented here in the role of "Daphnis", a pastoral-shepherd god who was admitted to Olympus after his death. The pose is less solemn but the shepherd is always Arcadian, with this "negligence" which was also a trait of aristocratic culture. The musette could be the same, even if the cover of the bag is of a different colour. Note the red heels of the Marquis' shoes, a mark of nobility since *Monsieur*, brother of Louis XIV, had launched this fashion at Versailles. This pastel appears as a sketch of the portrait by Rigaud.



Photo 06. *Gaspard de Gueidan as Daphnis* by Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752), ca 1735. The Horvitz Collection, Boston.

The second is a preparatory drawing, or a copy, of the Coypel pastel, which allows us to identify with certainty the musette player as Gaspard de Gueidan. In fact, the coat of arms of the family is at the bottom of the drawing : it is the same as that of the musette in Rigaud's painting. We are bringing them together here. Each of these representation of the Marquis as a shepherd includes the famous heraldic arms of the "lords of Gueidan-Simiane".

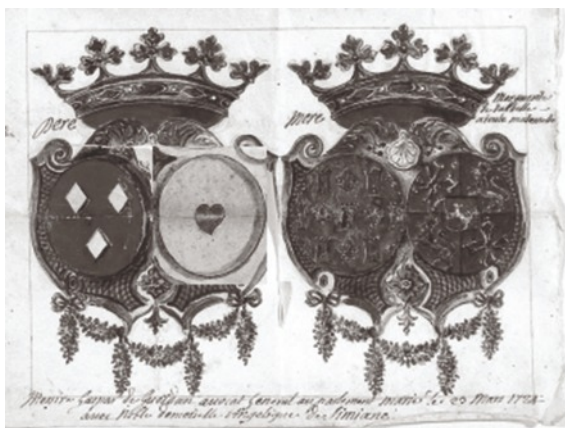
Heraldic arms, musette head.

Gueidan also appropriated heraldic symbols: the arms of the

Gueidan-Simiane family are placed on the head (stock) of his musette. The head of Gueidan's musette is one of the few - perhaps the only one - to carry heraldic arms. The object thus joins an old popular tradition which makes this symbolic "head" (the old head of the goat-bagpipe) a place of decoration and

representation: as on the Limousin cornemuses à miroirs (*chabretas*) or on the "Bourbonnaises incrustées".

There is no Christian symbol here but rather the ostentatious mark of his brand new aristocratic lineage. The assent of the parvenu is thus expressed by his newly acquired coat of arms depicted on the box of the prestigious musette⁸.



Armorial of the Gueidan-Simiane family.



Arms of the Gueidan-Simiane family on the head of the musette.



Gaspard de Gueidan as Daphnis, craie, encre, aquarelle sur papier, vers 1735. Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752). Sold at Christie's, London, 2 July 2013.

The musette was the multi-symbolic musical instrument of an aristocracy enamored of freedom. It was designed to evoke the ancient times, the Middle Ages, aristocratic epoch *par excellence*, which had preceded the rise of absolutism: it is to this ancestral aristocracy that Gueidan claims to be related by his genealogical inventions. The musette was also the musical element of the Arcadian Renaissance at the Court at the end of the reign of Louis XIV, and especially in the first half of the 18th century, with its golden age in the years 1720-1740. Nobility, ancestry, culture, pastoralism and provincial independence ... all elements juxtaposed in the theatrical representation of a bourgeois turned gentleman, Gaspard de Gueidan.

I let my English friends discuss correspondence with the pastoral fashion that also developed in the aristocratic and urban world of the 18th century in the Great Britain world, giving birth to instruments like Northumberland smallpipes or other pastoral pipes in London.

There is, at least, a remnant of this craze for aristocratic bagpipes in Provence: it is in the form of a very old *musette* which is preserved in the basements of the Calvet museum in Avignon. With my Italian friends of the *Zampogneria Fiumerapido* ensemble, we had the chance to see this rare object, to measure it and to photograph it. In a future of edition of *Chanter* there will be an

article by Marco Tomassi on this musette, now in Avignon, the city where, in the 19th century, the great collector Bricqueville brought together an impressive collection of old instruments.



Study of Hands Playing Bagpipes for the portrait of Gaspard de Gueidan, Hyacinthe Rigaud, ca 1735. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

In the next article, Marco Tomassi will describe the surviving musette in the Calvet Museum, Avignon. The instrument, which we have been fortunate to have been allowed to study, is in a remarkable state of preservation and it is the only old musette that has all its original reeds. It is a testimony of the use of the musette in Provence. The most astonishing fact was to discover that this instrument corresponded in all respects to the one drawn by Borjon de Scellery in his "Traîté de la musette" published in 1672.

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¹ I had the honour to participate in 2014 in the recording of an unknown work of Campra updated by the ensemble Les Festes d'Orphée in Aix, *Les Muses rassemblées par l'Amour*, in the company of my friend Jean-Christophe Maillard, a few months before his death.

² The basics of this study are in the French article of Ariane JAMES-SARAZIN, « Hyacinthe Rigaud et ces messieurs d'Aix-en-Provence », in *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 2003, t.161, pp. 241-287.

³ *L'Astrée* de Honoré d'Urfé was a long pastoral romance , published from 1607 to 1627.

⁴ Hubertus KOHLE, « Le portrait de Gaspard de Gueidan par Hyacinthe Rigaud. », *Art et politique aristocratique sous l'Ancien Régime. Arts et société : Essais sur l'art français (1734-1889)*, Norderstedt, 2009, p. 13.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 14.

⁶ *Idem*.

⁷ See : T. LEFRANÇOIS, *Charles Coypel Peintre du roi (1694-1752)*, Paris, 1994.

⁸ Another musette wears heraldic arms, but sewed on the bag. Collection of the Royal College of Music, Musette RCM 192. This bagpipe belonged to a Prince of Schwartzenberg.