

**On the Name "Judith's Dagger"**

**Judith's Dagger**

**August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

The beheading of Holofernes by the widow Judith was a popular theme in art of the seventeenth century. However, the Florentine painter Artemisia Gentileschi famously depicted Judith's beheading of Holofernes with unusually visceral and tactile detail, in a (purported) self-portrait representing herself as Judith. Holofernes then comes to represent Agostino Tassi, the man who raped her when she was seventeen.

During the trial, she was tortured with thumbscrews to ensure she would not lie.

(Tassi was not tortured.)

She testified: “. . . When I saw myself free, I went to the table drawer and took a knife and moved toward Agostino, saying, **‘I’d like to kill you with this knife because you have dishonored me.’**”

In Artemisia's painting of the beheading of Holofernes, Judith wears a bracelet representing Artemis, her namesake. Indeed, feminist reclamation has often made Judith into an icon of insurrection against patriarchy. We follow in this tradition, but we choose as our own namesake not the goddess, Artemis.

*Instead, we choose the knife.*

Signed, Judith's Dagger



*Tongues like fusillades! Eyes Like Fire!*

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