THE HEAD-HUNTER AND HEAD-HUNTRESS IN ITALIAN RELIGIOUS PORTRAITURE

Among the more curious and rarer conventions of Italian sixteenth-century painting is a form of disguised portraiture in which contemporary persons are represented in the guise of Old Testament figures, such as David, Judith or Salome, each with a decapitated head, usually containing a further likeness. The tradition represents a particularly Italian response to Christianity in the search made by Renaissance artists to find commemorative traditions to depict themselves and their contemporaries. Of all the figurative traditions that might be found to commemorate the dead, the image of the head-hunter is indeed an unusual one, associated more in the popular imagination with New Guinea than with Renaissance Italy, and certainly unknown to such a people as the Dinka. But in the context of this volume it seemed an appropriate subject, as one of the first art historians to have been fascinated by the theme of the head-huntress in art was Aby Warburg,1 one of the earliest art historians to have profited from contact with anthropologists, as indeed I have done in many informal and witty discussions with Godfrey Lienhardt.

The earliest instance of a disguised allegorical portrait of the kind referred to in this article occurs in the famous self-portrait by Giorgione of himself in the guise of David with the decapitated head of the giant, Goliath, Allegorical self-portraiture was unknown in Venetian art before Giorgione's representation of himself as an Old Testament hero. The only near-contemporary

parallel that can be found is Albrecht Dürer's bold depiction of himself as Christ, in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Both pictures may be interpreted as autobiographical statements about the god-like power of an artist to create. The original portrait by Giorgione is often identified as the fragment in Brunswick, where the giant's head has been cut, leaving only the self-portrait as David; but the entire composition is faithfully recorded in an engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar (Fig. 1). In the few documents that refer to Giorgione during his own lifetime, his name is given in Venetian dialect as Zorzi da Castelfranco, or George from Castelfranco; significantly, it is in an inventory description of this portrait in 1528 that he is first given the name Zorzon (Giorgione in Italian), or big George, the nickname by which he has become known to posterity. Hollar's engraving of the picture, made before it was cut, shows that the artist had portrayed himself as giant-sized, the features of David being the same size as the head of the Philistine giant.2

In his allegorical self-portrait, Giorgione has chosen to be represented as a soldier rather than a shepherd. For his fight with Goliath, David refused to wear Saul's armour (I Sam. 17: 38-9), but after his victory, he accepted clothes and weapons from Saul's son Jonathan (I Sam. 18:4). Giorgione's choice of clothes, particularly the iron gorget, indicates a moment in time, the period after David's victory over the Philistine, when he was perturbed by Saul's envious persecution. The comparison suggests that, like David, the artist is subject to melancholy and self-doubt even at the moment of his greatest triumph. This interpretation is enforced by another self-portrait composition by Giorgione of himself as David, which survives only as a reproductive drawing in an illustrated inventory of the Vendramin collection (Fig. 2). Here David is accompanied by Jonathan, who gazes searchingly at him, suggestive of his enduring love for David, and by Saul, who holds a concealed weapon, a threatening indication of his attempts on David's life. The inventory sketch is so rough that it is impossible to say whether the composition contains more portraits than the self-portrait, and the work is not otherwise described in contemporary sources. This lost narrative version of the subject adds confirmation that Giorgione identified his own artistic personality with David's suffering during his flight from Saul's persecution.

This portrait invention was disseminated among Giorgione's pupils in slightly varying forms. The compositions which Giorgione had evolved for the subject of David and Goliath were adapted to representations of the stories of both Judith and Holofernes, and Salome and John the Baptist. One of the most striking examples is Titian's Giorgionesque painting of Salome with the

^{1.} Warburg's obsession with the head-huntress, whom he saw as a pagan nymph in flight, and upon whom Renaissance artists modelled representations of Salome and Judith, is discussed in E. H. Gombrich, Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography, London: Warburg Institute 1970, pp. 108, 287, 299. Warburg did not discuss the head-huntress in portraiture.

^{2.} For further discussion of Giorgione's invention of a series of allegorical portrait motifs, see J. Anderson, 'The Giorgionesque Portrait: From Likeness to Allegory', in Giorgione: Atti del convegno internazionale di studio per il 5° centenario della nascita, 29-31 maggio 1978, Venice: Comune di Castelfranco Veneto 1979, pp. 153-8; also the catalogue of an exhibition at the Anton-Ulrich Museum, Selbstbildnisse und Künstlerporträts von Lucas van Leyden bis Anton Raphael Mengs (Brunswick, July-September 1980), pp. 38-42. For the Grimani inventory description, see P. Paschini, 'Le Collezioni archaeologiche dei Grimani', Rendiconti della pontificia academia romana di archeologia, Vol. V, no. 18 (1928), p. 171.

head of the Baptist on a charger in the Doria Gallery, Rome (Fig. 3). It has long been recognized that the face of the Baptist is a self-portrait.3 The pronounced sensuality of the painting in such details as the lock of the Baptist's hair caressing Salome's arm and the exquisitely painted Cupid on the archway all imply that the woman was Titian's mistress, but her identity is unknown. Although the legend that Salome was in love with John the Baptist is a non-biblical story that has been accredited to nineteenth-century authors like Oscar Wilde and Richard Strauss, Panofsky has shown that this idea existed as an 'underground' tradition some seven centuries earlier which had left its imprint on ecclesiastical commentaries, popular songs and imagery.4 He neglects to mention the most interesting example of a nineteenth-century interpretation of Judith, Friedrich Hebbel's dramatic tragedy, written in 1839-40. Hebbel invented an unconsummated first marriage for Judith: subsequently the virgin widow is violated by Holofernes, and the play ends before it is known whether she will bear his child. Hebbel's interest in the subject was said to have been aroused by a painting by Giulio Romano in the Alte Pinakothek, Munich. Hebbel's Judith provides a fascinating parallel to Wilde's Salome.

Panofsky argues that Titian revived this tradition; but credit should go to Giorgione, whose self-portrait as David stimulated a series of half-figure compositions among his followers. These must be assumed to be portraits, although there is no contemporary documentation to prove the argument. One of these, a painting of Judith attributed to Giorgione, was recorded in a reproductive print by David Teniers (Fig. 4) when it was in the collection of the Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, in whose gallery (now part of the Künsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) there were more works by the enigmatic artist of Castelfranco than in any other. Judith stands before a window, a cloudswept landscape in the background, the locks of her hair in abandoned disarray. She gazes compellingly at the viewer as if in illustration of the expression a 'speaking likeness', while the severed head of Holofernes rests on a parapet beneath the sword hilt. On the evidence of Teniers's print, Giorgione's lost representation was the model for a version made by his friend, Vincenzo Catena, now in the Pinacoteca Querini-Stampalia, Venice (Fig. 5). Here again Judith stares fixedly at the viewer as if conveying a statement of some importance, and the severed head, acutely foreshortened, is a strongly expressive element in the composition.

The subject of the Iewish heroine of the Apocrypha was a new theme in Venetian painting that Giorgione introduced with his version of the subject, now in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad (Fig. 6). This is considered to be one of his earliest furniture paintings, for during a recent restoration it was revealed that the panel had a blocked-up keyhole and that there were traces of hinges on the right-hand side, suggesting that the panel was the door to a piece of furniture, like Carpaccio's Heron Hunt in the Lagoon, now in the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu. 5 Giorgione may have known of two Florentine precedents, the famous bronze statue of Judith which Donatello made for the Medici Palace and Botticelli's two small furniture panels, Judith and her Maid and Holofernes Found Dead in his Tent, a gift from Ridolfi Siringatti to Lady Bianca Cappello de' Medici as panels for her writing-cabinet. Both Donatello and Botticelli were attentive to many of the details of the story of Judith as told in the Apocrypha, and it is possible to identify each with a particular event. Donatello has chosen the most brutal moment, when Judith holds her fauchion aloft and grasps Holofernes' head of hair as she is about to strike him (Judith 13:6-8), whereas Botticelli represents [udith as a graceful young girl, journeying sprightly home to Bethulia, accompanied by her maid and jauntily holding not only Holofernes' fauchion, but also an olive branch, symbolic of the peace she brings to the Israelites (Judith 13:10). By contrast, Giorgione's painting is in no sense a literal interpretation of an episode in the book of Judith. Although the chosen scene clearly follows the decapitation, Judith does not appear to be hurrying home to Bethulia, nor is she accompanied by her maid. Instead she stands still, dressed in a flowing, crimson-pink robe, open and bared to her left thigh, languidly resting her foot on Holofernes' brow, seen in a patch of wild flowers, white grape hyacinths, sylvan tulips and a rare Columbina japonica, a plant only recently introduced into Italy at that date. Her hair is bound in the traditional manner, but she does not wear the sandals which were said to ravish his eyes (Judith 16:9). Some scholars have seen Giorgione's self-portrait in the decapitated head at her feet, although there is little resemblance between the known self-portrait and the dead giant, which renders the suggestion unconvincing.6

^{3.} Discussed by E. Panofsky, Problems in Titian Mostly Iconographic, New York: Phaidon 1969, pp. 42-7.

^{4.} Panofsky attributes the invention of the love story to a canon of St Pharaildis in Ghent, named Nivardus, in the early twelfth century (ibid., p. 45), whose tale was republished by Jacob Grimm in his German Mythology (1835), from whom it was taken up by nineteenth-century German writers. Panofsky also reproduces two versions of the subject, Guercino's Salome Visiting St. John the Baptist in Prison, from the collection of Sir Denis Mahon, London, and Pieter Cornelisz van Rijck's half-figure representation of Salome, who wears a medallion, showing herself and the Baptist embracing (ibid., figs. 51-2). Other Northern representations of the subject, which he does not mention, are Jan de Bray's Judith and Holofernes, which represents the artist as Holofernes and his wife as Judith, and Carel Fabritius' Execution of John the Baptist, where the executioner is a portrait of the ageing Rembrandt. Both paintings are in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, and are discussed in E. Wind, Hume and the Heroic Portrait: Studies in Eighteenth-Century Imagery, ed. J. Anderson, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986, pp. 26-7.

^{5.} T. D. Fomicieva, 'The History of Giorgione's Judith and its Restoration', The Burlington Magazine, Vol. CXV, no. 844 (1973), pp. 417-20. On the Leningrad panel, see also J. Bialostocki, 'La Gamba sinistra della Giuditta: Il Quadro di Giorgione nella storia della Tema', in R. Pallucchini (ed.), Giorgione e l'umanesimo veneziano, vol. i, Florence: Fondazione Giorgio Cini 1981, pp. 193-220.

^{6.} Nevertheless, the suggestion was made independently by T. Pignatti, 'La Giuditta diversa di Giorgione', in Giorgione: Atti del convegno internazionale, pp. 269-71, and John Shearman, 'Cristofano Allori's Judith', The Burlington Magazine, Vol. CXXI, no. 910 (1979), p. 9, who also argues against the Vasarian tradition and the evidence of the Grimani inventories that Giorgione represented himself as the decapitated head of the giant Goliath in the late self-portrait (Fig. 1), rather than as David. This suggestion appears highly implausible, not only because it is against the literary tradition as

Judith's character and actions were interpreted in two different ways in the Renaissance. Either she was seen as a heroine who had overthrown a tyrant and was therefore representative of civic virtue and republican freedom; or she was considered a femme fatale, an enchantress who lured men to their destruction. There is no doubt as to which tradition Donatello alludes, since his statue of Judith was once accompanied by the following distich:

> REGNA CADUNT LUXU, SURGUNT VIRTUTIBUS URBES CAESA VIDES HUMILI COLLA SUPERBA MANU7

As in Prudentius' Psychomachia, Donatello's Judith represents Chastity triumphant over the devil and the vices of luxuria and superbia. The other interpretation of Judith's role is presented in Botticelli's diptych in the Uffizi, a present from a gentleman to a lady as a compliment to her beauty and power.

The most dramatic and fully documented example of this second kind of fatal Judith is presented by Cristofano Allori, a Florentine mannerist artist and bon viveur who painted two versions of the subject, one now believed to be the superior variant at Hampton Court Palace, the other in the Palazzo Pitti, Florence (Fig. q). The best account of Allori's life and of his *Judith* is given by the abbot Filippo Baldinucci in his Notizie de' professori del disegno (first published between 1681 and 1728), a chronological account of the lives of the Florentine artists modelled on the Vasarian prototype. According to Baldinucci, Cristofano was conspicuously addicted to pleasure but then joined a devotional confraternity which led to a brief period when he led an exemplary life dedicated to conversion:

But at last, tempted perhaps by all the varied entertainments and pleasant pastimes with which his mind had always been filled, he abandoned the prayers and the brotherhood. He returned to his amusements until he fell deeply in love with a very beautiful woman called La Mazzafirra. With her he used to squander all his considerable earnings, and what with jealousy and the thousand other miseries which such relations usually bring with them, he led a thoroughly miserable life. Since we have mentioned La Mazzafirra, we should also tell that

represented in the Grimani inventory (dismissed by Shearman as unhelpful) and Vasari's Lives, but more importantly, because David's eyes are those of the artist's traditional self-portrait, seen gazing to the right as if reflected in a mirror.

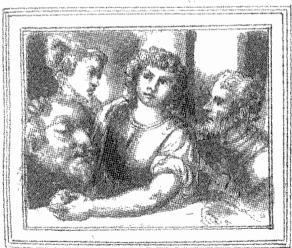
7. 'Kingdoms fall through licence; cities rise through virtue. See the proud neck struck by the humble hand.' The significance of the inscription is discussed by E. Wind, 'Donatello's 7udith: A Symbol of Sanctimonia', in his The Eloquence of Symbols: Studies in Humanist Art, ed. J. Anderson, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1983, pp. 37-8. Another, slightly later example of this interpretation of Judith as a heroine of civic virtue and the triumph of faith is provided by the French Huguenot poet Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas, who was commissioned by Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, to write an epic poem, Judit, first published in 1574 but written a decade earlier, when the author was only 20; see the edition by A. Baiche (Toulouse 1971).

8. See J. Shearman's publications on the Hampton Court version in The Burlington Magazine, Vol. CXXI (1979), pp. 3-10; and in his catalogue, The Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen: The Early Italian Pictures, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, pp. 6-8.



Fig. 1. Giorgione's Self-Portrait as David with the Decapitated Head of Holofernes, engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar

manid con la resta del gigante golia.



Di ZORZON.

Fig. 2. Giorgione's Self-Portrait as David with the Head of Goliath, Accompanied by Saul and Jonathan, sketch from the inventory of Andrea Vendramin's collection, Venice (1627)



Fig. 3. Salome and St John the Baptist, by Titian



Fig. 4. Judith and the Head of Holofernes, engraving by Vorsterman after Giorgione, from David Teniers's Theatrum Pictorium (1658)

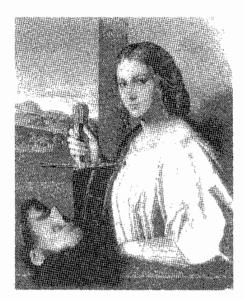


Fig. 5. Judith and the Head of Holofernes, by Vincenzo Catena



Fig. 6. Judith and Holofernes, by Giorgione



Fig. 7. Portrait of Melchiorre Zoppio, engraving after Albani



Fig. 8. Portrait of Olimpia Luna as 'Judith' and Melchiorre Zoppio as 'Holofernes', by Agostino Carracci



Fig. 9. Judith with the Head of Holofernes, by Cristofano Allori

he made use of her face, portrayed from the life, to represent Judith in one of the oddest pictures which ever came from his hand.9

Baldinucci goes on to relate that La Mazzafirra holds a bloody sword in her right hand, while in the other she holds aloft the head of Holofernes, in which the artist's bearded features are represented, and that the maidservant was a portrait of La Mazzafirra's mother. In the Hampton Court version, Holofernes' bed is inscribed in gold with the artist's signature.

Allori's version of the Judith at Hampton Court is dated 1613, and he must have been conversant with several versions of the subject by Jacopo Ligozzi, an antiquarian painter, who was court artist to the Grand Duke of Tuscany and superintendent to the Medici collections at Florence. In several versions of the painting (the best is in the Palazzo Pitti), also called Judith, Ligozzi gave Raphael's features to the sleeping head of Holofernes, who awaits decapitation at the hands of his mistress. La Fornarina. The picture is a self-conscious bit of antiquarianism, a seemingly imaginary episode from the life of the most famous artist of the preceding century and quite different in mood from the various versions of decapitation by Caravaggio and his followers, which must also have been known to Allori.

Scenes of decapitation are most frequently to be found in the work of Caravaggio, and in some of these there are self-portraits in which he depicts himself both as victim and executioner. The most famous is the representation of David and Goliath in the Borghese Gallery, Rome, in which he portrays himself as the decapitated head held aloft by the youthful hero. Caravaggio's own life was a notoriously violent one—he is known to have committed murder on at least one occasion-and it is difficult not to interpret these subjects as having an autobiographical significance.10 The most recent biographer of Caravaggio, Howard Hibbard, has made much of these decapitated heads with streaming blood and horror-stricken faces, which he claims belong to Caravaggio's private world of fears and fantasies. Hibbard draws attention to Freud's essay, Medusa's Head (1922), in which he makes the suggestion that 'to decapitate = to castrate. The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something.' And Hibbard associates Caravaggio's depiction of the Medusa's head (now in the Uffizi, Florence) with the numerous scenes of violent decapitation from Caravaggio's hand, including his late masterpiece, the Decapitation of the Baptist, at Valletta. This was the only painting which Caravaggio signed, his name written in the saint's blood.

The subject of Judith was taken up by one of the most successful women

^{9.} Baldinucci, Notizie de' professori del disegno... (Florence 1974 (3rd edn.), pp. 732-3), here given in the translation of R. and M. Wittkower, Born under Saturn. The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution, New York: Norton & Co. 1963, pp. 160-1, who cite the example in their discussion of 'Debauchery among Artists'.

^{10.} The most important studies are by C. Frommel, 'Caravaggio und seine Modelle', Castrum peregrini, Vol. XCVI (1971), pp. 21-56; H. Röttgen, Il Caravaggio: Ricerche e interpretazioni, Rome 1974; and most recently H. Hibbard, Caravaggio, London: Thames and Hudson 1983.

artists in seventeenth-century Italy, Artemisia Gentileschi, who used a pictorial language self-consciously drawn from Caravaggio, with whom her father. Orazio Gentileschi, had worked.11 One incident in her life, the trial of her father's apprentice Agostino Tassi for her alleged rape (in the spring of 1612). has provoked much comment, especially among feminist writers. Tassi had been employed by her father as a perspective artist and, when instructing Artemisia, is said to have forced himself upon her. Artemisia's earliest work, a painting of considerable maturity and power, is a representation of Judith with her Maidservant, now in the Palazzo Pitti, executed at the time of the trial. It is the first of six known variations of the theme by Artemisia, which in turn are based on her father's Caravaggesque versions of the subject in Oslo and Hertford. Some scholars have seen a very personal identification of the artist with the Jewish heroine in her most famous rendition of the subject in the Pitti Palace, Judith Decapitating Holofernes, where it is argued that Artemisia has represented herself as Judith and her violator Tassi as Holofernes. Such arguments, though not capable of being absolutely proven, carry a certain amount of conviction within the tradition. Moreover, they relate to similar depictions by near-contemporary women artists, such as the austere Fede Galizia, and the genteel Bolognese, Elisabetta Sirani, whose various versions of Judith are well known for the manner in which the heroine turns away from the violence of the subject and for the feminine way in which Judith is assisted in conspiratorial fashion by her maidservant. 12

All the examples discussed so far can be placed within the context of self-portraiture. But there remains one important variation of the tradition, concerning the rediscovery of one of Agostino Carracci's long-lost paintings (Fig. 8), which I was fortunate enough to identify in 1985.13 Agostino's portrait depicts a plump, double-chinned, matronly woman and is clearly a portrait of someone as Judith. Her hand holds a sword firmly, and she thrusts the hideous trophy towards us. The spectator's attention is focused on Holofernes' head, and this action is dramatically enforced by the seemingly obvious inscription on the left-hand side of the picture, near her right hand: ECCE CAPVT HOLOFERNES. The decapitated head is not represented in

a dramatically foreshortened position, as is usual in these portraits, but is seen full face, his lips parted. A clue to the identity of the woman is given in the repeated celestial motifs, heavily and obtrusively embroidered in gold brocade on her pearl-encrusted dress. The most prominent motif is a full moon with rays, embroidered in a diamond-shaped pattern of pearls. Blue sapphires are sewn at the corners of the diamond shapes, with little rays emanating from them to denote falling stars among the constant celestial bodies. The woman represented is Olimpia Luna, whose surname was of Spanish origin and unusual in Bologna. Her husband, Melchiorre Zoppio, was Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Bologna (Fig. 7) and one of Agostino's best-known patrons. In the many publications by Zoppio-he wrote at least sixteen books—he discusses his wife at some length, even though their marriage was an extremely brief one. They were married in 1591, and she died on 1 November 1592, presumably in childbirth. Eleven years after her death Zoppio published an unusual book, Consolatione di Melchiorre Zoppio Filosofo Morale nella Morte della Moglie Olimpia Luna Z (Bologna 1634), which records an imaginary and very learned conversation with his wife on the subject of death, She appears to him in a dream, dressed in a robe that is very like the one in the portrait.

In the opening pages Zoppio describes himself lying in bed at night, his soul troubled by his widowerhood. Suddenly, an unexpected light illuminates his bed, and a female effigy appears. In the vision she was a woman of normal height with bright luminous eyes, as in the portrait. The colour of her skin resembled the Milky Way, but in her countenance was perceptible the first light of dawn ('quel tempo che l'aurora si mescola coll'alba'). Her dress was stormed with pearls, divided by little flames denoting the falling stars, which move from place to place among those that are fixed, and everything about her was heavenly ('vestito...tempestato a perle, divisato a fiammelle rappresentava le stelle cadenti, qual'hor se ne vanno, da luogo in luogo, squillando fra le fisse. In somma non era cosa in lei, che non mi raffigurasse il cielo'). After a few pages she proclaims herself to be Olimpia, and there ensues a sympathetic and lively dialogue between them, in which they both discourse with enviable ease on death, analysing many learned quotations from ancient authors, especially Plato, and from early Renaissance poets. Olimpia is envisaged as a muse, and a witty one too, and ends by encouraging Zoppio to remarry, thereby completing his consolation.

The significance of her first name, Olimpia, is dwelt on at some considerable length, but briefly it denotes a heavenly thing, for Mt. Olympus was the home of the Gods. Zoppio's own impresa, devised by Agostino, is described by Olimpia as denoting things that are not serene and tranquil, but turbulent and cloudy. She charges him that 'You pride yourself in finding splendour in obscurity, and yet you are one of those who do not recognize beauty in the heavens, unless the climate is serene.' To which he responds, echoing Homer's words to Melpomene, 'You are my consolation, you are my Melpomene, and even if you are not the sun by day, at least you are the moon by night, giving legitimacy and embellishment to my fog.'

^{11.} On Artemisia, see R. Ward Bissell, 'Artemisia Gentileschi: A New Documented Chronology', Art Bulletin, Vol. L (1968), pp. 153-68; also Bissell's monograph, Orazio Gentileschi and the Poetic Tradition in Caravaggesque Painting, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press 1981, passim.

^{12.} On Fede Galizia, see A. S. Harris and L. Nochlin, Women Artists: 1550-1950, Los Angeles: L.A. County Museum 1977, pp. 115-17, who discuss her Judith with a Maidservant, circa 1596, now in the Ringling Museum, Sarasota, Florida. For Sirani, see ibid., pp. 147-50. Versions of Sirani's Judith are now in the collection of the Marquess of Exeter, Burghley House, and at the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

^{13.} See the catalogue of the exhibition, Around 1610: The Onset of the Baroque, London: Matthiesen Fine Art Ltd. 1985, pp. 18-25; the discovery is questioned by D. Benati in the catalogue Nell'eta del Correggio e dei Carracci: Pittura in Emilia dei secoli XVII e XVIII, Bologna: Pinacoteca di Bologna 1986, pp. 258-9, but reaffirmed in the catalogue Paintings from Emilia 1500-1700, New York: Newhouse Galleries March-April 1987, pp. 64-70.

The features on the decapitated head of Holofernes are those of Melchiorre Zoppio, as is revealed in an engraved portrait (Fig. 7). On both we can recognize the same bearded face, the same forehead with tousled curls, the same idiosyncratic raised right eyebrow (seen in reverse in the print) and the full sensual lips of Melchiorre. On the upper right-hand side of the print is a further depiction of Zoppio's impresa, designed by Agostino. It bears the Platonic device of the two suns, one obscured by mist, a witty reference to Zoppio's own nickname in his academy of Il Caliginoso, or in other words the foggy or cloudy member.

It is very probable that this double portrait is in fact the long-lost portrait described in Agostino's funeral oration by Lucio Faberio, here given in translation:

If it be a considerable achievement to know how to draw from life in the presence of a model, it is an even greater feat to do the same in the absence of one. Indubitably it is a very great and wonderful thing to achieve this, that is painting a person, who is already dead, buried, never seen, without a drawing or any likeness, but only from hearsay. Our Carracci can boast of this not once, but many times. Thus, from her husband's testimony he painted the portrait of Signora Olimpia Luna, who was the wife of Melchiorre Zoppio, so well that she appeared to be living, and the work made manifest for eternity both her and his distinction. For she displays modesty, wisdom, beauty, chastity, rare gifts that rendered her worthy of such a man, who honoured her memory with a most charming sonnet:

Emulo ancor de la natura sua
Non pur'imitator, Carracci, ch'ella
Suo difetto apre in consumando quella,
Che vivente assai piacque a gli occhi miei
Tu per virtù de l'arte avvini in lei
L'aria, il color, lo spirito, e la favella,
E se viva non è, come a vedella
Altro senso, che vista io non vorrei.
Ma come può giamai privo sembiante
Di lingua articolar voce non sua?
Tacito anco il tuo stil ti grida in lode.
Non sai, ch'occhi per lingua usa l'Amante,
E de gli occhi il parlar per gli occhi s'ode,
Che dice amami, io son l'Olimpia tua. 14

In searching for a convincing compositional formula to represent the dead woman (whom the artist had never seen), one which would appeal to the imagination of her husband, Agostino chose to appropriate the image of Judith the head-huntress as an expression of the widower's anguish. His picture belongs to the heroic tradition of commemorative portraiture, which originated in Venice with Giorgione and his followers but was quite unknown elsewhere.

As Oscar Wilde was to remark in a much later age, 'The only portraits in which one believes are portraits where there is very little of the sitter, and a very great deal of the artist.... It is style that makes us believe in a thing—nothing but style.'

^{14. &#}x27;Oratione di Lvcio Faberio Academico Gelato in Morte d'Agostin Carraccio', in Benedetto Morelli's Il Funeral d'Agostin Carraccio fatto in Bologna sua patria da gl'Incaminati academici del disegno (Bologna 1603), pp. 36-9; repr. in C. Malvasia, Felsina pittrice, vol. i (Bologna 1678), pp. 429-30.

