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Festschrift for John Miles Foley

This article belongs to a special issue of *Oral Tradition* published in honor of John Miles Foley's 65th birthday and 2011 retirement. The surprise Festschrift, guest-edited by Lori and Scott Garner entirely without his knowledge, celebrates John's tremendous impact on studies in oral tradition through a series of essays contributed by his students from the University of Missouri-Columbia (1979-present) and from NEH Summer Seminars that he has directed (1987-1996).

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The Role of Memory in the Tradition Represented by the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles

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Albert Lord described the concept of memory with relation to traditional singers as follows (1981:451):

They remember phrases they have heard from other singers and that they themselves have used many times before. This “remembering,” however, is as unconscious as our use of certain phrases in ordinary speech, and should be distinguished from “memorization.” We have not consciously memorized “please” and “thank you,” for example. We use them by an unconscious “remembering.” At a given stimulus such phrases come to our minds as a learned reflex. So it is with formulas. The weaving of formulaic diction exclusive of the formulas themselves, the exact repetitions, is also but a special extension of the processes of everyday speech, a special extension that embraces sung verse as a means of communication of a special set of ideas appropriate to the epic genre of story-telling.

This description of the process by which oral poets produced epics finds support in the stories of some oral poets themselves. In “Memory in Oral Tradition,” John Miles Foley explored three traditions—those associated with Old English literature (specifically *Widsith* and *Beowulf*), Serbo-Croatian epic, and Homer’s *Odyssey*—for what these oral traditional literatures themselves may contribute to the discussion of memory. Imagining his exploration as an “interview” of the oral poets, Foley concluded as follows (2006:84):

the oral singers tell us at least five things. First, memory in oral tradition is emphatically not a static retrieval mechanism for data. Second, it is very often a kinetic, emergent, creative activity. Third, in many cases it is linked to performance, without which it has no meaning. Fourth, memory typically entails an oral/aural communication requiring an auditor or audience. Fifth, and as a consequence of the first four qualities, memory in oral tradition is phenomenologically distinct from “our memory.”

Thus, rote memorization of traditional epics as a necessary means of oral performance is rejected.¹ Rather, oral composition can proceed naturally from a singer's memory as a creative activity tied to an oral performance before an audience, whose memory has likewise prepared them well for receiving the song. In this way, both the singer and his audience have, on the one hand, internalized the tradition in their collective memory, but, on the other hand, interact with the tradition in the context of an oral performance that re-creates the narrative.

Drawing from the work of both Lord and Foley on memory, I will extend arguments I made in *The Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles: Scribal Works in an Oral Culture* (2010), demonstrating that their understanding of the role of memory in oral traditions provides an excellent lens through which we can view the ancient Israelite tradition as represented in the Deuteronomistic History (Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings) and the Book of Chronicles (1-2 Chronicles). In the first section I will show how a synchronic reading of these literary works strongly suggests a similar notion of memory behind this tradition—that is, in Lord's words, a “remembering” not “memorization” (Lord 1981:451). The texts that occur within the narrative of the two works (for example, the law of Moses) are imagined as primarily oral compositions to be used as mnemonic aids for the internalization of the tradition. In the second section I will show how a fuller diachronic understanding of these literary works is facilitated by that same notion of memory, at the level of both the composition of these texts and their transmission. The Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles are best understood as two instantiations of the broader tradition that existed in the interplay of the co-existing parallel texts, none of which could possibly represent the complete fullness of the tradition or the entire collective memory of the people. As such, even the material that is unique in Samuel-Kings and Chronicles can be understood as nevertheless remembering the broader tradition, rather than requiring the reconstruction of necessary theological conflicts between the authors/schools.

The Testimony of the Narrated Texts within the Texts

The three traditions that Foley “interviewed” concerning memory do not as frequently reference writing as the Bible does. However, the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles nevertheless still portray at least some texts as oral compositions existing in written form that primarily act as mnemonic aids for their own internalization.² We will see that this is the case with the law and the temple plans and even to some extent with the source citations.

The most important text mentioned in the works at hand is the law given to Moses. In Deuteronomy, God gives the law in an oral then a written form: “These words the LORD spoke to

¹ This does not necessarily exclude rote memorization from playing an important role in some cultural traditions, for example, the recitation of the Quran in Islam. However, oral performance of the type exemplified by the Serbo-Croatian *guslari* does not require such rote memorization and is more akin to the processes found in everyday conversation.

² My work on the interplay of the oral and the written in ancient Israel has been significantly influenced by the works of Susan Niditch and David Carr. See especially Niditch 1996 and Carr 2005.

your whole assembly at the mountain. . . . He wrote them on two stone tablets” (5:22).³ Moses then gives the law in oral and written form. Deuteronomy begins by referring to Moses’ speech (“These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness” [Deut 1:1]) and ends with Moses completing both the writing and speaking of these words (“When Moses finished writing down the words of this law in a book to the end” [Deut 31:24]; “And Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel” [Deut 32:45]). Thus, the law’s origins are portrayed as oral dictation or at least as having been first presented in an oral form before being written down.

The oral and written characteristics of the law are not in opposition to each other but clearly work together to ensure the proper internalization of God’s law: “Teach them [these words] to your children, talking about them when you are in your house and when you are on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 11:19-20). The emphasis here is on having various oral/aural and visual reminders of God’s law so that the people are constantly reminded of God, God’s wondrous works, and what God requires of them. Moreover, this remembering that Moses demands of all of Israel is not simply a past exhortation, but one that is reconstituted with every performance of the text as seen here in Deuteronomy:

Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; you have been rebellious against the LORD from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place (Deut 9:7).

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today (Deut 15:15).

This very day the LORD your God is commanding you to observe these statutes and ordinances; so observe them diligently with all your heart and with all your soul (Deut 26:16).

That is, the historical Moses is not simply telling those who stood with him “beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness” to “remember,” but every time that the text is recited to a new audience (“this very day”) the living character of Moses is once again animated so that his voice tells his immediate audience to “remember.”

The oral and written character of the law continues throughout the narratives. Joshua receives oral words of instruction from God (Josh 1:7-8), which results in Joshua’s copying the law and reciting it to the people of Israel (Josh 8:32-35). Within the narratives of the monarchic period the law (whether oral or written) seems to have been lost, due to the lack of reference to it and then to its “rediscovery” just prior to the end of the monarchy during the reign of Josiah (2

³ All English translations of the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), unless otherwise noted.

Kgs 22-23; 2 Chr 34-35).⁴ Of course, both narratives assert that this forgetting of the law led to doing “evil in the sight of the LORD,” the cause of the Babylonian exile as divine punishment.

Although Chronicles does not narrate the events concerning Moses, the law is nevertheless referred to throughout in ways that likewise suggest an interplay between its oral and written character:

according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded (1 Chr 6:49)

as Moses has commanded according to the word of the LORD (1 Chr 15:15)

according to all that is written in the law of the LORD that he commanded Israel (1 Chr 16:40)

in all that we have heard with our ears (1 Chr 17:20)

as it is written in the law of Moses (2 Chr 23:18)

according to what is written in the law, the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded (2 Chr 25:4)

all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses (2 Chr 33:8)

when the king heard the words of the law (2 Chr 34:19)

according to the word of the LORD by Moses (2 Chr 35:6)

Most (if not all) of these references suggest the context of oral instruction. For example, Manasseh “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (2 Chr 33:2) because he disobeyed God’s oral instruction to David and Solomon that their descendents must “be careful to do all that I [the LORD] have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses” (2 Chr 33:8). In fact, I would interpret the phrase “all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses” as itself involving the interplay between the oral and the written—that is, God’s oral presentation of the law to Moses on Horeb (see 2 Chr 5:10), the writing down of the law (by either God or Moses), *and* finally Moses’ oral instruction of the law to the people.

Since Chronicles does not narrate the giving of the law but assumes the existence of some other narrative, Moses is not portrayed as exhorting (or not) the people to “remember.” Nevertheless, the exhortation to “remember” occurs in Chronicles, this time in the words of David, who is the first major character in Chronicles:

Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered. . . .

Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations (1 Chr 16:12, 15).

David’s call to “remember” certainly recalls Moses’; they both admonish the people to remember what God had done for Israel and the importance of following God’s commandments, so that their actions are done “according to the word of the LORD.”

⁴ For a discussion of the similarities and differences of these two accounts of the finding of the law book, see Person 2010:121-25.

According to Chronicles, God gives the temple plans to David, who then hands them down to Solomon (1 Chr 28:11-12, 19):

Then David gave to Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, its rooms, its inner chambers, and the room for the mercy seat; and the plan of all that he had in mind: for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for dedicated gifts; . . . [David said,] “All this, in writing at the LORD’s direction, he made clear to me—the plan of all the works.”

The temple plans are described as being in David’s “mind,” probably as a result of God’s oral instructions. David then gives Solomon both oral instructions and written plans. Although Solomon’s building of the temple is portrayed as following David’s instructions exactly, nowhere in the account of Solomon’s building of the temple (2 Chr 2-6) is there another reference to the written plans that David gave to Solomon. Therefore, from the perspective of the narrative itself, Solomon requested wisdom to complete David’s plans and God granted his request (2 Chr 1:7-13) so that the plans were once again transmitted from mind to mind, this time with the aid of a written text that plays virtually no role in the subsequent narrative.

Probably the most obvious evidence of written texts in the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles are the various source citations given in the two works referring to books other than the law of Moses. The Book of Kings refers to these various books as sources:

the Book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:42)

the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel (1 Kgs 14:19; 15:31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27; 22:39; 2 Kgs 1:18; 10:34; 13:8, 12; 14:15, 28; 15:11, 15, 21, 26, 31)

the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah (1 Kgs 14:29; 15:7, 23; 22:45; 2 Kgs 8:23; 12:19; 14:18; 15:6, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 23:28; 24:5).

Chronicles likewise refers to various books:

the Book of the Kings of Israel (1 Chr 9:1; 2 Chr 20:34)

the Annals of King David (1 Chr 27:24)

the records of the words of Samuel the seer, the words of Nathan the prophet, and the words of Gad the seer (1 Chr 29:29)

the records of the words of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the visions of Iddo the seer (2 Chr 9:29)

the records of the words of Shemaiah the prophet and Iddo the seer (2 Chr 12:15)

the story of the prophet Iddo (2 Chr 13:22)

the Annals of Jehu (2 Chr 20:34)

the Commentary on the Book of Kings (2 Chr 24:27)

the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel (2 Chr 16:11; 25:26; 28:26; 32:32)

the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Chr 27:7; 35:27; 36:8)

the words of David and Asaph the seer (2 Chr 29:30)

the vision of Isaiah son of Amoz the prophet (2 Chr 32:32)

the Annals of the Kings of Israel (2 Chr 33:18)

the writing of David king of Israel and the writing of Solomon his son (2 Chr 35:4)

the Laments (2 Chr 35:25)

Most of the source citations in both works occur in the concluding formulas for the king—for example, “Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred and how he reigned, are written in the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel” (1 Kgs 14:19) and “Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the Annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel” (2 Chr 20:34).

In *Why Did They Write This Way?* (2008) Katherine Stott undertook an extensive comparison of references to written documents in biblical texts and in classical literature. Her review of classical literature, including especially Herodotus and Thucydides, led her to the following conclusions: a reference to a source does not necessarily demonstrate that the author used the source, the lack of a reference to a source does not necessarily demonstrate that no source was used, and references are not necessarily due to first-hand knowledge of the source. That is, the authors/redactors know of a connection between their own text and a source text based on their memory of the meanings represented by the source text. Therefore, a reference to the source text can simply be a reference to the memory of the meaning taken from that source text rather than an indication that the author double-checked the written source text for the sake of accuracy according to our own highly literate standards. Therefore, even if such annals were scribal productions based on archival material completely removed from oral dictation, Stott’s analysis strongly suggests that references to such annals in later scribal works were often (if not primarily) based on the authors’ memory of what was in those texts rather than suggesting that the author had a copy of the annal on the desk for reference.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this review is, in Foley’s words, “memory in oral tradition is phenomenologically distinct from ‘our memory’” (2006:84). This remains the case even when written texts are referred to in literature from a primarily oral society like ancient Israel. The origin of many (if not all) of the written texts referred to in these two literary works are portrayed as involving both oral composition and oral performance—that is, these narrated texts live in an interplay of the oral and the written. Furthermore, these texts are clearly mnemonic aids, so that the emphasis is the internalization of the words in the minds of the characters in the literature. Even when authors refer readers to other written texts as sources, this does not necessarily imply that the authors had access to the written source material themselves or that the authors assumed the readers/hearers would have access; the references themselves may simply serve as a stimulus for remembering what the texts contain. Thus, even the use of texts as portrayed in this literature can suggest that memory in ancient Israel is “a kinetic, emergent creative activity . . . linked to performance” (Foley 2006:84).

The Testimony of the Texts Themselves

Text critics of the Bible readily accept that tremendous diversity in the ancient textual traditions undercuts significantly our attempts to reconstruct “the” original text. This is especially the case with Samuel-Kings. In fact, text critic Julio Treballe has insisted that we accept the multiformity of these texts (2006:98):

When studying the historical books, alongside the analytical model that assigns various texts to successive redactions another analytical model has to be used that accepts the co-existence of parallel editions. The final process of composition and redaction of a work can give rise to several editions that can co-exist and even intermix.

Although Treballe was uninfluenced in his text-critical conclusions by the study of oral traditions, his conclusion certainly does parallel that of Lord, who found that “in oral tradition the idea of an original is illogical” (1960:101).

The consensus model for how the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles relate to each other assumes that the Chronicler’s *Vorlage* was an early (exilic) written source from which the Chronicler made his own idiosyncratic revisions, including significant subtractions and additions; therefore, a careful comparison of the Book of Chronicles to Samuel-Kings (the main source text) provides the commentator with sufficient information to identify the Chronicler’s theological agenda in contrast to that of his source. (See, for example, Japhet 1993; Kalimi 2005; Klein 2006; Knoppers 2003.)

In *The Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles* (2010), I directly challenge and reject this consensus on the basis of the important role of multiformity within the tradition represented by Samuel-Kings and Chronicles and assert that both of these texts can be understood as faithful performances of the broader tradition they represent, even though from our modern, highly literate perspective they may appear to diverge greatly. Below I will provide one illustration of my argument that helps to demonstrate how their literary relationship (as I reconstruct it) is consistent with the role of memory in oral traditions, and by extension, in primarily oral societies such as ancient Israel.

When comparing Chronicles to Samuel-Kings, one must seriously take into consideration the diversity of the extant texts of Samuel-Kings.⁵ I illustrate this by drawing from Treballe’s analysis of 1 Kings 3-10/2 Chronicles 1-9; however, I limit my comments below to 1 Kgs 3:4-15/2 Chr 1:3-13 (Treballe 2007; see also Person 2010:107-15). Treballe’s analysis of these parallel texts is summarized in his chart for the reign of Solomon as seen below. The first column represents the received text of Chronicles (MT = Masoretic Texts); the second column the main text of the ancient Greek translation of Kings (LXX = Septuagint); the third column the received text of Kings (MT); and the fourth column the supplemental material in the ancient Greek

⁵ Although the extant textual tradition of Chronicles is not devoid of any diversity, the diversity is so much greater in Samuel-Kings that for our purposes the received text of Chronicles is sufficient.

translation of Kings (LXX Supplement)⁶ that occurs between 2:35 and 2:36 and between 2:46 and 3:1 of the received text (2007:494):

MT 2 Chronicles	LXX Kings <i>Main Text</i>	MT Kings	LXX Kings <i>Supplement</i>
			2:46l
	lacking	3:1a	
		<i>3:1b</i>	2.35c
	<u>3:2-3</u>	<u>3:2-3</u>	
1:3-13	3:4-15	3:4-15	
	<u>3:16-28</u>	<u>3:16-28</u>	
	... <i>3:1b</i> [after 5:14]		

What Treballe referred to as the “triple textual tradition”—that is, Chronicles, MT Kings, and LXX Kings agreeing in basic content and order—is bolded. The “double textual tradition” (MT Kings = LXX Kings in basic content and order) is underlined. Those verses that are found in both LXX Kings and MT Kings but in different orders are italicized.

If one were to assume a unilinear development (as is often done by redaction critics), the redactional history of 1 Kings 3:1-28//2 Chronicles 1:3-13 would be as follows. The earliest core is found in a reconstruction behind the “triple textual tradition,” 1 Kgs 3:4-15//2 Chr 1:3-13. Chronicles would generally be the more conservative text in comparison to Kings, because Kings includes the additions of 1 Kgs 3:2-3 and 3:16-28 (in both LXX and MT) and even later additions in MT-1 Kgs 3:1a (lacking in LXX) and 1 Kgs 3:1b (located differently in LXX and MT). However, Treballe resisted such simplification of the redactional process. Although he agreed that the “triple textual tradition” could most reasonably be understood as original material, he nevertheless concluded as follows (2007:496): “The texts common to LXX and MT Kings, missing in 2 Chronicles, are not necessarily more recent. . . . They can also be ancient, although of a different provenance.” That is, although these texts may also be ancient and have been preserved in the textual tradition behind LXX Kings and MT Kings, one should not assume that they were in the *Vorlage* on which Chronicles is based. Furthermore, he noted that the texts in MT Kings that are lacking in the main text of LXX Kings “correspond in a large proportion with materials present in the supplements of LXX”—that is, they also appear to be later additions (2007:496). Rather than imagining a unilinear development of these texts, Treballe allowed for a multiplicity of texts, or in his own words, “several editions that can co-exist and even intermix” (2006:98).

⁶ The LXX contains “supplementary” material following 1 Kgs 2:46 and 1 Kgs 2:35. Since the numbering system is primarily based on the MT, the standard form of citation for this additional material is 1 Kgs 2:46a-1 and 1 Kgs 2:35a-o. However, as the table shows, some of the LXX supplementary material has close parallels in the MT—in this case MT 1 Kgs 3:1b = LXX 1 Kgs 2:35c, even though they occur in different locations in the text.

This multiformity is evident even within what Treballe called the “triple textual tradition” as is illustrated in the following synopsis of a selection of only two of three texts in the “triple textual tradition,” the received traditions of Kings and Chronicles. If I had included the third text—that is, LXX Kings—the variation would have increased; however, for the sake of brevity and ease of comparison I provide only the two.

MT-1 Kings 3:4-9

⁴The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the principal high place;

Solomon used to offer a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, “Ask what I should give you.”

⁶And Solomon said, “You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or

MT-2 Chronicles 1:3-10

³Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God’s tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. ⁴(But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) ⁵Moreover the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the tabernacle of the LORD. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it.

⁶Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

⁷That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, “Ask what I should give you.”

⁸Solomon said to God, “You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David,

and have made me succeed him as king.

⁹O LORD God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king

over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth.

counted.

⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?

These parallel texts describe Solomon's sacrifices at the Gibeon altar, God's appearance to him there, God's offer of "Ask what I should give you," and Solomon's request for wisdom. Although these parallel texts both clearly describe the same events, they do so in ways that, at least from our modern perspective, differ. However, from the perspective in which multiformity is characteristic in primarily oral societies, such variation was accepted even within a faithful reproduction of the tradition. Thus, Treballe's insistence on the multiformity behind these texts should be viewed at both a macro- and micro-level. These texts display variety in what is narrated and in the order of commonly narrated events, and even in the material that occurs in the same order they differ in their wording.

In a recent essay, David Carr discussed what he termed "memory variants" and provided examples from this same passage (2011:77):⁷

MT-1 Kings 3

4b: a thousand offerings Solomon offered

5a: At Gideon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night

8: a great people, who cannot be numbered or counted

MT-2 Chronicles 1

6: he [Solomon] offered on it a thousand of offerings

7a: On that night God appeared to Solomon

9: a great people, as much as the dust of the earth

In the first of these two examples, the variations are fairly minor. In 1 Kgs 3:4b//2 Chr 1:6 and in 1 Kgs 3:5a//2 Chr 1:7a we see a simple inversion of word order. In 1 Kgs 3:5a//2 Chr 1:7a the variation between "God" and "the LORD" also occurs. Although the difference in 1 Kgs 3:8//2 Chr 1:9 is greater, it is still what is often referred to by text critics as a "synonymous reading."⁸ Carr has argued that scribes reproducing an older tradition often worked on the basis of their memories rather than written texts. When reproducing texts from memory, the scribes introduced what he has termed "memory variants" into the texts, which he defined as "variants that show up in parallel versions of texts: exchanges of words with similar meanings, meaningless shifts in word order, variation in syntactically equivalent expressions, etc." (2011:75).

Carr noted that evidence for "memory variants" also comes from studies in other literature, including Homer, Old English, Middle English, medieval French, and Sumerian

⁷ Carr provides the examples in Hebrew; I provide them here in my own literal English translation. He also provides a Hebrew synopsis of the texts (2011:94-95). For his discussion of "memory variants," see also Carr 2010:27-29.

⁸ For my discussion of synonymous readings in the context of an argument similar to that of Carr, see Person 1998:604-05.

(2011:76n.9). He concluded that the presence of “memory variants” is a strong indication of the transmission of texts by memory. As illustrated in his analysis of 1 Kgs 3:2-15//2 Chr 1:1-13, Carr concluded that (2011:77):

these memory variants are evidence that early versions of Chronicles and Samuel-Kings were transmitted in an environment where written texts were memorized and often accessed by means of memory. . . . As a result, minor variations of this sort—typical of memory slips and switches—between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles may not point to subtle exegesis on the part of the author(s) of Chronicles but to the sorts of oral-written dynamics typical of the transmission of many ancient texts.

Although I agree with Carr concerning such “minor variations,” I also think that he may not go far enough. If the broader tradition represented by the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles existed in its fullness only through a constant interplay between literary texts and the mental “text” preserved within the collective memory, then even the distinction we may make today between “minor” and “major” variations may be anachronistic. For example, even the material that is unique in Samuel-Kings and in Chronicles only appears to be a “major” variation when compared to the other literary text with the assumption that each text must somehow preserve all of the relevant traditional material. If we assume that no text preserves the fullness of the broader tradition, then material that is unique to one of the extant texts may not be unique at all within the context of the broader tradition.⁹ Thus, co-existing parallel editions of texts, despite their apparent differences, can nevertheless equally re-present the tradition, and the broader tradition is best reconstructed by the collective re-presentation of the texts in all of their multiformity with the caveat that some of the tradition preserved in the ancients’ memory but not in extant texts is now lost. Hence, both the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles may best be understood as limited instantiations of the broader tradition that exists within an interplay of written texts and communal memory, an ancient tradition that has been lost to us except as witnessed by these two competing historiographies and the textual plurality in which they exist, especially in the various textual versions of Samuel-Kings.

Conclusion: Memory in the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles

Despite the differences between the traditions “interviewed” by Foley—that is, Homeric Greek, Old English, and Serbo-Croatian—and the Hebrew Bible concerning the frequency of references to written texts, I have demonstrated how the interplay between the oral and the written in the biblical description of oral instruction, writing, and memory as well as the similarities and differences between the Deuteronomic History and the Book of Chronicles strongly suggests that Foley’s five conclusions based on these “interviews” (2006:84) also apply to the Hebrew Bible, including the role that texts played in the collective memory.

⁹ For elaboration on this point with various specific examples of how such unique literary material nevertheless re-presents the broader tradition, see Person 2010:131-61.

First, memory is “not a static retrieval mechanism” and this insight even applies to written texts in a primarily oral society. For example, despite God’s giving Moses the law in written form and then Moses giving it to the people under the leadership of Joshua (Deut 31:23-29), God nevertheless instructed Joshua orally concerning the law (Josh 1:7-8); therefore, Joshua’s copy of the Mosaic law may not have been identical—that is, the law as written by Moses was not a static retrieval mechanism that determined the exact wording of Joshua’s copy. This understanding of memory and the role of texts in the collective memory helps us better appreciate the similarities and differences between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles (for example, the “memory variants” identified by Carr).

Second, memory is a “kinetic, emergent, creative activity.” Memory is an ongoing activity as illustrated in this quote from Deuteronomy: “Teach them [these words] to your children, talking about them when you are in your house and when you are on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut 11:19-20). By interpreting such acts of memory as creative activities, we can understand how two different groups preserving similar elements of the broader tradition can nevertheless produce what from our modern perspective appears to be significantly divergent historiographies—that is, the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles. However, when we understand how dynamic the tradition must be to keep it alive, we can envision how the ancients may have understood such apparent differences as nevertheless re-presenting the broader tradition in its multiplicity with creative faithfulness.

Third, if memory is “linked to performance” and texts act as mnemonic aids, then texts will also be linked to performance. All of the most significant texts in these two narratives are connected to oral composition and oral performance. For example, the law was given to Moses by God first in oral instruction and then in written form. Likewise, Moses and Joshua instructed the people concerning the law orally. Just as multiformity is a characteristic of the performance of oral traditions, we have seen how multiformity is a characteristic of the performance of the broader tradition represented by both the Deuteronomistic History and the Book of Chronicles.

Fourth, memory requires “an oral-aural communication,” even if in the form of reciting a written text. Memory as some abstract notion locked away in someone’s mind or embedded in a library book sitting on a shelf somewhere unread for decades has no place in the role of memory as understood in the biblical text. In the narratives of the monarchic period, the law (whether in oral or written form) plays little (if any) role in the events of the narrative until its “rediscovery” during the time of Josiah near the end of the monarchy (2 Kgs 22-23; 2 Chr 34-35). That a copy of the lawbook was preserved for later discovery (whether historical or fictional) is important for the story thereafter, but the lost lawbook and the lost memory of the law that is connected with it could not prevent the forgetting that led to Israel’s and Judah’s destruction. The lawbook once again became effective only when it was read aloud.

Fifth, when all of the four previous qualities of memory are taken together, it becomes perfectly clear that “memory in oral tradition is phenomenologically distinct from ‘our memory.’” Furthermore, the use of texts as mnemonic aids is phenomenologically distinct from our use of texts to replace memory. That is, texts in a primarily oral culture like ancient Israel are not static retrieval mechanisms that can be stored until they might be needed again, but are

devices that facilitate the creative activity of remembering (not memorizing) the broader tradition so that it can continue to live in the oral-aural communication of ongoing performances.

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