The Old English Judith: Can a Woman be a Hero?

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The Old English *Judith* is unique among the other poems in the extant Old English poetic

corpus in depicting a woman as the hero at the center of the poem. A hero, as portrayed in Old

English poetry, is one who performs acts of valor in a life-threatening situation, out of loyalty to

a lord, gaining a glorious reputation as a result.[1] Thus, while *Elene* and *Juliana* also feature

women as their central characters, they are not necessarily portrayed as heroic. Elene embarks

on a quest to retrieve the True Cross, but there is no sense that she is performing an act of

bravery. She endures no hardship, and there is no threat to her own safety or that of her people.

She is at the head of a troop of armed men, but she does not lead them into battle, unlike her

son Constantine at the beginning of the poem.[2] Juliana does verbally battle with the devil and

withstands physical tortures in her determination to remain true to her faith, but this seems to be

more a depiction of a saint imitating Christ in a hagiographical vein than a Germanic heroic

ideal. Judith, conversely, kills the mortal enemy of her people, returns victorious to her city,

and her people proceed to win a battle against their foes. She operates in a quintessentially

heroic setting. The Old English *Judith*, then, gives us a chance to witness the efforts of a poet

to fit a female into a setting that was almost exclusively the province of men. The poet

accomplishes this through a careful depiction of the interplay between Judith's gender, words,

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[1] This definition of a hero taken from B. Murdoch, *The Germanic Hero: Politics and Pragmatism in Early Medieval Poetry* (London and Rio Grande, 1996), p. 4; K. O'Brien O'Keeffe, 'Heroic Values and Christian Ethics', in M. Godden and M. Lapidge (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 107-109.

[2] S.A.J. Bradley (trans. and ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1982), p. 166.

and actions. For, while the setting of the poem may be stereotypically heroic, Judith's heroism

is portrayed as anything but stereotypically feminine or masculine.

That the poet's depiction of Judith defies efforts to pigeonhole her into a specific gender

role can most clearly be seen in the conflicting opinions which her portrayal has generated

among modern scholars. One viewpoint holds that the poet marginalizes Judith's role in the

Hebrew victory over the Assyrians while emphasizing that of the male Hebrew warriors, thus

allowing the heroism of men to eclipse that of a woman.[3] The opposing viewpoint asserts that

the Old English poet centralizes Judith's role in her people's victory, but felt he could only do

this by masculinizing Judith and removing all importance from her femininity.[4]

The singularity of the ideal of heroism portrayed in the Old English *Judith* is also evidenced

by the wide variety of readings the poem can support. Some scholars see it as a politically

motivated call to Anglo-Saxons to take up arms against Viking invaders.[5] Others see it as an

allegorical tale of the triumph of the Church Militant,[6] the victory of Christian innocence over

heathen bestiality,[7] or the defeat of the devil by faith.[8] Others simply see it as a call for virtuous

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[3] C. Fee, '*Judith* and the Rhetoric of Heroism in Anglo-Saxon England', *English Studies* 78 (1997): 401, 405.

[4] A.G. Litton, 'The Heroine as Hero: Gender Reversal in the Anglo-Saxon *Judith*', *CEA Critic* 56 (1993): 42; P.A. Belanoff, 'Judith: Sacred and Secular Heroine', in H. Damico and J. Leyerle (eds.), *Heroic Poetry in the Anglo-Saxon Period. Studies in Honor of Jess B. Bessinger, Jr.* (Kalamazoo, 1993), p. 252.

[5] D. Chamberlain, '*Judith*: A Fragmentary and Political Poem', in L.E. Nicholson and D. Warwick Frese (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Poetry: Essays in Appreciation* (Notre Dame, 1975), p. 144.

[6] R. Schrader, *God's Handiwork: Images of Women in Early Germanic Literature* (Westport, 1983), pp. 22-23.

[7] B.F. Huppe, *The Web of Words* (Albany, 1970), p. 147.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

living.[9] The supposed date of the composition of the poem, late ninth or tenth century,[10] makes any of these reading possible. The poem can also be seen as being directed to several different audiences. Scholars have surmised such widely differing audiences as nuns[11] and Anglo-Saxon noblemen.[12] Thus, the ambiguity of the poem permeates gender issues, Germanic heroism, readings of the poem, and audience.

While all of these viewpoints make valuable observations, they fail to fully appreciate the nuanced portrayal of Judith which places a female in a traditionally masculine setting without denigrating either. Ultimately, Judith complicates both our idea of the Anglo-Saxon female and the concept of heroism itself. To examine this aspect of the poem, I will be comparing the portrayal of Judith's heroism with that of male figures in heroic poetry and studying the relation between Judith's character and that of other females, and idealizations of females, in heroic poetry. Additionally, I will be examining the different spheres, public and private, in which men and women were thought to operate and the poet's clever use of the tension between the two.

Before comparing Judith's heroism with that of men in heroic poetry, it may be useful to examine the differences between the portrayal of Judith in the Old English poem with her depiction in the poet's source text. Fortunately, we have at least a close approximation of the source the poet was using while composing his poem: the *Liber Iudith* from the Latin Vulgate.[13]

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[9] J.J. Campbell, 'Schematic Technique in *Judith*', *English Literary History* 38 (1971): 172.

[10] M. Griffith (ed.), *Judith* (Exeter, 1997), p. 47.

[11] Schrader, *God's Handiwork*, pp. 46-47.

[12] Fee, '*Judith* and the Rhetoric of Heroism', p. 405.

[13] Griffith, *Judith*, pp. 47-50. Griffith states that, while it is impossible to determine exactly which biblical texts were known to the poet, the text the poet used at least closely

Perhaps the most striking difference between the Old English *Judith* and the Vulgate version is the setting of the story. In the Vulgate version of the story, Judith's people, the citizens of Bethulia in particular and the Israelites in general, are shown as more religious than martial, led by priests and elders[14] rather than kings and generals. The Old English poet deliberately chose to place Judith in a more military setting. Thus, the seeming paradox of a woman as the military leader of her people is not just the result of a difficulty in adapting a biblical story to a Germanic heroic idiom. Though casting Judith, the central character, as a military leader may simply be a function of Old English poetics, it was nonetheless a deliberate choice by the poet. While some scholars have denied that Judith should be viewed as a war-chief figure,[15] certain factors seem to indicate that this is exactly how the poet wanted Judith to be seen.

One of the clearest indicators of the poet's intention to portray Judith as a military leader is his use of contrast. Throughout the poem, the poet portrays Holofernes as the epitome of evil: *la*ð,[16] *womfull*,[17] *hæðen hund*.[18] In contrast, Judith is portrayed as pure goodness:

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resembled the Vulgate. All references to the Vulgate *Liber Iudith* are taken from the Clementina Vulgate.

[14]*Liber Iudith* 4:5.

[15]Fee, '*Judith* and the Rhetoric of Heroism', p. 401; P.J. Lucas, '*Judith* and the Woman Hero', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 21, 22; though Lucas does acknowledge Judith's mental powers. Cf. H. Damico, 'The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature', in H. Damico and A. Hennessey Olsen (eds.), *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1990), p. 183. Damico sees Judith as a warrior-woman, an analogue to the valkyries of the Old Norse heroic lays.

[16]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 100. (line 101) - 'odious'. All translations of the Old English are taken from Griffith's glossary, using Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* as a guide.

[17]*Ibid.*, p. 99. (line 77) - 'foul'.

[18]*Ibid.*, p. 100. (line 110) - 'heathen dog'.

beorht,[19] *eadig*,[20] *nergendes þeowen*.[21] Thus, the two characters are held in direct opposition to each other. The two groups represented by Judith and Holofernes, the Bethulians and the Assyrians, are also contrasted through a clever use of traditional heroic language.[22] The poet has heightened this by reducing the named characters in the story to two, Holofernes and Judith.[23] Holofernes is portrayed as everything that a commander should not be,[24] and therefore it is only natural that we should see Judith as everything that a commander should be. For example, on the night prior to the battle between the Assyrians and the Bethulians, Holofernes invites the senior members of his army to a feast and *oferdrencte his duguðe ealle, swylce hie wæron deaðe geslegene*.[25] Admittedly, Holofernes does not know that the Bethulians will attack the next day, but a prudent military commander probably would not wish all of his officers to be simultaneously made drunk. Judith's men, conversely, are still *wæccende*[26] as they await her return.

Like any good hero, Judith issues orders to her men and goes off to battle.[27] Though in

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[19]*Ibid*., p. 98. (line 58) - 'bright, virtuous'.

[20]*Ibid*., p. 98. (line 35) - 'happy, blessed'.

[21]*Ibid*., p. 99. (line 73) - 'handmaid of the Saviour'.

[22]E.M. Tyler, 'Style and Meaning in *Judith*', *Notes and Queries* 237 (1992): 16-19.

[23]J. F. Doubleday, 'The Principle of Contrast in *Judith*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72 (1971), p. 436.

[24]Lucas, '*Judith* and the Woman Hero', p. 22.

[25]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 97. (line 31). - 'inebriated his entire band of select troops, as if they had been struck down by death'.

[26]*Ibid*., p. 101 (line 142) - 'watchful, vigilant'.

[27]*Ibid*., p. 101. (lines 141-146).

this instance the poet refers to Judith merely leaving on a *sið*,[28] Judith herself soon states that

she succeeded in *beado*.[29] Unlike male warriors in heroic poetry, however, Judith's battle is not

fought on a field against a fierce enemy, but on a bed against an unconscious man. Is Judith's

action heroic? After all, Holofernes has passed out after drinking too much and is thus not an

immediate threat to Judith herself. Judith does not kill Holofernes in the heat of battle or a fit

of rage, but rather in a deliberative, quite cold-blooded fashion. She did feel threatened,

however, and did fear that he could wake up at any time.[30] She was in the midst of a camp filled

with his soldiers, and, though Holofernes may have been no immediate threat to her person, he

had previously *mæst morða gefremede, sarra sorga*[31] upon Judith's people.

A similarity, however, between the actions of Judith and those of men in Old English heroic

poetry is the voluntary nature of the initial participation of the central figure in the events

around him or her. Beowulf voluntary chooses his quest, traveling from his homeland to the

court of Hrothgar upon hearing of Grendel's deeds.[32] Byrhtnoth initiates the battle with the

Vikings, allowing them to cross the causeway and fight on secure land.[33] Judith voluntarily

goes to the Assyrian camp: *Þæt wæs þy feorðan dogore þæs ðe Iudith hyne ... ærest gesohte*,[34]

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[28]*Ibid*., p. 98. (line 145) - 'journey'.

[29]*Ibid*., p. 102. (line 175) - 'battle'.

[30]*Ibid*., p. 99. (lines 76-77) as pointed out in Lucas, '*Judith* and the Woman Hero', p. 21.

[31]*Ibid*., p. 102. (lines 181-182) - 'perpetrated the greatest of violent crimes, of grievous sorrows'.

[32]Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf*, p. 11. (lines 267-285).

[33]Scragg (ed.), *Battle of Maldon*, p. 60. (lines 89-95).

[34]Griffith (ed.), *Judith,* p. 97. (lines 12-14) - 'that was on the fourth day since Judith...first sought him'.

though the poet does state that she did not willingly go to Holofernes's tent. Holofernes must

het[35] his men to bring Judith to his tent.[36] Though, as will be illustrated below, this may have

been a matter of female decorum.

In contrast to male heroes, Judith's actions are very private. The poet stresses the secretive

atmosphere of Holofernes's tent, especially his bed. The poet describes the bed as being

surrounded by a net through which Holofernes can view those inside the tent but cannot be

observed in return.[37] This fact seems to be of great importance to the poet, for it is not

mentioned in the Vulgate version of the story. In the Vulgate, mention is made of the canopy

around Holofernes's bed, but it is described simply as being covered with jewels.[38] Later in the

poem, the poet portrays Holofernes's men, unaware of the fact that Holofernes is already dead,

afraid to enter the tent for fear of Holofernes's anger.[39] The tent, then, is a private sphere, and

Holofernes's bed is more private still. Thus, it is implicitly made clear that there was unlikely

to have been any witness to Judith's killing of the Assyrian general. Even Holofernes is

unconscious before Judith decides what action she is going to take, and thus Judith herself is the

only human being to observe her actions.

The privacy of Judith's actions is in direct contrast to the portrayal in heroic poetry of

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[35]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 98. (line 34) - 'he commanded'.

[36]Belanoff, 'Judith: Sacred and Secular Heroine', p. 254 sees parallels between Beowulf being dragged unwillingly to Grendel's mother's lair and Judith being taken to Holofernes's tent.

[37]*Ibid*., p. 98. (lines 46-54).

[38]*Liber Iudith* 10:19

[39]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 104. (lines 257-261).

deeds perpetrated by men. Beowulf's men, at least initially, watch him as he fights the dragon,[40] all of Byrhtnoth's personal retinue see their lord struck down in battle,[41] and, though, no one is present underwater with Beowulf as he fights Grendel's mother, men wait above and watch the water, at least partially aware that Beowulf is engaged in battle.[42] Judith's people merely wait at home for her, completely unaware of what she is doing or what is being done to her. When Judith does show her people the evidence of her deeds, the head of Holofernes, she does not describe her actions in any detail, merely stating *ic him ealdor oðþrong*.[43] Again, this is a divergence from the Vulgate version. In the *Liber Iudith*, Judith recounts her time in the Assyrian camp, describing her actions to Achior, the Assyrian convert, who then praises her in return.[44] Judith's simple statement in the Old English poem stands in stark contrast to Beowulf's lengthy recounting of his own exploits.[45] The details of Judith's beheading of Holofernes, then, remain hidden throughout the poem from everyone except Judith, God, and the reader.

While Judith's actions in the Old English poem are not public, her words certainly are. When she returns to her people, she delivers a speech meant to stir the blood of the Hebrew warriors. Here, the poet makes her even more of a public leader than she was in the Vulgate version. In the *Liber Iudith*, Judith merely prophecies what God has preordained:

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[40]Fr. Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, 3rd edn (Boston, 1950), p. 95. (lines 2529-2532).

[41]D.G. Scragg (ed.), *The Battle of Maldon* (Manchester, 1981), p. 63. (lines 202-204).

[42]Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf*, p. 61. (lines 1591-1599).

[43]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 102. (line 185) - 'I took his life'.

[44]*Liber Iudith* 13:27-31.

[45]Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf*, pp. 75-80. (lines 1999-2143).

the Assyrians will see the head of Holofernes suspended on the city walls and flee, while the

Hebrews will follow behind and cut them down.[46] In the Old English Judith, however, Judith

directs the Hebrew warriors as to what they should do, not merely telling them what they will

do,[47] and the battle is won because of her *gleaw lar*.[48] Judith's speech is not full of mere

generalizations. She gives the warriors detailed, specific instructions as to what they should do,

rather like a military commander formulating a battle plan.[49] She does not merely tell them to

go out and kill whatever Assyrians they can find, but rather to cut down the *folctogan*,[50] the

frumgaras.[51] Judith has a strategy. Thus, the poet takes the *Maxims I* concept of what an ideal

woman should do, namely, offer wise counsel to her husband,[52] and places it in public, military

setting. Judith, a virgin in the Old English poem and a widow in the Vulgate, has no husband to

whom to offer advice, but she does have an army of warriors, apparently devoid of any male

leadership, who do need her direction. Judith's speech can be compared to that of Hildegyth in

Waldere, in which Hildegyth urges Waldere into battle. However, Hildegyth is not giving

Waldere specific instructions as to what he should do, but merely expressing commonplaces

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[46]*Liber Iudith* 14:1-5.

[47]A.W. Astell, 'Holofernes's Head: *tacen* and teaching in the Old English *Judith*'. *Anglo-Saxon England* 18 (1989): 130. Astell attributes the victory to Judith's and the Bethulians' faith in God, rather than to Judith's instructions, but still emphasizes the fact that the victory is not predestined.

[48]'wise counsel' - as stated in Schrader, *God's Handiwork*, pp. 21-22.

[49]For a conflicting argument on Judith's verbal leadership, see Fee, '*Judith* and the Rhetoric of Heroism', p. 401. Fee here states his view that Judith is merely a noble figurehead whose behavior inspires her warriors to imitate her, rather than a war-chief formulating a battle plan.

[50]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 102. (line 194) - 'leaders, chiefs, commanders'.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 102. (line 195) - 'leaders, chiefs, commanders'.

[52]Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 348.

commonplaces concerning his courage and military prowess.[53] These comments are also

directed toward a single man, her betrothed, and not to an army of soldiers.[54]

Thus, the poet adds to the complexity on the 'proper' sphere in which women were to

operate, for Judith does venture out into the public sphere, the Assyrian military camp, though

her actions remain confined by a private sphere, Holofernes's secluded bed, in its midst.

Judith's words, however, are spoken in a very public sphere. She alone is the speaker, while

her people, including the male warriors, are a rather passive audience awaiting her instructions.

The ambiguity concerning the feminine sphere of influence was characteristic of the early

medieval period. As Janet Nelson has shown, there was no concrete distinction between

'public' and 'private' at this time.[55] The poet of *Judith* does sharply delineate the boundaries of

each arena, but shows Judith operating in both.

Judith can be seen as leading her people, but in a very specific, verbal manner. That Judith's

words are the catalyst for the subsequent action is evidenced by the lack of activity on the part

of her men prior to her arrival: *wiggend sæton*.[56] This is where her power lies, rather like

Wealhtheow's in *Beowulf*. Wealhtheow informs Beowulf that after they have drunk from the

mead cup, the warriors will do whatever she asks of them.[57] Judith does not need to charge into

battle herself, for she is able to ask her male warriors to do so, and they acquiesce. It seems,

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[53]Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 511.

[54]*Ibid.*, p. 510.

[55]J.L. Nelson, 'Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages', in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood (eds.), *Women in the Church*, Studies in Church History 27 (1990), p. 74; J.L. Nelson, 'The Problematic in the Private', *Social History* 23 (1990): 364.

[56]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 101. (line 141) - 'the warriors sat'.

[57]Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf*, p. 47 (lines 1228-1231) as pointed out in L. Stratyner, 'Wealhtheow's Threat: *Beowulf* 1228-1231', *In Geardagum* 14 (1993): 40.

then, that female heroism partly involved the unleashing of the potential for action in the men around them. This is also an aspect of the male heroism represented in Old English poetry, though male words are usually followed by action. Like the previously mentioned example of Elene leading a troop of men while not actually being involved in any combat, and unlike most male figures in heroic poetry, Judith does not join her warriors in their battle.

That the poet wishes to emphasize the complete uninvolvement of Judith in battle is evidenced by the fact that he does not even allow her to engage in verbal battle, or flyting. Flyting in Old English literature generally involves two adversaries identifying each other, comparing accomplishments, debating their relative heroic merits, and boasting of their likely performance in a future competition.[58] Both Beowulf and Byrhtnoth engage in this activity, Beowulf with Unferth[59] and Byrhtnoth with the Viking messenger.[60] Though the poet of *Judith* has deliberately concentrated his focus on two adversaries, he does not allow them to engage in any verbal sparring. In fact, unlike the Vulgate version of the story, Judith and Holofernes never speak to each other.

The absence of Judith from any form of battle, however, does not detract from her leadership role, but rather complicates our perception of what that role entails. The Bethulians evidently see Judith as their leader, for after the warriors vanquish the Assyrians, they bring back Holofernes's bloody helmet and coat of mail and give them to Judith.[61] There is a parallel

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[58]W. Parks, *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative: the Homeric and Old English Traditions* (Princeton, 1990), p.3.

[59]Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf*, pp. 19-23. (lines 499-606).

[60]Scragg (ed.), *Battle of Maldon*, pp. 58-59. (lines 42-61).

[61]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, pp. 106-107. (lines 334-338).

episode in *Beowulf*, when Beowulf gives to Hrothgar the hilt of the sword with which he killed Grendel's mother and beheaded Grendel.[62] Beowulf's men also give the spoils of the battle against the dragon to Beowulf, but with two important differences: Beowulf is dead when they do this, and his people will soon cease to exist.[63] The Bethulians, however, continue their existence as a result of Judith's words and thoughtful action. Judith, then, by *not* rashly charging into battle with the Hebrew soldiers seems the more heroic. Byrhtnoth is a noble character and brave in battle, but his seeming lack of wisdom in allowing the Vikings to cross the causeway results in his own death and that of his men. Judith's deliberation, then, before deciding to decapitate Holofernes seemingly makes her the better leader.

   While the poet does place Judith in a masculine setting, she never loses her essential femininity. For, if we use *Maxims* as the poetic portrayal of the ideal Anglo-Saxon woman, we see that Judith has violated none of its precepts. In fact, she has followed them to the letter. As already stated, she offers wise counsel, though to a group of warriors rather than a husband. The poet also seems mindful of the directive that women should not go traveling about, but should stay at their embroidery. For, unlike the Vulgate version of the story, Judith does not attend Holofernes's feast, but remains in the guest hall until she is forcibly compelled to Holofernes's tent. Upon her return to the city, we can also view her showing of Holofernes's head as an effort to contradict any rumors that may have been circulating concerning her virtue, such as those about which *Maxims* warns.[64]

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[62]Klaeber (ed.), *Beowulf*, p. 63. (lines 1677-1686).

[63]*Ibid*., pp. 113-114. (lines 3007 - 3027).

[64]Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 348.

The poet also places Judith's virtues on par with those of other literary representations of women. Perhaps the aspect of Judith's character most emphasized by the poet is her wisdom. Wisdom is also the essential virtue recognized in other women in Old English poetry such as Hygd in *Beowulf*, and in other Old Testament women such as Sara and Esther.[65] The poet uses different expressions to state that Judith is wise: *gleaw*,[66] *ferhðgleaw*,[67] *snoter*,[68] *searoðoncol*.[69] He also shows Judith in the act of thinking. Before beheading Holofernes, Judith is *þearle gemyndig*[70] in deciding on her course of action. The poet complicates the concept of female wisdom, though, by combining the traditionally female virtue of wisdom with the traditionally male virtue of courage. As R.E. Kaske has shown, descriptions of Judith's wisdom are often closely followed by allusions to her courage.[71] For example, within the span of two lines, Judith is described as both *searoðoncol mægð*[72] and *ides ellenrof*.[73]

While it is fairly simple to identify instances in the Old English poem where the poet chose to either emphasize a particular aspect of the Vulgate version or to simply make his own additions to the story, trying to identify the poet's reasons for these actions is far more difficult.

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[65]R.E. Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo* in the Old English *Judith*', in L.D. Benson and S. Wenzel (eds.), *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honor of Morton W. Bloomfield* (Kalamazoo, 1982), pp. 15-17.

[66]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 97. (line 13) - 'prudent, wise'.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 98. (line 41) - 'prudent, wise'.

[68]*Ibid.*, p. 98. (line 55) - 'wise, shrewd'.

[69]*Ibid.*, p. 101. (line 145) - 'discerning, shrewd'.

[70]*Ibid.*, p. 99. (line 74) - 'sorely mindful'.

[71]Kaske, '*Sapientia et Fortitudo*', p. 25.

[72]Griffith (ed.), *Judith*, p. 101. (line 145) - 'shrewd woman'.

[73]*Ibid.*, p. 101. (line 146) - 'courageous woman'.

The poet would have had his own opinion on what reading(s) he intended his readers to take from his poem and must have had some idea of the sorts of people who would have comprised his audience. Without knowing these two factors, however, we can never definitively decipher the poet's intentions.

In conclusion, then, the poet of the Old English *Judith* deftly incorporates a woman into a militaristic world populated by men. It is the combination of Judith's public words and private actions which allow the poet to easily tread the fine line between making Judith overtly masculine and portraying her as an impotent female. The poet manages to shed light not only on what a woman should be, but also on what a warrior should be.

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