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THE PERSUASIVE AGENCY OF OBJECTS AND PRACTICES IN ALFRED THE GREAT'S REFORM PROGRAM

by
GEORGINA PITT

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This book is dedicated with love to David: shared adventures, always.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I RESTRICT THE contentious term "Anglo-Saxon" to specific contexts. First, as an archaeological classification of artifacts. Secondly, as an adjective for the kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia, and Kent, and the commonalities between those kingdoms (e.g., their governance or warfare). The peoples of these kingdoms also shared a suite of cultural norms and beliefs. I describe these as Anglo-Saxon to avoid the inference that the same beliefs and norms necessarily pertained to their Celtic neighbours. I also use the term Anglo-Saxon in relation to the concept of the *Angelcynn*. This is not an ethnic classification in the sense of race or descent. The reader is referred to a fuller discussion on page 77. The term "Old English" is used for language and literature. "Early medieval" describes the period between the end of the Roman Empire in Britain and the Norman Conquest.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASC *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*. Edited by Michael Swanton. London: Phoenix, 2000.

Asser *Asser's Life of King Alfred, Together with the Annals of St Neots, Erroneously Ascribed to Asser*. Edited by William Henry Stevenson. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904. Reprint, 1959 (with article by Dorothy Whitelock).

EHD *English Historical Documents: Vol. 1, ca. 500–1042*. Edited by Dorothy Whitelock. 2nd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 1979.

Gildas *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*. Edited by Michael Winterbottom. London: Phillimore, 1978.

HE *Bede's The Ecclesiastical History of the English People.* Edited by Judith McClure and Roger Collins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

K & L *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources.* Edited by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.

Pastoral Care *The Old English Pastoral Care*. Translated by Robert D. Fulk. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021.

OE Boethius *The Old English Boethius*. Edited by Susan Irvine and Malcolm R. Godden. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012.

S The Electronic Sawyer. https://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk

Soliloquies *Augustine's Soliloquies in Old English and in Latin*. Edited by Leslie Lockett. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022.

Figure 1. Replica of the Alfred Jewel, held in a pincer grip. © The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2023.

Figure 2. Replica of the Alfred Jewel, clutched in a fist. © The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2023.

Prelude

THE ENIGMATIC ALFRED JEWEL

IN JUNE 2019, I had the opportunity to handle the Ashmolean's replica of the Alfred Jewel (which I will refer to simply as "the Jewel"). The phenomenological experience of the Jewel was startlingly different to my expectation. The front of the Jewel is usually depicted floating in space, with the beast's head pointing down and the figure upright. Holding the Jewel that way, like an inverted teardrop, did not feel natural. Then I rotated the Jewel, holding it by the widest part with the beast's head pointing away from me. That felt right; it was comfortable. I was holding the Jewel the way a conductor holds her baton.[1] Holding the Jewel like a baton, both the teardrop shape and the bevelled sides of the Jewel made perfect practical sense. The bevelled sides assisted me to grip the Jewel between my finger and thumb. My thumb and forefinger rolled in slightly, which is a natural pincer grip. The teardrop shape concentrated the weight at the back of the Jewel. This is the widest part, where it is easiest to hold the tiny Jewel. These physical characteristics made it easy to clasp the Jewel securely while moving my hand around.

Figures 1 and 2 show the difference between clasping the Jewel like a baton, and clutching it in a fist. The Jewel is not normally depicted in use, which perhaps increases its enigmatic aura. Elaine Treharne has recently pointed out the enormous difference in the functionality of an object in a display case and an object that is handled; the display case imposes a barrier to what she calls "the integrated experience" of an object.[2] By way of demonstrating that barrier, consider this: we do not know how much the Jewel weighs. Its weight, fundamental to a phenomenological experience of any object, is not recorded.

Part of the Jewel's enigma lies in the absence of contemporary documentary accounts of it—who created it, who owned it, or why it was commissioned. The Jewel was accidentally uncovered in 1693 by a labourer digging for peat, on a site roughly 6.5 km from Athelney.[3] Alfred had close associa-

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1 Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 198; Pitt, "Fabulous Alfred Jewel."

2 Treharne, *Perceptions*, 7.

3 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 11.

tions with Athelney, in good times and bad. It was Alfred's last refuge in 878, from which he conducted guerrilla-style raids on the Vikings who had overrun Wessex (*ASC*, s.a. 878). It was also where he founded a monastery in gratitude for the recovery of his kingdom.[4] Most scholars cautiously link the Jewel to King Alfred and his reform program.

If we compare Wessex at the start of Alfred's reign and at the end of it, there is demonstrable change, significant reforms, in his community. These reforms continue their trajectory during the reigns of his children, Edward the Elder and Æthelflæd (Lady of the Mercians), and his grandson, Æthelstan. However, the documentary record about how those reforms unfolded, about the lived experience of reform, is sparse. The paucity of textual evidence means that there are questions about the *process* of Alfredian reform that have either not been asked in traditional historical scholarship, or have been deemed unanswerable from a lack of evidence. In fact, there is ample evidence that we can use productively to start to answer these questions—evidence which is artifactual and behavioural, and which provides new ways of thinking about the textual evidence for Alfredian reform. The Jewel is a case in point. One of the commonest approaches to the Jewel is to try to figure out what it *represents*. To explore the lived experience of Alfredian reform, I suggest that a better question is: "*What did the Jewel do?*" To explore what an object does, it is useful to consider its materiality (its material characteristics) and its relationality (context, associations).

The Jewel's Materiality

When considering the materiality of the Jewel, due weight should be given to the fact that its physical characteristics were deliberately chosen—the Jewel was created. The Jewel is tiny, a lot smaller than the impression given by its free-floating image. It is 64 mm long, 32 mm at its widest, and 13 mm thick. It consists of a teardrop-shaped natural quartz rock crystal overlaying a cloisonné enamel, bound together in an open gold fretwork frame. The enamel features a seated human figure. Both the cloisonné and the rock crystal are highly unusual in an Anglo-Saxon artifact.[5] Cloisonné enamel appears in high status Anglo-Saxon archaeological contexts from the seventh century onwards. It is a feature of the sumptuous grave goods in the Sutton Hoo

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4 Asser, ch. 92; Winterbottom and Thomson, *William of Malmesbury: Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, bk. 2, chap. 92, 313.

5 Webster, "*Aedificia nova,*" 101.

ship-burial, for example.[6] However, Anglo-Saxon cloisonné objects feature abstract patterns. There is no contemporary European exemplar for the cloisonné figure depicted in the Jewel, and no later English derivative of it.[7] The rock crystal was similarly novel, lacking both traceable precedent and later imitation. It may be reused Roman spolia.[8] Rock crystal is extremely rare in early medieval Britain. The other prominent example of roughly contemporary rock crystal, the Galloway hoard rock crystal jar, is also a repurposed crystal.[9] (The crystal in the Warminster jewel is a bead, also reused.)[10]

The rock crystal is bevelled, so that it is wider at its flat base than at its top surface. Inscribed in the gold framework are the words "+ÆLFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN" (+Alfred ordered me to be made). The Jewel has a sheet gold backing plate, with a tree-like pattern. At the narrow end of the crystal, sheet gold is fashioned into an intricate animal's head. Its jaws clasp a short gold tube, with a rivet inserted crossways at the end of the tube furthest from the head. The tube is empty, and gives no indication of what was originally held in place with the rivet.[11]

Soon after its discovery, it was suggested that the Jewel was an amulet.[12] If the Jewel were suspended from a chain threaded through the tube, then the figure would be displayed upside down. The cloisonné figure would surely have been created facing the other way up, if the Jewel was intended to hang down. Various other theories have been put forward for the Jewel: it might have adorned a rod of office, a royal helmet or a crown, or been used as a seal of office.[13] Using the Jewel as a seal would replicate the pattern on the back of the Jewel, which is not its finest workmanship, leaving the most impressive (and expensive) elements of design and craftsmanship underutilized. The inscription would not appear on a sealed document. There would be no need for the tube and rivet.

The slenderness of the tube, the use of sheet gold rather than a sturdy material where the Jewel was fastened to something else (making it a pressure point likely to fail), and the weight of the Jewel all militate against the

---

6 Bruce-Mitford, *Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, 2: chapter 10.

7 Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 200.

8 Kornbluth, "Alfred Jewel," 35.

9 I am grateful to Greg Waite for this suggestion. A full analysis of the Galloway hoard rock crystal jar is yet to be published. See "Galloway Hoard Rock Crystal Jar."

10 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 34–35.

11 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 12–17.

12 Keynes, "Discovery," 1–2.

13 Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 217; Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 197.

Jewel being affixed at the high point of a device like a staff, a crown or a helmet.[14] A brooch is theoretically possible, but neither the Jewel nor any similar objects (such as the Minster Lovell jewel, the Warminster jewel, and the Bowleaze Cove jewel) has any trace of the fittings necessary to fasten a brooch.[15] The tube and rivet are superfluous in terms of the Jewel's ornamentation; they are not a part of any beast's head in nature or legend. Although the tube and rivet were not part of the depiction of the animal, their inclusion was purposeful. These characteristics, deliberately chosen and therefore meaningful, become comprehensible when the Jewel is in action, rather than passively displayed.

Certain physical characteristics of the Jewel suggest that it was designed for practical use. The Jewel's shape facilitates it being held delicately, like a baton. The Jewel's gold fretwork and luminous crystal glow and catch the light, as the Jewel is moved in a pincer grip. The cloisonné figure is visible, if the Jewel is held in a pincer grip. The sumptuous materials, expert craftsmanship, and sheer *showmanship* of the Jewel strongly suggest that this was not a utilitarian device. Nevertheless, the flat back of the Jewel makes it apt to put the Jewel down on a page of a book, to mark a place on the page, perhaps while reading aloud. And if the tube held a narrow wand, secured by the rivet, then the Jewel could be used as a pointer.

Identifying the Jewel as an *æstel*

There is cogent documentary evidence which supports the interpretation of the Jewel as a pointer. At the end of the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*, in the context of plans to distribute the text for study, there is reference to an *æstel*:

> ond to ælcum biscepstole on minum rice wille ane onsendan; ond on ælcre bið an æstel, se bið on fiftegum mancessa.
>
> (and to each episcopal seat in my kingdom I intend to send one copy; and in each there will be a certain pointer which will be valued at fifty crowns.)[16]

The word *æstel* is rarely used in the Old English (OE) corpus, and its meaning has long been the subject of debate. The *Dictionary of Old English* records four usages, and tentatively links an *æstel* with a small piece of

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14 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 57n25; Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 26.

15 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 24.

16 *Pastoral Care*, 8–9.

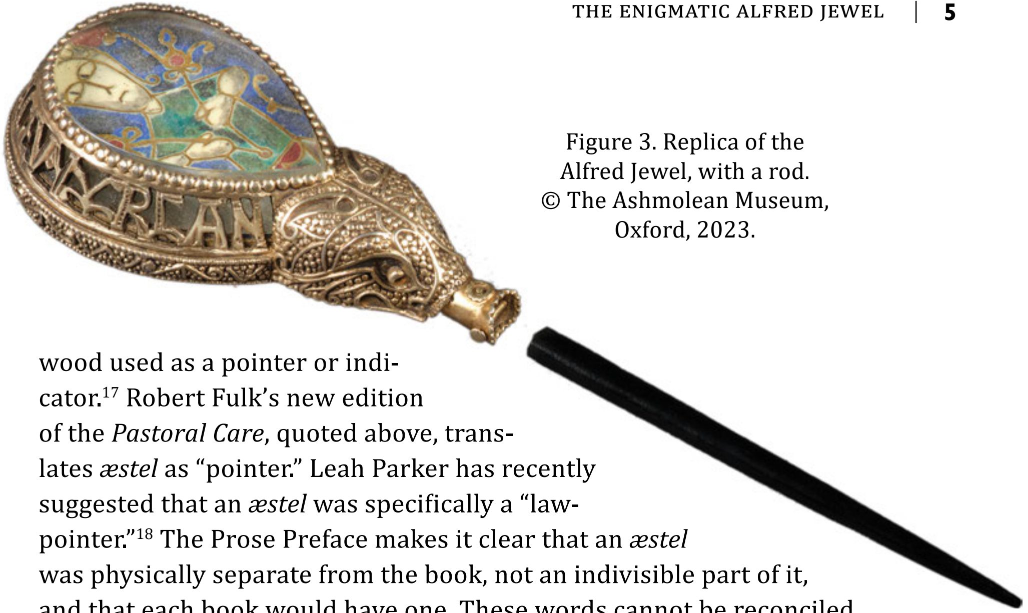

Figure 3. Replica of the Alfred Jewel, with a rod. © The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2023.

wood used as a pointer or indicator.[17] Robert Fulk's new edition of the *Pastoral Care*, quoted above, translates *æstel* as "pointer." Leah Parker has recently suggested that an *æstel* was specifically a "law-pointer."[18] The Prose Preface makes it clear that an *æstel* was physically separate from the book, not an indivisible part of it, and that each book would have one. These words cannot be reconciled with the suggestion that an *æstel* was an elaborate book-binding.[19] The explicit direction that book and *æstel* not be separated strongly implies that they were easily and temporarily separable, and arguably, that book and *æstel* could be used independently of each other. That is not the case for a book-binding.

The only surviving contemporary manuscript of the *Pastoral Care* (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries [Bodleian], MS Hatton 20) does not provide any clues. However, a later version of the *Pastoral Care* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 12) contains a handwritten Latin gloss written above the word *æstel* in the Preface: the words *festuca* and *indicatorium* (fol. 3r), and *festucam* (fol. 3v).[20] The gloss in CCCC, MS 12 has been ascribed to the thirteenth-century scribe known as the "tremulous hand of Worcester."[21] The "tremulous hand" also glossed Hatton 20 (as did Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and later Archbishop of York, and John Joscelyn, assistant to Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury), but not in relation to *æstel*.[22] The words *æstel* and *indicatorium* are paired in Ælfric's *Glossary*.[23] The words *indica-*

17 *Dictionary of Old English*.

18 Parker, "*Æstel* and Divine Law." See also Faulkner, *Wealth*, 40.

19 Collins, "King Alfred's *Æstel*," 48–50.

20 Page, "Yet Another Note," 11–12.

21 Franzen, *Tremulous Hand*, 60–61; Ker, *Pastoral Care*, 25.

22 Ker, *Pastoral Care*, 24; Page, "Sixteenth-Century Reception."

23 Page, "Yet Another Note," 14.

torium and *festuca* may mean something similar to "indicator" and "rod."[24] If the Jewel was created with a short slender rod of wood or bone, then it could be used as an aid to keeping one's place when reading the plain and largely unpunctuated text of the *Pastoral Care*, particularly if the text was being read aloud to an audience. It could be used as an indicator or pointer.

If an *æstel* was a pointer intended to be used in conjunction with a text, then the Jewel (with a slender rod fixed to the tube by the rivet) was apt for that purpose. Figure 3 shows the replica in proximity to a narrow rod. The salient features of the Jewel are all consistent with its use as a pointer, and indeed there is no feature of the Jewel which is at odds with that purpose.

The Jewel's Relationality

The Jewel's materiality thus provides important insights into what it *could* do. Thinking through the context of the Jewel, its relationality, deepens our understanding of what the Jewel may have actually done. My argument proceeds on the assumption that the Jewel was created during King Alfred's reign and on his commission.

When Alfred ascended the West Saxon throne in 871, it was four years since Northumbria had fallen to Viking conquest. The Vikings were eyeing up the southern kingdoms and testing their resolve.[25] Only Wessex successfully fended them off. At the heart of its success was an extensive and astonishingly innovative military system that demanded the commitment of vast resources of labour and materials. At the same time, there were significant social innovations in education and justice. Early medieval Christian communities threatened by Viking depredation universally interpreted their woes as divine punishment meted out by a wrathful God, and increased their religious observance in response. Alfred's prescribed response to this existential Viking threat was unprecedented in its focus on action rather than supplication—the reorientation of the community back to God by the acquisition and application of practical Christian wisdom to the governance of the kingdom.

The Jewel was produced during the period in which this novel prescription (the cornerstone of Alfredian ideology) was articulated, disseminated, and inculcated in the areas of justice, adult literacy and education, and defence. At the centre of these reforms was the king. Alfred must have played

24 Latham and Howlett, *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, 933, 1325; Latham, *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List*, 190, 244.

25 Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms*, 96–97; Christie, "Creating Defended Communities," 54.

a pivotal role in the formulation of Alfredian ideology and the deployment of that ideology to facilitate and drive societal reforms, even though we cannot calibrate his role precisely. The king's centrality in a properly functioning Christian kingdom as envisaged by Alfredian ideology is one key indicator of close royal involvement in the development of Alfredian ideology. It makes intuitive sense that a specific area of reform (such as literacy, the administration of justice, or the application of Christian wisdom to day-to-day life) may have been dear to the hearts of individual councillors or subsets of the king's advisors. However, no one benefited as immediately from the package of reforms as the king, because Alfredian reform was fundamentally about the governance of the kingdom. No one else was in a position to authorize any of these reforms or to meld them into a coherent program. Although we lack the corroborative evidence, the breadth and extent of Alfredian reform means that it had to pivot around the king. It is in this context of change and of action that the Jewel was created, if it is an *æstel*.

Intriguingly, there are artifacts which have features in common with the Jewel. None of them comes close to the Jewel in terms of materials, design, and workmanship. The objects most often linked with the Jewel are the Minster Lovell jewel, the Warminster jewel, and the Bowleaze Cave jewel. The Bidford-on-Avon object, the Aughton object, and the Borg object also share features with the Jewel, but they are of significantly lesser craftsmanship and value. These are all fully described by David Hinton in his monograph on the Jewel.[26] (There are also a number of other objects which have come to light as a result of the Portable Antiquities Scheme, whose connection to the Jewel is much more uncertain. I discuss these more fully in chapter 7, when I revisit the Jewel.)

While there is an ongoing debate about classification of the individual objects listed above, there are characteristics which they all share: the tube and rivet, the absence of any other fitting, the use of gold instead of more readily available silver. Three characteristics aside, the objects could be mapped as a series of Venn diagrams, sharing a set of finite characteristics, but not all alike. There are patterns in their materials and manufacture which strongly suggest a link between some of the objects, but that link may be independent emulation. It is not necessary to assume that all these objects were commissioned or created by the same person over time, or by different people at the same time. It is hard to resist the tentative conclusion that the Jewel was copied. These objects were deliberately created; they had a purpose. It is impossible to discern the purpose behind the creation of

26 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 31–36.

individual copies, or to track their circulation, but emulation was presumably part of the motivation.

Just as there is no unequivocal evidence which links these objects, there is no incontrovertible proof of their usage. A coherent interpretation of these objects must account for the features which all the objects share: the absence of any evidence of fittings other than the tube and rivet, the narrow diameter of the tubes, the comparatively flimsy construction of the tubes, the heaviness of the objects relative to the tubes, and the flat backs of the objects. Most interpretations revolve around the tube and rivet.[27] It is the tube and rivet protruding from the beast's jaws which strongly suggest that the Jewel was an *æstel*. What, then, was the Jewel's role in Alfredian reform?

What Did the Jewel *Do*?

I argue that the Jewel was an active agent of persuasion in the Alfredian project of reorienting the West Saxon community back to God, to re-earn divine favour and avert annihilation at the hands of the Vikings. To re-earn God's favour, Alfred's people had to apply the principles of Christian wisdom in everyday life. The Alfredian version of Christian wisdom focused on principles connected to good governance of the kingdom and the social order. This concept of Christian wisdom had profound political and social consequences for Alfred's people. I use the expression "reorienting the community back to God" throughout the book, but I always mean it as encompassing the good governance which results from the application of the Alfredian concept of Christian wisdom. Reorientation had significant political and social dimensions.

Alfred was not in a position to coerce his people to adopt his reforms; he had to persuade them. The Jewel acted on multiple levels to persuade Alfred's elites to opt in to his reform program, and to do as he asked. Objects and behaviours can be powerful agents in the expression and inculcation of an ideology.

A modern analogy may help to illuminate the point. Donald Trump blazed his way to the Oval Office in 2016. His ideology was a necessary part of his success, but not sufficient on its own. When we think of how "Trumpian" ideology was disseminated, certain things spring to mind: the extraordinary interactive rallies, the red caps emblazoned with MAGA—acronym for the Trumpian catch cry "Make America Great Again"—, the citations of American patriotism and exceptionalism, and the novel use of social media. The

27 Keynes, "Discovery," 5.

catch cry referenced a particular worldview, encapsulating a specific perception of America's past and a desire to regain lost prominence. It was simplistic and easily understood—and it fitted neatly on a distinctive cap or t-shirt. Wearing that slogan advertised a particular identity, a set of values and beliefs, and identified the wearer to others. Trump's rallies were high-octane events which made their participants feel validated, powerful, and enthused, and allowed them to bond with like-minded others. Social media was used innovatively and extensively. Objects and behaviours overlapped in the inculcation of Trumpian ideology and in the voluntary adoption of a new communal identity—Trump's America.

We can more easily discern the agency of objects and behaviours in this contemporary analogy because we witnessed it unfold. The Trumpian phenomenon provides useful insights into the process by which ideology can be communicated and absorbed. Of course, a direct parallel between modern and medieval societies cannot be assumed. Nevertheless, thinking through the agency of objects and practices in our own time provides some useful guidance on the kinds of questions to ask, the things to look for, in an analysis of Alfred's society. This is why political sociologist Michael Mann advocates "analysing specific situations with the intuitive and empathic understanding given by our own social experience."[28] Thinking through the agency of objects and behaviours in Alfredian Wessex provides new perspectives on hierarchy, power, and community, and how they may have interacted. This has real value: "when the Anglo-Saxon historian is frustrated by the lack of firm evidence, it is good to be reminded how much can still be left to the powers of our historical imagination."[29]

Thinking through the way that the Jewel may have exercised its persuasive agency illuminates Alfredian reform from the perspective of those who participated in it. That is the aim of this book—to examine the reception, the lived experience of Alfredian reform. To do so, I use theoretical frameworks which do not depend upon the written word to explore how change occurred.

28 Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, 3–4.

29 Keynes, "Anglo-Saxon Entries," 119.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

ALFRED IS THE only English king to be styled "the Great"—but the accolade was not bestowed by his contemporaries, although they admired him. The legend of Alfred was a product of English imperialism, identifying the seeds of its greatness in early medieval England.[1] Seeing Alfred clearly is difficult, as Simon Keynes and Barbara Yorke have demonstrated.[2] In his book on Alfred, Daniel Anlezark says that he "would like to find the Alfred before he was "great," the Alfred who lived and died across the second half of the ninth century, in a material and cultural world very remote from ours, but facing many of the same issues."[3] His emphasis is on exploring Alfred as he lived. While seeing Alfred in his own world is difficult, seeing those who peopled his world is even more problematic.

Alfred looms so large over any inquiry into ninth-century Wessex that it can be difficult to see past him. But as Julia Crick points out, the king could not feast, fight, pray, or converse alone, and the members of the aristocracy with whom he interacted "were or must have been instrumental in extending his power beyond his presence."[4] The shifting, subtle relationship between Alfred and the men he relied upon to govern his kingdom is critical to our understanding of Alfredian reform and Alfred's kingdom. This book swivels the focus on Alfredian reform from Alfred to his elites, examining the process of reform from their perspective. It ranges beyond the sparse documentary record, using assemblage theory and social practice theory to investigate the persuasive agency of objects and behaviours and reveal their role in the reception of Alfredian reform.

There are lingering historiographical assumptions about "the structures of social action," about how political power was generated, wielded, and confirmed in the early medieval period.[5] A simple top-down model of political power is flawed. It fails to acknowledge that those lower down in the

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1 Yorke, "Alfredism."

2 Keynes, "Cult of King Alfred"; Yorke, "Alfredism."

3 Anlezark, *Alfred*, 2–3.

4 Crick, "Nobility," 414–15.

5 Innes, *State and Society,* 9.

hierarchy might have been able to choose how far to obey, might have had wriggle-room to resist quietly or to comply only partially. If there is scope for gradations of compliance in a particular context of power, then we need to account for what might have made people choose to do more than they could be compelled to do. An early medieval king led because he was followed. His power was constrained by his need to carry his principal men with him.[6] The leading men of a kingdom were essential participants in the formulation and implementation of royal policy.[7] Alfred lacked the political authority to insist that his reforms be implemented. If he could not compel his elites to enact his reform program, how did he persuade them to adopt the values and identity embedded in Alfredian ideology, and to do as he asked?

This question goes to the heart of the distribution and exercise of political power during Alfred's reign. It has implications for the reigns of his immediate successors, as they consolidated royal and military power and took the fight up to the Vikings (I have chosen to use the term "Vikings," as it is the most consistently used compendious expression in the scholarship—a convenient form of shorthand). The question is also important because it allows us to look more closely at the lived experience of Alfredian reform, to "construct their lifeways."[8] As Julian Thomas notes: "We emphatically need a past that is more colourful and more peopled than those presently on offer."[9]

The Nature of Power

To effect societal change, in any context, requires power. The implementation of Alfredian reform required the exercise of power. Power is a highly contested concept.[10] John Turner writes that "we use the term in ordinary parlance confident that we know what it means, until we are asked to define it."[11] Turner's theory of power identifies psychological group formation—the development of a shared social identity (with shared beliefs, theories, and values)—as the wellspring of power. Ingroup identification leads to group processes of influence, cooperation, and cohesion. From this shared social identity, three dimensions of power emerge: persuasion, authority, and coercion. Persuasion influences the judgments and values of others,

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6 Althoff, *Family, Friends*, 8, 103, 112.

7 Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 105.

8 Deetz and Scott, "Documents, Historiography," 110.

9 Thomas, "Reconfiguring the Social," 155.

10 Reed, "Power," 195.

11 Turner, "Nature of Power," 5.

so that they act volitionally, as willing agents, making individual choices. Authority is the voluntary vesting of decision-making in a specific individual, person, or role by a group, whose members thereby relinquish the right to make individual decisions. Coercion is the control of others against their will.[12] This is not the only formulation of power which has value for the early medieval period. Isaac Reed parses power slightly differently. His typology consists of relational power, discursive power, and performative power.[13] His concept of relational power approximates to Turner's notion of authority, and discursive power is a form of persuasion.

Discursive power, according to Reed, is used to reconstitute the social and political world by "shaping the perceptions of interests" of participants.[14] Language is heavily implicated in this work—creating as well as reflecting changing beliefs and values. Reed's focus on shaping perceptions resonates with aspects of Steven Lukes's typology of power. Lukes suggests that power can operate to submerge and smooth over latent conflict, so that the competing self-interests of those seeking to exercising power and those who comply remain unidentified and unacknowledged by all concerned.[15]

The effective exercise of relational power or discursive power results in concrete actions; those actions provide the visible proof of the exercise of power. Performative power, according to Reed, means more than these consequential actions. Performative power refers to the "situated effectiveness of acts themselves as movers of the world."[16] This has particular resonance for my analysis of Alfredian military reform, specifically the feedback loop between military innovation and Alfredian ideology.

Stuart Airlie's monograph on the Carolingians is an example of the insights which can be gained by paying close attention to power and how it was successfully wielded. He analyzes the complex, mutually constitutive relationship between the Carolingian dynasty and the aristocracy. In particular, he focuses on "symbolic" rather than "coercive" power—shaping perceptions so that others align their self-interests with yours, and therefore want to do what you want them to do. Symbolic power is constructed and must be carefully maintained, even while it appears to be the natural order.[17] By its very nature, symbolic power is relational. It requires the active partic-

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12 Turner, "Nature of Power," 8, 11.

13 Reed, "Power," 203.

14 Reed, "Power," 205.

15 Lukes, *Power*, 33.

16 Reed, "Power," 207.

17 Airlie, *Making and Unmaking*, 6.

ipation of those who are to obey; such participation may consist of express affirmations of authority and legitimacy as well as actions which perform relationships of power. Critically, the construction and maintenance of Carolingian dynastic power was a communal effort: "kings did not write their own charters, mint their own coins, build their own palaces, compose their own prayers for the safety of the royal family or paint the impressive manuscript pictures of rulers in majesty."[18] Paying close attention to the way that Alfredian ideology was articulated and disseminated, and the way that his elites responded to his reform program and participated in it will bring to the fore the way that power was exercised in Alfred's kingdom.

Alfred's relationship with his elites is thus an important factor in the *process* of Alfredian reform. Alfred's hold on the throne was not as secure as the contemporary sources depicted. This helps to explain the methods chosen to achieve reforms. There was substantial risk in allowing concerted resistance to foment; persuasion was the safest and surest way to achieve reform.

Problems with the Alfredian Sources

The contemporary sources on Alfred's reign were written and distributed under his patronage. Unsurprisingly, they provide a very selective account of how Alfred came to the throne, his dynasty's history, and his authority over his thegns. Both the *ASC* and Asser depict Alfred's accession as natural and assured, free from conflict or challenge. Janet Nelson encapsulates their characterization: Alfred was "papally-appointed, parentally-preferred, the nobility's choice even before his brother's [predecessor's] death."[19] This highly skewed depiction has significant implications for a consideration of Alfred's relationships with his magnates. The assumption that Alfred took and held the throne as a matter of inevitability and with the ongoing unanimous consent of his elites effectively masks their ability to contest and resist any aspect of his rule (as well as obscuring the unlikely sequence of events that led to the youngest of five brothers ascending the throne). As a result, the question of aristocratic response to Alfredian reform can sometimes slide from view.

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18 Airlie, *Making and Unmaking*, 17.

19 Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family," 63.

Anglo-Saxon Kingship and Succession: An Overview

There were no clearly established rules governing succession in any of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Any brother, son or (arguably) grandson of a previous king was a prince, an "*ætheling*"—and in Anglo-Saxon custom, all *æthelings* were throne-worthy.[20] The term *ætheling* carried no connotation of a designated successor, but was rather a marker of eligibility for the throne.[21] An Anglo-Saxon king ruled with the active consent of his elites, lay and ecclesiastical. Their acceptance of, and submission to, a particular *ætheling* on the death of the king both marked and formed part of the act of succession.[22]

While a king might favour a particular candidate, and take steps to enhance his preferred successor's prospects of securing the crown, other factors were always in play. There was rarely only one eligible candidate for the throne. *Æthelings* close to the throne could span two generations—the reigning king's sons, and his brothers and their sons. Intermarriage between members of the *stirps regia* and prominent aristocratic families frequently complicated issues of aristocratic consent and gave rise to factions vying for the throne.[23] Who succeeded at any given point depended upon the ability of the existing king to secure the loyalty of his elites for his preferred successor against any other contenders for the throne, and the wealth and influence of their supporters.

Every dynasty trod a fine line between providing enough candidates to allow for contingencies and avoiding internecine quarrels over the throne.[24] The problem was not confined to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The descendants of Charlemagne fought each other bitterly over their inheritances.[25] The management of family expectations and rivalries was "an acid test of early medieval kingship."[26] Difficult or precarious times were more likely to foment or exacerbate succession rivalries; other grievances and insecurities within a kingdom could manifest themselves as disputes over succession.[27]

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20 Abels, "Royal Succession," 84; Dumville, "Ætheling," 12, 17.

21 Dumville, "Ætheling," 6.

22 Abels, "Royal Succession," 84.

23 Dumville, "Ætheling," 24–25.

24 Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family," 61; Foot, "Dynastic Strategies."

25 Innes, "Charlemagne's Will"; Nelson, "Kingship and Empire."

26 Nelson, "Reconstructing a Royal Family," 48.

27 Stafford, "King's Wife," 12.

Wessex was relatively small in size.[28] However, during the reign of Alfred's grandfather, Wessex replaced Mercia as overlord of Kent and the East and South Saxons, by the voluntary submission of those peoples.[29] The West Saxon royal house thereafter ruled an extended kingdom of considerably enlarged resources, albeit a kingdom of disparate peoples, who traditionally thought of themselves as separate *gentes*.[30] The nature of this overlordship was fragile and reversible, making the extended kingdom more liable to fissure under the pressure of rival claims for a share of it.

The unexpected marriage of Alfred's father, Æthelwulf, to a young Frankish princess (Judith) in 856 sparked a rebellion by his eldest son which resulted in just such a partition of the kingdom between father and son. It is distinctly possible that Æthelbald construed his father's marriage to a wife of childbearing age as an unacceptable threat to his own ambitions.[31] After Æthelwulf's death, an agreement was reached between his three remaining sons—Æthelberht, Æthelred, and Alfred—whereby the kingdom would be reunited, and ruled by each of the three brothers in turn.[32] This unusual arrangement for fraternal succession depended upon goodwill and trust between siblings, as the throne was passed from eldest to youngest.[33] Fraternal succession does not extinguish the prospect of contestation for the throne. Arguably, it simply postpones that contest to the next generation, because all the sons of the various brothers, the kings of the previous generation, are eligible for the throne and have an ostensibly equal claim.[34]

It is possible to discern the sensitivities surrounding this fragile arrangement in the contemporary documents. During their reigns, both Æthelberht and Æthelred needed to assert the legitimacy of their pre-eminence over their younger brothers, who were potential kings-in-waiting. Younger brothers are consistently identified in charter attestation clauses as *filius regis*; they are not described as designated heirs.[35] Alfred, when he finally gained the throne, needed to assert the legitimacy of his accession over the claims of the next generation, his nephews, sons of his older brother and predecessor.

28 Nelson, "Alfred of Wessex," 699.

29 Yorke, *Wessex*, 94–95.

30 Abels, "Royal Succession," 92; Keynes, "Control of Kent," 115–16.

31 Yorke, *Wessex*, 98; Stafford, "King's Wife," 17.

32 *EHD*, no. 96, 534–37.

33 Sheppard, "King's Family," 416; Stafford, "King's Wife," 19.

34 Stafford, "King's Wife," 10–12.

35 S 327; S 329; S 331–33; S 340; S 1201; S 356.

Although the annalists of the *ASC* chose to portray Alfred's succession as inevitable and his reign as harmonious, the *ASC* also provides abundant evidence of self-interested opportunism, conflict, and betrayal. As Janet Thormann puts it: "West Saxon hegemony was from the start continuously challenged and reasserted in response to contingent events."[36] What emerges from the evidence is a clear sense of the contingency of Alfred's accession, and the fragility of his ongoing hold over his extended kingdom. Alfred was the obvious candidate for the throne when Æthelred unexpectedly died, given the Viking incursions. He had already proved himself to be a competent military leader against that enemy while his brother was alive, and given the young age of his nephews, Æthelred's children, they could not be considered for military command.

However, Alfred's continued hold on the entirety of the kingdom, staring down his nephews, and successfully managing the expectations of his own children as they became adults, was not assured. Alfred doubtless remembered his elder brother usurping their father's throne and was old enough to have understood at the time that an internecine civil war loomed as a consequence. As king, Alfred faced the potential for discontent from overlooked *æthelings* now adult.

Outright rebellion (by Alfred's nephew, Æthelwold) broke out only after Alfred's death. However, the wider context, in particular the existence of challenges and self-interested actions immediately before and after Alfred's reign, gives ample reason to infer that the balance of power between Alfred and his magnates was finely poised and perhaps readily altered, and that he could never take their loyalty and their wholehearted support for granted. That is why the approval of the witan was so carefully recorded—in Alfred's will, in the Alfred-Guthrum Treaty, and in the prologue to the *domboc*.[37] His resort to their approval on critical issues, and the careful recording of that approval on issues likely to be contentious into the future, suggest an awareness that power was mutable. The evidence also suggests that Alfred's elites were aware of the fluidity of power, of the potential for evasion, defiance, and even rebellion. This generalized latent awareness of the mutability of power shaped the relationship between Alfred and his principal men. It informed the implementation of Alfredian reform. And it is a factor to be considered in assessing how Alfred's aristocracy responded to his reforms, and why they chose to embrace them.

36 Thormann, "Chronicle Poems," 78.

37 Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 171–72.

The documentary record provides only sparse evidence from the perspective of Alfred's elites. The difficulties with the extant texts in the early medieval period generally—the small quantity, the particular and confined worldviews of those who wrote in this period, and the vagaries of preservation of textual evidence—are well rehearsed. The only extant narrative on Alfredian reform written from the perspective of one of Alfred's elites is Asser's *Life* of Alfred. Asser is acknowledged to be a problematic source. Keynes describes Asser's *Life* (along with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*) as "a mixture of panegyric and propaganda, as hype, not history."[38] While acknowledging that Asser must be treated circumspectly, I concur with Patrick Wormald's assessment of Asser's value: "His account may not be dispassionate, but losses in objectivity should be balanced if not outweighed by gains in empathy."[39]

Attributing it all to Alfred

Alongside the problem of scant and partisan sources, there is an enduring scholarly controversy about how much of Alfredian reform can be attributed to Alfred the man, and how much was done by others in his circle—men such as Asser and Plegmund, and others we cannot identify. It is a question that seems to engross literary scholars more than historians, perhaps because nobody expects that the king single-handedly put into practice changes to education and defence.

It is reasonably clear that in the face of the existential threat posed by the Vikings, King Alfred made a deliberate choice to try something different. He did not follow the path of the Mercian king Burgred, who conceded his kingdom to the Vikings and fled to Rome. Alfred the king "made the difference," in that he created the network of individuals, the Alfredian circle.[40] That does not mean that the king personally "did" everything or expressly authorized all aspects of Alfredian reform. I am going to use "Alfred" as a convenient shorthand for a collaboration between members of King Alfred's circle, without trying to delineate which individuals did what, or to calibrate the degree to which the king was personally involved in the minutiae of reform. Throughout this book, I will use "Alfred" when I am referring to this corporate entity, and Alfred/King Alfred when I am referring to the individual.

38 Keynes, "Age of Alfred," 254.

39 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 118.

40 I am grateful to Daniel Anlezark for this pithy phrasing.

The king's role as fulcrum for Alfredian ideology and reform needs to be considered separately from his role in the production of the Alfredian texts (which I identify below). The issue of authorship of these texts remains unresolved. There is considerable scholarly debate about what constitutes medieval authorship; there is a body of scholarly literature about the identification of specific authors for specific Alfredian texts. Even within the broad group who argue that King Alfred was personally involved in the production of the Alfredian texts, opinions on the nature and extent of his involvement differ. Opinions range from an "ultra-positivist" position (Alfred was the "formative mind" behind the translations and personally laboured on the task of translating) to the "ultra-sceptical" position (Alfred simply provided a conducive environment for like-minded scholars and was pleased to lend his name to their efforts).[41]

Consistent with my approach to Alfredian reform as a collaborative project undertaken by a network of people revolving around King Alfred, I argue for a collegial and distributed form of authorship of the Alfredian texts. By "Alfredian texts," I mean the *Pastoral Care*, the Old English translation of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* (henceforth *OE Boethius*), *Soliloquies*, *Dialogues*, the *Prose Psalms*, the *ASC*, and the *domboc*. I argue that the OE *Dialogues* may have been a harbinger of the Alfredian reform program. A corporate form of authorship of these texts is not inconsistent with the express attribution of authorship to King Alfred in the framing pieces of some of them, and by later commentators. Early medieval listeners and readers had a different understanding of authorship to modern audiences. I do not suggest that Alfred's individual contribution was negligible—far from it. I think that we can get a sense of his influence by considering how he himself learned, and what he learned, on his personal quest for wisdom—a quest that was itself collegial, not undertaken as a solitary endeavour. The Alfredian texts were a product of Alfredian thinking as well as an agent of Alfredian persuasion. In that respect, Alfred did indeed "make the difference."

My conceptualization of Alfredian authorship as collegial and distributed can account for some of the objections scholars have raised to a sole author/translator of these texts—the disparate nature of the source texts and the linguistic and stylistic differences in their translations. My argument on devolved and collaborative production opens the way for the Old English translations of Orosius's *Historiae adversus paganos* (*OE Orosius*) and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (*OE Bede*) to be reconsidered as part of the Alfredian canon. My examination of the way that Alfred learned also

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41 Lemke, *Translation of Bede*, 115–16.

leads me to propose a new way of conceptualizing the links between the texts in the Alfredian canon. I argue that a range of texts suitable for different audiences engaged in various social practices were produced. These texts are linked by their aptness to convey elements of Christian wisdom about good governance in variable circumstances of reception—built-in flexibility of usage.

It follows that if we are to investigate the reception of Alfredian reform, to illuminate the process by which his ideology was imbibed, accepted, and acted upon, then we cannot rely upon the extant texts alone. We need to widen the frame of our inquiry, to consider other available forms of evidence, such as objects and behaviours. Incorporating different forms of evidence productively requires us to let go of old historiographical preferences for the written word. Text has no innate merit as a form of evidence, and documents should not hold a privileged position, ontologically, to other forms of evidence.

Investigating non-textual evidence requires different analytical techniques to those used to interpret the written record. We can borrow those theoretical frameworks from other disciplines. This is an issue best addressed explicitly, notwithstanding Sarah Foot's acknowledgement of "the significant resistance to theory which characterizes this corner of our theory-resistant discipline."[42] Objects are not obvious, transparent, passive. The old adage that the spade does not speak but neither does it lie is misleading on both counts. An oversized crucifix in a teenage girl's grave dated to the 1980s is meaningful, but its meaning requires consideration, not assumptions. It may be an expression of the deceased's personal religious conviction, or a love for the music and fashion of the pop singer Madonna, or something else entirely. Thomas reminds us that "we cannot take the existence of objects for granted; we need to attend to the conditions of their materialisation."[43]

Adding new theories to the scholarly toolkit has real value. Assemblage theory's focus on the connections between things provides a way of exploring how objects, people, places, and ideas interact. These interactions often slide from our view unless we have eyewitness accounts or documents that record subjective, lived experience. Social practice theory can help us to understand the "collective development of modes of appropriate conduct in everyday life."[44] The models hail from different disciplines but share a

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42 Foot, "Historiography," 126.

43 Thomas, "Reconfiguring the Social," 153.

44 Warde, "Consumption," 146.

common interest in the nature of agency. I use assemblage theory and social practice theory to explore the reception of Alfredian reform. I focus on "thing-power" and routinized ways of doing things to analyze why Alfred's elites chose to do as he asked. The central tenet of my argument is that there was much more to Alfredian reform than a carefully crafted ideology. Ideology was necessary but not sufficient to drive change.

Assemblage Theory: Conceptualizing the Agency of Things

Assemblage theory is a subset of "new materialism," the exploration of how humans and things interact. At the heart of assemblage theory is the concept of object agency—how things do and bring about. The phrase "to do and to bring about" is deliberately open-ended. The central premise of assemblage theory is that things are not inert, passive containers.[45] Things are "indispensable constituents of the social fabric."[46] This is not a form of animism. Acknowledging the agency of objects to do and to bring about does not require an implication of intentionality or an attribution of consciousness. Assemblage theory explores how agency emerges from the interactions between humans and non-humans (animals, plants, objects, biological processes, landscapes, and places).[47] It is therefore a post-humanist theoretical approach. The notion of "thing-power" has been explored in relation to objects both real and fictional.[48] Jacqueline Fay has recently used new materialism to explore the production of "Englishness" through "encounters between early medieval bodies and a host of material entities."[49]

Agency is not an innate quality of an object. Object agency is an emergent quality. By that I mean that when things are brought into association with people, places, ideas, and other things, agency emerges from the relationships between them. We harness the emergent agency of objects in our everyday lives without a second thought. Cookbooks are a good example.

The Australian Country Women's Association cookbook is an iconic Australian book. It is also an assemblage. Bound up in this cookbook are mid-twentieth-century ideas about food and nutrition, the relationship between

45 Jones and Boivin, "Malice of Inanimate Objects," 337; Crellin, *Change and Archaeology*, 162.

46 Olsen, *In Defense of Things*, 37–38; Downes, Holloway, and Randles, "Introduction," 11.

47 Harris, "Becoming Post-Human," 18.

48 Miller-Bonney, Franklin, and Johnson, *Incomplete Archaeologies*; Paz, *Nonhuman Voices*; Hostetter, "Disruptive Things in *Beowulf*"; Reddan, "Thinking through Things."

49 Fay, *Materializing Englishness*, 4.

food and the land, and conventional social roles. Family and community connections and memories may be embedded in a treasured copy of this cookbook, instantiated by marginal notes in different hands, food splatter marks, and dog-eared corners on the pages of favourite recipes. A modern cookbook, say one of the many inspired by the late Dr. Michael Mosley, has a different set of components: modern medical science of nutrition and human biology, different technologies of cooking, changing social rules about food, and different sources of food. Two objects, same genre, but vastly different assemblages.

Assemblage theory focuses on relationality, on the "affects and effects" of the deliberate bringing into association of diverse objects, people, landscape, and ideas.[50] This concept borrows particularly from the theoretical work of Deleuze and Guattari.[51] Ideas and beliefs can be actants; practices and processes can equally be part of an assemblage.[52] A theoretical model which focuses on the collaboration between disparate elements has great explanatory power.[53] Part of its usefulness lies in its insistence that an assemblage is an alloy—not simply the aggregate of its parts, but something new and different from them. This difference stems from the interplay between the components in an assemblage—their lively hum.

For example, in chapter 5, I analyze the persuasive power of the Alfredian texts as objects, as text-bodies. "Text-body" is a phrase coined by Jane Bennett—a shorthand for the distributive network of words, readers, senses, and space.[54] The analytical focus is not on the content of the Alfredian texts, the message they contained, but on the recursive connections between the text-bodies, the people who handled them, how they were accessed, and the cultural constructs which may have shaped people's responses to these objects. The agency of Alfredian text-bodies emerged from these connections, from the dynamic relationships between specific things, people, places, and ideas.

No actant, certainly no human, exists in isolation from other actants. Agency is distributed between actants in any assemblage, although it may not be distributed evenly. Actants interact in dynamic and non-linear ways.

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50 Hamilakis and Jones, "Archaeology and Assemblage," 83; Lucas, *Archaeological Record*, 167–68.

51 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus.*

52 Harris, "Becoming Post-Human," 23; Franklin et al., "Introduction," ix.

53 Knutson, "Itinerant Assemblages," 815. For recent examples, see: Kay, "Baby in the Brick" and Averett, "Beyond Representation."

54 Bennett, "Systems and Things," 232.

Actants form circuits, "in which effect and cause alternate position and redound on each other." As an assemblage is fundamentally different from its constituent parts, it follows that the agency of an assemblage—its capacity to produce action—is different from that of its parts.[55]

Given that object agency emerges from the relationships between the components of an assemblage, it also follows that as those components change over time, the agency of the assemblage itself may alter. People die, technologies develop, regimes fall, and new ideas circulate. Assemblage theory eschews essences and final, fixed forms in favour of flow—a constant state of flux which is nevertheless historically contingent.[56] Any analysis of an assemblage has to slide the focus from the qualities of a material phenomenon at a specific point in time to its changing, unfolding, flow of relations.[57] For the purpose of analysis, we first artificially freeze the assemblage *in* time, as if putting it under a microscope for a biopsy, then adjust the focus to consider the phenomenon as it changes *through* time. Social practice theory has an equivalent concept, called "zooming in" and "zooming out" on a practice, like switching the focal length on a camera.[58] As with assemblages, it is helpful to take a snapshot of the social practice first, "frozen" in time for close analysis, before lengthening the focus to see how the practice emerges, changes, and perhaps decays.[59]

Why Use Social Practice Theory as well as Assemblage Theory?

In order to understand the process of Alfredian reform, we need to give the objects of Alfredian reform their due, to acknowledge their agency and efficacy. However, we also need to analyze human behaviour—what Alfred's elites actually did. Social practice theory investigates meaning-making, identity-forming, and order-producing activities.[60] In chapter 6, "Social Practices," the focus is on the behaviours through which Alfredian ideology was imbibed, accepted, and acted upon. I argue that Alfred created a

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55 Knutson, "Itinerant Assemblages," 807; Harris, "More than Representation," 90.

56 Harris, "More Than Representation," 89; Crellin, *Change and Archaeology*, 164.

57 Fowler and Harris, "Enduring Relations"; Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 97–121.

58 Nicolini, "Zooming In and Zooming Out"; Nicolini, "Zooming: Studying Practices"; see also the essays on zooming in and zooming out in Spaargaren, Weenink, and Lamers, *Practice Theory and Research*.

59 Schatzki, "Edge of Change."

60 Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 8.

new social practice of lifelong learning and modified the existing social practices of education and the administration of justice. I examine how Alfredian social practices were "bundled," amplifying their agency.

Social practice theory makes humans the centre of attention while acknowledging that they interpret and manipulate their world through material culture. It sites the social (to paraphrase Theodore Schatzki) in human interaction with materiality.[61] Social practice theory accords with assemblage theory in its acknowledgment of object agency but differs from assemblage theory in its insistence on human exceptionalism as an actant.

Social Practice Theory: Conceptualizing Agency

Schatzki defines agency as a "doing." A doing is "an event, an occurrence, an accomplishment or a carrying out." Agency is not limited to humans, and does not imply intentionality, merely responsibility or causality.[62] Defining agency as a "doing" avoids any inference of intentionality. It is an umbrella term which allows for different ways of acting, different ways of being agential.[63]

Social practice theory is usually applied to the modern, Western, world in the areas of science, climate change, and sustainability policy, education, and consumption.[64] A theory used to investigate aspects of the modern, Western, world might seem a curious framework for an inquiry into a very different kind of community over a thousand years in the past. There are, however, significant advantages to using social practice theory to examine Alfredian Wessex. One of the principal benefits of social practice theory as a framework of analysis is that it does not champion either the individual or the structure.[65] This makes it particularly apt for the early medieval period, which did not have the structures and institutions of the modern Western state, and equally did not have the modern Western liberal concept of the sovereign individual. Instead, social practice theory focuses on routinized patterns of behaviour, *ways of doing things*.

Modern applications of social practice theory, particularly studies of consumption in the context of climate change and sustainability, provide valuable insights into how behavioural change is achieved or stymied, even amongst groups who believe in the existence of climate change and the need

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61 Reckwitz, "Toward a Theory," 249.

62 Schatzki, *Site of the Social*, 190–93.

63 Schatzki, *Site of the Social*, 199–201.

64 Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 2.

65 Spaargaren, Lamers, and Weenink, "Introduction," 6.

for sustainable practices. These studies reinforce the argument that ideology is not enough, is not sufficient on its own to drive change, and that other factors, other *agents* in combination with ideology beget behavioural change. The quantitative analysis, the questionnaires and the data-gathering which underpin most practice-based studies of brand loyalty and patterns of consumption, demonstrate that social practice theory is apt to explain behaviour and behavioural change. Social practice theory works as a framework for investigating behaviour, even if the time, place, and behavioural changes being examined are very different.

An example might help to clarify the theory. Tom Hargreaves observed and analyzed an extended program to instil environmentally friendly work practices in a UK office.[66] As the program started, the participants paid the greatest attention to the nuts and bolts of the new behaviours. How to ensure that lights and equipment were turned off at the end of each day and that paper wastage was minimized took precedence over ensuring prior individual belief in the importance of these actions. As the new behaviours became entrenched, participants correlated environmentally friendly practices to their identity as an employee of the company. Failure to conform made individuals feel that they had let the side down. Hargreaves also found a close connection between practices and the social order which sustained those practices. A "no bin day" proposal to cut waste was opposed, diluted, and finally quashed by the Facilities Management Team. To change behaviour requires the cooperation of those who have the capacity to undermine or reject that change.

Hargreaves's analysis demonstrates how social practice theory can identify important elements of group behaviours, ways of doing things. Practical, mundane action by a group can precede the individual adoption of belief; collective behaviour can be linked to belonging and expression of identity; and practices can become embedded in social hierarchies and power structures. Social practice theorists conceptualize the necessary components of a social practice in slightly different ways, just as models of new materialism differ. Elizabeth Shove's "deliberately slim-line" version identifies materials, competencies, and meanings as the elements of practice.[67]

66 Hargreaves, "Practice-ing Behaviour Change."

67 Shove and Walker, "Governing Transitions," 472.

Materials, Competencies, and Meanings

The categories of materials, competencies, and meaning are heuristic devices—it will be helpful to consider them separately at first. However, in performing a practice, these elements fuse together, like the strands of a rope. In particular, meaning becomes embedded in both the competencies and the materials used to perform a practice ("performing" is used in the sense that scholars like Michel Foucault and Judith Butler use it—as a form of social action).[68]

Social life is a nexus of "doings and sayings"—and the doing is always "doing with things."[69] The "doing" thus requires competencies, Shove's second category, which means skills, know-how, and techniques. "Meaning" is a subjective belief in the merit of a practice and the social or symbolic significance of participation in the practice. An alternative phrase, "understanding and attunement," draws attention to the combination of reasoning and affect which constitute "meaning"—a blend of reasoned explanation and what matters or what people care about.[70]

In Alfredian reform, the urgent need to reorient the community back to God to avoid annihilation became an overarching Alfredian meaning, conditioning different social practices. Social practices often do not operate in isolation. They are "bundled" with related practices, forming connections and feedback loops, melding into one another.[71] "Bundling" is the term social practice theorists use for the recursive influence individual practices can have on other practices, particularly when meaning is shared across practices.[72] Alfredian social practices such as education and justice were "bundled." The use of the vernacular, the tendency to place the king at the centre of activity, and the shared common meaning meant that these two practices reinforced each other. Meaning was absorbed and affirmed through carrying out Alfredian social practices.

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68 Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.

69 Reckwitz, "Status of the 'Material,'" 212.

70 Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 164.

71 Shove, Panzar, and Watson, *Dynamics of Social Practice*, 81–96; Hargreaves, "Practice-ing Behaviour."

72 Hargreaves, "Practice-ing Behaviour"; Schatzki, "Edge of Change."

How Practitioners Imbibe and Affirm Meaning through Conducting a Practice

A practice is an embodied, materially mediated bundle of human activities based upon shared understanding.[73] Practices are one way in which a group may differentiate itself from others. Knowledge, values, affectivity, and goals are shared and espoused; people become predictable. There is more to practice as a mechanism of group identity than this, though. People who carry out a practice orient themselves to others who carry out the same practice. People carrying out a practice (sports, birdwatching, online games) calibrate their routinized behaviours to those of other practitioners.

A successful practitioner demonstrates competency and is likely therefore to be valued by the group, and become influential or powerful. As practices are not reified entities, but may change, either suddenly or incrementally, there is usually an ongoing process of adjustment between practitioners, calibrating alignment, so that the group shifts together.[74] Interaction, accommodation, mentoring, and the according of respect may flow between members of a well-functioning group of practitioners. Defective or incompetent performance may mark an individual as recalcitrant or apostate. The distribution of routinized behaviour among a community may well amplify the impact of the practice and help to entrench it in the group.

Feedback, in the sense of reasoned explanation and "oughtness," are imparted as the practitioner learns the practice through instruction. It is an important component of embedding a practice through performance. As the practitioner learns the practice through instruction and correction, she acquires technical competency while imbibing a particular viewpoint, an accepted way of interpreting behaviour, actions, and events, and "making sense" of things. In this way a person learning a social practice is socialized or channelled into particular patterns of behaviour, certain ways of doing things. That normative flavour may be reinforced by praise and respect or censure and scorn, depending upon whether the practitioner follows or flouts the accepted way of doing things. External validation and the inculcation of a sense of belonging to a group reinforces or perpetuates the understanding and attunement shared generally by practitioners.[75]

Repeated performance of a practice should reinforce and deepen understanding and attunement, which inspires continued participation. In a well-functioning social practice, meaning and performance act as recursive rein-

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73 Schatzki, "Introduction: Practice Theory," 2–3.

74 Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action."

75 Nicolini, *Practice Theory*, 164–68.

forcers of each other. As Schatzki puts it, if a course of action "makes sense," then it achieves or is likely to achieve desired ends in ways which accord with a mental evaluation of what is appropriate or justifiable.[76] Repeated performance of a practice can, in propitious circumstances, increase a practitioner's commitment to the goals and values of the practice, reinforcing its meaning. As I show in the next chapter, this was particularly the case with military reforms. The success of Alfred's innovations against the Vikings validated the "truth" of Alfredian ideology.

Military Innovation: Proof of the Pudding?

Military reform is one of the most notable and celebrated aspects of Alfredian reform: notable because the degree of innovation was profound, and celebrated because those innovations were spectacularly successful. Alfredian military reforms imposed significant financial burdens on the elites who carried out those reforms, and effected a substantial transfer of power and authority to the king. In carrying out Alfred's military innovations, his elites demonstrated a willingness to bear considerable expense and to relinquish substantial autonomy. This can only be because they bought into Alfredian ideology and the future it promised.

Earlier, I used Trump's 2016 election campaign as a modern example of how objects and behaviours can be used to inculcate an ideology and cohere a community. Alfredian ideas spread as labour was performed on the burghal network, so that common understandings were established and confirmed as things were done. Objects and behaviours were agential in all stages: the expression of ideology, the reception of "the message," and the actions which performed and advertised a communal identity based upon that ideology. These steps were not discrete phases, nor were they chronological. It is useful to remember that practice is inevitably messier than theory.[77] Looking at military reform first up provides an opportunity to appreciate the "messiness" of the lived experience of Alfredian reform: to understand that an assemblage has greater agential power than the sum of its parts, and that assemblages and social practices melded and overlapped. In the chapters that follow Alfredian military reform, I artificially segregate ideology, assemblages, and social practices. The purpose of this artificial dis-

76 Schatzki, "Practice Mind-ed Orders," 52–53; see also Reckwitz, "Toward a Theory," 254.

77 Innes, *State and Society*, 5.

tinction is to allow a deeper analysis, like putting biopsied material under a microscope.

Alfred became king because the constant threat of the Vikings required a mature ruler capable of leading his followers into battle and demonstrating military prowess, that *sine qua non* of early medieval kingship. Participation in warfare was also an integral part of aristocratic life.[78] The fact that early medieval warfare was both the measure of a king and a fundamental aristocratic activity made warfare an excellent opportunity to link the actions of elites in response to their king's directions with the ideology being promoted in his name. Alfredian military reform hit that sweet spot—creating a powerful feedback loop between beliefs and actions. After all, the West Saxons must have been aware that they were the only Anglo-Saxon kingdom to successfully fend off Viking groups intent on conquest.

78 Halsall, "Anthropology."

Chapter 2

MILITARY INNOVATION

PERFORMING ALFREDIAN IDEOLOGY

THROUGHOUT THE 870s and much of the 880s Wessex came perilously close to being overrun by Viking forces. By the mid-890s, against the odds, Wessex had repelled Viking attempts at conquest. This remarkable achievement was substantially due to a highly innovative defence system. Alfred's defence system required an extraordinary investment of labour and materials over an extended period of time. The resources required were well beyond the capacity of the royal fisc; they had to be supplied by the kingdom's magnates. Alfred's defensive system turned conventional West Saxon wisdom about warfare on its head. The effectiveness of the system is obvious in hindsight; it was not obvious in advance to Alfred's elites.

Decentralized political power gave Alfred's elites the capacity to resist, to undermine, or to comply half-heartedly with their king's wishes. In a society of diffused political power, what motivated these men to commit vast resources to such a radical and untested system? Scholars have long suggested that there was an ideological component to Alfred's military reforms, without identifying *how* that might have played out. Conceptualizing the burhs as assemblages which performed relations of power and instantiated ideology in the landscape helps to explain the subtle link between Alfredian ideology and military reform. Through the social practices of garrisoning and supplying the forts, Alfred's people self-identified and advertised a specific identity to others, thereby performing the Alfredian community into being.

Ideology can certainly shape beliefs and desires, and prompt action.[1] I analyze Alfredian ideology in depth in the next chapter. By way of (preemptive) summary, Alfredian ideology held that the Vikings were an instrument of divine vengeance inflicted on a people who had turned their faces away from God. The only way to avert further punishment was for the West Saxons to reorient themselves back to God. If his community realigned

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* A more detailed analysis of the archaeological evidence and the dating of Alfredian military reform is contained in my article "Alfredian Military Reform," *Early Medieval Europe*, 2022.

1 Lukes, *Power*, 134.

themselves with Christian values and behaviour, then peace and prosperity, wealth and military success would follow. Military action or innovation on its own would not defeat the Vikings, because they were the scourge of God. Alfredian ideology thus held that imminent Viking conquest could *only* be averted by re-earning God's favour. Without that reorientation, God would continue to use the Vikings to punish Wessex. How did an ideology that mandated the practice of Christian wisdom as the only way to save the kingdom cause Alfred's elites to implement extensive (and expensive) military innovations?

A community that was demonstrably Christian would please God. A Christian community obeyed their divinely appointed king. A Christian king led and protected his people. I argue that this is where Alfredian ideology connected with military innovation and facilitated it. Implementing Alfred's military reforms was a way of demonstrating that Wessex was a Christian community. Military reforms and ideology formed a positive feedback loop. Ideology persuaded Alfred's elites to keep acceding to directives from their king as the military system developed, as it consumed increasing amounts of labour and materials, and despite its novelty. As things were done, a common understanding was established and a common identity forged. Over time, the success of that system in stymying Viking attacks confirmed the validity, the "truth," of the ideology that had prompted continuing participation in the evolving system.

The military successes which bookended Alfred's reforms—his remarkable victory at Edington in 878, and the rebuffing of the Vikings in the mid-890s—cannot alone explain why Alfred's elites implemented his reforms. No doubt Alfred's victory at Edington, months after the ignominious rout at Chippenham, greatly enhanced his military reputation.[2] The resounding victory against the odds would have made Alfred a hero to those who followed him into battle, and to those who had stubbornly supported him in the dark period after Chippenham.[3] As a battle, Edington was "a good old-fashioned shield-wall clash."[4] It was not an example of Alfred's innovations in action, not proof of the pudding. In 878, Alfred's reforms were untested and without contemporary precedent. We cannot use the ultimate success of those reforms to defend Wessex as an explanation for Alfred's ability to persuade his people to implement them in the first place. We can use assemblage theory and social practice theory to see

2 Abels, "Reflections," 62; Williams, "Military and Non-Military," 135.

3 Konshuh, "Fighting with a *lytle werode*."

4 Hill, *Viking Wars*, 136.

how Alfredian ideology persuaded Alfred's elites and his people generally to participate in implementing his novel system. We can illuminate structures of social action and ways in which political power was created and transmitted.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: the first section briefly summarizes the concepts of Alfredian ideology relevant to Alfred's military reforms. I then examine the nature of Alfredian military innovation and argue that these reforms required greater investment as they progressed over time. Alfredian ideology was disseminated and absorbed during the period in which the heaviest demands were made for labour and materials. I analyze the burghal network as an assemblage through which a specific communal identity emerged, and a new balance of power was affirmed. This was a materialization of ideology. Garrisoning, which was a social practice, reinforced Alfredian ideology of identity and relations of power. The final section explores how the outstanding success of these reforms might have validated the "truth" of Alfredian ideology, completing a feedback loop between ideology and military reform.

Alfredian Ideology: Relevant Elements

Alfredian ideology provided an explanation of the current crisis, a solution to it, and therefore good reasons to do as their king asked. Crucially, Alfredian ideology necessarily implied that military action or innovation on its own would not defeat the Vikings, because they were sent by God, as a divine scourge. The only way to avert further punishment was to please God.

Implementing Alfred's military innovations was a way of reorienting the community back to God, a way of demonstrating that Wessex was a Christian community. Alfred could exemplify the Christian king's obligation to guide and protect his people by devising effective military defences against an imminent threat. His subjects could demonstrate Christian obedience to their divinely appointed king by constructing and manning those defences. In implementing Alfred's defence system, Alfred's people put into practice important concepts of Alfredian ideology, particularly the proper exercise of royal power for the benefit of the community, rather than personal aggrandizement, and the appropriate response of obedience and loyalty by the community. In so acting, Alfred's community could demonstrate that Christian values and behaviours permeated its actions as well as its beliefs.

In doing as Alfred directed, his people enacted the discourse articulated in Alfredian texts, the *ASC* and the *domboc* about Christian wisdom, the Vikings as divine retribution, and the special destiny of the *Angelcynn*.

In doing as Alfred directed, his people adopted an identity and signalled that identity to others. Identity is constructed in a "conversation" with others.[5] Through the lived practice of contribution to Alfred's military reforms, people could self-identify and identify themselves to others as members of the Alfredian community, sharing a common ideology.

Viking Strategies of War in Britain

The Vikings were not a homogeneous group, and different Viking forces operating in Britain may have had different objectives from time to time.[6] As a generalization, Viking objectives in Britain segued from plunder and tribute to the control of lands and peoples. These objectives were familiar to early medieval kings and their elites, who periodically waged war on each other for similar purposes.[7] While their objectives were familiar, Viking tactics were foreign and doubtless unnerving to the West Saxons and their neighbours. The Vikings would seize a defensible site, improve the defences, and use it as a base to launch raiding parties. Anglo-Saxon kings would raise ad hoc levies to provide fighting forces to repel the marauders. These forces were intended to campaign only for short periods, which meant that they typically lacked the logistical support to conduct siege warfare successfully against a Viking force barricaded in a fortified site.[8] Viking bands were consistently difficult to dislodge from such sites, and usually had to be bribed to leave.[9]

The centres which the Vikings seized were often associated with royal power. The royal estate centres providing food and supply renders known as the "farm of one night" were important targets. Seizing them was logistically imperative for the Vikings, particularly as they overwintered.[10] After their successful assault on Alfred at Chippenham in early January 878, Guthrum's forces stayed there for the remainder of the winter, because it was a well-provisioned royal estate.[11] The seizure of royal estate centres also damaged the king's reputation and his relationship with his principal followers. Being able to feed your men well was an exercise of good lordship

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5 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 15; Thomas, "Taking Power Seriously," 35–50.

6 Abels, "Paying the Danegeld," 175.

7 Halsall, "Anthropology."

8 Abels, "Reflections," 56.

9 Baker and Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage*, 17.

10 Abels, "English Logistics," 259; McLeod, "Feeding the *micel here*," 144.

11 Gore, "Review of Viking Attacks," 62.

and cemented the personal bond between lord and follower.[12] Alfred was alert to a king's need to provide materially for his followers.[13] Successful seizure of royal estate centres demonstrated military impotence and weakened cohesion in the targeted community.[14] Weakening the king's authority made it easier for a Viking force to wrest political control of a kingdom. The early years of Alfred's kingship were marked by a lack of military success against the Vikings, because he used traditional Anglo-Saxon strategies of warfare against an enemy which did not play by the same rules.[15]

Alfred's Military Innovations

It is logical to think that military reform began post-Edington, when Alfred's military reputation shone brightly.[15] This would have given him enhanced authority to insist upon immediate defensive works of the kind familiar to his elites, the repair and refurbishment of existing burhs.[16] Such work would have made pragmatic sense to the West Saxons, particularly with two Viking forces lurking over the border.[17] Over time, a web of burhs spread across the landscape.

The burhs were deliberately located to control access routes across the landscape: roads, rivers, and ports.[18] Dawn Hadley and Julian Richards have demonstrated the importance of riverine routes and crossings as well as roads to the movement of the *micel here* and its offshoots.[19] The burhs were supported by a complex web of observation posts and signalling systems, *herepaths* and bridges, incorporating existing infrastructure where appropriate.[20] The spatial distribution of the burhs suggests careful planning, which confirms the idea of a network.[21] The role of the burhs as supply dumps was critical.[22] The burhs simultaneously denied the Vikings access

12 Lavelle, "Geographies of Power"; Althoff, *Family, Friends*, 154.

13 Asser, chap. 100; *Boethius*, Prose 9, 99.

14 Lavelle, "Geographies of Power," 202; Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, 178.

15 Abels, "Reflections," 48; Halsall, "Playing by Whose Rules," 7.

16 Lavelle, *Fortifications in Wessex*, 16; Williams, "Military and Non-Military," 135.

17 Baker and Brookes, "Fulham 878–79."

18 Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 70–73; Williams, "Military and Non-Military," 151.

19 Hadley and Richards, "Changing Places,"; Hadley and Richards, "In Search."

20 Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, 217; Abels, "Costs and Consequences," 205.

21 Baker and Brookes, "From Frontier," 109.

22 McLeod, "Feeding the *micel here*."

to food and provided a reliable chain of food supplies for Alfred's army on the move.[23] Foraging inflicted damage on the local community whether conducted by the enemy or home troops. Richard Abels describes "living off the land" as "a polite phrase for extremely rude activities."[24] Alfred also created a standing army, battle-ready and mobile. The standing army benefited logistically from the network of burhs and from the reinforcements provided by the garrisons, as the army moved through the landscape.

We have no insight into how Alfred's thinking on military reform evolved. We do not know whether he conceived of a master plan before commencement, or whether he developed the system incrementally over time, adding elements as the possibilities and benefits occurred to him. He had no contemporary precedent for his system. Neither the Carolingians nor any other insular kingdom threatened by the Vikings had implemented such a complex, mutually reinforcing system. Charles the Bald's bridge fortifications, often seen as a model for some of Alfred's burhs on important waterways, were not part of an extensive interlocking system.[25] Alfred's predecessors had undoubtedly implemented defensive measures.[26] However, the scale and depth of Alfred's interlocking system was much more than a natural extension of earlier works.[27] Alfred's system was *sui generis*.

It is logical to assume that Alfred required the individual burhs to be garrisoned soon after work was completed, although we lack the evidence to confirm this. A refurbished but ungarrisoned burh would be vulnerable to seizure by a Viking force in any renewed campaign. To provide the Vikings with better fortifications for their use would have been an egregious tactical error. For each burh, signalling systems and food supply dumps must also have followed refurbishment. Ancillary infrastructure linking the burhs, such as improved *herepaths* and bridges, may have proceeded as burhs became operational or were close to being completed. Finishing such infrastructure while the site was vulnerable to seizure would simply further advantage an invading Viking force. This is very much a broad-brush approach to the evolution of the system, but it makes sense. It follows from this tentative schedule of work that the demand for resources became greater over time, and that the novelty of the system emerged as more elements were added. This has implications for the royal endeavour required to obtain the neces-

23 Williams, "Military and Non-Military," 131–32; Lavelle, *Fortifications in Wessex*, 16.

24 Abels, "English Logistics," 259.

25 Coupland, "Fortified Bridges," 1–12.

26 Downham, "Earliest Viking Activity," 1–12; Brooks, "Alfredian Government," 173.

27 Abels, "Reflections," 58.

sary labour and materials, to persuade his elites to invest those resources. The novelty of a mutually reinforcing system would have made that task of persuasion more difficult.

Asser tells us that Alfred invested considerable energy in persuading his elites to do as he directed.[28] Alfred was an astute leader, careful to build consensus in contexts where conflict might breed. We do not know whether Alfred started by insisting on the renovations of individual fortifications as stand-alone defensive measures, or whether he took time to articulate his objectives to his inner circle and get them onside first. If he did so, it is highly probable that he pointed to unsatisfactory past encounters—such as the lengthy and futile siege of the Vikings at Exeter—as good reasons for change.[29]

Despite the uncertainties, there is enough evidence to demonstrate that Alfred substantially overhauled the existing infrastructure, added his own innovations, and melded the disparate parts into a comprehensive system.[30] Although the material record does not permit precise dating of the refurbishment of individual burhs, their common morphology is cogent evidence of innovation in the degree of centralized control (planning and supervision) exercised over the refurbishment process.[31] The material record does not permit us to pinpoint when reform began, or indeed to date specific siteworks with precision, but we can identify reform in progress.

The system may have taken a decade or more to develop.[32] If so, then the novel elements of the system, which increased the necessary investment of resources, would have emerged later in the period. This would have been roughly contemporary with the dissemination and absorption of Alfredian ideology, which was clustered around the late 880s and early 890s. Alfredian ideology was agential in persuading Alfred's elites to shoulder the increasingly heavy burden of his reforms as the system developed, and to implement the novel and untested components of the system; in effect, to do as their king directed. The proper relationship between king and subjects was instantiated in the landscape.

28 Asser, chap. 91; K & L, 101–2.

29 *ASC*, s.a. 876.

30 Hill, "Origin," 230.

31 Baker and Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage*, 124.

32 Yorke, "West Saxon Fortifications," 104.

Alfredian Military Reform as an Assemblage

In the burghal network, the objects were the forts, their supplies, the *herepaths* and other infrastructure. Technologies (or knowledge) included communications between the forts (such as signalling), and the training necessary to run the garrisons efficiently for surveillance and warfare: I develop this further in the section on the social practice of garrisoning. The people in the assemblage included the king, the magnates who provided the labourers, those who laboured (directly and indirectly—see below), and those who were protected by the forts. Alfredian ideology was an actant in the assemblage—a set of beliefs which explained the Viking threat, offered a solution, and provided cogent reasons to obey the king.

As the burhs were constructed, refurbished, and used they could bring about a changed perception of landscape, a different way of being-in-the-landscape. Different experiences of landscape were possible from within and outside the forts. Given that the local community provided ongoing labour and supplies for the burhs, a significant proportion of the local community probably experienced both perspectives on the landscape.

Social and political relations would have been bound up in these experiences of landscape. There was an interplay between the control of resources and the affirmation of political authority, the deliberate incorporation of specific sites of past and present political power, and the coalescing of community in the changed experience of landscape. Such relations underpinned the provision of labour, materials and supplies for the forts. They were also embedded in the promise of protection and in the sense of being under surveillance. Political power, hierarchy, and communal endeavour were incorporeal actants in the burghal network.

It is very difficult to isolate the individual operation of these actants, because we lack detailed accounts for each fort and for how the network coalesced. However, we can tentatively identify the ways in which relational actants of power, hierarchy, and community were likely to interact with the physical actants of the fortifications and the landscape. These connections between ideology, landscape, objects, people's labour, and the diversion of resources were neither linear nor static. The feedback loops between Alfredian ideology and military reform are discernible in this field of activity.

The burhs created a physical space in which the social relations between participants were affirmed, for participants and observers alike. The connection between the built environment and social order has been explored by Michael Bintley (in relation to halls as well as fortifications) and by Ben

Jervis (in relation to medieval town formation).[33] Jervis describes towns as "more-than-spatial phenomena." They are "assemblages of social relationships between people, materials, and their environment."[34] The burhs were just such an assemblage.

These burhs were also monuments. There is an element of spectacle, of public gaze, to monument building.[35] Monuments can be expressive, can actively promote ideas about politics and identity.[36] In repairing and provisioning these burhs, the participants affirmed hierarchical control of labour and materials, and the king's overall right to direct both. The efficient and extensive co-option of resources signals political power. Early medieval kings had limited means of displaying authoritative power, by which I mean obtaining the conscious obedience of others to explicit directions.[37] Defensive earthworks were a recognized means of demonstrating the ability to appropriate labour and materials belonging to others and at the same time build support and consensus. It doubtless helped that such projects were usually defensive in character, directed against a common enemy.[38]

For example, Paul Belford interprets Offa's Dyke as an exercise in unifying the Mercians through communal labour to construct a defence that was also a symbol of royal power. Landscape was used to help stabilize communal identity constructed against an "Other," the emerging powerhouse of Powys.[39] Brooks sees a causal link between work done in conformity with royal commands and the expansion of royal authority. He argues that in Francia, the failure of Charles the Bald's successors to use military works as a mechanism to both demonstrate and accrue power partly explains why the balance of political power continued to shift from the king to his elites.[40]

Construction of the burghal network required both a direct and an indirect reallocation of resources. Abels estimates that to construct or refurbish the defensive structures for all the burhs listed in the *Burghal Hidage* would have consumed 1.4 million working days. Early medieval kingdoms were largely subsistence agrarian societies. In Alfred's extended kingdom, it took

33 Bintley, *Settlements and Strongholds*.

34 Jervis "Town Formation," 384.

35 Inomata and Coben, "Overture," 11–24.

36 Reynolds and Langlands, "Travel as Communication," 413; Lavelle, "Places I'll Remember," 316.

37 Luke, *Power*, 109, 32; Mann, *Sources of Social Power*, 8.

38 Squatriti, "Digging Ditches."

39 Belford, "Offa's Dyke," 60–81.

40 Brooks, "Development of Military Obligations," 84.

three agricultural labourers working nineteen hectares of arable land to produce enough food to provide for a single person not engaged in agriculture.[41] Construction of the network was a heavy burden, and it must have fallen on whole communities. These reforms required an extraordinary investment of resources and the cooperation of most of the landowners of the kingdom to create and sustain the burghal network.[42] The social and political relations, power, and authority which underpinned the diversion of resources to the construction of the burhs would have been obvious right across the community.

The relational actants of authority and power implicit in the control of labour and resources may have received further amplification from two other actants in the assemblage of the burghal network: the reuse of Iron Age and Roman sites and the geographical correlation between some refurbished forts and centres of royal and ecclesiastical importance. The reuse of Iron Age and Roman fortifications or defensive features amplified the royal power manifested by these burhs. The Iron Age and Roman fortifications had been symbols of power for their original communities. Their reuse was an appropriation of past manifestations of authority, an implied claim of inheritance, extending royal authority.[43] This was not a new strategy.[44] Existing towns with fortifications such as Exeter, Chichester, and Bath were reorganized in ways that emphasized their Roman origins.[45] Many of the refurbished Roman and Iron Age sites were incorporated into, or were close to, existing West Saxon ecclesiastical and royal institutions and centres of activity. Authority was manifested in the choice of activities and sites which deserved the close protection of the refurbished burhs. Authority was also extended by the surveillance capacities of the burhs as a network.

The location of the burhs in the landscape meant that the garrisons could control movement through the landscape and keep the population under a degree of surveillance. The number of burhs, and their spatial distribution, meant that as the network developed, most of Wessex came within this protective net, and under observation. The burhs were positioned with care so as to be inter-visible.[46] As the West Saxons moved around their landscape, they could not help but be aware of the looming presence of the forti-

41 Abels, "Costs and Consequences," 202, 207.

42 Lavelle, *Fortifications in Wessex*, 17.

43 Williams, "Place of Slaughter," 39.

44 Pitt, "Sutton Hoo," 19.

45 Baker and Brookes, *Burghal Hidage*, 69–70.

46 Baker and Brookes, *Burghal Hidage*, 69–70.

fications they had helped to build, whether reluctantly or not, for their king. Royal power was writ large on the landscape. The burhs thus increased the reach and exposure of Alfredian ideology and gave it permanence, "stability through time."[47] The modified landscape communicated an easily understood message about social relations and hierarchy.

Ideology and action went hand in hand. Power relations must be performed, reiterated through action, to maintain and affirm the ideology underlying the asymmetrical distribution of power.[48] Implementing Alfred's defence system put the reciprocal Christian obligations of leadership and obedience into practice, demonstrating Christian values and behaviour. Over time, the success of the new defences confirmed God's renewed approval: Wessex was spared Viking conquest. The construction and refurbishment of the burhs instantiated Alfredian ideology, gave it a physical form.

Elizabeth DeMarrais, Jamie Castillo, and Timothy Earle refer to this kind of instantiation as the materialization of ideology: the transformation of ideas, values, stories and myths into a physical reality, such as ceremonies, symbolic objects and monuments.[49] In implementing Alfred's military reforms, his people enacted Alfredian ideology. By this I mean that the community made sense of that ideology and applied it. Belief need not precede action but can develop in tandem with it. Social action can inculcate, as well as confirm, belief—as Hargreaves's study of environmentally friendly work practices showed (Introduction). When faced with the threat of large-scale violence, people can subordinate their individual agency, favouring a cooperative form of decision-making which acts to align individuals to a common set of objectives and values.[50] I do not suggest a sequential chronology of disseminate–persuade–act. Not everyone need have been convinced of Alfred's reasoning before taking action. Asser suggests a level of compulsion. Keynes says "there can be no doubt that Alfred trod heavily on his people."[51] However, as the burhs and the standing army demonstrated their value in rebuffing Viking incursions, belief by the sceptical and the put-upon doubtless blossomed.

There are close connections between the materialization of ideology and the creation and affirmation of community. In a case study of the intellectual communities of early Northumbria, Martin Carver argues that early

47 Earle, "Institutionalization of Chiefdoms," 107–08.

48 Inomata and Coben, "Overture," 25.

49 DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle, "Ideology, Materialization."

50 Giddens, *The Nation-State*, 214–15.

51 Keynes, "Tale of Two Kings," 205.

medieval communities dextrously used material culture to signal adherence to particular worldviews or ideologies, thereby advertising a particular identity.[52] Identity requires iteration and affirmation—actions, as well as words.[53] Behaviours can perform and reinforce group identity. Remembering that doing is always "doing with things," I want to consider the ways in which routinized ways of doing things might have consolidated the feedback loop between Alfredian ideology and military reform.

The fact that there was a network of such burhs, and that there appears to have been a relatively high degree of central planning and oversight, suggests that performances of social relations played out in similar form across multiple locations. Baker and Brookes argue that, unlike the conduct of battles, civil defence extends beyond the elites who conduct warfare, that it involves "a common experience anchoring people together."[54] Common experience on sites across the kingdom would have amplified the "givenness" of these relations, leading to community cohesion. The creation of monuments interweaves people, things and place and can be "a critical connector in the formation of communities."[55]

The modern theory of community owes much to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens.[56] The emphasis is on the dynamic relationship between action, identity, and power. The relationships between people, spaces, and ideas are the "glue" of communities: interaction is critical. Interactions occur within or around a given space, on the basis of common perceptions or rules. A sense of shared identity emerges from those interactions.[57] This identity is not static or monolithic. Communities usually incorporate a series of changeable identities, sometimes nested and sometimes conflictual.[58]

Deliberate effort is required to inculcate a sense of collective identity through interactions. There must be a "conscious acknowledgement and deliberate celebration" of commonalities, through which a community expresses its cohesion.[59] As Timothy Pauketat puts it, "community is what

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52 Carver, "What Were They Thinking," 918.

53 Varien and Potter, "Social Production," 16; Stodnick, "Emergent Englishness," 36; Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 32.

54 Baker and Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage*, 11.

55 Harris, "More than Representation," 96.

56 Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory*; Giddens, *Constitution of Society*.

57 Yaeger and Canuto, "Archaeology of Communities."

58 Harris, "(Re)assembling Communities," 80.

59 Mac Sweeney, *Community Identity*, 37.

community does."[60] Oliver Harris emphasizes the roles of values and emotions in the creation of community identity. He also highlights the agency of objects and landscape in the practices by which people affirm their membership of a community.[61] Carver likewise emphasizes the agency of material culture—such as burials, sculpture, manuscripts, and churches—in promoting early medieval communal identity.[62]

Asser describes Alfred engaging many levels of his community to achieve his reforms: "bishops, ealdormen, nobles, thegns dear to his heart and reeves."[63] While the landowners probably marshalled their own labourers, the reeves presumably oversaw the work and acted as a conduit between the king and the landowners. The king's right to mobilize the labour of his people in an enterprise to protect and guide them was thus manifested in this interaction: as the king demanded, his elites obeyed by organizing the work, and the peasants obeyed by labouring.

The Lively Hum of Actants in the Assemblage of the Burhs

In the lived experience of Alfred's military reform, actants in the assemblage were not compartmentalized. Their agency was not segregated and discrete. These actants "pinged off" one another, interacting, reinforcing, and magnifying each other. For example, there was an interplay between the kind of sites chosen for the building program, the scale of effort involved, the twinned sense of surveillance and promise of protection emanating from the burhs, and the emphasis on the reciprocal obligations of kingship and obedience in Alfredian ideology. Fortification work on existing centres of royal and ecclesiastical power, and the co-option of ancient sites of authority, reiterated the centrality of royal power—this was an important theme in Alfredian ideology. New sites across the landscape extended royal authority. The scale of the resources Alfred harnessed not only demonstrated the king's prerogative to direct his people—it demonstrated his right to channel those resources *in furtherance* of royal power. The capacity of the burhs to watch and protect were new ways of manifesting the core responsibility of kingship—to guide and protect the people given into a king's charge. Landscape, objects, people, and ideas interacted. Assemblage theory illuminates the dynamic nature of these connections.

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60 Pauketat, "Grounds for Agency," 240.

61 Harris, "(Re)assembling Communities," 88–89.

62 Carver, "Intellectual Communities," 186–87.

63 Asser, chap. 91; K & L, 101–2.

The sense of shared identity, of community, is another example of the dynamic relationships between components in the assemblage: sustained labour involving a significant proportion of the population, directly and indirectly; labour which produced objects (the forts) with immediate practical communal value; labour which altered the way that most people experienced their landscape; a landscape which instantiated royal power and the promise of protection. The completed burhs dominated the landscape and instantiated Alfredian ideology as all levels of the community went about their day-to-day lives.[64] Part of those day-to-day lives now revolved around the completed burhs, which required garrisons and the provision of foodstuffs and other goods. The roles of the permanent garrisons, both in observation and control of movements and their part in warfare, were new to their participants. These activities were new social practices. They too forged important connections between ideology and military reform, but in a different way to assemblages.

The Social Practice of Garrisoning the Burhs

The *Burghal Hidage* specifies the military service required for each individual burh.[65] The burden of providing that labour fell on those living in the countryside surrounding a specific burh, under the supervision of the local ealdorman, probably supported by the king's reeves.[66] We do not know the detail of how this labour was organized. In particular, we do not know whether individuals were permanently assigned to manning the garrisons, or whether the lords allocated a certain number of their followers on rotation. According to the *ASC* (s.a. 893), the garrisons were separate from the rotation policy that provided the standing army, but that does not exclude a separate rotation policy, operating for each burh and organized locally.

If the garrisons were drawn from local men, it would follow that within each garrison there was probably a degree of familiarity between the men who served, as well as existing vertical relationships of power between those men and the lords who organized the garrisons (under the reeve's watchful eye?). We know virtually nothing about how the garrisons went about their role of observation and control of movements. These were new roles. I think that we can safely assume that a degree of training was required, because

64 DeMarrais, Castillo, and Earle, "Ideology, Materialization."

65 Hill, "Shiring of Mercia," 158.

66 Abels, "Costs and Consequences," 204.

there would have to be conformity in messaging and observation for the system to function properly. There were missteps along the way. The *ASC* (s.a. 893) records a failure of coordination, when the army pursuing a Viking force broke off their pursuit because they had finished their allotted rotation and run out of supplies. They met their replacements on the way back. The Vikings obtained a valuable respite.

There must also have been a degree of training, of the leaders as well as the men, in relation to the specific role the garrisons played in combat. This role was different from the army's general role. The *ASC* (s.a. 893) provides valuable detail about how the garrisons were deployed when Viking forces appeared. The garrison only came out "in full" to challenge the enemy before the standing army arrived, and when the enemy attempted to leave. The garrison was thus deployed to prevent a newly arrived Viking force from acquiring a bolthole and from raiding for supplies and booty, and to prevent a counter-offensive by a departing Viking force. Otherwise, the garrison was used to supplement the army in harassing the enemy as it attempted to break through the containment line constituted by the web of garrisoned forts. The entry shows that Alfred's system could prevent the Vikings from penetrating deeply into West Saxon territory, deny them safe refuge and the ability to plunder freely, and impede their ability to depart with whatever booty they had managed to acquire.[67]

Unfortunately, there is not enough evidence to flesh out the detail of the garrisons as a new social practice (remembering that social practices comprise meanings, materials, and competencies). Alfredian ideology comprised the meaning, the social and symbolic significance of participation in the practice. The burhs themselves, the foodstuffs and other supplies, the wood for the beacons, and military equipment would have been the materials. The competencies would have included the skills of using fires as beacons and any system for the relay of messages, the organizational skills involved in keeping a large area under observation in shifts, and different fighting tactics from the standing army. The evidence does not currently permit us to drill down further than that.

However, manning the garrisons was clearly an ongoing activity. Further, the activity was carried out publicly and communally. Training was required. Food and other goods must have been supplied to the garrisons for their consumption, as well as food stores for the *fyrd*. Presumably the sur-

67 It appears that Edward followed his father's system. The *Chronicle of Æthelweard* records English victory at Wednesfield using Alfred's strategies.

rounding communities supplied these, just as they provided labour.[68] There was therefore participation in the social practice by a large section of the community beyond the individuals who served in the garrisons, and that participation was witnessed by others in the community. This social practice was localized. It was carried out amongst familiar faces, in designated sites situated in close proximity to settlements.

In repeatedly carrying out the practice of garrisoning, participants were likely to become increasingly attuned to the sense of oughtness underlying the practice. We do not have specific evidence in relation to garrisoning, but Asser describes Alfred judiciously employing praise and censure in respect of the construction of the burhs. Asser also records the response of the elites who suffered at the hands of the Vikings because they did not construct forts in time.[69] Those elites "made sense" of that calamity by interpreting the events as a failure to do what they ought to have done. The contrast between the familiar impotence to withstand a marauding Viking band and the successful rebuffing of a comparable attack must have been profound, and shows how a sense of oughtness can be inculcated.

The success of completed burhs in repulsing Viking attack and avoiding the terrible consequences of being overrun is an example of the kind of "eventness" or happening that generates performative power. I talked about Reed's three-phase typology of power in the Introduction. Relational power stems from the societal structure of ties between people, which allows some individuals greater capacity to control others or to direct social life. Discursive power is subtler, written in to signification and perception, shaping peoples' often unstated assumptions and norms, channelling their choices. Performative power, in contrast to discursive power, generates its energy precisely from its public spectacle. Performative power emerges from actions which "work" or a performance that "comes off." Performative power is an "eventful" representation of power, producing a "coherent interpretation of a chaotic, fragile, ambiguous or uncertain situation."[70] Asser and the *ASC* record mirror "events": successful defence against Viking attack, and Viking destruction. The carrying out of that successful defence and the opposite experience of being overrun and plundered were actions and experiences which had the power to transform the understandings, expectations, and emotions of those involved and those who observed, and therefore, the potential to cause them to modify their future behaviour.

68 Baker and Brookes, "From Frontier," 110.

69 Asser, chap. 91; K & L, 101–2.

70 Reed, "Performative State-Formation," 24; Kreiss, "Seizing the Moment," 5.

It is reasonable to assume that Alfred imparted the same normative flavour to garrisoning, and that his elites adopted this viewpoint as the success of the garrisons became clear. Over time, there would have been opportunities to expound Alfredian ideology to a larger proportion of the population than the elites. It is logical to assume that somehow, perhaps through sermons, perhaps through the reeves and the local lords, those further down the hierarchy were made aware, in some measure, of Alfredian ideology. This is not an issue of informed consent to participate. No doubt those at the bottom of the hierarchy did as they were bid. That does not mean that they laboured in a vacuum or were without agency. In particular, it was open to them to negotiate and adopt an identity in conformity with the work being required of them, with what they understood to be the purpose of that work, and what they perceived to be the benefits for them. Identifying as part of the Alfredian community was as open to a labourer as it was to a bishop.

The act of manning garrisons was not an unconscious, routine daily practice of the kind identified by Bourdieu and Butler. It was a new social practice explicitly developed in response to an extreme threat. Despite the imminent threat, it took time to implement Alfred's military reforms. It is clear that there was resistance from some quarters to providing the men and materials needed. That resistance crumbled, according to Asser, when the merits of the system were forcefully demonstrated during a Viking attack.

The Feedback Loop between Alfredian Ideology and Military Innovation

Alfred's military reforms worked. In the 870s, the Vikings repeatedly penetrated deeply into West Saxon heartlands, military action was exhausting and inconclusive, and the intruders could not be dislodged without the payment of tribute.[71] In the 890s, the Vikings barely infiltrated Wessex.[72] They frequently had to abandon any booty in order to escape, if they escaped at all.[73] Alfred's reforms succeeded despite additional advantages available to the Vikings in the 890s. Unlike the Viking forces of the 870s, they could draw upon alliances with Vikings settled in Northumbria and East Anglia. In the 890s, Alfred's army had to fight over longer distances against an enemy with

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71 Gore, "Review of Viking Attacks," 59; Baker and Brookes, *Beyond the Burghal Hidage*, 137.

72 Wormald, "Ninth Century," 150; Abels, "Reflections," 62.

73 *ASC*, s.a. 893 and 894.

multiple entry points.[74] Alfred's innovations protected his community generally as well as providing strategic advantages to the military elite who conducted warfare.[75]

The extent of community engagement meant that these reforms could be highly influential in cohering the general community. The wider community participated in the construction and maintenance of Alfred's burhs and in the provision of manpower, equipment, and supplies for his standing army. The wider community benefited from the absence of loss of life and destruction consequent upon the containment of the Viking threat. Alfred's ability to protect his people as a result of his military reforms could be demonstrated in pragmatic ways that touched an entire local community. According to the *ASC* (s.a. 895), Alfred used his standing army to shield a community harvesting its corn from a Viking force in need of supplies. This is another "event" that could have generated performative power, causing Alfred's people to modify their understandings and their future behaviour. This event would have been a fruitful opportunity to hammer home to the elites and the wider community the role of the king in directing and facilitating the system which benefited them all.

In doing as Alfred asked, in constructing, repairing, provisioning, and garrisoning the burhs, Alfred's people performed relations of power. Iterative performances of social relations are powerful reproducers of normative behaviour and attitudes.[76] These relations of power confirmed Alfred's divine right to protect and guide his people, and their reciprocal obligation to obey. In doing as Alfred asked, his people were able to construct an identity and demonstrate that identity to others. The construction and garrisoning of the burhs signalled community acceptance of Alfredian ideology, just as the construction and use of graves, monuments, and other sites signalled acceptance of other worldviews across early medieval Europe.[77]

The Political Dimension of Military Reform

There was a manifestly political dimension to military reform. Alfred's military innovations were agential in transferring political power to Alfred, on both a theoretical and practical level. Alfredian ideology expanded the power of the king at the expense of his elites. The construction of the burghal net-

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74 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 94; Abels, "Reflections," 62.

75 Abels, *Lordship*.

76 Jervis, "Town Formation," 385.

77 Carver, "What Were They Thinking."

work also allowed the king to exercise power through a multitude of nuts-and-bolts decisions. The division of the *fyrd* into two parts, serving on rotation, required greater central administration.[78] Fundamentally, implementing Alfred's military reforms required the task of governing. It required the identification and ranking of priorities, negotiations with community members, the marshalling of resources, the organization of technical expertise, and administrative oversight of the work. Implementing Alfred's military reforms was a triumph of government.[79]

Military action was not a straightforward proxy for political control, but it was a useful mechanism for asserting and substantiating royal power. Military action also held significant risks for kings with fractious nobles. In Francia, Charles the Bald's military efforts against Viking forces were sabotaged by his own magnates, who defected to his brother, Louis the German.[80] Paying attention to things and to behaviours gives us fresh insights into the structures of social action and the accrual and exercise of power.

Military reform provides unique insights into how Alfredian ideology may have spread and taken hold. Analyzing military reform as an assemblage allows us to identify how the individual components interacted and magnified each other. The assemblage had a powerful impact on community beliefs and cohesion because an assemblage is greater than an aggregation of its components. Exploring social practices alongside assemblages illuminates how military reform was woven into the fabric of the community. Using these two theories in tandem permits a closer-grained understanding of the link between ideology and military reform. The point of looking at military reform first was to illuminate this essential interconnectedness, the "messiness" of lived experience. I turn next to a detailed examination of the content of Alfredian ideology ("the message"), and the way Alfred himself learned. Alfred's personal path to wisdom showed him how to disseminate that message. I then segregate objects and behaviours, to delve deeper into how their persuasive agency was constructed.

78 Baker and Brookes, "Explaining Anglo-Saxon Military Efficiency," 226–27.

79 Abels, "Reflections," 62–63; Keynes, "Age of Alfred," 255.

80 Coupland, "Blinkers of Militarisation," 168–70.

Chapter 3

ALFREDIAN IDEOLOGY

KEY ELEMENTS OF Alfredian ideology can be identified in the Alfredian texts. Of course, not all ideology is communicated overtly. Sometimes it takes the form of assumptions which lie, *sub silentio*, behind or beneath express statements. There is also an overlap between ideology and ideological power. Ideological power can derive from control of the content of an ideology (such as a religion or political movement). Controlling the dissemination of an ideology can augment this ideological power.[1] Those in control have the opportunity to harness collective action and direct it in ways that benefit them. This chapter focuses on identifying the relevant concepts, the *content*, of Alfredian ideology in the texts. The term "ideology" is used in the sense of "what the message was."

Ideology was important because it explained what Alfred wanted people to do and why they should do it. Ideology provided the ultimate objective of the proposed reforms, cogent reasons why the elites should participate in reforms, and tools to help them implement these reforms. Alfredian ideology was articulated across a variety of written media—translations of respected texts, the *ASC*, and the *domboc*. It is reasonable to assume that Alfredian ideology was also articulated verbally, in formal contexts such as assemblies and judicial hearings, and during informal face-to-face discussions, even though we lack extensive records of these interactions.

Ideology was a crucial component in the assemblage of Alfredian text-bodies, which were agential in bringing about Alfredian reform. Ideology pervaded Alfredian social practices of lifelong learning, education, and the administration of justice, which were equally agential in Alfred's reform program. I explain how text-bodies and social practices were agential in Alfredian reform in chapters 5 and 6.

The ultimate objective of Alfredian ideology was the (re)acquisition and practice of God-devoted wisdom across all levels of the community. (I say (re)acquisition because the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms converted to Christianity over the course of the seventh century.) There were several key components to the Alfredian model of acquiring and practising God-devoted

1 Snyder, "Networks and Ideologies," 308–09, 316.

wisdom. At the heart of the model was the relationship between king and subjects, framed by reciprocal obligations. The king's paramount obligation was to exercise royal power in service to God, echoing the Carolingian model of kingship.[2] Power exercised this way was constrained by the obligation to guide and protect the people entrusted to a king's care, and was subject to divine oversight. Humility ensured the righteous use of royal power. Honour and wealth were appropriate tools of royal power exercised in service to God.

The community had a concomitant obligation to obey their king, who had been appointed by God to lead them. Good lordship and loyal friendship facilitated appropriate behaviour within the political hierarchy in a God-centred community. *Cræft* (mental or spiritual calibre) and the *modes eagan* (the "eyes of the mind") were essential tools for both king and subjects in their goal of God-devoted wisdom. The concept of the Anglo-Saxons as the *Angelcynn*, a people with a common identity and a shared destiny, operated to cohere the community and reinforce the importance of reorienting the community back to God.[3] Alfredian ideology therefore encompassed a variety of concepts and methodologies. Alfredian ideology was both political and religious, intertwining "spiritual health and social integration."[4]

This array of concepts and tools provided flexibility to articulate Alfredian ideology across individual texts. The use of a variety of media to articulate and disseminate Alfredian ideology was a shrewd strategy. It increased the reach of that ideology—different texts were apt for different kinds of textual communities.[5] Importantly, there is a social dimension to a textual community—a process of absorption of the content of texts, acting in accordance with them, and identification through those actions and beliefs.[6] The concepts of textual communities and social practices overlap.

Different genres of texts permitted different aspects of ideology to be emphasized, tailored to suit the audience and the circumstances of reception. Alfred paid attention to the circumstances of reception, adjusting social practices or creating new ones in order to maximize the prospects of Alfredian ideology being absorbed and acted upon. While I focus on the ideology embedded in texts in this chapter, it is important to remember that material culture can instantiate and transmit ideology.

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2 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 58–60.

3 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn.*"

4 Brown, *Transformation of Britain*, 103.

5 Stock, *Implications of Literacy*; Stock, *Listening for the Text.*

6 Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 112–13, 150–53.

In this chapter, I analyze the texts traditionally regarded as the Alfredian canon—the *Pastoral Care*, *OE Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms*.[7] I refer to these four texts as "the Alfredian translations." I start my analysis with a close consideration of the *Pastoral Care*—its prefaces and the modifications in translation. In respect of the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, I examine elements of ideology in turn, referring to the texts in which the elements are articulated, rather than working through each text separately. I then turn to the *ASC*, the *domboc*, and finally, the *Prose Psalms*. Before examining the individual texts, it is useful to consider why translations were used at all.

The Alfredian Translations

Translation was an act which could accrue authority for the translator from the status of the original work.[8] There were precedents for translations.[9] Both Asser and the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* suggest that Alfred's Mercian advisors had expertise in translation, which is consistent with the early ninth-century Mercian evidence for vernacular literacy.[10] Harnessing the authority of patristic texts was common sense for a leader aiming for a Christian community. It was a form of authority readily available, uncontroversial, and likely to garner the support of the bishops, with their influence and resources.

The Alfredian translations modified the source texts, thereby shaping the power appropriated from those texts.[11] The Carolingians had shown how to manipulate written repositories of Christian authority to articulate a sense of shared history and destiny, and to mandate specific standards of collective behaviour.[12] In one respect, the Alfredian texts were very different from the Carolingian model. Alfredian texts used the vernacular, not Latin. I discuss this later in this chapter, in the context of the notion of the *Angelcynn*, and more fully in the chapter on Alfredian social practices.

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7 Bately, "Alfred as Author," 140–42.

8 Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 62; Harbus, "Metaphors of Authority," 718–19, 722.

9 Bede is an obvious example: Crépin, "Bede and the Vernacular."

10 Rauer, "Early Mercian Text," 5–6; Brown, "19 Mercian Manuscripts," 289; Rauer, "Old English Literature."

11 Stanton, *Culture of Translation*; Davis, "National Writing"; Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface."

12 Costambeys and Innes, "Introduction," 2, 4; McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*.

The careful appropriation of authority is most evident in the text which announced the reform program—the *Pastoral Care*. Pope Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* was a well-known text in clerical circles long before Alfredian reform.[13] Aldhelm quoted it, and both Bede and Alcuin used it and recommended it to fellow ecclesiastics.[14] It is highly likely that the text was known by all of the learned men Alfred relied upon to help him learn. It is probable that they brought the text to the king's attention to help him formulate his ideas of the responsibilities of kingship, during his quest for personal wisdom. The text was widely held to be instructive for secular rulers.[15] Alcuin and Hincmar of Reims both used the text to develop ideas of good secular governance in the Carolingian court.[16] The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* was an invitation to consider the text anew.

The *Pastoral Care*: The Flagship Text

The Prose Preface encapsulates Alfredian ideology—explicitly in relation to the reorientation of the community back to God, implicitly in relation to the enhanced authority of the king. Its style is carefully chosen. The effect is to imbue the Preface with "a powerful sense of Alfred's presence."[17] The Preface describes a previous Golden Age of wisdom, peace, and prosperity in England. The implication is that learning, peace, and material prosperity are causally linked.[18] There is a striking contrast between the images of former glory and present decay.[19] Both the cause and the remedy are encapsulated in the notion of Christian wisdom. "Alfred" identifies the Viking raids, the loss of peace, and material prosperity as divine punishment for the loss of wisdom inherent in the loss of learning. Only by relearning what they have lost, and by recommitting to the values they previously held dear, can the community reverse their present misfortunes.

"Alfred" bemoans the dire state of learning in the kingdom. "He" says: "ðone naman ænne we lufodon ðætte we Cristne wæren, ond swiðe feawe ða ðeawas" (we loved the name alone of being Christians, and very few loved

13 Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 127.

14 Schreiber, "*Searoðonca hord*," 172–73; Anlezark, "Gregory the Great," 25.

15 Anlezark, "Gregory the Great," 14, 31; Schreiber, *Alfred's OE Translation*, 8, 10.

16 Schreiber, *Alfred's OE Translation*, 8, 10; Whobrey, "Alfred's Metrical Epilogue," 175–76.

17 Faulkner, "Royal Authority," 127.

18 Shippey, "Wealth and Wisdom."

19 Discenza, "Persuasive Power," 132–33.

the practices).[20] The comment paraphrases Augustine's pithy inquiry: "Quomodo te gloriaris esse Christianum? Nomen habes et facta non habes" (How are you proud of being a Christian? You have the name and not the deeds).[21] The phrase was employed by other writers in the early medieval period.[22] Its use by "Alfred" evidences a degree of scholarly sophistication.[23] While Keynes and Lapidge use the word "virtues" in their 1983 translation of the Prose Preface, the Latin word facta aligns semantically with the concept of deeds rather than virtues. James Cross notes that the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary translates ðeawas as "practices."[24] Using the word "practices" highlights the active and the behavioural component of Christian wisdom, how the community would reorient themselves back to God.[25]

The Alfredian concept of wisdom embraces more than knowledge; following Augustine, *sapientia* is the goal, not *scientia* or *eruditio*.[26] *Sapientia*, "a Solomonic perceptiveness to the will of God," is a gift from God, a moral and religious sagacity; the concept pervades the Alfredian canon.[27] *Sapientia* permits the regulation of the self; good regulation of the community follows.[28] *Sapientia* is not innate; it must be earned, and honed by use.[29] Literacy is the mechanism by which wisdom is accessed and God's favour gained.[30] In this, "Alfred" channels Solomon, a comparison made explicit by Asser and reiterated in the *domboc*.[31] Proposed reforms are linked to a historically approved method of redemption, making a powerful emotional appeal to avoid further divine reprisals.[32] In articulating a conception of wisdom in terms which echoed biblical precedent and authoritative exegesis, "Alfred"

20 *Pastoral Care*, 6–7.

21 St. Augustine, "Tractatus V," col. 2018.

22 Cross, "The Name."

23 Anlezark, "Which Books," 9.

24 Bosworth and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 1042; Cross, "The Name," 66.

25 There is an echo of this emphasis on behaviour in the OE *Exodus*, on the imperative to keep the covenant actively: Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 79.

26 Bately, "Literary Prose," 9; Szarmach, "Meaning of Alfred's Preface," 64, 70. Shippey, however, has misgivings: Shippey, "Wealth and Wisdom," 353.

27 Hudson, *Laws of England*, 24.

28 Wormald, "Uses of Literacy," 107.

29 Discenza, "Persuasive Power," 127.

30 Bately, "Literary Prose," 9; Wormald, "Uses of Literacy," 107.

31 Asser, chaps. 76, 99.

32 Stanton, *Culture of Translation*, 71.

provided impeccable authority for the argument, and cast it in terms which would have been persuasive to the ecclesiastical elites in particular.

I do not suggest a dichotomy between Alfred's secular and clerical elites. The secular and the ecclesiastical were not separate spheres of action.[33] Alfredian ideology astutely appealed to both secular and religious values, notwithstanding potential tensions between the two worldviews. In Alfredian ideology, Christian wisdom led to success in warfare, territorial expansion, and material wealth. Material wealth—treasure—was culturally important in early medieval Western Europe, a fundamental measure of an individual's stature and character both as recipient and giver, and equally a measure of a community's worth and honour.[34] I develop this point further, in relation to royal largesse, when I return to the Jewel in chapter 7.

In the Verse Preface, Christian wisdom is described as a form of treasure—searoðonca hord—echoing Old English epic poetry like *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* in tone and terminology.[35] It also had an impeccable Solomonic pedigree (3 Kings 3:11–14 and 2 Chronicles 1:7–12).[36] The Prose Preface specified, twice, that wealth follows the acquisition of wisdom:

> swelce hie cwæden: Ure ieldran, ða ðe ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom, ond ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan ond us læfdon. Her mon mæg giet gesion hiora swæð, ac we him ne cunnon æfter spyrigean. Ond forðæm we habbað nu ægðer forlæten ge ðone welan ge ðone wisdom, forðæm ðe we noldon to ðæm spore mid ure mode onlutan.
>
> (as if they were to say: Our elders, who once inhabited these parts, loved learning, and through it they amassed wealth and left it to us. Here their track can still be seen, yet we cannot follow it. And we have now forfeited both the riches and the learning, because we would not incline our understanding to the track.)[37]

Treasure occurs elsewhere as a measure of worth: in the *OE Boethius*, the historical Boethius is described within a single stanza as being just, a great treasure-giver, wise, and eager for honours—these are admirable character traits.[38] Treasure and treasure-giving appealed to values and emotions deeply embedded in the aristocratic ethos.[39] The promise of wealth would

33 Jurasinski, "English Law," 10.

34 Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*; Faulkner, *Wealth*.

35 Frantzen, "Form and Function," 130.

36 Zacher, "Chosen People," 461.

37 *Pastoral Care*, 6–7.

38 *Boethius*, Metre 1, lines 49–52.

39 Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*, 82.

have been highly motivating for an early medieval aristocratic audience. Nelson argues that wealth was held out as reward because the Alfredian program, unlike Charlemagne's, required the active participation of the lay elites.[40] The lure of wealth may have been a deliberate strategy to coax participation from the unwilling or the sceptical.

Further, the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* stamps the king's authority by inserting Alfred into what Nicole Guenther Discenza describes as "a chain of authority," using metaphors, sentiments, and language familiar to the audience from secular heroic texts.[41] Alfred already has royal authority; by placing him between Gregory, Augustine, and the audience for Gregory's text, a claim is laid to religious and textual authority in terms likely to be palatable to the intended audience.[42] In expressly directing the bishops to copy and circulate the translation in the king's voice, the Verse Preface inserts the king into the chain between bishop, lower clergy, and laity.[43] "Alfred" may well have considered Carolingian precedents in crafting the Prose and Verse prefaces.[44]

In both prefaces, the focus is thus on the acquisition of God-devoted wisdom. This focus dovetailed with Gregory's characterization in the *Cura pastoralis* of the obligation to teach as a sacred duty. This set the tone for those who would be responsible for steering the Alfredian community back to God. Teaching was an evangelical obligation, owed to God and to others whom one should serve. This was a common theme in Gregory's writings.[45] It is echoed in later texts, such as the Vercelli Book.[46] Highlighting this theme at the commencement of the reform program would presumably have prodded the bishops to action—they too served. The king's responsibility for his people expressed in the Prose Preface not only channelled Gregory's concept of power in service to others, it provided an impeccable justification for the invitation to the bishops to act with the king—making the invitation difficult to refuse.

In the *Pastoral Care*, the obligation to teach is emphasized and expanded to include secular contexts. The text addresses *lareowas* (teachers) 110

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40 Nelson, "Wealth and Wisdom," 36, 45.

41 Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface," 629.

42 Stanton, *Culture of Translation*, 79; Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface," 625–26; Harbus, "Metaphors of Authority," 723–24.

43 Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface," 627–30.

44 Godden, "Prologues and Epilogues."

45 Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 20.

46 Leneghan, "Teaching the Teachers."

times.[47] It also has a more secular flavour in its use of other terminology, substituting *ealdorman* and *ealdordom* for the Latin *rector* or *praelatus*, and translating *praepositus* as *scirman*.[48] The effect is to adjust the focus of the text, widening it to include those who exercise secular authority over others.[49] The notion of rulers as teachers was consistently characterized in the Alfredian texts as a hallowed Christian Latin tradition.[50] Alterations in translation made the text apt for the exercise of secular power, but did not alter Gregory's focus on how power must be wielded: cautiously, with humility, and in service to God and others.[51] As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has shown, the Alfredian translation diverges from the source text in its treatment of power exercised this way. The translation tempers Gregory's unease about the essentially fraught nature of power by distinguishing between the worthy and self-serving wielder of power.[52] "Alfred" also softens Gregory's warning that bishops who involve themselves in worldly affairs and take their focus away from God will displease Him (2 Tim. 2:4). "Alfred" qualifies the warning with the words "to ungemetlice" (too immoderately).[53]

The validation of the appropriate use of secular power is a major theme of Alfredian ideology. Other aspects of Alfredian ideology are embedded in this translation. These are the proper use of worldly riches, and the importance of good lordship and friendship. Section 143.1–4 of the *Pastoral Care* emphasizes the importance of the relationship between lord and follower; another section (201.2–3) explicitly states that lordship is divinely ordained and may not therefore be resisted.

These themes are reiterated in other Alfredian translations, and they feature strongly in the *domboc*. The other texts and the *domboc* were aimed at the secular elites as well as the clerical. Although the *Pastoral Care* was directed principally at the bishops, the Verse Preface and the emphasis on treasure suggest that "Alfred" anticipated that secular elites might well access the text, or portions of it. The framing pieces, as stand-alone texts, were also apt for the classroom and the task of learning to read. It is clear that Alfred was alert to that additional opportunity for persuasion. A new

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47 Discenza, "Wealth and Wisdom," 459.

48 Schreiber, "*Searoðonca hord*," 187.

49 Anlezark argues, contra, that there is no evidence that the *Pastoral Care* was modified for readers other than bishops: Anlezark, "OE *Pastoral Care*," 231.

50 Discenza, "Wealth and Wisdom," 458.

51 Leneghan, "Royal Wisdom," 83–85.

52 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Inside, Outside."

53 Faulkner, "Royal Authority," 132–33.

social practice of lifelong learning was introduced, and the existing social practice of education was modified, to facilitate the discussion and absorption of ideology contained in the Alfredian translations.

In order to reverse their fortunes, Alfred's people had to apply Christian wisdom. Applying Christian wisdom required more than private piety. It was crucial that Christian wisdom guided the community's actions and values in order to earn divine approval and fend off the Vikings. Alfred needed those who were involved in the management of the kingdom, the principal men, secular and clerical, on side. They would help to inculcate the requisite values and behaviour through their leadership in diverse social practices.

The *OE Boethius*, the *Soliloquies*, and the *Prose Psalms* were intended to assist with that process of inculcating and applying Christian wisdom. They therefore had to be tailored so that they would be suitable for secular elites as well as higher clergy. These texts contain greater digressions from their source texts than the translation of *Cura pastoralis*, and I argue that these digressions were deliberate. In common with scholars like Discenza and David Pratt, I contend that the OE translations evidence key concepts in Alfredian ideology—the importance of the *modes eagan* in the task of learning, Solomonic God-centred wisdom as the goal of learning, and the roles of kingship, lordship, friendship, honour, and earthly goods in a God-focused community.[54] In both the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, the translation either expands upon or departs from the source text's commentary on each concept. These were not errors of transmission. I adopt Discenza's argument that Alfred deployed strategies of persuasion in the process of translating which were designed to make the texts easier to access and absorb. Ease of access increased the prospects of spreading the message, particularly to the adult men, the ealdormen, whom Alfred needed to target. These strategies increased the prospects of Alfredian ideology being discussed and accepted.

The *Soliloquies* and the *OE Boethius* are generally regarded as having been translated by the same person, even by those who doubt Alfredian authorship.[55] They use similar strategies of persuasion, and they both deal with important facets of Alfredian ideology. I introduce each text briefly. In analyzing these texts, it is easier to consider strategies of persuasion first, before considering ideology. Using subsections, I consider strategies of persuasion, *modes eagan*, lordship, friendship, and worldly goods, turning from the *OE Boethius* to the *Soliloquies* in each subsection.

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54 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory"; Discenza, *King's English*, Introduction; Pratt, *Political Thought*, Part 2; Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention."

55 Godden and Irvine, *OE Boethius*, 1:8; Szarmach, "Augustine's *Soliloquia* in OE," 232.

The *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*: Background

The central theme in the *OE Boethius* is finding the path to God. That is an integral part of its contextualization as a Christian text; the theme is absent from the source text. This theme echoes Alfred's own personal journey to wisdom (as recounted by Asser). This suggests that where there are modifications of the concepts from Latin source text to the OE text, those alterations signal issues of particular significance to Alfred. Many of those alterations revolve around the nature and responsibilities of kingship. These had particular relevance for Alfred's personal quest for wisdom, but they were also fundamental to Alfredian ideology and the task of reorienting the community back to God.

Some scholars have found it difficult to conceive why Augustine's *Soliloquia* was chosen as one of the books "most necessary for men to know."[56] Anlezark has cast doubt on Alfredian authorship of the OE translation, while acknowledging that the linguistic evidence points to an author who used the West Saxon dialect around 900.[57] Anlezark's reservations rest upon the esoteric nature of some of the content of the *Soliloquia*—difficult theological issues such as the pre-existence of the soul. There is no evidence that Alfred was interested in venturing into such intellectually difficult and theologically hazardous territory. If, however, Alfred was not concerned with the totality of the content of a text, but only what was useful to him, then the extraneous material may not have mattered a great deal to him. It was not as though he had a large selection of texts to choose from, or the option of writing his own polemic. There was no concept of a manifesto, a call to arms, in the early medieval period. I argue that "Alfred" took what was available—established texts, already known in educated circles—and manipulated them so that they articulated Alfredian ideology and could be used as vehicles to disseminate that ideology. I argue (in the next chapter) that the king intended his adult elites to seek wisdom the same way he had sought wisdom—using texts to spark discussion and elucidate debate. He probably did not intend his adult elites to read a text in its entirety or to study it as closely as a monastic community might do. It therefore probably did not matter very much that the texts contained material extraneous to Alfredian ideology or purpose, as long as they did not conflict with it.

56 Szarmach, "Alfred's Soliloquies," 160.

57 Anlezark, "Soul," 59–60.

Strategies of Persuasion in the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*

Discenza has identified a number of strategies of translation in the *OE Boethius* which made it a more accessible and engaging text.[58] I summarize some of her arguments. Woven into the translation are familiar features of Old English poetry. These include the use of doublets and the use of Old English poetic formulations such as "we have heard" and "we have learned." Loan words from the Latin are few in number and appear elsewhere in Old English, so that the text is phrased in language familiar to the audience. Likewise, style and syntax follow Old English patterns, rather than Latin.

"Alfred" used familiar concepts as well as familiar style. Boethius's interrogator is not Philosophy, but Wisdom. Wisdom appears in OE poetry, as well as in other genres.[59] In the *OE Boethius*, Wisdom is described as a foster-mother, a more congenial characterization than remote Wisdom.[60] The source text maintains the fiction of a conversation between the two characters; in contrast, Discenza lists a dozen places in the *OE Boethius* where the book refers to itself. The speaking book is an Old English cultural norm, which "Alfred" employed to great persuasive effect in his prefaces, as well as in text-bodies and the Jewel.[61] Discenza argues that the book speaks particularly where the argument is heavy-going, and that this strategy was employed to build a camaraderie between "Alfred" and his audience—a sense of shared labour.[62] The rapport is bolstered by a switch from the third person or impersonal voice in the Latin, to the first and second person voice in the OE. From chapter 22 of the *OE Boethius*, the protagonist simply uses *ic*.

The OE translation starts by situating the main character, Boethius, in a known historical period, albeit with some details that do not appear in the Latin text.[63] The historical figure soon fades into the background, as the main character is increasingly frequently referred to as *Mod* (mind) and *Gescead-wisnes* (wisdom). This change effects a switch in viewpoint for the audience. The central character is no longer a long-dead historical person with whom the audience can have limited connection. *Mod* is a proxy for each of us. *Mod*'s path to wisdom is open to the audience, because it is not historically contingent. Britton Brooks argues that the *OE Boethius* creates a relational-focused

58 Discenza, "The Old English Boethius"; Discenza, *King's English*.

59 Discenza, *King's English*, 88–89.

60 Discenza, *King's English*, 72; Crawford, *Childhood*, 123–38.

61 Earl, "King Alfred's Talking Poems."

62 Discenza, *King's English*, 61–63.

63 Godden, "King and Counselor," 203.

pathway to God, diverging from the argument-focused dialectic of the source text.[64] Erica Weaver suggests that the focus in the *OE Boethius* on "mental discipline that is entangled with the disciplining of the soul" made this text apt for the Alfredian educational program.[65] In fundamentally reshaping the way that the central character learns, "Alfred" made the *OE Boethius* far more relevant and accessible to his audience than the source text.

The OE text is made less arduous by the use of more tangible imagery and everyday narrative than the original.[66] The protagonist shows emotions and is therefore more empathetic. He smiles, and wonders (Prose 21 and 29; Prose 27 and 30). In the source text, a display of emotion is cause for reprimand by Philosophy.[67] Discenza argues that this human touch assists the audience not only to digest difficult argument but also to envisage undertaking a similar journey towards wisdom.

"Alfred" made his translation of Boethius more relevant to his ideology by framing it in an explicitly Christian context. The use of Wisdom as interlocutor connects the text to the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, and links Alfred as putative author with Solomon, reputed author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.[68] In Proverbs 8:15–16, Wisdom proclaims that she is behind every throne. Solomonic kingship is a concept "Alfred" uses frequently. The Solomonic concept of "God-devoted wisdom" is revealed as the ultimate goal in the *OE Boethius*.

In the *Soliloquies*, "Alfred" used the same strategies of translation as in the *OE Boethius*: the use of familiar Old English language, explication of difficult passages from the source text, more concrete imagery, and a reliance on authority rather than logic.[69] The tone in the Alfredian translation is markedly different from Augustine's source text. Ruth Waterhouse argues that Alfred's carefully calibrated tone constructed an "immediate and friendly intimacy" between the king and his audience, based partly upon the audience's greater sensory and emotive response to the text.[70] Similarly, "Alfred" employed an intimate tone to great effect in the Prose Preface to the Pastoral Care—he makes a show of deferring to his audience "Forðy me ðyncð betre,

64 Brooks, "Intimacy, Interdependence."

65 Weaver, "Bending Minds," 358.

66 Gatch, "King Alfred's Version," 28; Godden and Irvine, *OE Boethius*, 54.

67 Watts, *Boethius*, bk. 1, chap. 5, 18.

68 Treschow, "Wisdom's Land," 263; Discenza, *King's English*, 34.

69 Discenza, *King's English*, 126.

70 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version"; Gatch, "King Alfred's Version," 25.

gif iow swa ðyncð."[71] The intimate tone levelled the relationship between king and audience, invited the audience in close, and fostered a sense of a shared undertaking.

The *Soliloquies* is a more practical text than the original—many of the arguments reflect lived experience and common sense. As Allen Frantzen puts it: "Alfred weaves the truth of his own experience into the Augustinian argument."[72] That assessment of the OE text is consistent with there being a period in which the source text was used to anchor discussion and debate between Alfred and his coterie, before the text was translated for use by others.

Having considered strategies of persuasion—elements of the text which made it easier for the audience to understand and assimilate Alfredian ideology—I turn to the content of that ideology. "Alfred" identified two tools which could be used by individuals to reorient themselves to God—the *modes eagan* and *cræft*. "He" also identified social relationships which, when functioning properly, would consolidate the application of Christian wisdom. These were good kingship and loyal friendship. Good kingship required particular explication, to assuage fears of increased royal power. "Alfred" used *cræft* and the Gregorian ideal of humility to signal an awareness that power is only righteously exercised in service to God.

Alfredian Ideology: *modes eagan*

The *modes eagan* is a critical tool in the journey to wisdom. Vision as a metaphor for the mind's perception was a familiar legacy from classical antiquity.[73] In Old English literature, sight was the pre-eminent sense, because of the acknowledged link between sight and the acquisition of knowledge.[74] Sight and hearing are referenced on two unusual quatrefoil brooches in the Galloway hoard.[75] The Alfredian concept of the eyes of the mind is both an essential tool for following the path inward to achieve God-focused wisdom, and a consequence of finding that wisdom, an enhanced perception, and understanding turned outward. It is both instrument and reward. The incentive to learn to use the mind's eye is thus powerful. *Modes eagan* is a concept

71 *Pastoral Care*, 8.

72 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 87.

73 Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors," 180–83; Hindley, "Sight and Understanding," 23; Karkov, "Sight and Vision."

74 Fera, "Metaphors," 730.

75 There is no definitive publication on the hoard yet. See "The Galloway Hoard."

which is developed in the *OE Boethius*, and it is reiterated in the *Soliloquies* and the *Prose Psalms*. It is referenced on high-status objects associated with Alfred, notably the Fuller brooch and the Alfred Jewel.

In the *OE Boethius*, when Wisdom first visits the prisoner (Prose 2—before Boethius segues into *Mod*), Wisdom has to dry Boethius's mind's eye before Boethius can even recognize him. Without a properly functioning mind's eye, understanding is obscured, and things appear hopeless. Later, Wisdom says: "Þu me ahsast micles and earfoðes to ongitanne. Gif þu hit witan wilt, ðu scealt habban ær þines modes eagan clæne and hlutor" (You ask me a great thing and one difficult to understand. If you wish to understand it, you must first have your mind's eyes clean and pure).[76] Reorienting yourself to God enables you to see clearly both your predicament and the best solution for it.

In the *Soliloquies*, there are extensive analogies between sight and understanding which echo the discussion in the *OE Boethius*, and also expand on it with some concrete imagery. For example, Reason uses the analogy of a person climbing a ladder in small steps—an extended vista becomes available to him as he gradually climbs (1.79). Comprehension grows as the mind's eye is employed. "Alfred" also uses the analogy of travel by ship and land to explain how to learn to use the mind's eye. One may travel by ship towards land, but on reaching land, the ship must be left behind. If the mind's eye is used in the right way, then sight acts as an anchor, fixing the mind to God (1.38). The mind's eye provides the connection to God.

The protagonist asks directly what the mind's eye is. In the *Soliloquia*, one needs reason, faith, hope, and charity to make one's mind's eye function properly.[77] These are New Testament concepts (1 Cor. 3:9). In the *Soliloquies*, Reason answers somewhat differently. The mind's eye is "gescæadwisnesse, toæacan oðrum creftum" (the faculty of reason, together with other virtues). Reason then elaborates on those other virtues:

> Wysdom and eadmeto and wærscype and gemetgung, rihtwisnes and mildheornes, gesceadwisnes, gestadþines and welwilnes, clennes and forheafdnes.
>
> (Wisdom and humility and prudence and moderation, righteousness and mercy, reason, constancy and benevolence, purity and abstinence.)[78]

Many of these other virtues are relational and behavioural, virtues appropriate for dealings between people, rather than between an individual and God.

76 *Boethius*, Prose 33, 396–97.

77 Watson, *Augustine*, bk. 1, chap. 12, 41.

78 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 38, 218–19.

In the *Soliloquies*, Reason says that God works with us, using these powerful tools. The effect of "Alfred's" modification of this passage is to give a far more socially constructed flavour to the mind's eye than in the source text. The passage evokes *Mod*'s argument in Prose 9 that in order to rule well, to exercise his *cræft* (see below), a king needs "gebedmen and ferdmen and weorcmen" (prayer men and army men and workmen).[79] The path to God does not entail repudiating relationships with others but infusing those relationships with Christian virtues and practices. This applies to kingship. *Modes eagan* is linked to good kingship, because good kingship is centred upon God.

Alfredian Ideology: Good Kingship

Leading insular clergy (Aldhelm, Bede, Boniface, and Alcuin) admonished and advised their kings, endeavouring to "shape, moderate and Christianise royal behaviour"—as did their Carolingian counterparts.[80] Kings themselves did not ruminate about the nature and pitfalls of power.[81] The evils of unjust power, and the argument that power corrupts so that it is always eventually exercised unjustly and oppressively, is a central theme of the *Consolation of Philosophy*. This is one of the principal reasons why Malcolm Godden has repeatedly cast doubts upon the attribution of this text to Alfred.[82] He makes the same argument in relation to the *Soliloquies*.[83]

However, the *OE Boethius* departs significantly from the source text's argument that the exercise of power is necessarily evil, instead providing "a meditation on royal power."[84] It sets out the affirmative case for the exercise of power. The *OE Boethius* is not the only Alfredian translation to situate its discussion of moral reflection within contemporary political concerns and to modify the translation accordingly.[85] The recalibration of the treatment of power in the *Pastoral Care* may well have provided confidence that the *Consolation of Philosophy* could be similarly adjusted. I argue that the profound divergence between source text and translation on the nature of power sup-

79 *Boethius*, 98–99.

80 Cardwell, "What Sort of Love."

81 Which is partly why Hrothgar's advice to Beowulf on good and bad kingship is so powerful—it is unexpected. Swanton, *Beowulf*, lines 1698–1757.

82 Godden, "King and Counselor," 206–07; Godden, "Alfredian Prose," 135; Irvine and Godden, *OE Boethius*, xi.

83 Godden, "King and Counselor," 206.

84 Szarmach, "Alfred's Nero," 147, 151.

85 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Inside, Outside," 335.

ports the attribution of the text to "Alfred," because it served a useful pragmatic purpose—to reassure the West Saxon elites.

In the *OE Boethius*, "Alfred" provides additional material to the source text, fleshing out the nature of bad kingship, and making careful distinctions between it and good kingship. In the introduction narrative, Boethius the historical person defends ancient Roman laws and justice against the oppressions of the tyrant Theodoric—bad kingship is juxtaposed with power wielded to protect and to serve.[86] The Alfredian distinction between good and bad kingship constitutes a conscious acknowledgement of the danger of power. The interpolation of the concept of authority exercised in service to God which Gregory articulated in the *Cura pastoralis* negates this danger. Gregorian authority is conditioned by the duty imposed by God to care for the spiritual wellbeing of others—to act in the world. The Latin text contains no such obligation to participate in worldly affairs in service to others.[87] "Alfred" articulates two other concepts to reassure his elite audience that, in Alfred's case, the use of power would be constrained. Both concepts stem from God-devoted wisdom. The first is *cræft*; the second is humility.

Alfredian Ideology: *cræft*

In the *OE Boethius*, the concept of *cræft* is not as narrowly confined as the source text's concept of *virtus* (moral integrity or rectitude).[88] *Cræft* "forges a connection between power, talent and virtue, and between man and God."[89] As Discenza notes, *cræft* is a synthesis of spiritual, moral, and material elements. Peter Clemoes argues that this synthesis was already present in OE poetry.[90] That would have made the concept easier for an aristocratic audience to understand and assimilate. Discenza suggests that mental or spiritual calibre is the essence of *cræft*, underlining the pivotal God-focus of Alfredian wisdom. *Cræft* is a tool available to all on their journey to God, not just kings. Everyone must use the resources he has, to find the right path.[91]

The notion that individuals must strive, must use their skills, resonates with the Preface to the *Soliloquies*. That Preface makes it clear that the acquisition of Christian wisdom requires dedication and effort. Although the

86 *Boethius*, Metre 1, 8–9.

87 Gatch, *Loyalties and Traditions*, 111; Discenza, *King's English*, 39–40.

88 Yorke, "Alfred and Weland," 53.

89 Discenza, *King's English*, 121. See also Faulkner, *Wealth*, 70.

90 Clemoes, "King Alfred's Debt."

91 Clemoes, "King Alfred's Debt," 237.

Preface to the *Soliloquies* emphasizes the personal effort required to acquire wisdom and the imperative to use that wisdom, "Alfred" did not cast the path to wisdom as a solitary endeavour. Individual effort was required, within a communal endeavour. The clues that the Preface to the *Soliloquies* provides to the king's intentions are discussed in the next chapter.

The *OE Boethius* also makes it clear, contra the *Consolation of Philosophy*, that the exercise of *cræft* in striving for eternal reward brings rewards in this world which should not be disdained—honour and reputation.[92] "Alfred" thereby links concepts familiar to, and valued by, his community with God-devoted wisdom. This strategy stands in stark contrast to the innovative use of the concept of humility. Humility in the exercise of power was a Gregorian concept, and therefore already familiar to Alfred's bishops.[93] However, it was not a secular virtue lauded in Old English epic literature.[94] It had the potential to discompose secular elites.[95]

"Alfred" used the concept of humility as a way of signalling the proper limits of power. One limitation is the purpose of power—power must be exercised in the service of God who has granted the power. Kingship is a duty, not a privilege. Royal power exercised appropriately is focused outward, on God and on the people entrusted to the king's care, not inward, on self-gratification. A second limitation is the proper relationship between king and followers. "Boethius" bemoans the ingratitude of his tyrant emperor and the deleterious sycophancy of his favourites. *Mod* contrasts this with a view of kingship where good servants and measured advice are necessary to the king's ability to govern well and should be suitably rewarded (Prose 9). This sense of humility as moderating the relationship between lord and follower is echoed in the *Soliloquies*.

The concept of humility was used to pre-emptively assuage aristocratic concern about the dangers of a too-powerful king. Alfredian ideology greatly enhanced royal power. The West Saxon elites doubtless recognized this. The exercise of *cræft* and humility place the ruler firmly in the Solomonic model of kingship, conditioning the exercise of royal authority.

The source text occasionally depicts God as master and individual as servant—"Alfred" multiplies those analogies, particularly in Books 2 and 3, so that the master–servant paradigm becomes the predominant character-

92 Irvine, "Wrestling with Hercules," 178–79; Yorke, "Alfred and Weland," 62–63.

93 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory," 68; Anlezark, "Gregory the Great."

94 Alfredian humility had a very different flavour from Hrothgar's cautionary advice to Beowulf to avoid hubris, for example. Swanton, *Beowulf*, lines 1758–68.

95 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory," 72.

ization of the relationship between God and man.[96] Significantly, "Alfred" frequently places himself with the subordinate, viewing the relationship from the subservient position.[97] The effect is a silent acknowledgement that a temporal lord, such as a king, also serves a master. "Alfred" thus brings himself closer to his audience, as one who also serves.[98] "He" also reinforces the idea that power is exercised in service to God. This acknowledgement fits with discussion of lordship and power in the *OE Boethius*. The master–servant paradigm permeates other discussions. In both versions, Reason asks what measure the protagonist will use in order to understand his friend, Alippius. In the source text, Augustine seeks to truly know his friend through his intellect.[99] In the *Soliloquies*, loyalty is the paramount consideration: "Ðonne wiste ic hwilce treowða he hæfde wið me" (Then I would know what sort of loyalty he might have toward me).[100]

Loyalty is also integral to the passage where Reason sketches a scenario in which the protagonist receives a command from his lord, in a sealed letter. All that he knows is that the command involves leaving behind the wealth already received from his lord. Reason asks whether he would follow the command, trusting to his lord, or would he elect to stay, and enjoy the wealth already bestowed? The answer, after some prevarication and a wistfully expressed desire to keep the existing wealth and retain his lord's goodwill, is that the protagonist would obey the fresh instructions.[101] Waterhouse argues that Alfred acknowledges his own role in the lord–follower relationship—with its elements of command, obedience, and reward—and also the space for love in that relationship.[102] Love is implicit in the Alfredian characterization of loyal friendship.

Alfredian Ideology: Loyal Friendship

In the *OE Boethius*, the Alfredian concept of friendship differs from the source text. Alfredian friendship reinforces the mutual obligations of lord and follower, which is adumbrated in the discussion of lordship. "Alfred" uses language redolent of hierarchy, of responsibility and

96 Hitch, "Alfred's *Cræft*," 132.

97 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version," 50, 75.

98 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version," 72.

99 Watson, *Augustine*, bk. 1, chap. 8, 35.

100 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 32, 212–13.

101 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 40, 221.

102 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version," 72–73.

status.[103] The Alfredian character of the relationship between king and retinue owes more to Germanic values than to Latin traditions.[104] The emphasis is on friendship within hierarchical bounds, love intrinsically tied to loyalty. These concepts would have been familiar to the audience from poems such as *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer*. However, "Alfred" recasts that friendship in a Christian context.

Metre 11 of the OE text characterizes friendship as a strong cohesive force which produces the "sibbe samrade" (harmonious peace) that God has ordained. Prose 12 describes loyal friends as "ðæt deorwyrðeste ðing ealra þissa weoruldgesælða" (the most precious thing of all these worldly felicities), divine in nature because created by God.[105] Friendship between superior and subordinate which is based upon mutual esteem and a shared value system cements the divine order. In Metre 15 and Prose 15, Wisdom details the perils faced by subjects serving a king with false values. However, "Alfred" recasts that friendship in a Christian context. This remodelling is a subtle reminder to the audience that a good king should be cherished by his people, reciprocating the king's obligation to cherish his people.[106]

In the *Soliloquies*, "Alfred" addresses the role of friendship in the context of learning. Friendship in this text is far less hierarchical than in the *OE Boethius*, far more about camaraderie, and it appears to have been deeply important. The *Soliloquia* starts with Reason "appearing" before Augustine, who is having an existential crisis. Reason tells him to write down what he learns about God. Reason further advises him not to count on encouragement from a large audience for his writings, although what he writes may be worth something to a few people.[107] It is a curious comment, and gratuitous. Augustine has explained, before Reason appears, that he is trying to understand himself and how he should be. Of what relevance is an audience? The implication in the Latin source is that the nature of the quest to understand God is innately solitary. The Alfredian text takes a different view.

In the OE text, Reason makes no comment about an audience. Instead, Reason advises the protagonist to write, and says that he will need a suitable place to write, free from distractions but enhanced by the support of learned and interested companions: "and fæawa cuðe men and creftige mid þe, ðe nanwiht ne amyrdan ac fultmoden to þinum crefte" (and a few familiar and

103 Thomas, "Binding Force of Friendship," 16.

104 Discenza, *King's English*, 78–80.

105 *Boethius*, 124–25, 138–39.

106 Discenza, "Power, Skill," 106.

107 Watson, *Augustine*, bk 1, chap. 1, 23.

capable people with you, who would not disturb you, but would rather be supportive of your undertaking).[108] In the *Soliloquies*, learning is best undertaken collaboratively, if the right people can be found. The principal character then bemoans his lack of assistants as well as his inadequacies for the task of knowing God, and Reason tells him to pray for help. The implication is that good assistants are a God-given benefaction. Alfred, of course, had assistants from the start of his own journey towards wisdom, and he freely acknowledged the benefits they provided. The departure from the source text's assessment of the value of assistants reflects Alfred's personal experience and suggests that he wanted others to learn collaboratively, as he had learned.[109]

In the *Soliloquia*, Augustine later declares that he will abandon his friends if they hold him back from his quest to know God (1.20). In the *Soliloquies*, the character asserts that he will not abandon his friends even if they hamper his quest for wisdom—they would still be helpful to him in other ways, and he could help them (1.67–68). Loyalty imbues the obligation to assist others. Loyalty as a characteristic of friendship in the *Soliloquies* aligns with the model of friendship in the *OE Boethius* (where loyalty is the crux of friendship), and it resonates with the duty owed to others in the *Pastoral Care*. Loyalty was, of course, of paramount importance to an early medieval king, because of the personal nature of kingship and the personal bonds upon which it relied. The emphasis on loyalty is consistent with the sense of the importance of communal endeavour. While the *Soliloquia* has a strong flavour of the solitary about it, the OE text emphasizes the socially constructed self.[110] The contextualization of self within community allows "Alfred" to defend the use of material wealth as a tool of good kingship, since merit and honour are social constructs.

Alfredian Ideology: Worldly Goods

When the eyes of the mind see clearly, when the ruler focuses on God-devoted wisdom, and his relationship with his followers is in harmony, then worldly concerns can be put in their proper perspective. Amy Faulkner has shown how wealth is consistently depicted across the Alfredian translations as a productive resource in a properly-functioning community.[111]

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108 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 4, 188–89.

109 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Listening to the Scenes," 23.

110 Ganze, "Individual in the Afterlife"; Green, "Speech Acts."

111 Faulkner, *Wealth*. I am grateful to Dr. Faulkner for allowing me to read her doctoral thesis before publication.

The *OE Boethius* departs radically from the *Consolation of Philosophy* in its treatment of worldly goods.[112] The change is tailored to suit the intended audience and to advance Alfredian ideology, a major component of which is the powerful king. Again, Discenza's commentaries on the *OE Boethius* are central to my argument. While the source text discounts material wealth as a false lure and an empty prize, the *OE Boethius* acknowledges that they have value. Worldly goods can be a means of acquiring other things with greater value, such as honour. For example, in Prose 7, Wisdom concedes that gold has value, although much depends on how it is acquired and distributed—and her emphasis is on distributing it. In Prose 4, Wisdom makes her values clear:

> Ne onscunige ic no þæs neoþeran and þæs unclænan stowe gif ic þe geradne gemete, ne me no ne lyst mid glase geworhtra waga ne heahsetla mid golde and mid gimmum gerenodra, ne boca mid golde awritenra me swa swiðe ne lyst swa me lyst on þe rihtes willan.
>
> (I do not shun this low and unclean place if I find you well-disposed, nor do I want walls made with glass or thrones decorated with gold and jewels, nor do I want books written in gold as much as I want a well-directed will in you.)[113]

Alfred's clerical elites would doubtless have affirmed the emptiness of riches within the Christian worldview, at least in theory. Alcuin's strictures on a number of his clerical contemporaries suggest that sometimes practice did not match theory.[114] However, his secular elites were highly unlikely to entertain the notion that riches were worthless and to be repudiated. Alfred, as an early medieval king, needed wealth and treasure in order to govern.

In Prose 9, *Mod* makes a spirited and extended defence of earthly goods as necessary materials for the exercise of power, which was entrusted to him. Twice, *Mod* expressly refers to the needs of a king. The historical Boethius was never a king; he was a senior official in an imperial administration. The overwhelming inference is that this is an alteration made in Alfred's interests. One can almost hear the king, on being read the Latin text's condemnation of riches as a worthless trap, exclaim "No, no, no, I'm not having that!"[115]

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112 Although Godden and Irvine argue that both Boethius and the OE author exhibit a fundamental ambivalence to wealth: Godden and Irvine, *OE Boethius*, 64–65.

113 *Boethius*, 22–23.

114 See for example the letter from Alcuin to Calvinus and Cuculus, 801, in Allott, *Alcuin of York*, letter 21, p. 30.

115 This entertaining image comes from Barbara Yorke's conference paper "Becoming Royal."

As Discenza points out, the response of Wisdom (here called *Gescead-wisnes*, "Reason") is more temperate, more flexible, than Philosophy's response in the source text.[116] Reason does not reject *Mod*'s defence of riches outright. Instead, Reason responds by warning that even those who acquire riches in order to do good things are in danger of great evil, by doing good things for the wrong reasons: "þæt is þone wilnung leases gilpes and unryhtes anwealdes and ungemetlices hlisan godra weorce ofer eall folc" (that is the desire for vain glory and unjust power and immoderate fame for good deeds above all people).[117]

In the *OE Boethius*, in contrast to the *Consolation of Philosophy*, riches are not an encumbrance to the higher goal of God-centred wisdom, as long as they are used appropriately. The Alfredian perspective on wealth as a useful tool if used advisedly—as a means to a worthy end but not an end in itself—echoes Gregory's acknowledgement of the role of wealth in good deeds in chapter 21 of the *Cura pastoralis*.[118] The justification of wealth used wisely has parallels with the Alfredian defence of power in the *OE Boethius*. Like wealth, power is not necessarily a corrupting force. In Alfredian ideology, honour and wealth rewarded individual effort, signalled the use of *craeft*. It confirmed the link that "Alfred" made in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* between the acquisition of Christian wisdom and the wealth and prosperity that would follow.

The *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies* as Vehicles for Alfredian Ideology

The *OE Boethius*, manipulated in translation from its source text, was thus an apt vehicle for Alfred's ideology. It told an interesting story, anchored in Roman history, which was adjusted to make the content more accessible to a West Saxon audience. Important Alfredian themes are explicated in the text, in ways which make it possible to pick the text up and read passages from it (once the general gist of the narrative is known). I develop this argument in the next chapter.

The *Soliloquia* was not as apt for Alfred's purpose as the *Consolation of Philosophy*, not as ready-to-hand. Nevertheless, it contained material which could be adjusted to suit Alfredian themes of the mind's eye, learning, lordship, and friendship. Anlezark describes the *Soliloquies* as a version, rather

116 Discenza, *King's English*, 40.

117 *Boethius*, Prose 9, 100–1.

118 Davis, *Pastoral Care*, 158–62.

than a translation, of the source text; Frantzen calls it an adaptation.[119] In terms of Alfredian ideology, there are many similarities and overlaps between the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*.

Co-opting the authority of translation, "Alfred" adapted Latin source texts so that they were suitable vehicles for components of his ideology, without making them unrecognizable. There were other elements of Alfredian ideology for which translated Latin texts were not an apt vehicle. Other genres were used to articulate and disseminate those elements, particularly the characterization of the common identity and destiny of the Anglo-Saxon people, the *Angelcynn*. This characterization blurred the distinction between the separate *gentes* recorded by Bede. I do not argue for a neat division of ideology between genres—creative ways were used to weave Alfredian ideology *across* different texts, so that they reinforced each other. Thus, the Alfredian notion of the *Angelcynn* finds its first (muted) expression in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. The *domboc* emphasizes Anglo-Saxon common history and destiny, but also holds out Solomonic, God-devoted wisdom as the lodestar for the administration of justice, echoing the Alfredian translations. I start by considering the concept of the *Angelcynn*.

The Creation of the *Angelcynn*: A Common Identity and Destiny

I want to reiterate that I do not use the term "Anglo-Saxon" in the sense of race, biological descent or fixed ethnicity. Alfred needed the diverse communities he ruled to meld into a homogeneous group. He could not arbitrarily dismantle old regional identities, but he could offer a fresh identity, the *Angelcynn*. In order to encourage his disparate peoples to reconceptualize their communal identity, the boundaries between those narrowly-conceived and competitive identities and the *Angelcynn* had to be porous. Choosing to identify as a member of the *Angelcynn* had to be open not just to those living in Wessex, but also to those in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms subjugated by the Vikings. Critically, that identity also had to be available to those of Scandinavian or Celtic descent living under Alfred's rule who wished to opt-in.

The Alfredian texts invoked a myth of descent, of common origin—in the *ASC*, the *domboc*, and, inferentially, in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. Myths of origin were common in this period. Nicholas Howe defines an origin myth as "an account of the ancestral past, which, despite any evi-

119 Anlezark, "Soul," 39; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 71.

dence to the contrary, gives a group its irreducible common identity."[120] An origin myth, by definition, goes beyond the evidence, or ignores it, and may include a creative appropriation of significant material from other genres; as a "remembered history" it involves choice.[121] Myths of descent can be used to find common ground between people, or to justify exclusion. Medieval myths of descent occur in secular heroic poetry as well as in clerical writings.[122]

A theological component is invaluable to any myth of origin which seeks to tie the present and the future to a past event or series of events, to predicate a potential future upon breaking with the past.[123] In the early medieval period, the Bible was "the most significant historical work that ever had been, or ever could be, written."[124] The biblical past not only explained present events but also anticipated future events.[125] The use of the Bible as the key to interpreting and predicting meant that early medieval Christians tended to look for similarities across times and contexts, rather than differences.[126] This was fertile ground in which to lay claim to a communal identity with a special relationship with God. In the rumination on the cause of current woes in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*, "Alfred" alleges just such a special relationship. The Prose Preface taps into deeply held foundation myths about the Anglo-Saxon peoples articulated by influential insular Christian writers—Gildas, Bede, and Alcuin.[127]

Gildas wrote *De excidio Britanniae* in about 540 CE. He was Romano-British, and he regarded the Germanic migrations of the fifth century as pagan invasions, a righteous punishment of the indigenous British inhabitants, who had abandoned Christian teaching and lived in moral torpor.[128] The British, Gildas wrote, had enjoyed a Golden Age as a result of God's grace, but had lost divine favour as a result of their sinful behaviour. He described and interpreted the migrations within a Christian worldview, rather than as secular British history.[129] Gildas drew on Old Testament authority for

120 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 5.

121 Lewis, *History: Remembered*, 11–12.

122 Reynolds, "Medieval *Origines Gentium*," 375, 380.

123 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 64–65.

124 Keen, "Mediaeval Ideas," 286.

125 McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past*, 19; Bernau, "'Britain': Originary Myths."

126 Keen, "Mediaeval Ideas," 309; Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 5.

127 *Gildas*, chaps. 22.1, 24.1, 26.1; *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 15; *EHD*, no. 194, 844–46.

128 *Gildas*, chaps. 22.1, 24.1, 26.1.

129 Sims-William, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons," 2.

his casting of the Germanic migrants, whose homelands were in the North, as a divine scourge, citing Jeremiah (46:24) and Ezekiel (26:7). This Christian framework enabled later writers like Bede and Alcuin to recast and shape Gildas's history as an origin myth for their own people, who were of course the descendants of Gildas's brutal aggressors.[130] In the hands of Bede and Alcuin, the descendants of those aggressors became a Chosen People, beloved of God.

The Northumbrian scholar and cleric Bede wrote the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* in or about 731. Bede distinguished between various Germanic tribes who migrated to Britain. Language was, for him, a clear delineator of both the various migrant groups and the indigenous *gentes*.[131] Bede made no claim for a common English identity, based upon political rulership; kings could rule multiple kingdoms, but the individual *gentes* were not merged by the fact of common rulership.[132] Bede did, however, believe in a Christian or ecclesiastical community which transcended ethnic and political boundaries. This was the sense in which he wrote of a *gens Anglorum*, a people defined not by origin or ethnicity but by their (Roman) Christianity.[133] A lack of evidence makes it difficult to ascertain whether this was a particularly clerical perspective, or one shared by the laity as well in this period.[134]

Bede attributed the success of the immigrants of the fifth and sixth centuries to the refusal of the Britons who already inhabited the archipelago to convert the newly arrived immigrant groups to Christianity, choosing to stay aloof from them.[135] He used Gildas's notion of the British archipelago as a special landscape marked by God's bounty, a land which could only be securely claimed and occupied by the just, but in a different way from Gildas. He recast Gildas's account of the fate of the British Christians who strayed, not as a prediction of impending catastrophe, but as a cautionary tale for his contemporaries, using the analogy of the Israelites.[136] The aim of the analogy was to remind his contemporaries of the value of what they currently had,

130 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 38.

131 Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 71.

132 Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 73–76.

133 *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 1 and bk. 5, chap. 22; Foot, "Making of Angelcynn," 38–39; Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 27–28.

134 Harris, "An Overview," 749.

135 *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 22.

136 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 52.

not what they had lost, by providing a framework for understanding their recent history: an origin myth.

Alcuin also referenced the Israelites in his poem *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*.[137] Alcuin's perspective in this poem, written before the Viking raids intensified in scale and frequency, resembles Bede, rather than Gildas: he does not prophesy impending doom, but rather focuses on blessings bestowed upon the island's inhabitants. However, in 793, after the Viking raid on Lindisfarne, Alcuin's letter to Æthelred, king of Northumbria, raised the prospect of the end of another Golden Age.[138] Alcuin wrote in terms which explicitly linked the raids to a failure by his native community to adhere to Christian behaviours and values, and warned of worse to come if errors were not corrected.[139] This was not, in 793, an immutable future, but rather a prospect of disaster which could be avoided by scrupulous action, a rigorous attendance by the clergy and laity alike to their spiritual obligations. Alcuin's prescription, the call for greater religious observance, is consistent with contemporary Carolingian response to imminent threat—the call for "collective gestures of atonement."[140] Alfred's response was quite different and highly original. Alfred called not for rituals but for widespread behavioural change based upon a deeper understanding of Christian wisdom.

The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* expressly identifies the cause of current misfortunes as the loss of Christian wisdom. That loss entailed the forfeiture of the privileged status which his people had hitherto enjoyed. In describing the collective loss of wisdom, "Alfred" evokes a sense of lost inheritance. Fulk translates the phrase "Ure ieldran, ða ðe ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom ond ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan ond us læfdon" as "Our elders, who once inhabited these parts, loved learning, and through it they amassed wealth and *left it to us*" (emphasis added).[141] Sweet translates *læfdon* as "bequeathed," which also connotes an inheritance, a strong sense of entitlement.[142] The Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus contains

137 Godman, *Alcuin*, 10–11.

138 Letter from Alcuin to Æthelred, king of Northumbria, 793, *EHD*, no. 193, 842–44.

139 See also letter from Alcuin to Higbald, Bishop of Lindisfarne, *EHD*, no. 194, 844–46.

140 de Jong, *Penitential State*, 154–58; McCormick, "Liturgy of War"; Lamb, "Evidence from Absence," 55–57.

141 *Pastoral Care*, 6–7.

142 Sweet, *Alfred's West-Saxon Version*, 5.

a number of entries for *læfdon*, which tend to have the flavour of a purposive transfer.[143]

"Alfred" makes no mention of the internecine conflict between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms before the Viking incursions.[144] That conflict is amply attested in both the *ASC* and in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Biblical precedent confirmed that such conflicts indicated God's ire. Internecine conflict and strife between kingdoms were inflicted upon the Israelites by God as punishment (1 Kings). "Alfred" did not draw this connection. Given the predilection in the Alfredian texts for biblical precedent, the inference is that this was a deliberate choice. Foot suggests that for Alfred, as for Bede, disparate pasts were not as important as a common future.[145] Instead, recollection was altered and things forgotten in the service of forging a new communal identity, the *Angelcynn*.[146] I suggest that "Alfred" trod very carefully in creating his concept of the *Angelcynn*. Highlighting old rivalries, even as corroborating evidence of divine displeasure, would not help the audience to consider themselves one community.

"Alfred" needed to portray a people at peace in order to claim a Golden Age which had been lost. Alfred also needed contemporary cohesion. The concept of the *Angelcynn* was a new, more prestigious and important pan-regional identity, superimposed upon existing parochial identities.[147] This pan-regional identity stood in opposition to the pagan Vikings. Importantly, it was an identity which could be adopted by individuals from other, defeated, Anglo-Saxon kingdoms who wished to opt in. The emergence of new and fluid communal identities was not a novel proposition in early medieval Europe, as Patrick Geary has long argued.[148] Early medieval *gentes* were "peoples in progress."[149] The use of biblical precedent in a discourse of ethnicity in this period was an easily understood example of a "repertoire of ethnicity," providing both *exempla* (things to be imitated) and *typoi* (the past prefiguring the future).[150]

143 "Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus."

144 Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, 45; Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 5.

145 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 36.

146 Lewis, *History: Remembered*; Davis, "National Writing"; Foot, "Remembering, Forgetting."

147 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity," 157.

148 Geary, "Ethnic Identity"; see also Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends," 15–16.

149 Wolfram, "How Many Peoples," 101.

150 Pohl, "Introduction—Identification," 32–33.

As Ross Poole argues, the construction of a community is not an epiphenomenon of economic or political relationships. A sense of community is itself an actant, a powerful force which regulates the relationships between individuals who identify as part of that community.[151] The concept of the *Angelcynn* provided a mechanism for the voluntary adjustment of values and behaviours through self-identification as part of that community and actions (including social practices) which advertised that self-identification to others.

It is important to bear in mind that the king could not impose a new sense of identity. "Alfred" could articulate it, make it persuasive and appealing. Ultimately it was up to Alfred's people to choose to adopt that identity, to self-identify, and to perform that identity in their relations with others.[152] The Alfredian texts enticed them to make that choice by linking an overarching identity of Englishness to the idea of a Chosen People and a promise of communal redemption.

The trope of a Chosen People who defy God and are either punished by conquest or repent and rehabilitate, and are therefore returned to favour, was well-known. To re-earn God's favour, and thereby avoid annihilation, Alfredian ideology prescribed actions which were culturally familiar and consistent with existing Christian worldviews. The actions, the state of mind, and the emotions necessary to achieve the objective were already part of the Anglo-Saxon cultural and historiographical landscape. The community of the *Angelcynn* was thus framed by the Alfredian depiction of the past and representation of the future. These shared a common thread, the consequences of the orientation of the community toward, or away from, God.

Critically, accepting the mantle of the New Israelites meant accepting corporate responsibility for actions and failings. The community would be judged by God collectively, rather than individually. Divine punishment, as conceived by early medieval clerics, fell on a people, a collective. A community flourished or was scourged as a group.[153] A sense of cohesion, of a close-knit community, was therefore important. This sense of collectivity may well have helped to collapse the old regional boundaries within Alfred's extended kingdom, making it easier for the king to exercise control over all his peoples.

The Alfredian texts reinforced the narrative of the *Angelcynn* consistently. An *ASC* entry (s.a. 886) records the submission of "all Angelcyn"

151 Poole, *Nation and Identity*, 10–13.

152 Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 32–33; Stodnick, "Emergent Englishness."

153 Harris, "Overview," 747–48; Pohl, "Introduction—Identification," 36.

to Alfred on the occupation of London. London had previously been held by the Vikings, taken when they overran part of Mercia. The *ASC* entry describes the ceremonial reclaiming of London (it had probably been wrested from the Vikings a few years previously) together with the delegation of local power by Alfred to the Mercian ealdorman Æthelred.[154] This account highlighted the concept of *Angelcynn* as a common identity which submerged previous rivalries and distinctions between former Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the pre-eminence of its construction against the pagan Viking "Other." Foot describes this as "innovative language of legitimation"—validating political novelty.[155] It is from this date that King Alfred is styled *rex Angulsaxonum* or *rex Anglorum et Saxonum* rather than *rex Saxonum* in his charters, and from this date that Asser so describes his king.[156] These titles reinforce the concept of a new entity—Asser's use of *rex Angulsaxonum* suggests that King Alfred's contemporaries understood the difference.[157] In the Alfred–Guthrum treaty, the king is said to represent "ealles Angelcynnes witan."[158]

The characterization of the *Angelcynn* as the New Israelites has its critics, notably George Molyneaux. Molyneaux challenges the contention that the pre-Conquest English considered themselves to be God's specially chosen people.[159] His concept of the Elect is grounded in the theological distinction between the Israelites, with whom God made an explicit and unique covenant, and the New Testament expansion of the Israelites' special status to all Christians. The New Testament designated all Christians as the people of God (1 Peter 2:9–10).[160] Molyneaux argues that an early medieval community such as the pre-Conquest English must have asserted a special status above all other *Christian* peoples to be designated as a community claiming the status of the Elect. As no such claim is made by authors such as Gildas, Bede, Alcuin, or indeed Wulfstan, Molyneaux concludes that the pre-Conquest English did not regard themselves as the "peculiar successors" to Old Testament Israel.[161]

154 Keynes, "Alfred and the Mercians," 23.

155 Foot, "Historiography," 129.

156 Whitelock, "Some Charters"; Nelson, "Political Ideas," 155.

157 Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 7–8.

158 K & L, 171.

159 Molyneaux, "Did the English."

160 Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 95.

161 Molyneaux, "Did the English," 737.

Molyneaux is perhaps right in arguing that these authors did not lay claim to a particularist form of divine election, but that is, with respect, a narrow argument. It ignores the undoubted use of a looser and less literal concept of a Chosen People in political ideology. Walbert Bühlmann usefully distinguishes between the notion of special election as an ideology and as a theology.[162] Mary Garrison describes the concept of election as a culturally shaped appropriation, a socially and politically contingent sense of exceptionalism.[163] Samantha Zacher discerns just such an appropriation in Old English poetry which adapted Old Testament narratives.[164]

Early medieval political leaders like Charlemagne and Alfred were employing a metaphor for political purposes: a metaphor which would likely have been familiar and attractive to their audiences. Bede's conception of the English was as "a" people chosen by God, a people whose special place in God's plan is emphasised by his use of the verb "foreknown," echoing Scripture (Rom 8.29).[165] Such a characterization suited pragmatic political purposes. First, it distinguished the Alfredian and Carolingian communities from other communities with whom they were in conflict. Second, both Alfred and the Carolingian kings characterized themselves as divinely appointed. That designation would be more persuasive, harder for their elites to resist, in the context of a community characterized as having a special relationship with God. As an ideology, the concept of a Chosen People tends to emerge in contexts where a new identity is politically and socially useful; in these circumstances, the concept is deployed as a bonding discourse.[166] In this context, the power of a diluted form of particularism is not extinguished by being embedded in a wider Christian community.[167] The *ASC* followed the Frankish precedent of using annals as a bonding discourse—a vehicle to disseminate and reinforce a sense of history and identity, and a specific political ideology.[168]

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162 Bühlmann, *God's Chosen Peoples*, 124.

163 Garrison, "Divine Election," 281.

164 Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*; Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth," 16.

165 *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 22; Cardwell, "People Whom He Foreknew," 50–53; I am grateful to Sarah Foot for this observation.

166 Garrison, "Divine Election," 299.

167 Kaye, "Anglicanism."

168 McKitterick, "Constructing the Past"; McKitterick, "Political Ideology."

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

Traditionally, annals were kept to chart the passage of time and to calculate important religious festivals.[169] The *ASC* may have its roots in the "Chronological Epitome" attached to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, but it became a means of creating and reflecting communal identity through its portrayal of history and its inculcation of communal memory.[170] The degree to which Alfred supervised the production of the *ASC* is unclear, but the inclusion of the West Saxon genealogical preface is cogent evidence of royal involvement at some level.[171] At the very least, as Susan Irvine puts it, the *ASC* is "a project he would have favoured."[172] The *ASC* is a compilation by various anonymous annalists, probably secular clerics, possibly writing in different parts of the country, who drew on a number of sources.[173] The "common stock" of the chronicle, ending in ca. 892, was most probably produced at Alfred's court and disseminated for use and further copying.[174] Nicholas Brooks argues that the annals for 893–896 (after the common stock) may also have emanated from Alfred's court.[175] This suggests that the scribes responsible for the *ASC* were familiar with the Alfredian concept of the *Angelcynn*, possibly from the period of formation of Alfredian ideology through Alfred's own collaborative learning period.

The compilers of the *ASC* deliberately selected and highlighted material within a cohesive narrative—the story of the making of the *Angelcynn*.[176] Irvine characterizes this as more than propaganda. It is evidence for the emergence of an English identity, a social reality based upon a shared history and a sense of place.[177] The *ASC* indicates that the concept of the *Angelcynn* was already circulating when the *ASC* was produced. A close connection between scribes and Alfred's inner circle would explain why the *ASC* presents a consistent narrative framework, a teleological account which privileges the West Saxon dynasty and characterizes Alfred's reign

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169 Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, xi.

170 Bredehoft, "History and Memory," 110.

171 Dumville, "West Saxon Genealogical," 66.

172 Irvine, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 344.

173 Brooks, "England in the Ninth Century," 3–4; Scharer, "Writing of History," 183.

174 Brooks, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 48; Stafford, "Making of Chronicles," 66.

175 Brooks, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 49.

176 Foot, "Finding the Meaning," 99; Yorke, "Representation of Early West Saxon History," 155–59.

177 Irvine, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 346–47; Stodnick, "Interests of Compounding."

as inevitable and ordained.[178] While the *ASC* does not expressly refer to a Chosen People, the notion is implicit in the entry for 855, which traces Æthelwulf's genealogy back to Noah and Christ. Ryan Lavelle argues that the *ASC* created an affinity between the West Saxon royal house and the concept of the *Angelcynn*.[179] Olga Timofeeva has drawn attention to the strong association between Alfred's *domboc* and the earliest version of the *ASC* (A), demonstrated by their preservation in the same manuscript.[180] This association suggests a contemporary perception of an integrated reform program.

A close connection between Alfred's inner circle and those who produced the *ASC* also explains why the *ASC* used the vernacular, in contrast to Continental annals—and indeed in contrast to the local annals and other sources on which the ASC was doubtless based.[181] Language is itself an integral component of communal identity.[182] The use of the vernacular in Alfredian texts is thus implicated in the formation of the identity of the *Angelcynn*—it is a substantive component as well as an effective means of widely disseminating that identity. Jacqueline Stodnick traces the linguistic practices which anchored the concept of *Angelcynn* to a new temporal understanding of the realm of the *Angelcynn*.[183]

Nelson has voiced doubts about the efficacy of the *ASC* as a vehicle for dissemination of Alfredian ideology, notwithstanding its use of the vernacular. She queries whether the West Saxons "went in for public readings of a text which is so very unlike the stirring rhythms and themes of *Beowulf*."[184] If, however, the *ASC* was compiled in bursts, rather than in yearly increments, then portions of the text would more closely resemble a coherent body of work, more amenable to being read or read aloud.[185] The fact that the *ASC* used the vernacular would render it suitable as a tool to teach individuals to read, whether in the *schola* or in a nobleman's home. The vernacular would also make the *ASC* more accessible to an ealdorman who wished

178 Irvine, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 352–53; Trilling, "Writing of History," 237.

179 Lavelle, "Representing Authority"; see also Sheppard, *Families of the King*, 99–102.

180 Timofeeva, "Sociolinguistic Concepts," 139.

181 Leneghan, "Royal Wisdom," 72.

182 Poole, *Nation and Identity*, 14.

183 Stodnick, "Interests of Compounding"; Stodnick, "Sentence to Story."

184 Nelson, "Frankish Identity," 74.

185 Scharer, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 163.

to consult it, either for his own edification, or as part of a discussion in a localized textual community.

The *ASC* presented a different discourse about communal identity, about the *Angelcynn*. This narrative was part of a pattern of emerging discourses about identity across Western Europe, legitimating new polities.[186] The principal purposes of Carolingian and Alfredian constructs of identity were firmly grounded in the present and the immediate future—political integration and the pursuit of a common identity and purpose.[187] The argument that these annals were used to manipulate a sense of communal identity is supported by modern analysis of the social and political role of archives. The modern characterization of archives as social constructs acknowledges the power of systems to store and retrieve history as "dynamic technologies of rule which actually create the histories and social realities they ostensibly only describe."[188] This characterization applies equally to early medieval archives.[189] The *ASC* was just such an archive. It was used to impose a particular constructed history and to inculcate an overarching identity.[190]

Alfredian concepts of history, destiny and identity were reiterated in other media. The Alfredian depiction of the *Angelcynn* as the New Israelites is a major theme of the *domboc*. The *domboc* would have been accessed in different textual communities from the *ASC* and perhaps reached a broader audience, involving those lower down in the hierarchy. The fact that the code proper commences with rules about oath-taking suggests that the *domboc* was discussed and applied in contexts which included those of lesser social status, those who owed obligations, and who took oaths to serve truly.[191]

The *domboc*

The Prologue to the *domboc* starts with excerpts from Exodus, linking the Mosaic past to the Alfredian present in a teleological account.[192] In citing the Old Testament, "Alfred" demonstrated that Christian law evolved from,

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186 Pohl, "Introduction- Distinction," 2–9.

187 Reimitz, "*Omnes Franci*," 54, 57.

188 Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records," 7.

189 McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*; Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*.

190 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity."

191 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 37.

192 Adair, "Troublesome Source," 215; Adair, "Narratives of Authority," 16–20.

and drew its authority from, the divine law revealed to Moses.[193] A claim of authority through citation of the Old Testament was not novel. The Old Testament was a familiar source of inspiration for legislation in early medieval Europe.[194] However, in its Anglo-Saxon context, the Prologue to the *domboc* was a uniquely extensive exposition of political and ideological aspiration. No other Anglo-Saxon king, before or after Alfred, engaged in such an extensive exposition of political and ideological aspiration.[195] And that discourse is in Alfred's first-person voice. While the use of first-person voice was common in the brief prefatory remarks of other royal legislation, it provided added gravitas and persuasive force to the theory of justice and the community's destiny articulated by analogy in the *domboc*'s prologue.

The Prologue to the *domboc* was a clear statement of Alfredian ideology, coupling justice to the community's identity and destiny, and its relationship with God. The representation of Alfred's community as the New Israelites was reinforced by the citation of the Mosaic law in the Prologue. Wormald argues that the sophisticated handling of Mosaic law constituted an unmistakeable invitation—indeed, an offer which could not be refused—to take up the mantle of the New Israelites, and to live in accordance with divine law.[196] That divine law and that concept of Christian wisdom permeated the *domboc*.[197]

Existing legislative traditions were used alongside biblical tradition to construct the Alfredian community in the *domboc*. Communal identity was asserted through the representation of shared legislative traditions. The way that this was achieved is almost counter-intuitive. The Prologue highlights the different *gentes* by reference to their individual legal codes, then amalgamates their legislative traditions. In doing so, regional identity and old divisions are downplayed, in favour of a foregrounded pan–Anglo-Saxon identity. "Alfred" refers to the laws of his West Saxon forebear, Ine, and the laws of Offa of Mercia and Æthelberht of Kent. Only the laws of Ine were appended, apparently unedited, to the *domboc*.[198] Ingrid Ivarsen has recently suggested that Ine's laws were originally recorded in Latin and translated into Old English as part of Alfred's translation program.[199] The laws of Offa

193 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 423.

194 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 124, 416.

195 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 215; Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 294.

196 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 426–27.

197 Keynes, "Royal Government," 231–32.

198 Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 292.

199 Ivarsen, "King Ine."

of Mercia, which have not survived, and of Æthelberht of Kent are acknowledged as precedents for the *domboc*, but they are not cited as a source for any specific provision in that code. Although Ine's code was appended, there was no attempt to synchronize the new code with Ine's; to do so would have detracted from "Alfred"'s purpose.

This contrasting use of legislative tradition reflected twin objectives. "Alfred" provided a reassuring patina of familiarity and stability to the heartland of Wessex by appending Ine's law. In citing admired kings from other jurisdictions as valued sources of this legislation, the *gentes* of those kingdoms, peoples who had come under Alfred's authority, were given a separate assurance of familiarity. A differently articulated signal of connection and belonging was provided to them. By issuing the code without specific acknowledgement of the provenance of each substantive provision, the Prologue to the *domboc* knitted the legislative traditions of all three kingdoms into one, *and implied that they had never really been different anyway*. This was a powerful device for cohesion. Wormald noted the impact on the collective consciousness of the code, in its restatement of familiar secular judicial themes correlated to familiar biblical judicial themes.[200] Courtnay Konshuh has demonstrated a similar process in the *ASC*—the deliberate smoothing of regional differences and the construction of common identity to "influence contemporary perception."[201]

This nuanced handling of legislative tradition may explain the puzzle of Alfred's chosen title in the Prologue, *Westseaxna cyning*, "king of the West Saxons." Here surely was an opportunity to emphasize the new pan-regional identity being so carefully constructed by describing the king as *rex Anglorum*, "king of the English." The answer may lie in historical Kentish sensitivity to their subjection to overlordship by Mercia and then Wessex. The narrower title may well have been chosen to avoid any perception of a West Saxon cultural take-over, particularly given the effort made to acknowledge the contribution of Mercia and Kent to the code.

The last text that I want to examine is the *Prose Psalms*. Alfredian texts were integrated into new and modified social practices—this is how Alfredian ideology was conveyed and disseminated. The role of the *Prose Psalms* within Alfredian social practices is more conjectural than other texts because it is incomplete. According to William of Malmesbury, Alfred was working on a translation of the Psalter when he died.[202] Patrick O'Neill argues that the

200 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 427.

201 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity," 156–61.

202 Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, bk. 2, chap. 4, 120. Both O'Neill and

text was not intended as a primer or a service book, but as a reading book.[203] This is consistent with it being intended for the reform program, although the precise way in which it was intended to be used is unknown. For that reason, I treat the text as a special case, separate from the others.

The *Prose Psalms*

Holy texts raised special considerations for any translator. The Psalms were a cornerstone of early medieval devotional practice.[204] They were also ubiquitous in the classroom, as a Latin primer.[205] Anglo-Saxon communities especially valued the Psalter as a type of wisdom book. Familiarity and status combined to give any translator minimal room to manoeuvre in translation of the substantive text, although some scope was provided by the complicated transmission history of the psalms. The Latin version used in early medieval Europe had been through a series of translations from other languages, some infelicitous. The result was a text both cryptic and stylistically awkward.[206] There is a general scholarly consensus that the *Prose Psalms* owe much to the historical and literal tradition of interpretation of the psalms advocated by Theodore of Mopsuestia.[207] "Alfred" took a pragmatic approach to translation, an approach consistent with the "word for word and sense for sense" approach adopted in other Alfredian translations.[208]

Sometimes, this pragmatic approach simply explicated obscure references in the Psalms. For example, in Ps(P) 16:14, where the psalmist expresses a wish that his enemies starve to the point of consuming swine's flesh, "Alfred" points out that swine's flesh was forbidden to the Jews. In Ps(P) 17:7, "Alfred" clarifies that the mountain is a reference to the psalmist's enemies, and in Ps(P) 41:8 "he" explains that the earth's cataracts represent the Lord's anger. These are not explanations that an educated monastic audience would require. Nor would Alfred himself have needed them, if the translation was for his personal use. Their presence in the translation suggests that a wide and diverse audience was anticipated—and perhaps

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Frantzen suggest that there are good grounds for believing that William was correct: O'Neill, *Prose Translation*, 73; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 90.

203 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 19–20.

204 Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter,* 3; O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, vii.

205 Leneghan, "Introduction," 7; O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, vii.

206 O'Neill, "Strategies of Translation," 138, 142–43.

207 Butler, "Children of Israel," 12; O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, xii.

208 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 74.

that the translation was aimed primarily at those without the resources or inclination to consult extraneous sources such as commentaries or scholarly interpretive glosses.

"Alfred" also took the opportunity to choose words which were not the direct equivalent of the Latin words in the source text, but which reiterated themes in other Alfredian translations. Faulkner has traced Alfred's use of *mod*—inserting it where there is no reference to the mind in the source text, frequently choosing it instead of *heorte* (heart) or *sawl* (soul), or indeed other body parts, such as the mouth.[209] *Eagan modes*, a phrase and concept familiar from the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, appears three times, in Ps(P)s 13:8, 16:10, and 18:8. Likewise, *cræft* also appears, in Ps(P) 37:9, and is used in the Alfredian sense of a composite of mind, talent, and virtue.

"Alfred" sought to draw parallels between the psalmist's enemies and the Vikings menacing Wessex. In Ps(P) 18, respite from political strife results in the psalmist being "unwenne" (spotless) and "geclænsod" (cleansed), because he can focus on God, rather than on political upheaval. Daniel Orton interprets this as a straightforward association—adherence to God's laws means political stability.[210] I suggest that it has particular reference to Alfredian ideology and the aim of his program of reform—the reorientation of the community back to God and deliverance from the Viking threat. Michael Treschow discerns the translator tweaking the text in Ps(P) 28 to make the psalm a call for gratitude for deliverance from the Vikings.[211]

"Alfred" adopted an innovative way of subtly adjusting the psalms to fit with Alfredian ideology. Each psalm was supplied with an introduction which provided historical background and interpretive assistance.[212] These were introductions in the medieval sense—they state the guiding idea or theme as well as the purpose or application of the psalm.[213] It was a remarkably clever, if audacious, strategy. "Alfred" exhibited similar audacity in other texts. In the translation of biblical quotations within the text of Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, the king's voice was conflated with the voices of Gregory, Solomon, and, occasionally, Christ. In the preface to the *domboc*, the king's voice elided with those of God, Moses, Christ, and the Apostles. The Alfre-

209 Faulkner, "Mind."

210 Orton, "Royal Piety," 489.

211 Treschow, "*Godes Word*." Treschow believes the Psalms to be part of the Alfredian project, but not authored by Alfred: Treschow, Gill, and Swartz, "King Alfred's Scholarly Writings."

212 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*.

213 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 95.

dian introductions to the *Prose Psalms* draw a close connection between the psalmist and Christ by representing that just as David lamented or rejoiced, so too did Christ in comparable circumstances. This representation is achieved by the almost ubiquitous use of the simple phrase *swa dyde Crist* (Christ did likewise).[214]

The Alfredian introductions explicated the text, as the patristic commentaries did, but they were contained in the same document as the text, like a gloss. The effect was to provide an immediately available resource for teaching others and for personal devotion.[215] This correlated with the aim of Alfredian reform, centring the community back to God, and the dual social practices of formal education and lifelong learning. Importantly, it greatly increased the likelihood of the audience relying upon this interpretation of the individual psalms, particularly a secular audience. The individual introductions gave scope to embed Alfredian ideology—the source text could not substantially be departed from in translation, but an appropriate slant on each psalm could be provided in the introductions.

Each introduction stresses the role of David or another king, and characterizes that kingship as an amalgam of political and spiritual authority.[216] The introduction situates each psalm in its historical context, in David and his community's path from sin to God, and from political chaos to peace and stability. David and Solomon were the pre-eminent models of excellent kingship in the early medieval period.[217] The Alfredian texts frequently emulate or cite Solomon, but David was also a motif, particularly in Asser's *Life*.[218] The focus of the introductions is thus on moral exempla and the path to wisdom, and the king's pastoral duties to his people.[219] The *Prose Psalms* project an image of kingship and community available to Alfred's people to adopt.[220] Ps(P)s 4:4, 17:38, and 41 also reinforce the inevitability of eventual victory of the Christian community over its enemies—and that such a community is formed when its king serves God and its people serve their king.

For example, the introduction to Psalm 13 subtly encourages the audience to connect the psalm with Alfredian ideology:

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214 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*.

215 O'Neill, "Strategies of Translation," 277, 281; Orton, "Royal Piety," 488.

216 Butler, "Thus Did Hezekiah," 627–28.

217 de Jong, "Carolingian Political Discourse," 87.

218 Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 67–68; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 465.

219 Butler, "Children of Israel," 16–17.

220 Orton, "Royal Piety," 485–87.

> Ða Dauid þisne þreotteoðan sealm sang, þa seofode he to Drihtne on þam sealme þæt æfre on his dagum sceolde gewurðan swa lytle treowa, and swa lytel wisdom wære on worulde; and swa deð ælc rihtwis man þe hine nu singð, he seofað þæt ylce be his tidum; and swa dyde Crist be Iudeum; and Ezechias be Rapsace, Assyria cyninge.
>
> (When David sang this thirteenth psalm he lamented to the Lord that always in his time so few covenants should be made, and that so little wisdom existed in the world, and so does every just person who now sings it, lamenting the same thing about his times; and so did Christ about the Jews; and Hezekiah about Rabshakeh, king of the Assyrians.)[221]

The word "wisdom" appears in the introduction, but it does not appear in the psalm itself. However, the psalm contains a number of elements of Alfredian wisdom: *modes eagan*; the emphasis on behaviour, on the socially constructed self; and a Chosen People. The psalm predicts deliverance for a Chosen People who are threatened by an enemy who would *fretan* (devour) them. Deliverance is achieved by the acquisition and application of God-devoted wisdom. The parallel with Alfred's community is clear—and the introduction casts the psalm as a precedent for the West Saxons. This psalm is an example of how "Alfred" could mould perceptions of Scripture through these introductions and use them as a vehicle for Alfredian ideology.

A similar shaping of perception is discernible in the introduction to Psalm 11. Again, wisdom is mentioned in the introduction, but not the psalm itself: "Þa Dafid þisne endleftan sealm sang, þa seofode he on þam sealme þaet on his dagum sceolde rihtwisnes and wisdom beon swa swiðe alegen" (When David sang this eleventh psalm he lamented that in his time justice and wisdom should be brought so very low).[222] Cued by other texts containing Alfredian ideology, it is possible to read this psalm as an example of the evil that results when individuals do not fear and follow their lord, in contrast to the strength and purity of Christian wisdom.

It is doubtful whether Alfred had a sufficiently comprehensive knowledge of both Scripture and the exegetical traditions to have authored such a "harmonizing translation" and apt introductions—it is more likely that the scholarship which made this achievement possible was provided by the king's advisors.[223] That scholarship is evident, for example, in the way that three different versions of the psalms are synthesized—the Roman, Gallican, and Hebrew psalters—to produce a coherent Old English version which

221 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 38–39.

222 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 32–33.

223 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 96.

privileged exposition over literal translation.[224] This supports the argument about the way that Alfred learned, through interaction with his coterie, through discussion and debate.

Translation of the psalms presented particular challenges which were absent from other Alfredian translations, but also unique opportunities to add the king's voice and embed Alfredian ideology in a text which circulated widely and in different contexts throughout his community, thus extending the reach of the message. The Psalms had a normative dimension—they inculcated particular viewpoints and ways of behaving. The Psalter, Alice Jorgensen reminds us, was an emotion script for that society: "[the Psalms] were not simply for reading and comprehending but for praying and performing."[225] Emily Butler suggests that the frequent reference to psalms being sung in the OE introductions was a way of connecting readers' emotions with the psalmists— "encouraging readers to imagine joining their voices in the same kinds of laments, entreaties and rejoicings as the Psalms captured."[226]

This chapter has focused on the texts which most scholars accept as part of the Alfredian canon. I do not, however, exclude other texts less securely associated with Alfred—the *Dialogues*, the *OE Bede*, and the *OE Orosius*—from a role in promoting Alfredian ideology. I discuss this possibility in later chapters. Ideology was crucial to persuading the elites to adopt Alfredian reforms, to do as their king asked. In this chapter, I have focused on the *content* of that ideology, on what Alfred wanted his people to do (reorient themselves to God), why they should do it (because they were a people with a particular history and destiny, which gave them a pathway to assuage divine wrath), and how they should do it (by using the tools of *modes eagan* and *cræft* to acquire Christian wisdom and apply it, in the process regulating their relations with one another and their divinely chosen king).

The concept of the divinely chosen king sat uneasily with Anglo-Saxon norms of kingship—that all *æthelings* with a blood-tie to the present king were (in theory) throne-worthy. An ideology of kingship which tied the validity of kingship itself, and its exercise, to God-devoted wisdom would have been more palatable to Alfred's elites than a claim for authority and power which was not so constrained. "Alfred" articulated a model of power exercised in service to God and constrained by humility. Friendship and loy-

224 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, xi.

225 Jorgensen, "Learning about Emotion," 128, 134.

226 Butler, "Examining Dualities," 415. See also Leneghan, "Making the Psalter Sing," 196.

alty fall within the same model, and facilitate good relations throughout the political hierarchy, as well as good kingship. All individuals are implicated in this endeavour. Everyone must use their mind's eye to discern Christian wisdom and exercise their own *cræft* to understand and apply that wisdom. Material goods are rightly used in furtherance of good kingship—treasure, honour, and reputation are justifiable rewards which do not prevent the attainment of eternal rewards. If the community acquired Christian wisdom—and practised it—then they could fulfil their destiny as a people beloved of God and avoid Viking conquest. The concept of the *Angelcynn* provided Alfred's people with a way of interpreting their present misery and having confidence in a better future, if they followed their king.

The Alfredian translations contained this ideology. It did not matter that these texts contained other content as well. Early medieval kings had no established status as writers, so "Alfred" used the material to hand, and adjusted it so that it was apt for purpose. In the next chapter, I argue that Alfred intended to replicate his personal method of learning for his elites, providing texts which would spark or elucidate discussion of key parts of Alfredian ideology. Of course, those texts were only part of the methodology. Alfred needed to provide the environment and the inducement for others to choose to learn, as he had. The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* was the first, crucial, step in Alfredian persuasion, getting the bishops onside and actively participating in his program of renewal. The Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and the Preface to the *Soliloquies* were similarly persuasive, although appropriate for his secular elites as well.

Alfred went further, to provide the right environment and powerful inducement for others to accept his ideology and act upon it. His persuasive strategies went well beyond the meaning of the words on the pages of his texts. He harnessed the agency of the texts as objects, as text-bodies. And he instituted new patterns of behaviour, new social practices, and modified existing ones, so that discussion and debate could flourish. In the next chapter, I analyze how Alfred intended his elites to use the Alfredian translations.

Chapter 4

ALFREDIAN LEARNING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ALFREDIAN REFORM

IN THIS CHAPTER, I argue that the way Alfred learned and the way that he used texts in his individual quest for wisdom showed him how to disseminate his ideology to his people. That is, Alfred's personal quest not only taught him *what* he needed to impart to his people, but *how* to use texts in different ways to teach them. Alfred's personal search for wisdom did not revolve around sustained close study of a preset series of texts, as would be the case in a formal or monastic learning environment. Alfred learned through free-ranging discussion and debate, using texts as anchor points, to spark discussion and elucidate arguments. He expected that his elites would do the same, and that the Alfredian texts would be used to initiate and guide discussion about concepts central to Alfredian ideology. Alfred's bishops would be critical to this process.

I start the chapter by exploring the way that Alfred learned—collaboratively, interacting with a group of learned assistants. The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* tells us explicitly how Alfred learned. Asser provides eyewitness corroboration. Asser's *Life* is a problematic source, given its hagiographic flavour.[1] However, Alfred's love of, and reflection upon, the *process* of learning is not a trope borrowed from the Carolingian or classical models of princely biography. Asser's depiction of Alfred's learning is consistent with the accounts in the prefaces, and therefore unlikely to be purely "hagiographical padding."[2] The Preface to the *Soliloquies*, traditionally attributed to Alfred (see below), imparts a similarly practical flavour to the task of learning. Adapting his own learning experience for his elites would give Alfred scope to shape what would be learned, as well as the opportunity to enhance his political authority through his role as the progenitor of the reorientation of the community back to God. This is an example of ideological power, which I mentioned at the start of chapter 3.

My argument has implications for both the longstanding debate about authorship of the Alfredian canon, and the place of the *Dialogues* within that

1 Abels, "Alfred and his Biographers," 63–65; Fulk and Cain, *History of Old English Literature*, 83–84.

2 DeGregorio, "Affective Spirituality," 133–35.

canon. I suggest a new way of conceptualizing the Alfredian canon, based upon Alfred's way of learning. I also suggest that the *Dialogues* may have played a pivotal role in the development of Alfred's plans to disseminate his ideology.

The Way that Alfred Learned: Alfred's Helpers

Asser says that Alfred deeply felt his lack in "divine learning and knowledge of the liberal arts," and that God remedied this deficiency by providing him with helpers on his path to wisdom.[3] As Asser describes it, this was very much a personal quest. The picture Asser paints in the first part of chapter 76 is of a king striving to be the best that he can be in all respects, driven by a fundamental piety, and perhaps a very human competitiveness.[4]

Asser says further that the king's knowledge grew through the ministrations of his first advisors, the Mercians Wærferth, Plegmund, Æthelstan, and Wærwulf. Asser describes them all as learned men: Wærferth and Plegmund were higher clergy, Æthelstan and Wærwulf were priests and chaplains. They probably joined Alfred's court in the early 880s.[5] The fact that Alfred deliberately chose these men, and from outside his own kingdom, suggests that they were regarded as learned men. Modern scholarship increasingly acknowledges the depth of learning in Mercian circles prior to Alfredian reform.[6] The Mercian contingent appear to have been well able to impart principles of Christian wisdom to a level sufficient for most laity, and indeed for many clerics.[7]

However, Alfred subsequently sought out Grimbald and John the Old Saxon to join his circle of helpers. It is clearly significant that when Alfred's "royal greed" for wisdom (as Asser describes it) outstripped the capacities of the Mercian contingent, he sent not for additional *books* but for additional *scholars*.[8] One implication from Asser's comment is that Alfred required assistants who could better engage in more complex and learned intellectual debate than his Mercian contingent.[9] Alfred was prepared to look far afield for such tutors. Both Grimbald and John the Old Saxon were notable

3 Asser, chap. 76.

4 Yorke, "Alfred and Weland," 49.

5 Lapidge, "Scholars."

6 Rauer, "Early Mercian Text"; Brown, "Mercian Manuscripts."

7 Rauer, "Early Mercian Text," 6.

8 Asser, chap. 78; K & L, 93.

9 Rauer, "Old English Literature," 55.

scholars with international reputations.[10] Grimbald's superior, Archbishop Fulk of Reims, certainly sang his praises.[11] These men could provide sophisticated and rigorous intellectual stimulus and challenge. Asser was himself recruited to join Alfred's circle of helpers. He was suitably modest about Alfred's reasons for selecting him, but he was a renowned scholar of the Welsh Church.[12] These scholars probably brought additional texts with them to discuss with Alfred, different from those already available to him.[13] It may well be that these scholars collectively treated Alfred as they would a monk showing intellectual promise—providing mentorship and an individualized learning pathway tailored to that student's strengths.

The Way that Alfred Learned: Collaborative Learning

Asser says explicitly that at the start of his quest for wisdom, Alfred could not read for himself at all, and only became able to read Latin in 887.[14] So there is a period of some years when Alfred's access to the wisdom he so fervently desired was necessarily mediated through others. Asser says that the Mercian contingent read books to him whenever there was an opportunity. Alfred was never without one or other of them; their presence was required.[15] Asser says that he also was required to read to the king.[16] This has important implications for how Alfred used texts. Reading per se presumably was not an important goal for Alfred on his personal quest, or Alfred could have devoted his energies to that task from the start. Solitary learning was not his chosen method of acquiring wisdom. Alfred chose a method of acquiring wisdom which was communal and interactive. In the *De gestis regum Anglorum* and in the *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, William of Malmesbury records Asser as not just reading to the king from the *Consolation of Philosophy*, but explicating the text to him.[17] While modern scholarship is sceptical of William's historical accuracy, Whitelock suggests

10 Anlezark, "Which Books," 18.

11 *EHD*, no. 223, 883–86; Grierson, "Grimbald."

12 Asser, chap. 79; Anlezark, "Which Books," 18.

13 Keynes and Lapidge, "Introduction," 28.

14 Asser, chaps. 77, 87.

15 Asser, chap. 77.

16 Asser, chap. 81.

17 Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, 2.4, 118; Winterbottom and Thomson, *William of Malmesbury*, *Gesta*, bk. 1, chap. 80, 279.

that his extensive research means that his accounts cannot be discounted as mere oral tradition.[18]

Significantly, the Mercian contingent were not dismissed as new scholars arrived; their input was still required. We know from charter evidence that sometimes individual members of Alfred's circle were away from court, but there is no evidence that only one individual was by his side at any moment in time.[19] The presence of a group, however constituted, suggests discussion and debate, not the solitary application to prescribed texts, explicated by a tutor in a one-on-one setting. It is intrinsically unlikely that Alfred was content for his highly learned circle of advisors to sit passively and listen to texts (which probably would have been familiar to them) being read aloud to the king. Their passive presence would not assist Alfred to learn. The motor of this style of collaborative learning is interaction; discussion, and debate, between Alfred and reader no doubt, but presumably also between all those who were present. Nor is there any reason to believe that this was a closed circle, that other members of the court or scholars outside the court were excluded.[20]

Asser does not tell us which texts were read aloud to Alfred. He describes the choice of texts this way: "in quibus recitavi illi libros quoscunque ille vellet, et quos ad manum haberemus" (during which time I read aloud to him whatever books he wished and which we had to hand).[21] Asser's description has an ad hoc flavour which is inconsistent with a planned course of study, such as might comprise formal education in the Roman liberal tradition beloved of Alcuin and others in the Carolingian milieu.[22] It is unlikely that Alfred or his coterie were unaware that such a program existed, or that it was entirely unavailable to Alfred, even given the Viking depredations. The picture Asser paints of relatively unstructured inquiry and instruction seems like a deliberate choice.

We do not know whether Alfred assiduously listened to one text in its entirety and then another, or whether specific passages were read to initiate or elucidate discussions. I suggest the latter rather than the former. It fits with the evidence for informality and the primacy of discussion in Alfred's quest for wisdom, according to Asser. It also fits with Alfred's depiction of his quest for wisdom in the Preface to the *Soliloquies*, discussed in detail later

18 Whitelock, "William of Malmesbury."

19 Schreiber, "*Searoðonca hord*," 196.

20 Clement, "Production of the *Pastoral Care*," 139.

21 Asser, chap. 81; K & L, 96–97.

22 McKitterick, "Carolingian Renaissance," 159.

in this chapter. Even when Alfred allegedly learned to read for himself, and to master Latin sufficiently to translate it competently, he did not dismiss his circle of advisors. He continued to inquire and to learn collaboratively. Alfred's collaborative model of learning is reflected in the friendlier tone of the dialogues of the *Dialogues*, *OE Boethius*, and *Soliloquies*, compared to the dialogues of the source texts.

It is helpful to conceptualize this learning circle as a community of practice. Timofeeva defines a community of practice as a small group mutually and self-consciously engaged in a specific task. The goals and the purpose of the task are understood by practitioners, and there is a chosen method to accomplish the task.[23] Scale distinguishes a community of practice from a social practice. Communities of practice are small, localized, and involve face-to-face interactions between members; social practices can be widely dispersed, with little direct contact between practitioners.[24] A textual community might be considered a subset of a community of practice.[25]

The concept of a community of practice emphasizes the collaborative nature of the work undertaken by the group—a "corporate activity within the court."[26] Faulkner proposes that the *OE Boethius*, the *Soliloquies*, and the *Prose Psalms* were the result of a collaboration between scholars who read and discussed the source texts and related writings between themselves over a period of years—although she leaves open the question whether this was "Alfred."[27] Faulkner's argument supports Rohini Jayatilaka's conclusion that the translators of the *OE Boethius* and *Soliloquies* did not rely upon single source texts, but drew upon deep knowledge of a broad range of source texts and commentaries.[28] Translation as a process of distillation might well follow extensive discussion and debate between scholars.

Conceptualizing Alfred's learning as a community of practice assists my argument about how books were used by Alfred on his personal path to wisdom, and how he intended others to use the texts he provided—as integral repositories of wisdom to spark and inform discussion and debate. Alfred probably did not acquire Christian wisdom by ploughing through texts from cover to cover, by "the sustained act of reading."[29] The prefaces to the *Pasto-*

23 Timofeeva, "Alfredian Press," 232; Timofeeva, "Sociolinguistic Concepts," 126–27.

24 Timofeeva, "Viking Outgroup," 84; Shove and Pantzar, "Consumers, Producers."

25 Stock, *Implications of Literacy*.

26 Irvine, "English Literature," 231.

27 Faulkner, "Mind," 602.

28 Jayatilaka, "Alfred and his Circle."

29 Brown, "Strategies of Visual Literacy," 72.

ral Care and the *Soliloquies* confirm that Alfred learned collaboratively, and that he anticipated that others could learn the same way.

The Prefaces to the *Pastoral Care* and the *Soliloquies*: Insights into Alfredian Learning

The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* provides important clues, ostensibly in Alfred's voice, about his learning process. "Alfred" says that he translated the text

> hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete, swæ swæ ic hie geliornode æt Plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe ond æt Assere minum biscepe ond æt Grimbolde minum mæsseprioste ond æt Iohanne minum mæssepreoste. Siððan ic hie ða geliornod hæfde, swa swa ic hie forstod ond swa ic hie andgitfullicost areccean meahte, ic hie on Englisc awende.
>
> (at times word for word, sometimes sense for sense, just as I had studied it with Plegmund my archbishop, and with Asser my bishop, and with Grimbald my chaplain and with John my chaplain. After I had studied it, in accordance with my understanding of it and as sensibly as I could render it I translated it into English.)[30]

Two points arise. First: this sounds like a reading group, with turn-taking. It is highly unlikely that such turn-taking was mechanistic, simply picking up where the last reader had left off, with no inquiry or discussion about what had been read and absorbed so far. Alfred was a man intent on the acquisition of wisdom, not a bored youth intent on getting to the end of a tedious schoolbook. Study, understanding, and meaningful rendition are discrete stages in Alfred's learning process. They reflect the process of *enarratio* (*areccan*)—the spiritual as well as literal comprehension of scripture, often guided by the patristic texts, such as the *Regula pastoralis*.[31]

Second, three of the four men acknowledged by "Alfred" did not belong to the Mercian contingent, but were additional scholars Alfred had sought out, with learning beyond the Mercians. "Alfred" says explicitly that they *all* helped him to learn the text. This supports an inference of detailed discussion and debate. "Alfred" then says that he translated the text *after he had studied it and in accordance with his understanding of it*.[32] It is possible that "study" means assured rote learning of the text—but that interpretation

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30 *Pastoral Care*, 8–9.

31 Parkes, "*Ræden*, *Areccan*."

32 I note that Keynes and Lapidge use the word "mastered" rather than "studied" in their translation.

is at odds with the description of this translation as "sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense" and the caveat "in accordance with my understanding of it." "Study" (or indeed "mastery") in the context of a "sense for sense" translation suggests a thorough understanding of the concepts and the way the argument unfolds, rather than a memorization exercise. Anlezark has drawn attention to the insistence in the Prose Preface that the goal is to understand the text, not simply to read it.[33] The description of the sequence—study and understanding followed by translation—explains an apparent inconsistency between the Prose and Verse prefaces which troubles Anlezark.[34] While the Prose Preface acknowledges the role of Alfred's helpers, the Verse Preface says: "Ælfred kyning awende worda gehwelc" (Alfred turned every word).[35] If Alfred's assistants helped him to gain a comprehensive understanding of the text for himself first, and thereafter he translated it for others, then there is no inconsistency between the prefaces.

A range of Latin sources inform the Preface, such as Bede, Isidore of Seville, and Chrodegang of Metz.[36] This supports Jayatilaka's contention that a broad range of texts and commentaries underlie the translation of the *OE Boethius* and *Soliloquies*, rather than a single source text. The range of sources, and the fact that they are backgrounded and unacknowledged, is suggestive of discussion and debate which was not narrowly focused on the *Cura pastoralis* but encompassed other texts in the course of elucidating and understanding Gregory's text. This is consistent with Alfredian "study" or "mastery"—in the sense of a thorough understanding of ideas. This interpretation is supported by similarities with another Alfredian text. The introductions to the individual psalms in the *Prose Psalms* owe much to commentaries and glosses by various late antique and early medieval authors such as Theodore of Mopsuestia, some of which were likely to have circulated only within learned clerical circles.[37] The implication, again, is of wide-ranging discussion focused on ideas. There are thus two separate indications of extensive discussion informing understanding of an Alfredian text. This suggests a consistent method in Alfred's process of learning.

Learning and wisdom are intertwined in the Prose Preface. Learning and wisdom are symbiotic and practically oriented—learning obliges teaching and wisdom obliges action. "Alfred" talks about the roles of the

33 Anlezark, "Which Books," 13; Anlezark, "Drawing Alfredian Waters," 263n44.

34 Anlezark, "Which Books," 4; Anlezark, "OE *Pastoral Care*," 237.

35 *Pastoral Care*, 2–3.

36 Kläber, "König Aelfreds Vorrede"; Morrish, "King Alfred's Letter," 91.

37 Rowley, "Long Ninth Century," 19; Butler, "Children of Israel," 12.

clergy, "ægðer ge ymb lare ge ymb liornunga" (as to teaching and in learning); "he" reminisces "hu man utanbordes wisdom ond lare hieder on lond sohte" (how sagacity and education were sought out here in this country from abroad).[38] "He" cautions the audience to remember the punishments that were inflicted when they did not cherish learning or make the effort to teach others. "Alfred" urges his audience to take time from secular concerns in order to obtain *ðeawas*: (Christian) "practices." The word "practices" emphasizes the active nature, the "doing," not just the belief, which is at the core of being Christian in Alfredian ideology.

The practical value of learning and wisdom is also evident in the Preface to the *Soliloquies*. The preface to the *Soliloquies* is written in an anonymous first-person voice, but authorship is traditionally ascribed to Alfred—an ascription supported by the colophon at the end of Book 3.[39] I will use the collaborative form: "Alfred." "Alfred" eschews the traditional analogy of acquiring wisdom as gathering flowers, such as Isidore of Seville uses in his *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum*, in favour of imagery of gathering wood and building cottages.[40] While the uncertainty of the times might well have influenced the choice of analogy—this was not a good time to stop and smell the roses—the goal is to build something useful. "Alfred" essentially argues for the *construction* of wisdom by each individual.[41] A plethora of technical terms for building materials and the process of construction is used. The emphasis is on the need to select carefully the raw materials suitable for each phase of construction.[42] The acquisition of Christian wisdom requires dedication and effort. This emphasis on the personal effort required to acquire wisdom and the imperative to use that wisdom was a fundamental component of Alfredian ideology.

The allegory of gathering materials with which to build a home is capable of working on at least two levels. It is probable that this was intentional. By the time these texts were produced, the king's focus had shifted from a personal quest for wisdom to a reorientation of his community back to God. Alfredian ideology had to be couched in terms that both clerical and secular elites could understand and accept. To those men educated in the Latin tradition, the references to Augustine, Gregory, and Jerome would have suggested that the wood being gathered was the wisdom of the patristic texts,

38 *Pastoral Care*, 4–5.

39 Irvine, "Alfredian Prefaces," 164.

40 St. Isidore, *Quaestiones,* cols. 207–16.

41 Treschow, "Wisdom's Land," 275.

42 Sayers, "King Alfred's Timbers"; Irvine, "Alfredian Prefaces," 165.

and the cottage was the orientation of self to the wisdom in those texts.[43] The references to aristocratic pursuits of hunting, fishing and fowling, and to *lænland* and *bocland*, Anglo-Saxon concepts of property-holding, would have been reassuringly familiar to the secular elites and provided a homelier sense of the task at hand—to construct and inhabit a moral framework.[44]

The Preface thus emphasizes a self-aware and pragmatic approach to the task of acquiring wisdom. "Alfred" methodically surveys the material available to him and chooses the best that he can competently manage.[45] That too would have been reassuring to the audience—what was demanded of them was to do the best within their abilities. There is a close link between this part of the extended metaphor and the concepts of *cræft* and the tools of kingship, which I explored in the last chapter. Bintley details the close connection between Anglo-Saxon conceptions of dwellings and settlements and the social order.[46] To Alfred's audience, this metaphor of building a dwelling reinforced those aspects of Alfredian ideology which dealt with proper social order—good kingship, loyalty, the role of worldly goods, and friendship. In using the metaphor of building a home, "Alfred" provided an easily understood parallel between work that prudently provides for an individual's wants in this life, including his social self, and work that prepares an individual for salvation.

In this Preface, and in the Verse Epilogue to the *Pastoral Care*, "Alfred" uses other allegories which are innately practical. One builds, or one fetches water, being careful not to waste precious resources and with a concrete goal in mind. The Verse Epilogue urges the reader not to waste a resource (Christian wisdom) that has been provided by others. In the *Soliloquies*, I suggest that "Alfred" reused an effective strategy from the *Pastoral Care*, expressing a spiritual endeavour in practical language apt for a secular audience. The prefaces to the *Pastoral Care* and the *Soliloquies* provide valuable insights into Alfred's learning process. Alfred provided a model of collaborative learning for both his clerical and lay elites to follow. I argue that Alfredian ideology was articulated, discussed, absorbed, and accepted in the context of textual communities. It follows that the translated texts were used in a fundamentally different way to their source texts.

43 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 71–72.

44 Heuchan, "God's Co-Workers," 4.

45 Treschow, "Wisdom's Land," 275.

46 Bintley, *Settlements and Strongholds*, 136, 143.

The approach to texts within the church learning environment, exemplified by Gregory, was close study—reflective reading. Anlezark describes Gregory's view of Scripture as food which must be thoroughly chewed before it is swallowed.[47] This was the approach in the monastic communities, where lengthy *ruminatio* and detailed discussion were encouraged, and where time was made for such activities. In order to inculcate Alfredian ideology, the texts needed to reach a much wider audience, and be usable in different ways and different contexts. Importantly, Alfred needed to get his bishops onside and actively involved in disseminating his ideology and persuading others to act. That is why the *Pastoral Care* was the flagship translation. It was particularly apt for his bishops, from whom Alfred had different and greater expectations of audience response. In distributing the *Pastoral Care*, Alfred reached out beyond his immediate circle of advisors, to the remaining bishops and (perhaps) abbots. Copies were sent to every bishopric in Alfred's extended kingdom, not just Wessex.[48]

Alfred needed his bishops because they straddled the ecclesiastical and secular worlds. They led the church community. They also commanded great landholdings and economic resources and were influential in secular matters. They were linchpins in the textual communities, through church *scholae*, fosterage, and the administration of justice. No doubt Alfred spoke about his ideology and his program, and sought to persuade his leading men through personal interactions—at court, in assemblies, in the administration of justice, and so forth. His bishops could, however, provide greater reach for his message, and they were obvious allies.[49]

Those members of Alfred's higher clergy who were familiar with the *Cura pastoralis* would have already understood the need to adjust teaching styles for different audiences. They would presumably have been alert to the benefits of adapting their use of different portions of the *Pastoral Care* to suit different circumstances of reception. The *Pastoral Care* may not have been independently consulted by Alfred's ealdormen at all.[50] However, it is also possible that bishops referred to the text in informal discussions with their secular contemporaries, cited it at assemblies, or used the Preface in the *schola* as a stand-alone text for their students learning to read (in much the same way that university students new to Old English are frequently given the Preface to cut their teeth on). For these reasons, a translation of

47 Anlezark, "Gregory the Great," 18.

48 Orton, "Alfred's Prose Preface," 143; Sisam, "Publication," 374.

49 Karkov, *Ruler Portraits*, 35.

50 Anlezark, "Which Books," 8.

the *Cura pastoralis* was a fitting text with which to start the dissemination of Alfredian ideology, to persuade the bishops to become actively involved. The Prose Preface started that process of persuasion.

The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* opens with a loving greeting to a named bishop, an opening which subtly positions the relationship between reader and writer.[51] The tone is friendly and earnest.[52] The effect is to draw the reader in closely; this is not a harangue and not an edict. The ruminations on the cause of the community's woes and the solution are designed to elicit an emotional response: desire and eagerness, a sense of common cause, perhaps also a sense of pride in being chosen to participate in this reinvigoration, stemming from the acknowledgement that the reader is necessary for the king to accomplish this most important task. That sense of participation, of collaboration, is underlined by the changes in authorial voice, from "ic" to "ge" to "we" as "Alfred" progresses from investigation of a problem to a solution.[53]

The persuasive effect of the collegial tone and language of the Prose Preface can be illustrated by comparing it to documents written in a very different tone. Foot notes the deliberately grandiose, indeed pompous, language of Æthelstan's later charters. She asks how much of that language his thegns could have understood "even if some kind (and highly educated) bishops standing nearby tried to translate the text for them, or at least paraphrase it sotto voce during its recitation."[54] Æthelstan's scribes chose dense language and inflated rhetoric to enhance the majesty of the king.[55] "Alfred" deployed tone and language to bring the audience closer to the king. The Prose Preface was a carefully crafted exercise in persuasion, not only in terms of the diagnosis of current misfortunes and their solution, but also as an acknowledgement that extensive collaboration between the king and his bishops was necessary. Selected members of the higher clergy had helped Alfred learn what he needed to know; now he and his extended higher clergy needed to embark on a communal endeavour to assist others to obtain and practise Christian wisdom.

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51 Frantzen, "Form and Function," 126; Huppé, "Alfred and Ælfric," 272.

52 Szarmach, "Meaning of Alfred's Preface," 61–62.

53 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Listening to the Scenes," 18–19.

54 Foot, *Æthelstan*, 214.

55 Lapidge, "Hermeneutic Style," 99–101.

Production of the Alfredian Texts

Janet Bately postulates a collegial form of authorship for the Alfredian translations, which allows for input by a variety of assistants, in matters of substance as well as in form, subject always to the king's overriding discretion.[56] Yorke gives significant scope to the king's discretion in the flavour and emphases of the translated texts.[57] Trish Ferguson argues that in relation to the *Pastoral Care*, Alfred authored that part most nearly concerned with *anweald* (authority), leaving his mentors to produce the balance of the translation.[58] O'Brien O'Keeffe suggests substantial discussion between Alfred and his advisors in relation to aspects of the translation of the *Regula pastoralis*.[59] The implication is that these compromises, or the king's final decision, were made during the process of composition of the OE texts. That puts the king very close to the actual work of composition, temporally and spatially. That may well have been the case for the *Pastoral Care*, but not necessarily true for the balance of the translations.

I suggest that the work of "hammering out" the king's position was done in the period in which he was learning for his own sake, with his advisors in close attendance. The OE translations reflect positions already reached, after discussion and debate, in a community of practice comprising Alfred and his assistants. This would reflect the dialogic form of some of the Alfredian translations, in which a common understanding is frequently reached through discussion and debate between the characters.

I argue that by the time the *Pastoral Care* was produced, the king and his inner circle had formulated at least the basic principles of Alfredian ideology. They had identified some pertinent texts to use as anchor points to educate and persuade others of their ideology. I analyzed these in the previous chapter. Those who undertook the work of manuscript production did not necessarily have to be closely supervised by the king, because the goals were already clear, and the way the texts were to be used was already familiar. Royal control did not have to be tightly exercised, after the production of the *Pastoral Care*.

Alfredian ideology was known with sufficient certainty that the translations could be done at a distance. Richard Clement suggests that Alfred and his helpers settled upon a series of "editorial principles" to guide the

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56 Bately, "Alfred as Author," 117.

57 Yorke, "Alfred and Weland," 62–63.

58 Ferguson, "Case for Multiple Authorship."

59 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Inside, Outside," 343.

individual translations.[60] Konshuh characterizes Alfred's role as "conceptual director."[61] Which texts were to be translated may not even have been settled very far in advance of their production. Alfred does not specify the texts which are "the most necessary for men to know" in the Preface to the *Pastoral Care*.

Anlezark argues that the category of "books most necessary" is unlikely to have been open-ended, and that this description is a reference to the sacred Scriptures.[62] This narrow interpretation is consistent with his position that the intended audience of the *Pastoral Care* was confined to the bishops, and that the purpose of translating the text was to improve ecclesiastical education.[63] If, however, the *Pastoral Care* was intended to be accessed to some degree by a wider (secular) audience (even if mediated through the bishops), then the scope of the "books most necessary" need not be narrowly confined. For early medieval communities, knowledge of the Scriptures was fundamental. They also relied upon non-Scriptural texts to understand their world and to place it in a Christian context: Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* is an obvious example. In the Preface to the *Soliloquies*, "Alfred" explicitly encouraged others to choose materials that suited them in their quest for Christian wisdom. Individual flexibility is inherent in key components of Alfredian ideology such as the *modes eagan* and *cræft*. Flexibility and variability were carefully incorporated into the social practices used to disseminate Alfredian ideology. A rigidly defined set of texts is at odds with the emphasis on versatility which permeates Alfredian reform. I argue that the books most necessary to know were those which would inculcate Alfredian ideology most persuasively in different contexts and for different audiences.

If the individuals responsible for producing translated texts for the reform program had a degree of discretion in their choice of texts, and if there was no deadline for the production of texts, then we can open up space for the *OE Bede* and the *OE Orosius* to be reconsidered as part of the Alfredian canon, albeit with a far more attenuated connection than, say, the *Pastoral Care*. Bately suggests that the *OE Orosius* may have been produced as part of Alfred's broader educational program.[64] Greg Waite argues that the Preface to the *OE Bede* was written later than the translation, by a different

60 Clement, "Production of the *Pastoral Care*," 137.

61 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity," 160.

62 Anlezark, "Which Books," 2.

63 Anlezark, "OE *Pastoral Care*."

64 Bately, "Old English Orosius," 343.

author.[65] He does allow for the possibility of a loose Alfredian connection, which fits with my argument for a dispersed mode of production.[66] Waite notes the absence of interpolations on Alfredian issues such as royal power in the *OE Bede*.[67] This may be a function of the close translation of the text, similar to the *Dialogues*. There are other possible explanations—the Mercian origin of the texts or their hagiographic flavour.[68]

It may well be that the king left it up to his assistants and his bishops to actually produce the texts which would contain the ideas he wanted to disseminate. That would be an attractive option for him. It would spread the significant cost of labour and materials necessary to produce the manuscripts. It would underscore the collaborative flavour of the reform program, and the emphasis on consultation and agreement in the prefaces to the *Pastoral Care* and the *domboc*. It would also evidence his bishops' commitment to his reforms, and encourage them to disseminate his ideas in discussions on the texts. This does not mean that any text would do. Rather, there was a general understanding of which texts contained the anchor points which the king had found useful, and which he would therefore want his people to use.

For example, the *OE Boethius*, with its historical narrative, could accommodate different kinds of textual communities: both an informal gathering of adults, and the formal setting of a *schola*. The Alfredian concepts embedded in the text were of equal relevance to ealdormen and their youthful sons, but using the text as an anchor point would have provided flexibility in how those topics were explicated and absorbed. The basic narrative, for example, may have been useful in teaching students to read in the classroom; discussion of the concepts could have followed on from a discussion of the historical context. I have already noted that the prefaces would have been useful as a short exercise in learning to read, for both adults and youths. The two different presentations of the *OE Boethius*, all-prose and prosimetrical, may have been designed to cater for different audiences, with varying intellectual standards and tastes, an example of *opus geminatum*.[69]

Texts may have been selected not only for their material, but for their form. The *Consolation of Philosophy*, the *Soliloquia*, and the *Dialogi* (obviously) were dialogic in form. The dialogic format was a standard method

65 Waite, "Preface to the OE Bede."

66 Waite, "The *Old English Bede*," 3.

67 Waite, "Translation Style," 3.

68 Molyneaux, "The OE Bede."

69 Weaver, "Hybrid Forms"; Irvine, "Protean Form."

of teaching in the early medieval period, another legacy from antiquity.[70] The Alfredian translations were therefore versatile—they were consistent with established pedagogic practices, and they could also be used in a style of learning based upon informal discussion between (more or less) equals.

My argument that there was flexibility, a degree of discretion allowed to those who would produce the texts to be used to disseminate Alfredian ideology (other than the *Pastoral Care*), may answer the objection that the *Pastoral Care*, the *OE Boethius*, the *Soliloquies*, and the *Prose Psalms* are too diverse to be attributed to one individual. This controversy revolves around Alfred's intellectual interests and his standard of Latinity, and the purpose of the individual translations and what their circulation might have achieved. Some scholars question whether there is a sufficient pattern in the translated texts to demonstrate a cohesive whole. Scholars like Discenza and Pratt have discerned a series of overarching themes and a sociopolitical purpose which, they argue, evidences a deliberate choice of these texts in furtherance of specific policy.[71] Godden, in particular, is sceptical both of any discernible design and any attribution to Alfred.[72] Others, like Anlezark, doubt the suitability and therefore inclusion of specific texts in the canon, while reserving judgment on the larger claim of a cohesive whole.[73]

My argument that the king did not necessarily mandate specific texts to be produced and used by his collaborators in his reform program accounts for both the disparities between the texts we call the Alfredian canon, and also the commonalities between them, particularly where those commonalities derive from manipulations of the Latin source texts. I highlighted these commonalities in my analysis of Alfredian ideology in the previous chapter.

My argument thus provides a completely different way of conceptualizing these texts as a collection; a way which accounts for the diversity in content and intellectual sophistication of the individual texts while demonstrating sufficiently close connections between them to warrant their characterization as a canon. My argument leaves the door open for the *OE Bede* and the *OE Orosius* to be considered Alfredian texts, rather than "Alfrediana."[74] The *ASC* and the *domboc* are also part of the Alfredian canon, thus conceived.

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70 Dumitrescu, *Experience of Education*, 4–5.

71 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory"; Discenza, *King's English*, Introduction; Pratt, *Political Thought*, Part 2; Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention."

72 Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?"; Godden, "The Alfredian Project"; Godden, "Alfredian Prose"; see also Brown, *Transformation of Britain*, 111–19.

73 Anlezark, *Alfred*, 89.

74 "Alfrediana" is the rubric for these texts in the 2015 edited collection *A Companion to Alfred the Great*.

In choosing the texts and disseminating the ideas they contained, Alfred and his advisors were doubtless aware of their diverse audience—the adult bishops and ealdormen, and the youths to be educated in the court *schola* and under the auspices of the kingdom's great men.[75] Some texts were more suitable for the classroom than for local assemblies or private discussions—some texts show signs of being modified in ways which indicate that a mature audience was anticipated. We should not assume that only the Alfredian translations were used in Alfred's reform program. It may well be that other texts were also referred to from time to time.

The Alfredian translations thus reflect an ideology already settled upon within the core group, and a specific way of using the texts to promote that ideology. This explanation would account for the linguistic and stylistic differences between the texts, which have been used to cast doubt on Alfredian authorship. At the same time, this explanation accounts for consistent themes in the texts, particularly where those themes emerge from changes in the translation from the Latin source texts. Consistency in message and variation in form are not irreconcilable—they can be interpreted as evidence of a clearly understood and articulated ideology, disseminated in a decentralized manner. Alfredian discourse was not within the king's sole control; like the Carolingian discourse, it was conducted by multiple actors with scope for individual agency in the promotion of that discourse. As Airlie puts it, that discourse was "articulated by many voices, not simply by the king's voice shouting from his palace."[76]

Further, this explanation helps to quiet scholarly unease about the attribution of the work of translation to King Alfred in some of the prefaces. Godden in particular has argued that such attribution cannot be taken at face value—that attribution was an early medieval literary trope, a way of acknowledging patronage or claiming authority for a work.[77] Thomas Bredehoft argues that Bede's characterization of Cædmon as an "author" demonstrates that for the Anglo-Saxons, a named author and textual authority were not necessarily coterminous, that Anglo-Saxon authorship could encompass looser associations than modern understanding of that term.[78] If the Alfredian texts reflect a settled ideology and an agreed means of disseminating that ideology under the aegis of the king (whether loosely or tightly supervised), then by early medieval criteria, the claim of Alfred's authorship was

75 Discenza, *King's English*, 14.

76 Airlie, *Making and Unmaking*, 8, 17.

77 Godden, "Alfredian Prose," 133.

78 Bredehoft, *Authors, Audiences*, 39.

validly made. This explanation may also help to account for later claims of Alfredian authorship, such as Ælfric's attribution of the *OE Bede* to Alfred.

Finally, this explanation accounts for the differences in dialect, which has also been a point of contention in relation to authorship.[79] If the texts were produced under Alfred's aegis but in a decentralized manner, then the person responsible for an individual text's production might well have chosen the dialect with which his scriptorium or his audience was most familiar. I acknowledge that Alfred went to great lengths to portray a united kingdom and a single culture. Equally, he was alert to the sensibilities of the non-West Saxon peoples in his kingdom and assiduously avoided steps which might be construed as subsuming their culture. A text containing Mercian dialect, perhaps the project of Plegmund or Wærferth, might well have had much greater circulation among Mercian elites, and greater acceptance by them, because of those inclusions. Alternatively, such inclusions may evidence a corpus of pre-existing Mercian scholarship which influenced the Alfredian translations without being acknowledged.[80] The presence of a range of dialects is not a fatal flaw to Alfredian authorship, if that authorship was expansive and communal.

The Curious Case of the *Dialogues*: Harbinger of Alfred's Reform Program?

The *Dialogues* may have played an unusual role in the formulation of Alfred's reform program. Asser says that Wærferth translated Gregory the Great's *Dialogi* at Alfred's command.[81] It is the earliest translation connected to Alfred, being dated to the mid-880s, before the *Pastoral Care*.[82] The timing suggests that Alfred asked Wærferth to translate the *Dialogi* before the reform program commenced. The translation was done in the period when Alfred had embarked on his own quest for wisdom, but before he became able to read Latin (according to Asser).

The *Dialogi* was held in high regard in the early medieval period.[83] Bede quoted from it, and Ælfric recommended it in his *Catholic Homilies*.[84] The

79 See, for example, Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything," 3.

80 Rauer, "Early Mercian Text."

81 Asser, chap. 77.

82 Rowley, "Long Ninth Century," 12.

83 Godden, "Waerferth and King Alfred," 48; Thijs, "Close and Clumsy," 21.

84 Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*, 358; Johnson, "Why Ditch the *Dialogues*," 208–09.

format of the text is similar to that of both the *Soliloquies* and the *Consolation of Philosophy*—a dialogue, which allows gradual explication through questions and answers. The form suggests a didactic purpose, which is reinforced by the text's content and style.[85] The source text emphasizes the process of teaching and learning, and the translation increases that emphasis. For example, the teaching role of several saints within their communities is highlighted.[86]

The text recounts miracles performed by Christian men and women, elaborating upon Christian values and the power of those values to overcome otherwise insuperable obstacles. To modern eyes, these tales of miracles may stretch credulity, but early medieval audiences did not expect historical accuracy in the accounts of saints' lives. Such *Lives* were read figuratively.[87] As Christine Thijs puts it, the stories in the *Dialogues* were concerned with practical morality and "the occasional portion of applied exegesis." As with both the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, the *Dialogues* favours more concrete imagery and a livelier narrative than its source text.[88] It was an apt text for an individual seeking to understand and identify the basic components of Christian wisdom, which is consistent with Alfred's personal quest.

There are significant commonalities between the *Dialogues* and other texts in the Alfredian canon. These commonalities include: a highly regarded source text; a dialogic form; emphasis on the importance of teaching, which is dialled up in translation; the ultimate goal of acquiring Christian wisdom; and concrete examples of how that wisdom can defeat powerful enemies. The translator of the *Dialogi*, Wærferth, was one of the Mercian scholars summoned to Alfred's side. I suggest that, logically, the *Dialogues* is linked to Alfred's reform program, even though the translation precedes the start of Alfredian reform.

Irvine has suggested that the *Dialogues* may have been a catalyst for the use of translations.[89] I propose two possible scenarios. It is possible that in using this translation for his own purposes, it occurred to Alfred that translations would be a productive way of articulating his ideology and persuading his community of the urgent need to reorient themselves to God. That is, Alfred's own use of the translation of the *Dialogi* prompted him to think about providing translations for his people to use, in order for them

85 Rowley, "Long Ninth Century," 13; Thijs, "Waerferth's Treatment," 275.

86 Dekker, "King Alfred's Translation," 42.

87 Hill, "*Imago Dei*," 46; Dekker, "King Alfred's Translation," 32.

88 Thijs, "Waerferth's Treatment," 275, 286.

89 Irvine, "English Literature," 213.

to acquire Christian wisdom. It is equally possible that Alfred had already decided that translations were the way to go and that the *Dialogues* was produced as an experiment, a trial run.

Either scenario would explain the anomaly which Godden identifies in the Preface to the *Dialogues*. The Preface speaks of a private commission of a translation for personal use—but a preface would be unnecessary in such circumstances. A preface assumes a public audience and a wider circulation.[90] The Preface could have been written retrospectively, when Alfred decided to circulate the translation. There is a tantalizing link between the *Dialogues* and the prefaces to Alfred's flagship translation. Irvine argues that the preface to the *Dialogues* in London, British Library [BL], Cotton MS Otho C I contains a characterization of Alfred as a successor to Gregory the Great—a parallel drawn with greater force in the prefaces to the *Pastoral Care*.

The scenarios outlined above might also account for the discrepancies between manuscripts. MS Otho C I has a preface ascribing the commissioning of the text to Bishop Wulfsige but the versions in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 322 and Bodleian, MS Hatton 76 have letters in Alfred's name.[91] The stricter adherence of the translation to the source text also supports both alternatives. If the translation was initially conceived as a text for Alfred's use alone, then Alfred may well have required a faithful translation.[92] The realization that he could use this and other translations to disseminate his ideology may have occurred later. If the translation was conceived as a prototype, again, stricter adherence to the source text makes sense, while Alfred and his advisors experimented with what was possible and what worked.

In terms of circulation, both Kees Dekker and David Johnson argue that this translation would have been used as a teaching tool, and both identify elite youths as the likely audience.[93] I suggest a wider circulation, in line with Irina Dumitrescu's observation that dialogues were standard tools for teaching in classrooms and more broadly.[94] This translation would have been apt for those learning to read, whatever their age, and the text may well have been used in Alfred's new social practice of lifelong learning. I deal with this further in chapter 6. The aptness of the source text as a teaching

90 Godden, "Waerferth and King Alfred," 38.

91 Yerkes, "Translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*," 335.

92 Thijs, "Early Old English Translation," 162.

93 Dekker, "King Alfred's Translation," 48; Johnson, "Why Ditch the Dialogues," 208.

94 Dumitrescu, *Experience of Education*, 5.

tool may explain why the *Dialogues* follows the source text more closely than other, freer, translations in the Alfredian canon.[95] It was not the concepts which were difficult for students, but the Latin. Translated into the vernacular, the concepts did not need to be tweaked to suit Alfred's purpose.[96]

The *Dialogi* was eminently suitable for Alfred's reform program. Translation facilitated the acquisition of Christian wisdom, while the text was an exemplar of Christian behaviour. My argument that the *Dialogues* either alerted Alfred to the idea of using translations as a vehicle, or was a test run of the idea, proceeds on circumstantial evidence. However, the circumstantial evidence is coherent, and provides a plausible explanation for the otherwise anomalous Preface and the differences between manuscripts. My argument permits the *Dialogi* to be reconsidered as part of the Alfredian canon, albeit a special case.

We have cogent evidence as to how Alfred learned, in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and in the eyewitness account of Asser. It makes intrinsic common sense for Alfred to intend that others, particularly his adult elites, would learn as he had learned—with help, in a collaborative way, dipping into texts to provide authority and to promote understanding. Alfred's own path to wisdom gave him a precedent, a methodology which would facilitate others, particularly his adult ealdormen, to learn. Alfred's collaborative approach to learning meant that when the time came to produce the vernacular texts which would contain Alfredian ideology, its fundamental concepts were already known within Alfred's circle. This meant that Alfred could safely delegate authority to produce appropriate texts. Authorship was corporate, not individual. Alfred's delegation of production of the texts provides a plausible explanation for the diversity of texts in the Alfredian canon. The *Dialogues* may have played a crucial and hitherto unheralded role in the planning of Alfredian reform.

Having considered the content of Alfredian ideology, and the way that Alfred envisaged using texts to propound that ideology, it is time to turn to the issue of reception. This involves shifting the focus from the king to his elites, those whom he needed to learn and to act, if his community was going to avert catastrophe. We do not hear their voices in the sparse documentary record of Alfredian reform. Theories that do not rely solely upon documents—assemblage theory and social practice theory—illuminate the reception of Alfredian reform. The next chapter examines the "thing-power" of Alfredian text-bodies, the persuasive agency of Alfredian texts *as objects*.

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95 Johnson, "Why Ditch the Dialogues," 209.

96 Thijs, "Close and Clumsy," 16–17.

In the following chapter, I analyze the way Alfredian ideology was embedded in new and modified social practices—routinized ways of doing things. I use each theory separately, to “unpack” the agency of text-bodies and social practices in inculcating Alfredian ideology and driving reform.

Chapter 5

TEXT-BODIES

A CRUCIAL ACTANT

WE LACK A substantial corpus of documents written by people who participated in Alfredian reform, or who observed it, or who recounted stories about it. We can however identify agents of change in objects, discussed in this chapter, and in behaviours, discussed in the next chapter. This chapter focuses on the persuasive agency of the Alfredian texts as "text-bodies." Assemblage theory is used because of its flatter ontology, its wide recognition of the ability of objects, people, places, and ideas to do and to bring about through their interactions.[1] The focus is on the recursive connections between the text-bodies, the people who handled them, and the cultural constructs which shaped people's responses to Alfredian text-bodies.

The understanding of a text as a physical object, important in its materiality and in its connections to identity and values, is neither new nor solely the province of assemblage theory. Henrike Lähnemann has explored medieval prayer books as cultural objects in both their original and modern contexts.[2] Treharne's recent monograph on medieval perceptions of manuscripts explicitly conceptualizes the book as a "being-in-the-world."[3] What assemblage theory adds to the analysis of texts as things is its understanding of agency as relational and emergent, and its focus on the connections between the disparate elements of a text-body.

Outline of the Argument Applying Assemblage Theory

There were a variety of important actants in the assemblage of the Alfredian text-body: the early medieval belief in the inherent power of certain books; the Alfredian style of collaborative learning; the delicate balance of political power in Alfred's community; the variable contexts in which Alfredian text-bodies were to be used; the plainness of these text-bodies; the use of

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1 Hamilakis, *Archaeology and the Senses*.

2 Lähnemann, "From Devotional Aids"; Lähnemann, "Materiality of Medieval Manuscripts."

3 Treharne, *Perceptions*, 1.

first-person voices (Alfred's in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*, and the text-bodies themselves in the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and the Verse Preface to the *Dialogues*); and the Old English cultural norm of the speaking object inscription. (Whenever I refer to Alfred's first-person voice in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* in this chapter, I mean his ostensible voice—consistent with my conceptualization of "Alfred"; but I won't keep repeating the caveat about corporate authorship.) These actants are very different in character. It is possible to identify other actants—such as the social role of treasure and the cultural norm of authority in translation. These are so deeply embedded in the content of the texts, in Alfredian ideology (see chapter 3), that I choose to put these to one side, to concentrate on actants which I have not already discussed.

The agency of an Alfredian text-body emerged from its actants being brought into association with, and impacting upon, each other. For example, the early medieval belief in the power of certain books interacted with the cultural norm of the speaking object to amplify the agency of the prefaces to the *Pastoral Care* and the *Dialogues* in which the book spoke about itself. The use of the king's own voice in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* interacted with the plainness of the text-body to create a levelling effect, bringing the audience closer to their king. That levelling effect, the creation of a communal sense of endeavour, was particularly persuasive in a context of dispersed political power in Alfred's kingdom. The interactions between actants are not sequential but contemporaneous. The text-body's agency emerged from (and was a consequence of) the interplay between its component parts.

I start my analysis of the actants in Alfredian text-bodies with the early medieval belief in the inherent power of certain books, before turning to Carolingian examples. The Carolingian examples demonstrate that text-bodies could be deliberately manipulated to form a discourse of power, by harnessing cultural norms. "Alfred" could have followed these exemplars, but did not. Three important actants explain why Alfredian text-bodies are so different from the Carolingian examples. They are: the Alfredian style of collaborative learning; the delicate balance of political power in Wessex; and the variable contexts in which Alfredian text-bodies were to be used. The plainness of the Alfredian texts is explicable as a deliberate choice in light of these other actants. I then look at several of the Alfredian prefaces, showing how content can itself be an actant. For example, the king's first-person voice interacted with the plainness of the text-bodies and the decentralized political landscape. Anglo-Saxon cultural attunement to the speaking object amplified the persuasiveness of the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and the Preface to the *Dialogues*.

Each actant contributes to the agency of the assemblage. Each actant must therefore be separately identified before its relationship with other actants can be properly understood. I start with the broadest cultural actant, the early medieval understanding of the power of books as objects.

The Early Medieval Experience of Text

Agency is always context-specific.[4] The experience of, and response to, text varies considerably across periods and cultures.[5] It follows that any inquiry into the agency of Alfredian text-bodies must consider the context in which they were produced, disseminated, and used. There are indications that early medieval perceptions of texts could be very different from ours. The modern Western experience of texts is heavily influenced by a belief in the separation of mind and body, a dichotomy between the signifier and the underlying meaning, usually attributed to Descartes's influence.[6] It is salutary that some modern authors on textuality whose work has been produced digitally confess to unease over the lack of a *book*, a physical manifestation of their ideas with which their audience can interact.[7] Traditionally, Western scholarship on medieval manuscripts has tended to "read through" the text-as-object to interpret the meaning of the words on the page, although some scholars have called for more attention to be paid to the text as object.[8] The consequence of a narrow focus on discerning meaning is that the "purely material" signifier slides from view.[9]

The narrowness of Western focus does not only apply to texts. Nina Eidsheim critiques Western preoccupation with the notation of music—"the quantifiable, idealised and abstract"—over the sensed, perceived, *lived* experience of music—a collectivity of bodies (performer and audience), spaces, and materials.[10] It is possible to identify some of the ways in which modern Western culture differs from Alfred's world; being attentive to those cultural differences will assist in considering how Alfredian text-bodies operated and were effective.

4 Johnson, "Self-Made Men," 213.

5 Nichols, "Image," 10–11; Foys, *Virtually Anglo-Saxon*, 19.

6 Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 2; Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 1–2.

7 Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 2; Foys, *Virtually Anglo-Saxon*, 3.

8 Lähnemann, "Materiality of Medieval Manuscripts," 124; Treharne, "Manuscript Sources," 93; Treharne, "Fleshing Out the Text."

9 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 81.

10 Eidsheim, "Sensing Voice," 134–35.

Hans Gumbrecht defines modern Western culture as a "meaning culture" and early medieval Europe as a "presence culture." These are typologies. Gumbrecht argues that a "presence culture" has a number of characteristics; some of these are applicable to Alfred's Wessex. First, in a presence culture, the dominant self-reference is not the mind, but the body. Second, people in a presence culture perceive themselves to be part of the world, in-the-world, in a physical and spatial way, and their bodies are therefore an essential part of their existence. Third, knowledge is revealed, rather than produced by an individual's conscious act of interrogation and world-interpretation. Fourth, there is no disjunct between signifier and signified, but an Aristotelian coupling between substance and form, which means that materiality does not fade from view in the search for meaning.[11] Aristotle argued that without sensory perception, there is no thought.[12] Antiquity bequeathed this concept to the early Middle Ages.[13]

For people in the early medieval period, the experience of texts was "an immersive sensory experience."[14] Bede provides an example of the unreflexive conjoining of mind and body in using a text. In *De computo vel loquela digitorum*, Bede's exposition of the complicated arithmetic required to calculate the correct date for Easter each year is part mental, part physiological exercise: flexing and positioning fingers, hands and arms as a bodily abacus.[15] Bede's *De temporum ratione* (BL, Royal MS 13 A XI) contains an engaging illustration of Roman finger-reckoning (fol. 33v).[16] Bede's deployment of the body in mental activity was by no means unusual; memorization, as an early medieval educational method, frequently involved rhythmic body movements as a physical mnemonic, a seamless combination of mind and body in the pursuit of knowing and learning.[17] Memorization, repeating back to a teacher what the teacher has modelled orally, was one form of what Paul Zumthor and Marilyn Engelhardt call "voiced discourse," grounded in the human body. However, it is important not to assume that modern and medieval phenomenological experiences are equivalent.[18] Meg Boulton urges an awareness of cultural differences in perception. She argues

11 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 79–86.

12 Gregoric and Fink, "Sense Perception," 15.

13 Vogt-Spira, "Senses, Imagination," 51; Robertson, "Medieval Materialism."

14 Christie, "Image of the Letter," 130.

15 Jones, *Bedae opera*, 1:179–81.

16 Reproduced in Breay and Story, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, 268.

17 Kendrick, *Animating* the *Letter*, 27, 29.

18 Zumthor and Engelhardt, "Text and Voice," 69, 70.

that early medieval people had a peri-performative engagement with material artifacts which involved a spatial component that is quite different to modern understandings of spatial perspective.[19]

In search, therefore, of useful analogies to understand early medieval textuality, I suggest that the early medieval liturgy provides a valuable example of the interaction between the senses and the intellect. The liturgy entailed a phenomenological experience of the material world, involving all the senses, at the same time as participants absorbed and affirmed a powerful ideology. While the words and ideas, the meaning, were crucial to the liturgy, the liturgy was also a performance, a multidimensional physicality. It comprised space, bodies, movement (the ritual movements of those officiating and the responsive bodily movements of the participants), objects (texts, relics, chalices, and vestments) sound (music, singing, chanting, and speech), sight (static images and the ritual movements of those officiating, the vestments and paraphernalia, and the play of light), touch (kissing the bishop's ring, touching relics, statues, and sacred parts of the fabric of the church), and aromas (incense, candlewax, and, for those close enough, the smell of the sacred texts).

Religious worship took place in a textual community. Very few of those participating actually read the texts—but everyone present listened to the text being read aloud, saw the text being ritualistically handled, participated (to some degree) in the prescribed physical movements, and thereby performed a public affirmation of the ideology contained in the texts. While church rituals were intrinsically a combination of phenomenological elements— visual, auditory, tactile, and olfactory—early medieval theologians were uneasy about, and ambivalent towards, the role of the senses and the body in Christian ideology.[20] This unease existed despite both Old and New Testament exhortations to eat the words of God as a way of understanding and absorbing the Word (Ezekiel 2:9–3:3; Revelation 10:8–11). Christian disquiet about the role of the senses was implicated in early patristic exhortations to look beyond the material script to the meaning of the words, their spiritual content. Jerome famously deplored the "Babylonian" decadence of sumptuously produced texts, written in gold on a purple background.[21]

Christian attitudes to text-bodies evolved over the early centuries of the medieval period. By the Carolingian era, some theologians were will-

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19 Boulton, "End of the World."

20 Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy," 27–29.

21 Jerome, "Ad Eustochium" (384 CE) and "Ad Laetam" (403 CE) in Wright, *Jerome: Select Letters*, letter 22.32, 130–32; and letter 107.12, 364.

ing to employ the senses and affectivity to cultivate Christian virtue.[22] In the eighth century, Boniface entreated Eadburga, the Abbess of Thanet, to procure for him a copy of the Epistles of Paul written in gold, with which he might "impress the eyes of the carnally minded while I preach."[23] Boniface's remarks imply a dispersed audience of listeners, who would see the text, and respond to it, but not read it for themselves. His remarks underscore the value of the senses in the task of persuasion, the goal of capturing hearts and minds. The Anglo-Saxons of the ninth century inherited a suite of cultural norms which provided a framework for their experiences of text-bodies.

Early Medieval Textual Strategies and Beliefs: The Power of Things

Early medieval Christian theology taught that the written words of Scripture made the invisible present in the world, manifested it, provided a material trace of immanence.[24] Eric Palazzo argues that Christian texts, as objects, were conceived as a way of accessing the sacred space of revelation. Opening the texts ("activating" them) made the invisible present, perceptible through the material form of the object and its graphic and iconographic layout.[25] Palazzo's argument focuses on the efficacy of the bodily action of opening the text-body. Other gospel books were sealed in embellished containers, making them unreadable: the object was valued over access to the words.[26]

Sacred texts were similar to those ritual objects of Christian worship which were held to have been made under divine instruction.[27] Manuscripts perceived to have been written by Christian saints inspired by a direct communion with God were also held to contain physical traces of the divine.[28] Some text-bodies were held to have a protective power by reason of the traces left behind of the saints who had handled the objects, a transfer of power through the senses, and a function of the text's materiality.[29] The St. Cuthbert Gospel, which absorbed sanctity through its close proximity to the uncorrupted body of the saint over a period of centuries, is a good exam-

22 Appleby, "Instruction and Inspiration," 86–87.

23 Emerton, *Letters of Saint Boniface*, letter 26, 42; Christie, "Image of the Letter," 132.

24 Brown, "Book as Sacred Space," 45.

25 Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy," 39.

26 Diebold, *Word and Image*, 28.

27 Harting-Correa, *Walahfrid Strabo's Libellus*, 75–81.

28 Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 16–17, 110.

29 Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 16–17.

ple.[30] Sue Brunning's analysis of early medieval swords demonstrates that text-bodies were not the only objects capable of being innately powerful.[31] There was thus a tension between theological assertions of meaning's pre-eminence over form and early medieval belief that an object might have powers of its own.

The manifestation of the divine, the invisible made present in the liturgical or saintly text-body meant that these objects were not simply displayed or read from, but were actively engaged in Christian rituals. Church murals occasionally depict this active engagement: a sixth-century mosaic at San Vitale, Ravenna, shows an ornate text being censed together with the cross and paten as part of the procession to the altar.[32] Religious texts were reverently *handled*: carried in processions to church and on pilgrimage, laid ceremoniously on the altar, kissed by the clergy conducting the service, and perfumed with incense before use in the service.[33] These text-bodies were not passive conduits.

Part of the text-body's ability to do and to bring about resides in the use of recognized and culturally sanctioned performance conventions focused on the text-body. The liturgy is one example of this, in its prescriptions for the ritualistic handling of the text-body. For certain texts produced by the Alfredian and Carolingian courts, relevant performance conventions were elements *outside* the narrative. These performance conventions engaged the audience in two very different discourses about power.[34]

Carolingian Text-bodies: A Discourse of Power

The Godescalc Evangelistary (Paris, BnF, MS n.a.1 1203), produced for Charlemagne and his wife Hildegard between 781 and 783, is a good example of the deployment of the text-body in an ideological discourse. The text is written in gold and silver on a purple background. Gold, silver, and purple were the imperial colours of the Roman Empire. Their use in this setting was a reference to Charlemagne's claimed inheritance of Roman authority.[35] The Evangelistary was specifically used in the lavish celebrations of the main liturgical feasts in which Charlemagne took a leading role. Text-as-

30 Treharne, *Perceptions*, 82.

31 Brunning, *Sword*, 139–56.

32 Kessler, "Book as Icon," 101.

33 Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy," 41.

34 Thomas, "Medieval Space," 10.

35 Tekippe, "Copying Power," 143; Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy," 43.

object conflated both the glory of Christ and the glory of Charlemagne.[36] Text-bodies such as Charlemagne's Godescalc Evangelistary employed a display of wealth and a citation of the Roman imperial past as an integral part of their power and effect.

Charlemagne's use of text-bodies was part of a wider appropriation of materials, spaces, and iconography to reference and reinforce politically valuable connections. These connections were the legacies of the past (Roman imperial power) and current sources of legitimacy and authority (the church). The spatial layout and elevation of Charlemagne's court buildings at Aachen borrowed forms like the Roman triumphal arch and referenced earlier Christian court complexes in Ravenna, Rome, Benevento, and Constantinople.[37] Columns brought from Rome and Ravenna were incorporated into the fabric of Charlemagne's chapel and housed relics of the Apostles; these columns were placed on the same level of the chapel as Charlemagne's throne—placing him literally amongst the Apostles.[38] Charlemagne thus deployed various forms of materiality as well as text-bodies to promote his chosen ideology.

Charlemagne's heirs continued his practice of using text-bodies to reinforce concepts of power and authority. Louis the Pious, Lothair I, and Charles the Bald all manipulated the iconography and embellishment of religious texts and objects for ideological purposes, to impart a sense of Frankish destiny, and to glorify themselves.[39] The Vivian Bible (Paris, BnF, MS lat.1), the prayerbook of Charles the Bald (Munich, Residenz, Schatzkammer, Prayerbook) and the Munich *Codex Aureus* (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm 14000) all draw parallels between Christ and Charles the Bald.[40] The Lothar Cross, a richly embellished golden processional cross commissioned by Lothar of France (r. 985–991), contains a portrait of Lothar, an antique cameo of the Roman emperor, Augustus, on one side, and Christian iconography engraved on the reverse.[41] This was a complex interweaving of references to religious and secular authority.

The Carolingians deployed objects in a carefully crafted discourse on power and legitimacy. Their use of objects exploited the early medieval experience of text and the early medieval understanding of the power of objects.

36 Palazzo, "Art, Liturgy," 43.

37 Lobbedey, "Carolingian Royal Palaces," 137; Tekippe, "Copying Power," 147.

38 Snyder, *Medieval Art*, 192; Tekippe, "Copying Power," 147.

39 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 75.

40 Deshman, *Eye and Mind*, 185, 205–06.

41 Tekippe, "Copying Power," 153.

This forms a useful comparative for a consideration of the actants used to create the Alfredian text-body. Alfredian texts, as assemblages, contained some different actants to their Carolingian counterparts, which influenced both the production of Alfredian text-bodies and their reception.

Three Crucial Actants in the Alfredian Text-body

The importance of the interaction between various actants, the lively hum, can be demonstrated by considering three highly influential participants in Alfredian text-bodies. These particular actants influenced a slew of other actants, both material and relational. Collaborative learning, the delicate balance of political power, and the variable contexts in which Alfredian text-bodies were to be used, all influenced the choice of other components in the assemblage of the text-body. Interestingly, all three actants are incorporeal—demonstrating that ideas, cultural norms, and other intangibles can be part of an assemblage. These three actants also demonstrate that an actant can exist prior to an assemblage—can influence its creation and become part of the assemblage itself.

In terms of collaborative learning, literacy was a means to an end—the (re)acquisition and practice of Christian wisdom. Alfred intended his people to use texts as anchor points for discussion between themselves, the same way that he had learned. This format—not solitary study but group learning, not sustained reading but using texts to spark discussion and elucidate debate—meant that textual communities could be used to broadcast and inculcate Alfredian ideology. Collaborative learning had important implications for the kind of text-bodies that were needed. Alfredian text-bodies had to be tailored to a dispersed audience, listeners as well as readers—a larger group of people who might see the book reasonably close-up during the course of discussion, but not handle it greatly themselves.

Alfredian text bodies had to be both authoritative and approachable. Alfredian ideology emphasized that reorienting the kingdom back to God was a communal endeavour. Alfredian ideology also emphasized the reciprocal nature of the obligations which supported a well-functioning Christian community, reciprocity which bound a king just as much as his subjects. A Christian king had obligations to those entrusted to his care. Alfredian ideology thus operated to narrow the gap between the king and his subjects. Alfredian text-bodies needed to reinforce this aspect of Alfredian ideology—to bring the elites closer to the king, to persuade them to join him.

In terms of variable context, we can infer that these text-bodies were intended to be versatile, apt for a number of different textual communities.

For example, the command in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* that the *æstel* be kept with the book wherever the book travelled necessarily implies an expectation that the book will be used in different contexts. These might include discussions between higher clergy on the obligation to teach or the importance of humility; discussions between a bishop and local reeves as to the fundamental principles of Christian wisdom applicable to the administration of justice; as a resource for those learning to read; or as an edifying text suitable to be read aloud within the bishop's household. The *domboc* was similarly flexible, appropriate for assemblies and judicial fora, but also for discussions between local administrators seeking practical guidance or "bigger picture" policy direction. The other translated texts and the *ASC* could be used as resources for teaching students (including adult ealdormen) to read, or to frame discussions on aspects of Alfredian ideology—dipping into the texts to use the portion appropriate for the occasion.

Having identified particularly important actants in the assemblage, I am going to use Bennett's categories of materiality and relationality to identify other actants in Alfredian text-bodies, and to explore the way they interacted with collaborative learning, political realities, and variable contexts.

Alfredian Text-bodies: Materiality

In considering the materiality of Alfredian text-bodies, I want to ask some questions. Did materiality influence the handleability of these text-bodies? Were these text-bodies apt for everyday use? Would Alfred's bishops have felt comfortable getting out their copy of the *Pastoral Care* during discussions with local councillors, reeves, or junior clergy? Would they have been content to pass the book around, or to rest the book on their knees as they searched for the passage they wanted to read out? Were the books appropriate to be handled in classrooms of occasionally careless schoolboys and in domestic spaces where ealdormen struggled to learn to read (and were sometimes bad-tempered about the task)?[42] Could the *domboc* safely be put into a reeve's satchel while he was out and about on the king's business? Did the physicality of the book temper the relationship between king and subjects, suggest closeness or a sense of communal endeavour—or did it underscore rigid hierarchy and unapproachability?

While both the Carolingians and Alfred deployed text-bodies for ideological purposes, there is a vast difference between the deluxe Carolingian Bibles and psalters, such as the Godescalc Evangelistary, and the Alfredian

42 Asser, chap. 106.

texts. The Carolingian text-bodies discussed above were created for a specific context (religious worship), instantiated specific attributes of the emperor (divine approval, the inheritance of Roman imperial authority), and were agential in inculcating a particular ideology within that context. Alfredian text-bodies were a different assemblage, incorporating a different ideology and different actants to promote that ideology. This was a deliberate choice; Alfredian text-bodies could have followed the path set by the Carolingians. For example, one Anglo-Saxon manuscript (BL, Cotton MS Vespasian A VIII), probably produced after 966, contains thirty-three folios written entirely in gold, with illustrations linking King Edgar to Christ.[43]

We have only one contemporary example of an Alfredian translation—Bodleian, MS Hatton 20 of the *Pastoral Care*. All other manuscripts are tenth- to twelfth-century copies. My argument rests explicitly on an assumption that Hatton 20 is typical of the manuscripts of the *Pastoral Care* disseminated to the various bishops (and perhaps selected abbots) and is broadly representative of Alfredian texts in general.

Hatton 20 was intended for Wærferth, Bishop of Worcester, one of Alfred's Mercian mentors on his personal path to wisdom. Wærferth was also the translator of the *Dialogi*, commissioned by Alfred. There is no reason to believe that Hatton 20 was produced to a lesser standard than other manuscripts of the *Pastoral Care*, and no scholar has suggested it. The ornamentation of Hatton 20 is largely consistent with ornamentation of the extant later manuscripts. A close look at Hatton 20 reveals consistent imperfections in the vellum, some of which were sufficiently large that the scribe had to work around them (fols. 12, 19, 23, and 25 in particular). The inference is that the vellum did not have to be of the highest quality—physical perfection was not the objective. Elizabeth Tyler describes Hatton 20 as "comparatively scrappy."[44] This inference is consistent with the modest decoration of the manuscript.

The palette of Hatton 20 is of black ink, with infills of green, yellow, and red.[45] It was a relatively plain production. There are similarities between the ornamental initials in Hatton 20 and those in earlier manuscripts such as the late eighth-century Barberini Gospels (Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica, MS Barberini Lat. 570, fols. 80, 125), the ninth-century Book of Cerne (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Ll. 1. 10), and the

43 Treharne, *Perceptions*, 117–20.

44 Tyler and Mhaonaigh, "Looking East and West."

45 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 72–74.

early tenth-century Tanner Bede (Bodleian, MS Tanner 10, fol. 5v).[46] Richard Gameson argues that Alfred revived this relatively plain style of decoration for his translations, using a style familiar in late eighth- and early ninth-century Southumbrian manuscripts, such as the Book of Cerne.[47] It is possible that Alfred's Mercian advisors brought this style to his attention. The decorated initials in Hatton 20 are also consistent with those in the later copies of the Alfredian texts, being depictions of entire small animals.[48]

The modesty of ornamentation in the Alfredian texts presents a startling contrast to earlier manuscripts as well as to contemporary Frankish codices. Codices produced prior to Alfred's reign demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxons could produce sumptuous manuscripts. Asser records Alfred as a considerable patron of the arts, an avid inventor, a commissioner of fine buildings, a king who encouraged and supported foreign craftsmen at his court and who helped fill West Saxon churches with beautiful treasures.[49]

Leslie Webster points out that even less prestigious texts produced contemporaneously with the Alfredian texts, such as the Mercian prayerbook (BL, Royal MS 2 A XX) and the Tiberius Bede (BL, Cotton MS Tiberius C II), for which the "Tiberius group" of manuscripts (including the Vespasian Psalter and the Stockholm Codex Aureus) is named, contained more lavish ornamentation than Alfred's texts.[50] The lack of ornamentation and visual display in Alfredian texts was a deliberate and meaningful choice, rather than an absence of appropriate technical skill or the wealth to commission such works of art. Webster argues that the lack of ornamentation and visual display in Alfred's manuscripts was designed to bring his elites closer to his way of thinking. In contrast, the sumptuous contemporary Carolingian manuscripts emphasized that the king stood apart, *sui generis*, from his aristocracy.[51] Ornamentation, which appealed to multiple senses, could be integral to the experience of a text-body. The choice of ornamentation—lavish or modest—did not simply reflect meaning, but could help to shape it.[52]

Webster's argument can be taken further. The Alfredian texts were plain because they were intended to be workaday objects; they were intended to be handled, consulted, and passed around. They were intended to be an eas-

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46 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 72–73; Brown, *The Book of Cerne*, 177.

47 Gameson, "Tanner Bede," 120–22.

48 Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*; Deshman, *Eye and Mind*, 26.

49 Asser, chaps. 91, 101. See also Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 190.

50 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 74.

51 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 47–48, 75.

52 Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 4–5.

ily available point of reference precisely to encourage the practice of consultation and emulation. These were not objects of awe, whose rarity and costliness instantiated the power and wealth of the king who commissioned or owned them, brought out only for special occasions to dazzle those who saw them, and were otherwise securely stored in the king's treasury. That is one reason why the quality of the vellum for Hatton 20 was relatively unimportant and why the decoration was plain.

Alfredian texts were *handleable*—suitable to be stuffed in a satchel and transported, used in informal settings where a book might be passed around or read from during a casual gathering, or set down on a school table. The carefully chosen materiality of Alfredian text-bodies encouraged handleability, which increased the prospects that the texts would be accessed in a way appropriate for their content and purpose. In contrast, beautiful liturgical texts were handled with reverence, in prescribed settings with choreographed movements. There were no such normative constraints on the Alfredian text-bodies, because they were not service books, but books for instruction (with the possible exception of the *Prose Psalms*).[53]

The alignment of materiality with function has been analyzed in other contexts. Anya Adair explores the links between design and function in the codex Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 383, containing a collection of Anglo-Saxon law codes; a relatively lightweight, compact codex suggests active, everyday use.[54] Erik Kwakkel cites the holster book as an example of function guiding form, a consequence of the close connection between manuscript producers and first user.[55] In an article on early gospel codices, the authors argue that early versions of the gospels were written as codices rather than on scrolls in part because they were intended to be workaday objects—"consulted, used, and revisited"—as practical tools to guide daily living, a means to an end. They were intended to be handled frequently.[56]

Handleability was a function of the Alfredian text-bodies' materiality. Handleability also increased the sense of communal endeavour which Alfred needed to inculcate. The prosaic material form of Alfredian books made their contents more accessible to a greater number of people, in a wider range of contexts. The absence of gorgeous ornamentation narrowed the gap between the king and the audience—the opposite of the Carolingian deployment of materiality.

53 Gameson, "Alfred the Great," 201.

54 Adair, "Pocket Change," 77.

55 Kwakkel, *Decoding the Material Book*, 66.

56 Larsen and Letteney, "Christians and the Codex," 395.

"Handleable" materiality was thus an important aspect of the Alfredian text-body. I turn now to Bennett's other classification—relationality. Relationality is obviously incorporeal, and it is very closely aligned to the content of the Alfredian text-bodies, to Alfredian ideology. There are several elements of Alfredian ideology which can be identified as actants in their own right. For example, the *domboc*'s recitation of Mosaic law was an intellectual and religious claim of legitimation for the laws themselves and a component of the concept of the *Angelcynn* as a Chosen People. The Mosaic law tradition was a relational actant in the text-body of the *domboc*. Similarly, the invocation of Gregory the Great, Apostle of the English, was a relational actant. The cultural norms of authority in translation and the social role of treasure were also relational actants. As I have already dealt with these elements, I shall focus here on the use of Alfred's first-person voice and the text-body itself, and the related cultural norm of the speaking object inscription. I show how these actants interacted with the materiality of the Alfredian text-body to increase its agency, its persuasive appeal.

The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*: "Alfred" Speaks Directly to His People

In the *Pastoral Care*, the levelling effect of the text-body's materiality was amplified by the inclusion of a preface in the king's own voice. I looked at the way the Prose Preface articulated Alfredian ideology in chapter 3; what I want to consider here is the effect of (what appeared to be) Alfred speaking directly to his people. While the *Pastoral Care* was distributed to the bishops (and possibly abbots), it is likely that the Prose Preface had a much wider circulation and was accessed in a variety of contexts. The use of the king's first-person voice helped to form a link between the audience (readers and listeners) and their king.

Brief first-person comments can be found in the introduction to documents issued in the name of a king, such as law codes and charters—V Æthelstan and the charter recording the grant from Æthelwulf, king of Wessex, to Dunn, 855, for example.[57] However, the extended monologue and relaxed, ruminatory, tone of the Prose Preface were arrestingly novel. Those lower down in the social hierarchy had probably never been addressed thus by their king. In talking directly to the audience, by using the first-person voice, "Alfred" bridged the gap between face-to-face communication and the transcribed words on the page, collapsing Seth Lehrer's distinction between a

57 *EHD*, no. 36, 422–23. See also S 315.

literature of presence and a literature of absence.[58] While the first-person voice of the king was distinctive, arresting even, it utilized existing traditions in OE literature. Isolated public speeches—independent and autonomous—are a feature of *Beowulf* and other poems. In hagiographic literature, such speeches often had a didactic purpose.[59] Alfred's audience were culturally conditioned to attend closely to the first-person voice.

Having been cued that the Preface was important, the first-person voice brought the audience closer to their king. They could hear (what appeared to be) their king expressing his own thoughts, in his own words, as though he was conversing with them. This direct appeal could operate across a variety of contexts, different textual communities, beyond the bishops who first received the text. There were doubtless others with whom the bishops discussed the king's ideas. One can envisage, for example, local officials discussing the *domboc* in relation to a local dispute or an upcoming assembly. The bishop reaches for his copy of the *Pastoral Care* to read out part of the Prose Preface to them, to give them an overview or reminder of the king's thinking and goals, or to prod them to participate in the king's reforms.

In such a scenario, there would be an interaction between direct speech and the early medieval experience of, and beliefs about, texts. After all, books were rare and costly, no matter how imperfect the vellum or plain the decoration. And this was a copy of a book ostensibly provided by the king, in which he speaks directly to his audience. If the text-body was passed around, then I think it is reasonable to infer that those who handled it were acutely *physically* aware of the importance and novelty of what they were holding. Lara Farina refers to the "skin-on-skin experience" of holding a parchment codex.[60] That phenomenological experience of the text-body may have been amplified by early medieval beliefs in the power of particular text-bodies. Irvine describes Alfred's first-person voice as a "bridge between text and audience, identifying the vernacular book as an autonomous object with authority but also as an animate and engaging presence, reaching out directly so as to move hearts and minds."[61]

The Prose Preface is an appealing text for students new to Old English. It is not a great stretch to assume that it was similarly engaging for ealdormen who may have used it to learn to read, or for youths in the *scholae*. The intimate tone of the Preface was doubtless part of its appeal; the camaraderie, the

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58 Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 4, 21.

59 Louviot, *Direct Speech*, 35–36.

60 Farina, "Get a Grip," 105.

61 Irvine, *Uncertain Beginnings*, 17–18.

invitation to the audience to agree and to join their king was a large part of its charm. "Alfred" solicited the active agreement and cooperation of his people. The persuasive power of Alfred's Prose Preface was amplified by the interaction between his words, the material form of the text in which they were contained, and the contexts in which the text was accessed and discussed. Collegiality, closeness, and reciprocity were manifested and recursively reinforced by the use of the first-person voice, the deliberately plain materiality of the text-body, and the workaday contexts in which the text-body was accessed and its contents discussed. These actants were not separate components which formed an aggregate; they were a new entity, a thing which was different from, and not reducible to, its parts. A short consideration of the OE poem or speaking inscription known as *Thureth* usefully demonstrates this point.

Thureth

Thureth exists in only one manuscript (BL, Cotton MS Claudius A III, fol. 31). It is provisionally dated to the second half of the tenth century. The following version and translation are by Craig Ronalds and Margaret Clunies Ross:

Ic eom halgungboc; healde hine dryhten
þe me fægere þus frætewum belegde.
þureð to þance þus het me wyrcean,
to loue & to wurðe þam þe leoht gesceop.
gemyndi is he mihta gehwylcre
þaes þe he on foldan gefremian mæg,
& him geþancie þeoda waldend
þaes þe he on gemynde madma manega
wyle gemearcian metode to lace.
& he sceal ęce lean ealle findan
þaes þe he on foldan fremaþ to rihte.

(I am a benedictional; may the Lord protect him
who thus decorated me beautifully with ornaments.
Thureth gratefully ordered me to be made in this way
in praise and in honour of Him who created the light.
He [= Thureth] is mindful of all the mighty works
which He [= God] is able to bring about on earth,
and the Ruler of Nations shall reward him,
because, mindful of many treasures,
he wishes to designate (me) as an offering to the Lord.
And he shall fully obtain eternal reward,
Because he acts properly here on earth.)[62]

62 Ronalds and Clunies Ross, "*Thureth*," 360.

Thureth can be compared to the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. Both *Thureth* and the Verse Preface refer to themselves in the first-person voice. The Verse Preface to Wærferth's translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* does the same. This prompts the question—in these texts, who is talking?

Look Who's Talking

Ronalds and Clunies Ross argue that there is a distinction between *Thureth* and the Verse Prefaces. They argue that in *Thureth*'s case, the book is speaking, and in each of the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and Wærferth's Verse Preface, the text is speaking.[63] They do not justify that distinction. Orton makes a similar argument, albeit drawing the distinction between the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* on one hand, and *Thureth* and Wærferth's Verse Preface on the other. Orton argues that the speaker in the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* is Gregory's text, in its essential irreducible form.[64] He interprets the voice in *Thureth* as the linguistic communication, the contents of the benedictional.[65] However, the inscription explicitly states that Thureth does not earn an eternal reward by commissioning the production of a religious text, but by commissioning its gorgeous binding. Equally, paying for the beautiful ornamentation of a secular text would not bring him eternal reward. Thureth's piety is materially manifested in the embellishment of *this specific text*. The reward stems from the union of materiality and meaning. The meaning of the words and its material form are not separate components which form an aggregate. They are a composite, a thing which is different from, and not reducible to, its parts.

Ronalds and Clunies Ross's, and Orton's, argument is based upon an anachronistic modern distinction between word-meaning and body. The distinction they draw does not allow for the early medieval understanding of the essential unity of the material object and the meaning of the words. Alfred's community was a presence culture, in which materiality and sensory perception participated in the revelation of meaning. Knowledge was accessed through the cooperative endeavour of mind and body.[66] The speaker in the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* is a composite formed from the physical characteristics of the book (its materiality), the message it contained, the cultural norms which shaped the way that the text was accessed

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63 Ronalds and Ross, "*Thureth*," 369n49.

64 Orton, "Deixis," 204.

65 Orton, *Writing in a Speaking World*, 100.

66 Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence*, 79–86.

and understood—and the interplay between these actants. What speaks in the Verse Preface is the text-body. Likewise, in Wærferth's Verse Preface, the text-body speaks. The speaking object was a familiar experience for Alfred's community—another example of how sensory perception fused with intellect in the process of understanding. The Old English affinity for the speaking object was a cultural norm, a relational actant in the text-body of the *Pastoral Care* and the *Dialogues*.

Anglo-Saxon Speaking Objects

The Anglo-Saxons had a tradition of endowing riddles, poems, private objects, and public monuments with words delivered in the first-person voice, aimed directly at the listener or viewer and, sometimes, demanding a response.[67] As Benjamin Tilghman describes it, "Anglo-Saxons were subject to a cacophony of things constantly chattering about themselves."[68] Speaking objects date back to antiquity and are found scattered across the Mediterranean and up to the German-speaking regions.

There are between two hundred and three hundred extant Anglo-Saxon inscriptions, spatially and temporally very widely distributed.[69] A speaking object inscription is a distinct subset of inscriptions on items such as jewellery, coins, and weapons. An inscription conveys information. A speaking object inscription does this too, but speaks in the first-person voice and therefore lays claim to an identity, an individuality.[70] According to Peter Ramey, there are thirty Anglo-Saxon speaking object inscriptions, dated from the seventh to the eleventh centuries; according to Bredehoft, there are twenty-four.[71] The most comprehensive compilation of Anglo-Saxon inscriptions is that by Elizabeth Okasha. References to her original list below are provided in parentheses.[72]

Speaking object inscriptions are found on a range of objects, including jewellery (rings and brooches), prestige items (swords and scabbards), and monumental pieces (sundials and crosses). They are fashioned from a variety of materials: from leather to wood and bone, from precious metals

67 Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 135–78; Bredehoft, "First Person Inscriptions," 104.

68 Tilghman, "Enigmatic Nature of Things."

69 Bredehoft, "First Person Inscriptions," 103; see Lenker and Kornexl, *Anglo-Saxon Micro-Texts*.

70 Ramey, "Writing Speaks," 343.

71 Ramey, "Writing Speaks," 342; Bredehoft, "First Person Inscriptions," 104.

72 Okasha, *Hand-list*.

to ornamental stonework. They speak in both Old English and Latin. However, the extant Anglo-Saxon record is dominated by inscriptions in the vernacular, on costly items.[73] The Jewel is one such speaking object inscription: "+ÆLFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN" (+Alfred ordered me to be made). The "me" is clearly neither reader nor speaker, but the object itself (and perhaps the book which accompanied it). Faulkner points out that if the Jewel's rivet secured a pointer, then the beast would have a tongue, underlining the Jewel's capacity to speak for itself.[74]

The inscribed speaking object thus declared its own message directly to those listening and reading.[75] Ramey argues that speaking object inscriptions were a material form of speech. He uses Ursula Schaefer's concept of the "vicarious voice" to illustrate how the inscribed voice emanated from the object itself, rather than the person who read the inscription out loud. The speaking object, provided with a voice, had the power to operate within human discourse and social relationships independently of its creator or owner. The Jewel's inscription articulated a clear sense of identity: like the Cross in the *Dream of the Rood*, it "remembers where it came from."[76] Ramey argues that direct speech is equated with power in OE literature.[77] Direct speech was a significant feature of OE poetry. While modern readers find such speeches awkward, contemporary audiences seem to have had different expectations and different ways of assimilating direct speech.[78] An extreme example of this agency is the speaking object inscription which pronounces a curse—a performative speech act. The early eleventh-century Anglo-Scandinavian silver brooch found on the Isle of Ely known as the Ædwen brooch (Okasha no. 114) contains the following curse, inscribed around the rim of the brooch on the reverse:

> +ÆDVWEN ME AG　　AGE HYO DRIHTEN
> DRIHTEN HINE AWERIE　　ÐE ME HIRE ÆTFERIE
> BVTON HIO ME SELLE　　HIRE AGENES WILLES

> (+Ædwen owns me, may the Lord own her. May the Lord curse him who takes me from her, unless she gives me voluntarily.)[79]

73 Bredehoft, "First Person Inscriptions," 105–06.

74 Faulkner, *Wealth*, 57.

75 Orton, "Deixis," 207; Ramey, "Writing Speaks," 336.

76 Faulkner, *Wealth*, 58.

77 Ramey, "Writing Speaks," 336–37, 341–42.

78 Louviot, *Direct Speech*.

79 Okasha, *Hand-list*, 116–17.

The form of the curse, which operates only if the brooch is illicitly separated from its rightful owner, gives the fullest agency to the brooch to perform the curse, Ædwen being necessarily absent.[80] Another example, the gold Lancashire ring (Okasha no. 66), contains the inscription "+ÆDRED MEC AH EANRED MEC AGROF" (+Ædred owns me, Eanred engraved me).[81] The inscription, in the first person voice, locates the object in a web of relationships, and thereby provides it with a specific identity.[82] These examples can be contrasted with the ninth-century gold and nielloed ring (Okasha no. 245) which simply bears the word "+CYNEFRID+"—the inscription conveys information but does not speak.

The Anglo-Saxons may have been particularly receptive to speaking objects because of the widespread practice of reading aloud, of literacy as a public performance.[83] Bredehoft envisages that speaking object inscriptions in a community of limited literacy may have functioned in this way: there was a general understanding by those who could not read that an inscription was meaningful and could be voiced, and those who could not decipher the inscription usually had access to someone who could read out the inscription, give it voice. That is, there were pockets of literate individuals who acted as interpreters and facilitators for those around them. It follows that an inscribed object in a community of limited literacy such as Alfred's Wessex imparted its message to most people orally. The inscriptions on larger monumental inscribed objects like the Ruthwell Cross may well have been memorized (sense for sense, rather than word for word) by the population living nearby, so that the inscription became a kind of cultural memory, particularly as people moved around their landscape.[84] People could respond to a text without being able to read it.[85]

Alfred's people were thus attentive to the thing, alert to its possible agency. That alertness stemmed from familiarity with the speaking object, and also drew upon early medieval understanding of texts. There was a peri-performative dimension to listening to text being read aloud, as there was to viewing images. Audience engagement, communal response, shaped the way text was read and understood.[86] Text-bodies could be powerful,

80 Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 158.

81 Okasha, *Hand-list*, 89.

82 Ramey, "Writing Speaks," 342–43.

83 Howe, "Cultural Construction."

84 Bredehoft, "First Person Inscriptions," 103–4.

85 Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 1.

86 Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 67–91; Boulton, "End of the World."

exert an influence. So, when the text-body talked, as the *Pastoral Care* and the *Dialogues* did, the audience was primed to listen and to absorb.

In this chapter, I started the analysis of Alfredian text-bodies by examining early medieval attitudes to the material and relational aspects of sacred texts and texts associated with authoritative religious figures. The early medieval text-body had a power which both religious and secular authorities acknowledged and harnessed. That power extended far beyond the persuasiveness of the meaning of the words written on the page. I then compared the text-bodies of the Alfredian translations with other Anglo-Saxon texts and with Carolingian texts. The difference in materiality is profound—deliberate and therefore meaningful. This comparison was the entry point for a consideration of the assemblage of the Alfredian text-body.

What then constitutes the assemblage which was the Alfredian text-body? Ideology certainly—ideology lay at the core of the Alfredian text-body. Ideology was necessary but not sufficient on its own to achieve the reorientation of Alfred's community back to God and avoid annihilation at the hands of the Vikings. I identified three incorporeal actants which were highly influential in the formation of the Alfredian text-body. The plain text-body, handleable and ready-to-hand, was an important actant. The use of direct speech, by "Alfred" in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and by the text-body in both the *Pastoral Care* and the *Dialogues*, was another actant. Direct speech interacted with the Anglo-Saxon cultural norm of attentiveness to the speaking object. These "pinged off" the early medieval culturally mediated belief in the power of certain text-bodies.

Was the assemblage apt for its persuasive purpose? In its materiality and relationality, the Alfredian text-body was apt to create a levelling effect, to draw king and elites together. It created a sense of shared enterprise, a communal endeavour. That levelling effect was accentuated by the use of the king's first-person voice in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. Skilful use of early medieval and Anglo-Saxon cultural norms increased the likelihood that the audience would pay attention, listen, and absorb the ideology embedded in the text-bodies. The Alfredian text-body was carefully constructed to persuade Alfred's elites to opt in and to act. The text-body's handleability and the incorporation of prefaces which could be used as stand-alone pieces made it flexible for different contexts of collaborative learning, different textual communities. Alfred's people were more likely to listen to, agree with, and act upon the ideology contained in the Alfredian translations as a consequence of the agency of the Alfredian text-body. That agency emerges from the co-functioning of the elements of

Alfredian text-bodies. Alfredian text-bodies were an assemblage of actants which could "dance" with humans.[87]

Human agency has taken a back seat in the present chapter, because I have used assemblage theory, with its flatter ontology. In the next chapter, humans take centre stage, as I use social practice theory to demonstrate that practices of "doing and saying" by Alfred's magnates were powerful drivers of elite acceptance of Alfredian ideology. As with this chapter on text-bodies, I artificially isolate social practices in the lived experience of Alfredian reform, in order to demonstrate how they inculcated acceptance of Alfredian ideology and fostered the ethnic identity of the *Angelcynn*.

87 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 31.

Chapter 6

SOCIAL PRACTICES

ROUTINIZED WAYS OF DOING THINGS

IN THE PREVIOUS chapter, I moved the focus from the formation of Alfredian ideology to the reception of that ideology. I analyzed the Alfredian text-bodies, employing assemblage theory to illuminate their thingly agency, their capacity to do and to bring about. I continue to focus on reception in this chapter, turning to elite behaviour.

New and modified social practices were agential in persuading people to adopt Alfredian ideology. I argue that Alfred astutely modified existing social practices where these would serve his purpose and invented new practices where necessary. I use social practice theory to examine discourse and behaviour, the "doings and sayings" of the West Saxon elites. I focus on particular social practices (education, justice) to identify their constituent parts, and to see how practices "bundled" (exercised recursive patterns of influence and reinforcement on one another).

Materials, competencies, and meanings are the elements of a social practice. Alfredian social practices shared an overarching meaning: the urgent need to reorient the community back to God. Alfredian overarching meaning encompassed much more than religious belief and practice. Becoming a Christian kingdom (again) required that Christian wisdom infuse the governance of the kingdom in pragmatic ways, which had consequences for secular administration and social relationships.

The Alfredian texts constituted new materials for Alfredian social practices (such as the *domboc* in the administration of justice). The vernacular was a new competency for the social practice of education. I do not suggest that Alfred "invented" the use of the vernacular; there is abundant evidence of the use of the vernacular in Mercian manuscript production—the OE *Martyrology* is a good example. The novelty lies in the consistency with which the vernacular was used across a range of texts (including new media, such as the *ASC*) associated with Alfredian reform. The use of the vernacular consistently across important social practices fostered the new identity of the *Angelcynn*. In this way, Alfredian texts, as objects, became sites of "materialised understanding."[1] Materialized understanding is not restricted to

1 Reckwitz, "Status of the 'Material,'" 214.

issues of practicality and use—it may encompass hierarchies, ideologies, or religious beliefs, which are aspects of meaning.[2]

"Alfred" tapped in to long-held foundation myths to represent the Anglo-Saxons as a Chosen People. By virtue of that privileged status, their fall from grace was greater. The Alfredian position differed from Carolingian concepts of divine punishment and the path back to God's favour. In Alfredian ideology, regaining divine approval and protection required much more than private piety or the communal expression of religious beliefs. It required the community to do as well as to say—to put Christian principles into operation.

A social practice is a routinized or habitual way of doing things, but it is not static. Small adjustments may be made without disturbing this taken-for-granted flavour. A major disruption or challenge to a social practice brings the practice from the background into the spotlight. At such times, the practice becomes subject to reflection, discussion, challenge, and assessment. As a result, it either continues unmodified, changes, or dies out.[3] The Alfredian reform agenda constituted just such a challenge—a major shock to the practice of education, a lesser challenge to the administration of justice. During the process of working through a challenge and its repercussions, practices become self-aware behaviours.

Outline of the Argument Applying Social Practice Theory

Alfredian social practices had an overarching meaning which applied to both modified and new social practices. This was the need to reorient back to God, in order to avert threatened annihilation at the hands of the Vikings. Each existing practice had its own more pragmatic or established meaning, but this overarching meaning formed the lens through which social practices were viewed and the framework against which the conduct of social practices was assessed and modified. Alfredian meaning, the impetus to action, was intended to percolate through all aspects of the community, including the pragmatic and the secular. Social practices would be modified so that they aligned with this fundamental goal. This is *how* Alfred's people would reorient themselves back to God: through personal piety and religious observance, no doubt, but also, critically, by adjusting their behaviour and values through routinized ways of doing things.

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2 Rinkinen, Jalas, and Shove, "Object Relations," 871.

3 Schatzki, "Practice Theory as Flat Ontology," 39–40; Spaargaren, Lamers, and Weenink, "Introduction," 10.

It is notable that this remedy was not narrowly focused on greater expression of private individual piety or the public demonstration of religious observance through processions of repentance and atonement, or by "continua bonorum operum exhibitione" (the continuous display of good works).[4] In the Alfredian model, the conscious and mindful adoption of Christian values and behaviour would guide and inform practical decisions about day-to-day life, from individual choices to royal policy affecting the entire community. It is worth briefly comparing the Alfredian response with those of the Carolingians, and with Æthelred during the Second Viking Age.

The Carolingians invoked divine aid against external threats—military, famine, or pestilence—with royally mandated programs of additional religious observance.[5] Such observance was conceived as the propitiation of an angry God. The Frankish clergy traditionally characterized natural disasters and military setbacks as punishment for the sinfulness of the Frankish people. God's retribution did not fall any more heavily on the Frankish people than other communities, and the remedy was universal. For example, the capitulary of Pitres, 862, blamed the sins of the Franks for current "tumults" and "terrible calamities" and called for the people to return to God and believe.[6] Simon Coupland argues that such piety—"repentance and renewed devotion"—did not rule out more practical measures, such as defensive works.[7] However, it is clear that Alfred's call for action was qualitatively different from the remedy prescribed by the Frankish clergy. Although both solutions had the relationship between the people and their God at their core, Alfred's solution extended far beyond the expression of religious conviction to the secular world of administration of the kingdom, to the good governance of social relationships within the political hierarchy.

Alfred's own piety and asceticism, which Asser records in some detail, and Alfred's close reliance on the advice of his coterie of clerical advisors, would have made it easy for him to follow the Carolingian example. Alfred's insistence on a more radical solution may have been grounded in his conception of the English as a Chosen People. Coupland argues that the Franks did not regard themselves as singled out for divine retribution.[8]

The response of English kings in the Second Viking Age, notably Edgar and Æthelred, had more in common with the Carolingian response than

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4 S 911.

5 Keynes, "An Abbot," 185–86; McCormick, "Liturgy of War," 7.

6 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 38n57.

7 Coupland, "Rod of God's Wrath," 539.

8 Coupland, "Rod of God's Wrath," 539.

Alfred's.[9] During Æthelred's reign, renewed Viking attacks were first interpreted as divine anger at the king's treatment of the church, but later reinterpreted to encompass the sins of the general population.[10] Godden argues that successive drafts of Wulfstan's famous *Sermo ad Anglos* demonstrate a shift from an apocalyptic millennial explanation for the Viking attacks to an emphasis on divine punishment for the particular sins of the English, as a recalcitrant Chosen People.[11] English diagnosis continued to focus on their special relationship with God, but the prescribed response became more closely aligned with the Carolingian remedy.

Alfred's prescribed remedy was thus quite different from other responses to the Viking menace, although that threat was consistently interpreted by the Anglo-Saxons as a sign of divine wrath. To acquire and practise Christian wisdom required a realignment of certain social practices. This realignment meant that in carrying out those practices, *through their behaviour*, Alfred's people were turning their faces back to God. The changes wrought by Alfredian ideology are perhaps clearest and most profound in relation to education and justice.

I will deal with each of these practices in turn, looking at materials and competencies. These may not have been the only social practices modified during Alfred's reform program, but they are the most easily identified on the available evidence. It is logical to allow for the possibility that other social practices were utilized, without significant modification. One example is the existing social practice of fosterage, which was apt for Alfred's aims, and was probably therefore harnessed without adjustment. Alfredian reform may have been inculcated in ways which we cannot now discern.

Having considered the social practices in turn, I will consider the way in which these practices were bundled together—how they interacted with and reinforced each other. Bundling practices together helped to bring the Alfredian community into being. As people imbibed Alfredian ideology and acted in accordance with it, they self-identified and identified themselves to others as members of the Alfredian community. Communal identity was performed by participating in the various practices and observing others participate. These practices interlinked to amplify their shared meaning.

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9 IV Edgar, 962–63; VII Æthelred, probably 1009: *EHD*, no. 41, 434–37; no. 45, 447–48, respectively.

10 Roach, "Apocalypse and Atonement"; Roach, "Penitential Discourse," 268–69.

11 Godden, "Millennium, Time."

Alfredian Reform of Education: An Overview

Alfredian reform of education was complex and multi-layered. The first complication is that Alfred did not confine his reforms to formal education. Educating the young was not his sole or indeed his immediate objective, as the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* makes clear. In the Prose Preface, "Alfred" makes the following plea:

> Ond forðon ic ðe bebiode ðæt ðu do swa ic geliefe ðæt ðu wille, ðæt ðu ðe ðissa woruldðinga to ðæm geæmetige swæ ðu oftost mæge, ðæt ðu ðone wisdom ðe ðe God sealde ðær ðær ðu hiene befæsten mæge, befæste. Geðenc hwelc witu us ða becomon for ðisse worulde, ða ða we hit nohwæðer ne selfe ne lufodon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lefdon: ðone naman ænne we lufodon ðatte we Cristne wæren, ond swiðe feawe ða ðeawas.
>
> (And therefore I direct you to do as I believe you would like, to disengage yourself from these worldly concerns as often as you can, with the aim of applying the understanding which God bestowed on you wherever you can apply it. Think what punishments plagued us before all the world when we neither loved it ourselves nor passed it down to other people: we loved the name alone of being Christians, and very few loved the practices.)[12]

The Preface called for the (re)acquisition and application of Christian wisdom through a process of lifelong learning and reflection—by the bishops to whom this text was sent, but also by the secular elites. It appears in the Preface well before the proposal to translate "sum bec ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne" (certain books—those most essential for all people to know) into the vernacular for formal study by the young as part of their education. Alfred targeted first the men he needed to be wise right now, the day-to-day leaders of his community, and then the youth who would be the next generation of councillors.

What is commonly called (perhaps infelicitously) "Alfredian education reform" thus had a dual focus, targeting two very different groups. Alfred's call for the acquisition and application of Christian wisdom, *sapientia*, applied to both his existing councillors and the youths still being fostered and educated. Describing the task at hand for his adult advisors as "education" is inapposite; this was a group of people who had left behind the formal structures of learning and were active participants in the administration of the kingdom. Insofar as his councillors were concerned, Alfred instituted a new social practice which I call "lifelong learning." It was a new social practice because it involved a distinct set of people, less formal or institutional

12 *Pastoral Care*, 4–7.

methodology, and different settings from education. However, there were overlaps. The same new competency, literacy in the vernacular, was used in the new practice of lifelong learning and substantially supplanted Latin in the existing practice of education. New materials, the Alfredian texts, were used in both practices. My analysis starts with the new practice of lifelong learning, before turning to the existing social practice of education. I then examine the areas of overlap between the two: competency (literacy in the vernacular) and materials (the Alfredian texts).

The New Social Practice of Lifelong Learning

The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* makes it clear that the aim of lifelong learning is Christian wisdom applicable to daily life—practical, not esoteric, knowledge. The Preface also makes it clear that lifelong learning is not a discrete task, to be set aside once completed. Lifelong learning is much more like a compass, to be used constantly to reassess direction and adjust values and behaviours. The idea of lifelong learning as a compass resonates with the Alfredian concept of the *modes eagan* explicated in the OE *Soliloquies*. Lifelong learning was conceived as an instrument—not an end in itself, but a mechanism.

Asser tells us that Alfred explicitly linked the capacity to read to continued *secular* office-holding. The king's rebuke to incompetent judges focuses on the acquisition and application of wisdom:

> Nimium admiror vestram hanc insolentiam, eo quod, Dei dono et meo, sapientium ministerium et gradus usurpastis, sapientiae autem studium et operam neglexistis. Quapropter aut terrenarum potestatum ministeria, quae habetis, illico dimittatis, aut sapientiae studiis multo devotius docere ut studeatis impero.[13]
>
> (I am astonished at this arrogance of yours [he said], since through God's authority and my own you have enjoyed the office and status of wise men, yet you have neglected the study and application of wisdom. For that reason, I command you either to relinquish immediately the offices of worldly power that you possess, or else to apply yourselves much more attentively to the pursuit of wisdom.)[14]

It is clear from Asser's depiction that for Alfred good decision-making stemmed from *sapientia*, which Wormald describes as "sensitivity to the

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13 Asser, chap. 106.

14 K & L, 110. The words in square brackets are my interpolation.

mind of God."[15] The insistence that wisdom was essential to good administration is of course a central tenet of Alfredian ideology—it is both the way in which to turn yourself to God and the consequence of doing so. Alfred's demand that his secular officials meet this standard provides strong support for the argument that the *Pastoral Care*, particularly its Prefaces, was intended to have a far wider circulation than his bishops.

Asser's vignette also suggests how others may have utilized Alfredian learning, using texts as anchor points. In the process, they both self-identified and identified themselves to others as members of the Alfredian community. Alfred's rebuke was for a failure to make judicial decisions guided by Christian wisdom. It is a reasonable assumption that this rebuke, and others like it, were publicly given—a salutary warning to other officials. Those holding lucrative offices would no doubt strive to avoid incurring the king's displeasure. It is therefore logical to suppose that when legal disputes were aired, or appropriate outcomes discussed between those administering justice, the Alfredian texts might be brought out. Particular passages might be read out, to illuminate the guiding principles of lordship, of loyalty, of oath-giving. This was how one pleased the king, how one demonstrated the skill set he required.

Alfred's emphasis on reading as a means to an end is consistent with his own path to wisdom, which I discussed in chapter 4. If reading was simply beyond an ealdorman, Alfred commanded that someone be found in his household who could read aloud to him, and would do so assiduously:

> Sed si aliquis litteralibus studiis aut pro senio vel etiam pro nimia inusitati ingenii tarditate proficere non valeret, suum, si haberet, filium, aut etiam aliquem propinquum suum, vel etiam, si aliter non habeat, suum proprium hominem, liberum vel servum, quem ad lectionem longe ante promoverat, libros ante se die nocteque, quandocunque unquam ullam haberet licentiam, Saxonicos imperabat recitare.[16]
>
> (But if one of them—either because of his age or the unresponsive nature of his unpractised intelligence—was unable to make progress in learning to read, the king commanded the man's son (if he had one) or some relative of his, or even (if he had no one else) a man of his own—whether freeman or slave—whom he had caused to be taught to read long before, to read out books in English to him by day and night, or whenever he had the opportunity.)[17]

15 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 122; Hudson, *Laws of England*, 17.

16 Asser, chap. 106.

17 K & L, 110.

Being read aloud to was not necessarily a stop-gap measure. Reading aloud, and listening to texts being read aloud, were conventional Anglo-Saxon ways of accessing text-based knowledge. Bede's prefatory address to King Ceolwulf, at the start of his *Ecclesiastical History*, refers to those "who listen to or read this history."[18] The Verse Preface to the *OE Boethius* records that Alfred had a great desire to "leoð spellode" (proclaim verse) and bids the audience "Hliste se þe wille" (Let him listen who will).[19] Æthelweard expressly refers to the *OE Boethius* as a text with two distinct audiences, readers and listeners.[20] Asser is clear that even when Alfred had learned to read, his preference was to read aloud and be read to aloud; Alfred assimilated wisdom orally/aurally.[21] O'Brien O'Keeffe describes this as a "corporate process" of using books: reception comprised both listening and reading.[22]

The way in which texts were accessed, their contents comprehended and absorbed, is significant. The interaction of reading with listening by an audience likely magnified the persuasive reach of the Alfredian texts in both extent and effect. This is because reading aloud to an audience is an interactive experience.[23] For example, heroic poetry "socialized" its audience through "the interaction between the work itself, the oral performance, and the neurological processes of its audiences."[24] As Peter Richardson puts it, "Anglo-Saxon poems script, and do not merely reflect, far-reaching social processes."[25] The social context of shared experience, the gathering together to read and to listen, might well have amplified engagements with the Alfredian texts.[26] Mutually focused attention can generate solidarity and alignment to a common goal.[27] In the early medieval period, collective aristocratic behaviour was a social norm.[28]

Modern researchers suggest that an individual's reactions can be influenced by psychological identification with a group; a sense of collective

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18 *HE*, bk. 3.

19 *Boethius*, 4–5.

20 Campbell, *Chronicle of Aethelweard*, s.a. 899, p. 51; O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Listening to the Scenes," 36.

21 O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Visible Song*, 84.

22 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Listening to the Scenes," 21–22.

23 Chartier, *The Order of Books*, 3–4; Amsler, *Affective Literacies*, 102.

24 Fay, *Materializing Englishness*, 147–48; Donoghue, *How the Anglo-Saxons*, 6.

25 Richardson, "Making Thanes," 216.

26 Raine, "Emotional Communities," 65–66.

27 Collins, *Interaction Ritual Chains*, 7.

28 Reuter, "Nobles and Others," 115; Barton, "Emotions and Power," 48.

identity can result in responses by an individual which privilege the well-being of the group.[29] They label this phenomenon "ingroup identification"—the self-association of an individual with a group based upon shared traits or values. Ben Raffield explores the significance of ingroup identification on the cohesion and behaviour of Viking forces in Britain.[30] Raffield identifies material markers of group identity, oath-taking, and shared ideologies as cohering elements in Viking war-bands. Ellora Bennett uses ingroup identification to analyze the construction of different kinds of enemies in early medieval England, focusing on the construction of group identity and the delineation of Otherness in the written record.[31]

The theories of ingroup identification, discourse communities, and social practices share an interest in the mechanisms of group cohesion—the ways in which members demonstrate that they belong, and delineate those who are excluded from the group. Social practice theory offers an explanation for how this process of orientation occurs. In chapter 1, I discussed the ongoing calibration which brings about alignment between practitioners. Mentoring, praise, the earning of respect and influence all act to channel an individual into accepted patterns of conduct and to normalize the meaning of the practice—why things are done the way they are done.

The practice of reading in early medieval religious houses provides a good example of calibration in social practices. Listening to texts being read aloud and learning to read by reading aloud was an integral part of learning in monastic environments. Micol Long argues that "shared reading" was a social process which gradually inculcated newcomers into the monastic community through social interaction: "imitation, reciprocal correction and exhortation, and participation in shared activities."[32] There are social dynamics at play in the way that texts, read aloud in a group, are accessed, discussed, and absorbed. In a textual community, a group of people associate voluntarily in a social activity which revolves around the dissemination and comprehension of a text; in this case, the Alfredian texts. The textual community is constructed from the process of comprehending the script, by the common understanding of the text, and by the changes in behaviour and values which are driven by that communal interpretation of the text and its voluntary adoption. Interpretation of selected texts thus gives rise to a

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29 Mackie, Silver, and Smith, "Intergroup Emotions," 228–30.

30 Raffield, "Bands of Brothers"; Raffield et al., "Ingroup Identification."

31 Bennett, "Construction of the Enemy."

32 Long, "Monastic Practices," 504.

social entity, whose members self-identify and act in accordance with commonly held beliefs and rules.

Reading aloud, and listening to texts being read aloud, was a cultural norm which endured beyond the *schola*. Reading aloud and listening to texts being read aloud remained a communal activity, even at the highest echelons. Passages from Augustine's *City of God* were read aloud each night to Charlemagne and his companions, according to Einhard.[33] Group reading was customary within Alfred's court circle.[34] These portrayals of Charlemagne and Alfred were doubtless intended to emphasize their piety. We have no means of knowing the degree to which the practices ascribed to these two exceptional kings by their biographers extended down the social hierarchy after formal education concluded. However, there is evidence that elite families, including fostered youths, listened to the head of the household read aloud from the *Lives* of saints, or from sermons.[35] As a child, Alfred listened to poems recited by others, and memorized them.[36] The *Dialogues*, the *OE Bede*, and the *ASC* would have been suitable choices as reading material—easy to read out loud in discrete sections, and easy to follow. Waite notes that there are features of the *OE Bede* which suggest that the text was adapted so that it could be read aloud to a non-literate audience.[37] As Godden points out, it is hard to see why Alfred would choose to translate texts unless he intended to make them available to those who were not already sufficiently educated to access them in Latin.[38]

MS Hatton 20 provides some evidence for Alfredian texts being read aloud. Hatton 20 contains emendations to the Preface, attributed to the homilist Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester (1002–1023). The rhetorical nature of the emendations ramped up the commentary, providing greater theatrical flair. Wulfstan also made amendments to the punctuation of the text which facilitated reading the text aloud.[39] Together, these changes suggest that the Preface was read aloud to an audience even long after Alfred's reign.

I have argued that Alfred was not in a position to coerce his ealdormen; that he had to persuade them. Persuasion can encompass deterrents, the consequences of bad choices, as well as incentives and rewards

33 Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, chap. 24, in Noble, *Charlemagne*, 42.

34 Asser, chap. 77; O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Orality and Literacy," 131.

35 Treharne, "Textual Communities," 347.

36 Asser, chaps. 22, 23.

37 Waite, "OE *Bede*: Some Reflections," 152.

38 Godden, "Alfredian Prose," 146.

39 Graham, "Opening of King Alfred's Preface," 46.

for good choices. Pleasing the king was important to those who sought worldly honour, wealth, and influence—and the king's displeasure could be a spur to action. Asser's description of Alfred's technique (albeit in the context of fortification work) is instructive. Alfred first "gently instructed," then "cajoled, urged, commanded," and finally "sharply chastised those who were disobedient."[40] Alfred's ultimate threat was to remove the recalcitrant individual from office, a sanction with severe practical consequences.[41] Asser records recalcitrant noblemen being both "terrified and chastened," and struggling to learn to read to avoid that penalty. Sally Crawford puts it neatly: Alfred obliged "mature noblemen and experienced soldiers to join their children at the school bench, much to their discomfort."[42]

Asser's comments suggest that probably the majority of Alfred's elites did voluntarily comply with the king's wishes and did meet his expectations—at least to a minimum acceptable standard. There are two aspects to this—carrot and stick. The carrot was the potential for reward—for the king's approval and favour. Early medieval nobility, insular or Continental, were intensely competitive.[43] The stick—the threat of removal from office—was doubtless used sparingly. Had the threat of removal from lucrative office hung over the heads of too many prominent men, unrest would have been likely. If some ealdormen complied, the rest probably followed. This has implications for the evolving relationship between Alfred and his principal men. Power can be located and reinforced in the interplay of social discourse.[44]

Compliance with Alfred's wishes, even if not to the fullest extent desired by the king, demonstrated royal power and consolidated an asymmetrical relationship between Alfred and his elites. Alfredian ideology mandated just such an asymmetry. In complying with Alfred's wishes, Alfred's ealdormen shifted the balance of political power in Alfred's favour. The person who controls ideology wields ideological power—the capacity to mould behaviour and actions to his own benefit. Again, there are parallels across the Channel, as the Frankish nobility publicly performed relations of power with their ruling dynasty and assessed each other's performances. Collective aristocratic behaviour in the Carolingian context cemented horizontal bonds of

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40 Asser, chap. 91.

41 Asser, chap. 106; Abels, "Devolution of Bookland," 222.

42 Crawford, *Childhood*, 145.

43 Airlie, "Aristocracy," 431; Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 102.

44 Barton, "Emotions and Power," 43, 56; Diggelmann, "Slime of Vice," 109.

collective aristocratic identity as well as the vertical bonds reaching up the hierarchy.[45]

Alfred also needed to ensure that the next generation of councillors became attuned to Christian wisdom, as well as his existing councillors. Moulding youths, those still being formally taught, was a matter of manipulating the existing social practice of education.

Modifying the Existing Social Practice of Education

Formal learning, the learning of one's letters and the curriculum of antiquity, had tended to be regarded with suspicion by the aristocracy in the early medieval period. Such learning was associated with clerical values, which did not align with the values of the warrior class. Too much learning was seen as inimical to the proper business of an aristocrat, which was fighting and the pursuit of treasure and status.[46] Although Augustine started a school at Canterbury, it was principally for the purpose of providing education for recruits for the cathedral at Christ Church and the monastery of Saints Peter and Paul.[47]

Aidan, at the monastery cathedral of Lindisfarne, was training boys in the mid-sixth century. There were schools whose reputations shone very brightly: the school established in the late seventh century by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, and his colleague Hadrian, for example, and York in the later eighth century under the aegis of Ælberht and then Alcuin.[48] The great schools were normally attached to cathedrals, such as York and Christ Church, or monasteries such as Whitby, Melrose, and Malmesbury.[49] Gradually, the church institutions began to train boys for roles outside the church, for secular as well as clerical careers. Wilfrid of York was a notable example of a bishop content to train youths for secular as well as clerical careers.[50] Equally, boys intended for a career in the church might receive their early education fostered in the households of lay magnates.[51] It seems that the heads of fostering households had a wide discretion in encouraging their charges into secular or clerical pathways. The absence of clearly demarcated

45 Airlie, *Making and Unmaking*, 123–25.

46 Airlie, "Aristocracy," 431; Wormald, "Uses of Literacy," 105.

47 Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 18.

48 Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 22.

49 Godden, "Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England," 584; Barrow, *Clergy*, 181–83.

50 Farmer, "Eddius Stephanus," 130; Crawford, *Childhood*, 132.

51 Barrow, *Clergy*, 161.

spheres of influence reflects the extent to which the aristocracy monopolized the higher echelons of the church, and the church's increasing involvement in secular politics. It also suggests a communal approach to the education of the aristocratic young.

Alfred was not the first Anglo-Saxon king to value formal learning. Bede admired Aldfrith of Northumbria, and sent Ceolwulf both a draft and final version of his *Ecclesiastical History*. Alcuin commended Offa of Mercia for his commitment to teaching the young, a compliment perhaps elicited by Offa's request to Alcuin to provide him with one of his scholars as a suitable tutor.[52] While we have evidence for some schools, and for some level of education, Susan Kelly makes the point that we have insufficient evidence to assess either the quality of the education or the degree of access to it.[53]

Asser refers to Alfred instituting a *schola*, which Donald Bullough argues was probably modelled on the *scholae* of the Merovingian kings or those of early medieval bishops.[54] This appears to have been novel for the West Saxon court. Asser's description of Alfred as "illiteratus," which may have signified either an inability to read Latin, or an inability to read altogether, suggests that Alfred's father and grandfather did not set much store by formal learning.[55] According to Asser, Alfred bemoaned his lack of education, and encouraged particularly his younger children in their scholarship.[56] Presumably the boys who were being fostered in Alfred's *familia* also attended that school. Asser likewise tells us that the ealdormen forced to learn to read as mature adults lamented that they had had no opportunity to do so as youths, when the task would have been easier.[57]

Asser tells us that the king took a keen interest in the education of the young at the court school, providing tutelage in both literacy and virtuous conduct.[58] There is a parallel with Charlemagne here, too. The value Charlemagne placed on the political training of the young was matched by the interest he took in their formal learning. While he praised endeavour, Charlemagne also punished, using righteous anger and public humiliation of the slothful.[59] Charlemagne explicitly tied compliance with his commands and

52 *EHD*, no. 195, 846–47; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 26.

53 Kelly, "Lay Society," 59.

54 Bullough, "Educational Tradition," 298.

55 Asser, chap. 22; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 34.

56 Asser, chaps. 75, 76, 102.

57 Asser, chap. 106.

58 Asser, chap. 76.

59 Notker, *Deeds of Emperor Charles*, bk. 1, chap. 3; Noble, *Charlemagne*, 61.

diligent study with both emotional and material rewards. It is significant that Charlemagne used the public expression of his own response to excoriate and to laud: it sent the message that pleasing the king was paramount. Education at the king's court had a pragmatic political purpose. Those favoured with an education, who responded well, could expect to become the king's councillors, leading men in the kingdom.

The existing Anglo-Saxon practice of education had aspects which were apt for Alfred's purpose. The youths lucky enough to receive an education were a small cohort already being trained to consider themselves a cohesive group, and equally being trained that pleasing their king brought honour, prestige, and material rewards. Education was provided in a communal context of learning which would tend to amplify individual engagement with Alfredian understanding and attunement. In order to harness the potential of the existing social practice of education, Alfred introduced a new competency, literacy in the vernacular, and new materials, the Alfredian texts. These competencies were shared with the social practice of lifelong learning.

A New Competency: Literacy in the Vernacular

In the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*, "Alfred" justified his choice of the vernacular on the grounds that the standard of Latinity had sunk pitifully low. Latinity had languished in England—just how far it had deteriorated is still the subject of academic debate.[60] Alfred did not discard Latin; it remained the language of higher ecclesiastical study.[61] Rather, he rejected the bifurcation which relegated the vernacular languages to a secondary status within the Christian kingdoms on the Continent. Alfred's decision to make the vernacular the language of his "education reform" was without precedent. Other European communities would not use their vernacular languages in this way for another two centuries.[62]

In relation to both adults and youths, Alfred's use of the vernacular was, on one level, utterly pragmatic. In a community with low standards of literacy, using the vernacular meant that efforts could be focused on teaching practical literacy in order to acquire and apply wisdom, rather than adding

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60 Insley, "Archives," 340–41; Morrish, "King Alfred's Letter."

61 Schreiber, *Alfred's OE Translation*, 195; Treharne, "Textual Comunities," 341–42. Gallagher suggests that Latin may have been seen as a skill relevant to secular leadership by ambitious individuals: Gallagher, "Writing Latin," 93–94.

62 Richardson, "Making Thanes," 215; Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 405.

the burden of acquiring competency in Latin first. It may also be that Alfred chose the vernacular because he could not find enough teachers competent in Latin. In the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*, Alfred's comment, "Gode ælmihtegum sie ðonc ðætte we nu ænigne onstal habbað lareowa" (Thanks be to almighty God that we now have any fund of teachers), certainly suggests a dearth of Latinate teachers.[63] This may partially explain his decision not to follow the Carolingian example of educational renewal through the promotion of Latinity.[64]

While pragmatism was doubtless a consideration, there were powerful political reasons to choose the vernacular. The choice of the vernacular, rather than Latin, gave greater scope to select and manipulate the texts which would comprise the core of both education and lifelong learning. Literacy is a culturally contingent process, in which "socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes."[65] Alfred's aim was to fuse the different peoples he ruled into a cohesive community focused on a specific goal, and the use of the vernacular as the vehicle for lifelong learning and education was a potent tool to achieve that. While the use of the vernacular was certainly expedient, its significance extended far beyond mere utility. The vernacular was more than a useful mechanism, because language is not simply a mechanism.

Language is intrinsically embedded in social relations; language, culture, and society are mutually constitutive.[66] Language is a form of social action; people do things with words.[67] Language is not a mere conduit; language can be used to construct relationships and identity.[68] Language can create, as well as reflect, a community, because a shared language can create a bond of similarity sufficiently strong to mask other differences within a social group.[69] Language is both malleable and ubiquitous, and therefore often manipulated in the production of social identity.[70]

In using the vernacular as the language of both lifelong learning and education, the language which would assist the kingdom to return to God's

63 *Pastoral Care*, 4–5.

64 Ullmann, *Carolingian Renaissance*, 8–12; Contreni, "Pursuit of Knowledge," 106–41.

65 Amsler, *Affective Literacies*, 101.

66 Ahearn, "Language and Agency," 110.

67 Morgan, "Speech Community," 5; Duranti, "Agency in Language," 459.

68 Ahearn, "Language and Agency," 110; Morgan, "Speech Community," 4.

69 Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity," 371; Ahearn, "Language and Agency," 111.

70 Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity," 369.

favour, the vernacular became imbued with power.[71] The use of the vernacular in all of the Alfredian texts meant that the power of the texts remained associated with the sole language in which they were disseminated; there was no fragmentation of authority. Ethnographic evidence demonstrates that authoritative speech, speech in a style or language that reflects power, has the capacity to create as well as to reflect reality, because it is more convincing and better heeded.[72] The *ASC*, a new genre recounting the history of the Anglo-Saxons as a Chosen People, was in the vernacular. This made the *ASC* more accessible to a wider audience. However, the use of the vernacular had a deeper impact, in the relationship between what was said, the language in which it was said, and other important texts being produced in the same language.

The increased authority and status of the vernacular can be seen in its increased use as the language of record. I do not suggest that before Alfred, Anglo-Saxon documents were only recorded in Latin.[73] Æthelberht of Kent's law code was issued in the vernacular.[74] The vernacular was sporadically used in some documents, occasionally in important legal documents like wills and leases, from the seventh century onwards.[75] However, even allowing for the vagaries of the preservation of evidence, the breadth and extent of the surviving corpus of documents written in the vernacular by the end of the Alfredian period demonstrates that, over the period, the vernacular became a language of legitimation.[76]

I suggested earlier that there may be a place for the *OE Orosius* and the *OE Bede* in the Alfredian canon, if authorship is conceived as corporate, rather than individual. These two translations may have been produced as part of a highly decentralized drive to produce texts consistent with Alfredian ideology, with considerable latitude allowed to those actually producing texts. If so, they attest to a shared understanding of the importance of using the vernacular. If, on the other hand, these texts were produced entirely independently of the king, then they speak to an embedding of the use of the vernacular beyond the king's ability to impose such use. That in turn implies a fundamental acceptance of the authority of the vernacular as an appropri-

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71 Discenza, "Writing the Mother Tongue," 52.

72 Philips, "Language and Social Inequality," 475–76.

73 Godden, "Why Did the English."

74 *HE*, bk. 2, chap. 5.

75 Kelly, "Lay Society," 54; Godden, "Literacy," 586; Keynes, "Alfred and the Kingdom," 31–32.

76 Treharne, "Textual Comunities," 344.

ate language for the study of history and historiography.[77] The rise of the use of the vernacular in a context of scholarship reflects the vernacular's increased status and value within the Alfredian community. As with many cultural phenomena, the link between use and status is recursive.

The use, or the availability, of the vernacular throughout and across all levels of Alfred's kingdom (notwithstanding the continued use of Latin by the higher ecclesiastical echelons) provided a mechanism for people to perceive themselves as alike, and as part of a social group. Social groups do not form on the basis of a pre-existing, objectively identifiable uniformity, but rather coalesce as a function of emphasizing the importance of similarity.[78] Étienne Wenger and Jean Lave coined the phrase "communities of practice" to describe the interaction between learning, knowledge, and meaning; active participation in communities of practice gives rise to a communal identity.[79]

The idea of a community of practice is useful in the Alfredian context because its salient identifying feature is shared practice, not physical proximity (co-presence) or abstract characteristics like gender and class. A community of practice shares features of social practices generally—in particular, the affirmation of the practice's meaning, values, and worldviews based upon shared experiences over time. Community of practice is a conceptual tool most frequently used by sociolinguists, who study the links between language and identity.[80] Those responsible for the production of the *ASC* would likewise have constituted a community of practice—performing a common identity through the actions of compiling and circulating the chronicle.[81]

The scale of the communities involved in the extended use of the vernacular in Alfred's community is obviously far greater, and the bonds between them far more attenuated, than the close circle of collaborators involved in the production of the Alfredian texts. What I want to highlight here is the acknowledged link between a change in the use of language and the construction of identity. The consistent use of the vernacular helped to forge a sense of common identity. Group identity is constructed, not found; it emerges from interaction, from "motivated social achievement."[82] Identity

77 Magennis, *Cambridge Introduction*, 110; Godden, "The *OE Orosius*," 9–10.

78 Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity," 371.

79 Wenger, *Communities of Practice*.

80 Eckert, "Communities of Practice," 683; Jucker and Kopaczyk, "Communities of Practice."

81 Fay, *Materializing Englishness*, 76.

82 Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity," 383.

can be reiterated and confirmed with the use—the performance—of language across multiple settings.[83] This is a concept Timofeeva has explored in relation to the Alfredian reform program: the use of language as a marker of group identity, facilitating self-identification with a group of like-minded individuals (a discourse community) and subtly excluding those who do not use language the same way.[84] Rutger Kramer uses the concept of discourse communities in his study of Louis the Pious's reign.[85] Máire Ní Mhaonaigh and Elizabeth Tyler have drawn attention to the investment and institutional support required to develop the vernacular as a written language in this period. The rise of the vernacular in a community was not accidental; there was a close connection between language and the agendas of leaders.[86]

The kingdom which Alfred inherited had been extended by his grandfather, uncles, and father beyond the West Saxon core, to include areas over which Mercia had previously hegemony, in East Anglia and Kent. The West Saxon kings were alert to the sensibilities of the different *gentes* they ruled. Alfredian ideology required old regional identities to be subsumed (but not extinguished) in the new identity of the *Angelcynn*. The use of the Anglo-Saxon vernacular as the language of authority across Alfred's extended community was thus apt to help that extended community to cohere over time. The use of a single, common language downplayed the differences between different subgroups, and assisted in the construction of a group identity. The Alfredian texts, written in the vernacular, assisted that process.

New Materials: The Books "most essential for all people to know"

"Alfred" never claimed to have exclusive control over access to Christian wisdom. Indeed, in the Preface to the *Soliloquies* traditionally attributed to Alfred, he encouraged others to seek out wisdom for themselves, beyond his efforts to supply it. The Preface contains an extended metaphor of gaining wisdom as the process of cutting wood from the forest to build a house:

> Forþam ic lære ælcne ðara þe maga si and manigne wæn hæbbe, þæt he menige to þam ilcan wuda þar ic ðas stuðansceaftas cearf. Fetige hym þar ma and gefeðrige hys wænas mid fegrum gerdum…

83 Bucholtz and Hall, "Language and Identity," 381.

84 Timofeeva, "Sociolinguistic Concepts"; Timofeeva, "*Ledenum bocum*."

85 Kramer, *Rethinking Authority*, 45.

86 Mhaonaigh and Tyler, "Language of History-Writing," 7–8.

> (Therefore I urge everyone who is strong and has many wagons to turn his intentions toward that same forest where I cut the support beams. There, let him fetch more for himself and load up his wagons with handsome branches...)[87]

While Christian wisdom could be accessed independently, easy access—and perhaps less wriggle-room for the lazy and the reluctant—was provided through the Alfredian translations.

Alfred did not need to provide a large corpus of materials, given the way that he had learned, and expected others to learn. Texts were to be used to spark discussion and debate, rather than for deep and detailed solitary reading. Within the context of formal education, the Alfredian texts (and particularly the various prefaces) were useful tools to teach practical skills, such as reading, reading aloud, and writing. Used that way, as tools to teach skills, the Alfredian ideology which was embedded in the texts could be transmitted, discussed, and absorbed.

Reading aloud and memorization were fundamental components of the process of education in antiquity and into the early medieval period.[88] Reading aloud constituted a "double reception" by those who read and those who heard.[89] According to Asser, Alfred's first venture into the world of literacy was his memorization of a book of "Saxon" poetry, rote learned with the help of his tutor, in order to claim the book for his own.[90] Asser's description of how Alfred came to literacy certainly fits with what we know of early education practices in this period.

It may be that parts of the Alfredian texts, especially the prefaces and epilogues, were read aloud to pupils, as an incentive to learning. Parts of the texts, again, perhaps the prefaces, may have been read aloud by pupils as part of the process of learning to read, and learning the skill of reading aloud. The prefaces are discursive in tone, informative and persuasive without being intellectually heavy. The introduction to the *OE Boethius*, with its stirring historical narrative of the just consul resisting royal tyranny, would have made good reading material for a classroom. Johnson suggests that the OE translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* would have been suitable for school exercises in reading, copying, and memorizing, as the text was a series of entertaining and lively narratives, albeit with a suitably Christian flavour.[91]

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87 *Soliloquies*, 182–83.

88 Kelly, "Lay Society," 61; Parkes, "*Ræden, Areccan*," 8.

89 Chinca and Young, "Orality and Literacy," 7; Schaefer, "Hearing from Books," 117.

90 Asser, chap. 23.

91 Johnson, "Gregory's Dialogues," 173.

It is reasonable to assume that there would have been discussion within the classroom, had the Alfredian texts been used in this way. Long argues for an interactive, rather than passive, process of learning, citing Bede and Gregory the Great.[92] The latter, in his letter to Leander, Bishop of Seville, characterizes his exposition of biblical text to his fellow monks as a dialogue in which his students are actively engaged in the discussion.[93]

A *schola* was also a textual community. Texts read aloud by the teacher to the class, or by a pupil to his cohort, would be likely to evoke a communal response in such a small, close-knit group. There is ample evidence for learning as a communal activity in which the pupils themselves assisted each other in the learning process, through practice and peer correction.[94] Long points to Alcuin's *Dialogue of the Frank and the Saxon*, and Ælfric Bata's *Colloquies*, as Anglo-Saxon examples.[95]

The Alfredian prefaces and epilogues could be accessed independently of the works they framed, as discrete texts. There is no evidence that they circulated independently of the translations—but they were of a length and style which made them a useful resource in contexts of learning to read. In Hatton 20 and Tiberius B XI, Alfred's prefaces are written on separate bifolia, physically distinguishing them from the main text.[96] Reading aloud these attractively phrased short pieces might well have elicited an appropriate willingness and compliance from a group being taught the importance of pleasing their king and treasure-giver, and inculcated a specific identity at the same time.

Lifelong learning and formal education shared certain features—the vernacular, the use of texts as anchor points, and of course, an overarching meaning. These features were also a part of the social practice of the administration of justice.

The Social Practice of the Administration of Justice: An Overview

In Alfred's extended kingdom, there was no apparatus of state to monopolize the administration of justice. Centralized royal control of justice did not

92 Long, "Monastic Practices."

93 Kerns and DelCogliano, *Gregory the Great*, 49–50.

94 Dumitrescu, *Experience of Education*, 77–78, 83; Long, "High Medieval Monasteries," 45–46.

95 Long, "Monastic Practices," 515–17.

96 Irvine, "Alfredian Prefaces," 146, 153.

start to develop until the eleventh century.[97] The judicial system operated in a communal fashion. There were royal officials, reeves, whose job was to ensure that the king received his dues and that feud remained contained. Disputes or accusations were brought before local assemblies and judged by the leading men of the district.

It is clear from the evidence that decisions reached at an assembly were collective decisions. Wormald notes that the verbs used in recording assembly decisions were almost unanimously in the plural, indicating a "participatory and communal" process.[98] The collectivity expressed in these assembly decisions stands in contrast to contemporary practice elsewhere.[99] The deliberate emphasis on communality may have assisted local acceptance of assembly decisions. However, an appeal to the king by a disaffected litigant was possible, for those with wealth or connections.

Asser says explicitly that the king had a practice of scrutinizing decisions made in his absence, as well as reviewing cases referred to him.[100] The Fonthill Letter shows Alfred acting as the ultimate arbiter of disputes, and also, pertinently, that those who initially determined a dispute were required to explain and justify their decision.[101] This confirms Asser's account of *how* the king reviewed judicial decisions, not simply reaching his own conclusions, but asking the decision-makers to justify theirs. Alfred obviously regarded his role in the administration of justice as an integral part of good kingship. Both Asser and the Fonthill Letter place Alfred at the centre of this social practice, with his elites revolving around him. This placement of the king at the heart of justice emphasized both Alfred's right to lead his people and their obligation to obey him.

Alfred modified the social practice of justice by issuing a new law code, his *domboc*. I dealt with the ideology embedded in the *domboc* in chapter 3. The *domboc* constituted new material in the social practice of the administration of justice.

New Material: The *domboc*

The careful description of the consultative process of compiling the code in the Prologue to the *domboc* shows the Alfredian community in action. Here

97 Lambert, *Law and Order*, 163.

98 Wormald, "Charters, Law," 164.

99 Wickham, "Consensus and Assemblies," 416.

100 Asser, chap. 106.

101 *EHD*, no. 102, 544–46.

is the Christian king, motivated by his divinely sanctioned responsibility to guide his people, a role undertaken with due humility, in consultation with his councillors, carefully and advisedly sifting through historical law codes to produce a set of standards for daily living for a Christian community. The following passage is from the "Parker Chronicle" manuscript (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173):

> Ic, ða Ælfred cyning þas togædere gegaderode ond awriten het, monege þara þe ure foregengan heoldon, ða ðe me licodon; ond manege þara þe me ne licodon ic awearp mid minra witena geðeahte, ond on oðre wisan bebead to healdanne. Forðam ic ne dorste geðristlæcan þara minra awuht fela on gewrit settan, forðam me wæs uncuð, hwæt þæs ðam lician wolde ðe æfter us wæren. Ac ða ðe ic gemette awðer oððe on Ines dæge, mines mæges, oððe on Offan Mercna cyninges oððe on Æþelbryhtes, þe ærest fulluhte onfeng on Angelcynne, þa ðe me ryhtoste ðuhton, ic þa heron gegaderode, ond þa oðre forlet.[102]

> (Then I, King Alfred, gathered them together and ordered to be written many of the ones that our forefathers observed—those that pleased me; and many of the ones that did not please me I rejected with the advice of my councillors, and commanded them to be observed in a different way. For I dared not presume to set down in writing at all many of my own, since it was unknown to me what would please those who should come after us. But those which I found either in the days of Ine, my kinsman, or of Offa, king of the Mercians, or of Æthelberht (who first among the English people received baptism), and which seemed to me most just, I collected herein and omitted the others.)[103]

In emphasizing the collaborative nature of lawmaking, Alfred was following in the footsteps of earlier Anglo-Saxon kings and Old Testament exemplars. Both Wihtræd and Ine were careful to record consultation and consensus in the laws they published.[104] Todd Preston puts it concisely: "Kings do not legislate from above their culture, but from within it."[105] Nevertheless, in the explicit description of the process—a description given for the benefit of Alfred's subjects—Alfred is placed firmly at the core of law-making and recording.

102 Preston, *Book of Laws*, 118.

103 K & L, 164.

104 *EHD*, nos. 30 and 31, 396–407; Adair, "Narratives of Authority," 11, 13.

105 Preston, *Book of Laws*, 19.

The *domboc* was "conceived as a written text."[106] The Prologue records that Alfred caused it to be written ("awritan het"), although he did not want to presume to set down many of his own laws, "on gewrit settan," in case those laws did not find favour with those who would come after him. There is debate about the date of the code's production, but modern scholars usually ascribe it to the last part of Alfred's reign.[107] It may be that by this time standards of functional literacy were improving, with Alfredian reform.

The *domboc* contained both black letter and red letter law, so that it operated on a number of different levels. The code articulated a comprehensive theory of justice (red letter law). It then set out concrete rules, and punishments for actions which transgressed those rules (black letter law). The primary concern of the substantive sections of the *domboc* is oath-keeping and loyalty to one's lord, and there are substantial penalties for transgressions.[108] Those substantive provisions correlate with the emphasis in the Prologue to the code on the necessity of loyalty and obedience, and have echoes in the *Pastoral Care* and the *OE Boethius* and *Soliloquies*.[109]

The *domboc* was written in the vernacular, but this was not novel. Bede records that Æthelberht of Kent was the first Anglo-Saxon king to commit his laws to writing, "after the Roman manner," but he did so in the vernacular.[110] There were sound reasons for Alfred to use the vernacular for legislation. According to the Prologue, the code was intended to be universally applied. The vernacular was important for effective dissemination down the political hierarchy. Its use suggests that Alfred intended a wider dissemination than his immediate court circle and principal men, who would have had a better chance of understanding Latin than the participants in the local assemblies where justice was administered to most of the population. Using the vernacular not only assisted the dissemination of the black letter law component, it also meant that the ideology embedded in the Prologue was broadcast in a language which was far more accessible to his people generally than Latin. The use of the vernacular also emphasized the common identity which Alfred was inculcating, even as the *domboc* acknowledged the legacies of different *gentes*. A common language pointed the way forward, to "Englishness."

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106 Keynes, "Royal Government," 231.

107 Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 282; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 219; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 11, contra.

108 Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 306.

109 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 20.

110 *HE*, bk 2, chap. 5.

We can reasonably assume that even if some cases were quite clear-cut, and even if some assemblies were dominated by individuals held in high regard for their sagacity (or their wealth, or their connections), there would have been open discussion as to the appropriate judgment in many cases. This has significance for the dissemination of Alfred's *domboc*: not only for the specific provisions and their sanctions, but for the ideology articulated in the Prologue, which was intended to guide the application of the substantive provisions. The adjudication of disputes would probably have entailed discussion, consultation, and accord. This is particularly so, given the social norm of consensus which Wormald notes in Anglo-Saxon judgment-making. Assemblies and meetings of the witan thus had an important role in disseminating and inculcating the Alfredian ideology embedded in the *domboc*. For example, if the Preface to the *domboc* was read out, then the king addressed those present, in the first-person voice, evincing his care for them and, *sub silentio*, his right to lead them. Royal discourse therefore had a wide audience.

Levi Roach discusses royal discourse in relation to Æthelred's penitential diplomas, which made amends for his previous depredations on church lands and rights. Roach says: "We should not imagine [Æthelred's] voice speaking in a void. If Æthelred is speaking then what we are hearing is part of a dialogue between the king…and the houses that he has offended." Roach argues that since the diplomas were issued at assemblies and on other public occasions "many others got to listen in on the conversation."[111] It is reasonable to assume that the king's words in the *domboc* were only part of the discussion, and that others took an active role in that discourse, in the course of discussing, evaluating, and implementing the *domboc*'s provisions.

Much like the social practices of lifelong learning and formal education, Alfred's new material for the social practice of the administration of justice, the *domboc*, consolidated royal power by making it tangible. It is reasonable to assume that an early medieval king would not issue a law code which had little hope of being applied by the local assemblies. Such a step would be highly risky, because it would signal weak political control to his principal followers and potential rivals. At the same time, it is unlikely that a king would expect slavish adherence to his legislation, because he lacked the infrastructure to monitor and insist upon it. A degree of local variation in the application of legislation was probably therefore expected, and tolerated as long as there was a satisfactory level of general compliance.[112]

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111 Roach, "Penitential Discourse," 273.

112 Lambert, *Law and Order*, 137.

Compliance could be monitored, at least to some extent, through royal review. Asser's comments on the king's habit of reviewing decisions show a royal focus on corruption and incompetency, rather than an inability to access the law code. This suggests that there was a mechanism to distribute legislation to the local administrators of justice. Those called upon to administer the law were expected to know what the law was. The communal nature of Anglo-Saxon justice makes it highly likely that new legislation was discussed at assemblies. It is inherently unlikely that an assembly provided with a copy of the *domboc* would not read or listen to it being read aloud; more probably the latter, given the public nature of an assembly. We have no direct evidence for this, but it makes intuitive common sense. It is consistent with the passage in the Fonthill Letter, in which the documents proving Helmstan's claim to the Fonthill land are produced at the hearing, *and read aloud*, not passed around.[113] It fits with the Anglo-Saxon cultural norm of listening to texts being read aloud. It is also consistent with the practice of law later in the pre-Norman period, where a greater corpus of extant evidence attests to a practice of discussion, debate, and local adaptation of law.[114]

I do not suggest that each assembly necessarily had its own copy of the *domboc*. It may be that a copy was in the possession of a prominent individual in the local community, one who would have attended court or royal assemblies where the legislation was expounded—an abbot, a bishop, or an ealdorman—and that after the code was read and its contents assimilated at a local assembly (perhaps on a number of occasions), then the text in the possession of the local worthy was consulted as required. This accords with the evidence that royal prerogatives to collect fines for offences were delegated down the political hierarchy, often as royal rewards. The individual or institution who held the right to collect punitive fines would have a material interest in ensuring compliance with Alfred's code and would be likely to keep a copy.[115] Networks of patronage and political reward embedded in the administration of justice thus facilitated dissemination of the *domboc*.[116]

In arguing for the use of the *domboc* as part of the communal practice of administering justice, I am aware of Wormald's position that the code was not actually applied in legal disputes, but was intended to assert the lawmaker's legitimacy and right to make laws.[117] He reached that conclu-

113 Brooks, "Fonthill Letter," 303, 309.

114 Roach, "Law Codes," 478.

115 Lambert, *Law and Order*, 135–36, 142.

116 Baxter, "Lordship and Justice."

117 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 283–85; Preston, *Book of Laws*, 17.

sion based upon a complete lack of citation of the code in the records of judgments and arguments.[118] While John Hudson agrees with Wormald that there is no evidence of citation, and that the code was not set out in a way which would make it easy to use in judicial proceedings, he makes the cogent point that noting a citation of precedent in a record of an argument or judgment is a matter of judicial procedure or custom, not substance.[119] I want to take the argument a step further. There was no concept of judicial discretion being formally constrained by legal precedent, by case law, in this period. In Alfred's kingdom, where oral memory still played an important role in the administration of justice and written records were uncommon, where claims and accusations were debated in open fora and resolved by communal judgment, where precedent did not constrain judicial decision-making, why would a record of argument or judgment need to cite chapter and verse?

Wormald's strongly held views were developed in the 1960s and 1970s, and have been highly influential, although not everyone has agreed with his conclusions. Keynes has long argued that the *domboc* was widely disseminated and its contents known and applied, notwithstanding that we lack "the dog-eared copies…which the judges actually used."[120] Written records and written communications in Alfred's time and indeed in the following period supplemented rather than replaced traditional oral methods of administration.[121] Modern scholars frequently take issue with Wormald's reasoning. Tom Lambert notes that the sample of extant records of case law is worryingly small to draw firm conclusions about how the code was used.[122] Levi Roach and Catherine Cubitt criticize Wormald's argument as unnecessarily dichotomous: citation in argument and judgment would demonstrate that the code was used in determining cases; the absence of such citation is evidence that the code was not used *at all* in determining cases.[123] Wormald's stance is quite mechanistic, and does not allow for more flexible use of texts, particularly in a community of limited literacy.[124]

The manuscript tradition of the *domboc* arguably offers a different perspective on the dissemination and use of the code. The earliest extant

118 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 264.

119 Hudson, *Laws of England*, 27.

120 Keynes, "Royal Government," 233; Jurasinski, "English Law."

121 Keynes, "Royal Government," 244.

122 Lambert, *Law and Order*, 113.

123 Roach, "Law Codes," 480; Cubitt, "As the Lawbook," 1046.

124 Pratt, "Written Law," 332–33; Roach, "Law Codes," 481

manuscripts of the *domboc* date from the mid-tenth century to the opening decades of the eleventh century, postdating Alfred's reign, but within living memory of it. Mary Richards argues from the number of surviving manuscripts and their transmission history that Alfred's *domboc* carried "significant cultural weight" relatively early in its history.[125] The manuscript tradition exhibits a stability of transmission far greater than for contemporary poetry and homilies. Roach suggests that this demonstrates the greater respect accorded written law.[126] Pratt goes further, arguing that the transmission history is consistent with the *domboc* being at least accessed from an early date by those dispensing justice.[127] Alfred's *domboc* is the only OE code to be cited as authority in later legislation.[128] The manuscript tradition thus suggests that the *domboc* had a significant role in the Alfredian practice of justice, even if the full scope of that role is elusive. The fact that the text survives as part of larger codices does not mean that it was not circulated originally on its own. Cubitt points out that Alfred's domboc, as a freestanding text, would have been a slim volume of only two quires, a booklet.[129] Its lack of heft may well have made it more portable, more handleable, thereby increasing the contexts in which it was used.

There is one other, intriguing, piece of evidence for the use of the *domboc*. It comes from the Old English translation of the legend of the Seven Sleepers, recorded in two very early eleventh-century manuscripts, BL, Cotton MS Julius E VII and BL, Cotton MS Otho B X.[130] The vocabulary of the OE version is "solidly West Saxon."[131] The OE translation contains the following passage, in which the portreeve loses patience with Malchus for what he perceives to be his public lies, and threatens him with a punishment that will loosen his tongue:

> Ic gedo pæt man sceal þe wel fæste gewriðan, ægðer ge hande ge fet, and þe, *eall swa seo domboc be swilcum mannum tæcð*, oft and gelome swingan and to ealre sorge tucigan.[132]

125 Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 284, 286. See also Jurasinski, "The *Domboc*," 524.

126 Roach, "Law Codes," 479.

127 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 238.

128 Adair, "Narratives of Authority," 6.

129 Cubitt, "As the Lawbook," 1047.

130 Reprinted in Magennis, *Seven Sleepers*.

131 Magennis, *Cambridge Introduction*, 16.

132 Magennis, *Seven Sleepers*, lines 655–57 (my emphasis).

> (I will give orders that that they shall bind you very fast, both hands and feet and scourge you often and repeatedly, *just as the lawbook teaches concerning such men*, and afflict you with every sorrow.)[133]

This reference to the *domboc* is not found in the two Latin versions of the legend; the Old English author has added it.[134] This evidence obviously post-dates the Alfredian period. However, it provides a tantalizing glimpse of legal custom, of the everyday use of a written lawcode to guide judicial action.

The Bundling of Alfredian Social Practices: Ramping up the Impact

Bundling refers to the way social practices can influence and reinforce each other. I have argued that there was an overarching meaning applicable to both new and modified Alfredian social practices. This overarching meaning was the urgent need to reorient the community back to God in order to avoid annihilation at the hands of the Vikings, the scourge of God. Alfredian modifications to existing practices and new Alfredian practices were all apt to achieve the goal of God-focused wisdom. A strong and prosperous kingdom would result from God-focused wisdom. This is the first respect in which Alfredian social practices were bundled.

The second respect is the way in which Alfred placed himself at the heart of certain social practices by his oversight of them. This is easy to discern in respect of lifelong learning and the administration of justice, because we have Asser's commentary and the Alfredian texts. We should not assume that these were the only practices which Alfred adjusted so as to place himself at the centre. A more general shift, perhaps subtler and therefore less easy to discern, would make sense given the way Alfred conceived the relationship between king and subjects. In their day-to-day administration of the kingdom, Alfred's ealdormen played out, performed, Alfredian ideology through their acceptance of the pivotal role of the king in those activities.

Another respect in which practices were bundled was the consistent use of the vernacular. Such consistency was apt to foster a sense of communal identity, integral to Alfredian ideology. It made that ideology more accessible to a greater number of people, and meant that people's behaviour was more easily recognized by others as conforming to Alfredian ideology. Not all social practices had to be reconfigured. Fosterage is an example of a social practice which did not require adjustment in order to be an apt vehicle for disseminat-

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133 Magennis, *Seven Sleepers*, 53–54 (my emphasis).

134 Cubitt, "As the Lawbook," 1031.

ing and inculcating Alfredian reform. It is therefore a reminder that we may not be able to see all the ways in which Alfredian ideology was inculcated.

A Comparison with the Existing Social Practice of Fosterage

The early medieval practice of fostering out aristocratic youths to the court or to the households of the great, to be brought up and educated together, provided political benefits for both ruler and elite families, and created a closely knit social class. Youths, in particular, were placed in households of equal or higher rank to their own, and it was expected that the children would benefit from both the education they received and the contacts they made during their time in fosterage.[135] The practice of fosterage provided the astute ruler with an opportunity to mould the young men of the ruling class, to shape their conduct and their worldviews, and to facilitate important social bonds.

Fosterage facilitated the military training and social cohesion of the aristocratic youths being fostered, who learned and practised their martial skills together, making them a more effective military force.[136] Aristocratic youths had a designated role in military households and took part in battles.[137] The practice of fosterage also provided opportunities for noble youths to learn proper conduct pleasing to their elders and betters, and thereby to gain opportunities for advancement under the patronage of the influential men surrounding the king.[138] Significantly, fosterage was called *nutritio*, the nourishing of the young.[139]

Practices of fosterage, particularly at court, are better attested in the historical records for the Frankish courts than the Anglo-Saxon courts.[140] Charlemagne, in particular, devoted considerable energy and resources to the creation of a court as a distinctive entity: spatially defined, with its own particular culture, which inculcated a self-aware social identity and sense of community amongst the elite who inhabited Charlemagne's court. Central to the education of youths in the ways of the court and the service of their king was the court's tone. Charlemagne evidently strove for an informal tone

135 Crawford, *Childhood*, 123, 132.

136 Nelson, "Alfred of Wessex," 702; Barrow, *Clergy*, 159.

137 Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, 15; Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation*, 32.

138 Barrow, *Clergy*, 159.

139 Dümmler, "De procinctu Romanae miliciae," 444; Innes, "Place of Discipline," 61.

140 Innes, "Place of Discipline," 62–63.

amongst the privileged young men at his court, without a corresponding loss of discipline.[141]

Hincmar records the custom of important officials at the court inviting young office bearers to dine with them in their private homes, a social occasion which fostered personal relations within the established hierarchy.[142] That informality, deliberate and purposive, is also evident in Einhard's depiction of Charlemagne in his *cubiculum* surrounded by invited members of the court, and giving judgment on litigation while getting dressed.[143] We can glimpse a similar informality and intimacy in Alfred's court, from Asser, and again in the Fonthill Letter, in which Alfred is described giving judgment while at his ablutions.[144]

The personal bonds which could be formed through fosterage were crucial to the aristocratic families which sought to advance their sons in the interests of familial wealth and influence, and to the royal family, which dispensed patronage as a form of social and political control of their elites. Competition for royal patronage and favour was intense.[145] An astute ruler knew both the value of providing largesse and the risks of putting their kinsmen and other noble followers offside.[146] Charlemagne was certainly adept at manipulating what Nelson calls the "centripetal pull of the court" to control and reward his elites.[147] Again, we can see similarities with Alfred's court, in the noted generosity alluded to in the Preface to Wærferth's translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* in Cotton MS Otho C I. The book says:

> ond eac swa his beah-gifan,   þe him ðas bysene forgeaf,
> þæt is se selesða   sinces brytta,
> Ælfryd mid Englum,   ealre cyninga
> þara þe he sið oððe ær fore   secgan hyrde,
> oððe he iorð-cyninga ær   ænigne gefrugne.
>
> (and also to grant rest to his treasure-giver, who gave him the book's exemplar, that is Alfred of the English, the best distributor of treasure of all the kings

141 Nelson, "Charlemagne's Court."

142 Innes, "Place of Discipline," 74.

143 Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, chap. 24, in Noble, *Charlemagne*, 42.

144 Edited and translated in Brooks, "Fonthill Letter," 302–06.

145 Gautier, "Butlers and Dish-bearers."

146 Nelson, "Alfred of Wessex," 700; Innes, "Place of Discipline," 60.

147 Nelson, "Charlemagne's Court," 53.

> that he has ever before heard of,
> or of earthly rulers that he has known about.)[148]

Asser describes a king who is not only generous, but who understands the different contributions that various types of people (warriors, craftsmen, foreign visitors) make to his court. Alfred is careful to apportion his generosity so that all who are deserving receive an appropriate share.[149] There is, in such a measured approach, an acknowledgement of the social capital of treasure-giving.

While there was undoubtedly rivalry for place and patronage between the noble youths at court, the sources also demonstrate a degree of friendship and camaraderie within this self-aware group, bonds which could survive the separation of distance and the passage of time.[150] Mayke de Jong describes the close bonds which formed between adolescent aristocrats at the Carolingian court as a "formidable old-boys' network," formed from connections that could last lifetimes and span generations.[151]

We have little direct evidence for the practice of fosterage in Alfred's Wessex, although scholars accept that fosterage occurred.[152] Asser says that Alfred was brought up exclusively at the royal court: "in regio semper curto inseparabiliter nutriretur" (in the royal court and nowhere else).[153] Asser's story of Alfred competing with his brothers to learn and win his mother's book of "Saxon" poetry suggests that none of Æthelwulf's sons was fostered out.[154] Asser does however refer to Alfred giving instruction to the sons of his elites who were being brought up in the royal household, "in regali familia nutriebantur."[155] He makes no suggestion that fosterage was new to Alfred's court.

There are also glimpses of both royal and aristocratic fosterage slightly after Alfred's reign. King Athelstan, Alfred's grandson, was reared by his aunt Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians, in Mercia.[156] Dunstan, who became archbishop of Canterbury and was later canonized, was introduced at Ath-

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148 *Boethius*, 406–07.

149 Asser, chaps. 76, 78, 81.

150 Nelson, "Charlemagne's Court," 48.

151 De Jong, *Epitaph for an Era*, 154; Airlie, "Bonds of Power," 196–97.

152 Kelly, "Lay Society," 59.

153 Asser, chap. 22; K & L, 74.

154 Asser, chap. 23.

155 Asser, chap. 76.

156 Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, bk. 2, chap. 6, 131.

elstan's court by his uncle Æthelhelm, and thereafter became part of the *familia* of his kinsman Ælfheah the Bald, who was bishop of Winchester. Ælfheah was obviously highly regarded by King Athelstan, who later arranged for Æthelwold (who became the bishop of Winchester) to enter the same household.[157] King Edgar (the "Peaceable") was reared by the East Anglian ealdorman Æthelstan Half-King.[158] Pauline Stafford has identified other, later, instances of fosterage.[159]

Alfred did not need to modify the social practice of fosterage. In its existing format, it facilitated Alfredian reform. First, it encouraged a communal identity and mentality in the aristocratic class. This was, by any account, a small group of people. That sense of common identity needed very little adjustment to align with Alfredian understanding and attunement. As this was the ruling class, it was also the class which stood to lose the most if the Viking threat could not be averted, and equally, stood to gain the most if peace and prosperity could be achieved. Second, the emphasis was on the king as the centre of the court circle—the source of largesse, which was evidence of value, of being esteemed, as well as a practical reward. And there was competition for the king's high regard. That doubtless encouraged individual adoption of an understanding and attunement heavily promoted by the king. As I discuss later, the Jewel had a special role to play in persuading aristocratic individuals to join the king's program.

In this chapter, I have identified several diverse social practices as agential in bringing about aristocratic acceptance of, and participation in, the Alfredian community. Acceptance and participation are not temporally delineated stages: perhaps the best way of describing the process is that, through routinized ways of doing things, Alfred's aristocracy *performed* his reforms, and his new community, into being.

The practice of education was substantially altered to achieve Alfred's aims. All the elements of the existing practice (materials, competencies, meaning) were modified. There were new materials to provide easy access to that wisdom: the Alfredian texts. There was a new competency: literacy in the vernacular. In addition, Alfred created a new social practice of lifelong learning, different from the formal practice of education because it was aimed at the mature men already prominent in his kingdom. These new and modified social practices mirrored Alfred's personal path to wisdom, reflecting what and how he had learned.

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157 Yorke, "Æthelwold," 66, 68.

158 Macray, *Chronicon abbatiae Rameseiensis*, 11, 53.

159 Stafford, "King's Wife," 21.

Alfred also substantially modified the practice of the administration of justice. New material was provided—the *domboc*. The *domboc* conveyed Alfredian ideology in its recitation of Mosaic law and in the central importance given to oath-taking and loyalty in its substantive provisions. Alfred's thorough review of judicial decision-making placed the king firmly at the centre of this social practice. His oversight, and the communal nature of Anglo-Saxon justice, provided an opportunity for his ealdormen and other officials to demonstrate that they had opted in to Alfred's program. These may not have been the only practices used to achieve Alfred's aims.

The persuasive agency of objects and behaviours in Alfredian reform is more easily identified when objects and behaviours are artificially separated and closely examined in turn. That is not how Alfred's people experienced their persuasive agency. In the next chapter, I return to the "messiness" of lived experience, and re-examine the Jewel's multifaceted role in Alfredian reform.

Chapter 7

THE ENIGMATIC ALFRED JEWEL

A POWERFUL PLAYER IN ALFREDIAN REFORM

IN THE LIVED experience of Alfredian reform, there was no neat division between different kinds of agency. Thing-power and patterns of behaviour frequently intersected and subtly reinforced each other. In this chapter, I collapse the boundary between social practices and assemblages that I have previously maintained. Assemblages and social practices are organic phenomena which develop and decay, emerge and evolve through time. They are essentially contingent and temporal. I argue that the Jewel's agency increased over time, as the social practices in which it was embedded became established and as the assemblage of which it formed part evolved.

In the Prelude, I argued that the Jewel is an *æstel*, referred to in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. According to Asser, Alfred was an innovative designer, sufficiently confident to instruct his craftsmen and to commission objects to his own design.[1] Designs such as the candle clock and the horn lantern were novel and carefully reasoned. Significantly, they served a practical purpose; they solved a problem.[2] In the Alfredian canon, usefulness is a recurring theme, a laudable quality.[3] The lexical rarity of the word *æstel* is consistent with novelty, an Alfredian creation.[4] There is no direct evidence of Alfredian innovation in design or a florescence of creative craftsmanship directly attributable to his patronage. However, there is solid evidence for a corpus of distinctive metalwork datable to his reign.[5] This provides some support for Asser's comments. While Asser's *Life* was undoubtedly an encomium, his portrayal of Alfred as a designer of novel items for practical use is not part of the standard early medieval characterization of good kings and has no counterpart in the Carolingian literature.

Pratt draws parallels between Alfred's deliberate creation of a coterie of scholarly advisors and his patronage of foreign craftsmen who were encouraged to take up residence at his court. Asser's comments provide the first

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1 Asser, chap. 76; Webster, "Art of Alfred," 48.

2 Asser, chap. 104.

3 Faulkner, *Wealth*, 3.

4 Webster, "*Aedificia nova*," 83.

5 Keynes, "Alfred and the Kingdom," 33.

written evidence for formal West Saxon court patronage of the arts.[6] Alfredian patronage was carefully thought through: according to Asser, Alfred set aside one-seventh of his annual revenue from taxes and taxes-in-kind to support craftsmen at his court, which was a substantial sum.[7] Gift-giving as a means of recruiting and retaining a lively court was not new; it is well attested in the Carolingian court, for example.[8] But in Alfred's case, we see the king implementing a formal scheme, an administrative mechanism, which suggests that to Alfred, ensuring certainty of access to high quality craftsmen was more than an incidental aspect of courtly life.

The deliberate steps which Alfred took to provide for a pool of exceptional talent at his disposal accords with the impression of him as a king who thought about and planned for what he needed to achieve his political goals. There was purpose in his novel arrangement. Alfred's band of scholars helped the king to express his ideological meaning through his translations. Alfred's craftsmen could also help the king to express his ideas in ways that were perhaps complementary and related.[9]

Purposeful creativity underlies the frequent use of the activity of building as a metaphor for acquiring Christian wisdom. This is a recurring metaphor in both the Old and New Testaments (Prov. 9:1; Matt. 7:24–25; 1 Cor. 3:9–23). It was also Solomonic (3 Kings 9:1), a recurring point of reference for "Alfred." The metaphor of building is central to the Preface to the *Soliloquies*, which I have discussed. Asser described the additions to Alfred's *enchiridion* in terms of constructing a building.[10] It is noteworthy that Asser also described Alfred's designs as *aedificia*, a word normally associated with buildings rather than portable objects.[11] He may have intended to emphasize that these were not just precious objects, but objects which had been carefully designed to serve "edificatory or instructive" purposes.[12]

Wærferth, in his translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*, translated "aedificatio" not as "getimberness," its most common OE substitute, but as "to ure

6 Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 190.

7 Asser, chap. 101.

8 See, for example, Notker, *Deeds of Emperor Charles*, bk. 2, chap. 21, in Noble, *Charlemagne*, 117.

9 Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 190.

10 Asser, chap. 88.

11 Asser, chaps. 76, 91, 101. For a discussion of the term *aedificia*, see K & L, 249–50n114; Webster, "*Aedificia nova*," 79–80.

12 Deshman, "Galba Psalter," 132–33; Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 199–200.

lare getrymnesse" (strengthening to our learning).[13] The emphasis on learning and teaching was a major theme in Alfredian ideology. Both Wærferth and Asser may well have been aware of Bede's *Exegetica genuina*, in which he comments on Proverbs 9:1: "Wisdom has built her house." Treschow suggests that Bede's unusual use of the imperfect tense *aedificabit*—"sapientia mulier aedificabit domum suam"—was intended to emphasize that constructing the edifice of wisdom is an ongoing project, an individual responsibility for each Christian.[14]

What, then, of the objection that there is only one Jewel? Alfred's Prose Preface makes it clear that he commissioned an *æstel* per manuscript. Hinton argues that the Jewel and the Minster Lovell jewel were created at the same workshop, which suggests that the Minster Lovell jewel is also an *æstel*.[15] The other, perhaps now missing, *æstels* might at some stage have been sold off or reduced to their component parts. There are two principal contexts in which this might be likely. The first is in Æthelred's reign, when the church institutions were obliged to help pay off the Vikings; they sold items adorning the altar as well as other moveable items.[16] The second is centuries later, on the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII.

Alternatively, the Jewel might have been intended to surpass all other *æstels* and was perhaps commissioned with a specific recipient in mind. Alfred names Plegmund, Grimbald, Asser, and John the Old Saxon as providing great assistance with the translation of the *Pastoral Care*. Grimbald, Asser, and John the Old Saxon were not native English speakers. This has implications for their role in translating the text into the vernacular, although they were obviously well-equipped to explain difficult passages in the Latin to Alfred. They also spent long periods of time away from the court.[17] That leaves Plegmund, the Mercian, as the principal assistant to Alfred in the day-to-day task of translation. Plegmund became archbishop of Canterbury roughly contemporaneously with the dissemination of the *Pastoral Care*. Pope Formosus acknowledged Plegmund's importance and zeal.[18] Anlezark suggests that Plegmund may have been the author of the metrical Epilogue to the *Pastoral Care*.[19] He was therefore presumably both

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13 Dekker, "King Alfred's Translation," 41.

14 Treschow, "Wisdom's Land," 260.

15 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 32.

16 Hearne, *Hemingi chartularium ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, 1:248–49.

17 Schreiber, "*Searoðonca hord*," 196.

18 *EHD*, no. 227, 890–92.

19 Anlezark, "Drawing Alfredian Waters," 241.

eminent and likely to have been an assiduous advocate of Alfredian ideology. If the Jewel was intended to surpass all other *æstels*, then Plegmund would be a logical recipient. This, of course, is speculation—but it is plausible.

I turn now to consider the close connection between an *æstel* and the *Pastoral Care*, which is set out explicitly in the Prose Preface. The following sections focus on reception of the Jewel: who would have handled and seen it, the contexts in which they may have done so, and how the Jewel may have spurred them to act in accordance with their king's wishes. I argue that the agency of the Jewel expanded significantly over time, as Alfredian ideology was disseminated and imbibed, and as Alfred's people began to self-identify as a distinct community, the *Angelcynn*.

The *æstel* and the *Pastoral Care*

"Alfred" notes the expensive gift of an *æstel* in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. He ordered that the *æstel* remain with the book:

> Ond ic bebiode on Godes naman ðæt nan mon ðone æstel from ðære bec ne do, ne ða boc from ðæm mynstre...ic wolde ðætte hie ealneg æt ðære stowe wæren, buton se biscep hie mid him habban wille, oððe hio hwær to læne sie, oððe hwa oðre bi write.
>
> (And I direct in God's name that no one remove the pointer from the book, nor the book from the minster...I desire that they (the book and the *æstel*) always remain in that location, unless the bishop wishes to have it with him, or it is somewhere on loan, or someone is making a copy of it.)[20]

The book and the *æstel* must stay together whether they are in their usual place or elsewhere. This also suggests that the *æstel* and book are readily separable. The church is intended to be their usual home, but "Alfred" does not stipulate that they must be locked in the church treasury. Indeed, the implication is that book and *æstel* are to be kept readily available for use. They may be used by the bishop outside the church, or loaned to others, or provided for copying by others. This provides some important clues about the contexts in which the book and *æstel* were to circulate in Alfred's extended kingdom.

The Prose Preface makes it clear that the *æstel* was intended to be used with the book. If this direction was obeyed, then whenever the *Pastoral Care* was consulted (and that includes the prefaces), then the Jewel would have been in play. This suggests a context for the Jewel which is very different to its current setting. Context is crucial to understanding how an object does.

20 *Pastoral Care*, 8–10.

The Jewel's agency emerged from its associations with people, ideas, and other things, and its affordances influenced the kind of connections which could be made.

The Affordances of the Jewel

The Jewel's teardrop shape and bevelled sides facilitate a secure grasp on the Jewel even as you move your hand around. If the tube held a pointer, then the Jewel could be used to keep place while reading aloud a text, or it could be pointed at people or other things for emphasis, for dramatic flourish. The flat base of the Jewel allowed the Jewel to be laid flat on an open book if the book was put down temporarily during discussion, or balanced on a knee during a reading. The Jewel's white crystal had connotations of Christ-like purity.[21] The fretwork was gold, a precious metal frequently used in sacred texts and to adorn passages on church walls. And of course, there was the watching cloisonné figure, with its outsized eyes. As Faulkner puts it: "A thing with eyes is a thing with power: we look at it, and it looks back."[22]

Modern scholars argue that the Jewel reified Alfredian ideas with a new visual vocabulary.[23] Pratt and Webster see strong parallels between the Jewel and the Fuller brooch, in the emphasis in both objects on the importance of sight in the quest for wisdom.[24] This is not the physical sense of sight, but the mind's eyes. *Modes eagan* was the conduit through which Christian wisdom was accessed and understood. However, at the start of Alfredian reform, as Alfredian ideology began to be articulated and disseminated, it is unlikely that the cloisonné figure was universally interpreted as materializing that ideology.

At the start of Alfredian reform, the number of people who interpreted the cloisonné figure as a personification of Wisdom or a representation of *modes eagan* was probably small. People who had collaborated with the king in the development of his ideas and objectives, or who were aware of those discussions, might well have so interpreted the figure. People who were unfamiliar with Alfredian thinking may have initially interpreted the figure differently. They may have interpreted the figure as Christ the just judge, or as their king, the gift-giver. There was value for Alfred in either interpretation; either interpretation would catch an audience's attention.

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21 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 22.

22 Faulkner, *Wealth*, 55.

23 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 56, 81; Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 214, 216–17.

24 Webster, "Art of Alfred," 65–66; Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 214–16.

Alfred was probably sufficiently astute to have intended a deliberate ambiguity, to have allowed for the possibility of multiple, and changing, interpretations. He may have deliberately chosen a design which allowed people to interpret and then reinterpret the figure as they became acquainted with Alfredian ideology.[25] For those familiar with that ideology, the Jewel may have reinforced important themes in Alfredian reform from the start. For others, a dawning understanding of Alfredian ideology might well have caused them to look at the Jewel afresh, for the Jewel to prompt them to think of Solomonic wisdom, what it might mean and how to achieve it. Much might depend upon the "expectant eye" of the beholder.[26]

Those who saw the Jewel being used with the *Pastoral Care* may have included individuals within the orbit of the recipient of the Jewel (lesser clergy, junior royal officials, local administrators, and household members, including fostered youths). Other ealdormen at assemblies and other important meetings, and those to whom the book was lent for study and copying, would also have seen the Jewel being used, as sections of the *Pastoral Care* were consulted and discussed. We should therefore not assume that contemporary interpretation of the figure remained constant, and we should allow for the possibility that as Alfredian ideology was discussed and acted upon, the connection between the Jewel and important tenets of that ideology became stronger and more obvious.

There is a similar process of agency enhancing over time in the Jewel's speaking object inscription. The inscription on the Jewel tapped into the Anglo-Saxon norm of the speaking object. What the Jewel says, in the first-person voice, connects the artifact with its giver, Alfred. I acknowledge that there were other individuals called Alfred with the wealth to commission this object. For example, there is the ealdorman from Surrey who, with his wife Wærburh, ransomed the Codex Aureus Stockholm from Viking raiders.[27]

King Alfred used various titles, such as *Westseaxna cyning* (king of the West Saxon), and *Rex Anglorum* (king of the English). Like other Anglo-Saxon kings before him, Alfred generally used the Latin *rex* on his coins, and an expansive title in documents.[28] The Jewel's inscription does carry a signifier of royal status—the cross at the commencement of the inscription. The cross has parallels in contemporary coins and seals.[29] Anglo-Saxon coins,

25 Alfred was in the habit of instructing his craftsmen: Asser, chap. 76.

26 Onians, *Art, Culture*, 97–98.

27 Breay and Story, *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms*, catalogue item 58.

28 Naismith, *Money and Power*, 80; Keynes, "Alfred and the Mercians."

29 Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 11.

with one very limited exception (the coins of "Sihtric comes") were only ever issued in the name of the king, and manifested royal control and authority.[30] "+Ælfred" expressed the king's name in a form frequently used in other displays of royal power. It is comparable to the two (roughly) contemporary finger rings with inscriptions interpreted as "King Æthelwulf" and "Queen Æthelswith" respectively, which are said to be royal gifts or symbols of delegated authority.[31]

Given the size of the Jewel, there is very limited space for an inscription; even the small word *rex* could only be used at the expense of another word. It is perfectly possible to suggest a phrase which emphasizes the status of the person who commissioned or gave the Jewel, or which identifies the Jewel as a gift. Due weight should be to the deliberate selection of phrase. There is no reason to assume that Alfred was constrained to use particular words, or that the words were immaterial. It is reasonable to assume that Alfred deliberately chose an expression which highlighted the most important aspects of the Jewel, an expression which would make sense to the recipient of the Jewel and to those who saw it. The phrase chosen resonated with the opening words of the Prose Preface of the *Pastoral Care* and with the talking books of the Alfredian verse prefaces. The cross attached to the name Alfred was a sufficient cue of royal status. After all, the recipient of the Jewel was hardly likely to be confused about the identity of the giver. If the *æstel* and book circulated together, then an audience was also likely to connect the Alfred of the Jewel with the Alfred who speaks in the Prose Preface. The absence of a royal title in the inscription is not a fatal flaw in the identification of King Alfred as the Ælfred inscribed on the Jewel.

The phrase itself, "+Ælfred mec heht gewyrcan" (Alfred ordered me to be made) was a direct citation of Alfred's role in commissioning the *æstel*. The inscription would have layers of meaning to those who were at the forefront of implementing Alfredian reform. To them, the phrase could refer to the novel artifact their king had commissioned and given to them, to the Alfredian texts, and perhaps also to the new community of the *Angelcynn* which Alfred intended to create.[32] The inscription on the Jewel was, from its inception, a citation of the broader program of renewal which Alfred was promoting, even though perhaps only a handful of people would have understood the reference in the early days of reform.

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30 Williams, "Kingship, Christianity," 180.

31 Okasha, *Hand-list*, items 70 and 107; Webster, "Age of Alfred," 268–69.

32 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*"; Davis, "National Writing"; Stodnick, "Interests of Compounding."

When reform was just beginning, when reception of Alfredian ideology was uncertain and success far from assured, the absence of a royal title in the inscription could have helped to spur the recipient of the Jewel to action. The use of the first name emphasized the collegiality Asser attests amongst Alfred's close circle of advisors.[33] It also referenced the shared endeavour, the communal effort, required to bring the project to fruition. The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* makes it quite clear that a communal effort was required. The informality of the inscription provided a levelling effect, consistent with the intimate and ruminatory tone of the Prose Preface.[34] At the same time, the inscription acknowledged Alfred's role as the driving force of that program, and therefore underscored his divinely sanctioned responsibility to lead his people. And as the inscription was in the vernacular, it was more easily comprehended by a greater number of people. There is an association between the language of the Jewel's inscription and Alfred's radical use of the vernacular as a language of power.[35]

Over time, as the *æstel* and book were used together, the inscription's deeper meaning would have become clear to an increasing number and a wider circle of people. The inscription would thus have acted as a reminder, a restatement, of Alfred's role as the instigator of Alfredian ideology and his divinely appointed right to lead. That restatement probably would have coincided with a deeper and wider understanding of the Jewel's iconography. A progressively deeper and more complex understanding of the Jewel fits with Catherine Karkov's concept of envisioning—an interpretation, indeed internalization, of what is presented to sight.[36]

There is a further crucial association from which the Jewel drew agency. That connection lies in an Anglo-Saxon cultural norm, the social meaning of costly gifts. Royal largesse is a sub-category of the worldly goods which are so robustly defended in the Alfredian translations. What I want to consider here is the cultural framework in which such gifts are given and received.

33 Asser, chap. 77.

34 Alfred employs a similarly intimate style in his *domboc*: Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 416.

35 Richardson, "Making Thanes," 215; Irvine, *Making of Textual Culture*, 405.

36 Karkov, "Sight and Vision," 25–31. Karkov's discussion of envisioning covers objects like the Ruthwell Cross and Byrhtnoth's statues of the female saints of Ely Abbey, as well as manuscript images.

The Social Role of Largesse and the Jewel

The *Pastoral Care* was distributed to every bishopric in Alfred's extended kingdom.[37] It is possible that the Jewel was intended to be in a class of its own in terms of its craftsmanship and costliness. However, in the Prose Preface, "Alfred" says that the *æstel* is worth 50 mancuses. This was not simply the bullion value of the *æstel*. Logically, some monetary value must have been ascribed to the other rich components, the cloisonné and the rare rock crystal, and also to the exemplary creative skill which fashioned the object. Some sense of what 50 mancuses was worth can be gained by comparison to contemporary items such as arm-rings, which were high-status fashioned objects. They were frequently the subject of specific bequests which estimated their worth; these range in value from 20 to 120 mancuses.[38]

Each bishop was thus to receive a costly gift from his king, for his use. These men were members of the aristocracy, and notwithstanding their Christian ideals and values, were likely to respond to valuable objects in the same way as the rest of their class. Asser's description of the gifts showered upon him by Alfred, and Alfred's promise of such gifts (evidently made on the assumption that they would be powerful inducements) is contemporary evidence of the deeply ingrained social role of royal largesse.[39] Asser is quick to ascribe his account of the wealth he received from Alfred to a wish to honour the king for his generosity, but his pleasure in recounting the gifts he has received from his king is obvious.[40]

The social role of costly gifts is widely and consistently attested in Old English literature.[41] One of the most notable aspects of the literature is the pleasure evinced in the act of describing treasure, a delight which spans both secular and religious texts.[42] Such gifts have long been understood to function in early medieval literature as a measure of honour, personal merit, peer esteem, and authority; the economic value of the item was secondary.[43]

Costly gifts valourized both giver and recipient.[44] In *Beowulf*, gold is frequently referenced in lordly contexts: the lord who is a "goldgyfa" (line 2652)

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37 Sisam, "Publication," 374.

38 Williams, *World Before Domesday*, 114.

39 Asser, chaps. 79, 81.

40 Asser, chap. 81.

41 Bazelmans, *By Weapons Made Worthy*, 149–88.

42 Tyler, *Old English Poetics*, 9.

43 Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*, 82.

44 Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*; Godden, "Waerferth and King Alfred," 39–40.

and the hall (Heorot) which is a "goldsele" (lines 1253, 1639). Beowulf's parting gift of a gold-inlaid sword to the coastguard who courageously challenged him on his arrival made that coastguard more welcome on the mead hall bench, caused his contemporaries to esteem him more highly, because the gift constituted tangible evidence of honour and merit (lines 1900–03). In sharp contrast, Heremod's hoarding of treasure, his covetousness and his refusal to dispense gifts, was corrosive and socially destructive (lines 1709–57).[45]

Alfred's own role as a treasurer-giver, and the status it accorded him, is emphasized in the Verse Preface to the Old English Dialogues. This preface, contained in Cotton MS Otho C I, is commonly attributed to Wulfsige, Bishop of Sherborne. The preface was probably intended to accompany further copies of the translation, made at Wulfsige's direction for wider dissemination.[46]

Treasure which is given as a gift is implicated in different social relationships to items which are commissioned or sold.[47] Medieval gift-giving was often asymmetrical and political in purpose. A king dispensed treasure to inculcate and reward loyalty.[48] Maxims I and *II* make the point clearly. *Maxims I* contains the following (A, lines 71–72):

> Gifre biþ se þam golde onfehð, guma þæs on heahsetle geneah.
> Lean sceal, gif we leogan nellað, þam þe us þas lisse geteode.
>
> (The one who receives the gold is avid, the man on the high seat has enough of it. If we do not want to speak false, we will have to repay the one who granted us these favours.)

Later in the same poem (B, lines 12b–13a), there is a further reference to the importance of royal gift-giving:

> Bu sceolon ærest | geofum god wesan.
>
> (Both [king and queen] must first of all be free with gifts.)

In *Maxims II*, there are two references to royal gift-giving. The first expressly categorizes generosity as an integral part of princely education (lines 14–15):

> Geongne æþeling sceolan gode gesiðas
> byldan to beaduwe and to beahgife.

45 Swanton, *Beowulf*.

46 Godden, "Waerferth and King Alfred," 39–40.

47 Nelson, "Introduction," 5; Davis, *Gift*, 9.

48 Wickham, "Conclusion," 254.

(A young prince ought to be encouraged in war and in generosity by good companions.)

Then in lines 28–29:

Cyning sceal on healle | beagas dælan.

(In the hall a king must share out rings.)[49]

While the political significance of this generosity is largely implicit, *Maxims II* opens with a statement of the king's primary role: "Cyning sceal rice healdan" (A king is to guard his kingdom).[50]

The early medieval sources demonstrate that royal largesse was, in part, about creating a specific idea of the king; gift-giving defined the giver.[51] Bede praised King Oswine of Deira for generosity which proved his "royal dignity" and attracted retainers.[52] On the other hand, Orderic Vitalis ascribed William Rufus's downfall to immoderate gift-giving which exhausted his treasury and turned him against his aristocracy, and Stephen of Blois was criticized for unwise gift-giving.[53] Both Asser and Wulfsige confirm the importance of treasure-giving to a king.[54] A good king was bountiful but also measured, even calculating. That is the impression Asser gives of Alfred, meticulously calibrating his largesse to the rank and role of each recipient.[55] Both prefaces to the *Pastoral Care* link wealth with Christian wisdom. The beautiful Jewel simultaneously demonstrated Alfred's status as a generous king, affirmed the worth of the recipient, and materialized an important aspect of Alfredian ideology—that Christian wisdom is the path to wealth.

The gift of a precious object such as the Jewel in the context of the Prose Preface would have placed an obligation on its recipient to comply with his king's wishes. While the Prose Preface urges the audience to refresh their understanding of Christian wisdom, Alfred needed more from his bishops than a personal commitment to re-engage with familiar sources. He needed them to spread the word, to actively advocate and promote his ideology. A royal gift such as the Jewel would have flattered its recipient by manifest-

49 Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom*, 67–77.

50 Leneghan argues that *Maxims II* is part of an ongoing process of *translatio imperii*: Leneghan, "End of Empire," 412–14.

51 Schwartz, "Social Psychology."

52 *HE*, bk. 3, chap. 14.

53 Chibnall, *Orderic Vitalis*, bk. 10, chaps. 2 and 5, 202–3; *ASC, Peterborough Chronicle*, s.a. 1137.

54 Asser, chap. 76; *Boethius*, 404–07.

55 Asser, chaps. 99–101.

ing his importance to the king. In using the Jewel, the bishop would have flaunted that royal esteem, and affirmed his prestige and authority within his own circle of influence. The direction that the *æstel* and the book be kept together would have encouraged the bishops to use the Jewel whenever they consulted the book. The Jewel may have prompted the bishops to make frequent recourse to the *Pastoral Care*, as it gave them an unimpeachable opportunity to display their importance and closeness to the king.

Alfred's explicit acknowledgement that the book might be in places other than a church, and used in contexts other than private study by the bishop, makes it clear that the Jewel was not an item for display or for choreographed, ritualistic, handling. If texts were used as anchor points for discussions in small gatherings, in textual communities, then the Jewel would have been seen by the people in those groups. They may not have handled it—but they might. At the very least, they would have seen it close up. And those people are likely to have been the adult men of the kingdom, from the highest ealdormen down to the worthies engaged in the running of their local community. The Jewel was thus both reward and incentive. Such wealth was not available to all—yet. Highly desirable and exotic, the Jewel's close connection with the *Pastoral Care* underscored the means by which such wealth might be obtained.

The Lively Hum of Actants in the Assemblage of the Jewel

I have thus far considered the material and the relational aspects of the Jewel separately, for convenience. In the lived experience of the Jewel, all aspects interacted. It is time to explore how that might have played out. The Prose Preface makes it clear that the *æstels* were to be kept with the *Pastoral Care*, that the books were to be consulted in a variety of contexts, and not solely by the bishop. The Jewel may therefore have been frequently used and seen in small settings as well as on formal occasions.

Dorothy Horgan has noted that the punctuation of MS Hatton 20 lends itself to reading aloud, rather than silent eye-reading.[56] If the Jewel was used as a pointer when Alfredian texts were consulted in group settings, then the phenomenological experience of the Jewel would have been very different to our modern experience of it, remote and static in its glass display case. In use, the Jewel would have had had a liveliness we do not encounter. The Jewel fitted snugly and securely in a moving hand. Its shape facilitated and encouraged movement. Movement increased the impact of certain of its

56 Horgan, "Scribal Contribution," 112.

components: the sparkle of the gold, the luminescence of the rock crystal. The open fretwork design of the inscription permitted the crystal to glow.[57] In its contemporary context, *in play*, the Jewel was not untouchable, remote, and passive. It was experiential, immediate, and ablaze.

Movement was likely to capture the attention of the audience, to make them think about the Jewel and about Alfredian ideology. If you were reading part of an Alfredian text out loud to others, you could move the Jewel across the page as you read. In doing so, you could feel the Jewel in your fingertips. Your audience could see the Jewel, sparkling in the light. The phenomenological experience of the Jewel would maintain the personal presence of the king, the facilitator of Christian wisdom, the gift-giver, in the act of reading aloud and teaching Christian wisdom.

That sense of the king and the king's presence was amplified by the interaction between the material and relational components of the Jewel. The physical characteristics of the Jewel could act as prompts for particular lines of thought. White crystal and gold had connotations of purity and royalty. The figure and the inscription had layers of meaning, all relevant to Alfredian ideology. At the very start of Alfredian reform, when the Jewel was despatched to its recipient along with his copy of the *Pastoral Care*, the inscription had a levelling effect, bringing the recipient closer to his king at the same time as it reiterated Alfred's role as leader.

Throughout Alfredian reform, the Jewel in its gorgeous materiality tapped into long-standing Anglo-Saxon cultural norms about the role and meaning of treasure, of costly gifts bestowed by a king, acting as both reward for current position and inducement for future behaviour. That enduring relational actant juxtaposed with the capacity of the Jewel to manifest different aspects of Alfredian ideology, for beholders to interpret it afresh as Alfredian reform progressed and knowledge of Alfredian ideology deepened and spread.

The Jewel's persuasive agency may help to account for the surprising number of apparently similar items which have come to light as a result of the Portable Antiquities Scheme. This body of evidence is highly variable in terms of materials, craftsmanship, and location. Materials include lead, copper, silver, and gold—some with glass beads. There are findspots even in the Danelaw (virtually all of the items discussed by Hinton had southern and western findspots). None of these items have inscriptions. This wider corpus of much lesser quality objects broadly similar to the Jewel may suggest a degree of emulation than we cannot discern in the documentary sources.

57 Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, 216.

These objects were deliberately created; they served a purpose. It is possible that individuals lower down the hierarchy had copies made as a marker of identity, a way of showing that they had opted-in to Alfredian reform, or were given them by their lords for the same reason.

Power and Persuasion

The Jewel connected the king to his bishops, leading men of the kingdom, at the start of Alfredian reform. This was when Alfred needed them to act, to spread his ideology. That ideology had a political dimension, in the way it conceived the relationship between king and subject. Alfredian ideology espoused an expanded royal right to lead and a greater obligation to obey than the existing model of Anglo-Saxon kingship. Analyzing the thing-power of the Jewel provides fresh insights into how power was generated in Alfred's kingdom. As a king who lacked strong coercive capacity, how did Alfred ensure that his wishes for reform were met? By persuading others to do as he asked, by increasing their willingness to comply.

By focusing on the reception of the Jewel, on what it was like to use and to see the Jewel, we can identify its active role, its agency. The Jewel was not an exquisite bauble, but a powerful player in Alfredian reform. In focusing on reception and the agency of the Jewel, we also grant Alfred's elites an active role, a choice, in Alfredian reform. The exercise of power is acknowledged to be far more subtle than a top-down model of political power may allow. Asser records grumbling and backsliding, which confirms that there were a variety of responses, degrees of compliance.[58] We lack the detailed evidence to investigate and calibrate individual responses to Alfredian reform. However, thinking about the "thing-power" of the Jewel enables us to consider some of the ways in which Alfred's elites may have been induced to do more than they could be compelled to do.

Things and practices helped to shape aristocratic response to Alfred's reform program through their persuasive agency. Objects and behaviours open up a fresh perspective—that of the men Alfred relied upon to implement his reforms. Their perspective has tended to slide from view in the traditional scholarship because of difficulties with the documentary evidence.

I said in the Introduction that it is hard to look past the king when considering his reform program. Assessing Alfred himself can be problematic—a consequence of partisan sources and also the exceptional character and qualities of the man. Keynes writes about the tendency to talk about "a

58 Asser, chap. 91.

multiplicity of different Alfreds."[59] In much the same way, it is easy to focus sequentially on specific segments of Alfredian reform and discuss them as though they are discrete topics. However, Alfred's military innovations, his educational program, the *domboc*, the *ASC*, the translations, the championing of the vernacular, and the conceptualization of the *Angelcynn* were a coherent whole. Threaded through them are things and behaviours, designed and used to bring a community into being.

An overall assessment of Alfredian reform is made easier by conceptualizing it as an assemblage in its own right. As always, using the framework of assemblage theory highlights the connections between things, and the dynamic nature of those connections. How to teach others what Alfred had learned? The same way Alfred learned, as an adult, busy with responsibilities of governance. Here is the first connection between actants in the assemblage of Alfredian reform: emulation. What Alfred had learned, others could learn the same way. Not by downing tools and committing themselves to introspective full-time study, but by using texts as anchor points in diverse textual communities, by discussion and debate, at the same time as participating in the management of the kingdom. This was a form of learning on the job, modifying patterns of behaviour and instilling values to reorient the community back to God. Not just claiming the name of Christian but putting into practice a particular version of Christian virtues.

How to encourage such a form of learning without relay teams of dedicated advisors to guide each magnate? By embedding the principles identified as the most important for a well-functioning Christian community into translated texts: invoking the authority of existing works but increasing the reach of those texts through the use of the vernacular. "Alfred" provided the content which the magnates needed to learn and to put into practice in an accessible format. Here is the second set of connections, between what you learn and how you learn it. Alfred co-opted the power of respected texts, the capacity of the monastic scriptoria to produce manuscripts, and the ease of everyday language.

How to ensure that the magnates paid attention and learned? Not by royal decree, but through persuasion. The political landscape is an actant in the assemblage of Alfredian reform. The diffuse distribution of political power in Alfred's kingdom significantly constrained the king's options for achieving reforms. The delicate balance of political power necessitated strategies of persuasion, because coercion was not an option. We can identify Alfred's persuasive strategies. Alfredian text-bodies were plain and there-

59 Keynes, "Power of the Written Word," 197; see also Keynes, "Tale of Two Kings," 217.

fore handleable, so that they could be used in a variety of settings and were easy to consult in precisely those contexts of learning on the job. A range of cultural norms were harnessed, to increase the accessibility and the reach of the principles of Christian wisdom embedded in the texts. New and modified social practices were additional actants. The pool of those who would learn was expanded by instituting the practice of lifelong learning. Education and the administration of justice provided fertile ground to disseminate and inculcate Alfredian ideology. There may have been other social practices used in this way, which are now not detectable because of the paucity of the surviving evidence. I discussed fosterage as a possible example of a practice that was ready-to-hand as an instrument in inculcating Alfredian reform.

Alfredian reform did not end with the king's death in 899. I do not have the space in this book to fully explore the trajectory of reform post-Alfred. The next chapter sketches, by way of a coda, how Alfred's heirs continued the reform program and re-shaped Alfredian ideology to their own ends.

Coda

LOOKING FORWARD

ALFRED'S SUCCESSORS

IT IS POSSIBLE to discern continuations in each of the principal areas of Alfredian reform—military innovation, education and scholarship, and justice. It is also possible to identify a new use of Alfredian ideology, deployed in service of the creation of empire, a claim of legitimacy and the right to rule expanded areas of Britain well outside the traditional West Saxon sphere of influence. Alfred's notion of the *Angelcynn* found fuller expression in the concept of *translatio imperii*, contained in the Chronicles and other texts, supported by the use of the vernacular. And Alfred's reputation as reformer and saviour of his people was shaped and presented to advance the claims of his children and grandchildren to rule their heartland and an empire.

Military Innovation

Lavelle describes the trajectory of military innovation as a process of militarization rooted in Alfred's innovations.[1] Edward's reign witnessed a flurry of burh building, but with a new, wider purpose. Edwardian burhs were not primarily defensive, and not aimed squarely at inhibiting Viking incursions. Particularly through the period 912–920, burh building was "a prelude to conquest, rather than a defensive measure."[2] These new burhs were intended to cow the nearby populations into submission—and they succeeded.[3] The various Chronicle recensions record that under the direction of Edward and Æthelflæd, there was a pattern of burh building at the frontiers of Alfred's expanded kingdom which pushed into new territory on multiple fronts. In the annals, this burh building is repeatedly associated with the voluntary submission of surrounding communities.

Strategic placement remained crucial. Following Alfredian precedent, the new burhs were consistently sited where they could control movement in the landscape. The construction of Witham in 913, isolating Essex from

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1 Lavelle, "'Dark Matter' Evidence," 91.

2 Konshuh, "Chronicle Compilation," 504.

3 Konshuh, "Edward the Elder," 252.

Danish support, is an example.[4] The *ASC* connects new burhs and the submission of leaders and peoples in the simplest terms—one immediately followed the other. Submission was doubtless public and performed relationships of power. No doubt the king had an eye to the political value of these public submissions.[5] Paul Hill describes Edward's and Æthelflæd's policy as "a very serious game of domination and subjection made possible by the central fortified place."[6] The generation after Alfred took the principles of defence-in-depth and applied them to the conquest of peoples and territory never before ruled by the West Saxon royal house.

Translatio imperii

Such expanded hegemony required a nuanced language of legitimation. Edward's circle (like his father before him, Edward did not "do" it all himself) borrowed from the Alfredian playbook. A range of texts was deployed to transmit a specific ideology of legitimacy within an eschatological framework. The *ASC* characterizes the submission of new territories as a liberation from Viking oppression, rather than West Saxon empire-building. Konshuh argues that MS A of the *ASC*, the *OE Bede* and the *OE Orosius* were all produced at Edward's court, and constitute a coherent extension of Alfredian ideals of Christian kingship and the legitimacy of the West Saxon overlordship.[7] Francis Leneghan has analyzed the theme of *translatio imperii* threaded through *ASC* MS C, the *OE Orosius* and the OE poem, *The Death of Edward*, all preserved within a single eleventh-century codex, Cotton MS Tiberius B I.[8] *Translatio imperii* legitimated Edward's right to rule over other kingdoms and other peoples, grounded in the ideals of Christian kingship and framed in the familiar terms of a salvation narrative. That legitimacy was articulated in the title Edward consistently used: "king of the Anglo-Saxons." Æthelstan's circle likewise seized the opportunity to articulate an expanded hegemony after the conquest of Northumbria and the submission of the surrounding British rulers, consistently describing Æthelstan as *rex Anglorum* in charters—a form of "ideological aggrandizement."[9] Such care-

4 Hill, *Fortress Kingdom*, 77, 91; Foot, *Æthelstan*, 13.

5 Lavelle, "Representing Authority," 76.

6 Hill, *Fortress Kingdom*, 190.

7 Konshuh, "Edward the Elder," 252–53; see also Konshuh, "Chronicle Compilation."

8 Leneghan, "*Translatio imperii*"; "End of Empire."

9 Foot, *Æthelstan*, 27.

ful propaganda was not limited to the charters. Imperial sovereignty is joyously celebrated in the *Battle of Brunanburh* (*ASC*, s.a. 937).

While Edward's chosen title, "king of the Anglo-Saxons," stems from the latter years of Alfred's reign, Keynes argues that during Edward's reign, a process of political development gave real substance to this claim of a new polity. Edward was "more than the bellicose bit between Alfred and Æthelstan."[10] In the administration of his kingdom, Edward also built upon the legacy of Alfredian reform, although the process was not straightforward.[11] Edward's laws invoked the authority of Alfred's *domboc* as a political symbol and a foundation for new substantive laws on oath-breaking, for example.[12] As with Alfred's *domboc*, the manuscript tradition suggests that Edward's laws were frequently consulted.[13] Æthelstan continued this trajectory of legal reform, with particular emphasis on the bonds of loyalty underpinning the proper regulation of the kingdom.[14] The legislation of both Edward and Æthelstan demonstrate that royal directions were increasingly conveyed in writing.[15]

Text Production and Learning

The Alfredian educational legacy is visible in the production of other manuscripts and in scholarship under the patronage of Edward and then Æthelstan.[16] Early copies of the *ASC*, the *OE Orosius*, the *OE Bede* and *Bald's Leechbook* were produced at the same scriptorium over a period of time.[17] Waite argues that the Preface to the *OE Bede* was a retrospective attempt to link the text to Alfred and Alfredian ideology of royal responsibility.[18] Alfred's name was invoked frequently and deliberately, burnishing his reputation for learning and kingship in a manner which promoted the authority and prestige of scholarship and book production under the patronage of his heirs. Both the *OE Orosius* and the *Leechbook* contain interpolations

10 Keynes, "Edward," 57.

11 Jurasinski, "The *Domboc*."

12 Konshuh, "Chronicle Compilation," 505.

13 Jurasinski, "English Law," 11.

14 Foot, *Æthelstan*, 127.

15 Foot, *Æthelstan*, 137.

16 Konshuh, "Chronicle Compilation," 501.

17 Kesling, "Winchester Scribes," 479.

18 Waite, "Preface to the OE Bede," 85.

expressly referring to Alfred, carefully placed as framing pieces.[19] The value of invoking Alfred's name is demonstrated in a different textual context, in the Fonthill Letter's "strategic invocation of King Alfred's authority."[20] Like his grandfather, Æthelstan surrounded himself with a vibrant and cosmopolitan intellectual circle and appears to have had an abiding interest in learning.[21]

The tenth-century literary evidence for the circulation and high repute enjoyed by the Alfredian texts is crucial evidence for the continuation of Alfredian ideology. Ælfric's assured use of Alfredian arguments and language is highly suggestive of the diligent study of Alfredian texts by students in at least one institution post-Alfred, in the time of Æthelwold.[22] Ælfric noted his approval of Alfred's translations in the preface to his *Catholic Homilies*.[23] Ælfric's apparent familiarity with, and approval of, Alfredian texts suggests that they were accepted and used.[24]

Cenwald, Bishop of Worcester, wrote a learned colophon responding to the Metrical Epilogue to the *Pastoral Care*, which is preserved in Bodleian, MS Hatton 20. Anlezark provisionally dates the colophon to the 950s.[25] Æthelweard's *Chronicon*, composed by an ealdorman and relative of Alfred's in the latter part of the tenth century, praised Alfred for his sense of justice and his skill in warfare, but above all, for his learning and his translations.[26] Æthelweard's description of an audience being moved to tears by a reading of *OE Boethius* suggests both continued circulation of Alfredian texts and an appreciation of their contents.[27] Anlezark has drawn attention to the debt owed by the *Solomon and Saturn II* poet to Metre 20 of the prose *OE Boethius*, arguing that the dates of composition are closer than has been realized. He concludes that from the early tenth century, either the prose or prosimetric version of the *OE Boethius* was a carefully studied classroom text.[28] Other

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19 Kesling, "Winchester Scribes," 487.

20 Smith, "Kings and Cattle Thieves," 448; Marafioti, "Seeking Alfred's Body," 226.

21 Foot, *Æthelstan*, 91, 66.

22 Godden, "Alfredian Prose," 153.

23 Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies*; Godden, "Ælfric and the Vernacular."

24 Godden explores the ambivalence of Ælfric's comments in Godden, "Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents," and "Ælfric and the Vernacular."

25 Anlezark, "Drawing Alfredian Waters," 263–64.

26 Campbell, *Chronicle of Aethelweard*, s.a. 899; K & L, 191.

27 K & L, 191. I note that Campbell ascribes *lachrymosus* to the text rather than the audience in his translation: Campbell, *Chronicle of Aethelweard*, s.a. 899, p. 51.

28 Anlezark, "Drawing Alfredian Waters," 262–63.

pointers are the expanded use of the vernacular, such as in Ælfric's homilies and his *Lives of Saints*, and the increased prestige of OE prose.[29] This diverged from Continental practice, and may indicate that the Alfredian use of the vernacular for authoritative works was normalized in the decades after the king's death.[30] The fact that there are tenth- to twelfth-century copies of Alfredian texts is further confirmation of continued circulation.

The continued circulation of Alfredian texts in the tenth century does not only speak to the continuation of Alfredian reform after Alfred. It is also evidence that these texts served their purpose in the first place, that they were apt vehicles for the transmission of Alfredian ideology. Similarly, the continuation of the *ASC* after the common stock, the Edwardian annals and indeed the Mercian Register all display a close interest in questions of royal power and national identity—an ideological function. The strong inference is that the authors were close to royal power.

Alfredian reform thus had a trajectory beyond Alfred's lifespan. Elements of the assemblage of Alfredian reform that I have analyzed in this book continued after Alfred. However, even the abbreviated discussion above demonstrates that while there was continuity, there was also significant change. Some actants were different—such as the burhs (now used offensively, not defensively), the language of legitimation, and some texts. There was continuity in other actants—in core concepts of Christian kingship, embedded in texts, and the use of the *ASC* as a propagandist medium. This is, necessarily, the briefest of sketches. The question that then arises is—how do we theorize this change? Is it an evolution of the same assemblage (an example of the constant state of becoming and flux that is an essential characteristic of an assemblage), or a different assemblage altogether? I think that in order to organize the data and the analysis into manageable proportions, we make an *agential cut*.[31] We artificially separate material phenomena for the purpose of analysis. In this instance, I propose that post-Alfredian reform constitutes a new assemblage, which emerged from Alfredian reform. "New assemblages emerge and proliferate because of the efficacy and fertility of past ones"; the past unfolds.[32]

29 Godden, "Why Did the English."

30 Godden, "Ælfric and the Vernacular," 107.

31 Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 348; Knutson, "Itinerant Assemblages," 797.

32 Fowler, "Dynamic Assemblages," 252.

Social Practice Theory and Assemblage Theory

Using assemblage theory and social practice theory in tandem has allowed a closer-grained analysis of the persuasive agencies of objects and behaviours—how they can differ and how they can reinforce each other. In the lived experience of the reform process, objects and routinized ways of doing things overlapped and segued into one another.

Fascinatingly, this interdisciplinary approach to Alfredian reform has revealed that ideology operated differently in Alfredian assemblages and social practices. The different theoretical models demonstrate that ideology could exert a subtly different agency in different contexts. In an assemblage, ideology is simply one of the actants, and does not occupy an a priori privileged position. This characterization probably stems from assemblage theory's flatter ontology, its decentring of the human. In social practice theory, ideology has a far more central role.

Ideology provides the meaning of a practice and therefore shapes the two other elements of practice (materials, competencies) in a way that is different from the interplay between actants in an assemblage. The interplay between actants is usually best described as fractal, but the relationship between meaning and materials/competencies seems to be more linear and unidirectional. This theoretical difference may derive from the difference between ideology and ideological power which I explored at the start of the "Alfredian Ideology" chapter, in which case it is a substantive difference. Equally, it may be a semantic or conceptual difference between the theoretical models. Further research, perhaps other detailed case studies, may provide greater clarity. Assemblage theory and social practice theory will not have universal application, but identifying the flaws and weaknesses of a theoretical model has its own value—either refining the model or potentially opening up space for fresh theories.[33]

Using the frameworks of assemblage theory and social practice theory allows us to interrogate the extant written sources, to supplement them, and, on occasion, to confirm their accounts. This is not a case of the material record being a handmaiden to history, but an example of real interdisciplinarity. The material and written records can be used to complement, challenge, and contradict each other in ways that confront myths, identify false assumptions, and confirm hypotheses.[34] There is value in a diverse analytical toolkit. An object or a behaviour should not be taken at face value, any

33 Pétursdóttir and Olsen, "Theory Adrift," 113.

34 Little, "Historical Sources," 427–30.

more than an image or a piece of writing. We need to deal with materiality in ways that are analytical, not merely descriptive.

An interdisciplinary approach to the reception of Alfredian reform has revealed subtle relations of power in Alfred's kingdom. There was wriggle-room indeed, and Alfred astutely increased the prospects of successfully persuading his elites to follow him with a series of well-chosen strategies. Alfredian ideology was coherent and well-reasoned, resonated with existing cultural norms and worldviews, and offered a clear path to ward off threatened annihilation by Viking conquest. That was not enough to effect large-scale change. The persuasive agency of objects and behaviours was employed, to drive reform. We can see in Alfred's reform program how ideology can be disseminated and absorbed, how the choice of action can be made straightforward, and how a community can be forged which increases the likelihood of collective behaviour. Paying attention to objects and behaviours provides a fresh opportunity to see past the towering figure of Alfred the Great, to those who peopled his world.

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