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## Signs of Greek Education in the Book of Judith

Jacob P.B. Mortensen  
Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark  
teojmo@cas.au.dk

### Abstract

This article examines Judith's prayer in chapter 9 of the Book of Judith from the perspective of the guidelines on speech-in-character found in Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata* (mid/end of the first century CE). According to the guidelines, it is important for an author of prose to achieve correspondence between the literary persona and the actual speech-in-character. This article examines the extent to which Judith's prayer in chapter 9 observes Theon's guidelines, as well as the theological implications of this.

### Keywords

The Book of Judith – *Progymnasmata* – speech-in-character – rhetoric and theology – the original language of the Book of Judith

In 2013, Deborah L. Gera argued that the author of the Book of Judith quite often writes “idiomatic, even elegant Greek.”<sup>1</sup> Gera argued convincingly from a linguistic and literary-historical perspective that, especially in the speeches of Judith, the author reveals a rich and varied Greek style and knowledge of Greek literature.<sup>2</sup> This argument was presented in the context of the question of the original language of the Book of Judith: whether it was written originally in Hebrew or Greek.<sup>3</sup>

This article will further strengthen the case concerning the literary quality of the speeches in the Book of Judith. The discussion about the original language of the Book of Judith—whether or not it is a translated text—will not be addressed. Instead, a perspective based on ancient Greco-Roman literate education will be introduced.<sup>4</sup> This perspective has not been pursued before and is rather innovative.<sup>5</sup> It will further illuminate the quality, skill and well-composed nature of the speeches in

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<sup>1</sup> Gera, “Speech,” 415.

<sup>2</sup> Gera, 417.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion about the original language of the Book of Judith, see Joosten, “Original Language”; Priebatsch, “Buch Judith”; Caponigro, “Holding the Tale”; Schmitz, “Funktion der Reden,” 221; Moore, *Judith*, 66-67. Robert Hanhart opens his book on Judith from 1979 like this: “Der griechische Text des Buches Judith ist ein Übersetzungstext” (*Text und Geschichte*, 9). Toni Craven provides an overview of scholarship on Judith until 2001, including text-critical approaches and the relation of the Greek text to original Hebrew manuscripts (“Book of Judith,” 198-99).

<sup>4</sup> See Marrou, *History of Education*; Bonner, *Education in Antiquity*; Criboire, *Writing, Teachers, Gymnastics*; Morgan, *Literate Education*; Booth, “Elementary and Secondary Education”; Booth, “Schooling of Slaves”; Kaster, “Primary and Secondary”; Webb, “*Progymnasmata*.” Judith was probably written in the years before the Roman conquest of Palestine (63 BCE). Hence, the author could not have received a Greco-Roman education if he did indeed live in Palestine. However, the educational system we know from the Roman period repeated Hellenistic patterns and closely resembled its Greek predecessor. Therefore, it makes sense to designate the ancient literate education by which the author of Judith may have been influenced “Greco-Roman,” even if it was “merely” Hellenistic.

<sup>5</sup> McDowell sums up the general approach to prayers in the Hebrew Bible and states that in terms of form, scholars have applied a form-critical approach (*Prayers*, 21). My approach differs from the traditional form-critical approach in two ways: first, I work from a (roughly) contemporary rhetorical theory applied to Judith's prayer, that is, Theon's guidelines on speech-in-character in his *Progymnasmata*. The consequence of this is a historically more plausible analysis (more emic to Judith itself), since the author of Judith may have used similar rhetorical theories. Second, I do not apply (modern) forms

Judith.<sup>6</sup> The contours of current scholarly debate serve to contextualise the rhetorical approach offered here. The rhetorical guidelines on how to write a speech in a narrative composition come from the *Progymnasmata* of Aelius Theon (mid/end of the first century CE) in his chapter on προσωποποιία.<sup>7</sup> Theon probably wrote his work on exercises in prose composition in Alexandria, and addressed it to other teachers who also taught grammar and rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> Even though Theon's work may post-date the Book of Judith,<sup>9</sup> it provides a relatively contemporary entry into the logic of composing speeches in ancient literary works. It may reasonably be argued that the author of Judith followed certain commonly taught patterns and guidelines (perhaps from some unknown *Progymnasmata*) when giving voice to the characters inhabiting the story.<sup>10</sup> This article will demonstrate that the speeches in the Book of Judith conform to guidelines similar to those of Theon's *Progymnasmata*, and that they exhibit significant amounts of literary, stylistic and rhetorical qualities that support the claim that the author of Judith wrote Greek with a certain level of competence.

## 1 Previous approaches to the speeches in the Book of Judith

Several scholars have studied Judith's speech or prayer in chapter 9, the majority approaching the text as a prayer.<sup>11</sup> A rhetorical analysis attentive to literary speeches, like the one applied here, differs from such an approach. A literary or rhetorical approach focuses more on rhetorical patterns, educational guidelines and literary know-how from ancient theoretical guidelines in order to see how these may be reflected in the text. This is different from determining Judith 9 as a prayer and searching for generic features, as Géza Xeravits does in his 2012 study.<sup>12</sup> It also differs from looking at Judith's prayer as a scripturalization of prayer during the Second temple Period. Such an approach can be found in the work of Judith Newman,<sup>13</sup> who argues that prayer and praying became a central feature of religious life in the Second Temple Period.<sup>14</sup> Sabine Van Den Eynde analyses Judith's prayer

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based on the content of the prayer. McDowell mentions four types of prayer: praise and thanksgiving, petition, intercession, and lament (21).

<sup>6</sup> The work of Lawrence Wills on the Book of Judith may also be said to support this claim on a more general level (*Jewish Novels*, 132-57).

<sup>7</sup> Patillon and Bolognesi, *Aelius Théon*; cf. also Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*; Butts, *Progymnasmata of Theon*.

<sup>8</sup> See Hock and O'Neil, "Aelius Theon"; Webb, "Progymnasmata," 293-94; Criboire, *Gymnastics*, 185-219. Joosten argues that the Book of Judith was written in Alexandria and that Alexandrian Judaism was responsible for the composition of the book ("Original Language," 203). If Judith was indeed composed in Alexandria, and if we can assume an Alexandrian tradition of *Progymnasmata* preceding Theon—a tradition in which he partakes—then the Book of Judith and the tradition of Theon's *Progymnasmata* would be brought close together. This is speculative, but not impossible. Moore argues that Judith was written in Palestine "with no traces of Alexandrian ... influences" (Moore, *Judith*, 71).

<sup>9</sup> The First Epistle to the Corinthians by Clement of Rome is the first source to mention Judith explicitly. The letter is dated to 95-97 CE and serves as a *terminus ante quem* for the dating of Judith in general. A plausible date for Judith is 100 BCE, give or take a decade or two at either end (see Gera, *Judith*, 26-44; Moore, *Judith*, 67-70).

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this article, I presume that the author of Judith was male. For discussions of whether the female character of Judith has been masculinised, and which male and female voices Judith bears witness to, see Gera, *Judith*, 98-109; Caponigro, "Holding the Tale," 47-59; Van Henten, "Alternative Leader," 245-52.

<sup>11</sup> The definition of prayer varies, but these scholars all confirm that Jdt 9:2-14 is a prayer: Xeravits, "Supplication"; Newman, *Praying*, 118; Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 1-4; Van Den Eynde, "Crying to God"; Gera, *Judith*, 296; McDowell, *Prayers*, 47-51; Moore, *Judith*, 194-97. Flusser, "Psalms," does not consider Judith's prayer, even though his chapter is concerned with "Psalms, Hymns and Prayers" of the Second Temple period. None of these scholars address the composition of Judith's prayer from the perspective of Greco-Roman rhetorical analysis of speeches.

<sup>12</sup> Xeravits points out to "hear" (εἰσάκουσον, 9:4), "break" and "bring down" (ῥάξον and κάταξον, 9:8), "look at," "send your wrath" and "give to me ... strong hand" (βλέψον, ἀπόστειλον τὴν ὀργήν σου and δὸς ἐν χειρὶ μου ... κράτος, 9:9), "strike down" and "crush" (πάταξον and θραῦσον, 9:10). Xeravits regards this as vocabulary belonging to the supplication of an individual faced with severe challenges by enemies ("Supplication," 161).

<sup>13</sup> Newman, *Praying*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Flusser states that "we can learn about various types of Jewish piety in the Second Temple period" by analysing the psalms, hymns and prayers of this period ("Psalms," 551). However, he immediately modifies this statement by pointing

in chapter 9 (and the other prayers in Judith) as a telltale of characterisation and plot.<sup>15</sup> Even though character and plot play significant roles in a rhetorical or literary approach to Judith's prayer, there is a methodological difference in approaching the text from ancient or modern literary categories. Van Den Eynde works from modern narratological categories rather than ancient and historically contextualised categories. By approaching Judith's prayer from this perspective, the analysis becomes more etic than emic, meaning less historically contextualised regarding theoretical literary matters.

One of the most prevalent approaches to the Book of Judith comes from gender studies and feminist criticism.<sup>16</sup> These approaches often mention Judith's prayer in chapter 9, but it rarely plays a key role.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, these approaches to Judith are manifold and concern the way in which Judith inverts gender roles or blurs distinctions of class, gender and ethnicity.<sup>18</sup> One of the reasons for the popularity of the feminist approach is that Judith's gender seems to be important in the story. A recurrent theme in the Book of Judith is that a great deed has been accomplished by the "hand of a woman,"<sup>19</sup> and her beauty and sexuality play a pivotal role for the plot.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in one sense, Judith as a woman is a main theme in the book. But in another sense, Judith is more often depicted in a male framework, either as a returning hero (like David or Jephthah, cf. Jdt 15:12-14), as Dinah's vengeful brother Simeon (cf. 9:2-4), or as "a cold and androgynous figure, an honorary male, as it were, rather than a role model for women."<sup>21</sup> These divergent presentations of Judith make it difficult to assign one unitary significance to the character of Judith's gender. Even though she may resemble other strong, wise and beautiful women, she is not "womanly" because she does not take part in the world of ordinary women concerned with marriage and motherhood. Hence, the present rhetorical approach to Judith does not interact with these gender readings and feminist approaches, because Judith is a complex figure who cannot one-sidedly be termed feminist.

An important issue for the present approach concerns the relation of the rhetorical means to the theological outcome and meaning of the Book of Judith. That is, in which way does the author of the Book of Judith turn rhetoric into theology? This question has partly been addressed before, but never to such an extent that anything general has been stated concerning Judith's speech in chapter 9 and the relation to the entire Book of Judith. Sketches of such an interpretation can be found in the work of Géza Xeravits, who touches upon these matters but does not contextualise the analysis of chapter 9 within the theological message of the Book of Judith in general.<sup>22</sup> The same applies to Sabine Van Den Eynde and Pancratius Beentjes.<sup>23</sup> The best analysis so far on this matter is the work of Barbara Schmitz, who analyses the function of the prayers and speeches in Judith according to the structure of the entire story about Judith.<sup>24</sup> Schmitz contextualises her analysis of Judith's song in chapter 16 both with historical parallels to processions (the cult of Dionysius) and to the overall theology of the Book of Judith.<sup>25</sup> She also identifies Judith's speeches in chapter 8 and 9 as the most important theological passages of the story.<sup>26</sup> Schmitz's 2004 analysis of Judith's prayer is the most

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out that it is uncertain whether these texts reflect actual liturgical practice. McDowell is uncertain of whether the literary prayers reflect historical-religious practices (*Prayers*, 1-11). Hence, these comments should be taken into account before succumbing to Newman's thesis.

<sup>15</sup> Van Den Eynde, "Crying to God."

<sup>16</sup> For a general overview of scholarship on Judith until 2001, see Craven, "Book of Judith."

<sup>17</sup> See for example Rakel, *Judith*.

<sup>18</sup> See Brenner, "Introduction," 21.

<sup>19</sup> Jdt 9:9-10; 12:4; 13:14-15; 15:10; 16:5. See furthermore Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 299-301; Gera, *Judith*, 98 and McDowell, *Prayers*, 50.

<sup>20</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 98.

<sup>21</sup> Gera, *Judith*, 102.

<sup>22</sup> Xeravits, "Supplication."

<sup>23</sup> Van Den Eynde, "Crying to God"; Beentjes, "Bethulia Crying."

<sup>24</sup> Schmitz, "Funktion der Reden," 222.

<sup>25</sup> Schmitz, 223.

<sup>26</sup> Schmitz, 226.

thorough analysis, and she covers almost all areas. However, there is no contextualisation within an ancient rhetorical setting.

In 1985, Carey Moore concluded that “this [Judith’s prayer] is not one of the great prayers of the Apocrypha,”<sup>27</sup> and Pancratijs Beentjes stated in 2004 that one becomes fairly disappointed “in search of publications dealing with prayers in the Book of Judith.”<sup>28</sup> Subsequently, several scholars have worked with Judith’s prayer in chapter 9, with the majority trying to demonstrate the artfulness and quality of the prayer, especially in connection with other Old Testament or Second Temple Period prayers.<sup>29</sup>

## 2 The Progymnasmata on “speech-in-character”

Aelius Theon presents twelve “actual” exercises (handed down to us in Greek) and five “follow-up” or “elaborating” exercises.<sup>30</sup> The exercise in προσωποποιία, which may be roughly translated as “speech-in-character,”<sup>31</sup> “personification”<sup>32</sup> or “impersonation,”<sup>33</sup> is presented as the sixth exercise.<sup>34</sup> Concerning the translation of the Greek word, we should note that the word itself derives from πρόσωπον (“person/character”) and ποιέω (“to do”). Therefore, the meaning of προσωποποιία is “to do,” “make” or “create” a person or character. However, there is more to προσωποποιία than merely constructing a literary persona. According to Theon, the actual speech performed by the person is equally (or more) important and functions to both reflect and construct the literary persona. Hence, the literary speeches performed “in-character” serve the function of characterization in the (wider) narrative.<sup>35</sup>

Theon opens the chapter on προσωποποιία with a definition: Προσωποποιία “is the introduction of a person/character (πρόσωπον) to whom words are attributed that are suitable for the speaker and indisputable to the subject discussed” (Προσωποποιία ἐστὶ προσώπου παρεισαγωγὴ διατιθεμένου λόγους οἰκείους ἑαυτῷ τε καὶ τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις πράγμασιν ἀναμφισβητήτως) [115].<sup>36</sup> As noted above, the word itself derives from πρόσωπον and ποιέω and concerns the making or creation of a literary persona. Hence, Theon provides the example of the words that a general might say to his soldiers in time of danger, or the words Cyrus might say when marching against the Massagetae. This means that the person or character speaking may be either a real or a fictional person.<sup>37</sup> What matters, though, is the invention, portrayal, creation or characterisation of the persona in the literary work. The author must create a clear description of

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<sup>27</sup> Moore, *Judith*, 195.

<sup>28</sup> Beentjes, “Bethulia Crying,” 231.

<sup>29</sup> There is also a major scholarly work on the reception history of the Book of Judith in theatre, music and drama, cf. Brine, Ciletti and Lähnemann, *Sword of Judith*; Bal, “Head Hunting”; Stone, “Judith and Holofernes.”

<sup>30</sup> The other four extant *Progymnasmata* collected in Kennedy’s translation (the *Progymnasmata* of Hermogenes, Aphthonius, Nicolaus and John of Sardis (with fragments from Sopatros) basically stick to the twelve exercises, with minor variations (see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*).

<sup>31</sup> “Speech-in-character” is Butts’ translation of προσωποποιία (*Progymnasmata of Theon*, 445).

<sup>32</sup> “Personification” is Kennedy’s translation of προσωποποιία (*Progymnasmata*, 47).

<sup>33</sup> “Impersonation” is Buttler’s translation of Quintilian’s use of προσωποποιία (Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.2.29-31) in the LCL translation of *Institutio oratoria*.

<sup>34</sup> Rhet. Her. 4.53 calls προσωποποιία “conformatio”. Quintilian calls it “fictiones personarum” (9.2.29-37).

<sup>35</sup> Scholars within Classical Philology often use “character speech” with reference to Lausberg’s *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*. However, “speech-in-character” indicates more precisely the actual speaking of a character taking place as different from the vaguer “character speech.” Hence, “speech-in-character” is more commonly used among scholars working with the *Progymnasmata*. Additionally, cf. the discussion in Butts (*Progymnasmata of Theon*, 445) arguing for the more cumbersome but precise, “speech-in-character.”

<sup>36</sup> Scholarly references to Theon’s text commonly refer to the page numbers of vol. 2 of Spengel’s *Rhetores Graeci* in square brackets.

<sup>37</sup> The distinction between real and fictional persons becomes important in later *Progymnasmata*, but Theon does not differentiate in his treatment of the two (see Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 47).

who the person is, if suitable words are to be attributed to this person. Hence, “personification” covers part of the meaning but is not sufficient to cover the entire semantic field.

Another thing to note is that *προσωποποιία* includes the active element of actually speaking in the person’s character, hence the awkward and cumbersome “speech-in-character,” rather than “personification” or “character delineation.” Theon’s definition emphasises this active element when stating that “suitable words” must be attributed to the speaker. The character must speak some actual words. Therefore, *προσωποποιία* is both the invention of a character and the attribution of suitable words to this character.

Finally, the words attributed to the speaking character must also have indisputable relevance for the subject discussed. This feature may seem obvious, but if we take Judith’s speech to the leaders of Bethulia in chapter 8 as an example, it quickly becomes obvious that this speech stands out because of its extended length and theological significance. Judith speaks as a moral and theological authority, and she instructs the leaders of the town in God’s ways. This makes the speech distinctive, because it seems to go beyond the plot requirements. However, following the guidelines established by Theon reveals what the situation is really about (if not about the concrete scene) and allows for the words to be related to the “actual” subject discussed (*ὑποκειμένοις πράγμασιν*). Judith may be talking about theological matters even when she speaks about mundane matters, such as eating or fighting (cf. 11:5-19). This feature becomes very apparent in Judith’s conversations with Holofernes, because irony plays a pivotal role throughout the Book of Judith.

Having provided the definition of *προσωποποιία*, Theon goes on to describe how it should be developed. First, the writer should have the personality or character of the speaker in mind. This means that the speaker’s age must be clear, as must the occasion of the speech, the place where the speech is delivered and the speaker’s social status. It is also important to have the intended audience in mind. These qualifications imply that the writer must somehow characterise the person who is to deliver a speech-in-character. All these qualifications and guidelines are important to establish consistency between the speaker and his words. Theon specifically points out that words must be suitable (*λόγους οἰκείους*) for the character to utter.

Theon has further qualifications, which can be paraphrased as follows: Different ways of speaking belong to different ages of life. An old man would not phrase his words in the same way as a young man. The way of speaking also differs by nature for a woman and a man. It also differs according to status for a slave and a free man. It differs by activities for a soldier and a farmer, and by state of mind for a lover and a temperate man. Finally, ways of speaking may also vary according to origin.<sup>38</sup> Theon exemplifies the latter instance by stating that the words of a Laconian are sparse and clear, whereas a man from Attica is voluble or loquacious. These distinctions follow from a typical perception in Antiquity about the people from Sparta, the people from Athens, the people from Egypt, and so on.<sup>39</sup> Hence, Theon encourages the author to reproduce ethnic types in the way a literary persona speaks in order for it to be recognizable by the reader. In the Book of Judith, the words of Holofernes may be seen as constructed to reflect a Jewish perception of the gentile Assyrians (cursing and impious). The same would apply to the words of the prospective proselyte Achior in his speech in chapter 5. His words reflect someone closer to the Jewish perception of the world, which is why he knows how to retell Israel’s story.<sup>40</sup> These ideas reflect a perception of “insiders” and “outsiders,” how “we” speak and how “they” speak. This holds true for women, men, barbarians, philosophers, gentiles and Jews.<sup>41</sup> Gender, social status and ethnicity were revealed by the way a person spoke, and an author was supposed to reproduce this in a speech-in-character. Theon mentions Herodotus as an example to emphasise his point. When presenting barbarians, Herodotus often has his characters

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<sup>38</sup> See Theon [116].

<sup>39</sup> For a modern reflection on this, see the work of cultural theorist Stuart Hall (“Spectacle”).

<sup>40</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 462-74; Roitman, “Achior,” 31-40; Gera, *Judith*, 7; Moore, *Judith*, 84.

<sup>41</sup> See Stowers, “Apostrophe,” 352-61.

speak like barbarians from a Greek point of view.<sup>42</sup> This is also true of Holofernes, who reveals his “true” personality in 12:11-12, 16-17, 20. In these verses, Holofernes is presented through his words and the author’s description as a drunkard and lecher.

Theon makes a further specification, which concerns the places and occasions (τόποις καὶ καιροῖς) where and when words are spoken. Theon states that words spoken in a military camp are different from words spoken by a citizen in the assembly. Similarly, words spoken by a victorious general are different from words spoken by a vanquished people. Both guidelines apply to people, places and occasions in the Book of Judith. Each subject has its appropriate form of expression. It is not enough for an author merely to give voice to a character. There is a proper form of expression for what is being said. Each subject must be treated appropriately. The speaker must speak in a way that fits him and his manner of speech, the time and his lot in life. In order to create a strong and well-composed speech-in-character, the words spoken must reveal the person’s character and the specific circumstances the person confronts in the actual situation. This also relates to the temporal aspect of a speech-in-character: it should reveal the person’s response to the circumstances at different times. This means that the person speaking considers aspects of the past, present and future.

One aspect of a speech-in-character on which Theon does not elaborate, but which may be found in the *Progymnasmata* of Aphthonius,<sup>43</sup> is the classification of speech-in-character into different species or categories. Aphthonius explains that there are three kinds of speech-in-character.<sup>44</sup> Some are pathetic, some are ethical and some are mixed. The pathetic primarily expresses emotions (cf. πάθος). This form would characterise the words that Hecuba might have said as Troy lay in ruins. The ethical form primarily expresses a person’s characteristic disposition or nature (cf. ἦθος). This would be exemplified by the words someone from the inland might speak on first seeing the ocean. The mixed version is a combination of the ethical and pathetic, and would characterise the words Achilles might have said as Patroclus lay dead and he was deliberating returning to battle. This deliberation would both reveal his feelings towards his dead friend, and his character or disposition. A final distinction of the speech-in-character concerns whether it is single or double. In the single form, a person speaks to himself in a kind of monologue or soliloquy (καθ’ ἑαυτὸν); in the double form, the speech is addressed to another person (πρὸς ἄλλων) and may be part of a dialogue.

### 3 Engaging with Theon’s guidelines in the Book of Judith

With Theon’s guidelines in mind, we may turn to the Book of Judith and begin to see how, throughout the story, the characters respond to their circumstances with specific speeches. Indeed, a quick read through the story reveals fourteen occasions (in 16 chapters) on which Nebuchadnezzar, Holofernes, Achior, Uzziah, Judith and others respond to the challenges and trials they encounter with a speech. Once these speeches have been identified, they may be classified and analysed in terms of their conformity to the structure and stylistic suggestions of the *Progymnasmata*. The conformity of the speeches in Judith to Theon’s guidelines and stylistic suggestions provides a measure for the literary quality and finesse of the speeches in Judith, and this determines the literary quality of the speeches from an ancient historical perspective.

Most of the character speeches in Judith are mixed and double. This should not come as a surprise when we consider the general allegorical, symbolic or double-layered nature of the text. The person speaking does not speak just for himself as a persona in the story; most of the characters also

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<sup>42</sup> See Theon [116].

<sup>43</sup> Aphthonius studied rhetoric with Libanius in Antioch in the second half of the fourth century AD ( Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 89; Butts and Hock, “Chreia Discussion,” 211-16).

<sup>44</sup> See Aphthonius in Kennedy, *Progymnasmata*, 115-17.

represent something more. Judith is not just Judith, a widow from Bethulia; she is also every Jew or “Jewess” (her name is the feminine form of “Jew”),<sup>45</sup> Holofernes is the archetypal enemy of the Jews,<sup>46</sup> and Achior is a typical, friendly-minded gentile proselyte (see the rather elaborate and theologically very informed speech in 5:5-21).<sup>47</sup> Hence, the responses of most of the characters to situations in Judith reflect both a specific person’s emotions concerning a certain situation (pathetic) and a typified version of what the person represents in the narrative, thereby representing a certain character, disposition or attitude of this kind of person. This applies to Nebuchadnezzar’s speech in 2:5, Achior’s speech in 5:5, Holofernes’ speeches in 6:2 and 11:2, and Uzziah’s speeches in 7:30, 8:28 and 13:18, as much as to Judith’s speeches (cf. 8:11; 11:5; 14:1; 16:1).

Even though most of the speeches are double, the author of Judith also presents us with one that is single: Judith’s prayer in chapter 9. The text actually states that Judith cries out to the Lord (πρὸς κύριον, 9:2). In a formal sense, this would make the prayer belong to the double category, but immediately before and after her prayer, the text makes it clear that Judith is alone on the rooftop of her house (9:1; 10:1-2). She initiates the prayer without any preceding address from God, and the prayer is not conversational in nature.<sup>48</sup> The function of the prayer is to reveal Judith’s emotions and thoughts as she presents herself to God to “act as” a tool in his hands, but her emotions are also highly stylised ritualised expressions. Furthermore, God does not answer her. This makes her prayer individual rather than part of a dialogue. However, since the formal indication of the speech categorises it as belonging to the double form, it could be argued that it does indeed belong to this category. Nevertheless, based on the function of the speech, it rather serves the purpose of staging Judith’s inner thoughts and emotions. The prayer provides an exclusive window into the heroine’s ritualised expressions of grief. Hence, Judith’s prayer should be categorised as belonging to the single form of a speech-in-character.

According to Theon, it is equally important to portray the character as it is to provide suitable words actually spoken by the literary persona. Judith and Holofernes play large parts in this drama, but minor actors are also carefully described and depicted to make them consistent with their words. Hence, in order to clearly see how the author may have followed guidelines similar to Theon’s, we need to identify how the author imagines the characters of his narrative personae.

### 3.1 *The characterisation of Judith*

Judith is the heroine and protagonist of the Book of Judith. Even though she does not appear in the first part, and does not enter the stage before chapter 8, she is the centre of the story.<sup>49</sup> Judith enters the story accompanied by a very elaborate description of her situation, background, family and character. In 8:1, the author states that “in those days Judith heard [about these things]” (καὶ ἤκουσεν ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις Ιουδιθ).<sup>50</sup> This refers to the conflict between the leaders and the people of Bethulia. But the narrative concerning what Judith hears, and her reaction to it, is suspended and not resumed until 8:9. The direct object of what Judith hears, and how she reacts, does not appear until 8:9.<sup>51</sup> This becomes the point of departure for her first speech (8:11-27). But by suspending the narrative progression, 8:1 and 8:9 become virtual parentheses that bracket the introduction of Judith.<sup>52</sup> The narrative suspense is paused in favour of a presentation of Judith that includes her genealogy, background, family and character. This is quite a stroke of genius on the part of the author, and it introduces the main persona of the story to the reader as clearly and vividly as possible,

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<sup>45</sup> See Xeravits, “Supplication,” 164; Gera, *Judith*, 11; Levine, “Sacrifice,” 208; Moore, *Judith*, 179.

<sup>46</sup> See Corley, “Imitation”; Newman, *Praying*, 121.

<sup>47</sup> See Roitman, “Achior,” 31-40; Schmitz, “Funktion der Reden,” 221.

<sup>48</sup> See Newman, *Praying*, 6-7; Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 157-58.

<sup>49</sup> Gera, *Judith*, 8, 254.

<sup>50</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 151.

<sup>51</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 270.

<sup>52</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 151-52; Gera, *Judith*, 254-55.

immediately before she speaks. This compositional strategy may very well reflect the influence of progymnastic rules. In fact, we can see similar presentations of characters in other Greek literature of the period. In the first chapter of *Joseph and Aseneth*, the author presents a comprehensive description of Aseneth, commenting on her genealogy, marital status, age, bodily appearance, ethnic affiliation and her similarity to the Hebrew race and the Hebrew ancestresses Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel despite her Egyptian origin. Similar examples can be found in the Greek romances *Chaereas and Callirhoe* and *Leucippe and Clitophon*.<sup>53</sup> The opening books provide comprehensive descriptions of the protagonists' genealogy, marital status, age and bodily appearance in order to prepare for their speeches and love affairs. Also Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* presents comprehensive descriptions of the genealogy, bodily appearance, public appearance, offices held and main character features of the persons described, which support the speeches they deliver.<sup>54</sup>

The description of Judith's genealogy underscores her importance in the story, especially as no other biblical woman's genealogy is described in such detail.<sup>55</sup> The author lists sixteen generations of forefathers and traces her family back to Israel (i.e. Jacob). She is also linked to several of her forefathers who were judges, prophets or priests in Israel (Gideon, Elijah, Merari), and Judith herself embodies similar roles in the narrative. The names of her forefathers also identify different tribes of Israel.<sup>56</sup> From one perspective, this observation points out the fictitiousness of her lineage, since it would be impossible to have forefathers from different tribes.<sup>57</sup> From another perspective, it connects Judith to every tribe of Israel. In this way, she becomes an ideal, generic and emblematic Israelite who personifies her name, "Jewess."<sup>58</sup> From the moment that Judith enters the story, the author makes it clear that she is not a real person. She is a composite and idealised figure who encapsulates all the best of Israel.

The next thing we learn about Judith concerns her age and family circumstances. She was married to a man (Manasseh) from her own tribe but he died, and Judith became a widow.<sup>59</sup> She is alone, because they had no children. While Manasseh lived, they belonged to the upper strata of society, and he left her gold and silver, men and women slaves, livestock and fields, all of which she retained after his death (8:7).<sup>60</sup> From a financial perspective, her social position is probably still good when the story takes place, but the fact that she lives a secluded life on the roof of her house, mourning her husband, also identifies her as a vulnerable and unprotected widow.<sup>61</sup> She remains a widow for the rest of her life, despite receiving many offers of marriage (16:22). In a sense, she remains a widow because she is married to God, just like the nation of Israel. To further emphasise this point, the description of Judith as a widow also serves to introduce the biblical metaphor of vulnerable women who represent weak and unprotected cities or nations.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Judith exemplifies an endangered city (Bethulia/Jerusalem) and people (the people of Israel). She is the endangered city and people that face a threatening enemy on the doorstep, waiting to attack in both a concrete

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<sup>53</sup> Chariton, *Chaer.* 1.1; Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 1.3-5; 1.16-17.

<sup>54</sup> Plutarch, *Eum.* 17; *Ant.* 84.

<sup>55</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 27.

<sup>56</sup> See Gera, 255-58.

<sup>57</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 152; Gera, *Judith*, 5; Newman, *Praying*, 121, 149-50; Nickelsburg, "Stories," 48; Moore, *Judith*, 187-88. Another fictitious element in Judith is the geography of Israel. Joosten, Gera and Caponigro discuss this (Joosten, "Original Language," 203-4; Gera, *Judith*, 5, 26-44; Caponigro, "Holding the Tale," 53-55). McDowell points to the "historical contradictions" as a sign of the fictitiousness (*Prayers*, 41-42). Moore discusses the question of historicity (*Judith*, 38-49).

<sup>58</sup> See Levine, "Sacrifice," 210.

<sup>59</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 153; Moore, *Judith*, 180; Gera, *Judith*, 258.

<sup>60</sup> See Joosten, "Original Language," 206-7; Gera, *Judith*, 267.

<sup>61</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 261; Newman, *Praying*, 145.

<sup>62</sup> See Newman, *Praying*, 135; Gera, *Judith*, 99; Levine, "Sacrifice," 209-10.

sense in the narrative and in a symbolic sense.<sup>63</sup> Judith becomes a metaphorical or typological representation of the faithful wife (cf. Isa 62), but she is not merely weak and vulnerable—passively waiting for the attacking enemy. Her widowed state has the advantage of providing her with the opportunity to take action in the narrative. She is not bound by husband and children but is free to act as a tool in the hands of God.<sup>64</sup> Her position in life and social status are, again, ideal and generic. She is childless, but she is also the mother of her town and country. She is a widow, but she is married to God. She is vulnerable but becomes violent as a tool in the hands of God.

Another aspect of the description of Judith concerns her religious observance. In this matter, her widowed state also plays a part. The fact that she is, and remains, a widow implies her chastity. She does not take another man, but rather devotes herself entirely to God. She personifies the God-fearing and pious Jew, and her devotion to God is truly impressive.<sup>65</sup> She mourns her husband deeply (8:4), fasts almost every day, wears widow's garments and lives a withdrawn life on the roof of her house. In 8:8 it says that she "feared God with great devotion" (also cf. 8:29, 31). This is revealed in her prayers and in matters of kashrut; throughout the story she takes great care to eat only kosher food.<sup>66</sup> She does so even in the Assyrian camp, and she also bathes and prays every night while there (12:7-9). All these features emphasise that she manages to practise her religion and live as a pious and chaste Jew even in the heart of an enemy camp, surrounded by violent, lecherous, fornicating, drunken and impious gentiles (cf. 10:11-12:19). She keeps her faith and practises her religion in a place where it would seem practically impossible to do so. All these features present to us a faithful, pious, chaste, idealised and emblematic Jew.<sup>67</sup>

One final notable point from the opening characterisation of Judith in chapter 8 concerns her bodily or physical appearance and constitution.<sup>68</sup> In 8:7 it says that "she was beautiful in appearance and very lovely to behold." Her beauty plays an integral part in the story, and her extended periods of fasting have not destroyed her looks.<sup>69</sup> She is described as beautiful at several points in the story, and her beauty affects the people around her (10:7, 14, 19, 23; 11:21; 12:13; 16:6, 9). Her beauty and gender play major roles in her entrance into the Assyrian camp (10:11-23). It seems obvious that if a man had tried to enter the camp and meet with Holofernes—no matter how handsome he was—he would not have succeeded.<sup>70</sup> Hence, the author makes sure to present the protagonist of the story as vividly as possible before our eyes: she is a beautiful, pious and observant Jew; she is wealthy, wise, wilful, victorious, and a widowed wonder-woman.<sup>71</sup> What is there not to like!

These elements play a core role in establishing a successful προσωποποιία. Their presentation at this point in the storyline, as a collected block of information presented just before the protagonist first speaks, is a virtual textbook example of what Theon prescribes. The introduction of these elements at this point in the narrative serves to present before our eyes—as a powerful and vivid picture—the character of the narrative persona who speaks. They constitute the background upon which her words will be evaluated as suitable or not. They materialise our hopes for a reversal of fortunes in the low point of the narrative discourse,<sup>72</sup> and they encapsulate and present the

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<sup>63</sup> See Xeravits, "Supplication," 176; Gera, *Judith*, 6; Van Den Eynde, "Crying to God," 228; Brenner, "Introduction," 13.

<sup>64</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 155.

<sup>65</sup> See Schmitz, 154-55; Moore, *Judith*, 181; Gera, *Judith*, 106.

<sup>66</sup> See Xeravits, "Supplication," 164; Moore, *Judith*, 62.

<sup>67</sup> See Mason, "Jews, Judaeans," for a discussion concerning the problem of practicing "Judaism" or practicing the Jewish religion in Antiquity.

<sup>68</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 267; Moore, *Judith*, 181-86.

<sup>69</sup> For similar descriptions, see parallels in Daniel (Dan 1:4-15), Rachel (Gen 29:17) and Joseph (Gen 39:6).

<sup>70</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 99; Moore, *Judith*, 185.

<sup>71</sup> See Beentjes, "Bethulia Crying," 241-42; Craven, "Book of Judith," 187; Gera, *Judith*, 6; Moore, *Judith*, 64.

<sup>72</sup> Judith shares (or mimics) the reversal of fortunes with Isaiah: the haughty and arrogant will be brought down; the lowly and humble will be exalted (cf. Isa 2:11-17; 5:15; 10:12; see Newman, *Praying*, 145). Schmitz analyses the entire Book of Judith according to the "Spannungsbogen der Reden und Gebete," which generates the reversals of the plot. She states: "Der

protagonist to the reader. As the story further unfolds, her intellectual capacities are also revealed, just like her sexual-seductive power, capacity for violence and political propensities.

#### 4 *Judith's Prayer (9:2-14)*

Judith is a woman of many words, and her speeches shape her persona as do her deeds. The speeches are very important in the work, both in establishing the characters and for the sake of the plot, and the author has constructed them to identify significant turning points.<sup>73</sup> Additionally, Judith is the character in the story with the lion's share of the speeches. This is not mere chance: it specifically reveals the theological significance of the pronouncements where Judith serves as mouthpiece for the author's theology.<sup>74</sup> As the protagonist of the story, she intercedes for her people in words as well as deeds, and she represents the faith of the ideal Jew.

For Judith's speech or prayer in chapter 9 to conform to the guidelines provided by Theon in the *Progymnasmata* or guidelines similar to Theon's, it must be possible to trace or observe such guidelines at work in the speech. Some sort of cluster of dependable or interrelated terms must be present. If several of Theon's guidelines are evident in the text, it is plausible that the author of Judith composed the text with an awareness of guidelines similar to those found in Theon. If several of these guidelines can be identified in the speech, they will serve—jointly—as a critical mass that strongly suggests that the author composed his text in accordance with such guidelines.<sup>75</sup>

##### 4.1. *Concerning the temporal aspects of the speech*

Judith's prayer may be divided into minor parts according to a variety of criteria.<sup>76</sup> In order to check the prayer against the progymnasmatic rules, one division should address the temporal aspects.<sup>77</sup> This division may be presented as: 9:2-6 (past); 9:7 (present); and 9:8-14 (future). The first part of the prayer (9:2-6) is primarily concerned with recounting the events of Genesis 34 (the rape of Dinah and the revenge of her brothers on the Shechemites).<sup>78</sup> These verses address God's actions in the past. The verbs are presented in aorist indicative with a clear past tense. In 9:7 the perspective changes, and the author accentuates this change by using ἰδοὺ ('Look' or 'Behold'). Judith turns to the present circumstances and explains the power of the Assyrians. She explains what the situation is like now—in the present—and says that the Assyrians are ready to attack, waiting outside the city with their horses and riders (9:7), and their presence is what forces Judith to act. In 9:8-14, the perspective changes to the future. The verbs primarily appear in aorist imperative. The use of this form is understood as a request more than a demand, as Judith's hopes for the future or a call to action.<sup>79</sup> Judith cries out to God, asking him to break the Assyrians' strength and bring down their

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Höhepunkt dieses Spannungsbogens liegt in der Rede Judiths in Jdt 8 und ihrem Gebet in Jdt 9 ("Funktion der Reden," 226).

<sup>73</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 151.

<sup>74</sup> Moore, *Judith*, 37, 60.

<sup>75</sup> Xeravits designated 9:2-14 on formal grounds as a prayer or supplication and wrote that "formally, the prayer reminds the psalms of lament" ("Supplication," 161-62). However, the advantage of using as a point of departure Theon's guidelines concerning the composition of speeches in narrative or prose works lies in the *institutionally* rooted connection of these guidelines to the ancient Greco-Roman literate education and, hence, the close connection of these guidelines to ancient discourses on literary theory (see Russell and Winterbottom, *Ancient Literary Criticism*). This connection validates any conclusions regarding the literary quality and style of the speeches, and may (eventually) bleed into the discussion about the compositional language of the work.

<sup>76</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 297; Newman, *Praying*, 123; Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 235; Xeravits, "Supplication," 162; Van Den Eynde, "Crying to God," 221. Moore (*Judith*, 189-90) makes divisions in his translation.

<sup>77</sup> Van den Eynde also divides the prayer according to temporal aspects, but merely finds past (9:2-4) and present (9:5-14) aspects. I suggest there is also a future aspect (9:8-14), see above.

<sup>78</sup> For an analysis of the relation of the Genesis passage to Judith, see Newman, *Praying*, 123-38.

<sup>79</sup> See Newman, *Praying*, 123.

power (9:8). She acts in the hope that God will redeem his promises to his people and remain loyal to them.

#### **4.2 *Concerning the circumstances to which Judith reacts***

The immediate situation to which Judith reacts follows from her conversation with the leaders of Bethulia. She reveals to the leaders some of her intentions to act on behalf of the city as a tool of God. She tells them in 8:32 that she is about to do something that will be passed down through all generations of their descendants, and that God will deliver Israel by her hand. She receives the support of the leaders, who describe her as speaking from a true heart (8:28), as wise (8:29) and as respected by all people (8:29). Before they leave, Uzziah and the leaders tell her to go in peace, and they hope that the Lord will guide her to take vengeance on their enemies. The entire speech or prayer follows as a response to this situation. But Judith also reacts to the broader circumstances, which concern the situation in Bethulia.<sup>80</sup> The town (with the leaders in front) is about to surrender to the Assyrian enemy. The people are suffering from thirst, and they have given up hope. Similarly, the leaders have given up hope. They have given God a five-day ultimatum to intervene in their situation. But it does not seem as though they consider it a real possibility that God will intervene (cf. 7:30-31). So, Judith reacts to the situation in the town, and the actions of the leaders, as a kind of protest. Defying the people and leaders of Bethulia, she does not give up, and she does not merely wait for the enemy to attack. Instead, she has faith and hope in God; faith in God that he has not forgotten his people, and hope that he will not leave them to their own devices, but will intercede. She prays to God to make her strong (9:9), strike down the enemy through her deceit (9:10) and make her deceitful words wound and bruise the enemy (9:13).

Judith reacts to the circumstances by crying out to God in a loud voice (9:1). This expresses her desperation and devotion to God in response to the circumstances and presents her as consecrating or dedicating herself to God.<sup>81</sup> The fact that she puts ashes on her head supports this observation. Putting ashes on your head was a typical Jewish way of expressing grief.<sup>82</sup> In a religious sense, it may also express penitence, abasement or subjugation (Isa 58:5; Lam 3:16; Dan 9:3). Judith takes advantage of this kind of expression in order to frame her response to the situation she faces. This is shown through her expressions in 9:4 (“O God, my God, hear me also, a widow”) and in 9:12 (“Please, please, God of my father, God of the heritage of Israel, Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all your creation, hear my prayer!”).

Judith’s reaction is primarily strong and powerful, because she is about to take action, but it is also a reaction filled with despair. She is desperate on behalf of the town and the leaders.<sup>83</sup> Because of the lack of water, the children of Bethulia are listless, the women are faint from thirst, and the young men collapse in the streets and gateways (7:22). But Judith does not pray for rain to fill the cisterns. Her scope is greater.<sup>84</sup> She prays for revenge on the enemies of Israel, and she invokes God as the protector of the weak and the master of creation (9:5-6, 12). Even in this desperate situation, she prays to God to intervene and reverse the situation with regard to the enemy, not just the lack of rain. She gambles her ascetic life as a lonely widow in a tent on the top of her roof, and her situation as a pious “Jewess” lends itself to the symbolic acts that accompany a prayer of distress.

#### **4.3 *Concerning the place and time of Judith’s speech***

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<sup>80</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 156.

<sup>81</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 301-4.

<sup>82</sup> For similar ways of expressing grief, see 2 Sam 13:19; Job 2:12; Lam 2:10, and the comments by Beentjes (“Bethulia Crying,” 233) and Schmitz (*Gedeutete Geschichte*, 223). See also Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, Olyan, *Ritual Violence*.

<sup>83</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 311.

<sup>84</sup> See Beentjes, “Bethulia Crying,” 239; Gera, *Judith*, 297.

Judith utters her prayer in her tent on the roof of her house. This location carries more meaning than meets the eye, and it also serves a symbolic and ironic function.<sup>85</sup> The rooftop is located closer to heaven than the ground. This positions Judith closer to God. The tent on the roof recalls Moses and the tabernacle (cf. Exod 25:9). Additionally, the story of Judith generally re-enacts the deliverance story of Exodus, with Moses as the leading persona. This presents Judith as another Moses—the ideal leader of Israel, who combines prophetic, priestly and regal features in one person.<sup>86</sup> Thus, Judith becomes a female Moses with a privileged connection to God, and the rooftop reveals an all-Israelite significance.<sup>87</sup>

The rooftop also invokes associations to the temple in Jerusalem.<sup>88</sup> The way Judith prays on the rooftop parallels the way the people of Jerusalem pray as described in 4:11 (“And all the Israelite men, women, and children living at Jerusalem prostrated themselves before the temple and put ashes on their heads and spread out their sackcloth before the Lord.”). This situates the rooftop and the temple in Jerusalem on par as ideal places for prayer, but it also strikes a clear ironic tone running through the entire Book of Judith. Additionally, Judith speaks at the very hour when the evening incense is offered at the temple in Jerusalem (9:1) (cf. Ezra 9:5; Dan 9:20-21).<sup>89</sup> In a way, when Judith utters her prayer on the rooftop, she speaks as though she were in the temple in Jerusalem, and this is the function of the tent on the rooftop. She speaks as a priest in the temple who intercedes on behalf of the people, and her prayer serves an emblematic function with all-Israelite significance, but also provides a tongue-in-cheek reference with ironic overtones.<sup>90</sup>

#### **4.4 *Concerning Judith’s social position, her nature as a woman and her age***

Judith’s prayer reveals that she is a widow (9:4) and a woman (9:10). The prayer also reveals something about her intellectual capacities, because she is very well-versed in the history of Israel (9:2-4) and Jewish theology (9:5-7, 11-12, 14), as revealed when she reprimands the town leaders in her speech in chapter 8.<sup>91</sup> This may indirectly indicate her social position. The fact that she displays such theological knowledge in her speech gives the impression that she is a woman of some means. Although indirect, this observation corresponds to the general description of Judith presented in 8:1-8.

#### **4.5 *Concerning Judith’s state of mind and ethnic identity***

Judith’s prayer demonstrates her state of mind to the reader and encompasses different feelings. For one thing, Judith speaks as a person who wants revenge. The city is in a state of despair, and the inhabitants are desperate to get water in order to survive (cf. 7:20-22). Judith incorporates this feeling of desperation as a ritualised expression of grief, and it feeds a desire for retributive justice or revenge. The first part of the prayer (9:2-6) recounts the story of the rape of Dinah and the revenge of her brothers on the Shechemites.<sup>92</sup> Judith internalises the revenge motif and takes it upon herself—with the help of God—to act similarly. In 9:2, when she narrates the story of Dinah, she speaks of her own ancestor, Simeon. She explains that God put a sword in his hand to take revenge on the strangers. In her own story, Judith “becomes” Simeon, because she will take revenge on the Assyrian enemy. God will place a sword in her hand as well (13:6), and she will enact God’s retributive justice. In this way, the revenge motif reveals her state of mind. But her speech also reveals other emotions. She puts her faith in God and hopes that God will fulfil, through her, the task

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<sup>85</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 157-58, 223-32; Moore, *Judith*, 190; Gera, *Judith*, 302-3.

<sup>86</sup> See Xeravits, “Supplication,” 172-73; Newman, *Praying*, 149; Van Henten, “Alternative Leader,” 238-45.

<sup>87</sup> For a similar conclusion regarding a universal Israelite meaning, see Xeravits, “Supplication,” 162; Newman, *Praying*, 135.

<sup>88</sup> See Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 223; Gera, *Judith*, 302.

<sup>89</sup> See Beentjes, “Bethulia Crying,” 249-50.

<sup>90</sup> See Newman, *Praying*, 135.

<sup>91</sup> See Schmitz, “Funktion der Reden,” 227-28; Gera, *Judith*, 311.

<sup>92</sup> See Xeravits, “Supplication,” 165.

that she has taken upon herself to enact. This presents to us the development of her emotional state, from despair to desire for revenge, to faith and hope. Her emotions become ritualised expressions re-enacting the emotions of her ancestral tradition.

Every word Judith speaks throughout the entire Book of Judith emanates Judaism.<sup>93</sup> In fact, the entire book reads as a palimpsest of quotations, stories and allusions from the LXX.<sup>94</sup> It appears obvious that her speech in chapter 9 reveals her ethnic identity. In her prayer, she retells part of Israel's history (9:2-4). She also exhibits thorough knowledge of Jewish theology, such as retributive justice, God as omnipotent and omniscient, and the centrality of the temple and Jerusalem.<sup>95</sup> In 9:11-12, she explicitly echoes Moses' and the Israelites' Song of the Sea in Exod 15:2 in such a way that the Greek words in Judith occur in exactly the same order as in the LXX of Exod 15:2 (βοηθός, σκεπαστής, σωτήρ).<sup>96</sup> Hence, everything in Judith—including her speech in chapter 9—displays her ethnic identity, and her literary persona materialises the religio-ethnic identity of a faithful Jew.

#### **4.6 *Considering the specific type of προσωποποιία in chapter 9***

Judith's prayer in chapter 9 should be considered the type of single προσωποποιία. But is it the ethical, pathetic or mixed type? For one thing, Judith reacts emotionally to the situation she confronts. This makes the προσωποποιία the pathetic type. The entire prayer may be seen as one long, emotional outburst. The emotions revealed in the prayer comprise supplication (9:4), awe (9:5-6), fear (9:7), revenge (9:8-9) and hope (9:8-14). Thus, Judith's situation may resemble that of Hecuba and the words she spoke as Troy lay in ruins. Both women show equal signs of fear, desperation, sorrow, anger, and revenge. But Judith's speech also reveals something about her character. She is not constrained by her feelings; she looks beyond them to find possible actions and solutions to approach the situation. She musters her feelings and responds to the situation in a manner consistent with her character and religious habitus. She trusts in God and calls upon him to use her as a tool. Thus, her situation may resemble that of Achilles as he deliberated a return to the battle when Patroclus lay dead. Like Achilles, Judith's character demands that she take action and respond appropriately to a desperate and distressing situation. These elements unite to make Judith's speech in chapter 9 a combination of the ethical and pathetic types of προσωποποιία. Her speech should be considered a mixed προσωποποιία, because it presents us with both her feelings and her character.

#### **4.7 *Concerning the way Judith speaks—as a victorious general or a vanquished people***

Judith speaks from a position of fear and despair, but her words express hope and trust. This means that she speaks—in faith—as a conquering and victorious general. She does not give in to her feelings of despair but trusts in God to bring victory. This fine shading of hope for something that has not yet come to pass is reflected perfectly in the retelling of the story of Dinah (9:2-4), combined with the realities and pragmatism of the impending enemy attack (9:7), and the hopeful proclamation of a future victory (9:8-10). Hence, Judith does not speak vulgarly about great things, loftily about small things or rashly about shameful things. She speaks in a way that appropriately corresponds to her actual situation and reflects her character and narrative persona. Her words match her wise and pious character and her courage in the way she trusts in God.

As a whole, the cluster of rhetorical features make it very probable that the author of the Book of Judith composed the speech in chapter 9 (and the other speeches) according to guidelines similar to those known from Theon's *Progymnasmata*. However, before a conclusion, another argument should be presented concerning a third point of comparison for Judith's speech. This will shed further light on the author's rhetorical skills.

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<sup>93</sup> Moore, *Judith*, 31.

<sup>94</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 5, 11.

<sup>95</sup> See Beentjes, "Bethulia Crying," 240-41.

<sup>96</sup> See Moore, *Judith*, 193; Xeravits, "Supplication," 174; Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 280-89; Gera, *Judith*, 45; McDowell, *Prayers*, 49.

## 5 A third point of comparison

In order to avoid merely looking at Theon's literary guidelines and attempting to trace their usage in the Book of Judith, a third point of comparison can be brought in to strengthen the analysis.<sup>97</sup> This third point of comparison will provide a methodological assurance against reading Theon's guidelines "into" the Book of Judith as a sort of rigged "proof finding." It will also serve as a foil upon which to perceive the literary quality of Judith's prayer as achieved by the author. Hence, the third point of comparison serves to highlight the probability that the author of Judith actually did compose Judith's prayer in chapter 9 (and the other speeches) according to literary guidelines similar to those found in Theon.

Scholars generally agree that the author of Judith relies on and re-works three prayers as literary source material for Judith's prayer in chapter 9.<sup>98</sup> The primary literary source in terms of structure, content and theology is 2 Kgs 19:15-19 (= Isa 37:16-20). The secondary sources are 2 Chr 14:10, and 2 Chr 20:5-12. The prayer from 2 Kgs 19 is Hezekiah's prayer when threatened by Sennacherib during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem; the prayer from 2 Chr 14 is Asa's plea when confronted by Zerah and the Ethiopian forces; the prayer from 2 Chr 20 is Jehoshaphat's petition when facing a coalition of enemies. In 2 Kgs 19, Hezekiah addresses God as "enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth." Hezekiah prays that God will save them "so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Lord, are God alone" (2 Kgs 19:19). When facing the approaching enemy from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, Jehoshaphat explains in 2 Chr 20:9 that they "will stand before this house, and before you, for your name is in this house, and cry to you in our distress, and you will hear and save." Jehoshaphat also includes in his prayer elements of Israel's history such as God's deeds when he drove out the inhabitants of the land before his people (2 Chr 20:9).

From these observations, it should be apparent that the theme, content, structure, theology, and literary setting of the biblical source material serve as inspiration for the author of Judith.<sup>99</sup> Scholars have often affirmed that Judith exhibits a wealth or symphony of biblical allusions reminiscent of Midrashic embroidery.<sup>100</sup> The Old Testament prayers all contain a plea for help in a situation of distress when faced by an approaching enemy, and the prayers roughly share the same kind of description of the enemy.<sup>101</sup> They also include a characterisation of God in which his power and exclusive rule are proclaimed, and he is presented as the creator of heaven and earth. In a similar way, Judith's prayer exhibits these features and descriptions. Thus, it is plain to see how these prayers serve as literary precursors or intertextual references for the author of Judith.

However, Judith's prayer also differentiates itself from the biblical source material, standing out as a far more elaborate and rhetorically refined prayer than its precursors. This feature can be

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<sup>97</sup> For the theoretical background of this claim, see Smith, *Drudgery Divine*, 51.

<sup>98</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 298. See also Newman, *Praying*, 118, and Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 241-89, who furthermore point to the importance of Gen 34 and Exod 15:1-8 as literary underpinnings of, or allusions to, the prayer. Van Henten forgoes reading Jael's killing of Sisera (Judg 4-5) as the obvious biblical intertext to Jdt 7-13, turning instead to Exod 17; Num 20; and Deut 33:8-11 ("Alternative Leader," 232-38). Unlike Van Henten, White and McDowell explore the connection to Judg 4-5 (White, "Judith as Heroine"; McDowell, *Prayers*, 43, 45).

<sup>99</sup> See Newman, *Praying*, 139; Schmitz, *Gedeutete Geschichte*, 315-16.

<sup>100</sup> See Joosten, "Original Language," 199; Gera, *Judith*, 45; Newman, *Praying*, 124.

<sup>101</sup> See the wording of 2 Kgs 19:16 describing Sennacherib's intent to "mock the living God" (όνειδίζειν θεόν ζώντα). This is similar to Jdt 9:7-9, which speaks of the Assyrians pride, boasting and trusting in their arms and horses (ἰδοὺ γὰρ Ἀσσύριοι ἐπληθύνθησαν ἐν δυνάμει αὐτῶν ὑψώθησαν ἐφ' ἵππῳ καὶ ἀναβάτη ἐγαυρίασαν ἐν βραχίονι πεζῶν ἤλπισαν ἐν ἀσπίδι καὶ ἐν γαίῳ καὶ τόξῳ καὶ σφενδόνη). Both prayers also assert the reason for God to intervene in the situation as concerning the greater divine glory, and that the nations should know that YHWH alone is God (cf. Newman, *Praying*, 140). For similar observations on God's sovereignty, see Van Den Eynde, "Crying to God," 226, 230.

explained by the inference that the author of Judith has re-worked the prayers into his own composition, but also elaborated and expanded on the biblical source material.<sup>102</sup> This may not in itself indicate anything significant about the author's training in progymnastic exercises, but in combination with Theon's guidelines, it certainly becomes conspicuous. Theon explicitly states that skilled authors "who want to put their hands to speech-in-character in a more accurate and complete way" should make use of the materials for developing arguments through expansion and elaboration.<sup>103</sup> In all twelve exercises in Greek, Theon provides guidelines for an author to practise the expansion and elaboration of a minor literary source into a more developed rhetorical form.<sup>104</sup> In the additional exercises, Theon even presents a complete exercise fully devoted to the practice of elaboration (ἐξεργασία).<sup>105</sup> This means that if the author of the Book of Judith had received training in something similar to Theon's *Progymnasmata*, he would have received specific training in how to elaborate and expand a minor literary unit into a more comprehensive and rhetorically refined form—i.e., how to expand a short prayer into a longer, more refined, and rhetorically developed one. Combined with the analysis of the features of speech-in-character in Judith's prayer presented above, this third point of comparison further adds to the probability that the author of Judith was trained in something similar to Theon's *Progymnasmata*, and that he intentionally composed Judith's speeches based on progymnastic guidelines.

When we compare Judith's speech with the biblical source material underlying it, the author's proficiency and creativity with regard to retelling the underlying stories, and shaping them in a way that serves his argumentative ends, stand out. The author of Judith was probably trained in the tradition of the Greco-Roman literate education, unlike the authors of the biblical source material.

## 6 The relation of form to content

My approach to Judith's speeches may be defined as formal or formalist, as I work from a set of formal criteria described by Theon in his *Progymnasmata*. This approach may be criticised for not necessarily addressing the actual content or message that the author may have wanted to transmit to his audience. Many scholars would probably agree that the aim of the Book of Judith—including the speeches—is moral or theological.<sup>106</sup> However, the author of the Book of Judith may have chosen (for various obvious formal reasons) to compose it with such a strong προσωποποιία presence *because of* the message he wanted to communicate. This choice may support the broader or deeper theological intentions of the book, which should *not* be sought in identifying any actual historical crisis or circumstance reflected in the text, but, instead, should be taken as an attempt to convey a set of moral and ahistorical truths.

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<sup>102</sup> I disagree with Judith Newman, who states that "the literary evidence indicates that prayer and praying became a central feature in religious life in the centuries following the return from the Babylonian Exile" (*Praying*, 1). I will not draw historical conclusions concerning the actual practice of religious or liturgical life in the post-exilic period, but merely state that prayer and praying became a central feature in post-exilic literature. In their present form, these prayers were not composed for liturgical purposes, but served as part of the literary output of the authors. There is not necessarily any direct correspondence between literature and life. To assume such a correspondence would involve excessive "mirror reading." I consider this methodological caution to be more in line with Newman's concept of a "scripturalization of prayer" (*Praying*, 1), even though Newman openly states that "the definition used in this study refers to verbal prayer" (*Praying*, 6 n. 9). Unlike Newman, McDowell restricts his approach to prayers in literary contexts (*Prayers*, 11, 17, 20).

<sup>103</sup> Theon [118].

<sup>104</sup> The minor literary precursor could be a chreia or a fable, which the author developed into a speech-in-character or even a *thesis* (see Theon [103], [75] and furthermore [118]).

<sup>105</sup> Theon [111 in Patillon].

<sup>106</sup> See Gera, *Judith*, 53; Newman, *Praying*, 122; McDowell, *Prayers*, 46. The theological themes represented in Judith's prayer are retributive justice (9:2-3), God as omnipotent and omniscient (9:5-6), the might and power of God (9:7-11) and the centrality of the temple and Jerusalem (9:8, 13). These themes conform to and confirm the overall theology of the Book of Judith (see Schmitz, "Funktion der Reden," 224-25).

Judith's speeches serve as outlets for the story's protagonist to present herself. This applies equally to the literary persona (Judith) in the storyline and to the ideal and emblematic ethno-religious example that the author presents to the reader. Judith is an example for readers to emulate and imitate.<sup>107</sup> Judith's speeches both present her as a persona and offer attitudes for readers to identify with. She is the heroine of the story, and she becomes a moral and religious role model for readers.

Judith's speeches also support the author's intentions through their mode of expression. They address the text-external reader or narratee precisely as *speeches* addressed to someone. For instance, the theological significance of Judith's speeches in chapters 8 and 9 serves to heighten the expectation of God's miraculous intervention at a low point in the narrative storyline and is *addressed* to the text-external reader. These speeches anticipate God's intervention in the narrative, through Judith's expression of hope and faith. Thus, the speeches specifically address the external reader with theological content. James Watts has described this aspect of the speeches very incisively. He explains the relationship of the speeches to the narrative parts of Judith with an analogy to a Broadway musical:

In contrast to the prose dialogue, which is spoken between characters and passively observed by the audience, the songs are often performed facing the spectators and addressed to them, establishing a more direct rapport between actors and audience.<sup>108</sup>

The direct contact between singer and audience—in Judith, between the speaker of the speech-in-character and the text-external narratee—does not merely serve the function of presenting the literary persona to the audience, as we have seen above. Much more importantly, it serves the theological purpose of addressing the external reader by forcing them to reflect on what is being *said to them*. In this way, the Book of Judith truly becomes theo-logical in the speeches: the author of Judith *speaks* about, to and with *God* in the speeches—that is, theo-logy. The author intentionally and specifically uses the genre of speech-in-character in order to explicitly express his theological views and values through the main character. That is why the correspondence and coherence between character/persona and speech are so important.<sup>109</sup> The correspondence validates, strengthens and intensifies the theological message of the work. In sum, Judith's words serve a double or circular purpose: they construct and depict her as the heroine of the story in a concrete sense, but they also convey the theological message of the work. The author delivers the theological pronouncements through his literary mouthpiece, thus adding to the substance and eminence of his character, while also transmitting the message of the work. Judith's voice (and Achior's) is dignified and authoritative, because she utters the author's theological concerns. This is quintessentially expressed in the observation that God only actively participates in half a verse in the Book of Judith (4:13a). The consequence of this is that the characters in the story must speak (and act) on behalf of God, since he neither speaks nor acts directly. The author *has* to express himself *precisely* in this way, because he presents speeches about God—*theo-logia*. That is why rhetoric and theology come together in the Book of Judith.

If we truly acknowledge the theological significance of the speeches in Judith, we will be more able to fully appreciate the formal guidelines structuring these propositions. The salient theological significance of the book may be identified in the speeches of Achior (chapter 5) and Judith (chapters 8, 9, 16), and it is palpable and discernible in these speeches that they conform to a well-structured and well-defined rhetorical pattern that provides the best possible lever of theological credibility to the presentation of the literary discourse. Thus, form truly does become content. The literary finesse

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<sup>107</sup> See McDowell, *Prayers*, 46.

<sup>108</sup> Watts, *Psalm*, 187.

<sup>109</sup> See Schmitz, "Funktion der Reden," 225-28; Moore, *Judith*, 60.

and quality of the author's writing bleed into the theological significance of his propositions. This means that the theological message of the work dovetails the literary means used to tell the tale: the literary and theological intentions of the work blend together seamlessly.

## 7 Conclusion

This article has shown how Judith's speech/prayer in chapter 9 of the Book of Judith conforms to the literary and stylistic guidelines in Theon's *Progymnasmata*. This includes the temporal aspects of the speech, the circumstances to which Judith reacts, the place and time of the speech, Judith's social position, her state of mind as expressed through the words she utters, and her ethnic identity. Thus, she speaks in a way that properly and suitably corresponds to her literary persona. These guidelines follow from Theon's explanation about how an author should compose a good and well-written speech-in-character. Hence, it is *very* probable that the author of the Book of Judith composed the speeches based on guidelines resembling the ones from Theon's *Progymnasmata*. In fact, the presentation of the literary character of Judith in chapter 8, and her speech in chapter 9, read almost like textbook examples of a speech-in-character as described by Theon.

A final comment on the original language of the Book of Judith, related to the literary quality of its speeches, recapitulates the opening of this article. The mustering of the elements from the ancient Greco-Roman literate education in the Book of Judith may indicate that the work was originally composed in Greek, with a significant homage to Septuagintal language and style. Assuming that the author indeed did complete the ancient literate education it makes sense that he composed the story of Judith in Greek as an original piece of (Hellenistic-Jewish) fiction with an invented background, setting, plot and characters—perhaps even in his native Greek tongue.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> The work of Lawrence Wills specifically pushes the perception of Judith in the direction of the other ancient Greek novels (*Jewish Novel*, 132-57).

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