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The Case for Judith's Imitation of "Nobody" (among Others)

Michael Kochenash | ORCID: 0000-0002-2240-5717
Radboud University, Nijmegen, Netherlands
michael.kochenash@gmail.com

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Abstract

In this article, I argue that Judith can be read as imitating book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey*, the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus the Cyclops, in a way that compliments its use of other literary models (e.g., Genesis 34; Judges 4–5; 1 Kingdoms 17; and Homer, *Iliad* 14). Such an imitation can be read as reinforcing the narrative's explicit themes, especially that of violent opposition to foreign invaders, and as contributing to its characterizations of Judith (who compares favorably to Odysseus) and Holofernes (who is stigmatized by association with Polyphemus). In the process, I situate Judith among other imitations of *Odyssey* 9 in antiquity and observe how especially Jewish writings in the Hellenistic and Roman eras appear to use it as a resource for opposing foreign subjugation, including to Greek empires. Accordingly, Judith further attests to the participation of Jews in the contestation over the Greek canonical past.

Keywords

blinding of Polyphemus – book of Judith – Homeric reception – killing of Holofernes – literary models – Odysseus – *Odyssey* 9

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> Odysseus's stratagem of inebriating, then blinding the cyclops Polyphemus (*Odyssey* book 9) may seem a vaguer comparison, but, were it in the Bible, it would be included in every list of echoes.[1]

With the Israelites in "Bethulia" facing an existential threat from Nebuchadnezzar's "Assyrian" army (led by Holofernes), the widow Judith takes matters into her own hands. She beautifies herself, uses deception to infiltrate Holofernes's camp, and takes advantage of a private moment of drunkenness to behead the general with his own sword. When the Assyrian army learns about Holofernes's decapitation, they flee in retreat but are ultimately outflanked by the pursuing Israelite army. There has been no shortage of proposed intertextual frameworks for reading the book of Judith, not least with respect to the narrative's characterizations of Judith and Holofernes.[2] While the sheer volume of proposals can be overwhelming, the remarkable credibility of so many of them attests to the literary richness of this novella and its skillful adaptation of earlier stories. Indeed, it is likely that Judith is best interpreted as imitating a variety of literary models, with alternating and interconnected evocations of well-known stories imbuing its narrative with meaning, at least for readers possessing the literary competence to read it this way.

Even the basic premises structuring the conflict in Judith appear to be modeled on situations of precarity from Greek and Jewish literature. The details about Bethulia and the vulnerable state of the Israelites there, for example, can be read as evoking famous military episodes in the writings of Greek historians like Herodotus. The Judith narrative describes Bethulia as situated in the hills and as standing between the Assyrians and Jerusalem, "and it was easy to hinder those ascending, the access being narrow [στενῆς], for two men at most" (Jdt 4:7).[3] This description recalls the Battle of Thermopylae as told by Herodotus.[4] Indeed, as Jeremy Corley observes, "the narrow pass defending the

1 Wills, *Judith*, 44. *This research was enabled by a Radboud Excellence fellowship from Radboud University in Nijmegen, Netherlands*. I am very appreciative of the comments from the journal's two anonymous reviewers.

2 See, e.g., Zenger, *Judit*, 439–46; Rakel, *Judit*, 228–90; Gera, *Judith*, 45–78; Wills, 33–49. For a helpful discussion on intertextual methods, see Miller and Corley, "Encountering Intertextuality," esp. 1–17. I use "intertextuality" to refer to a text's "deliberate use of an earlier text for various purposes" (Miller and Corley, 4).

3 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated, with one exception: translations of Homer's *Odyssey* are by Murray and Dimock (LCL), but in-text attributions for this translation have been omitted in the interest of readability.

4 See, e.g., Caponigro, "Judith," 382–83; Schmitz, "Zwischen Achikar"; Corley, "Imitation," 39–40; Gera, *Judith*, 61–62; Wills, *Judith*, 45. For the Battle of Thermopylae, which took place in 480 BCE, see Herodotus, *Hist.* 7.175–176, 210–233. There are additional clues that the

approach to Jerusalem (Jdt 4:7) hardly exists in Palestine," an indication that it is an invention of the author of Judith.[5] In the Battle of Thermopylae, the Greeks defended themselves against an invasion by King Xerxes I and his Persian army. Despite being vastly outnumbered, they were able to fend off the Persians temporarily by forcing them through the narrow pass at Thermopylae, which was "narrower [στεινοτέρη] than the pass into Thessaly" (Herodotus, *Hist*. 7.175 [Godley, LCL]). Herodotus attests that it measured about the size of a cart in width (7.176). Readers who are familiar with the Thermopylae stratagem (and Palestinian geography) can thus read this description of Bethulia as casting Holofernes as a new Xerxes and the Assyrian invasion as echoing that of the Persians into Greece, projecting the precarity of the Greeks at Thermopylae onto the Bethulian Israelites. Doing so not only villainizes Holofernes, it also imbues the narrative with a sense of ominousness—especially for readers who remember that, even though the Greek alliance defeated them a year later, the Persians eventually overtook the Spartans at Thermopylae.

Thermopylae is not the only story about Persia invading Greece that the Judith narrative evokes. At the beginning of Jdt 7, Holofernes orders his army to advance on Bethulia, preemptively seizing the springs of water that supply the city and determining to let the Bethulians die of thirst rather than engage them in battle directly (Jdt 7:7, 12–17). So it happens, after thirty-four days, that the Bethulians run out of water and contemplate surrendering. At this juncture, a magistrate named Uzziah encourages the Bethulians, "Fear not [Θαρσεῖτε], brothers; let us endure five more days" (7:30), at which point they will surrender if God has not yet delivered them (7:30–31). Uzziah's suggestion recalls a particular Persian invasion of the Greek city of Lindos in the early fifth century BCE.[6] The story of this invasion is preserved in the Lindos Chronicle, an inscription from 99 BCE on the island of Rhodes.[7] The Chronicle

author of Judith was familiar with Herodotus's *Histories*. Wills, 44, writes, "The surrender by presenting earth and water in Jdt 2:7 is known elsewhere only in Herodotus 6.48" (see also Caponigro, 378–80; Corley, 39–40). Herodotus's presentation of Xerxes's consultation with Demaratus (*Hist*. 7.101–104, 209), where he offers a warning about the strength of the Greek armies, may have inspired Achior's role in the Judith narrative (Jdt 5:5–21), as he warns Holofernes about the Deuteronomistic logic that determines whether the Israelites can be defeated. See Schmitz, 31–36; Corley, 40; Wills, 45. Caponigro discounts the significance of the Achior-Demaratus parallel (378). Achior's characterization also recalls "tragic warners" from other stories that influenced the composition of Judith, including Tiresias in Euripides's *Bacchae* and Balaam in Num 22–24.

5 Corley, 39.

6 Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture*, 165–69; Corley, 37–39.

7 See Higbie, *Lindian Chronicle*. For the Greek text and an English translation, see Higbie, 18–49.

tells how Darius I and the Persians, intent on enslaving Greece (D2–3), besiege Lindos, "until, on account of the lack of water, the Lindians, being worn down, were of a mind to surrender the city to the enemy" (D10–12, trans. Higbie). Athena then appears and tells the Lindians to "be bold [θαρσεῖν]" because she is asking Zeus to send rain to them (D15–16, trans. Higbie). The Chronicle then says, "They, reckoning that they had enough to hold out for five days only, asked for a truce of only that many days from the enemy, saying that Athena had sent away to her own father for help, and if there was nothing forthcoming in the allotted time, they said that they would hand the city over to them" (D18–25, trans. Higbie; slightly modified). The next day, clouds bring rain only to the Lindians, leaving the Persians without water (D27–32). Modern critics can reasonably conclude that the water deprivation and five-day holdout in Judith were inspired by their counterparts in the Lindian episode, not necessarily because ancient readers would recognize the parallels, but because it represents a dramatic model for a siege that is "defeated by divine intervention."[8]

As with the narrative as a whole, numerous proposals exist regarding the models that structure Judith's killing of Holofernes. Many of these proposals have merit and are not mutually incompatible.[9] The purpose of this article, as suggested by the epigraph, is to reconsider a model that is particularly understudied, Odysseus's inebriation and blinding of Polyphemus the Cyclops. To my knowledge, the possibility of reading Judith's killing of Holofernes in relation to the Polyphemus story in book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey* has been suggested only by Lawrence Wills—and only in a passing manner.[10] This article makes the case that reading Judith through this Homeric framework—in addition to other intertextual frameworks—both makes better sense of how this episode is narrated and also contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the

8 Corley, "Imitation," 39. For comparable situations of precarity in the Jewish Scriptures, see also Gera, *Judith*, 298.

9 See Gera, 5, 11. According to Corley, aspects of Judith's presentation "echo several scriptural heroines (e.g., Miriam, Jael, Deborah, Esther, Abigail, and Ruth)" and "various male heroes from biblical history (e.g., Abraham, Simeon son of Jacob, Moses, Ehud, Samson, and David)" ("Deuterocanonical References," 34). Two especially noteworthy models are not elaborated here: Dionysus and Moses. For the Judith narrative's relation to Dionysian mythology, especially Euripides's *Bacchae*, see Schmitz, "Vor-Denken," 222; MacDonald, "Jewish Agave," 133–41. For its relation to the exodus story, see Skehan, "Hand of Judith"; Rakel, *Judit*, 249–60; Gera, 299, 312–13, 448–51; Siquans, "Reception of Exodus."

10 In addition to the quotation included in this article's epigraph, see Wills, *Judith*, 337, where he comments on Jdt 12:20, "Especially relevant here is the powerful leader, whether in Greek or Israelite tradition, who loses control or falls asleep after drinking too much wine. The cyclops Polyphemus (in both *Odyssey* 9 and in Euripides's satyr play *Cyclops* 557–559, 583–589) descends into a self-destructive spiral by drinking too much wine."

reception of *Od.* 9 in antiquity generally. With respect to the characterizations within the narrative, this framework compares Judith favorably to the clever Odysseus, stigmatizes Holofernes and the Assyrians by associating them with the lawless Cyclopes, and accounts for narrative elements that have yet to be explained in a satisfactory manner. With respect to the history of Homeric reception, it attests to multiple thematic tendencies among texts imitating *Od.* 9 in antiquity. One such tendency, apparent especially in Jewish narratives in the Hellenistic and Roman eras, is to use the Polyphemus story as a model for violent resistance to foreign subjugation. This reading of Judith is best presented within the context of the narrative's apparent use of other literary models, and so I review a selection of these first.

1 Judith the Copycat Killer

The beginning of Judith's prayer for deliverance in chapter 9 explicitly evokes one of the narrative's literary models for her killing of Holofernes, Simeon and Levi's slaughter of the Shechemites in Gen 34.[11] Judith prays, "O Lord, the God of my father Simeon, into whose hand you gave a sword to exact vengeance" for defiling, shaming, and profaning Dinah (Jdt 9:2). She even attributes a phrase by the Genesis narrator to God, "It shall not be so [οὐχ οὕτως ἔσται]" (Jdt 9:2; cf. Gen 34:7 LXX). In the chapters that follow, Judith simultaneously enacts the roles of both Dinah and her brothers Simeon and Levi. On the one hand, like Dinah, she is the object of a gentile's sexual desire; on the other hand, like Dinah's brothers, she punishes that gentile for trying to defile her. By enacting a Simeon-like vengeance against Holofernes before he is able to sleep with her, Judith not only avoids being defiled (Jdt 13:16), she also prevents the Assyrians from defiling the temple (9:8).[12] Like that of Simeon, Judith's vengeance requires deception.[13] After Shechem rapes Dinah and asks for permission to marry her (and to establish a custom of intermarriage between them), Simeon and Levi respond with a ruse. They tell Shechem that if he and all the men of his city circumcise themselves, then they will consent to his proposal (Gen 34:13–17). The Shechemites agree to do so (34:24), and, while they are still incapacitated by their procedures, Simeon and Levi enter the city, kill all of the

11 On the use of Gen 34 in Judith, see esp. Rakel, *Judit*, 194–95; Corley, "Imitation," 27–28; Thiessen, "Protecting." The narrative situates Bethulia near Dothan (Jdt 4:6), which, according to Gen 37:12–17, is not far from Shechem, so it is reasonable for readers to associate even the geographic location of the Judith narrative with the story in Gen 34.

12 See Gera, *Judith*, 405–6; Thiessen, esp. 167–71, 183–84.

13 See Thiessen, 174–75.

men, and rescue Dinah (34:25–26), after which the other sons of Jacob plunder the city (34:27). In a similar way, it is because of her lies and ambiguous statements (discussed further below) that Judith has the opportunity to kill an incapacitated Holofernes. Unlike those of Simeon and Levi, however, Judith's duplicity also serves the purpose of guaranteeing her safety in the camp of the Assyrians. Additionally, while Judith's and Simeon and Levi's attacks are both preceded by the incapacitations of Holofernes and the Shechemites, respectively, the particulars of both the incapacitations and the assaults are distinct. Thus, though it is clear that Gen 34 is an important literary model for reading the Judith narrative, its recognition as such does not foreclose the possibility of considering others.

A major component of Judith's deception of Holofernes and the Assyrians is her physical appearance, and the narration of her beautification prior to departing for the Assyrian camp (Jdt 10:3–4) has been compared to that of Hera in book 14 of Homer's *Iliad*.[14] Hera's beautification (*Il.* 14.166–186) prepares her for the so-called Deception of Zeus.[15] This episode not only shifts the Trojan advantage to the Greeks, it also sets into motion a sequence of events that culminates with Achilles's reentry into the war, making it a profoundly consequential scene in the *Iliad*.[16] Throughout much of the epic poem, as a punishment for Agamemnon's abduction of Briseis from Achilles, Zeus ensures favorable conditions for the Trojans (see 1.493–530). In *Il.* 14, Hera diverts Zeus's attention away from the battlefield, allowing Poseidon to circumvent the prohibition on divine aid to the Greeks. To accomplish this, she goes "to [Mount] Ida, when she had beauteously adorned herself, to see if [Zeus] might long to lie by her side and embrace her body in love, and she might shed a warm and gentle sleep on his eyelids and his cunning mind" (14.161–165 [Murray and Wyatt, LCL]). The steps that Hera takes to beautify herself are echoed in Jdt 10:3–4.[17] Both Hera and Judith bathe, anoint themselves with oil, comb their hair, and put on attractive attire, jewelry, headpieces, and sandals. Deborah Gera adds, "Hera turns to Aphrodite for her special embroidered sash which contains intimacy, desire, and deceptive persuasion (*Il.* 14.214–217), while Judith has prayed to God for the power of persuasion and deception (Jdt 9:10, 13)."[18] As it

14 Gera, *Judith*, 57, 329; MacDonald, "Jewish Agave," 141–45.

15 The Deception of Zeus became a discussion topic among some philosophers. See, e.g., Plato, *Resp.* 390b–c; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 3.122c.

16 When Zeus awakens and realizes Hera's ruse, he resumes his punishment of the Greeks, but doing so inspires Patroclus to don the armor of Achilles in battle, and Hector's subsequent killing of Patroclus draws Achilles back into the war (see *Il.* 15.53–77).

17 See also Jdt 16:6–9.

18 Gera, *Judith*, 329.

happens, Judith's beautification achieves the effect that Hera desires for hers—Holofernes wants to sleep with her (Jdt 12:12)—and, as with Zeus, the trajectory of the narrative is radically altered during Holofernes's resulting sleep. Readers who recognize the similarities between Hera's and Judith's beautifications can therefore project the logic of the Deception of Zeus onto the Judith narrative, an interpretive framing that reinforces the narrative's earlier indications that Judith would turn the Assyrian advantage to the Israelites (8:32–34; 9:7–14). Nevertheless, given her earlier Gen 34-inspired condemnation of sexual relations with gentiles (9:2–4), readers can reasonably expect that Judith's deception of Holofernes will ultimately diverge from Hera's model.

Sure enough, rather than sleeping with Holofernes, Judith kills him, and in doing so her actions call to mind two models from the Jewish Scriptures in particular: Jael and David. Judith's parallels with Jael are punctuated by references to their hands.[19] The prophet Deborah tells Barak, an Israelite military commander, "The Lord will give Sisera," the commander of the Canaanite army, "into the hand of a woman [ἐν χειρὶ γυναικὸς]" (Judg 4:9 LXX), referring to Jael; likewise, Judith prays for God to "shatter [the Assyrians'] haughtiness by the hand of a woman [ἐν χειρὶ θηλείας]" (Jdt 9:10), referring to herself. This sentiment is repeated in Judith with some frequency.[20] After his army is defeated by that of Barak (Judg 4:12–16), Sisera flees to the tent of Jael, "wife of Heber the Kenite," whom Sisera apparently assumes will be an ally (4:17). Jael invites him in, covers him, and gives him milk to drink (4:18–19). Sisera asks Jael to guard the entrance to the tent and, should anyone ask, to deny that he is there (4:20). Instead, with Sisera asleep from exhaustion, Jael takes a tent peg and drives it through his head and into the ground (4:21). The Judith narrative is schematized similarly, with Judith attacking the head of a general while he sleeps and while they are alone together in a tent (Jdt 13:1–9). Moreover, both killings are commemorated in song (Judg 5:24–27; Jdt 16:5–10). A notable difference, however, is that Sisera sleeps from exhaustion (though perhaps the milk causes him to fall asleep more quickly), whereas Holofernes falls asleep from drinking an excessive amount of wine. Jael also has no need to escape after killing Sisera, since she is already in her own tent and Barak routed the Canaanite army before Sisera arrived there; Judith, in contrast, is in the middle of the Assyrian army's camp when she kills Holofernes. Even so, it is not difficult to understand why the author of Judith might regard Jael—a woman who single-handedly kills a military commander of a foreign army that is hostile

19 For comparisons of Judith with Judg 4–5, see White, "Steps of Jael"; Rakel, *Judit*, 237–44; Gera, 48–49; Wills, *Judith*, 35–37, 344–45.

20 See Jdt 8:33; 9:9; 12:4; 13:14–15; 15:10; 16:5. See also Judg 4:21; 5:26.

toward Israel—as an appropriate literary model, and readers who recognize the parallels between the two can conclude, for example, that God not only rescues the Israelites when they repent after sinning (in accordance with the pattern in Judges), but also on the occasion that they are attacked by a foreign army without having sinned.[21]

Although Judith's assault on the head of Holofernes is schematically similar to Jael's killing of Sisera, her specific actions imitate David's beheading of Goliath.[22] Indeed, the Israelites' initial reaction to the reputation of Holofernes echoes the reaction to Goliath. According to the Judith narrative, "When the sons of Israel living in Judea heard all that Holofernes had done to the nations … they were exceedingly terrified [ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα σφόδρα] at his appearance" (Jdt 4:2), which recalls, and intensifies, the reaction of the Israelites to Goliath's taunts: "they were very afraid [ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα]" (1 Kgdms 17:11 LXX). This characterization of Holofernes reappears at the narrative's climactic moment. With Holofernes in a drunken sleep, Judith approaches his bedpost, takes down his "sword [ἀκινάκην]," grabs him by his hair, and, striking his neck twice, "she cut off his head [ἀφεῖλεν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ]" (Jdt 13:6–8). A similar fate, described using the same phrase, befalls Goliath. After knocking him to the ground by slinging a stone into his temple, David runs and stands over Goliath, "and he took his sword [ῥομφαίαν] and killed him and cut off his head [ἀφεῖλεν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ]" (1 Kgdms 17:51 LXX). The Philistines flee at the sight of their decapitated leader and are pursued by the Israelites, and David brings the head of Goliath back to Jerusalem (17:51–54). These actions all appear in Judith: Judith brings the decapitated head of Holofernes back to Bethulia (13:15; 14:1), and the Assyrians flee upon discovering Holofernes's dead body (Jdt 14:14–15:3) and are pursued by the Israelites (15:3–7). Judith's imitation of David's slaying of Goliath is comparable to other, roughly contemporary, Jewish narratives. Of particular note are Benjamin's slaying of Pharaoh's son in Joseph and Aseneth and Judas Maccabeus's victory over Nicanor in 1 Maccabees.[23] As in

21 There are also parallels with the account of Ehud killing King Elgon in Judg 3:12–30. Gera writes, "Judith is, in many ways, a female version of Ehud" (*Judith*, 74; see also Wills, *Judith*, 344–45). Most relevant to this discussion, Ehud uses a false pretense (rendering tribute; Judg 3:15–18) to approach the king, and he lies (claiming that he is delivering a secret message from God; 3:19–20) to create an opportunity to kill him. In contrast to Judith, Ehud's approach takes place after the Israelites have been defeated by the Moabites, and so he does not need to use deception in order to secure *protection* in the way that Judith does, given the ongoing nature of the hostilities between the Assyrians and Israelites in Judith.

22 Esler, *Sex, Wives, Warriors*, 274–87; Gera, esp. 394–96, 431–32; Zsengellér, "Female David," esp. 187–88; Kochenash, "Trojan Horses," 434–35.

23 Corley, "Imitation," 42–43, highlights the similarities between the deaths of Holofernes and Nicanor, though it should be noted that the parallels he foregrounds can also be

these other narratives, the particulars of Holofernes's execution associate him with Goliath; they also associate Judith's heroism with that of David. Readers who make these associations can project the logic of the Goliath story onto the Judith narrative. As with the stories of Dinah and Jael, doing so serves to reinforce the narrative's theme of violent resistance to foreign aggression. There are, however, a number of differences between these two stories, including the incapacitation of Holofernes preceding his execution and Judith's need to escape afterward. Readers are thus permitted, once again, to seek additional frames of reference.

Although, taken together, the literary models in the preceding analyses account for many of the features of the Judith narrative, several elements nonetheless lack analogues. In none of these earlier narratives does a character lie for the purpose of gaining protection; none of them feature inebriation as a means of incapacitating someone in advance of an attack; and no character in these narratives uses a ruse in order to retreat safely after that attack. It is certainly possible to read these features as the Judith narrative's innovation on its literary models, as acts of compositional creativity appropriate to the story being told in Judith. As plausible as this suggestion may be, however, a popular story predating Judith also contains these features, and, as it happens, a reading of Judith as imitating it coheres thematically with its use of literary models throughout the narrative. That earlier story is, of course, Odysseus's inebriation and blinding of Polyphemus the Cyclops.

2 Judith's Imitation of "Nobody"

The story of Odysseus and Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.105–542), which includes an explanation for why Odysseus's return home is so protracted and tumultuous, is "one of the most familiar, and most imitated, of the *Odyssey*'s narratives."[24] Ancient imitations of this episode vary in length, sometimes spanning an

found in the Septuagintal narration of the death of Goliath. It seems likely that Judith and 1 Maccabees both use this story as their primary literary model. For the imitation of David slaying Goliath in Joseph and Aseneth, see Kochenash, 428–30, 434–35.

24 Hunter, *Critical Moments*, 53. See also Ball, "Popularity of Homer's *Odyssey*," esp. 14, where he identifies the Polyphemus story as "the most frequently satirized episode of the *Odyssey*." Bremmer writes, "In fact, the story was so popular that during the Roman Empire people even dreamt of the Cyclops or his cave (Artem. 1.5, 26)" ("Odysseus versus the Cyclops," 135). On the popularity of this scene in visual arts, see Hall, *Return of Ulysses*, 90. For the explanation regarding the duration and severity of Odysseus's *nostos*, see Homer, *Od.* 9.528–535.

entire work, as with Euripides's satyr play *Cyclops*, and other times comprising only a part of a scene, as in a sequence early in Aristophanes's *Wasps*. Ancient authors were often selective in their imitations of *Od.* 9, foregrounding some Homeric features and disregarding others. Ancient appropriations of the Polyphemus story variously foreground the duplicity of Odysseus (as in Sophocles's *Philoctetes*), the element of intoxication (as in Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*), the use of a farm animal as a means of escape (as in Aristophanes's *Wasps*), Polyphemus's suffering in accordance with an earlier prophecy (as in Sophocles's *Women of Trachis*), and Polyphemus's action of hurling boulders at a ship (as in Apollonius's *Argonautica*). Many narratives imitate more than one aspect of the Polyphemus story, but few are comprehensive. A similar diversity obtains with respect to the explicitness of the imitations. While some refer to Odysseus by name, others—including, for example, the imitation in book 7 of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*—contain no explicit references. Of course, if it is accepted that Judith imitates *Od.* 9, it must be counted among the latter.

Even so, Judith contains a number of features that can be understood as indicating the narrative's indebtedness to *Od.* 9, and, when considered together, they amount to a credible argument in favor of reading Judith as imitating the Polyphemus story. For example, after infiltrating the camp of the Assyrians, Judith is brought to the tent of Holofernes (Jdt 10:20), where the general is inside reclining on his bed "under a canopy [ἐν τῷ κωνωπίῳ]" (10:21). Especially given how rare it is, the word κωνώπιον can, in fact, be read as foreshadowing Holofernes's fate as a new Polyphemus.[25] Not only does the canopy enclose Holofernes's bed—like a cave within his already cave-like tent (see 10:22)—it also can call to mind the similar-sounding "Cyclops [Κύκλωψ]." That readers in antiquity were sometimes expected to make this phonetic association is made evident in Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, where a character named "Conops [Κώνωψ]" is presented as a Polyphemus figure. (The word κωνώπιον ["canopy"] is the diminutive form of κώνωψ ["gnat" or "mosquito"], which explains how κωνώπιον came to be used to refer to mosquito curtains around a bed [i.e., a canopy].) The Judith narrative refers to Holofernes's κωνώπιον again in several notable scenes. After Judith hacks off Holofernes's head, "She rolled his body off of the bedding, and she took the canopy [κωνώπιον] down from the posts" (13:9). Along with the severed head, it is the canopy that serves as proof of her success to the Bethulians. Judith declares, "Behold, the head of Holofernes …, and, behold, the canopy [κωνώπιον]" (13:15). Holofernes's canopy

25 On the rarity of κωνώπιον, see Schmitz, "Holofernes's Canopy," 75. For example, it appears only four times in the Septuagint, all in Judith.

then makes one final appearance when Judith dedicates it to God as a votive offering for delivering the Israelites from the Assyrians (16:19). The canopy is obviously valuable, given its description as "interwoven with purple and gold and emeralds and luxurious stones" (10:21), but, as Barbara Schmitz explains, "No satisfactory answer has yet been found and the search for the meaning of κωνώπιον is indeed a difficult task."[26] Perhaps this word choice (when the more-common σκηνή would have sufficed) is best explained by its potential to evoke the word Κύκλωψ at pivotal moments in the Judith narrative—when Judith is introduced to Holofernes, when she kills him, when she proves she killed him, and when the Israelites celebrate triumphing over the Holofernes-led Assyrian siege.[27]

Whether or not readers associate Holofernes's κωνώπιον with Homer's Κύκλωψ, there are still other features in Judith that evoke the Polyphemus story in a less cryptic manner, one of which is Judith's use of verbal deception. Judith alerts readers to this tactic when she prays for God to strike down the Assyrians "by the guile [ἀπάτης] of my lips" (Jdt 9:10) and to "let my guileful words [λόγον μου καὶ ἀπάτην] bring wound and bruise" to them (9:13).[28] After Judith arrives in the Assyrian camp (10:11–12), she beguiles them with both outright lies and ambiguous statements, as a result of which she finds safety among the Israelites' enemies. Judith lies when she tells Holofernes and the Assyrians that she is fleeing from the Israelites (10:12; 11:16), when she says that the Israelites are about to be defeated (10:12; 11:11–15), when she assures them that she will speak truthfully (10:13), and when she instructs them on how to prevail against the Israelites (10:13; 11:17–19). The Assyrians believe these lies and welcome her as a Bethulian traitor. Judith also makes statements that turn out to be lies from the perspective of Holofernes and the Assyrians but which readers can interpret as truthful due to their ambiguity. Sometimes the ambiguity lies in Judith's use of the phrase, "my lord [ὁ κύριός μου]," which can be understood as referring to either Holofernes or God. She tells Holofernes, "I will not report a falsehood to my lord [τῷ κυρίῳ μου] on this night" (11:5), and, "My lord [ὁ κύριός μου] will not fail in his pursuits" if Holofernes does what she says (11:6). Other statements mislead Holofernes in different ways. She tells him, "God sent me to do with you things at which all the earth will be amazed, whoever hears of it" (11:16), which Holofernes understands as referring to his siege on Israel

26 Schmitz, 75. Schmitz argues that the κωνώπιον feminizes Holofernes. Building on Schmitz's work, Wills suggests, "This canopy may have represented Holofernes's hymen in a reversal of gender roles and sexual penetration" (*Judith*, 385).

27 For an example of σκηνή being used to refer to a bed's canopy, see Xenophon, *Anth. Habr.* 1.8.2–3.

28 See also Jdt 13:16 ("my face beguiled [ἠπάτησεν] him to his destruction").

but which readers know refers to the defeat of the Assyrians. The culmination of Judith's ambiguity takes place at Holofernes's banquet. Holofernes wants to inebriate Judith in order to sleep with her (12:11–12), and Judith accepts his invitation to drink by saying, "I will drink now, my lord, because, of all the days since my birth, today is the most exalted day of my life" (12:18; cf. 12:14). Holofernes flatters himself in his interpretation of this statement and celebrates by drinking in excess (more on this below), but, of course, Judith is referring to her imminent execution of the general. In this way, Judith's lies and ambiguities protect her from Assyrian hostility and create the opportunity for her to kill Holofernes.

Of course, verbal deception is a characteristically Odyssean tactic, and the use of lies and ambiguities to ensure one's safety prior to attacking an adversary recalls the Polyphemus episode in particular. Although Homer's Athena describes him as unable "to cease from guile [ἀπατάων] and deceitful tales" (*Od.* 13.294–295), Odysseus at first speaks truthfully to Polyphemus (9.259–271). It is only after Polyphemus explains that Cyclopes have no regard for Zeus or for the norms of hospitality (9.275–278) that Odysseus responds "in crafty [δολίοις] words" (9.282). Odysseus lies when he tells Polyphemus that his ship wrecked (9.283–286) and that he brought wine for the purpose of offering it to him as a drink offering (9.347–350). The culmination of Odysseus's deception is, of course, his use of a fake, ambiguous name. Once the wine "had got round the wits of the Cyclops" (9.362), Odysseus lies about his identity, saying, "Nobody [Οὖτις] is my name" (9.366). This ambiguity protects Odysseus from the other Cyclopes. After Odysseus and his men stab the intoxicated Polyphemus's eye with a smoldering stake, the neighboring Cyclopes hear Polyphemus's anguished cries and call out to see what is wrong, to which Polyphemus answers, "My friends, it is Nobody [Οὖτίς] that is slaying me by guile [δόλῳ] and not by force" (9.408), and so his neighbors conclude that "nobody [μή τίς]" is harming him (9.410) and do not come to his aid; Odysseus then says he is pleased that his "name and flawless scheme [μῆτις] had so beguiled [ἐξαπάτησεν]" (9.414). Odysseus's beguiling ambiguity thus allows him to injure Polyphemus without fear that the neighboring Cyclopes would come to his aid.[29]

It is possible, of course, to read the Judith narrative as using Odysseus's deception of Polyphemus and the Cyclopes as a model for Judith's deception of Holofernes and the Assyrians. Particularly striking is how both Odysseus and Judith use ambiguous assertions to protect themselves from those who

29 Richard Hunter and Rebecca Laemmle write, "Apart from the play with μῆτις, Odysseus' feigned name Οὖτις only makes sense in fact in anticipation precisely of such a scene in which the other Cyclopes come to Polyphemos' aid" (*Cyclops*, 15).

would otherwise be hostile toward them. Although deception appears in other literary models for Judith's killing of Holofernes (e.g., Gen 34; Judg 3; *Il.* 14), the use of ambiguity in addition to outright lies—all in the service of securing safety and creating an opportunity for an attack—is particularly evocative of the Polyphemus story. Such a reading of Judith is analogous to other narratives that can be understood as imitating *Od.* 9. Neoptolemus, in Sophocles's *Philoctetes*, lies to the eponymous character—saying that he, like Philoctetes, hates Odysseus—in order to avoid being killed by him in his cave. In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Tlepolemus uses deception, including a fake alias, to safely infiltrate the cave of robbers. The Gospel of Mark likewise evokes Odysseus's "I am Nobody" ruse when the demons possessing a man identify themselves as "Legion," before suggesting (what they think is) an alternative to Jesus destroying them.[30] Duplicitous strategies for self-preservation are thus a common feature in imitations of the Polyphemus story, and so the presence of one in the Judith narrative can reasonably be taken as indicating that it too is modeled on *Od.* 9. Unlike the stories by Sophocles, Mark, and Apuleius, however, the self-preserving lies and ambiguities in both *Od.* 9 and Judith directly relate to the subsequent attacks on those who are deceived.[31]

Arguably the most apparent parallel between Judith and *Od.* 9 is the inebriation that precedes an attack (using a weapon taken from the victim, no less). The first mention of wine in Judith occurs just before the heroine leaves Bethulia. After beautifying herself, Judith gives her favorite enslaved attendant "a leathered canteen [ἀσκοπυτίνην] of wine" and other provisions so that she can carry them to the Assyrian camp for Judith (Jdt 10:5). Judith subsequently enters the Assyrian camp and secures Holofernes's favor with her beauty and deceptions (11:20–23), and the general orders a table to be set for her, including "some of his own wine to drink" (12:1). Judith declines and explains that she will consume only the provisions that she brought with her (12:2), and, addressing Holofernes's concern about its quantity (12:3), she assures him, "I will not exhaust the things with me before the lord does by my hand what he has resolved" (12:4). Accordingly, days later at Holofernes's banquet, Judith eats and drinks only "what her female slave had prepared" (12:19), and, especially given the five-day timeframe for her mission, readers can assume that her

30 Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* and the Gospel of Mark are both discussed in greater detail in section three below.

31 Tlepolemus does eventually attack those he deceives, but it occurs much later. See n. 60 below. Mark also includes the destruction of Legion, the new Polyphemus, but it is Jesus that the demons attempt (unsuccessfully) to manipulate.

supplies are running low.[32] In contrast, Holofernes, flattered by his misunderstanding of Judith's interest in sleeping with him due to her ambiguity, "drank a great quantity of wine, more than he had drunk in a single day since he was born" (12:20). Although the narrative does not say as much, Gera suggests that "we may well imagine that Judith has encouraged him to drink up."[33] Left alone with Holofernes, with his tent closed from the outside and the general passed out from the wine (13:1–2), Judith takes Holofernes's sword, grabs him by his hair, and hacks off his head with two blows (13:6–8). Judith thus brings a limited supply of her own wine into the Assyrian camp, flatters Holofernes into drinking his own wine to excess, and takes advantage of his passed-out condition by killing him with his own sword.

When Odysseus and "twelve of [his] best comrades" (*Od.* 9.195) disembark on the island of the Cyclopes, he brings with him "a goatskin [αἴγεον ἀσκὸν] of the dark, sweet wine" (9.196–197) that was given to him previously by Maron, a priest of Apollo (9.196–205). This wine is "sweet and unmixed, a divine drink" (9.205), so potent that Maron would dilute one cup with twenty measures of water before serving it (9.209). Trapped inside the cave of Polyphemus, with two of his comrades having been eaten already, Odysseus says, "I formed a plan in my great heart to steal near him, and draw my sharp sword from beside my thigh and stab him in the breast" (9.299–300), but, realizing that only the Cyclops can remove the boulder obstructing the cave's exit, he decides to formulate a different plan. His inspiration comes from seeing "a staff of green olivewood" lying "beside a sheep pen" (9.319–320). It goes without saying that this staff belongs to Polyphemus. The next day, after Polyphemus eats two more of Odysseus's men and takes his sheep out to pasture, Odysseus and his eight remaining comrades break off a manageable piece of the olivewood staff, sharpen one end to a point, and harden it in a fire (9.325–328). After Polyphemus returns in the evening and eats yet another pair of Odysseus's comrades, Odysseus sets his scheme into motion. He offers the Cyclops some of his wine and lies to him, saying that he brought it as an offering so that, in return, he might send them on their way (9.347–52). Polyphemus, who had never tasted wine before, drinks three bowls of Maron's unmixed wine in total (9.361) and, in between servings, asks for Odysseus's name (9.355–356). After Odysseus answers, Polyphemus says he will eat him last of all in return for

32 See Jdt 7:30; 8:9, 15, 33. Judith must be running low on provisions by the day of Holofernes's banquet. Wills writes, "Why does Judith spend three days in the camp (v. 7)? In terms of storytelling, this would provide an appropriate amount of time for her to enact her stratagem—she must establish a pattern of going out to pray—but in addition, the vow of the Bethulians had imagined God acting within five days" (*Judith*, 326).

33 Gera, *Judith*, 390.

the wine and falls into a drunken sleep (9.369–373). Odysseus then heats the olivewood stake in the fire until it starts to glow, and he and his six uneaten comrades thrust it into Polyphemus's eye (9.375–390). In this way, Odysseus brings wine into the cave of the Cyclops, convinces him to drink it to excess using a lie, and takes advantage of his drinking-induced slumber by stabbing him in the eye with a piece of his own olivewood staff.

As with Judith's duplicities, it is possible to read Holofernes's intoxication prior to Judith's attack as modeled on *Od.* 9. Both Odysseus and Judith bring wine into hostile settings: Odysseus brings unmixed wine that was a gift from a priest of Apollo into the cave of Polyphemus, and Judith brings wine (and other provisions) so as to "observe Jewish food laws while in the enemy camp."[34] Odysseus takes advantage of Polyphemus's inexperience with drinking, encouraging him to consume three bowl's worth of unmixed wine, on account of which Polyphemus loses his wits and falls into a drunken slumber, leaving himself vulnerable to Odysseus's attack. Because Judith brings a limited quantity of her own wine and refuses that of the Assyrians, she is able to drink with Holofernes without losing her wits, and so the general leaves himself vulnerable to Judith's assault when he passes out from overdrinking. Both Odysseus and Judith use duplicity to encourage their adversaries to drink the wine—Odysseus by saying he brought the wine as an offering, Judith by implying that she was eager to sleep with Holofernes. They both also use their adversaries' own weapons to attack them. Odysseus blinds Polyphemus with a piece of his own olivewood staff, and Judith decapitates Holofernes with his own sword. Although Judith's attack most closely resembles David's use of Goliath's sword to cut off his head, it is nonetheless reminiscent of *Od.* 9 as well, and there is no need to regard these models as mutually exclusive.[35] Other imitations of the Polyphemus story likewise foreground the aspect of drunkenness. In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, Tlepolemus encourages the band of robbers—who collectively play the role of the narrative's Polyphemus—to drink, while abstaining from wine himself; once they all fall into an alcohol-induced sleep, he ties them up and escapes with his fiancée. Similarly, in Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Satyrus neutralizes the Polyphemus figure, Conops, by drugging his wine.[36] Even more relevant for the present discussion, Antisthenes of Athens

34 Wills, *Judith*, 307–8. Wills observes, "All but the fig cakes are associated with tithing and offerings in the temple" (307), which is worth noting here because of the priestly origin of Odysseus's wine.

35 At least one other imitation of *Od.* 9 includes decapitation with the victims' swords, and that is Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*. See n. 60 below.

36 Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* and Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* are both discussed in greater detail in section three below.

wrote a book titled *On the Use of Wine or On Intoxication or On the Cyclops*, a work that is now almost entirely lost but which attests to the association of Homer's Polyphemus with the weaponization of wine.[37] In contrast, neither Apuleius nor Achilles Tatius use the drunkenness of their Polyphemuses as opportunities for attacks. The Judith narrative can thus be read as imitating *Od.* 9 more closely than they do, since the intoxication of Holofernes immediately precedes Judith's attack, whereas Apuleius's and Achilles Tatius's novels progress directly from the intoxication to an escape. Although the Judith narrative also features an escape, like Odysseus's in *Od.* 9, it involves a ruse that is not directly related to the intoxication.

While Judith prepares herself for Holofernes's banquet, her enslaved attendant "went ahead and spread out on the ground opposite Holofernes the sheepskins [κώδια] that she received from Bagoas for her daily use, to eat while reclining on them" (Jdt 12:15). The sheepskins are mentioned only here, but, according to Wills, their purpose in the narrative "has yet to be fully explained."[38] In light of the other echoes of *Od.* 9 reviewed here and the prominence of wine in Judith, it is possible to read them as evoking Polyphemus's flock of sheep, which, notably, were instrumental in the escape of Odysseus and his comrades from the cave of the Cyclops.[39] Indeed, Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* signals its imitation of *Od.* 9 with a seemingly innocuous indication that "the others returned carrying skins of wine and driving whole flocks of sheep and goats" (*Metam.* 7.11 [Hanson, LCL]). To be sure, the inclusion of sheep(skins) and wine together in a narrative does not guarantee that the Polyphemus episode is being imitated, but their presence should prompt attentive readers to look for additional similarities of plot structure and characterization. In the verse following the sheepskins notice, Judith enters and lies down, presumably on one of the sheepskins, and immediately Holofernes is "very eager, exceedingly so, to sleep with her" (Jdt 12:16). At this point, Judith deceives Holofernes into thinking that she too is eager to sleep with him, and he drinks to the point of passing out (12:18–20). After Judith kills Holofernes, however, she still needs to escape the Assyrian camp without raising suspicion, and she has a ruse established for just this purpose. In chapter 11, Judith tells Holofernes and the Assyrians that she needs to leave their camp nightly to pray in the ravine of Bethulia, because, she says, this is how she will learn when the Israelites have provoked God's anger and are thus vulnerable to an Assyrian attack (11:17). The narrative states that Judith remains in their camp for three days, going

37 On this work, including an extant line, see below at n. 57.

38 Wills, *Judith*, 336. See also Gera, *Judith*, 385.

39 The narrative has already referred to wine and/or drinking at Jdt 10:5; 12:1, 11, 13.

out to pray every night (12:5–9), with Holofernes's banquet taking place on the fourth day (12:10). On the evening of the banquet, Judith is left alone with Holofernes in his tent, and Bagoas, the general's attendant, "shut the tent from outside" (13:1). Judith instructs her enslaved attendant to wait outside the bedchamber in anticipation of her nightly custom, "and she had spoken to Bagoas accordingly" (13:3). After killing Holofernes, then, Judith and her enslaved attendant "went out together for prayer according to their routine," thereby passing through the encampment and returning to Bethulia without raising the suspicions of the Assyrians (13:10). Thus, it is by means of a ruse that Judith escapes from the tent of Holofernes and the camp of the Assyrians, and the final sequence is preceded by references to sheepskins and wine.

Sheep feature prominently in *Od.* 9, and no more memorably so than when they serve as vehicles for Odysseus and his comrades as they escape from the cave of Polyphemus.[40] After Odysseus lies to Polyphemus about his ship wrecking, the Cyclops seizes, kills, and eats two of his comrades, and, after drinking some milk, "he lay down within the cave, stretched out among the sheep [μήλων]" (*Od.* 9.298). At this point, Odysseus devises his scheme to inebriate and attack Polyphemus, and, after the scheme is executed, the blinded Cyclops removes the boulder and places himself in the doorway (9.415–418). Seeking to prevent Odysseus and the remnant of his comrades from escaping as he lets his sheep out to pasture, Polyphemus "felt along the backs of all the sheep as they stood up before him," but Odysseus and his comrades "were bound beneath the breasts of his fleecy sheep" (9.441–443). They thereby escape undetected and retreat to their ship. This ruse for escaping from the cave of the Cyclops is dependent on his earlier lies and ambiguities, which protect him from the neighboring Cyclopes, and on his inebriation of and attack on Polyphemus, which render him dependent on his sense of touch to detect their escape, but it is nevertheless a distinct scheme.

As with his duplicities and weaponization of wine, Odysseus's escape from the cave of Polyphemus can be understood as a model for Judith, who, like Odysseus, devises a ruse in order to escape to safety. Although her plan does not involve sheep, it is possible to read the Judith narrative as signaling its echo of Odysseus's escape through its (otherwise difficult to explain) reference to sheepskins.[41] Odysseus plots his assault on Polyphemus while the Cyclops

40 Other references to Polyphemus's sheep and/or shepherding include *Od.* 9.217–222, 237–239, 312–316, 336–339.

41 It is worth noting that, whereas Odysseus's escape ruse depends on some considerations outside of his control, that of Judith does not. On Odysseus's good fortune, see Hunter and Laemmle, *Cyclops*, 11.

lies among his sheep, and Judith deceives Holofernes into drinking to excess while she reclines on sheepskins, generating the opportunity for her attack. Of course, both attacks also precede their escapes. Remarkably, Judith's escape is not directly related to the duplicities leading up to her attack on Holofernes; it is a distinct ruse. This circumstance recalls Odysseus's escape, which also requires a ruse separate from his earlier deceptions of Polyphemus. Odysseus's escape on the underside of Polyphemus's sheep was such a popular target of imitation in antiquity that other farm animals could be substituted for the sheep without compromising the reference.[42] The demons named Legion in the Gospel of Mark attempt to escape destruction at the hand of Jesus by possessing a herd of pigs. In Aristophanes's *Wasps*, Philocleon attempts to escape captivity in his son's house by hiding on the underside of a donkey.[43] Similarly, it is on the back of a donkey that Tlepolemus's fiancée escapes from the cave of the robbers in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*.[44] Even clinging to the underside of a *bed* can recall Odysseus's famous escape.[45] It is not unreasonable, then, to think that ancient readers might associate the image of Judith reclining on sheepskins (Jdt 12:15–16) with that of Polyphemus sleeping among his sheep. Such readers would be able to predict that Judith will need a ruse to escape from Holofernes's cave-like tent. Some might even anticipate that it will involve the request she sends to Holofernes in Jdt 12:6, as a result of which the general permits her to leave the Assyrian camp nightly to pray. Of course, such readers would not be disappointed (13:10).

3 Projecting the Logic of *Od.* 9 onto the Judith Narrative

Because they pertain to aspects of the Judith narrative that, for the most part, lack analogues in its other literary models, these readings of Judith as imitating book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey* complement the intertextual analyses often found in scholarship. Even so, it may not be immediately clear why the author

42 Hunter and Laemmle attest, "Perhaps no part of the Homeric Cyclops-episode was as familiar in antiquity as the escape from the cave clinging to the bellies of sheep which had been strapped together" (*Cyclops*, 14).

43 See Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 169–189. When Philocleon's son notices the donkey acting strangely, he asks, "Why are you fussing? Unless you've got Odysseus or somebody under there" (*Vesp.* 180–181 [Henderson, LCL]). Philocleon is indeed hiding on the underside of the donkey and, when confronted, identifies himself as "Nobody [Οὖτις]" from "Ithaca" (184–185). Predictably, this ruse fails, and Philocleon is locked away again (198).

44 The Gospel of Mark and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* are both discussed in greater detail in section 3 below.

45 See Petronius, *Sat.* 97.4–5.

of Judith would use *Od.* 9 as a literary model for the slaying of Holofernes in the first place. There are, of course, some straightforward implications to this reading—in which Judith is compared to Odysseus, Holofernes to Polyphemus, and the Assyrians to the Cyclopes—but it is not difficult to imagine modern critics finding in these comparisons, as meaningful as they may have been for ancient readers, a less than satisfactory explanation, even if these associations reinforce the narrative's explicit characterizations. For such critics, it may be helpful to note that Judith's apparent imitation of *Od.* 9 can be situated within a particular strand of that story's reception history, one in which the Polyphemus episode is used as a resource both for constructing one's enemies as lawless, foreign aggressors and for resisting them with violence. In this and other ways, reading Judith as imitating *Od.* 9 contributes to the narrative's explicit themes, just as with its other literary models. Thus, when Judith is read through the framework of *Od.* 9, a variety of interpretive possibilities emerge, ranging from characterizations to thematic contributions. A review of some of these interpretive possibilities can address concerns about the aptness of the Polyphemus story as a model for Judith while also elucidating some of the contours of the reception of *Od.* 9 in antiquity.

First and perhaps foremost, reading the Judith narrative as imitating *Od.* 9 invites a comparison of the respective protagonists, Odysseus and Judith. Insofar as readers recognize Judith as playing the role of Odysseus, his virtues—including heroism and cleverness—are projected onto her, not least because the scene in question is the Polyphemus episode. Of all of his feats narrated in the *Odyssey*, his besting of Polyphemus brings Odysseus the most renown.[46] It also marks him as a distinctly "epic hero," with his actions embodying "a triumph of good over evil, order over chaos, civilization over nature."[47] In comparison, the Judith narrative is explicit about the fame that accrues to Judith for killing Holofernes—it continually grows and no foreign power threatens Israel again during her lifetime (Jdt 16:21–25). To the extent that the narrative is successful at evoking a comparison of Judith with Odysseus, then, it imbues her victory over Holofernes with such epic overtones as good overcoming evil and divine order triumphing over lawlessness. It also foregrounds Judith's bravery and shrewdness. Odysseus was widely regarded as an exemplar of these qualities in antiquity. Robert J. Ball observes, "The Roman philosophers—Cicero and Seneca in particular—consistently praised Odysseus for their own Stoic reasons and consistently looked upon the *Odyssey* as the basis of a moral lesson, that man can triumph over overwhelming obstacles,

46 See Louden, *Homer's* Odyssey, 192.

47 Louden, 180.

through a combination of bravery, intelligence, and determination."[48] Similar ideas appear explicitly in novelistic literature. In Petronius's *Satyricon*, Giton evades harm by clinging to the underside of a bed, an action that the narrator describes as "surpassing Ulysses with almost identical cleverness" (*Sat.* 97.5 [Schmeling, LCL]). As the analysis in the previous section demonstrates, Judith's guile is likewise emphasized in her story. To the extent that the narrative aims to present Judith as heroic and clever—aims that appear to be straightforwardly evident—Odysseus's blinding of Polyphemus is a logical literary model for her attack on Holofernes.

To be sure, a close comparison of the Judith narrative with *Od.* 9 also reveals several contrasts, and these can have just as much impact on readers. The comparison in the previous section does not discuss Odysseus's taunting of Polyphemus, for example. After escaping to his ship, Odysseus is unwilling to suppress his urge to taunt Polyphemus (*Od.* 9.471–479, 523–525), even going so far as to reveal his true identity, "Cyclops, if any one of mortal men shall ask you about the shameful blinding of your eye, say that Odysseus, the sacker of cities, blinded it, the son of Laertes, whose home is in Ithaca" (*Od.* 9.502–505). In contrast, Judith does not boast to the Assyrians about her besting of Holofernes. Instead, readers encounter a functionally equivalent outcry from Bagoas. Upon discovering Holofernes's headless body, Bagoas exclaims, "The slaves acted treacherously! A single woman from the Hebrews has brought shame upon the house of King Nebuchadnezzar" (Jdt 14:18).[49] Insofar as readers contrast this exclamation with Odysseus's taunt, it redounds to her credit that the speaker is Bagoas rather than Judith. In response to Odysseus's taunting, Polyphemus asks Poseidon, his father, to curse Odysseus, as a result of which he experiences many hardships—including the loss of all of his comrades—during his return home (*Od.* 9.526–536, 551–555). In this way, Odysseus undermines the effectiveness of his guile. In contrast, Judith does not remain in the Assyrian camp long enough to boast about decapitating their general, which would have compromised her ruse. Instead, in good Davidic fashion, she brings Holofernes's decapitated head back to Bethulia, and the Assyrian army flees in terror (Jdt 15:1–7). For readers who observe this contrast, Judith can thus be interpreted as comparably clever to Odysseus but as surpassing him in prudence and self-restraint.

Another contrast concerns the sexual context of Judith's attack on Holofernes. Though it might seem odd to imitate *Od.* 9 in a sexual context, the Judith narrative would not be alone in doing so, and a brief review of one other

48 Ball, "Popularity of Homer's *Odyssey*," 15.

49 Judith does boast about her victory but not to the Assyrians. See Jdt 13:15–16; 16:5–6.

instance of this combination may be suggestive for interpreting the combination in Judith. In book 2 of Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, Clitophon desires a midnight tryst with Leucippe in her room. His entry is obstructed, however, by "Conops [Κώνωψ]," "a meddlesome, talkative, greedy rascal, deserving any bad name you liked to call him," who "seemed to be watching from a distance" and who "would constantly sit up until very late, leaving open the doors of his room, so that it was a difficult business to escape him" (*Leuc. Clit.* 2.20.1 [Gaselee, LCL]). In order to overcome this obstacle, Clitophon's enslaved attendant, Satyrus, plays the role of Odysseus. Satyrus "bought a drug of the nature of a strong sleeping-draught, and asked [Conops] to dinner. At first he suspected some trick and hesitated: then, his beloved belly being too strong for him, he accepted" (2.23.1 [Gaselee, LCL]). Satyrus pours the drug into Conops's final drink, and Conops collapses just as he returns home (2.23.2). Satyrus reports to Clitophon, "Your Cyclops [Κύκλωψ] is asleep; see that you prove yourself a brave Odysseus" (2.23.3 [Gaselee, LCL; slightly modified]). Instead, as Koen De Temmerman argues, Clitophon is characterized "as a non-Odysseus."[50] Clitophon acts like a coward, and "his marked dependence upon Satyrus," who contrives and executes the ruse, "also dissociates him from Odysseus."[51] Even so, by evoking Odysseus mythology in a sexual context, readers can project onto Clitophon the *Odyssey*'s theme of chastity (or lack thereof) and anticipate that Clitophon will have a sexual encounter with another woman (i.e., Melite) before his eventual reunion with Leucippe.[52] In the Judith narrative, however, the evocation of Odysseus mythology in a sexual context only underscores Judith's temperance, which can be read as contributing to an explicit theme in the narrative. Judith is emphatic that Holofernes neither defiled nor shamed her (Jdt 13:16), and, moreover, she remains faithful to her late husband for the rest of her life (16:22–23). In this respect, of course, Judith contrasts sharply with Odysseus, recalling instead Penelope, Odysseus's long-faithful wife. To be sure, even though the contrast between Judith's chastity and Odysseus's lack of faithfulness to Penelope is clearly observable and can contribute to an explicit theme in Judith, it is not obvious that the narrative is structured in such a way as to encourage this reading, given the parallels outlined in the previous section.[53] Yet, because of the particulars of the

50 De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters*, 173.

51 Ibid.

52 See De Temmerman, 174.

53 Judith's apparent use of *Od.* 9 is in this respect more like that in Euripides's *Cyclops*, which also contains sexual elements (e.g., *Cycl.* 583–589) but does not appear to be structured in such a way as to call to mind Odysseus's extramarital affairs.

reception of *Od.* 9 in Achilles Tatius, the contrast nevertheless merits observation here, even if only as an aside.

The corollary to likening Judith to Odysseus is the assimilation of Holofernes and the Assyrians to Polyphemus and the Cyclopes. Of course, this association villainizes Holofernes and the Assyrians. Homer constructs the Cyclopes as the epitome of barbarians—lawless cave-dwellers who lack basic regard even for other Cyclopes (*Od.* 9.112–115).[54] Indeed, Odysseus discovers that Polyphemus and the Cyclopes "pay no heed to Zeus" (9.275) and so have no interest in showing hospitality to strangers or foreigners (9.273–278). According to Richard Hunter, Odysseus's besting of Polyphemus was interpreted in antiquity as a quintessential representation of "the triumph of intelligence (μῆτις and λογισμός), social convention and respect for the gods … over an unreasoning and impious reliance on brute force."[55] Moreover, to the extent that readers associate Judith's Assyrians with a particular real-world group—say, the Seleucid Empire of the eastern Mediterranean—a distinct irony emerges.[56] The Greek Seleucids, it is safe to assume, would generally identify themselves with Odysseus, but the book of Judith can be read as associating them instead, by means of the Assyrians, with Polyphemus and the Cyclopes. In this respect, the Judith narrative weaponizes a distinctively Greek dichotomy against Greek rulers—attributing lawlessness and barbarous aggression to the Seleucids. Even remaining within the world of the narrative, however, the association of the Assyrians with Homer's Cyclopes stigmatizes them as lawless and barbaric, qualities that are hardly sympathetic and so ideally villainous. Because of these qualities, the Cyclopes are a sensible analogue for those in the Judith narrative who attack Israel in the absence of the Israelites sinning against God.

This stigmatization applies to Holofernes at the individual level as well. The general of the Assyrian army invades Israel, despite being informed about the unmet prerequisites for victory (Jdt 5:17–21). The parallels of the Judith narrative with *Od.* 9 allow readers to frame this disregard for the law of God in reference to Polyphemus's lawlessness, particularly his disregard for Zeus Xenios, protector of foreigners. In Judith, of course, the Cyclops's inhospitality is transformed into an aggressive military campaign, more reminiscent of the Cyclopes' earlier mistreatment of the Phaeacians (discussed further below). It is entirely appropriate, then, that the Judith narrative's new Polyphemus forfeits his military victory by drinking too much wine. Indeed, according to Piet

54 According to Robertson, "Homer describes Polyphemus in a way that embodies the opposite of what constitutes proper Greek virtue" in the archaic period (*Cyclops Myth*, 48).

55 Hunter, *Critical Moments*, 53. See also Mondi, "Homeric Cyclopes," 25.

56 For Judith's date of composition (probably ca. 100 BCE), see esp. Wills, *Judith*, 14–16.

Meijer, the single extant fragment of *On the Use of Wine or On Intoxication or On the Cyclops* reads, "After the god had thought about this, and seeing that water is entirely to be tolerated, he recommended drinking water and avoiding wine when one wants to win a victory."[57] Arguably more applicable to the situation of Holofernes than Homer's Polyphemus, this sentiment speaks to the particular ways in which the construction of Holofernes resonates with receptions of the Cyclops myth. Not only is Holofernes lawless, he also, like Polyphemus, bears responsibility for his inability to emerge victorious through his consumption of wine.

Thematically, Judith's slaying of the drunken Holofernes is, perhaps above all else, about a woman rescuing Israel from foreign aggression (e.g., Jdt 8:17; 9:8–10), and, though it may strike some modern readers as a surprising assertion, *Od.* 9 is an apt literary model for such a theme. Without question, the Polyphemus story was a popular model for escaping situations of confinement (as exemplified in, e.g., Aristophanes's *Wasps*), but it was also used as a model for stories of deliverance. This particular mimetic tendency can be identified as early as Euripides's *Cyclops*. In this satyr play, Euripides follows the basic outline of *Od.* 9 with a few notable exceptions, including the integration of new characters (a satyr named Silenus and his sons) who were enslaved by Polyphemus while searching for the pirates who abducted Dionysus (*Cycl.* 112) and the omission of the Homeric use of sheep for escaping (see 680–685). That the Euripidean Odysseus does not need his famous ruse to escape is made explicit when he sneaks out of Polyphemus's cave after the Cyclops eats two of his comrades and gets drunk on Odysseus's wine. Odysseus tells the chorus leader, "I have crept out with the intention of saving you and me" (426–427 [Kovacs, LCL]), but, at the chorus leader's behest, Odysseus agrees to save them all: "Then listen to the punishment I have contrived for the knavish beast and how you may escape from slavery" (441–442 [Kovacs, LCL]). Before enacting his ruse, Odysseus again concedes, "And yet I could flee, and I have come out of the cave, but it is not right to leave behind my friends with whom I came here and save myself alone" (480–482 [Kovacs, LCL]).[58] In Euripides's *Cyclops*, the blinding of Polyphemus is thus a rescue mission. The same can be said of the imitation of *Od.* 9 in Apuleius's story of Tlepolemus (*Metam.* 7.5–12).[59]

57 Meijer, *New Perspective*, 101. See Aelius Aristides, *Hier. log.* 3.30–33.

58 In the LCL edition, these lines are presented in square brackets, indicating the editor's judgment that they are a later addition. Hunter and Laemmle suggest that they are likely "a post-Euripidean attempt to draw explicit attention to (and make theatrical capital out of) the un-Homeric ease with which Odysseus can come and go from the cave" (*Cyclops*, 199).

59 See, e.g., Frangoulidis, "Epic Inversion," esp. 68–72.

Tlepolemus's fiancée, Charite, is kidnapped by a group of robbers and held captive in a cave while awaiting execution. Tlepolemus infiltrates the group of robbers by claiming to be Haemus the "famous brigand" (7.5 [Hanson, LCL]), and he convinces them to make a profit by selling Charite to a brothel (7.9–10), thereby averting her execution and establishing the premise for a feast. He then rescues Charite by "thrusting wine on" the robbers, "while he himself abstained," and he ties them up once "every single solitary one of them lay buried in wine, and the whole group was as good as dead" (7.12 [Hanson, LCL]). In this way Tlepolemus and Charite escape from the cave of the robbers—with Charite on the back of a donkey, no less (7.12).[60] Unlike in Euripides's *Cyclops* and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, however, Judith is tasked with rescuing a group of people that has not yet been captured. Even so, by killing Holofernes, Judith halts the Assyrian invasion and saves the Israelites from sure enslavement or death. Accordingly, given its reception in Euripides and Apuleius, the Polyphemus story can be regarded as a thematically suitable literary model for the Judith narrative—and yet there is a different but related reception tradition of *Od.* 9 with which Judith also resonates.

The story of Odysseus blinding Polyphemus also appears to have been used as a literary model for enacting violence against foreign aggressors—an apt model for Judith, indeed, given that the narrative focalizes her act of deliverance on her assault against Holofernes. Such an understanding of *Od.* 9 may seem counterintuitive, given that Odysseus and his comrades invade the home of Polyphemus, but it is nevertheless possible according to details supplied by Homer. Odysseus narrates his adventurous story to the Phaeacians.[61] At the beginning of book 6 of the *Odyssey*, with Odysseus shipwrecked on their island, Homer explains that the Phaeacians formerly lived near the Cyclopes in Hypereia and that the Cyclopes "plundered them continually" (6.6). Charles Segal muses, "Why should the peace-loving Phaeacians have such a history? Nothing in the subsequent narrative required it, and for an imaginary people the poet was probably free to invent details of origin."[62] Segal hints at the dynamic I am suggesting when he notes, "Odysseus encounters … and triumphs over" the same elements from which the Phaeacians fled.[63] Odysseus thus narrates his triumph over Polyphemus to a Phaeacian audience, for whom the Cyclopes

60 It is worth noting that Tlepolemus and others from his hometown later return to the cave and loot the robbers, and "they decapitated" some of the robbers "with their own swords [suis sibi gladiis obtruncatos] and left them there" (*Metam.* 7.13 [Hanson, LCL]).

61 The contrast between the hospitality of the Phaeacians and the inhospitality of Polyphemus is often noted. See, e.g., Robertson, *Cyclops Myth*, 28–32.

62 Segal, "Phaeacians," 34. Cf. Mondi, "Homeric Cyclopes," 26.

63 Segal, 35.

were formerly a menacing, foreign presence. Because of this schematization, subsequent narratives could depict violent resistance to foreign aggressors by presenting their characters as reenacting the blinding of the Cyclops.[64]

One example can be located in the extant fragments of Theodotus's epic poem, *On the Jews*, which tells the story of the rape of Dinah and its aftermath. Fragment 7 contains language from the *Odyssey* that assimilates the Shechemites with Penelope's suitors and Polyphemus, which serves to justify their subsequent slaughter.[65]

Homer's *Odyssey*	Theodotus's *On the Jews*
"for they honored no one of men upon the earth [οὔ τινα γὰρ τίεσκον ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων], high or low, whoever came among them [οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ὅτις σφέας εἰσαφίκοιτο]" (22.414–415)	"for they did not honor [οὐ γὰρ ἔτιον] / Whoever came to them, the low, not even the noble [ἰς αὐτοὺς ὅστις κε μόλῃ κακὸς οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλός]" (7.4–5 [trans. Holladay])
"a savage man that knew nothing of rights or laws [ἄγριον οὔτε δίκας ἐὺ εἰδότα οὔτε θέμιστας]" (9.215)	"Neither did they dispense justice [οὐδὲ δίκας ἐδίκαζον] nor enforce laws [οὐδὲ θέμιστας]" (7.6 [trans. Holladay])

According to Tim Whitmarsh, the effect of applying this Homeric language to the Shechemites is "to refine and accentuate the theme of cultural differentiation already latent in Homer," which, like Gen 34, can be understood as promoting endogamy.[66] Indeed, by associating them with the Cyclopes in particular, Theodotus foregrounds not only the Shechemites' lawlessness and lack of hospitality but also their foreign status, and so the violence of Simeon and Levi against them (narrated by Theodotus using still additional Homeric language) echoes Odysseus's violence against a representative of the Phaeacians' former foreign aggressors—Polyphemus.[67]

64 This reception tradition apparently continued into medieval period—beyond the chronological scope of this article. See Bremmer, "Odysseus versus Cyclops," 136, where he describes a story in the *Book of Dede Korkut*.

65 Interestingly, Apuleius likewise imitates both the Cyclops and suitors scenes in the *Odyssey* in *Metam*. 7.4–13. See Frangoulidis, "Epic Inversion," 68–72; Harrison, "Odyssean Scenes," 198–201.

66 Whitmarsh, *Beyond Second Sophistic*, 243.

67 Fragment 8 "depicts, in highly dramatic fashion reminiscent of Homer, Simeon and Levi's slaughter of Hamor and Shechem, and their rescue of Dinah" (Holladay, *Fragments*, 2:53).

The Gospel of Mark can also be read as imitating—and reconfiguring—the Polyphemus story in a way that capitalizes on the Homeric association of Polyphemus with foreign threats.[68] In Mark 5, Jesus and his disciples disembark from their boat in the land of the Gerasenes (5:1), and Jesus is immediately confronted by a man who is possessed by an unclean spirit, lives alone among the tombs, and exhibits monstrous qualities (5:2–5). Jesus asks the unclean spirit's name, and it replies, "Legion is my name [λεγιὼν ὄνομά μοι], because we are many [πολλοί]" (5:9). Apparently fearing destruction, the spirits ask instead to be sent into the nearby herd of pigs (5:11–12). Jesus consents, perhaps knowing the fate that awaits them, and the newly possessed pigs drown themselves in the sea (5:13). As Jesus reembarks to sail away, the man who had been possessed asks to go with him (5:18), but Jesus, who in Mark's Gospel is otherwise famously secretive about his identity, tells him instead to stay and proclaim "how much the Lord has done" for him (5:19).[69] The resemblance of the plot in Mark 5:1–20 to *Od.* 9 is relatively straightforward, with Jesus as a new Odysseus and the demons (who are "many [πολλοί]" [!]) as a new Polyphemus. Rather than taunting the former demoniac at the end with his true identity, however, Jesus commissions him to make that identity known. There are additional reconfigurations, of course. The ambiguous name is used by the new Polyphemus, not the new Odysseus—though the unclean spirits are outwitted nonetheless. Mark also uses pigs rather than sheep.[70] These additional reconfigurations are relevant to the theme of opposing foreign aggression. In fact, the use of the Latin loanword legion, which refers to a military unit, along with references to pigs that are drowned can be read as signaling the narrative's opposition to the Roman military's occupation of the Southern Levant. Adela Collins explains, "Caesar's tenth legion (Legio X *Fretensis*) had, among other things, the image of a boar on its standards and seals. This legion … took part in the first Jewish war and was subsequently stationed in Jerusalem."[71] In this reading of Mark 5, the Roman military occupation of the Southern Levant is likened not only to demonic possession but also to Polyphemus's terrorizing of Odysseus, his crew, and the Phaeacians.

68 MacDonald, *Homeric Epics*, 67–74; MacDonald, *Gospels and Homer*, 198–200, 213–21; Busch, "Scriptural Revision," esp. 72–78. No less significant is the *Homeric Centos* that uses lines from *Od.* 9 (and 10) when retelling the story of Jesus and the Gerasene demoniac (*Hom. Cent.* 2.782–815). See MacDonald, *Gospels and Homer*, 220–21.

69 This feature recalls Achaemenides's request to embark with Aeneas and his crew in Virgil's imitation of *Od.* 9 (*Aen.* 3.588–691).

70 MacDonald argues that the pigs (among other features) echo the Circe episode in *Od.* 10 (*Homeric Epics*, 64–67; *Gospels and Homer*, 112–21).

71 Collins, *Mark*, 269. See also Carter, "Cross-Gendered Romans."

Of course, opposition to foreign aggression is a major and explicit theme in the book of Judith. Indeed, Judith is spurred into action at the thought of the Bethulians capitulating to the Assyrian invasion (Jdt 8:11–17, 32–34), and the final verse of the celebratory hymn in chapter 16 begins, "Woe to the nations that rise up against my kindred!" (16:17). Readers who recognize the parallels with *Od.* 9 that are highlighted in the previous section can regard the narrative's imitation of the Polyphemus story as contributing to this theme of opposing foreign aggression. This reading places Judith alongside both, on the one hand, Euripides's *Cyclops* and book 7 of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* as imitations of *Od.* 9 that emphasize a new Odysseus's deliverance of others from a new Polyphemus and, on the other hand, Theodotus's *On the Jews* and Mark 5 as imitations that frame a new Odysseus's assault on a new Polyphemus as an act of violent resistance to foreign subjugation. In several ways, then, the selection of *Od.* 9 as a literary model can be understood as logical and its imitation as reinforcing the Judith narrative's explicit themes and characterizations.

4 Synthesis and Conclusion

So goes the case for Judith's imitation of the Polyphemus story. This argument primarily involves a cluster of circumstantial, though sequential, parallels alongside narrative elements that are more elegantly explained by reference to *Od.* 9 (i.e., Holofernes's canopy and the sheepskins supplied to Judith). Within these circumstantial parallels, the close correspondence of Holofernes's and Polyphemus's inebriations prior to being assaulted stands out. That the argument for reading the Judith narrative through an Odysseus-Polyphemus framework does not involve more-explicit references to Homer should not be surprising, given the relative lack of attention to *Od.* 9 by Judith scholars. To wit, if Judith stabbed Holofernes in the eye or escaped to Bethulia on the underside of sheep, the narrative's connection to *Od.* 9 would have been exhaustively analyzed long ago. Even so, with the exception of the destruction of the Shechemites (which is referred to explicitly), the nature of the relationship proposed here is not qualitatively different from Judith's relationship to other, commonly accepted literary models.

Indeed, the Judith narrative's dependence on literary models often manifests through some combination of circumstantial, thematic correspondences and close parallels. In reenacting the story from Gen 34, for example, Holofernes's attraction to and desire to sleep with Judith constitutes a close parallel to Shechem's attraction to and desire to sleep with Dinah. In contrast, Judith's role as a new Simeon plays out thematically and circumstantially: she

uses deception to incapacitate Holofernes and kills him while he is vulnerable. Though the details are different, the circumstances and plot progressions are similar enough for readers to interpret the Judith narrative by reference to Gen 34. Similarly, Judith's process of beautification closely parallels that of Hera, and Holofernes's resultant desire to sleep with Judith likewise closely parallels Zeus's desire to sleep with the goddess. The details regarding how these beautifications affect the ongoing military campaigns are dissimilar in their specifics, but they are circumstantially identical: in both cases, women reverse the trajectory of the conflicts. The argument for Judith's imitation of the Polyphemus story features a comparable mixture of close parallels and thematic, circumstantial correspondences. Holofernes's intoxication prior to Judith's attack closely parallels that of Polyphemus preceding Odysseus's assault. This intoxication occurs, moreover, within an extended sequence of actions with circumstantial parallels in the Polyphemus story: Judith uses deception to ensure her own safety and to create an opportunity to kill Holofernes, she assaults him with his own weapon, and she uses a ruse to escape after the attack. The details of these actions differ from those of Odysseus's corresponding actions, but because there are so many circumstantial and sequential correspondences—in addition to the close parallel of intoxication prior to an attack—readers are able, with credibility, to interpret Judith's actions within the framework of the Polyphemus story.

It is also worth noting that there are elements in the Judith narrative that can be accounted for by reference to multiple literary models, and the fact that an element is more closely paralleled in one model does not foreclose the possibility of reading it in relation to others. For example, Judith's role as a new Dinah explains Holofernes's attraction to her, but so does her role as a new Hera, and the latter parallel is arguably closer on account of Judith's beautification scene. This observation does not detract from the importance of the Dinah framework for interpreting the Judith narrative, nor does it indicate that readers should not recall Shechem's attraction to Dinah when reading about Holofernes's attraction to Judith. Likewise, Judith's role as a new Jael explains her assault on Holofernes's head, but so does her role as a new David, and the details of the Judith narrative align more closely with the latter as to the assault itself. Once again, this recognition does not foreclose the possibility of reading Judith's assault on Holofernes in relation to Jael's attack on Sisera. With respect to *Od.* 9, although Holofernes's incapacitation prior to Judith's attack recalls the incapacitations of Shechem and Sisera, it is closer still to that of Polyphemus prior to Odysseus's assault. Of course, to acknowledge the narrative's apparent debt to *Od.* 9 is not to deny the validity of the Dinah and Jael frameworks for interpreting this scene. Similarly, David's decapitation of

Goliath is a closer model for Judith's beheading of Holofernes than Odysseus's blinding of Polyphemus, but affirming that judgment does not preclude a reading of Judith's action in relation to that of Odysseus as well. Accordingly, the fact that Judith's apparent imitation of *Od.* 9 involves some narrative elements that are also related—sometimes more closely—to its other literary models does not undermine the credibility of reading Judith in relation to the Polyphemus story. On the contrary, in this respect *Od.* 9 is comparable to Judith's other literary models.

Moreover, all of the literary models reviewed above, including *Od.* 9, feature themes that are germane to Judith. For example, the Judith narrative explicitly expresses anxiety about the invasion by and potential enslavement to the Assyrians.[72] Similar anxieties feature in the stories about the Philistine invasion in the Goliath story and the Persian invasions related to Thermopylae and Lindos. Not only are these stories logical foundations on which to construct a narrative about a precarious city under siege from a foreign army, the recognition of the narrative's indebtedness to these stories gives readers additional frames of reference for understanding the Assyrian invasion in Judith. The threat of the Assyrians is thus contextualized by reference to the invasions led by Goliath, Xerxes I, and Darius I. This use of literary models can, of course, be understood as complementing the narrative's explicit indications of anxiety about foreign invasion. A corollary theme is that of resistance to foreign invaders. Once again, the Judith narrative addresses this theme explicitly.[73] Violent resistance to foreign aggressors also features in Simeon and Levi's slaughter of the Shechemites, Jael's killing of Sisera, and David's slaying of Goliath. As with the theme of anxiety, readers can interpret Judith's assault on Holofernes by reference to these other stories, as reenacting the roles of Simeon and Levi, Jael, and David, thereby imbuing the narrative's resolution to its anxiety about foreign invasion with legitimation derived from authoritative precedents. The Judith narrative can be read as using the Polyphemus story similarly. A prominent motif in Judith is her use of duplicity prior to attacking Holofernes.[74] As reviewed above, this motif is likewise prominent in *Od.* 9, making the Polyphemus story a sensible literary model for the Judith narrative. Additional themes in *Od.* 9 are similarly relevant for Judith: it is a story in which Odysseus rescues his comrades and himself by committing an act of violence against a representative of the group that formerly menaced the Phaeacians. As such, recognition of the narrative's indebtedness to the

72 See Jdt 1:12; 2:3, 5–13; 4:1–2, 12; 5:24; 6:2–4; 7:27; 8:22–23.

73 See Jdt 9:2–14; 16:9.

74 See Jdt 9:10, 13; 16:6–9.

Polyphemus story contributes to the themes of anxiety about foreign invasion and the use of deception and violence against foreign aggressors. The apparent imitation of the Polyphemus story both provides an interpretive frame for the corresponding elements in the Judith narrative and reinforces its explicit themes and characterizations. The proposal for the Judith narrative's use of *Od.* 9 is thus, once again, not meaningfully different from its use of other literary models.

Not only so, in many respects Judith can be read as imitating *Od.* 9 in a more straightforward and comprehensive manner than other imitations. In Sophocles's *Philoctetes*, the Gospel of Mark, and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, characters appear to imitate Odysseus by using lies, ambiguities, and false names in an effort to gain protection. Judith does so as well, but, like those of Odysseus, her duplicities are also critical to a subsequent attack. In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* and Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon*, characters reenact the incapacitation of Polyphemus through intoxication. Holofernes is likewise incapacitated by excessive drinking, brought about by Judith's intentional ambiguity regarding her desire to sleep with him. In Apuleius's and Achilles Tatius's novels, the intoxication provides an opportunity to escape from or to evade the notice of Polyphemus figures. In Judith, Holofernes's inebriation is not an opportunity to escape but rather to attack, just as Polyphemus's intoxication is for Odysseus. Even so, both Odysseus and Judith do subsequently escape, and in order to do so they use ruses that, though dependent upon their other duplicities, are nevertheless distinct. In this way Judith can be read as imitating *Od.* 9 in a manner that is more comprehensive than many other imitations, and, among those that are similarly comprehensive (e.g., the Gospel of Mark and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*), Judith's apparent imitation is more straightforward.[75] The reading of Judith proposed here is, thus, impressively legible among other ancient imitations of the Polyphemus story.

Finally, and on account of the preceding considerations, this reading of Judith as imitating *Od.* 9 contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the reception of the Polyphemus story in antiquity. By comparing Judith with other imitations of *Od.* 9 in antiquity, at least two applications within this story's reception history emerge, both attested in Judith. First, it attests to the use of the Polyphemus episode as a model for rescuing others from peril. Following the application exhibited in Euripides's *Cyclops* (and which also appears in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*), the narrative allows readers to interpret Judith's rescue of the Bethulians through the framework of Odysseus's rescue of his comrades from the cave of Polyphemus. The second application

75 See, e.g., n. 31 above.

is the use of Odysseus's assault on Polyphemus as a model for violently opposing foreign aggressors. Although this framing is permitted by the details in Homer, I am unaware of texts employing it prior to the Hellenistic era. I am also unaware of non-Jewish writings using *Od.* 9 in this way before the medieval period, though I do not doubt that some might have. Thus, along with Theodotus and Mark, Judith can be read as a Jewish narrative wielding the Greek canonical past against foreign subjugators—whether Ptolemies, Seleucids, or Romans. Moreover, such a use of *Od.* 9 is consistent with Judith's apparent use of the Deception of Zeus, the Battle of Thermopylae, and the Persian siege of Lindos. With each of these Greek stories, Judith reverses the schematizations in such a way that Jewish individuals enact the roles of Greek characters, deploying the rhetorical force of these stories against imperial aggression. In this way, the present study adds further attestation both to the participation of Jews in the contestation over the Greek canonical past and to the freedom that ancient writers felt to reconfigure authoritative stories to align with their desired themes.

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