CANONICAL NARRATIVE SCHEMA: A KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE VICTORY DISCOURSE IN *JUDITH*:[1] A GREIMASSIAN CONTRIBUTION

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ABSTRACT

A historical critical approach to narratives has contributed significantly to the analysis of ancient narratives. However, this approach has somehow unfairly ignored some other critical aspects of many ancient narratives. *Judith* is no exception to this claim. While appreciating the contribution of historical critical approaches to *Judith* (i.e., the questions on authorship, historical and geographical inconsistencies etc.), the aim of this article is to go beyond the historicity of *Judith*, and reveal some narrative techniques employed by the author in creating a woman protagonist who is destined to achieve the unthinkable in the minds of the men of her contemporary world. This article explores these narrative techniques by employing the narrative analysis, narrative syntax in particular, of the Greimassian approach to narrative texts. Subsequently, this article contributes to research of *Judith* by revealing the path that Judith followed on her quest to save the Jewish religion from extinction during the Second Temple period.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Studies on *Judith* have been primarily dominated by historical critical approaches until fairly recently (Efthimiadis-Keith 2004:25; see also Hobyane 2014:898). Moore (1985:76–77) provides an insightful outline of various scholarly views on the study of the purpose of *Judith* dating from as early as 1888. Many of these contributions were primarily focused on the issue of the original language of authorship, the date of the book, the place of its composition, the author as well as historical and geographical inconsistencies. While appreciating and applauding this significant contribution, this article observes that the historical critical approach has somehow unfairly overlooked some other critical aspects of many ancient narratives, e.g., the study or the

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[1] In this study, *Judith* (italicised) refers to the book; Judith (non-italicised) refers to its female protagonist or character.

exploration of various narrative techniques utilised in many ancient narratives. *Judith* is no exception to this claim. *Judith* is one of the most beautiful as well as controversial books in apocryphal literature (Roitman 1992:31). It consists of two parts; these two parts are traditionally called Part I (1–7) and Part II (8–16). Nickelsburg (2005:97) asserts that Part I narrates the story of the developing crisis facing Israel, while Harrington (1999:27) indicates that Part II narrates the story of how God saves Israel by the hand of Judith. White (1992:5) connotes that it is a story of courage and resourcefulness, where Judith saves her people by one single action that is both compelling and repugnant. The *Judith* narrative, Judith the character in particular, has triggered the interest of many scholars to do research on and has for many years been subjected to ethical and theological scrutiny. This article does not intend to follow this route by contributing to research on *Judith*. The aim here is not to fill any particular or specific gap left by the historical critical approach to *Judith*, but to provide yet another perspective on *Judith* by using the Greimassian approach to narrative texts.

Instead of dwelling on historical and ethical issues, this article asserts that using the narrative analysis of the Greimassian approach, narrative syntax in particular, helps a reader to recognise some narrative techniques utilised by the author in creating a woman protagonist who is destined to achieve the unthinkable in the minds of the men of her contemporary world. This article reveals the transformational stages undergone by Judith on her quest to save the Jewish religion from extinction during the Second Temple Period.

APPROACH OF ANALYSIS

For the purpose of clarity, the terminology and concepts used in the Greimassian approach to narrative texts are summarised below. Greimassian semiotics is a general theory of meaning. It is used in relation to understanding architecture, cartoons, business communication, drama, literary texts, arts and multimedia. Kanonge (2009:24–62) indicates that this approach of analysis consists of three different levels

of analysis, namely the figurative, narrative and thematic.

The focus in this article is on the narrative analysis, the narrative syntax in particular. The aim of the narrative analysis is to examine the organisation of a text as a discourse. It helps to reveal different functions of actants and tracks the course of the subject across the narrative from the beginning to the end of the story. The tools for investigation here are the actantial model (also called actantial narrative schema) and the narrative syntax (Martin & Ringham, 2000:19). The narrative syntax, which this article mainly focuses on, also consists of two main tools of investigation, that is, the narrative programme (NP) and the canonical narrative schema.

Kanonge (2009: 52) describes an NP as the actions to be performed by the subject in order to transform his/her state or to reach the object of quest.

The canonical narrative schema can simply be defined as the course of the subject in the entire narrative (Kanonge 2009:52). It consists of four steps, namely the contract, the acquisition of competence, the performance, and the sanction. According to Greimas & Courtes (1982:194) these four steps are accompanied by corresponding abilities called modalities. Modalities (willing and competence) enable the action of the subject. There are six basic modalities involved, namely being, doing, wanting, having-to, knowing and being-able-to (Greimas & Courtes 1982:194).

Contract

According to Greimas and Courtes (1982:59), in a very general sense a contract can be understood as the fact of establishing an intersubjective relationship which has as its effect the modification of status (being and/or seeming) of the subject in the narrative. In simple terms, in the contract, the addresser (subject manipulator) exerts a persuasive doing/action about the object on the addressee. The addressee appreciates the value of the object offered to him/her. This process corresponds to the contract. The addressee can accept or reject the contract. If he/she accepts the contract, he/she acquires the modality of wanting-to-do (desire) and/or having-to-do (duty) and becomes a subject of the story, i.e., a virtual subject. A contract can be injunctive, permissive or seductive. The contract in the *Judith* narrative is of a seductive nature.

This point will be elaborated on in the analysis of *Judith*.

Acquisition of competence

This step is also called a qualifying test (Greimas and Courtes 1982:253). It is a series of events during which a subject acquires or manifests his/her competence. There are two kinds of modalities involved here, cognitive modalities (wanting-to-do or having-to-do) and pragmatic modalities (being-able-to-do and knowing-how-to-do). When a subject acquires them, he/she becomes an actualised subject (Kanonge 2012:54).

Performance

Kanonge (2009:54) states that a story is about the action of at least one subject aiming to be in conjunction with an object. The final action of the subject in a narrative is called performance (the "doing" of the subject) or the decisive test. The subject acquires the object of his/her quest by the performance, and has therefore the status of a realised subject. Greimas and Courtes (1982:226) indicate that performance covers the domain of realisation of the competence. The performance can either be instantaneous or progressive.

Sanction

Sanction is an epistemic judgement, passed by the addresser, concerning the conformity of the behaviour and more precisely of the success of the subject (Greimas and Courtes 1982:267). After achieving his/her performance, the subject reports his achievement to the addresser. Many narratives end with words of praise in recognition of the performance of the subject. The addresser assesses the performance of the subject according to the system of values he/she represents. The subject receives the title of a glorified subject when his/her actions were in accordance with the axiology of the universe of the narrative.

The narrative syntax of *Judith*

The narrative syntax of *Judith* focuses on the quest of the protagonist (Judith) in the

narrative. As highlighted in the discussion of the approach of analysis above, this article will focus only on two main aspects, namely the NP and the canonical narrative schema. These two aspects will be discussed below in order to track and understand the victory discourse in the narrative.

THE NARRATIVE PROGRAMME OF *JUDITH*

According to Martin and Ringham (2000:91) a narrative programme (*programme narratif*) refers to the representation of syntactical relationships and their transformation on the surface level of the utterance (see also Greimas 1990:46,173–176). The NP of *Judith* highlights the main quest of the story where the protagonist (Judith in this case) transforms her initial state (disjunctive condition) into her final state (conjunctive condition) (see also Kanonge 2009:152).

Levine (1992:17) observes that *Judith* is usually identified as a representation of or as a metaphor for the community of faith and that many exegetical studies of the text of *Judith* have tried to keep pace with its heroine. Therefore, focusing on the heroic work of Judith and the state of the Jewish religion/Jewish community, this study suggests that the NP in *Judith,* may be summarised as follows:

> Threat of extinction and destruction of the Jewish people/religion dominates the beginning of the narrative. However, the heroic work of Judith gives hope to the Jewish people/religion in the second part of the story, and ultimately the object of value (preservation of the Jewish people/religion) is realized. The Assyrian cult fails to subdue the Judaism.

The NP in *Judith* entails that the heroic performance of Judith brings a critical development in the story. Judith transforms her state from a disjunctive condition (mission to be accomplished) to a conjunctive condition (mission accomplished). This study further emphasises that the mission in question concerns the preservation of the Jewish people/religion.

THE CANONICAL NARRATIVE SCHEMA OF *JUDITH*

The canonical narrative schema focuses on the action of *Judith* in relation to the object. It presents in detail the different stages that the subject of doing (Judith) undergoes in pursuing the object of the quest (Martin & Ringham 2000:11). This schema, as highlighted above, comprises four stages: the contract/manipulation, competence, performance and sanction. These four stages are applied to *Judith* and discussed below.

The contract/manipulation

The contract could be defined as "the establishment of an inter-subjective relationship which results in a modification of status affecting the subject involved" (Martin & Ringham 2000:11). According to Martin and Ringham (2000:11), in semiotic meta-language a narrative schema/sequence starts with a contract/manipulation between the addresser (God) and a subject (Judith) who undertakes to accomplish an action. Therefore, the contract in *Judith* describes the moment when the protagonist in the story (Judith) becomes aware (8:9) of the challenge the people of Bethulia or the Jewish religion faces.

Upon her introduction in 8:8, Judith is introduced as a "woman who feared the Lord greatly" (ἐφοβεῖτο τὸν θεὸν σφόδρα). Contrary to this God-fearing quality of Judith, the author states that Judith heard the evil words of the people to Uzziah, 8:9, and she had also heard that he had sworn to surrender the city to the Assyrians within five days (παραδώσειν τὴν πόλιν μετὰ ἡμέρας πέντε τοῖς Ἀσσυρίοις). This verse clearly proposes a distinction between Judith and the Elders or the community. The Elders work with God in ultimatums, whereas Judith shows a total trust in God. Dahbany (2009:2) calls the leaders of Bethulia useless — icons of male ineptitude. This verse also serves to single out the origin of the central concern of *Judith*. The social unrest and the evil words uttered are, according to Judith, proof that the people of Bethulia have lost touch with the God of Israel. When it comes to Judith's awareness of the problem in the community, the text does not indicate explicitly who informed her of these events and speeches. However, the circumstance around the

people of Bethulia and the decision of Uzziah may have been heard by all the people in Bethulia; hence Judith (as a member of the community), also "ἤκουσεν" (she heard).

Judith's high level[2] of the fear of the Lord encourages her to send her maid (τὴν ἄβραν αὐτῆς) to call the Elders of the city (Uzziah, Chabris and Charmis). It may thus be argued that Judith is immediately taking responsibility or a leadership role to reprimand the Elders for leading the nation to destruction and, moreover, for imposing conditions on the Lord their God (see Efthimiadis-Keith 2004:216). Moreover, in the process of surrendering the city, they are on the verge of abrogating the covenant between God and Israel by bowing down to Holofernes/Nebuchadnezzar.

Contrary to the conditions that the Elders impose on God, Judith devises a plan to save her people and the temple, announcing in 8:35:

Ἀκούσατέ μου, καὶ ποιήσω πρᾶγμα ὃ ἀφίξεται εἰς γενεὰς γενεῶν υἱοῖς τοῦ γένους ἡμῶν[3]

The modalities of wanting-to-do or having-to-do in the character Judith (subject) are also revealed in the above quote. Judith commits herself not to surrender but to defend the city and the temple. Judith's brave approach is, undoubtedly, based on her fear of God (ἐφοβεῖτο τὸν θεὸν σφόδρα) (8:8). Nowhere in the text does God speak to Judith about assuming responsibility, neither does God send anyone to give her a mandate to do so. It may thus be inferred that Judith's willingness to act is based on the high extent of fearing God and her commitment to the Jewish people/religion.

This study has shown that God is involved in four different modes of manipulation in the story. Following the Greimassian semiotic approach, it has been argued that the introduction of Judith itself may be seen as God's indirect intervention or perhaps may be seen as part of God's plan of action towards saving the Jewish people/religion. Therefore, God (as the addresser) exerts a persuasive doing (albeit silently) on the Jews (the addressee) in general, and on Judith in particular to stand against any threat

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[2]   The author uses the adverb σφόδρα, translated as "exceedingly" to describe this degree.
[3]   Hear me, and I will do a thing, which shall go throughout all generations to the children of our nation.

to the Jewish people/religion. According to Kanonge (2009:154) such communication, intended to cause people to act, is manipulation.[4] Manipulation is central to the contract. There is no contract without the manipulative action of the addresser (Kanonge 2009:154).

The contract here is Judith's commitment to saving the Jewish people/religion. Her high degree of faith and trust in God, revealed in her prayer, solidifies her commitment to the contract. By taking up the contract, Judith (woman) parallels male (e.g., David) and female (e.g., Deborah), subjects who played decisive roles in battle victories

When discussing the matter of manipulation in *Judith*, it must be noted that God's manipulation is somewhat different; the scenario in *Judith* is different from that, for example, in Joshua 1. In Joshua 1:1–18 God addresses Joshua and gives him a mandate to lead the Israelites to the promised land. In *Judith* the manipulation is indirect. The text does not report any conversation between God and Judith (or any prophet sent to Judith with the message) as is the case with Joshua. Judith's manipulation is causative and not direct. In this kind of manipulation model, Kanonge (2009:156) indicates that the initiative is upon the protagonist; God does not need to do anything, but only to desist from averting a particular action by Judith. Kanonge (2009:156) further mentions that this kind of influence is called contract by seduction. The term "seduction" here does not have a negative connotation. It is a technical term in semiotics to refer to an influence/manipulation that causes someone to act.

In summary, the Judithic contract is established between God and Judith through the fact that the author describes her as a "God fearing woman". As a Jewish woman, Judith may have been brought up under strict Jewish teaching, which was the Law of Moses according to Deuteronomy 6:6–24. Her Jewish patriotic stance may have been a result of what she was taught from a tender age. The teaching of the Law evokes the fear of the Lord. In Judith's life, the fear of the Lord became a kind of natural duty (having to do) and it moves her from duty to desire (wanting to do). Judith's desire to save her people and Judaism moves her from being just an addressee (Jewish woman)

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4   Martin and Ringham (2000:11) use the two concepts, contract and manipulation, as synonyms.

to a virtual subject in the narrative. As a virtual subject, she is ready to ward off any kind of threat from the Assyrians.

Competence

When discussing competence, Martin & Ringham (2000:38) claim that the subject needs more than just virtualising modalities (duty) and/or (desire). The subject must be in possession of actualising modalities that make it possible for her to carry out the action. Kanonge (2009:159) asserts that duty and desire alone are not sufficient to accomplish the subject's mission. He further indicates that two modalities play an indispensable role in this respect, that is, *pouvoir faire* (being able to do: power) and/or *savoir faire* (knowing how to do: skill).

In discussing competence in *Judith*, the interest is to know what makes Judith able to resist the threats of the Assyrians (Holofernes in particular) and thus save the Jewish people and Judaism from possible extinction.

Harrington (1999:35) and Steyn (2008:164) state that the reader should observe that the instrument of delivering God's people is a widow (apparently childless) whose weapons are fear of God, beauty and wisdom. In addition to these qualities, the qualities of affluence and bravery also contribute as a driving force behind Judith's success. These attributes help her to achieve her goal in the narrative. It is not within the scope of this subsection to discuss all of these qualities, but only to revise briefly how some of them played a role in Judith's acquisition of competence.

First, Judith's fear of God is a determining feature. The author unswervingly reminds the reader, throughout the narrative, that Judith is a God-fearing woman. She fasts and prays all the time; she does not eat unclean food (12:1 and 12:19), consume alcohol or indulge in sexual immorality. This God-fearing quality seems to be a compelling force behind Judith's courage to reprimand the Elders and not succumb to Holofernes' threats. In the scene of Bethulia, Judith secures the attention of the Elders and most possibly the attention of the Bethulian community. Chapter 8:9 marks the commencement of her acquisition of competence in the story. The reader further learns, in 8:21, that Judith's fear of the Lord raises her awareness of the impending

danger to the Jewish religion, when she says:

> ²¹ὅτι ἐν τῷ λημφθῆναι ἡμᾶς οὕτως καὶ λημφθήσεται πᾶσα ἡ Ιουδαία, καὶ προνομευθήσεται τὰ ἄγια ἡμῶν, καὶ ἐκζητήσει τὴν βεβήλωσιν αὐτῶν ἐκ τοῦ αἵματος ἡμῶν.⁵

Judith's knowledge and fear of the Lord enables her to perceive the negative consequences that could arise for the people of Bethulia and the Jewish religion should Holofernes not be stopped. This situation compels her to call upon the intervention of the Lord by prayer.

Judith's prayer life plays a pivotal role in the achievement of her goal. Her unbending trust in God helps her to wait for God's help, even in life-threatening or dangerous situations. Judith's prayer and her dependence upon God emerge as her "knowing how to do" in the narrative.

It may be argued that without the Lord's intervention, which resulted from prayer, Judith's beauty, wisdom, bravery, and her affluent state, could not have helped her. Consequently, the end of the narrative could have read as a disaster to the Jewish people/religion. Assyria's potential victory over Israel could have meant the end of the Jewish people/religion. Then, Nebuchadnezzar would be hailed as god.

Many Judith scholars have debated the aspect of a woman protagonist in this narrative, particularly in the patriarchal dominated society. However, in response to the negative critic about the woman protagonist Raja (1998:700) states that:

> The choice of a woman to defend the preservation of the Jewish
> people/religion in Judith is not a strange act in the history of the Jewish
> people. Judith stands in the line of Miriam the prophetess who led Israel
> to sing praises of YHWH after their liberation from Egypt (Ex. 15:20-21;
> Jdt. 15:13; Jdt.16:13), she represents Deborah who encouraged Israel to
> fight against the onslaught of the enemies (Judg. 4:4-9); Jdt. 14:2-4), she
> reminds a reader of Jael the brave woman who murdered Sisera, her
> people's enemy (Judg. 4:17-22; Jdt. 13:6-8), she parallels the ingenious

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5   ²¹ For if we be taken so, all Judea shall lie waste, and our sanctuary shall be spoiled; and He
     will require the profanation thereof at our blood.

woman of Abel of Beth-Maacah who, by her wise counsel, helped to cut
off the head of David's adversary (2 Sam. 20:15-22; Jdt. 8:11-36; 11:20-
23), she evokes the beauty and the boldness of Esther (Esth. 2:7; 5:1-4;
Jdt. 10:3-4.7,10,14,18-19,23). One sees in her a harmonious blending of a
soldier and a seductress, of wisdom and charm, of masculinity and
femininity; a veritable androgyne! In portraying Judith in such a fashion
the author of the story stands in a stark opposition to the prevalent
thinking and culture of the time, that is Hellenistic period of Jewish
history. His dissenting voice breaks asunder the enslaving prison walls of
male chauvinism and lets into the narrative the gentle breeze of a
legitimate and much desired feminism. The woman is shown as equal to
and in some sense even superior to men.

Second, Judith's widowhood deserves a brief discussion. The narrative portrays Judith
as a woman free from male dominance, both in terms of authority and sexuality. This
social status contributes towards her ability (being able to do) to go out to the Assyrian
camp. No man can question her going out by reminding her of her marital obligations
or duties. The same may be argued in reference to the aspect of "knowing-how-to-do",
that is, going out freely having beautified herself. This leads to the third quality which
is her beauty.

Kanonge (2009:159) states that beauty is an innate quality. He argues that beauty
is an actualising attribute that plays a determining role in *Esther, Judith,* and *Susanna*
(ibid.). In the first two stories, beauty is the central power that preserves Jewishness
(existence as a nation and their religion). Steyn (2008:164) arrives at this same
conclusion after conducting a comparative study of the main characters in *Susanna,
Judith* and *Esther*. According to Kanonge (2009:160) beauty, in *Susanna*, *Judith* and
Esther, becomes a source of deliverance only when it is exposed. Beauty, in *Judith*, is
one of the capacities that help the heroine to gain the attention of the enemy and
eventually destroys them. Judith adorns herself and then leaves her people and exposes
herself to the Assyrians (10:1–11). Kanonge (2009:160) states that beauty always
constitutes a deadly threat only to the non-Jews. No true Jew, committed to the Law, is

trapped by Judith's beauty in the story. In 10:7–9, instead, the story records the following when the men/people of Bethulia saw her:

> καὶ ἦν ἠλλοιωμένον τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς καὶ τὴν στολὴν μεταβεβληκυῖαν αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐθαύμασαν ἐπὶ τῷ κάλλει αὐτῆς ἐπὶ πολὺ σφόδρα καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῇ [8] Ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν δῴη σε εἰς χάριν καὶ τελειῶσαι τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματά σου εἰς γαυρίαμα υἱῶν Ισραηλ καὶ ὕψωμα Ιερουσαλημ" [9] καὶ προσεκύνησεν τῷ θεῷ .[6]

This is not the case in the Assyrian camp. Judith's beauty and wisdom are key weapons in securing her a place and attention in front of Holofernes (12:16).

Holofernes' lustful eye on Judith may represent the attitude of all the men in the Assyrian camp toward Judith. Judith's beauty is indeed a trap to the enemy. Judith confirms this point in 13:16 when she says: "ὅτι ἠπάτησεν αὐτὸν τὸ πρόσωπόν μου εἰς ἀπώλειαν αὐτοῦ" (My face has deceived him to his destruction).

In brief, it may be asserted that Judith's beauty, fear and trust in God, prayer, bravery and wisdom are driving forces behind Judith's power (being-able-to-do) and/or skill (knowing-how-to-do). In view of the resemblances between *Susanna*, *Esther* and *Judith*, when it comes to beauty, one may argue that God intensifies the beauty of these women to trap the enemy (Kanonge 2009:166). Their beauty seems to go beyond ordinary beauty. Judith's beauty seems to be one that is extraordinary. The acquisition of competence, therefore, consists in Judith's use of qualities to go against the threat of Holofernes and eventually save her people.

The performance

The subject acquires the object of his quest by means of performance and therefore attains the status of the realised subject. Martin and Ringham (2000:100) declare: "The term performance designates the principal action of the subject, the event to which the story has been leading. It is by carrying out the performance that the subject acquires

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[6]   And when they saw her, that her countenance was changed, and her apparel was changed, they wondered at her beauty very greatly, and said unto her. [8] "The God, the God of our fathers give you favour, and accomplish your enterprises to the glory of the children of Israel, and to the exaltation of Jerusalem". Then they worshiped God.

(or fails to acquire) the object of value." In this step, the subject uses his/her powers/skills to achieve his/her mission. Here, Judith uses the abilities discussed above to achieve her mission.

In some stories, the performance is instantaneous, while it occurs progressively in others. For example, in the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18:37–39 (LXX), the performance is instantaneous. After Elijah's prayer to God, the text reports that God reacts immediately by bringing fire from heaven and consuming all the burnt sacrifice and all the prophets of Baal. An example of a progressive performance is found in the story of Esther and the death of Haman. These events take place progressively until Haman is hanged.

In *Judith*, the protagonist's performance and victory over Holofernes is not progressive but instantaneous.

The decapitation of Holofernes by Judith happens in one night in a specific place, that is, in Holofernes' tent. Judith spends three days in the Assyrian camp preparing and waiting for this specific moment to come so that she can carry out the performance. The text mentions that Judith stays in the Assyrian camp for three days and goes out in the night (κατὰ νύκτα) into the valley of Bethulia. These activities, prior to the killing of Holofernes, build up to the encounter of the two subjects (anti-subjects) accompanied by the involvement of the helpers and opponents. The decapitation of Holofernes eventually translates to the transfer of the object of value, which is the preservation of Jewish religion.

After decapitating the drunken Holofernes, Judith and her maid undertake the final trip back to Bethulia with the head of Holofernes in her food bag. Ironically, the daily trip to the valley of Bethulia by Judith and her maid could be seen as a rehearsal for this final trip back to Bethulia with the head of Holofernes, as the text indicates in 13:3 and 13:10 respectively. The death of Holofernes consequently interrupts the narrative programme of threat and destruction to Israel.

After the decapitation of Holofernes the state of affairs changes completely in the Assyrian camp. When Bagoas goes to waken Holofernes, he finds him alone in his bedroom, a discarded corpse without a head (14:15). Terror and dread befall Bagoas

and subsequently the rest of the Assyrian camp (15:2). They are eventually destroyed by the army of Israel. This is in sharp contrast with the events of chapters 1–3. Fear and dread are no longer among the Jews, but has seized the Assyrians. By contrast, the Jews are empowered. They attack and win the war in defence of their religion and Jerusalem (15:3ff.) and, more importantly, the temple. Once again, it must be said that this came to pass by the hand of a woman (15:10).

The sanction

This last step of the canonical narrative schema focuses on the assessment of the mission of the subject. Martin and Ringham (2000:113) state that the term sanction "designates the stage of the quest where the subject's principal action or performance is being evaluated or interpreted by the narrator or actor in the story". They indicate that the performance could be considered a success or a failure; the subject could be rewarded or punished. Kanonge (2009:170) further indicates that sanction may be deemed negative or positive depending on what is accepted or rejected as good or bad values within the religious community.

This study observes, agreeing with Jordaan and Hobyane (2009:240), that war is a natural phenomenon in *Judith*. The sanction is consequently placed under ethical scrutiny by virtue of the fact that war, seduction and killing are involved in the story.

Ames (2008:24) defines war as a state in which the killing of other human beings is rendered legal, necessary, honourable and "even glorious", as Lincoln (1987:342) points out. This is because the enemy belongs to a rival group to whom ethical norms do not extend (Lincoln 1987:342). The enemy is effectively defined as subhuman, or even non-human. This situation is also found in *Judith*. The enemy has been identified as a non-Jew and anti-Jew (Assyrians), and ethical norms do not apply when dealing with such people. Seducing, lying to, and even murdering such people are justified among the Israelites of the Judithic community (see also White 1992:8). It is not an evil thing for Judith to commit these acts for the sake of the preservation of Jewish people/religion. It may, therefore, be indicated that Judith successfully (even gloriously) achieves the object of the quest by murdering the enemy of the Jewish

people/religion, namely Holofernes.

Kanonge (2009:54) states that after achieving his/her performance, the subject comes back to report his/her achievement. Judith's report on her achievement may be divided into two parts. First, she reports her achievement to the Elders and the people of Bethulia. She comes back with the head of Holofernes. She boastfully mentions that she has achieved her victory without committing sin with Holofernes. This means that her success is achieved within the confines of Jewish religious norms.

Besides the word of praise directed to God, in many narratives, there is also a word of praise in recognition of the performance of the subject. Judith's victory and achievement are sanctioned by words of honour from Uzziah in 13:18 –20.

Uzziah's words are a positive recognition of Judith's achievement. These words of honour are further revealed in the speech of Achior in 14:7 that reads as follows:

ὡς δὲ ἀνέλαβον αὐτόν, προσέπεσεν τοῖς ποσὶν Ιουδιθ καὶ προσεκύνησεν
τῷ προσώπῳ αὐτῆς καὶ εἶπεν Εὐλογημένη σὺ ἐν παντὶ σκηνώματι Ιουδα
καὶ ἐν παντὶ ἔθνει, οἵτινες ἀκούσαντες τὸ ὄνομά σου ταραχθήσονται.[7]

In brief, DeSilva (2006:55) states that concerning all that Judith has done, the Elders said that she walks "in a straight path before our God" (13:20) and that "God is well pleased with" her actions (15:10).

Secondly, the songs of praise directed to God may also be seen as her report to the Lord (the addresser and subject adjudicator). After the decapitation of Holofernes, the *Judith* narrative is dominated by songs of praise and thanksgiving specifically directed to the Lord God of Israel. These praises are introduced by Judith in 13:14 when she says:

Αἰνεῖτε τὸν θεόν, αἰνεῖτε, αἰνεῖτε τὸν θεόν, ὃς οὐκ ἀπέστησεν τὸ ἔλεος
αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ οἴκου Ισραηλ, ἀλλ᾽ ἔθραυσε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ἡμῶν διὰ χειρός
μου ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτη.[8]

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[7]   But when they had recovered him, he fell at Judith's feet, and reverenced her, and said, "Blessed are you in all the tabernacles of Judah, and in all nations, which hearing your name shall be astonished".

[8]   Praise, praise God, praise God, for he has not taken away his mercy from the house of

In 13:17 the reader learns that when the people hear the report of Judith they also respond and praise God saying:

Εὐλογητὸς εἶ, ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν ὁ ἐξουδενώσας ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ σήμερον τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τοῦ λαοῦ σου.[9]

This article contends that the report to the Elders (Bethulians included) and God should be regarded as constituting two sanctions. The recognition by the Elders is subject to God's approval. The Elders are not sanctioning her based on any other Law/norm outside the Law of Moses. The people of Bethulia indirectly acknowledge that Judith's achievement is according to the norms established by God. Kanonge (2009:54) emphasises that the addresser, as subject adjudicator, judges the performance of the subject according to the system of values he/she represents. He further indicates that if the actions of the subject were in conformity with the axiology of the universe of the narrative, the subject receives the title of a glorified subject. After her achievement, Judith is glorified and elevated above "all the women upon the earth" (παρὰ πάσας τὰς γυναῖκας τὰς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). In other words, God acknowledges the accomplishment by the subject (Judith).

This study concedes that God does not speak directly in the text. However, it can be argued that He is the object of praises from the entire Jewish nation because of His intervention in Judith's victory. The phrase διὰ χειρός μου ἐν τῇ νυκτὶ ταύτη (by my hand this night) in 13:14 strongly suggest that God's intervention helped the children of Israel to gain victory through the hand of Judith.

The most important verdict with regard to Judith's mission are the words of Judith herself (self-proclamation) in 13:16: καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησεν ἁμάρτημα μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ εἰς μίασμα καὶ αἰσχύνην (and yet he did not commit sin with me to defile and shame me). Judith achieved the victory fairly and managed to keep her relationship with God uncontaminated and the addresser is pleased by the action of Judith, as the text reports in 15:10:

Israel, but has destroyed our enemies by my hands this night.

[9] Blessed are you, O our God, who in this day has brought to naught the enemies of your people.

¹⁰ ἐποίησας ταῦτα πάντα ἐν χειρί σου, ἐποίησας τὰ ἀγαθὰ μετὰ Ισραηλ, καὶ εὐδόκησεν ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς ὁ θεός, εὐλογημένη γίνου παρὰ τῷ παντοκράτορι κυρίῳ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα χρόνον. καὶ εἶπεν πᾶς ὁ λαός Γένοιτο.¹⁰

This can be deemed the overall adjudication of Judith's action by the addresser. God is pleased with what Judith did. The people are celebrating the victory. Therefore, Judith accomplishes her mission successfully and to the honour and glory of Κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ.

CONCLUSION

The endeavour of this article was to investigate the narrative techniques employed by the author in creating Judith, a woman character that was destined to achieve a historic victory for her people and religion. In the first instance, the article contended that, while scholars within the historical critical approaches have done considerably well in investigating the date of the book, the place of its composition, the author, historical and geographical inconsistencies, the aim here was not to dwell on these historical critical issues but to explore/investigate the narrative brilliance of the story. This article contented that there is more to *Judith* than meets the eye, e.g., historical issues.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goal, the narrative analysis of the Greimassian approach was applied. It was established in the discussion of the narrative programme (NP) that *Judith* entails that the heroic performance of Judith brings about a critical development in the story. Judith transforms her state from disjunctive condition (mission to be accomplished) to a conjunctive condition (mission accomplished). The NP of *Judith* further emphasises that the mission in question concerns the preservation of the Jewish people/religion. The discussion of the

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¹⁰ ¹⁰ You have done all these things by your hand; you have done much good to Israel, and God is pleased with these things. Blessed be are you of the Almighty Lord for evermore. And all the people said, "So be it".

canonical narrative schema, traced the trajectory which the subject of doing (Judith) undergoes in pursuing the main object of quest discussed above. The article finally looked at the schema that comprises four different stages of her quest, viz.: contract, competence, performance and sanction.

The investigation of the contract (first stage) revealed that the addresser (The God of Israel) motivates the action and communicates the modalities of desire or obligation (acquisition of wanting-to-do or having-to-do) to Judith. Judith emerges as a character who is more concerned about the danger facing the Jewish religion and shows a desire to defend it. In the second stage (investigation of competence) Judith moves from virtualising modalities of desire to actualising modalities (Knowing-how-to-do and being–able-to-do) that would make it possible for her to carry out an action of saving the Jewish religion. The study further shows that the choice of a woman to resist the Assyrian threats was not mere chance in the story of *Judith*. The third stage investigated the performance by the subject of doing. This stage was only restricted to the events of the killing of Holofernes, following the Greimassian approach. The investigation revealed that the subject acquires the object of her quest by decapitating Holofernes.

It is at this stage that the transfer of the object of quest occurs; the investigation revealed that the death of Holofernes played a critical role in the survival of the Jewish religion. The fourth and last stage (the investigation of the sanction) focused on the assessment of the mission (more specifically the performance) of the subject. The investigation indicates that the performance of Judith was regarded as a success and worthy of reward according to the norms and values within the Jewish religious community. The story ends with the honouring of Judith and praising of the Lord God of Israel.

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