The representation of the mind as an enclosure in Old English poetry

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ABSTRACT

The frequent representation of the mind as a potentially secure enclosure in Old English poetry has unrecognized implications for interpretation. The mind as imagined by Anglo-Saxon poets exhibits both capabilities of an enclosure: containment and exclusion; but the most common image is one of containment, specifically of reified thoughts, knowledge or discourse as figurative treasure objects. This model's interaction with traditional value systems invests it with ethical meaning: what is inside or outside of the mind either should or should not be allowed to pass through its boundary. Mental valuables are closely analogous to material wealth and are subject to the same imperatives for their management and use. The poetry also reflects anxiety about the privacy of the individual mind, which allows the accumulation and concealment of a perverse *hord* of deceit, sin or folly that can cause social harm through a failure of containment.

Many linguistic and literary traditions commonly represent the mind as a container or enclosure. In Modern English, expressions formed on this conceptual model are generally simple (on the order of *having* or *keeping something in mind*) and are so conventional as to go unrecognized as figures of speech in normal usage.[1] Old English poets, by contrast, often seem more aware of the possibilities for rhetorical manipulation of this idea. To be sure, constructions of similar plainness to those in Modern English do occur frequently in Old English, as when a thought or emotion is stated to be *in breostum* or *in mode*. Still, while we may not always be able to locate the dividing line between deliberate metaphor and presumed physical or metaphysical fact for Anglo-Saxon writers,[2] we can observe that they sometimes linger over or develop references to the immaterial mental enclosure, presenting the idea more elaborately and exploiting its associative possibilities for literary effect.

Yet the ubiquitous figure of the mind as a container, which appears to have had an enduring place in Anglo-Saxon poetic imagination, rarely receives explicit critical attention;[3] we fail to notice the variety of ways in which it is

[1] While G. Lakoff and M. Johnson do not give it extended attention, see for instance their citations of the metaphor 'Mind As Container' in *Philosophy in the Flesh: the Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York, 1999), pp. 338–9 and elsewhere.

[2] See the observations of E. G. Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction and the Interpretation of *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer* and *The Penitent's Prayer*', *Anglia* 73 (1956), 413–66, at 414–15 and 428–47.

[3] A few studies have made brief or passing reference to the immaterial mind as a metaphoric enclosure: M. Matto, 'A War of Containment: the Heroic Image in *The Battle of Maldon*', *SN*

used and remain relatively insensitive to the implications of its deployment in a given context. This article will examine the portrayal of the mind as an enclosure in Old English poetry, with emphasis on the frequency and diversity of this concept's occurrence, and, more importantly for interpretation, on the value systems within that traditional discourse according to which it is invested with ethical meaning.[4] In the first section below, I will discuss ways the idea of the mind as an enclosure finds expression in Old English poetry, particularly at the level of word and phrase, that suggest its simultaneous familiarity and vitality to Anglo-Saxon writers and audiences. Section II will turn to a consideration of certain notional relationships between interior and exterior, private and public, that the motif's usage implies.

I

We take for granted that the skull presents an impenetrable barrier to a would-be observer of another person's thoughts and feelings: only through some act

74 (2002), 60–75, at 68–9, suggests that this concept might influence interpretation of the word *ofermod* in that poem; A. Harbus makes isolated references to the figure of the mind as a container in *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry*, Costerus ns 143 (Amsterdam, 2002), but does not discuss this model; and both E. Jager, 'The Word in the "Breost": Interiority and the Fall in *Genesis B*', *Neophilologus* 75 (1991), 279–90, and recently Matto, 'True Confessions: *The Seafarer* and Technologies of the *Sylf*', *JEGP* 103 (2004), 156–79, mention the mind as a metaphorical container but turn to other ideas loosely related to the one on which I will focus.

[4] It seems best here not to attempt an over-precise definition of the mind. I will use the term, as we normally do, with reference to the notional site of consciousness, cognition, emotion, knowledge and memory. Several Old English simplices have the general meaning 'mind'. M. R. Godden considers *mod*, *hyge*, *sefa* and *ferð* to be essentially synonymous ('Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. M. Lapidge and H. Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 271–98, at 288–9, with similar comments on pp. 291 and 293). Harbus (*Life of the Mind*, pp. 28–37 and 40–9) states the case cautiously but largely concurs: she grants that '*mōd*, *hyge*, and *ferhð* (but less often *sefa*) can refer to the mind in the general sense' (p. 37) while finding it likely that these words' overlapping semantic ranges and our cultural distance from their usage obscure some distinctions that must have existed but perhaps were not fixed, depending on 'heavily contextualised and therefore changing connotations' (p. 32). Likewise, S.-A. Low, 'Approaches to the Old English Vocabulary for "Mind,"' *SN* 73 (2001), 11–22, emphasizes the probable flexibility and largely overlapping range of 'mind' terms while avoiding attributing true synonymity to them. J. Roberts, C. Kay and L. Grundy, *A Thesaurus of Old English*, 2nd corr. impression, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 2000), in items 08.01 and 06.01, distinguish the seat of emotions from the seat of thought, but this division does not represent direct study of the question: the compilers of the *Thesaurus* had to draw their data uncritically, for the most part, from the standard lexicons of Old English (see its introduction, esp. pp. xvi–xviii and xxviii). The re-examinations of the primary literature by Godden ('Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', esp. pp. 285–91), Low ('Approaches') and Harbus (*Life of the Mind*) suggest no such clear distinction as that implied by the *Thesaurus* between intellectual processes and emotional ones.

of communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, deliberate or unintentional, can our interior lives, our private experience, become known outside of our own heads. I state this idea in terms familiar to our own time and culture,[5] but Anglo-Saxon poets contemplated the same principle of subjective privacy, and they distinguished sharply between an interior reality and a public, exterior one. Underlying many Old English poetic terms used in reference to the mind – *breostcofa*, *breosthord*, *breostloca*, *ferhðcleofa*, *ferhðcofa*, *ferhðloca*, *heortscræf*, *hordcofa*, *hordloca*, *hreþercofa*, *hreþerloca*, *modhord*, *runcofa*, *gewitloca* – is an interior/exterior model of personal mentality and its inaccessibility to others, expressed lexically as an analogy between the mind's 'contents' and material possessions that may be confined in an enclosure and protected or hidden.[6] If a distinction between interior and exterior experience, conceived as such, had not been familiar to Anglo-Saxon poets and their audiences, this system of metaphors would not have been so readily comprehensible as to require no further contextual explanation, even for apparent nonce-formations like *ferhðcleofa* and *heortscræf*;[7] and note, too, the absence in several of these compounds of any element whose signification is restricted to an immaterial referent like 'mind'.[8] If we can assume

[5] Placing the corporal seat of the mind in the head, for instance. Godden's conclusion that the corporal location of the mind for the Anglo-Saxons was 'in the heart or thereabouts' ('Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', p. 290) is generally accepted. Note also that whereas casual modern conceptualizations (in contrast to more formal psychological theory) tend to imagine the mind as identical to the experiencing self, there are recurrent indications in Old English poetry that to Anglo-Saxons, the mind was not necessarily monolithic and could perform actions over which the self had limited control (an observation first made by Godden, ibid., pp. 292–5). When represented as an enclosure, the mind may contain things of which the conscious self is unaware, as in *Daniel* 108–67, where Nabuchodonosor's inability to recall his dream is portrayed in these terms.

[6] Some other poetic words for the mind and mental functions, like *ingemynd*, as well as some that occur commonly in prose, like *ingehygd*, *ingeðanc*, *ingeðoht*, and *ingewitnes*, likewise emphasize interiority and subjective privacy but do not themselves imply a metaphor of the thoughts or feelings as a material hoard.

[7] *Ferhðcleofa* in *Paris Psalter* 111.1 and *heortscræf* in *Judgment Day II* 39a. Except as otherwise noted, I cite all Old English poetry from ASPR. Unattributed translations are mine. Throughout this essay I base statements about word frequency and distribution on consultation of *A Concordance to 'The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records'*, ed. J. B. Bessinger, Jr. and P. H. Smith, Jr. with M. W. Twomey (Ithaca, NY, 1978), and *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English*, ed. A. di P. Healey and R. L. Venezky (Toronto, 1980).

[8] In these words, only *ferhð-* and *mod-* are solely immaterial in their denotations, and a few of the listed compounds (*hordcofa*, *hordloca*, *runcofa*) include no element that can, used as a simplex, unmetaphorically signify an immaterial faculty. *Hreþer* exists independently as a term with physical denotations, as in the phrase *mod on/in*(*nan*) *hreþre* (e.g., *Andreas* 70b, *Paris Psalter* 54.22, *Paris Psalter* 118.53), but dominated in verse by its reference to the mind, and *breost*, of course, appears independently with the physical denotations 'breast' and 'abdomen' as well as with the meaning 'mind'. These terms' semantic duality, with senses both corporeal and abstract, is comparable to that of ModE *heart* and, as Low points out ('Approaches', 17), derives from semantic extension by metonymy.

any accuracy at all in poets' estimations of their audiences' abilities to understand what they wrote, the lack of an explanatory tendency in passages using these poetic terms points to a firm basis for these compound words in traditional thought about the mind and in traditional patterns of language used to describe it.

Some of the compounds listed above do not always mean 'mind'. When they do, it is because they are extensions into the distinctively poetic lexicon of a concept that finds expression in simplices as well. This system of compound words, that is to say, reflects and helps to sustain, but does not itself generate, the model of the mind as a container. Rather, these poetic terms depend on a presupposed affinity between the mind's functional characteristics and those of a secure enclosure or collection of treasure items.[9] We can observe this reliance in the metaphor's frequent appearance without recourse to the special set of poetic compounds, most often in very simple forms (for example, *in mode*), but sometimes in more developed or overtly figurative statements. For example, in *Beowulf*, Hrothgar tells the hero,

> site nu to symle ond onsæl meoto,
> sigehreð, secgum swa þin sefa hwette.
>
> (489–90, repunctuated)[10]

In *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care*, Alfred says that 'Gregorius gleawmod' ('wise-minded Gregory') was knowledgeable in 'ryhtspell monig' ('many a true discourse') through his 'sefan snyttro, searoðonca hord' ('mind's wisdom, a hoard of clever thoughts', 5b–7); and in Advent Lyric VII, such a cache of private wisdom or understanding, this time concerning the conception of Christ, is opened to Joseph's view by Mary when 'seo fæmne onwrah / ryhtgeryno' ('the virgin uncovered true mysteries', *Christ I* 195b–196a) to explain her miraculous impregnation in response to Joseph's doubts and anxiety. The basic idea of the mind as a secure enclosure for valuables can become rhetorically ornate, still without using any of the 'mind' compounds. It is given perhaps its most intricate formulation of this kind near the end of Exeter Book Riddle 42, where the speaker asks,

> Hwylc þæs hordgates
> cægan cræfte þa clamme onleac

[9] P. Clemoes, *Interactions of Thought and Language in Old English Poetry*, CSASE 12 (Cambridge, 1995), identifies the following as a principle of Old English poetic signification: 'Under normal conditions implicit affinity between actors was free to trigger the substitution which we call metaphor: one doer could replace another if it was common knowledge that the action concerned sprang from an inherent capability which both shared' (p. 96).

[10] 'Sit now at the feast and unseal your thoughts, victory-glory, to men as your mind may urge'. I cite *Beowulf* from *'Beowulf' and 'The Fight at Finnsburg'*, ed. F. Klaeber, 3rd ed. (Lexington, MA, 1950), omitting Klaeber's diacritics.

þe þa rædellan wið rynemenn
hygefæste heold heortan bewrigene
orþoncbendum? (11b–15a)[11]

Now that the door to the mental treasure chamber may be unlocked by someone clever enough in 'cægan cræfte' ('the skill of a key') – the metaphorical key being the sequence of *runstafas* (6a), the runic anagram of the solution, that has been presented in lines 8b–11a – the answer to the riddle, previously concealed within the treasury of the riddler's mind, is expected to be 'undyrne / werum æt wine' ('unhidden to men at wine', 15b–16a).

This conceptual model's attractiveness to Anglo-Saxon poets can be seen particularly clearly when the mind-as-container figure is introduced into Old English verse adaptations of sources that did not originally include it. Several examples of this tendency occur in the metrical version of the Psalms in the Paris Psalter. *Paris Psalter* 70.7, 'sy min muð and min mod mægene gefylled' ('may my mouth and my mind be filled with praise'), adds the mind itself in translating Vulgate (< Septuagint) 'repleatur os meum laude' ('let my mouth be filled with praise', Psalm LXX.8).[12] The Vulgate (< Hebrew) version of Psalm CXVIII.2, saying that they are blessed who 'in toto corde requirunt eum' ('seek him with their whole heart'), is expanded in *Paris Psalter* 118.2 to a statement that they are blessed who

hine mid ealle innancundum
heortan hordcofan helpe biddað.[13]

Similar is *Paris Psalter* 118.145, where Vulgate (< Hebrew and < Septuagint) 'clamavi in toto corde' ('I cried with my whole heart') becomes

Ic mid ealle ongann inngehygde
heortan minre . . .
ceare cleopian.[14]

We find a similar phenomenon in *Meters of Boethius* 22, although here the conception of the mind as an enclosure is added in the process of versifying a vernacular prose text. This poem is based ultimately on Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, bk 3, metre 11, which concludes with a statement attributed to Plato: 'quod quisque discit immemor recordatur' ('whatever each person learns,

[11] 'Which one has, with the skill of a key, unlocked the bands of the treasury door which had held the riddle thought-secure, concealed with cunning bonds of the heart, against men skilled in mysteries?'

[12] I cite the Vulgate Bible from *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. B. Fischer *et al.*, rev. R. Weber, 4th corr. ed. (Stuttgart, 1994), and give English translations from the Douay-Rheims Bible. *Fragments of Psalms* 70.7 gives the same Old English phraseology as *Paris Psalter* 70.7.

[13] 'With the entire inner treasure chamber of the heart ask him for help.'

[14] 'I began to cry out my care with all the inward thought of my heart.'

that forgetful one is remembering').[15] In his Old English prose adaptation, King Alfred alters and expands the thought: 'swa hwa swa ungemyndig sie rihtwisnesse, gecerre hine to his gemynde; þōn fint he þær þa ryhtwisnesse gehydde mid þæs lichoman hæfignesse ȝ mid his modes gedrefednesse ȝ bisgunga'.[16] The Old English verse rendering, based on the vernacular prose version and probably also written by Alfred, elaborates the passage further yet, largely by introducing the idea of the mental container:

> æghwilc ungemyndig
> rihtwisnesse hine hræðe sceolde
> eft gewendan into sinum
> modes gemynde; he mæg siððan
> on his runcofan rihtwisnesse
> findan on ferhte fæste gehydde
> mid gedræfnesse dogora gehwilce
> modes sines mæst and swiðost,
> and mid hefinesse his lichoman,
> and mid þæm bisgum þe on breostum styreð
> mon on mode mæla gehwylce. (*Meters of Boethius* 22.55–65)[17]

Neither in this case nor in those from the Paris Psalter is the presence of the mind-as-enclosure figure necessary for the sense of the verse adaptation. It appears to have been added for aesthetic reasons by Anglo-Saxon writers drawn to a traditional way of representing the mind that they felt was appropriate to the stylized poetic register.

But what best illustrates the traditional nature of the mind-as-container metaphor's appeal or perceived utility is its involvement in the formation of nominal compounds, a fundamental element of Old English poetic diction. Consider the following passage from *The Wanderer*:

> Nis nu cwicra nan
> þe ic him modsefan minne durre
> sweotule asecgan. Ic to soþe wat
> þæt biþ in eorle indryhten þeaw,
> þæt he his ferðlocan fæste binde,

[15] Latin quoted from *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii philosophiae consolatio*, ed. L. Bieler, CCSL 94 (Turnhout, 1957), III, met. xi, 16 (p. 60).

[16] *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), XXXV.i (p. 95, lines 20–3). 'Whoever may be forgetful of righteousness, let him turn himself to his memory. Then he will find righteousness there, hidden by the body's heaviness and by his mind's confusion and cares.'

[17] 'Each one forgetful of righteousness should direct himself quickly back into his mind's memory; he can then find righteousness in his (or its) secret chamber, hidden fast in the heart by the daily confusion of his mind most and especially, and by the heaviness of his body, and by the cares that agitate a man in his mind, in the heart, at all times.'

healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille.
Ne mæg werig mod wyrde wiðstondan,
ne se hreo hyge helpe gefremman.
Forðon domgeorne dreorigne oft
in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste;
swa ic modsefan minne sceolde,
oft earmcearig, eðle bidæled,
freomægum feor feterum sælan. (9b–21)[18]

It has sometimes been assumed that many of the compound words I listed earlier refer more properly, or primarily, not to the mind, but to its corporal seat, the bodily 'container' in which the mind resides. An example of this interpretation, convenient because it is advanced in an important article on the mind in Old English literature, is Malcolm Godden's reading of these same lines. Although Godden includes 'various compounds based on' *mod*, *hyge*, *sefa* and *ferhð* in his listing of terms for the mind itself, his subsequent discussion of *The Wanderer* makes it clear that he takes those which appear here – at least, those expressing containment – to mean not the mind, but its bodily location: he reads *breostcofa* (18a) as 'the mind's location' and on the basis of that determination then retrospectively takes the terms *ferhðloca* and *hordcofa* (13a and 14a) to have been references to the same corporal enclosure.[19]

However, it usually makes better sense in poetic contexts to understand these and similar terms to mean 'the mind (imagined as a secure container)', and I suggest that these lines from *The Wanderer* are no exception.[20] I understand all three of these words here as referentially parallel with *mod* (15a) and with *modsefa* in its two appearances framing this passage (10a and 19a), the second of which is particularly supportive of this view: *modsefa* is not a container word at all and has no possibility of corporal reference, so its use here

[18] 'There is now none of the living to whom I dare clearly speak my mind. I know it for truth, that in a nobleman it is a lordly habit that he securely bind his mind-stronghold, guard his treasure chamber, think what he will. The weary mind cannot resist fate, nor the sorrowful thought provide help. Therefore those eager of reputation often bind a grievous thing securely in their heart-chamber; thus I, often miserable, parted from my homeland, have had to fasten my mind with fetters.'

[19] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', pp. 288–9 and 291–3. Godden's understanding of these terms in *The Wanderer* is probably also influenced by P. Clemoes's interpretation of this passage in '*Mens absentia cogitans* in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*', *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London, 1969), pp. 62–77, esp. 75–7, an article which (as Godden acknowledges) is an important antecedent to his own inquiry.

[20] Harbus agrees that these words have the basic meaning 'mind'; see *Life of the Mind*, pp. 53–4, and her rendering of these same lines from *The Wanderer* (ibid. 132–3). Cf. also Low's table of 'mind' words ('Approaches', p. 12). I will identify the few instances of these compounds that I regard as exceptions below.

appears to indicate clearly that the mind itself is what the speaker must 'feterum sælan' ('fasten with fetters', 21b). This interpretation seems less strained as a reading of the lines in sequence, and it recognizes a sustained use of a widely attested metaphor that also occurs independently of compound words whose meanings might be disputed. The very point of the traditional image is that the mind itself is something that can be shut fast, and it is that quality which is important in these lines.

Rosemary Woolf briefly but explicitly addresses the semantics of this family of compounds in her edition of *Juliana*. Woolf states that 'when not combined with verbs of opening or closing such compounds [as *ferhðloca*] retain only the meaning of the first element', which is to say that they mean 'mind', more or less.[21] But the semantic constraint she asserts, categorically changing the meaning of compounds of this type to denote the corporal seat of the mind when they are used with certain verbs, is arbitrary. In the contexts Woolf describes, which would presumably include the quoted passage from *The Wanderer* with its emphasis on sealing and containment, there is no reason to disregard (in effect) the second element of these terms. Rather, in such contexts these compounds retain a strong connection between their elements that all the more clearly shows them representing the mind as a container. Far from giving rise to special cases that must be separately accounted for, nothing could be more appropriate connotatively than the frequent appearance of this group of compounds with verbs of opening and closing.

Some of the difficulty with compounds like *breostcofa* and *ferhðloca* may stem from the odd fact that many of these words do, as Woolf suggests, ordinarily refer to something roughly equivalent to what their initial elements denote.[22] For this reason, they can superficially appear to be left-headed endocentric compounds: compounds the referent of whose first element is identical to the referent of the entire compound word. Woolf's statement in particular, as quoted above, implies that this is how she interprets their internal structure. However, left-headedness would present a serious problem, a problem that brings us to a much more compelling reason than literary impressions for perceiving these compounds' dependence on an underlying concept of the mind as a container.

If formed in the usual way, by the joining of two free morphemes into one word, English determinative (*tatpurusa*) compounds will always be right-

[21] *Cynewulf's 'Juliana'*, ed. R. Woolf, rev. ed. (Exeter, 1977), p. 24, n. to line 79.

[22] This is true for *ferhðcofa*, *ferhðloca* and *ferhðcleofa* (whose first element almost always denotes the mind); *breostcofa*, *breostloca*, *heortscræf*, *hreþercofa* and *hreþerloca* (whose first elements often denote the mind, in a sense transferred from their original anatomical denotations); and probably *breosthord* and *modhord*. Some distinction between 'mind' compounds in *-hord* and those of the *-cofa*, *-loca* type will be made below.

headed: that is, the second element will be the head, denoting the compound's referent, and will be modified in some way by the first element, the determinant.[23] Left-headed endocentric compounds are scarce in English of any period and occur only in lexicalized phrases, like *mother-in-law*, *jack-o'-lantern* (< *Jack* (generic masculine name) *with a lantern*) and *court martial*, where their unusual formation – not originally as compounds at all – in some cases remains transparent in their morphological reflection of rules governing phrasal structures rather than compounds (for example, *mother-in-law*, standardly pluralized as *mothers-in-law*). So strong is the instinct for the right-headedness of compounds in English, moreover, that even in words of this rare phrase-derived type, a tendency to realign not only morphological accidence but even semantics with the right element can be observed.[24] A left-headed structure for the

[23] See D. Kastovsky, 'Semantics and Vocabulary', *The Cambridge History of the English Language*, gen. ed. R. M. Hogg, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1992) I, 355–408, at p. 356. Old English does have a very few coordinate (*dvandva*) nominal compounds (also sometimes called copulative, additive or aggregative) – joining two nouns *x* and *y* in a cumulative semantic relationship to denote 'two things, *x* and *y*, together' – but it is an unproductive type surviving in fossilized form from Primitive Germanic. The only sure examples of coordinate compounds in Old English are *suhtorfædran* 'nephew and uncle' (*Widsith* 46) and the names for the numerals 13 through 19. C. T. Carr is probably right that *aþum swerian* (*Beowulf* 84 (manuscript reading) is a scribally misconstrued archaic compound **aþumsweoran* 'son-in-law and father-in-law' (Carr, *Nominal Compounds in Germanic*, St Andrews Univ. Publ. 41 (London, 1939), pp. 40–1); Klaeber emends to 'aþumsw*eor*an' in his edition and offers the same explanation (p. 130, n. to line 84). Cf. T. J. Gardner, *Semantic Patterns in Old English Substantival Compounds* (Hamburg, 1968), pp. 90–2; and Kastovsky, 'Semantics and Vocabulary', pp. 365–6. The coordinate type must not be confused with the much more frequent appositive (*karmadhāraya*) type, in which a formation *x-y* denotes 'a (single) thing that is both *x* and *y*', exemplified in words like OE *winedryhten* 'friend-and-lord' and *werwulf* 'man-and-wolf'. See Carr, *Nominal Compounds*, pp. xxvi and 328–9, and Gardner, *Semantic Patterns*, pp. 92–5.

[24] A case in point is the prompt adaptation of early ModE *helpmeet*, which can plausibly be analysed as left-headed in its first uses, to *helpmate*. It is not a regularly derived compound, but arose from a misunderstanding of a phrase in the Authorized Version of the Bible: *OED* etymologizes it as 'a compound absurdly formed by taking the two words *help meet* in Gen. ii. 18, 20 ('an help meet for him', i.e. a help . . . suitable for him) as one word'. *OED* states that *helpmate* (first attested in 1715) was '*prob.* [my emphasis] influenced in origin by' the earlier *helpmeet* (first attested in 1673), but the case seems beyond doubt: *helpmeet* would not have seemed grammatical as a noun to native speakers based on any contemporary use of the free morpheme *meet*, so usage selected for a like-sounding right element that could make sense of the word as a compound with regular structure. A similar case of the instability of left-headedness is the reanalysis of *jack-o'-lantern*. Originally meaning 'a man with a lantern; a night watchman' (first attested in this sense in 1663), the word came to be regarded as denoting instead a kind of lantern (in this sense first attested in 1837), with a shift of headedness from JACK-*o'-lantern* to *jack-o'*-LANTERN (see *OED s.v.*). Another place to see the strength of the impulse to right-headedness is in the treatment of ModE *x-in-law* relation terms (*mother-in-law*, *brother-in-law*, etc.). The Standard English plural *xs-in-law* acknowledges this group's left-headedness as a feature of its still-transparent phrasal origin, but in spoken English the more regular-seeming plural *x-in-laws* is frequent; and even the most prescriptive schoolroom grammar

endocentric, determinative 'mind' compounds in Old English, then, would deviate radically from the linguistic rules that describe how compounds are made in English, past and present. Considering the productivity of this system of compounding elements, in their many combinative possibilities, to form words in the semantic field 'mind', positing such a linguistic anomaly in order to arrive at an analysis of their structure should be the strategy of last resort.

The challenge is how to reconcile Woolf's perception that these compounds normally mean 'mind' with Godden's perception that their second element must be their head. This problem proves illusory once we recognize the operation of metaphor, the dependence of the whole system of 'mind' compounds on the underlying concept of the mind as a secure container or enclosure.[25] These words are in fact normal right-headed nominal compounds, but ones in which the denotation governed by the second element (*-cofa*, *-hord*, etc.) is, most often, being used figuratively. Each most directly or literally denotes a container or store, and the determinant (*mod-*, *breost-*, etc.) specifies what kind of a container or store: namely, the kind *as which* the mind is figured by a metaphorical application of the second (head) elements. What I describe here is the same pattern of word formation that Peter Clemoes has called 'hybridization' in his discussion of compounding and other forms of poetic collocations. As Clemoes explains this two-step process, one term metaphorically substitutes for another that has some similar active potential – like *cofa* for *mod* (to apply his model to the semantic field I am discussing), because according to the concepts represented in the poetry, both enclose and hold things securely – and then the metaphoric term is further specified by the addition of a qualifying element that is proper only to the term that has been replaced, like adding *breost-* (which 'fits' *mod*) to *cofa* to produce the metaphor/hybrid *breostcofa*.[26]

would have difficulty insisting on treating the word as left-headed in the genitive case (*x's-in-law* or *x-in-law's*?). The existence of the back-formed compound *in-laws* 'relatives by marriage', very frequently used as a free morpheme (first attested in 1894, according to *OED s.v. -in-law*), shows the same gravitation toward right-headedness.

[25] Gardner thoroughly discusses metaphoric processes in the signification of Old English compounds (*Semantic Patterns*, pp. 122–34). He cites as metaphors (ibid. pp. 362–3) all of the 'mind' words I list that fall within the defined range of his study except *breostcofa*, and this appears to have been an accidental omission (see his glossary, p. 173, *s.v. cofa*). Gardner does not, however, recognize all of these as referring to the mind, as his glossary entries indicate.

[26] See Clemoes, *Interactions*, pp. 96–100 and 138. Cf. also Gardner, *Semantic Patterns*, p. 129: the 'heightened disparity [between head and referent] in the case of the compound metaphors depends for its resolution upon the concept of the determinant, which always is taken from the conceptual sphere of the figurative referent'. In Gardner's classification scheme, the 'mind' compounds I discuss are type II.3, metaphors 'based primarily on a point of similarity in quality, activity, function, or some other characteristic not involving physical appearance', in which the metaphoric substitution is 'concrete for abstract' (ibid. pp. 130–1).

What makes compounds of this type difficult to analyse is the curious effect they often have of re-literalizing what has begun in the head element as a metaphor by providing a literal frame of reference through the application of the determinant, and it is this effect that can make them appear *prima facie* to be left-headed endocentric compounds. However, the internal semantic organization by which I suggest we can best understand this system of 'mind' compounds gains support from other Old English compound words that are similarly constructed and likewise involve the operation of metaphor. Compare formations like *tungolgimm* 'star (imagined as a gem)' and *sæfæsten* 'sea (imagined as a stronghold)', both of which, like the 'mind' compounds, have a head element with metaphoric application and use the determinant to supply a literal frame of reference.[27] Directly relevant to our purposes are the compounds *lichord* and *licfæt*, both meaning 'body (imagined as a container)', which are exactly parallel to words like *modhord* and *breostcofa* and in context clearly mean 'body', not 'something which contains a body' (such as, for instance, a grave or coffin).[28] By analogy with these words, it becomes clear how compounds like *breostcofa* happen usually in the poetry to mean 'mind', not 'something in which the mind is contained', and their frequent use with verbs of opening and closing comes into focus as a logical extension of the same metaphor to a larger phrasal expression.

Even the acknowledged exceptions – the instances in which words that are elsewhere 'mind as container' compounds function instead as 'container for the mind' compounds – being as few as they are, do not undermine the understanding of their more common usage that I suggest.[29] Not all uses of the same compound must be to the same degree literal or figurative; the use of *hordloca* in its most literal sense 'container for treasure' in *Juliana* 43a, and the uses of *breostcofa* to mean a part of the body in *The Creed* 16a and in prose contexts, do not preclude the metaphoric use of these container words elsewhere to describe

[27] *Tungolgimm*, *Christ* 1150b; *sæfæsten*, *Exodus* 127b. With *sæfæsten*, cf. the semantically parallel *lagufæsten* 'sea' (*Andreas* 398b and 825b; *Elene* 249a and 1016a).

[28] *Lichord*, *Guthlac B* 956a and 1029a; *licfæt*, *Guthlac B* 1090a and 1369a.

[29] Five times in the poetic corpus, words of this kind refer to the body or some part of it: certainly *hreþerloca* in *Guthlac B* 1263b and almost certainly *hreþerloca* in *Seafarer* 58b mean 'body' or 'corporal seat of the mind'; *ferhðloca* in *Exodus* 267a is probably 'body'; *ferhðcofa* in *Genesis A* 2604a is probably 'corporal seat of the mind'; and *breostcofa* means 'womb' in *The Creed* 16a. In addition to these, there are two other cases where reference is not to the mind itself: in *Beowulf* 1719a, *breosthord* means 'contents of the mind' (which notwithstanding its different internal syntax still exemplifies the model of the mind as a container, being formed on *breost* 'mind', where the governing metaphor is clear also in the use of *ferhþ* in the same sentence); and *hordloca* in *Juliana* 43a, there and only there, has the compounded elements' literal sense 'treasure coffer' which elsewhere is extended metaphorically to denote the mind as a container of valuables. Apart from these seven instances, in my view all occurrences in poetry of the words in the list at the beginning of this section can be most plainly understood as referring to the mind.

another figurative container, the mind. With *breostcofa*, for instance, whose head element denotes a physical enclosure, the determinant *breost-* might in principle direct the word's reference in either of two directions, due to the fact that the simplex *breost* can mean either 'chest, abdomen' or (through a common semantic transference) 'mind'; and in addition to that duality, the use of *-cofa*, governing the reference of the word as a whole, can be metaphoric or literal. Moreover, compounds that share elements need not involve those elements in exactly the same relationships within different words: there is no reason to expect that all compounds with the head *-loca* will make their meaning in precisely the same way.[30] Thus the use of *hreþerloca* in the sense 'container for the mind' in *Guthlac B* 1263b is no evidence against the use of *ferhðloca*, *breostloca*, or indeed *hreþerloca* itself to mean 'mind as a container' elsewhere, any more than the dissimilar syntactic relationships between elements in *drincfæt* 'container *for* a drink' (e.g., *Beowulf* 2254a), *goldfæt* 'container *made of* gold' (e.g., *Daniel* 754a), *wundorfæt* 'wondr*ous* container' (*Beowulf* 1162a) and *lyftfæt* 'container *in* the sky' (riddle 29.3a, referring to the moon) indicate against one another or against the metaphorical *licfæt* 'body (imagined as a container)', a meaning that is above suspicion in its attested contexts.

Most of the 'mind' compounds I have included in the group under discussion have a head element that literally signifies an enclosure of some sort. The two others, *breosthord* and *modhord*, function similarly even though a *hord* is not a physical enclosure. A *hord* can both contain and be contained. It contains, conceptually, in that it is a collection of treasure items rather than a singular object, but it also may be contained within a treasure chamber, with a connotation of concealment. The exact meanings of *breosthord* and *modhord* must be determined in context by whether the figurative *hord*'s aspect of containing or of being contained is most pertinent.[31] The sole instance of *modhord* and three of the four occurrences of *breosthord* refer to the mind in its aspect as a containing or collective entity, 'the treasure store as which the mind is imagined'.[32]

[30] On compounds with the same elements but different contextual meanings, see F. C. Robinson, *'Beowulf' and the Appositive Style* (Knoxville, TN, 1985), pp. 15–18, and Gardner, *Semantic Patterns*, pp. 10–11.

[31] With emphasis on a *hord*'s nature as a thing contained or concealed, *modhord* would seem to mean 'the treasure in the mind', perhaps 'thoughts'; with emphasis on a *hord*'s nature as a grouping of constituent treasure items, the meaning would be 'the treasury (or collection of valuables) as which the mind is imagined'. *Breosthord* offers the same possibilities, with the added complication that *breost* can have the corporal denotation 'chest, abdomen' as well as the denotation 'mind'. *Breosthord* can thus be 'the treasure in the *breost*' or 'the treasury as which the *breost* is imagined', and in either case the determinant *breost-* theoretically could point to either the abdomen or the mind.

[32] In *Andreas* 167b–174, a speech act is represented as an unlocking of the *modhord*; in *Guthlac B* 942b–945a, the *breosthord* diminishes, as a treasure-store might; in *The Seafarer* 54b–55a, sorrow is *in breosthord*; and in *Beowulf* 2791b–2792a, a word breaks out of the *breosthord*.

The remaining appearance of *breosthord*, in *Beowulf* 1719a, refers to the harmful and violent mental impulses that began to amass within Heremod's mind, named separately as his *ferhð*. Here *breosthord* means 'the treasure of the mind' (that is, thoughts or disposition) rather than the mind proper and emphasizes a *hord*'s other aspect, that of being contained, with its connotation of concealment corresponding in this case to mental privacy.[33]

Another closely related poetic compound, *wordhord*, deserves consideration with respect to the metaphoric system that figures the mind as an enclosure for valuable mental objects. Words or longer utterances (*word* can, of course, signify either) are frequently reified in Old English poetry. Prior to their release into the external world of speaking and hearing, they exist in latent or potential form as particles of wisdom, knowledge, understanding, or sentiment, and until they are spoken they lie enclosed within the mind of the speaker.[34] This is why Hrothgar can praise a speech Beowulf has just made by telling him that 'Þe Þa wordcwydas wigtig Drihten / on sefan sende' ('the wise Lord sent those sayings into your mind', *Beowulf* 1841–1842a): the worthy utterances were not created by Beowulf's imagination in planning and performing the act of speech, but were first placed inside the container of his mind by God and then shared out by him to an appreciative Hrothgar. Later, Wiglaf revives the dying Beowulf for a moment, and when the old king speaks, the event is represented as the eruption into the exterior world of something already present in his mind: 'wordes ord / breosthord Þurhbræc' ('the point of a word broke out of his heart-hoard', 2791b–2792a). In the damaged final lines of Exeter Book Riddle 84, the reader is invited to produce the solution like a valuable object from the storehouse of the mind: 'hordword onhlid' ('uncover the treasure-word', 54a). If the clues have been properly interpreted, this implies, the correct solution has appeared within the reader's or auditor's mind during the course of the riddle such that now, as an atom of knowledge or wisdom, it merely awaits release.[35]

The metaphor implicit in statements such as these is inseparable from the interior/exterior model of mentality.[36] This connection also informs the poetic use of traditional instrumental-and-verb collocations denoting the act of oral

[33] The *DOE* definition *s.v. breosthord*, 'heart, mind, literally "treasure of the breast"', is deficient in not accommodating the distinction between the use of the word in *Beowulf* 1719a (in reference to the concealed contents of the mind) and the other three, where the definition 'heart, mind' applies unproblematically.

[34] Cf. E. Jager, 'Speech and the Chest in Old English Poetry: Orality or Pectorality?' *Speculum* 65 (1990), 845–59.

[35] Even if what is referred to here is the release of the solution from the riddler's mind (not the reader or auditor's), as in riddle 42 cited above, it merely shifts the location of the latent, objectified word from one mind to another.

[36] Cf. Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction', pp. 428–9.

expression, like *wordum mælan* or *wordum cweðan* 'speak with words', so that we need not see such a frequent construction as (according to Bosworth–Toller's analysis) a pleonasm.[37] The image, we should recognize, is that of a speaker sharing out his or her store of valuable knowledge or wisdom bit by bit, saying by saying, word by word; something is now being used publicly that has had a prior private existence. Thus the compound *wordhord* may be understood as a kenning for the mind itself, slightly more opaque than *modhord* or *breostcofa* but constructed on the same fundamental concept of the mind as an enclosure with contents. A *wordhord* is not merely a 'collection of words' in the modern sense (that is, 'vocabulary'), as Bosworth–Toller's definition 'word-hoard, store of words' would imply, but the discursive treasury – a container full of that which may be said, or thoughts – that its possessor can *onlucan* 'unlock' in the act of speech.[38]

The potential for close correspondence of meaning between *wordhord* and 'mind' words like *breostcofa* and *modhord* is implied in *Andreas*, where the act of speaking is denoted using a system of overlapping expressions (including *word-* as a substitution element) for letting the mind's contents out: God 'modhord onleac, / . . . ond þus wordum cwæð' ('unlocked his mind-hoard and thus spoke with words', 172b–173); Andreas recounts that a pagan priest 'hordlocan onspeon, / wroht webbade' ('unfastened his treasure chamber and wrought deceit', 671b–672a); and Andreas 'ongan ða reordigan . . . / . . . wordlocan onspeonn' ('began to speak then, unfastened his word-chamber', 469–70). In light of this formulaic system taken as a whole, there is little warrant for interpreting the two instances of *wordhord* in *Andreas* – lines 316b and 601b, in which Andreas and Christ respectively 'wordhord onleac' – as nods to the saint's and the Saviour's impressive vocabularies.

In fact, the distribution of *wordhord* in the poetic corpus indicates that as an element of this compound, *word-* normally denotes not a lexeme but an utterance of any length, a thing which may be said, and that the *wordhord* is the store

[37] *S.v. word* I (¶ *wordum*) and II (¶ *worde*) in *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth*, ed. and enlarged by T. N. Toller (Oxford, 1898); entries unmodified by T. N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Manuscript Collections of the Late Joseph Bosworth: Supplement* (Oxford, 1921), or A. Campbell, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Based on the Collections of Joseph Bosworth: Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda to the Supplement by T. Northcote Toller* (Oxford, 1972).

[38] Cf. M. Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100*, Cambridge Stud. in Med. Lit. 19 (Cambridge, 1994), p. 427, where Irvine departs from the usual modern definition of *wordhord* – 'repertoire of words, lexicon in the sense of a mere wordlist' – and emphasizes the term's implication of 'the power of language symbolic of the speaker's power'. In my view, this 'power of language' is a defining property of the speaker's mind, which is described for contextual reasons as the *wordhord* to emphasize the discursive substance in which its wisdom is formed and exported.

not just of any potential discourse, but specifically of wisdom or understanding. Similar to the examples from *Andreas* is *Beowulf* 259b, where *wordhord onleac* is used as the speech prefix for Beowulf's diplomatic reply to the coastguard's challenge. Reference to the mind as a treasury of wisdom is even more conspicuously appropriate in the term's occurrences in *Vainglory*, where the context explicitly describes an erudite figure sharing truth, and *Widsiþ*, where it introduces a lengthy display of cultural learning: a catalogue of peoples and rulers, with occasional comments of a sentential and historical nature, derived from the speaker's extensive travels.[39] Poem 6 of the *Meters of Boethius* begins by saying that personified Wisdom 'eft wordhord onleac, / sang soðcwidas' ('again unlocked the *wordhord*, sang truth-sayings', 1–2a), likewise clearly an act of sharing from a cache of wisdom, not merely finding the right words.[40] It is significant that every existing context of *wordhord*'s occurrence gives the term an ethically positive meaning. The mental store when described as a *wordhord*, unlike the *ferhþloca* of *Juliana* 79b or the *hordloca* of *Andreas* 671b, is unequivocally sapiential in nature; it never belongs to a wicked character or contains improper thoughts.

Of all of these compound words with similar construction and reference to the mind, none is very common: only *ferhþloca* and *wordhord* occur more than five times in the surviving poetic corpus, and they each make fewer than ten appearances, while several occur once only (*ferhþcleofa*, *heortscræf*, *hreþercofa*, *modhord* and *runcofa*). This twofold fact – the existence of a rich repertoire of 'mind' compounds, all based on the same underlying concept, in conjunction with the only occasional use of any particular one – suggests that this family of terms was both transparent and productive during the period when the poetry

[39] *Vainglory* 1–4: 'Hwæt, me frod wita on fyrndagum / sægde, snottor ar, sundorwundra fela! / Wordhord onwreah witgan larum / beorn boca gleaw, bodan ærcwide' ('Listen: an old sage, a wise messenger, long ago told me of many various wonders! The man learned in books uncovered his *wordhord*, the ancient saying of the prophet [or apostle], with wise teachings'); *Widsiþ* 1–3a: 'Widsiþ maðolade, wordhord onleac, / se þe monna mæst mægþa ofer eorþan, / folca geondferde' ('Widsith spoke, unlocked his *wordhord*, he who of all men had travelled the most among peoples, the races throughout the earth'). Widsith emphasizes the previous judgement of far-flung rulers that he is worthy of rich gifts, probably in hopes of inspiring a similar kingly performance in the present moment, but this rhetorical purpose itself has a didactic, sapiential aspect, as it asserts a philosophy of lordly generosity.

[40] Of all occurrences of the compound *wordhord*, this leaves only *Order of the World* 19b as a possible instance of the meaning 'poetic vocabulary' in the phrase *wordhordes cræft*. This case differs somewhat in that it layers or mixes the metaphor of the mental container with that of memory as inscription on a mental surface, but I believe that *wordhord* here is still compatible with the meaning 'treasury of (wise) utterances': 'scyle ascian, se þe on elne leofaþ, / deophydig mon, dygelra gesceafta, / bewritan in gewitte wordhordes cræft, / fæstnian ferðsefan, þencan forð teala' ('he who lives zealously, a man of profound thought, must inquire about the secrets of Creation, write upon (or in) the understanding the knowledge of a treasury of truths, fasten the mind, ever contemplate them well', 17–20).

we have was being written. Makers of Old English verse could actualize potential pairings of simplex elements as desired, and could rely on their audiences' ability to apply the conventional figure to unfamiliar words of a familiar type, rather than having to adhere more rigidly to well-established meanings for particular received combinations that audiences would already know.[41] It is also noteworthy that even those compounds in this group whose elements would lend themselves to corporal rather than mental reference – words of the *breostcofa* type – are in fact dominated by their metaphorical applications to the mind. Only *hreþerloca* (twice) and *breostcofa*, *ferhðcofa* and *ferhðloca* (once each) are attested at all in the poetry with a corporal meaning, and all of them also occur with metaphorical reference to the mind. *Breosthord*, *breostloca*, *ferhðcleofa*, *heortscræf*, *hordcofa*, *hreþercofa*, *modhord* and *gewitloca* are all composed of elements that would seem to allow reference to the body, but in fact have only mental reference in poetic usage. The same pattern is evident in the words that most literally mean 'treasure chamber', *hordloca* and *hordcofa*: *hordloca* means 'treasure chamber' once but 'mind' in its other two instances, and *hordcofa* means only 'mind' in poetry.

This system of compounds testifies strongly, then, to the contemporary viability of the mind-as-enclosure metaphor in Old English poetic discourse. We will now turn to a more particular consideration of how this metaphor is used.

II

The foregoing discussion has focused on lexical and rhetorical examples that have in common a presumed similarity between the mind and a container or store of valuables, according to which the mind's 'contents' are imagined as treasure items. While very frequent, this particular metaphoric system is not the only realization of the mind-as-enclosure concept that occurs in Old English poetry. Any enclosure has, in principle, a pair of complementary capabilities: containment and exclusion. Anglo-Saxon poets' uses of the concept of the mental enclosure are guided sometimes by one of these properties and sometimes by the other. Foregrounding the mind's ability to contain focuses attention on what lies inside the enclosure, while foregrounding its ability to exclude emphasizes what lies outside of it; so much is

[41] Some combinations of the separately attested first and second elements may be metrically impermissible: it is notable in particular that **sefa-* does not alternate with *breost-*, *ferhð-*, or *hreþer-* as a first element to pair with *-loca* or *-cofa*, a combination which would violate a constraint against the pattern ˘x-˘x hypothesized by J. Terasawa, *Nominal Compounds in Old English: a Metrical Approach*, Anglistica 27 (Copenhagen, 1994). (*Hreþercofa* and *hreþerloca* are allowed because *hreþer*'s epenthetic vowel causes it to be scanned as *hreþr*, giving each of these compounds the metrical pattern ¯-˘x.) The absence from the surviving record of certain seemingly permissible combinations, such as **modloca* or **heortcofa*, may reflect unrecognized factors or simply be an accident of composition or preservation.

obvious enough. But in Old English poetic treatments of the mind, this dichotomy is complicated by the presence of another variable: permeability, governing whether or not there is any transmission or conveyance between interior and exterior. The mental enclosure's quality of permeability is usually linked to volition, and it carries ethical implications – in a given case, what is situated inside or outside of the mind either should or should not be permitted to cross its boundary – but as we will see, the moral value attached to permeability is not fixed, instead remaining eligible for determination by the poets for thematic purposes.

With two binary variables (containment/exclusion and permeability/impermeability) at work in representations of the mind as an enclosure, it follows that there are four possible combinations. The mind's aspect of containment, combined with impermeability and permeability respectively, can be designated by the schemata *the mind holds* and *the mind releases*; in its aspect of exclusion, we may designate the combinations with impermeability and permeability as *the mind repels* and *the mind admits*. All four of these theoretical combinations describing the mental enclosure's capabilities are attested in the extant Old English poetic corpus, at least in the form of a stated potential.

Most immediately familiar to many modern readers of Old English literature will be a few famous poetic statements of the type *the mind holds* that valorize the idea of keeping one's mental property shut away from the world. In the passage from *The Wanderer* discussed earlier, for example, it is 'indryhten þeaw' ('a lordly habit', 12b) that a man

> his ferðlocan fæste binde,
> healde his hordcofan, hycge swa he wille (13–14)

and the poet later asserts that

> ne sceal næfre his torn to rycene
> beorn of his breostum acyþan. (112b–113a)

This is why

> domgeorne dreorigne oft
> in hyra breostcofan bindað fæste. (17–18)[42]

Presumably this principle also explains Hrothgar's locking away his sorrow at Beowulf's departure:

[42] 'Securely bind his mind-stronghold, guard his treasure-chamber, think what he will'; 'a man must never too quickly let his grief be known outside of his heart'; 'those eager of reputation often securely bind a grievous thing in their heart-chamber'.

him on hreþre hygebendum fæst
æfter deorum men dyrne langað
beorn wið blode. (*Beowulf* 1878–1880a)[43]

These passages imply that certain things would be unseemly if let out carelessly. It is significantly the *domgeorne* in *The Wanderer* who adopt an impassive outward demeanour, and Hrothgar's sorrow is, appropriately it seems, *dyrne*.

While the mind must remain a secure container for some kinds of mental possessions because of their potential to cause harm or shame in the public world, it is also (and much more often) a vault in which valuables are safely kept because of their great worth. An apparently secular application of this idea of securing precious knowledge or memories in the enclosure of the mind occurs in *The Husband's Message*, where the addressee is enjoined to protect her vows with the message-writer in her heart.[44] But the kind of mental treasure most often identified as worthy of interior safekeeping is spiritual understanding or religious devotion.[45] In *Precepts*, the wise father advises his son,

læt þinne sefan healdan
forð fyrngewritu ond frean domas (72b–73)[46]

and the imprisoned and tortured St Juliana behaves in accordance with such advice as this when she keeps

hyre. . . Cristes lof
in ferðlocan fæste biwunden. (*Juliana* 233b–34)[47]

Similar ideas of safeguarding Christian commitment or knowledge like a treasure in the enclosure of the mind occur in many other poems as well.[48] There is

[43] 'Secure with thought-fetters in his heart, a hidden longing for the dear man burned in his blood.'

[44] Lines 13–16: 'Þec . . . biddan het se þisne beam agrof / þæt þu sinchroden sylf gemunde / on gewitlocan wordbeotunga, / þe git on ærdagum oft gespracon' ('the one who engraved this wood commands [it] to bid that you, yourself treasure-adorned, remember in your mind-chamber the vows which the two of you often spoke in former days').

[45] This convention may be indebted to scriptural identifications of wisdom as a treasure (e.g., Prov. II.3–5, Col. II.1–3). However, more often in scripture, wisdom is not precisely a treasure itself, but is compared with treasure (it is to be valued above earthly riches) or is treated as a means to riches (it will lead to real or figurative wealth).

[46] 'Cause your mind always to hold the ancient writings and praises of the Lord.'

[47] 'The praise of Christ securely enclosed in her mind-chamber.'

[48] See *The Lord's Prayer II* 79–80a; *The Lord's Prayer III* 3–5; *The Metrical Preface to the Pastoral Care* 5b–7; *Paris Psalter* 111.1; *Homiletic Fragment II* 1–11a; *Guthlac A* 651b–653; and *Guthlac B* 842–843a and 1245b–1248a. There are also a few interesting variations on this theme, as in *Paris Psalter* 108.17, where lacking the proper store of mental goods hinders one from seeking

at least one instance of the mind's potential failure to keep something precious contained, although in this case it is represented not as an object of material value, but as a life-giving substance. In *The Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*, the mind is at risk of spilling the water drawn from *wisdomes stream* (14a), conveyed from heaven to earth through Gregory's book:

> Fylle nu his fætels, se ðe fæstne hider
> kylle brohte, cume eft hræðe.
> Gif her ðegna hwelc ðyrelne kylle
> brohte to ðys burnan, bete hine georne,
> ðy læs he forsceade scirost wætra,
> oððe him lifes drync forloren weorðe. (25–30)[49]

In the preceding examples, the mental enclosure's ability to contain securely is ethically positive, because the mental objects it contains either promise harm or embarrassment if let out of the mind or have great worth within it. But the idea of the mind holding something tightly can also have unfavourable associations, because the inaccessibility to others of valuables stored deep in a person's mind can threaten community and the cooperative responsibility to gather, preserve and pass down a cultural treasury of wisdom.[50] The opening lines of *Maxims I* reflect this concern:

> Frige mec frodum wordum! Ne læt þinne ferð onhælne,
> degol þæt þu deopost cunne! Nelle ic þe min dyrne gesecgan,
> gif þu me þinne hygecræft hylest ond þine heortan geþohtas.
> Gleawe men sceolon gieddum wrixlan. (1–4a)[51]

The rhetoric of exchange here (the final verb, *wrixlan*, elsewhere has economic applications such as 'barter') harmonizes with the metaphor of mental goods

blessings; *Genesis B* 570–575a, where Adam's impulse toward faithfulness to God's command is described, through the perspective of the devil, as 'yfel' (see analysis in Jager, 'Word in the "Breost,"' p. 283); and *The Order of the World* 17–20, where the addressee is enjoined first to inscribe the ancient wisdom of creation in his understanding as if in a book and then to lock it into his mind.

[49] 'May he who brought a sound bottle here fill his vessel now and come again soon. If any man here brought a punctured bottle to this brook, let him repair it well, lest it scatter the purest of waters or the drink of life be lost to him.'

[50] On the importance of the exchange of traditional wisdom, cf. R. Poole, *Old English Wisdom Poetry*, Annotated Bibliographies of Old and Middle Eng. Lit. 5 (Cambridge, 1998), p. 7; H. Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*, CSASE 18 (Cambridge, 1996), p. 2; P. Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 178; and Harbus, *Life of the Mind*, pp. 79–80.

[51] 'Inquire of me with wise words! Do not let your mind be hidden, that which you may know most profoundly remain secret! I will not tell you my secret if you hide your mental skill and the thoughts of your heart from me. Wise men must exchange proverbs.'

or possessions that underlies 'mind' compounds like *breosthord*. The speaker of these lines reifies lore as something that could in principle be stockpiled and concealed; but the instrumentals *frodum wordum* and *gieddum* framing this opening passage identify utterances, particles of wisdom, as the unit of exchange in what is clearly meant to be a reciprocal bargain. Mental containment, rather than being construed here as the wise accumulation or safekeeping of mental treasure, is now depicted as ungenerous hoarding that carries a risk of social harm. In this case, the schema *the mind holds* becomes merely a failure of its inverse, the schema *the mind releases*, which the beginning of *Maxims I* invests with positive moral value. The implicit obligation to deal out one's wisdom or knowledge voluntarily is represented in other poems, too, as a community-forming and stabilizing force, as in the opening passages of *The Order of the World* (1–22) and *Vainglory* (1–8). If wisdom is a kind of wealth, then once accumulated, it should be shared out to provide for the needs of others.

This principle brings the metaphor of mental valuables into alignment with the idea of dispensing wealth that figures so prominently in the poetic convention of ring-giver and retainer, where the giving of gifts is a similarly powerful community-building instrument in its symbolic dimensions and its entailments of loyalty.[52] Such an analogy suggests that a person who is stingy of wisdom, keeping it locked away, has failings in the sapiential economy similar to the failings in the material economy of the violent and greedy Heremod, who, as described by Hrothgar, 'nallas beagas geaf / Denum æfter dome' ('did not at all give rings to the Danes in seeking glory',[53] *Beowulf* 1719b–1720a). A few lines after this Heremod allusion, Hrothgar offers another exemplum of a miserly, avaricious lord, describing a ruler to whom

[52] M. Stevens, 'The Structure of *Beowulf*: from Gold-Hoard to Word-Hoard', *Mod. Lang. Quarterly* 39 (1978), 219–38, precedes me in recognizing the parallel that is drawn between the treasure of wisdom that should be exchanged and the material treasure that likewise should be shared out. The complexes of meaning surrounding the lord/retainer relationship and the institution of gift-giving and exchange in Old English poetry have attracted renewed interest in recent years. Full-length studies that set out to refine the received understanding of this cultural system include N.-L. Surber-Meyer, *Gift and Exchange in the Anglo-Saxon Poetic Corpus: a Contribution towards the Representation of Wealth* (Geneva, 1994); J. M. Hill, *The Cultural World in 'Beowulf'*, Anthropological Horizons 6 (Toronto, 1995), and *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Gainesville, FL, 2000); and J. Bazelmans, *By Weapons Made Worthy: Lords, Retainers and their Relationship in 'Beowulf'*, trans. D. Johnson (Amsterdam, 1999).

[53] Or alternatively, 'in accordance with (good) judgement'.

þinceð . . . to lytel, þæt he lange heold,
gytsað gromhydig, nallas on gylp seleð
fætte beagas (1748–1750a)[54]

until in the end he dies and

fehð oþer to,
se þe unmurnlice madmas dæleþ,
eorles ærgestreon. (1755b–1757a)[55]

Gold is for giving, we are matter-of-factly told elsewhere; treasure will inevitably become someone else's.[56] We might recall, too, the pithy description of a proper ruler in *Maxims II* – 'cyning sceal on healle / beagas dælan' ('a king must distribute rings in the hall', 28b–29a) – and its contrast with the nature of the hoard-guarding dragon which has been described just previously in the same text: 'draca sceal on hlæwe, / frod, frætwum wlanc' ('a dragon must be in a barrow, old, proud with treasures', 26b–27a).

Another type of literature, with a more direct connection to the social realities of Anglo-Saxon England, also urges the voluntary distribution of one's wealth. The importance of almsgiving is stressed by Anglo-Saxon homilists and poets alike. Examples in verse include *Alms-Giving* and the opening lines of *The Rune Poem*;[57] one of the more fully developed prose examples is a long and spectacular passage in Vercelli homily 10 (lines 122–245), whose popularity the manuscript record indicates,[58] on almsgiving and more generally the vanity of greed for earthly riches, culminating in a fine statement of the *ubi sunt?* motif. While the homilists often represent almsgiving as a penitential act and make it available to everyone at least in symbolic forms regardless of personal wealth (as in Vercelli homily 21.33–47), Alfred and Ælfric, for both of whom it was important to be able to justify the possession of wealth, do so partly by means of an argument that only by first possessing material goods is one subsequently able to use them for morally necessary purposes.[59] According to this view, there

[54] 'It seems too little, that which he has long possessed; the hostile-minded one covets, does not at all give decorated rings in boasting.'

[55] 'Another gets it, one who will unmournfully distribute treasures, the nobleman's ancient wealth.'

[56] *Maxims I* 154b–155a: 'maþþum oþres weorð, / gold mon sceal gifan' ('treasure will become another's; one must give gold').

[57] On this theme in *The Rune Poem* 1–3, see M. Clunies Ross, 'The Anglo-Saxon and Norse *Rune Poems*: a Comparative Study', *ASE* 19 (1990), 23–39, esp. 29–31.

[58] *The Vercelli Homilies and Related Texts*, ed. D. G. Scragg, EETS os 300 (Oxford, 1992), p. 195. I cite the Vercelli homilies from this edition by homily number and line number.

[59] For discussion of Alfred's and especially Ælfric's attitudes toward wealth, see M. R. Godden, 'Money, Power and Morality in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 19 (1990), 41–65, esp. 55–65.

is nothing wrong with a faithful Christian's possessing riches so long as he is generous with them in turn, as is also the case for the hall-lord of the poets. The continual emphasis on generosity with one's accumulated wealth that is represented as a component of virtuous public behaviour in both secular and religious contexts will necessarily inform passages like the opening of *Maxims I* where wisdom is figured as a store of wealth. In each frame of reference, the economic and the sapiential, Anglo-Saxon poets consider it virtuous to obtain treasure and hold it securely; but once this is achieved, hoarding either wealth or wisdom rather than judiciously sharing it out could appear downright dragonish.

Several of the foregoing ideas can be seen working together in the seldom-studied poem *Instructions for Christians*, where a comparison of material wealth with wisdom is stated explicitly and continues to guide the development of thought in an extended passage.[60] The relevant section of the poem begins with these lines:

> Se forholena cræft and forhyded god
> ne bið ællunga gelice. * * * * * *
> Betere bið þe dusige, gif he on breostum can
> his unwisdom inne belucan,
> þonne se snotere ðe symle wile
> æt his heahþearfe forhelan his wisdom.
> Ac þu scealt gelome gelæran and tæcan,
> ða hwile þe ðe mihtig Godd mægnes unne,
> þe læs hit þe on ende eft gereowe
> æfter dægrime, þonne þu hit gedon ne miht. (69–78)[61]

Similar ideas occur elsewhere as well, as in Blickling homily 3, 37/34–39/1: 'ne magon þis þeah ealle men dón; ac hit sceolan don þa þe God þas world to forlæten hæfþ; & forþon þe he him world-speda syleþ, þ*æt* hi þæs earman helpan sceolan' ('however, not all people can do this, but those to whom God has given this world must do it; and for that reason he gives them world-prosperity, so that they must help the poor'); or Blickling homily 4, 53/27–32: 'nis eow þonn*e* forboden þ*æt*te æhta habban, gif ge þa on riht strenaþ; forþon Gode is swiþe leóf þ*æt* ge þá earmu*m* mannum syllon, & mid eowru*m* æhtu*m* geearnian þ*æt* ge þone écan geféan begytan motan, þe Drihten on is mid his halgum, & mid eallum þam þe his bebodu healdan willaþ & gelæstan' ('it is not, however, forbidden to you to have wealth, if you get it properly; because it is very pleasing to God that you give it to poor people, and merit with your wealth that you can receive the eternal joy in which God is with his saints and with all those who wish to observe and follow his commands'). I cite the Blickling homilies (by page number followed by the line number within the page) from *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. R. Morris, 3 vols., EETS os 58, 63 and 73 (London, 1874–80; repr. as 1 vol., Oxford, 1967).

[60] *Instructions for Christians* is omitted from ASPR. I cite it from '*Instructions for Christians*', ed. J. L. Rosier, *Anglia* 82 (1964), 4–22.

[61] 'Hidden knowledge and concealed possessions are not exactly alike. The fool is better off if he can lock his folly inside, in the heart, than the wise man who always wants to hide away his wisdom for his moment of great need. Rather, you must often teach and instruct, as long as mighty God grants you the power, lest you regret it in the end, after your span of days, when you cannot do it.'

This comparison takes the form of a dissimilitude between wisdom and wealth, but the contrast emerges from drawing a finer distinction between two things that are fundamentally similar. Both are of great value and can be either hoarded or distributed. The dissimilarity proceeds from what can only be an assumption that wisdom is, if anything, even more valuable in its public manifestations than wealth: the implication in these lines is that wealth can legitimately be stored up against hard times, but wisdom must be dispensed rather than simply accumulated. In the course of making this comparison, the quoted passage invokes the idea of the desirability of sealing something harmful or unseemly (*unwisdom*) inside the mind; there, it can harm the individual but not the community. As bad as it is to have a hoard of folly, however, it is even worse to hoard wisdom ungenerously, withholding its potential benefits from others.

Instructions for Christians next presents a concatenation of ideas pertaining to the importance of teaching before returning to the topic of material riches and offering a determined justification of the possession of wealth. The argument in favour of riches is based first on scriptural precedent,[62] and then on the great utility of wealth in the world:

> mid þam bið þe earman oftost geholpen
> and þa mettruman myclum gehælede
> and þa nacodan eac niowum gewerede;
> of þæm cumað monige men to heofonum. (146–9)[63]

The poem's emphasis on the moral permissibility of wealth is balanced by a focus on its virtuous use in the human community of the living and the dead,[64] and on the gains for one's own soul that may be had from generosity with material possessions:

> Nis þæt þearfan hand þæt ðe þince her,
> ac hit is madmceoste Godes ælmihtges. (188–9)[65]

[62] Lines 132b–137a: 'Iacob hæfde / and Moyses eac micele speda, / swylce Isaac and Abraham; / and Dauide drihten sealde / winburgum mid weolan unmete; / and eac Noe hæfde weoruldweolona genohne' ('Jacob had great prosperity, and Moses too, and likewise Isaac and Abraham; and the Lord gave David, amid joyous cities, untold wealth; and Noah, too, had plenty of worldly wealth').

[63] 'With it most often the poor are helped, and the sick healed many times, and the naked newly clothed, too; by means of it many people come to heaven.'

[64] I take line 149 to be a reference to the souls in purgatory who are helped by the alms of the living. For this idea in *Alms-Giving*, and its patristic background, see C. T. Berkhout, 'Some Notes on the Old English *Almsgiving*', *ELN* 10 (1972), 81–5.

[65] 'That is not the hand of a poor man as it seems to you here; rather, it is the treasure-chest of God almighty.'

While the idea is expressed through a metaphor of material treasure (a metaphor with scriptural precedents such as Matt. VI.19–21, Luke XII.33–4 and I Tim. VI.17–19), only immaterial personal gains, those measured according to the value systems of eternal rather than mundane prosperity, are considered finally acceptable, and they are so in part because their attainment benefits other people along the way. This ethics of wealth may be reapplied to the quasi-economic view of wisdom evoked earlier in *Instructions for Christians*. In the passage contrasting the two, the hoarding of wealth was temporarily allowed to be more permissible than the hoarding of wisdom, but it becomes clear later that even wealth is meant to be used in the world, not stored away forever. Having reached this understanding, if we recall the poem's prior remarks about stinginess with wisdom, we can only infer that the hoarding rather than the use of it – that is, the pursuit of learning without the later translation of it into teaching – is not only inadvisable, or paradoxically foolish, but morally repugnant.

So far we have considered the two possible values of permeability as they can combine with a focus on what is contained within the mind. But the model of the mind as a potentially secure enclosure works in the opposite direction as well: just as it can keep things inside, which may be for good or ill according to the case, the mind also can and should resist certain kinds of intrusion from the outside, according to the schema *the mind repels*. This species of the mind-as-enclosure model is expressed chiefly in its morally culpable failure. In lines 397b–409a of Cynewulf's *Juliana,* the devil whom Juliana has overpowered confesses his methods: after scrutinizing the *ingehygd* of the fallible believer in order to discover 'hu gefæstnad sy ferð innanweard' ('how the inward heart is fortified', 400), he fires 'in breostsefan bitre geþoncas' ('bitter thoughts into the mind', 405). A similar scenario is found in *Vainglory*. Immediately after introducing the portrait of the prideful man in whom 'þrinteð . . . innan / ungemedemad mod' ('the unmoderated mind swells up inwardly', 24b–25a), the *Vainglory* poet explains that

> bið þæt æfþonca eal gefylled
> feondes fligepilum, facensearwum. (26–7)[66]

The portrait of the prideful man is developed for a few lines, in which he in turn launches an assault on his fellows from inside his fortress, and then the 'devil's arrows' motif recurs as that image in turn is elaborated:

> He þa scylde ne wat
> fæhþe gefremede, feoþ his betran
> eorl fore æfstum, læteð inwitflan

[66] 'That is an offence entirely accomplished with the devil's flying darts, deceitful tricks.'

brecan þone burgweal, þe him bebead meotud
þæt he þæt wigsteal wergan sceolde. (35b–39)[67]

The mind is a stronghold entrusted by God to the care of the individual, which, in the case of the prideful man in *Vainglory* or the weak believer in *Juliana*, the devil has successfully penetrated.

As James F. Doubleday has shown, the fortress imagery of these passages in *Juliana* and *Vainglory* derives from a patristic motif found most prominently in the writings of Gregory the Great.[68] Although in exegetical tradition the stronghold that the devil assails is the soul, the *Vainglory* poet seems to conceive of the conflict in terms more appropriate to faculties, attitudes and actions of the mind.[69] This adjustment, which is also evident in the analogous passage in *Juliana* cited above and is probably a feature of these ideas' modulation into thought-structures of Old English poetic tradition, is not as radical as it might first appear. Sin involves the wrong orientation of the thought and the will.[70] What is of primary importance, both in the Gregorian version of the soul-as-fortress motif and in *Vainglory* and *Juliana*, is that the diabolical attack targets the desiring, volitional part of the self, which for Old English poets is generally the *mod* (or some aspect of it) and not the *sawol*.[71]

[67] 'He does not understand that guilt brought about by enmity, hates the better man on account of envy, allows an evil arrow to break the fortress wall: he whom the Creator bade that he should defend that rampart.'

[68] J. F. Doubleday, 'The Allegory of the Soul as Fortress in Old English Poetry', *Anglia* 88 (1970), 503–8; cf. the similar but much briefer observation in reference to *Vainglory* made simultaneously by C. A. Regan, 'Patristic Psychology in the Old English *Vainglory*', *Traditio* 26 (1970), 324–35, at 331. For discussion of this figure in connection with the related motif of the 'devil's darts' (also found in the passages quoted above), see Stanley, 'Old English Poetic Diction', pp. 418–22, and J. P. Hermann, *Allegories of War: Language and Violence in Old English Poetry* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1989), pp. 41–5.

[69] Doubleday ('Soul as Fortress') gives a brief survey of relevant early Christian writings. Key to the meaning of the passage in *Vainglory* is the *ungemedemad mod*; and *æfþonca*, whatever its precise sense here, is formed on the root *þanc*, which pertains to functions of the mind rather than the immortal soul. On the usually firm distinction between soul and mind in Old English poetic tradition, see Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', pp. 289–90, whose conclusions are affirmed by Low, 'Approaches', p. 11.

[70] See, for instance, Gregory's description of the heart's graduated capitulation to sin – beginning with *suggestio* and leading to the assent of the victim's will and finally the prideful rationalization of the sin or denial of its consequences (*S. Gregorii Magni moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, 3 vols., CCSL 143, 143a and 143b (Turnhout, 1979), IV.xxvii.49–52 (vol. I, pp. 193–7)) – which Doubleday applies to the passage in *Juliana* ('Soul as Fortress', pp. 503–4).

[71] Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', esp. pp. 271–85 and 289–90. Godden associates Alcuin, Alfred and Ælfric with the classical model and differentiates it from that which appears dominant in the vernacular poetic tradition.

The vernacular poetic reinterpretation of the patristic soul-as-fortress image allows the *Vainglory* poet to construct an exact juxtaposition of the assault that breaches the metaphorical stronghold with that which then erupts from it, the latter being a function fully concordant with the traditional idea that the mind may fail to contain something harmful. What we see in *Vainglory* is the interaction of two aspects of the mental enclosure: first its unsuccessful exclusion of the devil's destructive power (a failure to act according to the schema *the mind repels*), and then the aggressive loosing of the dangerous mental contents that set the prideful man's mind apart from that of a virtuous man (*the mind releases*, again improperly). Like the breach of the mental enclosure from without, the subsequent issue of something destructive from it is described by the poet in martial terms. The words of the wicked man, like the temptations of the devil, are weapons, now shot out from the *ungemedemod* mind rather than into it: after we are told that the prideful man is brought to his ungoverned state of mind by diabolical temptation, we learn that he 'hygegar leteð, / scurum sceoteþ' ('sends forth a thought-spear – shoots (them) in spates', 34b–35a). This alternation from the devil's arrows, penetrating from the outside, to the complementary violent force of the arrogant mind, striking out from the inside, occurs not once but twice in *Vainglory*:[72] again, following the explanation that this man was supposed to have held the fortress of his mind against the devil's arrows for God, the poet returns to a description of his behaviour as he

> siteþ symbelwlonc, searwum læteð
> wine gewæged word ut faran,
> þræfte þringan. (40–42a)[73]

Although in the latter lines the prideful man's discourse is not explicitly called a weapon, the entire context is one of battle imagery (his speech is of course being sent forth from a metaphorical fortress), and his combative words that rush forth are either the arms or the army of his corrupted mind.

This recursive comparison in lines 23b–44a brings the prideful man's disposition and actions into alignment with those of the devil, and the two figures converge in lines 47b–48a: 'þæt biþ feondes bearn / flæsce bifongen' ('that is the devil's son, wrapped in flesh'). The identification of the prideful man as the son of the devil, which is the culmination of a behavioural parallel

[72] Noticed also by T. A. Shippey, *Poems of Wisdom and Learning in Old English* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 8–9.

[73] 'Sits, proud with feasting; misled by wine, craftily causes words to go out, to press forward belligerently.'

between the two, is also the focal point of a contrast with earlier material in the poem, where the virtuous man (to whom the last part of the poem returns) has been described as 'godes agen bearn' ('God's own son', 6b). All of *Vainglory*, in fact, is organized as a series of comparisons and contrasts, and the juxtaposition of its two human figures leads the poet to a simple but very important statement about minds: they differ. The introductory description of the argumentative clamour at a feast, building up to the contrast of the proud man (capable of hostility and guile) with the godly one, concludes with the declaration that

> beoþ modsefan
> dalum gedæled, sindon dryhtguman
> ungelice (21b–23a)[74]

– an idea affirmed in *Maxims I*, where we find that no two minds are alike:

> Swa monige beoþ men ofer eorþan, swa beoþ modgeþoncas;
> ælc him hafað sundorsefan. (167–168a)[75]

The *Vainglory* poet exploits the difference between interior, subjective experience and exterior, public reality in the intimation that the boastful man 'þenceð þæt his wise welhwam þince / eal unforcuþ' ('thinks that his manner seems entirely honorable to everyone', 30–31a). Here is the source of discord: the wording implies that other people do not in fact find this type of man's behaviour admirable, and this statement is immediately followed by a more decisively critical one, the pronouncement that

> biþ þæs oþer swice,
> þonne he þæs facnes fintan sceawað. (31b–32)[76]

It is this existence of *sundorsefan* – unconnected, mutually inaccessible and differing minds – that brings about the socially threatening entailments of private subjectivity. Given the opacity of others' minds to us, the fact that mental enclosures can exclude our perception of their contents, how are we to know whether they harbour sapiential wealth or violence and danger? Those who have seemed loyal and companionable may suddenly unbind a mental arsenal whose existence was unsuspected. It is significant that duplicity and hostility are often imagined by Anglo-Saxon poets not in terms of disconformity between two public phenomena – outward speech or obligation and outward action – but instead as a discrepancy between outward seeming and

[74] 'Minds are divided by distinctions; men are dissimilar.'
[75] 'As many as are men throughout the earth, so are thoughts; each one has his own separate mind.'
[76] 'There will be another end of that, when he perceives the outcome of that sin.'

inward thoughts, intentions, or attitudes, which are sometimes contained indefinitely and sometimes shown bursting forth.[77]

The latter appears to be what is recounted in *The Riming Poem*, which describes the concealed, interior growth of deceit or more general wickedness, as well as its escape into the social world, in imagery taken from nature: it develops by blossoming and growing, and it exits the container of the mind as a bird might escape a cage or as a deep pool of water might burst a dam. After contemplating at some length a period of wealth, power and pride that he has enjoyed, the speaker of *The Riming Poem* explains that he must now face exile because

> scriþeð nu deop in feore
> brondhord geblowen, breostum in forgrowen,
> flyhtum toflowen. Flah is geblowen
> miclum in gemynde; modes gecynde
> greteð ungrynde grorn efenpynde,
> bealofus byrneð, bittre toyrneð. (45b–50)[78]

This poem, in the words of J. E. Cross, 'bristles with unsolved philological problems',[79] and the compound *brondhord* (46a), a *hapax legomenon*, is one of them; it has the metaphoric density of a kenning and resists direct translation, but it clearly functions as a contents-of-the-mind word. Its elements suggest transliteration as 'fire-hoard' or 'sword-hoard'. 'Fire-hoard' is the more likely primary sense,[80] but either choice richly connotes an uncomfortable, destruc-

[77] E.g., *Beowulf* 499–501a and 1718b–1719a; *Andreas* 669b–674a and 767b–772; and *Homiletic Fragment I* 3–6, 12–18a and 24–30. For admonitions against such behaviour in similar terms, see *Beowulf* 2166b–2169a and *Precepts* 90–93a.

[78] 'A *brondhord* that has bloomed deep in the spirit, grown up in the breast, now glides about, having burst out in flight. Treachery has flourished greatly in the heart. The all-dammed-up bottomless agitation challenges the mind's nature, burns eager for destruction, (and now) bitterly runs forth.' The ASPR reading 'deop in feore' (45b) is Krapp's solution to the defective manuscript reading 'deop feor'. The emendation makes good sense of a difficult passage by giving a variation, 'in feore . . . / geblowen', for the succeeding phrase, 'breostum in forgrowen', if we take *feorh* here to be roughly equivalent to 'mind'; but even if Krapp's editorial construction or my interpretation of the line is incorrect, the remainder of the quotation still gives the mind-as-container metaphor. My assumption of Krapp's responsibility for the emendation is based on Dobbie's comments in the preface to the volume (ASPR III, v).

[79] J. E. Cross, 'Aspects of Microcosm and Macrocosm in Old English Literature', *Studies in Old English Literature in honor of Arthur G. Brodeur*, ed. S. B. Greenfield (Eugene, OR, 1963), pp. 1–22, at 11.

[80] It seems the better fit for the image of the *brondhord*'s having spread around as if in flight, as well as the statement in the following lines that grief 'burns' and 'runs forth'. It also fits well with the natural and elemental qualities of the context. However, 'toyrneð', though it could perhaps apply to fire, seems primarily to be part of a liquid image, of water bursting a dam; and the phrase 'flyhtum toflowen' may evoke the motif of the arrows of sin, a notion suggested by J. P. Hermann, '*The Riming Poem*, 45b to 47a', *Explicator* 34 (1975), 7–9, and favoured by K. P. Wentersdorf, 'The Old English *Rhyming Poem*: a Ruler's Lament', *SP* 82 (1985), 265–94,

tive and potentially violent thing to have enclosed in one's heart, and the word is rhetorically parallel in this passage to *flah* 'treachery', an association that confirms *brondhord*'s general if not its precise reference.[81] Also of probable relevance to its signification is the rare adjective *brandhat* 'fire-hot', attested only twice. Both times it describes emotions or attitudes contained within the mind, and once, in *Andreas*, it does so as part of a combination of fire, liquid and organic imagery that is remarkably similar to the wild mix in the lines just quoted from *The Riming Poem*:

> Man wridode
> geond beorna breost, brandhata nið
> weoll on gewitte, weorm blædum fag,
> attor ælfæle. (*Andreas* 767b–770a)[82]

My translation of the *Riming Poem* passage above is tentative in its details, but the overall sense of this metaphoric mélange clearly centres on the eruption of something dangerous from mental containment.

We should not mistake such assertions of subjective diversity as we find in *Maxims I* and *Vainglory* for celebrations of individuality. It is the purpose of

at 286 (presumably the arrows would be of the type fired out of the sinful mind, as paralleled in *Vainglory* 34b–35a, rather than into it by the devil).

[81] *DOE* notes that *brondhord* is 'of uncertain meaning' (*s.v. brandhord*). I am in closest agreement with R. P. M. Lehmann's interpretation of *brondhord*, which she translates 'burning treasure' (but avoiding identity of reference to the literal treasure mentioned earlier) and elsewhere describes as a 'hidden fire', saying that in these lines 'evil arises, burning in the hearts of men' ('The Old English *Riming Poem*: Interpretation, Text and Translation', *JEGP* 69 (1970), 437–49, at 445 and 440); and with J. W. Earl's view of the passage as a whole ('Hisperic Style and the Old English *Rhyming Poem*', *PMLA* 102 (1987), 187–96, at 194). Most prior attempts to define the word have been untenably exact or otherwise unpersuasive. See W. S. Mackie's translation in *The Exeter Book*, ed. and trans. I. Gollancz and W. S. Mackie, 2 vols., EETS os 104 and 194 (London, 1895–1934; repr. 1958) II, 59, line 46; Cross, 'Microcosm and Macrocosm', pp. 11–15; M. E. Goldsmith, 'Corroding Treasure: a Note on the Old English *Rhyming Poem*, lines 45–50', *N&Q* 212 (1967), 169–71; N. D. Isaacs, *Structural Principles in Old English Poetry* (Knoxville, TN, 1968), p. 65; *The Old English 'Riming Poem'*, ed. O. D. Macrae-Gibson (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 48–50; C. Schaar, '"Brondhord" in the Old English Rhyming Poem', *ES* 43 (1962), 490–1.

[82] 'Sin flourished throughout the hearts of the men, fire-hot malice welled up in the mind: a worm (dragon?) inimical to joys, a fatal poison.' The liquid imagery is in the verb *weallan* (which is often used metaphorically of flames but has primary application to the flow, surge, or roiling of water) and probably also in the idea of the *attor ælfæle*. The other instance of *brandhat*, in *Guthlac B*, describes the safekeeping of a positive mental object: as Guthlac prepares himself to battle with devils, 'næs he forht . . . / ne seo adlþracu egle on mode, / ne deaðgedal, ac him dryhtnes lof / born in breostum, brondhat lufu / sigorfæst in sefan' ('he was not afraid, nor was the power of illness nor the dissolution of death troublesome in [his] mind, but the praise of the Lord burned in his heart – fire-hot love, victory-firm in his mind', 961b–965a). *DOE* cites one other doubtful instance, an unclear four-letter gloss read as *bron*, as a possible abbreviation for *brandhates*.

sentential declarations like those in *Maxims I* to encapsulate universal truths, and proverbial writings as a rule exhibit little interest in the particular instance except as an opportunity to illustrate those truths.[83] The interior differences among people that *Vainglory* acknowledges are systematic, conditioned by individuals' responses to temptation and the degree to which they permit themselves to become polluted with sin. Rather, passages like these reflect an anxiety stemming from the opacity of minds other than one's own. Because the shell of private consciousness is impermeable from the outside – at least to humans – there is always the possibility that danger lurks in the unknown contents of another person's mind. There are proper stores of thought and improper ones; the figurative treasure chamber may become filled with socially beneficial possessions (wisdom, right belief, appropriate attitudes) or harmful ones (deceit, vice, error), and either can be released into the world.

However, the inaccessibility of the individual's mental store is not absolute, and public inventory will one day be taken. As *Christ III* makes clear in its description of Judgement Day, the mental stronghold that can be defended for God cannot be closed against him:

> Sceal on leoht cuman
> sinra weorca wlite ond worda gemynd
> ond heortan gehygd fore heofona cyning.
> . . .
> Ne magun hord weras, heortan geþohtas,
> fore waldende wihte bemiþan.
> . . .
> Ne bið þær wiht forholen
> monna gehygda, ac se mæra dæg
> hreþerlocena hord, heortan geþohtas,
> ealle ætyweð.
> . . .
> Ðonne weoroda mæst fore waldende,
> ece ond edgeong, ondweard gæð
> neode ond nyde, bi noman gehatne,
> berað breosta hord fore bearn godes,
> feores frætwe. (1036b–1038, 1047–8, 1053b–1056a, 1069–1073a)[84]

[83] S. E. Deskis's invocation of 'the principle that a sentential construction is used by the *Beowulf*-poet to create a sort of exemplum from an episode or an instance of specific behavior' (*'Beowulf' and the Medieval Proverb Tradition* (Tempe, AZ, 1996), p. 137), as well as Cavill's observation that 'the *Maxims* are dealing predominantly with habitual and typified activity in the world' so that 'there is almost no reference to individuality' (*Maxims in Old English Poetry*, p. 178), could safely be generalized beyond the texts they are discussing.

[84] 'Into the light before the King of Heaven must come the image of their (the body's and soul's) deeds, and the memory of words, and the thought of the heart . . . Men will not be

This passage brings us to the fourth possible combination of the containment/exclusion and permeability/impermeability variables, the schema *the mind admits*. Sometimes the mind's interior should be, and in this case it must be, opened to something outside of it. In this schema, the relevance of the individual's will can vary. According to *Christ III*, access to the mind's contents by Christ the Judge will be forced upon those who do not willingly open their mental treasuries; it is the divinely potent analogue to Satan's attempts to breach the stronghold of the mind in *Juliana* and *Vainglory*. Moreover, this access will take the form of compelled self-revelation, as individuals 'beraþ breosta hord fore bearn godes, / feores frætwe' ('carry the hoard of their hearts, the treasures of the spirit, before the son of God', 1072–1073a), so that the penetration of the mind from the outside by Christ's scrutiny quickly becomes indistinguishable from another of the schemata discussed above, the release of 'heortan geþohtas' ('the thoughts of the heart', 1055b) from the mind's containment.[85]

In a passage from *Beowulf* cited briefly above (lines 1841–2a), when Hrothgar tells Beowulf that God has sent certain honourable words into his mind prior to his sending them out again publicly in his speech, there is no sense of forcible penetration of Beowulf's mind by God, but there is also no indication in Hrothgar's wording that his concept of the transaction entails an active role on Beowulf's part in receiving that wisdom himself, only in his own speech to Hrothgar in turn. Elsewhere, however, wisdom or spiritual understanding can be represented in Old English poetry as something originating outside of the mind that should be voluntarily received into it. In Cynewulf's *Elene*, Constantine opens his *hreðerloca* in order to take in a valuable item of spiritual knowledge, a message from heaven, as an angelic visitor has instructed him to do:

> He wæs sona gearu
> þurh þæs halgan hæs, hreðerlocan onspeon,
> up locade, swa him se ar abead,
> fæle friðowebba. (85b–88a)[86]

able at all to conceal their treasure, the thoughts of the heart, in the presence of the Ruler . . . Not at all will the minds of men remain hidden there, but that great day will completely reveal the treasure of the mind-chamber, the thoughts of the heart . . . Then the greatest of crowds, eternal and renewed, will go forward eagerly or by compulsion, called by name, before the Ruler; will carry the hoard of their hearts, the treasures of the spirit, before the Son of God.'

[85] Most treatments of this scene – a popular topic in Old English poetry and prose alike – present it as an irresistible confessional moment, without the container metaphor that suggests God's opening of the heart. See, for instance, *Judgment Day I* 103b–108 and esp. *Judgment Day II* 26–42.

[86] 'He was immediately ready through the command of the holy one, unfastened his mind-chamber, looked up, as the messenger bade him, the good peaceweaver.'

Constantine's willing participation is important in this passage, because the vision he voluntarily receives will lead to his conversion. It stands to reason that the same reified wisdom or understanding that can be hoarded or shared out can begin by entering the mind in the form of a divine revelation.

Of the two aspects of the mental enclosure, that of containment is by far the more commonly encountered in Old English poetry. Where impermeability is valued, such that mental containment is good, we have seen that the mind can either keep or fail to keep harmful things contained, and likewise it can either keep or fail to keep precious things contained. Where permeability is valued, such that mental release is good, the mind can either release precious things for public use or fail to do so. Interestingly, while the schema *the mind contains* accommodates the morally positive containment of both harmful and valuable mental objects, the schema *the mind releases* has no analogous duality: I know of no representation in the existing poetry of a purging release of undesirable emotions, for instance, or of ridding the mind of moral pollutants. The other aspect of the mental enclosure, that of exclusion, occurs rarely by comparison. In examples where impermeability is valued, such that mental exclusion is defined as good, the successful realization of this ideal is never dramatized; we see only the failure of the schema *the mind repels*. Poetic portrayals of the schema *the mind admits*, in which permeability is valued, are similarly uniform: we see only the mind's acceptance of what initially lies outside of it.

Almost all of these more specific versions of the basic mind-as-enclosure concept are governed by variations on the related metaphor of mental 'contents' as treasure items, the only notable exceptions we have seen being in the martial imagery of the devil's invasion of the mind in *Juliana* and *Vainglory* and the liquid imagery of *The Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*. The idea of the mind's being assailed from without by the devil's temptations is patristic in origin, and the *Metrical Epilogue* is based on the scriptural *aqua viva*; in this latinate heritage, both appear to differ from the more usual portrayal of the mental enclosure as a store of precious objects, which seems to have deep roots in Old English poetic tradition. Even the penetration of the mind by God's scrutiny in *Christ III*, which might have been developed as a rightful demand to enter the fortress of the heart corresponding to the devil's guileful penetration, quickly gives way instead to a more conventional image of treasure being carried forth out of the mind into public view. When the mind is harbouring harmful or unsuitable thoughts, too, they are sometimes represented as treasure, probably ironically, but also because of the *hord*'s normal connotation of concealment; and it is likely that this variation of the metaphor informs passages like the one in *The Wanderer*, advocating the strict containment of grief, as well.

Anglo-Saxon poets' most common and probably most traditional expressions of the concept of the mind as an enclosure, and of the figurative objects it holds, are those shaped by the activities that also cluster around literal treasure in the poetry: it can be accumulated and kept, for better or worse; it can be concealed; it can be distributed. Treasure can also be received, like Constantine's revelation in *Elene*, and we should note what the precise nature is of the vision that he takes into his mind after he *hreðerlocan onspeon*:

> Geseah he frætwum beorht
> wliti wuldres treo ofer wolcna hrof,
> golde geglenged, (gimmas lixtan). (88b–90)[87]

The treasure imagery here is apparently Cynewulf's innovation – there is no mention of precious materials in the corresponding passages of the Old English prose and Latin analogues[88] – and it may not be merely incidental, suggesting rather that the emperor is being presented with a less tangible but no less ennobling gift from the *dryhten* of the heavenly kingdom. The material richness of the vision harmonizes well with the terms of the traditional metaphor and powerfully communicates the value of what Constantine receives into the treasury of his mind.

The continual recurrence of the metaphor of the mental enclosure throughout the corpus of Old English poetry implies its ready availability to early audiences, and thus its eligibility to provide a framework for interpretation in any case where the language or themes of a poem might seem to accommodate it. The concept must have been part of the standard hermeneutic repertoire for many insiders to the culture of Old English poetry. Furthermore, some of the more nuanced uses of the mind-as-enclosure model indicate that Anglo-Saxon poets and (in their estimation) their audiences were capable of not just recognizing its thematic associations, but considering them in creative local combination with other ideas. This article has made only a few inroads into the interpretative possibilities raised by this argument, and I have limited my evidence here to cases in which poems formulate the motif of the mental enclosure directly, in ways that more or less completely state the terms of the

[87] 'He saw, spanning the roof of the skies, the radiant tree of glory, bright with treasures, adorned with gold; saw gems glitter.'

[88] In Ælfric's account, Constantine sees 'on ðam scinendan eastdæle. drihtnes rodetacn. deorwurðlice scinan' ('the cross of the Lord shine preciously in the bright east'). In the anonymous Old English prose version, the cross of Constantine's vision is 'on myceles liohtes brihtnesse . . . geset and gemearcod' ('set and outlined in the brightness of a great light'), and the Bollandists' Latin version has the cross 'ex lumine claro constitutum' ('made of bright light'). Last two quotations from *The Old English Finding of the True Cross*, ed. M.-C. Bodden (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 63 and 62 respectively; Ælfric cited from *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series: Text*, ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979), homily 18, lines 11–13.

metaphor. There are other texts in which the same figure emerges more obliquely or as part of a complex system of significations, so that an audience's prior sensitivity to the traditional associations I have shown might be required in order for some more sophisticated meaning to be actualized. Such cases, however, lie beyond the range of the present discussion and merit their own study.[89]

[89] I analyse some of them in two other articles related to the present one: 'The Mental Container, the Vercelli Book and *The Dream of the Rood*', in preparation, and 'Manipulations of the Mind-as-Container Motif in *Beowulf*, *Homiletic Fragment II* and Alfred's *Metrical Epilogue to the Pastoral Care*', forthcoming in *JEGP*.