Gender, Genre and the City in Early Modern English Writing: A Reading of Thomas Deloney's ballad 'The ouerthrow of proud *Holofernes*, and the triumph of vertuous Queene *Iudith*' (1587-8)

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Abstract The essay sets out to re-read Deloney's ballad about Judith's daring assassination of her city's besieger, Holofernes, as a laudatory fable of urban womanhood. I have sought to locate Deloney's representation of the Judith legend at the cusp of multiple cultural archetypes: gendering of elements of architecture, gendering of the city as a woman in terms of the architectural essentialisation of its walls, the perceived association of walls, in turn, with mercantile access, resultant prosperity and visible opportunities for hedonism, the related perception of urban women as habitually promiscuous and disruptive, and the hinging of the military and political fate of cities on the alleged impact of such vitiating feminine presence. I argue that in fashioning Judith, Deloney is seeking to locate and resolve, express and exorcise urban male anxieties about the city, anxieties that are recognizably early modern in their moorings, but also generically conditioned and perpetuated through deeply entrenched, pronouncedly gendered strands of what Deborah Shuger calls "habits of thought".

 Keywords Judith, Deloney, Bible, siege, gender, urban, space, walls

Introduction

This essay re-reads Thomas Deloney's late-1580s' ballad about the Biblical Judith's daring assassination of her city's besieger, Holofernes, as a laudatory fable of urban womanhood. In terms of its immediate ambit of allusion, the ballad is a flattering solicitation of Queen Elizabeth I's proactive guardianship of national

defence and security in view of an imminent Spanish invasion. I argue, however, that Deloney is consciously using this piece of popular Biblical apocrypha to make a twofold synecdochal projection. The nation's good is encapsulated in its capital city's well-being; and the virtuous queen's affirmative role in turn is made signifier of urban female virtue. In doing so, Deloney seeks to invert received and entrenched male prejudices about women's moral behaviour in the urban milieu and their putative repercussions on the concerned urban community's moral and military health. Yet in choosing to present Judith as a prototype of the female resident sovereign rather than of one of her humbler female subjects, Deloney may be seen to have collapsed into self-cancelling tokenism. What the ballad ultimately serves to reinforce is the prevalent cultural binary between the exceptional urban female saviour and the urban female traitor-destroyer, between a virtuous city woman and city women of vice.

In his authoritative though now dated study of Elizabethan middle class culture, Louis B. Wright had asserted that 'the Bible naturally was the foundation of all religious reading' and that 'all manner of Bibles found their way into English households' (1964: 236). Thus one may assume general familiarity in Deloney's London and England with the Judith story. While it is only to be expected that a balladeer would draw upon the currency of such a story, Deloney's opportunism lies in making the triangular intersection between national, civic and gender identity politics the basis of a self-aggrandising piece of political flattery.

According to Francis Oscar Mann, editor of the 1912 Oxford edition of Deloney's works, the ballad was entered 'to Sampson Clerk on March 23, 1587-8' (576-77). In Mann's edition, it figures in the Second Part of 'The Garland of Good Will', which in turn would be entered in the Stationer's Register in 1592-3 (562). These were years of both pan-national jubilation and paranoia, and Deloney exhibits characteristic opportunism in drawing upon the political implications of the Biblical Book of Judith. Judith, disguised and accompanied by her maid, is a wealthy, beautiful, virtuous but far from politically active widow residing in the besieged Jewish city of Bethulia. She infiltrates the camp of Holofernes, the besieging Assyrian general, pretends to be responsive to his advances, waits for the opportune moment to behead him while in a state of drunken torpor, and returns to her city and home, her reputation untarnished, to be greeted as her city's unexpected deliverer. Judith's story helps lay bare the sexually inflected gender posturing implicit in military conflicts and ambiguates orthodox societal reception of female sexual agency as leverage outside the domestic sphere.

Deloney's rationale for re-writing the Judith legend may be understood in terms of Erich Auerbach's contention in *Mimesis* that the doctrinal casting of all elements of a Biblical narrative operates by co-opting the reader into finding newer and newer meanings commensurate with its overarching message (Carruthers *et al* 2014: 15). As to Deloney's reasons for picking a story of collective crisis and individual enterprise from Jewish history, we may locate them in what Beatrice Groves has described as the early moderns' 'ingrained habit of imagining England as Jerusalem – of reading Jewish history as English prophecy' (2015: 14).

My reading of Deloney's ballad, outlined in my introduction, is inflected by Hans W. Frei's contention that Biblical hermeneutics in the pre-Neoclassical period has a simultaneously realistic and typological orientation:

> First, if it seemed clear that a biblical story was to be read literally, it followed automatically that it referred to and described actual historical occurrences. ...
>   Figuration was at once a literary and a historical procedure, an interpretation of stories and their meanings by weaving them together into a common narrative referring to a single history and its patterns of meaning.
>   In the third place, since the world truly rendered by combining biblical narratives into one was indeed the one and only real world, it must in principle embrace the experience of any present age and reader. (cited in Carruthers *et al* 2014: 16-17)

'The ouerthrow of proud *Holofernes*, and the triumph of vertuous Queene *Iudith*' is a patriotic celebration of Queen Elizabeth in the typological mode of praising a Biblical female personage who prefigured her. Deloney makes the analogy explicit in his conclusion. The realism is evident in the faithful detailing of the Judith story on its own terms of relevance to Elizabethan London's social and martial anxieties.

It is important to remember that Deloney's typological presentation of Judith is by no means the first of its kind. Margarita Stocker points out how, with the rise of gynecocracy across Europe around the mid-sixteenth century, the existing *querelle de femmes* tradition of identifying queens with Judith acquires a dimension of heightened political immediacy (1998: 67-9). Indeed, Mann's note on the ballad refers to a Norwich pageant comparing Elizabeth to Judith as early as 1578 (577). It may be deemed justified, therefore, to engage with the specificities of Deloney's representation, and my preferred angle of enquiry is one where issues of urbanity and femininity intersect.

Many cultural historians have commented on the *Book of Judith*'s rich cultural afterlife. Stocker engages with the iconic ramifications of Judith's story in the gamut of Western culture from the perspective of feminist psychoanalytics, while Mary D. Garrard has studied the vast art history of Judith in the early modern period at length. However, the latter does not mention Deloney's ballad at all, and the former only in passing (1998: 75).

One might propose that the apocryphal nature of the book of Judith in the Biblical ambit is similar to the factual-fictive in-betweenness achieved by ballad narratives in general and that this is partly the reason why Deloney may have been drawn to the idea of turning it into a ballad (see Gera 2014: 10). Ballads, going by Autolycus's wares in Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* (1997: 4.3) were both news and stories. In Jungian terms, then, Judith is a symbol, that is, 'a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning' (Jung 1964: 20).

Judith and Urban Space

The declaredly urban setting of Deloney's ballad is not incidental, but potentially germane to our understanding of the full import of Judith's role. Deloney makes Judith into an at once unusual and exemplary city-woman, the actual and normative significance of whose operations deserves to be re-evaluated in terms

of the early modern discourse of the city, the woman in the city and the city as woman. This would not detract from my earlier claim that Judith is clearly an iconic representation of Queen Elizabeth. In his posturing as a patriotic middle-class balladeer, Deloney would have seen the Queen as the desired icon, not just of the kingdom as a whole, but synecdochally, of the city of London, too. We find just such rhetorical substitution of the urban capital for the national geographical space in one of Deloney's later celebratory ballads. He rejoices over the 'happie obtaining of the great Galleazzo' and the resounding victory of the English against those, 'Who made account, /before this time or day:/Against the walles of faire *London*, their banners to display' (472). Richard Hakluyt's *Divers Voyages touching the Discouerie of America* (1582) offers a similar elision towards the end of his account

> take with you the mappe of Englande set out in faire colours, one of the biggest sort I meane, to make shewe of your Countrie from whence you came. And also the large mappe of London, to make shewe of your Citie.

This confusion, unwitting or deliberate, of the nation and the city would have been habitual in the period, firstly, because London was the royal seat and site of royal ostentation, and secondly because of London's status as the only seriously near-metropolitan location in England (see Clark 2000: 2, 27; Jones 1990: 9; and Fisher 1990: 61). The proliferation of maps of London during the early modern period also points towards London's growing sense of its own importance (see Howgego 1978; and Gordon 2013). Wright posits exhibitionist pride in London as a feature of the new mercantile gentry (1964: 34), precisely the class that Deloney would go on to write novels for and about, such as *Jack of Newbury* (1596-7), *The Gentle Craft* (1597), *Thomas of Reading* (1597-1600).

Significantly, amongst Deloney's oeuvre, one comes across at least one other ballad which commemorates an iconic woman's unusual act of selfless heroism in saving her city: 'The Garland of Good Will'. Here, 'Godina faire', Countess of Chester, prevails upon the Earl to relieve the 'city' of Coventry of prohibitive taxation by conceding to his demand that she ride without clothes on horseback through the city. Being a woman of wit like Judith, Godina manages to preserve her reputation by ensuring that no one sees her in the act (Deloney 1912: 308-11). One notes, therefore, an almost lurid fascination in Deloney with imagining respectable, socially unassailable women violating the codes of urban female propriety without actually compromising their sexual rectitude. This amounts to a sensationalisation, not of urban feminine vice, as manifested by the moralist writings of reformed 'prodigal' London writers like George Gascoigne and Thomas Nashe, but instead a recording of urban feminine virtue. By way of clarifying the literal basis for locating Judith in an urban space one may add that Deloney follows Biblical precedent in calling Bethulia, Judith's home, 'that little City'. As was characteristic in Elizabethan writing, he alternately and alternatively called it 'Towne':

> Wherefore about *Bethulia*,
>   that little City then:
> On foot he planted vp and downe,
>   an hundred thousand men.
> Twelue thousand more on horses braue,
>   about the Towne had he,

He stopt their springs and water pipes
      to worke their misery.   (1912: 33-40)

Mary Mills attests that the Judith story's urban setting in Bethulia is germane even in the Biblical context, and not just in later appropriations:

The occult geographies of the prophetic texts ... all deal with the urban spectacle of the ancient Near Eastern city-state. **...** It is through the literary depiction of scenes of destruction and construction that the reader accesses deeper urban values. (2012: 20-21)

Mills's contentions afford a context for my call for the Judith story to be read as an exemplum of gender anxieties in urban crises. What Mills's reading also points to is the iconic value of the city in the Biblical imaginary as the quintessential locus of individual human endeavour and its collective, communal implications. It also underlines the city's archetypal status as the site for the collective experiencing of danger and the ensuing conflict and crisis of values. As I shall go on to illustrate later, the city under siege is a common chronotope of crisis in the alarmist literature of Deloney's times and beyond. The Biblical precedent may be said to have provided a shared point of departure for early modern narratives of London.

Genre, Gender and the City

To the possible interjection that little city, town and metropolis are not identical Firstspaces, if one were to use Edward Soja's handy term (1996: 75), I would proleptically reply that the early modern literary representation of the city tended to have a strong generic dimension to it. This generic thinking about the city may be understood in terms of what Peter Clark says:

That the city was in a sense 'natural' to man's view of himself was expressed in the revival, initiated by Thomas More, of utopian writing. (2000: 214)

That is not to say there was no local colour, and that lived experience of the city was ignored. Nevertheless, the conceptualisation of the city was inveterately generic. Indeed, it is possible to ask whether essentialising the city is an early modern tendency alone. The architectural and urban historian, J. E. Vance, for instance, talks of how 'the mortality of man contrasts sharply with the immortality of cities' (Vance 1977: 3). Early modern conceptualisation of London as 'a city' seems to be entrenched in just such deterministic processes of assimilating contingent experiences into the received archetypal construct of 'the city'.

　　　　The context of Deloney's ballad is an urban siege. The sense of urban vulnerability was intense and ubiquitous in the Renaissance psyche. Leon Battista Alberti, for instance, sees cities as an inevitable target of martial attack. In *De re aedificatore* (*On the Art of Building*, c.1453) Alberti writes:

With Plato I say that it is of the nature of a city to expect that at some point in its history it should be threatened with conquest, since it is impossible, either in public or in private life, to curb that desire for possession and that ambition which are due to Nature or to human habits, within any reasonable limits: it has been the single most important reason for all armed aggression. This being so, who would deny the need to add guard upon guard, and defense upon defense? (1992: 102)

Judith is celebrated and feted by Deloney, himself a London writer and poet, because of her decisive and proactive role in saving the city and its inhabitants. In the story, then, Deloney projects a suitably royal succour for the pent up anxieties of an urban population unsure of its collective readiness for martial defence in view of a waning feudal culture (see Stone 1967; and Hutson 1989). Deloney uses the example of Judith as a hortatory lever to urge not just the Queen to lead from the vanguard, but also to bring moral pressure to bear upon his martially disinclined urban compatriots. Implicitly, then, martial leadership is located upon the reigning sovereign, notwithstanding gender. Martial service is sought from the obliging subject population, as in Machiavelli, who makes a case for a sharing of martial skill and knowledge among all classes, instead of perpetuating the arcane elitism of chivalry (1905: 67-8).

Interestingly, art history of early modern Europe notes the strategic placement of statues of exemplary 'good' and 'bad' women, including Judith, the Virgin Mary, and Salome in Florence for admonitory or hortatory purposes. There is thus an implied equation between the idea of the city and the ideals allegorically or emblematically embodied by women.

Roger J. Crum discusses the iconographic significance of Donatello's statue of Judith and Holofernes from the 1450s in front of the Medici Palace in Florence in relation to the inscription underneath: 'Kingdoms fall through luxury, cities rise through virtues; behold the neck of pride severed by humility' (2001: 23). In particular, Crum draws attention to the enduring centrality of pride as a perceived cardinal vice in the urban context. He quotes Brunetto Latini's words:

> pride engenders envy, and envy lying, and lying deception, and deception wrath, and wrath malevolence, and malevolence enmity, and enmity warfare, and warfare lays waste the city. (2001: 28)

In relation to such collective urban crises, early modern English literary representation of women tended to be unflattering, particularly though not exclusively in moralistic pamphlets. Indeed, the pride of urban women and the shameful submission of cities' male population to their effeminising influence are popularly blamed for cities' simultaneously moral and martial vulnerability and consequent defeat in sieges. Gascoigne's *Jocasta* and Nashe's *Christs Teares Ouer Ierusalem* are cases in point. In Nashe's alarmist text, the association of sin and corrupting feminine presence in London culminates in the description of prostitution and its rich patrons:

> yea, my Father (if all witnesses should faile) would stand vp and article against thee himself, how thou hast dryuen him (with thy detestable whoredomes) out of his consecrated dwelling place. (1910: 35)

In their play *A Looking-Glasse for London and England* (1589), Robert Greene and Thomas Lodge similarly denounce women's lust in Nineveh:

> *Oseas*. Woe to the traines of womens foolish lust,
> In wedlocke rights that yeeld but litle trust (1905: IV.4.1573-84)

Laura Gowing helps put male writers' representative anxiety about urban women into perspective, when she remarks how early modern urban women 'were envisaged as predators in a predatory city', and 'their use of the opportunities of

urban life was frequently construed as disorderly' (2000: 131-2). Antoni Maczak has also noted how early modern travel writings betray a preoccupation with 'the virtue of the women, or the lack of it, and the wider theme of the social etiquette associated with sexual relations' (1995: 286).

The surprising inversion in Deloney's narrative, I argue, lies in the fact that a virtuous woman should rescue her besieged city by impersonating a typical urban loose woman. In a sense, then, Judith becomes the thirdspace where the segregation between the public male and the private female spaces is obliterated, where the house and the city and the camp meet, where life outside the walls and the private life of a wealthy, pious reclusive widow can come together.

The tale of Judith serves to demonstrate how important the idea of space is to identity-formation and role-playing, that is, self-fashioning. The subtle innovation or shift effected by Deloney in the spatial setting of Judith's remarkable display of agency may be understood in terms of what the cultural geographer Amos Rapoport observes about the shaping influence of the environment on interpersonal and intra-social communication and 'in the organization of meaning' (1977: 12).

It would be pertinent to recall Soja's postulation that all regulation of and resistance to power operates in spatial terms (1996: 87). Judith's self-empowerment as a female assassin-saviour in disguise is founded predominantly on the shrewd exploitation of the spaces and boundaries circumscribing her designated role as a pious widow. Deloney makes his Judith step out of her house to meet the elders of her city, Bethulia, and reprimand them for their imminent capitulation to Holofernes's threats. This is implied in the lines 81-2: 'When she from them was gotten home, within her Palace gate'. As Gera indicates, in the Bible, however, she is reported as having sent her maid to the elders, who then came round to see her at her house:

> (10.) She sent her maid who was in charge of all her possessions and summoned Uzziah, Chabris, and Charmis, the elders of her city.

> (11.) When they came to her she said to them, "Listen to me, leaders of the inhabitants of Bethulia. ... (Gera 2014: 252)

Such freedom of movement and agency as Deloney consciously bestows upon his Judith is consistent with his portrayal of empowered middle-class women, especially widows. In the prose-romance, *Jack of Newbury*, Jack's master's widow, whom Jack subsequently marries, would be a case in point (Wiesner-Hanks 2008: 124). I would argue, however, that Deloney's portrayal of Judith is implicitly that of a city-woman, in view of the habitual visibility and mobility manifest among women in early modern London. To quote Gowing again:

> ... working women had to move between private and public, outside and inside every day. ... The evidence of neighbourhood disputes over personal or family territory gives the impression that women's sense of their own space, if not centred entirely on the house, was focused on a fairly circumscribed area: the street, yard or alley, the water pump or well, the shop or doorstep. But women also lived, worked and walked around a much larger space: the city itself. (2000: 134, 137)

Deloney's understandably economical narration leaves it tantalisingly unspecific whether stepping out to meet city elders was an unusual act for Judith in particular or women in general. It appears, therefore, that the spatial transgression

attempted by the Biblical Judith is sharper and more radical than Deloney's Judith's. What he does seem to underline in spatial terms is the pro-activeness shown by Judith. While this might seem to suggest a refreshing open-mindedness in Deloney on issues of urban female freedom, I would further argue that Deloney's re-presentation of Judith as a liberated urban woman is ultimately an early modern male stereotype.

She is described as having duly sought the permission of the city authorities to embark upon her mission:

> If you will grant me leaue (quoth she)
>   to passe abroad this night:
> To *Holofernes* I will go,
>   for all his furious might. (73-6)

Judith maintains expected protocol, and in spatial terms no less, when she asks permission to be let back in (193-200).

Generally in early modern siege literature, the male invader lays siege to a city outside its gates. And the gatekeepers are emphatically male. In a telling spatial symbolism construable in terms of Soja's postulation about the power-space nexus discussed above, civic authorities negotiate with the besieging male from on top of the walls. Such spatially hierarchised posturing serves to underline a paternalistic, controlling jurisdiction over rights of access into and without the designated urban space. All these motifs may be seen at work in Henry the Fifth's siege of Harfleur (1997: 3.78-135) and in the dialogue outside the walls of Angiers in *King John* (1997: 2.1). The connection between city walls and the repressive exercise of power is also acknowledged by Henri Lefebvre:

> City walls were the mark of a material and brutal separation far more potent than the formal polarities they embodied, such as curved-*versus*-straight or open-*versus*-closed. This separation had more than one signification – and indeed implied more than any mere signification, in that the fortified towns held administrative sway over the surrounding countryside, which they protected and exploited at the same time (a common enough phenomenon, after all). (1991: 163)

Deloney's decision to make Judith step out of her house and the city, while omitting to describe what she does after requesting the public display of Holofernes's head, which ends the siege, could hardly have been in ignorance of the Biblical details.

The City, the Home, and Siege

The implications of Judith's spatial transgression may also be understood further in the light of Alberti's treatise on architecture. Alberti draws an analogy between body and building and between the house and the city (1992: 5, 23, 140). He conceives of the house, which is indistinguishable from the home in his mind, in terms of clear functional demarcation of available internal space between the private and the public (1992: 8).

What is noteworthy is the insistent designation of the secluded inner space as the space of protection for the women. So there is an implicit understanding of the walls of the city as the outermost protection, the walls of the house as the medial one, and the walls of the innermost sanctum, be it of a citadel or a room in

the house, as the space specially constructed for the preservation of women's chastity. Alberti's mention of Vesta, the virginal Roman goddess of the home and hearth, modelled on the virginal Hestia of Greek mythology, leads one to draw a figural connection between the sanctified space called the home and the idea of the pure, undefiled, chaste woman. This would be particularly relevant to the conceptualisation of Judith, a self-cloistered widow who has removed herself to the remotest sanctum of the house she inhabits: a space undefiled by strangers, particularly males (1992: 7-8). Alberti goes on to point out:

> The ancients first gave each city a citadel as a retreat in times of adversity, where virgins and matrons could preserve their chastity and holy things be preserved from pollution. (1992: 122)

The cultural assumptions at work in Alberti's exposition yield the corollary that cities are vulnerable, and the women of the city all the more so; and that both entities therefore need multiple mural layers. This is key to understanding the significance Alberti attaches to the idea of masculine masterhood or control over the synecdochal spaces: house and city.

Mark Wigley's critique of Alberti's spatialisation of gender relations helps put Judith's act of conformational subversion into spatial perspective:

> If the woman goes outside the house she becomes more dangerously feminine rather than more masculine. A woman's interest, let alone active role, in the outside calls into question her virtue. The woman on the outside is implicitly sexually mobile. Her sexuality is no longer controlled by the house. ... In these terms, the role of architecture is explicitly the control of sexuality, or, more precisely, women's sexuality, the chastity of the girl, the fidelity of the wife. (1992: 335)

Deloney makes Judith an acceptably Christian role model for urban Englishwomen. She seeks permission to step outside the city walls because she wants to serve her city and not because she wants sexual freedom and anonymity of the kind that life inside the walls would not allow. In the *Book of Judith*, she is described as having returned to her earlier reclusive existence, thereby physically removing herself from male contact (Gera 2014: 471). It would be pertinent to perceive Judith's surprising proactiveness and subsequently voluntary withdrawal in terms of Helen Hills' reading of Pierre Bourdieu's idea of the *habitus* and the secondary benefits of obedience to rules (2003: 10). As a pious, ever-mourning widow, Judith performs acquiescence in and conformity to expected spatial norms in order that she may continue to enjoy 'the prestige and respect' this brings her.

Deloney refers to Judith's bejewelled appearance in disguise, so that coming from within the desired city in all the finery and wealth that attracted foreign invasion in the first place, Judith must have seemed attractive to Holofernes all the more because she was a woman from that city. Her presence in the camp is synecdochal of the city itself. At a symbolic level, therefore, Judith comes to represent the wealth, the prestige and the hedonistic licence, all of which prospects the city evoked or triggered.

For a similar elision of the erotic and the civic in projecting the city as a coveted, desirable commodity, we may turn to the anonymous dramatic adaptation of Gascoigne's *Spoyle of Antwerp* (1576) called *A Larum for London* (c.1602). The personal motives of the Spanish captain, Sancto Danila, for

despoiling the city are his own rapacity and military ambitions, but his language is palpably sexualised and predatory:

> She must be Courted, mary her selfe inuites,
> And beckons vs vnto her sportfull bed:
> What is he then more lumpish than rude Iron,
> By such a load-starre may not be attempted? (Anon. 1913: 1.83-6)

In much the same vein that Marlowe's Tamburlaine envisages his plunder of Damascus (*Tamburlaine* 1.4.2.108-10), Danila fantasizes about Antwerp's wealth:

> Her garments are imbrodered with pure golde;
> And euery part so rich and sumptuous,
> As Indias not to be compar'd to her; (1.80-02)

Barbara Rossing points out how in classical mythology and writing, concepts or spaces that were represented by feminine nouns would be personified as feminine icons, while those denoted by masculine nouns would be personified as male (1999: 20). Architectural historians in their turn admit the gendering of specific elements of architecture and architectural terminology:

> The use of terms such as 'masculine' and 'feminine' implies that we can equate certain forms and features of buildings with a particular gender (Conway and Roenisch 2005: 25).

Taking my cue from Rapoport's proposition that 'organization of meaning' is one of the key functions of 'the eikonic aspects of the built environment', of the environment as an agency (1977: 11), I would contend that the walls of the city have just such semiotic value with respect to the city, both in physical and symbolic terms. City walls are subsumed under the eroticised feminine iconography of cities in Renaissance siege literature. Walls putatively tantalise the male besieger's gaze with what they conceal. Deloney admiringly describes the aesthetically grand as well as functionally formidable walls of Jerusalem in his ballad *Canaans Calamitie*: 'Three stately walles begirt this Citty round' (1912: 25-30). As Simon Pepper observes in an essay on the symbolism of city walls in Renaissance Europe, to the inhabitants of a free city, the wall was an essential attribute of civic status and independence' meaning that 'the component parts of fortifications – walls, towers, merli, and gates – themselves came to be associated with the sovereignty of a prince or the liberties of a free city' (2000: 583).

Even other contemporary plays, particularly plays dealing with war, and especially sieges, for example Thomas Lodge's *The Wounds of Civil War* (1594), copiously refer to city walls in a manner that seems to suggest the inconceivability of the city without its walls (314, 327, 331). Peter Ackroyd mentions how the walls of sixteenth-century London were 'continually being rebuilt, as if the integrity and identity of the city itself depended upon the survival of this ancient stone fabric' (2000: 22). Michael Wolfe notes that each early modern French town 'had an expressive, individualized profile created by a town's public buildings ringed by a curtain of walls, turrets and, by the sixteeth century, bastions (2000: 318).

From the above strands of evident historiographic emphasis on walls and their status in early modern urban history, one suspects further that some cities could be seen as something of a paradise, a pleasure haven, albeit a manmade one. Deloney describes Jerusalem as a place 'Which did earthes heauenly paradice

destroy', "Where in the midst of sweetest smelling flowers,/ They built for pleasure, many pleasant bowers' (31-40). Its attractiveness stems from its elusiveness, and its vulnerability from its very attractiveness. Deloney actually uses the word 'pleasure' to emphasise this hedonistic element, even though his hedonism is not overtly misogynistic in its causality. Abraham Akkerman contends that the Western cultural construct of the city has oscillated between two archetypes: the predominant masculine Platonic 'citadel' and the underlying feminine Biblical 'garden' (2006: 229-56).

As to the generic gendering of the city as a woman, Lewis Mumford also notes how 'house and village, eventually the town itself, are woman writ large' (1961: 13). Scholars show feminisation of the city to be quite evident in medieval English literature. Sylvia Federico draws attention to the allegorical fusion of Dido with London in Gower and Richard Maidstone's works (2003: 4, 6-7). She uses Lacanian psychoanalysis to show how these male writers of medieval England fuse the ideas of Troy and woman in that both are 'voided signifiers' that simultaneously support and threaten to destroy masculine identity. Interestingly, Federico marks the fact that 'both poems specifically address moments of great crisis in London's semblance of civic order' (*New Troy*, 4). In other words, the anxieties engendered by a civic crisis lend themselves easily to allegorisation of the city as a feminine entity. I have noted a similar tendency in actual or imagined siege narratives of the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century.

In entering the military camp of the enemy besieger, Judith must have recognized precisely what role she would be associated with, since the women who accompanied soldiers or followed in their train were often prostitutes. To quote John A. Lynn:

> Prostitution in military camps benefited from tolerance and regulation during the sixteenth century, but suffered increasing restrictions that climaxed in complete prohibition in the late seventeenth century. ... During the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, many commanders readily accepted and regulated the presence of prostitutes, usually called "public women," "women in common," or "common women." (2008: 68-69)

Yet, even there she carefully keeps herself above the rung of the common courtesan and presents herself as a romance heroine: a damsel in distress cum self-sufficient, independent woman like Ariosto's Angelica:

> Much ground alas she had not gone
>   out of her owne City:
> But that the Centinels espied
>   her coming presently.
> From whence come you faire Maid (qd. they)
>   and where walke you so late?
> From yonder Towne, good Sir (quoth she)
>   to your Lord of high estate. (105-12)

Deloney is also careful to show how Holofernes falls into drunken torpor before he has been able to seduce Judith (161-84). It is thus implied that Judith's sexual purity and, consequently, reputation remains unblemished. This is Deloney's way of resolving the ethical implications of feminine agency in the extra-domestic, extra-mural space, and of averting over-sexualisation of the sovereign queen's projected role as saviour-patriot.

Robert Shoemaker observes how 'in the public mind, single women were associated with illicit sex', and how 'the geographical mobility induced by illicit sex affected the lives of those who made their living in this way – the women – much more than their customers' (2001: 146-7, 149, 159-60). Judith both exploits and belies that prejudice.

'The Garland of good Will', of which this ballad is part, also contains 'A New Sonnet, conteining the Lamentation of *Shores* wife, who was sometime Concubine to King *Edward* the fourth*,* setting forth her great fall, and withall her most miserable and wretched end.' That poem presents Jane Shore's fall in terms of her abjection from the city of London after Edward's death:

In a Procession,
For my transgression,
Bare foot he made me go,
For to shame me,
A crosse before me there was carried plainly,
As a penance for my former life,
     So to tame me.

Then through London,
Being thus vndone,
The Lord Protector published,
    a Proclamation:
on paine of death I should not be harbord,
which furthermore encreast my sorrow
    and vexation. (43-56)

Notably, such parading of female transgressors through the city in disgrace was a convention:

In counterpart to this largely masculine progress of honour was a typically feminine progress of dishonour: the processions of 'carting'. Walking at a cart's tail or riding on it, criminals were led around the city's public spaces to mark their shame; both men and women were carted, but women were often ordered to do so naked, or wearing blue mantles or hoods to mark them out as bawds, carrying white rods to denote fornication, or holding a distaff for scolding. (Gowing 2000: 141)

Beatrice Groves apprises us of the equation in the early modern urban imaginary of 'the city's unbreached walls' with 'the virga intact' (2015: 172). The tragic adulteress Jane Shore's extramural eviction acquires added symbolic import in the light of that association. We can see this contrast between London's hospitality to the Queen with its hostility to the 'other woman' in the context of another Elizabethan poem, Isabella Whitney's 'Wyll and Testament', a poem of farewell to London published as part of Whitney's *A Sweet Nosegay* (1583). As Rhonda Sanford observes:

In the end, it might be that whether the streets of London are turned out in their best for the queen or in their worst for Whitney, there is simply no place for an unmarried woman of any rank. She can move with ease through streets covered in satin, so long as she is gone within the day, or she can roam about from place to place for longer terms, but eventually she will end up in the outskirts, beyond the walls, forced to keep moving. (2002: 123)

As a study in marked contrast, we may recall that the Biblical *Book of Judith* refers explicitly to the hero's welcome given by the entire city population to Judith.

Although Deloney does not dwell on it, moving instead to the praise of Elizabeth, he implies as much.

Deloney in Context

A triangulated comparison with female saviours and saviour-aspirants in Shakespeare and Marlowe may not be entirely digressive here. Rather, it serves to demonstrate how writers of the age variedly deploy a trope or formula in ordinary circulation to endorse or impeach the relationship between a city's welfare and the putative ethical standing of its women. The one Shakespearean character who might be said to emulate Judith, though in a decidedly cerebral way, is Volumnia. She too successfully releases her city, Rome, from a potentially catastrophic siege by her own son. Just as Judith outwits Holofernes, the plain, blunt soldier who is taken in by appearance, Volumnia, too, seduces her son, though with her words. The end result is the same. Judith and Volumnia succeed where the virgins of Damascus fail in persuading Tamburlaine to abandon his conquest and sack of their city:

> Pity our plights, O pity poor Damascus!
> Pity old age, within whose silver hairs
> Honour and reverence evermore have reigned;
> Pity the marriage bed, where many a lord
> In prime and glory of his loving joy
> Embraceth now with tears of ruth and blood
> The jealous body of his fearful wife,
> Whose cheeks and hearts, so punished with conceit
> To think thy puissant never-stayèd arm
> Will part their bodies, and prevent their souls
> From heavens of comfort yet their age might bear,
> Now wax all pale and withered to the death – (V.1.80-91)

We are thus confronted with a moral problem. Virgins' appeals on behalf of their city do not work. In the gendered imaginary of urban crises and violent communal encounters, women are either compelled or impelled to perform various stereotypical gender roles – virtuous mother, vulnerable daughter or sister, or fallen woman, in order to legitimate their continued presence in society. Such efforts, directed at quelling patriarchal anxieties, can actually entail performing those very anxieties about female sexuality and the moral hazard it poses to civic wellbeing. Only when Judith impersonates a morally questionable woman, that is, only in such disguise as is reliant upon her physical charms and sexual availability, does she prove useful to Bethulia. As with the heroines of Shakespearean comedy, disguise facilitates empowerment through what is clearly sexual licence. Such licence in turn is leverage that the *mulier bana* or good woman uses to reaffirm collective good and the *mulier mala* or bad woman to destabilise it.

It is important to note how Deloney is at pains not to underline the specificities of Judith's role-playing. The implication is that a good woman earns her freedom of mobility and knows how to use this freedom with discretion, moderation and honour. In fashioning her in words – unlike the more voluptuous portrayal in contemporary paintings – that draw attention to her regal beauty

without over-emphasising the seductive appearance she carefully adopts, Deloney is circumspectly avoiding any insinuation that a princely widow, whom he will consciously and explicitly compare with the Queen at the end of the poem, can even pretend to be a courtesan, prostitute or woman of pleasure. Instead, in describing her reception among the enemy soldiers and officials, leading up to her introduction to Holofernes himself, what Deloney draws upon is distant admiration, quite similar to what one would imagine the Queen herself commanding in the course of her progresses through London or, more pertinently, at Tilbury:

> When they did marke and view her well,
>   and saw her faire beauty:
> And there with all her rich array,
>   so gorgeous to the eye:
> They were amazed in their minds,
>   so faire a Dame to see:
> They set her in a Chariot then,
>   in place of high degree. (113-20)
>
> An hundred proper chosen men
>   they did appoint likewise,
> To waite on Princely *Iudith* there,
>   whose beauty bleard their eyes,
> And all the souldiers running, came,
>   to view her as she went:
> And thus with her they past along
>   vnto the General's Tent. (121-28)

The Tilbury connection is all the more pertinent because Deloney writes a ballad (1588) celebrating the Queen's visit to Tilbury (1912: 474-8). Thus, even as she plays the role of *femme fatale*, Judith retains her dignity and distance and does not debase herself. Indeed, the freedom of movement that she earns even among the enemy is one founded on respect for her immaculate commitment to her own way of life, with respect to religious practice or gastronomic preferences. It is this privilege that she uses to get away from Holofernes's camp bearing his head away with her. Everyone who saw her thought she was going out to pray in solitude as on previous occasions. Judith is thus able to outwit the males on both sides: her compatriots never find out how she secured Holofernes's head, while her enemies never realise that her prayers were not the only pretext for stepping out. In neither space, however, does she foreground herself as a martially aspirant woman. Instead, she sticks to her brief of being just a woman – beautiful, deferential, docile, traditional *and* pious.

Again, it would be pertinent to juxtapose Deloney's spatialised representation of Judith's enterprise with acts of spatial violation by some of her scriptural, historical and literary peers. The one Biblical woman who pays dearly for going out of the city is Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah in the *Book of Genesis* 34, who is raped by Shechem, son of a Canaanite and Levite prince. It is very significant that in the prayer before she sets out for Holofernes's camp, Judith cites Simeon, the avenging brother of the raped Dinah (Gera 2014: 101). Diane Wolfthal's reference to the Limbourg brothers' illumination of Dinah's straying and subsequent rape as a Renaissance exemplum 'which reinforces the belief that rape is caused by women's behaviour, not men's' by warning 'women to avoid the dangers of the public sphere' (1999: 188). Joy Schroeder, too, corroborates how

'numerous sixteenth-century reformers argued that Dinah provoked this rape by leaving her parental home without permission' (2007: 11).

Unlike in the case of Dinah, it is Judith, rather than a fraternal guardian, who exacts revenge for the symbolic siege/rape of Bethulia, her city. The telling irony – and one that is meant to draw flattering attention to the leadership provided by Queen Elizabeth – is that this literal and metaphorical decapitation and subsequent defeat in retreat of the besiegers should have been accomplished by a mere woman – a non-martial woman at that, using an apparatus that is perceivably feminine: physical attractiveness. She is not Virgil's Camilla, not Penthesilea, as in Sidney's *Arcadia*, nor Spenser's Britomart. On the contrary, Judith uses a persona and commensurate skills that would be deemed embarrassingly un-martial. She accomplishes what Spenser's Radigund also attempts and achieves only partial success at, namely seducing the enemy hero into ignominious defeat and captivity.

Deloney's presentation of a deliberately straying Judith also contrasts with Spenser's representation of Munera, Pollente's daughter, in *The Faerie Queene*, Book V, unlike whom Judith is not proactively martial or politically ambitious. Munera, whose castle stands besieged by Artegall and Talus, leans over from the castle wall to negotiate in person with her besiegers. She seeks to placate her inflexible besieger, the iron man, with all her charms, but to no avail; and is duly cast over the Castle wall and into the flood' (2007: 2.27:2-4). 'And lastly all that Castle quite he raced,/ Even from the sole of his foundation,/And all the hewen stones thereof defaced,/ That there mote be no hope of reparation,/Nor memory thereof to any nation' (2007: 2.28:5).

Radigund in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Book V, is described as issuing out of her city's walls and, like Deloney's bejewelled Judith, she too is reported to have taken particular care with her sartorial preparation (2007: 5.2-4). Radigund *is* the allegorical enemy, a living embodiment of the destructive power of degenerate sexual infatuation in a Christian hero's life and career. Judith and Radigund are the *mulier bana* and *mulier mala* respectively. The crux however lies in the fact that both use the same ruse or ploy to accomplish their separate goals, one honourable, the other dishonourable.

Conclusion

I have sought to locate Deloney's representation of the Judith legend at the cusp of multiple cultural archetypes: gendering of elements of architecture; gendering of the city as a woman in terms of the architectural essentialisation of its walls; the perceived association of walls, in turn, with mercantile access, resultant prosperity and visible opportunities for hedonism; the related perception of urban women as habitually promiscuous and disruptive; and the hinging of the military and political fate of cities on the alleged impact of such vitiating feminine presence. I conclude by suggesting that in fashioning Judith, Deloney is seeking to locate and resolve, express and exorcise urban male anxieties about the city, anxieties that are recognizably early modern in their moorings, but also generically

conditioned and perpetuated through deeply entrenched, pronouncedly gendered strands of what Deborah Shuger calls 'habits of thought' (1990).

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