



The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius (SUNY series in Medieval Studies)

Nicole Guenther Discenza

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Shows how Alfred the Great's translations of Latin works exposed Anglo-Saxon elites to classical learning and Christian thought while bringing prestige to the king and his West Saxon dialect.

In the late ninth century, while England was fighting off Viking incursions, Alfred the Great devoted time and resources not only to military campaigns but also to a campaign of translation and education unprecedented in early medieval Europe. The King's English explores how Alfred's translation of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy from Latin into Old English exposed Anglo-Saxon elites to classical literature, history, science, and Christian thought. More radically, the Boethius, as it became known, told its audiences how a leader should think and what he should be, providing models for leadership and wisdom that live on in England to this day. It also brought prestige to its kingly translator and enshrined his dialect, West Saxon, as the literary language of the English people.

Nicole Guenther Discenza looks at the sources Alfred used in his translation and demonstrates his selectivity in choosing what to retain, what to borrow, and how to represent it to his Anglo-Saxon audience. Alfred's appeals to Latin prestige, spiritual authority, Old English poetry, and everyday experience in England combine to make the Old English Boethius a powerful text and a rich source for our understanding of Anglo-Saxon literature, culture, and society.

Nicole Guenther Discenza is Assistant Professor of English at the University of South Florida.

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