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THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

IN SEARCH OF THE ORIGINS OF Q
Community, Covenant and Conflict

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of
Master of Theology

WILLIAM GEORGE CONDÉ

30 September 2022

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ABSTRACT

One feature of the Synoptic Problem is that a quantity of the Synoptic Gospel material is absent from Mark, but shared by Matthew and Luke (the ‘Double Tradition’). It is hypothesised (among other contested theories) that Matthew and Luke, while drawing on Mark, had access to an additional source of tradition (denoted ‘Q’) unknown to Mark. This tradition, long regarded primarily as a collection of Jesus’ sayings, was probably circulated at first *orally* in Aramaic; but by the time it was used by Matthew and Luke, it must have been translated into Greek and reduced to *writing*, an assumption necessary to account for the close similarities in the wording and sequence of the material common to Matthew and Luke.

Can a study of Q, as has been attempted with other New Testament writings, cast light on the identity of the communities originally hearing the Q tradition: their location, circumstances, relations with other groups in the region, and their understanding of the person of Jesus and the meaning of his sayings?

This study considers the question with the help of ancient media studies and insights into the preservation and transmission of memory, especially cultural memory, in societies where the *spoken* word was pre-eminent.

Theories on the content, composition, and genre of Q are examined. One proposed theory is then assessed: that of Richard Horsley. He concludes that Q is largely misinterpreted through inappropriate modern Western concepts and Christian theological models. In his view, Q is properly to be understood in its historical, religious, social, and economic context: thus, the Q communities were oppressed agrarian villagers in Galilee, and Q is a set of discourses urging a movement of renewal of the Israelite covenant, in opposition to the elites of Jerusalem, and their agents, the scribes and Pharisees.

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ATR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
<i>BBB</i>	Bonner Biblische Beiträge
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
<i>EC</i>	<i>Early Christianity</i>
<i>HSCL</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJewThPhil</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
SBL	Society for Biblical Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Introduction

My study is an enquiry into Q, the hypothetical source underlying shared elements of the gospels of Luke and Matthew which are not (save about fifty overlapping verses) recorded in the gospel of Mark.¹ It seeks to understand the origins and the nature of the tradition(s) which Q preserved; the communities among whom it came into existence; how those communities perceived themselves; and the means by which Q was developed, preserved, and transmitted.

This dissertation works towards a critical examination of the work of Richard Horsley and Jonathan Draper, who offer a distinctive interpretation of Q, namely, that it represents coherent discourses embodying traditions of communities with a particular Israelite identity, understanding themselves as oppressed by the dominant elite: the Jewish rulers collaborating with the Roman occupiers, and the Temple at Jerusalem with its priestly caste, who send scribes and Pharisees to enforce their impositions and exactions.² According to the interpretation of Horsley (the principal author), Q is properly to be read as an intertwining of matters which are typically regarded as distinct in the modern Western mind, namely the religious, the political, the social, and the economic.³

In **Chapter One**, as a foundation for this dissertation, I begin with a statement of the Q hypothesis, and review theories as to its formation. One scholarly approach, advanced by Burton Mack and John Kloppenborg, serves as an analytical exposition of layers or strata in the composition of Q, revealing successive stages of development in the Q tradition, and consequently in the Q communities' perception of Jesus and of themselves.⁴ Out of this analysis arises a variety of genres to which Q is assigned. The Q tradition, long considered as a

¹ Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Four Gospels, a Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan, 1924; tenth impression 1961), pp. 186-91.

² The principal work that I examine is Richard A. Horsley and Jonathan A. Draper, *Whoever Hears You Hears Me: Prophets, Performance, and Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999). Of the fourteen chapters in this book, eleven were written by Horsley and three by Draper. References in this study are primarily to chapters written by Horsley.

³ Horsley is critical of modern Western tendencies and assumptions that lead to an erroneous reading of Q. For example, in *Whoever Hears*, he criticises modern liberalism (pp. 18-22), the projection of Christian theological concepts (p. 26), and the separation of economic, political, and religious affairs, although they are inseparable in the agrarian societies such as those underpinning Q's communities (p. 204).

⁴ Burton Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993). See also John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000).

collection of sayings, has been interpreted as having sapiential, apocalyptic, and prophetic attributes. One feature is said to be strikingly absent from Q, in that the tradition, despite the elevation of the person of Jesus, does not depict his death and resurrection. A notable aspect of the scholarship in this chapter is its treatment of Q in terms of *literary* analysis – treating it as a *text* – whereas Horsley’s theory is insistent that sight must never be lost of Q’s *oral* origins.

In **Chapter Two**, mindful of Q’s oral origins, I turn to consider how aspects of ancient media studies serve to aid our understanding of Q, especially how a tradition in oral form is received, preserved, and transmitted in and by a community. Ancient media studies emphasise the universal dominance of the *spoken* word in antiquity, even amongst the most literate classes: solitary reading was voiced aloud, and much that was written was intended for public performance. What was written was destined to be *heard*.⁵ To examine practices of oral societies, I draw on a variety of scholarly approaches, including those related specifically to Q, to the formation of New Testament texts more widely, and to studies drawn from conditions in the ancient world generally. Given the high probability that the Q tradition was, in its earliest stages at least, transmitted orally – in other words, received by hearing, held in memory, and then spoken again – I review scholarly opinion on the likely prevailing levels of literacy (especially among poorer and more rural populations), concluding that Q in its earliest stages was most probably preserved in the medium of *memory*. One aspect of this is, of course, direct memories of eyewitnesses to the words and deeds of Jesus. However, in the theories of Horsley, the emphasis is on the *inherited* community memories of the history of the hearers of Q as Israelites. The communities’ memories of the Israelite covenant are thus crucial in the view of Horsley. Although I address the memory methods of performers of oral traditions, most relevant to this study is not *individual* memory, but *social* and *cultural* memory, drawing on the work of Maurice Halbwachs. Here, the emphasis is not on the historical *reliability* of what is remembered (for example, the exact sayings of Jesus), but rather on its significance to the concerns and self-perception of the community today. This is central to the theory of Horsley, for whom the Q tradition represents historically grounded discourses addressed to communities in distress and rousing them into a movement.

⁵ The pervasiveness of orality in antiquity is conveniently illustrated with many examples in Paul J. Achtemeier’s ‘Omne Verbum Sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Late Western Antiquity’, *JBL* 109.1 (1990), 3–27.

In **Chapter Three**, having undertaken a broader review of scholarship on Q, ancient media studies, and memory, I progress to focus by contrast on the specific view of Horsley and Draper in *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*. The approach of Horsley is to locate the communities hearing Q amongst the poor of Galilee, who seek to preserve their identity as Israelites by renewal of the Mosaic covenant. According to Horsley, their self-perception, and their understanding of the message of Q, is particularistic: it speaks to them in their history, place, and economic circumstances. Accordingly, Horsley is critical of interpretations influenced by modern Western thought-patterns and Christian concepts that would universalise what is particular. Thus, theories perceiving a stratified development of Q are for him incorrect to the extent that they emphasise an exaltation of Jesus as ‘Son of Man’ as a title, or perceive sapiential themes and apocalyptic overtones; similarly, attempts to place Q in a particular *genre* are distortive in their constraining of Q into modern scholarly categories. For Horsley, Q is above all *prophetic*: it represents a transcript of repeated public performances of discourses urging a mission of the renewal of Israel over against Jerusalem and its agents. In its appeals to the *Q communities’ memories* of the history of the prophets, it is a ‘collective cultural enterprise of a communal memory’.⁶ This is the particular interpretation of the Q communities that I explore as a contrast to the scholarly analysis examined in Chapter One. I contend that Horsley’s theory – concretely relating the orally proclaimed cultural memories embodied in Q with the actual life-situation of its hearers – represents a persuasive contribution to our understanding of Q and the communities that heard it.

⁶ Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears*, p. 8, quoting from Werner Kelber, ‘Jesus and Tradition’, *Semeia* 65 (1994), 139–67 (p. 162).

1. Q: hypothesis, composition, and genre

1.1. Introduction

In this chapter I briefly review the hypothesis of Q, and theories as to its date and composition, including theories that the text reveals *layers* of composition, from which a history of its development in the community can be inferred. From this also arise scholarly theories as to the nature or *genre* of themes of the tradition. This examination offers an analysis of the elements of Q, valuable not only in itself, but also establishing a school of thought of which Horsley is critical. As I shall show, Horsley dismisses the stratification theory and is doubtful of the validity of many of the genres proposed for Q. His interest lies less in the *development* of themes in Q, but rather in its historical *origins* and its vital relevance to the actual lives of its hearers.

1.2. The Q Hypothesis

The term ‘Q’ is given to a hypotheticalal source of tradition that has been incorporated into the Synoptic Gospels. The hypothesis of its existence arises as a solution to the Synoptic Problem: namely how three Synoptic Gospels – while having substantial quantities of material in common – exhibit significant divergences from each other.⁷ Q is an essential part of the Two Document hypothesis, which posits that Matthew and Luke drew from Mark, but that Matthew and Luke both had access to a separate source, regarded as primarily a collection of sayings.⁸ The agreement of wording and sequence between their versions indicates that – at the time they drew on Q – it had been fixed in *written* form.⁹

⁷ Mark (661 verses), Matthew (1,086 verses), and Luke (1,149 verses).

⁸ This does not preclude Mark’s also having had access to Q, given the occurrence of about fifty verses which Mark and Q have in common, the so-called ‘Mark-Q Overlaps’. See, for example, Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, p. 186. (Such verses include the temptation story, the Beelzebul accusation, and the parable of the mustard seed.) Mark’s access may, however, have been to some tradition shared with Q, rather than the final form of Q: see Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, p. 80. He there provides (n. 37) references on the point.

⁹ John S. Kloppenborg, ‘Q, Bethsaida, Khorazin and Capernaum’, in *Q in Context: II: Social Setting and Archaeological Background of the Sayings Source*, ed. by Markus Tiwald, 61-90. BBB, Vol. 173. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), p. 61. Kloppenborg estimates that the material that Matthew and Luke have in common is about 4,600 words. For completeness, it should be noted that certain verses are attested in only one of either Matthew (‘M’) or Luke (‘L’). (Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, pp. 95-101.) And just as Matthew and Luke omitted material recorded in Mark, they may also have omitted material from Q; but such omitted material might be as little as 29 verses, from 235 to 264 (Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, p. 99).

Some scholars reject the existence of Q, objecting that the hypothesis is unnecessary and leaves points unexplained; but, as Piper observes, '[e]very hypothesis has weaknesses, and there is no solution to the synoptic problem which does not involve hypotheses.'¹⁰ The position I have adopted in this study is that of Streeter: 'we are justified ... in assuming the existence of Q, so long as we remember that the assumption which, though highly probable, falls just short of certainty.'¹¹

1.3. Language, place, date and of composition

In the next chapter, I shall address the probability of the illiteracy of Q's first hearers and the primacy of the spoken word in antiquity, and thus the *oral* origins of Q. It may be assumed that Q's earliest form, derived from witnesses' memories of the words of Jesus, was in the *spoken* word of Aramaic, the vernacular language of first-century CE rural Galilee.¹² However, as noted above, it was received by Matthew and Luke in Greek in *written* form.¹³ The possibility of an intermediate stage, with a *written Aramaic* version available to Luke, has been assessed as near zero.¹⁴ I touch on this in Chapter Three, as Horsley and Draper, while working in the basis that Q originated orally in Aramaic, devote attention to features of Q as written in Greek.

As to place, Galilee (particularly *villages* in lower Galilee) is regarded as most probable, based on our understanding of the first-century conditions in that region, and the mention of three Galilean towns (Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida), combined with hostility expressed towards the city-dwellers of Jerusalem and their emissaries.¹⁵ Nicholas H. Taylor finds Capernaum as the likely centre for Jesus' historical ministry, but notes that not all stages of transmission of the tradition (notably its eventual transcription into Greek) necessarily took

¹⁰ Ronald A. Piper, 'Q: The Sayings Source', in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Chichester, UK; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 254–71 (p. 265). In his pages following, Piper nevertheless presents a brief survey of a range of theories critical of the Q hypothesis. Kloppenborg, however, has no patience with objections in principle to hypotheses: '*Hypotheses are all that we have and all we will ever have.*' *Excavating Q*, p. 54. His emphasis.

¹¹ Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, p. 184.

¹² Nicholas H. Taylor, 'Q and Galilee?', *Neotestamentica* 37.2 (2003), 283–311 (pp. 288–90).

¹³ Evidence of its being written includes the near-verbatim agreement between Matthew and Luke in certain double-tradition pericopes, a significant amount of agreement between them as to sequence, and the use by both of the same unusual phrases or words.

¹⁴ Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, p. 80.

¹⁵ Piper, 'Q: The Sayings Source', p. 257. His emphasis.

place there.¹⁶ As we shall consider in Chapter Three, the stage at which, and milieu in which, the transcription of Q into Greek took place has implications for Horsley's theory.

Opinion on the dating of Q varies considerably, and is based on the presence or absence of references to external features (historical events) and internal features (implied stage of theological development). As to *external* evidence, while references have been cited to place the date as early as 40 CE,¹⁷ the first Jewish revolt (66–73 CE, with the fall of Jerusalem occurring in 70 CE), is a primary reference point for other theories.¹⁸ Piper notes that an increasing numbers of scholars have begun to place the *final* form of Q very near the time of the first Jewish revolt, noting that Kloppenborg finds a decisive sign of this in the sayings on the abandonment of the temple (Q 13:34–5).¹⁹ As to *internal* evidence, a significant question is whether or not Q manifests an awareness of Jesus' fate, which I consider further below. A particular approach to the internal evidence proposes to reveal the compositional history of Q, by identification of layers or *strata* of material, implying a process of development extending over decades.²⁰ I examine this next.

1.4. Structure: theories of the composition of Q in strata

Burton Mack and John Kloppenborg each propose readings of Q from which its development in strata can be analysed.²¹ Two features of their readings are significant to possible understandings of Q. The first is that the identity of Jesus appears to be progressively elevated to being the son of God. The second is that elements in the strata suggest that elements of Q

¹⁶ N. H. Taylor, 'Q and Galilee?', pp. 296–97.

¹⁷ Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. by Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991 ET), pp. 206–21, as cited by Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, pp. 82–83.

¹⁸ Dieter Lührmann, 'Q in the History of Early Christianity', in John Kloppenborg, *The Shape of Q: Signal Essays on the Sayings Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), pp. 59–73; Paul Hoffmann, 'The Redaction of Q and the Son of Man: A Preliminary Sketch', in Ronald A. Piper, *The Gospel Behind the Gospels: Current Studies on Q*, NovTSup 75 (1995), pp. 159–98 (pp. 191–94); Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), pp. 204–07; Matti Myllykoski, 'The Social History of the Jewish War', in Risto Uro, *Symbols and Strata: Essays on the Sayings Gospel Q* (Suomen Eksegeettisen Seuran Julkaisuja. Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 65 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) pp. 192, 198. All the foregoing cited by John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), pp. 85–86.

¹⁹ Piper, 'Q: The Sayings Source', p. 260. His emphasis.

²⁰ Piper, 'Q: The Sayings Source', p. 257.

²¹ Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q & Christian Origins* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1993) and Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*. Mack sets out a helpful table of verses on p.109, and tabulates his system of verse numbering against the verse numbers of Luke, Kloppenborg, and the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, in his Appendix B, pp. 260–61.

belong in particular *genres*. Both these features have implications for the nature of Q and for how the Q communities perceived themselves. In Chapter Three I shall address Horsley's dissatisfactions with the theories of both stratification and genre. As noted above, these include an objection to Christian theological assumptions which he finds distort a more relevant reading based on the social history and economic and political situation of the Q communities.

Kloppenborg summarises Mack's proposed stages of development of Q in terms of social history as: (1) an aphoristic core criticising superior status based on wealth and power, (2) an elaboration of this social critique, in which Mack detects a similarity with the *Cynic* philosophers,²² (3) *identity-forming conflict* with the Pharisees, *prophetic* warnings and *apocalyptic* announcements, by which Jesus becomes associated with *Wisdom*, John the Baptist, and figures from Israel's history, (4) a further elevation of Jesus to identification with the *rejected prophets* of Deuteronomy, and to the Son of Man, and (5) Jesus' elevation from a sage to an otherworldly being the *Son of God*, sole mediator of revelation, and heir to the kingdom.²³

1.5. Proposed Genres for Q

I now consider a selection of interpretations of the genre of Q, while noting Kloppenborg's observation that, though determining genre has important implications for understanding how those who framed Q perceived their work, any attribution of genre must be done cautiously, with due attention to the features of the text, and avoiding a priori assumptions about the theological and social history of the Q communities.²⁴

1.5.1. Sayings

Q was long considered as simply a collection of *sayings* or a sayings source.²⁵ Though it is a source for the composition of Matthew and Luke – by contrast with *The Gospel of Thomas*,

²² On the similarity with the Cynics, see also section 1.5.2 below.

²³ *Excavating Q*, pp. 185-87, drawing from Mack, *The Lost Gospel*: (1) pp. 110-11; (2) pp. 64, 115, 130, 122, 124, 125-26, 127, 138-39; (3) pp. 149-56; (4) p. 147; (5) pp. 173-74, 175.

²⁴ Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, pp. 379-80.

²⁵ 'Sayings source', originally from the German *Logienquelle*, *Spruchquelle*, or *Rede(n)quelle*. Such was the view, for example, of Harnack: Ronald A. Piper, 'Q: The Sayings Source', p. 258.

which is indeed a collection restricted to sayings – Q embodies a greater variety of forms.²⁶ Attention to forms brings into the discussion an earlier school of gospel analysis, ‘form criticism’.²⁷ Horsley agrees with the insights of form criticism to the extent that it recognised the oral nature of the early gospel tradition, that it represented ‘*Kleinliteratur*’ or ‘little tradition’, the ‘distinctive patterns of belief and behaviour which are valued by the peasantry’, preserved orally²⁸ (this is in distinction to the formal ‘great tradition’ of the Jerusalem establishment), and that certain forms indicated the circumstances of the community, the ‘*Sitz im Leben*’.²⁹ However, form criticism’s tendency to apply methods of *literary* analysis which reduce the text to small, discrete forms – a collection of isolated sayings – at the expense of reading it as coherent *discourses*, is criticised by Horsley.³⁰ As to treating Q only as no more than a *source*, some scholars regard this as a diminution of Q’s integrity and independent value, concluding (even if ‘argumentatively’ or ‘provocatively’) that the term ‘gospel’ is merited.³¹

1.5.2. Cynics

We have noted that Mack discerns a similarity between the Q communities and the Cynics, drawing attention to the forthright social critique (from a social group who are detached from family, voluntarily homeless, and begging) of worldliness and enjoyment of superior status, with bold outspokenness or *parresia*.³² Similarly, F. Gerald Downing finds the topics and content of Q to bear a similarity to the Cynics.³³ Christopher Tuckett, however, does not find

²⁶ *Gospel of Thomas*: a collection of sayings discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945; written in Coptic, possibly in the early second century CE. Text in English and brief introduction in Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁷ Leading works of form criticism include Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, trans. by John Marsh (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963); Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel: Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums*, trans. by Bertram Lee Woolf from 2nd German edn 1933 (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971); Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn 1935, repr. 1960).

²⁸ *Whoever Hears*, p. 99, quoting from James C. Scott “Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition”, *Theory and Society* 4 (1977), 1-38. Horsley treats the great and little traditions generally in *Whoever Hears*, pp. 98–104.

²⁹ Alan Kirk provides a useful summary of the strengths and weaknesses of form criticism in *Memory and the Jesus Tradition* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, T. & T. Clark, 2019), pp. 1-5.

³⁰ Bultmann’s categories of forms include apophthegms, dominical sayings (logia, prophetic and apocalyptic sayings, legal sayings and church rules, ‘I’ sayings, similitudes and similar forms), miracle stories, and historical stories and legends. Dibelius’s categories of forms include sermons, paradigms, tales, legends, analogies (including *chriae*), and exhortations.

³¹ ‘Argumentative’: Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, pp. 398–408. ‘Provocative’: Arland Jacobson, *The First Gospel: An Introduction to Q*, Foundations & Facets (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1992), p. 3.

³² Mack, *The Lost Gospel*, pp. 45–49. See also Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, pp. 184–88. Examples appear in the woes against the Pharisees, the lawyers, and ‘this generation’, Q 11:39–52.

³³ F. Gerald Downing, ‘Quite like Q - a Genre for “Q”’: The Lives of Cynic Philosophers’, *Biblica* 69.2 (1988), 196–225 (p. 203). He refers specifically to the Cynic section of Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. (He also notes similarities with the genre of βίος, with reference to Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*

the characterisation convincing, partly because some features adduced are not peculiar to Cynics, and partly because the simple presence of components in a text are inconclusive unless *ordered* in such a way as to establish inclusion in a genre.³⁴ As we shall note later, Horsley's objections to the validity of the Cynic theory extend beyond Tuckett's, to rejecting itinerant philosophers having any historical relation to the Q communities, whom he regards as geographically and culturally rooted, not itinerant or philosophically selective.

1.5.3. *Wisdom*

Both the schemes of stratification see Jesus portrayed as a personification of Wisdom, but in a more general sense Q has been identified as a common form of wisdom *literature*, with parallels in other early Christian writing (including Mark 4 and the *Didache*) as well as several Coptic-Gnostic writings.³⁵ A combined classification of Q as sayings and wisdom literature is made by James Robinson in his *Logoi Sophōn* ('Sayings of the Sages'),³⁶ which identifies Q as belonging among ancient wisdom collections, such as Proverbs, the *Gospel of Thomas* and Mishna 'Abot.³⁷

1.5.4. *Prophetic*

A particular thrust of prophetic utterance in Q is in the invective against 'this generation', which stubbornly refuses to respond to the overtures made towards it; and this is connected with the Deuteronomistic theme of the rejection and violence which afflicts all prophets sent from God: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those sent to her!' (Q 13:34a).³⁸ In terms of attempting to identify the Q community by reference to 'this generation', Tuckett finds it clear that the polemic is directed against Jews who do not support the Christian cause by

A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography, The Biblical Resource Series, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Dearborn, MI: Dove Booksellers, 2004), p. 241.)

³⁴ Christopher M. Tuckett, 'A Cynic Q', *Biblica* 70.3 (1989), 349–76 (pp. 359–61).

³⁵ Mack, *The Lost Gospel*, p. 34–35.

³⁶ James M. Robinson, "'Logoi Sophōn': On the Gattung of Q", in James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), pp. 71–113.

³⁷ John S. Kloppenborg and Leif E. Vaage, 'Early Christianity, Q and Jesus: The Sayings Gospel and Method in the Study of Christian Origins', *Semeia* 55 (1991), 1–14 (pp. 5–7).

³⁸ Christopher M. Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), p. 195. (Persecution of prophets: Q 6:23b; 10:10; 11:47b; 11:49–51.)

contrast to the Gentiles, who display faith.³⁹ Relevant as an insight to the Q communities' self-perception, he notes Kloppenborg's observation that the conflict with the outsiders may serve to reinforce *group identity*.⁴⁰ Conflict and identity may also be seen in prophetic sayings of Jesus in Q which have been regarded as prophetic *threats*. Indeed, together with woes – first against the Jewish leaders, later against those who persecute prophets – prophetic threats have been noted as distinctively frequent in Q compared with Mark, with a common theme of judgement for impenitence or failure to respond to divine appeal.⁴¹ A question arises as to whether the threats are expressions of actual *present-day* social conflict (as Horsley insists), or carry a *theological* significance, with a message of imminent judgement which has been identified as *apocalyptic* (which Horsley rejects). Kloppenborg, for example, comments on a cluster of sayings: 'The threat of apocalyptic judgement recurs as the formative literary and theological motif'.⁴² Helmut Koester's interpretation is also decidedly apocalyptic and eschatological; he states 'The sayings in this section must all be understood as warnings regarding the coming of the *Son of man*'.⁴³ However, Horsley is dismissive of this apocalyptic interpretation, regarding it as no more than a 'synthetic modern scholarly construct', largely dependent on imposing a historically unwarranted *theological* significance on the term 'Son of Man'.⁴⁴

1.5.5. *Absence of a Passion Narrative*

Significant for the self-understanding of the Q communities is the apparent absence of a passion narrative. However, some scholars take the view that it is extremely unlikely that the

³⁹ Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity*, p. 196. (Faith of the Gentile centurion: Q 7:1–10; better for Gentile Sodom and Gomorrah than rejecting Galilean cities: Q 10:13–15; this generation judged by the queen of the South: Q 11:31f.)

⁴⁰ Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity*, p. 202, quoting John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections*, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity, 1st Trinity Press International edn (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), pp. 167–68. My emphasis.

⁴¹ Jacobson, 'The Literary Unity of Q', pp. 365–89. (Macarisms: at least seven in Q, two in Mark; woes: at least nine in Q, none in Mark; prophetic threats: between twelve and fifteen in Q, two in Mark. Interestingly, Jacobson identifies only one story categorised as 'conflict' in Q (the Beelzebul controversy), compared with eleven in Mark.) Jacobson also refers to 'the eschatological correlative', a Gattung elaborated by Richard A. Edwards in 'Eschatological Correlative as a Gattung in the New Testament', *ZNW* 60.1–2 (1969), 9–20.

⁴² The sayings that Kloppenborg references are Q 12:39–40, 42–46, 49, 51–53, (54–56), 57–59. *The Formation of Q*, p. 148 (referred to by Koester, as cited in the next note).

⁴³ Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), p. 146. His selection of sayings is similar (Q 12:39–40, 42–46, 49, 51–53, 54–56, 57–59, 13:18–19, 20–21) gathered under his heading 'The Coming Judgment'.

⁴⁴ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 68–75. (On this point, it may be noted that the International Q Project's online translation of 'The Sayings Gospel Q', changes at Q 12:39 onwards from 'son of humanity' to 'Son of Humanity'. (<http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~kloppen/iquqet.htm>)).

communities receiving Q did not also know other traditions about Jesus, including his life, death, and resurrection.⁴⁵ Q may have served as a written ethical teaching to supplement an oral tradition including the Passion.⁴⁶ Kloppenborg takes the view that Q does refer to Jesus' death (taking up the cross, Q 14:27), but with an absence of soteriological function.⁴⁷ Jesus' death may thus have been seen by the Q communities as the fate of a *prophet*.⁴⁸ As we shall see in Chapter Three, Horsley regards the memory of the fate of the prophets of history (especially their deaths at the hands of the rulers in Jerusalem) as a vital theme in the message to the Q communities.

⁴⁵ For example, Marinus de Jonge, *Christology in Context: The Earliest Christian Response to Jesus*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), pp. 83-84, cited by Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, pp. 374-75.

⁴⁶ Streeter, *The Four Gospels*, p. 292. Similarly, Birger A. Pearson believes that those hearing Q were aware of narratives of the passion and resurrection, and like Streeter he regards the purpose of Q as a guide to good behaviour in community life: 'A Q Community in Galilee?', *NTS*, 50.4 (2004), 476-94 (p. 487).

⁴⁷ Kloppenborg, *Excavating Q*, p. 371. His emphasis.

⁴⁸ Piper, 'Q: The Sayings Source', p. 262. My emphasis.

2. Memory, Orality, and Literacy

2.1. *Memory in oral societies*

It is clear that the Q tradition at some point became *written*, but it remains a matter of scholarly contention as to when and by whom Q was transformed from an oral tradition to a written text. I regard this as a crucial question in evaluating Horsley, as his theories depend heavily on the Q tradition being both oral (at least in its early stages), and on hostility between the Q communities and the elites of Jerusalem. This attitude of hostility is critical for Horsley because it portrays a stark cultural division between, on the one hand, the poor and illiterate of Galilee nurturing an unofficial oral ‘little tradition’; and on the other hand, the powerful Jerusalem, secure in their official great tradition recorded in written texts, sustained by a wealth of scribes. For Horsley’s vision of the Q communities, then, the question of literacy is more crucial than merely an interesting variety of scholarly opinions. I therefore next focus on two questions crucial to Horsley’s theories: (1) were the Q communities illiterate, or were scribes at work amongst them recording or even *composing* the Q tradition? and (2) if the Q tradition was at first communicated *exclusively orally*, how was it preserved and transmitted?

As recognised from the form critics onwards, the early Q tradition must have been oral, with memories of the words and actions of Jesus passed from eyewitnesses to other followers. It is for this reason that I concentrate here on human memory. I noted above that form criticism, despite its useful insights into the formation of the gospel, has its defects in applying textual methods to oral tradition. So also certain apparently useful models of memory (in particular, *individual* memory) can be misleading as to the preservation and transmission of oral tradition. I briefly review some less helpful models of memory concentrating on the memory of *individuals*, which serve to highlight the contribution to this study of the phenomenon of *community* memory. Then, drawing on ancient media studies, I consider various possible models of how community memory may have been transmitted to, among, and by the Q communities. In the case of both the *retention* of memory and the *transmission* of memory, I emphasise the distinction between, on the one hand, the *reliability* of memory (examined against historical fact or an original narrative), and, on the other hand, the significance of memory to a community in expressing its current *concerns* and shaping its *identity*.

2.2. *Memory: unreliability*

Many studies on memory have addressed its weakness in terms of *reliability*. This is particularly so where studies, including those focused on tradition of the gospels, have examined the memories of *individuals*. Such studies tend to fixate on the unreliability of an individual's recall of an unfamiliar narrative which lacks *cultural resonance* for them,⁴⁹ or of the transmission of narratives *from one individual to another* in a chain⁵⁰ or cascade.⁵¹ In all such cases attention is misdirected away from the essential nature of memory in Q: a tradition repeated over time in *a community* amongst whom the tradition is profoundly familiar.⁵² As I shall show in Chapter Three, a vital element of Horsley's view of the Q communities is that the Q tradition was already embedded in their memories as their own cultural possession and sense of identity as Israelites. It is to the cultural significance of memory in the identity of a community that I turn next.

2.3. *Memory: social and cultural significance*

For a more helpful study on memory as an artefact and possession of a *community*, I approach the work of Maurice Halbwachs, the founder of modern social and cultural memory studies.⁵³ Halbwachs distinguishes between, on the one hand the memory of the individual, and on the other hand, 'collective memory', which refers to

a shared cultural past to which individuals contribute and upon which they call; but ultimately a past that transcends individual memory. Since collective memory is crucial for informing group identity, it is a past that the group actively manages.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁰ Examples of this approach are given by Bart D. Ehrman in *Jesus before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior* (New York: HarperOne, 2017).

⁵¹ V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, pp. 124-26. His Appendix B (pp. 202-09) gives both detail of the story and its transmission, with conclusions on pp. 207-09. A similar experiment on gospel formation was conducted by Robert K. McIver and Marie Carroll in their 'Experiments to Develop Criteria for Determining the Existence of Written Sources, and Their Potential Implications for the Synoptic Problem', *JBL*, 121.4 (2002), 667-87.

⁵² V. Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition*, p. 124. Note that Taylor himself was alert to the limitations in his experiment.

⁵³ The distinction between 'social memory' (referring to smaller social units) and 'cultural memory' (referring to larger social units) is relevant when considering the extent and duration of the formation of the Jesus tradition.

⁵⁴ Chris Keith, 'Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research: The First Decade (Part One)', *EC* 6.3 (2015), 354-76; and (Part Two), *EC* 6.4 (2015), 517-42 (p. 360).

Cultural memory is thus ‘an intentional formation of the past’.⁵⁵ In this respect, the significance of the memory of the community resides less in an accurate historical record – indeed Halbwachs denotes its function as *reconstruire* rather than *retrouver* – and more in a response to the *social demands of the present*.⁵⁶ For Horsley, this function of cultural memory as a response to a society’s current concerns, and the formation of its identity, is fundamental to his understanding of the Q narratives and their meaning to the Q communities.

We thus have tensions between two models of memory: one concentrating on its unreliability, and the other concentrating on its embodiment of the concerns and identity of a community. To the modern mind, now unaccustomed to relying on memory for preserving what can be documented, the question arises: could not the Q communities have captured their memories at an early stage and thereafter transmitted them in stable form, namely in *writing*? As I have noted, Horsley’s theories are dependent on these communities living in an oral culture, and Q originating as an ‘oral-derived text’. They are also dependent on a marked cultural and political distance between the village communities and the literate elites of Jerusalem, whose agents the scribes would be. I therefore next review scholarly opinion on the prevalence of literacy at that time and place, and thus the what the probability was that scribes could have been involved in the recording or composition of Q.

2.4. Writing: illiteracy and the involvement of scribes

Levels of literacy in Palestine in the first century CE were extremely low, and it has been estimated that fewer than ten percent of any ancient community would have the ability to read, let alone write; and that would be restricted to the elite and its retainer class.⁵⁷ As to the Jewish population in Roman Palestine, the literacy rate has been estimated at about three percent, with this being even lower in rural populations.⁵⁸ There is no hard evidence that Jesus’ personal

⁵⁵ Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *Social Frameworks of Memory*, in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, The Heritage of Sociology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 38; quoted in Keith, ‘Social Memory and Gospels Research’, p. 360.

⁵⁶ Chris Keith, ‘Social Memory Theory and Gospels Research’, p. 359. My italics.

⁵⁷ William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). It should be noted that, under the broad title of ‘Ancient Literacy’, Harris’s work concentrates on the Greek and Roman world.

⁵⁸ Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine*, TSAJ 81 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 496, referring to the estimate of Meir Bar-Ilan, ‘Illiteracy in the Land of Israel in the First Centuries C.E.’, in *Essays in the Social Scientific Study of Judaism and Jewish Society*, Volume II, ed. by Simcha Fishbane and others, (Hoboken, NJ: 1992), pp. 46-61 (p. 55). In her work Hezser is careful to point out the difficulties of precision, especially in terms of the widely variable definitions of literacy. Larry Hurtado, however, in a critical review of Kelber, is insistent that literacy was a valued and widely-shared competence, especially in Jewish society: Larry

followers recorded his words to writing: their culture was oral, and only tenuously connected to literate culture.⁵⁹ Such findings are, of course, of support to Horsley. Nevertheless, the possibility cannot be excluded that scribes were involved in the capture or even the formation of the Q tradition, and in the opinion of William Arnal, the most likely group responsible not only for the recording but for the *composition* of Q was village scribes ('the small class of literate administrators'). Arnal, like Horsley, bases his view on socio-economic conditions, but contrary to Horsley, brings in the scribes, whom he sees as resentful of their declining position under the Roman administration.⁶⁰ These scribes, in his view, were capable not simply of recording, in the sense of taking down dictation, keeping accounts and so on, but they were 'relatively proficient at the production (composition, authorship) of texts, and literary texts at that'.⁶¹ However, contrary to Arnal, Joanna Dewey finds it entirely improbable that there would have been scribes with such literary skills in Galilee before the Roman cities, regarding Arnal as both underestimating the abilities of a non-literate culture and overestimating the literacy level of village scribes.⁶² Similarly, Nicholas H. Taylor strongly doubts that the scribes' ability and function would extend to maintaining cultural traditions. Rather, scribes would be facilitating the economic exploitation by the ruling interests, again a view that supports the theory of Horsley.⁶³

A scholarly tension therefore exists regarding the role of scribes, which I have identified as crucial to Horsley's theory that there existed a hostile distance between the oral Q communities and the Jerusalem elite. As I have noted, Horsley places emphasis both on the orality of the Q

W. Hurtado, 'Greco-Roman Textuality and the Gospel of Mark: A Critical Assessment of Werner Kelber's *The Oral and the Written Gospel*', *BBR* 7 (1997), 91–106 (p. 95).

⁵⁹ Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. 21. He refers to Acts 4:13, where Peter and John are referred to as ἄνθρωποι ἀγράμματοι ... καὶ ἰδιῶται 'non-literate and common men'. Although it may be noted that *The NKJV Greek-English Interlinear New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1994), p. 433, glosses ἀγράμματος as being more probably 'uneducated', possibly with specific reference to a lack of formal training interpreting the Jewish law.

⁶⁰ Milton C. Moreland, 'Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q', *JBL* 121.4 (2002), 757–66 (p. 765), reviewing William Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q*, illustrated edn (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001).

⁶¹ Arnal, *Jesus and the Village Scribes* p. 170. He opines that the work of the scribes was not simply transcription of material that was circulating orally, but involved organising and rearranging material into carefully constructed arguments (p. 168).

⁶² Joanna Dewey, 'Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q', *ATR* 85.1 (2003), 183–84. Similar assessments appear in Richard A. Horsley, Introduction to *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, pp. 10–11; and Horsley and Draper, *Whoever Hears*, pp. 293–94.

⁶³ N. H. Taylor, 'Q and Galilee?', pp. 290–302. He contemplates that documents for this purpose would be 'minute', such as contracts, receipts, and other records. In addition to the limited abilities of such scribes (whether in Aramaic or Greek), and the difficulty of obtaining writing materials in the quantity required, Taylor doubts that the scribes would have had a role in society as custodians or interpreters of the cultural tradition of the villages.

communities and the significance to them of the memory of the prophets of Israelite tradition. Given the significance of memory, I turn to ancient media studies and other anthropological studies to explore other means by which memories – especially cultural memories significant to communities – might be preserved unwritten. These include mnemonic devices used by illiterate peoples; institutionally disciplined memory practices; professional repositories of memory on behalf of the community in the form of bards; and finally, a model for ownership of tradition by the community itself.

2.5. *Models of preservation and transmission of memory in oral cultures*

2.5.1. *Mnemonic devices*

As aids to the retention of complex thought, those in oral-only cultures must rely on mnemonics such as rhythm, balanced patterns, repetitions and antitheses, standardised epithets, and formulaic expressions.⁶⁴ For those performing long narratives from memory, formulaic expressions, such as fixed epithets (for example Homer's 'grey-eyed Athena' or the Anglo-Saxon scop's 'unlocking his word-hoard'), are particularly helpful as aids to recalling and formulating verse, as demonstrated by Albert Lord.⁶⁵ From the point of view of the audience, such phrases can carry an additional dimension of meaning and cultural significance for the audience. Here, the formulaic expressions are heard not merely as stock phrases, but resonate in the listeners' imaginations by the phenomenon termed 'metonymic referencing' by John Miles Foley, whereby a reference has the power to awaken in the mind associations from a shared inheritance of tradition. In this way, such elements may 'reach out of the immediate instance in which they appear to the fecund totality of the entire tradition ... and they bear meanings as wide and deep as the tradition they encode'.⁶⁶ In terms of tradition, other characteristics of oral narrative are close engagement with human concerns, characterised by

⁶⁴ Walter J. Ong and John Hartley, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, *Orality and Literacy*, 3rd edn (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 34. As an indication of the global significance of orality, Ong notes that '...language is so overwhelmingly oral that of the many thousands of languages – possibly tens of thousands of languages – spoken in the course of human history only around 106 have ever been committed to writing sufficient to have produced literature, and most have never been written at all', (p. 22).

⁶⁵ In *The Singer of Tales*, HSCL (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960) and *Epic Singers and Oral Tradition, Myth and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁶⁶ John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 8, cited in *Whoever Hears*, p. 160 (and further treated on pp. 160–63 and 170–74). Additionally, Vernon K. Robbins gives a helpful summary of gradations of referencing in the 'rhetorical spectrum of oral-scribal texture' in 'Oral, Rhetorical, and Literary Cultures: A Response', *Semeia* 65 (1994), 75–91 (pp. 82–88). These gradations are (1) reference, (2) recitation, (3) recontextualization, (4) reconfiguration, (5) echo.

the treatment of characters with sympathetic identification or with vituperation ('agonistically toned'), and a tendency for the narrative to be emotionally enmeshed rather than objective.⁶⁷ As we shall see in Chapter Three, two concepts here support Horsley's view of an oral Q. The first is metonymic referencing, which can be illustrated by the fate of Zechariah (Q 11:51), awakening in the memory of the hearers of Q the entire line of persecuted and murdered prophets (many of them dying, as noted above, at the hands of the rulers in Jerusalem). The second is the characteristic of emotional engagement, as evidenced in the vituperation in the woes and the condemnation of the Pharisees, the exegetes of the law, and 'this generation'.

2.5.2. *Institutional memory*

Closer to the time and circumstances of the oral phase of Q is a model which proposes that the tradition could have been consistently transmitted, with memories of Jesus being preserved in a highly disciplined way, by analogy with rabbinic teaching methods, whereby the students of a rabbi would have to memorise a teaching perfectly before the rabbi would give his interpretation.⁶⁸ This model, though attractive for its apparent connection with the culture of the Q communities, has been criticised for a number of reasons. First, as being anachronistic, the earliest dating of the Mishnah being about 200 CE, and the Babylonian Talmud about the sixth century CE.⁶⁹ Secondly, based on the view that the words and deeds of Jesus as reported in the gospels show signs of *not* having been memorised.⁷⁰ Thirdly, on the basis that rabbinic teaching was bound up with written texts, and that rote memorisation tends to occur only in educated, literate circles.⁷¹ On this last point, Horsley, as we shall see further in Chapter Three, approves the theory of rabbinic-style transmission, despite its connection with literacy, on the basis that the teaching itself would have been delivered exclusively orally.

⁶⁷ Ong and Hartley, *Orality and Literacy*, Chapter 3: 'Some Psychodynamics of Orality'. On pages 36–57 are set out Ong's nine characteristics of orally-based thought and expression: additive rather than subordinate; aggregative rather than analytic; redundant or 'copious'; conservative or traditionalist; close to the human lifeworld; agonistically toned; empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced; homeostatic; situational rather than abstract.

⁶⁸ Birger Gerhardsson and Eric J. Sharpe, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity; with, Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity*, The Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Dove, 1998).

⁶⁹ Ehrman, *Jesus Before the Gospels*, pp. 66–71 (p. 68).

⁷⁰ Ehrman, *Jesus Before the Gospels*, p. 69.

⁷¹ Eric Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* (London: SPCK, 2013), p. 40.

2.5.3. *Memory of specialist performer*

Horsley's theory envisions the performers of Q as leaders of the village communities, delivering their discourses to their neighbours from memory. I therefore now introduce a specific model of performers of traditional material, to compare it in Chapter Three with Horsley's view. This model is of a *specialist* performer preserving memory for their community on their behalf, as it were. A study was made in the 1930s of illiterate Yugoslavian poet-singers of oral epics, who were able to perform recitations of Homeric length requiring a prodigious memory. These performances were characterised by oral memory-formulas noted above (the 'oral-formulaic theory').⁷² However, one of the features noted was that recitations might vary very materially from one performance to another, whereas the bard was insistent that he invariably performed a single *definitive* version of the story.⁷³ In this we may observe two features relevant to the study of Q, its performers, and its hearers. The first is that the performer (whether or not conscious of the process), is able to edit or even compose in the course of live performance: 'composition in performance', while at the same time for both performer and audience, each performance event remains true to tradition, and is 'authentic'. The second, related to this, is that in oral performance, even of an apparently stable narrative, there is not necessarily a single version that remains fixed over time. In other words, there is not a version which may be regarded as the 'original', the existence of which was typically an assumption of form criticism; and although form criticism acknowledged the oral origins of the Gospels, its methods were attuned to the development of successive written texts. Werner Kelber is terse in his criticism:

The form-critical search for the archetypal composition, and the compulsion to honor it as a first rung in the evolutionary ladder betray the bias of textuality and ignorance of oral behavior. ... The concepts of *original form* and variants have no validity in oral life, nor does the one of *ipsissima vox*, if by that one means the authentic version over against secondary ones. 'In a sense each performance is "an" original if not "the" original.' Moreover, if each utterance constitutes an authentic speech act, then the question of transmission can never be kept wholly separate from composition.⁷⁴

In this observation can be seen a judgement applied to performance of a narrative similar to that of the judgement applied to memory. That is to say, for a community the issue of

⁷² Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Chapter 3: 'The Formula'. This work develops the term 'oral-formulaic theory'.

⁷³ Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, pp. 26-29.

⁷⁴ Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, p. 30. The quotation within the quotation is from Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, p. 101.

authenticity of a narrative or tradition is not necessarily dependent on the precise replication of an original, if indeed such exists. Here, a certain degree of latitude is permitted to the performer. By contrast, in the next model of performance of community memory, we see that certain traditional materials may be permitted no latitude in performance.

2.5.4. *Memory regulated by community*

Whereas the bard offers oral performance *to* a community, I now turn to a model of narratives performed – and regulated – *by* a community. Here Kenneth E. Bailey considers theories on the consistent transmission of oral tradition; he reviews two schools of thought, and proposes a third model, applicable to the circumstances of the Q tradition.⁷⁵ First is the ‘informal uncontrolled’ oral tradition model of Bultmann: here the tradition is always open to new community creations, there is no identifiable teacher or student, and all is fluid and plastic. Second is the ‘Scandinavian school’, of which Birger Gerhardsson is a proponent, postulating a teacher, students, and an identified block of tradition passed on in disciplined conditions; this is the ‘formal controlled’ model. However, Bailey himself proposes a third model, described as the ‘informal controlled’ oral tradition. This is exemplified in a Middle Eastern community entertainment called *haflat samar* (‘samar’ being, according to Bailey, a cognate of the Hebrew word meaning ‘to preserve’). For certain categories of narrative, while an individual from the audience may take over the recitation, even a single word out of place brings humiliating correction of the performer from the audience: here the community exercises rigid control over the tradition.⁷⁶

In my discussion of the last three styles of performance I have put forward possible models which present a tension in terms of the ‘ownership’ by the audience of the memories being transmitted and their relationship to the performer or teacher. In the next chapter, I consider Horsley’s insistence that Q was oral rather than written – an oral-derived text – and evaluate the significance of this to his understanding of the Q communities, in particular their inheritance of their own ‘little tradition’ in conflict with the ‘great tradition’ of Jerusalem.

⁷⁵ Kenneth E. Bailey, ‘Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels’, *Themelios* 20.2 (1995), 4–11. A convenient summary and assessment of Bailey’s article appears in Rafael Rodríguez’s *Oral Tradition and the New Testament: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), pp. 47–50.

⁷⁶ Bailey, ‘Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels’, p. 7.

3. Horsley's Interpretation of Q and the Q Communities

3.1. Introduction

In Chapter One I introduced the Q hypothesis, and sketched its origins. I summarised the theory of stratification, which discerns the development of Q in layers, from which a progression in the sense of identity of the Q communities might be inferred. I then considered a range of genres in which Q could be located: a collection of sayings, an account of Cynic-like philosophers, wisdom sayings, or prophetic utterances with overtones of apocalyptic and eschatological themes. In this, the absence of a Passion narrative was noted, with its implications as to how the Q communities saw Jesus, and therefore themselves.

In Chapter Two, after acknowledging the generally accepted view that the Q tradition was in its early years transmitted orally, I considered certain studies relevant to *orality*, the need for the tradition to be maintained in *memory*, and a variety of modes of transmission of memory, especially in a *community* setting. I also addressed views on the likelihood of the tradition having been recorded in writing in its early stages, taking into consideration levels of literacy and the possibility of the involvement of scribes.

I now come to a turning-point in this study, in addressing the particular interpretation of Q and its communities presented in Horsley and Draper's *Whoever Hears You Hears Me*. In that work, Horsley certainly accepts the oral nature of Q, and indeed depends on it to emphasise the cultural division between the 'little tradition' of Q and the 'great tradition' of Jerusalem; he also stresses the significance of cultural memory in shaping the identity of a community (both of which I discussed in Chapter Two). However, Horsley's theory stands in contrast to much of the scholarly analysis which I addressed in Chapter One. I have noted above, Horsley's objection that the modern Western mind has difficulty in recognising that, for the Q communities, the religious, the political, the social, and the economic were not separate spheres.⁷⁷ In this chapter I shall demonstrate that in promotion of his particular vision of the Q communities, he is unconvinced by certain approaches to Q which he regards as distorted by such patterns of thought. In particular, he detects the errors both of liberal *individualistic* faith and also a tendency to *universalise* the ethical import of certain sayings in the text of Q, thus

⁷⁷ (As detailed in footnote 3 above.)

wrongly detaching them from the historical and culturally specific situation in the lives of the Q communities. Accordingly, he is impatient of scholarly preoccupation with analysing features into categories or genres, not least when he doubts that the features belong in a given genre, or that the genre exists at all. It is clear that he promotes his theory on what he regards as its firmer foundation in the actual lives and circumstances of the Q communities, as evidenced by Q itself. I shall demonstrate that Horsley urges a political, economic, and cultural distance between the Q communities and the Jerusalem authorities that extends far beyond a Cynic-like philosophical critique, or the division between ‘little tradition’ and ‘great tradition’ as though expressing merely differing literary norms in two spheres of society. His view of Q almost as a manifesto is shown in his quotation of James C. Scott’s observations that ‘the material and symbolic hegemony normally exercised by ruling institutions does not preclude, but rather engenders a set of contrary values which represent in their entirety a kind of “shadow society”’ whose criticism of the elite may ‘under certain circumstances amount to a *political or religious mobilisation* of the little tradition’.⁷⁸

Given Horsley’s insistence on founding his theory in the historical circumstances of the Q communities, I next summarise the historical and social background to the Q communities that he contends must be seen as the foundation of their worldview.

3.2. History relating to the Q Communities

For Horsley, the starting point is that the Q communities were part of a society that had recently come under the rule of the Romans, who maintained as their client rulers the Herodians and the Jerusalem high-priestly class. At the other end of the social structure were the vast majority of Judaeans and Galileans, who lived in rural villages and organised their communities according to Israelite traditions. Between these two extremes were the scribes and Pharisees, objects of invective in the text of Q, who were sent as mediators by those at Jerusalem. Horsley draws attention to further historical regional and class divisions, in that those in Jerusalem were centred on the temple, itself a great (and costly) political-economic-religious institution, altogether remote from the village lives of the Q communities

⁷⁸ *Whoever Hears*, p. 103, referencing Scott, ‘Protest and Profanation’, pp. 19 and 12. My emphasis.

3.3. Horsley's understanding of Q

Horsley contends, therefore, that Q is properly to be read in the context of the history of the Q communities, their view of themselves as representing an authentic Israelite tradition distinct from that of those at Jerusalem, imposed upon by their agents the scribes and Pharisees, and living a marginal existence in agrarian villages, under the burden of taxation for the temple and other Herodian building projects. Thus, the text of Q embodies not sayings of general, universalised wisdom, but the speeches of a community movement responding to hardship and conflict with powerful authorities. Horsley is adamant that his are the only terms on which to proceed: 'we must face the implications that Q is an "oral-derived" text' and 'grapple with Israelite tradition in Q as the *only* basis on which the sequence of speeches in Q can be appropriately heard'.⁷⁹

Thus, from Horsley's point of view, any approach reliant on form criticism must be deficient, despite the form critics' recognition of Q's origins in orality and their insight that elements of the text were rooted in the circumstances of the lives of the Q communities ('*Sitz im Leben*'). For Horsley, it is untenable that Q can be analysed as a collection merely of *sayings*, and that these sayings can be isolated according to their forms.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the breaking of the elements of Q into isolated sayings deflects attention from a reading of Q in context as a set of *discourses* which spoke to and resonated with the lives of the Q communities.⁸¹ I shall further expand on the sense of a narrative *resonating* with communities below, in the context of both cultural memory and performance in community; but I shall first examine Horsley's assessment of other scholars' proposals concerning the stratification and genre of Q.

3.3.1. *Language, date and place of composition*

In the light of the material so far investigated in this study, little need be said concerning Horsley's understanding of the circumstances of Q's composition, except to observe that he detects a growing awareness amongst other scholars of the points that he advances. One is that Q comes from a specific community or movement among Jesus' followers, another is that Q is increasingly being located among communities in Syria, even in Galilee (referencing

⁷⁹ *Whoever Hears*, p. 122. My emphasis.

⁸⁰ *Whoever Hears*, p. 85.

⁸¹ *Whoever Hears*, p. 84.

Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida). Also, relevant to his criticisms of anachronistic theological analysis is his view that Q comes from a period (50–70 CE) before self-consciously Christian groups separated from their origins in Israelite traditions. For him, the principal conflict was between the Judean and Galilean people versus the Herodians of Jerusalem.⁸²

Problematic, though, is a question relating to language. I noted above that the presence of metrical formulas may be indicative of oral performers drawing from their repertoire of memory. Horsley and Draper devote much attention to examples of such rhythmic patterning within lines, and grouping of lines into couplets and triplets and stanzas. In illustration of these features, they offer a carefully versified presentation of certain passages in Q, with transliterated Greek and English displayed in parallel.⁸³ As I noted in Chapter One, a problem arises in that, whereas it is accepted that in the *oral* stage the Q discourses were performed in Aramaic, this presentation is in Q's *written* language of Greek. Horsley goes some way to addressing this in proposing that the movement had expanded into areas where more Greek was spoken than in villages. This supposes hearers who were not descendants of Israelites, yet who identified with Israelite tradition as the basis of the expanding movement.⁸⁴ Given Horsley's insistence on the historical grounding of the (Aramaic-speaking) Q communities, and their firm identity as Israelites, the disjunction between language, place, and people introduces a loosening of his argument, otherwise securely grounded in historical specifics.

3.3.2. *Stratification and Genres*

Horsley's analysis of Q entails a broad dissatisfaction with many of the theories that have been reviewed above. Again, his insistence on the historical grounding of the Q communities brings into play criticisms of the stratigraphic and genre appreciations of Q more or less simultaneously. An extended quotation usefully serves to illustrate his combined objections:

... for all its sophistication and generation of scholarly energy, this [stratigraphic] hypothesis appears to be based primarily on modern theologically rooted scholarly assumptions and concepts. The criteria by which the two principal strata are sorted out – that is, the classification of sayings into sapiential and apocalyptic, supposed prophetic condemnation of 'all Israel', and the apocalyptic motifs that distinguish the

⁸² *Whoever Hears*, p. 68.

⁸³ For example, Q 6:20–49, *Whoever Hears*, pp. 212–17, and Q 9:57–10:16, pp. 234–37.

⁸⁴ Horsley, 'Performance and Tradition: The Covenant Speech in Q' in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, *Semeia* 60 (Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 43–70 (pp. 50–51).

secondary layer – are difficult to find in the Q material itself and would appear to be derived from modern scholarly concepts in the field of New Testament studies.⁸⁵

3.3.2.1. *Stratification*

Horsley taxes Kloppenborg with failing to observe his own cautions on giving attention to the features of the text, taking care in the attribution of genre, and avoiding unwarranted theological assumptions.⁸⁶ He also regards Kloppenborg's categorisations of material into sapiential, prophetic, and apocalyptic/judgemental as incorrect and inconsistent, causing the stratification theory to fall under critical scrutiny.⁸⁷ In particular, Horsley criticises at length the term apocalypticism ('the synthetic modern scholarly construct'), which he believes to be the primary concept behind attempts to discern different layers in Q, particularly based on an unwarranted theological interpretation of 'son of man'.⁸⁸

Ultimately, Horsley regards the stratigraphy of Q as a product of the logic of modern science, particularly the insistence on categorisation according to resemblances. He also refers to the assumptions of the mind accustomed to *print*, where typographic culture encourages seeing texts as palimpsests, with layer building on layer.⁸⁹ Horsley must in any case be disposed against Kloppenborg's stratigraphic approach, which is founded on an assumption that Q was composed as a written document.⁹⁰

3.3.2.2. *Genres*

Connected with Horsley's criticism of stratigraphy is his criticism of certain genres advanced for Q. Nevertheless, he does offer observations on particular genres, and I review these before moving on to the characterisation which he endorses with conviction as the true genre of Q: the *prophetic*.

⁸⁵ *Whoever Hears*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 62–65.

⁸⁷ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 64–67, 82.

⁸⁸ *Whoever Hears*, p. 69.

⁸⁹ Horsley here (p. 83) draws on Werner H. Kelber, 'Jesus and Tradition: Words in Time, Words in Space', *Semeia* 65 (1994), 139–67 (pp. 141 and 144).

⁹⁰ Horsley, Introduction to *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, pp. 1–22 (pp. 8–9).

Cynics

Consistent with his insistence in locating the Q communities in the context of history, Horsley finds the presence of ‘Cynic culture critics’ as historically incredible,⁹¹ treating Q as simply a collection of *sayings*, torn from their literary and historical context.⁹² He sees the performers of Q as being rooted in their communities, not itinerant philosophers or ‘wandering charismatics’.⁹³ The notion of itinerant radicals *voluntarily* pursuing a lifestyle of poverty or homelessness (‘ethically motivated heroes of renunciation’)⁹⁴ is unconvincing to Horsley, who regards Q communities as static and enduring the hardships imposed upon them unwillingly. Indeed, he goes so far as to regard the Q communities as *anti*-Cynic, referring to Q 10:4, which forbids the carrying of purse, bag and sandals on journeys, by reason of their association with Cynic preachers.⁹⁵ In short, Horsley urges abandoning speculation on what the Q communities might have *resembled*, in favour of what they historically were, and in this I regard his opinion as more soundly based in the historical reality of the Q communities.

A collection of sayings

That Horsley regards as deficient any approach to Q that treats it merely as a collection of isolated sayings is by now clear. Also obvious is the foundation of his objection, namely that individual sayings are of limited use in understanding what was happening in the performances of the discourses.⁹⁶ He is also critical of those scholars who do appreciate that Q is more than a collection of sayings, yet tend to proceed by applying ‘topical or thematic labels or sequential indicators’.⁹⁷

⁹¹ *Whoever Hears*, p. 292.

⁹² *Whoever Hears*, pp. 231-32.

⁹³ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 34-40, criticising the theories of Max Weber and Gerd Theissen. Draper also devotes a chapter (Chapter 2) to ‘wandering charismatics’.

⁹⁴ *Whoever Hears*, p. 39. Horsley is quoting from Gerd Theissen, *Sociology of Early Palestinian Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 119.

⁹⁵ *Whoever Hears*, p. 231. The same point about Q missionaries looking ‘*un-like*’ Cynics is made by Christopher M. Tuckett, ‘A Cynic Q’, pp. 367–68.

⁹⁶ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 7-8.

⁹⁷ *Whoever Hears*, p. 85.

Wisdom and apocalyptic

We saw in Chapter Two that among the genres to which Q has been assigned are wisdom and apocalyptic. In addressing Horsley's views, I combine these two categories, as he criticises them together in combination with stratigraphic analysis of Q, criticising assumptions that both overlook the historical situation of the Q communities, and observe the text of Q through a Christian theological lens. Combining his historical and theological correctives, Horsley rejects the concept of 'Christianity's' break from 'Judaism' and the reading into Q of a Gentile mission, holding that Q belongs in Israelite tradition which possesses no distinctively 'Christian' features, since Christianity did not yet exist historically.⁹⁸

Wisdom

Horsley finds a specific verse in Q that 'takes a stance opposed to the very sages who cultivated wisdom and speculated on the *figure* of Wisdom', namely Q 10:21, which has Jesus thanking the Father for hiding the work of Jesus from 'the wise and the learned'.⁹⁹ As to wisdom as a *genre*, Horsley is likewise dismissive of the existence of a sapiential layer in Q. Apart from doubting that all of it is in fact sapiential instruction, his reading is that verses which appear to be ethical or religious precepts of universal application in reality refer to the actual life circumstances of the Q communities. For example, the passage Q 6:20–49 includes many items which are often read theologically as pieces of wisdom or commendations of ethical behaviour; and the modern reader may interpret in this way the blessings for the poor, the hungry, the mourners, and the persecuted; and commandments to love one's enemies, to observe the Golden Rule, to refrain from judgement of others, to turn the other cheek, to give the cloak as well as the shirt, and to lend without demanding return. Horsley, however, interprets these as practical instructions for the regulation of the Q village communities in accordance with the Israelite covenant, which requires the community to support its neighbours in their precarious common existence: to give or lend without interest, to allow the poor to glean, to cancel debts and release debt slaves every seven years.¹⁰⁰ Thus, Horsley identifies Q 11:2–4 as prayer for the real-world economic necessities of 'bread' and 'cancellation of debts'; Q 12:22–31 as expressing anxiety about food and clothing; and Q 12:2–12 as concerned with political

⁹⁸ *Whoever Hears*, p. 75. All quotation marks in Horsley's text.

⁹⁹ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 117–18.

¹⁰⁰ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 201–09. (Of historical interest, pp. 201–02 include a brief review of the similarities between the Mosaic covenant and treaties issued by Hittite emperors.)

struggle.¹⁰¹ In my opinion, it is at such points that Horsley's vision becomes most vivid, in that whereas much of his energy is devoted to dismissing the scholarship of others, here approach is grounded in the historical and literal. The Q communities were hearing prophetic discourses that aroused memories of their inherited covenant that spoke directly to their daily needs and their identity as Israelites.

Apocalyptic

As to the detection of an apocalyptic theme in Q, Horsley is critical of the persistent tendency to assert that Son of Man christology was central to Q and the Q community, investigations into the term 'the son of man' increasingly find that historic Judean texts do not denote the apocalyptic title Son of Man. He quotes Eugene Boring as an example of this: "'Son of Man' is the only christological title found in Q and was both fundamental to the community's confession of Jesus and the cause of its persecution',¹⁰² but himself sees the sense of the phrase 'the son of man' in many (though not all) Q verses simply as a circumlocution for the speaker's self-reference as 'I/me'.¹⁰³

Prophetic

It is in the prophetic that Horsley locates the text of Q, particularly in the life circumstances of the Q communities. He makes a strong case for locating the message of Q in the realities of the time: in its injunction to engage in a movement to renew the covenant in opposition to those of the great tradition in Jerusalem, Q is not only an example of a little tradition, but also a 'hidden transcript', an expression of resistance only safely to be performed away from the attention of the powerful authorities.¹⁰⁴ Horsley substantiates this sense of present danger to the members of the Q communities given the fates of many prophets in Israel's history. On the theme of renewal, Horsley refers to Elijah, whom he identifies as 'the most prominent and remembered prophet of the northern tribes of Israel' and a great renewer of Israel, and Elisha, 'his envoy and successor as prophetic leader of the renewal of Israel over against its rulers' in particular

¹⁰¹ *Whoever Hears*, p. 82.

¹⁰² *Whoever Hears*, p. 70, quoting M. Eugene Boring, *Sayings of the Risen Jesus*, SNTSMS 46 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 141.

¹⁰³ *Whoever Hears*, p. 71. The verses he cites are Q 6:22; 7:34; 9:58 and 11:30.

¹⁰⁴ Horsley, drawing on James C. Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990), in *Introduction to Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, pp. 19–22.

the overthrow of Ahab.¹⁰⁵ The passage Q 13:34–35 (Jerusalem killing the prophets) forms a prophetic lament, but this is not simply an expression of distress; rather it is a pronouncement of judgement against an exploitative ruling class.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, Q 14:16–24 (the parable of the great supper) glances at the luxury of the ruling elite, in a position to use their wealth to buy more land and oxen, but who are to be rejected in favour of the poor. And Q 13:29–28 (‘Many shall come from the East and the West, and recline with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God’) is read by Horsley both as a prophetic oracle against the rich Jerusalem rulers, and as a speech encouraging the community movement against them. The reference to those coming from the East and the West points to the longed-for gathering of the dispersed Israelites in a future restoration of Israel.¹⁰⁷ Again, Horsley relates the function of cultural memory expressed in Q to the political reality of the communities.

Q 11:39–52 (woes against the scribes and Pharisees) calls forth again Horsley’s objection that the true prophetic message to the Q communities – of solidarity in accordance with the Israelite covenant – is distorted by readings of individual religion or ethics, or Christianity versus Judaism, or a debate about purity laws. Horsley roots these verses in the tradition of prophetic woes in the books of Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and Habakkuk, where the form links an indictment of breaking a covenantal law with its punishment. He sees the woes as arising directly from the actual conflictual relationship between the poor Q communities in Galilee and Judea and the scribes and Pharisees as the emissaries from the Jerusalem rulers. The Pharisees are condemned as being intent on raising taxes (Q 11:42, tithing mint, dill, and cumin) and their eagerness in seeking luxury and social status (Q 11:43, places of honour at banquets), with no regard for the plight of the poor.¹⁰⁸ The scribes, as exegetes of the law, load the people with burdens, but do not lift a finger to help (Q 11:46b).

Also regarded by Horsley as speeches urging the renewal of Israel in accordance with the covenant is the section of Q in 6:20–49, where he notes many allusions to Israelite traditions, especially Mosaic covenantal laws and teachings.¹⁰⁹ Again, utterances that may be interpreted

¹⁰⁵ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 304–05 and p. 49.

¹⁰⁶ *Whoever Hears*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁷ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 283–84.

¹⁰⁸ Though Horsley doubts that mint, dill, and cumin were tithed in reality, and regards the mention of them as sarcastic hyperbole, *Whoever Hears*, p. 877. Kyu Sam Han notes that Q 11:42a,b is regarded by Leif Vaage as a social critique, or ‘lampoon’, of the Pharisaic ‘normative ethos, and religio-cultural system’ in general. Kyu Sam Han, *Jerusalem and the Early Jesus Movement: The Q Community’s Attitude toward the Temple*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 207 (London; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 153.

¹⁰⁹ *Whoever Hears*, p. 96.

as universal ethical injunctions are read by Horsley as located in the specific social and economic situation of the Q communities. Thus Q 6:20-23 (beatitudes for the hungry, poor, mourners, and persecuted) and Q 6:24-26 (woes against the rich, the full, those who laugh, and those who are well spoken of) represent the overturning of the present political-economic order.¹¹⁰ Q 6:27-29 (loving your enemies, turning the other cheek, giving freely, the Golden Rule) are read by Horsley as focused on local economic interaction. Q 6:37-42 (including not judging, and the mote and the beam) refers to the social tensions between neighbours, perhaps rooted in the economic conflicts just mentioned. In my assessment, Horsley's presentation of 'real world' explanations for these elements of Q, has persuasive coherence in combining the text, the communities' memories of the Israelite covenant, and the historical situation in which they were living.

Horsley considers that the supposedly 'sapiential' macarisms in fact function as the 'blessings and curses' closure in the Mosaic covenant, and are here transformed for the Q communities into a declaration of God's deliverance in the renewal of the covenant. And Nehemiah 9-10 would have resonated with the Q hearers, reminding them of the people's subjugation to foreign rulers and rulers who disobeyed the covenant, but with the hope of salvation if the covenant is adhered to. Similarly, the commandment to love one's enemies is not for Horsley a broad injunction to non-resistance, either generally or to the Roman occupiers; rather, it is a direction to observe social harmony and cooperation with neighbours in the village communities, where 'enemy' was a traditional term for a neighbour with whom a conflict had developed.¹¹¹ In a vivid image, Horsley denies the universalised reading of Q 6:29 (giving the shirt as well as the cloak) as a commendation of generosity, and explains it as a reproach to a creditor insisting on taking the cloak as a pledge, enacted by stripping off the tunic as well and standing naked before the creditor in view of the fellow-villagers.¹¹² Here again, Horsley's literal reading has, in my opinion, the merit of establishing the congruence between the Q communities' memories of the Israelite covenant and other scriptural associations and the economic realities of their lives. An illustration of these economic realities is supplied by Sarah Rollens's attestations on the practice of cloaks being handed over as pledges or seized in recovery of debts, sometimes

¹¹⁰ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 210, 211. Note, though, that verses Q 6:24-26 are omitted from *The Critical Edition of Q*, ed. by James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), p. 165. It also reorders a number of verses in this section. I am following Horsley's order.

¹¹¹ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 216-21.

¹¹² *Whoever Hears*, p. 222.

accompanied with violence and insulting behaviour (cf. slapping in Q 6:29, which Horsley interprets as primarily an insult, rather than an injury).¹¹³

3.3.3. *Memory, orality, and community*

I have shown that Horsley's emphasis on the centrality of prophecy speaks to the social and economic situation of the Q communities and, through their shared cultural *memory*, their identity as the people of the Israelite covenant, in conflict with the powerful ones in Jerusalem, who have neglected their community solidarity in forgetting their duties under that covenant. Particular condemnation is reserved for the scribes and Pharisees, immersed in the great or official tradition, often preserved in writing, as opposed the little tradition, preserved orally.¹¹⁴ In the context of ancient media studies, before progressing to Horsley's views on the nature and function of memory in the Q tradition, I first turn to his views on the role of writing in relation to the Q communities, in particular to the dominance of *orality*, and thus to the understanding of Q as discourses for repeated community *performance*.

3.3.4. *Writing: illiteracy and the involvement of scribes*

Horsley reviews the evidence on the rates and distribution of literacy in the ancient world, (including the estimate of literacy in Roman Palestine as low as 3 percent),¹¹⁵ supporting his view that Israelite and Judean cultural tradition was primarily oral.¹¹⁶ Even where certain words or phrases appear to suggest reading ability, such as *gegraptai*, 'it is written' (in reference to the book of a prophet) or *graphē*, 'scripture', he states that this may indicate the speaker's appeal to the *authority* of scripture, rather than a citation to a written text;¹¹⁷ references to *reading* may likewise mean *reciting* from memory.¹¹⁸ Texts were in effect 'transcripts' of oral performances, being 're-oralised' in further performance. Horsley concludes that since literacy

¹¹³ Sarah E. Rollens, 'Conceptualising Justice in Q: Narrative and Context', in *Metaphor, Narrative, and Parables in Q*, WUNT 315, ed. by Dieter T. Roth, Ruben Zimmermann, and Michael Labahn (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), pp. 93–113 (pp. 99–105).

¹¹⁴ *Whoever Hears*, p. 99, quoting from Scott, "Protest and Profanation". Horsley treats the great and little traditions generally in *Whoever Hears*, pp. 98–104.

¹¹⁵ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 125–27. This includes several references to Harris, *Ancient Literacy*. The figure of 3 percent is from the same source as cited (though more cautiously) by Catherine Hezser, as referred to in Chapter Two above.

¹¹⁶ *Whoever Hears*, p. 137.

¹¹⁷ *Whoever Hears*, p. 143. Horsley offers examples in Q: 'as it is written' (three instances) in the temptation story (Q 4:1–13) and John's reference to Jesus as 'the one about whom it has been written' (Q 7:27).

¹¹⁸ *Whoever Hears*, p. 127. Horsley's emphasis.

was so limited, then Q also must have originated and continued in oral performance.¹¹⁹ Further, he is insistent that the Q communities as having a ‘decidedly antiscribal stance’, even seeing the reference in Q 11:46b to ‘fingers’, in the failure of the exegetes of the law to alleviate the burdens which they load on the people, as a glance at the scribal practice of writing.¹²⁰ These scribes are clearly those sent from the authorities in Jerusalem; but could there have been members of the Q communities with the ability to record the Q tradition in writing? In my opinion, the balance of the scholarly views on scribal involvement discussed at 2.4 above, weighs on Horsley’s side that there was a low probability that scribes contributed to the *composition* of Q. However, Horsley goes so far as to dismiss as ‘an imaginative historical conjecture’ that there would have been a presence of lower-level scribes in contact with peasant village life of Galilee, still less that they would have had the literary skills in the instructional genre associated with scribal or palace schools.¹²¹ Here, I consider that Horsley may be forced into this definite position by his commitment to Q as an oral-derived text, and the cultural significance of this. At all events, the Q communities are thus clearly depicted by Horsley as *hearers* of an oral tradition, and I therefore progress to his understanding of the preservation of that tradition in memory and its transmission in performance.

3.3.5. *Memory*

Reliability of memory

I have above addressed the question of the *reliability* of memory, and its limited significance in terms of the authenticity of tradition as received in oral societies. As to memory, Horsley’s concern is not with its reliability, and I would suggest that this is for the following reason. Whereas the reliability of human memory is of particular concern to those seeking the closest that can be achieved in establishing the words spoken by Jesus, by contrast, Horsley, though intent on founding his theories on historical evidence, is pursuing neither the historical Jesus nor Jesus’ actual words. In particular, and in contradistinction to the observations referred to in Chapter Two above (by Ehrman, V. Taylor, and Bartlett), Horsley does not have an interest in memory transmitted along a chain of *individuals*, nor the reliability of recall of a narrative

¹¹⁹ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 144–45.

¹²⁰ *Whoever Hears*, p. 98.

¹²¹ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 292–94.

read or heard *once only*. He dismisses this approach in relation to the performance of discourses to the Q communities:

In no case is Q material a matter of individual transmission of sayings heard from another individual, via better or poorer memory. Q performers not only appear to have been addressing communities of people but were apparently performing the discourses *repeatedly* before the same communities.¹²²

Memory: social and cultural significance

Similarly, Horsley's interest does not lie with individuals' recall of a narrative which lacks vital *cultural resonance* with them. We noted in Chapter Two that a marker of oral performance, where the performer is reciting from memory, is the use of verbal formulas, helpful as an aid to recall and for metrical composition. As I have noted, these formulas are also significant to the *hearers* when, by metonymic referencing, wider associations are awakened in their memories. Horsley refers to an observation of Pieter Botha (on the Gospel of Mark), who recognises that some of the formulas did not so much 'contain meaning in themselves' as 'signal knowledge that is already shared' with the hearers, who thus resonate with the message or story delivered by the performer.¹²³

Horsley extends this resonance in the imagination of hearers as individuals, to the hearers as a *community*, referring to studies of oral-derived literature which suggest that performance in a particular context must resonate with the cultural tradition shared by performer and listeners.¹²⁴ The importance of cultural memory to the community itself is taken further by Kelber:

[T]he gospel composition is unthinkable without the notion of cultural memory, which serves ultimately not the preservation of remembrances per se but the preservation of the group, its social identity and self-image.¹²⁵

Horsley applies these observations to the Q communities with further specifics, including his views (1) that the public performances were probably regularly repeated and in more than one

¹²² *Whoever Hears*, p. 303. My emphasis here, but a point frequently stressed by Horsley.

¹²³ *Whoever Hears*, p. 159, drawing on Pieter Botha's comment in 'Mark's Story as Oral Traditional Literature: Rethinking the Transmission of Some Traditions about Jesus', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 47 (1991), 304-31, (p. 318). Horsley comments in the footnote that Botha anticipated what John Miles Foley termed 'metonymic referencing'.

¹²⁴ *Whoever Hears*, p. 8.

¹²⁵ *Whoever Hears*, p. 160, quoting from Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, introduction to the new edn, xxiii.

community, (2) performances were short speeches focused on concerns of the community listening, (3) the conflictual life situation of the Q communities meant that the performances always had an immediate historical social context, without which resonance they would have been discontinued.¹²⁶

Having considered the significance of cultural memory in the lives of the Q communities as audience, I now turn to the memory of the *performers*, and address Horsley's views on the performers' identity and methods.

Institutional memory

I noted in Chapter Two a model for disciplined preservation of memories by analogy with rabbinic teaching methods.¹²⁷ Contrary to others' criticism of this as anachronistic, Horsley cites evidence that the Pharisees cultivated the Mosaic Torah orally, committing texts to memory, discouraging the use of their written texts in favour of face-to-face performance to recreate the imparting of oral tradition from Moses to his disciples.¹²⁸ While Horsley's approach to this evidence is in accord with his theme of the primacy of orality, his acceptance of the possibility of the existence of 'official' texts in writing somewhat weakens his general case that Q represented a 'little tradition' unsupported by a deposit of written texts, and thus the complete absence of scribal involvement in the composition of Q.

The performers of Q

We have noted that a possible model of transmission of memories to a community was a specialist performer such as a bard. Promising as this might appear as a type for the performers to the Q audiences, Horsley is not considering performance-poets such as Lord's 'singers of tales'. Such bards, although they may be preserving a cultural art-form, are not prophets but essentially entertainers recounting extended folk-hero stories which they have committed to memory. Horsley's sense of the performers of the Q tradition is not that they were set apart from their communities, but more probably members of village communities, leaders of prayers

¹²⁶ *Whoever Hears*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ Gerhardtsson and Sharpe, *Memory and Manuscript*.

¹²⁸ *Whoever Hears*, p. 140, drawing on Martin S. Jaffee, 'Writing and Rabbinic Oral Tradition: On Mishnaic Narrative, Lists and Mnemonics', *JJewThPhil* 4 (1994), p. 126.

at regular gatherings, and collectors of goods for the poor. They would have been indigenous to the village communities and not outsiders, such as scribes or Pharisees.¹²⁹

The teachers or prophets or ‘evangelists’ who specialised in regular performance of the Jesus traditions did not have to ‘memorise’ them, whether exorcism stories, parables, or a longer ‘Gospel’ narrative. They were not simply specialists in the tradition. They were organically part of it, not simply its carriers or bearers but its regular performers, composing on the basis of what was highly familiar.¹³⁰

The function of memory in the performance of Q, as seen by Horsley – although he does not dismiss the mnemonic skills of people in antiquity – is not a question of an exceptional cognitive faculty or a specialist skill.¹³¹ Rather, Q represents the repeated performance to a community, by members of that community, of an existing common possession of that community: the Israelite covenantal tradition and associated memories of the community’s history. He thus depicts the Q communities as at one with the performers of Q, not only in their common life in the agrarian villages, seeking a renewal of the Israelite covenant, but also sharing a sense of their identity as oppressed by the Jerusalem elite:

[T]he performers of Q discourses were addressing communities of a movement (about social-economic relations amongst themselves and political economic relations with rulers) ... the Q performers addressed communities of people about their common situation and difficulties, and about their common rulers.¹³²

The office of the performers of Q was itself prophetic, in that Horsley takes the view that in delivering their discourses, they are speaking for or as Jesus or John, enacting the renewal of the covenant, condemning the rulers, and commissioning new prophetic delegates: ‘I send you out ... Whoever hears you hears me’ (Q 10:16).¹³³

In this presentation of Q as a shared inheritance of memory, performed orally in the village communities by members of those communities, Horsley in my opinion essentially succeeds in offering an analysis that aligns a literal reading of text of Q with the historical reality of the communities which heard it.

¹²⁹ *Whoever Hears*, pp. 303–04.

¹³⁰ *Whoever Hears*, p. 159, drawing on Botha, ‘Mark’s Story as Oral Traditional Literature’, p. 308.

¹³¹ He notes the evidence on memory skills gathered by Jocelyn Penny Small. See his Introduction to *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, pp. 18–19.

¹³² *Whoever Hears*, p. 304.

¹³³ *Whoever Hears*, p. 301.

Conclusion

My investigation of ancient media studies, the dominance of orality of antiquity, and the vital role of cultural memory in forming community identity, provide support that Horsley's vision of the Q communities is coherently underpinned by evidence. Based in the historical information on the life-situation of the Q communities, and identifying in the text of Q references to their memories of their tradition, above all the Israelite covenant, Horsley presents a plausible case for Q as movement-rousing discourses which I regard as persuasively argued.

In presenting his own views, Horsley does not shrink from criticism, even dismissal, of scholarship which he regards as unhelpful in achieving the most accurate understanding of Q, based on his reading of the text of Q in the context of the culture and history of the communities hearing it. His criticisms, though sometimes brusque, are in my opinion fairly grounded in the terms of his argument, given that he is able to articulate his objections to approaches which he believes detract from the most accurate appreciation of Q. That is to say, patterns of thought such as a print mindset, the intrusion of Christian theological concepts, and the modern Western separation of religious, political, social and economic affairs into distinct spheres. For Horsley, the Israelite covenant made these matters inextricable in the lives of the Q communities (and I have endeavoured to evidence Horsley's criticisms of theories failing to observe this, in section 3.3.2 above). From this point of view of the lives of the Q hearers, Horsley reasonably points out the weakness of the 'Cynic philosophers' proposal, given that the Q communities were geographically rooted and enduring rather than seeking poverty, and from the text of Q forbidding purse, bag, and sandals on journeys.

Thus, while compositional history theories offer an insight into a developing progression of the Q communities' sense of identity, Horsley finds them deficient to the extent that they come to rely on imposing essentially theological concepts such as a particular interpretation of the phrase 'son of man'. And whereas from compositional analysis can be inferred how the Q communities' sense of identity may have *progressed*, Horsley succeeds in offering an explanation of where the Q communities' sense of identity *originated*. This he bases on the combination of their cultural memory and their actual life situation, and I regard as compelling his attention to the meaning of those passages in Q which – read literally – ground Q in the material concerns of its hearers. Thus, the petition for daily bread actually is about food, forgiveness of debts is about debt-slavery, and parting with one's cloak is a loan-pledge. By

contrast, scholarly observations on possible genres (wisdom, apocalyptic, eschatological) for Q may be enlightening in terms of literary analysis as to what Q is *like*, whereas Horsley, impatient of pondering resemblances, endeavours to say what Q is.

It is hard to object in principle to a theory that, as does Horsley's, is based on historical foundations. Certain questions on his historical assurance do, however, arise. One is his firm objection to the admissibility of scribal involvement in the early stages of Q, it is possible that the firmness of this objection is forced by the distinction between the oral little tradition of Q communities and the written great tradition of Jerusalem. Similarly, although Horsley cites historical data on illiteracy, and emphasises the vituperation against the scribes in the text of Q, does hostility to the 'Jerusalem' scribes necessarily exclude at least the *possibility* of the involvement of scribes sympathetically identified with the Q communities authentically recording their voice? Likewise, I am unconvinced that the division between written and oral is as distinct as promoted in Horsley's theory. The historical evidence is that orality dominated the lives of the literate as well as the illiterate, and members of the village communities citing scripture might have been calling on memory of Israelite tradition, or equally might have heard the scriptures read aloud from a text.

Nevertheless, in my opinion Horsley succeeds in depicting the cultural division between the Q communities and Jerusalem, namely between 'official and anti-hegemonic social memory, or between the official and the hidden transcripts'.¹³⁴ As I have illustrated above (in my review at 3.3.2 of Horsley's reading of the *prophetic* in Q), he does so by evidencing the communities' sense of identity in opposition to the representative of the 'great tradition'. He cites the woes against those identified with Jerusalem, the Pharisees, the scribes, the exegetes of the law; the criticism of those revelling in wealth and status; and those who reject and kill prophets sent to them. Sustaining the poor Q communities in their identity, is their cultural memory, where the Israelite covenant resonates with their present-day concerns. Horsley successfully aligns cultural memory theories with his depiction of Q representing prophetic discourses urging a renewal of the Israelite covenant as a movement of an oppressed community in conflict with the rulers. On the question of the transmission of the Q tradition, I have presented a range of models, and in my opinion Horsley's view of village leaders repeatedly performing discourses

¹³⁴ Eve, *Behind the Gospels*, p.116, referencing 'Great/Official vs. Little/Popular Tradition', *Whoever Hears*, pp. 98–104.

embodying memories which they already *shared* with the hearing community is persuasive in terms of the social and cultural environment which he has presented; it does not require special memory skills or disciplines on the part of either performers or audiences, and allows for a audience willingly accepting as authentic performances according with their cultural memory.

My research into the origins of Q, its preservation in memory and its oral transmission in the villages, in my opinion render Horsley's depiction of it – underpinned by the historical, political, and economic context of its time and place – convincingly established. This is not without certain weaknesses identified above, such as the commitment to excluding scribes and the focus on Greek text of an Aramaic oral tradition. Nevertheless, I find that Horsley has persuasively, and vividly characterised the thrust of the text as the Q communities' Israelite inheritance, shaped and mobilised into discourses urging the renewal of the Israelite covenant.

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