Dynamic intertextuality in the *Miracula Nynie episcopi*: remembering Arator's *Historia apostolica*

RICHARD HILLIER

ABSTRACT

It has long been acknowledged that Arator, author of the sixth-century *Historia apostolica*, was one of the Christian Latin writers with whom the author of the eighth-century *Miracula Nynie episcopi* was familiar. However, until now the critical consensus has been that the later poem was little more than a 'cut-and-paste' pastiche: Arator's phrases had been chosen largely for their metrical suitability; some were perhaps just 'recycled' borrowings rather than evidence of first-hand reading. But a close comparison of the two texts shows that the extent of the unknown author's borrowings from Arator is far greater than has hitherto been realized. Furthermore it reveals a detailed knowledge of the earlier poem, indeed an intimate understanding of it. This is evident not only in his poetic diction but also in his imitation of specific narrative detail where he displays a tendency to simplify his model, rendering the abstract concrete and the figurative literal.

The *Miracula Nynie episcopi* (hereafter *MNE*) is an account of the life and miracles of St Nynia (more commonly, and hereafter, Ninian) who, according to Bede, established a church at Candida Casa (literally, 'the White House'), now Whithorn in south-west Scotland, at some point before the arrival of Columba from Ireland in 563.[1] The work, which consists of 504 hexameters, divided into fourteen episodes, each preceded by a short prose heading, survives in a single manuscript, Staatsbibliothek, Bamberg Msc. Patr. 17 (II 10) (157v–161v).[2] Whether the *MNE* was written at Whithorn (as traditionally held) or at York

[1] *Historia ecclesiastica* iii. 4, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), p. 222. Ninian's *floruit* has been much debated. The arguments are well summarized by D. Broun, 'The Literary Record of St Nynia: Fact and Fiction', *Innes Rev.* 42 (1991), 143–50, who concludes (at p. 148): 'At the end of the day, the best literary evidence for dating St Nynia remains Bede's unhelpfully vague description of the saint as being active *multo ante tempore* St Columba, which can hardly be regarded as contemporary or disinterested information.'

[2] The eleventh-century manuscript, also containing works by Alcuin and Augustine (for description, see F. Leitschuh and H. Fischer, *Katalog der handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Bamberg*, 3 vols. (Bamberg, 1887–1912, repr. Wiesbaden, 1966) I. 1, 363–6), is edited by Karl Strecker at MGH PLAC 4. 3 (Berlin, 1923), 943–61. For an English translation, see J. MacQueen, *St Nynia*, with a translation of the *Miracula Nynie Episcopi* and the *Vita Niniani* by W. MacQueen, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh, 2005), pp. 88–101.

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(as more recently suggested),[3] the poem had certainly been written by the late eighth century, when some of Alcuin's former students at York sent a copy to him at the court of Charlemagne, as he later confirms in a letter to the monks at Whithorn (dated to 790).[4] Whilst the work has largely been dismissed by scholars as devoid of poetic merit, it is notable for its allegedly unimaginative recycling of quotations from the Christian-Latin poets of late antiquity.[5]

One of the names which features in the list of earlier authors from whom the eighth-century poet sourced his material is that of the subdeacon Arator (*c.* 490–*c.* 550), author of the *Historia apostolica* (hereafter *HA*), a poetic version of the Acts of the Apostles – two books of more than a thousand Latin hexameters each – which received its first public reading in Rome in 544[6] and

[3] For Whithorn, see W. Levison, 'An Eighth-century Poem on St. Ninian', *Antiquity* 14 (55) (1940), 280–91, at 284; J. MacQueen, *St Nynia*, p. 11. For York, see M. Lapidge, 'The Anglo-Latin Background', *A New Critical History of Old English Literature*, ed. S. B. Greenfield and D. G. Calder (New York and London, 1986), pp. 5–37, at 24, repr. as 'Anglo-Latin Literature', in M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 1–35, at 25: 'this exercise may have been written at York in the late eighth century'; Lapidge, 'Aediluulf and the School of York', *Lateinische Kultur im VIII. Jahrhundert. Traube-Gedenkschrift*, ed. A. Lehner and W. Berschin (St Ottilien, 1989), pp. 161–78, at 166–7, repr. in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 381–98, at 386–7: 'It shares certain phrases with Alcuin's poem on the saints of York, and . . . draws on a range of Christian Latin poets similar to those we have seen represented in the York library and in Alcuin's *De laude Dei*.' Lapidge's theory is developed further by Orchard, 'Wish You Were Here: Alcuin's Courtly Poetry and the Boys Back Home', *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. S. Rees Jones, R. Marks and A. J. Minnis (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 21–43, who argues (at p. 32) for composite authorship: 'It is tempting to conclude that the *Miracula Nynie episcopi* is not a single work by one incompetent poet, but the joint effort of a committee of illiterates (perhaps a whole class?), each composing in the same restrictive and repetitive "house style".'

[4] *Epistolae Karolini Aevi* II, ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epist. 4 (Berlin, 1895), 431–2 (no. 273). Alcuin's words imply that he at least had no doubt that the poem was the work of a single person ('I recognized the learning of the man who wrote it (*facientis agnovi eruditionem*)'), whether at York or Whithorn. On the dating of Alcuin's letter, see R. Constantinescu, 'Alcuin et les *Libelli precum* de l'époque carolingienne', *Revue d'histoire de la spiritualité* 50 (1974), 2–56, at p. 56.

[5] A list is supplied by Strecker (MGH PLAC 4.3, p. 944), who suggests that it was the poet's awareness of his own failings which led him to appropriate so much material from his poetic predecessors. Andy Orchard (*The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE 8 (Cambridge, 1994), 262) similarly observes that it is when the poet abandons his dependence on his models that his faulty prosody becomes most apparent.

[6] Ed. A. P. Orbán, CCSL 130 (Turnhout, 2006). There are also three letters in elegiac couplets. Whilst R. P. H. Green, *Latin Epics of the New Testament: Juvencus, Sedulius, Arator* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 251–350, gives a sound overview, the most comprehensive modern treatment of Arator is to be found in three studies by J. Schwind: *Arator-Studien*, Hypomnemata 94 (Göttingen, 1990), the best overall survey of the work; *Sprachliche und exegetische Beobachtungen zu Arator*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur: Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Klasse (Stuttgart, 1995), an indispensable guide to Arator's Latinity; and 'Origenes und der Dichter Arator: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Origenesrezeption

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has long been recognized as a text which enjoyed considerable popularity in the monasteries and schools of Anglo-Saxon England.[7] However, in his study *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* Andy Orchard writes that 'despite . . . impressive evidence of knowledge of Arator in Anglo-Saxon England, secure examples of his direct influence on Anglo-Latin poetic diction are rather few, perhaps for the reason already noted that Arator can be viewed as very much a product of the same long tradition of epic Latin verse which fostered the Anglo-Saxon poets.'[8]

Whilst examining the influence of Aldhelm (*c.* 639–709) on, amongst other later works, the *MNE*, and acknowledging the borrowings previously identified in that work from other verse authors, both classical and Christian, Orchard proceeds to issue the following warning: 'It is important to note, however, that these more exotic authors are imitated rather infrequently, and that indeed many of the phrases which Strecker [the *MNE*'s first modern editor] would assign to Juvencus or Sedulius or whoever can equally and perhaps more plausibly be assigned to Aldhelm, who had read and used them all.'[9] This article

im Westen', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 41 (1995), 113–29, which convincingly reveals Rufinus's translations of Origen as one of his principal sources. On Arator as a propagandist for the primacy of the papacy, see C. Sotinel, 'Arator, un poète au service de la politique du pape Vigile?', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Antiquité* 101 (1989), 805–20, and P.-A. Deproost, *L'Apôtre Pierre dans une épopée du VIe siècle: L'Historia apostolica d'Arator*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes: Série Antiquité 126 (Paris, 1990). On Arator's preoccupation with baptism, see R. Hillier, *Arator on the Acts of the Apostles: a Baptismal Commentary* (Oxford, 1993). R. J. Schrader, J. L. Roberts III and J. F. Makowski, *Arator's On the Acts of the Apostles*, Classics in Religious Stud. 6 (Atlanta, GA, 1987), the only complete English translation of the *HA*, sadly appeared too early to benefit from the renaissance of interest in Arator which occurred just a few years after its publication.

[7] On Arator and the other Christian Latin poets as school texts, see M. Lapidge, 'Versifying the Bible in the Middle Ages', *The Text in the Community: Essays on Medieval Works, Manuscripts, Authors and Readers*, ed. J. Mann and M. Nolan (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), pp. 11–40. Despite the implications of its title, L. T. Martin, 'The Influence of Arator in Anglo-Saxon England', *Proc. of the Patristic, Med. and Renaissance Conference, Augustinian Historical Institute, Villanova Univ.* 7 (1982), 75–81, is a very limited study, passing quickly over Aldhelm and dealing predominantly with Bede (and only with the most obvious borrowings in his *Expositio actuum apostolorum*). For better discussions of Arator's influence on Bede, see K. Werner, *Beda der Ehrwürdige und seine Zeit*, new ed. (Vienna, 1881), pp. 189–94; M. Lapidge, 'Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. G. Bonner, D. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 77–93, esp. 86–93, repr. in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 339–55, esp. 348–55; Patrick McBrine, 'The English Inheritance of Biblical Verse' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Toronto Univ, 2009), esp. pp. 116–18; M. Wilcox, 'Creating the Cloud-Tent-Ship Conceit in *Exodus*', *ASE* 40 (2011), 103–50. For a wider survey, see M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 174–274.

[8] *Poetic Art*, p. 168. Orchard goes on, however, to demonstrate (*ibid.* pp. 168–70 and 235) that Aldhelm was much more influenced by Arator than previously realized.

[9] *Poetic Art*, p. 263. It is curious that Orchard omits Arator from his summary of Strecker's list of 'more exotic authors'.

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will contend that the author of the *MNE* had a far greater familiarity with, and understanding of, Arator's *HA* than has hitherto been noticed: a knowledge acquired at first hand and not through an intermediate source, whether Aldhelm or anyone else.

At first sight, the very structure of the poem would seem to suggest the influence of the *HA*, or at least of the *HA* in the format in which it was known by Bede and later writers, since it is divided into discrete episodes of hexameter verse, with each (except the first) introduced by a short prose summary or title.[10] However, its immediate progenitor is not Arator's *HA* but Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti* (hereafter *VCM*), as is made clear by the fact that the prose *tituli* begin with Bede's favoured *quomodo*, not Arator's *de eo ubi*.[11] Nonetheless, as the *MNE*'s editor Strecker recognizes in his introduction and *apparatus fontium*, the author of the *MNE* (hereafter 'the Ninian-poet') appears to have had knowledge of Juvencus, Sedulius, Paulinus of Nola and Cyprianus Gallus, as well as of Arator. But while Strecker's researches may indeed have been 'exhaustive' in terms of the range of verbal parallels which he has established,[12] the knowledge of the *HA* shown by the Ninian-poet is considerably more extensive than the MGH editor realized. This was noticed to a small extent by Luitpold Wallach who, in his review of McKinlay's edition of Arator, adds another half-dozen parallels to the dozen or so 'identified' by Strecker.[13] However, a close reading of the *MNE* reveals an even greater familiarity with the *HA* than has hitherto been recognized, as the following list reveals:[14]

[10] These prose summaries (variously dubbed *capitula* or *tituli*) are now accepted not to be the work of Arator (see Green, *Latin Epics*, pp. 270–3), although they may well have been written soon afterwards (thus P.-A. Deproost and J.-C. Haelewyck, 'Le texte biblique des Actes et l'authenticité des sommaires en prose dans l'*Historia apostolica* d'Arator', *Philologia Sacra: Biblische und patristische Studien für Hermann J. Frede und Walter Thiele zu ihrem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. R. Gryson, 2 vols., Vetus Latina. Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel 24 (Freiburg, 1993) II, 583–604, at p. 604).

[11] Twelve of the *MNE*'s fourteen episodes are preceded by a *titulus* which begins with *quomodo* (the first has none, the last begins *de mirabilibus*); twenty-one of the *VCM*'s forty-six tituli begin with *quomodo* (see *Bedas metrische 'Vita sancti Cuthberti'*, ed. W. Jaager, Palaestra 198 (Leipzig, 1935)). On the *VCM* as the model of the *MNE*, see Strecker, MGH PLAC 4.3, p. 944; Levison, *Eighth-century Poem*, p. 283; Lapidge, *Bede the Poet*, Jarrow Lecture 1993 (Jarrow, 1994), p. 1, repr. in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 313–38, at 313.

[12] Thus Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse', *Comparative Lit.* 31 (1979), 209–31, at 231, repr. in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 247–69, at 269.

[13] Review of CSEL 72, *Speculum* 29. 1 (1954), 145–50, at 146. Not all of Strecker's parallels are admissible: there is no link between *MNE* 135 and 418 (*surge igitur properans*) and *HA* ii. 822 (*surge citus*) beyond the fact that both mean 'rise quickly'; the only similarity between *MNE* 446 and *HA* i. 5 lies in the fact that both place the adjective *ardua* in the fifth foot of the line; the appearance of the word *pocula* at *Hymnus S. Nynie episcopi* 20b (ed. Strecker, MGH PLAC 4.3, p. 962) has no connection with *pocula vitae* (*HA* i. 555).

[14] Parallels identified by Strecker and Wallach are marked (S) and (W) respectively.

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MNE

43 **terrarum domine** candentia menia mansit
45–6 **pervigil excubiis** mundi luminaria poscens
et ceteros passim **lustravit in ordine sanctos**
85 fecerat et celsi **veneranda cacumina** templi
95 prompta **salutifere** capessunt **munera** cure
105 sub quo **servator** praecelsi **pastor ovilis**

136 **dona novella ferens** dominum visitare memento
143–5 quo rex **depressus** morbo languebat acerbo
continuo cephal iacentis **dextera** signat
instaurata salus serpit **tenebrasque repellit**

146–7 **saucia restituit** gemmarum lumina clemens
et stipulante deo **pulse periere tenebre**
152 **sacrilegum patrare nefas** cum clamore latrans

155 late per **populos** provulgans ore **loquelas**
169–70 diximus et rumpens **retinacula tarda loquele**
cepit ab ore pio mysteria pandere sancta

172 **insinuans digito** genitorem voce fatebor
174 o populi, patris pulsus **discernere causam**
180 conticuit **stringens** silenti **guttura** nodo
187 et celebrem sanctis equa**vit in ordine sanctum**
239 **cur, precor**, inmerito voluistis ledere, quem vos
248 tum pavidi **stupuere, viri** quia **vita revertit**

271 teg**mine iam niveo** fulgens ceu fosforus axe
283–4 que **post busta sacer** Christus patravit in illo
carmina vera loquor pangens miracula sancti
288–9 **supplicio comitante** miser **vestigia ferre**
nescius ex utero compressis currere plantis
291 perque dies plures **defunctus vivere membris**
293 **vulnera semper habens** torpebat mortis in umbra
318 hinc **medicina potens** macerata in membra cucurrit
343–5 tempore quam longo vetuerat **cernere lucem**
nox oculis infusa, **chaos** dum **iuncta cerebro**
tinxit non madide **fuscans** primordia vene

353 de**cedente die** nigre ten**uere tenebre**
358-9 fac **tenebras exire graves**, fac **cernere lucem**
semper amica manus tua **numquam munera tardat**

HA

ii. 1228 **terrarum dominae** fundata cacumina sedes (S)
i. 754–5 **pervigil excubiis** commissi Petrus ovilis,
postquam cuncta videns **lustravit in ordine sanctos** (S)
i. 53 liquit oliviferi **veneranda cacumina** montis
ii. 104 sponte **salutiferi** cesserunt **munera** Christi
i. 1011–12 publica poena fuit; proprium sed **pastor ovile**
servato custode regit, quem ditat honore[15]
ii. 57 **dona novella ferens**, quam lex aeterna coegit
i. 834 illa manus meruit Petri contingere **dextram**
i. 838–9 **instaurata** dies animae patet apta figuris,
quam nimis antiqui **depresserat** umbra pericli
i. 842 ecclesia praesente levat **tenebrasque repellit**
i. 301 **saucia restituit**, qui mortua surgere cedit
i. 1021 carceris umbra fugit; **pulsae periere tenebrae**
i. 302–3 fert animus **patrare nefas** sanctisque verendis
sacrilegas inferre neces. o semper iniqui
Ep. ad Parth. 29 exiit in **populos** solidae pinguedo **loquelae**
i. 897 excute, Petre, meae **retinacula tarda loquelae**
i. 950 **coepit** et aeterni **mysteria pandere** Christi
ii. 212 **coepit ab ore pio** solidae vestigia mentis
ii. 602 **insinuans digito** caelestem prodidit agnum
ii. 934 adveniens cum nocte iubar. **discernere causas**
i. 85 horruit ipse suae **stringens** in **gutture** vocem
i. 755 postquam cuncta videns lustra**vit in ordine sanctos**
ii. 178 **cur, precor**, ista datis, fragili quos corpore constat
i. 951 magnanimes **stupuere viri** vocemque sequentes
i. 835 pauperibus quae larga fuit, qua **vita revertens**
i. 293 ag**mine iam niveo** per milia quinque virorum
i. 186 **post sacra busta** levat. radiantem in corpore Iesum (S)
Ep. ad Vig. 20 historiamque sequens **carmina vera loquar** (W)
ii. 158–9 **supplicio comitante** satus, **vestigia ferre**
nescius ex utero; membris pars coeperat aegri
i. 757 respicit Aeneam **defunctis vivere membris**
i. 776 **vulnera semper habent**, quorum fit saucius infans
i. 256 exiluit **medicina potens** atque hospite gressu
ii. 222 da tenebras exire graves, da **cernere lucem** (W)
ii. 225 **nox oculos** exulque dies illuminat orbes (W)
i. 180 non potuit **fuscare chaos**, fugere dolores (W)
ii. 232 quae meruit sentire deum. pars **iuncta cerebro** (S)
i. 714 dis**cedente die**. quantum mer**uere tenebrae**
ii. 222 da **tenebras exire graves**, da **cernere lucem** (S)
ii. 224 **semper amica manus** iubar intulit atque reliquit (W)
i. 953 indubitata fides, cui **numquam munera tardant** (W)
ii. 382 his pius accelerat iustusque his **munera tardat** (W)

[15] But see too Paulinus of Nola, *Carmen* xv. 169 (*Carmina*, ed. W. Hartel, CSEL 30. 2 (Vienna, 1894), 58): *servabat pastor ovile*.

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MNE	*HA*
383–4 inde domum repedans visitabat **menia nota**	i. 55 **moenia nota** petunt, quo per sua sabbata mille
perque dies plures **divina negotia** mensae	ii. 383 in Macedum terris cum **moenia nota** Philippi
	i. 82 surgit et, insinuans **divina negotia**, coram
386 obtulit venerans **ferventi plenus amore**	i. 230 dilige mente deum **ferventi plenus amore**
393 **Christus ubique de**us, quem totus non capit **orbis**	ii. 99 **Christus ubique de**dit faciens manifesta, quod **orbi**
406 incubuit **genibus**, **qu**in **poplite flexo**	i. 943 sanctificare domum, **genibus qu**em **poplite flexo**
408 te precor, omnipotens, **misteria pandere Christi**	i. 950 coepit et aeterni **mysteria pandere Christi** (S)
419–22 corpore nunc praesens, **carnis vestitus amictu**	ii. 98 postquam signa dei **carnis vestitus amictu** (S)
Christus adest dominus, mundi fabricator et auctor;	ii. 71 **Christus adest**, quem tota canunt oracula vatum
hic est ille puer, qui sanctis **horrea celi**	i. 368 de quibus ipse tui componas **horrea caeli** (S)
iam super astra parat. const**anti corde tonantem**	ii. 145 consuleretque rogans or**anti corde tonantem**
424 hospicio ventris quem sacra **puerpera gessit**	ii. 149 quicquid in hoc utero fecunda **puerpera gessit**
447 invenit oblatam in formam **remeasse priorem**	i. 118 mystica causa dedit numerum **remeare priorem**
450 talibus enituit **post sancti busta** cadaver	i. 186 **post sacra busta** levat. radiantem in corpore Iesum (S)
455 **Christus ubique de**us patrans miracula multa	ii. 99 **Christus ubique de**dit faciens manifesta, quod orbi
461 **Christus adest** semper, qui in sancto corpore patrat	ii. 71 **Christus adest**, quem tota canunt oracula vatum
487 laudibus et meritis **terras lucebit in omnes**	i. 720 sub qua caecus erat, **terras lucebit in omnes**
491–4 **doctoris celebravit iter** dans **dona salutis**,	ii. 384 **doctoris celebraret iter**, bacchata puella
doctiloquis **meruit linguis comprendere** libros,	ii. 320 **dona saluti**feram **meruit comprendere linguam**
predicat inde **potens** verbis, quod actibus implet,	ii. 322 **praedicat** omni**potens**: 'non veni perdere mundum'
queque alios docuit homines, prius **omnia complet**	ii. 301 emicat atque hominem mediator in **omnia complet**
496–7 dul**cisonos mirata modos**, **qui**s intonat ipse;	ii. 446 doct**isonis mirata modis** '**qui**bus' inquit 'ab oris'
vera loquens famulis eterne gaudia vite	ii. 449 **vera loquens**. namque hic fecundus in orbe viator
499 omnibus eque sacer monstrabat **dogmata digna**	ii. 580 spiritus alme, riga, sint ut tibi **dogmata digna**
501–3 **cumque per innumeras** celebraret talia gesta	ii. 625 **cumque per innumeros** nutarent saucia morbos
plebes ac gentes vir tam bonus **ore magistro**	ii. 134 ne fructus afferre queas! quibus **ore magistro**
clausit iter laetus domini **translatus** ad **aulam**	i. 1076 **claudit iter** bellis, qui portam pandit in astris
	ii. 409 nox antiqua diem! niveam **translatus** in **aulam**

This list does not include phrases which the two authors could have taken from a common source.[16] Also omitted are those phrases which the Ninian-poet might not have encountered at first hand but rather in the work of another writer who himself had borrowed them from Arator. The two writers who fall most immediately under suspicion in this respect are Aldhelm and Bede, who were both well known to the Ninian-poet and themselves heavily influenced

[16] Thus the commonplace *deus omnipotens* (*MNE* 15 and *HA* i. 185), *ore pio* (*MNE* 70 and *HA* ii. 212), *oscula figit* (*MNE* 123) and *oscula fingens* (*HA* i. 101), *munere functus* (*MNE* 150 and *Ep. ad Parth.* 21), *ore loquelas* (*MNE* 155 and *HA* ii. 261 (and *ore loquelam* at *HA* ii. 752), *regnator Olimpi* (*MNE* 304 and *HA* i. 346), *talia dicta* (*MNE* 307 and 351) and *talia dictas* (*HA* ii. 734), *dona salutis* (*MNE* 340 and *HA* i. 169, 286 and ii. 410) and *gloria rerum* (*MNE* 482 and *HA* ii. 216), earlier parallels for all of which are contained in O. Schumann, *Lateinisches Hexameter-Lexikon. Dichterisches Formelgut von Ennius bis zum Archipoeta*, 6 vols. and supplementary vol., MGH Hilfsmittel 4 (Munich, 1979–89); *hinc capere incipiam* (*MNE* 282 and *HA* i. 221) is probably taken directly from Virgil, *Georg.* i. 5, although both could have encountered it at Proba, *Cento* 22 (*Poetae Christiani Minores*, ed. K. Schenkl, CSEL 16.1 (Vienna, 1888), 570).

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by the verse of Arator.[17] However, although eighty-nine lines of the *MNE* are identified by Orchard as owing something to Aldhelm,[18] these lines are almost wholly devoid of the influence of Arator.[19] Furthermore, the traces of Arator identified above are not expressions or verbal combinations which are listed by Orchard as paralleled in the works of Aldhelm.[20] In the case of Bede, things are not so clear. Whilst some shared phrases may well come from Bede rather than Arator,[21] in other cases it is no less evident that the Ninian-poet is directly imitating the *HA*, even if he manifestly knows Bede too. Thus, although *misteria pandere Christi* (*MNE* 408) could well be modelled on the same words at *VCM* (i) 72,[22] the content of *MNE* 170 (*cepit ab ore pio mysteria pandere sancta*) reveals that Bede's source (*HA* i. 950 *coepit et aeterni mysteria pandere Christi* and *HA* ii. 212 *coepit ab ore pio solidae vestigia mentis*) is also the *MNE*'s.

It is clear from these parallels that the Ninian-poet had direct knowledge of the *HA* and did not just know it at second hand in the works of someone heavily influenced by Arator. But it is interesting at this point to consider the way in which Arator is put to use by the Ninian-poet. It is true that the majority of these parallels are merely places where the poet has incorporated a phrase remembered from the *HA*. In these cases there is no indication that the reader is intended to recognize the source of the borrowing or indeed any guarantee that the borrowing is a conscious one. When discussing Aldhelm's

[17] Thus Orchard, 'Wish You Were Here', pp. 32–4.

[18] *Poetic Art*, pp. 260–3 and 289–91.

[19] The one exception is the parallel drawn by Orchard (*Poetic Art*, p. 290) between *MNE* 165 *fecerat auctor* and Aldhelm's *fecerit auctor* (*Enigmata* xcvi. 7 (*Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auct. antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919), 143)), clearly influenced by the identical cadence at *HA* i. 540. The phrase *munera Christi* (*MNE* 365) is an internal echo of *pia munera Christi* (*MNE* 207), borrowed from Proba, *Cento* 23 (*Poetae Christiani Minores*, ed. Schenkl, p. 570) rather than Aldhelm's *munere Christi* (*Carmen de virginitate* 203 (*Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, p. 361)), *pace* Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 291.

[20] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 235. The same appears to be true of the parallels between the *MNE* and *HA* identified by Wallach, Review of CSEL 72, p. 146. There are, however, some lines which are influenced differently by both Arator and Aldhelm. For example, *MNE* 143, the first of five lines which are heavily influenced by the *HA*, also contains Aldhelm's *morbo . . . acerbo* (*Carmen de virginitate* 1830 (*Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, p. 429)). Similarly the cadence of *MNE* 424 *sacra puerpera gessit* is an original combination of Aldhelm's *sacra puerpera virgo* (*Carmen ecclesiastica* ii. 7 (*Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, p. 13)) (thus Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 291) and Arator's *fecunda puerpera gessit* (*HA* ii. 149), rather than Aldhelm's Arator-inspired *fecunda puerpera virgo* (*Carmen de virginitate* 1677 (*Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, p. 423)) (thus Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 235).

[21] Thus *MNE* 282 *narranda relatu* recalls *VCM* (v) 143 (*Bedas metrische 'Vita'*, ed. Jaager, p. 69), not *HA* ii. 328 *narrante relatus* (thus Strecker, PLAC 4. 2, 954, *pace* Wallach, Review of CSEL 72, p. 146). In the case of *dona salutis* (*MNE* 340 and 491 and *HA* i. 169, 286 and ii. 410), the source may well be Bede, *VCM* (xiii) 371 and (xli) 869 (*Bedas metrische 'Vita',* ed. Jaager, pp. 85 and 125), but the cadence is a frequent one in Christian Latin verse (thus Schumann, *Lateinisches Hexameter-Lexikon* II, 141–3).

[22] *Bedas metrische 'Vita'*, ed. Jaager, p. 63.

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use of Arator, Orchard classifies this kind of 'remembered reading' as 'mere borrowings of diction . . . where Aldhelm has simply fitted lexical elements from Arator's verse into recognizable patterns of his own, without attempting to assimilate any of the thought or context of Arator's words.'[23] I would question, however, whether it is always a case of conscious 'fitting', rather than an unconscious assimilation of a borrowed phrase.

In some cases, however, even though the parallel may consist of no more than a couple of words, there can be no doubt that the poet is quoting directly from Arator. It may be that the poet has imitated not just the phrase but its figurative meaning. Thus at *MNE* 43 the poet uses the phrase *terrarum domine* to mean the city of Rome (as at *HA* ii. 1228). On another occasion he may borrow a particular phrase and then set it in a grammatical or metrical context which, though different in meaning, is identical in terms of rhythm or syntax. Thus *MNE* 85 sandwiches the borrowed *veneranda cacumina* inside the two-word genitive phrase *celsi . . . templi* (imitating *HA* i. 53 *oliviferi . . . montis*). Elsewhere the poet may reference, for example, two words which are juxtaposed in the *HA*, but not grammatically connected. So at *MNE* 95 the poet consciously copies *salutifere [capessunt] munera [cure]* from *HA* ii. 104 *salutiferi [cesserunt] munera [Christi]* and, it should be noted, in addition imitates the grammatical context.[24] Such examples, I would argue, constitute a rather more sophisticated poetic technique than the simple cutting and pasting of lexical elements: the poet is not just availing himself of a phrase which conveniently fits a metrical gap; he actually understands and appreciates *how* the phrase is used in its original context.

Orchard's second category is 'where an entire verse is confected by Aldhelm from a number of phrases from Arator. Such free combination of the characteristic diction of another poet is the hallmark of Aldhelm's verse, but surely implies ready familiarity with that poet's work.'[25] Although there is no instance in the *MNE* where an entire verse is concocted from Aratorian models, there are several places where the author combines more than one phrase from the *HA* in the same line. Thus *MNE* 152 (***sacrilegum patrare nefas*** *cum clamore latrans*) brings into a single line ideas from two successive lines of Arator (*HA* i. 302–3): *fert animus* ***patrare nefas*** *sanctisque verendis /* ***sacrilegas*** *inferre neces*. More frequently, however, the original phrases are totally discrete: *MNE* 170 (***cepit ab ore pio mysteria pandere*** *sancta*) draws on *HA* i. 950 (***coepit*** *et aeterni* ***mysteria pandere*** *Christi*) and *HA* ii. 212 (***coepit ab ore pio*** *solidae vestigia mentis*); *MNE* 248 (*tum pavidi* ***stupuere, viri*** *quia* ***vita revertit***) on *HA* i. 951 (*magnanimes*

[23] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 169.

[24] One might also add that there is an aural reminiscence here, with the 'ss' of *ce**ss**erunt* echoed in *cape**ss**unt*.

[25] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 169.

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stupuere viri *vocemque sequentes*) and *HA* i. 835 (*pauperibus quae larga fuit, qua* ***vita revertens***); *MNE* 358–9 (*fac* ***tenebras exire graves***, *fac* ***cernere lucem***. */* ***semper amica manus*** *tua* ***numquam munera tardat***) on *HA* ii. 222 (*da* ***tenebras exire graves***, *da* ***cernere lucem***), *HA* ii. 224 (***semper amica manus*** *iubar intulit atque reliquit*) and *HA* i. 953 (*indubitata fides, cui* ***numquam munera tardant***); *MNE* 503 (***clausit iter*** *laetus domini* ***translatus*** *ad* ***aulam***) on *HA* i. 1076 (***claudit iter*** *bellis, qui portam pandit in astris*) and *HA* ii. 409 (*nox antiqua diem! niveam* ***translatus*** *in* ***aulam***). Such combinations clearly demonstrate that the author was steeped in Arator's verse and not just parroting a few phrases which lurked in his memory.

The last 16 lines of the *MNE* (chapter 14) show very clearly the different ways in which the poet adopts and adapts a series of phrases from the *HA* to ornament his peroration:

MNE 489–504	*HA*
hic decus omne suis horrende noctis in antro	
celestem intento meditabat corde sophiam,	
doctoris celebravit iter dans **dona salutis**,	**doctoris celebraret iter** (ii. 384)
doctiloquis **meruit linguis comprendere** libros,	**dona saluti**feram **meruit comprendere linguam** (ii. 320)
predicat inde **potens** verbis, quod actibus implet,	**praedicat** omni**potens** (ii. 322)
queque alios docuit homines, prius **omnia complet**,	**in omnia complet** (ii. 301)
eius et eloquio lectorum corda virescunt	
dul**cisonos mirata modos**, quis intonat ipse;	doct**isonis mirata modis** (ii. 446)
vera loquens famulis eterne gaudia vite	**vera loquens** (ii. 449)
pandit ad **astra** volans meritis celestibus aures,	**pandit** in **astris** (i. 1076)
omnibus eque sacer monstrabat **dogmata digna**	**dogmata digna** (ii. 580)
gentibus ac populis regnum ad celeste vocandis.	
cumque per innumeras celebraret talia gesta	**cumque per innumeros** (ii. 625)
plebes ac gentes vir tam bonus **ore magistro**,	**ore magistro** (ii. 134)
clausit iter laetus domini **translatus** ad **aulam**;	**claudit iter** (i. 1076) **translatus** in **aulam** (ii. 409)
nunc Christum laudat sacris concentibus illic.	

Admittedly I have not included above the borrowings from any other author.[26] Nevertheless, the influence of the *HA* is evident, with ten of the sixteen lines containing a clear debt to Arator.[27] However, in only one of these examples does the Ninian-poet use the borrowed phrase in exactly the same way and with the same meaning: thus *ore magistro* ('with instructive word') refers similarly

[26] See in particular the borrowings from Bede: *MNE* 490 and *VCM* (xxi) 549 (*Bedas metrische 'Vita'*, ed. Jaager, p. 99) *celestem intento . . . corde sophiam*; *MNE* 498 and *VCM* (xx) 463 (*Bedas metrische 'Vita'*, ed. Jaager, p. 93) *celestibus aures*.

[27] The fact that this final episode contains considerably more allusion to the *HA* than any of the preceding chapters might be seen as supporting Orchard's theory of composite authorship: an 'illiterate' inordinately fond of Arator? See n. 3 above.

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to the teaching of Ninian (*MNE* 502) and Paul (*HA* ii. 134). In every other case, the poet uses Arator's words to produce a very different meaning:

MNE 491: the Ninian-poet has made *doctoris . . . iter* the object of *celebravit*: 'he [Ninian] frequented the path of a teacher'; at *HA* ii. 384, in Arator's more abstract style, the phrase is the verb's subject: 'the route of the teacher [Paul] frequented (the famous walls of Philip)'.
MNE 492: the Ninian-poet takes Arator's three-word phrase *meruit comprendere linguam* (*HA* ii. 320), originally used to describe the way in which the region of Macedonia (again, abstract for concrete) 'was deemed worthy to understand the language [of Paul] which brings salvation (*salutiferam*)',[28] and adapts it for his own means: Ninian 'was deemed worthy to understand books [written] in learned languages'.
MNE 493: an aural reminiscence is evident here: Arator's *praedicat omnipotens* (*HA* ii. 322) becomes *predicat inde potens*.[29]
MNE 494: Arator's *in omnia complet* ('he accomplishes in every respect' *HA* ii. 301) is simplified to *omnia complet* ('he accomplishes everything').[30]
MNE 496: again the Ninian-poet adapts and simplifies his model: whereas Arator uses *doctisonis mirata modis* as part of a complex indirect statement – the people 'marvel that Paul is speaking in learned-sounding tones' (*HA* ii. 446) – Ninian's hearers simply 'marvel at the sweet-sounding tones', as the poet alters the compound adjective to *dulcisonos*, perhaps to avoid clumsy repetition after *doctiloquis* (*MNE* 492).[31]
MNE 497: Arator uses *vera* substantively: the people were 'speaking the truth' (*HA* ii. 449); the Ninian-poet, however, expands the borrowed phrase to make *vera* an adjective to emphasize that the saint was speaking 'the true joys (*vera gaudia*) of eternal life'.
MNE 498: in a manner already noted, the Ninian-poet dislocates Arator's phrase *pandit (portam) in astris* ('opens (a gate) in the stars' *HA* i. 1076), instead connecting the equivalent prepositional phrase *ad astra* with the verb *volans* ('flying to the stars'), and making *aures* the object of *pandit* ('opens the ears').
MNE 499: superficially one would expect the straightforward phrase *dogmata*

[28] It seems likely that the poet was induced by his recalling of the two words which begin *HA* ii. 320 (*dona salutiferam*) to include the cadence *dona salutis* at the end of *MNE* 491.
[29] The cadence of *MNE* 203 *germine terre* may be another aural reminiscence (this time of *HA* ii. 842 *germina ferre*) but more likely an echo of Cyprianus Gallus, *Genesis* 47 (*Heptateuchos*, ed. R. Peiper, CSEL 23 (Vienna, 1981), 3): *germine terrae*. Compare also *MNE* 353 and *HA* i. 714.
[30] Although the cadence *omnia complent* is found twice in Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura* iv. 1017 and v. 1066) and once in Lucan (*Pharsalia* vi. 465), the absence of their names from Strecker's *apparatus fontium* suggests Arator as the likely source here.
[31] Or was he just misremembering, -quoting or -copying?

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digna to mean the same for both poets, but again the later writer reduces the complexity of Arator's original: at *HA* ii. 580 Arator prays that what he teaches (*dogmata*) may be worthy of the Spirit which inspired it; in Ninian's case, it merely means the 'worthy teaching' of Christ.

MNE 501: Arator's *cumque per innumeros* is repeated word for word, but the *HA*'s transferred use of *per* to express means (the sick are 'faltering *as a result* of countless diseases' *HA* ii. 625) is once more simplified as the prepositional phrase depicts Ninian's preaching '*amongst* countless peoples and races'.

MNE 503: the first half of the line yet again removes the complexities from Arator's original: at *HA* i. 1076 (the final line of the first poem) Peter 'closes off the way to war' (*claudit iter bellis*); the Ninian-poet imitates the first two words for the start of his final line: Ninian 'brought his journey to a close' (*clausit iter*); the line's cadence is taken from *HA* ii. 409, but its meaning is changed entirely: the jail in which Paul is imprisoned at Acts XVI.11–34 is 'transformed into the snow-white hall of the church' (*niveam translatus in aulam / ecclesiae*), since it becomes the place of baptism for the jailer and his family;[32] Ninian, however, is merely 'carried off to the hall of the Lord' (*domini translatus ad aulam*). Once again, the Ninian-poet simplifies Arator's original: a figurative application becomes a literal one.

The examples above show quite clearly that this 'confection' is not, as is so often implied, a matter of mere cutting and pasting,[33] at least not in the simplistic manner in which we might understand it. The poet is clearly using favourite phrases, but he is reworking and adapting them for his own purposes. Most frequently, admittedly, he is simplifying his model: abstract becomes concrete and figurative literal. However, his reapplications always display an accurate understanding of the original and are often highly effective in their own right.

The Ninian-poet's skill is particularly evident in the third category of borrowing identified by Orchard, instances where 'the identity of diction is symptomatic of Arator's greater influence at the thematic level', where, although there may not be multiple verbatim repetitions, 'there are enough near-echoes and parallels of theme and form to establish that Aldhelm is deeply indebted to Arator'.[34] There are perhaps three examples in the *MNE* which fall into this category, where the

[32] Snow-white refers to the white robe in which the baptized were clothed after emerging from the font. See Hillier, 'Arator and Baptism in Sixth-Century Rome', *Studia Patristica* 71 (2014), 111–33, at 129–30.

[33] Thus for example Lapidge, 'Aldhelm's Latin Poetry and Old English Verse', p. 231, repr. in *Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 269: 'nothing more than a *cento* of formulas lifted from a variety of school authors'; Lapidge, 'The Anglo-Latin Background, p. 24, repr. in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 25: 'Little more than a pastiche of quotations from the curriculum poets'; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 260: 'cut-and-paste pastiche'.

[34] Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 169.

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parallels in sequence of thought, as well as the context, show clearly that Arator is the poet's model. The first example is particularly interesting.

MNE

142–7 venerat interea vates summusque sacerdos,
quo rex **depressus** morbo languebat acerbo.
continuo cephal iacentis **dextera** signat.
instaurata salus serpit **tenebrasque repellit**,
saucia restituit gemmarum lumina clemens
et stipulante deo **pulse periere tenebre**.[35]

HA

i. 834–43 illa manus meruit Petri contingere **dextram**,
pauperibus quae larga fuit, qua vita revertens
cetera membra levat corpusque itura per omne
hanc subiit, quae causa fuit. si iure movemur
instaurata dies animae patet apta figuris,
quam nimis antiqui **depresserat** umbra pericli
ad vocem conversa Petri: caput ante gravatum
legis in obscurae gremio velut altera surgens
ecclesia praesente levat **tenebrasque repellit**
lux operum comitata fidem.[36]
i. 300–1 hic membra redemptor
saucia restituit, qui mortua surgere cedit.[37]
i. 1021 carceris umbra fugit; **pulsae periere tenebrae**.[38]

Both passages describe a healing: in the *MNE* Ninian restores the sight of King Tudvael, taken from him as a punishment for banishing the saint from his land; in the *HA* Peter restores to life a disciple called Tabitha (or Dorcas) (Acts IX.36–43). There is no apparent parallel in the healing itself: the former is cured of blindness, the latter is raised from the dead. However, there are several details which reveal this passage of the *HA* as the *MNE*'s model. Both poets credit the saint's right hand (*MNE* 144 and *HA* i. 834 *dext(e)ra*) as the instrument of healing.[39] But the remaining parallels with *HA* i. 834–43

[35] 'Meanwhile the prophet and high priest had come to the place where the king lay powerless crushed by his harsh affliction. Straight away his right hand makes a sign on his head as he lies there; his health is restored, creeps forth and dispels the darkness. Mercifully he restored his wounded eyes and, as God required, the darkness was driven back and died.'

[36] 'That hand of hers, which was so generous to the poor, was worthy to touch Peter's right hand, through which life returned and raised the rest of her limbs. Before life made its way through the whole of her body, it came first upon this hand which was the cause [of her recovery]. If I am inspired correctly, the daylight which was restored to her soul is clearly suitable for allegorical interpretation: she whom the darkness of the most ancient peril had crushed down turned to the voice of Peter; rising up, as if a different person, she lifts up, in the presence of the Church, a life which had earlier been weighed down in the bosom of the shadowy Law. The light of her good works which accompanies her faith dispels the darkness.'

[37] 'The redeemer who here has restored wounded limbs is he who grants that what is dead may rise.'

[38] 'The jail's shadow flees, the darkness is driven back and dies.'

[39] MacQueen takes *dextera* as ablative and translates (*St Nynia*, p. 92) 'he made a sign on the head of the sick man with his right hand'. However, notwithstanding the frequent errors in the poet's grasp of scansion (which could mean that the Ninian-poet has shortened the final

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concern not the literal healing of Tabitha, but its figurative meaning as divined by Arator: Tabitha's revival is referred to as the 'restoration of daylight' (*HA* i. 838 *instaurata dies*); it was the darkness of death which had crushed (*HA* i. 839 *depresserat*) her; it is the light of her good works which dispels the darkness (*HA* i. 842 *tenebrasque repellit*). Similarly, King Tudvael had been crushed (*MNE* 143 *depressus*) by his blindness; his health (that is, his sight) is restored (*MNE* 145 *instaurata*) and dispels the darkness (*MNE* 145 *tenebrasque repellit*). The darkness which Ninian dispels from Tudvael is the literal darkness of blindness; the darkness driven out from Tabitha by Peter is the metaphorical darkness of death. The penultimate borrowing in this passage similarly involves a phrase used elsewhere by Arator in connection with a miraculous healing: Ninian 'restores [Tudvael's] wounded eyes' (*MNE* 146 *saucia restituit gemmarum lumina*); Peter credits Christ with 'restoring [a lame man's] wounded limbs' (*HA* i. 300–1 *membra . . . saucia restituit*) (Acts IV.10). The final borrowing returns to the theme of darkness and light: Tudvael's 'darkness is driven back and dies' (*MNE* 147 *pulse periere tenebre*), 'the darkness' of Peter's prison 'is driven back and dies' (*HA* i. 1021 *pulsae periere tenebrae*) on the arrival of a shining angel (Acts XII.7).

The second example concerns the healing of the paralytic at Ninian's tomb, a passage where the poet draws upon his knowledge of Arator's version of two similar healings in Acts, the first at Lydda by Peter (Acts IX.32–5), the second at Lystra by Paul (Acts XIV.8–10).

MNE	*HA*
288–93 **supplicio comitante** miser **vestigia ferre**	ii. 158–60 **supplicio comitante** satus, **vestigia ferre**
nescius ex utero compressis currere plantis,	**nescius ex utero**; membris pars coeperat aegri
nam geminas retro vergebant vulnera plantas;	se nascente mori.[40]
perque dies plures **defunctus vivere membris**	i. 757 respicit Aeneam **defunctis vivere membris**[41]
incipit atque miser morborum tabe peresus	
vulnera semper habens torpebat mortis in umbra.[42]	i. 775-7 iugulantia quippe
	vulnera semper habent, quorum fit saucius infans

syllable of *dexterā*, as he does for example at the end of the fifth foot in the case of what should be *mollissimā* 229, *fervidā* 262 and *pisulā* 310), *dextera* is clearly the subject of the action (as is the case in the corresponding passage of the *HA*): 'his right hand made a sign . . .'. On faults in the *MNE*'s versification, see Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 262.

[40] 'Born with torment for companion, unable from the womb to take a step, frail in his limbs, part of him had begun to die as soon as he was born.'

[41] 'He sees that Aeneas is alive, though his limbs are dead.'

[42] 'With torment for companion, the wretch had been unable from the womb to take a step, to run on soles which were held in check, for his wounds turned both his feet backwards. Day after day he had to live, dead in his limbs, and the wretch, eaten away by the putrefaction of his disease, bearing continual wounds, lay motionless in the shadow of death.'

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octavo veniente die.[43]

The poet begins with a full line and a half from Arator's description of the cripple at Lydda, changing only one word of the original (substituting *miser* for *satus*). He then moves on to imitate Arator's paradoxical statement of the coexistence of both life and death, perhaps inspired initially by *HA* ii. 159: part of the cripple's body had begun to die from the moment he was born. However, the Ninian-poet chooses to adapt not this line, but one from the account of the healing of the the paralytic Aeneas at Lydda. But while the phrase is used to illustrate the imminent recovery of Aeneas, who 'is alive [in his soul], though his limbs are dead' (*HA* i. 757 *defunctis vivere membris*), in the *MNE* it serves on the contrary to emphasize the paralytic's physical decline, since he increasingly lived 'dead in his limbs' (*MNE* 291 *defunctus vivere membris*), a continuous decline highlighted by another borrowed phrase 'bearing continual wounds' (*MNE* 293 *vulnera semper habens*) drawn also from the passage concerning the healing of Aeneas (*HA* i. 776 *vulnera semper habent*).[44] This passage shows not just a knowledge but a sophisticated understanding of Arator's text and an ability to turn it to his own ends, whatever his shortcomings as a versifier.

In the third example, the Ninian-poet recounts another healing at the saint's tomb, this time of a blind woman, and draws particularly on Arator's exegesis of Christ's healing of the two blind men at Matt. IX.27–31 (*HA* ii. 219–34).

MNE	*HA*
343 tempore quam longo vetuerat **cernere lucem**	ii. 222–8 'da **tenebras exire graves**, da **cernere lucem**
nox oculis infusa, **chaos** dum **iuncta cerebro**	quam nescimus adhuc!' subitum tunc illa medelae
tinxit non madide **fuscans** primordia **vene**.	**semper amica manus** iubar intulit atque reliquit
	nox oculos exulque dies illuminat orbes
	expavitque redux inopina crepuscula visus.
	hos populos liquet esse duos, quos noxia **venae**
	caecavit natura suae.
	ii. 232–3 pars **iuncta cerebro**
	maxima sunt oculi.[45]
	i. 180 non potuit **fuscare chaos**, fugere dolores.[46]

[43] 'In fact those whose child is injured when the eighth day comes continue to receive cutting wounds.'

[44] Originally referring to the 'wounds' of circumcision: see Hillier, *Arator*, pp. 126–34.

[45] 'Grant that we may leave the burdensome darkness, grant that we may see the light which until now we have not known!' Then that ever-loving hand bestowed the sudden ray of healing, the night left their eyes, the exiled day shed its light on their vision, and their sight as it returned was terrified by the unexpected twilight. It is obvious that these men are the two peoples whom the harmful nature of their birth has blinded . . . The eyes, being connected with the brain, are the most important part [of the body].'

[46] 'Chaos could not darken him, sorrows fled from him.'

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MNE	*HA*
352–3 'o dilecte dei, geminas sub fronte fenestras	i. 713–14 caelique agnoscitur auctor
de**cedente die** nigre ten**uere tenebre**	dis**cedente die**. quantum mer**uere tenebrae**![47]
358–60 fac **tenebras exire graves**, fac **cernere lucem**	i. 952–3 quid non credentibus offert
semper amica manus tua **numquam munera tardat**	indubitata fides, cui **numquam munera tardant**[48]
credula si fuerint hominum precordia semper.[49]	ii. 382 Christus
	his pius accelerat iustusque his **munera tardat**.[50]

The most striking feature comes in the final three lines (358–60), the first two of which are confected almost entirely from the *HA*. First the Ninian-poet (*MNE* 358) transforms the opening plea of Arator's blind men (*HA* ii. 222 *da tenebras exire graves, da cernere lucem*) into the climax of the blind woman's prayer to Ninian, giving it added urgency by substituting *fac* for *da*, urging the saint to 'make' rather than 'allow' it to happen. But in the following line Christ's 'ever-loving hand (*HA* ii. 224 *semper amica manus*)' becomes the invisible healing power of the saint. The poet then plunders another section of the *HA* (this time from the baptism of Cornelius (Acts X.17–48)), attributing to Ninian's hand the quality of 'never being slow with its gifts (*MNE* 359 *numquam munera tardat*), if men's hearts are ever faithful'. It is interesting to see the way in which the poet has used his source material. Speed was originally an attribute of faith itself (*HA* i. 953 *indubitata fides*), but whereas Arator uses the verb *tardare* intransitively ('the gifts are never slow'), the Ninian-poet employs it in a transitive sense ('[your hand] is never slow with its gifts'). Both poets, however, see the swift granting of gifts as the reward of those who believe, whether it is the gentile Cornelius, or the blind woman at Ninian's tomb.

Equally interesting, however, are three lines in the opening sentence of the chapter which describe the woman 'whom a night poured over her eyes (*MNE* 344 *nox oculis infusa*) had forbidden to see the light (*MNE* 343 *cernere lucem*), whilst darkness had not steeped with moisture those organs connected to the brain [that is, the eyes] (*MNE* 344 *iuncta cerebro*) when it blackened the

[47] 'And the creator of heaven is recognized as daylight departs. What a great reward that darkness deserved!'

[48] 'What does a sure faith not offer to those who believe? Its gifts are never slow.'

[49] 'For a long time the night which had been poured over her eyes had forbidden her to see the light whilst darkness had not steeped with moisture those organs connected to the brain [i.e. the eyes] when it blackened the very beginnings of her life . . . "O beloved of God, daylight has departed and black darkness taken hold of the two windows beneath my brow . . . Make me leave the burdensome darkness, make me see the light! Your ever-loving hand never delays its gifts as long as men's hearts are constant in their faith."'

[50] 'Christ in his goodness speeds up his gifts for some, in his justice delays them for others.'

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very beginnings of her life (*MNE* 345 *vene*).'[51] Here the poet has combined several phrases and conceits from the same passage of the *HA*: first he uses the cadence *cernere lucem* (*HA* ii. 222), later to be repeated in the blind woman's prayer;[52] next he reverses the contextual meaning of Arator's metonymic *atque reliquit / nox oculos* (*HA* ii. 224–5): in this case, night has descended on her eyes, not left them; the poet's subsequent use of *iuncta cerebro* to mean the eyes presupposes familiarity with Arator's declaration that 'the eyes, being connected to the brain (*iuncta cerebro*), are the most important part [of the body]' (*HA* ii. 232–3), without which the expression is surely inpenetrable; finally the use of *vena* (literally, 'vein' or 'blood vessel') through synecdoche to mean 'life', here to emphasize that the woman has been blind since birth, echoes Arator's use of the word in exactly the same way when describing the allegorical significance of the two blind men, who represent the Jews and the Gentiles: 'the harmful nature of their birth (*venae*) has blinded them' (*HA* ii. 227–8). In addition, the juxtaposition of *chaos* and *fuscans* (*MNE* 344–5) makes it clear that the poet also has in mind, or in his ear, *non potuit fuscare chaos* (*HA* i. 180), where Arator emphasizes that the brightness of Christ could not be dulled by the darkness of hell encountered in the descent into the underworld which followed his crucifixion and preceded his resurrection.[53]

The poet now turns to Arator's version of the blinding of Saul, as the woman, having prostrated herself on the saint's tomb, begins to speak. She claims that 'as daylight departed, black darkness took hold of (*MNE* 353 *decedente die nigre tenuere tenebre*)' her eyes. Again, the poet does not quote Arator directly (*dis**cedente die** quantum mer**uere tenebrae*** (*HA* i. 714)), although the aural reminiscence is quite clear, but the poet has adapted the lines for his own purposes, not least to produce the four examples of the paired alliteration of which Aldhelm was so fond (*MNE* 352–3 ***d**ilecte **d**ei . . . **f**ronte **f**enestras . . . **d**ecedente **d**ie . . . **t**enuere **t**enebre*).[54]

In all three of these examples, whilst it is clear that the Ninian-poet has 'confected' whole sections and in some cases entire lines from the *HA*, the

[51] The exact meaning of lines 344–5 is unclear. I have tentatively proposed that the poet is playing on the double meaning of *tinxit*, which can mean both 'moistened' and 'dyed'. The blind woman's eyes were not moistened with tears (*tinxit non madide*) but dyed with darkness (*chaos tinxit*). MacQueen's translation (*St Nynia*, p. 97: 'without obstructing the fountain springs of the tear duct') is difficult to construe from the Latin. Neither of Strecker's suggested substitutions for *tinxit* (MGH PLAC 4. 3, 956) – *texit* ('cloaked') or *cinxit* ('surrounded') – is particularly helpful.

[52] The Ninian-poet's fondness for (or indifference to) internal repetition is as nothing compared with Aldhelm's. On formulaic repetition in Aldhelm, see Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 102–12.

[53] This is confirmed by the aural reminiscence evident in the identical vowel sequence of *MNE* 344 *nox oculis* and *HA* i. 180 *non potuit*, as well as by the fourth-foot caesura after *chaos*.

[54] See Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 9, 14 and 112–13.

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phrases he has chosen to repeat and the ways in which he has chosen to alter them reveal a deep and intelligent understanding of Arator's poem.

The *MNE* is not the work of someone who is blindly and unthinkingly copying a convenient model. Nor is it the product of a writer unconsciously incorporating his 'remembered reading'. On the contrary, the *MNE* is a poem written by someone who is not just steeped in both the text and meaning of the *HA* but also determined to adapt his source material for his own purposes. Whether the poem was written in Whithorn or York, or written in Whithorn and 'corrected' in York, there can be no doubt that it provides substantial and convincing evidence not just of the knowledge but also of the influence of Arator's verse on at least one poet in Anglo-Saxon England.

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