THE COMPOSER'S EYE: FOCALIZING JUDITH IN THE CANTATAS BY JACQUET DE LA GUERRE AND BROSSARD

MICHELE CABRINI

❧

ABSTRACT

With its intense drama and marked eroticism, the story of Judith's slaying of Holofernes was often represented in baroque visual art and music. The overwhelming majority of musical representations are found in oratorios, with only three cantatas known to have been devoted to the subject. The oratorio's dramatic framework was suited for emphasizing Judith's multifaceted figure through character depiction, contrast and conflict, while the cantata's epic nature and lack of direct character intervention made staging conflict in that genre more difficult. Yet precisely because of these limitations, the cantata constitutes a revealing case study for exploring the strategies composers employed to give agency to Judith.

This article focuses on the baroque cantata settings of the Judith story by Sébastien de Brossard and Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre (both from about 1708, both based on a text by La Motte). To illustrate their differing perspectives on Judith, I employ the concept of focalization – used in literary theory to mean point of view or filtered perspective – as a theoretical framework. The well-known Judith paintings by Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi (the so-called Uffizi Judith) provide a lucid example of focalization through the differing perspectives of the two maidservants and offer a valuable methodological tool for understanding the two differing compositional approaches. Whereas Brossard follows La Motte's narrative dutifully by emphasizing swiftness of action at the expense of character depiction, Jacquet de La Guerre bypasses it through instrumental accompaniments and independent symphonies that give voice to Judith, despite a text that downplays her character.

> And taking her stand by his bed, Judith said in her heart, 'Adonai God of all power, look down with favor in this hour upon the works of my hand for the exaltation of Jerusalem; because now is the time to come to the aid of thine inheritance and to carry out my designs for the shattering of the enemies who have risen up against us.' And going to the bedpost which was at Holofernes' head, she took down from it his sword, and nearing the bed, she seized hold of the hair of his head and said, 'Give me strength this day, Adonai God of Israel.' And with all her might she smote him twice in the neck and took his head from him.[1]

1 Judith 13:4–8. Cited in *The Book of Judith: Greek Text with an English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes*, ed. Morton S. Enslin and Solomon Zeitlin (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 153.

With its intense drama, seduction and spectacular execution, the story of Judith's slaying of Holofernes was often represented during the baroque era. The original, anonymous account from the Apocrypha tells of a Jewish heroine who employs deceitfulness and flattery in order to kill her opponent, the despotic Assyrian general Holofernes. Aware of Holofernes's sexual infatuation with her, Judith entices him, watches him become inebriated and then beheads him as he falls into a fatal slumber. Judith goes on to free her people from the Assyrian invasion; for her great deed, she is for ever revered as God's agent and Israel's valiant heroine.[2] The complex nature of this particular heroine had fascinated the Western world long before the Baroque – and with good reason. Judith's multifaceted character verges on paradox and defies stereotypes. On the one hand, she is praised for her strength, beauty, resolution, assertiveness, eloquence with words, wisdom and acumen – even her enemies concede that 'There is not such a woman from one end of the earth to the other, for fairness of face, and understanding of words.'[3] On the other hand, she is honoured for her chastity and virtue and for her humble fear of God ('no one spoke ill of her, so devoutly did she fear God').[4] Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann put it succinctly: 'Humble and bold, pious and devious, widow and warrior, Judith is ever composed of contradictions barely contained in tense equilibrium.'[5] Judith's fundamental paradox extends to the realm of gender: her character exudes fascination precisely because her behaviour transcends gender boundaries. It has been argued that Judith's character represents the 'archetypal androgyne', one that can navigate effortlessly between feminine seductiveness, masculine heroism and asexual virtue.[6] Throughout Western history, the artistic reception of the Judith story has emphasized the heroine's conflicting traits. Indeed, Ciletti contends that 'Judith would seem remarkable to us [today] if only for the sheer quantity of opposing identities and symbolic usages imposed on her across the centuries, from patriot to Virgin Mary prototype to femme fatale.'[7] Such multifaceted images are not simply a reflection of her many-sided character but also 'participate in a complex, evolving intellectual history' of the Judith theme, which, Ciletti points out, 'defies definitive formulation'.[8]

Baroque visual artists, poets and musicians capitalized on Judith's contradictions, often emphasizing the theatricality of her spectacular deed. Most readers will be acquainted with the story through two iconic baroque paintings, known for their persuasive force in representing the murder: *Giuditta decapita Oloferne* (Judith Decapitating Holofernes) (*c*1620) by Artemisia Gentileschi, housed in the Uffizi in Florence, and *Giuditta che taglia la testa a Oloferne* (Judith Beheading Holofernes) (*c*1599), by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, housed in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (Palazzo Barberini) in Rome. Yet these images

---

2 The standard scholarly edition can be found in *The Book of Judith*, ed. Enslin and Zeitlin. See also *The Anchor Bible Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, ed. Carey A. Moore (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985).

3 Judith 11:21, as cited in *The Book of Judith*, ed. Enslin and Zeitlin, 143.

4 Judith 8:8, as cited in the Introduction to *The Anchor Bible Judith*, ed. Moore, 61. In several sections of the Apocrypha she is described as leading a saintly life: after the death of her husband, Judith devotes herself to prayer and fasting (Judith 8:4–6), lives simply (12:4) and remains celibate until her death (16:22).

5 Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, 'Judith in the Christian Tradition', in *The Sword of Judith: Judith Studies across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 42.

6 In the beginning of the book Judith leads a simple, unadorned life as an asexual widow. Later she takes on a masculine role when she addresses the elders of Bethulia to try and convince them not to give up on God's plan. At Holofernes's enemy camp Judith first plays her feminine side as seductress, then she turns masculine when she delivers the blow that severs the general's head. Back in Bethulia, she continues her masculine role until the defeat of the Assyrian army at Israelite hands, and finally she reverts back to asexual widowhood. Patricia Montley, 'Judith in the Fine Arts: The Appeal of the Archetypal Androgyne', *Anima* 4 (1978), 39, as cited in the Introduction to *The Anchor Bible Judith*, ed. Moore, 65.

7 Elena Ciletti, 'Patriarchal Ideology in the Renaissance Iconography of Judith', in *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, ed. Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 38.

8 *Refiguring Woman*, ed. Migiel and Schiesari, 37.

are just two from a baroque visual tradition that includes one hundred and eighty-seven works, twenty-eight of which treat the moment of decapitation itself.[9] In literature, Judith was used emblematically in the religious controversies between Protestants and Catholics that plagued France, England, Scotland and the Low Countries, causing much violence and bloodshed; by 1600, she would become a model of 'rebellion, resistance, and assassination' for Catholics and Protestants alike, occupying, according to Margarita Stocker, a 'remarkable position within the propaganda of international conflict'.[10] In music, composers and librettists capitalized on the contrasts inherent in the story. Oratorio settings often emphasize conflicting themes such as day versus night, masculine desire versus feminine beauty, combative spirit versus intimate seduction; and they sometimes highlight the struggle between the two opposing groups of the military conflict, the Assyrians and the Bethulians, in order to serve specific political agendas.[11]

In the oratorio such contrasts were articulated primarily through character depiction and conflict. In the cantata, it was a different matter. Its fundamentally epic nature reduced the possibility of direct character intervention, thereby limiting the potential for staging contrast. Because the great majority of baroque cantatas are designed for one voice, the singer-narrator alone controls the characters' interventions, allowing them free rein only within his own imagined experience of the action. Thus in cantata texts, characters rarely speak directly and, even when they do, it is the narrator that articulates their identities through his

---

9 Frima Fox Hofrichter, 'Artemisia Gentileschi's Uffizi *Judith* and a Lost Rubens', *The Rutgers Art Review* 1 (1980), 9, note 3. The source used by Hofrichter is Andreas Pigler, *Barockthemen: eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974), volume 1, 191–197. For a good overview of the representations of the Judith story in Western Art see Elizabeth Pilpot, 'Judith and Holofernes: Changing Images in the History of Art', in *Translating Religious Texts: Translation, Transgression and Interpretation*, ed. David Jasper (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 80–97. See also Mary Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), especially 278–336. For an account of the Judith story and its various representations in Western culture see Margarita Stocker, *Judith Sexual Warrior: Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

10 Stocker, *Judith Sexual Warrior*, 46, 89.

11 See David Marsh, 'Judith in Baroque Oratorio', in *The Sword of Judith*, ed. Brine, Ciletti and Lähnemann, 385–396. The oratorios discussed by Marsh are: Charpentier, *Judith sive Bethulia liberata* (1675); the two well-known settings by Scarlatti, the 'Naples' *Giuditta* (1694) and the 'Cambridge' *Giuditta* (1697); Vivaldi, *Juditha triumphans devicta Holofernis barbarie* (1716); the lesser-known setting by Francisco António de Almeida (1726); and the Mozart setting (1771) based on Metastasio's libretto (1734) *La Betulia liberata*. He also discusses the spoken play by Federico Della Valle, *Iudit* (1627). On Scarlatti's two oratorio versions see Norbert Dubowy, 'Le due "Giuditte" di Alessandro Scarlatti: Due diverse concezioni dell'oratorio', in *L'oratorio musicale e i suoi contesti (secc. XVII–XVIII). Atti del convegno internazionale, Perugia, Sagra musicale umbra, 18–20 settembre 1997*, ed. Paola Besutti (Florence: Olschki, 2002), 259–288, and Stefanie Tcharos, *Opera's Orbit: Musical Drama and the Influence of Opera in Arcadian Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72–97. See also Eleanor Selfridge-Field, '*Juditha* in Historical Perspective: Scarlatti, Gasparini, Marcello, and Vivaldi', in *Vivaldi Veneziano Europeo*, ed. Francesco Degrada (Florence: Olschki, 1980), 135–153, and the several articles devoted to the eighteenth-century settings based on Metastasio's libretto *La Betulia liberata*, in *Mozart, Padova e la Betulia liberata: Committenza, interpretazione e fortuna delle azioni sacre metastasiane nel '700. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi 28–30 settembre 1989*, ed. Paolo Pinamonti (Florence: Olschki, 1991). On Charpentier's setting see Patricia M. Ranum, 'Un "Foyer d'italianisme" chez les Guises: quelques réflexions sur les oratorios de Charpentier', in *Marc-Antoine Charpentier: Un musicien retrouvé*, ed. Catherine Cessac (Hayen, Belgium: Mardaga, 2005), 85–110; Catherine Cessac, *Marc-Antoine Charpentier*, trans. E. Thomas Glasow (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 1995), 273–275; Bodil Ellerup Nielsen, 'Les grands oratorios bibliques de Marc-Antoine Charpentier', *Dansk aarbog for musikforskning* 5 (1966–1967), 29–61; and H. Wiley Hitchcock, 'The Latin Oratorios of Marc-Antoine Charpentier', *The Musical Quarterly* 41/1 (1955), 41–65, and 'The Latin Oratorios of Marc-Antoine Charpentier' (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1954). In baroque France, in addition to Charpentier's oratorio, there is an anonymous musical setting, *Judith* (c1695–1700), composed for a spoken play to be performed at the convent school at Saint-Cyr; it is discussed in Anne Piéjus, *Le théâtre des demoiselles: Tragédies et musique à Saint-Cyr à la fin du Gran Siècle* (Paris: Société française de musicologie, 2000), 112–118, 129, 132.

own voice.[12] These features of the genre may explain why composers preferred to rely on the more dramatic framework of the oratorio to articulate contrast. Sheer numbers are significant: compared with the several hundred oratorio librettos devoted to the Judith story, there are only three known baroque cantatas on the subject.[13] Yet precisely because of its limitations and idiosyncrasies, the cantata may well constitute the more revealing genre for exploring the musical strategies composers could employ to give agency to Judith and the multifarious aspects of her character. This article focuses on two French cantatas composed by Sébastien de Brossard (1655–1730) and Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre (1665–1729), both based on the same text by librettist Antoine Houdar de La Motte, which have not received the attention they deserve.[14] Because both are based on the same text and because both were conceived by French composers at about the same time (1708)[15] – thus eliminating potential geographical and chronological variables of style – these

---

12 Exceptions are: lament cantatas, where the singing character laments his or her own fate directly without the mediation of the narrator, and duet cantatas, in which the characters also speak directly (with or without narratorial intervention). Eighteenth-century French cantata composers were aware of such genre distinctions: at the top of his duo *Pyrâme et Thisbé* from his second book of cantatas (1717), for example, Michel Pignolet de Montéclair writes that 'It is half epic, half dramatic. The epic part is sung by a bass who acts as the narrator, while the dramatic part must be sung by a soprano and tenor who represent the characters.' Cited in David Tunley, *The Eighteenth-Century French Cantata*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 15. The same type of concern about the epic and dramatic qualities of the cantata can be found in the eighteenth-century German writings of Mattheson, Scheibe and Krause. For a good discussion of these see Colin Timms, 'The Dramatic in Vivaldi's Cantatas', in *Antonio Vivaldi: teatro musicale, cultura e società*, ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Giovanni Morelli (Florence: Olschki, 1982), 97–130. On lament cantatas see the excellent article by Carlo Guaita, 'Le cantate-lamento della seconda metà del diciassettesimo secolo', *I quaderni della civica scuola di musica* 17 (1989), 40–57. See also Margaret Murata, 'Image and Eloquence: Secular Song', in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music*, ed. Tim Carter and John Butt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 378–425, and Ellen Rosand, 'Barbara Strozzi, *virtuosissima cantatrice*: The Composer's Voice', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 31/2 (1978), 241–281, which discusses Strozzi's lament cantatas.

13 They are: two Judith cantata settings (both from around 1708), by Jacquet de La Guerre and Brossard, both based on the text by Antoine Houdar de la Motte, and a cantata setting by Réné Drouard de Bousset (1739) based on an anonymous text. Modern editions of these cantatas are available in Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre, *The Collected Works*, ed. Mary Cyr, volume 3 (New York: The Broude Trust, 2005), and Sébastien de Brossard, *Cantates françaises et italiennes*, ed. Jérôme Dorival (Versailles: Éditions du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, 1997). A modern edition of Bousset's cantata is available in Felicity S. Smith, 'The Music of René Drouard de Bousset (1703–1760): A Source Study and Stylistic Survey, with Emphasis on His Sacred Output' (MMus thesis, New Zealand School of Music, 2008). It is available in electronic format for consultation at <http://hdl.handle.net/10179/1114> or <http://mro.massey.ac.nz/handle/10179/1114> (11 July 2011). Giancarlo Mangini, '"Betulia liberata" e "La morte d'Oloferne" Momenti di drammaturgia musicale nella tradizione dei "Trionfi di Giuditta"', in *Mozart, Padova e la Betulia liberata*, ed. Pinamonti, 145, note 1, counts 220 oratorio librettos devoted to the Judith story published between 1621 and 1934. Sartori lists fifty-seven oratorios with Judith in the title, sixty-two with Bethulia in the title and five with Holofernes in the title. See Claudio Sartori, *I libretti Italiani a stampa dalle origini al 1800* (Cuneo: Bertola & Locatelli, 1990), volume 1, 426–431; volume 3, 336–340, 384; volume 4, 291.

14 The only exception is Catherine Cessac, 'Les relations d'Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre et de Sébastien de Brossard', in *Sébastien de Brossard musicien*, ed. Jean Duron (Paris: Klincksieck, 1998), 43–57, which presents a cursory comparison of the two settings (55–56) within a broad discussion of the professional relations between the two composers. Brooke Green, 'Codifying the Heroine: Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre's *Judith*', in *Musics and Feminisms*, ed. Sally Macarthur and Cate Poynton (Sydney: Australian Music Centre, 1999), 47–56, provides a feminist reading of the end portion of Jacquet de La Guerre's cantata, without engaging in a comparison with Brossard's setting.

15 Jacquet de La Guerre's *Judith* appeared in her first book of sacred cantatas, published in 1708 by Ballard, whereas Brossard's six sacred cantatas were never published during his lifetime. Jean Duron, *L'oeuvre de Sébastien de Brossard (1655–1730): Catalogue thématique* (Versailles: Éditions du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles and Paris: Klincksieck, 1995), 135–145, places the date of Brossard's cantatas between 1703 and 1708. See also Duron, Introduction to

cantatas offer a compelling case study, shedding light on fundamental issues of text-setting. The comparison will show how individual and forward-looking Jacquet de La Guerre's setting is compared to Brossard's normative approach to the text, and will complicate commonly held notions concerning the centrality of the text in the French Baroque.

Such notions were ingrained in the French baroque collective imagination, owing to the difficulty most Frenchmen had in accepting opera (aptly termed *tragédie en musique*) as anything other than a fundamentally literary genre in which music plays a subservient role; this difficulty in accepting opera is well demonstrated by the paradoxical solution of conceiving it and justifying it primarily as an inversion of spoken tragedy, as its negative, so to speak.[16] In the cantata, the anxiety concerning the balancing of text and music took the more moderate form of a typical early eighteenth-century issue – the joining of Italian music to French words within the context of the so-called *réunion des goûts*, as evident in several composers' prefaces to cantata books; yet scholars point out that the cantata also enjoyed the status of minor literary genre.[17] This context makes Jacquet de La Guerre's music all the more unusual, particularly in her choice of instrumental accompaniments and instrumental symphonies, which betray a strong narrative impulse to bypass La Motte's text at key moments of the story. Such moments create what could be called musical *ekphrases*. These are narrative images that emanate from the text yet add a parallel dimension to it by filtering the action through the composer's perspective, and by stretching specific moments beyond their strictly necessary narrative purpose, in order to afford Judith the appropriate depth and complexity of character denied by La Motte. Jacquet de La Guerre's choice of and confidence in instrumental music to affect narrative time and achieve a narrative perspective vis-à-vis the text is unique in that it goes beyond the conventional wisdom

---

L'oeuvre de Sébastien de Brossard, xxi, lxxvii–lxxviii, xci–xcii, ciii. Cessac, 'Les relations d'Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre et de Sébastien de Brossard', 43–57, speculates that Brossard's cantata may have been composed around 1704–1705 and explores the professional exchanges between the two composers. In 1695 Jacquet de La Guerre loaned a manuscript of her violin sonatas to Brossard, who promptly copied it and judged the sonatas to be 'delightful'. Brossard shows constant admiration for her in several notes made in the *Catalogue des livres de musique, théorique et prattique, vocalle et instrumentalle* (1724) that he kept of his collection, in which he always addresses her with superlatives. For example, in his catalogue entry devoted to his own cantatas, Brossard notes that the *Judith* cantata has also been 'set to music and printed ... [by] the renowned Mademoiselle de la Guerre'. Regrettably, the late date (1724) of his statement does not allow us to discover which setting came first. Brossard also arranged and performed a concert version of the Prologue from Jacquet de La Guerre's opera *Céphale et Procris* in Strasbourg in 1696. See Cessac, 'Les relations d'Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre et de Sébastien de Brossard', 43, 44–46, 48–49, 55.

16 On these aspects see Catherine Kintzler, *Poétique de l'opéra français de Corneille à Rousseau* (Paris: Minerve, 1991). In the eighteenth century the French *querelle* over the merits of French and Italian music constitutes yet another level of expression of the French concern about keeping the expressive power of music in check. The writings by Raguenet and Lecerf de la Viéville are particularly eloquent on this matter. See Georgia Cowart, *The Origins of Modern Musical Criticism: French and Italian Music 1600–1750* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1981), 49–85.

17 Several such prefaces can be found in English translation in Gene E. Vollen, *The French Cantata: A Survey and Thematic Catalog* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1982), 11–14, and in Tunley, *The Eighteenth-Century French Cantata*, 47, 88, 101. On the *réunion des goûts* see David Tunley, *François Couperin and 'the Perfection of Music'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). Cantatas were commonly published as stand-alone texts in the *Mercure de France*; in its entry on the French cantata, Diderot's *Encyclopédie* devotes twice as much attention to the text as to the music. On these aspects see Tunley, *The Eighteenth-Century French Cantata*, 16, 263–267. Jérôme Dorival even suggests that cantata texts may have been read aloud in literary cafés such as the Café Laurent, which La Motte frequented on a daily basis. See Jérôme Dorival's Introduction to Sébastien de Brossard, *Cantate Françaises et Italiennes*, ed. Jérôme Dorival, trans. Mary Criswick (Versailles: Éditions du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, 1997), xxix, and Antoine Houdar de La Motte, *Textes critiques. Les raisons du sentiment: Édition critique avec introduction et notes*, ed. Françoise Gevrey and Béatrice Guion (Paris: Champion, 2002), 33–34. See also Manuel Couvreur, 'Marie de Louvencourt, librettiste des *Cantates françoises* de Bourgeois et de Clérambault', *Revue belge de musicologie* 44 (1990), 25–40.

of her own country, whose notoriously sceptical attitude towards instrumental music on account of its inability to convey meaning was famously encapsulated by Fontenelle's 'Sonate, que me veux-tu?'.[18]

Recent research has shed light on Jacquet de La Guerre's compositional style as well as on her unusual position as one of the first women to achieve professional status as a composer in France, and Mary Cyr in particular has illuminated the special qualities of her cantatas.[19] The present study expands on current scholarship and continues the quest to define the composer's distinctive style. Jacquet de La Guerre's confidence in music's potential for signification outdoes not only the typical procedures of the French baroque cantata, but also those of the Italian cantata. That cantata composers made up for the lack of character presence through particular musical techniques is not a new notion. Hendrik Schulze has recently shown how Legrenzi uses various techniques to achieve the 'staging' or 'embodiment' of a character, and these include changes in metre from duple to triple, changes in melodic style from syllabic to lyrical, unexpected harmonic progressions to signal shifts of character, and imitative entries between continuo and voice to suggest dialogue or anticipate the final punchline from the narrator.[20] Margaret Murata discusses similar narrative shifts in the musical articulation of the singing self in the Italian cantata of the seventeenth century through changes in musical style and the dissolution of the recitative–aria paradigm into a loose succession of formally nebulous sections.[21] Elsewhere I have discussed the dramatic uses of instrumental music in the French baroque cantata to stage similar shifts in singer subjectivity, and to stage instruments as dramatic 'characters' functioning as interlocutors for the singer.[22] Yet such examples constitute the composers' *overt* articulations or expansions of the latent dramatic potential of the text. Although emanating from the text,

---

18 There is a large literature concerning French theories of *mimesis* and the French attitude towards instrumental music. See in particular John Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language: Departure from Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Edward Higginbottom, '"Sonate, que me veux-tu?": Classical French Music and the Theory of Imitation', in *French Music and the Fitzwilliam*, ed. Christopher Hogwood (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum, 1975), 12–22; Maria Rika Maniates, '"Sonate, que me veux-tu?": The Enigma of French Musical Aesthetics in the 18th Century', *Current Musicology* 9 (1969), 117–140; and Georges Snyders, *Le goût musical en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Vrin, 1968). Jules Ecorcheville, *De Lully à Rameau, 1690–1730: l'esthétique musicale* (Paris: Fortin, 1906; reprinted Geneva: Slatkine, 1970) is dated but still useful.

19 See Mary Cyr, 'Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre: Myth or Marvel? Seeking the Composer's Individuality', *The Musical Times* 149 (Winter 2008), 79–87, and 'Representing Jacquet de La Guerre on Disc: Scoring and Basse Continue Practices, and a New Painting of the Composer', *Early Music* 32/4 (2004), 549–567. See also Catherine Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre: Une femme compositeur sous le règne de Louis XIV* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1995), and Carol Henry Bates, 'Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre's Trio Sonatas: An Analysis and Appraisal', *Orbis musicae* 12 (1998), 26–48, and 'Elizabeth Jacquet de La Guerre: A New Source of Seventeenth-Century French Harpsichord Music', *Recherches sur la musique française classique* 22 (1984), 7–49. On Jacquet de La Guerre's secular cantatas see Adrian Rose, 'Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre and the Secular *cantate françoise*', *Early Music* 13/4 (1985), 529–541, and 'A Newly Discovered Source of Vocal Chamber Music by Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre and René Drouard de Bousset', *Early Music* 36/2 (2008), 245–264. On Jacquet de La Guerre's operatic output see Wanda R. Griffiths, 'Jacquet de La Guerre's *Céphale et Procris*: Style and Drama', in *Music in Performance and Society: Essays in Honor of Roland Jackson*, ed. Malcolm S. Cole and John Koegel (Warren: Harmonie Park, 1997), 251–268, and Catherine Cessac, 'Les *Jeux à l'honneur de la victoire* d'Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre: Premier opéra-ballet?', *Revue de musicologie* 81/2 (1995), 235–247.

20 Hendrik Schulze, 'Narration, Mimesis and the Question of Genre: Dramatic Approaches in Giovanni Legrenzi's Solo Cantatas, Opp. 12 and 14', in *Aspects of the Secular Cantata in Late Baroque Italy*, ed. Michael Talbot (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 55–77.

21 Margaret Murata, 'Image and Eloquence: Secular Song', 378–425, and 'Singing About Singing, or, The Power of Music Sixty Years After', in *In cantu et in sermone: For Nino Pirrotta on His 80th Birthday*, ed. Franco Piperno and Fabrizio Della Seta (Florence: Olschki, 1989), 363–384, and David L. Burrows, 'Antonio Cesti on Music', *The Musical Quarterly* 51/3 (1965), 518–529.

22 Michele Cabrini, 'Upstaging the Voice: Diegetic Sound and Instrumental Interventions in the French Baroque Cantata', *Early Music* 38/1 (2010), 73–90.

Jacquet de La Guerre's singular use of instrumental music, as we shall see, represents a *covert* expression of her own perspective *around* the poet's, one that aims to complicate the Judith character and augment her dramatic import in the story. La Guerre's original treatment of Judith is typical of a tendency in her sacred cantatas, many of which feature original musical treatments of Biblical heroines, and even in her operatic music, which also features remarkable psychological depictions of female characters.[23] Her interest in *femmes fortes* also reflects a larger trend in French literary and artistic practice, of which Judith provides an emblem. Arguably, her unique status as a successful woman composer may have given her a particular viewpoint on the Judith story, yet it should be said outright that the originality of her music transcends issues of gender, much as Judith's enigmatic figure transcends roles.

FOCALIZATION

To illustrate Brossard's and Jacquet de La Guerre's fundamentally different ways of treating Judith and her story, I will employ the concept of focalization – the term used in literary and film theory to mean point of view or filtered perspective – as a theoretical framework, one that has rarely been applied to music thus far, despite the musicological interest of the last two decades in music's narrative potential.[24] For the present purpose the well-known baroque visual interpretations of Judith's slaying of Holofernes by Caravaggio and Artemisia Gentileschi and their strikingly different use of the maidservant as filter will provide a valuable means of introducing focalization before reviewing its application to music. My aim in discussing these two paintings is primarily methodological, to show that the role of the maidservant and her relation to Judith can be employed as a useful tool for understanding the differing perspectives of the two composers, on the one hand, and the rapport between the narrator and Judith in La Motte's text, on the other.[25] The following

---

23 On these aspects see Cyr, 'Myth or Marvel?'; on the psychological treatment of the female characters Procris and Aurore in *Céphale et Procris* see Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre*, 71–80.

24 While several musicologists, including Lawrence Kramer, Susan McClary, Patrick McCreless, Fred Everett Maus, Anthony Newcomb and Carolyn Abbate, have dealt with the question of narrative in music from different angles, none to my knowledge has engaged with the theory of focalization specifically. For an excellent in-depth account of this literature and its related bibliography see the review article by Sanna Pederson, 'The Methods of Musical Narratology', *Semiotica* 110/1 and 2 (1996), 179–196. The exception is the forthcoming book by Mauro Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera: Monteverdi's Staging of the Self* (Berkeley: University of California Press), which newly applies the theory of focalization to baroque music. I am indebted to Mauro Calcagno for pointing me towards focalization as a model for analytical pursuit, and would like to thank him for allowing me to read his manuscript prior to its publication. See also the works by Vincent Meelberg, 'A Telling View on Musical Sounds: A Musical Translation of the Theory of Narrative', in *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Mieke Bal (New York: Routledge, 2004), 287–316, and 'Sounds Like a Story: Narrative Travelling from Literature to Music and Beyond', in *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, ed. Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 244–260.

25 The figure of the maidservant is also common in several baroque oratorios, employed as a dramatic foil to or as alter ego of Judith. See Mangini, '"Betulia liberata" e "La morte d'Oloferne"', 148–149, and Dubowy, 'Le due "Giuditte" di Alessandro Scarlatti', 263–275. It must be added that Caravaggio's painting influenced the artistic production of the Judith subject in France. The best-known French baroque paintings are two works by Simon Vouet, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (first half of the seventeenth century), housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, and another *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (also from the first half of the seventeenth century), housed in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich; two paintings by Valentin de Boulogne, *Judith Carrying the Head of Holofernes* (*c*1628–1630), housed in the Musée des Augustins, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Toulouse, and *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (*c*1624), housed in The National Museum of Fine Arts, La Valletta, which strongly recalls the disposition of the figures in Caravaggio's painting. For brief catalogue entries on and photographic reproductions of the Vouet paintings see William Crelly, *The Painting of Simon Vouet* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 180, 221. For an analysis and photographic reproductions of the two paintings by Valentin de Boulogne see Marina Mojana, *Valentin de Boulogne* (Milan: Eikonos Edizioni, 1989), 26, 32, 92, 164.

discussion does not attempt to set up a clear-cut gender equation, as has been attempted between Jacquet de La Guerre's cantata and Gentileschi's painting.[26] Rather, aside from Jacquet de La Guerre's depiction of Judith with the dignity and heroism denied to her by La Motte, which does recall Gentileschi, the resulting analysis complicates the issue of gender by showing that Brossard and Gentileschi are actually closer in formal conception concerning the murder's purpose, while Jacquet de La Guerre's perspective filtering recalls Caravaggio's use of the maidservant, which complicates the scenario. I also aim to reconsider the figure of the maidservant and her dramatic significance as a filter. While art historians have noted Gentileschi's innovation of the young and vigorous maidservant as active partner compared with Caravaggio's more traditional representation of the old crone acting as a foil to Judith, scholars have been surprisingly reticent about the narrative role of the maidservant in Caravaggio's painting.[27] With few exceptions, Caravaggio scholars have been more concerned to ascribe the contrast between the youthful Judith and the old maidservant to Caravaggio's awareness and manifestation of the Renaissance notion of *contrapposto*, and to trace the old crone type to sixteenth-century traditions of painting, theatre and caricature prints than to engage with the narrative stance of the figure per se and the role she plays within (and without) the painting.[28]

---

26 See Green, 'Codifying the Heroine: Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre's *Judith*', 47–56.

27 Gentileschi's innovation in her use of the youthful maidservant has been noted by Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 310, in a discussion of the Naples *Judith*, which equally pertains to the Uffizi *Judith*. Garrard traces the idea of the young maidservant to Gentileschi's father, Orazio, who also painted a youthful maidservant in his *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* (1610–1612). Garrard goes further, arguing that in the revised Uffizi version Artemisia reverses the traditional roles of the 'the innocent heroine and the wizened crone maidservant', proposing instead the maidservant as a balancing, even rectifying, figure that justifies 'Judith's devious and slanted behavior'. Representing 'divine justice' as the true *ancilla Dei*, the maidservant embodies Judith's humble side as God's agent, while Judith herself is the more sinister figure, the 'nether-heroine' that stands for 'human vengeance'. See Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 324–326. R. Ward Bissell understands many of the key features of Gentileschi's interpretations of the Judith story – the mature Judith, the youthful maidservant, their deliberate closeness and their 'joint psychic involvement' – within the context of a 'wider movement at the time to redefine the relationship between Judith and her maidservant'. He considers the drama by Federico Della Valle, *Iudit* (1627), as marking the 'attitudinal change', noting also that earlier interpretations of the Judith story by Mantegna and Jacopo Palma il Giovane treated the two women in a similar vein of joint solidarity. See Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art: Critical Reading and Catalogue Raisonné* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 124. For an account of Della Valle's play and its position on women see Domenico Pietropaolo, 'Iudit, *femme fatale* of the Baroque Stage', in *Donna: Women in Italian Culture*, ed. Ada Testaferri (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), 273–283.

28 Howard Hibbard, *Caravaggio* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 66–67, understands the representation of the old hag as a foil to emphasize Judith's beauty as Caravaggio's awareness of *contrapposto*, a poetic and rhetorical device to emphasize differences of age, type and social condition. On this aspect see David Summers, 'Contrapposto: Style and Meaning in Renaissance Art', *The Art Bulletin* 59 (1977), 336–361. The notion of *contrapposto* is clearly articulated in the 1591 Milanese treatise by Gregorio Comanini, *The Figino, or, On the Purpose of Painting: Art Theory in the Late Renaissance*, ed. and trans. Anne-Doyle Anderson and Giancarlo Maiorino (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 97–98, in which the author recommends that painters juxtapose figures of different age, sex and social status (Comanini does, however, warn about the overuse of such technique as mannered). Citing Barry Wind, 'Pitture Ridicole: Some Late-Cinquecento Comic Genre Paintings', *Storia dell'Arte* 20 (1974), 25–35, Mina Gregori (ed.), in *The Age of Caravaggio* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 257, notes that the use of the aged woman 'frequently associated with repugnant and despicable characters' can be traced to a cinquecento theatre and painting tradition. Both Gregori and Mia Cinotti, *Michelangelo Merisi detto il Caravaggio: Tutte le opere* (Bergamo: Poligrafiche Bolis, 1983), 516, note that Eduard Šafařík traces the style of Caravaggio's old maidservant to Leonardo's grotesque types as well as sixteenth-century Flemish paintings and caricature prints of the same period. For Šafařík's original catalogue entry see Italo Faldi and Eduard Šafařík, *Acquisti 1970–1972: Roma, Palazzo Barberini, ottobre-novembre 1972* (Rome: La Galleria, 1972), 23–34. Italian art historian Roberto Longhi is the only scholar to have perceived the 'stone-like fierceness' ('accanimento impietrito') of the maidservant as a type of commentary on Judith's action. Longhi, 'La "Giuditta" nel percorso del Caravaggio', *Paragone* 2/19 (1951), 10.

Deliberately disregarding the story from the Apocrypha, in which the maidservant waits outside the tent and prays while the deed is performed,[29] both artists choose precisely to mediate the action through her perspective, yet they do so in radically different ways. While Gentileschi takes a direct, blunt approach to representing the murder, Caravaggio complicates the action by means of stark contrasts between opposing psychological types. In both paintings the maidservant plays a significant role in establishing the scene. In Gentileschi's *Judith Decapitating Holofernes* (Figure 1) the assisting presence of the maidservant enhances Judith's powerful might as she performs the deed.[30] The painting represents a perfectly efficient example of teamwork, one in which, Mieke Bal argues, 'the arms express strength and determination, the faces commitment to the task at hand'.[31] Bal notes that 'Gentileschi's work radiates a contained and serious, almost organized passion that enhances the sense of efficacy of the work being done.'[32] Not so in Caravaggio's treatment of the same story (Figure 2).[33] There, in place of a determined female warrior we find a perplexed, diaphanous and mannequin-like Judith, whose youthful beauty contrasts with both the beastly agonizing cry of Holofernes and the viciousness of the old maidservant. Unlike Gentileschi, who chooses to impart a business-like, concentrated intensity to her female figures, Caravaggio distributes the intensity of the moment among the trio of figures and their wildly different psychological reactions to the murder, thus complicating the meaning of the action for the viewer.

In Gentileschi the maidservant is thus not only an active follower but also a partner in crime, Judith's *Doppelgänger*, as Nanette Salomon puts it. This is highlighted by her position at the apex of the painting, by her active holding of Holofernes and by her close proximity to Judith, as if to create one single powerful instrument of war against the tyrant.[34] She contributes to what feels like a turbulent yet dignified harmony of action efficiently aimed at one goal – Holofernes's death. Indeed, the strong 'feeling of joint psychic involvement' of the two women, who seem 'united in action and mind', as Bissell puts it, has persuaded several art historians to perceive a strong sense of womanly 'sisterhood' emphasizing feminine 'strength of body and spirit' against a male oppressor.[35]

---

29 See Judith 13:2–3 and 9–10. Cited in *The Book of Judith*, ed. Enslin and Zeitlin, 151, 153.

30 The most complete catalogue entry on this painting can be found in Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art*, 213–216. An earlier version (*c*1611–1612) of the same painting housed at the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples goes by the same title; see the catalogue entry in Bissell, 191–198. For an excellent analysis detailing the differences between the two see Elena Ciletti, '"Gran Macchina è bellezza": Looking at the Gentileschi *Judiths*', in *The Artemisia Files: Artemisia Gentileschi for Feminists and Other Thinking People*, ed. Mieke Bal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), particularly 66–86; see also Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 307–313, 321–327, and Nanette Salomon, 'Judging Artemisia: A Baroque Woman in Modern Art History', in *The Artemisia Files*, ed. Bal, particularly 48–58. Ciletti argues that in the later painting Artemisia accentuated the age and societal differences between the maidservant and Judith and emphasized the theatrical qualities of the scene 'with far more attention to monumental formality and luxurious effects'. Indeed, Judith 'is more coiffed or bewigged and therefore more formal a presence than she is in the Naples work, not to mention older and more explicit in the frowning set of her features'. Ciletti, '"Gran Macchina è bellezza"', 78, 86. Garrard finds that in the Uffizi work Artemisia gives Judith a new seductive dimension by clearly defining her 'as a sexually developed woman'. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 323.

31 Mieke Bal, *Double Exposures: The Subject of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 299.

32 Bal, *Double Exposures*, 299. The cold, business-like execution in Gentileschi's painting has also been noted by Garrard, who reads in it a deliberate withholding of conventional moral clues. See Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 321, 323.

33 A most exhaustive catalogue entry on this painting, which includes a comprehensive review of the bibliography, can be found in Mia Cinotti, *Michelangelo Merisi detto il Caravaggio*, 515–517. A good catalogue entry in English can be found in *The Age of Caravaggio*, ed. Gregori, 256–262.

34 Nanette Salomon, 'Judging Artemisia', 53. Bettina Baumgärtel uses the term 'active partner' for Gentileschi's maidservant; see *Die Galerie der starken Frauen: Die Heldin in der französischen und italienischen Kunst des 17. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Bettina Baumgärtel, Silvia Neysters and others (Munich: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1995), 244–247, as cited in *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*, ed. Keith Christiansen and Judith W. Mann (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 311.

35 Bissel, *Artemisia and the Authority of Art*, 123–124. See also Ciletti, '"Gran Macchina è bellezza"', 76, Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 21, 312, and Christa Wachenfeld and Roland Barthes, *Die Vergewaltigung der Artemisia: Der Prozess* (Freiburg:

Figure 1   Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–*c*1654), *Giuditta decapita Oloferne* (*c*1620). Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. Photo credit: Alinari / Art Resource, NY. Used by permission

Kore Verlag, 1992), 34. Any discussion of Gentileschi's Uffizi *Judith* (or the earlier Naples version) inevitably evokes the infamous incident of the artist's rape by her teacher Agostino Tassi, which resulted in a court trial in 1612 (an English translation of the trial documents is available in Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 403–487). Mary Garrard's 1989 monograph offered the first compelling scholarly case for interpreting the Naples and Uffizi *Judiths* as Artemisia's sublimated expression of revenge against both Agostino Tassi and the patriarchal tradition in which she operated, and

Figure 2   Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571–1610), *Giuditta che taglia la testa a Oloferne* (*c*1599). Rome, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica. Photo credit: Art Resource, NY. Used by permission

Caravaggio situates the maidservant to the side of action instead, thus deliberately accentuating her narrative distance. Unlike Gentileschi's maidservant, Caravaggio's takes part in the action not so much as character – at least not yet, since she is eagerly waiting to place Holofernes's head in her sack – but rather as emotional witness. Her disturbingly voyeuristic posture, lurking on the edge of the painting, gives her a privileged, omniscient position that bridges the gap between the observer and the artwork. Operating within the painting, she silently goads a seemingly perplexed Judith; operating as a link between the painting and its beholder, she draws the beholder into the drama by witnessing and savouring the murder for him, exhibiting the very emotional traits Judith lacks – anticipation and a desire to kill. It is her gaze that connotes her privileged narrative distance. Unlike the stare of the main protagonists – Judith looks unemotionally focused, physically present yet absent in spirit, Holofernes desperately pleads to the beholder

---

art historians have capitalized on this connection ever since, to the point that '. . . it [now] seems irresistible to talk about Artemisia's rape in connection with it, even if only to say that the painting cannot be directly related to the rape. This compulsive biographism immediately sexualizes the subject and the artist to a degree that no longer allows us to see the painting as a work of "art" in canonical terms' (Salomon, 'Judging Artemisia', 54). The most comprehensive review of the literature on the rape is to be found in a masterly essay by Richard Spear, 'Artemisia Gentileschi: Ten Years of Facts and Fiction', *The Art Bulletin* 82 (2000), 568–579, in addition to the excellent volume edited by Bal, *The Artemisia Files*, and the article by Elizabeth Cropper, 'Life on the Edge: Artemisia Gentileschi, Famous Woman Painter', in *Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*, ed. Christiansen and Mann, 263–281. Here the author pleads for finding 'a better way to come to terms with [Artemisia's] critical fortune', suggesting that 'Not to submit Artemisia Gentileschi to a constant rehearsal of her rape . . . means not to view her work . . . as primarily expressing her conscious or unconscious reaction to that rape' (263, 265).

for empathy – the maidservant appears entranced. Yet her transfixed gaze lacks a clear point of reference and looks beyond the visible, as it were, as if she alone held the key to understanding the true significance of the action. Whereas Gentileschi's maidservant is too caught up in the act itself, dutifully performing as if wearing blinders, Caravaggio's maidservant possesses the benefit of the critical point of view: the action is thus focalized through her eyes. She epitomizes what Italian Renaissance art theorist Leon Battista Alberti suggests in his treatise *On Painting* (first appearing in 1435) as a way to strengthen the proper representation of the *istoria* – the use of a 'commentator' figure inside the painting:

> In an *istoria* I like to see someone who admonishes and points out to us what is happening there; or beckons with his hand to see; or menaces with an angry face and with flashing eyes, so that no one should come near; or shows some danger or marvelous thing there; or invites us to weep or to laugh together with them. Thus whatever the painted persons do among themselves or with the beholder, all is pointed toward ornamenting or teaching the *istoria*.[36]

In Alberti's description the figure inside the painting clearly establishes a powerful 'emotional link' between the painting and its beholder.[37] This notion recalls twentieth-century narratological theories of focalization, according to which Caravaggio's maidservant would function as a focalizer, a character whose point of view orients the beholder's perception of the action. Manfred Jahn has aptly defined focalization as 'the perspectival restriction and orientation of narrative information relative to somebody's (usually a character's) perception, imagination, knowledge or point of view'.[38] The concept of focalization owes much to the seminal work of Gérard Genette, who distinguishes between the categories of perspective and narrative agent in literary texts by employing two fundamental questions, '*who sees?*' or '*who perceives?*' (the focalizer) and '*who speaks?*' (the narrator).[39] In literary texts, focalization can be viewed as 'a relation between the narrator's report and the characters' thoughts'.[40] In other words, it is defined by the constantly shifting amounts and kinds of narrative information imparted by the narrator or by a reflective character

---

36 Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, revised edition, trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 78. *Istoria* is a term for which there is no modern translation. Alberti intended it as a rough definition of 'affective humanist painting': the way in which every figure in the painting must relate to the whole, express the main subject of the painting and express its focal emotion; see Spencer, Introduction to Alberti, *On Painting*, 25. I am indebted to Ayana Smith for pointing out to me the existence of this passage. There are three different versions of this treatise: *Volgare*-vernacular, Latin and Italian, which are published side by side in the critical edition *Il nuovo De pictura di Leon Battista Alberti*, ed. and trans. Rocco Sinisgalli (Rome: Kappa, 2006). The vernacular (original version), from which Spencer translates, reads: 'E piacemi sia nella storia chi ammonisca e insegni a noi quello che ivi si facci, o chiami con la mano a vedere, o con viso cruccioso e con gli occhi turbati minacci che niuno verso loro vada, o dimostri qualche pericolo o cosa ivi maravigliosa, o te inviti a piagnere con loro insieme o a ridere. E così qualunque cosa fra loro o teco facciano dipinti, tutto apartenga a ornare o a insegnarti la storia.' See Sinisgalli, ed., *Il nuovo De pictura*, 212.

37 Spencer, Introduction to Alberti, *On Painting*, 26.

38 Mandred Jahn, 'Focalization', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Literary Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan (New York: Routledge, 2005), 173.

39 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 186. Genette changed his original '*who sees?*' to '*who perceives?*', deeming his original formulation too narrow. See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 64 (original italics). For a basic introduction to focalization see Manfred Jahn, 'Focalization', in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 94–108. For a comprehensive introduction on Genette's work and on narration and focalization in general see also Mieke Bal, *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 3–39. I am indebted to Guido Baldi of the Università di Torino, whose introductory chapter to his *Narratologia e critica: teoria ed esperimenti di lettura da Manzoni a Gadda* (Naples: Liguori, 2003), 3–36, helped me to navigate my way through the maze of literature on this topic.

40 William Nelles, 'Getting Focalization into Focus', *Poetics Today* 11/2 (1990), 368.

inside the story in order to orient the reader's perception of the scenario. If the narrator's knowledge or point of view overshadows that of the character, we are dealing with external focalization; conversely, internal focalization occurs whenever the knowledge or perspective of a reflector-character inside the story overshadows that of the narrator.[41]

Although originally conceived for literary texts, this model offers a useful framework for understanding the rapport between the two agents at work in a hybrid genre like the cantata: the narrating voice and the composer. In *The Composer's Voice* Edward T. Cone subsumes the narrator's voice within the all-inclusive persona of the composer, who ostensibly 'appropriates' the text and 'makes it his own by turning it into music'.[42] I would like to reframe the issue in terms of a dynamic rapport between two parallel yet constantly shifting perspectives, converging and diverging in a competition to guide the listener's perception. This is more in keeping with reception by listeners of the time, who according to Jean Bachelier varied between 'those who clung to the words' and those who 'were struck by the music'.[43] The rapport between the narrator and the composer can thus be conceived in terms of the shifting quantity and type of information, knowledge or point of view each agent chooses to convey to the listener. Although both agents are external focalizers (they are external to the fictional world), their perspectives act as a connecting bridge between the audience and the narrative world, opening up glimpses of it for the listener. A composer's view can converge with or diverge from the text: the composer can blend in with the poet, yielding to his perspective, as it were, or choose to augment the emotional import of a particular character, aspect, mood or moment in the story in a way that might diverge from the narrator's view. As we shall see, Brossard's setting is devoid of additional emotive information: his point of view matches, for the most part, that of the textual narrator, and his subsidiary role recalls the dutifulness of Gentileschi's maidservant in helping Judith to accomplish her deed. Conversely, Jacquet de La Guerre chooses to augment and complicate the text with emotive information that makes it tridimensional, thereby focalizing the action through her own perspective. Her point of view overshadows the narrator's in specific moments of the narrative, and her focalizing role recalls the critical stance of Caravaggio's maidservant in presiding over the action. Her music bypasses the text, not so much in meaning, but as the primary means through which the listener is catapulted into the fictional world. This accords with Manfred Jahn's understanding of focalization as 'a means of opening an imaginary "window" onto the narrative world, enabling the reader to see events … through the perceptual screen provided by a focalizer functioning as a story-external or story-internal medium'.[44] The intense brevity of Jacquet de la Guerre's musical *ekphrases* also squares with what Genette

---

41 This is Mieke Bal's model. Bal has criticized aspects of Genette's original three-pronged approach to focalization, which includes zero-focalization, in which events are seen from an unrestricted or omniscient (also known as panoramic) viewpoint; internal focalization, in which events are seen through the lens of an internal reflector-character inside the story; and external focalization, in which events appear as though they are observed from outside the story. She has subsumed Genette's categories of zero- and external focalization under her single category of 'external focalization', arguing that anyone, even an omniscient third-person narrator, will have a perspective, and that the events are not seen from the outside but are actually imagined by the narrator, who is external to the story. She thus opposes the narrator's perspective (external to the story) to the reflector-character's perspective (internal to the story). For views on post-Genettian focalization theory see Jahn, 'Focalization', 97–99 and 100–105. See also Mieke Bal, *Narratology: An Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, third edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 147–153. I am indebted to Calcagno, *From Madrigal to Opera* (chapter 6), for the concept of 'overshadowing'.

42 Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice*, paperback edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 19. Cone's work has been criticized by Carolyn Abbate, who cautions against his image of the composer as a single, hegemonic mastermind behind the musical work, subsuming vocal utterance, instrumental accompaniment and text under his 'monologic' aegis (intended in the 'Bahktinian sense'). See Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 11.

43 Jean Bachelier, Preface to *Recueil de cantates* (The Hague: Alberts & Vander Kloot, 1728; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1992), fols 4r–v.

44 Jahn, 'Focalization', 175.

argues concerning focalization – that its types and patterns do not 'always bear on an entire work, but rather on a definite narrative section, which can be very short'.[45]

LA MOTTE AND HIS NARRATOR(S)

Let us return to Caravaggio's maidservant and her double stance – as a goading figure to Judith, on the one hand, and as a character looking into the painting and orienting the vision of the beholder, on the other. Her relationship to Judith recalls the rapport between the narrator and Judith in La Motte's text. Much like Caravaggio's Judith, whose youthful inexperience and finicky perplexity benefit from the intense and decisive presence of the maidservant, La Motte's Judith likewise needs the authoritative presence of the narrator in order to complete her task. Indeed, in the central section of the cantata (see Table 1) the narrator constantly guides – and often goads – what he presents as a wavering Judith. This can be noted, for example, in his description of her vacillation immediately before the deed (see number 6 in Table 1) – her arm remains suspended as if to underscore her indecision, yet she trembles with vengeance – and in his plea for Heaven's help to assist her 'distraught heart'. Moreover, at the end of the poem, the narrator reminds the audience of Judith's weakness by noting that even 'the weakest hand is sufficient for His [God's] miracles' (final aria in Table 1), an image that recalls the puppet-like Judith of Caravaggio. Unlike Holofernes, who is allowed to voice his desire in the first aria, Judith is never allowed to speak in the first person. Instead, employing exhortatory language that sounds at times vaguely patronizing, the narrator constantly addresses Judith directly and tells her what to do: to ensnare Holofernes with her looks ('jettez sur luy les regards les plus doux'), to hasten his drunkenness ('hâtez, hâtez, l'yvresse'; number 3 in Table 1) and to arm herself and get ready for the deed ('Armez-vous, armez-vous, et d'un bras magnanime'; number 5 in Table 1). Moreover, he exhorts her twice to execute Holofernes, literally ('enfoncez le trait qui le blesse'; number 3) and symbolically ('éteignez dans son sang l'amour qui l'a séduit'; number 5). La Motte's narrator thus addresses the heroine through the apostrophe, a rhetorical figure that, as Elizabeth Block has shown in the context of Homeric narrative, allows the narrator to guide the listener's response by 'verbalizing emotion toward either a real or [an] imagined object'.[46] Block notes that in apostrophes,

> The speaker pretends to feel, for example, anger, fear, or sympathy, in order that through himself his audience may confront, in the particular context, these same emotions. Apostrophe . . . thus asks the audience to respond, ideally, as the narrator responds to the situations or evaluations that he introduces.[47]

By apostrophizing Judith rather than having her speak directly, La Motte's narrator saps the power of the heroine's voice, thus shifting the focus of the attention away from Judith in favour of his own emotional rapport with the reader. He thus focalizes the scenario through his own eyes, bridging the narrative gap between himself and the audience while restraining Judith and setting her aside.

    This recalls some of La Motte's most common habits of narrative control employed in his controversial critique of Homer's *Iliad*, his *Discours d'Homère*, published conjointly with his own twelve-book 'imitation' of the *Iliad* in 1714. Although the book's publication boosted La Motte's celebrity and reputation, it also 'set off an eruption of hostility' among literary circles in early eighteenth-century France, which must be understood within the context of the ongoing quarrel between the ancients and the moderns (La Motte was a staunch supporter of the latter).[48] In his version of the *Iliad*, La Motte turns several speeches from

---

45 Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 191.

46 Elizabeth Block, 'The Narrator Speaks: Apostrophe in Homer and Vergil', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 112 (1982), 9.

47 Block, 'The Narrator Speaks', 9.

48 See Richard Morton, *Examining Changes in the Eighteenth-Century French Translations of Homer's* Iliad *by Anne Dacier and Houdar de La Motte* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2003), 1–2. The hostility towards La Motte is particularly evident

first to third person, thereby robbing the original characters of their own voices. This occurs in Book 22, immediately prior to Hector's death at the hands of Achilles – in which La Motte turns 'Hector's "agitated" soliloquy, through which Homer shows the beginning of his self-doubt … from direct speech to third-person narrative, as the poet tells us what Hector thinks' – thereby mitigating Hector's original 'urgency and the pity of [his] melancholy fantasy'.[49] Similarly to the way he addresses Judith in his cantata, La Motte also uses apostrophe in his version of the *Iliad* to inflate his authorial voice. For example, in the judgment of Paris, one of the episodes depicted in the *ekphrasis* of Achilles's shield, La Motte describes 'the process by which Paris's hopes turn fatal' through an apostrophe to Paris in the narrator's voice – 'Tu te repais, Pâris, d'un bonheur adultère … Sçais-tu juge imprudent ce qu'il doit te coûter?' (You feed yourself, Paris, on an adulterous happiness … Do you know, imprudent judge, what it must cost you?).[50]

La Motte's manipulation of the speeches from first to third person can be understood not only as a way of exercising authorial power, but also as a way of sanitizing Homer's text, removing what he perceived as textual excesses that would not suit the sensibility of his contemporary French audiences. Homer's narration does not follow what La Motte christened the unity of interest, or 'the principle that must guide a poet in his choice of circumstances',

> l'unité qui doit régner dans le tout doit aussi régner dans chaque partie: c'est-à-dire que, comme l'assemblage des faits qui composent tout le poème ne doit produire qu'un effet unique et général, l'assemblage des circonstances qui composent chaque fait particulier ne doit produire aussi qu'un effet unique, quoique subordonné à l'effet général.[51]

> the unity that must govern the whole [which] must also govern each part: in other words, just as the assemblage of the facts that make up the poem must produce only an effect both singular and general, so must the assemblage of the circumstances that make up each particular fact produce only a singular effect, even though subordinate to the general effect.

To achieve this end, La Motte tells us that he has 'tried to render the narration more rapid than it is in Homer, the descriptions grander and less charged with minutiae, similes more exact and less frequent'.[52] La Motte excises lengthy descriptive passages that hold up the action, sanitizes much of Homer's gory language and avoids long lists and detailed inventories, deeming them 'cold and languishing' and inappropriate for his contemporary audiences.[53] For the same reason, he rewrites and reduces Homer's notoriously lengthy *ekphrasis*, such as the episode of Achilles's shield, omitting all pictorial references to sound and motion.[54] He also removes all poetic repetitions – 'boring refrains' and 'epithets already repeated a thousand

---

in the reaction of Anne Dacier, a well-known and respected classicist whose definitive translation of the *Iliad*, also published in 1714, had set the scholarly standard. The literary quarrel between Dacier and La Motte should also be understood within the larger context of the quarrel between the ancients (Dacier took their side) and the moderns (of whom La Motte was an advocate).

49 Morton, *Examining Changes*, 53.

50 Morton, *Examining Changes*, 74. The following translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

51 Antoine Houdar de La Motte, *L'Iliade, poëme avec un discours sur Homère*, second edition (Paris: Prault, 1754), as reproduced in La Motte, *Textes critiques*, ed. Gevrey and Guion, 185–186. A similar attitude can be observed in La Motte's activity as a librettist. Most of his *tragédies en musique* reveal a certain simplicity of structure with a typically 'linear advancement [of plot] without intrigue or [sudden] twists and turns'. See Cuthbert Girdlestone, *La tragédie en musique considérée comme genre littéraire* (Geneva: Droz, 1972), 189.

52 La Motte, *Textes critiques*, ed. Gevrey and Guion, 234.

53 La Motte, *Textes critiques*, ed. Gevrey and Guion, 189. For example, he removes Homer's description of the bodies of the dead warriors as food for dogs and all kinds of birds at the beginning of Book 1, and omits the catalogue of the ships and the listing of the Trojan allies in Book 2. See Morton, *Examining Changes*, 24–27, 33–34.

54 Morton, *Examining Changes*, 72–74.

Table 1 Text from La Motte, *Judith*

	Brossard (Recitative)		Jacquet de la Guerre (Recitative)		Translation[1] (Recitative)	
	Tandis que de la faim ou la guerre la livre, Béthulie alloit expirer; **Le Cruel qui l'assiege avoit fait preparer** **Un superbe festin où Judith doit le suivre.** Sans elle il ne sçauroit plus vivre, Et déjà par ces mots il va se déclarer.	C major V⁶/C minor V/E flat major E flat major ↓ C minor	Tandis que de la faim ou la guerre la livre, Béthulie alloit expirer; **Le Cruel qui l'assiege avoit fait preparer** **Un superbe festin où Judith doit le suivre.** Sans elle il ne sçauroit plus vivre, Et déjà son amour ose se déclarer.	A major V/A major B major E	Whether famine or war dispatched it, Bethulia was going to die; The cruel one who besieges the city had prepared A superb feast where Judith must attend him. Without her he could not live any longer, And already his love dares to reveal itself.	1
	Air (written-out da capo) **La seule victoire** **Me rendoit heureux,** **Et sans vous la gloire** **Eût borné mes vœux.** Mais la gloire est vaine Près de vos attraits, J'aime mieux ma chaîne Que tous ses bien faits.	C minor	Air (da capo) **La seule victoire** **Me rendoit heureux,** **Et sans vous la gloire** **Eût borné mes vœux.** Mais la gloire est vaine Près de vos attraits, J'aime mieux ma chaîne Que tous ses bien faits.	A major	Air Victory alone Made me happy, And without you glory Would have limited my desires. But glory is vain Beside your attractions, I prefer my chain To all its benefits.	2
	Recitative Enfoncez le trait qui le blesse, Judith, jettez sur luy les regards les plus doux; Hâtez, hâtez, l'yvresse Qui doit le livrer à vos coups.	E flat major	Recitative **Enfoncez le trait qui le blesse,** **Judith, jettez sur luy les regards les plus doux;** **[mesuré] Hâtez, hâtez, l'yvresse** Qui doit le livrer à vos coups.		Recitative Drive in the dart that wounds him, Judith, cast on him the sweetest glances; Hasten, hasten the drunkenness That must deliver him to your blows.	3
	Ne le voyez-vous pas charmé de sa conquête Qui boit l'amour & le vin à longs traits? Mais vainement l'Impie au triomphe s'apprête;	V⁶/C minor C minor	**Ne le voyez-vous pas charmé de sa conquête** **Qui boit l'amour & le vin à longs traits?** **Mais vainement l'Impie au triomphe s'apprête.** **Déjà de ses pavots épais** **Le sommeil a couvert sa tête.**	descending tetrachord descending tetrachord E	Don't you see him charmed by his conquest, He who drinks love and wine in long drafts? But in vain the impious one prepares himself for triumph; Already with its thick poppies Sleep has covered his head.	4
	[Sommeil begins] **Déjà de ses pavots épais** **Le sommeil a couvert sa tête.** C'en est fait. Le repos, le silence, [Animé] la nuit Vous livrent à l'envi cette grande victime. Armez-vous, armez-vous, & d'un bras magnanime, Eteignez dans son sang l'amour qui l'a seduit. [Animé ends]	C minor C minor	**Sommeil (instrumental)** C'en est fait. Le repos, le silence, la nuit Vous livrent à l'envi cette grande victime. Armez-vous, armez-vous, & d'un bras magnanime, Eteignez dans son sang l'amour qui l'a seduit.	C minor	Sleep It is done. Rest, silence, night Deliver this great victim to you, as you wished; Arm yourself, arm yourself, and with a valorous arm Extinguish in his blood the love that has seduced him.	5

[1] Translation adapted from Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre, *The Collected Works*, ed. Mary Cyr (New York: The Broude Trust, 2005), volume 3, xlii–xliii. The translation of Brossard's additional text is from Sébastien de Brossard, *Cantates françaises et italiennes*, ed. Jérôme Dorival (Versailles: Éditions du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, 1997), l–li. Bold type indicates sections shown in music examples.

(first setting)	(second setting)	English translation
Judith implore encore la celeste puissance. Son bras prêt à fraper demeure suspendu; Elle frémit de la vengeance, Soutenez son coeur éperdu, O Ciel! qui l'inspirez, soyez son assurance!	Judith implore encore la celeste puissance. Son bras prêt à fraper demeure suspendu; Elle frémit de la vengeance, Soutenez son coeur éperdu, O Ciel! qui l'inspirez, soyez son assurance!	Judith again implores the heavenly power. Her arm, ready to strike, remains suspended; She trembles with vengeance. Sustain her distraught heart, O Heaven! you who inspired her, be her assurance.
		E minor
[Murder music runs on into following air as opening ritornello]	Murder music [instrumental]	'murder music'
Air (binary)	Air (da capo)	Air
		V/E minor →E minor
Le coup est achevé Quelle gloire éclatante! Judith est triomphante, Israël est sauvé.	Le coup est achevé Quelle gloire éclatante! Judith est triomphante, Israël est sauvé.	The blow is struck What a glorious victory! Judith is triumphant, Israel is saved.
[omits second strophe and moves it to final air]	Pour ce guerrier trop tendre Il n'est plus de réveil, La mort vient de le prendre Dans les bras du sommeil.	For this too tender warrior There is no more awakening, Death has just taken him In the arms of sleep.
[sets as binary air's second stanza]	Recitative [mesuré]	Recitative
Courez, courez Judith, que rien ne vous arrête, Un peuple allarmé vous attend. Allez sur vos remparts arborer cette tête, Le présage assuré d'un triomphe plus grand.	Courez, courez Judith, que rien ne vous arrête, Un peuple allarmé vous attend. Allez sur vos remparts arborer cette tête, Le présage assuré d'un triomphe plus grand.	Run, run, Judith, let nothing stop you, An alarmed people awaits you. Go mount this head on your ramparts, The sure omen of a greater triumph.
Recitative [added by Brossard]		[added by Brossard]
Et vous, Bétaliens, par des chants d'allégresse, Célébrez de Judith l'adresse et la valeur, Bénissez à jamais la suprême sagesse Du Dieu qui vous [tira] d'un si cruel malheur		And ye Bethulians, with your songs of joy, Celebrate Judith's skill and her courage, For ever bless the supernal wisdom Of the God who rescued you from a misery so cruel.
Air (rondeau)	Air (da capo)	Air
		E minor
Chantons, chantons la gloire Du seul maître des Rois. Non, ce n'est qu'à ses lois Qu'obeit la victoire.	Chantons, chantons la gloire Du seul maître des Rois. Non, ce n'est qu'à ses lois Qu'obeit la victoire.	Sing, sing of the glory Of the only master of kings. No, it is only His laws That victory obeys.
[added by Brossard] Le plus heureux vainqueur, Trop fier de sa conquête, Trouve enfin qui l'areste Au milieu du bonheur	Son pouvoir souverain Triomphe des obstacles, Et la plus faible main Suffit pour ses miracles.	His sovereign power Triumphs over obstacles, And the weakest hand Is sufficient for His miracles.
Pour ce guerrier trop tendre Il n'est plus de réveil, La mort vient de le prendre Dans les bras du sommeil.		

Left setting keys: C minor →G minor; B flat major; E flat major; →C minor (Picardy); A minor.

Boxes: 6, 7, 8; *

times', as he himself puts it – and he omits any narrative foreshadowing, such as dreams or prophecies (*prolepses* in Genette's jargon), so as to maintain suspense and not spoil the effect of 'surprise'.[55]

THE COMPOSERS AND THEIR PERSPECTIVES

The radically different musical responses to La Motte's text by Sébastien de Brossard and Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre reflect their differing degrees of narrative involvement in the story, recalling the strikingly different stance of the maidservants in Caravaggio and Gentileschi. Brossard follows La Motte's plan by animating the narrator without regard for Judith, with well-crafted yet unremarkable recitatives, while ensuring continuity through key, use of run-on movements and avoidance of da capos, and by rearranging the text at the end of the piece for the sake of unity of action. His concern for connecting the events together upholds – even intensifies, as is demonstrated by his rearrangement of the text at the end – La Motte's strong belief in the principle of the unity of interest, and his subsidiary role in and allegiance to La Motte's vision recalls the allegiance of Gentileschi's maidservant – ready to act and follow on command for a good cause. Conversely, Jacquet de La Guerre lingers on and stretches specific narrative moments that forgo La Motte's typical concern for unity in favour of depicting Judith's complex character. Her music affects narrative time by slowing down the action and focusing on important dramatic moments, forcing the listener to pay heed much as the transfixed gaze of Caravaggio's maidservant captures the beholder's attention.

Their musical responses to La Motte's text differ in several respects, both at the formal level and at the local level of musical rhetoric. At the formal level, Brossard's dramatically efficient structure recalls the efficiency of Judith and her maidservant in Gentileschi's painting. Table 2a shows Brossard's linear trajectory, which employs parallel keys – C minor to C major – to emphasize the path from tragedy to triumph, a strategy for which there is a precedent in Charpentier's oratorio *Judith sive Bethulia liberata*, which moves in similar fashion from A minor to A major.[56] Brossard's concern for emphasizing both the celerity of the action and its ultimate end goal – triumph – can be observed through his treatment of the last four movements as run-ons (represented as horizontal arrows in Table 2a). His emphasis on action with a purpose at the expense of character depiction means he does not dwell on the murder as a tragic event; rather, he underscores it as a necessary evil, as a civic and moral duty in order to achieve the final objective, as it were.[57] This approach squares with the composer's own aesthetic vision of the cantata as a useful tool for inculcating morals:

> il est seur, qu'en choisissant des sujets, ou pieux, ou du moins qui n'ayent rien de contraire aux bonnes mœurs on y peut tellement joindre l'utile à l'agréable que les plus sévères seront obligez d'avoüer qu'elles ne sont pas moins instructives que divertissantes, et qu'on pourroit par leur moyen renouveler en nos jours, cette manière d'instruire si usitée (commune) chez les anciens . . .[58]

---

55 See La Motte, *Textes critiques*, ed. Gevrey and Guion, 187–188, 191, 232–233.

56 See Nielsen, 'Les grands oratorios bibliques de Marc-Antoine Charpentier', 35. H. Wiley Hitchcock, in 'The Latin Oratorios of Marc-Antoine Charpentier', 57–59, notes that Charpentier's oratorios are 'strongly unified by a principle of tonal stability' that exhibits the composer's understanding of an oratorio as a type of motet in a Zarlinian conception of the term, in which a predetermined mode should predominate. A modern score of Charpentier's *Judith sive Bethulia liberata* is available in Marc-Antoine Charpentier, *Histoires Sacrées*, ed. Jean Duron, volume 4 (Versailles: Éditions du Centre de musique baroque de Versailles, 2005). Mozart's oratorio *La Betulia liberata* (1771) also progresses from D minor to D major over the course of the piece. See Biancamaria Brumana, '"Betulia" a confronto: Jommelli e Mozart', in *Mozart, Padova e la Betulia liberata*, ed. Pinamonti, 115.

57 I am indebted to Kelley Harness for pointing out to me that Brossard's teleological harmonic structure points to the thereafter, thereby bypassing the murder as a necessary civic duty to achieve an end. On the concept of civic duty in connection with seventeenth-century Italian librettos on the Judith story see Kelley Harness, 'Judith, Music, and Female Patrons in Early Modern Italy', in *The Sword of Judith*, ed. Brine, Ciletti and Lähnemann, 371–383.

58 Sébastien de Brossard, 'Dissertation sur cette espèce de concert qu'on nomme cantate', no date, MS autograph ms fr na 5269, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fols 75–77v, as cited in Brossard, *Cantates françaises et italiennes*, ed. Dorival, trans. Criswick, xxiii, xliii.

it is certain that if the subjects are selected with care, whether sacred, or at least containing nothing contrary to upright behaviour, then may the useful be combined with the agreeable so that the severest critics will be obliged to admit that the cantatas are as instructive as they are entertaining and that one might use them to revive today that manner of instruction which was so commonly used among the ancients …

Seen from another perspective, however, Brossard's care to connect together the events relating to the murder could be said to celebrate one of La Motte's most important contributions as an advocate of the moderns – unity of interest. Indeed, Brossard shared with La Motte sympathy for the moderns while still holding great respect for the ancients. This can be observed in his poetic choices, and in particular in his connections with the poets that wrote for the *Mercure galant*, the literary journal and voice of the moderns through which he established his reputation as a composer of airs, as Manuel Couvreur has persuasively argued.[59]

Table 2a   Brossard, *Judith ou la mort d'Holoferne* (between 1703 and 1708)

Prelude	Recitative	Air	Recitative		Sommeil+Animé	Recit.+instr. interlude ⇒⇒Air ⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒ Rec. ⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒Air		
	Narr. (set-up)	Holofernes (love declared)	Narr. (exhort. to murder)	Narr.	Narr. (murder)	Narr. (rejoicing)	Narr (celebr.)	Narr. (celebr.)
C minor	C minor	C minor	E flat major →C minor	C minor	C minor→A minor	A minor	C major	C major
(i)	(i)	(i)	(III)	(i)	(i)→→(vi/I)	(vi/I)	(I)	(I)
	1	2	3	4	5 6 7	8		

Table 2b   Jacquet de la Guerre, *Judith* (1708)

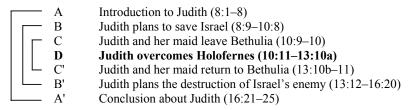| Prelude	Recit.	Air	Recit. [mesuré]	Recit.	Sommeil (instr.)	Recit.	Recit. accomp.	De mouvement et marqué	Air	Recit. [mesuré]	Air
	Narrator (set-up)	Holofernes (love declared)	Narrator (exhort. to murder)	Narrator (description)		Narrator (exhort.)	Narrator (murder prep.)	(murder)	Narrator (rejoicing)	Narrator (celebr.)	Narrator (celebr.)
A major	A major	A major	F sharp minor →A major	E major →E minor	A minor	A minor	E minor	E minor	A major	A major	A major
(I)	(I)	(I)	(vi→→ I)	(V→ v)	(i)	(i)	(v)	(v)	(I)	(I)	(I)
	1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		

Jacquet de La Guerre proposes a different kind of overview (see Table 2b), one that betrays a concern not for goal-oriented linearity, but rather for framing the murder scene as the dramatic fulcrum, employing a major key (A major) to create bookends to the main action, and minor keys (A and E) to connect the murder and the events that lead up to it.[60] This recalls the overall chiastic layout (A–B–C–D–C′–B′–A′)

---

59   See Manuel Couvreur, 'Le goût littéraire de Sébastien de Brossard', in *Sébastien de Brossard musicien*, ed. Duron, 168–171. See also Duron, Introduction to *L'oeuvre de Sébastien de Brossard (1655–1730)*, lix–lxi, xc–xci. Indeed, the combination of religious principles and endorsement of the moderns (through Brossard's general support for the Italian style) that Couvreur finds in Brossard's religious cantatas not only reflects the taste of the authors of their texts, La Motte and Brossard's nephew André de Mézenge, but also shows Brossard's blending of ancient and modern sensibilities. See Couvreur, 'Le goût littéraire de Sébastien de Brossard', 179.

60   Jacquet de La Guerre's use of key as a structural device can also be found in her other sacred cantatas. See Michele Cabrini, 'Breaking Form through Sound: Instrumental Aesthetics, *Tempête*, and Temporality in the French Baroque Cantata', *Journal of Musicology* 26/3 (2009), 361–362. Other French cantata composers also employed key as a structural device. See Greer Garden, 'A Link Between Opera and Cantata in France: Tonal Design in the Music of André Campra', *Early Music* 21/3 (1993), 397–412.

of the original story from the Apocrypha (Judith 8–16), which, Toni Craven points out, privileges the scene of the murder (labelled with the letter D) 'as the narrative heart of the story ... [in which] both form and content signal the climactic significance of Judith's triumph over Holofernes' (see Table 3).[61] The central section in minor keys corresponds to the crucial moments leading up to the murder, in which Jacquet de La Guerre employs instrumental music to linger over and delay the action. This draws the listener in and lets him savour the pending deed rather than rushing through it like Brossard, thus recalling the focalizing stance of Caravaggio's maidservant looking into the painting to orient the vision of the beholder. Also focalizing are the lush musical moments provided by instrumental interludes and instrumental accompaniments – the sleep, the murder and the musical images of Holofernes, the narrator and Judith – that slow down narrative in exchange for prolonging musical time, which tends to warp La Motte's original narrative vision. Similarly, her musical *prolepses* and *analepses* – forecasting the future and evoking the past – also bypass La Motte's narrative control. Jacquet de La Guerre's attempts to focalize the scenario by imparting a voice to Judith can be perceived as a way of bypassing La Motte's characteristic reduction of a main character's direct speech to the third person (and thus to narratorial control), as observed above.

Table 3   Chiastic structure of Judith 8–6 (from Toni Craven, 'Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith', *Semeia* 8 (1977), 88)

A	Introduction to Judith (8:1–8)
B	Judith plans to save Israel (8:9–10:8)
C	Judith and her maid leave Bethulia (10:9–10)
D	**Judith overcomes Holofernes (10:11–13:10a)**
C'	Judith and her maid return to Bethulia (13:10b–11)
B'	Judith plans the destruction of Israel's enemy (13:12–16:20)
A'	Conclusion about Judith (16:21–25)

This reflects the stance of someone assertive and aware of her own talent. Compared to Brossard – his musical training as an autodidact, his provincial and peripheral activity outside the king's established musical circles, and his open uneasiness with regard to the court – Jacquet de La Guerre was indeed in a different league.[62] She benefited from a proper musical training, undertook all sorts of musical genres (including opera), felt at home at court and enjoyed a privileged status there.[63] Introduced by her father to the court of Louis XIV at the age of five, she quickly gained the reputation of child prodigy for her dazzling ability as a keyboard player, and benefited from the sponsorship and protection of living at court during her early years.[64] A look through the various *avertissements* and prefaces to the music she dedicated to the king yields a picture of a woman on the one hand eager to please her patron, on the other self-aware and often pleased with her own talent and success, particularly in view of her unrivalled status as the first

61 Toni Craven, 'Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith', *Semeia* 8 (1977), 88.

62 Brossard's activity circled round the French provinces of Strasbourg and Meaux, away from both Paris and Versailles. See Yolande de Brossard, *Sébastien de Brossard* (Paris: Editions Picard, 1987). In a letter to the abbé Bignon dated 1726, Brossard openly said: 'I must confess it, the court is a land whose ways and detours I know so little that if someone did not show the kindness to serve me as guide, I would run the great risk of losing my way.' Cited in Cessac, 'Les relations d'Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre et de Sébastien de Brossard', 55, note 66.

63 See Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre*. See also Edith Borroff, *An Introduction to Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre* (Brooklyn: Institute of Mediaeval Music, 1966).

64 Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre*, 24–25. The various words of praise throughout the composer's career from the *Mercure galant* and other journals of the time can be found in Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre* and in English translation in Borroff, *An Introduction to Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre*.

successful female operatic composer in France.[65] The Preface to her sacred cantatas (dedicated to Louis XIV) is particularly informative, in that it demonstrates both her confidence and her aesthetic vision about such pieces:

> J'y ay fait un usage de la Musique digne, j'ose le dire, de VOTRE MAJESTÉ. Ce sont les faits les plus considérables de l'Ecriture Sainte que je mets sous ses yeux; L'Auteur des Paroles les a traitez avec toute la dignité qu'ils exigent, & j'ay tâché par mes Chants d'en rendre l'esprit, & d'en soûtenir la grandeur.[66]

> In it [my works] I have made a musical work worthy, dare I say it, of YOUR MAJESTY. These are the most significant deeds of Holy Scriptures that I put before your eyes; the author of the text has treated them with all the dignity that they require, and I have tried by my melodies to do justice to their spirit and to support their grandeur.

This is quite different from Brossard's pragmatic conception of the cantata as instructive and entertaining. The highly dramatic, strongly visual language of her Preface – 'putting before your eyes', 'doing justice to their spirit', 'supporting their grandeur' – implies music that greatly intensifies the text by making the scriptures come alive before the eyes (and ears) of the listener. Indeed, her sacred cantatas were held in such esteem and became so popular that manuscript copies travelled well beyond the French court: some even reached New France (Québec) in the eighteenth century.[67]

The notion of supporting the 'grandeur of the scriptures' and 'doing justice to their spirit' might also help us contextualize and understand Jacquet de La Guerre's endorsement of the Judith character and her treatment of the murder as heroic. While much less radical than Gentileschi's representation of Judith, Jacquet de La Guerre's heroic portrayal and empowerment of her follows a pattern within the composer's own sacred cantatas in which unusually vivid musical characterization of Biblical women can be found.[68] Her support of the Judith character also continues a French literary and artistic tradition endorsing the notion of strong women – *les femmes fortes* – of which the rise in popularity of the Judith story represents an example.[69] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries alone, three heroic poems and five spoken tragedies were dedicated to the Biblical heroine, while the eighteenth century saw the production of seven spoken

---

65 These can be found in Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre*, and in English translation in Borroff, *An Introduction to Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre*. Particularly eloquent in this regard is her dedication to Louis XIV in her ballet *Les Jeux à l'honneur de la victoire* of 1691 (music lost), in which she proudly trumpets the fact that although it was not uncommon for women to write poetry during and before her own time, 'until now, none has tried to set a whole opera to music; and I take this advantage from my enterprise: that the more extraordinary it is, the more it is worthy of you, Sire, and the more it justifies the liberty that I take in offering you this work'. Translation adapted from Borroff, *An Introduction to Elisabeth-Claude Jacquet de la Guerre*, 13.

66 Cyr, Introduction to *The Collected Works*, volume 3, xvi–xvii.

67 See Cyr, Introduction to *The Collected Works*, volume 3, xxi–xxii.

68 See, for example, the bass-line rhythmic ostinato in 'Non, dit l'Héroïne', a *récitatif mesuré* from *Susanne*, which depicts Susanna's obdurate refusal to be blackmailed by the lecherous voyeurs, or the dramatic use of the bass and of silence to depict Esther's shifting emotions, from fear and hesitation to resolution, in approaching her husband in *Esther*. For a discussion see Cessac, *Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre*, 145–147. The composer's cantatas are characterized by 'unique approaches to formal design and text-setting', which include experimentation with or manipulation of the recitative–aria design, the dramatic use of the bass line for purposes of text depiction and musical characterization, changes of tempo, insertions of instrumental music within textual strophes and dramatic uses of silence. See Cyr, 'Myth or Marvel?', 82–85, and Cessac, *Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre*, 142–153.

69 On the literary tradition supporting the notion of *femmes fortes* see Ian Maclean, *Women Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature 1610–1652* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977). Several writings on women emerged in the sixteenth century, among which the following are representative: Antoine Dufour, 'Les Vies des femmes célèbres' (manuscript, Nantes, Musée Dobrée, MS 17, *c*1504, available in an edition by Sophie Cassagnes-Brouquet, *Un manuscrit d'Anne de Bretagne: Les "Vies des femmes célèbres" d'Antoine Dufour* (Rennes: Editions Ouest-France, 2007)); Jean de Marconville, *De la*

tragedies and an opera libretto.[70] More striking than the sheer number, however, is the fact that two of these works were written by women[71] and that three were dedicated to women, including Jeanne d'Albret, Queen of Navarre, the original leader of the Huguenots.[72] This French interest in *femmes fortes* was also promoted through cycles of paintings such as that commissioned by Marie de' Medici at the Luxembourg Palace, painted by Rubens, or that commissioned by the Maréchal de la Meilleraye for his wife in 1637, painted by Simon Vouet for the Hôtel de l'Arsenal (now Bibliothèque), among which Judith, Esther, Semiramis, Mary Stuart, Joan of Arc and others figure notably.[73]

Taking thus into account the composers' different backgrounds and aesthetic perspectives, it remains to discuss their musical treatment at the local level of musical rhetoric. While both composers employ the normal parameters for the proper rhetorical articulation of the text's syntactical structure – rhythmic and melodic motion, and, in particular, key changes and modulation[74] – Jacquet de La Guerre's unique use of the melodic element either to enliven the text in the vocal line or to create an entirely separate discourse from it in the bass or in the obbligato instruments sets her music apart from Brossard's. This can be observed in the opening recitative and aria, which concern the general Holofernes and the city of Bethulia (numbers 1 and 2 in Table 1). Both composers employ rhythmic anapaests to depict the Assyrian general as an obstinate and goal-driven character. Yet Brossard simplifies and condenses La Motte's threefold division of the starvation of Bethulia, Holofernes's lavish banquet and his infatuation by setting the associated verses in two related key areas – C minor and E flat major (see Table 1). Jacquet de La Guerre complicates the situation with a more dynamic treatment. After beginning the recitative in A major, she begins modulating towards E via its dominant, B. The bass line in particular seems to tell a different story about Holofernes: its long plunge from dominant to tonic, B to E, carefully calibrated by the brief circle-of-fifths progression

Bonté et mauvaistié des femmes (Paris: Dallier, 1564); Guillaume Salluste du Bartas, *La Judith* (Paris: L'Angelier, 1582); Henri Corneille Agrippa, *Traité de l'excellence de la femme* (Paris: J. Poupy, 1578); Peeter Heyns, *Le miroir des vefves. Tragédie sacrée d'Holoferne & Judith. Représentant, parmi les troubles de ce monde, la piété d'une vraye vefve, et la curiosité d'une follastre* (Amsterdam: Z. Heyns, 1596).

70 For a complete list and discussion see André Blanc, 'Les Malheurs de Judith et le bonheur d'Esther', in *Poésie et Bible de la Renaissance à l'âge classique*, ed. Pascale Blum and Anne Mantero (Paris: Champion, 1999), 83–101.

71 They are: Gabrielle de Coignard, *Imitation de la victoire de Judich*, published among her *Oeuvres chrestiennes* (Tournon: pour J. Faure libraire en Avignon, 1595), and Marie de Pech, dame de Calages, *Judith, ou La Délivrance de Béthulie* (Toulouse: A. Colomiez, 1660). See Blanc, 'Les Malheurs de Judith', 83, note 1. For a scholarly English edition of Coignard's poem see Colette H. Winn and Robert H. McDowell, 'Gabrielle de Coignard: *Imitation de la victoire de Judich* (1594)', in *Writings by Pre-Revolutionary French Women*, ed. Anne R. Larsen and Colette H. Winn (New York: Garland, 2000), 171–211.

72 Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas, *La Judit*, dedicated to Jeanne, Queen of Navarre, was quickly translated and read throughout Europe. Using the biblical story as a metaphor for the Huguenots' fight against the French monarchy, 'Du Bartas's poem became the most important single catalyst of Judith's symbolic centrality of Protestantism' (Stocker, *Judith Sexual Warrior*, 56). Marie de Pech's *Judith, ou la Délivrance de Béthulie* was dedicated to Queen Marie-Thérèse, and Adrien d'Amboise's *Holoferne: tragédie sacrée extraite de l'histoire de Judith* (Paris: L'Angelier, 1580) was dedicated to Madame de Broos, daughter of a Marshal of France and Governor of Metz. See Blanc, 'Les Malheurs de Judith', 83, note 1, and 89.

73 See Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 157–159. For a detailed description of the Vouet cycle see Crelly, *The Painting of Simon Vouet*, 110. On Marie de' Medici as an art patron see Deborah Marrow, *The Art Patronage of Maria de' Medici* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1982), particularly 65–72.

74 That modulation and choice of key were deemed essential in the proper setting of a recitative is amply shown by Rameau's analysis of Lully's recitative 'Enfin, il est à ma puissance' from *Armide* (1686). This is discussed in Cynthia Verba, *Music and the French Enlightenment: Reconstruction of a Dialogue 1750–1764* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 20–30, and 'The Development of Rameau's Thoughts on Modulation and Chromatics', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 26/1 (1973), 69–91; see also Charles Dill, 'Rameau Reading Lully: Meaning and System in Rameau's Recitative Tradition', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 6/1 (1994), 1–17.

from E to B to F♯ at bars 3–4 and by the long bass descent, sidesteps and forgoes La Motte's threefold organization, and points instead to the leader's inexorable downfall (see Example 1). The dynamism of the circle-of-fifths progression renders the harmonic move towards E seemingly inevitable: the strong hint of minor mode implied by the G♮s in the continuo and soprano (bar 8) before the final cadence is significant from a narrative perspective, as it foreshadows the key of the murder by linking it with the true source of Holfernes's downfall – his infatuation for Judith.[75] The two composers' divergent views continue in Holofernes's aria 'Victory Alone', his declaration of love (number 2 in Table 1). Brossard's use of C minor and lilting dance rhythms and the expressive label *tendrement* paint Holofernes as a tender character easily vulnerable to infatuation (see Example 2); conversely, Jacquet de La Guerre's use of A major and Italianate features, including driving rhythms, sequences and extended melismas on 'gloire', depict him as over-confident and narcissistic (see Examples 3, 4a and 4b).

Let us now turn to the preparation for the murder. This begins with La Motte's narrator goading Judith to act swiftly and take advantage of Holofernes's self-assurance and inebriation (numbers 3 and 4 in Table 1).

Example 1   Élisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Tandis que de la faim', bars 3–9, from *Judith* (Ballard, 1708). Facsimile in *The Eighteenth-Century French Cantata: A Seventeen-Volume Facsimile Set of the Most Widely Cultivated and Performed Music in Early Eighteenth-Century France*, ed. David Tunley (New York: Garland, 1990), volume 3, 126–131. Used by permission

---

75 The lack of a natural sign above the E in the continuo at the final cadence (bar 9) should not surprise us: one of the compositional signatures of Jacquet de La Guerre is the free alternation of parallel major and minor keys for the sake of variety and dramatic contrast. This is the same harmonic thinking displayed by Michel de Saint Lambert, for whom *ton* was 'a tonic upon which one could build a piece that was in either the major or the minor mode', as Greer Garden has shown. See Garden, 'A Link Between Opera and Cantata in France', 398–399. For the original see Michel de Saint Lambert, *A New Treatise on Accompaniment*, ed. and trans. John S. Powell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 47–49, originally published as *Nouveau traité de l'accompagnement du clavecin* (Paris: Ballard, 1707).

Example 2   Sébastien de Brossard, 'La seule victoire', bars 1–13, from *Judith ou La mort d'Holofernes*. Sébastien de Brossard, 'Recueil de cantates', Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms F-Pn Vm⁷ 164 (no date), available for consultation at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1050644> (1 July 2011). Used by permission

Example 3   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'La seule victoire', bars 1–11, from *Judith*

Brossard here reflects the syntactical polarization of La Motte's verses through a dutiful rhetorical treatment of the text: he sets the verses in a *récitatif simple*, and relies on the establishment of distinct key areas (C minor and E flat major) to paint the narrator's incitement of Judith to cast sexy looks and to hasten Holofernes's drunkenness, on the one hand, and Holofernes's tender infatuation and eventual surrender to love and wine, on the other. Conversely, Jacquet de La Guerre animates the narrator with music that depicts his ever-changing moods as he becomes more involved in the description of the scenario, varying the text-setting from syllabic to melismatic and the continuo accompaniment from *simple* to *mesuré*. Particularly remarkable is the sudden profusion of vocal ornaments over a moving bass line in bars 2–3 of Example 5, which affords a glimpse of Judith's eroticism and allure that not even the narrator might otherwise be aware of, and the *mesuré* texture on 'Hâtez l'yvresse' in bars 4–8, which suggests a certain trepidation over Holofernes's impending inebriation and capitulation. It is once again through a descending bass line, however, that Jacquet de La Guerre can bypass La Motte's narrator and foretell the inevitable fate of Holofernes by highlighting the agents of his eventual downfall – love, wine and sleep (number 4 in Table 1). Particularly poignant are the two descending tetrachords (bracketed in Example 6), one diatonic on the notions of love and wine, the other chromatic on the notion of sleep. The use of chromaticism to paint sleep as a premonition of death is a particularly remarkable example; it is notable that a strong hint of E minor (implied by the G♮s in the continuo and voice at bars 6 and 8–9), the murder key, occurs towards the end of the recitative.

Example 4a   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'La seule victoire', bars 51–56, from *Judith*

Example 4b   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'La seule victoire', bars 63–66, from *Judith*

Example 5   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Enfoncez le trait', bars 1–8, from *Judith*

The slumber scene as a preparation for the murder also shows the two composers' differing perspectives. Brossard treats it conservatively, creating what recalls a typical operatic *sommeil*. Indeed, the treble parts playing stepwise in slurred pairs recall Lully's slumber scene from *Atys*, as do the long held notes in the voice under key words like 'repos' (see Examples 7a and 7b). The overall effect is powerfully hypnotic, enhanced by the slow harmonic rhythm. Jacquet de La Guerre opts instead for an instrumental *sommeil* inserted between strophes – an unusual choice by the compositional standards of the time. The music itself is also uncharacteristic: instead of the stepwise pairs of crotchets in the treble parts moving over a slow-moving bass, Jacquet de La Guerre opts for instrumental parts that move independently in alternating thirds (see Example 8). The movement also lacks the still harmonic rhythm so typical of *sommeil* movements, featuring instead meandering harmonic and melodic motion, overarching melodies and a remarkable scarcity of internal cadences. It opens in A minor, yet the composer denies a firm cadence in the tonic key. Rather, through an arching melodic line in the violin (bars 1–12), which unfolds slowly and meanders harmonically, she whets the listener's appetite for a perfect cadence. Such a cadence, however, does not occur until bars 17–18, eighteen bars into the movement, and in an unexpected key, the dominant minor (E); the listener must wait until the very end of the movement to hear a perfect cadence in the tonic key (not shown). The composer also denies closure, mitigating the effect of a perfect cadence by immediately turning away from the presumed arrival of the new tonic and continuing on towards a new key, as can be seen in bars 27–29,

Example 6   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Ne le voyez-vous pas', bars 1–10, from *Judith*

where the modulation to D minor is thwarted by the $f\sharp^1$ and the $g\sharp^1$ in the ascending violin line, which point back to A. All of this creates a sense of waxing and waning that feels disquieting rather than hypnotic.

Catherine Cessac suggests that Jacquet de La Guerre's textless setting of the *sommeil* is not as original as Brossard's canonic treatment.[76] I would argue the opposite, that her deliberate compositional choice allows this music to function at multiple levels precisely because it is not bound by the verbal domain. At the dramatic level, the *sommeil* paints the moment of Holofernes's inebriation and capitulation at the hands of Judith's powerful spell. Indeed, the winding phrases and the constant denial of closure can be understood as hallmarks of Judith's deceitful seductive powers. At the narrative level, the music functions as the equivalent of an extended verbal description – an *ekphrasis*, precisely that which La Motte enjoyed removing – which has the effect of slowing down or pausing dramatic time in order to set up properly the ensuing murder.[77] There is yet another level, however, one that yields the perception of this piece as a type of focalization. Much like the uneasiness expressed by the voyeuristic posture of Caravaggio's maid-servant, who invites the beholder to participate in her own satisfaction over the deed, Jacquet de La Guerre invites the listener to peruse the scenario slowly through the uneasiness of the winding melodic phrases and the nonteleological harmonic language in a way that recalls a travelling shot during a film, urging the listener to contemplate the significance of the moment rather than to take a standard *sommeil* image at face value.

The most divergent musical characterization deals with the portrayal of Judith immediately before the murder. Here La Motte highlights Judith's hesitation (number 6 in Table 1): notice, for example, the representation of her arm suspended in the air, as if it were temporarily frozen in time waiting for divine approval

---

76 Cessac, 'Les relations d'Élisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre et de Sébastien de Brossard', 56.

77 On narrative tempo in general and narrative pause in particular see Genette, *Narrative Discouse*, 93–95, 99–106. Composers can achieve interesting effects of narrative tempo through instrumental music. Charpentier, for example, employs an instrumental prelude labelled *nuit* between parts one and two of his oratorio *Judith sive Bethulia liberata* to represent 'the passage of time between Judith's departure from the Israelite camp and her arrival at the headquarters of Holofernes'; see H. Wiley Hitchcock, 'The Latin Oratorios of Marc-Antoine Charpentier', 327. This is an effect Genette calls ellipsis, or a 'leap forward' in time (Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 43).

Example 7a   Brossard, 'Sommeil', bars 1–13, from *Judith ou La mort d'Holofernes*

Example 7b   Brossard, 'Sommeil', bars 53–59, from *Judith ou La mort d'Holofernes*

to strike its blow on Holofernes's head, or the narrator's plea on Judith's behalf for divine assistance to carry out the deed. Brossard matches La Motte's rhetorical depiction of the heroine's vacillation by highlighting each verse with a different key area (see number 6 in Table 1). Jacquet de La Guerre dignifies Judith's indecision instead and turns it into the expression of the heroine's noble determination in the face of her inevitable destiny. Her *récitatif accompagné* setting of La Motte's text employs certain ceremonial traits associated with French overtures and marches to portray royal characters, particularly the dotted rhythms and the anapaests, though in a slower tempo (shown in Example 9). Her treatment highlights Judith's internal conflict through the melodic tension between the voice and the bass line, whose descending melodic contour provides a grounding element with which the voice must contend. Every melodic ascent in the voice is invariably followed by a descent, as if the gravitational pull of the bass were impossible to resist.[78] This occurs at the opening, when the voice reaches a high g^2 on 'puissance' in a progressive ascent followed by a descent to the dominant, emphasized by a Phrygian cadence on 'demeure suspendu' (see Example 10, bars 16–17). Likewise, the voice attempts another ascent on 'elle frémit de la vengeance', but is promptly cajoled by the bass to follow its descent on 'soutenez', which outlines a descending tetrachord – A–G–F–E – in augmentation (shown in Example 11). Two final chromatic ascents in the voice, to invoke Heaven's help, are also followed by descents (see Example 12). This treatment recalls the tension between voice and bass employed in French opera during ground-bass arias that Geoffrey Burgess has suggested were used to

---

78 Even though this kind of compensatory move might be regarded as universal in music, its persistent occurrence in this cantata makes it particularly striking.

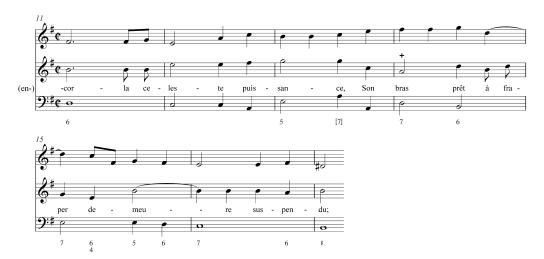Example 8   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Sommeil', bars 1–30, from *Judith*

represent the hero's final deliberation before a critical decision.[79] Indeed, it recalls Jacquet de La Guerre's own treatment of the bass line (which features a descending tetrachord within a changing ground bass) and the voice in the opening section of Procris's monologue 'Lieux écartés, paisible solitude' in Act 2 Scene 1 from her opera *Céphale et Procris*, in which the heroine expresses her inner suffering at the threat of separation from Céphale and tries to find consolation in solitude.[80] By calling upon this practice Jacquet de La Guerre ennobles Judith's inner conflict by recasting it as the dilemma of a tragic heroine rather than as the whim of a weak character, thereby focalizing the heroine through her own view. At the narrative level, however, this explosion of descending thematic material in the bass – especially the descending tetrachord – feels like the culmination of the previous bass descents employed to allude to Holofernes's demise. Indeed, because of its frequency throughout the piece, the descending tetrachord acts as a leitmotif, a narrative tool that suggests that the destiny of Judith and the imminent death of Holofernes are inextricably linked.

79 See Geoffrey Vernon Burgess, 'Ritual in the *Tragédie en musique* from Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione* (1673) to Rameau's *Zoroastre* (1749)' (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1998), 224–234.

80 A modern edition is available in Élisabeth-Claude Jacquet de La Guerre, *Cephale et Procris*, ed. Wanda Griffiths (Madison: A-R Editions, 1998). For an analysis of the scene see Cyr, 'Myth or Marvel?', 83–84, and Cessac, *Elisabeth Jacquet de La Guerre*, 73–74.
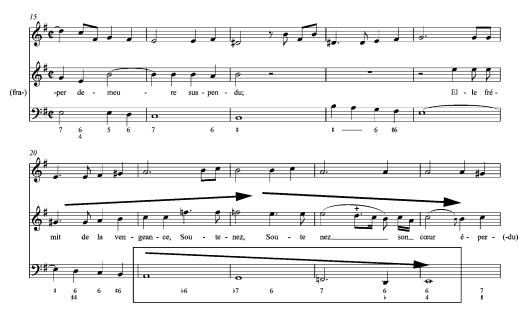
Example 9   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Judith implore encor', bars 1–10, from *Judith*

Example 10   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Judith implore encor', bars 11–17, from *Judith*

As for the murder itself (number 7 in Table 1), Brossard expresses it through a particularly striking run-on move from recitative to instrumental prelude and a sudden modulation from C minor to A minor. This choice suggests Brossard's emphasis on swiftness of action, as if he consciously chose to de-emphasize the brutality of the moment by passing over it quickly (see Example 13). Only the semiquaver sequence, reinforced by the chromatically ascending bass line proceeding in dactylic rhythms (bars 10–13), briefly hints at the physical struggle between Judith and Holofernes before the striking of the final blow. This music functions as the ritornello of the ensuing aria 'Le coup est achevé', thereby diffusing the energy of the murder and catapulting the listener into the final celebration.

Conversely, Jacquet de La Guerre's music celebrates Judith's heroic determination in carrying out the murder, animating her valorous arm, as it were, and turning what La Motte depicted as suspended indecision into action. Though brief – only nineteen bars – the movement effectively portrays what feels like the determination of a soldier going to battle (see Example 14). This is achieved by the martial quality of the rhythm in the violins, assisted by a *basso ostinato* in relentless crotchet arpeggios; by the linear trajectory

Example 11   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Judith emplore encor', bars 15–24, from *Judith*

Example 12   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Judith emplore encor', bars 25–37, from *Judith*

Example 13   Brossard, 'murder music', bars 7–17, from *Judith ou La mort d'Holofernes*

of the bass line, which proceeds at a rate of one chord per bar throughout most of the movement; and by the mechanical regularity of the modulating sequences, all of which create a sense of inevitability. This focalization on the execution implies Judith's calm yet resolute sense of purpose, and immortalizes her action in a seemingly never-ending moment. Such qualities recall Gentileschi's painting, in particular what Ciletti, Garrard and Bissell have noted about her portrayal of Judith as an instrument of war, reflected, as Ciletti argues, in the way the biblical character 'exude[s] the confidence of someone secure in the virtue of her deed'.[81]

---

81 Ciletti, '"Gran Macchina è bellezza"', 77; compare Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 326–327, with Bissell, *Artemisia Gentileschi and the Authority of Art*, 104–105. Note also the jewellery that Judith wears – a bracelet scholars interpret as representing either the goddess Diana or Roman gods Ares/Mars and a dancing Bacchante, all symbols of war or destruction.

Example 14   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'murder music', bars 1–19, from *Judith*

The treatment of the post-murder celebratory aria (number 8 in Table 1) also shows the two composers' differing approaches. Concerned with continuity of action, Brossard diffuses the energy of the murder by turning the murder music into the ritornello of 'Le coup est achevé'. His manipulation of La Motte's text also shows his concern for grouping together celebratory texts for the sake of dramatic unity: Brossard moves the aria's original second stanza – a recollection of Holofernes's death that does not fit within the celebration – to the cantata's final aria (represented in dotted arrows in Table 1) and adds a new recitative of his own invention to urge the citizens of Bethulia to continue the celebration (see asterisk in Table 1).

Jacquet de La Guerre strikes instead through her music alone, leaving La Motte's second stanza unscathed and capitalizing on the contrasts it creates with the first so as better to juxtapose Holofernes's demise and Judith's triumph. Brooke Green has noted that on the one hand Jacquet de La Guerre celebrates Judith's heroism through appropriate rhetorical devices – a fast tempo, a melodic line with wide leaps, a characteristic battle-music motif, which suggests a 'warrior-masculine … androg[y]nous persona', and long Italianate melismas on words like 'triomphante' that highlight and extend Judith's triumph in spite of La Motte's deliberate de-emphasis – while on the other hand the composer pays her respects to Holofernes's death in two brief minor-key sections, in which she slows down the tempo to *lentement* (see Example 15).[82] Green sees the contrast as ironic, and perceives the *lentement* as out of place and 'fairly perfunctory' since 'a *vite* interferes as if Judith is dancing around with excitement or possibly even satirising [Holofernes's]
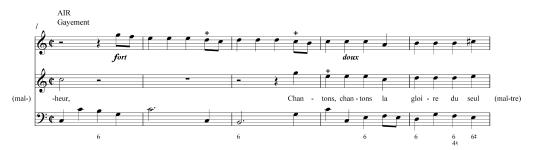
---

82 Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 51–52.

Example 15   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Le coup est achevé', bars 33–42, from *Judith*

"tragedy"'.[83] I would like to turn Green's idea upside down and suggest that from a narrative perspective it is more likely that Jacquet de La Guerre meant to evoke a brief interference of the tragic past within the triumphant present. I thus perceive the two brief *lentement* sections as narrative flashbacks, what Genette calls *analepses*: Jacquet de La Guerre's music thus not only pays its respects to Holofernes's death but also urges the listener to relive its memory, if only for a brief moment.

A final striking difference is the way the two composers treat the concluding aria 'Chantons, chantons', whose celebratory text provides a glorification of God and, by extension, Louis XIV. By manipulating La Motte's text, Brossard explicitly sets up a contrast between God's triumph and Holofernes's demise by excising the aria's original second verse and replacing it with two new ones – one of his own invention, the other taken from 'Le coup est achevé', as previously mentioned. He depicts God's glory in the opening verse as a bright, energetic rondo refrain in C major (seen in Example 16), which exhibits the very battle-music motif – as both anapaests and dactyls – that Jacquet de La Guerre ascribes instead to Judith; the exuberance of the refrain easily overwhelms the two restrained rondo couplets, set in the secondary keys of G major and A minor respectively, that paint Holofernes's defeat. And yet, despite the contrast, the music gives us a picture of Holofernes that is mainly sympathetic: Brossard indeed employs 'royal' battle-motifs (dactyls) that seem to cater to Holofernes's regal pride in the bass line of the G major couplet, almost portraying him as marching alongside the kingly celebration (see Example 17). Moreover, in spite of the musical contrast between the king and Holofernes, Brossard's pairing of the two male figures in the final aria seems almost to set Judith's personal triumph aside as the means to an end in a fashion that recalls the way in which La Motte also sidesteps the heroine by apostrophizing her and never allowing her to speak.

---

83 Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 52.

Example 16   Brossard, 'Chantons, chantons', bars 1–5, from *Judith ou La mort d'Holofernes*

Example 17   Brossard, 'Chantons, chantons', bars 31–35, from *Judith ou La mort d'Holofernes*

Once again, Jacquet de La Guerre leaves La Motte's text intact while delivering a different message through her music. Her version of 'Chantons, chantons' presents an apparent incongruity between the triumphant text and the rather anaemic character of the music glorifying the king (Example 18). Brooke Green notes that this is especially significant when compared with Jacquet de La Guerre's decisively more powerful portrayal of Judith's triumph in 'Le coup est achevé', and she perceives this as the composer's deliberate attempt at creating a destabilizing situation that seems to threaten conventional wisdom.[84] She notes that the king's musical language includes narrow intervals, a melody characterized by a long gradual descent and a syllabic setting of the text, in contrast to the wide leaps, battle-music motif and Italianate virtuosity of Judith's music.[85] Indeed, if one considers musical rhetoric, the king appears old and deflated compared to Judith's youthful vigour: his melismas on 'victoire' are slower and less flamboyant than hers, and the one he sings on 'triomphe' is oddly descending.[86] Green makes an excellent point when she argues that:

> If we took Mattheson literally, it would seem that the real emotions here are sadness and even despair. We are told to "sing of the glory" (the King's glory) but this theme is simply not as uplifting as Judith's in *Le coup est achevé*. Furthermore, the sprightly tempo could imply a feeling of forced enthusiasm, and the result could even be interpreted as a half-hearted attempt by the narrator to encourage us to dutifully celebrate the King.[87]

Yet rather than viewing this music as a veiled criticism of the king's power, which in light of Jacquet de La Guerre's personal debt to the royal family would be rather unlikely, it might be more appropriate to consider this aria as a witty critique of La Motte and his narrator. Indeed, the discrepancy between the written 3/4 metre and the 6/8 metre clearly demanded in performance by the phrasing, syllabic accents and agreement between treble and continuo, together with the hemiolas and cross-rhythms – all of which

---

84 Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 50–55.
85 Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 51–52.
86 Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 51–52.
87 Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 52.

Example 18   Jacquet de La Guerre, 'Chantons, chantons', bars 1–12, from *Judith*

deliberately destabilize the performance – could be seen as a musical pun against the 'stiffness' of La Motte's narrator.[88] The resulting playfulness of this music seems to poke fun at him by making his performance appear altogether inappropriate and inadequate for upholding the required solemnity of the moment, the celebration of the king's glory. Moreover, the 'feeling of forced enthusiasm' of this music could also be viewed as a veiled mockery aimed at the narrator's infelicitous verse 'And the weakest hand [Judith's] / Is sufficient for His [God's] miracles', almost as if Jacquet de La Guerre wished to beat La Motte at his own game by questioning his final reservations about Judith's strength.

CONCLUSION

Brossard and Jacquet de La Guerre's settings of La Motte's Judith provide a remarkable case study of musical exegesis, showing two diametrically opposed perspectives on text setting. Brossard's conception of the execution as civic duty – a means to an end – yields a compressed dramatic time that fast-forwards the events, passing over the murder quickly and propelling the action forward towards the final triumph. Yet while his efficient dramatic structure gets the job done, it does not offer an individual perspective. It yields rather a bird's-eye view of the story that squares with La Motte's concept of unity of interest, according to which everything must be connected to a single, underlying idea. Brossard's efficiency of structure may recall Gentileschi's efficiency of execution, and his fidelity to La Motte the dutifulness of her maidservant;

---

88 The 3/4 appears in the original 1708 publication. Green rightly notes that although the opening phrase could be sung in 3/4, its rhythmic feeling would conflict with the continuo, which is clearly in 6/8. If performers tried to infuse an overall feeling of 3/4, it might well cause the piece to fall apart. Green sees the symbolism of the Holy Trinity behind the choice of 3/4 and its association with the figure of the king. See Green, 'Codifying the Heroine', 52, 54.

yet his overall message does not celebrate, as is the case in Gentileschi, 'the *legitimate* aggressive deeds of the famous biblical character, heroic avenger of the Jewish people'.[89]

In contrast, Jacquet de La Guerre achieves precisely that, acting as focalizer by zooming in on key moments of the story to propose a viewpoint that differs from that of La Motte's narrator, bypassing his agency so as to celebrate Judith's heroic deed as legitimate, ennobling the indecision ascribed to her by La Motte and turning it into action. Significantly, this is achieved through the branch of music that claims independence from the text – instrumental music. Her instrumental topoi can be said to be 'plurifunctional' in the sense that although they fulfil the normative mimetic roles suggested by the text, they also manipulate narrative time independently from the text: the descending tetrachord foreshadows Judith's deed, linking it with Holofernes's downfall;[90] the slumber music and the *basso ostinato* of the murder expand time to prepare the action and linger on its heroism respectively; and the sudden *lentement* in the last aria brings back past memories of the murder for the listener. Her conception of the scene yields a richly detailed, elaborately involved view, rather than the detached bird's-eye view of Brossard: she stretches dramatic time, rather than compressing it, allowing the listener to savour each moment, and to perceive the murder scene as the dramatic fulcrum. Through her music, Jacquet de La Guerre builds an emotional link with her listener and goads him to listen to and heed the action in much the same way that the spellbinding gaze of Caravaggio's maidservant drives the beholder to look and pay attention. Yet unlike Caravaggio's anaemic depiction of Judith, Jacquet de La Guerre's representation is powerfully heroic, and yields an overall message that celebrates Judith's heroism per se rather than viewing her action as a means to an end, thus continuing not only a trend in the composer's own cantatas, but also a longstanding French tradition of *femmes fortes*. Through music, which exhibits a strong narrative impulse either by playing a dramatic role between textual strophes or by greatly expanding on ideas put forth by the text, and by refusing to re-arrange La Motte's text to achieve its dramatic purpose, as does Brossard, she demonstrates confidence in instrumental music as a narrative medium, thereby asserting her creative independence from the poet. This is very different from Brossard's music, which could be said to 'colour' La Motte's text, blending with it in a way that recalls what Le Cerf de la Viéville, a staunch supporter of the notion of music as subservient to the text, had called 're-painting' the poetry, so that 'the verse is indistinguishable from and lives again in the music'.[91]

With its strong impulse to narrate and to represent the multifarious aspects of the character of Judith by relying primarily on instrumental music, Jacquet de La Guerre's work remains a unique, isolated case in the history of the cantata. Without attempting to force a case for a linear, historical trajectory, it is possible nevertheless to perceive in it certain preoccupations concerning music's potential for signification, for its ability to narrate and to create pictures that go beyond mimesis by inviting the listener to contemplate, preoccupations that strike a fundamental chord with similar mid-eighteenth-century concerns about music's expressive potential. Jacquet de La Guerre's faith in the ability of music, particularly instrumental music, to amplify the text to the point of bypassing it as a mode of expression foreshadows later eighteenth-century concerns – most evident in France through the writings of Jean-Baptiste Dubos, Charles Batteux, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot and others – with emancipating forms of artistic expression that rely primarily on the senses, such as painting and music, from the rational clutch of poetry.[92] This is most evident in the

---

89 Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi*, 279.

90 I borrow the term 'plurifunctional' from Dubowy, 'Le due "Giuditte" di Alessandro Scarlatti', 266.

91 Jean Laurent Le Cerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique française* (Brussel: Fr. Foppens, 1705; reprinted Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), as cited in a translation by Margaret Murata in Oliver Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1998), volume 4, 173.

92 For an informative introduction to these aspects see Tili Boon Cuillé, Preface to *Narrative Interludes: Musical Tableaux in Eighteenth-Century French Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), xi–xxi. See also Neubauer, *The Emancipation of Music from Language*, and Verba, *Music and the French Enlightenment*. For an excellent introduction to Dubos see Paul Guyer, 'The Origins of Modern Aesthetics: 1711–35', in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. Peter

slumber music – where unconventional, undulating melodies and meandering harmonies engulf the listener in the sensuous beauty of its sound, inviting him to imagine a soundscape that far transcends that of the conventional *sommeil* topos prescribed by its text – and, to a lesser extent, in the murder music, with its *basso ostinato* that freezes the action into a seemingly never-ending moment. The simultaneously sensuous, visual and contemplative nature of this music matches the complexity of Judith: the music is in itself a paradox, expressing at once both action and reflection by depicting stasis through motion. In a passage from his *L'Essai sur l'origine des langues*, which reflects on music's ineffable powers of expression, Jean-Jacques Rousseau points precisely at this aspect:

> C'est un des grands avantages du musicien, de pouvoir peindre les choses qu'on ne saurait entendre, tandis qu'il est impossible au peintre de représenter celles qu'on ne saurait voir; et le plus grand prodige d'un art qui n'agit que par le mouvement est d'en pouvoir former jusqu'à l'image du repos. Le sommeil, le calme de la nuit, la solitude, et le silence même, entrent dans les tableaux de la musique … Que toute la nature soit endormie, celui qui la contemple ne dort pas …[93]

> One of the great advantages of the musician is to be able to paint things that we cannot hear, whereas it is impossible for the painter to represent what we cannot see. The most prodigious feat of an art that acts primarily through movement is to be able to create the impression of rest. Sleep, the calm of night, solitude and even silence enter into the *tableaux* of music … Even if all of nature is asleep, he who contemplates it is not …

Rousseau's closing comment points to a final, significant aspect of this music – the fact that it commands the listener's attention. The contemplative aspects of Jacquet de La Guerre's *sommeil* and murder music could be said to anticipate another mid-eighteenth-century theme: the importance of absorption. This aspect has been discussed by Michael Fried in the context of mid- to late eighteenth-century French paintings and by Tili Boon Cuillé with regard to literary *tableaux* from the same period. These *tableaux* foreground 'a musical performance staged for a beholder inscribed within the text' as a mode of discourse to affect the emotional impact of the narrative.[94] Much like the paintings of Greuze, in which the figures are absorbed in the task at hand to the extent that they draw the beholder into the painting with them, Jacquet de La Guerre's music draws the listener in. In similar fashion, a literary tableau suspends the narrative momentarily to allow the inscribed beholder to become enraptured by the musical performance and listen not so much to the music as to the 'emotion it expresses' and 'the characters whose sentiments the music evokes'.[95]

Jacquet de La Guerre's interest in Judith's interiority and complexity of character may be what pushed her to take such bold steps into the realm of musical expression, steps in directions prescient of later eighteenth-century concerns. Yet her unusual position as a successful woman composer in France may well have played a role, too, in shaping her unique point of view. However that may be, the case of this cantata demonstrates her compositional prescience in truly understanding the ineffable power of music.

Kivy (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 25–44. The seeds of this increasing emphasis on the senses can already be seen in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writings on painting by Roger de Piles, which emphasize colour over line. See Georgia Cowart, 'Inventing the Arts: Changing Critical Language in the *Ancien Régime*', in *French Musical Thought, 1600–1800*, ed. Cowart (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1989), 211–238.

93 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes de J.-J. Rousseau* (Paris: J. Bry aîné, 1858), volume 9, 242, trans. in Cuillé, *Narrative Interludes*, 1.

94 Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), and Cuillé, *Narrative Interludes*, 5–6.

95 Cuillé, *Narrative Interludes*, 4.