The star-like soul in the *metra* of the Old English *Boethius*

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ABSTRACT

The central theme in both versions of the Old English *Boethius* is the Christian conversion of the soul. In the prosimetrical version, this theme is highlighted further in the *metra* through the poetic trope of the human soul figured as a star to reinforce the teaching in the prose passages. In the course of the *metra*, the trope increasingly focuses on the inner life of the man engaged in earthly affairs as he strengthens his moral resolve and his divine affiliation through meditation. Repetition and variations of the trope in Metres 5, 10, 20, 22 and 23 represent the soul's shift from despair to understanding.

The presentation of a text profoundly influences its interpretation. Such has been the case with the Old English prosimetrical version of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, whose literary aesthetic had been lost to modern readers until recently.[1] This version, preserved in London, British Library, Cotton

[1] The discrepancies between printed editions and their manuscript context have been the subject of several recent studies. At issue is the absence of the prosimetrical format in printed editions, which has prompted several scholars to call for a new edition. See M. Godden's 'Editing Old English and the Problem of Alfred's Boethius', *The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. D. G. Scragg and P. E. Szarmach (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 163–76; K. S. Kiernan, 'Alfred the Great's Burnt Boethius', *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, ed. G. Bornstein and T. Tinkle (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998), pp. 7–32; Paul E. Szarmach, 'Editions of Alfred: the Wages of Un-Influence', *Early Medieval English Texts and Interpretations: Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg*, ed. E. Treharne and S. Rosser, pp. 135–49, Med. and Renaissance Texts and Stud. 252 (Tempe, AZ, 2002); *idem* 'Meter 20: Context Bereft', *ANQ* 15 (2002), 28–34; and recently *idem*, 'An Apologia for the *Meters of Boethius*', *Naked Wordes in Englissh*, ed. M. Krygier and L. Sikorska, Med. Eng. Mirror 2 (Frankfurt, 2005), 107–36. In response, the new comprehensive edition preserves the format of each manuscript and presents the first complete edition of each one. *The Old English Boethius: an Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's De consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. M. Godden and S. Irvine with a chapter on the *metra* by M. Griffiths and contributions by R. Jayatilaka, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2009). I cite passages primarily from the prosimetrical edition, here noted as CM or CP for meter or prose passage. Passages from the Bodleian edition are cited here as B text; Godden and Irvine's dual edition also includes a critical apparatus that pairs relevant commentary, much of which appears for the first time in print; all citations from the notes are found in vol. II; the editors translate both editions, and I use the translations of the Cotton text throughout, unless otherwise noted. The translations are all from vol. II.

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Otho A. VI, alternates prose and verse, while another version, preserved in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 180, is written entirely in prose, even in its translations of Boethius's verses.[2] Each version presents its own rendition of Boethius's text and reflects a medieval Christian world view.[3] The prose version presents King Alfred's free translation. The prosimetrical version, also probably by the king, is a recasting of the prose, and its poetic passages enlarge upon themes central to Alfred's educational reform programme.[4] Despite the different literary format in each manuscript, editors of Alfred's work have traditionally combined its two different manuscript presentations into a single work.[5] For over three hundred years, every edition consolidated the prose

[2] These are the only extant manuscripts that preserve the entire text. N. R. Ker dated the Cotton manuscript to the mid-tenth century and the Bodley manuscript to around the middle of the first half of the twelfth century in his *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), nos. 167 and 305 respectively. Godden and Irvine give a full description of Bodley 180, where they indicate that it may have been written earlier than the twelfth century; see *Old English Boethius*, pp. 9–17; for a description of the Cotton manuscript, see pp. 18–24 in vol. I of *The Old English Boethius*. For a recent analysis of the Cotton manuscript, see also Irvine's 'Fragments of Boethius: the Reconstruction of the Cotton Manuscript of the Alfredian Text', *ASE* 34 (2005), 169–81.

[3] For the purposes of this study, I accept Alfred's authorship of both the original translation and the subsequent verse metres. The authorship is under debate, especially with regard to the *metra*. Three major areas of argument shape the debate: those that examine language patterns as a mark of the king's signature; those that examine the historical figure of Alfred against the literary production associated with him; and a related branch of argument that identifies contradictory dramatic voices in the work as a sign of authorial intention at odds with that of a king. Of the arguments that investigate language patterns and diction as evidence for or against authorship, see K. Sisam, *Studies in the History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953), 293–7; J. Bately, 'The Alfredian Canon Revisited: One Hundred Years On', *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 107–20, esp. pp. 113–14; *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine, esp. pp 141–8. On the theoretical problems of conventional notions of authorship, see P. E. Szarmach,'An Apologia for the *Meters of Boethius*'. On conflicts between Alfred's authorship and dramatic voice in the *Froferboc*, see Godden, **'**King and Counselor in the Alfredian Boethius', *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. V. Blanton and H. Scheck, Med. and Renaissance Texts and Stud., 224 (Tempe, AZ; Turnhout, 2008), 191–207, esp. 203–6; 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?' *MÆ* 76 (2007), 1–23; 'The Translations of Alfred and His Circle, and the Misappropriations of the Past', H. M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 14 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic at the University of Cambridge, 2004). 'The Player King: Identification and Self-Representation in King Alfred's Writings', *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, edited by T. Reuter (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 135–50.

[4] For an overview of the themes in the Bodleian version that underlie Alfred's other works, see N. Discenza, *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius* (New York, 2005); see also D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), esp. pp. 278–90.

[5] Earlier editions include W. J. Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius 'De Consolatione Philosophiae' Edited from the MSS., with Introduction, Critical Notes and Glossary* (Oxford,

texts from each manuscript into one primary text and isolated the poetry as an appendix to it.

The recent edition by Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine is the first to restore the literary vision of the prosimetrical format that previous editions have obscured for modern readers.[6] The new edition elucidates an important theme in the prosimetrical version that involves the development of the soul, particularly *Mod*'s soul. Its format highlights the pattern of *Wisdom*'s spiritual teaching, which alternates between prose and verse passages as he draws the prisoner *Mod* out of his despair over his earthly suffering. At times *Wisdom* engages him in a dialogue that progresses through a series of arguments in the prose passages. These passages counterbalance the meditative and imagistic quality of *Wisdom*'s verse monologues, which frame the prose passages. The poetry in tandem with the prose cheers the prisoner so that he becomes more receptive to *Wisdom*'s spiritual instruction. *Mod* takes delight in *Wisdom*'s aesthetics of teaching, for at the beginning of Book 3, *Mod* says to *Wisdom*: 'Eala wisdom þu ðe eart sio hehste frofr ealra werigra moda, hu ðu me hæfst afrefredne ægþer ge mid þinre smealican spræce ge mid þinre wynsumnesse þines sanges.' [7] In the drama of the dialogue, *Wisdom*'s prosimetrical style contributes to the tonal shift that defines the work as a *consolatio*, which Alfred describes as *Froferboc*.[8] While the prose dialogue captures *Mod*'s responses to *Wisdom*'s teaching, the poetry often describes the inner life of the mind, at times to signify *Mod*'s own spiritual state and at other points to describe the blessed mind of the wise man or corrupt mind of the tyrant. [9] In particular,

1899); G. P. Krapp, *The Paris Psalter and the Meters of Boethius*, ASPR 5 (New York, 1932); and B. Griffith's revised edition, *Alfred's Metres of Boethius* (Pinner, England, 1994). Godden and Irvine provide a full description of the printed editions and shorter excerpts, beginning with Francis Junius's influential unpublished transcription (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 12): *Old English Boethius* I, 215–25.

[6] See Szarmach's essays, especially 'Editions of Alfred' for fuller discussion of the way in which previous editions have diminished the role of the *metra* in the eyes of its readers. Kiernan observes that editors have ignored the cues in the manuscript that signal the shifts between prose and verse, what he calls 'the most important function of the formatting in this manuscript, for its scribes and contemporary readers'; see 'Alfred the Great's Burnt Boethius', p. 27.

[7] 'O Wisdom, you who are the highest comfort of all weary minds, how you have comforted me both with your penetrating speech and the sweetness of your song.' CP 11.4–7

[8] The term occurs at the end of Book Two in both Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. See the final statements that follow CM 11 and B 21.48. B. Griffiths notes this term in his edition, *Alfred's Metres of Boethius* (Pinner, England, 1994), p. 8. S. Lerer examines ways in which the prisoner's intellectual growth in Boethius's work depends upon the interplay of prose and verse in the Latin text, in his *Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in 'The Consolation of Philosophy'* (Princeton, 1985).

[9] *Mod* voices his despair in Metres 2 and 4. *Wisdom* analyses *Mod*'s consciousness in Metres 3, 5, 12, 23 and 24. In other metrical expansions, *Wisdom* addresses the mind of the wise or corrupt man in Metres 7, 16, 20 and 25.

certain *metra* describe Christian conversion through the poetic trope of the star as a metaphor for the human soul. *Wisdom* repeats the trope in different *metra* to describe various spiritual states of the soul as he lifts *Mod* from despair to spiritual understanding.

The two prefaces of the prosimetrical work capture the relationship between the prose and verse as complementary forms of teaching. To set the tone for the work, a moralizing thesis in the prose preface guides the work: 'ælc mon sceal be his andgites mæðe and be his æmettan sprecan þæt he sprecð and don þæt þæt he deþ'.[10] According to this passage, the reader must exercise the full intelligence of his mind (suggested in *andgites mæðe*). The Cotton text echoes this diction near the close of the work: 'we sculon þeah be þæs andgites mæðe þe he us gifð fandian . . . mon scolde ælc þing ongitan be his andgites mæþe'.[11] These passages frame the entire work and urge the reader to conduct his life wisely. The verse preface counterpart expands upon this statement to emphasize that poetic teaching cultivates the intellect:

Ðus Ælfred us ealdspell reahte,
cyning Westsexna, cræft meldode,
leoðwyrhta list. Him wæs lust micel
ðæt he ðiossum leodum leoð spellode,
monnum myrgen, mislice cwidas,
þy læs ælinge ut adrife
selflicne secg, þonne he swelces lyt
gymð for his gilpe. Ic sceal giet sprecan,
fon on fitte, folccuðne ræd
hæleðum secgean. Hliste se þe wille.[12]

The poetry is intended to lift the mind beyond its self-absorption and brings delight to men (*monnum myrgen*, 5a) as a remedy for despair. The forms of *reccan* (to explain, interpret, or expound, 1b), *spellian* (to discourse, 1b and 4b), *cwidas* (proverbs, sermons, 5b) and *ræd* (counsel, 9b) repeatedly reinforce the notion of teaching through poetic discourse.

[10] See the prose preface in the C text, lines 11–12: 'every man must say what he says and do what he does according to the capacity of his intellect and the amount of time available to him'. I cite the translation by S. Keynes and M. Lapidge for their translation of *be his æmettan*, which suggests not only leisure time but lifetime. S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, (London, 1983), p. 132.

[11] CP 33.3–6, 'We ought to seek according to the measure of understanding that he gives us . . . man should perceive everything according to the measure of his understanding'.

[12] 'Thus, Alfred, king of the West Saxons, told us an old story, made known his ability, his skill as a poet. He had a great desire to proclaim verse to these people, entertainment for men, various speeches, lest tedium drive away the self-regarding man, when he pays little heed to such a matter because of his pride. I must yet speak out, engage in poetry, tell to men well-known advice. Let him listen who will.'

The poetic preface characterizes the didactic role of poetry and anticipates *Wisdom*'s teaching in the *metra*. In several cases, the prose passages that follow the poetry open with a description of the meditative thought of the characters as though the poetry has led them into deeper reflection.[13] The preface, like *Wisdom*'s poetry, sharply contrasts the vacuous poetry of the prisoner in Metre 2 of the prosimetrical *Froferboc*. In this metre, the prisoner laments his loss of counsel and consolation ('rædes and frofre').[14] Unlike the heavy sighs and weeping that characterize his songs, the voice in the poetic preface announces that the poetry will edify the mind with its comprehensive teaching. Variations of the trope of the star-like soul signify the spiritual vitality of the meditative soul to reinforce the Alfredian mandate that each individual has a responsibility to become as wise as he is able.

Further, the *metra* strengthen the Christian tone of the *Froferboc*. The homiletic quality of the poetry has long been noted. Francis Junius observes the superior presentation on the repose of the soul described in Metre 21 over its Bodleian prose counterpart in his 1659 letter to Thomas Marshall.[15] However, concentrated investigation of Christian teaching in the poetry has only recently begun with Paul E. Szarmach's analyses, specifically in his argument that the poems must be understood as 'an imaginative response to the source text', often providing poetic innovations that Christianize the classical world view of the *De consolatione Philosophiae*.[16] Szarmach's observations enlarge upon Pierre-Eric Monnin's classic study of the thematic richness of the *Froferboc* poetry, organized according to motifs.[17] In her discussion of the poetry as part of the Alfredian

[13] In CP 12.1–2, *Wisdom*'s poetry deepens his reflections on his own teaching. In CP 11.1–12, *Mod* exclaims that *Wisdom*'s poetry, in tandem with the prose teaching, has transformed his spiritual state.

[14] CM 2.12

[15] See Letter no. 208 in S. G. van Romburgh's edition '*For My Worthy Freind [sic] Mr. Franciscus Junius': an Edition of the Correspondence of Francis Junius F.F.* (Leiden, 2004), p. 992. I am grateful to the editor for sharing her work with me prior to its publication.

[16] 'An Apologia for the *Meters of Boethius*', p. 122. In other studies Szarmach provides evidence that Alfred synthesized classical and biblical thought. See 'The *Timaeus* in Old English', *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies Presented to Jane Roberts*, ed. C. J. Kay and L. M. Sylvester, Costerus ns 133 (Amsterdam, 2001), 259–67; and 'Meter 20'. Additional studies on the Christian contributions in the *metra* are found in his 'Editions of Alfred'; and 'Alfred, Alcuin, and the Soul', *Manuscript, Narrative, Lexicon: Essays on Literary and Cultural Transmission in Honor of Whitney F. Bolton*, ed. R. Boenig and K. Davis (Lewiston, PA, 2000), 127–48.

[17] In his aesthetic study, Monnin asserts that at times the *metra* contribute poetic motifs to the prosimetrum *Froferboc*. 'The Making of the Old English "Meters of Boethius"': Studies in Traditional Art and Aesthetics', (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1975); and 'Poetic Improvements in the Old English Meters'. See also *Alfred's Metres of Boethius*, ed. Griffiths, pp. 34–7. Other studies that treat the thematic material of the *metra* include Irvine's 'Ulysses and Circe in King Alfred's *Boethius*: a Classical Myth Transformed', *Studies in English Language and Literature: Doubt Wisely; Papers in honour of E. G. Stanley*, ed. M. J. Toswell and E.

literary corpus, Miranda Wilcox analyses Alfred's synthesis of Boethian and Gregorian world views.[18] These studies examine classical and Christian influences at work in the *Froferboc* poetry and lay the foundation for analysis of the Alfredian poetics of conversion in an idiom that merges the transcendent wisdom of classical thought with Christian obedience to divine will.

One example of a classical image that conveys Christian significance in the *Froferboc* poetry is that of the soul figured as a star. Boethius refers to the metaphor twice in the *De consolatione Philosophiae*, each time to allude to the transcendent soul in classical literature. Through repetition and variation, the image gathers in rhetorical force to emphasize Christian teaching on the soul in its flawed and blessed states in the *Froferboc* poetry.[19] According to Bede, one use of a poetic trope is to provide necessary significance to the text.[20] The repeated metaphor on the soul in the *Froferboc* poetry imitates the rhetorical patterning of poetic echoes in the *De consolatione Philosophiae*, as examined by Seth Lerer.[21] In the *Froferboc metra*, the trope provides layers of meaning to the text through poetic variations, which increasingly focus on the inner life of the mind. These repetitions of the metaphor correspond to Calvin Kendall's statement that a trope is used 'not only to enhance the beauty of a work but also to reveal an additional layer or layers of meaning'.[22] Metrical expansions on the soul as a star represent spiritual wisdom that illuminates the soul, as described in Metre 5. *Wisdom* emphasizes that the soul fulfills its divine purpose by following divine law in a description of the community of Christian souls in Metre 10. In Metre

M. Tyler (London, Routledge, 1996), pp. 387–401; and Szarmach, 'Alfred's Nero', *Sources of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs, and T. N. Hall (Toronto, 2007), pp. 147–67. Analyses of poetic themes or motifs have emerged from the larger concentration of studies that focus primarily on the technical merits of the poetry. These are cited in *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine I.

[18] She asserts that Alfred adapted Gregory's language that distinguishes between the inner life of the mind and human experience in the world and melded his ideas with the Boethian poetic focus on the vitality of the mind. See 'Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors: *Eagan Modes* and *Scip Modes*', *ASE* 35 (2006), 179–217, esp. 201.

[19] Godden and Irvine identify forms of rhetorical echoes in the consistent patterns of alliteration and envelopes in their note to Metre 2 in the Commentary chapter: *Old English Boethius* II, 499. See M. Griffith's study of prosody: *ibid.* I, 93–4. For studies that discuss poetic formulae in the *metra* adapted from oral-formulaic tradition, see L. Benson, 'The Literary Character of Anglo-Saxon Formulaic Poetry', *PMLA* 81 (1966): 334–41, esp. 336–9.

[20] 'Solet iterum tropica locutio repperiri, quae fit translata dictione a propria significatione ad non propriam significationem necessitatis aut ornatus gratia'('A trope is an expression which has been transferred from its proper meaning and understood in a sense which it does not have, either from necessity or for the sake of ornamentation'). The translation is by C. Kendall in his *Bede: Liber II de arte metrica et de schematibus et tropis/the Art of Poetry and Rhetoric*, Bibliotheca Germanica ns 2, ed. Hans Fix (Saarbrücken, 1991), 168–9.

[21] See his *Boethius and Dialogue*, esp. pp. 166–202

[22] Kendall, *Bede*, p. 24.

20, he broadens the metaphor to signify the fallible human soul in addition to the blessed one. Through this trope, *Wisdom* pairs the transcendent soul with the luminescence of the stars and the unsteady thoughts of the human soul with their rotation. In this metre, *Wisdom* teaches that the human soul is weak and unstable in its thought, yet by grace it may transcend the temporal realm when it follows the divine laws that govern it. In Metre 22, *Wisdom* urges *Mod* to cultivate his intellect so that he may respond to others with moral resolve guided by his understanding of the virtues of justice and prudence. *Wisdom*'s teaching on the star-like soul culminates in a prose passage near the close of the work to describe the proper role of the man with spiritual consciousness engaged in earthly affairs. This lesson reinforces *Wisdom*'s pervasive teaching that *Mod* has an obligation to benefit society with his wisdom.[23]

THE DIVINE PURPOSE OF THE SOUL

The sequence of passages in Metre 4, Prose 4, and Metre 5 presents the core of the work's teaching on the soul. In Metre 4, *Mod* despairs over mankind's ignorance and blatant violation of natural law. *Mod* asks, how can God allow fate to fulfil the desires of wicked men? His question is so critical to the narrative that it is repeated rhetorically in an envelope pattern that frames his lament over social injustice:

> Hwi ðu, ece God, æfre wolde
> þæt sio wyrd on gewill wendan sceolde
> yflum monnum ealles swa swiðe?
> Hio ful oft dereð unscyldegum.
> Sittað yfele men giond eorðricu
> on heahsetlum, halige þriccað
> under heora fotum; firum uncuð
> hwi sio wyrd swa wo wendan sceolde.[24]

In *Mod*'s view, God controls the perfect execution of fate in the natural realm, yet yields control over fate to tyrants who execute it according to

[23] CP 5.101–3. 'Swa ic wolde la mod þæt þu þe fore up to us gif þe lyste, on þa gerad þe þu eft mid us þa eorðan secan wille for godra manna þearfe' ('So I would wish, Mind, that you came up to us if you wished, on the condition that you afterwards with us are willing to seek the earth for the good of the people').

[24] CM 4.33–40. 'Why, eternal God, did you ever want fate to turn quite so completely according to the will of evil men? It very often harms the innocent. Throughout earthly kingdoms evil men sit on high thrones, trample the holy under their feet; men do not know why fate should turn so wrongly.' In her discussion of the sources for envelope patterns in the *Froferboc metra*, C. Stévanovitch observes that this question, taken from its Bodleian prose counterpart, forms the basis for the envelope pattern in Metre 4; see her study, 'Envelope Patterns in Translation: the Old English *Metres of Boethius*', *The Medieval Translator* 6 (1998), 101–13, esp. 109–10.

their personal ambitions. *Mod* complains that the best men suffer because mankind is not subject to divine laws as all the rest of nature is. In the prose passage that follows, *Wisdom* observes that *Mod* has become so preoccupied with earthly cares that he has forgotten his essential affiliation with the divine. *Wisdom* argues that *Mod* must become introspective to understand his spiritual kinship with 'the heavenly Jerusalem', whose dwelling place is within his intellect.[25] *Wisdom* indicates that he can lead *Mod* back to his divine home land, for he states that his teaching is itself the divine country of the soul and thus suggests that *Mod*'s process of realization is his journey back to his divine origin.[26] At the close of the passage, *Wisdom* thins *Mod*'s despondent thoughts, described as mists, with his divine teaching.[27] From this point on, *Wisdom* cultivates *Mod*'s understanding of his divine identity to prepare his soul for its eternal repose.

In Metre 5, *Wisdom* elaborates upon the imagery of *Mod*'s consciousness, this time from within *Mod*'s consciousness. *Wisdom* describes Mod's mental state as a landscape covered in clouds that block his vision of the divine. At the close of the passage, *Wisdom* elaborates upon the teaching that *Mod* in his despair is unaware of the divine presence that resides within him:

> forðæm þa twegen tregan teoð tosomne
> wið þæt mod foran mistes dwoleman,
> þæt hit seo ece ne mot innan geondscinan
> sunne for ðæm sweartum mistum, ær ðæm hi
> geswiðrad weorðen.[28]

These closing lines enlarge upon *Wisdom*'s argument that *Mod* may understand his relationship to the divine if he cultivates his intellect. *Wisdom* draws a tight link between the sun that shines in the natural world and the divine sun that illuminates consciousness to emphasize to *Mod* that the divine is present in both human and natural realms. The passage is an improvisation on the source text, for these verses elaborate upon the divine light introduced in the opening lines of *De consolatione Philosophiae* Im7. The poetic expansions on the sun as a signifier of the divine are not unique to the Alfredian poetry, for manuscript glosses in medieval commentaries in circulation in the ninth century replaced

[25] CP 4.13–9.
[26] CP 4.5–6.
[27] CP 4.95–6.
[28] CM 5.40–6: 'for those two griefs together pull the chaos of mist in front of the mind so that the eternal sun cannot shine into it because of the dark mists, until they are cleared away'. These lines are an expansion of the final lines of the corresponding prose from B 6.16–17: 'forðam þæt mod siemle bið gebunden mid gedrefednesse þær þissa twega yfela auðer ricsað', as indicated in *Old English Boethius*, ed. Godden and Irvine; see the Commentary chapter, p. 503.

the concept of the classical world soul with the sun, as indicated by Joseph Wittig.[29]

The Boethian poetic imagery of the divine sun forms a significant share of the poetic language in the *Froferboc metra*. This imagery is expressed vividly in *De consolatione Philosophiae* Vm2.12, where Boethius describes the divine mind that vitalizes creation with a single stroke of thought ('Uno mentis cernit in ictu') through the image of a sun ray illuminating the cosmos. This poem precedes the prose lesson on the mind's receptivity to divine light in Lady Philosophy's argument that humankind is freer when it directs itself to the divine rather than to earthly things. When the eye of the human mind turns away from the divine, the mind then enslaves itself. The combined teaching of poetry and prose emphasizes that the divine gaze is ever present within the mind, yet the eye of the mind chooses to look upon the divine. In the *Froferboc* poetry, the imagery of the divine sun is a poetic variation on the concept of the divine as the highest good that vitalizes all creation in *Wisdom*'s prose teaching. In the following passages, *Wisdom* employs the trope to signify the intellect that reflects the light of the divine.

THE CHRISTIAN SOCIETY OF SOULS AS STARS

In *Mod*'s despair over his earthly losses, he has forgotten the eternal value of virtue and wisdom. He laments that honorable men do not receive the renown they deserve for their good works because tyrants obscure their 'bright virtues'.[30] Likewise, in Prose 9 *Mod* argues for his right use of earthly power when he directed his ambitions solely to rule with virtue. *Wisdom* interprets *Mod*'s lament as a sign of vanity, for he believes that *Mod* wants temporal recognition and fame. He scolds *Mod* as a representative of all men who neglect divine virtue in their pursuit of worldly honor: ' ge. . . forsioð þa cræftas eoweres ingeðonces and eowres andgietes and eowre gesceadwisnesse . . .'. [31] In both lessons, *Wisdom* contrasts the insubstantiality of earthly reputation with the inviolate and eternal quality of the intellect and its virtues.

One of *Wisdom*'s recurrent metaphors to describe the soul receiving wisdom from the divine is that of a star that reflects the light of the sun. In one prose passage that echoes in the verses, *Wisdom* describes the divine source that distributes good in terms of the sun that brightens the stars: 'Þeah he nu sie

[29] In his study of glosses to *Consolatio* III.m9, he notes that the image predates the Remigian school. '"Remigian" Glosses on Boethius's *Consolatione Philosophiae*', *Source of Wisdom: Old English and Early Medieval Latin Studies in honour of Thomas D. Hill*, ed. C. D. Wright, F. M. Biggs and T. N. Hall (Toronto, 2007), pp. 168–200, esp. 175.

[30] CM 4.45

[31] 'You . . . despise the skills of your inner mind and your understanding and your reason'. CP 9.130–1.

se fruma and se staðol ealra goodra and ealra gooda, þeah is mænig good þe of him cymð, swa swa ealle steorran weorðað onlihte and gebirhte of þære sunnan, sume þeah beorhtor, sume unbeorhtor.'[32] In Metre 10, *Wisdom* describes the wise souls in terms of stars that follow in the orbit of the divine sun. This imagery reinforces *Wisdom*'s earlier description of the heavenly, Christian society in Prose 4, discussed above. The verse is a poetic reflection on the soul's participation in the divine through its knowledge of the virtues Christ has given it. Peter Clemoes describes the role of virtues as 'man's intellectual bond with wisdom' by which the soul participates 'in the cosmic *onweald* [power] of Christ . . .'.[33] The prose translation that corresponds to Metre 10 introduces the imagery of the sun paired with the virtues. In this brief prose passage, *Wisdom* states that virtue cannot be taken from the wise man any more easily than one can turn the sun from its course: '. . . ne mæg næfre his cræft losigan ne hine mon ne mæg þonne eð on him geniman ðe mon mæg þa sunnan awendan of hiere stede'.[34]

This comparison forms the root of the poetic variation in Metre 10, which indicates that Christ grants virtues to the soul. Relevant poetic innovations are italicized:

> . . . ængum ne mæg eorðbuendra
> se cræft losian *þe him Crist onlænð.*
> Ne mæg mon æfre þy eð ænne wræccan
> his cræftes beniman, þe mon oncerran mæg
> sunnan onswifan *and þisne swiftan rodor*
> of his rihtryne *rinca ænig.*[35]

The imagery of Christ bestowing virtues to the soul in the verse *þe him Crist onlænð* (37b) is a poetic variation on an earlier b-verse formula from Metre 8 (*þe him Crist gesceop*, 17b). This line states that men are blessed when they fulfil the divine nature 'which Christ has created in them'. Finally, the verse expansion *þisne swiftan rodor* ('this swiftly moving firmament') recalls a network of

[32] CP 20.102–7. 'Though he is now the source and foundation of all good men and all goods, yet there is many a good that comes from him, just as all stars are illuminated and brightened from the sun, some though brighter, others less bright.'

[33] See his study, 'King Alfred's Debt to Vernacular Poetry: the Case for *Ellen* and *Cræft*', *Words, Texts, and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Korhammer (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 213–38, esp. pp. 228 and 238. For the wealth of meanings attached to the term 'cræft', see N. Discenza, 'Power, Skill, and Virtue in the Old English Boethius', *ASE* 26 (1997): 81–108.

[34] B 19.18–20. '. . . the craftsman can never lose his skill nor can it easily be taken from him any more than the sun can be moved from its place'.

[35] CM 10.36–41: '. . . the skill which *Christ grants to any earth-dweller* cannot be lost by him. Nor can anyone ever deprive a wretch of his skill more easily than any man can divert and turn aside the sun *and this swift firmament from its correct course.*'

meanings associated with the soul as a star. The phrase compares virtues firmly rooted in the soul to the course of the fixed stars turning in guided, unified movement, suggestive of the unity among the heavenly society. This passage in Metre 10, however, presents the earthly society that follows divine law through its understanding of the virtues.

The next reference to the community of souls as stars occurs in Metre 20. In this passage, *Wisdom* describes the blessed souls as they make their return to the divine homeland. The imagery is a recasting of the description of the human souls in the corresponding source text, Boethius's visionary meter, 'O qui perpetua' (IIIm9). Boethius describes the souls as stars that move within the cosmic design. In this poem, the divine intellect emanates through the world soul to drive all life into being as it flows through the lesser, transcendent souls. As part of her famous hymn, Lady Philosophy presents a vision of the transcendent souls who return to their divine origin in shining chariots:

> Tu causis animas paribus vitasque minores
> provehis et levibus sublimes curribus aptans
> in caelum terramque seris, quas lege benigna
> ad te conversas reduci facis igne reverti.[36]

Listening to Lady Philosophy's hymn, the prisoner turns his mind to the divine and elevates his thought as he begins to reflect on the eternal life of his soul.

Like its Latin model, Metre 20 is pivotal to the entire *Froferboc* for its elaborate descriptions of divine power ordering creation. The verses that correspond most closely to the Boethian verse above represent the soul in its everlasting perfection. In this version, the ethereal souls represent the blessed society:

> Hwæt, þu, ece God, eard forgeafe
> saulum on heofonum, selest weorðlica
> ginfæsta gifa, God ælmihtig,
> be geearnunga anra gehwelcre.[37]

The poetry describes the worthy soul's metaphysical state of transcendence when it shines with the merit it achieved during its earthly existence. In Metre 20, the Boethian classical description of divine law is recast into God's grace operating through the laws that order the universe. Boethius's phrase *lege*

[36] IIIm9.18–21:'In like manner, You create souls and lesser living forms and, adapting them to their high flight in swift chariots, You scatter them through the earth and sky. And when they have turned toward You, by your gracious law, You call them back like leaping flames.' I am using R. Green's translation for this passage and the remaining passages that are taken from Boethius's work. Green, *The Consolation of Philosophy* (New York, 1962).

[37] CM 20.225–8: 'Oh, eternal God, you gave a territory to the souls in heaven and, almighty God, you give valuable and glorious gifts to each according to his merit.'

benigna resonates in *ginfæsta gifa* to tighten the relationship between grace and divine law. The poetry inserts *ginfæsta* into the prose phrase *weorðlice gifa* to form two consecutive d-verses to celebrate divine grace (*selest weorðlica ginfæsta gifa*). The reinterpretation of classical law as divine grace in this verse is not unique, for Boethius's phrase *lege benigna* is elsewhere glossed as God's mercy ('misericordia').[38] This poetic recasting of divine law into a gift to guide humankind is representative of the larger poetic teaching that grace aids the mind in the poetic expansions in the *metra*.

In the next passage, *Wisdom* describes divine grace as the splendour of the heavenly society that guides men to God:

> Ealle hi scinað ðurh þa sciran neaht
> hadre on heofonum, na hwæðre þeah
> ealle efenbeorhte. Hwæt, we oft gesioð
> hadrum nihtum þætte heofonsteorran
> ealle efenbeorhte æfre ne scinað.[39]

The verse innovations here emphasize the splendour of the divine souls through such descriptions as *þa sciran neaht* (229b), *hadre on heofonum* (230a) and *hadrum nihtum* (232a).[40] These verse expansions are significant because their imagery of divine light parallels the physical firmament that encompasses the world. As Monnin notes in his examination of poetic innovations in the *Froferboc* verses, the representation of the soul in Metre 20 captures 'the moment of union . . . between the divine and created worlds'.[41] Monnin points out the spiritually vital force of the blessed souls when he applies this imagery to the earlier Alfredian description of the firmament as the nutritive outer shell that encompasses the yolk of the earth. This imagery parallels the medieval poetic commonplace of the saints figured as stars reflecting God's light as spiritual guides for men. As Bernard Huppé explains, such descriptions are pervasive in ecclesiastical and scientific texts.[42] Isidore of Seville describes the allegorical significance of the stars: 'Sicut enim omnis stellae a sole inluminantur, ita et sancti a Christo gloria

[38] Cambridge, University Library, Kk.3.21 (Abingdon, s. x^{ex}–xi^{in}), 50r. The commentary glosses 'lege benigna' as 'tua misericordia'. The manuscript and its glosses are described by R. I. Page, 'Recent Work on Old English Glosses: the Case of Boethius with Two Figures', *Mittelalterliche volkssprachige Glossen: Internationale Fachkonferenz des Zentrums für Mittelalterstudien der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg 2. bis 4. August 1999*, ed. R. Bergmann, E. Glaser and C. Moulin-Fankhänel (Heidelberg, 2001), pp. 217–42, esp. pp. 219–28.

[39] CM 20.229–33; 'They all shine brightly in heaven through the clear night, but yet not all equally bright. Truly we often see on clear nights that the heavenly stars do not always shine equally bright.'

[40] Monnin, 'Poetic Improvements', p. 351.

[41] *Ibid.* The remaining observations by Monnin are found in this passage.

[42] Huppé cites pertinent biblical commentaries by Bede and Cassiodorus in his study, pp. 28–61.

caelestis regni clarificantur.'[43] As John Brinegar shows, Isidore of Seville's *De natura rerum liber* was a principle source for the *Froferboc*.[44]

In the poetic passages discussed above, imagery of the soul as a star represents the community of Christian souls that shine with the merit they have achieved through obedience to divine will. In addition to its resonances with the souls in Metre10 and the transcendent souls in *De consolatione Philosophiae* IIIm9, the description of virtuous souls in Metre 20 also recalls Boethius's other classical reference to the soul as a star at the end of *De consolatione Philosophiae* Book IV. In this passage, Lady Philosophy urges the prisoner to see his death as a victory over earthly hardship and points to the apotheosis of Hercules. Lady Philosophy admonishes the prisoner to follow in his heroic steps:

> Ite nunc, fortes, ubi celsa magni
> ducit exempli via . . . Superata tellus
> sidera donat.[45]

In the corresponding passage in the *Froferboc*, *Wisdom* echoes the teaching on fortitude but sets it within a Christian context when he urges the prisoner to follow in the path of exemplary wise men who dwell eternally beyond the stars: 'Forðæm hi wuniað nu ofer þæm tunglum on ecre eadignesse for hiora godum weorcum.'[46]

THE FALLEN SOUL

References to the soul as a star in the *Froferboc metra* not only address the transcendent soul but also the flawed human soul. The poetic innovations on the star as a metaphor for the soul in Metre 20 present the Alfredian paradigm of the Christian soul in divine and earthly states. In contrast to the firmament of Christian souls described above (lines 225–31), in earlier verses *Wisdom* describes the flawed human souls as they move within the created cosmos (176–210a) and then provides an interior examination of the varying perspectives of consciousness in the fallen human soul (210b–224). The treatment of the soul in Metre 20 begins with an elaborate conceit on the three-fold human

[43] 'For just as all stars are illuminated by the sun, so the royal saints are made illustrious by the glory of heaven from Christ . . . '. *De natura rerum liber*, ed. G. Becker (Amsterdam, 1967), ch. 24, sect. 2.

[44] ' "Books Most Necessary": the Literary and Cultural Contexts of Alfred's *Boethius*', (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000), pp. 18–22.

[45] IVm7.32–3 and 34–5. 'Go now, strong men! Follow the high road of great example. . .When you overcome the earth, the stars will be yours.'

[46] 'Therefore they live now above the stars in eternal bliss because of their good works.' CP 30.71–2.

soul that details the changeability of the soul's imperfect consciousness.[47] The lines present the perceptions of the soul as it relates itself to divine and earthly realms:

Hwæt, þu ða saule, sigora waldend,
þeoda þrymcyning, þus gesceope,
þæt hio hwearfode on hire selfre
hire utan ymb, swa swa eal deð
rineswifte rodor, recene ymbscriðeð
dogora gehwilc drihtnes meahtum
þisne middangeard. Swa deð monnes saul,
hweole gelicost, hwærfeð ymbe hy selfe,
oft smeagende ymb ðas eorðlican
drihtnes gesceafta dagum and nihtum.
Hwilum [ymb] hi selfe secende smeað,
hwilum eft smeað ymb þone ecan God,
sceppend hire. Scriðende færð
hweole gelicost, hwærfð ymb hi selfe.
Þonne hio ymb hire scyppend mid gescead smeað,
hio bið up ahæfen ofer hi selfe,
ac hio bið eallunga an hire selfre,
þonne hio ymb hi selfe secende smeað;
hio bið swiðe fior hire selfre beneoðan,
þonne hio þæs lænan lufað and wundrað
eorðlicu þing ofer ecne ræd.[48]

This passage exemplifies the tension between innate love that lifts the soul toward the divine, and attraction to earthly things that pulls the soul away from its spiritual meditation.

[47] The three-fold human soul as a microcosm for the structure of the world soul has been the subject of much study. Several studies refer to Alcuin's treatise on the soul, which draws heavily on Augustine's *De Trinitate* among other works. Alcuin's passage is cited in the Commentary chapter in Godden and Irvine: *Old English Boethius* II, 385. See also Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), 271–98; and Szarmach, 'Alfred, Alcuin, and the Soul'.

[48] 'Oh, ruler of victories, mighty king of nations, you so created the soul to turn on itself, round about itself, just as the whole swiftly moving firmament does, quickly moves around this world each day by the lord's powers. Thus does a man's soul, very like a wheel, revolves about itself, often reflecting on these earthly creatures of the lord by day and night. Sometimes as it seeks, it thinks about itself, sometimes again it thinks about the eternal God, its creator. In moving it travels very like a wheel, turning about itself. When it thinks with proper understanding about its creator, it is raised above itself, but it is entirely in itself when as it seeks it thinks about itself; it is very far beneath itself when it loves and marvels at these transitory earthly things over eternal salvation'.

This reference to the three-fold soul as a star is unique to both versions of the *Froferboc*. It is distinct from the source text because it does not refer only to the transcendent souls, but to the flawed human souls. Nor does this passage parallel the humanized three-fold soul in the commentary tradition, for these texts describe the three-fold human soul as a flawed microcosm of the world soul.[49] As a result, Alfred synthesizes the souls that ride in chariots as stars from Boethius's text with the three-fold structure of the world soul, as discussed by Szarmach.[50] Further, Alfred's allusion to the flawed human soul as a star recalls classical descriptions of the star-like soul in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*, sources that may have informed Boethius's work, as indicated by Friedrich Klingner and Joachim Gruber.[51] These classical texts describe the transcendent soul as well as the three-fold human soul that rides in a star, represented as a chariot. While Alfred does not refer to the *Timeaus*, Remigian commentators draw upon passages from Chalcidius's translation of the *Timeaus*, as shown by Diane K. Bolton.[52] Although there is no direct evidence that Alfred would have known of these works, his treatment of the three-fold soul as a star resonates with them and invites speculation. For example, Ludwig Helbig suggests in his analysis of the *Froferboc* that the Alfredian three-fold soul derives from the metaphor of the stellar chariot of the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*.[53]

In his adaptation of the metaphor of the soul as a star, Alfred deepens the Christian significance of the trope of the human soul to emphasize the unsteady nature of thought in the fallen soul. *Wisdom* elaborates upon the shifting perspectives of the mind through the imagery of the rotating star to urge *Mod* to strengthen his meditation on the divine. The reference to the human soul riding in a chariot occurs elsewhere in the *Froferboc*. In a later passage, *Wisdom* alludes to the three-fold human soul that rides in a chariot to signify the mind guided by its intellect. To prepare *Mod* to allow his intellect to be his guide, *Wisdom* trains *Mod* to meditate upon the divine in the lesson that leads

[49] For a description of the commentaries, see Wittig, '"Remigian" Glossrs', esp. pp. 173–83 and Brinegar, '"Books Most Necessary"',pp. 25–6. The interpretive glosses are printed in Godden and Irvine as a note to B 33.225–32. See the Commentary chapter: *Old English Boethius* II, 385.

[50] 'Alfred, Alcuin, and the Soul', p. 131.

[51] Joachim Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius de consolatione Philosophiae*, Text und Kommentare 9, ed. O. Gigon, F. Heinimann and O. Luschnat (Berlin, 1978), pp. 284–5; F. Klinger, *De Boethii consolatione philosphiae* (Zurich, 1966), pp. 47–8. The horse-driven chariot of men and gods is described most fully in the *Phaedrus*. See C. J. Rowe, *Plato: Phaedrus* (Warminster, England, 1986), sect. 246.

[52] 'The Study of the *Consolation of Philosophy* in Anglo-Saxon England', Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge 44 (1977): 33–78, esp. 41–2.

[53] See his study, 'Altenglische Schlüsselbegriffe in den Augustinus- und Boethius-Bearbeitungen Alfreds des Grossen', (PhD dissertation, Frankfurt am Main, 1960), p. 61.

into this chapter. He describes the highest spiritual state of the mind as a star that reflects the light of the divine in this lesson on contemplation in Metre 22.

In Metre 22, *Wisdom* explains to *Mod* how he must cultivate his intellect to guide his thought, for his intellect is the divine nature of his soul which joins him to the divine community. In the poetic description, divine splendour illuminates the mind to signify wisdom that vitalizes it. At the pinnacle of its understanding, the wise mind, trained in sound doctrine recognizes justice ('rihtwisnes' in 48a) and prudence or discretion ('geradscip' in 48b), the knowledge of both divine and human things. As a result, the concept of virtue in the *Froferboc* replaces Boethius's focus on truth itself as the highest form of knowledge.

Poetic descriptions of light shining in the meditative soul is a motif in the *De consolatione Philosophiae* that reaches its fullest realization in Book IIIm11, the model for *Froferboc* Metre 22. The Latin poem is a visionary meditation on human intelligence, based on the Platonic premise that the mind possesses an inherent understanding of truth, which it recognizes through contemplation. As described in the first eight lines of the metre, truth illuminates consciousness through the image of splendour shining through treasure:

> Quisquis profunda mente vestigat verum
> cupitque nullis ille deviis falli
> in se revolvat intimi lucem visus
> longosque in orbem cogat inflectens motus
> animumque doceat quicquid extra molitur
> suis retrusum possidere thesauris;
> dudum quod atra texit erroris nubes
> lucebit ipso perspicacius Phoebo.[54]

In Metre 22, *Wisdom* states that the individual who wishes to discern virtue must teach his mind to direct his inner thought to the divine before he introduces the imagery of light. Significant poetic innovations are italicized below:

> Sece þæt siððan on his sefan innan
> and forlæte an, swa he oftost mæge,
> [ælcne] ymbhogan ðy him unnet sie,
> and gesamnige, swa he swiðost mæge,
> ealle to þæm anum *his ingeðonc*;[55]

[54] 'The man who searches deeply for the truth, and wishes to avoid being deceived by false leads, must turn the light of his inner vision upon himself. He must guide his soaring thoughts back again and teach his spirit that it possesses hidden among its own treasures whatever it seeks outside itself. Then all that was hidden by the dark cloud of error will shine more clearly than Phoebus.'

[55] CM 22.8–12: 'Let him seek it then within his mind and abandon as often as he can each anxiety which is useless for him, and let him gather his thoughts as best as he can wholly on that one thing [his inner thought].'

The term *ingeðonc* (inner thought) represents the unification of all thought directed toward 'that one', as *anum* refers to the unity of consciousness with God. The poetic diction recalls *Wisdom*'s teaching in the prose passage immediately preceding Metre 22 when he encourages *Mod* to imagine that all forms of good are unified in the highest good, as though they were cast into a single ingot of divine good: 'swelce hi sien to anum wegge gegoten . . . þonne þa good ealle on annesse bioð, and sio annes bið on ecnesse'.[56] In Metre 22, *Wisdom* applies this image to the intellect as it merges with the divine when the individual trains his inner thought entirely upon the divine. *Ingeðonc* is the counterpart to Boethius's description of meditative thought described in *profunda mente* in line 1 and its variation as the light of innermost vision (*intimi lucem visus*) in line 3. Both Latin and Anglo-Saxon poems describe the individual directing his thought to the divine, as one turns his thought inward in the movement of introspection and the other gathers his thoughts into one thought.[57] *Ingeðonc*, the inner light of the mind, refers to the sight of the mind, elsewhere glossed as *aciem mentis*, by which the thinker examines his thought.[58]

The passage culminates in the individual's awareness of the divine, which shines within his consciousness:

and [he] eac ongit	*his ingeþonc*
leohtre and berhtre	þonne se leoma sie
sunnan on sumera,	*þonne swegles gim*,
hador heofontungol,	*hlutrost scineð*.[59]

Similar to its Boethian model, Metre 22 presents a comparison of the brilliance of thought to a light that outshines the sun. The poetic variations on inner thought as the sun which shines as the 'gem of the sky' and 'the clear heaven star' merge the human soul with the divine. While the heaven star refers to the divine sun, the term is a verbal echo of other references to the star-like soul; thus the term at once recalls the divine and the human to emphasize the union

[56] CP 21.14–15 and 17–18: 'as if they were poured into one mass . . . when all the goods are in unity, and the unity is in eternity'. This echoes *Wisdom*'s term 'ane' to refer to the divine that encompasses 'true joys' in CM 12.32a. Further, the unity of goodness is discussed throughout CP 12 and 19.

[57] In their discussion of Bodleian Chapter 35.6 the prose counterpart to Metre 22, Godden and Irvine note the similar phrasing and sense of the descriptions of introspective thought in 'in orbem cogat' and 'gegæderige to þam anum' (the prose equivalent of 'gesamnige . . .ealle to þæm anum'). See the Commentary chapter: *Old English Boethius*, II, 402.

[58] Cambridge University Library, Kk.3.21, 57v. 'Aciem mentis' is written above 'intimi lucem visus'.

[59] CM 22.21–4. 'And he also perceives his thoughts to be lighter and brighter than is the radiance of the sun in summer, *when the jewel of the sky, clear heavenly star, shines most brightly*.'

of the blessed mind with the divine. The poetic diction provides variations on the Boethian line *lucebit ipso perspicacius Phoebo* (8). These references to the sun combine with Boethius's image of the treasure hidden in the mind to signify created wisdom in the soul that shines in the image of the divine, suggested in *suis retrusum possidere thesauris* (6). The imagery of reflected light corresponds to *Wisdom*'s teaching that *Mod* may come to better understanding of the true good if he can discern the likeness of the divine good in earthly things.[60] As a signifier for the mind's understanding, the image of reflected light may also apply to the speaker *Wisdom*, who guides *Mod*'s consciousness yet describes himself as a created being.[61]

In the final lines of Metre 22, seminal knowledge flourishes in sacred memory (*runcofa*), the Anglo-Saxon version of Platonic memory:

	he mæg siððan
on his runcofan	rihtwisnesse
findan on ferhte. . .[62]	

The term *runcofa* (*run* as mystery; *cofa* as chamber) appears nowhere else in the Anglo-Saxon literary corpus. This term transforms the concept of memory from a familiar force within the individual into an unknown and sacred presence. In his study of the term *run* and its related forms, Hans-Georg Goetz cites several instances in which the term signifies divine revelation through Scripture.[63]

The final poetic allusion that forges a link between the human intellect and its participation in the divine realm is described in Metre 23. In the poetic innovations italicized below, divine teaching leads the inner thought of the pious soul on a pathway beyond the stars to its divine homeland. The man is happy

	gif he gesion mæge
þone hlutrestan	heofontorhtan stream,
æðelne æwelm	ælces goodes,
and of him selfum	ðone sweartan mist,
modes þiostro,	mæg aweorpan.
We sculon ðeah gita	*mid Godes fylste*

[60] CP 19.3–5: 'gif þu nu sweotole gecnawan meaht þa anlicnesse þære soðan gesælðe, þonne is siððan ðearf þæt ic þe hi selfe getæce' ('if you now can clearly recognize the likenesses of the true felicity, then it is necessary next that I show you the thing itself') .

[61] CP 5.91–2: 'ic ne mot mid minum þeowum minra þenunga fulgangan swa ealla oþra gesceafta moton' ('I am not allowed to perform my duties with my servants as all other created things are allowed').

[62] CM 22. 57b–60a: 'Then he can find wisdom in his inner heart . . .'

[63] 'Geschichte des Wortes run (rune) und seiner Ableitungen im Englischen' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Göttingen, 1964). Goetz discusses the significance of the term in Old English literature and in its use as a definition for 'mysterium' in Old English glosses.

ealdum and leasum ðinne *ingeðonc*
betan bispellum, þæt ðu ðe bet mæge
aredian to rodorum rihte stige
on ðone ecan eard ussa saula.[64]

Only the poetry describes the mind making its path to the divine through its intellect, aided by grace.[65] The poetic verses *þone hlutrestan heofontorhtan stream* (3) integrate the imagery of the bright stars that signify the heavenly society in Metres 20 (*hadrum nihtum þætte heofonsteorran*, 232) and 22 (*hador heofontungol hlutrost scineð*, 24) as a sign of the divine in the mind. These poetic innovations echo in the phrase *aredian to rodorum* in Metre 23 to signify the soul finding its way across the firmament to its divine homeland. The poetic resonances suggest that the human meditative soul participates with the divine souls of heaven to signify its conversion and anticipates the soul's life of everlasting blessedness in the divine society. The idea that contemplation conveys the soul to the heavens occurs in a gloss to Boethius's description of the star-like souls returning to the divine in IIIm9.18–19, discussed above. The commentator states that the chariots not only signify the stars that bear the angels but also signify the contemplative state of mind that elevates the human soul: 'inmittit angelos in caelum, homines in terram aptans sublimes animas levioribus curribus id est subtili contemplatione ad consideranda caelestia'.[66]

The alternation between the star as a receiver of light with the sun as the source of light poetically signifies the mind in union with the divine when its wisdom invigorates the mind. In Prose 14, *Wisdom* indicates that the trinity of memory, understanding and will signify the purest condition of consciousness when the mind is directed toward God. *Wisdom* states: 'Hwæt, ge þonne þeah hwæthwega godcundlices on eowerre saule habbað, þæt is andgit and gemynd

[64] '. . . if he could see the purest heavenly bright stream, noble source of every good, and could cast away from himself the black mist, the mind's darkness. *Yet with God's help we shall remedy your mind* with old and false stories, *so that you can better find the correct path to heaven, the eternal dwelling-place of our souls*.'

[65] The Bodley prose translation follows the Latin source text closely, for the counterpart to Metre 23 in each source text is brief and operates as a transitional statement to introduce the Orpheus tale: 'Gesælig bið se mon þe mæg geseon þone hluttran æwellm þæs hehstan godes, and of him selfum aweorpan mæg þa þiostro his modes. We sculon get of ealdum leasum spellum ðe sum bispell reccan' ('Happy is the man who can see the clear source of the highest good, and can cast from himself the darkness of his mind. We must yet again give you an example from old false stories'). B 35.195–7.

[66] ('he scattered angels in heaven, men on the earth, fitting their sublime souls into lighter chariots, that is, [directing their souls] into keen contemplation for reflection upon divine things'.) H. F. Stewart. 'A Commentary by Remigius Autissiodorensis on the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius'. *Jnl of Theological Stud.* 17 (1960) 22–42, esp. 34.

and se gesceadwislica willa þæt hine þara twega lyste. Se þe þonne þas ðreo hæfð, þonne hæfð he his sceoppendes onlicnesse.'[67] The imagery of the sun radiating within the Christian mind that reflects divine wisdom has its analogue in Bede's commentary on II Peter I.19. In this passage, Bede interprets the morning star as a signifier for wisdom that awakens the mind to the divine: 'Quis est lucifer iste? Si dominum dicas, parum est. Lucifer ipse praeclarus intellectus noster est. Ipse enim oritur in cordibus nostris, ipse illustrabitur, ipse manifestabitur.'[68] Like Bede's description, the verbal echoes in lucent imagery reinforce *Wisdom*'s teaching that the intellect is created in the image of the divine.

THE PROSIMETRUM LESSON ON THE SOUL

According to *Wisdom* the daily motions of the stars and the seasonal cycle in the transitory realm signify the greater law that compels all things to return to their divine origin. In Metre 20 (210–24), *Wisdom* employs the metaphor of the turning star to represent the changeable nature of the human soul aware of its affiliation with God. This image signifies the soul's shifting perspectives as it looks at times upon the world with fascination and at other times considers the divine with intelligence. The poetic comparison between the changeable mind and the turning star provides a metaphysical explanation for the moral struggle of the weak human soul. This description of the shifting perspectives of the soul reappears as the eye of the man who must negotiate divine and human realms in *Wisdom*'s prose lesson, the 'parable of the wheel'. In this prose lesson, his eye turns from heaven to earth to signify his moral obligation to apply divine knowledge to earthly affairs.

Both passages have their source in a prose lesson Lady Philosophy presents to the Boethian prisoner in Book Four. In this lesson, she asserts that human thought can rise beyond the realm of fate and participate in the eternal realm of being. She describes the divine as a still point and imperfect human thought as a moving circle: 'Igitur uti est ad intellectum ratiocinatio, ad id quod est id quod gignitur, ad aeternitatem tempus, ad punctum medium circulus, ita est fati series mobilis ad providentiae stabilem simplicitatem.'[69]

[67] CP 7.125–8. 'Indeed, you men have something godlike in your soul, that is understanding and memory and the rational will that takes pleasure in those two things. He then who has these three things, has his creator's likeness. . . '

[68] *Bedae: in Epistolas VII Catholicas*, ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 21 (Turnhout, 1983), 267. 'What is that morning star? If you say the Lord, that is too little. The morning star is our own excellent understanding. For if this arises in our hearts, it will be enlightened, it will be made clear.' The translation is by D. Hurst in his work *The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable*, Cistercian Stud. Ser. 82 (Kalamazoo, MI, 1985), 132.

[69] Bieler, IVpr6, sect. 17: 'Therefore, the changing course of Fate is to the simple stability of Providence as reasoning is to intellect, as that which is generated is to that which is, as time

Wisdom begins his lesson with clarification on Lady Philosophy's statement that some things are subject to fate while others are not: 'Be ðæm ic ðe mæg sum bispell secgan þæt þu meaht þy sweotolor ongitan hwilce men bioð underðied þære wyrde, hwylce ne bioð.'[70] In this lesson, men are arranged on the macrocosmic wheel of society according to their degree of moral intelligence:

> Eall ðios unstille gesceaft and þios hweafiende hweafað on ðæm stillan Gode and on ðæm gestæðegan and on ðæm anfealdan, and he welt eallra gesceafta swa swa he æt fruman getiohhod hæfde and get hæfð, swa swa on wænes eaxe hweafiað þa hweol and sio eax stint stille and byrð þeah ealne þone wæn, welt ealles þæs færeltes . . . swelce sio eax sie þæt hehste god þe we nemnað God, and þa selestan men faran nehste Gode, swa swa sio nafu færð neahst þære eaxe and þa midmestan swa swa ða spacan . . . and þa mætran near ðæm felgum.[71]

Wisdom does not bring in Lady Philosophy's lesson on the levels of intelligence until he first contextualizes the Boethian argument by associating levels of intelligence to types of people in society. He redefines the Boethian still point as the axle around which the 'wheel of society' turns. The most spiritually pure men appear closest to the axle of divine stillness. Those ignorant of God appear closest to the whirling rim; they are aware only of apparent goods, such as political power, wealth or fame. In between these extremes is the individual engaged in worldly affairs with spiritual consciousness; he mediates between divine and human realms and is thus called the 'middle-most man'.

Of the ranks of men in the parable, the man on the spoke receives the most attention throughout the entire *Froferboc* as a representative of men who must follow divine law. Just as the spoke joins the axle to the rim, the individual bridges divine and human realms. As the teacher *Wisdom* indicates, the man's thoughts always shift between earthly and divine realms: 'oðre hwile he smeað on his mode ymb þis eorðlice [lif], oðre hwile ymb ðæt godcundlice, swilce he locie mid oðre eagan to heofonum, mid oðre to eorþan'.[72] This line echoes an

is to eternity, as a circle to its center'. Godden and Irvine note this correspondence in the Commentary chapter: *Old English Boethius* II, 467.

[70] CP 29.75–7. 'About that I can tell you an analogy by which you can the more clearly understand which men are subject to fate and which are not.'

[71] CP 29.77–82, 83–6 and 94.'All this moving and turning creation revolves around the still and stable and single God, and he rules all creatures as he had determined at the beginning and still has determined, just as the wheels turn on the axle of a cart and the axle stands still and yet carries all the cart and controls all the movement . . . as if the axle were the highest good which we call God, and the best men went next to God, as the hub goes next to the axle, and the middle-most men like the spokes . . . and the weaker ones nearer the rim pieces'.

[72] CP 29.88–90: 'sometimes such a man thinks in his mind about this earthly life, sometimes about the divine life, as if he looked with one eye to heaven, and with the other to earth'. Godden and Irvine note this echo with the passage describing the middle-most man, cited above: 'Wisdom would appear to be characterising Boethius as a man in the middle of the

earlier passage in which *Wisdom* tells *Mod* that he is more concerned with *Mod*'s judgements than with those of ignorant men who fix both eyes on earthly things: 'Ac þu ana hwilum bescylst mid oðre eagan on þa heofonlican þincg, mid oðre þu locast nu giet on þas eorðlican.'[73] Godden and Irvine indicate that the man on the spoke represents Boethius, and thus *Mod*, who, *Wisdom* states, must apply his knowledge of the divine to society in the world.

The references to the soul as a star in the poetry culminate in this lesson to emphasize that introspection strengthens the mind of the individual with the moral resolve necessary to fulfil his proper role. Because the man has a duty to apply his wisdom in society, a case may be made for the term 'middle-most' as a humanized signification of the middle nature of the world soul, which in Boethius's work, executes divine laws in the physical realm. In her lesson, cited above, Lady Philosophy alludes to human thought as analogous to temporal and eternal existence. In this respect, she suggests that the mind is a microcosm for the realms of existence that the middle nature of the world soul negotiates. The eye of the man alternates perspectives between divine and human realms in a temporal and earthly imitation of the world soul, which continuously integrates divine and natural realms through its middle nature. Evidence from the commentary tradition supports this reading, for one source glosses the two circles of the world soul, interior and exterior to its middle nature, as two eyes that look upon the divine and then return to the body in meditation.[74] Further, Godden and Irvine state that certain diagrams of the three-fold world soul in the manuscripts are similar to Anglo-Saxon diagrams of a cartwheel, which suggests further that the lesson on the wheel could have a cosmic counterpart.[75] As a result, the lesson on the wagon wheel is suggestive of the individual star-like soul in Metre 20 that turns like a wheel, yet also may signify the social order as an imperfect representation of the world soul.

Two rhetorical forms of teaching on the soul are drawn together in the image of the wheel, one form in prose to inspire the individual to act morally in society and the other in verse to urge the individual to cultivate his inner

spokes, looking both to the still centre of God or good and to the mundane world'. See the Commentary chapter: *Old English Boethius* II, 467.

[73] CP 27.141–3. 'But you alone sometimes look with one eye to the heavenly things, with the other you look now still on these earthly things'. Godden and Irvine note this correspondence and indicate that it applies to the character Boethius; see their note to B 39.165–168 in the Commentary chapter: *Old English Boethius* II, 467.

[74] 'cum extenditur ad aliquid contemplandum suum glomerat motum divisa in duos orbeis [*sic*] id est duos corporis oculos' (when it is extended to contemplate something, divided, it gathers its motion in two circles, that is, the two eyes of the body). Cambridge University Library, Kk.3.21, 49v. A photograph of this page of the commentary is found in Szarmach, 'Alfred, Alcuin and the Soul', p. 137.

[75] See the Commentary to CP 29.82–115 in *Old English Boethius* II, 466.

life. The teaching from the combined passages adapt the Boethian ascent of the mind to the divine to an ethical code of conduct in the world. In this prosimetrum lesson, Alfred recasts the Boethian model of concentric circles of the world soul into that of the three-fold human soul to signify that the human soul is the single agent of divine will.[76] At the same time, the lessons on the macrocosmic wheel of society and the inner wheel of the soul establish that the social order and the man's role within it are intrinsic to the cosmic order.

CONCLUSION

Certain verses in the *metra* recapture the image of the Boethian star and recast it into a Christianized vision of the human soul. While the *Froferboc* poetry resonates briefly with descriptions of the soul in the source text and the commentaries, each reference to the soul as a star in the *Froferboc* poetry reinforces the trope. In this respect, the poetry appears to be independent of the source text and the commentaries, yet contributes to the 'intertextual system' of meaning associated with medieval readings of the *De consolatione Philosophiae*.[77] The repeated poetic imagery creates a body of exclusively poetic language to describe spiritual conversion. The trope represents the soul on a continuum from its fallen, earthly state to its transcendent state of grace, a state it may become aware of fleetingly during its human existence. In Metre 20, the metaphor signifies the fallen nature of the soul and its blessedness. With this range of spiritual states, the passages in Metre 20 form the basis for all other poetic innovations on the soul. In Metres 10 and 22, the metaphor signifies the sublime nature of the soul when it is governed by its intellect. These two poems present variations that alternate the imagery of the soul as a star that receives light with that of the sun as its divine source. In Metre 10, the imagery describes the outer appearance of the soul as it reflects the splendour of the virtues shining within it. In Metre 22, the imagery is set within the mind to describe its recognition of truth within itself. Both lessons teach that the divine virtues bind the soul to God. Poetic descriptions of the splendour of the

[76] The sharp contrast between the distinctly moral concerns in Alfred's *Froferboc* and the metaphysical concerns in Boethius's source text has been carefully examined in several studies. Influential studies include those by J. C. Frakes, *The Fate of 'Fortune' in the Early Middle Ages: the Boethian Tradition* (New York, 1988); Gatch *Loyalties and Traditions*, esp. pp. 108–10; and Discenza 'Power, Skill, and Virtue in the Old English Boethius'. See Anne Payne's study of Alfred's revisions to Boethian order in favour of free will in her *King Alfred and Boethius: an Analysis of the Old English Version of the Consolation of Philosophy* (Madison, WI, 1968); and Bately, 'Boethius and King Alfred', *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. A. Baldwin and S. Hutton (London, 1994), pp. 38–44.

[77] '. . . Alfred, Boethius, and the commentaries form an intertextual system, and Alfred shows himself to be able to produce his text as an active part of it'. Szarmach, 'Alfred's Nero', *Source of Wisdom*, pp. 147–67, esp. p. 156.

intellect echo in the soul's vision of heaven in Metre 23 to form a link between contemplation and repose. As the poetic trope indicates, the soul rises to its highest level of human wisdom when it applies its understanding of the cardinal virtues, the principles of judgement by which it interprets divine laws. After its virtuous life on earth, the soul, perfected by grace, transcends the temporal realm and enters into eternity.[78]

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