CHAPTER 1

TREASURES FROM THE LATIN HOARD

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Alfred's *Boethius* negotiates a deep cultural divide. The *De consolatione philosophiae* relies on familiarity with mythology, history, science, and philosophy that Alfred's readers simply did not possess. Because of the great differences between the source audience and the new target audience, changes in the text should come as no surprise. Yet the *Boethius* retains a wealth of classical and late-antique allusions and scientific ideas, a dialogue form popular centuries earlier, and much of a chain of arguments that followed a logic no longer strictly taught. The *Boethius* thus remains adequate to the *De consolatione* at several levels.

Alfred's strategic adequacy served first to authorize writer and text. The authority of a warrior-king, even once he had established it against foes both foreign and domestic, did not automatically translate into authority in the role of philosopher-translator; this was a different field and required a different form of capital. As the language of learning and religion, and one that had relatively standard grammar and spelling, Latin was the only "legitimate language," in Bourdieu's terminology. Bourdieu explains how French became "officielle"—both "official" and "formal"—in conjunction with the state: the legitimate language provided a measure against which dialects and solecisms could be found wanting and a means by which the less educated could be excluded.[1] In Alfred's England, the vernacular lacked standardization and had dialects; Old English had no legitimate form.[2] An author could not draw on an official form of Old English to legitimize his or her text as much later writers and speakers of vernaculars routinely do. Only Latin provided a standard by which to gauge good usage, and Carolingian writers viewed it as a valuable measure. Charlemagne's decrees sought to standardize language, especially the text of the Bible.[3] Yet for Alfred, Latin was not a viable option. Not enough of his people knew it.[4] Moreover, no evidence exists that philosophical or theological works had been composed in Old English before Alfred, and few works of any kind had been translated by the

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time Alfred wrote the *Boethius*. Old English had developed a poetic vocabulary, but Alfred did not use it much in his prose.

Both the *De consolatione* and the *Boethius* use the rhetorical and literary resources of the dialogue form, imagery, and stylistic variation to convey philosophical and religious ideas. Thus Alfred had to establish his authority, and the usefulness of his language, in the combined literary and spiritual field into which the *Boethius* entered. Universities did not exist to set credentials in Alfred's era; the church controlled the field, and members of the clergy dominated the production of spiritual literature.[5] A very small number of clerical readers would have some acquaintance with either late-antique literature or the specific source text; finding material in the translation that corresponded to norms of late-antique literature or to the *De consolatione* itself would inspire confidence in the text and its translator. Although few, these learned readers would carry great authority. Their attestation of Alfred's mastery of the Latin text would not survive in written form, but must have carried weight with some readers. As Bourdieu argues, unwritten sources of information, even rumors and gossip, play a role in shaping written fields as surely as writing itself because readers are formed by oral sources even more than by the texts they read.[6] In effect, Alfred's *Boethius* attempts to redefine the field, opening the category of Latin literary and philosophical works to include Old English literary and philosophical works.[7]

Most readers, however, would be unable to compare the Latin to the *Boethius*. Alfred's program of translation and education aimed at "eall sio gioguð ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben ðæt hie ðæm befeolan mægen" ("all the youth of free men which are now in England, who have the means and opportunity[8] that they might devote themselves to it," *PC* 7.10–1). Those with intellectual ability but no time could not be educated; a student was to be taught only "ða hwile ðe hie to nanre oðerre note ne mægen" ("as long as he is not capable of other employment," 7.12). The requirement for leisure assumed high birth; the expensive materials of tablets, writing implements, and perhaps even books, also point to a well-born audience. This program excluded men who were unfree or lacked means and opportunity, and women.[9] Thus Alfred's primary audience would be nobly born boys or young men, most lay but some destined for the clergy; they would not have a background in Latin or late-antique literature. Seeing unfamiliar textual elements handled consistently over a long text, however, they could conclude that Alfred followed the source text's ideas and usages. Alfred established his place in the literary field and, paradoxically, the usefulness of his West Saxon language, from his systematic adherence to Latin norms.

In the nineteenth century, Bourdieu finds "three competing principles of legitimacy" operating in fields: a specific legitimacy granted by other

writers in an autonomous field, a bourgeois "consecration", and a popular "consecration."[10] In Alfred's era, the competing principles were somewhat different: educated churchmen comprised one small audience that might bestow legitimacy, whereas the high-born, mostly lay, originally illiterate audience Alfred sought to educate might also consecrate works using different criteria. Alfred's combination of Christian discourse with Old English reaches out to both groups.

The readers stood to gain cultural capital from the translation. The *Boethius* offers a compact library of Roman history, geography, science, theology, and philosophy. Alfred's retention of proper nouns helps to introduce these well-born readers (and future rulers) to mythology, history, and even science. The oral transmission of some of this information to nonreaders (hearers or relatives of readers) may have occurred as well. The adequacy of his imagery and dialogic structure does a less obvious service to new readers: Alfred's translation helps them learn to negotiate a text that still retains characteristics of difficult but important Latin texts. Finally, Alfred preserves the overall flow of arguments and themes, both in the general progression of arguments in both works and the specific case of the definition of eternity. Anglo-Saxon readers would not only gain specific knowledge, but also experience reading a complex and abstract text from a different milieu. Alfred's lay readers gained cultural and symbolic capital that could help equalize them with the clerical authorities who controlled Latin texts; now readers of the vernacular had access to information and strategies of speech and argumentation previously available only in Latin. According to Asser, Alfred required the *comites, praepositi*, and *ministri* (ealdormen, reeves, and thegns) to learn to read or get a son or trusted servant to read for them if they were to maintain their position.[11] Thus Alfred put the weight of his authority as king behind his authority as writer. The program may also have provided a way to ensure that those who held important posts were obedient to Alfred's orders, and it may to some extent have replaced an unlettered old guard with younger men literate in their native tongue. Clerical readers with poor Latin might also benefit, within the church or in service to the king, as their cultural and symbolic capital increased. All who learned to read would in turn owe any advancement and even confidence they gained from reading to King Alfred.

Alfred used the spoken language that readers already understood to initiate them into written texts. Acceptability to his audience governed Alfred's decisions more than adequacy does at the most basic textual level: the individual word.[12] Loan-words are often an important feature of translation in general, and they are most common when one culture has just begun translating from another.[13] Yet the *Boethius* uses very few Latin words. A few specifically Christian words include forms of *cristen, engel, papa, martyr,*

and *arianisc*; these do not appear in the source text.[14] From the *De consola-tione*, Alfred borrows several Roman political terms: *læden; consul*; the common *Rome, roman*, and related forms; and *casere or kasere*.[15] Three words name African and Asian animals: *leo, tigris*, and *elpend*.[16] Scattered other loan-words occur: *must, rosa, capitula, magister, gigant*.[17] *Æfweardnesse* and *þiofscole* appear to be calques, drawing at least one ele-ment from Latin.[18] For such a lengthy translation, however (142 pages in Sedgefield's edition), the *Boethius* has a very small set of loan-words. All these words are found elsewhere in Old English (although some are rarer than others); Alfred is not introducing any of the words to the language. The king relies heavily on words his audience would already know and exceedingly little on foreign words. Syntax and style also generally reflect developing Old English norms rather than Latin ones.[19] Alfred's handling of the most basic levels of vocabulary and grammar, then, generally reflect acceptability to his audience rather than adequacy. By making most of the language acceptable, Alfred relieves some of the inevitable conflict between native and foreign norms: his readers will encounter many new names, ideas, and rhetorical strategies, but he makes the text readable even if it remains difficult.

The *Boethius*'s handling of proper nouns thus contrasts with its treat-ment of other words.[20] Proper nouns from the source text almost always remain easily recognizable, although Alfred alters a few spellings in accord with Anglo-Saxon norms and does not use Latin declensions.[21] Alfred retains many Latin names. Sixty-six of the occurrences of proper nouns in the Old English come directly from the Latin text.[22] Seventy-three occurences of proper nouns are new to the Old English, nearly all to supply information that the late-antique audience of the *De consolatione* would already have known.[23] Most additions involve allusions clear only to highly educated readers; for instance, where Boethius gives a seven-line description of a season without naming it (I met. vi. 1–7), Alfred simply has "Agustes monðe" (12.7); where Boethius has "tergeminus . . . ianitor" (III met. xii. 29–30) Alfred names Cerberus (102.14).[24] Many of the added names gloss other names in the text, such as when Alfred keeps the name "Aetnae" (II pr. vi. 1) from the Latin text and adds "þam munte þe Ætne hatte, on þam ieg-lande þe Sicilia hatte" ("on the mountain that is called Aetna, on the island that is called Sicily," 34.8–9).[25]

Alfred does not blindly retain proper nouns from his source text; he invests labor in adding glosses ranging from a word to entire independent clauses. His retention of proper nouns indicates respect for the Boethius's text and in turn commands respect for the translation: the unfamiliar names promise fidelity to the source text. Alfred could have omitted or changed most names because they occur in illustrations. At one point he substitutes Weland for the source text's reference to Fabricius, demonstrating his skill

with the strategy of replacement.[26] Yet Alfred often did not choose deletion and rarely used replacement, although either is easier than glossing.

By retaining and glossing so many proper nouns, Alfred increased both the prestige of his text (and therefore his own symbolic capital) and the cultural capital of his people. Alfred legitimated his language and his text by drawing clearly and overtly on the one legitimate language available, although he did not write in that language. He demonstrated that he was highly conversant with Latin, even where difficult matters of mythology, history, or science were involved. To the rare readers who had some acquaintance with the Latin text, that Alfred brought his own knowledge to bear on the Latin text would be clear. To the majority of readers, who lacked access to the Latin text, word of Alfred's investment might come from recommendations by those would could recognize it. Less learned readers would also recognize Alfred's comfort with unfamiliar names and references, and the high expectations he had of his audience.

Alfred's treatment of proper nouns not only legitimizes the translation, but it also introduces readers to classical mythology. Most of its mythological references appear in two meters, the Orpheus meter (101.19–103.21/III met. xii) and the Ulysses meter (115.12–116.34/IV met. iii). Alfred glosses both meters to explain several names and circumstances, but he keeps the main narratives intact. In addition to Christian interpretations of these stories, Alfred adds clear warnings that each meter is a "leasan spell" ("lying story," 103.14; see also 116.13 and .16) so that his audience did not understand them literally.[27] Boethius's original readers needed no such warning. These cautions also guide readers through other passages. Hercules (Erculus) is mentioned twice (36.33 and 127.11), both times as the son of Jove (Iob); thus when readers learn that Iob and Saturn (Saturnus, Iob's father) are also the figments of "leasunga" ("falsehoods," 99.4), they are prepared to consider all these references to Roman heroes and gods as no more truthful than stories of Orpheus and Ulysses.

The *Boethius* teaches its readers how to understand references to the classical pantheon and Greek and Roman heroes. Readers of the text acquired a small store of mythological knowledge, a framework into which they could put later additions to that hoard, and the tools to understand the mythological stories they encountered, not as fantastic tales from a distant world, but as moral stories relevant to their own lives and responsibilities. The *Boethius* not only offers cultural capital, it also inculcates the correct way to use this capital—a specific mode of reading. As Bourdieu writes, "Any legitimate work tends in fact to impose the norms of its own perception and tacitly defines as the only legitimate mode of perception the one which brings into play a certain disposition and a certain competence."[28] The ability to read correctly sets the reader apart from others, even as the ability to be

read correctly sets the work apart. The demands the *Boethius* makes on its audience bestow privileged status on both text and readers even as the readers acquire a habitus of proper Christian reading. Alfred prepares readers in modes of thinking that had previously been a clerical monopoly.[29]

Alfred prizes history more than mythology as cultural capital. Names of figures in the distant past and of gods, winds, and constellations are occasionally discarded, particularly where Boethius uses them figuratively, but Alfred keeps many place names and most names of historical figures.[30] This practice accords well with his complaint that scribal error has caused men to lose their proper fame: "hi for heora slæwðe 7 for gimeleste 7 eac for recceleste forleton unwriten þara monna ðeawas 7 hiora dæda, þe on hiora dagum formæroste 7 weorðgeornuste wæron" ("On account of their sloth and carelessness and even recklessness [scribes] leave unwritten the behavior and deeds of men who in their days were most famous and most eager for glory," 44.2–4).[31] Alfred could only make such an accusation if he had taken care with most historical names himself.

Alfred's investment in glossing historical names would enable readers of the *Boethius* to make the acquaintance of historical figures from Tarquin to Nero.[32] Although the *Boethius* itself offers no sense of chronology, it would enable readers to recognize certain classical historical figures and their most famous (or infamous) deeds. The *Boethius* could thereby whet readers' appetite for the *Orosius*. If readers had already encountered the *Orosius*, these names would remind them of what they had already learned.[33] In either case, readers who found names they had learned from one text in another would see some profit from the time that they invested in the first text. Similarly, the *Boethius* offers the names of several classical writers.[34] Few or no Anglo-Saxon readers would encounter the works of Homer, Aristotle, or Plato, even in excerpts translated into Latin, but they could find further mentions of these authorities. They would be slightly more likely to encounter the works of Cicero and Virgil. Although the *Boethius* could not begin to offer its readers mastery of classical literature, it could offer them a sense of acquaintance. This pleasure of recognition rewards readers for work already done and promises future rewards as well. As Bourdieu explains, while readers become increasingly comfortable with texts and specific references and ideas those texts contain, they remain aware that most of their contemporaries lack the skills and knowledge they enjoy. They feel a sense of accomplishment in their ability to recognize and use names and concepts.[35] Readers also feel an investment in the text and so have a stake in believing in the authority and usefulness of Alfred's translation and language.

In addition to introducing readers to classical literature and history, the *Boethius* teaches natural science. The text names the four elements and explains their natural tendency to discord and the way God's power and love bind them together in several places. Although some of these explanations

expand or repeat material from the source text, none are pure additions; all derive from the *De consolatione*.[36] Likewise, the *Boethius* offers observations about the weather and seasons; instructs readers about astronomy and cosmology; and teaches comparative physiology and psychology of plants, animals, and humans.[37] The *Boethius* exposes readers to some basic scientific terms and concepts, providing a foundation in classical scientific discourse.

Alfred thus not only asserted his ability to transmit Latin lore, he also gave readers entry into previously closed fields of discourse: classical mythology, Roman history, and the natural sciences. Providing this entrée did not much diminish Alfred's own dominance of these corners of the cultural market; even as he gave access to specialized learning, he clearly controlled that access. Adequacy in this regard strengthened Alfred's literary and linguistic authority, and the cultural capital whose monopoly Alfred relinquished by making it more widely available bought him symbolic capital in turn. The classical learning that readers acquired from the *Boethius* might not by itself make them successful. Yet it offered them encouragement and directions for future acquisitions. Most important, Alfred's own court valued this capital, providing a marketplace for those who had acquired the knowledge and skills that the books offered. Alfred set the standards and supplied the education, training future nobles and clerics in particular ways of thinking that he could then expect at court.

The *Boethius* did not simply hold out facts as capital. Both the Latin and Old English texts are rich in imagery, and Alfred frequently retains illustrations from his source text, although he sometimes develops his own metaphors. Again, adequacy underscores Alfred's authority by demonstrating his mastery of the source text and language even as it offers admittance to Latin literary culture, providing new readers with a stock of metaphors and the skills to understand them. In our technological age these may not seem to be useful skills, but when a king's court begins to value literature, being conversant with literature becomes very practical (much as when a U.S. president enjoys running, journalists buy track shoes and get in shape).[38]

Alfred keeps two key illustrations that would be unfamiliar to much of to his audience.[39] The first comes from the portion of the text that Alfred has most heavily abridged; he did not merely keep the image because it was there. Philosophy describes a rich library:

non tam me loci huius quam tua facies mouet nec bibliothecae potius comptos ebore ac uitro parietes quam tuae mentis sedem requiro, in qua non libros sed id quod libris pretium facit, librorum quondam meorum sententias collocaui. (I pr. v. 6)

Not so much this place as your appearance moves me; nor do I require a library with walls covered in ebony and glass but rather your mind as

a seat, in which I once collected my teachings, not in books but in what makes the books precious.

The Old English sets a similar scene:

> ne me na ne lyst mid glase geworhtra waga ne heahsetla mid golde 7 mid gimmum gerenodra, ne boca mid golde awritenra me swa swiðe ne lyst swa me lyst on þe rihtes willan. Ne sece ic no her þa bec, ac þæt ðæt þa bec forstent, ðæt is, þin gewit. (11.26–30)

> Nor do walls worked with glass please me, or high seats ornamented with gold and with gems, nor do books written with gold please me as much as your right will pleases me. I do not seek here books, but what understands the books, that is, your mind.

Alfred adds fresh details appealing to Anglo-Saxons' love of treasure, but the concept of a library as a lavishly appointed room set aside for books would be foreign to his readers. The vivid image conveys effectively the value placed on learning, both in the form of rich books and in the form of what they confer on their readers. Cultural capital is associated with economic capital in the image of the library; a room fitted with glass, gold, and gems and set aside for reading would be the stuff of dreams for Anglo-Saxon readers. Yet, shockingly, Wisdom rejects the enticing physical setting in favor of the more valuable knowledge that lies inside the books—and the reader's mind. The image places an almost tangible value on the work that Alfred and his readers do in their engagement with the text, associating the more abstract cultural capital with highly desirable economic capital. Although Anglo-Saxons would not theorize the connection in the way Bourdieu does, the image of the library makes a powerful if implicit argument for the convertibility of cultural and economic capital.[40]

Even more surprising, Alfred chooses to keep a brief and obscure reference to late-antique disciplines. At one point Philosophy/Wisdom associates certain talents with certain professions: "sic musica quidem musicos, medicina medicos, rhetorica rhetores facit" ("so indeed music makes musicians, medicine doctors, rhetoric rhetoricians," II pr. vi. 17). The first two professions would be familiar enough to Anglo-Saxon audiences, but not the third. Alfred could have transformed it into something familiar, such as homilists preaching, but instead he keeps the rhetoricians: "Swa mæg eac se dreamcræft ðæt se mon bið dreamere, 7 se læcecræft þæt he bið læce, 7 seo racu deð þæt he bið reccere" ("So may also the art of music make a man a musician, and leechcraft a leech, and argumentation a rhetorician," 38.6–8).

Not only does this image demonstrate Alfred's faithfulness to his text, but the specific illustration also underlines Alfred's authority. Those few readers familiar with Augustine would recognize rhetoric and the figure of the rhetorician from late-antique learning.[41] Alfred's use of learned terms places his discourse within a patristic context. Bourdieu describes how the Homeric orator held the *skeptron* to demonstrate his authority to speak.[42] A writer too needs some form of authorization, and the use of recognized, authoritative discourse provides a symbolic *skeptron. Reccere* means both rhetorician and ruler; in this image, a *reccere* is learned in argumentation. The metaphor links Alfred's hard-won authorization as ruler in political and military matters with the less certain religious or rhetorical authority, securing both to Alfred. In Alfred's hands, the illustration proposes a connection between ruling and learning; it hints that Alfred is uniquely qualified to write this translation and that the learning that his translation demonstrates makes him uniquely qualified to rule. Even readers unfamiliar with Augustine could see the paronomasia that equated ruling with speaking well and suggested that the great warrior-king should be an equally great translator.

The impression of the authorized translator is borne out by the appearance of other important images from the source text, these more familiar to Anglo-Saxon audiences.[43] The recurring image of the doctor acts as an example of a particular skill or kind of knowledge as well as an illustration of the narrator's state as a sick man in need of the medicine of Philosophy/Wisdom.[44] Readers already initiated into late-antique Latin literature, directly or in translations, would recognize the image of the doctor as a favorite of Augustine and Gregory and feel the pleasure of recognition.[45] Readers who had not yet been initiated into Latin literature could enjoy the same pleasure later on finding the image in the Old English *Pastoral Care, Dialogues*, or *Soliloquies*.[46] Another Latin motif running through both texts is that of the spark or light as an image for knowledge and truth.[47] The connection of Alfred himself with medicine and with light becomes almost mythical; Asser writes of Alfred's prayers both for illness and for healing (he sought a less debilitating illness to replace a more difficult one) and of Alfred's invention of special candles to tell time and special lanterns to keep these candles from blowing out.[48] His translation is not purely intellectual; it affects court life.

The imagery changes between the Latin text and the Old English, and a few alterations are quite striking and significant, as the alteration from concentric circles to a wagon wheel (129.19–131.27) and from a labyrinth to a wood (100.4–9). Yet Alfred rarely omits images, and often instead of adding new images he displaces, repeats, or anticipates ones from the source text. This strategy, like his retention of the original people and places featured in anecdotes, indicates respect for the text and a recognition that arguments cannot be easily separated from the illustrations that support them.[49] Although

not all the illustrations would have the same particular strategic value as that of the rhetorician, maintaining the source text's illustrations allows Alfred to demonstrate repeatedly his mastery of a source text authorized by the prestige of its original writer, a saint. Alfred also educates his audience in the reading of imagery. Readers would gain familiarity with some of the common patristic images they would encounter in other Alfredian translations or, in the case of a select few, in Latin texts themselves. Again, adequacy served both Alfred and his readers, yielding symbolic capital for the king and his language, and cultural capital for his audience.

The *Boethius* is even more adequate to its source text in dialogic structure. Out of nearly 500 turns in dialogue, only a handful has been reassigned. Where Alfred has abridged the text, he has generally taken lines from both characters instead of shortening the dialogue allotted to one or collapsing exchanges into one long speech, both of which would have been easy translation solutions to use. The narrator has lost only three turns and gained six responses relative to Wisdom over the course of the text.[50] His role in the dialogue remains as active as in the Latin, but no more so overall; the additional turns are few and small enough that they help compensate for the loss of the autobiographical material in I pr. iv, but do not tip the balance of the dialogue. The narrator is still the learner and his interlocutor the authority figure and dominant speaker.

The narrator of the Old English text agrees a little more often than the narrator of the Latin. On a few occasions questions are turned into affirmations, as when "Quidni?" ("Why not?" III pr. iii. 10) becomes "Ic wat þæt þu soð segst, þæt ic hi hæfde" ("I know that you say the truth, that I had [earthly goods]," 59.15–16).[51] Sometimes the Old English narrator's agreement is more enthusiastic than in the Latin: "Minime, inquam" ("'Not at all,' I said," III pr. ix. 4) becomes "Þa andsworede ic eft 7 cwæð: Ne secge ic no þæt he nauhtes maran ne ðyrfe, forðæm ic wat þæt nan nis þæs welig þæt he sumes eacan ne þyrfe" ("Then I answered again and said: 'I do not say that he does not need anything more, because I know that there is none so wealthy that he has no need of some increase,'" 75.3–5).[52] At 52.21–8, part of Philosophy's speech (III pr. ii. 3) on the highest good is given to the narrator rather than Wisdom, making the narrator a more active participant in this part of the dialectic, an equal partner who can correctly anticipate Wisdom's next lesson (which Wisdom then repeats in agreement, 52.28–53.3).[53] One major expansion occurs at 40.10–41.6 (roughly II pr. vii. 1) where the narrator delivers his speech on the ruler's need for tools to work his *cræft*. In that passage the balance is shifted in favor of the narrator.

Occasionally, it is the Latin narrator who agrees more. Once the Latin narrator almost fawns (V pr. i. 6–7) where the Old English narrator speaks more plainly (140.1–2), and once the Old English narrator merely agrees (107.26–7) where the Latin narrator summarizes (IV pr. ii. 24).[54] Yet most

alterations in the dialogue also do not shift the balance between the characters. Where arguments are omitted, both lose turns.[55] Only the omission of Boethius's defenses of himself in Book I are significant in terms of characterization, and this loss is compensated in the dialogue by the extra turns and expanded replies that the narrator receives. The substitution of a different and much shorter argument in favor of free will in Book V also does not change the balance; Philosophy dominates the Latin text here as heavily as Wisdom does the Old English.

The translation also follows the source text's frequent use of rhetorical questions in the dialogue. Sometimes rhetorical questions are answered in the text; when both Philosophy and Wisdom ask whether bad fortune does not benefit the recipient by revealing true and false friends (48.5–15/II pr. viii. 6), only Wisdom supplies an explicit answer: "Ic wat ðeah þæt ðu hit woldest habban mid miclan feo geboht þæt ðu hi cuðest wel toscadan" ("I know, however, that you would have paid with great treasure to be able to distinguish them," 48.15–7). Similarly, Wisdom answers his own question regarding whether an individual can bring his honor to other nations (63.18–9).[56] However, the Latin, too, sometimes answers its own rhetorical questions: "At cuius praemii? Omnium pulcherrimi maximique; memento etenim corollarii illius quod paulo ante praecipuum dedi ac sic collige" ("But what prize? The most beautiful and greatest of all; for recall especially that corollary that I gave you a little before and consider thus," IV pr. iii. 8).[57] As in his translation of the preceding passage, Alfred sometimes changes rhetorical questions into simple statements.[58] Overall the same impression is given: both texts use rhetorical questions heavily, and sometimes they even answer them.[59] Again, the translation is not exact, but Alfred compensates to achieve adequacy. Learned readers would recognize Alfred's achievement, whereas the less educated would gain practice negotiating a sometimes difficult literary form.

Seeing what has been changed in the dialogue is easier than determining how much remains the same. The text runs 142 pages in Sedgefield's edition. By contrast, the changes can be listed in a few paragraphs here. The *Boethius* offers the characters the same turns in dialogue that the source text does and generally the same sentiments; the translation maintains the structure and balance of the source text. Alfred initiates his readers into particular modes of thinking and even disputation.

The aspect of the *Boethius* that diverges most from the source text is its treatment of the specific arguments and themes of the source text. Many scholars have emphasized difference at the argumentative level. Most prominently, F. Anne Payne views Alfred's work as less than coherent due to "a discrepancy between thought and style, between Alfred's ideas and the form in which they are presented."[60] In her view, fundamental philosophical differences with the source text prevent adequacy: Boethius believes in order

and eternity; Alfred believes in freedom and contingency.[61] Kurt Otten points out that Alfred avoids the question of free will raised in Book V, and he concludes that Boethius ends his work on a philosophical high note, whereas Alfred instead finishes with practical Christian commands, giving his work a less powerful, more popular ending.[62] Otten also writes that in general Alfred simplifies the arguments of his source.[63] Alfred indeed makes some arguments that are not in his source text at all, and a few of these do not fit comfortably with the source. The changes strike the modern reader of both texts more than what is kept the same, but the similarities are profound, especially given how difficult and unfamiliar some passages must have seemed to Anglo-Saxon readers. The bulk of the *Boethius* has clear roots in the *De consolatione*.[64]

Alfred does omit arguments, cutting thirteen major passages. The *Boethius* also includes several significant additions. Besides glosses of existing ideas and names, the Old English contributes new arguments, primarily about the use of goods.[65] Despite these changes, which later chapters will treat, the central arguments of the *De consolatione* remain clear in the translation, and most proceed in the same way as in the source text. To list all the elements of the *De consolatione* that remain in Alfred's *Boethius* would be tedious. Although Alfred has made some significant changes, he has retained a great portion of his source text. It may seem obvious to modern readers that a translation would follow the source text closely, but this was not in fact obvious to Anglo-Saxons, as evidenced by some other Anglo-Saxon translations. Alfred's own *Soliloquies* omits large portions of Book II and adds an entire third book culled from several sources.[66] The *Orosius* and the *Bede* make deep cuts as well; most notably, the *Bede* omits much of the Easter controversy and much of the Latin documentation of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*.[67] Moreover, poetic texts such as *Genesis* and *Exodus* take such great liberties with their source texts that many scholars hesitate to dub them translations—but that kind of translation was clearly a viable option for Anglo-Saxons, even with sacred, more prestigious texts than the *De consolatione*. That Alfred retains so much of the *De consolatione* is significant, particularly in light of all the explanations and excuses scholars have produced for Alfred's changes: the Latin is difficult, Old English had never been used for such a work before, the philosophy is difficult and uses technical language, the mode of argumentation is foreign. All those claims are true, yet Alfred has retained most of the source text's structure and argumentation in spite of them.

Omissions fit a strategic pattern, coming almost entirely from the start and end. Several passages in Book I, especially those concerning the narrator's own life, are abridged or deleted.[68] The omissions at the beginning suggest impatience to get to argument and disinterest in the details of Boethius's

imprisonment. Books II–IV are treated with the greatest respect, even reverence. The only other major omission before Book V is of II met. i, on the wheel of Fortune, which has been compressed into a very brief earlier reference in the Old English. The omissions near the end, combined with Wisdom's worry that, "Gif wit þæt eall sculon tosmeagan, þonne cume wit late to ende þisse bec, oððe næfre" ("If we must consider all that, then we will come to the end of this book late or never," 148.4–6), imply that more than philosophical and literary pressures impinged on translation. Indeed, Alfred's most substantial alteration to the arguments in the source text come in V, where the treatment of free will is greatly altered.[69] His alterations do not change the main point, that human beings all have free will, only the means of getting there. Alfred treats his source text not as something sacred and unalterable, but as something deserving great respect. Additions appear not as impositions on the text but expansions of the rich material already present. Alfred entered into conversation with Boethius. The evenness of tone and form over the course of his text would make it seem unified to readers unfamiliar with the source. They would see not divergence, but one coherent text.[70]

One issue provides a useful case study demonstrating both how Alfred made minor changes and how the bulk of the argument remains the same despite great differences in vocabulary and culture. The distinction among different kinds of eternity, although it is a supporting argument, has been hotly debated by scholars. Some think Alfred did not accept Boethius's distinction between perpetuity (unending time) and eternity (being outside time). J. M. Wallace-Hadrill writes that he is uncertain Alfred understood Boethian concepts of foreknowledge or eternity; "if he did, he rejected both in favour of something more up to date. He prefers the notion of the kingship of God and the personal dependence of every man, but especially the earthly king, upon that kingship."[71] Jerold Frakes has made stronger statements; he writes, "Alfred does not accept the ontological distinction between *aeternitas* and *perpetuitas*, which was essential to the Boethian order (147, 17–22)...,"[72] and F. Anne Payne declares, "Alfred omits completely Boethius's Platonic explanation about the states of eternity and time."[73] Payne views this difference as crucial to the translation: "The key to practically everything that goes on in the OE text...is that Alfred did not postulate Boethius' two separate and completely different states of existence, man's and God's...."[74] If Alfred truly did not understand Boethian eternity, his failure would have repercussions throughout the text.

Yet other scholars claim with equal vehemence that Alfred did in fact understand and translate the Boethian concept of eternity. Kurt Otten lists a series of antitheses from the Alfredian text, including time and eternity.[75] He remarks that these binary oppositions appear in the source text, but that both

commentaries and Alfred's translation emphasize them more heavily than the Latin text itself. In direct response to Payne's book, Katherine Proppe argues that "Alfred certainly contrasts present time and eternity,"[76] and W. F. Bolton writes that Alfred distinguishes among *hwilendlic, ece*, and *ece buton ende*.[77]

Alfred faced a linguistic difficulty: he lacked individual words to match each Latin word dealing with time and eternity because *perpetuum*, a crucial term in Boethius's triad of limited time, perpetuity, and eternity, had no Old English equivalent. Instead, Alfred uses the word *ece*, "eternal," for both perpetuity and eternity. Fred Robinson finds that *ece* originally meant "lasting" and continued to be used in that sense both in poetry and prose, including Ælfric's first letter to Wulfstan.[78] Alfred explains perpetuity, "Oðer ðing is ece, þæt hæfð fruman 7 næfð nænne ende" ("Another thing is *ece*, that has an origin and has no end," 147.29–148.2). This explanation, while coming approximately where V pr. vi. 9 does in the Latin text, actually matches better the Latin in V pr. vi. 14, where the word used is *perpetuum*. Alfred then must use the word *ece* again for "aeternitas" (V pr. vi. 3): "Þridde ðing is ece buton ende 7 buton anginne" ("A third thing is *ece* without end and without beginning," 148.3).

Thus, when Alfred seems to use the word "eternal" where he should be using "perpetual," he may in fact mean "perpetual." He does not always supply "buton ende," his one clear way of distinguishing the two meanings for which he must use *ece*. He refers to the soul as *ece*: "monna sawla sint undeadlica 7 ece" (26.11) translates "mentes hominum nullo modo esse mortales" ("men's souls are undying and *ece*" for "the minds of men are in no way mortal," II pr. iv. 28). He also refers to the afterlife several times as *ece*: "symle bið se beag goodes edleanes ðæm godum gehealden on ecnesse" ("the jewel of good reward is always held for the good in *ecnesse*," 113.2–4) translates "corona non decidet, non arescet" ("the crown does not decay, does not wither," IV pr. iii. 5), and a number of other passages use the word *ece* similarly.[79]

These passages might appear to present a confused notion of eternity, but if one accepts that Alfred sometimes uses *ece* as an abbreviated form of *ece buton ende*, the problem vanishes. Alfred has precedent: Boethius himself does not always maintain the distinction, sometimes using *aeternitas* and *aeternus* to describe infinite time, not timelessness. Some instances clearly refer to *aeternitas* as a length of time and not a separate state, as in the question, "Quod si ad aeternitatis infinita spatia pertractes, quid habes quod de nominis tui diuturnitate laeteris?" ("Which, if you spread to the infinite space of eternity, what do you have to rejoice in the length of time of your name?" II pr. vii. 15; similarly, see II pr. vii. 18).[80] In Book IV Boethius explicitly speaks of an eternity that must have a beginning: describing how miserable the punishment of the evil would be if it had no end, he writes, "infinitam

liquet esse miseriam quam esse constat aeternam" ("that misery is agreed to be infinite that is eternal," IV pr. iv. 9; see also IV pr. iv. 24).[81] Unless one wants to claim that the evil are co-eternal with God, one must read *aeternam* here the same way as Alfred's *ece* (*buton ende*). Finally, in IV met. vi Boethius refers to the courses of the heavens as eternal, although they are clearly created and inside time: "Sic aeternos reficit cursus / alternus amor, sic astrigeris / bellum discors exsulat oris" ("So mutual love reforms the eternal courses, so disharmonious war is banished from the shores of the stars," IV met. vi. 16–8).[82] Alfred does differentiate terms less often than Boethius does, using *ece* much more often that the Latin source text uses *aeternitas*; *ece* or forms of it occur forty-one times, whereas forms of *aeternitas* and *aeternus* occur twenty times.[83] Yet Boethius himself sometimes uses *aeternitas* for the more common sense of a long or endless period of time, and Alfred's usage of *ece* reflects this shifting sense.

In one key passage, both authors explain the restricted meaning of eternity. Boethius writes: "Quid sit igitur aeternitas consideremus; haec enim nobis naturam pariter diuinam scientiamque patefacit. Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis uitae tota simul et perfecta possessio" ("Let us consider therefore what eternity is; for this is made open equally to our nature and to divine understanding. Eternity, therefore, is the simultaneous and perfect possession of an interminable life," V pr. vi. 3–4). Alfred adds and repeats a little material, but the thrust of the passage is basically the same:

> Ða cwæð ic: Hwæt is ecnes?...Þridde ðing is ece buton ende 7 buton anginne; þæt is God....Þæt an us is gewislice andweard þæt þe þonne bið; ac him is eall andweard, ge þætte ær wæs, ge þætte nu is, ge þætte æfter us bið; eall þæt is him andweard. (147.22–3, 148.3, 148.10–2)[84]

> Then I said, "What is ecnesse?"...[Wisdom answered]: "The third thing [of the triad limited time, perpetuity, and eternity] is *ece* without end and without beginning; that is God....That alone is truly present to us which is then; but to him all is present, both that which was before, that which is now, and that which will be after us; all that is present to him."

Alfred clearly defines eternity as a separate state of being outside time just as Boethius does.

This case shows how Alfred negotiated linguistic obstacles he faced to achieve adequacy in philosophical argumentation. Although Alfred's usage is slightly freer, in that he employs *ece* more often and with less discrimination than Boethius among terms such as immortal, eternal, and unending, his usage is not substantially different from that of his source text. Ultimately he

makes the same conceptual distinctions. The concept of eternity, and other arguments, show Alfred to maintain overall a fairly high degree of adequacy with some differences in specific terminology and some displacement and compensation in the text. At the level of argument as well as individual images, exchanges, and even words, Alfred proves himself an accomplished scholar of Latin and offers less-educated readers a way into a difficult philosophical discourse.

For adequacy in the *Boethius* always looks in two directions. On the one hand, it supports Alfred's authority in the field: by remaining close to the source text, he demonstrates that he is a reliable translator and secures symbolic capital for himself. For those with any familiarity with classical mythology, history, and science, or with Latin logical, philosophical, or theological texts, the *Boethius* would display Alfred's faithfulness to the source text and late-antique tradition, from the lowest level of the text, the word, to the overarching dialogue structure and major arguments. They would pass on their judgments to those unable to recognize the text's adequacy. For readers unacquainted with the Latin tradition, however, the very unfamiliarity could achieve the same end, indicating the use of a nonnative tradition.

On the other hand, Alfred offers cultural capital to his readers: readers at any level of learning stood to gain something, whether knowledge of particular names and facts or further mastery of difficult modes of thought, by working their way through the *Boethius*. The text provided a new kind of education for Anglo-Saxons. The training would be useful for those who read further in Alfred's program, especially readers who encountered the *Soliloquies*, a philosophical dialogue even denser than the *Boethius*. It was also an important step for those few who would proceed further to reading Latin texts in the original language and perhaps commenting on or translating those texts themselves. Because a king offered this cultural capital, readers could feel confident that it would be valued at court; in turn, they invested their own labor to earn it.

The *Boethius*, along with Alfred's other translations, opens the field of spiritual literature to West Saxon writers and readers. It also claims that field for the West Saxons. Mercia had produced many learned men and some literature, from glossaries to poetry, and Alfred's own helpers included Mercian clerics.[85] Cynewulf and other early, anonymous poets are thought to have worked in Mercia—although they can be difficult to date and locate.[86] Yet by using his own dialect for his own translation while maintaining much of the information, imagery, structure, and argument of the *De consolatione*, Alfred asserted West Saxon as the rightful heir to the Latin tradition. Alfred's texts were copied and recopied, and West Saxon became the language of many subsequent writers, a kind of "Standard Old English."[87] Today, students begin learning Old English with Alfred's early West Saxon. Nowhere does Alfred

openly assert the superiority of his dialect or people. Indeed, by treating his language, a mixture of his own dialect and some Anglianisms, as the common language of the Anglo-Saxons, Alfred implicitly presents his text as the unified product of a unified tradition as he presents the whole program in the Prose and Verse Prefaces to the *Pastoral Care*.[88] He fabricates a singular Anglo-Saxon culture where there were in fact multiple cultures and quietly subsumes that culture under the authority that he is establishing for himself.[89]

Alfred translated the *De consolatione* with a sophisticated set of strategies: he maintained adequacy not only through close translation in many passages but also in the text as a whole through compensation and displacement, which allowed him more freedom while he kept reasonably close to the overall sense of the text. These observations suggest that Alfred did not make changes lightly and make it easier to see where Alfred made alterations at all levels of the text. The next chapter will examine alterations based on the Christian Latin tradition.