

## Steering the Ship of the Mind: Politics and Theology in the Nautical Expression of the Layered Mind in the Alfredian Translations

Eleni Ponirakis   
University of Nottingham

(Received 19 April 2024; revised 24 June 2024)

Following Gregory the Great, the Alfredian translator(s) make use of a metaphor where the mind is conceptualised as a ship, with Reason at the helm. The ship must navigate the dangerous waters of worldly temptation and at times is steered by God. The interchangeability of God and Reason at the helm suggests that Reason is, in some way, a God-like faculty. The ship of the mind is a common image in patristic texts, but its origin is Pre-Christian, and has its basis in Plato; in *Phaedrus*, rather than a ship, a chariot with headstrong horses is steered by the part of the mind known as the steersman of the soul (Emlyn-Jones and Preddy 2022, 416). This essay will attempt to trace the possible sources for the prevalence of this image in Gregory and in the Alfredian translations, with a particular focus on *Hierdeboec* or *Pastoral Care*, and the *Old English Boethius*. Although the *Pastoral Care* is a close rendering of the original, the Alfredian translator has added details which show an in-depth knowledge of contemporary sailing techniques. This essay will argue that the use of the ship of the mind metaphor not only taps into Christian Neoplatonic theology fashionable at the Carolingian court, but also styles King Alfred as a man of action, a competent sailor versed in the latest techniques of sailing and a competent hand on the tiller of state, where he is implicitly compared with God.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Ship of the mind; Alfred; *Pastoral Care*; *Old English Boethius*; Neoplatonism; layered mind

This essay will consider the way the Alfredian translations use maritime metaphors to illustrate the mind and how to control it, with an examination of the political aspect of these metaphors as they developed in Alfredian times. The image typically represents the mind as a ship or boat. This mind-ship comprises the higher reasoning faculty as the pilot, with the rest of the boat and its crew being the lower parts of the mind; these are susceptible to influence from the senses and other temptations, which in turn are represented by sea, rocks, waves and wind. The image represents the importance of allowing the ship of the mind to be steered firmly by Reason. It can be used to convey the difficulties of mortal life in general, and more precisely the requirement of self-control for salvation. Versions of the metaphor can also be used to refer to acquiring or

---

<sup>1</sup> Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Francis Leneghan for his advice, support and patience with the writing of this paper. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable suggestions. Any remaining errors are my own.

transmitting knowledge (Wilcox 2006). Before considering the sources and implications of this image, it will be useful to clarify what is meant by a layered mind.

Malcolm Godden famously defined what he refers to as the classical idea of mind as the “unitary concept of the inner self, identifying the intellectual mind with the immortal soul and life-spirit” (Godden 1987, 271). This is the mind as understood by Alcuin, Alfred and Ælfric and based on patristic, especially Augustinian theories. Although there are nuances of interpretation between these thinkers, as Godden (1987) explains, this is a good working definition. In the Alfredian translations and the sermons of Ælfric, the mind is conceptualised as having different elements which are at times described as being in discussion amongst themselves, such as in the *Soliloquies*, where Augustine’s self is in debate with his own Reason, *Gesceadwisnes*, or the *Old English Boethius* where Boethius has become Mod, and Mod is in debate with Wisdom. There is a sense that there are parts of the mind that are wilful and wayward, and these must be controlled by a stronger more rational part of the mind, the self or reason. At times, there is also a sense of what we might call the subconscious, where one part of the mind is aware of something that another part of the mind is ignorant of, for example in *Dominica in Quinquagesima*, Ælfric instructs, “swa hwa swa oncnæwð þa blindnysse his modes Clipige he mid inweardre heortan,” “he who is aware of his *mod*’s blindness let him shout out with inward heart” (Clemoes 1997, 260). This implies that the part of the mind which is self and aligned with heart is aware of something that the part here referred to as *mod* is blind to (see Ponirakis 2024). *Mod* here, as is often the case, represents the wilful and wayward part of the mind that needs controlling.

*Mod* is a tricky term, however. Studies have shown that *mod* and other Old English mind terms do not have a constant value. Leslie Lockett (2011, 317) remarks that “Alfred’s method of translating the words *anima*, *animus*, and *mens* in the *Consolatio* is, in brief, surprisingly inconsistent.” Soon-Ai Low (2001, 2005) demonstrates that many mind terms, but especially *mod*, must be translated in context, and cannot be given a single value in modern English. A recent study, useful especially in relation to the Alfredian texts, is Amy Faulkner’s paper (2019). Faulkner (2019, 597) shows the Alfredian “translator’s concern with the workings of the mind, demonstrated by the tendency to introduce the word *mod* (‘mind’) when there is no mention of a faculty of thought or feeling in the Romanum source, and the use of *mod* to translate the words *cor* (‘heart’) or *anima* (‘soul’).” Faulkner (2019, 615) also identifies an inward mind which, as it is conceptualised in the Alfredian translations, seeks true wisdom within itself. All of this points to what I refer to as a layered mind. Layered, because Augustine’s schema of the mind in *De Trinitate* XII.3. Hill (1991, 322–40) describes the mind as comprised of higher and lower elements, with the higher part (*sapientia*) ideally being turned towards God, whilst the lowest part is open to worldly sensation. The reasoning part (*scientia*) must steer the mind towards the higher things:

When we live according to God our mind should be intent on his invisible things and thus progressively be formed from his eternity, truth and charity, and yet some of our rational attention, that is to say some of the same mind, has to be directed to the utilization of changeable and bodily things without which this life cannot be lived; this however not in order to be *conformed to this world* (Rom. 12:2) by setting up such goods as the final goal and twisting our appetite for happiness onto them, but in order to do whatever we do in the reasonable use of temporal things with an eye to the acquisition of eternal things, passing by the former on the way, setting our hearts on the latter to the end. (Hill 1991, 333)

This is not replicated spatially in the ship of the mind metaphor beyond the idea that the sea and rocks are below, representing the dangers of worldly distractions, but it does embody the idea of a mind that is comprised of various elements including a wayward element open to the temptation of worldly things, and a reasoning element that must remain vigilant in order to steer the whole mind to salvation.

The Alfredian translations are at times faithful to their source, as is the case with Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, and at times they diverge widely, as is the case with Augustine's *Soliloquies*. It is to be noted that both Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (*DCP*) and Augustine's *Soliloquies* are texts that are themselves influenced by Platonism. This paper will argue that the Alfredian translations insist on the Christian-Platonic idea of the importance of mind governing mind (see below). The importance of self-governance is essential for right living and salvation; for the monk engaged in contemplation, it is a prerequisite for approaching God. The Alfredian use of this image may have a further aim. One of the particular traits of the Alfredian treatment of the ship of the mind, shows that these nautical images have been adapted to include particularly realistic references to the skill of seafaring. This paper will further argue that this is intended to show an understanding, and perhaps even experience of sailing in keeping with the image Alfred wishes to give of himself. The demonstration of an understanding of the craft of piloting a ship, especially in rough seas, relates to the image of Alfred as a king who is both educated and practical, a scholar and a craftsman. Alfred's biographer, Asser, paints the king himself as a helmsman, guiding the ship of his kingdom through the whirlpools of life (Keynes and Lapidge 1983, 101).<sup>2</sup> This show of seafaring knowledge extends the metaphor, equating Alfred himself with Reason and thereby linking him closely to God.

Miranda Wilcox (2006) has covered the ship of the mind metaphor in detail in her essay on Alfred's epistemological metaphors. Wilcox focusses on both the metaphor of the ship of the mind and the eye of the mind as "conceptualising the mental process of acquiring knowledge" (2006, 179). This essay will focus on the ship metaphor in the Alfredian texts where it is concerned with control of the mind as a means to salvation or contemplation of God.<sup>3</sup>

## Sources

The use of ships and boats, especially the steering of ships and boats, to represent the mind predates Christianity, although nautical symbols have been employed to represent the church itself since its earliest days; the mast of a ship can be seen to resemble a cross, as indeed can the upper part of an anchor, with all its additional salvific associations.<sup>4</sup> The Old Testament story of Noah and his ark or the account of Christ's calming of the storm in the synoptic gospels, add to the sense that this is an appropriate symbol. Of this last, Tertullian (born c. 160) writes in *De Baptismo* 12:

---

<sup>2</sup> See Pratt (2007, 96) and North (2024, 429–53), who has recently argued that the figure of Christ as helmsman in *Andreas* is modelled on Alfred.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the contemplative nature of the Alfredian texts, see Weaver (2024, 341–61).

<sup>4</sup> For more on Old English *ancor*, see Frank (2001, 7–27).

ceterum navicula illa figuram ecclesiae praefererat quod in mari, id est in saeculo, fluctibus id est persecutionibus et temptationibus inquietatur, domino per patientiam velut dormiente donec orationibus sanctorum in ultimis suscitatus compescat saeculum et tranquillitatem suis reddat.

for the rest, this small boat in that way prefigured the church which in the sea, that is to say in the world, is agitated by the waves, that is persecutions and temptations, whilst the Lord appears to be sleeping until awakened by the prayers of the saints at last holds in check the world and restores it to tranquillity. (Lupton 1908, 36)

Church architecture embodies this idea as churches are built around a central nave, from Latin *navis*, or ship. However, the image of the ship to represent the mind which we find in Christian writings is one adapted from Plato.

The early Christian fathers, including Origen (born c. 185) and Gregory of Nyssa (born c. 335) take definitions of the mind and soul from Plato (born c. 428 BCE), with Gregory of Nyssa's *De Animae et Resurrectione* for example, adapted from Plato's *Phaedo* and *Symposium* (Ramelli 2018, 116).<sup>5</sup> In *Phaedrus* (Emlyn-Jones and Preddy 2022, 416), Socrates argues that the intangible essence (God, from a Christian perspective) is only visible to the mind, or part of the mind (*nous*) which he calls "the steersman of the soul" (*ψυχῆς κυβερνητήρ*). The image is not of a sailor, however, but of a charioteer. It gives the idea of a partite soul, governed by Reason, which must control two headstrong horses. The Alfredian image of the mind, conceptualised as one with soul and presented as something to be steered and controlled has Platonic and Neoplatonic roots, and this is consistent with the influence of Boethius and Eriugena on Alfredian writing.

Nautical imagery related to the ship of the mind metaphor typically includes references to the pilot or helmsman of the ship, the ship itself and its various elements: helm, mast, sail, oars, anchor, cargo and ballast. The natural elements through which the helmsman must navigate are sea, wind, waves, currents and rocks and the harbour is the hoped-for goal of salvation or the heavenly home. Not all of these elements are included in each instance, nor do they always have the same metaphorical value. However, it is a constant that the pilot of the ship represents Reason or the guiding force of the mind, as represented by the charioteer in *Phaedo*. At times, God can take over this role, or alternatively the soul's pilot can sleep, leaving the steering in the hands of a demon.

Several instances of Neo-Platonic influences on old English texts, especially the Alfredian ones, have been identified, and it is a growing field of study.<sup>6</sup> A primary source for this influence is the Carolingian court and the writing of John Scotus Eriugena (born c. 800), the Irish monk who translated pseudo-Dionysius (late fifth century)<sup>7</sup> and Maximus the Confessor (born c. 580) from Greek and whose reading of these and the Cappadocian fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa, give the basis for his own treatise, the

<sup>5</sup> See also Karamanolis (2020, 103–18).

<sup>6</sup> See Ritzke-Rutherford (1980), Leneghan (2016), Anlezark (2017), Treschow (1993, 2024), Flight (2017), McMullan (2021), and Ponirakis (2021, 2022), inter alia. See also McKitterick (1992, 95), who demonstrates that "Plato's work seems to have been part of the corpus of works recognized by the early Carolingians as concerning crucial knowledge."

<sup>7</sup> The identity of the person behind Pseudo-Dionysius, so called because he identified himself as Dionysius the Areopagite (Acts 17:34), is unknown. Louth (1999, 160–61) calculates that he must have been active sometime after 476 and before 533.

*Periphyseon*. Whilst Eriugena would seem to be a source for neo-Platonic elements, the image of the mind as boat needing to be steered correctly through the temptations of mortal life with a view to salvation does not appear in the *Periphyseon*. He uses the same image, but to refer to the difficulty of writing, “we enter upon a voyage where the course has to be picked from a mass of tortuous digressions” (O’Meara 1987, 383), a trope which, like the eye of the mind metaphor, is concerned with the acquisition or dissemination of knowledge rather than salvation. Within this image, however, when he refers to his own thought processes he declares,

with the mercy of God as our captain and steersman and our sails filled with the propitious wind of his spirit, we shall pick through all these dangers the true and safe course, and reach the harbour which we seek, free and unhurt after a smooth voyage . . . Let us spread sails, then, and set out to sea. For Reason, not inexperienced in these waters, fearing neither the threats of the waves, nor windings, nor the Syrtes, nor rocks, shall speed our course. (O’Meara 1987, 383)

The harbour here is not salvation, but the successful transference of knowledge, and the rocks, waves and other dangers are obstacles to that understanding. A similar image is used in the prologue to the *Liber Monstrorum* to explain the writer’s feelings on being asked to write it, “the gust of your request . . . cast me from the high poop quivering amongst the monsters of the deep. For I compare this task with the dark sea” (Orchard 1995, 88). However, in the example from the *Periphyseon*, God is at the helm of the ship and many of the usual metaphorical elements are there too: wind, waves, rocks, sails, steering and harbour. Reason too is present and seems to be piloting in tandem with God, in such a way that Reason seems to be of God more than of the self, in keeping with the idea of Gregory of Nyssa in *De Anima et Resurrectione*.<sup>8</sup> The pronouns *we* and *our* are distinct from God and Reason which therefore seem to be outside of self. Whilst Eriugena would seem to be a source for many of the Neoplatonic ideas in the Alfredian translations,<sup>9</sup> including those conveyed by the maritime imagery, the use of the image of the ship of the mind in relation to salvation does not seem to come from here.

Another source for the use of maritime imagery diverted in relation to Christian salvation comes from Homer. St Ambrose (born c. 340) follows Clement of Alexandria (born c. 150), for whom the image of Odysseus navigating past Scylla and Charybdis and tying himself to the mast whilst plugging his ears against the sirens was a metaphor for the good Christian embracing the wood of the cross and ignoring the siren call of temptation. Developing the image, for Ambrose the sea is the deceitful world, and to defeat the sirens one should not block one’s ears, but open them to the voice of Christ, and one should tie oneself, not with material bindings as Odysseus did, but with spiritual ones (Pépin 1986, 21–22). Jean Pépin (1986) demonstrates how this image is further developed by Maximus of Turin in the fifth century, where the sea is the hostile world,

---

<sup>8</sup> For the Cappadocian fathers, following Origen and the Platonists, the *nous* or intellectual part of the soul is what is created in God’s likeness. “Gregory of Nyssa insists in many passages, besides the all-important conclusion of *De Anima et Resurrectione*, on the similarities between human intellectual souls and God. Divine nature, θεϊότης, is νοῦς and λόγος . . . And, consistently, this is also why the power of human reasoning is a work of God” (Ramelli 2018, 128). Ramelli also demonstrates the influence of the Cappadocian fathers on Eriugena.

<sup>9</sup> See McMullan (2020), Treschow (2021) and Ponirakis (2021).

the sirens are temptations and Ithaca is the heavenly home. The ship is the means to get to that heavenly home.

So, we have two indirect Greek sources for the imagery in the Alfredian translations. The idea of the reasoning part of the mind steering the mind / soul from Plato and the image of the sea and its dangers as temptations, from Homer, via St Ambrose. This last is employed by Aldhelm (born c. 639) in the prose *De Virginitate*:

while the others [those not puffed up with pride], sailing (as it were) near the perilous shipwreck of this world with the whirlwind of a dreadful tempest raging, as though between the Sicilian Scylla and the gulf of the whirlpool [i.e. Charybdis], hasten towards the harbour of the monastic life, and with Christ as their pilot arrive safely, even though the timbers of their ship are somewhat shaken. (Lapidge 1979, 67)<sup>10</sup>

Aldhelm's use of the image strongly suggests that the influence of the Greek Theodore of Canterbury (born c. 602) may have been another point of entry for the ship of the mind metaphor in England, as Aldhelm was a pupil of the Canterbury school of Theodore and Hadrian.<sup>11</sup> We also have the image of God and Reason steering the mind from Eriugena, but importantly not for salvific purposes. The sea, waves and rocks for Eriugena, as we have seen, represent the difficulties of transmitting wisdom.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to Theodore, it would seem that the most obvious source for these specific images in the Alfredian translations is Gregory the Great himself (born c. 540). The *Pastoral Care* or *Hierdeboec* is generally considered to be the first of the translations, partly because of its faithfulness to the original. As David Pratt (2007, 135–36) points out, “such respect must also be judged against the deep impact of Gregorian ideas on Alfredian thinking and behaviour.” The missing link between Gregory's maritime imagery and that of the Platonic or Homeric models is almost certainly monastic. Gregory himself was a monk before becoming pope, and the peace and solitude of the monastic cell is something he appears to long for. According to Barbara Müller (2013, 83–108), “Gregory and his fellow monks appear to have carried out *lectio divina*. This means that . . . they were aiming for contemplative experience.” In pursuing this aim, “the monks of St Andrews would have been instructed in this spiritual praxis by their monastic fathers as well as from the relevant literature” (Müller 2013, 85). Müller indicates John Cassian as the primary source. Cassian, however, although he uses sea imagery in *The Conferences*, does not seem to favour the image of the ship of the mind, whilst his own mentor and spiritual leader, Evagrius of Pontus, does. Evagrius, as Jerome complained in one of his epistles, was “read by many, not just in the East, but in the West as well” (Sinciewicz 2003, vii). This is due to the translations into Latin made by Ruffinus.<sup>13</sup> Sinciewicz (2003, vii) also points out that Gennadius of Marseille had access to Evagrius's major works and translated some of them into Latin. It is not impossible to

---

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this reference and for the one above from the *Liber Monstrorum*.

<sup>11</sup> For more on the connection between Theodore of Tarsus and Maximus the Confessor, and the influence of Greek ideas on early medieval England, see Bischoff and Lapidge (1994), Lapidge (1995) and Ponirakis (2023a).

<sup>12</sup> For the ship of the mind as an epistemological metaphor, see Wilcox (2006).

<sup>13</sup> There are references to the antagonism between Jerome and Cassian, Evagrius and Ruffinus in the *Canterbury Commentaries* (Bischoff and Lapidge 1994, 217–18).

imagine, therefore, that whilst at St Andrews, Gregory may have been introduced to the work of Evagrius in one form or another.<sup>14</sup>

There are multiple examples of mind-as-ship metaphors in Evagrius's treatises, *Eight Thoughts* and *On Thoughts*. *On Thoughts* 3 (Sincewicz 2003, 155) even has a direct Platonic echo. When using a shipwreck metaphor to describe the consequences of public prayer, Evagrius writes, "another more terrible shipwreck will follow, when the demon of vainglory has blown a contrary wind. For this reason, our Lord in the Gospels offered this teaching *to the mind that functions as a navigator*: 'beware of practising your almsgiving before people'" (italics my own). "The mind that functions as a navigator (*κυβερνήτην νοῦν*)" closely resembles the *ψυχῆς κυβερνητήρ* in Plato's *Phaedrus*, quoted above. The thoughts referred to in the titles of these treatises are the eight vices that Gregory was to transform into the seven deadly sins, so it is evident that he had some familiarity with the work of Evagrius. Here are some more examples:

*Eight Thoughts* 2:3 The force of the waves batters a ship without ballast in a storm; the thought of fornication will act similarly on an intemperate mind. (Sincewicz 2003, 76)

*Eight Thoughts* 2:13 A ship caught in a storm hastens towards a harbour; a chaste soul seeks solitude. The former flees the waves of the sea...while the latter flees the forms of women. (Sincewicz 2003, 77)

*On Thoughts* 13: *Gentleness* And if someone abstains from food and drink, but rouses his irascible part to anger by means of evil thoughts, he is like a ship sailing the high seas with a demon for a pilot. (Sincewicz 2003, 162)

Here the ship in Evagrius's symbolism represents mind, self or soul. This is the element that must be controlled. Ballast represents temperance, whilst the waves are bad thoughts—fornication in this instance. Elsewhere Evagrius identifies these thoughts as demons, sent to trouble the mind of the monk.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Ælfric also uses the image of the demon piloting the mind in *De Dominica Oratione*:

and swa he swiðor syngað swa he deofle gewyldra bið, and hine þonne God forlæt, and he færð swa him deofol wissað, swa swa tobrocen scip on sæ, þe swa færð swa hit se wind drifeð. (Clemoes 1997, 331)

and the more he sins, the more he will be in the devil's control, and God will then forsake him, and he will travel as the devil directs him, just like a damaged ship at sea that is driven by the wind.

<sup>14</sup> As Evagrius was posthumously condemned for Origenism, some of his works, including versions of his ascetic treatises, were circulated under the name of Nilus of Ancyra; this includes *On Thoughts* and *Eight Thoughts*.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Leneghan (2015, 121–42) argues that *The Wanderer* is concerned with monastic modes of prayer and makes reference to the type of dangerous thoughts described by Evagrius and Cassian called *logismoï*. Following this, I have argued that the thoughts attacking the mind of the narrator in *The Seafarer* are another example this (Ponirakis 2023b, 33).

## Nautical metaphors in the Alfredian translations

Having looked at possible sources for the use of maritime imagery, we will now look at the various nautical elements in the Alfredian translations and what they represent, before considering how the images have been adapted and to what end.

Gregory's *Pastoral Care* is a book primarily aimed at outlining the responsibilities and dangers of leadership, as well as offering advice about how to deal with different types of personality. It could be described as a guide to good management, and for Alfred, it may have reflected his vision of ruling a country, and not just a monastery. The first example looks at the dangers of overlordship:

Swiðe eaðe mæg on smyltre sæ ungelæred scipsteora genoh ryhte stieran, ac se gelæreda him ne getruwað on ðære hreon sæ ond on ðæm miçlan stormum.<sup>16</sup> Hwæt is ðonne ðæt rice ond se ealdordoom butan ðæs modes storm, se simle bið cnyssende ðæt scip ðære heortan mid ðara geðohta ystum, ond bið drifen hider ond ðider on swiðe nearwe bygeas worda ond weorca, swelce hit sie ongemong miclum ond monigum stancludum tobrocen?

An inexperienced helmsman can quite easily steer a ship true enough on a calm sea, but an experienced one does not have confidence in himself on a rough sea and in a great tempest. What, then, are power and overlordship but a tempest of the mind, which perpetually tosses the ship of the heart with waves of thoughts, and it is driven this way and that on singularly narrow straits of words and works, as if it were broken up on shoals of rocks both huge and countless. *PC* 1.9 (Fulk 2021, 64–65)

The waves of thoughts tormenting the mind are thoughts, perhaps not dissimilar to those described by Evagrius. The particular temptations of power are among the most insidious, appealing to vainglory and pride. Not only that, but the burden of responsibility takes the mind away from the peace of contemplation and forces the mind into the world. Whilst the reference to an experienced helmsman might lead to the interpretation that the helmsman is a man in a position of responsibility, the reference to *ðæs modes storm*, a storm of the mind, makes it clear that this is an image of the mind and therefore the helmsman must be the reasoning part of the mind of that man. The narrow straits of words and works between the huge and countless rocks are the actions or good deeds of that man which are required to keep his mind on a safe path.

In *PC* 3.58, we see a similar reference to the importance of the continuation of good works to keep the mind moving forward. Gregory does not exclude the importance of the body which, directed by the mind's helmsman, is vital in keeping the mind and the self safe.

Ac ælces mannes modes on ðys middangearde hæfð scipes ðeaw. ðæt scip wile hwilum stigan ongean ðone stream, ac hit ne mæg, buton ða rowend hit teon, ac hit sceal fleotan mid ðy stream; ne mæg hit no stille gestondan, buton hit ancor gehæbbe, oððe mon mid roðrum ongean tio; elles hit gelent mid ðy stream. Swa deð sio forlætnes ðæs godan

---

<sup>16</sup> Whilst in the Old English "him ne getruwað" appears ambiguous: does "him" refer to the inexperienced seaman or the experienced seaman not trusting himself? Fulk clarifies the point with reference to the Latin "etiam peritus se nauta confundit," which he translates as "even an experienced sailor is confounded" (Fulk 2021, 558, 9.2.).



weorces. Hio winð wið ða god ða mon ær gedon hæfð, buton mon simle swicende ond weorcende sie god weorce oð ende.

But the mind of every person in this world has the character of a ship. A ship will sometimes move against the current, yet it cannot unless oarsmen propel it, but it must float with the current; it cannot remain still unless it has an anchor or is controlled with oars; otherwise, it will proceed with the current. So does the abandonment of the good work. It strives against the good that had been previously accomplished unless one is continually toiling and working at good deeds to the very end. *PC* 3.58. (Fulk 2021, 496)

Here too, the image revolves around the possibility of controlling the direction of the mind or failing to do so. The mind is once again a ship, but this time it is everyman, and not just the person in a position of authority. The point here is that a ship will not remain motionless in the sea; it will be moved by winds and currents without human intervention. To propel it forward oars are needed if it is to move against the current, or an anchor to prevent it from moving backwards. These represent the continued need for good works. It is not enough to have banked up some good works; to reach salvation, continued effort is needed. Interestingly a similar example can be found in Cassian's *Conferences*. Here Cassian describes the minds of the neglectful:

Therefore the mind will never be able to remain in one and the same condition. As in the case of a person who is trying hard to push forward a boat that is held back by the river's current, he will certainly either go upstream by cutting off the torrent with the strength of his arms or, letting his hands drop, be thrown headlong by the rushing water. (Ramsey 1997, 6.14.1, 232)

As far as I can tell this is the only place in *The Conferences* where the mind is compared to a man in a ship.

Gregory draws on a nautical image in Proverbs 23:34–35, but adapts it to fit with the ship of the mind metaphor. Citing Solomon as referring to 'the sleep of the mind' Gregory equates the image of the pilot asleep at the tiller with someone giving in to temptation. However, the image in Proverbs does not refer to the mind, but specifically to someone who has drunk too much wine being like a pilot asleep and losing the tiller. Loss of self-control is understood, but the image is more specifically one of drunken loss of control of the body and bodily senses, rather than the mind suddenly giving in to vices.

Be ðæs modes slæpe was ær awriten on ðære ilcan Salomones bec; hit wæs awriten ðæt hit wære swelce se stiora slepe on midre sæ, ond forlure ðæt stiorroður. ðæm stiorere bið gelicost se mon ðe ongemong ðisses middnangeardes costungum ond ongemong ðæm yðum undeawa hine agimeleasað. Swa deð swa se stiora ðe ðæt stiorroður forliesð, se ðe forlæt ðone ymbhogan ond ða geornfulnessse ðe he mid stioran scolde ðære sawle ond ðæm lichoman. Se bið swiðe onlic ðæm stioran ðe his stiorroður forliest on sæ, se ðe forlæt ðone foreðonc his gesceadwisnesse ongemong ðæm bise gum ðisses middangeardes.

About the sleep of the mind it was written earlier in the same book of Solomon that it was as if the helmsman slept amid the sea and lost the helm. Very like the helmsman is one who relinquishes control of himself in the midst of the temptations of this world and among the waves of vices. As the helmsman loses the helm, so does one who abandons the care and devotion with which he ought to steer soul and body. Quite like the steersman who loses

the helm at sea is one who renounces the providence of his discretion<sup>17</sup> among the distractions of this existence. *PC* 3.56.4. (Fulk 2021, 476–78)

The helmsman in Gregory’s version is Reason, or “ðone foreðonc his gesceadwisnesse.” When Reason lets go of the tiller, the mind is at the mercy of worldly distractions. Gregory goes on to describe the prudent man who keeps a hold of the tiller:

ac gif se stiora his stiorroðor gehilt, ðonne cymð he orsorglice to lande, hwilum ðeah ongean wind and ongean ða yða, hwilum mid ægðrum. Swa deð ðæt mod, þonne hit wacorlice stiereð ðære sawle

But if the steersman keeps hold of his rudder, he will come securely to land, though at times against wind and waves, at times with them both. So does the mind when it pilots the soul vigilantly. *PC* 3.56. (Fulk 2021, 478–79)

The control of the mind is a struggle. The wind and waves are the vices that will, if there is no one at the helm, push the mind-ship in a different direction. Coming securely to land most probably refers to the end of the journey of life, and this salvation can only be achieved by maintaining a firm grip on the helm. Implicit in this image is the idea of the difficulty of regaining control of the tiller once it is lost. The constant vigilance required in monastic asceticism is called *prosoche* or attention to self. Defining the importance of *prosoche*, Douglas Burton-Christie (2012, 48) explains that “only a sustained commitment to pay attention to oneself and to search out the deep sources of the soul’s chronic attachments could lead the monk [to experience that profound and abiding sense of God’s presence].” The idea of *prosoche*, constant vigilant attention to oneself and one’s direction, coupled with vigilance against the demons of worldly distraction or *logismoï* would seem to be what Gregory is referring to in his description of the importance of keeping a constant hold of the tiller with the aim of ultimately arriving safely—that is, in death. It is also implied in the previous image of the ship that needs constant attention to stop it from moving backwards. Interestingly, in lay terms *prosoche* also refers to coming ashore.<sup>18</sup> It may be supposed that this monastic term has its very roots in a nautical metaphor, one of coming safely ashore.

Gregory closes the *Pastoral Care* with a reference to the ship of his own mind. Gregory’s mind, rather like Schrödinger’s cat, is at once a sound vessel and a wreck, existing simultaneously.

Ic nu hæbbe manege men gelæd to ðæm stæðe fullfremednesse on ðæm scip mines modes, ond nu giet hwearfige me self on ðæm yðum minra scylda. Ac ic ðe bidde ðæt ðu me on ðæm scipgebroce ðisses andweardan lifes sum bred geræce ðinra gebeda, ðæt ic mæge on sittan

<sup>17</sup> Fulk’s (2021) translation of “foreðonc his gesceadwisnesse,” “the providence of his discretion” may seem a little odd, as *foreðonc* in the sense of providence is usually an attribute of God. “Reason” may also be a preferable rendering of *gesceadwisnesse*. However, Fulk’s translation does offer a subtle reminder that God can be at the helm of the ship of the mind.

<sup>18</sup> Iamblichus (250–325 BCE), in his account of the life of Pythagoras describes a sea crossing where the young Pythagoras’s presence on the boat apparently leads to an unusually smooth crossing “as if some god were present.” This lasts “until their boat docked (*προσοχής*) without mishap or rough weather at the Egyptian shore” (Dillon and Hershbelle 1991, 43).

oð ic to londe cume, ond arær me mid ðære honda ðinra gearnunga, forðæm ðe me hæfð  
gehefegad sio byrðen minra agenra scylda.

I have now conveyed many people to the shore of perfection in the ship of my mind and yet still wander myself on the rough seas of my faults. But I pray you will extend to me in the shipwreck of this present existence the plank, as it were, of your prayers, that I may sit on it till I come to land, and raise myself with the hand of your merits, since the burden of my own deficiencies has weighed heavy on me. (Fulk 2021, 532–33)

This is a slightly different visualisation of the mind, but one that is still centred on the idea of the dangers of responsibility. Gregory’s mind becomes a ferry for others, whom he is able to transport safely to shore—presumably either setting them on the right path, or accompanying them in death. His own mind is still at the mercy of the waves of his own faults, suggesting that whilst he can train others to control their minds, he struggles to control his own. This could of course be modesty, but is most likely to be a genuine self-evaluation, especially as to assume the contrary would bring danger of the sin of vainglory. It is also an interesting reflection on the question of *ex opere operato* (“from the work performed”) which refers to the fact that the duties performed by a priest do not take their validity from the performing minister, but are independent. This stance refuted the Donatists who argued that if a priest was not in a state of grace, the sacraments and offices performed by him were invalidated. Thus, Gregory is able to save others whilst still struggling himself with faults of his own.

The images in the *Pastoral Care* depict the importance of mental vigilance. The reasoning part of the mind must not sleep; it must keep a firm hold on the tiller amidst the storms of life. The importance of the tiller as an image does rely to a certain extent on the experience of sailing. For one who has not experienced it, it might be easy to imagine that all that is required is to take hold of the tiller again and put the boat back on course, as one might when losing control for a split second at the wheel of a car. However, the point about the consistent vigilance is that if once lost, even momentarily, the tiller of a boat in a storm cannot easily be recovered. Losing hold of a tiller on a calm sea, as Gregory indicated, is not a problem, but in a high sea with powerful waves and the wind driving into the ship, it will be extremely difficult to get the tiller back under control. This is what makes it such a useful image; the vigilance must be constant, because in the same way, once the rest of the mind has fallen under the temptation of vices and the other distractions of life, it will be so much harder for the reasoning part of the mind to regain control. There are several other examples of the ship of the mind metaphor in the Alfredian translations, and Miranda Wilcox (2006) has explored them in some depth. We will now focus on an example where the image has been adapted in a way that shows a particularly detailed knowledge of the craft of sailing.

### **Sailing in the Age of Alfred: More than a metaphor**

Martin Carver (2014, 24) rightly points out that “any boat can be sailed in a following wind, but only in one direction . . . If there is an evolutionary factor to be chronicled here, it is not the use of sail, but the ability to tack.” The ability to tack means the ability for a ship or boat to trim its sails in order to sail closer to the wind. The significance of this from a maritime point of view is that it opens the possibility to sail in different directions, and not just in the direction set by the wind. This also lends itself to the ship of the mind

metaphor, as we see in the *Old English Boethius*, where referring to worldly fortunes, the translator writes,

Hwæt þu wast gif þu þines scipes segl ongean þone wind tobrædst þæt þu þonne lætst eal eower færeld to þæs windes dome.

For see, you know that if you spread your ship's sail against the wind, then you leave the course that you all follow to the choice of the wind. (Godden and Irvine 2009, B text 7, 1:253 and trans. 2:11)

The wind in this image represents the other forces at work on the mind, the temptations and distractions of this mortal life. The implication here is that the steersman does nothing to control the direction of the ship. It could be argued that for this image to have any import, there would need to be other ways of setting your sail—ones that require constant effort and vigilance. Modern sails are, of course, designed to sail into the wind. They are triangular rather than square and are at rest in the long axis of the boat rather than across the boat's width. In addition, the rudder is mounted on the stern of the boat, and not on the starboard side. (We have however maintained the name, as the term "starboard" is etymologically derived from Old English *steorbord*, that is the side of the ship with the steering oar, or rudder). In experimenting with a replica of the Oseberg Viking ship, Carver and his companions discovered that it *was* possible to sail into the wind:

The tacking spar did succeed in creating a little jib-like envelope that took us quite near to the wind, but every time it veered, the ship would heel over precariously and threaten to capsize us. The vessel righted itself because the person holding the rope attached to the end of the sail (i.e., the sheet) would be pulled across the deck and the wind could then spill out. (Carver 2014, 25)

This, of course, was a tiresome activity as no one wants to be dragged across a deck. The skipper therefore tried fixing the sheet to a cleat and, of course, the ship capsized (Carver 2014, 25). Modern ships use quick release cleats to avoid just this sort of problem, and any experienced sailor could have warned them of the outcome of fixing the sheet in a way that could not be released quickly. However, it is not necessary to have a quick release cleat, and these are relatively modern inventions. Ben Fuller (2019), writing in the nautical magazine *Small Boats Nation*, repeats the adage taught to beginners, "never cleat the main," because, as he so rightly points out, "a cleated main can turn you over." He reveals a traditional way of cleating the main sheet in such a way that it can be released immediately, and that is with the use of a special knot, a slippery hitch knot, attached to a pin. Quoting *The Ashley Book of Knots*, Ashley (1993, 186) explains, "a whaleboat's halyards as well as sheets are always secured with them, since a Slipped Knot admits of casting off without first removing the load." What this means is that the sail can be released whilst the sheet is still under tension from the wind. It is not therefore hard to imagine that a similar system may have been adapted by early medieval sailors. As Carver and his fellow crew members have demonstrated that tacking was indeed possible, this would be a sensible solution to the problem of managing the main sheet.

There is also evidence of a boat's ability to tack or beat against the wind in one of the ship-of-the-mind metaphors in the *Old English Boethius*:

Nat he hit no forþi ðe he wille þæt hit gewyrðe, ac forþe þe he wile forwyrnan þæt hit gewyrðe, swa swa god scipstyra ongit micelne wind and hreo se ær hit wiorðe, and hæst fealdan þæt segl and eac hwilum lecggan þonne mæst and lætan þa betinge, gif he ær þweores winde bætte; wærnað he hine wið þæt weder.

He does not know it because he wishes it to happen, but because he would like to prevent it happening, as a good pilot perceives the great wind and rough sea before it happens and gives orders to fold the sail and also sometimes to take down the mast and leave off beating, if you previously had been beating against the wind; he protects himself against the weather. (Godden and Irvine 2009, B text 41, 1:377 and trans. 2:93)

The image compares God to a ship's captain. The passage attempts to explain the problem of predestination. This question was to plague Christian thinkers right up to and beyond the Reformation. Misunderstanding of God's foreknowledge led to heretical ideas such as that of Gottschalk of Orbais (d. 868), who argued that because God knew how everyone was to act beforehand, it meant that men were already damned or saved and that Christ only sacrificed Himself for the elect. The main concern here is to explain that it is not because God knows something will happen, that He makes it happen. The implication that God tries to prevent bad things from happening is "troubling," as Godden and Irvine put it (2009, 2:491). It therefore makes sense to accept their suggestion that *forwyrnan* ("to prevent") is scribal error for *forewarnian* ("to warn / take guard against in advance"). This makes more sense of the image where the pilot is not preventing the storm from happening, but giving orders so that the crew know how to protect themselves. Furthermore, this ties in with the idea we saw in Eriugena, that God, at times, takes the helm and is closely linked to Reason.<sup>19</sup>

Godden and Irvine (2009, 2:93) translate *beting* as "beating" (that is tacking into the wind), taking it as a present participle for *bætan*. The verb *bætan* means "to bridle" or "to rein in." Applying it to this passage seems to have caused doubtful eyebrows to be raised. The *DOE* describes *bætan* as "a sailing term of uncertain meaning," referring to the *OED* which gives "to strive against a contrary wind" adding that "makes fast" has also been suggested. This last is Sedgefield's translation, and he translates *bætinge* as "the cables of a ship." Following this it would translate as "let loose the cables if you had previously been making fast against the wind." Letting loose the cables, in other words, releasing the main sheet, would make sense, as we have seen above. It seems to me that Godden and Irvine are quite right to translate this as beating against the wind. Presumably the hesitation comes from the doubt that Anglo-Saxon mariners were capable of doing this. As we have seen, there is now reason to believe that they could. It is hard to see what other meaning could fit, when it is specifically related to "against the wind." What "making fast against the wind" could possibly refer to, given the actions that follow when they *stop* doing whatever that is, is hard to guess.

Following Godden and Irvine (2009, 2:93), we can take this as the first known reference to beating or tacking into the wind in English. It would be interesting to

---

<sup>19</sup> See also *The Seafarer* 108, "Eadig bið se þe eaþmod leofaþ; cymeð him seo ar of heofonum, / meotod him þæt mod gestapelað, forþon he in his meahte gelyfeð" ("blessed is he who lives humbly; the grace of heaven comes to him, the Lord strengthens his mind, because he believes in His might" trans. my own). Godden and Irvine (2009, 2:491) refer to Ælfric (Godden 1979, 37, 22ff) for a similar point about God's foreknowledge.

speculate whether or not this is related to a newer design of ships. Carver (2014) sees Alfred's moving of the London docks from the Strand to the newly refurbished Roman docks as both political and practical. It was political, because his *burhs* "emulated the network of Roman towns" and "a move back into the Roman capital indicated a move back into the Roman ethos as Alfred's family saw it" (Carver 2014, 33). It was practical because ships could moor there without waiting for the tide. The merchants of Alfred's time were "advancing towards large deep-water ocean-going vessels whose masters had begun to face the challenge of sailing near the wind with a square sail" (33). So these references to sailing were not just making use of Platonic and monastic imagery to convey sophisticated thoughts about the operation of a multipartite mind, but also reflecting the political and technological advances of the Alfredian regime.

What makes this image all the more striking in this context is the way it shows a skilled knowledge of sailing, not only in the reference to beating against the wind, which would presumably belong to the very latest technology of the time, but also in the manoeuvre described. When bad weather approaches, the first thing to do is to take in a reef—this means to reduce the amount of sail by folding and tying the lower part of it, so the captain "hæt fealdan þæt segl," orders the sail to be folded. If things get worse, an extreme technique that worked better with a shallower draft, would be to take down all the sail and allow the ship to slide sideways in the wind. This technique is called lying a-hull.<sup>20</sup> This would seem to be the manoeuvre or series of manoeuvres that is being described. By showing knowledge of this technique, Alfred is showing himself to be, not just a king, but also a skilled sailor.

## Conclusion

The ship-of-the-mind metaphors in the Alfredian translations have two purposes. The first to show an engagement with Christian-Platonic ideas of the layered mind and the importance of mental control—steering the self—influenced by the early Christian fathers and made fashionable by the Carolingians, especially the Irish monk, Eriugena at the Carolingian court of Charles the Bald. The images seem to be sourced from Gregory's original writings—themselves influenced by the patristic fathers and most probably Evagrius of Pontus—and developed to further fit the Alfredian vision. The notions of self-control are key to both good leadership, as the *Pastoral Care* dictates, and also mystical theology, the pre-requisite for an experience of God.<sup>21</sup> Alfred seems keen to conflate his image of himself as king with Christian monastic ideals as well as political ones, harkening back to the glory of Rome. Indeed, Richard North and Michael Bintley (2019, 81–115) see in *Andreas* a nod to Alfred's building of the *burhs* and reclamation of Roman cities and therefore date the poem to around 890. Building on this, North (2024, 429) has recently argued that Christ in the poem is "stylized as a temporal king in line with King Alfred's own development as we see it in Asser's *Vita Alfredi*, but also that the ship's

---

<sup>20</sup> This is no longer considered the best way to handle extreme storm conditions as the danger of capsizing is high. I am also not sure if taking down the mast makes sense, but in a boat with a shallow draft and little or no keel, it might be advisable to remove anything that can catch the wind. In a modern boat, it certainly would not be.

<sup>21</sup> See Michael Treschow (2024, 362–87).

captain, Jesus's incarnation in the first half of *Andreas*, is portrayed as a version of Alfred himself."

This brings us to the second purpose of the ship-of-the-mind metaphors. As we have seen, Alfred makes deliberate reference to the latest techniques in sailing. Whether or not he is behind the translations himself, or to what extent, Alfred is clearly behind the image of himself that the translations in his name put forward. The ship-of-the-mind metaphors show a knowledge of sailing techniques, including how to direct your ship into the wind—a previously impossible task—and significantly, how to save your ship and crew in a storm from seemingly impossible dangers. Here too, as North (2024) has argued for *Andreas*, Alfred is subtly aligning himself with God at the helm of the ship of state, as well as with Reason and God at the helm of the ship of the mind.

## References

### *Primary Sources*

- Ashley, Clifford W. 1993. *The Ashley Book of Knots*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Bischoff, Bernhard, and Michael Lapidge, eds. 1994. *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clemoes, Peter, ed. 1997. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*. Early English Text Society, Supplementary Series 17. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dillon, John M., and Jackson P. Hershbell, eds. 1991. *Iamblichus. On the Pythagorean Way of Life*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Emlyn-Jones, Chris, and William Preddy, eds. and trans. 2022. *Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Phaedrus*. Loeb Classical Library 166. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fulk, R. D., ed. and trans. 2021. *The Old English Pastoral Care*. Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Godden, Malcolm, ed. 1979. *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*. Early English Text Society SS 5. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Godden, Malcolm, and Susan Irvine, eds. 2009. *The Old English Boethius: An Edition of the Old English Versions of Boethius's "De Consolatione philosophiae."* 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hill, Edmund, ed. 1991. *Augustine. The Trinity*. New York: New City Press.
- Keynes, Simon, and Michael Lapidge, eds. 1983. *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*. London: Penguin.
- Lapidge, Michael, ed. 1979. *Aldhelm, the Prose Works*. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer.
- Lupton, J. M., ed. and trans. 1908. *Tertullian, De Baptismo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- North, Richard, and Michael Bintley, eds. 2019. *Andreas*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- O'Meara, Dominic J., ed. 1987. *Eriugena: Periphyseon*. Montreal: Dumbarton Oaks.
- Ramsey, Boniface, ed. 1997. *Cassian. The Conferences*. New York: The Paulist Press.
- Sincewicz, Robert E., ed. 2010. *Evagrius of Pontus: The Greek Ascetic Corpus*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Secondary Sources*

- Anlezark, Daniel. 2017. "The Soul in the Old English Soliloquies and Ninth-Century Neoplatonism." In *Germano-Celtica: A Festschrift for Brian Taylor*. Sydney Series in Celtic Studies, edited by Anders Ahlqvist and Pamela O'Neill, 35–60. Sydney: Sydney University Press.
- Burton-Christie, Douglas. 2012. "Early Monasticism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Mysticism*, edited by Amy Hollywood and Patricia Z. Beckman, 37–58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Carver, Martin. 2014. "Travels on the Sea and in the Mind." In *The Maritime World of the Anglo-Saxons*, edited by Stacy S. Klein, William Schipper, and Shannon Lewis-Simpson. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies Press.
- DOE = Cameron, Angus, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey, Roy Liuzza, and Haruko Momma, eds. 2007–. *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*. Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project. <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca>.
- Faulkner, Amy. 2019. "The Mind in the Old English Prose Psalms." *The Review of English Studies* 70: 597–617.
- Flight, Tim. 2017. "Through a Glass Darkly: Evidence for Knowledge of Pseudo-Dionysius in Anglo-Saxon England." *Journal of Medieval and Religious Cultures* 43: 1–23.
- Frank, Roberta. 2001. "Old English *ancor*: Transformation of a Latin Loan Word." In *Germanic Texts and Latin Models: Medieval Reconstructions*, edited by K. E. Olsen, Antonina Harbus, and Tette Hofstra, 7–27. Leuven: Peeters.
- Fuller, Ben. 2019. "Cleating the Main: Two Quick Release Options." *Small Boats Nation*. <https://smallboatsmonthly.com/article/sheet-cleats/>.
- Godden, Malcolm. 1987. "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind." In *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, edited by Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss, 271–98. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Karamanolis, George. 2020. "The Reception of Plato's *Phaedrus* in Early Christianity." In *The Reception of Plato's Phaedrus from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, edited by Sylvain Delcomminette, Pieter d'Hoine, and Marc-Antoine Gavray, 103–18. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Lapidge, Michael. 1995. "The Career of Archbishop Theodore." In *Archbishop Theodore*, edited by Michael Lapidge, 1–29. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leneghan, Francis. 2015. "Preparing the Mind for Prayer: *The Wanderer*, *Hesychasm*, and *Theosis*." *Neophilologus* 100: 141–42.
- Lockett, Leslie. 2011. *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies in the Vernacular and Latin Traditions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Louth, Andrew. 1999. *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: from Plato to Denys*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Low, Soon-Ai. 2001. "Approaches to the Old English Vocabulary for 'Mind.'" *Studia Neophilologica* 73: 11–22.
- Low, Soon-Ai. 2005. "Pride, Courage and Anger: The Polysemousness of Old English *Mod*." In *Verbal Encounters: Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse Studies for Roberta Frank*, edited by Antonina Harbus and Russell Poole, 77–88. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.



- McKitterick, Rosamond. 1992. "Knowledge of Plato's *Timaeus* in the Ninth Century: The Implications of Valenciennes, Bibliotheque Municipale MS 293." In *From Athens to Chartres: Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought: Studies in Honour of Edouard Jeuneau*, edited by Haijo Jan Westra, 85–95. Leiden: Brill.
- McMullan, A. Joseph. 2021. "Literary Landscapes and Cultural Exchange in the Early Medieval North Atlantic." *Viator* 51: 23–34.
- Müller, Barbara. 2013. "Gregory the Great and Monasticism." In *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, edited by Bronwen Neil and Matthew J. Dal Santo, 83–108. Leiden: Brill.
- Niles, John D. 2019. *God's Exiles and English Verse: On the Exeter Anthology of Old English Poetry*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- North, Richard. 2024. "King Alfred as the Skipper in *Andreas*." In *The Age of Alfred: Rethinking English Literary Culture c. 850–950*. Studies in Old English Literature 3, edited by Amy Faulkner and Francis Leneghan, 429–53. Turnhout: Brepols.
- OED = Proffitt, Michael, ed. 1990–. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 3rd ed. www.oed.com.
- Orchard, Andy. 1995. *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf Manuscript*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Pépin, Jean. 1986. *De la Philosophie Ancienne à la Théologie Patristique*. London: Varorium Reprints.
- Ponirakis, Eleni. 2021. "Echoes of Eriugena in the *Old English Boethius*." *Neophilologus* 105: 279–88.
- Ponirakis, Eleni. 2023a. "Hellenic Language and Thought in Pre-Conquest England." *Anglica* 32 (4): 61–82.
- Ponirakis, Eleni. 2023b. *Thought and Action in Old English Poetry and Prose*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Ponirakis, Eleni. 2024. "Anhyld þinre heortan eare: Mind as Body in the Sermons of Ælfric." *Open Library of Humanities* 10 (1): 1–18. doi: 10.16995/olh.9065.
- Pratt, David. 2007. *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ramelli, Ilaria L. E. 2018. "Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul (and the Restoration): From Plato to Origen." In *Exploring Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical, Theological, and Historical Studies*, edited by Anna Marmodoro and Neil B. McLynn, 110–41. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ritzke-Rutherford, J. 1980. "Anglo-Saxon Antecedents of the Middle English Mystics." In *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England*, edited by Marion Glasscoe, 216–233. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.
- Treschow, Michael. 1993. "Echoes of the *Periphyseon* in the Third Book of Alfred's *Soliloquies*." *Notes and Queries* 40: 281–86.
- Treschow, Michael. 2024. "Easing Unease in the Old English Soliloquies and Boethius. A Mystical Turn." In *The Age of Alfred: Rethinking English Literary Culture c. 850–950*. Studies in Old English Literature 3, edited by Amy Faulkner and Francis Leneghan, 362–87. Turnhout: Brepols.
- Weaver, Erica. 2024. "Bending Minds in the *Old English Boethius*." In *The Age of Alfred: Rethinking English Literary Culture c. 850–950*. Studies in Old English Literature 3, edited by Amy Faulkner and Francis Leneghan, 341–61. Turnhout: Brepols.

Wilcox, Miranda. 2006. "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors: *Eagan modes* and *Scip modes*." *Anglo-Saxon England* 35: 179–217.