"The Seafarer," ll. 97-102

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literary language of Wessex¹. But here we have them in a hand which is undoubtedly to be dated *circa* 1000; in a manuscript which is certainly not an autograph, and which seems to represent originals carrying back well into the tenth century. It would appear, then, that the introduction of these Oriental themes belongs to the great period of Continental influence which began with the tenth century, and not to the later period of Norman influence.

One point remains. In the critical examination of early English texts, the task of distinguishing forms introduced by copyists is usually baffling, and we cannot afford to overlook any source of information. So far, only *Judith*, which is in the second hand², has been used to throw light on the language of the scribes of *Beowulf*. But here, in the first hand, are prose texts of four times the bulk of *Judith*, free to some extent from the circumstances which make poetical texts so confusing in forms, and probably themselves due to more than one author. The detailed comparison of one with another, and of all with *Beowulf*, cannot fail to throw light on the characteristics of the first scribe, and on the explanation of the more obscure dialect forms in *Beowulf*. I need mention only one example. Genitive plurals in *-o*, which are very rare in careful West Saxon texts, occur in the part of *Beowulf* written by the first hand, e.g. l. 70 *yl̥do*, l. 475 *hyn̥ðo*. Surely it is no coincidence that Sievers (*Beitr.* ix, 230), and Klaeber (*Modern Language Notes* xvi, 17) quote no less than five examples from the *Letter of Alexander* which precedes in the same hand.

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‘THE SEAFARER,’ ll. 97–102.

In the MS., ll. 97–102 of *The Seafarer* read :

peah þe græf wille	golde stregan
broþor his geborenūm	byrgan be deaðum
māþmum mislicum	þ hi ne mid wille
ne mæg þære sawle	þe biþ synna ful
gold to geoce	for Godes egsan
þonne he hit ær hydeð	þenden he her leofað.

¹ *English Literature from the Beginning to the Norman Conquest*, p. 293.

² Dr Chambers, *Beowulf*, Introd. p. xix, seems uncertain of the identity, but it is not doubtful. The hand is well marked, and has one feature not easily paralleled at this time: the occasional *ȝ* with the bar so swung downwards on the left as to form a loop similar to that of the Continental *g*; see for instance *Beowulf*, l. 2141 *ȝagyt*, l. 2197 *ȝecynde* in Zupitza's facsimile. This occurs in *girwan* on the first page of *Judith*. Of course it must not be assumed that the scribe went straight on from *Beowulf* to the *Judith* fragment as we have it.

Early editors differed considerably in their treatment of this passage, particularly ll. 97–99. Thorpe doubtfully suggested *he ne mid wille* with the meaning ‘he will not that (take) with him.’ Ettmüller emended (*wat ic*) *þæt he mid nylle*. Rieger wished to read *bycgan* for *byrgan*, and *þæt he ne mid wille* = ‘purchase with dead treasures that he need not also die.’

As Kluge pointed out, *geborenun* presents the first difficulty. It is usually translated ‘his born brother’ with *brēþer* (cf. Thorpe) understood, but in this sense it is not common before Middle English. There is, however, a passage in the *Lindisfarne Gospels* (Preface to *Matthew*) which lends some support to this use of the word:

ðirdda		lêce	geboren	sirisc.
Tertius	lucas	medicus	natione	Syrius.

With regard to the next difficulty, l. 99, is it possible that in *maþmum mislicum* we have a scribal error of a very common type for *maþmas mislice* (acc. pl.) due to the attraction of the preceding dative plurals *zeborenun* and *dēādum*? This would seem the more probable in that *byrgan* governs an accusative.

A similar emendation *zemæne* for *zemænum* has been suggested by Prof. Sievers for *Beo.* 1857.

Then *hi ne mid* might well be *hine mid* = ‘with him’ (i.e. the dead brother), for in Anglian *mid* is often followed by an accusative and this use might have been misunderstood by a West Saxon scribe.

Finally, if the contraction *þ* is taken as representing the relative *þe* and not the usual *þæt*, a fairly clear sense is produced which agrees well with the following lines.

The whole passage then reads:

þeāh þe græf wille golde strēgan,
 brōþor his zeborenun, byrgan be dēādum
 māþm[as] misli[ce], þe hine mid wille,
 ne mæz þære sǣwle, þe biþ synna ful,
 gold to geōce for Godes egsan,
 þonne he hit ær hýdeð þenden he hēr leofað.

‘Although a brother, for his born brother, will strew the grave with gold, will bury with the dead man various treasures which he (the living man) wishes (to be) with him, yet on account of the fear of God gold may be no help to the soul which is full of sin when he hides it before, while he still lives here.’

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