Preface

Since its foundation, the Centro di studi interreligiosi (CSI) – established at the Almo Collegio Borromeo (Pavia, Italy) through the synergy between historians of the Middle Ages from the Department of the Humanities at the University of Pavia and Italian and foreign scholars of religious history – has been committed not only to conference activities, but also to teaching, offering seminars, courses, and summer schools. In 2022, immediately after the Covid pandemic, the Centro organized its first two long-planned summer school programmes. One of these, held from 29 August to 2 September 2022 at the Collegio Borromeo, was the international summer school in interreligious studies entitled *Invicta Juditha. Stories of Judith in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam from Antiquity to Modern Times*. Consistent with its interreligious approach, the meeting began with an examination of the Book of Judith and its afterlife in medieval and modern Judaism (from commentaries on the Talmud to the Hanukkah liturgy). It then moved on to Judith Christianised (martyrdom and female heroism in medieval and early modern Western literature and music), investigated Judith in medieval and early modern Western iconography, and concluded with research into Islamic literature and cinema. The essays collected in this volume derive partly from the papers given and discussed during the summer school (Helen Geyer, Matthias Morgenstern) and partly from the work of the doctoral students and postdocs who participated (Noga L. Cohen, Anna Gili, Beatrice Perego). The editors contribute an introductory essay on the tradition of Judith in the Christian Latin Middle Ages. Although this topic has been the subject of research for at least a hundred years, we felt it was important to summarise it and even repeat some of the already well-known facts. In this way, the lesser-known aspects that our volume has to offer, such as the role of Judith in medieval and modern Jewish culture and translations of the book into Arabic, come to the fore.

In order to provide our readers with a convenient way to quickly contextualise the quotations scattered throughout the articles, we include English translations of both main versions of the Book of Judith in full: the translation by Deborah Gera, based on the Septuagint, and a translation of the Vulgate. Anna Gili's contribution also includes extracts (chapters 8 and 10–13) from two other versions of Judith: two sixteenth-century translations into Arabic, also with English translations.

The editors write this with the wish that the study of the Judith tradition may foster a more peaceful interfaith dialogue than the second-century BCE story conveys and present-day events likewise bespeak. It is true that the turn to dialogue is a historical rarity. Perhaps it remains a dream – and yet it is always a necessity.

T. F. — D. R.

Technical remark:

All URLs listed in the book were checked for accessibility between 25 June and 31 October 2024.

The Book of Judith in the Western Christian Middle Ages: An Introduction

by Thomas Frank and Daniela Rando

The introductory essay reconstructs the reception of Judith in the Christian Latin Middle Ages. While the number of scholarly theological treatises on the Book of Judith remained manageable until the late Middle Ages, literary, pastoral theological, dramatic and pictorial adaptations increased more and more. The Christian interpretations of the Old Testament heroine thus became more diverse, but also more contradictory. Judith developed from the *figura* of the Church or *Religio*, from the personification of Christian virtues and prefiguration of Mary to a role model for queens, to a praiseworthy or threatening example of the strong or cunning woman, to a femme fatale and politically deployable tyrant murderess. On the basis of recent research in the history of literature, art, and theology, this article uses selected examples to illuminate this rich panorama of Christian voices on Judith.

The story of Judith[1] – the woman who, with strength of faith, sacrifice, courage, cunning, cleverness, and brutality, with chutzpah and against all odds, succeeded in approaching the enemy commander Holofernes, beheading him in his sleep after a feast, thus saving her besieged city of Bethulia – has occupied posterity to this day. "To this day" is no exaggeration when one considers the adaptations of the story in modern-day Israel, its transfer to other cultural milieus, or its blending with other plots.[2] The Book of Judith is

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1   This essay was discussed and written jointly by the two editors. Thomas Frank is primarily responsible for parts 1–3, Daniela Rando for parts 4–8.

2   Modern-day Israel: see the contributions by Noga Cohen and Matthias Morgenstern in this volume. Contemporary use of the Judith material: the world premiere of the opera *Judith von Shimoda* by the Argentinian composer Fabián Panisello was performed at the Bregenz Festival 2023; the libretto combines elements from the *Book of Judith*, *Madame Butterfly*, and real events from nineteenth-century Japan (Egbert Tholl, "Geopferte Heldin," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 19/20, 2023, 16; cf. https://fabianpanisello.com/opera/). Cf. the contribution by Helen Geyer in this volume, who focuses on Judith oratorios of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but also mentions contemporary musical productions.

set in the sixth century BCE with historical imprecision, but it was written in the second century BCE and, according to the most plausible hypothesis, as late as around 100 BCE.[3] It therefore belongs to a precise political context: the Hasmonean dynasty, and possibly at its beginnings in the time of the Maccabean revolts. As will be mentioned several times in our volume, Judith was originally (or also) written in Hebrew or Aramaic, but that version has not survived. Only the Greek translation that was produced in a later phase of work on the Septuagint and Jerome's Latin translation for the Vulgate have been preserved.[4] The latter translation was the basis for the reception of Judith in Western Christianity.

1. *Judith as* Figura *and* Exemplum

Judith is already mentioned in patristic literature as an example of God-centred heroism, especially female heroism.[5] In the first letter of Clement of Rome (written shortly before the year 100), the author places Judith and Esther among the patriarchs and other heroes of the Old Testament.[6] The apparently deliberate choice of two exemplary female personalities is intended to show that women, too, could have prophetic gifts and closeness to God. In the short prologue to his Latin translation in the Vulgate, Jerome addresses the question of why the Book of Judith ("in verbis chaldeis," i.e. Aramaic) was not accepted by the Hebrew Bible, but was nevertheless included in the Christian Bible: the Council of Nicaea had decreed this and therefore Judith deserved the highest praise as a "castitatis exemplum," even among

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3   Cary A. Moore, "Why Wasn't the Book of Judith Included in the Hebrew Bible?," in *No one spoke ill of her. Essays on Judith*, ed. James C. VanderKam (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 61–71; Nicolae Roddy, "The Way it Wasn't: the Book of Judith as Anti-Hasmonean Propaganda," *Studia Hebraica* 8 (2008): 269–77. Deborah L. Gera, *Judith* (Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 34–44.

4   See below, and Gera, *Judith*, 11–15.

5   Cf., for the following remarks, the efficient overview by Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann, "Judith in the Christian Tradition," in *The Sword of Judith. Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 42–65.

6   Janelle Peters, "Rahab, Esther, and Judith as Models for Church Leadership in *1 Clement*," *Journal of Early Christian History* 5, no. 2 (2015): 94–110. It is uncertain who actually wrote the letter addressed from Rome to the Church of Corinth; it is only attributed to Clement of Rome. For the following, see also Gera, *Judith*, 11–15.

Christians.[7] Jerome's prologue, only a few sentences long, remained for centuries the only commentary that goes beyond a mere mention of the name as an *exemplum* for a pious heroine. He also used his translation work, which he claims to have completed in one night (and apparently with the help of older Latin translations and Jewish scholars), to Christianise the figure of Judith with respect to the Septuagint.[8]

A longer commentary was not written until the ninth century in the Frankish Kingdom, by Rabanus Maurus (died 856), abbot of Fulda, archbishop of Mainz, and the most important theologian under the emperors Louis the Pious and Lothar I.[9] Rabanus initially dedicated his commentary to Emperor Louis's wife, Judith, whose name was rather rare in the Latin Middle Ages[10] and was probably the main reason for the theologian's choice of this particular part of the (Christian) Old Testament; he later also sent a slightly revised version to Ermengard, the wife of Emperor Lothar.

The commentary, which is attested by twenty-four manuscripts (some of which date back to the ninth century), is largely a compilation of earlier statements on Judith: Rabanus drew mainly from patristic authors (for exam-

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7   Robert Weber, Hg., *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, 5. edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007), 691.

8   Cf. the two versions in the English translations provided at the end of this book, for example, the following passages: in contrast to the Septuagint (LXX), Jerome repeatedly emphasises Judith's "castitas" (Jdt 15:11 in the Vulgate and Jdt 15:9-10 in the LXX; Jdt 16:26 Vulgate and Jdt 16:22 LXX), her prophetic and preaching abilities as well as the penitential character of her actions (Jdt 8:11–27 Vulgate and Jdt 8:12–27 LXX; Jdt 8:30–2 Vulgate and Jdt 8:32–3 LXX), while he often abbreviates the ritual elements of Jewish religion (e.g., Jdt 16:16 LXX is omitted in Jdt 16 Vulgate).

9   Rabano Mauro, *Commentario al Libro di Giuditta. Edizione critica*, a cura di Adele Simonetti (Firenze: SISMEL, 2008).

10 A look at the name registers of the edited *necrologia* and *libri memoriales* of the Roman-German Empire may prove this. In the older series of the *Necrologia Germaniae* (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Antiquitates*), in which mainly South German and Austrian necrologies of the High and Late Middle Ages are edited, the name Judith (with its possible secondary forms) is present, but not very common. In the early and high medieval sources of this type (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Antiquitates. Libri memoriales* and *Libri memoriales et Necrologia, Nova series*), it occurs rarely, if at all, or else with very moderate frequency; most frequently, it seems, in the Romance peripheral and neighbouring regions of the Empire. See https://www.dmgh.de/antiquitates.htm.

ple, Isidore of Seville[11]), but also consulted Josephus Flavius, without always citing these sources. Rabanus annotated all sixteen chapters of the Book of Judith according to the Latin Vulgate text, but not every single verse. He read the last chapter most extensively, whose hymns and prayers of thanksgiving lent themselves well to correlation with the Christian liturgy. In addition to etymological explanations of the personal names, Rabanus attempted to reconcile the historical facts with which the Book of Judith begins. But his most common exegetical perspective is the 'typological' or 'mystical'. In this sense, the figure of Judith refers to the "veritas" of the Gospels and stands for the Christian church, while Holofernes stands for the forces of evil (the devil, the Antichrist, demons). Because Judith "ecclesie typum habeat," she prefigures the church – as "prophitissa"[12] – so that her battle against Holofernes can be interpreted as a victory of the Christian church against evil. That sixth-century BCE Jews were typologically identified with Christians of the Middle Ages, while at the same time medieval Jews were held up as an example of heretics to be combatted, apparently troubled the author of the commentary as little as it did his Christian readers.

In addition to this most important reference – Judith as a figure of the *ecclesia* – her *castitas* and, to recall Clement of Rome, her heroism were also repeatedly emphasised in the wake of Jerome. Both characteristics, and certainly the name she shared with the empress, enabled her to be included in the coronation *ordines* as a role model for Christian queens from the ninth century onwards.[13] Chastity, even virginity, could be attributed to the widow because she had led a celibate life after the death of her husband, resisted the advances of Holofernes, and did not remarry after her return to Bethulia. Queens were not supposed to be so celibate that they produced no offspring, but if they had fulfilled this duty, then sexual restraint was certainly considered appropriate behaviour for a Christian queen. At the time when Rabanus Maurus wrote his commentary

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11   Isidore of Seville, "Allegoriae S. Scripturae. Ex veteri Testamento," in *S. Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Opera omnia*, vol. 5: *Libri differentiarum et opera biblica*, ed. Francisco Arevalo (Roma: apud Antonium Fulgonium, 1802), 134; https://archive.org/details/operaomnia05isid/page/134/mode/2up.

12   Rabano Mauro, *Commentario*, 35 (on Jdt 8) and 78 (on Jdt 16).

13   Grzegorz Pac, "Biblical Judith in the Ideology of Queenship in the Early Middle Ages," *Quest* 6 (2009): 75–89, for the West Frankish *ordines*. For the medieval Roman Empire see Reinhard Elze, Hg., *Die Ordines für die Weihe und Krönung des Kaisers und der Kaiserin* (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1960), 8, 12, 40, 57, 84, 99, 119; in these *ordines* Judith is mentioned (with an identical formula from the tenth to the thirteenth century) in a prayer pronounced during the blessing of the queen or empress.

on Judith and not long before the first *ordines* for the coronation of the queen were written, this was a controversial topic because empress Judith's opponents had publicly accused her of adultery. Furthermore, the image of the victorious heroine was also too well suited for identification with the demands placed on a queen for the supporters of the empress to have overlooked it. The aspect of victory over her enemies, in turn, could easily be linked to Judith's function as an "ecclesie typus" and thus also brought her closer to the Virgin Mary.[14]

In the High Middle Ages, such theological politics or political theology of the queen also found expression in pictorial representations.[15] The windows of the Sainte-Chapelle, built by Louis IX of France in the 1240s, present a dense series of images of the Old and New Testaments, which virtually frame the central depictions of the founder, King Louis, and his mother, Blanche of Castile. Louis and his mother designed the chapel as a walk-in reliquary for the crown of thorns and other relics of Christ acquired in Constantinople. Two very differently designed windows are dedicated to the two Old Testament heroines Judith and Esther. They seem to refer to the two queens in Louis IX's orbit: the humble, diplomatic Esther representing the king's wife, Margaret of Provence, whose influence at court was neutralised in the 1240s and who had to accompany the king on his first crusade; the energetic Judith representing Blanche, by contrast, whom Louis appointed regent in France during his absence.

The interpretation of Judith as a 'type' of the Christian church, proposed rather in passing by Isidore of Seville and more strongly emphasised by Rabanus Maurus, persisted throughout the Latin Middle Ages. The most influential biblical commentary of the later Middle Ages, the *Postilla* by the Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra (died 1349), may serve as proof of this. Nicholas invested most of his exegetical energies in explaining the historical sense of the Latin Bible (*sensus litteralis*); at least in his reading of Judith, he devoted

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14   Pac, "Biblical Judith," 83, 86; for parallels between Judith and Mary in twelfth-century art see Elizabeth Bailey, "Judith, Jael, and Humilitas in the *Speculum Virginum*," in *The Sword of Judith. Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 286–90. Cf. also the modern Catholic reading by Gianfranco Ravasi, *Rut, Giuditta, Ester* (Bologna: Mondadori, 2020), 74, 91, 94, 136, who argues that some verses of the Marian hymn *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55) are similar to the hymn of praise in Jdt 16. On Judith and Mary see also below, text after notes 82 and 93.

15   For the following, see Alyce A. Jordan, "Material Girls: Judith, Esther, Narrative Modes and Models of Queenship in the Windows of the Ste-Chapelle in Paris," *Word & Image* 15 (1999): 337–50.

much less space to the 'moral' (i.e. figurative) sense than to the historical sense. However, in the places where he argues "moraliter," his interpretation is clear: everything that Judith once did stands for what the "ecclesia militans" has accomplished since the early church and still accomplishes in the (medieval) present.[16]

Rabanus Maurus's *Expositio* was the sole comprehensive commentary on the Book of Judith before the *Postilla* of Nicholas of Lyra. Thus, it was heavily referenced in the twelfth-century Ordinary Gloss,[17] through which the contents of the *Expositio* could reach later audiences.[18] Nevertheless, the *Historia scholastica*, compiled by Petrus Comestor before 1173, was just as influential as Rabanus's *Expositio*. This foundational work for teaching arranged, classified, and linked knowledge from the Bible to secular history. Petrus dated the events narrated in the Book of Judith to the rule of Cambyses (sixth century BCE) and thus gave them a historical frame, while at the same time situating them within salvation history. Consequently, the story of Judith found its way into later compilations, which then became direct sources for the late medieval vernacular *Historienbibeln*.[19]

In this way, the narrative was enriched and organised chronologically, while retaining its ambivalence and polysemy: "It must be stressed that for a figure as multivalent as Judith, malleability in signification is the norm, with varying and sometimes even opposing constitutive roles played by creators and audiences, especially as popular arts and drama came to transport the

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16 We used the online edition from around 1510, which is accessible via the homepage of the Staatsbibliothek Berlin. *Textus biblie: cum Glosa ordinaria, Nicolai de Lyra postilla, Moralitatibus eiusdem, Pauli Burgensis additionibus, Matthiae Thoring replicis*, cur. Conradus Leontorius (Ludgunum: Mareschal, c. 1510), fols. 292v–304v; https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN789516632. See there, for example, fols. 299r, 300r, 302r, 303r. On f. 302r ('moral commentary' on Jdt 13, the murder scene) it says, for example: "Et talem [referred to "ebrietas," f. 301v] occidit Iudith, id est ecclesia, q(uo)n(iam) propter mala sua per excommunicationem separat eam a fidelium coetu."

17 Lesley Smith, *The Glossa ordinaria. The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009), 47, 54: "Rabanus is virtually the only source for at least the books of Kings, Chronicles, Judith, Esther, Ruth, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus and Maccabees, contributing as well to the books of the Pentateuch and the Prophets."

18 Henrike Lähnemann, *"Hystoria Judith". Deutsche Judithdichtungen vom 12. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 62.

19 Lähnemann, *"Hystoria Judith"*, 64–73; Ciletti and Lähnemann, "Judith in the Christian Tradition," 50–1.

topic into ever more widely accessible arenas." The history of the specific forms that this process of reception took is inextricably linked to the paradoxes that the biblical narrative inscribed in the figure of Judith.[20]

2. *A Figure of* Religio

A fifteenth-century Benedictine monk who edited a collection of material on Benedict of Nursia at the monastery of Saint-Laurent in Liège in the 1430s departed from this main strand of interpretation by the medieval Latin Christian theologians. Jean de Stavelot wanted to support the reform of his and other monasteries in the Rhineland, and with this in mind (perhaps for the training of novices), he copied the basic texts of Western monasticism (the *Regula Benedicti,* the *Dialogi* of Pope Gregory I) and translated them into French.[21] He combined them with sermons and other treatises on Benedict and monastic life, and illustrated some of these texts with coloured drawings by his own hand. An original *Vita* of Benedict consists almost exclusively of pictures, in which thirty-five drawings of episodes from the life of the founding father (on the *recto* pages) are mirrored by as many scenes from the Old Testament (on the *verso* pages). Each Old Testament image is a *figura* of the *veritas* of the facing depiction of events or themes relating to Benedict of Nursia.

All seventy pictures are accompanied by short texts (multilingual verses, quotations from the Bible or Church Fathers). None of this would be of interest to us here if the author hadn't chosen a *figura* featuring Judith as the opening illustration of the *Vita* (Fig. 1). The caption reads: "Figura religionis Judith VI° capitulo."[22] Judith stands to the left of the centre of the picture, pointing with her left index finger at Holofernes who lies below her feet, dead or sleep-

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20   Ciletti and Lähnemann, 42.
21   The manuscript has been in the Musée Condé in Chantilly since the nineteenth century (Ms. 738). Digitisation: https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md07gq67jt5g#Reproductions. See most recently the art history dissertation by Verena Bestle-Hofmann, Unus liber de Sancto Benedicto. *Das Benediktskompendium des Jean de Stavelot und die Klosterreform des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Sankt Ottilien: EOS, 2016), at 238–48. Thomas Frank is working on an essay on this manuscript, provisional title: "*Reformatio* e *translatio* in un manoscritto redatto da Jean de Stavelot († 1449), monaco benedettino a St-Laurent di Liegi" (in preparation for *Reti Medievali Rivista*).
22   Chantilly, Ms. 738, fol. 112v. The verse written on the banner in Judith's right hand is correctly Jdt 16:20 (Vulgate), not Jdt 6.

ing, but his head is not severed. On the right-hand side of the picture the chief of Bethulia, Uzziah ("Ozias episcopus"), stands with his priests. According to the central banner, which Judith holds in her right hand, she is saying "V[a]e genti insurgenti super genus meum" (Jdt 16:20 Vulgate and 16:17 Septuagint). In the four corners of each page, Jean de Stavelot placed four portrait busts of biblical, patristic or medieval authors; on Judith's page these are (from top left): Jesus Sirach, St Paul, a "matrona" (the mother of the seven brothers killed in the second book of Maccabees) and, in the inner bottom corner, a portrait of himself. We will not go into the quotes uttered by these figures in detail here, but rather reproduce the Latin two-line caption below the picture, to which Jean points as the author of the manuscript: "Judith, devota, pudica, tipus est religionis. / Hominibus fit amica sancte conversationis."[23] This makes clear what is being prefigured by Judith: not the church or Mary, but *religio* itself.

However, the fact that the pious Judith does not simply embody 'religion' in the modern sense of a particular faith (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc.) and its cult is made clear by the picture opposite, at the centre of which is a female personification of "religio."[24] This picture is entitled "Ymago religionis" – an exception, because all the following pictures on Benedict's life bear the title "veritas". Here, in the first pair of pictures, Jean probably chose the term *imago* because "religio" is not a concrete person from the saint's life, but a rhetorical figure, a *personificatio*. However, as the surrounding attributes and quotations show, this figure combines both meanings of the word that were common in the Latin Middle Ages: the general meaning (as in the expression 'Christian religion') and the narrower meaning, according to which *religio* means a community following a religious way of life, an order (the *religio* of the Franciscans, the Benedictines, etc.). The latter is obvious from the outset in this book conceived for the Benedictine monastic reform, and is confirmed by the fact that the figure of "religio" proclaims the three evangelical counsels of obedience, chastity, and poverty on her chest and holds open a book with "precepta, statuta, ceremonie" in her left hand. These are norms that are clearly part of monastic discipline and had to be learnt by young monks. On the other hand, the four cardinal virtues surrounding "religio" refer not only to monastic life, but to religion in general; and the "superstitio" dominated by the female figure (similar to Holofernes lying at Judith's

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23   The Latin verses are then freely translated into French and Flemish, where "Dieu" (Flemish "onsen heer") is added to "hominibus" and "tipus" is rendered as "signifiat" (Flemish "bediedende"). Transcription of all short poems of the *Vita* in Albert Henry, "Une œuvre trilingue de Jean de Stavelot," *Latomus* 1 (1938), 190.
24   Chantilly, Ms. 738, fol. 113r.

feet) is not so much in opposition to the narrower concept of religious order, but to true faith. The four busts in the corners lead from the general (God and King Solomon at the top) to the narrower sense of *religio* (with Peter Damian, a leading figure of eleventh-century monastic reform, in the lower outer corner). Jean's bust recites the Latin verse "Religio cultum affert Deo et cerimoni[a]s. / Holocaustum libens offert mundi spernens delitias," and thus remains ambivalent: here, "religio" could be translated both as 'religion' and as 'religious order'.

The point here is that this fifteenth-century monastic scholar detached the figure of Judith from the prevailing interpretation as a prefiguration of the Christian church, claiming her instead for a broad concept of *religio* – incidentally, a concept that seems to grant Judaism a relatively equal position alongside Christianity. The pictorial tradition that Jean de Stavelot drew on is strongly characterised by models from the twelfth century. This was, it seems, a deliberate reminiscence of the 'golden age' of the Benedictines.[25] Whether he knew and drew on older Judith iconography when designing his Judith, however, remains an open question.

Such iconographic patterns had developed in Latin Christianity since late antiquity. They were received and surpassed by Renaissance artists in the fifteenth century, who turned Judith and Holofernes into a popular subject of early modern and modern painting and sculpture. Here, however, we must confine our survey to possible early and high medieval models. Jean de Stavelot may have known the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and, if he was ever in Rome, he may have seen an eighth-century fresco in the church of Santa Maria Antiqua, the oldest surviving depiction of the Book of Judith. The wall painting does not depict the scene of Holofernes's decapitation, only the two women returning with the severed head.[26] Judith appears more frequently in illuminated manuscripts in the early Middle Ages than in such monumental depictions. These were primarily Bible manuscripts – besides Byzantine manuscripts, the Carolingian Bible of San Paolo fuori le mura (ninth century) – in which various iconographic traditions developed up to the twelfth century. Everywhere, however, the be-

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25 Bestle-Hofmann, Unus liber, 229–36.
26 Joseph Wilpert, Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien der kirchlichen Bauten vom IV. bis XIII. Jahrhundert (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1916), vol. 2, 696–7; Jutta Seibert, "Judith," in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, hg. von Engelbert Kirschbaum SJ, vol. 2 (Roma-Freiburg im Breisgau-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1970), 454–8.

heading of Holofernes established itself as a central scene, as for example in the *Hortus Deliciarum* by Herrad of Landsberg, an encyclopaedic collection of texts and images compiled in Alsace between 1159 and 1175.[27]

Whether Jean de Stavelot studied a depiction of Judith from the twelfth century, the era that was so important to him, and chose it as a model remains a matter of speculation. He was certainly familiar with illustrated Bibles from that period.[28] In some of those Bibles and in the *Speculum Virginum* (ca. 1140), the Old Testament heroine was shown not only in the act of killing, but also in a victorious pose, with Holofernes at her feet; in this stance she may be interpreted as the embodiment of *humilitas*, *continentia* and *castitas*, triumphing over the *superbia* or *luxuria* identified with Holofernes.[29] This iconographic formula is close to Jean's pictorial composition; the difference was that he used it to represent *religio*, thus supplementing the older interpretations of Judith.

3. *A Potential Martyr*

One level of meaning that Judith has been associated with more frequently only since the early modern period is that of martyrdom, including revenge[30] on the enemy at the cost of possible self-sacrifice. An interpretation of Judith as a potential martyr can only be found rudimentarily in the Latin theologians of the Middle Ages. At one point, Rabanus Maurus quotes Daniel's account of the three boys who were miraculously saved from execution by fire, a frequent reference in Christian martyr discourse; moreover, he compares Achior (not Judith!), the Ammonite who converted to Judaism in Bethulia, with the Christian catechumens who had suffered martyrdom. In his picture of Judith, Jean de Stavelot quotes a common 'martyr' passage from the Second Book of Maccabees.[31] How-

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27   Frances Godwin, "The Judith Illustration of the *Hortus deliciarum*," *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 91 (1949): 25–46, 142–9.

28   Bestle-Hofmann, Unus liber, 149. On the illustrations in the *Bibles moralisées* (thirteenth century) see below, ch. 5.

29   Seibert, "Judith," 454–5; Bailey, "Judith, Jael, and Humilitas."

30   The poster of the exhibition at the Jewish Museum in Frankfurt am Main in 2022 on the subject of *Rache. Geschichte und Fantasie* (Revenge. History and Fantasy) features Jacopo Ligozzi's painting, *Giuditta* (1602, Florence, Uffizi Gallery): https://www.juedischesmuseum.de/besuch/rache/. We thank Friederike Pannewick, Marburg, for this information.

31   Rabano Mauro, *Commentario*, 28–9 (on Jdt 6), 39 (on Jdt 8). For the quotation of 2 Macc 7 see above, text before note 23.

ever, theologians did not expand on such allusions or go beyond recognition of Judith's heroism. Heroism in particular had always been a source of Christian martyrdom, even if this dimension of death for the faith generally took a back seat to closeness to God and the humble acceptance of torture and execution.

In the sixteenth century, however, the question of martyrdom gained renewed importance due to the struggle between Christian denominations. Shortly after St Bartholomew's Day, the leading French Protestant, Guillaume du Bartas, published his epic poem *La Judit*. Although he had already received the commission in 1564, by the time it was published in 1574, the work could easily be read as a call for revenge for the Protestant victims of the massacre.[32] And it is hardly a coincidence that Martin Luther began his hymn about the first 'martyrs' of the new Protestant faith, the Augustinians Henricus Vos and Johannes van den Esschen, who were burnt in Brussels in 1523, with the words: "A new song, here shall be begun – the Lord God help our singing!"[33] This is a quotation from the Old Testament: several psalms in the Vulgate begin with such a phrase ("canticum novum"). It also occurs twice in the Book of Judith: "psalmum novum exaltate" (16:2 Vulgate; cf. 16:1 Septuagint, where the adjective is missing) and above all "hymnum novum cantemus Deo nostro" (16:15 Vulgate; 16:13 Septuagint).[34] Perhaps Luther, as a potential 'martyr' himself, wanted to enrich his song about the first real 'martyrs' of the new faith with a subtle reminiscence of the potential 'martyr' Judith – even if he later decided not to include her book in the Lutheran Bible canon.

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32 Paula Sommers, "Gendered Readings of The Book of Judith: Guillaume du Bartas and Gabrielle de Coignard," *Romance Quarterly* 48 (2001): 211–220. The usability of Judith – and even of du Bartas's *La Judit* – for both denominations is emphasised by Robert Cummings, "The Aestheticization of Tyrannicide. Du Bartas's La Judit," in *The Sword of Judith. Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 228–238. On Bartas see also below, note 89.

33 A comment and English translation in Dick Akerboom and Marcel Gielis, "'A new song shall begin here …'. The Martyrdom of Luther's Followers among Antwerp's Augustinians on July 1, 1523," in *More than a Memory. The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. Johan Leemans (Leuven-Paris-Dudley MA: Peeters, 2005), 256. In the German original the verb is active: "Eyn newes lied wir heben an, des wald gott unser herre."

34 The Latin quotations from the Vulgate are from https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Biblia-Sacra-Vulgata-VULGATE/. Cf. Gera, *Judith*, 454.

4. *Judith in Latin and Vernacular Poetry, Fourth to Thirteenth Century*

The tenets of moral and ideological exemplarity have been present in poetry from the early Christian eras, albeit with subtle variations depending on the target audiences.[35] A catalogue of biblical women who were either role models for virtue or symbols of religious life was compiled by Venantius Fortunatus. In his *De virginitate* (AD 567), Fortunatus used rhetorical devices (accumulation, inventory) to list outstanding women, second only to Mary. Among them was Judith ("sobrietas Iudith vincere sola facit"). Other writers referred to his catalogue as a template, such as the monks Agius of Corvey and Walafrid Strabo, who praised the qualities of the empress Judith in his allegorical poem *De imagine Tetrici*, composed at Louis the Pious's court ("at Judith refert virtute et religione"). A similar list was made over three centuries later by Marbodus of Rennes (1035–1123) in the chapter *De matrona* of his *Liber decem capitulorum*.

Avitus of Vienne (c. 450–518) addressed the topic of virginity that Fortunatus would later elaborate. He summed up Judith's feat as a story of murder and deceit ("How can we forget Esther and the lies of the chaste Judith, Holofernes aroused by the deception of her painted face"). The great poet from Vandal Africa, Dracontius (c. 450–460), highlighted Judith's fortitude as being greater than that of men; conversely, the daring, formidable *dux* Holofernes was cheated of a hero's death in combat because he was overpowered by "promissa voluptas" – promised pleasure – implying that Holofernes was paradoxically punished for his unconsummated adultery ("Holofernes adulter inpollutus"). Earlier still, Paulinus of Nola (Carmen 26) had already pointed out the mocking aspect of the victory of modesty (Judith mocked the duped general, "risit," remaining "inpolluta" in the "impuro cubili"), listing Judith's performance in the midst of a string of triumphs won through heavenly protection rather than the use of force.

Another poetic work, by Aldhelm of Malmesbury (639–709), is devoted to virginity. His 2904 hexameter transcription of an earlier prose work, *De laude virginitatis*, is filled with references to biblical figures, including Judith. A long passage – the longest in Latin poetry (63 verses) – is also dedicated to her in *De sobrietate* by the monk and schoolmaster Milo of Saint-Amand (died 871/872). Emphasising the virtues of moderation – sobriety, thrift, and

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35   Here and in the following passages we refer to Francesco Stella, "The Women of the Old Testament in Early Medieval Poetry," in *The Early Middle Ages*, ed. Franca E. Consolino and Judith Herrin (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2020), 231–58.

continence – and condemning their related vices along the lines of Pruden-tius's *Psychomachia*, Milo depicted Judith with subtle psychological nuances and moral undertones. He portrayed her as a redeeming example for wid-ows, devoted to self-mortification.

Judith's popularity in the Carolingian period is also reflected in a small rhythmic poem that focuses entirely on her and was probably intended to be recited. It is preserved in a ninth-century manuscript in the possession of the Biblioteca Capitolare in Verona (and partially survives elsewhere). In its fifty stanzas, less than half of which are readable, Judith emerges as a symbol of victory over the heathens. The poem's militaristic tone and its final yearning for victory similar to that of the Jews in Bethulia have led scholars to date it to the wars fought by the Carolingians in the late eighth century against the Muslims or Avars.[36]

Though Judith appears to be mentioned less frequently in ninth-century Latin poetry,[37] she nevertheless features in popular poetry and prose. The narrative was revived in Anglo-Saxon England as a fragmented poem in the vernacular, preserved with the epic poem Beowulf in the famous Nowell Codex, as well as in a sermon that Ælfric addressed to a community of nuns. Regarding the recent Viking raids, Judith took on particular connotations: "The Anglo-Saxons imbued Judith with both the qualities of military hero and chaste widow, and used her narrative both as tropological message and allegorical type."[38] Throughout Ælfric, there are realistic ambivalent refer-ences to the protagonist as "an Eve-like temptress using her seductive wiles to destroy the Assyrian." Therefore, in many respects, Ælfric's rendition de-picts the enemies in a significantly more complex manner.[39]

Since Juvencus and Prudentius (fourth century), biblical poetry has been the first literary genre to address Christian topics between theology and poetry, drawing from a variety of sources, including liturgical texts, hymns, sermons, and oral secular poetry. Beginning with the first two re-

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36   Stella, "The Women of the Old Testament", 248.
37   Stella, 252.
38   Tracey-Anne Cooper, "Judith in Late Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Sword of Judith. Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti, and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 170.
39   Stuart Dermot Lee, *Ælfric's Homilies on Judith, Esther, and the Maccabees* (1999), https://users.ox.ac.uk/~stuart/kings/main.htm (without page numbers); Cooper, "Judith in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 176.

workings in vernacular, known as *Older* and *Younger Judith*, this genre was especially appreciated in the Germanic areas between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries.[40] These two poems were part of the Vorau manuscript, a collection of biblically based literature in the vernacular that built a history of redemption from Genesis to the Last Judgement, as a meditative tool. The *Judith of 1254*, preserved in an elaborate codex including five other biblical versifications, was also composed in the vernacular and marked the beginning of literary works intended for the order of the Teutonic Knights.[41] Unlike these vernacular works, the *Aurora* by Petrus Riga, a canon in Rheims, was composed in Latin. The *Aurora* was the most important verse commentary on the Bible in the Middle Ages. Written between 1170 and 1200, it was further enhanced over time by other writers, both anonymous and named, including Aegidius of Paris. In its final, highly popular version (more than 250 manuscripts), the *Aurora* reached 15,000 verses; it was also used by lexicographers and grammarians, revised and commented upon by readers and teachers, and included in the students' curriculum.[42] Aegidius of Paris introduced allegorical interpretation ("mystica multa") to the Book of Judith and other passages put into verse by Petrus Riga;[43] therefore, he interpreted Judith's victory as the triumph of the church over Satan – which is not surprising in view of the theological interpretations presented above – and he developed a more inventive analogy between the severed *caput* of Holofernes and Rome as *caput mundi*: the head of the enemy was cut off by the banner of faith, Rome was conquered by Christianity.[44] The *Aurora* was freely translated into French at the beginning of the fourteenth century by the parish priest of Sancoins (Berry), Macé (Matthieu) de la Charité-sur-Loire (*Bible de Macé de la Charité*).[45] Macé reworked Petrus Riga's poem into nearly 40,000 verses, including the passages from the Book of

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40 Lähnemann, *"Hystoria Judith"*, 87–168.

41 Lähnemann, 191–232.

42 *Aurora Petri Rigae Biblia versificata. A Verse Commentary in the Bible*, vol. 1, ed. Paul E. Beichner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), XI–LV.

43 In his dedicatory poem to bishop Odo of Paris, Aegidius states: "Insuper, in libris Thobie, Iudith, et Hester/ Et Machabeorum mystica multa dedi" (*Aurora Petri Rigae*, 15, vv. 25–6).

44 "Qui Iudith uidue fuit ex Holoferne triumphus/ Ecclesie laus est de titubante Sathan […] Perdidit ille caput et uirtus corruit eius/ Cum nostre fidei Roma subacta fuit./ Mundi Roma caput; caput hoc precidit in hoste/ Vexillum fidei detinuitque sibi;/ Roma colenda prius cum ediceret idola, demum/ Idolici cultus desinit esse caput./ Nunc thronus ecclesie domina fundatur in urbe,/ Sic famulantur ei cetera regna soli" (*Aurora Petri Rigae*, 383, vv. 1–2, 7–14).

45 *Aurora Petri Rigae*, XLII–XLIII.

Judith. Petrus's presentation of Judith, for example ("Urbe manebat in hac Iudith, inclita, predita sensu,/ Ortu clara, Deo cara, uenusta genis,"[46]), takes on a fine narrrative tone in Macé's vernacular: "En la ville avoit une dame/ Qui mont ert belle *et* gentis fame,/ Grant beauté *et* gra*nt* sens avoit/ *Et* dieu amoit mont *et* servoit:/Nomee estoit par non Judith."[47]

5. *Searching for the* sensus spiritualis

At the time when Petrus Riga was studying in Paris, the city was becoming a hub for the production of glossed Bibles;[48] the origin of moralised Bibles (*Bibles moralisées*) can also be traced back to the tradition of Parisian scholastic exegesis.[49] *Bibles moralisées* as "illustrated books," i.e. books featuring figures with condensed written commentary, first appeared in the early thirteenth century. Image-text pairs illustrating passages or paraphrases from the Bible matched text-image pairs providing interpretation through the *sensus litteralis* and *spiritualis*;[50] conceived as "Erbauungsbücher" (books for edification), they represent "the most complete and systematic visual exegesis of the Bible produced during the Middle Ages."[51] The first four surviving manuscripts were written for aristocratic clients or perhaps members of the royal family, through the efforts of talented theologians, most likely employed by the Parisian monasteries of Saint-Victor or Saint-Germain-des-Prés.[52] The biblical text, including the Book of Judith, was given a moral, anagogic, and tropological reading. In the earliest extant Latin version, Ms. 1179 at the National Library in Vienna, Judith's actions and gestures "acquire significance," *significant*: Judith loading provisions onto her handmaid's shoulders "signified" contemplatives who do not carry the weight of temporal goods, while the burdened handmaid herself represented active good people who, although

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46   *Aurora Petri Rigae*, 378, vv. 93–4.

47   *La Bible de Macé de la Charité*: *Ruth, Judith, Tobie, Esther, Daniel, Job,* éd. Henri-C.-M. van der Krabben (Leiden: Universitaire Pers, 1964), 10, vv. 16585–9.

48   Lesley Smith, *The Glossa ordinaria*, 148.

49   "Bible moralisée," in *The Grove Encyclopedia of Medieval Art and Architecture*, ed. Colum Hourihane, vol. 1: *Aachen to Cecco di Pietro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 337–8.

50   Reiner Haussherr, "Sensus litteralis und sensus spiritualis in der Bible moralisée," in *Bible moralisée. Prachthandschriften des Hohen Mittelalters. Gesammelte Schriften von Reiner Haussherr,* hg. von Eberhard König, Christian Tico Seifert und Guido Siebert (Petersberg: Eberhard König Print Book, 2009), 92–123.

51   "Bible moralisée," 337.

52   "Bible moralisée," 337.

owning worldly goods, use them as the Lord's dispensers rather than in accordance with their own will. The image of Judith submitting to Holofernes "signified" the obedience required by earthly princes, in line with Romans 13:1; Judith's *two* strokes to behead the Assyrian stood for sincere faith and excellent acts,[53] and so on (Fig. 2–3).

The layout of that Bible and the other *Bibles moralisées* from the thirteenth century has been connected to the schemes used in the stained-glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle, mentioned above, because of their circular medallions and use of blue and red. From here, French artists exported them (along with Judith) to German *Bibelfenster*, such as those in Mönchengladbach and Esslingen.[54]

The *moralizatio* of biblical facts and characters as an exegetical technique continued to be practised, opening up to ever new meanings. Pierre Bersuire's fourteenth century *Reductorium morale* in fourteen books, "the most elaborate medieval compendium of moralised science,"[55] resumed the traditional interpretations of the Book of Judith, but delved into the figures of the Assyrian leaders to outline short notes "de regimine," denouncing the bad governance of princes, secular and ecclesiastical, and their officials: tyranny, avarice, simony, nepotism, taxation (the water cut off by Holofernes in Bethulia). Judith still portrayed the "sancta anima christiana," the *Ecclesia* that vanquished the devil (Holofernes), or the Blessed Virgin, but as *deceptrix* could also denote false friends and, when she entered Holofernes's chamber, false counsellors who, flattering the magnates, are led by them *ad cubiculum*, that is, "ad secreta consilia." The Judith "mala et ornata mulier" became an example of the women who, having enticed the vicious leader, appropriate his *caput*, that is, his *capitale*, his *divitias*, leaving him impoverished, in moral and material misery.[56] "The richness

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53   Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Hs. 1179, fols. 183v–184r; https://digital. onb.ac.at/RepViewer/viewer.faces?doc=DTL_7907841.

54   Lähnemann, "*Hystoria Judith*," 14.

55   Robert Earl Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 46. Christel Meier, "Petrus Berchorius: Autor und Werk," in *Petrus Berchorius und der antike Mythos im 14. Jahrhundert*, hg. von Dieter Blume und Christel Meier, 2 vols., vol. 1: *Die Metamorphosen Ovids in der Deutung des Petrus Berchorius und in den italienischen Bildzyklen des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin-Boston: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 9–28.

56   *Petri Berchorii Pictaviensis, ordinis S. Benedicti, Opera omnia in sex tomos distincta, sive Reductorium, Repertorium et Dictionarium morale utriusque Testamenti quadripartitum*, vol. 1 (Coloniae: Joannis Wilhelmi Huisch, 1730), 145–8.

and variety of the moralization to be found in the *Reductorium* can hardly be overstated"[57] and shows the hermeneutical freedom that the inexhaustibility of meaning in Scripture allowed exegetes.

6. *In the Series of Female* Exempla

In French literature, brief mentions of the Judith figure can be found in Eustache Deschamps's works (c. 1340–1404), such as the ballad *Sur la justice de Dieu* or his comparison between a lady and historical heroines, again within a list.[58] In the same serial way, his contemporary, Jehan Le Fèvre, *procureur* to the Paris *Parlement*, referenced Judith in the *Livre de Lëesce* (1373–87), in assessing how soon widows could remarry.[59] Rich in pro-women arguments as well as in misogynistic language,[60] the *Livre* was one of the primary sources for the *Book of the City of Ladies* (*La Cité des dames*) by Christine de Pizan, "who silently mined the work for useful profeminine material but nevertheless condemned it as a whole."[61]

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57 Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery*, 47.

58 *Œuvres complètes de Eustache Deschamps, publiées d'après le manuscrit de la Bibliothèque nationale*, éd. Marquis De Queux de Saint-Hilaire (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1880), vol. 2, 336, v. 18 ("Car de Dydo ne d'Elaine,/ De Judith la souveraine,/ Ne d'Ester ne de Tysbée,/ De Lucresse la Rommaine,/ Ne d'Ecuba la certaine,/ Sarre loial ne Medée"); vol. 3, balade CCCLXI, 98–9, vv. 19–32; CCCLXVIII, 113, v. 12; CCCXCIX, 183, v. 22; CCCCVII, 202, v. 19; CCCCLXX, 289, v. 8; CCCCLXXXII, 303, vv. 1–9 ("Judith en fais, Lucresse en voulenté,/ Rebeque en sens, en noblesce Ecuba,/ Sarre loyal et Helain en biauté,/ Plaisant Hester et royne de Sabba,/ En ferme foy et en sainté Anna,/ Semiramus pou gouverner contrée,/ Et pour honneur et gens veoir Martha,/ Dydo, Palas, Juno, Penelopée,/ Marie en grace et en humilité"); DXLVI, 389–90, vv. 9, 13, 19.

59 *Les Lamentations de Matheolus et le Livre de Leesce de Jehan Le Fèvre, de Ressons (Poèmes français du XIVe siècle). Edition critique, accompagnée de l'original latin des Lamentationes, d'après l'unique manuscrit d'Utrecht, d'une Introduction, de Notes et de deux Glossaires*, éd. Anton-G. Van Hamel, vol. 2: *Texte du Livre de Leesce, Introduction et Notes* (Paris: Emile Bouillon, 1905), 55–6, vv. 1761–76.

60 Albrecht Classen, review of *The Book of Gladness/Le Livre de Leesce: A Fourteenth Century Defense of Women, in English and French, by Jehan Le Fèvre*, trans. and ed. by Linda Burke, *Mediaevistik* 27 (2014), 412.

61 Karen Pratt, review of *The Book of Gladness/Le Livre de Leesce: A Fourteenth Century Defense of Women, in English and French, by Jehan Le Fèvre*, trans. and ed. by Linda Burke, *Symposium* 69, no. 3 (2015), 176.

Christine de Pizan addressed Judith in no fewer than six books. Among them, *Mutacion de fortune* and *La Cité des dames* present the longest narratives. In the first, "histoire palpitante et merveilleuse," the wonders of the East are combined with the desire, sacrifice, and death of a Christian woman.[62] In the latter, Judith enters a gallery filled with notable women, both past and present, who were renowned for their morality, wisdom, and skill. She was also invited to move to that city, which was "established and built for all ladies of honor," acting as a model for how women should fairly contribute to the salvation of God's people.[63] In the *Livre de Paix* and *Epistre de la prison de vie humaine*, instead, Judith is recalled in a reflection on evil rulers and their fate. Both works deal with current political events; the latter particularly brought up the assassination of King Charles VI's brother, the duke of Orléans (1407), which was perpetrated at the behest of the duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless. In the *Epistre* she therefore viewed the Old Testament murders – including the one by Judith – with caution, considering them to have occurred before the advent of Christ and the more equitable society he established.[64] "Riche de sa féminité, la Judith de Christine de Pizan n'est pas le symbole du peuple souverain prêt à se soulever contre l'oppresseur mais la représentante de la communauté des femmes, qui, malgré la faiblesse physique, peut rétablir l'ordre politique et changer le devenir du royaume."[65]

At least since the *Cité des dames*, Judith's exemplarity was given a more active role: she was added to the group of women whose heroism and goodness made them eligible for inclusion in the arguments against misogynist critics in the *querelle des femmes*.[66] One of those who followed this path was

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62   Claire Le Ninan, "La veuve et le tyran: l'*exemplum* de Judith dans l'œuvre de Christine de Pizan," in *Christine de Pizan. La scrittrice e la città/L'écrivaine et la ville/The Woman Writer and the City. Atti del VII Convegno Internazionale "Christine de Pizan," Bologna, 22–26 settembre 2009*, a cura di Patrizia Caraffi (Firenze: Alinea editrice, 2013), 76, 86.

63   "All of you who love glory, virtue, and respect may reside here in great honor. Ladies from the past, the present, and the future: you may all live here, because the City has been established and built for all ladies of honor:" *The Book of the City of Ladies and Other Writings*, ed. Sophie Bourgault and Rebecca Kingston, trans. Ineke Hardy (Indianapolis-Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2018), 219. And cf. Sebastián Provvidente, "*Stylus theologicus et iuridicus*: Jean Petit in Constance (1414–1418) and the debates on tyrannicide," *Médiévales* 77 (2019), 129–51.

64   We are taking up the view of Le Ninan, "La veuve et le tyran," 80–1.

65   Le Ninan, 82.

66   Ciletti and Lähnemann, "Judith in the Christian Tradition," 59.

the physician Symphorien Champier from Lyon, who, in his 1503 poem *La nef des dames vertueuses*, praised the "subtilité et sagesse de judich," here portrayed as a widow "enclose," resolute in keeping the fast.[67]

The same year, Jean Molinet in the *Cœurs vertueux* again listed Judith among the women who were able to exert influence or even negative power over males.[68] He reserved the same serial treatment for Holofernes in the *Neuf preux de gourmandise*,[69] a satirical cast of the *Nine Worthies* displayed originally in Jacques de Longuyon's *Vows on the Peacock* as the embodiment of chivalry. Once more Judith is named on a list in *Vies des femmes célèbres*, a poem which the Dominican friar Antoine Dufour, a prominent figure in the French court, presented to Anne, the duchess of Brittany and queen of France, the following year. Judith "fut une des belles et sages dames qui fust de son temps;" as a widow, "ne laissa elle jamais maistriser sa sensualité, en la chastiant discrètement et honnestement" and, having defeated Holofernes, her people held her in esteem, "[la] révérant et honnorant comme leur propre royne et maistresse."[70]

Judith's typification and serialisation – which had started *in nuce* with Venantius Fortunatus – persisted throughout the late Middle Ages, and the phenomenon extended beyond French literary works. In the letter written in 1358 to empress Anne on the occasion of the birth of her daughter, Judith is mentioned in the sequence of women praised by Petrarch because of her constancy as a widow.[71] Only a few years before, the biblical heroine had risen above all the other women cited in Petrarch's Triumphs, becoming a symbol of *honestate*, triumphing over illicit love, and achieving fame:[72] "Vedovetta/con bel parlar, con sue polite guance/vince Oloferne"

67 Symphorien Champier, *La nef des dames vertueuses*, éd. Judy Kem (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007), 57, 94.

68 *Les faictz et dictz de Jean Molinet*, éd. Noël Dupire, 2 vols. (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1936–7), vol. 1, XLI, 390–1, vv. 49–56: "Par Eve Adam pecha contre raison,/ Par Rebecca Jacob beaucoup valut,/ Par Dalida perdy force Sansson,/ Par Medee eult Jason d'or la thoison,/ Par Judich fut Holofernes dechut,/ Par Nathalie Adriien eubt salut,/ Par Marie eubt Joseph gloire es hauls trosnes,/ Par Johanne a Philipp trois couronnes."

69 *Les faictz et dictz de Jean Molinet*, vol. 2, XXIV, 538, vv. 53–60.

70 Antoine Dufour, *Les vies des femmes célèbres*, éd. Gustave Jeanneau (Genéve-Paris: Droz, 1970), 63–4.

71 Petrarca, *Le familiari*, XXI, 66, vv. 8, 21.

72 Dennis Dutschke, "Petrarch's Triumphal and Cheerful ('allegra') Judith (*Triumphus Cupidinis* iii. 52–57)," *Nuova rivista di letteratura italiana*, 1, no. 1 (1998), 57.

in the *Triumph of Love*;[73] "saggia, casta e forte" in the triumphal parade of modesty alongside Lucretia, Penelope, and Virginia, foreshadowing Laura;[74] "vedovetta ardita/che fe' il folle amador del capo scemo" among the figures worthy of glory in the *Triumph of Fame*.[75] Chaucer, Petrarch's contemporary, included Judith in his *Canterbury Tales* no less frequently. In *The Man of Law's Tale*, he mentioned her "corage" or "hardynesse" in killing Holofernes and the "spirit of vigour" that God bestowed upon her, just like the main character Constance;[76] in *The Monk's Tale*, he recalled her for having caused the downfall of Holofernes, one of the seventeen people who fell from glory to a tragic end by the hand of Fortune;[77] in the *Tale of Melibee*, "hire [her] good counsel" had been commended by Melibee's wife when persuading her husband to follow her advise,[78] and likewise, the protagonist of *The Merchant's Tale*, January, supported his decision to marry since he saw Judith as a woman "by wys conseil."[79]

Allegoresis and the personification of virtues or deeds, in conjunction with the learned tradition of writing biographies of illustrious women (*clara mulier*), fostered a glorification which, starting in the late fourteenth century, brought Judith into the circle of the *Nine Worthy Women* (*Neuf Preuses*), the female pendant of the *Nine Worthies*; one excellent illustration can be seen in the engraving by Hans Burgkmair the Elder from 1519, which splits the nine heroines into three groups – three pagan, three Jewish, and three Christian women – and places Judith, Esther, and Jael in the "Drei guot Jüdin."[80]

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73   *Triumphus Cupidinis*, II, 53–5: we are using the edition Francesco Petrarca, *Trionfi. Rime estravaganti. Codice degli abbozzi*, a cura di Vinicio Pacca e Laura Paolino (Milano: Mondadori, 1996).

74   *Triumphus Pudicitiae,* 142.

75   *Triumphus Famae,* II, 119–20.

76   Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor, 2. ed., (Peterborough: Broadview Editions, 2012): *The Man of Law's Tale*, 939. Cf. Rosalyn Rossignol, *Critical Companion to Chaucer: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts in File, 2006), 476 (*sub voce* Judith).

77   Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*: *The Monk's Tale,* 2, vv. 551–2, 574.

78   Chaucer, *The Tale of Melibee*, 1, 099.

79   Chaucer, *The Merchant's Tale*, 1, 366.

80   Lähnemann, "*Hystoria Judith*," 431, note 33. Cf. Pia Holenstein Weidmann, "Heilige, gefährliche und tugendhafte Frauen – Judith und ihre Schwestern," *Nova Acta Paracelsica. Beiträge zur Paracelsus-Forschung,* Neue Folge 22–3 (2008–9), 36.

7. Cunning Women and Tyrannicide

Henrike Lähnemann pointed out that inserting Judith into a series meant removing her from the narrative context and abandoning the perspective of the temporal organisation of the causalities of her actions in order to use the character instead as an element in a particular argument.[81] After "this transition from a narrative to a gnomic context, and from a figure as part of a wider divine strategy to one who herself performs momentous acts, the way is open for different accentuations of this 'cipher Judith', and the most prominent of these for early modern times is the 'cunning woman' topos."[82]

The 'cunning woman' topos emerged in the *Sangsprüche* and the *Meisterlieder*, which presented Judith in conflicting ways: as a prefiguration of Mary on the one hand, and as a member of the club of the cunning women on the other. In the serialisation characteristic of the latter type, Judith's behaviour was detached from the Christian-dogmatic domain and limited to the moment of deceit.[83] In two different stanzas, in which the *Meistersinger* drew on Frauenlob's *Goldenen Ton*, the Judith story was pedagogically reformulated to point out the dangers of government, the fall of the powerful due to pride, and the resourcefulness of women.[84] Meanwhile, Holofernes was listed among the love slaves in a stanza written in Frauenlob's highly popular *Langem Ton*, which was used in various contexts. By assuming the role of the protagonist and being depicted as a dupe, Holofernes gained potential as a mirror for other men, a possible figure of identification.[85]

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81 Lähnemann, *"Hystoria Judith"*, 418.
82 Henrike Lähnemann, "The Cunning of Judith in Late Medieval German Texts," in *The Sword of Judith. Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 243. At p. 240, note 2, the definition of *Spruchdichtung*.
83 Daria Norma Jansen, "Judith und Holofernes. Eine Tyrannenmörderin zwischen Skandalon und Ideal," in *Tyrannenbilder. Zur Polyvalenz des Erzählens von Tyrannis in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, hg. von Julia Gold, Christoph Schanze und Stefan Tebruck (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 60 (our English translation of the German wording).
84 Lähnemann, "The Cunning," 240, and 243–5, with an example of another stanza written in Frauenlob's *Langem Ton*. See also below.
85 Jansen, "Judith und Holofernes", 59–61, who bases her argument on the version in the *Süddeutsche Tafelsammlung*.

Thus, Judith's inclusion in the *Weiberlist* heightened the ambiguous meaning of her deeds, which the presumption of divine approval for seduction and murder in the biblical text was unable to suppress. Theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus discussed Judith's lying in the context of the question of the absolute value of truth,[86] while John of Salisbury judged her duplicity toward the Assyrian commander as a "pious" deception to vanquish Holofernes, who was essentially a victim of his own vice. John of Salisbury gave the story of Judith a prominent place in his *Polycraticus*, the first medieval text to clearly address the issue of tyrannicide. At the end of a string of biblical examples, he provided a thorough explanation of the story and paid it serious attention, while retaining some elements of ambivalence and contradiction in his analysis.[87] "By the authority of the divine book it is lawful and glorious to kill public tyrants […]. Thus Holofernes was laid in his grave by a woman with a sword not on account of the valour of his enemy but by his own vice, and he who was a source of terror for men was vanquished by luxury and drunkenness and was slain by a woman. And the woman would not have been accorded access to the tyrant unless she had concealed her hostile purpose in a pious deception" ("pia simulatio").[88] The Parisian theologian Jean Petit would also take advantage of the killing of Holofernes "per insidias" in his defence of John the Fearless, responsible for the murder of the duke of Orléans, as mentioned previously. In the *Justification* delivered on 4 March 1408 in front of nobles and medical professionals from his university, Petit was able to situate the assassination in a row of 'holy' tyrannicides who were directly inspired by God, according to biblical precedents like the Book of Judith. This thesis was further developed by other authors, including Guillaume du Bartas, referred to above.[89] However,

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86   Andrew Hadfield, *Lying in Early Modern English Culture. From the Oath of Supremacy to the Oath of Allegiance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 125–6 (on Thomas of Aquin); *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, ed. and trans. Alan B. Wolter (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), 304, 312. Cf. Antonie Vos, *The Theology of John Duns Scotus* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2018), 221.

87   Barbara Schmitz, "Johannes von Salisburys 'Policraticus,' die Juditerzählung und die Frage nach der Legitimität der Tyrannentötung," in *Theologische Ethik auf Augenhöhe. Festschrift für Stephan Ernst*, hg. von Thomas Brandecker, Tobias Janotta und Hendrik Weingärtner (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2021), 389, 391.

88   John of Salisbury, *Policraticus. Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman, 7. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 206–7.

89   Julien Le Mauff, "The Sword of God. Tyrannicide as a Providential and Miraculous Event from Medieval Debates to Early Modern Religious Conflicts," in *Miracles,*

Judith's feat would be called into question by Jean Gerson, as he fiercely opposed Jean Petit.[90]

After Gerson, the negative overtones of Judith's deceit that were hinted at in Jean Molinet's *Coeurs vertueux* and focused on in the *Weiberlist* extended far beyond the Middle Ages. It suffices to quote Giuseppe Passi's *I donneschi difetti*, published in 1598 and reprinted many times. In it, the Ravenna-born author argued that "le bugie di Giudit non sono iscusate da Dottori, né dalla scrittura, anzi Scoto non vuole iscusarla del tutto, perché quanto poté s'abellì, s'adornò, e dice egli che il provocare altrui a peccar mortalmente, è peccato mortale."[91]

8. *Persistent Exemplarity in Homiletic Literature and Religious Theatre*

Conversely, the homiletic domain long preserved the *exemplum*'s moral and edifying significance. Between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Stephen Langton proposed a gloss on the fall of Holofernes, calling it "an excellent theme on the death of some powerful worldling by whose fate others may be instructed."[92] A few decades later, the Dominican friar Humbert of Romans reinterpreted the story of the Book of Judith allegori-

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Political Authority, and Violence in Medieval and Early Modern History, ed. Matthew Rowley and Natasha Hodgson (Abingdon-New York: Routledge, 2022), 126.

90   "Autre assertion: Judith ne pecha point en flattant Holofernes ne Iehu en mentant qu'il vouloit honnorer Baal. – Cette assertion est favorisante a l'erreur de ceux qui ont dit que en aucun cas on peut loisiblement mentir:" Jean Gerson, *Œuvres Complètes*, éd. Palémon Glorieux, vol. 7/1: *L'œuvre française. Sermons et Discours (340–398)* (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1967), no. 389, *Rex in sempiternum vive!* (4 September 1413), 1022, taken up on 6 September 1413: Gerson, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 10: *L'œuvre polémique (492–530). Suppléments-Documents-Tables* (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1973), no. 511, 173; no. 514 (18 December), 183: "Amplius assertionis quintae reprobatio modeste et reprehensibiliter facta est, quidquid de facto Judith vel Jehu dicant doctores in hanc vel illam artem. Videant tamen theologi si sane dictum sit quod Deus possit permittere mendacium vel prolationem falsitatis, cum intentione fallendi vel insidiandi". Cf. Alfred Coville, *Jean Petit. La question du tyrannicide au commencement du XVe siècle* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1932), 436, 441.

91   Paola Cosentino, "Vedova, puttana e santa. Giuditta figura del desiderio (XVI, XVII e XVIII secolo)," *Between* 3, no. 5 (2013), 2; http://www.Between-journal.it/.

92   Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 255 (from the Ms. Exeter Coll. Oxford 23, fol. 15d). Cf. Carlo Delcorno, "La trasmissione nella predicazione," in *La Bibbia nel Medioevo*, a cura di Giuseppe Cremascoli e Claudio Leonardi (Bologna: EDB, 1996), 71.

cally, arguing that if Holofernes (i.e. the devil) attempted to cut off Bethulia's aqueduct to stop the flow of water (i.e. the word of Scripture), then the preachers sent by God were those whose word made precisely that water flow.[93] His Dominican brother Giordano da Pisa would again see Judith as a prefiguration of Mary in a sermon delivered in 1304 on the feast of the Purification of Mary: just as Judith's innocence pleased the enemy king, who then was killed with his own knife, so Mary was tempted by the devil, but defeated him with the same weapon of temptation.[94] Early modern women in particular are encouraged to emulate some of Judith's traits and demeanour, such as her immaculate reputation and her voluntary seclusion from society. As writers found inspiration in the heroine's story, so according to preachers, too, might men and women find inspiration in her religious drive.[95] According to the rule Angela Merici gave her Ursulines in 1535, Judith could still be a source of inspiration to the consecrated women as a virile virgin: "Come on, valiant daughters, let us all embrace this holy Rule [...] and armed with its sacred precepts, let us behave in a virile way, that we too, like holy Judith, having courageously cut off the head of Holofernes, that is of the devil, may return gloriously to our heavenly home."[96]

Like the sermons, religious theatre could easily make Judith's lively, awe-inspiring story its theme. This is evidenced by the 2470 verses of *Le Mystère de Judith et Holofernés*, ascribed to Jean Molinet (c. 1490–1500),[97] which stresses

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93   *Humberti de Romanis Opera de vita regulari*, cur. Joachim Joseph Berthier, vol. 2: *Expositio in Constitutiones. Instructiones de officiis Ordinis. De Eruditione Praedicatorum. Epistolae Encyclicae* (Roma: A. Befani, 1889), 379–80: "*Judith. 7*: Holofernes praecepit incidi aquaeductum, qui fluebat in civitatem; *Glossa*: Hoc diabolum maxime suadet, ut doctrine fluenta auferatur, sed e contrario Dominus mittit praedicatores qui aquam influant." Cf. Carlo Delcorno, *Giordano da Pisa e l'antica predicazione volgare* (Firenze: Olschki, 1975), 116.

94   Giordano da Pisa, *Avventuale fiorentino 1304. Edizione critica*, a cura di Silvia Serventi (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), XLII, § 10–14, 574–5.

95   Kathleen M. Llewellyn, *Representing Judith in Early Modern French Literature* (London-New York: Routledge, 2016), 27.

96   Querciolo Mazzonis, "The Company of St. Ursula in Counter-Reformation Italy," in *Devout Laywomen in the Early Modern World*, ed. Alison Weber (London: Routledge, 2016), 58.

97   Jean Molinet (?), *Le mystère de Judith et Holofernés. Une édition critique de l'une des parties du «Mistere du Viel Testament »*, éd. Graham A. Runnalls (Genève: Droz, 1995), 42: between the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, the play seems to have been performed three times: twice as part of the *Mistere du Viel Testament* and once in its own right; 76–7 for the dating.

"the fleeting nature of Judith's valiant enterprise."[98] Further illustrating the Judith theme in religious drama, *Coment Judich tua Oloferne*, in 845 verses, dates to the end of the fifteenth century and is part of the *Mystères de la procession de Lille*, the large annual procession hosted by the city.[99] The *Ystoria di Iudith*, a devotional poem by Lorenzo de' Medici's mother, Lucrezia Tornabuoni, falls within the same tradition of popularising and reworking sacred texts, compendia, and sacred drama for pedagogical purposes. The story "i' l'ò trovata così scripta in prosa/ et tanto m'è piaciuto il suo ardire:/ essendo vedovetta et temorosa / hebbe il tuo aiuto et seppe fare et dire, / tu la facesti, Signor, baldanzosa / e 'l suo pensier l'à tutto a riuscire." The poem, which was addressed to friends and family, took on the Roman form of the "cantare", combining a realistic, humorous, and grotesque register with courtly and stilnovistic undertones.[100] Since it dates to the 1470s, scholars have been led to seek cautiously its source of inspiration in Judith paintings by artists close to the Medici family, like Donatello and Botticelli.[101] Tornabuoni's *storietta*, on the other hand, has been connected to the anonymous *Rappresentazione di Judith hebrea*,[102] which was published in Florence in 1518. Like the *mystères* referred to above, this play focused on the traditional moral and allegorical aspects of the biblical narrative.[103]

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98   On the *Mystère*, see Llewellyn, *Representing Judith*, 29–50, 133 (quotation).

99   *Les mystères de la procession de Lille. Edition critique*, éd. Alan E. Knight, 5 vols. (Genève: Droz, 2001–11), vol. 3: *De Salomon aux Maccabées*, 351–92. For he dating of the Ms. see vol. 1, 16. Cf. also John Nassichuk, "The Prayer of Judith in Two Late-Fifteenth-Century French Mystery Plays," in *The Sword of Judith. Judith Studies Across the Disciplines*, ed. Kevin R. Brine, Elena Ciletti and Henrike Lähnemann (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), 197–211.

100   Fulvio Pezzarossa, *I poemetti sacri di Lucrezia Tornabuoni* (Firenze: Olschki, 1978) 62, CXIV, 80, CXXIII: "Il duca Oloferno udendo dire/ che Iudetta venia sì volentieri/ tutto si rallegrò il degno sire,/ et presto fe' chiamar un camerieri:/ 'Or sù, portate qua il mio vestire,/ quel corto che sta meglio et più leggieri.'/ Ripulissi la barba et sì e capelli,/ in dita si mettea di ricchi anelli." Further: "Non fu sì tosto in su letto posato/ che cominciò fortemente a russare,/ el capo avea mezzo spenzolato/ che 'n sul piumaccio non giunse a posare."

101   Pezzarossa, *I poemetti sacri,* 41.

102   Lucrezia Tornabuoni de' Medici, *Sacred Narratives*, ed. and trans. Jane Tylus (Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 24.

103   Brigitte Reineke, *Eros und Tod. Zur Bildlichkeit von Feminität in den halbfigurigen Judith-Darstellungen im Venedig des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar: Kindle Edition, 2003), 228. The text is edited by Erhard Lommatzsch, *Beiträge zur älteren italienischen Volksdichtung. Untersuchungen und Texte*, vol. 4/2: *Ein vierter Wolfenbütteler Sammelband*, 2. Teil: *Sacre rappresentazioni* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), 125–47.

Having established a steady presence across a variety of literary and visual genres, the Judith story gained fresh life in the sixteenth century, enhancing itself with novel values, a development that cannot be pursued further here. The polyvalence of a figure whose transgressive potential was intuited and who, by virtue of her liberating violence and redemptive beauty, had been raised as a symbolic banner of the Catholic church's re-newed capacity for conquest, stimulated the late Renaissance and Baroque predilection for the well-known biblical story.[104] Judith took on paradoxical meanings as a woman of fortitude, a sensual *femme fatale*, a personification of virtue, and a model of feminine cunning all at once. The ambiguities surrounding her *persona* that surfaced in the late Middle Ages set the stage for depictions of Judith in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth cen-turies, giving rise to the character of Judith-seductress and dealing with ideas of temptation and threat.[105] This image of Judith – the seductive en-chantress or *femme fatale* – grew over the centuries as a powerful emblem of castrating femininity and eventually, catalysed by well-known Freudian interpretations, blended with the story of Salome.[106]

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104   We follow Cosentino, "Vedova, puttana," 10, and translate her conclusion into English.
105   Lähnemann, "The Cunning," 252.
106   Cosentino, "Vedova, puttana," 12.

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