MEMORY AND REMEMBERING:
ANGLO-SAXON LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS
AND CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS
OF THE PHENOMENA CONSIDERED

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the University of Leicester

by

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April 2005
MEMORY AND REMEMBERING: ANGLO-SAXON LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS AND CURRENT INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PHENOMENA CONSIDERED

Striking similarities between Anglo-Saxon and present-day notions of MEMORY and REMEMBERING can be discerned through close analysis of Old English representations of these phenomena. Where there are significant dissimilarities, these are manifested as culturally specific nuances rather than fundamental differences between the two forms of expression. In this thesis, Anglo-Saxon literary representations of MEMORY and REMEMBERING are considered in comparison with current interpretations of the concepts as revealed through idiomatic Modern English and also in scientific discourse.

Although the Anglo-Saxons did not have the same understanding of MEMORY as is found in modern scientific accounts, these do provide a comparatively objective measure against which to gauge the remembering activities portrayed in Old English texts and Modern English idiom. A detailed exploration of the memory retrieval continuum, together with close examination of actual language use, allows for a degree of quantification not achievable through more impressionistic approaches to the field. This is achieved by analysing the contexts in which the Old English verb gemunen and noun gemynd are used; the figurative representations of MEMORY and REMEMBERING adopted by both Old English and Modern English speakers are also considered.

Misconceptions about tenth-century MEMORY representation – that Anglo-Saxon writers have no notion of ‘self’, or that nostalgia is the dominant aspect of REMEMBERING within Old English texts – are challenged by my findings. In order to arrive at a definition for each specific occurrence of an Old English MEMORY term, a range of contextual factors needs first be considered: manuscript context and the type of text, who is remembering and what they are remembering, and what other mental or emotional activities are occurring concurrently. A better understanding of the role of MEMORY is attained through recognition of its critical place within the wider field of COGNITION.
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Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my supervisors, Prof Elaine Treharne and Dr Julie Coleman, for all their help and encouragement throughout the period of my PhD research and writing. I am also appreciative of the guidance offered by Dr Anne Marie D’Arcy, Dr Mary Swan, Prof Greg Walker, Dr Michael Davies, and others who have heard me present conference papers: I only wish I had space to thank everyone I have met in Leicester, Leeds, and Kalamazoo. A big thank you goes to Mrs Sue Lloyd for administrative support over many years.

My family have given me their continued moral support during my eight years in higher education, and for this I am enormously grateful. I would particularly like to thank Matt Newcombe for his technical expertise and his boundless patience.

I would like to thank my fellow research students for lessening the isolation of the PhD experience: ‘congratulations’ to those who have recently been awarded their doctorates and ‘good luck’ to those who are still writing. Particular thanks go to those with whom I travelled the medieval conference circuit: Jasmine Kilburn-Small, Chloe Quirk, and Claire Watson.

I would also like to thank the many colleagues and former colleagues who have offered unstinting encouragement over the last four years: thank you to everyone in the Department of English, the Clinical Sciences Library, and the Centre for Mass Communication Research, all at the University of Leicester.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the financial support received from the Arts and Humanities Research Board over a three-year period from October 2001 in the form of a full-time Postgraduate Studentship in the Humanities.
List of Abbreviations

ASPR  Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records

b. Born

c. Circa

CSASE  Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England

d. Died

[DOE] Dictionary of Old English

ed[s]. Editor[s]

EETS OS  Early English Text Society, Original Series

[MCOE] A Microfiche Concordance to Old English

MS. Manuscript

repr. Reprint

trans. Translator

For an explanation of the typographical conventions employed in the study, see section 1.3.3.
0.1 THE RELEVANCE OF MEMORY STUDY – WIDER IMPLICATIONS

MEMORY is a vital and exciting topic of study. It has a far wider relevance than that specifically addressed in this thesis, or even than in the field of Old English literature more broadly. MEMORY goes to the heart of human identity, creating a sense of selfhood and building a coherent narrative out of the otherwise disparate moments of a personal history. MEMORY is implicit in every meaningful interaction between individuals; each speech act bears a weight of remembered meaning for the speaker, and must be met with corresponding memories in the receiver. (The less similar the memory stores, the less perfect the communication between minds.) A shared set of remembered cultural meanings and values can forge communities from individuals; incompatible memories, on the other hand, can place groups into opposing camps, unable to bridge the divide between them.

No literature – nor even the briefest conversation – can be created without the remembered vocabulary of one mind being transmitted and interpreted by other minds, who too must rely on a set of remembered words, phrases, and assumptions. Humans are story-telling animals: from navigating aspects of the physical world to explaining their own existence, narratives are used in a broad range of situations. Memory is fundamental, essential to that inexorable narrative drive.

0.2 WHY HAS THIS FRAMEWORK BEEN ADOPTED?

Research for this thesis stemmed from a detailed lexicographical study of MEMORY-related terms within a defined Old English corpus. Although the study of individual lexical items remains a valid approach, I have also found it necessary to include other approaches (such as the exploration of figurative representation) in order to provide a fuller picture of the Anglo-Saxon conception of MEMORY.

An overview of colloquial Modern English representations of MEMORY and REMEMBERING has also been included, in order to highlight continuities and disparities between tenth- and twenty-first-century views of these concepts.

The reason for the inclusion of work on modern scientific knowledge is twofold. In addition to its usefulness in defining and refining the terms to be used throughout this thesis, my exploration of current scientific theories of memory will also act as a control in the study of Old English and Modern English language use.
0.3 LIMITATIONS

Readers may expect to find in this thesis an exposition of the concept of MEMORY as revealed in Old English texts specifically written on that topic (explicit teaching texts, perhaps, or translations of classical works on mnemonic technique). However, such historically-based accounts of the concept are already in existence and it is not my intention to cover that ground again in this thesis.

Although I concur that MEMORY and REMEMBERING are vital in both the production and reception of texts in the Anglo-Saxon period, my focus will be on the memory events that occur within the texts’ narratives, rather than on the relationship between the narrative and the outside world.  

Readers may also be surprised that there is not a greater emphasis on literary secondary sources in the thesis. Although there is a wealth of literary criticism based on the texts described herein, my approach is primarily linguistic and I have therefore included secondary sources only where they seem particularly relevant to the language used in my texts.

Even though I have restricted my study to a small proportion of the Old English corpus and to a fraction of the memory-related vocabulary, the amount of data obtained has been considerable. It could be argued that I have aimed to be exhaustive in my exploration of my chosen terms, at the expense of in-depth analysis. Further work on any given aspect of this study could profitably be undertaken, it is true. However, I feel that my approach is justified in that I set out to illuminate the range of meanings that my terms could denote and this would not be possible were some occurrences excluded from the analysis.

0.4 OUTLINE OF THESIS STRUCTURE

0.4.1 CHAPTER ONE

In my introductory chapter, I outline some recent approaches to the study of medieval memory. I continue by delineating my own approach to the subject, and the methodology adopted in the thesis.

0.4.2 CHAPTER TWO

It is important to establish just what is meant by MEMORY, as we understand it today, before embarking on a study of Anglo-Saxon conceptualisations. The exposition in Chapter Two is based in

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1 See also section 9.3 below.
2 I do, however, point out correspondences between literary and ‘real world’ uses of MEMORY and REMEMBERING where these seem appropriate.
part on a synthesis of previous scientific work in this field. However, I also offer my own interpretations and suggestions, where I have found the explanations arising from this previous work to be overly restrictive.

0.4.3 CHAPTER THREE

In Chapter Three, I explore the colloquial Modern English language that is associated with memory. I shall examine the idioms currently in use, in order to establish (i) the kinds of memory process represented in such idioms, and (ii) the types of metaphor employed. I shall examine the extent to which idiomatic Modern English correlates with what we actually know about the mechanisms of memory.

0.4.4 CHAPTER FOUR

In Chapter Four, I explore the extent to which the processes identified in the ‘modern scientific’ approach to MEMORY are replicated (or even recognised) within the schemes utilised by Anglo-Saxon writers and thinkers. Do Old English idioms adhere in different degrees to the ‘actual’ workings of memory as proposed by modern science?

0.4.5 CHAPTER FIVE

The imagery of horticulture provides an alternative way of investigating the phenomenon of MEMORY as it was understood by Anglo-Saxon writers; whereas most of the figurative means of representing memory in Old English are also employed in Modern English (albeit in updated forms), horticultural imagery is one area in which Anglo-Saxon and present-day practices diverge.

0.4.6 CHAPTER SIX

In Chapter Six, having already noted the importance of MEMORY for the individual rememberer, I turn my attention to the role of MEMORY in the remembering community. Most remembering individuals belong to communities, in one way or another. Memory is at work within these remembering communities, both in mundane, day-to-day activities and in forging the very bonds that define the community itself. The binding of individual narratives into chronological sequences is a necessary step in the creation of community histories.
0.4.7 CHAPTER SEVEN

In this chapter, I turn my attention to one particular Old English memory term, *gemunan*, in order to explore which parts of the memory retrieval continuum are covered by this one important verb. This term is frequently translated as ‘to remember’, which tends to suggest that what is occurring is recollection, the centre point of the memory retrieval continuum. If the full spectrum of possible memory events is considered, however, it can be shown that terms such as *gemunan* carry a range of subtly nuanced connotations in addition to their most obvious meaning.

0.4.8 CHAPTER EIGHT

Having examined the connotations of the verb *gemunan*, in Chapter Eight I look at the collocational contexts of the MEMORY noun *gemynd*. By studying identifiable phrases within the Old English literary language and by identifying the ways in which metaphors are utilised within these phrases, I hope to gain a greater understanding of the Anglo-Saxons’ concepts of MEMORY and the extent to which these are similar – or otherwise – to our own.

0.4.9 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

My concluding chapter reviews the findings of my research, and highlights the significance of these for our understanding of the Anglo-Saxon mindset and for the interpretation of Old English language terms.

0.4.10 CONCORDANCE

In my concordance, I list every occurrence of *gemunan* and *gemynd* found within my selected corpus of Old English texts. In order to give an indication of the various uses to which these terms are put I have cited the phrase or sentence in which they occur, as appropriate, and have also provided my own translations throughout.
Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

If it had no memory, then with each sensation the sensate being would pass from waking to sleeping and from sleeping to waking: it would hardly have time to admit of its own existence. It would simply experience a momentary surprise at each new sensation; it would emerge from nothingness only to sink back into it again.¹

Between the “me” of to-day and the “me” of yesterday lie night and sleep, abysses of unconsciousness; nor is there any bridge but memory with which to span them. … Memory collects the countless phenomena of our existence into a single whole; and as our bodies would be scattered into the dust of their component atoms if they were not held together by the attraction of matter, so our consciousness would be broken up into as many fragments as we have lived seconds but for the binding and unifying force of memory.²

At first glance, memory seems a straightforward concept. Memory is the faculty by which we remember what we did last week, what we have read, what we need to do. Living without memory would be inconvenient, it is true, but we might believe that we could get around the problems involved by relying on external reminders or prompts. Further contemplation, however, reveals that loss or impairment of the faculty has far more serious and widespread consequences: as the quotations above indicate, MEMORY as a concept goes to the very core of human identity.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF MEMORY

A cursory glance along a library shelf will suggest the interconnectedness of mental activities: the biological fields of sensory perception and motor behaviour lead on to the area of emotions and feelings (areas which are, we like to think, about more than ‘mere’ biology). Then come memory and learning (two labels for parts of one process), shading into imagination, cognition, communication, perception, motivation and intelligence. Close by are books on the broad themes of personality and psychology. Does the study of memory begin and end with the section labelled ‘memory and learning’? If it does not, which topics should be included in the memory spectrum, and which excluded?

It is my intention in this thesis to reveal the ways in which these memory-related activities were understood by the Anglo-Saxons through an exposition of the way they are expressed in Old English texts. In a necessarily brief overview³ of the concept of MEMORY, I will show that this is an area demanding careful study: memory is vital to the creation and maintenance of (more or less) stable

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³ See section 1.1.1 and also Chapter Two.
individual identities, and is no less important in the genesis and transmission of the cultures of social groups.\textsuperscript{4}

1.1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORY AND THE ABILITY TO REMEMBER

While outward physical appearance has a large role to play in human interactions – particularly in early, or superficial, encounters between individuals – when we get to know a person we want to know ‘what they are like’: what are the unifying characteristics of the amorphous mass of thoughts, feelings, opinions, and beliefs which go to make up their identity, ‘who they are’? Is this interior landscape any more unchanging than the physical characteristics of an individual? Some behaviours in small children suggest that personality traits are inherent, inherited along with eye colour and blood type from the genes of their parents. However, it is also possible that even very young children learn or develop such characteristics independently (and so the nature/nurture debate rumbles on).

It is certainly true that interests and beliefs, and so on, accrue, alter, and are discarded over time. One’s opinions about religion, politics, relationships, etc., are informed by a wide range of sources: what one has experienced, what one has heard or read, what one somehow feels to be true, without being able to identify the source of that feeling. Every event one experiences has the potential to reinforce or to shatter a belief. Since I may hold opinions today contrary to those I held yesterday, since I may come to like what I have previously disliked (and vice versa), I surely cannot state that I am the ‘same’ person I was previously, based on the evidence of these shifting characteristics of my identity. Since neither physical, mental, emotional nor spiritual characteristics are immutable – since all, in fact, are more likely than not to undergo change in the course of a lifetime – what is it that constitutes the individual identity that I call ‘I’?

It is memory that provides the link between all the disparate locations, activities, thoughts and feelings of an individual’s life. Beliefs and practices may change over time, but the memory of these changes contributes to the sum of experience which goes to make up an individual. It is this continuity of memory that makes the ‘I’ of today the same as the ‘I’ of yesterday. I can have no empathy for the person that I was, in early childhood, because ‘we’ do not share memories; ‘she’ is alien to me and her experience is not part of mine. At some point, however, consciousness ‘came online’, the child began to perceive – and tried to comprehend – the world around her. Crucially, she began to remember what she experienced, the external stimuli and the internal thoughts and feelings. From that point on – the point to which the ‘I’ of today can remember back – she and I are one and the same.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{4} It is perhaps worth noting that not all the effects of memory are positive: group identity can be divisive within wider society, for example.
\textsuperscript{5} This is a necessarily simplified account of childhood memory, although the field of developmental psychology suggests that the disjunction of memory prior to the age two or three is real. See also the R. D. Gross, \textit{Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour}, second edition (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), pp. 607ff.
This, then, explains the vital link between memory and concepts of the self. Without memory, the individual can have no conception of him- or herself as an entity with a set of experiences distinguishing her or him from the rest of the world. As Squire and Kandel have it:

Life without the capability to store new information, or to recall previously stored experience, is a life in dissolution, a life without mental past, present, or future, a life without ties to other people or events and, most tragically, without ties to oneself.6

Memory, then, is the ultimate source of authority for our knowledge of ourselves.

1.1.2. HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF MEMORY

My work is related to that of scholars who have been interested in Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards memory. Mary Carruthers, Janet Coleman, Frances Yates and others have introduced the slippery concept of memory by outlining the classical writings on the subject, and exploring the reception of these works in the (later) middle ages.7 While this approach has many advantages, it also has a number of drawbacks: in the first place, what was believed about memory in classical antiquity may not have been transmitted to Anglo-Saxon England (Quintilian’s book on mnemonics having been ‘lost’ until the fifteenth century, for instance) and, even if it were, attitudes adopted in classical times may not have been current among the Anglo-Saxons of the tenth century.

Past scholarship has tended to focus on two main areas: studies of religious prose writings have sought to show how Anglo-Saxon techniques of composition fit into the classical tradition of learning (for example, the memoria component of rhetoric)8 while studies of Old English poetic texts have tended to focus on the role of memory in the context of the Germanic heroic ethos (in which studies, memory is shown to function between individuals in society).9

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8 See, for example: M. J. Carruthers, Book of Memory, pp. 122–55 on the Arts of Memory; J. E. Cross, ‘Ælfric: Mainly on Memory and Creative Method in Two Catholic Homilies’, Studia Neophilologica 41 (1969), 135–55; and K. O’B. O’Keefe, Visible Song: Transitional Literacy in Old English Verse, CSASE 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) on the role of remembering and misremembering in scribal copying and composition. Frances Yates describes Quintilian’s advice on how best a student can learn texts by heart (Yates, Art of Memory, p. 25), while Mary Carruthers refers to Hugh of St. Victor’s similar advice about using a single copy of a text when memorising (Carruthers, Book of Memory, pp. 263–64). There is a tradition of promoting such mnemonic techniques in handbooks of rhetoric dating from the classical period and continuing through the middle ages. However, such sources tell us little about how memory was perceived away from the rarefied atmosphere of the educational system.
The research question that I pose is: do these approaches tell the whole story about Anglo-Saxon views of memory? If so, then Anglo-Saxons are far removed from the modern remembering subject who values his personal memories for what they say about, and even contribute to, him as an individual. In modernity, the individual’s memories create and perpetuate the self.

Other scholars have touched on the historical role of MEMORY in the increasingly writing-based cultures of the middle ages.\(^\text{10}\) Because these studies tend to focus on the increasing use of written records, they illuminate only a narrow selection of medieval society. Furthermore, because these are on the whole narratives of progress, they tend to dismiss the feats of memory necessary for pre-literate as inferior to the arts practised by their literate successors.\(^\text{11}\) Although such scholars do acknowledge the continuing role of memory in this transitional society – the written documents sometimes being treated as mnemonic artefacts rather than being valued purely for their written context, for example – they tend to exclude from consideration that large proportion of the population who were peripheral to the ‘textual community’. There is also a tendency to concentrate on the later medieval period in these studies, as though the phenomenon that is the human memory was not recognised or appreciated in the ‘dark ages’ of the Anglo-Saxon period.

In fact, memory is all-pervasive in everyday life today and there is no reason to suspect that it was any less vital during the Anglo-Saxon period. The originality of my approach lies in an examination of the language of a selection of Old English texts recorded in or around the tenth century; these texts cover a wide range of topics and refer to memory in a number of contexts, showing that the faculty is not merely useful as a tool for rhetoric, composition and oratory. Rather than referring back to a Classical terminology of memory (which in any case would not have been understood by the majority of Anglo-Saxons, and may not even have been used by scholars of that period) I have chosen to compare Old English representations of memory against what is now known through scientific investigation of the phenomenon. I do not suggest for a moment that Anglo-Saxon writers of the tenth century perceived memory in the same way that twenty-first century scientists do, although, interestingly, there are many apparent correspondences between Anglo-Saxon representations of memory and the representation of the phenomenon in present-day Modern English usage. However, it seems to me that when dealing


\(^{11}\) In his *Presence of the Word*, for instance, Walter J. Ong asserts that an ‘oral culture has great difficulty in formulating abstractions’, due to its dependence on epic narrative form rather than on written analyses for the classification and passing on of knowledge; W. J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 203. This sharp distinction between memory practices in oral and literate societies ignores the fact oral ‘sayings’ – ‘common sense’ wisdom – must surely have been in circulation alongside the heroic, epic tales. It is pertinent to add that we gain many of our guiding principles today by ‘abstraction’ from experience (of ‘concrete’ events) rather than through any such abstract knowledge that may be available to us in written form.
with such a pervasive, nebulous, and shifting concept as memory the first step must be to define the concept as precisely as possible, in order to establish a ‘baseline’ against which to compare occurrences in other cultures and other languages. Since the modern scientific explanation is the most accurate and reliable explanation of the memory process currently available to us (albeit that the knowledge is partial, and subject to possible future alteration) it is this that I intend to use in my description and categorisation of the human faculty of memory and the processes of remembering.

1.2 OLD ENGLISH TEXTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THIS STUDY

The texts considered in this study are linked by a common language – that of the Germanic peoples living in Britain from the mid-fourth century onwards, known as Old English – and also by a common context of production.

During the Danish invasions of the ninth century, the tradition of monasticism in Anglo-Saxon England fell into decline. In the mid-tenth century, this decline began to be reversed when Dunstan created a new monastic community at Glastonbury, based on the principles of the Benedictine tradition. As the century unfolded, this development was given greater impetus as Edgar, King of Wessex, determined to restore monasteries that lay derelict, although this revival was largely confined to southern areas of what is now England. The king’s influence was to have a lasting effect: at the synod Edgar convened in Winchester (c. 963–75), Bishop Æthelwold drew up the Regularis concordia, a document in the Benedictine tradition that was intended to guide the revitalised monastic communities in their daily lives. Nor was this the last piece of work to be produced as a consequence of the monastic revival: the late-tenth and eleventh centuries saw a burgeoning in the production of Old English texts. It is against this context of post-Benedictine reform that the Old English texts considered herein were recorded and disseminated in their manuscript contexts.

Although Old English poetry could be, and was, treated in isolation to the prose of the period (see, for instance, the purely poetic collections of the Exeter Book and Junius manuscript), it could also be grouped thematically within a collection of mixed forms (as in the Vercelli Book). As I am studying, primarily, a theme or concept, rather than a form, I feel it is prudent to base my analysis on collections in order to see what dominant strands may emerge, rather than to restrict myself to, for instance, verse alone. The Vercelli Book itself provides a thematically-grouped collections of texts, of mixed form and genre, on which to build my further research. In order to provide some context for these items, I will also be looking at a wide range of Old English poetic texts and the Blickling Homilies, a

13 If such a term can be applied to Old English texts.
collection of anonymous prose homilies that will provide a suitable complement to the homilies of the Vercelli Book.

1.2.1. THE POETIC TEXTS

The poetic texts on which my earlier work has been based are for the most part to be found collected in a small number of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Exceptions to this rule are the so-called ‘Minor’ poems, collected into the sixth volume of the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records by E. V. K. Dobbie in 1942. This collection comprises 53 poems edited from 72 manuscripts of varying origin, and it is therefore impossible to ascribe a date and place of production for these poems as a whole.

The other poetic collections within the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, however, are somewhat easier to classify, being based as they are on individual manuscripts. The so-called Junius Manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11) is dated on palaeographical evidence to around the year 1000. The Paris Psalter has been dated to the beginning of the eleventh century, according to some commentators.

Most of the large poetic collections, however, have been dated to the later part of the tenth century. These manuscripts are: the Vercelli Book (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII); the Exeter Book (Exeter, Cathedral Chapter Library, MS 3501); the Beowulf Manuscript (London, British Library, MS. Cotton Vitellius A.xv); and the Meters of Boethius in MS. Cotton Otho A.vi.

1.2.2. THE PROSE TEXTS

Clearly, the Old English prose corpus is large, and detailed study of it in its entirety would be impractical. A well-defined subset of the extant corpus, such as the work of Ælfric, could have been chosen, but reliance on a particular writer might lead to individual idiosyncrasies being interpreted as general trends. Instead, the chosen prose texts are – like the majority of the poetic corpus – of

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16 Of course, dates and places of origin for these texts can only be posited based on the extant versions: we are unable to verify the (possibly complex) oral and/or written transmission history of the individual poems.
uncertain authorship, and roughly contemporary with the extant manuscripts comprising the major poetic codices (i.e. of around the second half of the tenth century). The Vercelli Homilies, contained in Biblioteca Capitolare CXVII, are conveniently situated in the same manuscript context as the poems Andreas, Fates of the Apostles, Soul and Body I, Homiletic Fragment I, The Dream of the Rood, and Elene. However, the Vercelli Homilies provide limited volume, as compared to the poetic corpus; the volume of homiletic material studied was increased by my inclusion of the anonymous Blickling Homilies, dating from a similar period (971 AD, according to an inscription in the manuscript itself, although the vocabulary used therein may look back to the ninth century). The inclusion of these two homiletic collections will help to establish the extent to which poetic texts are different in kind from prose works.

The availability of sources and analogues for many Old English homilies complicates their study, in comparison to the (usually unique) Old English poems. I have chosen to omit from this survey those passages supplied by Scragg and Morris to ‘reconstruct’ the text of lost or damaged manuscript leaves. I have, however, followed Scragg’s text and have therefore silently accepted a number of ‘corrections’ that do not appear in the original manuscript. My reasons for making these choices are that (a) editions of both prose and poetic texts tend to amend scribal errors and parts of texts that do not make grammatical sense, thus making their study comparable, but that (b) large portions of homiletic texts ‘reconstructed’ from Latin sources or vernacular analogues – however well these may mirror the missing texts – cannot be compared to Old English poetic texts, where sources and analogues are not generally available and the scholar therefore has to rely on the (extant) ‘words on the page’.

1.2.3. OLD ENGLISH TEXTS: CREATION, TRANSMISSION, AUDIENCE RECEPTION

At one point in Blickling Homily V, the homilist specifically targets the actions of unscrupulous judges: he (or she) also digresses into the three distinct types of murder. This raises questions about who were the intended audience of Blickling Homily V. Some years ago, Gatch warned of the problems involved in ascertaining the audience and purpose of Old English homiletic texts: not least of these is that there may have been a considerable period of time between the composition of a homily (or its translation from a yet more remote source) and its eventual inclusion in the late-tenth-century

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24 It must be noted at this point that the poetic corpus is in fact itself a very diverse medium: Old English poems exist within a number of ‘genres’, if it is possible to so categorise them, after the present-day fashion. Subjects include the exploits of Germanic heroes, re-tellings of the Old Testament stories, allegories, riddles, paraphrases of the psalms, hagiographies, and a metrical translation of Boethius’ Meters, to name but some.
Blickling collection.\textsuperscript{26} Nor can we say with certainty when the Blickling Homilies ceased to be used: versions of these texts may have been re-copied into later manuscripts, or have been incorporated into new texts. Uncertainty surrounds the circumstances of dissemination of many of the literary texts of the Anglo-Saxon period, although the prohibitive cost of manuscript production suggests that the producers, and perhaps the patrons, of such texts were well-resourced and more educated than the general population, among whom levels of literacy were low. These factors point towards a monastic or courtly context for manuscript production.

1.3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study looks at the lexical field of MEMORY in a range of Old English texts. Memory in the medieval period has been studied from a range of perspectives: the role of classical rhetoric in medieval education and oratory; the mnemonic techniques developed to enable readers to handle the ever-increasing amount of knowledge contained in monastic manuscripts; or the role of a prodigious memory for sources in the composition of new texts.\textsuperscript{27}

However, what is less well researched is what Anglo-Saxon writers and audiences may have meant by ‘memory’ or ‘remembering’. While this topic can be investigated by reference to texts that deal specifically with memory, clues to the polysemy of these concepts can be found in the language of writers whose main concern may not be memory \textit{per se}. The employment of memory-related vocabulary – \textit{gemunan}, \textit{gemynd}, \textit{gemyndig}, \textit{gemyndigan}, etc. – throughout the corpus in a number of contexts suggests a broad meaning for these terms. A detailed study of each term in its textual context, however, may reveal a number of specific nuances of meaning within the broader definition supplied by past lexicographers. By exploring the actual language used by Anglo-Saxon writers, it is to be hoped that light will be thrown on this important aspect of the Anglo-Saxon mindset.

1.3.1 FORMULATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

Having decided upon a close examination of the language of MEMORY of Old English texts, my primary tasks were (i) to select texts from the Old English corpus for investigation, and (ii) to identify the key MEMORY terms used within those texts. The present study builds on my previous work on the lexicon of Old English poetry. I had a choice to make when expanding my study for the larger PhD thesis: should I continue to work on the Old English poetic corpus, but expand the range of terms studied to include some of the related cognition terms already identified? Or should I instead take a


\textsuperscript{27} See, for example, J. E. Cross, ‘Ælfric: Mainly on Memory and Creative Method in Two Catholic Homilies’, \textit{Studia Neophilologica 41} (1969), 135–55.
chronological approach, and study the semantic shifts of the vocabulary of memory over a longer period of time, to include the gradual development of Old English *gemunan* into Middle English *imunen* and, later, its replacement by *remember*? My interest in the Old English corpus was the more pressing concern; a greater understanding of its writers and audiences is yet to be gleaned from an in-depth study of its lexicon.

As I was already familiar with the major texts of the Old English poetic corpus, and with many of the ‘minor’, or less well known, ones, I felt that I should attempt a comprehensive study of the entire Old English poetic corpus. Due to the possible dominant influence of Old English poetic form on the choice of vocabulary, however, I felt that it would be preferable to include some prose texts in my study.

Having established a selected corpus on which to work, my next task was to identify ‘memory events’ within the narratives and to identify the specific vocabulary employed in each instance. Originally I concentrated solely on the memory lexicon, and in this effort I was aided by the *Thesaurus of Old English* and the dictionaries of Bosworth-Toller and J. R. Clark Hall.\(^{28}\) Having compiled a list of likely terms, I then turned to the *Microfiche Concordance*\(^{29}\) to track the occurrences of these terms throughout my chosen corpus, thus decreasing the chances of missing any occurrences.

By noting where each word occurred, and translating the immediate context into Modern English, I was able to create a concordance of terms that would later form the basis of my analysis.\(^{30}\) The compilation of the concordance was time-consuming and quite labour-intensive; it rewarded the effort, however, in becoming a valuable research tool and source of raw data.

Valuable though this data is, however, an account of the lexicon of memory cannot, on its own, address the numerous nuances of the concept as represented in Anglo-Saxon texts. In addition to the recognised vocabulary of MEMORY in Old English, then, attention has also been paid to the figurative representation of memory events in Old English texts.

1.3.2 PRESENTATION OF THE DATA: RESOLVING UPON A SCHEMA

Having compiled a concordance of MEMORY vocabulary and a list of figurative representations of MEMORY, my next task was to look at the data obtained and to settle on a scheme for analysing and presenting the results. A text-by-text, term-by-term, approach was quickly abandoned as being too


\(^{29}\) A. dP. Healey and R. L. Venezky (comps.), *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English* (Toronto: The Dictionary of Old English Project, Centre for Medieval Studies, Toronto University, 1980).

\(^{30}\) Translations throughout the thesis and concordance are my own, unless otherwise stated.
repetitive and as not providing enough information about subtle nuances within each term (such as the personal or group motivations behind remembering, for instance); it also failed to reveal any patterns or links *between* texts. On the other hand, an approach which grouped memory occurrences thematically, according to the perceived motivation behind memory events, relied heavily on subjective interpretation of these memory events and failed to make clear the linguistic complexity of memory vocabulary. This also seemed somewhat cyclical, as the categories themselves were drawn from my preliminary results. In order to generate some quantifiable results, I later undertook a detailed analysis of the Old English terms’ collocational contexts.

Part of the difficulty in interpreting my data lay in the inherent difficulty of defining memory itself, whether in Old English or Modern English terms. In order to clarify what I meant by the terminology I had adopted, I returned to the modern-day exploration of the memory phenomenon. Drawing on the work of biologists and psychologists, I was able to delineate some of the key features of the human memory and the process of remembering, and to better explain the external manifestations of remembering by reference to the internal processes.

While a precise definition of what goes on during remembering helps to bring clarity to my investigation of Anglo-Saxon representations of the process, there are drawbacks to this approach. However, the modern explanation of the physiology and psychology of the human memory is still the most complete and most up-to-date descriptive system available to us at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I have therefore chosen to adopt it as the organising principle for my analysis of lexical data: since the schema is not of my devising (albeit that I have arrived at my own slightly modified model following a synthesis of the currently-available material) it provides as objective a way of classifying memory events as is possible. And yet, since the schema tends not to be acknowledged in colloquial Modern English, and was not part of the knowledge base of Anglo-Saxon writers, it can be used as an external, impartial yardstick by which to measure both these varieties of discourse.

Having derived a model, then, from a range of biological and psychological sources, I determined to use the features identified as a series of pegs upon which to hang my Old English occurrences of memory events, as well as a range of common Modern English idioms.
1.3.3 TYPOGRAPHICAL CONVENTIONS EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY

A number of typographical conventions are employed in this thesis. The main conventions are:

- Italics: used for titles of literary works, and Old English and Latin vocabulary terms.
- Small caps: used for semantic fields and concepts (e.g. MEMORY), and also for metaphor types (e.g. MIND-AS-CONTAINER).
- Inverted commas: used to indicate direct quotations, translations, and idioms.
- Quotation marks: used to indicate definitions.

1.3.4 QUESTIONS POSED BY THE STUDY

The questions I wanted to answer were:

- What are the meanings of the Old English lexicon of memory when these are viewed in context?;
- To what extent do dictionary definitions of memory lexical items reveal the true nature of memory events contained in Old English texts?;
- Is the Anglo-Saxon conception of memory strikingly dissimilar, or in fact similar, to that of Modern English speakers?;
- What is the link between remembering activities within the text and those between text and real-world audience?

In identifying memory events in Old English texts – whether these are expressed through memory-specific vocabulary or by the figurative use of non-memory-specific vocabulary – and analysing these in context, it is possible to derive a wealth of information about their nature. It is not only possible to identify who is remembering and what is being remembered; it is also possible to postulate motivations for the remembering activities, to infer what other mental and/or emotional activities are linked to remembrance, and to view the role of the observed memory event within its wider cultural context. Only when all these subtle nuances of meaning are identified is it possible to assess the relevance of an established dictionary definition for a particular term in a particular context.

Although my research does not include in-depth research into Modern English speakers’ use of memory vocabulary, I come to the writing of the thesis as a native speaker of Modern English, immersed in the culture of the late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century West and cognisant of the dominant ‘folk psychology’ or ‘common sense’ explanations of memory prevalent in that society. Using my own native knowledge of the language of memory in Modern English, and supplementing this by reference to dictionaries of Modern English idiom, I am well-placed to discover how present-day conceptions of memory relate to conceptions revealed in the Old English corpus. Using the
posited ‘memory retrieval continuum’ as a guide, I shall be able to chart the prevalence of various memory types recognised and expressed by Anglo-Saxon writers and Modern English speakers. In doing so, I hope to highlight any similarities between tenth-century and twenty-first-century outlooks (which might indicate a fundamentally similar approach to ideas about the self, and so on) as well as indicating where divergences occur (which would be revealing about points at which these two outlooks differ, such as the kinds of imagery used, or motivations ascribed to particular remembering individuals, etc.).

The (generally anonymous) authors of my chosen texts – particularly the homilists, although also the poets – often address a posited audience. We cannot always recover who this audience might have been: a church congregation, a monastic community, a secular gathering, and so on. Indeed, such is the complexity of the history of many of these texts that the instruction to remember may have been heard by generations of listeners before the words were set down in their present manuscript contexts; the purpose of these texts may have altered over the years when they were used and understood; and, following some years in obscurity as archaic documents, the texts are once again under scrutiny, this time addressing a scholarly audience. Although we cannot hope to understand every interaction between such texts and their audiences, in examining the implications of remembering within the worlds of the texts, we are better placed to understand something of the interaction between a text and the contemporary audience who are enjoined to remember it.

1.3.5 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter (section 1.1), the fields of cognition and perception are broad and interrelated, and I have had to make somewhat arbitrary decisions about which areas could be included in this study and which must be excluded due to constraints of time and space. Even within a more restricted field, not all pertinent aspects of MEMORY are within the scope of the thesis. For example, a comparison of mod and gemynd would have been very useful, but a close investigation of all MIND terms was impractical.

Constraints are also imposed on the study by the necessity of using available dictionary definitions for Old English vocabulary; although I am deriving meanings for the memory lexicon based on context, I still face the problem of possibly narrow interpretations when utilising existing dictionaries in my translation work.

Some of the vocabulary of poetry is restricted to use in poetic context, and literary prose is not necessarily a surer guide to Anglo-Saxon speech. This does not, of course, preclude lexical items in

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literary texts from use in the spoken language of the Anglo-Saxons; it does, however, bring into question the extent to which written texts can ever be said to reflect the everyday language of the period. In my study of the collocational contexts of memory terms, I am generally assuming that words tend to have evolved from describing concrete entities to metaphorical use with abstract concepts. This is compatible with everything I have read on the subject, but may still be a dangerous assumption to make. It is also necessary to assess the extent to which modern interpretations are imposed on to the lexical items translated.

I have also had to make some assumptions about Modern English use, as a native speaker of the language. I take it for granted that Modern English speakers use idiomatic language when discussing memory events, and that scientific vocabulary is not generally used. It is not possible, within the context of the present thesis, to undertake an exhaustive study of actual Modern English speech; instead, I have relied on my own experience of Modern English colloquial language, supplemented by documented idioms which have been listed in reference books.

1.3.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this introduction I have shown that MEMORY is of vital importance to individuals and societies today, and that it was no less key to Anglo-Saxon authors and audiences *circa* the tenth century and later. I have also outlined the approaches to memory taken by scholars in the field of medieval studies. These have tended to focus on texts specifically concerned with MEMORY, and on the transmission and reception of such texts historically. They have also tended to concentrate on the use of Classical sources in the later middle ages rather than on the Anglo-Saxon experience of MEMORY as revealed through Old English texts.

I have outlined my methodology, showing the process that led to my undertaking the current study. I have described the steps taken to identify both memory-specific vocabulary and figurative representations of MEMORY in Old English, and I have explained the rationale behind my choice of texts for study. I shall return to the results of these investigations in chapters four to eight. In the next two chapters, however, I intend to set the scene for the closer examination of Anglo-Saxon conceptions of MEMORY by looking at modern conceptions of the phenomenon: I shall do this by looking at the current state of scientific knowledge about the memory faculty and the processes of remembering, and by considering the ways in which Modern English speakers discuss MEMORY in colloquial exchanges.
Chapter Two

The Physiological and Psychological Basis of Memory

The subject of my research is MEMORY in Old English literature. This merits study, as memory is a vital part of the life of individuals and societies. Before embarking on a study of Anglo-Saxon conceptualisations of memory, however, it is important to establish what is meant by ‘memory’. In order to bring the concept into sharper focus – providing a context for the study of Anglo-Saxon memory – I shall begin this chapter with a look at what memory is, as far as we understand it today. MEMORY is a broad field, little understood even today, despite its pervasiveness in our day-to-day existence. I shall show that memory is a process – perhaps, more correctly, a series of processes – encompassing such activities as learning and creative thinking in addition to those functions that we would more usually associate with remembering.

As I have already intimated, memory is itself a contested term. Much work has been done to establish the physiology of the brain and the psychology behind the mental processes involved, and yet questions remain to be answered. I am not a psychologist, and so I do not plan to offer definitive solutions to these problems. However, in the interest of defining what it is I am talking about when I use the term memory, or a related term, I feel it is important to offer my own interpretation of what memory is. The following exposition is based in part on a synthesis of scientific work in this field: for my account of the neural basis of memory, for example, I am deeply indebted to others. However, in addition to synthesizing the results of others’ research in this chapter, I also offer my own interpretations and suggestions. While I accept many of the findings of scholars based on rigorous psychological experimentation, I also feel that this is an area in which results are open to subjective interpretation. Where I have found scholars’ explanations to be overly inflexible, I have not hesitated to offer my own less restrictive interpretations.

The reason for the inclusion of this work is twofold. In addition to its usefulness in defining and refining the terms to be used throughout this thesis, my exploration of current scientific theories of memory will also act as a control in the study of Old English and Modern English language use. Anglo-Saxon writers will clearly not refer in their writings to twenty-first-century explanations of the

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1 The importance of MEMORY to individuals and societies is explored in Chapter One, ‘General Introduction and Methodology’.
3 I shall return to the subject of the ‘objectivity’ of scientific discourse at a later stage; for the time being, I accept scientific discourse as being the most useful approach in bringing to light the memory process.
memory phenomenon. Chapters Four to Eight of this thesis will explore in some depth exactly what terminology is employed in Old English texts when memory events are described or explained. However, it cannot be assumed that Modern English speakers, with their access to current scientific thinking on the subject, utilise objective scientific discourse when referring to the role of memory in their everyday lives either. Although this thesis does not aim to explore Modern English language use at great length, it will be beneficial to compare some colloquial representations of memory in Modern English, against the index of my explanation of the memory process. It is in this second role that the following exposition will act as a control.

The aim of this thesis, then, is to explore the notion that Anglo-Saxon writers privilege the use of memory as a pedagogical tool and as a communal activity over its role as the cornerstone of self and identity. In this chapter, I shall explore current thinking on these topics: the process of memory as it is relevant (indeed vital) to the individual rememberer, and the role of the process within the wider remembering community.

2.1 THE INDIVIDUAL REMEMBERER AND THE HIDDEN PROCESSES OF MEMORY

Our everyday definition of memory might include, for example, the way that we are able to reminisce about pleasant events of the past, or our ability to remind ourselves when something important needs to be done. These are, of course, important – and impressive – examples of what ‘the memory’ can do. However, many other linked processes occur within the brain, not all of which we would immediately classify as memory processes. Perception, learning, habitual behaviours, as well as the recollection of memories, are all processes which are facilitated by a shared system in the human brain.

In simple terms, messages are received by and transmitted through the brain by means of a network of neurons. Information received from the outside world is converted into signals that are then conveyed along the neurons by means of the sodium/potassium action potentials in these specialised cells. Having travelled the length of the axon, the signal is halted. A neurotransmitter flows into the synaptic cleft between neurons and, if a significant quantity is detected by the receptor sites of the dendrons of the next neuron, then a new signal is instigated. It seems that the structure of the synapses (the connections between neurons) are in some way altered by this electrical activity. It is as though frequent use of particular pathways strengthens the synapses involved, encoding what is experienced into the very structure of the neural network itself. Conversely, pathways that are used infrequently seem to have less strong connections, causing the encoded information to be lost over time.

Changes in the connectivity of the neural network are not the only physiological effects of the electrochemical impulses that occur whenever we experience something, learn a fact, or otherwise
engage our memory system. Further processes, such as protein synthesis, must also happen if certain memory functions are to be sustained. More will be said about these processes in the following section, in which the relationship between particular memory processes and specific regions of the brain is explored.

2.1.1 WHERE DOES MEMORY ENCODING TAKE PLACE?

Analysis of patterns of brain activity has suggested that memory is not located at one specific site within the brain, but in fact involves a series of processes over a wide area, encompassing more than one brain region. Enduring memories for specific events are located (if this is the right word to denote neural activity) in close proximity to those areas in which the experience was first ‘encoded’ or processed; that is, in the cerebral cortex.

Fig. 2.1 (a) the whole brain from the left side; (b) a mid-line section

However, although it does seem that our experiences are registered, processed and ‘stored’ in the cerebral cortex in the form of engrams, research has shown that other areas of the brain are also involved in the process of memory. For example, lesions in the medial temporal lobes (or removal of a related structure, the hippocampus) prevent the formation of new memories, although old memories remain unaffected and the individual concerned is still capable of functioning in and interacting with his or her external environment. This has suggested to researchers that ‘the memory’ (or ‘learning’) is in fact a collective term for a number of discrete activities carried out in different parts of the brain.

Long-term memory, residing in those very sites that initially process perceptual inputs, is the usual end result of perceptual and intellectual activity. However, the case of ‘H.M.’ (an individual whose temporal lobes and hippocampus were removed in 1953) suggests that intellectual tasks can be

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5 A pattern of physiological/neurological changes, elsewhere referred to as a ‘memory trace’. Groeger glosses *engram* as ‘Tulving’s term for the brain-based record produced by learning something’; J. A. Groeger, Memory and Remembering, p. 327. Rose states that *engram* was a term introduced by zoologist J. Z. Young in the 1950s, S. Rose, Making of Memory, p. 137, although the Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. *engram*, gives the earliest citation date as 1908.
successfully carried out in the absence of a capacity for long-term memory processing. \(^6\) H.M. is able to perceive his environment, and to interact with others; however, once his attention is diverted from the things he is perceiving, or from the conversation in which he is engaged, then his memory of his surroundings or previous actions is lost. On the other hand, removal of his hippocampus and temporal lobes has not impaired H.M.’s ability to recall childhood memories. This suggests that the problem with his memory lies somewhere between the present perception of things and the storing of impressions for future retrieval. \(^7\)

The temporal lobes and the hippocampus, then, cannot ‘store’ enduring memories, which are thought rather to be captured as electrical patterns in the cerebral cortex, closely aligned to those pathways that were activated by the originating stimulus; and yet the absence of the aforementioned structures is disastrous for the formation of new memories, clearly indicating that they do have a role to play in the process. One possibility is that the temporal lobes, in the immediate aftermath of a learning event or other experience, provide links or prompts to the information being encoded in the cortex:

> after an event occurs, the medial temporal lobe rapidly stores links or pointers that connect it with the multiple cortical areas that together store a representation of the whole event … Eventually, the network of interconnected cortical areas is able to support storage and retrieval without the help of medial temporal lobe structures. \(^8\)

Memories, if this is indeed the case, do not ‘move’ from short-term to long-term storage sites in the brain. Rather, the immediate but relatively transient changes in synaptic connectivity brought about by encoding may be consolidated, through protein synthesis, into the more permanent anatomical changes which lead to long-term memory storage. \(^9\)

I shall say more later on about the kinds of memory produced through the collaboration of the different regions of the brain, but first I shall address the question of what it is that stimulates memory formation.

### 2.1.2 WHEN DOES MEMORY ENCODING TAKE PLACE?

It is common for our past experiences to become lodged in our memories without us having had any idea that encoding was taking place. Sadly, however, certain other kinds of information do have to be painstakingly memorised, or ‘learned by rote’, before we can say that we have them ‘in our memory’. However we perceive (or fail to perceive) the genesis of these memory traces, they all share common features such as the electrochemical impulses that encode them and the neural networks of the brain.

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\(^7\) For more on this, see L. R. Squire and E. R. Kandel, *Memory*, pp. 12–14.
\(^9\) For more on this see, for example, L. R. Squire and E. R. Kandel, *Memory*, pp. 131–35.
through which these impulses travel. Similarly, they share a common source: inputs, in the form of sensations, from the outside world.

Perhaps the most obvious source of stimulation is the physical environment that surrounds us. The ancestors of modern man lived through many millennia without the use of language or other high-level cognitive skills. What they reacted to, and became perfectly adapted to survive, was the physical world with its many inherent dangers. Reflex actions and other seemingly innate skills (pulling away from a source of pain, for instance) were all learnt through experience and through the activation of similar neural pathways to the ones involved in memory processes today.

Human brains have not altered a great deal over the years; certainly there has been no rapid increase in brain size or neural connectivity to match the intellectual leaps made by mankind during, for example, the age of classical learning in ancient Greece and Rome, or the more recent industrial, technological and scientific revolutions of the modern West. So the rich concept of multi-faceted memory as we understand it today is based on this: patterns of electrical activity in the neural networks of a brain developed to cope with surviving, navigating and procreating in a (often harsh) physical environment.

Navigating one’s environment and recognising the people one encountered was perhaps less complicated in prehistoric times than it is today, prehistoric humans being generally less mobile and having fewer contacts with others of their species. However, there were for a long time no external prompts to aid memory, nor any verbal language with which to communicate knowledge to others, or to learn from them. Increasing mobility (as people learned to utilise animals for transport, for instance, or built ships to explore further afield) must have led to an exponential increase in the number of experiences available to individuals. However, it must surely have been the development of human languages that had the biggest impact on learning, on knowledge, and on what we think of today as ‘memory’. It is impossible to conceive how thought could take place at all prior to language.

Presumably, prehistoric humans making flint implements – and also perhaps the higher primates today who use sticks as tools to manipulate other objects – must have utilised some kind of visual representation, perhaps ‘holding’ and ‘turning’ in their minds a picture of what the finished project

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10 We should remember, however, that for the majority of individuals within agricultural communities, life probably still very much revolved around one’s home or village.

11 In a different context (i.e. on the necessity to be fluent in Latin in 1050–1200 A.D.), Morris has noted that ‘[w]hat cannot be verbalized can scarcely be thought’; C. Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual* 1050–1200, Church History Outlines 5 (London: SPCK, 1972), pp. 7–8. Looking back more than three millennia earlier than Morris, Colin Wilson (following Jaynes) posits a shift from an integrated ‘intuitive consciousness’ to a self-divided ‘head consciousness’, dominated by the left-hand-side of the bicameral mind. For Wilson, this weakening of the unified consciousness is commensurate with the move towards widespread written record-keeping from c. to 2500 B.C. and, although it entails a ‘thinner and poorer type of consciousness’, the new scientific approach brings with it increased power over nature; C. Wilson, *Starseekers* (St. Albans: Granada Publishing Limited, 1982), p. 86.
should look like, against which they could compare the physical article before them. This kind of visualisation is still in evidence today, of course, when we try to recall specific images such as the face of an acquaintance, or when a generic image pops into our minds when we are asked to ‘think of a tree’ or other object.

Once language was adopted, however, the possibilities of what could be achieved by the apparatus of the brain were multiplied many times over. Sensory perception continues as it did before, through the exploitation of the signalling capacity of the sensory neurons. But the objects of perception are now somewhat different; the senses are no longer stimulated by direct contact with the physical environment alone. Equipped with language, we have access to second-hand experiences re-told to us by others. Their previous experiences are encapsulated in their words, and feed into our learning processes. Not only do others’ words offer us vicarious experience of environments and situations other than our own, but they can also influence our response to our own surroundings. Knowledge of others’ attitudes, now accessible to us through language, may lead us to question our own.

In some ways, language is not necessary for the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. Certain basic survival skills can seem almost innate, although this is a hotly contested topic. Ducks teach their young to swim, and bears their cubs how to catch fish, without any need of verbal language; the same must have been true for humans in their early (pre)history. Once it comes to the acquisition of knowledge from outside our domain of experience, however, verbal skills become vital. If a traveller were to attempt to explain snow to a desert-dweller, for example, a practical demonstration would not be possible. A complex series of verbal interactions would probably ensue: questions and answers; descriptions, comparisons, and antonyms. Language is a sometimes imperfect but frequently essential means of conveying information. Without it, and the concomitant ability to express ideas and opinions, culture as we know it could not exist. Nor could the stock of human knowledge have grown so quickly and to such a great extent, were it not for first verbal and then written language.

Before moving on to the topic of the role of memory in language production and comprehension, I would like to turn briefly to the work of Sapir and Whorf on the links between language, thought processes and cultural backgrounds. It is common to view verbal thoughts as the product of the mental ‘processing’ of our experience in the real world; that is to say, that the exterior reality pre-exists thought, and waits only to be described in our language(s). Both Sapir and Whorf would dispute this commonsense (or ‘natural logic’, in Whorf’s formulation) view of the order of things. Rather, they posit that ‘the “real world” is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group’, and that – far from there being any rational, pre-existing pattern to this exterior reality – it is we who organise our external experience into concepts, following categorisation systems.

that are implicitly agreed by our ‘speech communities’. Rather than seeing different languages merely as a way of applying different labels to common referents, Sapir sees different language communities as occupying ‘distinct worlds’. Evidence for the way in which different societies experience and organise their worlds comes from Whorf. He notes, for example, that the referents of some Modern English nouns, such as lightning and meteor, actually refer to passing events – rather than stable entities – and are therefore described by verbs in the Hopi language. The most familiar of Whorf’s illustrations is probably that of the Eskimo vocabulary for snow, in which the number of terms available (compared to the one broad Modern English term snow) suggests a greater sensitivity to the phenomenon among Eskimo peoples. Although the validity of Whorf’s reported findings has subsequently been challenged by some commentators, the underlying thesis – that, rather than the output of a mental process, language is ‘itself the shaper of ideas’ – remains important today.

Language is a product of culture, and of particular individuals within particular cultures. It is intimately bound up with the mental outlooks of those of those individuals and cultures, and so the study of language can provide insights into mindsets other than our own. In the words of Edward Sapir, ‘[l]anguage is a guide to “social reality”’, a ‘symbolic guide to culture’. Although language has been vital in the proliferation of human knowledge, the innovation that is written language could in some ways seem to be the enemy of the human memory, replacing rather than aiding the act of remembering. And, indeed, the prevalence of written records as external supports has reduced the need to memorise facts that would have been ‘common knowledge’ to our prehistoric ancestors. However, although memory owes a lot to language, language can only function with the assistance of memory. Language is of course an arbitrary system substituting words – ‘signs’ – for the objects or actions that we wish to describe. This in itself means that language is heavily dependent upon memory. There is no obvious link between a green, leafy object in a park and the noun tree. The sight of a tree does not spontaneously trigger the response, ‘That is a tree’; rather, from our many encounters with trees we derive a generic concept of ‘treeness’, which we learn to name tree. Whether we acquire the ability unconsciously at an early age – our first language or ‘mother tongue’ – or with conscious effort later on (‘foreign’ languages), the capacity to understand and to produce language is underpinned by memory.

The importance of memory is yet greater when individual ‘signs’ are brought together to form complex ‘texts’, whether written or spoken. Oral and written forms of a language each have

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16 Ibid., p. 117.
18 However, Mary Carruthers notes that at the end of Phaedrus, Plato has Socrates say that written words ‘serve only to “remind one who knows that which the writing is concerned with”’; M. J. Carruthers, Book of Memory, p. 30. Although the engagement of two living minds is by far the best method of education, Socrates ‘allows value to writing as a way of storing experience for oneself and posterity’; ibid., p. 30.
advantages and disadvantages. In present-day England, for example, reading tends to be a private affair. Individual readers peruse a text, usually silently, and are able to read at their own pace, pausing or even ‘retracing their steps’ when necessary. Because writer and reader are separated spatially and temporally, and because there might be hundreds or thousands of readers, written texts have to adhere to certain formal rules if they are to be widely understood. In contrast, spoken words reach the audience, whether one individual or many, at a pace dictated by the speaker. This may have the disadvantage of ‘losing’ all or part of the audience, but in compensation the speaker can implement a range of strategies to overcome this problem: repeating phrases, reiterating ideas in different forms and so on.  

Whatever form of communication is chosen or imposed, the individual words do not convey meaning – or, at least, not the specific meaning intended in the context – until the clause, sentence, or paragraph is complete. This means that language comprehension cannot take place without the intervention of memory. The words ‘pile up’ in memory until such a time as meaning can be assigned to them.

I have shown that inputs into the memory system can be derived from the physical environment, or from the inhabitants who populate that environment (perhaps in the form of second-hand accounts of real-world experiences). I now want to explore another, perhaps less well-known (because less obvious) source of input: the rehearsal of memories.

When we reminisce about a past event, what is the source of our recollection? Is it the raw data received and processed by our senses in response to the original event? It could well be. Often, for example, a particular scent may trigger a spontaneous recollection of an event, rich in detail and apparently replicating the sensations of that originatory event. (We might, in common parlance, ‘feel’ as we did then, and the memory is akin to a re-experiencing of that situation.) Is the source not first-hand experience of an event, but information gained at second-hand from others? Again, it could be so. One may not have a clear memory of becoming separated from one’s parents in a crowd at a young age, but if the story of the event has been told within the family (and perhaps re-told on numerous occasions) then it is likely that one will have a reconstructed memory based on what one has learned of the event.

Alternatively, what if you do remember the event and have had occasion to recall the details a number of times since? You might also remember having recalled the event at some point in the past. What then is the source of one’s latest, present recollection? Is it possible to distinguish between recollecting an event and recollecting a previous recollection of that event? Such serial recollections might be termed ‘rehearsals’. It seems likely that such internal rehearsal of memories, while strengthening or reinforcing certain aspects of the recalled experience, may cause other aspects to be

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19 However, the processes of reading written texts and hearing spoken ones are both sequential; see G. Cohen, Memory in the Real World, pp. 238 and 280.
lost or altered. Thus, what comes to be remembered is often the reinforced, rehearsed version with which one is familiar, rather than an accurate representation of events as they actually occurred. In such cases, the source of a memory-trace is not an event in the physical world, but the rememberer’s own rehearsed version of the event; and in such a case, the rememberer him- or herself is unlikely to recognise the difference, believing his or her version to be accurate.\textsuperscript{20}

The introduction of language in the memory equation has another, perhaps surprising, consequence. Our experiences in the world and encounters with others frequently contain no language component. (When Wordsworth saw daffodils, or Coleridge stared into his hearth, their senses were stimulated but there was no verbal element in the experience, for instance.) However, it is very common that we create narratives for ourselves out of these experiences, just as we would if recounting the events to others. In doing so, we change a non-verbal experience into verbal form and create a different kind of input; a ‘rehearsal’ similar to those mentioned above.

The way in which we deal with these internally-generated narratives is not entirely dissimilar to the way that we respond to stories in general. It is a well-known phenomenon that, in the general way of things, many specific details about reading a novel, say, are ‘lost’ or, indeed, are never really registered consciously in the first place by the reader. Unless there is something very extraordinary about a particular volume, aspects like the feel of the book in the hand and the placement of the words on the page are disregarded as unimportant to the reading experience.\textsuperscript{21} Similarly, with the exception of a few familiar passages, such as the opening lines or other popular quotations, much of the actual language of the novel will also be quickly forgotten. What remains – and what may, in some cases, be retained for months and years – is a sense of the tone of the book and a knowledge of the main points of the narrative (the story, in simple terms).

What are the implications of this phenomenon for the process by which experiences-become-narratives are remembered? Turning real-world experience into internal narrative representation is already a self-editing process. Peripheral events are disregarded in our account of the central encounter. Not all of the accompanying sensory inputs can be attended to at once, and so we tend to focus on only those which are vital to our story: the face of our interlocutor and the sound of their words, say, in a remembered conversation.\textsuperscript{22} The narrative structure imposes certain constraints on the

\textsuperscript{20}It is often important, from a practical point of view, to distinguish between ‘real’ events and ‘mental’ ones. It is necessary to establish which actions one performed and which one only intended to do: ‘I remember thinking about closing the window…’. Gillian Cohen uses the term reality monitoring for ‘the ability to discriminate between externally derived memories that originate from perceptions and internally derived memories that originate from imagination’; G. Cohen, \textit{Memory in the Real World}, p. 282.

\textsuperscript{21}Medieval and modern attitudes differ on this point. For more on how the way in which the text is presented affects subsequent recall, see F. A. Yates, \textit{The Art of Memory} (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1996), p. 25 and M. J. Carruthers, \textit{The Book of Memory}, p. 94 and appendix A, pp. 263–64.

\textsuperscript{22}In any situation, sensory inputs are numerous and must be ‘filtered out’ if the participant is to ‘make sense’ of the conditions. Without conscious intervention, the nervous system directs attention to what is novel or unexpected in the environment, ignoring static elements. Richard Gross describes this ‘habituation’ to the
remembered experience: it must have a clear beginning and end; there should be development of some kind between these two points; and the event is usually endowed with some kind of meaning. (And, after all, it is generally those events that are meaningful to the rememberer that can subsequently be recalled.)

In addition to organising a remembered event, pulling it into a particular shape, the process of creating one’s own narrative can also have a more dramatic effect on the originatory event. The salient features can be elaborated upon, and one’s own part in the incident embellished: ‘what I should have said was…’. Consciously or otherwise, we often edit our narratives to make them mesh with our own life stories. There is, therefore, a gap between our memory of an experience – rich in sensory information and other random, and perhaps conflicting, elements – and our experience-become-narrative, which is structured, coherent, logical. As time goes on, and as the narrative version of events is rehearsed to ourselves or among others, this gap widens. Just as we remember only the storyline of a novel, so we tend to forget the extraneous details of our own already pared-down version of events. This, then, shows another aspect of the pervasive power of language on the memory process; in time, our memory of the story becomes our memory of the event.

Having the ability to convert lived experiences into language-based memories means that humans are able to share their experiences. I have already touched on the role of language in transmitting knowledge across time and space (across continents, for example, or between generations). This is not a one-way process. The effects which groups can have on exactly what is remembered would be a fascinating area for further study and is of particular importance, as shall be seen, in a culture like that of the Anglo-Saxons.

Assuming that the event held enough significance to be remembered at all, where several individuals have shared an experience each will have her or his own recollection of that experience. If one group member struggles to recollect a fact about the event, she or he will probably appeal to the group to supply the missing information. As the details may be recalled differently from one group member to another, negotiation to establish an accepted or authorised version may have to occur. As with one’s own rehearsal of experience-become-narrative, the frequent repetition of recollected experiences within groups, whether or not these are formalised as story-telling, may result in the narrative version of events replacing the original sensations as the source of the group’s recollection. A yet stranger corollary to this process of sharing narratives of recalled events is that one may find oneself reminded by the group of, or corrected about the details of, private experiences of which the group has no

environment as an adaptation that aids survival (R. A. Gross, Psychology, p. 105); attention is focussed on detecting danger, and so on. Which, not coincidentally, are also heavily self-edited. The narrative structure which we impose upon our life history – our autobiography – works to lend coherence and meaning to our lives to date. The creation and rehearsal of such narratives does much to affect our beliefs about events, even overwhelming the internal ‘reality monitor’ on occasions. For more on the role of reality monitoring, please see G. Cohen, Memory in the Real World, p. 282.
knowledge save for their having heard, and repeated, one’s own narrative account: ‘Yes, you have been there before; I remember you telling me’.

2.2 THE OUTWARD SIGNS OF MEMORY, AND THE REMEMBERING COMMUNITY

Having considered in the previous section the various inputs that stimulate the memory process, I should now like to consider the ‘outputs’, or end results, of that process. What are the likely outcomes of the various mental activities explored elsewhere in this thesis? How are these activities manifested in the real, physical, world? What is their impact upon an individual’s actions, and indeed upon his or her life?

In the most basic terms, a human’s capacity to act in the physical world is governed by the same system that allows him to perceive his physical surroundings. Just as sensory neurons transmit sensory inputs into the nervous system, so are the outputs from the system effected by the motor neurons of the body.

Determining exactly what it is that memory does, or defining the ‘outputs’ of the memory system (described herein), is in some ways the most complicated task so far. Certainly, the physiological basis of memory is an incredibly complex subject (much more so than will appear from the foregoing brief summary) but learning what is going on within the brain structure is a finite process. It is a code that will be deciphered one day, and it seems likely that, once the basic process has been described, this will explain the biological bases of the various activities associated with memory: learning, memorising, recalling, and so on. Providing the underlying machinery that is utilised in many and varied ways, the neural network – though fiendishly complex in its make up – will supply a single key to unlock the secrets of the mind’s workings.

What is less easy to account for is the vast array of tasks to which the human being sets his or her mental machinery. The observable outputs of the memory system are rich, complicated, varied and yet closely intertwined. Teasing out, and assigning a name to, discrete products of the retrieval system of memory is a task that may never be satisfactorily completed. Nevertheless, I shall attempt to describe some of the things that we do with memory (bearing in mind that I am addressing this problem based on my own experience in the modern West, and that these categories may well not apply in other cultures or in other time periods).

2.2.1 DECLARATIVE AND NON-DECLARATIVE MEMORY

Simple, reflex actions are initiated by electrochemical impulses which bypass conscious thought entirely; we withdraw our finger from a flame instinctively. Learning is involved, in that certain
pathways in the nervous system are stimulated and strengthened by the experience of the pain associated with burning. But things that we learn to do without thinking about our actions – walking, riding a bicycle, driving a car – do not seem to us to be the product of memory. To put it differently, these skills are not the kind of thing one would automatically mention if asked to define memory. Yet these automatic, almost habitual, behaviours are learned – or encoded within the brain – in just the same way as we learn facts or encode memories of events. All are due to the stimulation of certain pathways of the neural network. Learning to walk, ride, or drive, however, does not result (usually) in a visual representation or verbal account of what it is one now knows; this kind of learning instead results in a change of behaviour, a change of which we may be unaware as it happens. It is this lack of dependence on conscious recollection that sets the learning of skills apart from other kinds of remembering. Our actions show that such learning has taken place, but we are not able to tell what it is we know, even to ourselves. Indeed, attempts at conscious application of this knowledge can often impede the performance of an action that is undertaken effortlessly without conscious thought.

This kind of output is termed *implicit* or *non-declarative memory*. It will not feature prominently in my account of memory, simply because it is not usually considered to be of the same order as other kinds of (explicit) memory. The remainder of this discussion, then, will focus on those kinds of memory output that are generally termed *declarative memory*.

### 2.2.2 DECLARATIVE MEMORY: EPISODIC AND SEMANTIC SCHEMA

As I have already indicated, the machinery of memory generates an immense number of related outcomes. In an attempt to understand this vast field, researchers have organised these outcomes according to various schemata. These take as their basis different approaches to categorisation, for example content (*what* is remembered) or purpose. One of the most prevalent schemata is the division of declarative memory into two major classifications: episodic and semantic memory.\(^{25}\)

The episodic-semantic memory schema is derived from the content of memory, and ultimately from the source of that content. I have shown in the previous section that memories are derived from two principal sources: one’s own direct (first-hand) experience of the world and all its inhabitants, and knowledge gained at second-hand (third-, fourth-, etc.) which ultimately derives from the first-hand, personal experience of others.\(^{26}\) The distinction between content gained at first-hand through personal experience and that derived from other sources forms the basis of the episodic-semantic divide.

\(^{25}\) This is only one way of classifying memory. Mary Carruthers, for example, notes that the medieval understanding of memory did not distinguish between ‘things experienced’ and ‘things read about’ in the same way as we do. In her view, ‘character’ results from the repeated recollection of *all* experience (ours and others’). See M. J. Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, pp. 169 and 179.

\(^{26}\) For the purposes of classifying memories according to this schema, it is assumed (a) that there exists an objective reality that we and others can experience at first-hand, and (b) that others will subsequently report their experience of this reality to us truthfully.
2.2.3 DECLARATIVE MEMORY: EPISODIC MEMORY

When we attempt to recall the scene of a childhood birthday party, or to remember what we did last Tuesday, we are accessing information classified as episodic (or autobiographical) memory. This is information about specific events in our lives, the result of direct personal experience. Because episodic memory falls under the more general heading of declarative memory, we are able to recollect such episodes consciously. We might turn the scene into a verbal description, explaining to others what we have experienced (including such discussions as ‘What I did on holiday…’, for instance). Or we might conjure up a visual representation of the event: indeed, we frequently do this while simultaneously describing the scene to someone else. So, in recalling a birthday party we might call up an image of our childhood home, through which we are able to wander, looking at it from various angles. It is a feature of episodic memories that they are context-rich; in placing an homunculus in the middle of our visual representation, we are able to immerse him in the sights, sounds, scents, tastes and feelings of that time and place. By ‘remembering ourselves back into’ an earlier version of ourselves, we might recapture part of the complicated web of feelings associated with that previous time; what one had been doing previously, what one felt on the day itself, what one’s relationships were with others, what one’s expectations were for the future, and so on.

Not every episodic recollection, of course, will be so rich in detail. Often an element of (positive or negative) emotional response to a particular event, for instance, will affect the degree of detail in which it is recalled.\(^\text{27}\) If one is merely trying to remember where one was yesterday, for instance, it is quite likely that the barest outlines of the experience will be recalled, stripped of all its attendant periphery sensations.

2.2.4 DECLARATIVE EPISODIC MEMORY: FIELD AND OBSERVER PERSPECTIVES

The ways in which we can access episodic memory, or the extent to which we feel involved in our recollections, are also apparent in two viewpoints identified by researchers. In one, as with our example of the homunculus at the birthday party, we see and experience events again as we did the first time around. The memory itself may be a more or less accurate representation, but the present, remembering ‘I’ moves through the scene in the role – and with the same perspective as – the former, remembered ‘I’. This is sometimes referred to as the field perspective.\(^\text{28}\) The alternative means of interaction – the observer perspective – has the rememberer as a disembodied viewer of the scene (perhaps even looking at his or her younger, remembered self).

\(^{27}\) Moments in which interest is stimulated or emotions aroused tend to lead to better subsequent recall of declarative memory, as they lead to deep, elaborative encoding. For more on this topic, see L. R. Squire and E. R. Kandel, Memory, p. 71 and G. Cohen, Memory in the Real World, p. 312.

\(^{28}\) G. Cohen, Memory in the Real World, p. 147.
However we experience our episodic memories – as representations in which we participate or upon which we look, or as verbal, narrative accounts told to ourselves or others – experiments suggest that we organise our episodic memories along chronological and/or temporal lines. That is to say that episodic memories are heavily dependent on context, and that we will have many linked memories associated with a specific time (‘What I did when I was eight … eighteen … twenty-eight…’) or place (‘Things I have done at school … at the beach … at home…’).

2.2.5 DECLARATIVE EPISODIC MEMORY: NOETIC AND AUTONOETIC MEMORY

I have touched briefly on the problems involved with memory loss, and have intimated that lack of self-knowledge, or lack of a cohesive life history, is perhaps the most devastating consequence of such loss. In such cases, what is lost can be categorised as episodic memory. One of the major functions of episodic memory is the creation of a continuous, meaningful life history, and in conjunction with that also the creation of a sense of ‘self’; the ‘I’ of today recognises him- or herself in the remembered ‘I’ of yesterday. In addition to this intrapersonal function of episodic memory, it also performs an interpersonal function, for example the maintenance of relationships among those one recalls to be one’s friends and family and with whom one recalls having shared experiences in the past. In all of these cases where the rememberer knows the context of his recollected experience (that is, ‘source monitoring’ tells him that he has had this experience, at some earlier time, in the real world) the memory involved can be called autonoetic.

There is one kind of autobiographical memory, however, which falls outside of the autonoetic category. If we think about our date of birth, we know that we know this information, and can also inform other people about it: it is a declarative memory. It is concerned with an event, in a specific place at a specific time, in which we were personally involved; it can therefore be called an autobiographical or episodic memory. However, very few, if any, of us have any conscious memory of our birth. We can try to reconstruct or imagine the scene based on what we know of birth generally and of the circumstances of our birth specifically (second-hand information) but we are unable to recall the attendant thoughts and feelings because they are not (and perhaps never were) part of our conscious experience. This kind of autobiographical memory is termed noetic, and I consider it more closely related to semantic than episodic memory.

2.2.6 DECLARATIVE MEMORY: SEMANTIC MEMORY

Semantic, or generic, memory differs from episodic memory in terms of its sources and its contexts. The division is, of course, an artificial one, since all memory enters the brain in the same way. However, semantic memory is a term covering a range of processes that are used by the rememberer in a way unlike the manner in which episodic memory is used.
Whereas episodic memory is derived from direct personal experience, semantic knowledge is derived from other sources. There is some overlap; knowledge gained through reading a book or conversing with friends does involve episodic memory to an extent. However, it is a characteristic feature of general knowledge that we place more emphasis on what is known, rather than the how or why of the process. Once we know that the Conquest occurred in 1066, to take a well-known example, we tend not to remember the context in which we learned the fact (whether this was through reading a book, being told by a teacher, or whatever). In other words, we tend not to monitor the source of our general knowledge, unless there is a strong personal interest in doing so: for example, if one were humiliated in a school room situation for not knowing a fact.

Because general knowledge is frequently context-independent, it cannot be ordered along chronological or spatial lines, as can episodic memory. Rather, semantic memory tends to be organised by category: for example, ‘Everything I know about motor mechanics…’, ‘Recipes I know…’, or ‘Facts I’ve learned about elephants…’. This is important because, as a rule, examiners or others who require information are interested in what one knows of a subject, and not how one came to know it. General knowledge also tends to be bound into its own hard-and-fast hierarchies (e.g. elephant → mammal → animal) and to have right or wrong answers; an objective view is required, and one cannot decide to reclassify an animal based on one’s personal feelings.

So far, our exploration of semantic or generic memory would seem to suggest that all such general knowledge is acquired in the form of hard facts learned through books or other learning methods (now including interactive DVDs, the Internet, etc., in addition to human tutors). If this were so, then general knowledge would be a useful tool, but it would also have some severe limitations. If an object looked novel to us (albeit with typical features), we would be unable to match it with the mental images of objects encountered previously. And if information were presented to us in a different manner or form to usual, then we would be unable to recognise it as comparable to information already known. In fact, semantic memory works in a far more complicated and more intriguing way than that: it does not merely take snapshots of information and use these for recall purposes, or to identify identical incoming information. Rather, through semantic memory we are able to extract pertinent information from the vast array of sensory inputs that bombards us daily and, through the de-construction, re-construction and re-combining of such elements, create seemingly infinite ways in which our general knowledge can be used. These inputs are gained from the wealth of our personal experiences, including, though not limited to, explicit learning experiences. Events in the real world – detail-rich, context-dependent specific occurrences – can be abstracted, or turned into generalisations. These generalisations are then applicable to a wider range of possible scenarios than would be the case

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29 This can pose a problem, in that we often have the feeling that we know something without being able to say why we know it. In a pressure situation – during a quiz, for example – we are forced to gamble on whether our knowledge is based on a reliable source, on hearsay, or was simply imagined!

30 Except, perhaps, under certain artificial conditions, such as keeping information learned in one undergraduate module discrete from another module even though the content is linked or even overlapping.
if the memory remained context-dependent. For example, shopping in one supermarket on several occasions might lead one to construct a supermarket ‘script’ (this is not generally a conscious process, but if the question were asked, we could all name the component aspects of supermarket experiences: finding a trolley or basket, walking up and down the aisles, queuing to pay for goods, and so on). One is not completely at a loss, then, when unexpectedly forced to visit a different store. Although the layout may be different, the main points of one’s generic script will still apply, and even clues as to the layout of the store may be laid down in one’s script (e.g. looking for aisle signage, knowledge about what kinds of product tend to be grouped together, etc.). So, while it is quite impossible to have personal experience or knowledge of every supermarket, we are well equipped to function within any store in which we might find ourselves.31

In the same way, it is impossible to hold the sum of human knowledge – accumulated by numerous people over many millennia – in one’s conscious memory, even supposing all such knowledge were available to any one individual. But, through the process of abstraction, we are able to create tools with which we can manipulate our limited knowledge to achieve an unlimited range of possible outcomes: inferring, estimating, guessing, calculating, and so on.32

2.2.7 DECLARATIVE MEMORY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FORGETFUL

This is an opportune point at which to raise the question, why do we forget? Forgetting may seem, at first sight, to be a design fault in the memory. One has only to consider, however, the sheer quantity of apparently useless information with which one is inundated every day to realise that remembering everything would soon become counter-productive. Just as the perceptive system filters out unchanging sensations to avoid sensory overload, meaning that we are not even aware of the constant aspects of our environment most of the time, so too the memory tends not to store individual records of repeated events. For instance, there is no need to recall the details of every walk home from school, a journey undertaken perhaps a couple of thousand times by the time one reaches school-leaving age. Similarly, mundane chores like washing and dressing oneself or doing housework are not recalled in detail, unless a particular occurrence was in some way remarkable.33

31 This generalisation is culture-specific, of course: if we were presented with a non-self-service model (of shop, or petrol station, or whatever) we would have to pause our scripts, re-evaluate the situation, either applying a different script from a comparable situation or else being prepared to learn a new skill or write a new script.
32 For further information, see G. Cohen, Memory in the Real World, p. 180.
33 It should be noted that the inability to recall details in such circumstances does not necessarily mean that memories have not been encoded. Police reconstructions are just one way in which memories can be ‘jogged’, leading individuals to recollect memories of which they were not previously conscious. (I would add, however, that though lost details can be retrieved through prompting, it may also be the case that multiple re-tellings of a story cause details to be re-ordered in such a way as to make sense of senseless events, and may cause incorrect details to be reinforced as true accounts. There is also a possibility that memories of traumatic events are suppressed, consciously or unconsciously, although this is a contentious issue: again, questions can be raised about the validity of such memories, once they are ‘recovered’.)
Not only does forgetting allow such filtering, freeing up more space for what is important, it is also crucial for the abstraction process outlined above. In order to construct generic scripts or schemas, we must forget the details of individual experiences. If our memories were full and accurate records of our whole lives – if they were, for example, like a constantly-running video system – then we would have excellent recall of specific events but would be unable to break them down to their component parts in order to recognise commonalities, and so on.  

2.2.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The division of explicit, declarative memory into episodic and semantic categories, then, is a somewhat arbitrary, but still useful, way of describing and understanding what are the outcomes of the memory process as a whole. Another way of dividing up declarative memory into manageable chunks might be to establish the common ways of expressing ideas about remembering; that is, to identify terms in common usage and to try and relate these to the internal processes of memory studied by specialist researchers.

2.3 THE DECLARATIVE MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM

While the semantic-episodic bi-polar representation of declarative memory is one commonly used in psychology textbooks, and is very useful, I prefer to think of the outputs of the memory system as falling along a continuum. In the preceding discussion, I have shown that MEMORY is an over-arching concept comprising all kinds of mental process from the registering of external stimuli in sensory perception to the complicated processing of information to develop inferences, evaluations, and so on. It is along this continuum that I picture all of those activities which are commonly called remembering.

Of course, there are no hard-and-fast rules about how memory outputs should be classified; indeed, there is perhaps no reason why they should be divided up at all, except for the sake of convenience. They are all the result of one, or perhaps several extremely closely related, process(es) in the human brain, after all. For this reason, I am using the term ‘continuum’ to suggest their interrelatedness and, perhaps, ultimate inseparability. However, Modern English speakers do attempt to carve up the

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34 This is borne out by work on people with prodigious memories. For example, the case of Shereshevskii, a journalist and stage memorist who had the capability to remember vast amounts of information for long periods of time, but who was unable to draw inferences from the details he encoded; see A. R. Luria, The Mind of a Mnemonist, trans. L. Solotaroff (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1969). Squire and Kandel noted that ‘[m]etaphor and poetry were often beyond him’; L. R. Squire and E. R. Kandel, Memory, p. 76.

35 Throughout this introductory section, I have shown that memory is in fact intrinsically linked to other mental processes: perception, learning, cognition, and so on. The designation of memory may itself be considered artificial; the thing which we term memory may in fact be a collection of aspects of these other processes, and not at all the separate faculty that it has long been assumed to be.
range of possible memory outcomes into distinct units, labelling them just as they might label individual colours within the continuous spectrum of visible light. Certain terms have a quite specific meaning, and are employed mainly by experts in the field. Others are much more general, and are applied to a wider range of outcomes by a broad range of speakers. The resulting mass of terms can be a hindrance, as they are used imprecisely and tend to blur distinctions between the different uses to which memory is put. Although the customary verb *remember* works very well in everyday situations (helped, no doubt, by the context in which it is used), it is not terribly helpful in identifying what kind of memory process is occurring.

The only way in which we can know about the outcomes of the declarative memory processes in others is through the reports of those who experience them. This knowledge is, of course, supplemented by what we know about our own experiences; we try to relate the two things, usually, in an attempt to understand these mysterious phenomena. How we think about such outcomes, then, is bound up with language; we have no way directly to experience another’s recollections, nor any way to share our own with others except through language. Because of this, it is important to utilise fully the range of language tools available to us. Modern English speakers’ use of *remember* as a term for memory retrieval works well in general use but masks the diversity of responses of which the human memory system is capable.

I shall now offer some more precise terms for these outcomes, defining the kinds of remembering that are carried out and suggesting how they might be distributed along my continuum of memory retrieval processes. It is hoped that these terms will act as pegs upon which to hang Modern English and Old English vocabulary about memory, showing how such vocabulary is distributed along the continuum and what that might tell us about Anglo-Saxon and present-day attitudes towards memory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involuntary Memory</td>
<td>Triggered externally. Often transitory; sometimes irrecoverable through conscious effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Reminded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Familiarity (not necessarily context-dependent.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declarative / Explicit Memory</td>
<td>Recollection Active ‘search’ for information. Result can be ‘reported’ verbally or via visual representation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminiscence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconstructive Memory</td>
<td>Subjective. Creating a narrative which more or less corresponds to ‘objective’ view of events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confabulation</td>
<td>Creating a narrative which may have little correlation to ‘facts’; events may nevertheless come to be believed by rememberer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective. Reflection</td>
<td>Using ‘stored’ memories creatively: anticipating, planning, visualising possible future events, etc.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Fig. 2.2 The Declarative Memory Retrieval Continuum.
The two extremes of my retrieval continuum are similar to two of the three sub-systems identified in Johnson’s ‘Multiple Entry Modular’ system of memory. In addition to a sensory system (which detects stimuli, and which I would therefore classify as an encoding, rather than a retrieval, process), Johnson posits a perceptual system which is able to recognise stimuli and perceive patterns therein, and a reflective system that is involved in looking both backward (reminiscing) and forwards (planning and anticipation).

At the ‘perceptual’, to borrow Johnson’s terminology, end of my continuum, the outputs of the declarative memory are very much dependent upon the external world. External stimuli trigger the memory process, without any conscious effort to memorise or to recollect them taking place; very little processing is done. By contrast, there is less reliance on the outside world at the ‘reflective’ end of the memory retrieval continuum. This is because a great deal of processing goes on at this end; in contrast to the raw materials of external stimuli, memories here are products that have progressed through various memory processes and no longer resemble their real-world counterparts. Accordingly, a great deal more conscious effort is required in the reflective areas of the continuum, as compared to the perceptual areas. Although it is impossible accurately to quantify the elements – effort, reliance on external factors, amount of processing, and so on – involved in the different kinds of memory retrieval, these factors do provide a way of assessing the outcomes relative to each other, and to arranging them according to some kind of scale.

2.3.1 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: INVOLUNTARY MEMORY

I would suggest that the kind of output that sits at the perceptual extreme of the scale is ‘involuntary memory’; that is, the kind of memory that exists without any conscious effort on the part of the rememberer. The rememberer plays an extremely passive role in this kind of memory retrieval: indeed, the usual term ‘retrieval’ seems the wrong word here, as it implies effortful recovery of stored memories.

These kinds of memory outcomes are often triggered spontaneously by external stimuli. For example, unexpectedly hearing a familiar voice may trigger a visual representation of the speaker’s face even before the rememberer consciously recognises the voice. In addition to often being initiated by external stimuli, such memories have another connection to the outside world: they often involve the experiencing (or, perhaps, re-experiencing) of intense and vivid sensations, as though one had been plunged back into a previous sensory experience. Of course, such memories do not always involve sensory experiences in the usual sense; a rememberer might also become suddenly aware of a fact that has lain dormant but is now nudged into his or her consciousness, for a reason unknown to him or her.

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at the time. Whether concerned with the (re)presentation of certain sensations or of other information, involuntary memory outcomes tend to be transitory. Often, what has suddenly ‘come into consciousness’ disappears again as quickly, leaving barely a trace. Indeed, it is often the case that these fleeting memories are irrecoverable through subsequent conscious effort.\(^{37}\)

2.3.2 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: BEING REMINDED

In involuntary memory, the memory impression appears to the rememberer, fully formed, without any conscious effort on her or his part. Part of the brain is responding to something in the external environment (although the connection may not be at all obvious) but the rememberer is unaware of the process behind the manifestation of the memory. The difference between this and being reminded of something lies principally in the amount of conscious effort required to produce an output. Again, an external stimulus is the catalyst. Perhaps a friend asks, ‘Didn’t you have something you had to do today?’, or, ‘Don’t you remember him? We were at school together…’. In this case, however, the rememberer has to pause for a second and consciously search for the corresponding memory. The recollection does not ‘spring to mind’ as an involuntary memory will. However, the information is ‘in there’ somewhere, and just needs a helping hand to bring it into conscious view.

2.3.3 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: RECOGNITION

Less dependent still on outside interference is the retrieval process that I am calling ‘recognition’. Like being reminded of something, recognition is a response to the outward universe. An external stimulus initiates a feeling of familiarity within the rememberer. Rather than flashing a visual image before the ‘mind’s eye’, or providing some other type of sensory representation, the process of recognition compels the rememberer to make connections between his or her physical surroundings and internal resources.\(^{38}\) The process is not undertaken entirely consciously, however. One may be able to contextualise one’s recognised memories but this classification also contains elements which one may feel or know in some mysterious way, but which one is unable to ‘figure out’ logically. Such aspects include *déjà vu*, ‘niggles’ or ‘hunches’, and the sense of discomfort experienced when one feels sure that one knows something but is unable to access the requisite knowledge.

Involuntary memories, prompted memories and recognition, then, are all to some extent imposed upon the rememberer from without. (‘Without’, that is to say, in the physical sense of outside the body – i.e. stimuli in the environment – but also in the sense of beyond the conscious mind: these are processes that continue despite one’s lack of awareness.) Recognising and being reminded may subsequently stimulate further memory outcomes, in that greater conscious mental effort will be

\(^{37}\) The involuntary remembrance of dreams could be said to function in the same way: a dream may be remembered with absolute clarity on waking, only to be irretrievably forgotten seconds later.

\(^{38}\) This is similar to being reminded but relies on one’s own cognitive processes to make connections rather than requiring a human prompt.
applied to remembering in detail what one intuits only indistinctly. This application of conscious effort is a feature characterising the remaining kinds of memory retrieval in my continuum.

2.3.4 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: RECOLLECTION

Occupying perhaps the central position in the spectrum, and corresponding most closely to what is generally thought of as remembering, is the kind of outcome that I am calling ‘recall’ or ‘recollection’. This is the kind of activity undertaken when one wants information and instigates an active search of the storage component of the memory system. The recollection produced as the result of successful recall may take the form of a visual (or other sense) representation, or be present in the form of knowledge. Whereas, in cases of recognition, one is aware of one’s memory processes but not necessarily able to articulate what it is one is experiencing (‘It’s just a hunch…’), one is generally able to report what one recalls. Indeed, transmitting knowledge from one individual to another is an important element in the role of recollection.

A further example of effortful recall, indeed a development from those cases just mentioned, is that of ‘bearing in mind’. Here, a memory is not only recalled, but is carried at the forefront of consciousness for a period of time. In this case, sustained effort results in an effect on one’s behaviour: one remembers to do, or not to do, something. Remaining conscious of the recollection thus has an observable effect.

2.3.5 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: REMINISCENCE

Also closely related to the activity of ‘recollection’ is that of ‘reminiscence’. These two terms are in fact often used interchangeably. Although no recollection can ever truly recapture a remembered scene (even photographic, or ‘eidetic’, memories surely cannot incorporate all the attendant thoughts and feelings into a two-dimensional representation) recall is usually an attempt to approximate the original event. The rememberer himself, and any other participants in the event who hear his testimony, could bear witness to the veracity of his account, probably remaining unaware of minor inaccuracies.

Carruthers suggests that recollection (which she also calls reminiscence) is the activity termed reminiscentia or anamnesis in post-Aristotelian accounts of memory. Although memoria is often used as a non-technical term for memory, memoria and mnesis more properly refer to the process of storage. See M. J. Carruthers, Book of Memory, p. 46.

In colloquial Modern English, the memory is often described as a filing system or other mode of physical storage (more or less (dis)organised, depending on the individual concerned) and so searching and retrieval are metaphors frequently employed in this context.

This is another instance of the episodic-semantic divide; remembered events from one’s personal experience and remembered information learned at second-hand tend to be recalled in different forms, as there are fewer contextual and emotional cues associated with semantic (generic) knowledge. Textbooks place great emphasis on visual representation: one area for further study might be other sense representations; what is the experience of the congenitally blind, for instance?

Duration is not necessarily a feature of other kinds of recall.
What I am calling reminiscence differs subtly from recall, and for a number of reasons. In the first place, reminiscence tends to be a frequently repeated occurrence. That is to say, the events or periods of time retrieved are not simply reported once or twice, and perhaps then forgotten; instead, they are retrieved periodically and may be related to others on numerous occasions during the course of a lifetime. As with all such retellings, in time it becomes impossible to differentiate between the memory of the event itself and the memories of the memory of the event (and so on to infinity...). That is to say, what is retrieved in such cases may be the memory of the retelling; the rehearsed narrative or story of the event. Worse yet, inaccuracies can creep into the account and errors can be compounded each time the event is reminiscenced about. Reminiscence often includes a strong element of story-telling and its role in social cohesion may be more important than its truth.

Even in cases where reminiscence is not caught up in the rolling-stone effect of recurring storytellings, it may still be subject to alteration or deviation from the (actual) facts. The position of reminiscence in my retrieval continuum is not fixed, but is dependent upon the extent to which subjective interpretation is brought into play during the act of reviewing such memories. However, it is likely that the rememberer thinks she or he is recalling past events accurately during reminiscence, and the distinction between the two activities is a fine one.

2.3.6 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: RECONSTRUCTIVE MEMORY

Travelling along our notional continuum, we find other activities which are less closely related to the (relatively) straightforward retrieval of facts that I have termed ‘recall’. I have termed my next category ‘reconstructive memory’. The constructivist view of memory would argue that all memory processes are reconstructive, that is to say that individual memories are not faithful recordings of events, replayed each time a person remembers. I would agree with this view to an extent; it is undeniably true that complicated procedures occur within the unconscious mind during memory activity, and that there is no such thing as pure recall. However, I would argue that, in the cases discussed above, the rememberer is himself unaware of the potentially false nature of his recollections.

I am using ‘reconstructive memory’ in a more specific sense, to denote those processes in which there is an element of conscious interpretation involved in remembering. As with many of the points on this

\[43\] The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the primary definition of reminiscence as ‘[t]he act, process, or fact, of remembering or recollecting’. However, definition 2.b. (‘[a] recollection or remembrance of some past fact or experience related to others; freq. (in pl.) the collective memories or experiences of a person put into literary form’) highlights the shared nature of reminiscence, as compared to (often) private recollection, as well as emphasising the narrative shaping involved; *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), s.v. reminiscence.

\[44\] That is to say that the objective, factual truth may be subordinated to the ‘emotional truth’ of the account.

\[45\] I am therefore re-defining reminiscence as a recollection of personal, emotional importance to the rememberer, and which may therefore be subject to alteration (consciously or otherwise) based on subjective interpretation.
continuum, there is a subtle difference between what I have termed recalling (a search for facts or records of events) and reconstructing. In reconstructive memory, the remembered details are tailored into narratives – for oneself or for an audience – which more or less correspond to an objective view of the events that have occurred, as far as such an objective view is possible, in a universe where all observers are similarly subject to perceptual and cognitive tricks such as sensory filtering. In consciously constructing such a narrative, however, one also interprets the facts as one recalls them, in light of one’s own subjective position. Elements of the story which are painful or embarrassing to remember may be omitted, even when one’s only audience is oneself. Other aspects might be embellished. As has been mentioned elsewhere, rehearsal reinforces memory; the repetition of such reconstructed memories as part of normal social intercourse may leave even the rememberer unable to distinguish between the real event and the reconstructed version.

2.3.7 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: CONFabULATION

Closely related to reconstructive memory is ‘confabulation’: the creation of a narrative which may bear little resemblance to the facts, often with the intention of deceiving an audience, either for underhand purposes or else simply to entertain them. In certain pathological make-ups the rememberers themselves may come to believe their own confabulations, but generally speaking one knows the difference between what is remembered and what has been ‘made up’. As with the related reconstructive memory, the mode of transmission for confabulated memories is commonly via social communication: gossip, story-telling, and so on. Confabulation is a creative activity, and could therefore be considered to fall outside of the umbrella concept of MEMORY. However, it is an activity that is heavily dependent on the ‘raw materials’ of remembered experience and shares a common physiological basis with other memory processes, and I therefore think it deserves its place in the memory retrieval continuum.

2.3.8 MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM: REFLECTIVE MEMORY

The same is true of my final category: that of ‘reflection’. Modern English speakers would probably refer to the activities involved in reflection as thinking. This is a not unreasonable way in which to classify such activities. However, my topic of study is memory, and reflection is, for me, at the pinnacle of what can be achieved by the human memory system. Using all of the myriad information input into the system in the past (sensations, learned knowledge, etc.) and extracting general principles from specific experiences, the human mind is then capable of anticipating what may happen in future and of planning responses to each eventuality. Information that has been encoded, processed, and stored is therefore used creatively in the reflective process. If we refer back to some of the tests by which I originally arranged the various memory outputs, we can see that reflective memory involves the greatest amount of processing and also of conscious mental effort. Conversely, it is far less reliant on the outside world than outcomes such as involuntary memory or being reminded; the reflective
system already has vast internal resources with which to formulate patterns, make connections, draw
inferences, and so on. It has little need for further external intervention. If I want to know how my
sitting room might look if I rearranged the furniture, I have no need to undertake a lot of heavy lifting.
I can rearrange it in my ‘mind’s eye’ without physically moving objects. The human mind is capable
of manipulating many different visual representations in order to ‘try out’ new scenarios.

2.3.9 CONCLUDING REMARKS

That, then, concludes my introduction to the memory processes of the human mind, which has
exposed the hidden processes underlying the lexicon of memory. This physiological and
psychological framework will form the basis of my subsequent study of Old English and Modern
English vocabulary.

I have shown that many observable outcomes, from lightning reflex reactions not even involving the
brain to sophisticated, complex planning and mental modelling, are all the result of the same memory
system. I have highlighted the difficulties involved in defining what memory, remembering and so on
mean. Such words are often used by Modern English speakers as catch-all terms covering many
processes. This has implications for the study of Old English too, of course; there is unlikely to be a
one-to-one correspondence between Old English terms and the terms used by modern scientists, for
instance. In identifying certain points along a ‘memory retrieval continuum’, I have established a
more precise terminology which will prove useful in talking about the final outcomes of the memory
system. In particular, my description of the range of activities performed by the memory system
highlights the extent to which certain kinds of remembering are creative processes, vital for the
generation of new ideas and in the creation and transmission of culture.

In the following chapter, I shall explore how Modern English idiomatic language relates to modern
conceptions of memory and the mind. I shall then address the question from the point of view of the
study of Old English. The foregoing description of memory activities, and the ascription of these to
points on a continuum, is based on my own personal experience and on observation of others’ reports
of their own memory systems in the present day. My breakdown of the modern day processes,
however, will subsequently help in identifying which areas of mental (or spiritual or emotional)
activity the Anglo-Saxons considered to be part of memory. The result may be an entirely different
model to the one we have today.
Chapter Three

Memory and the Mind in Colloquial Modern English: Idiom, Metaphor, Simile

In this chapter I explore the colloquial Modern English language that is associated with memory. I shall examine the idioms currently in use, in order to establish (i) the kinds of memory process represented in such idioms, and (ii) the types of metaphor employed. Trends in everyday language about memory will be compared to the facts about memory noted in chapter two on the physiological and psychological basis of memory. I shall examine the extent to which idiomatic Modern English correlates with what we actually know about the mechanisms of memory.

3.1 The Problem of Memory: What are Modern English Speakers Talking About, When They Talk About Memory?

Two major difficulties complicate the study of the related semantic fields of mind and memory. In the first place, the workings of these human faculties are imperfectly understood even today, and have in the past been explicated with reference to a large number of (sometimes conflicting) theories over a long period of time. Although the human brain has been mapped, with various functions attributed to the different sites, and although we know a lot about neuro-transmitters and the like, the thing which we term ‘mind’ – and which we believe to reside somewhere in the brain tissue – remains essentially a mystery to scientists and philosophers alike.

Secondly, the Modern English words that relate to these semantic fields often cover a range of meanings, or even of related concepts; this confuses the issue by conflating what might otherwise be treated as discrete phenomena. For example, does the noun memory refer to a distinct (visual) image, to the store of such images belonging to an individual, or to the faculty by which that individual collects, retains, and reviews such images?\(^1\) The wide range of the headword mind can be significantly narrowed by discounting the verbal form and focussing attention on the noun. However, the number of attributes covered by this term is, if possible, greater than those of memory (with which, incidentally, one definition of mind is synonymous).

The basic Modern English vocabulary of memory and remembering, then, encompasses a broad range of meanings; this means that the terms are rather vague in everyday use. This seems to reflect a general lack of awareness about what is occurring when one remembers. Lack of awareness of the physiological basis of memory does not cause Modern English speakers too many problems, as it is

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\(^1\) The question is posed here in ‘lay’ terms, necessitating the use of semi-metaphorical language – the inclusion of the technical vocabularies of modern psychology or science would pose yet more problems about the deceptively simple term ‘memory’.
the result of the process that is important to them, not the process itself. Lack of awareness about the kinds of outcomes that result from the memory process, however, obscures the subtlety and complexity of the human memory. The use of the umbrella term *remembering* for all retrieval activities, for example, devalues the faculty in as much as it fails to recognise the myriad aspects of retrieval and their individual purpose and importance in everyday life.

This imprecision in the use of terminology is also detrimental to the academic study of memory and the mind; memory activities are internal, interior processes that we can attempt to access only through language. A common, shared language helps us to access the minds of others, and enables us to share ours with them. Even if we are communing only with ourselves, we have to adopt a form of verbal exposition in order to think about our own mental processes. In order to make clear what is going on ‘inside their heads’, human beings employ a range of linguistic strategies. These may have little to do with the actual physiological processes of the brain, but that is of no matter; for two people discussing their innermost thoughts and feelings, reality does not inhere in the electrochemical impulses of the nervous system. The truth of one’s feelings is in their alignment to the outlook adopted by the posited ‘I’ that governs and monitors our mental activities. As long as both interlocutors subscribe to a common way of discussing internal processes, the correlation of their description with the actual mechanisms involved is of little account.

In twenty-first-century society, it is uncommon to use the specialised vocabulary of scientists or philosophers when conducting everyday conversations about memory. Modern English contains numerous colloquial, idiomatic words and phrases that can be used under these circumstances, alongside the basic verbs (e.g. *remember*) and nouns (e.g. *memory*).

Many idiosyncratic Modern English phrases recall the mechanical or technological processes with which we have largely replaced the art of remembering vast amounts of information. Memory-storage is commonly transferred to the written record once literacy is introduced; ‘making a mental note’ reverses the process, re-internalising the external record as though that were the natural site of memory. So pervasive has been the acceptance of the written record that actual (human, mental) memory has come to be seen as only equal to (if not inferior to) the external record of a memory. Similarly, computing ‘memory’ was so-named following the human faculty that it is designed to assist and enhance. This translation is now flowing in the opposite way, with computing terminology sometimes applied to the interior workings of the mind: one wonders how long it will be before such technological vocabulary becomes as ‘second-nature’ to Modern English speakers as the vocabulary of the written record is at present. Ong, following Whitehead, cites the need for ‘study of the effects of changes in the communications media on the organization of the sensorium …’ and continues ‘Today there is a common awareness of the general pattern of these changes as man has developed his verbal
communications media out of the initial spoken word. ... Writing ... shifts the balance of the senses away from the aural to the visual ... and alphabetic typography strengthens this shift.  

Such technological analogues form only one part of a vast range of ways of describing memory and the mind. I shall now present evidence of the large number of idioms, metaphors and similes that Modern English speakers employ in their quest to explain the inexplicable; the interior, subjective mental phenomena of memory. In order to communicate abstract concepts, people often need to translate the abstract into concrete terms, using images that are evocative and can be widely recognised and understood. The ability of figurative language to substitute the concrete for the abstract makes it a useful tool in the struggle to understand and communicate ideas about memory and the mind.

3.2 KINDS OF METAPHOR

There are many idioms concerned with memory and mind in Modern English, and many of these idioms are metaphorical in nature. In the areas where the two semantic fields most closely touch, or even overlap – that is, where memory and mind are almost-synonymous terms for an entity constituted by a collection of thoughts, ideas or ‘memories’ – the most common metaphors would seem to be those of the MIND-AS-PHYSICAL-SPACE or the MIND-AS-CONTAINER. When we learn a fact, and determine to know it again in the future, we ‘commit it to memory’; that is to say, we conceptualise the fact as an object with physical characteristics, capable of being ‘given’, ‘consigned’, or ‘sent’ to a notional store where it will remain until required. This store is ordered in terms of physical space: ideas can be ‘put to the back of’ the mind, or alternatively ‘kept at the forefront’.

Other Modern English MEMORY metaphors also invoke the mind as a physical, tangible object as a way of explaining what is happening during the memory process. In the MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE metaphor, the mind is an object or surface responsive to pressure from ‘memories’ or impressions which themselves have the characteristics of concrete, tactile objects. Elsewhere, the mind may be described as a tool or implement, to be used in the retrieval of stored memory traces, or as a writing surface on which the traces are preserved.  

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3 Although many of these paradigms are enduring, it must be borne in mind that ways of understanding the world are not necessarily universal. Modern English speakers, for instance, speak of being able to ‘see’ a problem and of ‘seeking’ answers: this understanding-is-seeing construction is pervasive but cannot be applied indiscriminately across cultures. Walter Ong has noted that ‘[c]ultures vary greatly in their exploitation of the various senses and in the way in which they relate their conceptual apparatus to the various senses. ... The [ancient] Hebrews tended to think of understanding as a kind of hearing, whereas the Greeks thought of it more as a kind of seeing, although far less exclusively than post-Cartesian Western man generally has tended to do’; see Ong, Presence of the Word, p. 3.
Steven Pinker is one observer who has written on the pervasiveness of space and force/resistance metaphors in languages. He posits that the human mind is not adapted to think about abstract entities *per se*:

> We have inherited a pad of forms that capture the key features of encounters among objects and forces, and the features of other consequential themes of the human condition such as fighting, food, and health. By erasing the contents and filling in the blanks with new symbols, we can adapt our inherited forms to more abstruse domains. Some of these revisions may have taken place in our evolution, giving us basic mental categories like ownership, time, and will out of forms originally designed for intuitive physics.  

I shall return to explore these metaphor types in greater depth in later sections of this chapter.

### 3.3 PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY FACULTY

Much of this chapter will consider the types of figurative language utilised in articulating ideas about the various parts of the process of remembering. Before moving on to these, though, I should like to turn briefly to the portrayal of the faculty that makes remembering possible: the memory itself. It will become evident in this and later chapters that the terms *memory* and *mind* are often used interchangeably by Modern English speakers when naming the supposed locus of remembering activities, and for this reason I hyphenate the two terms in the following discussion where they seem to be equally applicable and nearly synonymous.

#### 3.3.1 PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY FACULTY: SIMILES AND COMPARISONS

Similes appear infrequently in the Modern English figurative terminology of remembering. However, a cluster of similes *does* appear among those idioms used specifically to address the properties of the memory faculty.

The container-like nature of the mind is nowhere so much in evidence as in the Modern English idiom ‘memory [or mind, or head] like a sieve’. By design, the sieve is an imperfect container, allowing much of its content to flow away. When the memory-store cannot hold all that is placed within it, it allows memory-impressions – perhaps facts and figures or appointments – to ‘escape’ or ‘leak out’. A good memory-store, by contrast, is conceptualised as a perfect container and will retain its contents until required again by the rememberer.

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5 Note the deletion of agency here: not ‘I forgot’ but ‘my defective memory…’. The ‘head like a sieve’ simile specifically locates the mind-memory in the *head* of the rememberer: later discussions of Old English figurative language will show that the head is not necessarily portrayed as the locus of memory.
In opposition to this use of the MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor, some idioms convey the superior ability of certain minds to ‘hold onto’ information. Having a mind ‘like a steel trap’ suggests that one (a) ‘seizes upon’ or understands facts quickly, and (b) retains them in the memory-store indefinitely. In this case, the mind is not strictly a container. However, facts (and this particular idiom does seem to be used in the context of general knowledge of the world especially) are portrayed as physical objects that are trapped and constrained by the mind.\(^6\)

Speakers of colloquial Modern English have formed other comparisons from time to time in their attempt to make the faculty of human memory tangible and therefore understandable. Some of these may be very informal, and they may or may not attain a lasting place in the colloquial vocabulary. It is the nature of idiomatic language to be restricted to the speech of certain groups, for example, or to enjoy short-lived popularity; it is impossible to say which will ultimately become codified in dictionaries.\(^7\) An example of an idiom not yet recorded in the dictionaries of idiom that I have consulted is ‘to have a brain/mind the size of a planet’.\(^8\) In this case, the idiom works through the conceptualisation of the mind or brain as a spherical object, specifically, an object so vast and so far distant that it could never conceivably fit within the confines of the human skull. The implication of this idiom is that the rememberer’s store of knowledge is large; more than that, it is astonishingly so. The phrase is often accompanied by a kind of awe, as though the commentator her- or himself could never hope to attain a memory-store of such magnitude.\(^9\)

I have outlined some of the uses of simile that liken human memory to inanimate objects; in such cases the (real) physical attributes of the object (sieve, steel trap, etc.) are made to stand as analogues for the apparent attributes of the memory or mind in question. The ability of an object to hold its contents corresponds to the ability of the mind to retain a quantity of knowledge.

Other comparisons – such as those in which the human memory is compared to an apparently similar mechanism in other animals – operate in a different way. There is no suggestion in the former examples that the sieve or the trap actually possess a human-like memory capability; their fitness for one task (holding contents) is merely compared to the human mind’s fitness for a different task (‘holding’ memories or knowledge). In the case of comparison with other living beings, however, the

\(^6\) Use of this simile can carry a slightly derogatory sense, perhaps because of the attribution of inhuman qualities to a person. Used in this way, the phrase perhaps reflects a cultural dislike of the ‘know-it-all’.


\(^9\) The phrase is also sometimes accompanied by a corollary, however: it may be used to poke gentle fun at those who are perceived to carry a great weight of knowledge but little common sense.
simile does not work unless we first ascribe memory – as we understand it from a human viewpoint – to animals such as the elephant or goldfish. In addition to this, we must also assign a ‘quality’ of memory to the animals concerned: elephants have ‘good’, sustained memories; goldfish have ‘poor’, fleeting memories. Having imposed these characteristics on such animals – which may in any case not use memory in the way we understand it at all – we then use the supposed memory capacities of the anthropomorphised beasts to refer back to ourselves and other humans.

3.3.2 PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY FACULTY: MIND-AS-CONTAINER METAPHORS

In addition to similes, Modern English speakers also apply a range of metaphors when delineating the properties or qualities of the ‘memory’, or the ‘mind’ within which that memory is thought to exist. I shall return to the MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor elsewhere in this chapter. For the present, I shall simply note that it is possible for individuals to have (or to keep) ‘open’ or ‘closed’ minds. To have an ‘open’ mind is to allow a variety of influences to penetrate the memory-store, to be receptive to new ideas. Conversely, to have a ‘closed’ mind is to limit the inflow of information, to be unreceptive to novel ideas, and perhaps prejudiced in one’s judgements.

3.3.3 PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY FACULTY: SPATIAL AND MOTION METAPHORS

Spatial metaphors for the mind abound in Modern English (as in Old English) and certain characteristics of physical space are mapped consistently onto certain psychological attributes of the mind. The metaphor is employed in a number of ways by Modern English speakers when discussing memory and remembrance. In the case of remembering, I shall show that this often involves a sense of movement between spaces, or places objects in a spatial relationship to one another. In terms of the memory itself, however, this kind of metaphor is used to delimit the metaphorical space occupied by the memory: a ‘large’ memory is capable of containing more information and experience than a ‘small’ one, in this formulation.

Spatial metaphors applied to ‘minds’ are intrinsically linked to the supposed personalities and characteristics of those to whom such minds belong. To have a ‘narrow mind’ or to be ‘small-minded’ is to be constrained in what one can contemplate; one has limited room within the mind for ideas and opinions, leading to a restricted range of available options. To have a ‘broad mind’, conversely, is to be capable of accepting many different ideas and influences. In order to ‘broaden one’s mind’, it is necessary to be open to a wide variety of influences (perhaps through travelling, as the old adage has it). It seems to be the nature of the container to be flexible – the notional space within is finite but can be expanded to accommodate an increasing amount of content when necessary. A ‘one-track’ or ‘single-track’ mind might also belong to the category of spatial metaphors: these idioms are suggestive of a very narrow course, either within the mind or along which the mind is compelled to run.
The idea of the mind as a physical space through which thoughts and ideas flow is also apparent in the concept of the ‘mental block’ – a psychological obstruction perceived as a physical impediment in the channelling of language and information.

3.3.4 PROPERTIES OF THE MEMORY FACULTY: OTHER IDIOMS

Before turning to the idioms used to describe remembering activities, I should like to note a few more idioms connected to the faculty of memory. Some of these could conceivably be categorised with other idiom-types already mentioned: ‘If memory serves [me well]’, for instance, could be an example of the MIND-AS-IMPLEMENT idiom, while ‘losing my memory’ might be classified along with the spatial / motion metaphors. Others are harder to attribute to a particular category, however. Their only common feature is that all seek to explain something about the way in which this mysterious faculty operates (or fails to operate, on occasion). Each addresses the question of differing levels of mental efficiency, without being specific about precisely what it is that is altering in each case.

Hence, one can say that the memory ‘improves’ or ‘gets better’ without stating how this comes about, or how the improvement is manifested. Conversely, one can say that one’s memory is ‘deteriorating’, ‘getting worse’, ‘failing’, or even ‘going’. In phrases such as ‘the memory’s starting to go’, often used humorously, the onset of poorer remembering abilities is usually linked to increasing age. However, such idioms do not make clear exactly what is happening to the memory faculty at that time. Perhaps such uses are reflective of the common sense view that we all have the capacity to remember – albeit that some have ‘better’ memories than others – but also of the fact that we do not dwell overmuch on defining that capacity in everyday speech.

3.4 FORGETTING

I have elsewhere explained the process of remembering as though it were a linear sequence of events: memory traces are encoded following perception; they are stored in the short- or long-term; and they are finally retrieved under varying conditions. Forgetting has not been viewed as part of this process.

Forgetting is often considered to be a feature of a malfunctioning memory, or as the opposite of remembering. It is often excluded from the ideal model of memory and treated as a separate phenomenon. As I have shown in section 2.2.7, however, it is in fact an integral and vital part of the process of remembering. Without the ability to forget, one would be over-burdened with specific sensory data and would be unable to use what one has encoded in novel situations and innovative ways.
There are several aspects of forgetting to take into account when studying the colloquial Modern English representation of the phenomenon. In the first place, forgetting is often unintentional: if one cannot recall something, the cause may be the failure consciously to register an impression in the first place (sensory filtering), failure to encode the impression as a memory trace for ‘long-term’ storage, a temporary inability to retrieve a trace which is in long-term memory storage (which may subsequently be remembered), or – somewhat controversially – the result of unconscious suppression of unwanted memories. In addition, forgetfulness may also be an intentional state: one can (sometimes) choose not to consider something actively, even though it ultimately remains in one’s memory.

This is important because colloquial Modern English has a range of ways of expressing forgetfulness, using a number of different metaphor types. As Modern English speakers tend to place forgetting in opposition to remembering, it is interesting to note how the different aspects of forgetting are placed in opposition to specific kinds of remembering through the use of certain metaphor types.

3.4.1 FORGETTING AS THE OPPOSITE OF ENCODING

If forgetting, then, is often viewed as the obverse of successful remembering, in which part of the process does the ‘failure’ lie? The MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor may be invoked when the failure to remember something is linked to the failure of the encoding process. When one is claiming never to have considered a particular thing, for example, one can say that it ‘never entered one’s head’. Similarly, when the MIND-AS-WRITING-SURFACE metaphor is invoked in a phrase such as ‘my mind is a blank’, it is possible to infer that the required memory trace failed to register in the first place. However, failures of encoding are rarely considered to be the cause of forgetfulness in colloquial Modern English.

3.4.2 FORGETTING AS THE OPPOSITE OF RETRIEVAL

Just as it is possible to suggest that an incident of forgetfulness is caused by an encoding fault, so is it possible to lay the blame on the retrieval process. When one forgets a story halfway through the telling and claims to have ‘lost one’s thread’, the process of retrieval seems to be at fault. It is as though memories were composed of a chain of thoughts (or words, or images), one following another.10 ‘Losing one’s thread’, in this case, would seem to indicate a failure to grasp and to control this chain and to draw out the required sequence of memories at the appointed time. However,

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10 Carruthers notes that chains of fish are a common decorative motif in book decoration, and that mnemonic ‘hooks’ (unci) are a means by which one can retrieve one’s stored memories. See M. J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; repr. 1993), p. 247. The concatenation of such ‘hooks’ – one idea following on from another – is important in the ordering of associated memory traces for future recall.
Modern English speakers tend not to talk of forgetting as a failure on their part to retrieve their memories adequately.

### 3.4.3 FORGETTING AS A PROPERTY OF THE MEMORY FACULTY

The majority of Modern English idioms of forgetting, then, do not suggest that forgetfulness is caused by a failure to memorise things, or by a failure properly to recall them. In other words, Modern English speakers tend not to find themselves culpable when their memories fail them (to use another common idiom). To what, then, do Modern English speakers attribute the apparent ‘failures’ of memory that cause forgetfulness? In fact, it seems that forgetfulness is an inherent feature of that storage space – somehow independent of us despite our reliance on it – that we term the ‘mind’ or the ‘memory’.

A number of different metaphor types are employed in Modern English idioms concerning the memory as a site of storage. Unsurprisingly, given what I have already noted concerning the frequent use of container and spatial metaphors in describing the memory faculty (see sections 3.3.2. and 3.3.3. above), it is customary to conceptualise forgetfulness as the movement of memory objects out of or away from the spaces where memory storage is commonly supposed to take place.

This can be a deliberate choice: to put a thought ‘to the back of one’s mind’ is to move it from conscious contemplation to a place where it will not be immediately available. This, however, is not true ‘forgetting’. True forgetfulness, for the Modern English speaker at least, seems to involve the non-volitional loss of memory objects from the place of memory storage. This bias is apparent in the frequent use of such idioms as ‘that went [right] out of my mind (or head)’ and ‘that slipped my mind’. The memory objects themselves are endowed with the power of movement, and the memory-container is sometimes powerless to restrain them. A similar notion can be observed in the phrase ‘out of sight, out of mind’, in which to be ‘outside’ of the mind-memory is to be beyond the reach of conscious contemplation.\(^\text{11}\)

Finally, in addition to metaphors that treat the memory faculty as a space within which to deposit memory objects, there are also metaphors that rely on the conceit that the memory is a reusable writing surface (such as the wax tablet or the schoolroom slate of earlier times). Modern English speakers may describe their memory faculties as having been ‘wiped’ or ‘erased’. Again, in these cases the rememberer insists on there being an outside agent who is responsible for the failure to retrain memory traces. Memories may also be described as ‘fading’: in this instance, the writing surface of the memory.

\(^{11}\) Conversely, individuals may wish to forget something but find themselves unable to do so. In a phrase such as ‘I can’t get it out of my mind (or head)’, the memory object – whether a painful memory or simply an annoying tune – remains firmly ‘in the mind’ of the rememberer.
memory faculty is perhaps perceived to be at fault, unable to retain the memory traces. Alternatively, the traces themselves – the ‘ink’ with which such memories are recorded – are condemned as too weak to leave an enduring mark.

In all of these cases, the root cause of a failure to remember is probably a failure to stimulate the correct synaptic pathways of the cerebral cortex, leading to a failure of retrieval. However, in each case the rememberer utilises colloquial language that reduces his or her own culpability and instead assigns blame to the semi-independent mind-memory which is apparently unable adequately to retain the encoded memory traces with which it is supplied.

3.5 ENCODING ACTIONS

3.5.1 ENCODING ACTIONS: MIND-AS-CONTAINER METAPHORS

The mind can be conceptualised as a bounded container, with greater or lesser capacity and with varying degrees of permeability (see section 3.3.2. above). Since the mind, in this construction, is viewed as a vessel containing accumulated memories, it is to be expected that the encoding process might be expressed in terms of moving memories into that space. In fact, many of our interactions with the outside world can be described in terms of bringing what is external into an inward container: we frequently speak of ‘internalising’ exterior influences.

When one wishes to memorise a particular piece of information for future recall, one ‘commits it to memory’, as though it were an object that could be sent into the mind-memory space. Such expressions are not always used to express approval, however. To ‘fill one’s head’, for instance, is often used with negative connotations: ‘to fill one’s head with rubbish’, or ‘with nonsense’, and so on. In these cases, it is indicated that the encoded ideas have no value. The implication of this image is that the mind-space – or the capacity of the memory for which it stands – is of finite dimensions. New information can be added to the container, but not without certain attendant consequences. As new memory traces are laid down in the memory, this image suggests, a limit is reached, after which further objects cannot be added to the container, or old ones cannot be given room and are pushed out.

Despite this, the ingress of new influences into the sealed receptacle of the mind is often viewed as a positive development. In the phrase ‘open one's mind to …’, an inward flow of ideas is implied, and this phrase usually connotes approval of the breadth of learning implied.

12 For Socrates’ comments on the differing qualities of the ‘wax blocks’ of memory, see Carruthers, Book of Memory, pp. 21–22.
13 To ‘close one’s mind against’ something, for no apparent reason, is correspondingly disapproved of in the generally liberal, tolerant culture of twenty-first-century Britain.
3.5.2 ENCODING ACTIONS: MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE METAPHORS

Related to the idea of the mind as containing objects is the idea of physicality: that is to say, that there is some interaction between a tactile, responsive mind and the concrete objects (i.e. thoughts and memories) with which it is involved. This presumption of physicality is apparent in phrases such as ‘my mind has grasped it’, where the mind is not a passive container but a tangible entity capable of reacting to the influx of new sense data. Just as the MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor imposes certain limitations on the memory capacity, however, so does the MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE metaphor place constraints on what can be encoded in the memory. If the mind-memory is portrayed as a sensible entity, it is possible for excessive memory encoding to ‘burden one’s memory’: the mind-memory is no longer, in this case, a passive, insensible receptacle into which one can load increasing quantities of data without regard for repercussions.

3.5.3 ENCODING ACTIONS: MIND-AS-WRITTEN-RECORD METAPHORS

As already intimated in my earlier section on the historical representation of memory processes, the MIND-AS-WRITTEN-RECORD metaphor has a long history. It continues to be used today to describe the ways in which exterior stimuli are transmuted into internal memory traces. (Indeed, the scientific term ‘trace’ is in itself indicative of the pervasiveness of such metaphors.) When a striking event affects us, the memory that is encoded within the brain is frequently sharply defined and enduring: psychological research tells us that emotional arousal at the time of encoding increases the likelihood that such traces will be retained in the long term and subsequently successfully retrieved. Such memories are often encoded without our conscious awareness and – particularly if the event in question was traumatic – can often be retrieved involuntarily in great detail. In these cases, the mind-memory behaves like a photographic plate, passively receiving and recording the images that flash onto it. The mind-memory is portrayed as a surface in this fashion whenever we speak of a memory trace being ‘etched’, ‘burned’ or ‘seared’ into the mind. Each of these verbs is suggestive of the enduring nature of such memory traces, and also intimates the pain (mental or physical) that can accompany such memories.

Modern English speakers, then, use the metaphor of the mind-memory as a writing surface in describing certain types of involuntary encoding and retrieval. The metaphor can also be applied in cases where there is voluntary involvement in the processes of memory. When a speaker promises to ‘make a mental note’ of something, the relevant memory trace has already been encoded in his or her brain (otherwise, he or she would be unable to discuss it). So, although ‘making a mental note’ seems to refer to the actual method of inscribing information on the surface of the memory-mind (and this is probably what is understood by the speaker), what is actually going on is more complicated. In ‘making a mental note’, one perhaps reinforces that synaptic pathway of the trace that has already been
encoded, a trace which may otherwise have been accorded little significance and therefore subsequently forgotten. Thus the ‘mental note’, ostensibly the record of an idea or sense impression, is in fact a signpost to the residual trace caused by that impression in the long-term memory store.\textsuperscript{14}

3.5.4 ENCODING ACTIONS: OTHER IDIOMS

A number of other Modern English idioms exist for memory encoding, although their relationship to the foregoing metaphor paradigms is somewhat uncertain. The determination to memorise something – whether a multiplication table, a part in a play, or a piece of music – is known as ‘learning by heart’, even though most Modern English speakers would, if challenged, probably state that cognitive processes occur within the head rather than the heart. This, then, can only be a hangover from earlier times – such as the Anglo-Saxon period – in which certain ‘mental’ faculties were believed to be housed in the heart.

Other idioms that could be said to relate to memory encoding include being ‘quick (or slow) on the uptake’: although this is often used in the context of a person’s ability to understand concepts and draw inferences, and so on, at its most basic level it could reveal an inability to encode incoming information efficiently. The same could be said of a person’s ability to ‘pick things up quickly’, which is again an expression of his or her ability to ‘learn’ (that is, to encode) new things.

This concludes my examination of the Modern English idioms surrounding the field of memory encoding. I shall now turn to what is probably the most commonly talked about aspect of the remembering process in colloquial Modern English: that is, the retrieval of stored memory traces.

3.6 RETRIEVAL ACTIONS

3.6.1 INVOLUNTARY MEMORY: SPATIAL/MOTION METAPHORS

Modern English idioms associated with involuntary memory retrieval include ‘X crossed one’s mind’ and ‘X comes (or springs) to mind’. In each of these phrases, movement is implicit in the verb. ‘Come’ is a quite neutral verb, but ‘to cross’ suggests direct motion without unnecessary diversion or delay and ‘to spring’ connotes very swift, direct, and perhaps unexpected, movement.

A rememberer is suddenly conscious of a retained thought, fact or feeling when it ‘crosses [his] mind’. In this idiomatic phrase, the mind is once again conceptualised as a physical expanse. In Modern English usage, this idiom normally refers to thoughts, ideas, and memories that are involuntarily

\textsuperscript{14} The image of the ‘mental note’ is also apparent in the idiom ‘file X away for future reference’, where the storage of information within the brain is likened to the filing of paperwork.
recalled: like animate beings, these ‘wander’ through the consciousness unbidden.\textsuperscript{15} The implication is that a retained impression, unheeded, can often ‘draw attention to itself’ by unexpected movement (before the ‘mind’s eye’, as it were), often to the surprise of the rememberer him- or herself.

When something ‘comes (or springs) to mind’, unconsciously triggered by a physical sensation, rather than hidden by the recollecter, where has it been? It is as if there are two ‘minds’ at work in such constructs: one like an illuminated stage upon which thoughts and ideas can be viewed, and another like a backstage store, full of props vital for future productions but unneeded – and unheeded – at present. Modern science explains this problem by reference to different kinds of memory: the ‘working memory’ that handles information of which we are conscious, and the long-term memory store that is not open for scrutiny (although, interestingly, we often can say whether or not we have an answer in our memory store even though we cannot immediately access its content).

3.6.2 BEING REMINDED BY RESEMBLANCE: SPATIAL/MOTION METAPHORS

Modern English speakers use the verb \textit{remind} in two specific senses. In the first, one person reminds another verbally: this might be an invitation to recall a past event (‘You studied that at school, remember?’) or a prompt to future action (‘Remember that you have a dentist’s appointment today’). On occasion, reminder and remindee are one and the same: a person may ‘remind’ him- or herself about forthcoming events by mentally reciting a ‘to do’ list, for example. This process is fascinating in itself: how is it possible to remind oneself, when it is oneself that is likely to forget in the first place? The second main sense of \textit{remind} in Modern English is that in which some object or person prompts one spontaneously to recall another (possibly unrelated) object, person, or event. This type of reminding may function because there is some similarity between the thing seen and the thing subsequently recalled, or there may be some other connection between two objects that is less obvious to outside observers (because, for example, one habitually mentally associates a particular person with a specific object, place, or event).

In these circumstances, common idioms such as ‘that puts one in mind of X’ and ‘that brings X to mind’ are often used. Clearly both utilise physical motion and spatial dimensions as a way of expressing what happens during the process of being reminded, although it is difficult to know how to interpret the first. In the second example, the exterior object (or person, or event) that has triggered the experience is portrayed as the agent which brings the previously-encoded memory back into the conscious mind, independently of the passive rememberer. This is consistent with my organisation of retrieval events into a hierarchy: on the memory retrieval continuum, ‘being reminded’ is a relatively passive experience, greatly influenced by outside forces.

\textsuperscript{15} It is as though a kind of darkness – signifying unconsciousness – surrounds on each side the landscape which the thought ‘crosses’.
A further idiom that is applied to the process of being reminded is that of having one’s memory ‘jogged’. As in the last example, the faculty of memory is here portrayed as a passive, physical substance. This substance is physically accessible to others, and can feel the effects of their physical actions: the verb *jog* seems to imply a swift and unexpected action, leading to a brief but powerful movement of the jogged object.

Often used to describe a nudging action designed to arouse attention, the verb seems to have been used figuratively in conjunction with the memory since the late eighteenth century. The prevalence of this image in current idiomatic speech could be seen as a product of the mechanical age: malfunctioning machines often begin to function following a sharp tap, and it is possible that the mind in need of reminding is similarly seen as defective and in need of a restorative shock. It is common, as I have outlined above, to represent the mind as a container full of stored thoughts and images: perhaps it is these which shuffle when tapped—kaleidoscope fashion—revealing a pattern of which the rememberer was previously unaware.

**3.6.4 BEING REMINDED BY RESEMBLANCE: OTHER IDIOMS**

Other idioms that exist for the phenomenon of being reminded include ‘X has shades of Y’ and ‘X rings a bell’. In the first example, the object that provokes the retrieval is like the ghost or shadow of the item that is remembered: one thing conjures up the impression of the other, due to physical or other similarities. In the second example, the thing that ‘rings the bell’ revives a dormant memory (although stimulating such a memory was possibly not explicitly intended). Like the comic-book light bulb that indicates sudden inspiration, the image of a bell within the mind to herald a retrieved memory suggests the suddenness with which this process can occur, and the way in which the rememberer’s attention can be instantly diverted to a previously unregarded source.

**3.6.5 RECOLLECTION: MIND-AS-CONTAINER METAPHORS**

I shall show in a following section that MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphors are often employed in the discussion of a particular kind of recollection: that is, sustained awareness or ‘bearing in mind’. Such metaphors are less common in relation to recollection more generally. One example of a very informal usage will serve to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the container metaphor, however. When

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17 The first usage of ‘bell’ in this context is attributed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* to Aldous Huxley: ‘Why should the Local Pavlov have chosen to ring just those particular bells which happen to be rung?’. This usage apparently refers to the popular belief that Pavlov used a hand bell as a conditioned stimulus in his research, and the idiom therefore suggests that one stimulus may provoke the retrieval of another apparently unrelated memory-trace.
18 Section 3.6.10.
attempting to recall information that one knows to have been encoded but that one is unable to access momentarily, it is not unusual to state ‘I know it’s in there somewhere’, or a similar phrase. Such a statement may even be accompanied by a hand movement, as if the rememberer were about to strike his or her head, as though this motion might somehow unlock the inaccessible information and therefore enable recollection. Use of this kind of idiomatic language indicates (i) that the head is perceived to be the container of the memory faculty and (ii) that one’s own memory faculty is not always compliant with the demands one places upon it. One can know that one has previously encoded facts or experiences, storing them safely within the mind-memory, and yet still be unable to retrieve them from this container.

3.6.6 RECOLLECTION: SPATIAL/MOTION METAPHORS

The action of bringing something forward is implicit in the very word recall, which suggests that the rememberer can command stored thoughts and memory-impressions to reappear at will. (Although, as already intimated, thoughts can conversely arrive unbidden, suggesting that they are somewhat like trained animals; they are often subservient to the rememberer’s demands but sometimes wander around at will.) This raises the question, how is it possible to recall information, unless one already knows that it is available to be recalled? This is one of the great mysteries of the human memory. Nonetheless, the collecting together of known facts during the process of recall is a major role of the memory faculty. Idioms such as ‘calling to mind’ and ‘bringing to mind’ utilise metaphors of space and motion to illustrate this process.

To return to the question of fallibility: even in cases where things are recollected, the store may be seen as imperfect. The apparently dual level nature of the memory faculty has been discussed at 3.6.1. This two-tier system illustrates a central crux in the problem of the human mind. When the rememberer needs a particular piece of information, of which (s)he is unaware most of the time, (s)he is able to ‘call it to mind’, bringing it onto the ‘stage’ of consciousness, to use our earlier image, from the deeper, darker vaults of long-term memory.

In fact, as outlined in section 2.1.1, it has been theorised that long-term memories are organised in the brain according to their category, and that they can be accessed because ‘signposts’ are laid down as memories pass from short- to long-term storage and are consolidated. Considering that recollection is often defined as a conscious search for previously-encoded information, there are surprisingly few searching or seeking metaphors in use in Modern English representations of the process. A possible reason for this is the very ubiquity of the term search in discussions relating to memory, whether in psychological discourse, or in relation to computer memory, or elsewhere. If we have no way to label recollection other than as a search for information, then we cease to perceive this search as metaphorical.
3.6.7 RECOLLECTION: MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE METAPHORS

In section 3.6.3 above, I described the way in which the MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE metaphor could be used in instances of being reminded. In that case, the rememberer was a somewhat passive recipient of a forceful blow from without, as is consistent with the nature of being reminded.

The metaphor can also be used, however, in instances where there is more involvement on the part of the rememberer her- or himself. Recollection, I have said before, is the point on the memory retrieval continuum at which the rememberer himself is engaged in a conscious ‘search’ for previously-encoded memory traces. Although countless pieces of information are retrieved in this way every day, anyone who has ever struggled to recall something will know that this is not always a trouble-free process. The idiom ‘to rack one's brains’ is an indication of the sometimes almost painful effort involved in retrieving memory traces through recollection. The brain is conceived of as a sensible object with which the rememberer can make contact. As is often the case, the ‘brain’, ‘mind’, or memory faculty is perceived as a separate entity when it does not conform to the will of the rememberer. By exerting physical effort upon the substance of the brain, the rememberer hopes to make it give up its secrets. That this is not always successful is evidenced by the fact that this particular idiom is often used to indicate one’s frustration at failing to achieve the desired result.

3.6.8 RECOLLECTION: MIND-AS-IMPLEMENT METAPHORS

‘Casting one’s mind back’ can be likened to fishing. The mind is a tool – like a fishing line – which can reach back into the depths of the past (the spatial metaphor ‘back’ here used to stand in for the temporal notion of ‘earlier time’) and bring home something of use to the reminiscer.\(^{19}\)

3.6.9 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION: MIND-AS-CONTAINER METAPHORS

When we wish (actively) to remember something over a period of time, with a view to its having an influence on our external behaviour, we ‘[keep or] bear it in mind’. The fact or memory-impression (which could be a feeling or other sense impression, e.g. words, pictures, scents) is not only consigned to the interior of some notional storage compartment, it is also somewhere easily accessible, as it is implied that the rememberer will be aware of its presence.

The phrase ‘keep in mind’ is so prevalent and pervasive in everyday usage that we rarely pause to examine the metaphorical nature of the idiom. Indeed, so common is this construction that it is unlikely to be perceived as metaphorical by the majority of Modern English speakers.

\(^{19}\) The *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. cast, has examples of the verb being used to mean both “throw” and “forecast”. Two seventeenth-century examples have people ‘casting in their minds’, but there are apparently no instances where minds are themselves cast.
3.6.10 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION: SPATIAL/MOTION METAPHORS

That the MIND-AS-MEMORY-STORE is often conceptualised in terms of physical space, then, has been established. This store-cupboard of ideas, thoughts, and feelings is further defined by analogy to real-world storage systems. Ideas considered urgent or important are positioned at the forefront of our thoughts (or mind), where they are accessible to the consciousness and easily retrieved for viewing by ‘the mind’s eye’. Less important – or, frequently, uncomfortable or disturbing thoughts – are often pushed ‘to the back of the mind’ where they will not be subject to scrutiny in the short term. Trying to avoid contemplation of unpleasant thoughts is often futile, however: try as one might, often one ‘can’t get [those thoughts] out of one’s head [or mind]’. One can try hard not think about something, but find that it lurks there, making itself known, nonetheless.

3.6.11 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION: MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE METAPHORS

In idiomatic Modern English, the mind can sometimes be conceptualised as a substance subject to alteration by external forces. Indeed, the mind can be portrayed as analogous to the body, experiencing the same physical impressions. To have something ‘on one’s mind’ could be considered an example of a spatial metaphor, with the preposition on supplying a straightforward relationship between the mind-location and thought-object. However, this idiom is very similar to others such as ‘weighing on one’s mind’, to ‘get a weight [or load] off one’s mind’, and to ‘have a weight lifted from one’s mind’. This group of metaphors endow the mind with physical attributes, presenting it as sensitive to external stimuli. It is oppressed by worries as though by weighty objects (‘burden one’s memory’), and can be ‘relieved’ of those burdens.

3.6.12 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION: MIND-AS-IMPLEMENT METAPHORS

In Modern English, the mind can sometimes be expressed in terms of a tool that is applied to a particular problem in order to solve it. So, ‘putting [or, giving] one’s mind to it’ means giving a problem one’s full attention, and bears resemblance to ‘putting one’s shoulder to X’ (where X is a real world object, such as a wheel) in order to move it, or applying an implement to an object in order to facilitate a change.

Similarly, in order to complete a mental task, one has to ‘keep [or have] one’s mind on it’ (i.e. concentrate, focus). If one takes one’s mind off something, this process ends and the problem remains unsolved. However, if it is beyond one’s control to affect the outcome, then ‘taking one’s mind off’ the problem for the duration may be a sensible course of action and may conserve one’s resources for other more suitable occasions.
3.6.13 REMINISCENCE: SPATIAL/MOTION METAPHORS

Many of the spatial or motion idioms discussed have involved the movement of memory objects into, within, or out of the memory faculty, conceived of as a physical space. Curiously, the spatial idioms that relate to reminiscence are of a different character. Reminiscence is similar to recollection, but often has a strong emotional element and the retrieved memory traces are accordingly subject to more subjective interpretation. Another characteristic of reminiscence is that the memories tend to be revisited on numerous occasions, often in response to present events which prompt the rememberer to retreat to a happier time. The terms *revisit* and *retreat* are indicative of the kinds of colloquial language that are used of reminiscence: the past (or our memory of that past) is conceptualised as a physical place to which we can escape from time to time.

Depending on the context in which it occurs, reminiscence can be seen as either a positive or a negative activity to engage in. If one insists on dwelling among one’s memories rather than facing the present, one might be censured for ‘living [too much] in the past’. Similarly, the phrase ‘lost in reverie’ implies that the reminiscer may be trapped within the world of her or his own memories and unable to return to the present. The question seems to be one of degree: the consensus is that it is unhealthy to spend too much time in reminiscence.

In most situations, however, reminiscence is treated as a positive experience. The notion of reminiscence as a journey to a pleasant place is evident in the common idiom of a ‘trip (or stroll, or walk) down Memory Lane’. Rememberers undertaking such a journey usually do so to revisit those memories to which they bear a sentimental attachment, and it seems to be a very human response to want to indulge in such nostalgia periodically.

3.6.14 REFLECTIVE MEMORY: MIND-AS-CONTAINER METAPHORS

When reflective remembering has been used to create something new from the accumulated experiences of the past – something that does not, therefore, exist in the real world – it is said to be ‘all in the mind’.

3.6.15 REFLECTIVE MEMORY: SPATIAL/MOTION METAPHORS

Another location for these reflective, imaginative memories is ‘in one’s mind’s eye’. To a degree, this could also be considered a MIND-AS-SUBSTANCE metaphor, in a much as the mental faculties are presented as mimicking physical senses.
When it is necessary to think creatively in order to solve a problem or puzzle, one can ‘give one’s mind [over]’ to it. It is more usual, however, to locate items to be contemplated within the mind-space. Another way to deal with difficult decisions is to ‘turn things over in one’s mind’, as though thoughts were concrete objects that could be manipulated within the mind. This conception is also evident in the idiom of ‘weighing up one’s options’. Again, conflicting possibilities are portrayed as masses that can be physically handled within the mind: the greater an outcome’s metaphorical weight, the greater chance that it will be adopted.

As already intimated, reflective remembering is not about the passive regurgitation of remembered experiences: it involves the creative use of remembered elements in finding solutions to novel problems. Conceptualising a problem as a physical task, and the mind as the corresponding tool, is a common idiom in this area. The lines are blurred here between the senses of mind as the locus of mental activity and as an intention (as in ‘having a good mind’ to do something). Colloquial expressions include ‘setting [or putting, or applying] one’s mind to [or on]’ something.

A number of other idioms could be said to describe the process of reflective remembering. As has been noted in chapter two, section 2.3.8, above, Modern English speakers often treat this high-level cognitive process as though it were entirely separate from memory: it is labelled as ‘thinking’, and it is often not recognised that such thinking depends on having a base of remembered knowledge from which to draw.

In my discussions of Classical conceptions of memory, and of Anglo-Saxon portrayals, it will be seen that ideas are often thought of as being ‘processed’ in a similar way as nutrients are processed by the body. Even in Modern English usage, when a problem requires deep consideration and creative thinking this reflective remembering can be illustrated through such idioms as ‘food for thought’ and ‘chewing the cud’.

So that Cædmon, in Bede’s account, ruminates on what he hears ‘swa swa clæne neten eodorcende’ before composing his songs. The moth, by contrast, ‘… ne waes / wihte þy gleawra, þe he pam wordum swealg’: he gains no intellectual nourishment by his digestion of the written word (Riddle 47, lines 5–6).
3.6.19 AREAS ABSENT FROM COLLOQUIAL DISCUSSIONS OF MEMORY

Although recollection lies at the centre of the memory retrieval continuum and is often seen to be the archetypal memory type, recollection tends to be invoked mainly in the negative in colloquial Modern English, to explain why retrieval breaks down. The best-represented category in the continuum seems to be a sub-group of recollection: that is, sustained recollection or ‘bearing in mind’.

Other parts of the continuum are not well represented in idiomatic Modern English. Implicit memory does not feature here, probably because habitual actions not considered to be part of the memory process (or even to be an especially mental phenomenon). Reconstruction is similarly not a part of memory in common thought; Modern English has a separate vocabulary of story-telling, embroidering the truth, lying, and so on. This is also the case for the process of confabulation: we tend to assume that remembering involves the accurate representation of past events, and processes which deviate from this standard fail to be recognised as part of the broad spectrum that is remembering.

3.6.20 CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have demonstrated in this chapter that colloquial Modern English utilises a variety of metaphors and idioms to express ideas about memory, the mind, and inner experience. In fact, such figurative expressions are so pervasive that non-figurative language is rarely used to explore what is occurring during encoding, storage and retrieval processes (outside of bald statements such as ‘I remember…’, and so on) except within the discourses of biology and psychology. Indeed, even the so-called objective language of Western modern science is deeply influenced by the figurative representations of MEMORY that are common currency among Modern English speakers.

In the following chapter on the figurative representation of mind, memory, and inner experience in Old English texts, I shall go on to show that Old English shares many of these characteristic idioms with Modern English. Despite the tendency for speakers to refer to current technologies in their colloquial discourses, certain paradigms seem to span the centuries: metaphors involving written records, for example, may be manifested in the twenty-first century through reference to printed pages (or even to ‘e-texts’) but may have their roots in tenth-century metaphors of vellum manuscripts and even in imagery based on the wax-tablets common in Classical times. I postulate that Modern English and Old English speakers probably utilise such idioms with a similar purpose: the pinning-down of abstract, often inexplicable, mental phenomena into concrete models which are evocative and can be widely recognised and understood.
Chapter Four

The Figurative Representation of Mind, Memory, and Inner Experience in Old English

Already in this thesis, I have outlined the importance of the faculty of memory in everyday life today: its role in the creation of coherent self-narratives, and in the formation of group identities, for example. I have described the various processes that are classified as parts of the memory process in current psychological literature, and the ways in which these are referred to in colloquial Modern English. My aim now is to use this same psychology-based approach in exploring the ways in which Anglo-Saxon writers discuss memory. I want to see how far the processes identified in the modern scientific approach are replicated (or even recognised) within the schemes utilised by Anglo-Saxon writers and thinkers. This will enable me to compare Old English literary representations of inner experience with current interpretations of the phenomena. I shall be keeping in mind the present-day non-specialist view of memory, that is to say, the colloquial and idiomatic speech of Modern (British) English speakers or the ‘common sense’ view of what memory is, and asking whether Old English and Modern English idioms adhere in different degrees to the ‘actual’ workings of memory as proposed by modern science.

As I have shown in my section on Modern English idioms, even speakers who have available to them modern, scientific explanations for the phenomenon of memory frequently employ familiar tropes such as the MEMORY-AS-STORAGE-BOX metaphor, as if this better serves as a description of the memory process than reference to nerve cells and electrochemical impulses. The Anglo-Saxon writers also had a body of medical knowledge on which to draw when discussing memory, and yet – as my investigation of a selected corpus has revealed – they too employ a number of common tropes, some of which seem to originate in antiquity.¹ If not to the neuro-chemical explanation of memory traces, to what do Anglo-Saxon writers attribute these phenomena: to their own understanding of medicine, such as the system of humours? Or is there another type of system underlying the concept of memory, as understood by Anglo-Saxon writers: a system more ancient and more pervasive even than that produced by early medieval or classical philosophy? Through my exploration of the figurative representation of inner experience in Old English texts, I shall show the points of convergence and divergence between these varied systems of interpretation.

I shall address the straightforward vocabulary of memory in chapters seven and eight of this thesis.² What I mean by straightforward in this context is a group of nouns and verbs that are generally agreed

² ‘Straightforward’ is in itself a disputed term, as all work on Old English vocabulary involves translation and therefore a degree of interpretation, and generations of scholars over three or four centuries have sometimes ‘muddied the waters’ by their myriad definitions of terms, even as they have attempted to illuminate and make clear their meanings. A plethora of definitions, on the other hand, is perhaps to be expected in relation to so nebulous and unstable a field as MEMORY.
to pertain to MEMORY (as a faculty of the human mind, or as a ‘trace’ within that mind) and REMEMBERING (an activity undertaken by means of that faculty – frequently referring to what I term ‘recall’ but also encompassing a range of related activities). 3

In the present chapter, by contrast, I shall refer to areas that have been less studied – in relation, at least, to Old English texts – and about which there is less of a consensus of agreement. Having determined to deal with MEMORY and REMEMBERING vocabulary elsewhere, in this chapter I shall turn to instances where the language used to describe memory processes is not explicitly that connected with MEMORY. My method is to provide, under each section heading, a number of examples of a particular figurative usage; the implications to be drawn from these lists will then be considered.

4.1 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

What I shall be referring to is, of course, figurative language: the imagery, metaphors, metonyms, idioms and so on, that are used to express complex ideas about what is going on during the mysterious phenomenon of memory events. These metaphorical expositions have much to tell us about the processes, capacities, and qualities of the human memory, as understood by the Anglo-Saxon community. It is the language adopted when rational, scientific explanations are not available, but also – as my work on Modern English representations of memory has shown – a language whose pressure is so great that knowledge of physiological-psychological processes can be suppressed even when it is available.

Studies have shown that many of our abstract concepts are deeply metaphorical in nature; the imagery used in describing them is complex and detailed, and many areas of the abstract phenomenon can be ‘mapped onto’ corresponding areas of the physical structure, metaphorically employed. 4 Such metaphors are often so ingrained that we are unable – or at least severely restricted in our ability – to discuss them without recourse to metaphorical terminology.

It has become clear during the course of my research that MEMORY is one such concept: it cannot easily be freed from associations that have been carried with it over an extended period of time. Although we can never hope to recreate the actual vernacular language and practices of the Anglo-Saxons, it is my contention that figurative language stems from an universal impulse and – by analogy with modern usage of colloquialisms and idioms – what is represented in literary texts is likely to be a

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3 Although this is my formulation, a similar division between ‘the memory’ as a storage facility and ‘remembering’ as an activity is also addressed in U. Neisser, ‘The Ecological Study of Memory’, Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences 352: 1362 (1997), 1697-1701.

reflection of ‘real world’ usage. Investigation of (written) figurative Old English language may then at least provide a partial picture of Anglo-Saxon attitudes toward memory and will highlight consistencies and divergences between tenth-century and twenty-first-century approaches to the memory faculty.  

It is my intention to turn my attention to each of the stages of the memory process in turn, following the pattern laid out in my introductory chapter. I shall highlight the kinds of imagery used in reporting these parts of the memory process, and assess the usefulness of employing certain kinds of image. Thus, I shall be in a position to compare Anglo-Saxon practices with present-day practices, the better to understand how Anglo-Saxons experienced and expressed the inward world of the mind. Furthermore, I shall be able to highlight any areas of memory that are not represented in my chosen texts, and may be able to supply possible reasons for their absence.

Were occurrences of figurative language confined to the poetic corpus of the Anglo-Saxons, then modern readers might consider these metaphors to be merely poetic devices, rather than being indicative of the way that Anglo-Saxon writers thought about memory. Metaphor has, of course, played an important role in English poetry over the last thousand years and modern readers of Anglo-Saxon texts might not be surprised to find that writers of Old English verse employ a wider range of metaphors than do those of prose pieces. However, close study of the Blickling and Vercelli homilies reveals that memory is conceptualised through the use of figurative language in the prose, as well as the poetry, of the Old English corpus. Figurative language, then, can be seen as integral to the expression of ideas about inner experience across a range of Anglo-Saxon writings; it is not restricted to a particular form, as many literary devices are restricted to use in poetry or ‘highbrow’ fiction today.

Homiletic texts are undoubtedly serious, didactic pieces of writing, relying often on non-figurative language and frequently addressing the audience directly in imperative mood. However, they also need to be memorable texts: the recollection of pertinent segments of established texts might form the basis of the composition of new texts, for instance, or homiletic texts may have been read aloud to a

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5 Section 1.2 of my introduction provides some historical context for the production of texts in and around the tenth century. The Anglo-Saxon period covers some six centuries; limiting this study to c. late-tenth and c. early-eleventh-century texts reduces (but does not completely negate) the problems of treating this lengthy historical period as an homogeneous whole.

6 See sections 4.6.1, 4.6.7, 4.6.8, 4.6.9, and 4.7 below.

7 The prevalence of this language throughout the Old English corpus raises questions about the relative status of poetry and prose in Anglo-Saxon England: there was perhaps less of a dichotomy between poetry as ‘high’ art and didactic, non-fiction prose as ‘low’ art (if, indeed, an art at all) than can be perceived among present-day attitudes.

8 See, for example, the opening lines of Vercelli Homily XIV (ll. 1-9), Vercelli Homily XIX, (ll. 1-3), and Blickling Homily XI (ll. 125.2-6), along with other examples of *gemunan* in the concordance to the thesis.
listening audience. Thus the homilist would have required similar skills and techniques for keeping his audience’s interest as would the poet of an entertaining but lengthy piece such as Beowulf.

4.2 SITES OF LEARNING AND MEMORY ENCODING

A brief survey of figurative representations of MEMORY reveals that many name the location in which the memory event is occurring. A number of ambiguities arise from the seemingly straightforward project of identifying the locus of memory. Lexicographers have often provided a very broad range of possible meanings for those terms used to indicate the site of memory, so that, for instance, heorte may be the physical organ the heart (Latin corde), the breast within which the organ sits, or as the seat of both intellect and feelings. This makes it difficult to determine whether the Anglo-Saxons thought of memory as occurring within the physical heart (from which modern translators have inferred that heorte can be equated with memory) or whether heorte always contained a metaphorical element in addition to its medical definition.

As I have demonstrated elsewhere, it is common in both Old English and Modern English to refer to memory as taking place within a defined space. Leaving aside for the moment those examples where what is remembered is said to be ‘held’ in a particular location, I shall now examine occurrences where an act of memory is said to happen in a specific location. In these occurrences, as these are examples of metaphor or idiom, a wide range of verbs are employed, as opposed to purely MEMORY verbs such as gemunan. I shall suggest that the types of verb used in conjunction with the memory loci reveal something of the specific qualities attributed to such loci by Anglo-Saxon writers, and hence something of the nature of memory itself as understood by those writers.

4.2.1 HEORTE

The heorte is frequently identified as the locus of memory events. This can be seen in Vercelli Homily XI for the first Rogation Day, which begins with a brief account of the origin of the Rogation procession. These processions are important, the audience hear, because ignorance causes men (specifically, heathen men) to fall into error. In order to banish such ignorance, gospels are ordained.

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9 See, for example, J. E. Cross, ‘Ælfric – Mainly on Memory and Creative Method in Two Catholic Homilies’, Studia Neophilologica 41 (1969), 135-55 and M. J. Carruthers, Book of Memory. Section 1.2.3 above addresses some of the specific questions raised about the dissemination of my chosen homiletic collections.

10 I have referred elsewhere to the difficulty involved in establishing the identity of Anglo-Saxon homilists and poets. For the purposes of this chapter – and in the interest of simplicity – I use masculine pronouns in referring to such writers. This should not be taken to exclude the possibility that these texts may have been authored by women.

11 See the supplement to Bosworth and Toller (eds.), Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, s.v. heorte.

12 The verbs gehealdan and habban are discussed at 4.6.6, below.

13 Homily XI is primarily a modified translation of a sermon by Caesarius of Arles commemorating St. Honoratus, although it begins with an incipit from a Rogationtide homily (also by Caesarius). See D. G. Scragg (ed.), Vercelli Book, p. 219.
Further, apostles or prophets of old, along with contemporary religious teachers, all help the audience to see the truth of the gospels. The audience are told: ‘& þam rihtum larum & ðam halegum bysenum we habbað mycle nydþearfe þæt we hyrsumien, & ondrysenlice we þæt halige godspel gehyren, & fæste we hit on urum heortum gestaðolian’.\(^\text{14}\) The *heorte* is thus a container of sorts; the words of the holy gospel are able to enter the space, apparently through the ears of the believer. The verb *gestaðolian* has connotations of strength and stability, and is hence often to be found in what I have termed ‘construction’ or ‘defence’ metaphors.\(^\text{15}\) The *heorte* is a site of long-term memory storage, but is also a place of conscious contemplation (he who has the gospel ‘in his heart’ is inclined to obey their teachings) and perhaps also confers the ability to withstand false teaching (the ‘defence’ element of *gestaðolian*).

*Heorte* and *staðolian* are again in collocation in *Blickling Homily X*, a homily that treats the horrors of the forthcoming Judgement Day. It is common, in sermons, to use examples; stories that have a moral that is more widely applicable than within the confines of the context. As we have noted with regard to other aspects of homiletic technique, examples fail to serve their purpose unless they are remembered by the hearer, and also unless they are able to be recollected and applied to novel situations in the future. For this reason, the homilist of *Blickling Homily X* tells the story of the bones of the rich man speaking, and asks that the audience ‘þas bysene on urum heortum staþelian’.\(^\text{16}\) Again, the *heorte* is the site of memory, suggesting either that this exemplum has a particular appeal to the emotions and is thus memorable, or that the heart was routinely thought to be the site of memory in Anglo-Saxon culture.\(^\text{17}\)

A different tone is created in *Vercelli Homily XXII* by the use of *heorte* as a site of memory in conjunction with the related verbs *þurhwunian* and *wunian*.\(^\text{18}\) There is a sense of stasis in these verbs; memories are seen to inhabit or abide in the *heorte* as a person might occupy a dwelling. The tone here is rather more passive than the defensive connotations of the previously-discussed *(ge)staðolian*. Emphasis is placed instead on the desired longevity of such memories.

The homilist of *Vercelli Homily XXII* warns that ‘ðurhwunige on þinre heortan ege & fyrhtu’ if one is guilty of sin.\(^\text{19}\) As with the similar episode in the *Blickling Homilies*, the *heorte* is concerned with painful emotions. In the contemplation – and hence perpetuation – of those feelings, however, the

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14 Lines 17-20: ‘And we have great need that we those right precepts and those holy rules obey, and that we reverently hear that holy gospel, and firmly fix it in our hearts’.
15 Bosworth and Toller (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. staðolian: … I. to establish, found, settle, fix: … II. to make steadfast, confirm, endow with steadfastness: …
16 Lines 113.34–115.1: ‘fix this example in our hearts’.
17 I have noted in chapter two that strong emotions create strong impressions; memories encoded in emotionally-charged situations tend to be durable and vivid.
18 Bosworth and Toller (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. þurh-wunian I. to continue, not to come to an end, not to pass away: … II. to continue in a place, with a person, to remain, not to leave: … and s.v. wunian *To dwell, remain*; …
19 Lines 172-73: ‘awe and fear remain in your heart’. 
heorte is also a site of memory production; the contents of the heart act as painful reminders of sin and thus affect future behaviour. Shortly after this occurrence, the homilist again invokes the heorte as a site of memory: ‘Ic bidde & halsige æghwylcne cristene mann þæt we lætan ðas lare on ure heortan faeste wunian’. Once more, the homilist is concerned with the permanent record[ing] of fleeting words in the memory of the hearer (in this case located in the heart). In his use of the verb wunian, the homilist presents the heorte as a dwelling-place, within which the homilist’s words – and other teachings – may reside.

The theme of the heart as a container is continued through the Vercelli Homily II homilist’s use of the verb ontynen. This homily is concerned to relate the dreadful physical signs of the arrival of Doomsday. Alliteration is used throughout the homily but a particularly striking descriptive passage at lines 39–51 seems to follow more strictly the Anglo-Saxon poetic form. Following this chilling account of Doomsday, the homilist goes on to list the sins one should avoid in this world to be spared harsh judgement in the next. In order that that they can behave in the prescribed fashion, the audience are told: ‘La hwæt, we behofigaþ þæt we usse earan ontynen & usse heortan to þam godspellican larum þe us man ofþ beforan sægð & usse lareowas beodaþ & secgæþ’. As with the previous example from Vercelli Homily XI, the heorte is receptive (or otherwise) to teaching that enters via the hearer’s ears. The phrase ‘earan ontynen’ reveals the role of sensory perception in learning and memory processes; these perceptions are the system’s inputs. However, the phrase also reveals the importance of a willingness to be taught on the part of the student (since ears, by implication, can also be ‘closed’ to teaching). Similarly, the heorte – elsewhere portrayed as the store of remembered teaching – must be voluntarily opened – metaphorically speaking – to allow access to the inner person. The element of volition implied in the use of the verb ontynen thus brings to light a new aspect of the concept of memory: memories do not necessarily have free access to the heorte of the rememberer.

My final example of the heorte as a site of memory occurs in Blickling Homily III. As is often the case, the object to be remembered is the result of spiritual instruction, what is contained within the believer’s heorte is ‘godecandra beboda’. The verb used here is (ge)fyllan, with the primary meaning

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20 Lines 205-206: ‘I ask and adjure every Christian man that we allow these precepts to remain firmly in our hearts’.

21 Interestingly, several writers have utilised imagery of dwelling-places when discussing the cultivation of ‘artificial memory’ (mnemonic technique). The pseudo-Ciceronian Rhetorica ad Herennium (of c. the first century B.C.) contains directions for placing objects to be remembered against a background, such as a series of intercolumnar spaces through which the rememberer can wander. See [Cicero], Rhetorica ad Herennium, trans. Harry Caplan (London: Heinemann, 1954), pp. 209-213. Quintilian (b. c. 35 A.D.), following Cicero, also mentions the use of forecourts and hallways through which a remember may ‘retrace his steps’ and find objects that relate to words or concepts. He is, however, somewhat sceptical about the usefulness of this system. See H. E. Butler (trans.), The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian, 4 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1922), vol. IV, pp. 223-27.

22 See D. G. Scrapp (ed.), Vercelli Homilies, pp. 50-51 for more on the use of alliteration in Vercelli Homily II.

23 Lines 96-98: ‘Listen, we have need that we open our ears and our hearts to the gospel teachings which men often say before us and which our preachers command and explain.’

24 In this homily for the first Sunday in Lent, the homilist opens with Matthew’s account of the temptation of Christ. The homilist reminds his audience of their need to rid themselves of sinfulness during Lent: ‘[p]onne sceolon we nu for þon dæg hwamlicum synnum / on þas tid georne clænsian, mid fæstenne, & mid halgum / wæccum, & mid ælmessum’ (37: 5-7) before they can ‘fill’ their hearts with God’s commands.
of “fill” or “replenish”.\(^{25}\) The *heorte* is thus represented as a vessel that can be filled with those things that are to be remembered. It is also intimated that the *heorte* – though in many contexts evidently capacious – is a container of finite capacity. The audience are told ‘swa we sceolon eac ure heortan gefyllan mid þære swetnesse godecundra beboda, þæt on us ne sy gemeted nænigu stow æmetig gastlicra mægena, þæt þær mege yfelu uncest on eardian’\(^{26}\) and it is clear that, if the heart is full of ‘þære swetnesse godecundra beboda’, there will be no dark corner left empty in which vices may develop. The ‘satisfy’ element of *geffyllan* may also suggest that the heart craves such ‘sweet’ teaching; as a container, it is the natural state of the mind-heart to be full.

4.2.2 MOD

After *heorte*, the most frequently occurring *locus* for memory in the homiletic metaphors is that of the *mod*.

The term *mod* is generally translated as Modern English *mind*. A difficulty with this translation is that Modern English speakers do not themselves know what ‘the mind’ is. A range of intellectual activities are ascribed to the mind, which is thought to be located within the brain and yet not a part of its physical structure. In fact, the mind seems to be a concept, designed to house those intellectual processes that we know to take place within us but are unable to locate more precisely.\(^{27}\)

Evidence for the *mod* as the container for memories can be found in *Blickling Homily XI* on the Ascension. Just as Christ ascended to heaven, the homilist warns, so will he descend again to earth on Doomsday. The audience should remember that no man may know when this day will come, and that the only way to guard against sins which would condemn us to eternal punishment is to ‘symle þæs dæges fyrbto & egsan on ure mod settan’.\(^{28}\) Images of the fear and awe, conjured up ‘for the mind’s eye’ by the homilist’s words must be ever-present on *ure mod* and available for contemplation by the believer. The verb *settan* (125: 6) could be interpreted as an act of deliberately placing something ‘in’ the mod or it could refer more specifically to the act of setting (i.e. sowing) seeds.\(^{29}\)

A similar effect is achieved through the use of the verb *staðolian* in conjunction with *mod* in *Vercelli Homily XIV*. This homily is based for the most part on Gregory’s *Dialogues*. The homilist begins his concluding section by asking that we repent ‘þa heardnesse ures modes’\(^{30}\) and contrasts the brevity and

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\(^{25}\) Bosworth and Toller (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. fyllan: … v. *trans. To fill, replenish, satisfy, cram, stuff, finish, complete, fulfil; …*

\(^{26}\) Lines 37.7-10: ‘so we must also fill our hearts with the sweetness of divine commands, so that there might not be found any place empty of spiritual power in which evil vices may dwell’.

\(^{27}\) Sections 2.1 and 2.1.1 outline the current state of knowledge regarding brain structure and neural activity.

\(^{28}\) Line 125.6: ‘always set in our mind the dread and awe of this day’.

\(^{29}\) Horticultural imagery will be dealt with separately in chapter five.

\(^{30}\) Lines 138-39: ‘the hardness of our mind’.
hardship of this present life with the eternal joy of heaven.\(^{31}\) He stresses the necessity of considering the future life of the soul, as attaining immortal life is more important than anything in this life. Thus, the homilist appeals for his audience to follow what they have been taught in holy books, and asks us to ‘[s]taðelian we þa dryhtenlican beboda on urum mode’.\(^{32}\) Like *settan, staðolian* is a verb that connotes stasis and fixity.

In my final example in this section of *mod* employed as the *locus* of inner experience, two verbs take *mod* as their object. These verbs are *gebindan* and *gebysegian*.\(^{33}\) In order that we not lose our eternal homeland, the homilist of *Vercelli Homily XIV* tells his audience, it is imperative that we not allow ‘þissa hwilendlicra þinga ure mod gebindan & gebysegian’.\(^{34}\) This can be viewed as a metaphor of memory in as much as giving thought to the transitory pleasures of this world is seen to displace contemplation of eternal life; conversely, of course, we have already seen that reflection upon – i.e. memory of – everlasting reward or punishment should stifle thoughts of worldly pleasures and therefore influence the believer’s present behaviour for the better. The two verbs used in this instance, though linked by alliteration, might seem to be contradictory as to meaning. *Gebisgian* could be used in a non-metaphorical way to mean ‘employ’; that is to say, the *mod* might be shown here simply to be capable of thinking about or remembering worldly things.\(^{35}\) However, its alternative interpretations – trouble, busy, and so on – seem to have connotations of movement, as though the *mod* were a substance that could be physically agitated. This image is somewhat at odds with that conjured up by *gebindan*, whereby the *mod* is represented as a container that can be locked, fettered, fastened. The contemplation of worldly things provokes agitated movement within the *mod* at the same time as it restricts the use of the *mod* for higher purposes, and this twofold effect perhaps highlights the ultimate futility of this worldly mode of thought.

The homilist of *Blickling Homily III* tells his audience that they should – during the season of Lent, particularly – *geclænsian* their *mod* of evil words and, having performed this task, should keep God’s behests ‘symle bliþe mode’,\(^{36}\) which could be translated as ‘always in (a) cheerful mind’ (but could also be read as ‘with cheerful spirit’). Evidence that God’s words should be held within a *bliþe mode* comes from the fact that the *mod* is already portrayed as a container that needs to be purged – *geclænsian* – of evil words.

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\(^{31}\) Based on Gregory, *IV, 62.3.* See Scragg (ed.), *Vercelli Homilies*, p. 245.

\(^{32}\) Line 171: ‘fix the divine commandments in our minds’. This final section of the homily (l. 139 onwards) has no known source; see *ibid*, p. 245.

\(^{33}\) Examples from the poetry (*Andreas, Guthlac A & B*) show that *staðolian* can be used in conjunction with *modsefan, heortan, hyge,* as well as *mod*.

\(^{34}\) See Bosworth and Toller (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. ge-bindan (to bind, tie up) and s.v. ge-bysgian (to occupy, busy, afflict, trouble, vex, oppress, overcome, agitate, weaken, destroy).

\(^{35}\) Lines 55-56: ‘these transitory things to bind and occupy our mind’.

\(^{36}\) Thinking implies mental activity in Modern English, but the meaning here might be less ‘cerebral’.

\(^{39}\) Lines 39.3-4.
Another example of the *locus* of memory comes from *Vercelli Homily XII*. Here there is a unique example (in the Vercelli and Blickling Homilies, at least) of *modgeþanc* as the locus of memory. In this occurrence, the *modgeþanc* is the object of the verb *wunian*, a verb with connotations of stasis and permanence. As shown in the foregoing analysis of metaphors in the homilies, metaphors of memory within the texts are indicative of the importance of memory for the didactic purposes of the homilist beyond the text. Once we have listened to the words of the gospel, they must ‘fæste wunige on ussum modgeþancum’. The *modgeþancum* is a long-term storage area but it is a room open to the continual scrutiny of conscious contemplation.

4.3 WORDS AS EXTERNAL EXPRESSIONS OF INTERNAL THOUGHT PROCESSES

Before moving on from this discussion of the ‘sites’ of memory and remembering, I would like to mention some instances in which language is seen to be a means of expressing openly those thoughts that would otherwise occur secretly in the recesses of the *heorte* or *breost*. I have noted the intrinsic link between memory and narrative elsewhere in this thesis: in all of the more active aspects of remembering – reflection, confabulation, reconstruction, reminiscence, and even recollection – the content of one’s memory tends to be organised into narratives, whether one is relating them to others or merely to oneself. Narrative is particularly important in transmitting the content of one’s memories to others; words may be an imperfect mechanism by which to convey one’s innermost thoughts, but they are often the best, if not the only, means of doing so. The examples which follow reveal a range of labels for the location in which thought takes place – *ferðloca*, *modsefa*, *breost*, *breosthord*, and *breostgehygdum* – a location which is often portrayed in terms of the container metaphor. The examples also demonstrate the way in which these private, bounded spaces are breached through the use of language, words sometimes ‘bursting out’ with some force where strong emotion is involved. It is possible, for example, for the container-like *ferðloca* to be opened in an outpouring of anger:

- Geswearc þa swiðferð
- þære fæmnan fæder,  
  sweor æfter worde,
  ferðlocan onspeon

37 Lines 75-76: ‘abide firmly in our mind-hearts’.
38 This is not the case in non-declarative (or implicit) memory, where the response is an unconscious or involuntary movement rather than the production of some content that could be put into words. At the passive end of the declarative memory retrieval continuum, similarly, the response may not result in the creation of a narrative: impressions are often fleeting and irrecoverable by subsequent conscious effort, and these brief sensations may not lend themselves to explication through language.
39 *Juliana*, lines 78-79: ‘Then the stong-minded [one], the maiden’s father, swore after the speech, unloosed his heart: …’.
The *breosthord* can be similarly breached:

```plaintext
… he hine eft ongon
wæters weorpan, oðþæt wordes ord
breosthord þurhbræc. …
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This instance pinpoints the *breosthord* as the source of wisdom and its verbal expression; in order to communicate with the outside world, however, it is sometimes necessary for the confinement of the individual mind to be broken.

### 4.4 LEARNING AND MEMORY ENCODING: THE ‘INPUTS’ OF THE MEMORY SYSTEM

In my introductory chapter on the physiological and psychological basis of memory, I briefly explained the process by which electrochemical impulses and neurotransmitters carry signals through the neurons of the brain, leading to changes in the neural synapses and to the ‘encoding’ of memories. This was an attenuated exposition of the present-day scientific explanation of the phenomenon of human memory.

Of course, Anglo-Saxon writers did not have available to them this knowledge of the neural activity of the brain, and so I would expect to find no corresponding vocabulary in the Old English lexicon. However, I would expect Anglo-Saxon writers to have some views on how information and sensation from ‘out there’ affects the inward thought processes of an individual, because the Anglo-Saxon corpus displays an obvious interest in what Antonina Harbus describes as ‘the life of the mind’. In addition to a large vocabulary concerned with the mind, thinking, and memory, there is also an appreciable use of figurative language to express ideas about these mysterious phenomena.

I have not found, in my work on the Old English vocabulary of MEMORY, a large amount of material specifically concerned with ‘inputting’ into the memory system. For example, there are few occasions on which the Modern English verb *memorise* would be an appropriate translation. This is due in part, I believe, to the fact that most memory ‘inputs’ are not consciously recognised as such. Although we may sometimes make a conscious effort to ‘memorise’ a piece of information, for instance, the vast majority of the memory traces available for subsequent recall are derived from sensory information that has been encoded without our realising it. Thus, every example of a literary character seeing, hearing, reading or otherwise experiencing something is a potential memory event; the sensory information derived from these experiences will be filtered to remove extraneous information, registered in the very short-term memory, and may then be laid down as a more-or-less permanent

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40 *Beowulf*, lines 2790-92: ‘[Wiglaf] again began to sprinkle him [i.e. the dying Beowulf] with water, until the speech’s source broke through [from] his mind’.

record in the long-term memory. Obviously such instances of ‘learning’ abound in the Old English corpus and it is not within the scope of this study to examine every instance. Rather, I will select a few examples of ‘learning’ taking place in order to show some Anglo-Saxon representations of the way in which external experience is internalised in a mental context. As I shall be discussing the loci within which memory events take place in a separate section, my concern in this section lies with the mechanisms by which external stimuli become internalised.

The following examples are categorised according to the types of metaphor that I have identified during my analysis of my selected texts.

4.4.1 CONTAINER/LOCKED CHEST METAPHOR

The homilist of Vercelli Homily II implies that knowledge enters the individual via his or her senses, a view that is not too dissimilar to the modern explanation of sensory input. The homilist argues that it is necessary that ‘we usse earan ontynen & usse heortan to þam godspellica n larum’.

While the ears, in reality, are always open and receiving sound waves from the environment (albeit that the brain may not always be processing these stimuli), the homilist implies that an act of volition is required. The ears and the heart are metaphorically endowed with doors that prevent ingress of knowledge in the form of gospel teaching and the audience members can choose to open these doors or to leave the way closed. The implication of the homilist’s choice of words is that the Christian message is available, but that one must be prepared both to hear it and to reflect upon it inwardly; a salutary message for the homily’s various audiences to hear.

Another example of this mechanism in motion can be found in Elene. Awoken from sleep by an angelic vision, Constantine is eager for knowledge of the symbol that will assure his victory. Looking to the skies in accordance with the messenger’s instructions, Constantine ‘hreðerlocan onspeon’.

Again, this is an interesting figurative illustration of the memory encoding process; learning takes place in the very act of Constantine unfastening his hreðerloca volitionally.

The pervasiveness of the image of wisdom as passing into a container through some kind of opening – which may be capable of being closed – can also be seen in Guthlac B. In the example above, taken from Elene, it was in Constantine’s power to unclasp the trove of wisdom within his breast in order to allow in new information. Similarly, the Vercelli homilist depicts an audience capable of opening their ears and hearts to receive new teaching. The example from Guthlac B, in contrast, shows wisdom being introduced into a person’s hrepfre by someone else. At the end of his life, Guthlac

42 Lines 96-97: ‘we open our ears and our hearts to the evangelical lore’. All quotations from the Vercelli Homilies are taken from D. G. Scragg (ed.), The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts, EETS OS 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

reveals to his solitary companion the secret of his nightly conversations with an unseen interlocutor. The angelic visitor – wulires wilboda\textsuperscript{44} – has ‘in hrepere bileac … wisdomes giefe’\textsuperscript{45} Although here it is God’s messenger who places wisdom into the saint’s breast, it can be argued that this is allowed to happen only through Guthlac’s cooperation: it is he who has sought help for his anxious mind and who has allowed these continuing secret meetings.

The idea of wisdom as a precious substance kept ‘under lock and key’ also functions in another way within the Old English corpus. Just as something that is already encoded can be said to be ‘locked up’ within one’s memory, so too can information that has yet to be learned be ‘locked up’ within its source (whether this is within the thoughts of another, within the words of a story that requires translation, or between the pages of a codex). In Exeter Book Riddle 42, the riddle has a heortan of its own: the meaning or solution at the centre of the text.\textsuperscript{46} This heortan is protected against anyone except the person who has found the ‘key’ through wise interpretation of the text. (‘Text’ may, in this sense, be written or spoken, although the runic content of some riddles – and their basis in Latin texts – does suggest a written context for them.)

So, the inputting of information into memory can be described in terms of the locked-container metaphor: if one is wise, one can unlock the meaning of exterior objects (texts, people, totems, etc.) to extract knowledge, while also unlocking one’s own heart in order to embrace this knowledge for oneself, as Constantine does in preparation for learning about the True Cross. The depictions shown here have a range of possible implications: that knowledge (and, particularly, Christian teaching) exists in the world, but that individuals must actively seek it out and unlock its meaning; that this outward knowledge must be internalised before it is of benefit (the seeker must be metaphorically ‘open’ to the truth); and that it is in the gift of God, who will impart it to those who open their hearts to him.

4.4.2 PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF MIND-HEART / CONCRETE/MALLEABLE OBJECTS

In the modern scientific explanation of memory encoding, there are a number of factors that affect a person’s ability to encode new information within the cerebral cortex of the brain.\textsuperscript{47} In Modern English idiomatic language, however, there is a tendency to blame the physical senses if the message does not seem to ‘get through’ to the brain; we believe someone to be deliberately ‘blind’ or ‘deaf’ to things, rather than blaming the brain or the more abstract ‘mind’.

\textsuperscript{44} Line 1246a: ‘messenger of glory’.
\textsuperscript{46} Line 14.
\textsuperscript{47} More is said on this subject in Chapter Two, but factors might include: physical and chemical problems in the brain; distraction; effect of lists (e.g. the recency effect); and the level of emotional or physical arousal accompanying the initial sensation.
Anglo-Saxon authors do on occasion attribute inability (or unwillingness) to learn to lack of perception but, interestingly, it is the cognitive centre – whether heart or mind – that is characterised as ‘blind’ in the instances listed here, rather than the actual, bodily eyes of a person. So, for example, the homilist of Blickling Homily XIII believes that the devil has ‘ablende eowre heortan’ in order to deprive the Jews of true knowledge of Christ.48 In this model of memory, knowledge enters the heart or mind via sensory inputs (listening to preachers, reading texts, and so on). If the heart or mind is metaphorically blind, the individual rememberer cannot perceive the world around him, and is thus unable to create new memory traces for the future.

The homilist of Vercelli Homily XX similarly refers to impaired (physical) senses in the phrase ‘modes blindness’.49 This ‘blindness of the mind’, the audience is told, is born of the sin of adultery. This rather implies that the sinner follows his or her bodily senses rather than those of the mind, and is therefore unable to ‘see’ and encode the truth in memory.50

If the ‘senses’ of the mind-heart51 are not at fault, then the substance of the mind itself may be blamed for the inability to ‘learn’; that is, to encode new memory traces. The Jews who were unable (or unwilling) to acknowledge Christ, the Vercelli Homily XVI homilist tells us, had ‘forheardydan heortan … heardran þonne ænige stanas’.52 Similarly, the homilist of Blickling Homily V tells us that those who are ‘heardre heortan’ cannot benefit from hearing divine teaching.53

The heart is more usually associated with faith, belief and emotion in Modern English than with memory, and the Modern English phrase ‘hard-hearted’ implies a lack of sympathy or fellow-feeling rather than an inability to perceive stimuli and receive new memory traces. For Anglo-Saxon writers, being ‘hard-hearted’ is not about refusing to empathise with others; rather, it indicates an unwillingness to allow any new experience to impinge on the mind-heart and contribute to that collection of remembered experiences that we call ‘the memory’ or ‘the mind’. It is as though the words of the preacher are unable to leave an ‘impression’ in the hard substance of the mind-heart, a

48 Line 151.33: ‘blinded your hearts’. These particular Jews are also physically blinded by God, during an attempt to attack the apostles tending the Virgin Mary’s bier; see BHXIII, 151.32-34. This and all subsequent quotations from the Blickling Homilies are taken from R. Morris (ed.), The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century: from the Marquis of Lothian’s unique ms. A.D. 971, E.E.T.S. O.S. 58 (London: N. Trübner and Co., 1880).
49 Line 83.
50 These depictions can be linked to understanding as a way of ‘seeing’ something. The metaphor equating ‘seeing’ with ‘understanding’ has a long history. But they can also be linked to idea of imagination and the ‘mind’s eye’ --- if this faculty is disabled, it becomes impossible to ‘see’ (metaphorically) another’s point of view, and so on.
52 Lines 91 and 92: ‘very hardened hearts … harder than any stones’.
53 Line 57.18.
metaphor which is compatible with the MIND-AS-WAX-TABLET metaphor that goes back at least to the time of Socrates.\(^{54}\)

These two characteristics of the mind-heart – metaphorical blindness and unyieldingness – can even be combined to lend emphasis to a person’s imperviousness to new ideas from without. In similar homilies in two collections, the audience is told that the men in Christ’s time could not at first understand His teaching, because they were ‘stænenre heortan & blind[r]e’.\(^{55}\)

The supposed characteristics of the mind-heart, then, are of paramount importance for the successful encoding of new memories. Anglo-Saxon writers often portray the mind as an entity capable of registering sensation through its ‘senses’ and through its innate plasticity; a failure to encode memories is therefore attributed to a fault of the senses (*modes blindness*) or to the ‘substance’ of the mind failing to be malleable (*heardre heortan*).

### 4.4.3 CONSTRUCTION, DEFENCE AND CONFLICT METAPHORS

I have said that the MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor is prevalent in the figurative representation of memory in Anglo-Saxon texts. In addition to the general instances already cited, I have discovered a number of instances in which the external environment is depicted as a scene of conflict, and the ‘container’ is in this case an area fortified against the influx of conflict.

On occasion, this metaphor could appear to be representing the storage of memories. For example, in *Andreas*, Andrew is told to stay with the Mermedonians and ‘on ferðlocan fæste getimbre’ God’s name.\(^{56}\) ‘Building up’ a name could conceivably refer to making it stronger, more prominent in consciousness, less likely to be forgotten. But the phrase ‘fæste getimbre’ – analogous to phrases such as ‘faest[e] bind’\(^{57}\) – suggests to me that Andrew is to install God’s name and teaching within each mind-heart, which must then be constructed in a fortress-like fashion to protect the new content and to prevent the ingress of contrary teachings. The Mermedonians must be given something now that they can contemplate in the future, something which becomes integral to them.

Many other instances in the Old English corpus, however, are far more explicitly about the encoding stage of memory. Specifically, these ‘construction’ or ‘defence’ metaphors reveal the effort required in preventing the ‘wrong’ kind of learning, in closing the mind, so to speak, to harmful influences from the outside world. In *Guthlac B*, the saint ‘faeste trymede’ his ‘modsefan’ against the attacks of

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\(^{54}\) For instance, Carruthers quotes Socrates on the ‘consistency’ of individual minds; see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, p. 21.

\(^{55}\) *Vercelli Homily X*, line 28, and *Blickling Homily IX*, line 105.27: ‘stony and blind of heart’.

\(^{56}\) Line 1671: ‘in [the] heart firmly build [God’s name]’.

\(^{57}\) See *Wanderer*, line 13 and *Homiletic Fragment II*, line 3: ‘bind fast’.
his adversaries. The sense of fortification in this passage derives from the use of the verb *trymede*. Although the effect is to highlight the prevention of unwanted ‘inputs’ in the form of devilish persuasion, the metaphor is not particularly developed in this passage.

The metaphor is, however, developed at length in passages from another Exeter Book poem, *Juliana*:

… Ic ðæs wealles geat
   ontyne þurh teonan;      bið se torr þyreld,
ingong geopenad,      bonne ic ærest him
   þurh eargfare    in onsende
   in brestsefan    bitre gehþoncas
   þurh mislice    modes willan

Once the devil is able to penetrate the battlements of a believer’s mind, we are told, he is quick to send in his evil counsel, causing the believer to abandon his former good practices. In a parallel passage, in which Juliana exhorts her persecutors to avoid wickedness, the mind is portrayed as a house:

     Forþon ic, leof weorud,      læran wille,
aeftremmende,      þæt ge eower hus
gefæstnige,      þy læs hit ferblædum
windas toweorpan.      Weal sceal þy trumra
strong wpstondan         storma scurum,
leahtra gehygdum.      …

It is necessary to construct a strong spiritual wall in order to withstand unwelcome inputs into the mind or inner self.

I have found, then, that three main metaphor-types are used in the depiction of memory encoding processes. Two are sub-divisions of the over-arching MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor: things that a rememberer might wish to admit into the memory are described as precious objects to be stored with care in a safe receptacle, while things harmful to a rememberer are linked to weapons and other hostile forces, and the rememberer must fortify the memory enclosure in order to repel them. The third type draws on the imagery of Classical sources, such as the MEMORY-AS-WAX-TABLET metaphor; in this case, the rememberer’s ability (or inability) to create new memory traces is attributed to physical qualities of the mind itself.

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58 Lines 960 and 959: ‘securely made firm [his] mind-heart’.
59 Bosworth and Toller, s.v. tryman … I. *to make firm or strong*…
60 Lines 401b-406: ‘Through injuries [insults] I open the gate of the wall; the tower is pierced, the entrance opened. Then I first send to him, through the arrow’s flight, bitter thoughts by means of various desires of the mind, into [his] mind-heart’.
61 Lines 647-52: ‘Therefore, dear people, I wish to teach, fulfilling the law, that you make fast your house, lest sudden blasts of wind break it in pieces. A strong wall shall the more securely withstand the tempests of storms, the thoughts of sin’.
4.5 WHEN DOES LEARNING / MEMORY ENCODING TAKE PLACE?

In chapter two, I have said that most memory traces are ultimately derived from outside the individual rememberer. Outward influences include the physical environment, the speech and actions of the people who populate it, and combinations of these, such as the book which, although itself a physical artefact, also represents the language(s) of its producer(s). I have referred to memory encoding as something occurring continually within the human brain. Although many sensations are ‘filtered out’ and never reach our ‘conscious mind’, information from our senses constantly floods into our nervous system without our being aware of it. Perhaps because of this lack of awareness, the process of memory encoding is not prominent among the figurative representations of memory events in my chosen corpus. The laying down of memory traces tends to be noticed only when accompanied by a strong emotional element or when conscious effort is expended in the encoding process. However, there do exist some figurative representations of the process of deriving information from the outward environment.

Examples of the need consciously to draw meaning from objects in the physical environment can be found in the Junius Manuscript poem Exodus, for instance. Of the scriptures, the audience is told:

\[
\text{hafað wislicu word on fæðme,} \\
\text{wile meagollice modum tæcan.} \quad 62
\]

The wise or prudent words that are to form the memory input of the believer are held within Scripture. God, through His words, desires to impart this teaching to His followers, but they must first seek that benefit for themselves. ‘On fæðme’ could suggest that the words are within the grasp of the opaque text, and need to be wrenched away. The preceding lines, however, hold clues that locate this image within a tradition of ‘treasure chest’ imagery. Believers are able to penetrate the mysteries of the Scriptures and find true meaning:

\[
\text{gif onlucan wile lifes wealhstod,} \\
\text{... ginfæsten god gastes cægon.} \quad 63
\]

The words of Scripture are precious, then, and can only be attained by those who hold the right ‘cægon’ – a disposition to learn, perhaps – within their own mind. The Scriptures are portrayed as a treasure-chest of wisdom; that wisdom resides in the mysterious words of Scripture, but can be unlocked by one who is willing to learn. The truth, though attainable by anyone who desires it, is not freely available. Effort must be expended in its recovery, and its value is all the greater for that, presumably. The reference to the faculty that is able to decode these mysteries is somewhat riddle-like: it could be interpreted as the ‘heart’, the ‘mind’, or the ‘understanding’, for instance. So, aspects

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63 Lines 523-25: ‘if life’s interpreter wishes to unlock ... that ample good with the keys of the spirit’.

All quotations from the Junius Manuscript are taken from E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), The Junius Manuscript, ASPR 1 (London: George Routledge and Sons Limited, 1932).
of the external world – in this poem, the Scriptures specifically – are recognised as valuable potential sources for new memories. A willingness to learn and an ability to understand are necessary to unlock the potential, and are thus represented as the keys of the encoding process.

In the cited examples, then, the encoding of new memory traces is represented as a process entailing the opening of an exterior container and a transfer of the ‘treasures’ it holds. Compatible imagery may also be utilised in the representation of memory retrieval events, a subject to which I turn in the following section.

4.6 THE MEMORY RETRIEVAL CONTINUUM

4.6.1 INVOLUNTARY MEMORY

Involuntary memory is at one extreme of my posited declarative memory retrieval continuum. It is at the end where external influence is high and conscious mental processing relatively low. Ideas seem to originate outside the individual rememberer; he or she has been unaware of the mental process leading up to such inspiration, and so the idea appears to have arrived, fully formed, ‘from out of nowhere’. Although I have not found many examples of this in the Old English corpus – characters typically have very clear motivations for their actions, such as God, the devil, or a sense of personal pride, and so on – some Old English phrases do seem to describe impulsive actions based on the prompting of involuntary memory.

Hrothgar’s idea about the building of Heorot, for example, ‘[h]im on mod bearn’. The connotation of bearn is that the thought ran into his mind without conscious involvement on his part. Given the subsequent consequences, Hrothgar’s hall building could be viewed as a dangerous and irrational act, and the phrase ‘[h]im on mod bearn’ certainly suggests that the idea was not given proper consideration. Although this instance could be interpreted as a problematic idea with difficult future ramifications (i.e. the difficulties with Grendel and his kin), other examples in the Old English corpus are much more explicitly critical of the outcome of involuntary memory.

Blickling Homily II includes a treatment of the memory encoding process; the devil’s suggestions, we are told, carry evil into the hearts of mankind. People do not need actively to seek evil; they need

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64 Beowulf, line 67: ‘[to] him in [his] mind occurred’.
65 Bosworth and Toller (eds.), Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, s.v. be-yrnan “… To run by, to come in, occur, incur …”
66 From the viewpoint of the generally Christian literate community, the necessity of playing an active role in Christian life is surely a factor in this prejudice: Christianity may be the religion of the Book, but the emphasis is very much on taking the lessons of the Book and applying them in life. The active search for truth is valued over passive receptivity to stray, idle thoughts.
merely be passive (even unconscious) recipients. Having once penetrated the enclosure of the heart as part of memory encoding, this evil influence can go on to have a lasting effect on the rememberer. They are ‘on heora mode mid mislicum geþohtum onstyrede’. These thoughts have the power to ‘stir’ the mind and trouble the rememberer, whether or not that is what is desired. This is surely a case of involuntary memory and – because the effect is detrimental to the rememberer – reinforces injunctions made elsewhere in the homiletic corpus that the believer must actually resist the devil’s temptations (i.e. not merely rely on not doing evil actively).

Just as unwonted thoughts stir the mind in *Blickling Homily II*, in *Judgement day II* we find that:

\[\ldots \ Quinte mod \quad wendað þa gyhtas\]
\[\quad swiðe mid sorgum \quad \text{and mid sargunge.}^{68}\]

In this poem, the poet looks ahead to the events of Doomsday and the sinner’s frame of mind at that time. The *gyhtas* that trouble the mind may be literal offences but I would argue that when one regrets past actions, what disturbs one is the memory or recollection of one’s past sins. Again, these memories are portrayed as autonomous actors with the power to *wendan* the defenceless *mod*.

This emphasis on the intervention of involuntary memories when the rememberer is at an emotional low point is evident in a number of other Old English poetic texts. For example, in *The Wanderer*

\[\dot{\ldots} \quad \text{Sorg bið geniwad,} \quad \text{ponne maga gemynd} \quad \text{mod geondhweorfeð;} \]
\[\quad \text{greteð gliwstafum,} \quad \text{georne geondsceawad} \]
\[\quad \text{secga geseldan.} \quad \ldots^{69}\]

Although involuntary memories of family and friends must surely bring comfort at times, in this instance the wanderer seems troubled by his painful memories. These images seem to come unbidden into the man’s mind, although it is possible that he conjures them up himself, through his own desire to see lost friends. Certainly, the experience feels real, and more than just an image from the past. His senses and emotions are so overawed by the experience that he tries to greet his companions.

When thoughts or memories, then, are depicted in Old English literature as autonomous entities that affect the mind in some way – by turning it, perhaps, or stirring it up – the kind of events portrayed are those that I would term ‘involuntary’ memory events.

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67 Lines 19.8-9: ‘agitated in their mind with manifold thoughts’.
68 *Judgement Day II*, lines 244-46: ‘sins violently turn that weary mind, with sorrows and with grief’.
69 *Wanderer*, lines 50-53: ‘Grief is renewed, whenever remembrance of kinsmen passes through his mind, he greets [them] joyfully, eagerly surveys the companions of men’.
4.6.2 BEING REMINDED

The act of being reminded (by someone, or something) does not seem to be articulated through figurative language in the Old English corpus. Examples of reminding found in my selected corpus utilise verbs of remembrance, and are therefore not treated in the present chapter.

4.6.3 RECOGNITION

As with all proximal points on the declarative memory retrieval continuum, there is a close relationship between the memory outcomes of ‘involuntary memory’ and ‘recognition’ . They share a high dependence on the external world and both show low levels of conscious processing. The differences between the two outcomes are subtle: whereas the involuntary memory seems to arrive spontaneously from without the rememberer’s mind, and subsequently acts autonomously to affect it, in recognition there is a feeling that the knowledge has lain dormant and unnoticed within the individual but is then spontaneously brought into play in an instant. When the Guthlac A poet reports ‘ðuhte him on mode …’, the impersonal verb construction suggests that something suddenly occurs to the saint and the mod is represented as a site of realisation.

4.6.4 RECOLLECTION

Although there are many examples of ‘recollection’ within the corpus, writers have tended to utilise verbs such as gemunan rather than employing metaphor or other figurative language in these cases.

In contrast to outcomes such as involuntary memory (discussed above), recollection is characteristically a deliberate, conscious act on the part of the rememberer. It frequently involves ‘searching’ the memory in pursuit of some knowledge that might be contained within. In the poem Elene, Judas complains to Elene that many generations have lived and died since the time of the Crucifixion, about which she has requested information. He implies that the knowledge has not been passed from one person to another, although the audience knows that this is untrue:

… Ic ne can þæt ic nat,  
findan on fyrhðe  þæt swa fyrm gewearð.72

In this instance, the ferhð is depicted as the seat of memory. This can be ‘searched’ in an attempt at recollection, although the information does not seem to be available in this case. (In fact, the required information is found when further pressure is applied by Elene.) This image is in accordance with the MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor, of course: the mind-heart is a physical space within which items of knowledge are stored away, to be sought and retrieved as necessary.

70 Line 440: ‘[i]t seemed [to] him in [his] mind’.
71 See chapter seven for uses of gemunan.
72 Lines 640-41: ‘I cannot find in [my] mind that [of which] I am unaware, that [which] occurred long ago’.
There is a further image which may be classified under the heading of ‘recollection’, although, in this case, the remembering individual is exhorted not to recollect something. The homilist of Vercelli Homily XXII tells his audience ‘[f]or þan þeah þe we hie forlæten, we ne sculon ure heortan eft to him hweorfan, for þam þe ða welan forwyrðað & ðæt wuldor forwyrð & sio fægernes forwisnað. This seems to be an injunction against recollecting things which one should have ‘put away’ from oneself, and implies that an element of longing might accompany the abstinence from worldly things. The mind-heart is depicted as an object in motion; the rememberer is in control of that movement and can choose to keep his or her mind at a distance from the objects of desire.

4.6.5 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION: ‘BEARING IN MIND’

In contrast to many other aspects of the memory retrieval continuum, sustained recollection is well represented among the figurative representations of the Old English corpus.

The Old English term (ge)healdan has the characteristic of describing a relationship between a possessing subject and a possessed object, often (though not exclusively) a material object and often (again, not always) constrained in some way and maintained in close proximity to the owner. It is very frequently used to describe an action in a narrative: throughout the corpus, however, the verb also appears in a metaphorical context. Since all Old English literature must be assumed to have been influenced by Christianity, it comes as no surprise to find religious references within these metaphorical uses of (ge)healdan. It is, however, surprising that these occurrences are so consistently focussed on one particular aspect of the Christian religion: remembering the word of God.

As might be expected in collections composed of homilies and sermons, there is in the Blickling Homilies and Vercelli Homilies an emphasis on remembering the word of God. It is common in this respect for the homilist idiomatically to employ the verb healdan, with God’s commandments as the object of that verb. At the beginning of Vercelli Homily VIII, the homilist reminds the audience of Gregory’s teaching, and of how it is important to go back through the words of subsequent writers in order to know and remember the words of the ultimate authority: God himself. Later in the same text, the homilist includes a passage of direct speech, ostensibly God’s address to sinful mankind on Judgement Day. Having created you and placed you into Paradise, He says, I ‘þe bead mine bebodu to healdanne’. Thus injunctions to hold God’s commandments can be seen to date back to the very origins of life on earth. Similarly, the homilist of Vercelli Homily X also provides evidence of Christ’s words. Within this authority, Christ reminds a wealthy man of the words of another authority:

73 Lines 176-78: ‘Therefore though we abstain from them, we must not again turn our hearts to them, because those riches pass away and that glory passes away and the beauty decays’.
74 See sections 1.2 and 1.2.3 on the probable contexts of manuscript production.
75 Taken, apparently, from Gregory the Great’s Homiliae in euangelia; see D. G. Scragg (ed.), Vercelli Homilies, p. 139.
76 Lines 49-50: ‘bid you to keep my commandments’.
Solomon. The wealthy man, therefore, has no excuse for not heeding Christ’s commands, and he is asked ‘hwi noldest ðu mine bebodu healdan?’.

At the conclusion of Blickling Homily I, having described the events surrounding the Annunciation and explained the hidden meanings of the earlier biblical texts (exegesis), the homilist exhorts his audience ‘his bebodu healdan’.

Blickling Homily III closes with an injunction to the audience that they keep their minds free from evil thoughts – particularly during Lent – and ‘symle bliþe mode Godes beboda utan we behealdan’. The reward for doing so, of course, is revealed to be eternal life with the saints. Similarly, eternal joy is reserved for those who ‘Godes bebodu healdan’.

An interesting final example of this use of ‘holding’ in relation to remembering God’s words comes from Blickling Homily XIII on the Assumption. Here, the body of the recently deceased Mary asks Christ ‘wes þu min gemymdig, for þon ic healde þinra beboda goldhord’.

Here, what is being ‘held’ is not only beboda but beboda goldhord; this is surely indicative of the value inherent in what has been tended in memory.

This concentration on the importance of ‘holding in mind’ the word of God is not confined to the prose homiletic works; it also features in some of the poetic texts. In Genesis A, for example, the narrator informs us that Adam and Eve:

… Heo waron leof gode 
ðenden heo his halige word healdan woldon.

Similarly, words that appear to have come from God can be carried in the mind-heart. In Genesis B, the serpent coaxes Eve:

Gif þu him to soðe sægst hwylce þu selfa hæfst bisne on breostum …

The example that Eve has in her bosom, of course, has been placed there by the deceitful serpent. Nevertheless, she is persuaded that she should attend to his counsel, as though his words were a message from God. For those that truly hold God’s words in their hearts, the experience entails emotional involvement.

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77 Lines 132-33: ‘why did you not wish to keep my commandments?’
78 Line 13.25: ‘keep his commandments’.
79 Lines 39.3-4: ‘let us always keep God’s commandments with a glad mind-heart’.
80 Line 97.29: ‘keep God’s commandments’.
81 Line 147.36: ‘you should be mindful of me, because I keep the goldhoard of your commandments’.
82 Lines 244-45: ‘[they] were dear to God as long as they wished to hold his holy word’.
83 Lines 570-71: ‘If you say to him in truth what kind of example you yourself have in your breast…’.
84 We must not, however, ascribe emotion to the heart and intellect to the mind, in the way that is common in Modern English idiom: Anglo-Saxon writers did not necessarily observe a clear-cut dichotomy between the two loci.
In the poem *The Phoenix*, we are told that:

Beoð him of þam wyrtum
in wuldres byrig weorca to leane,
þæs þe hi geheoldan halge lære
hate æt heortan, ...  

For these people, the holy lore is held ‘hate æt heortan’, and the association of heat and heart connotes passionate engagement with that which is held. In this instance, the emotion that motivates continuing remembrance is seen to be a positive one; in other cases, emotional responses to the items ‘held in mind’ may be less pleasant (although ultimately beneficial) to the rememberer.

In the Junius Manuscript poem *Exodus*, the poet combines the didactic Christian purpose of the homilies with the heroic diction of ‘secular’ poetry:

gif ge gehealdað halige lære,
þæt ge feonda gehwone forð ofergangað,
gesittað sigerice be sæm tweonum,
beorselas beorna. ...  

Here, the ability to ‘hold the holy lore’ in one’s mind has benefits beyond the purely spiritual: it will enable one to defeat one’s enemies. The journey of Moses’ companions is portrayed as the march of an army led by God, and so the enemies to be defeated may be spiritual ones; however, the passage need not be read entirely allegorically, as the biblical wanderers did indeed encounter many physical threats during their exodus.

‘Having and holding’ metaphors are not applied solely to cases where God’s word is to be remembered, of course. Other things, too, can be ‘held in mind’ to provide continuing support and guidance. In *Vercelli Homily VII*, the homilist encourages the audience: ‘[o]ngitað nu hwæt ic eow secge: gif ge nu bioð geswencte, þe swa manigra haligra manna mægenu to bysene habbað’, before explaining that Noah was able to exist among the impious majority only because he too had such inward resources. In this direct address to his audience, the homilist provides explicit instruction in how such didactic examples are to be used effectively.

Homilies, of course, have an explicitly didactic purpose; memory – the author’s and the audience’s – plays an important role in fulfilling this purpose. Within the community of rememberers, present

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85 Lines 474-77: ‘An abode shall be established for them, from those herbs, in the stronghold of glory, as a reward for [their] works, for that which they held, hot at heart: holy lore’.
86 Lines 561-64: ‘... if you hold the holy lore, after that you shall henceforth overcome each one of [your] enemies, [and] sit victorious [in] the beer-halls of warriors, between the seas’.
87 Lines 11-12: ‘understand now what I say to you: if you are troubled now, you have as an example the good deeds of many holy men’. The homilist instructs the audience on the use of such examples: the stories of Noah, and of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, must be learned and borne in mind, just as those biblical figures in turn knew and drew upon exemplars.
listeners need to use past holy men as literary examples, but also are reminded that those men themselves often followed the examples of other, earlier members of this (Christian) community, having recalled their stories. Formulaic exhortations to remember and to consider examples abound within the homiletic corpus. What has once been learned cannot be allowed to lie untended in the memory store; by analogy with the physical effort required to grasp and retain a valued physical object, the believer must make the effort to remain conscious of what he already knows. Keeping God’s commandments also requires a certain kind of behaviour. Knowing what is right is of little or no benefit to the believer unless he also acts in accordance with that knowledge. Such behaviour is, of course, heavily reliant on the ability to remember what is required, although – as I have intimated in my introduction to modern memory – it is difficult to determine the extent to which memory plays a role in motivating habitual behaviour. I think that the active role of the rememberer in ‘holding in mind’ – as opposed to passively allowing a memory to remain in mind – is indicative of the fact that memory alone is insufficient; memory must be employed to achieve an end, and is not an end in itself. This has implications for the audiences of the homilies and poems: such teachings, which the audience have received through previous learning experiences, are worth ‘holding on to’ and need to be maintained in the memory store through some effort on the part of the rememberer.

In addition to the spiritual value of knowledge held in the mind-heart, it also serves a practical purpose, particularly in the maintenance of community histories. Trying to establish the truth about past events, Elene demands that the Jews:

\[
\text{Gangaþ nu snude, snyttro geþencaþ,} \\
\text{weras wisfaeste, wordes crafte,} \\
\text{þa ðe ewre æ ædelum crafte,} \\
\text{on ferhøðefan yfres haebben,} \\
\text{þa me soðlice seccan cunnon,} \\
\text{ondsware cyðan for eowic forð} \\
\text{tacna gehwylces þe ic him to sece.}^{89}
\]

She asks not only for those who have knowledge, but specifically for those who are the best guardians of it: those who hold it most firmly in their mind-hearts. Again, the implication is that effort must be expended in retaining memories that have value.

As my final example of ‘bearing in mind’, I shall turn now to the description of Noah’s time on the Ark in Exodus, recounted as a parallel to the story of the Israelites’ protection from the waters of the Red Sea. In addition to the animals that he has saved, Noah has another cargo: he carries ‘on hreðre’ the ‘halige treowa’, God’s promise that he will be spared.\(^{90}\) Noah:

\(88\) E.g. biblical stories, hagiography, etc.
\(89\) Elene, lines 313-19: ‘Go now at once, and think of wise [ones], learned men, skilful of speech, those who – learned with noble qualities – have your law foremost in [their] thoughts, who can inform me truly, [who] of you [can] reveal forth the answer [concerning] each of the proofs for which I seek’.
\(90\) Line 366. In the biblical account, God tells Noah that He will make a covenant with him, and that he and his family will be safe in the Ark; following the Flood, it is revealed that God’s covenant is that floods will never again threaten to destroy mankind.
Chapter Four

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Hæfde him on hreðre halige treowa;
forþon he gelædde ofer lagustreamas
maðmhorda mæst, mine gefræge

The *Exodus* poet also tells us that Noah is bringing ‘maðmhorda mæst’ with him across the ocean. This *hapax legomenon* is defined as “treasure” by Bosworth and Toller and is often taken to be a reference to the precious cargo of livestock on board the Ark. I would like to argue that what he actually bears is the memory of God’s promise, the ‘halige treowa’.

Several years ago, Richard Marsden focussed attention on the role of messengers in Old English texts and in particular on the failure of even one Egyptian *spelboda* to survive the Red Sea floods of *Exodus* in order to report his companions’ fate. ‘Can there … be a more abject fate for a proud nation …’, he asks, ‘than the loss of the story of their heroes?’ I would like to argue that, where the collective memory of shared experience fails to preserve knowledge of the Egyptians’ fate (through the lack of a messenger), the memory of God’s promise to His people succeeds, as it is preserved within Noah’s mind. As he is the only man on earth privy to God’s plan, it is imperative that the content of his memory is preserved intact; the mind or memory in which the promise is stored, then, is indeed the greatest of treasure-hoards.

The endeavour has been successful; not only has the poem’s Noah vouchsafed the existence of life on earth, but he has himself survived to pass on the story of his experiences; this much is implied by the poet’s telling his audience ‘mine gefræge’. And in creating his own poem from the biblical text and from vernacular poetic techniques, the *Exodus* poet draws his audience into the cycle of shared inner experience, preserving and passing on the products of his or her memory as surely as the literary Noah has his.

4.6.6 REMINISCENCE

The non-appearance of reminiscence within the figurative language of my chosen texts is somewhat surprising, as many scholars have emphasised the importance of nostalgia and the emphasis on transience within Old English literature generally. Elsewhere in this thesis, I have myself written on,

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91 Lines 366-68: ‘had in [his] heart the holy promise; therefore he carried over the waters the greatest of treasures, as I have heard’.
92 Treasure; see Bosworth and Toller (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. maðum-hord. [NB maðmhorda mæst = the Ark with its contents.]
94 *Exodus*, line 368: ‘I have heard’.
95 Authors such as Wrenn have found echoes of an earlier way of life in poems which derive ultimately from the heroic traditions of the age of Germanic migration; C. L Wrenn, *A Study of Old English Literature* (London: George Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 74. A fascination with past times has also been noted by, for instance, Anderson, who remarks that the ‘idea at the core of *Deor’s Lament* is virtually universal in the Old English lyric: time passes, and mankind with it’; G. K. Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 157. More recently, the category ‘elegy’ has continued to be employed by editors.
for example, instances of reminiscence in *Beowulf* and the ‘elegiac’ modes of poems such as *The Wanderer*. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that these instances use the non-figurative vocabulary of memory, and that I have therefore discussed them as part of my lexical study. If so, this reveals an important implication for the study of MEMORY in Old English texts; the reason for countless scholars’ insistence on the nostalgic character of Anglo-Saxon memory might be that this is one aspect highlighted in the ‘straightforward’ lexicon. If so, this is a good reason for pursuing the study of more figurative representations of memory; this broader field of study should throw light on other, less recognised, aspects of Anglo-Saxon memory.

4.6.7 RECONSTRUCTIVE REMEMBERING

Like reminiscence, reconstructive remembering seems to be absent from the figurative representations found in my texts. It is possible, of course, that examples of this behaviour exist, but that they are disguised as recollection events. The difficulty, again, lies in distinguishing between objective ‘truths’ and people’s accounts of their memories.

4.6.8 CONFABULATION

Confabulation is part of the declarative memory retrieval continuum as it involves the utilisation of previously-encoded and previously-stored experiences. However, activities in this area of the spectrum rely less heavily on the objective, shared outside world than do, say, recollection and recognition. Instead, it has a greater element of creativity. Although based ultimately on reality, confabulation involves the creation of a coherent narrative which may have little correlation to accepted facts. The resultant story is often transmitted through the remembering community via gossip, or is more formally disseminated through story-telling. The events thus related, although partly fictional, may nevertheless come to be believed by the rememberer him- or herself: confabulation is not a conscious attempt at lying or to deceive.

Old English has a broad vocabulary of lies and deceit: *leasung, gedwola, gedwolcraeftum*, etc. What I have termed ‘confabulation’, however, is harder to detect within Anglo-Saxon texts. The problem seems to be that, whereas barefaced lies are often reported as such, in cases of confabulation the narrative purports to represent events as they actually happened. Even the rememberer, telling his or

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96 Intentional false reporting is part of the memory retrieval continuum; it is best described as being part of the reflective memory, although in everyday language we would tend to discount lying as either being no part of true memory at all (as we often think of the memory as an infallible reproducer of ‘true’ facts) or as part of a faulty memory system.

97 See sections 7.4.1 and 7.5.1.
her tale, believes it to be true. It is only with knowledge of context – with an omniscient view of events – that we as readers can detect confabulation in these remembered accounts.

That accounts may be false is evidenced by a plethora of injunctions to avoid giving false testimony. Narrators, such as the poet Cynewulf, often place emphasis on the veracity of the tales they are telling, and value is often ascribed to poets and story-tellers who have the gift of skilfully recounting true stories.\textsuperscript{98} This, together with the evident importance of memory within the corpus, may lead modern readers to believe that all instances of shared remembering rely on perfect recall and an adherence to the truth. I would agree that this situation seems to be the ideal towards which most protagonists aspire. However, my account of memory would be incomplete did it not also seek to address those instances where recall is less-than-perfect; when the ‘truth’ of an account cannot be taken at face value.\textsuperscript{99}

4.6.9 REFLECTIVE MEMORY AND THE IMAGINATION

Investigation of the figurative representation of memory in Old English texts reveals that, while factual memory was of great importance in Anglo-Saxon culture, there was also a place in the society for the creative imagination. In spite of their interest in knowledge and learning, the Anglo-Saxons were faced with situations in which it was impossible to ‘know’ everything. What could not be ‘known’ or remembered had to be constructed in the imagination from previously stored memories or knowledge.

In some senses, it is true, the educated Anglo-Saxon was encouraged to develop a much more literal memory than us. However, despite the emphasis in the Anglo-Saxon period on memorisation, I have shown that memory itself is not a mechanical scribe. Memory can never be merely mechanical as long as an individual is able to reflect on his past experiences: depending on the relationship between an individual’s memories and his present situation, contemplation may induce feelings of joy or a sense of loss. Memories can also be transmuted and are the stock on which the imagination draws. There is no thought, however apparently removed from the real world, that does not contain elements drawn from the interior reality that is the accumulated memories of the individual.

In chapter two, I stated that many of the outcomes of the reflective end of the declarative memory retrieval continuum could be labelled ‘thinking’ or ‘contemplating’ by Modern English speakers. This is problematic for the study of memory, in that any one of the hundreds of everyday expressions


\textsuperscript{99} It is difficult to discover whether a given memory event is actually an instance of confabulation: as readers, we are constrained by a limited view of events and complete reliance on the word of the narrator(s).
involving ‘thinking’ must be in some way the result of the memory process – and yet the language used to describe the event suggests that it belongs to a separate field of cognition.

This is as much a concern when studying Old English texts as it is in analysing Modern English speech. There are many COGNITION terms in the Old English lexicon – (ge)hyccgan, (ge)dencan, and so on – and many more idioms formed by the metaphorical use of non-COGNITION vocabulary. It is beyond the scope of the present study to address all these ways of expressing COGNITION, relevant though they are to the study of MEMORY. Instead, I shall limit myself to highlighting just a few of the instances in my chosen texts where reflective memory can be seen to be an essential component of the human imagination.

One of the functions of memory is to make present to the rememberer things that are not actually within his field of perception; things, that is to say, that are temporally or spatially removed from his present situation. We can re-experience a visual image, a sound or a scent within our minds although the original stimulus of that experience is no longer before us. As I have discussed in chapter two, such sensory memories may be involuntary, occurring for no reason that the rememberer can ascertain. However, an illustration from the Vercelli Homilies will show that the memory experience need not always be passive.

Overcoming spatial displacement by ‘seeing’ an absent person or object is a not-uncommon use of memory. Being able to think about things not present also relies on there being a memory of those objects available for contemplation. This need not necessarily be a visual image of a concrete object, of course; it is also possible to contemplate a problem using a more abstract representation of a situation. In either case, higher thought processes cannot take place unless and until there is a knowledge base in memory from which to work. Often when spatial displacement is overcome in this way, Modern English speakers instinctively label the process ‘calling to mind’ or one of the related idioms. This suggests that the object of contemplation is metaphorically drawn to the rememberer through the power of his or her memory or imagination. My example from Vercelli Homily XIV, by contrast, implies movement in the opposite direction. The homilist reminds his audience of Matthew 5:23–24; prayers and sacrifices are unacceptable to God if the bearer is uncharitable or is in disagreement with another. Even though our adversary may be ‘on oðrum lande feor fram us’, we are told, ‘we sculon mid ure mode him to gan’. The mode is endowed with the power of movement (if mid is translated as ‘with’) or, in my preferred interpretation, is the means by which the rememberer is able to travel, imaginatively, to the far land. Although it is not physically possible to bridge the distance, it is possible to ‘send our thoughts to’ another person: to travel in the imagination to where the object of thought is, to meditate on our relationship, and to display the good intentions of our heart for God’s scrutiny.

100 Lines 115-16: ‘in another land far from us … we must go to him by means of our mind’.
A similar conclusion can be drawn from *The Seafarer*, in which the speaker recounts:

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Forþon nu min hyge hweorfeð ofer hreþerlocan,
min modsefa mid mereflode
ofrer hwæles ëpel hweorfeð wide,
eorþan sceatas, cyrneð eft to me
gifre ond grædig, …
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101 Lines 58-62: ‘Therefore my mind wanders beyond the enclosure of the heart; my spirit wanders widely over the whale’s homeland, along with the sea-tide, [and over] the surfaces of the earth. [It] comes again to me, ravenous and greedy’.

It is again the mind that is able to travel, covering physical distances and seeing sights in a way that the seafarer himself is unable to do. The implication of Matthew’s instruction, and of the seafarer’s situation, is that imagination – the product of reflective memory – is a powerful force, enabling the rememberer to travel great distances and to accomplish with his mind what he has been physically unable to do.

Although the foregoing example has revealed the role of memory in surmounting problems of physical distance, I have found in the texts examined an overwhelming emphasis on the importance of overcoming temporal displacement. Thus, reflective memory is used in assessing past events and, perhaps more surprisingly, in contemplating the future.

We tend to view our personal histories as a linear sequence of known past events, terminating with the present moment. Things not yet experienced cannot be known. And yet we do at the same time make predictions about the future; by combining memories from the past – personal experience or learned knowledge – and extrapolating, we are able to imagine how certain events will turn out in future. Nothing that we can imagine is so original as to have no basis in the memory of our previous experience.

For the Christian audience of Anglo-Saxon homilies, the most compelling aspect of the future was the fate of the eternal soul. Although this was not something that could be known from personal experience, oral homilies and sermons (and written authorities, for those few who could read) could provide a wealth of knowledge about the possible alternatives. Having imparted such knowledge in the first place, it was then the role of the homilist to exhort his audience to reflect on what they had heard. Homiletic passages describing the joys of heaven or the horrors of hell are frequently full of striking imagery; the corresponding ‘memories’ subsequently evoked might also contain powerful images. Such images might provoke strong emotion – awe, perhaps, or fear – in the rememberer. An emotional response is not an end in itself, however. The rememberer is required to use such memories and make a ‘mental leap’, applying the lessons learned to his or her own situation. Thus the reflective power of memory is harnessed; memories are retrieved, reflected upon, and their implications for the rememberer shape his or her future actions.
Some of the most powerful and disturbing imagery in the Old English homiletic corpus – in prose homilies but also in homiletic poetry – is drawn from the idea of the soul-body dichotomy. These two elements of the human are thought to be separated after death, and are often portrayed in the literature as a pair of entities in dialogue; often, the soul is seen to berate the body for the sins it committed while alive. Among the living, the future fate of the eternal soul remains something of a mystery; dimly glimpsed through the teaching of the Christian church. The fate of the mortal body, however, is less open to speculation. In Blickling Homily V, the homilist attempts to impress upon his audience the implications of the final separation: the homilist dwells on the theme of transience, comparing the coming of old age and death to the withering of beautiful flowers. Each person is treated to ‘sceawige hine sylfne on his heortan, swigende mode’ what will happen when the soul leaves the body.\footnote{Lines 57.33-34: ‘himself behold in his heart, [in his] silent mind’.
} Although the event is temporally displaced from the present moment, this more-or-less certain future event can be contemplated through the use of reflective memory: an image is created that can be ‘seen’ or ‘viewed’ within the \textit{heorte}.

Whatever the basis of reflective memory, the foregoing example exemplifies the capacity to envisage likely forthcoming events. For a true believer, the Christian future holds a day of judgement, followed by an eternity of heaven or hell. Exhortations to remember these apparently inevitable events can be found throughout the Old English corpus, and are discussed elsewhere in this thesis.\footnote{There are limits to what the human mind can imagine, however. In \textit{Christ III} (at lines 899-904 and 988-93), the poet attempts to describe the Judgement Day scene but concedes that it is so far outside of people’s usual experience that it is beyond their power even to imagine it.} Two further examples, however, reveal the ways in which reflective memory functions in reflecting on past events and in contemplating an uncertain future. Although from two very different texts – the Exeter Book poem \textit{The Seafarer} and the prose \textit{Vercelli Homily XXIII} on St. Guthlac – these examples share commonalities in the way in which temporal displacement is overcome. Apart from revealing interesting things about the workings of reflective memory, these two examples also show that the classification of Old English texts according to ‘genre’ can be limiting; here, both poetry and prose writers employ figurative language, and both have something to say about the workings of the human mind.

In both \textit{The Seafarer} and \textit{Vercelli Homily XXIII} a physical quality is ascribed to the process of contemplation or decision-making within the heart or mind. Unable to determine a course of action, the seafarer feels his heart’s thoughts \textit{cnyssað},\footnote{Line 33.} that is, ‘press’ or even ‘crash’ together. Guthlac reviews his decision about living as a hermit; the Vercelli homilist tells us that Guthlac has ‘cyrde’ this memory back and forth ‘on his mode’, as though it were a physical object susceptible to manipulation.\footnote{\textit{Vercelli Homily XXIII}, line 24: ‘turned … in his mind’.}
Although Guthlac is subjected to attack by demons, who prompt his misgivings about his scheme, and seems uncertain about the path to take or course to follow, it does seem as though the solution is, metaphorically speaking, in his own hands. He is the contemplative subject, turning thoughts over in his mind; and, although at one stage in the narrative he ‘nyste hwider he mid his mode cyrran wolde’, it is implied that the power to direct his mind does ultimately lie with himself. Just as the character in Blickling Homily XIV used imagination to move towards another person in a distant land, so can Guthlac use his reflective faculty to ‘turn’ towards the correct future.

A similar motion of, or by means of, the mind can be seen in The Seafarer. The speaker, oppressed by conflicting thoughts that cnyssað within his heart, is not allowed the degree of volition granted to Guthlac. The mod is here seen as the agent, as it is modes lust that impels the seafarer’s ferhð to move. A great deal has been written about this passage of the poem. Although these may be valid interpretations of the situation, I would like to add another possibility of my own. I have shown, in this subsection and elsewhere, that the mind is often conceptualised as an entity with the ability to move about independently of its owner. Exhorting the ‘ferð to faran’ could be a way of performing what is sometimes known as a ‘thought experiment’. In allowing the imagination to range across the possible routes available, the seafarer may be combining his knowledge and experience to ‘seek out’ the best possible plan for the future.

In each case, the text’s audience has some – albeit limited – knowledge of the protagonist’s past actions, and might therefore be expected to connect these past actions with future choices. Both examples demonstrate that the reflective aspect of memory retrieval is a flexible instrument, allowing the rememberer to cope with multiple possible futures and with the attendant doubts and worries engendered by such uncertainty.

The three previously-mentioned examples of overcoming temporal displacement show the mind and imagination in motion in an attempt to understand futures that hold varying degrees of uncertainty. While the future can never be known on the basis of evidence, we have seen that the extent to which it can be considered unknown varies according to the level of doubt and uncertainty ascribed to the contemplating subject. Guthlac in Vercelli Homily XXIII, for example, is only troubled in his mind about future actions when under fire from the demons’ arrows of temptation.

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106 Line 29: ‘did not know whither he would turn with his mind’.
107 Line 36: ‘mind’s desire … spirit’.
109 Line 37: ‘spirit to travel’.
110 Which are also described as wounding ‘menniscean heortan’ (l. 18).
Conversely, faith can bring certainty to the vision of the future provided by reflective memory. Towards the end of Blickling Homily XVIII – and towards the end of the saint’s life – Martin lies with his face turned to heaven ‘þyder his modgeþanc a geseted wæs’.¹¹¹ Martin meets his end calmly, free of the oppressive fears experienced by those who are uncertain of their future fate. Like the implied audience of the Blickling Homilies, Martin has presumably not experienced heaven himself; what he is contemplating is a vision created by his imagination, informed by his knowledge of Christian teaching and his belief. His modgeþanc is geseted, located in the very heaven which is the object of his contemplation, and the verb implies completed motion. His modgeþanc is not travelling to heaven, but has already been placed – and continues – there. This sense of stasis is very different from the clashing and turning of thoughts and minds experienced in the other texts quoted above.

The ultimate achievement of reflective memory, having drawn an absent object towards one’s mind or having transported one to a past or future spot of time, is to collapse all distances – temporal or spatial – and locate one within the imagined place and time.

4.7 FORGETTING

Forgetting is an intrinsic component of the human memory system. It is uncommon for a person to be able to recall with precision information, events, conversations, and so on from a long time in the past. Indeed, it is usual to ‘forget’ much of the detail which bombards the sensory system constantly. There are, of course, rare exceptions. Luria’s work on super-normal memory illustrates the importance of forgetting for so-called normal memory: if one is unable to forget a single detail of what one has experienced, then it is difficult to abstract from one’s experience (that is, to deduce generalities from specifics).¹¹² It is this abstraction, and creation of schema, that allows one to tackle many varied situations based on knowledge from similar – although not identical – situations encountered previously. It is a fundamental tool in negotiating the world in which we live, and it can be assumed that Anglo-Saxons subconsciously utilised similar methods.

However, modern man is barely conscious of the process of abstraction. Talk of forgetting in Modern English tends to focus on the problems caused by forgetting (whether one knows that one has forgotten something, or whether one is later reminded of something, perhaps too late for the information to be of use). In the Old English corpus, too, this seems to be the kind of ‘forgetting’ that is referred to. I shall concentrate on just a few instances within the corpus where the mind or memory are portrayed figuratively and the aspect highlighted is forgetfulness.

¹¹¹ Lines 227.17-18: ‘thither his mind was forever set’.
¹¹² Explained in detail elsewhere; see 2.2.7.
Just as recalling something, or ‘bearing in mind’, can be a volitional act, so too can ‘forgetting’. I have shown elsewhere that the believer is exhorted to keep the wrong kind of memories out of his or her mind, but that – due to the devil’s persistence – unwonted information is sometimes encoded.\textsuperscript{113}

What to do in this case is a topic explored in \textit{Blickling Homily III}. During Lent, when the body is to be cleansed through prayer and fasting, it is also important ‘\textit{þæt we eac ure mod geclænsian from yfelum wordum’}.\textsuperscript{114} This wilful forgetting should ensure that believers dwell on – and act upon – the true words of God, while not allowing false teachings to become part of their internal mental processes. This image could be broadly classified as a container metaphor, in as much as the \textit{mod} is a container of \textit{wordum}. The verb \textit{clænsian} might add to this sense, as it connotes the purging of a vessel. Two more examples of ‘forgetting’ in the Blickling Homilies, however, utilise a different kind of imagery.

When the homilist talks about the love of worldly things in relation to the \textit{mod} it is conceivable that he is condemning the practice of giving too much attention to those things. If I am right in my supposition, then the exhortation ‘\textit{began we ure mod from þære lufan þisse worlde synlustum & gitsungum}’ in \textit{Blickling Homily V} can be read as an instruction to forget distracting worldly objects.\textsuperscript{115} Here the \textit{mod} is not portrayed as a container; rather, it is represented as a mobile object, presently in too close proximity to the objects of contemplation. The verb \textit{biegan} suggests that the mind’s path can be ‘turned away’ from things best forgotten.

A similar relationship between physical distance and emotional or spiritual closeness can be observed in my final example, from \textit{Blickling Homily VI}. Although this example does not show actual movement of the mind-heart, it does show distance being used to express mental engagement and to gauge fidelity. Discussing the people’s interest in the raising of Lazarus, the homilist recounts Jesus’ words: ‘\textit{Þis folc me weorþaþ mid / wordum, & is þeah heora heorte feor fram me’}.\textsuperscript{116} Although their words suggest fidelity, in other words, their hearts are forgetful of Christ. Presumably, however, people are capable of ‘moving’ their heart-minds back towards God; that is to say, of remembering.

Where forgetting is treated figuratively, then, it is placed in opposition to remembering (and to ‘good’ memory) through the reversal of certain key metaphors. Where memory encoding is portrayed as the filling of a vessel, forgetting is shown as an emptying. And whereas the mind moves towards those objects which are contemplated and remembered, it is located at a distance from those things which are to be forgotten.

\textsuperscript{113} See 4.4.3.
\textsuperscript{114} Lines 39.2-3: ‘that we also cleanse our mind from evil words’.
\textsuperscript{115} Lines 57.22-23: ‘we must turn our mind from the love of the sinful and greedy desires of this world’.
\textsuperscript{116} Lines 69.24-25: ‘These people praise me with words, but their heart is far from me’.
4.7.1 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This chapter has covered two main areas of study: the representation of the mechanisms of memory (e.g. encoding and storage) and the representation of the reportable outcomes of memory (i.e. points along the continuum).

As far as the mechanisms of memory are concerned, there are two main metaphorical systems for representing these. In one system, the mind is portrayed as an independent entity that is capable of ‘sensing’ the world. Memory encoding thus takes place through the ‘eyes of the mind’, and any failure to lay down new memory traces can be blamed on the ‘blindness’ of a particular mind. In Modern English, the phrase ‘the mind’s eye’ tends to relate to recall or to the imagination; that is, to the outcomes of the memory process rather than the mechanism by which memories are initially encoded. However, there are similarities between modern usage and this Anglo-Saxon metaphor: the metaphor SEEING-IS-UNDERSTANDING goes back to antiquity and is still a dominant metaphor in Modern English.

The second system is the familiar trope of the MIND-AS-CONTAINER. Memory traces often ‘enter’ the mind space through outside agency, which may be beneficial or harmful to the rememberer. The related imagery of construction and defence – in which the mind is fortified against unwanted inputs – is, however, very interesting and is perhaps deserving of further mention. This metaphor does not occur with similar frequency in present day colloquial speech. This may be because the fields of fortification and weaponry are less familiar to us in the twenty-first century, at least in terms of personal experience, than they might have been to (early) Anglo-Saxons. However, this does not seem a likely explanation, as Modern English speakers continue to rely on numerous metaphors, the referents of which have no real meaning for their lives outside of their metaphorical uses. A more likely explanation, I would suggest, is that, in the present day, we tend not to think of words as harmful to us. Except in certain circumstances (to protect children or the vulnerable in society, perhaps) we believe in ‘free speech’ and trust in the individual to make a judgement about the validity of an opinion. For the newly-Christian Anglo-Saxons, however, (at least, for the classes of society responsible for both the spiritual welfare of the population and the production of (instructional) texts) there was a greater emphasis on learning the ‘right’ words and keeping harmful, ‘wrong’, words at bay.

There are many difficulties in assessing the kinds of memory retrieval occurring in the Old English corpus. In order to establish the extent of mental processing involved, it is necessary to compare the reported outcome of memory with the original event or information (the ‘input’). Since we are, as

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117 In Old English texts, this metaphor tends to occur in religious contexts. It would therefore be instructive to analyse examples of Modern English religious writings, such as sermons and homilies, in order to establish the frequency of fortification imagery therein, as compared to the Old English corpus.
readers, reliant upon our narrators, and since it is almost impossible for anyone to establish what is the ‘objective truth’, it is difficult to understand the mental processes involved, unless they are made explicit to us.\textsuperscript{118} The results of my analysis in this section, then, are necessarily impressionistic.

Some aspects of the memory retrieval continuum seem to be poorly represented in Old English texts; few or no examples exist. In some cases, this may well be due to the difficulties outlined above: it is hard to know just what is going on in cases of reconstructive memory or of confabulation. In other cases, a lack of figurative occurrences may be due to the use of specialised vocabulary rather than imagery: recognising may be represented through the vocabulary of KNOWING, for example, and ‘being reminded’ is certainly portrayed through the use of MEMORY verbs in many cases. Other areas of the continuum are, however, better represented within Old English literature: there are numerous examples of recollection, ‘bearing in mind’ and reflection, for example. Forgetting – portrayed as a ‘withholding’ of the mind from harmful influences – is also well represented.

Although there are some gaps in the continuum, then, the exploration of figurative language use suggests that there is a strong correspondence between the kinds of memory understood by Anglo-Saxon writers and Modern English speakers. In order to obtain a more complete picture, I shall explore the specialised Old English vocabulary of MEMORY in chapters seven and eight, using evidence from a lexicographical survey of the literature.

Before embarking on this analysis of Old English vocabulary, however, I shall present two alternative ways of approaching the study of Anglo-Saxon memory. In chapter five, I shall consider the use of one specific set of imagery: that of horticulture. Following that, I shall move on to discuss the importance of memory within communities.

\textsuperscript{118} And even then, we are not guaranteed ‘the truth’.
Chapter Five

Horticultural Imagery in the Representation of Mind, Memory and Inner Experience

‘At the end of Book II of [De arca Noe morali], Hugh [of St Victor] introduces a tree-figure, the “arbour [or ‘lignum’] sapientiae,” which grows in holy hearts as in an invisible Paradise, and which embodies allegorically both the Tree of Knowledge in Eden and the Tree of Life in Revelation. The order of the phrases themselves [as he expands upon his Book II series in Book III] follows that of the growth of the tree and its fruits: planting, watering, the seed sometimes being sterile, sometimes rooting, germinating, opening, growing, strengthening, greening, leafing and branching, flowering, fruiting, ripening, being harvested, and finally eaten.’1

The imagery of horticulture provides an alternative way of investigating the phenomenon of MEMORY as it was understood by Anglo-Saxon writers. As the above quotation about an early twelfth-century text shows, there is a long tradition of using garden imagery when exploring the processes that occur within the heart or mind: the “inner experiences” of humankind.2 Earlier still, horticultural imagery was being used allegorically in biblical contexts such as the Parable of the Sower,3 the Parable of the Weeds,4 the Parable of the Mustard Seed,5 and in Jesus’ teachings on the Tree and Its Fruits6 and on the Vine and the Branches.7

Unlike pervasive metaphors such as those of space or containers, horticulture does not feature in the idiomatic treatment of memory among Modern English speakers. Since figurative language is otherwise used quite similarly among Old English and Modern English speakers, the specifically Anglo-Saxon use of horticultural imagery is a topic which demands further exploration.8 Some possible reasons for this shift in emphasis between the tenth and twenty-first centuries suggest themselves. In the first place, life in Anglo-Saxon England was more closely attuned to the rhythms of the agricultural year than is modern life. International trade in goods undoubtedly took place, but for most Anglo-Saxons a good local harvest was still vital to their health and well-being. Secondly, educated Anglo-Saxons (and, through them, also the less well-educated) had access to learning

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2 As I have shown elsewhere, the ‘location’ in which remembering takes place varies from writer to writer and according to historical period: whereas Modern English speakers tend to equate remembering with the ‘mind’ (and the ‘mind’ with the brain), in the early medieval period writers were just as likely to associate remembering with the heart, or the breast. For a useful discussion of the mind-heart-soul relationship, see M. R. Godden, ‘Anglo-Saxons on the Mind’, in M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (eds.), Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 271–98.
4 Matt. 13:24–30 [and see also II. 36–43]
7 John 15: 1–17
8 Although horticultural imagery was not evident within the Modern English idioms analysed, further investigation of such imagery would prove useful. Anglo-Saxon authors of Christian texts drew on established biblical paradigms in their religious writings, and it would be interesting to establish whether present-day authors of religious works draw on similar horticultural schema in their compositions.
produced in earlier times in other predominantly agricultural settings. Traditions of employing horticultural metaphors may well have been passed down through redactions and translations of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin texts, so that such imagery was far more familiar to Anglo-Saxon writers than it is to most Modern English speakers today. Finally, of course, the idioms current in any period tend to be linked to contemporary technology: it may be that horticultural imagery was superseded in later generations by references to industry, telegraphy, computerisation, and so on.

For whatever reason, horticultural imagery seems to have fallen out of use for the discussion of memory. It would be a mistake, however, to exclude horticultural metaphors from this study on that ground, as the very distinctiveness of this imagery may shed light on the Anglo-Saxon mindset. As with all such metaphors, the impact is stronger if multiple areas from one sphere of reference are able to be ‘mapped onto’ analogous areas from another sphere. I shall begin, therefore, with a brief sketch of the memory process as interpreted through the medium of horticultural imagery.

5.1 THE MEMORY AS A GARDEN

Memories, like plants, require a place in which to ‘grow’. The places in which memory occurs, such as the mod or the heorte, can be viewed as the ground in which memories are planted. If the soil therein is fertile – if, that is to say, the heart or mind is receptive to teaching – then memories can flourish and grow. On the other hand, the mind or heart which resists such teaching can be represented as barren or stony ground.

As I have shown in my overview of the memory process, a variety of sensory stimuli from the outside world provide the inputs of the memory system. We learn from what we see and hear, and from the example provided by other individuals. Everything that is part of our experience of the world can become part of our learning experience, if we choose to pay attention to it or if the experience has so great an emotional impact that we are unable to ignore the lesson. From these external sources, then, come the ‘seeds’ of memory. From the point of view of the Old English homilists, these seeds of good or evil are sent from God or the devil into the human heart, although usually through an intermediary: scripture, preachers, and the examples provided by saints or by wicked men all contribute.

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9 As I have demonstrated elsewhere, very many of the idioms of MEMORY in Old English and Modern English attribute memory processes to some specific location within the individual and it seems near impossible to discuss memory without assuming some such place. Indeed, modern scientific thinking supports such views; although ‘remembering’ occurs at disparate sites within the cerebral cortex, it does seem that the electrical interactions that together form the memory phenomenon are indeed grouped within particular areas of the human brain.

10 See Chapter Two: The Physiological and Psychological Basis of Memory.
Once sown in the *heorte* or *mod*, these seeds require care and nurturing. In a garden, provision must be made for the things which plants require for healthy growth – sun, rain, nutrition – as well as against those things which might cause harm, such as drought, pestilence, or disease. Constant vigilance is required if the optimum growing conditions are to be maintained. In what ways do these factors translate into the analogy between memory and horticulture? Awareness of possible dangers should lead to vigilance: if the individual constantly rehearses in memory what he or she has previously learnt, danger can be averted or at least lessened. Just as there is a cycle of growth and death in a garden, so it is usual for some memories to flourish while others die; that is to say, some things are forgotten. Rehearsal can forestall this process.

Neglect is not the only potential problem in the garden of memory. Other factors, such as the distraction caused by paying too much attention to worldly things, or the intervention of malevolent ‘others’, may also have a role to play in ‘uprooting’ the tender plants. If the rememberer manages to tend the garden, however, and to ward off potential threats, the result is a harvest of memories or, more specifically in the homilies, of the ‘spiritual fruit’ which are the product of such memories. Logically, such spiritual growth also produces fresh ‘seed’ for others, a new generation of rememberers. The process is cyclical; the individual’s actions, themselves the result of the internal learning and memory processes, in time become examples that will be ‘input’ into the memory processes of others. They are therefore able to inspire and cultivate good thoughts and good deeds in others.

In some ways, the popular medieval *genre* of the *florilegium* could be said to be part of this process: the flowers of the human mind, given external expression in the form of works of literature, can be selected (or harvested) and collected together into anthologies. Such *florilegia* might then be used to stock the memories of future readers; knowledge is transplanted between minds much as plant cuttings are between gardens.  

### 5.2 MEMORY ENCODING: SOWING THE SEED

One example of a horticultural metaphor of learning and memory is that employed by the homilist of *Blickling Homily V*. The homilist uses the commonplace of spiritual fruit: the benefits that accrue from following the word of God. This theme is developed using metaphors of growth and horticultural imagery. People who fail to bear spiritual fruit do so because ‘†æt halige sæd on him gedwan & gewat, †æt him ær of þæs læreowes muþe wæs bodad & sægd’.  

11 The etymological roots of the word *florilegium* are found within the semantic field of horticulture. Now used to describe a collection of valued literature, its meaning was originally that of a collection of flowers.

12 *Blickling Homily V*, ll. 55.29–55.31: ‘that holy seed wasted away and died in them, which from the teacher’s mouth was formerly preached and told to them’. This and subsequent passages from the Blickling Homilies are
words of a homilist or preacher is vital, but it is only a beginning. The homilist’s words contain the germs of spiritual fruit, but these can develop only if nurtured within the believer. In this instance, the site of memory is not named but it is clear that outside intervention cannot save the believer; he must ‘tend’, or remember and meditate upon, the holy lore inwardly. The *mod* (or *heorte*) is often portrayed as the ‘fertile ground’ within which the fruits of the Holy Spirit may grow, provided that the words of the homilist are attended to and subsequently ruminated upon.

Similar examples can also be found in the poetic corpus:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ða us geweorðade} & \quad \text{se þas world gescop,} \\
\text{godes gæstsunu} & \quad \text{ond us giefe sealde,} \\
\text{uppe mid englum} & \quad \text{ece stæpelas,} \\
\text{ond eac monigfealde} & \quad \text{modes snytru} \\
\text{seow ond sette} & \quad \text{geond sefan monna}^{13}
\end{align*}
\]

In this example from *Christ II*, it is Christ who is deemed responsible for stocking the garden of men’s minds with the beginnings of wisdom. Elsewhere, however, we learn that other influences may be brought to bear in such learning environments. In an example from the *Vercelli Homilies*, for instance, the *mod* of the sinful man becomes the seedbed of the devil’s work: ‘& eal synna cyn ðe dioful bereð & saweð on þara synfulra mod þe him hyran willað’.\(^{14}\) Although memory is not explicitly mentioned it could be assumed that it is at work, it being as necessary to remember the devil’s promptings in order to act upon them as it is to remember God’s instructions (albeit that following the devil’s instigations often seems to require less conscious effort than does following the word of God and the teachings of His ministers). False learning leads to sin as surely as meditating on the words of the gospel leads to good deeds.

### 5.3 Inner Experience: Tending the Crop

In the Old English poetic corpus, verbs of growth are, on occasion, used to express inner experience. In *Andreas*, the hero thinks he recognises in the disguised Christ a man of truth and wisdom. Joy, it seems, is experienced by those who are wise, who have allowed correct teaching to take root in their breasts. Andrew tells Christ:

---

\(^{13}\) *Christ II*, ll. 659–63: ‘Then Christ exalted us, he who created this world, and gave grace to us, eternal positions up amid the angels, and also abundantly sowed and set wisdom of mind throughout the heart of men’. This and subsequent passages from the poetry of the Exeter Book are drawn from G. P. Krapp and E. V. K. Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, 1936).

\(^{14}\) *Vercelli Homily XIV*, ll. 149–51: ‘and the devil bears all kinds of sins, and sows [them] in the mind of the sinful, [those] who wish to hear him’. This and subsequent passages from the Vercelli Homilies are drawn from D. G. Scragg (ed.), *The Vercelli homilies and related texts*, EETS OS 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
Chapter Five

... snytrnum bloweð,
beorhtre blisse,   breost innanweard\textsuperscript{15}

The verb \textit{blowan}\textsuperscript{16} means “to blow”, in the sense of a bud bursting into blossom. This could of course refer to the apparent physical effects of strong emotion on the heart, the feeling of expansiveness that is often linked to joy even in Modern English idioms: for example, ‘the heart swells’. However, the choice of this particular verb, rather than one denoting movement or alteration only, also connotes growth and development, whether this is in a spiritual, emotional, or an intellectual sense.\textsuperscript{17}

In the prose homiletic corpus, a similar use of this verb can be detected. In \textit{Blickling Homily X}, ‘The End of this World is Near’, the evidence of multiple evils is a sure sign that the end of the world is at hand. No effort on the part of the individual can prevent the coming of Doomsday. On the final day, the resurrected body will be ‘ascyred swa glæs’,\textsuperscript{18} so that nothing can be concealed within. Therefore, it is necessary that ‘we sceolan … þone rihtan geleafan fæste staðelian on urum heortum þæt he ðær wunian mæge & mote, & þær growan & blowan’.\textsuperscript{19} Again, growing and blooming – in the sense of surviving but also of developing – are seen to occur within the individual’s \textit{heorte}. It is difficult to separate this \textit{rihtan geleafan} from memory, as such faith is both informed by the memory of what has been formerly prescribed and promised by God and also referred back to as a guide to future behaviour.

Faith is also the subject of a similar image found in the \textit{Maxims I} poem of the Exeter Book:

\begin{quote}
Treo sceolon brædan   ond treow weaxan,
sio geond bilwitra   breost arised\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

The poet plays on the two meanings of \textit{treow} (i.e. “tree” and “truth”) and ascribes to both items a need, or perhaps even a desire, for growth and development.\textsuperscript{21} Just as a tree must, of its nature, spread out its branches, so it is the nature of faith to grow and be fruitful in the right conditions (that is, in the \textit{bilwitra breost}).

---
\textsuperscript{15} Andreas, ll. 646–47: ‘the inward breast blooms with wisdom, [with] brighter bliss’. This and subsequent passages from the poetry of the Vercelli Book are drawn from G. P. Krapp (ed.), \textit{The Vercelli Book}, ASPR 2 (London: George Routledge and Sons Limited, 1932).
\textsuperscript{16} Bosworth and Toller (eds.), \textit{Anglo-Saxon Dictionary}, s.v. blowan … 1. \textit{to blow}, flourish, bloom, blossom; florere, efflorere, reflorere; …
\textsuperscript{17} This joy is in contrast to the sorrow in store for the individuals mentioned elsewhere in Andreas: ‘… Man wridode / geond beorna breost …’, ll. 767–68: ‘Wickedness grew throughout men’s breasts …’.
\textsuperscript{18} Blickling Homily X, line 109.36: ‘made as clear as glass’.
\textsuperscript{19} Blickling Homily X, lines 111.2–111.5: ‘… we must … firmly set right belief in our hearts, so that it can and may dwell there, and there grow and blossom’.
\textsuperscript{20} Maxims I, lines 159–60: ‘trees must grow, and faith [must] grow, which arises throughout the breast of the innocent’.
That emotions or other ‘contents’ of the containing heart or mind can supplement memory can also be seen elsewhere in the poetic corpus:

\[\ldots\text{ Flah is geblowen miclum in gemyne}^22 \]

In this somewhat riddle-like poem, the speaker describes the power and ease he had experienced in his early life. Turning to the present, however, the speaker reveals that ‘Nu min hreþer is hreoh’.\(^{23}\)

‘[B]rondhord geblowen, breostum in forgrowen’,\(^{24}\) and this secret disease seems to be a kind of grief at the passing away of good things or a fear of the future and, ultimately, of death. The breost, then, is the place where emotions can grow but this also leads to the growth of a memento that dominates thought and cannot be forgotten.

Another passage from the *Blickling Homilies* contains horticultural imagery that illustrates the inner experience of the ideal Christian audience member. In addition, a number of other themes discussed elsewhere in this chapter are also in evidence. What does it benefit a man, asks the homilist, to listen to the words of the gospel, ‘gif he þa nel on his heortan habban & healdan’?\(^{25}\) As we have seen, the words must be remembered – held in the heart – and used as a guide to future conduct, if they are to be efficacious. In conjunction with habban, healdan serves to emphasise the active role the believer must play in this process; he may have the words in memory now, but risks losing them if he does not make a conscious effort to retain them, perhaps by recitation. Losing the contents of one’s memory through natural wastage – the normal process of forgetting – is one thing, but the homilist seems to suggest that memories can also be removed by others through physical force (perhaps in itself a metaphor for psychological persuasion). What use is listening if ‘se wyrtruma þære halgan gesegene of his heortan biþ alocen & onweg anumen’?\(^{26}\) The sæd must germinate, and what has been learned allowed to ‘put down roots’ in the heart, but danger still lurks without. Attention to things other than the word of God, such as the pleasures of this earthly existence, perhaps, or others of the devil’s temptations, can cause what has been ‘laid down’ to be ripped up again. This passage as a whole has great relevance for the wider topics of this thesis.\(^{27}\)

The aim of the homilist, which is the transplantation of ‘spiritual fruit’ into the minds of his audience, can be achieved only when the individual hearer ‘mid inneweardre heortan gemunan & geþencan’\(^{28}\) what has been learned, and how this can be translated into the words and deeds that will earn him eventual salvation.

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\(^{22}\) *Riming Poem*, lines 47–48: ‘Wickedness is grown large in the mind’.

\(^{23}\) Line 43: ‘Now my heart is troubled’.

\(^{24}\) Line 46: ‘Anxiety has flowered, grown up inside the breast’.

\(^{25}\) *Blickling Homily V*, lines 55.7–55.8: ‘if he will not have and hold those in his heart’.

\(^{26}\) *Blickling Homily V*, lines 55.8–55.9: ‘the root of Holy Writ is plucked from his heart and taken away’.

\(^{27}\) For example, the intersection of text and memory; how these two function together; the didactic nature of Old English literature; and the necessity of memory in the didactic project.

\(^{28}\) *Blickling Homily V*, lines 55.11–55.12: ‘with inward heart remember and consider’.
5.4 IMPLICATIONS OF THE USE OF HORTICULTURAL IMAGERY IN ANGLO-SAXON TEXTS

A survey of the poetic corpus and a selection of prose homilies, then, reveals that horticultural imagery is systematically employed in the representation of certain kinds of inner experience. There is an internal consistency in the way that this imagery is applied. Memory inputs are represented as seeds sown in the mind-heart; once external experience has been internalised, the resultant inward thoughts and feelings grow and blossom; such effects can be nullified if contrary external forces are allowed to uproot what has been input into the memory system; but, if allowed to develop unhindered, what results from this learning process is the production of fruit.

Interestingly, this system of figurative representation appears to be restricted within Old English literature to a specific context: that of imparting Christian teaching to individuals who will ultimately benefit from the ensuing ‘spiritual fruits’ of wisdom and grace. This suggests that the use of such imagery is not merely due to the agricultural setting of life in Anglo-Saxon England, or the prevalence of agrarian concerns in the minds of Anglo-Saxon writers, important though these factors must have been in day-to-day life. Rather, it suggests that these writers were deeply engaged with a wider intellectual tradition of religious literature that similarly employed this horticultural imagery to explore the process of spiritual growth. Rather than being concerned solely with domestic matters, then, it seems that those writers who employed such imagery were engaged in a larger project of Christian instruction, a project which encompassed a substantial proportion of the globe at that time and which comprised a large intellectual community.
Chapter Six

The Remembering Community

… memory is selective. … In oral as in written culture, memory functions within the social group, which, within its particular conventions, traditions, and institutions, acts as a conceptual filter for image formation and recollection. … [in the oral tradition] the constitution of the social group, together with its “folk-memory”, determines the relationship of the new elements to the old. The past, whether conceived abstractly or concretely, can be present if relevant to ongoing cultural needs. 

We can think of a textual community as a group that arises somewhere in the interstices between the imposition of the written word and the articulation of a certain type of social organization. It is an interpretative community, but it is also a social entity. … Wherever there are texts that are read aloud or silently, there are groups of listeners that can potentially benefit from them. A natural process of education takes place within the group, and, if the force of the word is strong enough, it can supersede the differing economic and social backgrounds of the participants, welding them, for a time at least, into a unit. In other words, the people who enter the group are not precisely the same as those who come out. Something has happened, and this experience affects their relations both with other members and with those in the outside world.

The ability to remember is vital for the individual rememberer; without it, a person could not function adequately in the world, never mind acquire a coherent life narrative or develop a sense of “self”. However, most remembering individuals belong to communities, in one way or another. Memory is at work within these ‘remembering communities’, both in mundane, day-to-day activities and in forging the very bonds that define the community itself. The binding of individual narratives into chronological sequences is a necessary step in the creation of community histories.

As I have already discussed the stages of the human memory process as they pertain to the individual rememberer, I shall now turn my attention to the role of memory in the remembering community. The material to which I shall refer was drawn from a trawl of my chosen texts, and is based on an impressionistic survey of episodes in which I have identified some kind of memory event, rather than on a study of the lexicon of memory.

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1 The term ‘remembering community’ was inspired by Hugh Magennis’ use of ‘textual community’; see H. Magennis, Images of Community in Old English Poetry, CSASE 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 4.
4 Please see Chapter Four, ‘Figurative Representation of Mind, Memory, and Inner Experience’.
5 The complete extant Old English poetic corpus and the prose homiletic collections known as the Blickling and Vercelli Homilies. See Chapter 1, ‘Introduction and Methodology’, for further details.
6.1 THE SHARED BASIS OF MEMORY IN ‘MEMORY AS A MEASURE OF TIME’

The concept of MEMORY binds together communities in a number of ways. One of the ways in which MEMORY operates as a unifying concept is in its role of measuring time. This is evident in Modern English idioms such as ‘within living memory’, and is no less prevalent in Old English narratives concerning communal groups. Memory is invoked as the basis of a shared history when past events are located within ‘the memory of those now living’, or within a tradition that has been passed down through the generations, memory to memory.

The two Guthlac poems of the Exeter Book, though probably of different authorship, obviously share subject matter in that they both treat the life of Guthlac, a historical figure who died early in the eighth century.\(^6\) They share another similarity, pertinent to this discussion of memory as a unifying factor: both use versions of the ‘in living memory’ idiom. Furthermore, both are indebted (although to different degrees) to the eighth-century Latin biography of Guthlac by Felix of Crowland. The immediacy of the original account on which both poems are based lends historical credibility to the stories recounted within the poems, as the poets can claim that the events cited occurred ‘in gemynigra monna tidum’\(^7\) or ‘in urra … tida gemyndum’.\(^8\) This claim unites the contemporary audience into a single entity, a remembering community whose knowledge goes as far back as the memory of the oldest living member. In creating a (written) text about Guthlac’s life and death, the biographer – and the later poets or scribes – extends the boundaries of the remembering community, making knowledge available even when it is ‘out of living memory’.\(^9\) Before moving on from the Guthlac poems and the use of memory as a unifying device, I would like to turn to one other, slightly different, example.

Following his return from the wilderness, Guthlac continues amid a scene of bliss: the hill is green and full of blossom, singing birds come to take food from the saint’s hand, and the devils have been driven away. The narrator asks:


\(^8\) Guthlac B, lines 876–78: ‘during the remembrances of our times’.

\(^9\) The creation of a Latin vita during the period when the saint’s life and works were still remembered by the community (Guthlac died 714; the vita was written c. 730–749) is interesting for the study of ‘reconstructive’ or ‘confabulated’ memory. (That is, memories in which coherent narratives are created at the expense of objective ‘truth’). Bradley intimates that Felix of Crowland constructed the vita along fairly standard formulaic lines (Bradley (ed.), Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p. 249); this process is not dissimilar to the way in which events are often reconstructed in memory according to particular patterns. However, Felix is outside the scope of this study and therefore such explorations will have to wait for another occasion.
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… Hwylc wæs fægerra
willa geworden in weorÂa life,
þara þe yldran usse gemunde,
oþþe we selfe siþþan cuþen?10

Such is the rarity of the happening that it takes place outside of the space bounded by present knowledge, and even beyond the memories of ‘our ancestors’ (which, collectively, cover a considerable period of time).

6.2 TRUE MEMORIES CONTRASTED TO ‘LYING WORDS’ AND FALSE PROPHETS

Because of the importance accorded to the transfer of memories between individuals through storytelling, truth in discourse is valued. Having described the life-cycle of the mythical bird, and having compared its fiery death and re-birth to the purification of souls at Judgement Day, the narrator of The Phoenix enjoins the audience:

Ne wene þæs ænig ælda cynnæs
þæt ic lygewordum leoð somnige,
write woðcræfte. …11

This implies that words can be false. The Phoenix-narrator, however, positions himself among those for whom authentic speech is a gift. Turning to Job – as an authority, and as one who has spoken truly in the past – the narrator claims that Job was ‘þurh gæstes blæd / breostum onbryrded’.12 Job’s words are inspired by a source without himself, just as, as I have shown elsewhere, memories can be introduced into the mind through the passing-in of good or malign influences.

6.3 THE ABILITY TO CONVERSE AS A GIFT FROM GOD

This theme of the ability to converse as a gift from God is also evident in the Cynewulfian Christ II. In a passage that has similarities with the poem The Gifts of Men, the narrator tells his audience:

Sumum wordlæþe wise sendeð
on his modes gemynd þurh his mufæs gæst,
æðele ondgiet. Se mæg eal fela
singan ond secgan þam bið snytru cæft
bifolen on ferðe. …13

10 Guthlac A, lines 748–51: ‘What more beautiful delight was made in men’s life, of those which our ancestors remembered, or [those which] we ourselves afterwards may know?’
13 Christ II, lines 664–68: ‘To one [He] sends wise speech into his mind’s remembrance, through His mouth’s spirit, and noble understanding. He [who] can entirely sing and tell many things, for him wisdom is sustenance in [his] mind’.
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As with the previous example, the ability to ‘sigan ond secgan’ is linked to wisdom and is therefore highly prized, and again is seen as a gift sent into the ‘modes gemynd’.  

Judas, in the Vercelli Book poem *Elene*, is one such man who has a talent for communication. He is introduced as a man ‘betæhton / giddum gearusnotorne’; his usefulness to Elene lies precisely in his ability to perpetuate ancient memories by learning and retelling old stories, as she needs information to aid her search for the True Cross.  

His compatriots hand Judas over to Elene, confident that he can answer her questions and thus shield them from her anger:

```
He is for eorðan æðelæs cynnes,
    wordcræftæs wis ond witgan sunu,
    bald on meðle; him gebyrde is
    þæt he gencwidas gleawe hæbbe,
    cræft in breostum. ...
```

Rather than being described as a gift direct from God to Judas, in this case the skill with words seems to have been passed down to Judas in his genes; he is a ‘witgan sunu’. We are not told whether the ancient tales that he knows have been handed down from father to son, but it does seem that Judas has inherited a predilection for narration. As we have seen, knowledge is not confined to the head in Old English texts, and Judas’ store of knowledge is located ‘in breostum’. It is this hidden store that, his fellow Jews hope, will be revealed to Elene in order to satisfy her curiosity.

*Elene*, like *Christ II*, is of course a poem by Cynewulf. Although we lack biographical details of this historical poet, his pride in his work and his desire to have his name remembered are evident in the runic inscriptions that adorn his four known works. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that this skilful poet and teller of tales should value and praise similar skills in others. Cynewulf describes the effort that has gone into creating his poetry (or, the poet-persona who narrates *Elene* does). He has:

```
    wordcræftum wæf ond wundrum læs,
    þragum þreodude ond geþanc reodode
    nihtes nearwe. ...
```

However, he also acknowledges another source for his talent: just as the narrator of *Christ II* describes individuals’ wisdom as a gift from God, so too does the poet-narrator of *Elene* confess his ignorance prior to receiving divine inspiration:

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14 It is also noted that God apportions wisdom throughout humankind, and does not allow any one person to have too many talents.  
16 Lines 591–95: ‘As regards the world, he is of noble family, wise of poetic art and son to a prophet, confident in speech; it is innate with him that he has wise answers, skill, in his breast’.  
17 The Vercelli Book poems *Elene* and *The Fates of the Apostles* and the Exeter Book poems *Christ II* and *Juliana*.  
18 Lines 1237–39: ‘…woven [the] poetic arts and gathered wonders, at times meditated and sifted [his] thought anxiously by night’.
The mind is construed as a container that can be permeated only by the gift of God. That God should unbind and unlock Cynewulf’s mind in order both to enlarge his understanding and release his *leoðucræft* emphasises the two-way nature of mental processes: it is important that Cynewulf considers the wisdom that God has revealed to him, but it is equally necessary that he share this wisdom with his audience, through his poetic gifts.

### 6.4 THE EXPLICIT IMPORTANCE OF REVELATION AND SHARING

The Exeter Book poem *Maxims I* contains a number of injunctions to share inward thoughts and feelings through outward communications with another (or others). In the opening passage, the speaker makes clear the rationale behind the collation and transmission of maxims:

```
Fringe mec frodum wordum! Ne let þinne ferð onhælne,
degol þet þu deopost cunne! Nelle ic þe min dyrne gesecgan,
gif þu me þinne hygecræft hylest ond þine heortan geþohtas.
Gleawe men sceolon gieddum wrixlan. …
```

The speaker is prepared to share his knowledge (drawn, it may be supposed, from the body of ‘folk wisdom’ which must have existed within society), but is insistent that the addressee(s) must also reveal what he or she knows. Thus the importance of sharing knowledge is made explicit: it is of mutual benefit to both speaker and addressee, and is beneficial to society as a whole. It is also implied here, as elsewhere within the corpus, that revelation is akin to honesty and therefore a positive thing; concealment, conversely, is linked to deceit and therefore condemned.

The speaker of *Maxims I* acknowledges the importance of the individual, and assumes that individuals have the right to their own, private viewpoints. ‘Swa monige beoþ men ofer eorþan’, he says, ‘swa

---

19 Lines 1239–50: ‘I did not clearly understand the truth concerning the Cross before more unfettered deliberation disclosed wisdom in [my] mind’s counsel, through that glorious might. … the mighty King meted out glorious grace, and in [my] mind infused [it], revealed [its] brightness, at times enlarged [it], unbound the bodily frame, unwound the mind, [and] unlocked poetic art’.

20 *Maxims I*, lines 1–4: ‘Question me with wise words. Do not let your mind [be] concealed, nor that [which] you know deepest [be] hidden. I will not tell my secret to you if you conceal the power of your mind and your heart’s thoughts [from] me. Wise men must exchange stories’. 
beoþ módgeþoncas; ælc him hafað sundorsefan’. However, the inward life of the individual rememberer is not, on its own, fulfilling enough to sustain a person. Apparently trivial pursuits, when they allow individuals to come together as groups in order to share their thoughts, are as valid as private contemplation:

\[
\text{Wæra gehwylcum wislicu word gerisað,}
\]
\[
gleomen gied ond guman snyttro.
\]
\[
\text{...}
\]
\[
\text{Longað þonne þy læs þe him con leoþa worn,}
\]
\[
oþþe mid hondum con hearpan gretan;
\]
\[
hafaþ him his gliwes giefe, þe him god sealde.}
\]

Skill in music-making is God-given, the addressee is told, and the minstrel’s words become him as much as a scholar’s do. Communication between people should not be suppressed, it is implied, whatever form that sharing of experiences might take. The Andreas poet even extends this privilege to the Mermedonians, who are exhorted:

\[
\text{Ne hele se ðe hæbbe holde lare,}
\]
\[
on sefan snyttro! ...}
\]

Usually, as I have shown, openness and revelation are seen as positive. In this case, however, the Mermedonians are exhorted to reveal their ‘advice’ (that is, their suggestions of wicked plans) during secret councils: surely the poet is being ironic here in locating ‘wisdom’ in their sefan. Ordinarily, however, the memories of members are seen as worthy to be shared among the group. An explicit requirement to pass on acquired knowledge from senior to newer group members is contained within the metrical version of the psalms:

\[
\text{Gif bearn wære geboren þam fæder,}
\]
\[
him sceolde se yldra eall gesæcgan,}
\]
\[
þæt hi gleawne hiht to gode hæfdan,}
\]
\[
and his weorðlicu weorc gemundon,}
\]
\[
and godes bebodu georne heoldan.}
\]

The importance for the individual of remembering the word of God is made clear elsewhere in this thesis. This example reveals, in addition, the necessity of passing on those memories through communication within the remembering community.

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21 Lines 167–68: ‘There are as many minds as there are men over the earth; each [of] them has a separate understanding’.

22 Lines 165–71: ‘Wise words are proper for each of men: songs for the minstrel, and the wisdom of men. [It] grieves him then the less, [he] who knows a larger number of songs, or with [his] hands can greet the harp; [he] has in him the gift of music, which God gave to him’.

23 Andreas, lines 1164–65: ‘Nor [should] he who has true teaching conceal [that] wisdom in [his] heart’.

24 Paris Psalter Psalm 77, lines 8.1 – 9.3: ‘If a child were born to the father, the elders must all say to him that they had clear-sighted hopeful joy in God, and [they] remembered His splendid work, and eagerly kept God’s commands’.
6.4.1 DISCLOSING INNER THOUGHTS

The sharing of memories within communities, then, is often seen as a positive, beneficial activity. I have shown that the memory of an individual can be a very private, even secret thing, hidden away in his (or her) heart or breast. In what ways do Anglo-Saxon writers negotiate this balance between ‘holding in mind’ what needs to be remembered individually and passing on necessary knowledge to others in a group?

I have already shown that the Andreas poet recognises the uses of shared memories in relation to the council of the Mermedonians. Elsewhere in the poem he has more to say about the memory of the individual in a group context, and articulates this through the metaphor of the treasure chest. Having remembered Matthew’s plight, God speaks to Andrew:

\[ \text{þa him cirebaldum cininga wuldor,} \\
\text{meotad mancynnes, modhord onleac,} \\
\text{weoruda drihten, ond þus wordum cwæð} 25 \]

In this example, the modhord is portrayed as the locus of (private) thoughts and feelings, which is subsequently made open to others through the use of language. There is some similarity between the use of modhord here and the use of wordhord elsewhere in the poem, and indeed throughout the poetic corpus. Here, for example, Andrew addresses Christ in the form of a seaman:

\[ \text{ða him Andreas} \quad \text{ðurh ondsware,} \\
\text{wis on gewitte, wordhord onleac} 26 \]

\[ \text{Ongan ða reordigan rædum snottor,} \\
\text{wis on gewitte, wordloca onspeonn} 27 \]

In these examples, gewitte is the locus of wisdom. In order to transfer this wisdom from the inner store of the gewitte, Andrew ‘wordhord onleac’ or ‘wordloca onspeonn’. These are fairly familiar constructions, as treasure chest metaphors are often used in poetic descriptions of speech acts. The hord or loca acts as a repository for the eloquent person’s vocabulary: the implication is that words are precious, and should be guarded. The frequent collocation of the verb onlucan with such nouns, however, indicates that words’ value lie in their use as tools for communication: more often than not, the ‘treasure’ needs to be shared. It is the wordhord or wordloca that is unlocked or unfastened in these examples, yet there is a close enough link between these and the gewitte to imply that there is a correspondence between the sharing of words and the sharing of wisdom.

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25 Andreas, lines 171–73: ‘Then the glory of king’s, creator of mankind, Lord of hosts, unlocked His secret thoughts and spoke words to him - the brave one - in this way: …’.
26 Andreas, lines 315–16: ‘Then to him, by way of an answer, Andreas unlocked [his] treasury of words, wise in understanding’.
27 Andreas, lines 469–70: ‘[Andreas] began speaking then; wise in [his] counsels, wise in understanding, [he] unfastened [his] word-hord’.
The foregoing examples, I hope, illustrate the importance of the transfer of knowledge between characters within a text. Just as such transfers are depicted within the worlds of the texts, moreover, so too do they feature in the interaction between the texts’ author(s) and his or her audience. Poets and homilists reveal the contents of their memories, and in the process a remembering community is forged from the readers or listeners who receive and internalise their words.

6.5 THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF SHARING

For every rule there is an exception, and there are a number of instances in the Old English corpus that do not accord with the notion that the sharing of one’s inner experience is necessarily a good thing. Striking examples of this occur in The Wanderer, often categorised as an elegy. This is the tale of a man separated from his community: his isolation is partly physical as he is often alone on the sea, yet also partly mental as something prevents him from entering into normal discourse with companions:

> Fordon domgeorne dreorige oft
> in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste;
> swa ic modsefan minne sceolde,
> oft earmcearig, eðle bideæled,
> freomægum feor feterum sælan

Once again the treasure-chest metaphor is encountered: the terms *breostcofa* and *modsefa* are used to denote the places where thoughts and emotions must be buried. Rather than being allowed to move freely within a remembering community, these particular memories must be tightly constrained. It is not made explicit why this is so: in part it seems that the wanderer has no outlet for his thoughts because he is parted from his lord and family; in part, he imposes the condition of silence on himself due to a concern for reputation. However much he might try to contain and suppress his inward life, the wanderer can never be entirely successful: a man may prevent his thoughts from entering into the public domain, but he will continue to think ‘swa he wille’:

> … Ic to soþe wat
> þæt biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw,
> þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde,
> healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille

There is a final example in which restraint is preferable to sharing. The poet of The Fortunes of Men relates that:

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28 *Wanderer*, lines 17–21: ‘Therefore, those eager for glory often firmly bind a sorrowful [thing] in their heart; deprived of my homeland and far from noble kinsmen, I must likewise bind my heart with fetters’.

29 *Wanderer*, lines 11–14: ‘I know, in fact, that it is a very noble practice in a nobleman, that he firmly bind his breast, [and] keep his heart closed, think as he will’.
It seems that opening the *wordhord* does not always bring forth pearls of wisdom from the breast: in order to share only those memories that are beneficial to the group, it is essential that a man keep a clear head and ‘gemearcian his muþe’.

6.5.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The container-like memory, then, must sometimes be closed up and a metaphorical barrier raised between the individual rememberer and the remembering community. More often, however, there is value in allowing memories to flow from one individual to another, drawing all into a collective remembering community. Eloquence is viewed as a gift and a virtue: truth in speech even more so. Without a language with which to share the inner experiences of individuals, through story-telling, teaching, or preaching, human society and culture would be severely impeded. This is evident in the relationships between the characters within the texts, but must also have been obvious to the early audiences who experienced the texts in the real world.

This and the preceding two chapters have provided insight into the metaphorical representation of MEMORY, in the contexts of the individual rememberer and the remembering community. I turn now to a detailed examination of the non-metaphorical Old English lexicon of memory in the hope of establishing (i) the meanings and implications of Old English MEMORY terms in their textual contexts, (ii) the role of memory in Anglo-Saxon society, and (iii) the differences and similarities between tenth- and twenty-first century perceptions of mind, memory, and the inner experience.

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30 *Fortunes of Men*, lines 51–53: ‘At beer, one shall [be] a man drunk with mead, by the hand of the cup-bearer. Then he [shall] know no moderation, [nor how to] measure his mouth with his mind’.
In chapter two of this thesis, I have explained that declarative memory, comprising the reportable outcomes of the memory system, is a complex phenomenon, encompassing a wide range of closely-related possible outcomes. I have also noted that most Modern English speakers consider what I have termed ‘recollection’ to be the archetypal way of remembering: this is an outcome in which the individual rememberer makes a conscious effort to access knowledge or images that have previously been encoded in the cerebral cortex. However, I have made clear that a range of events that are not commonly perceived as ‘remembering’ also result from the workings of the memory processes, and that these also need to be explored in order to understand the full complexity of the phenomenon of memory.

In this chapter, I shall turn my attention to one particular Old English memory term, *gemunan*, in order to explore which parts of the memory retrieval continuum are covered by this one important verb. This term is frequently translated as ‘to remember’, which tends to suggest that what is occurring is recollection: the centre point of the memory retrieval continuum. If the full spectrum of possible memory events is considered, however, it can be shown that terms such as *gemunan* carry a range of subtly nuanced connotations in addition to their most obvious meaning.

### 7.1 THE CATEGORISATION OF MEMORY EVENTS

The first thing to say about the categorisation of types of remembering, is that memory events are complex phenomena. The points of the continuum that I have highlighted are in themselves somewhat arbitrary: there is no hard-and-fast division between what constitutes ‘reminiscence’ and what ‘reconstruction’, and so on. For the most part they differ only in degree, with reconstruction, for example, requiring more mental processing than reminiscence. Also, within each perceptible memory event, a range of remembering activities may be taking place. For example, psychologists distinguish between ‘episodic memory’, the remembrance of one’s own past experiences, and ‘semantic memory’ or knowledge gained at second hand. In practice, this distinction may not stand: one can be said to be accessing semantic knowledge when remembering religious instruction, for instance, but may have subsequently internalised this teaching as part of one’s own moral code. In such a case, it is difficult to know at what point acquired knowledge becomes an integral part of one’s own life history and sense of selfhood.

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1 See section 2.2.2, above.
Despite this caveat, the process of categorisation continues to be valid and useful. Interpreting what is going on during any given remembering activity is bound to be a somewhat subjective exercise. In trying to employ certain objective tests, however, and in seeing patterns begin to emerge through this analysis of raw data, we are able to examine some of the subtleties and complexities behind a seemingly straightforward term such as gemunan.

I have identified 139 occurrences of gemunan in the poetic corpus and the Blickling and Vercelli homilies. The majority of these occurrences can be classified as instances of recollection, or of the related category of sustained recollection or ‘bearing in mind’. This is to categorise each example on the basis of only its dominant or most apparent meaning: in many cases the term gemunan carries a range of secondary or tertiary characteristics, emphasising the complex and multi-layered nature of many memory events.

The dominance of recollection and sustained recollection within the retrieval events covered by gemunan, however, does go some way towards explaining the frequent use of the Modern English remember, or phrases such as ‘had in mind’, in translations from the Old English. The commonsense view of remembering revolves around what I have termed recall or recollection, as this is the archetypal form of memory retrieval, and so instances of recollection are often simply labelled with the generic term remembering. In order to go beyond this simplistic process of translation, one needs to examine the individual instances of gemunan in their textual contexts and to assess how each instance fits into the range of possible memory retrieval outcomes (or the ‘memory retrieval continuum’).  

Grouping together instances of gemunan based on these first impressions or dominant characteristics can provide an insight into the way that a term is used differently according to genre, subject matter, apparent intention on the part of the compiler, and so on. All but one of the occurrences of human recollection or sustained recollection in the metrical psalms of the Paris Psalter and the meters of Boethius, for example, refer to the recollection of semantic knowledge material. This could suggest, for example, that in these texts more emphasis is given to recalling important universal concepts than to dwelling on personal memories: even the one example of recalling episodic material (from Paris Psalter Psalm 136, lines 1.1–1.3) refers to the shared remembrance of Zion among Jews, and may therefore be an example of recalling a cultural icon rather than a memory based on personal experience. The vast majority of recollection occurrences in the two homiletic collections similarly have semantic knowledge as their object, again suggesting that the recollection of Christian teaching is more valued than that of personal history. This perhaps reflects a difference of emphasis between the

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2 The distribution of gemunan occurrences along the continuum highlights the interrelatedness of adjacent points on the scale: a substantial number of these examples fall somewhere in the interstices between two definitions, clearly containing elements of both.

3 Several occurrences within the Psalter refer to the mind of a divinity: these are discussed in section 7.6.
values of Christian Anglo-Saxon society and the increasingly secular society of the modern West, in which individual fulfilment and a sense of self-worth are held in high esteem.

By contrast, over 60% of all *gemunan* occurrences in the poetry of the Cotton Vitellius manuscript refer to acts of recollection or sustained recollection that have as their object autobiographical, episodic memories. This manuscript, of course, contains lengthy poems on the subject of heroism and personal endeavour: it is not overly surprising to find an interest in the interior biography of the individual in these ‘heroic’ texts. Other manuscripts are more predominantly religious or philosophic and didactic in nature, and it seems that there is a concentration on externally-imposed rules within the prose homilies and religious poetry. If a dichotomy exists within the usage of a term like *gemunan*, then, this is not likely to be caused by the poetic or prose form of a text. Rather, the theme or subject matter of a particular text may cause a common term to be used in a specific, perhaps an uncommon, way.

### 7.2 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION OF SEMANTIC KNOWLEDGE

Of the occurrences located within my chosen corpus, the most frequent primary meaning of the term *gemunan* is that of the sustained recollection, or the ‘bearing in mind’, of semantic, generic knowledge. Almost a third of all *gemunan* occurrences fall into this category, and examples can be found throughout the various manuscript collections of my selected corpus.

#### 7.2.1. SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION

Many of these examples have the relatively straightforward function of showing a character’s awareness of a particular fact, a concept, or a rule of conduct. Lot, for example, is shown to act in a certain way because he is ‘cynn gemunde riht and gerisno’: he is aware of a correct mode of behaviour. He offers shelter in Sodom to the messengers of God, even though they are strangers to him; he is mindful of his duty towards his human ‘kin’ (family and strangers alike). Beowulf is motivated by a different abstract concept, and is enjoined to ‘gemyne mærþo’. Often the thing ‘borne in mind’ is a form of teaching: Christ III emphasises the importance of remembering ‘þa mildan meotudes lare’, while the poem *Precepts* relies on a son’s awareness of his father’s words.

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4 Or, perhaps, its genre.
5 *Genesis*, lines 2433–34: ‘mindful of the duty of kin, and what is fitting’.
6 *Beowulf*, line 659: ‘be mindful of fame’.
All quotations from the poetry of the Cotton Vitellius manuscript are taken from E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), *Beowulf and Judith*, ASPR 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).
7 Line 1200: ‘the merciful creator’s teaching’.
Chapter Seven

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the Christian influence in late Anglo-Saxon life, many of these instances contain a reminder (to the audience, or to characters within the texts) to consider God in one’s daily decision-making: following Isidore, the Vercelli homilist exhorts his audience ‘gemyne þinne scippend’,

9

while Juliana asks her persecutors to ‘gemunað wigena wyn’.

10

Generic or semantic knowledge is information derived from others, usually through the medium of spoken or written language. Knowledge (awareness gained through experience, or the accumulation of facts) and wisdom (the ability to utilise this knowledge practically or critically) are of great importance to the life of the individual human, and to the functioning of society. These concepts are intrinsically linked to memory: one can hear instructions, or read teachings in books, but this does not constitute ‘knowledge’. Only when one has, to a greater or lesser extent, internalised these facts in one’s memory do they begin to be useful in day-to-day living.

The ability to remember one’s own speech acts and those of others is important, as the implications of what is said usually long outlast the fleeting spoken word. Even if the flight of the spoken word is arrested and captured in writing, it is no less important that these written words are remembered: lying passively on the page, they have little impact. Words may be inscribed in texts, but their meaning is not fully realised until they are contemplated, reflected upon, and actively remembered in the human mind. The meaning or import of a promise, for instance, lies not in the spoken words or written record of those words, but in the minds of the parties concerned in the agreement, and of any witnesses thereto. The frequent exhortation by a homilist that his audience remember the words of the gospel indicates the precedence of human recall, and is indicative of the power of the word to become an authority governing future actions.

The following examples reveal the role played by gemunan in the sustained recollection of such written or spoken words. Precepts, at Exeter Book folios 80a to 81a, consists of ‘ten injunctions on morals and manners, represented as being spoken by a father to his son’.

11

Thought to be composed in the eighth or early ninth century, it is the ‘work of a Christian poet … who had definite pedagogical purposes in view’,

12

although the Christian influence is not evident throughout the piece. Bradley notes that the precepts are ‘drawn from secular and religious wisdom and morality’.

13

In two places in the poem (lines 27–30 and 93–94), the importance of future recall is implied in the giving of instructions. The poem takes the form of a series of instructions ostensibly passed between father and

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8 Lines 27–30 and 93–94.
9 Vercelli Homily XXII, line 135: ‘remember your creator’.
All quotations from the Vercelli Homilies are taken from D. G. Scragg (ed.), The Vercelli homilies and related texts, EETS OS 300 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).
10 Juliana, line 641: ‘remember the warriors’ joy’ (that is, God).
son. The subject of these two particular instructions are doubly significant; the son must, first of all, recall the father’s words, but what he must remember includes ‘what is right and proper’ (i.e. culturally-imposed moral codes) and ‘wisdom’ to avoid sin. In adopting this form, the poet relies on his audience’s capacity and willingness to remember his words, as much as the father-character in the poem relies on his son’s. Depending on the context in which the poem was originally performed, the audience may or may not have been able to take advantage of the presence of the written form of the text as a permanent reminder. It is possible that the original audience would have heard the poem read to them, thus aligning them more closely with the position of the attentive son, and increasing the importance of the list form as a mnemonic device.

The poet of Vainglory (at lines 82–84) frames the codes necessary in life specifically in terms of Christian doctrine:

Forþon we sculon a hycgende hælo rædes
gemunan in mode mæla gehwylcum
þone selestan sigora waldend. Amen.¹⁴

Although the boundaries are very fluid,¹⁵ it does seem likely that the Christian has obtained knowledge about what is needful for salvation through the medium of the written word, albeit disseminated and interpreted orally by an intermediary. Like the Exeter Book poems The Gifts of Men, The Fortunes of Men, The Order of the World and Judgement Day I, Vainglory is didactic or homiletic in tone. It therefore uses the first person, and also includes direct addresses to the audience.¹⁶ Particularly in the homilies and Christian poetry, then, gemunan can be used to introduce very strictly circumscribed details, which are ostensibly transmitted to an audience in an unchanging form.

Knowledge or wisdom is not merely passively received by the authors, audiences and protagonists of Anglo-Saxon texts, however. New information is also formulated and passed on to future generations. In being selective about what ‘traditional’ knowledge is preserved, and in perhaps combining received wisdom with new insights, a person can formulate a new kind of knowledge. Following the pursuit of the mortally wounded Grendel to the edge of his mere, a thane of the king begins to sing of Beowulf’s exploits:

¹⁴ Lines 82–84: ‘Therefore we must always, on all occasions, think what is advisable [for] salvation, [and] remember in mind/spirit that most excellent Lord of victories.’
¹⁵ Cultural ‘norms’ may be encoded in written as well as oral language, while Christian doctrines are no doubt discussed verbally in the vernacular in addition to being disseminated via written Latin, for example.
¹⁶ See lines 44 and 77, also Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), Exeter Book, p. xl.
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… Hwilum cyninges þegn,
guma gilphlæden, gidda gemyndig,  
se ðe ealfela ealdgesegena  
worn gemunde, word oper fand  
söðe gebunden; secg eft ongan  
sið Beowulfes snýttrum styrian  
ond on sped wrecan spel gerade,  
wordum wrixlan. …

This is perhaps to be expected following such a great victory, and is the beginning of a new legend. At the same time, the thane relates other tales, including all he knows about Sigemund. Not only does the thane preserve these stories for future generations, in selecting pertinent tales at this time he is formulating a new kind of knowledge: he is categorising Beowulf’s deeds in relation to those of others, assigning him a particular place in the heroic canon. This has implications for the Anglo-Saxon mindset, in that the thane is able not only to memorise and pass on previously-heard stories but also to select, shape, to combine and recombine tales, thus affecting the way future generations will view Beowulf’s exploits in conjunction with those of other heroes.

In either case, the knowledge that is ‘borne in mind’ is made to serve a useful purpose. The anticipation of events yet to come is evident in *Blickling Homily VIII*, as might be expected in a homily about the needs of the soul. The homilist reminds his audience that they must be ‘singallice gemunan’ – continually mindful – of the awful Doomsday. Further to this, the Christian must also bear in mind the needs of his soul:

> Donne sceolon we nu gemunan ure nyðbearfe, & geneh geþencean emb ure saula þearfe þe læs ure deaþ urum feondum to gefean weorc

Collocated with *geþencean*, the verb *gemunan* here does not mean merely to remember passively or to carry, as it were, a mental image constantly before ‘the mind’s eye’. Rather, it is suggested that the Christian needs to consider actively: to work out first what is the necessity of the soul, and furthermore to work actively to fulfil this need. The remembrance of the need, once identified, thus becomes the motivating factor in the life and good works of the Christian.

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17 Lines 867–74: ‘Sometimes the king’s thane, a proud man, mindful of words, he who remembered a large number of old traditions – one word found another, faithfully bound – that man again began to treat of Beowulf’s fate with cleverness and successfully to utter a skilful story, to exchange words.’

18 At lines 874–902, the *Beowulf*-poet indirectly reports the king’s thane’s words about Sigemund: there are echoes of Beowulf’s own future fate in the tale of the death of Sigemund and, perhaps more importantly, Beowulf’s story is categorised alongside another tale of a man gaining great repute through adversity.

19 We can only speculate whether this applies equally to the *Beowulf* poet him- or herself, as we do not know how this poem fitted into the corpus of contemporary (epic) Anglo-Saxon poetry.

20 Lines 101.31–101.33: ‘Then we must now remember our necessity, and often think about our soul’s need lest our death should come to pass as a joy to our enemies.’
Chapter Seven

**Blickling Homily X** is titled ‘Pisses middangeardes ende neah is’ – The End of the World is Near – and, as might be expected, the homily is concerned with the faith and the good works of those who recognise the coming of the fateful day. With the end of the world approaching, the homilist warns, the Christian must have faith and also perform good works. It is necessary for them to ‘geðencean & gemunan’ this at all times, but ‘geornost, þonne [they] gehyron Godes bec us beforan reccean & rædan, & godspelle secggean’.  

The homilist’s use of ‘gemunan’ here shows the importance of actively calling to mind and contemplating these things at certain prescribed times, such as when God’s teaching is before one. Memory, then, can be an activity, in itself one of the ‘good works’ of the pious Christian. Further – as revealed in relation to the ‘Soul’s Need’ homily – when the ‘remembered’ event is the future decay of the body, or the destruction of the world, then the act of remembering is itself an act of penance. Rehearsing events in the mind’s eye, the Christian suffers the ‘memory’ of horrible sights now in an attempt to avoid their reality at some future point in time.

It is an important feature of sustained recollection that the rememberer expends concentration on the subject in question over a period of time. It is equally important, it seems, that this attention leads to a change in behaviour and attitude (if these were not acceptable previously). Although this change may be an inward one, we see in the examples from the Old English corpus a number of instances where there is an observable, outward effect upon the behaviour of the rememberer. In **Blickling Homily VI**, for example, the homilist exhorts the audience:

 Gemunon we symle þæt we þa god don þe us Godes bec læraþ, þæt is þonn 
  and halige wæccan, & ælmessylena æfter urum gemete

Here, the thing that is borne in mind is an intention to perform good deeds, as instructed in the Bible. The acts themselves become proof that such sustained recollection is occurring.

In **Vercelli Homily XIV**, the verb *gemunan* is used in showing that sustained recollection of one thing can protect the rememberer from falling prey to thoughts of other, less worthy, things. The audience learns that ‘þis synt halige dagas & gastlice & ussum sawlum læcedomlice, & we micle nyðpearfe habbað þæt we ðæt geornost geþencen & gemynen, þa hwile þe we ðære tide benigen þe us nu gyt God for his mildheortnesse gerymed hafað’, and that it is especially important to keep in mind Christ’s teaching ‘þæt we ne læten þas hwilendlican þing & þas feallendlican þysse worulde ure mod

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21 See **Blickling Homily X**, 111.15–111.18: ‘And it is a great necessity that we think to ourselves and remember, and then [the] most eagerly when we hear God’s book read and explained before us, and the gospel told, and His heavenly glories revealed to men.’

22 **Blickling Homily VI**, lines 73.26–73.28: ‘Let us remember always that we do those good [things] which God’s book teaches us, that is fasting and holy vigils, and almstiving according to our means’.

23 **Vercelli Homily XIV**, lines 1–4: ‘these are holy days, and spiritual and salutary to our souls, and we have great need that we eagerly consider that, and remember while we possess the time that at the present time God through of his mercy has extended to us’.
This occurrence, then, shows the importance of bearing in mind, but also demonstrates the human tendency to allow the mind to become occupied with other things. One can ‘know’ what is right and yet still fail to bear this in mind: it is all too easy to give consideration to other things. Thus, *gemunan* is once again shown to include more than the ability to recall: ‘bearing in mind’ is an activity requiring effort on the part of the rememberer.

Failure to remember God’s teaching is evident at lines 1199–1203 of the poem *Christ III*. This poem contains a description of the Last Judgement, with sources in the biblical Revelation and in patristic writing. Biggs notes that ‘several long passages directly translate known homilies’, and perceives a great reliance on the insular homiletic tradition. The poem has a homiletic tone and is apparently addressed directly to the ordinary Anglo-Saxon Christian. It must therefore refer to written, primarily Biblical accounts of Christ’s life and works, rather than to first-hand experience. This is an example of a failure not merely to remember a law but presumably also to behave accordingly (since it is possible to recall instructions yet still act in a contrary manner).

7.2.2 THE INFLUENCE OF REFLECTIVE MEMORY IN SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION OF SEMANTIC MATERIAL

The examples in 7.2.1 above, then, can all be categorised as instances of the sustained recollection of semantic knowledge. It is not always possible to assign a *gemunan* occurrence to a single, definitive category, however. Of the instances categorised as primarily examples of bearing in mind semantic knowledge, for instance, many have secondary connotations. Some include elements of reflection, for example; this is particularly the case where what needs to be ‘borne in mind’ is something not within normal human experience, for example, envisioning judgement day, heaven, or hell, and so autobiographical knowledge is brought into play and used creatively to construct an image and to support second-hand generic knowledge.

In *Guthlac A*, the saint ‘upp gemunde ham in heofonum’. Guthlac was conscious of heaven over a period of time and allowed this sustained recollection of a distant place (and a future time) to influence his present behaviour and thus the outcome of present events. Semantic, generic knowledge is the object, as the concept of heaven is one learned through Christian teaching rather than through personal experience (for the most part). However, an element of reflection upon episodic memories may also be involved, inasmuch as heaven cannot be pictured ‘from memory’ but can be constructed and imagined through a combination of semantic knowledge and real-world, autobiographical experience.

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24 Lines 7–9: ‘so that we do not allow these transitory and perishable things of this world to ensnare our mind through the devil’s treachery and his lying’.
26 Lines 97–98: ‘remembered the home that is above in the heavens’.
The most striking instances of the interplay between reflection and sustained recollection, however, are those in which rememberers ‘bear in mind’ not heaven itself, but the process that must be undergone before they reach heaven. Evocations of the judgement day scene in *Judgement Day II* are created through the combination of known facts and experienced emotions, extrapolated from worldly fears and applied to the terror of that final day. The narrator asks that his audience ‘gemune hu micel bið se broga beforan domsetle drihtnes þæn’; although judgement day is frequently described in Old English homilies and must have been a familiar series of events to the contemporary audience, the poet-narrator of *Judgement Day II* must also rely on the audience’s emotional response (based on personal experience) to achieve the required response to the text’s message. In the same way, the lesson of *Vercelli Homily XXII*, ‘þonne þu gefele þæt sar, gemyne þæt cwicsusles fyr’, would be less effective were the audience not able to draw on personal experience of the pain of being burnt.

As might be expected in a collection with a strong eschatological focus, the Blickling Homilies contain many exhortations to look not backwards but forwards: to remember that the Day of Judgement is coming and to anticipate – through the use of one’s imaginative faculty – the events of that fateful day.

The function of the homily is surely not merely to retell a tale and to draw a lesson from it, but ultimately to effect the salvation of the hearer through an alteration in his thoughts and deeds. It is not surprising, then, that when a homily writer asks his audience to *gemunan*, he is often exhorting them consciously to remember something in order to change their behaviour and to amend their former sins.

In the homily for Holy Thursday (*Blickling Homily XI*), the homilist asks his audience to remember the approach of Doomsday:

> Ah wuton we þæt nu geornlice gemunan þa hwile þe wæn & motan; uton betan þa geworhtan synna & ælmihtigne Drihten georne biddan þæt he us gescylde wið þa toweardan; & uton we symle þæs deges fyrhто & egsan on ure mod settan; …

Listeners are asked to reflect upon events yet to come; to recall the biblical prophesy of what will happen on Doomsday but, more than that, to picture in their own minds the horror of that day and their own role within it. By conscious awareness of this, it is implied, the listener will be able to somehow remedy his past sins. By keeping always in our consciousness – ‘on ure mod settan’ – the fear and

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27 Lines 123–24: ‘remember how great then is the terror before the judgement seat of the Lord’. See also lines 92–98. Quotations from poems that do not form part of the major poetic codices are taken from E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ASPR 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).

28 Examples of exhortations to consider doomsday can be found in *Vercelli Homily XXII*, lines 111–14 and 167–70; *Blickling Homily VIII*, lines 101.23–101.31; and *Blickling Homily X*, lines 113.22–113.24, 113.24–113.26, and 125.2–125.6.

29 Line 91: ‘whenever you feel that pain, remember the fire of living punishment’.

30 *Blickling Homily XI*, lines 125.2–125.6: ‘But let us now eagerly remember that, [in] the time that we may and can; let us remedy those performed sins and earnestly ask the almighty Lord that he shield us against those impending [things]; and let us always fix in our mind the fear and terror of this day.’
horror of the day of judgement, the homilist suggests, we can ensure that our subsequent behaviour will be judged worthy on that final day.

The inevitability of the Day of Judgement is often shown to be the motivating factor when a man stops to consider how he should behave: while good works have value in and of themselves, it is the benefit that these bring to the eternal soul that is often uppermost in the mind of the homilist. This is demonstrated in Blickling Homily VIII, which Morris entitles Sauwle Pearf (‘Soul’s Need’). What is the point of worrying about the body’s needs, asks the homilist, when it is the soul alone that will undergo final judgement, and about which we therefore need to be concerned? In an extended ubi sunt passage, the homilist describes the amassed wealth of those who ‘nystan ne ne gemdon hwonne hie þæt eall anforlætan sceoldan’. The wealth is gone and, by implication, those who amassed it in their lifetimes have wasted an opportunity to redeem their eternal souls. Having heard the homilist’s account of the wealthy people’s demise, the audience now hears that ‘þonne sceolon we singallice gemunan þone egesfullan domes dæg’. Holding in mind an image of that awful occasion – throughout the term of his life – will ensure that a man makes the right choices and thus gains his place in paradise.

7.2.3 ASPECTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION OF SEMANTIC MATERIAL

In the examples given in 7.2.2 (above), the divide between what is considered ‘semantic’ knowledge and what ‘episodic’ is blurred, revealing the difficulties inherent in dichotomising information sources in this way. This is also the case in a number of other sustained recollection events; although the object of remembrance may explicitly be semantic material, a role is also played by autobiographical aspects of the ‘memory store’.

When involved in the sustained recollection of generic knowledge, characters may simultaneously ‘bear in mind’ autobiographical features of the input signals originally encoded. Sometimes the semantic and episodic aspects of a memory event are closely intertwined, or even inseparable. When Beowulf recalls that King Hrethel ‘sibbe gemunde’, what Hrethel has borne in mind is the notion of responsibility to one’s kin allied to the autobiographical memory of his real-world relationship with the young Beowulf.

Hrethel looked after the youthful Beowulf because he was ever mindful of their relationship and of the responsibilities of kinship bonds. A modern-day response to this might be resentment and not being valued for oneself, perhaps, but here it is seen as admirable that Hrethel fulfils his ‘role’ out of obligation: his feelings for the young Beowulf as an individual seem irrelevant. What is important is that a worthy man knows his duties and carries them out: this is only possible if the memory is

31 Blickling Homily VIII, 99.30–99.31: ‘knew not nor considered when they should leave all that’.
32 Lines 101.27–101.28: ‘then we must perpetually remember the dreadful Doomsday’.
33 Beowulf, line 2431: ‘[he] remembered kinship’.
employed and allowed to guide behaviour. Although this state of affairs is not incompatible with having an emotional relationship, affection between the two parties is not a requirement of the arrangement. However, it is also true that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to form a notion of ‘kinship’ were one not acquainted with family and group relationships in reality.

Elsewhere, the poet’s emphasis on not bearing something in mind provides further evidence of the connections between generic and autobiographical sources of input in sustained recollection. During the attack upon Heorot, it is said that ‘helm ne gemunde, byrnan side’.34 In order to be able to consider or disregard the need for defensive garments, one must first be acquainted with the use and purpose of such items in real-world situations. This, then, is another instance in which semantic knowledge of an abstract concept is closely linked to personal experience of a concrete object; similar instances occur elsewhere in my selected corpus, in poetic and in prose texts. The process by which generalisations are abstracted from specifics, noted in section 2.2.6 above, is clearly a factor in the overlapping of episodic and generic memories. However, the way in which humans utilise wide ranges of inputs and are able to process many different information sources simultaneously also complicates the study of memory and calls into question the modern practice of delineating two separate sources of memory input.

7.3 RECOLLECTING SEMANTIC / GENERIC KNOWLEDGE

*Christ and Satan* has been described as ‘a set of lyric and dramatic amplifications of a number of Biblical and legendary themes of a familiar character’.36 The poem is believed to have been composed c. 790–830.37 In a homiletic passage from *Christ and Satan*, the poet describes Satan’s passage to hell and provides a series of ‘reminders’ to Christians, including the injunction to keep in mind ‘truth and right’ before God’s throne in prayer:

\[\ldots\] gemunan soð and riht,
þonne we to hehselde  
þenen gehnigan þencað,
and þone anwaldan ara biddan.38

Homiletic texts frequently stress the importance of good works and deeds; here, the poet is insistent that Christians keep ‘good thoughts’ in their hearts and minds, apparently for their own sakes. In the sight of God, who knows the heart’s secret thoughts, it is as important to remember what is fitting as to act properly.

34 Lines 1290–91: ‘no one remembered his helmet, [nor] his ample coat of mail’.
35 All but two of these occurrences also have a secondary connotation of ‘bearing in mind’. Therefore, 93% of ‘recollection-generic’ instances are also ‘sustained recollection-generic’.
37 Dobbie (ed.), *Junius Manuscript*, p. xxxvi.
38 Lines 206–208: ‘[Let us] remember truth and right, whenever we think to bow down before the throne and pray to the Ruler for mercies.’
In addition to such instances of a homilist-figure addressing a posited audience, the Old English poetic corpus contains similar interactions between the actual Anglo-Saxon poet and his or her audience.

Towards the conclusion of his poem *Juliana*, the poet Cynewulf speaks these words:

… Bidde ic monna gehwone  
gumena cynnes, þe þis gied wræce,  
þæt he nec noedful þeþ noman minum  
gemyne modig, ond meotud bidde  
þæt me heofona helm helpe gefremme,  
mehta waldend, on þam miclan dæge,  
fæder, frofre gest, in þa frecnan tid,  
dæda demend, ond se deora sunu,  
þonne seo þrynis þrymsittende  
in annesse ælda cynne  
þurh þa sciran gesceaf þrymsittende  
scrifeð bi gewyrhtum  
meorde monna gehwam. …

This particular Anglo-Saxon poet asks that everyone who recites the poem remember him by name. It is possible that the contemporary audience of this poem would have had no personal knowledge of the writer Cynewulf: none of the poem’s modern readers, of course, can have this knowledge. This being the case, they have no personal interest in the welfare of his soul. However, the poem itself stands as a testament, it is to be hoped, to the poet’s worthiness to be remembered in prayers. To remember his name alone is important but not enough: for prayers to be efficacious, the audience must be diligent in actively promoting Cynewulf’s cause with his Maker. The words of the poem confer this responsibility onto the listeners, and memory and obligation are shown to be closely linked.

In both of these occurrences, then, the verb *gemunan* refers to an act of recollection, on a specific occasion, with semantic knowledge as its subject. In each case, the act has an element of obligation: the listeners to the homiletic sections of *Christ and Satan* owe it to themselves to recall ‘soð and riht’ when occasion demands and thus to save their own souls; and for the audience of Cynewulf’s address a similar obligation extends to caring for the soul of another.

### 7.3.1 RECOLLECTING GENERIC KNOWLEDGE AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION

Twenty-eight of a total of 139 *gemunan* occurrences studied (20%) exhibit a primary characteristic of expressing the recollection of generic knowledge. Of these 28, a large proportion (82%) also show evidence of the *sustained* recollection of that knowledge as a secondary characteristic. This reveals two things: that recollection of generic knowledge is outnumbered in the chosen corpus by the sustained recollection of generic knowledge (44 of 139 occurrences, or 32%), and that ‘bearing in

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39 *Juliana*, lines 718b–729a: ‘I ask of each one of the race of men who utters this song that, zealous and brave, he remember my name, and pray the Creator that the Lord of the heavens might help me on that great day, the Ruler of power, the Father, the spirit of solace, the Judge of deeds, and the dear son, in that terrible time, when the Trinity, sitting in glory in unity, ordains to the family of men through the resplendent creation on account of [their] deeds the reward of each man.’
mind’ even plays an important role in the majority of cases where simple recollection appears to be the primary emphasis of *gemunan*.

In section 7.2.1 above, I have already demonstrated the pervasiveness of sustained recollection throughout my chosen corpus. Instances where recollection of generic knowledge is allied to sustained recollection are similarly distributed across a range of texts (both poetry and prose), and are used in dealing with a variety of subject matters. There is, however, a noticeable bias, with more than 40% of these occurrences falling within the Vercelli Homilies. In fact, there are six occurrences of this usage within a single homily.

*Vercelli Homily VII*, of which Scragg says little other than ‘The item has many of the hallmarks of a literal translation from Latin but no source has yet been found’, ¹⁰ warns of the dangers of sloth and gluttony. However, the homilist commences by telling his audience that ‘lar is haligdomes dæl’ ¹¹ (that is, study or learning is part of holiness or righteousness). This is a very blunt address to the audience, as is the homilist’s implication that his listeners can be saved only through ‘lar mid geswince’. ¹² Learning, then, must be an active process, and the homilist goes on to give explicit instruction in how his didactic examples are to be used fruitfully. The homilist’s injunctions are:

Gemunað eac hwylce ehtnesse  
Isac æghwanon ræfnod…  
Gemunað eac Iacobes  
mænigfealdan geswinc…  
Gemunað eac þa ðe eall hira lif on þisse worulde on  
olehtungum lifedon…  
And gemunað ludeas þe hira lif eall hyra wambe to forlore  
forgeafon…  
Gemunað hu Esaw his dagas on ehtnesse lædde…  
Gemunaþ eac hu þa  
forwurdon þe mid wodheortnesse willan to wæpnedmannum hæmed sohton… ¹³

In explaining that the recollection, and sustained recollection, of these biblical exemplars can lead individual rememberers to overcome hardships, the homilist also lays bare the motivation underpinning his own art: the writer of such didactic texts must first draw upon his own memory to provide examples, must transmit these to his audience, and must encourage that audience to ‘bear in mind’ these examples and their import if the purpose of achieving change in their lives is to be fulfilled. In *Vercelli Homily XI* (lines 21–22), itself a translation of a sermon by Caesarius of Arles, ¹⁴ the homilist reminds his audience of the importance of remembering the gospels. Although contemporary Anglo-Saxon Christians are dependent upon the written record of the Lord’s words, and although it is a relatively straightforward procedure to have the written word interpreted (laying aside problems of Latin literacy and so on) it is important nonetheless to commit these words to memory and subsequently to reflect on them, as though they were ephemeral spoken words which need to be

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¹⁰ Scragg (ed.), *Vercelli Homilies*, p. 133.
¹¹ *Vercelli Homily VII*, line 1.
¹² Line 5: ‘learning together with effort’.
¹³ Lines 17–47: ‘Remember [you] also what kind of persecution Isaac underwent in every way … Remember [you] also Jacob’s manifold hardships … Remember [you] also those who lived all their life in indulgence … And remember [you] the Jews who all their life gave [up] their stomach to destruction … Remember [you] how Esau conducted his days in persecution … Remember [you] also how those perished who through desire of madness sought intercourse with men …’.
fixed in the mind. This implies that knowledge stored in books – even the Bible – is not true ‘knowledge’: to be useful, it must first be internalised by the audience, and subsequently acted upon. Similar uses of *gemunān* occur elsewhere in the Vercelli Homilies: the homilist-figure exhorts the audience to recall the story of Adam and Eve, but also expects them to draw a lesson from the exemplum and to alter their behaviour accordingly;\(^{45}\) there is an exhortation to recall the facts and consequences of Christ’s suffering while in human form;\(^{46}\) and the audience are expected to converse about God, of whom they have learnt through previous teaching.\(^{47}\) The principle is also evident in *Paris Psalter Psalm 77*, in which there is an explicit instruction not only to recall God’s ‘weorōlicu weorc’\(^ {48}\) but also to pass on this remembered information to each subsequent generation.

This concern with recalling (and passing on) knowledge gained at second hand, in order to effect change in the lives of those who recall it, is evident in a number of explicitly Christian contexts, then. To an extent this concern is also articulated in the less-explicitly Christian works of the corpus.\(^{49}\) In *Meter 1* of Boethius (lines 56–59), for example, the chief protagonist is described as knowing his ancestors’ histories and as bearing this in mind during his everyday actions; thus his generic knowledge is seen to shape his present conduct. My final example, taken from *Beowulf*, shows how a non-religious object of remembrance can become the focus of a remembering community; indeed, knowledge of that object, disseminated through the medium of story-telling, is the catalyst for the coalescence of a remembering community out of otherwise disparate peoples, geographically isolated from one another.

Being remembered by the group is, of course, enormously important for the individual protagonist, not least because, in the pre-Christian world of the heroic poem, one’s ‘afterlife’ depended on the continuance of one’s reputation in the collective remembrance of the community. In looking at this equation from the opposite perspective, however, I have become increasingly aware of the reciprocal nature of the relationship: for every individual being remembered by a group, there is a group formed around the shared remembrance of an individual. Such a group may have little else in the way of spatial proximity, temporal connections, or similarity of spirituality to sustain it, as can be seen in an example from *Beowulf*:

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\(^{45}\) *Vercelli Homily XVI*, lines 177–79.

\(^{46}\) *Vercelli Homily II*, lines 83–87. *Andreas* (lines 636–40) similarly has Christ’s life on earth as an object of recollection, and as a shared factor in the communal mental life of the remembering community. Rememberers have recourse to a written authority (i.e. the Bible), which is as close as it is possible to come to ‘verification’ of this particular semantic knowledge.

\(^{47}\) *Vercelli Homily XIX*, lines 1–3.

\(^{48}\) Line 9.2: ‘splendid work’.

\(^{49}\) Both *Beowulf* and the *Meters of Boethius* have, of course, been transmitted to us through scribes and collators (and translators) who were likely to have had a Christian outlook. The *Meters*, particularly, show signs of having been Christianized during the process of translation. However, in the particular passages that I shall refer to here the subject matter is secular.
Ecgtheow is remembered widely by an otherwise disparate collection of wise men (whether they remember him because they are wise, or are wise in remembering him, is not made explicit). Of course, one must allow for some hyperbole in Beowulf’s depiction of his father: it is surely not possible for *witenal welhwelec* to know of him, no matter how great his legend nor how widely disseminated. This, then, is perhaps something of a hypothetical remembering community: those who would remember Ecgtheow if they had the opportunity to learn his story. Or it is perhaps a figure of speech, with broadness of knowledge equated with the minds of men *wide geond eorþan*, just as length of knowledge is often aligned to the minds of succeeding generations of men. In any case, this example highlights the importance of the art of poetry in the continuance of memory and the creation of remembering communities (within the text and between each text and its audiences), just as *Vercelli Homily VII* illustrated the importance of the art of the homilist through its exposition of the use of biblical reminders.

The foregoing, then, have been examples of the 23 instances where *gemunan* has the primary meaning of recollecting generic knowledge, and a secondary connotation of ‘bearing in mind’. All have illustrated again the vital importance of remaining conscious of what one has learnt, usually with a view to being guided in one’s present conduct by what one has previously learnt. They also contain internal evidence for the continuing importance of the texts from which they are drawn; just as written and oral authorities within the texts are crucial in the creation and maintenance of remembering communities, so the texts themselves are artefacts which have influenced the groups with which they have come into contact over time.

### 7.4 RECOLLECTING EPISODIC / AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

After the recollection of semantic or generic knowledge, the next most frequent use of *gemunan* in my texts involves the recollection of first-hand, autobiographical knowledge. There are 23 instances of ‘recollection-episodic’. Of these, around 16 (70%) seem to have secondary connotations of ‘sustained recollection-episodic’. A further 7 (30%) also have secondary connotations of ‘reflection-episodic’ (and these all also fall into the category of ‘sustained recollection-episodic’).

Eight of the 23 (35%) instances occur within the Cotton Vitellius manuscript and a further six are taken from the poems of the Exeter Book (26%). These figures account for 35% of all Cotton Vitellius occurrences of *gemunan*, and a third (33%) of all Exeter Book occurrences.

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50 *Beowulf*, lines 264–66: ‘He [Ecgtheow] lived a large number of winters before he departed on the way, the old man [away] from the dwellings; every one of wise [men] [i.e. every wise man], far and wide throughout the earth, readily remembers him’.
As I have noted elsewhere, in real life not every stimulus experienced by a person goes on to leave an indelible mark in her or his memory. Some sensations may not even register in the conscious mind; others may provoke a fleeting response only to be disregarded or repressed. In reality, the majority of people do not retain impressions of everything they have previously experienced; such large amounts of information would perhaps be impractical to process, and in any event the lack of such ‘total recall’ does not seem to hinder an individual’s ability to function in the real world. Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, however, there is a general expectation that a person will indeed be able to recall events, situations, and conversations in which they have been personally involved. In other words, the successful recollection of episodic memories is taken to be the norm; perceived exceptions to this norm are therefore comment-worthy.

That Nebuchadnezzar is unable to recall the details of a dream that leaves him unnerved is remarked upon by the poet of Daniel. The despotic ruler’s inability to recall his own interior experience – ‘No he gemunde þæt him meted wæs’\(^{51}\) – is highlighted as a sign of his unworthiness; his lack of mental clarity is linked to the imbibing of wine which has preceded his sleep. That the relevant information exists is not doubted: Nebuchadnezzar’s advisors believe it to be ‘dygle … on sefan’.\(^{52}\) The problem seems to lie rather with Nebuchadnezzar’s inability to retrieve the previously-encoded information.

In the world of the literary text, the question of recalling one’s own (or others’) spoken words or actions is further complicated by the fact that these fleeting occurrences are captured in writing. There exists evidence of practical, real world uses of historical written agreements and promises in Anglo-Saxon England. The treaty between King Alfred and Guthrum is, for example, ‘ostensibly a record of oral agreements made between the two parties and confirmed on a particular day by the swearing of oaths’.\(^{53}\) Discussing Wormald’s ‘Æthelred the lawmaker’, Keynes notes that ‘whatever the status of the extant codes as records of royal decrees [Wulfstan, for example, was ‘forever revising material’], Wormald must, however, be right to insist that it was the king’s (spoken) word which counted, for it was in the king that the authority ultimately lay’.\(^{54}\) Although my chosen texts are not (and do not purport to be) matters of historical record, they do contain instances of promises inscribed both in the memories of the protagonists and in some physical form. One such instance occurs in The Husband’s Message.

The Husband’s Message – the title in itself is open to debate – is a somewhat riddle-like poem that can be variously interpreted as a secular love poem or as a metaphorical treatment of Christian concepts.

\(^{51}\) Line 119: ‘He did not at all remember that [which] was dreamt by him’.

\(^{52}\) Lines 130–31: ‘hidden … in [the] mind’.


\(^{54}\) Keynes in McKitterick, Uses of Literacy, p. 243.
Chapter Seven

While a Christian interpretation of *The Husband’s Message* cannot be ruled out, it is possible that the apparent overwhelming Christian emphasis of the Exeter codex may have influenced critics in finding Christian themes in a secular poem.\(^{55}\) While bearing in mind this debate, in the following analysis I concentrate on the role of memory in the ‘surface’ narrative of the poem.

The episodic memory of what one has formerly said can be a strong motivator. One’s past words can take a number of forms: vowing, boasting and promising, for example. This aspect of ‘memory as obligation’ is closely linked to the idea of being aware of reputation, since it is a matter of honour to keep one’s promises and broken promises bring shame upon the oath-breaker. The runestick of *The Husband’s Message* – or the carver of its message – wants the woman to remember vows she has previously made:

\[
\text{Hwæt, þec þonne biddan het se þisne beam agrof} \\
\text{þæt þu sinchroden sylf gemunde} \\
\text{on gewitlocan wordbeotunga}^{56}
\]

The implication is that the husband-figure doubts his wife’s ability (and perhaps even her willingness) to remember and act upon her former promise unprompted. The words on the runestick (and its very being) become physical prompts to remembering something from long ago.\(^{57}\) They are also a prompt to acting in the present: the runestick messenger also encourages the woman to *stand by* or honour her earlier words, once they have been remembered. As so often in Anglo-Saxon literature, words alone are not enough: they must be accompanied by appropriate actions if they are to have any meaning. Knowledge of her vows’ significance, not their form alone, is what will provoke a sense of responsibility. While the frailty of human memory is implicit in the message (as compared with the apparent infallibility of the carved wood) the message is also indicative of the power of the spoken word to become an authority governing future actions.\(^{58}\)

In the absence of a written record, it may be left to one character in a text to exhort the others to recall details of their personal pasts.\(^{59}\) Seeing his lord face the dragon alone, towards the conclusion of *Beowulf*, Wiglaf remembers happier times and treasure-givings in the beerhall, and implies that his comrades also remember what has transpired. He relies on their sense of duty to perform now as they

\(^{55}\) Kelly notes that ‘[v]ernacular poetry and the Chronicle were secular literature and, even though clerics could and did appreciate the former and may have been responsible for the latter, probably imply a secular audience’; this is one among many contributions to the vexed debate over the purpose and audience of such texts. See S. Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word’, in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The Uses of Literacy in Early Mediaeval Europ.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 36–62, at p. 61.

\(^{56}\) *Husband’s Message*, lines 13–15: ‘Lo! He who ordered this piece of wood carved asks that you, adorned with costly ornaments, yourself remember in your mind promises that in former days you two often said, while you were yet allowed to dwell in the mead-cities of your homeland, to occupy one land, to perpetuate your love.’

\(^{57}\) By appealing to the senses, one can sometimes unlock vivid memories that have previously lain dormant.

\(^{58}\) Somewhat ironically, evidence of the actual historical use of such runesticks is scarce due to the mutable nature of the material used, if indeed such things once existed and were used in England. See S. Kelly, ‘Anglo-Saxon lay society and the written word’, in McKitterick, *Uses of Literacy*, p. 37.

\(^{59}\) It should be noted that, although the protagonists are being ‘reminded’ in such instances, the reminder contains the verb *gemunan* in its sense of ‘recollect’. This exemplifies the difficulty of ascribing single, definitive meanings to memory terms, when memory events themselves are so multi-layered.
had previously promised they would. Their king has not asked them for help – having been
determined to face the firedrake alone – so it is their own words, prompted by Wiglaf, that provide the
only impetus to assist Beowulf. Wiglaf tells this story as a reminder to his tardy companions of the
promises they have made to Beowulf:

Ic ðæt mæl geman, þær we medu þegun,
þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde
in biorsele, …
þæt we him ða guðgetawa gyldan woldon
gif him þyslicu þearf gelumpe,
helmas ond heard sw eord. …

In doing this, he hopes they will be stirred to act to aid Beowulf. The men’s responsibilities towards
their lord are at least twofold: they have accepted gifts from him and, crucially, they have verbally
committed themselves to rendering aid in just such circumstances as the current situation. Wiglaf
feels an obligation towards his fallen lord, Beowulf, because he:

Gemunde ða ða are þe he him ær forgeaf

The verb gemunde reveals that Wiglaf recalls those treasures that Beowulf has formerly bestowed on
him. More importantly, however, the context shows that Wiglaf considers that obligations that these
gifts confer. Almost as though he has recalled a verbal pledge of allegiance, Wiglaf is spurred into
action.

A similar exhortation occurs in the poem The Battle of Maldon. Following the death of Byrhtnoth,
Ælfwine, son of Ælfric, enjoins Byrhtnoth’s thanes:

Gemunan þa mæla þe we oft æt meodo spræcon,
þonne we on bence beot ahofon,
hæleð on healle, ymbe heard gewinn;
uu mæg cunnian hwa cene sy

Like Wiglaf, Ælfwine urges the men to fight on after Byrhtnoth’s death by exhorting them to
remember their mead-pledges and their subsequent duties. From these two examples it can be inferred
that warriors (and indeed others) should be very careful about what they say. It would be all too easy
to make a rash promise in the comfortable, companionable atmosphere of the meadhall, or when
provoked to better another man’s boast. However, as the poets of Beowulf and The Battle of Maldon
emphasise, vows and boasts made in the evening must be supported with action in the cold light of
day, often in trying circumstances. A person, then, must consider the weight of his words before he or

60 Beowulf, lines 2633–38a: ‘I remember that occasion, we consumed mead there, when we promised (to) our
lord in the beerhall … that we would repay him for the armour, helmets and hard swords, if such a need should
befall him’.
61 Beowulf, line 2606: ‘remembered when he formerly granted prosperity to him’.
62 Battle of Maldon, lines 212–15: ‘Remember the times that we often spoke at mead, heroes in the hall, when we
raised up a vow on the bench about brave battle; now it can be found out who is brave’.
she speaks them. The obligation conferred by the memory of promises long outlasts the fleeting spoken word.

This is further exemplified in *Beowulf*, where Unferth’s behaviour before the fight with Grendel’s mother compares unfavourably with that of Beowulf during the first battle. Where Beowulf had matched action to words, Unferth is unable (or unwilling) to fulfil his earlier promise. Although alcohol is an integral part of the beerhall setting and therefore part of the warriors’ common experience, on this occasion wine is blamed for loosening Unferth’s tongue when it should have been more guarded. Unferth lends his sword, Hrunting, to Beowulf as he does not have the courage himself to face Grendel’s mother. In contrast to what we are told before Beowulf’s assault on Grendel, here the poet states that:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Huru ne gemunde & mago Ecglafes,} \\
\text{… hæt he ær gespræc} \\
\text{wine druncen, …} \quad &63
\end{align*}
\]

Ecglaf’s son forfeits his reputation by failing to live up to his provocative words: others will surely remember his words, even if he forgets or neglects to act on them.

It is not always necessary to state explicitly that a man remembers (or, should remember) his duty. In *Beowulf* (lines 1180–87) the tangible subject of Hrothulf’s memory will be the things done for him by Wealtheow and Hrothgar in his youth. Wealtheow knows that Hrothulf will be obliged to be kind to her sons (his cousins) in future, if he remembers what she and Hrothgar have formerly done for him. Wealtheow’s words, ‘gif he hæt eal gemon’, \(^{64}\) imply that Hrothulf must remember the events of his own earlier life, but also the obligations conferred therein. Here, as elsewhere in the poem, her words in themselves become reminders of this duty: past kindnesses should be repaid through future kindness to her sons. Knowledge of a ‘code of honour’ is a very personal thing: it is learnt, for the most part, by example and through the stories, praise, and blame of and by others in the community. There is no written code, as there is in Christianity, and no one can know what is in another man’s heart. This submission to the authority of a moral code can only be inferred from observable events and behaviour. Wealtheow and Hrothgar’s actions confer obligations on Hrothulf: if he knows and follows accepted behavioural norms, his future actions towards their sons will be the tangible evidence of this.

The recollection of autobiographical memory, then, is a familiar and important function of the Old English *gemunan*. The varied examples outlined in this section, however, serve to exemplify the complex web of motivations underlying the apparently simple act of recalling one’s own life story.

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63 *Beowulf*, lines 1465–67a: ‘The kinsman of Ecglaf certainly did not remember … that [which] he previously spoke, drunk with wine …’.

64 *Beowulf*, line 1185: ‘if he remembers all that’.
7.4.1 RECOLLECTING ONE’S PERSONAL HISTORY: THE INFLUENCE OF REMINISCENCE

As I stated in section 2.3.5, the position of reminiscence in my retrieval continuum is dependent upon the extent to which subjective interpretation is brought into play during the activity. Reminiscence can be defined as a discrete section of the memory retrieval continuum, with distinct qualities, but it can also be viewed as a particular way of recalling autobiographical memories. For this reason, in the present section I shall review those instances of *geman* that seem concerned with reminiscence as I have defined it, alongside those instances in which the recollection of a personal memory is heavily influenced by reminiscence.

Four occurrences of *geman* in my chosen corpus have the primary meaning of ‘reminisce’, while a further five occurrences that have the primary meaning ‘recollect’ also have a secondary connotation of ‘reminisce’. Reminiscence is characterised by frequent retellings, whether to others or to the rememberer himself. So strong is this element of story-telling, with the ‘rehearsal effect’ and lack of factual accuracy that this entails, that it seems that reminiscence is an activity less related to reporting ‘the truth’ than to the creation of social cohesion within groups and of self-image in individuals. This turns on its head the usual notion that remembering involves the reproduction of stored memories, and highlights the creativity involved in the process (whether or not this element is noticed by the rememberer himself). It also seems to me that reminiscence serves a useful purpose; regimenting conflicting or confusing events into a coherent narrative often helps the rememberer to ‘put things into perspective’, to use the modern idiom. This useful function of reminiscence is often missed by those who see reminiscing as a ‘wallowing in the past’ or an avoidance of harsh realities.

The act of reminiscence can be viewed as an attempt to bridge the divide between past and present by repeatedly reworking the events of the former within the latter. Time and its passing are prevalent themes in Anglo-Saxon literature. This emphasis on transience is not, of course, unique to Anglo-Saxon writers. However, there does appear to be a preponderance of Old English texts in which the faculty of memory, ranging back through the events of a person’s life, calls to mind earlier scenes and provokes an emotional response. Past things remembered will frequently have an effect on a person’s present behaviour. Often, adherence to a particular code of behaviour or religious belief will guide present conduct. By contrast, however, memories of the past can frequently provoke more emotional – and apparently less rational – responses. *Beowulf* can be used as a case study here to illustrate the main points of my argument; as the longest extant Old English heroic poem, it provides numerous examples.

Momentarily diverted from telling Hygelac the narrative of his encounter with Grendel, Beowulf contemplates the advisability of using marriage to heal rifts between families. Speaking of the forthcoming marriage between Freawaru and Ingeld, he doubts that the Heathobards will easily be able
to forget past injuries, when they see Freawaru’s retinue carrying treasures taken from the Heathobards in old wars:

þonne cwið æt beore se ðe beah gesyhð,
eald æscwiga, se ðe eall geman,
garcwealm gumena (him bið grim sefa) 65

The precious object upon which the spear-warrior gazes, Beowulf suggests, sparks in him a memory of the horrors of battle. This memory provokes such a powerful emotional response that he is unable to think clear-sightedely or act in accordance with the union being made. He is not content until he has stirred up trouble among the young warriors and instigated further bloodshed. This would seem to be in opposition to the notion of knowing one’s duty and then performing it: here a more powerful visual memory supplants rational thought and spurs him on to behave in a way contrary to what should be his duty. He acts only to make himself feel better – to relieve himself of the anger and bitterness he has experienced. In the event, he is unsuccessful even in this; he is doomed to recollect and reminisce about the many things he has experienced in the course of a long life:

Hwilum eft ongan, eldo gebunden,
gomel guðwiga giogudæ cwiðan,
hildestrengo; hreðer inne weoll,
þonne he wintrum frod worn gemunde 66

The ageing warrior is not the only character in the poem to experience regret while reminiscing. Looking back at his eventful life from a position of experience fills Beowulf with pride but also with sorrow. Contemplating facing the dragon, Beowulf reviews the events of his life: ‘ic þæt eall gemon.’ 67 He speaks with pride and perhaps joy about Hrethel and the way in which he made Beowulf feel part of the family. At the same time, he also recounts with sadness and regret the misfortunes that have befallen the family. For both of these reminiscers, the intense emotion – experienced as an almost physical pain – when they gemunað their past lives shapes their present state of mind and outlook.

I have discussed elsewhere the poet Cynewulf’s injunctions for his audience to remember his name in prayer. However, I have not so far examined in any depth the reasons why Cynewulf feels this to be necessary. The codicil to his poem Juliana may, however, provide a clue as to Cynewulf’s state of mind:

… Sar eal gemon,
 synna wunde, þe ic sīþ ofþe ær
geworhte in worulde. … 68

65 *Beowulf*, lines 2041–43: ‘Then laments an old spear-warrior at his beer, he who sees the treasure, and who remembers all: the death of men by the spear. In him is the heart fierce’.
66 Lines 2111–14: ‘Sometimes the ancient warrior, bound by old age, again began to lament [his] youth, [his] vigour for battle; his heart welled inwardly whenever, wise in years, he recalled many things’.
67 *Beowulf*, line 2427: ‘I remember all that’.
68 *Juliana*, lines 709b–711a: ‘I remember all [the] pain, the wounds of sins, that I ever committed in the world’.
The poet, presumably towards the end of his life, although this is not made explicit and may be an
authorial posture or assumed literary role, is greatly conscious of and distressed about the possible fate
of his soul after its separation from the body. In common with many, presumably, Cynewulf was
preoccupied while he was in good health and did not allow himself to feel shame at his less-than-
estimable deeds. Now – a cynic might say, conveniently – he is able to remember his deeds and
contemplate what he has done. The result is that he acknowledges his sinfulness and is, apparently,
overcome by a wave of negative emotions. If we accept that these memories are in fact painful and
that remembering them causes him sorrow, then Cynewulf’s dwelling on his former deeds can be
viewed as almost an act of penance in itself. Forcing himself to review the past has a twofold
outcome: the painful memories chastise him, but they also motivate him to seek help from others. In
these ways, the emotions unleashed by his memories may well contribute to the well-being of his
eternal soul.

In his prosopopaeic presentation of the rood, the poet of The Dream of the Rood has the Cross speak of
its memories of being cut down in the forest: ‘ic þæt gyta geman’.\textsuperscript{69} Human-like emotions are
attributed to the Cross: recalling the crucifixion, it also remembers its feeling of fear, resoluteness,
humiliation and grief. I would argue that it is possible to treat this poet’s use of gemunan here as
though she/he were dealing with a human character, since human characteristics are so critical a part
of the Cross’s portrayal in the text and it is the poet, not the reader, who can be accused of
anthropomorphising. Although the tree has gone on to become an object of wonder, even in its
elevated state it cannot forget the past. Like Cynewulf – or like any other person who may have had a
bad experience many years ago – the tree is still powerfully affected by emotions first experienced all
that time in the past. Here, gemunan not only connotes a recognition of the facts of the situation, but
also acknowledges the role that the memory continues to play in the emotional life of the one who
reminisces.

A graphic illustration of what can ensue when an evil spirit contemplates his previous treatment is
afforded by Cynewulf’s Juliana. Having been roundly punished by the saint on one occasion, a
wretched fiend reappears to taunt her captors and to complain about his treatment at her hands:

\textit{… Ic þa sorge gemon,}
\textit{hu ic bendum fæst \quad bisga unrim}
\textit{on anre niht \quad earfeða dreag,}
\textit{yfel ormætu. \quad \ldots} \textsuperscript{70}

He remembers the (presumably physical) tortures he was forced to undergo, but also the misery and
anguish that he suffered that night. It is these lasting feelings that apparently fuel his ire now. Proved
impotent against Juliana, he instead berates the crowd and incites them to do violence towards her. He

\textsuperscript{69} Dream of the Rood, line 28: ‘I remember that even now’.
\textsuperscript{70} Juliana, lines 624–27: ‘I remember that sorrow, how – fixed in chains – I suffered a countless number of
cares, boundless harm, in one night of hardships’.
knows that he is beaten, however: without waiting for the desired outcome to take place, he returns to hell to nurse his shame and humiliation. His very personal reaction to his previous treatment is thus evident in his later submissive behaviour.

There are numerous instances in the poetry of characters ‘holding onto’ negative emotions, and this does not always lead them to cower and avoid further pain. In *Beowulf*, Grendel’s mother’s grief – she ‘yrmþe gemunde’ — inevitably spurs her into action. In taking revenge for her offspring’s death, Grendel’s mother could be said to be following her own version of the heroic code. However, she is also described as ‘galgmod’: this emotion, as much as the direct influence of the death of her son, propels her towards her final decisive encounter with Beowulf.

Nostalgia for the past is often cited as a major preoccupation of the poets of the Old English corpus. In the instances to which I shall refer below, the protagonists look backwards (metaphorically speaking) to some distant time and place; this exercise brings about the emotion of longing. They experience painful desire for a time, a place, or a person now lost to them.

Perhaps the most obvious examples of this type of reminiscence occur in *The Wanderer*. ‘Gemon he selesecgas’, we are told: he recalls the men of the hall. The wanderer does not merely recall the facts of his former existence, however: he dwells on and reminiscences about his earlier experiences. Such nostalgic memories are something of a double-edged sword to a man separated from his kin: they can be a comfort or a torment. Memory is not a mechanical device, faithfully reproducing every detail of one’s past existence. Memory can play tricks. It can be treacherous.

Another poem with many implications of loneliness and longing in its various interpretations is *The Wife’s Lament*. This poem has a riddle-like quality and defies conclusive interpretation. Even if the possibility that this is religious allegory is discounted, it is still difficult to establish the situation between the female speaker and her erstwhile male companions. What is evident is a sense of being exiled, both from companionable society and from one another. Whomever the final lines refer to, the wife predicts that he will endure anxiety and experience great longing for a previous life, just as she does:

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71 *Beowulf*, line 1259: ‘remembered hardships’.
72 Line 1277: ‘sad in mind’.
73 A recent contribution to the debate comes from Roy Liuzza, who sees nostalgia as the accompaniment to ‘any great cultural shift’, citing instances not only from *The Seafarer* and *Beowulf* but also from the *Sermo Lupi*. See R. M. Liuzza, ‘The Tower of Babel: *The Wanderer* and the Ruins of History’, *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 13:1 (2003), 1–35, at p. 14. I am grateful to Roy Liuzza for allowing me to see a pre-publication version of this article following the International Medieval Congress at Leeds in 2002.
74 *Wanderer*, line 35.
75 Among those who see the Wife as dwelling on the past is Barrie Ruth Straus in ‘Women’s words as weapons: speech as action in “The Wife’s Lament”’, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 23:2 (1981), 268–85, at p. 278. Straus is unusual, however, in viewing the experience as ultimately a positive one, inasmuch as the Wife is able to turn painful reminiscence into retribution against her persecutors.
His mind will often turn to a better time or place, but he will derive no comfort from comparing his present situation with the subject of his reminiscence. (Here, it makes little difference whether the object of his longing has been experienced in reality, or is merely an imagined alternative to the present.)

At least in respect of gemunan, the act of reminiscence is less dominant in Old English literature than has sometimes been perceived. Where reminiscence does occur, however, it can reveal a deep dichotomy at the heart of human memory: remembering can be a blessing, provoking the rememberer into useful activity, or a curse, in which the rememberer is mired in stifling emotions of the past and unable to function effectively in the present.

### 7.4.2 Recollecting Personal History and the Importance of Sustained Recollection

There are many instances of gemunan as recollection of personal history with a secondary emphasis on sustained recollection. Rather than reiterate the implications of these two related types of remembering, in this section I shall focus on some of the more unusual examples of this use of gemunan. These are the instances in which the remembering individual is not a human protagonist. In Riddle 83, for example, an inanimate object (gold) addresses the reader:

```
... Ic ful gearwe gemon
    hwæ m in fromcynn fruman agette
call of earde ... 77
```

Along with human-like memories, this object also seems capable of human emotions, being resentful of the one who first brought it forth from the earth. As in the more conventional examples of episodic memory recollection, continued awareness of old wounds is seen to sustain a desire for revenge.

My other two examples are taken from *The Nine Herbs Charm* and have a slightly different outcome. In these cases, the herbs Mugwort and Mayweed are exhorted to recall their previous actions:

```
Gemyne ðu, mucgwyrt, hwæt þu ameldodest, hwæt þu renadest æt Regenmelde 78
Gemyne þu, mægðe, hwæt þu ameldodest, hwæt ðu gændadest æt Alorforda:
þæt næfre for gefloge feorh ne gesealde
syððan him mon mægðan to mete gegyrede 79
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76 *Wife's Lament*, lines 50–52: ‘He, my lord, suffers much grief of heart; he remembers too often a more delightful abode’.

77 *Riddle 83*, lines: 6–8: ‘I very well remember who, at the beginning, deprived all my lineage of the homeland’.

78 *Metrical Charm 2: The Nine Herbs Charm*, lines 1–2: ‘Remember, Mugwort, what you made known, what you prepared at Regenmeld’.
The herbs are exhorted to recollect their previous deeds – the ways in which they have healed people – and also, perhaps, to re-enact this healing in a new context. The invocation seems to suggest that herbs must ‘bear in mind’ their special properties if they are to retain their potency and efficiency. They need to *gemunan* their essential nature in order to sustain it; by extension, human rememberers must also ‘bear in mind’ their own personal histories in order to maintain themselves as unique individuals.

7.4.3 RECOLLECTING PERSONAL HISTORY AND THE PERVASIVENESS OF GENERIC KNOWLEDGE

One final point needs to be made in respect of the recollection of episodic memory: that such recollection is often shaped to some extent by the influence of generic factors. To give a single example, in *Blickling Homily II* the homilist asks ‘Gemunon we nu ure dæghwamlican synna þe we wið Godes willan geworht habbaþ’.

Listeners (and subsequent readers) are required actively to recollect the sins that they have committed in the past: this task would be impossible, however, did they not have the generic knowledge to distinguish between sinful and innocent behaviour. Generic knowledge of, for instance, social codes or religious teachings can therefore help to frame the way in which one’s own personal life-story is ordered and subsequently remembered.

7.5 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION OF EPISODIC / AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL KNOWLEDGE

Half of these occurrences are taken from the poems of the Cotton Vitellius manuscript. This means that thirty per cent of *gemunan* occurrences in the Cotton Vitellius collection are classified primarily as the sustained recollection of episodic knowledge.

The remaining seven occurrences occur within the Paris Psalter, the so-called Minor Poems, and the Vercelli and Blickling Homilies. Across all the texts, the sustained recollection of episodic material is occasionally linked with recollection, reflection, reminiscence, involuntary remembering, and the sustained recollection of generic material. However, no pattern emerges from this data (other than that the two instances of sustained recollection of generic material appear within the prose homiletic texts).

As already intimated in 7.4 above, the keeping of promises is closely linked to reputation and therefore forms part of the so-called Germanic heroic ethos. This can be demonstrated in relation to the poem *Beowulf*:

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79 Lines 23–26: ‘Remember, Mayweed, what you made known, what you finished at Alorford; so that [he] never gave up [his] life because of infectious disease, after the man desired Mayweed as food for him’.

80 *Blickling Homily II*, ll. 25.14–25.15: ‘Let us remember our daily sins, which we have done against the will of God’.
Facing Grendel, Beowulf recalls his own words – part boast, part promise – and is compelled by his sense of honour to fulfil his promise and match words with action. This is the poet’s comment at the point in the poem when Beowulf first moves to attack Grendel. At first sight, it seems too obvious to state that Beowulf remembered what he had promised that evening: it is to be hoped that the hero can recall the words he has spoken just hours earlier. This cause-and-effect sequence is complicated by the fact that Beowulf remembers his words having already begun his encounter with Grendel. Calling his promise to mind could be a way of strengthening his resolve in a difficult, indeed dangerous, situation. However, it is also possible that the poet is here using the verb *gemunde* in the sense of ‘fulfilled the promise’ – Beowulf’s actions recall and fulfil the promise, without the hero himself necessarily consciously recalling the actual words spoken. Beowulf bears in mind the implications of what he has said: the poet implies that Beowulf will now act to fulfil his earlier vow.

Other autobiographical knowledge is brought into play during Beowulf’s later conflicts. Faced with Grendel’s angry mother, he is sorely tested but:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hwæþre he gemunde</th>
<th>mægenes strenge,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gimfæste gife</td>
<td>ðe him god seald</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Awareness of the gifts he possesses (i.e. self-awareness about his strength) sustains Beowulf against the onslaught. His remembrance of these gifts becomes in effect another internal resource; indeed, it is a vital one, as a person’s talents are of little use unless he or she remains aware of how to exploit these. Heroic and Christian values, often treated as dichotomous, are shown here to be linked: Beowulf bears in mind his warrior-like attributes, but at the same time the poet makes it clear that such attributes are given by God.

Like *Beowulf*, *The Battle of Maldon* contains moments of heroism in which the hero is inspired to act by the (sustained) recollection of an episodic memory. When Ælfwine goes to battle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>þa he forð eode,</th>
<th>fæhðe gemunde,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>þæt he mid orde</td>
<td>anne geræhte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flotan on þam folce</td>
<td>þæt se on foldan læg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forwegen mid his wæpne.</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

he is motivated – in part, at least – by the episodic memory of the killing of his lord: he wants revenge.

In the heroic context, to bear in mind an aspect of one’s past experience is seen as a positive thing if it leads to the strengthening of one’s present resolve and loyalty to one’s leader. Betrayal of those to

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81 *Beowulf*, lines 758–59a: ‘That good man, Hygelac’s kinsman, remembered then his evening talk’.
82 Lines 1270–71: ‘but he remembered the strength of [his] might, the ample gift that God gave to him’.
83 *Battle of Maldon*, lines 225–28: ‘He remembered the feud: then he went forth, so that he alone wounded with his spear a Viking in that army, so that he lay dead on the ground, killed with his weapon’.
whom one is obligated involves putting aside those memories that ought to guarantee one’s fealty.\textsuperscript{84}

This is the case with the sons of Odda, who ignore their obligations to Byrhtnoth. They should have fought for him:

\begin{verbatim}
ac wendon fram þam wige       and þone wudu sohton,
flugon on þæt fæsten       and hyra feore burgon,
and manna ma       þonne hit ænig mêð ware,
  gyf hi þa geearnunga     ealle gemundon
   þe he him to dugufê     gedon hêfde \textsuperscript{85}
\end{verbatim}

Their actions reveal that they have failed to bear in mind their past experiences with Byrhtnoth, which should have guaranteed their support in his hour of need.

Once again, it is evident that \textit{gemunan} encompasses more than the (deceptively) simple ability to recall the facts of one’s life and to consider these over a period of time. What is important is the extent to which past experiences are allowed to influence current events.

\section*{7.5.1 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION OF PERSONAL HISTORY: THE INFLUENCE OF REMINISCENCE}

One particular occurrence of sustained recollection of personal history has, in addition, a secondary connotation of reminiscence. Reminiscence differs from straightforward recollection on a number of levels: the period over which reminiscence takes place may be considerable, with the remembering subject returning many times to the same memories, as compared to many acts of recollection, which can be one-off occurrences. An added factor, related to this extended period of reminiscence, is that of the rehearsal effect, by which the remembered events or situations may be progressively tailored, albeit subconsciously, to fit a particular narrative with successive retellings. The story told by the rememberer – whether to himself only, or to others – may therefore be more subjective than his other recollections, which are themselves never entirely objective. Perhaps the most striking feature of reminiscence, however, is the emotional response often present in such situations. The reminiscer is often plunged back into a past time or distant place, and re-experiences the physical sensations and emotions that were formerly present.

As reminiscence has been treated at some length at 7.4.1, I shall treat this one occurrence only briefly here. My example, from \textit{Beowulf}, illustrates the interrelatedness of emotion and reminiscence, and the impact of these on the sustained recollection of one’s own life story.

\textsuperscript{84} In his study of betrayal in Old English literature, Hugh Magennis suggests that the idea of treachery as ‘a crime against honour’ has been inherited from the Anglo-Saxon’s Germanic past: despite its Pagan origins, the Anglo-Saxon horror at the act of betrayal is also demonstrated in their portrayal of the archetypal betayers of the Bible: Satan, Cain and Judas. See H. Magennis, \textit{Images of Community in Old English Poetry}, CSASE 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 18.

\textsuperscript{85} Battle of Maldon, lines 193–97: ‘But they turned from the battle and sought out the forest, flew into that stronghold and saved their life, and more men [?did so] than was proper, if they then remembered all the favours that he [Byrhtnoth] had done for them, for their advantage.’ All quotations from the so-called ‘minor poems’ are taken from E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), \textit{The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems}, ASPR 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).
Following the triumph of Beowulf over Grendel, Hrothgar’s *scop* tells the story of Finn. This story highlights the transience of human happiness, and has a number of examples of longing for things now lost in time. Hengest is seen to be in a particularly painful predicament: forced by atrocious weather to spend the winter with Finn, he dwells on his homeland with longing — he ‘Eard gemunde’\(^8^6\) — but to no avail. As in *The Wanderer*, Hengest’s harsh physical plight mirrors his desolate emotional state at the same time as it exacerbates the situation.

### 7.5.2 SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION OF PERSONAL HISTORY AND THE PERVASIVENESS OF GENERIC KNOWLEDGE

Memories, even those based on personal histories, do not exist in a vacuum. Despite being encoded at various sites across the cerebral cortex, memory traces caused by discrete events can and do influence one another. Just as a single event may be interpreted in different ways, according to the cultural, social or personal assumptions of the observers, so do the remembered events take on different meanings within a cultural matrix.

A character’s remembrance of her or his perceived sins is heavily influenced by her or his immersion in the Christian belief system. Without an externally-imposed categorisation of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, characters’ interpretations of their own behaviour might be very different than if they did not subscribe to (or were not aware of) this set of rules.

The pervasiveness of generic knowledge is not confined to religious contexts, however. A knowledge of any belief-system or behavioural code will impose constraints on the way in which personal histories are remembered. Presenting Beowulf with a number of gifts, Wealhtheow wishes him well, but also asks him to take care of her sons in future. When she tells him ‘ic þe þæs lean geman’,\(^8^7\) her meaning is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, she may be simply expressing gratitude for the deeds Beowulf has already performed; on the other, she may more cynically be promising future reward based on his treatment of the sons or indeed reminding Beowulf of the obligations already conferred on him by the giving of gifts. In either case, however, Wealhtheow requires episodic memories of Beowulf’s behaviour: these are what she will ‘keep in mind’ in the long term. Equally, however, in either case she will need to make reference to the complex code of giving and receiving, of reciprocal obligations, that is implicit in the heroic context of the poem: in order to formulate the appropriate response to Beowulf’s actions, and to remain aware of this over time, Wealhtheow must first access generic knowledge contained in the code of conduct to which her society subscribes.

There are two further instances of the verb *gemunan* being used to refer to the sustained recollection of autobiographical details with some reliance also on generic knowledge. Since these two occurrences

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\(^8^6\) *Beowulf*, line 1129: ‘[He] remembered [his] homeland’.

\(^8^7\) Line 1220: ‘I shall remember the gifts [made] to you’.
both deal with a single event, I shall treat them here together. *Blickling Homily XVIII* and *Vercelli Homily XVIII* both treat the life of St. Martin. As he prepares to leave this world for the next, the saint receives appeals from his distraught followers; we understand that you are ready to leave, they tell him, ‘[a]c mïlsa ðu þonne hwæðre us & gemyne ure þearfe’. Martin relates to and shows concern for his followers as one human being to another: as humans, they and he have common, shared needs, of which he will have episodic memories. However, when they ask him to bear in mind their needs, they are also articulating those needs and passing them on in the form of semantic information. Again, then, the distinction between what one has experienced personally and what one learns from other sources is seen to be rather artificial: everyday interactions frequently contain elements of both.

### 7.6 RECOLLECTION AND SUSTAINED RECOLLECTION IN THE DIVINE MIND

It is difficult to know how to treat the mind of God in this exploration, as the categorisations herein are based on the current understanding of the workings of the human brain. Throughout this study, most of the remembering subjects are human or prosopopaeic objects, such as the Rood or the speakers of the riddles, that have been endowed with human thought processes by their literary creators. In some ways, the figure of God within the texts could be treated equivalently: as a literary creation based on the model of human characters and endowed with human qualities. However, the supposed omniscience of the Christian and Old Testament deity poses a problem: if He exists outside of time and is aware of all things, there can be no learning of facts or experiencing at first hand. In other words, the current distinction between semantic and episodic knowledge is irrelevant. Indeed, the whole question of memory retrieval is called into doubt, as an omniscient being cannot, presumably, forget things or fail to be aware of facts. If nothing ‘goes out of’ His consciousness, then nothing can be subsequently recalled to it. Without knowing the authors’ intentions, we cannot know whether the many representations of God within Anglo-Saxon texts are attempts at approximating the mental processes of a divine being, or merely the result of the creation of human-like characters.

In the two instances of *gemunan* in which God appears simply to recollect something, it is the accompanying adverbs that create a sense of a transient thought rather than a continuing awareness in the divine mind. In *Paris Psalter Psalm 78*, for example, God is enjoined not to recall ‘to oft’ the sins of His followers. This is an appeal to the deity not to act on what He knows, rather than an expectation that He can forget, yet the use of ‘too often’ in this context is indicative of repeated, discrete instances of recall, rather than a sustained recollection. Similarly, in *Paris Psalter Psalm 105*.

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88 *Vercelli Homily XVIII*, lines 252–53: ‘But nevertheless, then show mercy to us, and remember our need’; see also *Blickling Homily XVIII*, lines 225.19–225.21.

89 *Paris Psalter Psalm 78*, line 8.1: ‘too often’.
the audience are told: ‘þonne he his wordgebeot well gemunde’.\textsuperscript{90} Again, the preposition ‘þonne’ suggests a thought that exists in time rather than a perpetual state of knowledge.

Since similar clues are not available elsewhere, I have to conclude that other instances of \textit{gemunan}, when God is the remembering subject, are examples of sustained recollection or ‘bearing in mind’. Although a small proportion of these of these \textit{gemunan} occurrences are found in the Junius manuscript and the Blickling Homilies, the vast majority (69\%) occur in the Paris Psalter.\textsuperscript{91} The difficulty of applying human constraints and human motives to a divinity is further illustrated by the fact that no secondary connotations can be suggested for most of these \textit{gemunan} occurrences: there are no explicit references to other types of memory retrieval in the texts, and retrieval activities cannot be inferred on the basis of usual human behaviour.\textsuperscript{92}

Throughout Old English literature, I have found examples of the Deity being humanised in terms of His being able to remember. Forgetting is implicit in the act of remembering, and as an omniscient being, God should surely not be depicted doing either. However, human understanding of God portrays Him as constrained by time in just the same way as any other character in a poem, homily, or other narrative text is. When God appears as a character in a temporal sequence of events, events appear to unfold to Him just as the story unfolds to the audience. Rather than an atemporal, omniscient presence, God is perceived as an actor located in a particular physical space, taking part in a series of actions and reactions. Thus, He is seen in \textit{Paris Psalter Psalm 105} (lines 34.1–34.3) to punish His people, and then immediately to regret their suffering; this is a human reaction to events. God is also seen to remember His earlier promise, just as a hero like Beowulf or Wiglaf might remember theirs. Despite His omnipotence, God is Himself constrained by His own previous words; human-like, He appears unconscious of His promise for a time, but remembers again when the correct time arrives to put words into action (again, a human perception of time). In \textit{Paris Psalter Psalm 118} (lines 49.1–49.2), the Psalmist insists that God remember what He has promised. By asking this, the Psalmist reveals that he well recollects God’s words, at least in as far as they pertain to him personally.\textsuperscript{93}

The contrast between immortal God and mortal beings is made explicit in \textit{Paris Psalter Psalm 102}:

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Paris Psalter Psalm 105}, line 34.1: ‘then He well remembered His promise’.
\textsuperscript{91} This type of usage accounts for 53\% of the \textit{gemunan} occurrences in this metrical psalter.
\textsuperscript{92} How far usual human behaviour can be ascribed to any literary character is, of course, debateable. However, this topic is too broad for the scope of the present study: I have therefore assumed that the poets and homilists quoted herein would have inscribed their own views of the memory system when creating their narratives, albeit unconsciously, rather than assuming that they would have deliberately employed unrealistic representations of memory events for some other agenda.
\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Gemunan} appears in the imperative mood, with a similar effect, in a number of Paris Psalter poems: see 73, lines 2.1–2.2; 77, lines 39.1–39.2; 88, lines 41.1–41.3; 88, lines 44.1–44.3; 105, lines 4.1–4.3; 131, lines 1.1–1.2; and 136, lines 7.1–7.3 in the appended concordance for \textit{gemunan}.
Gemune, mihtig god,
þæt we synt moldan and dust;
beoð mannès dagas
mawenum hege
æghwëre anlice,
eorðan boostman,
swa his lifdagas
lëne syndan.

Even in the moment of setting up the contrast, however, the appellant seems to negate God’s powers of omniscience by suggesting that He might not be aware of man’s fleetingness.

The use of *gemunan* – combined with descriptions of subsequent events – reveals that God shows particular concern for the individuals portrayed in the narratives. One instance of this occurs when ‘þa gemunde god mereliðende, sunu Lameches’. Here, God is not only keeping Noah and his shipmates ‘in mind’: rather, He shows concern for them and takes steps to ensure their safety by causing the flood to subside.

Similarly, in *Blickling Homily XII* for Whit Sunday the audience is told that the heavenly Father ‘gemunde & wiste’ that His children were troubled. Again, the omniscient being who ‘sees’ all and knows in advance the whole course of human history can hardly be said to ‘call things to mind’ in the human pattern of memory; rather, in respect of the divine mind, *gemunan* seems to carry connotations of concern and care for the remembered object.

### 7.7 OTHER MEMORY RETRIEVAL EVENTS INCLUDED WITHIN GEMUNAN

#### 7.7.1. INVOLUNTARY REMEMBERING

In sections 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, I described involuntary remembering as a process that takes place without conscious effort on the part of the rememberer. Sometimes semantic knowledge is remembered in this way: facts and figures, which might on other occasions be recoverable only through an effortful search, come flooding into the mind unlooked for. At other times, autobiographical or episodic memories are triggered during involuntary remembering: the rememberer may suddenly become aware of sensations experienced previously; the impression may even be so powerful that it feels like re-living a past moment.

Of the 139 occurrences of *gemunan* in my chosen corpus, only seven have the primary meaning of involuntary remembering. Although this figure is low, involuntary remembering is the most frequent meaning for *gemunan* after the two main (and related) meanings: recollection and bearing in mind. With such a small sample, it is not possible to detect any bias towards either semantic or episodic

---

94 Lines 14.1–14.4: ‘Remember, mighty God, that we are earth and dust; man’s days are in every respect like mown hay; like the blossoms of the earth, so are his life-days transitory’.
95 *Genesis*, lines 1407–1408: ‘Then God … remembered the sailor, the son of Lamech’.
96 Line 131.26: ‘remembered and was aware’.
memories: on the evidence of these occurrences, both are equally represented. Instances appear to be confined to the explicitly religious texts of the corpus: *Vercelli Homily XIV* and *XXIII* are represented, as are the Junius manuscript poems *Daniel* and *Christ and Satan*, and, particularly, the vision of Doomsday contained in the CCCC 201 poem *Judgement Day II*.

As so often in a religious context, these instances of such remembering are united through a common outcome; used in the correct way, they can lead to the salvation of the rememberer’s soul. This is the case regardless of the category of memory involved. In *Daniel*, it is an external (and eternal) truth that Nebuchadnezzar is suddenly conscious of: after seven years without rational thought, he:

\[
\text{Gemunde þa on mode } \text{ þæt metod wære,} \\
\text{heofona heahcyning,} \quad \text{hæleða bearnum} \\
\text{ana ece gast.} \quad \ldots
\]

This realisation effects his salvation, having also restored him to his former position of power. In *Vercelli Homily XIV*, by contrast, the sudden remembrance of a personally-experienced situation – in this case, negative emotions between brothers – demands a change in behaviour. If you come to the altar with an offering, the sinner is told, and ‘þu þær gemyne þæt þin broðor hwylcne hete oðþe hwylce unsybbe wið þe hæbbe’, you must make amends with that brother before your offering can be accepted.

Such involuntary memories might be termed conscience, in this context. In *Vercelli Homily XXIII* on St. Guthlac (discussed briefly at 4.6.9 above), the saint seems unable to escape thoughts about his earlier sins. On this occasion, the disturbance is attributed to the harmful external influence of the devil: for whatever reason, Guthlac is certainly beset by memories of past misdemeanours that threaten to overwhelm him. The pressure of his thoughts is so great that they threaten to drive Guthlac into despair, rather than contributing towards his salvation:

\[
\text{He ða hine hider & þyder gelomlice on his mode cyrde,} \\
\text{& he gemunde þa ærran fyrena & leahteras þe he gefremede & geworht hæfde,} \\
\text{& þa maran & unmettran þe he sylfa dyde,} \\
\text{þonne he wende þæt he hie æfre gebetan ne meahte} \quad 99
\]

Aid is provided, however, when the saint – having fought the feelings, alone, for three days – turns his troubles over to God and is sent Bartholomew, with the result that Guthlac is strengthened to withstand future attacks.

---

97 Lines 624–26: ‘He then remembered in [his] mind that the Lord, the heavens’ high king, was to the children of men the sole eternal spirit’.

98 Lines 106–107: ‘you remember there your brother, against [whom] you have hatred or hostility’.

99 *Vercelli Homily XXIII*, lines 23–26: ‘He himself frequently turned that hither and thither in his mind, and he remembered the earlier crimes and sins that he had brought about and made, and the larger and more excessive [?sins] that him himself might do, he thought that he was not ever able to remedy them’.
A similar theme can be detected in the poem *Judgement Day II*. The first-person narrator reports being in an earthly paradise, when an abrupt change in the tranquil atmosphere causes a corresponding change in his mood. He says:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{þa ic færinga, forht and unrot,} \\
&\text{þas unhyrlican fers onhefde mid sange,} \\
&\text{eall swylce þu cwæde, synna gemunde,} \\
&\text{lifes leahtra, ...}  \\
\end{align*}
\]

Like Guthlac, the narrator is once again conscious of things long forgotten, or perhaps suppressed, by the conscious mind. Caught in a wave of painful emotion, what he initially remembers are his own past sins. These sins have far-reaching consequences, however, and knowledge of what is to come – ‘þæs dimman cyme deaðes on eorðan’ – also appears to his consciousness. The spontaneous, involuntary remembrance of things learned in the past features elsewhere in the poem. Having remembered the vices of his own life, the narrator goes on to reveal that:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Ic gemunde eac mærðe drihtnes} \\
&\text{and þara haligra on heofonan rice,} \\
&\text{swylec earmscœpenra yfel and witu.} \\
&\text{Ic gemunde þis mid me, and ic mearn swiðe,} \\
&\text{and ic murcnigende cwæð, mode gedrefed}  \\
\end{align*}
\]

The glory of the Lord, the blessings of the saints and the tortures of the damned are things outside of his personal experience, yet knowledge of them has been encoded in his mind through the reading of texts or the hearing of sermons. The messages seem to have gone unheeded, in as much as he has not lived his life in accordance with Christ’s teachings. Yet, in the course of his account, the narrator describes a turning point: the buried memories that well up in response to his situation move him to tears and to repentance.

In real life, although involuntary remembering takes place very frequently, the subject matter may be trivial, and the effects often transitory. In the literary creations of the Anglo-Saxon writers, however, this daily assault of the inconsequential thoughts is not represented. Instead, what are reported are those accounts where, in a religious context, involuntary remembering can be likened to the pricking of the conscience: where awareness of Christ’s teachings and of one’s own adherence to them is an essential element on the path to eternal salvation.

We cannot deduce from this that the Anglo-Saxons were not subject to the more mundane instances of involuntary remembering with which people are beset today. We can, however, assert that the poets of the Old English period – like the majority of English writers up until the Modernist period – report

---

100 Lines 10–13a: ‘Then I [was] suddenly afraid and despondent, [and] raised up these wild verses in song, all just as you said; I remembered my sins, my life’s vices …’.

101 Line 14: ‘the wretched approach of death on earth’.

102 Lines 21–25: ‘I also remembered the glory of the Lord and of the holy ones in the kingdom of heaven; likewise [I remembered] the harm and torments of the wretched ones. I remembered this within me, and I was exceedingly anxious, and – my mind troubled – I said, grieving…’.
instances when they are consequential for the character involved, and when they are crucial for the
development of the literary narrative.

7.7.2 RECOGNITION EVENTS

I have identified only one of my 139 gemunan occurrences as an example of recognition. This
suggests that other Old English terms may be employed for this purpose. Even the one occurrence that
does concern recognition is not unproblematic. The soldiers at lines 220–23 of the poem Exodus
respond to the “battle-cry” of the trumpet. (Moses has commanded that the trumpets be sounded as a
signal for the soldiers to make themselves ready for battle, and think of ‘courageous conduct’.) Since
the battle-cry occurs simultaneously with the troops’ movement, it is unlikely that the soldiers need to
‘recall’ the signal. It is more likely that they recognise the sound of the trumpets and, crucially,
recognise the meaning of the signal. If this is so, there are implications here for the study of
remembering more generally: rememberers must ascribe meaning to what they experience and
subsequently remember, adding yet another layer of complexity to the study of MEMORY vocabulary.

7.8 SOME COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED IN THE STUDY OF REPORTABLE MEMORY OUTCOMES

Although the memory retrieval continuum is a very useful way of organising the myriad data obtained
from the single Old English term gemunan, it is not the only possible system of categorisation, nor is it
necessarily the best one. The connotations of this common verb of memory are many, and can be
studied from a variety of perspectives. In addition to examining memory events from the point of
view of modern psychology, we could, for instance, classify them according to the subject or object of
remembrance in each case. In the real world, remembrance is triggered by a range of stimuli or
motivations, and it is equally interesting to attempt to determine what were the motivations for
remembrance experienced by Anglo-Saxon writers and their literary creations.

My study of the memory term gemunan in the Old English corpus has demonstrated that memory has
a vital role to play within the important Anglo-Saxon concept of OBLIGATION. The writers’
descriptions of their principal characters, and the ways in which these figures interact, suggest that the
protagonists are often compelled to act for other than selfish reasons. From what the characters tell us
– and from the contexts of their behaviour – we can often deduce their motives. They feel an
obligation to act because of promises they have made and assistance they have accepted in the past, or
they expect reciprocal actions from others. Along with a desire for glory and lasting fame, these
responsibilities form an accepted ‘code’ that guides the actions of worthy literary characters, whether
Christian or Pagan. Social bonds begin to break down when these expected obligations remain
unfulfilled. The thread which draws together the disparate strands of the OBLIGATION theme is that of
memory. Without continuing knowledge of, contemplation of, and action in response to these remembered duties, the fabric of obligation as portrayed in these texts could not exist.

Many other similar themes could be drawn out of the Old English corpus and their intersections with the concept of MEMORY noted; it is likely that no study of the motivations behind remembering could ever be exhaustive.

7.8.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In order to tease out the strands of meaning encompassed by the term *gemunan*, it is necessary to consider the vocabulary of MEMORY in its textual context: how does each occurrence fit into the range of possible outcomes along the memory retrieval continuum? Recollection and sustained recollection undoubtedly dominate the discussion of *gemunan*, so that common Modern English translations of the term (‘remember’, ‘bear in mind’) are understandable. However, there is a blending of recollection with other categories of remembering (e.g. reminiscence) and also of subjects (episodic versus semantic information) and of motivating factors, which forces us to reassess the seemingly uncontroversial Modern English alternatives as viable translations. ‘Remembering’ and ‘bearing in mind’ are useful and necessary as shorthand terms for what is occurring during memory events, but they also mask the complexity of what is occurring when literary characters remember.
Chapter Eight

The Old English Lexicon of MEMORY, Mind, and Inner Experience: gemyn

In order to complement the extensive study of the MEMORY verb *gemunan* undertaken for chapter seven, an examination of a key MEMORY noun is also desirable. The term *gemyn*, from which Modern English *mind* derives, has often been translated as ‘memory’.¹ Although the original Bosworth and Toller definition is brief, the Supplement subsequently adds a much more complex definition, subdivided under twelve main headings.² This proves interesting, as the categories shade from the postulated ‘memory’ (as tangible object) to the postulated ‘mind’, showing the interrelatedness of these two Modern English terms and the difficulties involved in divorcing one from the other for analysis.

Although modern science can describe processes within the brain that are the basis of universal human memory, the ways in which ideas about memory are expressed outside scientific discourse are multiple, culturally-specific and context-dependent. As I have shown in chapter two, the ability to remember (in the broadest sense of that term) is the lynchpin of the human mental faculties. It is this collection of faculties, based on the ability to remember, that forms what is often termed ‘mind’: that independent aspect of the brain that cannot be located by medical science and yet which many people perceive to exist in close proximity to the physical brain.

In an article on joy and mirth, Hans-Jürgen Diller makes a case for the socio-culturally negotiated nature of emotions.³ In order to explore this thesis, he investigates the use of three emotion nouns – *joy*, *mirth*, and *wynne* – across a range of Middle English and Old English texts. Where psychologists and modern linguistics can talk in generalities and appeal to notions of accepted, common usage, Diller argues, the historical linguist needs to observe in great detail the context (both syntactic and situational) of such lexical occurrences.

As I see it, the human mind – no less than the human emotions – should not be viewed as a solely biological phenomenon. Although undeniably biological in origin, MIND, MEMORY and other forms of INNER EXPERIENCE are also concepts that need to be framed in a shared language in order to be given expression.

While it is not possible to question the original speakers of Old English as to their usage of language, it is possible to study the written texts that they have left to us, and to identify from these some of the literary conventions that govern language use in this context.

C. P. Biggam notes the danger of applying rules identified within written texts to other contexts:

[in written texts] … the dictates of alliteration, metre, or an archaic style may keep alive a lexeme which has become archaic or obsolete in other linguistic contexts in that same society.  

8.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY OF MIND METAPHORS

In chapter four, I have outlined some recent ideas about the metaphorical nature of the human conceptual system, and how this is exhibited through language choices. The roots of my interest in such metaphors, however, lie in the detailed collocational work undertaken in this chapter. From a study of gemynnd alone, it is evident that the thing labelled the mind is in fact a thoroughly metaphorical construct; it seems that speakers are incapable of articulating what the mind is without recourse to metaphor.

Christian Kay notes the frequent conceptualisation of the mind in terms of physical space. Examples include:

*hweorfan* (literally *turn*, metaphorically *to turn the mind to*), *bewindan* (literally *to wind, wind round*, metaphorically *to revolve in the mind*), *cumin/irnan on gemynnde/on mod* (to come to mind, occur to one), *purhferan, purhgan* (*’go through’ with the mind, penetrate*), *rum, sid* (spacious, capacious of mind).  

While some metaphors draw attention to themselves through their novelty or their surprising natures, others are so frequently used in everyday conversations as to be almost unrecognisable as metaphors. Although of perhaps limited interest to the literary critic, these ‘everyday’ metaphors are of considerable interest to the student of linguistics. For Kay, the ‘real interest of metaphor is in the light it throws not only on language but on the conceptual categories which underlie it’.

---

Kay notes that:

The Vision group of words [e.g. *behealdan, locian, sceawian, beseon* etc.] incorporates an even more fundamental metaphor, that of holding/grasping or possession. Thus *behealdan* presumably follows an etymological path from holding in the hand to holding in the eye (that is seeing), to holding in the mind, that is understanding; *locian*, interestingly, has another meaning of *belong, pertain*, while expressions for remembering include *(ge)healdan*, and *habban/niman/lettan on gemynde* (Kay, p. 284).7

In his discussion of the analogies employed in an attempt to understand memory, Roediger notes that one dominant metaphor is utilised by psychologists, philosophers and lay people alike.8 This is the metaphor of mind as ‘an actual physical space, with memories and ideas as objects in the space’.9 This is borne out by my investigation of memory terms within a selection of Old English texts. Roediger goes on to describe the implications of this metaphor: that ‘memories’ are objects stored within the mind, and that these memories need to be sought whenever information is to be recollected. These he names the ‘spatial storage and search metaphors for memory’.10

I believe that by studying identifiable phrases within the Old English literary language, such as the collocational contexts of the memory terms, and by identifying the ways in which metaphors are utilised within these phrases, I will gain a greater understanding of the Anglo-Saxons’ concepts of memory and the extent to which these are similar – or otherwise – to our own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PrepPhrases:</th>
<th>Poetry</th>
<th>Blickling Homilies</th>
<th>Vercelli Homilies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>be</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>from</td>
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<tr>
<td>in + acc.</td>
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<td>in + dat.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>into</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on + acc.</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>on + dat.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>þurh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As subject of verbs:

| beon/wesan            | 1      | 1                 | -                 |
| (sceal) cuman         | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| (ge)mearcian          | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| genearwian            | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| (ge)standan           | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| wunian                | 1      | 1                 | -                 |

As object of verbs:

| amierran              | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| areccan               | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| begangan              | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| habban                | 4      | 1                 | -                 |
| don                   | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| forgiefan             | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| forleosan             | -      | -                 | 1                 |
| geondhweorfan         | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| (ge)secan             | 1      | -                 | -                 |
| (ge)sellan            | 1      | -                 | -                 |

Complement:

| -                    | -      | 2                 | -                 |

Total:

| 48                   | 10     | 9                 |

Fig. 8.1 Analysis of *gemynd* in poetic and prose contexts
8.2 ANALYSIS OF COLLOCATIONS IN PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Most of the occurrences of gemyn in my selected corpus are found in prepositional phrases.11 For this reason, I shall begin my analysis of the use of this noun by looking at the range of prepositions with which it collocates. I shall discover (1) whether any particular preposition collocates with gemyn more frequently than any other, and (2) whether any conclusions can be drawn from the prepositions encountered in collocation with gemyn.

8.2.1 ON + ACCUSATIVE

I shall begin my analysis with the most frequently-occurring preposition studied: on. The collocation of the preposition on + gemyn in the accusative case is particularly prevalent in Elene. The preposition on automatically gives a spatial dimension to the event(s) taking place. In the first occurrence, rewards are foretold for every one among men ‘þe on gemynd nime’12 the feast-day of the Cross. The intangible – in this case, knowledge of and veneration for a feast-day – is made tangible: the knowledge and the storage place of this knowledge are conceptualised in physical terms. This effect is heightened by the use of the verb nime: he who wishes to benefit from the feast-day of the Cross must ‘take’ it into his mind. The implication is that this act is one of volition, but also that effort is required: ‘memory’, in this case at least, does not simply happen spontaneously.

In the previous example, I showed that a person can be depicted as taking a memory into his or her own mind. In the next, God is depicted as introducing something into the mind of someone else. The audience hears that:

… gife unscynde
mægencyning amæt ond on gemynd begeat

Here the prepositional phrase ‘into my mind’ completes the action. While a gift of grace is a wonderful thing, it is implied that the gift alone is not enough. It is more wonderful that God can pour His grace into the recipient’s mind – another instance of the MIND AS CONTAINER metaphor – where it can be effective. This can be compared to the example above, in which the feast-day has no meaning unless it is brought within the heart and mind of the believer.

A similar use occurs in Christ II, in which it is said that God:

… wordlæþe wise sended
on his modes gemyn …14

11 62.5% of gemyn occurrences within the poetic corpus, and 70% of Blickling Homily and 66% of Vercelli Homily occurrences.
12 Line 1232: ‘who takes into mind-memory’.
13 Lines 1246–47: ‘the mighty king bestowed a glorious gift (or grace), infused it into my mind’.
As with the gift of grace, the gift of wise speech is conceptualised as a physical entity that can be sent by God into a person’s ‘mind space’. The collocation ‘modes gemynd’ could be considered a tautology, in that thought and memory (or remembrance) seem obviously to be attributes of the mind. One function of the collocation, of course, is to fulfil the requirements of the poetic alliterative scheme. Beyond this, however, it is possible to infer that the collocation also serves to emphasise the mental and spiritual aspects of the human recipient: this possible conclusion is discussed further in relation to the poem *Genesis* below.

In the final instance of *on* + accusative *gemynd* in the poetic corpus, the *gemynd* in question is that of the Lord. In *Paris Psalter Psalm 108*, the Psalmist asks:

\[
\text{Eall þæt unriht þe his ealdras ær manes gefremedan,} \\
\text{on gemynd cume and on ansyne ures drihtnes;}^{15}
\]

I have discussed in section 7.6 the difficulties involved in attributing human-like capabilities to an omnipotent, omniscient being. In this example, the audience might infer that God has forgotten the man’s crimes, or been unaware of them. Although this would seem to be unacceptable from a theological point of view, it once again demonstrates an author’s willingness to depict God as a human-like character within his text and to conceptualise His mind through the use of the familiar spatial metaphor. The Psalmist expresses the wish that the crimes committed by his adversary be allowed passage into the mind-memory of the Lord; there is an implication here, perhaps, that when justice is *not* done, this is due to the impeding of similar movements, leaving God unaware of certain wrongs.

8.2.2 *ON* + DATIVE

I have discussed the idea that the heart or mind is a treasure chest and this concept is alluded to in an example of *on* + dative to be taken from *Elene*. The eponymous heroine questions how it is that the Jews ‘on gemynd witon’ so many of the tokens that the Trojans accomplished through battle (while claiming to remember nothing of Christ’s execution). If the reading ‘keep in mind’ is accepted, memories of the Trojans’ exploits can be seen to be hoarded in the collective mind-memory of the Jews. This use of the MIND AS TREASURE-CHEST metaphor implies that some memories are precious and worth storing; others, such as the events surrounding the Crucifixion in this case, are not deemed

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14 Lines 664–65: ‘sends wise speech into [a certain man’s] mind’s remembrance’, or ‘into the thought of his mind’.
15 Lines 14.1–14.3: ‘[Let] all [of] that wrongful crime that his ancestors previously brought about, come into the mind and into the countenance of our Lord’.
16 Although the noun *gemynd* appears to be in the accusative case, in this context it must be interpreted as a dative.
17 Line 644: ‘keep in mind’ or ‘be aware of in mind’. See Hall, *Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, s.v. ±witan (‘to be aware of’, etc.) and s.v. ±witan (‘to guard, keep’, etc.).
worthy of keeping and are therefore discarded. The human mind, it seems, is capable of assessing memories, filtering them, and choosing which to store for future recollection. Our everyday experience tells us that this is indeed sometimes the case, although we know too that what we remember is sometimes beyond our control.\(^\text{18}\)

In the poem *Andreas*, Christ reminds the saint that His sufferings are widely known, and exhorts him ‘læt ðe on gemyndum’.\(^\text{19}\) I need not reiterate the fact that knowledge is again conceptualised as being inside the mind, but it is worth noting that, if *læt* is translated as ‘allow to remain’, the verb once again colludes in this portrayal of an immaterial object as a material one.

In the *Husband’s Message*, the husband’s desire to be reunited with his wife (to take a straightforward, secular approach to this complicated poem) is such that no pleasure in the world can loom ‘mara in gemyndum’.\(^\text{20}\) The emotion is expressed in terms of comparatives – ‘more’, ‘larger’ – more usually applied to physical objects. The implication here is that the mind has a capacity for a certain number of desires or emotions: when one of these grows ‘larger’ and begins to fill the available ‘mind space’ it consequently suppresses other needs or desires.

Past occasions (or the memory of these, at least) can remain indefinitely in the mind-memory. For Boethius:

\[
\text{Wæs him on gemynde mæla gehwilce yfel and edwit ðæt him elðeodge kynings cyðdon. …}^{\text{21}}
\]

The prepositional phrase ‘on gemynde’ provides a seemingly infinite space in which the memories of a lifetime’s slights can accumulate. This occurrence does not, however, offer much insight into the way that the *gemynd* operates.

Additional information can be gleaned from the *Paris Psalter Psalm 149*, where we learn that:

\[
\text{Him on gomum bið godes oft gemynd}^{\text{22}}
\]

God’s achievements are often in the minds, we are told, which suggests that they are often consciously aware of these, perhaps through conscious recollection and perhaps even as an act of devotion. The

\(^{18}\) My work on Modern English idioms and Old English figurative representations of memory suggest that neither we nor the Anglo-Saxons recognise the involuntary encoding of memories as such; the vocabulary of learning, if anything, is usually employed for instances of memory encoding.

\(^{19}\) Line 960: ‘allow that to remain in your thoughts’. Whereas ‘gemynd’ in the singular is often translatable as ‘mind’, in the plural form the most likely translation usually seems to be ‘thoughts’ or ‘memories’. This may be the imposition of my own interpretation, of course, but it does seem to me that the two things – plural thoughts/memories and singular mind – are analogous: the ‘mind’ is in fact simply the collective term for the thoughts/memories contained within it.

\(^{20}\) Line 31: ‘larger in [his] thoughts’.

\(^{21}\) *Meter I*, lines 54–56: ‘Each of the times that foreign kings had revealed to him evil and disgrace was in his mind’.
adverbial *oft* raises an interesting question: if God’s achievements can make frequent reappearances within the mind-memory, where are they in between times? This is a problem of language that remains unsolved by Modern English speakers, who utilise many similar metaphors.\(^{23}\)

In the example from Boethius’ *Meter 7*, an abstract concept, wisdom, dwells ‘on gemyndum’.\(^{24}\) Wisdom, of course, is also the literary singer-figure of these meters, so it is perhaps not difficult to make the leap from the idea of people being wise to that of wisdom actually dwelling within minds. The verb *wunian* itself re-emphasises the performance of this state of affairs: in the ideal situation, it is implied, wisdom can be ever-present.\(^{25}\) In its entirety, this meter provides an interesting discussion of a person’s mental, spiritual and emotional well-being, contextualised in Christian terms as caught between the storms of the present world and the stability or safe harbour that is the promise of the next.

The lasting nature of *gemynd* is also demonstrated in *Paris Psalter Psalm 111*, where the poet states:

\[
\text{Byð on eceum gemynde æghwylc þæra þe his soðe and riht symble healdeð} \quad \text{26}
\]

It is the fate of the righteous to have their worthiness forever borne in mind by God. *Paris Psalter Psalm 111* is in many respects a response to *Paris Psalter Psalm 110*, in which God is said to be ever ‘gemyndig his gewitnesse’:\(^{27}\) the notion of God eternally remembering His promise to care for his followers is complemented and reinforced in *Paris Psalter Psalm 111* by that of his followers being forever remembered.

In *Genesis*, the drunken Noah lies asleep and incapacitated, ‘on gemynd drepen’.\(^{28}\) Although the prepositional phrase serves a similar purpose here to those in previous examples, in that it locates an event or activity within the imagined space of the mind, it differs in that the verb does not have strong connotations of physicality. That is to say, being ‘stupefied’ is usually considered to be a mental condition, and therefore it comes as no surprise that this should take place within the mind (given that the MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor is so pervasive that all mental activities are deemed to take place within the mind, to the extent that this is not even perceived as metaphorical in current usage). The function of the prepositional phrase here, then, is to emphasise the mental nature of the state in which Noah finds himself, rather than to conceptualise the mind in terms of physical objects.
Finally, a rather different poetic use of *gemynd* occurs in *Thureth*. The collocation with the preposition *on* again lends a spatial aspect to *gemynd*, but this time as the locus of activities perhaps not automatically associated with ‘remembering’. The author has already stated that Thureth is mindful of God’s powers, and now adds that Thureth:

\[
\text{þæs þe he on gemynde madma manega}
\]
\[
\text{wyle gemearcian metode to lace}
\]

Thureth’s willingness to make such offerings cannot be doubted in the context of the poem: the words are spoken prosopopaeically by the very book which he has caused to be written for the purpose of glorifying his Lord. What, then, does the collocation ‘on gemynde’ add to this? In colloquial Modern English, wishing to do something ‘in one’s mind’ might suggest an intention not necessarily followed up by action. This is surely not the case here, as the poem itself remains as evidence that thoughts were put into action. ‘On gemynde’ might merely locate the origin of Thureth’s thought process: the mind as the space within which such intentions are expressed. This is possible, as there is a long history of *mind* being used in the sense of intention (e.g. ‘having a mind to…’), as well as being the locus of thought and feeling, and this explanation would seem to encompass both sense of *mind*. However, another possibility is that ‘on gemynde’ actually expresses the intensity of Thureth’s wishes, perhaps bearing the sense of ‘with sincerity’, since what is involved is (whatever else *gemynd* may denote) fundamentally a private, deeply personal part of a person’s psychological make up.

The single instance of an *on* + dative *gemynd* occurs in a phrase familiar from the New Testament:

\[
\text{fordan þis wæs gedon on min gemynd}
\]

This is not an event occurring within the mind-memory of Christ; rather, *gemynd* must be translated as ‘remembrance’ in this context. Mary’s act of anointment, Christ assures Judas, will facilitate the transmission of His message.

The construction *on* + dative, which appears only once in the Blickling Homilies, is relatively frequent in the Vercelli Homilies. Two examples occur within *Vercelli Homily IX*. In the first instance, the homilist exhorts ‘læton we us singallice bion on gemyndum & on geþancum þæs egesfullican dæges tocyme’. The coming of Doomsday is treated almost as a physical object, which can lie permanently within the ambit of one’s thoughts, and therefore be available for contemplation. This emphasis on permanence is similarly perceptible in the second occurrence within this homily.

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29 Lines 5–6.
30 Lines 8–9: ‘? because [þæs þe] he wishes in his mind/in remembrance to designate many treasures as an offering to the Creator’.
31 Even though the benedictional itself is lost to us.
32 *Blickling Homily VI*, line 69.20: ‘because this was done in remembrance of me’. Again, the context suggests the dative case for *gemynd*.
33 The deed is inspired by Mary’s concern for Jesus, and will later become the focus of memory for Christian’s worldwide.
34 Lines 4–5: ‘let that terrible day’s advent be always in [our] memories and in our thoughts’.
Describing the horrors of hell, the homilist says that a person of any intelligence ‘symle hæbbe on gemyndum þære egesfullan stowe’. Again, the audience is asked not to ‘remember’ something, but to hold the object itself within the mind. Clearly this instruction is not to be taken literally; it is another example of the MIND AS CONTAINER/PHYSICAL SPACE metaphor. In this case, a hell ever-present within the mind is perhaps a more powerful image than would be created by an exhortation to contemplate an abstract, far-off event.

The idea of ‘holding in mind’ an abstract concept is also prevalent in the on + dative collocation in Vercelli Homily XX. Here, the thing which the audience is exhorted to ‘habban … symble on gemynde’ is the torments – a long list of which are recounted – due to those who live their lives contrary to God’s will.

In contrast, the audience of Homily XX are asked to contemplate the fate of those who have lived according to God’s precepts. Able to stand before the judgement seat without anxiety, they are ‘rihtwise þonne on ecum gemynde’. Scragg glosses gemynd here as ‘record’ (or ‘memoria’) and if this interpretation is accepted than this seems a very different use of gemynd than those employed elsewhere in the Vercelli Homilies. However, gemynd could refer equally to the eternal, omniscient mind or memory of God: a judgement recorded in such a mind would indeed constitute a ‘permanent record’, however this interpretation simultaneously allows for the possibility of the MIND AS CONTAINER metaphor to be at work.

8.2.3 IN + DATIVE

All of the poetic occurrences of the collocation in + dative occur in the poems of the Exeter Book. The first instance, in Guthlac A (l. 168), propagates the spatial metaphor of memory:

\[
\ldots \text{Him wæs godes egsa mara in gemyndum} \ldots
\]

The phrase ‘in gemyndum’ alone suggests that the mind is a physical space in which something can exist. Further, the thing which is in Guthlac’s thoughts – that is, ‘godes egsa’ – is described as mara, thus lending a spatial dimension to the emotion of ‘awe’ which is contained within Guthlac’s thoughts.

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35 Lines 121–22: ‘always [have] in his thoughts/mind that terrible place’.
36 Line 190: ‘hold … always in mind/memory’.
37 Line 117: ‘righteous then in eternal memory/record’.
38 Lines 167–68: ‘To him, awe of God was larger in his thoughts (or memories)…’.
39 This is also the sense in which in gemyndum is used in the poem Juliana (line 36).
Similarly, the mind is a physical space within which abstract concepts can be housed.\(^{40}\) Thus, the abstract concept *flah* is rendered as a weed that can grow larger ‘in gemynde’\(^{41}\). Once more, the preposition *in* paired with a dative of rest provides a physical space within which a mental or emotional activity can be conceptualised.

Not only emotions and abstract concepts but also physical objects that are to be remembered can be ‘contained’ within the mind. As the story of Guthlac unfolds, the audience is assured that ‘stood seo dygle stowe dryhtne in gemyndum’\(^{42}\). Not only does the *in* + dative construction provide a sense of physical site in which to locate this particular memory trace, but the use of the verb *stood* adds to the sense of physicality, referring as it does to the placement of a material object.\(^{43}\)

The third instance of this collocation in the poem *Guthlac* is somewhat different from those discussed above. The poet tells his/her audience that men have sought the reward of victory:

\begin{align*}
\text{sume ær, sume sið,} & \quad \text{sume in urra} \\
\text{…} & \quad \text{tida gemyndum}\quad^{44}
\end{align*}

The phrase ‘within living memory’ is, of course, still in common use today. This use is so insidious that it will give pause to few speakers of Modern English. However, it is interesting to note that the preposition *in* alludes to a similar spatial framework here as it did in the previous two examples. The collective minds (or thoughts or memories) of all those living ‘in our times’ are portrayed as a single entity, corresponding to a particular length of time and encompassing all those things which have occurred within that period.

The collocation *in* + *gemynd* in the dative case – relatively frequent in poetic contexts – occurs only once within the Vercelli Homilies. In *Homily V*, an exegetical homily for Christmas,\(^{45}\) the homilist assures his audience that Christ took on human form, wishing the names of His chosen ones to be written ‘in ecre gemynde’\(^{46}\). The preposition of course lends a spatial aspect to this phrase: ‘eternal memory’ becomes a space within which one can keep a record. More interesting, perhaps, to the study of metaphors of memory, is the use of the verb *awritan* (‘to write’, l. 102). There is a long history of the memory being conceptualised as a medium for receiving written words, whether as a wax tablet

\(^{40}\) The ‘mind’ seems to be a term synonymous with the ‘container’ and the thoughts, memories, and emotions that are generated by and contained within it.

\(^{41}\) *Riming Poem*, line 47: ‘wickedness’ or ‘treachery’. I have referred to this garden metaphor elsewhere in my discussion of the Blickling Homilies: good and/or evil intentions must ‘put down roots’ in the heart or mind if they are to come to fruition.

\(^{42}\) *Guthlac*, line 215: ‘the secret place stood/remained in the thoughts/memories of the Lord’.

\(^{43}\) Further work is required to establish the ‘usual’ uses of all these verbs and prepositions: do they always refer primarily to the concrete, and only subsequently to the abstract, for instance?

\(^{44}\) Lines 876–77: ‘some previously, some afterwards, some in the memories of our times’.


\(^{46}\) Line 102: ‘in eternal memory’.
waiting to receive the impression from a stylus, or a parchment roll or codex to be marked by quill and ink.\textsuperscript{47}

On this occasion, Scragg glosses \textit{gemynd} as ‘record’ or ‘memoria’ and indeed the name inscribed into the memory or mind does become a ‘permanent record’. However, although this is the function of the \textit{gemynd} in this instance, I would hesitate to dismiss ‘mind’ or ‘memory’ as a suitable translation. The use of \textit{gemynd} here is consistent with both the \textsc{Mind as Container} and \textsc{Memory as Book} metaphors, which I have demonstrated to be so powerful and such pervasive models for the conceptualisation of the human mind. I think, in the absence of stronger evidence to the contrary, that it is possible to translate \textit{gemynd} as ‘memory’ here, with the implicit suggestion that the function of ‘memory’ is often as an (un)written record.

8.2.4 \textsc{In + Accusative}

The collocation \textit{in} + accusative occurs widely throughout the poetic corpus. In \textit{Daniel}, ‘his gast ahwearf in godes gemynd’.\textsuperscript{48} I do not interpret this phrase according to the modern idiom in which ‘turn into’ means ‘become’. Rather, the use of \textit{in} plus an accusative of motion suggests that the soul or spirit – although itself an incorporeal entity – is pictured moving between two alternatives: an undesirable state of forgetfulness, and the state in which it is inspired to contemplate God. This effect is heightened by the use of the verb \textit{ahwearf}, itself suggestive of a change of direction undergone by a moving, physical object.\textsuperscript{49}

In \textit{Elene}, the prepositions used suggest the possibility of bodily transportation from a physical location to an abstract one. Sinners can:

\begin{quote}
\textit{… Gode no syððan of ðam morðorhose in gemynd cumað}\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Although the context here reveals the impossibility of this transition for this particular group, the way in which the idea is phrased does allow for the comparison of physical with abstract locations. In other circumstances, movement from the place of torment towards the memory of God might be possible: this, at least, is the implication of the grammatical construction.

In the Exeter Book poem \textit{Guthlac}, an angel and a demon struggle to control the saint’s thoughts. The saint is presumably unaware of this struggle, knowing only the outcome of their actions. Ultimately, the power to overcome the demon lies with God, not with Guthlac. During the course of the conflict, the combatants:

\textsuperscript{47} See, for example, section 1.1.2 on historical approaches and section 4.4.2 on attributes of the heart-mind.

\textsuperscript{48} Line 629: ‘his spirit turned into thought/memory of God’.

\textsuperscript{49} Note that \textit{godes gemynd} can be used as both objective and subjective genitive, i.e. memory of (remembering) God or God’s memory (being remembered by).
Chapter Eight

… lare bæron
in his modes gemynd …

Their promptings, for good and for evil, are imagined as objects to be directed into the thoughts of the saint: such teachings have to be internalised – to ‘put down roots’ – before they can have any effect on the life of the recipient.

The act of recollection is depicted in an interesting use of the in + accusative collocation in Riddle 59. The audience is provided with the information that:

… Him torhte in gemynd
his dryhtnes naman dumba brohte

The subject of the riddle – possibly a chalice – silently conveys the name of the Lord into the mind of its beholder. Barring the inclusion of some metaphysical element in this transaction, it seems most likely that the beholder of the chalice already knows the name of the Lord: the common sense interpretation of the event is that it is an instance of recollection, rather than of sudden inspiration.

Despite this, the image here is not one of the chalice drawing the knowledge out of the beholder’s mind, but rather of carrying it inwards.

8.2.5 to

The four poetic occurrences of the collocation to + gemynd are located in Beowulf and in the two poems of the title Soul and Body (in the Vercelli and Exeter Books). The two instances within the Soul and Body poems are, not surprisingly, very similar:

… þæt mæg æghwylcum
men to gemynde, modsnotra gehwam!

… þæt mæg æghwylcum
men to gemyndum modsnottera

In each case, the sense is ‘that can be as a reminder to every wise man’. This instance differs, then, from the majority of cases cited herein, where the prepositional phrase grounds the term gemynd in a spatial context. Although the preposition to can often function like the Modern English ‘to’, describing movement between two physical points, on this occasion it defines the relationship between

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50 Lines 1302–1303: ‘Never afterwards come from that place of torment into the thought/memory of God’.
51 Lines 117–18: ‘[they] carried teaching into his mind’s thought/memory’.
52 Lines 7–8: ‘To him the dumb thing splendidly/brightly brought into mind his Lord’s name’.
53 Although this cannot, of course, be discounted, particularly in the religious atmosphere that pervades the majority of the Exeter book poems.
54 Further work is needed to investigate the correlation (or otherwise) between the two-way memorise-recollect relationship and the portrayal of these two aspects in metaphors.
55 Soul and Body I, lines 125–26
56 Soul and Body II, lines 120–21
the abstract concept of a ‘reminder’ and the things or events which form this reminder (thus I have translated the preposition as ‘for’ or ‘as a’).

As has been noted before, by myself and by others, the continuation of one’s memory after death was an important concern of the Germanic warriors depicted in the Old English corpus. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the two examples of to + gemynd in Beowulf should occur towards the end of the epic poem, at the time of the eponymous hero’s death. The barrow constructed on the headland:

\[
\text{scel to gemyndum} \quad \text{minum leodum} \\
\text{heah hlifian} \quad \ldots
\]

As an additional mark of respect to the fallen hero, treasure is to be buried beside him, and:

\[
\text{… nalles eorl wegan} \\
\text{maddum to gemyndum} \quad \ldots
\]

From the limited number of occurrences located in the poetic corpus, it would appear that the preposition to always signals that gemynd is being used in the sense of a reminder.

While the construction to + gemynd does not occur within the homilies of the Vercelli Book, there are examples within the Blickling Homilies. I have described elsewhere the process by which external stimuli – whether first-hand experiences or second-hand knowledge – are internalised within the metaphorical vessel which is the heart or mind. This process is demonstrated once more in Blickling Homily X. The homilist asks ‘Magon we þonne … us þis to gemyndum habban, & þas bysene on urum heortum staþelian’. 59

Blickling Homily XI for Holy Thursday discusses Christ’s ascension into heaven, and also what this foretells about His return on Doomsday. The homilist describes the Church on Mount Olivet that marks the site of Christ’s last walk on Earth. The homilist recounts how ‘Forlet he ure Drihten his þa halgan fet þær on þa eorþan besincan mannum to ecre gemynde’. 60 The imprints remain in the earth to this day, says the homilist, serving as a perpetual reminder to mankind. In this context, the gemynde is a physical, tangible object upon which a man can think and reflect.

As suggested by the (added) Old English title, Blickling Homily XV treats the lives and passions of Peter and Paul. The homilist gives an account of the saints’ confrontation with Simon the sorcerer. At the scene of Simon’s final defeat, four stones are laid ‘to gemynde & to cyþnesse & þæs apostolican

57 Beowulf, lines 2804–2805: ‘shall rise up high, as a reminder to [Beowulf’s] people’.
58 Lines 3015–16: ‘not at all [shall] a nobleman carry treasures as a reminder’.
59 Lines 113.33–114.2: ‘May we then … have this as remembrances to us, and establish in our hearts this example’. See also section 4.2.1, above, on the heorte.
60 Lines 127.21–127.22: ‘Then our Lord let his holy feet sink into the earth as an everlasting remembrance to men’.
This use of physical objects as memorials raises an interesting question. I have said that these stones were raised as reminders, in order to stimulate the memories of those who behold them. However, are memorials erected for those who deserve to be remembered (perhaps because of their place in history) but who are in danger of being forgotten? If this is the case, physical memorials perhaps imply that actual human memory is fallible.

8.2.6 þurh

The noun mynd is collocated with the preposition þurh twice in the poetic texts. Both of these occurrences are located in Genesis. In the first occurrence (at line 1085), this collocation forms part of a phrase describing the qualities that led to Tubal Cain becoming the world’s first maker of ploughs. He achieved this ‘þurh modes gemynd’. The use of the alliterating collocation ‘modes gemynd’ has been noted above, and I will not therefore reiterate points made earlier. Just as the preposition to can denote movement in space, so too can þurh (similar to Modern English ‘through’). However, as to can also mean ‘for’ or ‘as a’, so to does þurh have a range of possible interpretations. In this case, it seems to be expressive of the manner by which something was done, and can be translated as ‘by means of’. This also seems to be the case in the second occurrence at line 1957, where the phrase ‘þurh gemynda sped’ seems to mean ‘by the means of mind/thought’.

The construction þurh + gemynd occurs once within the Vercelli Homilies, in Homily XX. The central section of the homily, from which portion this collocation is derived, is a translation of part of the St Père homiliary. Scragg comments that in ‘this central part of the homily virtually nothing is added to the Latin’. The homilist lists the dangers attendant upon the sin of fornicators: such bodily impurity leads to blindness of the mind, hatred of God’s commandments, and neglect of the impending afterlife. All this, the homilist informs his audience, may yet be overcome through abstinence, through fear of God’s presence, and ‘þurh gemynd þæs ecan fyres’. As we have seen elsewhere, the recorded memory of the everlasting fire – learnt from the teachings of homilists and so on – becomes as a conduit through which the believer can escape the fate of the sinner. In this case, although ‘memory’ serves as a translation of gemynd, it is perhaps better to think of this as an instance of ‘recall’ or ‘recollection’.

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61 Lines 189.15–189.16: ‘as a remembrance and as a testimony of the apostolic victory’.
62 See, however, M. J. Carruthers, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992; repr. 1993) on mnemonic imagery: the concrete betokens the abstract, but the observer must make the mental connection for himself.
63 Line 1085: ‘by means of his mind’s thought’.
64 Itself an abbreviation of Alcuin’s De Virtutibus et vitis; see Scragg (ed.), Vercelli Homilies, p. 330.
66 Line 87: ‘through memory of the eternal fire’.
8.2.7 MID

Explaining that the devout should fast in the week before Christmas, the poet of *Seasons for Fasting* goes on to explain that they should, at the same time, pray to *wuldræs cyninge*:

… mid deornum …
wordum and weorcum
… eallum gemynde.

The preposition *mid* is therefore the implied antecedent of the *gemynde* in this occurrence. It is difficult to draw any particular spatial metaphor from this collocation, except in as much as the things noted must be intrinsically linked to the prayer offered: not only words alone, but also actions, must demonstrate a man’s true feelings, and ‘mid … eallum gemynde’ perhaps emphasises the sincerity which must accompany one’s stated intentions.

In *Blickling Homily III*, the homilist urges his audience to consider ‘mid mycelre gemynde to geleçence þæt se sælmhītga … onfeng þæt hiw ure tyddran gecynde’. The prepositional phrase ‘mid mycelre gemynde’ intensifies the verb *geleşence*: the audience is asked not only to think about the homilist’s words, but to give them a great deal of thought. Although *mid* in this context does fulfil in part its usual role of denoting accompaniment – i.e. two physical entities in close proximity can be said to be *with* each other – here it also carries a connotation of the manner in which a thing is done: a closer, if slightly more cumbersome, translation might be ‘by means of much thought’.

8.2.8 INTO

The preposition *into* clearly lends a sense of motion to the collocation ‘into sinum modes gemynde’, similar to that seen in occurrences of *on* or *in* + accusative *gemynd*. Often, what has been transported into the mind from outside is an abstract concept, such as wisdom, or a thought or memory, that in reality is generated by the brain but which is frequently conceptualised as existing independently of the remembering mind.

In the one poetic example of *into* + *gemynd*, however, the thing that must journey into the mind-memory is the rememberer him- or herself. Some 1300 years before the production of the Old English *Meters of Boethius*, Plato was asserting that seeking for answers and learning was in fact nothing more than recollection, the knowledge sought being pre-existent within the individual seeker. This viewpoint perhaps accounts for the poet’s report that:

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67 Lines 73–75: ‘with pleasing words and deeds, and with all our mind’.
68 Lines 29.1–29.4: ‘consider with much thought that the Almighty … accepted the form of our frail kind’.
69 Adjective such as *mycelre* lends an aura of quantifiable solidity to the usually intangible *gemynd*.
70 *Boethius Meter* 22, lines 57–58: ‘into his mind’s remembrance’.
71 Socrates evinces this view, for instance, in Plato’s dialogue *Meno*, of c. 385 BC.
Knowledge of rihtwisnesse, however long neglected and forgotten, is retained within the ‘modes gemynde’, and a person seeking this must return within himself in order to recover it. The gemynd, then, is once again conceptualised as a repository of remembered knowledge: the difference here is that, instead of seeing the process of memory-encoding as taking place via the inward movement of (Christian) teachings, the world-view evoked here sees this knowledge as lying unheeded and dormant within the gemynd, to be accessed as necessary.

8.2.9 BE

The collocation be + gemynd occurs once, in Blickling Homily XVII. Although the preposition be can have spatial connotations (meaning ‘by’, for example), in the context of ‘be … his eadgan gemynde’ it needs to be translated as ‘concerning’. It is difficult to draw any conclusions from this one isolated occurrence.

8.2.10 FRAM

‘Godes gemynd’ is a frequent collocation in Old English. This can be interpreted as either a subjective or an objective genitive: it refers either to God’s capacity for memory, or for others’ capacity to remember Him. In Blickling Homily V, it is the inclination of others to remember their God which is in question. Hell, the audience learns, is full of magicians who deceive unwary men and ‘hi aweniaþ from Godes gemynde’. In common with many prepositions which describe relationships between physical objects, from lends a spatial dimension to this scenario. The capacity to think about God is rendered as a place, a physical location, from which magicians can lead one away. This is slightly different from the other spatial metaphors which have described the mind as a container.

8.3 ANALYSIS OF COLLOCATIONS WITH VERBS

Gemynd appears as the subject of a verb eight times and as an object on fourteen occasions. Although this is a small figure in comparison to the number of gemynd occurrences in prepositional phrases

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72 Lines 55–58: ‘He [i.e. Plato] said that each one forgetful of righteousness must soon turn again to him[self], into his mind’s remembrance’.
73 Line 197.5: ‘concerning … his blessed memory’.
74 Lines 61.24–61.25: ‘wean them away from remembrance of God’.
75 As this one would, had it been translated as ‘lead them away from God’s memory’.
(forty-three) it is still worth looking at the verbs with which *gemynd* collocates, to ascertain whether they provide any more insight into the way that the Anglo-Saxons conceptualised the mind.

### 8.3.1 OBJECT OF HABBAN

Of all the verbs of which *gemynd* is the object, only *habban* occurs more than once. Two of these occurrences are in the Exeter Book, in *Christ I* and *Precepts*, while two are in the metrical psalms of the Paris Psalter.

In a passage of *Christ I* that is homiletic in tone, the poet suggests that the best advice ‘monna gehwylcum þe gemynd hafað’\(^{76}\) is that he eagerly honours God. Since every living person can be assumed to have a brain, this physiological meaning is clearly not what is intended. Rather, the poet seems to be singling out those who have the mental aptitude to understand the necessity of worshiping God: those who have a conscious mind and the ability to remember and recall wise counsel. *Paris Psalter Psalm 102* employs this collocation in a similar manner: those who ‘gemynde mycle habbað’\(^{77}\) are those who keep God’s commandments.

It is of course commonplace in Modern English to describe someone as having or possessing mental or spiritual attributes. This means that the metaphorical nature of the collocation – using a verb which denotes primarily holding a concrete object and transferring this to an abstract concept – is lost on most Modern English speakers. It is hard to know how far the Anglo-Saxons would have recognised this usage as metaphorical. In *Precepts*, the addressee is told ‘hafa þe to hyhte haligra gemynd’.\(^{78}\) Once again, the *gemynd* is conceptualised as a concrete object which can be held (and, although this is not explicit in this extract, which can be held within the mind or heart as a perpetual reminder and comfort).

The opposite implication operates in *Paris Psalter Psalm 77*; here, retribution awaits those who:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Na gemynd hæfdan,} & \quad \text{hu his seo mycle hand} \\
\text{on gewindæge} & \quad \text{werede and ferede.}^{79}
\end{align*}
\]

In a similar usage, the Blickling Homilist warns that a bitter judgement will be heard by ‘se þe nu forhogað þæt he Godes bebodu healde, oþþe ænig gemynd hæbbe Drihtnes eaþmodnesse’.\(^{80}\) This is the homily for Easter Sunday and it is thought that God will choose some future Easter as the date for the final judgement. The homily begins fittingly, then, with this account of what will occur at that

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76 Line 431: ‘to each one of men who has memory [or thought]’.
77 Line 17.3: ‘have great remembrance’.
78 Line 63: ‘Have/hold thee the memory of the holy ones [i.e. saints] as a hope/trust’.
79 Lines 42.1–42.2: ‘[They] had no remembrance [of] how his great hand defended and carried [them]’.
80 Psalm 78 (the source for *Paris Psalter Psalm 77*) relates stories of the ingratitude of the children of Ephraim, who fail to appreciate what God did for His chosen people during the exodus from Egypt.
time, and the importance of the memory is once again made manifest. The passage tells the listener that those who are mindful of Christ’s passion and resurrection will be rewarded. Those who fail to bear in mind Christ’s meekness, however, will be rewarded only with eternal torment. As is often the case, ‘ænig gemynd habbe’ here means more than simply to have any memory of Christ’s humility. This is not something likely to ‘slip the mind’ of the believer: it is more likely that a believer fail to ‘put his mind to’ contemplation of it.

8.3.2 OBJECT OF AMIERRAN

In Vainglory, the poet-narrator claims to have been taught to recognise right and wrong, and asserts that this wisdom is available to others:

Poet mec æghwylc mon eaþe geþencan,  
se þe hine ne læteð on þas lænan tid  
amyrran his gemyndum modes gælsan 81

As Shippey notes, metaphors of conflict abound in this poem: proud men are besieged by the devil, and launch verbal assaults at one another in the form of boasts and (when caught in a lie) with verbal trickery. 82 I have referred elsewhere (section 4.4.3) to the importance of defence and conflict metaphors within Old English texts, and this occurrence in Vainglory reinforces the notion that the mind can be wounded and requires protection.

8.3.3 OBJECT OF ARECCAN

In his account of the Christian year that prefaces one of the Chronicle manuscripts, the poet of Menologium tells his audience:

… Sculan we hwæðere gyt  
martira gemynd ma areccan,  
wearcan wordum forð, wisse gesingan 83

Here, the ‘martira gemynd’ is something that can be articulated through spoken language, interpreted and expressed to others. This suggests that this particular gemynd is not a pre-existing entity: rather, the martyrs are remembered by a process of negotiation, in which their lives (and deaths) are condensed into authorised narratives and disseminated among those who follow the Church calendar.

80 Blickling Homily VII, lines 83.15–83.17: ‘he who neglects that he keeps God’s commandments, or that he holds any thought/memory of the Lord’s humility’.
81 Lines 9–11: ‘Each man can easily consider that, he who himself does not allow the spirit’s wantonness to wound his thoughts in this transient time’. The editors supply ne, line 10, which does not appear in the manuscript; see Krapp and Dobbie (eds.), Exeter Book, p. 147.
83 Lines 68–70: ‘However, we must render still more of the remembrance of martyrs, impel words forth, wisely sing, …’.
8.3.4 OBJECT OF BEGANGAN

In *Paris Psalter Psalm 62*, we learn that, in its sense as ‘remembrance’, *gemynd* can have a finite, temporally-defined existence. This is implied elsewhere, but often emphasis is placed on the eternal nature of God’s *gemynd* rather than on the contrasting, temporally-limited *gemynd*. The poet promises:

\[
\text{Swa ic þin gemynd on modsefan} \\
on minre reste rihte begange, \\
and on ærmergen on ðe eac gewene, \\
forðon þu me on fulum fæste gestode}^84
\]

The remembrance promised by a fallible human – even one who recognises a debt to his Creator – has a defined beginning and may (although this is not the poet’s immediate intention) have a similarly defined terminus.

8.3.5 OBJECT OF DON

Even a remembrance that emanates from God is subject to temporal constraints, it seems, when it exists within human perception. When the poet of *Paris Psalter Psalm 110* says:

\[
\text{He gemynd dyde mærra wundra}^85
\]

the verb *dyde* places the event in a temporal context: once again, God’s actions are perceived in relation to a very human notion of events as narratives. It is very difficult to grapple with notions of eternity within a narrative text, and so God is once again presented as a human-like character, here shown ‘making’ a remembrance for His human followers.

8.3.6 OBJECT OF FORGIEFAN

In the Exeter Book poem *Resignation*, an interlocutor asks:

\[
\text{Forgif þu me, min frea, fierst ond ondgiet} \\
on gelyn ond gemynd}^86
\]

As with *habban*, the verb *forgiefan* is used – in its Modern English form – so frequently in collocation with abstract nouns that Modern English speakers would not tend to view this as a metaphorical construction. If, however, this verb follows the usual pattern of being applied first to concrete objects, then subsequently used metaphorically with abstract concepts, then it is clear that *gemynd* is here

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^84 Lines 7.1–7.4: ‘Thus I fittingly [shall] perform your remembrance in [my] heart in my resting place, and in the early morning [I] also think on thee, because you [have] fast remained as a support to me’.

^85 Line 3.1: ‘He made remembrance of glorious wonders’.

^86 Lines 22–23: ‘Give thou to me, my Lord, respite and understanding, and patience and mind-memory’.
conceived of as an object which can be passed from hand to hand. 87 A different verb could have been chosen in this context, with the sense of ‘grant’ or ‘allow’ perhaps: such a choice would have emphasised the nature of gemyn as a mental attribute rather than as a ‘thing’ to be possessed.

8.3.7 OBJECT OF FORLEOSAN

Vercelli Homily VII is unique to the Vercelli Book, and is possibly a direct translation from Latin, although no source has yet been identified. 88 Warning against the dangers of overindulgence, the homilist tells his audience that, when people eat and drink as though no amount can satisfy their appetite, then ‘ôferfylle hyra gemyn forleosað’. 89 There is, perhaps, a suggestion here that control over one’s own body is linked to control of one’s mind: the gemyn is vulnerable when the body is weak.

8.3.8 OBJECT OF GEONDHWEORFIAN

Gemyn as the object of the verb geondhweofian occurs once within the poetic corpus, in The Wanderer. This poem is frequently labelled elegiac, and the speaker of the poem does seem preoccupied with his memories of the past, of better times now lost to him. This collocation is particularly difficult to translate, perhaps because the apparent direct translation does not conform to expected modern notions about the portrayal of memory and the mind. The passage has been rendered as:

\[\ldots\quad Sorg bið geniwad, \\
\quad þonne maga gemyn mod geondhweorfed 90\]

My preferred translation of these lines is ‘sorrow is renewed, whenever [his] mind traverses the remembrance of his kinsmen’: this appears at first sight inconsistent with the prevailing metaphor of MIND AS CONTAINER, and therefore it is an image that jars. As I have shown, many images of the mind in Anglo-Saxon literature show memories as physical objects which are taken into the mind and kept there for future contemplation. By contrast, the wanderer seems to send his mind (mod) away from himself – across the sea, to his homeland – where it is able to interact with the memory (gemyn) of his relatives. 91 This is not unlike to instance in the poem Genesis, where Lot is unable to function mentally because his mind is not ‘free’. 92 There is a difference here, however, in that it is the wanderer’s mod which wanders freely: his gemyn in this instance is the recollection of his kinsmen, not the entity which we would tend to label his ‘mind’.

87 This presupposes that God has human-like hands with which to ‘give’ objects, of course.
88 Scragg (ed.), Vercelli Homilies, p. 133.
89 Lines 85–86: ‘gluttony destroys their mind’.
90 Lines 50–51.
91 I am assuming – in common with most translators, I think – that this is the wanderer’s memory of his relatives, NOT his relatives’ memory.
92 See 8.5.17 following.
8.3.9 OBJECT OF *(GE)*SECAN

*Gemyn* is used as the object of *gesēcan* in *Christ III*. Here, it is foretold that the king of heaven will condemn Satan and his followers to the eternal fire. Once there:

\[
\ldots \quad \text{Næles dryhtnes gemyn}
\]
\[
\text{sīþþan gesēcað} \quad 93
\]

The Lord’s *gemyn* is conceived of as a place which can be sought or visited. The irony here is surely that, rather than the devils choosing not to enter God’s thoughts, it is He who decides not to further consider those whom He has condemned.

8.3.10 OBJECT OF *(GE)*SELLAN

*Gemyn* is the object of *sellan* in *Guthlac A*. Although the Modern English verb derived from *sellan* implies a commercial exchange, the Old English word connotes ‘giving’ rather than ‘selling’. To the saint, God:

\[
\text{sealde him snytru on sefan gehygdum,}
\]
\[
\text{mægenfæste gemyn} \quad 94
\]

As ever, this notion of being able to give mental characteristics as though they were material gifts is not unfamiliar to Modern English speakers. It remains to be seen how far this construction was commonplace among Anglo-Saxons.

8.3.11 COMPLEMENT

In the eschatological *Vercelli Homily IV*, the sorrowful soul addresses the body: ‘ic wæs þin feðe & þin gang & þin staðol & þin gemyn’.\(^95\) This is only a part of the long list of functions that the soul has performed for the body: the body is portrayed as a mere thing of clay, while it is the soul which animates it.\(^96\) The *gemyn*, then, is not part of the physical body, but rather is one of the many non-corporeal aspects of the living, breathing human.

In *Vercelli Homily XX*, the audience learns that the eighth capital sin is called vainglory, of which is born boasting and pride, discord and greed. ‘Þonne ys þære adle læcedom gemyn þære godeundan

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93 Lines 1536–37: ‘not at all the Lord’s memory/thought/mind [will they] afterwards seek/visit’.
94 Lines 473–74: ‘gave to him wisdom in the thoughts of his mind/heart, and a steadfast memory/mind’.
95 Lines 279–80: ‘I was your power of movement and your journey and your support and your mind-memory’.
96 Although, curiously, the blame for the sinful actions of the dead man lies entirely with the body: the animating spirit is apparently overruled by the otherwise lifeless flesh.
godnesse’, the homilist tells his audience. Memory provides protection against sin, but people often need help ‘after the fact’ and memory can also serve as a salve when things have gone awry.

8.3.12 SUBJECT OF WUNIAN

Wunian is collocated with gemynd in Paris Psalter Psalm 101:

þu on ecnysse wunast    awa, drihten;
wunað þin gemynd,    þenden woruld stande

The emphasis is on God’s memory continuing in tandem with the continuance of the world. Despite the sense of permanence provided by wunian, it is clear that – eternal being or not – God’s gemynd can be perpetuated only while the world (and its people) remain.

In a section of the manuscript damaged by having the page tops trimmed, the Blickling homilist says of the saints Peter and Paul that ‘heora gemynd wunaþ’. Just as tales of heroism perpetuate the fame of Germanic warriors in Old English verse, so in this homily, many centuries after their deaths, Peter and Paul are kept alive in the memories of believers.

8.3.13 SUBJECT OF BEON/ WESAN

In Paris Psalter Psalm 108, the poet asks that his adversary be punished for a number of personal attacks and because:

Næs him milde gemynd    on modsefan

In this instance, gemynd clearly cannot connote the notional space that is the mind-memory; rather, it is an attribute which can (though may not) be located in the modsefa. I have noted in section 4.3 (above) that the modsefa is one location (often portrayed as a container) in which thought takes place.

Although the head-heart dichotomy does not necessarily apply in Old English texts, it is tempting to see ‘milde gemynd’ as compassionate consideration of others: an emotion suitably located within the heart, rather than a purely rational thought of the analytical mind.

97 Lines 134–35: ‘Then is the medicine of the disease the memory of the divine goodness’.
98 Lines 10.1–10.2: ‘You, Lord, dwell forever in eternity; while the world remains, Your remembrance continues’.
99 See also 4.2.1 on the sense of stasis and longevity conveyed by such verbs.
100 Line 171.32: ‘their memory [or remembrance] continues’.
101 See also 8.5.2 above.
102 Line 16.1: ‘Merciful remembrance for them was not in [his] heart’.
In the homily for Palm Sunday, the Blickling homilist describes Judas Iscariot’s reaction to Mary anointing Christ’s feet with expensive ointment: he is angry that precious oil had been wasted, when it could have been sold and the profits used to feed the poor. The homilist questions Judas’ motives, however: Judas is angry because he is a covetous man. The homilist comments ‘Ne cwæþ he þæt na forþon þe him wære ænig gemynd þearfendra manna’. In this context, ‘thought for’ should perhaps be interpreted as having ‘concern’ for or ‘caring’ for. It implies more than simply thinking about needy men: what Judas lacks is a real interest in their well-being.

8.3.14 SUBJECT OF CUMAN

In Christ III, one instance of the noun gemyn can be found as the subject of the verb cuman. The poet lists a number of things destined to:

\[\ldots\text{ on leohht cuman}\]
\[\text{sinra weorca wlic} \quad \text{ond worda gemyn}\]
\[\text{ond heortan gehyg} \quad \text{fore heofona cyning}\]

Along with a person’s deeds and the intentions of their hearts, the ‘worda gemyn’ must also come into the light. The Toller supplement glosses this use of gemyn as meaning ‘the moral tendency, moral character’ and thus the phrase could be rendered as ‘the character of his/their words shall come into the light’ and this would be consistent with the theme of the passage as a whole; that is, the means by which a person’s hidden intentions are revealed to God’s sight. However gemyn is translated, what remains is an entity – a thought or a memory or a characteristic – that will come independently into the light on the final day.

8.3.15 SUBJECT OF (GE)MEARCIAN

In the Metrical Preface to Gregory’s Dialogues, the reader learns that:

\[\text{Bideþ þe se bisceop,} \quad \text{se þe ðas boc begeat}\]
\[\text{þe þu on þinum handum nu hafast and sceawast,}\]
\[\text{þæt þu him to þeossum halgum helpe bidde,}\]
\[\text{þe heof[..] gemyn her on gemearcude siendon}\]

The gemyn in this case, then, is a reminder to the readers of the book to perform an action, and also a permanent record of the lives of ‘þeossum halgum’. These remembrances are doubly ‘marked’ in the

---

103 Although it can also be the imaginative spirit that allows the rememberer to travel, metaphorically, beyond the bounds of his own lived experience: see section 4.6.9 with particular reference to lines 58–62 of The Seafarer.
104 Blickling Homily VI, lines 69.9–69.10: ‘He did not at all say that because any thought of needy men might occur to him’.
105 Lines 1036–38: ‘The form of his deeds and the memory of his words and the intention of his heart [must] come into the light before the king of the heavens’.
106 s.v. ge-mynd.
107 Lines 16–19: ‘The bishop then entreats (he who obtained this book, which you now have in your hands and behold) that you might ask help of Him for these holy [ones], to whom remembrances are marked herein’.
book, in that they are written down physically but also in that attention is drawn, through the words marked on the page, to the real people behind the names.

8.3.16 SUBJECT OF GENEARWIAN

*Gemyn* appears as the subject of *genearwian in Genesis*. Here, Lot is unable to comprehend his daughters’ plan as ‘on ferhðcofan faste genearwod’ were his ‘mode and gemynde’.\(^\text{108}\) This seems to be an inversion of the usual MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphor, where the *gemynd* is often conceptualised as a physical space, into and through which ideas can move. On this occasion, however, the *gemynd* is portrayed as an object locked up within Lot’s breast (whether this is thought of as the actual physical chest, or as a metaphorical chamber within which thoughts are hoarded). Lot’s *gemynd* must have its freedom if it is to be allowed to perform its major function: perceiving, interpreting, and understanding the world.

8.3.17 SUBJECT OF *(GE)STANDAN*

In the *Paris Psalter Psalm 134*, the poet addresses God:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ys þin nama, drihten,} & \quad \text{nemned ece,} \\
\text{and þin gemynd,} & \quad \text{mihtig drihten,} \\
\text{on ealra worulda woruld} & \quad \text{wynnum standeð} \quad \tag{109}
\end{align*}
\]

The difficulties of determining what might be the ‘mind’ of God have been discussed elsewhere: on this occasion, however, the *gemynd* may in any case be less an attribute of God than of His followers. If His name remains eternal, it is only because people perpetuate the memory of it; *gemynd* might then be the collective remembrance of God by the people. The verb of which it is the subject – *(ge)standan* – connotes longevity and perhaps also fortitude.

8.3.18 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The first thing to note about the collocational contexts of *gemynd* is that prepositions are much more frequent than verbs.\(^\text{110}\) This in itself lends a spatial element to many of the collocations, as the basic function of prepositions is to define spatial relationships between concrete objects. This is evident from the frequent references to *on* and *in*, usually connoting either placement within a defined space or movement into that locus.

Prepositional phrases are themselves often linked to verbs, of course, and these verbs often describe in detail the means and manner by which such spatial relationships have come about, suggesting, for

\(^{108}\) Lines 2604–605: ‘fast confined in his breast [were his] spirit and mind’.

\(^{109}\) Lines 13.1–13.3: ‘Thy name, Lord, is called everfasting, and thy remembrance, mighty Lord, remains in the joys of the world of all worlds’.
example, the relative passivity or activity of the rememberer. It is difficult to draw conclusions about
the individual verbs with which gemyn is collocated, as most occur only once within my chosen texts.
It is interesting to note, however, that the most frequently-occurring verb – habban – at base denotes
close proximity between possessor and possessed. This metaphorical theme is continued throughout
the set of verbs studied: verbs collocated with gemyn are not those denoting mental activities
(thinking, remembering), but are instead taken from the realm of the physical and connote movement,
manipulation and exchange or storage, stasis and confinement.

It is striking that, though the subject matter of these texts differs in many respects from that of present-
day colloquial language, the metaphorical constructions used to explore the relationship between
memory and mind are surprisingly similar.

64% and 36% of collocations, respectively.
Conclusion

The present-day importance of MEMORY and REMEMBERING cannot be over-estimated; they are vital to the practical aspects of life (enabling us to negotiate our physical environment, etc.) and equally important in the creation of a sense of what it is to be a human individual within a social environment. The fact that MEMORY and REMEMBERING are so often taken for granted is indicative of their pervasive nature.

In this thesis, I have applied present-day thinking about the memory to the representation of the phenomenon in Old English literary texts with the aim of establishing whether remembering served similar or different functions within Anglo-Saxon society to those it serves today.

Past scholarship has tended to concentrate on the practical role of MEMORY in the transmission of knowledge (whether through oral or written media) rather than on the significance of the memory to individuals. My goal has been to discover whether the remembering subject who places value on personal memories, and derives from them a sense of selfhood, is purely a creature of modernity. Are these concerns limited to modern conceptions of MEMORY, or were similar currents present in Anglo-Saxon thought? In order to do this in as systematic way as possible, I have identified the categories of remembering established by modern science and applied these to Old English texts and Modern English colloquialisms.

9.1 FINDINGS

I have noted the prevalence of MIND-AS-PHYSICAL-SPACE and MIND-AS-CONTAINER metaphors in colloquial Modern English, and identified certain over-arching imagery schema which differ only in detail between Old English and Modern English usage, where an organising principle is adhered to, but contemporary innovation is reflected in the imagery: e.g. wax tablet → vellum → inkjet printer. I have also identified an instance of imagery – that of horticulture – which does not seem to have survived into Modern English idiom.

The important verb of remembering, gemunan, primarily denotes the activity of recollecting semantic or generic knowledge, along with the sustained recollection of the same. Its second main function is to denote the recollection, and sustained recollection, of episodic, autobiographical memories.¹ 

¹ It must be noted that the modern scientific division of incoming signals into ‘semantic’ and ‘episodic’ categories is useful in establishing the kinds of things that are remembered but is also artificial. In fact, I have found the two memory types to be mutually-supporting: semantic memory helps to bring order to one’s
is frequent emphasis, in the textual contexts under investigation, on the importance of active recall and on the need for sustained effort when ‘bearing in mind’. This is particularly evident in the explicitly Christian texts. It is all too easy, it seems, to be the passive recipient of ‘wrong’ memory traces (e.g. the devil’s temptations), yet difficult to be active in pursuit and retention of ‘right’ traces (e.g. Christ’s teachings). In addition, the influence of emotion on the events described by *gemunan* should not be disregarded: strong emotion appears to be remembered over a considerable period of time, and present emotional responses can also affect one’s recollection of what is past.

Analysis of the noun *gemynd* has revealed the difficulty, or perhaps the impossibility, of delineating ‘the mind’ and ‘the (faculty of) memory’ separately. If all cognitive activities are part of the spectrum of remembering, the mind is simply the collective term for all these related activities.

The prevalence of spatial metaphors in the collocational contexts of *gemynd* is a consequence of the dominance of prepositions in these collocations, when compared to the frequency of verbs. The overall effect is to portray the *gemynd* as a container within which various remembering activities can take place. There are some exceptions to this rule, however: in collocation with the preposition *to*, *gemynd* can be interpreted as “remembrance”; and the phase ‘mid gemynd’ indicates an activity carried out with sincerity.

### 9.2 SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

#### 9.2.1 ANGLO-SAXON AND MODERN MEMORY

An important aspect of my research project was the identification of areas where Anglo-Saxon and modern representations of the memory phenomenon differed and, conversely, of areas where Anglo-Saxon and modern conceptions seemed to mirror each other. The figurative representation of memory encoding as an inward movement of information into the mind is common to both Old English and Modern English. There does seem to be a difference of emphasis between the two time periods, however: the Old English vocabulary of memory seems to show a greater emphasis on the internalisation of exterior, book-based knowledge than is common in modern-day discussions of the memory process. It is likely that this is due, at least in part, to the overwhelming amount of information available to individuals in twenty-first century society (particularly in the affluent West): today, the ability to access required knowledge from a vast range of sources is more important, often, than the complete absorption of detailed information from a limited range of sources. In contrast to the abundance of written sources available in affluent societies today, access to manuscripts would have been limited in the Anglo-Saxon period: production was costly and, in any case, literacy was autobiochaphical memory narratives, for example, while episodic memory helps to bring to dry facts of generic memory to life.
restricted to a narrow section of society. In view of this, the ability to access a text’s information, independently of the written document, must have been of great significance to the Anglo-Saxons.

In the Old English corpus, there is also an apparent emphasis on drawing lessons from the past and on allowing the memory of past events to dictate present behaviour, which does not seem to be so prevalent in Modern English contexts. This might, however, be in part an effect of the literary context: the recollection of otherwise ‘inconsequential’ memories and the discussion of these is an everyday activity within groups of Modern English speakers, in the form of gossip or other forms of social bonding for example, but such remembering activities are not accorded enough importance to be recorded within texts. The memory events that do make it into print or onto vellum are those that have consequences for the unfolding story or for the didactic purpose of a text; we should be careful, therefore, not to dichotomise the ‘important’ memories recorded in Old English texts and the ‘inconsequential’, often transitory, remembering activities in which we engage in everyday life.

My study shows that there are some overwhelming similarities between Anglo-Saxon and modern memory: recollection, the centre point of the memory retrieval continuum, is the most dominant aspect of remembering in both Old English and Modern English, for instance, and both languages are heavily reliant on figurative representations of the concept and draw on a shared pool of metaphorical imagery in creating these representations. Where there are major differences, these appear to be culturally specific. Certain kinds of imagery are restricted to one or the other language, such as the use of horticultural and battle imagery in Old English texts, which reflects dominant aspects of Anglo-Saxon life and culture. The motivations for remembering also differ according to context: for example, the theme of obligation as a prompt to remembering is important within the ‘heroic’ context and within texts that are heavily biased towards the Christian world-view; the theme is less apparent in the discussion of memory in the modern West, where needs of an individual often seem to outweigh any exterior considerations). One important point to raise is that the individual, or the ‘self’, is not entirely absent from Old English texts, despite the common perception that notions of selfhood did not come about until the later middle ages.

Another aspect of Anglo-Saxon memory that will bear further investigation is that of the dominance of reminiscence or nostalgia in critical approaches to Old English texts, (and, in particular, specific subsets such as ‘heroic’ or ‘elegiac’ texts). My study has revealed nostalgia to be a feature of (some of) the lexical representations of Anglo-Saxon memory, but has not found nostalgia to feature strongly in the figurative representation of the concept. This leads me to question whether those scholars who find nostalgia to be a major concern of Anglo-Saxon writers are influenced by an approach which concentrates on the Old English lexis at the expense of other modes of representation. Further investigation of COGNITION in its many guises will be required in order to address this question.
Similarly, further attention must be paid to those areas of MEMORY and REMEMBERING that are not well represented in Old English texts, in order to establish the full implications of what is represented. Reconstructive memory and confabulation, for example, are not represented within the figurative language of my study. This may imply that such activities were not part of the Anglo-Saxons’ experience. The fact that Modern English speakers also often fail to recognise these activities for what they are, however, suggests that the absence of reconstruction and confabulation in the written record is due to a problem of expression or articulation rather than reflective of actual experience. Lack of awareness about confabulation may lead to the (probably false) assumption that memory events within texts always reflect an objective ‘truth’ and that they are faithfully reported. In fact, what is missing from the spectrum of recorded memory events may suggest that Anglo-Saxon writers could be self-deluding about the interaction between the remembered event and the remembering process; this delusion is by no means a particularly Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, of course, but it does serve as a caveat when taking Old English representations at ‘face value’.

9.2.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR DICTIONARY DEFINITIONS

Between the compilation of the original Bosworth-Toller dictionary and the publication of the Supplement, the definition of the verb gemunan underwent subtle change: the very general “to remember, bear in mind” was replaced by a range of more specific definitions which are on the whole supported by my analysis of this verb: the emphasis is on recollection and on ‘bearing in mind’, which I have shown to be the most frequently-described areas of the memory retrieval continuum.

Definitions of gemynd in the Bosworth-Toller dictionary and Supplement tend to bear out the results found in my analysis: the primary meanings are “mind” and “memory”. What the dictionary definitions cannot provide, however, is an exploration of what memory and mind actually are or of how they are related to one another. For the purposes of day-to-day translation, these definitions can be readily adopted. For a more in-depth knowledge of the Old English terminology, however, it is necessary to question our assumptions about the Modern English terms used.

A range of contextual factors needs to be considered when finally arriving at a definition for each occurrence of an Old English memory term (if, indeed, a definitive meaning can be arrived at). These include broad areas, such as the manuscript context (date and place of production; purpose and usage of the codex; etc.) and the type of text in question (poetry, prose, or a hybrid of the two; predominantly ‘heroic’ or explicitly Christian themes; etc.). On a smaller scale, the memory events within the texts themselves need to be analysed: who is remembering, what they are remembering, what other mental or emotional activities are occurring concurrently, and so on.

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2 As I have noted elsewhere in this thesis, no one has a monopoly on perceiving objectively; all experience is refracted through the lens of human perception, with various degrees of distortion and entailing different levels of awareness about this distortion.
The currently-available dictionaries of Old English are invaluable tools for the study of memory and remembering in Anglo-Saxon texts; however, analysis can be pushed further, and more nuanced appreciation of these two concepts reached, through the detailed examination of lexical items in their multiple specific contexts.

9.3 ASSESSMENT OF METHODOLOGY

The main limitation of this study is its necessarily limited scope, as compared to the large amount of data available in the form of Old English memory and remembering vocabulary. 3

My complete concordance 4 contains a large number of memory-related Old English terms, including:

- Verbs of cognition translated as “to remember” or “to forget”
- Nouns translated as “mind”, “memory” or “thought”
- Adjectives translated as “mindful”
- Nouns denoting the physical location of the memory
- Verbs used figuratively of remembering activities

Clearly, it has not been possible to analyse more than a fraction of these terms within the confines of the present study: analysis of the lexicon could have been expanded to fill the thesis many times over.

My choice of one main verb and one main noun for analysis (as shown in the appended abridged concordance) could be viewed as arbitrary; certainly, the remainder of the data will provide useful information that may support or eventually refute some of the conclusions arrived at herein. Gaps in the representation of certain areas of the memory retrieval continuum may be due to the use of a specific vocabulary that I have not yet analysed, for example. Only through a wider consideration of Old English verbs of COGNITION could this be determined.

Although it has restricted the amount of lexical data that could be presented in the thesis, I feel that the inclusion of my later work on figurative representations of memory is justified, as it provides a more complete picture than would be obtained by reference to memory-related vocabulary alone. Similarly, the inclusion of material based on modern scientific approaches to memory and on idiomatic Modern English usage is necessary in providing a framework for studying the otherwise unformulated concepts of MEMORY and REMEMBERING.

3 The data available in relation to Modern English colloquial usage is unquantifiable: I have made use of the information that is available through dictionaries of idiom, etc., but of course Modern English is a living language and new means of expression are being coined all the time.
4 An outline of the memory-related vocabulary identified during the early stages of my research is included as Appendix II.
I feel that I have covered as much ground as possible within the constraints of the thesis: by looking at one Old English verb and one noun, in a range of poetic and prose texts, and by balancing the examination of lexicological data with the more subjective interpretation of figurative language use, I believe that I have provided a useful overview of Anglo-Saxon literary representations of MEMORY and REMEMBERING.

9.3.1 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is my opinion that the concepts of MEMORY and REMEMBERING are fascinating and valuable areas of study that would bear a great deal of further research. As our understanding of how these concepts function today develops, we will gain ever-more precise ways of defining the complex interactions of remembering activities and will be able to apply these equally to Modern English and Old English representations. In this thesis, I have begun a twofold process of demystifying what is happening during memory events but also of questioning our assumptions about such events. It is my hope that this will lead to a greater understanding of the roles of MEMORY and REMEMBERING in Anglo-Saxon literary texts.
Appendix I: Concordance

±munan (usu. +) pres. 1, 3 sg. man (mon), 2 manst, pl. munon, pret. munde swv. to think about, be mindful of, remember, mention, Bl, Jul, Lk; Æ,AO,CP : consider. [‘i-mune’] 


Then our Lord remembered Abraham kindly, as he often did [remember] the beloved man.

**Exodus**

‘… Snelle gemundon / weardas wigleoð, werod wæs gefysed, / brudon ofer burgum, (byman gehyrdon), / flotan feldhusum, fyrd wæs on ofste.’ ll. 220–23

‘[The] bold/keen guardians remembered/were mindful of the battle-cry, the company was sent forth. The seafarers with tents moved quickly over the strongholds: they heard the trumpet; the army was in haste.’

**Daniel**

‘Wolde þæt þa cnihtas cræft leornedon, / þæt him snytro on sefan secgan mihte, / nales ðy he þæt moste oððe gemunan wolde / þæt he þara gifena gode þancode / þe him þær to duguðe drihten scyrede.’ ll. 83–87

‘[He] willed that the youths learned the skill, so that he might be able to reveal to them the wisdom of his heart, not at all because he could or wished to remember that he thank God for those gifts which the Lord of the heavenly host had allotted to him.’

‘No he gemunde þæt him meted wæs.’ l. 119

‘He did not at all remember that [which] was dreamt by him.’

‘Gemunde þa on mode þæt metod wäre, / heofona heahcyning, hæleða bearnum / ana ece gast. …’ ll. 624–26

‘[He (Nebuchadnezzar)] then remembered in [his] mind that the Lord, the heavens’ high king, was to the children of men the sole eternal spirit.’

**Christ & Satan**

‘… Gemunan we þone halgan drihten, / ecne in wuldre mid alra gescefta ealdre’ ll. 201–202

‘[Let us] remember the holy Lord, eternally in glory with the prince of all creation.’

‘… gemunan soð and riht, / þonne we to hehselde hnigan þencað, / and þone anwaldan ara biddan.’ ll. 206–208
‘[Let us] remember truth and right, whenever we think to bow down before
the throne and pray to the Ruler for mercies.’

‘Gemunan symle on mode meotodes strengðo; / gearwian us togenes
grene stræte / up to englum, þær is se ælmihtiga god.’ ll. 285–87

‘[Let us] remember always in mind the creator’s strength; [let us] prepare
ourselves in readiness for that living road up to the angels, where the
Almighty God is.’

‘Gemunde ic ðæs mænego on þam minnan ham / lange þæs ðe ic of
hæftum ham gelædde / up to earde, þæt heo agan sceolon / drihtnes
domas and duguðe þrym; / wuniað in wynnum, habbað wuldres
blæd / þusendmælum. …’ ll. 502–507

‘I remembered the multitude in that evil dwelling [? for a long time] who I
from fetters homewards led up to the homeland, so that they shall possess the
Lord’s glories and the majesty of the heavenly host; they shall dwell in joys,
and hold the gifts of glory in their thousands.’

‘Georne þurh godes gife gemunan gastes bled, / hu eadige þær uppe
sittað / selfe mid swegle, sunu hælendes!’ ll. 644–46

‘Through God’s grace, [let us] eagerly remember the spirit’s blessedness, how
the blessed ones sit up there themselves amid the sky, with the Son of the
Saviour!’

‘Da he gemunde þæt he on grunde stod.’ l. 723

‘Then he [Satan] remembered that he stood at the bottom [of hell].’

Andreas

‘... Ne eom ic ana ðæt, / ac manna gehwam mod bið on hyhte, /
fyrhð afrefred, þam þe feor oððe neah / on mode geman hu se maga
fremede, / godbearn on grundum. …’ ll. 636–40

3 All quotations from the poetry of the Vercelli Book are taken from G. P. Krapp (ed.), The Vercelli Book, ASPR
‘Nor am I alone in that, but the spirit of every man is in hopeful joy, and the 
mind made glad, [in] that [one] who, far or near, remembers in mind how the 
Son availed, the Son of God on earth.’

*Dream of the Rood*

Ongan þa word sprecan wudu selesta: / "þæt wæs geara iu, (ic þæt 
gyta geman), / þæt ic wæs aheawen holtes on ende, / astyred of stefne 
minum. …” ll. 27–30

‘The best tree then began to speak words: ‘That was years ago (I still 
remember that), that I was cut down from the forest’s edge, removed from my 
root.’”

*Soul & Body I*

‘… Lyt ðu gemundest / to hwan þinre sawle þing siððan wurde, / 
syððan of lichoman laed wære!’ ll. 19–21

‘You little remembered what thing your soul might afterwards become, when 
it would be led from the body.’

*Christ III*

‘Hwæs weneð se þe mid gewitte nyle / gemunan þa mildan 
meotudes lare, / ond eal ða earfðu þe he fore ældum adreag, / forþon þe 
he wolde þæt we wuldres eard / in ecnesse agan mosten?’ (ll. 
1199–1203)

‘What does he expect, who with sense/understanding will not remember the 
merciful creator’s teaching, and all the hardships that he suffered for men, 
because he wished that we might be allowed to possess in eternity the country 
of glory?’

*Guthlac A*

‘Magun we nu nemnan þæt us neah gewearð / þurh haligne had 
gecyped, / lu Guðlac his in godes willan / mod gerehte, man eall 
forseah, / eorðlic æþelu, upp gemunde / ham in heofonum. …’ ll. 
93–98

‘We may now relate that [which] accordingly became known to us through 
holy office, how Guthlac wielded his mind according to God’s will, rejected 
all wickedness and worldly family, and remembered the home that is above in 
the heavens.’

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‘… Hwylc wæs faegerra / willa geworden in wera life, / þara þe yldrán usse gemunde, / oþþe we selfe sipþan cuþen?’ ll. 748–51

‘What more beautiful wish/delight was made in men’s life [or, the life of men?], of those which our ancestors remembered, or [those which] we ourselves afterwards may know?’

Juliana

“… Ic þa sorge gemon, / hu ic bendum fæst bisga unrim / on anre niht earfeða dreag, / yfel ormætu.” …’ ll. 624–27

‘I remember that sorrow/grief, how – fixed in chains – I suffered a countless number of cares, boundless harm, in one night of hardships.’

‘Ongon heo þa læran ond to lofe trymman / folc of firenum ond him frofre gehet, / weg to wulldre, ond þet word awæð: / “Gemunað wigena wyn ond wuldræ þrym, / haligra hyht, heofonengla god.”’ ll. 638–42

‘Then she began to teach, and exhort the folk to praise and [away] from sins, and promised them consolation, the way to glory, and uttered the words:

“Remember the warrior’s joy [i.e. God] and glory’s majesty, hope of the holy one’s and God of heaven’s angels.”’

‘… Sar eal gemon, / synna wunde, þe ic sip oþþe ær / geworhte in worulde. …’ ll. 709–711

‘I remember all [the] pain, the wounds of sins, that I ever committed in the world.’

‘… Bidde ic monna gehwone / gumena cynnes, þe þis gied wræce, / þet he mec neodful bi noman minum / gemynge modig, ond meotud bidde / þet me heofona helm helpe gefremme, / mehta waldend, on þam miolan dæge, / fæder, frofre gæst, in þa freccan tid, / ðæta demend, ond se deora sunu, / þonne seo þrynis þrymsittende / in annesse ælda cynne / þurh þa sciran gesceafþ scrifeð bi gewyrhtum / meorde monna gehwam. …’ ll. 718–29
‘I ask of each one of the race of men who utters this song that, zealous and brave, he remember my name, and pray the Creator that the Lord of the heavens might help me on that great day, the Ruler of power, the Father, the spirit of solace, the Judge of deeds, and the dear son, in that terrible time, when the Trinity sitting in glory in unity, ordains to the family of men through the resplendent creation on account of [their] deeds the reward of each man.’

Wanderer
‘Gemon he selescegas ond sincþege, / hu hine on geoguðe his goldwine / wenede to wiste. …’ ll. 34–36

‘He remembers retainers, and the receiving of treasure, and how his generous lord accustomed him to feasting in his youth.’

‘Se þonne þisne wealsteal wise geþohte / ond þis deorce lif deope geondþenceð, / frød in ferðe, feor ofþ gemon / wælsleahta worn, ond þas word acwið: / “Hwær cwom mearg? Hwær cwom mago? …”’ ll. 88–92

‘He who wisely considers this foundation and deeply meditates on this dark life, wise in mind, often remembers a large number of battles in the distant past, and utters these words: “Where went the horse? Where went the young man?”’

Precepts
‘Feorþan siðe fæder eft lærde / modleofne magan, þæt he gemunde þis: / “Ne aswic sundorwine, ac a symle geheald / ryhtu m gerisnum. …”’ ll. 27–30

‘A fourth time the father again advised [his] dear relative, so that he remembered this: “Do not betray a bosom friend, but always maintain fitting honours.”’

‘… Swa þu, min bearn, gemyne / frode fæder lærne / ond þæc a wið firenum geheald.”’ ll. 93–94

‘And so you, my son, remember the wise teaching of the father, and hold yourself always against sins.’

Vainglory
‘Forþon we sculon a hycgende hælo rædes / gemunan in mode mæla gehwylcum / þone selestan sigora waldend. Amen.’ ll. 82–84
‘Therefore we must always, on all occasions, think what is advisable [for] salvation, [and] remember in mind/spirit that most excellent Lord of victories.’

**Riming Poem**

‘… Ne biþ se hlisa adroren. / Ær þæt eadig geþenceð, he hine þe oftor swenceð, / byrgeð him þa bitran synne, hogaþ to þære betran wynne, / gemon morþa lisse, þær sindon miltsa blisse / hyhtlice in heofona rice. …’ ll. 79–83

‘Fame is not extinguished. The blessed one soon considers that. He the more often torments himself, hides himself from bitter sins, strives for the better joy, [and] remembers the delight of rewards, where the favours of mercy are joyfully in heaven’s kingdom.’

**Riddle 17**

‘… Is min innað til, / wombhorð wlitig, wloncum deore; / men gemunan þæt me þurh muþ fareð.’ ll. 9–11

‘My stomach is good, the contents of my belly beautiful, dear to proud one’s; men remember that [which] goes from me through [my] mouth.’

**Wife’s Lament**

‘… Dreogeð se min wine / micle modceare; / he gemon to oft / wynlicran wic. …’ ll. 50–52

‘He, my lord, suffers much grief of heart; he remembers too often a more delightful abode.’

**Resignation**

‘… Ic þa bote gemon, / cyninga wuldor, / cume to, gif ic mot.’ ll. 20–21

‘I remember the/that remedy, glory of kings, may [I] come to [it], if I am allowed to.’

**Husband’s Message**

‘Hwæt, þec þonne biddan het se ðisne beam agrof / þæt þu sinchroden sylf gemunde / on gewitlocan wordbeotunga, / þe git on ærdagum oft gespræcon, / þenden git moston on meoduburgum / eard weardigan, an lond bugan, / freondscype fremman. …’ ll. 13–19
‘Lo! He who ordered this piece of wood carved asks that you, adorned with costly ornaments, yourself remember in your mind promises that in former days you two often said, while you were yet allowed to dwell in the mead-cities of your homeland, to occupy one land, to perpetuate your love.’

*Riddle 83*

‘... Ic ful gearwe gemon / hwa min fromcynn fruman agette / eall of earde;  ic him yfle ne mot, / ac ic hæftnyd hwilum arære / wide geond wongas. …’ ll. 6–10

‘I very well remember who, at the beginning, deprived all my lineage of the homeland; I may not harm him, but I sometimes establish imprisonment far throughout the meadows.’

*Beowulf*

‘... Swylc wæs þeaw hyra, / hæþenra hyht;  helle gemundon / in modsefan,  metod hie ne cuþon, / dæda demend,  ne wiston hie drihten god, / ne hie huru heofena helm  herian ne cuþon, / wuldres waldend. …’ (ll. 178–83)

‘Such was their custom, the hope of heathens; they remembered in their heart the one from hell. They knew not the Creator, the Judge of deeds; they knew not the Lord God; they certainly did not know or praise heavens’ protector, the Ruler of glory.’

‘Gebad wintra worn, ær he on weg hwurfe, / gamol of geardum; hine gearwe geman / witena welhwyc wide geond eorþan.’ ll. 264–66

‘He [Ecgtheow] lived a large number of winters before he departed on the way, the old man [away] from the dwellings; every one of wise [men] [i.e. every wise man], far and wide throughout the earth, readily remembers him.’

‘Hafa nu ond geheald husa selest, / gemyne mærþo, mægenellen cyð, / waca wið wraþum. …’ ll. 658–660

‘Now have and hold the best of houses; remember [or, be mindful of] fame; reveal mighty valour; watch against hostile ones.’

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5 All quotations from the poetry of the Cotton Vitellius manuscript are taken from E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), *Beowulf and Judith*, ASPR 4 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).
‘Gemunde þa se goda, mæg Higelaces, / æfenspræce, uplang astød / ond him fæste wiðfeng; fingras burston.’ ll. 758–60

‘The good man, Hygelac’s kinsman, then remembered [his] evening speech, stood upright and firmly laid hold on him; broke away from those fingers.’

‘… Hwilum cyninges þegn, / guma gilphlæden, gidda gemyndig, / se ðe ealfela ealdgesegena / worn gemunde, word oþer fand / soðe gebunden; secg eft ongan / sið Beowulfes snyttrum styrian / ond on sped wrecan spel gerade, / wordum wrixlan. …’ ll. 867–74

‘Sometimes the king’s thane, a proud man, mindful of words, he who remembered a large number of old traditions – one word found another, faithfully bound – that man again began to treat of Beowulf’s fate with cleverness and successfully to utter a skilful story, to exchange words.’

‘… Eard gemunde, / þeah þe he ne meahte on mere drifan / hringedstefnan; holm storme weol, / won wið winde, winter ype beleac / isgebinde, oþðæt oþer com / gear in geardas, swa nu gyt deð, / þa ðe syngales sele bewitiað, / wuldortorhtan weder. …’ ll. 1129–36

‘[He] remembered [his] homeland, although he was not able to drive [his] ring-prowed ship on the ocean; the sea storm welled, black against the wind, winter locked up the wave with fetters of ice, until next year arrived in the enclosures, when gloriously bright weather continually attends the hall, just as it still does now.’

‘… Fundode wrecca, / gist of geardum; he to gyrnwreæce / swiðor þohte þonne to sælade, / gif he torngemot þurhteon mihte / þæt he Eotena bearne inne gemunde.’ ll. 1137–41

‘The exile, the stranger of the enclosures, wished to set out; he thought rather more about revenge for injury than about the sea-voyage, [wondered] whether he was able to carry out a battle, so that he might inwardly remember the sons of [his] enemies.’
“... Ic minne can / glædne Hroðulf, þæt he þa geogoðe wile / arum healdan, gýf þu ær þonne he, / wine Scildinga, worold oflæest; / wene ic þæt he mid gode gyldan wille / uncran eaferan, gif he þæt eal gemon, / hwæt wit to willan ond to worðmyndum / umborwesendum ær arna gefremedon.”’ ll. 1180–87

‘I know my Hrothwulf is gracious, so that he wishes to hold/keep the young people with honours/dignity, if you, friend of the Scyldings, leave this world before he; I expect that he wishes to reward our sons with good, if he remembers all that we two provided in the way of favours, previously when he was a child, for his desire and for honour’.

‘Wealhðeo maþelode, heo fore þæm werede spræc: / “Bruc ðisses beages, Beowulf leofa, / hyse, mid hæle, ond þisses hrægles neot, / þeodgestreona, ond gehþeoh tela, / cen þec mid cræfte ond þyssum cnyhtum wes / lara lîde; ic þe þæs lean geman.’’ ll. 1215–20

‘Wealhtheow spoke, she said in front of that company: “Enjoy this ring in health, beloved Beowulf, warrior, and have use of this clothing from the people’s treasures, and prosper well; reveal yourself through skill, and to these boys be gentle of teaching; I shall remember the gifts [made] to you.’

‘… Grendles modor, / ides, aglæcwif, yrmþe gemunde, / se þe wæteregasan wunian scolde, / cealde streamas, sîþan Cain wearð / to ecgbanan angan brêper, / fæderenmæge; he þa fag gewat, / morþre gemearcod, mandream fleon, / westen warode. …’ ll. 1258–65

‘Grendel’s mother, that woman, that female monster, remembered hardships, she who had to occupy the water terrors, the cold rivers, ever since Cain came to be the slayer of his only brother, his paternal kindred; he had then departed, a criminal, branded with murder, had fled revelry and occupied the wasteland.’

‘þær him aglæca ætgræpe wearð; / hwæþre he gemunde mægenes strenge, / gimfæste gife þe him god sealde, / ond him to anwaldan are gelyfde, / frofre ond fultum; ðy he þone feond ofercwom, / gehnægde helle gast. …’ ll. 1269–74
‘There the combatant seized him, but he remembered the strength of [his] might, the ample gift that God gave to him, and trusted in the mercy of him, the Lord, [in his] solace and support: on that account he overcame the enemy, humbled that demon of hell.’

‘þa wæs on healle heardecg togen / sweord ofer setlum, sidrand manig / hafen handa fæst; helm ne gemunde, / byrnan side, þa hine se broga angeat.’ ll. 1288–91

‘There in the hall sharp-edged swords were drawn from above the seats, many a broad shield was raised aloft in firm hands; no one remembered his helmet, [nor] his ample coat of mail, when that terror seized him.’

‘Huru ne gemunde mago Ecglafes, /eafofes cæftig, þæt he ær gespræc / wine druncen, þa he þæs væpnes onlah / selran sweordfrecan. ’ ll. 1465–68

‘Ecglaf’s kinsman, powerful of strength, certainly did not remember what he had previously said, drunk with wine, when he lent that weapon to the better swordsman.’

‘... ða se wisa spræc / sunu Healfdenes (swigedon ealle): / “þæt, la, mæg segan se þe soð ond riht / fremed on folce, feor eal gemon, / eald [rune]weard, þæt ðæs eorl wäre / geboren betera! ...’ ll. 1698–1703

‘Then (when they all fell silent) the wise son of Healfdene spoke: “That, indeed, may [he] say – he who accomplishes truth and justice amid the people, [who] remembers everything from far back, an old keeper of secrets – that this nobleman was the better born!”’

‘þonne cwið æt beore se ðe beah gesyhð, / eald æscwiga, se ðe eall geman, / garcwælm gumena (him bid grim sefa), / onginneð geomormod geongum cempan / þurh hreðra gehygð higes cunnian, / wigbealu weccean, ond þæt word acwyð: / “Meaht ðu, min wine, mece gecnawan / þone pin fæder to gefeohne bær / under heregriman hindeman side, / dyre iren, þær hyne Dene slogon, / weoldon wælstowe, syððan Wiðergyld læg, / æfter hæleþa hryre, hwate Scyldungas?...”’

ll. 2041–52
‘Then laments an old spear-warrior at his beer, he who sees the treasure, and who remembers all: the death of men by the spear. In him is the heart fierce. Sad-minded he begins to try the minds of the young warriors, through his heart’s thoughts [tries to] awaken the war-bale, and utters these words: “Are you are able, my lord, to know the sword that your father carried to battle, under helmets, on [his] last journey, a costly iron sword, where the Dane’s attacked him, those brave descendents of Scyld, possessed of the battlefield after Withergyld lay dead, after the fall of the heroes?”’

‘Hwilum eft ongan, eldo gebunden, / gomel guðwiga gioðe cwiðan, / hreðer inne weoll, / ḋonne he wintrum frod worn gemunde.’ ll. 2111–14

‘Sometimes the ancient warrior, bound by old age, again began to lament [his] youth, [his] vigour for battle; his heart welled inwardly whenever, wise in years, he recalled many things.’

‘Se ðæs leohryres lean gemunde / uferan dogrum, Eadgilse wearð / feascaeftum freond, folce gestepte / ofer sæ side sunu Ohteres, / wigum ond wæpnum; he gewræc syððan / cealdum cearsiðum, cyning caldre bineat.’ ll. 2391–96

‘Afterwards, [until] later days, he remembered the repayment for the prince’s fall; [he] became a friend to the wretched Eadgils. The son of Othhere went widely over the sea to people, with warriors and weapons; afterwards he [had] revenge for those cold, painful journeys: he deprived the old king [?of life].’

‘Biowulf maþelade, bearn Ecgðeowes: “Fela ic on gioðe guðræsa genæs, / orleighwila; ic þæt eall gemon.’ ll. 2425–27

‘Beowulf spoke, the son of Ecgtheow: “I survived many battle-rushes in my youth, [many] war-times; I remember all that.”’

““Ic wæs syfanwintre, þa mec sina baldor, / freawine folca, æt minum fæder genam; / heold mec ond hæfde Hreðel cyning, / geaf me sinc ond symbol, sibbe gemunde.”’ ll. 2428–31
‘I was seven years old when the lord of treasures, the lord and friend of the people, received me from my father; King Hrethel kept and held me, gave me treasure and feast, [he] remembered kinship.’

‘Guðhelm toglad, gomela Scylding / hreas hildeblac; hond gemunde / ðæhdo genoge, feorhsweng ne oftæah.’ ll. 2487–89

‘The helmet fell asunder, the ancient Scylding [i.e. Ongentheow] fell down mortally wounded; [Eufor’s] hand remembered many feuds, and did not withhold the fatal blow.’

‘Gemunde ða ða are þe he him ær forgeaf, / wicstede weligne Wægmundinga, / folcrihta gehwylc, swa his fæder ahte.’ ll. 2606–608

‘[Wiglaf] then remembered the favours which he [i.e. Beowulf] previously gave to him, the rich dwellings of the Wægmundings and each of the folk-rights, just as his father had possessed.’

‘Wiglaf maðelode, wordrihta fela / sægde gesiðum (him wæs sefa geomor): “Ic ðæt mæl geman, þær we medu þegun, / þonne we geheton ussum hlaforde / in biorsele, þe us ðas beagas geaf, / þæt we him ða guðgetawa gyldan woldon / gif him þyslicu þearf gelumpe, / helmas ond heard sweord. …”’ ll. 2631–38

‘Wiglaf spoke, said many suitable words to [his] companions (he was sad at heart): “I remember that time when we vowed to our lord, in the beer-hall where we consumed mead, who gave these rings to us, that we would repay him for these arms, the helmets and hard swords, if such need befell him.”’

‘… þa gen guðcyning / mærða gemunde, mægenstrengo sloh / hildebille, þæt hyt on heafolan stod / niþe genyded; Nægling forberæst, / geswac æt sæcce sweord Biowulfes, / gomol ond grægmæl. …’ ll. 2677–82

‘Yet the warrior-king then remembered glories: compelled by hatred, [he] struck the sword with great might so that it remained in [the dragon’s?] head; Nægling failed, Beowulf’s sword desisted from combat, ancient and grey coloured.’
Appendix: Concordance

Paris Psalter 70  ‘Ic þine soðfästnesse geman symble, drihten; / þu me ara, god, ærest lærest / of geoguðhade; / nu ic eom gomel wintrum.’ II. 16.1–16.3

‘I shall always remember your righteousness, Lord; you first instructed me from my youth, God of mercies; now I am old in years.’

Paris Psalter 73  ‘Gemun þin mannweorod, þæt þu, mihtig god, / æt fruman ærest fægere geworhtest.’ II. 2.1–2.2

‘Remember your congregation, which you, mighty God, at the beginning/at Creation first made fair.’

Paris Psalter 77  ‘Gif bearn wære geboren þam fæder, / him sceolde se yldra eall gesæcgan, / þæt hi gleawne hiht to gode hæfdan, / and his weorðlicu weorc gemundon, / and godes bebudu georne heoldan.’ II. 8.1–9.3

‘If a child were born to the father, the elders must all say to him that they had clear-sighted hopeful joy in God, and [they] remembered His splendid work, and eagerly kept God’s commands.’

‘And he gemunde þæt hi wæran moldan and flæsc / gast gangende, næs se geancyr eft.’ II. 39.1–39.2

‘And He remembered that they were earth and flesh, a walking spirit that never again returns.’

Paris Psalter 78  ‘Ne gemune þu to oft, mihta wealdend, / ealdra unrihta þe we oft fremedon, / ac we hraðe begytan hyldo ðine, / forþon we ðearfende þearle syndon.’ II. 8.1–8.4

‘Do not remember too often, Lord Almighty, the previous wrongs that we often perpetrated, rather [let us] quickly gain your protection, because we are exceedingly needy.’

Paris Psalter 88  ‘Gemune, mære God, hwæt si min lytle sped; / ne huru ðu manna bearn on middangeard / to idelnesse æfre geworhtest.’ II. 41.1–41.3

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‘Remember, glorious God, how little might be my opportunity: You surely never made the children of men in the middle-earth as a frivolity.’

‘Gumune þinra esna edwitspræce, / þa him fracuðlice fremde þeode / utan ætywað, oðre mægðe.’ ll. 44.1–44.3

‘Remember the scorn [towards] your men, when shamefully did appear to them, from without the nation, another people.’

*Paris Psalter 102*

‘Gemune, mihtig god, þæt we synt moldan and dust; / beoð mannes dagas mawenum hege / æghwær anlice, eordan blastman, / swa his lifdagas læne syndan.’ ll. 14.1–14.4

‘Remember, mighty God, that we are earth and dust; man’s days are in every respect like mown hay; like the blossoms of the earth, so are his life-days transitory.’

*Paris Psalter 104*

‘Gemunað ge on mode, hu he mænig wundor / worhte wræclice, wundur unlytel, / and his muþes eac mere domas.’ ll. 5.1–5.3

‘Remember in your mind how he wondrously produced many a miracle, great wonders, and also his mouth’s glorious judgements.’

*Paris Psalter 105*

‘Gemune us, drihten, on modsefan / forð hyçgende folces þines, / and us mid hælo her geneosa.’ ll. 4.1–4.3

‘Remember us, Lord, thinking in [Your] heart of your people, and visit us here with [Your] salvation.’

‘þonne he his wordgebeot well gemunde; / hreaw hine sona, þonne hi hyþpa drugan, / æfter his miłtsa menigu godes.’ ll. 34.1–34.3

‘Then He well remembered His promise; when they suffered affliction He was immediately rueful, according to His, God’s, multitude of mercies.’

*Paris Psalter 118*

‘Gemun nu, dryhten, þines wordes, / on þam þu me þinum þeowe hyht gesealdest.’ ll. 49.1–49.2
‘Remember now, Lord, your words: in them you gave to me, your servant, hopeful joy.’

‘Nede ic þæt gemunde nihta gehwylcre, / þæt ic naman þinne nemde, dryhten, / and ic æ þine elne heolde.’ ll. 55.1–55.3

‘With duty I remembered that every night, that I called your name, Lord, and I kept your law with zeal.’

*Paris Psalter 131*

‘Gemune þu, drihten, mærne Dauid / and ealle his mannþwærnesse micle and goode.’ ll. 1.1–1.2

‘Remember, Lord, the famous David and all his great and virtuous gentleness.’

*Paris Psalter 136*

‘Ofer Babilone bradum streame, / þær we sittað and sare wepað, / þonne we Sion gemunan swiðe georne.’ ll. 1.1–1.3

‘[At] the bank of Babylon’s broad river, there we sit and sorely weep when we very readily remember Zion.’

‘Gemune þu, drihten, manigra bearna, / þe on Edom synt eal lifigende, / þonne þu Hierusalem gegodie; …’ ll. 7.1–7.3

‘Remember, Lord, the many of [your] children who are all living in Edom, when you endow Jerusalem; …’

*Paris Psalter 144*

‘Gemune þines modes þa miclan geniht, / þinre weðnesse wise sæcgenum / roccette and ræd sprece, / and þine mægenstrengðu mærsien wide.’ ll. 7.1–7.4

‘[They shall] remember then your mind’s great abundance, utter wise speeches [concerning] your mildness and speak wisdom, and proclaim your great might far and wide.’

*Boethius: Meter 1*

‘… Wæs on Greacas hold, / gemunde þara ara and ealdrihta / þe his eldran mid him ahton longe, / lufan and lissa. …’ ll. 56–59

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'He was loyal to the Greeks; [Boethius] remembered their [i.e. Roman senators’] prosperity and ancient rights which his ancestors had possessed with them for a long time, with love and kindness.'

'Wæs þa ormod eorl, ðare ne wende, / ne on þam fæstene frofre gemunde, / ac he neowol astreaht niðer of dune / feol on þa flore, fela worda spræc, / forþoht ðearle; ðe wende þonan æfre / cuman of ðæm clammum. …’ ll. 78–83

'The nobleman [i.e. Boethius] was then despondent; he did not expect mercy, nor did he remember consolation in that fortress, but stretched out, prostrate, he fell down on the floor. He spoke many words, and despaired violently; he did not expect ever to come thence from those fetters.'

Boethius: Meter 31

‘Hwæt, ðu meaht ongitan, gif his ðe geman lyst, / þætte mislice manega wuhta / geond eorðan farað ungelice; / habbað blioh and fær, bu ungelice, / and mægwltas manegra cynna / cuð and uncuð. …’ ll. 1–6

‘Listen! You may understand if it pleases you to remember that many various creatures go diversely throughout this earth; they differently have both beauty and movement, and aspects of many kinds, familiar and strange.’

Battle of Maldon

‘ac wenodon þam wige and þone wudu sohton, / flugen on þæt fæsten and hyre feore burgon, / and manna ma þonne hit ænig með were, / gyf hi þa geearnunga ealle gemundon / þe he him to dugupe gedon hæfde.’ ll. 193–97

‘But they turned from the battle and sought out the forest, flew into that stronghold and saved their life, and more men [?did so] than was proper, if they then remembered all the favours that he [Byrhtnoth] had done for them, for their advantage.’

‘“Gemunan þa mæla þe we oft æt meodo spræcon, / þonne we on bence beot ahofon, / hæleð on healde, ymbe heard gewinn; / nu mæg cunnian hwa cene sy.”’ ll. 212–15

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8 All quotations from the so-called ‘minor poems’ are taken from E. V. K. Dobbie (ed.), The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems, ASPR 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942).
‘Remember the times that we often spoke at mead, heroes in the hall, when we raised up a vow on the bench about brave battle; now it can be found out who is brave.’

‘þa he forð eode, faððe gemunde, / þæt he mid orde anne geræhte / flotan on þam folce, þæt se on foldan læg / forwegen mid his wæpne. …’ ll. 225–28

‘He remembered the feud: then he went forth, so that he alone wounded with his spear a Viking in that army, so that he lay dead on the ground, killed with his weapon.’

Judgement Day II

‘þa ic færinga, forht and unrot, / þas unhyrlican fers onhæfe mid sange, / eall swylce þu cwæde, synna gemunde, / lifes leahtra, and þa langan tid, / þæs dimman cyme deades on eorðan.’ ll. 10–14

‘Then I [was] suddenly afraid and despondent, [and] raised up these wild verses in song, all just as you said; I remembered my sins, my life’s vices, and that long time, the wretched approach of death on earth.’

‘Ic gemunde eac mæðe drihtnes / and þara haligra on heofonan rice, / swylce earmsceapenra yfel and witu.’ ll. 21–23

‘I also remembered the glory of the Lord and of the holy ones in the kingdom of heaven; likewise [I remembered] the harm and torments of the wretched ones.’

‘Ic gemunde þis mid me, and ic mearn swiðe, / and ic murcnigende cwæð, mode gedrefed:’ ll. 24–25

‘I remembered this within me, and I was exceedingly anxious, and – my mind troubled – I said, grieving: …’

‘Gemyne eac on mode, hu micel is þæt wite / þæ ðara earmra byð for ærdædum, / ofþe hu egeslice and hu andrysne / heahþrymme cyninge her wile deman / anra gehwylcum be ærdædum, / ofþe hwylce forebeacn feran onginnad / and Cristes cyme cyðað on eorðan.’ ll. 92–98
‘Remember also in [your] mind how great is the punishment of the wretched ones because of their former deeds, or how awesomely and terribly the King of great glory will judge each one concerning [their] former deeds, or what signs will begin to proceed and reveal Christ’s coming on earth.’

‘Ic bidde, man, þæt þu gemune         hu micel bið se broga / beforan domsetle drihtnes þænne; / stent hergea næst heartleas and earh, / amasod and amarod, mihtleas, afered.’ ll. 123–26

‘I ask you, man, that you remember how great then is the terror before the judgement seat of the Lord; the multitude stands most dispirited and wretched, confounded and troubled, powerless, frightened.’

**Metrical Charm 2**

‘Gemyne ðu, mucgwyrt, hwæt þu ameldodest, / hwæt þu renadest æt Regenmelde.’ ll. 1–2

‘Remember, Mugwort, what you made known, what you prepared at Regenmeld.’

‘Gemyne þu, mægðe, hwæt þu ameldodest, / hwæt þu geændadest æt Alorforda;/ þæt næfre for gefloge feorh ne gesalde / syþðan him mon mægðan to mete gegyrede.’ ll. 23–26

‘Remember, Mayweed, what you made known, what you finished at Alorford; so that [he] never gave up [his] life because of infectious disease, after the man demanded/desired Mayweed as food for him.’

**“Instructions”**

‘Æla, ðu ærma and þu eorðlica / man ofer moldan, hwi ne gemynas þu a / þæs diæðes hryre, ðe us drihten gescop?’ ll. 30–32

‘Alas, you wretched and worldly men over the earth, why are you not mindful always of the fall/ruin of death, that our Lord created?’

‘Ac we sculon gemunan mæla gehwylce / þæt se apostol Paulus ongan / geond eal cristen folc cyðan and læran, / þæt ða weologan for heora woruldrice / on heora modsefan men oferseagon.’ ll. 124–28

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‘But we must remember each of the times that the apostle Paul began (went) to teach and make known throughout all Christian people, so that those people went abroad (as pilgrims) because the men despised in their heart their earthly kingdom.’

**Vercelli Homily I**

‘Pa gemunde he, Petrus, þæt word þæt Crist him ær / to cwæð, þæt he him sceolde priwa wiðsacan ær þam se hana creowe.’ ll. 54–55

‘Then he, Peter, remembered the words that Christ previously said to him, that he must thrice renounce Him before the cock crowed.’

**Vercelli Homily II**

‘Hwæt, we behofigað þæt we gemunen hu / mycel he for us geþrowode, æfter þan þe he menniscum lichoman / onfeng, mancynne to ecre hælo, & us þurh þæt generede deofles / þeowdome, & us edhwyrft forgeaf to þam ecean life þe we ær forworhton, / gif we hit geearnian willæ.’ ll. 83–87

‘Listen! We have need that we remember how much He endured for us, after He accepted a human body, for the everlasting salvation of mankind, and through that saved us from the devil’s service, and gave to us a resumption of that eternal life which we previously forfeited, if we wish to earn it.’

**Vercelli Homily II**

‘Hwæt, we nu / on idlum gilpe us mid golde & mid gimmum gearwiaþ, & blissiaþ & / glædmode boð swa we wenen þæt we næfre hit forlætan scylen, & to / seldan mycles urine drihten gemunan & ure sawle þearfe, þa þe sculon / bion on ecnesse æfter þyssum life, mid sawle & mid lichoman in swa / hwæðrum swa we her nu geearniaþ.’ ll. 98–103

‘Listen! We now in worthless pride adorn us with gold and with gems, and we are happy and joyous, as [though] we expected that we should never abandon it; and too seldom much remember our Lord and our soul’s need, when that [we] shall exist forever, after this life, with [our] soul and with [our] body in whichever [way] we earn now here.’

**Vercelli Homily IV**

‘For hwan swenctest ðu me, & wlenctest þe in þær e / sceortan tide & forgeate me, & þas langan woruld ne gemundest?’ ll. 205–206

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10 All quotations from the Vercelli Homilies are taken from D. G. Scragg (ed.), *The Vercelli homilies and related texts*, EETS OS 300 (Oxford University Press, 1992).
‘Why [do] you afflict me, and become proud in that short time, and forget me, and not remember this perpetual world?’

Vercelli Homily VII

‘Gemunað eac hwylce ehtnesse Isac / æghwanon ræfnode, & hu he hyra þeawe þeowode & oðre men to his / geswinces leane fengon.’ ll. 17–19

‘Remember [you] also what kind of persecution Issac underwent in every way, and how he served their custom and [how] other men seized the reward for his hardship.’

Vercelli Homily VII

‘Gemunað eac Iacobes mænigfealdan geswinc.’ l. 19

‘Remember [you] also Jacob’s manifold hardships.’

Vercelli Homily VII

‘Gemunað eac þa ðe eall hira lif on þisse / worulde on olehtungum lifedon.’ ll. 34–35

‘Remember [you] also those who lived all their life in the world in indulgence.’

Vercelli Homily VII

‘And gemunað Iudeas þe hira lif eall hyra wambe to forlore forgeafon.’ l. 37

‘And remember [you] the Jews who all their life gave [up] their stomach to destruction.’

Vercelli Homily VII

‘Gemunað hu Esaw his dagas on / ehtnesse lædde, & hu ða ðe ær in þam ryne Godes bearn wærón þurh / ænlicra wifa sceawunga to fyrenlustum gehæfte on helle gehruron.’ ll. 43–45

‘Remember [you] how Esau conducted his days in persecution, and how those who before in that time were God’s children through viewing beautiful women for lust sank down fettered in hell.’

Vercelli Homily VII

‘Gemunaþ eac hu þa forwurdon þe mid wodheortnesse willan to / wæpnedmannum hæmed sohton, & eallra Babilone & Egypta cyninga / ealle hie swiðe ungesæliglice hira lif geendedon & nu syndon11 on ecum / witum.’ ll. 46–49

11 48 <hira lif… nu syn>don
‘Remember [you] also how those perished who through desire of madness sought intercourse with men; and all Babylon and all the kings of Egypt, they very wretchedly ended their life and now are in eternal punishment.’

**Vercelli Homily X**

‘Æt me hie leornodon scondword & lease brægdas, & þine soðfaestan / lare hie forgeaton & þinne dom ne gemundon; ac minre neaweste a / wilnodon & þine forhogodon.’ ll. 89–91

‘From me they learned blasphemous language and false tricks, and they forgot your true doctrine and did not remember your judgement; but they always desired my society and disdained yours.’

**Vercelli Homily X**

‘Ac hyne se hælend eft þara / leana myndgode, ða he cwæð: ‘Ne gemundest ðu na Salomones cwiðe / þe he cwæð: …’’ ll. 126–28

‘But the Saviour afterwards remembered those gifts, when he said: “You do not at all remember Solomon’s saying that he said: …’

**Vercelli Homily X**

‘[Ac] ic his giomrunga gehyrde & // geseah hwæt ðu dydest minum þearfan þam þe þe mildheortnesse / bædon. & þu hie oferhogodest & [geunrotsodest & þinne andwltan / fram him awendest &] ne gemundest no hwæt se witega cwæð: …’ ll. 135–38

‘But I heard his groaning and saw what you did [for] my needy ones, those that asked thee [for] pity. And you despised them and became sad and averted your face from them and did not at all remember what the prophet said: …’

**Vercelli Homily X**

‘Gesælige bioð þa ðe þæt rice gemunað: unlæde bioð þa þe þam wiðsacah.’ l. 257

‘Blessed are those who remember that kingdom: accursed are those who forsake [it].’

**Vercelli Homily XI**

‘Uton nu gemunan hu us ece dryhten on his godspelle lærde & / þus cwæð: …’ ll. 21–22

‘Let us now remember how the eternal Lord in His gospel taught us, and said thus: …’
Appendix: Concordance

Vercelli Homily XII
‘Her [hie] syndon swiðe mihtige þam to fultumigenne þe hine nu / giornlice in þyssw worulde gemunaþ.’ ll. 43–44

‘Here they are exceedingly powerful as a support to those that now in this world eagerly remember them.’

Vercelli Homily XIV
‘Men ða leofestan, þis synt halige dagas & gastlice & ussum sawlum / læcedomlice, & we micle nyðearfe habbað þæt we ðæt geornlice geþencen / & gemynen, þa hwile þe we ðære tide benigen þe us nu gyt / God for his mildheortnesse gerymed hafað, þæt we ða halgan Godes / æwe & þa godspellian lare in urum mode lufien & on urum þæawum / begangen, þe he sylfa lærdæ þa hwile þe he licumlice on worlde wæs / mid mannum, & þæt we ne læten þas hwilendlican þing & þas feallendlican / þysse worulde ure mod beswican þurh deofles facen & his / leasunga.’ ll. 1–9

‘Beloved men, these are holy days, and spiritual and salutary to our souls, and we have great need that we eagerly consider that, and remember while we possess the time that at the present time God through of his mercy has extended to us, so that we in our mind love God’s holy lore and the evangelical teaching, and in our customs practise, that he himself taught while he was bodily in the world with men, and so that we do not allow these transitory and perishable things of this world to ensnare our mind through the devil’s treachery and his lying.’

Vercelli Homily XIV
‘Ne bið sio ure ben / & sio ure onsægdnes Gode andfengu nymþe sio heorte sie clæne fram / æcum niðe & fram ælceræ wrohte & unsybbe, swa he sylfa, drijhten, be / ðam cwæð: ‘Si offers munus tuum ad altare.’ ‘Þu, man,’ cwæð he, ‘gif / ðu þin lac to ðam wiofode bringe & þu þær gemynæ þæt þin broðor / hwylcne hete oððe hwylce unsybbe wið þe hæbbe, forlæt ðu þær þin / lac beforan þam wiofode & gang ærest & geþinga wið hine, & cum eft / to ðam wiofode þæt ðu ðin lac & þine onsægdnesse Gode agife.’’ ll. 102–109

‘Nor is our prayer and our offering acceptable to God unless the heart is pure from every hatred and from every strife and unkindness. Thus he himself, the Lord, said concerning that: “Thou man”, he said, “if you bring your offering to the altar and you remember there your brother, against [whom] you have hatred or hostility, leave your offering before the altar, and first go and reconcile with him, and afterwards come back to the altar so that you [can] give your offering to God.”’
Vercelli Homily XVI

‘Ac utan we gemunan hu ure yldran, þa ærestan men, þurh / hwylc þing he ærest æt frymðe in gesette.’ ll. 177–79

‘And let us remember how our ancestors, the first people, through what things they forfeited the happy life in Paradise, where the Lord first set them at the beginning.’

Vercelli Homily XVIII

‘Gemunde he þæt Godes bebod þæt he sylfa on his / godspelle bebead: he swa cwæð ðæt se Godes man ne sceolde be ðam / mergendæge þencan, ðy læs ðæt were þæt he ðurh þæt ænig þara / goda for[y]lde þe he ðonne ðy dæge gedon meahte, in weninge / hwæðer he eft þæs morgendæges gebidan moste.’ ll. 39–43

‘He remembered God’s command, which He Himself commanded in His gospel: thus He said that the man of God must not think about tomorrow, lest it were that he through that [might] give up any of those good things that he was able to do that day, in doubt whether he again may be allowed to experience the morning.’

Vercelli Homily XVIII

‘Ac miltsa ðu þonne hwæðre / us & gemyne ure þearfe.’ ll. 252–53

‘But nevertheless, then show mercy to us, and remember our need.’

Vercelli Homily XIX

‘Men ða leofestan, us gedafenæþ ærest þæt we gemunen & gereczen be / Gode ælmihtigum, þe geworhte heofonas & eorðan & ealle gesceafta, / þone we sculon gelyfan þrynlicne on hadum & anlicne on spede: …’ ll. 1–3

‘Beloved men, it is becoming to us that we first remember and converse about almighty God, who made the heavens and earth and all the creatures, whom we must believe three-fold in persons and singular in substance.’

Vercelli Homily XIX

‘Men þa leofestan, uton gemunan þone cwide þæs eadigan / apostolys Petris; he cwæð: ‘Se deoful us symle ýmbepridað.’’ ll. 104–105

‘Beloved men, let us remember the saying of the blessed apostle Peter; he said: “The devil always besets us.”’
Vercelli Homily XXII  ‘Þonne þu gefele þæt sar, gemyne þæt cwicsusles fyr.’  l. 91

‘Whenever you feel that pain, remember the fire of living punishment.’

Vercelli Homily XXII  ‘Ac wiðstandað him nu þa hwile þe ge magon & moton, & settað / togeanes eowres lichoman lustum cwicsusles fyres bryne, & settað / beforan eow þone egeslican dom, & eowres deaðes dæg gemunað, for / ðan ælce dæg us nealæceð þære sawle gedal & ðæs lichoman.’  ll. 111–14

‘But withstand him now as long as you are able and may, and against your body’s desires set the burning of the fire of living punishment. And set before you the fearful judgement, and remember the day of your death, because each day draws near[er] to us the parting of the soul and the body.’

Vercelli Homily XXII (x3)‘Gemyne þinne scippend & gemyne ðæt ðu geworht eart & ongyt / hwylcne þe God gesceop & gemyne hwylc wyrhta þe geworhte & hu // fæger[e] scyppend þe sawle on sette & sende.’  ll. 135–37

‘Remember your creator and remember that you are made and understand for what God created you; and remember what kind of workman made you and how carefully the creator sent [a] soul to you and set [it] in [you].’

Vercelli Homily XXII  ‘Eala ðu, man, gif ðe nu gyt þines lichoman uneðnessa / hrinen oðþe hie ðe cnys]sende fyrwetgynnesse lære oðde nu gyt þin / mod þe forhealdnesse mnigie, gemyne þa towedian & þa unasecgendlican / witu, hu grimme hie synt.’  ll. 167–70

‘Oh! You, man, if at the present time your body’s difficulties lay hold of you, or they urge you to overwhelming curiosity, or [if] at the present time your mind reminds you of unchastity, remember the future and the unspeakable torments, how grim they are.’

Vercelli Homily XXIII  ‘He ða hine hider & þyder / gelomlice on his mode cyrde, & he gemunde þa ærran fyrena & leahteras / þe he gefremede & geworht hæfde, [& þa maran & unmiætran þe he / sylfa dyde, þonne] he wende þæt he hie æfre gebetan ne meahte.’  ll. 23–26
‘He himself frequently turned that hither and thither in his mind, and he remembered the earlier crimes and sins that he had brought about and made, and the larger and more excessive [?sins] that him himself might do, he thought that he was not ever able to remedy them.’

_Blickling Homily II_  ‘Gemunon we nu ure / dæghwamlican synna þe we wið Godes willan geworht habbaþ, / þæt we mid eallum mægene hie beton mid fæstenum, & mid / gebedum, & mid ælmes-weorcum, & mid soþre hreowe.’ II. 25.14–25.17

‘Let us remember our daily sins, which we have done against the will of God, so that with all [our] strength we [might] amend them through fasts, and with prayers, and with almsdeeds, and with true penitence.’

_Blickling Homily III_  ‘He cwaþ, ‘Ga þu onbæcling, & gemyne / þe sylfne hu mycel yfel þe gelamp for þinre gitsunga & / oforhydo, & for þinum idlan gilpe; & forþon ic þe ne fylge, / forþon on þyssum þrim þu eart oforswiþed.’’ ll. 31.12–31.15

‘He said: “Go you behind, and remember you how great an evil befell you because of your avarice and pride, and because of your idle boasting; and therefore I do not follow you, therefore in these three [things] you are overcome.’

_Blickling Homily V_  ‘Hu mæg / he gastlicne wæstm þonne habban & healdan, gif he ne wile / hine him to Gode gelyfan, & mid inneweardre heortan gemunan / & geþencan hu David se sealmsceop ongan smeagan & þencan, / hwylce þæs godan mannes weorc & his dæda wæron; …’ ll. 55.9–55.13

‘How may he then have and hold spiritual fruit, if he himself does not wish to believe in God, and with a sincere heart remember and consider how David the psalmist began to reflect and think what were the works and the deeds of a good man?’

_Blickling Homily V_  ‘wa biþ / þonne þæm mannum þe ne ongytaþ hisse worlde yrmþa, þe hie to / gesceapene beþ, & hie nellap gemunan þone dæg heora forþfore, / ne þone bifgendan domes dæg, ne hie ne gelyfaþ on þæt ece / wuldor þæs heofenlican rices …’ ll. 61.2–61.5

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12 All quotations from the Blickling Homilies are taken from R. Morris (ed.), _The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century: From the Marquis of Lothian’s Unique Ms. A.D. 971_, EETS OS 58 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1880).
‘Woe is to those men, then, who do not understand the hardships of this world for which they are created, and will not remember the day of their forth-faring, nor the terrible day of doom, nor believe in the eternal glory of the kingdom of heaven.’

**Blickling Homily VI**

‘Gemunon we symle þæt we þa god don þe us Godes bec læraþ, / þæt is þonne, fæsten and halige wæccan, & ælmessylena æfter / urum gemete; & mid manegum oþrum gastlican mægenum we / magon geearnian þæt we urum Drihtne bringþ godra weorca / swetne stenc.’ ll. 73.26–73.30

‘Let us remember always that we do those good [things] which God’s book teaches us, that is fasting and holy vigils, and almsgiving according to our means; and with many other spiritual strengths we are able to earn, so that we bring to our Lord the sweet scent of good deeds.’

**Blickling Homily VIII**

‘Eac / we magon geþencean þæt þæt hefigre is, þæt man mid mandædum / & mid synnum him sylfum geearnige edwit, þonne mon / mid godum & sôþfæstum dædum geearnige him þa ecean ræste / æfter þisse worlde; þonne sceolon we singallice gemunan þone / egesfullan domes dæg, se cumeþ nu ungeara; & we þonne beoþ / standende beforan Drihtnes þrymsetle, & anra manna gehwylc / sceal forþ-beran swa god swa yfel swa he ær dyde, & þonne / edlean onfon be his sylfes gewyrhtum.’ ll. 101.23–101.31

‘We are also able to consider that which is more oppressive, that men earn disgrace for themselves through evils deeds and sins, while through good and true deeds men earn for themselves the eternal rest after this world; then we must continually remember the awful doomsday that now comes soon; and we then will be standing before the Lord’s throne, and each man alone shall bring forth [whatever] he did previously, whether good or evil, and then receive his reward according to his own merits.’

**Blickling Homily VIII**

‘Þonne sceolon we nu / gemunan ure nyd-þearfe, & geneh geþencean emb ure saula / þearfe þe læs ure deaþ urum feondum to gefean weorþe.’ ll. 101.31–101.33

‘Then we must now remember our necessity, and often think about our soul’s need lest our death should come to pass as a joy to our enemies.’
Blickling Homily X
‘& us is mycel nedþearf þæt we us sylfe geðencean / & gemunan & þonne geornost, þonne we gehyron Godes bec / us beforan reccean & rædan, & godspell seeggean, & his wuldorþrymmas / mannum cyþan.’ ll. 111.15–111.18

‘And it is a great necessity that we think to ourselves and remember, and then [the] most eagerly when we hear God’s book read and explained before us, and the gospel told, and His heavenly glories revealed to men.’

Blickling Homily X
‘Eala þu freond & min mæg, / gemyne þis & ongyt þe sylfne, þæt þu eart nu þæt ic wæs io; / & þu byst æfter fæce þæt ic nu eom; …’ ll. 113.22–113.24

‘Oh you, my friend and kinsman, remember this and know yourself, that you are now that [which] I formerly was; after an interval, you are that [which] I now am!’

Blickling Homily X
‘gemyne þis & oncnaw þæt / mine welan þe ic io hæfde syndon ealle gewitene & gedrorene, & / mine herewic syndon gebrosnode & gemolsnode.’ ll. 113.24–113.26

‘Remember this and know that my riches, which I formerly had, are all departed and perished, and my dwellings are fallen to pieces and decayed.’

Blickling Homily XI
‘Ah wuton / we þæt nu geornlice gemunne þa hwile þe we magon & motan; / uton betan þa geworhtan synna & ælmihtigne Drihten georne / biddan þæt he us gescyldwe wið þa toweardan; & uton we / symle þæs dæges fyrdi & egsan on ure mod settan; …’ ll. 125.2–125.6

‘But let us now eagerly remember that, [in] the time that we may and can; let us remedy those performed sins and earnestly ask the almighty Lord that he shield us against those impending [things]; and let us always fix in our mind the fear and terror of this day.’

‘uton / gemunan hu uncuþ bið æghwylcum anum men his lifes tid, / æghweþer ge ricum ge heanum, ge geongum ge ealdum, hwilce / hwile hine wille Drihten her on worlde lætan [beon].’ ll. 125.6–125.9
‘Let us remember how to each single man, whether powerful or wretched, young or old, his life’s time is unknown, what time the Lord wishes to allow him here in [this] world.’

_Blickling Homily XI_ ‘… & ðæt oft gita manegum mannum gelimpèþ, þonne hie ðæt leoth / geseoþ on niht scinan swa beorhte, ðæt heora heortan beoð / þurh ðæt innan gemanode, & þurh godes gife, & hie heora / sylfra lif þe gearor ongeotæþ, & hie eft færinga þe maran hreowe / dop heora synna, þonne hie gemunæþ þa mycclan eaþmodnesse, / & hu luflice he us ærest gesohete hider on middangeard on menniscne / lichoman of his þæm hean heofonlican setle, & hu eaþmod / he for mannum waes lichomlice; …’ ll. 129.6–129.13

‘And it still happens often to many men, whenever they see that light shine so brightly in the night, that their hearts are through that, and through God’s grace, inwardly exhorted, and they more thoroughly understand their own life. And immediately afterwards they do regret the more their sins, when they remember then [Christ’s] great humility, and how willingly he first sought us, hither in the world in a human body, from his exalted heavenly throne, and how humble he was in the flesh before men.’

_Blickling Homily XI_ ‘þonne hie / ðæt eall gemunan & þurh ðæt leoth gemanode beoþ, þe hie of / þere halgan stowe scinan geseoþ, & oft a manige men þurh / ðæt to sopre bote gecyrræþ, & gode & medeme for Gode geweorþaþ, / ge efne eac manige hæþn e men ungeleafsume oft þurh / ðæt to Godes geleafan gecyrræþ, þe hie geseoð hu God þa stowe / weorþaþ.’ ll. 129.20–129.26

‘Then they remember all that and through that light, which they see shine from that holy place, are exhorted; and often many men turn forever to that true remedy through it, and become good and worthy before God, and also even many unbelieving heathen men often turn to belief in God through it, [those] who see how God honours the place.’

_Blickling Homily XII_ ‘Swa gemunde & wiste / ure se heofonica Fæder his þa leofan & þa gestreonfullan bearn / afysed & on myclum ymbhygdum wæron æfter him.’ ll. 131.26–131.28

‘Thus our heavenly Father remembered and knew [that] his beloved and precious children were inspired with longing and in great anxiety after him.’
Blickling Homily XIV  ‘Seo Elizabeþ þonne wæs unwæstmfæst / þara godcundra mægena, & ¹³ þeah þe heo þæs bearnes / lata ware; heo þonne þæs bearne noht lata ne wæs, þonne / hwæþere æt þære halgan Elizabet seo hire gebyrd naht gemunan, / þe heo hire on ylda þa ware?’  ll. 163.6–163.10

‘Elizabeth was [not] barren of divine virtues; and although she was late of child, yet she was not late of child. Nevertheless, as to the holy Elizabeth, [should we] not bear in mind the condition in which she, in her old age, might be?’

Blickling Homily XVIII  ‘Gemunde he þæt Drihten bebead on þæm godspelle, de crastino / non cogitare, þæt se Godes man ne sceolde be þan morgendæge / þencean, þylæs þæt ware þæt he þurh þæt ænig þara / goda forylde, þe he þonne þy dæge gedon mihte, & ðæ weninge / hweðer he eft þæs mergendæges gebidan moste.’  ll. 213.21–213.25

‘He remembered that the Lord commanded in the gospel, de crastino non cogitare, that the man of God ought not to think about the morrow, lest it were that through that he should put off any of the good [things] which he might do that day; however, he must afterwards await the expectation of the morrow.’

Blickling Homily XVIII  ‘We þæt witon þæt þæt is þines modes willa, þæt þu / mote þas world forlætan & Crist geseon. Ah miltsa þu hweþre / us & gemyne þu ure þearfa.’  ll. 225.19–225.21

‘We know that it is your mind’s will, that you must leave this world and see Christ. But pity us nevertheless and remember our needs.’

Blickling Homily XIX  ‘[Gemune ge / hu manega earfoðnesse] fram Iudeum ic wæs ðrowiende, hie me / swingon, & hi me spætlædon on mine ondwleotan; …’  ll. 237.9–237.11

‘Remember how many afflictions I suffered from the Jews, they scourged me and they spat in my face; …’

¹³ Morris: & seems superfluous
±mynd (usu. +) fn. memory, remembrance, Æ,BH,Met : memorial, record, Æ : act of commemoration, Bl,MH : thought, purpose, Bl : consciousness, mind, intellect. on +m. niman to recollect. [*mind*]

**Genesis**

‘Swylce on ðære mægðe maga wæs haten / on þa ilcan tid Tubal Cain, / se þurh snytro sped smiðcreftega wæs, / and þurh modes gemynd monna ærest, /sunu Lamehes, sulhgeweorces / fruma wæs ofer foldan, siððan folca bearn / æres cuðon and isernes, / burhsittende, brucan wide.’ ll. 1082–89

‘Likewise in that country, in that same time, [there] was a man called Tubal Cain (descendant of Lamech), who through the faculty of wisdom was a skilled workman and, through the thought/remembrance of his mind, was the originator of plough-making over the earth, the first of men [to do so]; afterwards the children of the nation knew of brass and of iron, and far and wide enjoyed city-dwelling.’

‘Swiðe on slæpe sefa nearwode / þæt he ne mihte on gemynd drepen / hine handum self mid hrægle wryon / and sceome þeccan, swa gesceapu væron / werum and wifum, siððan wuldres þegn / ussum fæder and meder fyrene sweorde / on laste beleac lifes ðeðel’ ll. 1570–76

‘In sleep his heart became contracted so that – stupefied in his mind – he was not able by his hands to conceal himself with clothing and to cover his shame; just such creatures were men and women, when the Thane of glory with a burning sword shut up the homeland of life behind our father and mother.’

‘… He frean hyrde / estum on eðole, ðenden he eardes breac, / halig and higefrod; næfre hleowlora / æt edwihtan æfre weordæð / feorhberendra forht and acol, / mon for metode, þe him æfter a / þurh gemynda sped mode and dædum, / worde and gewitte, wise þance, / oð his ealdorgedal oleccan wile.’ ll. 1951–59

‘He willingly obeyed his master in the homeland, holy and wise, while he enjoyed the country. Never [should] a living being, one who has lost a protector from disgrace, ever become a man afraid and dismayed before his Creator, who to Him always afterwards – through his faculty of mind – wishes to please [Him] with spirit and deeds, with word and intellect, with wise thought, until his separation from life (i.e. until his death).’
‘… Ne wiste blondenfæax / hwonne him fæmnan to bryde him bu weron, / on ferhôcofan fæste geneawrod / mode and gemynde, þæt he mægða sið / wine druncen gewitan ne meahte.’ ll. 2602–2606

‘Nor did the grey-haired one know when the maidens both were as a bride to him; his spirit and mind [were] fast confined in his breast, so that – drunk with wine – he was not able to know of the maidens’ venture.’

*Daniel*

‘Þa his gast ahwearf in godes gemynd, / mod to mannum, siððan he metod onget.’ ll. 629–30

‘Then his spirit turned to remembrance of God, [and] his mind [turned] to people, when he recognised the Creator.’

*Andreas*

‘… Wes a domes georn; / læt ðe on gemyndum hu ðæt manegum wearð / fira gefrege geond feala landa, / ðæt me bysmredon bennum fæstne / weras wansælige. …’ ll. 959–63

‘Be forever eager for reputation; allow that to remain in [your] thoughts, how [it] became well known [to] many people throughout many lands, that unblesed men mocked me.’

*Soul & Body I*

‘… Þæt mæg æghwylcum / men to gemynde, modsnotra gehwam!’ ll. 125–26

‘That can be as a remembrance to each man, to everyone prudent of mind.’

*Elene*

‘Hu is ðæt geworden on þysse werþeode / þæt ge swa monigfeald on gemynd witon, / alra tacna gehwylc swa Troiana / þurh gefeoht fremedon? …’ ll. 643–46

‘How happened it among this nation that you keep in mind so many of all the tokens [that] the Trojans accomplished through battle?’

‘… þe on gemynd nime / þære deorestan dægweorðunga / rode under roderum, …’ ll. 1232–33

‘… who take into [their] mind-memory the feast-day of that dearest rood under the heavens.’
‘… Ic wæs weorcum fah, / synnum asæled,  sorgum gewæled, / bitrum gebunden,  bisgum beþrungen, / … / …  gife unscynde / mægencyning amæt  ond on gemynd begeat, / torht ontynde, tidum gerynde, / bancofan onband,  breostlocan onwand, / leoðucræft onleac.  …’  ll. 1242–50

‘I was guilty of deeds, ensnared by sins, tormented by sorrows, severely bound, oppressed by cares […] the mighty King meted out glorious grace, and in [my] mind infused [it], revealed [its] brightness, at times enlarged [it], unbound the bodily frame, unwound the mind, [and] unlocked poetic art.’

‘… Gode no syððan / of ðam morðorhofe  in gemynd cumað’  ll. 1302–1303

‘Never afterwards [will they] come into the mind/remembrance of God from that place of torment.’

**Christ I**

‘… Þæt is healic ræd / monna gehwylcum  þe gemynd hafað, / þæt he symle oftost  ond inlocast / ond geornlicost  god weorþige.’  ll. 430–33

‘That is excellent counsel to each [one] of men who has remembrance, that he always most often and most thoroughly and most eagerly honour God.’

**Christ II**

‘Sumum wordlaþe  wise sendeð / on his modes gemynd þurh his muþes gæst, / æðele ondgiet.  …’  ll. 664–666

‘To one [He] sends wise speech into his mind’s remembrance through His mouth’s spirit, His noble understanding.’

**Christ III**

‘… Sceal on leoht cuman / sinra weorca wlite  ond worda gemynd / ond heortan gehygd  fore heofona cyning.’  ll. 1036–38

‘The form of his deeds and the memory of his words and the intention of his heart must come into the light before the King of the Heavens.’

‘… Nales dryhtnes gemynd / sipþan gesecað,  …’  ll. 1536–37

‘Not at all [shall they] seek the Lord’s mind/remembrance.’
Appendix: Concordance

*Guthlac A*

‘… lare bærón / in his modes gemyn ðe mongum tidum.’ ll. 117–18

‘… [they] carried teaching into his mind’s thought/memory many times.’

‘… Him wæs godes egsa / mara in gemynund þonne he menniscum / þrymme æfter þonce þegan wolde.’ ll. 167–69

‘[For] him, awe of God was larger in his thoughts whenever he wished, according to his will, to accept human glory.’

‘Stod seo dygle stow dryhtne in gemynund’ l. 215

‘The secret place remained in the thoughts of the Lord.’

‘sealde him snyttru on sefan gehygdum, / mægenfæste gemynð. …’ ll. 473–74

‘[God] gave to him wisdom in his mind’s thoughts, a steadfast mind-memory.’

‘sume ær, sume sið, sume in urra / æfter tælmearce tida gemynndum / sigorlean sohtun. …’ ll. 876–78

‘[Men have done God’s will] … some before, some afterwards, some according to date, in the memories of our own times, [they have] sought the reward of victory.’

*Juliana*

‘… Hire wæs godes egsa / mara in gemynndum, þonne eall þæt maþþumgesteald / þe in þæs æþelinges æhtum wunade.’ ll. 35–37

‘For her, awe of God was larger in her thoughts than all of that treasure which existed in that prince’s property.’

*Wanderer*

‘þonne maga gemyn ðæ mod geonðhweorfed; / greteð gliwstafum, … / secca geseldan. …’ ll. 51–53

‘… whenever his mind traverses the remembrance of his kinsmen; he approaches joyfully … the companions of warriors.’
Precepts

‘… weoruda scyppend / hafa þe to hyhte, haligra gemynd,’
ll. 62–63

‘Have you as a hopeful joy the Creator of companies, and the remembrance of the holy [ones].’

Vainglory

‘þæt mæg æghwyle mon eaþe geþencan, / se þe hine ne læteð on þas lænan tid / amyrran his gemyndum modes gælsan’ ll. 9–11

‘Each man can easily consider that, he who himself does not allow the spirit’s wantonness to wound his thoughts in this transient time.’

Riming Poem

‘… Flah is geblowen / miclum in gemynde; …’ ll. 47–48

‘Wickedness has blossomed greatly in the mind-memory.’

Soul & Body II

‘… þæt mæg æghwylcum / men to gemyndum modsnotterra.’
ll. 120–21

‘To each wise man that is as a remembrance [? or reminder].’

Riddle 59

‘… Him torhte in gemynd / his dryhtnes naman dumba brohte / ond in eagna gesihð, …’ ll. 7–9

‘Dumb, it brought the name of its Lord brightly into [their] mind-memory and into [their] eyes’ sight.’

Resignation

‘… fierst ond ondgiet / ond geþyld ond gemynd …’ ll. 22–23

‘respite and understanding and patience and mind-memory [or thought]’

Husband’s Message

‘Ne mæg him worulde willa gelimpan / mara on gemyndum, …’
ll. 30–31

‘Nor can a pleasure in the world befall to him greater in his thoughts…’

Beowulf

‘se scel to gemyndum minum leodum / heah hlifian on Hronesnæsse,’ ll. 2804–2805
‘It shall rise up high on the whale’s ness, as a remembrance to my people.’

‘… nalles eorl wegan / maððum to gemyndum, …’ ll. 3015–16

‘Not at all shall a nobleman carry these treasures as remembrances.’

*Paris Psalter 62*  ‘Swa ic þin gemynd on modsefan / on minre reste rihte begange, / and on ðærmergen on þe eac gewene, / forðon þu me on fultum fæste gestode.’ ll. 7.1–7.4

‘Thus I fittingly [shall] perform your remembrance in [my] heart in my resting place, and in the early morning [I] also think on thee, because you [have] fast remained as a suport to me.’

*Paris Psalter 77*  ‘Na gemynd hæfdan, hu his seo mycle hand / on gewindæge werede and ferede.’ ll. 42.1–42.2

‘[They] had no remembrance [of] how his great hand defended and carried [them].’

*Paris Psalter 101*  ‘þu on ecnysse wunast awa, drihten; / wunað þin gemynd, þenden woruld standeð.’ ll. 10.1–10.2

‘You, Lord, dwell forever in eternity; while the world remains, Your remembrance continues.’

*Paris Psalter 102*  ‘Swa his soðfäestnyss swylce standeð / ofer þara bearna bearn þe his bebodu healdað, / and þæs gemynde mycle habbað, / þæt heo his wisfæst word wynnum efnan.’ ll. 17.1–17.4

‘Thus His fairness likewise remains upon their children’s children who keep His commandments, and have great remembrance, that they compare His wise words to benefits.’

*Paris Psalter 108*  ‘Eall þæt unríht þe his ealdras ær / manes gefremedan, on gemynd cume / and on ansyne ures drihtnes; / ne adilgode wesæ deorce fyrene, / þæt his modur ær mane fremede.’ ll. 14.1–14.5
‘[Let] all [of] that wrongful crime that his ancestors previously brought about, come into the mind and into the countenance of our Lord; [let not the] dark sins be blotted out that his mother might have done previously [as a] crime.’

‘Næs him milde gemynd on modsefan, / and he þearfendra ðriste ehte;’ ll. 16.1–16.2

‘Merciful remembrance for them was not in [his] heart, and he avariciously pursued the needy ones;’

*Paris Psalter 110*  
‘He gemynd dyde mærra wundra; / mildheort he is and modig; …’  
ll. 3.1–3.2

‘He made remembrance of glorious wonders; He is mercifull and brave;’

*Paris Psalter 111*  
‘Byð on eceum gemynde æghwylc þæra / þe his soðe and riht symble healdeð,’ ll. 6.1–6.2

‘[They] are in everlasting remembrance, each one of them who always holds His truth and right …’

*Paris Psalter 134*  
‘Ys þin nama, drihten, nemned ece, / and þin gemynd, mihtig drihten, / on ealra worulda woruld wynnum standeð.’ ll. 13.1–13.3

‘Thy name, Lord, is called everlasting, and thy remembrance, mighty Lord, remains in the joys of the world of all worlds.’

*Paris Psalter 149*  
‘Him on gomum bið godes oft gemynd; / heo þæs wislice wynnum brucað, / and sweord habbaþ swylce on folmum.’ ll. 6.1–6.3

‘God’s achievements are often in their mind; they wisely enjoy these as benefits, and likewise have a sword in their hands.’

*Boethius: Meter 1*  
‘Wæs him on gemynde mæla gehwilce / yfel and edwit þæt him elðeodge / kyningas cyðdon. …’ ll. 54–56

‘Each of the times that foreign kings had revealed to him evil and disgrace was in his mind.’
Boethius: Meter 7

‘forþæm on þære dene  
drihten selfa / þara eadmetta  
eardfæst  
wunigað, / þær se wisdom a  
wunað on gemyndum.’ ll. 37–39

‘…because in that valley of humility the Lord Himself remains settled, where the wisdom always dwells in minds.’

Boethius: Meter 22

‘he cwæð þætte æghwilc  
ungenmyndig / rihtwisnesse  
hræðe  
sceolde / eft gewendan  
into sinum / modes gemynde;  …’ ll. 55–58

‘He [i.e. Plato] said that each one forgetful of righteousness must soon turn again to him[self], into his mind’s remembrance.’

Menologium

‘… Sculan we hwæðere gyt / martira gemynd ma areccan, / wrecan wordum forð,  
wisse gesingan’ ll. 68–70

‘However, we must render still more of the remembrance of martyrs, impel words forth, wisely sing’

Thureth

‘Gemyndi is he  
mihta gehwylcre / þæs þe he on foldan  
gefreman  
mæg, / and him gehwancie  
þeoda waldend / þæs þe he on gemynde  
madma manega / wyle gemearcian  
metode to lace;’ ll. 5–9

‘He is mindful of each of the powers which He is able to do on the Earth, and the Ruler of Peoples [will] reward him, because he wishes in his mind to designate many treasures as an offering to the Creator.’

Seasons for Fasting

‘We þæt feorþe sceolen  
fæsten gelæstan / on þære wucan þe bið  
ærur full / dryhtnes gebyrde,  
and we mid deornum scylan / wordum and  
weorcum  
waldres cyninge / in þa ylcan tid  
eallum gemynde /  
þeodne deman  þinga gehwylces, / efne swa swa ærran,  
and þone  
arwesan / leofne leoda frean  
lifes biddan.’ ll. 71–78

‘And we must in that same tide pray to the King of Glory, the people’s Prince of all things, the honoured beloved Lord of people’s life, with pleasing words and deeds, and with all our mind.’
The bishop then entreats (he who obtained this book, which you now have in your hands and behold) that you might ask help of Him for these holy ones, to whom remembrances are marked herein.

Vercelli Homily IV
‘& ic wæs ṣin feðe & ṣin / gang & ṣin staðol & ṣin gemynd;’ ll. 279–80

‘[Soul to body:] … and I was your power of movement and your journey and your support and your memory/mind.’

Vercelli Homily V
‘Oṅ ṣan wæs getacnod ṣat he com on menniscum / lichoman se wolde his ṣara geCOREnra naman awritan in ecre gemynde / eadges lifes, swa he him gehet & swa cwæd: ‘Gaudete et exultate quia / nomina uestra scripta sunt in célig.’’ ll. 101–105

‘About then [it] was betokened that he came in a human body, who wished his chosen one[s] [of those] to write his name in everlasting memory of the blessed life, thus he promised them and thus said: ‘rejoice because your names are written in heaven’.’

Vercelli Homily VII
‘Sume men synt ḍe him ṣyncd ṣat nawdēr ne æt ne drync ne genihtsumige, / ær he oð ḍa hraco ful sie, & ṣonne ḍa oferflëlle hyra / gemynd forleosaœ.’ ll. 84–86

‘[There] are some men to whom it seems that neither food nor drink satisfies, until he to the throat is full, then the gluttony destroys their mind.’

Vercelli Homily IX
‘… & læten we us singallice bion on gemyndum & on gefæncum ṣæs egesfullican / deges tocyme, on ḍam we sculon Gode riht agifan for ealles / ures lifes dædum ṣe we si ḍoðe ær gefremedon fram fruman ures / lifes [oð] ende; for ḍan ṣe we nu magon behydan & behelian ura dæda, / ac hie biode ḍonne opena & unwrigena.’ ll. 4–8
‘… and let that terrible day’s advent be always in [our] memories and in [our] thoughts, on which we must give truth/justice to God for all of our life’s deeds that we ever did from the beginning of our life until [its] conclusion; because now we are able to hide and conceal our deeds, but then they are open and uncovered.’

Vercelli Homily IX
‘For þy nis / nan man þæt he þ[an]on aweg hine astyrian mæge, & for ðam is mycel / ðearf æghwylcum men to onwariganne, þam þe ænig andgit hæbbe / oðð[e] wisdomes ænigne dæl, þæt he þis symle hæbbe on gemyndum / þære egesfullan stowe.’ ll. 118–22

‘Therefore there is not one man that is able to move himself away; and therefore there is great need for each man – he who may have any understanding, or any portion of wisdom – to beware that he always has in [his] thoughts/memories/mind that terrible place.’

Vercelli Homily XX
‘Þæt byð ðeahhwæðere oferswiðed þurh soðe lufe & þurh gehealdsumnesse & þurh gemynd þæs ecan fyres & þurh ege Godes andweardnesse.’

‘Yet that is overcome through true love, and through abstinence, and through memory of the eternal fire, and through fear of God’s presence.’

Vercelli Homily XX
‘Þonne ys þære adle læcedom / gemynd þære godcundan godnesse, …’ ll. 134–35

‘Then is the medicine of the disease the memory of the divine goodness.’

Vercelli Homily XX
‘Uton us nu ða warnian, men ða leofestan, wið ealle þas / foresprecenan word geornlice, & habban us symble on gemynde hu þa / ðe her on worulde ongean Godes willan heora lif lybbað oð heora / endedæg, hwilce witu & hwilce yrmða …’ ll. 189–92

‘Let us now, most beloved of men, eagerly take heed against all these previously-mentioned speeches, and let us have/hold always in mind/memory/thought how those who live their life here in the world against God’s will until their day of death, what are the torments, and what hardships, [etc.] …’
Appendix: Concordance

Vercelli Homily XXI  ‘Witodlice we cumað orsorge on domes dæge toforan Cristes / þrymsetle, & beoð rihtwise þonne on ecum gemynde. & we beoð fram / him forð gecigede to þam heofonlican gebeorscipe mid þam mærum / heahfæderum Abrahame & Isace & Iacobe & callum haligum werude.’ ll. 116–19

‘Certainly we come without anxiety on doomsday before Christ’s throne, and are righteous then in eternal memory/record, and we are by him called forth to the heavenly feast…’

Blickling Homily III  ‘Us is / þonne mid mycelre gemynde to geþencenne þæt se Ælmihtiga, / se þe wæs on Godes hiwe, God Fæder efnece, onfeng þæt hiw / ure tydран gecynde.’ ll. 29.1–29.4

‘[It] is to us, then, to consider with much thought that the Almighty … accepted the form of our frail kind.’

Blickling Homily V  ‘On helle beoþ … / … þa / scinlæcan þa þe galdor-cræftas & gedwolan begangaþ, & mid / þæm unware men beswicaþ & adwellaþ, & hi aweniaþ from / Godes gemynde mid heora scinlacum, & gedwolcraeftum; …’ ll. 61.21–61.25

‘In hell are … those magicians who practise occult arts and heresies, and by these ensnare and lead astray unthinking men, and with their sorceries and occult arts wean them away from remembrance of God.’

Blickling Homily VI  ‘Ne cwæþ he þæt na forþon þe him wære ænig / gemynd þearfendra manna, ah he wæs gitsere, & se wyresta / sceæpa; …’ ll. 69.9–69.11

‘He did not say that at all because any thought of needy men might occur to him.’

Blickling Homily VI  ‘… forðon þis wæs gedon on min gemynd.’ l. 69.20

‘… because this was done in remembrance of me.’

Blickling Homily VII  ‘& se þe nu forhogaþ þæt he / Godes bebodu healde, ofþe ænig gemynd hæbbe Drihtnes eæmpmodnesse, / se þær sceal heardne dom gehyræn…’ ll. 83.15–83.17

\[14\] A late hand has put \textit{e} between \textit{f} and \textit{n}. (Morris, p. 29, n. 1)
‘And he who now neglects that he keeps God’s commands, or that he holds any memory of the Lord’s humility, he shall there hear hard judgement.’

**Blickling Homily X**  ‘Magon we / þonne, men þa leofestan, us þis to gemyndum habban, & þas // bysene on urum heortum stapelian, þæt we ne sceolan lufian / worlde glengas to swiþe ne þysne middangeard; …’ ll. 113.33–115.2

‘May we then … have this as remembrances to us, and establish in our hearts this example.’

**Blickling Homily XI**  ‘Forlet he ure Drihten his þa / halgan fet þær on þa eorþan besincan mannum to ecre gemynde,…’ ll. 127.21–127.22

‘Then our Lord let his holy feet sink into the earth as an everlasting remembrance to men.’

**Blickling Homily XV**  ‘… heora gemynd wunaþ…’ l. 171.32

‘… their memory/remembrance continues …’

**Blickling Homily XV**  ‘feower syllice stanas on þære ilcan stowe alegdon, to gemynde / & to cyþnesse þæs apostolican siges …’ ll. 189.15–189.16

‘[Then men] laid down four wondrous stones, as a remembrance and as a testimony of the apostolic victory.’

**Blickling Homily XVII**  ‘be… his eadgan gemynde se þe is on ealra ymbhwyrfte / to weorþienne & to wuldrienne his ciricean, …’ ll. 197.5–197.6

‘concerning … his blessed memory, he who among all people is to honour and to glorify his churches.’
Appendix II: Outline of Larger Concordance

ferhọloca † m. breast, body

ferhọsefa † (i, y) m. mind, thought, EL.

forgietan5 (i, y) w. a. or g. to ‘forget,’ Bf,Bo,G,Ps ; AO,CP. For comps. v. forgit-.

gästgyrene † n. spiritual mystery : thought, consideration.

±healdan7 (a) (tr. and intr.) to ‘hold*’ (‘i-hald’), contain, hold fast, grasp, retain, possess, inhabit, Æ, Chr ; CP : curb, restrain, compel, control, rule, reign, Chr, CP : keep, guard, preserve, foster, cherish, defend, Æ, Bl, Mt, Ps ; AO : withhold, detain, lock up : maintain, uphold, support, Æ, LL : regard, observe, fulfil, do, practise, Bl ; Æ : satisfy, pay : take care, CP : celebrate, hold (festival) : hold out (intr.), last : proceed, go : treat, behave to, bear oneself : keep in mind. ongēan h. resist. tō handa h. hold (land, etc.) of another.

hordcofa m. treasure-chamber, closet : (†) breast, heart, thoughts.

hordloca m. treasure-chest, coffer : (†) secret thoughts, mind.

hreðer † (a, æ) m. breast, bosom : heart, mind, thought : womb.

±hwierfan (æ, e, ea, i, y) to turn, revolve, change, transfer, convert, return, Bo,CP ; AO : wander, move, go, depart, AO : exchange, barter : (+) overturn, destroy. [‘wharve’]

±hycgan (i) to think, consider, meditate, study : understand : resolve upon, determine. purpose : remember : hope. h. fram be averse to (v. also hogian).

+hygd (i), hygd (PPs 1204, VH) fn. mind, thought : reflection, forethought.

hyge (i) † m. thought, mind, heart, disposition, intention, Seaf,Da : courage : pride, GEN354. [‘high’]

ingemynd † fn. recollection, memory, mind.

ingemynde well-remembered, EL 896.

±manian I. (o) to remind, admonish, warn, exhort, instigate, Æ,CP : instruct, advise, Æ : claim, demand, ask. II. (+) to be restored to health? GD33830.

mödsefa † m. heart, mind, spirit, soul : thought, imagination, purpose, character.

+mun (w. g.) mindful, remembering, AO 4811.

±munan (usu. +) pres. 1, 3 sg. man (mon), 2 manst, pl. munon, pret. munde swv. to think about, be mindful of, remember, mention, Bl, Jul, Lk ; Æ,AO,CP : consider. [‘i-mune’]

±mynd (usu. +) fn. memory, remembrance, Æ,BH,Met : memorial, record, Æ : act of commemoration, Bl, MH : thought, purpose, Bl : consciousness, mind, intellect. on +m. niman to recollected. [‘mind’]

+mynde I. mindful, EL1064. II. river-mouth, BH39817 (v. JAW31).

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1 Definitions are taken from J. R. C. Hall, A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary, fourth edition (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1996)
Appendix II: Concordance Outline

±myndgian to remember, be mindful of: (w. g.) remind, W; CP: intend: commemorate, mention, PPs: exhort, impel, warn: demand payment, LL206.1. +myndgod aforesaid. ['ming']

myndgiend m. one who reminds, B1105.

±myndig mindful, recollecting, Mk: memorable: thoughtful, wise, HELL 77.

myne I. ↑ m. memory, remembrance: feeling, affection, love, favour: purpose, desire, wish, B: memorial. m. witan to love. ['min'] I. m. minnow, WW. III. =mene

ofergietan to forget, disregard, neglect, CP.

ofermunan swv. to remember, recollect, CP.

ofðencan to recall to mind, CP 349; VH18.

onmunan swv. pres. 3 sg. onman, pret. onmunde to esteem, think worthy of, consider entitled to, CP: refl. care for, wish: remember: remind, B2640.

danchycgende thoughtful, B2235.

±dancol thoughtful, mindful: prudent, wise: (+) desirous: (+) suppliant.

danc-woord. -woordlic (u, y) thankworthy, acceptable: thankful, grateful: memorable. adv. –lice gladly, willingly, CP.

±dencan I. to ‘THINK*’ (‘i-thenche’), imagine, think of, meditate, reason, consider, AÆ; AO,CP: remember, recollect, CP: intend, purpose, attempt, devise, AO: learn: wish, desire. long for. [danc] II. =ðyncan

ungemynig (w.g.) unmindful, forgetful, heedless (of), AÆ.

+witloca m. mind, MET, CP469.
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