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OTHERNESS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY IN CHRONICLES

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Introduction

The very first work of “history” penned in the Western tradition begins its first paragraph with setting the context of the work as the conflict between Greek and Persian. Herodotus of Halicarnassus, an Ionian Greek from the fringes of the Persian Empire, constructed his _historie_ as an account of the formation of Greek identity in relation to the Other. This tendency may also be found in the annals and royal inscriptions of the ancient Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and eastern Mediterranean cultures that preceded the creation of historiography in the Persian period. We may also find this tendency in the biblical narratives of Kings and Ezra-Nehemiah. The book of Chronicles, however, has not been investigated from this perspective. Previous generations of scholarship were apt to see the Other in Chronicles as Samaritans, but this construction was based on the assumed common authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah. In this essay I will explore another possibility for the Other against whom Israel is constructed in Chronicles. One possibility that I raise further in the conclusion is that Chronicles is not a work of historiography at all, or, if it is, it is a radical innovation in the fundamental rules of the genre as understood in antiquity.

_Historiography and the Other_

In this first part of my essay, I will argue that Otherness was an integral part of the construction of the genre of historiography in the ancient world in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. I will begin with the discussion of annals and inscriptions, move to the Greek histories, and finally turn to the biblical texts. If genre
is not only form but also context and significance, as I have argued previously, then this particular thematic focus deserves further discussion and reflection.¹

There is a vast amount of inscriptional material available from the ancient cultures of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Closest temporally and developmentally to historiography as it came to be understood are the Assyrian annals and royal inscriptions and the Neo-Babylonian chronicles. The Persian Empire has little preserved except royal inscriptions and these too need to be discussed as providing context. In order to fully explore this topic, a monograph-length work would need to expand upon the comparative work I will sketch below; perhaps something along the lines of David Carr’s Writing on the Tablet of the Heart.² The sketch below, therefore, should be seen as suggestive and programmatic, rather than exhaustive.

Assyrian Annals and Royal Inscriptions

It has been suggested that even from an early period (Old Akkadian) Mesopotamian identity was being constructed in relationship to an Other.³ The chronicles preserved from this period suggest that a certain core group was seeing itself in opposition to the outside groups. This tendency may be seen in the Neo-Assyrian-period royal inscriptions and chronicles. A chronicle from this period preserved in fragmentary form lists the revolts against the Assyrian kings and their campaigns against various enemies during the period 858–699 BCE. Although there are a few mentions of other events (e.g., solar eclipse, dedication of a new temple, restoration of a palace), the vast majority of the events recorded deal with the king’s military endeavors against the Other who is outside the land, or against the Other who has rebelled.⁴ A similar pattern may be seen in the royal inscriptions given in annal form from the reigns of Shalmaneser III and Shamshi-Adad V (good representative examples are the so-called “Khurkh Monolith” of Shalmaneser III, and the text of Shamshi-Adad V from Calah).⁵ The Others in these texts are detailed at length, making it clear that the Other is multiple, nefarious, and spread

⁴ Ibid., pp. 164–77.
throughout the land. A particularly interesting text was prepared for Shamshi-ilu, the field marshal of Adad-narari III; it was carved on two stone lions and described his campaign against an Urartian king, who “had not had relations with (lit. ‘stretched out his hand to’) any previous king.” The two lions’ names were given as “who [. . .] angry demon, unrivalled attack, who overwhelsms the insubmissive, who brings success” and “who charges through battle, who flattens the enemy land, who expels criminals and brings in good people.” The specific descriptions of enemy kings and territories are here generalized as criminals and insubmissive, contrasted with good people and successful conquerors.

From the many royal inscriptions of the Assyrian kings, I now turn to focus on the well-known Sennacherib inscriptions. The introduction to the Sennacherib Prism is a general panegyric to the king and the conclusion focuses on his building projects, followed by a general benediction. However, the majority of the text is made up of accounts against various enemies, both those who had rebelled (“did not submit to my yoke”) and those whom he defeated (“made submit to the yoke”). The Babylonians come in for special mention as “wicked devils” and are the people against whom he especially defined Assyrian rule. The strategy of demonizing the Babylonians, turning them into the Other that must be defeated, is consistent with the Assyrian historiographic tactics. The historically most-dangerous Others were not only subjected to attack and devastation, but also to the destruction of their central temples to the national god. Laato suggests that the use of pejorative language in Sennacherib’s inscriptions is most acute when the enemy was not completely defeated; this makes sense, as the Other that has been defeated cannot be set up against the self as an identity-forming object. In fact, for the Western kingdoms absorbed by Assyria, there was no sense that they had a history prior to being conquered: they are Othered and absorbed all at once.

The fate of Judah, Jerusalem, and Hezekiah has come in for much analysis, especially in the area of historical reconstruction. This is not my concern in this

6 Ibid., pp. 231–3.
9 Ibid., pp. 116–17.
essay, but rather how Hezekiah is constructed in the inscriptions. Sennacherib
describes shutting up Hezekiah in his city “like a bird in a cage,” and while what
this means historically has been extensively discussed, I would like to focus on
the simile itself. Gallagher points out that this simile is also used in an inscrip-
tion of Tiglath-Pileser, but more importantly for my purpose, that it comes from
hunting descriptions of the Assyrian king killing lions.13 The enemy, in our case
Hezekiah, is likened to an animal, made not-human and thus Other.

Cynthia Chapman has shown how gender also works as an Othering device
in the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions and iconography. The foreign king and sub-
jects (especially the military) are likened to women in their defeat. Women are
constructed as the opposite of the hyper-masculine Assyrian king and the iden-
tification of the foreigner as Other is heightened by this gendered Othering.14
It seems, from these brief examples, that Otherness in terms of nationality or
ethnicity is constructed from other binaries: the binaries of human–animal and
man–woman. Ethnicity in and of itself was perhaps not enough to construct the
Other.

Neo-Babylonian Chronicles

The Neo-Babylonian chronicles do not use the more vivid imagery that is found
in the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions, but follow the same pattern found in the earlier
Assyrian chronicles. In this case the core group, the Babylonians (defined as the
Akkadians), is positioned against the Assyrians first and then the Medes/Persians.
Glassner suggests that it is curious that at a certain point in the chronicles, the
Medes are no longer called Medes, but “Ummān-manda,” a pejorative term.15
Perhaps it is at this point, when the Assyrian defeat is assured, that the Medes
now become the Other. Unlike the royal inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrians, the
Neo-Babylonian inscriptions are more concerned with building activities and
expressions of devotion to the gods than with detailing the military campaigns,
although this may be an argument from silence.

Persian Royal Inscriptions

Persian-period Zoroastrianism was well known as highly dualistic. While this
might be the “cause” of a certain dualism or Othering found in the Persian

\[\text{‘Like a Bird in a Cage’}: \text{The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE (JSOTSup 363; ESHM}
\]
\[4; \text{London: T&T Clark, 2003).}\]

13 Gallagher, \textit{Sennacherib’s}, p. 133.
14 C. R. Chapman, \textit{The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian}
\[\text{Encounter (HSM 62; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), pp. 20–59.}\]
royal inscriptions, the fact that the earliest Persian inscription, the Bisitun inscription, was written also in the language of Babylon, should keep us from leaping immediately to this conclusion; as we have seen, there is Othering in the Akkadian-language inscriptions without the influence of a necessarily dualistic religious ethic. However, as Bruce Lincoln has recently shown, there was a strong link forged between the Lie (as a religious concept) and the enemies of Darius in the Bisitun inscription. As in the Neo-Assyrian materials, the Other is constructed by analogy. In this material, the analogy is not with animals or with women, but with a religious concept of the Lie. The Lie in its very nature is constructed as that which is opposed to justice, righteousness, and the divine. Darius is called by Ahura Mazda to oppose the Lie, and in a syllogism those that oppose Darius are part of the Lie.\textsuperscript{16} Darius’ rise to power is thus recounted in a series of Othering moves.

**Greek Histories**

As I noted in the introduction, the very first work of history, Herodotus’ *historie*, constructs Greek identity in relation to the Other, most notably the Persian Other, but also the Egyptian Other (Book 2), the Lydian Other (Book 1), and so on. There is a vast amount of scholarship on the relationship of Greek and Barbarian in a variety of texts in a variety of genres, growing yearly. My purpose in this essay is not to look at the subject from the broader context of identity formation (see the excellent collection edited by Harrison),\textsuperscript{17} but rather at the Other in historiography.

Francois Hartog’s book, *The Mirror of Herodotus*, was the first to examine this concept of the Other in Greek historiography, although the earlier work of Arnaldo Momigliano had certainly provided some groundwork.\textsuperscript{18} In his more recent work, *Memories of Odysseus*, Hartog notes that the Barbarians form an antonymic pair with the Greeks in Herodotus, “as they stand in opposition they define each other.”\textsuperscript{19} However, there were no “Barbarians” in the earlier


\textsuperscript{17} T. Harrison (ed.), *Greeks and Barbarians* (New York: Routledge, 2002).


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Homeric epics. Hartog also notes that Thucydides construes an earlier time when the Greeks themselves were “Barbarians” (Thucyolides 1.3.3), but that without Barbarians there could be no Greeks. The Persian Wars of the fifth century BCE were the catalyst for making the opposition between Greek and Barbarian. Although this opposition was also found in Aeschylus; we might compare Momigliano’s suggestion that it was the Persian imperial presence that fostered the development of historiography in both Greece and Judah.

Herodotus’ work places the Barbarian in Asia with a Persian face, but the primary opposition in Herodotus is a political one, not a moral/ethical one: the Greek is part of the polis, i.e., free, while the Barbarian is subject to a king. The Barbarians were all Others, but the Barbarian par excellence was the Great King of Persia.

Herodotus used a system to depict the various cultures in his work: using Greek ways of seeing the world as the defining categories, a series of oppositions were set up. This macro-system of oppositions can be used as a base for various micro-systems of local oppositions. Thus, within the structure of Greek–Barbarian, there were a series of inner-Greek oppositions set up: the Athenians/Ionians were contrasted to all other Greeks, and the Athenians were contrasted to all other Ionians; his historical framework was, above all, patterned. The Greek nomos or worldview (language, religion, and customs) was the master key.

It is possible that this series of oppositions are embedded into the style of classical Greek prose, which uses the μέν . . ., δέ construction (on the one hand . . ., on the other hand) to balance opposites. This was characteristic of the Sophists’ teaching of rhetoric, and marks the style of Thucydides just as much as Herodotus — it was an Athenian style. Thucydides’ ability to undercut


26 T. J. Luce, *The Greek Historians* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 72–3; Shanske,
his oppositional pairs — seen also in Herodotus — should not blind us to this important structuring device.\textsuperscript{27}

In the third and fourth centuries, the Persians of the past continued to be depicted in historiographic works, but contemporary Persians and their institutions were not.\textsuperscript{28} The Greek–Barbarian opposition also continued to be operational, but now it was modified so as to be less political and more moral/ethical/cultural. It was at this point that the Persians truly became “Orientalized,” i.e., portrayed as effeminate, “soft,” and so forth.\textsuperscript{29} However, Hartog’s presentation may be an oversimplification. Returning to Thucydides, a fifth-century author, we may note that the major structuring opposition in his work was not Greek–Barbarian, but an inner-Greek Athens–Sparta. Persians appear, to be sure, but in much more of the cultural sense; their role in the politics of the Athens–Sparta conflict is played down.\textsuperscript{30} So already, the Greek–Barbarian opposition became less political, perhaps at a time contemporary with Herodotus. Nevertheless, the oppositional form of identity formation in historiography is apparent in Thucydides’ work. Even Xenophon’s work, which is often credited with at least part of the Orientalizing of the Persians in Greek discourse, has been reassessed. While his \textit{Cyropaedia} is certainly set in the past, his depiction of Persian customs is drawn much more from his own experiences and imagination.\textsuperscript{31} Yet Robin Lane Fox has shown the link between Barbarian and woman in the \textit{Anabasis}, in a way similar to Chapman’s work about the Assyrians’ portrayal of their enemies. Fox argues that Xenophon’s encounter with the Other while on the march through the Persian Empire shaped his entire depiction of Cyrus the Great in the \textit{Cyropaedia}, especially the different construction of the masculine subject.\textsuperscript{32} The evidence,

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[27]\textit{Thucydides}, p. 27.
\item[28] Momigliano, \textit{Alien}, p. 138.
\item[31] Cf. S. W. Hirsch, \textit{The Friendship of the Barbarians: Xenophon and the Persian Empire} (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1985), p. 13; he argues that Xenophon is a reliable source on Persian customs and was an admirer of things Persian.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
therefore, leads to differing interpretations of the role of the Persian/Barbarian as the Other, while leaving the basic Self–Other dichotomy intact.

Beginning in the fourth century, we find many expressions of historiography written in Greek that were less “universal” (as Herodotus’ work basically was, even though it dealt with one particular encounter), and more specific. Thus, contemporary with Xenophon was the physician Ctesias, who wrote his *Persika* after having spent time as the personal physician of the Persian king Artaxerxes I. His complete history of the Persian Empire, including its predecessor Assyrian empire, has not survived, but its basic contents and some indication of its style has. In this case, the Other, as defined by Herodotus, was more fully (and luridly) described to Greeks. Ctesias’ claims to personal knowledge of Persian customs and history through his sojourn in Persia gave his work an authority that was not matched by the native informants who wrote their own histories in Greek. For example, the history of Babylon written by Berossus, a native Babylonian who wrote in Greek, was not the authority for Babylonian customs; Ctesias was. Even when Berossus specifically contradicted Ctesias’ claims, and presumably had an authority as a native informant, Ctesias’ version became the accepted one. Even though Ctesias’ *Persika* has not been preserved, the accounts of Persians and Babylonians that have been preserved from the Greek world were all written by Greeks (notably Herodotus). Greeks (even Hellenistic Greeks), it seems, preferred their accounts of the Other to be written by themselves.

Judahite Historiography

Beginning with John Van Seters’ *In Search of History*, there has been considerable interest in the problem of what I will call Judahite historiography, by which I mean Judahite historiographic texts prior to the fourth century BCE. I have tried to coin a term that does not presuppose the canon of the Bible, because I do not want to include Chronicles in this investigation. I want the ability to use a term that describes texts such as Kings that the Chronicler used, without presupposing that Chronicles belongs to the same genre. This starting point is in direct contrast to, for example, Marc Zvi Brettler, who begins his book on historiography with the supposition that Chronicles is a work of historiography, and in fact is the example from which to begin discussing Judahite historiography more generally.

34 Ibid., pp. 21–2.
Brettler takes issue with Van Seters and others who begin with a discussion of the Deuteronomic History, suggesting that because we can see how Chronicles operates as a text and with respect to its sources, it is a more appropriate beginning point for exploring earlier Judahite historiography. Brettler has been hampered by his definition of historiography, “a narrative that presents a past” as opposed to ideology. He suggests, in his conclusion, that “[b]iblical historical texts reflect a combination of genuine interest in the past, strong ideological beliefs and refined rhetorical devices,” yet his operational definition separates out these three features and emphasizes only the first.

One of the criticisms leveled at Van Seters’ work is his uncritical use of genres. Indeed, all of the scholars surveyed so far have an uncritical use of genre. Definitions of biblical historiography as a genre that is some variation of “a narrative that recounts a past” are uncritical in their use of content to determine genre. I have argued elsewhere that genre is both form and content. In that article, I suggested that the source citations in Chronicles and Kings are an index of the form of a genre to which both works belong, although Chronicles should be seen as an innovation within that genre. I would suggest that another index of the genre (anachronistically named historiography) would be the use of the Other against which the main group is constructed. Thus, I agree with John Frow that a definition of any genre must include both its formal features and its thematic content. A formal feature of Judahite historiography would be the use of source citations; a thematic feature of Judahite (and other ancient historiography) would be the use of the Other. Whether and how Judahite historiography uses this Other requires further investigation, but I will suggest — based on some preliminary evidence — that it does.

Scholars have examined the role of identity formation in the so-called biblical historiographic texts. Van Seters and Thomas L. Thompson, for example, see identity formation as the primary role of biblical historiography.

37 Ibid., p. 12.
38 Ibid., p. 138.
40 Mitchell, “Power.”
41 J. Frow, *Genre* (New Critical Idiom; London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 74–7. Frow defines genre as combining formal organization, rhetorical structure, and thematic content. Rhetorical structure is taken to mean the relations between speaker and hearer; in texts, that would mean “formal expression in the syntactic and intonational nuances of discourse” (p. 75). For biblical texts I think it is hard to disentangle rhetorical structure from formal organization.
42 Van Seters, *Search*, pp. 1–6; T. L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People*
has read the entire Deuteronomic History as promoting ethnic identity, with Deuteronomy as the charter for the identity. He makes the distinction between Israelite and non-Israelite (which is a form of Othering), but does not really define the Other.43 Following Mullen’s work is that of James Linville, who sees Kings as a project of identity formation, but, again, defines Israel in the positive (community of Yahwists) rather than over against another.44

It seems to me that more attention should be paid to the oppositional form of identity formation in these texts: there is a great deal of negative language in Judges and Kings, especially. For example, the formulaic language of “his heart was not true to Yhwh” (e.g., 1 Kgs 15:3), “he did not turn aside from the sins” (e.g., 2 Kgs 10:29), “the high places were not taken away” (e.g., 2 Kgs 12:3), and the negative rhetorical question form of the source citation, “are they not written?” (e.g., 2 Kgs 12:19). In fact, a quick tally suggests that the books of Judges and Kings use the negative markers לא, אין and אל almost twice as much as does Chronicles or Ezra-Nehemiah (uses per verse). Notably, Deuteronomy uses those negative markers at a higher rate than does Leviticus. Perhaps, rather than looking at Israel in the Deuteronomic materials as being positively constructed, we could consider Israel as being negatively constructed: what it is not rather than what it is. The work begun by Hartog on the classical historiographic material could be extended to examine the material of Kings.

Oppositional identity formation is well-recognized as present in Ezra-Nehemiah.45 The identity of the Judean community in that text is created by separation of that group from other groups, and by the definite Othering of the excluded groups. Unlike Deuteronomy or Kings, being true to YHWH and wishing to participate in worship at Jerusalem are not sufficient for inclusion in the community. The “peoples of the land” do include those who are YHWH-worshippers (cf. Ezra 4:1-5, Neh. 13:4-9). Saul Olyan has drawn attention to the manner in which purity regulations were applied to YHWH-worshippers who were “aliens” in such a way as to exclude them from the community.46 Nehemiah’s


43 E. T. Mullen, Jr., *Narrative History and Ethnic Boundaries: The Deuteronomistic Historian and the Creation of Israelite National Identity* (SemeiaSt 24; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993).


46 S. M. Olyan, “Purity Ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the
wall-building activity is typological for the wall-building between Judean and “peoples of the land,” the Other. Presumably only those whose names could be found in the genealogical lists of the book might be inside the wall, the rest would be part of the “peoples of the land.”47 The “nations round about” are also cast as the Other in the Nehemiah Memoir.48 Just as in the Neo-Assyrian materials, in Ezra-Nehemiah there is also a pronounced gendering of the Other: except where the Neo-Assyrian texts say the defeated enemy has become like a woman,49 Ezra-Nehemiah says the defeated enemy is a woman. Because the Other is found within, it must be expelled.50 It is interesting to note with Harold Washington that priestly texts (he seems to mean legal material) do not treat Other foreigners the way that Ezra-Nehemiah does.51 Is this perhaps, a pronounced marker of the genre of historiography found in Ezra-Nehemiah? If this is the case — that the Other is a generic feature of ancient historiography — then Ezra-Nehemiah would need to be interpreted in this light.

Chronicles and the Other

Sara Japhet and Hugh Williamson suggest that identity in Chronicles is not constructed by boundary-setting and exclusion, but by inclusion, in contrast to Ezra-Nehemiah.52 This view of Israel in Chronicles is in contrast to an earlier view that Chronicles was constructed as an anti-Samaritan polemic. Williamson in particular has shown how the Chronicler’s view of the inhabitants of the former Northern Kingdom was welcoming and inclusive, although this has been qualified to see non-Jerusalem Israel as peripheral.53 However, if it is the case that the northern inhabitants are Israel, and if the genre of historiography requires the construction of the Other, then what might that Other be? Perhaps, the narrowing of the focus from all of humanity down to Israel in 1 Chronicles 1 might show Israel as being constructed against the Other of all the nations. This should be

49 Cf. Chapman, Gendered.
51 Ibid., 434 n. 21.
understood as not the same entity as the “peoples of the lands” of Ezra-Nehemiah, as there is no “inside-outside” distinction made — all Yahwists may be Israel.

It has been argued that in Chronicles there is a tendency to “Israelitize” the foreigner. Examining the portrayal of foreign monarchs who speak to Judah, these monarchs are found to act in ways consistent with following YHWH. If this argument is accepted, then the Other is not all the nations, or is not not-Israel. Yet this argument does not deal with the genealogies, which, whatever else they may be, are such an arresting feature of the book. As well, alliances with foreign rulers are consistently presented as contrary to following YHWH. Contrary to Williamson’s assertion that the Northern Kingdom was in some way also Israel, alliances with kings of the Northern Kingdom by Judahite kings are always condemned.

Recently, Julie Kelso has examined what appears to be a lack of the feminine in Chronicles. By using the work of Luce Irigaray, she is able to read the Other in Chronicles as the repressed feminine. The maternal body as a producer of the sons, so important to the patrilineal genealogies is repressed by the use of the birthing verb מֹלֹד by masculine subjects. Bodies themselves, particularly diseased bodies, become feminine as well. Kelso argues that “women have been silenced to enable the phantasy of mono-sexual, masculine production required to sustain this particular (masculine) literary (re)production of Israel’s social, political, and cultic past.” In this reading, the feminine is made so Other that it cannot even be spoken. The absence of women characters in the narrative and genealogies is in stark contrast to the preoccupation with women in Ezra-Nehemiah or the feminizing metaphors of the Neo-Assyrian texts. Yet somehow, gender difference, femininity, is found here as well. If the feminine is the Other against which the subject is constructed, then the identity that is being constructed for that subject in this historiography is — what? Men? This is an intriguing possibility. If “Israel” is read as a largely inclusive label, what is it inclusive of?

57 Knoppers, “Yhwh,” 621.
59 Ibid., p. 213.
women, and Other = not Israel, then Israel = men. In fact, when we look at the
place where women figure significantly and consistently in Chronicles, it is in the
regnal notices at the beginning of each reign, when the name of the king’s mother
is given. Rehoboam’s mother is an Ammonite (2 Chron. 12:13) and Ahaziah’s
mother is a Northerner (2 Chron. 22:2); while both kings are not judged positively,
it is nowhere suggested that they are not of Israel. Therefore, Israel = men.

Nevertheless, if we look at ancient historiography, usually the Other is marked
fairly clearly near the beginning of the text. In that case, we might turn to the
beginning of Chronicles, where there is an Esau/Seir/Edom genealogy before
the Israelite genealogy in 1 Chron. 1:35-54. The purpose of this genealogy has
long puzzled commentators.60 Gary Knoppers asks, “If Israel is the focal point
of the Chronicler’s interests, why mention the descendants of Esau at all?”61
The Chronicler does consistently deal with the segments of the genealogy that
do not lead to Israel prior to those that do, but the descendants of Japhet, Ham,
Qeturah and Ishmael are all recounted much more briefly than the descendants
of Esau (Ham is given more space than Ishmael, so it is not necessarily a matter
of genealogical proximity to Israel). Edom/Seir — the link being made by para-
taxis in 1 Chronicles 1 — is also mentioned a few more times in Chronicles, as
well as “Edom’s servant” — Obed-edom — in two different parts of the book.
Examining Edom as a potential Other might seem to select only one of “the
nations” that seem to most scholars to be constructed as the Other,62 yet Edom is
a most interesting possibility.

First, the lengthy genealogical excursus on Esau/Seir/Edom in 1 Chronicles 1
has been read typically as a positive construction by the Chronicler. Since
genealogies are typically seen as a way of creating a community and weaving in
various new groups, the inclusion of a long Edomite genealogy is seen as a way
of cementing the relationship between Israel and Edom.63 However, given the
largely negative way that Edom is seen in other biblical texts and that Edom is not,
in fact, Israel, it might be a possibility to read the genealogy as an Othering move.
The note introducing the list of kings indicates that these kings ruled “before a
king ruled over the Israelites” (1 Chron. 1:43). In some ways, this brings to mind
the antiquity of Egypt as compared with Greece for Herodotus. Yet the period
of the kings devolved into a period of chieftains who are not even named indi-

60 See the bibliographies in G. N. Knoppers, I Chronicles 1–9: A New Translation with
Introduction and Commentary (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2004); and E. Assis, “From Adam
61 Knoppers, I Chronicles 1-9, p. 287.
62 Cf. Siedlecki, “Foreigners.”
63 J. M. Tebes, “‘You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite, for He is Your Brother’: The
Tradition of Esau and the Edomite Genealogies From an Anthropological Perspective,” JHS
vidually. Edom is therefore constructed as the opposite of Israel, the Other. Elie
Assis argues that the chieftains are not meant to be read as following the kings,
but as a separate list (reading the words “and Hadad died” in 1 Chron. 1:51 as the
conclusion of the list of kings rather than the heading of the list of chieftains), but I find this unconvincing, seeing rather a devolution. What Assis does note,
correctly in my opinion, is that this genealogy is constructed as an anti-Edomite
genealogy rather than one merely showing Edom’s relationship to Israel.

The next mention of Edom is actually within the name Obed-Edom (עבד
אדם), which may be construed as “Edom’s Servant” or as “Servant Edom,” and
which name is the only one in Chronicles to include the name of a non-Israelite
people. When reading this name in conjunction with the Edomite genealogy in
1 Chronicles 1, we must discount the suggestion that it means “Servant of Edom’s
God.” This figure appears in 1 Chronicles 13, 15 and 16 as a Gittite (a Philistine
from Gath?) on whose property the Ark of the Covenant rests, and may or may
not be the same figure as one of the two Levites by the same name who appear in
1 Chronicles 15 and 16, one as a lyre-player and the other as a gatekeeper. In the
family of Obed-Edom the gatekeeper also appears in 1 Chronicles 26 in the list
of gatekeepers and their rotations. Such a multiplication of Obed-Edoms! Rather
than seeing their inclusion as a measure of Chronicles’ inclusiveness, perhaps
there is an anxiety at work here: David’s testing of the Ark in 1 Chronicles 13 is
done on the servant-Other within, and when the Ark brings blessing even on the
Other, then there is textual anxiety about the servant-Other having been blessed.
The multiplication of Obed-Edoms then serves to mask their Otherness and to
draw them into Israel.

Edom appears next in 1 Chron. 18:11-13 in the more typical role as one
of David’s enemies that he has vanquished. The Other here is relegated to
its appropriate place on the outside of Israel, after having been found within
1 Chronicles 13–16. Similar is the mention of Edom in 2 Chron. 8:17 as the launching
place for Solomon’s ships — on the outside of Israel, showing Solomon’s reach.

In 2 Chronicles 20, Jehoshaphat faces the inhabitants of Mount Seir. The met-
onymy of the genealogy might allow us to construe them as Edomites. However,
more interesting is the “rebellion” of the Edomites against Judah in the time of
Jehoram in 2 Chron. 21:8-10. There it is noted that Edom has been in revolt “until

64 Assis, “From Adam,” 301.
66 Contra N. Tan, “The Chronicler’s ‘Obed-edom’: A Foreigner and/or a Levite?” JSOT
32/2 (2007), 217–30 (218), and the references given there.
67 G. N. Knoppers, I Chronicles 10-29: A New Translation with Introduction and
68 As does Tan, “Chronicler’s ‘Obed-edom’,” 227.
69 Cf. Ibid., 228.
this day.” The Edomites are outside the land (where they belong), but they no longer are in an appropriate subordinate relationship with Judah. The Other must always be subordinated in some way, as we saw in the Neo-Assyrian texts. Even if the Other is not subordinated, their subjectivity must be constructed in such as way as to subordinate them (e.g., foreigners constructed as women).

Not long afterward in the text, the Edomites are violently subjected. As Knoppers points out, Chronicles picks up this battle from the text of 2 Kings 14, but makes it much greater in terms of textual space and importance.70 While the importance of the attempted alliance between Amaziah and Israel should not be dismissed, the violence of the domination of Judah over the Edomites should be noted. The Edomites who had asserted their own subjectivity in 2 Chronicles 21 are now firmly subordinated and subjected to Judah again. The Other has now been put in its proper place. The only other mention of the Edomites, in 2 Chron. 28:17 has them again rising up against Judah — and not put back down again.

Yet the episode found in 2 Chronicles 25 has a rather interesting epilogue. After Amaziah’s defeat of the Edomites, he brings back their gods and begins to worship them. He imports the Other again into the midst of Judah,71 where they might again be asked to be “servants of Edom.” This irruption of the Other within is then further signaled by the very odd occurrence of the name Obed-Edom in 2 Chron. 25:24. It is as if the Other brought within by Amaziah is so disturbing that it raises the specter of that other Other, “Servant Edom” that is now no longer servant.

**Suggestions**

In Japhet’s fine summary of the various scholarly positions on Chronicles as historiography, she takes the *a priori* assumption that Chronicles is a work of historiography and then seeks to demonstrate by nature of its structure and content that it is.72 She is most concerned to counter the claim that Chronicles is some kind of “free” history or midrash. She suggests that because Chronicles begins with a genealogy, continues to tell a story about the past in periodized form, uses sources and selects from them, sees causation as important (the “doctrine of immediate retribution”), and evaluates sources based on “historical probability,” that it is “history.”73 Most telling about her discussion is the statement in her

71 Siedlecki, “Foreigners,” 264.
73 Ibid., pp. 404–8.
conclusion that “the Chronicler was a historian in the modern sense of the term, and the book of Chronicles is a ‘work of history,’ no more and no less.”74 Although she considers that she has drawn her conclusions from “reverting to the book itself and trying to uncover its nature and characteristics,”75 she has not raised the larger question of what historiography in the ancient sense of the term might be. We might contrast her definition of history with that of John Frow:

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\ldots \text{the writing of history is generically structured by the narrative problems of binding the singularities of events and their multiplicity of times into the coherence of a structural explanation. Everything else follows from this} \ldots \]

This definition effectively denies the difference between “historiography” and “ideology” that Brettler construes.

In this essay, I have sought to demonstrate that if we consider genre to be both form and content, that the Other was an important feature of ancient historiography. Having discussed a variety of ancient texts with respect to their Others, I turned to Chronicles. The problem with Chronicles is that it seems to be so positive in its construction generally, so inclusive, so single-minded in its focus on Israel, that there seems to be not much room for an Other. Even my discussion of the Edomites, as much as they may run through the entire book, falters on the fact that the Edomites simply do not appear all that often. Although Ammonites, Moabites, Philistines, etc. do not appear with the extensive genealogy that Edom is given, it would be possible to examine a variety of foreign nations as the Other,77 and to then extrapolate a broader Other in Chronicles of not-Israel. However, most of the Chronicles is just not that concerned with foreigners. They are present, but do not form an antagonistic pair in the way the Persians/Barbarians do in Herodotus. In this case, perhaps we should look elsewhere for an explanation.

One possibility is to suggest that perhaps Chronicles is not historiography at all. This possibility has not been thoroughly explored by scholars (midrash/rewritten Bible is the only other possibility that is generally discussed). I have argued in the past that Chronicles is political philosophy, based on formal and thematic features and on a comparison with Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia.*78 I have also argued in the past that Chronicles is an innovation in the genre to which

74 Ibid., p. 415, italics added.
75 Ibid., p. 403.
77 As does Siedlecki, “Foreigners.”
Samuel-Kings also belongs, without naming that genre. In a way, I think that Chronicles is both. If genre is descriptive rather than prescriptive, then there must be room for both understandings of Chronicles. As comparatist Wai-Chee Dimock has recently written, genre is “more . . . a self-obsoleting system, a provisional set that will always be bent and pulled and stretched by its many subsets.”

Another possibility is to suggest that Chronicles is historiography, but in a sense different from that which Japhet uses the term “history,” and more like that which Frow uses: a narrative that presents a coherent structural explanation of events. I noted above that Hartog suggests that while the Greek–Barbarian pairing was operational in the third–fourth centuries, it became modified. If in Herodotus the Barbarian had a Persian face, perhaps we could consider that in Chronicles the non-Israelite had an Edomite face — the non-Israelite certainly did not have a Persian face, even though the text was probably written during the era of Persian sovereignty. Yet perhaps (as Chronicles is generally dated to the third–fourth centuries) a distinctive feature of earlier historiography, the Other, was also modified in Chronicles, and instead of being an overriding thematic fascination the Other was included as a nod to generic conventions. Or, perhaps the later works of historiography no longer constructed the self in relation to the Other, but were inward looking rather than outward, as was possibly the case with Berossus, and as often seems with Chronicles.

All of this rumination is really about meaning: how do we construe meaning from a text? Genre is the framework for the contract between author/text and reader, but when the socially-grounded basis for the framework is not shared, in essence the contract is broken. As the reader tries to reconstruct the contract, the meaning, there are only reconstructions of the social context to guide the reconstruction. Yet those reconstructions are constructs grounded in the social context of the reader. As we stare in the window through to the text, ultimately we see our own reflection first. The Other is us.

79 Mitchell, “Power.”
81 My thanks go to the other panelists in Auckland for a stimulating discussion on the topic of historiography, and for their pertinent questions.