the peasant. 'But', I was asked on several occasions, 'surely it is not a good thing for a ruler to be a priest?'

I spent the following Easter in the neighbouring village of Katomeri. On Saturday evening the church was crowded—the one time of the year when it was. After the joyful midnight announcement that 'Christ has arisen', the congregation dispersed with their lighted candles. Outside the church, however, the students (who had returned for the occasion from Athens with their families), most of whom were strongly left wing, had continued another tradition, for they had constructed a bonfire on which they had placed the conventional figure of Judas the Jew, the betrayer of Christ. As the bonfire blazed, however, I noticed an innovation. Judas wore a sign round his neck on which was printed the name 'Khomeini'. The symbolism was, I think, complex (even if it had been done on the spur of the moment) and multivalent. Judas the Jew and Khomeini the Muslim: both the enemies of Christendom, both triumphed over by the Greeks. But I think the students were also up to something else: the figure that burned was also Khomeini the priest, a sight to greet their own popes as he exited from his church.

Ahmed Al-Shahi

NORTHERN SUDANESE PERCEPTIONS OF THE NUBIAN CHRISTIAN LEGACY

People of the northern Sudan inhabit a semi-desert region. Apart from the riverine Nile, where most of the people live as sedentary agriculturalists, the rest of the region is barren, consisting of deserts with some hilly outcrops and inhabited by nomadic groups. Despite the unfavourable ecological conditions, this region has attracted outsiders who came originally to proselytize and spread their religions. The process of religious conversion and reconversion began with the ancient Egyptians, followed by Christian missionaries from Egypt, themselves succeeded by the arrival of Arab/Muslims from Egypt and Arabia. In addition to those who came for religious reasons, others were drawn to the northern Sudan by its supposedly rich natural resources and for trade and slavery. However, to the present-day population of the north, neither the remains of the ancient Egyptian kingdoms nor the ruins of Christian churches and monasteries have much cultural or ideological relevance. Rather, it is the two major Islamic institutions, the mosque and the Koranic school, which are of fundamental religious and ideological significance to the people. Islam has superseded previous religions; but it is interesting to examine in their historical context the pre-Islamic religions and cultural influences on northern Sudan and, in particular, the legacy of Christianity.

In view of its geographical proximity and vested interests, Egypt has had and continues to have a greater cultural and political influence on the Sudan than the rest of its neighbours. The ancient Egyptian dynasties contributed to the civilizations of the northern Sudan in the fields of religion, arts,

1. I am grateful to my wife Ame for her comments on the content of this paper.
architecture and system of government. The evidence of this influence can be seen in the presence of archaeological sites in the north, which include temples, pyramids and burial chambers. The Egyptians ruled the Sudan intermittently until independence in 1956, though in “partnership” with Britain from 1898 until 1956. Furthermore, Christianity, Arab culture and Islam came to Sudan via Egypt. During the second century AD, Egypt was converted to Christianity, and, not unexpectedly, this new religion filtered to northern Sudan in the sixth century. It was the intention of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian to spread Christianity beyond the frontiers of Egypt. Thus missionaries were sent to convert the Nubians to Christianity as a ‘needed replacement for the obsolete traditions of the Pharaohs’.

Although Christianity was not introduced as a conquering religion, it spread throughout Nubia and, by the end of the sixth century, ‘it seems to have been rapidly accepted by rulers and subjects alike from Aswan to the junctions of the Nile’. Resulting from this religious conversion, the temples and pyramids, which were, ‘for 3,500 years, the climactic expression of human and divine authority, ceased overnight to be a meaningful symbol’. Temples of pre-Christian civilizations were ‘converted into churches, and other churches were founded’. The extent of the conversion to Christianity is reflected in a profusion of churches such that ‘the total number of surviving Nubian churches (more than 120 from lower Nubia and the environs of El-Hajjar alone) is more than double the number of religious structures from all earlier times combined’.

Thus at the time of the Arab conquest of Egypt in AD 639 there were three Christian kingdoms in northern Sudan, though these kingdoms had a political identity before they were converted to Christianity. First, Nobatia in the north, with its capital at Fasas, extended upstream from the First Cataract. Secondly, Makuria (known sometimes by the name of its capital), with its capital at Old Dongola, extended beyond Nobatia, perhaps as far as Kabushiyia, a village near Shendi, but more probably as far as the Fifth Cataract. Thirdly, Alodia, with its capital at Koba, south of the modern Khartoum, extended from Kabushiyia ‘probably as far south as Semna’. It appears that the first two kingdoms were joined together by the middle of the seventh century, and both came to be referred to by Arab historians as al-Maghara, while Alodia was known as Alawa. Historical sources concerning the extent of Christian influence among the people of these kingdoms and the social, economic and political organization of the Christian communities are scanty. Trimmingham does question the extent of conversion to Christianity, though his statement requires evidence when he suggests: ‘There is no reason to suppose that the mass of the rural population ever were Christians, and Christianity probably only existed in the principal towns and larger villages.’ However, it can be assumed that with the conversion of the people of these three kingdoms to Christianity, it became firmly established as the religion of the state. Though the official religion was Christianity, the Church in northern Sudan was linked with the Egyptian Coptic Church, which exercised control over the Church in Sudan, particularly in the appointment of bishops.

With the conquest and conversion of Egypt to Islam in the seventh century Christianity lost its dominance, but it has survived until the present time on a smaller scale in the form of the Coptic Church. Islam became the official religion of Egypt, and, as with the spread of Christianity, Egypt was the main route for the introduction of Islam and Arab immigration into the Sudan. The other route was from the east, where the Arabs settled among the Jebi tribes and intermixed with them. At first the Muslim Arabs of Egypt carried out frontier raiding against Christian Nubia. But in AD 651-2 the governor of Egypt, Abd Allah Ibn Sa’ad Ibn Abi Sarh, led an expeditionary force and besieged Dongola. This force could not subjugate the Christians in Dongola but the expedition resulted in a much-questioned treaty, known as the ‘Treaty of Dongola’, between the ruler of Egypt and the Christian king of Dongola. The main terms of this treaty, according to early accounts, were an annual exchange of 360 slaves from Nubia for provisions from Egypt and an article precluding settlement of either party in the country of the other. The treaty, however, could not stop the coming of Arabs into the Sudan. Though Nubia never became part of the Islamic empire, the conversion of Christian Nubia to Islam took place through gradual infiltration rather than through military conquest.

In the tenth century, more systematic efforts were made to convert the political hierarchy of Christian Nubia. For example, Ibn Sulaym al-Aswani, an envoy of the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt, was sent shortly after AD 969 to re-establish trading relations between Egypt and Nubia and, more importantly, to convert (though he was unsuccessful) the Nubian Christian king to Islam.

As Egypt became Islamized, Christian Nubia became isolated and vulnerable to further pressures from the Muslims. Neither the remaining Christian community in Egypt, nor the Coptic Church in Ethiopia, nor the Christians of Europe came to the rescue. Moreover, the Muslim Arabs were bent on converting Nubia to Islam. During the second part of the thirteenth century, the Mamluks and Arab tribesmen fought a battle with King David of Dongola, which resulted in the defeat of the king. Then King Shakanda, who succeeded King David, accepted the overlordship of the ruler of Egypt.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
8. Trimmingham, Islam, p. 70.
9. Holt (Modern History of the Sudan, p. 15) argues that the provisions, in the form of “gifts of cereals and other goods”, were not part of the treaty but were given by convention.
and thus his status was relegated to that of a provincial governor. For the first time in the history of Nubia, the Christian Nubians were classified as dhimmi, meaning 'Christians living under Muslim rule and protection and paying tribute.' This represents the first political interference by Muslims in the affairs of Nubia, which led to the weakening of the power of the Christian kingdom. The coup de grace came in AD 1516, when the rulers of Egypt, the Mameluks, installed Abd Allah Barshamba, a convert to Islam, as king of Dongola and in the following year converted the King’s Throne Hall at Old Dongola into a mosque. The repercussions of this change were a gradual Islamization of the rulers and an influx of Arab immigrants into northern and central Sudan.

In addition to religious conversion, an equally significant cultural process was the Arabs' introduction of their kinship system into the Sudan. Inter-marriage between Muslim Arab immigrants and local Sudanese people took place wherever the Arabs settled. It is believed by Arab historians that a matrimonial system of descent and matrimonial residence after marriage were practised by the Sudanese before the arrival of the Arabs, who emphasized paternity, and that the process of inter-marriage shifted power from traditional Nubian rulers to male descendants of the Arabs, eventually solidifying the system of descent. The initial process of replacing the matrimonial system occurred when the kings of the Nubians

proceeded to win them [Julayjnah Arabs] over by marriage-alliances, to their kingdom broke up, and it passed to some of the offspring of Julayjnah through their mothers, according to the custom, of the Barbarians by which possession goes to the sister and the sister's son. So their kingdom was torn to pieces, and the Julayjnah nomads took possession of their lands.12

By this change, the male offspring of the Muslim Arab immigrants established dominance and authority over the household. The central figure in the matrimonial system, the mother's brother, lost his authority over the male children and came to be replaced by the father. However, the common Arab practice of patrilocal residence after marriage was not adhered to among the northern Sudanese during the initial stages of marriage. The common custom among the Jan was for the bridegroom to live with his bride's family in order for him to become acquainted with his in-laws and particularly his mother-in-law. The bridegroom’s length of stay depends on various circumstances, chiefly the availability of residence in his father's settlement. But ultimately the husband takes his wife back to his own patrilineal group and settles there, in conformity with the general practice among Arabs and other patrilineal

societies. Thus the initial practice of uxorilocal residence may be assumed to be a legacy of the matrilineal system prevalent among the northern Sudanese prior to the arrival of the Muslim Arabs.

In religious life, a weakened Christianity lingered on in the Nubian regions until the Yunji Kingdom of Sebnat came into being at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was the first Arabized and Islamized state to rule northern Sudan, and it put an end to the continuity of Christianity in the country. It would be unlike for Christianity to have survived among the Arabized Nubians, as the Arabs who brought the new religion thought that Islam was the last revealed religion and that it was the 'right' religious path.

Thus conversion to Islam was successful in the north. It was during the rule of the Yunji Kingdom that it became the religion of the state and a great deal of endeavour was exercised by Muslim men of religion, both immigrant and indigenous, to spread Islam widely in the Sudan.13 Unlike the influence of Christianity, which was confined to the banks of the Nile in the north, Arab migration and the spread of Islam went beyond these limits, spreading to the deserts of the north and to the savanna belt of central Sudan. While Christianity survived on a smaller scale in Egypt, the gradual conversion to and assimilation of Islam have totally obliterated the influence of Christianity in the northern Sudan. At the present time there are no Christian communities which have continued in being since the Christian era. The various Christian denominations in the modern Sudan have been introduced through the efforts of missionaries since the nineteenth century and under the Condominium administration, or by immigrant communities from other nations, such as Greeks, Copts, Italians and Syrians. For the present-day Muslim population of the northern Sudan who claim Arab descent, even though historians refer to them as Arabized Nubians, their 'real' history begins with the dominance of Islam, the Arabic language and Arab culture. They recognize not only the present-day diversity of their country but also the past influence of Egyptians, Christians, Ethiopians, Turks, Europeans, Arabs and Africans. Nevertheless, they do strongly associate themselves with a particular and interrelated culture and ideology: Arabism and Islam. History books cite the influence of the aforementioned peoples, but the impact of Islam and Arabism are more meaningful to the people of the northern Sudan than any other culture or ideology which has contributed to their past. Even the Nubians, who as a distinct cultural group have been inhabiting their present-day homeland since before the emergence of Christianity, have acquired a new identity and historical perspective. They have discarded their origin and, despite the fact that they have retained their native languages, now claim Arab ancestry and are proud of this association. Indeed the present-day people have forgotten, and do not wish to remember, that part of their ancestry was Christian.
The northern Sudanese look to Arabia and the Middle East for their genealogical links, language and religion. For example, the largest and most prestigious group of tribes in the north, the Ja'abiyin, claim descent from al-Abbas, the Prophet’s uncle, of the Quraysh tribe of Arabia. Men of religion and mystics came to the Sudan from Arabia and Egypt from the fourteenth century onwards to spread Islam and to establish Sufi orders, which are still influential in both the religious and the political spheres. The Greek and Coptic languages gradually disappeared from the north and were replaced by Arabic, though the Nubians and Beja peoples continue to speak their native languages. Moreover, Islam brought a new identity and a new system of religious education in the form of the Koranic schools, *khilias*, which are still widespread in the north. Islam brought new laws, some of which were enshrined in the Koran, a system of judiciary and a system of government. Finally, Islam linked Sudan to the Arab and Muslim worlds. For these reasons, it is understandable why the northern Sudanese are proud of their connections and would not value other connections, for example with Christianity, in the same way.

Due to its geographical proximity to Egypt, Nubia encountered greater cultural influence from the ancient Egyptians and from medieval Christianity than the rest of northern Sudan. Among the Nubians, house designs, jewellery and decorations have been influenced by ancient Egyptian and Christian motifs, particularly the cross, the dome, and various animals. With the coming of Islam, these motifs lost their meaning and significance. The cross has been replaced by the crescent, and the domed-tombs of Muslim saints and holy men have more cultural relevance to the modern northern Sudanese than the temples and pyramids of Meroe or the Nubian churches. To them, these are legacies of former religions which Islam came to change. In the religious and cultural idioms of the Muslim Sudanese it makes sense to admire an old mosque or a Koranic school more than a pyramid, church or monastery of greater antiquity. To the northern Sudanese Islam, coming as the last revealed religion, had to uproot the beliefs, practices, values and artistic expressions associated with Christianity, while nevertheless accepting that Christianity was one of the revealed religions and that its followers were *ahl al-kitab*, 'people of the [sacred] book'. Moreover, Christianity did not take root sufficiently among the population to withstand the pressure on it resulting from the conversion to Islam. No sooner had Christianity been introduced in northern Sudan than Islam and Arabism followed in its wake. It was less than a century between the conversion of the northern Sudanese to Christianity and their encounter with Islam. Had Christianity been in the north longer the conversion to Islam might have been more difficult.

Apart from the consideration of time, Christianity suffered from a weakness which may have helped the conversion to and spread of Islam. Christianity was dominated by Egyptian hegemony and culture. The bishops and many other religious functionaries were Egyptians. Thus, the Church in the Sudan always remained exotic and never became indigenous in the sense that Islam is today. Christianity came as a new cult, weakly grafted on to the regressive pre-Ptolemaic culture of the country, without revolutionising the lives of either the nobility or the masses.

Moreover, while an indigenous cult of the saints, who are assumed to have miraculous power, has come to be an integral aspect of the religious life of the Muslim northern Sudanese, in Christianity 'the Church was not founded on the blood of martyrs because there was never any danger of persecution. So there were no indigenous saints to which to link their saint-practices."

It is assumed that Christian archaeological remains, in the form of churches and monasteries, are still to be found in the north, and further investigation of these is required. Some of these remains may have been converted later into *fira*, particularly in the region inhabited by the Shaggia people. They occupy the bend of the Nile in the north stretching from south of old Dongola almost to the Fourth Cataract. The Shaggia homeland was part of the Makouria Christian kingdom. After the establishment of the dominance of Islam and the Arabs, this people rose to become a military power and extended their influence, in the eighteenth century, further than Dongola. By

15. For further details on this aspect, see Ahmad Muhammad Ali Aal al-Abs in, *House Decorations and Their Evolution in Wadi Halfa* (in Arabic), Khartoum: University of Khartoum, Sudan Unit, Occasional Papers No. 1, 1965.


17. Ibid, p. 78.
this time, most of the Christian buildings had been dismantled. One of the surviving Christian remains in the Shargiya homeland is the Christian monastery at al-Hashiyya, a small oasis lying fifteen kilometers east of the present-day town of Meroi. The monastery and the cemetery attached to it have survived due to their isolation, being located in the desert and at some distance from the sedentary population who inhabit the banks of the Nile. Apart from giving occasional guidance to school parties, expatriates and specialist visiting the archaeological sites of the pre-Christian and Christian eras, local people rarely visit them. Though they admire and appreciate the achievement and ingenuity of the people who left these remains, they do not appreciate their forebears as being the architects of these pyramids, temples and churches. To them, these buildings were constructed by ancient people and in ancient times. Though they conceive all this legacy as part of their country’s cultural heritage, their significant ancestors were Muslim Arabs who came from Arabia and who established radically different religious and cultural traditions. The previous religious systems or cultural traditions are not part of their ideology or perception of history. Their projection of history is one of religious and cultural relevance to the present.

When asked about their genealogical connections, most people in the north would reply, ‘We are Abbasites’, meaning they are descendents of al-Abbas (the Prophet’s uncle) of the Quraysh tribe of Arabia. The Al is a prestigious line of descent, and it would point this connection were they to incorporate not only their Nubian ancestry but also the religion, Christianity, associated with it. This strong association, which has developed over centuries, was recognized early in the Condominium administration (1898–1956) when the authorities forbade Christian missionaries to proselytize among the northern Sudanese. No doubt the administration did not want to antagonize the Muslims in the north, as it had recently overcome the Mahdiyya Islamic state. However, missionaries were allowed to carry out their work in the south and west, and Christianity has come to be associated generally with Western culture and influence.

Whereas the pyramids and temples of the ancient Egyptian and indigenous Sudanese dynasties have survived, not many of the churches and monasteries of the Christian era can still be found south of Nubia. The pyramids and temples of the ancient civilizations are located on the periphery of modern settlements, and for this reason they were not destroyed by the Muslims. Moreover, their construction and scale are such that they could not be destroyed easily. When the Muslim Arabs arrived, the religious beliefs associated with the pyramids and temples had, as a result of conversion to Christianity, ceased to exist, and the Muslim Arabs had no cause to dismantle the buildings. In contrast, the Muslim Arabs encountered in the church a living religion, Christianity. Unlike the pyramids and temples, the churches were built in the existing villages or towns of the time. With the spread of Islam, most of these churches were either destroyed or converted into mosques, as in the case of the King’s Throne Hall in Dongola. As the objective of the Muslim Arabs was to convert the Christian population to Islam, the church had to give way to the central Islamic institution, the mosque. Therefore, with the conversion to Islam, not only has Christianity disappeared but with it the church.

The gradual and effective spread of Islam, Arab culture and the Arabic language has caused the demise of Christianity in the northern Sudan. The meaningful religious and cultural identity to the northern Sudanese is one in which the Islamic ideological framework plays a dominant role. What went on before the arrival of Islam and the Arabs does not figure in the recollections, narratives, myths or popular history of the northern Sudanese. In reality, very little has survived of the values, customs and beliefs of the pre-Christian and Christian eras as a legacy from the past. There is a cultural and religious discontinuity, which most northern Sudanese consider desirable. To them, history and cultural continuity began with the primacy of Islam and Arabism, which take precedence over previous ideologies.

MIRACLES OF THE PEOPLE:
ATTITUDES TO CATHOLICISM
IN AN AFRO-BRAZILIAN RELIGIOUS CENTRE
IN SALVADOR DA BAHIA

Quem é ateu e via milagres como eu
Sabe que os deuses sem Deus
Não cessam de brotar
Nem cessam de esporar o coração
Que é soberano e que é senhor
Não cabe na escravidão.
Não cabe no seu não
Não cabe em si de tanto sin
E pura dança / E sexo / E glória
E pais para a fala da história
Ojubá ia / Lé e via

Quem descobriu o Brasil / Foi o negro que viu
A crueldade bem de frente
E ainda produziu milagres
De e no extremo oceano.

Atheists who have seen miracles as I have done
Know that where God is not, the gods
Don’t disappear; they multiply.
The gods don’t give up, for the sovereign heart,
Cannot be confined by slavery,
Cannot be confined by ‘No’.
So much ‘Yes’ can never be confined:
The yes of dance / The yes of sex / The glorious yes
That arches across our history
Ojubá came here / And saw this

Miracles of the People
41

It was the blacks / Who discovered Brazil
Face to face with inhumanity
They performed miracles
Miracles of faith in the far west.

Cândido, Veloso, ‘Milagres do Povo’
(‘Miracles of the People’)

CANDIDOMBLÉ, the Afro-Brazilian religion of Salvador da Bahia, has for many years been the main focus of anthropological research into the African-derived religions of the new world. The analyses of the rituals and cosmology of the religion by Rodrigues and Bastide and accounts of life in the terreiros, or temples, of Candomblé by Landes, Carneiro and others stress its African traits, its fidelity to sub-Saharan old-world traditions and its preservation of African tribal divinities, of a liturgy in the Yoruba language and of dances, systems of divination, animal sacrifice and herbal lore all directly traceable to an African origin. Historical and ethnographic researches by Verger in West Africa have established precise linkages for many of these features of Afro-Brazilian religious practice. Later studies, for instance by Eliean, have continued to interpret Candomblé as a transformation of African cosmology ‘encysted’, in Bastide’s phrase, in modern Brazilian culture, rather than as a Brazilian form of spirituality, one among a number of other Afro-Brazilian cults.

The stress these authors put on the distinctively African character of Candomblé is the subject of critical discussion among contemporary scholars and adherents of Afro-Brazilian religions. The concern with Africanness, it is argued, led the earlier researchers to rely on data drawn from the minority of terreiros (cult houses) in Bahia that follow the Nago and Jeje rites (which preserve Yoruba and Fon divinities and incantations in the Yoruba language) at the expense of other Afro-Brazilian traditions derived from Bantu cultures which, generally speaking, incorporate a greater number of elements from popular Catholicism and Amerindian cultures. These traditions (Angola, Congo, Caboclo) are numerically better represented in contemporary Bahian religious practice, as Carneiro, at least, recognized. The bias in the literature

towards the Nagô tradition and the consequent enhancement of the prestige of terreiros. Following this rite has been characterized by a Brazilian commentator as *yorkhimo*. Candomblé, such critics maintain, is both more syncretic and more varied in its manifestations than the existing ethnography would suggest. The Jeje-Nagô houses, moreover, may themselves be more eclectic than has generally been described. In this paper I present some background to the current situation in Bahia and some observations from a traditionalist terreiro concerning the relations between Candomble and Catholicism. These are not intended to support one or other interpretation of Candomblé, but they serve to illustrate what may be called the creative ambiguity of the Brazilian religious imagination, a feature that has both preserved and transformed elements of each religion.

A system of correspondences with popular Catholicism is a time-honoured feature of Afro-Brazilian cults. Images of saints are found in most terreiros in Bahia. Jeje-Nagô included, alongside symbols of the orixás. St Lazarus with Omolin, the sun-god; St Anthony with Ògún, the god of war and iron; and the Virgin Mary, in her manifestation as Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception of the Beach, with Iemanjá, goddess of the sea and mother of the orixás. The equation of individual orixás with Catholic saints is reflected in the basic terminology of the terreiros, where initiates are known as *filhos de santo*, literally `children of the saint', and priests and priestesses as *pai de santo* or *mãe de santo*, `father' or `mother' of the saint (there are Yoruba synonyms for the last two terms, namely *babalawo* and *idiente*, and one for the daughter of a saint, *mãe de santo*, but they are used less frequently). In Bahia, Òxalá, the most revered deity of the Candomblé pantheon, is popularly identified with Nosso Senhor do Bomfim, and the church of this name is the site of devotions by cult-followers each Friday, Òxalá's day in the Candomblé calendar. The cult of saints in popular Catholicism, particularly the practice of *promessas*, offerings in return for favours received, has a parallel, though not an exact one, in the offerings made by *filhos de santo* to their *orixá*. This cross-mapping of mythology and ritual, documented in detail for various Afro-Brazilian religions by Bastide, seems to have its origin in a stratagem adopted by slaves in the face of prohibitions on African religions, and it can be explained, in the case of Candomblé, simply as a way of worshipping African gods under a Christian guise. The legal persecution of Afro-Brazilian cults, which continued until the 1960s, prolonged this stratagem, but it did not, in the opinion of Bastide, affect the fundamentally African metaphysic of Candomblé. His principle of compartmentalization, whereby the devotees of Candomblé could move between a hermetic world of African religion and the wider context of Brazilian urban life without a blurring of categories, encouraged a view of Candomblé as pure and unchanging, whereas other cults, particularly those cults of more recent formation such as Umbanda, the most widespread and eclectic Afro-Brazilian religion, which incorporates elements of Kardecist spiritism as well as popular Catholicism, were seen as degraded and culturally compromised.

In recent years Umbanda has been the subject of more sustained attention on the part of researchers. Their work represents a recognition that the common features of historically distinct religions may also form a metaphysical system, a lingua franca of the spirit. The complexity of religious practice in Brazil and the ambiguity of belief, where believers are moving between one set of religious symbols and another, makes the workings of this system hard to discern. However, in the case of popular Catholicism, spiritism and Afro-Brazilian cults, the key feature: these religions have in common is the principle of mediation, a belief in the control of events in this world by transactions with supernatural entities (saints, spirits or orixás). Although there are important differences in the kinds of religious experience offered by these traditions—the role of prayer in Catholicism is eclipsed by trance in spiritism and Afro-Brazilian religions—it seems to be the principle of mediation that enables adherents to translate between belief systems, to change their allegiance or subsume their experience of one religion under the precepts of another.

In the case of Candomblé, there is no doubt that African features are preserved in a more striking form in the Jeje-Nagô rite than in other Afro-Brazilian religions. To what extent this means that Jeje-Nagô terreiros still enshrine a sensibility, a world-view or metaphysical system that is usefully categorized as African (or West African, or Yoruba), and to what extent the outward African forms are animated by a religious experience that remains distinct from Christiainity or Spiritism are questions that are most appropriately examined at the level of particular terreiros and in the experience of individual devotees of the religion. Despite the existence of a Federation of Afro-Brazilian Cults (Federação dos Cultos Afro-Brasileiros) and the recent creation of a new central council (the Conselho Religioso do Candomblé, Religious Council of Candomblé), Candomblé has not developed a central organization of any authority; its sacred texts are orally transmitted, and ritual orthodoxy is maintained only by the lengthy initiation necessary to become a *mãe* or *pai de santo*. The legitimation of a new Candomblé house is derived from the prestige of the terreiro where the *mãe* or *pai de santo* was initiated, but

each is autonomous. As with the pastors of pentecostal churches, fast-growing rivals to Afro-Brazilian cults for the spiritual allegiance of poor, black Brazilians, the force of character of the founding priest or priestess is an important factor in the success of a new terreiro. Unlike Protestant pastors, mães- and pai-de-santo are not tied to a single sacred text (nor are they committed, as Protestants are, in theory at least, to reject other religious as snares and delusions). The reputation of particular terreiros waxes and wanes from generation to generation, although a small number have managed to maintain their influence since the last century. This institutional fluidity and the variety of Afro-Brazilian traditions means, for instance, that not every pai- or mãe-de-santo claiming to practise the Nagô rite would be recognized as actually doing so by a ritual specialist from one of the well-known Nagô houses. The Nagô orthodoxy itself has been modified within living memory, on the one hand by the almost universal incorporation of the cult of candomblé, native American spirits, alongside the orixás cult, and on the other by a conscious 're-Africanization' of the formal organization of some of the traditional terreiros.

For social scientists the maintenance of orthodoxy, the internal transformations of Afro-Brazilian cults, the resistance they offer to assimilation by the culture at large and, conversely, their influence on the wider field of Brazilian religious experience, are all questions of considerable theoretical interest. For those who live within the pale of faith they are questions of practical choice. A person with an interest in Candomblé will inevitably have attended services in Catholic churches and very likely Protestant ones as well. He or she will typically frequent a number of different terreiros before making a commitment to one in particular. Brazilian religious culture is dense and populous, a forest of belief. Syncretism is a response to this plurality (as, in another fashion, is Protestantism). In individual lives, faiths may be intertwined; thus the variation between cults is complicated by variations in the relation that individual adherents have to the cult and to the world outside the terreiro. Despite its elaborate preservation of ancient ritual, the Candomblé terreiro is by no means a closed community. One of its sources of strength is its incorporation of individuals in mind and will therefore tend to come from a different social milieu from the filhos-de-santo. All these individuals participate in a communal rite, but only some of them live permanently in the terreiro, so it is principally there that they meet their fellow adherents. Further towards the periphery of Candomblé, but crucial to its economic survival, are the day-to-day clients of the pai- or mãe-de-santo. Such people, from all classes and walks of life, seek consultations for purposes of divination or magical intervention (in their own lives or those of others). They may know very little of the religion and probably do not attend the festivals of the orixás, even though these are open to all comers. Candomblé has a different meaning for each of these categories of person and plays a different part in their lives.

The relation between Christianity and Afro-Brazilian religions and the wider significance of the African cultural heritage in Brazil are matters of discussion well beyond the terreiro and the seminar room. In Bahia particularly, where Brazilians of largely African descent make up the greater part of the population, Afro-Brazilian religions have become implicit symbols of racial affirmation. In the current era of democratization in Brazil, thi has given a new, specifically electoral dimension to the political importance they have always had, even in times of persecution. The feitorias of Candomblé—the promotion of its picturesque elements to encourage tourism and the staging of sacred dances for commercial interest—is routinely condemned as an act of cultural appropriation. At the same time, the figures of the orixás are beginning to be incorporated more openly into secular culture, in carnival floats or bloco and in the rhythms and lyrics of popular music, sometimes in a spirit of popular devotion, sometimes as part of a rhetoric of liberation from white economic and cultural domination. Among the Catholic clergy, the influence of liberation theology and the renewal of commitment to pastoral activity among the poor has led to greater interest in the values of folk religion, both popular Catholicisms and Afro-Brazilian cults. The presence of Candomblé has become more visible, its prestige greater. This is doubtless a source of strength, but it may also be seen as a new kind of appropriation, a sublime transformation in the tenor of life in the terreiros and their relation to the wider world.

My experience of Candomblé is based on sporadic fieldwork during two periods of residence in Salvador, in 1986 and 1987. Although I came to Bahia with an Africanist background, my enquiries were shaped by wider ethnographic reportage which included accounts of communities in various parts of Brazil, so relations between Candomblé and other religious systems were of primary interest to me. I attended feitos-de-santo and other rituals at various terreiros, particularly Iê Axé Opô Aganjú (the House of the Power of the Sign of Xangô), a Nagô terreiro in a small coastal town outside Salvador where I lived for a time in 1986. The pai-de-santo, Balbino Daniel de Paula, is a filho of Iê Axé Opô Afonja, one of the most venerable houses of Candomblé in Bahia. He represents, therefore, at least as far as ritual goes, traditional Candomblé, the least syncretic, most 'African' kind. Balbino is in his mid-forties. He has had little formal education but enjoys, more than most pai-de-santo, extensive contact with Bahian intellectuals who interest themselves in Afro-Brazilian religion—writers, artists, musicians and social scientists. He has also visited Africa twice, a fact that gives him additional authority in the world of Candomblé. His terreiro is a spacious enclave of trees and shrines in the shadow of a high, white sand-dune, secluded but populous, with some half-dozen families and as many individuals in permanent residence. Though twenty kilometres distant from Salvador, it is regularly visited by people from the city.
These included, during the period of my stay, local politicians, popular musicians, a Catholic priest and the members of a Dahomean cultural delegation, as well as Balmino’s mogbas, clients and non-resident filhos-de-santo. Ilé Axé Opó Aganju was thus a fair vantage-point for monitoring the everyday life of Candomblé, the gossip world of a terreiro and sporadic discourse concerning its relation to other religions.

There was nothing visibly syncretic about Ilé Axé Opó Aganju. A hut by the gate concealed the phallic emblem of Exú, the trickster of Yoruba deities, guardians of paths and crossroads. Exú is a mercenary deity, often invoked in rituals of magical vengeance and self-aggrandisement that are a significant part of a pata-de-santo’s day-to-day business. For this reason he has long been identified by Christian missionaries in Brazil as the Devil (in the iconography of Umbanda, Exús are represented as red homunculi with horns and tails). These days, only Protestant pastors make an explicit identification of Exú with the Devil; in the Protestant view, all Afro-Brazilian spirits are demons of one kind or another. But the figure of Exú reveals a crucial lack of fit between the moral systems of Candomblé and Christianity, one that no system of correspondences can bridge. The Candomblé vision of the world is permeated by witchcraft; it does not make the same dichotomy between good and evil as the Christian tradition; its deities are not paragons but have both good and bad characteristics in the manner of the gods of Greece and Rome; and its public rituals deal not with guilt and the forgiveness of sins but with the ecstatic transcendence of jealousy and competition.9

In Balmino’s terreiro, the main public rituals, the festas de santo, took place in a large building opposite the main gate, the barraca. These rituals involve trance-possession of the devotee by one or other of these gods (though not by Exú). The orixás are summoned by drums to take over (pregar) the body of his filho-de-santo. A possessed person dancing is regarded as the embodiment of the god; in the trance, his or her comportment changes, often dramatically, to correspond to the mythic character of the orixá, who may be of a different age and/or/sex. The filho-de-santo often has little subsequent recollection of the trance, even though this can last several hours and involve quite violent exertions.

In many terreiros, though not in Balmino’s, these ceremonies occur under the gaze of Catholic saints, as described above. (At Ilé Axé Opó Aganju the saints were present, but confined to the reception-room in Balmino’s house, along with secular memorabilia. Participants in festas de santo, which usually occur on Saturday nights, see no contradiction in attending mass the following day, though few do so. If asked they will almost invariably describe themselves as Catholics. In the census for Lauro de Freitas, the municipality where Balmino’s terreiro was situated, 32,741 out of a population of 35,437 declared themselves Catholics and only 38 as adherents of an Afro-Brazilian religion. The figure was clearly absurd: more than this number of filho-de-santo came to any given festa at Ilé Axé Opó Aganju and there were half-a-dozen other terreiros in the near vicinity. But there were reasons for the underestimation: historically, discretion has been advisable in revealing such affiliations—hence the correspondence between saints and orixás—and Catholicism is still associated with the apparatus of the state, including census-takers. So for the purposes of the census, Balmino explained to me, fingering the gold crucifix he wore around his neck, that he was a Catholic himself: ‘Everyone is a Catholic,’ he said; ‘we are born Catholics. We are not Catholics first, before we become filho-de-santo. It is our birthright. It is like citizenship.’ In this instance Balmino spoke of Catholicism as though it were a secular power rather than a rival religion. For him, it seemed, acknowledging its claims on the inhabitants of the terreiro was not so much a religious observance as a rendering unto Caesar.

Catholicism can function, however, in a significant way, as a ritual supplement to Candomblé. Despite the elaborate ceremonial flaws Brazilian cults, they lack formal rites of passage for important events: birth and marriage. The second of these is not of great importance, and is yearly, moreover, offer a metaphorical family for those who fall outside conventional kinship units; for this reason and others they attract a high proportion of single mothers and homosexuals). Catholicism, however, is considered a necessity. I asked the mother of a newborn child, herself a filho-de-santo of Iansã, the most powerful of the female orixás, why she wanted him baptised. She replied, puzzled and amused, ‘Because I don’t want him to grow up a pagan.’ She did not mean, of course, that she did not want her child to participate in the religion of the orixás—he would doubtless be initiated when his orixá manifested itself—rather, she wanted him to have the best of both worlds, since he had to live in two. Baptism was a mark of citizenship, of status in the world outside the terreiro. At death, a filho-de-santo is subject to Catholic and Candomblé rituals at the same time. An extended Candomblé ceremony, the axé, coincides with the Christian burial but does not supplant it. When Mme Menininha de Gomes, the most celebrated of all mães-de-santo in Brazil, died in 1986, she was interred with some pomp in a Catholic cemetery; a mass was sung over her grave at the same time as the axé began in her terreiro. Such ritual simultaneity, it should be stressed, is evidence not of syncretism but rather of its opposite, complementarity, or, to use Fry’s term, symbiosis. Only at a single point in the funerary ceremonies do the two religions come together. At the axé for Garlinhas, a mogba of Ilé Axé Opó Aganju who died an untimely death in 1987, the week-long ritual concluded with a silent prayer, eyes closed and hands together in the Christian manner. Afterwards, I asked Balmino who we had been praying to, ‘God’, he said. ‘But which god?’ I asked. ‘The god who is up there’, said Balmino.

In a commentary on the second World Oríxá Conference, an international meeting of practitioners and analysts of Yoruba-derived religions held in Salvador in 1983, Fry detected two strains of thought about the Catholic Church among the candombléiros (his term for the adherents of Candomblé).

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Mâe Stela, of Ilê Axé Opó Alonja, would have no truck with syncretism. She said, but it was no longer necessary. She wished to abolish the correspondences between orixás and figures of Christian mythology. She also opposed the assimilation of the orixás to secular rituals, notably their appearance in carnival performances. Mâe Stela was supported by four other leading Bahian mae-de-santo, including Mâe Meniminha, but a number of pai-de-santo disagreed. Balbinho was among them. ‘Syncretism’, he said, only exists in a few external aspects of the Yoruba cult. It makes no difference if you dethrone the images of Catholic saints in the terreiros. Candomblé and Catholicism are like water and oil—you can put them in the same glass but they won’t mix.\textsuperscript{10}

Balbinho frequently used this image when asked about syncretism. Sometimes he would shake drops of dandé oil into a bowl of water to make the analogy viable. The viscid, red oil of the dandé palm (Elaeis guineensis), which is of African origin, is an important ingredient in offerings to the orixás, so the contrast with water—holy water—has a special apotropaic quality. But the image was not entirely unambiguous: purification by water is also an important feature of Candomblé, the annual festa for Oxalá is called the Waters of Oxalá, and the syncretic ceremony at the Church of Bomfim centres on the ritual washing of the church steps. Lúis da Muriçoca, a pai-de-santo who supported Balbinho’s position on syncretism, told the candumbêteís at the Orixá Conference:

I know very well that Our Lord of Bomfim is not Oxalá, but nobody is going to take his statue away from my feiti [altar of an orixá]. I have been to mass on Fridays at Bomfim since I was a boy. My grandparents taught me to do this.

Fry also noted a difference of opinion within the Catholic hierarchy. The then Cardinal-Archbishop of Salvador, Dom Avelar Brantão, was reported as remarking, in response to Mâe Stela’s anti-syncretic position, that if the adherents of Candomblé rejected syncretism they would be renouncing Christianity. This, he opined, would be bad for both Church and Candomblé.

On the other hand, the auxiliary Bishop, Dom Boaventura, while doubting that there was any real likelihood of an end to syncretism, argued for the elimination of its more ‘absurd’ aspects. ‘The two religions’, he was reported as saying,

are intimately linked, at least in Bahia, but we must put an end to this. Syncretism is illegitimate, contradictory, absurd. Nowadays, on the feast of Our Lady, people don’t know whether they are paying homage to her or to an orixá.

So the ambiguous coexistence of the two religions had critics and apologists among both Catholic clergy and pai- and mae-de-santo. But the progressive wing of the Catholic Church, to which neither Dom Avelar nor Dom Boaventura belonged, had an even more radical critique of syncretism. At Ilê Axé

Opo Aganju, padres inspired by liberation theology visited the terreiros from time to time to study Candomblé and offer their services as, in effect, auxiliary ritual specialists. Padre Heitor, a young Italian priest, performed the baptism of the child referred to above in the reception-room of Balbinho’s house, where the symbols of the orixás had been discreetly covered with a sheet, leaving only the statues on show. It was a gesture that harked back to the era of police persecution of the terreiros, but the relation between padre and pai-de-santo was well and truly changed. Padre Heitor’s predecessor, a Frenchman named François de l’Epina, had even been initiated as a maebe of the terreiros. ‘If you ask if I believe in the orixás’, he had told Heitor, ‘I would say, “Yes, I believe in the orixás! And I believe in Jesus Christ! I believe in both!”’\textsuperscript{11}

There was an irony in Padre François’s rapprochement with Candomblé. Having discarded the high rituals and ancient liturgical language of his own Church as obstacles to achieving rapport with the people,\textsuperscript{12} he had immersed himself—and Padre Heitor was following suit—in the arcana, the mysteries, of a tradition that was, for all the popular participation it enjoys, equally esoteric. Proponents of padre spoke of religious pluralism and the presence of God in Candomblé, the intimacy of faith shown by its devotees, the historical errors of the Church in the forcible baptism of slaves. It was heartfelt discourse, yet it could also be shown to conform to the interests of the missionary Church, which thereby drew closer to the source of the religion with which it shared the allegiance of the people. The padre found God in the orixás and as candumbêteís had once found the orixás in the veneration of saints. They were sincere dissimlers, converting their faith in another religious culture for the greater glory of their own.

But Padre François’s exclamation (“I believe in both!”) may be beside the point. In Candomblé nobody ever asks the question, ‘Do you believe?’ It is a religion not of creeds but of observances. In this sense it is the opposite of Western Christianity, or at least Protestantism (it is noteworthy that the slang term for a Protestant in Brazil is simply crenta, ‘believer’). At the heart of Candomblé is a dance, a viable leap of faith, a wordless submission to possession by the deity. This is a religious experience so spectacular that the question of belief is otiose. Candomblé does not demand a profession of belief, though it can induce a change of life. It may be that the symbols of Candomblé and Catholicism owe something to the different emphasis Candomblé gives to key aspects of religious experience. It celebrates the quality and intensity of such experience rather than consistency of belief, and it privileges discontinuity of personal identity, the irruption of divinity into the body of the devotee. Such ecstatic episodes differ from anything found in mainstream Christianity, also offer a clue to the easy integration of aspects of two religions in a single life. If the pai-de-santo can cease to be his or her everyday self and become an African god, there would seem to be no reason why he or she cannot sometimes also be a Catholic. These discontinuities in


personal identity constitute a problem for Christian moral theology, though they make sense as responses to the demands of life in a culturally hybrid urban society. Similarly, the emphasis on magical manipulation of the world in Afro-Brazilian religions is hard to reconcile with Christian doctrine. The progressive position on Candomblé, rejecting syncretism but bringing the two religions together in a single embrace of faith, can be maintained only by passing over these divergences. Holy water and *dende* oil, to use Balbino's metaphor, can be shaken together but they will not stay mixed. The present tendency in Brazil, a democratic tendency, encouraged by people of goodwill on both sides, to elevate Candomblé to a place alongside Catholicism, is quite proper. But speaking of the two religions as though they were comparable in every respect may obscure the very differences that enable them to co-exist.

CARMELA LEÓN-TOLEDO

THE BEATAE:
FEMININE RESPONSES TO CHRISTIANITY
IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CASTILE

The first half of the sixteenth century and the kingdom of Castile compose a spatio-temporal arena in which a struggle unfolded between Christian tradition and modernization. The leading protagonists were women seeking a solution to what is, essentially, an age-old dilemma. Let us explore the culturally specific mode of discourse and action of these deeply religious women who proposed a new, feminine approach to Christianity. ¹

Such women were known as *beatas*, a term which, although used earlier in different contexts, began in the closing decades of the fifteenth century to be applied to women who, without being nuns, dedicated themselves to lives of marked religious observance and reflection. The word *beata*—"blessed one"—seems already at that time to have had ironic overtones: it conveyed the idea of an exaggerated, affected display of religiosity, and this slightly pejorative meaning is the one that prevails today.

*Beatas*, in the sense of contemplative, fervent and devout women, often visionaries and miracle-workers, already abounded in Castile during the final two decades of the fifteenth century; but, to be fully appreciated, their emergence must be seen against the backdrop of their curious historical period.

¹ Few scholars are familiar with this feminine movement, at its height in sixteenth-century Castile, and certainly it has not to my knowledge been studied from an anthropological perspective. Its significance has not, in fact, been noticed, let alone remarked upon before. The decline of this movement had set in by the seventeenth century, and it is scarcely remembered today. The information in this essay is taken mostly from A. Hurtado, *Historia de las alumbreadas* (1570–1630), Madrid 1997, and M. Andrés Martín, *Las Beatas. Nueva edición de la «Histoia de los beatas castellanas»* 1500–1700, Madrid 1975 (Fund. univ. española, Monographs nos. 51 and 15 respectively), both of which, of course, consider the question mainly from a theological point of view.
infiltrated the renowned University of Alcalá de Henares itself. Another woman, Petronila de Lucena, sister of the humanist Castillo, preached the Hour of Christian Perfection both to the poor and to the Dukes of Infantado. The enlightened Francisca Hernández from Salamanca maintained constant contact with the third order of Franciscans and, more significantly, was in touch with Cardinal Cárdenas. Among the circle of her followers, admirers and disciples from Valladolid were to be found theologians, clergymen, university men, Franciscans and even a bishop.

The beat María de Santo Domingo from Piedrahita, the 'companion and bride' of Christ, belonged to the third order of the Dominicans. But strangely enough her visionary ecstasies attracted more interest from the Franciscans, the Dominicans found themselves divided into two fiercely opposed parties, those who defended her and those who derided her, so that they felt obliged to appeal to the Pope himself. María wrote letters to her protector Cárdenas and foretold the future to King Ferdinand. Rated even wiser than the leading theologians of the day, she bestowed her approval on the mysterious, wandering Friar Melchor, and in company with Francisca Hernández confirmed his prophetic character. Friar Melchor also sought the blessing of the ecstatic mother María, a Benedictine nun and Prioress of San Clemente in Toledo. María was listened to and favoured by Cardinal Cárdenas, with whom she corresponded. Her reputation for saintliness was such that she attracted not only simple devout lay people, contemplative friars, priests and anxious bishops to her chamber, but even the king himself. The visionary and miracle-worker Juana de la Cruz was yet another beata who exchanged letters with the Cardinal.

All these women, in their different ways and with varying degrees of intensity, joined in the general Franciscan movement of spiritual regeneration. Anxious to instruct themselves in order to achieve a greater degree of inner recollection, a higher state of perfection, they read the epistles of St Paul and other pious works which by that time the printing-press was already placing in their hands. They heard mass daily and took Holy Communion with a frequency unusual in those days. They spent their time in prayer and meditation or discussing upon the love of God. They formed small groups, or as they called them at that time, 'secret sects' and 'swallows' nests', with their own 'teachers both male and female'. It was their method rather than their purpose, their feminine condition rather than their deeds, which seem to have puzzled their contemporaries. They did not marry; sometimes they refused obedience to their parents (and those who were already wives denied conjugal rights to their husbands); they spent all day in church or at their meetings. As time went by their numbers increased and their organization grew. They withdrew to hermitages for spiritual retreat, they tended to confess always with the same priests in secret places and behind closed doors. The bratas of Seville formed societies and conventicles and debated among themselves. They go about in the habit of bratas' and dwell in houses on their own'. In Bazza they wore white head-dresses, brown tunics and black mantles; when they went out in the street they were ill-shod; they wore St Francis's girdle round their waists;
but many of them, in preaching among the humble, the clergy, university and laymen, came to alter their path from the original one of simple participation in the general Franciscan movement. They propagated religious ideals characterized by a more personal and direct communication with God, ideas which at the same time were in accord with and an expression of the prevailing cultural values of the period, which exalted the individual. (It is worth, once more, noting the chronology: in advocating such a reform of the Church at that point of Spanish history, some of these women anticipated Luther.)

Were there many of these *beatas?* Available information is scarce but enough to suggest their large numbers. Many of them, discreet and pious, led a retired, secluded life which did not attract literary notice, others, more notorious and extreme in their outward religious manifestations, drew the attention of inquisitors; all of them were representatives of the spiritual explosion in baroque Spain. There were **beatas and houses of beatas** in Seville, Granada, Jaen, Jodar and Ubeda. Baeza, with a total population of just over twenty thousand people, sheltered nearly two thousand *beatas*, about thirty per cent of the women of an age to take up this way of life. To the eyes of the visitor, the whole town would have appeared to be a nunnery. Toledo numbered at least eight houses for *beatas*, and Madrid also had several. Celebrated *beatas* roamed the streets of Guadalajara, Cuenca and Almagro; but possibly the best-known centres for these handmaidens of God were, among others, those at Badajoz, Zafra, Talavera, Frexenal, Fuente del Maestre, Llerena and Fuente de Cuntos. We have definite information about the existence of five such women in Plasencia, eleven in Avila and a dozen in Trujillo. There were also houses for *beatas* in smaller communities such as El Toboso, Camarena, Ucles, La Solana, Villanueva de Santiago, Grinson, Villagarcia de Haro, Damiel, and Villamnueva de los Infantes. Furthermore, some are set out to the newly discovered land of America on evangelizing missions. Indeed, the number increased so rapidly in a few years that the Supreme Council of the Inquisition hastily sent out an urgent circular to all the provincial tribunals, appealing for suggestions so they should deal with the problem which would inevitably arise from the proliferation of the *beatas.* Many people saw them as nuns who chose to live in the world dedicated to prayer and contemplation (foreknowing what is happening today); they gained esteem in being held to be holy, which leads one to suspect that their social origins were in general humble.

In effect, the vast majority—and I have perused the biographies of about a hundred *beatas*, although in some cases the facts are incomplete—were young women between twenty and thirty years old, from the country. They were daughters or wives of peasants and frequently single. Widows over thirty years of age and mentally unstable women formed a notable contingent. Slaves, half-breeds, servants and the occasional vagabond comprised a third group, although I have also come across the daughter of a hidalg or merchant, a grocer and a clother, which enables one to understand why, in one case, a very poor woman was not accepted in a circle of *beatas.* Many of the *beatas*, especially at the beginning of the century, belonged to one of the tertiary orders of either the Franciscans or the Dominicans. They were all in close contact with friars or parish priests and played an active part in the local flock.

There is no doubt at all that this feminine movement, which gradually acquired baroque characteristics with the passing of time, was sending forth a human message which calls for anthropological interpretation. The *beatas* became signs, they were voices of minds in ferment, another section of the people which, like others of the period, communicated, with their own special tone and style, particular statements, a hidden meaning. Socially insignificant but ardent women wanted to climb aboard the contemporary Hispanic bandwagon and impersonate current heroic values.9 From the very outset, the more sincere and spiritual among them perceived that the main obstacle to their fulfilling their vocation as preachers was their feminine condition. Isabel de la Cruz insisted to her disciple Alcaraz: 'Look, I am a woman and I cannot put into practice the desires God has inscribed in me.' Yet like knights of old they kept vigil over their spiritual armour, in prayer, and struggled to overcome their difficulties. They listened to sermons and orations, they sat at the feet of teachers and missionaries, they read spiritual books. Isabel de la Cruz not only used to explain her ideas about salvation to her followers, besides urging them to 'read the Bible', but also 'gave them books to read.' There was a *beata* in Baeza who owned 'more than fifty books', and many *beatas* showed a veritable 'passion for reading' and followed closely the academic and spiritual life of the university in Baeza presided over by the figure of St. Juan de Avila. They were instructed by excellent teachers and confessors such as the missionary preachers led by St. Juan de Avila, the Jesuits and the reformed Carmelites in their initial fervour. They were also guided by outstanding saints such as St. Juan de Avila himself, St. Juan Ribera, St. Juan de la Cruz and St. Francis of Borja. They watched with interest the comings and goings of the 'nun from Avila', St Teresa, whose works they read in their mystical meetings. They were protected by bishops; the village girl Magdalena de la Cruz, a Clarisa nun who believed as a *beata* turned her convent in Cordoba into a famous place of pilgrimage. The Inquisitor-General and Archbishop of Seville went to visit her and she received messages from the empress. The aura of religiosity opened doors barred to the *beatas* as mere women; the greater their holiness, the greater their eminence.

Another external form of this tendency to assert and dignify themselves as women was the pretension of the *beatas* to a kind of 'priestess' status. Some were entitled 'spiritual directors' and had spiritual children, very often friars, whom they instructed, advised on matters spiritual as well as temporal and for whom they even found confessors; laymen and clergy 'owed obedience' to those *beatas* whom they held as 'directors of the spirit and doctrine', and there were priests who sought their permission to celebrate mass. This familiarity with the hierarchy embodied some *beatas* who, faithful to the premises they started

9. This is Spain's Golden Age (Edad del Oroc), a time of territorial discovery and expansion throughout the world matched at home by intellectual ferment and achievement. It is the epoch of the conquistadores, of the invas (Spanish regiments), of great saints, mystics, writers and poets.
out from, wished to follow these through to their logical conclusion—it is the humble and not the learned who really penetrate the mysteries of religion; those with inner recollection are guided directly by God and therefore they have no need either to submit themselves to religious authority or to observe the normal and banal ecclesiastical precepts, 'but rather give themselves up to contemplation'. Thus coitus interruptus or, as they called it in those days, somewhat meaningfully, 'enjoying oneself in a new way' was allowed to the beatie, married, widowed or single. If a father, husband or superior gave orders which disturbed the hours of mental prayer and contemplation, they were not obliged to obey. More directly, the beatie in communion with God had no need to tolerate secular or ecclesiastical obedience, nor to recognize 'either King or Pope', as the extremists vociferated. From a recognition of the structural inferiority of women, they came to develop and perfect strategies of inversion and climbed into the pulpits of the parish churches to defend their cause before thousands of the curious faithful. 'Come back here little Master!' shrieked the beatie Mari Sanchez from the pulpit to Friar Alonso de la Fuente, who had just descended thence after delivering a blistering attack on the beatie. The number, the idea, the action, the context and the ritual had converted them into a group, into a category, into a 'status of beatia...the most perfect' of all.

A new status not only has to be created, it has to be made valid. It is intriguing to see how the beatiea chose two principal means to this end, each a synecdoche of the other: religion and their own body, the spirituality of the material and the material of spirituality. The choice of the first is fairly obvious, considering the ideology of the period. The church was one of the few public places open to a woman; religion was a practice and mental state within which women could achieve the most sublime level of all—sainthood. Their bodies provided the setting in which they exhibited the outward signs of their inner holiness. The Eucharist as their only food; the stigmata of the sacred wounds on their hands, the hairs of their heads venerated as relics, trances, ecstasies, raptures, visions, bodily levitation, transports of delight, fainting fits, the noises they hear, the groans they utter and the voices they listen to, the prophecies and declarations that issue from their mouths and so forth are all remarkable signs revealing the effects of the Holy Spirit at work in their hearts. The sanctification and sanctified bodies. The woman in her new status, the 'most perfect' of all, the body of the beatie in its members and as a whole, acquires the supreme dignity, sanctity and—at the same time and at first sight vicariously—social pre-eminence, superiority, power. Here we have once more yet another of the diverse forms in which is clothed the baroque obsession with honour, with self-assertion, the determination to be and to be More in different cultural ways and contexts. The actors change but the themes remain the same, evoking images of permanence, elements of continuity.

The centres of beatia, the habit, the ritual shaving of the hair, the ecstatic behaviour and the ad hoc semantic creation of the word beatia were accumulated efforts to create within a structural vacuum a worthy lay-religious status, specifically and exclusively feminine. It was a semi-religious answer to a very definite human situation. In the Golden Age in Spain, there was a notorious difference between being born a boy and being born a girl. At a time of youthful fervour and ebullience, of the exaltation of heroic, individual values, of excellence and personal merit, a boy could pursue these through various channels. Paths to glory lay open through the university (as a cleric, doctor, scholar, theologian, lawyer), through the army (soldier, officer, explorer, conquistador), or as an adventurer (in the Mediterranean, Italy, Flanders and above all the New World), writer, merchant or administrator, all of which positions fitted into the prevailing scheme of moral excellence. The sphere of possibilities and action for a girl was far more limited: while single, she obeyed her parents; when married, she attended to the tasks involved in running her home and family. The convent and the church were the only outer spaces where her presence as an individual did not strike a false note. But at the time in question, just when change was constantly being enacted on the historic stage, a series of feminine actors dissatisfied with their inferior position made their appearance. Passive and marginal roles continued to be their lot in evident contradiction to the individualistic philosophy of the age. Instead of being faced with a challenge by the ethos of the age they lived in, as the young men were, it was they themselves who flung down the gauntlet, overturning the values and hierarchy which had been assigned them. It was a case of those who had been left out rejecting their unfavourable exclusion, redefining themselves, seeking their own independence and building up their identity to be other than what they were.

The gallery of characters I have portrayed form in effect something of an infra-category according to baroque tenets: females, spiners, tertiaries, widows, many of rural origin but living in small towns. Alone, emigrants, ordinary people from villages, they were inclined, perhaps, from the structure of their position towards the appropriation of individuating values and the exalation of the person. Kept on the fringes, they captured the milieu from outside. They enacted the background tensions in and with their lives and they converted themselves into visionaries of reality. Spiritual somnambulism, non-integrated, independent and with no fixed place, they were protagonists at first of a feminine reform which supported and promoted all that is free, spontaneous and individual in opposition to everything institutional and authoritarian; borderland spirits, they idealized the people of God not as the traditional hierarchical ecclesia but rather as a fraternal christianitas; ecstatic, mystical, they prized emotions and feelings above order.

To their contemporaries the beatiea inevitably appeared to be divided souls, always with a foot on the threshold, not really belonging anywhere. Conquistadors of divine territories, they open up new horizons, yet at the same time they shave their heads, dress, speak and behave in an eccentric, outlandish manner, and wander about unashamed and unclothed like picaros or like some of the modern punks and hippies. They seek perfection outside the convent, but meet secretly with persons of the opposite sex in nocturnal...
conventicles, spinsters, and—everything since they speak badly both of marriage and of nuns, without a vow of chastity, without a fixed and ordered rule, they make up their own rules without obeying any superior. To this complex syndrome of without, another and parallel one must be added which we can term neither/nor. They are neither nuns nor wives, neither enclosed nor married, neither mothers nor daughters; their situation is not that of being, but rather of standing between. The power of the oxyymoron dramatizes the incongruence and contradiction of the beata: female priests, holy witches, street contemplatives, ignorant preachers, girls of doubtful reputation showing signs of great sanctity.

What drama were these women enacting? A closer look reveals an extraordinary inversion of roles, functions, sexes and hierarchies; an unprecedented conquest of positions, fields, knowledge, words and spaces; a displacement of power, of authority, of things masculine; the devaluation of the latter and the corresponding deification of the feminine element which scales the heights in assuming not only clearness to the divine but a mystical union with God. Woman comprehends, knows and speaks, Man is ignorant and listen; the embroiderer shows how to interpret, clergy and university men learn; a rough village woman counsels a submissive great cardinal; prelates and monarchs humble themselves before an illiterate nun. Woman attracts, fascinates and conquers; she asserts herself and grows in stature and importance in the only cultural ambit in which she is able to do so. She is the feminine equivalent of Don Juan in a spiritual sense. This is the other face of the diorama, the reverse side, somewhat obscure and unknown of that other Spain in which an antithetic archetype, that of Don Juan, holds sway. The two faces need and complement each other.

In their dream of being lay-religious, the sixteenth-century beatae were ahead of their times. Today their initial vision and roles have been accepted, although not in all their aspects, as contemporary personages (nuns, roisters, punks, etc.), who are far more traditional in their anti-structural communitas than they realize, prove. And so far, we anthropologists have made no interpretation more profound than that made by the little Master Friar Alonso de la Fuente, who saw so clearly the astructural position of the beata and described it with enviable precision and concision:

When preaching one day in la Fuente del Maestre on the text: 'In my Father's House there are many mansions', I found a place in Heaven for all states of mankind but when I came...[to the beata] I excluded them from Heaven as people without a status. There are many reasons to prove this since...they are virgins without chastity, married without conjugal duties, nuns without a rule and continent without cleanliness. Which conditions are absent from every state.

So for this reason I excluded them from Heaven.

I have described the beata as a mystic, a visionary, a comuna, a conquistador and a pícaro. There is a little bit of her in all those nouns; she wants to create an individual baroque-renaissance type of self and years to excel, to stand out, to distinguish herself, to achieve the highest good—saintliness. The same beata forms a part of the contemporary cluster of semantic traits (conquistadors,
THE HEAD-HUNTER AND HEAD-HUNTRESS IN ITALIAN RELIGIOUS PORTRAITURE

Among the more curious and rare 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 Liehrandt.

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 (1 Sam. 17: 38–9), but after his victory, he accepted clothes and weapons from Saul’s son Jonathan (1 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 in a very different position 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 gazessearchingly 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


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. 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. 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 visited 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 Titian’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 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) there were more works by the enigmatic artist of Castelfranco than in any other. Judith stands before a window, a cloudless 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 parasol 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 Jewish 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. 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 Siringotti to Lady Bianca Cappello de Medici as panels for her writing-cabinet. Both Donatello and Botticelli were attentive to so 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 faunus aloft and grasps Holofernes’ head as she is about to strike him (Judith 13-6-8), whereas Botticelli represents Judith as a graceful young girl, journeying joyfully to Bethlehem accompanied by her maid and jauntily holding not only Holofernes’ faunus, 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 Bethlehem, nor is she accompanied by her maid. Instead she stands still, dressed in a flowing, crimson-pink robe, open and bare 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 Colchicum japonicum, 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 she is 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.

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4. Panofsky attributes the invention of the love story to a canon of St. Plauidis in Ghent, named Nicarius, in the early twelfth century (Ibid., p. 43), whose tale was republished by Jacob Grimm in his German Mythology (1855), from which it was taken up by nineteenth-century German writers. Panofsky also reproduces two versions of the subject, Giorgione’s Salome Visiting St John the Baptist in Prison, from the collection of Sir Denis Mahon, London, and Piero Cornelius van Rijck’s half-figure representation of Salome, who wears a medallion, throwing herself and the Baptist embracing (ibid., figs. 53-4). Other Northern representations of the subject, which he does not mention, are: Jean van der Heyd’s Judith and Holofernes, which represents the auras as Holofernes and his wife as Judith, and Caravaggio’s Eucides 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, Images and the House: Portrait Studies in Eighteenth-Century Imagery, ed. J. Anderson, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1986, pp. 46-7.


6. Nevertheless, the suggestion was made independently by T. Pignatti, ‘La Giuditta divenuta di Giorgione’, in Giorgione: Atti del convegno internazionale, pp. 605-71, and John Shearman, ‘Giulio A/i,1o’s Judith’, The Burlington Magazine, Vol. CXIX, no. 919 (1977), p. 79, who argues against the Venetian tradition and the evidence of the Giorgi 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 thereby represented 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 LUX, SURRENT VIRTUVS URBES
CAEVA VIDES FOEMILI COLLA SUPERBA MANI?

As in Prudentius' Psychomachia, Donatello's Judith represents Chastity triumphing over the devil and the vices of luxuria and superbia. The other interpretation of Judith's role is presented in Botticelli's depiction 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 fable, Judith, is presented by Cristofano Allori, a Florentine mannerist artist and bon vivant 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. 9). The best account of Allori's life and of his Judith is given by the abbot Filippo Baldinucci in his Notizie del professori del disegno (first published between 1681 and 1748), 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, as 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 (diminished 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 at the right as if reflected in a mirror.

7. 'Kingsdoms fall through license; cities rise through virtue. See the proud wax stretch by the humble hand.' The significance of the inscription is discussed by E. Wind, 'Donatello's Judith: A Symbol of Stantionia', in his The Inference of Symbols: Studies in Humour Art, ed. J. Anderson, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1955, 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 Saluste du Bartas, who was commissioned by Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, to write an epic poem, Judith, first published in 1575 but written a decade earlier, when the author was only 20; see the edition by A. Bauche (Toulouse 1971).


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

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 Voesterman 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 Melchior Zoppio, engraving after Albani

Fig. 8. Portrait of Olimpia Lommi as "Judith" and Melchior Zoppio as "Holofernes", by Agostino Carracci.
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." 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. 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


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 Maidens, 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 Caravagggesque 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 Deapointing 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 maidservants. 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 1982. 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: EGO CAPTV HOLOFERNIS. 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 obscenely 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 emerging 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, Consolatio di Melchiorre Zoppio Futsceso Morale nella Morte della Moglie Olimpia Luna (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 widowhood. 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'auro ra mescola col bianco'). Her dress was studded 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, divisa a spaccarile rappresentava lo splendore di lei, che non mi appariva col calce'). 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 envious 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 remember, thereby completing his consolation.

The significance of her first name, Olimpia, is doubly on at some considerable length. Briefly it denotes a heavenly thing, for Mt. Olympus was the home of the Gods. Zoppio's own impress, 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.'
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 disdainful 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 impressa, designed by Agostino. It bears the Platonic device of the two luna, one obscured by mist, a witty reference to Zoppio's own nickname in his academy of II Caligino, 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. Undoubtedly 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 render her worthy of such a man, who honoured her memory with a most charming sonnet:

Emulo ancor de la natura sua
Non per imitator, Carracci, o' ella
Suor differo aper in coosumando quella,
Che vivevte assai piauscio a gli occhi miei
Tu per virtù de l'arte avvini in le
L'aria, il color, lo spirito, e la favella,
E se vivova non t, come a vedella
Altro senso, che viste io non vorrei.
Ma come può giuamai profio sembiante
Di lingua aridolar voce non sua?
Tacito anco il suo stil co grida in lode.
Non sai, ch'occhi per lingua usa l'Amante
E de gli occhi il parlar per gli occhi s'dee,
Che dice amami, io son 'Olimpia tua."

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-hunter 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.'