A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN

THE IMAGES OF

JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES AND

DAVID AND GOLIATH

IN THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN ART

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PERIOD 1400-1700

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Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to conduct a comparative study analysing the main similarities and differences in the visual arts between two biblical subjects - namely that of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath with special reference to the period 1400-1700 when the greatest number of images was produced, although other periods are also discussed. While carrying out this comparison, the thesis elucidates the reasons why some artists and sculptors produce a near faithful rendition of events described in the Bible and the Apocryphal Book of Judith, while others fail to depict anything remotely true to the biblical texts.

The greater emphasis of this study is on works of art in Western Europe where the discussion centres around differing treatments given to these subjects by Northern artists (especially Protestant ones), vis-à-vis their contemporaries in Catholic countries. Consideration is given to the images as regards patronage and the intellectual and religious climate of the period in which the artist worked especially during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Judith and David are examined throughout this period in terms of their respective roles in salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*). The different typological interpretations and functions of the contents of the paintings and sculptures are also discussed.

In order to ascertain how far artists and sculptors have consulted the biblical texts and early source material, the images are evaluated under separate headings which are subdivided into different "types" which appertain to both Judith and David. These can be categorised as images of Judith and David together, as a personification of certain virtues, heroic and triumphant portrayals, contemplative images and where the painter or sculptor uses his or her face for either Judith and David or Holofernes and Goliath.

The conclusions show that during the Middle Ages artists conformed to the exegeses of the Early Church Fathers and later theologians in manuscripts, illustrations, sculptures and wall paintings. Later, especially during the Reformation (1534), it was in the Protestant North (particularly in Flanders, Netherlands, Germany and Sweden) that artists of the sixteenth century adhered to biblical texts disseminated by woodcuts, prints and Bibles. This trend of near textual accuracy in pictorial representations is continued during the Counter-Reformation in the North when Protestant painters such as Rembrandt still closely followed the biblical narratives, while in the South (especially in Italy) artists observed the tenets of the Counter-Reformation, the teachings of the newly canonised saints and the individual tastes of patrons.

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head of Goliath and
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Preface and Acknowledgements

This work is the culmination of several years of research, which has taken me from Oslo in the north to the island of Malta in the south, to Baltimore in the United States in the west and to Istanbul in the east. Many individuals in numerous countries have assisted me in completing this project and I therefore have many people to thank for making this thesis possible.

I should like to begin by thanking Dr. Alison Jasper of the University of Glasgow who first suggested and later persuaded me to combine my interest in history of art with that of theology and to examine the ways in which artists and sculptors used or chose to ignore biblical texts in their representations of the story of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath.

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Miss Claire Pace of the Department of History of Art for skilfully guiding me through the intricacies of thesis writing and being always available (even during her summer holidays) to discuss this thesis throughout its development. My special thanks go to the Reverend Alastair Hunter of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies who offered invaluable help on the theological side of this dissertation.

I also want to extend my thanks to my colleagues at the University of Surrey, especially Dr. Kathryn Brown who has offered her creative and enthusiastic support throughout, to Ann Clements, Nora Courtney, Daphne Joynes, Irene Luna, Hilary Underwood, Brenda Whitaker and Joy Wright who have either provided photographs or shared their ideas on the pictorial treatment of both Judith and David and have suggested many interesting points of view on the various types of images discussed. In addition to my colleagues, I should also like to thank my students who have borne with me, taken surreptitious photographs of images of David and Judith on their travels - even if some of them turned out be headless when developed! I have also been encouraged by the inspiration that this project has given, not only to my own students, but to those of other Universities to whom I have lectured.

Several others have contributed in various ways. I would like to single out for special mention Dr. Pamela Sue Anderson of the University of Sunderland who gave me much valuable theological help on the section dealing with prayer and to Frances Kay, a friend from my Courtauld Institute days, who cheerfully accompanied me on a memorable visit to Florence. To colleagues and friends from the

Chapter 1

Introduction

The American writer, Blanche Roosevelt, wrote an article in the *Quiver* of 7 April 1866 in praise of her friend Gustave Doré (1832-1883) and his illustrations for the Doré Bible.[1] In this, she states that Doré was so well acquainted with the biblical texts that he gives us a true picture of the events described in the Bible, unlike the other Old Masters, who be they French, Italian, Spanish, Flemish or Dutch, with hardly an exception, misrepresented the sacred stories. According to Blanche Roosevelt these other artists' paintings all contain "some glaring inconsistency, some palpable blunder, in the scene itself or in its accessories." Doré, on the other hand, "grasps its meaning", is moved by the circumstances surrounding the biblical characters seeing their passions, joys, sorrows with a realism unapproached by other painters. He endows his works with "an intense vitality", grandeur and oriental splendour without overloading his pictures with extraneous objects. In her opinion Doré's works have a realism unapproached by other painters so that he "becomes a valuable and suggestive commentator on the text."[2]

With this article in mind, I have chosen to focus in this thesis on just two of the stories - namely, that of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath -

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[1] The Doré Bible which was first published in 1865 was illustrated by Gustave Doré with 241 illustrations of biblical scenes. See <u>The Doré Bible Illustrations 241 Plates by Gustave Doré, with a New Introduction</u> by Millicent Rose, New York, 1974.
[2] Ibid., p. vii.

two of the greatest decapitation narratives in Scripture, both illustrated by Doré.[3]   One of my aims in this dissertation will be to examine her views and consider how far her statement is true or false i. e. that there is hardly an Old Master who has not misrepresented the sacred story.   I shall also attempt to unravel the reasons why artists have, if this is indeed the case, failed to produce a faithful rendition of the events as described in the Bible.   I shall also see if artists have deliberately distorted the biblical text to suit their own or their patrons' tastes or the ideas prevalent at the time.

My main reason for selecting these two biblical figures, Judith and David, is firstly because there is a tremendous variety of pictorial examples available to the scholar and art historian, especially during my chosen period 1400-1700 when the largest number of images was produced.   There are several reasons for this; not only were these artists and sculptors attracted to these compelling and vivid narratives concerned, as they were with violence, power, murder and sex (especially in the case of Judith) which evoked artistically imaginative images, but for historical, theological (especially typological) and political reasons.   Secondly, I am interested in the complex and many-sided personalities of Judith and David, and how these have influenced the artist. Many of these characteristics are similar but there are also many differences: the most obvious being that one is female and the other is male. Both these narratives call for an analysis in relation to the imagery and the biblical text and

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[3] Ibid., for illustrations see pp. 75, 142 and 143.

I therefore propose to examine how far the text has motivated the artist or sculptor and if so, how deeply or how far it has affected the finished artistic representation.

The other principal objective of this dissertation will be to conduct a comparative study which will analyse the links and differences between the images of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath in the visual arts from the third century AD in the case of David, and from the eighth century for Judith until the twentieth century, in several countries and in various media. As can be seen these representations cover an enormous time span, and although I shall be referring to earlier and later examples of these two subjects, the greatest emphasis will be, as stated, on the period 1400 - 1700. Both will be examined from an interdisciplinary angle. The different typological interpretations and their respective roles in salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) will also be discussed.

I shall investigate the art historical, iconographical, political and theological reasons for this concentration, while at the same time looking closely to see how painters, illustrators, sculptors and craftsmen have interpreted the biblical texts and other early source material and how far they have diverged from them. I shall also specifically examine Blanche Roosevelt's views that, compared to Doré, other artists' work contains inconsistencies and blunders and that they rarely produce "a faithful picture of the recorded event" from the text. I shall try to discover how many other artists can be considered,

(according to Blanche Roosevelt), like Gustave Doré, to be "valuable and suggestive commentator(s) on the text" and why it is that some artists fail to reproduce a faithful picture of the event described when they had access to the written word. What does she mean by a "faithful picture" and what is she comparing it to? Is she, in fact, right in her statement when she says that Gustave Doré is "evidently well acquainted with the text he illustrates. He grasps its meaning . . . " when we scrutinise his illustrations of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath in the Doré Bible? The question of whether the visual images themselves have influenced the literary interpretation of the text will also be explored.

The greatest emphasis will be on works of art in Western Europe (by this I mean Scandinavia (where the main concentration will be on Sweden because there are virtually no images of Judith in Norway and Denmark, many having been destroyed at the Reformation) in the north, the British Isles, mainland Europe (Netherlands, Italy, France, Germany and to a lesser extent Spain and Portugal where artists were mainly concerned with depicting events from the New Testament, martyrdoms and visions of saints, especially during the Counter-Reformation), and the island of Malta in the south. I shall discuss the different treatments given to these subjects by Northern artists (especially Protestant ones) vis-à-vis those of their contemporaries in the Catholic countries of Europe.

I shall also look into the question of why the story of Judith and especially portrayals of her with Holofernes are more often depicted in different media in art than those of David and Goliath. Why should Judith be more popular than David in the visual arts? I believe that these artists, in particular male ones, were captivated by the sheer bravado and daring exhibited by a beautiful unarmed woman who "uses her sexuality to her own advantage" or of her people, deceives a brutal and powerful general, killing him in cold blood and thereby liberating her home town.[4] While it is considered normal for men to kill men, (David slaying Goliath) the fact that it is Judith, a defenceless widow, who murders Holofernes, gives these painters an added incentive to exhibit their pictorial and creative skills. Additionally, Judith is an ambiguous figure who exercises an endless fascination with her complex personality and androgynous nature. Throughout the story Judith seems to move quite effortlessly between the traditional heroic masculine warrior-image, displaying physical strength and fearlessness, and the more feminine characteristics of beauty and sexuality which she also uses to good effect in overpowering Holofernes. Yet, remaining throughout the story, as we know from the text, a chaste and pious widow and therefore a non-participant in any sexual activities which were available to her, had she so desired, by not engaging in any sexual act with Holofernes, she becomes a kind of asexual being. On the one hand, she is devout, modest, feminine, chaste, gentle, thoughtful, kind, generous (distributing her wealth before she dies) and considerate showing all the best

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[4] Toni Craven, "Tradition and Convention in the Book of Judith", Feminist Theology A Reader, ed. Ann Loades, 1990, p.32.

sides of womanhood - attributes which we associate with the purity of the Virgin Mary, - while at the same time she is also a scheming, conniving, cunning temptress (more like a second Eve). She is deceitful, dishonest, a liar, a ruthless assassin and a shameful flatterer while also being eloquent, self-assured, brave and wise. In this thesis I shall therefore study how artists, sculptors and others come to terms with these different aspects of her character and how she has been portrayed in the history of art, from a theological, political, civic and erotic point of view.

David too is human and like Judith an ambiguous character full of contradictions. He is the archetypal masculine hero - a confident and valiant fighter both in battle and in unarmed combat - whilst also displaying some more feminine aspects such as his love of beauty (and here I think we can include his feelings for both Jonathan and Bathsheba), poetry and music. Typologically, he occupies an equal position to Judith and shares many of the same characteristics with her.[5] The iconography of both Judith and David encompasses an enormous variety of different images. David's repertoire covers, not only scenes from the story of David and Goliath (including the Triumph of David), but numerous examples from other episodes of David's life, e.g. David anointed by Samuel, David killing the lion and the bear, David playing the harp before Saul, David and Abigail, David dancing before the Ark, David and Nathan and David and Abishag. These will not be covered here. It

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[5] I discuss these characteristics in greater detail in Chapter 2.

should be pointed out that David is depicted less often than Judith in sensuous and erotic interpretations. A rather basic explanation for the popularity of this type of image is no doubt due partly to the fact that most artists and their patrons are or were male. They would therefore have a greater interest in painting the sensual, voluptuous and glamorous side of Judith, rather than the homo-erotic David as this would only have had a limited appeal to a small band of cognoscenti. However, we must not forget that the stories of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath are equally popular with women artists and I therefore propose to examine the way in which they too deal with these biblical themes and to see if they treat the subject any differently from their male colleagues. Recent feminist interpretations will be brought in where relevant.

In order to discover the reasons for the abundance of works of art of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath, especially during the period 1400 - 1700, the thesis will consider with reference to particular images: -

a) the conditions of patronage, where known, as well as the function of particular works of art which might determine the way in which they are presented;

(b) the related question of the artist's own religious affiliation (where known and; if not, this may have to be speculative);

(c) the intellectual and religious climate in which the artist worked - this will be of particular importance during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.

Although the main focus will be on paintings and sculptures there is also a vast cornucopia of other fine art objects which contain images of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath and which I shall refer to occasionally, as and when necessary, in order to make a point. The variety of the different media in which these are to be found is also remarkable. Not only do we come across them reproduced in paintings (fresco, canvas and panel) and sculpture, but they are also widely depicted among the fine arts in silver, enamel, wax,[6] ivory,[7] majolica,[8] glass,[9] hat-badges,[10] stained-glass, tapestries, inlaid marble pavements, wood carvings,[11] furniture,[12] woodcuts, drawings and engravings, seals[13] and playing cards (in the case of Judith[14]).

I will be concentrating on those representations of David which are directly connected with his exploits on the field of battle with Goliath and the events immediately following this encounter. However, there are many other

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[6] Wax tablet, Judith with the Head of Holofernes, Italian, late sixteenth century, Wallace Collection, London, see J. G. Mann, Wallace Collection Catalogues, Sculpture, 1931 with supplement 1981, p. 184, pl. 97.
[7] Ivory statuette, David with the Head of Goliath, Italian, sixteenth century, Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.
[8] Tall screw-topped flagon painted with the Beheading of Goliath by David, on one side and an army (either the Israelites or Philistines) on the other, from Urbino, sixteenth century, Wallace Collection, London. See A. V .B. Norman, Catalogue of Ceramics 1. Pottery, Maiolica, Faience, Stoneware, 1976, p. 199.
[9] Glass dish, Judith putting the Head of Holofernes in a Sack, 1551, sold at Sotheby's, 26.6.1978.
[10] English gold, repoussé, chased and enamelled hat-badge with Judith with the Head of Holofernes, from the 1530s, Wallace Collection, London. (Inventory no. XII A62).
[11] Judith presenting the Head of Holofernes from the Choir Stalls of the Fugger Chapel in S. Anna, Augsburg (1508-18). Staatliche Museen Skulpturen Sammlung, Berlin. See Schindler, Augsburger Renaissance, 1985, p. 40.
[12] French cabinet with figure of Judith, c. 1675, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.
[13] Seal of the Frawirten Family, German, 1532, British Museum, London.
[14] See Jules R. Block," Fast Shuffle", American Way, 12.8, (August 1979), pp. 91-97 and W. Gurney Benham, Playing Cards, London, n.d. pp. 80-81.
Judith was chosen by French card manufacturers as the Queen of Hearts because Uzziah says that she has "a true heart" (Judith 8:28) and that her "heart's disposition is right" (Judith 8:29) (The Holy Bible New Revised Standard Version, 1989).

types of David which I shall not be discussing. These include those images where David appears as-

a) a musician and composer of the psalms (i.e. holding a harp, or lyre or playing bells or the organ),[15] (as we would expect most of the examples of David as a musician and singer are to be found in medieval Bibles, Books of Hours and painted on early organ shutters);

b) a young shepherd (with a lamb);[16]

c) a prophet (with a beard);[17]

d) a king of Israel (with a crown), (these last two are most frequently to be seen on or inside medieval churches and cathedrals);

e) a combination of two or more of David's roles, for example as a king and prophet with a crown and a thick swarthy beard as befitting a prophet;[18] or as a king and musician with a crown and a musical instrument;[19]

f) a young clean-shaven warrior holding a spear and trampling on a two headed snake - a symbol of evil - as a precursor of Christ ;[20]

g) an angel with outstretched wings and a harp, as a reference to

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[15] David playing the Harp in the Psalter of Westminster Abbey, c. 1200, Royal Ms. 2A XXII, f. 14b and the thirteenth century King David Playing the Organ, miniature from the Rutland Psalter, Add Ms. 62925, f.97v. Both are in the British Library, London. This subject was immensely popular in Britain and Scandinavia during the Middle Ages (see the sculpture of David with a Lyre from the Jesse Screen of 1360 at the Priory Church, Christchurch, Hampshire, the wall painting from c. 1330 of King David playing the Harp at Longthorpe Tower, Cambridgeshire and the statue of David with a Lyre from the south porch of the cathedral of Skara, Sweden).
[16] David and his Flocks, Paris Psalter, f. lv, Ms. Gr.139, early tenth century, Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
[17] Andrea Pisano's The Prophet David, c.1340, Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Florence.
[18] The polychrome bust of David, executed in Swabia in about 1470 and now in the Department of Sculpture, Berlin.
[19] King David from the Puerta de las Platerias, Santiago de Compostela, Spain.
[20] The Durham Cassiodorus (Durham Cathedral Library (Ms. B. II. 30, f.172v) dating from the second quarter of the eighth century.

Psalm 139:7 ("If I take the wings of the morning . . ." (*sicut lux aurorae*

oriente sole mane) and II Samuel 14:17 ". . . for my lord the king is like the

angel of God, discerning good and evil")[21] and

h) a voyeur watching Bathsheba bathing from the roof of the house.[22]

As regards Judith, I shall not be discussing any portrayals which are

unrelated to the apocryphal story, but focusing on those images which show

her, either together with David (paired or as part of a cycle), or as the

personification of certain virtues such as justice, temperance and humility

which I have called the "virtuous images" and the "evil images" where she acts

as a salacious murderess and sexual temptress; as an heroic and triumphant

heroine who saves her nation from the aggressive and bloodthirsty Assyrian

Holofernes; as a contemplative figure reflecting on the head of Holofernes or

where the artist uses her face or that of Holofernes as a self-portrait. I shall not

be considering the multitude of representations of Judith, either with or without

her maid, placing the head of Holofernes in a sack or other receptacle, unless it

is specifically relevant to the argument. Although mainly concerned with

Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath, I shall also evaluate Judith's role

in the realm of modern feminist theory, together with her relationship to other

female biblical heroines. When comparing Judith with these other females it

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[21] For other rare examples of David as an Angel and the theological reasons for this image, see Paul Binski, "The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile" Art History, Vol. 20, No. 3, Sept. 1997, p.363 and fig. 13.

[22] Lucas Cranach the Elder, David and Bathsheba, 1526, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, for comments and an illustration see Picture Gallery Berlin, Catalogue of Paintings 13th - 18th Century, 2nd revised edition trans. by Linda B. Parshall, Berlin-Dahlem, 1978, p. 125.

becomes immediately obvious that she is unique and presented differently from other women in the Bible or the Apocrypha. She is frequently classed with Jael, who aided the fleeing Sisera, then killed him by driving a tent peg through his skull; Delilah, a Philistine, who emasculates Samson by ordering one of her men to cut off his hair, wherein lay his strength and the warrior Queen Tomyris, (who placed the head of Cyrus which she has just decapitated into a vat of blood). As well as being cunning, these women who attacked the heads of their male victims and became, as Réau says, *kephalophorai*, were also regarded as examples of the Triumph of Christian Virtues.[23] Judith is also linked to Esther, the wife of King Ahasuerus, who like her, saved the Jewish people and with whom she is often shown. Judith is depicted with Jael and Esther in an engraving by the Augsburg painter Hans Burgkmair (1473-1531) of about 1519 from a cycle of Nine Worthies entitled Drei Gut Jüdin (Three Good Jewesses), B. VII 219.67 (figure 1), although unlike them she did not lead her people but carried out an act of personal heroism.[24] Incidentally, David also appears in similar series of prints of Male Worthies, together with other eminent figures such as Joshua, Samson and Solomon. Even in our own century Judith stands erect with Jael, Ruth and Rebekah on the mahogany base supporting the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church at Mosta on the island of Malta (figure 2) where all four women act as a prefiguration of the Mother of God.

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[23] Louis Réau, Iconographie de l'art chrétien, 3 vols, in 6, Paris, 1955-59, p.330.
[24] The other women in the Burgkmair cycle are:
    Christians - Helena , Brigetta and Elizabeth
    Pagans - Lucretia, Vetura and Virginia.

In addition to Judith, (and those mentioned overleaf) I shall also include in this dissertation the lascivious dancer, Salome, who demanded the head of St. John the Baptist on a charger (another decapitation image which, as we shall see, is often confused with that of Judith in art); although the execution in Salome's case is committed by a man, it was under her mother, Herodias', request. The relationship of these women to Judith will be contrasted when it is deemed necessary to do so.

Whilst making a comparison between Judith and David throughout this dissertation, noting their similarities and differences and ascertaining how artists have dealt with these two stories through the biblical texts, I shall also analyse the images under separate chapter headings which will be subdivided into different "types" which I think best help to pin-point the comparisons between these personages.

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Chapter 2

The Biblical Texts: The Relationship between Image and Text

The first part of this chapter will be devoted to the study of the biblical texts, in this case the Apocryphal Book of Judith and the First Book of Samuel, together with an examination of some early source material. I shall conclude the chapter with a comparison between Judith and David.

1. The Book of Judith

The apocryphal Book of Judith, consisting of sixteen chapters was named after the heroine of the story, Judith - (*Ioudith* in Greek and *yhwdyt* in Hebrew - meaning Jewess). It was put together towards the end of the second century BC, probably during the Macabbean Revolt and subsequently was not included in the Hebrew Canon. We do not know who wrote the Book of Judith but Toni Craven even goes so far as to ask whether this book, with its strong feminist content, could have been written by a woman.[1] Flavius Josephus does not mention the Book of Judith and there is no reference to it whatsoever in the Qumran texts. The story has long been the subject of endless discussions among scholars. To this day they are undecided as to how much of the story is a true historical account of actual events, how far it is a book of fiction or whether it is a novel based on historical fact. Certainly Capellus writing in 1689 thought that it

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[1] See Toni Craven, Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith, California, n.d., p. 121.

was "a most silly fable",[2] while Margarita Stocker refers to it in 1998 as "one of the most striking of the Old Testament Apocryphal stories".[3]

Until the Protestant and Catholic Reformations in the sixteenth century, the Book of Judith was regarded by Christians as canonical. Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, dismissed the Book as apocryphal calling it "an allegorical passion play" because he could see no historical basis for it. Although he said that it was not Holy Scripture, he believed that it was "good and useful for reading" and placed it at the end of his 1534 German translation of the Bible.

Luther maintained there was no town named Bethulia. Perhaps he was right because although the town of Bethulia is referred to in the text nineteen times, it does not appear anywhere else in the Bible. Nevertheless, the biblical description gives us (and artists and illustrators) a very good idea of its topography and location (Judith 4:6; 6:11; 7:12-13; 10:10-11 and 11:2). As we shall see, many of the geographical features mentioned have been incorporated by artists into their works.

Scholars are still undecided whether there is, or if there ever was, a town of this name. Charles Torrey is convinced that this town did exist which means that we are "dealing with reality and not fiction".[4] He thinks that Bethulia is the

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[2] See Capellus, *Commentarii et notae criticae in Vet. Test.*, Amsterdam, p.575.
[3] Margarita Stocker, Judith Sexual Warrior Women and Power in Western Culture, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998, p. 1.
[4] Charles Cutler Torrey, The Apocryphal Literature, Yale University, New Haven, 1945, p. 91.

town of Shechem, while others such as Enslin and Zeitlin do not agree because "Bethulia is high on the mountain; Shechem was not".[5] Metzger thinks it is strange that this important town is unknown.[6] Bethulia could be a corruption of the word *beth'el* (House of God) or *beth'eliyn* (House of Ascents) or *bethula* (Virgin). It could also relate to other place names and persons in the Old Testament Bethul, (Joshua 19:4); Bethuel (Genesis 22:22-23), the father of Rebekah; and 1 Chronicles 4:30. Toni Craven favours the translation "House of Ascents" because it encapsulates the hilltop location of Bethulia which played such a prominent part in this narrative.[7] Protestants, under Luther, maintained that there was no Assyrian general named Holofernes and that Judith simply means "Judea".[8] We can therefore ask ourselves whether we should consider these words to be deliberate modifications of historically plausible references so that the story is already an artistic fabrication even before artists began interpreting it into works of art? Should we therefore also regard this narrative as symbolic with the archetypal virgin Jewish woman acting as saviour? If so, this would then bind the interpretative schema even closer to the artists whom I shall discuss in the ensuing chapters.

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[5] Morton S. Enslin and Solomon Zeitlin, The Book of Judith, Leiden, 1972, p.80, n. 7.
[6] Bruce M. Metzger, An Introduction to the Apocrypha, New York: Oxford, 1957, p.51.
[7] Toni Craven, op cit., n.d., p.73.
[8] There are only two women in the Bible named Judith: the daughter of Beeri, the Hittite who married Esau (Genesis 26:34) and Judith, the pious and devout widow of Bethulia.

a) Some Early Source Material

When we examine the texts available to artists we must not forget that both the Eastern and Western Fathers of the Early Church also wrote about Judith, although the earliest writers could not have influenced the images until after the date of the first frescoes executed in 707 AD, in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome. So that although there were those in the Eastern Church who accepted Judith as canonical such as Clement of Alexandria (150?-?215 AD), the Council of Nicaea (325) and Junilius (fl. ca. 542), there were several who did not e.g. Melito of Sardis (fl.c.167), Origen (185?-254), Athanasius of Alexandria (293?-373) and Cyril of Jerusalem (315?-386). In the Western Church most of the Fathers accepted the book as canonical especially Hilary of Poitiers (315?-357?), St. Augustine (354-430) and the Council of Carthage (397). The earliest book commentary on the Book of Judith was written in the eighth century by Rabanus Maurus.[9]

b) The Narrative of Judith

I shall begin by outlining the story of Judith in the Apocrypha and the narrative of David and Goliath in the First Book of Samuel.[10] As Toni Craven has pointed out the story of Judith "is structured in two parts each with its own dominant character". Chapters 1 to 7 deal with Holofernes' military conquests,

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[9] Rabanus Maurus (776?-856) was born in Mainz, Germany of noble parentage. He was ordained a Benedictine monk on 12th December 814 and later became Abbot of Fulda. He became a Christian exegete, writing copiously, setting the biblical stories in their historical contexts and interpreting their hidden meanings. See M.F. McCarthy's article "Rabanus Maurus" in The New Catholic Encylopaedia, New York, 1967.

[10] Quotations from the Book of Judith are taken from The Anchor Bible, Judith, a new translation with introduction and commentary by Carey A. Moore, New York, 1985.

achieved through masculine brutality and Chapters 8 to 16 tell of the courageous exploits of the patriotic and religious Judith.[11]

The Book of Judith begins on a vast political canvas with the war waged by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylonia,[12] against Arphaxad, King of the Medes.[13] Nebuchadnezzar the tyrant, anxious to assert his authority against those in the west and south who refused to come to his aid, decisively orders Holofernes, the general in command of his armies and second in command to himself, to "march out against all the region to the west, for they ignored my call" (Judith 2:6). Holofernes then proceeds to do exactly this: invading, looting, plundering, slaughtering, killing and tearing down their holy sanctuaries and ordering the citizens to worship Nebuchadnezzar as their god, until the theme narrows to the specific threat against Judea and the town of Bethulia itself.

The Israelites prepare for war, close the mountain passes, cover themselves and their cattle in sackcloth and ashes. Those living in Jerusalem prostrate themselves before the temple and pray fervently to the God of Israel. The narrative says that "the Lord heard their prayers and looked kindly on their distress" (Judith 4:13). Holofernes, surprised at their resistance, summons the rulers of Moab and the generals of the Ammon. Achior, the leader of the Ammonites, gives Holofernes an account of the religious history of the Israelites

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[11] Toni Craven, op. cit., n.d., p.47.
[12] The biblical story is in error here because the historical Nebuchadnezzar did not rule the Assyrians, he was the Babylonian king who took Jerusalem in 587BC.
[13] Arphaxad was never King of the Medes.

and tells him about their Omnipotent God who rewards the faithful and punishes infidelity. Holofernes who does not trust Achior's allegiance, orders his servants to seize him and to take him to Bethulia where they leave him tied up at the foot of the hill. The Israelites rescue him and set him before the Elders of the town, who listen to the report of his conversation with Holofernes. Satisfied, Uzziah takes him to his house and gives a banquet for the Elders. Holofernes attacks Bethulia, seizes the water source and cuts off the water supply to the town, thereby hoping that the citizens would surrender through hunger and thirst because of lack of water.

It is at this point, when the cisterns are almost empty, the people are fainting in the streets, and Uzziah is preparing to surrender the town within five days, that salvation is at hand. Judith, the devout and beautiful daughter of Merari and widow of Manasseh, now enters the story at the beginning of Chapter 8. She sends her maid to summon Uzziah, Chabris and Charmis, the Elders of the town, to her house and scolds them for their lack of faith. She tells them to give thanks to the Lord and declares that she will "do something which will go down among the children of our people" (Judith 8:32) and that the town will be delivered within the allotted time of five days. "But you must not inquire into the affair; for I will not tell you what I am going to do until it is accomplished" (Judith 8:34).

With permission of the Elders, Judith prays to the Lord for help before undertaking her dangerous mission. She takes off the widow's sackcloth which

she has been wearing and prays for a beguiling tongue and strength. She bathes, arranges her hair, anoints herself with perfume and then, adorning herself in the finest clothing and jewellery "so as to catch the attention of the men who would see her" (Judith 10:4), sets off with her maid carrying a skin of wine, a bag of food and all her dishes, to the camp of the Assyrians.[14] By pretending to have deserted her people she gains access to their commander Holofernes and, on being brought before the general, declares that she knows "a way by which he can go and conquer all the hill country without risking life or limb of his men" (Judith 10:13). Underlying the theological pattern, however (as is so often the case in the Old Testament), is a story of lust, sexual provocation, power and violence. How pious is this Judith, the "pious widow of Bethulia"? Holofernes is so impressed by her beauty, intelligence and eloquence that he allows her to remain in the camp for three days, leaving it only at night to purify herself and to pray.

However, on the fourth day Holofernes sends Bagoas, his servant, to invite Judith to attend a banquet for his retinue without his commanders. She accepts his invitation with alacrity and when she enters the tent richly attired ("dressed to kill") and lies down alluringly on the lambskins which Bagoas has provided for her to recline on while eating, Holofernes is beside himself with desire and is eager to seduce her. However, drinking more and more wine "than he had ever drunk on a single day since he was born" (Judith 12:20), he falls into

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[14] Conveniently the bag which was to contain the decapitated head had to be large enough for all the food – roasted grain, dried fig cakes and pure bread. (Abigail had prepared the same food (but in vast quantities), together with wine for David and his men) (I Samuel 25:18).

a drunken stupor onto his bed. She, on the other hand, sensibly, does not partake of his wine, although encouraged by him to do so, but drinks and eats only the food which her maid has prepared.

Finally when the other guests have left, Judith finds herself alone with Holofernes, previously having asked her maid to wait outside until summoned. After praying silently, she quickly seizes her opportunity and takes down the sword from the bedpost, approaches the bed on which the inebriated Holofernes lies, grabs the hair of his head and with two swift blows to his neck cuts off his head. She then rolls the body off the bed and pulls the canopy from the bed. Making her exit from the tent she hands the decapitated head to her servant who puts it into the food-bag she had brought with her. They both escape from the camp at night and return to Bethulia before the deed is discovered. Because the Babylonians were used to seeing them depart at night "to pray" they were able to return unimpeded, with the bag containing the head of Holofernes.

On her arrival at the town Judith shows the head of the general of the Babylonian army to the people, telling them that it was with God's help that he was struck down by the hand of a woman. She then orders them to "take this head and hang it from the battlements of our wall" (Judith 14:1). She also says that before doing so they should bring Achior, the Ammonite to identify the head of Holofernes. When Achior sees the head he faints and falls at Judith's feet; he believes and is circumcised. The Israelites then hang the head on the walls and

when the Babylonians hear of the death of Holofernes they panic and are severely beaten by the Israelites as far as Damascus. Those left in the town of Bethulia fall upon the Assyrian camp and loot it making themselves very rich. The story ends with Joakim, the High Priest and the Israelite Council coming from Jerusalem to declare Judith a national heroine. She then leads the women in their dancing and all the people of Israel sing a song of praise and hymn of thanksgiving on the way to Jerusalem where they worship God and offer burnt sacrifices. After three months she returns to Bethulia to the house of her husband to live in chaste retirement to the end of her life. Before her death at the age of one hundred and five, she sets her servant free and distributes her property among her own and her husband's family.

2. The Books of Samuel

We learn about David from the biblical books of Samuel I and II and I Chronicles. Within these books lies the story of David and Goliath written in the First Book of Samuel Chapter 17, verses 12 - 54 and forming part of that history of David's life known as "David's Rise to Power". Unlike the Book of Judith, the two Books of Samuel and the Books of Kings are part of the Hebrew Bible.

a) The Narrative of David and Goliath

In the biblical account we read that David, the youngest son of Jesse, the Ephrathite, tends his father's flock while his three eldest brothers are away with

Saul fighting the Philistines in the Vale of Elah.[15] One day his father asks him to go to the camp with some parched grains and ten loaves of bread for his brothers, together with ten cream cheeses for their commanding officer. While visiting his brothers, the Philistine champion Goliath appears from out of the Philistine ranks and issues his frightening daily challenge to the Israelites to choose a man to come down to fight him to the death. It is hardly surprising that the Israelites are afraid because Goliath is over nine feet in height, dressed in a bronze helmet and coat of mail (weighing five thousand shekels), with greaves on his legs, carrying a javelin of bronze and a spear like a weaver's beam with a head weighing six hundred shekels. When David hears Goliath's words he asks what will be given to the man who kills the Philistine and takes away their disgrace. The people answer that King Saul will generously reward the man who kills Goliath, as well as granting his daughter's hand in marriage and exempting his family from service due in Israel. Saul then sends for the shepherd boy and David tells him bravely "your servant will go and fight with this Philistine" (I Samuel 17:32) but Saul tries to dissuade him by saying that he is only a lad, whilst Goliath has been fighting men all his life. David explains that he is not afraid of bears and lions because "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine" (I Samuel 17:37) (he has the same unshakeable belief in God's help as Judith). Saul then puts his own armour on David, a bronze helmet on his head, clothes him with a coat of mail and fastens a sword over his armour, but David

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[15] The account and quotations are taken from I Samuel in the New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible, Glasgow, 1989.

being unused to wearing such accoutrements is unable to walk and removes them. He picks up his stick, chooses five smooth stones from the brook and places them in his shepherd's bag which serves as a pouch. He takes his sling in his hand and walks out to meet the Philistine. (David uses his shepherd's sling which was an accepted weapon of war. We know that these were employed extensively by regular armies as can be seen from Assyrian monuments e.g. Sennacherib's palace (seventh century A D)).[16]

Goliath advances behind his shield-bearer who marches out in front. He has nothing but contempt for this boy and asks him if he thinks he is a dog because he comes out to fight with sticks. Full of confidence David tells Goliath that he will kill him, cut off his head and give the dead bodies of the Philistine army to the birds and wild beasts.

While Goliath approaches, David takes a stone out of his bag and slings it straight at the Philistine striking him on the forehead, where the stone sinks in causing him to fall face down onto the ground. David then runs towards Goliath, grabbing his sword, draws it out of its scabbard and cuts off his head. The Philistines flee when they see that their champion is dead. The Israelites then raise the war-cry and pursue the Philistines all the way to Gath and Ekron. On their return from chasing the Philistines the Israelites plunder the enemy camp. David then takes Goliath's head and carries it off to Jerusalem.

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[16] G.A.Buttrick et al, eds. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, 4 vols, Nashville: Abingdon. 1962, p. 115.

3. Similarities and Differences between Judith and David

Certain similarities and differences between the story of Judith and that of David become apparent straightaway. Both can be considered, in terms of accepted biblical criticism, as legendary characters. Both appear to perform the same bold and redemptive actions, but David and Judith serve differently as role models in Christian Europe. David is glorified in military terms whereas military women, such as St. Joan of Arc, are burnt at the stake.

a) Similarities

There are clear similarities in the texts and in the histories of interpretation. Each protagonist fought against a mighty foe and with the help of the God of Israel killed the enemy of the Chosen People and saved their nation. Judith and David are both liberators and, like heroes from ancient mythology, engage in a three part action: leaving their base, fighting with the opponent or enemy - in mythology this is usually the dragon, a three headed hydra or Medusa - and returning triumphantly to the place from which they first set out. (Other comparable tales of decapitation include that of the Babylonian god, Marduk, slaying the sea-monster Tiamat, in the epic of creation Enuma Elish which symbolises the victory of order over chaos, and that of the Canaanite dragon, Lothan, killed by Baal.) The decapitation of mythical sea-monsters of Canaan and Babylon is a motif repeated in the Old Testament. Psalm 74:13-14 speaks of God breaking the heads of dragons in the waters and crushing the heads of Leviathan - described in Canaanite texts as that slippery and wriggling serpent with seven heads).

David and Judith are both physically weak - Judith because she is "only" a woman and David a mere youth - and therefore unlikely candidates for this undertaking. Both are unsuitably clothed, David presumably clad in a simple tunic (the text does not specify what he was wearing after he removed Saul's armour) and Judith in her most festive clothes; both take on and kill an enemy of formidable size: Goliath - a giant - and Holofernes whose cruelty and aggression made him a powerful enemy to be reckoned with. The sword plays an important role in these heroic stories. David, although given a sword by Saul, rejects it out of hand and then commits the final act of execution with Goliath's own sword. Similarly Judith too uses the sword of her oppressor; she takes the sword from the bedpost and with two sharp blows cuts off the head of Holofernes. She obviously belongs to the weaker sex because, in spite of her God-given strength, it takes two blows to sever the head from his body. While we know that Judith employed Holofernes' own sword to kill Holofernes, it is by no means clear from the text whether David killed Goliath with a sling and a stone as recorded in 1 Samuel 17:50 where it is stated "so David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand," or that David just rendered him comatose so that the final execution and death was accomplished with Goliath's own sword. 1 Samuel 17:51 states that "he grasped his sword, drew it out of his sheath, and killed him; then he cut off his head with it". Therefore if David killed Goliath with the sword then this would make the parallel with Judith even more striking. In both stories, we read that the enemies (Assyrians and Philistines) turned and ran as soon as they knew that their hero was dead. Both

David and Judith go to Jerusalem - David taking the head of Goliath and Judith to give thanks and sing hymns of praise for her people's salvation.[17]

b) Differences

The first difference is that in Scripture David is profoundly canonical and Judith is not. Another obvious difference is that these two protagonists who commit these respective killings are sexual opposites - David is male and Judith is female - so that the actual initial methods which they use to accomplish their tasks are different.

Although Judith and David are both heroes in the legendary mode as stated above, David is cited as a hero of Israel in Ecclesiasticus 44 which begins:-

"Let us now sing the praises of famous men, our ancestors

in their generation",

while there is no mention of any of the female heroines of Israel.[18] Jael, Esther and Judith were considered to have obtained their victories through the use of their wily and seductive skills and as a direct reference to the notion that the first woman, i.e. Eve, was a temptress and seductress and therefore responsible for the downfall of man (including Adam). Nevertheless, Judith's importance is recognised by the author of the Book of Judith because not only does he or she

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[17] I discuss the typological aspects of David's and Judith's roles as Saviours (like Christ and the Virgin Mary) further in Chapter 3 when I look at the images of David and Judith together and in Chapter 4 when I examine the virtuous images of David and Judith.

[18] The Apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus was written about 180 BC.

list Judith's illustrious ancestors, the longest genealogy in the Bible, but he or she also says that her husband Manasseh belongs to her tribe and not the other way round, which is the more usual description. (Judith 8:2).

The actual length of their respective stories is also different. Judith, who has a whole book named after her, occupies nine chapters, leading up to and following the death of Holofernes, while David and Goliath have just forty-two verses devoted to their exploits.

Judith carries out her deed of execution in secret at night, while David engages in man-to man combat during daylight hours in the full glare of public cynosure. We should therefore ask ourselves whether this difference implies a subversive tradition in Christianity in which men seem to control overtly while women control secretly by devious means?

While both David and Judith have a deep faith in God as a deliverer, it is only Judith who feels compelled to pray, which she does on nine occasions. The first takes place before she leaves Bethulia when she covers her head with ashes and calls upon God in her hour of need. She prays "put into my hand - a widow's - the strength I need" and "grant me a beguiling tongue for wounding and bruising" (Judith 9: 9 and 13). Later she prays twice inside Holofernes' tent - once standing by the bed and again before removing the sword from the bedpost to decapitate her victim. The fact that Judith prays and that David does not, is probably because Judith's tale was composed within an expressly pious context

as an exemplary story of piety, whereas David, who is a great hero of legend, is therefore by right already supported by God.

David carries out his act alone while Judith is accompanied by her maid, who also plays a significant role in this narrative - to carry and prepare the food and later to assist in transporting the head back to Bethulia. In some pictorial representations of the decapitation scene, she is also a co-conspirator helping to hold down Holofernes while Judith beheads him.

Both David and Judith are brave. David is described in the Bible as "a man of valor" (I Samuel 16:18) and yet of the two protagonists I would like to suggest that it is Judith who is the more courageous because once David had defeated Goliath on the battlefield and cut off his head his task was accomplished, whereas Judith still had to remove the head from the body of Holofernes, smuggle it out of the camp past the guards and return with it to Bethulia before her deed was discovered.

David who is young wins his fight with Goliath by strength and by accurately aiming the stone (with God's help) at the Philistine. Judith achieves her heroism by ambiguous means - seduction, deception, temptation and other feminine wiles but we must not forget that she was also virtuous and God-fearing, which played a part in her victory, in addition to the fact that she was prosperous, good looking and intelligent.

It would appear that although David was a simple shepherd lad, like Judith, he is a complex character imbued with many of the same characteristics including deception, (perhaps the use of a sling could be seen as a deceitful form of fighting not really appropriate to the single combat envisaged by Goliath). David can also be said to "seduce" Goliath who imagines, falsely as it turns out, that he is approaching a weak and unarmed opponent in the same way that Holofernes is deceived and taken by surprise by the "defenceless" Judith. Not only do we have David and Judith being deceitful but the lustful Holofernes is also waiting for the time when he too can deceive Judith and "have relations with her", (Judith 12:16). David is a liar and tempter because he later seduces Bathsheba, deceives Uriah and through his treachery puts him in the forefront of the battle to be killed. He lies to various people and is even at one time in alliance with the Philistines. Like Judith he is a mixture of piety, physical beauty and a sexual danger to the opposite sex. However, whereas the altruistic Judith seeks no reward for herself, David's initial motive for taking on Goliath was for the prize offered to the man who killed Goliath i.e. great wealth, the hand of Saul's daughter in marriage and freedom from service in Israel for his whole family (I Samuel 17:25).

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Chapter 3

Images of David and Judith together

Judith and David often appear paired or together with other biblical heroes and heroines in the pictorial arts. This is hardly surprising because, as we saw in Chapter 2 they share many of the same characteristics - kill an oppressive enemy, save their People and are both hailed as heroes. In this chapter I shall draw attention to those occasions when artists and sculptors present these two biblical figures as a pair. I shall demonstrate that they were portrayed together firstly for religious and theological reasons where typologically they become prototypes of the Virgin Mary and Christ respectively or where they represent Good vanquishing Evil in the same way that Christ and the Virgin overcame Satan; secondly morally as an example of virtue; thirdly in a political sense as a warning against tyrants and fourthly for satirical and/or humorous reasons. I shall begin by looking at the religious aspects of these dual representations of Judith and David.

Although David is to be found painted on the walls of the catacombs dating from the third-century AD (for example standing alone holding a sling in the catacombs of Domitilla[1] and Callixtus in Rome) and on the south wall of the baptistery of the Christian building at Dura Europos in Syria, from about

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[1] For an illustration of David in the Catacomb of Domitilla see J. Wilpert, Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV bis XIII Jahrhundert, Freiburg, 1917, Vol IV, plate 55.

240 AD, killing Goliath, it is not until the eighth century that these two protagonists are paired as part of the decoration.[2]

For Judith, as far as I have been able to ascertain[3], there are no images of her in early Christian art before we encounter her together with David and Goliath in the fresco decoration executed under Pope John VII (705 - 707 AD) in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome as part of the Old Testament scenes on the transenna (screen enclosing a shrine).[4] Why should this be so? It is, I believe, possible that there may have been other examples of Judith (perhaps in ivories or manuscripts) which have been lost to us, or on wall paintings which may have been destroyed or which have not yet been recognised as representing Judith.

As we consider the frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua we should try to define why Judith and David have been chosen over all other biblical figures to be shown together in this church. What is the significance of the iconography shown here? I think they were specifically selected typologically as prototypes

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[2] For an illustration see The Excavations at Dura Europos. Final Report VIII. Part II, The Christian Building, 1967, plates 1 and 2.

[3] I have discussed the question of whether there are any earlier examples of Judith with various scholars including Prof. Per Jonas Nordhagen of the University of Bergen (see footnote 11), Kirsti Gulowsen of the University of Oslo and Professor Beat Brenk of the University of Basel. All are unaware of any earlier images of Judith. Both Professor Brenk and Mrs. Gulowsen have suggested various avenues for me to explore but none has as yet yielded any earlier examples of Judith. I am grateful to both Prof. Brenk and Mrs. Gulowsen for their help.

[4] We know that the frescoes were executed under Pope John VII from the *Liber Pontificalis - 'Basilicam itaque sanctae Dei genitricis qui Antiqua vocatur pictura decoravit'*. See Liber Pontificalis, éd.Duchesne, I, Paris, 1886, p. 385.

of Christ and the Virgin. St. Augustine was the first to compare David and Christ in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos XXXIII, 4,* where he states:-

> *"Et quod David prostravit Goliam, Christus est qui occidit diabolum. Quid est autem Christus qui diabolum occidit? Humilitas occidit Superbiam".*

> ("As David overcame Goliath, so did Christ slay the Devil.[5] Who is this Christ who slays the Devil? Humility slays Pride".)

In his *Sermo XXXVII* on Proverbs 31, 10 - 13, St Augustine[6] likewise associates Judith with the Virgin who also overcame the Devil.[7] St. Augustine's views and writings had such a profound influence on the visual arts that sculptors and artists soon began to incorporate his typological ideas into their works. Moreover, it is important to note that since this church in the Forum in Rome is dedicated to Mary, much of the decoration is devoted to the image of the Virgin and that it is therefore appropriate that Judith as her prototype should be illustrated here.[8]

Another explanation, accounting for the lack of images before the eighth century, may be that, until the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, the Virgin was not actually proclaimed to be the Mother of God, in line with the teachings of the Nestorians, so that if we are looking for any earlier examples reflecting

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[5] J. P. Migne, <u>Patrologia Latina</u>, Collection of Latin Fathers, 217 vols., Paris 1844-55, col. 37, line 302.
[6] J. P. Migne, op. cit., col. 38, lines 221-35.
[7] For sources of Virgin types triumphing over the Devil see Emerson Brown Jr., "Biblical Women in the Merchant's Tale: Feminism, Antifeminism and Beyond", <u>Viator</u>, 5, 1974, pp. 402-403.
[8] See Chapter 4 for a fuller account of the typological aspects of David and Judith where I deal with the virtuous and youthful images.

this new phenomenon of Judith acting as the pre-figuration of the Virgin Mary

it is unlikely that we shall discover any before the years 431 AD, so we must

restrict our search to the period 431-700 AD.[9] The Marian cult was particularly

strong in Rome especially around 700 AD under Sergius I. Pope John VII, one

of his successors, and under whose auspices these frescoes were painted, was

also a great devotee of the Virgin Mary. Not only did he consider himself to be

a "Servant of the Virgin", but he commissioned the Oratory of the Virgin in St.

Peter's, consecrated in 706, and an icon for Santa Maria Trastevere in Rome. He

was also responsible for many paintings of the *Theotokos* (the God-bearer) for

other religious buildings in the capital.[10]

Unfortunately many of the frescoes in Santa Maria Antiqua have been

damaged by neglect, the ravages of time and an earthquake, so that those

which remain are in a poor state of preservation. We are therefore indebted to

the documented research carried out and recorded by Professor Per Jonas

Nordhagen in 1968.[11]

However, in spite of the ruinous condition of these frescoes, I should

like to begin by critically analysing the two scenes of <u>David and Goliath</u> (figure

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[9] The Nestorians were followers of Nestorius (d. c. 450), patriarch of Constantinople, who denied that the Virgin Mary could be the "Mother of God".

[10] There is a dedicatory inscription left of the apse to this effect at Santa Maria Antiqua which says IOHANNES SERVU(S) SCAE M(ARIA). See W. de Grüneisen, Sainte Marie Antiqua, Rome, 1911, p. 83 and figs 56-57.

[11] J. P. Nordhagen, The Frescoes of John VII (AD 705-707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome, Rome, 1968.

3) on the western transenna and that of <u>Judith returning to Bethulia with the Head of Holofernes</u> situated on the northern transenna which faces the nave of this church.[12]

We do not know who worked out the iconography of the frescoes of the transenna but it is possible that Pope John VII played some part in choosing the subject matter. The unknown painter of this early portrayal presents David standing triumphantly in a stolid pose, legs apart, one foot resting on the prostrate body of Goliath. He has, I believe, adhered fairly faithfully to an early written text - possibly that of St. Augustine - because he depicts David, as Rushforth and others say, as "a prefiguration of the victory of Christ over the powers of evil".[13] This oppressive stance was to become the standard iconography of David especially during the Renaissance in Italy and during the Reformation in the North. This artist sets the conflict between David and Goliath in a landscape with stepped terraces and closely follows the biblical account in I Samuel 17:39 which recounts how David took off the armour which Saul had put on him. He paints the youthful David in a short tunic with a fluttering *chlamys*. David is also depicted accurately with a staff as stated in I Samuel 17:40 which says "that he took his staff in his hand". (The fresco at Dura Europa is similar, perhaps indicating the same original source.) The

[12] For an illustration see ibid, op.cit, pl. XCI.

[13] G .M. Rushforth, The Church of Santa Maria Antiqua. Papers of the British School at Rome I, 1902, p. 63., and W. de Grüneisen, Sainte Marie Antique, Avec le concours de C. Hülsen, G. Giorgis, V. Federici, J. David, Rome, 1911, p. 162,

J. Wilpert, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 694 and E. Tea, La basilica di Santa Maria Antiqua, Milan, 1937, p.269.

head of David has unfortunately been destroyed. This temptingly calls for a post-modern comment because it is ironical that the young and courageous David who cut off the head of Goliath should himself have lost his head in this fresco. This painter has omitted the sling, sword and the severed head of Goliath in contrast to later representations of this subject, where they are either held by David or are found lying on the ground. We do not know if the artist has intentionally chosen to ignore the text or whether he has failed to observe his instructions. However, in spite of these omissions we are in no doubt as to the identification of this figure because the letters GOLIATH are inscribed on the red background to the right of David.

Sadly, only two fragments of the other fresco, showing Judith and Holofernes, remain. Although we might have expected to find an image of Judith as a prototype for the Virgin, perhaps trampling on or spearing a devil (Satan) or demon, (a representation which became popular and meaningful during the Middle Ages) this artist has decided to illustrate the triumph of Judith and her maid returning to Bethulia with the head of Holofernes. The left-hand fresco with the town of Bethulia (originally there was an inscription (Bet) ULIA to this effect but this has now disappeared) is a direct reflection of late Roman art.[14] The two rows of people standing on the battlements of the city walls arranged in two rows are reminiscent of the *largito* scene on the north side of the Arch of Constantine in Rome from the 4th century AD and the relief

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[14] See J. Wilpert, op. cit., Freiburg, 1917, IV, pl.161, I.

on the base of the Obelisk of Theodosius I in the Hippodrome in Constantinople, c. 390 AD (figure 4)) showing the Emperor Theodosius with his entourage, musicians and dancers.[15]

This second fragment on the right appears to be more Byzantine than Roman in inspiration, with Judith in an almost frontal position walking towards the city walls. It contains an inscription CAPVT O (Iofernis) written vertically in white letters, which tells the viewer that the most important aspect of the story shown here was the decapitated head of Holofernes. This was not only proof of his death but meant that Judith, like the Virgin whom she prefigures, is also a *Heilbringer*, bringing salvation to her home town. Judith is wearing a lavish Byzantine court dress decorated with pearls and jewels and red shoes (although only one shoe is visible) with pearls on the straps, so that already in this early fresco we are witnessing truth to the narrative because Judith is presented in her best clothes.[16] Her maid, on the other hand, is clothed in a more sombre dalmatic.

As this is the earliest known example of an illustration from the Judith story, it is likely that the artist had very little or nothing to copy from or inspire him and it is therefore appropriate that he should have based his fresco on the

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[15] For an illustration of the Arch of Constantine see Ernst Kitzinger, Byzantine Art in the Making Main lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean Art , 3rd-5th Century, Mass, 1976, plates 2 and 4.
[16] These items of Byzantine Court Dress were pointed out to me by Dr. Ann Moffat of the University of Canberra at the International Conference on Byzantine Art, held in Copenhagen in August 1996.

standard iconography of Roman and Byzantine art. As far as the text is concerned, the painter has given the congregation a visual translation which describes how Judith and her maid approach the city gates with the head. Further to the right is the camp of Holofernes with the same green terraces as in the David fresco, thus forging a still closer iconographical link between David and Judith. The fresco is too damaged for a more conclusive analysis to be made of the subject matter, but what does appear to be universally recognised by scholars is that here Judith stands as a prefiguration of the Virgin.

It is significant that Judith's maid is already present in such an early representation and that is why I should like to consider her here before moving on to other portrayals of Judith and David. The maid is referred to in the biblical text on several occasions (Judith 8:10 and 33; 10:2; 13:9 and 16:23). She is nameless and yet she plays an important and vital role in the narrative. She is referred to in the apocryphal text as *abra* which when translated means "favourite slave". "Abra" does not speak but is obviously well respected by Judith because she is "in charge of all her property" and has a close relationship with her mistress. (It would seem that her position is similar to that of Eliezer and Abraham (Genesis 15:2 and 24:2) and that of Joseph and Potiphar (Genesis 39:4)). It should be noted that the narrator gives Judith a female slave which helps to maintain her virtuous and chaste image; a male servant would have been improper.

We first hear about the maid in Chapter 8 when Judith sends her to summon Uzziah, Chabris and Charmis to her house (Judith 8:10). Again when Judith is ready to leave she calls her maid and asks her to carry the food and utensils to the camp of the Assyrians. Bravely (because she put her own life in jeopardy) "Abra" accompanies her mistress and together they leave Bethulia, suffering the indignity of being stared at by all the men of the town as they go down the hill, and cross the valley where they are stopped by a large Assyrian patrol of soldiers who take them into custody. After Judith has been questioned, the two women are escorted by one hundred hand-picked men and taken to the quarters of their general Holofernes. While at the camp she prepares the special kosher food for her mistress. Every evening she goes out of the camp with Judith to pray. She waits as bidden outside Holofernes' tent while Judith decapitates Holofernes and then transports the head of the Assyrian commander back to Bethulia. (The biblical text does not actually say that Judith's attendant carries the head, but this is nearly always assumed to be the case by artists who show her with the head in a sack, basket or other receptacle.) No doubt, they are basing their images on the statement in the Apocrypha which says that Judith "gave Holofernes' head to her servant, who put it in her food sack" (Judith 13:9-10). One of Judith's last gestures, before her own death, is to set her trusty maid free in recognition of her faithful service.

This servant also changes her appearance and duties from one period and from one century to another, much in the same way as Judith and David,

as we shall see. In the Middle Ages she is usually shown as a young maiden or woman at Judith's side often carrying a sack; during the Renaissance she wears fashionable clothes of the period (but less colourful than those worn by Judith) and is often portrayed as a negress or mulatto at her mistress's side holding open the sack while Judith deposits the severed head into it. In the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries she is depicted as an old hag (often in the guise of a procuress) or as an equal assisting Judith to hold down the body of Holofernes while Judith callously murders him. In the eighteenth century she usually stands behind Judith in a subsidiary role, while in the nineteenth century she disappears from the images altogether as artists concentrate on the more overtly sexual aspects of the story.

Unlike Judith, David has no-one to help him. As a young boy he would not yet have aspired to a man-servant and therefore relies entirely on his own intuition, youthful strength and his faith in God. Holofernes, on the other hand, has a discreet and faithful servant in the guise of Bagoas, "the eunuch in charge of his personal affairs" (Judith 13:12). He acts as a go-between and is sent to invite Judith to the banquet, assists Holofernes and Judith (by providing the lambskin for her to lie on) and who thoughtfully dismisses all those who had been attending Holofernes. Later he closes the tent from the outside after the party, (Judith 13:1), so that Judith and Holofernes can be left alone in the bedroom. The next morning he discovers the headless body of Holofernes and has the unenviable task of announcing the death of his master and Judith's

escape to the Assyrians. Goliath too has a servant in the form of a shield-bearer who walked in front of him (I Samuel 17:41).

Contrary to popular supposition, paired images of Judith and David are relatively unusual in the history of art after the eighth century unless forming part of a larger architectural or ecclesiastical scheme. In these Judith and David are never far from each other because they both represent the same theological teachings. However, Judith and David continue to feature separately in medieval Bibles e.g. Judith in The Bible of Charles the Bald of c. 870, S. Paolo Fuori le Mura, Rome, in the tenth-century Bible of Patricius Leo, Vatican Library, Rome, in the Farfa Bible,Vatican, Rome, (eleventh century),the Munich and Parma Bibles and David who is still shown in the various roles and guises in a whole range of illuminated manuscripts, Psalters and Books of Hours.[17] Nevertheless there is one impressive Bible - the Winchester Bible - with events from the lives of both Judith and David, which although they appear on separate pages must be commented upon because it contains scenes relevant to this thesis. [18]

This large twelfth-century English Bible in four volumes, one of Britain's greatest national treasures, is kept in Winchester Cathedral Library. It was

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[17] The various roles and different guises of David are outlined on pages 11-12 of Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

[18] For a full account of the Winchester Bible see Claire Donovan, The Winchester Bible, London and Winchester, 1993.

probably commissioned by Henry of Blois, who was Bishop of Winchester from 1129-1171. Written on calf-skin parchment folios, this magnificent Bible contains biblical scenes from the Book of Genesis to the Apocalypse. Each book begins with a great illuminated or historiated initial in golds, blues, reds and greens below or alongside which the text is written. Although the text is complete, the illuminations are not. It was executed by one scribe in a firm even hand, with a few amendments added by another, and six illuminators and although they were engaged on it for fifteen years it is still unfinished to this day.

The Bible which comprises twenty-eight folios with four full-page illustrations, was produced in the scriptorium attached to the Cathedral Priory of Saints Peter and Paul and Saint Swithun in Winchester between 1160 and 1175. [19] It was intended to be read by and to the monks (*lectio divina*) at various times of the day in accordance with Archbishop Lanfranc's[20] wishes that all Benedictine monasteries in England should have a copy of the Vulgate Bible (translated by St. Jerome into Latin from the Greek) in their possession for their use and spiritual enlightenment.[21] It was this Bible which was used throughout the Western Church until the time of the Reformation in Northern Europe and it is this text which the monks in the scriptorium would have referred to in

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[19] The full page illustrations are:-
        1.The Morgan Leaf: Life of Samuel and Saul (MS 619 recto)
        2. The Morgan Leaf: Life of David (MS 619 verso)
        3. The Book of Judith (f. 331v), unfinished, Master of the Apocrypha Drawings
        4. The Book of Maccabees, (f.350v), unfinished, Master of the Apocrypha Drawings
[20] Claire Donovan, op. cit., p. 13.

order to make sure that the image which they were illustrating was as authentic and as close to the written word as possible.[22]

It therefore comes as no surprise to discover that the two folios containing the story of David and the one with the events from the Book of Judith both follow the biblical and apocryphal texts. The David story appears on the so-called "Morgan Leaf" (Ms 619) which was removed from the Winchester Bible and is now in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York.[23] The *verso* of this leaf illustrates events from the life of David and like so many manuscripts from this time has a consecutive narrative in three registers. The David and Goliath episode is shown in the top register (figure 5) where the medieval artist has, as we would expect, followed the Vulgate text to the letter by showing not only Goliath's lance or spear on the ground but a diminutive David with a pouch at his waist swinging a sling, confronting a gigantic Goliath fully armed with a shield and sword.

The Judith folio (f.331v) (figure 6) which prefaces the Book of Judith is similar to the David folio in that this too is arranged in three registers but unlike its bright dazzling colours and predominance of blues and reds, this folio is without colour. Nevertheless, there are stylistic similarities between the two pages, with both being confidently drawn with strong linear contours. The

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[21] The Vulgate consisted of the Old and New Testaments, two versions of the Psalms, the Apocrypha, the Epistles and St. John's Apocalypse.

[22] It is still used by the Roman Catholic Church today.

figures have stylised poses with a certain rigidity influenced by wall paintings and Byzantine art and throughout the artist, known as the Master of the Apocryphal Drawing, gives us an accurate visual rendition of the main episodes from the Book of Judith with the figures overlapping. This helps the eye to move across the page and to read the story in sequence from the scene in the top left hand corner where Holofernes orders his men to take Achior back to the camp of the Israelites, instead of which his men bind him to a tree; to the banquet given by Holofernes and his decapitation in the middle register and concluding with Judith presenting the head to the Elders at Bethulia and then standing triumphant in the centre of the battle with a shield framing her head like a halo, in the bottom register.

During the Middle Ages these beautiful Bibles, Books of Hours and Prayer Books, were largely intended for the use of ecclesiastics, princes and the aristocracy. However, in addition the most important task of medieval art was to illustrate the Christian Faith and making it available to the ordinary lay person who could not read, but who could be helped to understand the meanings of biblical stories, as he or she visited churches and cathedrals. E. Clive Rouse has pointed out that "all medieval churches in England were more or less completed painted".[24] It was not enough just to represent the great historical episodes from the Old Testament and the Life of Christ in stained-glass, wall paintings, reliefs and statues in these ecclesiastical buildings, but it

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[23] This was probably removed in 1820 when the book was rebound. See Claire Donovan op. cit., p. 33.
[24] E. Clive Rouse, Medieval Wall Paintings, 1991, p. 9.

became necessary for the visual image to be understood in different ways so that episodes from the Old Testament were seen as prefiguring forthcoming events in the New Testament. In this way Christianity was brought to the People so that they understood the medieval theological concepts inherent in the pictorial language. Not only were the majority illiterate but neither could they comprehend Latin or French - the languages in which Bibles, Books of Hours and Prayer Books were hand-written and illustrated. There were no printed books until the fifteenth century.[25] This period has been described by Emile Mâle as "didactic", but he also recognised that although the people understood the stories, gradually the symbolism and meanings contained in these images became lost so that "from the second half of the sixteenth century medieval art became an enigma".[26]

The congregation would therefore have been able to follow the biblical narratives from the lives of David and Judith as portrayed side by side in the two lancet stained-glass windows on the south wall of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, dating from c. 1248.[27] These spectacular windows (figure 7) crammed with scenes (because as Emile Mâle says the artist "stopped only when he ran out of space") ; can be read from left to right.[28] They are arranged, in a similar

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[25] The first printed Vulgate was the Mazarin Bible which was probably completed in 1455.
[26] Emile Mâle, Religious Art in France The Thirteenth Century: A Study of Medieval Iconography and Its Sources. Princeton, 1984, passim....
[27] Marcel Aubert, Louis Grodecki, Jean Lafond, Jean Verrier, Les Vitraux de Notre-Dame et de la Sainte Chapelle de Paris, Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi - France I, Paris, 1959.
[28] Emile Mâle, op cit., p. 138.

way to the Bible Moralisée, in a series of medallions one below the other and, like these, tell a story.[29] In the case of Judith, the entire narrative is told from Nebuchadnezzar giving his Orders to Holofernes (Judith 2:4-6) to The People weep at the death of Judith in some forty roundels, while the David window has the whole history of Saul, David (including David killing Goliath) and Solomon (in other words, the Books of the Kings)). These lancet windows are part of a series of eleven in honour of the Old Testament Heroes.

History cycles of Judith were fairly common in France in the thirteenth century. The Cathedral at Soissons has the remnants of a stained glass window dedicated to Judith which was probably inspired by the one at Sainte-Chapelle, Paris; the Porte de la Calende at Rouen Cathedral has quatrefoils containing scenes from the life of the Judith where she acts as a prefiguration of the Virgin, who appears above in the tympanum of the porch and likewise the voussoirs of the right portal of the north porch of the Cathedral of Nôtre-Dame at Chartres which has reliefs from the Judith story.

It is below these voussoirs at Chartres Cathedral that we find a full-length statue of Judith. David is also here in the central portal. Both are placed together, not necessarily as a pair, but as part of the entire design and iconography and where they stand with other statues of prophets, patriarchs,

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[29] The Bible Moralisée is a collection of about 5,000 pictures in French manuscripts which are now divided between the British Library, London, the Bodleian Library, Oxford and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. They date from about 1240.

kings and queens from the Old Testament on the jambs of the central and right hand bays of the North Porch. These biblical heroes and heroines were considered to be "the most popular prototypes of Christ and Mary".[30] The significance of this thirteenth-century porch is that it represents the Old Testament while at the same time glorifying the Virgin to whom the cathedral is dedicated.

If we look at the central bay first, we shall discover David (figure 8) on the left (nearest the door) together with Samuel, Moses, Abraham (and Isaac) and Melchizadech, his feet resting on the lion of Judah, not as a youth with the head of Goliath, but as a king, bearded and crowned, holding a lance (one of the instruments of the Passion). David is shown both as an ancestor of Christ and as a prophet foretelling the agonies and sufferings of His Crucifixion as written by David himself in Psalm 22 which begins with the poignant words (later repeated by Christ on Golgotha), "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1).

Judith (figure 9) stands majestically on the jamb of the right hand bay of the porch which contains Old Testament statues prefiguring Christ, others representing His bride - the Church. Judith, who saved her people from the hands of the enemy fits into this latter category.[31]

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[30] Emile Mâle, op cit., p.164.
[31] See Chapter 4 where I discuss this statue of Judith in greater detail as part of those representations which I have called the virtuous and youthful images.

In the same way, we can also include the statues of David and Judith which are part of a series comprising some seventy figures of the Old and New Testaments (both male and female) dating from the fifteenth century dressed in fantastic costumes derived no doubt, as Mâle believes from Mystery Plays, encircling the ambulatory of the Choir of the Cathedral of Sainte Cécile in Albi, France.[32] Here David (figure 10) is also depicted as a king, together with Judith (figure 11) as the virtuous widow from the Apocrypha.[33]

While Judith and David grace these continental churches and cathedrals medieval artists and artisans also produced other religious artefacts which were also typological, such as the outstanding carved and painted Cistercian Crucifix from the Abbey Church of Doberan in Mecklenburg dating from about 1368 with representations of both David and Goliath and Judith.[34]

The Doberan Crucifix is unusual for several reasons. Firstly because it is one of the largest surviving Crucifixes from this period, standing approximately twelve metres high on top of a winged altarpiece (German *Schrankenaltar*) between the Lay brethren and the Monks' Choir; secondly these crosses are only to be found in Denmark at Løgum, Ryd, Holme and Søro; at Loccum

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[32] Emile Mâle op. cit., p. 178 and footnote 162, p.452.

[33] I shall return to this statue of Judith when I consider the virtuous and youthful images.

[34] Ebbe Nyborg, "Det Gamle Søro-Krucifiks Et forsog på at indkredse cistercienske traditioner for udformningen af monumentale krucifikser" in Den monastiska bildvärlden i Norden, ed. By Ann Catherine Bonnier, Mereth Lindgren, Marian Ullen, Uppsala, 1990, p. 88-113. For an illustration see fig. 7 and fig. 8 for a diagrammatic drawing.

and Doberan in northern Germany and Schulpforta in Saxony. There are no Cistercian crucifixes from the Middle Ages in England or France where the Cistercians observed the strict rules which forbade coloured windows, pictures and frescoes. Crucifixes were permitted, although these were not allowed to be sculptured or carved, or to be too large.[35] Thirdly the Doberan crucifix is unique because it is double-sided, with a carved figure of a suffering Christ in the centre when viewed from the Laybrothers' side of the church and with a carved Madonna and Child facing the Monks' Choir on the reverse. The rest of the cross is decorated with thirty-four carved smaller panels (sixteen on the front and eighteen on the back, of which fourteen panels (seven on each side) are part of the altarpiece (*Schrankenaltar*) beneath the actual cross.

On closer examination there does not appear to be any coherent iconographical scheme in the subjects chosen, except that some of the scenes are concerned with Christ's Passion and suffering while others are associated with typological events from the Old Testament. As we would expect the panel with David confronting Goliath has been placed in the most important location on the right arm of the Crucifix next to Christ, where he acts as a prototype for the Saviour.

The reverse of the crucifix has a large carved image of a standing Virgin and Child in the centre, with Marian iconography consisting of reliefs of events

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[35] The exact size was not specified.

from the Old Testament and the Childhood of Christ, together with the symbols of the Four Evangelists. Likewise two biblical heroines, Judith and her counterpart Esther, are also both portrayed here as prototypes of the Virgin and have been placed as close to her as possible. The panel with Judith's counterpart Esther (and Ahasuerus) is situated directly above the Virgin while the Judith relief with Uzziah occupies the panel directly below the central panel with the Virgin and Child. Iconographically, Judith was chosen because in the tradition of the *Biblia Pauperum* and the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, she was received at the gates victorious over Evil with the head of Holofernes in the same way that Elizabeth greeted the Virgin as a victor over Satan. Esther, in her role as Queen, is placed between the standing Virgin, in the centre, and forms a parallel with the topmost panel of the Crucifix with the Coronation of the Virgin. The sides of the Crucifix are symbolically decorated with grapes and vineleaves symbolising the Blood of Christ. Because this cross is an isolated case we have nothing with which to compare it and so we do not know if it was unusual for the time, but what is certain is that most of the crucifixes of this period in Scandinavia and Germany were single-sided with a carved or painted image of Christ on the Cross.

Another series from Northern Europe, which I wish to comment on as part of the typological scenes of Judith and David, are the artistically carved oak panels of the medieval choir-stalls in the Cathedral of Roskilde in Denmark (figure 12). Like the stained-glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle they too are an aid to the visual and oral education of the laity. These reliefs, which form a

kind of awning above the misericords, were placed in the choir in 1420 by Bishop Peder Jens Anderson Lodehart in memory of Queen Margrete and depict episodes from "The Old Pact" (The Old Testament) and "The New Pact" (The New Testament). These panels which were originally coloured, some remains of which can still be seen, comprise some forty-four panels (the north side of the choir has twenty two with stories from the New Testament, while the south side has twenty illustrating events from the Old Testament, together with two with scenes from the life of St. John the Baptist from the New Testament).

It is to the south side of the choir that we should direct our discussion because it is here that we find the two panels with episodes from the lives of Judith and David. Although not placed here as a pair they have been singled out as part of the Old Testament scenes and considered worthy of inclusion as illustrations of the Christian Faith.

The Judith panel, (figure 13), like many of the others, is divided into two parts with two successive incidents shown in the same field. Holofernes clothed in contemporary clothes, sits in the far left-hand corner imbibing from a large goblet, while Judith leans on the table, her maid standing beside her. This type of illustration showing Holofernes eating and drinking was popular during the Middle Ages in Northern Europe and reflects the biblical description of the banquet referred to in Judith Chapter 8. The emphasis here is

on drinking because it was Holofernes' own stupidity and drunkenness which led to his downfall and ultimately to death. Is the carver referring to the German proverb "Man ist was man isst"? ("One is what one eats?") It is, I think, possible that these carvings also perform a moralistic function in drawing the congregation's attention to the vice of gluttony while at the same time acting as a warning. Judith and her maid then reappear in the other right-hand half of the panel where Judith grabbing Holofernes' hair (as it says in the text), lays the falchion across his neck while he lies in bed asleep, prior to the act of execution. Her servant waits ready with the container over her arm, grasping the bedpost, from which, as we read in the Apocryphal text, Judith took Holofernes' own sword in order to commit the murder.

The scene chosen from the story of David, which is also divided into two sections, is not the one where David slays Goliath, but that where King Saul commits suicide by falling onto his sword after his defeat by the Philistines while his armour-bearer stands behind brandishing his sword before he too takes his own life, (figure 14), (I Samuel 31:4-5). The other half of the panel shows Saul's head being brought to David, who raises his hands in horror. This part of the representation has not been taken from the Book of Samuel because there we read that the bodies of Saul and his sons were burnt and their bones buried under the tamarisk tree in Jabesh (I Samuel 31: 12-13) and is therefore a complete fabrication by the carver.

These panels are full of lively details with the figures characterised in such a way that they were easily identified by the laity. We do not know where these panels were carved but their realistic gestures, the portrayal of different emotions and expressions and the finely carved folds of the medieval garments worn by the figures point, I believe, to a Flemish or German (possibly Saxony) workshop.

The choirstalls at Roskilde are almost unique in Scandinavian religious art because it is extremely rare to find pre-Reformation scenes of Judith still *in situ* in a Scandinavian country. Other than the six fifteenth-century narrative roundels in the old church at Risinge (which I discuss on pages 56 to 59), and the sixteenth-century fresco of Judith and Holofernes at Vittskøvle Castle in Skåne, Sweden, I know of no other images of Judith in either Norway, Sweden or Denmark, whereas depictions of David killing Goliath are fairly common in these Scandinavian countries - especially in Sweden and Denmark.[36] One explanation why Judith is not represented in Scandinavia is presumably that pre-Reformation images (but not David and Goliath) were destroyed at the time of the Reformation. None was supposed to be painted after the Reformation because, as we know, her story was condemned by Martin Luther as apocryphal, although he thought that the Apocrypha should be studied.

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[36] Anna Nilsén lists 25 examples in Sweden between 1400-1534 of David killing Goliath with a sling and decapitating him with a sword, see Program och Funktion in senmedeltida kalkmåleri, diss., Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien,1986, Stockholm, p. 31and Mereth Lindgren lists five churches in Sweden with David and Goliath from the period 1530-1630 in her Att Lära och att Pryda Om efterreformatoriska kyrkemålningar in Sverige cirka 1530-1630, diss., Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, Stockholm 1983, p.318.

David could of course be shown, not only because the First Book of Samuel, where his story is told, is part of the Hebrew Canon, but because the Lutheran Church specifically chose to represent David, like Christ, as a symbol of Good conquering Evil, or as a Symbol of Protestantism vanquishing Catholicism or as an ancestor or prototype of Christ. Other major prophets such as Moses, Noah and Samson therefore also appear frequently in Swedish wall paintings. In Britain, on the other hand, as E. Clive Rouse says, without giving an explanation, these prophets, (including David), "find little place in English wall painting though frequent on the continent".[37]

Although Martin Luther was against the use of imagery as laid down in the first of the ten commandments in the Lutheran Church, "you shall not make for yourself an idol...........you shall not bow down to them or worship them ...." (Exodus 20:4) he only forbade praying to wooden or stone images. He did not condemn wall pictures because he realised their educative value when he said:

> "Das wyr auch solche bilder mügen an die wende malen, umb
> gedechtnhis und besser verstands willen. Syntemal sie an den
> wenden ia so wenig schaden, als ynn den büchern. Es ist yhe
> besser, man male an die wand, wie Gott die wellt schuff, wie
> Noe die arca bawet und was mehr gute historien sind."
> (WA 18, 82, 27ff)

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[37] E. Clive Rouse, op. cit., p. 38.

(Translation:-

"That we also allow such pictures to be painted on the walls is in

order to have a better knowledge and understanding.   Those

on the walls are no less than those in books. It is therefore better

that one paints on the walls, how God created the world and

how Noah built the ark and which are better histories".)

The fact that the resplendent fifteenth-century wall paintings in the

church at Risinge in the province of Östergötland in Sweden have survived

the religious turmoils in Scandinavia renders them exceptional in the history

of Swedish art. This church, like that of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, is

dedicated to the Virgin Mary and similarly contains frescoes of both David

and Judith as part of the interior decorative scheme, although unlike Santa

Maria, they cannot actually be considered to be paired. Nevertheless I think

that they must be included in this study because of their uniqueness.

The frescoes which are painted with reds, greens and blues with black

outlines cover the vaults of the nave and transepts.[38] They have been

variously dated to 1435 by Andreas Lindblom and to c. 1410-20 by Åke

Nisbeth.[39] The subjects which are mostly set in roundels (like the Bible

Moralisée) are taken from the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha and

the Golden Legend. However, it was extremely rare for such a scene to be

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[38] These frescoes were first published by Nils Månsson Mandelgren in Monuments scandinaves du moyen
âge, Paris, 1862.
[39] Åke Nisbeth, Risinge gamla kyrka Sta Maria, Uddevalla,1993, p.15.

incorporated into the overall painted decoration of a church. Risinge church, which was begun during the second half of the twelfth century, is the only one in Sweden with a profusion of wall paintings in such excellent condition - miraculously none of which has been whitewashed over. We do not know who the artist was - he is known simply as the Risinge Master - or who designed the iconography of the whole scheme, but it was probably the Archbishop of Uppsala.[40] Like other medieval wall paintings these were intended for those who could not read. At Risinge they were used by the preacher to illustrate his sermons.

The David fresco is given pride of place at the eastern end of the church, nearest the altar (a site which was reserved during the Middle Ages for the most prominent personages). In this representation he is dressed as a king carrying an inscription with words from the Old Testament prefiguring the New, in the right hand squinch (south side) of the vault containing the Last Judgement with Christ in Majesty, opposite St. Peter (in the squinch on the north side). These two men have been singled out from among the Apostles and other Old Testament figures to stand near Christ. In this instance David is again acting as a prototype of Christ.

Judith is also portrayed together with three other great biblical women - Delilah, Esther and Suzanna - with whom she shares the westernmost

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[40] The Risinge Master has also painted scenes in Örberga, Östra, Eneby, among several other churches in Östergötland. See Per-Olof Westlund, Risinge kyrkor, Stockholm, 1950, p.7.

crossing of the nave (i.e. the first vault on entering the church). The story of each of these women unfolds in a series of roundels, some of which are separated from each other by floral rosettes (resembling a Tudor rose). The story of Judith is told in six roundels and since she is such a rare subject in Scandinavian art I shall describe all six of them. These are as follows:-

1. The town of Jerusalem, inscribed [' Jerusalem'],

2. Judith and her Maid are seized by the Assyrian soldiers. This is inscribed in Latin ['Judith capitur'](Judith is captured);

3. Judith is brought before Holofernes who sits at a tressle-table. This inscription reads [vir presentatur'];

4. Judith puts the decapitated head of Holofernes into a bag held by the Maid. This is inscribed ['Judit dar caput'] (Judith gives the head);

5. Judith and her Maid arrive back at the gates of Bethulia. the scene is inscribed ['port'];

6. The head of Holofernes is displayed from a pole on the walls of Bethulia. This has no inscription - the message is there for all to comprehend.

The first roundel (figure 15) is inscribed 'Jerusalem'. This inscription has been, I believe, misread by some Swedish art historians when they say that this is wrong and that the town should be called Bethulia. On the grounds that the artist has adhered closely to the biblical narrative (and my research shows that

medieval artists did not make this type of error) and because if the compiler of the iconography was, as is thought, the Archbishop of Uppsala, a learned theologian, then it is unlikely that this is a mistake and the town is therefore correctly inscribed 'Jerusalem'. In my opinion, Dr. Ingalill Pegelow has fully understood the implications of this scene when she titles it "The Jews prepare to resist Holofernes".[41] This would be textually correct because the narrator recounts in Judith, Chapter 4 how the Israelites in Jerusalem feared for their lives and for the safety of their holy sanctuaries when they heard about Holofernes, how they prepared themselves both militarily (two soldiers stand watch on the battlements while others hold lances and a crossbow at the ready), by storing up food, and religiously, by praying, fasting and prostrating themselves, to repel the advances of Holofernes and his enemies.

If we now examine examples in the art of the Renaissance in the Catholic south, in Italy for example, Judith and David continue to be conceived and portrayed as a pair in the religious sense, as part of the iconography of the whole during the early and middle part of the fifteenth century, for instance in the richly gilded bronze Gates of Paradise for the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence, commissioned in 1425 by the consuls of the Merchants' Guild and completed in 1452 by Lorenzo Ghiberti (1376-1455). Ghiberti, who was responsible for the design of this third set of doors for the Baptistery, having rejected the earlier idea suggested by Leonardo Bruni, Chancellor of the

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[41] Dr Ingalill Pegelow,"Kvinnan's skönhet och list - mannens fall," Iconographisk Post, 1986, vol 3, pp. 1-15.

Florentine Republic,[42] now chose a scheme made up of ten Old Testament scenes in low relief (five for each door) with a rectangular panel framed like a painting with small full-length figures of prophets and prophetesses along the top and side borders.[43] These are separated from each other by heads in roundels of Ghiberti's most prominent contemporaries (himself included) inserted at the corners of the main panels. The iconographical programme, as Roberta Olsen says, "draws heavily on the patristic sources (such as Origen and Ambrose) and the Hebrew Talmud and reflects Ambrogio Traversari's interests.[44] Hartt has suggested that much of the iconography has been taken from the *Summa Theologica* by Saint Antonino, Bishop of Florence. Ghiberti deliberately placed the figure of Judith (figure 16) almost in full relief wielding her scimitar (symbol of her courage) in a niche in the left hand border directly alongside the panel containing events from the story of David and Goliath. This panel has several episodes taking place simultaneously, including David decapitating Goliath who "fell face down on the ground" as described in the narrative (I Samuel 17:49),(figure 17), the defeat of the Philistines, David returning with the head of Goliath and being met by the people who are singing and playing musical instruments. The David panel was removed after the floods of 1966, cleaned and restored and is now exhibited, together with three other panels from the lower section of the doors, in the Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, Florence.

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[42] Bruni's idea comprised twenty eight panels (twenty with Old Testament scenes and eight with prophets).

[43] Giorgio Vasari, sixteenth-century painter, architect and biographer of The Lives of the Artists, 2 Vols., trans. George Bull, London, 1985 and 1987, calls these figures prophets and sybils in his biography of Ghiberti, Vol. 1, p.116.

By the end of the fifteenth century, much of the religious significance of showing David and Judith together had disappeared and artists and sculptors now saw these two personages differently. This was particularly marked in the Italian States, especially in Florence where David and Judith took on a political role and came to represent figures of courage and virtue. They were seen as victors over tyranny especially over their enemies, the Sienese and the tyrannical Medici family whom they ousted from Florence in 1494 and set up a Republic. Like them, David and Judith overcame and defeated their enemies through bravery and strength, despite the hopelessness of their situation. This meant that images of David and Judith began to proliferate in Florence, although paintings and statues of David in the religious sense were already commonplace in this city, for instance Taddeo Gaddi's fresco of David with the Head of Goliath (figure 18) executed in 1332-38, situated on the right hand side of the entrance arch into the Baroncelli Chapel of the Church of Santa Croce, Andrea Pisano's David, Museo dell' Opera del Duomo, c. 1340, one of sixteen statues from Florence Campanile, and Donatello's marble statue of David, 1408-11, (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence), (figure 19). By the middle of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries Florence had more paintings. (Here we can also include the illusionistic fresco of a statue of David holding a sling above the entrance arch to the Sassetti Chapel in Santa Trinità in Florence commissioned by Francesco Sassetti in 1485 and executed by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494)) and statues of David (and to a lesser extent

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[44] Ambrogio Traversari was the General of the Order of the Camaldosi and a friend of Cosimo il Vecchio.

Judith) than any other place in Italy.[45]   The most noteworthy statues were Donatello's bronze <u>David</u> of c. 1453, (Museo Nazionale del Bargello), (figure 20) and the <u>Judith and Holofernes</u> of c. 1455 (figure 21) and Michelangelo's marble <u>David,</u> (Galleria dell' Accademia) (figure 22) of 1501-04.[46]

After the expulsion of the Medici in 1494 the Florentines seized the two bronze statues of <u>David</u> (c. 1453) (figure 20) and <u>Judith and Holofernes</u> (c. 1455) (figure 21) by Donatello. The statue of Judith was sited on the left hand side of the Palazzo Vecchio, seat of the Florentine Government, as an example to the citizens of Florence and as a warning against tyrants, while the bronze <u>David</u> was placed inside the inner courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio.

It is also interesting to note that when the Florentines set up a commission in 1504 to discuss where to position Michelangelo's marble statue of <u>David</u> (figure 22), Botticelli agreed with fellow-artist Cosimo Rosselli (1439-1507) that the statue should be placed on the steps of the Cathedral of Florence and that a Judith should be positioned on the other side.[47]   Unfortunately this proposal to pair David and Judith was never implemented and the final decision was left to Michelangelo, who chose to place his statue where

[45] In this instance the image of David is put here as a visual pun on the family name of Sassetti meaning "little stones".
[46] I discuss Donatello's marble statue of <u>David</u> in Chapter 4 and the bronze Donatello and the Michelangelo statues in greater detail in Chapter 8.
[47] For the siting of Michelangelo's <u>David,</u> see Saul Levine, 'Tal Cosa: Michelangelo's David - Its Form, Site and Political Symbolism'. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1969 and 'The Location of Michelangelo's <u>David</u>: The Meeting of January 25, 1504', Art Bulletin 56, 1974, pp.31-49.

Donatello's statue of Judith had originally stood in the Piazza della Signoria. This was then moved to a more inconspicuous location in the Loggia dei Lanzi, no doubt because the statue was associated with the old Medici regime. This is borne out by one witness to the commission who said "it is not fitting for the Republic ...... it was erected under an evil star, for from that day to this things have gone from bad to worse; for then we lost Pisa ......"

The Florentine painter, Sandro Botticelli (c. 1445-1510) also takes up this theme of victory over oppression when he incorporates it into two of his historical paintings that of The History of Lucretia (figure 23) of about 1504, which is now in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and The Story of Virginia in the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo (with which it forms a pair).

The picture which concerns us here is that of Lucretia, where Botticelli ingeniously inserts both David and Judith into the architectural decoration of the city square where the tragic events of Lucretia's life unfold. A fully-clothed statue of David with the head of Goliath at his feet (the traditional pose in Italy at this time) is displayed prominently in the centre of the composition standing on top of a column.[48] Above the left portal is a relief clearly showing Judith

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[48] It is likely that Botticelli was inspired by Filippino Lippi's painting of the Death of Lucretia, in the Pitti Palace, Florence, c.1470, probably intended for a wedding chest, together with the Death of Virginia, (Louvre, Paris), which is similar in format and composition - this time with a naked statue of David also on a column but showing him with a sling and stone, in line with Prudentius description of David and Goliath in his Tituli Historiarum (Dittochaeon) where he says "and with a whizzing sling lays low Goliath". See Prudentius II, Loeb Classical Library, trans. by H.J. Thomson, Norwich, 1953 ,p. 355.

and her maid arriving at the gates of Bethulia to be greeted by the citizens who are gathered outside the walls of the town. These panels may form part of the paintings "showing many beautiful and very vivacious figures" which, according to Giorgio Vasari, decorated one of the rooms in the Vespucci family home in the Via de' Servi in Florence.[49] Botticelli (or his patron) chose the subjects of these paintings because they represent two victorious heroines from classical Antiquity - Lucretia and Virginia - who can be linked in their heroism to the biblical heroine Judith and whose deeds, like hers, led to revolts which freed their citizens from oppression. These two paintings are therefore clearly intended to be synonymous with the revolt of the Florentines against the Medici.

Not only do we find Judith and David in Florence but they also feature as part of the "grandiose figurative scheme" of the inlaid marble pavement of the Cathedral of Siena.[50] Although various artists worked on the panels for the nave, crossing, transepts, presbytery and choir over a period of some six hundred years, the iconography of the floor forms a cohesive programme. In this way the History of Judith in the left transept depicted as a narrative sequence and the panel with three episodes from the Life of David in front of the altar, although executed at different times, both encompass the "history of time, man and salvation."[51]

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[49] Giorgio Vasari, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 225.

[50] The description used by the German scholar Fredrich Ohly in his hermeneutic study of the pavement.

[51] See Bruno Santa, The Marble Pavement of the Cathedral of Siena, Florence, 1982, p. 7.

The David panel (figure 24) occupies the most important position in the cathedral in front of the altar. It is divided into three scenes with a roundel in the centre containing an image of David crowned and enthroned, composing the psalms surrounded by musicians with musical instruments with the inscription DAVID REX. This is flanked on either side by two lozenges. The one on the left shows a dynamic David throwing a sling with a stone across the central roundel to the lozenge on the right with a giant figure of Goliath, who with a stunned expression of surprise reels from the shot, his knees visibly buckling beneath his armoured frame while his sword falls to the ground. The stone bounces off his forehead having left a deep indentation. This is a very disciplined and correct visual interpretation based on the biblical text for both David and Goliath.

These three scenes of David were probably executed in 1423. They are attributed by Enzo Carli to Domenico di Niccolò (1363-before 1453), master builder of the cathedral, making them some fifty years earlier than the Judith panel. In Ohly's opinion the David panel epitomises the settlement of "the strife between the people of God and its leaders" and that David therefore represents peace and prefigures Christ the peacemaker". I agree that both David and Judith are peacemakers bringing peace to their citizens but I believe that we should regard them, first and foremost, as representing salvation.

The impressive panel with the story of Judith (figure 25) is now generally accepted by scholars as the work of Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439-1502) dating from 1473.[52] The events unfold on the left with a Renaissance-looking city with the name BETHULIA emblazoned above the gateway with framed classical busts and from which the Hebrew forces on horseback are leaving to engage in the battle taking place in the centre of the composition. On the far right we can see Judith with a raised sword inside the tent of Holofernes while a guard waits outside. Our eye then moves across the panel in a zigzag direction, above the battle in the centre, back towards the town, where we see a refined Judith and her maid making their way from the camp and back to the city; the maid carries a basket containing the head of Holofernes on her head. It can, I think, be said that the designer of this panel has not attempted to illustrate a true rendition of the biblical scene, but has tried to equate it with the history of Siena (recognisable by its walls and towers) and victories of its people, while at the same time using the figure of Judith in her traditional theological role as saviour, as an Old Testament heroine and as a prefiguration of the Virgin Mary because this cathedral is dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, unlike the examples from Florence which as I have discussed where the image of Judith was used solely in a political sense as a symbol of freedom, victory and virtue.

It is therefore no coincidence that Michelangelo, who came from

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[52] In addition to Bruno Santi, see also Enzo Carli.

Florence, should include two episodes from the stories of both <u>Judith and</u> <u>Holofernes</u> and <u>David and Goliath</u> in two of the four pendentives of the Sistine Chapel ceiling (figures 26 and 27) in the Vatican, Rome, dating from 1509. The other two pendentives contain scenes of the <u>Death of Haman</u> and <u>Moses and</u> <u>the Brazen Serpent</u>. Not only was he following Florentine precedents but he was also including Esther in these illustrations of triumph and salvation. While the Brazen Serpent is regarded as a "prefiguration of the Redeemer's Coming" (St. John 3:14, 15) the other three scenes are connected with instances when the Jews were saved by God's intervention.[53]

However, scholars are undecided as to how these events fit into the whole scheme and iconography of the vault of the Sistine Chapel. This is because many of the documents concerning the ceiling were lost during the Sack of Rome in 1527. de Tolnay[54] interprets the ceiling as indicative of Neoplatonic thought of the time, while Hartt relates it to Franciscan theological doctrine.[55] Wind[56] reveals the influence of Dominican theology and the influence of the heretic preacher Savonarola and Dotson[57] posits that the iconographical programme is to be found in the writings of St. Augustine. According to Michelangelo, Pope Julius II told him that he could decide the programme for himself. This evidence comes from a letter in which

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[53] Ludwig Goldscheider, <u>Michelangelo Paintings Sculpture Architecture</u>, London, 1962, p.14.

[54] C. de Tolnay, <u>Michelangelo</u>, 5 Vols., Princeton, 1943-60.

[55] F. Hartt, Lignum Vitae in Medio Paradisi: The Stanza Eliodoro and the Sistine Ceiling, <u>Art Bulletin</u>, 1950, 32: 115-45, 181-219.

[56] E. Wind, Michelangelo's Prophets and Sibyls, <u>Proceedings of the British Academy</u>, 51, 1960, pp. 47-84.

[57] E. Dotson, An Augustinian Interpretation of Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, <u>Art Bulletin</u>, 61, 1979: 223 - 56, 405-29.

Michelangelo writes that "he gave me a new commission to do what I liked."[58] It seems unlikely that the Pope would have given him so much freedom and the basic programme must therefore have been worked out by a theologian. The larger "history" panels do not follow the biblical text but the two which concern us here - David and Goliath and Judith and Holofernes - in the pendentives are both reasonably true to their respective narratives. What does seem certain is that they deal with the "temporal salvation, the deliverance from earthly distress, the miraculous deliverance of Israel" and as such they are part of the overall design showing episodes from Jewish salvation history.[59]

The Judith fresco is situated to the left of the entrance opposite that of David and Goliath. In the Judith episode Michelangelo neatly divides the scene into two halves, with Judith forming the central pivot of the composition. The grisly deed has already been committed (Holofernes' supine headless corpse is visible in the right portion lying on a bed) and we see Judith, having exited from the tent, stepping gracefully off the step to cover, with a white cloth, the dish containing the head of Holofernes, resting on the head of the maid, while at the same time glancing over her shoulder. In this, Michelangelo is one of the few artists who gives us a visually correct interpretation of the story because most painters show Judith giving the head of Holofernes to the maid inside the tent.

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[58] For Michelangelo's letter see Robert S. Liebert, Michelangelo A Psychoanalitical Study of his Life and Images, p. 145 and
E.H. Ramsden, The Letters of Michelangelo, 2 Vols., London, 1963, letter no. 157.
[59] Ludwig Goldscheider, op. cit., London, 1962, p.13.

Michelangelo, or whoever designed this fresco, has slavishly followed the earlier artistic tradition of showing the headless body on a bed. This became the convention from the earliest manuscripts, through Botticelli (The Discovery of the Body of Holofernes, Uffizi, Florence c. 1472), (figure 28), whereas the text states that when Bagoas went to Holofernes' tent in the morning he found "Holofernes lying on the ground" (Judith 15:18). It is poignant that Judith, a member of the so-called "weaker sex" and proposed sexual victim of the story, should have found the strength to roll Holofernes' body off the bed so that he now lies headless and defeated at her feet. Perhaps male artists did not wish to draw attention to this inferior position - Holofernes, the self-assured warrior, could fall no lower. Women artists who could have exploited this scene to their advantage have not chosen to do so by portraying the headless body of Holofernes at her feet - most prefer to show the deed of decapitation actually being carried out (Artemisia Gentileschi) or the head being presented to the onlooker (Fede Galizia and Elisabetta Sirani). Michelangelo has turned this gruesome scene into one of elegance and classical order. Giorgio Vasari describes the spandrels in some detail and specifically singles out the Judith picture as one "composed with marvellous thought and care".[60]

The other pendentive on the right side of the entrance opposite Judith, depicts David's victory over Goliath. This is clearly equally well thought out but Michelangelo, unlike others who depicted David with the sling or with the

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[60] Giorgio Vasari, op cit., Vol. I, p.359.

head of Goliath at his feet, portrays David wielding a large scimitar, about to behead Goliath who, as in the Ghiberti panel, "lies face down on the ground". David's action is frozen as he pins down the sprawling giant between his legs, while Goliath tries to raise himself up onto his massive arms, thereby giving some movement to an otherwise static composition. From this it is evident that Michelangelo has interpreted the biblical text as meaning that Goliath was not dead, but that he had merely been stunned by the stone from the sling. The positions of David's and Goliath's limbs were later adopted by Daniele da Volterra (1509-66) (Michelangelo's protégé) in an energetic and forceful painting of the same subject now at Fontainebleau.

Images of Judith and David were not always connected with civic or ecclesiastical commissions. Occasionally in the sixteenth century royal and princely patrons would commission artists to paint Judith and David in a political sense because they themselves wished to be associated with the most virtuous and positive qualities of these and other biblical heroes and heroines.

Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy (1562-1630), who built up a vast collection of paintings to embellish his palace in Turin, commissioned Paulo Veronese (c. 1528-88), the great Venetian artist, to paint four large canvases in about 1582.[61] These are now regarded as being the four beautiful pictures listed by R.

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[61] This dating is based on a pen and wash drawing on the back of a letter dated 18th September 1582 to Veronese, containing studies for Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath, formerly in the von Hirsch Collection.

Borghini in his *Il Riposo*,[62] written in Florence in 1584, as <u>Solomon and the</u> <u>Queen of Sheba</u>, <u>The Adoration of the Magi</u>, <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> and <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u>. Howard Coutts, however, thinks that Borghini was mistaken in his list and that he really meant <u>The Finding of</u> <u>Moses</u> and not <u>The Adoration of the Magi</u>. Coutts bases this on a note written by Carlo Emanuele in 1605 where he states that his four favourite paintings are *'I gran quadri del Veronese Regina Saba, et Figlia de Faraone, Davit, et Judit con le teste de Golia et Holofernes.* (Translation - 'The four large paintings by Veronese the Queen of Sheba and the Daughter of Pharaoh, David and Judith with the head of Goliath and Holofernes'.)[63]

These four subjects were no doubt chosen with the young king Carlo Emanuele in mind because, if we are correct in dating these pictures to 1582, the king was only twenty years old, having succeeded to the throne of Piedmont in 1580 on the death of his father Emanuele Philiberto. The four principal characters in these pictures - Solomon, Moses, David and Judith all have virtues with which Carlo Emanuele wished to be associated. Solomon is young and wise like Carlo Emanuele; David represents his courage; the Finding of Moses refers to the importance of the male hereditary line and Judith stands, not only for wisdom, beauty and bravery but also, for victory

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[62] R. Borghini, <u>Il Riposo</u>, Florence, 1584, pp. 562-63.
[63] Howard Coutts,"Veronese's paintings for Carlo Emanuele I of Savoy", <u>The Burlington Magazine</u>, Vol 127, May 1985, pp. 300-303, ill. p. 298.

over indulgence.[64] As Howard Coutts says "these pictures flatter the young king by equating him with biblical heroes and at the same time lists the qualities - legitimacy, wisdom, valour and vigilance - that a king must possess".[65]

All four paintings are large but we do not know where they hung in the Royal Palace.[66] The palace was rebuilt in the seventeenth century when the four canvases were taken down and presumably re-hung, but there is no mention in an inventory of 1635 of the David and the Judith after Carlo Emanuele's death.[67] The two canvases of The Finding of Moses and Solomon and the Queen of Sheba are now in the Galleria Sabauda in Turin. So what happened to the Judith and the David paintings? Howard Coutts suggests that these are the two pictures which are now at Hampton Court Palace because they are based on a drawing by Veronese which was in the Von Hirsch Collection. Although the design for these paintings is by Veronese, these canvases are now described as "by the studio of Veronese". As they are still together under the same roof, I think that we can consider them as a pair.

The David painting shows David straddling Goliath while soldiers on horseback flee into the landscape to the left and right of David. The position of

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[64] See B.A. Bennett and D.G. Wilkins, Donatello, Oxford, 1984, pp. 82-90 for the symbolism of Judith and David in Renaissance Italy.

[65] Howard Coutts, op. cit., p.301.

[66] For the history of the palace see U. Chierici, Torino: il Palazzo Reale, Turin, 1969, and Comili Mandracci, Torino, Bari, 1983.

[67] Howard Coutts, op. cit., p.301.

David and Goliath is so similar to the fresco of <u>David Killing Goliath</u> (figure 29)

by Raphael's Workshop in the Vatican Loggia that it is possible that Veronese

was inspired by it because we know that he saw it on his visit to Rome with

Cardinal Grimani.[68] Judith, however, (in the other picture) hands the head of

Holofernes to her mulatto maid in a night-time setting lit by a burning torch,

while the body of the headless tyrant lies on the bed outside the tent. This is an

invention by Veronese because this is not in keeping with the apocryphal

account. This was the first time that Veronese had painted a Judith (obviously

without consulting the Bible) but it was soon to become a well-established

subject in his oeuvre.[69] It was not an unknown subject for Venetian artists

because Jacopo Tintoretto had already executed two paintings from the Judith

story in the mid-1550s (Prado, Madrid).[70] Later the subject was also taken up

by Titian of c. 1570.[71]

In the sixteenth century, German and Netherlandish artist and

engravers also conjoined David and Judith, not as a pair but as part of a series

in their prints of Old Testament Heroes. The first examples appear to have

been instigated in Antwerp where Johan Wierix (c. 1549 - c.1615) included both

Judith and David (and Jael) in a series of ten entitled <u>The Decapitators</u> of c.

1578.

[68] C. Ridolfo, <u>Le Maraviglie dell' Arte</u>, Venice, 1649, ed. D. von Hadeln, Berlin, 1914-24, I, p.335.
[69] See Terisio Pignatti, <u>Veronese: l'opera complete</u>, 2 Vols., Venice, 1976, Vol. 1, A 271, A 229, A 83, 257,272, 273, A 42.
[70] See G. Bernari, <u>L'opera Completa del Tintoretto</u>, Milan, 1970, nos. 116 A-F.
[71] See Harold Wethey,<u>The Paintings of Titian. The Religious Paintings</u>, Vol. 1, London, 1969, p. 95, plate 193.

Wierix was followed by Hendrick Goltzius who in 1588 made a drawing[72] of <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> for a series of <u>Old Testament Heroes</u>, which was then engraved by Jacob Matham.[73] In 1589 Goltzius produced a red chalk drawing with white and pink gouache of <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> which is similar to the earlier drawing engraved by his pupil Nicolaes den Braeu and formed part of a series of four <u>Heroes of the Old Testament.</u> [74] The other three, which are now lost, were significantly Judith, Jahel and Samson - all characters who were involved in some way with either their own head or that of their adversary in the Biblical narrative.

As far as the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are concerned when the greatest number of portrayals of Judith (and to a lesser extent David) were produced, it might seem strange to us that there are very few images of Judith and David paired together in a typological way in the medieval tradition. Certainly after the Council of Trent the Church no longer relied on interpreting the Old Testament as exegesis outlined by the Church Doctors so that by the time of the Counter-Reformation, these kinds of symbolic representations had become obsolete. Although we can search almost in vain for images of David and Judith together at this period except for some large

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[72] This drawing in brown ink with a grey wash of David with the Head of Goliath is now in the Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam.

[73] For information about the Golzius drawing and an illustration of the Matham engraving see Joaneath Spicer, "A drawing of 'David with the head of Goliath" by Hendrick Golzius, <u>The Burlington Magazine</u>, Vol. 131, June 1989, p. 407-10 and figs 36 and 39.

[74] This drawing was sold at Christie's in Amsterdam on 30th November 1987. It was bought by Marianne and Frank Seger of Toronto as "circle of Goltzius. It has now been correctly assigned to Hendrick Goltzius.

decorative schemes in Rome, such as those in the Bandini Chapel of the church of San Silvestro al Quirinale by Domenichino (1581-1641) and those by 'Padre' Pozzo (1642-1709) in St. Ignazio, it is, however, quite common to discover paintings of Judith killing or triumphantly holding up the head of Holofernes being paired with another separate picture of David and Goliath. In Florence, as we would expect, the Florentine artist Cristofano Allori (1577-1621), draws these two heroes on a sheet containing a sketch for a <u>Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian</u>.[75] The Judith drawing later became one of the four versions of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u>.[76]

At Hampton Court Palace, for example, these two protagonists are to be found together in the decoration of the King's State Apartments above the two doors in the King's Withdrawing Room but they were not originally designed for this room built during the Wren era. The two paintings in question are the Domenico Fetti (c.1589-1623) of <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> painted in c.1620 (figure 30) and the <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> described as Italian School 1700. The Domenico Fetti was bought by Charles I in 1625-27 from the Gonzaga Collection in Mantua, then sold to Oliver Cromwell in 1649, only to be brought back by Charles II at the Restoration. This painting was

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[75] See Miles L. Chappell, Catalogue of exhibition of <u>Cristofano Allori</u>, Palazzo Pitti, October 1984 for an illustration of the drawing in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence, n.913F.
[76] These are:
    1. Royal Collection, Liechtenstein;
    2. Private Collection, Florence;
    3. Pitti Palace, Florence
    4. H. M. The Queen, Hampton Court Palace.

probably always intended to be placed above a door because it was recorded during the reign of Queen Anne as being over a door in the Drawing Room at Hampton Court.[77] The Judith was not originally part of the decorative scheme of this room. It was taken from storage after the fire of 1986 to replace the painting of the Virgin by Francesco Parmigianino (1503-40) which was destroyed. I think that this replacement which now unites this two biblical heroes was an excellent choice. The two paintings form a contrast to each other. The Fetti is a colourful and luminous painting with David, sitting in an expansive landscape under a clear blue sky holding a large sword with the gigantic of Goliath beside him (the headless body of Goliath lies on the ground in the distance). The Judith, on the other hand, is set in a darkened interior (which we know from the apocryphal text should be in the tent of Holofernes) but this is not made clear from this picture. In this example Judith hands the head to her maid, while raising her eyes to heaven.

There are other representations of Judith and David which were originally commissioned as a pair but many of these have been split up, for example, The Triumph of Judith by Francesco Curradi (1570-1661), and The Triumph of David by Matteo Rosselli (1578-1650) are now in two different art galleries - the Curradi is in the Musée des Augustin in Toulouse while the Rosselli is in the Louvre, Paris.[78]

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[77] Christopher Lloyd, The Queen's Pictures Royal Collectors through the Centuries, London, 1991, p.96-97.
[78] I say more about the Curradi picture when I discuss the triumphal returns in Chapter 10.

In addition to these paintings there used to be two paired panel paintings at Ampleforth Abbey in Yorkshire by the little known Dutch artist Jacob Toorenvliet (1635-1719) of a small <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> (approx. ten by eight inches) (figure 31) and another of <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> (figure 32). They were displayed together in the chapel until they were stolen in 1993.[79]

I should now like to consider Andrea Mantegna's <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> (figure 33) in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin and the <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> (figure 34) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna and to consider the possibility whether these two paintings can be paired as belonging to the same series. According to Duncan[80] the Judith painting was part of a series which included the <u>Samson and Delilah</u> (figure 35) in the National Gallery, London and <u>The Judgement of Solomon</u> (figure 36) in the Louvre, Paris. Davies adds the <u>David with the Head of Goliath,</u> referred to above, and the <u>Sacrifice of Isaac</u> (figure 37) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.[81] All these paintings with veined marble backgrounds are dated c. 1495-1500 and executed in grey grisaille to give the effect of sculpture. As Keith Christiansen says, the Judith and the Delilah obviously belong together because not only are they linked iconographically but the dimensions,

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[79] I spoke to The Librarian at Ampleforth Abbey in December 1997 when he told me that the paintings had been stolen and that he had no idea of their present whereabouts. I have since discovered that these two paintings were sold for £1,800 on 2 December 1997 at Phillips, London, # 251. See sale catalogue of <u>Fine Old Master Paintings,</u> pp. 234-235.

[80] E.Duncan, "The National Gallery of Ireland", <u>The Burlington Magazine,</u> X, 1906, pp 7-23.

[81] M.Davies, <u>The Earlier Italian Schools.</u> National Gallery Catalogues, London, 1961, p. 334.

technique, black borders and marble backgrounds of *africo verde*, are similar.[82] Both are lit from the left and both are damaged along the bottom edges. The Delilah painting has an inscription which reads, "a bad woman is three times worse than the Devil". This would indicate that Judith and the Delilah could have been part of a series depicting wily women (Judith as "good and Delilah as "evil") - a subject which would have appealed to Isabella d' Este who commissioned these from Mantegna and which were in her private apartments at Mantua. We do not know which room they were intended for, but Christiansen thinks that the most obvious place would have been her private chapel. We have no documentary evidence about the decor of this chapel and so cannot assign these figures specifically to it.[83] (It is noteworthy that when Mantegna's son, Francesco, designed his father's funerary chapel in S. Andrea in Mantua in 1516 he chose to decorate it with grisaille frescoes of the figures of Judith and David, together with Tobias.)

Where then should we place the painting of David which together with the Isaac and the Solomon is considered to be by Mantegna's workshop because of certain weaknesses in technique, perspective and difference in the backgrounds - these scenes have a red *africano* marble unlike the others which have green marble? I would like to suggest that these three paintings could have belonged to a series of Old Testament Heroes which contain scenes of

[82] Keith Christiansen, Andrea Mantegna, Exhibition Catalogue, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1992, p.405.
[83] R.W. Lightbrown, Mantegna, Oxford, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1986, pp. 449, 451.

Tobias, Esther, Abraham ad David and which are mentioned in an inventory of 1627 of the Gonzaga collection. The conclusion which we can therefore come to is that these pictures of David and Judith belong to two different series and cannot therefore be considered as a pair.

As we move onto the eighteenth century there is a dearth of images of Judith and David linked by a common theme but William Hogarth who is regarded as not only a great humorist but also as a brilliant satirist combines depictions of both of these figures in his canvas The Marriage Contract of 1743 (figure 38) which is the first in his series entitled Marriage à la Mode in the National Gallery, London. In this painting which shows the marriage contract being drawn up by the respective fathers - the impoverished nobleman and the rich merchant - Hogarth's sense of humour comes to the fore because be cleverly uses the pictures in their gilt frames hanging on the walls behind with their scenes of violence to the human body to draw our attention to the dreadful fate which could await this young couple. These works of art serve as an amusing comment, especially as the figures are blissfully unaware of the irony of these "pictures within pictures", as a warning against the events taking place in the paintings. In addition to paintings of the Head of Medusa and Martyrdom of St. Sebastian, we can just make out Hogarth's adaptation of Guido Reni's Judith with the Head of Holofernes[84] and Titian's David Killing Goliath.[85]

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[84] F. Zeri, La Galleria Spada in Rome, 1954, pl. 146.

[85] Klassiker der Kunst, Tizian, 5th edition, reproduced on page 136.

By the time the nineteenth and twentieth centuries dawn, artists no longer showed images of David and Judith together; these now having lost their theological and political message, tend to disappear almost without trace, except for isolated incidents as we shall see in subsequent chapters. However David and Judith are, of course, included in the Gustave Doré Bible Illustrations of 1865 in much the same way that the folios were bound together in the Winchester Bible. These Doré illustrations will be examined in later chapters of this dissertation.[86]

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[86] David and Goliath and one of the Judith illustrations will be discussed in Chapter 6 together with the heroic and triumphant images. The other Judith will be examined in Chapter 4 under the section dealing with "prayer".

Chapter 4

The Virtuous, Beautiful and Youthful Images

In this chapter, divided into two sections, I shall deal firstly with all those images which I consider to show the virtuous, beautiful and youthful characteristics of Judith and David and the saintly, vulnerable, feminine and chaste images in the case of Judith. I shall examine the rise of this type of portrayal and discuss the differences between these two subjects. I shall then look at those representations of devotion which I have called the "prayerful images" and see how artists have interpreted them because I believe, that these are also part of the virtuous image. I shall compare this with the paucity of examples of David praying with the more extensive portrayals of Judith and conclude with why there are so few scenes of Judith, and even fewer of David, in the visual arts showing them actually at prayer.

1. Judith

a) Virtuous Images

As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, Judith defeats Holofernes by various nefarious schemes in keeping with her complex and ambivalent nature. We have already seen how her character is an almost equal embodiment of virtue (goodness) and vice (evil). In this way Flemish and German artists of the sixteenth century were able to represent Judith typologically as virtuous in series of prints or woodcuts on the subject of the Power of Women, together

with other Old Testament heroines, such as Suzanna and Esther, while at the same time portraying her with Delilah, Eve, Jezebel and Lot's Daughters as cunning and deceitful.[1] I shall begin by examining Judith's good and virtuous female qualities which contributed to her victory. I shall then counterbalance this with a discussion of the menacing, villainous and seductive side of Judith's character when I examine the decapitation, nude and semi-nude images.[2]

By feminine virtues we mean those characteristics defined by Gilbert and Gubar as the "eternal feminine virtues of modesty, gracefulness, purity, delicacy, civility, compliancy, reticence, chastity, affability and politeness."[3] To these we can also add piousness, femininity, gentleness, thoughtfulness, generosity and kindness. The narrator of the Book of Judith begins by introducing us fairly early on in the story to the very best elements of Judith's character and leaves us in little doubt as to her most praiseworthy characteristics. Straightaway, before we have any idea of the devious tricks she is about to foist on Holofernes, we are told that she was devout and pious because we read in Judith 8:5 and 6 that she "wore sackcloth around her waist" and fasted every day "except for the sabbath eve, the sabbath itself, the eve of the new moon, the new moon itself, and the joyous feasts of the House of Israel" and that "there was no-one who spoke ill of her, so devoutly did she fear God".

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[1] Dirck. Volckertsz. Coornhert, after Maarten van Heemskerk, series Power of Women, 1551, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

[2] The decapitation images will be dealt with in Chapter 5, while the nude images will be discussed in Chapter 8.

[3] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, New Haven and London, 1979, p.23.

Later the author also suggests that her victory was due, not only to her virtuous qualities, including her courage and bravery, but also to the clever plotting which she used to overcome Holofernes. E. C. Bissell writing in 1886 with "Victorian values" could see no good in Judith and considered her to be "objectionable"... "from a moral standpoint." He reinforces this view by adding:-

> "Her way is strewn with deception from first to last...
>
> she would have been willing even to have yielded her
>
> body to this lascivious Assyrian for the sake of
>
> accomplishing her purpose.... That God in his providence
>
> interposed to prevent such a crime, cannot relieve her
>
> of the odium attaching to her conduct... there are elements of
>
> moral turpitude..."[4]

It is this which has led many to reject the Book of Judith out of hand.

Nonetheless it was her pious devotion and chastity which resulted in her virtuous and saintly reputation. It was especially the chaste aspect of her character which was the first virtue to be taken up by the Early and Medieval Church.

The author of the Book of Judith stresses Judith's chastity - firstly by describing her as a widow in Chapter 8 which serves to set the scene of the story. He could not have made her a virgin or a married woman (neither of

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[4] See E C. Bissell, The Book of Judith. The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, New York, 1886, p.163.

which would have been suitable for the seduction scene). Later Judith herself says that "my face tricked him and brought his downfall, Holofernes committed no sin with me to defile me or to disgrace me" (Judith 13:16) which only serves to strengthen her chasteness. Further on the writer informs us that many men wanted Judith (Judith 16:22) but that she had not had any sexual relations since her husband Manasseh had died.

Although the early Fathers of the Church were aware of the Book of Judith, most, according to Brian McNeil did not attach much importance to it.[5] Yet they set great store by her celibacy and chastity. The writers of the second and third centuries such as Tertullian (160? -230?), Methodius of Tyre (d. c. 311) and Ambrose of Milan (339-397) praised her celibacy. St Jerome, (320? - 420), penitent and celibate Father of the Church, must also have approved of Judith's virtuous conduct because he too spells it out in the Vulgate. "And chastity was joined to her virtue, so that she knew no man all the days of her life, after the death of Manasseh her husband" (Vulgate 16:26). St Fulgentius of Ruspe (c.467-533) also singles out Judith's chastity as an example of a virtuous widow who had no wish to remarry when he wrote to the widow Gall (Epistle II. 29). In this he says:-

> "Chastity went forth to do battle against lust,
>
> and holy humility went forward to the destruction
>
> of pride. He fought with weapons, she with fasts;
>
> he in drunkenness, she in prayer. Accordingly,

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[5] Brian McNeil, "Reflections on the Book of Judith", The Downside Review, 96, pp. 199-207.

a holy widow accompanied by the virtue of Chastity

what the whole people of the Israelites were powerless

to do. One woman cut down the leader of such a

great army, and restored unhoped for freedom to the

people of God."

It is difficult to assess the beginnings of the chaste image of Judith in art because we do not have any portrayals of her before the eighth-century fresco in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome. The condition of this fresco makes it extremely difficult to decide what representation the artist is trying to depict of this biblical heroine, because the figure is headless. Judith is certainly not very chaste or coy in early medieval illuminated manuscripts but this is probably more due to lack of artistic know'-how than trying to adapt to the ideas prevailing at the time. Yet we do know that by the late Middle Ages Judith was considered to be a prototype of the Virgin, and like her, was shown as the epitome of goodness and saintliness. Unlike the Virgin, Judith as a widow could not have been a virgin, but nevertheless, she came to symbolise chastity and celibacy. Moreover, she also came to represent deliverance of the chosen people in the same way that the Virgin was delivered of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Marina Warner re-iterates this when she says that "Judith was propounded in the Middle Ages as a forerunner of the Mother of God, peculiar as that may seem" and which resulted in her typological analogy with the

Virgin in art.[6] These prefigurations of the Virgin are to be found mostly in stained-glass windows, wall paintings and sculptures both inside and outside cathedrals and churches of Continental Europe. Not only was she regarded as a prototype of the Virgin Mary, but like the Virgin she was considered the means by which her people were saved. Judith like Mary "brought about the downfall of mighty men in order to deliver their people as the Holy Virgin through her compassion for Christ, defeated the devil and redeemed us all."[7] It is Uzziah who utters the immortal words when he says in Chapter 13:18 after Judith's return to Bethulia, "more blessed art you by God Most High than all other women on earth!" It will be recalled that this is the same accolade given to the Virgin by the Archangel Gabriel at the time of the Annunciation when he greets her with the words: "Hail thou art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28). However, it should be stressed that it was Clement of Rome (30? - 99AD) (the earliest writer on Judith) who first recognised her as patriotic, courageous and blessed. He said:-

> "she gave herself up to danger, and went forth from love of
>
> country and her people in sedge and the Lord delivered
>
> over Holofernes" (1 Clem. 55.4-5)

but then we must not forget that he was writing these words of encouragement at a time of persecutions when Christians were in fear of their lives.[8]

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[6] Marina Warner, Monuments and Maidens, The Allegory of the Female Form, London, 1985, p.164.

[7] Louise Lillie, "Traesnit och Kalkmalerie", Iconographisk Post, 1986, vol. 3, p.15.

[8] From this we know that the Book of Judith had already been translated in the first century AD.

Judith's analogy to Mary is also to be found (as I mentioned in Chapter 3) in the writings of St. Augustine (354-430) *Sermo 37*, on Proverbs 31 10-13). It too is expounded by Bede (673-735) (*De muliere forti*) where he links the *mulier fortis* with the Virgin. St Bernard (1090-1153) (*Super missus est homilia* 2.4-5), St Bonaventura (1221-1274) (*De navitate b. virginis Mariae, sermo 5.3*) and the Dominican scholar, Albertus Magnus, (Albert of Cologne) (?1206-1280) (*Questionies super evangelium missus est, 43.2, [Opera omnia 37:38]*) all said that the Virgin, like Judith (and Esther), triumphed over the Devil.[9] (In Judith's case, it is, of course, Holofernes who was the incarnation of Satan.)

According to Margarita Stocker, Judith also occasionally features on medieval fonts, for instance on the font from Hutton Cranswick, (c. 1130) now in the Yorkshire Museum, York.[10] If this is Judith, then she stands there with a severed head as a symbol of purity as she bathed and purified herself before her encounter with Holofernes, in the way that Baptism too is "a symbol of ritual cleansing"[11] Judith also epitomises Good over Evil because through the Sacrament of Baptism the Devil is vanquished.

Although Judith is clearly a typological figure for the Virgin, strange as it might seem, we only rarely find Judith in western art directly opposite or

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[9] For these sources see Mary D. Garrard, Artemisia Gentileschi The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art, Princeton, 1989, footnote 26, p.549.

[10] Although Margarita Stocker (op. cit., 1998, p. 11) identifies this figure as Judith, others (James Anderson, in his guide to St. Peter's Church, Hutton Cranswick, p.2) think that it is " a man holding a head". If the figure is male it could be a representation of David with the head of Goliath and still retain the same theological meaning.

[11] Peter and Linda Murray, The Oxford Companion to Christian Art and Architecture, Oxford, 1996, p.43.

alongside the Virgin, whereas she is often shown with other female heroines or David. Mary and Judith appear together in the fourteenth century where they are placed side by side in a typological context in the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (The Mirror of Human Salvation), which is one of the most important Christian typological books of the late Middle Ages.[12] It was first written in about 1324 by Ludolph of Saxony, a Dominican friar, and subsequently produced as a Block Book. The illustrated Speculum usually has two pictures to a page (four when the book is fully opened). When there are only two pages, the left-hand one is usually devoted to the New Testament while the right one typifies scenes from the Old Testament. The book became a vital guide for stained-glass, sculpture, painting and tapestries throughout Western Europe and especially in Northern Europe; it was not very popular in Spain and Italy.[13]

In one such illustration from the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Judith and the Virgin are portrayed side by side in this typological way. Mary stands on the left, spearing a claw-footed Devil lying beneath her feet, while Judith is shown on the right side of the page, inside the tent of Holofernes with her sword raised about to assassinate Holofernes. In other versions of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* Mary is also associated, not only with Judith and Holofernes, but also, with other biblical *kephalophorai*, namely Jael who kills Sisera and Queen Tomyris who places the head of Cyrus, which she has just

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[12] See Volker Herzner, "Die Judith der Medici", Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 43, no. 2, 1980, fig.2.
[13] A fourteenth-century copy of the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis* (ms. 43-1500) can be seen at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

decapitated, in a vat of blood. Judith and the Virgin are also to be found next to each other on two pages (folios 67v and 68r) on a Leipzig manuscript of 1436.[14]

It should be noted that even today in the Roman Catholic Church Judith is still praised and linked to the Virgin Mary, although since Vatican II the number of readings of Uzziah's pronouncement ("My daughter, more blessed are you by God most High than all other women on earth") (Judith 13:18) has been reduced. Uzziah's and Joakim's words of praise ("For by your own hand you have accomplished all this. You have done well by Israel; God is well pleased with it. May the Omnipotent Lord bless you in all the days to come".) (Judith 15:10) are still read in some parts of the Roman Catholic world on the Feast of the Assumption (15 August). On this date the coverings protecting the inlaid marble pavement of Siena Cathedral are completely removed so that the worshippers can see and meditate on the events illustrated on the floor – on the Judith scene in the transept and the images of David and Goliath in front of the altar. Even in Malta, the statue of the Virgin Mary already mentioned (with the effigies of Judith, Jael, Ruth and Rebekah on the base) is carried from the church through the streets of Mosta on the Feast of the Assumption.

During the late Middle Ages medieval sculptors turned to the works of Prudentius (348-c.410 AD) for inspiration and especially to his fifth-century poem *Psychomachia* (The Fight for Mansoul) as an example of Virtue conquering

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[14] This is the *Speculum historicum* of Vincentius Bellovacensis.

Vice.[15] In it he describes the battles between pairs of Vices and Virtues, for instance Faith and Idolatry, Patience and Anger, Chastity and Lust and Humility and Pride. He gives Judith as an example of Chastity overcoming Lust for he says:

" ....after the severed head of Holofernes soaked his

Assyrian chamber with his lustful blood, and the

unbending Judith spurning the lecherous

captain's jewelled couch, checked his unclean

passion with the sword and woman as she was,

won a famous victory over the foe with no

trembling hand..."

The Prudentius poem had an enormous influence on medieval literature and art where subjects from it (particularly the Virtues and Vices) became a favourite theme, especially in France on Romanesque and, to a lesser extent, on Gothic portals. However, by the late thirteenth century the *Psycomachia* had gone out of fashion or had lost much of its forceful symbolic significance.

An example of the chaste and youthful image from the late Middle Ages is the imposing full-size statue of Judith of about 1220 (figure 9) on the jamb of the right portal of the north porch of Chartres Cathedral where she stands solemnly and regally together with other biblical heroes and heroines all of whom are prototypes of Christ and the Virgin and through her the Church or

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[15] Prudentius, Psychomachia, Vol. I (Loeb Classical Library), trans. by H. J. Thomson, Norwich, 1949, p. 283.

Ecclesia, meaning the Church triumphant over the Unbelievers.[16] She appears dressed in long flowing robes between the statues of the bearded Sirah, the author of Ecclesiasticus who was wrongly credited with the reconstruction of the Temple, on the left, and Joseph (who was betrayed like Christ) on the right, trampling on the figure of Potiphar's wife beneath his feet while she communes with the devil - another instance of Chastity subjugating Lust. In this representation Judith is shown as a paragon of virtue, purity and chastity - as the image of eternal femininity. Beneath her feet lies a dog - symbol of fidelity.

As well as representing *Ecclesia* at Chartres, Judith also symbolises the Virtues of Chastity conquering Lust and Humility defeating Pride. Judith's humility was recognised at an early date, as we saw in Fulgentius of Ruspe's fifth-century letter to the widow Gall, and it soon became an established part of her character. Judith therefore also represents Humility in medieval art. In the manuscript of the *Speculum Virginum, 'Humilitas and Virtuous Women'* dating from the second quarter of the twelfth century (Arundel ms 44 folio 34v) in the British Library, London), Judith and Jael are again shown together - this time standing on either side of the figure of Humility (*Humilitas*) who stabs the prostrate armed Pride (*Superbia*) - while they trample on the bodies of Sisera and Holofernes respectively.[17]

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[16] See Chapter 3 where I refer to this statue, as part of the images of Judith and David together.

[17] For an illustration see J. Bialostocki, "Judith, The Story, the Image, and the Symbol. Giorgione's Painting in the Evolution of the Theme", The Message of Images, Vienna, 1988, fig. 99.

This chaste image from Chartres is continued by sculptors and artists in churches and cathedrals in France throughout the Middle Ages right up to the fifteenth century. I have already mentioned the stone polychrome statue of Judith (figure 11) in the ambulatory of the Choir of the Cathedral at Albi, which is considered by tourists visiting the cathedral to be among the most beautiful and touching sculptures from the end of the Middle Ages. Here she is still the noble and reticent heroine, sumptuously and decorously clothed in a red dress with pleated sleeves and yet she cheekily raises her skirt to reveal the tip of her right shoe or sandal. It would appear from this that this sculptor may have been aware of the text which states that "her sandal ravished his eyes" i.e. Holofernes' (Judith 16:9). There is no head of Holofernes present but we know, not only from her timid expression and downcast eyes, but from the inscription on the plinth, that this is Judith. It is an expression of feminine mystery for we do not know whether she has already planned her tragic mission to liberate her people or whether she is meditating on the act she has already committed. Her down-turned eyelids enhance the impression of coyness, piety and celibacy. Perhaps they also suggest weakness, vulnerability and humility?

These medieval sculptors and carvers realised and accepted Judith's modesty and therefore often show her with down-turned eyes. Was this just an assumption on their part or were they aware of her modesty from the passage in Judith 13:15 where she says, "The Lord has struck him down..." indicating that she does not take all the credit for the killing, but modestly gives the victory to God. Although she accepts God's role in her success yet she is

extremely self-confident "God has sent me to accomplish...", (Judith 11:16), "I will guide you through the heart of Judea ......" and "I was sent to tell you...and... "I have been given foreknowledge of this..." (Judith 11:19).

b) Beautiful and Youthful Images

Nearly all the portrayals of Judith in European art (except for some early examples) which have come down to us, represent her as young and beautiful, although the biblical text gives us no idea as to her exact age. Throughout the history of art artists have not even tried to work out Judith's age and always paint her as young or youthful. They are playing safe because they have no idea how old Judith was when she married. All we know is that she "had been a widow in her home for three years and four months" (i.e. forty months) Judith 8:4). Presumably Judith was young because Uzziah (Judith 13:18) addresses her as "my daughter." Women in the Near East usually married between the ages of twelve and fourteen. Therefore if we say that Judith was thirteen when she married, she could have been about sixteen when Manasseh succumbed to heat-stroke and died. However, the fact that that was a self-assured and wealthy widow of some standing in the community might indicate that she was older.

Judith's beauty was no doubt helped by her wealth; being the widow of a rich man meant that she possessed many fine clothes and jewels which she was able to put on to enhance her looks, although we know that she chose after his demise to wear sackcloth and to live frugally on the roof of her house.

Judith was not the only female in the Bible described as wealthy. Ruth, another biblical widow who had inherited wealth (Ruth 4:5, 10) and Abigail (I Samuel 25:39,42) and Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:27) were also all rich.

Verse 7 of chapter 8 informs us that our heroine is "shapely and beautiful" and in the eyes of craftsmen, sculptors and painters she therefore had to be young - older women are rarely portrayed in this way. Judith is not alone among biblical women to be described as "beautiful". Rachel (Genesis 29:17) is "graceful and beautiful", Sarai (Genesis 12:11) is "a woman beautiful in appearance" (although she was said to be in her eighties) and Esther (Esther 2:7) is "fair and beautiful".

Yet Judith's captivating beauty which is one of her main weapons has become legendary. Having already devised her secret plan she was determined to make herself as fetching as possible. In this she obviously succeeded because the narrator repeats over and over again the effect which her beauty had on those who saw her. So much so, that this becomes a kind of *Leitmotif* throughout chapter 10. The Elders and the young men waiting at the gates of Bethulia were amazed at her beauty (Judith 10:10); the Assyrian patrol studied her face and were much struck by her beauty, (Judith 10:14); the men in the camp of Holofernes (Judith 10:19) also crowded around her to admire her beauty and Holofernes too was struck by her beautiful face (Judith 10:23). Judith is well aware of the devastating effects which her beauty had on Holofernes because in her Song (Judith 16:9) she sings that "her beauty

captivated his mind". In fact, we can deduce from this that all ages were bowled over by her glamour and charisma - from the youngest to the oldest. It is therefore hardly surprising that St Jerome was worried that Judith's intentions were rather more sexual than virtuous, felt it necessary to add the following passage:-

> "And the Lord also gave her more beauty, because all this dressing up did not proceed from sensuality but from virtue; and, therefore, the Lord increased her beauty so that she appeared to all men's eyes incomparably lovely"

There is nothing in the apocryphal text to indicate that God gave Judith any additional beauty to accomplish her task.

The fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries provide a wealth of examples of virtuous, beautiful and feminine looking Judiths. These are mostly to be found in Italy where artists followed the ideas expressed by writers, such as Agnolo Firenzuolo whose treatise published in 1548 described how the beauty of women should be portrayed. He stipulated that for the optimum loveliness they should be depicted with curly hair, fair skin and dark eyes under curved eyebrows. We are therefore inundated in Renaissance Italy with a whole series of gorgeous and beautiful Judiths right through from Botticelli's Judith Returning to Bethulia, (figure 39), Uffizi Gallery, Florence of 1472, with a lovely and dignified Judith, to Fede Galizia's attractive Judith with the Head of Holofernes of 1596 in the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida and Elisabetta Sirani's painting of Judith with the Head of Holofernes in

The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore (figure 40) dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century, with its soft delicate colouring and smoothly painted features.[18] Both Galizia and Sirani present a very feminine example of their own sex. Northern artists and sculptors preferred on the whole to depict her more devious, cunning and sexually tempting side (more Eve than Virgin Mary).[19]

Later Florentine painters also carried on the tradition of showing Judith as a glamorous and sumptuously dressed Jewish woman. Giovanni Martinelli (active between 1635 and 1668), whose fondness for representing beautiful young women luxuriously clothed in exotically textured garments is well-known, gives full vent to his predilection for rich bright blues and tonal contrasts in his striking portrait-like image of Judith now in the Art Institute in Chicago.[20] Unlike some other seventeenth-century examples, Martinelli's Judith does not confront the viewer aggressively, but looks gently out of the canvas1 so that we are left admiring the brilliance of her coral necklace and the red flower in her auburn hair. Gradually, however, more and more sensuous and erotic examples of Judith began to creep in alongside these virtuous images, as artists focused increasingly on the sexual aspects of the story, so that by the first quarter of the of the seventeenth century, Italian Baroque artists (and some foreign painters working in Italy at this time) had moved away from the virtuous medieval and classical images of Renaissance Judiths and exchanged

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[18] For an illustration of the Fede Galizia painting see Mary D. Garrard, , op. cit., p. 315, fig. 279.

[19] I examine these images in chapter 8, where I deal with the nude and semi-clothed images of Judith.

[20] See Bulletin of Art Institute of Chicago, January 1942, Vol. 186, p.7.

these for more sensual and powerful women in scenes of sexual innuendo with bloody and gruesome representations of decapitation.[21]

However, some examples of beautiful Judiths do remain. By the late seventeenth century and the first part of the eighteenth centuries it became fashionable for rich and aristocratic women to have their portraits painted as saints and other biblical heroines. Judith was a popular choice, because being wealthy, attractive and virtuous, women wanted to emulate her. This vogue was widespread in both Northern Europe and Italy. The painting entitled Judith (Portrait of a Woman as Judith) by Eglon van der Neer (1634?-1703) in the National Gallery, London, of 1678 (figure 41) is, in spite of the sword, helmet, headless body and the maid lurking in the shadows putting the head into a bag, undoubtedly a portrait of a young woman with the latest hairstyle opulently attired in a shimmering white gown, masquerading as Judith. We do not know the sitter's identity or who commissioned the portrait but in Protestant Holland this type of portrait became the perfect pretext for painting Judith in all her beauty and innocence. Van der Neer has given the portrait an incongruous setting with drapes in front of a building with arches, columns and capitals which bears no relationship to the biblical text. Here the background details merely serve as props in the Van Dyckian portrait tradition.

This type of portrait image had already been created in Italy and used by Agostino Carracci (1557-1602) in his canvas of Olimpia Luna as 'Judith' and

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[21] We shall come across more of these in later chapters of this dissertation.

Melchiorre Zoppio as 'Holofernes' 1589 [22] when he chose to concentrate on the
femme forte side of Judith's character.[23] The painting was mentioned by Malvasia
in 1678 and then disappeared until it was rediscovered in the 1980s.[24]

By the end of the eighteenth century images of Judith had lost most of
their religious impact but artists continued to paint her for her beauty. The
picture by Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini (1708-1713) <u>Judith with the Head of
Holofernes</u>, the Barber Institute, Birmingham (figure 42), was probably
executed in about 1710 during his stay in England (1708-1713). This painting
with its broad and dashing technique and accentuated highlights also comes
close to being a portrait, but again we have no idea who the sitter was. Like the
Judith in the Van der Neer, this heroine is also oblivious of the maid scooping
up the head and placing it in the sack.

To all the above aspects of Judith's character we must also add her
wisdom. Although this cannot easily be depicted by artists, we should
nevertheless mention it here because both Uzziah and Holofernes and his
attendants say that she was wise (Judith 8:29 and 11:20). Uzziah says "today is
not the first time that your wisdom has been evident for from your earliest days
all the people have recognised your good sense and sound judgement" while

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[22] See <u>Around 1610: The Onset of the Baroque</u>, exh. cat., Matthiesen Fine Art Ltd., London, 1985, pp. 18-25 and <u>Apollo Magazine</u>, 12 July 1985, p. 70.

[23] For a discussion on the *femme forte* see Chapter 6 (triumphant and heroic images).

[24] Carlo Cesare Malvasia was a Bolognese writer who wrote <u>Felsina Pittrice</u> (lives of the Bolognese painters).

Holofernes' attendants exclaimed, "In terms of beauty and brains, there is not another woman like this from one end of the earth to the other!" [25] Geoffrey Chaucer, too, recognised her wisdom because he says in *The Merchant's Tale from The Canterbury Tales:*

> "Judith... her wisdom held God's people in its keeping
>
> By slaying Holofernes who was sleeping." [26]

2. David

St Augustine also considered David to be virtuous and a prefiguration of Christ who defeats the devil in the guise of Goliath. We read in his Sermo XXXII to the people of Hippo:-

> "Brethren here we see pitted against each other
>
> the devil figured by Goliath, on one side, and Jesus
>
> Christ figured by David, on the other." [27]

St Augustine then goes on to interpret the symbolic exegesis in the story of David and Goliath with the following words: -

> "David chose five stones out of the torrent and put them in the
>
> vessel into which he milked his sheep, and thus armed,
>
> marched out against his enemy. David's five stones represent
>
> the five books of the Law of Moses. The Law, in turn,

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[25] See Carey A. Moore, op. cit., note 21, p.211, for "beauty and brains", read "loveliness of face and wisdom of words".

[26] Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Merchant's Tale" from The Canterbury Tales, Penguin Classics, 1951, rev. ed., 1977, trans, by Nevill Coghill, p.360.

[27] Sermo XXXII, IV-VI, Migne P L: Line 38, Cols. 179-99.

contains ten beneficent commandments from which all others are derived. Thus, the Law is symbolised by both the number five and the number ten. That is why David fought with five stones, and sang, as he said, with a ten-stringed instrument. And note that he does not hurl the five stones, but one only: this single stone is the unity brought about by the Law, that is, by Charity. Note also that he took five stones from the bed of the river. What does the river represent if not a flighty and inconstant people whose violent passions plunge them into the sea of the world? Now such were the Jewish people. They had received the Law, but it passed over them as a river flows over stones. The Lord took the Law so that he might bring it to Grace, just as David chose the stones from the bed of the river and placed them in the milk-vessel. And what is a truer symbol of Grace than the abundant sweetness of milk".

David, because of his youth, has by definition to be shown in art as youthful. The biblical narrative tells us that David was the youngest son of Jesse of Bethlehem in Judah (I Samuel 16:11 and 17:14) and that he was just a boy, "ruddy and handsome in appearance" (I Samuel 17:42). Although, as we have seen, images of David date back to the time of the catacombs where he is presented as a young boy, it was not until the Renaissance that artists began to depict David as good-looking. Unlike Judith whose whole raison d'être and outcome of her mission depended on her beauty, David's victory was not

dependant on his appearance but more on his youth, agility and intelligence when compared to the older, less mobile giant Goliath.

Like Judith, David is also courageous. Medieval scholars and sculptors of the thirteenth century sometimes used his image as a reminder to the faithful, on church and cathedral facades, that they too should be brave and fearless like David. They would therefore set him up as an example by depicting him as a young boy presenting the huge head of Goliath to Saul e.g. in the archivolt of the rose window of the west facade of the Cathedral of Nôtre-Dame at Le Mans.

By the time of the Renaissance in Italy we begin to see a whole new interpretation of the figure of David with artists and sculptors emphasising his beauty and youthfulness. This is particularly evident in sculpture. Donatello, who had recently finished his apprenticeship with Ghiberti, was one of the sculptors commissioned in February 1408 by the Opera del Duomo of Florence to execute a marble statue of David for a buttress of one of the tribunes of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore. His statue (figure 19) which is now in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence, was unusual in Tuscany at this time - it is over life-size (191 cms) and free-standing and can be considered to be at the cross-roads of the old Gothic and the new Renaissance styles displaying both classical and realistic features simultaneously. This youthful statue of David still shows the signs of Gothic elegance in the long sweeping lines of the drapery, his elongated fingers, the stylised knotted cloak around his shoulders and the gentle swaying movement of his body. However, the robust modelling

and the realism of the decapitated head of Goliath lying at his feet with the stone deeply set into his forehead, is already indicative of Donatello's enormous talents, which culminated in his even more magnificently sensuous naked bronze statue of David (also in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence) (figure 20).[28] The pose which Donatello employs in the marble David is one which is taken from the antique where the hero stands triumphant over the vanquished enemy.[29] The proud idealised curly haired head of David is also influenced by antiquity recalling the Antinous type. Donatello embellishes this classical head with a wreath of flowers probably amaranth flowers (or ivy) which refers to "the never fading fame of heroes".[30] His smooth uncut eyeballs, giving a strange faraway look, may also have been taken from classical statues or busts. Originally there was a leather or metal strap which linked David's hand with the pouch of the sling resting on Goliath's head. This type of David figure with its highly polished draperies is far removed from the shepherd boy described in the Old Testament.

After the statue was completed, probably in 1412, it was considered to be too small and was bought by the Council of the City of Florence to be placed in an inner room of the Palazzo della Signoria.[31] Donatello and his assistants were summoned to the Signoria to complete and adapt the statue, which was now

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[28] I consider this statue more fully in Chapter 8, dealing with the nude images of David.

[29] I take a closer look at other such examples when discussing the triumphant and heroic images of David in Chapter 6.

[30] Roberta Olsen, Italian Renaissance Sculpture, London, 1992, p. 48.

[31] There is no evidence that this statue was ever put up.

altered from that of a Biblical hero to that of a civic hero. It was placed on brackets, decorated with gold and silver leaf, with glass inlays added to the base. The wall behind was painted blue with golden fleur-de-lis (emblem of Florence) and the statue was given an inscription which read:-

PRO PATRIA FORTITER DIMICANTIBUS ETIAM

ADVERSUS TERRIBILISSIMOS HOSTES DII

PRAESTANT AUXILIUM

("Translation: "To those who fight bravely for the fatherland the

gods lend aid even against the most terrible foes").

It is also possible that the drapery was re-cut at this time to expose David's leg.

The city of Florence had long been associated with David in both literature and art. To the Florentines David represented valour in times of adversity over the might of the strong and stood for a symbol of victory over tyranny. Already in the thirteenth century Taddeo Gaddi had painted David in the Baroncelli Chapel at Santa Croce (figure 18) and it is possible that Donatello may have been influenced by this fresco when he sculpted his own rendition of David.[32]

We can observe a similar trend in the work by Andrea del Castagno (1417/19-1457) on a parade shield entitled The Youthful David (figure 43) of

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[32] The greatest number of images of Judith and Holofernes and David in any one city are to be found in Florence.

about 1450 in the National Gallery of Art in Washington which can be considered as leading the way towards the more attractive and appealing representations, culminating in the sensual paintings of the seventeenth century. However, here Castagno is content to demonstrate his masterly technique combining, a sense of realism with classical inspiration because it has been suggested that Castagno adopted the pose from the pedagogue in the classical Niobid group or from figures painted on Greek vases.[33] In this well-balanced composition David is precisely and meticulously rendered on the leather covering of the shield, where he is shown as both young and handsome with wind-blown hair and softly modelled arms and calf muscles ready to fling the sling with the stone at Goliath. This painting has often been considered to be one of the first "action paintings" denoting action of the Renaissance.[34] Giorgio Vasari had already observed that Castagno "displayed great boldness in the movement of his figures".[35] Strangely because David has not yet thrown the stone, but symbolically, the severed head of Goliath, with a large stone embedded in his forehead, is already lying at his feet. This painting which combines both symbolism and realism - note the superb three dimensional quality of the white blouse and the red over-tunic worn by David - was obviously intended as a warning to tyrants when carried in parades. Figures of

[33] Catalogue of Italian Paintings, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Vol. 1, text, Washington, 1979, p.129.
[34] Ibid., p. 129.
[35] Giorgio Vasari, op cit., Vol. 2, p. 50.

David, and particularly statues of him, (as we shall see throughout this dissertation) became extremely popular in Florence during the Renaissance.[36]

The youthful and handsome image of David which began in the Renaissance continued well into the seventeenth century when artists and sculptors emphasise the classic beauty of his facial and bodily features in line with humanist thoughts on the human body. Many of the representations of David at this time concentrate on the nude or semi-nude figure.[37]

Like Judith, images of David decrease so that there are very few examples of David and Goliath in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One memorable statue, however, is the marble statute of David and Goliath on the facade of the church of San Rocco in Venice by Giovanni Marchiori, sculpted in 1743.[38] This representation of a turbaned youth, resting an over-sized head on the tree-stump while gazing away into the distance could equally be discussed under either contemplative or semi-nude images, but because his face is so exquisitely handsome, I think that he can be included among these portrayals.

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[36] See Chapter 8, dealing with the nude images of David, where other youthful statues of David (e.g. those by Michelangelo and Gian Lorenzo Bernini) are discussed more fully.

[37] I discuss these seventeenth century examples in greater detail in Chapter 8, when I examine the nude and semi-clothed portrayals of David.

[38] For an illustration, see Jane Martineau and Andrew Robison, The Glory of Venice Art in the Eighteenth Century, New Haven and London, 1994, fig. 6, p.27.

3. The "Prayerful" Image

a) Judith

In addition to the good and youthful examples which I have discussed in the first half of this chapter, I should also like to consider those representations of Judith praying or calling upon God which I think form an integral part of her "good", chaste and saintly image where she acts as a prefiguration of the Virgin Mary. These portrayals of her devotion to God, which I have called "the prayerful" images show her, not only asking God to listen to her but to give her divine strength and a beguiling tongue - in other words deceit and cunning (Judith 9:13). There is no doubt that without these additional weapons (she already had her sexuality) she feels unable to kill Holofernes. As noted earlier, Judith was both pious and devout, fasted, wore sackcloth and feared God. In spite of her wealth she preferred to stay on the roof of her house where she had made a shelter, presumably to pray.

From the apocryphal narrative we learn that Judith prays conscientiously at dawn and dusk and at every other opportunity throughout the narrative. (In fact she must have been praying hard because it appears that she was completely oblivious of the battle which had been raging around her for thirty four days.) We know that without prayer Judith could not have succeeded almost single-handedly (I say "almost" because she was to some extent assisted by her maid) in her undertaking to free her home town of Bethulia from the terrors of the besieging Assyrian armies led by Holofernes, and thereby ultimately saving the entire Jewish nation.

It is therefore puzzling, as we shall see, that these rituals of fasting and prayer which formed such an important part of her daily life, especially that of prayer, should have been so sparsely depicted by artists and sculptors except for the occasional scene where Judith appears praying as part of a biblical or historical cycle or during the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries when the subject was taken up spasmodically. One explanation why there is such a dearth of images of Judith at prayer is that artists preferred and obviously enjoyed stressing her physical and erotic qualities in order to emphasise it was through her sexual beauty that she lured Holofernes to his death. They mostly ignored the fact that it was also through the power of prayer that she was given strength to succeed in her self-appointed task.

Judith, as the narrator tells us, demonstrates her trust in God at the beginning of Chapter 8 when she summons the Elders of the town (Uzziah, Chabris and Charmis) to a meeting at her house. She rebukes them for their lack of judgement and faith. She scolds them for testing God by setting a time limit on Him to come to their rescue and for setting themselves above God. Judith is fully aware of God's Omnipotence because she says so and urges them not to provoke God's anger because, as she adds, "he still has the power to protect us as long as he wants or even to destroy us" (Judith 8:15), "for God is not to be threatened as a man is or to be cajoled as a mere mortal" (Judith 8:16). She gives us still greater proof of her belief in God and says that "as we wait for his deliverance, let us call upon him to help us. He will listen to our voice, if he is so disposed" (Judith 8:17). Judith convinces them that God has not

abandoned them to their fate, nor will he punish them for their sins, but that he is testing their faith just as he did with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is clear from this that Judith has a complete and unshakeable trust in God.

Having spoken strongly and convincingly she then says that the people should do something and not wait for God to act. Uzziah, who is in favour of waiting says in a rather cowardly way that he cannot go back on the promise which he has made to the people. Judith does not think much of this and says she has a better plan but they must not ask her what it is. The magistrates agree to her secret plan; perhaps they felt they had nothing to lose and possibly something to gain if the plan succeeded. On leaving, Uzziah encourages her to pray for them, so that God will send rain to fill their cisterns!

Presumably because there is no religious or theological advantage to be gained, artists have very little interest in showing the meeting of Judith and the Elders. An exception is the thirteenth-century sculpture of <u>Judith Talking to Uzziah</u> which is part of the series of six events from the life of Judith on the archivolt of the right hand portal of the north porch of Chartres Cathedral,[39] directly above the statue of Judith.[40] Strictly there should be two other Elders but I think they have been sacrificed due to lack of space.

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[39] The other sculptures in the archivolt are:-
    1. The head of Holofernes;
    2. Judith covers her head with ashes and prays;
    3. Judith leaves Bethulia with her Maid;
    4. Judith kneels at Holofernes' feet;
    5. The maidservant puts the decapitated head into a sack.
[40] I examined this statue of Judith on pages 90-91 of this chapter.

At this date the lack of examples portraying this scene may possibly be due to the fact that male artists and sculptors were not attracted to painting or sculpting a self-assured woman, particularly when the Elders meekly come to her house having been summoned by her "favourite slave" and who then agree to her undisclosed proposal, as she "manfully" takes charge of what appears to be a impossible situation.[41]

However, no sooner have the Elders left her roof top retreat than she begins her first long prayer which takes up the whole of chapter 9. We read in the text that she prostrates herself, puts ashes on her head and removes the sackcloth which she has been wearing. She cries out in a loud voice to the Lord and begins by praying for retribution (verses 2-3), calling upon her ancestor Simeon into whose hand God placed a sword, to take revenge on the foreigners who had violated the virgin's womb. This refers to Simeon's act of revenge on the Shechemites for the uncircumcised Hamor's rape of his sister Dinah (Genesis 34). It is typical that Judith should equate herself with Simeon, the hero of the story, and not with the victimised Dinah. It would appear from Judith's approval of his action that she was probably already aware that she too might be sexually ravished by the uncircumcised Holofernes and although she had no-one to help her (except another female - Dinah at least had her brothers to come to her aid) she does not let this stand in her way. Although her main concern was for the salvation of her town and the assassination of Holofernes,

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[41] As Toni Craven has pointed out the behaviour and reactions of these Elders is rather ludicrous. It was only later that artists painted this Jewish heroine as a *femme forte*. See Toni Craven, op cit., pp. 86-87.

she must have felt some trepidation at her forthcoming undertaking - some might even say that her mission was foolhardy, but then Judith was fearless in her faith in God. In verses 5 and 6 she recognises God's omnipotence "you designed the present and the future and what you had in mind has happened" and in his omniscience" all your ways are prepared beforehand, and you judge with foreknowledge". The kind of God which Judith prays to is God as a Creator and Redeemer which we can recognise in the psalmist:

Psalm 149 verses 6-7

"Let the high praises of God be in their throats and

two-edged swords in their hands to execute vengeance on the nations

and punishments on the peoples,..."

Not only does she pray but she cries out in a loud voice and begs God to hear her prayer, a widow's.

Representations of Judith actually at prayer are first to be seen in the visual arts during the Middle Ages in medieval narrative cycles which set out all or part of the Judith story. They feature in illuminated manuscripts, (for instance in the Bible Moralisée) sculpture and stained-glass windows. The Farfa Bible, 5729, folio 327r, has a small cameo, in the second register, giving us a rare glimpse of Judith praying on the roof of her house.[42]

At Chartres Cathedral Judith is also represented praying (figure 44) in

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[42] For an illustration see Frances G. Godwin, The Judith Illustration of the' Hortus Deliciarum', Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 36, 1949, p. 35, fig. 6

the same archivolt as that with Uzziah. This sculptor exactly follows the biblical text depicting her as young and attractive, in a plain, loose nondescript garment, kneeling and covering her head with ashes. She calls upon God in her hour of need (Judith 9:9 and 13). Judith regards God as her own personal God because she says and, here she recognises the weakness of her own sex, "For your strength does not depend upon numbers nor your might upon powerful men. Rather, you are the God of the humble; you are the ally of the insignificant, the champion of the weak, the protector of the despairing, the saviour of those without hope" (Judith 9:11). Yet, she does not take God for granted and implores him "please, please, God of my father... hear my prayer" (Judith 9:12).

It is indeed through prayer that she is given the physical strength to kill the evil and lusty Holofernes. Judith does not pray for her own safety and in this respect she could be considered foolish and irresponsible, but she had nothing to lose because she had no husband and was childless and therefore not beholden to anyone. She is obviously fearless: we have already seen how she approached the Elders of Bethulia with her own secret plan (Judith 8:11-17), her bold and determined stand when she meets the Assyrian patrol in the middle of the night on unknown terrain and how she shows no terror when they take her into custody or when they give her a bodyguard of one hundred hand-picked men to accompany her to the quarters of Holofernes. Nor is she afraid when later she is left alone with the drunken and lascivious Holofernes.

Although Judith is able to entice Holofernes by her voluptuousness and beauty, in the end it is her piety and her faith in the Lord which win the day.

Judith is also depicted in prayer in the third roundel from the bottom of the fourth lancet window of the south side of the Saint-Chapelle, dating from 1248. In this stained-glass panel she kneels under an arcade with a red background, dressed in a blue mantle with a white tunic (colours which are symbolic of the Virgin) while her servant stands behind. This calm and harmonious composition bears a French inscription CI PRIE: JUDIT: DIEU: PUIST ENGINEER, from which we learn that this is indeed Judith praying and that God can "engineer", thereby meaning that he can and will bring about a solution to her prayers. In this depiction Judith is incorrectly portrayed because she is richly attired and has not yet removed her widow's weeds.

After the end of the Middle Ages artists and sculptors lose this monastic interest in showing Judith praying, unless the scene is to form part of a cycle (usually some four or five illustrations) by Northern artists. Examples of such cycles are those by Maarten van Heemskerk (1498-1574) or the Fleming Jan Swart van Groningen (fl.1522-1558) who were also renowned draughtsmen and printmakers, together with others during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Very occasionally Italians would also portray Judith praying. An example of this is an illustration which is part of a cycle of four episodes from the Book of Judith in the Malermi Bible of 1490, executed in Venice and now in the British Library, London. It is divided into two scenes by a square pillar. On the left

Judith prays earnestly on her knees in front of a chest, hands clasped together while in the other half Judith and her elderly servant go forth to Bethulia. This Judith is wearing the same outfit while she prays as when she leaves the house, which would indicate that this artist was obviously not aware of the details of the story because after Judith had finished praying she took off her sackcloth and attired herself in her very best clothes and jewellery.

One print by Jan Swart van Groningen, now at the Philadelphia Academy, (on loan from the Philadelphia Museum of Art) shows Judith on her knees reading and praying in front of a small *prie-dieu* by the light of a candle: this artist has rightly observed the time of her devotions because the biblical text says that she began her prayers "just as the evening's incense offering was being offered in the Temple at Jerusalem" (Judith 9:1). More bizarre, however, is the inclusion of the maid in the interior, who lies prostrate on the floor of the room. She is certainly not present in the apocryphal account because Judith summons her after she "had stopped calling on the God of Israel" (Judith 10:1). Van Groningen has set this event in the Flemish tradition in a bedchamber (no rooftop here) where a large bed has been strategically placed to symbolise, not only the sexual aspects of the story, but also Judith's forthcoming victory over Holofernes, who as we know falls drunk onto the bed, thus enabling Judith to kill him. Van Groningen then conveniently continues the illustration in the right hand portion of the print, where Judith and her maid are seen departing from the house, leaving the town of Bethulia, with the tents visible in the distance.

If we now look at the middle part of the story from Chapter 11 of the Book of Judith onwards, we will see that Judith continues her courageous stand, fortified by God's divine help. She shows no fear when she is brought before Holofernes and remains totally calm throughout the interrogation. She informs him in verses 16 and 17 that "God has sent me to accomplish with you things which will astonish the whole world whenever people hear about them. For your servant is devout and serves the God of Heaven night and day".[43] Holofernes respects her religious beliefs and allows her to leave the camp every evening to pray to God because she tells Holofernes that God will show her when his army should march out against Bethulia. From this we can be certain that God also communicates with her, but at no time in the narrative are we informed of God's words to Judith.

We now come to the second most important prayer which Judith utters before chopping off Holofernes' head, and especially the way in which sixteenth and seventeenth-century artists cope with representing this part of the narrative. We have seen how Judith is invited by Holofernes to attend a banquet in his tent. Throughout this encounter Judith recognises and knows that her main weapon is her sexuality. She plays a calculating game while at the same time rousing his ardour by her demeanour and flattering language. She watches and waits throughout the meal - an event frequently painted by Northern artists - for her main chance while the hedonistic Holofernes foolishly

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[43] This statement that God has sent her might seem to us to be a slight distortion of the truth, because it was her idea and not God's to go out and defeat the Assyrians on her own.

drinks more and more wine until eventually he falls into a drunken sleep allowing her to execute her plan, one which she had already devised while still in Bethulia. However, before doing so she prays silently and although the text says "silently", the narrator gives us the words of her prayer,

> "Lord, God of all power, look in this hour upon the work of my
>
> hands for the greater glory of Jerusalem, for now is the
>
> opportunity to come to the aid of your inheritance, and to
>
> carry out my plan for the destruction of the enemies who
>
> have risen up against us" (Judith 13:4-5).

Later, in verse 7, as she removes the sword from the bedpost, she prays again "Lord God of Israel, give me the strength, now" without which she would not have been able to complete the decapitation using a large and heavy sword. This is her finest and bravest moment.

It is not until the Counter-Reformation that images of Judith praying are seriously taken up again. This was because prayer formed an important part of religious thought of the time and was promulgated by the newly canonised saints such as St Ignatius Loyola (1491/3-1556) whose *Spiritual Exercises* published in 1584 but written in 1528, extolled the Faithful to prayer, St Filippo Neri (1515-1595), the founder of the Oratorians, whose Order concentrated on piety and personal devotion, St Charles Borromeo (1538-1584) and Santa Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) whose intense praying resulted in spiritual visions and ecstasies. It is this second act of prayer inside the tent of Holofernes which is usually depicted by Renaissance and Baroque artists, who would show her

either raising her eyes to heaven praying before the execution with her sword held aloft ready to strike the first of two blows or after having decapitated Holofernes with her eyes gazing upwards in a gesture of thanksgiving after having decapitated Holofernes.

The seventeenth-century Bolognese artist Guido Reni is the exponent par excellence of this type of representation. In the badly damaged and restored painting in the Palazzo Spada, Rome, Judith holds the sword in a downward position and while grasping the hair of Holofernes raises her eyes and prays for strength. Correctly, the maid, is nowhere to be seen. Guido repeated this subject in another noble and colourful painting (Birmingham, Alabama, dating from his middle period (c. 1620)).[44] Following the text in Chapter 9, Judith lifts her eyes to heaven before the event - her sword glistens menacingly in the light. Again there is no maid.

This type of image was also repeated from time to time in the nineteenth century when both British and French artists paint pictures of Judith as part of the academic tradition. We know that William Etty (1787-1849) had scrutinised the biblical text because when his painting entitled Judith and Holofernes was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1827, the exhibition catalogue contained the following quotation:-

"Then she came to the pillar of the bed which was at Holofernes'

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[44]For an illustration see D. S. Pepper, Guido Reni, Oxford, p. 253, under 104.

head and took down his falchion from thence;

And approached to his bed, and took hold of the hair of his head and

said - Strengthen me, 0 Lord God of Israel, this day!"

This dramatic painting shows Judith raising her sword aloft with her right arm fully stretched, ready to strike the first of two blows on the sleeping Holofernes while calling upon God.[45]

There is no record in the Apocryphal text which says that Judith prayed after the event, yet this is something which is often illustrated by Baroque artists. Instead the biblical text gives us a rapid consecutive account of her actions informing us that after she chopped off his head, "she rolled his body off the bed and yanked the canopy from the poles" (Judith 13:9); and that a moment later she went out and gave the head to her maid who put it in the food sack. Yet there are a vast number of such paintings from this period where Judith prays or offers thanks to God. They are far too numerous to discuss individually but I shall cite just two examples by Italian artists from two different regions - one from Genoa in the north and the other one from Naples in the south. The first is by Bernardo Strozzi, the leading painter of the Genoese School, who demonstrates his intense feeling for religiosity in his admirable canvas of Judith with the Head of Holofernes (figure 45).[46] This picture which he painted in the mid 1630s, probably in Venice, is now in Christ Church

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[45] This painting is part of a series of three paintings which are now in the National Gallery in Edinburgh. The other two Judith paintings are Judith Going Forth and The Maid of Judith waiting outside Holofernes' Tent.

[46] Sometimes known as le prete Genovese or il Cappuccino because he became a Capuchin friar in about 1597.

Picture Gallery, Oxford.[47] In this version, (for he tackled this in another composition of which there are several copies), he presents us with a powerful Judith grasping the severed head while raising her eyes heavenwards.[48] Our attention is drawn to the blood-stained sword and the drops of blood falling onto the forehead of Holofernes. The emphasis has now changed from one of pride in her actions to one of thanksgiving as she gazes upwards in a saintly Baroque gesture.

The other painting of Judith with the Head of Holofernes is by the seventeenth-century Neapolitan painter Massimo Stanzione (1585-1656) in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. This work which combines the *tenebrism* of Ribera with the softer classicising elements seen in Guido Reni's female figures, was probably painted between 1630 and 1635 and is said to have been in King Charles I's collection. Stanzione presents Judith as a "pious maiden" elegantly clothed from her turbaned head to her neat sandal, while the maid grasps the end of the white cloth on which Holofernes' head rests like a gentle sleeping giant because there is no blood visible.[49] This canvas of Judith raising her eyes in thanks is symbolic (note the familiar symbols - beautifully attired Judith,

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[47] A painting of Judith by Strozzi is described in a poem by Marco Boschini entitled La carta del navegar pitoresco (1660) when it was in the Casa Bonfadina in Venice. It reads as follows:-
    "Giudit la bela Ebrea, la generosa,
    Che per la Patria e per servir a Dio,
    Ardisse con el cuor invigoroso
    De far impresa cusi gloriosa ...."
    (Translation: "Judith the beautiful Jewess, the generous one
    who for her fatherland and to serve God, burnt
    with a strong heart to undertake such a glorious thing ....")
[48] See L. Mortari, Bernardo Strozzi, Rome, 1966 with catalogue raisonné, figures 394, 395, 398, 400.
[49] Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p. 304.

head, sword and maid) rather than an accurate illustration of the biblical narrative, which does not say that she lingered after the event or that she prayed, but more in keeping with the Baroque representation of Judith with the head of Holofernes. Such portrayals are comparable to those of female saints, virtues, sibyls and other mythological figures (many of them turbaned) with their attributes painted by Domenichino, Guido Reni and others. The apocryphal tale does not say what Judith does with the sword after the event, but in many representations she wields or holds it in various symbolic positions.[50]

It is now time for us to return to Gustave Doré and to examine his illustration of Judith praying in his illustrated Bible and to see if he deals with his subject in the manner described by Blanche Roosevelt.[51] At first glance Doré's interpretation appears to be an authentic representation of an oriental scene with a realism "unapproached in the works of any other artist". Sure enough the scene takes place inside Holofernes' splendid tent, with a headless Holofernes, a large threatening falchion in the foreground and with a beautiful Oriental-looking Judith magnificently dressed with bracelets and necklaces, without the maid being present as described in the text. Doré also correctly sets the event at night with the shadows from the oil lamp illuminating the most important areas of the painting and highlighting the strong muscular veined arm of Holofernes as an indication of his strength. However, on closer

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[50] I discuss the sword in greater detail under chapter 5, dealing with decapitations.
[51] See my comments on page 3 of Chapter 1.

examination it becomes clear that Doré has chosen to ignore certain details. For example he gives her no tiara or earrings and shows her with her eyes raised in thanks while she removes the severed head which, as we have already pointed out, is not mentioned in the Apocryphal story. Yet there is an unmistakable amount of realism and theatricality for which Doré was criticised in his own life time. Judith is already pulling back the opening to the tent and we can sense a certain urgency as she slides the head away from the sheet, ready to make her escape.

b) David

David, on the other hand, is not shown in art in the act of prayer before his onslaught with Goliath. This is perhaps not so strange as it might seem because the Old Testament narrative does not say that he prayed before the battle. From Chapter 17 verse 37 we know that David, like Judith, had an unquestioning faith in God because he says "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine". Possibly David does not need to be depicted praying because it is acceptable for a man to be violent and engaged in battle. It is the deed which matters in David's case. Whereas for Judith it is her attitude to piety and humble disposition which is important and the deed is diminished (precisely because it would be dangerous to condone such behaviour for a women to emulate). Nevertheless, there are two unusual instances without any textual foundation, where an angel is shown blessing David before his confrontation

with Goliath - one in low relief in the Cloister at Moissac, France and another one in the fifteenth-century Heures de Laval in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris).

Yet strangely David can be portrayed at prayer after having slain Goliath. In Titian's painting (1543-44) of David and Goliath, (figure 46) commissioned for the church of Santo Spirito in Isola in Venice, but which was transferred from there in 1656 to the Sacristy of the church of Santa Maria della Salute, David straddles Goliath's gigantic arm and with his hands raised as he prays to God. This event, as we know, does not appear in the Bible but is taken from Josephus' description in his *Jewish Antiquities* c. 93AD where it states that David "dedicated his sword to God" after his victory.[52] The sword now lies in a prominent position against the supine body of Goliath which is seen from below (*di sotto di su*). The painting forms part of a series of Old Testament scenes (the other two are *Cain slaying Abel* and the *Sacrifice of Abraham*). According to Harold Wethey all three pictures are "prototypes for the death and sacrifice of Christ".[53]

During the seventeenth century, however, David will occasionally be shown in Italian art with his eyes lifted heavenwards in thanksgiving after the event in a similar way that painters portrayed Judith. The subject was still popular among private patrons around 1650, for we know that in 1649 the

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[52] The Works of Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 9, New and Complete Unabridged Edition, trans., William Whiston, Peabody, 1998, p. 166.
[53] Harold Wethey, op. cit., Vol. I, London, p. 121.

Perugian artist Gian Domenico Cerrini (1601-1681) painted a sensuous partially-clad David, (Palazzo Spada, Rome) for Cardinal Bernardino Spada, in the manner and colours of Guido Reni, holding a mammoth-sized head while glancing upwards in prayer.[54] Not long after, Il Guercino (1591-1666) also used this motif in his painting of David Beholden which, as we know from Malvasia, was acquired by Sig. L. Fermi of Piacenza on 12 October 1650 for sixty ducats.[55]

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[54] The payment dated 1653 for this is still preserved in the Spada archives in Rome.
[55] C. Malvasia Felsina Pittrice, 1678, p. 378. See also L.Salerno and D. Mahon, Tutto l'Opera del Guercino, Rizzoli, no. 232.

Chapter 5

Images of Decapitation

Before I examine these decapitation representations, I should like to consider how this subject is perceived. Judith kills her victim by chopping off Holofernes' head and by doing so retains her honour and gains the gratitude of the citizens of Bethulia; the threat which Holofernes posed to her personally was therefore dealt with in two swift blows of his own sword. Although it is considered a sin to kill (the Sixth Commandment), under these circumstances it was justified because "the end justifies the means" and according to Carey Moore and others "Holofernes simply got what he deserved".[1] Moreover, she was only following the Rabbinic view that it was all right to kill to defend Jews and Judaism. In a similar way, Goliath, too received his just reward for taunting and frightening the Israelites and David, like Judith, was hailed as a hero. Not only did David defeat Goliath and cut off his head but he also received the prize offered by Saul. Fame, fortune and the kingdom of Israel followed David, but Judith after her masculine feat withdrew from public life and returned home to resume her more traditional feminine role.

a) Judith and Holofernes

In the last chapter, I outlined all the virtuous and chaste aspects of Judith's character, including her piety, which were revered by the Church and early Church Fathers and which played a decisive part in her victory in overcoming

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[1] Carey Moore, op. cit., p. 85.

Holofernes. Earlier I also mentioned the less virtuous aspects of her nature which were also responsible for her triumph. These, as we saw, included her wiliness, the way in which she schemed, lied, deceived, manipulated, flattered and sexually tempted and ensnared Holofernes much in the same way that Eve tempted "the innocent" Adam in the Garden of Eden. However, it was ultimately the fact that she was, as Nickelsburg says "a clever and resourceful assassin" which eventually led to the defeat of the Assyrians and the liberation of her town.[2] It is this which has immortalised her among both Jews and Christians, so that when we think of the story of Judith, it is the act of decapitation (i.e. that Judith cut off the head of Holofernes) which most readily comes to mind and it is certainly this aspect of the narrative which remains with us long after the rest of the story is forgotten. John Ruskin writing in his *Mornings in Florence* was under the misguided apprehension that:

> "she cut off Holofernes head; and has been made
>
> the high light of about a million vile pictures ever since,
>
> in which the painters thought that they could surely attract
>
> the public to the double show of an execution, and a
>
> pretty woman, especially with the added pleasure of
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> hinting at a previously ignoble sin?".[3]

Yet if we examine this assumption in greater detail, we will discover that

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[2] G. Nickelsburg, The Hasmoneans and Their Opponents in Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah, Philadelphia, 1981, p.106.

[3] John Ruskin, Mornings in Florence:Being Simple Studies of Christian Art of English Travellers, New York, 1877, p. 53.

the number of examples of decapitated images is nowhere near the exaggerated one million mentioned by Ruskin. There are, in fact, relatively few representations where Judith is depicted in the actual act of execution. When they do illustrate this event, artists choose to show her with the sword raised aloft before bringing it down forcibly to sever Holofernes' head while he lies asleep, or they portray her standing in front, alongside or behind Holofernes with the sword firmly embedded in his neck.[4]

As we know, Judith entered the camp without any weapons because to have done so would immediately have aroused the suspicions of those she was trying to deceive. The fact that Judith's maid carries a dagger on her belt in the painting by Antiveduto Grammatica (1571-1626) of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u>, (Derby City Museum and Art Gallery) (figure 47) is either due to ignorance of the text on the artist's part or it may have been included to emphasise the maid's culinary role in the story. Judith who is unarmed, ironically therefore has to behead Holofernes with his own sword. In art, this implement of decapitation also changed its form from one century to another. The original text refers to an *akinakes* (Persian, meaning a short, straight sword), whereas the Authorised Version calls it a falchion (short, broad, sickle-shaped sword). Renaissance artists show either a falchion or a scimitar (curved with its broadest part at the tip used by the Turks and Persians and therefore associated with infidels). During the seventeenth century painters preferred to depict

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[4] Examples of Judith wielding her sword in triumph are dealt with in Chapter 6 concerning the triumphant and heroic images and should therefore not be confused with those under discussion in this chapter.

Judith, and occasionally David, with a long, rapier-like sword of the kind used in portrayals of martyred saints.

The first type of image where she lifts her sword above her shoulder is the one which is most frequently illustrated. These representations began in medieval manuscripts, often as a narrative cycle with several events taking place on the same folio, and re-appear almost continuously (but to a lesser extent during the Renaissance period) right through to the end of the seventeenth century. The earliest extant Bible illustration showing Judith swinging her sword in the air at Holofernes' bedside is the one in the bottom register of the Bible of Charles the Bald, fol. 231v, belonging to the Carolingian School of St. Denis, dating from c. 870 and now in S. Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome.[5] This image is followed by a multitude of examples in other manuscripts too numerous to mention individually.

Medieval manuscripts, carvings and sculptures also contain scenes of the second type of decapitation with the sword inserted into Holofernes' neck. We have already discussed one of these from the wooden choirstalls at Roskilde Cathedral, Denmark (figure 12).[6] In general most of the sculptural decoration in churches and cathedrals is genuine but I should point out that there is some disagreement concerning the date of the capital of Judith Killing Holofernes in the nave of the church of St. Mary Magdalene at Vézelay in Burgundy (figure 48)

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[5] See A.M. Friend, Carolingian Art in the Abbey of St. Denis, Art Studies, 1, 1923, pp.67-75.
[6] In chapter 3 (Judith and David together).

which is a modern addition to the thirteenth-century sculptures.[7] These decapitation images appear with regularity throughout the Middle Ages, until they re-emerge with a vengeance during the seventeenth century when these representations become gory in the extreme.

As far as I know there are only two examples in medieval art of Judith approaching her victim craftily and unperceived from behind. The first is a miniature from the Greek Bible of Patricius Leo, Codex Reg. Gr. 1, fol. 383r, in the Vatican, Rome (figure 49) dating from the first half of the tenth century, where Holofernes lies strangely beardless and dressed like a Greek king, not as in the narrative, in his tent but in front of a palace. (This had been the usual model in Byzantine art from which it spread to Western art.)

The second is to be seen on folio 60 of the twelfth-century German Hortus Deliciarum (The Garden of Delights), of Herrard of Landsberg, abbess of the convent of St. Ottilie in Hohenberg in 1167.[8] A variation of this Byzantine tradition is contained in the Italian Bible known as the Barberini Codex 587 in the Vatican Library, Rome dated 1067 where Judith places the sword on Holofernes' neck while standing sideways on. This, plus representations where she faces Holofernes, now become the most favoured position for decapitation scenes. During the Middle Ages such portrayals were often used in margins or in

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[7] Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p.282 says that this is "a twelfth-century capital relief" but in Neil Stratford 's opinion this sculpture is a modern twentieth century addition. See Essays for George Zarnecki, Le Sculpture oubliée à Vézeley, Cat du Musée, 1985, p. 181.

[8] Frances G. Godwin, op. cit., 1949, pp. 25-46, fig. 1.

illuminated letters where the tent of Holofernes becomes the capital letter (French <u>Bible of Stephen Harding III</u>, folio 158, Dijon Bib. Commun., mss. 12-15, early twelfth century).[9] In the majority of these early manuscripts with sequential narratives it is Judith's triumphant return to Bethulia, with this town representing the Jewish nation, rather than the decapitation scene itself which is considered to be of the greatest significance.

These images then tend to disappear after the Middle Ages when they fall out of favour. With the approach of the Renaissance, artists now restricted themselves to single episodes from the story, without involving scenes of decapitation but showing Judith leaving Bethulia; Judith being brought before Holofernes; Judith and Holofernes sitting either on a bed or in front of a banqueting table; Judith approaching the sleeping Holofernes about to carry out her homicide; Judith standing alone in the tent displaying the severed head triumphantly, or handing the head to her maid, who either puts it, or is about to place it in a bag, basket, or occasionally on a dish; Judith leaving the tent with the severed head; the officers discovering the headless body of Holofernes and Judith departing from the camp of the Assyrians and returning to Bethulia, either alone or with her maid and arriving at the gates of the town where they are met by the Elders.

It will be seen from this that Renaissance painters and sculptors covered an extremely wide spectrum of scenes from the Judith story. Why should this be

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[9] Frances Godwin, op. cit., fig. 17.

so? The main reasons why this story became so well illustrated after the Counter-Reformation was that Catholic countries, especially those of the South, interpreted the Judith story with the defeat of Holofernes as representing the triumph of Truth over Heresy (meaning, of course, Protestantism).

Contrary to popular belief, Renaissance artists in Italy did not dwell on the actual moment of decapitation where Judith's sword severs the head from the body or where it remains firmly embedded in Holofernes' neck. Instead they would show Judith raising her sword or scimitar to commit the deed of execution without actually chopping off the head. This, as we saw in the previous chapter, is a more gentle treatment of Holofernes because they still thought of her as "the virtuous Judith". The more grisly type of representation was left to the painters of the Baroque - a period in which artists were concerned with themes of violence, sexual encounter and revenge.

However, the subject was much more common in Northern Europe at this time when beheading was included as part of a cycle. This was particularly popular among Northern artists such as Maarten van Heemskerck whose etching of <u>Judith raising her sword to cut off Holofernes' Head</u> is plate six out of a series of eight dated 1564 (Hollstein VIII, 272-279).[10] These sixteenth-century cycles

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[10] For an illustration see Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p. 146, fig.131.

were often devoted to just one heroic female figure who in turn echoes an heroic

male figure from the Old Testament.[11]

It was Caravaggio who heralded a singular development in his canvas

<u>Judith Beheading Holofernes</u> (c. 1597-1600) now in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte

Antica, Palazzo Barberini, Rome, (figure 50) where he returns to a more narrative

but not strictly correct portrayal of the biblical story focusing on the most

dramatic climax of the story and emphasising the psychological interplay

between the two main protagonists. It is quite likely that this is the painting

referred to by Giovanni Baglione, Caravaggio's biographer and himself an artist,

in his *Lives* of 1642 when he says that Caravaggio had painted *"una Giuditta, che*

taglia la testa ad Oloferne per le Signori Costi" ("for the Signori Costi he made a

Judith who cuts off the head of Holofernes").[12] This was probably Ottavio Costa,

a Roman banker and one of Caravaggio's early patrons.[13] The painting which is

sensational in the extreme, demonstrates a powerful artistic display of brute

force which was undoubtedly meant to shock his sixteenth-century viewers.

This is a disturbing work showing Judith in the actual act of decapitating her

victim, writhing in agony on his bed where he has fallen into a drunken sleep.

Now awake, with his eyes open, Holofernes cries out, his head partially severed

from his body, while the bright red blood spurts realistically on to the clean

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[11] Heemskerck also made another Judith cycle of 1564, one of Susanna of 1551 and one of Esther (undated).
Many of these were then reproduced by others, among which there are those by I .H. Cock, Th. Galle and
Joan Galle.

[12] Giovanni Baglione, Lives, 1642, translated in Howard Hibbard, Caravaggio, 1983, Appendix II.

[13] The painting was included in the will of Ottavio Costa of 1632.

white bed-linen.[14] According to Carlo Cesare Malvasia it was this realism which particularly shocked Annibale Carracci. When asked to give his opinion about Caravaggio's Judith he said, "I do not know what to say except that it is "*troppo naturale*" ("too natural").[15] Caravaggio's Judith firmly clasps the gleaming sharp-edged sword and, with deep concentration and furrowed brow, saws through his neck, her hand pushing the sword away from her towards Holofernes' body, while at the same time pulling the head towards her and so horrifically revealing the open gash in his neck. In this action, Caravaggio moves away from the literal text which describes how she cuts off the head cleanly (Judith 13:10). Throughout this bloody execution, Judith's image remains unblemished with her clothes in pristine condition. She is shown unsullied and depicted as the good and virginal heroine, although Caravaggio originally portrayed her with bare breasts.[16]

Unlike the spatially expansive paintings of the Renaissance, Caravaggio sets the figures of his scene much closer to the picture plane in a darkened interior, not only to stress the clandestine nature of her operation, but also thereby to heighten the physical and psychological presence of the characters. He presents these as strong opposites - both in age and appearance, in line with

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[14] This bloody scene may have been influenced by the execution of Giordano Bruno (1600) or the decapitation of Beatrice Cenci (1599). See Claudio Strinati and Rossella Vodret, "Spada, Novelli, Van Campen . . . new theories and old issues concerning other Caravaggesque paintings in the Galleria Nationale d'Arte Antica" Caravaggio and his Italian Followers from the Collections of the Galleria Nationale d'Arte Antica di Roma, Venice, 1998, p. 21.

[15] Carlo Cesare Malvasia, Felsina pittrice. Vite de' pittori bolognesi, Bologna, 1841, 2 vols., vol. I, p. 344, reprinted, Bologna 1967, first edition, 1678.

[16] Claudio Strinati and Rossella Vodret, op. cit., p. 21.

the late Renaissance theory of *contrapposto*.[17]   At Judith's left shoulder stands a wrinkled old hag holding up her skirt ready to receive the head of the general, in sharp contrast to the dignified Judith, who in turn is the antithesis of the muscular and virile Holofernes. In this juxtaposition of the elderly and ugly with the young and beautiful Caravaggio was following the recommendations expounded by Gregorio Comanini in his treatise *Il Figino* of 1591, which states "And as the poet plays with antithesis, or with contrapposti, so the painter counterpoises in one painting figures of women and men, infants and old . . . . next to a beautiful girl an ugly woman".[18] What Caravaggio has also done is to portray the maid servant in the role of a procuress.

Caravaggio has re-interpreted the story. He pays little attention to the sequence of events or the accuracy of the narrative, for the maid was not present when Judith committed her dastardly act, nor did the maid place the head in the folds of her skirt - another invention by Caravaggio. As we have seen, it was the food bag which they had conveniently brought with them and which was used as a receptacle for the decapitated head. By including the servant, Caravaggio and other artists of the seventeenth century destroy that element of risk and danger and thereby lessen the real bravery shown by Judith. The fact that she was "left alone ......with Holofernes" - a terrifying Assyrian general - who is keen to seduce her, adds to her courage. The excitement on being discovered while

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[17] David Summers, "Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art", <u>Art Bulletin</u> 59, (September 1977), pp. 336-61.
[18] Canon Gregorio Comanini who wrote this treatise on art was part of the literary and artistic milieu of Northern Italy. See Mina Gregori, <u>Age of Caravaggio</u>, 1985, p.257.

engaging in this act of homicide becomes lost on the spectator and the shock value is therefore diminished. However, by filling the picture space with more persons than the story recounts, and by concentrating our attention on Holofernes' nude body by means of direct illumination, the scene becomes more powerful and compelling. Caravaggio also adds a strong chiaroscuro which helps to increase the intensity of the composition.

As we know from a letter dated 25 September 1607 from Frans Pourbus, a dealer in Naples, to the Duke of Mantua, this is not the only Judith painted by Caravaggio. He executed such a painting while on the run, which is now lost, together with a Rosary picture which was also for sale in Naples. The letter states that it "is a half length painting of medium size of Holofernes with Judith, for which they want less than 300 ducats".[19] There is no further description of it so we do not know if it was a decapitation scene or a more portrait-like portrayal of Judith and Holofernes. It is possible that this was one of the pictures painted by Caravaggio in Naples before he left for Malta and which could have been among the "good things for sale by Michelangelo Caravaggio that he painted here" (letter from the Duke of Mantua's agent dated 15th September 1607).

The canvas by Caravaggio in the Palazzo Barberini certainly influenced many other artists working in Rome in the first half of the seventeenth century. It seems to have inspired Valentin de Boulogne (1591-1632), a French follower of Caravaggio, who spent most of his active artistic life in Rome. In his painting of

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[19] Howard Hibbard, Caravaggio, London, 1983, p.316.

Judith and Holofernes, executed in about 1626, in the Museum of Fine Arts,

Valletta, Malta, (figure 51) we see another determined seductively dressed young

woman sawing through Holofernes' neck with studied indifference, while a

dark-skinned servant hovering behind looks on in wide-eyed amazement.

Valentin imbues his painting with obvious Caravaggesque features such as the

brutal blood letting realism, the vigorous rhythms of the backward and forward

action of the sword and the treatment of the light on the naked body set against

the dark background. Although the painting is close to Caravaggio the viewer is

spared some of the unmitigated ferocity of the Caravaggio, because by moving

the body of the sleeping general into a foreshortened upright supine position, we

are no longer able to see the open wound. Valentin's painting is peaceful and

sombre in comparison to Caravaggio's. However, as in the Caravaggio,

Valentin's maiden is clothed in a low cut bodice but here the dress has a golden

clasp in the form of a winged cherub or angel, symbolising her virtuous nature.

By severing Holofernes' head from his body Judith destroys those male

characteristics most usually associated by women with men - lust, drunkenness,

aggression, brute force, vanity and pride. She becomes as Mary Garrard says

"the purifier of man's dark and bestial side".[20]

The savagery and barbarity of the Caravaggio scene also foreshadows the

work of the female artist Artemisia Gentileschi in her two versions of Judith Slaying

Holofernes (figure 52) one painted in about 1612-13 (Capodimonte Museum,

Naples) and the other which is similar with certain variations executed in about

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[20] Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p. 294.

1620 (figure 53) now in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence. Her debt to Caravaggio in these renditions is obvious, both in the realism, bold composition, strong chiaroscuro, vibrant colours and focusing on the moment when Judith severs the head from the inebriated body.

Unlike the Caravaggio, however, where the old crone waits patiently for the head to be handed to her, we witness the dual complicity of the action taken to its ultimate conclusion. In both these pictures Judith and her vigorous young maid become equals and collaborators, the servant physically assisting Judith to hold down the mighty Assyrian general while Judith saws through his neck with an expression of intense satisfaction which is especially obvious in the Uffizi canvas. These are no weak and feeble women - Artemisia always imbues her female figures with large strong hands and muscular arms.

That these pictures were painted by a woman clearly demands closer scrutiny. Many have suggested that Artemisia's interest and obsession with this theme was due to the fact that she wished to exploit the success which her father, Orazio Gentileschi, and other artists in Rome were experiencing at the time, while others are convinced that her fascination was the result of a deep-seated revenge for the rape she had been subjected to 'many, many times' at the age of seventeen by Agostino Tassi, a fellow artist who shared a studio with her father

and who had been asked to give Artemisia instruction in perspective.[21] In 1612 her father brought the case to trial and a messy court suit ensued in which she volunteered to have her honesty tested by torture of the sibille.[22] It may be true to say that this experience had some bearing on the extreme violence of these paintings. Nevertheless while we can sympathise with Artemisia's feelings of hatred towards Agostino Tassi and her desire for revenge, I believe that we should not be too hasty in making the assumption that Artemisia's fondness for a blood-spattered treatment of the Judith legend was directly linked to her own traumatic experience. For we must not lose sight of the fact that although her preoccupation with the theme was remarkable, the narrative was extremely popular among both men and women artists and that it was one that had been depicted equally violently by male and female artists of the time.

If we are to look at this from a feminist viewpoint then we should direct our attention to the first of the two versions - the one in the Capodimonte in Naples which was painted in 1612-13 soon after her trial, where we can detect something of her feeling for revenge. In this painting the maid who forms the central apex of the composition violently pushes down on to Holofernes chest while positioning herself between his legs in a rape-like position. We know a

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[21] Artemisia painted five autograph examples of Judith:
1. Judith and her Maidservant, (after Orazio Gentileschi) 1610-12, Pinacoteca, Vatican,
2. Judith Slaying Holofernes , 1612-13, Capodimonte, Naples,
3. Judith and her Maidservant,c.1613-14, Pitti Palace, Florence,
4. Judith Slaying Holofernes, c.1620, Uffizi Gallery, Florence,
5. Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes, c.1625, Institute of Arts, Detroit.
Another painting of Judith with the Head of Holofernes attributed to Artemisia Gentileschi was on show at the Louvre, Paris from 12 February - 11 May 1998. See Catalogue Tableaux romains des XVII et XVIII siècles La Collection Lemme, pp. 164-65.
[22] For a record of the hearing see Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., Appendix B, pp. 403-487.

great deal about her rape because Artemisia describes her ordeal in graphic detail at her trial. In her testimony she says, " he then threw me onto the edge of the bed, pushing me with a hand on my breast, and he put a knee between my thighs to prevent me from closing them".[23] Holofernes puts up a struggle crying out in pain as Artemisia must have done during Tassi's assault on her. The excessive amount of blood which pours from his neck onto the white bed-linen could also, as Laurie Schneider Adams says, refer to the blood which was spilt when Artemisia threw a knife at Tassi.[24] On the other hand, could it be possible that Artemisia was reading the Vulgate version of the Bible when she executed this work which adds the words that Holofernes was "weltering in his blood" (Vulgate 14:14)? In the other later canvas of <u>Judith killing Holofernes</u> of 1620 (figure 53) which was probably commissioned by Cosimo II de Medici shortly before his death in 1621 and which is now in the Uffizi, Artemisia changes the position of Holofernes legs by placing them to one side. By doing so, the painting loses some of its violent impact and rape-like qualities. Baldinucci thought that this was Artemisia's best work even if he described it as inducing "no little terror".[25]

Artemisia's painting bears all the hallmarks of Peter Paul Rubens' painting "<u>The Great Judith</u>" and it is possible that she could have been familiar with it.

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[23] Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., 416.

[24] Laura Schneider Adams, <u>Art and Psychoanalysis</u>, New York, 1993, pp. 307-08.

[25] Baldinucci, 1681-1728, 1808 - 12 II, II.

This picture which is now lost, is known to us from Cornelis Galle I's engraving of 1610.[26] Although the image is in reverse, it gives us a good idea of the Baroque composition with angels and cherubs in the upper zone, (possibly an idea taken from Titian's so-called <u>Salome with the Head of John the Baptist</u>, of 1515, Galleria Doria-Pamphilj, Rome, (figure 54) which Rubens may have seen while in Rome), with cherubs hovering above.[27] Rubens' interpretation appears to have been less bloody than Artemisia's. This Judith, elegantly attired, unflinchingly saws through the neck of Holofernes. We have no means of knowing the colours of Rubens' painting, but as it was executed after his return to Antwerp from Italy, it was probably done in those rich Venetian colours which he employed at this time.

In turn, I believe that Rubens may have been inspired to paint his "<u>Great Judith</u>", not only from any Counter-Reformation or theological considerations, but also because he owned a painting of this subject by the German artist Adam Elsheimer (1578- 1610). This small painting on "silvered" copper entitled <u>Judith Slaying Holofernes</u>, which is now at the Wellington Museum, Apsley House, London, (figure 55) was probably painted c. 1601-03 during Elsheimer's early period in Rome. We know that Rubens was a friend of Elsheimer's in Rome, that he greatly admired his art and that he owned four paintings by him, including his Judith which he kept all his life because it is listed in the inventory of his

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[26] For an illustration see Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p.308, fig. 273.
[27] For a discussion of this painting see Chapter 6 on the triumphant and heroic images.

estate after his death in 1640.[28] If we analyse the engraving, it becomes immediately obvious that Rubens has followed Elsheimer's example using the same dramatically raised leg to heighten the horror and drama of the decapitation in his painting of "The Great Judith" - a motif which was used by Michelangelo in his pendentive fresco of Judith and Holofernes on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, Rome and which would have been known to both Elsheimer and Rubens.

If we examine this small picture closely, it is clear that it was painted by a Northern artist, even though it was executed under the strong influence of Caravaggio. Although Elsheimer has copied Caravaggio's sharp chiaroscuro he has not followed his lead by placing Judith in a gloomy and nondescript interior. Instead he sets the episode in a recognisable space i.e. the tent of Holofernes. Judith is about to finish the murderous deed which she has already started. With her sword raised she is preparing to hack off the head of Holofernes who lies on his back with his fists clenched in pain with his head already partially severed from his body - the blood pouring out of his mouth and from the gash in his neck because the first blow has already been struck, as related in the biblical narrative. It is this horrific aspect of the picture which is also reminiscent of Caravaggio's canvas in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome (figure 50). Judith commits her murder by the light of two candles (scenes by candlelight being a feature much loved by the Northern Caravaggisti). The flame of the left-

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[28] Rubens' letter of 14 January 1611 from Antwerp to Jan Faber in Rome about the death of Adam Elsheimer attests to his admiration for the artist. See Jacob Burckhardt, Recollections of Rubens, London, 1950, pp.201-02.

hand candle flickers symbolically in the draught from the half-open curtain over the entrance to the tent which is being pulled aside tentatively by the maid who has been instructed by Judith to "stand outside the bedroom and to wait for her to come out. . ." (Judith 13:3). This curious action is therefore not in line with the biblical narrative.

In spite of this divergence from the narrative, it would appear that in other respects Elsheimer has followed the biblical text fairly accurately, because, not only does he show evidence of the first blow, he also depicts the event as taking place inside a richly furnished tent as befitting the general of Nebuchadnezzar's forces. Few artists pay much attention to the actual setting (especially in the seventeenth century) of Holofernes' quarters which, in my opinion, proves how little notice they took of the apocryphal text which says that his bed had "a canopy which was woven of purple, gold emeralds and other precious stones" (Judith 10:21) and that there were silver lamps in the front part of his tent, descriptions, no doubt intended, to emphasise his wealth and importance. Elsheimer, is one of the few painters who highlights the opulence of Holofernes' sleeping quarters by showing us a lavish interior with a frieze over the door emblazoned with putti and a leopard. Another tapestry hangs on the wall to the left of the entrance, while the table is covered with still life including two carafes - one of water - painstakingly painted and a golden ewer decorated with figures from classical mythology - an obvious reference to the drunkenness which has overwhelmed Holofernes. The precision and delicacy with which Elsheimer has painted these objects attest to his northern origins.

We do not know when Rubens acquired this painting (whether he bought it during his stay in Italy (1600 - 1608), in which case he could have been the first to have owned it, or if it was one of the paintings which he said he wanted to buy after Elsheimer's death). Presumably it was not a commissioned work because there are no contracts or payments for this or any of Elsheimer's other pictures. He was a slow worker and did not sell many of his works during his life time because he did not finish them. Giulio Mancini confirms this when he says that he "produced little and this little is in the hands of princes and those persons who, in order that they should not be taken from them, keep them hidden."[29] Sandrart, Mancini and Baglione refer to Elsheimer but none of them mentions the Judith and Holofernes painting. If Rubens was not the first owner then it is possible that it might have been in the possession of one of the great collectors of the time such as either Cardinal del Monte or Scipio Borghese because both owned paintings by northern artists.

Another follower of Caravaggio, known variously as Trophime Bigot or Mâitre à la Chandelle (the Candlelight Master) (active 1630-40), also depicted the subject of Judith killing Holofernes (The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore) (figure 56).[30] This night-time scene which is illuminated by the flame of a candle was probably painted in Rome during the 1630s when Bigot came under the influence of the Northern Caravaggisti such as Gerrit van Honthorst, (1590-1656) Matthias

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[29] Guilio Mancini, Considerazioni sulla Pintura (c.1614-21) eds. Adriana Marucchi and Luigi Salerno, Rome, 1956.

[30] For an identification of this artist see Exhibition Catalogue, Pierre Rosenberg, France in the Golden Age Seventeenth-Century French Paintings in American Collections, Metropolitan Museum, New York, 1982, p.283.

Stomer (c.1600-after 1650), Adam de Coster (c.1586-1643) and Georges de La Tour (1593-1652), whose candlelit scenes are similar. Bigot's representation contains many of the same elements as Caravaggio, Valentin and Artemisia Gentileschi. They all show three figures inside a tent with Judith skilfully carrying out the murder with the sword embedded in Holofernes' neck. Bigot's depiction is equally horrific with Judith accomplishing her task by forcibly using two hands on the sword while the maid (as in the Gentileschi versions in the Galleria Uffizi and the Capodimonte Museum) assists in holding down one of Holofernes' arms. However she is not involved in the same way as in Artemisia's paintings. The flame throws a golden glow onto their faces while simultaneously highlighting the blood-stained pillow.

The more we look at these seventeenth-century images of decapitation, the more we realise that most of these painters under discussion who painted in Italy have not, and indeed could not, have turned to the Biblical text for inspiration because once Caravaggio had led the way with his horrific rendition, others followed his lead without recourse to the apocryphal narrative. Only Elsheimer, following his northern roots gives anything like an authentic rendition of the text. These representations were intended to be and indeed are sensational, bloody and shocking.

Of all the seventeenth-century artists, it is Rembrandt, who comes closest to correctly adhering to the beheading scenario. In his pen drawing of c.1652-55 of Judith Beheading Holofernes, now in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples,

(figure 57) which is not a preliminary drawing related to any known painting, Rembrandt with a few sweeping lines of his pen outlines the tent where Judith appears alone as stated in the text, carrying out her murderous act. Two-handedly, Judith saws off the head which is pushed forward realistically on to his chest exposing his neck. In order to gain optimum strength to accomplish her deed, she raises her knee and pushes it down into the bed on which Holofernes is sprawled, giving herself greater leverage. While this makes an impact on the violence of the action, Rembrandt slips up on just one textual detail because Judith is now unable to "grab the hair of his head" (Judith 8:7) as stated in the account. Two people (her maid and possibly a soldier (for he wears a helmet)) are roughly delineated standing outside the tent. The atmosphere in this drawing is full of tension and suspense heightened by her concentrated gaze because as we know she must complete her task before the general wakes from his inebriated sleep.

Other Dutch artists of the period will include most of the relevant details but occasionally, like their Italian contemporaries, they will sometimes position the maid inside the tent. At other times they will add symbolic references (perhaps to Holofernes' forthcoming death), such as in Judith and Holofernes by Jan de Bray (c.1627-1697) in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam of 1659, which contains a symbolic reference, so typical of Dutch paintings at this time.[31] While Judith raises her heavy sword with two hands, we notice that the candle at the foot of the bed is capped with a candle-snuffer intimating that Holofernes' life is

about to be extinguished.

It would help our understanding of Dutch seventeenth-century religious art by Protestant artists if we knew which Bible they (and Rembrandt) might have used. We know that Rembrandt owned a Bible because the inventory of his possessions drawn up in 1656 (item no. 285) lists "one old Bible".[32] This Bible might have been a sixteenth-century Reformation translation. The fact that it is described as "old" could refer either to its condition or to it being a pre-Reformation Bible. It could also have been a Staten translation, published in 1637, but this version was not fully accepted until the end of the seventeenth century, when it replaced all other Bible translations. The first edition of the Dutch Authorised Version includes the Apocrypha with a preface "Warning to the Readers". The Apocrypha disappeared from later editions of the Protestant Bible.

Rembrandt must have been fully aware of the Apocrypha because his oeuvre is rich in representations from these books. In addition to his other masterly drawing of Judith's Maidservant Putting the Head of Holofernes in a Bag of c. 1635 in the Louvre, Paris, he also depicts events from the story of Susanna (a later addition to the Book of Daniel), Esther and Tobit.[33] Tales of

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[31] This painting is paired with one of Jael killing Sisera, also signed and dated 1659 in the Art Gallery at Worcester.

[32] For the 1656 inventory of Rembrandt's Possessions see Kenneth Clark, Rembrandt and the Italian Renaissance, London, 1966, pp. 193-209.

[33] See Hidde Hoekstra, Rembrandt and the Bible, Utrecht, 1990, p. 219.

family life and the pious deeds of Tobit reappear throughout Rembrandt's career in some twenty drawings, five paintings and three etchings.

In all these seventeenth-century examples on which I have focused, Judith is shown as a ruthless assassin. It is by no means clear why these seventeenth-century artists should have taken such a deep-seated interest in these blood-letting portrayals of Judith. They do shock and were intended to alarm their contemporaries. These images are in keeping with the ideas promoted by Counter-Reformation theologians, where the Faithful were encouraged to reflect on the bloody and horrendous martyrdoms of saints. There is also the theory that perhaps these gory decapitation scenes were related to the horrific experiences of the Thirty Years War. The influence of contemporary war illustrations by artists such as Jacques Callot (1592/3-1635) in his Les Grandes Misères de la guerre only served to exacerbate the production of these images.

Artists of subsequent centuries do not concentrate on these scenes of extreme violence and had no wish to represent this aspect of the story. Certainly in the eighteenth century patrons showed no interest or desire to commission this type of 'horror painting'. Kings and the aristocracy now wanted to decorate their palaces and town houses with mythological scenes of pale pastel shades in the style of François Boucher and Antoine Watteau. Later in the eighteenth century artists used their talents to portray images of Judith's triumph, heroism and sexuality. The subject of decapitation did not return again until it took on a more

erotic meaning in the nineteenth century when artists would use their talents to portray sexual and triumphant images of an heroic kind.

b) David and Goliath

Unlike the images of decapitation of Judith which we have just examined and which are so memorable for their horror (especially during the seventeenth century) it is not the actual deed of execution which specifically interested artists, engravers and sculptors when depicting events from the story of David and Goliath. Although some would show David either with the sword raised above his head or chopping off the head - his trophy and evidence of the demise of Goliath - this was by no means the most popular visual representation of David. Death in Goliath's case, could either have been instantaneous from the stone cast by David's sling which sank deep into his forehead, or (the more generally held opinion) that he was simply knocked unconscious, enabling David to kill him by cutting off his head with a sword. In this the parallels with Judith as stated in Chapter 1 are all the more striking.

The earliest extant depiction of David slaying Goliath is to be found on the lower register of the south wall of the baptistery of the Christian building at Dura Europos in Syria, dating from the later years of Alexander Severus i.e. about 240 AD.[34] This fresco is badly preserved with a large section of plaster missing from the central portion, but there has never been any doubt that it is a portrayal of

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[34] This event is not represented in the catacombs where David stands alone with a sling,

David because the *tituli* of David and Goliath in Greek have been incised into the plaster above the two figures.[35] David stands in the centre of the composition, wearing a short *chiton* (tunic) - the suggestion is that it might even have been a shepherd's *exomis*. David, his arm poised high in the air, holds his sword in a horizontal position above his head, ready to sever the head of Goliath from his body. Below the hemline of David's *chiton* is the looped outline of what could be either the bag from which David took the stones (I Samuel 17:49) or the sling. The prostrate figure of Goliath and part of his head is just visible on the left. It would appear that David is coming upon his fallen victim from behind in order to decapitate him. Another curved outline above Goliath's body may possibly represent his shield - Goliath's sword is being used by David because we read in the story (I Samuel 17:50-51) that David had no sword and had to make use of Goliath's. Very faint traces of Goliath's spear or javelin can also just be seen stuck in the ground on the far left of the composition. It would therefore seem that the artist at Dura Europos has taken some account of the biblical narrative because this does make the distinction between the well-armed Goliath and the weaponless David, in accordance with the account in I Samuel 17:45, "you come to me with sword and spear and javelin; but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts . . ". In the Hebrew text which I have referred to above there is no mention of a shield, only "spear" and "javelin" (which are similar objects). We have no way of knowing which version of the narrative (Targumic or otherwise) this painter used. Could it have been a version which substituted "shield" for either "spear" or "javelin". In my opinion, it would appear that in this earliest

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[35] See the Excavations at Dura Europos. Final Report VIII, Part II, The Christian Building, 1967.

version of David killing Goliath, the artist has tried to represent the scene as accurately as possible. The right hand side of the wall-painting is blank.

I should now like to consider why this scene was incorporated into the fresco decorations of a Christian building at Dura Europos. It has been suggested by some scholars (and now mostly rejected) that this story was chosen because many of the congregation came from a nearby military garrison. More convincing is the suggestion by Lassus that the objective of the picture was "to illustrate the importance of faith for salvation".[36] Still more convincing, I think, is the idea that we should look for the clue in the baptistery itself because after all like St. John the Baptist David, in this instance, " comes in the name of the Lord of hosts (1 Samuel 17:45). However, we may come a little nearer to understanding the importance of this scene if we examine some of the early Christian literature. In these David can be considered as a symbol of Christ himself. This is because Syrian texts actually refer to Christ as "hero", as a "man of power" as a "general" or an "athlete."[37] Salvation is important because it indicates a struggle against evil powers and it is Christ who on Man's side is victorious in this battle against the devil. In these Syriac texts Christ on the Cross is not referred to as the sacrificial lamb atoning for the sins of the world but as the hero who on the cross also conquers Satan. Narsai says in his XXI Homily:

"as an athlete he (Christ) went down to the contest on behalf

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[36] J. Lassus, Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie, p. 14, Bibliotheque archéoligique et historique, vol XLII, Paris, 1947, pp. 10-19.

[37] Doctrina Addai, ed., Phillips, p.7 (man of power);
Aphraates, Demonstratio, V, 24 (patrologia Syriaca J 2), Coll 233f (general) and
Acts of Thomas, ed., Wright, II, p. 189 (athlete).

of his people; and he joined battle with Satan and conquered

him. On the summit of Golgotha he fought with the slayer

of men and made him a laughing stock before men and angels.

With the spear of wood he overthrew him".[38]

From this extract, the analogy between Christ as the slayer of Satan and David the slayer of Goliath becomes clear.

This is further confirmed by Ephraem in his *Hymni de Crucifixione VIII,* 4 where he says:

(Sol) annuntiavit agonem tibi esse cum morte. Quia porro cruce omnes

homines justificantur, E manibus Mortis eripuit crucem Et per eam

mortem devicit Ita Golliad, gladio suo interemptus, mortuus est.

(Translation) "The Sun has announced that you are to struggle with

Death. Because, further, all men are justified by the cross, he has snatched

the cross from the hands of death, and by it [the cross] he has vanquished

death which, like Goliath slaughtered by his own sword, has been put to

death".)

Christ's death on Calvary is therefore a victory and not a sacrifice.

It should be pointed out that most of the early representations of David show him with a sling as in the catacombs in Rome. Later he is portrayed with a sling and staff of which there are a few examples on Christian sarcophagi.[39] Portrayals with the sling continued to be popular throughout the Middle Ages,

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[38] For Narsai XXI Homily see Ed. Connolly Texts and Studies VII, I, p. 53.

especially in the North - in Sweden (fresco of <u>David slaying Goliath with a Sling</u> at Vittinge (1431)[40] and the roundel of c. 1600 with the inscription DAVIT OCH GOLIAT (David and Goliath) (Figure 58) from the church at Julita, Södermanland, based on woodcuts by Virgil Solis of 1562 which accounts for its rather "old-fashioned" appearance.[41] In England the subject of David was often treated as part of Mystery Plays or Pageants. At Norwich Cathedral, for example, the Pageant of <u>The Conflict of David and Goliath</u> by the Norwich Smith's Guild manifest itself into the rich series of bosses of c. 1530 in the nave including <u>David and Goliath</u> (figure 59).[42] This type of pictorial image gradually lost its appeal, only to be replaced by other more dramatic and sensual examples of David.

Another very early decapitation scene is the <u>Combat of David and Goliath</u> (Metropolitan Museum, New York) on one of the silver plates which form part of a series found at Kyrenia on the island of Cyprus in 1902, dating from between 613 and 629/30 AD (first half of the reign of Heraclius (610-640 AD)) with narratives from the life of David.[43] The David plates which may have belonged to an important official at the Court in Constantinople because of the high standard of workmanship, are now thought to celebrate, not only the life of David, but also

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[39] J. Wilpert, <u>I Sarcophagi</u> Text I fig 5, pl 18; fig. 24, pl 57. Text II pp. 264f.

[40] See Anna Nilsén, <u>Program och function i senmedeltida kalkmåleri</u>, Stockholm, 1986, p.168, fig. 103.

[41] I am indebted to Professor Lena Johannesson of the University of Göteborg for providing me with a photograph of the fresco.

[42] See Martial Rose and Julia Hedgecoe, <u>Stories in Stone The Medieval Roof Carvings of Norwich Cathedral</u>, London, 1997, p.77-78.

[43] See Ernst Kitzinger, <u>Byzantine Art in the Making Main Lines of stylistic development in Mediterranean Art, 3rd - 7th Century</u>, Massachusetts, 1980 pls, 195 and 197 and E.C. Dodd, <u>Byzantine Silver Stamps</u>, pp. 178ff, nos 58-66.

the career of Heraclius, who like David when a young warrior, overthrew a terrible foe - in Heraclius' case this was Phocos. These plates therefore fall between two areas - the sacred and the profane. They are religious in subject matter with the decapitation scene taking place in the lower register because like the medieval manuscripts to which I have already referred, the history unfolds in three registers and yet they are secular because they praise a Roman Emperor.[44] Here David has already slain Goliath, now lying on the ground. He is severing the head from the body with Goliath's sword.

As noted in the introduction, there are very few images of David and Goliath in Spain, and those extant are often very different from those I have discussed so far. Spanish culture was divided from the rest of Europe by the barrier of the Pyranees, so that during the Middle Ages it does not borrow the kind of motifs which we are used to seeing in Romanesque art, be it sculpture or fresco, but employs a combination of stylistic influences from both Islam and Byzantium. This strange dichotomy of styles can be seen in the fresco of David and Goliath (figure 60) dating from c. 1123 which came originally from the Church of Santa Maria, Tahull (Lerida) and which is now preserved in the Museo del Arte de Cataluña, Barcelona.

It is therefore not so extraordinary that this David and Goliath is entirely different from those in the rest of Europe showing strong Mozarabic art at its most provincial, because this fresco with its vibrant colours of red, yellow, ochre,

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[44] Ibid, p. 110.

blue and white came from a small church off the beaten track, up a mountain and therefore also developed its own style and iconography. The narrative in this instance is almost impossible to decipher from the story which we are used to seeing and would appear to have no biblical reference source. In this fresco, not only is this Goliath dressed in medieval chain mail with spurs on his ankles, but he has been run through with a sword. Another unusual feature is that David has already decapitated Goliath - *vide* the red gash across his throat - and now lifts the severed head away from Goliath's neck, because most of the decapitation images of David and Goliath present him raising the sword while Goliath lies on the ground face down as recounted in the Book of Samuel. David, on the other hand, is more correctly clad in a short tunic as befitting a young shepherd boy.

This motif is also carried on throughout the Middle Ages and is frequently illustrated in illuminated manuscripts. In addition to the Death of Goliath on the Morgan leaf Mss 619 fol. IV from the *Winchester Bible*, (figure 5) which we have already discussed in Chapter 3, it also appears in some church sculpture e.g. in the church of Mary Magdalene at Vézelay (figure 61) but unlike the Judith which I have already mentioned, this carving dates from the thirteenth century. In this curious sculpture, the sculptor has taken little notice of the narrative because he places David in a tree while he reaches across to decapitate the standing Goliath. I would suggest that the design is no doubt dictated by the shape of the capital rather than ignorance on the part of this medieval sculptor. Decapitation images are also to be found on wall paintings, especially in Scandinavia where they continue to be regarded as a moral message of Virtue

conquering Evil, a prototype for Christ's Descent into Hell and as a forerunner of Christ in the tradition of the *Biblia Pauperum*. Anna Nilsén lists some fifteen portrayals in Sweden between 1460 (the earliest) and 1534.[45] The subject remained equally well represented in the Netherlands and Germany. A fine example of this is the gouache by Hieronymus Franken the Elder of <u>David killing Goliath</u> (figure 62).[46]

In Italy the image of decapitation then almost dies out when we reach the Renaissance, especially those where the sword remains embedded in Goliath's neck. Lorenzo Ghiberti still uses this formula in his <u>David and Goliath</u> panel (figure 17) on the Gates of Paradise of the Baptistery in Florence.[47] Decapitation scenes are still found in isolated cases such as Michelangelo's <u>David and Goliath</u> (figure 27) in the Sistine Chapel, Vatican, Rome and the fresco in the eleventh vault of the Vatican Loggia by Raphael's workshop (1517-1519/20) (figure 29).

Why are there so few portrayals of David decapitating Goliath during the Renaissance in Italy? Compared to Judith, visually the decapitation scenes of David and Goliath were perhaps not considered to be as mentally and emotionally stimulating as those of a sexually attractive woman wrestling with a large and cumbersome sword. During this time other aspects of the David story take on a greater significance as we shall see, for example, in Florence where

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[45] See Anna Nilsén, op. cit., p.31.
[46] Sold at Sotheby's on 25 April 1983.
[47] I discussed this panel in chapter 3 as part of the images of Judith and David together.

David stands triumphantly symbolising virtue against the odds and as a warning against tyrants.

While David loses his theological meaning in Italy, in Scandinavia, on the other hand, and especially in Sweden, after the Reformation (1534), artists continue to depict David cutting off the head of Goliath representing him both as a patriarch and as a prototype for Christ and his victory over the Devil. At Edsbro in Uppland, David shares the easternmost apse of the choir with three other patriarchs - Abraham, Samson and Jacob. David is portrayed with a large sword held over Goliath's head ready to strike the blow which will sever the head from his body. The David fresco has the following inscription:-

"Och David lopp och toogh hans Sverd och drogn

och drap honom I:SAM:17 "

(Translation: "And David leapt and took his sword

and drew (it) and killed him ")

This fresco with its hues of red brown, pale red and grey green was executed by an unknown artist but possibly with the initials P.O.S.W. (or B.O.C.W.) which appear on one of the walls, together with the date 1625. Not only does the biblical inscription follow the account in Samuel, but these artists would use the printed illustrations in Lutheran Bibles which were close to the text, as their guide, thereby making doubly sure that the image they were painting was in accordance with the narratives. The David fresco is taken from the high quality woodcuts executed in Frankfurt in 1564 by Johann Bocksperger and Jost Amman for the <u>Neuwe Biblische Figuren des Alten und Neuen Testaments</u>. We know

that the wall paintings were commissioned by Christer Hendrickson Lilliesparre of Kragsta and his wife Margareta Larsdotter whose coats of arms are also painted on the east wall. Lilliesparre died in 1620 and it possible that his wife paid for these paintings as a memorial to her husband shortly thereafter.[48]

In Italy during the seventeenth century we saw the development of how representations of Judith become horrific and yet it is strange that we should be so hard pressed to discover similar violent images of David actively beheading Goliath with the sword embedded in his neck during this period. The most common are those representations where David lifts the sword ready to sever the head of Goliath (following on from Michelangelo just referred to) (figure 27), Rubens' grisaille sketch of David slaying Goliath for the Jesuit church in Antwerp of c. 1620 and now in the Courtauld Institute Galleries, London (figure 63) inspired by Titian's painting of Cain from Santa Maria Salute in Venice, Orazio Gentileschi's powerful painting of David and Goliath in the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin from c.1605-08[49] and David and Goliath attributed to Guido Reni, (Fondation Rau, Marseille).[50] Other examples are listed by A. Pigler.[51] In none of these representations is the decapitation as brutal as in those of Judith killing Holofernes and it is only in exceptional circumstances that artists would show the sword embedded in Goliath's neck. Whereas it was all right for the feminine Judith to struggle with beheading her victim by attacking the neck, it

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[48] The paintings were whitewashed over in 1752 and restored in 1951.
[49] See exh. cat. Orazio Gentileschi at the Court of Charles I, London, 1999, edited by Gabriele Finaldi, pp. 56-57.
[50] Exhibition Review, The Burlington Magazine, vol., 131, May 1989, pp. 367-72, fig. 50.
[51] A.Pigler, Barockthemen, Budapest, 1994, I, pp.140-44.

would have given the wrong impression to depict David in this ineffectual way. The masculine method was to show David bringing the heavy sword down forcibly with one blow. An horrific example of this type by Michel Coxie, is his David Vanquisher of Goliath with its gaping wound was bought, not surprisingly, by Philip IV of Spain for the Escorial Palace. Portrayals of David at this time consist mostly of images of contemplation, nudity and of self, all of which display some element of homo-eroticism, together with a few triumphal processional images. It bears out the theory that patrons during the Baroque period did not restrict themselves to commissioning works associated with the Counter-Reformation showing the triumph of Good over Evil, but that they also revelled in the portrayal of a sexually aware woman acting in an unusual capacity as the aggressor, whilst relishing the beauty of the male body either partially-clothed or naked.

Subsequent centuries do not express the same enthusiasm in representing David decapitating Goliath so that this subject dies out far more quickly than that of Judith. The eighteenth century shows only a minimal interest in David as either a sex object or biblical hero. Although Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) chooses to display David Slaying Goliath in a stained glass window (Vyner Memorial Window of 1872/73) in Christ Church, Oxford, in the nineteenth century, Gustave Doré, ignores this scene for his illustration of David, in spite of its dramatic possibilities and in the twentieth century it only makes the rarest appearance.

Chapter 6

The Triumphant and Heroic Images of Judith and David

Having now cut off the head of Holofernes, Judith's immediate task is to return to Bethulia as quickly as possible and display it triumphantly to the citizens indicating that the Assyrian general is dead and that she is bringing salvation to the town. The decapitated head becomes a symbol of victory over Evil, Lust and Pride and as Margarita Stocker points out it is also "symbolically and traditionally, ... the seat of selfhood, rationality and control - the 'king' of the body".[1] Although David too is a salvation figure he does not, according to the text, show the head of Goliath to the Israelites - the Philistines simply fled when they saw that their champion was dead. It is only later that David takes the head to Jerusalem.

David's action is diametrically opposed to that of Judith because there is no subterfuge or concealment involved and his action is in itself unambiguously triumphant. He himself is in no further danger, unlike Judith whose public moment of triumph does not take place until she finally arrives at the gates of Bethulia. The Israelites support David while his task is being accomplished; whereas in Judith's case the Israelites are unaware of what she has in mind, what is going to happen at any given moment, or what she is actually doing. It is no wonder therefore that her triumph is the more astonishing and remarkable of the two.

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[1] Margarita Stocker, "Biblical Story and the heroine", The Bible as Rhetoric Studies in Biblical Persuasion and Credibility, ed. Martin Warner, London and New York, p. 92.

These images of Judith and David with the severed head play an even more important role in salvation history than the scenes of decapitation which we have just discussed, especially during the Renaissance and Baroque periods when the head came to represent both a religious and secular triumph over tyranny and as a warning against tyrants. These can be subdivided into four types:-

(i) triumphant - as regards Judith, these are the images where she stands alone raising her sword in triumph, and/or waving the decapitated head of Holofernes aloft, or displaying the head to a large crowd of onlookers as if to announce in accordance with her own words; "Here's the head of Holofernes, the general in command of the Assyrian army" (Judith 14:15); (where David is concerned, there are fewer scenes showing him brandishing either the head of Goliath, sword or sling in a triumphal manner);

(ii) heroic - those images where she holds the head straight out towards the spectator grasping it by its hair or presenting it lying on a dish or on a parapet in front of her. (Although there are some examples for David from the Renaissance and Baroque periods, most of these show him holding the head in front and these images cannot therefore be described as triumphant, but are of the heroic variety.) From this it becomes clear that artists make a distinction in the way in which they choose to depict these two heroes. Artists obviously recognise this and therefore make Judith the more triumphant of the two. I believe that they realised the importance of her achievement as a woman and

therefore considered her to be of greater stature than David. Even in the heroic versions the head of Goliath is not thrust out of the picture plane and into our space as is the case in many of the Judith paintings. David's heroism is more subdued. (i) and (ii) can overlap to some extent and these will therefore be discussed together.

(iii) those images where Judith and David trample on the head of their opponent seen as a symbol of triumph over tyranny or as an example of Good subduing Evil (Satan). In these, the heroism of Judith and David is much more equally displayed;

(iv) those which treat the themes of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath (especially during the Renaissance) on a civic scale as representing the triumph of virtue and fortitude (Fortitudo) and as a warning against tyrants. Let us now examine these types in greater detail.

1. Judith
(i) The Triumphant and (ii) the Heroic Images of Judith

Triumphant representations where Judith holds up either the sword or the head of Holofernes in one hand while grasping the head or the sword in the other, are found in art from Carolingian times in Bibles and illuminated manuscripts, e.g. the eleventh-century Munich Bible Clm. 13001, folio 121, in

the Staatsbibliothek, Munich, where Judith raises her right arm wielding the sword.[2]

By the mid fifteenth century there are numerous examples - both in Italy (Lorenzo Ghiberti's bronze statute of Judith (figure 16) dating from 1425-1452 on the Gates of Paradise of the Baptistery in Florence has already been discussed)[3] and in Northern Europe where the sword or head of the tyrant is held up to the onlooker as an image of triumph and warning, much in the same way that Benvenuto Cellini's bronze statue of Perseus (figure 64), (1545-54) situated in the Loggia dei Lanzi in the Piazza della Signoria in Florence triumphantly displays the head of Medusa.[4] These representations reached their zenith at the end of the seventeenth century.

The last decades of the fifteenth century in Italy were a time of uncertainty, political unrest and religious fanaticism which had a profound effect on art. This was particularly true of Florence where the Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola, preached that the world would end in the year 1500, urged the people of Florence to repent of their sins, encouraged them to do penance and to bring down the government. This period of gloom was also reflected in the paintings of Judith at this time. Sandro Botticelli who had earlier in his career (c. 1470) painted his colourful and delicate panels of Judith

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[2] For an illustration see Frances Goodwin, op. cit., fig. 7.
[3] I discussed this statue in Chapter 3 when I examined the images of David and Judith together.
[4] Medusa was one of the three Gorgons with snakes for hair who turned those who as much as glanced on her to stone. She was killed by Perseus who then cut off her head.

and her Maid Returning to Bethulia (figure 39) and The Discovery of the Body
of Holofernes (figure 28), (both in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence), now paints
another Judith which is both pictorially and technically completely different
from the earlier version. This tempera on panel which is today in the
Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, (figure 65) was painted between the years 1495-
1500, under the influence of Savonarola. Unlike the earlier painting of Judith
Returning to Bethulia, this work lacks the jewel-like precision of execution, the
expansive landscape background and the exquisite colour harmonies. Botticelli
reduces the Rijksmuseum panel to its barest essentials - a large tent with an
open curtain swept back to reveal a blood-red lining, a black interior from
which a serious Judith, occupying almost the entire height of the composition,
emerges triumphantly holding up the decapitated head of Holofernes. The
mood is sombre with the shadowy outline of the maid's rear view just visible
inside the tent. Botticelli who so closely followed the biblical narrative in the
earlier painting now shows little feeling for the finer nuances of the biblical
story. Judith, although wearing sandals, as mentioned in the text, is dressed in
a plain gown and overdress, without any jewellery which is not in keeping with
the account, but which does, I would suggest, adhere to the ideas promulgated
by Savonarola who encouraged the citizens of Florence to throw their expensive
goods, including jewels, books, beautiful furnishings, rich and valuable textiles
and paintings onto the "bonfire of the vanities" which he had erected in the
Piazza della Signoria on 7th February 1497. The Botticelli painting is completely
devoid of any decorative details to attract our attention.

Sienese artists from this period were also not immune from the social and religious influences of the period. Painters such as Matteo di Giovanni (1435?-1495) interpret the gracefulness and elegance of early Botticelli into a more monumental and robust style. Matteo, who worked mostly in Siena, has positioned his <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> (Kress Collection, New York), behind a parapet. Judith raises her sword in a gesture of triumph and defiance, while the head of the vanquished Holofernes rests by her side. (Unlike seventeenth-century renditions of this subject, those of Renaissance artists nearly always indicate the location as suggested in the narrative, as to where the event is taking place - in a landscape, at the entrance to Holofernes' tent or inside it.)

The subject of Judith was not as popular at the end of the sixteenth century in Venice, as it was in Florence and Siena, but the influence can be seen to have permeated the work of the sculptor Pietro Lombardo (c.1435-1515) who had spent much of the 1460s in Florence. Pietro who was assisted by his son Tullio (c. 1455-1532) incorporated the small figure of Judith brandishing the head aloft in the bottom register (figure 66) of the vast and monumental tomb of Andrea Vendramin now in SS Giovanni e Paolo in Venice in the Florentine tradition but without its political associations. The tomb which was originally commissioned for the church of San Maria dei Servi was executed between about 1480 and 1495. It was dismantled by Napoleon in 1816.

Other sixteenth-century sculptors and painters continued to portray Judith either displaying the head, or raising the sword or scimitar above her head while holding the head in a downward position, as in the Matteo di Giovanni.

Unlike the painters in Italy, artists and engravers in the North, however, often portray her in the nude, aggressively holding the head in a triumphant gesture. In a print by Hendrick Goltzius, after Bartolomaeus Spranger, of about 1585, (figure 67) a bare-chested Judith (in the *Weibermacht* tradition of German and Netherlandish art of the time) stands alone at the entrance to the tent of Holofernes, his helpless and headless body sprawled on the bed behind, holding up the severed head to the viewer in a gesture of triumphant display.[5] Around the frame of the Goltzius print we read the Latin inscription:

> Nemo suis nimium confidat viribus, ansis
>
> Nemo suis temerè; Docet hoc Holophernis amarus
>
> Exitus; en diri cesa cernice Tyranni
>
> Te Saluam, Judith memoranda Bethulia fecit.
>
> (Translation : "Let no one trust too much in his powers,
>
> or rashly in his chances. The bitter end of Holofernes
>
> teaches this. Behold, once the neck of the dire Tyrant
>
> has been severed, Judith, worthy of remembrance,
>
> made you safe, Bethulia".)

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[5] I examine these images more fully in Chapter 8 when I deal with the nude and semi-nude images of Judith and David.

(This triumphant type of representation must not be confused with other similar images where the head is being held up in order to be placed in a bag, sack or basket of which there are an enormous number of examples but which I shall not be discussing in this dissertation. The main reason for this omission is that there is no equivalent scene relating to David. In these Judith episodes the maid will be present to assist her mistress.)

Seventeenth-century examples proliferate showing Judith presenting the head of Holofernes. Guido Reni uses a slightly different formula in his painting of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> (figure 68) shown in 1995 at the Walpole Gallery in London where Judith proudly holds out the severed head in an heroic gesture presumably before handing it to the maid waiting outside.[6] Reni painted four different Judiths, including this painting of which there are three autograph-copies.[7] Judith is correctly portrayed inside the tent, wearing sandals as described in the text but without her customary jewels and rich sumptuous clothes. Instead, Reni presents her dressed like an antique statue swathed in yellow and mauve draperies. The painting is sketchily executed but this does not mean to say that we should not consider it as essentially a finished work. Gone is the Baroque fervour found in Guido's earlier paintings of biblical subjects with upturned eyes seeking guidance from above or raised heavenwards in thanksgiving.

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[6] See the catalogue of the exhibition <u>Treasures of Italian Art</u> held at the Walpole Gallery, London from 5-29 July 1995, p.46.

[7] Ludovisi Collection, Rome, inventory of 1623;Maréchal de Créquay, acquired in 1635 and mentioned by Malvasia and Spanish Royal Collection, 1685 inventory.

Florentine artists continued to receive commissions for pictures of Judith during the seventeenth century. Still quieter in mood is the canvas by the Florentine artist Lorenzo Lippi (1606-1665) of <u>Judith holding the Head of Holofernes</u> in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Narbonne executed for doctor Giovan Battista Signi in Florence in about 1650.[8] Baldinucci, a close friend of Lippi, tells us that Signi was dissatisfied with the simplicity and poverty of Judith's dress so that Lippi was compelled to add a jewelled brooch to her bodice with "large diamonds with a value of at least thirty thousand ecus".[9] (The seventeenth century was an age of grandeur and power when patrons wished to display their wealth in lavish and expensive paintings so we can understand Signi's disappointment on seeing this painting.) Nevertheless, although this painting of Judith has a plain dark background, Lippi manages to convey a sense of discreet elegance in the relatively restrained style of the clothes worn by Judith. Perhaps Signi was hoping for a magnificent Judith like the colourful and brilliant one by Cristofano Allori painted between 1616-20 in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence? Lippi was no doubt inspired by the Allori because he depicts Judith in a three-quarter-length pose, grasping the head of Holofernes in a tight grip very similar to that used by Allori in the Pitti version.[10] Lippi 's painting has none of the richness of the Allori but it is an accomplished painting highlighted with the reds and blues of Judith's dress and cloak and with the light glinting onto the rapier-like sword (so often seen in

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[8] For an illustration see Exhibition Catalogue <u>Seicento le siècle de Caravage dans les collections françaises,</u> Paris, 1988, p. 262.

[9] Baldinucci, 1681-1712, ed. 1845-1848 V, 1847, p.275.

[10] I refer to this in greater detail in Chapter 9 under the images of self. For an illustration of the version at Hampton Court Palace see fig. 103 of this dissertation.

seventeenth-century paintings of this subject) and across the right-hand side of Judith's face which looks dreamily away from the head of Holofernes.

The heroic image such as those by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) where the head of Holofernes rests peacefully on the parapet in front of Judith and the sword is held are symbolic portrait-like representations which are identifiable as Judith only by her attributes. Cranach and his workshop painted several versions of this type, including the magnificent Judith with the Head of Holofernes in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow (figure 69) dated 1530.[11] More confusing, however, are those images which could represent either a Judith or Salome where the figure presents the severed head triumphantly to the onlooker on a charger. These are two similar biblical motifs which are often easily confused.

One such controversial picture which I should like to examine and which has been the cause of much debate and discussion is the panel entitled Salome in the Konstmuseum in Gothenburg by Lucas Cranach the Elder (figure 70).[12] This painting which was originally in the Royal Collection in Vienna depicts a cunning-looking female holding a severed male head on a charger. Although this representation is traditionally called Salome (no doubt because the head is on a dish and there is no sword), its iconography comes much closer

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[11] Other well-known examples are in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, the Art Gallery, Stuttgart, the Hall of Honour San Francisco and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

[12] Although this painting has been catalogued as by Lucas Cranach the Elder, Dr. Björn Fredlund, Director of the Konstmuseum in Gothenburg thinks that this could be by Lucas Cranach the Younger, c. 1540 because of the treatment of the clothing.

to the Judith images we have examined so far and therefore needs to be reconsidered here in the context of this dissertation.[13]

The confusion arises because both Salome and Judith are decapitation images with a severed head which has to be displayed. It can therefore be exhibited on a dish or charger yet most of the Judith images show the head in a food bag or sack. Occasionally artists portray Judith with the head on a dish but this is not in accordance with the biblical text which states that the head was put into a food sack. Why do these artists make this simple mistake? According to Paul Joannides artists placed the severed head on a charger so that it would be easier for all to see.[14] He does not refer or make any comment as to why artists did not consult the biblical text. Fede Galizia, as a woman may not have been familiar with the text when she placed the head on a dish. It is not known why she should have misinterpreted the text while all other aspects of the story are correctly rendered in this canvas - fashionable clothes, jewels (including a bracelet, sword, tent and maid). Most other artists of the Renaissance would have depicted the maid holding open a sack or bag while Judith popped the head into it.

However, it is generally recognised that the setting of the Gothenburg picture is quite alien to the Salome narrative. This usually takes place in an

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[13] I have discussed this painting with Dr. Irja Bergström and Mrs. Ira Tepfers of the History of Art Department of Göteborg University and Mrs.Ingmari Desaix of Gothenburg Konstmuseum.
[14] See Paul Joannides, "Titian's *Judith* and its context. The iconography of decapitation", Apollo, vol., 135, March 1992, p. 163-170.

interior such as the banqueting hall of Herod's palace where she dances (Domenico Ghirlandaio, Santa Trinità, Florence) or presents the head of John the Baptist to Herod, (Donatello, font, Baptistery, Siena). In other examples she is depicted waiting in the prison courtyard for the head to be handed to her. At other times she holds a charger with the head, either alone (Sebastiano del Piombo, National Gallery, London) or accompanied by soldiers and/or an executioner who are either about to hand the head to her or place it on the plate (Caravaggio, National Gallery, London) because unlike Judith, Salome did not commit the deed of execution herself. The Gothenburg painting therefore comes much closer to the events of the Judith story because here this youthful female stands in front of a tent which features in scenes of Judith where it represents the quarters of Holofernes - the opening of which is just visible on the right behind her left shoulder and from which she has just emerged, while in the upper left-hand corner we can see a city with a tower, city walls and a church high on a mountain crag which could represent Judith's home town of Bethulia. Behind and below this town lies another city which we could identify as Jerusalem, where Judith was later hailed as a national heroine. The view of a distant town through the window behind Judith's shoulder of the Burrell Collection painting of Judith confirms and, in my opinion, only helps to strengthen the argument that the Gothenburg painting represents Judith and not Salome.

What I think we should now ask ourselves is whether the background of this painting under discussion could have been changed at some time since it

was painted. Having scrutinised this panel in situ, I should like to suggest that it began life as an image of Salome and that the background was then changed at a later date into a Judith.[15] Lucas Cranach the Elder was, I believe, completely *au fait* with the story of Judith, not only because he was a friend of Martin Luther and was therefore well-versed in the story of Judith, but because he painted several different types and events from the Book of Judith - from the Banqueting scene now in Weimar, the nude Judith (previously in Dresden but now destroyed), to a whole series of coquettish, bejewelled, elegant courtesans with feathered and exotic head-dresses, leering out at the spectator.

I believe that the Gothenburg painting, like the portrayals of Judith mentioned above, originally had a black background, making Salome stand out prominently with the head. On examination of this panel it became clear to me that a second artist, perhaps someone who was familiar with the Italian tradition of landscape, had added the hilltop town on the left because the edge of the tent is clearly incised in one continuous line, as if carried out with the end of a sharp instrument, so that this area of the painting is at a slightly lower level (one millimetre) from the tent area. I think that the artist then painted the outer extremities of the tent with a Cranach-like decorative pattern; added two wavy lines to represent the tent opening and then painted in the mountainous landscape with its Pisanello-like forest with the deer below.

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[15] I have examined this painting together with Mrs. Ira Tepfers, who gave me her invaluable views on this painting which helped me to reach my own conclusions about this picture.

This painter has also included a red feather in Salome's hair to link the two halves of the composition; so that it appears as an afterthought. This feather is also another association with the feathered hats of Cranach's single Judith figures. It is therefore possible that this other artist (who could have been someone working in Cranach's studio), either mistakenly thought that it was a Judith and changed it accordingly or altered it to suit the tastes of a prospective patron. The painting remains controversial to this day. As far as I can tell with the naked eye, the head and the charger have not been tampered with and as far as I have been able to establish, it has never been X-rayed, so that until it is, my hypothesis that this painting was originally a Salome which was then altered into a Judith must remain conjectural.

Another heroic painting which has caused equal controversy over the years is Titian's painting referred to as <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes (known as Salome)</u> in the Doria Pamphilj Gallery in Rome, (figure 54) executed in 1515.[16] The canvas depicts an attractive young woman standing in front of a ruined Roman building with an opening revealing a blue sky with cumulus clouds, holding a charger with a severed head. The painting is now usually considered to be a painting of Judith. Certainly several scholars, Paul Joannides, Eduard Safarik and Lynda Stephens consider this to be a

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[16] Another version of this painting by a follower is now in the Norton Simon Foundation at Fullerton, California.

representation of Judith, the latter because she is convinced that the young girl standing next to the other woman is the maid.[17]

I now propose to re-examine this painting entitled <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> and to consider whether this painting should now be given its correct title which I believe is <u>Herodias with the head of St. John the Baptist</u> which was its title when it belonged to Cardinal Aldobrandini in the seventeenth century. However, after several connoisseurs such as François Descine and Charles de Brosse, had viewed the painting in the eighteenth century and decided that it represented Judith, the painting has often been entitled <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u>.[18] In my opinion there are several reasons why this painting should be seen for what it is - a painting of Herodias.[19] Firstly if we analyse the figure of the woman who recoils from the decapitated head on the charger and yet coyly sneaks a sideways glance at the head which has been presented to her on a dish, while the younger girl looks lost in wonderment at someone who could actually ask for the head of John the Baptist on a charger, we can see that this is not a Judith. If this were an image of Judith, she would be looking out triumphantly and heroically at the spectator, confident because she has ruthlessly killed the victim with her own hand; she

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[17] See Eduard A. Safarik, <u>Galleria Doria Pamphilj Masterpieces: Paintings</u>, Florence, 1993, pp.12-13. Lynda Stephens expressed the same sentiments in her lecture at the National Gallery, London on 17 December 1996.

[18] The painting appears in the inventory of 1592 of Lucretia d'Este, Duchess of Urbino, where it is listed as "Uno di un Herodiade". See P. della Pergola "L'Inventario del 1592 di Lucrezia d'Este" <u>Arte antica e moderna</u> II, 7 July-September 1959, pp.342-51, pp.345 and 349.

[19] See Paul Joannides, op. cit., p.163-170 and E. Panovsky, <u>Problems in Titian, Mostly Iconographic</u>, London, 1969, pp. 42-47. The former thinks that it is a painting of Judith while the latter believes it to be a portrayal of Salome.

would not be the recoiling maiden in this picture. She would also have been wearing jewellery, perhaps even a tiara, having made herself as alluring as possible to entice all those who would see her. This woman is without any jewels. The maid would have been older; this girl is too young to have been of much assistance to her mistress in carrying the provisions, let alone preparing the food and transporting the head back to Bethulia. It is more plausible that she is Salome, Herodias' daughter. E. Safarik says that "there is nothing regal about the two woman" but in most representations of Salome this is often the case. He maintains that "the seductive attitude of the main figure is well suited to the Jewish heroine" but he forgets that many of Titian's female figures, including saints, are often represented in a sensuous and erotic manner.

If we now look at the decapitated head which lies peacefully like a sleeping saint, eyelids closed, with a neat beard, and smooth face, it is similar to other images of severed heads of St. John the Baptist. If this were a head of Holofernes it would have a dark swarthy complexion, with unruly black or brown hair, with grotesque and evil-looking facial features, the eyes often half open with thick set lips, whereas this head gives a much more saintly impression almost as if the head is asleep on the dish, as is the case with other representations of St. John the Baptist.[20] Paul Joannides does not think that this is a John the Baptist because the halo is missing, but this is by no means

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[20] An exception to this is the head of Holofernes being carried in a basket by the maid in Botticelli's panel Judith Returning to Bethulia (Uffizi Gallery, Florence) where Holofernes is depicted with white hair and beard.

conclusive evidence as this saint is often shown without a halo. This head rests on a charger which is not the usual way of displaying the head of Holofernes although there are examples of Judith holding the head on a dish or basin.[21] The biblical text says that the maid put the head of Holofernes in a sack while the head of John the Baptist was presented to Salome on a charger (Mark 6:14-29) and most artists adhere to this reading. The setting too is wrong because Judith is usually depicted either in the tent or outside it, not in front of a ruin which is more in keeping with the Roman prison where John the Baptist was incarcerated. The sword or the hilt of a sword is also missing. Neither is it the correct time of day for it to be a painting of Judith. This event is taking place during daylight hours - note the blue sky through the archway - whereas Judith left the camp of the Assyrians at night. Safarix notes that there was a Titian painting of Judith from the collection of Alfonso I d'Este in 1533 (now lost) in the collection of Lucretia d'Este, his granddaughter, and that this is therefore the missing picture. As far as I can see this does not provide conclusive evidence that this is the same picture.

Dutch seventeenth-century artists showed little inclination to depict Judith as a triumphant or heroic heroine. Although the country had triumphed over their Spanish Rulers, the Dutch, unlike the Florentines, did not use the figure of Judith as an image of civic triumph or as a warning against tyrants and

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[21] Other representations where Judith holds or places the head on a charger are:-
1. Judith by Fede Galizia, 1596, The John and Mable Ringling Musuem, Sarasota;
2. Judith formerly attributed to Francesco Maffei, c. 1630, Pinacoteca Civico, Faenza;
3. Judith Returning to Bethulia by Sandro Botticelli, c. 1470, Uffizi Gallery, Florence;
4. Judith and Holofernes by Michelangelo, 1509, Vatican, Rome.

oppressors. To the Dutch, Judith remained an Apocryphal character and was therefore only rarely painted and illustrated at this epoch. On the whole, Judith was generally only depicted by those artists who had been to Italy and especially to Rome at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when this image was particularly popular, for example, in the work of Gerard Seghers, (1591-1651) Judith with the Head of Holofernes, early seventeenth century, painted in the Caravaggesque manner and now in the Galeria Corsini, Rome.

As we saw in the last chapter when we discussed his pen drawing of Judith Beheading Holofernes in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples (c. 1652-55), (figure 57) Rembrandt was the Dutch painter who adhered most closely to the biblical text when illustrating the Judith story.

It may therefore appear strange that an artist who illustrated the Apocrypha with such a profound knowledge and who ignored Martin Luther's pronouncements has failed to leave us any triumphant or heroic paintings of Judith but another suggestion is that maybe heroic images were not his *forte*. However, it is now generally recognised that Rembrandt did attempt one such a painting. Christopher Brown has pointed out that the canvas of Saskia as Flora in the National Gallery, London executed in 1635 (figure 71) was originally intended to be a portrayal of Judith with the head surrounded by a halo.[22] X-rays (figure 72) have revealed that beneath the figure of Flora stood

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[22] Christopher Brown, "Rembrandt's Saskia as Flora, X-rayed", Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp Bergman, Doornspijk 1983, pp.49-52.

an heroic Judith, holding out the head of Holofernes (underneath what is now the garland of flowers held by Flora) and that beneath her staff was a curved sword. A bag can be seen in the X-rays in the bottom right hand corner together with a ghost-like outline of her maid. Although the maid is present, I think that this painting which was never executed can still be described as part of these heroic and triumphant images.

Why did Rembrandt change his mind? Was this a commissioned painting from a well-to-do burgher in Amsterdam who then no longer wanted or turned down the painting? Or did Rembrandt paint this for his own pleasure and then became personally dissatisfied with it. Perhaps he painted it under the influence of the Utrecht School because the subject was not unknown in the Roman Catholic enclave of Utrecht. Abraham Bloemaert (1564-1651) had already painted a Judith.[23] Another possibility is that Rembrandt may have been inspired to paint this subject after he saw the Rubens painting of 1620 (now in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (figure 73)) which was in Leiden in the 1620s, because there are certain compositional similarities between the two pictures. However, until documentary evidence is found we can but speculate on this.

As well as the type of scene which I have discussed above which shows Judith alone in her moment of glory, some sixteenth-century and later artists

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[23] For reference to this painting in the Städel Museum, Frankfurt see Städelsches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie, Frankfurt, 1987, p. 31.

expanded the pictorial representation to reveal a brave Judith presenting the head to the crowds at the entrance to Bethulia in her role as a civic heroine. This gave painters a greater opportunity of producing a more sensational and dramatic type of history painting with several figures engaged in different activities. Battista Naldini (1537-1591) is able to show his compositional skills in a drawing of c.1564 entitled Judith Displaying the Head of Holofernes now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Lille, where standing on some steps she presents the head to a crowd of people and to a group of soldiers.[24] The drawing formed part of a series of drawings in preparation for a painting for Raffaello Borghini who had indicated his wishes in his *historia*.[25]

In the seventeenth century Italian artists would still paint images of Judith presenting the head to the onlooker although this becomes less frequent in the course of the century. Domenichino still uses this formula in his fresco for one of the pendentives of the church of San Silvestro al Quirinale in Rome in about 1628.[26] Later in the century the actual display would take on a more quiet religious feeling - not the drama that one might expect.

However, one of the ultimate triumphs of Judith must be the fresco painted by Luca Giordano (figure 74) for the vault of the Cappella di Tesoro in the Certosa di San Martino in Naples which he began on his return from Spain

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[24] For an illustration see Mary D. Garrard, op cit, p.288, fig 253.
[25] See Alessandro Cecchi, "Borghini, Vasari, Naldini e la Giuditta del 1546", Paragone 28, no. 323, January 1977, pp. 100-107.
[26] I mentioned this fresco and others from San Silvestro al Quirinale in Chapter 3 (Images of Judith and David together).

in 1702 and which he had completed by April 1704 shortly before his death in 1705. This work was executed at a time when the theme of Judith and Holofernes held a limited interest for most artists. It is a virtuoso performance by Giordano anticipating the luminous and refined paintings of the rococo with its soft gentle colouring of pinks, blues and yellows accentuated by the warm carmine tones. The composition has a strong sense of movement and a wonderful *di sotto in su;* there are three *bozzetti.* the finest of which is the one in the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham, (figure 75) for part of the fresco It differs in many respects from the final version, especially in its deeper and more intense colour accents and in its rapid and free technique.[27] The Bowes sketch concentrates on the central figure Judith and her maid positioned in front of the battlements of Bethulia to the exclusion of any other area of the vault. There is another *bozzetto* of similar size in the Detroit Museum of Fine Arts, Missouri. In both the Bowes sketch and in the final vault fresco Judith stands victorious on a rock, triumphantly holding up the head of the tyrant Holofernes, while her servant hovers behind clutching the empty sack from which Judith has just produced the head of Holofernes like a magician pulling a rabbit from a hat. The painting is conceived almost like an apotheosis, as if Judith is about to rise to join God the Father and the chorus of angels in the centre of the vault. Opposite the triumphal scene is its companion piece The

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[27] See Ferrari, Luca Giordano, Rome, 1966, Volume II, pp. 230-32, and Volume III, plates 504-09 and 518, 519.

Discovery of the Head of Holofernes. The four corners contain other biblical heroines for which there is a third *bozzetto*. [28]

Artists occasionally depicted Judith in the eighteenth century. Francesco Solimena's Judith displaying the Head of Holofernes dating from the beginning of the century, in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, has much of the exuberance of the Luca Giordano in Naples but his colours are warmer with reds, yellows and gold predominating amid the grey and blue of the costumes of the citizens of Bethulia. Like Naldini, Solimena also raises Judith on the steps in front of the walls of the city, but here angels and cherubs descend with a golden halo with which to crown our victorious heroine.

Giambattista Tiepolo (1696-1770), the great Venetian decorative artist, also painted this subject. His small oil painting of Judith displaying the Head of Holofernes to the Populace remained unsold at Sotheby's Milan on 3 December 1998 when it was "notified" by the Milan Soprintendenza per I Beni Artistici. The painting which measures 17in by 22 in came from a private collection in Milan and shows a youthful Judith raised on steps displaying the head to a mixed crowd of onlookers.

An equally dynamic painting is that by Johann Martin Schmidt, known as Kremer Schmidt (1718-1801) in the Österreichische Galerie in Vienna, where

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[28] Exhibited at the Hazlitt Gallery, London. See catalogue Baroque Painting in Italy, Hazlitt Gallery, London.

a triumphant Judith holds up the head of Holofernes while the storm clouds behind her roll away symbolically from the sky behind her.

Other than Gustave Doré who depicts <u>Judith Showing the Head of Holofernes</u> (not in front of the gates of Bethulia as described in the text, but among desert tents), other nineteenth-century artists preferred to depict Judith as a *femme fatale* rather than as a *femme forte*, so that emphasis changes yet again.[29]

(iii) Judith trampling on the Head of Holofernes

This image of Judith trampling on the head of Holofernes represents, as do so many of the illustrations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the old psychomachia of Good (or Virtue) standing triumphant over Evil.[30] In Giorgione's painting of 1500-04 in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Judith appears in the open air dressed in pale magenta gown hitched up around the waist and opening at the front to reveal a very feminine foot firmly placed on the severed head of Holofernes which although lifeless smiles sweetly.[31] This figure of Judith, which almost fills the entire surface of the picture, would originally have appeared smaller in relation to the picture space because we know from an engraving of 1729 by Toinette Larcher that the picture as a whole was much

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[29] Gustave Doré, op. cit., 143.

[30] As we saw in Chapter 4.

[31] For the attribution to Giorgione and illustration see Ludwig Baldass, <u>Giorgione</u>, London, 1965, pp. 131-32.

larger. This engraving shows that thirteen centimetres have been cut off from the sides. By decreasing the dimensions of the picture, which was not the artist's original intention, the prominence and status of Judith is increased.

No sooner had Giorgione finished his painting of Judith when in 1507-1508 Titian painted the so-called Judith fresco on the facade of new Fondaco de' Tedeschi in Venice (the old building having burnt down in 1505) showing a seated woman with a sword resting her left foot on the severed head of a man while a soldier looks on. The subject has been open to various interpretations over the years but Ludovico Dolce said that this was a Judith.[32] Giorgio Vasari also refers to this female figure as a Judith in his Life of Giorgione, but was unable to interpret the meaning of the fresco; having erroneously given it to Giorgione, he could not decide what the figure on the left was supposed to represent unless it was meant to be a figure of "Germania".[33] Crowe and Cavalcaselle, writing in 1888 came to the conclusion that the figure represented *Justitia*, because of its similarity to the *Justitia*, by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena where she also places a foot on a severed head while holding a sword.[34] However, they were also unable to decide what the male figure was supposed to be. Carl Nordenfalk posits that the woman is Judith with the head of Holofernes under her feet which is a symbol of "Heavenly Justice" while the soldier on the left stands for "Earthly

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[32] Ludovico Dolce was a Venetian art historian who wrote a dialogue in his *Aretino.*
[33] Giorgio Vasari, op. cit., Vol 1, p. 275.
[34] J.A. Crowe and G.B. Cavalcaselle, The Life and Times of Titian, London, 1888, pp. 80ff.

Justice".[35] Michelangelo Murano had another idea that the painting had a political meaning and referred to the treaty which the Emperor Maximilian had broken with Venice, but this would have been a rather odd subject for the warehouse of the German merchants.[36] Nevertheless, whichever way one wishes to read this image the fact remains that Judith with her sword is a personification of Justice. The inclusion of the soldier is not a usual feature in depictions of Judith and so, in my opinion, this is more likely to be a representation of Justice.

(iv) Images of Judith as a triumph of virtue and fortitude

Images of Judith as a symbol of the triumph of virtue and fortitude were popular during the Renaissance. In the bronze sculpture of <u>Judith and Holofernes</u> by Donatello, (figure 21) executed in about 1456-60, the figure of Judith becomes the epitome of abstract virtue and a symbol of freedom from tyranny, not just in the Christian tradition, but in the Greek or Roman sense of "virtue" - the quality of bravery against the odds, a concept almost entirely distinct from the Christian notion of pious behaviour under God's guiding rule.

Donatello's statue, sculpted in the round because it was originally a fountain with either four, three or seven spouts, stood in the garden of the

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[35] See Carl Nordenfalk, "Titian's Allegories on the Fondaco de' Tedeschi", <u>Gazette des-Beaux Arts</u>, Vol 40, 1952, pp. 102-108.
[36] M. Muraro, "The Political Interpretation of Giorgione's Frescoes on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi", <u>Gazette des Beaux-Arts</u>, VI/LXXXVI, 1975, pp. 177-83.

Medici Palace in Florence.[37] We know from contemporary sources that an inscription on the pedestal of the Judith statue while it was in the garden, (which no longer survives), read as follows:-

REGNA CADUNT LUXU SURGUNT VIRTUTIBUS URBES/

CAESA VIDES HUMILI COLLA SUPERBA MANU

(Translation: Kingdoms fall through Luxury,

Cities rise through Virtues; behold the neck of pride

severed by the hand of humility;)

and on the other side:

SALVS PUBLICA/PETRVS MEDICES

COS(MI) FI(LIVS) LIBERTATI SIMUL ET

FORTITUDINI/HANC MULIERIS STATVAM

QUO CIVES INVICTO/CONSTANTIQUE

A(N)I(M)O AD REM PVB(LICAM) REDDERENT

DEDICAVIT

(Translation: Piero, son of Cosimo Medici,

has dedicated the statue of this woman to

that liberty and fortitude bestowed on the

republic by the invincible and constant spirit

of its citizens.)

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[37] Water may have come from the three exits on the sides of the base (which are now closed) or from the four holes at the corners of the cushion where there would have been tassels originally, or from a combination of all seven holes.

The statue was moved in 1980 into the Palazzo Vecchio to preserve it from the ravages of pollution, but sadly it has been raised on to such a high pedestal that we are no longer able to examine the details at close quarters. However, we can make out that Judith is about to deliver the final coup. She raises her scimitar again (one blow having already been struck, as we know from the deep wound in Holofernes' neck) and thus achieving the moment of her triumph and conquest. This action in the hands of Donatello becomes not only a literal interpretation of the biblical text but is an entirely original artistic concept because most artists and sculptors show Holofernes already decapitated. Powerfully, and with the strength given to her by God, she holds down the drunken Holofernes with her thigh and with her left foot she steps on his upturned hand. We are instantly reminded of the ancient psychomacchia of Good standing over Evil. The statue is so naturalistic that Giorgio Vasari remarked "that one can see the effect of wine and sleep in the expression of Holofernes and the presence of death in his limbs, which as his soul has departed are cold and limp".[38]

2. David

(i) The Triumphant and (ii) the Heroic Images of David

The triumph of David, like that of Judith, encapsulated in their respective stories shows that without God, Man cannot be victorious in overcoming Evil and therefore Man cannot be victorious alone. In both instances, it is the hand of God that leads, although the Book of Judith says that

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[38] Giorgio Vasari, op. cit., p.179.

Holofernes was killed by the hand of a woman. Triumphant images are therefore important but unlike those representations of Judith waving the head or sword aloft there are relatively few examples of David doing the same. The reason is primarily that in the biblical narrative David does not physically present the head to the Israelites. They had already been witnesses to the execution and so no further exhibitionist display was deemed necessary.

Triumphant images where David brandishes the head or sword are more likely to be used in the decorative arts for example in carvings on furnishings and ceramics. A strangely clad David with a helmet (unlike anything described in the Bible) holds up the head of Goliath (figure 76) in one of the panels on the magnificent oak bed-head of 1530 at Temple Newsam near Leeds. This bed in the Renaissance style which was probably carved by foreign craftsmen came originally from Bretton Hall near Wakefield. The other panels contain <u>Samson with the Jawbone</u> and <u>St. George and the Dragon;</u> all symbols of victory over adversity.

Another fine example commemorating victory is the multicoloured plate dated 1507 (figure 77) made at Faenza. This plate, decorated with cornucopia, armour and grotesques bears the inscription SEQUITUR (on the left) and VICTORIA FAMAN (on the right), (meaning FAME FOLLOWS VICTORY) was made to commemorate a local victory and it is therefore appropriate that David should have been chosen. He stands triumphant in the centre holding up the bloody sword amid the ruins while Goliath's headless body lies behind

him. The comical upright decapitated head of Goliath lying on the ground is intended to make a mockery of the enemy. Most of the biblical details are correct but the setting has been transferred from the Vale of Elah to the mountains of Italy.

David is, therefore, not depicted as frequently as Judith in a triumphant pose, although the subject of triumph is prolifically represented in many different ways. By this I mean that David appears as a young and beautiful boy either nude or only partially-clothed, often with a loin cloth around his waist or sheepskin over one shoulder exposing a fair amount of young pubescent flesh and presenting the head of Goliath to the spectator. This was a frequent type in seventeenth century not only in Italian works but also in those by foreign artists who came to Rome and fell under the influence of Caravaggio, who introduced this type of image.

A painting sold at Sotheby's on 26 October 1994 (figure 78) and catalogued as "German School, 17th Century" (no 99) is a typical example of this type of partially-clad youth representing David. He stands with the light focusing on his bare torso, amid the classical buildings of Rome like a kind of risen Christ figure and this analogy is probably intended. He points to heaven from whence came his strength, whilst drawing our attention to the large head lying on a plinth. Against this rests the hilt of a sword studied with garnets symbolising the blood which was shed by both David and Christ for Mankind. This painting expresses the tenets of the Counter-Reformation.

Most French artists of any stature in the seventeenth century made their way to Rome.[39] Many of them were influenced by Caravaggio or his followers and as with Caravaggio some of their favourite subjects for easel paintings were events from the stories of both Judith and David to which Caravaggio had given a new interpretation and meaning. They were closely dependent on Caravaggio, not only for his use of chiaroscuro but also in their treatment of presenting David.[40] The greatest number of the triumphant images of David are either representations of young semi-naked boys or scenes showing David with the head, accompanied by maidens singing and playing musical instruments, either on the road or arriving triumphantly in Jerusalem.[41]

However, there are some by these French artists where David is clothed and where he presents the head of Goliath to the viewer. An example of this type of picture is the one by Claude Vignon (1593-1670) who worked in Rome from 1617 to 1623. Vignon was an artist who absorbed the styles of several artists including that of the French Mannerists (especially Lallemant), Manfredi, the Northern Caravaggisti, especially Ter Brugghen whom he actually knew, together with his compatriot Simon Vouet, and the Italians Domenico Feti and Guercino. Vignon's canvas of David with the Head of Goliath in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Rouen is in the style of the Utrecht Caravaggisti with a smiling youth in red velvet beret with a feather, the bloody sword and head of Goliath

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[39] Exceptions to this rule were Eustache Le Sueur and Philippe de Champaigne.

[40] Caravaggio's David with the Head of Goliath in the Galleria Borghese, Rome is discussed in Chapter 9 (portraits of self).

[41] I discuss these images of nude and semi-nude Davids in Chapter 8 and the triumphant returns in Chapter 10.

triumphantly displayed in front of him to the onlooker. These images of David therefore become figures of fantasy because there is no biblical reference to such scenes. They were popular with patrons who liked the theatrical quality of these paintings. The appeal of Vignon's painting also lies in the dreamy expression of David, its warm Venetian reds, with its sparkling dabs of white *impasto*.

Moving onto the nineteenth century let us now consider the textual accuracy of Gustave Doré's illustration to his Bible entitled <u>David and Goliath</u> (1865). Doré's representation refers to the event immediately after David has killed Goliath and shows David lifting the enormous, sad and dejected-looking head of Goliath aloft, his huge headless body laid out at his feet. David presents the head to the Philistines on the left who flee mounted on horseback into the distance while his compatriots, who can see only the back of Goliath's head, wave and hail David as a hero. In Doré's print the enemy are seen on horses whereas the account says that "when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled" and that the "troops of Israel and Judah . . . pursued the Philistines as far as Garth. . ." (I Samuel 17:51-52) which indicates that they were on foot. Perhaps Doré was aware of the details of the story but has chosen to ignore it in order to increase the sense of movement. Doré has included most of those elements which we mentally associate with David's victory - the headless giant Goliath dressed in armour, the diminutive David in a white tunic, Goliath's enormous falchion, spear and shield - but there is no sign of the helmet which he also wore. Symbolically the ends of Goliath's sword and spear point towards the fleeing enemy. However, by setting the scene on a rocky

outcrop with hills in the distance means that Doré has not read the account in I Samuel 17 because he has not fully understood the location. The biblical account says that "all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines" (I Samuel 17:19). I would like to suggest that Doré has let his imagination dictate the scene to him. In order to emphasise the drama Doré has raised David onto the rock so that he becomes the central focus of the composition and the head of Goliath the apex of the triangle formed by David's raised arms. By giving this kind of forceful impetus to the print he has sacrificed accuracy for theatricality. It is therefore only partially true to say, as Blanche Roosevelt does, that Gustave Doré was "a valuable and suggestive commentator on the text".[42] Nevertheless, in spite of these literary lapses, Doré succeeds in giving an authentic feel to his illustration and in depicting a triumphant image of David.

(iii) David trampling on the headless body or head of Goliath and (iv) Images of David as a Triumph of Virtue and Fortitude.

As these two types tend to overlap to some extent during the Renaissance period I shall discuss these together. Images of David trampling on the head of Goliath begin with the representation on the western transenna at Santa Maria Antiqua where David prefigures Christ and like him slays the Devil.[43]

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[42] Doré Bible op. cit., p. vii.
[43] I discussed this fresco in detail in Chapter 3 under the images of David and Judith together.

This kind of image re-emerges during the Renaissance in Italy when several artists and sculptors especially Florentine ones would depict David as a symbol for the city of Florence, trampling on Goliath's headless body while holding the head of Goliath or with the head between or at his feet. Donatello's two Davids, the marble of 1408-1411 (figure 19) and the bronze (figure 20) both now in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello and the so-called Martinelli David by Bernardo Rossellino, National Gallery Washington, after a wax model by Donatello commissioned by the Martelli family, were all executed in Florence. This last-named statue also reappears in the back ground of the portrait executed c.1537-38 by Agnolo di Cosimo di Mariano called Bronzino (1503-72) of the humanist, Ugolino Martelli (1519-92) in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (figure 79) seated in the courtyard of the Palazzo Martelli, surrounded by his books. Antonio del Pollaiuolo has a similar pose with the head of Goliath between his feet (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) of c. 1472 (figure 80) which resembles Donatello's statue of St. George of 1415 (figure 81) commissioned for a niche outside Or San Michele in Florence. Andrea Verrocchio's David will be discussed fully in chapter 7 dealing with the contemplative images.

The earlier versions would often show David with his foot on the headless body of Goliath while he would hold the head as, for instance in the David with the Head of Goliath on the entrance arch of the Baroncelli Chapel (figure 18). The foot placed firmly on the body as an image of evil being trampled underfoot as the Archangel Michael vanquishes the Devil or as Mary (or Christ) crushes the Serpent beneath her or his feet. This was a popular image

during the Counter-Reformation, for instance the <u>Palafrenieri Madonna</u> by Caravaggio in the Church of San Agostino in Rome commissioned in 1605 where both Mary and the Christ Child tread on the serpent's head symbolising the destruction of heresy.

Artists of the Baroque period and subsequent periods do not show David in this guise and religious images of him soon die out although there are some examples in the nineteenth century dating from the 1880s which concentrate on the type of classical nudity which we associate with Donatello and other Florentine sculptors.

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Chapter 7

The Contemplative Image

Images of Judith contemplating the head of Holofernes are few in the history of European art. Although we are used to seeing many examples of Judith's counterpart David, especially in the seventeenth century, where David reflects on his actions, gazing meditatively with masculine pride on the giant decapitated head of Goliath, it is only rarely that we find the equivalent representation in the Judith narrative. Why should this be so? Mary Garrard says that "by contrast with David, Judith is not permitted to grow into a multi-dimensional character defined by psychological or philosophical complexity, because she could not be regarded by male artists as an heroic extension of themselves. Unlike David, she was not invested with the aspirations, doubts and meditations of the dominant sex."[1] The narrative of Judith, as we have noted, moves along at a rapid pace. From the text we soon understand that she never had any doubts, her main ambition was to defeat Holofernes, to save her people from his tyranny and to accomplish her self-chosen task with God's help. Her role is one of action and accomplishment without pride. At no stage does she have time to "stop and stare" or to meditate on her achievement. With Judith there is always a sense of urgency because if she does not hurry her own life and that of her maid will be in still greater danger. Even after she has left the camp of the enemy the head must be transported back to Bethulia as quickly as possible and shown to the citizens to prove that she had succeeded in her undertaking

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[1] Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p. 303.

and that the general who had been terrorising them had finally been killed by her.

a) Judith

This, therefore, is probably the main reason why there are so few examples of meditative Judiths. However, there is one picture which can be read as either contemplative or as one of those triumphant portrayals where Judith and her maid return to Bethulia after leaving the camp of the Assyrians. This is the grave and regal night-time scene of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> by Antiveduto Grammatica (1571-1626) painted between 1620 and 25 (figure 82), now in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm.[2] This Caravaggesque painting which is lit by the flame of a burning torch held by the maid, depicts a monumental Judith of the Artemisia Gentileschi female figure type dressed magnificently and looking pensively down.[3] How poignant that the brightest area of illumination in this canvas should fall so emphatically on Judith's right hand - the hand with which she decapitated her enemy whose head she now touches in a gesture of abject tenderness. In this representation by Antiveduto she does not, like David, meditate on the head of the oppressor of her people, because her eyes are turned away from the decapitated head lying in the basket.[4]

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[2] This painting was once attributed to Caravaggio, Artemisia Gentileschi and Domenico Fetti, see Spear, 1971, cat 34.

[3] Although this painting can be classed as being of the Artemisia type it has certain similarities with H. Aldegrever's print of <u>Salome</u> of 1528 (B VIII, 371, 34).

[4] I should perhaps add that in some representations where both Judith and her maid are present inside or outside the tent after the decapitation, Judith occasionally gives the impression of hesitating thoughtfully before passing the severed head to the maid who stands ready to receive the head before putting it into the food-bag. I do not believe that these portrayals constitute contemplative images in the true sense of the word.

Although urged on by her servant to leave she stands, uncharacteristically, steadfastly rooted to the spot.

b) David

In David's case the situation is quite different because compared to Judith there is a multitude of representations of David contemplating the head of Goliath. It was not until the Renaissance that artists and sculptors attempted to depict the thoughts and feelings of David by showing him in a contemplative mood. These images gradually increased until there was a vast number of these in the seventeenth century especially in Roman Catholic countries where portrayals of meditative figures were in keeping with the religious ideas promulgated by sixteenth-century Counter-Reformation writers such as St. Ignatius Loyola (1491/5-1556) who encouraged their followers to reflect on the tortures of martyrdom, the sufferings of saints and the innermost emotions of other religious personages.

Many of the early Italian Renaissance statues of David executed either at, or after, the time of Donatello combine many different aspects of David's character and achievements in the one statue - his youthfulness and innocence, his triumph, his heroism and occasionally his state of mind. This emotional and psychological trend was begun by Donatello in his bronze statue of c. 1446 - c.1460, (figure 20), now in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence where there is some semblance of thought in this statue. (Note the downcast eyes).[5]

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[5] I discuss Donatello's bronze David more fully in chapter 8 dealing with the nude images of David.

However, this theme was not fully exploited until Andrea del Verrocchio (c.1435 - 88) modelled his smiling bronze statue of David (figure 83), also in the Bargello.

The Verrocchio statue was commissioned by the Medici family, probably by either Piero (who died in 1469) or Lorenzo de' Medici, some time before 1476. (There seems to be some difference of opinion as to who commissioned it but it is likely that it was cast between 1469 and 1475.) Although we do not know the exact date of its inception or where it was to be placed, Vasari tells us that Verrocchio was commissioned to make a bronze statue of David after his first successful visit to Rome and that on completion it "was placed, much to his credit, at the head of the staircase in the Palazzo Signoria . . . . ."[6] The Inventory of Tommaso (1494)[7] says that the statue was sold by Lorenzo the Magnificent and Giuliano de' Medici to the Signoria, the governing body of Florence, for 150 florins on 10 May 1476 "for the decoration, beauty and magnificence of the palace" ("*pro ornamento et pulchritudine ac etiam magnificentia palattii*") and placed near the Porta della Catena in the Palazzo Vecchio at the entrance to the Sala dei Gigli. The statue could also be classed as triumphant in so far as it represents victory over adversity showing David standing with the head of Goliath at his feet. Roberta Olson describes Verrocchio's David as looking out triumphantly at the viewer, but in my opinion his gaze is, in fact, directed sideways and is far

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[6] Giorgio Vasari, op. cit., p. 233.

[7] Inventory of Tommaso. List made by Verrocchio's brother after the expulsion of the Medici in 1494 of all the works by Andrea for the Medici which had not yet been paid for. It included a David with the Head of Goliath, ("uno davitte e la testa di ghulia").

from triumphant - it is pensive and meditative and that is why I should like to discuss it under this category. [8]

Verrocchio was clearly inspired by Donatello's bronze epicene statue of <u>David</u> which he would certainly have known because it stood in the courtyard of the Medici Palace in 1469 - the year of Lorenzo de' Medici's marriage. We are aware of the same stance with feet apart, the left leg bent and with one hand (but without the stone) resting on his hip while the right arm is lowered, holding the implement of decapitation, but the mood here is completely different. Does this figure of David with its far-away gaze represent some inner or other meaning which has now been lost to us? Charles Avery recognises the defects of the Donatello statue when he says that "Verrocchio's later statue of David seems to constitute a sharp criticism of his shortcoming in the emotional temper of the figure".[9] In this statue, Verrocchio demonstrates his skill in rendering a certain elegance combined with naturalism. We can even appreciate the muscles of his legs, the bone structure of his shoulders and the veins in his arms. Verrocchio's David is far removed from the biblical description of the young shepherd boy who discarded the armour put on him by Saul. This statue, clothed like a warrior (whereas the Donatello is nude except for his hat and greaves) in a sleeveless Roman tunic with skirt and both boots edged with Kufic lettering to give the statue some Middle-Eastern authenticity, belongs firmly to that classical tradition of young warriors from the Greek and Roman worlds. This becomes

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[8] See Roberta J.M. Olson, <u>Italian Renaissance Sculpture</u>, London, 1992, p. 117.
[9] See Charles Avery, <u>Florentine Renaissance Sculpture</u>, London, 1970, p. 82.

even more obvious if we imagine the statue without the head of Goliath. This head, which was executed separately, was removed from the statue, probably at the end of the seventeenth century, so that when this statue was listed in Giovanni Francesco Biachi's Uffizi Gallery inventory of 1704, without its attribute it was described as a "Young Mars"; its original biblical meaning had therefore become lost.[10] David holds a short sword or dagger tensely in his right hand; this is also not in keeping with the biblical narrative which says that David cut off the head of the giant with his own (i.e. Goliath's) sword, which would therefore have been enormous. In this respect he does not follow Donatello's David, who is faithfully portrayed grasping a gigantic sword.[11] Although Verrocchio's free-standing statue, which is sculptured in the round, can be examined from several different viewpoints, I agree with Passavant that it was probably originally intended to be placed against a wall and seen from the front with the head turned to the right so that David's eyes look out reflectively towards the far horizon and not at the spectator.[12] It also loses some of its impact and stability when viewed from the side.

In the seventeenth century we find this subject richly illustrated and portrayed in both paintings and sculpture where David contemplates either his

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[10] The head was not reunited with the statue of David until the nineteenth century. They were listed together in the first catalogue of the Museo del Bargello in 1878.

[11] There are other examples of bronze statues of David holding an enormous sword and contemplating the head of Goliath e.g. David with the Head of Goliath, fifteenth century, by Bartolomeo Bellano, Philadelphia Museum of Art and the late fifteenth-century sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum in New York attributed to a Florentine sculptor. Both statues measure 28.5 cm and both, no doubt, inspired by Donatello's David of c.1446-60. For illustrations see The Burlington Magazine, Jan 1986, vol. 128, p. 65, ills. 74 and 75.

[12] G. Passavant, Verrocchio - Skulpturen, Gemälde und Zeichnungen, London, 1969.

deed or the head of Goliath. This type of subject was first introduced by Caravaggio, who in his painting of <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u> in the Galleria Borghese in Rome executed in either 1605/06 (or c. 1608 or 1609/10 in Naples according to some scholars[13] (figure 84)) set the fashion for young handsome men dressed in off-the-shoulder tunics exposing a nipple and a fair amount of soft irradiant flesh to titillate the senses of their Catholic ecclesiastical patrons - pictures of youths whose titles can be easily transformed from a David to a St. John the Baptist, to an Isaac or other religious character simply by changing their attributes.[14] Indeed it is only from their symbols that we can recognise individual figures. By giving David a sword and a severed head he is instantly turned into the Biblical hero who slayed Goliath. Although we know that many of these works hung in the private apartments of prelates, bishops and cardinals, and were ostensibly intended as devotional paintings as a reminder of David's role as either king, prophet, saviour, angel or prototype of Christ, they were also sophisticated sexual objects to be enjoyed. Cardinal del Monte and Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani's love of such pictures "of effeminate young boys" is well documented especially in works by Caravaggio and his followers.[15]

From now on this type of erotically suggestive image of a contemplative David occurs frequently among the circle of Caravaggio's followers. It was popular with both Guido Reni and Orazio Gentileschi who painted several

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[13] Roberto Longhi suggested this latter date in his posthumous edition of <u>Caravaggio</u>, Rome, 1988, p.111. Helen Langdon, <u>Caravaggio: A Life</u>, London, 1998, p. 384 dates it "late summer of 1609".

[14] For a more extensive analysis of Caravaggio's canvas see Chapter 9 concerned with images of self.

[15] See Francis Haskell, <u>Patrons and Painters, Art and Society in Baroque Italy</u>, 1980, Yale, pp. 29-30.

versions of David reflecting on his act or studying Goliath's head in silence.[16] These Davids certainly appealed to artists because it gave them the opportunity to exhibit their skills, not only in expressing a mood of melancholy in its various forms, but, as I have indicated above, in painting the yielding youthful flesh of near-nude youths masquerading as Davids.[17]

Guido Reni is documented as having painted the subject of meditative Davids twice during his career in 1605/06 and 1630.[18] The earlier of these two full-length versions in the Louvre, Paris, painted in the manner of Caravaggio with a strong chiaroscuro but displaying a Bolognese refinement and elegance combines the gracefulness of the antique.[19] Its similarity to the standing classical marble statue of the Faun, Museo Capitolino in Rome with its crossed legs and nonchalant stance has long been recognised.[20] Guido produced this effeminate and dispassionate David shortly after his arrival in Rome from Bologna at the invitation of Cardinal Sfondrato. Guido's standing youth is young, handsome and effete, swathed in blue velvet and rich off the shoulder furs while he haughtily admires the head of Goliath laid on the plinth beside him. As Richard

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[16] The subject of melancholia was also very popular with writers of the time. Robert Burton refers to all the eccentricities of melancholia in his book of 1621 entitled Anatomy of Melancholia.

[17] Carlo Dolci's Self Portrait, Uffizi, Florence, cf. R. Wittkower and M. Wittkower, Born Under Saturn. The Character and Conduct of Artists. A Documented History from Antiquity the French Revolution, New York and London, 1963, fig.72 and Self Portrait on an Easel by Annibale Carracci, 1604, Hermitage, St. Petersburg. For an illustration see Mary Garrard op cit., fig. 321. It is also to be found in the works by Jusepe Ribera and Salvator Rosa.

[18] There are several versions of Guido Reni's David Contemplating the Head of Goliath. The painting in the Uffizi, Florence (inv.no.3830) is catalogued as an authentic Guido Reni and not just a copy of the painting in the Louvre.

[19] For an illustration see D. S. Pepper, Guido Reni. A Complete Catalogue of his Works, Oxford, 1984, no.19.

[20] See Richard E. Spear, The "Divine" Guido Religion, Sex, Money and Art in the World of Guido Reni., New Haven and London, 1997, p.287, fig. 146.

Spears says "David's fancy garb .... makes a mockery of the gruesome circumstances". Yet Reni's painting, like others by Orazio Gentileschi, was instantly admired and copied. It even became so famous that it was included in the poem *La Galleria* by Giambattista Marino (1569-1625), the first line of which reads "Ecco l'Alcide Ebreo" ("Behold the Jewish Hercules") which is the complete antithesis of Reni's ineffectual and delicate-looking David.[21] The painting was bought by Máréchal de Créquy and remained with him until his death in 1638.[22]

In 1630 Reni produced a second, very similar version of his Louvre David Contemplating the Head of Goliath (figure 85) with only some slight modifications.[23] It was rediscovered in a Scottish castle and sold at Sotheby's on 3 April 1985.[24] The painting which is now in a private collection was exhibited at the National Gallery, London from 1986-91. Although Denis Mahon and D. Pepper believe that this is the authentic painting by Guido Reni, Richard Spear thinks that this is a studio version.[25] The original painting can be dated fairly accurately to 1630 from the letter written in July 1631 by Cardinal Bernadino Spada to Queen Maria de' Medici's agent, the Abate di San Luca.[26] We also learn from this letter that Guido considered this later work to be even more beautiful

[21] Richard E. Spear, op cit., p.285.
[22] See Michael Helston, "Some recently cleaned seicento paintings at the National Gallery", The Burlington Magazine, Vol. 128, March 1986, p. 207.
[23] See S. Pepper, op. cit., p.217, no 19B.
[24] Where it fetched £2,200,000.
[25] Richard E. Spear, op. cit., footnote 66, p. 373.
[26] See Michael Helston, op. cit., p.209-10.

than his earlier canvas in the Louvre.[27] This later painting bears witness to how far Guido's style had changed over the intervening twenty five years resulting in a much more unified and harmonious picture. Guido Reni, having moved away from the dramatic lighting and dark tones of Caravaggio, reveals a new lyricism and now re-interprets the same subject into a much softer and more delicate painterly style. The draughtsmanship, too is, tighter and more controlled, especially in the outline of the bare torso, which could also indicate that this is by another hand.

Orazio Gentileschi also painted a partially-clad youth as David on two occasions in about 1610 entitled David in Contemplation after the Defeat of Goliath - both under the influence of Caravaggio and of which there are several copies due to its popularity.[28] One example on canvas is now in the Galleria Spada in Rome, (figure 86)[29] while the other (much smaller version on copper) (figure 87) is in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.[30] Although the scene in both paintings takes place in a landscape under a bright blue sky there are certain differences between the two works. The Rome version has been cut at the bottom so that the figure of David is truncated (the right foot, lower leg and sling are missing). The sword and Goliath's head are placed in a different position from that in the Spada painting. In this painting the head rests to the left side of David

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[27] Published by M.-T. Dirani in Ricerche di Soria dell'Arte (1952-3 p. 89.... "un David fattto nouvamente da Guido Reni, a veduto 200 ducatoni su l'andar del p.mo; ma secondo ch'ei dice, assai più bello."

[28] There is an early seventeenth-century replica in the Archbishop's gallery in Milan, together with a later copy in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig. A third copy appeared in the Berlin art market in 1971.

[29] It was first attributed to Caravaggio by Barbier de Montault in 1870.

[30] The smaller version in Berlin was for a long time attributed to the German artist Adam Elsheimer because it is small and painted on copper with a fine landscape.

so that he cannot possibly see the severed head of Goliath, suggesting that this is yet another study of a youthful semi-nude torso, rather than an overtly religious work. Yet he is obviously contemplative as he looks thoughtfully down and reflects on the enormity of the tyrannicide which he has just committed. In the Berlin painting, on the other hand, the head is placed further forward on the rocky outcrop so that David's glance falls directly onto it. By transposing the position of Goliath's head, Gentileschi has changed the mood and meaning of the image in front of us.

Another example of a languorous, half-naked youth sitting on a rocky ledge resting his arm on the severed head while holding the sling and bloodied long rapier-like sword while he looks silently into the far distance, is the slightly damaged canvas by an unknown seventeenth-century painter (figure 88) hanging in a corridor at Temple Newsam House near Leeds in Yorkshire.[31] It has all the freshness, clarity and softness of the pink and white flesh tones which we associate with the Bolognese School rather than the darker work by Caravaggio and which may seem almost obscene to twentieth-century eyes in its pose and nakedness. These innovative paintings of David from the seventeenth century express melancholia in its deepest sense, so that in all these introspective Davids there is a deliberate move away from the traditional theological understanding of David as a Christ figure overcoming Satan or of Humility slaying Pride.

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[31] I have been in touch with the Curator of Temple Newsam House who was unfortunately unable to shed any light on the provence of this picture. However, he kindly gave me permission to photograph it for which I am grateful.

The influence of both Guido Reni and Caravaggio was felt by French artists working in Rome. The canvas of <u>David holding the Head of Goliath</u> in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Bordeaux by Aubin Vouet (1595-1641) (the younger brother of the better-known Simon Vouet) executed probably during his Roman period[32] or on his return to Paris in 1624. [33]   It shows not only an awareness of Caravaggio's half-length compositions of young men and an understanding of his use of chiaroscuro, with the V shaped area of light behind David, treatment of the nude torso and his use of the distinctive red and white drapery around his midriff, but also a knowledge of Guido's Louvre painting of David with his plumed beret as he glances down deep in thought, his head turned away from that of Goliath.

Nicolas Poussin combines classical and traditional High Renaissance and Baroque features in his painting entitled <u>The Triumph of David,</u> c. 1630 (Museo del Prado, Madrid) (figure 89) turning it into an extraordinary intellectual picture. The work is both a victorious and triumphal portrayal while at the same time also being a contemplative image. Bellori mentions it in his *Nota delli Musei* as belonging to a Monsignor Girolamo Casanate and later in his *Vite* of 1672 he describes it in detail as being still in the Monsignor's possession.[34]   Poussin has absorbed much from his Roman contemporaries. This is clearly to be seen in his figure of David who closely resembles those half-naked young men made popular in the paintings of Caravaggio and his followers. He turns and stares at

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[32] He is documented as having been in Rome in 1620 and 1621.

[33] For an illustration see <u>Le Revue du Louvre et des Musées de France</u>, vol. 36, 1986, no. 6, p. 438.

[34] Giovanni Pietro Bellori, <u>Le Vite de'pittori,scultori et architetti moderni</u> ..., Rome 1672., pp. 451-2.

the head and armour of Goliath hanging on the wall to the right while the semi-nude winged figure of Victory, accompanied by three putti, takes off the crown of oak leaves and is about to replace it with a golden crown held by the putto on the left.[35] Bellori informs us that the laurel crown symbolises David's victory over Goliath and that the golden crown refers to his future kingship. There are other allusions to David, including the aeolian harp which refers to his skills as the composer of the psalms. There is a tragic poetic melancholy pervading this picture. Is David musing and pondering "on the fragility of life itself" as suggested by Richard Verdi?[36] This might indeed be the case because the seventeenth century was a time of reflection when men contemplated the transience of life and artists depicted themes relating to it.

This kind of contemplative representation is also to be found in seventeenth-century sculpture. We can cite the small bronze statue of David by the Florentine sculptor, Giovanni Francesco Susini (c.1575-1653) (figure 90) clasping a huge sword sitting in deep reflective mood staring at the head of Goliath.[37] This thirty centimetre high bronze, executed c.1625-30, is now part of the Princely Collections of Liechtenstein and is the only known bronze cast of the composition. Prince Karl Eusebius (1611-84) of Liechtenstein travelled to Florence in 1636 and commissioned works directly from Giovanni Francesco

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[35] Taken from the sculptural figure on the base of a relief in the Doria-Pamphilij Collection in Rome.

[36] See Richard Verdi, Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665, Royal Academy exhibition catalogue, 1995, London, pp. 175/176.

[37] See John T. Spike, "Liechtenstein: The Princely Collections, Vaduz", Apollo Magazine, Vol. 123, January 1986, p. 7, ill. 123.

Susini.[38] It is possible that this is one of those pieces. Susini takes up the tradition set by his Florentine predecessors in depicting David. Whereas the earlier examples by Michelangelo and Donatello did little to attempt to follow the biblical narrative of David, Susini, while showing David partially nude in line with contemporary taste, has incorporated the correct biblical details - the gigantic sword, the severed head, the shepherd's pouch and the sling on which David rests his foot.

This is not the only contemplative <u>David</u> by Susini. Another standing naked statue of the young warrior with the decapitated head of Goliath appeared on the art market recently.[39]

So far we have only considered a range of images of Judith and David from France and Italy. Northern artists did not paint or sculpt this aspect of the these two heroes so that portrayals of meditation became exclusively a Mediterranean speciality. This may be because painters from the North chose to adhere as closely as possible to the text when illustrating scenes from the Bible, whereas the Italian artists made a point of painting contemplative biblical figures. As we know, these scenes of David gazing proudly on the head of Goliath or looking into the far distance deep in thought are completely imaginary and have no biblical foundation whatsoever. The Bible states that after David cut

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[38] Dr. Olga Raggio's research has confirmed this. See <u>Apollo Magazine,</u> Vol. 123. January 1986, p. 8.

[39] See Pratesi, 1993, ill 616. There is also a replica of this statue in ivory, attributed to Balthasar Stockamer in the Museo degli Argenti in the Palazzo Pitti in Florence. I am grateful to Béatrice Capaul and Dr. Wieczorek of the Liechtenstein Gallery for providing me with further information about the second standing David and for supplying coloured negatives of the Susini in their collection.

off the head he took it to Jerusalem (I Samuel 17:54) and then to Saul (I Samuel 17:57). It does not recount any tales of him engaging in moments of introspection whilst languishing in the countryside before returning. Nor does the Apocrypha give any account of Judith lingering at the scene of her crime while she considers the head of Holofernes. In these representations, David is never in a hurry to rush back to either Jerusalem or to Saul with the head.

However, occasionally Judith might appear in a contemplative mood in Northern art but only in those half or three-quarter length paintings where she holds the severed head and sword. In most of these paintings Judith confronts the viewer directly in a triumphant and seductive manner (Lucas Cranach the Elder has several versions of Judith in this pose), but there are times when Judith looks thoughtfully away. Both the German painter Georg Pencz (c.1500-1550) and the Dutchman Lambert Sustris (1515/20 - after 1580) executed similar pictures of pensive and sensuous Judiths with the Head of Holofernes, such as the panel in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich (figure 91) dated 1531 and in Hatchlands Park, National Trust, Surrey respectively where both show a certain amount of introspection. These paintings are by Northern masters but they may both have been inspired by Italian models, especially Venetian ones, because the Munich panel was painted immediately after the first of the two visits[40] made by Pencz to Italy in 1531 and Lambert Sustris too follows and copies Venetian examples because we must not forget that he was a pupil of Titian in Venice.[41]

[40] His second visit to Italy took place in 1542.
[41] See Catalogue of Paintings Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1960, p. 296.

The eighteenth century, as we have already observed, was a period when painting no longer conformed to religious beliefs; art became decorative, the rococo style flourished and out went the biblical narratives of David and Goliath and Judith and Holofernes especially in France and Germany where these were replaced by events from mythology and scenes of shepherds and shepherdesses, followed by a new robust realism recording everyday objects and life, only to be superseded by neo-classicism with its history paintings and portraits.

However, Italy still clung to its long established tradition of biblical themes. The Church, especially in Venice under the auspices of the Doge, and some private patrons continued to commission images of David and Judith, including examples of the contemplative David. An impressive example is the exotically turbaned marble statue of <u>David</u>, 1743, sculpted by Giovanni Marchiori as part of the improvements for the interior of the church of San Rocco.[42]

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[42] Jane Martineau and Andrew Robison, op. cit., fig. 6.

Chapter 8

The Nude or Semi-Clothed Image

a) Judith

I shall now discuss those images of Judith and David where the artist, engraver or sculptor depicts either of these two protagonists completely naked or only partially clothed, whilst standing symbolically with the head of either Holofernes or Goliath or engaging in slaying their opponents.

In previous chapters we saw how Judith captivated Holofernes by her good looks and how this, together with her cunning, caused his downfall. In the medieval period depictions of her beauty did not involve nudity and artists showed her as the feminine and virtuous heroine, so that representations of Judith in the nude are rare before the fifteenth century.

The story, as we have noted, does, however, contain the episode which gave artists the opportunity to depict her naturally in the nude. It will be recalled that having taken off her sack-cloth and her widow's dress she "bathed all over with water" (Judith 10:3). (Idiosyncratically the authors of the narrative, ignored the fact that there was no water in Bethulia because the Assyrians on Holofernes' orders had cut off the water supply to the town.) This event, which entails a certain amount of nudity, is not often depicted but it does appear in one of the stained glass roundels illustrating the story of Judith in the Sainte Chapelle in

Paris (c.1248) which should be mentioned here in this context.[1] Here Judith sits or stands waist deep in the water which flows freely over her body, for although she appears as if there may be a veil over her nudity, the writers of the 1959 report of the windows of the Sainte-Chapelle describe her as nude. Her faithful maid stands in attendance with Judith's robe over her arm like in a baptismal scene. Margarita Stocker therefore interprets this episode as "an image of baptism", whereas I think that this roundel should be considered as part of the narrative cycle of some forty events from the life of Judith.[2] We know that Judith is bathing because the French inscription (this in itself is unusual) reads CI:BAINIE JUDI (here Judith is bathing).

It seems strange that this part of the Judith story which could be such a godsend for artists wanting an excuse to paint religious personages in the nude under the sanction of the Bible is missing in biblical iconography. One would have thought that seventeenth-century painters such as Rubens, Rembrandt, Artemisia Gentileschi and others who painted pictures of Susanna and the Elders and Bathsheba in different states of nakedness would have welcomed this scene. However this was not the case, unless, of course, some of the portrayals of so-called Bathsheba (especially those which do not depict a palace balcony or terrace in the distance on which we can see David standing), are really illustrations of Judith bathing with her maid assisting in her toilette. This suggestion is perhaps not too far-fetched when considering that the painting entitled <u>Bathsheba at her</u>

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[1] Marcel Aubert, Louis Grodecki, Jean Lafond, Jean Verrier, op. cit., D-126, p.247.
[2] Margarita Stocker, op. cit. p. 11.

Toilette, c. 1637 in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg attributed by Hofstede de Groot[3] to Rembrandt is thought by E. Fechner to represent Judith before the Mirror.[4] The panel which is weak in execution and composition is probably not by Rembrandt but some minor Dutch artist working in his style.[5] The Bathsheba/Judith analysis becomes even more interesting if Bathsheba is regarded as yet another female temptress, but this is, of course open to conjecture and is not part of this dissertation.

Let us now return to representations of nude women in religious art for although it was exceptional to see Judith unclothed, naked women were already being depicted from medieval times. Women appear nude as Eve in medieval cathedral art, as the naked figures on their way to Hell and in scenes of the Last Judgement and Christ in Limbo. Nude women are represented as the Vice *Luxuria* (Lechary) who was often portrayed as a young naked woman either riding a ram, stag or goat who could be considered as the direct descendant of Judith if we are to consider *Luxuria*, like Judith as a figure of allurement, luxury, beauty and temptation. *Luxuria* was a frequent subject in France, for instance the thirteenth-century sculpture (riding a goat), at Cathedral of Auxerre (figure 92) and in England on a late fifteenth-century misericord at Holy Trinity Church, Stratford upon Avon, (riding a stag).[6]

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[3] Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the most eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century, Vol. VI: Rembrandt, London 1916, no 310.

[4] F. Fechner, Rembrandt, Moscow, 1964.

[5] K. Bauch, Rembrandt Gemälde, Berlin, 1966, p.518, suggests this might be by F. Bol.

[6] R. Hamann, "The Girl and the Ram", The Burlington Magazine, LX,1932, 91ff.

It was Northern artists of the Renaissance such as Hans Baldung Grien, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Jan Massys, Jan Sanders van Hemessen and others who began painting Judith without (or with very few) clothes, giving rise to the notion that something sexual had occurred in the tent of Holofernes in contrast to the biblical account where the emphasis is on her virtuous nature. Why should these north European artists and sculptors (because they too were not immune to this trend) suddenly begin to paint and sculpt the pious widow as sexually provocative and naked? There are, I think, four aspects to be considered in this issue, apart from the most obvious reason that it gave artists sculptors and engravers the opportunity to paint, draw, sculpt or engrave the bare female body in all its beauty and voluptuousness. The first is the rather striking and natural transformation of the lecherous figure *Luxuria*, as indicated above, into that of the seductive Judith and as Margaret Miles[7] says female nakedness came to represent "sin, sexual lust and dangerous evil. In depictions of the naked female body, interest in active religious engagement, exercise and struggle is often subordinated to, or in tension with, the female body as spectacle". The story of Judith does embody all these features of struggle and spectacle which resulted in triumph.

The second point is that artists now wanted to stress the power of seduction which women can exercise over men by emphasising Judith's most seductive asset (her body) and by portraying her as alluringly and temptingly as

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[7] Margaret Miles, Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West, Boston, 1989.

possible in order to make men aware of the threat which women hold over them - both as a temptress and as a deceiver.[8] In this way Judith is often associated with Eve and takes on her characteristics. Instead of proffering an apple temptingly to Adam and which led to the Fall of Man, displays her rounded bosoms which ensnared and eventually led to the demise of Holofernes. It therefore comes as no surprise that the exhibition of bare breasts or the single breast in these Judith images can be equated in art, especially during the sixteenth century, with Eve's apple, and her nakedness with the Fall. This association becomes obvious if we analyse the painting by Lucas Cranach entitled Caritas, Weimar, Schlossmuseum).[9] (This type of painting is, of course, the complete opposite to those depicting Eve's virtue and goodness in which she prefigures the Virgin Mary.[10])

Thirdly these northern artists of the fifteenth and sixteen centuries were attracted to the idea of portraying, as part of *Weibermacht* (might of women), foolish men who were completely besotted or seduced by strong and powerful biblical and historical women. Men who fell for a woman's beauty only to lose control of their emotions and possibly their strength and their heads. Sometimes artists would produce these as part of a series (often prints) to demonstrate the tricks women could play on men. Among others they would include Eve giving

[8] For modern psychological analysis of masculine fear of women, see especially Karen Horney, " The dread of Women, Observations on a Specific Difference in the Dread Felt by Men and by Women respectively for the Opposite Sex", International Journal of Psychoanalysis 13, no. 3, July 1932, pp. 348-60 and Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise, New York, 1976, pp. 124-54.
[9] See Max J. Friedländer and Jacob Rosenberg, Die Gemälde von Lucas Cranach, Berlin, 1932 no. 326 and the one in Hamburg (cat. 1930, no. 299).
[10] We have already looked at this ambiguous aspect of Judith's character in Chapter 2.

the apple to Adam, Samson and Delilah, the woman inducing Solomon to adore strange gods, Aristotle and Phyllis, Virgil suspended in a Basket and Judith and Holofernes. At Vittskövle Castle in Skåne, Sweden, for example, sacred and profane images are shown alongside each other. Judith is portrayed together with Virgil in a Basket in these sixteenth-century wall paintings.

The fourth reason is that these images were also intended as a more sinister warning to men against women - their capacity to castrate and murder (not by their strength alone but by other more subtle methods). As Susan Smith has pointed out artists also wanted to depict Judith as "the classic type of seductress who follows a sexual act by murder."[11] Judith, as we know from the Apocryphal story, does not commit any sexual act with Holofernes but this was often added and hinted at in plays and operas to heighten the sexual tension of the plot. This threatening theme became current in art from the fourteenth-century onwards. Susan Smith illustrates this with an example from a *Minneskästchen* (early fifteenth century) which shows Judith killing Holofernes alongside "a lady plucking phalluses from a tree while her lover looks on".[12]

I shall now look a little closer at of some of these images: those which I have called the threatening or castrating interpretations which can be read as symbolising the male fear of castration not by actually attacking the sexual organs but by cutting off its substitute instead, in this case the head, (a Freudian

[11] Susan L. Smith "To Woman's Wiles I Fell": The Power of Women Topos and the Development of Medieval Secular Art. Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1978 pp. 21-22.

[12] Susan L. Smith op. cit., passim....

concept). The abundance of paintings of Salome, Judith and David with decapitated heads, makes us aware of the importance of this theme. We find that this becomes even more threatening when it is a woman who is cast in the role of the aggressor. To the above list we can also add the names of other deceitful or murderous women - Delilah, Esther, Tamar and Jael. In addition, one must not forget that the hero of male masochism in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus im Pelz* (translated by J. Brownell in 1931 as *Venus in Furs*) has a fantasy where he imagines that he is Holofernes, victimised by the sensual Judith.[13]

In Italy during the Renaissance, artists continue to depict Judith as the chaste and beautiful heroine, so that there are only a few isolated instances of Judith appearing in the nude. According to Bialostocki, the Italian sculptor Belluno was the first to show her naked, but sadly this bronze statuette which was in the Berlin Museum was lost during the Second World War.[14] This was then followed by the print by Nicoletto Rosex da Modena (c. 1500-1505) of a naked Judith with sword and decapitated head in a classical setting of full and broken columns bearing little resemblance to anything in the biblical text, but personifying female sexuality over masculine brutality. Later Rosso Fiorentino, (1494-1540) executed a drawing, (Los Angeles County Museum of Art) for which there is no known painting, of two nude women. This is an extraordinary

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[13] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Venus in Furs, English trans., London,1969, pp. 21-22.
[14] Bialostocki op. cit., p. 124.

drawing in which both women are naked - the old maid with sagging skin and sinuous muscles in contrast to her young plump mistress.[15]

Hans Baldung Grien in his Judith of 1525 (Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg), depicts her naked with her legs crossed as an Eve prototype because she is portrayed in this way in church sculpture (for example the thirteenth-century capital of Eve at Vézelay) and as "an image of female allurement, but also deception", while glancing demurely down.[16] Another intriguing suggestion first mooted by Evers and then taken up by Madyln Millner Kahr while discussing Rubens' oil sketch of Samson and Delilah of 1609-10 in the Cincinnati Art Museum is that the crossed legs in the painting are a pun on the German word "verraten".[17] I think that the verb "verraten" meaning to double cross and in its intransitive state to mean "betray" applies equally well to the Baldung Judith because in her case it refers to both the double crossing and betrayal of the gullible and naive Holofernes.[18] The way in which Judith holds the dagger - instrument of castration - in one hand while she clutches the curls of Holofernes with the other, is synonymous with her evil intentions - so much so that Charles Talbot connects this not only with Eve and Venus as a seducer of men but also and with Dürer's winged figure of Nemesis.[19]

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[15] E A. Carroll, "A Drawing by Rosso Fiorentino of Judith and Holofernes", Los Angeles County Museum of Art Bulletin, XXIV, 1978, pp. 25-49.
[16] Mary D. Garrard, op cit., p. 296.
[17] Evers, 1943, p. 143.
[18] Madyln Millner Kahr, Chapter 7, "Delilah", Feminism and Art History - Questioning the Litany, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, New York, 1982, p.135.
[19] Charles W. Talbot in James H. Marrow and Alan Shestack, eds. 1981, Hans Baldung Grien, Prints and Drawings with Three Essays on Baldung and Art, Exhibition Catalogue, National Gallery of Washington, pp.28-31.

This Judith with her long flowing tresses, rounded belly and small breasts would have been considered seductive in the eyes of Baldung's contemporaries.

In the panel painting entitled <u>Judith</u> by Lucas Cranach the Elder of 1537[20] we are aware of a similar castration image where our beautiful heroine is bare except for a thin veil lightly covering her body, but in no way concealing, her feminine charms. Cranach's Judith carries the severed head in one hand while delicately holding a huge sword with her thumb and forefinger on the hilt leaving us in little doubt that this outsize weapon should be interpreted, not just as an instrument of castration, but also as the castrated penis itself.

In this category of nudes I also want to include the painting of Judith by Jan Massys (c.1509-c.1575) in the Louvre, Paris, (figure 93) which could have been included in the chapter on triumphant and heroic images (Chapter 6) because like the Goltzius it is also a portrayal of an overtly sensuous woman holding up the severed head baring her breasts to the onlooker. Jan Massys painted several versions of this panel with slight variations.[21] Unlike so many other painters Massys also manages to convey, by narrowing her eyes, the cunning and deceitful aspect of her character.

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[20] This painting which was originally in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden is now destroyed.

[21] There are several very similar versions of Judith by Jan Massys
- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- National Museum of Ottawa
- Koninklijk Museum, Antwerpen.

It seems extraordinary to us that artists should go to such lengths to show us Judith in the nude in order to make it clear to the viewer that it was through her female sexuality that she succeeded in killing Holofernes. The biblical text informs us quite specifically that before she went to the camp of the Assyrians she bathed, anointed her body with rich perfume, dressed herself in her best clothes which she used to wear on joyous occasions when her husband was alive, put on a tiara, anklets, bracelets, rings and ear-rings (Judith 10:3-4) deliberately making herself as sexually tempting as possible to men. At no time does the devout and chaste widow remove her clothes. In fact, in the Book of Judith we learn that she saves her people by her bravery, her faith in God, her attractiveness, her wit and by the practical preparations which she had made so that she and her servant could continue to observe their Jewish dietary laws.

Not only did Northern artists paint Judith in the nude, but sculptors too would occasionally portray her in this way. Conrad Meit of Worms (1475-c.1545) executed a small highly erotic painted alabaster statue of Judith completely naked in about 1520 where she holds an enormous sword in one hand. She gazes almost affectionately down at the bearded head of Holofernes which rests on a plinth beside her. This statue, now in the Bayerisches National Museum in Munich, with its directly intended sexual implications and small firm breasts, wide hips and dimpled flesh conforms to standards of beauty in sixteenth-century Germany.

As part of the theme of *Weibermacht*, Netherlandish and German artists and engravers also went to considerable lengths to make her as powerful-looking as possible stressing her physical strength and sexual prowess.[22] This type is brilliantly illustrated in the painting by Jan Sanders van Hemessen, in his portrayal of Judith, now in the Art Institute of Chicago, painted in about 1540, (figure 94) where he presents a monumental naked female figure of unnatural muscular strength still brandishing her sword even after she has severed the head of Holofernes. It is an aggressive painting which highlights the open sexuality of Judith, as well as being a homage to the classical art of the High Renaissance of Michelangelo whose influence was then being brought to the Netherlands from Italy. The dramatic lighting and the precisely rendered textures of her flesh and plaited hair, in this panel, also heighten the power of the composition intended to suggest the seductive wiles which Judith (or so van Hemessen's contemporaries liked to think) used to disarm her foe.

In fact Van Hemessen takes the erotic symbolism in this painting still further because, not only does he represent Judith as a "femme forte", but he emphasises that the severed head on the left should be read as a substitute for the castrated penis. He does this by painting Holofernes' nose like an erect penis as an additional gesture intended to highlight Judith's sexuality. Such a secret device to heighten the sexual emphasis of the painting was common in Germany. Bo Lagercrantz confirms this when he suggests that Cranach uses the upturned

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[22] Ebria Feinblatt, "Two Prints by Lucas van Leyden", "Los Angeles Museum of Art Bulletin XVII, 1965 discusses some *Weibermacht* cycles; see also Jane Campbell Hutchison, "The Housebook Master and the Folly of the Wise Man", The Art Bulletin 48, 1966, pp. 73-78.

toe of Eve as a penis symbol in the painting of The Fall of Man (Adam and Eve) (figure 95) in the Östergötlands länsmuseum in Linköping, Sweden.[23]

The strength and courage which we associate with Judith is also represented in an unusual painting on oak in the National Gallery, London, entitled, Judith with the Infant Hercules by the Master of the Mansi Magdalene, (figure 96) probably painted 1525-30.[24] This picture represents a naked Judith, (except for some flimsy drapery), holding the head and sword of Holofernes, together with a young Hercules clasping two serpents with peacock crowns. The subject is certainly strange in that it combines the Old Testament with Greek mythology. Is the artist comparing the power and bravery of the naked Hercules who showed his prowess while still a baby by strangling the two snakes sent by Juno (whose attribute was a peacock) to kill him in his cradle with that of Judith? Certainly his greatest exploits (especially The Twelve Labours of Hercules) are recognised as feats of strength. These labours were also (like Judith's) a conquest over death and destruction. It should also not be forgotten that Hercules was also highly regarded in Rome as a defender against evil and that the Stoic philosophers admired him. In Geoffrey Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales* Hercules is mentioned with other famous men, Adam, Samson and Holofernes, who fell or died by the hand of a woman.[25] Later in some

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[23] I am grateful to Elisabeth Johnsson, the Curator, for providing me with copies of newspaper articles from 1964 and 1988, together with a copy of Bo Lagercrantz's manuscript Lucas Cranach och Kärleken.

[24] Master of the Mansi was an anonymous Netherlandish painter, active between 1510 and 1530 in Antwerp who worked in the style of Quinten Massys (1465/66-1530). Named after a painting which was in the Marchese Giovanni Battista Mansi Collection in Lucca and which is now in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

[25] Geoffrey Chaucer, The Monk's Tale, op. cit, pp.186-214.

countries Hercules was also linked with Christian saints and, like Judith who was transformed into the Christian figure of Virtue, he came to represent Fortitude. (Nicola Pisano did just that on the pulpit in the Baptistery of Pisa Cathedral, signed and dated 1260 where he transformed a nude figure of Hercules into that of Christian Fortitude).

After the Council of Trent Edict (1546) which forbade the depiction of 'licentious nudes', artists had to disguise nudity under the veil of biblical or historical narratives. So one can say that the biblical text becomes a pre-text, a means to explore powerful themes of violence and sexuality under the protection of scriptural sanction. One might instance the recurring pictures by late Renaissance and Baroque painters of Bathsheba, Susanna, Esther, Potiphar's wife, Lot's daughters and penitent Magdalenes, all used as a means to portray female nudity or semi-nudity under the ethical protection of the Bible. Yet, having said that, Italian artists of the Renaissance do not use this licence to indulge in scenes of nudity of Judith. Most depict her well dressed, as the elegant widow of Bethulia and as the eternally feminine Judith. Only occasionally will a Renaissance or Mannerist artist be tempted to display openly an erect nipple as, for example, in the Beccafumi painting of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> in the Wallace Collection., London.

Baroque artists in Italy now also began to combine the erotic and the awesome elements which manifest themselves in the works of sixteenth-century Northern artists while still managing to keep up a certain pretence of decency by

making sure that Judith is beautifully and sumptuously dressed as described in the biblical story and thereby adhering to the Edict as far as possible. There are, nevertheless, some exceptions by artists who were commissioned privately for slightly more riqué works. Giovanni Baglione (1571-1644) has followed the preferences of his patron, Cardinal Scipione Borghese, and made his painting of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> of 1608 now in the Galleria Borghese, Rome, (figure 97) as seductive as possible, depicting an erotic Judith with her bare breasts fully exposed to the viewer.

The Paduan artist Girolamo Forabosco (1604/4-1678) whose work was influenced by the Venetians and especially Titian and Lorenzo Lotto, also produced a sensual painting of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u> in the collection of Mr and Mrs Paul H. Ganz in New York. His heroine becomes a sensuous *femme forte*, whose physical exertions have caused her right bosom to spring enticingly from her bodice.[26] Forabosco places this formidable woman in a frontal portrait stance holding the head and sword of Holofernes (the tents of his camp are visible on the left). Her maid is shown here as an ugly toothless old hag, no doubt as a contrast to the good looks and youthfulness of Judith, on the right.

Rubens, in his panel painting of <u>Judith with the Head of Holofernes</u>, painted in Antwerp in about 1616 and now in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum

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[26] <u>A Portrait of a Young Woman</u> with the same features as Judith was acquired by the Detroit Institute of Arts in 1926. It is now catalogued as by Forabosco.

in Braunschweig, (figure 73) has moved away from the unremitting violence of his <u>Judith Beheading Holofernes</u>, known as "The Great Judith" painted during his youth and which we have already examined under the chapter dealing with the scenes of decapitation. Like Forabosco he gives us a sensuous heroine, stimulating the onlooker with her almost masculine strength, her direct gaze and bare breasts. Although we are used to seeing naked German and Flemish women as we have just discussed above, in the guise of Judith, seventeenth-century artists do not, on the whole, resort to this kind of exposure. Rubens, famed for his Junoesque women, is one of the few painters of the Baroque who does so, but perhaps as a Fleming, he adheres to the Northern and Flemish tradition of nude or partially-clad Judiths?

Instead we see that the majority of Italian artists of this period preferred to use their imaginative and artistic skills to make her appear as erotic and provocative as possible without removing her clothing. In the canvas painted in the 1640s, which is now in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm, Bernardo Cavallino (1622-1654), the Neapolitan painter, has done full justice to his local beauty posing as Judith who has just ensnared Holofernes by her languid sensuality (figure 98). Cavallino draws our attention to her half-open lips, liquidly painted in vermilion, and the elongated fingers placed gently and caressingly over the decapitated head of Holofernes. She stares out at the spectator, exercising her seductive powers as if he were Holofernes and dominates the viewer in the same way that Judith did when she captivated the

Assyrian general.

With the resurgence of history painting during the first half of the nineteenth century it may come as something of a surprise to us that there are only a few isolated pictures of Judith by French artists during this period. With so many of the academic painters executing religious and mythological works we would expect to find erotic portrayals of Judith in a state of *déshabille.*

Emile-Jean Horace Vernet (1781-1863) has left us a magnificent painting of <u>Judith and Holofernes</u> in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Pau where Judith is decorously clothed and about to decapitate the unsuspecting Holofernes who slumbers peacefully on the bed beside her. However, in Vernet's sketch for the face and shoulders of Judith for the Pau painting which is now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, signed and dated "Rome 1830", Judith is shown as nude with her right breast fully exposed, while her left arm covers her right breast. Did Vernet paint this nude with its highly finished enamel-like flesh tones for his own amusement and enjoyment, as a portrait study of a Roman courtesan, or as a preliminary sketch for a large scale Judith painting? If it was for a Judith, had he originally intended to portray her in an erotic manner?

Following the Freudian Revolution in Austria at the beginning of our own century, we find a new sexual image of Judith emerging in line with men's anxious fantasies of the seductive powers of women. In the paintings by Gustave Klimt of 1901 and 1909, Judith is no longer the paragon of virtue, strength and

courage, but is now shown as a dangerous and sexually aroused *femme fatale*. In the first painting of Judith I in the Österreichische Galerie, Vienna, (figure 99) he presents an openly erotic woman with half-closed eyes and parted red lips in an almost total reversal of her religious role in scripture as a servant of the God of Israel in salvation history. It was a portrayal which the Austrians were convinced represented Salome because in Klimt's interpretation Judith has become an embodiment of voracious sexuality, so much so that the critics in Vienna at that time were thrilled and excited by its undisguised decadence. However, there would appear to be no doubt about the heroine's identity because Klimt has designed a gold frame bearing the title "Judith und Holofernes". He had also cleverly included some archaeological details in the form of stylised mountains, fig trees and grape vines from the Assyrian Palace relief of Sennacharib at Ninevah (705-681BC), in order to give it biblical credence.[27] Perhaps Klimt added these details and inscription to deflect contemporary thoughts away from the real identity of the woman. It is strange that no-one noticed the strong resemblance between this Judith and his later portrait of Adele Bloch Bauer (c.1907), the rich Jewess who was Klimt's mistress for twelve years until Dr. Salomon Grimberg, the American psychiatrist, pointed it out recently. Even more surprising is the fact that her husband made no comment when the painting was first exhibited, especially as she is wearing the wide choker studded with jewels which he had given her.

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[27] Alessandra Comini, Gustav Klimt, London, 1975, p.23.

In the second life-size rendering, <u>Judith II</u> (Galleria d'Arte Moderna (Ca' Pesaro), Venice), (figure 100) we are made aware of the equally lustful and rapacious woman (Freud's "castrating" and devouring female) clawing at her thigh while depositing the head of Holofernes by his hair in a bag, with an expression of dreamy hedonistic rapture. In both these pictures Judith has become a sexually abandoned seductress.

The leading German Impressionist artist Max Liebermann (1847-1935) takes the erotic sexual theme still further in his painting of <u>Judith and Holofernes</u> because he portrays both Judith and Holofernes completely naked lying on a bed, with Judith attempting to claw out Holofernes' eyes, so that the portrayal becomes one of rape. Judith, as we know, was chaste and left the tent unsullied but Liebermann was probably depicting the variation of the tale which was popular with librettists and composers at the turn of the century, that Judith was infatuated with Holofernes even before she met him and that she was therefore asking to be raped.[28] The result of this was that she then killed Holofernes after making love to him, as in Richard Wetz's opera *Judith*.[29]

b) David

The semi-clothed or nude images of David are those which leave the viewer in no doubt that the artist or sculptor is trying to depict a homo-erotic David. This tendency, which became paramount during the Renaissance and

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[28] There are approximately thirty "Judith" operas and about forty "Judith" oratorios.
[29] Richard Wetz (1875-1935) was a German composer.

Baroque periods, was begun by Donatello in his nude bronze statue of <u>David</u> executed c.1446-c.1460 (figure 20) which is now in the Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence.

This statue which represents victory over adversity is both revolutionary in that it was one of the first nude statues in the round since antiquity. It is also the first time that the biblical hero David had been portrayed in this way. The biblical text does not tell us what David was wearing - perhaps a tunic or vest or loin cloth -when he marched out to confront Goliath. We only know that he took off the implements of war given to him by Saul. Would he have approached the giant in the nude? While the statue is openly sensuous with its gleaming polished surface it also embodies many facets of David's character especially that of vulnerability and innocence, in a similar way to the early images of Judith.

However, possibly the most famous nude statue of <u>David</u> is that by Michelangelo (figure 22), (Accademia, Florence). It was commissioned by the *operati* of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence and the contract was signed on 16 August 1501. It was described in the official commission *as "homo ex marmore vocato Davit male abbozatum et supini"* ("a man out of marble called David badly blocked out and supine"), because it had already been begun and abandoned by Agostino Duccio in 1464 and by Antonio Rossellino in 1476. Michelangelo set to work on it straight away and, as Vasari tells us, worked on the statue ceaselessly

in the Office of Works of the church of Santa Maria del Fiore, behind a partition, letting no-one see it until it was finished.[30]

Unlike Donatello, Michelangelo chooses to depict the moment before the battle. Why did Michelangelo choose to portray David in this way? The first reason is that Michelangelo was compelled to use a narrow shallow block of marble which had already been chosen for him so that he was restricted in what he could actually do with the block. Secondly the simplest shape to sculpt would have been that of a standing figure in the antique style of the kind which had already been sculpted in Central Italy as part of the classical revival of Graeco-Roman sculpture beginning with Nicola Pisano's statue of Fortitude. There is a very close similarity between this and Michelangelo's David. The position of the legs, the weight on the right leg in a kind of *contrapposto* position gives an impression of movement. Michelangelo's David is geared up to the task ahead. He furrows his brow and anxiously looks over his left shoulder. He pauses and sizing up the enemy is ready to step forward off the base, his left leg and toe over the edge of the ground on which he stands. This statue, unlike the Verrocchio, but like the Donatello (Bargello), is completely nude, the muscles of his torso are taut and tense, the right hand greatly exaggerated in size, holding a stone, because it is here that David's strength lay and it is with this hand that the task is accomplished. As Howard Hibbard suggests "this probably illustrates the appellation of the *manu fortis* that was commonly applied to David in the Middle

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[30] Giorgio Vasari, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 338.

Ages.[31] The other hand is raised touching the end of the sling. How far is this statue intended to be erotic or sensuous? How far can we associate it as a figure of courage - a kind of Hercules in the antique sense? Certainly the figure is intended to be one of bravery and to act as a symbol for the city of Florence. Vasari informs us that the wax model which Michelangelo made was "intended as a symbol of liberty for the Palace, signifying that just as David had protected his people and governed them justly, so whoever ruled Florence should vigorously defend the city and govern it with justice".[32] The statue was erected outside the Palazzo Vecchio in 1504.[33]

We are also told by Vasari that Michelangelo was given a commission in 1502 for another statue of David by the Frenchman Pierre de Rohan, Charles VIII's general, who had taken over the Palazzo Medici in 1494.[34] He had seen Donatello's statue of David in the courtyard of the palace and had asked for a copy. The contract was signed on 12 August 1502. Although this final statue is now lost we can obtain some idea of Michelangelo's design from a drawing of 1502 in the Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, which shows a design for this statue, together with a drawing of the right arm of the marble statue of David.[35] From this drawing we can see how close it was to the traditional Florentine type of

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[31] Howard Hibbard, Michelangelo, Penguin Books, London, 1978, pp.56-57.

[32] Georgio Vasari, op. cit., Vol. I, p.338.

[33] The statue was moved from there in 1873 to the Accademia in Florence and a copy was put outside the Palazzo Vecchia in 1910.

[34] A small nude statue of David in the Louvre, Paris is remarkably close to Donatello's bronze David and may be connected with the commission for Pierre de Rohan. See R. Wittkower, Michelangelo, op., cit., p.223.

[35] This statue was sent to France in 1508 via Leghorn, but nothing has been heard of it for over three hundred years.

David. Like the Donatello, it would have been nude and wearing some kind of head-gear, with one leg protruding forward and with the severed head of Goliath lying at its feet. This drawing has an inscription as follows:-

> *Davicte cholla fromba*
>
> *e io chollarcho*
>
> *- Michelagniolo.*
>
> (Translation: David with the sling and I with the bow -
>
> Michelangelo.)

Charles Seymour has suggested that this refers to Michelangelo's running drill which worked on a bow. In my opinion, it is possible that Michelangelo added these words to his drawing when he saw that he had mastered this commission which had defeated others and thereby linking his own victory with that of David?

Another much more sensual, emphatic and energetic sculpture than the Michelangelo, is the partially nude life-size marble statue of David by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (figure 101) which was commissioned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese in 1623 and which is still in the Palazzo Borghese in Rome for which it was intended. Unlike Michelangelo's David which is classical and static, Bernini chooses to portray the most dramatic moment just before David actually releases the stone from his sling at his opponent.

The sculpture which is a *tour de force*, completed as Baldinucci tells us, in just seven months, is sculpted from blue specked Carrara marble.[36] Bernini's David is sensuous, not just in the smoothness of the surface of the marble, the contrasts between the hard contours of the bone structure and muscles but in the softness and pliable quality of the upper arms and torso. Even more tantalising and erotic is the sweep of the loin cloth slipping slowly from his body to reveal a small area of youthful curly pubic hair and mere outline of his male organs. This David with its tactile qualities would have been much admired by the friends of Cardinale Scipione Borghese who revelled in erotic and risqué works of art which were considered perfectly respectable because they were executed under biblical sanction. Bernini, a devout Jesuit, while wishing to please his patron, has adhered to the biblical text even to the point of including the "coat of mail" which Saul had given him to wear and which now lies discarded on the plinth at David's feet, (I Samuel 17:39) together with the lyre in reference to David's skills as an accomplished musician. He also wears his realistically rendered sheepskin pouch on a band around his chest in which, as we know, he kept the stones because the Bible tells us that he "put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch". (I Samuel 17:40).

Bernini's concept in sculpture is completely new.[37] No other sculptor had shown David in movement because Renaissance artists, carvers and sculptors depicted David standing motionless with the trophy of Goliath's head at their

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[36] Filippo Baldinucci, The Life of Bernini, University Park, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966.
[37] The prototype for the stance is Annibale Carracci's fresco of Polyphemus attacking Acis and Galatea, c.1600, Palazzo Farnese, Rome.

feet. The physical pose of Bernini's David is both powerful and natural, as he swings his right arm back ready to dispatch the stone. In true Baroque fashion Bernini involves the spectator in this action - we now become Goliath - as David stands in his real space he flings the stone into the imaginary space where we are standing. Bernini achieves this sense of illusion by twisting the body in a *contrapposto* pose with the legs wide apart, with the weight on the right foot and by giving the statue only one principle viewpoint which, as Wittkower says, "lies exactly on the central axis of the figure and on the eye level of the average person" [38]. There are, of course, other subordinate viewpoints. In fact, the feeling of movement in Bernini's statue was even greater before plaster additions were made to the plinth on which David stands. Before this mutilation, David's toes (not just the big toe) and the lyre projected beyond the confines of a rather small plinth thus giving an even greater impression that the figure was moving forward into space.[39] The heightened drama is strengthened by the tenseness of the stance which is poised for action and which in turn is helped by the forcefully held angle of the head - and face with its pursed lips, firm jaw line and the intensity of the direct gaze under a furrowed brow. The physiognomy, as we know, is copied from his own features.[40]

By the eighteenth century, much of the eroticism which we perceived in

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[38] Rudolf Wittkower, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, The Sculpture of the Roman Baroque, Phaidon, London 1955, p.6.
[39] See the engraving in P.A.Maffei, Raccolta di statue antiche, Rome, 1704, pl. 82 there is also a 52cm high bronze replica of Bernini's David in the Museo Nazionale, Rome, which shows the size and shape of the original plinth.
[40] I shall say more about this when I look at the images of self in Chapter 9.

the seventeenth century had disappeared in images of David except in the case of the Venetian artist, Giambattista Piazzetta (1682-1754), who in his early career returned to Seicento subjects, both in terms of handling and composition, in line with popular demand for tenebrist and sensuous paintings in Venice at this time. We can see this in his canvas of <u>David with the Head of Goliath</u>, in the Gemäldegalerie in Dresden, which is painted in a Caravaggesque style with strong contrasting elements of light and shade, probably before 1722.[41] David's naked body which is brightly illuminated stands out dramatically from the dark nondescript background. Although the picture is similar in conception to seventeenth-century paintings with their half-figures against a sombre background, Piazzetta has chosen a different aspect of the narrative. Unlike the seventeenth-century artists who depicted scenes of David and Goliath either, in the act of decapitating or presenting the head of Goliath to the spectator, or contemplating the head, Piazzetta chooses a completely novel way of showing David. It refers to the moment when David averting his gaze in horror lifts the gigantic head of Goliath and places it on a cloth ready for transporting it to Jerusalem. Piazzetta is reputed to have studied literary texts when composing his pictures and although this scene is not actually referred to in the Bible it does say that "David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem"

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[41] A. Mariuz in his <u>L'opera completa del Piazzetta</u>, Milan, 1982 lists thirty of the one hundred and sixty five autographed paintings before 1722, while G. Knox in his thesis <u>Giambattista Piazzetta.</u> Oxford, 1992, pp. 33-38 says that Piazzetta painted large history paintings during the first ten years of the seventeenth century.

(I Samuel 17:54).[42] Piazzetta's painting ingeniously shows one way in which the head could have been carried and removed from the battlefield.

After the eighteenth century artists only rarely showed David in the nude, although some images of partially-clothed Davids continued spasmodically, for instance the beautiful David with jewelled turban inside the church of San Rocco in Venice which I have already mentioned in the last chapter.

The nineteenth century was no more prolific in depicting David in the nude but I should like to draw attention to an unusual example from this period. This is the painting by Edgar Degas in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge of David and Goliath where both are shown fighting in the nude, reflecting this French academic tradition with its emphasis on the human form and use of line of which Degas was an exponent.

We might expect to find images of David in the twentieth century confronting Goliath as a reference to the First and Second World Wars. David was only used as an image of encouragement in the Great War when he again came to symbolise victory over the enemy. World War I artists, such as the German painter Albert Weisgerber (d. 1915) depicted a David with a bare torso on the field of battle in his canvas David and Goliath (Saarland Museum, Saarbrücken), in 1914 (figure 102) shortly before he left for the War in 1915. How

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[42] Jane Martineau and Andrew Robison, Art in the Eighteenth Century. The Glory of Venice. Exhibition catalogue, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1994 and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, 1995, p.142.

far is this therefore a statement of war and how far is it a religious subject? Certainly Weisgerber "who seeks to justify the German cause with resounding biblical references" is unaware of the biblical text because the sprawling Goliath is naked while David is partially-clothed.[43] Although David has not yet lifted up the heavy sword, the tense anticipation of the forthcoming decapitation scene looms before our very eyes. This David is vulnerable and victorious amidst the battle raging behind him.

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[43] Richard Cork, A Bitter Truth Avant-Garde Art and the Great War, New Haven and London 1994, p.48.

Chapter 9

Images of Self

Images of self are depictions of and by the artist where he or she presents himself or herself as the aggressor (Judith or David) or the vanquished (Holofernes of Goliath) or (as can be seen in some cases) as the servant. Why should painters wish to represent themselves in this way?

a) David

This kind of representation began during the Renaissance with paintings of David and Goliath. Giorgio Vasari tells us that Giorgione painted three portraits in Venice which were to be found in the study of the Very Reverend Grimani, patriarch of Venice, one of which was a self-portrait of Giorgione as David. Vasari says that he "is depicted with wonderful vigour and realism. His breast is protected by armour as is the arm with which he holds the severed head of Goliath".[1] It is not known for certain to which painting Vasari was referring, but it could be either a fragment of the picture in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig of which Wenceslaus Hollar made an engraving in 1650 showing the whole portrait, or it could be the David painting in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, which is attributed to Giorgione.[2] Vasari gives us no other indication as to why Giorgione depicted himself in this way.

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[1] Giorgio Vasari, op. cit., Vol. I, p.273.
[2] T. Pignatti, Giorgione, London, 1971, fig. 216.

However, it is not easy to understand what motivated artists to depict themselves in this manner. On the other hand, Caravaggio's portrayal of himself as Goliath in the painting of <u>David and Goliath</u> in the Galleria Borghese (figure 84) (which I have already referred to in Chapter 7 as an example of a contemplative image) could be interpreted in many different ways. Avigdor Posèq examines these in great detail from Neoplatonic thought to Freudian castration theories.[3] The picture has been the subject of much debate over the years, not only because of the uncertainty of the date of its inception, but also because of the difficulty of discerning how to interpret Caravaggio's intentions. Let us examine the evidence.

Our first source is Bellori who informs us that Caravaggio painted a "half-figure of David, who holds the head of Goliath by the hair, which is his own portrait" for Cardinal Scipione Borghese, one his early patrons.[4] From this it was assumed by Pevsner, Friedlaender and Frommel that the picture was painted in 1605 when Caravaggio first came into contact with the ecclesiastic and intellectual circle of Cardinal Scipione in Rome.[5] Others, including Helen Langdon, are now more inclined to give it a later dating from the period of his sojourn in Naples in 1609/1610 because of its dark colours and macabre subject matter.

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[3] Avigdor W. G. Posèq, "Caravaggio's Self-Portrait as the Beheaded Goliath", <u>Konsthistorisk tidskrift</u> LIX, 1990, pp. 169-182.
[4] Howard Hibbard, <u>Caravaggio</u>, English trans. of Bellori, p. 367.
[5] W. G. Posèq, op. cit., footnote 2, p. 178.

This canvas, (figure 84) painted at the height of the Counter-Reformation, may therefore have been produced as part of anti-Reformation ideology. It is a three quarter-length portrait of David holding out the tortured head of Goliath which refers to that part of the David story in I Samuel 17:57) where David brings "the head of the Philistine in his hand" to Saul. This painting can be considered under many different "types". As well as being an image of self, it is also triumphant and heroic, a partially-clad image containing a typological reference of the kind which we discussed in Chapter 3, that of St. Augustine's exegesis in his *Enarrationes in Psalmos XXXIII* 4 which states that David like Christ vanquished the Devil. Here David holds a long rapier with the letters H. OC. H. which as Posèq says stands for *Humilitas occidit superbiam* (Humility slays Pride). In this David is again linked to Judith who, as we have seen, represents humility. This is especially common during the Middle Ages. It is less usual during the Counter-Reformation.

I do not think we need be in any doubt that the head of Goliath is that of Caravaggio because not only do we have Bellori's account, but the face also bears a close resemblance to the portrait drawing by Ottavio Leoni and other contemporary descriptions of his physiognomical features.[6]

The reasons why Caravaggio chose to depict himself, however, are less easy to define, partly because there is no real documentary evidence to

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[6] See W. Friedlaender, Caravaggio Studies, New York, 1955, frontispiece.

support many of the suggestions by Howard Hibbard who thinks that Caravaggio felt damned and was hoping for redemption because "David was a hero, a king and the ancestor of Christ" or Erich Fromm who sees the head of Goliath as a case of "symbolic self punishment".[7]

Another suggestion is that Caravaggio may have been suffering from an unhappy homosexual love affair so that the image may be linked to contemporary concept of *tormenti d'amore* (the torture of love). Caravaggio's pained expression is therefore commensurate with the figure illustrated by Cesare Ripa of tormented love in his *Iconologia* of 1593 as a man with two serpents and an arrow through his heart. But until more conclusive evidence about Caravaggio's personal life turns up this theory must remain speculative.

We are on similar ground to the Caravaggio (except that here the artist is represented as David and not as Goliath) when we look at the David sculpture (1623) (figure 101) by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the Galleria Borghese, Rome; here Bernini's biographer Filippo Baldinucci informs us that Bernini used his own face for the head of David.[8] The story was further corroborated by his son Domenico Bernini.[9] Both men say that his patron Cardinal Maffeo Barberini (later Pope Urban VIII) actually held the

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[7] Howard Hibbard, Caravaggio, op. cit., p.267.
[8] Filippo Baldinucci, Vita del Cavaliere Gio. Lorenzo Bernino....., 1682, ed. Sergio Samek Ludovici, 1948, p. 78.
[9] Domenico Bernini, Vita del Cavalier Gio. Lorenzo Bernino, 1713, p.19.

mirror for Bernini to work from his own features. There appears to be no reason to dispute this. (In addition to this self-portrait Bernini also painted a picture of David c.1625 which was considered to be another self-portrait.[10] No deeper meanings have been inferred.

There are three self portraits as David with the Head of Goliath in the eighteenth century by Franz Ludwig Hermann, Pier Leone Ghezzi and Johan Zoffany (1733-1810).[11] The last named made a portrait entitled Self-portrait as David with the Head of Goliath in 1756, now in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. This semi-nude biblical figure with its direct gaze and softly modelled torso bears strong echoes of the Baroque classicism of Guido Reni. Unlike these representations, Zoffany substitutes a staff for the sword usually depicted by seventeenth-century artists, thus moving away from the more bloody Counter-Reformation image and concentrating on David's more pastoral role in line with eighteenth-century thinking, although some blood is visible on Goliath's forehead.

It is not clear why Zoffany should have wished to portray himself as David. Possibly he may have been influenced, as Pressly suggests, by Caravaggio's David and Goliath and Bernini's David which he would have seen in the Villa Borghese in Rome. Pressly posits that in this narcissistic

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[10] This painting was sold at Christies, Rome on 24.11.81 and is now in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.
[11] See William L. Pressly "Johan Zoffany as 'David the Anointed One'. Art Bulletin, March 1995, pp. 49-55, footnote 20 and illustration p. 51.

image "he (meaning Zoffany) declares his special quality as one of the anointed few (like David) singled out for greatness."[12] Moreover, Zoffany is following the long tradition of languid, sensuous youths as David which we discussed in Chapter 7 under the contemplative images.

b) Judith

The decapitated head of Holofernes is often a self-portrait, in the David and Goliath tradition discussed above. Michelangelo too uses his own features - a fact of which his contemporaries were well aware - for the severed head of Holofernes lying on the dish (figure 104) held by the maid in the pendentive of <u>Judith and Holofernes</u> in the Sistine Chapel of 1509. This is not the tormented face which we saw in Caravaggio's <u>David and Goliath</u> in the Galleria Borghese but more of a head in repose. Various scholars have tried to find deep-seated psychological reasons for the use of decapitated heads employed in this way, but there may be a simple narcissistic explanation proclaiming the authorship of the fresco. (The later self-portrait of Michelangelo as the flayed and tortured face of St. Bartholomew in <u>The Last Judgment</u>, may have deeper psychological meanings but a discussion of this is outside the scope of this dissertation).

Sometimes the head, which is grasped by Judith is also a self-portrait. Cristofano Allori is known to have used his face for the head of Holofernes in the two renditions of the subject, one (1616-1620) in the

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[12] Ibid, p. 54

Palazzo Pitti in Florence and the other of 1613, now hanging at Hampton Court Palace (figure 104). Both paintings are intended to convey an image of a dominant and powerful woman who overpowers the male viewer by her penetrating and seductive look. For we know from his contemporary Filippo Baldinucci (1625-95) that the figure of Judith is a portrait of the artist's lover, Maria di Giovanni Mazzafirri, known as 'La Mazzafirra' and that the features of the maid are those of her mother, while the head of Holofernes is a self-portrait of the artist.[13]

This painting commemorates an unhappy love-affair and symbolizes the suffering and distress which he experienced at the hands of his mistress. However, although Allori may have been emotionally tortured by the beautiful Maria di Giovanni, he was not going to admit defeat in his professional life and adds an inscription for us on the green cushion which reads:-

> "Hoc Cristofori Allori/Bronzinii opere natura/hactenus
>
> invicta pene/vincitur Anno 1613"
>
> (Translation: "This [work is] of Cristofaro [sic] Allori
>
> Bronzino, hitherto unvanquished, [he] has almost
>
> been defeated by the labour [of] painting, in the year 1613".)

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[13] Filippo Baldinucci, Notizie dei Professori del Disegno da Cimabue in qua per le quali si dismostro (Florence) cited in John Shearman "Cristofano Allori' Judith, The Burlington Magazine, 121, January 1979, pp. 3-10.

There is also a double meaning connected with this painting which is confirmed by a poem in La Galleria which Giovan Battista Marino wrote in 1619 after he saw one of the versions in Paris. He wrote:-

> *Di Betulia la bella/Vedovetta feroce/Non ha lingua,*
>
> *né voce, e pur favella./ E par seco si glorij e voglia dire,/*
>
> *Vede s'io ferire,/ E di strale, e di spada./Di due morti, Fellon,*
>
> *vò che tu cada,/Da me pria col bel viso,/Poi con la*
>
> *forte man due volte ucciso."*

(Translation: "The beautiful, ferocious widow of Bethulia,

kills Holofernes twice, with Cupid's darts

and with the sword, and she destroys the "felon"

first with her beautiful gaze and then by her strong hand.")[14]

Hidden meanings and carthasis are also to be found in Artemisia Gentileschi's Judith Slaying Holofernes, of about 1620, in the Uffizi Gallery (figure 53) executed for her patron the Grand Duke Cosimo II dei Medici, in Florence before her return to Rome. The painting which is as shocking as her earlier canvas in Naples of the same subject (discussed under the Chapter on decapitation), could (as stated by some art historians) be autobiographical, in that Artemisia now portrays herself as Judith, as a violent castrator exacting revenge on Agostino Tassi (Holofernes).[15]

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[14] G. B. Marino, La Galeria, 1619, Venice Ciotti, 1635. The poem is quoted in Claudio Pizzorusso, Ricerche su Cristofano Allori, Florence, 1982, p. 70ff, together with two other poems on the Judith and Holofernes story, dating from the early seventeenth century.

[15] Christopher Lloyd, op. cit., p. 92, who also says that Lavinia Fontana depicted herself as Judith and that "there could also be an autobiographical element in the Judith by Jacopo Ligozzi of 1602, (Florence, the Palazzo Pitti)."

If this is a self-portrait, as many scholars now think, then Artemisia is following the long established tradition from Michelangelo to Titian. It would therefore be true to say, as Mary Garrard does, that this painting is "both biblical and Freudian, between decapitation and castration, the just punishment for rape in an eye for an eye tradition". The murder is set in an darkened interior, giving no real sense of its biblical location, except that this is a bedroom with its emphasis on the bed with its blood-stained sheet placed close to the picture plane. Mary Garrard is not convinced that this Judith is a self-portrait of Artemisia, but believes that rather in contrast she depicts herself as the maid because of the latter's likeness to the Jérôme David engraving of Artemisia, c. 1625-30 in the British Museum, London.[16] If this is the case, she probably represented herself as the servant so that no-one could accuse her of releasing her own hidden fantasies in the guise of Judith.

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[16] Mary D. Garrard, op. cit., p. 64, fig., 51.

Chapter 10

The Triumphal Returns

Ever since Antiquity triumphal returns (*adventus* scenes) have been considered to be of the utmost importance because they signified victory and defeat of the enemy.[1] After the fourth century AD they were used in Christian art for Christ's arrival and still later typologically when artists and sculptors set David's triumphant return alongside Christ's entry into Jerusalem, for instance in the tapestry at Chaise-Dieu Abbey in the Auvergne, France. During the Counter-Reformation they came to represent the Church Triumphant. Images of Judith and David proliferate during this period but there are, I believe, more representations of Judith than David, because textually speaking, the biblical narrative of Judith is more complex and colourful, than that of David, with more pictorial events taking place. The fact that Judith is hailed as a hero on two occasions (firstly in Bethulia and then in Jerusalem) also increases the number of her images. Moreover, there was the added thrill of portraying a woman escaping without her crime being discovered and returning safely with her prize. With David, on the other hand, there was no threat and the enemy having already fled the battlefield, David was free to return with the head. Rather than concentrating on scenes of David returning to Jerusalem on his own, artists preferred to show a handsome youth on the road adored by beautiful women or arriving at the city gates being serenaded by other women.

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[1] For more information on *adventus* see Sabine G. MacCormack, <u>Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity</u>, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1981, Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 17-84.

The depictions of the triumphal return of Judith can be divided into four distinct categories:

(i) those where Judith and her maid leave the camp of the Assyrians;

(ii) where they are seen approaching the town of Bethulia with its walls visible in the distance;

(iii) where they are greeted at the gates by the citizens and the Elders of Bethulia and

(iv) those scenes where Judith is received by the High Priest in Jerusalem and where the people rejoice and give thanks for her great victory.

The triumphal depictions of David are visually much more restricted and tend to show only:

(i) his return with Jonathan;

(ii) his joyful journey to Jerusalem accompanied by singing maidens and his triumphant arrival there and

(iii) David returning with the head of Goliath to the camp of Saul and handing it over to him.

Although in these representations it might therefore appear that David's role is of lesser significance than that of Judith's, David's position could, in fact, be construed as being of greater importance because his triumphal entry into Jerusalem is considered to be a prefiguration of Christ's entry into that city.

a) Judith

I should like to begin this section by looking at the triumphal returns of Judith, dealing with them in the same order as above.

(i) Judith and her Maid leaving the camp of the Assyrians

Portrayals of Judith leaving the camp of Holofernes are rare except during the Middle Ages when they form part of narrative sequences and are fairly common. In these Judith and her maid are usually depicted as indicated in the narrative with a large sack containing the head of Holofernes. Judith had already established a routine so that the guards were used to seeing them depart every evening to pray and so made no attempt to stop them. It is at this point, in my opinion, that the plausibility of the story falls down because it is astonishing that the sack containing the bulky head did not arouse the suspicion of the guards.

Not until the seventeenth century is this part of the legend illustrated as an integral image in its own right and it is Artemisia Gentileschi who should be credited with having introduced this completely new and original concept to the many other representations from the Judith story. After she painted her gruesome picture of the decapitation of Holofernes of 1612-13 (figure 51) and which we have already examined, she turned her attention to the events which took place after the murder has been committed i.e. when Judith and her maid left the camp of Holofernes.[2] The picture to which I am referring is the one entitled <u>Judith and Her Maidservant</u> (c.1613-14) in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence,

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[2] Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.

(figure 105) which she painted soon after he arrival in Florence in 1613. There is no reference to Judith and her maid lingering at the scene of the crime in the apocryphal text, so it would appear that Artemisia's inspiration comes from other paintings of Judith by her father and possibly other contemporaries. A painting which could have influenced her is Orazio Gentileschi 's painting of 1610-12, Judith and her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes, in the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, (figure 107). Artemisia's painting may, I think, be included in this category of pictures of Judith and her maid on their way back to Bethulia. However, I do not believe that we should consider Orazio's painting in Hartford in the same light, because in this picture the two protagonists are still in the tent - the head has scarcely been placed in the basket before they hear a noise. There is a feeling of suspense in both these canvases but compared to Artemisia's painting, Orazio's lacks tension - there is not the same sense of urgency and there is no real rapport between the two women. In Orazio's painting Judith's expression is more devotional than urgent and the maid, although she is also listening, is more intent on holding the basket in order to receive the head of the tyrant from her mistress, than on making her escape.

At first sight Artemisia's painting appears to be calm and restrained - the maid depicted from the back stands transfixed while the head of Holofernes lies safely in the wicker basket.[3] (This use of the basket is not in accordance with the story but seventeenth-century artists tend to place the head in this type of

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[3] The motif of the turbaned woman seen from the back originates in Guido Reni's St. Andrew led to Martrydom in San Gregorio al Celio, Rome, 1608.

receptacle to heighten the sense of horror with the blood seeping through the open work and overtly to show the head to the spectator.) The painting is very similar to another which is usually attributed to Orazio Gentileschi, Judith and her Maidservant in the National Gallery, Oslo, (figure 108) where the position of the two figures, especially that of the maid and the basket, are almost identical. Although it is often stated that Artemisia's canvas was influenced by her father, I concur with Mary Garrard that in this instance Orazio "adapted a composition of his daughter's" because it is possible that he was in Florence in 1616 when he might have seen it. However, until the Orazio painting can be more accurately dated this theory can be interpreted either way.[4]

In Artemisia's painting it is not long before we are aware of the inner tension, the need for haste and the inherent danger facing these two women. Both figures are rooted to the spot, keyed up; having heard a noise, they stand still and listen intently, hoping and praying that their deed has not yet been discovered and that they are not about to be pursued. Judith and her maid look out of the canvas in the same direction - the commotion comes from an area outside the picture on the right, almost like a disturbance taking place off stage. Artemisia would have been well aware of theatrical devices employed in the popular dramas and operas put on at the Florentine Court and the Papal Court in Rome. In the seventeenth century some of the action of the Judith story (especially that of decapitation) would have taken place in the wings.[5] In the

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[4] Mary D. Garrard., op cit, p. 40.
[5] The earliest well-known drama was Giuditta by F. della Valle of 1627.

Artemisia painting it is not clear how far Judith and her servant have travelled before they hear a sound. The background is a dark night-time setting without any indication of their exact location.

Judith and her servant revert in this painting to their respective roles as collaborators, as we witnessed in Artemisia's painting of decapitation in Naples. Of the two figures in the Pitti painting, Judith is the more dominant person with the sword over her right shoulder - a stance reminiscent of her father's fresco executed between 1597 and 1599 of the figure of Justice, in the St. Ursula Chapel, Abbazia, Fafra.[6] The two women, who are of similar age and height, are psychologically and emotionally linked by the way in which Judith places her left hand on her maid's shoulder in order to persuade her to move on quickly. She is shown very much as the heroine of the biblical narrative, as a woman of strength and courage incorporating a sense of justice.

It is ironic that Artemisia should, as Mary Garrard has pointed out, have used the side-view of Michelangelo's David of 1501-04 (figure 109) for the prominent profile of her Judith.[7] This either consciously or unconsciously binds these two saviours together again in a curious way. Moreover, Artemisia also subtly includes other emblems of masculine heroic might in her painting. The decorated slide in her hair significantly depicts a man with legs astride holding a spear and shield similar to Donatello's statue of St. George (another figure whose

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[6] For an illustration see Mary Garrard, op. cit., p. 317, pl. 281.
[7] See Mary D. Garrard, op.cit., p.317

bravery in killing the dragon is akin to Judith's in slaying of Holofernes) with which artists were familiar in Florence, (figure 79).[8] The image on the slide also bears a close resemblance to other fifteenth-century David figures such as Antonio del Pollaiuolo's painting of David as Victor (figure 81) painted in about 1472, (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin) where David stands in a similar pose to that of St. George as a symbol of Florentine freedom but without a shield or spear.[9] In contrast to this image of male dominance, and as an additional poignant reminder of her androgynous nature, Artemisia gives the pommel of her sword an insignia of a screaming head of Medusa, albeit without the writhing snakes, which so terrified Perseus and other men who dared to look at her. This recalls Caravaggio's Medusa[10] of c. 1600 (figure 106) painted on a tournament shield, at that time (and as now) in a Florentine Collection, and also Benvenuto Cellini's bronze statue of Perseus with the Head of Medusa (1545-54) (figure 64) in the Loggi dei Lanzi in Florence.[11] The theme of Medusa reverses the sexual roles because in this case it is the woman who has lost her head.

(ii) Judith and her Maid approaching the town of Bethulia

The representations of Judith and her maid approaching the town of Bethulia have been illustrated from the earliest example of Judith which has come down to us, viz. that in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome, dating from the

[8] For the story of St. George and the Dragon see Jacopus de Voragine, The Golden Legend, trans. William Grangrer Ryan , Vol 1, pp.238-242, Princeton, 1993.
[9] The statue of St. George by Donatello originally held a spear.
[10] Baglione (1642) tells us that it was commissioned by Cardinal del Monte who then gave it to the Grand Duke of Tuscany.
[11] See page 160.

eighth century. In this fresco Judith's role as a salvation figure, as we have already seen, is already well defined because here she is shown as a heroine having with God's help already achieved a feat of great courage. Her victory is seen as one of national importance because she is regarded as a saviour, not only of the city of Bethulia itself, but of her people. As a result of her action she is identified with the whole of the Jewish nation. It is also a representation of her triumphant return, which heralds a whole series of triumphant home-comings of her in early medieval art continuing right through the Middle Ages as part of a narrative cycle, either in sculpture or in manuscripts. As such they were considered to form an essential and integrated part of the plot.

This type can be said to begin with the Bible of Charles the Bald of c. 870 AD (folio 231 verso), S. Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome, where the whole story of Judith is illustrated as a continuous narrative episode on one page, in three registers, rather like a strip cartoon, beginning with Judith's departure with her maid from the walled city of Bethulia in the upper left hand corner and then leaving the scene of their crime, carrying the head of Holofernes.[12] The story continues in the upper right hand corner where in a circular narrative we observe the two women returning to the city which they had recently left. Another example from this period is that of the Bible of Patricius Leo (Codex Reg. 1 folio 383) (figure 48) from the first half of the tenth-century, which is to be found in the Vatican Library. In this Bible miniature the artist has combined four different scenes (we have already looked at the one of decapitation) on the same page;

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[12] For an illustration see Mary D. Garrard op. cit., p.283, fig. 244.

these are not in any cohesive order in three registers as in the Bible of Charles the Bald, but we can spot Judith and her maid, the latter with a large sack over her shoulder either arriving at the camp of the Assyrians with a sack load of food or returning to Bethulia with the heavy head of Holofernes. This kind of consecutive image became rare after the Middle Ages.

Although this type of depiction was popular during the Middle Ages, artists gradually lost interest in portraying this part of the story, so that by the end of the sixteenth century it almost disappears from art. However, there are several memorable examples from the Italian Renaissance which I should like to discuss.

Sandro Botticelli comes much closer to the biblical text than many of his contemporaries in his small panel painted in about 1470-72 of Judith with the Head of Holofernes, (figure 39) and which is now displayed in the Uffizi Gallery, Florence.[13] Here a pensive Judith is clothed in a billowing gown and with a tiara in her hair. Botticelli is one of the few artists who actually shows her with the tiara, which is mentioned in the apocryphal text as part of the accoutrements which she put on as part of her adornment. She pauses for a moment on her way back to the town with a blood-spattered falchion in her right hand and an olive branch in her left to signify that she is bringing peace to the

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[13] These two panels were probably part of a diptych or may have been kept as Barbara Deimling says in a casket and taken out to be admired, see Botticelli, Cologne, 1994, p. 17. They are described in an inventory of the house of Antonio de' Medici in 1588, as "a small picture divided in half, making two small pictures." See Roberto Salvini, All the Paintings of Botticelli, trans. John Grillenzoni. 4 vols., New York, 1965, pt 1, pp.45-46.

citizens. A young mulatto maid follows her carrying the head of Holofernes covered with a cloth in a basket on her head, while two empty wine bottles (another important ingredient of this story, often ignored or forgotten by painters) dangle from her wrist. Several Renaissance artists show the head in a basket but we learn from the biblical text that she gave it to her servant to put in the food-sack which they had brought with them. (Judith 8:9).

Another lesser known representation of the same event is the painting on poplar of Judith with the Head of Holofernes in the Wallace Collection, London, by an unidentified sixteenth-century Sienese artist, executed in a style showing the influence of Sodoma and Peruzzi but now attributed to a follower of Domenico Beccafumi (died 1551).[14]   Unlike Botticelli's painting Judith is returning alone to Bethulia without her maid.   It belongs to a series of three panels relating to the tradition of "heroic women and the *femmes fortes*". The other two, now in the Museé Bonnat, Bayonne, are of Sophonisba and Cleopatra, both famous women of antiquity. There are two other comparable paintings in the National Gallery, London of Tanaquil and Marcia who are also heroines of antiquity) attributed to Beccafumi and a third one of Judith by Giovanni Sodoma (1477-1549) now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena.[15] It is not clear why Judith is shown bare-footed when we know from the text that she put on sandals to go to the camp of the enemy. In this panel the countryside around Bethulia has been

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[14] For the different attributions see Wallace Collection Catalogue of Pictures, Vol. 1, London, 1985, pp. 212-213.

[15] The National Gallery panels were probably executed for a palace in Siena c. 1520-25, see The National Gallery Complete Catalogue, compiled by Christopher Baker and Tom Henry, London, 1995, pp. 25-26.

laid bare after the effects of war; symbolically the tree on the left is dead while that on the right is showing growth for the future of the saved Israel.

In the Wallace Collection painting Judith is depicted as a courtesan with her nipple standing visibly erect through the thin muslin of her bodice. In spite of the threatening falchion which she carries over her shoulder she has assumed the role of seductress and with God's help has departed from Holofernes' tent untouched and intact. She tells everyone on her return to Bethulia "Yet I swear by the Lord, who protected me in the course I took so that my face tricked him and brought his downfall, Holofernes committed no sin with me to defile me or disgrace me" (Judith 13:16). (This verse about Judith's honour is the one which is used in the Office of St. Joan of Arc).[16] Although she says naively that it was her face that "tricked" Holofernes, artists at this time are more inclined to linger over her shapely body which they painted as erotically as possible, rather than her face.

Some narrative cycles continue to be produced in the Renaissance, such as those which are to be found on the left bronze door (north) of the basilica (Chiesa della Casa Santa) at Loreto in Italy, comprising three panels from the Judith story, including one of Judith and her Maid returning to Bethulia with the maid holding a bundle under her arm (presumably the head) on their way back to Bethulia; the town is visible behind with the tents of the Assyrians below the city

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[16] See André Barucq, , 2ⁿᵈ ed., Judith, Esther, La Sainte Bible de Jérusalem, XIV, Paris: Cerf, 1959, p.62.

walls.[17]   (A terracotta relief model for the left door is now in the Museo Nazionale della Marche in Ancona.[18]). These panels were designed and executed by Tiburzio Vergelli in 1598 during the reign of Pope Sixtus V.[19]

Scenes of Judith returning to Bethulia almost vanish from art after the seventeenth century because, as we have already observed, this period was more interested in portraying violence and eroticism.   However, they make a reappearance in the twentieth century. The Glaswegian artist David Donaldson (born 1916) has painted a powerful and bold work entitled Judith, (figure 110).[20] This painting shows Judith escaping from the camp of the Assyrians (seen here on the right) with the severed head of Holofernes wrapped in a white cloth resting on her shoulder.

Donaldson has been fairly faithful to the biblical text and presents Judith in her usual finery and has correctly set the event as taking place just as dawn is breaking. However he has omitted the maid who, in earlier examples is always present and has failed to place the head of Holofernes in a bag or other receptacle. It is as if Judith has accomplished her task solely with Divine help, without the assistance of her maid.

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[17] The other two panels are The Decapitation of Holofernes and The Head of Holofernes displayed from the Walls of Bethulia.

[18] See P. Marconi and Luigi Serra, Il Museo Nazionale della Marche in Ancona, 1934, p. 79.

[19] For biographical details of Tiburzio Vergelli see Thieme Becker, Vol 34, p. 242.

[20] It was exhibited at the Edinburgh Festival in 1955 and now hangs on the stairs of the History of Art Department of the University of Glasgow.

(iii) Judith and her Maid are greeted in triumph at the gates of Bethulia by the Citizens and Elders

These scenes showing Judith returning to Bethulia and being greeted at the gates of the city are also frequently illustrated as part of the whole narrative either in illuminated manuscripts such as The Bible of Charles the Bald, folio 231 verso, Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome, c.870 or in stained-glass windows, for example in the windows of the Sainte-Chapelle, Paris (figure 7).

During the Renaissance there are fewer examples but, as we would expect, Northern artists again come closest to the biblical text. In the sixteenth-century stained-glass panel in one of the windows of the Blue Room at Strawberry Hill, Twickenham which was part of the glass panel collection formed by Sir Horace Walpole and later incorporated into other windows of the house is a case in point. This panel (figure 111) with its striking yellow highlights illustrates the moment when Judith arriving at the gates with the head of Holofernes is greeted by the Elders and townsfolk. The text says that "everyone regardless of status, came running (for they were surprised she had returned); they opened the gate and welcomed them; they lit a fire to give some light and crowded around them" (Judith 14:13). The visualisation of this text is clear and original with the man lighting the fire visible in the foreground proving that this unknown designer was fully conversant with the narrative. Although we do not

know who was responsible, it would appear to be of Flemish manufacture, perhaps from the workshop of Jan Svart van Gronigen.[21]

If we now look at the images from the seventeenth century we shall be surprised to discover that this century with its Baroque scenes of drama and bravura contributes very little to the number of representations showing the triumphant return of Judith to Bethulia.

The subject of Judith returning to Bethulia was not very often represented by artists from the Northern countries, but we have seen how Rembrandt often chose to depict stories from the Apocrypha. He treats the subject of Judith's triumphant return with great solemnity in a pen and bistre drawing with wash and some body colour of about 1652-56 (British Museum, London) of <u>Judith Returning in Triumph with the Head of Holofernes</u>.[22] This confidently and rapidly drawn example, with its strong dark outlines, shows Judith walking along a road outside the city walls carrying a large sword and wearing a Minerva-like head-dress, accompanied by her servant holding the head of Holofernes. It is appropriate that Rembrandt should associate this powerful warrior goddess with Judith who, like Minerva (Pallas Athena), is also a bringer of peace.[23] It is Judith and her maid who lead the procession of banners and

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[21] Jan Svart van Groningen has drawn an equally fine and accurate pen drawing of another episode from the Judith story viz. <u>Judith at the Banquet with Holofernes</u> which is now in the Leonard Goldfinck IV Collection in New York and which may also have been a design for a glass panel. I am grateful to Mr. Goldfinck for allowing me to examine his drawing.

[22] For an illustration see Seymour Slive, <u>Drawings of Rembrandt</u>, 2 Vols, New York, 1965,Vol 1, no 513.

[23] It is therefore no coincidence that Antiveduto Grammatica should also dress Judith in a similar head-dress in his painting in the National Museum in Stockholm.

Elders, followed by a man on a horseback, together with others, including a trumpeter and a piper, which only helps to increase the spectacle. It is interesting that Rembrandt gives the central and most prominent position in this composition to the maid because he, unlike other artists of the period, has recognised and concentrated on the importance of the death of Holofernes rather than the triumph of Judith herself, yet people wave from the battlements in jubilation turning it into a triumphal image. The drawing and its composition is so well thought out that I think we can ask ourselves whether this could have been a preliminary drawing for a painting which has been lost. Otto Benesch [24] thinks that this drawing is not authentic but in my opinion it bears all the imprints of the mature Rembrandt.

Compared to other aspects of the Judith story, her triumph was not as popular with artists in the Catholic south as it was with those in the north. These same artists, as we have discussed preferred to concentrate on scenes of the triumphs of David.

Artists in the south such as Francesco Curradi, (1570-1661) who belonged to the first generation of Florentine Seicento artists, which included Cristofano Allori, de Boschi and Fontebuoni, painted such a picture at a time when it was rare to find the theme of the triumph of Judith being portrayed by Florentine artists. It might appear odd that Judith should be so grossly ignored in a city

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[24] See Otto Benesch, The Drawings of Rembrandt, A Critical and Chronological Catalogue, London, 1954-57, 6 Vols., A.93.

used to seeing Donatello's statue of <u>Judith</u> erected in the Piazza della Signoria. It is much more usual to find Florentine artists depicting scenes of David returning to Jerusalem with the head and sword of Goliath, than the equivalent scenes of Judith.[25] In fact, as we have already noted, portrayals of the actual act of decapitation or of the head being held up were far more numerous during the seventeenth century than at any other period. For a long time Curradi's painting, which once belonged to Louis XIV, was considered to be by Matteo Rosselli because its pendant <u>The Triumph of David</u> now in the Louvre, Paris is signed and dated *"Opus Matthaei Ressellini Florentini 1630"*.

Curradi's canvas entitled <u>The Triumph of Judith</u> (Musée des Augustins, Toulouse), shows Judith outside the city walls being greeted by Uzziah. Curradi's figures are always elegant and dignified in keeping with the Mannerist style of his master Giovanni Battista Naldini (1537-1591), and the artist hardly differentiates between different types of people. It is clear that Curradi who paints all the people as if they were from a similar social standing has not turned for inspiration to the Biblical text which tells the reader that all the citizens "came running ....." (Judith 14:13) lit. "from small to great" which could, of course, also mean from the short in stature to the tall, from the young to the old, and from those of lowly status to those of higher standing. Even the maid shows little social difference in terms of dress, hair and bearing from her mistress. Most of

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[25] cf. Lorenzo Lippi in the Pitti Palace, Florence and Jacopo Vignali (1592-1664) at the Bob Jones University, Greenville, USA.

the women's faces are expressionless when they should be rejoicing, but probably this is because Curradi often reuses the faces from some of his other canvases.[26]

As in all these returns, Curradi, like other artists who have painted this subject, show Judith and her maid with the head, but they fail to include "the canopy under which he lay in his drunken stupor" (Judith 13:15) which she also took with her. This too was further proof that she had been with Holofernes inside his tent, but as long as she had the head no further proof was needed. Perhaps it was the richness of the canopy which tempted her to take it with her. It is understandable that male artists would want to omit this canopy which only serves to draw attention to men's gullibility and stupidity, but women artists also omit this prop.

(iv) Triumphant Images of Judith in Jerusalem

This event is rarely represented in art, although a follower of Guido Reni has painted a half-length picture entitled Judith (now in The Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore) (figure 112) in the mid-seventeenth century where three women surround Judith, singing and playing musical instruments, while the ashen-faced severed head of Holofernes lies on a plinth beside the group.

b) David

Triumphant images of David, as mentioned earlier, are of only three

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[26] The face of Judith, for example, is similar to that of Eve in the painting The Ancestors, of 1629, Private Collection, U.S.A. This may be significant vis-à-vis Judith's position as a type of Eve.

types. I shall discuss these in the order set out at the beginning of this chapter.

(i) David's return with Jonathan;

David's return is not entirely ignored by Renaissance artists, but when it is depicted the scenes are sometimes controversial or unusual; for example, the picture of David returning with Jonathan by Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano (1459/60? - 1517/18) entitled David and Jonathan, in the National Gallery in London (figure 113), painted in about 1505-10. This is a strange painting because David should not be depicted with Jonathan, the son of king Saul, during this part of the account - their friendship dates from a later period in the Old Testament story. The painting makes more sense if we regard it as a picture which could have begun life as a representation of Tobias and the Angel.[27] An image of David walking in this North Italian landscape holding the head of Goliath could be seen as one of Tobias carrying a fish, while the position of Jonathan resembles the Archangel Raphael who has just arrived on the scene and now ambles along with Tobias. David walks beside Jonathan with a warm regard which leaves us in no doubt that "the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (I Samuel 18:1). It is not clear why Jonathan should be carrying a javelin unless it is the staff which David took with him into battle (I Samuel 17:40) or the javelin or spear which we know Goliath took with him into combat.

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[27] See Martin Davies, National Gallery Catalogues: The Earlier Italian Schools, London, 1961, p. 146 and Peter Humphrey, Cima da Conegliano, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 111-112.

(ii) Return to Jerusalem and his triumphant arrival with the head of Goliath

Depictions of this subject begin in the medieval period in sculpture on the Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals and churches of France, where they act as a prefiguration of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. In paintings they appear much less frequently than images showing the triumphal return of Judith .

Triumphant scenes of David are based on the passage "David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem" (1 Samuel 17:54). During the fifteenth century scenes of David returning can still be regarded as typological.

We find that the subject is painted extensively during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when it was equally popular among artists from both the Low countries and Germany during the sixteenth century and Southern artists, such as Bartolomeo Manfredi (1582-1622), Guercino, Luca Giordano and Matteo Rosselli in the seventeenth. Northern artists (Johann Liss and Nicolas Pousin) working in Italy at this time also continued to include this subject in their repertoire. Compared to Judith who had to hide the severed head from view, David either carries it by the hair or proudly displays it on the end of a pole or sword.

The German painter Bernhard Strigel (1465/70-1525) executed in about 1500 what to our eyes may seem a rather curious painting in about 1500 (Alte Pinakothek, Munich) (figure 114) of a young David dressed in contemporary hunting attire. It depicts the moment when "the women came out of all the

towns of Israel, singing and dancing to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments. And the women sung one to another as they made merry, "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (I Samuel 18:6-7). David is shown being greeted at the gates of Jerusalem (here shown represented as a German town) to be greeted by local women singing and playing musical instruments. There is no sign of Saul in this and in most other depictions of this event. It is possible that this panel was once part of a larger whole with other typological scenes either as a prototype for Christ's victory against the Devil or Christ's Entry into Jerusalem. The provenance of the painting is unknown.

These sixteenth-and seventeenth-century artists take up this theme with enthusiasm in several different media. Lucas van Leyden 's painted glass panel of The Triumph of David dating from 1510-30 (figure 115) now in the Pinacoteca della Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, also depicts the moment when the women came out to greet King Saul. David stands alone on the left holding up the head of Goliath on the end of a gigantic sword so that it could be seen by all. This device was invented by artists because there is no reference to it in the Bible. He listens to the static figures before him, in elaborate feathered head-dresses and other exotic headgear, singing and playing a tambourine in accordance with the text. The figures are not particularly animated and in this depiction, as recorded in I Samuel there is no sense of merriment or celebration. The glass panel which is of the highest calibre is painstakingly and subtly executed in monochrome. Several artists, among them Jan Saenredam and Pieter Fierens, made engravings

(with slight variations) after the panel (or perhaps copies of it) in 1600.[28]

These images then make a full-scale reappearance during the Baroque period just as we are beginning to think that they have vanished from art. I would like to suggest that this was because artists now wished to show David in as dramatic a way as possible, using theatrical light and shade, with powerful and muscular men and beautiful women in lively processions which were both full of movement and emotion.

It was the Holstein artist, Johann Liss (c.1595-1629/30) who led the way into the next century with his large painting of David with the Head of Goliath (Palazzo Reale, Naples), which was probably commissioned by an important nobleman or patron of the church. We do not know whether this was the unascribed painting mentioned in an inventory in the House of Savoy of 1632 as *Davide con la testa di Golia di bona mano*.[29] Liss chooses the same triumphant moment as Lucas van Leyden but clearly shows his debt to Caravaggio in this three quarter length image of David, his bare torso frontally lit, his raised arm holding the head of Goliath, spiked on the tip of his sword surrounded by singing and dancing girls playing musical instruments. David looks out at the spectator with a melancholy gaze. The strong reds and lambent draperies executed with fluid brushstrokes again recall Caravaggio. A black servant in

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[28] Lucas van Leyden treated this subject of The Triumph of David in another engraving of 1513 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinett. For an illustration see Timothy B. Husband et al, The Luminous Image, Painted Glass Roundles in the Lowlands 1480-1560. New York, 1995, p.125, fig. 5.
[29] See G. Campori, *Raccolta di Cataloghi ed Inventarii inediti ...*, Modena, 1870, p. 83.

flame-red costume holds David's sling.

Nicolas Poussin who spent his career in Rome (except for a spell in France in 1640-41) painted his Triumph of David now in the Dulwich Picture Gallery (figure 116) in about 1632. It is a brilliant rendition of a triumphal procession full of expressive gesture and movement and is based on the same biblical description. The fact that neither Saul (who is probably the figure in red on the far right) nor the women are engaged in any of the activities mentioned in the Old Testament, does not detract from Poussin's powerful and complex composition. All aspects of humanity are here women, children, soldiers, old men - all those whom David's victory over Goliath liberated. They are here to greet David returning with the head of Goliath. Poussin ingeniously opens up the composition to reveal the slight, proud figure of David carrying a gigantic head of Goliath aloft following the two trumpeters who lead the procession. Meanwhile the crowd gesticulates (like the figures in Poussin's Bacchanals also from the 1630s) while the women in the portico throw flowers - an old man points to his forehead as if to demonstrate to his companion the action taken by David. It is an heroic picture painted in clear grey-blues, reds, yellows and greens reminiscent of Raphael which is a move away from Poussin's earlier Venetian colouring.

A much more tranquil canvas by Guercino entitled The Triumph of David is that at Burghley House in Lincolnshire; it is now considered by Sir Denis Mahon to be the original picture for which Guercino was paid a total of two

hundred and thirty six scudi between 1636 and 1637 by Cardinal Colonna for a Triumph of David. There is another identical painting in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin which most art historians now believe to be a copy probably executed towards the end of the seventeen century after the painting which was then still in Rome.[30]

Compared to the Poussin, the Guercino is calm with three-quarter length figures set close to the picture plane. A young and handsome David pauses at the walls of the city of Jerusalem, holding the huge head and sword of Goliath; he turns and looks at the group of women who are playing musical instruments - a kettle drum and tambourines - or singing. As in other pictures, there is no sign of Saul.

Luca Giordano's painting (figure 117) of the same subject at Temple Newsam House in Yorkshire, is even more magnificent and colourful with its reds, blues, pinks, and yellows positively glowing out from the dark background.

There are many other similar scenes from this period with figures dancing, singing and playing musical instruments, such as the three paintings of

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[30] See Catalogue of the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

The Triumph of David by the Florentine artist Matteo Rossellini, which we have already discussed in chapter 3.

Some Dutch seventeenth-century artists also took up this theme, for example Bartolomeus Breenbergh (1599/1600-57) entitled The Triumph of David.[31] The painting is quite unlike his usual repertoire because Breenbergh, an artist born in Deventer in 1598, concentrated mostly (especially after his stay in Rome from 1620-1630) on Italianate landscapes with pastoral figures or bathers and animals (usually in a small format on copper or panel) and on drawing well-known classical ruins and monuments. David is represented as a peasant or shepherd (although there are no obvious attributes to confirm this) with strong bare arms, standing in a portrait-like pose with the head of Goliath speared on a sword, David's gaze directed towards something outside the picture on the right, the city gates with its pseudo-classical architecture, including two pyramids behind him.

(iii) David appearing before Saul with the Head of Goliath

This third category of David appearing before Saul is painted intermittently by artists at various times and during different periods. From the seventeenth century comes the painting by Rembrandt. It depicts the slightly later event in the story which says, "On David's return from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand." (I Samuel 17:57). The Rembrandt painting on panel, entitled David

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[31] This painting was shown in November 1991 at the Richard Feigen Art Gallery in London.

with Goliath's Head for Saul (figure 118) in the Offentliche Kunstsammlung, Basle, (Bredius 488), is signed RH and dated 1627 and is therefore one of Rembrandt's earliest works. The event takes place at the camp of the Israelites where many have gathered to greet David - here seen on his knees and cradling the bloody head of Goliath in his arms in front of Saul clad in rich golden robes.

Rembrandt, as I have already pointed out, nearly always interprets the biblical text as accurately as possible. However, there is one discrepancy here because like many other artists he depicts David in front of Saul with an enormous sword. This is not mentioned in the Bible. Perhaps David took it with him as proof of his victory in the same way that Judith removed the canopy over Holofernes' bed. The text says only that "Abner took him and brought him before Saul, with the head of the Philistine in his hand" (I Samuel 17:57) but perhaps artists may have assumed that he must have had the sword with him and included it to accentuate David's strength and bravery. This small painting is crammed with realistically observed details, from the two small train-bearers behind Saul whispering to each other to the barking dog and the baying horse. A turbaned soldier on horseback on the left and a dark figure on the right add depth to the painting.

After the seventeenth century these images tend to die out as artists concentrate on other aspects of the Judith and David stories, as we have seen in previous chapters.

CONCLUSIONS

I began this dissertation by quoting some lines from the American writer, Blanche Roosevelt where she stated that Gustave Doré was the only artist who grasped the meaning of the Bible, endowing his works with vitality, grandeur and oriental splendour and expressing the joys and passions of the biblical characters he was depicting. She posited that he gave his works more realism and understanding than any of the other Old Masters. I have taken this as my starting point and then examined her views in relationship to how the Western European painters portrayed events from the stories of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath which were also used by Doré in his illustrated Bible, while at the same time conducting a comparative examination of how artists depicted these two characters during the period between 1400-1700.

With this article in mind, I then concentrated on the differences and similarities of Judith and David within typological interpretations and their roles in salvation history. My aim has been to bring out and demonstrate how artists, illustrators and sculptors interpreted the biblical texts and other early source material and how they have diverged from them. I have discussed the different treatment given to Judith and David by Northern artists, especially Protestant ones, vis-à-vis their contemporaries in the Catholic countries of Europe.

I now propose to set out my conclusions after having conducted this study into the various images of Judith and Holofernes and David and Goliath. Having examined the works of art, I shall now outline those conclusions.

The first conclusion which we can reach is that during the early Christian era and the medieval period, David and Judith were paired for theological and typological reasons and artists and sculptors followed the biblical texts. Artists and others followed the exegesis of St. Augustine and, as we saw, they became prototypes of Christ and the Virgin Mary respectively. Both are victors over Satan and artists in all the visual arts recognised this. This link began as we saw on the transenna of the church of Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome in 705-707 AD and continued right through until the second half of the sixteen century in some countries. Throughout these images Judith is seen as the personification of goodness, saintliness and vulnerability and David as the youthful hero who slays Goliath in line with the narrative. These artists recognise her beauty and wealth and they depict her as elegantly attired according to the text. There is no description in the Bible of how David is clothed throughout his encounter with Goliath and artists in these early representations usually give him a short tunic or other simple garment.

This visual truth to the narrative continued until the time of the Reformation in the North when artists began to interpret the more devious

aspects of Judith as a cunning and deceitful sexual being as part of series of prints and cycles of Powerful Women. Images of Judith were intended as a warning to men because they too might be ensnared by a wily woman in the way in which they thought that Judith had lured Holofernes to his death. She was therefore depicted in the nude or semi nude, as a sexual being. These portrayals are far removed from the biblical texts. This approach continued until the until the Counter-Reformation when the Council of Trent put a stop to these nude depictions, although the Council stipulated that it was all right to show nudity as long as it was under the pretext of the Bible

However, by the end of the end of the fifteenth century much of the religious significance of showing David and Judith together had disappeared and artists and sculptors now saw their roles in a different light. This was particularly marked in the Italian States especially in Florence where Judith and David (now also portrayed in the nude) came to represent figures of courage and virtue in a political sense. They were seen as victors over tyranny and oppression. In Rome, on the other hand, Michelangelo still included them in his Sistine Chapel ceiling as salvation figures in the biblical sense.

Images of David and Judith were not always connected with civic or ecclesiastical commissions, because occasionally sixteenth century royal or princely patrons would commission artists to paint Judith and David as a political message, because they themselves wished to be associated with the

most virtuous qualities of these and other biblical heroes and heroines. Most of the details of these images bear little resemblance to the biblical narrative.

In the seventeenth century, which produced the largest number of images of Judith and David, they were, on the whole, no longer shown together as a pair. This was largely dictated by the tastes of ecclesiastical and noble patrons who now commissioned images of David and Judith for their own pleasure so that they lost much of their religious meaning. Led by Caravaggio, scenes of decapitation became bloody and gory in the extreme and, as we have observed, there is no difference in the treatment between the way in which male or female artists depicted Judith and David - both are equally brutal in their depictions of decapitation. The opulent settings described in the bible of the murder scenes of Judith are not based on the biblical narratives and the maid is often included which as, we saw, is not part of the story. Artists in the South use their imaginative powers and artistic skills to portray these images as powerfully, dramatically and sexually as possible to suit the tastes of their individual patrons and in keeping with the times in which they lived. Decapitations executed by David, on the other hand, are more realistically portrayed with David usually bringing down the sword from above However, most seventeenth century artists do try to adhere to the tenets of the Counter-Reformation whether they are depicting scenes of David at prayer or in contemplation, or as a representative of the Church Triumphant while the artists of the Reformation of the North also employ representations of Judith and David as a means of

showing Protestantism victorious over Catholic Heresy. While painters of the South pay little attention to the biblical texts, sixteenth century artists of the North, such as Lucas van Leyden, do so as far as possible, while Rembrandt follows the text almost to the letter on nearly every occasion. Artists in Sweden relied to a great extent on prints and woodcuts in Bibles which being next to the written text were an accurate rendition of the sacred word. These were disseminated from Germany and Flanders. We saw evidence of this in the wall paintings of Sweden.

And now to a discussion of the final conclusion. So how far is Blanche Roosevelt correct in her comments that most artists misrepresented the sacred stories? I think that my research has shown that she is basically correct in this assumption, but then I do not believe that she has examined the evidence as to why artists make certain change to the images they are depicting. As regards Gustave Doré, he does, as she rightly points out, give us a biblical image of splendour and grandeur, nevertheless, as I have demonstrated he fails at times to give us a "truly accurate comment" on the textual image.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN

THE IMAGES OF

JUDITH AND HOLOFERNES AND

DAVID AND GOLIATH

IN THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN ART

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PERIOD 1400-1700

by Elizabeth Philpot

Volume 2 - Illustrations

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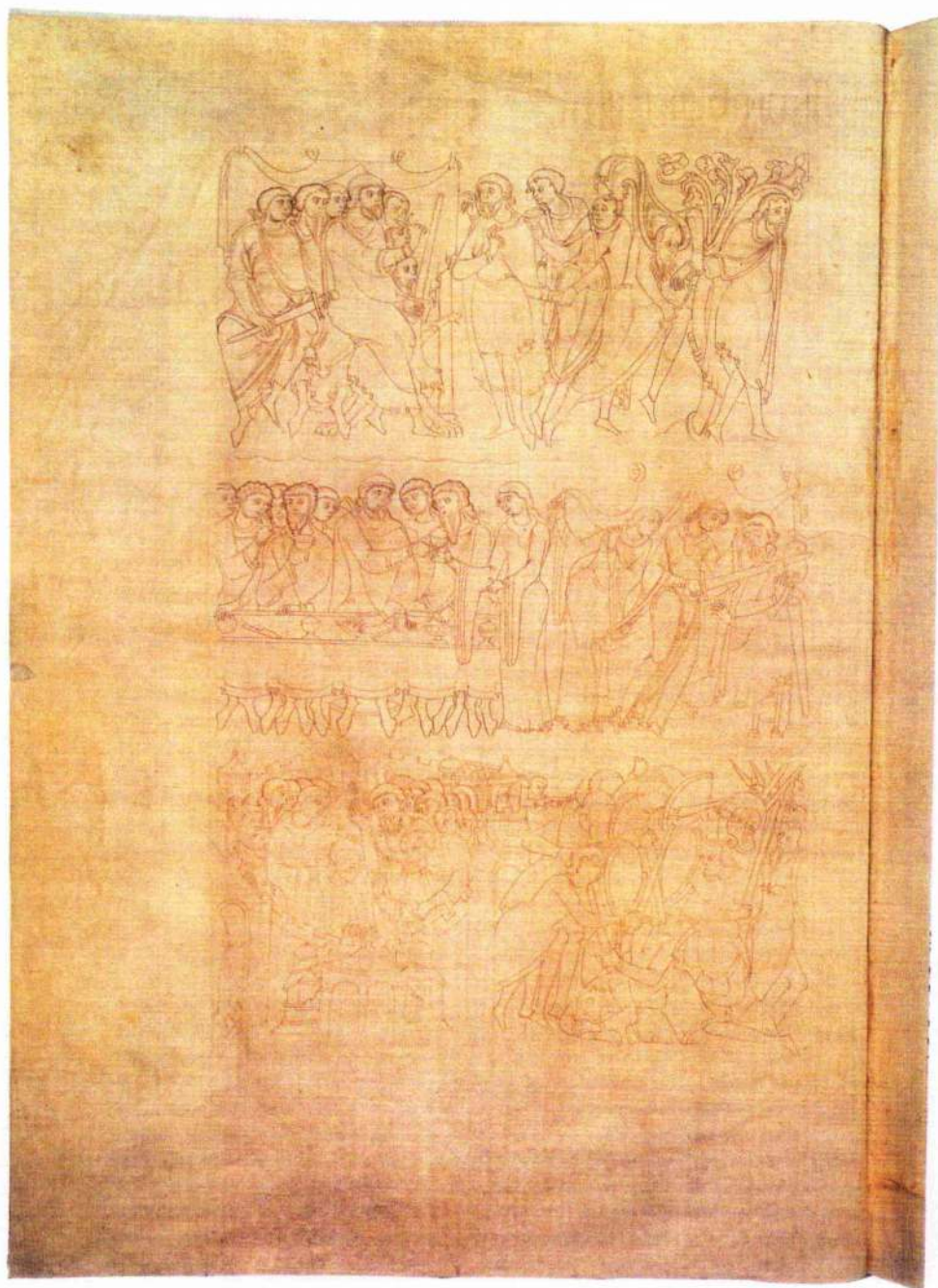
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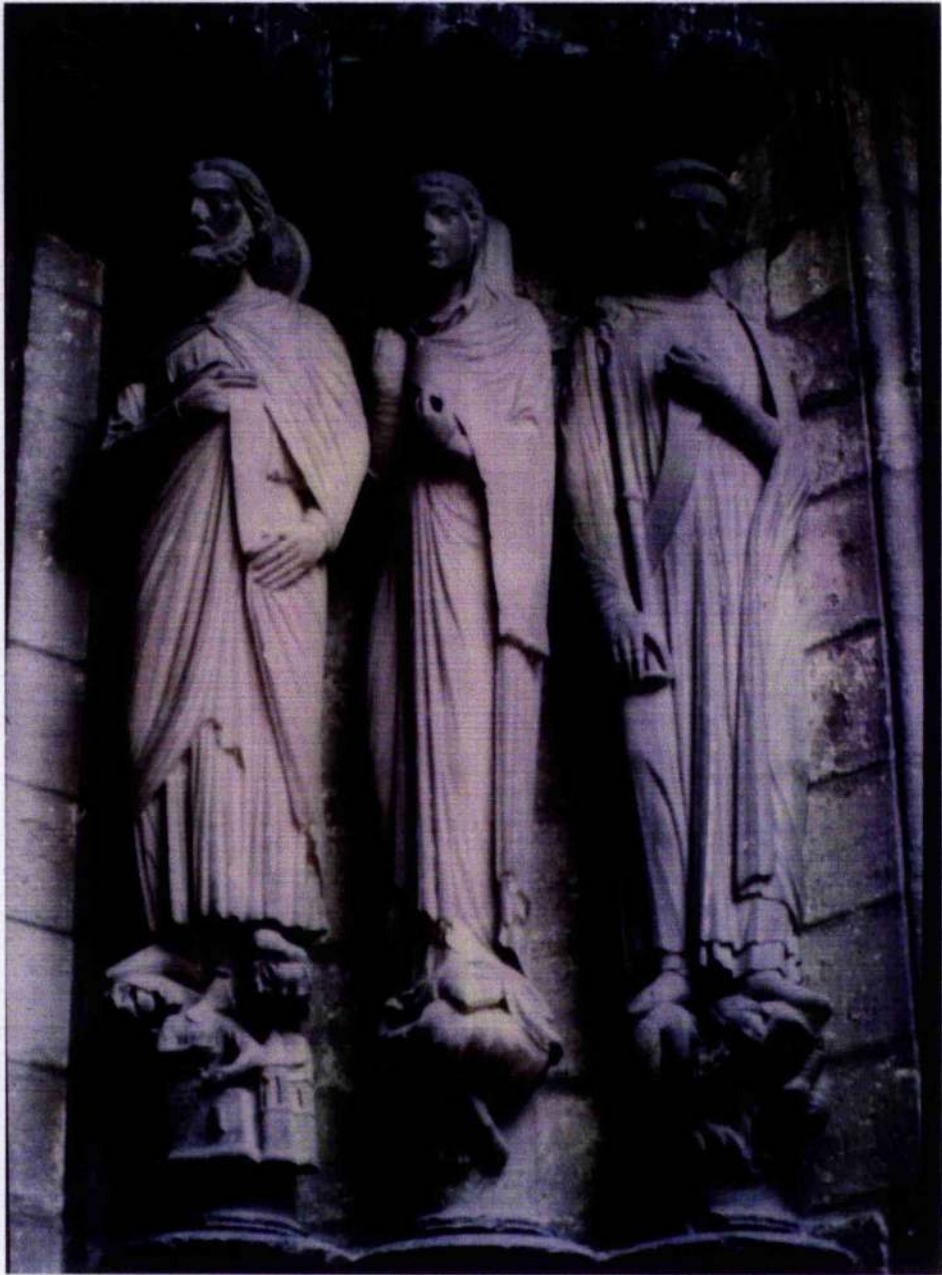
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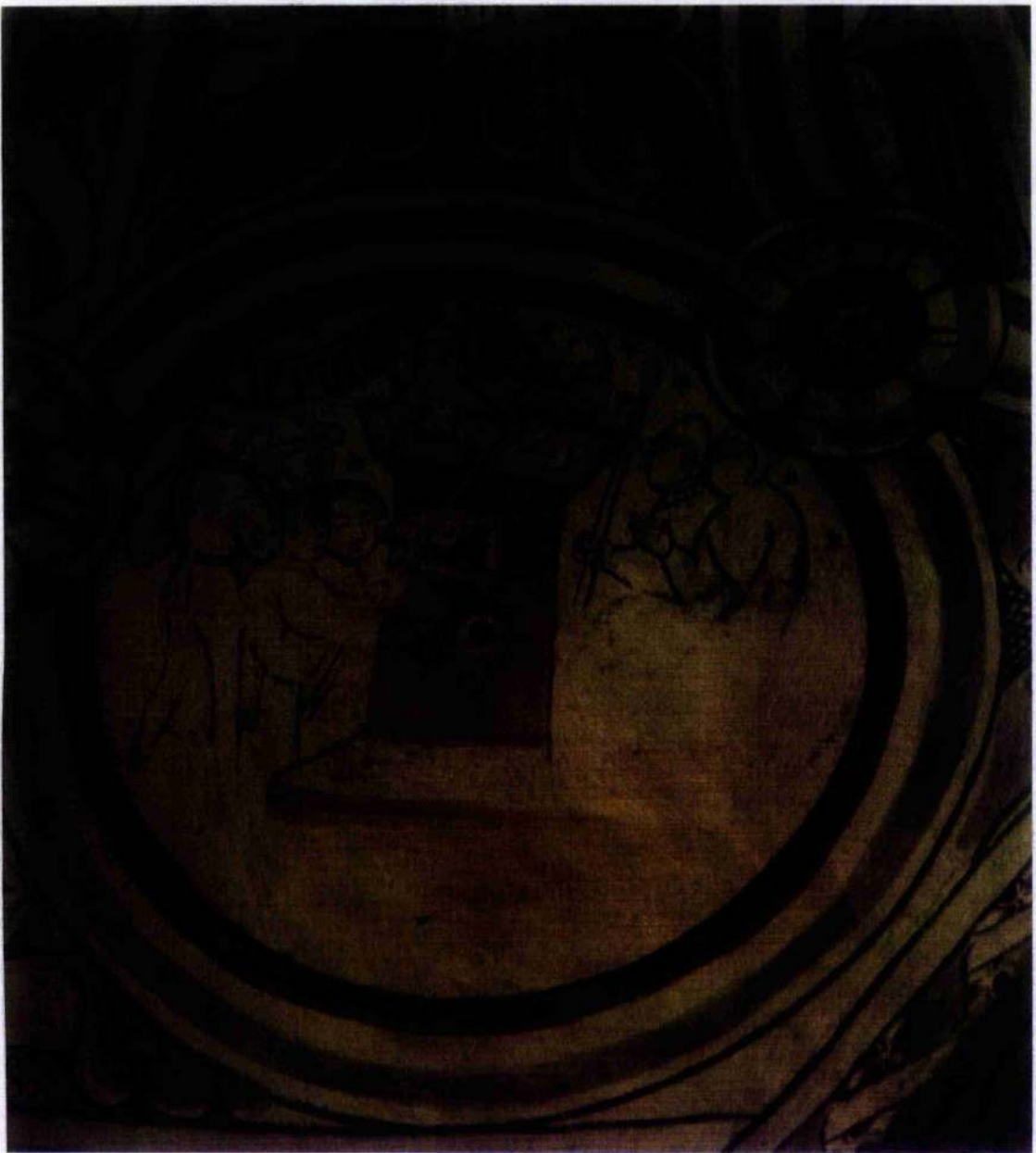
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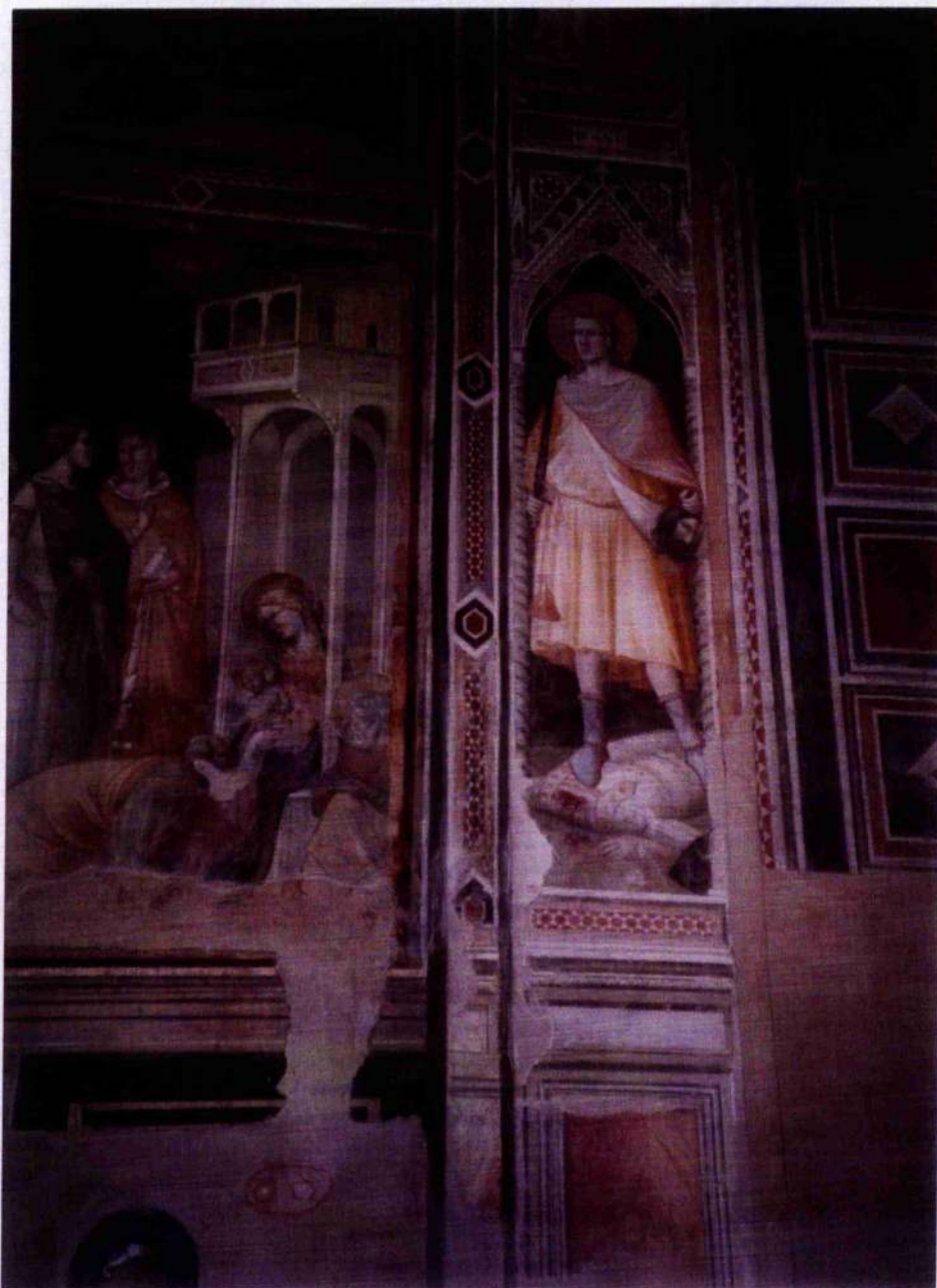
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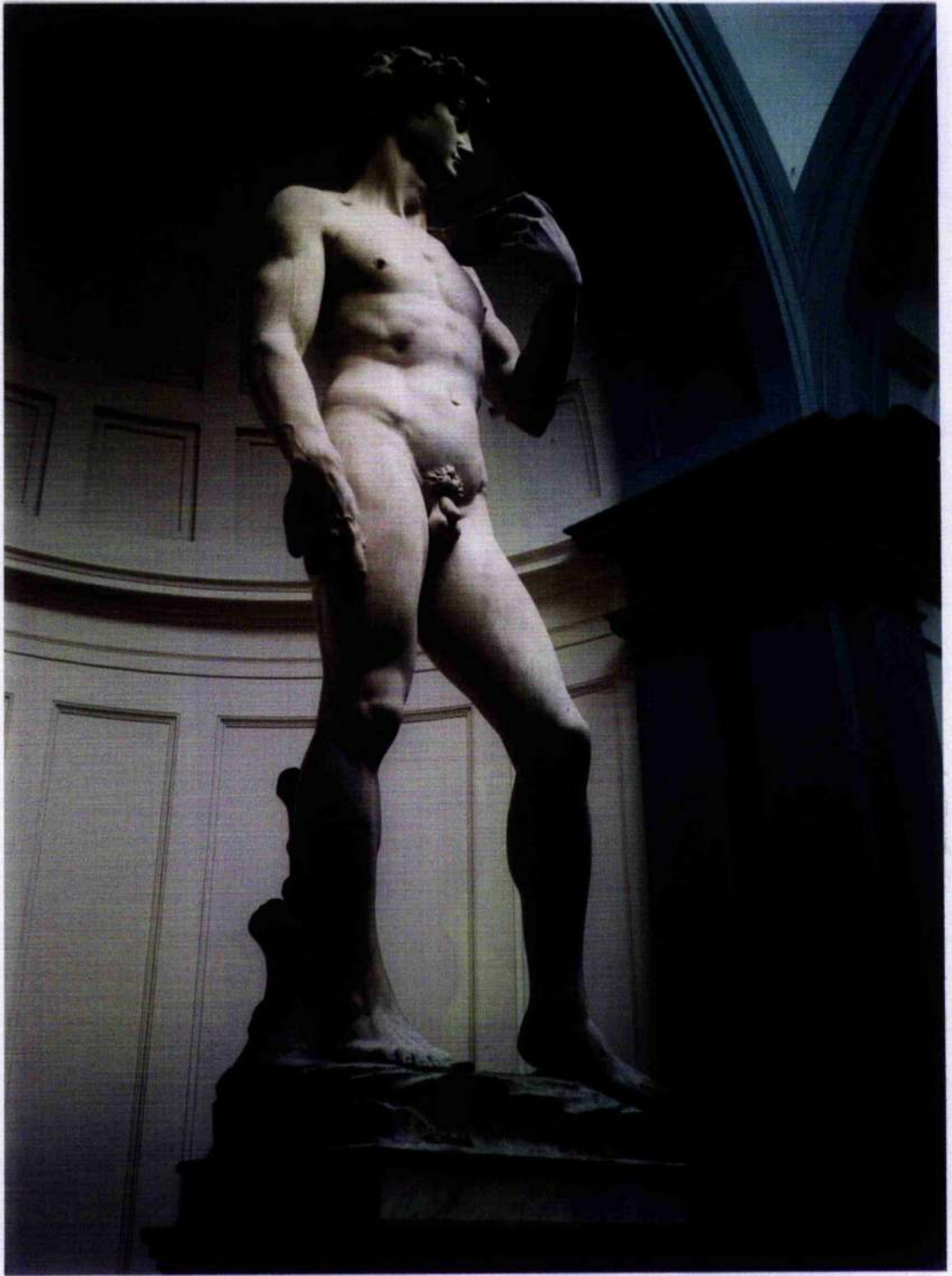
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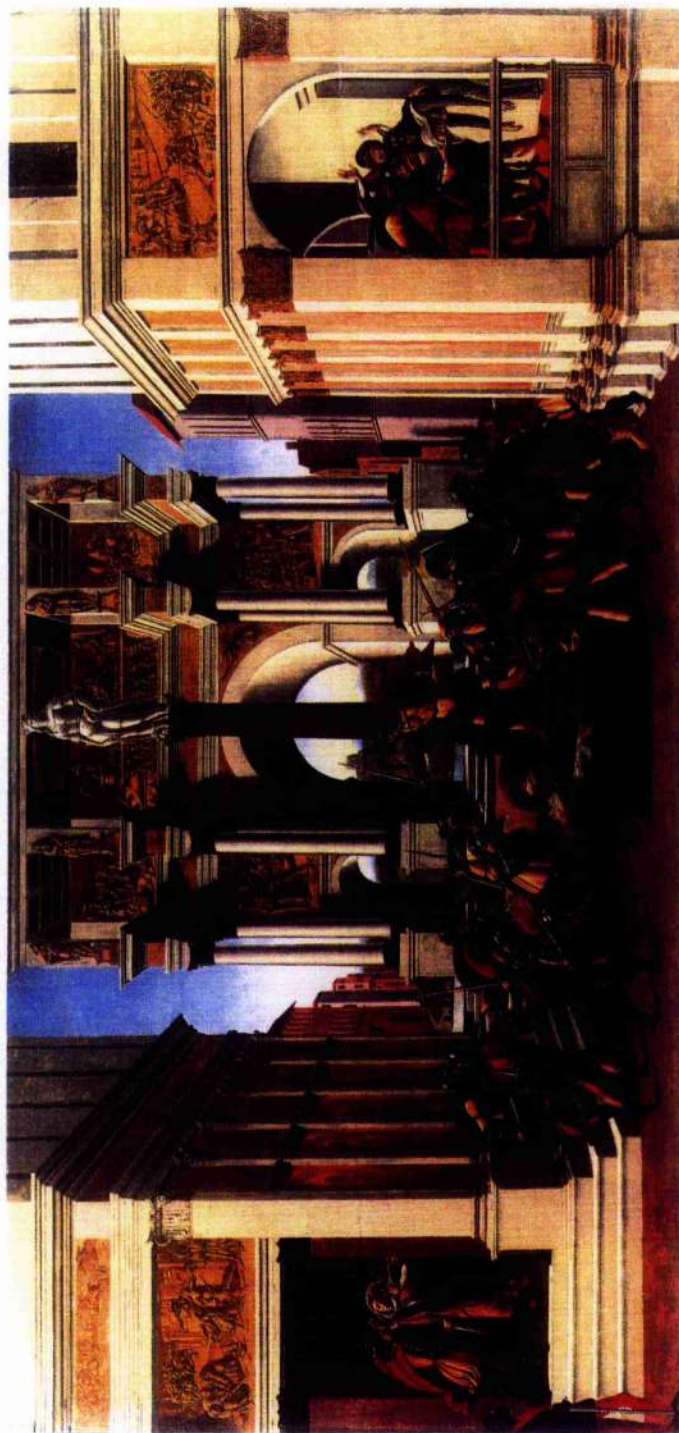
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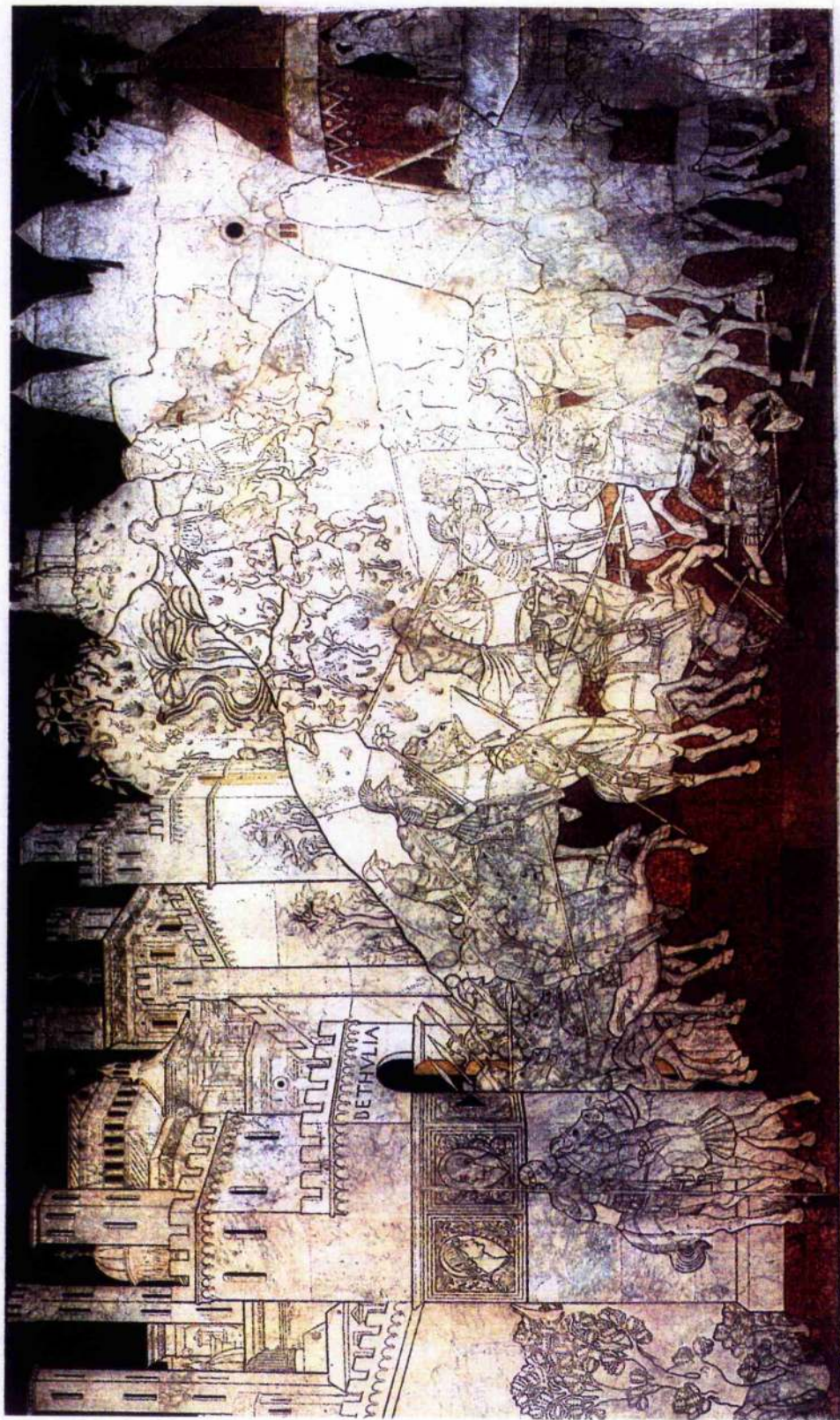
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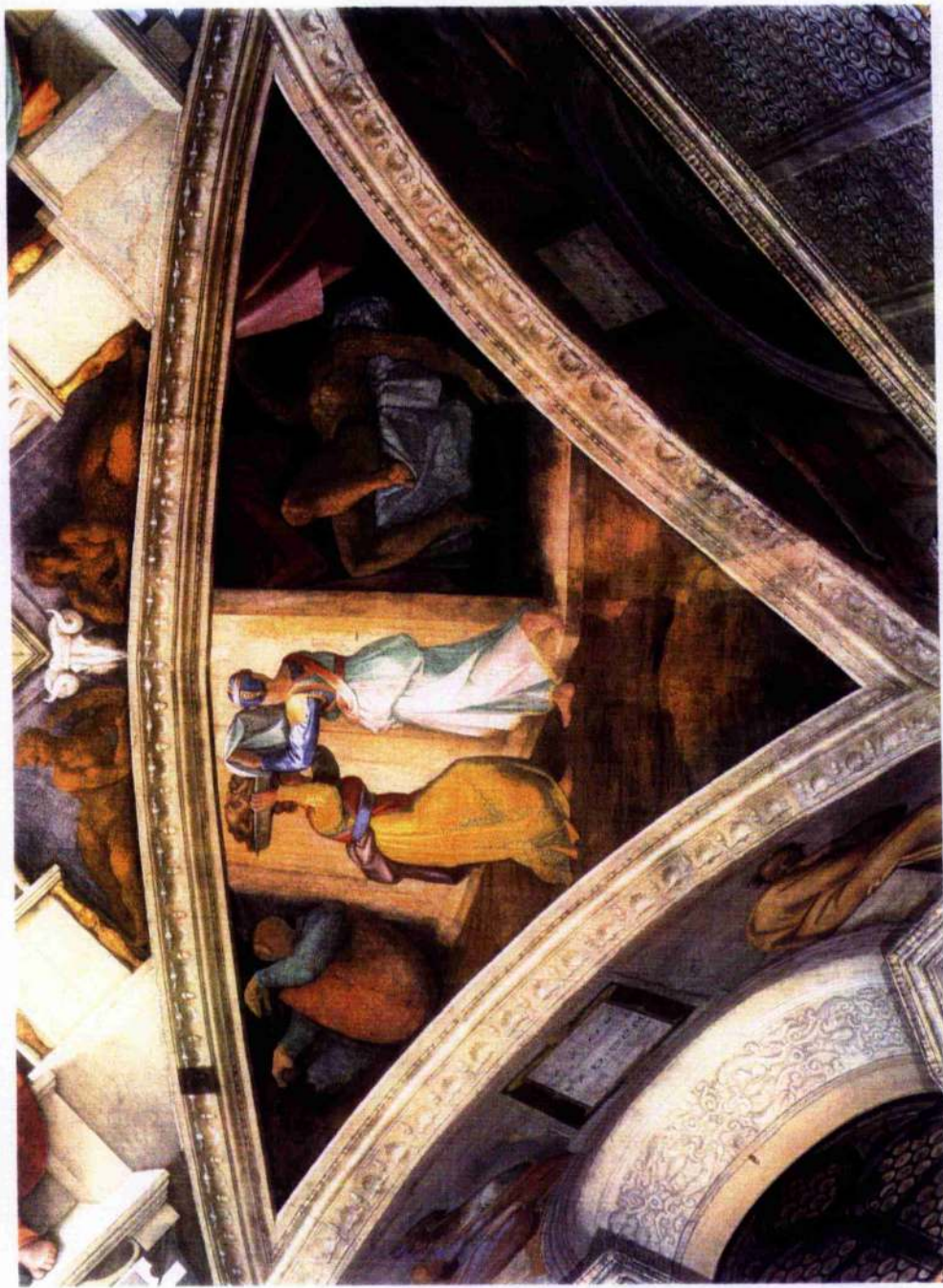
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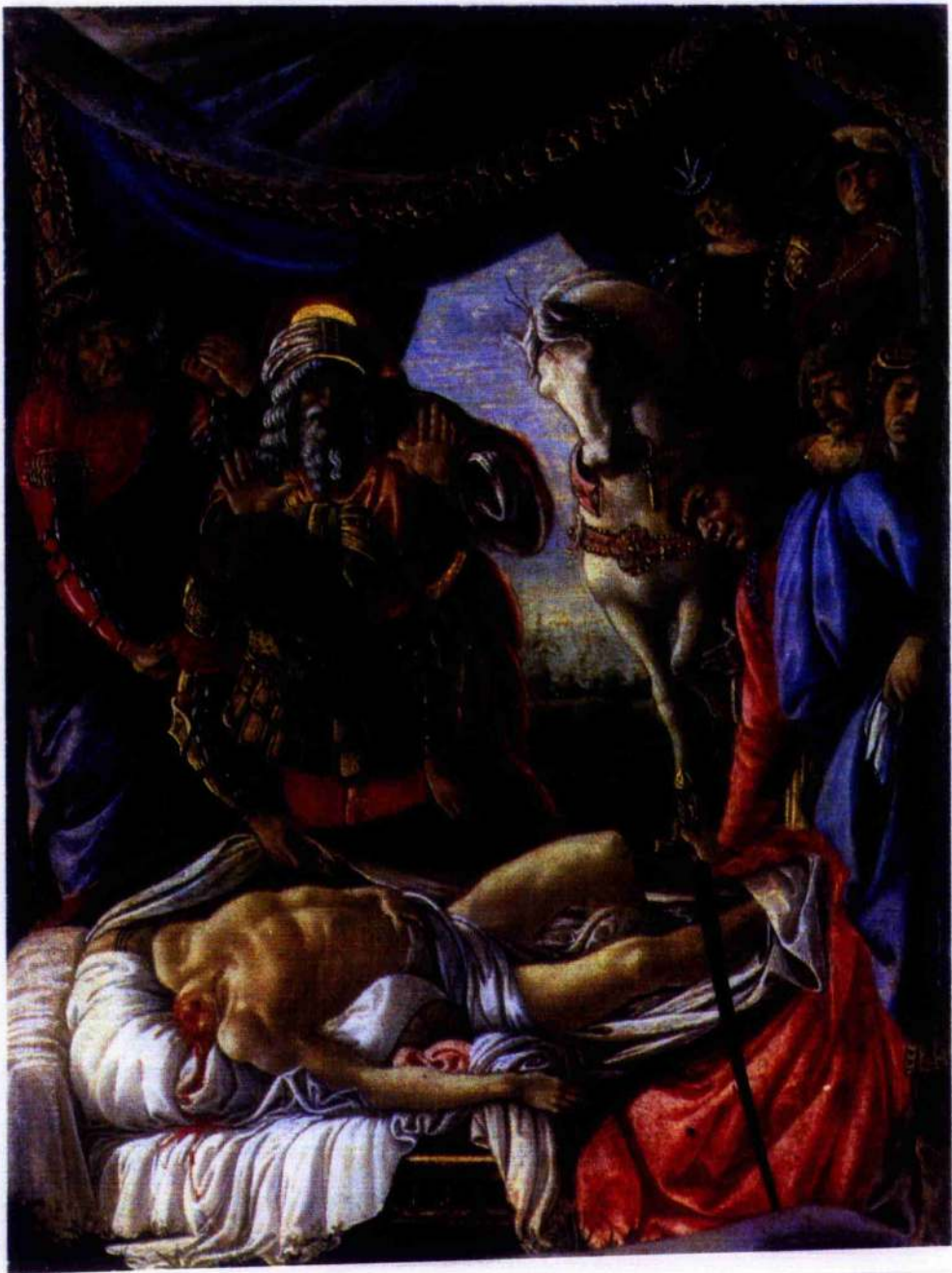
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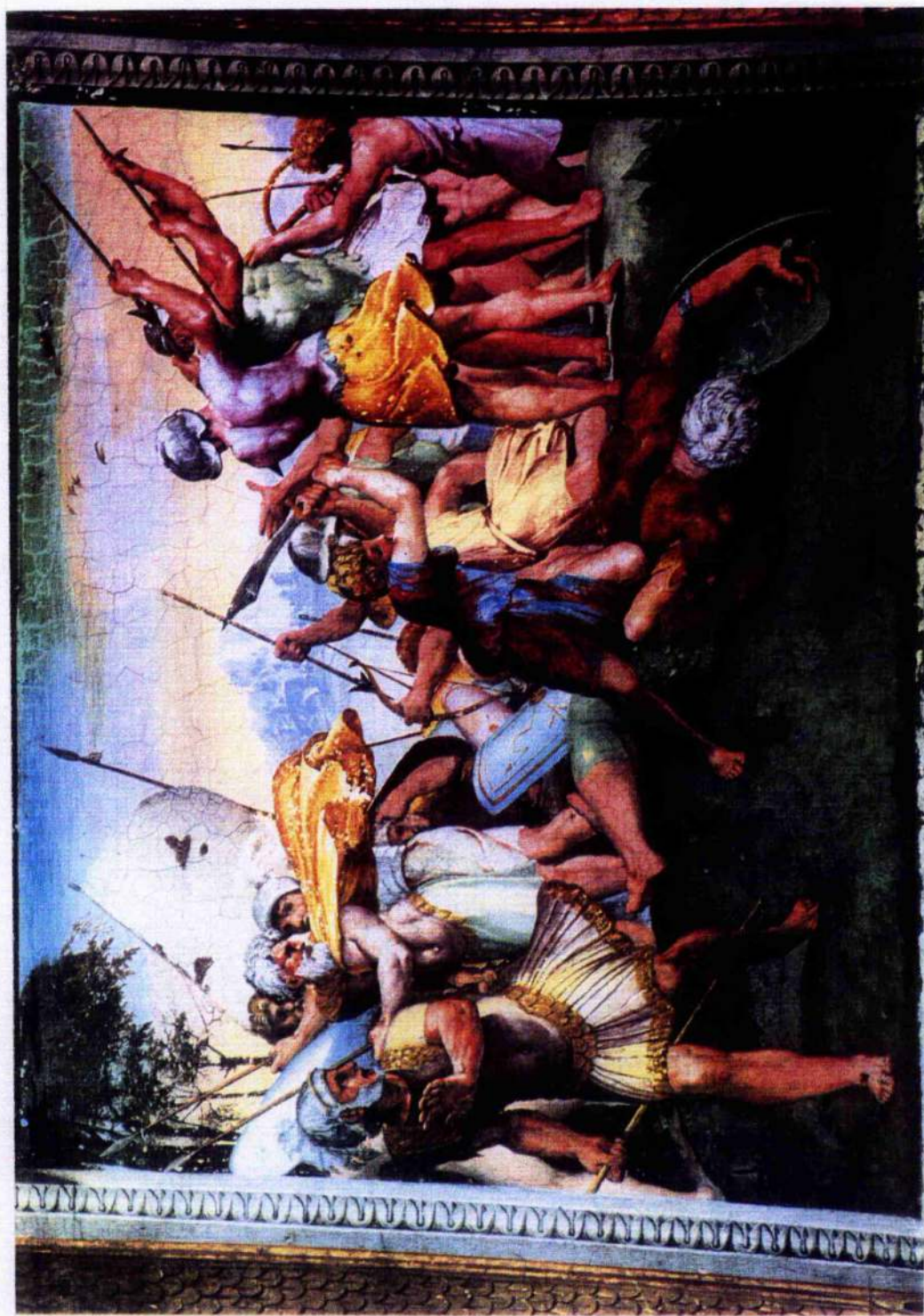
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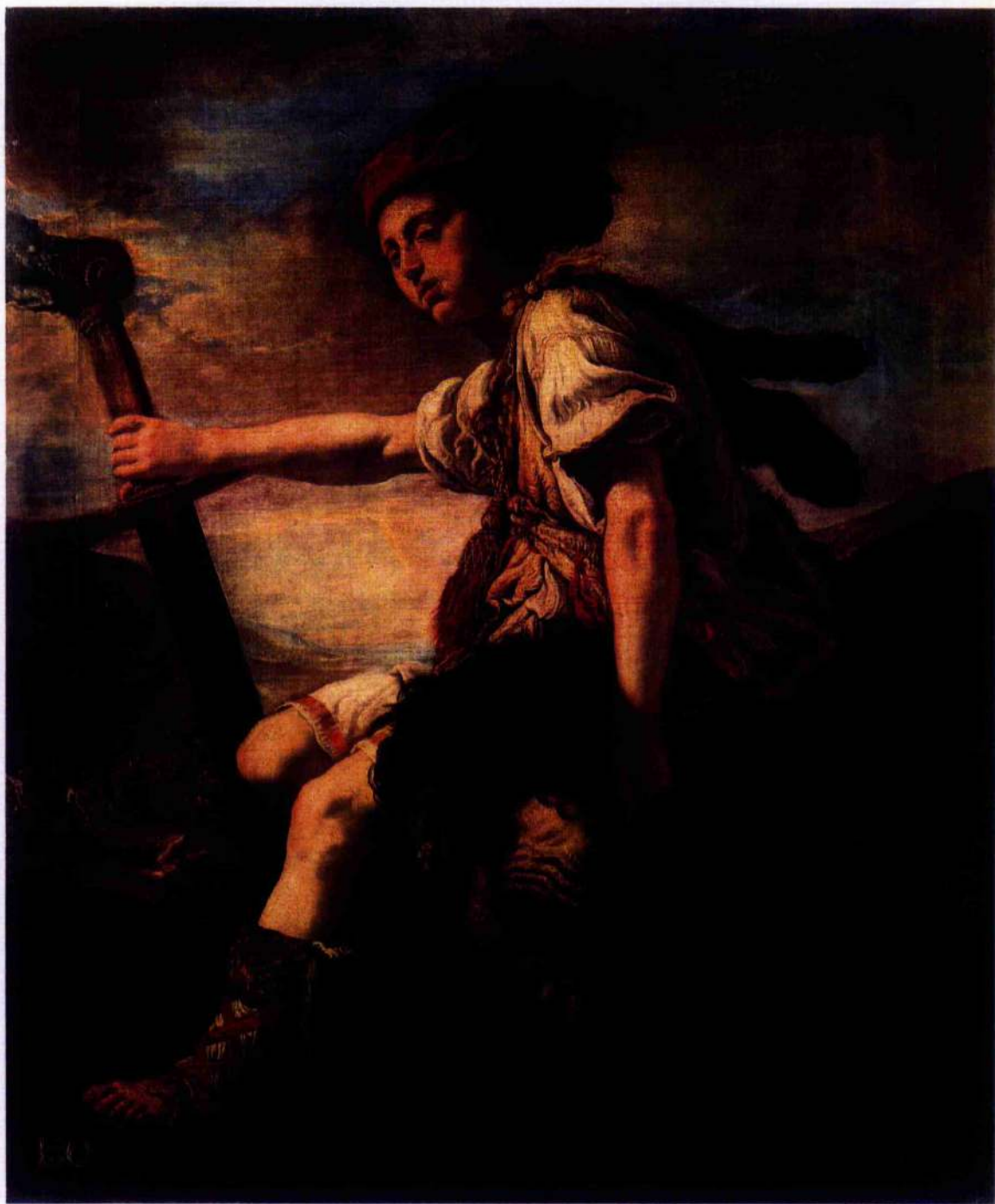
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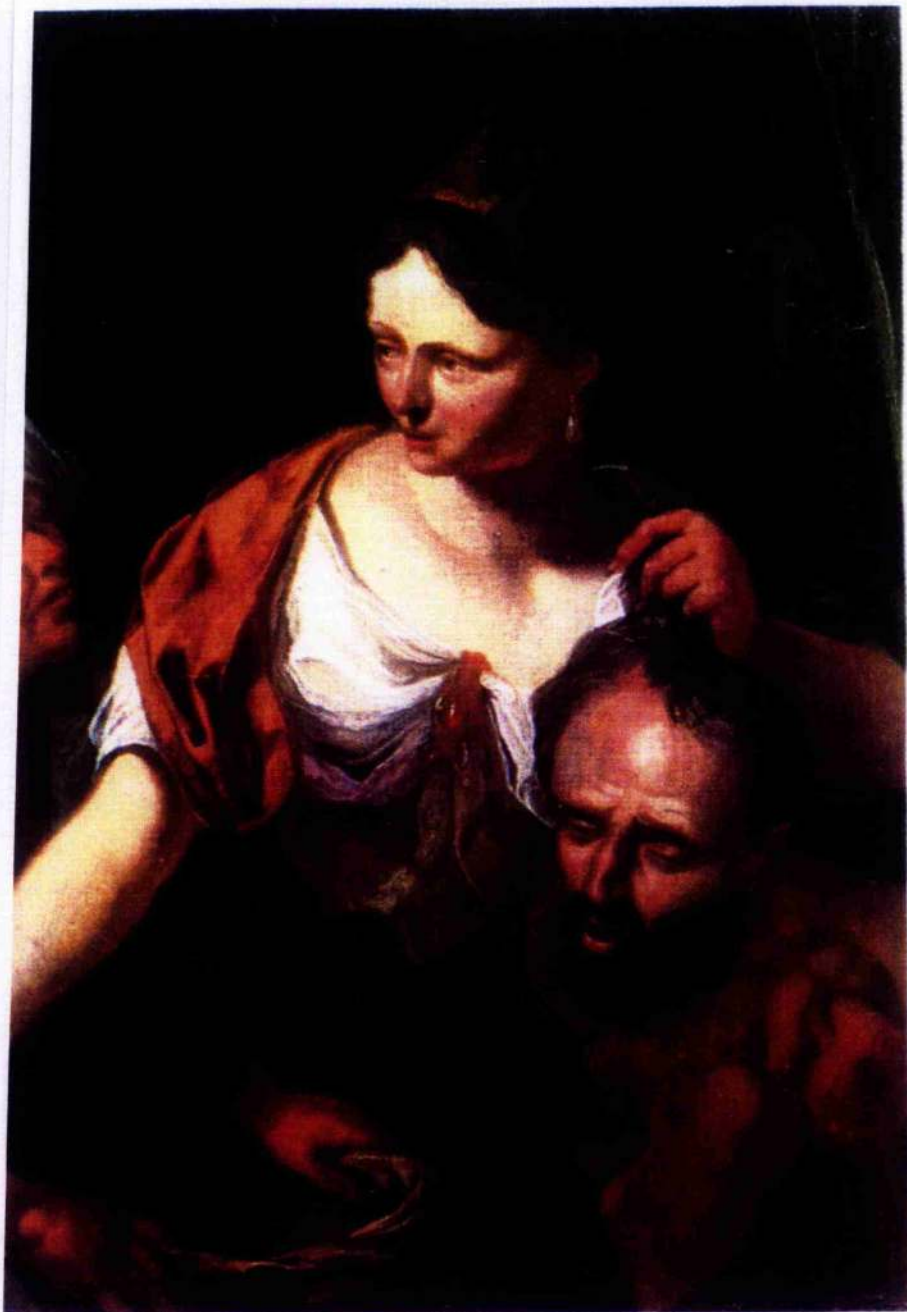
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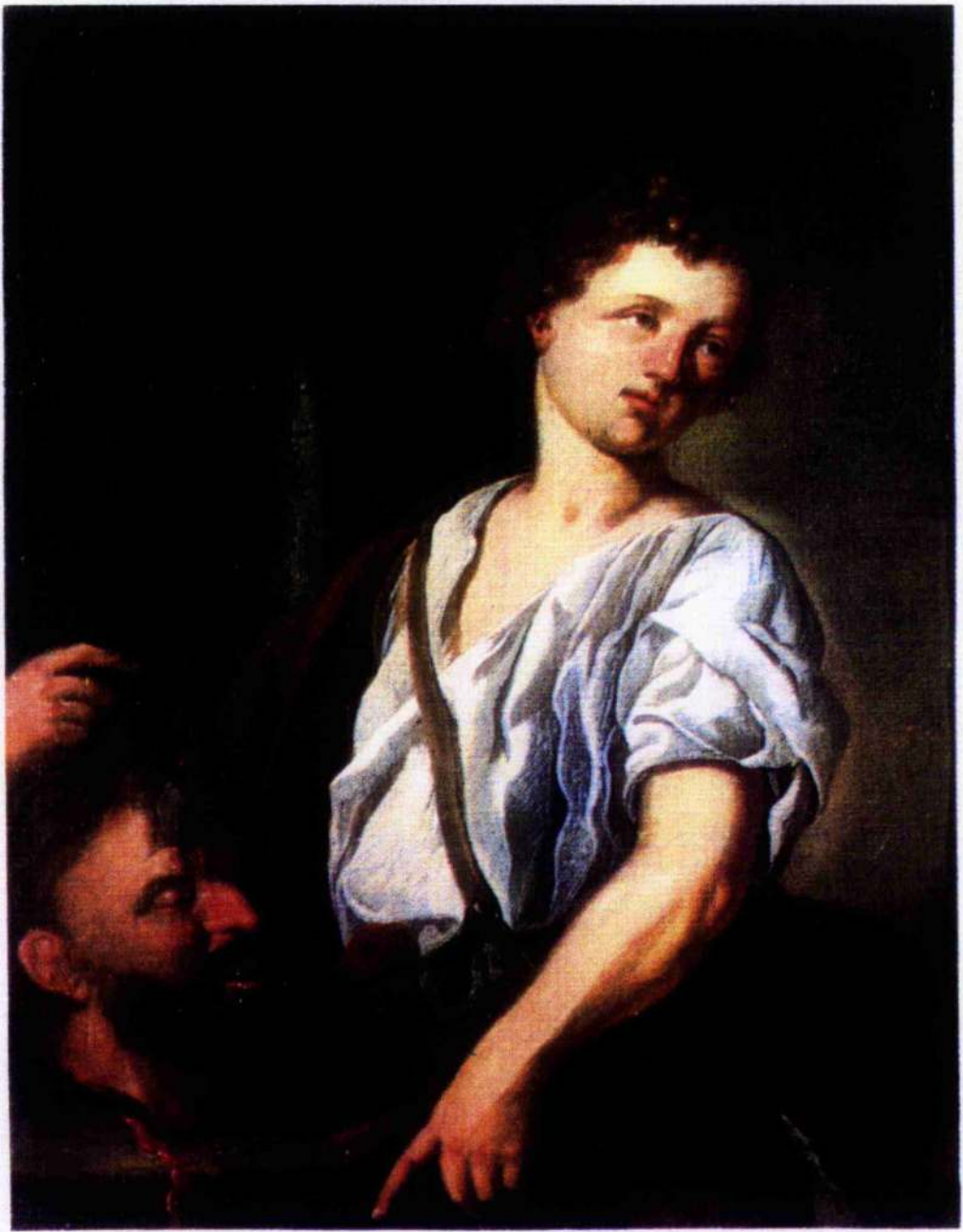
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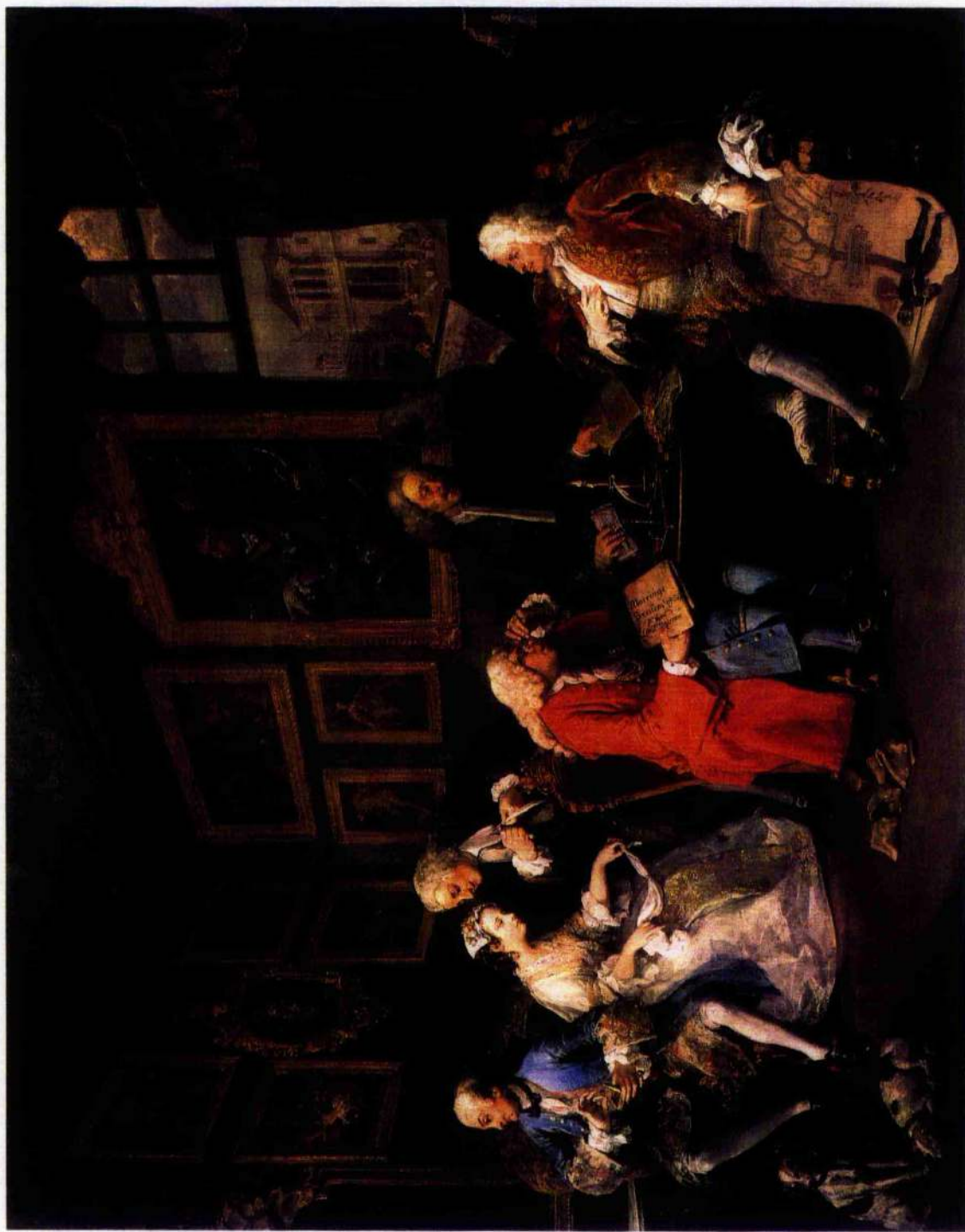
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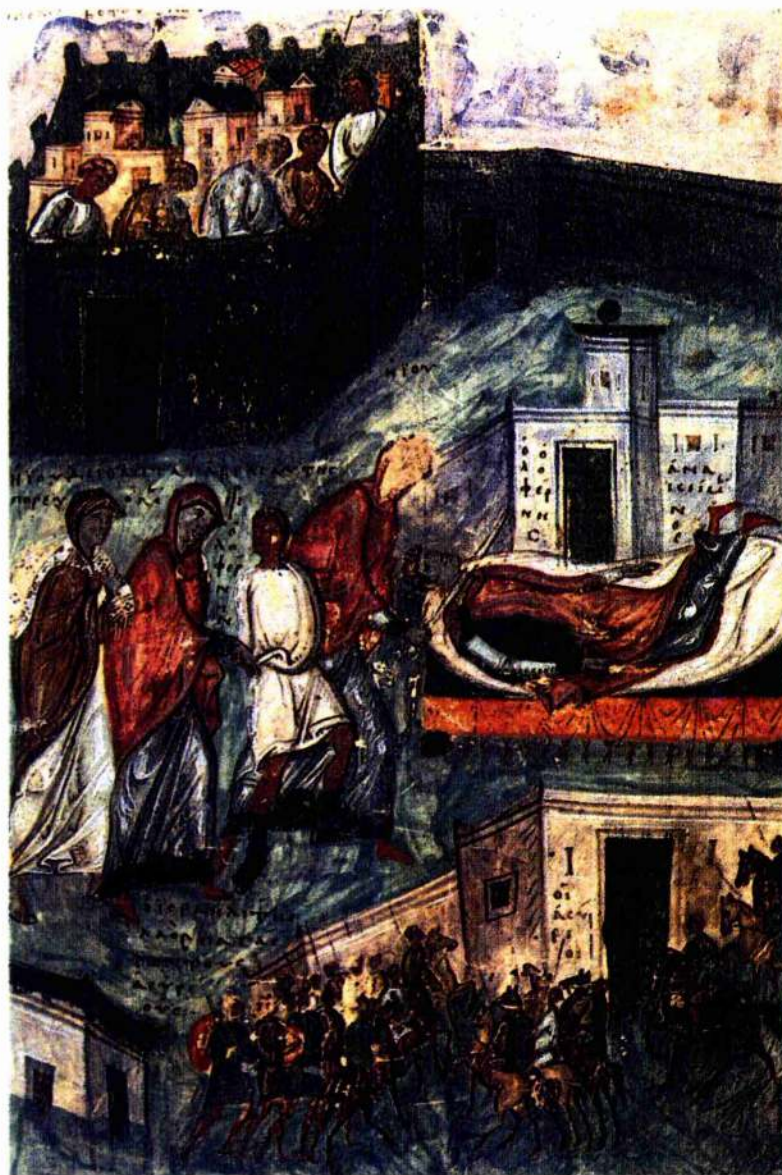
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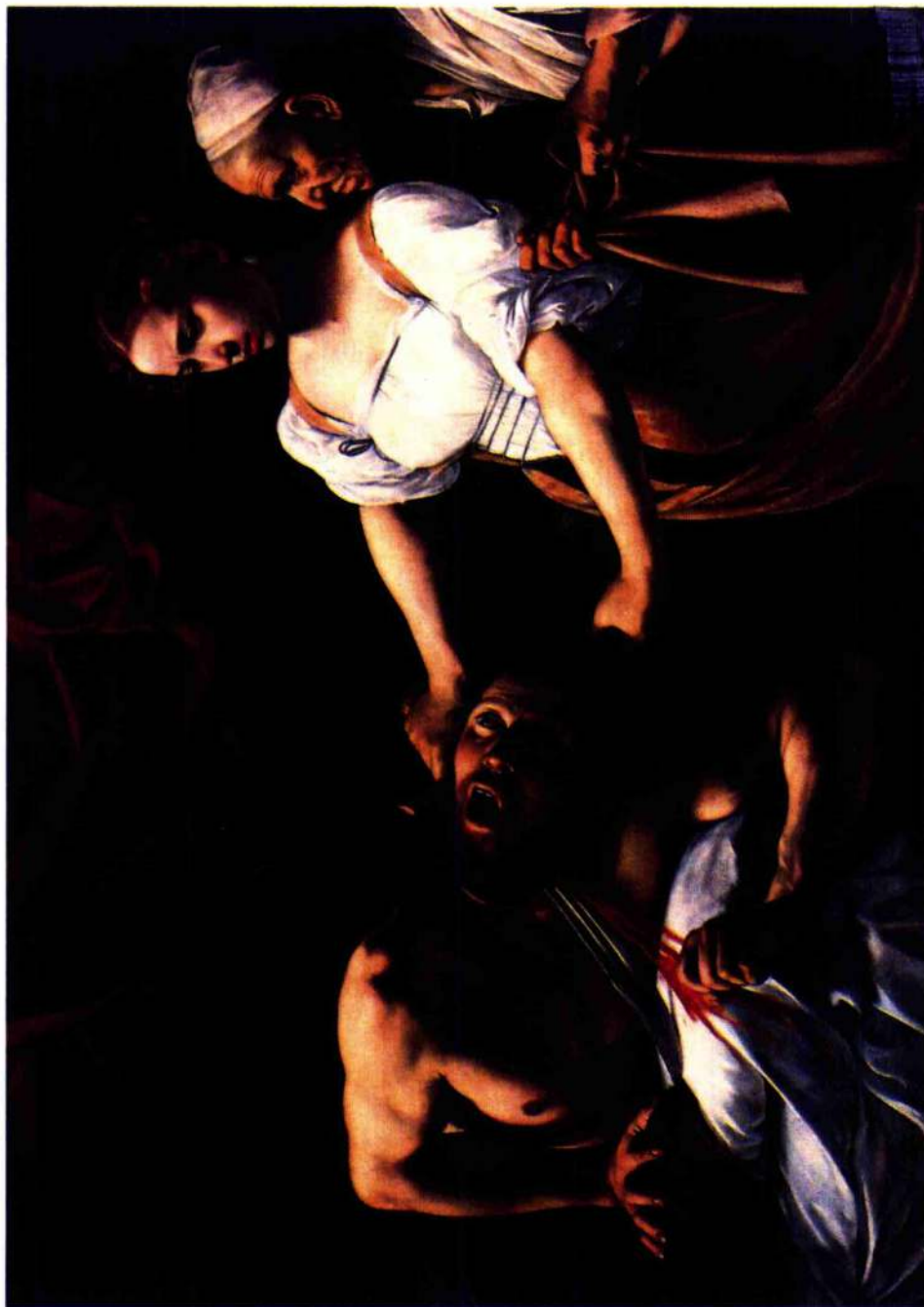
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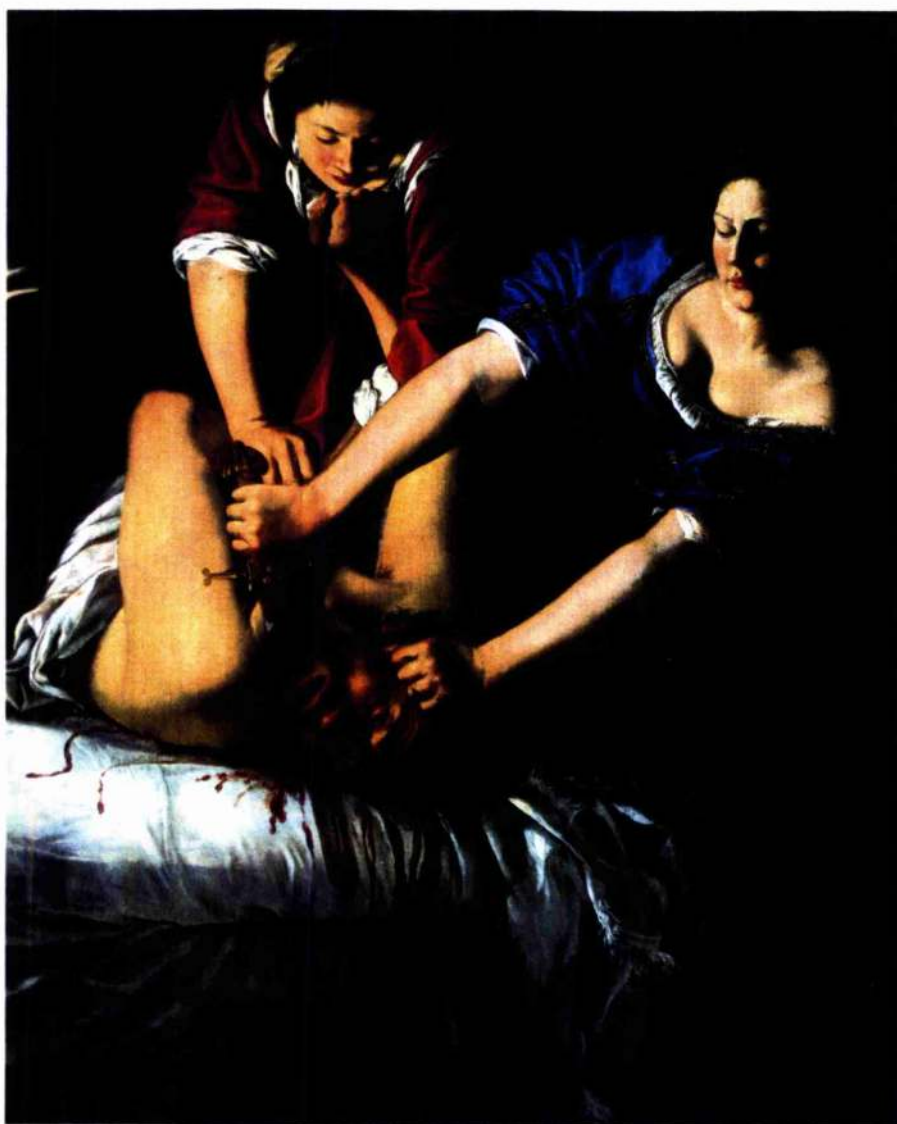
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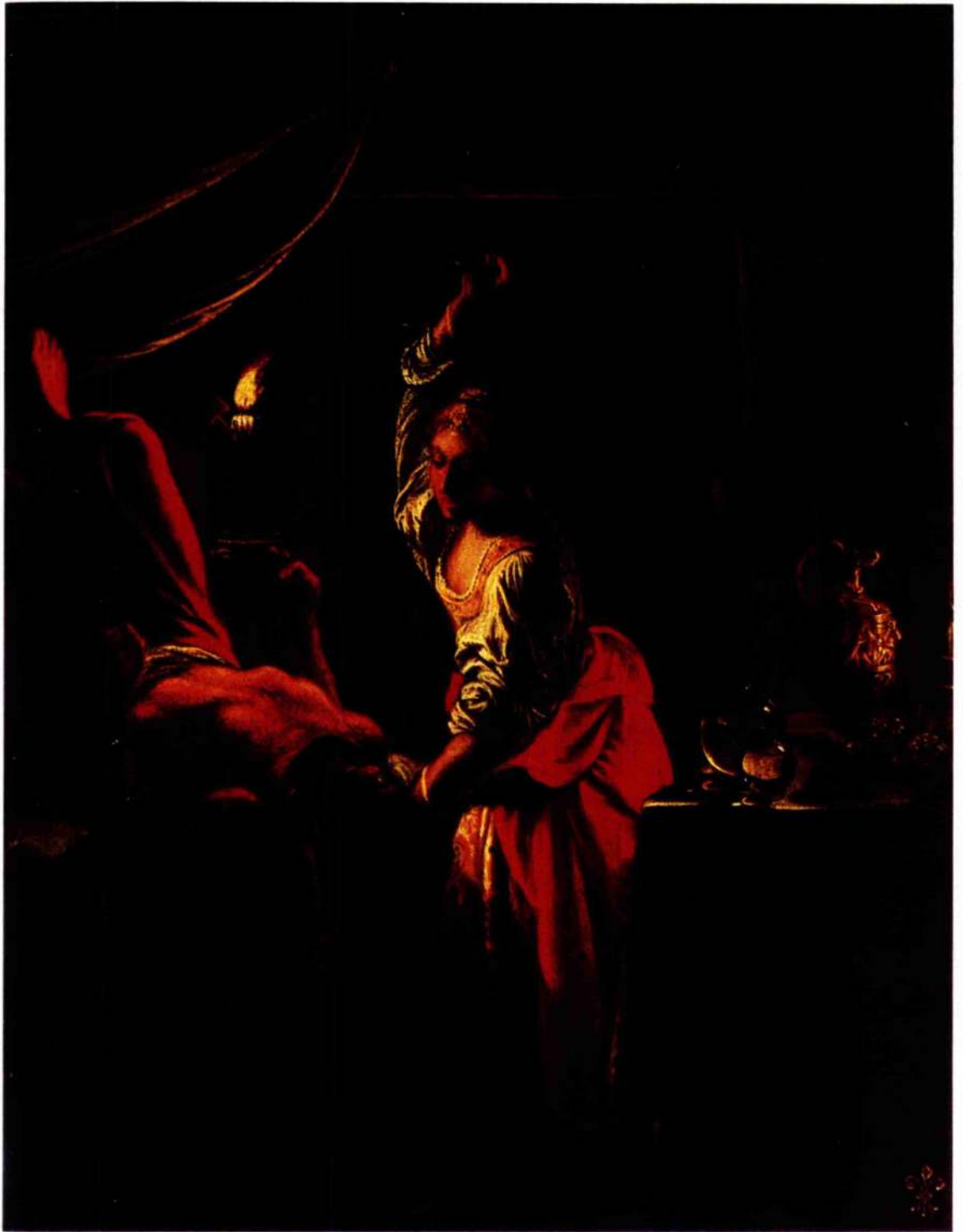
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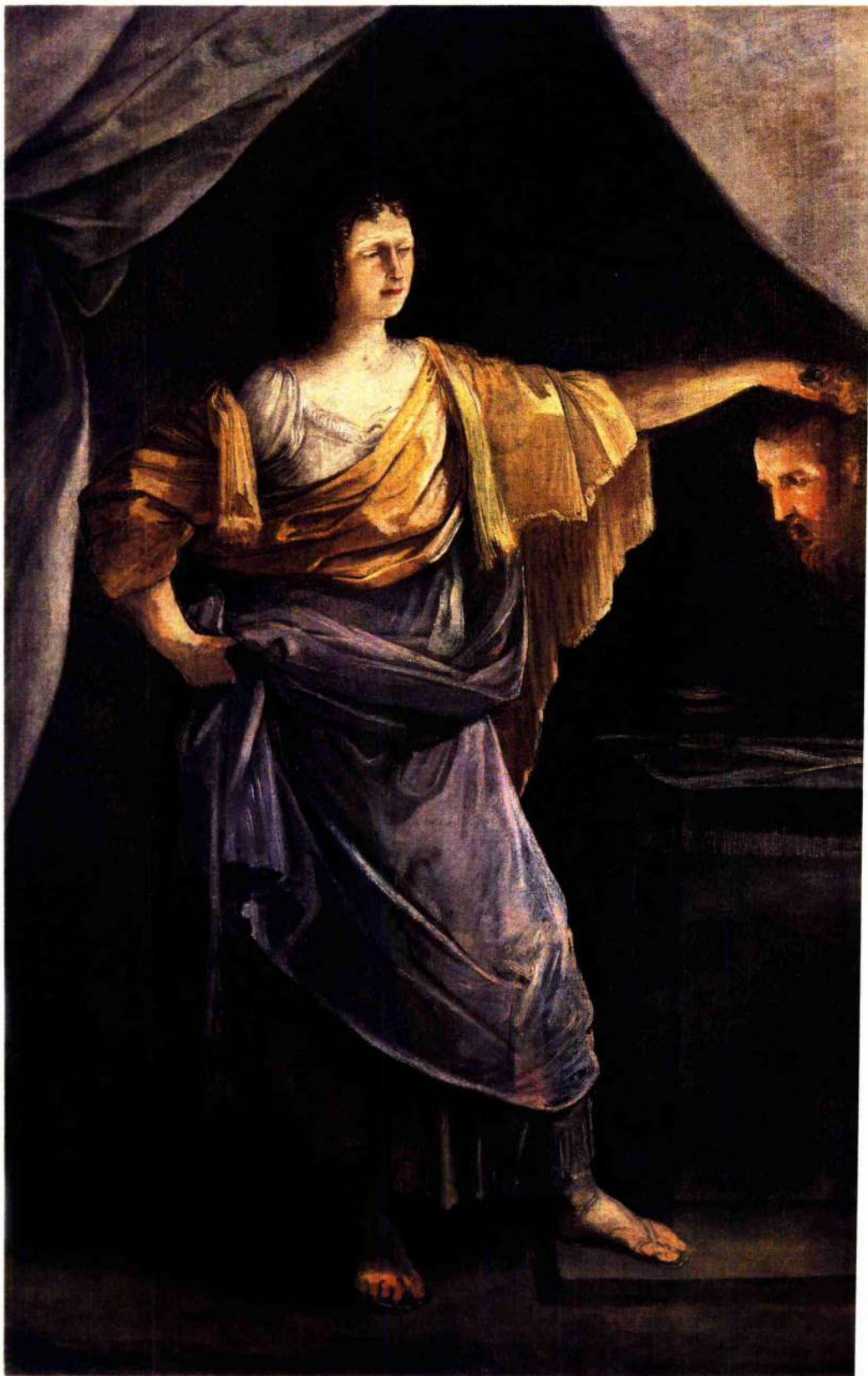
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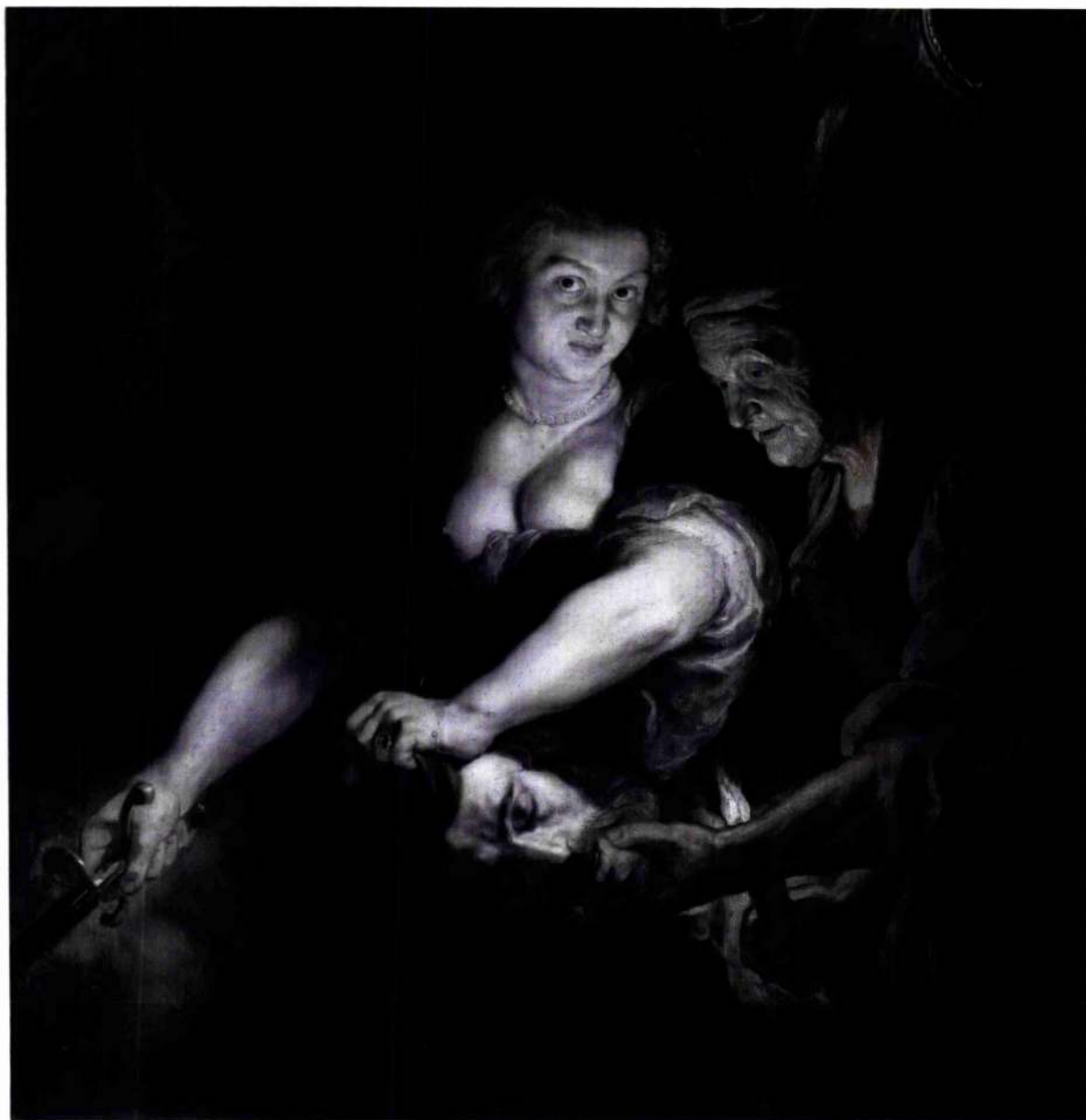
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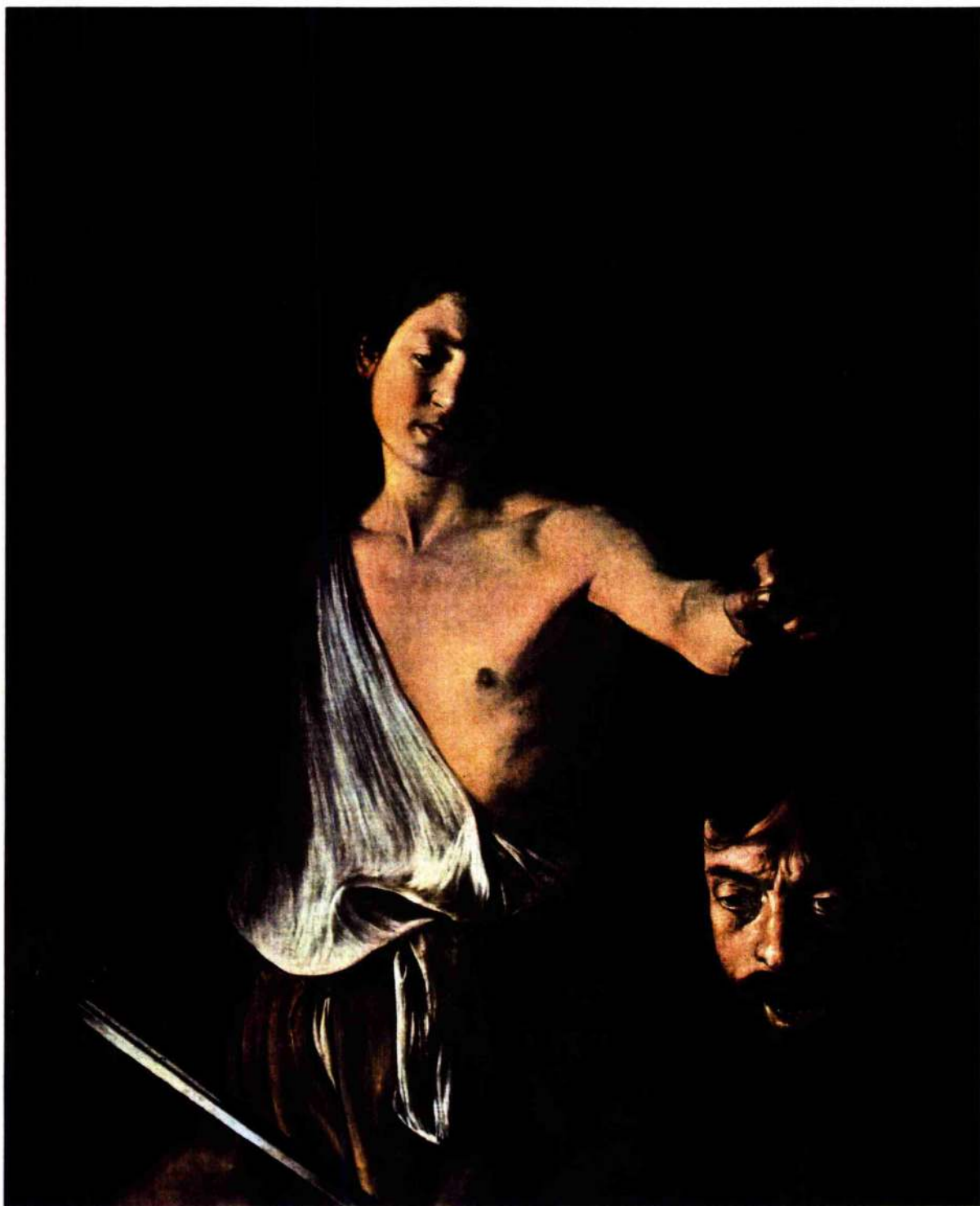
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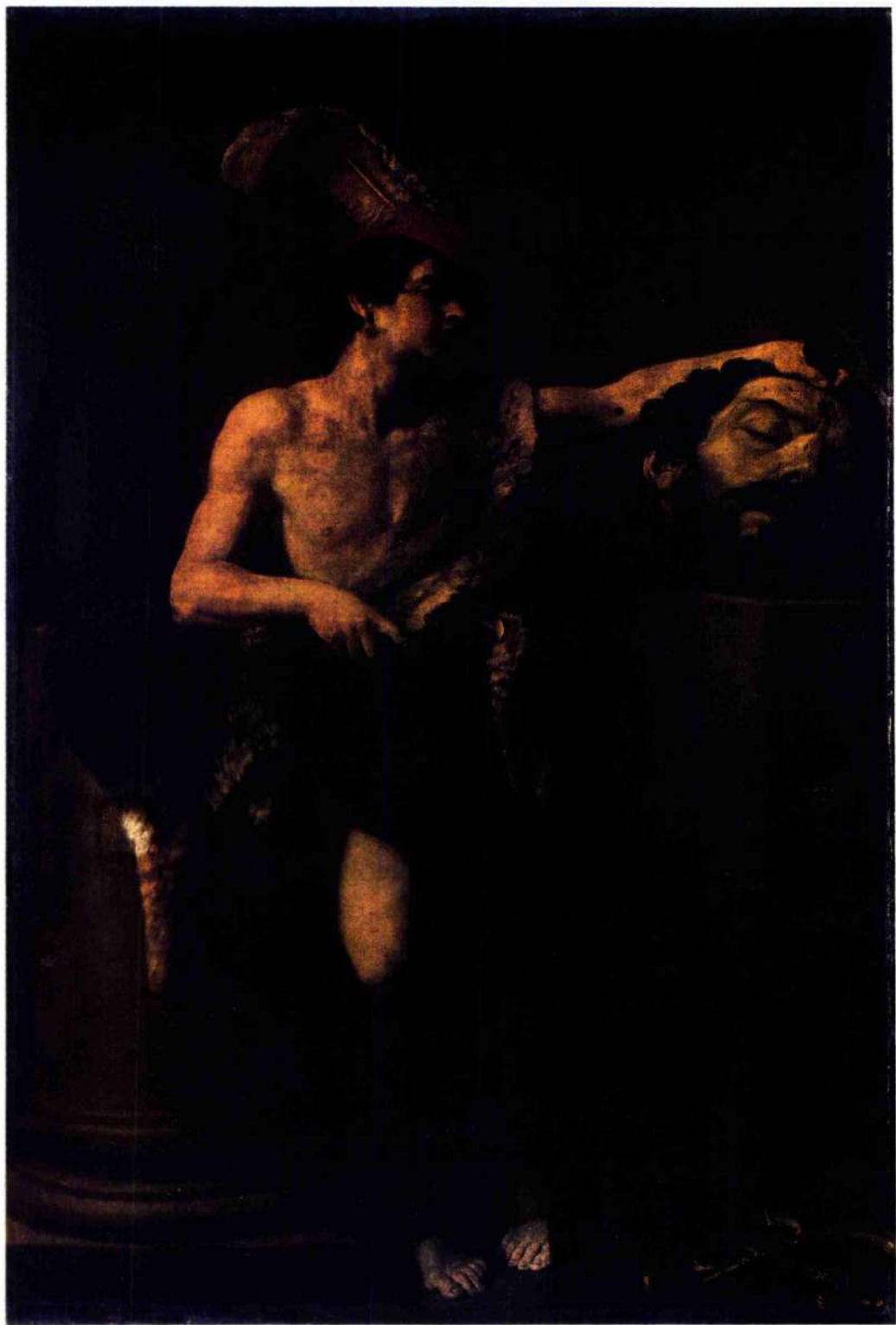
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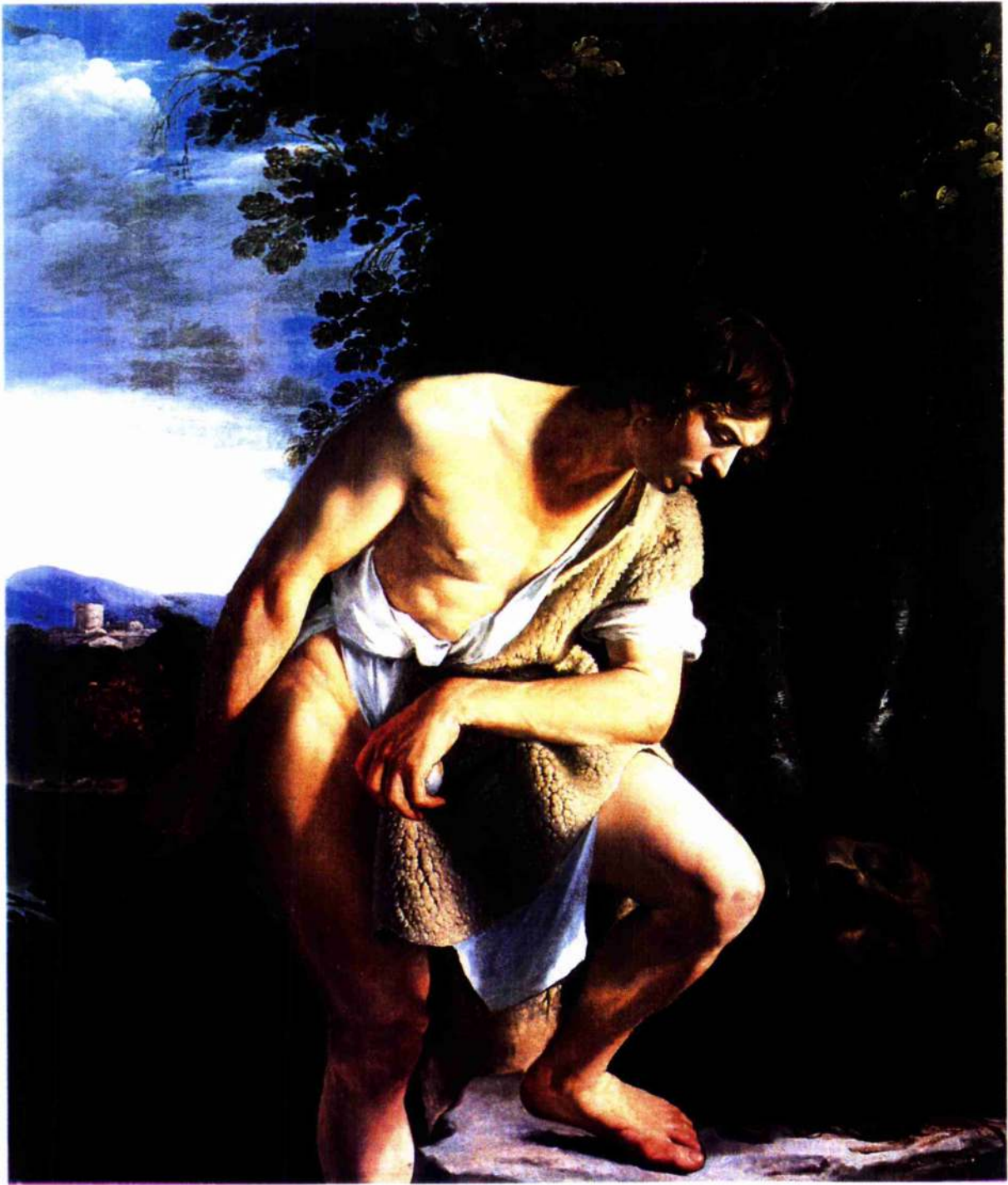
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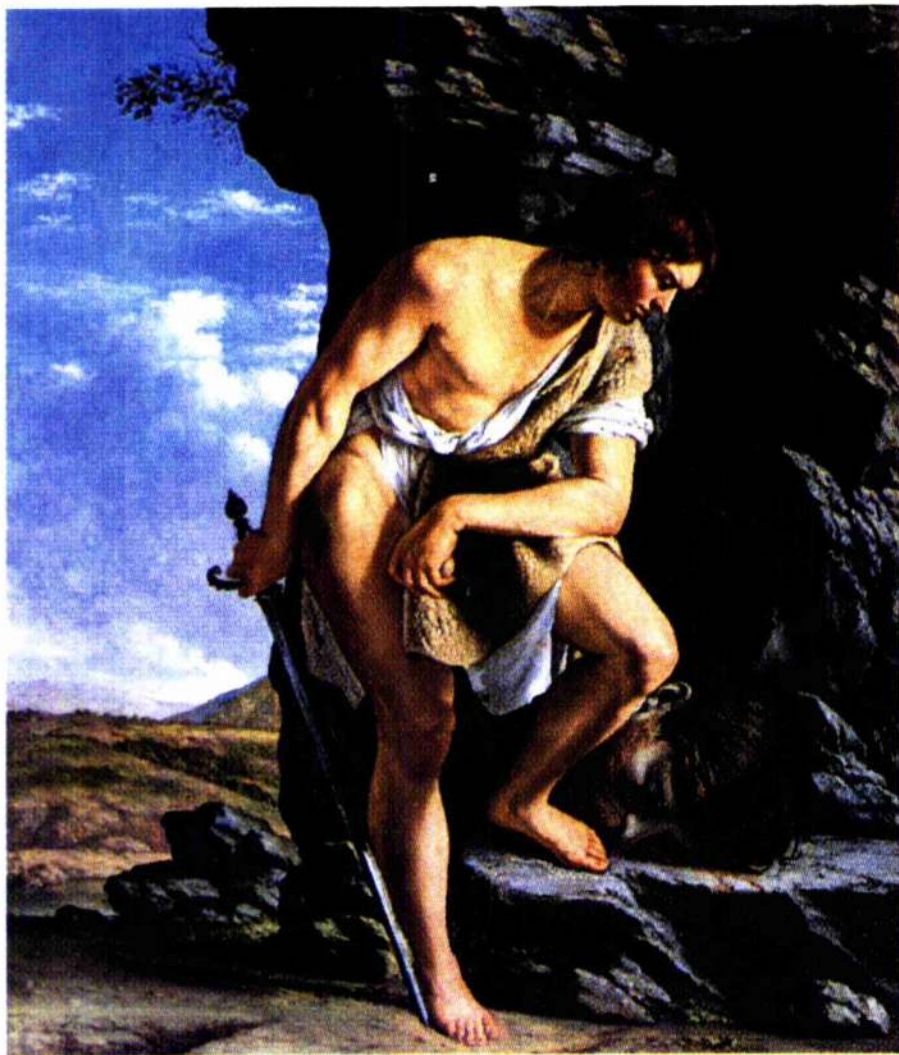
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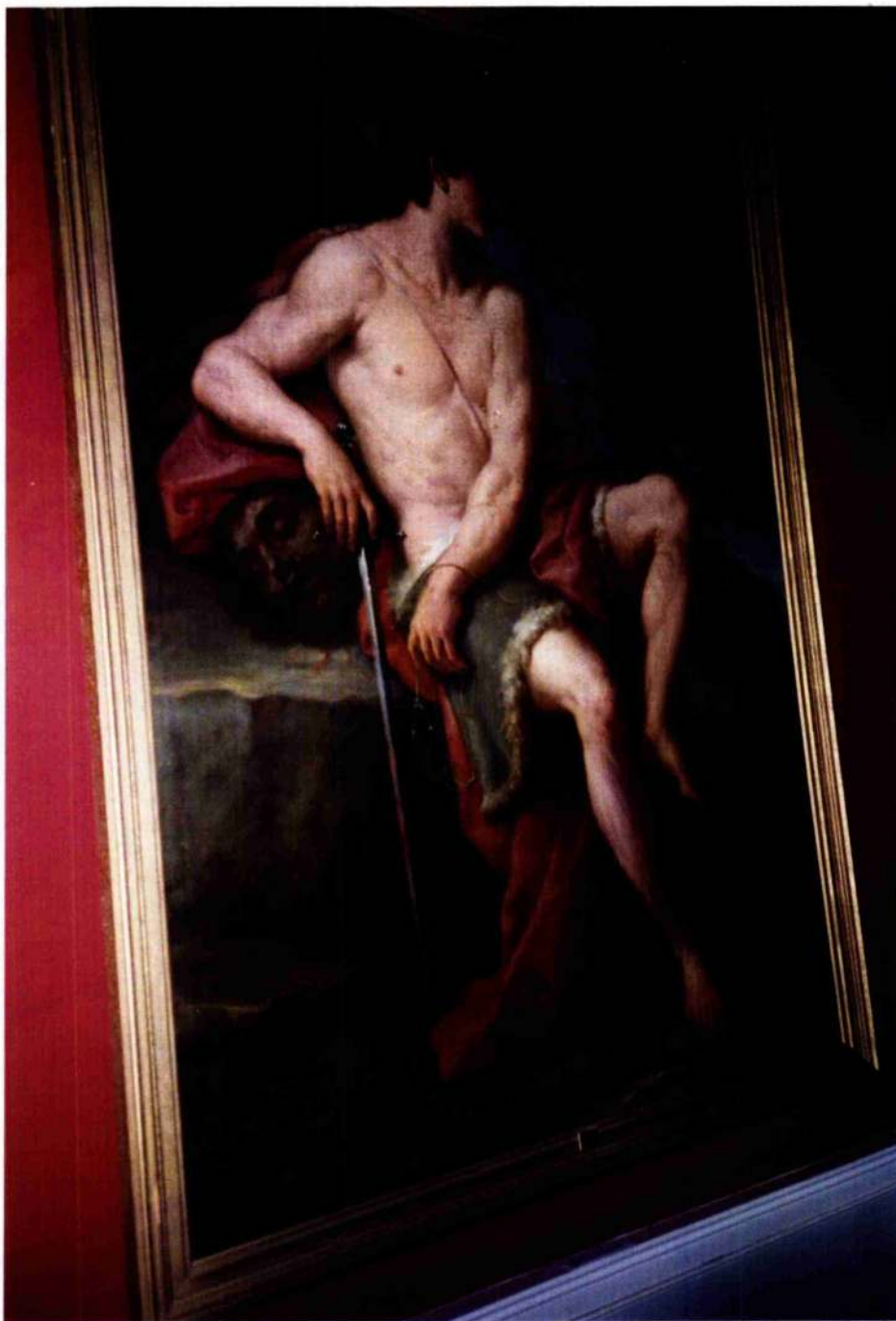
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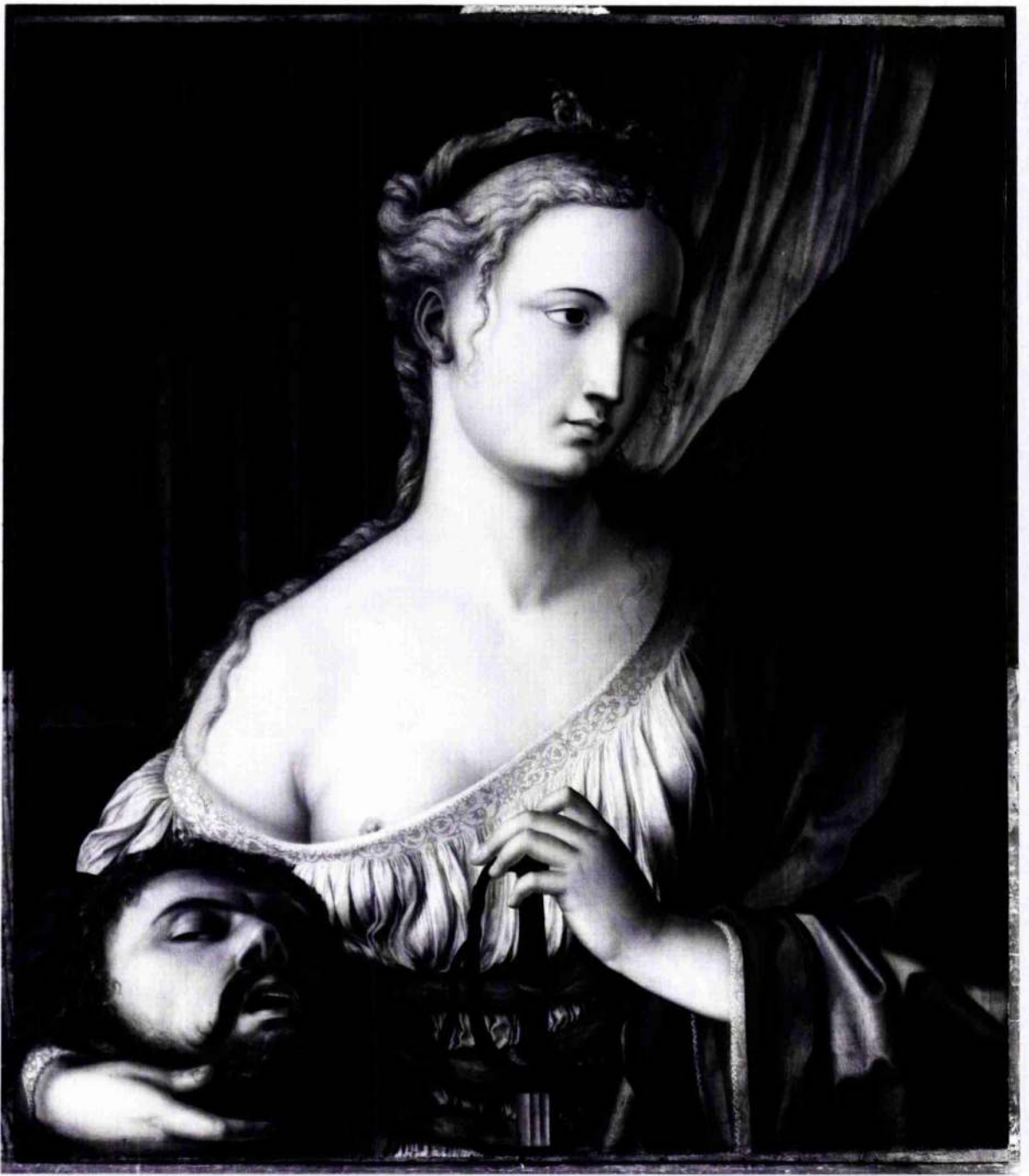
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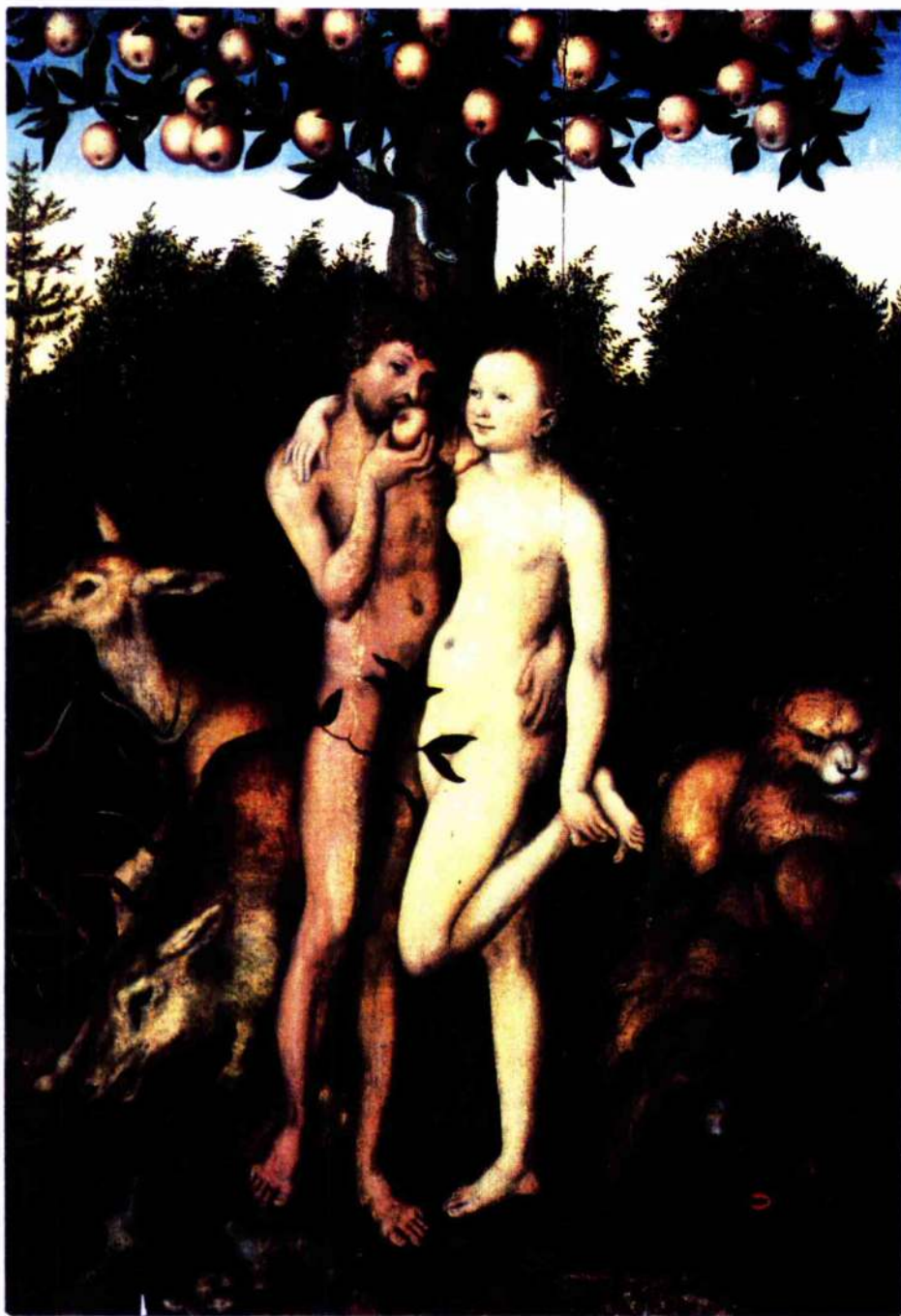Jan Sanders van Hemessen, *Judith*, Art Institute, Chicago, c. 1540.

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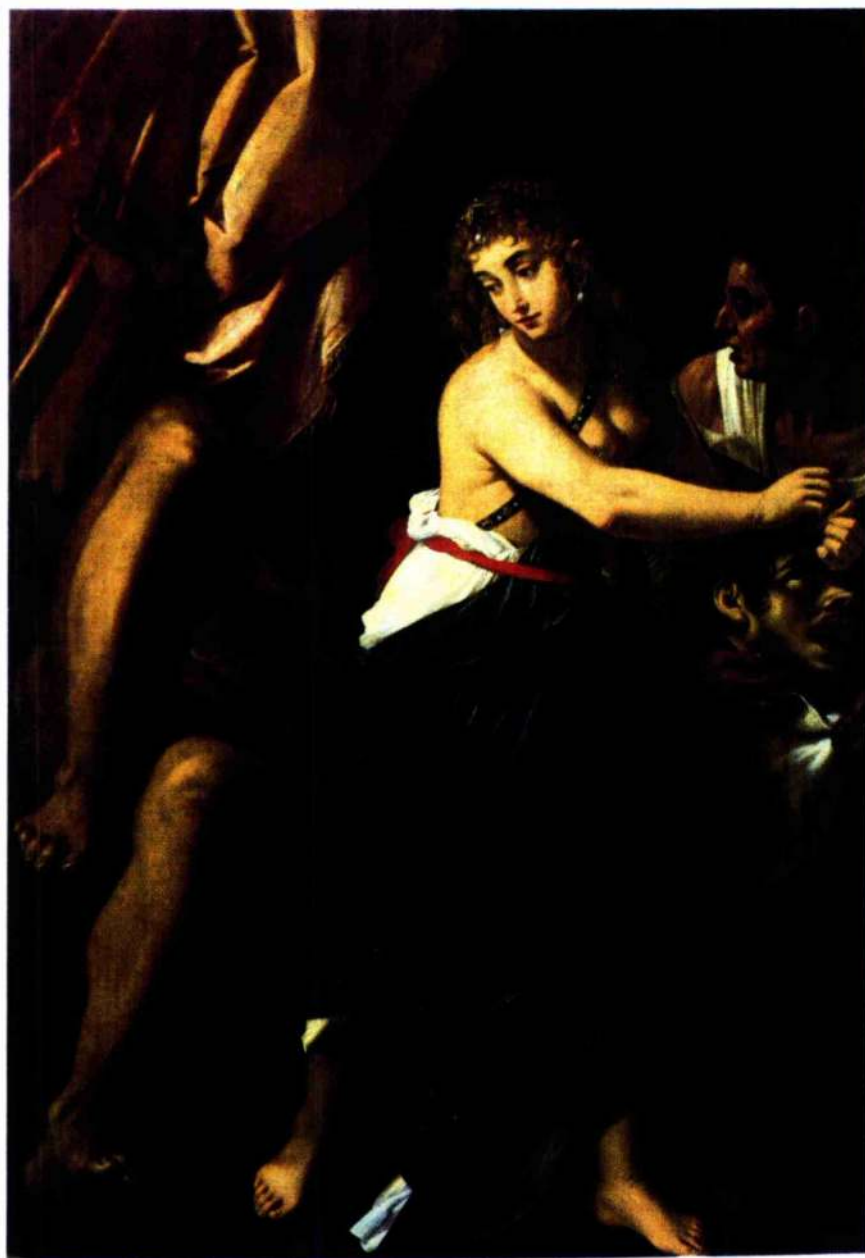National Gallery, London, 1525-1530.

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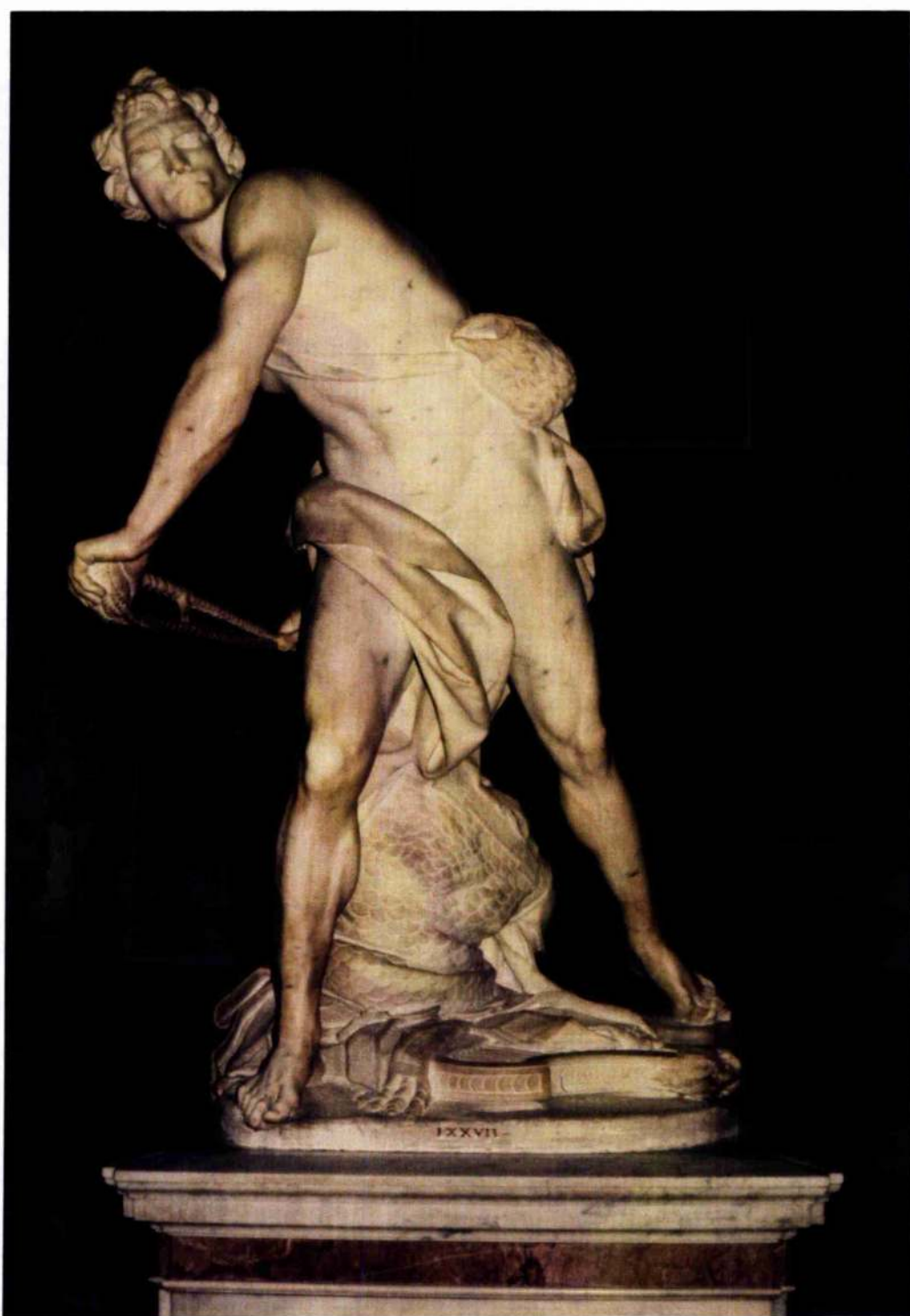Gustave Klimt, *Judith II*, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, (Ca' Pesaro), Venice, 1911.

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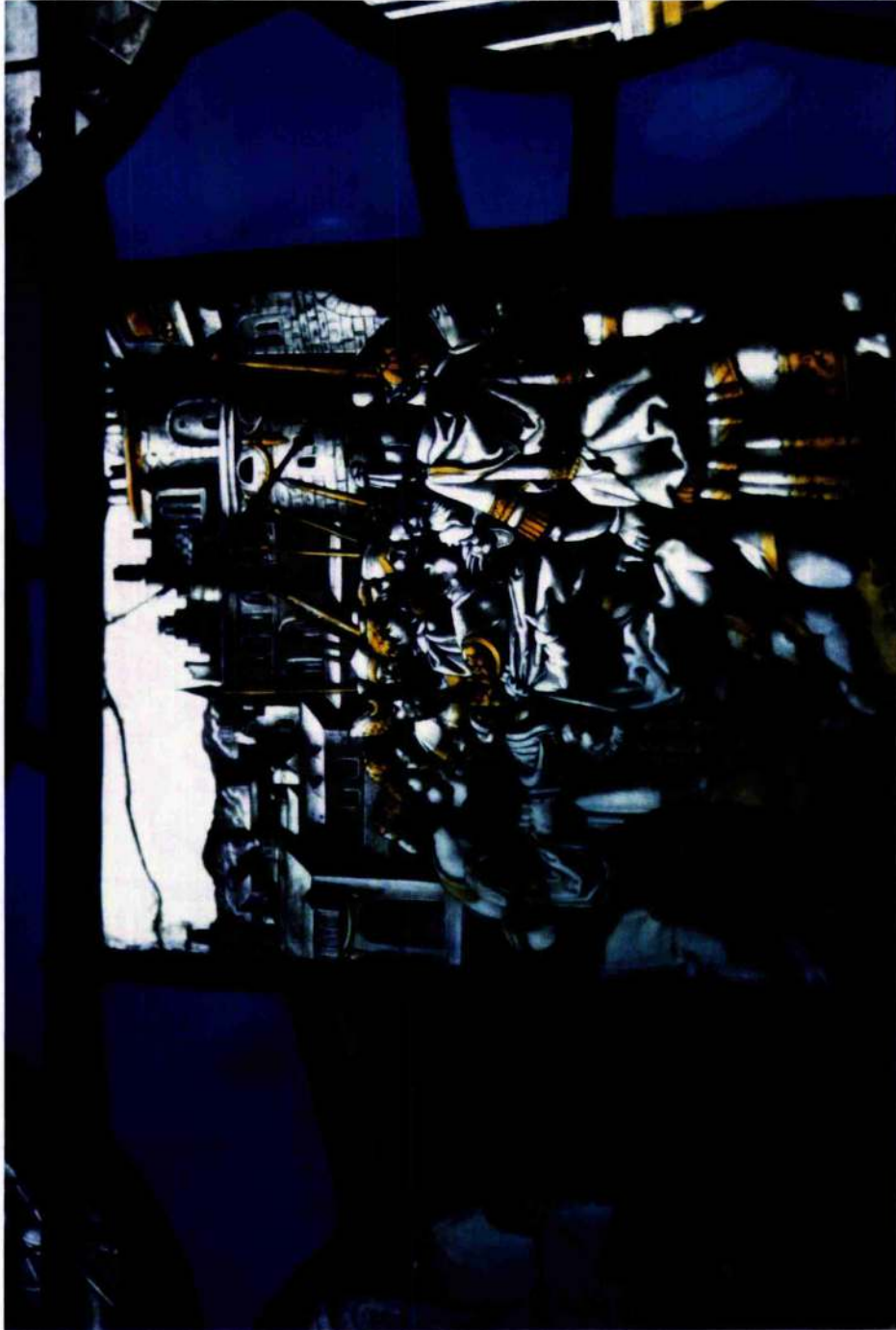David Donaldson, *Judith*, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, 1955.

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