

Laetitia Pilkington and the Mnemonic Self

Abstract

The role memory plays in Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs* has been oddly underexplored. Although Pilkington draws heavily upon biographical details of her life as Swift acolyte, scandalous divorcee and Grub Street demimondaine, she supplements personal memory with her 'astonishing' memory for literary texts. The *Memoirs*' 'rich embroidery' of over 250 lengthy quotations from other authors, especially Shakespeare and Milton, as well as many of the poems written by Pilkington herself, were taken from memory. Pilkington, often homeless and on the move, had little access to physical books or manuscripts while writing the *Memoirs*. This article sets Pilkington's own prodigious textual memory, of which she often boasted, within the context of the long-standing educational practice of memorising and reciting poetry, still widespread during the eighteenth century and valued as a social accomplishment of educated girls. Pilkington's frequent discussions of memory in the *Memoirs* reveal her keen interest in memory as a mental faculty and cognitive function. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, read in the Dublin intellectual circles in which she grew up, shapes her own poem 'Memory'. Memory for Pilkington is more than the marketable resource of the 'kiss and tell' scandal memoirist but a foundational part of her identity as author and wit.

Halfway through the first volume of her *Memoirs* (1748), Laetitia Pilkington boasts of a sly trick she played on her mentor Swift in 1733. Swift shows Pilkington a manuscript of ‘the Poem he wrote on his own Death’ (the poem that was to become *Verses on the Death of Dr Swift*). Pilkington, ‘sensibly affected’, close to tears, begs for an overnight loan of the poem. Swift places strict conditions on the loan – no sharing, no copying, returning it by 8am the next morning. Yet Swift soon discovers that his poem has been ‘leaked’ and accuses Pilkington of perfidy. She protests her innocence, then admits that she has memorised the whole poem and recited it to mutual friends. ‘The Dean did not know what sort of a Memory I had’, comments Pilkington gleefully, for ‘I had no occasion of any other Copy, than what I had registered in “The *Book and Volume of my Brain*.”’¹ Pilkington’s italicised quotation from *Hamlet* (a play singularly preoccupied with memory) is a subtle rhetorical flourish furnishing further proof of her own remarkably retentive memory.² The *Memoirs* contain at least 250 quotations from Shakespeare, Milton, Prior, Parnell, Gay, Pope, Swift, Thomson and other famous or contemporary authors. As Pilkington’s scholarly editor A. C. Elias notes, most of these quotations, as their numerous small inaccuracies indicate, were drawn from memory rather than copied from books.³ Pilkington began composing the *Memoirs* in 1743 following a stint in debtors’ prison. Most of the text was composed after her return to Dublin in the spring of 1747, when she was frequently homeless or in temporary lodgings and had no access to a library and very little recourse to printed books or manuscripts. The *Memoirs* contain numerous poems by Pilkington herself, which she incorporated into the text following her earlier failure to launch a subscription edition of her poetry. Although she had at an early stage (1741-2) owned a manuscript volume of her own verse to show to potential London subscribers, it seems that either this did not accompany her to Dublin or was accidentally burned among the pile of manuscripts that her daughter Elizabeth ‘never scrupled’ to use as kindling in the grate to keep a cold room warm (*Memoirs*, xxiii, 225). Pilkington appears to have been quoting many of her own poems from memory.

Memory, as this article will show, plays a vital yet oddly underexplored role in the *Memoirs*. This is more than a mere truism. Pilkington drew heavily upon her own personal memories for the *Memoirs*, but she was also unusually and objectively interested in memory as a function of the human mind. Her curiosity about mind, memory and cognition was fostered by her medical and intellectual background as the eldest daughter of the eminent physician and obstetrician John Van Lewen, who rose to become President of the College of Physicians at Trinity College Dublin. She devoted an entire poem to the topic, ‘Memory, A

Poem' which she composed around 1733 and first published in the *Memoirs*. This philosophical, Lockean enquiry into the function of memory has no poetic counterparts in its time. Pilkington constantly peppers her *Memoirs* with observations on the function and nature of memory. In proto-Proustian mode, she remarks that 'I have observed, that the Scent of a Flower, or the Tune of a Song, always conveys to Remembrance the exact Image of the Place in which they were first noticed' (*Memoirs*, 282-3). Discussing the relationship between wit, memory and the imagination, she disputes an aphorism in Pope's *Essay on Criticism* – 'Where Beams of warm Imagination play, / The Memory's soft Figures melt away' – to argue that that memory is a prerequisite for wit. 'I know not how any Person can be witty without a good Memory' (*Memoirs*, 55). Her own retentive textual memory supplied her with material for wit and play. She matches Swift in a wager, quotation by quotation, through the works of Shakespeare – he throws out a line and she continues the passage, no matter how obscure. He counters by reciting to her the whole of Samuel Butler's mock-heroic poem *Hudibras* (*Memoirs*, 55).

Pilkington's lively personal memories are what sold the *Memoirs*: the closely observed personal quirks and domestic anecdotes of her mentor the great Dean Jonathan Swift, the salacious details of her failed marriage to Matthew, her descent into demimondaine life as hack author, print-shop keeper and ghost writer for the infamous James Worsdale. Fidelity to personal memory was a feature particularly praised by contemporary responses to the *Memoirs*. The 'Oxford Scholar', pseudonymous author of *The Parallel; or, Pilkington and Phillips Compared* (1748), claimed that 'this Lady being blest with a brisk Imagination, and a retentive Memory, describes things not as she would have them, or as she thinks they will please, but as they really happened ... Her Ideas fall upon the Paper just as they rose in her Mind, and the Reader sees Things as she saw them, and therefore sees them as they were'.⁴ But Pilkington also embellishes her personal memories with her textual memory, using extensive, interwoven literary quotation from the works of others and her own poems to create what she describes as her own 'curious Embroidery' (*Memoirs*, 253). To extend the textile metaphor (one which Pilkington herself often uses), the text of the *Memoirs* is a mesh in which Pilkington interweaves memories of her own life, her memories of others such as Swift, her own poems, and quotations by other authors. Within this mesh, textual memory plays as large a part as personal anecdote, testifying to its importance to Pilkington's identity as an author and a wit. Pilkington's earliest childhood memories involve acts of verbal memorisation: needing to remember words, being punished for not remembering them

quickly enough, and being rewarded, both financially and with parental praise, for learning whole texts off by heart for public performance. Her dying hours, as her son Jack recalls, were filled with recitations of poetry from memory (*Memoirs*, 368, 339). Memory enables Pilkington to transcend time, place and circumstance, even the loss of the book or material text which so often accompanied her fraught, erratic trajectory from boarding house to print shop to jail. A good memory, a portable library of the mind, brings autonomy and self-sufficiency, comfort and consolation.

I Memory as mourning

Contemporary western culture, observes Andreas Huyssen, is ‘obsessed with the issue of memory’.⁵ Modern memory studies are frequently devoted to exploring the broad cultural and social implications of collective and individual trauma and loss, in part a legacy of the world wars, displacements, ethnocide and genocides that have marked the history of the past century. This concern with memory as trauma and loss is one also shared by early modern women’s literary studies, reflected in the extensive body of recent critical scholarship on the female elegy.⁶ The elegy, as such studies show, was one of the most popular poetic modes for women writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Female memory finds its most powerful expression in literary tributes to the memory of a parent, a spouse, and especially, in an age of high infant mortality, a child or infant. This elegiac concatenation of mourning and memory also extends to other forms of female loss and self-fragmentation, such as the loss of creative literary potential curtailed by marriage and motherhood, and more conventionally, by the loss through disease or age of female beauty, so often in this period equated with female value.⁷ Cynthia Pomerleau’s seminal study of female biography noted that memory is painful for women because

women’s lives are fragmented; they start as young women and are successively transformed from without into either spinsters, demimondaines, wives, mothers, or matriarchs. The process is not one of growth, of evolution; rather, they enter each stage as a failure of the previous stage. Earlier and more decisively than for a man, the curve of a woman’s life is seen by herself and society to be one of deterioration and denigration. Men may mature, but women age.⁸

Yet recent work on women authors, coterie writing and literary sociability has recovered the significant role played by a more traditional, pre-Romantic understanding of memory which has more positive and holistic connotations: memory as ‘memorisation’, a mnemonic, epideictic facility, a skill in ‘memorising by heart’, often pressed into the service of a social and performative self.⁹ This kind of memory is highly significant to an understanding of female authorial identity in the early modern period, and has a particular relevance to Laetitia Pilkington, with her remarkable textual recall and habit of extensive literary quotation. The ‘mnemonic self’, in Amanda Watson’s striking definition, enables the writer to mediate between an interior self and an outward self through a mode of intertextuality that is at once both impersonal and deeply personal.¹⁰ Pilkington’s frequent recourse to literary quotation to express personal emotion enables her to venture into the commercial public sphere of the scandal memoirist through the vehicle of male-sanctioned articulations of feeling.

II The Book of Memory

As Ann Whitehead’s excellent short introduction *Memory* shows, from classical antiquity through to the eighteenth century, memory mattered not in conceptual but in practical terms.¹¹ Memorisation, learning things off by heart, was important initially as a way of preserving texts in an oral culture, then later as a way of training and educating children. Mnemotechnical devices, such as metre, rhyme, and repetition, aided this process. In *The Book of Memory* Mary Carruthers traces this legacy through medieval and Renaissance views of memory which were informed by the belief that memory ‘built character, judgement, citizenship and piety’.¹² Cicero, Quintilian and the Renaissance humanists and later educational theorists all emphasised the importance of committing texts to memory. Frances Yates and others have explicated the elaborate mnemonic devices used to train the memory to ‘walk’ through imagined rooms and spaces to ‘retrieve’ the objects deposited there.¹³

Memorising by heart has a long pedagogical history, although the practice came under increasing criticism during the seventeenth century. The literature of the period is filled with debates contrasting mere ‘rote learning’ with the humanist emphasis on the civilising power of knowledge. In his important *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), John Locke censures the practice of forcing students to ‘learn by Heart, great parcels of the Authors which are taught them’. He dismisses rote learning without understanding as a practice fit only for a ‘Pedant’. Yet he also values learning by heart things that are worth remembering

and absorbing. Learning off by heart may be an ‘old Custom’ yet ‘when the Matter is worth Remembrance ... it may not be amiss to lodge it in the Mind of young Scholars ... and the Memory of School-boys’.¹⁴ Karen Newman has recently reminded us how much, even in the eighteenth century, was committed to memory. ‘If by the end of the seventeenth century evidence suggests there began to be a shift to English from Latin, at least in some classrooms where English is increasingly important for a rising middle class engaged in business and trade, what is astonishing is how much was still got by heart.’¹⁵ Newman shows how, throughout the eighteenth century, popularly adapted grammars, both Latin and English, provide directions for memorising to both masters and students. John Collyer’s 1735 grammar required 10,000 words to be memorised, James Gough’s 1754 text required 56,000. As Ian Michael observes, ‘learning by heart, in all subjects, was a useful form of pedagogic and, it was hoped, mental discipline’.¹⁶ By the end of the eighteenth century the practice of memorising the best vernacular authors seems to have been well-established. Robert Dodsley’s popular *The Preceptor: Containing a General Course of Education* (1748) sets out passages to be memorised from the poets, including Shakespeare, a practice designed to create a mind ‘stor’d with Variety of good Principles, sure Rules, and happy Expedients, reposed in the Memory, and ready upon all Occasions to be produced and employed in Practice’.¹⁷ The popularity of this kind of anthology continued to grow as the century progressed.

To what extent was the practice of memorising and reciting poetic texts, either whole or in selected excerpts, shared by both sexes? Ian Michael draws his evidence mostly from grammar school boys’ educational practices in Britain and Ireland. In her history of eighteenth-century women’s reading, Jacqueline Pearson shows that girls were trained to read aloud, and to engage in sociable and performative reading rather than solitary and self-absorbed private reading. The most compelling evidence comes from Abigail Williams’ recent study of sociable reading practices in the eighteenth century, in which she shows that girls and young women were widely encouraged to memorise and recite texts, and that textual marginalia point to a range of mnemonic methods used.¹⁸ As Williams notes, James Fordyce’s popular *Sermons to Young Women* (1766) instructs female readers ‘that there can be few occupations of greater entertainment or utility, than that of imprinting on the mind those passages for any good author ... either by repeating them often at the time, till they are got by heart, or by writing them down, or sometimes by doing both’. Evidence drawn from diaries and novels throughout the century shows that girls were encouraged to learn verse off

by heart and perform it as part of a wider repertoire of social skills.¹⁹ Mary Barber's recital of her own (often extemporised) verses in front of company was one of the means she used to attract subscribers to her proposed *Miscellaneous Poems* during her publicity tours around Bath, Tonbridge Wells and London.²⁰ Poorer labouring class poets often learned verse off by heart in lieu of owning a printed copy. Mary Collier traces her transformation from washer woman to poet to her zealous memorisation of her model and antagonist Stephen Duck: 'After several Years thus Spent, Duck's Poems came abroad, which I soon got by heart'.²¹

III Learning to remember

Pilkington's *Memoirs* offer one of the most detailed personal accounts of how an early training in memorising and performing verse could prove a socially useful skill, as well as a means of self-preservation and self-development. Pilkington's earliest childhood memories are associated with the acquisition of literacy and the role of reading, reciting and memorising texts by heart.²² The story Pilkington tells of her early intellectual life follows the pattern characteristic of so many female authors of this period, such as Annabella Blount and Martha Fowke, including the emphasis on memorisation.²³ The father encourages intellectual precocity in his daughter, proud of her early ability to read and write. But the mother discourages and punishes signs of literacy in case they damage her daughter's looks and jeopardise her reputation and chances of marriage. Reading and writing are acceptable only if applied to cookery books and recipes, and the needle is always more suitable than the pen. When Martha Fowke began to blossom as a child poet, encouraged by her father's praise, 'I began to scribble Verses of my own, or I thought mine. My Memory treasured up all Things. I had long Poems by Heart'. Yet her strict mother intervenes, 'my Pens were burned, and I bound down a Prisoner to my Needle'.²⁴ Pilkington claims that her own husband Matthew later used the same clichéd pen/needle metonym to put his writing wife in her domestic place (*Memoirs*, 50). In so doing, he was reinforcing the model initially instilled by Pilkington's mother Elizabeth who, though apparently educated and somewhat literary, banned her daughter from reading because a bout of smallpox had weakened her eyes and her mother worried more about 'the Beauty of my Face, than the Improvement of my Mind'.²⁵ At home, Pilkington was not 'permitted to look at a Book ... neither was I allow'd to learn to read'. This prohibition only served to make her more determined. She would ask her mother incessantly for definitions of words, and her exasperated mother 'would tell me the Word, but accompany it with a good Box on the Ear, which I suppose, imprinted it on my Mind' (*Memoirs*, 13).

This early substitution of auditory learning for visual learning – her mother would ‘tell me the Word’ but not allow her to look at a book or read it – might go some way to explain why Pilkington developed such a retentive memory for verse, with its mnemonic patterns, rhythms and rhymes. She does not otherwise describe any techniques or methods for verse learning, and glosses over any effort or application on her part, thus implying that her memory was a natural gift. However, the auditory as a mnemonic tool seems to have been prioritised over the visual or printed page, as suggested by her talent for precisely mimicking the accents and speech patterns of those she wanted to satirise, such as the stroke-slurred speech of Bishop Thomas Sherlock (*Memoirs*, 147). Her phrase ‘imprinted it on my Mind’ recalls Locke’s terminology in his *tabula rasa* discussion in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, showing how ideas are imprinted on the childhood mind through sensory impressions. As will be discussed below, Pilkington, like her Dublin friend and rival Mary Barber, was evidently familiar with a number of Locke’s essays, including his writings on education. Mary Barber’s playful ‘Written for my Son ... upon his Master’s first bringing in a Rod’ directly alludes to ‘that Sage’ Locke’s enlightened method of teaching through play and games rather than the schoolmaster’s rod.²⁶ Locke’s strong disapproval of corporal punishment as a mnemonic aid, and his belief that ‘learning by heart, and *learning to read*, should not, I think, be mixed, and so one made to clog the other’ (*Of Education*, 185) might be read in ironic conjunction with Pilkington’s account of her mother’s repeated childhood punishments. Pilkington’s mother ‘strictly followed *Solomon*’s Advice, in never sparing the Rod ... whether I deserv’d it or not, I was sure of Correction every Day of my Life’ (*Memoirs*, 13).

Pilkington draws a parallel between her mother’s physical punishment forcing her to remember words quickly, and an episode (which she slightly misremembers) from Book 3 of *Gulliver’s Travels*: ‘Had *Gulliver* seen her Behaviour, I should have imagin’d, he had borrow’d a Hint from it, for his floating Island, where when a great Man has promis’d any Favour, the Suppliant was oblig’d to give him a Tweak by the Nose, or a Kick on the Rump, to quicken his Memory’ (*Memoirs*, 13). The episode in question from *Gulliver’s Travels* actually takes place not in the flying island of Laputa but as one of many failed experiments in learning in the Academy of Lagado. Swift’s passage reads thus:

whoever attended a first Minister, after having told his Business with the utmost Brevity and in the plainest Words; should at his Departure give the said Minister a Tweak by the Nose, or a Kick in the Belly, or tread on his Corns, or lug him thrice by both Ears, or run a Pin into his Breech; or pinch his Arm black and blue; to prevent Forgetfulness: And at every Levee Day repeat the same Operation, till the Business were done or absolutely refused.²⁷

In her own misremembered version of the Lagadan lesson ‘to prevent Forgetfulness’ Pilkington omits any reference to pinching arms ‘black and blue’. Yet later in the *Memoirs* she uses this very phrase to describe how Swift physically reinforced on her diminutive body his brutal lessons in wit: ‘I was sure of a deadly Pinch, and frequently receiv’d Chastisement before I knew my Crime ... the black and blue Favours I receiv’d at his Hands, were meant for Merit, tho’ bestow’d on me’ (*Memoirs*, 45).²⁸ Pilkington appears to have associated in her memory three separate but connected punishments: Swift’s repetitive pinches on Pilkington’s arms, his ‘black and blue Favours’; the passage from *Gulliver’s Travels* on how to ‘prevent forgetfulness’ which lists ‘black and blue’ pinches among its mnemonic aids; and her own mother’s regular ‘good Box on the Ear’ which ‘imprinted’ the word ‘on my Mind’.²⁹ Pilkington claims that her mother’s ear-boxing ‘had this Effect on me, insomuch that I never forgot what was ever told me; and quickly arrived at my desir’d Happiness, being able to read before she thought I knew all my Letters’ (*Memoirs*, 13). The enforcement of memory through pain echoes Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*: ‘Attention, repetition, pleasure and pain, fix ideas. Attention and repetition help much to the fixing any ideas in the memory. But those, which naturally at first make the deepest and most lasting impressions, are those that are accompanied with pleasure or pain ... pain should accompany the reception of several ideas’.³⁰ But whereas Locke sees pain as a necessary means to teach children to avoid physical harm, Pilkington equates pain with her rapid acquisition of literacy.

Pilkington describes her solitary childhood reading as a furtive, guilty pleasure, done ‘by Stealth, with Fear and Trembling’ (*Memoirs*, 13) – a description which almost anticipates Wordsworth’s famous boat-stealing scene in *The Prelude*: ‘It was an act of stealth / And troubled pleasure’.³¹ Caught reading by her father, she describes being ‘took in the very Fact’ – the metaphor anticipating her later sexual exposure *in delicto flagrante* by her husband Matthew. Yet instead of ‘the whipping, of which I stood in Dread’, her father rewards her with a ‘whole Shilling’ and promises her another one ‘as soon as I got a Poem by

Heart'. A shilling was no insignificant sum, even for the relatively prosperous Van Lewen household. Her father gives her Pope's 'sacred Eclogue' – the fourth 'Pollio' eclogue -- to learn by heart. She recites it perfectly to her parents: 'They were both astonish'd at my Memory, and from that Day forward, I was permitted to read as much as I pleas'd' (*Memoirs*, 13). For Pilkington, memory is associated first with punishment (her mother's beatings to expedite her recall) and then reward. Her reward for a good memory is permission to read freely, economic capital (the shilling) and an admiring audience. Her early experience of performance, pain, pleasure and reward may have set her upon the path to professionalising her writing and reading abilities.

The noticeable pride which suffuses Pilkington's childhood recollection that her parents 'were both astonish'd at my Memory' and her subsequent boast that 'the Dean did not know what sort of a Memory I had' is important. Pilkington wanted to 'astonish' people by her almost magical feats of memory. This may explain why she is so uncharacteristically silent on the mechanics of memorisation, on precisely how she learned so many texts by heart. She does not describe practising out loud or writing down passages, implying that her extraordinary memory for texts is not the product of steady effort or perseverance, but a spontaneous gift. She likens her childhood literary 'performances' (this may include both composition and reciting out loud) to Pope's famous lines in *Epistle to Arbuthnot* describing his own apparently effortless childhood utterances:

I may truly say with Mr *Pope*,

I lisped in Numbers, for the Numbers came.

My performances had the good Fortune to be look'd on, as extraordinary for my Years, and the greatest and wisest Men in the Kingdom did not disdain to hear the Prattle of the little Muse, as they call'd me, even in my childish Days.

(*Memoirs*, 13)

Pilkington wanted to be seen as a child prodigy, universally applauded and admired, like her close teenage friend and fellow poet Constantia Grierson, who lodged with her family while training as a midwife under her father.³² In the *Memoirs* Pilkington tellingly depicts Grierson

as a prodigy or *wunderkind*. Just as Pilkington describes herself as ‘extraordinary for my Years’, so she in turn praises Grierson’s ‘extraordinary talents’ of scholarship, ‘Mistress of Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French’ despite parents who were ‘poor illiterate Country People’. Although Grierson was undoubtedly a conscientious as well as talented student, Pilkington prefers to emphasise the ‘astonishing’ and prodigious, rather than the industrious. Grierson’s gifts are mysterious and wonderful, like the apostolic gift of tongues or like ‘the intuitive Knowledge of Angels’ (*Memoirs*, 17). The close friendship which these girls shared formed, as I will argue at the close, one of Pilkington’s most consoling personal memories.

IV ‘Memory’ and Locke

Pilkington’s serious interest in the workings of memory can be seen in ‘Memory, A Poem’, first published in the *Memoirs* (54-6). Pilkington claims that this poem arose extempore from her ‘Evening’s Chat with the Dean [which] furnish’d me with Matter of Speculation on that most amazing Faculty of the human Mind, Memory’. The poem’s presence in the text of the *Memoirs* at this point functions as a metacommentary on memory.

In what Recesses of the Brain

Does this amazing Pow’r remain,

By which all Knowledge we attain?

What art thou, Memory? What Tongue can tell,

What curious Artist trace thy hidden Cell,

Wherein ten thousand different Objects dwell?

Surprising Store-house! in whose narrow Womb

All things, the past, the present, and to come,

Find ample Space, and large, and mighty room.

O falsely deemed the Foe of sacred Wit!

Thou, who the Nurse and Guardian art of it,

Laying it up till Season due and fit.

Then proud the wond’rous Treasure to produce,

As Understanding points it, to conduce
Either to Entertainment, or to Use.

Nor Love nor holy Friendship, without thee,
Could ever of the least Duration be;
Nor Gratitude, nor Truth, nor Piety.

Where thou art not, the cheerless human Mind
Is one vast Void, all darksome, sad, and blind;
No Trace of anything remains behind.

The sacred Stores of Learning all are thine;
'Tis only thou record'st the faithful Line;
'Tis thou mak'st Humankind almost divine.

And when at length we quit this mortal Scene,
Thou shalt with our tender Friends remain,
And Time and Death shall strike at thee in vain.

Lord let me so this wond'rous Gift employ,
It may a Fountain be of endless joy,
Which Time, or Accident, may ne'er destroy.

Still let my faithful Memory impart,
And deep engrave it on my grateful Heart,
How just, and good, and excellent Thou art.

'Memory' is one of the many poems written by Pilkington which she intersperses throughout the pages of the *Memoirs*. These multiple poems, as Catherine Ingrassia suggestively notes, constitute a 'phantom' version of the subscription edition of poems which Pilkington had repeatedly tried, but failed, to get published.³³ Yet in its scientific approach and intellectual content, 'Memory' is very different from the chatty, sociable, 'occasional' verse that often filled subscription editions such as that published by Pilkington's friend then rival Mary

Barber in 1734. Pilkington addresses memory as a mysteriously abstract entity. Her opening apostrophe, ‘What art thou, Memory?’, echoes James Thomson’s scientific invocation to frost in *Winter* (1730), ‘What art thou, Frost?’³⁴ Few, if any other poems of this period deal with memory as a brain function. ‘Memory’ belongs to an entirely different genre from the handful of other ‘memory’ poems published at around this time. Shenstone’s sentimental ‘Ode to Memory’ (1748) visualises memory as a feminised pastoral personification -- ‘O Memory! Celestial Maid, / Who gleans’t the flowrets cropt by Time’.³⁵ Elizabeth Singer Rowe’s 1737 ‘To Memory’ praises memory as a means of restoring fleeting pleasures, and of bringing added lustre to a lover’s nostalgia.³⁶ But Pilkington’s poem is something else. Its tight iambic pentameter triplets are modelled on John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester’s philosophical satire ‘Upon Nothing’. The poem also draws on another late seventeenth-century philosophical text on memory and amnesia, Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

Pilkington’s debt to contemporary scientific and philosophical writing remains underexplored. Her excited paean ‘To the Reverend Dr. Hales’, the eminent physiologist Stephen Hales who she met in London in 1739, shows that she shared her father’s interest in scientific and philosophical debate – debate which featured heavily at Trinity College Dublin, where both her brother Meade and her husband Matthew were students, and where her father eventually became President of the College of Physicians. The curriculum at Trinity College Dublin featured moral as well as natural philosophy. Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was placed on the curriculum in 1692, two years after its publication, the direct result of William Molyneux’s recommending the work to the provost, St George Ashe, as a text for the instruction of logic and moral philosophy.³⁷ Pilkington, as we have seen, was familiar with Locke’s *Of Education*. She may have read Locke’s works in her father’s library. Van Lewen, educated at Leiden and Utrecht, would undoubtedly have encountered Locke’s ideas both in Dublin and earlier in the Netherlands, where Locke spent a five-year period of exile in the 1690s during which he composed the *Essay*.³⁸ That the Van Lewen family were familiar with, and even playful with, Locke’s theories is suggested by Pilkington’s account early on in the *Memoirs* (45) of an episode in which her younger brother Meade ‘teiz’d me one Evening to write some verse as a School Exercise for him’. ‘I asked him what I should write upon’. He jokingly replies, ‘what shou’d you write upon but the Paper?’ The playful ambiguity around the preposition ‘upon’ recalls Locke’s discussion of the ‘doubtfulness or ambiguity of the signification of words’, cause of so many episodes of comic frustration in

Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. Pilkington produces in response a little poem, 'O spotless Paper, fair and white!', a mock complaint about her enforced desecration of a blank sheet of paper to pander to a teenage boy's demands. This untitled poem, later often anthologised and sometimes misattributed, was given the title 'Carte Blanche' by George Colman and Bonnell Thornton, editors of the 1755 anthology *Poems by Eminent Ladies* which included several poems by Pilkington. As Chantel Lavoie notes, the title 'Carte Blanche' 'may refer not only to the purity of the unspoiled page, but also to the possibilities presented by John Locke on the changeable nature of humanity, and the possibilities of the personality as a *tabula rasa*.'³⁹

The *Memoirs* make several references to the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, particularly Locke's discussion 'Of Retention' in Book 2. Locke's treatment of memory reflects the transition taking place during the seventeenth and eighteenth century from memory as mnemonic system, the formal technique for textual recall and detail that was part of the Renaissance scholastic process, and a modern, subjective concept of memory that equates memory with identity, individuality and selfhood. Locke deploys the traditional spatial metaphors of the classical and Renaissance mnemonic tradition, which views memory, in its ideal form, as a retrieval mechanism for what has been previously stored. This tradition commonly represented memory as a store room, a warehouse or cabinet with chambers or rooms, through which the individual moves to retrieve the images placed there. In the fourth edition of the *Essay* published in 1700, Locke describes memory as 'the storehouse of our ideas. For the narrow mind of man, not being capable of having many ideas under view and consideration at once, it was necessary to have a repository to lay up those ideas, which at another time it may have use of.'⁴⁰ Locke qualifies this traditional static storage metaphor with the observation that as ideas exist nowhere, memory is less a place than a function of mind, a capacity to recall at will past perceptions and to renew them again.⁴¹

Pilkington's apostrophe to memory, the 'surprising Storehouse!', echoes Locke's assertion that memory is 'the storehouse of our ideas'. Pilkington's metaphors draw on the same mnemonic tradition which informs Locke. She depicts memory as a cabinet of curiosities, made up of 'recesses in the brain', 'a hidden Cell, / Wherein ten thousand different Objects dwell'. It is the repository of the 'Sacred Stores of Learning'. Yet, in an original turn, Pilkington transforms the static 'container' image into an organic, specifically female container: 'In whose narrow womb / All things, the past, the present and to come / Find ample space and large and mighty room'. This container is paradoxically 'narrow' yet

also ‘mighty’, intimate yet expansive, female and gestational. As K. I. Berens notes in her suggestive discussion of this passage, maternal imagery here ‘approximates the mind’s profound generation of mental associations, extends the day’s ruminations. Pregnant with expansive reading and literally pregnant with her daughter Charlotte, Pilkington imagines her wit “lay’d up till season due and fit”’.⁴² Pilkington boldly figures memory as the mother of wit. Unlike Rochester and Pope, whose ‘Upon Nothing’ and *The Dunciad* respectively equate the maternal imagery of wombs and procreation with dullness, amnesia and vacuity, Pilkington’s gestational metaphor for memory is richly productive. Throughout the *Memoirs*, we see Pilkington concerned with both the mnemonic aspects of memory – her ability to learn texts off by heart and to recite them, a foundational part of her early girlhood desire to please and be praised, part of the traditional repertoire of female accomplishment – and with memory as individuated, personal history, a capacity for reflection, a linking of past and present selves. Pilkington’s memory for quotations also reveals, in Locke’s terms, an understanding of *res* rather than mere *verba*. This is not the mechanical memorisation decried by Locke. Pilkington remembers quotations because they *mean* something to her. Her extraordinary textual recall throughout the *Memoirs* does not suggest texts that have been rote-learned, but texts whose emotional resonance and relevance to her life have helped embed themselves in her memory, providing a pattern or model to enable her to make sense of ongoing events.

V *Memoirs* and memory

This connection between textual memory and personal history leads us to consider the larger role of memory within the *Memoirs*. Generically, Pilkington’s *Memoirs* epitomise the very real difficulties of categorising and analysing female life-writing in the early modern period, not least because so little is known about Pilkington aside from what she tells us herself. Alongside the memoirs of Constantia Phillips, the other so-called ‘scandal’ memoirist with whom she is often bracketed, Pilkington’s work is often read less in terms of autobiographical authenticity than (in the words of Kathryn R. King) ‘the discursive effects of self-exculpatory rhetorical campaigns that are at once exercises in self-promotion and acts of proto-feminist resistance, in perhaps equal measure’.⁴³ Daniel Cook explores Pilkington’s approach to writing memoirs ‘not merely as a confessional mode but as a knowingly fictional pursuit, and extension of the necessary lie of literature’.⁴⁴ Pilkington’s use of personal memory is often characterised as both performative and exploitative. Her kiss-and-tell account of life with the great Dean, argues Elias, becomes increasingly unreliable in the later

volumes in its mixture of truth and fantasy as Pilkington became desperate to keep herself financially afloat and to exact revenge on her enemies by exposing their embarrassing foibles and peccadillos (*Memoirs* xxx-xxxvii). Perhaps understandably, there have been no real attempts to align Pilkington's *Memoirs* with the kind of Romantic subjectivity and interiority which characterises some later female, mainly poetic exercises in childhood memory formation and retrieval. Notable examples are Ann Yearsley's topographical 'Clifton Hill', which explores, in a proto-Wordsworthian way, the relationship between a familiar childhood landscape and personal memory, and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's foundational childhood memory poem 'Washing-Day'. This kind of 'interior' or 'confessional' self is not to be found in Pilkington's *Memoirs*. Yet arguably it is when Pilkington is using extensive quotations from other writers that she is at her most personal. Amanda Watson's description of the 'mnemonically constituted subject', which she applies to a number of seventeenth-century texts, offers the most appropriate model to an understanding of Pilkington's relationship between memory and selfhood. Watson shows how textual memory helps 'construct and mediate between the categories of literary convention and personal experience' by emphasising the widespread educational and literary practice of learning texts off by heart until they merge with one's own character and identity and become inseparable from personal ways of thinking. This model, she argues,

provides us with a way to question the predominance of "interiority" in recent critical discourse about early modern literature and culture ... the alternate paradigm of the "subject-who-remembers" ... opens up a different way of thinking about early modern selfhood: instead of a self based upon a clear delimitation of exterior and interior, the arts of memory and their intersection with poetry give us a self whose contours are textual and whose boundaries are fluid enough to allow for intertextual borrowings and allusions.⁴⁵

Watson's description of the 'mnemonic self' elides inner and outer in a theory of intertextuality which feels more accurate in its application to textual-memory-based yet also deeply personal texts like Pilkington's *Memoirs*. Pilkington constructs herself out of textual allusions which can be both robustly performative and exhibitionist as well as deeply personal and emotional. In this respect, as in several others (destitution, debtors' prison, marital scandal, writing commercially) Pilkington strikingly anticipates the slightly later Charlotte Smith. Like Smith, Pilkington's extensive use of literary allusion, moving between the public and the private, the familiar and the personal, enables a socially sanctioned

performance of sensibility which draws on acknowledged literary authority. Charlotte Smith's heavily intertextual *Elegiac Sonnets* interweave numerous quotations from male poets such as Milton, Shakespeare, Pope and Gray to articulate painful personal feelings. As Adela Pinch has observed, in Smith's poems 'feeling itself is thus revealed as that which constructs and mediates between the categories of literary "convention" and personal "experience"'.⁴⁶

VI Literary ventriloquism

Pilkington's huge array of quotations recalled from memory is far more extensive than the former stage actor Colley Cibber's more limited use of *Hamlet* and *Othello* quotations in his 1740 *Apology for the Life* (on which Pilkington partly modelled her *Memoirs*). Elias meticulously lists over 250 citations within the *Memoirs* taken from contemporary and 'classic' authors (not Latin or Greek), notably Milton, Shakespeare, Swift and Patrick Delany, Thomson, Parnell, Prior, Waller and Butler. Many others – such as the echo of Young's *The Instalment* (noted above) -- remain as yet unacknowledged. Yet Pilkington's dense web of literary quotations initially incurred more criticism than admiration. Elias notes that '[a]n element which contemporary readers found much less impressive [was] her penchant for peppering her narrative with quotations from Shakespeare, Swift, Pope, Milton, and other favourite poets' (*Memoirs*, xxii). Matthew Pilkington complained that his ex-wife's *Memoirs* were a 'patchwork' of quotations: an interesting metaphor for female composition which perhaps inadvertently recalls the 'patchwork' novels of Jane Barker and others. In her own creative version of Matthew's disparaging needle/ pen analogy, she compares her own bare writing to 'coarse Canvas' upon which 'Ladies ... work thereon Fruits, Flowers, Trees, all Summer, and all Autumn's Pride? And should we say the Canvas would have been better without the Artist's curious Embroidery?' (*Memoirs*, 252). Her own work is the (more masculine, more crude) 'coarse Canvas', which she embellishes with the decorative 'curious Embroidery' of remembered quotations from (mainly male) poets.

Pilkington herself clearly felt some ambivalence towards her prodigious memory and its potential to displace her own literary creativity. Towards the end of Volume II of the *Memoirs*, she confesses that 'I think I have nothing to boast of as a Writer, but a great Memory, for if I could not have retained *Shakespear*, *Milton*, & c., and the great Authors I have last mentioned, to give a Taste of their Wit, when I was myself at a Loss, I do not know

how I could ever have compassed three Volumes of Memoirs' (*Memoirs*, 231). Her anxiety over the substitution of the remembered for the created surfaces in the strange myth she fabricates of a dream vision which anticipates the allegory of poetic composition in Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan'.⁴⁷ After an intoxicating evening of scientific conversation with Dr. Hales, Pilkington falls asleep by a fountain in Bushey Park. She dreams that a river nymph appears to her and hands her a sheet of paper with a completed poem. 'I thought I read it; and as I presently awoke, I remembered all the Lines; so, having a Pencil and Sheet of Paper in my Pocket, I wrote them down' (*Memoirs*, 132). The poem is her own 'To the Reverend Dr Hales'. Pilkington supplants her own poetic invention with an imagined act of memory retrieval. The tensions around the relationship between memory and creativity emerge at various points in the *Memoirs*, particularly in Volume II's mock-dialogue between 'I' and 'myself'. This ventriloquized debate between two sides of the self is modelled in part on Cibber's *Apology* (1740) and subsequent *The Egotist* (1743) and in part on Pope's dialogic couplets in *Epilogue to the Satires* (1738).⁴⁸ Pilkington's accusatory 'I' persona, blaming 'Myself' for plagiarism and lack of originality, feels like an externalised projection of internal self-criticism, in which Pilkington upbraids herself for lack of confidence in her own work: 'your Stile borrow'd from *Milton, Shakespeare and Swift*', 'O come, do not think to put us off at this Rate, you give us Quotation on Quotation; why, we know the Works of other Writers, and expected something entirely new from your superior Pen'. 'O Lud, lud, why the best Part of your first Volume, is that which you wrote from yourself, without these Auxiliaries'. 'Truly, we did not intend it, but we would rather have some of your own Stuff' (*Memoirs*, 252-3).

This habit of literary ventriloquism, of impersonation, self-impersonation and playing with double voices, is a characteristic not only of Pilkington, but of other members of Swift's Dublin 'Triumfeminate' especially Mary Barber. Christopher Fanning's description of Barber's poetic practices applies just as pertinently to Pilkington's *Memoirs*. Barber, he notes, develops 'a female poetic identity through indirection: the use of other voices, including "ghost writing" for others, the creation of satiric personae, quotation and the inclusion of others' writing in her volume. The necessary paradox of this indirect technique is that the identity thus created requires a degree of self-effacement which obscures authority'.⁴⁹ Fanning argues that Barber's use of 'other voices' constitutes an undercutting of her own voice, and thus of female literary authority. It is true that Barber, like Pilkington

(and indeed like several other women poets such as Mary Leapor and Mary Jones), often incorporates within her works the voices of her most severe critics, yet more often than not, this is to mock them and undermine their criticisms. As my previous article on the ‘Triumfeminate’ has argued, Barber’s literary ventriloquism, a ventriloquism strongly shaped by Swift’s influence, can often be ironic and subtle, enabling her to advance some daring criticism of social inequality inappropriate for a modest female poet who purports to write only for her children’s education and who is careful not to ‘*step out of her Province*’.⁵⁰ Barber often borrows the voices of her young son Constantine and his schoolboy friends to critique the disparity between male and female educational opportunity, or to satirise Irish misogyny.

Pilkington’s almost compulsive habit of borrowing quotations from male authors in order to tell her story is similarly far more complex than mere deference to masculine literary authority.⁵¹ After all, her expressed desire to be buried next to Shakespeare’s monument in Westminster Abbey scarcely smacks of feminine humility (*Memoirs*, 199). Her apposite recycling of quotations from the male canon of literary ‘greats’, especially Shakespeare and Milton, can be seen, like Barber’s ventriloquism, as an extensive and sophisticated kind of intertextuality, with a range of tonal effects. Often, as Elias notes, Pilkington ‘can shift with bewildering ease and rapidity between quotation, narrative, indirect quotation, and back again’ (*Memoirs*, 471). She gleefully satirises the fat, red-faced pompous Bishop Thomas Sherlock with quotation-rich passages which combine the Falstaffian Dominic of Dryden’s *The Spanish Friar* with Shakespeare’s Falstaff, rounding off her ridicule with a blasphemous couplet from Swift’s poem *The Grand Question Debated*, cheekily justifying herself by citing literary precedent: ‘I hope the Reader will pardon me, for inserting Oaths, as I have so great an Authority to quote for them’ (*Memoirs*, 147). Pilkington frequently uses Shakespeare and Milton to exonerate and defend her actions. She recasts her life experience through quotations from Shakespeare which contain a coded commentary on masculine power dynamics: she is Brutus to Swift’s Caesar, Desdemona to Matthew Pilkington’s Othello, Isabella to his Angelo, Ophelia to his Hamlet. Pilkington’s use of familiar quotations to illuminate larger moral and abstract themes such as jealousy, reputation and revenge recalls the organisation of Shakespearian and Miltonic quotations under didactic headings in the mnemonic popular primers such as Robert Dodsley’s widely-used *Preceptor* (1748) and William Dodd’s *The Beauties of Shakespeare* (1752). Pilkington claims to have known the

whole of Shakespeare by heart, but may have learnt some of the most popular passages from Shakespeare from this kind of primer.

Many of the quotations – particularly from *Othello*, *Measure for Measure* and Milton's *Comus* – deal with female chastity and women's precarious position within male power structures. Pilkington attacks Matthew through paradigms of male power created by Shakespeare, then borrows the voice of the spirited but vulnerable Lady in Milton's *Comus* and then the voice of the abused, victimised Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, to elicit readerly sympathy for her plight.

I do assure my Reader, I do not, by those Quotations, mean to countenance Vice,

Or to arm my Pen

Against the Sun-clad Power of Chastity.

So far from it, that in my Opinion, Nothing can excuse the Breach of it; and a Female

Should strip herself to death, as to a Bed,

Which, longing, she'd been sick for;

Rather than yield her body up to Shame.

(*Memoirs*, 86)

Pilkington also draws extensively on the affective poetry of sensibility and melancholia in order to shape an idealised reader responsive to her sufferings. She describes how Colley Cibber, who weeps on reading her poem 'Sorrow', listens sympathetically to her 'long and mournful Story' with a 'humanized Soul' like that of Thomson's Shaftesburian poet-philosopher in *The Seasons*:

Where dwelt the pitying Pang, the tender Tear

The Sigh for suff'ring Worth, the Wish preferr'd

For Humankind, the Joy to see them blest

And all the social Offspring of the Heart.

(*Memoirs*, 159)

VII 'I praised his Ode ... and threw my own into the Fire'

Pilkington pays frequent testimony to the power of books in her life: ‘who had from my Childhood been, if I may use the Word, a perfect Devourer of Books’ (*Memoirs*, 173). Yet for Pilkington, textual recall often replaces the physical book. She began composing her *Memoirs* during the months following her release from debtors’ prison in the autumn of 1742. She composed the last part during her final impoverished three years following her return to Dublin in May 1747. She wrote hurriedly, following deadlines, almost certainly with no recourse to texts she could consult. Catherine Ingrassia has recently argued that for both Pilkington and the poet Elizabeth Thomas, reverence for books (as material object and a form of cultural currency) and the library (as both a physical space and a curated collection of texts) created an important source of identity. Both authors, she claims, pay ‘attention to the book and library ... as an attempt to fix identity on something they recognise as stable’.⁵² Yet instability, rather than stability, I would argue, is the condition Pilkington more frequently associates with books. She often depicts the material text as something inherently fragile, susceptible to physical damage and sudden destruction. She shared Swift’s obsession with the ephemerality of the material text, a ready source of Grub Street humour and literary revenge. Pilkington’s jealousy of her former friend and rival Mary Barber’s success in publishing a subscription edition of her poems – she desperately wanted to do the same, but failed – erupts in a fantasy of textual annihilation. She recalls how the ‘*Senatus Consultum*’, the coterie of friends and literary figures meeting at Patrick Delany’s Delville, tried to lick Barber’s poems into shape: ‘dull as they were, they certainly would have been much worse’ without this help. But their lumpen materiality, she claims, made them fit only to be used for pie case linings or cheese wrappings, ‘a Volume of Poems, some of which I fancy might, at this Day, be seen in the Cheesemongers, Chandlers, Pastry-cooks, and Second-hand Booksellers Shops’. Swift’s ‘Prince Posterity’ in *Tale of a Tub* exposes the fate which usually befalls his Grub Street progeny, lining draughty windows, or ignominiously flushed down the jakes. Pilkington’s literary revenges often centre on versions of Swift’s imagined scatological recycling of lofty thoughts as lavatory paper. She writes a witty ballad on Councillor Callaghan (*Memoirs*, 97-9) in which she elaborates on the ‘vile Use to which he adapted three large Folio Volumes of his Uncle’s Philosophy’. ‘Newton, Bacon, Locke and Boyle’ are shredded like Sybil’s leaves, ‘*And wip’d a Part not fit to Name, / And plung’d them in a Jakes*’.

The vulnerability of the physical text frequently resurfaces in Pilkington’s *Memoirs*. At the end of the second volume, she playfully threatens that if she proves unable to supply

an even wittier third volume, she will carry out Prospero's threat: '*Deeper than did ever Plummet sound/ I'll drown my Book*' (*Memoirs*, 253). The original Shakespeare quotation echoes Marlowe's Faustus's despairing plea 'I'll burn my books'. Textual conflagrations recur repeatedly, deliberately or accidentally, throughout the *Memoirs*. Swift shows Pilkington the handsome presentation volume which the young Dublin scholar Charles Carthy gave him of his recent translation of Horace. He invites her to admire its 'special good Cover' of Turkey or morocco leather before unexpectedly gutting its contents, slicing out the pages and throwing them into the fire – an act surely designed to intimidate the aspiring author Pilkington. The text is useless but Swift saves the leather cover to bind his own correspondence with his friends. This dramatic act of textual evisceration and conflagration is echoed elsewhere in the *Memoirs*. Laetitia recounts how Matthew, jealous of her superior ability to extemporise a Horace ode, verbally and physically abuses her, so 'to bring him into Temper I prais'd his Ode highly, and threw my own into the Fire' (*Memoirs*, 50). But this act of physical destruction is merely tokenistic, as Pilkington has lodged the poem in a secure place, '*The Book and Volume of my Brain*', so she can reproduce it at will at any time, as she does in the *Memoirs*. As Ingrassia notes, Pilkington creates 'a library of her own mind'.⁵³ Memory replaces the physical library. Her daughter's use of her poems as kindling constitutes a greater problem as it occurs before she has committed them fully to memory: 'It is a very great Loss to me, that by the Ignorance of my Daughter, half of my Writings were burned, for she never scrupled if even the Fire was bad, to take a whole Bundle of them to enliven it' (*Memoirs*, 225).

Finally, textual memory for Pilkington could also provide a rich source of emotional consolation. One of the comforts of memorising favourite texts, recommends Thomas Gisborne to his audience of young ladies, is that 'when affliction weighs down the spirits, or sickness the strength, it is then that their cheering influence will be felt ... the memory, long retentive, even in its decay, of the acquisitions which it had attained and valued in its early vigour, still suggest the lines which have again and again diffused rapture through the bosom of health'.⁵⁴ Pilkington published for the first time in the *Memoirs* (18-22) the two playfully affectionate georgic friendship poems which her friend Constantia Grierson had sent to her sixteen-year old self, 'To Miss Laetitia Van Lewen' and 'The Second'. Given the poems' place early on in the first part of the *Memoirs*, written when her own circumstances were slightly more stable, it is possible that Pilkington transcribed them from a manuscript copy in her possession. Yet it is also likely that Pilkington knew and could recite them off by heart,

especially given their personally meaningful content. The publication of these two poems in the *Memoirs* forms part of Pilkington's public memorial to Grierson as poet, who died aged only twenty-seven with little of her own writing published. In this enterprise of memorialising Grierson in print, Pilkington found a rival in Mary Barber, who also published some of Grierson's poems in her 1734 *Poems on Several Occasions*.⁵⁵ Yet for Pilkington, as Kate Lilley has shown, the publication of this intimate affectionate poetic exchange with Grierson also revived memories of 'early vigour', a pre-marital, pre-Matthew heterotopia of youthful female creative potential.⁵⁶

Few women writers of the first half of the eighteenth century engaged so actively, and with such intellectual curiosity, with memory as an essential part of the self. Pilkington's particular emphasis on memory as memorisation – the ability to digest, assimilate and learn long texts off by heart – was exceptional, even in her own time. From her prodigious textual recall, she constructed a large part of her self-identity, interiorising texts, suffusing them with her own experience, using them to express her own situations or emotions. Memorising carried her through her life, in the absence of books and ephemeral paper records. Her dying hours were filled with recitals from memory. In the third volume of the *Memoirs*, published posthumously in 1754, Jack Pilkington recalls driving with his very sick mother in a landau around Phoenix Park, Dublin: 'the fresh Air vastly revived her, and she repeated a good many Lines of the Poem on *Windsor-Forest*'. She relapses the following day, yet 'retained her Senses so well, that she entertained me with many Stories, and repeated Part of a Poem written on Mrs *Waller*' until 'I found her Brain begin to grow defective' (*Memoirs*, 336, 338-9). For Pilkington textual recall was a vital function, like breathing, and the end of recall signified the end of life. Fortunately, the *Memoirs*, that published part of her 'own Stuff', still survive.

Notes

¹ A. C. Elias (ed.), *The Memoirs of Laetitia Pilkington*, 2 vols (Athens and London, 1997), 55-6.

² See Peter Stallybrass, Roger Chartier, J. Franklin Mowery and Heather Wolfe, 'Hamlet's Tables and the Technologies of Memory', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 55 (2004), 379-419. They argue (p. 479) that 'the most important book in the play ... is that of memory'.

³ Elias notes that 'comparing her snippets with the originals makes clear that she quotes from memory – a generally remarkable memory at that. At times, some of her quotations from Swift may even preserve early variants which never made it into print' (*Memoirs*, xxii). See Stephen Karian, *Jonathan Swift in Print and Manuscript* (Cambridge, 2010), 175-6.

Pilkington's quotation from Milton's 'Il Penseroso' (*Memoirs*, 30), is characteristic in its tendency to substitute slightly misremembered words for the original phrases: for example, 'Shedding a dim religious Light' rather than 'Casting', and 'may with Pleasure thro' mine Ear' rather than 'may with Sweetness'.

⁴ *The Parallel: or, Pilkington and Phillips Compared* (London, 1748), 15.

⁵ Andreas Huyssen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York and London, 1995).

⁶ See especially Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry* (Baltimore, 2005), 268-315; Anne K. Mellor, "'Anguish no Cessation Knows": Elegy and the British Woman Poet, 1660-1834', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Elegy*, ed. Karen Weisman (Oxford, 2010), 442-462; Kate Lilley, 'True State Within: Women's Elegy 1640-1740', in Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (eds), *Women, Writing, History 1640-1700* (Athens, Georgia, 1992), 72-92; Patricia Phillippy, "'I might againe have been the Sepulcre": Paternal and Maternal Mourning in Early Modern England', in Jennifer C Vaught (ed.), *Grief and Gender: 700-1700* (New York, 2003), 197-214.

⁷ Thomas Parnell's aptly titled 'An Elegy. To An Old Beauty' (1722), finds an echo in female-authored poems as diverse as Mary Leapor's 'Dorinda at her Glass' and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's 'Saturday: The Small-Pox'.

⁸ Cynthia Pomerleau, 'The Emergence of Women's Autobiography in England', in Estelle C. Jelinek (ed.), *Women's Autobiography* (Bloomington, 1980), 7-8.

⁹ See, for example, Kathryn R. King, 'Jane Barker, Poetical Recreations, and the Sociable Text', *English Literary History* 61, 3 (1994), 551-70. Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia (eds.), *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Anthology* (Baltimore, 2009), 8-11, describe 'social verse' produced in 'simultaneously competitive and collaborative' environments, in which poets would spontaneously compose and exchange verse as a form of 'social commerce'. See also Moyra Haslett, 'The Poet as Clubman', in Jack Lynch (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1660-1800* (Oxford, 2016), 135-6.

¹⁰ Amanda Watson, 'The Poetics of Memory in Early Modern England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, 2003, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing).

¹¹ Anne Whitehead, *Memory* (Abingdon and New York, 2009).

¹² Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 2008), 11.

¹³ Frances Yates, *The Art of Memory* (Chicago, 1996).

¹⁴ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (London, 1693), 209-11.

¹⁵ Karen Newman, 'Memorizing Shakespeare', *Actes des congrès de la Société française Shakespeare* 35, 2017 (pubd online 12 May 2017) <<http://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/3905>> accessed 1 June 2018.

¹⁶ Ian Michael, *The Teaching of English* (Cambridge, 1987), 259.

¹⁷ Robert Dodsley, *The Preceptor* (London, 1748), D2r

¹⁸ See Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven, 2017), 86-8.

¹⁹ See, for example, Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) in which Emily recites from heart her own translation of an Italian poem, and Mary Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796) in which the heroine claims that 'At six years old I read aloud before company, with great applause, my uncle's favourite authors, Pope's Homer, and Thomson's Seasons, little comprehending either. Emulation was roused, and vanity fostered: I learned to recite verses, to modulate my tones of voice, and began to think myself a wonderful scholar'. See Mary Hays, *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*, ed. Marilyn L Brooks (Toronto, 2000), 48.

²⁰ See Emily O' Flaherty, 'Patrons, Peers and Subscribers: The Publication of Mary Barber's Poems on Several Occasions (1734)' (unpublished Ph. D thesis, NUI Galway, 2013), 154-6.

²¹ See David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (eds), *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology* (3rd edition, Oxford, 2015), 312.

²² Pearson, *Women's Reading*, 122-6, offers a very detailed chapter on Pilkington's childhood experiences of literacy. She does not, however, discuss the role of memory.

²³ See Annabella Blount, 'A Cure for Poetry' (1741), in Roger Lonsdale (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets* (Oxford, 1990), 186-8.

²⁴ Phyllis Guskin (ed.), *Clio: The Autobiography of Martha Fowke Sansom* (Newark and London, 1997), 65.

²⁵ Elizabeth Van Lewen was a member of the 'Senatus Consultum', the witty circle of writers and editors who met at Patrick Delany's suburban estate Delville, just outside Dublin.

²⁶ Mary Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1734), 36.

²⁷ Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, ed. Claude Rawson (Oxford, 2005), 176.

²⁸ The last line contains an ironic, possibly unconscious echo of Edward Young's sycophantic panegyric on the recently gartered Walpole's favours in *The Instalment* (1726), p. 4: "'Twas meant for *Merit*, tho' it fell on *Me*'.

²⁹ The association between the 'black and blue' pinches in *Gulliver's Travels* and Pilkington's *Memoirs* is made by Carol Houlihan Flynn in *The Body in Swift and Defoe* (Cambridge, 1990), 186.

³⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Roger Woolhouse (London, 1997), 148.

³¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (London, 1805), 1, 391-2.

³² The image of Pilkington as a child prodigy is reflected in the fact that one of her most widely anthologised poems, 'Carte Blanche', was often mistakenly ascribed to 'a young lady of twelve years old'. See A. C. Elias's note, *Memoirs*, 420-21.

³³ See Elias's discussion of Pilkington's plans for her projected subscription volume of poems, *Memoirs*, xvi, xx-xxiii, and Catherine Ingrassia, 'Elizabeth Thomas, Laetitia Pilkington and Competing Currencies of the Book', *Women's Writing* 23 (2016), 312-24.

³⁴ James Thomson, 'Winter', l. 714, in James Sambrook (ed.), *The Seasons* (Oxford, 1981), 236. Thomson's scientific influence on Pilkington can also be seen in 'To the Reverend Dr. Hales' in which she draws on Newtonian optics from Thomson's *A Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (1727) and 'Spring' (1728).

³⁵ William Shenstone, 'An Ode to Memory', in *A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes by Several Hands* (London, 1748), 330-332.

³⁶ Elizabeth Singer Rowe, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1737), 85-6.

³⁷ Patrick Kelly, 'Perceptions of Locke in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature* 89 (1989), 17-35.

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- ³⁸ Luisa Simonutti, 'Political Society and Religious Liberty: Locke in Cleves and in Holland', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 14 (2006), 413-436.
- ³⁹ Chantel M. Lavoie, 'Poems by Eminent Ladies: A Study of an Eighteenth-Century Anthology' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Toronto, 1999, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing), 208.
- ⁴⁰ Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 147.
- ⁴¹ Whitehead, *Memory*, 53.
- ⁴² K. I. Berens, 'The Sword Unsheathed: Wit in Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs*' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1999, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing), 111-12.
- ⁴³ Kathryn R. King, 'Writing the Lives of Women: Recent Biographies of Eighteenth-Century Women Writers', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 5 (2005), 99-111.
- ⁴⁴ Daniel Cook, 'An Authoress to be Let: Reading Laetitia Pilkington's *Memoirs*', in Daniel Cook and Amy Culley (eds), *Women's Life Writing, 1700-1850: Gender, Genre and Authorship* (Basingstoke, 2012), 39-54.
- ⁴⁵ Watson, 'The Poetics of Memory', 9-10.
- ⁴⁶ Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen* (Stanford, 1996), 8.
- ⁴⁷ See Norma Clarke, *Queen of the Wits: A Life of Laetitia Pilkington* (London, 2008), 169.
- ⁴⁸ In a poem probably co-authored with Benjamin Victor, 'A View of the present State of MEN and THINGS. A Satyric Dialogue between the Poet and his Friend. In the Year 1739' (*Memoirs*, 151-5), Pilkington similarly borrows the model of the adversarial dialogue between 'P' and 'F' found in Pope's *The First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated* (1733).

⁴⁹ Christopher Fanning, 'The Voices of the Dependent Poet: The Case of Mary Barber', *Women's Writing*, 8 (2001), 81-98, p. 82.

⁵⁰ See Christine Gerrard, 'Senate or Seraglio? Swift's "Triumfeminate" and the Literary Coterie', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 31 (2016), 13-28; Barber, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1734), xvii.

⁵¹ Pilkington had little positive to say about women writers in general: 'I cannot, except my own Countrywoman, Mrs Grierson, find out another female Writer, whose Works are worth reading' (*Memoirs*, 228).

⁵² Catherine Ingrassia, 'Elizabeth Thomas, Laetitia Pilkington, and Competing Currencies of the Book', 314.

⁵³ Ingrassia, 'Elizabeth Thomas, Laetitia Pilkington, and Competing Currencies of the Book', 320.

⁵⁴ Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London, 1797), 219.

⁵⁵ See Catherine Ingrassia, "'Her Abundant Regard for Me": The Poetic Tributes of Mary Barber and Constantia Grierson', in Laura Runge and Jessica Cook (eds), *The Circuit of Apollo: Women's Tributes to Women in the Eighteenth Century* (Newark, NJ, forthcoming).

⁵⁶ See Kate Lilley, 'Homosocial Women and Georgic Verse Epistle', in Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (eds), *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment* (Basingstoke, 1999), 167-182.