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### MANUSCRIPT

THE manuscript is the well-known Cotton Vitellius A. XV of the British Museum, probably of the tenth century, which likewise contains (fol. 129<sup>a</sup>-128<sup>b</sup>) the poem of *Beowulf*. The whole manuscript was first described by Wanley, *Catalogus*, pp. 218-219; then in Planta's *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library* (London, 1802), and elsewhere. Besides the *Beowulf* and the *Judith*, it contains eight other pieces, these two forming the final ones.

A fire in 1731 destroyed some of the Cottonian manuscripts, and injured others, among the latter being this one. The injury consisted in the scorching of its edges and the shriveling of certain leaves. In some places the edges have been chipped away, and words, or portions of words, lost. It does not appear, however, as Dr. Tinker remarks (*The Translations of Beowulf*, p. 8), that these losses are of so great importance as the remarks of some prominent Old English scholars might lead one to suspect;<sup>1</sup> and it is certain that some awkward readings of the *Judith* are due to the blunderings of one or more scribes, though if Foster's conjecture is right, and the poem was composed about 915, there can hardly have

<sup>1</sup> But the injury to the manuscript is of less importance in this case, since the poem had been printed by Thwaites in 1698, before the injury occurred (see Bibliography).

been many transcriptions, on the theory that the manuscript is of the tenth century. The mixture of dialectic forms, however, seems to indicate that a Northern original passed through one or more hands, and that the last scribe, at all events, belonged to the Late West Saxon period. Forms like *hēhsta* (4, 94) and *nēhsta* (73), for example, point to the North, while such as *h̄yhsta* (309) are clearly West Saxon; so *sēceð* (96), *hafað* (197), *medowērige* (229) seem distinctively Northern (Foster, *Judith*, pp. 50-51).

The *Judith* begins in the manuscript immediately after the *Beowulf*, and covers fol. 199<sup>a</sup>-206<sup>b</sup>. A photographic facsimile of the *Beowulf* pages was published by the Early English Text Society in 1882, with a transliteration and notes provided by Professor Zupitza; and a page (200<sup>b</sup>) of the *Judith* is similarly reproduced in my earlier edition, containing lines 55<sup>a</sup> to 69<sup>b</sup>. An autotype facsimile of all the pages of the *Judith* is in my possession, and I shall be happy to facilitate its consultation by scholars.

## DATE

Very few of the Old English poems are dated. Those of which we are most certain are the ones on the battles of Maldon and Brunanburh, and these must have been written soon after the respective dates of those battles, A. D. 937 and 991; and the Cynewulfian poems, *Juliana*, *Elene*, and *Christ*, which must have been written not far from the year 800. The latter poems have the name of the poet spelled in runes, the two former as Cynewulf, the latter as Cynwulf. Now the form *Cyne-* begins to appear about 750, and *Cyn-* about 800;<sup>1</sup> hence the *Christ* may be conjecturally dated about 800, or even

<sup>1</sup> See Stevens' proofs in *Anglia* 13, 11-15.

later; the *Elene* only enough earlier to permit of the poet's alluding to himself as an old man; and the *Juliana* within the limits of Cynewulf's activity as a religious poet. All that can be said with relative certainty is that the *Christ* no doubt belongs to the early ninth century, that the *Elene* can hardly be more than ten or a dozen years earlier, at most; and that the *Juliana* can be only a few years earlier than the *Elene*, if indeed it be not later (for on this point we have no evidence). Of the remaining poems, the verse translation of the *Metres* of Boethius must, at earliest, fall at the very end of the ninth century, since it was executed either by Alfred or by some later writer. The interpolated portion of *Genesis*, known as *Genesis B*, can hardly be earlier than the middle of the ninth century, since it is based upon an Old Saxon poem which is ascribed to about 830 or 840. *Cædmon's Hymn* would date from about 670, and *Bede's Death-Song* from 735. It is generally agreed that in its present form the *Beowulf* can not be later than about 750. These are almost the only poems which can be dated somewhat independently of others. The *Andreas*, *Guthlac B*, and the *Phoenix* have been assigned by some critics to Cynewulf, the evidence being perhaps clearest in the case of the *Andreas*. The rest of the poems must be dated on the basis of internal evidence, by a comparison of diction and metre with those of the foregoing, or perhaps rarely with Continental poems of date approximately ascertained.

The *Judith* exhibits some striking correspondences in phraseology with the *Juliana*, the *Elene*, and the *Andreas*; with *Genesis A*, the *Battle of Maldon* (*Byrhtnoth*), and the *Beowulf*; and, at a greater remove, with *Gifts of Men*, the *Dream of the Rood*, the *Psalms*, etc. For example, the phrase *ic 88 . . . biddan wylle* (83-84) is found also in *Beowulf* and *Andreas*; *cene under cumblum*