

The Compositional/Narrative Structure of Judith:¹ A Greimassian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The compositional structure of the Judith narrative has evoked the reaction of many OT scholars who focus on Judith. Some scholars allege that part one is flatter in style and that the book is unbalanced in structure. Other scholars² have made insightful contributions against these allegations on Judith. This article endeavours to bring a unique contribution against these allegations, by applying narrative analysis to the narratives, as informed by the Greimassian semiotic approach. The appeal here is to discover how these allegations robbed Judith of the recognition it deserves as a brilliant story. The application of a narrative analysis based on the Greimassian approach reveals that Judith is a well-structured and balanced story containing a noticeable transformation. Subsequently, this article concludes that the two parts of the story are complementary to each other rather than imbalanced as claimed.

Key words: Judith, Greimas, narrative analysis, structure

A INTRODUCTION

Many scholars³ have made significant contributions to the interpretation of the story of *Judith*.⁴ Jordaan⁵ concedes that at first glance, the *Judith* narrative seems to be just another story with a sad beginning and a good ending. However, one does not have to read long before realising that *Judith* is more complicated than it may seem at first glance. One of the most debated aspects of the story is its alleged poor compositional structure and style. This allegation triggered the interest of some *Judith* scholars. To give an example: the study of Toni Craven⁶ and her doctoral thesis⁷ deserves some recognition in this regard.

¹ **Article submitted:** 2014/02/20; **accepted:** 2014/06/02.

² Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 76-77.

³ Moore, *Judith*, 76-77.

⁴ The book *Judith* will be referred to in italics (*Judith*), and the character Judith in normal font (Judith). Mieke Bal, "Head Hunting: Judith on the Cutting Edge of Knowledge," in *A Feminist Companion to Ester, Judith and Susanna* (ed. Athalya Brenner; London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 253-287.

⁵ Pierre J. Jordaan, "Reading Susanna as Therapeutic Narrative," *JSem* 17/1 (2009): 331.

⁶ Toni Craven, "Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith," *Semeia* 8 (1977): 75-101.

Through her literary/rhetorical study of *Judith*, Craven shows that the narrative of *Judith* is both "balanced and proportioned."⁸ She further concludes, after analysing the story rhetorically, that there are definite, intentional connections between the two sections of the story on the level of both thematics and vocabulary. To my mind, Toni Craven's work is the only research that intensively tackles the alleged poor compositional structure and style of *Judith*. Other than Craven's work, a number of articles have been published that address various issues that arise regarding the narrative. To mention but a few: Branch and Jordaan⁹ investigated the significance of secondary characters in *Judith*, Efthimiadis-Keith¹⁰ contributed on the possible Egyptian origin for the Book of *Judith*, and she further published a paper in which she investigated the links between the feminist ethics of care, justice, autonomy and the self in relation to certain practices in feminist biblical interpretation, focusing on *Judith*.¹¹ Jordaan and Hobyane¹² also did a literary study on ethics, gender and the rhetoric of the Judith narrative and Efthimiadis-Keith¹³ has shown that there is currently a lively interest in studying *Judith* from a feminist point of view. Lastly, Jordaan¹⁴ interprets *Judith* as a therapeutic narrative, arguing that the function of the narrative is to advocate a more equal society during times of war. These contributions proved that there is much that the text of Judith can offer.

B PROBLEM STATEMENT

While appreciating the contributions made by the scholars mentioned above, Toni Craven's in particular, the contention here is that it appears that no other scholar working on *Judith* has ever focused on the alleged poor compositional structure and style of *Judith* by using a Greimassian approach. Before the study of Craven, scholars have reacted to the organisational/compositional structure of the two parts of *Judith* in a variety of ways. For many, the *Judith* narrative is

⁷ Toni Craven, *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith* (Chicago, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1983).

⁸ Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, *The Enemy is Within* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2004), 25.

⁹ Robin G. Branch and Pierre J. Jordaan, "The Significance of the Secondary Characters in Susanna, Judith, and the Additions to Esther in the Septuagint," *APB* 20/55 (2009): 389-416.

¹⁰ Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, "Judith, Feminist Ethics and Feminist Biblical/Old Testament Interpretation," *JTSA* 138 (2010): 91-111.

¹¹ Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, "On the Egyptian Origin of Judith or Judith as Anath-Yahu," *JSem* 20/1 (2011): 300-322.

¹² Pierre J. Jordaan and Risimati S. Hobyane, "Writing and Reading War: Rhetoric, Gender, and Ethics in Judith," *EkkPh* 91 (2009): 238-247.

¹³ Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy*, 93.

¹⁴ Pierre J. Jordaan, "Reading Judith as Therapeutic Narrative," in *Septuagint and Reception* (ed. Johann Cook; VTSup 127; Leiden: Brill Academic Supplements, 2009), 331-442.

imbalanced, as it consists of two unequal parts, chs. 1-7 and 8-16. This perspective is held by scholars like, Alonso-Schökel, Dancy and Craghan as referenced in Efthimiadis-Keith.¹⁵ Moreover, Cowley as referenced by Craven,¹⁶ puts forward that the book of *Judith* is "out of proportion" because of an overly long introduction (1-7) to the "story proper" (8-16). Dancy also, as cited by Efthimiadis-Keith,¹⁷ regards Part 1 as "duller in thought and flatter in style," because it fails to provide a historical setting with the "economy" and "accuracy a modern reader looks for."

The central hypothesis here is that the application of the narrative analysis of the Greimassian approach reveals not only that *Judith* is a well-structured and balanced story, but also that *Judith* is a story with a noticeable transformation in it. The study of transformation will further help to reveal the relation between the initial and the final sequence in *Judith*. This article aims at bringing a new contribution by analysing the two parts of the story and further establishes the complementary significance of one part to the other.

This is a unique contribution in that instead of taking a historical critical route of analysing narrative texts, it employs a Greimassian semiotic approach which accepts, appreciates and analyses a story as a whole without discrediting any of its parts. To the researcher's knowledge, *Judith* has not been analysed this way in many instances.

C METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Greimassian semiotics is a general theory of meaning. According to Kanonge,¹⁸ this theory consists of exploring semiotic objects at three different levels of analysis: the figurative, narrative and thematic. This article focuses on the second of the three analyses that form part of the Greimassian approach, that is, the narrative analysis. The narrative analysis examines the organisation of a text as 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. According to Martin and Ringham,¹⁹ the tools for investigation here are the actantial model (also called actantial narrative schema) and the narrative syntax. Aspects of importance addressed in relation to this level of analysis are: the structure of the story (the relation between the initial and final state of the narrative, in particular), the actantial model and canonical narrative schema.

¹⁵ Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy*, 23-27.

¹⁶ Craven, *Artistry and Faith*, 8.

¹⁷ Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy*, 24.

¹⁸ Dihck M. Kanonge, "The Emergence of Women in the LXX Apocrypha" (DLitt et Phil diss., Northwest University, 2012).

¹⁹ Bronwen Martin and Felizitas Ringham, *Dictionary of Semiotics* (London: Cassel, 2000), 9.

This article only focuses on the aspects which contribute to addressing the alleged compositional imbalance of the story, namely the structure of the story and the relation between the initial and final state of the narrative.

D THE COMPOSITIONAL STRUCTURE OF *JUDITH*

1 The Structure of Judith

This section focuses on establishing the position of this article concerning the alleged questionable compositional relation between the two parts of the book of *Judith* (Jdt 1-7 and 8-16), before embarking on a detailed narrative analysis of the book. This is important because the Greimassian semiotic analysis treats the story as a structural whole. In summary, the two parts of the *Judith* narrative can be divided as follows:²⁰

Chapters 1-7 (Part 1)

- 1 Introduction to Nebuchadnezzar and his campaigns against Arphaxad (1:1-16)
- 2 Nebuchadnezzar commissions Holofernes to take vengeance on the disobedient nations (2:1-13)
- 3 Development
 - A The campaign against the disobedient nations; the people surrender (2:14-3:10)
 - B Israel hears and is "greatly terrified"; Joachim orders war preparations (4:1-15)
 - C Holofernes talks with Achior. Achior is expelled from the Assyrian camp (5:1-6:11)
 - C' Achior is received into Bethulia; he talks with the people of Israel (6:12-21)
 - B' Holofernes orders war preparations; Israel sees and is "greatly terrified" (7:1-5)
 - A' The campaign against Bethulia; the people want to surrender (7:6-32)

Chapters 8-16 (Part 2)

- A Introduction to Judith (8:1-8)
 - B Judith plans to save Israel (8:9-10:8)
 - C Judith and her maid leave Bethulia (10:9-10)
 - D Judith conquers Holofernes (10:11-13:10a)
 - C' Judith and her maid return to Bethulia (13:10b-11)
 - B' Judith plans the destruction of Israel's enemy (13:12-16:20)
- A' Conclusion of Judith (16:21-25)

²⁰ Craven, "Artistry and Faith," 75-101.

As shown above and mentioned before, *Judith* is a narrative in two parts. Part I begins with successful campaigns by Nebuchadnezzar and his commission to his army general, Holofernes. Holofernes is ordered to advance Nebuchadnezzar's ambition of having all the people and nations worship him (Nebuchadnezzar) as god. He is commanded to destroy the nations – including Israel, who refuses to comply with Nebuchadnezzar's command. The story continues with the description of the threat posed by Holofernes' army to the city of Bethulia, Jerusalem and the temple.

Part II deals with the introduction of the protagonist, Judith, and her plan to save Israel. Harrington²¹ asserts that this part reveals how God saves Israel through the hand of Judith.

In summary, the first part of the narrative describes Israel facing a crisis due to the ambitious plan of Nebuchadnezzar to control the entire existing world (1-7). Israel lacks courage and urges her leaders to surrender. The second part of the book (8:1-16:25) is the story of how God saves Israel through the hand of a woman called Judith, as Jordaan and Hobyane²² asserts.

As already alluded to, biblical scholars have reacted to the two parts of *Judith* in a variety of ways. For many, the *Judith* narrative is imbalanced as it consists of two unequal parts, chs. 1-7 and 8-16 (cf. Alonso-Schökel, Dancy, and Craghan, as referenced in Efthimiadis-Keith).²³ Winter as cited by Moore,²⁴ is kinder in criticising by suggesting that "[t]he *Judith* narrative is slightly disproportionate in its parts." This article is of the opinion that the views of Dancy, Winter, Cowley and Craghan (mentioned above) have, for many years, robbed *Judith* of the recognition of its value and brilliance as a narrative with a transformational character. However, following Craven's²⁵ rhetorical criticism of *Judith*, Efthimiadis-Keith²⁶ observes that most modern scholarship acknowledges the necessity of both "parts" or sections of *Judith* and the structural integrity of the text as we have it today. De Silva²⁷ also acknowledges the structural brilliance of the *Judith* narrative, noting that "the careful structuring of this balanced work attests to the literary artistry of the author."

²¹ Daniel J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 27.

²² Jordaan and Hobyane, "Writing and Reading," 238.

²³ Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy*, 24.

²⁴ Moore, *Judith*, 56.

²⁵ Craven, *Artistry and Faith*, 1983.

²⁶ Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy*, 24.

²⁷ David A. De Silva, *Introducing the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002), 88.

Nickelsburg²⁸ concurs with De Silva that *Judith* is a literary work of considerable artistic merit. He argues that chs. 1-7 actually constitute the first half of a carefully crafted literary diptych, in which the second part (chs. 8-16) resolves events and issues presented in the first part. Craven's work (see 1.3.1) has made an insightful contribution to the alleged structural imbalance of *Judith*. It establishes that both parts exhibit highly refined and carefully crafted architectural patterns that contribute to the meaning of the story. The study of Craven²⁹ further shows that to excerpt a few verses or chapters from Part II, for example about the deed of the woman Judith, is to do violence to the whole of the story.

In summary, this article observes that *Judith* scholars such as Moore, Harrington, Nickelsburg, Efthimiadis-Keith and De Silva, as cited above, generally agree that the story of *Judith* comprises two main parts, traditionally named Part I and II, which are not "disproportionate" or "imbalanced," as some scholars would suggest, but are nonetheless fairly complementary to each other. The present study considers the first part of the story as a necessary preparation for the second, without which the act of Judith itself in Part II would be without context. Therefore, the acknowledgement of the necessity of these two parts as complementary halves is indispensable. This article observes further that it is unfortunate that many of the scholars mentioned above stopped their contribution after establishing the complementary nature of the two parts of *Judith*. They do not substantiate it by going into other aspects or further details of the story. Following the Greimassian semiotic approach, this article intends to investigate the relation between the initial and the final sequences in *Judith*, as they add value in the compositional brilliance of the story.

2 The Initial and Final Sequence in Judith

According to Kanonge³⁰ the primary condition for the existence of narrative structures is transformation. Everaert-Desmedt³¹ states that there is no way to think of a narrative starting and ending without change. Martin and Ringham³² support this idea, arguing that "in order for there to be any story there must be a transformation." According to Greimas,³³ transformation accounts for what happens when a narrative progresses from one state to the other or includes a categorical movement from one state (initial state) to another (final state).

²⁸ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 99.

²⁹ Craven, *Artistry and Faith*, 1983.

³⁰ Kanonge, "Emergence of Women," 126.

³¹ Nicole Everaert-Desmedt, *Semiotique du Recit* (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2007), 16-17.

³² Martin and Ringham, *Dictionary*, 136.

³³ Algirdas J. Greimas, *On Meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 123, 167.

According to Kanonge,³⁴ narrative transformations generally occur in terms of “lack (state of disjunction) versus settling of lack (state of conjunction)” or “mission given versus mission accomplished.” The researcher’s extensive reading of *Judith* has shown that *Judith* is fertile ground for this type of investigation. Judith’s compositional structure calls for an in-depth analysis of this matter.

This investigation, of the relation between the initial and the final sequence in *Judith* proceeds from the point of departure that *Judith* is an orderly crafted literary unit that comprises two complementary parts (Part I and Part II). This study postulates that the initial and final sequences introduce and conclude the relationship between the main opposition in the story. The main opposition in *Judith* is between the Israelites (represented by Judith) and the Assyrians (represented by Holofernes). In addition, the relation or opposition of desires in the story is well-covered in both parts of the narrative.

The study of initial and final sequence is another way of reading *Judith* and realising its compositional brilliance and this may help a reader to read this narrative with a different focus. The focus here is on the unfolding of the story, starting from the threat to the existence of Jewish people/religion posed by the Assyrian army to the preservation of the Jewish people/religion. According to Martin and Ringham,³⁵ the general passage from one state of affairs to another can be illustrated on a semantic axis as follows:

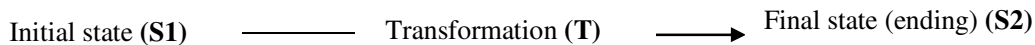


Figure 2.1 Relation between the beginning and ending of the Judith narrative

The situation in **S1** introduces the problem (lack/mission to be accomplished) to be addressed, while **S2** presents the settlement of the lack/mission accomplished. The **S1 and S2** states represent Part I and Part II of the story respectively. The situation in **T** is the critical point of transformation in the story. One of the main problems *Judith* seeks to address is to help the Jewish religion, under the leadership of the ἄρχοντες (governors) and πρεσβυτέροι (elders), to survive the threat of extinction by the Assyrians. Therefore, the situation in **S1** is that of the Jewish religion in crisis, while the situation in **S2** is that of the Jewish religion surviving/having survived extinction.

The narrative indicates in 7:31 that the elders are about to surrender the city just before the introduction of the protagonist, Judith. Therefore, this arti-

³⁴ Kanonge, “Emergence of Women,” 126.

³⁵ Martin and Ringham, *Dictionary*, 136.

cle observes that the role played by the elders and governors in **S1** is significant and constitutes a major compositional part of the narrative. Therefore, this aspect deserves brief attention and illustration.

Thus, a reading focused on the elders/governors of Bethulia can be presented as part of the structure in the following manner:

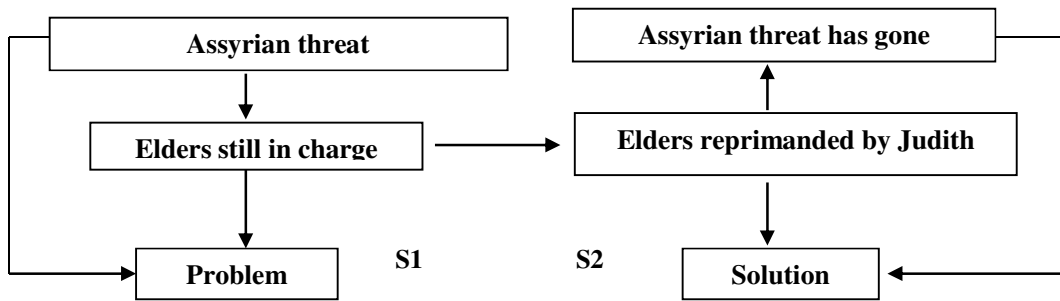


Figure 2.2 Relation between the beginning and ending in *Judith* focusing on the elders of Bethulia

The schematic representation (Fig. 2.2) on the one hand shows that the Jewish religion under the leadership of the elders experiences problems. It seems that the elders in **S1** do not have a firm vision for the survival of the Jewish religion. However, the representation shows on the other hand that after Judith reprimands the elders in **S2**, the Jewish people have hope for survival.

The role of the Bethulian elders in their state of fear and uncertainty can thus contribute to the destruction of the city and the extinction of the Jewish religion. However, it must be indicated that the elders and governors are not the only contributors to the situation in **S1**. The main contributor of the situation in **S1** is in the person of Holofernes. Holofernes incites fear among the Jews by propagating that Nebuchadnezzar should be worshipped as the only god by all the people, including the Jews.

Similarly, a reading focused on the presence of Holofernes (Assyrian threat) can be presented as part of the structure in the following manner:

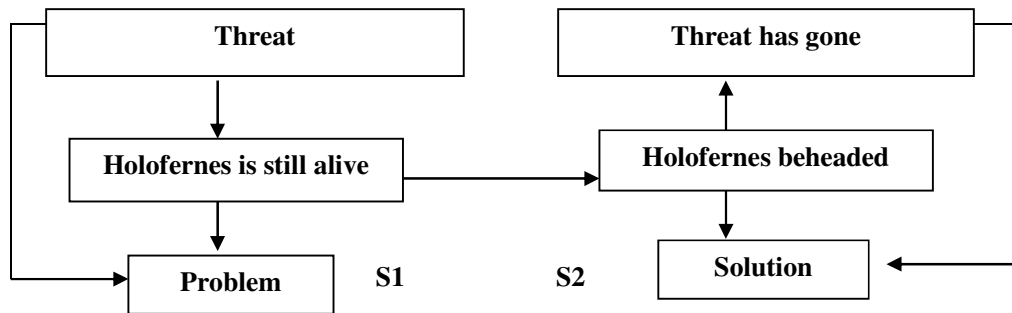
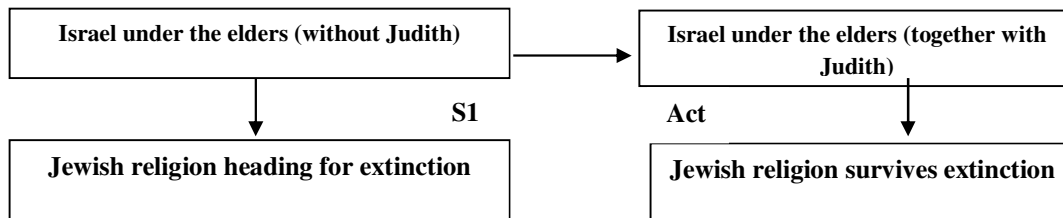


Figure 2.3 Relation between the beginning and ending in *Judith* focusing on the presence of Holofernes

Fig. 2.3 illustrates how the existence of Holofernes in the Assyrian camp constantly bears a threat to the nation of Israel, perhaps of possible extinction. Holofernes is indeed a real threat to the existence of the Jews and their religion. This is clear because, after his death, Israel suddenly experiences victory, peace and stability. Jerusalem and the temple (Jewish religion) are finally safe. The Jewish religion is no longer in crisis; it has survived the threat of extinction. This development is well-covered by both parts of the story.

In summary, from the perspective of the Jewish religion and the role played by Judith within the Jewish religious community (Judith versus the elders/governors) the transformation can be schematically presented as follows:



2.4 Relation between the beginning and ending in *Judith* focusing on the presence of Judith within the Jewish religious community

Fig. 2.4 emphasises the role played by Judith (the subject of doing) in saving the Jewish religion. The schematic representation further shows that the presence of the Elders/governors alone, in **S1**, could not save the religion without Judith’s brave involvement in **S2**. From the perspective of the Jewish religion with reference to the impending Assyrian threat (Judith versus Holofernes) the problem presents itself as follows:

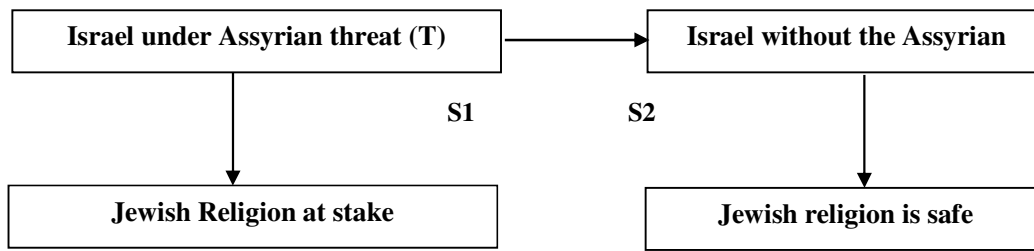


Figure 2.5 Relation between the beginning and ending in *Judith*, focusing on Israel (Jewish religion)

The schematic representation (Fig. 2.5) shows that unless something is done to stop the Assyrian threat, the Jewish religion will always be under threat and in crisis. Therefore, the whole story of *Judith* can be summarised by the following transformational function:

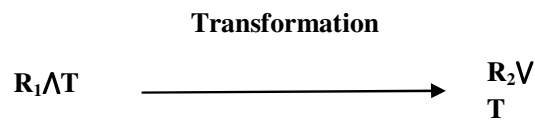


Figure 2.6 The function of transformation underlying the relation between Jewish religion under threat and its survival.

Fig. 2.6 illustrates the transformation of the Jewish religion (designated as **R**) from a religion under threat of extinction (designated as **R₁**) on account of the Assyrians and the presence of Holofernes, to a religion that survives extinction (designated as **R₂**) under Judith. In a Greimassian semiotic approach/terms, the unfolding of the story is a transformation from a state of disjunction (designated as \wedge) (mission to be accomplished by Judith) to a state of conjunction (designated as \vee) (mission accomplished). In this representation, the subject of transformation is the Jewish religion.

It should be noted, however, that transformation in the narrative does not take place by chance or automatically. Martin and Ringham³⁶ state that transformation can correspond to the performance of the subject, who thereby becomes a subject of doing. Transformation in the *Judith* narrative does not happen until the introduction of Judith (protagonist) and the role played by all helpers around her. Therefore, the figure of Judith is the subject of doing in the narrative. The point here is that Judith's heroic actions bring about transformation within the Jewish religion. Therefore the schematic representation Fig. 2.6 can be read as follows: Judith causes the Jewish religion to be transformed from a religion under threat of extinction to a religion that survives extinction.

³⁶ Martin and Ringham, *Dictionary*, 136.

In this case, the story of *Judith*, focusing on the heroic action of Judith, can be summarised as follows:³⁷



Figure 2.7 The function of transformation illustrating the heroic action of Judith.

The illustration Fig. 2.7, in simple terms, asserts that Judith’s involvement saves her people and their religion from the impending threat by the Assyrians. Following this transformation in the narrative, in terms of the Greimassian semiotic approach, the figure of Judith is characterised by a *transformation doing*, Martin & Ringham.³⁸ Efthimiadis-Keith³⁹ further observes that Judith goes through transformation herself, which she effects in order to bring about the situational transformation. Judith’s beautification process constitutes this transformation.

It should be noted, however, that Judith does not bring about transformation in the story by herself. She achieves victory through the help of God. Nickelsburg⁴⁰ for instance observes that Judith’s prayer wins the help of God. The Lord God of Israel is intimately involved in her victory (12:7).

The focus at this present moment is on the involvement of Lord God of Israel, who plays a significant role in both parts of the *Judith* narrative. In **S1** he is the receiver of the prayers of the Jewish people. In **S2**, Judith’s pious character points to her relationship and her dependence on God’s help. For example when she beheads Holofernes, she prays, “Κραταίωσόν με, κύριε ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ, ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ” (Strengthen me, O Lord God of Israel, in this day) (13:7). The Lord God of Israel gives her the strength to destroy the enemy and to consequently bring a change of circumstance in her community. The whole nation is filled with joy and sings songs of praise; it is no longer full of fear and confusion. Given Judith’s heroic action and the Lord’s intervention, the story may be summarised as follows:



Figure 2.8 The function of transformation illustrating the involvement of Κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ

In summary, the schematic representation in Fig. 2.8 focuses on the beginning and the ending of the narrative and shows that *Judith* is indeed a unified whole, thus confirming Craven’s findings (ch. 1, 1.3.1). The situation in

³⁷ Cf. Greimas, *On Meaning*, 123

³⁸ Martin and Ringham, *Dictionary*, 136.

³⁹ Efthimiadis-Keith, *Enemy*, 250.

⁴⁰ Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 98.

the initial (**S1**) and final state (**S2**), according to Fig. 2.1, does not refer to either Part I or Part II separately, but to the whole story from chs. 1 to 16. Judith’s heroic act is thus seen as one of the scenes which contributes to the process of transformation, as the Jewish religion transforms from being under threat of extinction to surviving extinction.

The subsequent survival of the Jewish religion, the praising of the Lord (13:17) and the honouring of Judith’s brave act (13:18) confirm two important facts with regard to the compositional brilliance and transformation in the story. First, it confirms that the narrative ends honourably in favour of Judith and that her brave action benefits the community and saves the Jewish people and their religion. While this article observes that this honourable ending takes place in Part II of the story, it should not automatically suggest that Part II of *Judith* is more important than Part I. Second, it confirms that Judith challenges and reverses the initial state (**S1**) in Part II, namely the Assyrian threat and the claim that Nebuchadnezzar is god. In other words, the story develops from the religious claims of the Assyrians and their threats to the affirmation or acknowledgment that *Κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ* is the real God.

Therefore, the main structure of the story, focusing on the heroic achievement of Judith, may be represented as follows:



Figure 2.9 Relation between the beginning and ending in Judith highlighting religion as one of the key issues in Judith.

Figure 2.9 illustrates how the God of Israel was undermined by the claim of the Assyrians (Part I) and how the Jewish religion survived the threat of extinction (Part II). Judith’s introduction (preceded by the role of Achior) in the story serves as a turning point towards the religious freedom of Israel and the acknowledgment of *Κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἰσραηλ* as the one and only God.

In summary, the study of the initial and the final sequences in the *Judith* narrative underlines the transformation of the Jewish religion from threat of extinction to survival as the narrative’s main concern. This study takes a view that the existence of both the Jews and Jewish religion are inseparable. One cannot speak of the Jews without speaking of the Jewish religion. Judith’s transformational doing consists of preserving the lives of her people and the existence of the Jewish religion. This eventually brings honour to the Lord God of Israel and further proves that he is the one and only real God.

Judith’s ending shows that a religious reversal eventually occurs in the Jewish community. This ending thus helps to clarify the possible inten-

tion/purpose of the story’s structure with a beginning (Assyrian success/claims) and ending that focuses on Judith’s success and the Assyrians’ failure. This aspect is discussed in detail in the following subsection.

3 The Logic of the Ending of *Judith*

According to Kanonge,⁴¹ the ending of a narrative is subject to an intentional communicational strategy of the author/editor. Kanonge⁴² further states that the ending of a narrative is generally the place where the audience learns something to practice or avoid. Success or failure at this stage is always revealed. The *Judith* narrative, in this instance, is no exception to this kind of literary art by the author. For example, following the Greimassian semiotic approach, the logical structure of *Judith’s* ending with its focus on Judith can be presented graphically as follows:

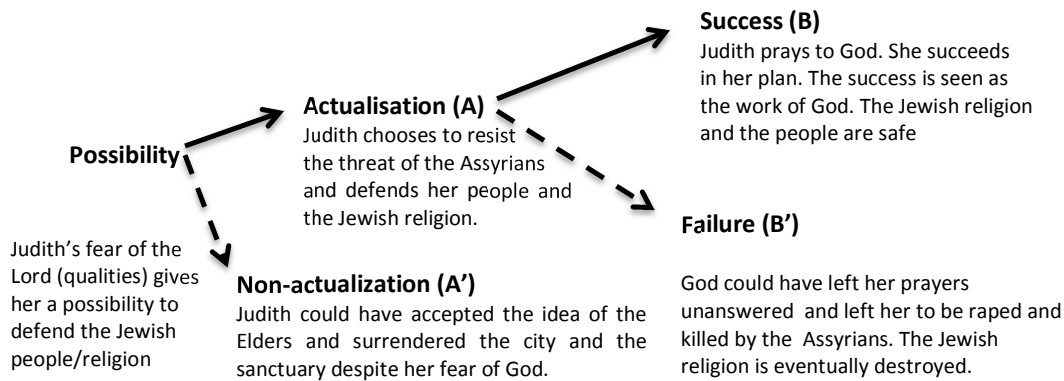


Figure 3.1 The ending of the Judith narrative focusing on Judith

Figures 3.1 shows that the author of *Judith* had at least one other possibility for ending his/her story. **A** and **B** (with continuous lines) in each diagram, illustrate the intentional choice of the author to compose or tell the story of *Judith* as we know it today.

The illustrations **A'** and **B'** in Fig. 3.1 show another open possibility of narrating the story of *Judith*. First, the author could have told his/her story and make Holofernes refuse to carry on with Nebuchadnezzar’s commission (non-actualisation). Second, an open possibility was available for the author to have told the story in such a way that Holofernes succeeds in sleeping with Judith and carries on with Nebuchadnezzar’s commission of destroying the Jewish people as he did with other nations.

⁴¹ Kanonge, “Emergence of Women,” 135.

⁴² Kanonge, “Emergence of Women,” 135.

The alternative possibilities of endings to the narrative from which the author could have chosen suggest that the current ending of *Judith* was an intentional choice of the author. From this discussion, it becomes clear that the structure of *Judith* was purposefully designed by the author. It seems that the conviction of the author is to urge the Jews to defend the honour of the Lord God of Israel against the claim of the Assyrians.

Therefore, the reading of *Judith* from the perspective of Holofernes (Assyrians), the schema can be represented as follows:

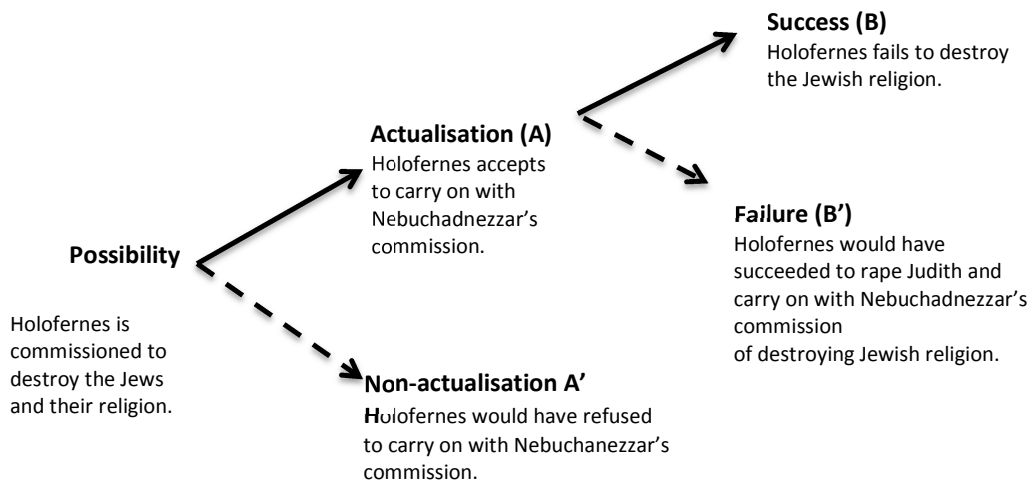


Figure 3.2 The ending of the Judith narrative focusing on Holofernes (Assyrians)

The choice of the author to tell the story as he/she prefers, reveals his/her motivation for the story.⁴³ The choice of the author may also reveal his/her conviction about certain matters in his/her community. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show that the author of *Judith* had at least one other possibility for ending his/her story. **A** and **B** (with continuous lines) in each diagram, illustrate the intentional choice of the author to tell the story of *Judith* (both Part I and II) as we know it today.

The ending of *Judith* as illustrated in Fig. 3.1, suggests that the author had a few other possibilities in composing the story. The author could have illustrated Judith as easily falling for both the undecided stance of the elders and the schemes of Holofernes, despite her God fearing quality as shown in 8:8 (ἐφοβείτο τὸν θεὸν σφόδρα – she feared God greatly) and 11:17 (θεοσεβής – a religious woman).

The illustration **A'** and **B'** in Fig. 3.2 show another open possibility for narrating the story of *Judith*. First, the author could have told his/her story and

⁴³ Kanonge, "Emergence of Women," 136.

make Holofernes refuse to carry on with Nebuchadnezzar's commission (non-actualisation). Second, an open possibility was available for the author to have told the story in such a way that Holofernes succeeds in sleeping with Judith and carries on with Nebuchadnezzar's commission of destroying the Jewish people as he did with other nations.

The alternative possibilities of endings to the narrative from which the author could have chosen suggest that the current ending of *Judith* was an intentional choice of the author. From this discussion, it becomes clear that the compositional structure of *Judith* was purposefully designed by the author to address the matters affecting the community of his time. It seems that the conviction of the author is to urge the Jews to defend the honour of the Lord God of Israel against the claim of the Assyrians.⁴⁴

The following section examines the actantial organisation of *Judith* in order to contribute further to the semiotic exploration of the narrative.

E CONCLUSION

This article comprises the summary of the findings of a narrative analysis of *Judith* as informed by the Greimassian semiotic approach. The point of contest centred on the alleged compositional imbalance of the structure of *Judith*. The aim of the article was to demonstrate that there is more to the story than just judging its value by a mere compositional structure. The application of the narrative analysis reveals that the first part of *Judith* is a necessary preparation for the second part, without which the act of Judith itself in Part II would be without context. Therefore, the acknowledgement of the necessity of these two parts as complementary halves is indispensable.

The finding in the analysis of the relation between the beginning and ending of the *Judith* narrative compels the reader to realise (instead of dwelling on the fruitless arguments of the compositional structure) that the Jewish religion is under severe threat of extinction in the beginning of the narrative (Part I). However, the ending of the story radically opposes the claim and threats by the Assyrians and the Jewish religion emerge victorious through the transformational doing by the main character, Judith (Part II). The discussion of the ending of the story has revealed (Fig. 2.9) that the subject of doing (Judith) is no longer in disjunction (\wedge) with the object of quest, but in conjunction (\vee) with the object. This means, therefore, that the compositional structure of *Judith* progresses from "mission to be accomplished" to "mission accomplished," instead of the so called "imbalanced and disproportionate."

⁴⁴ Risimati S. Hobyane, "A Greimassian Semiotic Analysis of Judith" (D.Lit. et Phil. diss., Northwest University, 2012).

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