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*Judith*

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I choose this as a sufficiently short and particularly attractive piece to represent the poems based on biblical narrative. It is found in the same MS as *Beowulf*, but part of the poem is missing, though how much is uncertain. It does not slavishly follow its original, but has been converted into a highly skilful piece of narrative, with lingering attention to the salient points of the action, ingenious but relevant passages of interspersed moral comment, and trenchant and dramatic speeches. As usual in Old English there is no attempt at suspense (see ll. 9, 63, etc.). The whole poem is direct, bold and vivid, and it is the skill of the poet that makes it so despite his strong dependence on conventions and formulas; compare ll. 209-12 with *The Battle of Maldon* ll. 106-7, *The Battle of Brunanburh* ll. 60-5.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

B. J. Timmer, *Judith*, Methuen's Old English Library, London, 1952

ASPR IV  
Sweet ASR

## Judith

- ..... twēode  
gifena in ðys ginnan grunde; hēo ðær þā gearwe funde  
mundbyrd æt ðām mæran Þeodne, þā hēo āhte mæste  
pearfe  
hyldo þæs hēhstan Dēman, þæt hē hie wið þæs hēhstan  
brōgan  
5 gefriðode, frymða Waldend; hyre ðæs Fæder on roderum  
torhtmōd tiðe gefremede, þe hēo āhte trumne gelēafan  
ā tō ðām Ælmihtigan. Gefrægen ic ðā Hōlofernus  
wīnhātan wyrcean georne, and eallum wundrum þrymlic  
girwan up swæsendo: tō ðām hēt se gumena baldor  
10 ealle ðā yldestan ðegnas: hie ðæt ofstum miclum  
ræfndon rondwiggende, cōmon tō ðām rīcan þeodne  
fēran folces ræswan. Þæt wæs þy fēorðan dōgore  
þæs ðe Iūdith hyne glēaw on geðonce,  
ides ælfscīnu, ærest gesōhte.  
15 Hie ðā tō ðām symle sittan eodon,  
w lance tō wīngedrince, ealle his wēagesīðas,  
bealde byrnwiggende. Þær wæron bollan stēape  
boren æfter bencum gelōme, swylce ēac būnan and orcas  
fulle fletsittendum: hie þæt fæge þēgon  
20 rōfe rondwiggende, þēah ðæs se rīca ne wēnde,  
egesful eorla dryhten. Ðā wearð Hōlofernus,  
goldwine gumena, on gytesālum;  
hlōh and hlýdde, hlynede and dynede,  
þæt mihten fīra bearn feorran gehýran,  
25 hū se stiðmōða styrmde and gylede,  
mōdig and medugāl manode geneahhe  
bencsittende þæt hī gebærdon wel.  
Swā se inwidda ofer ealne dæg  
dryhtguman sīne drencte mid wīne,

1. The negative in the translation is deduced from the context.

## Judith

... And did not doubt his gifts in this wide world.  
She found there ready help from the great Prince  
When most she needed from the Highest Judge  
Favour, that He, the Ruler of creation,  
Should save her from the greatest of all terrors.  
The Father in the heavens, glorious,  
Granted her plea, because she always had  
Firm faith in the Almighty. Then I heard  
That Holofernes summoned men to wine  
And splendidly prepared a mighty banquet,  
To which the prince of men commanded all  
His noblest thanes. The soldiers with great speed  
Did as he bade, the people's leaders came  
To the great ruler. That was the fourth day  
After the elf-fair lady Judith first,  
Wise in her heart, had come to visit him.  
They went and sat then at the feast, proud men  
At wine-drinking, all his comrades in woe,  
The bold armed warriors. There were steep bowls  
Borne often round the benches, likewise cups  
And tankards full to all who sat in hall.  
The brave men who accepted it were doomed,  
Though this the strong and dreadful lord of men  
Did not foresee. Then Holofernes was  
In festive mood, the patron of those men.  
He laughed and roared, he shouted and cried out,  
So that the sons of men could hear afar  
How the stern-spirited one stormed and yelled,  
Mead-drunk and proud continuously urged  
Those on the benches to enjoy themselves.  
And so the evil one throughout the day,  
Arrogant patron, drenched his men with wine

JUDITH

30 swiðmōd since**s** brytta, oð þæt hie on swīman lāgon,  
oferdrencte his duguðe ealle, swylce hie wæron dēaþe  
geslegene,

āgotene gōða gehwylces. Swā, hēt se gumena aldor  
fylgan fletsittendum, oð þæt fira bearnum  
nēalæhte niht sēo þýstre. Hēt ðā nīða geblonden

35 þā ēadigan mægð ofstum fetigan  
tō his bedreste bēagum gehlæste,  
hringum gehrodene. Hie hraðe fremedon  
anbyhtscaelcas, swā him heora ealdor bebēad,  
byrnwigena brego: bearhtme stōpon

40 tō ðām gysterne, þær hie Iūðithþe  
fundon ferhōglēawe, and ðā fromlice  
lindwiggende lēdan ongunnon  
þā torhtan mægð tō træfe þām hēan,  
þær se rīca hyne reste on symbel,

45 nihtes inne, Nergende lād  
Hōlofernus. Þær was eallgylden  
flēohnet fæger ymbe þæs folctogan  
bed āhongen, þæt se bealofulla  
mihte wlitan þurh, wigena baldor,

50 on āghwylcne þe ðærinne cōm  
hæleða bearna, and on hyne nēnig  
monna cynnes, nymðe se mōdiga hwæne  
nīðe rōfra him þe nēar hēte

rinca tō rūne gegangan. Hie ðā on reste gebrōhton  
55 snūde ðā snoteran idese; ēodon ðā stercedferhðe  
hæleð heora hearran cýðan þæt was sēo hālige mēowle  
gebrōht on his būrgetelde. Þā wearð se brēma on mōde  
bliðe, burga ealdor, þōhte ðā beorhtan idese  
mid wīde and mid womme besmītan; ne wolde þæt  
wuldres Dēma

60 geðafian, þrymmes Hyrde, ac hē him þæs ðinges  
gestýrde,  
Dryhten, dugeða Waldend. Gewāt ðā se dēofulcunda,

61. Dryhten omitted in translation.

JUDITH

Till all his troop was drunk and lay unconscious  
As if struck down in death, deprived of good.  
Thus did the prince of warriors command  
That those in hall be served, until dark night  
Approached the sons of men. Then, steeped in sin,  
He ordered that the blessed maid be fetched,  
Laden with ornaments and decked with rings,  
To grace his bed. Retainers quickly did  
As their prince bade, the lord of war-armed men.  
To the guest-house they noisily repaired,  
And there wise-hearted Judith did they find;  
The warriors at once began to lead  
The noble maiden to the high pavillion  
Where the great lord used always to retire,  
The nightly chamber of Holofernes  
The Saviour's foe: There was a curtain fair,  
All-golden, hung around the leader's bed  
So that the wicked lord could see through it  
On any hero's son who came therein.  
But none could look on him unless the chief  
Should order any of the brave in war  
To come more close to him for consultation.  
Then they brought the wise lady to his couch  
Speedily, and the steadfast men went out  
To tell their prince the holy woman had  
Been taken to his tent. The famous prince  
Of cities then exulted in his heart,  
Planned to pollute that lady fair with sin  
And foulness; but the Guardian of might,  
The Judge of glory would not let it be,  
The King of hosts restrained him from the deed.  
The fiendish one then with a troop of men,

JUDITH

gálferhð gangan gumena ðræate  
bealofull his beddes næosan, þær hē sceolde his blæd  
forlēosan

ædre binnan ānre nihte; hæfde ðā his ende gebidenne  
63 on eorðan unswæsligne, swylcne hē ær æfter worhte,  
pearlmōd ðeoden gumena, þenden hē on ðysse worulde  
wunode under wolcna hrōfe. Gefēol ðā wine swā druncen  
se rica on his reste middan, swā hē nyste ræda nānne  
on gewitlocan; wiggend stōpon  
70 ūt of ðām inne ofstum miclum,  
weras winsade, þe ðone wærlogan,  
lāðne lēodhatan, læddon tō bedde  
nēhstan siðe. Ðā wæs Nergendes  
þeowen þrymful þearle gemyndig  
75 hū hēo þone atolan eaðost mihte  
ealdre benæman ær se unsýfra,  
womfull onwōce. Genam ðā wundenlocc,  
Scyppendes mægð, scearpne mēce,  
scūrum heardne, and of scēaðe ābræð  
80 swiðran folme; ongan ðā swegles Weard  
be naman nemnan, Nergend ealra  
woruldbūendra, and þæt word ācwæð:  
'Ic ðē frymða God, and frōfre Gæst,  
Bearn Alwaldan biddan wylle

62. *gangan* supplied. However as this line is surrounded by hypermetric verses, Timmer, ASPR and others are probably right in regarding *gálferhð gumena ðræate* as the first half-line with the second missing by accident or design (see note on *Battle of Maldon* l. 172).

74. *pearle* omitted in translation.

79. *scurum heardne*. *Beowulf* l. 1033 and *Andreas* l. 1133 have the word *scurheard*. *Beowulf* l. 326 has also *regnhearde*. The latter probably originally meant 'supernaturally hard', the first element being related to Norse *regin*, 'gods'. This became thought to be the same as *regn*, 'rain', with some such idea as 'raining with weapons' in mind (see *Judith* l. 221, *flana scuras*), and then the nearly synonymous *scur* could be substituted as alliteration demanded. See C. L. Wrenn, *Beowulf with the Finnesburg Fragment*, London, 1958, p. 81.

JUDITH

Lustful and evil, set off for his bed,  
Where he was destined soon that very night  
To forfeit all his fame. Then had he reached  
A cruel end on earth, such as before  
The mighty prince of men had merited,  
While in this world he lived under the roof  
Of heaven. On his bed the noble lord  
Fell down, so drunk with wine that in his mind  
He knew no sense. The soldiers with great haste  
Marched from the room, the men replete with wine,  
Who for the last time to his bed had brought  
The treacherous and hateful tyrant king.  
Then was the mighty hand-maid of the Saviour  
Mindful of how she might most easily  
Deprive the fearful sinner of his life  
Before the foul, impure one should awake.  
The maiden of the Lord, with braided hair,  
Seized a sharp sword hardened by battle-play,  
And with her right hand drew it from its sheath.  
Then she began to call upon the Lord  
Of heaven by His name and the Protector  
Of all who dwell on earth, and said these words:  
'To you, God of creation, joyous Spirit,  
And Son of the Almighty, will I pray:

JUDITH

83 miltse Ðinre mē þearfendre,  
 Drynesse ðrym. Ðearle ys mē nū ðā  
 heorte onhæted and hige gēomor,  
 swýðe mid sorgum gedrēfed; forgif mē, swegles Ealdor,  
 sigor and sōðne gelēafan, þæt ic mid þýs sweorde mōte  
 90 gehēawan þysne morðres bryttan; geunne me mīnra  
 gesynta,

pearlmōd Ðeoden gumena: nāhte ic Ðinre nāfre  
 miltse þon māran þearfe: gewrec nū, mihtig Dryhten,  
 torhtmōd tīres Brytta, þæt mē ys þus torne on mōde,  
 hāte on hreðre mīnum.' Hī ðā se hēhsta Dēma  
 95 ædre mid elne onbryrde, swā Hē dēð ānra gehwylcne  
 hērbūendra þe Hyne him tō helpe sēceð  
 mid rāde and mid rihte gelēafan. Ðā wearð hyre rūme  
 on mōde,

Hāligre hyht geniwod; genam ðā þone hāðenan mannan  
 fæste be feaxe sīnum, tēah hyne folmum wið hyre weard  
 100 bysmerlice, and þone bealofullan  
 listum ālēde, lāðne mannan,  
 swā hēo ðæs unlādan ēaðost mihte  
 wel gewealdan. Slōh ðā wundenlocc  
 þone fēondsceaðan fāgum mēce  
 105 hetepocolne, þæt hēo healfne forcearf  
 þone swēoran him, þæt hē on swiman læg,  
 druncen and dolhwund. Næs ðā dēad þā gýt,  
 ealles orsāwle: slōh ðā eornoste  
 ides ellenrōf ðpre sīðe  
 110 þone hāðenan hund, þæt him þæt hēafod wand  
 forð on ðā fīore; læg se fūla lēap  
 gēsne bæftan, gæst ellor hwearf  
 under neowelne næs and ðær genyðerad wæs,  
 sūsle gesæled syððan æfre,

96. The first half-line appears to be normal, the second hypermetric. J. C. Pope, *The Rhythm of Beowulf*, p. 220, suggests there is a missing word, and proposes *hearns herbuendra*.

JUDITH

Show me your mercy in my need, O Might  
 Of Trinity. For greatly is my heart  
 Inflamed, my mind is sad and bitterly  
 Oppressed with sorrows. Grant me, heaven's Prince,  
 A victory and true belief, that I  
 May cut down with this sword the murderer.  
 Grant me my safety, mighty Prince of men.  
 I never had more need of Your protection.  
 Avenge now, mighty Lord and glorious  
 Giver of fame, that I have in my heart  
 Such bitterness, such warmth within my breast.  
 The Highest Judge inspired her speedily  
 With valour, as He does to every one  
 Who lives on earth and comes to Him for help  
 With counsel and true faith. Then was her heart  
 Relieved, hope in the Holy One renewed.  
 She took the heathen man fast by his hair,  
 Pulled him towards her shamefully by hand,  
 Skilfully placed the evil, hated wretch  
 As she might best have power over him.  
 The fair-tressed one then struck the hated foe  
 With decorated sword, so that she cut  
 Through half his neck, and he lay swooning there,  
 Drunken and wounded. He was not yet dead,  
 Utterly lifeless; then the gallant girl  
 Earnestly smote the heathen hound again,  
 So that his head rolled forth upon the floor.  
 The foul trunk lay there dead, the spirit passed  
 Elsewhere under the cliff of the abyss,  
 And, there brought low, was bound in pain for ever,

JUDITH

115 wýrmum bewunden, wítum gebunden,  
 hearde gehæfted in hellebryne  
 æfter hinsíðe. Ne ðearf hē hopian nō,  
 þýstrum forðylmed, þæt hē ðonan mōte  
 of ðām wýrmsele, ac ðær wunian sceal  
 120 āwa to aldre būtan ende forð  
 in ðām heolstran hām hyhtwynna lēas.  
 Hæfde ðā gefohten foremærne blæd  
 Iúðith æt gūðe, swā hyre God úðe,  
 swegles Ealdor, þe hyre sigores onlēah.  
 125 Þā sēo snotere mægð snūde gebrōhte  
 þæs herewæðan hēafod swā blōdig  
 on ðām fætelse þe hyre foregenga,  
 blāchlēor ides, hyra bēgea nest  
 ðēawum gedungen þyder on lædde,  
 130 and hit ðā swā heolfrig hyre on hond āgeaf,  
 higeðoncolre hām tō berenne,  
 Iúðith gingran sínre. Eodon ðā gegnum þanonne  
 þā idesa bā ellenþrīste,  
 oð þæt hie becōmon collenferhðe,  
 135 eadhreðige mægð út of ðām herige,  
 þæt hie sweotollīce gesēon mihten  
 þære wlitegan byrig weallas blican,  
 Bēthūliam. Hie ðā bēahhrodene  
 fēðelāste forð ðnettan,  
 140 oð hie glædmōde gegān hæfdon  
 tō ðām wealgate. Wiggend sæton,  
 weras wæccende wearde hēoldon  
 in ðām fæstenne, swā ðām folce ær  
 gēomormōdum Iúðith bebēad,  
 145 searodoncol mægð, þā hēo on síð gewāt,  
 ides ellenrōf. Wæs ðā eft cumen  
 lēof tō lēodum, and ðā lungre hēt  
 glēawhýdig wif gumena sumne

117. *hinside*, i.e. from this world. See note to *Epilogue to the Pastoral Care* l. 6.

JUDITH

Circled by serpents, fixed in punishments,  
 Held hard as captive in the burning hell  
 After his journey hence. He need not hope,  
 Wrapped round with darkness, that he may escape  
 Thence from the serpent-hall, but there must dwell  
 To all eternity in that dark home  
 Lacking all hope of bliss for evermore.  
 Then in the fight had Judith won herself  
 Outstanding glory, as God granted her  
 When heaven's Prince gave her the victory.  
 The wise maid quickly put the warrior's head,  
 All bloody as it was, into the bag  
 Which her fair-faced attendant girl had brought.  
 Most excellent in virtues, with their food,  
 And gave it back, thus gory, to her hand,  
 To carry home, Judith to her wise servant.  
 The valiant ladies both departed thence  
 At once, till triumphing the bold maids came  
 Out of that host, till they could clearly see  
 The walls of the fair city shining out,  
 Of Bethulia. Then, adorned with rings,  
 They hastened on their way till glad in heart  
 They reached the city wall. There soldiers sat,  
 And wakeful warriors in the fort kept watch,  
 As Judith, noble lady, prudent maid,  
 Had ordered the sad people earlier  
 When she set out. Was then come back again  
 The dear one to her people. The wise maid  
 Ordered one of the warriors at once.

JUDITH

of ðære ginnan byrig hyre tōgēanes gān,  
 150 and hī ofostlice in forlæton  
 þurh ðæs wealles geat, and þæt word ācwæð  
 tō ðām sigefolce: 'Ic ēow secgan mæg  
 þoncwyrðe þing, þæt gē ne þyrfen leng  
 murnan on mōde: ēow ys Metod bliðe,  
 155 cýninga Wuldor; þæt gecýðed wearð  
 geond woruld wīde, þæt ēow ys wuldorblæd  
 torhtlic tōweard and tīr gifede  
 þāra læðða þe gē lange drugon.'  
 Þā wurdon bliðe burhsittende,  
 160 syððan hī gehýrdon hū sēo hālige spræc  
 ofer hēanne weall. Here wæs on lustum,  
 wið þæs fæstengeates folc ðnette,  
 weras wif somod, wornum and hēapum,  
 ðrēatum and ðrymmum þrungon and urnon  
 165 ongēan ðā Þeodnes mægð þūsendmælum,  
 ealde ge geonge: æghwylcum wearð  
 men on ðære medobyrig mōd ārēted,  
 syððan hie ongēaton þæt wæs Iūdith cumen  
 eft tō ēðle, and ðā ofostlice  
 170 hīe mid ēaðmēdum in forlēton.  
 Þā sēo glēawe hēt golde gefrætewod  
 hyre ðinenne þancolmōde  
 þæs herewæðan hēafod onwriðan,  
 and hyt tō bēhðe blōdig ætýwan  
 175 þām burhlēodum, hū hyre æt beaduwe gespēow.  
 Spræc ðā sēo æðele tō eallum þām folce:  
 'Hēr gē magon sweotole, sigerðfe hæleð,  
 lēoda ræswan, on ðæs lāðestan  
 hæðenes heaðorinces hēafod starian,  
 180 Hōlofernus unlyfigendes,  
 þe ūs monna mæst morðra gefremede,  
 sārra sorga, and þæt swýðor gýt  
 ýcan wolde; ac him ne ūðe God  
 lengran lifes, þæt hē mid læððum ūs

JUDITH

To go and meet her from the spacious city  
 And quickly let them pass in through the gate,  
 And spoke these words to the victorious people:  
 'I tell you a most memorable thing,  
 That you need mourn no longer in your hearts.  
 The glorious Lord of kings is good to you.  
 It has been widely shown throughout the world  
 That splendid and magnificent renown  
 Is granted you, and glory shall be yours  
 From the afflictions you have long endured.'  
 Then were the dwellers in the city glad,  
 When they heard how the holy maiden spoke  
 Over the lofty wall. The host rejoiced,  
 The people hastened to the castle gate,  
 Women and men together, groups and troops,  
 In crowds and multitudes they thronged and ran  
 To meet the Prince's maiden in their thousands,  
 Both old and young; the heart of every man  
 Was gladdened in the celebrating city,  
 After they knew that Judith had returned  
 Back to her country, and then hastily  
 With humble reverence they let her in.  
 Then the wise lady, all adorned with gold,  
 Ordered her prudent maidservant to show  
 The warrior's head, unwrap it bloody there,  
 A token for the citizens to see  
 How she had prospered in the battle-play.  
 The noble one then spoke to all the people:  
 'There you may clearly gaze, triumphant heroes,  
 Leaders of warriors, upon the head  
 Of the most hateful heathen general,  
 Of the no longer living Holofernes,  
 Who most of all brought violence upon us  
 And bitter grief, and that more greatly still  
 Wished to increase; but God did not allow  
 Him longer life, that he with persecution

JUDITH

185 eglan mōste: ic him ealdor oðþrong  
 þurh Godes fultum. Nū ic gumena gehwæne  
 þyssa burglēoda biddan wylle,  
 randwiggendra, þæt gē recene ēow  
 fýsan tō gefeohte; syððan frymða God,  
 190 ārfæst Cyning, ēastan sende  
 lēohtne lēoman, berað linde forð,  
 bord fē brēostum and byrnhomas,  
 scīre helmas in sceaðena gemong,  
 fyllan folctogan fāgum sweordum,  
 195 fāge frumgāras. Fýnd syndon ēowere  
 gedēmed tō dēaðe and gē dōm āgon,  
 tīr æt tohtan, swā ēow getācnod hafað  
 mihtig Dryhten þurh mīne hand.  
 Þā wearð snelra werod snūde gegearwod,  
 200 cēnra tō campe; stōpon cynerōfe  
 secgas and gesīðas, bāron sigepūfas,  
 fōron tō gefeohte forð on gerihte,  
 hæleð under helmum of ðære hāligan byrig  
 on ðæt dægred sylf; dynedan scildas,  
 205 hlūde hlummon. Þæs se hlanca gefeah  
 wulf in walde, and se wanna hrefn,  
 wælgīfre fugel: wiston bēgen  
 þæt him ðā pēodguman pōhton tilian  
 fylle on fāgum; ac him flēah on lāst  
 210 earn ætes georn, ūrigfeðera,  
 salowigpāda sang hildelēoð,  
 hyrnednebba. Stōpon heaðorincas,  
 beornas tō beadowe bordum beðeahte,  
 hwealfum lindum, þā ðe hwīle ær  
 215 elðeodigra edwīt poledon,  
 hāðenra hosp; him þæt hearde wearð  
 æt ðām æscplegan eallum forgolden  
 Assýrium, syððan Ebrēas  
 under gūðfanum gegān hæfdon  
 220 tō ðām fyrdwicum. Hīe ðā fromlice

JUDITH

Might harm us; I deprived him of his life  
 With God's assistance. Now I wish to pray  
 To every man among the citizens  
 And warriors, that you prepare yourselves  
 Quickly for fight, after the gracious King,  
 Creator God, shall send forth from the east  
 The beams of light. Then bear forth linden-shields  
 Before your breasts, and ring-mailed corslets too,  
 And gleaming helmets in the press of foes,  
 Cut down their officers with flashing swords,  
 Their fated leaders. For your enemies  
 Are doomed to death, and you shall have renown,  
 Glory in battle, as the mighty God  
 Has shown you by this token through my hand.  
 Quickly the troop of bold and eager men  
 Prepared themselves for fight. Then they advanced,  
 Brave warriors and comrades, bearing banners,  
 The heroes in their helmets straight away  
 Set off for battle from the holy city  
 At break of day itself. The shields resounded,  
 Loudly rang out. The lean wolf in the wood  
 Rejoiced at this, and the dark raven too,  
 The slaughter-greedy bird; for they both knew  
 That warriors intended to supply them  
 With doomed men for a feast. Behind them flew  
 The eagle keen for carnage, dewy-winged,  
 With feathers dark; the horny-beaked one sang  
 A song of battle. Warriors advanced,  
 Soldiers to war protected by their shields,  
 Their hollow boards, men who till then had long  
 Endured the shameful pride of foreigners,  
 The scorn of heathens. The Assyrians  
 Were all most grievously repaid for that  
 At the spear-play, after the Hebrew men  
 Under their warlike banners had approached  
 Their camping-place. They rapidly made showers

JUDITH

225 lēton forð flēogan flāna scūras,  
 hildenædran of hornbogan,  
 strælas stedehearde; styrmdon hlūde  
 grame gūðfrecan, gāras sendon  
 in heardra gemang; hæleð wæron yrre,  
 landbūende lādum cynne,  
 stōpon styrmōde, stercedferhðe  
 wrehton unsōfte ealdgeniðlan  
 medowērige, mundum brugdon  
 230 scealcas of scēaðum scīrmæled swyrd  
 ecgum gecoste, slōgon eornoste  
 Assīria ðretmæcgas,  
 niðhycgende, nānne ne sparedon  
 þæs herefolces hēanne ne ricne  
 235 cwicera manna þe hīe ofercuman mihton.  
 Swā ðā magoþegnas on ðā morgentīd  
 ēhton elðēoda ealle þrāge,  
 oð þæt ongēaton ðā ðe grame wæron,  
 ðæs herefolces hēafodweardas,  
 240 þæt him swyrdgeswing swiðlic ēowdon  
 weras Ehrisce. Hīe wordum þæt  
 þām yldestan ealdorþegnum  
 cýðan ēodon, wrehton cumbolwigan  
 and him forhtlice færspele bodedon,  
 245 medowērigum morgencollan,  
 atolne ecgplegan. Þā ic ædre gefrægn  
 slegefāge hæleð slæpe tōbrēdon  
 and wið þæs bealofullan būrgeteldes  
 wērigferhðe hwearfum þringan  
 250 Hōlofernus; hōgedon āninga  
 hyra hlāforde hilde bodian,  
 ær ðon ðe him se egesa on ufan sǣte,  
 mægen Ebrēa. Mynton ealle  
 þæt se beorna brego and sēo beorhte mægð

223. *stedehearde*, found only here, has defied precise interpretation. See ASPR note on pp. 285-6.

JUDITH

Of darts fly forth, and from their horn-shaped bows  
 Sent battle-adders, strong and steady arrows.  
 Loudly they raged, the angry fighting men,  
 And sent their spears into the throng of fierce ones.  
 The heroes were enraged, the native people  
 Against the nation of their enemies.  
 Stern-hearted they advanced, and firm in spirit  
 They woke ungently their old enemies  
 Drunken with mead. By hand the warriors  
 Drew from the sheathes the ornate gleaming swords  
 With peerless edges, and struck earnestly  
 The warriors of the Assyrians,  
 The cruel-hearted ones; none did they spare  
 In all that army, neither low nor high,  
 No living man that they could overcome.  
 So the retainers in the morning-time  
 Pursued the foreigners unceasingly  
 Until the leaders of the hostile force,  
 Those who were hardy, clearly understood  
 That there the Hebrews made their sword-swing felt  
 Firmly upon them. Then they went and told  
 The seniors among the chief retainers,  
 Woke up the standard-bearers fearfully,  
 And told them, drunk with mead, the sudden news,  
 The morning terror and the sword-play grim.  
 Then, as I heard, the heroes doomed to slaughter  
 Quickly cast sleep aside and thronged in crowds,  
 Men grieving in their hearts, towards the tent  
 Of evil Holofernes, for they planned  
 To tell their lord at once about the fight  
 Before the terror of the Hebrew strength  
 Should set upon them. They remembered all  
 That the men's leader and the lovely maid

JUDITH

- 255 in ðām witegan træfe wæron ætsomne,  
 Iūðith sēo æbele and se gālmōða,  
 egesfull and āfor; næs ðeah eorla nān,  
 þe ðone wiggend āweccan dorste  
 oððe gecunnian hū ðone cumbolwigan  
 260 wið ðā hālgan mægð hæfde geworden,  
 Metodes mēowlan. Mægen nēalæhte,  
 folc Ebrēa, fuhton pearle  
 heardum heoruwæpnum, hæste guldon  
 hyra fyrngeslitu fāgum swyrdum  
 265 ealde æfðoncan; Assýria wearð  
 on ðām dægweorce dōm geswiðrod,  
 bælc forbigeð. Beornas stōdon  
 ymbe hyra þeodnes træf pearle gebylde,  
 sweorcendferhðe. Hi ðā somod ealle  
 270 ongunnon colhettan, cirman hlūde,  
 and gristbitian gode orfeorme,  
 mid tōðon torn þoligende; þā was hyra tīres æt ende,  
 ēades and ellendāda. Hogedon þā eorlas āweccan  
 hira winedryhten: him wiht ne spēow.  
 275 Þā wearð sið and late sum tō ðām arod  
 þāra beadorinca, þæt hē in þæt būrgeteld  
 niðheard nēðde, swā hyne nýd fordrāf:  
 funde ðā on bedde blācne licgan,  
 his goldgifan gæstes gēsne,  
 280 lifes belidenne. Hē þā lungre gefeoll  
 frēorig tō foldan, ongan his feax teran,  
 hrēoh on mōde, and his hrægl somod,  
 and þæt word ācwæð tō ðām wiggendum,  
 þe ðær unrōte ūte wæron:  
 285 'Hēr ys geswutelod ūre sylfra forwyrd,  
 tōweard getācnod, þæt þære tīde ys

287-8. *nu* and *life* supplied. Some editors expand the remaining words into one hypermetric line instead of two normal lines, placing *somod* at the beginning of the next (my l. 289). There is much to be said for this, as the second half-line of l. 289 appears to be hypermetric.

JUDITH

Were both together in the splendid tent,  
 The noble Judith and the lustful one,  
 Fearsome and harsh. But there was no-one there  
 Among the warriors who durst awake  
 The general, or would investigate  
 How the great leader with the holy maid  
 Had prospered, with the woman of the Lord.  
 The force approached, the army of the Hebrews  
 Fought vigorously with their hardy weapons,  
 Firmly repaid their former suffering  
 And long-held grudge with decorated swords.  
 The glory of Assyria declined  
 By that day's work, and brought down was their pride.  
 The warriors stood round their prince's tent  
 Gravely disturbed, with spirits darkening.  
 They then together all began to cough,  
 To cry out loudly and to gnash their teeth,  
 Deprived of joy and suffering great grief.  
 Then were success, glory and noble deeds  
 Ended for them. The warriors designed  
 To wake their lord; but it availed them not.  
 But then at last one of the warriors  
 Grew bold enough, and daring ventured in  
 To the pavillion, as compulsion drove.  
 And there he found his patron lying pale  
 Upon his couch, deprived of consciousness,  
 Departed from this life. At once he fell  
 Cold to the ground, began to tear his hair  
 And clothing likewise, in his heart enraged,  
 And called these words out to the warriors  
 Who waited gloomily outside for him:  
 'Here is our own destruction shown to us,  
 Its coming tokened, that the time is near

JUDITH

nū mid niðum nēah gebrungen,  
 þe wē life sculon losian somod,  
 sæt sæcce forweorðan: hēr lið sweorde gehēawen,  
 290 behēafdod healdend ſire.' Hī ðā hrēowigmōde  
 wurpon hyra wāpen ofdūne, gewitan him wērigferhðe  
 on flēam sceacan. Him mon feaht on læst,  
 mægenēacen folc, oð se mæsta dæl  
 þæs heriges læg hilde gesæged  
 295 on ðām sigewonge, sweordum gehēawen,  
 wulfum tō willan, and ēac wælgifrum  
 fuglum tō frōfre. Flugon ðā ðe lyfdon  
 lādora linde. Him on læste for  
 swēot Ebrēa sigore geweorðod,  
 300 dōme gedýrsod; him feng Dryhten God  
 fægre on fultum, Frēa sēlmihtig.  
 Hī ðā fromlice fāgum swyrdum  
 hælēð higerōfe herpað worhton  
 þurh lādora gemong, linde hēowon,  
 305 scildburh scæron; scēotend wæron  
 gūðe gegremede, guman Ebrisce,  
 þegnas on ðā tīd þearle gelyste  
 gārgewinnes. Þær on grēot gefēoll  
 se hýhsta dæl hēafodgerimes  
 310 Assiria ealdorduguðe,  
 lāðan cynnes: lýthwōn becōm  
 cwicera tō cýððe. Cirdon cynerōfe,  
 wiggend on wiðertrod, wælsceł oninnan,  
 rēocende hrāw; rūm wæs tō nimanne  
 315 londbūendum on ðām lādēstan,  
 hyra ealdfēondum unlyfigendum  
 heolfrig hererēaf, hyrsta scýne,  
 bord and brād swyrd, brūne helmas,

297. MS has *lind* followed by one or two illegible letters. The reading *linds* has been attacked on the grounds that the sense requires 'shield-bearers' or the like; but perhaps the sense of *linds* can be extended to imply spears or weapons generally.

JUDITH

When we, oppressed with troubles, now must die,  
 Perish together in the strife. Here lies  
 Our ruler, cut down by the sword, beheaded.  
 Grieving in heart they cast their weapons down,  
 Demoralised they hastened off in flight.  
 The mighty army fought them as they fled  
 Until the greater number of that host  
 Lay slain upon the field of victory,  
 Cut down by swords, a pleasure for the wolves  
 And comfort to the carnage-greedy birds.  
 Survivors fled the weapons of their foes.  
 The Hebrew army chased them, flushed with triumph,  
 Honoured by noble deeds. Almighty God,  
 The Lord and Ruler, gave them splendid help.  
 The gallant heroes with their treasured swords  
 Then bravely carved a warlike passage through  
 The crowd of enemies, they cleft the shields,  
 Cut through the shield-wall. All the Hebrew men,  
 The warriors, were furious with war,  
 The thanes at that time thoroughly desired  
 The clash of spears. There fell down in the dust  
 The greatest part of all their total strength,  
 The officers of the Assyrians,  
 The hostile people; very few got home  
 Alive. The warlike warriors turned back  
 In full retreat among the reeking corpses  
 And heaps of slain. The people now had time  
 To take from their most hated enemies,  
 Their ancient foes now destitute of life,  
 The gory booty and fair ornaments,  
 The shields and broad swords and the gleaming helmets.

JUDITH

dýre mādmas. Hæfdon dōmlīce  
 320 on ðām folcstede fýnd oferwunnen  
 ēðelweardas, ealdhettende  
 swyrdum āswefede: hīe on swaðe reston,  
 þā ðe him tō life lādost wāron  
 cwicera cynna. Þā sēo cnēoris eall,  
 325 mægða mærost, ānes mōnðes fyrst,  
 wlanc wundenlocc wāgon and læddon  
 tō ðære beorhtan byrig Bēthūliam  
 helmas and hupseax, hāre byrnan,  
 gūðsceorp gumena golde gefrætewod,  
 330 mærra mādma þonne mon ānig  
 āsecgan mæge searoþoncelra:  
 eal þæt ðā ðeodguman þrymme geðodon,  
 cēne under cumblum on compwige  
 þurh Iūdithe glēawe lāre,  
 335 mægð mōdigre. Hī tō mēde hyre  
 of ðām siðfate sylfre brōhton  
 eorlas æscrōfe Hōlofernes  
 sweord and swātigne helm, swylce ēac sīde byrnan,  
 gerēnode rēadum golde, and eal þæt se rinca baldor  
 340 swiðmōd sincea āhte oððe sundoryrfes,  
 bēaga and beorhtra mādma, hī þæt þære beorhtan idese  
 āgēafon gearoþoncolre. Ealles ðæs Iūdithe sægde  
 wuldor weroda Dryhtne, þe hyre weorðmynde geaf,  
 mārðe on moldan rīce, swylce ēac mēde on heofonum,  
 345 sigorlēan in swegles wuldre þæs ðe hēo āhte sōðne  
 gelēafan  
 tō ðām Ælmihtigan; hūru æt þām ende ne twēode  
 þæs lēanes þe hēo lange gyrnde. Þæs sý ðām lēofan  
 Dryhtne  
 wuldor tō wīdan aldre, þe gescēop wind and lyfte,  
 roderas and rūme grundas, swylce ēac rēðe strēamas  
 350 and swegles drēamas þurh his sylfes miltse.

350. 'boundless and eternal' added in translation.

JUDITH

The precious treasures. On the battle-field  
 They worthily had overcome their foes,  
 The owners of the land destroyed by swords  
 Their former enemies, those who alive  
 Had been most hateful of all living people  
 To them lay in their tracks. Then all the tribe,  
 Greatest of nations, for a whole month's space,  
 Proud, curly-haired, carried and bore away  
 To the fair city of Bethulia  
 Helmets and hip-swords and grey coats of armour,  
 The corslets of the men, adorned with gold,  
 And treasures more illustrious by far  
 Than any man however wise could say.  
 The warriors won all that by their might,  
 Bold under banners on the battle-field,  
 Through Judith's wise advice, courageous maid.  
 The hardy heroes from that venture brought  
 As a reward for her the bloody helmet  
 And sword of Holofernes, and his broad  
 Corslet, adorned with good red gold, and all  
 The treasure that the lord of warriors,  
 Proud man, had owned, all his inheritance,  
 His rings and gleaming treasures did they give  
 The fair wise lady. Judith for all this  
 Ascribed the glory to the Lord of hosts  
 Who gave her fame and honour in the world,  
 Likewise rewarded her in heaven above,  
 Repaid her in the glory of the sky  
 Because she had true faith in the Almighty.  
 She did not doubt that she would at the end  
 Have the reward that she had long desired.  
 For this may there be glory evermore  
 To the dear Lord who made the wind and air,  
 The heavens and the spacious grounds beneath,  
 The pouring waters and the heavenly joys  
 Through His own boundless and eternal mercy.