Domenico Guidi's Papal Portraits: A Point of Departure for Baroque Eclecticism

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For nearly three hundred years, the *oeuvre* of the Baroque sculptor Domenico Guidi (1624-1701) has, to a large extent, been ignored in the critical history of art. During the last twenty years, some scholars have begun to reverse this trend, in part re-establishing Guidi as one of the five most important Baroque sculptors of seventeenth century Rome. During the last decade of the seventeenth-century, the eclectic Guidi rendered the likenesses of several popes in a series of portrait busts. The firm reattribution of these busts, formerly thought to be by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) or his school, to Guidi has done much to clarify the nature of Guidi's portraiture, as well as aided in the continuing crystallization of Bernini's extensive *oeuvre*. The similarities, and the very real differences, between Bernini's and Guidi's portraiture that these attributions have emphasized result from numerous biographical and philosophical differences between the two sculptors.

Guidi's eclectic style of portraiture, as evident in his series of papal busts, will be explored through an examination of the formal characteristics of the papal portrait series. Guidi's style will be more clearly illuminated by contrasting these papal portraits with key portraits by Alessandro Algardi (1598-1654), and Gian Lorenzo Bernini. Next, an examination of Domenico Guidi's training, production method, associations, and the changing Roman art world he worked in will explain why he was disposed to a different interpretation of the high Baroque style in his portraiture. The genesis of his sculpting style will be traced from his early training in his uncle Guilano Finelli's Neapolitan *bottega*, to his mature assistantship in the Roman *bottega* of the classicizing sculptor Alessandro Algardi, from whom Guidi inherited his method of production. Guidi's associations with the eminent French painter Nicolas Poussin (1594 -1665), along with his involvement with the Academy of St. Luke in Rome, and his subsequent attachment to the French Royal Academy in Rome and later the Sun King Louis XIV will be discussed in an effort to contextualize Guidi and offer ideas as to why his interpretation of Baroque portraiture stands apart from the interpretations of his contemporaries.

Upon the death of his master, the classicizing sculptor Alessandro Algardi, in 1654 and later the death of the great Bernini in 1680, the eclectic Domenico Guidi became the leading Roman Baroque sculptor of the last quarter of the seventeenth century. During this time, Guidi sculpted the likenesses of the Popes Innocent X (1644-1655), Alexander VII (1655-1667), Innocent XI (1676-1689), Alexander VIII (1689-1691), and Innocent XII (1691-1700).[1] These Papal busts, long thought to be by the school of Bernini, offer a point from which a discussion of Guidi's sculptural style and professional success in late seventeenth century Rome can begin.

Guidi's series of papal portraits, like all sculpted portraits of the seventeenth century, owe a great debt to the ground breaking portraiture of *il maestro* Bernini. During the nearly seventy years of his career, Bernini's spirited likenesses, which incorporated intense naturalism, psychological insight, active drapery, and a sense of instantaneous familiarity revolutionized sculpted portraits in Baroque Rome. In a mature High Baroque portrait such as *Cardinal Scipione Borghese* of 1632 (Figure 1) all of Bernini's techniques are brought to bear. The cardinal is caught in a transitory moment, with his head turned and his eyes flashing. The ephemerality of the pose imbues the bust with a fierce vivacity; the viewer is invited to participate in whatever witticism is about to escape the cardinal's parted lips. Bernini renders facial details with great naturalism, while keeping the parts of the composition subordinate to the total concept of the great man. The simple drapery has been rendered in a very expressive, dynamic way, enabling light to dance across the bust, activating the sculpture and setting it in continuous movement.[2] It is not surprising that it was this naturalistic, highly energetic, and engaging portrait type that, as Rudolph Wittkower commented,

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1 David L. Bershad, "A Series of Papal Busts by Domenico Guidi," *The Burlington Magazine*, 112 (December 1970): 805-809 and Bershad, "Two Additional Papal Busts by Domenico Guidi," *The Burlington Magazine*, 115 (November 1973): 736-739. Bershad provides archival documents to substantiate his belief that these portraits are by the hand of Guidi and not Bernini and studio.

2 Rudolph Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy* 1600-1750 (New Haven: Yale UP, 1982) 146.

"Baroque sculptors endeavored to imitate and emulate"[3] throughout the remainder of the century.

The extent to which Guidi's papal portraits imitate and emulate Bernini's formula dictates a relative amount of success to them because Bernini's prototypical portrait was in wide currency by the middle of the century. At the same time, this imitation would have naturally imposed limitations upon his portraits as well. The Victoria and Albert bronze *Alexander the VIII* of 1691 is of the finest quality, and will serve as an example of Guidi's style evident throughout the series of busts (Figure 2). The pope's head is turned slightly to his right, smiling imperiously, looking pleasant and yet aware of his superior status relative to the viewer.[4] The turn of the head and the smiling expression succeed to a limited degree in animating the pontiff, however the immediacy of the bust, central to Bernini's portraiture, is gone. Fifty years of emulation and imitation had an obvious dulling effect on Baroque portraiture. The elaborate, polymorphic folds of the Pope's alb seem to be little more than convention now as they bend and crease in a way that does not emphatically assert the presence of a solid body underneath.

Though the turned head and the active folds of drapery were obviously originally taken from Bernini's High Baroque portrait prototype, the attention to details in the drapery and verism in the facial features speaks of Guidi's mature master, Alessandro Algardi. A terra cotta bust of *Innocent X* by Algardi from around 1647 shows that the motif of the agitated alb and the decorative stole, which Guidi utilized throughout the series of papal portraits with little alteration, actually began in Algardi's studio (Figure 3). Guidi, who was a master bronze caster, interprets his bronze *Innocent X* (Figure 4), in much the same way Algardi did the terra cotta. Guidi incorporates the Berninian conventions of an active sitter with Algardi's verism, crisp lines, attention to detail in the stole and the stylized nature of the drapery folds to create his own unique, eclectic image.

In his *Alexander VIII*, Guidi has rendered a competent portrait of the Pope in the accepted High Baroque style, patterned after Bernini's prototype and using many of Algardi's formal devices. This bust has come a long way from Bernini's *Scipione Borghese*, though it represents neither a synthesis of Algardi and Bernini, nor does it slavishly copy either master's style. The bust is a bit more restrained than Bernini's portraits. This aspect of Guidi's work is usually attributed to the influence of Algardi, whose introduction of classicizing tendencies into Baroque sculpture often had a calming effect on the more theatrical aspects of Bernini's style. While Guidi's eclectic style as revealed in these portraits may very well be described as a tempered reading of Bernini, or a less classicizing reading of Algardi, a number of factors in Domenico Guidi's biography, as well as the state of Baroque sculpture in Rome in the last quarter of the seventeenth-century, must be explored before a full understanding can be reached.

Domenico Guidi began his training as a sculptor at age fourteen, spending most of his adolescence in his uncle Guiliano Finelli's *botegga*. Finelli, it should be noted, spent several years in Rome in the studio of the younger Bernini in the 1620s and 30s. In 1647, at the age of 22, Guidi fled his uncle's Neapolitan studio to seek his fortune in the Eternal City, where Bernini was still Rome's brilliant shining star. Interestingly, Guidi joined the studio of Alessandro Algardi, who along with Francesco du Quesnoy controlled one of only two studios able to coincide with that of the great Gian Lorenzo. His choice of studios would greatly influence his future. From 1647 until the master's death in 1654, Guidi enjoyed the status of "favorite student"[5] in Algardi's studio. Because of his favored position within the studio, Guidi inherited the lion's share of Algardi's tools, models, and unfinished works at his death.[6] This allowed him to quickly set up his own studio and establish a wealthy clientele which included businessmen, Cardinals, several Popes, and eventually the Sun King Louis XIV. Though the death of Bernini in 1680 left an unfillable void in the Roman art world, Guidi's fame and fortune, already rising, did increase due to the master's passing. In the last two decades of the seventeenth century, Guidi was the most successful sculptor in Rome.

His popularity with patrons, however, did not gain Guidi the respect of his fellow sculptors. Though he moved in learned circles, Guidi was not theoretically minded with regard to his profession. He viewed the many commissions he gained from his association with Algardi as an opportunity to support his extravagant social life, which included collecting rare books, purchasing *objets d'art*, and providing himself with expensive clothing and fine foods.[7] This led him to employ numerous lesser craftsmen or professional assistants, which in turn allowed him to complete commissions very quickly.[8] This aspect of his working method comes directly from his training with Algardi. It is worth returning here to Algardi to shed some light on Guidi's methods.

By the time Algardi entered the Bolognese *Academia degli Incaminati* circa 1609, Annibale and Agostino Carracci had both died, leaving Lodovico as the master of the *Academia*. Lodovico's emphasis on line and rhythm, gracefulness, and lyrical beauty were to have a greater influence on Algardi than Agostino's strict academic training.[9] This left Algardi an efficient studio artist yet poorly trained in theoretical academic

3 Rudolf Wittkower, *Gain Lorenzo Bernini—The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque* (New York: Cornell UP, 1955) 13.

4 For Guidi's skill as a bronze caster, see Jennifer Montagu, *Roman Baroque Sculpture—The Industry of Art* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989) 62-63.

5 Rudolf Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 2 (1938): 188-190.

6 Jennifer Montagu, *Alessandro Algardi*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985) vol. 1, Appendix 1.

7 Frederick den Broeder, "A Drawing by Domenico Guidi for a monument to Innocent XII," *The Burlington Magazine*, 117 (February 1975): 110-113.

8 den Broeder 110.

matters. This would be a factor in a set of very real contrasts between Algardi and Bernini. Because Bernini held almost every major commission in Rome, he could employ master carvers such as Mochi, Bolgi, and du Quesnoy to carry out aspects of his designs, whereas Algardi had to employ lesser talents. While Bernini was reluctant to take on new commissions, Algardi had to accept almost any commission, and while Bernini worked very slowly and charged relatively high prices, Algardi worked very rapidly and often charged a fraction of Bernini's commissions.[10]

Domenico Guidi was one of these lesser talents at Algardi's disposal. When Guidi created his own studio, he made Algardi's production methods his own, though he himself was once removed from the master's talent level. By employing numerous *giovanni*, literally boys or young assistants, and *scarpellini*, who were little more than common stone masons, Guidi could execute his works quickly and inexpensively. Additionally, few sculptors of merit would have been available to him, since nearly every master sculptor in seventeenth-century Rome was in the employment of Bernini. Guidi directed his workers to complete a commission as quickly as possible according to a predetermined set of criteria. Because of this, very little stylistic change is evident in Guidi's extensive *oeuvre*. [11] An illustration of the difference in quality of execution between Algardi and Guidi is provided by a comparison of the terra cotta and marble busts of *Cardinal Paolo Emilio Zacchia.*

The finished terra cotta sketch, along with the roughed-out marble bust were taken by Domenico Guidi after the death of Algardi. The marble bust was completed by him for the patron a short time later.[12] Comparisons between the terra cotta model and the completed marble bust provide a visual example not only of the stylistic differences between Algardi and his student Guidi, but also of the effects of Guidi's working method. Algardi's terra cotta model (Figure 5) is an expressive combination of calm and agitation. While the subdued activity of turning pages in a scholarly tome has a calming effect on the erudite Cardinal, the alb is realized in bold stokes and the excessive movements of the small folds of the alb reveal an inherent agitation which brings the bust to life.[13] The Cardinal's features are rendered with a high degree of verism and liveliness, which is no small task, as the sitter had been dead for some fifty years. This is a real person engaged in a real activity, and this rendering must have convinced the patron's family of Algardi's merit as a portraitist.

Unfortunately, Guidi's finished version does not live up to his master's sketch. Where the master succeeds, the student fails. Guidi's resulting marble bust (Figure 6) is a clumsy, spiritless interpretation as lifeless as the Carrara marble from which it was carved. As Jennifer Montagu relates, the bust exhibits "a tightness. . .as if the sculptor grudged every centimetre of marble employed."[14] This was, in fact, probably the case, because his emphasis on economy did not allow for a high degree of perfection. Lesser assistants likely completed much of the poorly realized drapery while Guidi probably carved the plain, uninspired facial features that were so lively in Algardi's model. Guidi's rendering has lost some of the dignity of the sitter by emphasizing the hands and the book rather than the facial features. Additionally, the Cardinal's gaze seems rather vacant compared to the penetrating, thoughtful look Algardi's terra cotta bust exhibits. This helps to emphasize, in part, the disparity in quality between Guidi's sculptures and those of Algardi and Bernini, but one must wonder what conditions existed in Rome in the last quarter of the seventeenth century that enabled Guidi to prosper so greatly.[15]

The answer begins with Algardi's involvement with the Roman Classicist circle, and ends with Guidi's involvement with the French Academy in Rome. It is ironic that Guidi, whose hatred of the *professori*, or academic teachers, is well documented,[16] reached the height of his career through his connection with the French Academy in Rome.[17] Guidi's involvement with the Academy is inextricably connected with his teacher Algardi. Owing in part to his Bolognese roots, Algardi was included in the Bolognese Classicist circle of artists that had formed in Rome during the second decade of the century. Their goal was to promote a calm, austere style of art that owed an equal debt to the Classical past, the great Renaissance masters, and the Carracci. During the first half of the seventeenth century, Andrea Sacchi, Domenichino, Guido Reni, and Algardi were some of the artists who formed this circle of mostly Bolognese artists in Rome who believed that simplicity, clarity, and naturalism should be the hallmarks of great art. Though Bernini was greatly influenced by a return to naturalism, the theatricality of his work was at odds with the aims of this group.

The eminent French painter Nicolas Poussin, who spent most of his life in Rome, soon became one of the leaders of the Roman Classicists. His leadership against Bernini's High Ba-

9 Montagu, *Algardi*, volume 1, 2-3.

10 Montagu, *Algardi*, volume 1, 160. Montagu has pointed out that some of Bernini's working methods arose from his abilities as a salesman rather than any inherent academic qualities.

11 David L. Bershad, "Domenico Guidi," *The Dictionary of Art*, volume 23, 814.

12 Montagu, *Algardi*, vol. 1, 170. Montagu bases her assumption on the fact that Guidi, who was entitled by Algardi's will to take what he wanted from the studio, was subsequently commissioned to complete several portrait busts for the commissioning Rondanini family.

13 Montagu, *Algardi*, vol. 1, 170-171.

14 Montagu, *Algardi*, vol. 1, 168.

15 David L. Bershad, "Domenico Guidi and Nicolas Poussin," *The Burlington Magazine*, 113 (September 1971): 544-545. Bershad notes that no less a mind than Carlo Cartieri, the 17th century archivist of the Castel Sant'Angelo and librarian to Cardinal Paluzzo Alteiri, thought enough of Guidi that he wished to write a Life of the Artist.

16 L. Pascoli, *Vite de' Pittori, Scultore, et Architetti Moderni*, 1730, I, 252, cited in R. Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism," 188.

17 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 189.

roque style eventually gave the classicist circle a modicum of influence in the Roman art world. Poussin's influence was predictably greater on painters such as Sacchi than on sculptors, however one sculptor who seems to have taken Poussin to heart was Algardi. His sculptures, imbued with Classical restraint and austerity, must have been admired by the Frenchman.[18] The French aristocracy was much taken by the idea of Imperial Rome as a metaphor for their own enlightened and absolutist rule, and as such saw Rome and her artists as a connection to this glorious past. Consequently, Roman sculptors were tempted to take lucrative offers from French patrons, and Algardi was courted by Louis XIII in 1639.[19]

The flattering offers from the French monarchy were declined, although Algardi remained predisposed toward French ideas of Classicism. It was in Algardi's studio that Guidi probably met Nicolas Poussin. Only two years after Algardi's death, Guidi was working on three herm statues, after Poussin's wax models, for the gardens of Versailles[20] (Figure 7). It may be assumed that it was Guidi's association with Poussin that put him in contact with the French Academy in Rome. In fact, his friendship with Poussin may have led him to increased involvement with the Academy of St. Luke, the official guild of Roman artists. The high point of Guidi's involvement in the Academy of St. Luke was from 1670 to 1675, when he served as the *Principe* of the organization.[21] It was in this position that Guidi came to interact on equal terms with Charles Le Brun, Louis XIV's Minister of Cultural Affairs.[22] In a significant political move, Guidi suggested in 1675 that Le Brun become the next *Principe* of the Academy of St. Luke.[23] Le Brun could not leave Paris, so Charles Errand, the Director of the French Royal Academy in Rome, took the post in his place. Because of this turn of events, Guidi secured for himself an appointment as one of four Rectors of the French Royal Academy in Rome. This appointment to the French Royal Academy would have, according to Rudolph Wittkower, "greatly strengthened the power of French academism which had been growing in Rome since the foundation of the French Academy there in 1666."[24]

The French commitment to Roman artists was, at least in theory, very strong. In 1680, Colbert, Louis XIV's Minister of Public Works, wrote to Charles Errand, the Director of the French Academy in Rome, that "it would be particularly desirable that you invite Cavalier Bernini to come and see the students at work, and also Carlo Marati [*sic*] and Domenico Guidy [*sic*], to whom the king has done the honour of appointing them his Painters and Sculptors."[25] That Colbert sought the opinion of Bernini, who fifteen years earlier had made a brief trip to France, as well as the opinion of Guidi, shows that the French hoped to gain expertise through their connection with the elite artists of Rome. The association with Guidi, in particular, was probably an attempt to find, as Wittkower says, a "refined academic interpretation of antiquity."[26] For Guidi, the desire to be connected with them was surely based on a desire for status and profit. He eventually gained large commissions from Louis XIV. One such example of a large-scale sculptural commission carried out by Guidi for the French monarchy is *Allegory of the History of France Holding a Portrait of Louis the XIV* from 1680-1686 (Figure 8).

The pre-eminent Guidi scholar David Bershad points out that "though Guidi's style does not reflect a 'classical approach,' certainly his work, thought and friends indicate a decided preference for the academic."[27] It is important to note that though he was connected with the Academy of St. Luke and the French Academy in Rome, Guidi was by definition the antithesis of an academic sculptor. The French Academy believed that an emphasis on artistic theory, mythology, religious study, drawing, and, above all, the emulation of the Classical past and the Renaissance masters could instruct a student in the making of fine art. The irony of the French patron seeking Roman sculptors to interpret their concepts of antiquity was that in Rome, according to Wittkower, "the foundation (for sculptors) was an accumulation of practical rules and personal observations, often handed down verbally."[28]

Perhaps the fact that Guidi's 'work, thought and friends' seemed to indicate a growing academism says more about Rome in the waning years of the seventeenth century than about the sculptor himself. By the last quarter of the century, the fiery, raw bravura talent and imagination that Bernini had introduced to Rome during the early days of Urban VIII's pontificate was gone. Increasingly, Louis XIV and his ministers looked to their own artistic apparatus to provide them with a proper interpretation of the Classical past, rather than entrusting this most important task to foreigners. Ultimately, when Rome lost the creative genius of Bernini, she could no longer compete for the title of art center of the world. Guidi provides a crucial link between the end of Rome as an artistic mecca and the dawn of French artistic dominance.

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18 Montagu, *Algardi*, vol. 1, 145. Though Montagu stresses that Algardi is "not classical, but lyrical," she does admit that "Algardi observes certain classic principles."

19 Montagu, *Algardi* 78.

20 Bershad, "Guidi and Poussin" 547. Bershad points out, "It is. . .not surprising that after the death of Algardi, Poussin should turn to the favorite student of that sculptor to execute the three herms."

21 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 189.

22 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 189.

23 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 189.

24 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 189.

25 Montagu, *Roman Baroque Sculpture* 11. Guidi and Marrati were never given a pension as Bernini was, and thus the distinction of being appointed Painters and Sculptors to the king was completely honorary.

26 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 190.

27 Bershad, "Guidi and Poussin" 547.

28 Wittkower, "Domenico Guidi and French Classicism" 188.

Figure 1. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, *Bust of Cardinal Scipione Borghese*, marble, 1632, Rome, Galleria Borghese. Photo Courtesy of Casa Editrice Bonechi Srl.

Figure 2. Domenico Guidi, *Bust of Pope Alexander VIII*, bronze, 1691,Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 3. Alessandro Algardi, *Bust of Innocent X*, terracotta, *c*. 1650, Rome, Palazzo Odescalchi.

Figure 4. Domenico Guidi, *Bust of Innocent X*, bronze, *c*. 1654-70, Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 5. Alessandro Algardi, *Bust of Cardinal Paolo Emilio Zacchia*, terracotta, *c*. 1650, Victoria and Albert Museum. Photo Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Figure 6. Attributed to Domenico Guidi, *Bust of Cardinal Paolo Emilio Zacchia*, marble, *c*. 1654, Museo Nazionale de Bargello. Photo Courtesy of Scala/Art Resource.

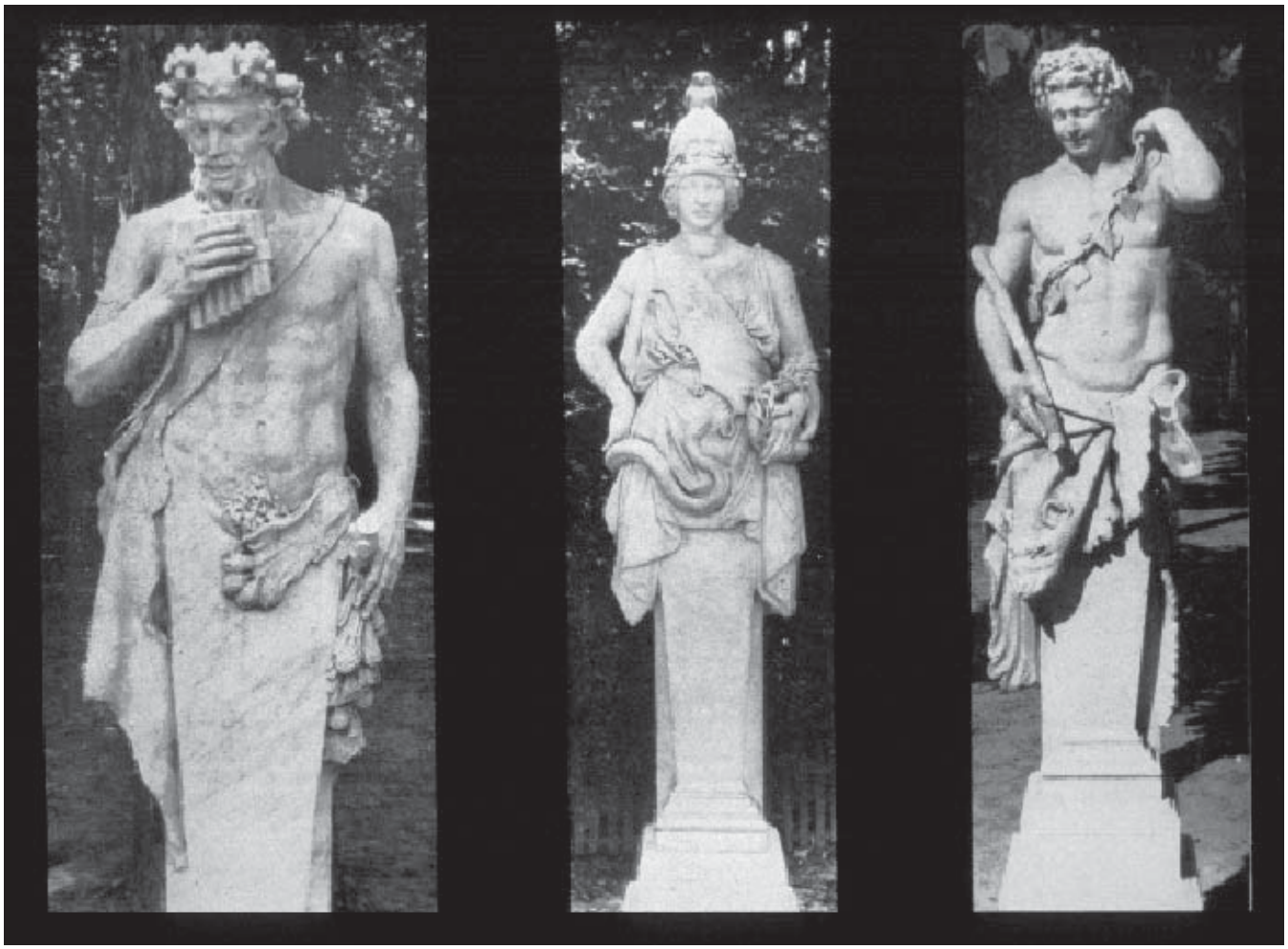

Figure 7. Domenico Guidi, *Pallas, Faunus, and Pan*, marble, between 1656 and 1661, Quincornces du Midi, Versailles.

Figure 8. Nicolas Dorigny, engraving after Domenico Guidi, *The Fame of Louis XIV*, from C.F. Menestrier, *Histoire du régne de Louis le Grand par les médailles*, Paris, 1693. Photo by permission of Houghton Library, Harvard University.