Old sources, new resources: finding the right formula for Boniface

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Of all the many Anglo-Saxons who travelled to the Continent, some never to return, Boniface, apostle to the Germans, arguably had the deepest and most enduring influence; for some, he is simply 'the greatest Englishman'.[1] But aside from Boniface's historical importance there is much of related interest for scholars of Anglo-Saxon literary culture too: not only does a wealth of hagiographical material survive relating to Boniface and his mission, but there remain a number of letters, poems, and other works written by Boniface himself, alongside a wide range of associated texts.[2] Yet while the literary contexts and merits of (for example) Boniface's poetry have been discussed a number of times in recent years,[3] the primary academic focus on the so-called 'Bonifatian correspondence' has tended to be historical, rather than literary. Such a focus has tended to privilege those letters with political or administrative implications above those that deal with more domestic or personal issues, yet it is precisely the latter category which shows the less formal aspects of Anglo-Saxon literary culture, and seems to invite closer comparison with a range of

[1] See the collection edited by T. Reuter, *The Greatest Englishman: Essays on St Boniface and the Church at Crediton* (Exeter, 1981). For the historical background, see too W. Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford, 1946); J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, 'A Background to St Boniface's Mission', *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 35–48; T. Schieffer, *Winfrid-Bonifatius und die christliche Grundlegung Europas*, rev. ed. (Darmstadt, 1972). Still useful for bibliography and basic orientation is the volume of essays collected as *Sankt Bonifatius: Gedankengabe zum zwölfhundersten Todestag* (Fulda, 1954).

[2] For an overview, see G. Greenaway, 'Saint Boniface as a Man of Letters', *Greatest Englishman*, ed. Reuter, pp. 33–46; see too R. Sharpe, *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland Before 1540*, Publ. of the Jnl of Med. Latin 1 (Turnhout, 1997), 79–80 (no. 166); M. Lapidge, 'Anglo-Latin Literature', in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 11–12. As a sidelight on Boniface's literary interests, it is intriguing to note that M. B. Parkes, 'The Handwriting of St Boniface: a Reassessment of the Problems', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 48 (1976), 161–79, believes that he has identified Boniface's own hand in several manuscripts; for a wider and more cautious view, see M. Lapidge, 'Autographs of Insular Latin Authors of the Early Middle Ages', *Gli autografi medievali: problemi paleografici e filologici*, ed. P. Chiesa and L. Pinelli (Spoleto, 1995), pp. 103–36, at 108–15.

[3] A. Orchard, 'After Aldhelm: the Teaching and Transmission of the Anglo-Latin Hexameter', *Jnl of Med. Latin* 2 (1992), 96–133, at 103–7; *idem*, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE 8 (Cambridge, 1994), 64–7 and 275–8.

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other texts.[4] In particular, the innately repetitious and formulaic quality of much of the correspondence has much in common with that of several other areas of Anglo-Saxon literature in both Latin and Old English, whether in prose or verse, and this article seeks to explore those links in detail, in order to offer a broader literary context for the composition of the correspondence as a whole.

The term 'Bonifatian correspondence' is itself something of a misnomer:[5] the 150 texts edited by Tangl that still comprise the standard edition certainly focus on Boniface and his German mission, but in fact span almost a century, from the last quarter of the seventh century to the last quarter of the eighth.[6] Not all the texts edited are letters,[7] however, and Tangl's selection is idiosyncratic in other ways. The edited collection is mainly derived from three manuscripts,[8] of which the best-known and most relevant for the following discussion is Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, lat. 751 (Mainz, s. ix^{med}),[9] which seems to stem directly from material apparently collected at the instigation of Lul, Boniface's successor as archbishop of Mainz.[10] Tangl's arrangement of material obscures a number of important features of the individual manuscripts, and the edited collection is clearly derived from a number of disparate sources. So, for example, the Vienna manuscript contains none of the thirty letters from various

[4] See, for example, P. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 30–5; U. Schaefer, 'Two Women in Need of a Friend: a Comparison of *The Wife's Lament* and Eangyth's Letter to Boniface', *Germanic Dialects: Linguistic and Philological Investigations*, ed. B. Brogyanyi and T. Krömmelbein (Amsterdam, 1986), pp. 491–524; C. E. Fell, 'Some Implications of the Boniface Correspondence', *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. H. Damico and A. H. Olsen (Bloomington, IN, 1990), pp. 29–43; P. Sims-Williams, 'Letter-Writing', in his *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800*, CSASE 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 211–42.

[5] See Fell, 'Some Implications', pp. 30–1.

[6] *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, ed. M. Tangl, MGH, Epist. select. 1, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1955). All citations from the Bonifatian correspondence below are taken from this edition, together with Tangl's suggested dating. Tangl's text is substantially adopted, with facing-page German translation, in *Bonifatii Epistulae, Willibaldi Vita Bonifatii. Briefe des Bonifatius, Willibalds Leben des Bonifatius*, ed. and trans. R. Rau, Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters 4b (Darmstadt, 1968). English translations of part of the Bonifatian correspondence are found in C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London, 1954); E. Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York, 1940); E. Kylie, *The English Correspondence of Saint Boniface* (London, 1911).

[7] Also included are (for example) synodal *acta* (Tangl 59), prayer-formulas (Tangl 149), formulas for the lists of the dead (Tangl 150), an oath attributed to Boniface (Tangl 16), and five *carmina rhythmica* attributed to Aldhelm and his pupil, Æthilwald (Tangl 6).

[8] For an overview of the manuscript tradition, see Tangl, *Die Briefe*, pp. vi–xxxi.

[9] There is a useful facsimile of the Vienna manuscript by F. Unterkircher, *Sancti Bonifacii Epistolae. Codex Vindobonensis 751 der österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Codices Selecti Phototypice Impressi 24 (Graz, 1971).

[10] Cf. Fell's description of Lul as 'the mastermind behind the assembling of materials which the compiler of this codex used' ('Some Implications', p. 35).

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popes that Tangl includes in his tally,[11] but all bar one of the twenty-nine (some, indeed, in multiple copies) are found in one or both of the other two major manuscripts, Munich, Staatsbibliothek, lat. 8112 (Mainz, s. viii/ix), and Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Rastatt 22 (Mainz, s. ix^{med}).[12] Likewise, all four of the letters sent from Boniface to either Pope Zacharias or Pope Stephen II are in both the Munich and Karlsruhe manuscripts, but only two are also found in Vienna 751.[13] By contrast, of the nine signed letters from Lul in the collection, all are found in Vienna 751,[14] but only four in the Karlsruhe manuscript, and none at all in the Munich manuscript. Vienna 751 also contains some fifty-three letters which are unattested in either of the other two main manuscripts, including many of the personal and less formal letters that are the main focus of attention here.[15]

The letters found in the Vienna manuscript fall into three distinct sections, comprising some (but by no means all) of the extant letters that make up the Aldhelm correspondence,[16] those letters contemporary with Boniface himself, and a large number which might more properly be said to belong to the next generation of missionaries, of whom Lul himself is undoubtedly the most conspicuous. Broadly speaking, Tangl 1–6 comprise the Aldhelm (and Aldhelm-related) material: Tangl 6 constitutes the five separate octosyllabic *Carmina rhythmica* now attributed to Aldhelm and his pupil Æthilwald;[17] Tangl 9–109 largely constitute the collection of letters produced during Boniface's own lifetime, and span the period 716–54; Tangl 110–42 comprise letters produced after Boniface's death in 754; Tangl 143–50 are undated. Within the second of these major groupings of texts from the Vienna manuscript, namely the letters belonging to Boniface's own lifetime, Tangl has interleaved the thirty-three letters by or to a succession of popes.

The collection as a whole, therefore, while in one sense it clearly charts the history of the Anglo-Saxon mission in Germany, none the less seems also

[11] The letters in question are Tangl 12, 17–26, 42–5, 51–3, 57–8, 60–1, 68, 77, 80, 82–3 and 87–9; Tangl 20 is in none of the three main manuscripts.

[12] So, for example, Tangl 11 (Daniel to Boniface) and 22 (Charles Martell to his dependent nobles) are found on both 51v–52r and (in reverse order) 107v–108r of the Karlsruhe manuscript; Tangl 23 (Daniel to Boniface) is likewise found on 79v and 113v of the Munich manuscript.

[13] The letters in question are Tangl 50, 86 and 108–9.

[14] The letters in question are Tangl 70–2, 92, 100, 113, 125–6 and 128.

[15] The letters in question are Tangl 1–5, 7–8, 37, 39, 55, 72, 92, 98, 102, 106, 110–27 and 129–48. I have not included Tangl 6 and 149–50 in this tally, although they too are not found in either of the other two main manuscripts, because they are not letters.

[16] For a useful overview, with translations, see M. Lapidge and M. Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 136–70 and 197–203; the letters themselves are edited by R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH Auct. antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919), 474–503.

[17] For the attribution, see the remarks of M. Lapidge in *Aldhelm: the Prose Works*, pp. 16–18; see further Orchard, *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 19–72.

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(indeed primarily) to have been intended to offer a kind of epistolary pattern-book for a range of occasions.[18] This conclusion seems especially appropriate in the case of the Vienna manuscript. All sixteen of the letters where the sender is unnamed or indicated by the siglum '.N.' (for *nomen*, 'name', the Latin version of 'X' or 'insert name here'), are found in Vienna 751, but only two of these are also attested elsewhere;[19] likewise, all thirteen of the letters in which the recipient is unnamed or represented by '.N.' are witnessed in the Vienna manuscript, while only two of these are also found in one or other of the other main manuscripts.[20] Another letter to Boniface (Tangl 15, found in all three main manuscripts) explicitly underlines this point: here, Bugga asks Boniface to offer masses for the soul of her dear relative 'who was dearer to me than all others, whose name was .N.' ('similiter deposco, ut sanctarum missarum oblationes offere digneris pro anima mei propinqui, qui mihi pre ceteris carus erat, cui nomen erat .N.'). It seems safer to suppose that this letter has been preserved primarily as a literary model and that the person echoing the phrase was to fill in the blank than that at the crucial moment of naming her nearest and dearest, Bugga, overcome with emotion, simply forgot. Such a letter, in fact, offers a perfect template for a later writer wishing to spice up his or her own letter of grief or longing, and the range of stock situations encapsulated by the anonymous letters is certainly instructive. Among the topics covered in the letters in which one or both of the recipient or sender are unnamed are: consolation for illness (Tangl 37); a request for clothing and news (Tangl 79); news of a pilgrimage (Tangl 98); a request to be allowed study-leave (Tangl 103); discussions of a vision (Tangl 115) or of the art of poetry (Tangl 98); a reminder of former friendship (Tangl 135); further requests for prayers (Tangl 66, 102 and 140), parchment (Tangl 142), or books (Tangl 145); thanks for books (Tangl 31); general good wishes (Tangl 141); but mostly complaints about solitude, suffering and isolation (Tangl 98, 102, 143 and 147–8). But if the same general themes and situations tend to recur, the derivative, repetitious and innately formulaic

[18] For a useful overview of the function of medieval letter-collections, see G. Constable, *Letters and Letter-Collections*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 17 (Turnhout, 1971), and J. Haseldine, 'Epistolography', *Medieval Latin: an Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, ed. F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Washington, DC, 1996), pp. 650–8.

[19] The letters in question are Tangl 4 (properly part of the Aldhelm correspondence), 37, 79, 98, 103, 110, 115, 135, 140–6 and 148. Tangl 79 is also found in the Karlsruhe manuscript, while Tangl 103 is also attested in both the Karlsruhe and Munich manuscripts. Tangl 143, uniquely preserved in the Vienna manuscript, has '.N.' for the recipent, and 'H.' for the sender; it seems most likely that in this case 'H.' represents a copying error for '.N.'. The letter itself is discussed in detail below, pp. 37–8.

[20] The letters in question are Tangl 31, 66, 98, 102, 110, 115 and 140–6; Tangl 31 is also found in the Karlsruhe manuscript, while Tangl 66 is also attested in both the Karlsruhe and Munich manuscripts.

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nature of the surviving Bonifatian correspondence can likewise to some extent be gleaned from a glance at Tangl's extensive *apparatus fontium*,[21] and comparison with a number of recently produced electronic databases and machine-readable corpora of texts only highlights the complex nexus of traditional and formulaic phrasing employed.[22]

Recent research has tended to highlight the fact that formulaic composition, once thought a sign of oral composition, is in fact found widely in Anglo-Saxon literature, including that produced by highly literate authors composing in both Latin and Old English. Although the bulk of research still tends to focus on formulaic composition in Old English poetry, in fact the same techniques of analysis, employing machine-readable texts and computer-generated concordances, have been applied successfully to (for example) the Latin poetry of Aldhelm or the Old English prose of Wulfstan.[23] Such research has allowed direct comparisons to be made between shared techniques of formulaic composition across the whole range of Anglo-Saxon literature, whether in Old English or Latin, and whether in prose or verse. There is at present abundant evidence of such techniques being employed in the composition of Old English poetry, Old English homiletic prose and Anglo-Latin hexameter verse; the Bonifatian correspondence, with its large and largely self-contained number of correspondents, many of whom were interrelated both literally and by letter, provides a perfect corpus for considering techniques of formulaic composition in Anglo-Latin prose.[24]

[21] For a useful preliminary analysis of repeated diction in the Bonifatian correspondence, see too H. Hahn, 'Ueber einige Briefe der Bonifazischen Sammlung mit unbestimmter Adresse', *Forschungen zur deutschen Geschichte* 21 (1881), 383–400.

[22] The most useful electronic tools for this purpose are *eMGH-2: Die elektronischen Monumenta Germaniae Historica auf CD-ROM* (Turnhout, 2000) [the Bonifatian correspondence is also on *eMGH-1* (Turnhout, 1996)]; *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: a Register of Written Sources Used by Authors in Anglo-Saxon England* [http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/]; *Cetedoc Library of Christian-Latin Texts 4* (Turnhout, 2000); the *Patrologia Latina Database* [http://pld.chadwyck.com/].

[23] The potential bibliography on the topic is vast: see in particular M. Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse', *Comparative Lit.* 31 (1979), 249–314; J. M. Foley, *Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research: an Introduction and Annotated Bibliography* (New York, 1985); F. P. Magoun, Jr, 'The Oral-Formulaic Character of Anglo-Saxon Narrative Poetry', *Speculum* 28 (1953), 446–67; A. H. Olsen, 'Oral-Formulaic Research in Old English Studies: I', *Oral Tradition* 1 (1986), 548–606 and 'Oral-Formulaic Research in Old English Studies: II', *Oral Tradition* 3 (1988), 138–90; A. Orchard, 'Crying Wolf: Oral Style and the *Sermones Lupi*', *ASE* 21 (1992), 239–64; A. Orchard, 'Oral Tradition', *Approaches to Reading Old English Texts*, ed. K. O'Brien O'Keeffe (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 101–23; A. Orchard, 'Both Style and Substance: the Case for Cynewulf', *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, ed. C. E. Karkov and G. H. Brown (Albany, NY, forthcoming).

[24] I am in the process of compiling an extensive series of linked databases, provisionally entitled 'An Anglo-Saxon Formulary', which will exhaustively document formulaic phrasing in four key areas of Anglo-Saxon literature, namely: (1) Old English poetry; (2) Anglo-Latin hexameter verse; (3) the Old English sermons of Wulfstan; (4) the Anglo-Latin letters of the Bonifatian correspondence.

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Now, of course letters are (even today) innately formulaic, and many of the conventional epistolary formulas are essentially just that; but, as will become clear, the Bonifatian circle (on the Continent at least) comprises a peculiarly tight and idiosyncratic group of essentially isolated correspondents, who in the course of the first three decades of their mission apparently developed what is effectively almost a private language, deliberately echoing and reshaping the same words and the same themes. It is as if a group of individuals had read precisely the same handful of books, from which they endlessly (and progressively loosely) quote, until they end up quoting not the original texts, but their own quotations. The overwhelming impression to be derived from these texts is the profound sense of exile and of isolation, precisely those stock themes which Anglo-Saxon poets were to develop so movingly (and so formulaically) in vernacular Old English verse.[25] It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the most recent literary studies of the Boniface correspondence should all point up parallels with Old English texts like *The Wife's Lament*, *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wanderer*.[26] Like these texts, alongside which they certainly deserve further study, the letters of the Bonifatian correspondence offer the authentic voice of Anglo-Saxon angst.

We can see a number of these basic points illustrated in a brief letter from Boniface to Eadburg, formerly identified as the abbess of Minster-in-Thanet, although Patrick Sims-Williams has suggested that Wimbourne seems a more likely venue.[27] The text below (Tangl 30) is essentially that edited by Tangl,[28] who dates it to the period 735 × 736, with biblical quotations presented in italics, and some parallels with others of the extant letters of the Bonifatian correspondence underlined:[29]

[25] A useful collection of five articles on the theme of exile in Old English poetry appears in S. B. Greenfield, *Hero and Exile: the Art of Old English Poetry*, ed. G. H. Brown (London, 1989), pp. 197–228. See too L. H. Frey, 'Exile and Elegy in Anglo-Saxon Christian Epic Poetry', *JEGP* 62 (1963), 293–302; M. Rissanen, 'The Theme of "Exile" in *The Wife's Lament*', *NM* 70 (1969), 90–104. [26] See above, n. 4.

[27] See P. Sims-Williams, 'An Unpublished Seventh- or Eighth-Century Anglo-Latin Letter in Boulogne-sur-Mer MS 74', *MÆ* 48 (1979), 1–22, at p. 22, n. 119.

[28] Here and for the other letters cited, I have silently corrected Tangl's *v* to *u* throughout, and in a number of cases preferred the readings of the Vienna manuscript, as checked against Unterkircher's facsimile edition (see above, n. 9).

[29] Parallels:

Lucerna pedibus meis uerbum tuum et lumen semitis meis	Ps. CXVIII.105
praeuenerunt me laquei mortis	Ps. XVII.6
Dominus Deus noster qui in excelsis habitans humilia respicit	Ps. CXII.5–6
sermo in apertione oris mei	Eph. VI.19
ut sermo Domini currat et clarificetur	II Thess. III.1
peccatis . . . exigentibus	Gregory, *Moralia in Job* XIV.xxxvii.9, XXXIV.xv.110, etc.
periculoso saeculi naufragio et grassante dirae tempestatis turbine . . . nauigantes ad portum	Aldhelm, Prose *De uirginitate* 238.18–19

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Dilectissime sorori et iamdudum spiritalis clientele propinquitate conexe Eadburge abbatisse Bonifatius seruus seruorum Dei perennem in Christo salutem. Carissimam sororem remunerator aeternus iustorum operum in superna letificet curia angelorum, quae sanctorum librorum munera transmittendo exulem Germanicum spiritali lumine consolata est, quia, qui tenebrosos angulos Germanicarum gentium lustrare debet, nisi habeat *lucernam pedibus et lumen semitis suis uerbum* Domini, in *laqueum mortis* incidet. Preterea de caritate tua diligenter confidens obsecro, ut pro me orare digneris, quia peccatis meis exigentibus periculosi maris tempestatibus quatior; rogans, ut ille, qui *in altis habitat et humilia respicit*, indulgens flagitia prestet mihi uerbum *in apertione oris mei, ut currat et clarificetur* inter gentes euangelium gloriae Christi.

To the most beloved Abbess Eadburg, for long linked by the close bond of spiritual dependency, Boniface, the servant of God's servants, sends endless greetings in Christ. May the eternal rewarder of just deeds make the most dear sister joyful in the celestial band of angels, since she has cheered up with spiritual light a Germanic exile by sending gifts of sacred books, since, as he has to travel round [or 'enlighten'] the dark corners of the Germanic gentiles, unless he had the Lord's word as a lamp for his feet and a light on his paths, he would fall into death's snare. Trusting, moreover, faithfully in your love, I beseech you to deign to pray for me, since I am buffeted by my exacting sins like the storms of a perilous sea, asking that he who dwells on high and looks on the lowly should pity my shame and grant me a word in the opening of my mouth, so that the gospel of Christ's glory should course and shine among the gentiles.

This letter constitutes a typical piece of what might be termed 'off-duty' Boniface: light, witty and learned. The whole text could be paraphrased: 'Dear Eadburg, thanks for the books; pray for me. Best wishes, Boniface'; in short, it appears little more than an elegant letter of thanks. But there is much more, of a much more subtle nature, which Boniface apparently expected his learned correspondent to

Que sine ullo naufragio periculose tempestatis nauem animae nostrae gubernans deducet ad amoenissimi litus paradisi et ad perpetua supernorum gaudia angelorum	Boniface to Nithard (Tangl 9; dated 716 × 717)
adfinitatis propinquitate conexo	Leofgyth to Boniface (Tangl 29; dated 732)
Germanicum mare periculosum nauigantibus	Boniface to Pehthelm (Tangl 32; dated 735)
Germanicarum gentium tempestatum fluctibus quassatam	Boniface to Nothelm (Tangl 33; dated 735)
Germanici maris tempestatibus undique quassantibus	Boniface to Duddo (Tangl 34; dated 735)
ne fluctibus Germanicarum tempestatum submergatur	Boniface to Aldhere (Tangl 38; dated 732 × 754)
conuersatio peregrinationis nostrae uariis tempestatibus inliditur	Boniface to Eadburg (Tangl 65; dated 742 × 746)
remuneratorem omnium bonorum operum	Boniface to Eadburg (Tangl 35; dated 735)
in superna curia beatorum angelorum restituat	Boniface to Eadburg (Tangl 35; dated 735)
spiritalis germanitatis propinquitate conexo	Boniface to unknown (Tangl 31; dated 735 × 736)

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comprehend. In only eleven printed lines (and only twelve lines in the Vienna manuscript), Boniface fits in no fewer than five separate biblical allusions, carefully divided into two groups, separating his allusions to those parts of the Old and New Testaments respectively which most closely echo his thoughts of exile and his request for support in his evangelizing mission, namely the Psalms and the Pauline Epistles.[30] These five biblical allusions are together found a total of fourteen times in the entire Bonifatian correspondence, but on all but one occasion are apparently cited by Boniface himself.[31]

In this letter there is also a likely nod towards patristic sources, in a single arresting stock phrase (*peccatis . . . exigentibus*, line 8), ultimately perhaps traceable to Gregory the Great,[32] whose name and works are explicitly mentioned by Boniface on a number of occasions, and whose role as sponsor of the Augustinian mission to the English must have made him a particularly attractive role-model for Boniface.[33] Boniface repeats the tag elsewhere in his own correspondence, and again it becomes almost his own personal trademark: five of the six examples of the phrase are his.[34] A further faint debt to Aldhelm, from

[30] Tangl, *Die Briefe*, pp. 315–17, lists almost 450 biblical parallels and quotations in the edited correspondence as a whole, of which more than a third occur in Boniface's own letters. Of these more than 150 citations, references to the Psalms (I count twenty-one examples) and to the (mostly Pauline) Epistles (I count sixty examples) clearly predominate, and demonstrate Boniface's (understandable) preferences and preoccupations.

[31] So, for example, alongside the five parallels noted here, allusions to Ps. CXII.5–6 are also found in Tangl 31 (Boniface to an unidentified correspondent); to Eph. VI.19 in Tangl 31, 76 (Boniface to Abbot Hwætberht of Monkwearmouth–Jarrow), and 101 (Wihtberht to the monks of Glastonbury); to II Thess. III.1 in Tangl 31, 46 (Boniface to the English bishops), 67 (Boniface to Leofgyth, Tecla and Cynehild), 76 and 106 (Boniface to Abbot Optatus of Montecassino).

[32] The *Patrologia Latina Database* also lists Augustine as a possible source: the phrase is widely quoted.

[33] So, for example, in a letter to Nothhelm (Tangl 33; dated 735), Boniface asks for a copy of the exchange between Gregory and Augustine, Apostle to the English; in a letter to Cuthbert, Boniface mentions Gregory's *Regula pastoralis* (Tangl 78; dated 747); Gemmulus writes to Boniface (Tangl 54; dated 742 × 743) apologizing for not sending a copy of Gregory's *Epistolae*, but Gemmulus (or another correspondent) appears to have been ultimately successful, since in another letter to Archbishop Ecgberht of York (Tangl 75; dated 746 × 747), Boniface mentions that he is sending copies of some of Gregory's *Epistolae* that he has obtained from the papal archives; and Gregory's name is invoked in both Boniface's letter of rebuke to King Æthelbald of Mercia (Tangl 73; dated 746 × 747) and a letter to Pope Zacharias (Tangl 50; dated 742); Pope Zacharias quotes Gregory back at Boniface in a later letter (Tangl 60; dated 745).

[34] The letters in question are Tangl 31 (Boniface to an unidentified correspondent; dated 735 × 736) and 65–7 (all dated 742 × 746, and consisting of a series of letters requesting prayers from a range of female correspondents, including Eadburg); all three of the group Tangl 65–7 are linked by parallel expressions, although interestingly Tangl 66 in fact reads *meritis* for *peccatis* at this point. The only other letter in the collected correspondence to include the phrase is among the earliest, from Ecgburg to Boniface (Tangl 13; dated 716 × 718), and it is intriguing

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whom elsewhere Boniface borrows very frequently,[35] is likewise evident in the storm-image of line 8; but four further examples of the same theme in Boniface's own letters once more illustrate the extent to which Boniface adopted and adapted images and phrases from his sources to make them his own. It will be clear from Boniface's letter to Nithard (dated 715 × 717) that he has lifted much of Aldhelm's material verbatim (note in particular that the borrowed words *naufragio periculose tempestatis* appear in sequence); but the noted passages from Boniface's letters to Pehthelm, Nothhelm and Duddo, like the one to Eadburg, are more like each other than they are either to the letter to Nithard or to Aldhelm's original.

The other striking thing about this letter is the number of phraseological parallels it shares with other letters sent by Boniface to Eadburg; a number of such parallels are given in the note, but a wider tissue of reminiscences appears to link all his letters to Eadburg still further. It is almost as if Boniface has developed a series of private topics, themes and in-jokes which he shares with Eadburg alone. It is interesting in this respect that it is only in another letter to Eadburg that Boniface uses the Latin verb *lustro* (as here, line 5), since in this letter it would seem that Boniface is playing on the two senses of the verb, which means both to 'light up, to illuminate', and 'to travel around, to traverse'; the same pun is employed to great effect by both Aldhelm and Vergil, to name but two authors with whose works Boniface was well acquainted.[36] The twin notions of illumination and travel are very cleverly enshrined by Boniface in two biblical allusions, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament: *lucernam pedibus et lumen semitis*, line 6 and *currat et clarificetur*, line 10. The effect is further highlighted by the essentially chiastic arrangement of ideas. Such punning or wordplay is of course very common in Old English poetry alongside the repetition of words or word-roots that in classical rhetoric is called paronomasia or polyptoton,[37] so it is further interesting that Boniface should indulge in the same game here, repeating *Germanicum*, line 4 and *Germanicarum*, line 5, to stress (as he does frequently) the essential bond of racial brotherhood (*germanitas*) that links the Anglo-Saxon exile to his gentile charges, and changing the *sermo* of both his

(though perhaps unlikely, given its wide currency) to speculate that it is from Ecgburg that Boniface derives the phrase.

[35] See, for example, the *apparatus fontium* for Tangl 9, 10, 33, 66, 75, 78, 86 and 91; for Boniface's heavy reliance on Aldhelm in the composition of his metrical verse, see too Orchard, 'After Aldhelm', pp. 103–7, and *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 66–7 and 245–6.

[36] See, for example, Vergil, *Aeneid* IV.6 and VII.148; Aldhelm, *Carmen de uirginitate* 181 and *Praefatio* to the *Enigmata*, line 20.

[37] The standard study of paronomasia in Old English remains R. Frank, 'Some Uses of Paronomasia in Old English Scriptural Verse', *Speculum* 47 (1972), 207–26; see too the collection of related articles in F. C. Robinson, *The Tomb of Beowulf and Other Essays on Old English* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 185–235.

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New Testament allusions to the (more appropriate) *uerbum* (line 10) presumably to echo the utterly biblical *uerbum* (line 6) of his first Old Testament citation.[38] It will be clear from the above discussion of one brief letter that (at least occasionally) Boniface was a rather splendid and subtle prose-stylist, whose works perhaps deserve more literary attention than they have received so far.

But if the qualities of this letter to Eadburg have eluded modern critics, the same cannot be said for Boniface's contemporaries: Tangl 30 is one of forty-four letters common to all three main manuscripts, preserved presumably, at least in part, for its stylistic qualities.[39] Interestingly, however, practically the same letter appears elsewhere in the Vienna and Karlsruhe manuscripts (Tangl 31, dated 735 × 736):[40]

Reuerentissimo fratri et spiritalis germanitatis propinquitate conexo Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei perennem in Christo caritatis salutem. Clementiam fraternitatis uestrae intimis flagitamus precibus, ut nostrae mediocritatis memores intercedere dignemini, quia peccatis nostris exigentibus periculosi maris tempestatibus undique quatimur; rogantes, ut illae, qui in altis habitat et humilia respicit, indulgens flagitia prestet nobis uerbum in apertione oris nostri, ut currat et clarificetur inter gentes euangelium gloriae Christi.

To a most reverend brother and one linked by the bond of spiritual brotherhood, Boniface, the lowly servant of the servants of God, sends an eternal greeting of love in Christ. We beg the mercy of your brotherhood with heartfelt prayers, that, mindful of our mediocrity, you deign to intercede, since we are buffeted on all sides by our exacting sins like the storms of a perilous sea, asking that he who dwells on high and looks on the lowly should pity our shame and grant us a word in the opening of our mouth, so that the gospel of Christ's glory should course and shine among the gentiles.

The message is essentially the same as that of Boniface's letter to Eadburg quoted above (Tangl 30), focusing on the general request for prayers rather than thanks for books. Moreover, the second half of the letter to the anonymous correspondent (from line 4 onwards: *quia peccatis . . . gloriae Christi*) echoes that to Eadburg practically verbatim, with the substitution of four first-person plural forms (*nostris . . . quatimur . . . nobis . . . nostri*) for the corresponding first-person singular forms of the letter to Eadburg (*meis . . . quatior . . . mihi . . . mei*), to match two earlier first-person plural references in line 3 (*flagitamus . . . nostrae*),[41]

[38] One might also note the paronomastic juxtaposition of *remunerator* and *munera*.

[39] The relevant letters are Tangl 9–11, 13–15, 22–3, 27, 29–30, 32–6, 40–1, 47, 56, 63, 65–7, 69, 73–6, 78, 81, 91, 93–7, 99, 103–5 and 107–9; note that all four of Boniface's extant letters to Eadburg (Tangl 10, 30, 35 and 65) are included in this number.

[40] For parallels, see above, n. 29, and below, fig. 2, together with the following:
intercedere dignemini — Lul (?) to Boniface (Tangl 103; dated 739 × 741);
intercedere dignemini [*twice*] — Boniface to Daniel (Tangl 63; dated 742 × 746)

[41] Likewise the 'extra' forms *uestrae* and *dignemini* are (second-person) plural, and *rogantes* is in concord with *flagitamus*.

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and the addition of the word *undique* in line 5.[42] The first few lines of the letter, however, are simply a confection of a number of Boniface's own opening epistolary formulas, as can be seen from fig. 2 below. Fig. 2 focuses on just two of a large number of opening formulas found in the Bonifatian correspondence, but again underlines the close interrelationships that extend throughout the collection; Tangl 31 is one of eight letters that is on both lists (Tangl 32–3, 38, 70, 76, 91 and 108 are the others). The first formula is restricted to the opening salutation of the individual letters, and is perhaps best described as the *exiguus*-formula, since besides the (almost) mandatory term *salutem*, the adjective *exiguus* is the only significant shared word.[43] The second formula, designated here the *clementiam*-formula, is considerably more complex, comprising as it does a combination of the key term *clementiam* in conjunction with an honorific abstract noun in the genitive, linked to a verb of asking or requiring which is itself combined with an adverbial phrase containing the form *precibus* (modified on sixteen out of seventeen occasions by the adjective *intimis*). Fig. 2 lists the significant examples of these two formulas in the entire corpus of the Bonifatian correspondence, and a number of interesting patterns emerge.

Of more than forty named individuals whose works comprise the Bonifatian correspondence, these particular opening formulas are all but restricted to Boniface and Lul (his successor as archbishop of Mainz):[44] nor are precise parallels for any of these formulas found in any earlier biblical, patristic or Anglo-Latin letters. With respect to the *exiguus*-formula, Boniface favours some form of *in christo . . . salutem* without exception,[45] while as part of this formula Lul adopts *in domino . . . salutem* twice (Tangl 70 and 100), and only takes over the

[42] Cf. the addition of the word *undique* in the parallel phrase in Boniface's letter to Duddo, noted above.

[43] A notable exception occurs in the opening to Lul's letter threatening excommunication to the Abbess Switha (Tangl 128; dated 754 × 786), which, presumably in keeping with its tone of stern rebuke, has no other salutation than 'Lul, a lowly and humble prelate, to Switha and her subordinates' ('Lullus exiguus atque humilis antestis Suithan eiusque subiectis').

[44] Apart from the letters cited, it is perhaps worth noting that Boniface describes himself as *exiguus* at the end of his oath of office (Tangl 16; dated 722). A simpler form of the *clementiam*-formula is found at the openings of Tangl 29 (*Rogo tuam clementiam* [Leofgyth to Boniface; dated 732]); Tangl 49 (*Agnoscere cupimus almitatis tuae clementiam* [Denehard, Lul and Burghard; dated 739 × 741); Tangl 69 (*Obsecramus celsitudinis tuae clementiam* [Boniface to King Æthelbald; dated 745 × 746); Tangl 107 (*Celsitudinis uestrae clementiae magnas gratias agimus* [Boniface to King Pippin; dated 753]). Versions of the *clementiam*-formula are also found within the body of the letter (generally signalling the beginning of a new section) in Tangl 73 (*obsecramus . . . clementiam tuam* [Boniface to King Æthelbald; dated 746 × 747]); Tangl 93 (*almitatis uestrae clementiam diligenter . . . deprecor* [Boniface to Fulrad; dated 752]); Tangl 117 (*omnipotentis Dei clementiam obnixis exorare precibus* [Bregowine to Lul; dated 759 × 765]).

[45] Indeed, thirty-two of the thirty-seven extant letters of Boniface begin with some form of *in Christo . . . salutem*; the exceptions are Tangl 40, 50, 69, 95 and 107.

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Fig. 2 Two opening formulas in the Bonifatian correspondence

(a) The *exiguus*-formula

No.	Date	From	To	Formula
10	716	Boniface	Eadburg	Uuynfrethus exiguus in Christo Iesu intimae caritatis salutem
27	pre-738	Boniface	Bugga	Bonifatius exiguus indignus episcopus aeternam in Christo salutem
31	735 × 736	Boniface	[unknown]	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei perennem in Christo caritatis salutem
32	735	Boniface	Pecthelm	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei optabilem in Christo caritatis salutem
33	735	Boniface	Nothhelm	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei optabilem in Christo aeternae caritatis salutem
35	735	Boniface	Eadburg	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei optabilem in Christo caritatis salutem
38	732 × 754	Boniface	Aldhere	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei in Christo salutem
59	745	Boniface	Pope Zacharias	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei optabilem in Christo karitatis salutem
76	746 × 747	Boniface	Hwætberht	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei in Christo fraternae caritatis salutem
104	*c.* 742 × 754	Boniface	Gemmulus	Bonifatius exiguus seruus seruorum Dei amabilem in Christo aeternae caritatis salutem
86	751	Boniface	Pope Zacharias	Bonifatius exiguus seruus uester . . . optabilem in Christo inmarcescibilis caritatis salutem
91	747 × 754	Boniface	Ecberht	Bonifatius exiguus episcopus . . . florentem in Christo inmarcescibilis caritatis salutem
108	752	Boniface	Pope Stephen	Bonifatius exiguus episcopus . . . optabilem in Christo caritatis salutem
109	753	Boniface	Pope Stephen	Bonifatius exiguus legatus . . . optabilem in Christo caritatis salutem
70	745 × 746	Lul (?)	Eadburg	.N. indignus et exiguus diaconus perennem in Domino salutem
100	*c.* 739 × 754	Lul	Leofgyth	Lullus exiguus seruus domni Bonifatii discipulorum in Domino salutem
125	767 × 778	Lul	Coaena	Lullus exiguus seruus seruorum Dei perennem in Christo salutem
126	764 × 786	Lul	Cuthbert	Lullus exiguus seruus seruorum Dei perennem in Christo salutem
101	*c.* 732 × 754	Wihtberht	[unknown]	Uietberht exiguus in Christo aeternae caritatis salutem

(b) The *clementiam*-formula

No.	Date	From	To	Formula
31	735 × 736	Boniface	[unknown]	Clementiam fraternitatis uestrae intimis flagitamus precibus
46	*c.* 738	Boniface	[English bishops]	Fraternitatis uestrae clementiam intimis obsecramus precibus
38	732 × 754	Boniface	Aldhere	Caritatis uestrae clementiam medullatis et intimis precordium obsecramus precibus
66	742 × 746	Boniface	[a nun]	Caritatis uestrae clementiam intimis obsecramus precibus
63	742 × 746	Boniface	Daniel	paternitatis uestrae clementiam . . . intimis precibus diligenter rogare uelim
65	742 × 746	Boniface	Eadburg	Dilectionis uestrae clementiam intimis imploramus precibus
76	746 × 747	Boniface	Hwætberht	Fraternitatis uestrae pietatem intimis obsecramus praecibus

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91	747 × 754	Boniface	Egberht	sanctitatis uestrae clementiam intimis postulamus precibus
95	732 × 754	Boniface	Reginbert	Dignitatis tuae clementiam obsecramus precibus
108	752	Boniface	Pope Stephen	Sanctitatis uestrae clementiam intimis ac uisceratis obnixe flagito precibus
106	750 × 754	Boniface	Optatus	Venerandam sanctitatis uestrae clementiam intimis obsecramus praecibus
32	735	Boniface	Pehthelm	Paternam sanctitatis uestrae clementiam intimis obnixe flagitamus precibus
75	746 × 747	Boniface	Ecgberht	intimis praecordiorum praecibus almitatis tuae clementiam obsecro
33	735	Boniface	Nothhelm	Almitatis uestrae clementiam intimis obsecro precibus
74	746 × 747	Boniface	Herefrid	Almitatis tuae clementiam intimis obsecro praecibus
70	745 × 746	Lul (?)	Eadburg	Almitatis tuae clementiam intimis obsecro precibus
71	745 × 746	Lul	Dealwine	Almitatis tuae clementiam intimis praecibus flagito

exiguus-formula with *in Christo . . . salutem* after Boniface's death in 754.[46] It will be noted that the form of the *exiguus*-formula used in Tangl 31 differs slightly from Boniface's customary usage; although elsewhere he certainly favours the (very common) combination *perennem . . . salutem*, this is the only occasion on which the phrase occurs as part of the *exiguus*-formula.[47] Such a point would be insignificant, were it not for the fact that Tangl 31 also offers a unique form of the *clementiam*-formula, being the only example of the seventeen cited in which the word *clementiam* opens the formula.

One is tempted to describe this letter as a simple example of what has been called the 'cut and paste' technique, a term often applied to Old English homilies.[48] It is perhaps significant that none of the puns, wordplay, and use of matching biblical quotations in the version to Eadburg has been included here, since the rest of the letter seems so utterly hackneyed. In the entire Bonifatian correspondence the only other cases in which there are letters so close in content and diction as Tangl 30 and 31 are two general letters, dated to the same day, and written to two different districts by Pope Zacharias (Tangl 52 and 53). If we accept the attribution, found in both manuscripts, that Tangl 31 is indeed a genuine letter of Boniface,[49] then we may assume that it was produced at around the same time as Tangl 30; but its utterly commonplace diction and (relatively speaking) unusual use of both the *exiguus*- and *clementiam*-formulas perhaps offer the possibility that Tangl 31 is not genuinely the work of Boniface himself, but rather the general later confection of a Boniface-imitator.[50]

For a similarly brief, general and utterly derivative piece, one might cite, for example, a short (presumably incomplete) letter attributed to Wihtberht, and found only in the Vienna manuscript, where the text in its entirety reads as follows (Tangl 102; dated *c.* 732 × 754):

[46] Of the eight letters definitely attributed to Lul, four begin with some form of *in Domino . . . salutem* (Tangl 71–2, 100 and 113), two with some form of *in Christo . . . salutem* (Tangl 125–6), and two with neither (Tangl 92 and 128); of the nine anonymous letters attributed to Lul, two begin with some form of *in Domino . . . salutem* (Tangl 70 and 114), three with some form of *in Christo . . . salutem* (Tangl 98, 103 and 142), and four with neither (Tangl 37, 49, 110 and 141).

[47] Boniface uses the combination *perennem . . . salutem* in the salutations of Tangl 30, 40, 73 and 93.

[48] For a useful discussion of the term (and its applicability), see D. Scragg, *Dating and Style in Old English Composite Homilies*, H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 9 (Cambridge, 1998).

[49] The Karlsruhe manuscript describes Tangl 31 as a 'letter of Boniface' (*epistola bonifatii*); the Vienna manuscript specifies that it is a 'letter of Archbishop Boniface' (*item epistola bonifatii archiepiscopi*).

[50] One might cite similar reservations about a 'cut and paste' vernacular homily which draws heavily on the works of Wulfstan, discussed by Scragg, *Dating and Style*, pp. 18–21, who notes of one piece (pp. 20–1): 'the problem here is that everything is *too* Wulfstanian. It seems to me to be a perfect example of a scissors and paste exercise, but the scissors were, by chance or design, at work only on writings which are known to be by the archbishop'.

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Dilectissimo fratri et conpresbitero .N. Uuietberht exiguus in Christo aeternae caritatis salutem. Intime caritatis obnixis precibus flagito, ut mei in tuis sacrosanctis orationibus memor esse digneris, quia mundanae temptationis malleo uanis rebus turbantibus percutior.

To the most beloved brother and co-priest, .N., lowly Wihtberht sends greetings of eternal love in Christ. I urge with the fervent prayers of devoted love, that you deign to remember me in your holy prayers, because with vain matters disturbing me I am struck by the hammer of worldly temptation.

As a glance at the preceding pages will show, the whole letter might be summarized as a combination of an *exiguus*-formula, a truncated *clementiam*-formula (omitting the element *clementiam* itself), and a general observation on being buffeted by worldly concerns which parallels Boniface's (rather more elaborate) storm-image. Comparison with the only other letter by Wihtberht extant only confirms the suspicion that he is composing by rote (Tangl 101; dated 732 × 754): he closes that letter with yet another variation on the *clementiam*-formula,[51] and incorporates into the body of the text two of Boniface's favourite quotations from the Pauline Epistles.[52]

More evidence, both direct and indirect, of Boniface's quite literally exemplary position is found in the following letter to Boniface (Tangl 29; dated 732) from the Anglo-Saxon missionary nun Leofgyth, who (as she explicitly mentions) was trained in Latin by Eadburg herself (line 20); again, significant verbal parallels are underlined:[53]

[51] 'Commoniter omnes obnixis precibus flagitto uicem instantiae orationis nostrae inpendere orantemque pro nobis beatitudinem uestram diuina tueatur clementia opto' ('I entreat all of you with humble prayers to alternate with us in earnest prayer, and I wish that divine mercy may guard your holiness as you are praying for us').

[52] The quotation from I Tim. II.4 is used by Boniface in Tangl 38, 46 and 65 (and by Pope Gregory II and Pope Gregory III in Tangl 21 and 24); the quotation from Eph. VI.19 is used by Boniface in Tangl 30, 31 and 76.

[53] Parallels:

iugum . . . leue	Matt. XI.30 [also Tangl 78 and 119]
annorum curriculum	Ambrose, Gregory, Bede, etc. [a patristic commonplace]
ex hac luce subtractus est	Gregory, *Dialogues* I.viii.34, IV.xxxvi.26, etc.
summi pontificatus infula praeditus	Aldhelm, *De metris* 65.1 [also prose *De uirginitate* 274.13]
ne . . . longa locorum intercapedine refrigescant	Aldhelm, *De metris* 75.4
uenenata . . . iacula . . . metrorum pelta . . . protegere digneris	Aldhelm, *De pedum regulis* 201.26–202.1
epistolarem perscrutans rusticitatem	Aldhelm, *De metris* 74.5–6
dilectionis ligatura . . . enixius . . . reliquum nodetur in aeuum	Aldhelm, *De metris* 75.13–14
inhianter satago audire	Aldhelm, *De pedum regulis* 152.10
aliquantula metrorum munuscula . . . fiducia fretus subiunxi	Aldhelm, *De metris* 75.16–17
prima ingenioli rudimenta exercitari cupiens	Aldhelm, *De metris* 76.5
indesinenter secundum poeticae traditionis disciplinam	Aldhelm, *De metris* 76.12
Arbiter omnipotens, nutu qui cuncta creauit	Aldhelm, *Enigmata* 91.1

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Domino reuerentissimo et summe dignitatis infula predito Bonifatio atque in Christo carissimo et mihi adfinitatis propinquitate conexo Leobgyda ultima *leue iugum* Christi portantium famula perennem sospitatis salutem. Rogo tuam clementiam, ut memorare digneris prioris amicitiae, quam iamdudum cum patre meo copulasti, cuius uocabulum est Dynne, in occiduis regionibus, qui nunc ante .viii. annorum curriculum ab hac luce subtractus est, ut pro anima illius preces offerre Deo non rennues. Necnon et matris mee memoriam commendo tibi, quae cognominatur Æbbe, que tibi, ut melius nosti, consanguinitatis nexibus copulatur et adhuc laboriose uiuit et diu ualide ab infirmitate obpressa est. Ergo unica filia sum ambobus parentibus meis; et utinam, licet sim indigna, ut merear te in fratris locum accipere, quia in nullo hominum generis mei tanta fiducia spei posita est mihi quanta in te. Hoc paruum munusculum mittere curaui, non ut dignum esset tue almitatis aspectui, sed ut memoriam paruitatis meae retines, ne longa locorum intercapidine obliuione tradas, quin immo uere dilectionis ligatura reliquum nodetur in euum. Hoc, frater amande, enixius efflagito, ut tuarum orationum pelta muniar contra hostis occulti uenenata iacula. Illud etiam peto, ut rusticitatem huius epistole digneris emendare et mihi aliqua uerba tuae affabilitatis exempli gratia transmittere non recusses, quae inhianter audire satago. Istos autem subter scriptos uersiculos conponere nitebar secundum poetice traditionis disciplinam, non audacia confidens, sed gracilis ingenioli rudimenta exercitare cupiens et tuo auxilio indigens. Istam artem ab Eadburge magisterio didici, quae indesinenter legem diuinam rimare non cessat. Vale, uiuens aeuo longiore, uita feliciore, interpellans pro me.

Arbiter omnipotens, solus qui cuncta creauit,
in regno patris semper qui lumine fulget,
qua iugiter flagrans sic regnet gloria Christi,
inlesum seruet semper te iure perenni.

To the most reverend master, endowed with the fillet of the highest dignity, to Boniface, dearest in Christ and linked to me by the bond of affinity, Leofgyth, the lowest handmaid of those bearing the light yoke of Christ sends the endless greetings of the fortunate. I ask you in your mercy that you deign to recall the former friendship, which you once had long ago with my father, whose name is Dynne, in the west country, and who has been taken from the light eight years ago now, so that you do not refuse to offer prayers to God for his soul. I also commend to you the memory of my mother, who is called Æbbe, who is connected to you by bonds of blood, as you know quite well; she is still alive, but in difficulty, and for a long time has been greatly afflicted with illness. I am both my parents' only daughter, and although I am unworthy, I should like to be worthy to take you as a brother, since of all mankind there is no one in whom I have such faithful confidence as you. I have taken care to send this small offering, not so that it should be worthy of the aspect of your kindness, but so that you may keep a memory of my worthlessness, and not consign me to oblivion because of the expanse of distance, but instead so that the bond of true love should be tied for the rest of time. Beloved brother, I earnestly request this quite urgently, so that I should be protected by the shield of your prayers against the poisoned darts of the hidden enemy. I also ask this thing, namely that you deign to correct the artlessness of this letter and that you do not refuse to send me

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some words through your own courtesy as an example, since I eagerly long to hear them. I tried to compose these paltry verses written below according to the rules of the poetic discipline, with no confidence in my boldness, but wishing to exercise the beginnings of my fragile intelligence, desperate for your help. I learnt this skill from the teaching of Eadburg, who unceasingly strives to examine the divine law. Farewell: may you live for long, and live happy, and intercede for me. May the almighty judge, who alone created all things, who always shines in light in the kingdom of the father, where too may Christ's glory reign, keep you always unharmed by eternal decree.

In her letter, Leofgyth asks Boniface for his patronage (which, since she goes on to become abbess of Tauberbischofsheim, was evidently forthcoming), invites him to correct her 'artless prose' (*rusticitatem*, line 16), and, more importantly in the context of the present discussion, to send her some of his own work as a (presumably literary) example (*exempli gratia*, line 17). In return, she sends him a small gift (*munusculum*, line 12): some Latin verses of her own. In form and technique the letter closely echoes in its formulation Boniface's own, and contains a rather fleeting biblical allusion to Matthew XI.30 (line 2), a smattering of patristic tags and a clear debt to Aldhelm. Even the mixed epistolary form, concluding with a poem, can be matched in Boniface's own earlier compositions, such as his letter to Nithard (Tangl 9).[54]

But it is the material derived from Aldhelm which is perhaps most revealing of Leofgyth's training and background: every Aldhelmian phrase derives either from Aldhelm's *De metris* (on consecutive pages of Ehwald's edition!) or from his *De pedum regulis*: in other words, from precisely the two treatises which Aldhelm composed to teach metrical verse-composition, and circulated along with his *Enigmata*, the verse-riddles which he included to illustrate metrical features.[55] It is scarcely surprising, then, that the first line of verse she cites is entirely confected from several lines of the *Enigmata*, nor that all four verses have precisely the same metrical structure as three-quarters of Aldhelm's own: a fixed cadence preceded by three long syllables, leaving only the first third of the line to be negotiated.[56] Such a verse-technique provides a perfect template for formulaic composition, effectively breaking the hexameter line down into three

[54] It is interesting to note that in a later letter to Boniface, apparently requesting study-leave in Thuringia (Tangl 103; dated *c.* 739 × 741), the anonymous author (assumed to be Lul) should again employ the same basic pattern of combining Aldhelmian and biblical allusions, and concluding with a poem. Like Leofgyth's, that letter also uses the honorific phrase 'endowed with the fillet of the highest pontificate' (*summi pontificatus infula predito*) when addressing Boniface. In the case of Tangl 103, however, it is important to note that the author cites the phrase more fully in its original form as derived from Aldhelm, as does Lul elsewhere in a letter to Coaena (Tangl 125), and Boniface in letters to Nothhelm, Pope Zacharias and Ecgberht (Tangl 33, 50 and 91).

[55] On these texts and their role in teaching verse, see N. Wright's Appendix to M. Lapidge and J. L. Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 183–219 and 263–8.

[56] See further Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 84–91.

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discrete units, each of which can be supplied by formulaic borrowing or repetition; it is, indeed, the same technique as that employed by Boniface himself.[57] Leofgyth, then, has simply echoed passages from her textbooks; in other words, this is a sort of undergraduate essay, albeit a rather superior one, a supposition strengthened considerably by her somewhat shaky grasp of Latin grammar: she has particular problems with deponent verbs, and we must remember that, after all, she did send this letter to Boniface for correction.[58]

Now, given that there is compelling evidence that Lul himself was responsible for compiling the collection that now travels under the name of the 'Bonifatian correspondence', it is particularly intriguing to consider passages from two letters of his own. In the first instance, one might simply cite the closing phrases of a letter in the name of Lul and two other brethren which, however, it has been argued was almost certainly penned by Lul himself (Tangl 49; dated 739 × 741):[59]

Parua quoque munusculorum transmisio scedulam istam comitatur, quae sunt tria, id est turis et piperis et cinnamomi permodia zenia, sed omni mentis affectione destinata. Huius muneris magnitudinem ut non consideres, sed spiritalis caritatis amorem adtende, poposcimus. Illud etiam petimus, ut rusticitatem huius epistiunculae emendas et nobis aliqua uerba tuae dulcedinis non rennues dirigere, quae inhianter audire gratulabundi satagimus.

Vale uiuens Deo aeuo longiore et uita feliciore intercedens pro nobis.

A small consignment of little gifts accompanies this letter, three in number, that is, small presents (yet indicating the heart's whole affection) of frankincense, pepper and cinnamon. We beg you not to consider the size of the gift but to pay attention to the love which is spiritual charity. We also ask you to correct the rusticity of this little letter and not to refuse to send us some words of your own sweet self, which we will be satisfied to hear eagerly and joyfully.

Farewell: may you live for long in God, and live happy, and intercede for us.

It will be clear from a comparison with Leofgyth's letter (parallel phrases have been underlined) that in this case, Lul has borrowed from Leofgyth herself rather than from Aldhelm, her model: from Leofgyth we have the notion of

[57] See further Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse'; Orchard, 'After Aldhelm', pp. 103–7, and *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 102–25.

[58] There are a number of ways in which the grammar of the letter transgresses strict classical standards of correctness. For example, *ut . . . rennues* (lines 6–7) should probably read (ignoring the dittography) *ut rennuas*; *ut . . . retines* (lines 12–13) should probably read *ut . . . retineas*; *rimare* (line 21) should probably read *rimari*; *regnet* (line 25) should probably read *regnat*. It is perhaps amusing to note that in the manuscripts Tangl 29 has been repeatedly corrected by later hands: see Tangl, *Die Briefe*, pp. 52–3.

[59] For a discussion of Lul's authorship of unattributed letters, see, for example, Tangl, *Die Briefe*, pp. 218 and 279.

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emending (Aldhelm simply says 'scrutinizing'); from Leofgyth we have the notion of sending *aliqua uerba* (entirely absent in Aldhelm); even the Aldhelmian phrase *inhianter satago audire* is given in the altered order of Leofgyth, while the verbatim copying of the final salutation has no parallel in Aldhelm.[60]

A still later letter from Lul to Dealwine of Malmesbury (Tangl 71; dated 745 × 746) is even more intriguing in this regard. The text of this letter reads as follows, with significant parallels again underlined:[61]

Reuerentissimo fratri Dealuuino iamdudum magistro Lul indignus diaconus sine prerogatiua meritorum diaconatus officio fungens optabilem in Domino salutem. Almitatis tuae clementiam intimis precibus flagito, ut meae mediocritatis carinam fulcire digneris tuis almis oraminibus, quatenus tuarum orationum intercessionibus pelta protectus ad portum salutis peruenire merear et piaculorum meorum in hoc terreno ergastulo ueniam consequi, sicut iam praeterito anni circulo per Deneuualdum fratrem nostrum litterarum mearum portitorem deprecatus sum. Ergo uilium munusculorum transmissio scedulam istam comitatur non tam digna quam deuota mente directa. Similiter obsecro, ut mihi Aldhelmi episcopi aliqua opuscula seu prosarum seu metrorum aut rithmicorum dirigere digneris ad consolationem peregrinationis meae et ob memoriam ipsius beati antestitis. Et mihi per aliqua uerba tuae affabilitatis indica, quid de istis ualeat precibus tua fraternitas perficere, quae inhianter audire satago.

Bene ualentem te et proficientem in prosperitate dierum et intercedentem pro me exopto longis temporibus.

To the most reverend brother Dealwine, his sometime teacher, Lul, an unworthy deacon discharging the office of the diaconate without the prerogative of merits, sends a hope for greeting in the Lord. I urge the generosity of your kindness with heartfelt prayers, so that you deign to support the keel of my mediocrity with your kindly prayers, so that protected by the shield of your prayers I may deserve to reach the post of salvation and to gain forgiveness for my sins in this earthly prison, just as in the past year I asked through Brother Denewald, the bearer of my letter. Therefore an offering of poor gifts

[60] It is interesting to note that the original Aldhelmian phrase, *inhianter satago audire*, appears in an order closer to that copied by Leofgyth (namely *inhianter audire satago*) in three of the nine manuscripts consulted by Ehwald; see Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 152. Although none of these manuscripts is early enough to have been directly used by Leofgyth, they may well reflect the reading of her source. One might also point out that Lul is not the only one to echo Leofgyth's letter: Boniface himself apparently borrows the phrase *propinquitate conexo* (in the form *propinquitate conexe*), perhaps as a conscious form of literary flattery, in a his letter to Leofgyth's teacher Eadburg (Tangl 30), quoted above.

[61] Parallels:

sine praerogatiua meritorum	Boniface to the English (Tangl 46; dated *c.* 738)
sine praerogatiua meritorum	Boniface to Optatus (Tangl 106; dated 750 × 754)
almis orationibus fulcire	Milred to Lul (Tangl 112; dated 754)
dirigere digneris [*twice*]	Eangyth to Boniface (Tangl 14; dated 719 × 722)
dirigere digneris	Boniface to Ecgberht (Tangl 75; dated 746 × 747)
proficientem et bene ualentem	Boniface to Herefrid (Tangl 74; dated 746 × 747)

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accompanies this epistle, not so much worthy as sent with a devoted heart. Likewise I ask, that you deign to send to me some works of Bishop Aldhelm, whether in prose or in metrical or rhythmical verse to cheer up my exile and in memory of that saintly prelate. And tell me through some words of your affable self, what your brotherliness can accomplish with respect to those prayers, since I eagerly long to hear them. I have the long-standing hope that you are faring well, and advancing in the prosperity of days, and interceding for me.

After the (by now) utterly formulaic opening, the notion of being protected by a shield of prayers (lines 4–5) again comes from the same letter of Leofgyth (line 15), as does the reference to *aliqua uerba tui affabilitatis* (Tangl 29, line 17; Tangl 71, lines 11–12), and the words *inhianter audire satago* (Tangl 29, line 18; Tangl 71, line 13). However, the words *munusculorum transmissio scedulam istam comitatur* (line 8) come from Lul's own earlier letter, and he has added a number of other echoes from elsewhere in the Bonifatian correspondence. It is almost as if he is writing with other letters on the table. The main point to make with respect to this letter to Dealwine is that Lul has moved far from Aldhelm, Leofgyth's ultimate source in his formulation, a somewhat ironic observation given that in this very letter Lul is requesting to be sent copies of Aldhelm's works. When we remember that Lul himself had been educated at Malmesbury (where, we are informed, his nickname at school had been Lytel ['little']),[62] and clearly had some (albeit by now evidently rather shaky) knowledge of Aldhelm, the poignancy (and urgency) of this letter becomes evident. In one of the two manuscript witnesses (the Vienna manuscript), a poem is appended to this letter to Dealwine, and one is tempted to conclude that this is one of the 'poor gifts' mentioned in the letter again, presumably in emulation of Leofgyth's poetic gift to Boniface.[63] But the appended verses are not even Lul's own, being simply a rather general call to moderation by the poet Ausonius (his *Epigram* 7); the relevance of these verses to the preceding letter seems slight, and they have been poorly copied in the Vienna manuscript: there are six substantial copying errors in only eight lines.[64] One cannot help but feel that the sooner they sent Aldhelm the better.

Later on, in a letter that Tangl dates to the period 767 × 778 (Tangl 125), Lul sends to Archbishop Coaena of York for the works of Bede in precisely parallel terms to those in which he had earlier requested Aldhelm's works: 'to

[62] So says a letter from an unnamed monk (Tangl 135; dated 754 × 786), recalling that the name was bestowed by Abbot Eaba ('Et hoc signum recordor, quod pro nomine uocauit te Lytel').

[63] Cf. Tangl 103, addressed to Boniface, attributed to Lul, and discussed above, in n. 54, which likewise ends with a poem.

[64] See Tangl, *Die Briefe*, p. 145. It is intriguing to note that in Ausonius' own poem, mention is made of someone receiving fortune 'from a place of exile' (*ab exili . . . loco*), but that the Vienna manuscript has 'from a lowly place' (*ab exiguuo loco*); both phrases might well have appealed to Lul, who, given his own penchant for using the adjective *exiguus* (see above, fig. 2), may even have been responsible for the metrical substitution himself.

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console our exile' (*ad consolationem peregrinationis nostrae*).[65] One might also note that around the same time Boniface himself had sent a letter to Hwætberht at Monkwearmouth–Jarrow for some works of Bede (Tangl 76),[66] but that in this case the request is couched more in the manner of an equal: 'we have heard that he shone like a candle in the investigation of Holy Scripture' ('Interea rogamus, ut aliqua de opusculis sagacissimi inuestigatoris scripturarum Bedan monachi, quem nuper in domo Dei apud uos uice candellae aecclesiastice scientia scripturarum fulsisse audiuimus, conscripta nobis transmittere dignemini'), says Boniface, immediately after a clever confection of three biblical allusions of his own,[67] the only such biblical references in the entire letter. It is as if Boniface is demonstrating that he too has some mastery of scripture. One remembers how in the letter from Boniface to Eadburg examined above (which was ostensibly written a decade earlier) Boniface had thanked his correspondent for sending him books, and one might note further an extant reply from Bugga to Boniface (Tangl 15; dated *c.* 720), apologizing for being unable to send him some *passiones martyrum* (a chillingly appropriate request for a man who went on to be horribly martyred as an octogenarian at Dokkum in 754). A further letter from Boniface to Eadburg (Tangl 35) requests a copy of the Epistles of Peter (again, a scarcely unusual request, given Boniface's often-stated identification of himself with St Paul, as illustrated by some of the borrowing we have already seen).[68] But this particular copy was requested to be illuminated with gold, to use 'before the eyes of the worldly in preaching' (*ante oculos carnalium in praedicando*). Indeed, much of the minutiae of the personal letters of the Bonifatian correspondence are taken

[65] Tangl 125 (p. 263, line 9); cf. Tangl 71 (p. 144, line 19: *dirigere digneris . . . ad consolationem peregrinationis meae*). It is also worth noting that when Abbot Cuthbert of Monkwearmouth–Jarrow does send Lul copies of Bede's works (Tangl 127), he too uses the same phrase (p. 265, lines 2–3: *ad consolationem tuae peregrinationi* [sic] *mittere curaui*).

[66] Two other letters from Boniface, both to Archbishop Ecgberht of York (Tangl 75 and 91), likewise make requests for works of Bede, each couched in broadly similar terms; Tangl 75 speaks of Bede's work in rather general terms ('Praeterea obsecro, ut mihi de opusculis Bedan lectoris aliquos tractatus conscribere et dirigere digneris, quem nuper, ut audiuimus, diuina gratia spiritali intellectu ditauit et in uestra prouincia fulgere concessit, et ut candela, quam uobis Dominus largitus est, nos quoque fruamur'), while Tangl 91 refers explicitly to Bede's *Homilies* and to various books of his exegesis ('Modo enim inhianter desiderantes flagitamus, ut nobis ad gaudium meroris nostri eo modo, quo et ante iam fecistis, aliquam particulam uel scintillam de candella aecclesiae, quam inluxit spiritus sanctus in regionibus prouinciae uestrae, nobis destinare curetis: id est ut de tractatibus, quos spiritalis presbiter et inuestigator sanctarum scripturarum Beda reserando conposuit, partem qualemcunque transmittere dignemini; maxime autem, si fore possit, quod nobis predicantibus habile et manuale et utillimum esse uidetur, super lectionarium anniuersarium et prouerbia Salomonis. Quia commentarios super illa eum condidisse audiuimus').

[67] The biblical references are I Cor. III.7, Eph. VI.19, and II Thess. III.1; for such a confection of references to the Pauline Epistles, see above, n. 30.

[68] See above, n. 29.

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up with requests for books, regrets that books are unavailable, and thanks once books have been sent.[69]

One can conclude from all the above that the Bonifatian mission, at least for the first three decades, was effectively starved of books. Boniface apparently carried much of his own learning with him in his own head and took it with him when he died. Fresh blood (like that of Leofgyth) was sorely needed, and for the next generation even the most casual and commonplace letters appear to have been preserved with reverence for the learning and Latinity that they contained. The Bonifatian correspondence thus contains much more than simply a conspectus of the deeds of the good and the great, and offers to the literary scholars of both Anglo-Latin and Old English a largely untapped source of information about Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards literary style and structure. The creative tension between written, remembered and recycled words that is the hallmark of Anglo-Saxon literary culture is fully in evidence throughout the Bonifatian correspondence, in which the effects of isolation and distance become progressively more painful and clear.

Nowhere are these effects more starkly expressed than in the three undated letters attributed to the missionary nun Beorhtgyth and apparently written to her brother Balthard back in England,[70] which seem to symbolize not only the feeling of all those English exiles far from home, but also their seeming attitude to all the Latin learning and literature to which they must have felt they were slowly losing access; as Beorhtgyth asks (Tangl 147): 'and now I ask you, my dearest brother, to come to me or have me come to you so that I can see you before I die, because my deep love for you has never left my heart' ('Nunc ergo rogo te, dilectissime frater mi, ut uenias ad me aut me facias uenire, ut te conspiciam antequam moriar, quia numquam discedit dilectio tua ab anima mea'). The letter in which this plea appears is in one sense typical of the Bonifatian correspondence, consisting as it does of a chain of four biblical quotations, and concluding with some rhythmical octosyllables that are in form and diction greatly indebted to the *carmina rhythmica* of Aldhelm and Æthilwald that are uniquely found in the same Vienna manuscript.[71] Such clear evidence from the *carmina rhythmica* provides a poignant reminder of the tissue of borrowing that links so many of the texts in Vienna 751. A further letter from Beorhtgyth (Tangl 148) is of essentially the same form, and, in the fashion of so many of the letters of the Bonifatian correspondence, alludes to 'small gifts' (*munuscula parua*) that are to accompany the letter, just before a further octosyllabic composition, equally

[69] Among the letters which deal directly with books and learning, one might include Tangl 9, 29–30, 33–5, 54, 62–3, 65, 70–2, 75, 77, 91, 98, 103, 116, 119, 124–7, 131, 140, 142 and 145.

[70] These letters are discussed by Dronke, *Women Writers*, pp. 30–3, and Fell, 'Some Implications', pp. 37–41.

[71] See Tangl, *Die Briefe*, pp. 284–5, and Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, pp. 65–7.

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indebted to Aldhelm and Æthilwald. But it is the third of Beorhtgyth's letters that shows the tremendous chasm in literary sensibility that exists within the Bonifatian correspondence as a whole. The letter contains no literary allusions at all, and consists simply of a series of anguished questions (Tangl 143):

Fratri unico atque amantissimo .N., .N. ultima ancillarum Dei in Christo salutem. Quid est, frater mi, quod tam longum tempus intermisisti, quod uenire tardasti? Quare non uis cogitare, quod ego sola in hac terra et nullus alius frater uisitet me neque propinquorum aliquis ad me ueniet? Et si ideo facis, quia adhuc nihil potui, secundum quod mens mea diligenter uoluisset, aliquid beneficii inpendere, tamen caritatis atque adfinitatis iura nullo alio suadente aut mens tua mutando debes obliuiscere. O frater, o frater mi, cur potes mentem paruitatis meae adsiduae merore fletu atque tristitia die noctuque caritatis tuae absentia adfligere? Nonne pro certo scies, quia uiuentium omnium nullum alium propono tuae caritati? Ecce non possum omnia per litteras tibi indicare. Iam ego certum teneo, quod tibi cura non est de mea paruitate.

To my only and most beloved brother .N., .N., the least of God's handmaidens, [sends] greetings in Christ. Why is it, my brother, that you have let such a long time pass, that you have delayed coming? Why are you unwilling to consider that I am alone in this land and no other brother will visit me nor any kinsman come to me? And if for that reason, as I thus far have been unable to, according to what my mind would earnestly wish, you do some act of kindness, however with no one else urging the duties of love and kinship or changing your mind you must forget. Oh brother, oh my brother, why are you able to afflict the mind of little me with constant grief, weeping and sorrow, day and night through the absence of your love? Won't you know for sure that there is no one else alive that I would place above your love? Already I feel sure that you don't care for little me.

Although at times the letter verges on incoherence,[72] there are powerful patterns of rhyme, rhythm and repetition set up which underscore and highlight the depth of emotion expressed, in much the same way as similar patterns have been perceived in vernacular poems such as *Wulf and Eadwacer*, *The Wife's Lament* or *The Wanderer*.[73] In tone and temperament the letters of Beorhtgyth might

[72] Particularly problematic is the sentence *Et si ideo facis . . . obliuiscere*, in which although the parallel structure *mens mea . . . mens tua* seems clearly central, the precise grammatical function of the phrase *mens tua* is obscure (it can hardly be the subject of the verb *debes* as it stands: perhaps emend to *debet*?). Less troubling is the use of an apparently active infinitive *obliuiscere* for the deponent verb *obliuiscor*, since such forms can be paralleled elsewhere in the Bonifatian correspondence, but it is still perhaps significant that whereas Dronke, *Women Writers*, p. 33, states that Beorhtgyth 'uses lucid, uncomplicated vocabulary and syntax, and writes a Latin that seldom strays very far from classical correctness', he none the less omits to translate this very sentence.

[73] Dronke, *Women Writers*, p. 289, provides a helpful line-arrangement for the Latin text here, pointing out that 'the rhymes and assonances . . . while not completely regular, seem much too extensive to be fortuitous: they are [Beorhtgyth's] attempt at a particular kind of verbal artistry'.

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seem light years from the polished elegance of Boniface's own letters to Eadburg, especially Tangl 30, which is about the same length, but what is most evident in all the letters of the Bonifatian correspondence is an earnest attempt to convey in literary terms the hardships and heartaches of the solitary missionary life, far from the books and learning of home. The correspondence captures perfectly the same elegiac spirit of loss and longing that pervades so much Anglo-Saxon literature, and represents a series of individual responses to the same sense of isolation so commonly expressed in vernacular verse; as the last line of *The Wife's Lament* aptly puts it (line 53): *Wa bið þam þe sceal of langoþe leofes abidan* ('it is hard for the one who has to wait in longing for what they love').[74]

[74] I am grateful to Michael Lapidge, Clare Orchard and Samantha Zacher for their helpful comments and suggestions in the writing of this paper.

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