

Artemisia at Her Canvas

by Sam Rasnake

— *during or just after the trial of Agostino Tassi, 1612*

After *Judith Slaying Holofernes*,
a flawless symmetry of blind pursuit
that even Caravaggio couldn't get at
with his paints, this darker vengeance
that would never rest in the sacred
or profane, did find its own truth, its
mound of flesh in full measures of rage
by her determined hand — his head
slipping free of its stubborn shoulders,
no worries of kingdom then, of lies or
damaged goods, to twisted bedsheet
in great spurts of blood, then a slow
and beautiful silence, such sweet
payback for art's willful grieving



Judith Slaying Holofernes, 1612-1613

