Introduction

As a student of Chronicles, it was with some trepidation that I launched myself into the study of Ben Sira. After having read as much as I could easily lay my hands on about Ben Sira, I found that many of the issues being discussed in Chronicles research are also being discussed in Ben Sira research. However, scholars studying Chronicles and scholars studying Ben Sira seem not to know anything about the other book. This leads to some unproblematized statements. Thus an essay or book on Ben Sira will give context to a particular issue (like exegetical technique) by saying that, of course, something very similar goes on in Chronicles. An essay or book on Chronicles will usually not even mention Ben Sira, although it seems to me that they might have some points in common. In this paper, therefore, I will intentionally be bringing together Chronicles and Ben Sira. I will be problematizing the relationship, and I will be looking for possibilities of using Ben Sira (whose date and context are more easily determined) for furthering our understanding of the genre and context of Chronicles. I will be arguing that the Chronicler was a broadly literate author (as was Ben Sira), who used a number of literary techniques in order to achieve his ideological aims. Key for both authors was the use of “inserted genres,” and I will be exploring this concept in this paper. Both interacted with past literary texts, re-using them and re-writing them, while they re-invented the literary genres in which they used them. This notion of genre is drawn from the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, which I will elaborate in this paper.

In this paper, I will be using examples from the range of both books. However, my primary focus will be on the so-called “Hymn to the Ancestors” in Ben Sira 44-50, and on the depiction of Asa in 2 Chronicles 14-16. The use of “historical” traditions in both books will be the starting point for my reflections on the purpose(s) of the books as a whole. It is my hope that this paper will take a few of the steps towards showing that the Chronicler did not just work with traditions, but worked with a specific body of literature or literary production. I hope to demonstrate through one extended example that the Chronicler both had read widely and had reflected on what he had read; he did not merely slavishly rewrite traditions.

Establishing a context

One of the more difficult problems in studying both Chronicles and Ben Sira is the complicated textual history of the two books. Chronicles is difficult enough, with the MT and LXX versions of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, as well as the Qumran material and the various Septuagint recensions to deal with. Ben Sira, with its Greek, Syriac and multiple Hebrew versions, has an extremely complicated textual history. With Ben Sira having been written by a specific, named

* Thanks are due to Steven Schweitzer, who read this paper and made many excellent comments and suggestions. Any errors that remain are, of course, my own.
author, we would hope to be able to recover the “original” text, something we can probably never hope to do with a book like Chronicles, and especially Samuel. However, the quest for the original text of Ben Sira may be as illusory as the quest for the original text of Samuel. Bearing all these textual cautions in mind, we can move on to the context of production.

Although there is considerable debate over the precise date of Ben Sira, we can date it generally to the first quarter of the second century BCE. The translation done by Ben Sira’s grandson dates to roughly fifty years later. Between the authorship of the book and its translation, there was the crisis of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the Maccabean revolt. This shift in context is important: the original work was written under Seleucid domination both politically and culturally, while the translation was written under general Hellenistic cultural domination, but Judean political independence was also a reality. In this paper, I will be using the Hebrew text(s), and will be concerned largely with the Seleucid context.

Trying to define Hellenism is difficult. It has become obvious over the past two decades, however, that there can be no clear separation of “Judaism” and “Hellenism.” All Judaisms of the Hellenistic period were “hellenized”, either in embracing aspects of the dominant culture of the eastern Mediterranean, or in reacting to or rejecting these aspects. Judea, as a border territory between two competing Hellenistic kingdoms, was both a part of empire and resistant to empire. We should not be surprised to find a mixture of Hellenism and resistance to Hellenism in Ben Sira’s work, as well as in the work of his grandson. Post-colonial theory could be of use in explicating Ben Sira’s ideology and position, although I am not aware of any work done using this approach.

One of the criteria used to establish a date for Chronicles is the apparent absence of any references to Hellenism in the book. However, as soon as we date Chronicles to any point in the Second Temple period, it was written under colonial conditions. In that case, the very few references to anything Persian should concern us: if the absence of any references to Hellenism requires a pre-Hellenistic period date, then what does that mean about the very, very few references to Persian influence? I will not be arguing for a pre-exilic date for Chronicles (since that would require a more complicated textual history for the book than I am willing to grant, for reasons that will become apparent below), but instead will be assuming that we really do not know what impact colonialism had on the creation of biblical texts, since studies taking that approach are only now appearing. Lester Grabbe argues that even if a biblical text is from the Hellenistic period, it may not show any Hellenistic influence, but instead may reflect continuing Persian-period conditions. What might these conditions be?

We should not let ourselves be misled by the generally poor economic conditions of Persian-period Yehud as to the possibility of literary production. A certain amount of wealth is required to support a leisured class that can write works such as Chronicles. However, there must have been such a class (either indigenous or imported), in order for Persian imperial policies to have been implemented in Yehud. The Chronicler’s preoccupation with Levites, who were after all minor civil servants connected with the Temple, has suggested to some that the book came out of Levitical circles (starting with Wellhausen). These days, the consensus date for Chronicles is somewhere in the 4th century BCE, but this date is based largely on the absence of Hellenistic features in the work. Since the dividing line between “Persian” and
“Hellenistic” may not actually be very sharp, we could place Chronicles earlier or later; on the whole, I tend to favour a late Persian-period or early Hellenistic period date. To my mind, one of the flaws in pushing the date of Chronicles later is that this move is generally based on an assumption about the length of time a literary text needs to become authoritative in some way. Thus Kai Peltonen suggests that a text like Zechariah 1-8 (specifically 4.10) must have been written approximately two hundred years before Chronicles in order for it to have achieved enough “authoritative status” to have been quoted in 2 Chron. 16.9. Nevertheless, an example from the Greek world may demonstrate the possibility of a much shorter time frame. Herodotus’ *Histories*, probably completed toward the end of the third quarter of the fifth century BCE, was well enough known within a few years for Aristophanes to parody the introduction in the *Acharnians* in 425 BCE (ll. 512-528), and was extensively used and reacted to by Xenophon in his work on Cyrus (probably finished by 360 BCE). Within an elite literate culture, only a few years or decades could be needed for texts to be known.

Perhaps at this point I should make a distinction between literary use and exegesis. Although I have developed my argument separately from that of Benjamin Sommer, this first part runs parallel to his. It seems to me that the common assumption sees all re-use of biblical texts as being in some way exegetical. Exegesis, as interpretation of the text, started very early in the biblical tradition, as Michael Fishbane has shown in detail. Fishbane suggests that in the Hebrew Bible, exegesis does not displace authority, but preserves the older traditions while constructing new meanings. Literary use of an older text, in this definition, would automatically be exegesis. To my mind, this removes the possibility of a literary culture from Second Temple Judaisms and posits a religious culture transmitted by a scribal class. To suggest that this was the only cultural form of the Second Temple period ignores all we have learned in the past fifty years about the diversity and heterogeneity of the Judaisms of this period: there may indeed have been a religious culture, but there may also have been a literary culture, both making use of a body of received textual material. Therefore, we should be careful about imposing the notion of interpretation of received authority upon all literary re-use. We should also be cautious about drawing any conclusions about (for example) Ben Sira’s “scriptures.” Just because Ben Sira reflects (for example) knowledge of the Abraham story as it appears in Genesis, does not mean necessarily that the story was “scriptural”. All literature is in some way an extension of and/or reaction to the literature that has come before. This does not make it exegetical. This makes it literary. I hope to further explore this argument in future work.

**The issue of genre**

Below, I will be establishing that there are many stylistic similarities between Ben Sira and Chronicles. This does not mean that there are not significant stylistic differences too: the main one would be that Ben Sira wrote in verse, while the Chronicler did not. I will further discuss this issue below when I turn to defining genre. Alongside the stylistic similarities, there are significant thematic similarities between the two works. John Gammie has pointed out that in the areas of theology, tolerance of mixed marriages, Temple and Temple worship, and openness to foreigners, there are “striking similarities” between Ben Sira and Chronicles. This does not mean that there are not significant thematic differences as well: the emphasis on the Levites in Chronicles is not paralleled in Ben Sira, and the emphasis on wisdom in Ben Sira is not paralleled in Chronicles.
There has been some effort in the past to find wisdom themes in Chronicles, or precedents for the historical sketch in Sir. 44-50. Thus Joseph Blenkinsopp can use a rather broad definition of wisdom and conclude that in “clearly a very limited and idiosyncratic sense dictated by the tradition within which it was written, Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah may be regarded as sapiential.”\(^{18}\) This definition of wisdom has wisdom being equated with following the law, and may be defined most clearly in 2 Chron. 1.7-12.\(^{19}\) R.N. Whybray, in his discussion of Ben Sira and history, can discuss the other biblical texts (e.g., Ps. 78, Ps. 105, Deut. 32) that use a historical sketch to make a wisdom point. He concludes that the historical sketch may have been a quite acceptable part of a wisdom work.\(^{20}\)

One problem lies in defining wisdom: is it a genre, or is it a framework? Alexander Di Lella suggests that for Ben Sira, wisdom meant five things: fear of Yhwh, love of Yhwh, observance of Yhwh’s commandments, discipline, and the source of the greatest blessings in life.\(^{21}\) However, this is not a generic definition. Gerald Sheppard suggests that wisdom is a hermeneutical construct, a way of interpreting the earlier canonical texts of the tradition. He suggests that,

> By carefully comparing the original non-wisdom context of an OT passage with its new role in the context of wisdom, one can draw a fairly objective picture of a wisdom interpretation … For instance, the … author may strategically omit integral parts of the original context to which he alludes, or he may reveal a pattern of selecting only a certain type or sequence of images for wisdom from non-wisdom material.\(^{22}\)

This is problematic, since if we remove “wisdom” from the above quotation, the process Sheppard describes also looks a lot like what went on during the production of Chronicles. Sheppard does go on to say that, “[T]his investigation neither assumes that every use of the OT in this literature is a wisdom interpretation nor does it purport to provide an exhaustive portrait of post-exilic wisdom exegesis,”\(^{23}\) and this is an important corrective. It does rely on the paradigm that at some point in the post-exilic period there was a shift from textual production to textual re-production, the interpretation of traditions for current realities, as Thomas Willi has described it in the context of Chronicles.\(^{24}\) The implication of seeing wisdom as a hermeneutical construct is that historiography (or philosophy) might be a hermeneutical construct as well.

Another problem lies in defining “history” or “historiography.” Again, is it a genre, or is it a theme, namely a concern for the past? In his discussion of biblical historiography, Marc Zvi Brettler has defined history as “a narrative that presents a past” and has opposed it to ideology, which he defines as a type of sets of beliefs. He does not use the term literature; instead, he uses ideology, suggesting that just because a text has literary features that does not mean it is literature.\(^{25}\) Chronicles does fit nicely into this definition of history, but so too does Ben Sira, especially if we consider the following: “Ben Sira’s poetic construction was ultimately that of an ideal social history and world.”\(^{26}\) Thus on the basis of theme alone, both Chronicles and Ben Sira can be considered to be both wisdom and historiography. Both can be characterized as re-interpreting earlier texts. However, they are very different works. How then can we understand them?
The use of theme alone is not enough to determine genre; genre helps us make sense of how we as readers construct the meaning of the text. I am working with a Bakhtinian understanding of genre, which means that genre is tied to form as well as theme. In *The Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Mikhail Bakhtin describes literary genre as containing “the most stable, ‘eternal’ tendencies in literature’s development,” yet a genre is “reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre.” In “The Problem of Speech Genres,” where he discusses the speech genres of utterances (ranging from the sentence to the full-length text), he notes that speech genres are heterogeneous in the extreme, and that their diversity is linked to the diversity of the human experience. Thus, genre can be seen as an ever-shifting array of speech types. Bakhtin divides speech genres into primary (simple) and secondary (complex) speech genres; the complex speech genres such as novels absorb primary speech genres such as letters. However, most important for our project is Bakhtin’s assertion that “style is inseparably related to the utterance and to typical forms of utterances;” there is an “organic, inseparable link between style and genre … each sphere has and applies its own genres that correspond to its own specific conditions.” He also states, “Where there is style there is genre. The transfer of style from one genre to another not only alters the way a style sounds, under conditions of a genre unnatural to it, but also violates or renews the given genre.”

Bakhtin also suggests that an individual’s speech is adapted for a specific genre, it takes the form of the genre; and if speech genres did not exist, communication would be almost impossible. We rely on stylistic markers in order to determine genre, which makes communication possible. Genre is thus linked to form, as well as theme. However, we should keep in mind that genre, for Bakhtin, also means social construction and social context: “The meaning of a text does not lie in the particular combination of devices but in the ways in which the text is produced and interpreted, transmitted and used.” Social context alone is not enough to form genre; it is the combination of style, content and social context that form a generic meaning. Indeed, as Francis Dunn has remarked, for Bakhtin, “literary genres are neither collections of works nor formal attributes shared by those works but ways of understanding the world.”

The concept of “inserted genres” flows directly from Bakhtin’s notion of genre. His comments on inserted genres pertain directly to the novel, but have resonances with all complex forms of literature, and I think are very applicable to biblical scholarship. He suggests that the work as a whole is not normally the focus of study, but that only a subordinate part of the work is analyzed: “The traditional scholar bypasses the basic distinctive feature of the novel as a genre; he substitutes for it another object of study, and instead of novelistic style he actually analyzes something completely different.” Inserted genres, those utterances placed into the work from another work or genre, are integral for understanding the work as a whole. Of course this flies in the face of biblical form criticism as traditionally practiced, and form criticism is exactly what Bakhtin was arguing against: the analysis of the smallest rhetorical units for their (oral) life situation, without looking at the work in which they are now integrated. The placement of a work of one literary genre into the broader work at hand gives new meaning to both the inserted genre and the broader work. This is a way for a variety of voices to enter the work, without direct quotation or allusion. With this understanding, a statement such as Michael Fox’s is problematic (yet representative of the state of affairs in biblical studies, even over twenty-five
years later): “I suggest as a working assumption that all words a speaker does not attribute (virtually or explicitly) to another person be taken as his own or as an expression of his own point of view.” Similarly, Reiterer suggests that Ben Sira expected his audience to recognize his biblical quotations/allusions and to understand them in the way that Ben Sira himself did.

Given this definition of genre, we need to know something about the social context, content and style of Ben Sira and Chronicles if we are to make something like a determination of genre. The comparative aspect may also be of some use to us here, although possibly not for the social context, but for the content and style. I would like to start with Ben Sira and work back from Ben Sira to the Chronicler; it seems to me that since we can know more about Ben Sira and his social context that this is a better place to start.

Techniques used by Ben Sira

John Snaith established that Ben Sira quoted directly from biblical texts only rarely; and such quotations as he did use may have been because of particular “striking phrases.” However, Ben Sira did use certain key words, especially in Sir. 44-50, in order to refer to biblical texts; Snaith took some pains to show that Ben Sira was able not only to copy biblical references, but to combine them or collect them together from various biblical texts and synthesize them; Friedrich Reiterer suggests that it may be difficult to determine Ben Sira’s source text(s), as many of his passages draw on themes found in more than one biblical book. This is definitely the mark of a literate author, reflecting on previous literary creation. It is not merely scribal activity, copying the text and adding explanatory glosses.

Snaith also made an interesting observation about the word plays on personal names in Sir. 44-50. He noted the play on חַזְק and Hezekiah in 48.17, and חֵשֻׁעַ and Joshua in 46.1; he also noted the use of the false etymology of Samuel in 46.13. Di Lella has pointed out that the name of Rehoboam was explicitly avoided by Ben Sira, who included it by creating an elaborate pun in 47.23. There is also a play on the דֵּע and Isaiah in 48.20. In this punning on personal names, Ben Sira was following in the footsteps of the Chronicler, as I will demonstrate below.

In a series of articles, now conveniently summarized, P.C. Beentjes has shown the extensive use of older texts by Ben Sira, although this use only rarely extends to direct quotation – in fact, only once does Ben Sira explicitly cite another text, in 48.10, paraphrasing Mal. 3.23-24. Thus Yair Hoffman suggests that Ben Sira was following the conventions of wisdom literature in avoiding explicit quotations. However, he also points out that while the Mishnah and New Testament used quotation formulae, the writings of the Pseudepigrapha did not. He suggests that the Mishnah, New Testament and Pseudepigrapha are chronologically close to each other, and that the use of quotations in the first two was due to a polemical intent, while the absence of specific quotations in the latter was due to a desire to claim sacred status for those works. If we replace “sacred” or “holy” with “well-known,” then it is possible to see the avoidance of explicit quotation in Ben Sira as a nod to his audience about his own learned-ness and theirs!

According to Beentjes, there were three main ways that Ben Sira used older texts. First, Ben Sira made use of a technique Beentjes calls “inverted quotation.” Examples include Sir.
Second, Ben Sira made some use of direct quotation, but following Snaith, Beentjes argues that this was very rare. Snaith’s caution about looking at the context of the quoting and quoted text in order to determine dependence is noted, and Beentjes carefully examines the context before making any assertions about dependence: the above-mentioned quotation from Malachi in Sir. 48 is one that he feels is dependent. Third, Ben Sira patterned passages in his book on passages in one or two older texts. One example is Sir. 6.5-17 and 1 Sam. 25, and another is Sir. 45.6-22 and Exod. 28. Beentjes implies that this technique may be found only in post-biblical texts (he dates this technique to the 2nd century BCE). However, we should keep in mind the extensive patterning that the Chronicler used that I will discuss below.

Ben Sira is often analyzed from the point of view of the traditions reflected within the book: the wisdom traditions for the first part of the book, and the historical traditions for the Hymn to the Ancestors. Generally, as far as historical books go, we can see that Ben Sira’s library included Genesis through Kings, Chronicles, and what became the canonical prophets; he also drew on traditions in Nehemiah, Psalms, Proverbs and Job. Lester Grabbe suggests that Ben Sira’s description of David seems to rely on Chronicles, not Samuel-Kings; he implies that the depiction of the post-Solomonic kings also came from Chronicles, but infers that Ben Sira must have had Kings because he did have Samuel and Chronicles. I am not sure if Grabbe actually means what he seems to be saying here: certainly the depiction of Solomon in Ben Sira has much more in common with 1 Kings 11 than it does with 2 Chronicles. I think it most probable that Ben Sira had both books. We can see how Ben Sira reflected both books through an examination of his depiction of the various kings. David is described as a shepherd, as having killed Goliath, as having been praised by women in killing tens of thousands (47.3-7): this is material only from Samuel and not from Chronicles. However, the image of David as a cultic founder (47.8-10) is more like the David found in Chronicles, not Samuel. Yhwh forgiving David his sins and exalting him forever may allude to the less-savoury aspects of the story in Samuel, but is much closer in tone to the depiction in Chronicles. Solomon in Ben Sira (47.13-22) seems to be based on the depiction in 1 Kings, creatively reinterpreted, although the word-play on the name Solomon and הָלֹא is implied in 47.13; this word-play is emphasized in the account in Chronicles (e.g., 1 Chron. 22.9). However, Ben Sira does not connect Solomon in any extensive way with the Temple (as he is in both Kings and Chronicles), seeking instead to downplay the Davidic kingship and the Solomonic contributions to the cult. In fact, it seems quite likely that Ben Sira took the attributes of the Davidic kingship and transferred them to the high priesthood. Like the Chronicler, Ben Sira plays up Hezekiah rather than the Deuteronomist’s hero Josiah, but Ben Sira’s depiction of Hezekiah seems to be based more on Isaiah than on 2 Kings: there is no mention of the cultic reforms undertaken by Hezekiah in both Kings and Chronicles; it is possible that Ben Sira used all of the material, from Isaiah, Kings and Chronicles, creatively in order to construct his picture of Hezekiah.

Beentjes and others writing on Ben Sira often seem trapped into a biblical/post-biblical mindset or a “scriptural” mindset. Although space does not permit me to venture into a discussion of the formation of the canon, I would like to dispute one quotation from Beentjes: “[I]t seems likely that [Ben Sira] turns out to be a very careful author who in a very selective and conscientious way adopted and elaborated the Holy scriptures of his day into his own book.” I would like to suggest that although Ben Sira clearly knew many of the books that became part of
the canon, there is no evidence of a “canon-consciousness” within the Hebrew text of Ben Sira. The Greek prologue is another matter, which we can set aside for the purposes of our study of the Hebrew text. Ben Sira was a literate author. Perhaps we should be thinking not in terms of canon formation and closure (hence biblical/scriptural), but rather in terms of a Second Temple period literary continuum: some of the techniques used by “post-biblical” writers can be found in Chronicles, even though these techniques are usually considered to be only “post-biblical,” and techniques developed (or used) by the Chronicler continued to be used in later periods.

**Genre and Ben Sira**

The Hymn to the Ancestors in Sir. 44-50 has been compared to the encomium-genre of the Hellenistic world; Thomas Lee has done the most extensive work on this subject. Lee sees Xenophon’s *Agesilaus* as a directly comparable example to Sir. 44-50, with the Hymn being not a hymn to the ancestors, but rather to Simon II. The enumeration of the ancestors is a form of praise of the hero. The hallmark of the encomium is amplification: the “omission or suppression of discreditable incidents … attribution of qualities that do not exist”, in order to give the subject the best possible image; amplification makes selective use of material and alteration of sources. We have seen that these techniques are used in Chronicles as well. In his discussion of Sir. 44-50, Lee also deals with the issue of midrash, i.e., seeing Sir. 44-50 as a midrash, and concludes that although Sir. 44-50 may be pre-rabbinic midrash in method, it is not midrashic in form; “Sirach 44-50 exists not for the purpose of interpreting particular biblical texts about the fathers of old, but it is a new composition that just happens to employ material from scripture.” This is contrary to many of the views about Ben Sira that I outlined above.

If the Hymn seems to be an encomium in terms of content and style, what about its social context? There have been many interesting studies recently about Ben Sira that use the book itself for clues about the author’s context. This leads easily into a circular argument about the book, so I would like to step outside this circle, and examine the first quarter of the 2nd century BCE from other perspectives. Gabriele Boccaccini has pointed out that the high-priesthood of Simon II was perhaps the highest point and ultimately the end-point of the Zadokite priesthood; his successor was forced into exile. The late 3rd century BCE was characterized by a near-constant struggle for the domination of Palestine by the Ptolemies and Seleucids, which did not end until the Seleucid Antiochus III finally gained control in 198 BCE (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.133). As a scribe/sage, Ben Sira would have been to a certain extent dependent on the priestly aristocracy of the period. His portrayal of Simon as a Temple-builder in the same tradition of David, Solomon and Hezekiah, and as a presider over Temple ritual in the same tradition of Aaron and Phinehas gives ultimate authority to this high priest, and is a creative rewriting of texts that had not linked the two aspects of builder and presider. Ben Sira’s position as dependent necessitated his generic choice.

However, it is also important to keep in mind Bakhtin’s caution about studying the subgenres of the text without examining the whole. Could “wisdom” be a heteroglossic genre, like Bakhtin’s novel? It incorporates many speech types, and Ben Sira in particular has a number of inserted genres, including the Hymn to the Ancestors. Although the wisdom book may seem to be “anthological” in nature, perhaps we should be looking at how the inserted genres function in the overall work, both shaping and being shaped by the work.
It is usual to separate off Sir. 44-50 from the rest of the book (including from the various “appendices” of the various versions/recensions). Yet there is always some pains taken to indicate the continuity between the first part of the book and the Hymn. Mack even suggests that the entire Hymn be subordinated to the “wisdom” worldview, thus denying that there is a difference in genre between the Hymn and the rest of the book. The book would conclude quite naturally at 43.33 (“The Lord has made all, and to the pious he has given wisdom,” reading with the LXX). By beginning the next section by describing it as praise to the pious men, Ben Sira brings the two pieces together. Now the figures mentioned in the Hymn have become exemplars of the sages described in the first part of the book: chapters 1-43 can be read as the prologue to the Hymn, or chapters 44-50 can be read as the epilogue to the wisdom. As well, the structure of the Hymn, culminating with the praise of Simon II in chapter 50, leads to the conclusion that Simon II is the pinnacle of the pious men, the men to whom wisdom has been given by Yhwh in 43:43. By inserting the Hymn and structuring it as a “historical summary,” Ben Sira has managed to associate wisdom with Simon II in a subtle and sophisticated way, without ever mentioning wisdom or piety in the praise of Simon except part of a general blessing (50:23 in Heb.; not in LXX). In the same way, the figure of the pious/wise man in passages such as 29:1 becomes associated with Simon II. By instructing the student of wisdom who has become the wise man, Ben Sira has managed to instruct Simon II.

Techniques used by the Chronicler

In contrast to Ben Sira, the Chronicler quoted other texts extensively, to the point of taking over other texts as his own. Although both the Chronicler and Ben Sira did not use quotation formulae to show that they were quoting, it is an interesting fact of Chronicles study that where the Chronicler did quote, he did not indicate his quotations, and that where he did use indications of quotation/citation, he probably had not done so. If I am going to argue that the Chronicler was a literate author, then I will have to produce some evidence that this was no mere copying. I have argued that the Chronicler did transform the texts he used with respect to the accession of Solomon; there I argued specifically about Chronicles’ relationship to Samuel-Kings. The most obvious kind of transformation is the basic patterning used by the Chronicler to depict the transfer of kingship from David to Solomon in the terms of Moses transferring leadership to Joshua in Deuteronomy-Joshua, as H.G.M. Williamson has shown: the disqualification of David from building the Temple being linked to Solomon’s accession is patterned on Moses’ disqualification from entering the Promised Land being linked to Joshua’s role; the installation of Joshua by Moses with the specific pattern of encouragement, description of the task and assurance of divine aid is repeated by David for Solomon; the charge being given first in private and then in public; the obedience of the people to the new leader; and Yhwh magnifying both Joshua and Solomon. The specific kind of patterning found in this transfer would seem to imply that this technique was not limited to the late Second Temple period as Beentjes suggests, but was used in an earlier period as well; although we could easily suggest that this technique may imply a 2nd century date for Chronicles! This is highly unlikely, given that Ben Sira seems to have known Chronicles.

In this paper, I would like to look at another portion of Chronicles, 2 Chron. 13.23b-16.14, the reign of Asa. The depiction of the reign of Asa contains a large block of material
unique to Chronicles (2 Chron. 14.1-15.15), as well as a block of material that runs parallel to the account in 1 Kings (2 Chron. 15.16-16.14), but has significant differences. This entire passage also has significant links to other biblical texts that will, I hope, demonstrate the literate-ness of the Chronicler.

The first thing we are told about Asa is that, “In his days the land had rest for ten years” (2 Chron. 13.23); Jacob Myers points out that this formula is very similar to the formula used of the judges, for example, in Judg. 5.31. The speech of the prophet Azariah in 2 Chron. 15.3-6 also seems to recall the period of the judges, “For a long time Israel was … without law … In those days it was not safe for anyone to go or come … They were broken in pieces, nation against nation and city against city ….” This describes quite accurately the situation in Judg. 17-21, although Peter Ackroyd argues that the language might be referring to events contemporary with the Chronicler. This language of the period of the judges might well be intended to deal with the problem of the unprecedented appearance of the altars, high places and so on in 2 Chron. 14.2. There had been no such places earlier in Chronicles, but they appear many times in Judges, and they are removed by Asa (2 Chron. 15.8) following Azariah’s speech. Sara Japhet suggests that the sudden appearance of the altars, idols and so on were the result of “a lack of full integration between history and theology” on the part of the Chronicler, so that Asa’s reforms contradict the story given so far in Chronicles but make sense in the context of the story in Kings. I would suggest rather that the Chronicler is deliberately reflecting on the book of Judges, and trying to draw parallels between the reign of Asa and the period of the Judges. Azariah also reminds Asa and the people in his speech that when the people of old “turned to Yhwh, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them” (15.4); this is language reminiscent of David’s charge to Solomon in 1 Chron. 28.9, and of Judges.

The first part of Asa’s reign, depicted in 2 Chron. 14-15, and thus unique to the Chronicler, is generally successful. However, just as David, after his successful completion of his removal of the Ark and his wars, undertook an act which was displeasing to Yhwh (1 Chron. 21), so too does Asa: he takes the silver and gold from the Temple and sends it to King Ben-hadad in Damascus in token of an alliance against King Baasha of Israel (2 Chron. 16.1-3); this is the turning point of his reign. His punishment for allowing Ben-hadad to fight his war for him is a constant state of war (16.9). However, instead of recognizing the foolishness of his action, Asa grows angry with the prophet Hanani who tells him of Yhwh’s punishment, and punishes both him and the people (2 Chron. 16.10). He also does not trust in Yhwh when he becomes ill, but consults physicians instead (16.12); perhaps an ironic comment is meant here based on his name, which may mean “healer.” The play on names, seen also in Ben Sira, is a recurrent theme throughout Chronicles. I noted above that Ben Sira included a play on Hezekiah and בִּים; the Chronicler made extensive use of this identical word-play; there is some suggestion that the names of many of the Judahite kings were played upon by the Chronicler.

Unlike his predecessors Rehoboam and Abijah, the evaluations of Asa by the Chronicler and by the Deuteronomist generally coincide. However, there is an interesting difference between the two accounts of Asa’s funeral. 1 Kings 15.24 uses the typical formula of death and burial, “Then Asa slept with his ancestors, and was buried with his ancestors in the city of his father David; his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him.” Chronicles, on the other hand, makes Asa’s funeral rather elaborate. Asa’s preparation of his own grave in 2 Chron. 16.14 (כַּבֶּדְתֵּי אָשֶׁר
recalls the grave the patriarch Jacob prepares for himself in Gen. 50.5 (כ תה אָשֶׁר הָרִית).88 Riley suggests that this grave of Asa’s “may indicate a certain distancing from the burial with the fathers/kings,”89 but one could argue that it recalls and reflects upon an even more archaic tradition. The use of an embalmed bier (16.14) is unique in the Hebrew Bible. However, what is intriguing is that they “made an exceedingly great fire for him” (16.14). Only in 2 Chron. 21.19 do we have a fire being used in a similar way, but in that case the people “did not make a fire for [Jehoram] like the fire for his ancestors;” Jehoram is elsewhere evaluated negatively by the Chronicler. Elsewhere in Chronicles, burning is depicted as something disgraceful: in 1 Chron. 14.12; 2 Chron. 15.16; and 34.5, relics pertaining to non-Yahwistic practices are burned, and in 2 Chron. 36.19, the Temple and palaces are burned. Burning, therefore, is an ambiguous act, one of honour and of shame. It is ambiguous just what was burned at the time of Asa’s funeral: is it the bier, the spices, the body, or all of the above? Jer. 34.5 also alludes to the burning done in honour of the kings, but also is unclear as to what is burnt. Raymond Dillard asserts that this rite is definitely not cremation but “a memorial and honorific rite.”90 Japhet suggests that the “spice-fire” might be an interpretation of Asa’s name, which in Aramaic means “myrtle” as well as “healer,” thus the two stories about Asa’s death have their origins in his name.91

The burning of a great fire for Asa, however, does link him back to Saul as depicted in 1 Samuel. In 1 Sam. 31.12, the men of Jabesh burned the bodies of Saul and his sons, an act repudiated and therefore not recounted by the Chronicler in 1 Chron. 10. As well, Ackroyd points out that the word for the physicians consulted by Asa in 2 Chron. 16.12, רֹפְאִים, is very similar to the word for ghosts or spirits, רְפָאִים (differing only in vocalization).92 Saul was condemned in 1 Chron. 10.13 for consulting a necromancer, one who communes with ghosts. The act, therefore, that would seem to honour Asa, is extremely ambiguous, just as the depiction of the last few years of Asa’s reign is also ambiguous. In this depiction, themes and images from several passages are drawn together and reflected upon: from Genesis, Jeremiah, Samuel and Kings.93 The Chronicler is in a deliberate relationship with these earlier texts.

**Genre and Chronicles**

If we use Brettler’s definition, then whatever else it might be, Chronicles is a work of historiography. However, as has become clear from our examination of Ben Sira, an author can have one of many purposes for giving an account of the past. Historical inquiry, as in Herodotus’ definition of his task (1.1), is only one. I would like to draw in the analogy of Xenophon again: if Ben Sira’s Hymn is like the encomium of the Agesilaus, then is Chronicles like the historiography of the Hellenica? Or, is it like the philosophy of the Cyropaedia? The Hellenica very deliberately sets out to continue the history of Thucydides, at least in its first part; it has been suggested that the general history of Greece (as opposed to a search for the causes and effects of certain events) was a genre innovated by Xenophon.94 The Cyropaedia, on the other hand, although it is a narrative that recounts a past, is most definitely not a work of historiography. It is a philosophical treatise, using aspects of biography and historiography in order to make a philosophical argument about rulership. Its purpose is clearly stated in its beginning (1.1.1-6). I would argue that Chronicles is more like the Cyropaedia than it is like the Hellenica: it uses the story of the past in order to make a philosophical point in the present.
I noted above that Ben Sira combined the vision of the Davidic ruler as Temple builder with the vision of the high priest as Temple presider, thus giving ultimate authority to the high priest. In Chronicles, the David appoints the high priest, but does so in the same moment as he appoints his son as the next ruler (1 Chron. 29.22). This has often been used to support the argument of a bicephalic leadership in the Second Temple period. However, in Chronicles it is the king who performs almost all presiding Temple functions; it goes beyond the king being the temple founder in the pattern of other Near Eastern rulers. Might we not see in the kings of Chronicles a generic precursor to Ben Sira’s Simon?

However, if we work within a Bakhtinian framework for genre, not only social context and theme are important, but also form. What might be the form of a philosophical treatise? The Cyropaedia combines two kinds of dialogue within itself: 1) explicitly marked dialogues of the Socratic type (e.g., 3.1.15-30) and 2) an implicit dialogic relationship within the text between story-versions. The key here is in the dialogue form. This form may also be seen in Chronicles in the implicit version: Chronicles does not just assemble and interpret previous texts, but also is in a polemical relationship with them.

Chronicles also uses inserted genres. The two most obvious examples are the genealogies of 1 Chron. 1-9, and David’s psalm of 1 Chron. 16. Nevertheless, in the story of Asa in 2 Chron. 14-16, there is an inserted genre, the prophetic speech, with two examples: 15.2-7 and 16.7-9. That these prophetic speeches are inserted is especially clear in the case of Hanani’s speech and its aftermath in 16.7-10, which interrupts the flow of the narrative as presented in 1 Kgs. 15.22-23. The first inserted prophecy, that of Azariah in 15.2-7, is a historical piece that recalls the period of the Judges, as I noted above; it also picks up one of the Chronicler’s favourite themes, seeking יְהֹוָה and finding him. Yet it is not strictly necessary for this speech to be inserted: the narrative could flow nicely from the defeat of the Ethiopians in chapter 14 to the cultic reforms undertaken in 15.8-18. By inserting this prophetic speech, which has many resonances with other books, the Chronicler interrupts the exposition. The prophetic speech itself becomes the spur to action; the place of prophecy is elevated in the book. Similarly, the second inserted prophecy in 16.7-9 also has many resonances with other biblical books (particularly Zechariah). Yet it is not a spur to action, but a comment on the action that had occurred previously. Action without being occasioned by prophetic speech does not end well. The inserted genre of prophetic speech is a locus of dense intertextuality, interacting both with the speech of the Chronicler, and with other biblical books.

The Chronicler as a literate author

Jon Berquist suggests that Chronicles was a priestly document arguing for a shift towards priestly power in the Persian period. He argues that the scribes of the wisdom movement (fragmented from the Temple after the Zadokite control of the Temple was solidified) may have understood themselves as good Yahwists, and may have been active in the Temple during the Persian period alongside the priests. In such a way, he can describe Ben Sira and the author of the Wisdom of Solomon as “consciously reflect[ing] on the religious traditions before their time and interpret[ing] those traditions in the light of their own contemporary philosophical stands.” Furthermore, he remarks that all wisdom writings are “a reflective process of systematic consideration of prior and current thought […] adapting itself to a changing world.” From my
analysis of the two texts, Chronicles and Ben Sira, I wonder if this does not describe Chronicles as well as Ben Sira.

Both the Chronicler and Ben Sira were interested in re-envisioning their worlds. Both worked within literate traditions, and used the texts of their literary culture in order to produce this revisioning. Mack suggests that Ben Sira was proposing a radical social ideal in the Hymn to the Ancestors.\textsuperscript{102} The utopian characteristics of Chronicles have been pointed out by Roland Boer and Steven Schweitzer.\textsuperscript{103} The manipulation of the story of the past was used by both authors to say something about their contemporary situations. Nevertheless, each author worked within a different generic framework in order to convey his message. If we understand genre only to mean theme or framework, as many biblical scholars do, then we must conclude that Ben Sira and the Chronicler were working within the same genre – hence the search for “wisdom in the Chronicler’s work” (Blenkinsopp), or “Ben Sira and history” (Whybray). Since this is clearly not the case, then we must combine the study of theme with the study of form in order to think about biblical genres. Simply in terms of Chronicles and Sir. 44-50, there are formal differences: Chronicles is written in a polemical form; Sir. 44-50 is written as an encomium.

However, just because they were using differing formal generic conventions does not mean that they were working from a different social or ideological location; genre is not just form, but context as well. If we see Ben Sira as a sage, then can we not see the Chronicler as a sage as well? This is not to say that the Chronicler was a “wisdom” author – I am not returning to a search for wisdom elements – but that the Chronicler was a sage in his ability to combine and reflect upon the texts of his tradition.\textsuperscript{104} This kind of reflectiveness, usually understood to have begun well into the Hellenistic period, may actually have begun earlier in the period. Alternatively, we can date Chronicles to a period much closer to Ben Sira, something I do not want to rule out, but neither do I want to argue it here.

In this period, a variety of literary genres were used, re-used or invented in order to convey a message about the political situation of the day. They were different ways of reflecting upon reality, but they were interdependent ways. In the case of Chronicles and Ben Sira, they both interacted with past literary texts, re-using them and re-writing them, while they re-invented the literary genres in which they used them.\textsuperscript{105} Their literary genres are interdependent because their social contexts are similar.
Notes

15. Here is where I diverge from Sommer’s analysis, as he suggests that Deutero-Isaiah was dealing with scripture, but not canon (Prophet, 181-82). The recent arguments of David Carr (*Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* [Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005]), that scribal education had a profound impact upon the reworking of textual material, should also be considered. I hope to do more with Carr’s work in the near future.
19. Ibid., 24-25.
29. Ibid., 61-62.
30. Ibid., 63, 64.
31. Ibid., 66.
32. Ibid., 78-79.
40. Fifty years ago, Peter R. Ackroyd made a similar plea about dating biblical books (“It would obviously be best if we could argue from the known to the unknown.”), beginning with the Maccabean-period Daniel (“Criteria for the Maccabean Dating of Old Testament Literature,” *VT* 3 [1953]: 113-132, here 132.). It is unfortunate that this methodology has not been used in most historical work on the Bible.
42. Ibid., 7. See also Reiterer, “Influence,” 105-107.
50. Ibid., 73-75. M.M. Bakhtin notes that, “One of the more interesting stylistic problems during the Hellenistic period was the problem of quotation” (“From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson & Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist [Austin: U of Texas P, 1981], 41-84, here 68.), and that in the Middle Ages there is a “whole spectrum of possible relationships” with the authoritative word, “beginning at one pole with the pious and inert quotation that is isolated and set off like an icon, and ending at the other pole with the most ambiguous, disrespectful, parodic-travestying use of a quotation” (Ibid., 69). Bakhtin was dealing with the early Middle Ages here, but I think it is just as apt for the earlier period.
54. Ibid., 600.
56. Ibid., 148.
57. *Contra* Ehud Ben Zvi, who suggests that this aspect of David’s depiction in Ben Sira may have come from a wider tradition, like the one also found in the Psalms scrolls from Qumran (“The Authority of 1-2 Chronicles in the Late Second Temple Period,” *JSP* 3 [1988]: 59-88, here 61-62).
59. Ibid., 11-13.
67. Ibid., 199.
68. Ibid., 206, 207.
69. Ibid., 54, 50-51.
71. A careful presentation drawn largely from “canonical” sources (Maccabees, Josephus, etc.) may be found in Collins, *Jewish Wisdom*.
88. Beentjes uses Devorah Diamant’s (“Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Martin Jan Mulder & Harry Sysling [CRINT 2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988], 379-419.) criteria to
find two “implicit quotations,” and a number of “explicit quotations” in Ben Sira (“Search,”123-31); nevertheless, I think he has misconstrued her category of “explicit quotation,” which requires that not only the source be referred to, but that specific linguistic markers of quotation be employed (385); thus what he construes as “explicit quotations” are really “implicit quotations.” Using the same criteria, this use of Gen. 50.5 would be an “implicit quotation.”

90. Dillard, 2 Chronicles, 127.
92. Ackroyd, I & II Chronicles, 141; cf. de Vries, I & 2 Chronicles, 304; Riley, King and Cultus, 102.
93. Gerrie Snyman’s account of the relationship of Asa and Saul runs roughly parallel to this analysis (“‘Tis a Vice to Know Him.’ Readers’ Response-Ability and Responsibility in 2 Chronicles 14-16,” Semeia 77 [1997]: 91-113, here 103-6).
94. Luce, Greek Historians, 102, 104.
97. See Japhet, I & II Chronicles, 715-16, for a refutation of such prophecies as being “Levitical sermons.”
99. Ibid., 164.
100. Ibid., 165.
101. Ibid.
102. Mack, Wisdom, 179.
105. Sommer seems to suggest that Chronicles is a rewriting (“revision”) rather than a re-use (what he might term “allusion” or “echo”) (Prophet, 26); I think it quite possible that rewriting and re-use are not as separate as he makes them out to be.