

UCLA

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies

Title

A Nude Judith from Padua and the Reception of Donatello's Bronze David

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8j3962d7>

Journal

Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 25(1)

ISSN

0069-6412

Author

Smith, Susan L.

Publication Date

1994-10-01

Peer reviewed

A NUDE JUDITH FROM PADUA AND THE RECEPTION OF DONATELLO'S BRONZE DAVID¹

Susan L. Smith

Donatello's bronze statue of David, now in the Bargello, has generated as much controversy as any work of Renaissance art (fig. 1). Its patron, date, original location—even its traditional identification as David—have been the subject of ongoing disputes, although a fifteenth-century inscription recently published by Christine M. Sperling appears to confirm at least that it is David who is represented and that it was displayed in the Medici palace as a symbol of Florentine liberty.² The unconventional character of the figure's nudity, in which numerous observers have perceived an erotic, even feminine quality, is among its most problematic features. That this feature was perceived as unorthodox, even unacceptably so, by Donatello's fifteenth-century audience is suggested by the fact that the statue did not inspire close imitations. Even artists who were familiar with the

¹This article draws from and expands upon two papers which I presented at annual meetings of the College Art Association: "Vice or Virtue? The Nude Judith in the Early Sixteenth Century" (1977) and "Sex and Citizenship in Donatello's 'Judith and Holofernes'" (1988). Of the colleagues and friends who read and offered valuable comments on this manuscript at different stages of its preparation, I wish to thank especially JoAnne Bernstein, Jack Greenstein, Constance Jordan, Wendy Stedman Sheard, Larry Silver, and Marguerite Waller.

²Christine M. Sperling, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and the Demands of Medici Politics," *Burlington Magazine* 134 (1992): 218-224. The text of the inscription is given below, note 40. The many controversies concerning the statue, relating to its dating (proposed dates range from as early as 1428-30 to after 1463), the circumstances of its commission, and its meaning have been ably reviewed by Volker Herzner, "David Florentinus II: Der Bronze-David Donatellos im Bargello," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 24 (1982): 63-142. Also see H. W. Janson, *The Sculpture of Donatello* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), 77-80. It was first recorded in 1469 as standing on a column in the courtyard of the Medici palace in a description of the wedding festivities of Lorenzo de Medici and Clarice Orsini, but no documents have been found that specify when it was made or for what patron. Sperling is one of a number of scholars who have argued for a Medici commission. She interprets the inscription as supporting an early date for the *David*, 1428-30 (pp. 221-23).



1. (left) Donatello, *David*. Bargello, Florence, Italy. 1428-30 (?). (Photo: Alinari/Art Resource)
2. (above) Bartolomeo Bellano, *David with the Head of Goliath*. Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George D. Widener. (Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art)

figure and borrowed from it avoided its unsettling ambiguities and produced more conventional interpretations like the fully-clothed David in Philadelphia, a bronze statuette sometimes attributed to Donatello's follower Bartolomeo Bellano (d. 1497), the leading sculptor in Padua in the late fifteenth century (fig. 2).³

³The Philadelphia statuette is attributed to Bellano by, among others, John Pope-Hennessy, in *The Frick Collection: An Illustrated Catalogue, Vol. III: Sculpture, Italian* (New York: Phaidon Press, 1970), 68; James David Draper, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture in the Time of Donatello*, catalogue of an exhibition at the Detroit Institute of Arts (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1985) 225-38; Patrick de Winter, "Recent Acquisitions of Italian Renaissance Decorative Arts, Part I: Incorporating Notes on the

It is of great interest, therefore, that the closest variant of Donatello's bronze *David* is not another David, or even another male figure, but a female one: Judith, the Old Testament heroine (fig. 3). This work, a little-known bronze statuette which was in the collection of the former Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin before it disappeared during the Second World War, is much more interesting than its diminutive dimensions (8.4 cm. high) and secondary artistic quality might lead one to expect. It is one of the earliest works, if not the earliest, in which Judith is represented nude. Moreover, it differs markedly from the nude images of Judith which are most familiar to art historians: those sixteenth century Northern works which employ a fleshy, unclassical type of female nudity long associated with figures like Eve and Venus to express the widely recognized erotic subtext of a calculating seductress who uses her beauty to incite Holofernes' desire, then destroys him without a qualm.⁴ Hans Baldung's life-size painting of c. 1525 (fig. 4) is a well-known example of this type.⁵ The Berlin *Judith* is the product of a very different cul-

Sculptor Severo da Ravenna," *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 73 (1986): 106; Leo Planiscig, *Andrea Riccio* (Vienna: A. Schroll, 1927), 57f.; and Wilhelm von Bode, *The Italian Bronze Statuettes of the Renaissance*, rev. ed. by James David Draper (New York: M. A. S. de Reinis, 1980), 15. Volker Krahn, in his recent monograph on Bellano, *Bartolomeo Bellano: Studien zur Paduaner Plastik des Quattrocento*, Beiträge zur Kunstwissenschaft, vol. 20 (Munich: Sceneg, 1988), 175-76, assigns it to a follower. A related statuette in the Metropolitan Museum in New York, the pose of which is not as close to Donatello's statue, has also been attributed to Bellano, e.g., by Krahn, 170; Draper, 225; and Pope-Hennessy, 68. In the exhibition catalogue *Natur und Antike in der Renaissance* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Liebighaus Museum alter Plastik, 1985), 367-68, a third version, in an unidentified private collection, is also attributed to Bellano. A fourth, closely related to the latter, is in the Victoria and Albert Museum; see de Winter, 106.

⁴See for example, the exhibition catalogue *Eva/Ave: Woman in Renaissance and Baroque Prints*, ed. H. Diane Russell with Bernadine Barnes (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 33; Adelheid Straten, *Das Judith-Thema in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Minerva, 1983), 30-33; and Jan Bialostocki, "Judith: The Story, the Image, and the Symbol: Giorgione's Painting in the Evolution of the Theme," in *The Message of Images* (Vienna: Irsa, 1988), 126. This interpretation of Judith's nudity is consistent with her frequent connection with Delilah, Eve, and other *femmes fatales* to exemplify the power, especially sexual, which women exercise over men; see my book *The Power of Women: A "Topos" in Medieval Art and Literature*, forthcoming in 1994 from the University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁵Gert von der Osten, *Hans Baldung Grien: Gemälde und Dokumente* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1983), 169-71, which refers to earlier studies. Baldung underscored Judith's affinities with Eve and with Venus, the goddess of love, by including this painting in a set of panels which also includes Adam, the first victim of women's wiles.



3. Artist unknown, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. Formerly Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin.

tural environment than the eroticized nude Judiths of the North, one in which the positive reevaluation of pagan antiquity by Renaissance humanists had facilitated the rehabilitation of the classical nude as a vehicle for the representation of biblical as well as virtuous pagan figures. Within this climate of thought, nudity functioned to transform the Old Testament widow into a heroine *all'antica* possessing the same active public virtues as men. Indeed, the Berlin *Judith* is among the earliest works of Renaissance art which used nudity emblematically to signify heroic character in any virtuous heroine, biblical or pagan. That it was modeled on Donatello's bronze *David*, a male figure, adds to our understanding not only of how the story of Judith was understood in the Renaissance, but also of the conditions under which nudity might come to signify heroic character in a female figure.

Neither the authorship nor the date of the Berlin *Judith* has been agreed upon, although there is a general consensus that its point of origin was Padua. In his fundamental catalogue of early Renaissance bronzes, Wilhelm von Bode attributed the Berlin *Judith* to an artist close to Bellano, and plausibly proposed, based on its small size and rough finish, that it originally decorated a utensil of some kind.⁶ Fritz Goldschmidt agreed, comparing it with a statuette of *Tomiris* in the Frick Collection which he attributed to the same artist (fig. 5).⁷ More recently, Wilhelm

⁶*Italian Bronze Statuettes of the Renaissance*, 17.

⁷Fritz Goldschmidt, *Beschreibung der Bildwerke der Christlichen Epochen, Königliche Museen zu Berlin*, vol. 2, *Die italienischen Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock: Büsten, Statuetten und Gebrauchsgegenstände* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1914), 12. Goldschmidt states that the Berlin *Judith* was acquired in 1892 from the H. Pfungst collection.

Steinböck, followed by Jan Bialostocki and Teresio Pignatti, attributed it without comment to Bellano himself.⁸ If the attribution of the Berlin *Judith* to Bellano or his shop could be secured, the statuette could lay claim to being the earliest work in which an artist took the innovative step of representing Judith fully nude, antedating two other claimants: a figured keystone belonging to the illusionistic architecture of Luca Signorelli's frescoes in the San Brizio Chapel, Orvieto, begun in 1500 and completed in 1503, proposed by Creighton Gilbert to be the first (fig. 6),⁹ and an engraving by the North Italian printmaker Nicoletto da Modena, dated as early as c. 1500.¹⁰ However, James Draper, in his recent revised edition of Bode's catalogue, reassigns the Berlin statuette to the "Manner of Severo da Ravenna," another Paduan sculptor active at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, and dates it c. 1520-30.¹¹ The disappearance of the work, together with a lack of clear photographs, now makes secure attribution problematic.

The humanist context within which the Berlin *Judith* was produced is indicated by the medium itself. Late fifteenth-century artists and their patrons were well aware that Roman connoisseurs had prized statuettes in bronze, and the revival of the form by artists like

⁸Wilhelm Steinböck, "Giorgiones 'Judith' in Leningrad," *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorisches Institutes der Universität Graz*, 7 (1972): 61 n. 12; Bialostocki, 124; Teresio Pignatti, "La 'Giuditta' diversa di Giorgione," in *Giorgione: Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studio per il 5 centenario della nascita di Giorgione* (Castelfranco Veneto: Comitato per la celebrazione Giorgionesche, 1979), 270. Krahn does not mention the statuette in his monograph on Bellano cited above.

⁹Creighton E. Gilbert, "Signorelli and Young Raphael," in James Beck, ed., *Raphael before Rome*, Studies in the History of Art, no. 17 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1986), 121. My thanks to Professor Gilbert for generously sharing his thoughts on the nude Judith with me. Earlier still is a painting traditionally attributed to Jan Van Eyck, now lost, depicting a nude woman at her toilet which Peter Schabacker has identified as Judith beautifying herself before she leaves Bethulia for Holofernes' camp (Judith 10:2-4): "Jan Van Eyck's 'Woman at her Toilet': Proposals concerning its Subject and Content," *Annual Report, Fogg Art Museum* (1974-76): 56-78. Even if this painting does represent Judith bathing—an identification which seems problematic to me—it is an isolated instance of Judith in this narrative context from which no pictorial tradition issued.

¹⁰Arthur M. Hind, *Early Italian Engraving*, 6 vols. (London: B. Quaritch, 1948), no. 87, 6, pl. 683, dates the print 1500-1506; Gilbert places it later, c. 1509.

¹¹Draper, 85. Severo da Ravenna is first recorded as a "magistro" in 1496 and active in Padua at least until 1511, when he took up residence in Ravenna. He died sometime between 1525 and 1538. His career was explored most recently by de Winter, "Recent Accessions," esp. 89ff.; the Berlin Judith is not mentioned. The Frick *Tomiris* is also attributed to Severo da Ravenna by Draper, 108, following Pope-Hennessy, 136-40.

Donatello, Bertoldo, and Pollaiuolo was encouraged by private collectors' demand for works of art in the antique manner.¹² By the end of the century, Padua, a leading center of classical studies because of its university, had become a center for the production of classicizing small-scale bronze sculpture as well. A powerful influence on the early Paduan school was Donatello himself, through his own work in bronze on the high altar of the Santo and on the Gattamelata monument produced in Padua in 1443 and 1453 respectively, and through his pupil Bellano, who is believed to have worked as his assistant in Padua and is documented working in his shop in Florence in 1456.¹³ In addition to their major commissions, Paduan workshops headed by artists like Bellano and his successor Andrea Riccio turned out quantities of inkwells, lamps, and related objects which filled the studies of humanistically-inclined collectors and which carry small-scale statuettes like the Berlin *Judith*, most of them pagan in subject and many based on antique models.¹⁴ In reduced size, these embody the same aesthetic and ideological values as the larger-scale, better-known works which they reflect. In at least one case, the influence of Donatello's bronze *David* itself can be traced through the intermediary of the statuette in Philadelphia attributed to Bellano (fig. 2) to a tiny figure atop an inkwell in Milan.¹⁵ A connection between the *David* and the Berlin *Judith*, probably through an intermediary, as I will argue later, is therefore not implausible, despite their differences in scale and quality.

Two other bronze statuettes representing Judith, both fully clothed, have been located within the same Paduan milieu as the Berlin *Judith*, one attributed to the workshop of Riccio and the other

¹²The art of the statuette is characterized as the "connoisseur's and artist's touchstone of a true taste *all'antica*" by Leopold D. Etlinger, "Hercules Florentinus," *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz* 16 (1972): 135. The fashion for collecting statuettes, many of which copy larger-scale antique statues, is noted in many studies of Renaissance sculpture. A good introduction is H. R. Weihrauch, *Europäische Bronzestatuetten 15-18 Jahrhundert* (Braunschweig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1967), 44-48.

¹³It is generally assumed that Bellano followed Donatello back to Florence in 1453, where he seems to have remained until 1458. On his activity during this period and other evidence of his close relationship to Donatello, see Krahn, 15.

¹⁴Weihrauch offers a useful introduction to the Paduan school of bronze sculpture at 96ff.

¹⁵Krahn, fig. 85.

(fig. 7) to Severo da Ravenna.¹⁶ These are quite different in conception, however. They correspond to the most prevalent manner of representing Judith as an emblematic figure, outside any narrative context, in which she is shown holding Holofernes' sword aloft in one hand and grasping his severed head by the hair in the other. This type was especially common in Italy, where it first appeared in an eleventh-century Bible and is exemplified prominently by the small niche figure of Judith on Ghiberti's east doors for the Florence baptistry.¹⁷ It was also current in Italian prints from the second half of the fifteenth century.¹⁸

The Berlin *Judith* departs from this prevalent type, however, in the details of its pose, noticeably in the downward-pointing sword, held easily in the right hand with its point resting on the base, and more conspicuously still in its nudity. In both these respects, it resembles Donatello's bronze *David* more closely than any surviving image of Judith. Despite a certain awkwardness in the adapta-



4. Hans Baldung Grien, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg. 1525. (Photo: Germanisches Nationalmus.)

¹⁶On the statuette attributed to Riccio, believed to have come from an inkstand or lamp, like the Berlin *Judith*, see John Pope-Hennessy, *Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Reliefs, Plaquettes, Statuettes, Utensils and Mortars* (London: Phaidon Press 1965), 128; on that attributed to Severo da Ravenna, see de Winter, 106, fig. 75. A bronze statuette sometimes attributed to the Florentine Antonio del Pollaiuolo has also been identified as Judith, although here Holofernes' head is missing: Leopold D. Ettlinger, *Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo* (Oxford and New York: Phaidon Press, 1978), no. 65, 170; Draper, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, no. 67, 199-201.

¹⁷Richard Krautheimer and Trude Krautheimer-Hess, *Lorenzo Ghiberti*, 2nd ed., (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), vol. 1, 173, vol. 2, pl. 130a. The eleventh-century Bible illustration is reproduced by Volker Herzner, "Die 'Judith' der Medici," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 43 (1980): 144, fig. 3.

¹⁸Two engravings in the Florentine Fine Manner from the so-called "Otto prints" are discussed by Paul Kristeller, *Florentinische Zierstücke in Kupferstich aus den XV. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1909), nos. 14 and 15; also see John Goldsmith Phillips, *Early Florentine Designers and Engravers* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1955), 66. Several *niello* prints, probably from the school of Bologna, were published by Arthur Hind, *Nielli, Chiefly Italian of the XV Century* (London: British Museum, 1936), nos. 167, 168, 169, and Dutuit, *Manuel de l'amateur d'estampes*, 6 vol. (Paris: A. Levy, 1881-88), vol. I, part 2, nos. 5, 19, 19 bis.

tion of the pose, parallels are also evident in the direction of the gaze and tilt of the head downward and to the right; in the *contrapposto* stance with the right leg bearing the weight, the free left leg turned inward, and the lifted, outward-thrusting right hip; and in the sense of stillness which pervades both works, quite different from the dynamism implied in the more typical depiction of Judith with up-raised sword. Even the body types of the two figures are similar. Judith's high-breasted, long-waisted torso, with its taut midriff section, is closer to the David than to the typical female nude of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. It is different from the Frick *Tomiris* (fig. 5), for example, whose breasts are more naturally rounded and placed lower and whose midriff is rounder and narrower, although both have in common the unusual manner in which the severed head is balanced in the palm of the figure's hand instead of being grasped by the hair.

The strong iconographic connections between Judith and David make it likely that the *David* and not some other figure was the source. David and Judith perform a common act, the slaying and decapitation of more physically powerful enemies. They have the same attributes, the sword and severed head. In a theological context, they prefigure, respectively, Christ and the Virgin triumphing over the devil, and they were cited together in texts and represented together in visual art as models of humility and as examples of how even the physically weak can destroy more powerful enemies with God's help.¹⁹ In the context of civic humanism, they were also brought together in the fifteenth century as examples of the *virtù* to which cities as well as individuals were encouraged to aspire. I shall return to the latter connection later in this paper.

Represented fully nude and in the classicizing medium of the bronze statuette, the Berlin *Judith* takes on the aspect, not of a modest Hebrew widow, but of a heroine *all'antica*. The same is true of the two other nude Judiths from Italy which are close to it in time. Signorelli's Judith in Orvieto (fig. 6), nude except for a helmet and narrow band of drapery around the genitals, is idealized, vigorously modeled with an assertive *contrapposto* stance, and, like the Berlin *Judith*, lacking any overt evocation of the erotic which characterizes the nude Judiths of the North. Also like the Berlin *Judith*, Signorelli's

¹⁹The thematic connections between Judith and David and their frequent use as pendants have often been discussed, e.g., by Hans Kauffmann, *Donatello: Eine Führung in sein Bilden und Denken* (Berlin: G. Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1936) 168-71; Herzner, "Die 'Judith' der Medici," 164-69; and Bialostocki, 120-21.



5. (above) Severo da Ravenna, *Tomyris with the Head of Cyrus*. Frick Collection, New York. c. 1502-1509. (Photo: Frick Collection).

6. (above rt.) Luca Signorelli, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. c. 1503. (Photo: Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione, Rome).

7. (below left) Severo da Ravenna, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*. Whereabouts unknown.

8. (right) Donatello, *Judith and Holofernes*. Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, Italy. c. 1455. (Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, New York)

9. (below center) Giorgione, *Judith*. Hermitage, Leningrad. (Photo: Art Resource, New York)



nude takes the form of an antique statuette—a fictive one in this case—occupying the keystone of an illusionistically-painted arch, an arrangement which had precedents in the figured keystones of Roman triumphal arches like those of Titus, Trajan, Septimius Severus and Constantine.²⁰ In the case of Nicoletto da Modena's nude *Judith*, an antique context is established by the architectural ruins which form the setting for the figure, itself classical in conception, and by the antique device of the *velificatio* billowing over the figure's head.

The use of nudity to characterize Judith as a heroine in the pagan manner is a late stage in a process of reconceiving the figure of Judith which began in the fourteenth century in the writings of Petrarch. In the "Triumph of Chastity," for example, written between 1340 and 1344, Petrarch introduced "the Hebrew Judith, wise and chaste and strong" into the ranks of illustrious women who acted in defense of their chastity and who glorify Laura's triumph over Love by comparison with their own highly-praised deeds.²¹ That Judith should be cited as an example of chastity is unremarkable, given her use as a model of this virtue in medieval art and texts.²² What is new is that her companions are all pagans and that she is ranked after, not above them; Lucretia and Penelope, whom the poet praises jointly as first in the ranks "of truest honor," and Virginia are all rated more highly, for it is not chastity as a Christian virtue which is honored here, but chastity which is defended by bold, even violent deeds, rewarded by worldly praise, and linked more often than not to the service of the

²⁰Phyllis Pray Bober and Ruth Rubenstein, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources* (London: H. Miller and Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), nos. 178, 179, 181, 182. Typically, the figures in such keystones represent either gods like the warrior Mars or personifications like *Virtus*, appropriate to a triumphal monument; see Richard Brilliant, *The Arch of Septimius Severus in the Roman Forum*, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*, no. 29 (Rome: American Academy, 1967), 101-2, 121-28.

²¹"Judith ebraea, la saggia, casta e forte." Francesco Petrarca, *Le rime sparse e i trionfi*, ed. Ezio Chiòrboli (Bari: G. Laterza, 1960), 329; *The Triumphs of Petrarch*, trans. Ernest Hatch Wilkins (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962), 45. This and other references to Judith in Italian literature are noted by Frank Capozzi, "The Evolution and Transformation of the Judith and Holofernes Theme in Italian Drama and Art before 1627" (Ph.d. Diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975).

²²For example, in illustrations to the popular thirteenth-century moral treatise *Somme le Roi*, discussed by Rosamund Tuve, "Notes on the Virtues and Vices: II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964): 42-72, esp. 50; also see Elena Ciletto, "Patriarchal Ideology in the Renaissance Iconography of Judith," in *Refiguring Woman. Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 41-43, and Bialostocki, 208.

state. The identification of Judith with virtuous pagan women was further promoted by her incorporation into fifteenth-century pictorial cycles representing illustrious men and women of antiquity and by the classicizing treatment of the figure itself through manner of dress, references to antique models, and other devices. Prominent examples of the latter category may be found among Mantegna's several versions of the Judith theme, among them a painting from the 1490s in Montreal in which the figure, like its pendant Dido, is not only clothed in classicizing dress but painted in monochrome to simulate small-scale relief sculptures set against a marble ground in the manner of classical reliefs.²³ The previously-noted bronze statuettes from the Riccio workshop and Severo da Ravenna belong in this category as well.

I think it unlikely, however, that the assimilation of Judith into the ranks of illustrious pagan women was alone sufficient to prompt her representation as a nude. Until the beginning of the sixteenth century, no established tradition existed for the nude representation of pagan heroines like Lucretia or virtuous pagan goddesses like Minerva. The nude figure of Temperance (sometimes identified as Prudence), modeled on a *Venus pudica* type, on Giovanni Pisano's pulpit for the Duomo in Pisa, 1302-1310, was the first of numerous female nudes, antique in inspiration, which Renaissance artists used to represent allegorical figures like Truth, Constancy, and Chastity, especially in small-scale works like medals and plaquettes prized by the same connoisseurs who collected statuettes like the Berlin *Judith*.²⁴ But pagan women like those to whom Judith was compared by Petrarch and others only began to be represented nude around the same time as Judith herself. The bronze statuette of *Tomiris* (fig. 5), attributed by de Winter to Severo da Ravenna and dated by him c. 1502-1509, is one example which is suggestively close to Judith in having a man's severed head as an attribute. Lucretia, with whom Judith was paired by some artists as models of heroic chastity and republican values, was first represented nude around the same time,

²³R. W. Lightbown, *Mantegna* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1986), 210-13, 450. On Mantegna's treatment of Judith, also see Yael Even, "Mantegna's Uffizi 'Judith': The Masculinization of the Female Hero," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 61 (1992): 8-20.

²⁴Scholarly opinion on the identification of the Pisa pulpit figure is reviewed by Nikolaus Himmelmann in his valuable study *Ideale Nacktheit* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1985), 52-53. Himmelmann cites examples of later allegorical female nudes at 102, 104f., 107.

for example in a 1508 drawing by Albrecht Dürer.²⁵ No clear priority for the nude representation of these or any other pagan heroines has been established.

There did exist, however, a long-established tradition of nudity for the representation of heroic men, and it is within this tradition that the Berlin *Judith* takes its place. By the second half of the thirteenth century, a powerful, idealized type of male nude, typically modeled on antique figures of Hercules, began to gain currency, initially as the embodiment of Christian fortitude and later of *virtù*, the Renaissance ideal of character derived from Roman *virtus* which encompassed courage, resolve, and the capacity to act effectively and autonomously in the service of morality and the public good.²⁶ Early humanists like Petrarch, in his *De viris illustribus*, and Salutati, in *De laboribus herculis*, promoted Hercules' reputation as the preeminent example of *virtù*, and the prestige attached to the heroic male nude was enhanced accordingly. Hercules' stature was especially high in Florence, where, since at least 1281, the city's seal displayed the nude Hercules carrying club and lionskin as a symbol of the city itself.²⁷ Late in the fourteenth century, the nude figure of Hercules, based on an antique prototype, was featured prominently in a landmark program of relief decorations commissioned for the jambs of the Porta della Mandorla.²⁸

²⁵Linda C. Hulst, "Dürer's Lucretia: Speaking the Silence of Women," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 16 (1991): 205-35, locates Dürer's drawing in the larger context of Renaissance views about Lucretia, chastity, and female heroism.

²⁶Nicola Pisano's pulpit for the Pisa baptistry, c. 1260, where a muscular nude Hercules, modeled on an antique prototype, was used to represent the virtue Fortitude, is an early example. On the concept of *virtù*, expounded upon by leading humanists like Bruni, Valla, Facio, and Brandolini, see Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), 179-80.

²⁷To Ettliger's widely-cited discussion of the meaning of Hercules in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence may now be added Maria Monica Donato, "Hercules and David in the Early Decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio: Manuscript Evidence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991): 83-98.

²⁸Hercules' combats with the Nemean lion, Antaeus, and the Hydra are represented in the archivolts. On the program of the Porta della Mandorla jambs, see Himmelmann, 62-93, with references to many earlier studies. Hercules here was interpreted in terms of Christian allegory by Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939), 155, and idem, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1960), 150 n. 4, but more recent opinion attributes the prominence of Hercules here to the influence of humanists like Salutati. See Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1:280.

Shortly thereafter David, likewise, was adopted as a symbol of Florentine liberty and civic virtue. In 1416, Donatello's marble statue of the victorious young David, originally intended for the Duomo, was transferred to the Palazzo Vecchio at the request of the Signoria in the wake of the city's latest reprieve from foreign aggression and conspicuously displayed as a symbol of her ability to resist tyranny and of the protection which she enjoyed from God himself.²⁹ Already in the trecento, Dante had compared David to Hercules as an example of a single combatant who can overcome a more powerful one with God's help.³⁰ Later, like another biblical hero, Samson, David also came to inherit Hercules' nudity. The most prominent *David* of Herculean type is Michelangelo's marble statue of 1501-1504, but this was anticipated by a number of powerful nude Davids in lesser-known, small-scale works of the late fifteenth century like statuettes and plaquettes.³¹ (I leave aside, only for the moment, what was probably the earliest nude David of the quattrocento, Donatello's notably un-Herculean bronze.)

²⁹The connection between David and Hercules has often been noted; see, for example, Donato, esp. 90-98; Himmelmann, 59; Herzner, "David Florentinus I," 112; Annegrit Schmitt, "Herkules in einer unbekanntenen Zeichnung Pisanellos," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 17 (1975): 51-86, 66; and Charles de Tolnay, *Michelangelo*, 6 vols. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1947), 1:153-54. The most recent discussion of Donatello's marble *David* is by Donato, 90-96, who presents new evidence that from the time of its installation in the Palazzo Vecchio, it carried an inscription believed by earlier scholars to be a later addition. The original inscription, according to Donato, read, "Pro patria fortiter dimicantibus etiam adversus terribilissimos hostes deus prestat victoriam" ("To those who bravely fight for the fatherland God will lend aid even against the most terrible foes," trans. Janson). Also see Janson, 3-7, and Volker Herzner, "David Florentinus I: Zum Marmordavid Donatellos im Bargello," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 20 (1978): 44-115.

³⁰Dante compared David's slaying of Goliath to Hercules' victory over Antaeus in *De monarchia* II.9.11, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci (Milan: Mondadori, 1965).

³¹The Herculean character of Michelangelo's David is commented on by Charles Seymour, Jr., *Michelangelo's David: A Search for Identity* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 59, 64. A pendant statue of Hercules was planned for the *David* well before Baccio Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus* was actually placed opposite it in front of the Palazzo Vecchio in 1534. The best known of the small-scale works representing David nude is a bronze statuette in the Louvre, once attributed to Donatello; see Herzner, "David Florentinus II," 131-34. For other nude Davids of heroic type, see Draper, *Italian Renaissance Sculpture*, 222-23; G. dalli Regoli, "David Trionfante: Una Ipotesi e un Disegno Poco Noto," *Antologia di belle arti* 9-12 (1979) 34-42, fig. 4; Pope-Hennessy, *Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*, 44, nos. 141 and 286; *Natur und Antike in der Renaissance*, 376-77, no. 74b; and Planiscig, fig. 547.

The themes which linked Hercules and David—the conquest of tyrants, the freedom of cities, and the exercise of active virtue for the public good—connected both of them to Judith as well. Like her male counterparts, Judith had been regarded as a model of fortitude beginning in the patristic period when St. Ambrose cited her as an example of “true fortitude, the power of virtue and temperance, which through devotion of mind surpasses the course of nature.”³² As an example of justified tyrannicide, Judith’s story, with David’s, is cited in the *Policraticus* of John of Salisbury.³³ As a defender of her city’s liberty, she is invoked by Petrarch in a letter to the empress Anna, wife of the emperor Charles IV, among other women celebrated for the founding and saving of cities, and by Cola di Rienzo in a letter circulated to the leaders of Florence and other Italian cities in 1347 in which he promised that opponents of his short-lived republic in Rome would be defeated as Judith had overcome Holofernes.³⁴ When the image of Judith slaying Holofernes first appears as a model of fortitude in visual art, in the *Canzone delle virtù* of Bartolomeo di Bartoli, c. 1350, it is in the company of a male figure labeled “Fortitudo” who rends a lion from behind and who in action and attribute evokes the lion-slayers Hercules and Samson, but even more specifically, because he is crowned, David.³⁵

This image from the *Canzone della virtù* anticipated by just over a century the most memorable image of Judith in the Quattrocento (arguably in any period), Donatello’s life-size bronze statue of Judith, dated stylistically to c. 1455 (fig. 8).³⁶ One of the inscriptions which

³²Ambrose, *Liber de viduis*, *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64) 16:245–47.

³³*Ioannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Policratici*, ed. Clemens C. I. Webb (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 377–78 (book VIII, ch. 20); *The Statesman’s Book of John of Salisbury*, trans. John Dickinson (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 370–72.

³⁴Francesco Petrarca, *Le Familiari*, ed. Vittorio Rossi, 4 vol. (Florence: Sansoni, 1942), 4:66; trans. Aldo S. Bernardo, *Letters on Familiar Matters, Rerum familiarium libri, XVII–XXIV* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1985), 178. *Epistolario di Cola di Rienzo*, ed. Annibale Gabrielli (Rome: Forzani, 1890), 84. See Capozzi, 21–23.

³⁵*La canzone delle virtù e delle scienze di Bartolomeo da Bologna*, ed. L. Dorez (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d’Arti Grafiche Editore, 1904), 27 and pl. 5. Judith’s visual image at times merges with that of Fortitude, e.g., on Riccio’s Paschal candlestick in the Santo in Padua, where Fortitude is represented as a woman holding a sword-grip in one hand and a severed head (or possibly a mask?) in the other (Planiscig, 183).

³⁶Donatello’s *Judith* is the subject of an extensive bibliography. The relevant documents and sources, together with earlier studies of the statue, are reviewed by Janson, 198–205. More recent literature on the Judith has been ably summarized by

the statue is reported to have carried on its base in the fifteenth century is self-evidently political: "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 the citizens."³⁷ This text construes Judith as a model of fortitude in the context of civic virtue and public action—that is to say, of *virtù*—as most recent studies of the work have emphasized.³⁸ The other inscription, which reads "Kingdoms fall through luxury, cities rise through virtues; behold the neck of pride severed by the hand of humility,"³⁹ has prompted some interpretations of the statue primarily in moral-theological terms; but it also carries political implications in its endorsement of the virtues of cities in contrast to the vices of kingdoms and its characterization of Holofernes as an example of vanquished pride, a principal vice of tyrants in Florentine political thought.

In the tribute which they pay to the power of cities to triumph through their virtues, both these inscriptions are related thematically to the inscription on Donatello's bronze *David* published recently by Sperling: "The victor is whoever defends the fatherland. God crushes the wrath of an enormous foe. Behold! a boy overcame a great tyrant. Conquer, O citizens!"⁴⁰ In 1469, Donatello's *Judith* is first recorded standing in the garden of the Medici palace in Florence adjacent to the courtyard where his bronze *David* was positioned, possibly on axis with it.⁴¹ Even if Donatello did not initially conceive the two statues as pendants, their physical proximity and frequent collocation elsewhere in Florentine art—in the painted vaults of Or San Michele and in Ghiberti's east baptistry doors, for example—would alone have encouraged a reading of the two in relation to one another.

Ciletti and by Herzner, "Die 'Judith' der Medici." The recent restoration of the Judith is the subject of the exhibition catalogue *Donatello e il restauro della Giuditta*, ed. Loretta Dolcini (Florence: Edizione Di, 1988).

³⁷"Petrus Medices Cos. Fi. libertati simul et fortitudini hanc mulieris statuam quo cives invicto constantique animo ad rem pub. redderent dedicavit." Trans. Janson.

³⁸That Donatello's Judith was intended to be understood as a model of *virtù* is the view, for example, of Ciletti; of Herzner, "Die 'Judith' der Medici," 152-54, 169-80; and of Antonio Natali, "Exemplum salutis publicae," in *Donatello e il restauro della Giuditta*, 19-32.

³⁹"Regna cadunt luxu surgent virtutibus urbes caesa vides humili colla superba manu." Trans. Janson.

⁴⁰"Victor est quisquis patriam tuetur/Frangit immanis Deus hostis iras/Un puer grandem domuit tirannum/Vincite cives." Sperling, 218-19 (her translation).

⁴¹Evidence concerning relative placement of the two statues is evaluated by Francis Ames-Lewis, "Donatello's Bronze 'David' and the Palazzo Medici Courtyard," *Renaissance Studies* 3 (1989): 235-51.

other, and the similar messages carried by their inscriptions must have further promoted the apprehension of them as a pair.⁴² Inside the palace, a group of paintings and at least one bronze statuette representing Hercules by Pollaiuolo carried forward related themes.⁴³ The connection between Donatello's two statues was perpetuated after the expulsion of the Medici from Florence in 1494, when they were jointly appropriated, together with Pollaiuolo's paintings of Hercules, to represent the republican ideals of the new regime, the David installed in the courtyard of the Palazzo della Signoria and the Judith outside on the *ringhiera*.⁴⁴

The collocation of Judith and David in programs based on humanist themes was not limited to Donatello's bronzes but can also be found in other works, most associated directly or indirectly with Florence. Botticelli, who proposed that Donatello's *Judith* be given Michelangelo's marble *David* as a pendant during the debate in the Signoria about the placement of the latter statue, introduced both Judith and David (shown wearing Roman armor) into his painting *The History of Lucretia*.⁴⁵ In Rome, 1492-94, Pinturicchio introduced David, Judith, and Hercules into the curious vault program of the Sala dei Santi in the Vatican apartments of Alexander VI, a supporter of the exiled Medici, where, together with Theseus, they serve as Hebrew and Greek counterparts to the Egyptian god Osiris, inter-

⁴²The theory that the figures were planned as pendants, first advanced by Kauffmann, 165-76, has been revived more recently by Herzner, "Die 'Judith' der Medici," 164-65. The ceiling of Or San Michele (Werner Cohn, "Franco Sacchetti und das ikonographische Programm der Gewölbmalereien von Orsanmichele," *Mitteilungen des kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz* 8 [1957]: 65-77) is only one of the public sites in which the Judith and David were displayed together; on Ghiberti's highly-visible east baptistry doors, Judith occupies the niche adjoining the panel in which David is shown decapitating Goliath as a complementary symbol of Christian victory (Krautheimer and Krautheimer-Hess, 1:173). Kauffmann cites other examples at 167-68, including a book of Gospels commissioned by Piero de Medici in 1466 for the Duomo and a psalter for the convent of Saints Cosmo and Damian.

⁴³Ettlinger, *Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo*, 128-37, discusses these works and Lorenzo de Medici's attachment to Hercules as a personal symbol. See also 26-28, 141-42.

⁴⁴Janson, 198-200; J. Wilde, "The Hall of the Great Council of Florence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 7 (1944): 76. Herzner, "David Florentinus II," 129ff., has proposed that Donatello's bronze *David* was already in the possession of the Signoria at this time and that it had been sold by the Medici to the Signoria in 1479; most scholars believe that the *David* purchased at that time by the Signoria was Verrocchio's bronze statue.

⁴⁵Ronald Lightbown, *Sandro Botticelli*, (London and Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978), 1:141-45, 2:101-103.

preted here as another virtuous tyrannicide.⁴⁶ In the very public context of the triumphal arch erected for the entry of Pope Leo X (Giovanni de Medici) into Florence in 1515, Judith appeared on one face, accompanied by Samson and the personification of Fortitude; David and Joshua appeared on the other face, and Hercules was prominently featured elsewhere in the festive decorations.⁴⁷

It is easy to comprehend how Judith, understood to possess the *virtù* of both David and his pagan counterpart Hercules, likewise assumed their nudity like a second, masculine skin. In proposing that Signorelli's Judith in Orvieto was the first to be represented nude, Gilbert connected its nudity to "the fact that her normal analogue, David, was undergoing the identical process at the hands of Michelangelo at just this time...."⁴⁸ The Berlin *Judith* presents a case in which a specifically identifiable male nude David served not merely as a suggestive precedent as in the case of Signorelli's nude but as an actual model. A nude Judith modeled on a nude *David* apparently offers an affirmative answer to a central question in humanist discourse on women: whether, as Plutarch had argued, women could be the moral equal of men, capable like them of *virtù*.⁴⁹ Indeed, Judith could claim to possess *virtù* in a double sense. She displays the courage characteristic of the heroic man and kills Holofernes with a

⁴⁶This is the interpretation of N. Randolph Parks, "On the Meaning of Pinturicchio's 'Sala dei Santi,'" *Art History* 2 (1979): 298.

⁴⁷John Shearman, "The Florentine 'Entrata' of Leo X," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1975): 145 n. 29.

⁴⁸Gilbert, 121. Indeed, it is very possible that Signorelli's Judith had a nude David for a pendant in the San Brizio Chapel itself, as suggested by Stanley Meltzoff, *Botticelli, Signorelli and Savonarola: "Theologia Poetica" and Painting from Boccaccio to Poliziano* (Florence: L. Olschki, 1987), 341. On the wall directly opposite the Judith, the keystone on the corresponding arch now contains a figure which reproduces the Judith very closely, but this is a later restoration. In the early sixteenth century, a figure complementary to the Judith would have been expected, not one identical to it, and a David would have been the obvious choice. It is not likely to be coincidental that Hercules, nude, is depicted combating evil elsewhere in the chapel, and if a David occupied the keystone opposite the Judith (also presumably nude, like the present restored figure), not one but two heroic men would have provided the context within which the representation of Judith as an heroic nude becomes readily comprehensible.

⁴⁹"The Virtues of Women," *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. 3, tr. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1949), 475, 479. On the controversy as to whether women are moral creatures, equal to men, see Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell Univ. Press, 1990), 123, 136-7, 148-49; Ian Maclean *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 20-22, 51-67; and idem, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610-1652* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 73-87.

sword, a man's weapon. But also conspicuous among the virtues ascribed to her is chastity, the most characteristic female virtue. Indeed, many humanists, arguing that in order to resist her own desires and the seductions of men a woman needs no less strength and courage than a man who engages in battle, contended that chastity was the source of the *virtù* peculiar to women.⁵⁰

The paradoxes which underlie the humanist concept of female *virtù* to which the nude Judith lays claim have often been remarked upon. In his *Isagogicon*, Leonardo Bruni justified the identification of fortitude (which he deems "the fairest of virtues") with *virtus* on the grounds that the latter term derives from *vir*, man, and expressed the commonly-held view that fortitude "means, literally, 'manliness,'" and is proper to men.⁵¹ Accordingly, in the language of the debate over women's capacity for *virtù*, a woman in whom the passive virtues characteristic of women like humility, patience, and charity are superseded by the active virtues characteristic of men, like courage and strength, is characterized as *virile*, or as a *virago*.⁵² The Bible itself recognized Judith as a woman of this sort. "For thou hast done manfully," the Bethulians praise Judith upon her return with Holofernes' head (Judith 15:11, Douay Version), and later commentators like

⁵⁰Hults discusses the veneration of female chastity at length at 205-35. The defense of chastity was conceived as a violent struggle in Prudentius' *Psychomachia*, where the conflict between the armed maiden Chastity and Lust the Sodomite is described as a furious bloody battle and indeed, is compared to the slaying of Holofernes by Judith, who "checked his unclean passion with the sword..." (282-87). The concept of chastity as an active rather than a passive virtue is again thematized in Petrarch's "Triumph of Chastity" which describes the conflict between Love and Chastity as a clash, a battle and an assault (*The Triumphs of Petrarch*, 40). Francesco Barbaro in his influential treatise *De Re Uxorica*, written in Florence in 1416, defined feminine *virtù* as a union of strength and courage with chastity and dutifulness, exemplified by Cornelia and Andromache. Although he does not mention Judith, his ideal of *virtù* certainly applies to her.

⁵¹Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Isagogicon moralis disciplinae*, in *Humanistisch-Philosophisch Schriften*, ed. Hans Baron (Leipzig and Berlin, 1928), 30-31; "An Isagogue of Moral Philosophy," in *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, trans. Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), 275. On the concept of *virtù* in Florence, with special attention to its gender implications, see Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Fortune is a Woman: Gender and Politics in the Thought of Niccolò Machiavelli* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1984), esp. 25, 48-9, 109-10.

⁵²See, e.g., Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), 147-49.

Dracontius refer to her similarly as a "manly woman."⁵³ And it is as a manly woman that the Berlin *Judith* may be regarded, insofar as nudity as a sign of *virtù* was an attribute previously reserved to men.⁵⁴ Her character as a *virago* is here directly embodied.

But the nudity of the Berlin *Judith's* specific model, Donatello's bronze *David*, is not Herculean nudity in the expected sense. If the bronze *David* had conformed to the type of the Porta della Mandorla Hercules or Michelangelo's marble *David*, mature, fully-muscled, and idealized, its nudity would have been readily comprehended as a strategy for casting him in the role of the ancient hero, possessing the *virtù* of the ancient Romans from whom the Florentines declared themselves descended. But a conventional nude of Herculean type is not what Donatello delivers. His *David* alludes to a heroic nude in its nudity, its *contrapposto* stance, and the role in which David is cast as a victorious warrior, displaying his weapon—a sword, held much as Hercules holds his club in both antique and Renaissance representations—and his trophy, Goliath's severed head. But the structure of the body is slender and physically undeveloped, so naturalistic that Vasari thought it was molded from a living model, and its nudity is unclassically highlighted by the elaborate boots and garlanded hat. The pensive gaze fails to engage the world outside which is the arena for heroic action.⁵⁵

⁵³Cited by Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words: Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems Vainglory, the Wonder of Creation, The Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1970), 67. Clement of Rome speaks of her "manly exploits" (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, ed. Alexander Roberts [Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1950], 20), and she was the ideal of a manly woman to Retherius of Verona (d. 974), who refers to her as "a man in mind, a woman in body." Quoted in Marie-Louise Portmann, *Die Darstellung der Frau in der Geschichtsschreibung des frühen Mittelalters* (Basel: Heibling & Lichtenhahn, 1958), 133. The concept of the manly woman arises also in relation to Lucretia; see Hulst, 219, 258.

⁵⁴Yael Even has made a similar argument in relation to a clothed Judith, Mantegna's drawing of Judith in the Uffizi, which she contends was modeled on the figure of a Roman centurion in his fresco *St. James Led to Execution* and is thereby endowed with the masculine hardness and potency of its prototype ("Mantegna's Uffizi 'Judith'").

⁵⁵Janson initiated an ongoing dispute about Donatello's unprecedented treatment of the male nude when he characterized it as "not a classical *ephebos* but the 'beautiful apprentice'; not an ideal but an object of desire, strangely androgynous in its combination of sinewy angularity with feminine softness and fullness." Donatello's "reputation as a homosexual," Janson insisted, is what explains his treatment of the David, which he proposed was modeled on the type of beautiful, effeminate youth that Donatello preferred (85-86). This psycho-sexual interpretation of the David was elaborated subsequently by Laurie Schneider in "Donatello's Bronze 'David,'" *Art Bulletin* 55 (1973): 213-16, and in "Donatello and Caravaggio: The Iconography of Decapitation,"

The Berlin *Judith* replicates the paradoxes of its prototype, and it may be that its author found Donatello's *David* a compelling model precisely because both present the same paradoxes in the use of nudity to characterize a figure as the embodiment of *virtù*. Like the David, the Berlin *Judith* alludes to heroic figures in outward signs like nudity and pose but contradicts their basic premise: the expectation that heroic character is expressed through the union of moral virtue with the physical strength of a mature man. Both David, with the physically undeveloped body of an adolescent, and Judith, with the body of a woman, performed heroic deeds, the deeds of men. But *not being men* is the physical condition which they share, the condition which their nudity so conspicuously discloses. This condition is the source of their physical weakness but at the same time, a measure of their moral strength—in the context of humanistic thought, proof that *virtù* can inhere in men and women alike, and in the context of Christian theology, proof of the power of God which worked through both.⁵⁶

Moreover, one of the most enigmatic qualities of Donatello's David, the sensuous, even erotic quality which many observers have perceived in the figure, is one which also hovers around the nude Judith. Even when the female nude is not deliberately eroticized, as

American Imago 33 (1976): 76-91, esp. 77-83, and by Albert Czogalla, "David und Ganymedes: Beobachtungen und Fragen zu Donatellos Bronzeplastik 'David und Goliath,'" in *Festschrift für Georg Scheja* (Sigmaringen: Thorbeck, 1975), 119-27. Different positions have been taken by, e.g., John W. Dixon, who argued that whatever "effeminacy" one might see in the David is that of the pre-pubescent boy whose youth and physical frailty are emphasized in the biblical text: "The Drama of Donatello's 'David': Re-examination of an Enigma," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 93 (1979): 6-12 (responses by Schneider may be found in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 93 [1979]: 18, and 94 [1979]: 48). Francis Ames-Lewis agreed that the figure has an erotic quality, but attributed it to fashionable philosophical trends in Florence in the late 1450s; to him, the work symbolizes the triumph of Plato's *amor caelestis* over Epicurean *amor vulgaris* ("Art History or 'Stilkritik'? Donatello's Bronze 'David' Reconsidered," *Art History* 2 [1979]: 146-47). The possible influence of Epicureanism on Donatello is also discussed by Emma Spina Barelli, "Note iconografiche in margine al Davide in bronzo di Donatello," *Italian Studies* 29 (1974): 28-44, and by Maristella de Panizza Lorch, "'Pulchra Facies' and 'Simulacrum': Reflection on Valla's Theory of Pleasure and Donatello's Art," *Source* 5 (1986): 12-15.

⁵⁶In the "Triumph of Chastity," Petrarch similarly underscored the marvelous quality of Chastity's victory over the formidable power of Love when he compared it to the slaying of "the Philistine giant" by "the Hebrew boy" David, to Hannibal's conquest by "the Roman youth" Scipio and to the vengeance wreaked on Cyrus by "the widowed Scythian Queen" Tomyris—examples of two youths and a woman who triumph over much stronger foes (ed. Chiòboli, 328; trans. Wilkins, 43).

in the case of the Berlin *Judith*, one may question whether the image of a female figure's unclothed body could ever be completely free of such resonances. This question is especially pertinent in the case of Judith, a paradoxical model of *virtù* in the conventional sense in that she possesses the courage of a man and wields a sword like a man but achieves her ends with a woman's characteristic weapon, the deliberate manipulation of her beauty and physical desirability. Beauty also characterizes the youthful David in the Old Testament. When David is first brought before Saul, he is described as "ruddy and beautiful to behold, and of a comely face" (I Kings 16:12). Once again, when Goliath first beholds David, the text says that he despises him, "For he was a young man, ruddy, and of a comely countenance" (17:42). David is said to have been beloved exceedingly by Saul (16:21) and by Jonathan (18:1-3). Another reason that the author of the Berlin *Judith* took Donatello's bronze statue as a model, and not a more conventional nude David, may be that in this work he perceived David as a figure who, like Judith, can be regarded at one and the same time as a heroic acting subject and as an object of desire. It may be more than coincidence that another *Judith*—though not a nude one—which is close in conception to Donatello's bronze *David*, Giorgione's painting in St. Petersburg (fig. 9), has likewise been said to explore the figure's equivocal character. Jan Bialostocki has proposed, based on perceptive visual analysis, that Giorgione's *Judith* also has a purposefully dual character, in which Judith's left leg, bare to the thigh and, in his words, "almost caressing the severed head of the man," introduced an erotic dimension into what is otherwise an image of good serenely triumphing over evil.⁵⁷

Thus the Berlin *Judith*, as unprepossessing as it may be as a work of art, nevertheless occupies a unique place in the reception of Donatello's famous statue as well as in the history of the nude Judith itself. Its dependence on Donatello's bronze *David* indicates that whoever the artist responsible for its invention, he must have had access to Donatello's statue either directly or through the intermediary of a now-lost studio *modello* or drawing. The case for an attribution to Bellano or a member of his shop is strengthened by his presence in Florence and his close contacts to Donatello. Alternatively, there is the possibility that a drawing or *modello* relating to the *David* was available in Padua during Donatello's ten-year stay there and that it remained there after his departure—once again, Bellano,

⁵⁷Bialostocki, 131.

who is presumed to have worked with Donatello in Padua as well as in Florence, would be suggested.

In view of the statuette's innovative character, however, the question must also be raised whether its author modeled it directly on Donatello's bronze or whether an intermediary, now lost, was its source. A diminutive work like this, ornamental and (from what can be determined from the surviving photographs) of secondary artistic quality, would likely have been modeled from another work of the same subject, perhaps a larger, freestanding statuette. The artist responsible for the actual transformation of Donatello's bronze *David* into a nude Judith would have required not only knowledge of the *David* itself, but familiarity with the Florentine practice of associating Judith and David as embodiments of *virtù* and imagination enough to use nudity, previously reserved to represent the *virtù* of heroic men, to create a new kind of image of a female hero. None of the existing candidates is completely satisfactory. Bellano remains a possibility, but Bellano was a largely derivative artist and one whose work as a whole demonstrates little interest in the nude and none at all in the female nude; indeed, when he took Donatello's bronze *David* as a model for his statuette in Philadelphia, he normalized his enigmatic prototype by clothing the figure and injecting a sense of movement suggestive of David's active virtue into the pose. For their greater inventiveness alone, Riccio, whose interest in harmonizing the Bible and antiquity is evident in works like his Paschal candlestick, and Severo da Ravenna, who produced numerous bronze statuettes representing female figures, are more conceivable. Neither, however, is known to have had the close connections with Donatello or with Florence which Bellano enjoyed. The question of what artist may have been behind the invention now realized only in the Berlin *Judith* remains an open one. My own suggestion—offered purely speculatively—is that that artist is likely to have been connected with the Donatello shop and may even have been Donatello himself. The idea of a nude Judith derived from the bronze *David* and fraught with similar ambiguities seems to me too characteristically Donatellesque to exclude such possibility.

Visual Arts Department
University of California, San Diego