



[DISCUSS]

The Aftermath

– for *The Act of Judith*, 1979-1980, (narrative painting) by Jerome Witkin

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Discussion Topics: Metaphor, Allegory, Tone, Gender Roles

Discussion Questions:

1. This poem is based on a narrative painting depicting the biblical story of Judith, but the poet learned of Judith's story *after* writing the poem. Identify where the poem is consistent with the story and where it strays. What are the advantages and disadvantages to writing a poem this way?
2. In her book *Life Lesson: The Art of Jerome Witkin* (Syracuse University Press, 2016), Sherry Chayat refers to Witkin's use of masks and mirrors as metaphors "suggesting self-deception, hidden truths, and the possibility of revelation." What else might the mask and the reflective knife be metaphors for in this poem?
3. Would you categorize this poem as an allegory? Why or why not?
4. The artist here is male; the poet is female – what role does gender play in each of their modern interpretations of Judith's story?
5. How did the poet translate the tone of this painting into words?

Sources:

Chayat, Sherry. *Life Lesson: The Art of Jerome Witkin*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2016.

"Glossary of Poetic Terms: Allegory." *Poetry Foundation*. 2019.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/allegory>

"Glossary of Poetic Terms: Metaphor." *Poetry Foundations*. 2019.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/metaphor>

"Glossary of Poetic Terms: Tone." *Poetry Foundations*. 2019.
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/learn/glossary-terms/tone>

Vertefeuille, Lin. "Judith with the Head of Holofernes, by Fede Galizia, 1578-1630, Mila, 1596." *Virtual Library on The Ringling Museum*. 2000. 2019. <http://ringlingdocents.org/judith2.htm>