

***Judith* and Anglo-Saxon England:**

Christianization and the Warrior Tradition



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Picture on the front page¹

¹ *Judith with the Head of Holophernes* by Cristofano Allori, 1613 (Royal Collection, London)

INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to explore in what way and with what aim the original biblical text from “The Book of Judith” was altered in the reworking of the story found in the anonymous Old English poem *Judith*. More specifically it will consider how “The Book of Judith” was Christianized in the OE poem *Judith* and how it was filled with elements of the Germanic and Valkyrie tradition. “The Book of Judith” is a Deuterocanonical Book, which is regarded as apocryphal, i.e. it is not recognized as a part of the Old Testament by all religions. “This book was regarded as apocryphal by Protestant churches from the sixteenth century, but for all pre- and post- Reformation Catholic readers it was an authentic part of the Hebrew Bible.”²

“The Book of Judith” is one of the primary texts for this research. It tells the story of a brave widow named Judith. The Assyrian king Nabuchodonosor wants to expand his empire and sends his commander Holofernes to do that. When Holofernes runs into a community that lives in the mountains it becomes more difficult. He is warned that these Hebrew people believe in only one god and that he protects them from harm. Holofernes still insists on attacking. Judith is one of the Hebrew people and decides to enter the camp and befriend Holofernes until she is close enough to decapitate him. She does this with the guidance of God. This inspires her people to defend themselves and they eventually defeat the Assyrian army. Another primary text is the anonymous Old English poem *Judith* (British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A.XV). This is a reworking of the original Biblical narrative from a Christian and Germanic perspective.³ The poem is not complete, at the beginning there are several lines missing. The original poem was approximately 450 lines but the surviving poem only has 349 lines.⁴ The final primary work is the OE poem *Beowulf*; this will be used as a comparison to *Judith*.

The organisation of this paper is structured as follows: after this brief introduction, chapter 1 will consider what the Christian tradition is and the information from that will be used to carry out a detailed analysis of the OE poem *Judith*. This will be followed by an explanation as to why the original biblical text was Christianized and a short conclusion will end the chapter. Chapter 2 is about the warrior tradition and in it the Germanic tradition and also the Valkyrie tradition will be explored and the characteristics from these two will then be used to analyse the OE poem *Judith* in detail. Similar to the first chapter this will be followed

² The Norton Anthology English Literature Volume 1 page 100

³ “Old and Middle English c.890-c.1100 an Anthology” Elaine Treharne page 196

⁴ Lucas, Peter J. "Judith by Mark Griffith." *Oxford Journals* (2000): 261-264.

by an explanation of why the characteristics from these traditions will then be used to analyse the OE poem Judith in detail. Similar to the first chapter this will be followed by an explanation of why the elements from these traditions were used in the poem. The chapter will be finished with a short conclusion of its findings. Finally, at the end of this paper, there will be a conclusion of the findings made during this research; this will contain the information from the conclusions from the chapters.

CHAPTER 1 - CHRISTIANIZATION

In the first chapter of this research and analysis of the anonymous OE poem *Judith*, the emphasis will be on the Christianization of the original text from the Bible “The Book of Judith”. The chapter is built up in four parts. Before analysing the poem it is important to discuss the historical aspect. Roman Christianity was introduced to the Anglo-Saxons in 597 AD. According to researchers the poem was written in the tenth century, so Christianity was well established by then⁵. The analysis of the Christianization of the poem is narrowed down to certain categories. After the analyses of these different aspects in *Judith*, the question of why the story was Christianized and for whom the poem was meant will try to be answered. Finally all the issues discussed in this chapter will be summarized in the conclusion.

The Christian Tradition

The first part in relationship with the Christian tradition is how the old pagan traditions are compared to the new religion Christianity. Another heroic female in Old English Literature is Juliana. In the OE poem *Juliana* by Cynewulf “the Christian Juliana is juxtaposed with the pagan men.”⁶ Juliana wants to remain an unmarried virgin and loyal to God, but her father Africanus and her suitor Eleusias want her to get married. The men in Juliana’s life are pagans and they think her Christian faith is folly. Similarly, to *Juliana*, in the poem *Judith* the contrast between paganism and Christianity also occurs and this will also be looked into.

In religion there is life and there is the afterlife, whether this may be Heaven, Walhalla, reincarnation, etc. In the Christian faith it is Heaven and even non-Christians know that you are supposed to be a good Christian to go there after your death. If you are not allowed into Heaven the alternative is Hell. In the Middle Ages female virginity was an important aspect of the Christian faith. Men were also encouraged to remain virgins, but it was emphasized more with women. “For women, it was the single most essential prerequisite for a life of Christian perfection; and through it they would be granted entry into heaven or the

⁵ The Norton Anthology English Literature Volume 1 page 101

⁶ Shari Horner. “Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English “Juliana”, Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure”. *Signs*, Vol. 19, No.3 (Spring, 1994), pp. 665

celestial gynaeceum.”⁷ Remaining a virgin would ensure that after death, a place in heaven was guaranteed. The presence of heaven and hell in *Judith* will be analyzed.

According to the Church Fathers there were three types of chastity: virginity, widowhood and conjugality.⁸ Juliana is described as having similar qualities to Judith. According to Jane Chance, “The light and shining quality of her beauty, illustrating the purity of her virginity, links her with that of the chaste Judith, the Virgin Mary, and the unfallen Lucifer and Eve.”⁹ Virginity was important in the Middle Ages as mentioned earlier. In *Juliana*, the protagonist wants to remain a virgin and she protects herself by refusing to marry Eleusias unless he converts to Christianity. In “The Book of Judith” Judith was a widow, but practiced abstinence after her husband’s death. The issue of chastity and the importance it holds will be discussed.

Finally the last point of attention when analyzing Christian elements for this research will be how the characters in the OE *Judith* are presented. The easiest way of presenting a character is by how the character is referred to. The epithets used to describe the characters make it very clear to the reader who is the hero and who is the villain. Since Judith is a heroic poem, it is almost certain that she is the heroin of the story and that the words used to describe her are good, her opponent in the story is Holofernes and therefore the words used for him are probably bad. Good Christian words refer to Heaven, God, faith, chastity, virtues and everything else that a good Christian should do and be. Bad Christian words will most likely refer to the Devil, Hell and heathens. The seven deadly sins will lead to Hell and words describing those sins are therefore bad.¹⁰

Analysis of the Christian elements in the poem

The analysis of the Christianization of “The Book of Judith” into the poem *Judith* will be done in the same order as the Christian elements were presented. First I will discuss the contrast between the old beliefs and traditions and the new religion Christianity. Then the concept of heaven and hell will be considered. Following that I will discuss the issue of

⁷ Schulenburg, Jane Tibbetts. “The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation”. *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Mary Berth Rose. (N.Y. Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 31

⁸ Chance, Jane. *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church. Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986) pp. 34

⁹ Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. pp. 41

¹⁰ Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. pp. 40

chastity and the importance it held. Finally the epithets for the characters in the OE poem will be considered in relationship with the Christian tradition.

The old beliefs came from the Germanic polytheistic religion that the Anglo-Saxons had before Christianity was introduced in 597 AD and the new religion was Christianity. The Jews also experienced tension between two beliefs in the original text which is clear from the lines below, taken from chapter 5 of the Book of Judith. Lines 7 and 8 are about the Jews and that they only worship one god as opposed to many different gods as they had previously done. It also shows that they used to have a different belief, but that they decided to turn away from what their forefathers believed in. This is similar to what the Anglo-Saxons did when they were introduced to Christianity.

(Judith 5, 7) They dwelt first in Mesopotamia, because they would not follow the gods of their fathers, who were in the land of the Chaldeans.

(Judith 5, 8) Wherefore forsaking the ceremonies of their fathers, which consisted in the worship of many gods,

(Judith 5, 27) Who is this, that saith the children of Israel can resist king Nabuchodonosor, and his armies, men unarmed, and without force, and without skill in the art of war?

(Judith 5, 28) That Achior therefore may know that he deceiveth us, let us go up into the mountains: and when the bravest of them shall be taken, then shall he with them be stabbed with the sword:

(Judith 5, 29) That every nation may know that Nabuchodonosor is god of the earth, and besides him there is no other.¹¹

Lines 27, 28 and 29 from chapter 5 in the original text show that Achior explains to the men of Holofernes who the people are that live in the mountains and that makes the Assyrians angry. Achior tells them that the Jewish people fear nothing as long as they believe in their one god and follow his directions. The Assyrians are outraged and say that there is only one god and that god is their leader Nabuchodonosor. This part of the story is cut from the reworking, but there are also fragments in the poem that show Holofernes' lack of belief in

¹¹ *The Deuterocanonical Books – The Book of Judith* http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_2-Judith.html Accessed June 2013

God. “þær se rica hyne reste on symbel nihtes inne, nergende lað, Olofernus.”¹² Here he is depicted as even hating God, which it does not explicitly say in the original text. When Judith is brought to his bed his intentions with her are not in line with what God would agree with: “þohte ða beorhtan idese mid widle ond mid womme besmitan.”¹³ What Holofernes is about to do is considered a sin and against the Christian faith; in the original text there is no mention of sin in this part of the story. The OE *Judith* explicitly states that Holofernes goes to Hell after his death and this is because of the way he chose to live his life when he was still walking this earth. He did not believe in God and that makes him a pagan/heathen. His heathen nature is repeatedly emphasised: “Genam ða þone hæðenan mannan fæste be feaxe sinum,”¹⁴ and “Sloh ða eornoste ides ellenrof oðre siðe þone hæðenan hund, þæt him þæt heafod wand forð on ða flore.”¹⁵ This is when Judith murders Holofernes and he is actually called a “hæðenan mannan” [heathen man] and “hæðenan hund” [heathen hound], which shows how lowly he is thought of. Again, Holofernes is called a heathen as his head is presented to Judith’s people: Spræc ða seo æðele to eallum þam folce: ‘Her ge magon sweotole, sigerofe hæleð, leoda ræswan, on ðæs laðestan hæðenes heaðorinces heafod starian, Olofernus unlyfigendes,”¹⁶ In the original story he is not called a heathen or a pagan; we are simply told that Judith raises “the head of Holofernes the general of the army of the Assyrians.”¹⁷

The afterlife is important in the Christian faith and therefore it is also a point of enquiry when looking at the poem. There is a description of Hell after Judith murders Holofernes.

Læg se fula leap
gesne beæftan, gæst ellor hwearf
under neowelne næs ond ðær genyðerad wæs,
susle gesæled syððan æfre,

¹² ‘where the powerful man Holofernes, hateful to the Saviour, rested himself during the night.’ *Judith*, ll. 44-46. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations and translations of *Judith* are from “Judith.” Treharne, Elaine. *Old and Middle English c.890-c.1400 an anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2004. 196-211.

¹³ ‘he intended to violate the bright woman with defilement and with sin.’ *Judith*, ll. 58-59.

¹⁴ ‘She seized the heathen man securely by his hair.’ *Judith*, ll. 98-99.

¹⁵ ‘The courageous woman struck the heathen hound energetically another time so that his head rolled forwards on the floor.’ *Judith*, ll. 108-111.

¹⁶ ‘Then the noble woman spoke to all the people: ‘Victorious heroes, here you can gaze clearly on the leader of the people, on this head of the most hateful of heathen warriors, of the unloving Holofernes,’ *Judith*, ll. 176-180

¹⁷*The Deuterocanonical Books – The Book of Judith* http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha/El-Asfar/El-Kanoneya/El-Tanya/2-Judith.html Accessed June 2013(Judith 13, 19)

wyrmum bewunden, wítum gebunden,
 hearde gehæfted in hellebryne
 æfter hinsiðe. Ne ðearf he hopian no,
 þystrum forðylmed, þæt he ðonan mote
 of ðam wyrmsele, ac ðær wunian sceal

awa to aldre butan ende forð
 in ðam heolstran ham, hyhtwynna leas.¹⁸

It shows that Holofernes has no resting place to look forward to, but will be in constant agony for the rest of his afterlife. He will not see light and is left wanting for the joy of hope. Judith on the other hand has served God well and has earned a place in Heaven after she departs from her mortal life.

huru æt þam ende ne tweode
 þæs leanes þe heo lange gyrnde. ðæs sy ðam leofan drihtne
 wuldor to widan aldre, þe gesceop wind ond lyfte,
 roderas ond rume grundas, swylce eac reðe streamas
 ond swegles dreamas, ðurh his sylfes miltse.¹⁹

In the original text, Heaven is only mentioned when God is referred to: “They worshipped one God of heaven”²⁰ or when “There bitter fountains were made sweet for them to drink, and for forty years they received food from heaven.”²¹ The original text does not mention what happened to Holofernes after he was murdered by Judith except that his men found him decapitated. His soul or Hell is not mentioned.

¹⁸ ‘The foul body lay behind, dead; the spirit departed elsewhere under the deep earth and was oppressed there and fettered in torment forever after, wound round with serpents, bound with punishments, cruelly imprisoned in hell-fire after his departure. Enveloped in darkness, he had no need at all to hope that he should get out from that serpent-hall, but there he must remain always and forever, henceforth without end, in that dark home deprived of the joy of hope.’ *Judith*, ll. 111-121.

¹⁹ ‘Indeed, at the end she did not doubt in the reward which she had long yearned for. For that be glory to the beloved Lord for ever and ever, who created wind and air, the heavens and spacious earth, likewise the raging seas and joys of heaven through his own individual grace.’ *Judith*, ll. 345-349.

²⁰ *The Deuterocanonical Books – The Book of Judith* http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_2-Judith.html Accessed June 2013(Judith 9, 5)

²¹ *The Deuterocanonical Books – The Book of Judith* http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_2-Judith.html Accessed June 2013(Judith 15, 5)

In the original story there is a detailed introduction to who Judith is and what has happened to her up to that point. She was married, but is now a widow and has not been with another man except her deceased husband. This makes Judith a woman living in widowhood and therefore chaste, because widowhood is one of the three types of chastity. (Chance 34) Judith goes to Holofernes' bed and his intention is to sleep with her, but in the end he is too drunk to perform. In the poem it says that even though Holofernes has bad intentions, God will protect Judith from any harm and by doing that he protects her virtue: "Ne wolde þæt wuldres dema geðafian, þrymmes hyrde, ac he him þæs ðinges gestyrde, dryhten, dugeða waldend."²²

In "The Book of Judith" Judith is described as a widow and a devout Jewess.²³ She remains chaste after her husband's death. She lives her life like a virgin. Virginity was important in the Middle Ages and remaining intact was a difficult task. England suffered constant attacks from Vikings and they would pillage and rape.²⁴ In the OE poem, Judith also fears for her *chastity* (emphasized by me). Judith is sent to Holofernes bed, but God protects her by making Holofernes pass out drunk. The prayer, in which she asks for God's help, before she kills him is longer in the OE poem than in the original text. As Hennessey Olsen states: "The Old English Judith is concerned to protect herself, both body and soul, from the diabolical pagan."²⁵ In the end Judith overpowers and ravages Holofernes instead of the other way round. She protects her virginity.

The epithets used to describe the characters in the poem say a lot about what kind of person they are supposed to be. They show if the characters are considered good or evil in the eyes of the writer and the intended audience. The poem is a biblical narrative according to "The Norton Anthology of English Literature Volume 1". In such a narrative good and evil are polarised in such a way that characters represent those conditions. Earlier in the chapter it was established that Judith most likely symbolises good and Holofernes evil. Analyzing the epithets describing these characters will clarify good and evil in the OE poem. There are also epithets employing warrior vocabulary and those will be discussed in chapter 2. Judith is

²² 'The Judge of glory, the majestic Guardian, the Lord, Ruler of hosts, would not consent to that, but he prevented him from that thing.' *Judith*, ll. 59-61.

²³ *The Deuterocanonical Books – The Book of Judith* http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_2-Judith.html Accessed June 2013 (Judith 8, 4-6)

²⁴ Horner. "Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English "Juliana", Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure". pp. 659

²⁵ Alexandra Hennessey Olsen. "Inversion and Political Purpose in OE Judith". *English Studies*, 63 (1982), pp. 291

mentioned very frequently throughout the poem using a variety of epithets. She is called a maiden and a woman. Maiden would suggest that she is a virgin, which she is not, but because she has not been with another man since her husband, she can be considered a “mægð” [maiden]. She is called “þær hie Iudithðe fundon ferhðgleawe”²⁶, “þa seo snotere mægð”²⁷, “þære beorhtan idese”²⁸, all of which shows that she is intelligent and cares about the future of the Hebrew people. She is called “halige” [holy] and “ða þeodnes mægð” [the Lord’s maiden], which shows that she is a good Christian and follows God’s directions. In the original text, Judith dresses herself in an attractive manner to impress and seduce Holofernes²⁹, but in the OE poem she does not set out to seduce Holofernes. She is a chaste woman. Contrary to Judith’s close bond to God, Holofernes is described as mentioned as “þone hæðenan mannan”³⁰ and “þone hæðenan hund.”³¹ He is also often referred to as being human and not a god: “se gumena baldor”³² “folces ræswan”³³ “egesful eorla dryhten”³⁴ “se gumena aldor”³⁵ “burga ealdor.”³⁶ In the original story, Holofernes is always referred to by name, but in the anonymous OE poem he gets an incredible amount of different references. None of the references used are positive and show him as the complete opposite of Judith. It can be suggested that Holofernes acts as Judith’s foil in the poem, as these descriptions show: “se brema on mode bliðe”³⁷ “se deofulcunda”³⁸ “galferhð gumena”³⁹ “laðne leodhatan”⁴⁰ “se unsyfra, womfull”⁴¹

²⁶ ‘The wise Judith’ *Judith*, l. 40.

²⁷ ‘The prudent woman’ *Judith*, ll. 55, 125, 147, 171.

²⁸ ‘Ready-witted woman’ *Judith*, l. 341.

²⁹ *The Deuterocanonical Books – The Book of Judith* http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_2-Judith.html Accessed June 2013 (Judith 10, 3-4)

³⁰ ‘The heathen man’ *Judith*, l. 98.

³¹ ‘The heathen hound’ *Judith*, l. 109.

³² ‘The lord of men’ *Judith*, l. 9, 66.

³³ ‘The leader of the people’ *Judith*, l. 12.

³⁴ ‘That terrible lord of heroes’ *Judith*, l. 21.

³⁵ ‘The men’s lord’ *Judith*, l. 32.

³⁶ ‘That lord of cities’ *Judith*, l. 57.

³⁷ ‘The notorious one’ *Judith*, l. 57.

³⁸ ‘The diabolical one’ *Judith*, l. 61.

³⁹ ‘The wanton and the wicked man’ *Judith*, l. 62.

⁴⁰ ‘That hateful tyrant’ *Judith*, l. 72.

⁴¹ ‘The impure and foul one’ *Judith*, l. 76, 77.

Why was the text Christianized?

It is important to consider who the intended audience was for a text and that will help to explain why it was written the way it was and why certain elements were used to illustrate a point. It is uncertain why the OE poem *Judith* was written: “Neither do we know the motives for this translation.”⁴² However it is possible to speculate about the reasons for its creation. The time the poem was written is uncertain, but the suggestion is made that it dates from the tenth century.⁴³ This means it was written at the time when the Anglo-Saxons inhabited England. The intended audience can therefore be assumed to be the Anglo-Saxon people. The Anglo-Saxons were introduced to Christianity in 597 AD, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. When the Vikings attacked, the Anglo-Saxons had already been Christians for nearly 200 years. It is safe to assume that therefore the text was not Christianized to help the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.

Judith was used not just because she was presented as a good Christian but because she was a woman. This meant she could be a role model for Anglo-Saxon women striving to be good Christians themselves.⁴⁴ Virginity was important to Christian women in the Middle Ages, but this virginity was constantly threatened by the invading attacks from the Vikings. Horner states that “The Scandinavian invaders repeatedly invaded Anglo-Saxon England from the 8th century through the eleventh century.”⁴⁵ Monasteries were also not safe from these invaders and the fear of rape was immense. Expecting the invasion of their monasteries it is said that the women would mutilate themselves, to repel their attackers. According to Horner, “The “heroics of virginity” practiced by early medieval nuns in defense of their bodily integrity included self-mutilation, suicide, or murder, since the loss of virginity meant that “they were still perceived as somehow at fault; and as disgraced persons, the onus of the burden was on them” (Schulenburg 1986, 59).”⁴⁶ Anglo-Saxon Christian women would have wanted to read the OE poem *Judith*, because Judith managed to save her people from the invading Assyrians. In her battle she also fought off Holofernes and with her sword she protected her chastity. As Hennessey Olsen states: “Judith, which emphasizes the physical danger which the handmaiden of God fears from a pagan, would surely have held great

⁴² The Norton Anthology English Literature Volume 1 page 101

⁴³ “Old and Middle English c.890-c.1100 an Anthology” Elaine Treharne page 196

⁴⁴ Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. Page 51

⁴⁵ Horner. “Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English “Juliana”, Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure”. pp. 658

⁴⁶ Horner. “Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English “Juliana”, Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure”. pp. 661

interest for the Englishwomen liable to receive the kind of treatment from the Danes which Holofernes plans for Judith"⁴⁷

Because the Anglo-Saxons had already been Christians for several hundred years and the looming threat of invading foreign groups was ever present, it was important to defend the country. Using a text with an enormous amount of Christian elements would enable people to relate to the story. If the good Christian Judith truly believes in God's saviour then the Anglo-Saxons should follow God's instructions faithfully. Judith was chosen as the subject of this religious epic, because she was a religious woman desperately trying to protect her home and her chastity. The tenth century writer Hrotswitha of Gandersheim believed in the importance of virginity and its struggles: "the greater the merit of those who resist, especially when it is a fragile woman who is victorious and a strong man who is routed with confusion."⁴⁸ The fragile women could be Judith and the strong man Holofernes. In reality it would have been the nuns and other Anglo-Saxon Christian women who were fragile and the Vikings the strong men. Judith's victory would make her a good role-model. Finally, Schulenburg's suggestion that *Juliana* was intended for "an Anglo- Saxon female religious audience, who presumably would benefit from learning about the adventures of the powerful Christian virgin"⁴⁹ also applies to the OE *Judith*.

Conclusion

This chapter shows that the poem *Judith* is indeed a complete reworking of the original Bible text "The Book of Judith". In the poem Judith is represented as a woman of God and this can be seen in the epithets used to describe her, the word "halige" [holy] is often used. Holofernes is portrayed as the ultimate evil doer and foe in this poem. In the original he is also a threat to Judith's people, but there he is just referred to by name. In *Judith* he is called a "hæðenan" [heathen] several times and the epithets used to describe him make him the complete opposite of the good Judith. Heaven and Hell are not destinations that are mentioned in the original text, but in the poem they are the reward or punishment for the two main characters. Judith is

⁴⁷ Alexandra Hennessey Olsen. "Inversion and Political Purpose in OE Judith". *English Studies*, 63 (1982), pp. 292

⁴⁸ Schulenburg, Jane Tibbetts. "The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation". *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance Literary and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Mary Berth Rose. (N.Y. Syracuse University Press, 1986), pp. 39-40

⁴⁹ Horner. "Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English "Juliana", Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure". pp. 659

a chaste woman and her devoutness to her chastity can make her seem virginal which was important in the Middle Ages. The Anglo-Saxon people were Christians when the Vikings attacked, but they also had Germanic traditions. The contrast between paganism and Christianity is clearly visible in the OE poem. All of this makes it clear that the original Hebrew story of Judith was completely Christianized by the anonymous writer. The purpose of Christianizing the text was to give Anglo-Saxon Christian women a role model in a time where their virginity was at stake, because of the Viking attacks.

CHAPTER 2 – WARRIOR TRADITION

In the second chapter of this research and analysis of the anonymous OE poem *Judith*, the emphasis will be on how the warrior tradition influenced the original text from the Bible “The Book of Judith”. Similarly to the preceding chapter, it is built up in four parts. The warrior tradition is made up of aspects from the Germanic and the Valkyrie tradition. In order to know if there are any Germanic and Valkyrie influences in the poem *Judith*, it is important to establish what these traditions are. The analysis of the warrior tradition is narrowed down to certain categories. These categories have been chosen, after reading secondary literature. After the analyses of *Judith*, the question of why the warrior tradition was incorporated into the reworked story of Judith in OE will try to be answered. Finally all the issues discussed in this chapter will be summarized in the conclusion.

The Warrior Tradition

The first part in relationship with the warrior tradition is the Valkyrie tradition and its influences on the OE poem *Judith*. There are many different types of Valkyrie and therefore the most common features are presented in this text. Valkyrie are perceived in two different antagonistic roles in Old Norse Literature: “they are seen as fierce, elemental beings and as benevolent guardians.”⁵⁰ The Valkyrie listen to a higher power, the god Odin and act on his behalf by deciding which warriors will die on the battlefield and which were good enough to join him in the afterlife. According to Damico, “They function as arrangers of destinies and intermediaries between men and the deity.”⁵¹ The appearance of the Valkyrie went from ugly to eventually beautiful women armed like warriors. Their armour was covered in gold to emphasise their beauty. The Valkyrie have the epithet of shield maiden and are presented as dignified gentlewomen or gold-adorned warrior-queens. They are also “wise, keen-witted and articulate.”⁵²

The role of Anglo-Saxon women in the heroic poem *Judith* is an important point to discuss, because of the female protagonist and the time it was written. Judith is the protagonist in the poem and she could possess attributes familiar to Anglo-Saxon women. In *Elene* and

⁵⁰ Helen Damico. “The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature”. *New Readings on Women in OE Literature*, eds., Helen Damico and [Alexandra Hennessey Olsen](#). (Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 176

⁵¹ Damico. “The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature”. pp. 177

⁵² Damico. “The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature”. pp. 181

Juliana, Cynewulf created autonomous and active heroines; women in Latin literature were passive. Cynewulf has mixed Christian saints with warrior queens.⁵³ This could be also the same for *Judith*. In Old Norse literature women had an active role as taunters; they would use speeches in order to cajole men into battle. The women did not fight, but speech was their weapon.⁵⁴ Women in Anglo-Saxon society were meant to inspire men with their words.⁵⁵

The epic *Beowulf* is filled with Germanic warrior characteristics, such as boasting, Beasts of Battle, the exchange of treasure/rewards, the image of the mead hall and the role of the *comitatus* (loyalty). It is apparent that this poem is a valuable source in what Germanic attributes occur in OE literature. Set in the time of Germanic tribes, it can be concluded that similarities between this OE poem and *Judith* will therefore be seen as Germanic warrior characteristics. These warrior attributes that make up *Beowulf* in addition to the ones mentioned earlier and can possibly be found in *Judith* are: bravery, honour, loyalty, courage, defiance, heroic resignation.⁵⁶

Finally, the last point of attention when analyzing the influence of the warrior tradition on the OE poem *Judith* will be on the epithets used to describe the character and their appearance. Judith and Holofernes are the main characters in the poem and it is interesting to see how they are described, if they have warrior clothing or an Anglo-Saxon appearance. When they are mentioned in the text it is also worth looking into whether the epithets used evoke the warrior ethos.

Analysis of the warrior characteristics in the poem

The analysis of the warrior characteristics in the OE poem *Judith* will be done in the same order as they were presented earlier. First, I will discuss the Valkyrie tradition and then the role of Anglo-Saxon women in heroic poetry. Following that is the comparison between the OE poems *Beowulf* and *Judith*. Finally the epithets describing the characters in the OE poem and their appearance will be considered in relationship with the warrior tradition.

⁵³ Alexandra Hennessey Olsen. "Cynewulf's Autonomous Women: A Reconsideration of Elene and Juliana". *New Readings on Women in OE Literature*, eds., Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen. (Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 224-225

⁵⁴ Olsen. "Cynewulf's Autonomous Women: A Reconsideration of Elene and Juliana". pp. 225-227

⁵⁵ Fee, Christopher. "Judith and the Rhetoric of Heroism in Anglo-Saxon England." n.d. <http://public.gettysburg.edu/~cfee/courses/English313/Complete%20Course%20Readings/Fee-Judith%20and%20the%20Rhetoric%20of%20Heroism%20revised.pdf>. PDF. 25 June 2013. pp. 405

⁵⁶ *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, eds. Malcolm Godden and Michael Lapidge. (Cambridge University Press, 1991). pp. 146, 151, 159.

The Valkyrie were tasked with the duty of deciding who would die in battle and who would join the god Odin in the afterlife. In the OE poem *Judith* it is often mentioned that men are doomed to die: “hie þæt fæge þegon, rofe rondwiggende, þeah ðæs se rica ne wende, egesful eorla dryhten.”⁵⁷ This was before Judith decapitates Holofernes and after she does this there are more references to being doomed: “fyllan folctogan fagum sweordum, fæge frumgaras.”⁵⁸ The Beasts of Battle also know the Assyrians are doomed: “Wistan begen þæt him ða þeodguman þohton tilian fylle on fægum;”⁵⁹ When the Assyrians realize they are under attack they are already doomed: “þa ic ædre gefrægn slegefæge hæleð slæpe tobredon ond wið þæs bealofullan burgeteldes werigferhðe hwearfum þringan, Olofernus.”⁶⁰ The poem makes it clear from the beginning that the Assyrians are going to die in battle. This has been decided by God and is done by Judith’s hand. This is comparable to Odin and his Valkyrie. The reward of being a good warrior in battle is going to Valhalla with Odin. Judith mentions that if the Hebrew warriors listen to God and do well in battle they will win: “Fynd syndon eowere gedemed to deaðe, ond ge dom agon, tir æt tohtan, swa eow getacnod hafað mihtig dryhten þurh mine hand.”⁶¹ Judith is described as “seo æðele” [the noble one] and she is also dressed similarly to the Valkyrie: “beagum gehlæste, hringum gehrodene.”⁶² As Damico states, “Like the valkyrie-brides, a striking attribute of Elene and Judith is that each is splendidly adorned, and the keynote of the ornamentation is its metallic and martial properties.”⁶³ Finally Judith is also intelligent just like the Valkyrie: “searoðoncol mægð” [The wise maiden]. Judith has many similarities with the Valkyrie; however, “This is not to imply that either Cynewulf or the anonymous poet of Judith was consciously creating a combination saint and valkyrie type.”⁶⁴

Similarly to the Valkyrie, Anglo-Saxon women did have an active role in the outcome of a battle. Their words inspired the men to take action, but they did not take up arms themselves. Judith is the heroine of the poem, but she does not have extraordinary talents or powers that distinguish her from a regular woman. She showed autonomy and activity when

⁵⁷ ‘They received those, doomed to die, brave warriors, though the powerful man did not expect it, that terrible lord of heroes.’ *Judith*, ll. 19-21.

⁵⁸ ‘fell the commanders, those leaders doomed to die with shining swords.’ *Judith*, ll. 194-195.

⁵⁹ ‘they both knew that the warriors intended to provide them with a feast from those doomed to die;’ *Judith*, ll. 207-209.

⁶⁰ ‘Then, I have heard, immediately the warriors, doomed to perish, cast off sleep, and the subdued men thronged in crowds to the tent of the wicked man, Holofernes.’ *Judith*, ll. 246-205

⁶¹ ‘Your enemies are condemned to death, and you will possess glory, honour in conflict, just as mighty God has given you that sign by my hand.’ *Judith*, ll. 195-198.

⁶² ‘adorned with bracelets, decorated with rings.’ *Judith*, ll. 36-37.

⁶³ Damico. “The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature”. pp. 183

⁶⁴ Damico. “The Valkyrie Reflex in Old English Literature”. pp. 187

she entered the Assyrian camp, but she would not have been capable of murdering Holofernes if he had not been unconscious from alcohol. This accomplishment was all due to her faith in God and the prayer she said before she decapitated Holofernes. She used her speech to achieve her goal.⁶⁵ Judith's second speech was directed at the Hebrew people after she returns with Holofernes' head. In "The Book of Judith" her people were not willing to fight the Assyrians, because they did not think they could win. After Judith gives a speech and shows her victory over Holofernes they take up arms. In the poem the speech is much longer, but the Hebrew people are also inspired to fight. "According to Tacitus Germanic women were also notable for exhorting despondent armies to battle."⁶⁶ Judith does not participate in the battle as was custom for Anglo-Saxon women. Judith uses her speech to motivate the men, but in the poem her victory did not have a big affect on the outcome. The Hebrew army is already winning the battle, even before Holofernes' dead body is discovered, but in the original story this discovery was needed to overcome the Assyrians. Her active role needed to become smaller and the men's roles needed to be bigger to make the poem's action acceptable to Anglo-Saxon society.⁶⁷ Judith's chastity and belief in God together with her murdering of Holofernes make a mix of a Christian saint and a warrior queen, even though her role as hero is diminished.

The first step in comparing the two OE poems *Judith* and *Beowulf* is to look for the warrior characteristics in *Judith* that are similar to those in *Beowulf*. In the poem Holofernes does not literally boast, but he does: "hu se stiðmoda stymde ond gylede"⁶⁸ He is either displeased with the result of his conquering or he is very pleased and is yelling out his victories in battle. Judith is caught boasting when she presents her people with Holofernes' head: "'Her ge magon sweotole, sigerofe hæleð, leoda ræswan, on ðæs laðestan hæðenes heaðorinces heafod starian, (...) ic him ealdor oðþrong þurh godes fultum."⁶⁹ The Beasts of battle appear shortly afterwards and signal the start of the great battle between the Assyrians and the Hebrews. "þæs se hlanca gefeah wulf in walde, ond se wanna hrefn, wælgifre fugel; (...) ac him fleah on last earn ætes georn, urigfeðera, salowigpada sang

⁶⁵ Peter J. Lucas. "'Judith' and the Woman Hero". *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 22, *Medieval Narrative Special Number* (1992), pp. 21

⁶⁶ Lucas. "'Judith' and the Woman Hero". pp. 25-26.

⁶⁷ Fee, "Judith and the Rhetoric of Heroism in Anglo-Saxon England" pp. 401, 405.

⁶⁸ 'how the fierce one stormed and yelled.' *Judith*, ll. 25.

⁶⁹ 'Victorious heroes, here you can gaze clearly on the leader of the people, on this head of the most hateful of heathen warriors (...) I deprived him of life through God's help.' *Judith*, ll. 177-186.

hildeleoð, hyrnednebba.”⁷⁰ There are two ring givers (leaders) in the poem, Holofernes and God. The *comitatus* bond between Holofernes and his people is seen at the beginning of the poem when Holofernes throws a big feast. He is also called “goldwine gumena,”⁷¹ and “dryhtguman sine”⁷² This *comitatus* bond does not remain after death; his men flee after they find his body even though they are supposed to avenge his death as their gift-giver. Holofernes imposed fear not loyalty and he was the reason for their drunkenness.⁷³ God is Judith’s ring-giver, she is a devout Christian and because of this she gets rewarded: “Hyre ðæs fæder on roderum torhtmod tiðe gefremede, þe heo ahte trumne geleafan a to ðam ælmihtigan.”⁷⁴ When she convinces her people to rely on God and pick up arms, they are rewarded with victory in battle. Holofernes’ camp is described as if it were a mead hall in the poem; this is seen during the feast: “þær wæron bollan steape boren æfter bencum gelome, swylce eac bunan ond orcas fulle fletsittendum.”⁷⁵ When he is murdered he goes to a different hall, Hell: “Ne ðearf he hopian no, þystrum forðylmed, þæt he ðonan mote of ðam wyrmsele,”⁷⁶

The epithets describing the characters and their appearance in the OE poem *Judith* show whether they are influenced by the Germanic culture and if they have Anglo-Saxon characteristics. Judith appears to Holofernes “beagum gehlæste, hringum gehrodene.”⁷⁷ and she is “ða wundenlocc”⁷⁸ According to Chance, “Judith anachronistically appears as an aristocratic Anglo-Saxon lady.”⁷⁹ Her appearance seems to be in tune with Anglo-Saxon fashion: “Most importantly, she wields a sword to decapitate him in a warlike action more common to the battlefield than the boudoir.”⁸⁰ This shows that Judith is presented as an Anglo-Saxon warrior woman. The people in the reworking of the story of Judith are not called the people of Israel, but they are in the original text. In the poem they are not mentioned in the

⁷⁰ ‘The lean wolf rejoiced in the forest, as did the dark raven, a bloodthirsty bird (...) but behind them flew the eagle eager for food, dewy-winged with dark plumage; the horn-beaked bird sang a battle song.’ *Judith*, ll. 205-212)

⁷¹ ‘The gold-giving friend of his men’ *Judith*, ll.22.

⁷² ‘The stern dispenser of treasures.’ *Judith*, ll. 29.

⁷³ Peter J. Lucas. “‘Judith’ and the Woman Hero”. pp. 22

⁷⁴ ‘The glorious Father in the skies granted her request, since she always possessed true faith in the Almighty.’ *Judith*, ll. 5-7.

⁷⁵ ‘There, along the benches, deep bowls were carried frequently; full cups and pitchers were also carried to the sitters in the hall.’ *Judith*, ll. 17-19.

⁷⁶ ‘Enveloped in darkness, he had no need at all to hope that he should get out from that serpent-hall.’ *Judith*, ll. 117-119.

⁷⁷ ‘adorned with bracelets, decorated with rings.’ *Judith*, ll. 36-37.

⁷⁸ ‘the woman with braided locks’ *Judith*, ll. 103.

⁷⁹ Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. pp. 39

⁸⁰ Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. pp. 40

beginning, but when Judith presents them with Holofernes' head they are "Her ge magon sweotole," [victorious heroes] even though they have done nothing to earn that title. When they decide to listen to Judith and indirectly to God and take up arms, they are given names deserving of their actions: "mægeneacen folc" [The mighty people] "Cirdon cynerofe" [The brave warriors] "Hæfdon domlice on ðam folcstede" [The guardians of the country] and "anes monðes fyrst, wlanc, wundenlocc," [The proud braided-haired ones]. Holofernes is described as a warrior and a leader: "byrnwigena brego" [The ruler of warriors] "se bealofulla" [The commander] and "se beorna brego" [The leader of warriors]. In the previous chapter it was shown that he was attributed terrible Christian qualities and that he was a heathen. His physical appearance is not mentioned in the poem. The Assyrians are also described as warriors, but not as heroes and guardians like the Hebrews. They are: "heardra gemang" [The cruel ones] "ealdgeniðlan medowerige" [Their ancient enemies] and "Assiria oretmæcgas" [The Assyrian warriors].

Why were warrior characteristics used?

The intended audience for the anonymous OE poem *Judith* in relation with the Christianization of the original "The Book of Judith" was looked into in the previous chapter, and it is also important to explain why the Germanic warrior ethos was incorporated into the reworking of the poem. Even though it is uncertain why the anonymous poet wrote his version of *Judith*, the reasons are open to speculation. The Anglo-Saxons were a Christian people when the poem was supposedly written, but before that they were influenced by the Germanic tradition and the characteristics of that tradition left its mark. In Jane Chance's article she wants to answer the question "Why would their poets have selected fighting women saints as the subjects of religious epics?"⁸¹ The first reason is that when the Anglo-Saxons converted to Christianity they inherited a heroic past with it. Their need for heroism did not leave when they joined Christianity and writers that wanted to appeal to the Anglo-Saxon audience needed to use that heroism to inspire their readers. Virgins were represented as warriors fighting off the Devil and his sins. As Chance states, "This imagery drawn from Ephesians 6 may have attracted an Anglo-Saxon audience to whom martial exploits were common."⁸² These martial exploits were used to echo "the military conditions of the time"⁸³

⁸¹ Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. pp. 31

⁸² Chance, *Brave Judith, Juliana, and Elene: Allegorical Figures of the Soul, Christ and the Church*. pp. 34

Aelfric also made a translation of Judith in the late tenth century and he did give his reasons for doing so: “(...) made his translation of Judith to encourage the Anglo-Saxons in defense of their territory against the invading Vikings. The text is, he says, ‘set down in our manner in English, as an example to you people that you should defend your land with weapons against the invading army.’”⁸⁴ This could also be the reason for the anonymous poem *Judith*. Supporting this claim is that the reason for writing the poem was political. “George Orwell’s definition of a writer’s political purpose as the ‘desire to push the world in a certain direction [and] to alter other people’s idea of the kind of society that they should strive after.’”⁸⁵ The Anglo-Saxon people should want to be a society that protects its people and their culture. According to Olsen the poem was intended to shame the men into fighting against the Viking invaders. If a noblewoman without any special abilities is able to decapitate an enemy commander and with that action help win a battle that was at first doomed to fail, then the Anglo-Saxon men should be able to do the same. Men are more capable warriors and of course much stronger than women. Anglo-Saxon women were being raped by the invaders and the men could do nothing to protect them. David Chamberlain does not think the poem was meant to shame anyone, but that “The Old English poem glorifies a noble woman without demeaning Anglo-Saxon noblemen.”⁸⁶ The poem was meant to inspire strength in the Anglo-Saxon women and triumph in the Anglo-Saxon men.

From this and the analysis of the poem, the most likely reason for the anonymous poet to use characteristics from the warrior tradition and in turn the Germanic and Valkyrie tradition was to make the story more interesting and understandable for the Anglo-Saxon people for whom it was probably intended, because it was written in that time. It also makes sense that this anonymous writer wanted to inspire the reader to be just as brave as Judith and take up arms to defend their land from any invaders.

⁸³ Fee, Christopher. "Judith and the Rhetoric of Heroism in Anglo-Saxon England." n.d. <http://public.gettysburg.edu/~cfee/courses/English313/Complete%20Course%20Readings/Fee-Judith%20and%20the%20Rhetoric%20of%20Heroism%20revised.pdf>. PDF. 25 June 2013. pp. 405

⁸⁴ The Norton Anthology English Literature Volume 1 page 101

⁸⁵ Alexandra Hennessey Olsen. “Inversion and Political Purpose in OE Judith”. *English Studies*, 63 (1982), pp. 290

⁸⁶ Olsen. “Inversion and Political Purpose in OE Judith”. pp. 293

Conclusion

This chapter shows that similarly to the previous chapter, the anonymous OE poem *Judith* is a complete reworking of the original Bible text “The Book of Judith”. The original text shows what happened to Nabuchodonosor and how he was a powerful ruler and that he sent out his commander Holofernes to conquer more land. Judith was a woman that stood up for her people by infiltrating the enemy camp and slaying the leader, thus inspiring her people to defend themselves. There is no mention of how Holofernes being the ultimate warrior leader, however, he must be a good commander if he can conquer that many places. In the poem he is called “se bealofulla” [The commander] The entire heroic poem is filled with similar imagery as that found in the heroic poem *Beowulf*, which makes it a text filled with Germanic warrior characteristics, such as the Beasts of battle which were no were present in “The Book of Judith”. Although it might not have been the anonymous poet’s intention, there are many references to the Valkyrie tradition in the OE poem. Judith inspires the Hebrew people to fight and afterwards they will be rewarded with a place in heaven and God. This is also what the Valkyrie do; they decide who is doomed to die in battle and who will get eternal glory. The Assyrians are the ones doomed to die in *Judith*. Judith’s role in the poem was changed from that of a warrior to that of a woman who inspires people with her speech. Experts are divided on whether or not Judith is a warrior woman or something similar to a saint. She is dressed in a warrior fashion, but her act of murder does not ultimately win the battle. The Hebrew warriors who are much more competent than their mirror images in “The Book of Judith” have the upper hand even before the body of Holofernes is discovered. All of this makes it clear that the original Hebrew story of Judith was not only completely Christianized but also filled with characteristics from the warrior tradition by the anonymous writer. The purpose filling the text with these attributes was to make it more identifiable for the Anglo-Saxon people, who were still a nation that believed in a heroic warrior tradition. It was also meant to inspire the men to fight off the Viking attackers and to protect their land and their women.

CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore in what way and with what aim the original biblical text from “The Book of Judith” was altered in the reworking of the story found in the anonymous Old English poem *Judith*. The alterations that were the focus of this research were the Christianization of the original Hebrew story and the implementation of characteristics from the warrior tradition. The warrior tradition was based on the Germanic and Valkyrie tradition.

“The Book of Judith” was Christianized in several different ways into the OE poem *Judith*. The epithets used for Judith in the poem have to do with her chastity, devoutness to God and intelligence and in the original text the emphasis was more on the liberation of the Hebrew people from the Assyrian commander, Holofernes. Holofernes is pictured as a heathen devil in the OE *Judith*; however, in “The Book of Judith” he is not considered evil, because of his religion, but because of his actions. The epithets used to describe him make him the complete opposite of the good Judith. The concept of Heaven and Hell is not present in “The Book of Judith”, but in the OE poem it is. The epithets do a good job of presenting the good and the evil, but their afterlife also makes this point come across. Holofernes is destined for the serpent-hall, hell and Judith will join God in heaven. England had already been Christianized and Judith is a role model of devoutness and chastity. The contrast between paganism and Christianity in society is represented by the two protagonists. These are just some of the Christian elements that have altered “The Book of Judith”.

The OE poem *Judith* was not only Christianized, but also heavily influenced by the characteristics of the Germanic and Valkyrie traditions. The Valkyrie were supernatural warrior women that decided who died in battle and who was rewarded with eternal glory in Valhalla. From the beginning of the poem the Assyrian army is doomed to die; their fate has been decided by God. Judith acts as God’s hand on earth and she murders Holofernes with God’s help and this is a major part in the victory of the Hebrew people. It may not have been the anonymous poet’s intent to use the Valkyrie tradition, because this is originally from Norse mythology and perhaps the poet did not know about it. Holofernes was a commander in both texts, but in *Judith* this is much more emphasized. His name is connected to being a powerful warrior similar to Beowulf, but Beowulf is respected by his men and Holofernes is feared by his men. The *comitatus* bond is not as strong in the Assyrian camp as it is between Judith and God. There are Beasts of battle in the poem and these signal that a battle is coming; these are characteristics of the Germanic tradition. Judith had a very active role in “The Book

of Judith”, she infiltrated the camp and because of her actions there the Hebrew people found the courage to overpower the Assyrians. In the poem Judith does the same, but the Hebrew people already have the ability to win the battle. Judith was only needed to present them with the inspiration of Holofernes’ head and her wise words. There are many more moments of warrior tradition characteristics in the OE poem *Judith*.

The aim of reworking the story of “The Book of Judith” into the OE poem *Judith* is uncertain. It is possible to speculate about the reasons, because of the abundance of secondary sources on the subject matter. The reason for writing the text is answered by realizing who the intended audience was. The purpose of Christianizing the story and filling it with characteristics from the warrior tradition was to make it more identifiable for the Anglo-Saxon people. The Anglo-Saxon people were Christians for several hundreds of years at the suggested point of creation of the poem; however, they were also still a nation with a heroic warrior tradition. Judith’s bravery and the victory of the Hebrew people over the Assyrian army showed that even though the future can look grim, it is possible to succeed if you believe in God and fight. The poem was meant to inspire the Anglo-Saxon men to fight off the Viking attackers and to protect their land and their women. Judith was not only used to inspire the men into action, but she was also a good Christian role model for the Anglo-Saxon women who feared for their chastity during the time of Viking attacks. All of this makes it clear that the original Hebrew story of Judith was not only completely Christianized but also filled with characteristics from the warrior tradition.

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