The Old English *Judith*: Sources, Analysis and Context

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Do you happen to know anything about Judith yourself, except that she cut off Holofernes' head; and has been made the high light of about a million vile pictures ever since? [...] She is not merely the Jewish Dalilah to the Assyrian Samson, but the mightiest, purest, brightest type of high passion in severe womanhood offered to our human memory.

Ruskin's Mornings in Florence

= Abstract =

The Old English poem *Judith* has received scant critical attention compared to other poems in the corpus of Old English poetry. This dissertation aims at providing a thorough analysis of the poem by an examination of its sources and analogues, its stylistic qualities and its cultural and historical context. A comparison with other Old English poems will help highlight its unique features and its highly stylized narrative form that centers on the opposition between the good and the evil leader.

The Introduction examines the most influential criticism of *Judith* in an attempt to elicit the major critical issues surrounding the poem. This is followed by an analysis of the physical features of London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A. xv; such a codicological investigation is necessary in a discussion of the original length of this incomplete poem and its relationship with other works in the manuscript.

The second chapter deals with the complexities of the source material, in particular the Judeo-Christian sources and patristic exegesis on the Book of Judith that evolved in the course of the Middle Ages. The ways in which the Old English poet departed from the apocryphal book and its accepted patristic interpretations are particularly important as a guide to the poet's didactic aims.

In chapter three comparisons are made with other Old English works both in prose and in poetry in order to illustrate the unique features of *Judith* both in the conception of its hero and in its style and structure. A detailed analysis of the style of the poem is undertaken in the fourth and central chapter of this thesis. Information gleaned in the previous chapters is now applied to a close reading of the poem in which the concept of leadership is seen to play a major role. This leads to a discussion of

significant historical, social and cultural events in England at the time when *Judith* was written.

The work concludes with a summary of the discussions and of reasons why such a poem would have appealed to a tenth-century audience, and indeed continues to fascinate modern readers. The first appendix provides a detailed synoptic view of the Old English text and its major biblical sources, while the second continues the story of the appeal of Judith into the literature and art of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance.

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= Preface =

The purpose of the thesis is to provide an understanding of the Old English poem *Judith* in its cultural and socio-historical context. The emphasis is on understanding the significance and relevance of the poem for a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon audience. By emphasizing the context of the poem, I do not intend to downplay the artistic achievement of *Judith*. Rather, I hope to show that a study of both text and context can lead to similar conclusions about the purpose and relevance of the poem.

Because of the wide range of criticism on *Judith*, my analysis of the poem is introduced by a review of the most influential milestones in the criticism of the poem. This introduction will also highlight those features of the poem which have attracted the most attention over the years (e.g., fragmentary status, dating, message), while also making my critical stance clear. It should be noted that Richard Trask's recent edition of *Beowulf* and *Judith* has not found its way yet on the British publisher market and I have had a chance to consult it only towards the final stages of my dissertation so that no reference is made to it in the course of the present discussion.[1] Such is the case also for Mark Griffith's edition of *Judith*, a work similar in scope to this thesis and whose major findings are considered only in the conclusion.[2]

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[1] Richard M. Trask, *Beowulf and Judith: Two Heroes* (Lanham, Maryland, 1997).
[2] Mark Griffith, *Judith,* (Exeter, 1997).

I start with the physical evidence in the manuscript, London, BL Cotton Vitellius A. XV. In chapter one, I briefly analyze the codicological data and paleographic evidence with the central aim of providing a partial answer to the traditional question about the length of the missing portion of the poem. I suggest that *Judith* should be seen as an almost complete fragment, agreeing with, among other people, Kevin Kiernan, whose work on the *Beowulf* manuscript forms the basis of this section.[3] In addition I shall discuss the most relevant problems presented by the manuscript, such as the oddities in its collation. Finally, I will address the theory that this manuscript is a collection of stories about monsters.[4]

The study of the cultural and socio-historic background of the poem begins in chapter two and extends to chapters three and five. The division into separate chapters reflects the different nature of the inquiries carried out in each. Chapters two and three examine the cultural and literary context of *Judith*, while the fifth, following my own reading of the poem, elucidates some of the socio-historical features of Anglo-Saxon England which bear particular relevance to *Judith*.

Chapter two looks at the influence of the Bible and patristic writings on *Judith*. The survey of patristic commentaries featuring Judith is preceded by a study of the biblical sources of the poem to which the Old English poem is compared. The Latin biblical versions of the *Liber Iudith* as well as the text of the Old English *Judith* are given in translations in the first appendix and are

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[3] Kevin S. Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1981).
[4] Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1962), p. 96.

organized synoptically for the benefit of the reader. The Old English poem is found to diverge in plot from the biblical sources and in the conception of the heroine from the patristic exegesis.

Chapter three is also concerned with the presentation of the heroine in *Judith*, but its focus is on examples of Old English literature rather than the Latin texts examined in the previous section. The overall emphasis is more stylistic, in that *Judith* is here compared with Old English works in prose and meter in order to understand it in its Anglo-Saxon poetic context. The poem *Exodus* is found to be the work which, in its conception, shares the most with *Judith*. However, even this poem shows some important differences from the Old English version of the story of the Bethulian heroine, mainly in its emphasis of allegorical details. On the other hand, popular Anglo-Saxon literary genres such as the Saint's Life and the sermon are shown to bear only marginal relevance to the compositional style of *Judith*, and the poems *Juliana* and *Elene*, traditionally associated with *Judith*, are shown to share little material beyond the sex of their respective main characters.

Together, chapters two and three help us understand the collection of cultural assumptions that tenth-century Anglo-Saxons would have brought to bear on their approach to *Judith*. Knowing what models for the poet's characterization of Judith were available to him is a necessary step in determining his degree of departure from them. In turn, this prompts the research of plausible reasons for the divergence from the established models. Similarly, by placing *Judith* within

the context of other Anglo-Saxon literary works, we may better understand the mind-set of the audience listening to the poem.

In chapter four I undertake an examination of the main characters, plot, structure, meter, syntax, and vocabulary of *Judith*. The poem is read with reference to its historical context. The inquiry in chapter four, while mainly textual, evolves from the discussion that preceded it, which informs and contextualizes the reading of the poem and the stylistic analysis. It is my belief that a firm understanding of the poem and its range of meanings for a tenth-century audience are the prerequisite for any study of the poem.

The analysis in chapter four suggests that the anonymous author of *Judith* was an artist well versed in the tools of his craft and aware of the literary tradition to which he belonged. In fact, his use of stylistic features is at times masterly and the introduction of traditional formulas shows his familiarity with Old English literature and his innovative adaptation of some of them. The structure of the poem, even as a fragment, reveals a sense of balance which is complementary to the opposition between good and evil embodied by the two central figures of the poem, Judith and Holofernes. The poet underscores that opposition in many ways throughout the poem, both stylistically and thematically, and the Anglo-Saxon ideal of leadership can be usefully adopted as a key to understanding the poet's approach to the text.

In chapter five, I proceed to give details of socio-historical events relevant to *Judith*. One of the findings of the previous chapter is the identification of Judith as a 'model for' and as a 'model of' Anglo-Saxon femininity and

leadership. Chapter five presents the socio-historical evidence to support this reading of the text by discussing the role of women in Anglo-Saxon society and by discussing the likelihood of identifying Æthelflæd, queen of the Mercians, as a potential patron to whom the poem was dedicated and/or by whom it was inspired. Moreover, this chapter briefly recounts the ongoing struggle of the English against the Viking invaders which a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon audience would likely see reflected in *Judith*'s battle between the Bethulians and the heathen Assyrians.

Two appendices close the thesis. The first one is provided in support of chapter two, as it gives a synoptic view of the Old English *Judith*, and the two versions of the *Liber Iudith* in the Old Latin and the Vulgate bibles. The second appendix acts as a coda to the thesis by providing the reader with a survey of later medieval and early Renaissance interpretations of the story of Judith. Particular attention is paid to the view of Judith as a deceitful temptress, responsible for the downfall of the immoderate Holofernes. This view of Judith, originating from the questionable morals intrinsic to her behavior in the biblical texts, is particularly interesting when compared with the characterization of the heroine in the Old English poem where Judith is a spotless, honorable, and courageous maiden to whom no guilt can be attributed.

Lastly, I would like to point out that all the translations in the thesis are my own unless otherwise noted.

= List of Abbreviations =

EETS - Early English Text Society

PL - Patrologia Latina

STS - Scottish Text Society

Specific to Chapter 2:

CCSL - Corpus Cristianorum Series Latina

CSEL - Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum

LXX - Septuagint Bible

OL - Old Latin Bible (Vetus Latina)

PL - Patrologia Latina

Vlg. - Vulgate Bible

= Introduction =

The body of criticism which has grown around *Judith* during the last century is large. The reason for the scholarly interest in the work is in part its artistic merit, in part the many questions posed by its fragmentary nature, and in part its prominent location in the Nowell Codex and proximity to *Beowulf*. Moreover, the nature of criticism on *Judith* has been varied, addressing most of the outstanding features of the poem. This chapter offers a survey of the more significant contributions to the study of *Judith* and serves to put in context my own critical reading of the poem that follows.

Most of the critical discussions on which contemporary scholarship is based did not flourish until after the second half of this century, but a few earlier works deserve to be mentioned, as they still inform much of the contemporary criticism on the poem. The relatively early works of Cook and Foster on *Judith* still regularly appear on the bibliographies of studies on the poem, and their impact on current scholarship has been crucial.[1] Cook's edition of the text first appeared in 1887, and was soon followed by a second edition in 1889[2] which, together with some of Foster's emendations,[3] remained the standard text of *Judith* for the first half of the century. The main input of both works was a detailed study of the stylistic and metrical features of the poem; however their discussions

[1] This is due to the fact that for a long time they were the only complete works on the subject, and that their scholarship is indeed solid.
[2] Albert Cook, *Judith; an Old English Fragment*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1889).
[3] Gregory T. Foster, *Judith; Studies in Metre, Language and Style* (Strassburg, 1892).

include contrasting views about the dating of the poem, and the artistic value of the fragment which seems to be more highly esteemed by Cook than by Foster.

It is not until 1952 that the edition of *Judith* by Timmer replaced Cook's as the standard text of the poem. Around the same time Dobbie published a joint edition of *Beowulf* and *Judith* in the *Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records* series; this work, while briefer and less in depth than Timmer's, arrives at many of the same conclusions.[4] The 1978 second edition of Timmer's *Judith*[5] is the latest available and it reflects the continued disagreement with Cook's approach to the poem and with some of Foster's conclusions.

Timmer's transcript of the text is more detailed than both Cook's and Dobbie's,[6] noting the emendations from the Junius 105 manuscript,[7] and signaling expanded abbreviations, and commenting on the emendations of damaged passages within the body of the transcript and footnotes. Moreover, basing his decision on the suggestions made by Pope in *The Rhythm of Beowulf*,[8] Timmer adopts a new line arrangement which differs from Cook's in ll. 1-2 where *gifena* is thought by Timmer to belong to l. 2a rather than 1b. This makes

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[4] Eliot V. K. Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith* (New York, 1953).
[5] B. J. Timmer, *Judith,* rev. ed., (Exeter, 1978). (1st ed., 1952).
[6] It must be noted that Dobbie remarks on most --though not all-- of the words and passages on which Timmer has something to say. Part of the transcription methodology adopted by Dobbie appears also in the body of his introductory chapter. In contrast with Timmer, Dobbie's transcription favors a more accessible text against one of greater scholarly usefulness. The same can be said of Cook's transcript which also notes a good number of abbreviations, emendations, etc., in the Appendix.
[7] This is the transcript of the poem made at the end of the 17th century, i.e., pre-Cotton fire, by Franciscus Junius possibly for the benefit of a pupil.
[8] John C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf* (New Haven, 1942), pp.100, 126 n.12 (as noted by Timmer and Dobbie).

l.2 a full hypermetric line, as opposed to having the hypermetric passage begin in 2b.

.... tweode
gifena in ðys ginnan grunde heo ðær ða gearwe funde
mundbyrd æt ðam mæran þeodne þa heo ahte mæste
þearfe

ll. 1b-3

This reading has also the effect of leaving *tweode* at the end of the line, in parallel with its appearance at the end of the poem, l. 345.

Timmer's other main divergence from Cook's line arrangement also concerns another hypermetrical line. In l. 287 Timmer places the *caesura* between *geðrungen* and *þe*, which Cook places at the beginning of l. 288a, and ends that line with *losian*; *somod*, which marked the end of Cook's l.288 becomes the beginning of Timmer's l.288 so that in the end Timmer's text is from this point onward a line shorter than Cook's. The result of Timmer's reading is shown here in comparison with Cook's,

Timmer:

her ys geswutelod ure sylfra forwyrd
toweard getacnod þæt þære tide ys
mid niðum neah geðrungen þe we sculon <nu> losian
somod æt sæcce frweorðan Her lið sweorde gehawen
beheafdod healdend ure

ll. 285-289a

Cook:

her ys geswutelod ure sylfra forwyrd
toweard getacnod þæt þære tide ys
<nu> mid niðum neah geðrungen
þe we <life> sculdon losian somod
æt sæcce forweorðan her lið sweorde geheawen
beheafdod healdend ure[9]

ll. 285-290a

By making l.287 a hypermetric line Timmer agrees with Kluge's proposed reading of the text,[10] limiting the editorial intervention to the insertion of *nu* before *losian* to provide the alliteration to the line.[11]

Timmer's work seems to emphasize manuscript authority more than any of his predecessors. A further example of this practice can be seen in the way he maintains l. 149, *of ðære ginnan byrig hyre togeanes gan*, rather than switching the manuscript's order of the half lines as Cook and the earliest editors had done in order to 'correct' the alliteration by linking *gan* and *ginnan*. Timmer justifies his decision by quoting other lines in which /g/ and /j/ alliterate.[12] By taking this position, however, Timmer consciously might have undermined his hypothesis

[9] 'Here is predicted our own perdition, / tokens are toward that near is the time/ full of afflictions, and now pressing forward, / when we shall lose our lives together, / sink in the strife: hewn with the sword here / lies headless your chief.' (Cook's translation). Timmer's passage omits 'life' with 'lose' and inserts 'now' in its place, yielding 'now we must lose / together perish in battle'.

[10] Friedrich Kluge, *Anglesächsisches Lesebuch* (Halle, 1888).

[11] Dobbie generally makes the same emendations to his text as those made by Timmer, but here he suggests, quite rightly that Klaeber's proposal of *nyde* as a substitute for *nu* is to be preferred. See Fr. Klaeber, "Notes on Old English Poems", *Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 12 (1913), 252-261.

[12] Timmer, *op. cit.*, note to l. 149.

about a tenth-century dating of the poem,[13] because, as Foster notes, alliteration between the two values of the consonant is common in earlier literature (e.g., *Elene*) and becomes less frequent. The tenth-century author of *The Battle of Maldon* seems for the most part to alliterate /g/ with /g/ and /j/ with /j/.[14]

Cook was the first to connect the poem with the Cynewulfian school to justify an 856 dating and the dedication of the poem to Alfred's stepmother, Æthelwulf's wife, Judith. His theory was dismantled a few years after publication by Foster who forwarded his own historical theory to support his claim that the poem dated between 915 and 918 and was composed in honor of Alfred's daughter, 'Mercia's Judith.'[15] Both Cook's and Foster's propositions about the date of composition and the identity of the female model are appealing but they are based primarily on conjectures and Timmer discredits both. He rejects Cook's theory on the grounds that the stylistic and metric features of the poem point to a much later date than the proposed 856; Foster's theory is quickly dismissed by the argument that "Pre-Conquest England was not given to hero worship," leaving "no justification for assuming that Judith stands for Æthelflæd." [16] Timmer's own conclusions about the dating of *Judith* are not that far from Foster's, favoring a date anchored around the first half of the tenth century, to correspond with the last Danish raids.

A final major point of disagreement between Cook and the later editors is the estimated length of the missing portion of the poem. Whereas most editors

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[13] *ibid.*, pp.6-8.
[14] Foster, *op. cit.*, pp.26-27.
[15] Foster, *op. cit.*, p.90.

follow the assumption that the section numbers which occur in *Judith* from X to XII are an indication that 3/4 of the poem are lost, Cook proposes that the poem is virtually complete as it stands, lacking only a few lines of background introductory material. His only evidence for the claim comes from the repetition of *tweode* at both extremes of the poem, ll. 1b, 345b, and the repetition of *þe heo ahte trumne geleafan / a to ðam ælmihtigan,* in ll. 6b-7a and 344b-345a.

Superseded for a while, Cook's theory has been re-evaluated by most critics, partially due to Woolf's strengthening of his theory with a study of both codicological and literary elements of *Judith.*[17] As Huppé suggests, "in his introduction, Cook presents a reasoned and convincing view of the art of the poem," when he argues for the relative integrity of the fragment.[18] Although Timmer's transcript is the most faithful to the manuscript and although he bases his emendations on more recent criticism than that which was available to the earlier editors, the studies of Foster and Cook are still important to the scholar, as is also Dobbie's edition which on many issues agrees with Timmer.

Timmer also discounts Foster's claim that Æthelflæd, queen of Mercia, might have been the inspiration for this version of the story of Judith. He ignores the fact that the practice of dedicating the story of Judith to homonymous ladies, while perhaps foreign to Anglo-Saxon England, was practiced by both Rabanus

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[16] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.7.
[17] R. E. Woolf, "The Lost Opening to the *Judith", Modern Language Review,* 50 (1955), 168-172.
[18] Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words; Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems Vainglory, The Wonder of Creation, The Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany, 1970), p. 136.

Maurus and Walfrid Strabo.[19] Moreover, in view of Timmer's objection that "the religious strength of the heroines of these poems [*Judith, Juliana, Elene*] is placed in the foreground [thus making it] very unlikely that a religious heroine like Judith would represent a secular queen, like Æthelflæd"[20] one must remember that the poet seems eager to associate the typical attributes of Anglo-Saxon noble femininity with Judith. It is not at all unlikely that by portraying his heroine as adorned with rings and bracelets, by making her a more chaste and less ambiguous embodiment of her biblical counterpart, and by giving her the rhetorical skills of a Wealhþeow, the poet aimed at celebrating a member of the Anglo-Saxon nobility, perhaps the wife or daughter of a patron.[21]

However, on the issue of the date of composition of *Judith* Timmer probably estimates rightly when he assumes the poem belongs to the first half of the tenth century. In addition to the metrical and linguistic studies which have been cited to support this point, we can observe that the poem's style both embodies the spirit of traditional Old English poems such as *Exodus*, *Andreas*, and *Elene*, while also adding to them, as the poet does in his premonitory use of the beasts of battle.[22] Yet, at times, the poet's use of vocabulary can be seen as mechanical in the attribution of typically Anglo-Saxon war-gear to Assyrian and Hebrew soldiers and the use of epithets such as *cumbolwiga* and *bencsittende* to

[19] See chapter two.
[20] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.7.
[21] See my own analysis of the poem in chapter four.
[22] See the following chapter for discussion of the poet's originality in the use of the formulæ of the beasts of battle.

refer to the troops.[23] However, both in originality and conventionality, the poet appears as a late author who is deeply versed in the tradition of his literature and is interested in integrating and reworking some of that tradition in his own work.

The revival of Cook's theory about the length of the poem gains some further credit with the recent study of the manuscript by Lucas.[24] The article questions the appropriateness of the term 'fragment' in relation to *Judith*. Lucas distinguishes between the codicological nature of the word 'fragment' and its literary counterpart. *Judith* is a fragment both because the poem is incomplete and because the part of the manuscript preceding the extant folios is now missing. While primarily concerning himself with the latter definition of 'fragment', Lucas admits that the question is "an essential prerequisite for the consideration of the literary problem, with which it is closely linked."[25]

Lucas determines that the quire containing *Judith*, quire 14, might belong to the beginning of the manuscript, preceded, in its turn, by three quires of 8 which contained both a small section of *Judith* as well as other works numbered seriatim I-IX which are now lost. This interpretation of the compilation of the *Beowulf* manuscript offers many advantages over previous theories, including Woolf's with which Lucas' shares much.[26] Given the extent of physical damage on the last page of *Beowulf*, there is no doubt it must have also been the last page

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[23] On this last point see Timmer, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14. I will show in chapter four that what may be seen as a mechanical use of traditional heroic vocabulary is in actuality one of the poet's means to shape the story of Judith into his vision of the meaning of the poem.
[24] Peter J. Lucas, "The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript", *Review of English Studies,* 41 (1990), 463-478.
[25] *ibid.*, p.465.
[26] Woolf, *op. cit.*.

in the manuscript at some time. The placing of quire 14 at the beginning, preceded by the three additional quires offers a better explanation for the section numberings than Woolf's assumption that they were copied *verbatim* from an exemplar numbered *seriatim*. According to Lucas, other missing poems occupying the lost quires would have accounted for the number I-IX. If, as Lucas proposes, scribe B had been responsible for the beginning quires as well as the end one, the share of the work between scribes A and B would become more equal, although B seems to be the one in charge of the work.

Lucas' theory is certainly indebted to Kiernan's study of *Judith* within his larger discussion of the *Beowulf* Manuscript.[27] In his discussion of the poem Kiernan reaches the conclusion that "almost certainly, *Judith* once was part of another codex entirely, and certainly it did not always follow *Beowulf*."[28] The hypothesized '*Judith* codex' could have belonged to a collection of Old Testament texts, similar to that of the Junius Manuscript, hence explaining the section numbering in the poem as *seriatim*. Kiernan accepts the handwriting of *Beowulf*'s scribe B as proof that the two poems came from the same scriptorium and that the handwriting is also the criterion which led a later collector to unite *Judith* with *Beowulf*. The reason ascribed by Kiernan for the removal of *Judith* from its original codex is the undocumentable theory that an early collector (i.e., pre-Nowell) would have removed this apocryphal text from its context because of Reformation beliefs. The existence of an original '*Judith* codex' from which the fragment was extracted leads Kiernan to the conclusion that the poem is virtually

complete as it stands because there would be no reason why the other sections --if they existed at all-- should not have been taken together with the ones we have.

The counter argument might be that the other sections could have been lost after the removal of the complete *Judith* from its original codex took place. But even then, Lucas has quickly dismissed the very existence of such a codex, based on Kiernan's discovery that *Judith* differs from all the other texts of the *Beowulf* manuscript because the average length between the extreme line rulings is 16-16.5 cm compared to the 17.5 average in the rest of the manuscript. As Lucas points out, it is a difference hardly noticeable to the naked eye and it can be added that scribe B's work was generally ruled on a smaller scale than scribe A's so that while most of scribe A's work took 17.5 cm to rule 20 lines, scribe B, within *Beowulf*, managed 21 lines in the same average space. It is therefore not surprising that the 20 lines which make up one face of a *Judith* folio should occupy only an average of 16.5 cm. Because *Judith* might have been copied by scribe B before he got to work on the ending of *Beowulf*, he might have agreed with his colleague on a 20-line ruled page which later, when working on *Beowulf*, he altered to 21 lines when he sought to be consistent with his predecessor's designation of a 17.5 cm long text area.

Though Lucas and, at least in part, Kiernan have mounted the most recent and credible arguments regarding the codicological aspects of *Judith*, the codicological approach to the text had been taken in part by Woolf in an effort to

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[27] Kevin S. Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick, 1981).
[28] *ibid.*, p.150.

determine the extent of the fragmentary nature of the poem.[29] At first, Woolf addresses the issue of the sectional numbers which divide the fragment in a sequence from IX to XII. The use of the section markers had allowed Timmer, in his edition of the poem, to estimate the length of the original composition at 1,344 lines by a simple multiplication of the average length of the remaining sections by the number of the missing sections (i.e., eight). Judging the section numbers to be the work of the scribe, and not necessarily the markings of the author, Woolf uses the first three Junius Manuscript poems to exemplify works which had been numbered *seriatim* by the scribe in the same way *Judith* might have been numbered if preceded by another poem(s) divided in seven sections.

To prove the likelihood of her hypothesis, Woolf resorts to a philological approach to the matter, and by examining the differences between the events common to both source text and the poem she arrives at the conclusion that the poet had left out much from his source in order to achieve an increased intensity. The lack of key figures present in the Apocrypha is taken by Woolf to be an indication that the poet had never introduced these characters to begin with. Achior, a key character of the story who in the sources is active both in sections prior to the ones reflected in the Old English as well as in the latter parts of the tale, is completely absent from the poem. Woolf argues that in doing this "the poet gains a sense of immediacy in the action and of dramatic compactness in the whole." And she concludes that "it is this intensity and compactness which suggest very strongly that, apart from some lines relating a few details concerning

[29] Woolf, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-170.

Judith's identity and her motive for visiting the camp of Holofernes, none of the poem is missing."[30]

Beside being a sensible study[31] giving weight to Cook's statement that the echoing sections at the beginning and end of the fragment are an indication of the poem's wholeness,[32] Woolf's study shares in part the merit of making the poem accepted as a self-contained work of art. This influence is reflected in the many works of criticism that have followed, and has lead scholars to reveal complex poetic techniques or sophisticated use of themes as well as evidence of a cohesive internal structure.

Twenty years after Woolf, Chamberlain refuted her arguments in favor of a longer *Judith* by once again re-examining the much debated section numbers which intersperse the fragment.[33] As for Woolf's philological reasoning defending her view of a short *Judith,* Chamberlain counters that the many omitted characters of the biblical story were not necessary to an author interested in composing a largely political poem, which he believes the fragment to be.[34] Chamberlain's argument is particularly weak in this section as he struggles to account for the poet's omission of Achior by claiming that his role in the story is "highly dramatic and interesting, but essentially digressive from the main plot and, therefore, expendable."[35] While this justification for the omission is valid in

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[30] *ibid.*, p.171.
[31] Especially when taken in connection with Lucas' emendations.
[32] Albert Cook, *Judith* (Boston, 1904), p. 21, note to line 1. 1b.
[33] Woolf, *op. cit.*, p.171.
[34] David Chamberlain, "*Judith:* a Fragmentary and Political Poem", in Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation; for John C. Galliard* (London, 1975), pp. 135-159.
[35] *ibid.*, p.143

the context of a shorter *Judith* in which the emphasis is laid on the two key characters, it loses validity when it is applied, as is the case here, to a longer poem which would have included other plot features of the biblical sources. Chamberlain lists eight crucial elements of the story which he feels would have been developed in the missing portion of *Judith*;[36] of these eight only half can be considered pertinent to a plot focusing on Judith and Holofernes: the siege of Bethulia (ch. 7), the decision to submit in five days (ch. 7), Judith's proposal to the elders (ch. 8), and Judith's journey to Holofernes causing Holofernes' infatuation with her (ch. 11). All other details are less crucial to the story than the character of Achior who nonetheless is easily dispensed with by the poet. Chamberlain's suggestion that the poet was creating a long and highly selective poem seems far fetched when, by his own reasoning, three chapters of the original story would have had to be stretched to fill 800 and more lines of poetry, especially if we consider that the extant 349 lines of *Judith* represent roughly five chapters of the biblical text.

Chamberlain's other evidence arguing for a long missing fragment is however very persuasive. Even Lucas' recent implementation of Woolf's theory fails to address the more troubling issues raised by Chamberlain against Woolf's study. Once again in question are the section numbers that divide the fragment. Woolf had resorted to the example of the Junius manuscript to argue that *Judith* might have been numbered *seriatim* like the poems in that manuscript, and that section IX might have actually been the beginning of the poem, not necessarily

[36] *ibid.*, p.145.

section I. However, Chamberlain has persuasively argued that the Junius manuscript is a special case amongst Old English manuscripts in that it contains exclusively poetry, and that it appears to have been extensively planned. The *Beowulf* manuscript, on the other hand, is more representative of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, mixing prose and poetic works and apparently having required less extensive planning than Junius. Therefore, according to Chamberlain, comparing *Judith* to the poems in Junius is misleading, and we should rather look at the religious heroic poems for clues to determine the length of *Judith*. By doing so, it appears that a short *Judith* of four sections (IX-XII), roughly 450 lines, would not conform to the average length of similar religious poems which Chamberlain calculates to be 1100 lines.

Chamberlain's argument has not and cannot be refuted definitively unless new evidence, perhaps another copy of the poem, or the missing fragment itself, is discovered. His argument is more sensible than Woolf's and Lucas' on the codicological aspect of the matter. However it is by no means the definitive counter to the theories of all those who believe *Judith* to be almost complete as it stands. If this codicological approach was the only means to gauge the length of the poem, Chamberlain's argument would prove the most convincing. However, his literary approach to the problem fails to convince: if Achior were omitted because his story did not pertain to the main plot, how can Chamberlain justify the inclusion of 800 lines of which at least half would be about non-central themes?

Perhaps the greatest merit of Chamberlain's study is its effort to provide his theory on the length of the poem with a corollary discussion of the reasons why the poet had decided to adapt his source materials to compose what Chamberlain calls a "long and selective *Judith*."[37] According to his theory, the various omissions of key characters as well as the theorized presence of episodes from the earlier section of the sources are both indications of the poet's intention of imbuing the text with a political message rather than with traditional patristic allegories. For Chamberlain the fact that the Assyrians are called 'old foes' (*ealdhettende*, l. 320b), or 'old enemies' (*ealdfeondum*, l. 315)

> would suggest that the original *Judith* was a longer poem that showed the origin and the duration of the strife with Holofernes, and they would simultaneously suggest the English wars against the Danes. Both of these effects would tend to diminish further the prominence of an allegorical meaning.[38]

Earlier in the paper Chamberlain also states:

> the omission of Achior, like the omission of Joachim, is again another instance of deliberate refusal by the poet to construct or exploit the more obvious allegorical possibilities suggested by his scriptural source.[39]

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[37] *ibid.*, p.152.
[38] *ibid.*, p.147.
[39] *ibid.*, p.144.

These arguments acquire even more strength if we agree with Chamberlain's extremely late dating of the poem around the last decade of the tenth century;[40] this would place the poem in a period in which monasticism had a strong political and nationalist role, making it likely for "a poetic monk or clerk to inspire his country with a long, selective, heroic religious poem whose plot of foreign invasion echoed his country's situation."[41]

One does not have to accept the whole of Chamberlain's theory to appreciate the logic of his argument in favor of a mainly political *Judith* in which the religious elements are largely literal. Nonetheless, other critics have seen the poem as being based on the exegetical works of the church fathers. Doubleday and Berkhout's essay on the significance of the fly-net detail is representative of the allegorical reading of the poem common in the '70s.[42] While Berkhout and Doubleday admit that there is no evidence that the poet was familiar with the Rabanus' commentary on the *Liber Iudith*, they feel that both this work and the sections on Judith in the later *Glossa Ordinaria* of Strabo reflect an approach to the text similar to the poet's.[43]

Through a study of the vocabulary and images used by the poet, Berkhout and Doubleday argue that the poet was trying to portray Holofernes as, "if not 'diabolus' himself, one of his ministers. His foulness and the poet's use of

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[40] As Chamberlain himself admits, this late dating would be unusually close to the date of the manuscript on which *Judith* appears. This dating, meant to coincide with the monastic Revival of the tenth century, is not absolutely crucial, as acute political awareness in members of the clergy was guaranteed throughout the Middle Ages by the common adoption of religious vows by members of the aristocracy.

[41] *ibid.*, p.159.

[42] Carl Berkhout and James F. Doubleday, "The Net in *Judith*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 74 (1973), 630-634.

fleohnet suggest Beelzebub, Lord of the Flies."[44] This reading is justified in their eyes by the fact that in patristic commentaries, flies always had a negative role, implying the ideas of foulness, *spurcitia*, which also appears in connection with Holofernes. Moreover, the fact that Holofernes' tent is repeatedly called *træf* reflects the poet's view of him as a demon since the word is often connected with heathen temples which for the medieval mind were synonymous with demonic residences.

While I disagree with Chamberlain's discounting of any possible allegory in the poem, the highly allegorical reading proposed by the two critics above is excessive. Holofernes is called *hæðen* [heathen] twice during the decapitation scene and the flynet can be seen as the attribute of an eastern commander *cum* deity figure. Apparently, the evil and sinful attributes which the biblical sources assign to Nabuchodonosor are here conflated in the figure of Holofernes. A medieval mind could have indeed construed such a character to be a demon, but there is no evidence the poet intended to elaborate his subject much more than that. Linking the character of Holofernes with the allegorical figure of Beelzebub would also require a parallel reading of Judith as the patristically sanctioned figure of *Ecclesia*, but, as Chamberlain has pointed out, too many opportunities to complement this particular type of reading have been left out intentionally by the poet, thus making it unlikely that the author's primary goal was to create an elaborate allegory of the biblical text.

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[43] *ibid.*, p.632.
[44] *ibid.*, p.634.

Rejection of the allegorical approach in favor of the political reading has been a hallmark of feminist criticism of the poem, because the latter reading affords Judith's femininity a more active role in the poem. In an allegorical reading Judith's femininity is only relevant as it sanctions the link with the traditionally feminine figure of *Ecclesia*. On the other hand, the Judith envisioned by Hennessey Olsen in her article about political purpose in the poem is a figure whose sexuality is crucial to the meaning of the poem.[45] Olsen believes that, as opposed to the Latin sources, the Old English Judith is in great danger of being raped by Holofernes. Olsen explains that "the Old English Judith is a woman realistically worried about what might happen to her. [... She] is concerned to protect herself both body and soul from the diabolical pagan."[46]

In the decapitation scene, Olsen believes that there is a reversal in the roles of Holofernes and Judith, so that Judith almost becomes the rapist Holofernes meant to be when he proposed to defile 'the bright lady', ll. 58b-59a. This reversal can be achieved if the masculine and feminine pronouns in the passage are switched so that the action would read as the description of the rape of a woman by a man. Moreover, Olsen suggests that *gewealdan* in *swa heo ðæs unlæden eaðost mihte / wel gewealdan* [As best as she might wield the wicked one], ll. 102a-103b, is akin in meaning to the Middle English *wield* which could mean to possess a woman, hence reinforcing the suggestion of a rape description.

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[45] Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, "Inversion and Political Purpose in the Old English *Judith*", *English Studies,* 63 (1982), 289-293.
[46] *ibid.,* pp.290-291.

Because of the historical circumstances surrounding the poem, namely that Anglo-Saxon women were the object of gang rape at the hands of the Danes, Olsen suggests that "the scene of the decapitation of Holofernes shows that the poem is intended to galvanize the men into action by shaming those noblemen in the audience who have watched the abuse of their wives, daughters, and kinswomen."[47] The problem with this reasoning is that it moves too far beyond Chamberlain's proposed reading of a mainly political poem. The text proposed by Hennessey Olsen is no more a poem, a work of art, but a sermon, or better a political speech; however, rather than being spoken by a powerful lord to his followers, it would have been spoken by a *scop* who would not have been very wise openly to shame "those noblemen in the audience who have watched the abuse of their wives." Even if the author of *Judith* had been among the higher members of the clergy, and therefore in a position to advance such accusations in relative safety, the very tone of the work, the depth of emotions and the strength of martial descriptions, should be a reminder that first and foremost *Judith* is a poem meant for the entertainment of people and not their chastisement.[48]

An interesting, if somewhat artificial attempt to unite the political and allegorical readings of the poem has been made by Ian Pringle around the same

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[47] *ibid.*, p.193.

[48] A less extreme look at gender reversal in the decapitation scenes of *Judith* and *Beowulf* can be found in Jane Chance's *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature*, pp. 104-105. Chance notes that there are many similarities between the two scenes but that "sexual role behavior of *Beowulf* occurs in reverse in *Judith*." Holofernes is "slightly effete ... and impotent" while Grendel's mother is "aggressive and sword-greedy." Chance believes that the perversion of the established behavior prescribed by the perceived sexual roles is meant to indicate the perversion of their spiritual state as well as the threat that these two 'monsters' pose to society.

time as the Chamberlain essay.[49] Pringle starts his article with a comparison between Ælfric's paraphrase of the *Liber Iudith* and the poem. He believes that the audience of the poem and that of the homily lived within a century of each other and shared similar ideas, attitudes and values. Therefore, just as the audience of the homily saw two messages embodied in the story of Judith, one of chastity triumphant and one of resistance against heathen invaders, the poet distinguished these two themes and incorporated them in his work.

As we will see with Doubleday's article on the structure of *Judith*, the fragment, whether part of a longer work or not, has a unity of its own that suggests many echoes and symmetrical structures to its audience.[50] These symmetries suggest to Pringle a reading of the poem in which he separates conveniently the political and allegorical meaning of the text so that the first section of the poem, up to section XI, incorporates the allegorical struggle of Judith/Chastity against Holofernes/Demon, and the second section incorporates the political reading by which the victorious Bethulians are meant to encourage the Anglo-Saxon audience to oppose the armies of the invading Danes. Together, these two messages would have reminded the English that military success would be achieved only if accompanied by a moral cleansing and religious reformation.

More recently, Ann Astell has reached some of the same conclusions as Pringle about the militaristic program suggested by the text being closely tied to

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[49] Ian Pringle, "*Judith:* the Homily and the Poem", *Traditio,* 31 (1975), 83-97.
[50] See James F. Doubleday, "The Principle of Contrast in *Judith*", discussed further on.

the message of spiritual reform.[51] However, Astell improves on Pringle's argument in that she does not see the two messages as separate units to be reassembled at the end; she shows that throughout the poem, the author weaves into the plot a literal, religious message (i.e. a good woman triumphing over evil as well as evil men) with shades of allegory plainly expressed, such as is the case with Holofernes' appelative of *se deofulcunda*, l. 61b. In addition to this there still exists the theme of military struggle. According to Astell, the audience is left with an open text in which "the poet aims at his audience's application, not discovery of truth."[52] I do not believe that the primary function of the text is educational. However, I agree that the text shaped by the poet allows multiple, and often simultaneous, interpretations.

Astell's reading has the advantage of incorporating various approaches to the text and the distinction of doing so without making the structure of the poem sound too contrived and artificial, as is the danger with Pringle's interpretation. A basis for Pringle's two-part division of the poem might be found in Doubleday's work which focuses on the importance which oppositions, parallels, and balance play in the poem.[53] Doubleday divides the poem into the two major parts later adopted by Pringle, one focusing on Judith's triumph over Holofernes, and the other on the Jews' triumph over the Assyrians. He claims that,

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[51] Ann W. Astell, "Holofernes' Head: *Tacen* and Teaching in the Old English *Judith*", *Anglo-Saxon England,* 18 (1989), 132.
[52] *ibid.*, p.121.
[53] James F. Doubleday, "The Principle of Contrast in *Judith*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 72 (1971), 436-441.

> To some extent, of course, this dichotomy is present in the original; but the poet deliberately intensifies it. [...] The poet is intent on making the audience feel the presence of two worlds, two realms of being, simultaneously: the temporal and historical present, in which the action is going on, and the eternal and the cosmic present, in which the result has already been decreed from the foundation of the world. [54]

The division is further complicated by the fact that Doubleday sees a symmetrical construction that matches the two sections, passage by passage, working from the outside in, "until two contrasting passages, Judith's triumph in the city and her speech urging her people to battle, are juxtaposed at the center of the poem."[55] Unfortunately, the intricate table which is used to demonstrate the proposed symmetrical construction fails to convince. It is undoubtedly appealing to be able to fit the poem neatly into such a cohesive and coherent structure, but there is no reason why the author would have gone to great pains to structure his poem on the underlying principle of contrast, so that the importance of the contrasts and parallels within the text could be emphasized. Parallel sections do exist in the poem on both a broad and a specific level, but mechanically to match passage for passage in the two major sections requires some forcing of the poem's metaphors.

For instance, the passage in which Judith is brought to Holofernes' tent, ll. 34b-57a, is contrasted by Doubleday with the passage in ll. 289b-313a, which narrates the defeat and flight of the Assyrians, because one episode highlights the power of Holofernes over Judith, while the other is a demonstration of the Jews'

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[54] *ibid.*, pp.437-438.

power over the Assyrians. This reading of the two passages is not invalid but it appears that ll. 34b-57a are already an ironic condemnation of the Assyrians' weakness, because they are shown to march with great mock-heroic pomp only to escort a disarmed female.[56] Furthermore, the demonstration of the Jews' power comes across more intensely by contrasting the unnecessary pomp of Holofernes' soldiers escorting Judith with the Jews' heroic marching on the Assyrians' camp, ll. 199-220a.

Finally, Doubleday makes no connection between the episode in which the head of Holofernes is shown to the Bethulians and the one in which the decapitated body is found by the Assyrians. This parallel has been discussed by other critics; Astell, for instance, sees Holofernes' head as a token with multiple meanings on both a spiritual and literal level: it typifies *Ecclesia* triumphing over Satan, and it is a symbol of victory for the Bethulians just as it is one of defeat for the Assyrians.[57] Recognizing the importance of the contrast created in these two passages would throw Doubleday's exact symmetry off-balance, but ignoring it for the sake of a pleasing structural theory would impede, in Greenfield's words, the meaning flowing out of the poem.[58] Doubleday takes his argument too far, to the point where it is not the text informing the analysis of it but *vice versa*; still, many of the points raised in his study are valid and the use of the principle of contrast as a key to the text is a common thread in later criticism.

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[55] *ibid.*, p.439.
[56] See my reading of the passage in chapter four.
[57] Astell, *op. cit.*, p.132.
[58] Stanley B. Greenfield, *The interpretation of Old English Poems* (London, 1972), p.98.

Elizabeth Tyler's recent study on *Judith* is based on the principle of the opposition between Judith and Holofernes noted by Doubleday.[59] While wisely avoiding the forced readings of her predecessors, she manages to strengthen the arguments of those who have identified contrast as the main technique shaping the various aspects of the poem. Tyler looks at keywords with heroic connotations, such as *steppan* and *hæleð*, which the poet uses with opposite effect in connection with Judith and the Bethulians on one side and Holofernes and the Assyrians on the other. For instance, when the Assyrian soldiers escort Judith to Holofernes' tent their action is described by the verb *steppan*, l. 39b, as if they were heroically marching as escorts to some fierce enemy now subdued, and not an unarmed maiden. In contrast, when the poet uses the same verb in connection with the Bethulians, l. 227a, it is to describe their heroic descent upon the camp of their enemy.

Tyler's study suggests the idea of a poet fully in control of the principle of juxtaposition "which takes place not just within the space of a few lines but back and forth throughout the poem, [and] weaves the poem tightly together, creating cohesion."[60] It is not, however, a poet obsessed with symmetries or balanced political and allegorical messages. The unity of the work derives not from some frame imposed on the text but from a complex network of key Anglo-Saxon referents which can be paired at will for contrast or similarity by the audience.

The poet's reliance on Anglo-Saxon themes for the conveying of his meaning is also the focus of an article by Hugh Magennis in which the poet's

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[59] Elizabeth M. Tyler, "Style and Meaning in *Judith*", *Notes and Queries,* 39 (1992), 16-18.

description of Holofernes' feast is compared to the biblical sources with the aim of revealing complexities of the poet's use of Anglo-Saxon tradition.[61] Once again, it is the Germanic nature of the banqueting scene which acts as a trigger for the ironic reversal of values which the poem's audience would not have failed to notice. Magennis remarks how the poet reworks the biblical description of the banquet in the sources into something quite different in the poem. Not only is Judith removed from the celebration, but the debauchery which takes place in Holofernes' tent is described with the terminology often associated with descriptions of Anglo-Saxon banqueting scenes.

This episode becomes a microcosm of the technique elsewhere applied by the poet by means of which heroic attributes degenerate into their unheroic counterparts when applied to the Assyrians or their leader.[62] The poet does not condemn the feast on the principle that drinking is bad, as the church fathers had suggested in connection with the passage;[63] rather, social drinking, within the controlled environment of the Anglo-Saxon mead hall, is an essential aspect of the relationship between a lord and his thanes, thus provoking the irony of a banquet where the relationship between lord and thanes completely falls apart instead of being strengthened.

Perhaps the most sustained study of the contrasting dichotomy of Judith and Holofernes is Huppé's chapter on the poem in which he goes through the

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[60] *ibid.*, p.18.
[61] Hugh Magennis, "Adaptation of Biblical Detail in the Old English *Judith*: The Feast Scene", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 84 (1983), 331-337.
[62] See Tyler, *op. cit.*.
[63] See Ambrose of Milan in chapter two for an example of the condemnation of drinking.

work line by line to mark those passages in which patristic commentaries have affected the poet's version of the story and to bring into focus the many instances in which the allegorical meaning is evoked through contrast of the 'good' and the 'bad' side.[64] Huppé's study of the text, which is distinguished by a distinctly Augustinian approach, is very extensive and detailed so that *Judith* appears to be an extremely complex poem whose basic meaning is as fundamental as the archetypal contrast between good and evil.

The extent of the poet's greatness in developing his theme is fully revealed in Huppé's study. Beyond the exploration of the reasons for the use of hypermetric lines, his chapter shows how the rhythm, alliteration, and the end-rhyme of the poetry help to convey to the audience the idea of Holofernes' drunkenness, and he suggests that the similarly heavy rhyming pattern used in the description of the general's soul descent in to Hell is meant to be a 'contrastive echo' to his previous gluttony.[65] Huppé brings to the study of the poem a yet unmatched attention to details, revealing some the subtler ways through which contrasts previously seen only in the major themes of the poem are now revealed almost as subliminal clues to the audience about the poem's message.

Unfortunately, this commendable devotion to attributing significance to every detail of the poem can be criticized, as it has been done quite convincingly by Greenfield;[66] Huppé forces the overall interpretation of the poem in ways which seem to go against what the text itself is suggesting. Greenfield has rightly

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[64] Huppé, *op. cit.*.
[65] *ibid.*, p.160.
[66] Greenfield, *Interpretation,* pp.96-100.

accused Huppé of falsifying his facts for the sake of a cohesive overall argument. Moreover, the insistence on a patristic backing for every position taken by the poet about his subject seems contrived when we consider that most patristic commentaries actually focused their attention on details other than those the poet decided to expand upon. Still, the work has a large share of convincing conclusions and deserves recognition for bringing attention to the complexity of the poet's skill.

Alain Renoir is another critic who has labored to highlight the creative imagination exercised by the poet on his theme.[67] He centers his discussion around the battle episode as "clear instances of the poet's ability to use with the utmost effectiveness the freedom of space and time which his medium affords him."[68] His approach to the poem is based on the comparative analysis of the narrative style of the poet with modern cinematographic techniques. The slightly unorthodox method used by Renoir is effective in establishing the greatness of the Old English poet's skill in pacing the action and cutting back and forward between salient points in the narrative, thus managing to engage effectively the audience's attention.

The battle motif has captured the attention also of Donald Fry who examines a sophisticated version of the 'hero on the beach' theme discussed by Crowne.[69] The basic elements of this theme are, in Crowne's words, "(1) a hero

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[67] Alain Renoir, "*Judith* and the Limits of Poetry", *English Studies,* 43 (1962), 145-155.
[68] *ibid.,* p.147.
[69] David Crowne, "The Hero on the Beach: an Example of Composition by Theme in Anglo-Saxon Poetry", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 61 (1960), 362-372. Cited in Donald K. Fry, "The Heroine on the Beach in *Judith*" (see below).

on the beach (2) with his retainers (3) in the presence of a flashing light (4) as a journey is completed (or begun). The time of the action is usually dawn; however, the temporal reference is sometimes omitted."[70] Fry argues that the author of *Judith* had a firm grip of the motifs and formulae of his poetic tradition and that he skillfully adapted the elements of the 'hero on the beach' motif to fit *Judith* and to cast the heroine in the role already played by Beowulf, Moses, and Guthlac.[71] According to Fry, the portrayal of Judith outside the walls of Bethulia matches the criteria by which this particular *topos* is identified. The time of the day is daybreak, the required beacon of light is provided by the sun and the shining armor, the retainers are represented by the maid, the soldiers and the people of Bethulia, and the city gate stands for the beach, the point of arrival and departure.

The oral-formulaic study made by Fry implies a great flexibility on the part of the poet who makes the metaphorical leap necessary for developing the 'hero on the beach' theme, not around a beach setting or river bank but around the Bethulian city gates. The validity of this reading of the passage rests in part on whether we accept that this type of connection was commonplace in Old English poetry; if patristic exegesis is any indication of the associative capabilities of the medieval mind, there should be little doubt that the poet would indeed have been able to see the city gates as a metaphor for the beach. A further objection to Fry's theory, less easily disputable, is that some of the elements that

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[70] *ibid.*, p. 368.

[71] Donald K. Fry, "The Heroine on the Beach in *Judith*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 68 (1967), 168-184.

he sees fitting the pattern of the theme make a very marginal appearance in the text and rather than encouraging a thematic reading, they merely have the theme imposed on them by the critic. Perhaps it is also worthwhile asking why the poet, usually interested in contrasting Judith and Holofernes, did not take the opportunity to create a parallel situation with Holofernes' death with elements similar to the following: daybreak, death or the bed as beach, a torch, retainers outside the tent, etc..

The poet's great skill and creativity has often been established by a comparison with Ælfric's homily on Judith.[72] However, the most important contribution of the homily to *Judith* scholarship has been focused on the two exegetical passages which have been associated with it and which have informed the whole earlier discussion about the allegorical and/or political reading of the text. The first passage is the exegetical note, addressed apparently to a community of nuns, or cloistered pious women as Mary Clayton suggests,[73] which emphasizes the value of Chastity; the second, a letter to Sigeweard, explains how the story of Judith should be seen as an example to take up arms against the invading Danes.

Magennis, in a second work on *Judith*, examines not only Ælfric's paraphrase of the *Liber Iudith*, but also Aldhelm's writings on Judith in the *De Virginitate* in order to establish an idea of what might have been the common

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[72] Cook, *op. cit.*, pp.lxxii-lxxiii.
[73] Mary Clayton, "Ælfric's *Judith*: Manipulative or Manipulated?", *Anglo-Saxon England,* 23 (1994), 215-227.

reception of the story of Judith for a ninth/tenth-century audience.[74] He arrives at the unsurprising conclusion that "the differing response to the biblical material, both between Ælfric and the *Judith* poet and within Ælfric's own writing, reveals a sense of the variety of possible interpretations and uses of the biblical text in the Anglo-Saxon world."[75]

The use of Ælfric's interpretations of the story in connection with theories about *Judith* is encouraged by Clayton's recent suggestion that by means of his two interpretations of the story, Ælfric was trying to pin down a text in which he had found it hard to reconcile the literal heroine with the typological figure prescribed by the Church Fathers.[76] According to Clayton, "instead of reflecting the narrative, [Ælfric's explanations] reflect a desire to make safe that text, to contain and diffuse it."[77] It is therefore likely that while not directly pertinent to the homily, Ælfric's comments reflected the two main contemporary approaches to the story of Judith.

Besides Ælfric's homily, other analogous texts have informed the way we look at the Old English poem. Rapetti's comparison of *Judith* with the Middle High German *Die ältere Judith* and the passage on the Old Testament heroine in the *Middle English Metrical Paraphrases of the Old Testament* helps to place our poem within the history of an evolving myth which extends from antiquity to the

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[74] Hugh Magennis, "Contrasting Narrative Emphases in the Old English Poem *Judith* and Ælfric's Paraphrase of the Book of Judith", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 96 (1995), 61-65.
[75] *ibid.*, p.65.
[76] Mary Clayton, *op. cit.*.
[77] *ibid.*, p.225.

present day.[78] The most extensive study of the appearance of the figure of Judith in literature might be Purdie's *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* in which the author traces the appearance of Judith from the earliest ninth-century manuscript to the turn of the century plays and poems.[79] However, because Rapetti's article focuses specifically on two works chronologically related to *Judith*, it shows a clearer picture of the Old English poet's specific treatment of his subject. While aiming to show a progression in the representation of Judith from being the instrument of Holofernes' downfall to being the tempting cause of it, Rapetti agrees with the critics who have remarked on the efforts of the *Judith* poet to clear his heroine from any *femme fatale* connotations.[80]

Recently parallels have also been drawn between *Judith* and *Beowulf* by Marie France Godfroy who remarks on the similarities of the decapitation scenes which are central to both poems.[81] She argues that the binding of the two works together was dictated by the similarities in 'head imagery', which would reflect the fascination by the clergy with the idea of heads and possibly headship. Godfroy digs deep for sources of the imagery of the head, severed or not, in Scandinavian literature. *Judith* is shown to mix the creation myths of earlier Scandinavian literature within the context of the Christian contemporary intellectual framework of the poem. The comparison with the emergence of the

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[78] Alessandra Rapetti, "Three Images of Judith", *Etudes des Lettres,* 2-3 (1987), 155-165.
[79] Edna Purdie, *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* (Paris, 1927).
[80] See Cook, *Judith,* 2nd ed., p.xxxviii; or Magennis, "Adaptation of Biblical Detail." 333-334.
[81] Marie France Godfroy, "*Beowulf* and *Judith*: Thematizing Decapitation in Old English Poetry", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* 35 (1993), 1-43.

same tradition in *Beowulf* reveals similarities between the two poems. These similarities are also reflected in the actual way the two episodes are structured; in both *Judith* and *Beowulf* the decapitation scene is told twice, once through the narrator's voice and once through the hero's. And similarities are also evident in the actual method of decapitation: the hesitation and knowledge of potential doom and the revealed sword to complete the deed are features common to both works, as I will discuss further on.

Godfroy gives us a *Judith* of increased complexity, revealing elements of its Anglo-Saxon nature hitherto unexplored. The Anglo-Saxon heritage of the poem has never been fully analyzed apart from comparisons between *Judith* and selected Old English poems, mainly *Juliana* and *Elene.* In the context of the present discussion, Godfroy's research supports those critics who strive to show how the poet played down allegorical readings of the poem in favor of a political interpretation. According to Godfroy, Judith's involvement in the decapitation scene gives the Old English poet the opportunity to draw on a long Germanic tradition of head deployment in order to endow her with the means for heroic leadership of her people.

The showing of the head to the Bethulians, an event in which Judith is shown to be a guide to her countrymen the same way as *Ecclesia* is a guide to her flock, is now removed from the Christian background which some critics have used to interpret it,[82] and is positioned against the Germanic tradition of the hero/heroine describing his/her actions to the followers. Godfroy's argument by

no means invalidates previous interpretations of Judith's character specifically, or the passage in general; it, however, helps to redress the balance of the ongoing dispute between those critics who see in the poem a clear religious allegory and those who notice a political message in the poet's characterization of Judith and adaptation of his sources.

Patricia Belanoff is one of the critics who have tried to reconcile the two points of view. In a recent study of the character of Judith, Belanoff examines the language and the events by means of which the poet blends the secular and the saintly traits of Judith's character.[83] Once again the link between the decapitation scene in *Judith* and that in *Beowulf* is established, but this time the focus is on the differences between the scenes. Belanoff finds that in *Judith* the decapitation of the 'evil antagonist' has a stronger element of spiritual strife as opposed to the "immediate physical word" of *Beowulf.* Moreover, she argues that the struggle between Judith and Holofernes takes place on a level between that of the heroic warrior and that of the saintly maid, as opposed to Beowulf's more clearly heroic actions. Belanoff finds that

> there is a tension in the poem between the saintly designations for Judith, which never actually grant her access to sacred power, and the absence of warlike designations, despite her use of violent means to accomplish her aims.[84]

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[82] See Astell, "Holofernes' Head", *op. cit.*. She claims that the passage is meant to be read on both a literal and a (Christian) allegorical one.
[83] Patricia A. Belanoff, "Judith: Sacred and Secular Heroine", *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period; Studies in Honour of Jess B. Bessinger Jr.* (Kalamazoo, 1993).
[84] *ibid.*, pp.256-257.

Belanoff claims that the poet is deflecting Judith's femaleness while avoiding turning her into a male hero. This appears to justify why on the one hand Judith does not lead the Bethulians to war but on the other she receives the spoils normally due to a great leader, and, in a final twist, she does not redistribute her treasure to her comitatus as it would be expected.[85]

The poet's choice of the terms *ides* and *mægð* is used by Belanoff further to explore her theory of the ambiguity of Judith's character. Belanoff raises the interesting point that "linguistic evidence suggests that a woman cannot be an *ides* and a *mægð* at the same time, though she may be either within given situations."[86]And then goes on to note that *Juliana* and *Elene*, the two heroines most often compared with Judith, are called by Cynewulf *mægð* and *ides* respectively. Thus, Belanoff suggests that the use of the epithets of Judith indicates how she combines the secular side of Queen Elene with the spiritual side of the virgin Juliana.

As an interesting postscript to her theory Belanoff asks whether the poet was fully in control of the shaping of Judith's character or if he was a 'victim' of circumstances by which

> the importation of Christian and Biblical heroes and heroines into the vernacular [Anglo-Saxon culture] entailed the absorption of new connotations by the traditional vocabulary.[87]

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[85] *ibid.*, p.257.
[86] *ibid.*, p.259.
[87] *ibid.*, p.260.

The character of Judith might have presented some problems of characterization to the poet; just as it was easy for Cynewulf to handle his heroines straightforwardly, so it could have been for *Judith*'s author, especially when we consider the abundance of patristic models by which Judith could have been typified as *Ecclesia* or Chastity or the *miles Christi.* I think it is safe to assume that the poet had a better grasp over his material than vice versa.

While Belanoff's study is the most reluctant to categorize Judith as either saint or hero, most other critics preceding her have taken stronger, if by no means absolute, stands. One the one hand Chance, Campbell and Hermann have leaned towards a reading of Judith as an allegory of *Ecclesia*; on the other, Lucas, Nelson and Locherbie-Cameron have found Judith's characterization to highlight the secular nature of the heroine, making her a metaphor for either an Anglo-Saxon hero or a noble Anglo-Saxon woman.[88]

In connection with Juliana and Elene Chance positions Judith as providng a common element between the two heroines, anticipating Belanoff's later study on *mægð* and *ides.* However, while on a tropological level Chance sees Judith as "an aristocratic Anglo-Saxon lady" fighting an evil lord, her main readings of the character are as a *miles Christi* on the allegorical level and as *Ecclesia* on the

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[88] Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse, 1986). Jackson J. Campbell, "Schematic technique in *Judith*", *Journal of English Literary History,* 38 (1971), 155-172. John P. Hermann, "The Theme of Spiritual Warfare in the Old English *Judith*", *Philological Quarterly,* 55 (1976), 1-9. Peter J. Lucas, "*Judith* and the Woman Hero", *The Yearbook of English Studies,* 22 (1992), 17-27. Marie Nelson, "*Judith:* A Story of a Secular Saint", *Germanic Notes,* 21 (1990), 12-13. Margaret Locherbie-Cameron, "Wisdom as a Key to Heroism in *Judith*", *Poetica (Tokyo); An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies,* 27 (1988), 70-75.

anagogical. Chance's point, however is that the 'woman as hero' is quite different from the 'man as hero' and that different sets of expectations on the part of the audience apply. She assigns a late tenth-century date to *Judith*, by which time the ideals of Anglo-Saxon feminine behavior would have been inextricably interlaced with the Christian values which saw the Virgin Mary as the ultimate female heroine, stepping on the Devil's head and bringing new life into the world.

Those partial to viewing Judith as a type of *Ecclesia* have obviously resorted to using patristic writings as keys to interpret the text; Campbell, for instance, claims that the Old English poet's description of the fly-net over Holofernes' bed finds its seed in Rabanus Maurus' commentary of the *Liber Iudith*.[89] These critics do not insist on an intimate knowledge of the patristic commentaries on the part of the poem's audience, but assume that certain interpretations of either the Judith story or standard exegetical commonplaces were easily understood by a contemporary audience. Thus, according to Hermann,

> the medieval Christian would have been conscious that listening to the heroic exploits of Judith and her fellow citizens, he was discovering more about that City of God of which he too was a member. The story of Judith was not arcane for him but part of his local history.[90]

This point of view and others along the same lines are fundamentally based on the belief that both audience and author had more interest in spiritual matters

[89] Campbell, "Schematic Technique", pp.162-163.
[90] Hermann, "The Theme", p.7.

than secular ones. While the author's interest could lean towards the spiritual given his likely religious background, the members of a lay audience would more likely have been intrigued by events that related directly to their everyday life. In trying to appeal to his audience, we can assume that the poet would stress the secular elements of his story, without necessarily having to dismiss its religious message.

According to Lucas, Judith "has a role which seems to grow out of conformity with the ideal female behavior in an heroic society."[91] I would like to alter this statement somewhat by suggesting that Judith is conforming to the role prescribed by the poet's contemporary audience, which, around the middle of the tenth century, was no longer an exclusively heroic society, but had already begun to transform into a Christian heroic society in which the old heroic stories and values still held a prominent place in the cultural heritage of the people.

Locherbie-Cameron is right when she picks wisdom as the key to the poem because it is a trait which not only has the heroic connotation which is the focus of her study, but it also provides the basis for saintly behavior --faith is the wisdom of believing in what is true.[92] While Locherbie's idea of focusing her discussion around the concept of virtue is a credible way to interpret the nature of the contrast between Judith and Holofernes, it depends on juxtaposing Judith's unquestionable wisdom against the unwise behavior of Holofernes. This can be problematic because the only unwise action taken by Holofernes is his conscious debauchery in a war situation; all other actions --including his intention to rape

Judith-- are not specifically unwise as much as they are performed, in Locherbie's own words, "with a failure in understanding" which does not directly equate with lack of wisdom. Had Holofernes been aware of Judith's divine protection through Achior's warning (missing in the fragment), his decision to force himself upon her would have been unwise, but, as it stands, the poem does not imply lack of wisdom in this specific incident. A better common denominator of Judith and God on one side and Holofernes on the other is their respective leadership skills.

In chapter four, I intend to center my discussion of the poem on the basis of the contrast technique discussed earlier using the idea of leadership as the key feature through which Holofernes and Judith are distinguished. This approach will reveal the central role that Anglo-Saxon poetic techniques and images play in the poem, while also giving a reading of the poem which owes little to the allegory suggested by patristic commentaries.

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[91] Lucas, "*Judith* and the Woman Hero", p.17.
[92] Locherbie-Cameron, "Wisdom as a Key."

= Chapter 1 – The Nowell Codex =

The study of an Old English poem, especially a fragmentary one such as *Judith*, requires some attention to be paid to the medium on which it was recorded and through which it has come down to us through the centuries. The following codicologic and paleographic study aims to introduce the reader to the history of the manuscript in which *Judith* is to be found today. Knowledge of the history of the manuscript is essential for understanding the circumstances which have led to the current fragmentary status of the poem. The reasons for the inclusion of the poem in the manuscript will also be examined as they are indirectly connected with the question about the poem's incompleteness. Being able to answer, at least tentatively, questions about the original length of the poem is necessary in order to support the later analysis of the poem where the interpretation of the story depends heavily on whether we accept the poem as virtually complete or missing three quarters of its original content.

The verses of *Judith* are recorded only in London, BL Cotton Vitellius A. XV (hereafter Vitellius A. XV) which is currently held in the British Museum. The document is a collation of two different codices; the first is commonly known as the Southwick codex and dates from the middle of the twelfth century, and the second work is commonly known as the *Beowulf* manuscript, or the Nowell codex, and dates from the late tenth century. It is at the conclusion of this latter manuscript that *Judith* is preserved from folio 202 recto to folio 209 verso, according to the official foliation. This foliation, introduced in 1884, is the one

adopted by Timmer and Dobbie in their editions of *Judith* as well as by Ker in his *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* and Malone in *The Nowell Codex*. It is a far from perfect foliation, as we shall see, but it will nevertheless be used in this chapter for ease of reference.

The more recent history of the codex can be followed through the various theories concerning the foliations attributed to the manuscript over the years. The Nowell codex, so called for the writing at the top of folio 94r which attributes its ownership to Lawrence Nowell in 1563,[1] bears no trace of numbering until sometime after 1731, when a disastrous fire consumed the edges of the manuscript's folios, destroying any evidence of earlier foliations. The codex came into the possession of Sir Robert Cotton at the beginning of the seventeenth century when it was joined with the Southwick codex by Cotton's librarian. It is likely that the two codices would have been numbered *seriatim*, as is suggested by a note in Franciscus Junius' seventeenth-century transcript of the *Judith* fragment, which locates the beginning of *Judith* on folio 199 of Vitellius A XV. Kiernan has argued that Junius' note proves that by the first half of the seventeenth century the two codices were assembled together and numbered sequentially.[2] This might not have been a 'true' foliation accounting for every folio in the manuscript; it could have simply been Junius' recording the start of *Judith* based on his own counting. However, in 1703, after the collection of

[1] The date 1563 is recorded in pencil on the frame of the folio, while at the top of the vellum leaf we can read "Laurence Nouell A-156"; what was likely a '3' following the '6' was lost in a rip in the vellum.

Robert Cotton had been donated to the public by Sir Robert Cotton's grandson in 1700, a commission was formed to report on the status of the collection and it was found that the total count of the manuscript folios added up to 205 and that folio 154 had been numbered twice. This last finding offers definitive evidence for an early numbering of the folios and is corroborated by Junius' reference to folio 199 as the beginning of Judith.

The research done by the commission was also the starting point for a second foliation made by Humfrey Wanley who provided an updated numbering of the manuscript in his *Antiquæ Literaturæ Liber Alter.* This foliation is very inaccurate compared to the current status of the manuscript in its accounting of a now missing folio of the Nowell codex. Kiernan has argued that the folio belonged to *Beowulf* and probably was misplaced at the end of the manuscript and counted as a flyleaf by the commission in charge of the 1703 numbering.[3] Although faulty, this foliation records a crucial stage in the evolution of the manuscript before the first extant numbering which has survived on the vellum pages.

After the manuscript, together with the rest of Cotton's collection, had been presented to the British people in 1700, the building which housed the Cotton library was deemed unsuitable for the preservation of the precious books. A new building was planned to house the books and manuscripts during which time the collection was stored *ad interim* in Ashburnham House. On the 23rd of

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[2] Kevin Kiernan has been the first to argue extensively for a foliation of the Nowell codex dating before 1731. See Kevin S. Kiernan, *Beowulf and the Beowulf Manuscript* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1981), pp. 90-91.

October 1731, the house went on fire and hasty maneuvers were made to save as much of the collection as possible; this meant that some books which had caught fire had to be rescued by being thrown out the windows.[4]

Overall, the damage incurred in the fire by Vitellius A. XV was limited to severe burn damage to the outer edges of the pages. During the process of restoration, the numbering of the Southwick codex, which in parts survived the burning, was extended to the Nowell codex in which there is now no trace of any other numbering which might have escaped the fire. This earliest of the surviving foliation is often referred to as the 'old' foliation and is still used to this day by some critics, especially those working on *Beowulf*, because it was the numbering used by Zupitza in his facsimile edition of the poem.

The burned edges of the vellum kept crumbling long after the fire, putting at risk not only the foliation written at the top right of the folio but also those words which lay close to the margins. Thus, in 1845 the British Museum proceeded to take defensive action to prevent further losses to Vitellius A. XV and other damaged Cotton manuscripts. The pages of the codex were preserved by means of paper frames which have admirably served their purpose to this day at the cost of some letters now hidden behind the paper frames and of the original bindings of the manuscript which might have helped us to unravel some unanswered questions about the collation of the Nowell codex.

On these frames we find the numbering of the remaining three foliations of Vitellius A. XV, the earliest of which, probably contemporary with the

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[3] Kiernan, *ibid.*, pp.97-98.

implementation of the frames, is basically an updated version of the old manuscript foliation and can be seen in pencil on the upper right corner of the frames. This new numbering corrects the mistaken order of the first ten folios of the Nowell codex recorded in the old foliation, but fails to correct the erroneous numbering of the previously misplaced folios 131 and 197, which likewise had been transposed to their correct positions in the poem. The fifth foliation, found on the bottom right of the frames, is the first to account for prefixed pages as well as folios properly belonging to the manuscript. This foliation, sometimes referred to as the new foliation, lists three leaves before the beginning of the Southwick codex as well as two blank leaves within the body of the manuscript. It is likely that the main purpose of this numbering was to provide a record of all the folios included within the covers of Vitellius A. XV as a means of comparison with the old foliation which only numbered pages with Old English text on them.

In 1884 a final numbering of the folios was made and called the 'official' foliation. Its folio numbers stand next to the now crossed-out numbers of the old foliation and include the three prefixed leaves, but not the two blank ones, in addition to the other folios covered by the previous foliations. The official foliation provided the correct numbering of the folios of the manuscript, but it too has become unreliable since the first of the prefixed leaves was removed in 1913 to be included in another codex. The inclusion of prefixed leaves in the counting has caused confusion and necessitated the use of complex tables[5] in order to

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[4] Kiernan, *ibid.*, p.68.

[5] E.g. Kemp Malone, ed. *The Nowell Codex*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, 12 (Copenhagen, 1963), p.14.

match the foliation on the vellum leaves with the official record. This is due to the fact that the earlier foliation did not correct the order of many folios, thus causing the discrepancy between the earlier and latest foliations to vary anywhere between one folio or eighteen.

Kiernan, in his study of the *Beowulf* manuscript, calls for a reversal to the old foliation supplemented by parenthetical notations indicating the correct positioning of those folios misplaced at the time of the foliation.[6] However, the 1884 numbering, while undoubtedly flawed, presents few complications for a study of *Judith* since within this section the correlation between the old and the official foliation can be easily obtained by adding the number three to the old foliation or subtracting it from that of 1884. Therefore, for a discussion limited to those folios on which the *Judith* fragment is recorded, either of the two foliations would be sufficiently accurate. The old foliation, having been adopted by Zupitza, might suit better those works which refer also to *Beowulf*, while the 1884 numbering would suit all other purposes.

The preceding survey of the history of Vitellius A. XV through the evolution of its various foliations has revealed an eventful past. The numerous foliations indicate various stages in the life of the manuscript after the seventeenth century, when the Nowell and Southwick codices began their life together as one manuscript. To get a clearer glimpse of *Judith*'s role in the manuscript we must turn our attention exclusively to the Nowell codex and study the history and reasons behind its compilation: the key to understanding the

fragmentary status of the poem lies in the paleographic evidence that can be gathered from a study of the Nowell codex.

Judith is preceded by four works in the Nowell codex: three prose texts, the fragmentary *St. Christopher*, *The Wonders of the East*, and *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle*, and one poem, *Beowulf*. These works have been transcribed by two tenth-century scribes. Malone recognizes their hand as typical of the insular tradition of the period between 980 and 1020 and points out that, although neither excelled as a calligrapher, the first scribe's (hereafter referred to as scribe A) handwriting has a lighter quality than the thick, heavy stokes of the second scribe (hereafter, scribe B).[7] The differences between the scribes are evident also in their use of abbreviations where scribe B appears to make a greater use of them than his colleague.

The fact that the two hands come together in the middle of *Beowulf* provides indisputable proof that the works in the Nowell codex came from the same scriptorium. Scribe B, responsible for the latter section of *Beowulf*, ll. 175v ff., was also responsible for copying *Judith*, thus encouraging the assumption that the two poems always belonged together. The highly damaged condition of folio 201, the last of *Beowulf*, has been caused by exposure to the elements at a time when it was the last folio of the manuscript. Also, Ker notes that a pattern of wormholes can be traced in the bottom left of the thirteenth quire but that these holes are not present on the fourteenth quire on which *Judith* is recorded.[8] We are

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[6] Kiernan, *op. cit.*, pp.81-85.
[7] Malone, *op. cit.*, p.17.
[8] Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957).

quite sure then that *Judith* did not always follow *Beowulf* in the Nowell codex, but the theories about the displacement vary.

Kiernan has shown that there is a slight discrepancy between the margins of the quires which make up *Beowulf* and the quire in which *Judith* is recorded; this would indicate that the two poems belonged in two different manuscripts before being brought together.[9] This theory precludes the possibility that the fourteenth quire containing *Judith* could have been placed at the beginning of the Nowell codex, since the margins of this quire differ not only from the ones in *Beowulf* but from all the other quires of the Nowell codex. This theory has been disputed recently by Peter Lucas who rightly claims that the discrepancy noticed by Kiernan between the *Judith* quire and the rest of the codex is not visible.[10] He then proceeds to argue that a now lost 'quire 0' linked the current fourteenth quire to the first because the opening of *St. Christopher* and the ending of *Judith* would have occupied a 'natural' quire, i.e., a quire made up of eight folios.

Lucas fails to provide a valid reason why quire 0 should drop from between quires 14 and 1. His argumentation is based on the hypothesis that a seventeenth-century compiler would have noticed the same scribal hand in *Judith* and the latter section of *Beowulf* and would have removed quire 14 and quire 0 from the beginning of the manuscript in order to place them next to the other quires written in scribe B's hand. After performing the move he would have noticed that the greater part of quire 0, i.e., the beginning of *St. Christopher*,

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[9] Kiernan, *op. cit.*,pp.151-152.

[10] Peter J. Lucas, "The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf* Manuscript", *Review of English Studies,* 41 (1990), 470-473.

made no sense by itself and proceeded to expurgate that quire from the end of the codex, copying the concluding lines of *Judith* onto the last folio of the fourteenth quire. It is highly unlikely that such a complex maneuver ever took place. The hypothesized manipulator would have to display enough discernment to recognize the link between the opening and closing sections of the codex as well as the importance of copying the closing lines of *Judith* onto the preceding quire, while simultaneously showing no consideration whatsoever of the obvious fact that by removing a section from the beginning of the codex he could jeopardize the integrity of the work which began after *Judith.* Furthermore, according to Lucas, this manipulator was skilled enough to understand the contents of the *St. Christopher* section of quire 0 and thus discard it as incomplete; but, if this is so, we have to wonder how he could fail to understand that it covered the same topic as the other fragment at the beginning of the codex, and why he would have discarded *St. Christopher* as fragmentary and not *Judith* too.

Kiernan's theory that the *Judith* quire belonged to a different manuscript altogether is also questionable even though it seems to be closer to the truth than Lucas' theory about the disappearing quire 0. The suggestion that *Judith* belonged to a separate codex before being joined to the Nowell codex rests in part on Kiernan's observation that

> the allotted writing space for the two MSS differs noticeably [...] the number of lines per page in *Beowulf* varies in different quires from twenty lines, to twenty-one lines, to twenty-two lines, and yet the written space between the first and last rulings, regardless of the number of lines per page, is uniformly between 17 and

> 18 cm., usually about 17.5 cm. [...] In the case of the *Judith* fragment the written space between the first and last ruling is between 16 and 16.5 cm. The difference is distinct and can hardly be fortuitous: *Judith* was not ruled to fit the same format as the *Beowulf* codex.[11]

The difference in ruling, as noted by Lucas, is hardly observable even under close scrutiny. In most cases a difference of no more than five millimeters can be found between a folio of the fourteenth quire and one belonging to the rest of the Nowell codex. The rest of Kiernan's argument is more convincing even though it is largely grounded in speculations regarding the original composition of the manuscript containing the *Judith* quire. The gist of the theory is that the end of *Judith* was voluntarily removed from the rest of the poem, as is evidenced in the transcription of the closing lines at the bottom of folio 209v. Obviously what came after must have been more important than *Judith*, if its beginning was worth preserving over the ending of the apocryphal story. Kiernan believes that "the only kind of text that would certainly take priority over *Judith* at this time (sixteenth century) would be a canonical text."[12] The same goes for the missing opening of the poem: a canonical text must have preceded *Judith* in what must have been a manuscript dealing with biblical stories. The section numbers which appear in *Judith* would then be part of a *seriatim* numbering of other poems and not an indication of the length of *Judith*'s missing section. A scrupulous reformer would have expurgated the non-canonical text from the collection, prefering the safekeeping of preceding and following works in his decision to mutilate the

[11] Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p.151.

opening and closing of *Judith*, which eventually was connected in fragmentary form to the Nowell codex by virtue of their scribal link.

Traditionally, the gathering of the works in the Nowell codex was justified as a collection of stories dealing with the marvelous and the monstrous, or, as Sisam famously put it, "liber de diversis monstris."[13] However, Sisam himself admitted that *Judith* does not easily fit in the overall scheme of a collection of stories with monsters in them. Even if Holofernes' character can perhaps be described as monstrous, he certainly was no monster.[14] Describing *Judith* as a work dealing with the marvelous and the monstrous would overlook what I see as the poet's effort to reduce the role of the miraculous in his story and to portray the struggle between Judith and Holofernes as that of two human contenders more than that of two allegorical figures symbolizing *Ecclesia* and Satan.

Whatever the reasons for its inclusion, it seems that once it joined the Nowell codex, the *Judith* quire was treated with more respect than its now celebrated neighboring epic. In fact, the last folio of *Beowulf* was removed from its position to serve as a flyleaf to the *Judith* fragment, indicating that preservation of a fragmentary apocryphal biblical text might have been more important than the preservation of the last page of a complete heroic epic. The burn marks which damaged the last page of *Beowulf* have carried through to

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[12] Kiernan, *op. cit.*, p.161.
[13] Kenneth Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1962), p.96. For a further reference to the Nowell codex as a book dealing with the marvelous see also p. 65.
[14] *ibid.*, p. 67.

folio 209, the last folio of *Judith*, bearing witness to the shifting priorities in the preservation of Old English manuscripts.

The earliest transcript of the Nowell codex is Junius' copy of *Judith* made in the seventeenth century. It was probably written as a text for his pupils, and the choice of this specific work for his aims reinforces the theory that the last folio of *Beowulf* should be used to protect *Judith*. Nowadays, when a facsimile or a study of the Nowell codex is made the emphasis is chiefly, if not exclusively, on *Beowulf*, as is the case in Zupitza's autotype of the epic poem. The proximity to the more illustrious and longer poem has greatly affected current criticism of *Judith* which, in recent years, has benefited from the copious research being done on the oldest English epic by sharing in some of the spotlight. Conversely, the vast amount of attention poured on all issues related to *Beowulf* has occasionally eclipsed deeper study of *Judith*.

The Electronic *Beowulf* Project is an example of an academic endeavor which has benefited the whole of Vitellius A. XV through the influence of *Beowulf*. Surely this codex would not have been picked for the ambitious project on the strength of the prose texts or even of *Judith*. The project, under the supervision of Kiernan and Szarmach and in conjunction with the British Library, will provide the most up-to-date tool for the study of the manuscript by providing a document with links to a vast archive of resources pertinent to the manuscript. There will be fiber-optic, ultra-violet as well as natural light scans of the pages of the manuscript; these will in turn be linked to the Thorkelin eighteenth-century transcripts of *Beowulf*. There will also be a selection of editions and translation of

the works in the manuscript, offering the user immediate reference to the scanned images. It is expected that the project will become commercially available on CD-ROM by the fall of 1998.

Unfortunately, the main questions about the *Judith* fragment of the Nowell codex will not be answered by this prodigious digital tool. Nevertheless, the problem about the original length of the poem, perhaps the biggest riddle facing codicologists, can already be solved with a high degree of certainty in favor of a virtually complete *Judith*. Kiernan's theory of an independent fourteenth quire cannot be proven on the basis of page ruling alone; however, the corollary presented in support of the physical proof is very convincing in arguing in favor of a ten folio poem spanning three quires, with the bulk of the text on the middle quire of eight folios and the opening and close on two folios belonging to two other quires.

The eventful history of the codex, its numerous foliations and other features of the manuscript are intriguing in their own right but in the present study they are subservient to the issue of the fragmentary nature of the poem. In the chapters that follow, the paleographic arguments in favor of an almost complete *Judith* will be corroborated by findings in the analysis of the poet's use of Christian materials, as well as by the study of other Old English poems, and by the results of the stylistic analysis of the text. Accepting *Judith* as virtually complete makes the vision of the poet clear and strong: he adapted his sources to his purpose and he did not let them dictate his storytelling. The poet's powerful narrative style very likely also struck the collators of the Nowell Codex who

might have felt that the mutilation of the text was sufficiently insignificant to warrant the exclusion of *Judith* from the manuscript.

= Chapter 2 – The *Liber Iudith* and the Patristic Commentaries =

The religious tradition relevant to the study of *Judith* extends from the early Hebraic biblical sources to the various Christian commentaries of the Church Fathers, covering a combined span of more than a thousand years. The author of *Judith*, whether a lay or a religious man himself, would have undoubtedly been greatly affected by the thoughts and traditions of the Church. Therefore, a review of the biblical versions of the story of Judith and the history of the book within the Church is necessary to determine what sources were available to assist the poet in the composition of *Judith*. Furthermore, the characters of Judith, Holofernes, and other key figures from the biblical story, must be seen through the eyes of the Church Fathers to begin to grasp the range of meanings they had for an Anglo-Saxon audience and the poet.

The earliest existing version of the story of Judith occurs in the Septuagint Bible (hereafter LXX), a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible compiled in Egypt for inclusion in the Alexandrine library. It has been proved that the source of the LXX's story of Judith was a Hebrew text which is believed to have been composed by the Jews of the Diaspora.[1] Judith is one of the later books of the Old Testament: Moore assigns it to the second century B.C., and argues, on the base of textual evidence, that the story was composed under the reign of John Hyrcanus I who reigned over Palestine between 135 and 104 B.C. It is probably in its Greek translation that the story first became widely known, thanks to the

universality of the Greek language during the Hellenistic period. The LXX was the common text of early Christianity, and New Testament writers, as well as early Church Fathers, quoted mainly from the LXX when referring to the Old Testament.[2]

When the language of the Roman Empire became associated with the language of Christianity, the LXX version of the Bible, complete with the story of Judith, was closely translated into Latin; this translation is referred to as Old Latin (hereafter OL). The OL soon gained international popularity, being used in North Africa and across Europe. Pierre Bogaert shows that, even after Jerome's translation of the Latin Vulgate Bible (hereafter Vlg), the OL was still used in Medieval Europe.[3] However, the language of the OL was often so faithful to the Greek original that it produced awkward translations which often retained the syntax or the vocabulary of the original Greek.[4] Moreover, at the time of Jerome, biblical scholarship had progressed to a level of sophistication where a direct translation of the biblical books was needed to replace the OL which was in effect a translation of a translation. With a view to correct these problems Pope Damasus charged St. Jerome with the task of producing a new Latin translation of the Bible.

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[1] Morton S. Enslin, *The Book of Judith; Greek text with an English Translation, Commentary and Critical Notes* (Leiden, 1972), pp. 34 -37.
[2] Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds., *Oxford Companion to the Bible* (Oxford, 1993), p. 752.
[3] Pierre Bogaert, "Un Manuscrit de Lérins; Contribution a l'Histoire de la Vieille Version Latine du Livre de Judith", *Revue Bénédictine*, 84 (1974), 301-312.
[4] Carey A. Moore, *Judith; a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, New York, 1985), pp. 94-95.

By following the LXX, the OL retained some of the books, such as the *Liber Iudith*, which had been excluded in the Hebrew canon. The inclusion of Hebrew Apocrypha was cause of controversy at the time of the Vlg's translation; Jerome himself warned against the use of such books for worship;[5] however even Jerome did not refrain from using the story for didactic purposes. Nevertheless, the council of Nicea decreed, among other things, that the book containing the history of Judith should be accepted as part of the Christian canon. Thus, when Pope Damasus ordered Jerome to edit a new Bible, the *Liber Iudith* was included with the many others awaiting a new and accurate translation; it was then that a new version of the story of Judith, based on what Jerome claimed to be a Chaldean manuscript, became available to the Latin-speaking world.

The text of Jerome's Vlg is significantly different from that of the OL even though many modern scholars have doubted that Jerome's Chaldean source-text was an independent text from that of the LXX and OL versions. Morton Enslin claims that the Chaldean text used by Jerome was actually nothing more than an Aramaic translation of the Greek LXX.[6] Thus, the differences between the LXX and the Vlg *Liber Iudith* are to be attributed to the numerous changes

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[5] The preface to the Vlg *Liber Judith* reads: *Apud Hebraeos liber Judith inter Hagiographa legitur: cuius auctoritas ad roboranda illa quae in cententionem veniunt, minu idonea iudicatur. Chaldeo tamen sermone conscriptus, inter historia computatur. Sed quia hunc librum Synodus Nycaena in numero sanctarum legitur computasse, aquievi postulatione vestrae* [Pope Damasus'] *immo exactioni: et sepositis quibus vehementer arctabar, huic unam lucubratiunculam dedi, magis sensum e sensu, quam ex verbo verbum transferens. Multorum codicum varietam vitiosissimam amputavi: sola est quae inteligentia integra in verbis Chaldaeis invenire potui, Latinis expressi.* [Paraphrase: The book of Judith is not canonical for the Jews, so I do not think it is appropriate; still, since the council of Nicea gave it canonical status, I have granted your request and translated the book sense by sense in a short night's work. I edited out anything foreign to my Chaldean source text.]

[6] *op. cit.*, p. 44-45

and translations the Greek text had to undergo before surfacing in the Latin through Jerome's hasty, *sensum e sensu* translation.

This is the origin of the story of Judith; in its Latin forms it was diffused throughout Christian Europe, becoming the source of later versions of the story such as the Anglo-Saxon *Judith*. On the basis of textual evidence it is hard to say which one of the two biblical versions was more likely to have been the source for *Judith*; the critics' consensus leans heavily towards the Vlg version. Their argument, however, is grounded more in the knowledge that the Vlg translation was used for most medieval Bibles, than in the textual parallels between the Vlg, OL, and Anglo-Saxon story. While the popularity of the Vlg during the Middle Ages is not denied, Bogaert, as previously noted, has presented evidence for a late use of the OL text.[7] Furthermore, textual similarities are found not only between the Vlg and the Old English, but also between the latter and the OL; therefore I would suggest that a corrupt Vlg text, with many elements of the OL, was the ultimate source for the Old English *Judith*.

Foster dedicates an appendix to the debate over the source of the poem dismissing the issue as "a tolerably simple one" which he solves by providing a chart of corresponding passages in the Old English, Vlg, and LXX. It is curious that in his comparison he should not mention the OL which, by virtue of the popularity of Latin, would have been a more likely vessel than the Greek LXX for the adoption of the story by the Anglo-Saxon author.[8] Unlike what Foster

[7] See p. 54 at the beginning of this chapter.

[8] Learning in Anglo-Saxon times implied by necessity the study of Latin and monks would have been expected to speak it among themselves while Greek remained the domain of the more

would have us believe, the Anglo-Saxon passage in which "[Holofernes] then fell so drunk with wine..." (l. 67) is not any more closely related to the Vlg "Holofernes laid in bed asleep because of great drunkenness" (13:4) than it is to the OL "Holofernes was prone on his bed for he was numbed by wine" (13:2). Foster is right, however, in claiming that there is a link between Vlg 14:9 and *Judith* ll. 269-272 which does not exist in the OL/LXX; but at the same time, he conveniently overlooks the fact that the OL 14:12-13 is closer to the Anglo-Saxon ll. 241-250 than the Vlg 14:8, in which the watchmen rush directly to Holofernes' tent, rather than warning the army's chiefs first, who then head for the tent of their general, as is the case in the OL and the Anglo-Saxon.[9]

Another section in which the Anglo-Saxon text resembles the OL more closely than the Vlg is ll. 91-94. In this passage all three texts have Judith offering her prayer to the Lord, asking to be sustained in her actions through his favor. To this event, the OL adds a detail which is paraphrased in the Anglo-Saxon. In OL XIII: 5 Judith specifically says that "now is the time to come to the aid [...]" and the heroine's need for immediate action is echoed in *Judith* ll. 91b-92, *nahte ic þinre næfre / miltse þon maran þearfe gewrec nu mihtig dryhten* [I did not have ever greater / need of your grace: avenge now mighty Lord] while the Vlg is silent about this specific request.

The two examples offered above do not intend to be proof that the OL is the direct source of *Judith*. Rather, they are included to cast some doubt on the

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gifted scholars such as Alcuin and Bede. See Michael Lapidge, "The Anglo-Latin Background" in Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, 2nd ed. (London, 1986), pp. 5-67.

theory that the Vlg is the definitive source of the Old English poem. Bogaert argues that the text of Judith was changed quite significantly beginning in the fifth century from one bible to the other. He offers the example of the Alaca Bible, a tenth-century work, in which the story generally follows the OL version, but at times expands the dialogue and adds minor details.[10] In writing his *De Virginitate*, Aldhelm made use not only of the LXX and the Vlg, but also of the OL, proving that the OL version of the story of Judith was known in seventh-century England. Moreover, Aldhelm quotes certain passages of the *Liber Iudith* using details from all three versions, thus indicating that a bible similar to the Alaca might have existed in England three centuries before the composition of *Judith*. I suggest that the source of the Anglo-Saxon poet might have been one of the 'corrupted' biblical texts of Judith, perhaps a mix of OL and Vlg, even though I cannot identify the source of *Judith* with a specific biblical manuscript.

Although a definite source for *Judith* might be impossible to determine in the current state of scholarship, one thing remains unquestionable: the poem derived from one version or another of the biblical story. In the first appendix, one can clearly see that most of the crucial plot events in *Judith*, listed below, can be found in both Latin biblical versions of the story.

1. Holofernes organizes the feast on the fourth day after Judith arrival in the Assyrian camp (ll. 7a-14).
2. Holofernes sends for Judith (ll. 34b-37a).
3. Holofernes plans to sleep with Judith (ll. 57a-59b).

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[9] For the synoptic arrangement of the relevant portions of the Vlg and OL, see Appendix 1.
[10] Pierre Bogaert, "La Version Latine du Livre de Judith dans la Première Bible de Alaca", *Revue Bénédectine*, 78 (1968), 7-32.

4. The party ends, all the drunk participants leave, and Holofernes lies in drunken slumber (ll. 67b-73a).
5. Judith nears Holofernes' bed and prays to God for support (ll. 80b-94b).
6. Judith lifts up Holofernes' head and strikes twice to decapitate him (ll. 97b-112a).
7. Exiting the tent, Judith drops the severed head in the bag carried by her maid, and leaves the camp, reaching the walls of Bethulia (ll. 125-141a).
8. Judith bids the guards to open the city gates (ll. 146b-158).
9. The people are happily surprised by Judith's return and gather around her (ll. 159-170).
10. Judith shows Holofernes head, and praises God (ll. 171-186a).
11. Judith advises the men of Bethulia on the battle plan (ll. 186b-195a).
12. At daybreak the armed men advance from Bethulia (ll. 199-205a).
13. The Assyrians in fear go to wake Holofernes (ll. 238-253a).
14. The decapitated body of Holofernes is found (ll. 275-282).
15. The general's death is announced (ll. 283-289a).
16. The Assyrians run in fear, pursued by the Bethulians (ll. 296b-307a).
17. The Assyrian camp is raided for thirty days (ll. 313b-318a).
18. The spoils that had belonged to Holofernes are given to Judith (ll. 323b-341a).
19. Judith praises God once more for all that has happened (ll. 341b-349).

It is unlikely that such similarity in plot development would arise if the poet had no access to the the biblical texts or at least to a secondary source, such as a sermon, which was very closely based on the biblical book.

The passage below exemplifies further the extent to which some parts of the three texts echo each other, thus leaving no doubt about a close connection between *Judith* and the biblical material.

- **OE ll. 67-73** Then fell so drunk with wine / the ruler in the middle of his bed, that he did not remember anyone of the

resolutions / in his mind: the warriors marched / out of there with great haste, / the men intoxicated, who the perfidious one, / the hateful tyrant, carried to bed / for the last time.

- **OL-12:20** - And Holofernes was enraptured with her and drank much wine, more than he had ever drunk in one day since he was born. 13:1 - But when the hour had become late, his slaves made haste to withdraw, and Bagoas closed the tent from without and excluded the attendants from the presence of his lord, and they all went off to their bed, for all were weary and sleepy because of very much drinking.
- **Vlg-12:20** - And Holofernes was made merry on her occasion, and drank exceedingly much wine, so much as he had never drunk before in his life. 13:1 - And when it was gown late, his servants made haste to their lodgings: and Vagao shut the chamber doors, and went his way. 2 - And they were all overcharged with wine.

In all three accounts there is first a statement regarding the extent of Holofernes' drunkenness; this is followed by the detail of the servants/guards leaving their lord by himself, themselves intoxicated. The sequence is identical in all three versions, although some of the particulars differ. The poet's original details enhance the atmosphere of impending doom by giving a description of a lost man with no control of his wits, as well as by anticipating the general's death by pointing out that he was being carried to bed for the last time. Even with such matching details, it is still possible that the author of *Judith* could have resorted to sermons or plays based on the story of Judith rather than making the biblical text his direct source. Even if this were so, the source in question would have to be closely related to the biblical narratives, thus making the Vlg and the OL, or their combined, corrupted texts, the remote sources of the poem's plot.

Unfortunately, the identification of the source of *Judith* with a Latin version of the *Liber Iudith*, either the OL or the Vlg, or a hybrid version, fails in pinning the text down to a specific biblical manuscript. Nevertheless, the Vlg and the earlier OL version of the Bible are important points of arrival and departure in the discussion of *Judith*'s sources. Looking at the Vlg and OL Bible side by side it is possible to see which elements of the story had been changed or maintained by Jerome when he made his translation from the Greek and Armenian sources. Extending this synoptic study of the two versions of the *Liber Iudith* to include the poem of Judith we can see that often the passages which Jerome felt were important to translate closely were held in equal importance by the Anglo-Saxon poet.

Example of result of synoptic reading from chapter 10[11] of the *Liber Iudith*:

	OL	VULGATE
1-2	*"God of Israel"*	*"Lord"*
2-3	*"the house where she was accustomed to spend her Sabbath and festivals"*	*"her house"*
4	Judith dresses attractively *"so as to catch the eye of any man who might see her"*	omits Judith's intent but adds, *"the Lord himself lent grace to her splendor, because this preparation was*

[11] This chapter precedes the events contained in the Anglo-Saxon fragment, but it contains, within the space of a few verses, a representative selection of Jerome's departures from the OL/LXX text.

		not out of wantonness, but out of virtue: thus the Lord increased in her her beauty so that she would appear incomparable in everyone's eyes"
5	lists foods brought to the Assyrian camp by the servant	adds *"cheese"* to the list
6	*"Chabris and Charmis"* are the elders waiting at the gate when Judith leaves	they are not named, though they are called *"presbyteri"*
8	*"and said to her"*	*"they did not ask questions but let her go, saying"*
9	*"so that Israel may triumph"*	omits

From the differences and similarities in the two versions, it appears that Jerome was trying to hide the Hebraic nature of the text by suppressing passages mentioning the God 'of Israel', or names of minor characters which would have no relevance to a non-Jewish audience. Furthermore, Jerome appears to be justifying and mitigating Judith's questionable use of her sexuality by implementing his version with a whole passage explaining God's active role in the process of making Judith beautiful.

Another interesting passage in Jerome's translation can be found in 10:16 in which the OL talks about Judith 'and her maid' being brought to Holofernes; the Vlg combines both figures in that of Judith. The Vlg passage reads: "And they led her to Holofernes' tent, and they announced her." By assimilating the character of the maid into that of Judith, Jerome streamlines the plot and focuses

the audience's attention on the heroine of the story in much the same way as the Old English poet does. In fact, in *Judith* the cast of characters from the original story is significantly reduced, simplifying the plot to a contest between two opposing leaders and their armies.

Also, the OL and the Vlg give different reasons why the Assyrian soldiers want to kill the Hebrews after seeing Judith. The LXX, on which the OL is based, in a move probably meant to please its Jewish readership, asks, "who shall despise this people who have women such as she among them? Surely it is not best that a single man of them be left alive, for if they be let go they will be able to get the best of the whole earth." The Vlg has no interest in flattering the national ego claiming, rather more pragmatically, that the soldiers wanted to dispatch the Hebrews to be able to rape women as beautiful as Judith.

In chapter 11 Jerome mainly abbreviates the plot by omitting passages like that at the end of 11:4 in which the OL hints at the sexual aspect of the hospitality that the Assyrians plan to give Judith --a passage probably meant to be ironic in the context of the foiling of all their plans which follow. Some of the other omissions do not affect equally important passages, and seem to be aimed at speeding the story along in what basically is a transitional chapter. Omissions occur at v.9-10, v.19, and v.23, but most of the text echoes the OL version, with occasional additions and changes such as the passage in v.12 where Jerome substitutes 'cattle' with 'goats'. The relative fidelity to the text and the fact that Jerome trimmed it to a more easily readable form suggest that he saw this passage as transitional and not worthy of major revisions.

In the two chapters that follow the texts of the OL and Vlg differ, albeit slightly, in numerous places. Chapter 12:5-9 describes how Judith made arrangements to be allowed to exit from the camp every night to go to pray. In the Vlg, Judith asks permission right before entering her lodgings, as if she already planned to make her escape with the excuse of having to pray, while in the OL she makes the request in the middle of the night when she goes to pray for the first time, making her later use of the night-time escape route appear less premeditated.

The Vlg and the OL differ also in their emphasis on Assyrian wickedness. Jerome attacks the Assyrians directly by inserting a passage in v.11 in which he says that among these heathen people it is a sin to let a good looking woman go by unharassed. On the other hand, the OL takes a more subtle and ironic approach in criticizing the Assyrians in v.13 by having Holofernes' servant invites Judith "to become this day honorable as a daughter of the children of Asshur who attend in the house of Nabuchodonosor." This passage is omitted by Jerome who seems to leave out details which suggest the possibility of a sexually alluring Judith even if these details are meant to show the sinfulness of the Assyrians. Jerome prefers adding examples in which the evil nature of the soldiers is plainly evident, as is the case with their above-mentioned desire for rape. Finally, omitted in the Vlg is also v.15 in which Judith's maid is seen spreading fleeces on which her mistress would lie. This last omission might again be interpreted as an effort to streamline the story plot by removing minor characters and focusing the audience's attention on Judith and Holofernes.

The main feature of the Vlg in the handling of chapter 13 is Jerome's mentioning of angels in v.20 when Judith talks about her divine protection. In this speech Jerome also emphasizes God's protection of Judith's chastity, while omitting the section found in the OL which has Judith admitting "my face deceived him to his undoing;" Jerome thus manages to remove once again a context in which the purity of Judith's behavior might seem questionable. Furthermore, the OL appears less concerned than the Vlg about the details of Judith's involvement in the slaying of Holofernes. Thus, in v.22 of the Vlg, there is emphasis on the idea of God acting through Judith and with Judith, showing her as an instrument of God when Jerome writes "you have been blessed by God who through you has reduced our enemies to nothing." The OL translation of the same passage in v.17 reads "blessed art thou, Lord our God, who has annihilated this day our enemies." Here all glory goes to God, marking a stronger separation between the roles of God and of Judith than is found in the Vlg.

Some of Jerome's main rationales for the editing of Judith story are the reduction of Semitic elements of the plot, the streamlining of the story, and the downplaying of the sexually alluring side of Judith's behavior. Unlike the OL which was a straight translation of a bible that catered largely for a Hebrew readership, the Vlg was aimed at a Roman audience which would not have missed minor historical details chiefly relevant only to a Hebrew audience; similarly the Anglo-Saxon audience of *Judith* might have disliked the poem if the author had not simplified the plot to eliminate many of those elements that might have alienated his audience. Moreover, Jerome's characterization of Judith as less

sexually alluring than its OL counterpart finds a parallel in the Old English poem. In *Judith* the heroine does not attend the banquet and never tries to deceive Holofernes with her wiles. By doing this, the poet removes Judith from the poem's most intense moment of debauchery and increases Holofernes responsibility in his own undoing and that of his men.

The Old English poet clearly relied heavily on the biblical story for his plot structure, but we have seen that he is not afraid to expand, abbreviate or otherwise change the plot elements to write a story which would entertain his audience. Moreover, the poet's significant departures from the biblical sources are a reminder that it would not have been unconceivable for him to dispense with the first three quarters of the *Liber Iudith* for the sake of good storytelling.

With regards to the biblical sources, the Vlg and the Old English sometimes share their approach to specific issues such as the treatment of historical detail or Judith's role of temptress, but this is to be attributed to their common concern to appeal to an audience not ethnically related to the characters in the story and not necessarily to the Old English poet's attempt to emulate Jerome. In fact, *Judith*'s departures from the Vlg text are often as significant as those from the OL with which it shares some plot details mentioned above not found in Jerome's translation.

While the biblical sources played a fundamental role in providing the Old English poet with material for his *Judith*, there were other medieval sources of Christian thought which would have been equally important in helping to portray the character of Judith and to understand the spiritual significance of the literal

events narrated in the *Liber Iudith.* These commentaries on the scriptures were written by the Church Fathers with the intention of shedding light on the 'true meaning' of the scriptures as well as of providing references and catalogues of biblical events. The direct knowledge of the patristic writings might have been beyond the religious training of the poet, but the ideas contained in those works would not have been foreign to him. Had he been a monk transcribing some of the patristic writings, studying and hearing them taught, his knowledge of the exegesis of the *Liber Iudith* would have been first hand. Or, had he been a clerk of more secular inclinations, his knowledge of patristic exegesis would have been likely limited to the repeated hearing of sermons or lessons from priests or other channels of Church catechism which incorporated the ideas of the Fathers. Whether the author's patristic learning came through the filter of sermons and homilies, or directly from the commentaries of the sacred texts, it is unavoidable that, in composing *Judith*, he was responding to a well established tradition of exegesis of the *Liber Iudith.* Therefore a review of the more influential patristic writing is essential to compare the Judith of the Old English poem with that envisioned by the Church.

Because the nature of patristic literature is such that one author builds upon the writing of the one that preceded him, I will begin a review of patristic commentaries on Judith and the *Liber Iudith* with authors whose writings date from a classical period, going back as far as five centuries prior to the period of the composition of *Judith.* This will help in following the development of century-long trends of thought that have affected the portrayal and interpretation

of the figure of Judith. Similarly, twelfth-century Church Fathers can be included --with some caution-- in this survey because their writings will largely reflect ideas developed centuries earlier. Assuming that *Judith* was composed sometime at the beginning of the tenth century, I hope to show some continuity in the patristic thought which preceded, coincided with, and followed the composition of the poem.

Patristic commentary of the Old Testament and the *Liber Iudith* began to flourish at the end of the fourth century, thanks no doubt to greater accessibility of Jerome's new translation. Most of the time, Judith and her story make their appearance in the patristic works either as items in a catalogue or list or as *exempla*. In the last case, the patristic writer emphasizes whichever virtue attributed to Judith happens to be the topic of his discussion, for instance virginity, abstinence or faith. Obviously, this type of work is of lesser significance than the rare but more comprehensive treatises such as the *Expositio in Librum Iudith* which provide us with exegetical material not limited by the author's need to adapt one of the various virtues of the heroine to suit the subject his text. Of those works which do not focus primarily on Judith, many are basic catalogues of biblical dates and names and they offer little or nothing to an understanding of the Anglo-Saxon poem.

Moore has remarked that the allegorical approach, at least as applied to Judith, was not in vogue throughout the Middle Ages, Church Fathers preferring

to regard the book as an historical account.[12] Although this is generally the case, the lengthier and more complex ninth-century patristic works on the *Liber Iudith* are indeed allegorical readings of the story. It should be said that the almanacs, which catalogue the names of places and people mentioned in the Bible, take everything as historical; this is a testament to the medieval desire to catalogue and rank every detail of the Holy Scriptures and the natural world more than to the cataloguer's faith in the literal truth of the Scriptures, even though these lists were considered as historical records.

In the following chronology I will distinguish among works which deal exclusively or extensively with the *Liber Iudith*, those in which Judith is mentioned as an *exemplum*, and those in which the references to the *Liber Iudith* are very brief entries in a catalogue. The chronological arrangement allows us to track varying trends in the exegesis of the figure of Judith and in the approaches to the story. These trends reflect the way people perceived the story of Judith -- both its message and its heroine-- throughout the Middle Ages, suggesting ways in which the Old English poet understood his subject.

Ambrose, Bishop of Milan from 374, and later Saint of the Roman Church, is among the first Church Fathers to make substantial use of the *Liber Iudith* in his writings.[13] Before him, Tertulian, a second-century Roman Church Father, makes brief mention of Judith in his *De Monogamia*, pointing out that while celibacy is preferable, individuals such as Isaac, Judith, and "tot alia

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[12] *op. cit.*, p. 46.
[13] J. -P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiæ Cursus Completus; Series Latina* (Paris, 1844-1864).

exempla sanctorum"[14] have led commendable married lives. This early passage on Judith implies a sort of sanctity of the heroine which is shared with Isaac and all the other important servants of God in the Old Testament. The tendency to sanctify Old Testament figures who in fact did not have canonical sanctity endured from antiquity to the Middle Ages and it was the Church's means of providing a Christian persona for Old Testament figures. In his work, Tertulian also focuses on a specific virtue of Judith: her faithfulness in marriage and widowhood, a feature of Judith's character much admired by other Church Fathers, and one which medieval congregations must have most commonly associated with her.

The great bishop of Milan was a very prolific and charismatic figure of the early Church, influencing many later champions of the Faith, such as St. Augustine. In his writings he makes more extensive use of the figure of Judith than Tertulian, even though his use of the savior of Bethulia as an example of chaste widowhood and self-moderation can clearly be traced to the Roman writer. Ambrose expanded the exegesis of Judith focusing on specific aspects of the chastity and self restraint already applauded by Tertulian and celebrating both her wisdom and her courage.

In Ambrose's *De Officiis Ministrorum* a few chapters are dedicated to virtuous women, and chapter thirteen offers the readers an *exemplum* of virtuous faith, and of the courage needed to affirm that faith. In this chapter Judith is praised as much for obtaining the success for which she hoped, as for daringly

[14] [And all other examples of Saints.] *PL ii; 1002.*

attempting to obtain that very success which might have cost her her life, or, worse by Ambrose' standards, her chastity. In the *De Virginibus*, a treatise in the form of a letter to his sister Marcellina, Ambrose reinforces the idea of Judith's bravery by commending the wisdom behind it. According to Ambrose, Judith wisely chose that it was preferable "mentem virginem quam carnem habere"[15] and thus managed with the help of God to maintain both the chastity of her spirit and that of the flesh. "Quod si Judith pudicitiam religioni praeferre voluisset, perdita patria, etiam pudicitiam perdidisset,"[16] argues Ambrose in his praise of Judith's preserved chastity.

For Ambrose the chastity of Judith is the very weapon of her triumph, as testified by the *De Viduis*, *Epistula 63*, *De Helia et Ieiunio*, and the *Epistula 14*. The last work sums up Ambrose's view on Holofernes' decapitation:

> Et quid de viris loquar? Iudith luxurioso Holofernis haudquaquam inflexa convivio solo titulo sobrietatis desperatum lacertis virilibs reportavit triumphum, patriam obsedione exuit, ducem militiæ suis manibus occidit.
> Exemplum evidens quod et illum terribilem populis bellatrem virum luxuria sua emollivit et hanc feminam temperantia cibi fortiorem viris fecit. Non hic in sexu suo victa est natura, sed in cibo suo vicit.[17]

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[15] [To be a virgin in the spirit than in the flesh.] *PL xvi; 225.*

[16] [And if Judith had chosen chastity over her religion, once her country had been lost, she would have lost her chastity too.] *PL xvi; 225.*

[17] [And why mention only men? Judith, not at all affected by the banquet of Holofernes, reported an un-hoped for triumph over the strength of men by the force of sobriety. Which is a clear example that his own luxurious behavior weakened the terrible leader of that warrior race, and that temperance in food made that woman stronger than men. In this instance, the spirit is not overcome by her sex but she triumphed through her diet.] *CSEL 82, p.250.*

Indeed, according to the *De Viduis*, if Judith had drunk any wine she would have undoubtedly slept with the adulterer.[18] The idea of not eating the Devil's offering, which goes back to the temptation-scene in Genesis, seems to have had an impact on the poet who in his composition diverges from the text of the Vlg and OL by not having Judith attend Holofernes's banquet at all, thus sparing her from exposure to the incontinence displayed at the feast.

In the *De Viduis*, Ambrose identifies Judith's self-restraint with her ability to be ready to change into "vestis illa jucunditatis"[19] and be cheerful when need be. Discussing this passage, the Bishop of Milan digs deeper than he had done in the *De Virginibus* when he interpreted Judith's change of clothes as part of the stratagem to get to the Assyrian general. In this text Judith changes her clothing, "quasi placitura viro, si patriam liberaret. Sed virum alium videbat, cui placere quærebat; illum utique, de quo dictum est: 'Post me venit vir, qui ante me factus est.'"[20] By adopting an allegorical reading of the scene which suggests that Judith's actions were aimed to please her dead husband as well as Christ himself, Ambrose introduces a milestone in the bibliography of patristic literature on Judith. In this allegory Judith becomes the bride of Christ, which is *Ecclesia*, the Church itself. This specific allegorical reading, and allegorical readings of the *Liber Iudith* in general, will become a common feature of later patristic works. Moreover, Judith's awareness of the existence of Jesus is an interesting precursor

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[18] *PL xvi; 260.*

[19] [Dress of her happiness.] *PL xvi; 259.*

[20] [Just as it would please her husband if she freed her country. But she could see another man to whom it would be pleasing, one of whom it is said: ' After me comes a man who is superior to me.'] *PL xvi; 259.*

to the anachronism in ll. 83-86a of *Judith* in which the Old English poet has Judith pray to the power of the Trinity in her hour of need.

Bishop Lucifer of Calgary, a contemporary of Ambrose, makes his most notable comment on the figure of Judith in the pamphlet titled *De non Parcendo in Deum Delinquentibus*, in which he adopts an allegorical reading of the story in a similar fashion to his Milanese colleague. He justifies his personal attacks on the Emperor Constantine by citing the example of the brave Judith who was not afraid to oppose her enemy in an effort to please God, pointing out that "Dicit dominus in evangelio: pastor bonus anima suam ponit pro ovibus."[21] In doing so, Lucifer of Calgary linked the figure of Judith not only with his own role of shepherd of the Church, but also with that of the ultimate shepherd of Christianity, Jesus Christ.

At the crossroads of the fourth and fifth century we find St. Jerome, a key figure in the interpretation of Judith, responsible, as discussed above, for the translation of the Vulgate Bible. Although he expresses doubts about the canonicity of the story in the prologue to the *Liber Iudith*, his own use of the figure of Judith in the commentaries and letters is evidenced by the fact that he found the book a valuable tool for the teaching of Christian values. Ultimately he says in *Epistula 65*, "Ruth, et Ester et Iudith tantae gloriae sunt, ut sacris voluminibus nomina indiderint,"[22] implying that Judith's brave deed is enough to warrant interest in her, regardless of the canonical status of the *Liber*. Jerome

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[21] [God says in the Gospels: the good shepherd endangers his soul for the sake of his flock.] *PL xiii; 958.*

embraces some of the earlier comments on Judith by Ambrose, so that in his *Commentarii* he also praises her abstinence from excessive drinking at Holofernes' banquet. Furthermore, he follows the example of earlier writers in his use of Judith as an *exemplum* of chastity and continence. But the definition of the savior of Bethulia as "laudans aut confitens aut iudea,"[23] a description found in most etymologies of later Church Fathers, is original to Jerome.

An important theme extracted from the *Liber Iudith* comes from the combined works of Jerome and Quodvultdeus, friend of Augustine and deacon of the Church of Carthage, who takes up the model of typological reading offered earlier by Lucifer of Calgary and interprets the character of Judith as a *figura Ecclesia.* Jerome in both *Epistula 79* and *Commentarii in Prophetas Minore* links the image of a Church-like Judith with her slaying of the devil-like Holofernes; writing to the newly widowed Salvina in *Epistula 79*, he invites her to take Judith as a model of behavior,

> te extendas habens tui ordinis, quas sequaris, Iudith de hebraea historia et Annam, filia Phanuelis, de evangelii claritate [...] Unde et altera in typo Ecclesiae diaboloum capite truncavit, altera salvatorem mundi prima suscepit sacramentorum conscia futurorum.[24]

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[22] [Judith, Ruth and Esther were so great that their names gave titles to holy books.] *PL xxii;623.*

[23] [Praising or confessing or Jewish.] *PL xxiii; 1307.*

[24] [You have widows like yourself who are good models to follow, Judith of the Hebrew story, and Anna daughter of Phanuel, famous in the gospel [...] One cut the head of the Devil as a "type" of Church, while the other held the Savior of the world first in her arms, and became aware of the future sacred mysteries.] *PL xxii; 732.*

In the *Commentarii* Jerome again picks up the theme of murder: "et Iudith et Ester, in typo Ecclesiae, et occidisse adversarios, et periturum Israel liberasse,"[25] emphasizing the martial traits of Judith as the most indicative of a similitude with the fighting Church.

Quodvultdeus approaches the typological reading of Judith as *Ecclesia* by noting how she switched from clothes of mourning to clothes of joy when going on her murderous mission. Similarly, *Ecclesia* seeing

> eius vir Christu dominus passus resurgens que ascendit in coelum, omni maestitia ut veste viduali depulsa, sit induta pulchritudine ab eo de quo in Esaia propheta dicit: induit me vestimento salutaris et stola iocunditatis circumdedit me, sicut sponsam ornatam monilibus suis.[26]

Even though Quodvultdeus does not mention the beheading of Holofernes in his comparison of Judith with the Church, there is a sense that for him also it is the warrior-like ability of being capable of putting on a brave and cheerful face in the face of danger that most recommends Judith as a "type" of Church. The martial attributes of Judith are not ignored by the Old English poet who provides his heroine with a fair share of bravery, and his poem with an elaborate battle scene. Even though he does not include the detail of Judith's switch from the clothes of widowhood to those of mirth, the spirit of this action, as interpreted by Quodvultdeus, transpires in the inspiring words in ll. 152b-198 with which she

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[25] [As types of Church, Ester and Judith both killed their adversaries and freed Israel from ruin.] *CCSL 76a; In Sophoniam, prol.; linea:4.*

[26] [Her man the Lord Christ shown resurrecting and ascending to the heavens, having removed all the sadness of the clothes of her widowhood, introduces beauty from them as it is said in

reminds the Bethulians that God is on their side, as the gory head being displayed by her servant plainly shows.

After Ambrose's series of comments on Judith, the authors of the fifth century find little worthwhile to say about the Jewish heroine and the book narrating her triumph over Holofernes. Rufinus limits himself to the inclusion of the *Liber Iudith* in a list giving the order of Old Testament books.[27] Paulinus of Nola briefly mentions Judith in his *Carmina* calling her *inclita*, and, interestingly, *callida* which can be translated as 'skillful' as well as 'cunning' and 'crafty'.[28] The morality of Judith's action will become eventually a recurrent issue in the works of later Church Fathers who struggle to reconcile her good deed with the undeniably questionable way of achieving her goal. Paulinus' contemporary, Chromatius, shows a propensity for depicting a slightly deceitful Judith when in his *Tractatus in Mattheum* he praises her because she "ita internae afflictionis tristitiam texit, ut simulato gaudio laetari hostibus videretur;"[29] by means of which deception she managed to slay Holofernes. Although Chromatius is praising the virtue of being able to smile in the face of adversities, his choice of words, *texit* and *simulato gaudio*, suggests an active role for Judith in deceiving her enemies. Even as early as Jerome's *Apologia Adversu Libros Rufini* there are warnings that lies should not exceed the extent to which they are used in the *Liber Iudith* against Holofernes by Judith who "vicit eum prudenti simulatione

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Esaia: he dresses me in the clothes of well-being, and wraps me in the cloth of happiness, as a bride adorned with his jewels.] *CCSL 60; pars:2; cap:38; linea:50.*

[27] *CCSL 20; cap:36; linea;6.*

[28] *PL lxi; 642* and *lxi; 663.*

verborum."[30] It is important to note that the deceitful aspect of Judith's character, evidenced first by the fifth-century Church fathers and later on often picked up by other Christian writers, does not play an important role in the Old English poem which actually seems to suppress any questionable aspects of Judith's behavior.

All of the above fifth-century authors mention Judith only in the context of some greater discussion including other characters from the Old Testament, especially Esther, and do not concern themselves with the heroine to the same extent that Ambrose does. This is the case also with the *Liber ad Gregoriam in Palatio Constituta* of Arnobius the Younger who in this work advises the Roman lady Georgia to find support in Judith, the enemy of the spoilers of chastity, just as she should also find support in Deborah, Anna, Sarah, and Rebecca, for other reasons.[31] Judith appears once more in a list of exemplar figures from the Bible in Arnobius' *Commentarii in Psalmos* where her story is mentioned in conjunction with David's as cases in which murder and deceits can be considered good, "Et mendacium in Iudith bonum, contra Susannam malum est."[32] Here too Judith's deed is justified by its successful outcome, and her potentially sinful deceits are given the Church's blessing.

Even though there was some sort of constancy in the fifth-century Church Father's approach to the story and character of Judith, it is puzzling that she should make such a brief appearance in their commentaries. Ambrose had

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[29] [So well contained the sadness of her internal grief that she seemed to be cheerful to her enemies through her simulated happiness.] *PL xx; 364.*
[30] [Overcame him through the wise deception of her words.] *PL xxxiii; 397.*
[31] *CCSL 25a; cap:2; linea:36.*
[32] [Deception is good in Judith but evil used against Susan.] *PL liii; 549.*

devoted considerable attention to this minor Old Testament book, but his most famous pupil, Augustine of Hippo, does not use the figure of Judith for any exegetical commentary, even though he was familiar with the *Liber Iudith.* Augustine mentions the book only as an historically sound account of Jewish history and uses it to date other events and to trace the history of the Hebrew people. In the *De Doctrina Christiana*, for example, one of the most important books of the medieval Church, Judith is only mentioned in a sentence explaining that the book narrating her deeds is to be grouped with Tobit, Esther, and Machabees.[33] In the *De Civitate Dei*, another of the seminal works of Augustine, the *Liber Iudith* is used only to fix dates and locations in his chronologies; quotations of Achior's speech to Holofernes serve to answer questions about Chaldean history, and spans of time are given such frames of reference as "per idem tempus etiam illa sunt gesta quae conscripta sunt in libro Iudith."[34]

More interesting is the isolated effort of a fifth-century writer, Virgil of Tapso, who argues that proof of the existence of the Trinity can be found in the Old Testament *Liber Iudith.* This is a particularly interesting proposition in light of the anachronistic way in which, in ll. 83-86a, the Anglo-Saxon *Judith* turns to the power of the Trinity to draw the strength of spirit needed to overcome the danger of her situation. In his *Opus Contra Varimadum Arianum*, Virgil seeks evidence for the existence of the Trinity in various Old Testament books, in the hope of convincing the Arian opposition that the existence of the Trinity was established prior to the New Testament. His proof lies in the fact that the

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[33] *PL xxxiv; 41.*

presence of the Holy Ghost can be found in the song sung by Judith in praise of the Lord at the end of the *Liber*, "misisti spiritum tuum," you sent forth your breath; furthermore, according to Virgil, when Judith addresses God as "magnus et claro, et admirabilis in virtute," she is really naming traditional attributes of the Holy Ghost.[35] Virgil's final proof is found in the same passage in which the Anglo-Saxon Judith prays to the Trinity: the Father asks his readers, "si Trinitas non est, cur etiam Iudith orando ait: Domine, Domine, Deus omnium virtutum, respice in oratione meam?"[36]

If the fifth century's production of works mentioning Judith extensively had been slim, the following century produced even less material and of a less exciting nature. Fulgentius, writing at the turn of the century, produced that period's longest passage on Judith in his *Epistula 2*. His influence seems mainly Ambrosian, as is reflected in the general concern with the theme of continence. He begins by setting down an order of perfection in chastity: first he ranks the "integritate virginali" of Mary, then the "continentia vidualis" of Judith and Anna, and last the "castitate coniugali" of Susanna.[37] He then proceeds to praise Anna and Judith's approaches to continence, by reminding us that they kept the love of their departed husbands alive, and using Jerome's typology of Judith as *Ecclesia*, he quotes the gospel's passage in which the angel speaks to the visitors

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[34] [At this time the events narrated in the *Liber Iudith* occur.] *PL xli; 583.*
[35] *CCSL 90; lib:3; cap:57; linea:8.*
[36] [If there is no Trinity, then why does Judith say in praying: Lord, Lord, God of all virtues, listen to my prayer?] *CCSL 90; lib:1; cap:1; linea:59.*
[37] Mary's true virginity, Judith's and Anna's continence in widowhood, and Susanna's chastity in marriage. *PL lxv; 316.*

of Christ's sepulcher, "quid quaeretis viventem cum mortuis?"[38] Thus, Judith's respect for the living memory of her husband is like the Church's faith in the resurrected life of Christ. He explains, "quam vero multum Deus in utraque vidua continentiam sibi placitam demonstravit! nam et Iudith spiritalibus armis accinta, caput lascivi praedonis abscindit."[39] Other aspects of Judith's continence are emphasized by Fulgentius, especially the Ambrosian view of fasting as her weapon against Holofernes: "ille pugnabat armis, ista ieiunis; ille ebrietate, ista oratione."[40]

One hundred years after Fulgentius, Isidore of Seville is the next Church Father to devote any degree of attention to Judith. However, just as Moore has warned, the approach to the text is beginning to become mainly historical. In the *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* Isidore lists the *Liber Iudith* as one of sixteen historical books of the Bible together with *Tobit*, *Ruth*, *Ester*, *Esdra*, *Kings*, and others. He is also concerned with the order of the book within the Scriptures and the identity of the author.[41] Of exegetical material he offers a reworking of earlier works, listing Judith as "laudans vel confitens" in his *Etymologiarum sive Originum* after Jerome's own definition of Judith as 'praising (the Lord), being witness (to the faith), and belonging to the Hebrew people'.[42] Furthermore, he uses Jerome's typological interpretation of Judith as *Ecclesia* which originated in the fifth

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[38] [Why do you seek the living among the dead?] *PL lxv; 319.*
[39] [God demonstrated how much he really appreciated the continence of both widows! In fact, Judith, armed with the weapon of the spirit, cut off the head of the lascivious thief.] *PL lxv; 320.*
[40] [He fought with weapons, she with fasting; he with drunkenness, she with prayer.] *PL lxv; 319-320.*
[41] *PL lxxxiii; 746.*
[42] *PL lxxxii; 286.*

century and had by now become commonly accepted. As Jerome did before him, Isidore links the idea of the Church with that of the warring heroine, "Judith et Esther typum Ecclesiae gestant, hostes fidei puniunt."[43]

For the following period, Judith disappears again from the writings of the Church Fathers, only reappearing briefly and insignificantly in the works by the prolific Venerable Bede, who lived from 672 to 735, almost one hundred years after Isidore. Bede too focuses on some of the historical aspects of the book using it as a manual to learn about Jewish costumes and history. In the *Expositio in Actuum Apostolorum* the example of Achior's conversion and circumcision is used to explain that in the past the details and requirements about joining the Jewish faith were more liberal than they had become in the eighth century.[44] Furthermore, he lists the *Liber Iudith* in one of his chronologies, the *De Temporis Liber*, between the captivity of the Hebrew folk, and the reign of Darius, which is the same placement given to it originally by Isidore in the *Etymologiarum*.[45] Another great Englishman, Alcuin, only turned his attention to Judith to state in agreement with Isidore that "Judith vero et Tobit sive Machabeorum libri quibus auctoribus scripti sunt, minime constat."[46]

After a four hundred year period in which all discussion pertaining to Judith was limited to small sections within the bodies of much larger compositions, we witness a sudden proliferation of works dealing exclusively

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[43] [Judith and Esther are types of Church, they fight the enemies of the faith.] *PL lxxxiii; 116.*
[44] *PL xcii; 947.*
[45] *PL xc; 277.*
[46] [In truth we know little about the authors of the Books of Judith, Tobit, and Machabees.] *PL ci; 1128.*

with Judith. The appearance of works focusing on the *Liber Iudith* coincided with the interest of Church Fathers in collections of works dealing methodically with each book in the Bible; just as commentaries on the *Liber Iudith* begin to appear around this time, so do monographs on books similarly neglected in the past, such as Tobit or Esther. Therefore this 'sudden popularity' might not be due to a revival of Church's interest in the *Liber Iudith*. However, the appearance of extensive commentaries might be responsible indirectly for making the story better known to the lay public. It might be more than coincidental that the tentative date of composition of the Anglo-Saxon *Judith* falls a few decades after these commentaries on the story had been composed and their contents had begun to infiltrate the realm of general knowledge.

Rabanus Maurus wrote what is perhaps the most complete work on the *Liber Iudith* in 834. His work is extremely influential for later writers because it sums up all the diverse approaches to the text offered in the past by Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and many others while also adding some original comments and views on the story. One feature of his commentary, the introductory dedication to the Empress Judith Augusta --wife of Louis the Pious-- became a model for other works on Judith that were dedicated to whatever Judith-named patron the author was familiar with. Indeed, as both Timmer and Cook argue in the introductions to their editions of *Judith*, it might be possible to date the poem and gain an insight into the author's identity if we assume that the poem was written to honor one of various Judith in Anglo-Saxon history.

In the section of the *Expositio in Librum Iudith* which interprets the portion of the story found in the Old English fragment, it becomes clear that Rabanus' central reading of the story is based on viewing Judith as a type of *Ecclesia*. This idea had been originally advanced by Quodvultdeus in the fifth century and in the following centuries it had gathered much credibility as a preferred reading; Rabanus continues in the tradition by using this particular typological approach to interpret various elements of the text.

For Rabanus Judith represents the Church when, according to the Biblical tale, she eats of the kosher food prepared by her maid at Holofernes' banquet on the fourth night of her stay in the Assyrian camp: "quia Ecclesia inter gentes habitans nullo modo polaitur idolatria aut superstitione gentilitatis."[47] She is also a figure of the Church when she calls to the Bethulian gate guards to have the door to the city opened; in this case Rabanus likens Judith's actions to the way in which the Church invites the hearts of the people to open and receive the word of God. Once inside the gates of Bethulia Judith reminds Rabanus once more of the figure of *Ecclesia* when she climbs on a mound to speak to her people in a guise resembling that of the Church delivering a sermon to her flock.[48] To extend the typological reading of Judith as a 'type' of the Church, other characters in the story are interpreted to support the main allegorical reading. Holofernes is often described as *hostis Ecclesiæ*, or *antiquus hostis*, i.e. Satan; Achior comes to

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[47] [Just as the Holy Church, living among the pagans, is in no way affected by the idolatry and superstitions of paganism.] *PL cix; 572.*

[48] *Quid est Judith in eminentiorem locum ascendere? nisi sanctam Ecclesiam as superna et cœlestia dogmata sermonem convertere, ut illuc nos animos sustollat, et ad laudandum Deum pro universis beneficiis suis. PL cix; 575.*

represent all pagans and heretics who are converted by the example of *constantia fides*; and Joachim, Jerusalem's high priest is, in Rabanus' typology, like the resurrected Christ coming to greet *Ecclesia* and praise her in her victory against the devil. Similarly, the golden fly-net hung over Holofernes' bed and the general's own sword are interpreted as instruments of Satan, and are incorporated by Rabanus into an unholy description of the bed chamber of the Assyrians' leader:

> Columna quæ erat ad caput lectuli Holofernis, significat duritiam cordis, et errorem genuit malefidæ securitatis. Gladius, qui in ea legatus pendebat, malitia est iniquæ intentionis. Coma capitis est elatio superbæ mentis. Cevix vero contumacia iniquæ actionis. Et canopeum, hoc est, rete muscarum, insidias sigificat dolosæ cogitationis.[49]

Rabanus Maurus' use of the *Ecclesia* typology is pervasive and almost every one of his comments on the *Liber Iudith* reflect this main reading. The samples above might be sufficient to give an idea of the thorough extent to which Quodvultdeus' original interpretation has been absorbed in the ninth century. Still, no matter how well established this way of reading the text had become by the time of *Judith's* composition, it is likely that to the people outside the clergy Judith was interpreted literally as the figure of the perfect widow, or maid strong in faith, rather than the more abstract idea of *Ecclesia*. This concept, which would

[49] [The column at the head of Holofernes' bed is a symbol of the hardness of a petty heart, and originates the mistake of false security. The sword, which is tied to it, represent the malice of evil intent. The hair of the head is the pride of a haughty mind. The stubborn neck represents in truth an evil deed. and the canopy, that is, the fly-net, signifies the insidious nature of malicious plans.] *PL cix; 572-573.*

have been too distant for everyday secular life, belonged more appropriately to theological discussions among educated churchmen. Not surprisingly, comparing the major patristic sources of the text with the Old English poet's approach to the same material, as we shall do more extensively at the end of this section, it appears that the poem omits those key elements found in the *Expositio in Librum Iudith* which are essential for a reading of Judith as a 'type' of Church.

Overall, Rabanus' commentary leaves the reader with the image of a pro-active heroine, always ready to fight evil while stirring the hearts of her people and bringing them to God. The story itself is portrayed by Rabanus as a series of interlocking pieces of a puzzle, all of which systematically expand our perception of the heroine as a figure of *Ecclesia*. Because the typology of the militant Church requires an active involvement on the part of the heroine in the struggle against evil, Judith is endowed by Rabanus with some of the same warlike attributes found in the Old English poem. However, the different nature of Germanic and ecclesiastic martial excellence is revealed in the way the Old English poet emphasizes the superiority of Judith's leadership skills over Holofernes' as opposed to the way Rabanus celebrates Judith's righteousness as the key to her victory over the Assyrian general. Similarly, Holofernes' fall is seen by both authors as being largely due to his own wickedness, but, while Rabanus writes about Holofernes' diabolical sword and fly-net as symbols of wickedness turning against its satanic purveyor, the poet sees the same fly-net as the more tangible evidence of the proud, flawed leadership of a man.

Most of Rabanus Maurus' ideas are summarized in the *Glossa Ordinaria* by his contemporary, Walfrid Strabo.[50] The *Glossa* was perhaps more influential than the full work of Maurus because it afforded a quicker and easier means to consult the interpretation of biblical texts. It is therefore important to note that Strabo decided to do without most of the historical details which Rabanus saw fit to include at the beginning of his work on Judith. Although Strabo probably did not view the text as less historically relevant than his colleague, he focused on the exegetical details, as this was what ultimately interested those who had need to consult the *Glossa*; one of the main uses was by priests looking for quick inspiration for a sermon, or the explanation of some dark allegory.

Strabo's distillation of patristic wisdom on Judith reveals in even greater detail one of the central differences between the literary renditions of the story, both biblical and poetic, and the commentaries which emphasize the typological reading of Judith as *Ecclesia*. In fact, in a typological reading, the slaying of Holofernes becomes only one of the many ways *Ecclesia* is celebrated in the poem and loses its status as the focal point of the narrative. Thus, the *Glossa Ordinaria* does not even comment on the significance of the slaying, skipping from offering an interpretation of Judith's abstinence from unholy food at the banquet to an explanation of the symbolism of showing Holofernes' head to the Bethulians. In between these two interpretations there is a short episode, indirectly related to the scene of the slaying, in which the bed of Holofernes is interpreted as a symbol of the false safety in sin which the bed ironically was

[50] *PL cxiii; 67 - cxiv; 751.*

going to afford to his master. For Strabo and his contemporaries it was more important to discuss the role of *Ecclesia* in the conversion of Achior, an entry three times as long as that about Holofernes' bed, than to focus on the decapitation scene.

This brief overview of patristic literature on Judith could feasibly end here. After the great works of Rabanus and Strabo there is no other major work in which Judith appears predominantly until well after the latest likely time of composition of *Judith.* Nevertheless, the works of Hugh of St. Victor might be examined as he makes numerous mentions of Judith. Hugh wrote over two centuries after Rabanus, but his religious ideas might well reflect the attitudes of the preceding century, given the slow evolution of thought we have witnessed so far in the commentaries of the *Liber Iudith.*

Hugh does not completely give up his predecessors' concern with the historical or physical aspect of the *Liber Iudith*; in the *Descriptio Mappæ Mundi* he refers to the biblical story only as a side comment to the mentioning of the city of Echbatanis, destroyed by Arfaxath in the earlier chapters of the *Liber.* Furthermore, Hugh concerns himself briefly with the issue of authorship, repeating the statement of earlier Fathers that little is known of his identity. Concerning the issue of canonicity, he claims that the *Liber Iudith*, Tobit, and Machabees, are not canonical according to Church dogma, but that they can be read for teaching the people.[51]

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[51] *[Iudith, Tobi, et Machabeorum] inter canonicas scripturas non recipit, sic et hec duo volumina legat ad edificationem plebis, non auctoritatem ecclesiasticorum dogmatum confirmandam. PL clxxvi; 784.*

Hugh himself uses the *Liber Iudith* for teaching, mentioning it mainly in sermons lxxxv, lxxxvi, and lxxxvii. In the first one, written on the occasion of the festivity of St. Michael, Hugh reviews the basic allegory of the story, "Judith significat Ecclesiam, Nabuchodonosor diabolum, [...], Holofernes aliquem robustissimum principe dæmonum, sive principatum gentium aversus Ecclesiam malignantium."[52] One interesting reading of Hugh is that of the Assyrians' spoils as positive virtues of the Church, "aurum significat sapientiam; argentum eloquentiam; vestes bona opera, gemmæ, virtutes; varia supellex, bonorum ornamenta morum."[53] This interpretation is particularly relevant to the Old English *Judith* in which the heroine keeps the spoils of the Assyrians rather than offering them to God as is the case in the bible. The other two sermons add little new material to the traditional exegesis outlined above; however, sermon lxxxvi diverges from the standard reading towards its conclusion replacing the role of Judith as a figure of the Church with that of a symbol of the "infirmus, ignobilis, idiota."[54] What warrants this unusually harsh interpretation of Judith is the fact that she is a female and not some bold man in charge of many armies, and that in spite of what Hugh saw as insurmountable odds of success, she did manage to defeat Holofernes and scare away his troops.

With this closing comment of Hugh we can abandon our overview of patristic thought to draw some conclusions as to the extent to which this massive

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[52] [Judith signifies the Church, Nabuchodonosor the devil, and Holofernes either the strong chief of the devils or the empire of those who bear ill-will against the Church.] *PL clxxvii; 889.*
[53] [The gold means wisdom; silver, eloquence; the clothes, good deeds, the gems, virtues; the various pieces of furniture, the ornament of good manners.] *PL clxxvii; 889.*
[54] [Weak, base, stupid.] *PL clxxvii; 889*.

Church tradition influenced the composition of *Judith*. The poet's attitude toward his material and its sources can be broken down into three main facets. Firstly, he has no reluctance in altering the biblical text in order to enhance the drama and pace of his poem. Secondly, he is not particularly interested in giving an allegorical account of the story based on the patristic commentaries. And finally, he is concerned about portraying Judith in a light which might admit partial criticism of her behavior.

The poem weaves around the biblical plot of the poem sometimes coming very close to it in the exactness of its details, and sometimes diverging substantially, as in the case of the banquet scene, the omitted conversion of Achior, or the battle against the Assyrians. The divergences seem to be intentional: some of the poet's variations of the story reflect a more extreme degree of Jerome's own desire to adapt the text to a non-Jewish audience. Gone are most of the geographical and historical references dear to the Church Fathers, and gone are also some of the key Jewish figures, such as Joachim, Jerusalem's High Priest. On the other hand, some details which might seem of little importance are maintained in the Old English poem. Among these there is the detail of the double blow which is necessary to fully decapitate Holofernes, the despair of the guards in front of Holofernes' tent on the morning of the Bethulians' attack, and the fact that Judith had resided in Holofernes' camp for four days before the night of the murder. From his treatment of the biblical sources, the poet shows a predilection for those details which would appeal to his contemporary audience, hence the expansion of the battle and banquet scenes; he

also shows disregard for all those details, big and small, which delay the flow of the action and which are not strictly necessary to the main plot.

Some of the omissions in *Judith* are important to the typological reading of the text given by the Church Fathers. The poet's streamlining of the plot's elements for aesthetic reasons coincides with his simplification of the cast of characters who can easily be separated into 'good guy' or 'bad guy'. The Anglo-Saxon Judith is a far less ambiguous or complex character than her biblical or patristic counterpart. She is stripped of some of the leadership she had in the biblical accounts in which she gives detailed plans of battle to the Bethulian troops, and the passage in which she steps on a rock to make her speech upon returning to Bethulia is omitted in spite of Rabanus' explanation of its significance as the heavenly height to which *Ecclesia*'s sermons move its people. Still, this procedure has made her character lean and pure, and equally compelling as a champion of righteousness even though the trappings necessary for a convincing impersonation of *Ecclesia* have gone. The basic good and evil present in the main characters of the Old English *Judith* can incidentally be transposed with little effort to fit the Christian struggle of the Church against the Devil. However, had the description of the spiritual struggle been the focus of the poet's attention, he would have followed the patristic works more closely.

Furthermore, the scene of the banquet is significantly altered from its sources into a showcase of Assyrian debauchery from which Judith is physically removed. In interpreting the passage, Rabanus points out *Ecclesia*'s incorruptibility and purity by likening the Church's behavior when surrounded by

sin and corruption to that of Judith at the Assyrian banquet. While it is not likely that the Old English poet did not care about the virtue of incorruptibility, he clearly did not want to involve Judith in the debauchery of the feast in order to favor an allegorical reading of his heroine as *Ecclesia*. Obviously the poet did not value patristic allegory as much as making his heroine as pure as possible.

Bernard Huppé's view that the poet closely follows the examples of the Church Fathers is erroneously founded in the conviction that the main interest of the patristic exegesis was with the slaying episode: "the interest of each (Jerome, Ambrose, and the poets Prudentius, Dracontius, and Aldhelm) in the *Liber Iudith* is in the climactic episode of the beheading of Holofernes, as it provided edifying example."[55] However, the focus of Ambrose and Jerome's attention has been her exemplary behavior in widowhood, in fasting and steadfastness of faith, in moderation and abstinence from drink, in chastity, as well as in its personification of *Ecclesia* in her murder of the satanic Holofernes.

There are instances in which the *Judith* poet writes in accord with some patristic works, although they concern small details. Some examples are the appearance of the Trinity in the Old English poem and the poet's concern for Judith's purity and chastity. Interestingly, none of these instances regards allegorical interpretations of the story, making it quite obvious that the poet was very likely familiar with most writings on Judith and that he specifically refused to turn his poem into a spiritual allegory based on the figure of *Ecclesia*. He was

[55] Bernard Huppé, *The Web of Words* (Albany, 1970), p. 139.

far more interested in endowing his heroine with an aura of purity and Christian piety similar to that attributed to her by some of the earlier Church Fathers.

Cook pointed out that by removing Judith from the banquet, "a direct motive is provided for [her] conduct in the slaying, Holofernes' evil desires and intentions being referred to the moment of his entry into the pavilion, which immediately precedes his drunken stupor and his death."[56] Judith does not so much act as react to Holofernes' evil intentions: her murder of Holofernes is not prompted by a premeditated scheme, as it is in the Bible, but by the fear and confusion deriving from being alone in the bed-chamber of a man who has every intention of raping her. Judith's uncertainty about what to do in this situation is expressed clearly in ll. 73b-98a in which she begs the Lord for guidance in her hour of need. If she already knew how to act, her prayers would have echoed the biblical sources more closely by asking not for guidance but for strength. The poet's goal of portraying a 'pure' Judith is revealed in yet another diversion from the sources when the Old English Judith, returning triumphant to Bethulia, does not display the head of Holofernes herself, but has her maid do it, thus removing herself from the polluted appendage.

The departure of Achior and Joachim from the narrative, the trimming of the "Song of Judith" which ended the biblical texts and which was discussed at length in Hugh's *Sermo lxxxv*, the alteration of the plot so that it flows smoother and more dramatically, are enough to convince us that it was not the intention of the poet to create a paraphrase of his sources nor an allegorical reading based on

the leading patristic commentaries. Nevertheless, *Judith* remains an undeniably religious text, and the mass of patristic works commenting on the story of the Bethulian heroine --insignificant compared to the amount of writing on books such as Exodus, but nonetheless significant-- has left its mark on the poem also. Huppé might after all be right when he claims that "the poet's tradition appears not to be Rabanus' commentary, but the pervasive tradition of selective exemplification."[57] It is this patristic understanding that more than others seems to have affected the *Judith* poet. In fact, while openly shunning typological readings, he shapes his story to focus primarily on the two central characters whom he turns into embodiments of primordial Goodness and Evil. Thus, they can be seen as spiritual forces as much as real people.

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[56] Albert Cook, *Judith; an Old English Epic Fragment* (Boston, 1889), p. xl.
[57] Huppé, *op. cit.*, p.144.

= Chapter 3 – Anglo-Saxon Literary Context of *Judith* =

Having analyzed the canonical, apocryphal and patristic Latin sources of the Old English *Judith* and before a detailed discussion of its literary qualities, I now hope to show the extent to which *Judith* conforms to any specific genre and the extent to which it is unique by comparing it with other Old English poems. Even though Cook and Timmer saw in *Judith* echoes of what they defined as the Cædmonian and Cynewulfian[1] schools, the poem appears to incorporate or echo elements from many sources, so that it is unclear whether the poet was following a definite genre in his composition.[2] Moreover, some aspects of *Judith* appear to be unique, thus indicating that either one or more poems of similar style have been lost to us, or that they never existed, which would suggest creative originality.

I will first try to establish the extent to which the form of Saints' Lives and Homilies has affected the *Judith* poet. Prose works, such as Saints' Lives, are less directly relevant to *Judith* than poems, because of different genre conventions between prose and poetry. However, such distinctions were less marked in Anglo-Saxon times when stylistic forms such as alliterative prose attest to the interaction between prose and verse. The journey through the rich Anglo-Saxon

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[1] Reference to a Cædmonian school is made by way of grouping all the poems of Oxford, Bodl. Junius 11; similarly, the term Cynewulfian school refers to the poems which bear Cynewulf's name as signature and those which share date of composition and stylistic details with them.
[2] Albert Cook, *Judith*, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1889), pp. xx-xxiv; B. J. Timmer, *Judith*, rev. ed. (Exeter, 1978), pp. 1-14.

tradition behind our poem will therefore start with an overview of Anglo-Saxon hagiographic homilies.

Ælfric's *Homily on the Book of Judith* gives us the unique opportunity to see the same source material (i.e., the biblical *Liber Iudith*) receive a different treatment within the context of Anglo-Saxon literature.[3] The homily will be studied both for its exemplification of the homiletic genre and as an analogue of the Old English *Judith*. For the discussion of Saints' Lives the life of Saint Lucy was selected as an example of the many similar lives offered by Ælfric in his third set of homilies. This will lead to an examination of poems, such as *Juliana* and *Elene*, which are dependent on the tradition of Saints' Lives for source material as well as for the characterization of their heroines.

The homily could cover many topics other than strictly theological ones. Although the potential topics were many and varied, the form of the homilies remained basically unchanged from one to another; in its simplest form the homily comprised a text and a lesson, which could precede or follow the main text, in which its mysteries and examples were expounded. Clearly the important part of the sermon was in the didactic extrapolations from the text which would be facilitated by putting appropriate emphasis on certain details of the story to be referred to in the lesson. Because the audience of a homily could be quite wide and varied, ranging from the laity to members of the clergy and monastic orders, the homiletic genre was granted wide exposure and its didactic style must have been well known by writers, such as the *Judith* poet, dealing with religious

materials. As a model for didactic literary works based on sacred material, the homily taught two clear lessons; first, there was a meaning to religious stories which lay beyond the literal, second, it gave examples of how to convey the hidden lessons to the audience.

It has been observed how the poem *Exodus* reworks its biblical source material by emphasizing through skillful metaphors the typological reading of the biblical text suggested by the Church Fathers.[4] Poets like the author of *Exodus* were mindful of the need of extrapolating the spiritual meaning from the literal; usually they did so subtly by embedding clues to the spiritual readings within the literal text by means of metaphors and allusions. With the notable exception of some Exeter Book poems such as the *Phoenix*, which is considered a free paraphrase of the Christian poem *Carmen de Ave Phoenice*, the homiletic practice of attaching a clearly explained lesson at the end of the main narrative was not practised in poetry, judging by the works that have survived. This can possibly be attributed to a desire on the part of the poets to show their skills in the subtlety and complexity of their metaphors. Nevertheless, some evidence of this sermonizing practice in poetry is perhaps found in the Cynewulfian poems of *Juliana* and *Elene*; in fact, the concluding sections of both poems incorporate the thoughts and feelings of the author as well as acknowledging his reverence to the Saint whose deeds were narrated.

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[3] The only edition of which I am aware is B. Assmann in "Abt Ælfrics angelsächsische Homilie über das Buch Judith", *Anglia*, 10 (1888), 76-104.
[4] Peter J. Lucas, *Exodus* (London, 1977), p. 55.

The *Homily on Judith* begins with a twenty-five-line introduction. The apparent purpose of this section is to clarify to the audience the potentially confusing fact that there are two biblical Nabuchodonosors who appear in Ælfric's various homilies. The rest of the introduction gives an account of how the first Nabuchodonosor managed to destroy the city of Jerusalem and its Temple while taking the Hebrews back to Babylon. Ælfric implies that the sacking of Jerusalem was caused by the Jews angering God who eventually, after the Hebrew people had been in exile seventy years, forgives them and through King Cirrus effects the restoration of Jerusalem and their release from captivity. This episode is then followed by the story proper which is introduced in connection with 'the other' Nabuchodonosor.

The introduction serves not only the pedantic function of assuring historical clarity, but it also introduces the idea of the repetitive nature of the Hebrews' sinning. The audience, reminded of what happened to the Hebrews when they began to stray from God's path, wonders --no doubt with a bit of amusement-- what trouble they will be getting themselves into after having been pardoned and punished many times before. After this, the story proper begins, in which we hear how the Bethulians are rescued by a woman of true faith, while once more they were on the verge of betraying the Lord by committing the sin of despair in surrendering to Holofernes' army. Thus, Ælfric manages to isolate Judith from the group of countrymen who are foolishly repeating the mistakes for which their ancestors had been punished at the hand of the Chaldean Nabuchodonosor. Of course, the sources themselves present the heroine as being

in opposition to her countrymen. However, that detail is stressed with particular interest by Ælfric who seems to want Judith to fit in the pattern of the 'one true person' which characterizes some Old Testament books, and which appears to be the organizing principle behind the collection of biblical stories in Oxford, Bodl. Junius 11.

This dissociation of Judith from her fellow Bethulians is later reinforced in the narrative part of the homily in which Ælfric, who normally seems to paraphrase closely the biblical source, edits the text to distance Judith from her stock. In ll. 191-196, corresponding to the Vulgate VII, 1-2, Ælfric omits the genealogy of Judith and does not mention her father, Mearus, limiting himself to naming Manasses, her husband. He also points out that she is of the line of the Patriarchs, further separating her as an 'enlightened' Jew. Still, Ælfric is careful to be true to his claim in l. 406 that *we na ne leogaþ*[5] and does not expand or shorten significantly his source. It is therefore interesting to see how, in his concluding statements, he puts much emphasis on the question of purity, *clænnes*, which is not particularly emphasized in the narrative because of the restraints of the original text.

In his conclusion Ælfric addresses specifically nuns, giving us a clear perception of the kind of people for whom his homily was intended. In typical homiletic tradition, his tone makes it clear that the lesson is a tool of authority by means of which higher ranking and more educated clergymen could comment and give precepts to the members of the communities over which they presided. The

authority of the author would have been not only political but also scholarly. Even though the audience of a homily might have consisted of nuns and monks, the author would have selected the subject of the homily carefully and would have provided an easily accessible lesson that did not require any dangerous extrapolations on the part of the audience. Schlauch observes that "literacy in England declined sharply between 800 and the reign of King Alfred, then again after 990. Even the clergy were often ignorant of reading and writing, whether in Latin or the vernacular."[6] In Ælfric's introduction to his third set of homilies he admits being afraid to translate too many sacred texts into Old English "lest peradventure the pearls of Christ be had in disrespect."[7] Furthermore he mentions that complex books such as the *Vitæ Patrum* contain "multa subtilia [...] quæ non conveniunt aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere."[8] Perhaps Ælfric in expressing his concerns is envisioning here a figure, who, without scruples, would plow through the scriptures and other religious writings twisting their meaning to adapt them to his or her argument in a similar fashion to that adopted by Chaucer's Wife of Bath a few centuries later.

The elements of the *Homily on Judith* discussed above exemplify one type of didactic message found in homilies: namely, the focus on domestic issues and personal instruction as opposed to the explanation of a broad theological precept; It was normally the aim of the author of vernacular sermons to address those

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[5] We by no means lie.
[6] Margaret Schlauch, *English Medieval Literature and its Social Foundations* (London, 1956), p. 80.
[7] Walter W. Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS os 76-82 (London, 1881-1885), p. 3.

religious issues which troubled the members of his congregation in their daily lives. The vehicle of the message derived directly from the Church's literary tradition, but the message itself was adapted to suit the Anglo-Saxon audience. Thus, the most original element of any particular homily would have been those remarks directed at explaining the relevance of a particular story to its target audience; the same story could be told in different homilies with different lessons appended to it.

In the case of Ælfric's *Homily on the Book of Judith*, the paraphrase of the *Liber Iudith* stresses, according to Magennis, "the theme of pride and humility, which he finds in his biblical source, and he shares the Old English poet's interest in Judith's resolute faith, highlighting this by focusing on the faintheartedness among Bethulians."[9] However, the stress put on these themes is mild and the paraphrase follows quite closely the biblical source. Because of this, the body of Ælfric's homily offers few insights for the study of *Judith* that could not be gathered by comparing the poem to its Old Latin and Vulgate sources; one of these being that both authors downplay the Judaic background of the heroine. Indeed, all major criticism contrasting the *Homily* and *Judith* is generally focused on the revealing interpretations of the story that can be gathered from Ælfric's own comments on the text.[10]

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[8] [Many subtleties which are not opportune to reveal to the laymen, nor should we ourselves expect to fully understand.] *Ibid.*, p 2.

[9] Hugh Magennis, "Contrasting Narrative Emphases in the Old English Poem *Judith* and Ælfric's Paraphase of the Book of Judith", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 96 (1995), p. 63.

[10] See Magennis, *op. cit.*; Ian Pringle, "Judith: the Homily and the Poem", *Traditio*, 31 (1975), pp. 83-97; Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words* (Albany, 1970), pp.138-147; David Chamberlain, "*Judith*: a Fragmentary and Political Poem", in Nicholson and Frese, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation of John C. McGalliard* (London, 1975), pp. 135-159; and

In fact, the lesson proves to be much more important for the interpretation of *Judith* than the paraphrase to which it is attached. Magennis finds that in the *Homily* the "exegesis is a 'detachable' and highly selective commentary not on Ælfric's own paraphrase but on the biblical original."[11] In fact, the ideal of chastity, which is strongly emphasized in the exegetical passage, is barely focused on in the paraphrase. I have mentioned above that the same narrative could be the source for homilies with different didactic messages. Ælfric's *Homily* is a good example of this phenomenon, because he gives different interpretations of the story of Judith on two occasions. While Ælfric did not write two complete homilies dealing with the *Liber Iudith*, he expounded the meaning of the story both in the conclusion of his *Homily* and in a letter he sent to his correspondent Sigeweard.[12] The lesson taught by the *Homily* is addressed to a group of nuns and it invites them to take Judith as an *exemplum* of chastity triumphing over evil, while the letter to the layman Sigeweard suggests following Judith's example in the English resistance against the heathen Viking invaders.

At first, it would seem that the poet of *Judith* is not particularly influenced by the form and style of the homiletic genre because he appears more interested in describing the action and unfolding the plot than in expounding it. Furthermore, he does not use complex metaphors to prove the underlying meaning of his text, as is the case with *Exodus*; and he avoids a reflective

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for a study solely preoccupied with the homily, see Mary Clayton, "Ælfric's *Judith*: Manipulative or Manipulated?" *Anglo-Saxon England*, 23 (1994), pp. 215-227.

[11] *ibid.*, p. 61.

[12] The letter can be found in the edition by S. J. Crawford, *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, in EETS os 160 (London, 1922), p 48.

concluding passage similar to those found in *Juliana* and *Elene*. Nonetheless, we cannot deny *Judith* any didactic value; we find, for instance, occasions in which the voice of the poet emerges to make comments along the lines of "swa he deð anra gehwylcne / her-buendra þe hyne him to helpe seceð / mid ræde and mid rihte geleafan,"[13] ll.95b-97a. Moreover, the authors of homilies and the poet of *Judith* share a common desire to highlight those elements of a narrative which they see to be the most relevant to their audience.

In the specific instance of Ælfric's *Homily on the Book of Judith*, the address to the nuns at the end of the homily has been seen by Pringle as a parallel to what he claims to be *Judith*'s emphasis on chastity.[14] However, the theme of chastity, while certainly present in the poem, is far from being emphasized by the poet. Pringle is only able to support his thesis by pointing to the lewd attributes of Holofernes as an indirect reminder of Judith's virtue and by claiming that the appellative *mægð*, often applied to Judith, acts as a direct reminder of "nuns, virgin saints, *Ecclesia*, and the Virgin Mary."[15] A brief overview of the use of the term *mægð* in the context of Old English poetry will reveal that its applications are much more varied than simply indicating a virgin female figure.[16] Ælfric's letter to Sigeweard appears more relevant to *Judith*'s own message of brave resistance and strength in faith against heathen oppressors. In this letter, Ælfric

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[13] [As he does he does for each living man who seeks him for help with good sense and with true faith.]
[14] Pringle, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.
[15] *ibid.*, p. 96.
[16] For a discussion of the word *mægð*, see Patricia A. Belanoff, "Judith: Sacred and Secular Heroine", *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period; Studies in Honour of Jess B. Bessinger Jr.* (Kalamazoo, 1993), pp. 258-259.

suggests that the English should defend their land with weapons against the invaders but here too the parallels with *Judith* are not very direct. It is undeniable that the poet of *Judith* would have been aware of the allegorical relevance of his poem to the political situation in his own country. However, he does not plainly invite his audience to pick up arms, rather, he invites them to praise the Lord in order to receive His favor, ll. 94b-97a. None of the two interpretations of the story of Judith given by Ælfric appear to have heavily influenced the poet; however elements of both readings transpire in *Judith* and suggest ways the poem's audience might have understood the story.

The sermon and the Saint's Life both extrapolate lessons from the stories narrated. The stylistic influence of the hagiographic genre on medieval authors must have been great and the many surviving collections of Lives in both Latin and Old English can be taken to reflect their popularity. It seems likely that if any type of Saint's Life has influenced the author of *Judith* at all, it must be the life of one of the Christian heroines, because they represent females triumphant, because of their unified structure focusing on one key episode and adopting little or no introductory material, and because they utilize a limited set of characters. In fact, the author of *Judith* could have been inspired by Saints' Lives to endow *Judith* with a plot so rich in dramatic elements that it could easily and effectively be converted to a play.[17] In Cynewulf's hagiographies, dramatic elements are often stronger in the lives of female virgin saints than in those of male saints; the lives of male saints usually recall so many miracles occurring in disparate places and

over such extended time periods that the brevity of their description and their large number reduce most dramatic impact.[18]

The female Virgin Saints have in common the element of persecution by some corrupted heathen nobleman or official who is determined to deflower the holy maids and bend them to the worship of false gods; details differ from version to version but the structure remains unchanged.[19] The *Life of Saint Lucy* is an example of the many lives of female saints which are the source of such illustrious Old English poems as *Juliana* and *Elene* and which might have contributed to the composition of our poem. In the *Life of Saint Lucy*, only four lines of text out of 152 are dedicated to the introduction, and three lines at the end serve to conclude the story. The emphasis is therefore on the story proper, and the reader's attention is not allowed to wonder from that. Moreover, the actual story is unadorned and concerns itself strictly with either the miracles performed or the sufferings incurred by the saints. Just as the saint is alone in the foreground of the story as the chief champion of righteousness, evil is often personified by an individual or by a unified group. For instance, the *Life of Saint Lucy* gives us Paschasius as the embodiment of evil; in the story of St. Agatha we find the relentless Quintianus, while the legend of St. Agnes presents us with the evil trinity of Sempronius, his son, and Aspasius. In reference to female saints we must also note that the element of virginity always plays a key role; even the lives

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[17] Plays based on the history of Judith flourished around the 16th century. See Edna Purdie, *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* (Paris, 1927).
[18] See Ælfric's *Life of St.Swithun* and *Life of St. Basil* in Skeat, *op. cit.*.
[19] See Ælfric's *Life of St.Agnes* and *Life of St. Agatha* in Skeat, *op. cit.*.

of non-martyred women, such as St. Æthelthryth, depend heavily on the condition of virginity in order for the saint to perform miracles.

In the Bible Judith is never specifically addressed as a virgin, although we know of no offspring from her marriage to Manasses and we are reminded that she spent her widowed life in chastity. Still, in view of the great importance attached by hagiographers to virginity, it is perhaps surprising to find that the *Judith* poet underplays the restrained sexuality of his heroine and does not attribute her success to her chastity after marriage, which was for the Church Fathers a second virginity.[20] However, the focus on the sexuality of the heroines in various Saints' Lives often went hand in hand with titillating descriptions of saints being stripped naked and sent to whore-houses to be deflowered like common prostitutes, or details of naked breasts being cut off by evil tormentors.[21] By not focusing on the topic of Judith's sexuality, the poet does not have to follow the literary convention set by Saints' Lives and succeeds in presenting to his audience a Judith whose strength lies chiefly in her true faith, and who is not at all connected with the role of involuntary temptress suggested by the biblical text.

While Saints' Lives might not have had a great impact on the character development of Judith in the Old English poem, the other typical elements of that genre might have affected the aesthetic sensibility of the poet when wrestling with issues of style and form. If we accept Woolf's suggestion that the poem is

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[20] Aldhelm describes Judith's "pure chastity" and "pure body." See Aldhelm, *The Poetic Works*, James L. Rosier trans. (Cambridge, 1985), p. 159.

very nearly complete as it stands,[22]then the swift transition from the first few missing lines and the beginning of the action reflects the equally brief introductions and conclusions found in the *Life of St. Lucy* as well as other Saints' Lives. Moreover, the tightly organized structure of the poem, focusing on the main event in Judith's life and pitting her against Holofernes in a head to head battle between good and evil, reminds us of the form of the virgin martyrs' lives in which the author concentrates on the episodes leading to the death of the saint, using a limited cast of main players, often only the saint and her oppressor.

These similarities with religious prose are more stylistic than thematic and it is possible that the poet might have been influenced unconsciously by religious writings. The audience --their ears trained by the formulaic nature of Germanic poetry-- would likely be sensitive to the use of a specific phrase or formula repeated from some other poem. It is to the corpus of Old English poems that we shall turn our attention now in an effort to establish some of the links between *Judith* and the other Old English poems.

There are two major strains of influences in *Judith* originating from the poetic Old English corpus. The more obvious comprises the many Old English religious poems which preceded *Judith* or were tenth-century contemporaries. The second includes the poems which deal with what are often identified as the heroic elements of *Judith* (i.e. the banquet, the battle, the spoils). A third strain of influence, and one particularly close to *Judith* in conception, comes from the

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[21] See in particular Ælfric's lives of the Saints Agatha, Agnes, and Julian and Basilissa in Skeat, *op. cit.*.

confluence of the two preceding strains into poetry which combines the religious elements with heroic ones. By the tenth century there were various examples of religious poems, such as *Exodus*, which extensively combined Germanic elements with the biblical story. All of the poems examined in this chapter fall in this group, each striking a different balance of Christian and heroic elements. Some poems such as *Judith* add Germanic elements to a Christian tale, while others such as *Beowulf* reveal a biblical sensibility affecting a Germanic story.

From the vast body of religious poetry in Old English there are two groups of poems to which *Judith* has often been compared in the past. The first group, chronologically, is sometimes referred to as the Cædmonian school, and includes those poems found in Oxford, Bodl. Junius 11 (hereafter, Junius 11), which deal with biblical themes. The other group includes the poems generally referred to as Cynewulfian and those who followed his school;[23] out of this second group *Juliana* and *Elene* frequently have been compared with *Judith*. The Cædmonian school's interest in biblical subject matter and free paraphrase of the scriptures has been traditionally likened to *Judith* because of its focus on an Old Testament story. The other traditional association of *Judith* is with the Cynewulfian poems *Juliana* and *Elene* on the basis of their common concern with the deeds of a religious heroine. The following discussion will examine the Cædmonian poems first and then the Cynewulfian as representative of the religious/heroic poetry possibly available to the *Judith* poet.

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[22] Rosemary Woolf, "The Lost Opening of *Judith*", *Modern Language Review*, 50 (1955), 168-171.

The poems in Junius 11 --*Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel*-- have, like *Judith*, a biblical book as their immediate source. *Genesis* introduces the first characters in the collection who reflect the dichotomy of good versus evil: biblical figures that have either fallen from great heights or shone through the righteousness of their faith. Throughout the codex, Satan's fall sets the precedent for that of Pharaoh and of Nabuchodonosor, while Noah's steadfastness is a prefiguration of Abraham's, Moses', Daniel's and ultimately Christ's. *Judith* could very well be inserted between *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*, incarnating the spirit of Abraham, Noah, Moses and Daniel, and like them, prefiguring Christ. Similarly, Holofernes would have found his counterparts in Satan, Cain, Pharaoh, and Nabuchodonosor.

The contrast between good and evil is often expressed through the visual metaphor of light and darkness. This metaphor is archetypal and not original to Old English literature, showing up in earlier Latin works and in the Psalms.[24] In *Genesis A*, the theme of light versus darkness is more deeply explored in the passages dealing with the fall of Satan and his angelic followers. Heaven principally is a place of light, *wic...swegltorht*, [heavenly-bright residence], ll. 27-28b, and Hell one of darkness, *synnihte beseald*, [surrounded by eternal night], l. 42a. In *Judith* the Hell in which Holofernes' spirit is cast is also described as a *heolstran ham*, [shadowy home], l. 121a, where the captives are *þystrum forðylmed*, [enveloped by darkness], l. 118.

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[23] The term Cynewulfian school refers to the poems which bear the name as signature and those which share date of composition and stylistic details with them.
[24] See Psalms 1.2, 4.6, 11.2, 18.8, etc.

However, the use of the light and darkness metaphor is more likely an indicator of a common theme in religious writings than a direct link between the two poems. One significant detail related to this theme is the fact that Judith's attribute, *ælfscinu*, [elfin-bright], l. 14 , occurs nowhere else in the body of Old English poetry other than in *Genesis A*, ll. 1827, 2731, in reference to Abraham's wife Sarah. This word, by which the *Judith* poet attributes an unearthly radiance to his heroine, has been the cause of much critical discussion. Bosworth and Toller's *Dictionary* translates *ælfscinu* as 'shining like an elf or fairy, elfin-bright, of elfin beauty'. Cook, in his edition, translates the word as 'beautiful as an elf' in the glossary, and 'elf-bright' in the side-by-side translation. Timmer, in his glossary, follows Cook's translation, and also adds a footnote to the word indicating the ambiguity of its supernatural implications; on the one hand he quotes Grimm, "(*Mythology 444*): 'Probably then *albs* meant first of all a light-coloured, white, good spirit.'" On the other hand, he points out that "in *Beow* 112, the elves are mentioned among evil."[25] In *Genesis A* Sarah, Abraham's wife, is called *ælfscieno* when in different instances the Pharaoh and King Abim'elech become attracted to her, bringing upon themselves the wrath of the Lord. The negative implication of the *ælf* part of the compound suggested by Timmer loses its pagan connotation when attributed to two righteous women. By comparing Sarah and Judith, Huppé finds that in the latter poem "*ælfscinu* suggests synoptically both the allure and the danger of the beauty to the evil who desire to

[25] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.18.

possess it."[26] Judith is not the temptress she sometimes is accused of being,[27] but, like Sarah, her beauty is a danger for the weak of spirit.

Another connection between *Genesis*, and specifically *Genesis B*, with *Judith*, is the frequent use of hypermetric lines. Although Foster suggests that *Genesis B* was composed after *Judith*,[28] Timmer believes that "the large number of expanded lines in *Judith* [...] may well point to a familiarity with the *Later Genesis*, for *Judith* is the only tenth-century poem with such a large proportion of expanded lines."[29] Reflective passages or crucial ones are often narrated with expanded lines in both *Judith* and *Genesis B*, though these effects are not unique to the two poems, nor are they true of every occurrence of hypermetric verse in either poem.[30]

Finally, *Genesis A* shares with *Judith* an interest in battle narrative which is exemplified in the poem's expansion of martial descriptions from their respective biblical sources. The battle scenes in *Genesis* (ll. 1982-2005, 2039-2095) are rich in the traditional epithets and idioms of battle poetry, but might appear brief and isolated, a mere 79 lines out of 2936, when compared with *Judith*. However, considering that in the biblical source the battles are summarized in a few verses, the amplification by the *Genesis A* poet is a

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[26] Bernard F. Huppé, *Web of Words* (Albany, New York, 1970), p.159.
[27] See appendix two for more in depth discussion of views of Judith as a Temptress. Aldhelm, in the *De Virginitate*, claims that the story of Judith teaches the lesson that it is the adornment of women which causes the downfall of men. See Aldhelm, *The Prose Works* (Ipswich, 1979), p. 127.
[28] Gregory T. Foster, *Judith; Studies in Metre, Language and Style* (Strassburg, 1892), p. 37.
[29] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
[30] More exhaustive discussion of hypermetric lines and their purpose in *Judith* can be found in chapter four.

noteworthy precedent to the *Judith* poet's introduction of heroic elements in a biblical text.

Where *Judith* differs most from *Genesis* is in the very structure of the poem. Though the *Judith* poet does not shrink from expanding battle scenes, or omitting particular details (e.g., Judith's presence at the banquet) to suit his purpose, he never goes as far as to emend the biblical book with apocryphal material in the way the author of *Genesis* does. The whole event of the angels rebellion which opens *Genesis A*, ll. 20-77, and fills much of *Genesis B*, ll. 246-441, is foreign to the canonical text of Genesis, and derives from writings that are now seen as apocryphal.

Judith's lack of this type of interpolation reflects the author's intention of keeping the story a streamlined narrative with no sub-plots or actions ancillary to the central *veni, vidi, vici,* motif. That it would have been within his artistic capabilities and sensibility to include foreign material is illustrated by the fact that he indulges in the brief and lively description of the descent of Holofernes' spirit to hell, ll. 111a-121. Though the poet's use of this type of detail is skillful and purposeful,[31] he limits its inclusion to this occasion where it forms a natural break in the narrative between the section about Judith's personal triumph and the section about the triumph of her countrymen. In *Genesis* the many departures from the biblical text and the main plot serve a didactic purpose; while *Judith* also has undeniable didactic value, when compared to *Genesis* it displays a

[31] See discussion of these lines in chapter four.

greater emphasis on realistic detail and cohesive narrative flow than on catechism.

In Junius 11 *Genesis* is followed by *Exodus* which is a poem very close to *Judith* and which therefore is best left to be discussed last in the series of the Cædmonian poems. We can now briefly turn to *Daniel.* The most remarkable connection between this work and *Judith* is the description of the banqueting at the feast of Belshazzar, ll. 695-764. Both poets expand on the original narrative of the banquets in parallel ways; although the banquet scenes themselves are not invented, in both poems they are adapted to highlight the leader's blindness in the face of danger.

In *Judith*, Holofernes is blind to the fact that he is planting the seeds of future ruin for his men and himself by overindulging in wine. In his pride, the general does not realize that he is jeopardizing his military advantage, nor that he is paving the way for Judith's triumph. The author of *Daniel* puts Belshazzar in a situation similar to Holofernes' by rearranging the biblical sequence of events so as to mention the impending attack of the Medes upon the city of Babylon. The audience's response to the banqueting in view of this impending military threat is bound to focus on the proud blindness displayed by Belshazzar in not being able to understand the writing on he wall. Farrell reminds us that "the locale of Baltassar's [i.e., Belshazzar] final banquet, not included in the Bible account, is made very specific in the poem. The walled city is the place of protection and

enjoyment of all good things for Baltassar,"[32] just as the *Judith* poet shows Holofernes to be deluded into a sense of power and safety by being in his own tent, surrounded by his close retainers.

Farrell notes that *Daniel's* reduced amount of prophetic detail and emphasis on narrative portions give us a poem which has a structure of his own and could have been conceived plausibly without the inclusion of the last seven chapters of the Bible story, which are not in the Old English poem, because of either loss or intention.[33] In its selectiveness *Daniel* reminds us of *Judith* and offers a precedent in favor of the argument of those who believe *Judith* to be almost complete as it stands. However, *Daniel's* interpolation of the Song of Azarias within the main plot, the switch of focus from the three youths thrown in the fiery furnace to Daniel's relationship with Nabuchodonosor, and the overall lack of heroic detail make it a remote relation to *Judith*'s style of poetry.

Exodus is probably the poem stylistically closest to *Judith* in the manuscript as well as in the Old English poetic corpus. Like all the other works in Junius 11, it shares with *Judith* a biblical source for its plot, and it deals more specifically than *Genesis* and *Daniel* with the leadership of an Old Testament figure. Moses is the central character of *Exodus*; he is the leader of the Hebrews in much the same way as Judith: both of them lead their people to salvation through their resolute faith in God. But where the poet of *Exodus* encourages typological readings of his poem,

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[32] R. T. Farrell, *Daniel and Azarias* (London, 1974), p. 31.
[33] *ibid.*, p. 30.

Gif onlucan wile lifes wealhstod,
beorht in breostum, banhuses weard,

ginfæsten god Gastes cægon,
run bið gerecenod, ræd forð gæð[34]

ll. 523-526

the composer of *Judith* adopts a straightforward narrative vocabulary which makes any supposition of exegetical sub-text a subjective matter.

The primary source of both stories is the Bible, which in the early Middle Ages, as we have seen in chapter one, could have been based on different Latin translations or versions, either following the Vulgate or Old Latin Bibles or a mixture of the two and possibly further corrupted with patristic details. Lucas, in his edition of *Exodus*, points out that some of the details in the poem have closer links with the Old Latin Bible than with the Vulgate, indicating that the poet of *Exodus* might have been familiar with both or with a version of the Bible incorporating some elements of the Old Latin in its mainly Vulgate text.[35] Moreover, *Exodus* and the other Junius 11 poems show that both liturgical and patristic elements have contributed to the shaping of the poem, suggesting the likelihood that *Judith* was composed in a similar way.

Both *Judith* and *Exodus* show a propensity to isolate and enlarge the crucial events of their biblical sources, using them to present their message with great intensity. In *Judith* and *Exodus* the set of characters, the locations of the

[34] [If the interpreter of lifegiving knowledge bright-burning in the breast, the ruler of the body's house, will with spiritual keys unlock the lavish good there stored, then the secrets (of the writing) will be explained, forth shall counsel come.] Translation by J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Old English Exodus; Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford, 1981).

events, and the time of action are purposely limited to the bare essentials. Thus the strength of the poets' story is not diluted in the mind of their audience because of too many plot extraneous interpolations.

Judith and Moses display strong leadership backed by an unyielding faith in the Lord even at times when their companions' belief in God's grace had begun to weaken. The strength of both leaders' faith is instrumental in obtaining God's help to defeat their oppressors. Moreover, both Judith and Moses are shown to have military skills and the ability to rouse the spirits of their companions. In *Judith*, ll. 146b-198, the heroine returns to her disheartened compatriots and infuses them with new found hope --or even certainty-- of victory, and then proceeds to describe the battle plan to be adopted against the Assyrian enemy. Moses' leadership skill is most notably shown when, on the shores of the Red Sea, he directs the despairing Hebrews to take up arms and ready themselves for battle against a greater force, ll. 215b-361. In the following lines the Hebrew men are transformed from cowardly fugitives to courageous soldiers, and bravely follow Moses' injunction to cross the open Red Sea. Additionally, Moses is described from the opening of the poem with the attributes usually belonging to an Anglo-Saxon chief in heroic poetry,

> He wæs leof Gode, leoda aldor,
> horsc ond hreðergleaw, herges wisa,
> freom folctoga.[36]
>
> ll. 12-14a

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[35] Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 52 ff..

[36] [He was dear unto God, prince of his people, a leader of the host, sage and wise of heart, a valiant captain of his folk.] Translation by Tolkien, *op. cit.*.

The military attributes of the central characters are a manifestation of the importance of martial themes in both works. The poet of *Exodus* displays the extent of his interest in martial descriptions by freely elaborating on the biblical description of the Red Sea crossing and turning it into a description of the warlike Hebrews advancing on an enemy, ll. 220b-361. This expansion of the original plot echoes that made by the *Judith* poet in his work where, departing from the Bible text, the battle between Bethulians and Assyrians becomes the focal point of the second half of the poem, ll. 212b-341a. Possibly, the focus on battle scenes is due to the poet's desire to cater to an audience whose tastes had been shaped on the models of traditional heroic poetry. This theory would also account for the repeated use of sea imagery, *Exodus*, ll. 89, 15-106, 118, 133, 223, 331, 333, 479, to describe the Hebrew's journey out of Egypt. The language and symbolism of Christianity and seafaring are closely connected in Anglo-Saxon poetry, as seen in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*. Also, the detail in l. 199 about the Egyptians' desire to exterminate the Hebrews in revenge for the death of their own first born differs significantly from the biblical texts in which the Egyptians want to capture the Hebrews and lead them back to slavery; this might be a way to create a connection between the motive for the Egyptians' pursuit the Anglo-Saxon principle of *wergild*. Finally, both poems draw from the heroic tradition in their use of 'beasts of battle' to anticipate the fray, and in the use of anachronistic details associated with the contending armies, such as typical Anglo-Saxon weapons and equipment.

The linguistic link between *Judith* and *Exodus* is weak but worth noting nonetheless because it underscores the importance of the light and darkness imagery found in *Exodus* and *Judith*, as well as in the other Cædmonian poems. It is uncertain whether both poems make use of these themes because of borrowing, because of a genre convention, because they are archetypal, or because they are inherent to Christian doctrine in Latin, as well as Old English. Nevertheless, Lucas notes that the words *scir werod* in *Exodus* l. 125 echo l. 230 in *Judith* where we have *scirmæled*, and another Christian poem, *Guthlac*, l. 1288 has *scirwered*, thus suggesting a formulaic use of the phrase.[37] Furthermore the Egyptians of *Exodus* are turned into hellish enemies much the same way the Assyrians of *Judith* are; the adjective *ealdwerig* [vile of old] of *Exodus*, l. 50 echoes quite closely *Judith*'s *ealdgeniðla* [arch-fiend] of l. 228, *ealdfeond* [ancient foe] of l. 315, and *ealdhettend* [old foe] of l. 320. These attributes support the theme of a battle between heaven and hell, good and evil, present in *Judith* and in *Exodus*, ll. 45-46, in which *helle* and *heofon* are juxtaposed.

The focus of the Old English *Exodus* is very selective, concentrating mainly on the crossing of the Red Sea; this provides an antecedent for an Old English paraphrase of a biblical story which is limited to a key event, and supports the likelihood that the fragment of *Judith* that we have represents most of the original poem. However, *Exodus* is not as selective as *Judith* where there are none of the interpolated stories about other Patriarchs found in the Junius 11 poem. Moreover, the whole action of *Exodus* is less streamlined than that in

[37] Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 96 footnote to l. 125.

Judith which occurs within the space of twenty-four hours, conforming -- although certainly unwittingly-- to Aristotelian aesthetic standards. The length itself is an indicator that the *Exodus* poet is aiming at a different sort of effect than that achieved in *Judith*. Because of its brevity and greatly abbreviated plot, *Judith* can never hope to elicit the same kind of complex allegorical and typological readings which comprise the very texture of *Exodus*.

Whereas the poet of *Judith* shows the importance of steadfast faith by exemplum of the uncompromising Judith, the poet of *Exodus* blends the literal and figurative meanings of his work to create the image of the Hebrew people dressed for battle in front of the Red Sea, ll. 310 ff., which had earlier been called a shield for them. The image of the host in front of the open sea can be seen as a symbol of the Hebrew people's struggle with their own doubts, and their having faith in God by advancing into the uncovered abyss. Accordingly, the man who in ll. 310-314b first advances onto the *grenne grund* receives glory and reward from God, just as a brave soldier leading the attack on a physical enemy. The theme of faith, central to both *Judith* and *Exodus*, is complicated further in the latter poem by stating that the souls of the Jews who despair at the sight of the pursuing Egyptians are doomed, *fleah fæge gast* [the fated exile turned to escape], l. 169a. Thus the straightforward way in which steadfast faith is positioned as a desirable virtue by exemplum of Judith and Moses, is further elaborated in *Exodus* by showing how even the people of the Lord can be doomed, and how they have to struggle in spiritual battle to keep their faith.

Finally, *Exodus* differs from *Judith* in its use of supernatural elements. Details such as the two pillars leading the Hebrews through the wilderness as well as the parting of the sea are central and essential elements in the story. Nevertheless, the poet of *Exodus* does not limit himself to include these elements in his work, but, as Lucas points out, he works these elements into a typological frame which invites the reader to see them not only as supernatural phenomena, but as prefigurations of the Cross, Christ, Baptism, and Judgment Day.[38] Moreover, he assigns to the fire pillar roles not mentioned in the Bible,

> Hæfde foregenga fyrene loccas,
> blace beamas, belegsan hweop
> in þam hereþreate, hatan lige,
> þæt he on westene werod forbærnde,
> nymðe hie modhwate Moyses hyrde,
> scean scirwerod- scyldas lixton.[39]
>
> ll. 120-125

The idea of the fire pillar serving as a coercive means to maintain obedience is, according to Lucas, an influence of the commentaries.[40] The willingness of the poet to make much of these portents is in contrast with the way the poet of *Judith* seems to emphasize the human elements of the poem rather than the divine, insisting that God's role in the killing of Holofernes is only that of bestowing courage on the heroine.

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[38] Lucas, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-72.
[39] [Fiery locks that vanguard bore and gleaming rays of light; with hot fire and blazing terror he made threat against that embattled array that he would in the wilderness burn to nought their host, unless with hearts of courage they hearkened to the words of Moses.] Translation by Tolkien, *op. cit.*.
[40] Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 95 footnote to l. 121b-123.

The antagonistic relationship between holy heroines and God on one side, and Evil on the other is explored further in two poems traditionally associated with *Judith*: *Juliana* and *Elene*. Timmer tells us how "*Judith* in spirit belongs to the religious epics, especially those dealing with a female saint, such as *Elene* and *Juliana*."[41] And Cook affirms that "*Judith*, if not by Cynewulf's own hand, emanated from what, in the larger sense, might be termed the Cynewulfian school."[42] The two poems are reworkings of Latin versions of Saint Lives, and though they are not concerned with any biblical text specifically, they belong in this overview as examples of the kind of poetry which might have influenced the *Judith* poet's style as he was striving to describe his heroine and her strife against Evil.

In Cynewulf's description of Juliana we can indeed see a parallel with the *Judith* poet's own characterization of his heroine as straight dealing and resolute. According to Wardale, one of the critics of the text,

> in the Latin as in the Middle English versions she [Juliana] tries to temporize with Heliseus. First she refuses him till he shall have attained a certain rank. Then, when he has attained that and again comes forward, then and then only, does she declare that she will never marry a heathen. Among the Anglo-Saxons straight-forwardness was a much esteemed virtue if we may judge by such passages as that in which Beowulf rejoices in looking back over his past life, because he has not sworn false oaths. Cynewulf, to make his subject more acceptable to his public, and no doubt to satisfy his own sense of fitness, has made Juliana declare from the beginning that she will never marry Heliseus unless he will accept Christianity.[43]

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[41] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.11.
[42] Cook, *op. cit.*, p. xx.
[43] E. E. Wardale, *Chapters on Old English Literature*, (London, 1965), p. 172. (1st ed. 1935).

Likewise, the author of *Judith* decided to make his heroine more compatible with the Anglo-Saxon admiration of straightforwardness mentioned by Wardale. He modifies the biblical text in a way to hide the appearance of temptress which Judith has in the Latin version when she attends Holofernes' feast and deceives the general into thinking she greatly admires him. Having Judith abstain from attending Holofernes' banquet, the poet creates in the Anglo-Saxon version a heroine whose only weapon is faith and not wanton allures.

Moreover, Cynewulf extends his modification of the original text to affect the depiction of the villain of the story in order that his evil should not benefit from the mitigating elements found in the source. In connection with Eleusius, Woolf explains that,

> Cynewulf has considerably blackened the prefect's behavior. In the *Vita* (a Latin source of the story), Eleusius appears as an easy-going man, eager to marry Juliana, and willing to please her even to the extent of theoretically accepting Christianity: in fact, only refusing to be baptized for fear of the Emperor depriving him of both office and life.[44]

This is of course quite different from the Eleusius of the Old English poem with the result that "the struggle is then clearly between good and evil, and Eleusius is made as deliberately wicked as Juliana is good."[45] This is not to imply that the *Judith* poet goes out of his way to blacken further Holofernes' Latin-text persona. Rather, it shows the two poets' similar taste for a simplified plot, as

[44] Rosemary Woolf, *Juliana* (London, 1955), p. 15.
[45] *ibid.*, p.15.

straightforward as the character of their heroines. In *Juliana* the focus on a clear-cut battle between good and evil might be attributed to a desire to make it more effective didactically. After all, Saint Lives' were meant to be *exempla*, didactic tools of Christianization, and it is not surprising to see them adapted to a specific purpose. In comparison, *Judith* displays far less emphasis on sermonizing, and I have shown earlier how it incorporates so little of the Christian exegesis which expounds the story's Christian message in the patristic commentaries.[46] Compared to *Juliana*'s unambiguous simplicity of plot and clear aim to instruct, the potentially didactic function of Judith's battle against evil seems to be often underplayed by the poet.

Further contrast of *Juliana* and *Judith*'s didactic aims can be sought in their treatment of the issue of virginity. Woolf argues that ll. 28 ff. of the poem, where Juliana opposes the marriage to Eleusius by expressing her desire to remain a virgin for God's sake, do not derive from the Latin source of the story available to Cynewulf, the *Alia Vita*. Thus, "Cynewulf had before him either two versions of the legend, or one, which could not be the *Vita,* were it not for the possibility that the motive stated at ll. 28 ff. was Cynewulf's own addition, invented for the immediate effect of increasing Juliana's piety and religious devotion."[47] Seeing the relative freedom with which Cynewulf exploits the theme of "virginity-at-risk" which is implicit in the source, we must remark that the *Judith* poet's decision not to do the same in his work was prompted by a desire to

[46] See chapter two. Though Judith is at times set up as an exemplum, e.g. ll. 94b-97a, many other occasions for Christian teaching are ignored in favour of letting the poem's action flow unrestrained by secondary discussions around the main plot.

tell a story which focused on Judith's inner strength of will and faith; the story of an avenger, rather than of someone with something to lose, a potential victim. Indeed, the authority to emphasize Judith's virginity would not have been entirely the poet's own; not only did many Church Fathers focus on this aspect of the story in their commentaries, but, as discussed in the preceding chapter, virginity is praised by Joachim, the high-priest of Jerusalem, in a portion of the story expurgated by the Old English poet in his retelling of the events.

In *Elene*, Cynewulf takes less liberty with his characters and the plot than he does in *Juliana*. One editor of the text, Gradon, notes how "there is little in the poem which can be shown to be original."[48] By looking at what Cynewulf has not done with the character of Elene we can better appreciate some of the changes the author of *Judith* has made to the text. For instance, Elene's power is derived from her son, as indicated by the passage in ll. 212-224; she is subservient to him, although she could easily have been portrayed independently from her son, as is indeed the case in some of the Latin versions of the story.[49] Similarly, in the biblical accounts Judith is also introduced as a widow of a great man, Manasseh, and at the very end of the story both the Vulgate and the Old Latin versions mention the fact that she spent the rest of her life in her husband's house, and eventually got buried next to him. But although the shadow of Manasseh on Judith is less than that of Constantine on his mother, the author of *Judith* felt it necessary to remove any mention of his heroine's husband from the extant

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[47] Woolf, *Juliana*, p.14.
[48] P. O. E. Gradon, *Cynewulf's Elene* (London, 1958), p. 20.
[49] On this point see Gradon, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 ff..

portion of the poem, managing effectively to focus all the glory and honor on her and God.

Still, overshadowed by her son or not, Elene remains a much stronger figure than Judith in terms of political power and clout. It is therefore harder to draw parallels between her and Judith than between Judith and Juliana, who were both alone in their fight against Evil and had to risk death --Juliana even suffered it-- for the sake of their faith. Elene is surrounded by an army at all times; she always has the upper hand with her enemies, and she is never in the role of the underdog or even in a situation where a great strength of faith was necessary. In that respect, the opening section dealing with Constantine's vision and his adoption of the symbol of the cross reminds the reader of a hero closer to Judith than Elene. Constantine's hopeless position against the invading Huns, his leap of faith, and his victory all provide closer emotions to *Judith* than those evoked by the rather dull interrogation of the Jews undertaken by Elene.

Stylistically *Juliana*, *Elene* and *Judith* share a common use of epic phrase and vocabulary, but the handling of the source material is quite different. Traditionally, critics have pointed out that there are strong relationships between the language of the Cynewulfian poems and that of *Judith*.[50] But often this parallel is drawn from those instances in Cynewulf's poetry where he is drawing from heroic poetry in a similar way to that of the *Judith* poet. For instance, Cook demonstrates the close link between the description of the beasts of battle in

[50] Timmer, *op. cit.*; Belanoff, *op. cit.*; Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse, 1986).

Judith and in *Elene*. He goes on to give other details related to heroic poetry in order to show how

> this very poem of *Elene* contains much which reminds us of *Judith*. [...] Thus, for example, notwithstanding the different words which fill the spaces here left blank, the general sequence is of the same nature, and employs in part the same expressions:
>
> *Gewat ða ...*
> .... *gumena ðreate*
> *his beddes neosan*
> (Jud. 61-3)
>
> *Com ða ...*
> *þegna þreate* ....
> .... *burga neosan*
> (El. 150-2)
>
> [...] is there not much resemblance between the color and energy with which these two battle-pieces are painted?
>
> *Hie ða fromlice*
> *leton forð fleogan* ***flana scuras***
> *hildenœdran of hornbogan*
> *strœlas stedehearde; styrmond hlude*
> ***grame*** *guðfrecan, garas sendon*
> *in heardra* ***gemang****; hœleð wœron yrre,*
> *landbuende laðum cynne,*
> ***stopon styrnmode****.*
> *(Jud. 220-7)*
>
> *On þæt fœge folc* ***flana scuras***
> *garas ofer geolorand* *on* ***gramra gemang***
> *hetend heorugrimme hildenœdran*
> *þurh fingra geweald forð onsendan;*
> ***stopon stiðhydige****.*
> *(El. 117-21)*[51]

When Cynewulf is not dealing with martial detail, as is often the case, there is little in his language that reminds us of *Judith*. Besides the opening of *Juliana*, an epic *Hwæt!*, the narrative of the evil emperor Maximianus, and Eleusius' determination to bend Juliana to his will, half the poem is flat dialogue meant to be a catechism for the audience. Both language and action are unimaginative and repetitive, and just how many times does Juliana have to repeat slight variations of the formula *þu scealt furðor secgan*?

The fact that the author of *Juliana* was working directly from a Latin source is bound to have restricted his freedom to add extraneous details to his story. However, one cannot help but think that if he was able to add such details as that of Eleusius sinking to a hell reminiscent of a wine hall, he could have used his skill to liven up the text that preceded:

> Ne þroftan þa þegnas in þam þystran ham,
> seo geneatscolu in þam neolan scræfe,
> to þam frumgare feohgestealde
> witedra wenan, þæt hy in winsele
> ofer beorsetle beagas þegon,
> æpplede gold.[52]
>
> ll. 683-688a

Elene is also victim, though to a lesser extent that *Juliana*, of this unevenness of style. Wardale proposes that Cynewulf "set out to be a didactic

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[51] Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. xix-xx.

poet; his aim was to instruct, and he has allowed that aim to be too prominent."[53] This criticism is unfair if the works are to be judged by the standards of other religious didactic material in both Old English and Latin. However, in trying to establish which works out of the corpus are closest to *Judith*, Timmer's belief that "*Judith* belongs to the type of poetry to which *Juliana* and *Elene* belong"[54] must be rejected. Although, there is much that links *Juliana* and *Elene* to *Judith*, their epic value is inferior, just as *Judith*'s didactic value would probably be found wanting by Cynewulfian standards. Wardale argues that "the speeches in *Juliana* and *Elene* are too long and often too dull. In both works it will be seen that Cynewulf's gift was not for storytelling."[55] Perhaps a contemporary audience would have found much entertainment in Juliana's long interrogation of the devil; nevertheless, the *Judith* poet is a supreme storyteller, whose talent for sound plot structure manages to grip the audience's attention from beginning to end.

Another Cynewulfian poem, *Andreas*, is closer to *Judith* than either *Juliana* or *Elene* because of its martial tone, sense of adventure and wide use of heroic elements. Krapp finds that,

> *Andreas*, "the Christian *Beowulf*" as it has been called, is representative of a group of Anglo-Saxon poems in which Christian themes are treated in the spirit of the

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[52] [Those thanes did not need in that abode of darkness, the throng of companions in that deep den, to expect bestowed treasures from the chieftain, that in the wine-hall, above the beer-benches, they should receive rings embossed with gold.]
[53] Wardale, *op. cit.*, p. 173.
[54] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.7.
[55] Wardale, *op.cit*, p. 173

> secular, heroic poetry. Its great companion-piece in this group is *Elene*.[56]

But while the connection with *Elene* is by undoubtedly present, the epic feel of *Andreas* stirs the audience's imagination in ways much closer to *Judith*'s captivating action than to *Elene*'s verbal battles.

Although, throughout *Andreas*, many 'sermons' are incorporated in the form of direct speech, the poem's plot never feels static as it does in *Juliana* and *Elene*. In *Andreas* we are taken from Andreas' homeland to Mermedonia through an uncommon sea-voyage; the hero is described in a variety of situations: traveling, secretly infiltrating the Mermedonians, suffering torture, performing miracles through God, and more. In this respect, *Judith* is closer to *Andreas* than to *Juliana* and *Elene*. In *Judith* the action moves swiftly from the Assyrians' camp to Bethulia and finally to the field of battle. Judith is seldom described in a static moment, even though the poet had opportunities to do so; for instance, even though she does not take part in Holofernes' banquet, nor does she lead her countrymen to battle, we have no descriptions of what Judith was doing on both occasions, when, presumably, she was either resting or praying.

Both *Judith* and *Andreas* focus primarily on a single hero set against unlikely odds of success and who risks his/her life for the defense of God's faith. Judith and Andreas are warriors for Christ, their battles, in both victory and defeat, are fought on an extremely physical level, not principally on a verbal and intellectual one as in *Elene*, nor on a spiritual one as in *Juliana*. However, even

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[56] George P. Krapp, *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles* (London, 1906).

though *Judith* and *Andreas* describe a similar type of crusading Christian hero endowed with Germanic attributes, in the end the poems are quite different. First, the author of *Andreas* is more faithful to the *Acta Andeæ et Matthiæ*, its Latin source, than the *Judith* poet is to the *Liber Iudith*, so that the former poem retains a greater number of the didactic elements of the original. While Judith becomes an example to follow, because of her brave actions in time of need, Andreas is shown not only as a fighter but also as pious and eloquent during his lengthy conversation with the mariner/Christ, ll. 256-821. The eloquence of Judith is evident in the speech to her countrymen upon her return to Bethulia; however it is not as central an element of her character as it is of Andreas', because in *Judith* wisdom is seen mainly in the heroine's actions. The emphasis on wise action over wise speech has the effect of removing Judith from the common domain of Christian heroines whose faith is asserted through wise thoughts and words rather than by wielding swords. Judith has been presented as a valorous leader of the people, wise, courageous, and steadfast in her faith. However, this image has been achieved more through her actions than through epithets; and ultimately she is always 'God's maid' rather than 'God's thane'. She is never explicitly presented as a soldier of God, nor even as fighting *Godes camp* [God's war] like Andreas. Although her deed was warrior-like, she does not benefit from the support of a devoted comitatus such as the one that follows Andreas to Mermedonia even when its members were given leave to wait safely at home if they so wished, ll. 401-414. The typically Germanic idea of the faithful comitatus does not figure in *Judith* except in the distorted form of Holofernes' retinue

which flees unheroically upon discovery of their dead leader; even in this case, the idea of the comitatus is implied, and not directly expounded by the poet. Thus, in comparison with *Judith*, *Andreas* displays a greater concern for portraying its hero in the conventional Christian-heroic fashion of the warrior-Saint with all his epithets and attributes. After all we have discussed so far, it is perhaps not surprising to find that once again Judith, who did not conform to the female hero models of *Juliana* and *Elene*, also transcends the model of the male fighting-saint which would otherwise seem akin to her nature because of its bravery in action.

By reducing the number of speeches --such as the ones of Joachim and Azaria-- the pace of the action of *Judith* is quickened, resulting in a poem far shorter and with a more compelling plot than *Andreas*. Furthermore, while the *Andreas* poet did not concern himself greatly with the streamlining of plot, we find in *Judith* a unique willingness to cut the source material to its barest for the sake of unity of action, even at the cost of omitting some prime didactic material in the form of speeches. Conversely, the author of *Andreas* adds to his source original details drawn from Anglo-Saxon tradition more enthusiastically than the *Judith* poet, often tying it closely to its Christian meaning. *Andreas* develops the theme of the Christian soldier right from the beginning, calling the Apostles *þeodnes þegnas*, l. 3a. The following description of the Apostles in ll. 1-11a is full of heroic epithets which by extension refer also to Andreas, though he does not appear until later on.

Hwæt, we gefrunan on fyrndagum
twelfe under tunglum tireadige hæleð,
þeodnes þegnas No hira þrym alæg
cam<p>rædenne, þonne cumbol hneotan
syððan hie gedældon swa him dryhten sylf,
heofona heahcyning, <h>lyt getæhte.
Þæt wæron mære men ofer eorðan,
frome folctogan ond fyrdhwate,
rofe rincas, þonne rond ond hand
on herefelda helm ealgodon,
on meotudwange ....[57]

When Andreas does finally appear, his reticence to obey the orders of the Lord at once is slightly disconcerting and it constitutes his greatest sin (see ll. 926-932a). But when the Lord strengthens Andreas' faith he is once again described as one of the warfaring Apostles,

.... ne wæs him bleað hyge,
ah he wæs anræd ellenweorces,
heard ond higerof, nalas hildlata,
gearo, guðe fram, to Godes campe.[58]

ll. 231b-234.

The character of Andreas and the idea of a fighting saint were already developed in the Mediterranean world before reaching the shores of England, however, Anglo-Saxon poems such as *Beowulf* further defined the idea of

[57] Passages from *Andreas* are quoted from Kenneth R. Brooks, ed., *Andreas and the Fates of the Apostles* (Oxford, 1961). [Lo! in days of old we have heard of twelve famous heroes under the heavens, thanes of the Lord. Their glory in warfare did not lessen, whenever standards clashed together, after they separated as the Lord himself, heaven's high King, ordered them, prescribed [their] fate. They were famous men on earth, brave leaders and bold in battle, valiant warriors when shield and hand protected the helmet on the battle-field, the plain of doom.]
[58] [Nor was he timid of mind, but he was resolute for bold deeds, tough and valiant, not at all slow to fight, ready, eager for battle in God's war.]

'Christian' hero for the English. There is evidence for this in the many ties between *Beowulf* and the Christian epic *Andreas*. While in Anglo-Saxon culture Christian heroes have been endowed with some of the characteristics of Germanic heroes such as Beowulf, the protagonist of the longest Old English poem has undergone the opposite process: he and his adventure have been Christianized. In the final passage of the epic, ll. 3181-3182, Beowulf is called *manna mildust*, *monðwærust*, *leodum liðost*, and *lofgeornost*, [mildest of men, kind, gentlest to the people, and most eager for good reputation], adjectives which stress the hero's compassionate side rather than his ability as a warrior. Beowulf's behavior represents a pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon ideal of heroism which complemented the Church's idea of the Christian Soldier. Although he lacks the direct Christian relevance to Judith which Andreas, Elene and Juliana have, Beowulf is one of the purest expressions of the Germanic hero in Old English and offers a suitable standard against which to measure the nature of Judith's heroism.

Because Judith is bare of most of the heroic epithets which have been so freely bestowed on Andreas and found also in *Beowulf*, the influence of Beowulf on the character of Judith is to be sought in the very conception of the hero in the Anglo-Saxon consciousness throughout the centuries rather than in the linguistic echoes. Besides Beowulf, other characters in the epic, especially the figure of Wealhþeow, offer examples of Anglo-Saxon heroic figures that reflect values also found in *Judith*. Finally, the epic style of *Beowulf* is also of importance in connection with *Judith*, and a comparative study can help us grasp the extent to

which the poet of the latter poem wished to --or was able to-- adapt the epic tone to his composition.

Beowulf embodies the qualities of bravery and selflessness which are also a hallmark of Judith's character and are often associated with Anglo-Saxon heroes. However, in *Judith* these traits find their origin not in Anglo-Saxon morals or the inventiveness of the poet, but in the biblical source material. Therefore the remarkable result of the comparison between *Judith* and *Beowulf* is how much Jewish ideals of heroism conform to Anglo-Saxon ones. In fact, there are more similarities between Judith's code of behavior and Beowulf's (or Wiglaf) than there are between Judith and fellow religious heroines such as Juliana and Elene. Thus the altruistic bravery displayed by Beowulf in his single-handed fight with the monsters of the poem echoes Judith's own display of courage when she alone braves the terror of Holofernes. And when Judith puts all the confidence in the Lord and hopes that her actions might grant her God's help, we are reminded of Beowulf who claims that "...Wyrd oft nereð / unfægne eorl, þonne his ellen deah," ll. 572b-573.[59] Although one form of belief is Judeo-Christian and the other pagan, both emphasize a reliance upon one's own actions designed to affect the outcome of a strife by eliciting the favor of God or that of Fate. Whereas Juliana is forced in her situation by Eleusius' choice, and Elene is ordered to her quest by her son, Beowulf and Judith volunteer to take on their opponents for the good of a larger group, the members of which are daunted by the unlikely odds of success for their hero or heroine.

A similar example of courage is afforded by Beowulf's faithful retainer Wiglaf. When the threat of the dragon proves too much for the men in Beowulf's retinue only Wiglaf is mindful of his duty and his oaths to his lord. He does not fear to put his life in danger knowing that should Beowulf die, the whole kingdom would collapse, as he himself explains later in ll. 2884-2891. Judith displays a similar concern for the well-being of her compatriots even though they themselves are not willing to take on the fight against their enemy. The type of heroism advocated by the biblical story, i.e., fidelity to one's Faith and Lord even in the face of death, would have been easy to appreciate by the audience of *Judith* who was used to seeing the actions of one good character enhanced by comparison with the cowardly behavior of his companions.

Interestingly, we know of no female equivalent to Beowulf in Old English literature, although the idea of a female warrior was familiar to Germanic societies in the form of valkyries. Because there is no model of heroine against which to compare Judith, her heroic behavior is seen as conforming to traditional male standards; just as the heroes in Beowulf, "hæfde ða gefohten foremærne blæd / Iudith æt guðe,"[60] ll. 122-123. However, it is unlikely that the poet wanted to give us a portrait of Judith as an androgynous heroine since he emphasizes many of her feminine attributes, describing them in terms fitting for a Anglo-Saxon noble woman. Whereas the characterization of Judith along models of male heroism is sanctioned by the events of the biblical book, the use of attributes

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[59] [Fate often saves the undoomed warrior when [his] courage is strong.] F. R. Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburgh* (Lexington, Massachussets, 1950).
[60] [She had then won eminent glory, Judith in fight.]

reflecting a model of Anglo-Saxon femininity requires more invention on the part of the poet.

The poet constructs his Judith to match an ideal of Anglo-Saxon femininity by emphasizing the Jewish elements akin to the Anglo-Saxon or by inventing others to suit his purpose. *Beowulf* provides us with the example of Wealhþeow, the queen of the Danes, who embodies most of the virtues valued in women by Anglo-Saxon culture.[61] The epithets used in her description are the stock ones used to compliment women in Anglo-Saxon poetry and that are also found in *Judith* where they help to make the Jewish Judith more of a familiar character to the poem's audience.

The character of Wealhþeow represents a treasure-hoard of epithets and adjectives relating to beautiful and noble women of Anglo-Saxon origin. The most significant descriptions of Wealhþeow occur during the banqueting scenes narrated when the Geats are received in Heorot, ll. 612-665, and when Beowulf succeeds in killing Grendel, ll. 991-1250. There she is described repeatedly as *goldhroden*, [adorned with gold], ll. 614, 640, an adjective also used in connection with the beautiful and haughty Modþryðo in l. 1948, and with Freawaru, Wealhþeow's daughter, in l. 2025. Wealhþeow is further described as *beaghroden*, [adorned with bracelets], l. 623 and as wearing a *gyldnum beage*, [golden circlet], l. 1163. In poems like *Beowulf,* the mentioning of jewelry in connection with a queen and a noblewoman is formulaic, often adding only parenthetical information to the plot. However, when Judith's precious ornaments

are mentioned by the poet, it cannot be dismissed as instinctive formulaic usage, because the insertions of such details require a deliberate departure from the source text on the part of the author. Moreover, neither the Judith of Ælfric nor Cynewulf's Juliana and Queen Elene are described as wearing such tokens of nobility as those attributed to Judith in the poem. In turn she is described as *beagum gehlæste*, [ring adorned], l. 36, *hringum gehrodene*, [decked with bracelets], l. 37, *beahhrodene*, [adorned with bracelets], l. 138, *golde gefrætewod*, [adorned with gold], l. 171, and at the end of the poem, ll. 335-342, her countrymen bring bracelets and gems from the Assyrian's hoard. It appears that after bestowing his Judith with elements of Anglo-Saxon male heroism, the poet wanted to portray a side of Judith's personality that would be less threatening and more familiar to his audience.

Another way in which the poet is able to soften the androgynous edge of his Judith is by showing that she is full of wisdom of both a religious and social nature. Repeatedly her wisdom is described: *gleaw on geðonce*, [wise in judgment], l. 13, *ferhðgleawe*, [sagacious], l. 41, *searoðoncol*, [discerning], l. 145, and *gleawhydig*, [prudent], l. 148. In her discernment she is matched by Wealhþeow who is not so openly praised by the *Beowulf* poet, but whose wisdom in her behavior is proved by her words and actions. Wealhþeow is certainly aware of the etiquette, privileges and responsibilities of being a queen; she is powerful, yet she is aware of her subordinate status to her lord Hroðgar. Similarly, Judith's wisdom is not only based on the epithets to describe her but on her speeches and

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[61] Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Bloomington, 1984), pp. 26, 35, 172.

actions. The poet gives proof of her wisdom when she encourages her compatriots and invites them to take up arms, rather than taking over the role of the army commanders and elaborating a detailed plan of action, as it is the case with the biblical text. Lucas remarks that

> as a woman Judith cannot be a Germanic chief with his comitatus. But she can be diametrically opposed to an example of how not to be one, thus gaining stature by contrast, negatively rather than positively.[62]

While I agree with the main thrust of Lucas' suggestion, I believe that Judith's status in the poem is not merely an indirect function of Holofernes' poor leadership. In fact, the poet does not negatively increase her stature as a 'male' leader; rather, he makes his heroine conform to the Anglo-Saxon ideal of a female leader, most notably embodied by Queen Æthelflæd of Mercia, and allows Judith to shine in her own feminine greatness.

Besides the shaping of the character of the heroine, the form and the plot of *Beowulf* also are important in relation to *Judith*, because both poems are considered epics; the first is traditionally known as 'the first/oldest English epic', while the latter has often been classed as 'a religious epic'. However, *Beowulf* is unmatched in length and epic scope, so that there are no other comparable Old English heroic narratives against which to test *Judith*'s merits. In places, the poem about the savior of Bethulia demonstrates an Anglo-Saxon heroic sensibility: the importance of warfare is predominant, as is the idea that great

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[62] Peter J. Lucas, "Judith and the Woman Hero", in Andrew Gurr, *The Yearbook of English Studies; Medieval Narrative Special Number*, vol. 22, (Cambridge, 1992), p. 22.

leaders prove themselves in battle in moments of hardship. However, *Judith*'s brevity and compact structure go against *Beowulf*'s many departures from the main plot and the large number of characters which populate the poem. The plot elements in *Judith* often find equivalents in *Beowulf.* Besides the similarity between Wiglaf's situation at the end of *Beowulf* and Judith's own predicament, which was discussed above, there are further similarities in the battle scene in Grendel's underwater cave and Judith's decapitation of Holofernes. In both scenes the protagonists are alone in the lair of their enemy, both are at a loss as to how to dispatch their foe effectively, and in both cases God intervenes in their favor, after which both warriors notice swords that they had not noticed before and by means of which they manage to overcome their enemies by cutting their neck (the scene in *Beowulf* extends to include also the decapitation of Grendel.) Although the instances of similarity between *Judith* and *Beowulf* are limited, those that do exist suggest that, at least in part, the poet chose the story of Judith because the main structure of the poem was already appealing to an audience used to Anglo-Saxon epic poetry.[63]

Finally, a few words on the poem of *Brunanburh*, which Foster and Cook,[64] among others, saw as indebted to *Judith.* The battle-poem of *Brunanburh* is a heavily stylized work which has adopted the form and expressions of traditional heroic poetry. *Brunanburh* can be considered more recent than *Judith*, although the poem is composed as an entry for the annal of 937 and is therefore

[63] Perhaps the Nowell Codex collator's decision to place *Judith* and *Beowulf* next to each other was not only influenced by the craftmanship of the same scribe on both poems; but also dictated by what he felt were thematic similarities between the texts. See chapter one.

fairly close to the date of composition of *Judith*. Its relevance in connection with *Judith* lies in the fact that we can use the poem to help us date *Judith*; however, since most of the earlier body of heroic poetry is lost to us, this poem offers the chance to see what elements of traditional poetry were considered important enough to be included in such formal poetry and then to compare those elements with those found in *Judith*.

While there are a few verbal correspondences between *Judith* and *Brunanburh*, the two works are completely different in execution, form, and inspiration. Moreover, since Foster shows that *Brunanburh* has as many verbal links with poems other than *Judith*,[65] the importance of the connection is enfeebled. Similarly, the strength of the connection of the meter of the two poems is lessened when we consider that the style of annal poetry is very artificial and there is no certainty whether it is exemplary of contemporary verse or purposefully archaic. If the style is contemporary then *Brunanburh* could be used as evidence for a late dating of *Judith*. On the other hand, if it is imitating older poems, as Greenfield suggests,[66] it is a compliment to the poet of *Judith* that his style of poetry should achieve the status of a classical model. Whatever the case, the main link between the two poems lies in the conception of heroism exemplified in *Brunanburh* which can also be detected in the fundamentally religious poem of *Judith*. Once more bravery in battle is praised as the only way to achieve success. This theme, encountered previously in *Beowulf*, must have

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[64] Foster, *op. cit.;* Cook, *op. cit.*.
[65] Foster, *op. cit.*, Appendix C.

been very dear to the *Judith* poet who includes the lines "hæfde ða gefohten foremærne blæd / Iudith æt guðe,"[67] ll. 122-123, even though Judith does not enter any battle [*guð*] herself.

From Ælfric's *Homily on Judith* to *Brunanburh,* this chapter has proved that *Judith* is a very complex poem. It is a work rich in elements of religious thought, selectively adopting the techniques of religious prose; it is full of heroic spirit --yet not as secular as *Beowulf,* and religious in theme --yet not as allegorical as *Exodus.* Its style is dignified both because of the subject and because of the treatment, and it reminds the reader of eloquent Cynewulfian poems; at the same time, however, it is fast moving, exciting and full of action in a way that resembles more closely some Cædmonian poems than *Juliana* or *Elene.* Together with the information in the preceding chapter about the patristic works on Judith, the comparisons made here will help us define the aims of the author of *Judith,* and to discover what he intended to be the purpose and audience of the poem.

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[66] Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature,* 2nd ed. (London, 1986), p. 149.
[67] See n. 61 for translation.

= Chapter 4 – Stylistic Analysis and Reading of the Poem =

Judith is no mere paraphrase of a Biblical book, it is a vibrant poem which even in its current fragmentary state can positively compare with the best works of Old English poetry. The pace of the action is masterful, being at times suspenseful, at times pressing, yet always keeping the audience's attention keen. The language feeds from the word-hoard of the best heroic poetic tradition to support the structuring of the poem around traditional themes of Anglo-Saxon literature. The plot is schematic and elegantly simple when compared to the majority of the longer Old English poems. Because of the tight unity of the poem, the lack of any lengthy moralising, and the colorful details which distinguish the poem, a modern reader is likely to find more aesthetic appeal in *Judith* than in a work of the complexity of *Beowulf,* the sermonizing of *Juliana*, or the digressing of *Elene.* I intend to examine the poet's artistry in an effort to understand better the complexities of the poem and to reveal at least in part the intentions of its author.

Thematically, the poem can simplistically be described as a struggle between good and evil. The poem firmly places Judith, God and the Bethulians on the side of good while Holofernes and the Assyrians are rooted equally firmly on the side of evil. This dichotomy is further emphasized through specific contrast between Judith and Holofernes. The struggle between the two central characters has already been studied in the light of wisdom and heroism by focusing of the ways the poet creates an opposition between the wise Jewish

heroine and the unwise anti-hero.[1] I propose to re-align the opposition using the idea of leadership as the key to the dichotomy of the poem. The advantage of this approach lies in the wide gamut of qualities and attributes which are intrinsic to the Anglo-Saxon concept of leader and leadership; heroism, wisdom and faith are all attributes which make up the ideal leader or, when absent, its antithesis.

Stylistically, the contrast between Judith and Holofernes is underscored by the poet's use of alliteration, vocabulary and structural patterns. However, the author's skillful use of the tools of his trade is not limited to enhancing the one theme of opposing leaders. The poet also created a captivating, swift-moving tale, based chiefly on the *Liber Iudith*, but not to the point of becoming a mere paraphrase of it; moreover, the poem served a didactic purpose while remaining highly entertaining. Structure, syntax, vocabulary, and meter will all be examined in turn in an effort to demonstrate how they contribute to the overall theme.

Because *Judith* is a fragment, a poem metaphorically without a head, any criticism of it must be based on an understanding of the poem as either almost complete or as a fraction of a much longer paraphrase of the Biblical original. Within the present discussion I align my approach to the text with Rosemary Woolf's rejection of Timmer's theory and with her idea of an effectively complete *Judith*.[2] In fact, the internal aesthetic structure of the poem favors such a view in ways which will be discussed in the course of the present chapter.[3] To

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[1] Margaret Locherbie-Cameron, "Wisdom as a Key to Heroism in *Judith*", *Poetica (Tokyo); An International Journal of Linguistic-Literary Studies,* 27 (1988), 70-75.

[2] R. E. Woolf, "The Lost Opening to the *Judith*", *Modern Language Review,* 50 (1955), 168-172.

[3] For additional information about the length of the poem see chapter one.

Woolf's theory I would also add Lucas's suggestion that the section numbers reflect the existence of three further gatherings containing perhaps biblical paraphrases numbered *seriatim* with *Judith*.[4] For the present purpose it is not necessary to delve any further into theories about the poem's original length; suffice to say that the extant fragment is self-contained, with the exception perhaps of some twenty lines of information about Judith's journey to the Assyrians' camp.[5]

It is dangerous to make too much out of themes developed in the surviving fragment since the missing lines, however few they might have been, could have contained enough information to alter at least some of our interpretations. And although Woolf rightly pointed out that, "short of the discovery of a manuscript continuing the whole work, no speculation concerning the lost portion of the *Judith* can be quite final,"[6] there are elements in the extant lines prominent enough to make it unlikely to have been contradicted in an earlier, missing, passage. Similarly, the existing structure of the poem has a cohesion of its own which would not be completely negated even if it were a small part of a much longer poem.

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[4] Peter J. Lucas, "The Place of *Judith* in the *Beowulf*-Manuscript", *Review of English Studies,* 41 (1990), 463-478.

[5] It might be worth to keep in mind that a criticism of my position lies in the rather speculative idea that if we only had the first half of *Beowulf* we might consider that fragment almost complete just as Cook, Woolf, and others have seen *Judith* as virtually complete on purely aesthetic grounds.

[6] Woolf, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

The structure of *Judith* has been analyzed and studied by various critics of the poem, as discussed in the introduction.[7] However, most of these studies impose a rather artificial symmetry on the poem at the cost of distorting the reading of a particular passage in order to establish a weak or sometimes non-existent link to its corresponding passage in the structure. It is wiser to note that while there is a certain regularity in the structure of the poem, it is never enforced with mathematical precision. This usually appears to be the case with all Anglo-Saxon poetry, even in poems as heavily structured as *Deor*. My understanding of the structure of *Judith* is based on a division of the poem in the following sixteen narrative units[8]:

A-	1-7	(7)	Introduction
B-	7-34	(28)	The Banquet
C-	34-57	(24)	Judith to the Tent / 46-54 Fly-net Description
D-	57-73	(17)	Holofernes' Failed Evil Plan
E-	73-97	(24)	Judith's Asks God's Help
F1-	97-111	(15)	Decapitation
F2-	112-121	(10)	Holofernes' Soul Journey into Hell
G-	122-141	(20)	Return to Bethulia
H-	141-198	(58)	Judith Fills Countrymen with Hope and Shows the Enemy's Head
I-	199-235	(38)	Attack of Bethulians / 205-212 Beasts of Battle
J-	236-261	(27)	Terror and Hesitation of Assyrians
K-	261-267	(7)	Hebrews Keep Charging
L-	267-291	(27)	Discovery of Decapitated Body and Flight
M-	291-323	(33)	Final Pursuit
N-	323-349	(27)	Picking of Spoils / Spoils to Judith
O-	342-350	(9)	Judith Praises God

[7] See Ian Pringle, "*Judith:* the Homily and the Poem", *Traditio,* 31 (1975), 83-97 and James F. Doubleday, "The Principle of Contrast in *Judith*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 72 (1971), 436-441.

This outline roughly follows Cook's[9] own division, although in this form it provides a more organized structure while avoiding limiting the flow of meaning from the text by the imposition of rigid and artificial structures.

The divisions above are subjective to a certain degree, although few would argue against such obvious breaks in the narrative as those which occurs between section F2 and section G at the middle of the poem, or between J, K and L towards the end of the poem. The exact number of lines in any specific section can be increased or decreased in order to account for those transitional sentences which could belong to either preceding or following section. However, a glance at the chart above will reveal a preponderance of sections whose length falls roughly between twenty-two and thirty-two lines. This seems to be the standard compositional unit of *Judith* even though the poet by no means restricts himself by expanding or contracting each narrative unit to fit the twenty to thirty line pattern. The presence of occasional shorter passages such as F2, K and O is not evidence of the poet's inability to maintain an even distribution of lines per unit, rather it shows how *Judith*'s author managed to infuse a vitality into his poem which derives in part form his opportune breaks from a set pattern.

Divergence from the twenty to thirty line passage norm, such as the brief sections F1 and F2 and the lengthier section H, contribute to the overall stylistic effect. Sections F1 and F2 bear enough distinctions in tone and topic to warrant their grouping as separate narrative units; section F1 narrates the moment of

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[8] Please note that these narrative units differ from the 19 plot elements shared by the OE, Vulgate and Old Latin versions of the story, and which are discussed in Chapter 2.
[9] Albert Cook, *Judith; an Old English Fragment,* 2nd ed. (Boston, 1889), p. xxxix.

Holofernes' decapitation with above average fidelity to the text of the biblical sources, while section F2 is a parenthetical comment about the fate of Holofernes' soul. Nevertheless, there are sufficient similarities to view F1 and F2 as a composite twenty-three lines long unit which contrasts with the preceding section focusing on Judith. In section E Judith is armed physically and spiritually, while in F1-F2, Holofernes dies both a physical and a spiritual death. By cutting his standard narrative unit in half, the poet effectively manages to catch his readers by surprise with his sudden switch of focus from the beheaded Holofernes to the descent into hell of the general's soul. Both the physical and the spiritual aspects of Holofernes' defeat are thus emphasized individually, so that the passage ends up echoing section E which preceded them. Moreover, the clear-cut shift of focus from Holofernes' body to his soul severs the unit in two sections and acts as a reminder of the severed state of the Assyrian general's body.

The opposite process can be applied to the lengthier section H. Lines 141 to 198 form a cohesive narrative unit: the preceding section focused on Judith and her handmaid traveling back home after the slaying of Holofernes, then, on l. 141, the reader's attention is drawn to the Bethulian guards who first witness the return of their heroine. A fifty-nine lines long passage follows in which we are shown the interaction between Judith and her people as the poem's focus begins to shift from the leader to the followers. When the transition is complete, the section is followed by one in which the Bethulian army takes center stage in their fight against the Assyrians. The whole of section H can be seen as being made up

of two sub-sections, one ranging from l. 141 to 170, and the other from l. 171 to 198. First Judith is outside the gates of Bethulia talking to her countrymen and bidding them to come and greet her, then, from l. 171 forward, she talks from inside the city gates and produces the head of Holofernes in order to encourage his people to battle. Both events are part of one large narrative unit quite discernible from those which precede and follow, but also separate in their unity.

By modifying the basic unit of composition of the poem, the poet manages to vary the emphasis of different sections of *Judith*. The frequent occurrence of narrative units which fall between twenty-two and thirty-two lines in length does not presuppose a rigid compositional structure. Eight of the sixteen units fall in the average-length group. To these I would add section A, of which, as I have previously suggested, roughly twenty lines of text are missing, turning the section into a standard narrative unit.[10] Three of the remaining sections, F1, F2, and H, as mentioned above, play with the basic unit of length by doubling or halving it. The remaining four sections do not keep to the poem's average number of lines in a passage being either longer or shorter than the average passage; of these, the last one, section O, needs no further discussion as it merely provides a coda to the poem. The first section to come short of the average size is D which is only seventeen lines long. The narrative in this section tells about Holofernes' plan to *mid widle and mid womme besmitan*, l. 59a, [to stain with defilement and with foulness], Judith and of its ultimate failure because of God's intervention. The whole scene shows Holofernes spiraling ever more quickly toward disaster and

the slightly shorter length of the section reflects the poet's desire quickly to drive his narrative forward.

The shortest section in my outline is section K. It could be argued that this is indeed no section at all as it comprises only three sentences, in the midst of two sections dedicated to describing the confusion in the Assyrian camp. However, this short passage has the important function of juxtaposing the preceding and following sections. Renoir has shown how the technique applied in this passage can be effectively compared to that of the film medium;[11] the action cuts from the hesitating Assyrians of section J to the swift moving Bethulians, relentlessly hacking their way through the Assyrians. The effectiveness of the technique lies on the flash-like brevity of section K. The poet catches his audience by surprise by interrupting the familiar rhythm of the narrative with a staccato beat.

Finally, two short sections are interpolated within the larger structure of sections C and I. In the first instance there is a description of the golden fly-net hanging in Holofernes' bedchamber when Judith is brought inside by the guards. Again, the action has a cinematic element to it, with the poet forcing our attention on the detailed close-up of the net. The focus on this object fascinates the reader by the beauty of the finely wrought gold, while it simultaneously creates apprehension for the well-being of Judith who is soon to meet the baleful owner of the evil-charged net. This detail does not advance the plot, but it shows Holofernes' level of corruption: he distrusts his own men and spies on them from behind the golden curtain, which in turn is a testimony to his moral excesses. The

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[10] See discussion on chapter one.

scene-setting description complements the earlier part of the narrative section by increasing the audience's apprehension after the short narration of Judith's arrival in Holofernes' tent.

The second interpolated section deals with the Anglo-Saxon formula of the beasts of battle. This passage has a greater narrative identity than the preceding one, as it acts as a premonition of the events about to unfold. The traditional passage about the beasts of battle that often accompanies battle scenes in Anglo-Saxon poetry is here adapted to coincide with the unavoidable victory of the Bethulians. To the sound of the shields clashing in l. 205 the wolf rejoices and so does the raven because *wistan begen / þæt him ða þeodguman þohton tilian / fylle on fægum* [both knew that the men of that country intended to prepare for them a feast on the fated]. Thus, even the beasts of battle, who normally are indifferent to the outcome of the battle as long as there are enough corpses to fill their hunger, are aware that victory is imminent on one side and their meat will come predominantly from the fated Assyrians. Significantly, section I, which contains the beasts of battle interpolation, fits the standard section range if the interpolated section is omitted.

Section H, as noted above, is almost double the length of the second longest, and is made up of two sub-units separated at l. 171 when Judith finally enters Bethulia after her glorious deed in the Assyrians' camp. Furthermore, section H occurs at the mathematical middle of the poem if we accept, as I suggest, that *Judith* is missing only twenty lines at its beginning. The placement

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[11] Alain Renoir, "*Judith* and the Limits of Poetry", *English Studies,* 43 (1962), 145-155.

of such an extensive narrative block at the middle of the poem suggests that the poet meant to draw attention to the passage by dedicating double the amount of lines normally allocated to other plot sections. Interestingly, the long passage marks a turning point as well as union in the structure of the poem since by the end of the passage the poet shifts his focus from Judith to the Bethulian army. By extending its reach to both halves of the poem, section H creates cohesion and continuity in the plot; the whole section generally revolves around Judith.

Thematically, the feeling of impending crisis suggested by the length of the section is reinforced by the gradual change of focus which occurs in the passage; Judith, the protagonist of the first section of the poem, is passing the torch to her countrymen who will become key figures in section I, while the first half of section H has Judith still firmly in charge. She bids her countrymen come and greet her from outside the wall of Bethulia, empowered as she is by the token of Holofernes' head. But while Holofernes' head served as a tool of personal empowerment in the first half of the section, in the second it becomes the means of public empowerment. As Judith orders the head of the Assyrian general to be publicly displayed, there is a flow of power from Judith to the Bethulians. Her role is done, and she has given them the means to fight their brave battle, just as God had granted her the courage to go through with the beheading of Holofernes. Structurally *Judith* is overall divided into two halves, the first deals with the contrast between Judith and Holofernes by juxtaposing their respective leadership skills, the second, of equal length and importance, shifts the direct contrast between the two leaders to a comparison between their respective followers.

Having examined the larger structural units, I wish to consider some of the ways in which the author has enriched his tale by crafting carefully balanced passages that are a testament to his artistic skill. One of the reasons many critics have claimed that *Judith* is almost complete as it stands is based on the envelope pattern created by the echoing lines at the beginning and end of the poem. Recently, traces of the pattern found at the extremities of the fragment have been shown to exist in modified form towards the middle of the poem,[12] but their presence requires emendation of missing text and lax structural links, as opposed to the simpler cyclical pattern set by the echoing *þe heo ahte trumne geleafan / a to ðam Ælmihtigan*, ll. 6b-7a, [because she had firm faith, always in the Almighty] and *þæs ðe heo ahte soðne geleafan / a to ða(m) Ælmihtigan*, ll. 344b-345a, [because she had true faith, always in the Almighty].

The very opening of the poem offers another excellent example of symmetrical construction. The fourteen lines at the beginning of the Cotton manuscript divide themselves neatly in two sections of equal length. The first section, ll. 1-7a, deals with Judith and tells about the Lord's gracious answer to her faith and need, while the rest of the passage focuses on Holofernes and his thanes. The duo of God and his handmaid is set in opposition to Holofernes and his army. This contrast, which is not yet antagonistic, is further evidenced by *Ælmihtigan*, l. 7a, alliterating with *Holofernus*, l. 7b, at the fulcrum between the two sub-sections, so that the two characters, as well as the ideas and individuals connected with them, are distinguished and yet locked in a bond of opposition.

[12] Martina Häcker, "The Original Length of the Old English *Judith*. More Doubt(s) on the

The contrast between the Judith/God team and Holofernes is accentuated by the tone of the passages; the earlier seven lines dealt mainly with spiritual matters, faith and grace, while the latter seven are more pragmatic, mentioning a banquet and its organization and details of Judith's arrival in the camp. At the end of manuscript section IX, regardless of the passage's fragmentary nature, it is clear to the reader that there is an opposition between God and Judith on one side and Holofernes on the other. However the nature of the conflict is still unclear.

It is important to note that up to this point Holofernes has not committed anything really evil; he has even been called *rice þeoden*, l. 11b, [a great lord]. Any sense of uneasiness about the situation derives from familiarity with the story compounded by the poetic oppositions created by the poet in this passage and the fact that Judith found herself in her moment of highest need. With this knowledge there can be no doubt in the audience's mind about who is going to emerge victorious from this contest not only because the story was renowned but also because the *gumena baldor*, l. 9b, [leader of men], i.e. Holofernes, would have to compete against the *mæran Þeodne*, l. 3a, [great Ruler], *hehstan deman*, l. 4a, [highest Judge], and *frymða waldend*, l. 5a, [Lord of creation]. There is a sense that the more spiritual Judith represents Good while the banqueting Holofernes is on the side of Evil, but this perception should not depend on condemning Holofernes as evil just because he is less spiritual than Judith and he is holding a banquet. While this idea of Evil might be adequate for puritanical thinking, an Anglo-Saxon audience might not have frowned so much upon the

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'Missing Text'", *Leeds Studies in English*, 27 (1996), 1-18.

idea of a banquet.[13] The example above has given occasion to consider some of the ways in which meter and lexicon can contribute to the plot features underscored by structure. These separate elements often occur together within the context of a specific section combining layers of poetic effects.

Individual sentences in *Judith* can be as carefully structured as its plot and contribute to the meaning of the poem. The greatest area of interaction between plot structure and syntax is in the lines which mark a boundary between two structural units. On l. 7b, the beginning of section B, the poet switches dramatically from the third person narrative which had characterized the preceding section to the more direct first person form of *gefrægen ic*. The change is rather abrupt and is probably meant to signal the fact that the story proper is about to unfold by drawing attention to its teller. The verbs soon revert to third person, but there is an interesting transitional sentence at the end of section IX in which the length of time of Judith's permanence in the Assyrians' camp is recorded: *þæt wæs þy feorðan dogore* [it was on the fourth day].

Frequently continuity and cohesion are achieved by making the object of a preceding sentence the subject of the following one, such as in ll. 55b-59a,

> .... Eodon ða stercedferhðe
> hæleð heora hearran cyðan, þæt wæs seo halige meowle
> gebroht on his burgetelde. Þa wearð se brema on mode
> bliðe, burga ealdor, þohte ða beorhtan idese

[13] Hugh Magennis, "Adaptation of Biblical Detail in the Old English 'Judith'", *Neuphilogische Mitteilungen*, 1983 (84), 331-337. Magennis suggests that when the poet calls Bethulia a *medoburg* in l. 167, he is showing that he had nothing against drinking *per se*.

mid widle and mid womme besmitan.[14]

Here the object *hearran*, i.e., Holofernes, becomes the subject of the next sentence, *se brema*. Similarly the passages beginning at ll. 97, 170, 267, 290, 342 adopt the same technique which eases the transition between the various narrative sections, even though, at times, the subject of a sentence becomes the object in the following one, rather than *vice versa*, or the indirect object of a sentence might become the subject of the one that follows. Line 141 represents a further variation of this process which requires some poetic license in identifying the wall of Bethulia, used as indirect object at the end of section G, with the guards on the wall who become the subject of the first sentence of section H:

... Hie ða beahhrodene
feðelaste forð onettan,
oð hie glædmode gegan hæfdon
141 to ðam wealgate. Wiggend sæton,
weras wæccende wearde heoldon
in ðam fæstenne ...[15]

ll. 138b-143a

Another important characteristic of the syntax in *Judith* is the relative simplicity of most clauses. When compared with most of the works in Junius 11, or even those signed by Cynewulf, *Judith* displays a lower number of complex clauses. Naturally, subordinate clauses are by no means uncommon, but rarely do

[14] [Then the stout-hearted went, the men to their lord, to inform that the holy woman was brought in his pavilion. Then the one noble in spirit was happy, the lord of the forts, he thought to stain with defilement and foulness that spotless lady.]

we find more than one subordinate clause appended to the main one. Even when there are two subordinate clauses the clarity of style is still evident:

Ealles ðæs Iudith sægde
wuldor weroda dryhtne① þe hyre weorðmynde geaf
mærðe on moldan rice swylce eac mede on heofonum
sigorlean in swelges wuldre② þæs ðe heo ahte soðne geleafan
a to ðam ælmihtigan③[16]

ll. 341b-346a

The principal clause (1) has Judith as subject and God as indirect object while in the following clause (2), Judith and God switch grammatical functions; God becomes the subject and Judith the indirect object, thereby suggesting reciprocity. First Judith shows true faith and receives strength, then she glorifies the Lord once she has been granted success.

The action in clause (2) is subordinated to (1) thus emphasizing that the exchange between Judith and God is a linear, and not simultaneous, process of cause and effect. Furthermore, the focus placed on Judith's action in the main clause reminds the reader that it is Judith's turn to give something to the Lord. A theological complexity is made clear by the simple grammatical construction.

Finally, the last clause (3) completes the poet's recapitulation of the process of interaction and reciprocity between Judith and God which punctuates the plot of the poem. We are told that the reason for Judith's success in the

[15] [Then they, adorned with rings, hurried on the path ahead, until, exultant in spirit, they had reached the rampart-gate.]
[16] [Judith for all this gave glory to the Lord of hosts who gave her honor, power in the kingdom of earth just as reward in heaven, a recompense for victory in the glory of heaven because she always had true faith in the Almighty.]

Assyrian camp and her reward in heaven is dependent on the fact that she always had faith in the Almighty. The connection between clause (2) and (3) is, once again, straightforward; the conjunction *þæs ðe* indicates one more level of subordination in a cause / effect relationship with the preceding clause. The conjunction introduces the primary reason for the action that precedes it, so that the chronological order of cause and effect is reversed from the natural order: (3) 'because she had true faith' (2) 'God gave her honor and rewards' (1) 'and she gave glory to him'.

In the passage examined, the poet's whole theological belief is summarized in these subordinate clauses. This arrangement underscores the consequential element of the relationship between Judith and God by separating their interaction throughout the poem in three stages. The stages are reversed syntactically, but chronologically exact, thanks to the use of the appropriate subordinating conjunctions which also help the passage to remain clear and swift-moving.

The occurrence of parallel clauses does not hinder the flow of the poem either. In other Old English poems the cumulative effect of parallel phrases results, when successful, in spiraling accumulations of meanings, which achieve a complex description of an event. Unfortunately, the flow of a particular passage can also be hindered by repetition of similar concepts which sometimes border on the redundant. The three parallel sentences of *Genesis* l. 54b-60a offer an example of what is good and bad about this practice,

... Þa he gebolgen wearð
besloh synsceaþan sigore and gewealde,
dome and dugeðe and dreame benam
his feond, friðo and gefean ealle,
torhte tire, and his torn gewræc
on gesacum swiðe selfes mihtum
strengum stiepe.[17]

The first two clauses express similar ideas with no tautology. In the first one God punishes the rebellious angels by depriving them of pragmatic things such as victory, power, authority and wealth; in the second God deprives them of spiritual things: happiness, peace, all joys and shining glory. However, the third clause is a summary of both ideas and provides no additional information to the reader. Its purpose is chiefly the ornamentation of an otherwise complete passage.

In *Judith*, parallel clauses and phrases often succeed one another in a brief paratactic series, such as in l. 23 where Holofernes *hloh and hlydde / hlynede and dynede*. At other times parallel clauses are linked with a succession of *þa*; for example, after the prayer to God, there is a quick succession of events by which Judith is shown first to become divinely inspired, then to seize the body of Holofernes and lastly to cut his head off. In this sequence we can witness a variety of parallel clauses linked both by conjunction and parataxis.

... Hi ða se hehsta Dema
ædre mid elne onbryrde, swa He deð anra gehwylcne
herbuendra, þe Hyne him to helpe seceð

[17] [When He grew angered, He deprived the evil-doers of victory and might, of glory and power and He deprived of joy his enemy, of peace and all gladness, of shining glory, and powerfully avenged His anger on the adversaries by overthrowing [them] by His own strong might.]

mid ræde and mid rihte geleafan. Þa wearð hyre rume
on mode
haligre hyht geniwod genam ða þone hæðenan mannan
fæste be feaxe sinum, teah hyne folmum wið hyre weard
bysmerlice, and þone bealofullan
listum alede, laðne mannan,
swa heo ðæs unlædan eaðost mihte
wel geweldan. Sloh ða wundenlocc
þone feondsceaðan fagum mece
hetenþoncolne, þæt heo healfne forcearf
þone sweoran him, þæt he on swiman læg
druncen and dolhwund.[18]

ll. 94b-107b

The scene of violent action is linked by the *þa* clauses. Initially it is God who is the subject, giving Judith courage; then Judith takes over as the initiator of action. I translate *þa* in lines 97b and 98b as 'then', rather than 'when', as I believe this construction creates the necessary sense immediacy. The active verbs *genam*, *teah*, *sloh* add to this sense, as do the hypermetric lines, ll. 97-99.

An extended example of the important role of the connective particle *þa* can be found in l. 54b ff. The series of *ða*-clauses which drive the action forward makes the listener wait with anticipation to discover what the next 'then' is going to bring.

54 ... Hie ða on reste gebrohton
snude ða snoteran idese. Eodon ða stercedferhðe
hæleð heora hearran cyðan þæt wæs seo halige meowle

[18] [The highest Judge then inspired her forthwith with courage, as he does for each living man who seeks him for help with good sense and the right faith. Then she was elated in spirit, confidence was renewed to the holy woman. She then seized the heathen man fast by his hair; shamefully, she pulled him with her hands towards her, and with skill laid down the wicked man, the hateful man, as she might most easily manage the miserable one. Then the curly haired struck the enemy, the hostile-minded, with the gleaming sword, so that she half cut through his neck , and he lay swooning, drunk an wounded.]

gebroht on his burgetelde. Þa wearð se brema on mode
bliðe...
...
... Gewat ða se deofulcunda
galferhð gumena ðreate
bealofull his beddes neosan þær he sceolde his blæd
forleosan
ædre binnan anre nihte. Hæfde ða his ende gebidenne
on eorðan unswæslicne, swylcne he ær æfter worhte,
þearlmod ðeoden gumena, þenden he on ðysse worulde
wunode under wolcna hrofe. Gefeol ða wine swa druncen
se rica on his reste middan...
...
... Þa wæs Nergendes
þeowen þrymful, þearle gemyndig
hu heo þone atolan eaðost mihte
ealdre benæman ær se unsyfra
womfull onwoce. Genam ða wundenlocc,
scyppendes mægð, scearpne mece
scurum heardne and of sceaðe abræd
swiðran folme. Ongan ða swegles Weard
be naman nemnan Nergend ealra
woruldbuendra ...[19]

ll. 54b-82a

The first three *ða* clauses set the scene for apparent disaster. Judith is brought to Holofernes' bed, then he is informed of her arrival, and then he prepares to *mid widle and mid womme besmitan* [stain with defilement and with foulness] the Bethulian heroine. We expect the next *ða* to bring us one step away from Judith's defeat, and just when we are about to lose our faith that things will turn out for

[19] [When they quickly had brought to bed the prudent woman, then the stout-hearted men went to their chief to inform him that the prudent woman was brought to his pavilion. Then the noble in spirit was happy...Then the devilish one, the wanton with troops, the evil man, left to seek his bed, where quickly, in one night, he would lose his glory. He awaited then his bitter end on earth, as he, the stout-spirited lord of men, had striven towards from the start while he dwelled on earth under the clouds' roof. The ruler then fell so drunk with wine in the middle of his bed...Then the Lord's peerless maid was truly concerned of how she might most easily deprive of life the terrible one before the impure foul man awoke. The curly-locked, the Creator's maid,

the best, the poet introduces God who does not wish Judith to be stained *mid womme.* In this passage, ll. 59-61, God is given military epithets, *þrymmes hyrde,* and *dugeða waldend,* which invite a comparison between the way Holofernes leads his men to sin at the banquet, and how the Lord protects his maid from evil. The following group of *ða* clauses is anti-climatic, as we now know that God has not forgotten Judith and that salvation is at hand; thus, we follow the poet's prophecies of Holofernes' doom, as well as the account of his excessive drunkenness, which leads him to forget his earlier grim resolutions about Judith. The soldiers who escorted Holofernes have carried him to his bed for the last time. All seems well for Judith, but the next *ða*, l. 73, warns us that it is not all over yet, because Judith still has to think of a way to eliminate Holofernes. In l. 74, Judith is called, for the first time in the poem, the Lord's *þeowen*, a very appropriate appellative in this context because it indicates that she is the instrument, i.e. 'handmaid', of the Lord's vengeance. Nevertheless the initiative has to come from her, so that Judith first grabs the sword from the head of Holofernes' bed, and only then turns to God for strength and courage. In this course of events the reader is taken through a roller-coaster of emotions, worry, false security, and renewed hope. The poet thus manages vividly to impart to his audience the Christian lesson that God does not forget his children in their hour of need, but it is up to them to take salvation in their own hands. This is clearly the type of message that the poet would want to convey if, as some critics have

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then grabbed a sharp sword, brave in battles, and she drew it from the sheath with the stronger hand. Then she began to address by name the Guardian of heaven, the Savior of humanity.]

argued,[20] *Judith* is supposed to be a poem with a political message encouraging the people in England to unite in the name of God and repel the heathen invading Danes.

On the whole, the syntactical style of the poet suggests that the author meant the poem to be swift moving and clear. The narrative units are often tied together by a sentence that streches from the end of one to the beginning of the other, creating smooth transitions points and driving the narrative forward. Moreover, the poet shows his skill in the masterful shaping of certain passages where the theme of the poem is 'brought' by the syntax and diction. In studying the syntax of passages we risk to lose a certain objectivity, as Greenfield warns when he claims that, "there is much unprovable, much subjectivity in inference; and perhaps, too, many of the syntactic features and word-order arrangements [mentioned] are but the concomitants of the demands of meter, alliteration, and formula."[21] I believe, however, that in *Judith* the poet consciously applies specific syntactic constructions to suit the tempo and atmosphere required by his tale.

The final stylistic element directly affecting the structure of the poem is metrics, including alliteration. One of *Judith*'s most distinguishing metrical features is its vast number of hypermetric lines. Little less than twenty percent of the lines in the poem are hypermetric; Pope counts 136 of such extended half-

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[20] A strong supporter of this view is David Chamberlain, "*Judith:* a Fragmentary and Political Poem", in *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation* (London, 1975), 135-159.

[21] Stanley B.Greenfield, "Syntactic Analysis and Old English Poetry", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen,* 64 (1963), 373-378.

lines out of the 698 which make up *Judith*.[22] As we have seen previously, the exact number of hypermetric lines is a matter of critical debate.[23] Nevertheless, most of the extended lines in *Judith*, with the exception of ll. 290-291, appear in groups of three or more, so it is safe to comment on such groupings even if the hypermetric nature of one of the half-lines can occasionally be debated.

The extended line seems to be a relatively late feature of Old English poetry, especially in the case of the longer type of expanded line found in *Judith*.[24] Clemons Kyte rightly sees hypermetric verse as an evolution from regular verse:

> the increasing frequency of hypermetric as well as anomalous verses is often related to chronological development, suggesting that expanded verses were a predictable outgrowth of the normal verses which constituted the basis of alliterative poetry.[25]

The occasional departure from the 'standard' two-stress form would suggest that, at times, the poet placed meaning before metric uniformity. It is in fact easier to understand these shifts in meter from a thematic point of view than from a rhythmic one, seeing them, for instance, as dictated by reflective passages.

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[22] John Collins Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf; An Interpretation of the Normal and Hypermetric Verse-Forms in Old English Poetry* (New Haven, 1942), p. 100.
[23] See the example of l. 287 in chapter two.
[24] Gregory T. Foster, *Judith: Studies in Meter, Language and Style* (Strasbourg, 1892). However, Amos reminds us that hypermetric lines are scarcely a valid criterion for dating Old English poetry even though they occur with greater frequency in later poems. Ashley Crandell Amos, *Linguistic Means of Determining the Dates of Old English Literary Texts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980), p. 97.
[25] E. Clemons Kyte, "On the Composition of Hypermetric Veses in Old English", *Modern Philology*, 71 (1973), 160.

However, to some extent, we can appreciate how the sustained rhythm of a group of hypermetric lines can underscore a particular passage.

An insight into the role of hypermetric lines can be gained if we look at them separately form the normal lines of the poem. The longer lines form enough of a break from the rhythmic pattern of the poem to be discernible even by an untrained modern ear, and their difference from the surrounding text would have been even more evident to a contemporary audience. The very opening of the fragment can be read as the first long line of a hypermetric passage extending to l.12 which deals with the introduction of the central characters of the poem, God, Judith, and Holofernes. This passage is followed by ll. 16-21 and ll. 30-34, both hypermetric, which describe the planning and sinful end of Holofernes' banquet. From ll. 54-68 (l. 63 in the passage is normal) Judith is once more at the center of the attention in a long, suspenseful description of her escorted arrival to Holofernes' tent, God's intervention, and the crushing of the general's plans against Judith. Part of Judith's prayer to the Lord is then recounted in hypermetric verse in ll. 88-99 (l. 96a is normal). The isolated hypermetric l. 132 tells of Judith's departure from the Assyrians' camp together with her servant. The confusion of the Assyrians caused by the Hebrew's attack is the subject of the hypermetric passage in ll. 272-274a, and the subsequent despair on discovering the headless body of Holofernes finds expression in l. 287 (here accepted as hypermetric) as well as ll. 290-291. Finally, in ll. 338-349 Judith is rewarded by her people and she sings her praises to God who granted her success.

According to Foster, the passages in *Judith* made up of hypermetric lines tend to be those which focus on some key element of the story; the long verse would provide the basic narrative embellished by the portions of normal verse which provided the details of the story in a metrically regular form suitable for musical accompaniment.[26] However, when compared to the narrative units of the poem, the story told by the collected hypermetric verses lacks some of the crucial points of the main narrative. Especially prominent is the lack of any hypermetric lines dealing with Judith's return to Bethulia; her display of the gory head of Holofernes, and her speech of encouragement to her countrymen are all missing from the story narrated in the hypermetric passages. The absence is further emphasized when we consider that three hypermetric passages, ll. 7b-12b, ll. 16-21, and ll. 30-34, are used to describe three different stages of the narrative episode concerning Holofernes' banquet.

The syntactic and thematic imperfection which characterizes most of the hypermetric passages encourages further resistance to Foster's theory about these verses. The following lines illustrate one of the many instances in which the beginning of a passage of extended verse does not coincide with the narrative beginning of the specific episode.

Ic ðe frymða god and frofre gæst
bearn alwaldan biddan wylle
miltse þinre me þearfendre
ðrynesse ðrym. Þearle ys me nu ða
87 heorte onhæted ond hige geomor
swyðe mid sorgum gedrefed. Forgif me swelges ealdor

[26] *ibid.* pp. 37-39.

sigor and soðne geleafan þæt ic mid þys sweorde mote
geheawan þysne morðres bryttan. Geunne me minra
gesynta,
þearlmod þeoden gumena nahte ic þinre næfre
miltse þon maran þearfe. Gewrec nu mihtig dryhten
torhtmod tires brytta þæt me ys þus torne on mode
hate on hreðre minum.' Hi ða se hehsta dema
95 ædre mid elne onbryrde swa he deð anra gehwylcne
herbuendra þe hyne him to helpe seceð
mid ræde and mid rihte geleafan. Þa wearð hyre rume on
mode
haligre hyht geniwod. Genam ða þone hæðenan
mannan
fæste be feaxe sinum teah hyne folmum wið hyre
weard
100 bysmerlice ond þone bealofullan
listum alede laðne mannan
swa heo ðæs unlædan eaðost mihte
wel gewealdan.[27]

ll. 83-103a.

Although Judith's prayer to God begins in l. 82, the verses remain regular for the first five lines. The hypermetric passage does not start until l. 88a with the concluding clause of a sentence whose subject, *hige*, can be found in l. 87b; therefore, the beginning of the passage does not make complete sense unless it is read in connection with the preceding lines of regular verse. Moreover, on l. 96a,

[27] The following is my very literal translation, preserving the structure of the half-lines: [I, You, God of creation, and Spirit of comfort, / Son of the Almighty, wish to implore / your favor for me needy [of it], / Majesty of the Trinity. In me now exceedingly / the heart is heated and the soul downcast, / greatly perturbed with distress; bestow on me, Lord of Heavens, / triumph and true faith, so that I might with this sword / slay this distributor of terror; grant me my salvation / Powerful Ruler of men: I did not have ever of our / grace the greater need: now avenge, great lord, / Glorious Distributor of glory, that [which] to me is grievously in spirit, / ardently in my heart." Her then the Highest Judge / inspired with courage forthwith, as He does for each one / of the living men who seek Him to help them / with good sense and with the right faith. Then was she elated in spirit, / confidence renewed to the holy [woman]; she seized then the heathen man / fast by his hair, she pulled him with the hands toward her / shamefully, and the wicked one / laid down cunningly, the hateful man, / as she of the miserable might most easily, / well manage.]

in the midst of this extended passage of hypermetric verse we find an isolated half-line of regular verse breaking the flow of what Foster had identified as a passage "doubtless intended to be delivered in recitative."[28] Finally, in l. 99, the hypermetric passage ends as abruptly as it started by resuming normal verse in the middle of a sentence.

It should be clear by now that the sole purpose of the hypermetric lines is not to provide a summary of the salient points in the poem, since not all of these points are narrated in expanded verse; nor is it the poet's intention to emphasize verse which should rather abruptly break from the flow of the poem, otherwise the beginnings and ends of these hypermetric passages would coincide with the beginning and end of sentences and narrative passages, so that the *scop* would not have to alter narrative voice in mid-sentence. I believe that the occurrence of hypermetric lines does not reflect an overall plan in the mind of the author. In *Judith* extended verse appears to be a localized technique adopted when the poet allows his meaning to influence the meter. Foster's remark about the importance of the topics covered by hypermetric lines in *Judith* is still true; however, the use of extended verse is not triggered by rhetorical considerations, as Foster would have us believe, but by the emotional poignancy of a specific passage.[29] Though there is still little known about the nature of hypermetric verse in Anglo-Saxon poetry, its appearance in *Judith* seems to be dictated by a sudden inspiration of

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[28] Foster, *op. cit.*, p.39.

[29] Adeline Courtney Bartlett, *Larger Rhetorical Patterns in Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (New York, 1935), p. 70.

the poet who would not so much change tone or pace as much as enrich the rhythm for a few lines.[30]

It is within the microcosm of the specific incidence of these passages that we should look for the poet's rhetorical skills and not exclusively on a broad scale. The hypermetric passage quoted above opens after a wonderful description of opposing feelings in Judith's heart and soul, l. 87. The heart is 'terribly excited' while the soul is 'sad' and, in the following half-line, the audience's attention is drawn to the verb *gedrefed* [oppressed] referring to the subject *hige*, thus prolonging the audience's consideration of the heroine's distressed soul. This effect is achieved through the skillful use of the hypermetric form: the audience is momentarily tricked into thinking that *swyðe mid sorgum* completes l. 88a because the double alliteration of the first words indicates a complete half-line. However, the reader longs for a resolution to the incomplete clause, and that resolution comes, metrically as well as syntactically, in the form of *gedrefed* thus underscoring the importance of this past participle in contrast with the *onhæted* of l. 87a. Judith's psychological and physical state is here succinctly and jet vividly described in the space of three lines. *Heorte onhæted*, modified by *þearle* [terribly], paints a picture of Judith almost quivering, perspiring, nervously awaiting to strike; to this febrile state of the heroine the poet juxtaposes a

[30] As it is suggested by Burton Raffel in "Judith: Hypermetricity and Rhetoric", in Lewis E. Nicholson and Dolores Warwick Frese, eds., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation* (London, 1975), pp. 124-134. An effort to see larger rhetorical patterns in the occurrence of hypermetric passages has been made more recently by Constance B. Hieatt in "*Judith* and the Literary Function of Old English Hypermetric Lines", *Studia Neophilologica,* 52 (1980), 251-257. In her article, Hieatt points out envelope pattern connections between the various hypermetric passages; the study is insightful but what remains doubtful is the importance of the

description of the state of Judith's soul in which the length of the hypermetric passage echoes metrically the weight that is afflicting the character's spirit. The composite image is that of Judith grasping the sword with white-knuckled, quivering hands; beads of sweat are forming on her brow as her brain commands the hand to strike and the limb refuses to move in fear and hesitation.

The localized importance of hypermetric lines is particularly relevant if we accept metric theories, such as Hoover's.[31] Because he views alliteration, and not stress, as the crucial element of Old English meter, a hypermetric line would in effect not be much different from any line of regular verse with double alliteration. When the emphasis is put on stress, however, the extra stressed measure of the hypermetric lines needs to be accounted for; this sometimes results in Hoover's need to create fairly complex tables showing how the line types designated by Sievers can occur even when an extra breath-group adds an extra stress to the verse. For instance, Bliss' presentation of the classic stress-based approach to Old English meter is extremely clear. However, the idea of overlapping verse types in hypermetric lines presents a major break from the meter of regular verse.[32] This break might be exactly what extended verse is all about, as Foster had suggested, but I think that the frequent occurrence of hypermetric verse beginning in mid-sentence and the occasional appearance of an isolated hypermetric line are good reasons to believe that the contrast between

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hypermetric construction in connection with the occurrence of the envelope pattern examples which also occur in regular verse.

[31] David L. Hoover, *A New Theory of Old English Meter. American University Studies*, vol. 14 (New York, 1985).

[32] Alan Bliss, *An Introduction to: Old English Meter* (Oxford, 1962). pp. 25 ff..

regular and hypermetric verse is much less marked than traditional theories would lead us to believe.

The occurrence of a line of regular verse in the midst of a hypermetric passage is a positive sign that the poet is choosing his metrical form discerningly. In l. 96a, the relevance of the word *herbuendra* is accentuated by the surrounding sea of hypermetric verse. Burton Raffel, who provides a helpful look into the phenomenon of hypermetric lines in *Judith*, finds no explanation for the occurrence of l. 96a aside from suggesting "the possibility that there was *no* reason, as we usually understand the word, for the shift. It happened; the poet felt like it; he did not feel that he needed a 'reason', nor did his audience."[33] Raffel believes that the hypermetric passages are generally meant to slow down the rhythm of the poem and/or to give it some elevation. His approach limits the expressive potential of hypermetric verse, and results in his overlooking of the emphasis placed on the single word *herbuendra* by its isolation within a passage of extended verse. From l. 94b, the poet tells us about the gifts bestowed by God on Judith through the same extended verse pattern which characterized her prayer. All of a sudden, in the middle of a slightly sermonizing passage generically referring to *anra gehwylcne*, the audience is metaphorically 'grabbed by the ear' and shown the relevance of what it is being said to them. This is achieved by zooming in on a one-word verse which stands out from the surrounding text not only through meter but also through prosody, alliteration and syntax, since the word is not essential to the sentence construction and it

emphasizes, through natural and alliterative stress, the *her* part of the compound *herbuendra* [those dwelling here].

In general, the extra 'space' on the hypermetric lines allows the poet extra freedom to play with his other stylistic tools so that hypermetric lines are, at least in *Judith*, more an accomplice to poetic effect than a poetic effect *per se*. In the same passage examined above, ll. 94b-97a (except 96a), the extended lines allow the poet to adopt a sermonizing tone, quite different from the reflective and more convoluted preceding lines of extended verse (especially from l. 88b). A concession to Foster's theory can now be made in that the poet's fond use of extended lines is restricted to those areas which he deems worthy of emphasis. However, the reasons and method of that emphasis are a localized matter and should rather be sought within the context of the passage in which the hypermetric verse(s) occurs than within a broad structural and thematic scheme.

While the rules of alliterations are for the most part retained, unchanged throughout various centuries of Old English poetry and from author to author, the specific effects achieved by the application of this fundamental technique of Anglo-Saxon literature vary greatly according to the skill of individual poets. In *Judith*, alliteration and end-rhyme are used to highlight effectively the sense of the passage or sections of thematic interest.

Judith makes a relatively large use of end-rhyme, surpassing that of earlier poems, such *Beowulf* and *Andreas*, and even that of later ones such as the *Battle*

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[33] Raffel, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

of Maldon, in the proportion of end-rhyming lines with non-rhyming lines.[34] The high occurrence of end-rhymes can be counted as evidence towards a later dating of the poem, being as it is a phenomenon associated particularly with late poetry. One memorable example occurs in l. 23 where Holofernes' clamoring during the banquet is succinctly expressed with the following rhyming verbs, ***hloh and hlydde hlynede and dynede*** [he exulted and roared, shouted and made noise].[35] The effect of the end-rhyme combines with that of alliteration and assonance giving an aural dimension to the idea of the noise produced by Holofernes. Another good example of rhyme and assonance is to be found in l. 115 which describes the soul of the Assyrian general ***wyrmum bewunden witum gebunden***. In this instance, the sounds produce the sensation of the inescapability of hell's torment through the interlocking of the words in the line. Huppé suggests that this line is meant to offer contrast to l. 23, but the rhythms of the two lines are too different to give any certainty of a purposeful connection. However, Huppé is quite right in recognizing the supportive role of the echoic ll. 114, 116-117 to the overall effect of l. 115.[36]

Occasionally, the poet's use of alliteration also relies on a play between sounds and meaning to increase the effectiveness of his descriptions, such as is the case with the alliteration of *haligre* and *hæðnan* [holy and heathen] in l. 98. The sounds link the two words and the meanings they convey, so that the two

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[34] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 28; and Elliott V. K. Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith* (New York, 1953), p. lxiii.

[35] Bold font is here used to indicate front and end rhymes in the line.

[36] Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words; Structural Analyses of the Old English Vainglory, The Wonder of Creation, The Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany, 1970), p. 168.

adjectives stand next to each other connected by a phonetic similarity but diverging widely in meaning. In the microcosm of this line are reflected the similarities and the differences between Judith and Holofernes: they are both leaders of their people but while one offers a positive example for the role, the other presents its antithesis.

The opposition between Judith and Holofernes, as well as that between God and the Assyrian general, is a central theme of the poem. This opposition is reflected in the structure of the first fourteen lines of *Judith* which are equally split describing God and Judith on one side and Holofernes on the other; but, more relevant to the present discussion, this balanced division hinges on the alliteration in l. 7 between *Ælmihitigan* and *Holofernus*.[37] Similarly, the connection of darkness and evil is reinforced and simultaneously exploited by the alliteration of *niht* and *niða* in l. 34.

The pairing of 'night' and 'hatred' comes at one of the cleaner breaks between the narrative units identified in my outline of the poem's structure. The audience, who has just heard about Holofernes' debauchery at his banquet, is becoming increasingly concerned about Judith's well-being. The poet makes no attempt to reduce his public's apprehension; rather, he takes advantage of the charged emotions. The *niht seo þystre* [the darksome night] in the poem creeps up on the unsuspecting audience whose attention had been focused on the reveling of Holofernes and his men, effectively closing the passage with a note of impending doom which is intensified through the alliteration with *niða*

geblonden [corrupt with evil]. Bosworth and Toller give 'envy', 'hatred', and 'enmity' as the primary meanings of *nið* so that the audience's fears at the arrival of night-time finds their manifestation in the evil of Holofernes. Thus, the alliteration complements the theme of darkness and evil, extending a bridge of both sounds and sense between two distinct narrative episodes.

The passage just examined also provides a good starting point for an examination of the diction of *Judith.* The play between *niht* and *niða* serves to draw the audience's attention to the connection between night-time and evil and ultimately to the archetypal equation of 'black' with 'evil'. This effect is further enhanced by the use of the adjective *þystre* [darksome] which is defined in Bosworth and Toller as 'dark' both physically and spiritually. In *Genesis* l. 737 and *Juliana* l. 683 the adjective is applied to both the substantives 'land' and 'home' in order to create metaphors for hell. Thus the concept of night and sin is enriched by a further shade of evil through the negative connotations of *þystre.*

Furthermore, on the same line, we can remark how the choice of the word *niða* not only benefits the passage through opportune alliteration with *niht*, but it also increases the depth of the action by its semantic connotations. In fact, l. 34 has up to now been examined as a passage relating exclusively to evil, darkness, and Holofernes, who is the *niða geblonden* of l. 34b. However, the semantic range of *nið* includes the following primary definitions offered in Bosworth and Toller: 'envy', 'hatred', 'enmity', 'rancor', and 'jealousy'; these definitions share the idea that there is a second referent, besides the subject of the sentence, which

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[37] See page 131.

is the target of the envy, hatred, enmity, rancor, or jealousy. The idea of 'evil' or 'malice', with which most translations, including mine, try to convey the sense of *nið*, is also affected by the concept of a person towards whom the evil and malice are focused. Thus, Judith is brought to the reader's mind even before she is mentioned in the following line. The result is that Holofernes' evil, his darkness, no longer exists *per se* but is a reaction to Judith.

The next line, l. 35, switches the audience's attention to Judith as Holofernes orders her to be brought to his tent. The adjective used to describe her in this instance is *eadigan* [blessed], which is also found in *Juliana* and *Elene* to describe the heroines of those poems. Because of its proximity to *niða geblonden*, the 'blessed', 'happy', and 'fortunate'[38] state of Judith appears to be the catalyst for Holofernes' hatred and disposition to do ill. The interpretation can be taken further by suggesting that the type of jealousy, envy, and hatred for all things beautiful, happy and perfect reflects the demonic desire in Christian mythology of corrupting God's creation in the garden of evil. While I believe that the poet seems to steer away from an allegorical presentation of his story,[39] the connection between Holofernes' hatred and Judith's blessedness cannot be denied and is reflected later, l. 59a, in Holofernes' desire *[ða beorhtan idese] mid widle and mid womme besmitan* [[the spotless lady] to stain with defilement and foulness] .

It should also be noted that both the connection between night, darkness, and sin, and that between light and goodness are downplayed by the poet when it

comes to select the adjectives and nouns to describe Judith and Holofernes. In fact, of the many epithets of Judith only a few have connections with the idea of brightness; these are: *ides ælfscinu*, l. 14a, *torhtan mægð*, l. 43a, *beorhtan idese*, l. 58b, *glædmode*, l. 140b, and *beorhte mægð*, l. 254b. In the case of Holofernes, there is only one occurrence of an epithet related to darkness, and even that could be discounted on the basis that it does not specifically describe Holofernes but his soul, which, we are told, is *þystrum forðylmed* [enveloped in shadows], l. 118a, after the decapitation at the hand of Judith. However, a contrast can be seen between the *niht seo þystre*, l. 34a, that prompts Holofernes' evil and the *leohtne leoman*, l. 191, that prompts the Bethulians' revenge on their oppressors. I believe that it was not the poet's intention to elaborate on the idea of light and darkness as an encompassing allegory of the strife in the poem; rather, he applies it successfully on a localized level, using the archetypal connotations of this dichotomy to inform his choice of words, as is the case with the passage examined above.

The following list allows us to compare the epithets and attributes used to represent the two main characters of the poem.

Judith	Holofernes
13b gleaw on geðonce	9b se gumena baldor
14a ides ælfscinu	11b ðam rican þeodne
35a þa eadigan mægð	12a folces ræswan
36b beagum gehlæste	20b se rica

[38] Bosworth and Toller Dictionary.
[39] See chapter two on patristic commentary.

37a hringum gehrodene
41a ferhðgleawe
43a þa torhtan mægð
55a ða snoteran idese
56b seo halige meowle
58b ða beorhtan idese
74a þeowen þrymful
77b ða wundenlocc
78a scyppendes mægð
98a haligre
103b ða wundenlocc
109a ides ellenrof
125a seo snotere mægð
133b ellenþriste*
134b collenferhðe* [adverbial]
135a eadhreðige mægð*
138b ða beahhrodene*
140a hie glædmode
145a searoðoncol mægð
146a ides ellenrof
147a leof to leodu
148a gleawhydig wif
160b seo halige
165a ða þeodnes mægð
171a seo gleawe
171b golde gefrætewod
176a seo æðele
254b seo beorhte mægð
256a seo æðele
260a ða halgan mægð
261a metodes meowlan
334a mægð modigre
340b beorhtan idese
341a gearoþoncolre

*Refers to both Judith and her servant, *idesa ba.*

21a egesful eorla dryhten
22a goldwine gumena
22b on gytesalum [adverbial]
25a se stiðmoda
26a modig and medugal
28a se inwidda
30a swiðmod sinces brytta
32b se gumena baldor
34b ða niða geblonden
38b ealdor
39a byrnwigena brego
44a se rica
45b nergende lað
48b se bealofulla
49b wigena baldor
52b se modiga
56a hearran
57b se brema on mode
58a bliðe burga ealdor
61b se deofulcunda
62a galferhð
63a bealofull
66a þearlmod ðeoden gumena
68a se rica
71b wærlogan
72a laðne
75a þone atolan
76b se unsyfra
77a womfull
90a morðres bryttan
98b þone hæðenan mannan
100b þone bealofullan
101b laðne mannan
104a þone feondsceaðan
105a heteþoncolne
110a þone hæðenan hund
126a þæs herewæðan
173a þæs herewæðan
179a hæðenan heaðorinces
180b unlyfigendes
248a þæs bealofullan
251a hlaforde
254a se beorna brego
256b se galmoda
257a egesfull and afor

258a ðone wiggend
259b ðone cumbolwigan
268a þeodnes
274a winedryhten
279a goldgifan
279b gæstes gesne
280a lifes belidenne
289a beheafod healdend
338b se rinca baldor
339a swiðmod

Interestingly, there are far more adjectives and epithets uses to describe Holofernes than there are for Judith. This statistic is particularly interesting when we consider that the description of Holofernes, as a live character, only appears in the first 100 lines of text. Furthermore, the list above does not include the many ways 'parts' of Holofernes are mentioned in the text. At the time of his death, Holofernes is mutilated not only physically but also lexically by a progression of nouns which extend from his head, l. 110b, to his trunk, l. 111b, to his damned soul, l. 112b and eventually to his head as symbol, *behðe*, in l. 174a. The poet might have wanted to keep the figure of Judith's enemy well alive in the mind of his audience even though the plot has him dead by the first third of the poem.

The large number of adjectives and nouns used to describe Holofernes is partially justified by the fact that while Judith is in a team with God on the side of good, Holofernes is the only key figure on the side of evil; the poet must have felt this imbalance in his story and might have compensated by devoting more time to the description of Holofernes. Another justification for the phenomenon

should simply be sought in the poet's interest in the character of the Assyrian general whom he liked to keep in his audience's mind even after his death.

The variety of these epithets gives us a composite picture of a man who could be both *goldwine gumena* [dispenser of gold of the troops], l. 22a, or *nergende lað* [hateful to the Savior], l. 45b. However, even when appellatives with positive connotations are attributed to Holofernes, the Assyrians' leader is clearly shown not to be worthy of them. For instance, when the Bethulians are attacking the Assyrians' camp, the soldiers around Holofernes tent hesitate to go in and disturb him even in such a high state of emergency: the soldiers' fear of their lord does not reflect well upon Holofernes who appears like a tyrant more than a leader. To describe Holofernes, the poet uses *goldgifan* [lord, gold-giver], l. 279a, an epithet used in *Beowulf* to describe the eponymous hero and in *The Seafarer* to describe the lords of old, but the choice of this word in the context of the passage highlights the general's dictatorial style of leadership as opposed to the 'friendlier' ideal of treasure-dispensing leadership held by the Anglo-Saxons.

Similarly, in the course of the description of the golden flynet, the poet mixes the appellatives *folctogan* [commander], l. 47b, and *wigena baldor* [leader of men], l. 49b, with the derogatory *bealofulla* [wicked], l. 48b, and the ambivalent *modiga* [noble, but also proud], l. 52b. The context in which these appellatives occur suggests that *modiga* should be read as 'proud' and 'arrogant' rather than 'bold' and 'noble', as it is meant to describe the character of a leader who does not deign to enter in personal contact with his troops and spies on them through his golden curtain. In fact, the description of the canopy is meant to cast

Holofernes in a bad light whether one agrees with Huppé that it is meant to suggest the veil of the holy of holies in the temple and that "Holofernes is a simulacrum of God, but he is false,"[40] or whether one simply interprets the golden ornament as a sign of the general's moral corruption. For the same reasons, *folctogan* and *wigena baldor* should be read as having ironic connotations. Although the two epithets are generic and not necessarily laudatory, they are both used in other poems to refer to heroes and famed leaders; for instance *folctogan* is also to be found in *Andreas*, l. 8, referring to the twelve apostles, as well as in *Beowulf*, l. 839, where it describes the chieftains who gathered to celebrate Beowulf's defeat of Grendel. Holofernes hardly deserves the same honorific title of either of those groups of warriors, and the poets use of *folctogan* and *wigena baldor* is meant to remind his audience of the sharp contrast between an ideal leader and the proud, wicked reality of Holofernes' leadership.

The rest of this chapter is a literary analysis of *Judith* based on the very concept of leadership which acts as one of the chief themes in the poem. As I discussed above, the ideal of a good leader is a fairly complex concept in Anglo-Saxon culture and can encompass many of the traits present or lacking in the two chief protagonist of the poem. In fact, the ideal leader would have to possess, among other attributes: Beowulf's bravery, Andreas' piety, and the generosity and friendliness of the lord/Lord mentioned in *The Wanderer*. Just as Judith, in various ways, fits the requirements of this description, Holofernes becomes the

[40] Huppé, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

antithesis of all that a leader should be. The best way to observe how the theme of leadership has been incorporated in the poem is to conduct an analytical reading of the text. This process will also reveal other nuances of the opposition between Judith and her people on one side and Holofernes and his followers on the other.

Because our poem has a fragmentary opening, in the few lines of what is left of section IX the reader becomes aware of a temporal ambiguity. Lines 2 and 3 contain a *ða... þa...* [then... when...] construction providing an ambiguous idea of time, rather than a specific one.

... tweode
gifena in ðis ginnan grunde. Heo ðær **ða** gearwe funde
munbyrd æt ðam mæran þeodne **þa** heo ahte mæste
þearfe

ll. 1-3

We know that the *ða* of l. 2b corresponds to the time when 'she [Judith] had most need', but when exactly is that? Was it specified earlier? Reading on, we find in l. 7b another allusion to time, *gefrægen ic ða* [I heard at that time], this expression has epic connotations and it echoes the opening lines of *Beowulf, Exodus,* and *Daniel*;[41] but again we are only referred to an action that took place at a time as yet to be determined. It is not until l. 12b, the last sentence of section IX, that we are finally given a specific reference to time, *þæt wæs þy feorðan dogore* [that was on the fourth day]. The fact that Judith had been staying four days in the

Assyrian camp is held back until the end of the passage. Its placement at the end of section IX alerts the reader that the actual story is about to begin, because when stories begin we are usually given a time reference, and it indicates that what preceded was introductory and background information. This reading supports the view of the poem as effectively complete because it suggests that section IX contained mainly introductory material.

No matter how little text has survived of this background material it is very useful in introducing the reader to the themes to be developed in the story. As we have seen in the survey of the poem's structure, the fragmentary nature of section IX still maintains a beautiful equilibrium by which half the remaining lines are dedicated to the description of Judith and God and their allegiance, and the other half is devoted to Holofernes. After the audience has been engaged and intrigued by the narration of the events leading to the banquet, we hear at the very end of section IX that Judith, *gleaw on geðonce* [prudent in thought], l. 13b, had been four days in Holofernes' camp, and that she had gone there of her own will. To find the answer to why such a prudent maid would spend four days in an army camp the reader is forced to read on to the beginning of section X where the contrast introduced at the beginning of the poem is continued; the image of Judith *gleaw on geðonce* and *ides ælfscinu* [bright lady] is now opposed to that of the openly sinful Holofernes.

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[41] For a detailed discussion of the implications of the *gefrægen ic* formula, see Ward Parks, "The Traditional Narrator and the 'I Heard' Formulas in Old English Poetry", *Anglo-Saxon England*, 16 (1987), 45-66.

Section X introduces the retinue of Holofernes with adjectives that stand in stark contrast with those used to describe Judith earlier. In ll. 16-21 the warriors are called *wlance* [proud], *weagesiðas* [companions in misery],[42] and *fœge* [fated]. The reader is made aware of a doomed atmosphere that escapes only the characters absorbed in it. Even Holofernes, leader of the troops, does not see the impending doom, l. 20, and his demeanor is that of a foolhardy man. The poet shows without restraints the corruption centering around Holofernes, and the reader's rough idea of a conflict between Good and Evil, which originated in section IX, takes on a more consistent shape. Judith, the good leader, is wise and prudent, while the bad leader, Holofernes, is blind and foolish. Foolishness becomes associated with evil, as it generally is in medieval thought where madness and foolishness derive from being removed from God's light and wisdom.[43]

The ever intensifying awareness of Holofernes' evil is not expressed strictly in Christian terms, as was the case with God's grace. Rather, the Assyrian general is shown to be evil because of his poor and selfish leadership. Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry is full of references to and examples of good leaders, and anyone in the Old English audience of the poem would have had no trouble picking out the clues to Holofernes' ineptitude and selfishness as a leader. Right after describing how the retainers were doomed, the poet describes Holofernes as

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[42] Bosworth and Toller quote other occurences of the word as indicating Satan's companions.

[43] Augustine calls wisdom a light which derives from God and without which we cannot 'see' our way through life. Moreover, in *Tractatus In Iohannis Evangelium XLVIII*;6, he claims: "Sic habet sapientiam, ut ipse sit sapientia, faciatque sapientes." [He has wisdom, who Himself is wisdom, and makes wise men.] *PL xxxv; 1743.*

being *on gytesalum*, l. 22, and in the next line we hear of how he *hloh and hlydde, hlynede and dynede,* as well as *styrmde and gylede* in l. 25b. This behavior, already to be condemned under ordinary circumstances, is especially inappropriate for someone already described in 9b as *gumena baldor,* in 21a as *eorla dryhten,* and in l. 22a as *goldwine gumena.* By repeatedly reminding the audience of Holofernes' leadership position, the poet conjures up an expectation of the ideal leader, the kind of person the protagonist of the *Wanderer* talks about[44], and Holofernes' faults are thus emphasized by comparison. Accordingly, when in l. 27, at the end of the passage, Holofernes tells his retainers that they *gebœrdon wel* [should behave well], it is hard not to see the irony in the ambivalence that the adverb *wel* carries when spoken by someone as Holofernes.

Moreover, Holofernes blindly leads his army to destruction, an even greater fault for a commander than being boastful and arrogant. There is no need to wait until the battle scene in order to find out the fate of the Assyrians and the role Holofernes plays in shaping it. Lines 28-34a describe Holofernes as encouraging his men to keep on drinking to excess. The reader, however, is made to see beyond the actual scene through the poet's opportune use of a simile in which Holofernes *dryhtguman sine drencte mid wine / swiðmod sinces brytta oð þœt hie on swiman lagon ... swylce hie wœron daeðe geslegene* [drowned with wine, the strong-headed dispenser of treasures, until they lay in stupor ... as if they were slain by death], ll. 29-31b. In doing this, the poet reminds the reader that Holofernes is *sinces brytta*, but he is also *swiðmod* and rather than dispensing

[44] *Wanderer*, ll. 25-29a

treasures during the banquet he causes his men to be *agotene goda gehwylces* [deprived of all good], l. 32. This last passage presents the climax of the portrait of Holofernes as an evil leader built from the beginning of section X. First we are offered a description of the fated Assyrians at the banquet, then we learn about their leader's behavior, characterized as 'strong-headed', 'arrogant', and 'drunk'; then Holofernes is explicitly given the satanic epithet *se inwidda* [wicked] in l. 28, and, metaphorically, he is shown to kill his men. When we think we have read the worst of it, the poet briefly removes us from the inside of the banquet tent to show us how *nealæhte niht seo þystre* [the gloomy night approached]. The banquet seems to have come to a natural end marked by the setting of the sun; but Holofernes is by then too *niða geblonden* [infected by evils], l. 34, to realize that it would be wise to bring the day's debauchery to an end. Immediately we discover that Holofernes' corrupted mind has turned to Judith:

> .... Swa het se gumena ealdor
> fylgan fletsittendum, oð þæt fira bearnum
> nealæhte niht seo þystre. Het ða niða geblonden
> þa eadigan mægð ofstum fetigan
> to his bedreste, beagum gehlæste,
> hringum gehrodene.[45]
>
> ll. 32b-37a

The transition between the drowning of the men in wine, the sun setting, and the summoning of Judith is so fast that the reader is caught by surprise. The description of the sun setting takes two half-lines, connecting with the beginning

of the next narrative section by alliterating *niht* and *niða*. As it was remarked in the course of the section on alliteration, the relationship between 'night' and 'sin' is emphasized by alliteration and assonance resulting in the audience's increased concern about Judith's safety. The action moves swiftly along, seemingly unstoppable; Holofernes orders Judith to be brought *ofstum* [with haste], l. 35, and the soldiers *hraðe fremedon* [quickly they did so], l. 37, as well as *bearhtme stoppon* [instantly they marched], l. 39. The rush of events not only increases the suspense, but it also creates an ironic moment as the *lindwiggende* [shield-bearers] of l. 42 hurry forth to do nothing more heroic than escorting a weaponless maid. Holofernes and his army are shown again to be a far cry from the brave and morally upright heroes of Anglo-Saxon poetry.

In the course of this expanding image of corruption and cowardly behavior the poet switches momentarily to a description of Judith, *þa eadigan mægð* [blessed maid], l.35, *beagum gehlæste / hringum gehrodene* [laden with bracelets, adorned with rings], ll. 36-37, at the beginning of the passage. *Eadig* is described in Bosworth and Toller's *Dictionary of Old English* as 'blessed' but also 'rich' and 'fortunate'. To these attributes of fortune and wealth the poet later adds the epithets *ferhðgleawe* [prudent in thought], l. 41, and successfully builds an image of Judith that complements the pious one given at the end of section IX. She is now in our eyes the ideal of the Anglo-Saxon noblewoman, a non-regal version of Wealhtheow; the bracelets and rings she wears are symbols of her high class

[45] [So the prince of warriors commanded them to be served, the lord of men, until the gloomy night approached. Then he, infected with evils, ordered to fetch with haste to his resting place the blessed maid, laden with bracelets, adorned with rings.]

and make her a *torhtan mægð* [splendid maid], l. 43a; her wisdom, prudence, and courage are the ideal qualities to complement her noble blood.

This is the first full glimpse the poet gives us of Judith's potential for success, but her safety remains as doubtful as ever, since she still is in the hands of the ruthless Holofernes with no escape in sight. We are kept more and more in suspense as the action pauses once more to gives us another glimpse of Holofernes' corruption. In l. 45 the Assyrian commander is called *nergende lað* [hateful to the Savior], the comment is then followed by the description, greatly expanded from the biblical sources, of the adorned golden fly-net hung on top of Holofernes' bed. As stated above, this detail shows Holofernes' level of corruption and bears testimony to his moral excesses. The plot then turns again to where it left off in l. 46: Judith is being taken to Holofernes' bed, and in l. 54 begins a series of *ða*-clauses, discussed in detail earlier, which drives the action forward at a fast rate, showing how Judith finds grace in the Lord in her hour of need. The poet sets up a comparison between God and Holofernes, highlighting the contrasting fashion in which the two leaders support their own followers. He makes Judith a model of the righteous believer whose true faith is rewarded by God.

The poet alternates details that are anachronistic to the story with realistic details and stock epithets, creating a composite image of Judith more easily acceptable as a role model by a Christian Anglo-Saxon audience than if she were presented simply as a courageous Jewish widow. For instance, in ll. 83-86, at the beginning of her prayer, Judith calls on the power of the Trinity, a detail which

transforms her from an Old Testament Jewish heroine to a New Testament Christian leader. While creating this fiction, based on the common practice of endowing good Old Testament figures with Christian sensibility, the poet keeps in mind the gravity of the situation and endows Judith with realistic feelings of anxiety, fear, and distress, ll. 86-88. As a cure for these she asks for *sigor and soðne geleafan* [triumph and true faith], l. 89a, and accordingly God *ædre [Iudith] mid elne onbryrde* [forthwith inspired [Judith] with courage]. The Lord does not give his handmaid victory, but the 'courage' needed to obtain it. According to the poet this is what God does with everyone *herbuendra, þe hyne him to helpe seceð / mid ræde and mid rihte geleafan* [of the men living in this world, who seek Him for help with good sense and the right faith], ll. 96-97a. By explicitly saying that 'the same will happen to anyone following her steps' Judith is clearly positioned as the model to follow. Therefore, the poet maintains the level of realism and ease of identification necessary to make a contemporary reader interested in an Old Testament female heroine who otherwise would have been too culturally removed to be an immediate model. Against the backdrop of a spiritual battle between the 'true faith' and heathen beliefs, underscored by the alliteration of *haligre* [blessed] and *hæðenan* [heathen] in l.100, we witness the effort and courage mixed with modesty with which the Lord's maid manages to the best of her abilities to hoist Holofernes' body in a position suitable for decapitation. As in the biblical texts, it takes two blows for Judith to cut off Holofernes' head, ll. 103-111; but in *Judith* the poet spaces out the strokes, managing effectively not only to prolong the victim's agony, but also to maintain

the realism of the scene, considering that a woman's strength would unlikely be great enough to cut off neatly the enemy's head in one blow.

While, at this point in the poem, Judith is positioned to be a model of Christian behavior by conforming to Anglo-Saxon ideals of courage and wisdom, Holofernes is transformed from a poor leader by Anglo-Saxon standards to the *hæðenan hund* [heathen hound] of l. 110, described through increasingly stronger epithets and more outrageous behavior. As soon as the head rolls off Holofernes' body, the poet switches his focus of attention from the body of the general to the wicked spirit's descent to hell, and the tortures that await it there. The switch of focus is quite sudden and intense as the tirade about the misery of hell, lasting ten lines, seems like a rather long parenthesis to the main action of the poem. However, for a Christian author, physical death is not as important as spiritual death, and by omitting details found in the biblical sources of what happened to the decapitated body, the poet shows his Christian sensibilities. Moreover, describing the pit of hell gives the poet a chance to show his familiarity with this recurring theme in Anglo-Saxon poetry.[46]

At the beginning of section XI, the reader is taken from hell and its hopeless misery to the renewed hope of victorious Judith. However, she is still trapped in the Assyrian's camp; and as the reader's feelings of anxiety begin to build up again, Judith keeps her level-headedness and disposes of the decapitated head with composed haste, even though the head is *swa blodig* [so bloody], l. 126, and *swa heolfrig* [so gory], l. 130, once it is packed away.

In l. 127 there is the first mention of Judith's maid, and even though her presence is limited to the first 30 lines of the section it helps to build on the image of Judith as an Anglo-Saxon noble woman. In fact, during the time of action, Judith does not hesitate to take the leadership, and give orders to *gingran sinre* [her junior], l. 132. But as soon as they get to the land between the Assyrian camp and Bethulia, their relationship is less hierarchical; they are described as *þa idesa ba ellenþriste* [both ladies heroically bold], l. 133, showing that, unlike Holofernes, Judith is a magnanimous and fair leader. Once within the Bethulian territory, the relationship becomes once again increasingly hierarchical and the figure of the maid is incorporated in that of Judith to the point that in ll. 146b-147a we only hear people rejoice at the arrival of Judith while the presumable presence of her servant remains unmentioned.

In Bethulia, Judith's behavior is presented to compare favorably with Holofernes' performance as commander. Her previous actions had shown her brave and calculating leadership, but now her guiding role is recognized by the whole city which comes alive with Judith's arrival. The speech delivered in ll. 152-ff. further reveals the wisdom of Judith who abstains from revealing immediately that she slew Holofernes, and skillfully builds up her countrymen's spirit with a reminder, *eow ys metod bliðe* [the Lord if friendly towards you], l. 154, and a prophecy, *þæt eow ys wuldorblæd / torhtlic toweard and tir gifeðe / þara læðða þe ge lange drugon* [that to you belongs glorious success, splendid imminent and certain glory for those afflictions which you suffered so long], ll.

[46] See chapter three on Anglo-Saxon background of the poem, p. 108, *Genesis A*.

156a-158. Her rhetorical skills enflame the hearts of the Bethulians who run to gather around their heroine.[47] The welcome received by Judith is literally breathtaking as the poems moves rapidly from description to description:

Here wæs on lustum
wið þæs fæstengeates folc onette
weras wif somod wornum ond heapum
ðreatum ond ðrymmum þrungon ond urnon
ongean ða þeodnes mægð þusendmælum
ealde ge geonge[48]

ll. 161b-166a

Once her fellow citizens draw near she orders the head of Holofernes to be brought out of the bag in which it had been put previously. Like a true warrior, Judith displays her bloody trophy, but ladylike, she has her maidservant hold it for her. With the physical proof of the Lord's support evidently displayed, Judith goes on to prove how victory is their fate, because the Lord will not allow anyone to abuse his people; Holofernes wants to torment the Bethulians longer, *ac him ne uðe god / lengran lifes þæt he mid læððum us / eglan moste* [but God did not allow him a longer life so that he might plague us with afflictions], ll. 183-185. Then the poet reveals how the beheading occurred, so that the Bethulians and the poem's audience will not be deluded into thinking that God took all the task upon himself. The phrase beginning in l. 185, *ic him ealdor oðþrong / þurh godes*

[47] Efrossini Piliouni Albrecht, *The Anglo-Saxon Judith: Wisdom Beyond Sainthood*, Ph.D. thesis, Auburn University (Auburn, 1992), pp. 79-140.

fultum [I took the life from him, through God's help] is an important turning point in her speech. By mentioning herself and her major role in the dispatching of Holofernes, Judith can rightfully ask her people to do the same as she did, as soon as God sends a sign, *leohtne leoman* [radiant light], l. 191, from the east. Without hesitation and with determination she organizes the attack on the Assyrians and the Bethulians do not delay in eagerly following the advice of a woman such as Judith. Clearly Judith knows how to get the love and admiration of her people without resorting to the arrogant and self-important ways of Holofernes whom nobody dared to approach.

The signs of the imminent victory of the Bethulians are to be read everywhere in the following passages, and once again these signs are coded for an audience familiar with Anglo-Saxon heroic poetry, as well as Christian language and metaphors. To begin with there is the brief description of the Bethulians getting ready for war and marching out of their city. The brevity of it, combined with the richness of the heroic military images used, make this passage especially powerful. Within the seven lines between ll. 199 and 205a it is almost as if a miracle has happened; the Bethulian army, which in l. 144 was described as *geomormodum* [depressed in spirit], is now revitalized, and everyone is ready to go to battle in the space of just one and a half lines, *þa wearð snelra werod snude gegearewod / cenra to campe* [then quickly got prepared the host of excited ones, of valiant men for the battle]. Immediately the army is advancing,

[48] [The host was overjoyed, the people hurried toward the fortress-gate man and women together, in multitudes and heaps, in groups and troops they pressed forward and ran by the thousands toward the maid of the Lord, the old and the young.]

cynerofe [daring ones], l. 200, *bæron sigeþufas* [carried the standard], l. 201, *hæleð under helmum* [the heroes under the helmets], l. 203, with all the noise and shield-clashing of battle poetry.

Additionally, the traditional passage about the beasts of battle that often accompanies battle scenes in Anglo-Saxon poetry is here adapted to coincide with the idea of the unavoidable victory of the Bethulians. The purpose of the formula of the beasts of battle is hard to define clearly, but the *Judith* poet excels in adaptating it to the poem. Bonjour suggested that to the modern reader the formula acts as a reminder of the futility of war, showing how the clear winners in a battle are the beasts who will benefit from the inevitable casualties.[49] Whatever the purpose of the formula, the creatures are usually impartial as to who wins the battle. In the poems in which the beast of battle formula precedes the battle, the animals' premonition is limited to the knowledge that carnage will occur, although the beasts themselves do not seem to know, or care, who will die and who will survive. Even when the scene occurs after the battle, the beasts never express concern for the victors or the losers.

In *Judith*, however, the poet very clearly states that the beasts know that the Bethulians intend to provide them with a feast of slain Assyrians. This becomes clear by the use of the verb *wissan*, translated as 'to wit, know, have knowledge, be aware' in Bosworth and Toller. The subjects of the verb, which takes the main stress in line 207, are the *wulf* and the *hrefn*, for whom, we then learn, *þeodguman þohton tilian fylle on fægum*. There is no doubt that

þeodguman refers to the Bethulians and *fæge* to the Assyrians respectively. *Þeodguman* is translated in Bosworth and Toller as 'chief man of a people, a great man', but as it is a compound of *þeod* [nation, people] and *guma* [lord, man, hero] it can be taken to mean 'men of that country', in which case it obviously refers to the Bethulians. Furthermore, *fæge* has been used earlier in *Judith* by the poet to refer to the Assyrians during the banquet scene, line 19b, and by Judith in her speech to her countrymen, line 195a.[50] The reprise of the formula in the midst of battle, ll. 294b-296a, serves as a confirmation that it was only the Assyrians who died and were meant from the beginning to be a treat for the scavenger animals.

The foreknowledge that the beast of battle have about the Bethulians' success proves to be right, and from l. 212 until the end of section X, twenty-two lines later, the Bethulians clearly have the upper hand against the hopeless Assyrians. The reader is reminded by the subtle metaphors of martial language that the Bethulians are fighting under the protection of the Lord. The Lord had been earlier called in l. 60 *þrymmes hyrde* [protector of glory] and His role as a protector of the Bethulians is reinforced during Judith's speech upon her return from the Assyrians' camp. Now the Bethulians are identified as *bordum beðeahte* [protected by shields], l. 213 and the idea of shield protection is insisted upon in

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[49] Adrien Bonjour, "*Beowulf* and the Beasts of Battle", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 72 (1957), 565-566.

[50] Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words; Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems Vainglory, The Wonder of Creation, The Dream of he Rood, and Judith*, (Albany, New York, 1970) remarks that the ironic interlocking of the word 'fated' at the banquet, in Judith's premonition, and in the beast of battle formula, is a suggestion of God's inescapable providence (p. 175).

l. 214a, with *hwealfum lindum* [curved linden shields] reminding the reader that the Bethulians are protected by their wooden shields as well as by the Lord. Similarly, the causal relationship of showing true faith and receiving grace is expressed metaphorically in ll. 216b-220a,

> ... Him þæt hearde wearð
> æt ðam æscplegan eallum forgolden
> Assyrium, syððan Ebreas
> under guðfanum gegan hæfdon
> to ðam fyrdwicum

In these lines the poet describes the Bethulians receiving vengeance for the abuses tolerated in the past once they gather around the battle standard: a fitting metaphor for the Bethulians' renewed faith in God leading them to victory. The idea of God being on the battlefield with the Hebrews is expanded from the biblical sources by describing the Assyrians as *ealdgeniðlan* [old foes], l. 228b, and in l. 320, *ealdhettende* [ancient enemies], poetic epithets usually reserved for Satan,[51] the 'ancient enemy', and his diabolical host, so that the battle can be seen as occurring both at a physical and at a spiritual level. Finally, the poet conveys the feeling of the Bethulians' supremacy by making them the subject of almost all the active verbs in the passage, leaving the Assyrians to be at the

[51] As in *Andreas*, ll. 1050, 1343: *ealdgeniðla*. Moreover, the *Thesaurus of Old English* lists *ealdgeniðla* as a noun for Satan on p. 659. Bosworth and Toller, in the *Dictionary*, gloss *ealdfeond* and *ealdgeniðla* as, "an ancient foe, arch-fiend, Satan." (The entry for *ealdhettende*, a compound peculiar to *Judith*, refers the reader to *ealdfeond*).

receiving end of the Bethulians' wrath.[52] The Hebrew folk are thus portrayed as great fighters, people with whom an Anglo-Saxon audience would have liked to identify. The poet departs from the biblical versions by endowing the Hebrews with Anglo-Saxon war equipment: their weapons are both *scirmæled,* l. 230, and *ecgum gecoste* [proven of edge], l. 231, just like those of the heroes of Old English heroic poetry.[53]

After a short summary of the outstanding performance of the Hebrew warriors, the poet turns his attention to the Assyrian army which he contrasts with the army of the Bethulians. To begin with, in ll. 237-241, the *ðæs herefolces heafodweardas* [chief guardians of the army] finally realize the impending doom, long after the reader, the beasts of battle, and the Bethulians themselves understood to whom belonged the victory. This blindness on the part of the Assyrian leaders causes them to panic and, just as the Bethulians gathered round the battle standard, they too gather around the *cumbolwigan* [banner-bearer], l. 243 and l. 259, although in their lack of foresight they cannot see that the banner they gather around is doomed to fail, or indeed that it has already failed metaphorically in the slain figure of Holofernes. Just as the Bethulians, like faithful retainers, pressed in throngs around Judith upon her arrival to hear her wise counsel and her tidings, the Assyrians also *<werig>ferhðe hwearfum*

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[52] *Hie leton forð*, ll. 220b-221a; *styrmodon hlude grame guðfrecan*, ll.223b-224a; *sendon*, l. 224b; *stopon styrnmode*, l. 227a; etc.

[53] See, for example, *Beowulf* ll. 1457-1465, in which the sword *Hrunthig* is described with epithets emphasizing the heritage and proven valor of the blade: *ealdgestreona* [ancient treasure], l. 1448b; and *ahyrded heaþoswate* [blood-hardened], l. 1460a. Also in *Beowulf* are various examples of weapons and armour called with appelatives indicating brillance or shine, e.g. the breastplate of Beowulf in l. 405, or the hilt of the mighty sword responsible for the death of Grendel's mother.

þringan [weary proceeded to press forth in throngs], l. 249. However, the inadequacy of Holofernes' leadership is made manifest by the fact that it is his soldiers, ignorant of Holofernes' death, who have to warn their leader about the on-going battle because he was unable to predict the eventuality of an attack on his camp. Moreover, Holofernes is shown to be an unkindly ruler as his retainers fear to approach him, hesitating outside his tent even in the hour of their greatest need. This passage is also an occasion for the poet to indulge in describing what might have happened in Holofernes' tent. At first he gives us almost a romantic image of the situation, the *se beorna brego* [prince of warriors] and the *seo beorhte mægð* [bright maid] are together *in ðam wlitegan træfe* [in that beautiful tent], ll. 254-255. But soon Holofernes from a 'prince/ruler of the men' transforms into a *galmoda / egesfull and afor* [lascivious of spirit, terrible and fierce] in ll. 256-257, and the romantic image just painted shatters at the idea of such a pure lady forced to spend the night with such a lascivious man.

The hesitation of the Assyrians is immediately contrasted by a short passage describing the Bethulians mercilessly advancing in the battlefield, ll. 261-265. There is no doubt or hesitation on the side of the Bethulians for they have been led to battle by the courage of a human leader and the blessing of a divine one; on the other hand, the unblessed heathen Assyrians do not even have the benefit of a human leader, not to mention a heavenly one, to guide them in battle. The relationship between leaders and troops is emphasized. A righteous leader will overcome a wicked one, and it becomes a suitable metaphor for the relationship between God and his triumphant people. The 'glory' promised to the

Bethulians by Judith in l. 196b is granted to them, just as it is taken away from the Assyrians in l. 266b, and l. 272b. The Assyrians have now become a 'headless' army; no one in its ranks knows what to do and the soldiers' efforts to wake up Holofernes seem ridiculous as they *ongunnon cohhetan cirman hlude / and gristbittan gode orfeorme / mid toðon torn* [began to clear the throat, to lament loudly and gnash, endured the rage through their teeth, deprived of God], ll. 270-272. Interestingly, all the ineffectual noises produced by the distressed warriors come from the head, that is, they cough and gnash their teeth rather than stomping their feet or clapping their hands, almost as if the poet wanted to remind us of the lack of a head on Holofernes' body, and the lack of a 'head' on the body of the Assyrian army. In l. 274, the poet ironically calls Holofernes a *winedryhten* [friendly lord], something he certainly was not to his retainers; then in l. 275 someone finally ventures into the pavilion, just as he should have done to begin with, although he only does it *swa hyne nyd fordraf* [as need compelled him]. Finally the fearful Holofernes is once more described by the poet as a *goldgifan* [gold dispenser], the terminology to be applied to a just and kind leader, much unlike Holofernes. Even the reaction of the retainer that discovers the decapitated body conforms at first with that expected of a devoted warrior, but soon turns into the excessive and wild behavior of a desperate man who *lungre gefeoll / freorig to foldan ongan his feax teran / hreoh on mode and his hrægl somod* [fell instantly trembling to the ground, troubled in spirit, he began to tear his hair and also his clothes], ll. 280-282.

The importance of Holofernes' decapitated head is evident to the reader who has witnessed the formidable effect it had stimulating the Bethulians to action; now, in ll. 285-289, we see the reverse impact that it has on the Assyrians, who by this token realize how *her ys geswutelod ure sylfa forwyrd* [here is manifest our own destruction]. The effect the sight of the decapitated body has on the Assyrians is as immediate and dramatic as the sight of the decapitated head was for the Bethulians. Straight away Holofernes' army flees, but the Hebrew soldiers chase them closely until the majority is slain and left *wulfum to willan and eac wælgifrum / fuglum to frofre* [to the will of wolves and also of the ravenous bird for comfort]. The return of the beasts of battle reminds us of the first mention of them in ll. 205-212 and of their role as accurate prophets of the result of the battle. Then the second wave of the Bethulians' attack arrives to exterminate those who had survived the earlier attack. The poet's technique of repetition of crucial passages is first adopted in ll. 212-289 when describing the Hebrew attacking and the Assyrians hesitating outside Holofernes' tent. Here it is used more concisely and to an even greater effect to convey the feeling of the unstoppable power of the Bethulians' attack which surges twice to exterminate everyone. The following recapitulation of the events of the battle shows how God had been fighting alongside the Bethulians, even though the poet had not mentioned His direct intervention until this passage. With God's help, the Bethulians, described in ll. 213b-214a as carrying shields --and, by extension, the shield of God's grace-- are described as cutting through all the much weaker defenses of the Assyrians:

hi ða fromlice fagum swyrdum
hæleð higerofe herpað worhton
þurh laðra gemong linde heowon
scildburh scæron[54]

ll. 301-304

This success makes Bethulia the *mægða mærost* [most famed of nations], l. 324, an adjective that is applied to the city for the first time at this point in the poem indicating that their fame derives from the victory against the Assyrians and not from earlier glory.

The poet, who anachronistically had earlier assigned to the Jewish Judith a prayer to the Trinity, relinquishes New Testament dogma in favor of traditional heroic behavior. Instead of having Judith and her people shun the riches and spoils of the Assyrians, including such potentially sinful items as the *mare madma þonne mon ænig / asecgan mæge searoþoncelra* [more splendid jewels than anyone of the wise ones could tell off], ll. 329-330, he devotes forty lines to describing the spoils. The concept of the spoil is an important and integral part of the Anglo-Saxon idea of warfare, and if the Christian message is meant to come through, the heavenly rewards must be accompanied with earthly military successes and rich spoils. The reader is once more made aware of Judith's high status among the Bethulians, as the trophies of Holofernes are brought to her together with *beaga and beorhtra maðma* [rings and bright jewels], l. 340, without her having to go out and search corpses. The idea of the two rewards awaiting the faithful is reinforced in l. 343, when Judith thanks the

Lord for the power awarded to her on earth, as well as for her heavenly reward. We are reminded of how all this was granted to her because *heo ahte soðne geleafan / a to ðam ælmihtigan* [she always had true faith in the Almighty], ll. 344b-345a, and thus the poem seems to come to a perfect close which echoes ll. 6b-7a in its opening section. Although I have already commented that the strength of an envelope-pattern theory depends on the actual length of the missing fragment, it is important to note how the idea of true faith bringing rewards appears both at the beginning and end of the resistance against the invaders; even if the poem had been significantly longer, this passage has some internal cohesiveness and self-sufficiency reinforced by the echoing opening and closing passages.

It is safe to assume that the theme of Good triumphing over Evil which dominates the extant fragment was an idea important enough to the whole of the poem to deserve such detailed treatment. Throughout the poem, Good is equated with God and Judith, and Evil with Holofernes and his army, in terms compliant with Anglo-Saxon ideals such as that of leadership. There is also a level of Christian allegory working in the poem which becomes evident in some of the vocabulary used to describe Holofernes and his men with demonic overtones. However, the author of *Judith* does not focus on the patristic interpretations of the *Liber Iudith* as much as Huppé would have us believe.[55] Rather, with the same care with which the author has balanced the structure of the poem, he has

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[54] [Then bravely they with shining swords, the brave-souled heroes, created a war-path through the phalanx of the enemy; they hewed the linden shields, cut through the roof of shields.]
[55] Huppé, *op. cit.*.

crafted a story pleasing to an Anglo-Saxon audience aware both of the Christian and heroic literary traditions which find their expression in the contrasting styles of leadership of Judith and Holofernes. Moreover, the Old English Judith is transformed from an Old testament heroine into a role-model appealing to an Anglo-Saxon audience who might have been familiar with real-life Christian female leaders along the lines of Æthelflæd, queen of Mercia.[56]

[56] See following chapter.

= Chapter 5 – Socio-Historical Context of *Judith* =

It has been my contention throughout this thesis that the Old English *Judith* is a work carefully crafted to suit its contemporary tenth-century audience. In my comparison of *Judith* to its biblical sources and to other Old English poems, I have concluded that the narrative has been modified both to eliminate most of the Judaic details and to introduce themes of particular appeal for the poet's Anglo-Saxon public. Furthermore, in the stylistic analysis of the text, I have highlighted the poet's emphasis on the ideal of leadership and Judith's fulfillment of that ideal. In the present chapter I intend to present a historical sketch of Anglo-Saxon England which will support my reading of the poem by fleshing out some key features of the socio-historical background of the Old English poet and his audience. This study will extend from the beginning of the ninth-century to the end of the tenth and will consider the great impact that the Viking invasions had on the English, the Church's response to the raids, the role of women in Anglo-Saxon society, and the relation of the poem to these socio-historical issues.

For the tenth-century clergy, the eponymous heroine of *Judith* would have been an example of the 'true faith' and righteousness which many clergymen believed missing in the Church of the time; these virtues were considered the armor for the piety and moderation which late Anglo-Saxon homilists such as Wulfstan advocated as weapons for the resistance against the invading Vikings. For the lay audience, Judith would have been an embodiment of the heroic ideal so diffused in Anglo-Saxon society and which was at the core of many Germanic

poems. For the female portion of this audience, Judith would have appeared as a tribute to the ideal of Anglo-Saxon femininity, endowed as she was with the wisdom of education, the jewelry of nobility, and the courage of the steadfast in faith.

The prominence of the Viking raids in Anglo-Saxon history in the ninth-century suggests the massive impact that they must have had on the English of the time. The first mention of their occurrence goes back to 793 when they raided Lindisfarne.[1] That was an isolated attack, but, as recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*,[2] from 835 onwards, the frequency of the raids increased disrupting the fabric of Anglo-Saxon society at political, social, and religious levels and thus stifling the intellectual growth of a country which a century earlier had produced scholars of the caliber of Alcuin and Bede. By the first half of the tenth-century, the most likely time of composition of *Judith*, England would have suffered at the hands of the Danes for almost a century. The story of Judith, dealing with the theme of resistance and defeat of heathen invaders, as well as other biblical tales of heroic resistance, might be easily seen by the Anglo-Saxons as reflections of their plight in the wars against the Vikings.

Although the heathen Danes never openly declared war on the Christian Church, their raiding of monasteries, practice of heathen rituals, and often brutal behavior towards their victims had led the exponents of the faith to condemn

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[1] The record of Chronicle A in the year 789 --i.e. the entry for 787-- is the actual first mention of Danish ships to come to England; however, even though the incident involved the murder of an Englishman, the event cannot be construed as a true raid given that it only involved three ships and no battle or large scale slaughter ensued.

harshly the Danish people, likening them to devils sent to punish the English for their lax morals. Wulfstan and Ælfric are two of the prominent late tenth-, early eleventh-century Church figures whose eloquent prose was meant to stir Englishmen into action against the heathen devils. In his famous *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* Wulfstan openly condemns his countrymen for their failure in protecting their land and women from the rape of the Viking pillagers at the time of Swein's assault on England.[3] But even more pertinent to *Judith* is Ælfric's letter sent to Sigeweard; having written a paraphrase of the biblical book himself, Ælfric invites his correspondent to take the story of Judith *to bysne þæt ge eowerne eard mid wæmnum bewerian wið onwinnendne here.*[4] This was not Ælfric's only scriptural example for the English resistance against the Danes; Clayton notes that in the exegesis of Maccabees, which follows the comment on Judith, Ælfric makes similar injunctions to follow the biblical example of Machabeus, whose heroic resistance was expressed not only in brave words but in brave deeds as well.[5]

Of course, the large population of Danish origin which had settled in England after the first wave of invasions would not have been so ready to see their countrymen as embodying devils; if they ever saw anything satanic in the wars of the period it would have certainly been King Æthelred's slaughter of the

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[2] Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961); and Michael Swanton, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1997).
[3] Dorothy Whitelock, ed., *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, rev. ed. (Exeter, 1976).
[4] S. J. Crawford, *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch,* EETS os 160, (London, 1922), p. 48. [as example that you should protect your homeland with weapons against the assailing army.]
[5] Mary Clayton, "Ælfric's *Judith*: manipulative or manipulated?" *Anglo-Saxon England*, 23 (1994), 215.

English Danes in 1003. Still, even the regions of the Danelaw would have felt the negative impact of their former countrymen's attacks whether it took the form of extra taxes to finance the English war machine and peace-buying tributes or that of support for the invading armies. Prior to Æthelred's betrayal of the English Danes at the beginning of the eleventh century, most of them would have felt that the land which was being harried by the new bands of Viking raiders was their own as much as that of the Englishmen of Anglo-Saxon descent and would have resented the invasions as much as their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

Although *Judith* was almost certainly composed prior to Ælfric's likening of the Assyrians to the Vikings of Swein, the feelings of dislike for the raiding Danes are surely not unique to his time. Sermons with the same message of Ælfric's letter to Sigeweard probably existed throughout the whole period of the monastic revival. It is hard to imagine any ninth- or tenth-century English audience to whom the plight of the Bethulians against the Assyrians would not have seemed pertinent to their own struggle against the Viking invaders. Moreover, they would have been aware, whether they believed in it or not, that the sinfulness of their own society was cited by the clergymen as the cause of their suffering and that deliverance from the Viking plague would only be attained through pious faith in Christianity.

Thirty-one years from their first recorded raid, the Danes' lust for looting became a desire for conquest which found its expression in the Great Army which from 866 onwards disrupted the Anglo-Saxon political balance and took advantage of the internal divisions between the kingdoms of the English. The

lack of a united English front made it easy for the invading army to attack whichever king they felt like attacking while simultaneously keeping a safe base in a neighboring kingdom where they had a truce with the local ruler. Eventually, the Danes' strategy evolved to the point of replacing the rulers of the various conquered kingdoms with their own chosen puppet-kings, as had been the case with Northumbria's Egbert in 867 and with Mercia's Ceolwulf in 874.

However, those same divisions which helped the success of the Great Army were also fundamental in the resistance against it. In fact, while the army traveled from one safe territory to subjugate another, the former could attempt a rebellion, requiring the invading army to retreat from its campaign and restore order in their original base of power. This had been the case with the Northumbrian revolt which took place when the Danish troops were engaged south with the West Saxons and the Mercians. A revolt in 872 had succeeded in overthrowing both King Egbert and the Bishop Wulfhere, who together had tried to serve the Danish interests in Northumbria.

Repression of this revolt was aided by the reinforcements to the Danes in the form of a 'summer army' which, according to the annals, landed at Reading in 871, just after the battle of Mæretun between the West Saxons and the Danes which had caused great losses on both sides. Prior to that battle, the Great Army had been engaged against King Æthelred and his brother Alfred at Ashdown and they had suffered a severe defeat. A truce with Alfred, who in that year had succeeded his deceased brother Æthelred to the throne of Wessex, bought more

time for the Danes to regroup and strengthen their ranks prior to the aforementioned march to the rebellious Northumbrian kingdom.

During his reign, Alfred spearheaded the country's resistance against the Viking forces. First he successfully reclaimed the rule of Wessex after it had capitulated in the hands of the enemy in 878. Later, he managed to repel a new wave of Viking invasion which kept him occupied from 893 to 896. Alfred's military achievements never brought a definitive defeat of the Danes, but his constant campaigning broke down the invaders' power and laid the foundations for the future supremacy of the Mercian and West Saxon kingdoms over the majority of the remaining English lands. At his death in 899, the political map of England saw Mercia and Wessex as the two leading kingdoms opposing the new attacks of the Danes on English soil. Both kingdoms were ruled by direct descendants of Alfred so that among them there was a unity which helped the English never again to risk total annihilation at the hands of their invaders.

The Danish attacks which had been crippled by Alfred's campaigns continued together with raids from other Scandinavian invaders, but their impact on the Saxon lands was less devastating than it had been at he time of the Great Army. Edward, Alfred's son, and his sister Æthelflæd managed to keep the Danes in check for the first quarter of the tenth century through attacks on the invading army and the implementation of a stronger defense system. These initial successes became the building blocks for the campaigns of Athelstan, Edward's son, which led to the conquest of York, then part of the Norse kingdom, after an earlier truce with the Scandinavians was broken in 927. The Norsemen's attempts

to retake the city in coalition with the northern kings of Scotland and Strathclyde culminated in 937 with the battle of Brunanburh; the victory of Athelstan's army in that encounter is celebrated in the eponymous poem preserved in the annals.

By the beginning of the tenth century the earlier generations of invading Danes had begun to settle down in the lands they had managed to capture from the English. The common Germanic background of the Anglo-Saxons and of the Danes contributed to a peaceful merger of the two people. Richard Humble draws a vivid parallel between the Great Army and a mutating poisonous virus which did not completely take over the host body but sank deep into it, leaving an enduring mark.[6] In later years, under King Athelstan's rule over the land of much of modern day England, there were a number of Danes holding official positions in territories which had formerly been under Danish rule. Stenton gives us an example of a group of a least seven Danes in Athelstan's company at Liston on the 12th of November 931;

> there is little doubt that they were the successors of the earls who had led the Danish armies of eastern England in the time of Edward the Elder. Whatever their origin, their existence proves that neither Edward nor Athelstan had carried out a deliberate replacement of Danes by Englishmen in the government of the conquered Danish colonies.[7]

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[6] Richard Humble, *The Fall of Saxon England* (London, 1975), p.45.
[7] Frank M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), p.351.

This process of assimilation was by no means one-way, rather, it was mutual, and individuals with prominent standing among the Englishmen might have held official positions in the Danish kingdoms of North-Eastern Britain.[8]

Similarly, the pagan religion of the newcomers had mixed with the mainstream Christian faith so that the people of the time were constantly under the influence of the two. The annals show us that even at the peak of the Danish invasions there was still frequent contact with Rome, as in 855 when Æthelwulf went on pilgrimage to Rome, stopping on the way back at the French court to marry the Princess Judith.[9] On the other hand, over 400 years after Augustine's conversion of Kent to Christianity, the Danish King Cnut, who had embraced the Roman Faith after his invasion of Britain, deemed it necessary to write down laws dealing with pagan rites:

> Be hæðenscipe.
> We forbeodað eornostlice ælcne hæðenscipe.
> Þæt bið þæt man idol weorðige, hæþne godas and sunnan oððe monan, fyr oððe flod, wæterwyllas oððe stanas oððe æniges cynnes wudutreowa, oððe wiccecræft lufie, oððe morðweorc gefremme on ænige wisan, oððe on blote oððe on fyrhte, oððe swylcra gedwimera ænig ðing dreoge.[10]

It is generally believed that the archbishop Wulfstan was a chief influence behind the composition of Cnut's laws. Nevertheless, it is significant that it is a Danish

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[8] *ibid.*, p.351.

[9] This is the same Judith that Cook believes to be the inspiration for the Old English *Judith*. See the introduction.

[10] A. J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England; from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge, 1925), p.176. [Concerning heathen practices. We earnestly forbid all heathen practices. Namely the worship of idols, heathen gods, and the sun or the moon, fire or water, springs or stones or

king who formulated these anti-pagan laws, showing the degree to which Christianity had managed to gain official status as the kingdom's religion while heathen beliefs still permeated many aspects of the daily life.

It is an amazing testament to the power achieved by the Christian Church in England that a king from a formerly heathen nation should so openly and enthusiastically embrace the Christian faith by compiling a set of laws heavily affected by the Church's ideology. Swein, Cnut's father, had abandoned heathen beliefs only later on in life, and even then his "tepid patronage of Christianity contrasts sharply with Cnut's enthusiastic devotion to the interests of the church in England."[11] Wulfstan, who as archbishop of York, had spent much time trying to entice the English into a physical and spiritual resistance against Swein's troops, became a trusted advisor to Swein's heir within a brief period of time following the death of the Danish king.

The cycle of invasion and settlement had gone full circle. The heathen raiders of the ninth century had finally become the supreme lords of England in the eleventh and had embraced the faith that for so long had condemned them and likened them to fiends of Hell. But the Danes never actively tried to fight and bring down the Church no matter how much this institution criticized them. At the time of Alfred's ascension to power, England was inescapably in the hands of the heathen invaders, but the Danes were obviously more interested in conquering land than converting people, and the Church did not lose much of its political

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any kind of forest trees, or indulgence in witchcraft, or the compassing of death in any way, either by sacrifice or by divination or by the practice of any such delusions. (Robertson)]

[11] *ibid.*, p.397.

status. In fact, the Danes "had realized the hand-in-glove relationship between Church and king in the government of Saxon England." For instance, in Northumbria they "had maintained Archbishop Wulfhere of York in his see to help Egbert in governing Northumbria as the Danes wished."[12] Nor had the great monarchs of the time forgotten their devotion to the Christian God. In Wessex the annals tell us of King Æthelwulf's two years-long trip to Rome in 855, right in the midst of the early Viking raids, and later we hear how Ethelred delayed his participation at Ashdown because he had not finished hearing Mass when his brother Alfred and the Danes first charged.

But while the Church's political power suffered comparatively little from the Viking invasion, the scholarly learning associated with the Christian institution sustained a far heavier blow in the loss of precious manuscripts in the fires of the raiding invaders.[13] As Christian learning declined so did vernacular literature. The early ninth-century poems of *Juliana* and *Elene*, as well as the others commonly ascribed to the figure of Cynewulf, are the last great compositions of Anglo-Saxon literature until the beginning of tenth century. It is in the tenth-century that Latin scholarship and literature found the springs of a new vitality thanks in part to Alfred's interest in learning during his lifetime and in part to the monastic reforms which were infiltrating the country from the continent. In fact, in his effort to re-inject life into the cultural and religious fabric of England, Alfred had imported a large number of monks from the

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[12] Humble, *op. cit.*, p.52.
[13] See King Alfred's introduction to his translation of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis*.

continent --especially from France-- to aid his educational plans.[14] In doing so, Alfred not only imported scholars with a deep knowledge of Latin, but he opened the door to the assimilation of the new ideas about monastic life which were beginning to take shape in late ninth-century France. The French monasteries of Cluny and Fleury were two of the main centers of a reform aimed at the unification of various monastic practices under a revised Benedictine rule. However, it was not until the second half of the tenth-century that the so-called Benedictine revival gained full force in England under the guidance of St. Dunstan.

Judith was very likely composed before the Benedictine revival fully revitalized learning in Anglo-Saxon England. However, already at the time of King Athelstan's reign there was "some evidence of renewed interest in monasticism [...] probably engendered by the happy coincidence of a protracted period of peace and by the increase in communications with the reforming movements in mainland Europe."[15] The predominant relaxed monastic rule that characterized Alfred's reign began to give way to the more organized and structured approach to monastic life dictated by the Benedictine rule. The direct effect of this new monasticism can be seen in an increase of Latin scholarship. The number of Latin works produced increased steadily following Alfred's death

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[14] Further details of Alfred's plans can be gathered in the *Cura Pastoralis*. See Neil R.Ker, ed., *The Pastoral Care; King Alfred's Translation of St. Gregory's Regula Pastoralis* (Copenhagen, 1956).

[15] Oswald McBride, "The Tenth-Century Monastic Revival", in *Monks of England; the Benedictines in England from Augustine to the Present Day*, Daniel Rees ed. (London, 1997), p. 72.

up to the end of the tenth-century.[16] Vernacular literature would have also benefited from the increased literacy of the time; the importance of making some of the 'new' Latin works available to the non-Latin-speaking laity prompted the need for glossed versions of Latin works or even translations of them.[17] Greater amounts of money and resources were being invested in *scriptoria*, facilitating the production of manuscripts, as is evident from the great number of tenth-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that has survived to this day.

Judith was very likely composed around this vibrant period of Anglo-Saxon learning, becoming the first recorded vernacular version of the story of Judith. The first surviving Latin version of the story, other than the biblical *Liber Iudith*, occurs in ninth-century Germany. In his survey of the various versions of the apocryphal text, David Radavich cites the ninth-century *Versus de Judith et Holofernem* as the earliest surviving interpretation of the biblical story.[18] According to Purdie, this Latin poem is not a significant work from a literary point of view, but it indicates an interest in the story in an early period, and it probably contributed to the knowledge of the story in Germany.[19] After this work we have no record of any other text dealing with a similar subject until the tenth-century Old English *Judith*.

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[16] Michael Lapidge, "Schools, Learning and Literature in Tenth-Century England", in *Anglo-Latin Literature 900-1066*, Michael Lapidge ed. (London, 1993), pp. 1-48.
[17] *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
[18] David A. Radavich, "A Catalogue of Works Based on the Apocryphal Book of Judith, from the Mediaeval Period to the Present", *Bulletin of Bibliography*, 44 (1987), 189-192. An older but more detailed list of works on Judith can be found in Edna Purdie, *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* (Paris, 1927).
[19] Purdie, *op. cit.*, p.1.

The appearance of the earliest version of the story of Judith acquires greater significance when seen in connection with the contemporary patristic work on Judith, specifically Rabanus Maurus' commentary on the *Liber Iudith* dated to 834. This work, collecting the patristic wisdom of previous centuries, might have been responsible for renewing interest in the story of the biblical heroine. The availability of Rabanus Maurus' series of commentaries would have encouraged the production of homilies of the biblical texts covered by his commentaries, and this, in turn, would have led to a wider knowledge of the issues relating to the biblical book in question. This process obviously benefited more those texts which normally received limited attention from other biblical exegetes, a we have seen to be the case with the *Liber Iudith*.[20]

Less than a century after Rabanus' commentary, the greatest of the earlier surviving works on Judith is composed in the Old English language during the spell of relative political stability afforded by the period of post-Alfredian Mercian and West-Saxon leadership. Foster took the tenth-century dating as the basis of a theory that attempted to identify a specific Anglo-Saxon figure as the inspiration for the Old English *Judith*. Before Foster, Cook had attempted a similar feat by choosing Judith, King Æthelwulf's wife, as the obvious inspiration for the poem. However, Cook's theory has been generally rejected by critics who, in more recent years, have sought a later dating of the poem.[21] The meter, diction, and style of *Judith* point, in fact, to a familiarity with later poems, and the

[20] For a detailed discussion of Rabanus Maurus, his commentaries, and the canonicity of the Book of Judith, see chapter two.

similarities with earlier poems, such as *Juliana* and *Christ II*, are likely to be deliberate archaisms on the part of an author very well versed with the literary tradition of his nation. I believe that such a literary figure would likely have been the product of a enlightened period, such as that which briefly followed Alfred's death at the beginning of the tenth century.

It is Æthelflæd, Edward's sister, daughter of Alfred and Judith's step-granddaughter, that Foster picks as the inspiration to the poem. According to Foster's reasoning, Mercia was the likely home of the poem's author given the temporary renaissance it underwent during the rule of Æthelred and Æthelfæd. He corroborates this choice by dating the poem to the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century on the basis of meter and language features typical of tenth-century writings.

Æthelflæd, or the Lady of the Mercians, as the annals call her, appears prominently in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C after the death of her husband in 911. This is due to the fact that this particular chronicle was copied and edited in North-East Wessex, an area close enough to Mercia to betray its neighbor's influence in the form of an interpolated section known as the *Mercian Register* which deals primarily with Æthelflæd's resistance against the Danes.[22] The West-Saxon annals, on the other hand, forego her mention in favor of a detailed reckoning of Edward's deeds, but her effort and achievement in the resistance against the Danes must have granted her fame beyond the boundaries of her own

[21] See B. J. Timmer, *Judith*, rev. ed. (Exeter, 1978) and Eliot V. K. Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith* (New York, 1953).

kingdom. Her eight-year rule of Mercia has been summed up by Stenton in complimentary terms:

> [she] kept the loyalty of a formidable military household, and led the Mercian host in person on expeditions which she herself had planned. The record of the fortresses which she built for the protection of Mercia shows that she had an eye for country, and the ability to forecast the movements of her enemies. [23]

She was certainly a formidable lady and a fitting Mercian counterpart to the Old Testament Judith. A few centuries after her death, William of Malmesbury gave her even higher praises in the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* calling her "popular with the citizens and a terror to the enemy [..] she was a virago, a very powerful influence and help in her brother's policy and no less effective as a builder of cities."[24]

Even though Foster's theory is more realistic than Cook's, both have been rejected by Timmer in his edition of the poem. Since Cook's theory had already been successfully disputed by Foster, Timmer concentrates on disproving the latter hypothesis, which he finds guilty of overestimating Æthelflæd's importance. Further, he claims that "pre-conquest England was not given to hero-worship," and that the major praises of her name came in later years.[25] I suggest, however, that the annals offer evidence of hero-worship in the form of a poem

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[22] More details about chronicle C can be obtained in G. N. Garmonsway, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1955), pp. xv-xliv.
[23] Stenton, *op. cit.*, p.324.
[24] R. A. B. Mynors, ed., *William of Malmesbury Gesta Regum Anglorum*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1998), pp. 198-199. [*favor civium, pavor hostium [..] virago potentissima multum fratrem consiliis iuvare, in urbibus extruendis non minus valere.*]

and a panegyric about two tenth-century monarchs, Athelstan and his brother Edmund, as can be witnessed in the entries for 937 (the Battle of Brunanburh), and 942 (Edmund's conquest of Mercia). Moreover, *Judith* is not meant to represent necessarily the deeds of the Lady of the Mercians; she could simply have been the person to whom the poem was dedicated, given a certain affinity between her deeds and those of the Jewish heroine. Being a figure of undeniable power, Æthelflæd is an ideal patron to whom an author might try to ingratiate himself.

The composition of *Judith* reflects a desire to celebrate the ideal of Anglo-Saxon femininity embodied in the character of the poem's heroine, a pious, prudent, brave, and intelligent woman. It is quite possible that the poem had been dedicated to some famous female contemporary of the poet. Maurus' *Expositio in Liber Iudith* offers us an example of a dedication to an influential Judith contemporary with the Church Father. This dedication provides a precedent for Cook and Foster's theories about the occasion of the composition of *Judith*. Rabanus' work opens with a dedicatory letter to Judith Augusta, wife of Louis the Pious, which, to Huppé, "suggests that the inspiration for his commentary was his reverence for the Empress rather than a unique desire for exegetical completeness."[26] Furthermore, the dedication of the commentary on Judith is tied to that on Esther, because the Empress "unam coaequit [coaequatis] nomine,

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[25] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.7.

[26] Bernard F. Huppé, *The Web of Words; Structural Analyses of the Old English Poems Vainglory, The Wonder of Creation, The Dream of the Rood, and Judith* (Albany, 1970), p.145.

alteram dignitate;"[27] as if Judith alone would not be an appropriate subject for Rabanus' dedication with her lack of aristocratic standing, a failure corrected only by the association with Queen Esther.

In the Anglo-Saxon poem, however, the figure of Judith gains more aristocratic attributes than its biblical counterpart[28] so that associating the figure of Judith with a member of the court would not require any additional appeal to the social standing of the person to whom the poem was dedicated. The golden ornaments, the eloquence, and the Christian faith of the Old English heroine would have all been desirable attributes of an Anglo-Saxon noble lady. Moreover, out of the limited literate audience of Alfred's time aristocratic women formed perhaps the majority of the lay readership. They had more time away from the affairs of state than their husbands and would assist with the education of their sons and daughters --as it is reported in Asser's famous anecdote about Alfred's mother's gift of a book of verse to her son.[29]

Timmer's conclusion that "there is [...] no justification for assuming that Judith stands for Æthelflæd"[30] might be extreme, but it can be rephrased more accurately by substituting 'there is no proof' in place of 'there is no justification'. Indeed, no definitive evidence has emerged in support of Foster's theory; it is quite possible that there was no written dedication attached to the poem as opposed to Rabanus' dedication to the Empress Judith and that simply in the act

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[27] Rabanus, Maurus, *Expositio in Liber Iudith,* in Migne's *Patrologia Latina.* [one she matched (you match) in name, the other in rank.]
[28] Details about Judith's characterization in the Old English poem are discussed in chapters three, four, and five.
[29] William H. Stevenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred* (Oxford, 1904), pp.20-21.

of presenting the poem to Æthelflæd, the link between the biblical heroine and the Anglo-Saxon queen was automatically made evident. Foster's theory remains just that, accurate though it might be, but while the connection between the Lady of the Mercians and Judith cannot be drawn with certainty at this stage, the broader idea, common to Cook's hypothesis, that a woman influenced the poet's vision of his heroine is quite plausible.

Women's place in Anglo-Saxon society has been a matter of critical debate over the years and the view that women were mistreated and abused is replaced by the more recent belief that they were in many ways better off than their Roman predecessors and their continental contemporaries. The two views are not mutually exclusive; the condition of women, especially women slaves, was grim throughout the Middle Ages when compared to the following historical periods. Still, a traditional guide to determine women's status in a society has been the amount of laws devoted to their protection, and at least in this respect Anglo-Saxon women seem to have fared quite well.[31]

Social class was perhaps the main factor in determining the extent of protection the law afforded to women. As it can easily be imagined, offenses to noble women and higher-level courtesans commanded higher penalties than similar offenses to members of the lower classes. Still, some laws seemed to have applied to all women, such a Cnut's decree that *ne nyde man næfre naðor ne wif ne mæden to ðam þe hire sylfre mislicige, ne wið sceatte ne sylle, buton he hwæt*

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[30] Timmer, *op. cit.*, p.7.
[31] Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (Bloomington, 1984), pp. 39 ff.

agenes ðances gyfan wylle.[32] Perhaps, in this particular case, it was the women of the higher classes who were afforded less protection by the law, given the common practice of sealing truces and alliances with marriages.

The survey of Anglo-Saxon laws suggests that marital status was also a factor which could affect the extent of legal protection afforded to women. Widows are particularly prominent in the laws, possibly because it was recognized that in the absence of a husband a woman would have a harder time to take care of herself and her own. Widows were protected by both God and the King, their rights were equated to those of nuns, as the following two laws of Æthelred indicate,

> Sy ælc wydewe, þe hy sylfe mid rihte gehealde, on Godes griðe and on þæs cynges.
>
> Gif hwa nunnan gewemme oþþe wydewan nydnæme, gebete þæt deope for Gode and for worolde.[33]

The Church's special consideration of widows as inferior only to virgins combined with the secular concern for a woman deprived of her husband gave rise to an ideal which went hand in hand with that of babes and orphans -- innocent victims of the brutes of the world. However, other legal evidence indicates that while Anglo-Saxon widows were deemed needy of special assistance and protection, they were also blessed with a high degree of financial

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[32] Robertson, *op. cit.*, p.212. [No woman or maiden shall ever be forced to marry a man whom she dislikes, nor shall she be given for money, except the suitor desires of his own freewill to give something. (Robertson)]

independence, thanks to many laws which insured that their husbands' property would remain with the wife after his demise. At the time of Æthelred, celibacy had to be maintained for twelve months after the husband's death in order not to forfeit his property to the benefit of his closest of kin, but after that year had elapsed a widow would become the owner of her husband's property and could do with it as she pleased.

It is noteworthy that the poet of the Old English *Judith* glossed over any reference to the heroine's widowhood, given the respect which both Church and state warranted to women in that circumstance. Within their social milieu, widows would have likely been wealthier, more independent, and more respected than their married counterparts. In short, highlighting Judith's widowhood would have enhanced her admiration from a contemporary audience. There is, of course, the possibility that some issue was made of Judith's marital status in the fragment of the poem which is now lost to us. However, the extant portion of the poem would have provided our poet with quite a few possibilities to discuss his heroine's privileged state of widowhood; most notably, the poet omits the passage at the close of the biblical text which mentions the fact that Judith continued to remain celibate after her success against Holofernes even though many suitors were attracted by her fame.

Æthelflæd was herself a widow, and she embodied the ideals of celibacy, strength, independence, and piety, commonly associated with Anglo-Saxon

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[33] *ibid.*, pp.98-102. [All widows who lead a respectable life shall enjoy the special protection of God and of the King. If anyone injures a nun or does violence to a widow, he shall make amends to the outmost of his ability both towards church and state. (Robertson)]

widowhood. If we believe in Foster's theory, it is undeniable that the poet must have seen these traits of the Mercian Queen reflected in the Jewish heroine, but if he still decided to obliterate, or at least underplay, that aspect of his Judith, regardless of the convenient connection with his patron, we must seek his objective in a possible desire to isolate Judith from any external sources for her strength aside from God. In fact, even though widowhood implied independence, it was 'thanks to' the death of her husband. In other words, Æthelflæd's glory would have appeared even greater if it had not depended on inheriting her wealth and status from her husband; similarly, Judith's courage and strength shine even brighter when not affected by the state of widowhood.

Nuns, with whom widows had been associated in Æthelred's law, represented another group of women with significant power and independence. A woman who entered monastic life would, for the most part, remove herself from the direct influence of a lay man and the rest of the secular world. Furthermore, becoming a bride of Christ, a woman might have improved her chances of receiving an education that often extended beyond the basics of literacy. Ælfric's *Homily on Judith* was addressed to a group of nuns with the advice that they should follow her example in faith and chastity, and many other sermons were written for female monastic consumption with the understanding that most of them would be able to read the texts. Christine Fell shows that this is the case even with Aldhelm's intricate Latin; the bishop "takes it for granted that the nuns for whom his book was written can cope with his convoluted syntax and abstruse vocabulary, and in fact asks them to let him know whether the style of his work is

'pleasing to [their] intelligence'."[34] Moreover, convents often provided the services of a scriptorium for important patrons and it is a matter of fact that quite a few nuns tried their hand at writing Latin verse.[35] Therefore the possibilty exists that the author might have been a nun, even though in this thesis the author of the poem has been referred to as a male.

Social class was a determining factor as to the extent of the power and independence that monastic life would grant a woman; all the higher charges of a convent or nunnery were usually held by women coming from aristocratic families. Thus secular and sacred power would often merge in the figure of an abbess whose family ties and monastic position would make her politically, economically, and spiritually knowledgeable. *Judith*'s range of possible readings, from the political to the allegorical, would not have been lost to a woman who was well versed in the scriptures and also working daily to provide sustenance for the people she cared for through a delicate economy heavily affected by the events of the world outside her monastery. Given the range of opportunities that monastic life promised to women, it is hardly surprising that Stenton should find a prominence of females embracing monastic life at the time of the monastic revival.[36] Some women might have been driven to enter a monastic life after having lost husbands and sons in the wars which had plagued the ninth century; others, under the advice of Church writers, might have embraced the religious life as a way to repel through piety the affliction brought by the heathen invaders.

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[34] Fell, *op. cit.*, p.110.
[35] *ibid.*, pp.112-114.
[36] Stenton, *op. cit.*, p.445.

more likely, he aimed at producing a version of the story compatible with Anglo-Saxon customs and sensibilities.[41]

The poet's success in catering for his contemporary tenth-century audience is reflected in the way the socio-historical issues examined in this chapter are reflected in the composition of his work: the poem's subject matter reflects the overwhelming impact of the Viking raids on English society, the characterization of the heroine is faithful to the Anglo-Saxon ideal of femininity, and the exemplum of virtue and piety offered by Judith echoes the injunctions of the Church for a strengthening of morals at the times of the Viking invasions. *Judith* is then a work particularly suited to its time of composition. As appendix two clearly makes plain, the perception of the heroine changed through the years and the Judith of the Old English poem remains unique amongst the many other Judiths that have appeared in later reworking of the story.

[41] This seems to be the case for most of the Old Testament narratives in the Middle Ages.

= Conclusion =

The aim of this thesis has been to research the literary background necessary for an informed reading of the Old English poem *Judith*, a work for which few editions existed until recently, and none of them up-to-date with the current scholarship on the poem.[1]

The emphasis of my work has been the examination of the Judeo-Christian background of the open on the one hand, and of the Old English literary tradition on the other. In doing so I have tried to address what Greenfield and Calder have defined the "primary question" in the study of Old English literature:

> Perhaps the study of Old English literature still finds that its primary question is the same Alcuin asked nearly twelve hundred years ago: *Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?* "What has Ingeld to do with Christ?" This famous remonstrance, made in a letter written in 797 to Hygebald, bishop of Lindisfarne, concerning the monks' fondness for listening to heroic song in the refectory rather than to spiritual wisdom, still forces us to consider how we should understand and describe that extraordinary corpus which emerged from the encounter between an unlettered Germanic tribal aesthetic and the remnants of the classical tradition, itself transformed by the Christian religion. Old English literature is a palimpsest, and few periods in the history of English literature offer the literary historian a greater challenge - to comprehend and appreciate the layers as they accumulated over many centuries, understanding its historical context and yet using modern critical techniques.[2]

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[1] Recently a new edition of *Judith* has emerged in which the author, Mark Griffith reaches some of the same conclusions offered in my research. Mark Griffith, *Judith*, (Exeter, 1997).

Judith differs significantly from the other poems in the corpus and any attempt to force this poem into one of the canonical genres risks overlooking the greatness of the work in favor of negative comparisons between Judith's brand of heroism and that of Juliana or Beowulf. The poem, moreover, should not be read merely as an Old English transcription of Old Testament tale, or a variation of the Saint's Life. The Anglo-Saxon version of the story of the Jewish heroine combines elements from all these literary traditions, resulting in a powerful and original work which still manages to capture the imagination and stir the feelings of the modern reader.

My observations on the manuscript, London, BL Cotton Vitellius A.XV, support the view that *Judith* is an almost complete fragment, far shorter than the biblical versions of the story which I have then examined to determine the degree to which they have influenced the Old English narrative. It was enlightening to find that contrary to what had been assumed until recently, *Judith* owes as much to the Vulgate *Liber Iudith*, traditionally reputed the source of the poem, as it does to the Old Latin version of the same story. Mark Griffith, in his edition of the poem, has also found that while "the text [the poet] knew undoubtedly resembled the Vulgate" there is "a little evidence that he might have known a few Old Latin readings."[3] For the reader's convenience, I have included a synoptic view of the Vulgate, Old Latin and Old English text of the story of Judith which

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[2] Stanley B. Greenfield and Daniel G. Calder, *A New Critical History of Old English Literature* (London, 1986), pp. 3-4.
[3] Griffith, *op. cit..*, pp. 48-49.

allows for quick and easy comparison of similar passages in the three versions of the tale.

I am again in agreement with Griffith in his comparison of the structure and plot of *Judith* with that of its biblical sources: "simplification, reduction and rearrangement are the hallmarks of the poet's method."[4] The poet's adoption of this method results in the reduction of the cast of characters and the roles they play in the story, the elimination of all details which might cast a shadow on the heroine's purity, and the overall adaptation of the story into a tale more easily understood by an Anglo-Saxon audience.

The extensive study of the patristic commentaries on the book of Judith has revealed that the conception of the heroine in the Old English poem differ significantly from Christian exegesis. I reject the view of the poem as an allegoric tale in which Holofernes and Judith represent Satan and Ecclesia respectively. Bernard Huppé, who in his *Web of Words* has constructed what is perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive study of the patristic influence on the poem, fails to recognize that *Judith* omits too many details found in the sources which are necessary for a wholly allegorical reading of the poem.[5] However, I do not completely discount the Church Fathers' influence on the Old English text, and tend to agree with Huppé's belief that "the poet's tradition appears not to be Rabanus' commentary, but the pervasive tradition of selective exemplification." [6] It is this the tradition of the commentaries that has left the strongest mark on

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[4] *ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
[5] Bernard Huppé, *The Web of Words* (Albany, 1970), p. 139.
[6] *ibid.*, p. 144.

Judith which I have recognized as an *exemplum* of Christian behavior and of Anglo-Saxon female heroism.

Just as the Old English poet borrows only a careful selection of elements from the biblical version of the story of Judith and from its exegetical tradition, he does not mold his heroine and her story on those of other female saints such as Juliana and Elene, nor does he attributes to her all the trappings and attributes of male heroes such as Beowulf and Andreas. Appreciation of Old English literature still suffers to a large extent from the major role played in the canon by *Beowulf* and celebrated authors such as Ælfric and Cynewulf. In an article criticizing some aspects of our critical approach to Old English literature, Allen J. Frantzen remarks how the 'Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal' informs our approach to Anglo-Saxon poetry and how a hierarchy of genres has been established placing heroic poems and Christian narratives in the top two places.[7] *Judith* differs significantly from the other poems in the corpus and any attempt to force this poem into one of the canonical genres risks overlooking the greatness of the work in favor of negative comparisons between Judith's brand of heroism and that of Juliana or Beowulf.

Timmer seems to fall prey of this fallacy when he comments on the way in which the *Judith* poet makes abundant uses of traditional heroic vocabulary while, on the whole, the Germanic spirit is diluted from earlier religious epics, providing, for instance, "no indication of the *comitatus*-idea."[8] But the idea of the

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[7] Allen J. Frantzen, "The Diverse Nature of Old English Poetry", in Henk Aertsen and Rolf H. Bremmer Jr., eds., *Companion to Old English Poetry* (Amsterdam 1994), pp. 3-4.
[8] *ibid.*, p. 12.

comitatus is indeed used by the poet, only in a subtler way than that which characterizes poems such as *Beowulf*. While the heroine in *Judith* might not reflect all the stereotyped ideals of Germanic heroism, I have argued that she does quite accurately reflect an ideal of Anglo-Saxon feminine leadership. The recent discussions in feminist criticism and in the study of women's roles in Anglo-Saxon society have helped in de-centering our view of Judith as parallel to male heroic models. Judith lacks a 'proper' comitatus because her brand of heroism does not warrant it. She does not lead her countrymen into battle by carrying the battle standard ahead of the front-line, but she is their savior nonetheless, having been instrumental in giving them the incentive and assurance to attack their oppressors. She is a leader, but a female one, the Bethulians and her maidservant both have attributes which remind the reader of the Germanic comitatus, but ultimately they play a different role in the poem and direct comparison with other expressions of the comitatus-idea in Old English poetry fail to appreciate *Judith*'s particular appeal.

Although *Judith* differs greatly from other poems in the canon and although it omits the complex allegories found in patristic commentaries, both of these cultural contexts, to a greater or lesser extent, would have been familiar to an audience contemporary with the poem. It is therefore important to understand both traditions well and to be familiar with the historical period in which the poem was composed in order to understand how *Judith* might have been received by its contemporary audience. However, we should not expect compliance to any

particular genre which might have influenced the poem's composition, be it the hagiography, the Germanic heroic epic, or the allegorical religious text.

Judith stands on its own merits. It is a skillfully crafted work which gains its strength from the carefully balanced tensions of its plot and structure. However, full appreciation of the poem comes only from an understanding of its many interactions with the social, cultural, and historic context from which it originates. The use of the word-hoard of Anglo-Saxon epic epithets is not stereotyped and conventional, as Timmer suggests: the poet is aware of the connotations of each word and its meaning when used in the context of a biblical story or when applied to a particular character. So, if *Judith* lacks full Germanic flavor in the banquet scene, it is not due to the poet's lack of skill but to his desire to mock Holofernes and his men by having them partake in a depraved variation of the traditional Germanic celebration in the mead-hall. If Judith fails to conform fully to the heroic standards set by Beowulf and Andreas, again it is not by way of incompetence in the poet's part. Her heroism, as mentioned above, is more feminine; it is private, like the triumph of Juliana over her demon, but unlike Juliana's heroism, Judith has political relevance to her countrymen and to the tenth-century audience of the poem. That I should be so sure of the poet's competence derives from witnessing his careful and innovative use of traditional formulas such as that of the beasts of battle, and more importantly it originates from the thorough enjoyment which I obtain from reading the poem.

Judith is interesting for the ways in which it adapts its sources and literary tradition to fit its meaning. The author emerges as a learned individual, aware of

his cultural heritage and skilled in adapting it in his entertaining storytelling. He seems concerned with catering to an audience that would have included powerful and influential women and therefore weaves his tale mindful to shape the heroine of his poem in a way that is consonant with his contemporary Anglo-Saxon ideal of female leadership.[9] In the Old English poem Judith becomes a Christian woman praying to the Trinity, an authoritative figure who gives orders to the Bethulian guards, a wealthy matron dressed in fine jewelry, and a woman aware of her place in society when she decides to leave the throwing of spears and wielding of shields to the men of her country. Her actions would have stirred the hearts of both women and men in the audience by witnessing the courage and resolution of a woman caught in events which would have seemed to them very similar to the Viking raids of the tenth and ninth century. The moral lesson of Christianity and strong faith triumphing over heathenism would have worked both on a spiritual and personal level as well as on a public and political one which identified the Vikings with the heathen Assyrians of *Judith* and the English with the victorious Bethulians.

In the course of my research I have attempted to explore two of the major layers which, in Greenfield's and Calder's view, distance us from Old English poems. My analysis of the biblical sources and patristic commentaries of the story of Judith as well as my study of the ties between *Judith* and other Anglo-Saxon literature have helped me construct a reading of the poem which reflects my understanding of its appeal and relevance for a tenth-century audience. More

[9] For study of female heroism and leadership, see Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English*

layers are left to be examined to refine further some of the conclusions reached here and many more will require study as our research into *Judith* progresses. To begin with, the field of *Judith* criticism would benefit from more work on the poem's performance, recording and social function. In small part some of these issues have been investigated here but they did not constitute the focus of the thesis. Another aspect of the poem worthy of further investigation is the popular conception of the character of *Judith* in Anglo-Saxon England. The work presented here in the second appendix suggests ways in which this research can be carried out and hints at some of the surprising outcomes of that research. The Judith of the Old English poem might have been unique or typical of the popular conception of this biblical figure, however the lack of references to Judith or the *Liber Iudith* during Anglo-Saxon times makes the nature of this research quite speculative. Perhaps it will prove useful to explore further the appeal of the Valkyrie figure in Germanic cultures, searching for references to Judith in medieval Germany, a country that, by the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, produced a vast number of works based on Judith and Holofernes.[10] Additional research will no doubt be rewarded by our increased understanding of this superlative poem, perhaps the greatest vernacular tribute of all time to this most enduring of heroines, Judith.

Literature (Syracuse, 1986).

[10] Lists of works on Judith can be found in Edna Purdie, *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* (Paris, 1927) and David A. Radavich, "A Catalogue of Works Based on the Apocryphal Book of Judith, from the Mediaeval Period to the Present", *Bulletin of Bibliography,* 44 (1987), 189-192.

= Appendix I =

The following appendix shows the texts of the Old English *Judith* next to that of the *Liber Iudith* in both the Vulgate Bible and the Old Latin one.[1] The sections have been divided to show how the same details and plot elements have changed from one version to the other.

Bracketed numbers, running from 1 to 19 throughout the Old English text, refer to the 19 plot elements shared by the three versions of the story, as listed in chapter 2, pp. 58-59.

[1] The translation from the Old English is entirely my own; the text of the Old Latin is translated from the *Bibliorum Sanctorum Versiones Antiquæ* and is based on Morton S. Enslin's translation of the Septuagint in Morton S. Enslin and Solomon Zeitlin, eds., *The Book of Judith* (Philadelphia, 1972) of which it follows the division into verses; finally, for the Vulgate I have resorted to the 1609 Douay translation of the Vulgate adding only minor modifications. See *The Holy Bible, Translated from the Vulgate* (Belfast, 1847).

OE Old English *Judith*	OL Old Latin Bible	Vlg Vulgate Bible
.....[not (?)] she doubted of grace / in this wide world; there she found readily at that time / protection with the great Ruler, when very much she had need / grace of the highest Judge, that He her against the highest danger / might defended, the Lord of creation (g.p.); accordingly to her, the Father in the heavens / glorious One, granted, when she had firm belief / always in the Almighty.		
[1] I heard [that] at that time Holophernes / eagerly ordered a wine-feast, and magnificent with every wonder / prepared a banquet: to which the leader of the men summoned / all the eldest attendants: really with speed they that [the bidding / did, the shield warriors, they went to the great lord / to the leader of the people. That was on the fourth day / since Judith, prudent in thought, him, / a radiant matron, first approached.	XII-10 - And it came to pass on the fourth day that Holofernes made a feast for his slaves only, and he did not invite any of those on duty.	XII-10 - And it came to pass in the fourth day, that Holofernes made a supper for his servants,
X / / They then went to sit at that banquet / the boastful to the wine-drinking, all his companions in sin / the confident corsleted warriors. There were deep bowls / brought thereafter repeatedly to the benches, and similarly cups and pitchers / The filled for the guests: fated they received [them] / the vigorous shield warriors, although the powerful man did not expect [it] / the terrible lord of the warriors. Then was Holophernes, / the gold-dispenser of the troop, happy in drinking; / he exulted and roared, shouted and made noise, / so that the children of the men could hear from afar, / how the strong-headed man stormed and yelled, / arrogant and drunk he exhorted repeatedly / the men on the benches that they should behave well. / Thus the evil one, during the entire day, / drowned with wine his retainers, / the strong-headed dispenser of treasures, until they lay in stupor, / he made all of his noble retainers drunk, just as they were slain by death, / deprived of all good. So the lord of the warriors commanded / them to be served, the lord of men, / until the gloomy night approached.		
[2] Then he, infected of evils ordered / to fetch the blessed maid with haste / to his resting place, laden with bracelets, / adorned with rings.		
Quickly they did it, / the retainers, as their lord had bid them, / the chief of the corsleted-warriors: instantly they marched / to the guest-chamber, there they Judith / found prudent, and then boldly / the shield warriors began to bring forth / that illustrious maid to the high pavilion / where the lord himself always rested, / nightly, hateful to the Savior, / Holophernes. There was all golden / a beautiful fly-net about the chieftain's / bed hung, which the wicked man, / the lord of warriors, could observe through, /	11 - And he said to the eunuch Bagoas, who was in charge of all his possessions, "Go now, and persuade the Hebrew woman, who is with thee, to come to us and eat and drink with us,	and said to Vagao his eunuch: "Go and persuade that Hebrew woman, to consent of her own accord to dwell with me."

OE	OL	Vlg
on anyone who came in there came / the children of heroes, and on him no one / of mankind, unless the proud one someone / of the experts in evil ordered near to him / to come to counsel, [one] of the soldiers. They then brought to the bed / quickly the prudent woman; then the stout-hearted went / the men to their chief to inform that the holy woman was / brought in his pavilion.		
[3] Then the one noble in spirit was / happy, the lord of the forts, he thought that spotless lady / to stain with defilement and with foulness;	12 - in fact, it is a shame for us if we let such a woman go without having intercourse with her, because if we do not force her to us, she will laugh at us."	11 - For it is looked upon as shameful among the Assyrians, if a woman mock a man, by doing so as to pass free from him.
the Judge of glory that did not wish / to allow, the protector of troops, but he prevented him this deed, / the Lord, the Ruler of hosts. Departed then the devilish one, / the wanton with the company of men / the wicked to visit his bed, there he would loose his glory / quickly in one night; then his end he had awaited / on earth bitter, as he from the beginning strove towards, / the stout-souled lord of the men, while he in this world / dwelled under the clouds' roof.		
	13 - And the eunuch Bagoas went out from before Holofernes and came to her and said, "Let not this fair maid, I pray, hesitate to come to my lord to be honored in his presence, and thou shalt drink wine in merriment with him and become this day honourable as a daughter of the children of Asshur who attend in the house of Nabuchodonosor." 14 - And Judith said to him, "Who am I to contradict my lord? Because all which will be pleasing in his eyes will I hasten to do, and this will be a source of joy to me till the day of my death." 15 - And arising, she arrayed herself in her apparel and all her woman's finery, and her slave girl came forward and strewed on the ground before Holofernes the lambskin which she had received from the eunuch Bagoas for her daily use, to eat reclining on them. 16 - And entering Judith reclined, and the heart of Holofernes was delighted at her, and his soul reeled, because he was exceedingly eager to lie with her; and he had been biding his time to deceive her, from the day when he had first seen her. 17 - And Holofernes said to her, "Drink with us in merriment." 18 - And Judith said, "My lord, I will drink, because my life has been exalted today to a height beyond that of all the days since my birth." 19 - And taking, she ate and drank before him what her slave had prepared for her.	12 - Then Vagao went into Judith and said: "Let not my good maid be afraid to go in to my lord, that she may be honored before his face, that she may eat with him and drink wine and be merry." 13 - And Judith answered him: "Who am I, that I should gainsay my lord? 14 - All that shall be good and best before his eyes, I will do. And whatsoever shall please him, that shall be best to me all the days of my life." 15 - And she arose and dressed herself out of her garments: and going in she stood before his face. 16 - And the heart of Holofernes was smitten, for he was burning with the desire of her. 17 - And Holofernes said to her: "Drink now, and sit down and be merry; for thou hast found favor before me." 18 - And Judith said; "I will drink, my lord, because my life is magnified this day above all my days." 19 - And she took and ate and drank before him what her maid had prepared for her.
[4] Then fell so drunk with wine / the ruler in the middle of his bed, that he not remember know anyone of the resolutions / in his mind: the warriors marched / out of there with great haste, / the men intoxicated, who the perfidious one, / the hateful tyrant, carried to bed / for the last time.	20 - And Holofernes was enraptured with her and drank much wine, more than he had ever drunk in one day since he was born. XIII-1 - But when the hour had become late, his slaves made haste to withdraw, and Bagoas closed the tent from without and excluded the attendants from the presence of his lord, and they all went off to their bed, for all were weary and sleepy	20 - And Holofernes was made merry on her occasion, and drank exceedingly much wine, so much as he had never drunk before in his life. XIII-1 - And when it was gown late, his servants made haste to their lodgings: and Vagao shut the chamber doors, and went his way. 2 - And they were all overcharged with wine.

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	because of very much drinking.	
	2 - And Judith was left alone in the tent, and Holofernes was prone on his bed, for he was numbed by wine. 3 - And Judith said to her slave girl to stand outside the entrance of the chamber and to observe her entrance and departure as she did everyday, for she said that she would go out for her prayers. And she had spoken to Bagoas with the same words.	3 - And Judith was alone in the chamber. 4 - But Holofernes lay on his bed, fast asleep, being exceedingly drunk. 5 - And Judith spoke to her maid to stand without before the chamber, and to watch.
Then was the Savior's / peerless handmaid truly concerned / of how she might most easily the terrible one / deprive of life before the impure / foul man awoke. The curly-locked then grabbed, / the creator's maid, a sharp sword, / brave in battles, and she drew [it] from the sheath / with the stronger hand;		
[5] then she began the Guardian of the heavens / to address by name, the Savior of all / the inhabitants of the world, and spoke this speech: / "I, you God of creation, and Spirit of comfort, / Son of the Almighty, wish to implore / your favor for me needy [of it], / majesty of the Trinity. In me now exceedingly / the heart is heated and the soul downcast, / greatly perturbed with distress; bestow on me, Lord of heavens, / triumph and true faith, so that I might with this sword / slay this distributor of terror; grant me my salvation / powerful Ruler of men: I did not have ever of your / grace the greater need: now avenge, great Lord, / glorious Distributor of glory, that [which] to me is grievously in spirit, / ardently in my heart."	4 - And all went away from her presence, and no one was left in his chamber, small or great. And taking her stand by his bed, Judith said in her heart, "Lord God of all power, consider in this hour the works of my hand for the exaltation of Jerusalem; 5 - because now is the time to come to the aid of your inheritance and to carry out my designs for the shattering of the foreigners who have risen up against us."	6 - And Judith stood before the bed praying with tears, and the motions of her lips in silence, 7 - Saying: "Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, and in this hour look on the works of my hands, that as thou hast promised, thou mayst raise up Jerusalem thy city. And that I may bring to pass that which I have purposed, having a belief that it might be done by thee.
	6 - And going to the bedpost which was at Holofernes' head, she took down from it his sword,	8 - And when she had said this, she went to the pillar that was at his bed's head, and loosed his sword that hung tied upon it.
Her then the highest Judge / inspired with courage forthwith, as He does for each one / of the living men who seek Him to help them / with good sense and with the right faith.		
[6] Then was she elated in spirit, / confidence renewed to the holy [woman]; she seized then the heathen man / fast by his hair, she pulled him with the hands toward her / shamefully, and the wicked one / laid down cunningly, the hateful man, / as she of the miserable might most easily, / well manage. Then the curly-haired struck / the enemy with the gleaming sword / the hostile-minded, so that she half cut through / his neck, and he lay swooning, / drunk and wounded. Nor then was he dead yet, / completely lifeless: then vehemently she struck, / the courageous matron, another time / the heathen hound, so that from him the head rolled / forth on the floor; the loathsome trunk lay / dead behind,	7 - and nearing the bed, she seized hold of the hair of his head and said, "Lord give me strength this very day, God of Israel." 8 - And with all her might she smote him twice in the neck and took his head from him. 9 - And she rolled his body from the couch and took his canopy from the poles;	9 - And when she had drawn it out, she took him by the hair of his head, and said: "Strengthen me, O Lord God, at this hour." 10 - And she struck twice upon his neck, and cut off his head, and took off his canopy from the pillars, and rolled away his headless body.
the spirit departed thence / under a deep precipice, and there was put to shame, / restrained by torture for ever after, / surrounded by snakes, bound by agony, / securely imprisoned in hellfire / after		

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death. He did not need not at all to hope, / encompassed in dark shadows, that he might away / of that hall of snakes, but there he must dwell / always in life without end [*forð*] / in that darksome home deprived of the joy of hope. XI / / She had then won the famous victory / Judith in fight as her God granted her, / the Lord of heavens, who vouchsafed her triumph.		
[7] Then the wise maid quickly put / the head of that warrior so bloody / in the sack, which her servant, / a fair-cheeked maid, food for them both / proficient in virtues, brought thither, / and then gave it [the head] so gory to her in hand, / to the thoughtful-minded to carry home, / Judith to her junior. The went then straight therewith / both the ladies heroically bold, / until they elated came / the triumphant maids out of the military camp / so that they could see clearly / the walls of that beautiful city shine, / Bethulia. They then, adorned with rings, / hurried on the path ahead, / until they exultant in spirit had reached / the rampart-gate.	and after a moment she went out and gave Holofernes' head to her maidservant, 10 - and she put it in the pouch of their victuals. And the two went forth together according to their habit, as if for prayer. And having traversed the camp they compassed all that valley and went up the mountain and came to the gates of Bethulia.	11 - And after a while she went out, and delivered the head of Holofernes to her maid, and bade her put it into her wallet. 12 - And they went out according to their custom, as it were to prayer. And they passed the camp; and having compassed the valley, they came to the gate of the city.
The warriors sat / the men watching kept guard / inside the fortress, as before to the people / depressed in spirit Judith had ordered, / the sagacious maid, wen she departed on the journey, / the matron of undaunted courage.		
[8] Was then returned / the one dear to the people, and then from afar bade / the wise-thinking woman some of the man / to go toward her from that great city, / and they quickly let them in / through the gate of the wall, and this speech spoke / to the victorious people: "I can tell you / a memorable news, so that you would no longer need / to mourn in spirit: the Lord is friendly to you, / the Wonder of kings; that was announced / throughout the wide world, that to you belongs glorious success / splendid [and] imminent and certain glory / of those afflictions which you endured so long."	11 - And Judith called out from afar to those who guarded in the towers, "Open, open the gate now! Our God, is with us, who gave strength in Israel and his might against the enemies, even as he did this day and will do."	13 - And Judith from afar off cried to the watchmen upon the walls: "Open the gates, for God is with us, who hath shown his power in Israel."
[9] Then the city dwellers became happy, / as soon as they heard how the holy one spoke / above the high wall. The host was / the people hurried toward the fortress-gate, / men and women together, in multitudes and in heaps, / in groups and troops they pressed forward and ran / by the thousands toward the Lord's maid / the old and the young: for everyone was / the spirit gladdened, for the man in the mead-city, / as soon as they perceived that Judith was arrived / back home, and then quickly / they let [her] in with reverence.	12 - And it came to pass that when the men of the city heard her voice, they hastened to go down to the gate of their city, and summoned the elders of the city. 13 - And all, both great and small, ran together because it seemed incredible that she had returned, and they opened the gate and received them, and having lit a fire for light, they circled them around.	14 - And it came to pass, when the men had heard her voice, that they called the ancients of the city. 15 - And all ran to meet her from the least to the greatest: for they now had no hopes that she would come. 16 - And lighting up lights they all gathered all round about her.
		And she went up to a higher place, and commanded silence to be made. And when all had held their peace,
	14 - Then she said to them with a loud voice, "Praise God, praise our Lord; who hath not withdrawn his mercy from the house of Israel but has shattered our enemies this night by my hand."	17 - Judith said: "Praise ye the Lord our God, who hath not forsake them that hope in him. 18 - And by me his handmaid hath fulfilled his mercy, which he promised to the house of Israel: and he hath killed the enemy of his people by my hand this it

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		night."
[10] / When that wise one, adorned with gold, commanded / her obedient handmaid / to uncover the head of the warrior, / and to display it bloody as a sign / to those citizens, [of] how she succeeded in battle. / That noble woman then spoke to all those people: / "Clearly here you can, valorous heroes, / stare at the head of the heathen warrior, / Holofernes bereft of life, / who against us perpetrated the greatest of torments of men, / of grievous sorrows, and that yet more / wanted to augment; but God did not allow him / a longer life, so that us with afflictions he / might plague: I took life away from him / through the help of God.	15 - And drawing out from the pouch the head, she showed it and said to them, "Behold, the head of Holofernes, the chief of the strenght of the Assyrians, and behold, the canopy under which he lay in his drunken stupor. And the Lord smote him down by the hand of a female. 16 - The Lord lives, who watched over me on the way by which I went, since my face deceived him to his undoing, and he caused no sin in me by pollution and by confusion."	19 - Then she brought forth the head of Holofernes out of the wallet, and showed them, saying: "Behold the head of Holofernes the general of the army of the Assyrians; and behold his canopy, wherein he lay in his drunkenness, where the Lord our God slew him by the hand of a woman. 20 - But as the same Lord liveth his angel hath been my keeper both going hence, and abiding there, and returning from thence hither. And the Lord hath not suffered me his handmaid to be defiled: but hath brought me back to you without pollution of sin, rejoicing for his victory, for my escape, and for your deliverance. 21 - Give all of you glory to him, because he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever."
	17 - And all the people were exceedingly amazed and bowing down worshipped God and said with one accord, "Blessed art thou, Lord our God, who has annihilated this day our enemies." 18 - And Ozias said to her, "Blessed art thou, my daughter, to the most high God, beyond all the women who are on earth, and blessed is our God who created the heavens and the earth, and who did guide thee for wounding the head of the prince of our enemies. 19 - Because thy glory will not depart from the hearts of men as they remember the strength of God for ever. 20 - May God give you a perpetual blessing, and visit thee with good, because thou didst not spare thine own life for reasons of the humility of thy people but didst go forth to avenge our fall, walking in the straight path before our God." And all the people said, "Amen, amen."	22 - And they all adored the Lord and said to her: "The Lord hath blessed thee by his power, because by thee he hath brought our enemies to nought." 23 - And Ozias, the prince of the people of Israel, said to her: "Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the most high God, above all women upon the earth. 24 - Blessed be the Lord who made heaven and earth, who hath directed thee to the cutting off the head of the prince of our enemies. 25 - Because he hath so magnified thy name this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men who shall be mindful of the power of the Lord, for ever: for that thou hast not spared thy life, by reason of the distress and tribulation of thy people; but hast prevented our ruin in the presence of our God." 26 - And all the people said: "So be it! So be it!"
	(This occurs below in XIV;5) see XIV; 1-2 below	27 - And Achior being called for came; and Judith said to him: "The God of Israel, to whom thou gavest testimony, that he revengeth himself on his enemies, he hath cut off the head of all the unbelievers this night at my hand. 28 - And that thou mayst find that it is so, behold the head of Holofernes, who in the contempt of his pride despised the God of Israel, and threatened thee with death, saying: When the people of Israel shall be taken, I will command thy sides to be pierced with a sword." 29 - Then Achior, seeing the head of Holofernes, being seized with a great fear he fell on his face upon the earth; and his soul swooned away. 30 - But after he had recovered his spirits, he fell down at her feet, and reverenced her, and said: 31 - "Blessed art thou by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob; for in every nation which shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on occasion of thee." XIV-1 - And Judith said to all the people: "Hear me, my brethren; hang ye up this head upon our walls. 2 - And as soon as the sun shall rise, let

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		every man take his arms: and rush ye out, not as going down beneath, but as making an assault. 3 - Then the watchmen must needs run to awake their prince for the battle. 4 - An when the captains of them shall run to the tent of Holofernes, and shall find him without his head, wallowing in his blood, fear shall fall upon them. 5 - And when you shall know that they are fleeing, go after them securely: for the Lord will destroy them under your feet." 6 - Then Achior, seeing the power that the God of Israel had wrought, leaving the religion of the Gentiles, he believed God, and circumcised the flesh of his foreskin, and was joined to the people of Israel, with all the succession of his kindred until this present day.
	XIV-1 - And Judith said to them, "Hearken to me brethren, and take this head and hang it on the battlement of your walls.	See XIV; 1
[11] Now I each men / from these citizens want to implore, / the shield-bearers, that you immediately yourself / hasten to fight; as soon as the God of creation, / the merciful King, from the east has sent / the radiant light, carry the linden-shields forth, / the plates for the breast and the corslets, / the gleaming helmets to the enemy's troop, / to slay the commanders with gleaming swords, / the fated chiefs.	2 - And as soon as morning dawns and the sun comes forth upon the earth, ye shall take up your weapons of war, each of you, and every able man shall go forth from the city	see XIV; 2
	and shall give them a leader as though you were about to descend upon the plain against the outpost of the children of Asshur, and ye shall not descend. 3 - And they will take up their arms and go to their camp and will arouse their leaders; and they will rush together to the tent of Holofernes and will not find him; and fear will fall upon them, and they will flee from before you. 4 - And follow all of you and all who dwell within the borders of Israel after them on their way. 5 - But before you do this, summon to me Achior the Ammonite, that he may see and recognize the one who made of small account the God of Israel and sent him to us, as he thought for death." 6 - And they summoned Achior from the house of Ozias, and when he came and saw the head of Holofernes in the hand of one of the men in the assembly, he fell upon his face and lost his spirit. 7 - But when the men picked him up, he fell at Judith's feet and did obeisance unto her and said, "Blessed shalt thou be in every tent of Judah, and in every nation; those who will hear thy name will be terror-struck. 8 - And now tell me what thou hast done in these days." And Judith told him all that she had done from the day she went forth until the moment she spake to them. 9 - When she had ceased speaking, the people shouted aloud and gave cries of joy in their city. 10 - When Achior beheld all which the Lord had wrought for Israel, he believed strongly in God with and got the flesh of	(This passage occurs above in XIII-27)

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	his foreskin circumcised and was added to the house of Israel unto this day.	
	11 - When the daybreak came, they hung and suspended the head of Holofernes from the wall,	7 - And immediately at break of day, they hung up the head of Holofernes upon the walls.
Your enemies are / damned to death and you will posses the glory / the honor in battle, as to you has signified / the mighty Lord through my hand."		
[12] Then quickly got prepared the host of exited ones / of valiant to battle; the royally brave marched / the heroes and companions in battle carried the standard, / they went forward to battle on the straight path, / the heroes under the helmets from that holy city / at the very dawn; the shields clashed, / resounded loudly.	and each man took up his weapons, and they went forth according to order to the mountain passes.	And every man took his arms: and they went out with a great noise and shouting.
To that the lean one rejoiced, / the wolf in the wood, and the black raven, / a bird greedy for slaughter; both knew / that the men of that country intended to prepare for them / a feast on the fated; but in their tracks flew, / the eagle eager of prey, dewy-feathered, / dark-coated sang the battle-song, / horny-beaked. The warriors advanced, / the men to battle, protected by shields, / curved linden-shields, these who at an earlier time / tolerated the abuse of foreigners, / the blasphemy of the heathens; that was to them painfully / requited, at that spear-contest, to all / the Assyrians, as soon as the Hebrew / had advanced under the battle standard / to the camp. They then boldly / let fly forth showers of arrows, / battle-adders from horn bows, / the strong darts; loudly stormed / the fierce warriors, sent spears / in the hard phalanx. The heroes were irate, / the land-dwellers, at the hateful people, / they marched stern of mood, resolute / they awoke harshly the ancient enemies / drunken with mead; with the hands drew / the men the beautifully decorated swords from the sheath / the ones proved in the edges, sharply they slew / the warriors of the Assyrians, / the evil-scheming ones, they spared no one / of that army, lowly nor powerful, / of living men whom they might to overcome. XII / / Thus the clansmen on that early morning / pursued the foreign people incessantly		
[13] until those who were fierce perceived, / the chief guardians of the army, / that for them proved furious the swinging of swords / by the Hebrew men. They with words that, / to the most senior chiefs, / went to announce, aroused the banner-carriers / and to them fearfully told the dreadful tidings, / the morning terror to the mead-weary, / the terrible play of swords. Then I heard forthwith / that the fated to die shook-off sleep / and toward the pavilion of the wicked / the men proceeded to press forth in throngs, / Holopherne's; they planed immediately / to announce the battle to their lord, / before the terror would descend above him, / the force of the Hebrews.	12 - When the children of the Assyrians saw them, word was sent to their superiors; and to their generals and all the superiors. 13 - And they arrived at the tent of Holofernes	8 - And the watchmen seeing this ran to the tent of Holofernes.

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Everyone supposed / that the prince of the warriors and the bright maid / were together in that beautiful tent, / Judith the noble and the lascivious of spirit, / the terrible and fierce one; however, no one of the retainers was there / who dared to awake the warrior, / or to find out how the banner-warrior / and the holy maid had been, / the woman of the Lord. The army approached, / the people of the Hebrews, they fought violently / with hard swords, fiercely requited / their ancient feud with gleaming swords, / the old grudge; of the Assyrian's was / the glory crushed in that day's work, / the pride humiliated.		
The men stood / around their lord's tent extremely excited, / desperate. They then all together / began to cough, to lament loudly, / and gnash the teeth, deprived of god, / enduring the rage through their teeth; of their glory that was an end / of success and deeds of glory. Then the lords planed / to awake their friendly lord: they did not succeed at all.		9 - And they that were in the tent came, and made a noise before the door of the chamber to awake him: endeavoring by art to break his rest, that Holofernes might awake, no by their calling him, but by their noise. 10 - For no man durst knock, or open and go into the chamber of the general of the Assyrians.
	and said to Bagoas, who was in charge of all his possessions, "Waken our lord, for the sons of Israel have dared to come down against us for battle, that they may be utterly destroyed."	11 - But when his captains and tribunes were come, and all the chiefs of the army of the king of the Assyrians, they said to the chamberlains: 12 - "Go in and awake him; for the mice coming out of their holes, have presumed to challenge us to fight.
[14] Then it became time, and too late at that, someone respected / of those warriors, that he in that pavilion / daring ventured, as need compelled him: / he found then lying pallid on the bed / his gold-friend lacking the soul, / deprived of life. He then fell instantly, / shivering to the ground, he began to tear his hair, / troubled in spirit, and also [to tear] his clothes,	14 - And Bagoas entered and knocked on the curtain of the tent which was in fron of the tent, for he supposed that he was sleeping with Judith. 15 - When no one paid heed, he opened and entered the chamber and found him cast down naked in th vaulted tent, and his head had been taken from him. 16 - And he cried out with a loud voice, with weeping and groaning and rent his garments.	13 - Then Vagao going into his chamber stood before the curtain, and made a clapping with his hands. For he thought that he was sleeping with Judith. 14 - But when with hearkening he perceived no motion of one lying, he came near to the curtain; and lifting it up, and seeing the body of Holofernes, lying upon the ground, without the head, weltering in his blood, he cried out with a loud voice, with weeping, and rent his garments.
	17 - And he went into the tent where Judith was, and he did not find her. And having burst forth, he cried aloud to the people,	15 - And he went to the tent of Judith; and not finding her, he ran out to the people,
[15] and this speech spoke to the warriors: / that were outside worried: / 'Here is manifest our own destruction, / an imminent token that that time is / with war approached near, / when we must loose together, / perish in battle: here lies slain by a sword / out beheaded commander."	18 - "Yesterday the slaves were ignored, and one Hebrew woman has brought chaos in the house of King Nabuchodonosor. Behold, Holofernes lies on the ground, and his head is not on him!" 19 - When they heard these words, the commanders of the Assyrians rent their tunics, their souls were greatly dismayed, and great noise was made by them in the midst of the camp. XV-1 And when those who were in the tents heard, they were astonished and asked what had come to pass,	16 - And said: "One Hebrew woman hath made confusion in the house of king Nabuchodonosor. For, behold, Holofernes lieth upon the ground; and his head is not on him." 17 - No when the chiefs of the army of the Assyrians had heard this, they all rent their garments: and an intolerable fear and dread fell upon them; and their minds were troubled exceedingly. 18 - And there was a very great cry in the midst of their camp. XV-1 - And when all the army heard that Holofernes was beheaded, courage and counsel fled from them.
Then they broken in spirit / cast their weapons down, they departed sad of heart / to hasten in flight. One man fought behind them, / powerful people, until the greater part / of the army lay leveled by battle / on the field of victory, hacked by the swords, / to the will of the wolves, and		

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also of the ravenous / birds for comfort.		
[16] Then flew away those alive / of the hateful shield-warriors. Behind them / the army of the Hebrews honored by triumph, / exalted by glory; the Lord God reached toward them / kindly in help., the Almighty ruler. / Then bravely they with shining swords / the brave-souled heroes created a war-path / through the phalanx of the hostile, the hewed the linden-shields, / cut through the roof of shields: the fighters were / enraged by war, the heroes of the Hebrews, / the thanes at that time eagerly desired / the battle of spears.	2 - And fear and trembling fell upon them, and there was no man who stayed to face his neighbor, but streaming forth with one accord they escaped by every path in the plain and the hill country. 3 - And those encamped in the hill country about Bethulia turned around in flight. And then the children of Israel, every man of them who was a warrior, streamed forth upon them.	And being seized with trembling and fear, they thought only to save themselves by flight. 2 - So that no one spoke to his neighbor, but hanging down the head, leaving all things behind, they made haste to escape from the Hebrews, who as they heard, were coming armed upon them: and fled by the ways of the fields, and the paths of the hills. 3 - So the children of Israel seeing them fleeing followed after them. And they went down sounding with trumpets and shouting after them. 4 - And because the Assyrians were not united together, they went without order in their flight. But the children of Israel pursuing in one body defeated all that they could find.
	4 - And Ozias sent to Bethumas, Tebel, Menchoba and Joab and to every part of Israel to tell what had been accomplished and to bid them all stream forth upon the enemy to the final fictory of the battle. 5 - When the children of Israel heard, all with one accord fell upon them and overthrew them as far as Choba. In like manner, both those from Jerusalem came from all the hill country, for men had told them what had happened to their enemies. And those in Gilead as well as those in Galilee outflanked them with great losses until they passed Damascus and its borders.	5 - And Ozias sent messengers through all the cities and countries of Israel. 6 - And every country, and every city, sent their chosen young men armed after them. And they pursued them with the edge of the sword until they came to the extremities of their confines.
There fell on the dust / the most part of the greater number / of the leaders of the Assyrians, / the hateful race. Few returned / to the homeland of the living. The noble ones turned back, / the warriors in retreat, among the carnage, / the stinking corpses;		
[17] there was the opportunity to seize / for the land-dwellers from the hated ones, / their dead long standing enemies / a gory spoil, beautiful ornaments, / shields and broad swords, brown helmets, / precious treasures.	6 - And the rest of those who dwelt in Bethulia fell upon the camp of the Assyrians and despoiled them and became exceedingly wealthy.	7 - And the rest that were in Bethulia went into the camp of the Assyrians, and took away the spoils, which the Assyrians in their flight had left behind them: and they were laden exceedingly.
	7 - When the children of Israel returned from the top of the mountain, they took possession of what was left, and they obtained the towns and villages and all in the plain, and got hold of much spoils, for the amount was exceedingly great. 8 - And Joakim the high priest and the council of the children of Israel who dwelt in Jerusalem came to behold the good deeds which the Lord had wrought for Israel and to see Judith and to speak to her in peace. 9 - And Judith came to them, and all with blessed the Lord and said to her, "Thou art the exaltation of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou are the glory of our people. 10 - Because by thy hand hast thou done all this, thou hast done a great deed for Israel, and God is well pleased therewith. You are a woman blest in the eyes of the Almighty for ever." And all the people said "Amen, amen."	8 - But they that returned conquerors to Bethulia brought with them all things that were theirs, so that there was no numbering of their cattle, and beasts, and all their movable, insomuch that from the least to the greatest all were made rich by their spoils. 9 - And Joachim the high priest came from Jerusalem to Bethulia with all his ancients to see Judith. 10 - And when she was come out to him, they all blessed her with one voice, saying: "Thou art the glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honor of our people. 11 - For you hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity, and after thy husband hast not known any other. Therefore also the hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever." 12 - And all the people said: "So be it. So be it."

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Gloriously they had / overcome the enemies on that battleground , / the guardians of the land, the ancient enemies / put to rest with swords: they stayed on the path, / those who in life were to them most evil / of living races.		
[18] Then the entire country / most splendid of nations, for a whole month, / the noble curly-locked carried and led / to that splendid city, Bethulia, / helmets and hip daggers, gray corslets, / the war trappings of the men, adorned with gold, / more splendid of jewels than any one / of the wise ones could tell of; / those noble people won all that / on the battlefield, noble under the banner, / though Judith's wise counsel, / the courageous maid. For her reward they / brought from that same expedition' / the spear-brave nobles, Holopherne's / sword and bloody helm, as well as the broad corslet, / adorned with red gold, and all that the powerful lord, / arrogant, had of treasures or private property, / rings and bright jewels, they that to that bright lady / gave, to the resourceful one.	11 - And all the people collected great spoils for thirty days; and they gave to Judith the tent of Holofernes and all his silver and the bed and all his gear; and when she accepted it	13 - And thirty days were scarce sufficient for the people of Israel to gather up the spoils of the Assyrians. 14 - But all those things that were proved to be peculiar goods of Holofernes they gave to Judith in gold, and silver, and garments, and precious stones, and all household stuff: and they all were delivered to her by the people.
	she loaded it upon her mule, and yoked up her wagons and piled them together. 12 - And all the women of Israel flocked to her, to see her, and they blessed her, and they formed a dance-ring; and Judith took branches in her hands and gave them to the women who were with her. 13 - And she garlanded herself with olive, and those who were with her, and she went before all the leaders of the people of Israel, leading all the women, and all the men of Israel followed, wearing their arms and garlands, with songs of praise on their lips. 14 - And Judith in her praising preceded all of Israel, and all the people sang loud praises to the Lord .	15 - And all the people rejoiced, with the women, and virgins, and young men, playing on instruments and harps.
[19] Judith of all this said / glory to the Lord of hosts who gave her honor, / power in the kingdom of earth, just as a reward in heaven, / a recompense for victory in the glory of heaven because she had true faith / in the Almighty; in the end she did not doubt at all / the reward for which she long yearned. Of this to the dear Lord be / glory in eternal life, He who created the wind and the air, / the heavens and the spacious grounds, just as also the raging seas / and the joy of heaven by his own grace.	XVI-1 And Judith said, "Begin unto my God on the timbrels, sing unto the Lord with cymbals, tune for him a new psalm and tale of praise. Exalt his name and call upon it.	XVI-1 - Then Judith sung this canticle to the Lord, saying: 2 - "Begin ye to the God with timbrels, sing ye to the Lord with cymbals, tune unto him a new psalm: extol and call upon his name.
(some parts of Judith's song are echoed in the lines above)	2 - For tGod ends wars; the Lord is his name. Who makes his camp in the mids of his people to delivered me from the hand of those who pursued me. 3 - Asshur came out of the mountains from the north; he came with ten thousand of his host, whose multitude stopped up the torrents, and their horsemen covered the valleys. 4 - He said that he would burn up my borders, and slay my young men by the sword, and give my babes for spoils and would despoil my maidens. 5 - The Lord Almighty has injured them and left them in the hand of a female, and caused havoc among them.	3 - The Lord putteth an end to wars: the Lord is his name. 4 - He hath set his camp in the midst of his people, to deliver us from the hand of all our enemies. 5 - The Assyrian came out of the mountains from the north in the multitude of his strength: his multitude stopped up the torrents; and their horses covered the valleys. 6 - He bragged that he would set my borders on fire, and kill my young men with the sword: to make my infants a prey, and my virgins captives. 7 - But the almighty Lord hath struck him, and hath delivered him into the

OE

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6 - For their champion did not fall by the hand of young men, nor did the sons of the Dathan smite them, nor did the sons of giants lay in ambush for them; but Judith, the daughter of Meari, undid him by the beauty of her face.
7 - For she put off the garb of her widowhood to raise on high the distress in Israel. She anointed her face with an unguent and bound her hair with a tire and took a new gown for his deceit.
9 - Her sandal ravished his eye, her beauty made captive his soul, the sword amputated his neck.
10 - Persians shivered at her daring, and Medes at her boldness.
11 - Then all in the Assyrian camp were troubles, and my humble ones raised their shout of triumph, and my weak ones in the city uttered their cry, shouted loud with their voices and the waters turned around.
12 - The sons of maidens pierced them through and wounded them as fugitive's children. They perished from the battle line of my Lord.
13 - Let us say a hymn to our God, let's sing a new hymn to the Lord. Adonai Lord, great and glorious art thou, marvelous of strength, that nobody can surpass.
14 - Let all thy creation serve thee, because thou didst speak, and they were made. Thou didst sent forth thy spirit, and it builded them; and there is none who wilt withstand thy wll.
15 - For the mountains will be shaken from their foundations with the waters, and before thy face rocks will melt like wax; but to them who fear thee wilt thou be propitious.
16 - Because little is every sacrifice in the scent of your sweetness, and all fat for a whole burnt offering is to thee exceedingly small; but he who fears the Lord is forever great.
17 - Woe to the Gentiles which rise up against my people; the Lord Almighty will take vengeance upon them, He will see them on the day of judgment, to give to their flesh fire and worms, to be consumed and to suffer forever."
18 - Now when they came to Jerusalem, they worshipped God, and when the people were purified, they offered holocaust to the Lord and vows and their gifts.
19 - And Judith gave in gift all the vessels of Holofernes which the people had given her; and the canopy, which she had taken for herself from his bed, she gave to the Lord for a votive offering.
20 - And the people continued their celebration of joy in Jerusalem before the sanctuary for three months, and Judith remained with them.
21 - After these days each man returned to their tents, and Judith went back to Bethulia and remained on her own estate; and she was famous in her time throughout all the land.
22 - And many desired her, but no man knew her all the days of her life, from the day when Manasseh her husband died and was gathered to his people.
23 - And she became famous with time.

Vlg

hands of a woman, and hath slain him.
8 - For their mighty one did not fall by young men: neither did the sons of Titan strike him, nor tall giants oppose themselves to him. But Judith the daughter of Merari weakened him with the beauty of her face.
9 - For she put off her garments of widowhood, and put on her garments of joy, to give joy to the children of Israel.
10 - She anointed her face with ointment, and bound up her locks with a crown: she took a new robe to deceive him.
11 - Her sandals ravished his eyes, her beauty made his soul her captive: with a sword she cut off her head.
12 - The Persians quaked at her constancy: and the Medes at her boldness.
13 - Then the camp of the Assyrians howled, when my lowly ones appeared, parched with thirst.
14 - The sons of the damsels have pierced them through: and they have killed them like children fleeing away. They perished in battle before the face of the Lord my God.
15 - Let us sing a hymn to the Lord; let sing a new hymn to our God.
16 - O Adonai, Lord, great art thou, and glorious in thy power: and no one can overcome thee.
17 - Let all creatures serve thee: because thou hast spoken, and they were made: thou didst sent fort thy spirit, and they were created. And there is no one that can resist thy voice.
18 - The mountains shall be moved from the foundations with the waters: the rocks shall melt as wax before thy face.
19 - But they that fear thee shall be great with thee in all things.
20 - Woe be to the nation that riseth up against my people: for the Lord almighty will take revenge on them. In the day of judgment he will visit them:
21 - For he will give fire, an worms into their flesh, that they may burn, and may feel for ever."
22 - And it came to pass after these things, that all the people, after the victory, came to Jerusalem to adore the Lord: and as soon as they were purified, they all offered holocaust, and vows, and their promises.
23 - And Judith offered for an anathema of oblivion all the arm of Holofernes, which the people gave her, and the canopy that she had taken away out of his chamber.
24 - And the people were joyful in the sight of the sanctuary; and for three months the joy of this victory was celebrated with Judith.
25 - And after those days every man returned to his house. And Judith was made great in Bethulia; and she was most renowned in all the land of Israel.
26 - And chastity was joined to her virtue, so that she knew no man all the days of her life, after the death of Manasses her husband.
27 - And on festival days she came forth with great joy.
28 - And she abode in her husband's house a hundred and five years, and made her handmaid free.

OE	OL	Vlg
	And she aged in her husbad's house reaching the age of a hundred and five. And she died in Bethulia, and she is buried in the mausoleum of her husband. 24 - And all in the house of Israel cried for her for seven days. And she divided her possessions before she died among all those closest to Manasseh her husband and those who were closest to her own kin, and she freed her servant. 25 - And there was no longer any who spread fear among the children of Israel throughout the days of Judith and for many days after she had died.	And she died, and was buried with her husband in Bethulia. 29 - And all the people mourned for seven days. 30 - And all the time of her life there was none that troubled Israel, nor many years after her death. 31 - But the day of the festivity of this victory is received by the Hebrews in the number of holy days, and is religiously observed by the Jews from that time until this day.

= Appendix 2 =

Although the biblical tale appears to have had a particular appeal to audiences of Germanic descent, few medieval works have survived, both here and abroad, whose main focus is either Judith or her story.[1] The scarcity of works dealing primarily with the events and characters of the *Liber Iudith* might be an indication of a decline in popularity of the story after the beginning of the tenth century. This is particularly true in England where the first reference to a work wholly dedicated to Judith, Radcliff's academic drama *De Judith Fortitudine*, does not occur until 1548.[2] For evidence about attitudes towards the character of Judith we must turn to works which either mention Judith in the context of a larger discussion or to those compendia that offer a version of the *Liber Iudith* as part of a greater work dealing with many biblical texts. *Ancrene Wisse*, the *Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*, and *The Canterbury Tales* are the most important English works in the Middle Ages which mention Judith to a greater or lesser extent.

Ancrene Wisse is the earliest post tenth-century work containing a significant mention of Judith. As a guide for anchorites, this work proved a

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[1] Speculations about the potential appeal of Judith to Germanic audiences are made in chapter three.

[2] Edna Purdie, *The Story of Judith in German and English Literature* (Paris, 1927), p. 4; and David A. Radavich, "A Catalogue of Works Based on the Apocryphal Book of Judith, from the Mediaeval Period to the Present", *Bulletin of Bibliography*, 44 (1987), 189-192. Both works provide an extensive bibliography for anything related to the Judith myth. Purdie's book focuses primarily on the literary works in German and English and follows the bibliography up to the end of the nineteenth century, while Radavich's article extends the list of literary works to include those published in the twentieth century (up to 1985) and those works published in countries other than Germany and Great Britain.

popular prose text in its time, as is attested by the many copies of the text made and even by the fact that there are translations into Latin and Anglo-Norman. The mentions of Judith in *Ancrene Wisse* consist mainly of reworking of patristic concepts occasionally intermixed with some original material; the most original of these comparing Judith and the pelican of the wilderness of Psalm 101.7,

> Eft up on oðer half pellican þis fuhel haueð an oðer cunde. Þet hit is aa leane. For þi as ich seide David eveneð him þer to in ancre persone. In ancre stevene. 'Similis factum sum pellicano solitudinis.' Ich am pellican ilich þe wuneð bi him ane. Ant ancre ah þus to seggen. Ant beon ilich pellican onond þet is leane. 'Iudith clausa in cubiculo ieiunabat omnibus diebus vite sue et cetera.' Iudith bitund inne as hit teleð in hire boc leadde swiðe heard lif. Feaste ant werede here. Iudith bitund inne bitacneð bitund ancre þe ah to leaden heard lif as dude þe leafdi Iudith efter hire euene. Nawt ase swin ipund isti to feattin ant to greatin a3ein þe cul of þe axe.[3]

The link between Judith and the Psalm is, as far as I am able to ascertain, unique to *Ancrene Wisse*; however, the explanation of the unusual pairing follows classic Ambrosian exegesis in setting them up as models of continence and restraint against excess of food and easy living. The second example is a false etymology of the name of Judith that suggests that when an anchoress makes confession, she is like Judith, "for iudith on ebrisch is schrift on English," ll. 2-4, 37b. The

[3] J. R. R. Tolkien, ed., *The English Text of the Ancrene Riwle: Ancrene Wisse*, EETS 249 (London, 1962). [Moreover, the pelican, this bird, has another characteristic, that it is always lean, because of this, as I said, David likens himself to it in the character of an anchorite. In an anchorite voice: 'I am made similar to the pelican of the desert,' I am like that pelican that lives by himself. And an anchoress ought to say the same and be like that pelican which is lean. 'Judith, shut in her room, fasted every day of her life, etc.' Judith shut in, as it says in her book, led a very hard life. Fasted and wore haircloth. Judith shut in signifies the anchoress shut in,

etymology can be clearly traced back to Jerome's explanation that, in Latin, the name Iudith means "laudans, confitens, vel iudea" [praising, confessing, or Jewish]. Nevertheless, the *Ancrene Wisse* author misunderstands Jerome's etymology because for the Church Father *confiteor* suggested Judith's 'confession of faith' rather than 'confession of sin'. In the third reference, Judith becomes the embodiment of confession; her act of uncovering and displaying the head of Holofernes is equated with the open revelation of sin during confession. Interestingly, the author here takes the idea of confession even further. Judith's actions become the symbols of a personal confession with the implication that she is washing herself from sin when she bathes before heading for the Assyrian camp, since "þat wes bitacnet þa iudith wesh hire and despulede hire of widewene schrud, þat wes merke of sorhe ant sorhe nis bute of sunne," ll. 9-13, 32a. The suggestion that Judith should be sinful in her sorrow is built on the idea of despair as a form of ultimate sin. However the association of the ultimate sin with Judith is unique to *Ancrene Wisse*, and it reflects a rather less heroic view of the protagonist when compared to her Old English counterpart.

In *Ancrene Wisse* the author shows disregard for the strength of faith embodied so plainly by both the biblical and the Old English Judith; moreover, the author does not hesitate to point out sinfulness in Judith's behavior when he claims, as mentioned above, that Judith's "sorhe nis bute of sunne." This accusation of Judith is puzzling because the author's accusation of Judith clad in the clothes of sorrow implies his approval of her change of clothes into the

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who ought to lead a hard life as did lady Judith according to her level. Not as a swine in a sty to

seductive garb which she will need to kill Holofernes. My impression is that in his effort to guide anchorites in their daily lives, the author did not hesitate to manipulate the character of Judith in unorthodox ways in order to stress the importance of confession and to warn against despair --a sin which he might have thought more common in his audience than their potential dressing up in seductive clothes in order to commit holy murder. This remolding of the interpretation of Judith's character will also be seen in the texts examined below.

The *Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament* was written in the fifteenth century as a way of retelling biblical stories for laymen not familiar with Latin.[4] It includes a complete retelling of the biblical *Liber Iudith*. The main source for the stories told in the *Metrical Paraphrase* is the Vulgate Bible, but other sources, such as the *Cursor Mundi* and Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, have been used by the author whose narrative is often quite close to the biblical source with only occasional departures in the form of additional direct speech and expansion or abbreviation of original details.

The story of Judith, as narrated in the *Metrical Paraphrase*, includes faithfully all the events narrated in the *Liber Iudith* albeit with the notable abbreviation of the events relating to Holofernes' siege. However, in the segment of the story which overlaps with the narrative of the Old English poet, the character of Judith is painted in quite a different light than in the Bible and the tenth-century poem. Alessandra Rapetti has compared this fifteenth-century

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fatten and grow for the cut of the axe.]

[4] The edition used here is by Urban Ohlander, *A Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (Göteborg, 1963).

characterization of Judith with that of earlier poems, including the Old English *Judith*, and has found that

> this poet neither tries to smoothe out the ambiguities inherent in the biblical Judith as the Old English and Middle High German poets had done, nor does he follow patristic tradition by aligning her with Mary while explaining away her traits of Eve. On the contrary, in the passages we have looked at it is just her ambiguity he delights in, and predominantly her lying, deceiving and seducing: his heroine has all the taints that have ever been attributed to Eve.[5]

While the Judith of the *Metrical Paraphrase* can hardly be called evil, it is true that the poet focuses on Judith's role of temptress by slightly digressing from the biblical narrative. Rapetti points out that in stanza 1458 the Middle English poet embellishes the corresponding Vulgate text by explaining that when Judith prepares to attend Holofernes' banquet, "rychly sho hyr arayd / to seme fayr in þer sy3t."[6] The emphasis on her aim to be attractive to Holofernes is a departure from the Vulgate XII, 15, "Et surrexit, et ornavit se vestimento suo, et ingressa stetit ante faciem ejus,"[7] in which the idea of seduction is only slightly implied by the verb *ornavit* [adorned].[8]

Further examples of the poet's emphasis of Judith's deceitfulness can be found in stanza 1459 in which the heroine not only eats the kosher meal prepared

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[5] Alessandra Rapetti, "Three Images of Judith", *Études de Lettres*, 2-3 (1987), 164.
[6] Ohlander, *op. cit.*, p.103.
[7] [And she stood up, adorned herself with her clothes, and coming in she stood in front of him.]
[8] However, it might be worthwhile to consider that the Septuagint and Old Latin Bibles are closer in spirit to the Middle English paraphrase, mentioning in XII, 15 that Judith dressed herself in her clothes and all her woman's finery and the effect of her appearance on Holofernes is more intense in these two Bibles than in the Vulgate.

by her maid, as the corresponding biblical text tells us, but she also "toke þat coupe with wyn full clere / and made semland and dranke ry3t noy3t." Moreover, Rapetti notes how the Judith described in the *Metrical Paraphrase* encourages Holofernes in his drinking when, in stanza 1460, "sho made talkyng be twyx þem two / tyll he wyst noy3t wele what he sayd."[9] Even her dressing up before the departure from Bethulia, an event already ambiguous in the Vulgate, becomes amplified in the Middle English poem in which the author takes two stanzas, 1437 and 1438, to describe in fine detail the "sylke and sendell and satayn" of Judith's apparel.

The author's freedom with his portrayal of Judith suggests the existence of a tradition of Judith as temptress. However, the patristic sources popular at the time struggle with the double identity of Judith as symbol of the Church or Mary on the one hand, and that of Eve, the temptress and betrayer, on the other. Comestor, whose *Historia Scholastica* is one of the recognized sources of the *Metrical Paraphrase,* minimizes the scheming aspect of Judith's murder of Holofernes by avoiding dwelling on those descriptions of her dressing up to seduce Holofernes. In particular, the lengthy description in chapter X of the Vulgate is abridged from

> abstulit ab se cilicium, et exuit se vestimentis viduitatis suae, et lavit corpus suum, et unxit se myro optimo, et discriminavit crinem capitis suis, et imposuit mitram super caput suum, induitque se vestimentis jucunditatis sua, induitque sandalia pedibus suis; assumpsitque

[9] Rapetti, *op.cit.,* p.163.

> dextraliola, et lilia, et inaures, et anulos, e omnibus ornavit se[10]

into "cumque orasset lavit se, at unxit myro optimo, et induit se vestibus iucunditatis suae,"[11] a description which is far more sparse about details of Judith's preparations prior to her trip to see Holofernes. Moreover, in the *Opera Mystica,* Hugh of St. Victor, the other great patristic authority of the time, explains the dressing sequence as a symbol of *Ecclesia* preparing to fight Satan. The sandals become the weapon for the typological crushing of the serpent's (i.e. Holofernes') head; the fine clothes become the sign of rejoicing in the resurrection of Christ --a time for renewed deeds of charity. Hugh emphasizes the allegorical meaning of Judith's actions so that the strength of the literal meaning is diffused, but he does not try to conceal all sense of deception in the heroine's actions, going as far as interpreting the headband on her head as a symbol of her resolved intention to deceive, *decipere*, her enemies.

Perhaps, the Church Fathers' reluctance to deal openly with the deceitful and scheming side of Judith's personality was the trigger that drove some medieval artists to explore the very topic that was meant to be glossed over by sophisticated exegesis. Eventually, in some Renaissance works, Judith fully takes on the persona of the avenging temptress which we glimpse in the *Metrical Paraphrase.* One of the more extreme cases of this trend, the seventeenth-

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[10] [She removed the haircloth and abandoned the clothes of her widowhood, and she washed her body and oiled it with fine unguent, and she loosened the hair of her head and put a head-band on her head, and she wore joyful garments, and put sandals on her feet; she put on a bracelet, lilies, earrings and rings, and she adorned herself completely.]

century's *Psyche in XXIV Cantos* by Joseph Beaumont,[12] offers a good example of Judith's characterization as a scheming seductress, thirsting for Holofernes' blood:

> Though thousand frowns her thoughts had oversped,
> Her outward Aspect wore a gentle guise;
> Loves, Joyes, and Smiles were sweetly marshalled
> About her lips, her forehead, and her eyes:
> Brave Judith's lovely glances ne'r could dart
> More potent charms at Oloferne's heart.
>
> ll. 685-690
>
> [wine] which Olofernes to the beauteous Dame,
> And yet more masculine than beauteous, fill'd:
> That Dame, who in her Nation's quarrel durst
> Quench with his Blood more than his wine, her thirst.
>
> ll. 879-882

Beaumont does not intend to depict Judith as evil; she is, in fact, called 'brave Judith' and we know her heart was troubled, l. 685, before committing her deed. Yet, there is something of the professional killer in the calculated coolness of her behavior. In the same century, Thomas Hudston, in translating into Scots the French poem by Du Bartas, pauses in his preface to express concern that the

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[11] [And while she prayed she washed herself, oiled herself with fine unguent, and put on the clothes of her happiness.]

[12] Rev. Alexander B. Grosart, *The Complete Poems of Dr. Joseph Beaumont* (Edinburgh, 1880). The version used here is the one available on the World Wide Web at Chadwyck-Healey *English Poetry Full-Text Database.*

example of Judith should be taken with great care, as it is against his intention to encourage similar behavior in his readers.[13]

Some early evidence of a similar approach to Judith's characterization can be found even earlier in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale.* Of the four stories in the *Canterbury Tales* which mention Judith, the *Monk's Tale* goes into greatest detail about the story of the Jewish heroine, devoting twenty-four lines to the description of Holofernes' downfall at the hands of Judith. Remarkably, the passage focuses on the Assyrian general rather than Judith who only appears rather unceremoniously in the last four verses,

> And yet for al his pompe and al his myght
> Iudith a womman as he lay vpright
> slepynge his heed of smoot and from his tente
> ful pryuely she stal from euery wight
> and with his heed vn-to hir toun she wente[14]
>
> ll. 3760-3764

Line 3761 puts great emphasis, through syntax and meter, on the fact that Judith was a woman and in the context the word is derogatory because it insinuates that the great Holofernes was killed by, of all creatures, a mere woman. This slighting of womanhood can be traced to Hugo of St. Victor's *Opera Mystica* in which he claims that God chose Judith as the instrument of His revenge especially because she was a weak woman and meant to signify typologically "infirmos, ignobiles, idiotas" [the sick, the lowly, the ignorant]. Moreover, Judith is debased further by

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[13] Guillaume de Saluste Du Bartas, *La Judit Scots; Thomas Hudson's Historie of Judith*, STS 3rd ser., 14 (Edinburgh, 1941).

Chaucer's Monk's emphasis on the thief-like moves through which she 'stole' Holofernes' head and went back to her city undetected. This particular episode is set in a context of other tales about the downfall of great men; but while Holofernes' pomp and presumption are reproached, he remains the great leader, and Judith the base and sneaky instrument of his downfall.

In his tale, the Monk insists on the adverse effect that women had on great men throughout history. This is perhaps as a way of countering *Melibee*'s list of good women, and we should keep in mind the intentions of the narrator when considering the merits and faults of his characterization of Judith.[15] The Monk, while very likely aware of Judith's righteousness, decides to emphasize the lecherous and lascivious aspect of her behavior with Holofernes.[16] In his misogynist recounting of famous people's fall from grace, the Monk sympathizes with Cenobia, a woman who, in his description, reminds the reader of the Old English Judith because of her nobility, bravery and warlike deeds. Cenobia was a Persian Queen whose valor and bravery surpassed that of many men and whose chastity and pity were superlative, but who fell from power after the death of her husband Odenake. In the *Monk's Tale* those details which would have made Judith a second Cenobia are underplayed in favor of those which highlight the Jewess' destructive sexual allure. It is in this type of characterization that I see

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[14] John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales; Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts*, vol. 4 (Chicago, 1940).
[15] John M. Hill, *Chaucerian Belief; The Poetics of Reverence and Delight* (London, 1991), p. 127.
[16] *ibid.*, p. 135.

the seed for the later development of the portrayal of Judith as temptress and downfall of the proud and famous.

In the *Man of Law's Tale*, Judith loses the negative attributes which characterized her in the *Monk's Tale*, but her description is certainly not as flattering as that of the Old English poem, since all credit for her success is attributed to God,

> who yaf Iudith corage or hardynesse
> to sleen hym Olofernus in his tente
> and to deliueren out of wrecchednesse
> the peple of god.[17]
>
> ll. 939-942

Once again, the context of this episode is important in determining the interpretation of the passage. In this case, Chaucer is telling of the misfortunes of Custance and her miraculous dispatching of a lusty pursuer, and he asks rhetorically "how may this wayke womman han this strengthe / hire to defende agayn this renegat" proceeding to give other examples where strong opponents had been defeated by weak adversaries such as David and Judith.

The fact that the story of Judith had been chosen to accompany that of David as *exemplum* in the *Man of Law's Tale* is an indication of the popularity of the story in the fourteenth century. This is particularly true as the mention of Judith is phrased as a rhetorical question, suggesting that the audience of the *Canterbury Tales* would have been familiar enough with the story of the Judith and Holofernes to know automatically its answer.

Further proof of Judith's popularity can be sought in the *Tale of Melibee* and the *Merchant's Tale* which both make brief mention of Judith in the course of lengthy lists of good and bad women. Prudence, in *Melibee*, defends herself from her husband's accusation that women's council is always evil by citing a list of examples of women who gave good advice. In reference to our heroine she says, "Iudith by hire good conseil deliuered the Citee of Bethulie in which she dwelled out of the handes of Olofernus that hadde it beseged and wolde haue al destroyed it," and she also mentions, in equally brief paragraphs, the stories of Rebecca, Abigail, and Ester. The same group of good women is mentioned in the *Merchant's Tale*, and in the same order, in a slightly longer list which includes Seneca's wife. It is interesting to note that in both stories the mention of Judith occurs in what appears to be a fixed list of good women. The wording is different but in both cases it emphasizes the saving of her city and her people through the killing of Holofernes. This almost-formulaic inclusion of Judith in the *Canterbury Tales* suggests that her story, or at least the barest skeleton of it, was widely known by fourteenth-century audiences.

Most of the references to Judith cited above are but brief and seem to presume the audience's knowledge of the story of Judith and Holofernes for a full understanding of their meaning. However, if this fact is to be taken as proof of Judith's popularity, we must consider that no mention of the heroine is made in such encyclopedic works as the *Cursor Mundi*, the Mystery cycles, the *Biblia Pauperum*, and Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, all of which are works in

[17] John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales; Studied on the*

which the inclusion of Judith would have been more than appropriate. I am inclined to believe that popular knowledge of the history of Judith was limited and superficial, restricting itself to the basic idea of a woman killing an evil man. The failure of the story to appear in the works listed above is to be attributed principally to the respective compilers' indifference for a theme and a character that superficially resembled so many others already included in their works.[18] It is a tribute to the vision of the Old English poet that he should be able to distill the potentials of the story of Judith and its relevance for his contemporary tenth-century audience in his *Judith*.

The peculiar absence of the story of Judith from the works cited above finds a parallel in the lack of substantial medieval iconography of the heroine.[19] It is not until the very end of the Middle Ages that a new humanistic interest in the figure of the woman, culminating in the Renaissance, gave a boost to works dealing with the biblical heroine. In the field of iconography, works depicting scenes or characters from the *Liber Iudith* do not begin to appear with any frequency until the fourteenth century.[20] The first record of a painting based on the story of Judith dates from the eighth century and is a *fresco* preserved in the church of S. Maria Antiqua in Rome. The *fresco* depicts the return of Judith to the city of Bethulia with the head of Holofernes in a sack, a scene which Rabanus

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Basis of All Known Manuscripts, vol. 3 (Chicago, 1940).

[18] Little weight should be given to the matter of canonicity of the *Liber Iudith* in the context of its popularity. The matter can be put to rest by considering how interest in the Jewish heroine peaked in and after the sixteenth-century when the work was confined to the Apocrypha by the Church reformers of the time.

[19] Louis Réau, *Iconographie de l'Art Chrétien*, vol. II., (Paris, 1956), pp. 329-335.

[20] *ibid.*.

Maurus interprets as the arrival at the Heavenly Gates through which only the meek of heart, such as Judith and her servant, have access. Closer to the time of composition of the Old English poem there are three works from the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. The first is an illumination found in the Bible of San Paolo, in which a narrative cycle shows three different episodes from the *Liber Iudith,* the departure of Judith and her maid to the Assyrian camp, their reception by Holofernes, and the decapitation of the Assyrian leader. The second and third works are also illuminations from medieval Bibles. They both illustrate the decapitation scene as well as the binding of Achior, an episode either lost or omitted by the Old English *Judith.*[21]

Because of the lack of a significant number of earlier iconographic records of Judith, it is hard to determine whether between the tenth and fourteenth century the heroine had any popularity in the visual arts. However, the iconographic data available effectively supports the evidence of a renewed interest in the subject at the end of the Middle Ages when artists such as Lucas Cranach, Michelangelo, Botticelli, and Artemisia Gentileschi created the masterful depictions of Judith which gave birth to an iconographic tradition of Judith of which traces can be seen as recently as in Klimt's *Judith*. In this modern work a gold-clad female figure stands alone, looking alluring, languid and distant

[21] The story of Achior is set up in the earlier segment of the *Liber Iudith* and might have been included in the lost portion of the Old English poem. However, I would agree with Rosemary Woolf, "The Lost Opening to the *Judith*", *Modern Language Review,* 50 (1955), where she asserts that the fact that Achior's name is never mentioned in the extant fragment should be taken as a sign that the poet did away with this character and his story, especially when we consider that Achior figures prominently in the portion of the biblical story which is told in the poem.

--a personification of the *femme fatale* envisioned by Beaumont in the aforementioned *Psyche in XXIV Cantos*. The popularity of Judith in Renaissance iconography echoes that in the sixteenth-century literary arts. Moreover, the evolving characterization of Judith through various stages of European painting corroborates the literary findings of a progressive interest in the 'dark side' of the heroine:

> In Medieval art, she was the virtuous foretype of Mary, a descendent of Athena Nike, and an ancestress of the female warrior saints like Joan of Arc. [...] During the Renaissance, she became fused with the personification of democracy and the city, and prefigured Ladies Liberty and Democracy. [...] From the Counter-Reformation period forward, Judith was represented as a seductive *femme fatale* who rejoiced in the dreadful deed she had committed.[22]

Judith's iconographic and literary portrayals have evolved in a similar way, although, in the literary world, evolution was faster. We can trace the seeds of a less-than-holy characterization of Judith as early as the works of the late Middle Ages. The works surveyed here suggest a continued popularity of the story of Judith as well as a persisting interest in the character of the heroine. In retrospect, they also remind us of the Old English *Judith*'s portrayal of a more straightforward and purer heroine whose faith and actions could serve as positive models for the poem's audience --perhaps the highlight of Judith's continued presence in literature.

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[22] Diane Apostolos-Cappadona ed., *Dictionary of Christian Art* (Cambridge, 1995). Entry for 'Judith'.

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