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*Published in:*  
Religions

Published: 01/01/2024

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Hartog, P. B. (2024). Journeys without End: Narrative Endings and Implied Readers in Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana. *Religions*, 15.

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## Article

# Journeys without End: Narrative Endings and Implied Readers in Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

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**Abstract:** This contribution compares the final sections of Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Through this comparison, I aim to show that these two writings resemble one another in their attention to travel as a literary theme. Both Acts and *Life* employ this theme to communicate their message and, in their narrative endings, set up their implied readers as travelers who are meant to continue the journeys of the protagonists in these writings. At the same time, Acts and *Life* differ in how exactly they envision their readers to continue the journeys of their protagonists. I will argue that these similarities and differences can be explained by the shared social and intellectual climate that Acts and *Life* inhabit: both writings result from discourses on travel and self that were rife among intellectuals in the Roman Empire in the first three centuries of our era, irrespective of their ethnic, legal, or cultural affiliations.

**Keywords:** travel; narrative endings; worldview; Acts of the Apostles; Philostratus; *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*; Second Sophistic



**Citation:** Hartog, Pieter B. 2024. Journeys without End: Narrative Endings and Implied Readers in Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. *Religions* 15: 606. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15050606>

Academic Editors: Elisa Uusimäki, Eelco Glas and Rivkah Gillian Glass

Received: 14 March 2024

Revised: 26 April 2024

Accepted: 13 May 2024

Published: 14 May 2024



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## 1. Introduction

Due in no small part to Lionel Casson's *Travel in the Ancient World* (Casson 1974), travel and mobility have emerged as central topics of study for scholars of Greek and Roman antiquity in the past five decades. Studies on the topic often address practical aspects of travel, including Roman road building and sea-fearing, the various types of travel in the Roman world, or the challenges that travelers faced on the road (e.g., Pekáry 1968; Chevallier 1972; Schneider 1982; Casson 1995; Adams and Laurence 2001; van Tilburg 2006; Cioffi 2016; Lo Cascio and Tacoma 2016; Tacoma 2016; Kolb 2000, 2019). Other scholars have drawn attention to the symbolic aspects of travel and the way in which literary portrayals of travel and travelers contribute to the formation of personal and collective identities (e.g., André and Baslez 1993; Gargano and Squillante 2005; Montiglio 2005; Pretzler 2013). Reflecting on the topos of the epic journey, for instance, Biggs and Blum write that “the journey provides a vehicle for identifying and authorizing the protagonists of the various texts under consideration. Mapped onto community, kingdom, or empire, it enables these protagonists to assert knowledge, and therefore power, over the spaces they trace and traverse” (Biggs and Blum 2019, p. 2). This portrayal of protagonists as travelers also affects the readers of these writings; implicitly or explicitly inviting their readers to identify with the story's protagonists, the authors of travel narratives set out to instill a sense “of self, space, or society” in their readers (Biggs and Blum 2019, p. 7). Reading about someone else's journeys makes one a traveler—in a real or a metaphorical sense—to the extent that one identifies with the protagonists (or, as we shall see, the narrator) in the travel narrative.

This scholarly interest in ancient traveling has come to affect the study of Jewish and Christian writings from the Roman period as well. Catherine Hezser's *Jewish Travel in Antiquity* (Hezser 2011) has been groundbreaking in showing that Jewish inhabitants of the Roman world (including those who are depicted in and whose works ended up as part

of the New Testament) shared in the increased role that travel and mobility came to play in the Roman imperial period.<sup>1</sup> Even if Jewish travelers in the Roman Empire developed their own travel networks (making use of guesthouses attached to synagogues or staying with friends and associates; see Hezser 2011, pp. 89–119), many practical aspects of Jewish travel and travel symbolism in Jewish writings from the 1st to 2nd centuries CE fit in squarely with elements found in non-Jewish culture. Recent comparative studies on ancient travel and travel writings confirm this image (Harland 2011; Niehoff 2017; Hartog and Uusimäki 2021; Luther et al. 2023).

In line with these earlier studies, this article investigates how two travel narratives from the Roman imperial period—Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*—use the travel motif to construct their implied readers.<sup>2</sup> I pay particular attention to the endings of these narratives, which, as I intend to show, set up their readers to continue the journeys of the protagonists. In both writings, the travel motif is instrumental in turning the implied readers into travelers, who are to continue the journeys of the protagonists in their own times.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the particularities of how Acts and *Life* envision their readers to continue the journeys of their protagonists differ. To explain these similarities and differences, I will conclude by suggesting that Acts and *Life* share a common intellectual milieu that is characterized by, on the one hand, an interest in the past of one's own group and, on the other, an ambition to write one's own group into the structures of the Roman Empire. This intellectual milieu shares its outlook and many of its interests with the so-called Second Sophistic (of which Philostratus, who coined the term, has often been considered a prime representative), even if it does not overlap with Philostratus' understanding of the movement.

## 2. Method and Approach

Ancient critics and rhetoricians attached significant importance to the endings of plays, narratives, and speeches (cf. Kurz 1987, pp. 212–15). Aristotle, for one, stipulates that tragedy and epic poetry should mimic “an action that is complete, whole, and of magnitude” (Poet. 1450b22–34; trans. Halliwell [LCL]). Just like such actions, tragedy and epic should have sound beginnings, middle parts, and ends (Arist., Poet. 1450b22–34; 1459a17–21). If well-constructed, the plot of tragedy (including its end) should engender an emotional response in its audience and, through this response, form their moral judgments (cf. Smithson 1983; Belfiore 1992; Janko 1992). Quintilian also points to the strategic role of endings in forming the emotions and judgments of the orator's hearers. In his handbook of rhetoric, Quintilian devotes a special section to the conclusion of speeches (*Inst.* 6.1.1–55). To such conclusions, Quintilian holds, “are two aspects ...: the factual and the emotional” (*Inst.* 6.1.1; trans. Russell [LCL]). On the one hand, conclusions bring together the main facts for the case that was pleaded; on the other, they aim to arouse emotions in the prosecutors and judges and affect their judgment. For both Aristotle and Quintilian, therefore, endings have a strategic part to play in shaping the attitudes of one's hearers.

The writings under scrutiny here are no tragedies, epic poems, or orations. What they are has been a topic of ongoing scholarly debate, and resolving the debate is not my purpose here.<sup>4</sup> Suffice it to say that I am inclined to think of Acts and *Life* as participating simultaneously in a variety of genres, which adds to their complexity and literary quality.<sup>5</sup> Given the specific focus of my comparison, I will refer to these two writings somewhat loosely as “travel narratives.” For me, that term is not meant to function as a genre category but rather as a reference to the importance of travel as a literary motif in Acts and *Life*.

From Jesus' assurance in Acts 1:8 up to Acts' final scene, the writing's protagonists are, in Knut Backhaus' words, “ständig unterwegs” (Backhaus 2014, p. 123). They are not the only ones on the move. Many individuals whom the apostles encounter on their journeys are themselves avid travelers: the Ethiopian eunuch is on his way home after a visit to Jerusalem; Lydia is a businesswoman from Thyatira but residing in Philippi; and Apollos is a Jew from Alexandria but traveling to Ephesus (Acts 8:26–40; 16:11–15; 18:24–28). In the “we-passages,” where the default third-person narrative shifts to first-person nar-

rative, Acts' narrator poses as a traveler who accompanied the apostles on their journeys (see Campbell 2007). Lastly, Acts coins the term "the Way" (ἡ ὁδός) as a self-designation for those who follow Jesus (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; cf. Trebilco 2011, pp. 247–71). Rooted in an eschatological reading of Isa 40:3 and the commission narratives in the Gospel of Luke, this self-designation captures the intricate combination of proclamation and physical movement that characterizes the apostles' activities in Acts (Hartog 2023a, pp. 100–2). Travel, then, is a central theme to Acts' narrative and agenda and moves the narrative forward until its end—and beyond.

Travel also plays a central role in how Philostratus portrays Apollonius in *Life*.<sup>6</sup> Elsner identifies two intertwined strands in Philostratus' description of the journeys of his protagonist. First, Apollonius appears in *Life* as a pilgrim who visits a range of shrines across the Mediterranean and beyond. Not only does Apollonius perform the proper rites at the sites he visits, but he also corrects the beliefs and practices of their inhabitants and officiants. This, Elsner notes, turns Apollonius into a pilgrim-priest, who in *Life* transforms "from a pilgrim to an object of pilgrimage" (Elsner 1997, p. 27). Second, Apollonius' journeys into India and his subsequent travels to the other ends of the world symbolize the global extent of his wisdom. At several points in *Life*, Elsner observes, "Apollonius' travels ... are used to evoke abstract and personal qualities," such as courage and virtue (Elsner 1997, p. 30). This latter quality is foregrounded, for instance, in *V A* 1.35.1, where Apollonius presents the sage as "liv[ing] in the sight of virtue (ὑπὸ τοῖς τῆς ἀρετῆς ὀφθαλμοῖς), and though he sees few people he himself is observed with a thousand eyes." This statement means that the sage will live up to the standards of virtue wherever he goes, and of course, Apollonius' travels in *Life* embody this ideal (cf. Flinterman 1995, pp. 90–91). In *Life*, therefore, Philostratus presents Apollonius as an exemplar of global wisdom by virtue of his worldwide travels.

Regardless of the exact categorization of their works in genre terms, the authors of Acts and *Life* share Aristotle's and Quintilian's interest in endings. The narrator Philostratus reflects explicitly that "[his] account ... must have its proper ending" (*V A* 8.29) and supplements his alleged Damis source with three alternative accounts of his hero's death.<sup>7</sup> Such meta-remarks by the narrator are absent from Acts. Even so, Acts' final section (Acts 28:17–31) is a carefully crafted literary composition (Mareček 2020), and the first verses of the book (Acts 1:1–2) present Acts' narrator as a conscious author.<sup>8</sup> The care with which the endings of Acts and *Life* are constructed demonstrates that the final sections of these two writings fulfill a purpose not altogether dissimilar to that of the endings in the genres Aristotle and Quintilian discussed. Just as the ending of a tragic play, a work of epic poetry, or an oration intends to cast the hearers of the work in a particular role (moral citizen, righteous judge) and predispose their judgments and actions, so the endings of Acts and *Life* contribute to the construction of what Wolfgang Iser and Wayne Booth have referred to as "implied readers": readers who are "fixed and objectified in the text by specific indexical signs" (Schmid 2014, p. 301; cf. Booth 1961; Iser 1972, 1976). By investigating the narrative endings of these two writings, I thus aim to bring out which response on the part of their readers Acts and *Life* seek to solicit and how, in their endings, these writings predispose their readers' attitudes.

As will become clear, the final sections in each of these writings—especially that in Acts—have received ample attention in previous scholarship. The comparative exercise carried out in this contribution addresses the questions to what extent the endings of Acts and *Life* achieve their aims in similar ways and how the similarities and differences between the textual strategies employed by the authors of these writings must be understood. To answer that question, I will begin by discussing, by way of introduction, the aims and intended audiences of Acts and *Life*. After that, I will analyze how the theme of travel plays a role in Acts and *Life* and how the endings of these writings tie in with the travel theme as it plays out in the rest of the writing in quest. I will conclude by suggesting that Acts and *Life* should be considered expressions of an intellectual tradition that attached importance to travel as a means to write one's own group into the structures of the Roman Empire.

### 3. Aims and Implied Audiences

The hypothesis that Acts and *Life* can be considered expressions of a shared intellectual milieu brings up the question of the aims and implied audiences of these writings. In this section, I intend to show that Acts and *Life* both address what could be described as cultured elite inhabitants of the Roman Empire.

#### 3.1. Acts of the Apostles

Acts of the Apostles does not offer any explicit indications of its aims. Whilst Acts presents itself as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1–2), this does not mean that Luke's preface (Luke 1:1–4) can be used straightforwardly for reconstructing the purpose of Acts.<sup>9</sup> The fact that both writings are addressed to a certain Theophilus indicates some sort of a connection between Luke and Acts, but the occurrence of a preface in Luke and recapitulation in Acts also shows that “[t]hings seem to have been looser in practice than logic might demand” (Alexander 1993, p. 145). In considering Acts' purpose, clues gleaned from the text of Acts should therefore take priority over information derived from Luke's preface.<sup>10</sup> A key pointer to Acts' aims is the misunderstandings and accusations that the protagonists in the writing face on their journeys. Throughout Acts, proclamations by Peter, Paul, and the other apostles either respond to or are met with a lack of understanding or violence on the part of their audiences. By emphasizing this literary theme, Acts brings to the table the question of how this novel movement of Jesus' followers, known as “the Way,” is to be understood. Answering that question is Acts' main purpose. I agree with Sterling and others, therefore, that Acts is primarily an exercise in identity-building and self-definition (e.g., Sterling 1992, 2023; Marguerat 2004; Adams 2013b; Becker 2017).

This does not yet answer the question of Acts' implied readership. At first glance, Acts does appear to explicate its implied readership in the persona of Theophilus, to whom Acts' author attributes his writing (Acts 1:1). The figure of Theophilus remains obscure, however, and neither his stance vis à vis the Way, his ethnic background, and his social standing are certain. Furthermore, it has been suggested that Theophilus serves not as a representative of Acts' implied readership, but as the patron of Acts' author (on Theophilus, see, e.g., Alexander 1993, pp. 187–200; Creamer et al. 2014). Given the ambiguity that surrounds Theophilus, reconstructions of Acts' implied readership should not start from this figure but be based on elements recovered from elsewhere in the text of Acts.

Three issues are particularly significant in this regard. First, did the author of Acts write for those inside or outside the Way? The majority of scholars opt for the first view, arguing that Acts offers to third- or later-generation Jesus followers an account of the place of the Way within the *Heilsgeschichte* and the Roman Empire. As Sterling has it, Acts defines “Christianity in terms of Rome (politically innocent), Judaism (a continuation), and itself (*traditio apostolica*)” (Sterling 1992, p. 386). Adding to the popularity of the view of Acts as an insider work is the fact that readings of Acts as being directed to those outside the Way often ascribe an explicitly apologetic purpose to the work: by bringing up charges of rebellion and causing unrest against the apostles, which are laid to rest by Roman officials (cf. Acts 16:11–40; 24–25), Acts would defend the Way against Roman officials who would look askance at this novel movement (see Alexander 1999, pp. 18–19, with references). Speaking against this view is the way in which Acts positions the Way squarely within the history of Israel, which would fail to convince readers unfamiliar with the history of Israel and the Jewish literary heritage.

At the same time, Acts does seem to be outward-looking in how it solicits a response from its readers through its portrayals of individuals who join or refuse to join the Way. It has been noted that Acts' protagonists serve as exemplars which Acts' implied readers are to emulate (Lentz 1993; Tannehill 2012; Adams 2016). Yet emulation is not restricted to the apostles: other characters in the narrative, Jewish and non-Jewish, also invite emulation on the part of Acts' implied readers. Cornelius' openness to Peter's message (Acts 10) and King Agrippa's question to Paul (Acts 26:28: “Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?”) not only solicit responses from the characters in Acts' narrative but also from



Acts' implied readers. And the two contrasting figures of Bar-Jesus and Apollos, who are both explicitly labeled as *Ioudaioi*, appeal to Acts' Jewish readers to decide either in favor of or against the Way (Hartog 2023b, pp. 495–96). Taking these considerations together, I agree with Lentz that "Luke-Acts was written as much for the non-believer as the believer" (Lentz 1993, p. 171). The writing *explains* to insiders the character and development of the Way and *exhorts* outsiders to join this novel movement.

A second question concerns the ethnic background of Acts' implied readership. On the one hand, the way in which Acts evokes prophetic passages from the Hebrew Scriptures to write the Way into the history of Israel and alludes to Noahide commandments and commandments for the *gerim* in Acts 15 implies a Jewish audience, or at least an audience closely familiar with Jewish literature and tradition. On the other, the paradigmatic position of the vindication of Cornelius (who is explicitly labeled an ἀλλόφυλος in Acts 10:28) in the Acts narrative and Paul's repeated announcement to shift his attention away from the Jews towards the non-Jews (Acts 13:46–47; 18:6; 28:28) presumably imply a non-Jewish audience for the work. For some scholars, the non-Jewish audience that Acts implies consisted mainly, or exclusively, of God-fearers: non-Jews who were attracted to a Jewish style of life and visited the synagogue (Esler 1987; Tyson 1992, pp. 19–41). Yet although several non-Jewish individuals who join the Way in Acts are described as "God-fearing,"<sup>11</sup> it is not clear to what extent these God-fearers constituted a recognizable category outside of Acts' narrative world (see Siegert 1973; Kraabel 1981; Lieu 1994; van der Horst 2015; Fox 2021, pp. 53–88). What is more, even within the Acts narrative, non-Jews who are not classified as God-fearers can be found to join the Way (e.g., Acts 14:8–10; 16:27–34; 17:18–34). In light of these features of the work, Acts appears to address a mixed Jewish and non-Jewish audience (cf. Esler 1987, pp. 30–33). This implied audience matches Acts' portrayal of the Way as a universalist movement, in which Jews and non-Jews come together to serve the God of Israel and Jesus, his Messiah.

The third issue to be discussed concerns the social location of Acts' implied readers. As many scholars have noted, Acts' portrait of Paul as a holder of Roman citizenship and an avid traveler with unhindered access to Roman officials defines him as an elite inhabitant of the Roman Empire (Lentz 1993, pp. 7–22). The fact that the apostles' conversation partners in Acts consist largely of Roman officials and Greek philosophers confirms this image (Acts 10; 13:4–12; 16:27–34; 17:16–34). Even when Acts zooms in onto local communities, its descriptions exhibit a close familiarity with elite imperial perspectives—notwithstanding the fact that these are also sometimes questioned. In the Lystra episode (Acts 14:8–18), for instance, the logic of the narrative hinges on the stereotypical naivete of rural communities (see Bécharad 2000, 2001; Wordelman 2003). These features of the narrative imply a readership for Acts that belongs to the higher intellectual and political echelons of Roman society. Acts, in Christina Petterson's words, "is a product of empire", and "structures of imperialism are present in the text and its readers, who themselves are embedded in structures of empire" (Petterson 2012, p. xiv).

To sum up, Acts of the Apostles addresses cultural and literate individuals within the Roman Empire—both within and outside of the Way, and both Jewish and non-Jewish. Acts fulfills the dual purpose of explanation and exhortation: by explaining the character of the Way, it exhorts its readers to follow in the apostles' footsteps and accept their claims.

### 3.2. Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*

With Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, we apparently tread on firmer ground in our attempts to reconstruct the writing's aims and implied audience. Unlike the author of Acts, Philostratus explicitly mentions the aim of his writing in *V A* 1.2.3:

I have therefore decided to remedy the general ignorance and to give an accurate account (ἐξακριβῶ) of the Master, observing the chronology of his words and acts, and the special character of the wisdom by which he came close to being thought possessed and inspired (δαϊμόνιος τε καὶ θεϊός).<sup>12</sup>

Judging from this statement, Philostratus' main aim in writing *Life* is to contest views on Apollonius that contradict his own, especially those that "think [Apollonius] a sorcerer (μάγος) and misrepresent him as a philosophic impostor (βλαίωσ σοφός)" (V A 1.2.1).<sup>13</sup> A symbol of earlier views which Philostratus sets out to contradict is Moeragenes, whose work on Apollonius, writes Philostratus, "does not deserve attention: he wrote four books about Apollonius and yet was greatly ignorant about the Master" (V A 1.3.2). Thus, Philostratus' biography sets out, in Ewen Bowie's words, "partly to create a monumental tribute to Apollonius, partly to establish his work as definitive and clearly fuller (as well as more correct) than the four books of Moeragenes" (Bowie 1994, p. 194).

At the same time, Philostratus' *Life* exhibits several features that lend the writing a fictional quality. Bowie in particular has called attention to the similarities between *Life* and ancient novels, arguing that "[a]t the most basic level, Philostratus may simply wish to expand [Apollonius'] story" (Bowie 1994, p. 194; cf. Whitmarsh 2004, p. 423, note 2). Moreover, as we shall see, the narrator in *Life* positions himself as an author over against his sources and lards his narrative with meta-remarks that reflect both on the literary process that had produced *Life* and the reliability of Philostratus' alleged sources. As a result, *Life* plays with the expectations of its readers, who remain constantly aware of the fictional character of the narrative they are reading. In its attempts to discredit previous accounts of Apollonius' life, therefore, Philostratus' *Life* simultaneously casts doubt on its own reliability.

The implied readers of *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* would have been in the position to appraise the subtle dynamic in Philostratus' narrative. In V A 1.3.2, Philostratus addresses "those with an inclination to learning (φιλομαθής)," suggesting that *Life's* implied readership consists of the *literati*—literate and cultured individuals in the Roman Empire. More specifically, Philostratus' claim to be writing on the commission of empress Julia Domna and to base his account on a source in her possession (V A 1.3.1) locates the implied readers of his narrative in the vicinity of the Severan dynasty. As Adam Kemezis has shown (Kemezis 2014a, 2014b), several members of the Severan dynasty had appropriated the image of Apollonius for their own ends, and Philostratus' portrayal of the 1st-century sage has political repercussions.<sup>14</sup> Philostratus' presentation of his project and audience engages in a debate over how to control the past; *Life* offers his audience not only a biography of Apollonius of Tyana but also a narrative on how to depict—and manipulate—the past. In this way, *Life* evokes in its readers not merely admiration for Apollonius' wisdom but also a critical attitude towards whoever seeks to lay claim to that wisdom for one's personal ends.

#### 4. Acts 28:16–31: The Journey Continues

With this in mind, we turn to the final sections of Acts and *Life*. Acts 28:16–31 describes how Paul, having been escorted to plead his case before the emperor in Rome, arrives in the imperial capital, where he "was allowed to live by himself" (Acts 28:16) and receive guests. The full passage reads as follows:

16 When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him. 17 Three days later he called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. 18 When they had examined me, the Romans wanted to release me because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19 But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor—even though I had no charge to bring against my people. 20 For this reason therefore I asked to see you and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

21 They replied, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you. 22 But we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

23 After they had set a day to meet with him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. 24 Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe.

25 So they disagreed with each other, and as they were leaving Paul made one further statement: “The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah, 26 ‘Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen but never understand, and you will indeed look but never perceive. 27 For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; otherwise they might look with their eyes and listen with their ears and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them.’ 28 “Let it be known to you, then, that this salvation of God has been sent to the non-Jews;<sup>15</sup> they will listen.”

30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, 31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance (μετὰ πάσης παρρησίας ἀκωλύτως).

These verses bring together several threads that run through the book of Acts. As such, they provide both closure and open-endedness to the Acts narrative (Kurz 1987, pp. 212–15; Troftgruben 2020; Marguerat 2022, pp. 856–58). In Troy Troftgruben’s words, “[b]y fulfilling expectations ..., summarizing earlier events ..., recalling earlier scenes ..., reiterating key themes ..., and portraying representative activity ..., the ending ties together strands from throughout Acts” (Troftgruben 2020, p. 179). In these verses, the apostles’ eventful journeys, which began with Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 and culminated in Paul’s sea journey and shipwreck on his way to Rome (Acts 27–28:15), come to a halt. With them, the narrative appears to end. At the same time, continues Troftgruben, “this conclusion is not definitive” (Troftgruben 2020, p. 179). When the Acts narrative reaches its end, several questions remain unanswered and issues unresolved. Jesus’ announcement that the apostles would be his witnesses “until the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) has not yet reached its fulfillment by Acts 28:30. What is more, Paul’s final journey to Jerusalem, which begins in Acts 21:15, sets in motion the final episode of the narrative, in which Paul is arrested, put on trial, and eventually transferred to Rome. This final episode builds up towards Paul’s defense before the emperor—only to remain silent on his actual trial and its outcome.

This combination of closure and openness in Acts 28:16–30 predisposes Acts’ readers in three ways. First, by presenting Acts’ narrative and geographical horizon as exceeding the limits of the narrative, Acts’ ending draws its readers into the narrative, involving them in the action and setting them up to continue the apostles’ journeys once Acts’ narrative comes to an end. Second, Acts’ portrayal of the encounters between Paul and the Jews in Rome shows that, in the future, Jews will remain an integral part of the eschatological movement Acts describes. Third, by presenting Paul’s stay in Rome as largely unrestrained and the apostle as preaching “with all boldness and without hindrance,” Acts communicates that its implied readers should take up their position within the Roman Empire with confidence and courage.

#### 4.1. *The Journey Continues*

The beginning of Acts consists of a preface, which blends seamlessly into the story of Jesus’ ascension (Acts 1:1–11). Just before he is taken up to heaven, Jesus tells his disciples: “[Y]ou will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ [ἐν] πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρεία καὶ ἕως ἑσχάτου τῆς γῆς).” Sleeman (2009) shows that this announcement sets the stage for the remaining part of Acts, where the message of the apostles sets out from Jerusalem (Acts 1–8:1), through Samaria (Acts 8:2–40), on its course to the extremities of the earth (Acts 9 and following,



where the focus shifts to Paul). Given this programmatic position of Acts 1:8, some scholars have equated Rome—the final location in the Acts narrative—with “the ends of the earth” to which Jesus refers at the beginning of the book (so, e.g., Cadbury [1927] 1961, pp. 323–24; Wilson 1973, pp. 236–38; Moessner 1988; additional references in Omerzu 2001, p. 132, note 19; Mareček 2020, p. 115).

Such a reading is unlikely, however, for two reasons. First, in Greek and Latin literature contemporaneous with Acts of the Apostles, the phrase “end of the earth” refers to the utmost extremity of civilization (see Romm 1992). Associating this connotation with Rome is hard to square with the central place that Rome and its empire occupy within the book of Acts (see Marguerat 2022, p. 856).<sup>16</sup> In many ways, Rome is not the end but the center of the earth for Acts’ author. Second, if Acts of the Apostles constitutes, at least in part, a biographical elaboration of information found in the Pauline letters, a more likely candidate for “the end of the earth” is Spain, where Paul writes he intended to travel (Rom 15:23–24) and where, according to Greek and Latin sources, the Pillars of Hercules are located (cf. Ellis 1991).<sup>17</sup> By the end of Acts, therefore, the geographical program outlined in Acts 1:8 has not yet reached its conclusion. With Paul in Rome, Acts’ perspective looks beyond that city to what lies in store for those Jesus followers who continue the apostles’ journeys.

The open-endedness of Acts also speaks from its description of Paul’s fate. Earlier episodes in the Acts narrative prefigure Paul’s death (Acts 20:18–34) or his meeting with the emperor (Acts 25:10–12), but neither event has found its way into the Acts narrative. The reasons for Acts’ silence on Paul’s death in particular have been amply debated in scholarship, with some scholars arguing for a lack of information on Luke’s part (e.g., Omerzu 2001).<sup>18</sup> This may or may not be the case. In any event, Acts’ silence on what happened to Paul after his residency in Rome fulfills the literary purpose of setting an example for those who continue his journey. Had Acts ended with Paul’s demise, the apostle’s journeys would have come to a definite halt, suggesting perhaps that Jesus’ promise in Acts 1:8 would never come to fruition (cf. Kurz 1997, p. 293). Moreover, narrating Paul’s death at the command of a Roman emperor would distort Acts’ emphasis on Paul’s innocence, as well as the generally harmonious interaction between Roman officials and members of the Way in the Acts narrative. In the current ending, in contrast, Paul appears as preaching “with all boldness and without hindrance.” Assuming that Acts’ readers were aware of Paul’s fate in Rome, they would have realized that Paul’s preaching and teaching had at some point come to an end. Yet by presenting the apostle as a self-confident proclaimer of the gospel, Acts predisposes its readers to walk in Paul’s footsteps. The apostolic mission, so is the implication, continues after Peter’s and Paul’s proclamations have ceased: for the apostles’ message to reach the end of the earth, others will have to step into their footsteps and spread the gospels with confidence.<sup>19</sup> “Die Weltwanderungen des Paulus mögen enden,” writes Backhaus, “die des Evangeliums nicht” (Backhaus 2014, p. 124).

The end of Acts thus involves the implied reader in the narrative. Readers are to identify with the apostles and continue their mission and journeys once Paul’s travels have ended. This close alignment of implied readers with protagonists fits in with the so-called “we-passages” in Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–37; and 28:1–16 (and perhaps also Acts 1:1–2). Regardless of the historicity and development of these passages, their narrative effect, as Campbell (2007) has shown, is to draw the reader into the story: through the first-person narrative, Acts’ implied readers are to pose as companions to the protagonist and to travel alongside him. The final we-passage ends in Acts 28:16, upon Paul’s arrival in Rome. The reader, as it were, accompanies Paul to Rome and witnesses the apostle’s actions in Acts 28:17–30. When the narrative ends and Paul’s fate remains in the dark, the reader is there to continue the apostle’s mission. In this way, Acts’ final verses consciously look beyond Rome and shape the expectations of their readers for what is yet to come—and their role in it.

#### 4.2. *The Way: An Eschatological Community of Jews and Non-Jews*

Central to Acts' final section are Paul's encounters with the Jewish leaders in Rome. After the Jewish leaders declared that they had no reason for assuming Paul's guilt, they set a date for him to explain his position to the larger Jewish community. The result of that second meeting is that "[s]ome were convinced by what [Paul] had said, while others refused to believe" (Acts 28:24). In the wake of this disagreement, Paul chides his visitors by quoting Isa 6:9–10 and announcing that his message will from now on be directed towards non-Jews—and "they will listen" (Acts 28:28).

Paul's announcement in Acts 28 mimics similar announcements in Acts 13:46–37 and 18:6. From this, many scholars have concluded that Acts 28:28 marks a final shift in the *Heilsgeschichte* away from the Jews to the non-Jews. Haenchen writes, for instance: "[D]iese dritte Absage am Ende des Buches [macht] ... deutlich, daß Lukas eine endgültige Verwerfung Israels und seine Ersetzung durch die Heiden darstellen will.... Sie sind nun das Volk der Verheißung, für das dieses Heil Gottes (2828) bestimmt ist" (Haenchen 1963, p. 185; similarly, e.g., Conzelmann 1972, p. 159; Wilson 1973, pp. 226–38; Tannehill 1985; Sanders 1987; Rese 1999, 2000). However, such a definitive shift in the *Heilsgeschichte* is unlikely to be implied in Acts 28. In the two other cases where Paul announces to turn away from the Jews towards the non-Jews, he and his companions freely visit synagogues in the next place they visit and Jews still join the Way (Acts 14:1; 17:1–4, 10–12; 18:19; 19:8; cf. also Paul's visit to the temple in Acts 21:27). This shows that Paul's announcements have no universal but local significance: the fact that local groups of Jews do not accept the apostles' message does not lead to a wholesale rejection of the Jews (see Brawley 1987; Marguerat 1994; 2004, pp. 129–54, 205–30). Given the local significance of Paul's proclamations in Acts 13 and 18, it seems reasonable to assume a local significance also for Paul's statement in Acts 28 rather than take those as a final pronouncement on the course of the apostles' proclamation after the Acts narrative has ended.

Two aspects of Acts' final scene support this reading. First, Acts does not depict the response to Paul's message as one of general dismissal. Some of the Jews accept Paul's message whilst others do not. This presentation of events leaves open the possibility of Jews still accepting the apostles' message despite Paul's harsh words.<sup>20</sup> If this reading is accepted, Acts' implied readers would expect Jews still to join the Way. The Jews are not discarded as Acts reaches its conclusion but continue to play a central role in the movement that Acts describes. Second, Acts 28:30 portrays Paul as welcoming "all who came to him" even after his conflict with the Jews in Rome. Some manuscripts add *Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἑλλήνων* and this reading, albeit in all likelihood secondary, captures the sense of this verse well: the "all" whom Paul addressed probably included Jews as well as non-Jews (see also Koet 1987, p. 410; Brawley 1987, p. 75; van Eck 2003, p. 568; Marguerat 2022, p. 864; den Heijer 2022, p. 209). When Acts comes to a close, therefore, the Jews do not leave the picture. As the apostles' message continues its course towards the ends of the earth, it continues to address and involve both Jews and non-Jews, joining them in the Way as an eschatological movement in which these two groups unite in their service of the God of Israel.

The continuing coming together of Jews and non-Jews, which Acts 28:13–30 foresees, corresponds with Acts' general presentation of the Way as an eschatological movement in which Jews and non-Jews are united. The eschatological character of the Way speaks already from its name, which goes back to an eschatological reading of Isa 40:3 (see Jónsson 2023, pp. 83–87; Hartog 2023a, pp. 100–2 for discussion and references). To underscore the eschatological nature of the events that unfold in Acts, the book's author quotes from Israel's scriptures at key points in his narrative. For instance, by quoting Joel 3:1 (2:28) in Acts 2:14–17 and Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:16–17 (both in adapted form compared to the Septuagint), Acts presents the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost and the Jerusalem meeting as fulfilling prophetic predictions on the eschatological age (cf. Kurz 1997, pp. 296–303). As they traverse the Mediterranean and proclaim their message, Acts' protagonists contribute to the realization of prophetic predictions of a coming together of "all flesh"

(Isa 40:5 as quoted in Luke 3:6) in the eschatological age. Seeing that the journeys of the apostles have not reached their final destination by Acts 28:30 (and hence the realization of this eschatological hope remains outstanding), Acts' implied readers are exhorted to take up the baton and walk into the apostles' footsteps in bringing about the formation of an eschatological movement of Jews and non-Jews.

#### 4.3. *The Way Amidst the Roman Empire*

A third purpose of Acts' final scene is to situate the Way squarely within the structures of the Roman Empire, without, however, limiting this new movement to the imperial borders. I have argued above that Acts generally adopts a supportive, or at worst a neutral, stance towards Roman rule. Acts breathes the atmosphere of Roman imperialism: not only are its protagonists continuously on the move, but they have unhindered access to Roman officials; they are credited—in Paul's case—with possessing Roman citizenship (on which, see [van Minnen 1995](#); [Adams 2009](#)); and Peter's speech to Cornelius in Acts 10:36 employs terminology used elsewhere for the emperor and his rule ("lord of all" and giver of "peace") to explain the Way.<sup>21</sup> What is more, the Acts narrative is situated entirely within Roman realms. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the prophetic passages quoted in Acts lack an emphasis on Sion/Jerusalem as the destination of the eschatological community of Jews and non-Jews. On the contrary: the first part of Acts may be predominantly Jerusalem-centered, but from Acts 13 onwards, Acts exhibits "a decisive shift from the Jerusalem-centred perspective of the earlier part of Acts" ([Alexander \[1999\] 2005c](#), p. 109). This enables Acts to depict Jerusalem as "the hub to which all future Christian expansion must be seen to be linked" whilst combining this image with "a global horizon in which the apostles are frequently described as preaching 'to the whole world'" ([Alexander 2003](#), p. 166). Nowhere in Acts, however, does Jerusalem feature as the exclusive place of residence for the eschatological community of Jews and non-Jews.<sup>22</sup> Rather, Acts presents the Way, especially in the second part of the writing, as being fully at home within the Rome-ruled Mediterranean.

This positive attitude towards Rome also speaks from Acts' final verses and the trial scenes that precede it. Throughout the trial scenes, Acts stresses Paul's innocence. When the Jews accuse Paul of opposing the Jewish nation, law, and temple (Acts 21:28), the Roman tribune in Jerusalem finds the apostle innocent of anything "deserving death or imprisonment" (Acts 23:29). When the high priest, represented by the Roman solicitor Tertullus, accuses Paul of threatening the *pax Romana* (Acts 24:1–8), the governor Felix finds nothing with which to charge him. Felix's successor Festus, too, finds that Paul "had done nothing deserving death" (Acts 25:25), and King Agrippa voices the same view (Acts 26:31). Paul's innocence thus runs as a red thread throughout the trial scenes in Acts 21–28: though repeatedly the object of accusation by the Jews and their leaders, Roman officials—including the Jewish King Agrippa—consistently acquit Paul of the charges brought against him.

Paul's innocence recurs in Acts' final scene (cf. [Mareček 2020](#), pp. 111–12). Paul himself refers to the positive outcome of his trials in Jerusalem and Caesarea (Acts 28:18), and the fact that he is allowed to live by himself and receive guests underscores the image of Paul as an innocent prisoner awaiting his trial. This time, it is not Roman officials but the Jewish leaders in Rome who confirm Paul's innocence (Acts 28:21). With the final portrayal of Paul as preaching "with all boldness and without hindrance," therefore, it is the image of the apostle as an innocent preacher in Rome that sticks with Acts' readers. This image is meant not only to defend the apostles from any accusations of causing unrest in the empire but also to shape the attitude of Acts' readership. Given Paul's exemplary role in Acts, the apostle's innocence symbolizes that of those who tread in his footsteps. Acts' emphasis on Paul's innocence thus exhorts the book's readers to take their position within the Roman Empire with confidence and, like Paul, proclaim their message "with all boldness and without hindrance."

This is not to suggest that Acts limits the Way to the Roman Empire. By leaving open the final realization of Jesus' announcement in Acts 1:8, Acts' final verses consciously look beyond Rome. This, too, ties in with themes elsewhere in the writing. A case in point is Acts' use of the term οἰκουμένη (see also Jung 2017, 2020). In line with other authors, Jewish and other, Acts recognizes the οἰκουμένη as a space ruled by Rome and so confirms the structures of the empire (Acts 11:28; 17:6; 19:27; 24:5; cf. Luke 2:1). At the same time, Acts portrays Jesus as the judge of the οἰκουμένη (Acts 17:31) and defines the scope of its message not as οἰκουμένη but as γῆ (Acts 1:8). These motifs subtly contest Roman claims over the οἰκουμένη: whilst supporting the structures of Roman rule, Acts situates these structures within a framework that looks beyond Rome both horizontally and vertically. On the vertical axis, it is not the emperor who holds supreme authority over the οἰκουμένη but the God of Israel; on the horizontal axis, the Way does not confine itself to the οἰκουμένη, but the apostles' message extends to the extremities of the earth. In this manner, Acts' author crafts a space for the Way both within and beyond the Roman Empire. So too in its ending: Paul's unhindered preaching situates the Way within Roman imperial structures and discourse, whereas the final perspective of this moment is not the imperial capital but the ends of the earth.

### 5. Philostr., *V A* 8.29–31: Elusive Apollonius

Having described Apollonius' journeys across and beyond the Greek and Roman worlds, Philostratus narrates in *V A* 8.28 how the Tyanean sage, feeling his end approaching, dispatches his companion and chronicler Damis to deliver a letter to the new emperor Nerva. Apollonius' last words to Damis, Philostratus claims, were an exhortation to follow his example: "Even when you seek wisdom (φιλοσοφῆς) by yourself, Damis, observe me" (*V A* 8.28). These works mark the end of Damis' account and the beginning of Philostratus' own ending of his work.<sup>23</sup> In *V A* 8.29, Philostratus draws explicit attention to his own authorial activity in taking over from Damis:

8.29 The account of Apollonius of Tyana given by Damis the Assyrian ends with these words. As for the manner of his death, if he did die, there are many versions, though none given by Damis. I, however, must not leave this item out, for my account surely must have its proper ending (δεῖ γὰρ που τὸν λόγον ἔχειν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ πέρας).

Damis has not said anything about the Master's age either, though some say it was eighty, some over ninety, and some that he passed a hundred, youthful and sound in all his body, and handsomer than a young man. Even wrinkles have a kind of bloom, and in him it was especially evident, as can be seen from the Master's statues in the sanctuary at Tyana and by descriptions that celebrate Apollonius's old age more than they once celebrated the youth of Alcibiades.

In what follows, Philostratus offers three different accounts of Apollonius' death, the final one of which includes Apollonius' ascension. This is followed by the story of a young man traveling to Tyana "who was eager for disputes, and did not accept the true doctrine"—meaning that he denied the immortality of the soul (*V A* 8.31.1). When he was asleep one day, however, Apollonius appeared to the youngster and lectured him "on the mysteries of the soul (ὑπὲρ τῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπορρήτων)" (*V A* 8.31.3). *Life* ends with Philostratus' comment that he has nowhere found a "tomb or cenotaph of the Master," and that the sanctuary devoted to Apollonius in Tyana is a sign of the honors the emperors bestowed on this exemplary sage (*V A* 8.31.3).

This ending, like that of Acts, offers *Life's* readers both closure and openness. By describing Apollonius' passing and mentioning his sanctuary in Tyana, Philostratus completes his transformation of Apollonius from a pilgrim to an object of pilgrimage (see Elsner 1997). After all his journeys, Apollonius here reaches, as it were, his final destination. At the same time, *V A* 8.28–31 does not provide full closure. Emphasizing his own role as an author and allowing the ambiguities surrounding Apollonius' age and the location of



his death to stand, Philostratus reminds his readers of the fact that his work should not be taken as the final word on Apollonius. Moreover, by presenting Apollonius as continuing to teach even after his passing (V A 8.31), Philostratus draws the end of his narrative into the present of his readers: with Apollonius' passing, *Life* may have come to an end, but the wisdom of its protagonist lives on.

This combination of openness and closure in *Life's* final sections affects the implied readers of the narrative in two ways. First, by accentuating the ambiguity of his sources and, by implication, his own account, Philostratus invites his readers to adopt a critical attitude towards earlier traditions about Apollonius—including *Life*. The implied readers of *Life* are not merely to become part of the narrative and follow Apollonius' traces but they are to sift claims about Apollonius for their truth, just as Philostratus had sifted the material in his (putative) sources for their worth. Second, by presenting his protagonist as immortal and continuing to teach philosophy, Philostratus spurs his readers on to continue their search for the type of wisdom that Apollonius represents.

### 5.1. Dealing with Damis: The Implied Reader as Critical Reader

In V A 8.28–29, as we have seen, Philostratus claims that Damis' account had come to an end and that he had to draw from other sources to write about Apollonius' passing. This comment at the end of *Life* looks back at the beginning of this writing, where Philostratus claims to base his biography on notes taken by a certain Damis, a disciple of Apollonius who accompanied him on his journeys. To understand Philostratus' remarks in V A 8.28–29, it is worthwhile quoting the passage in which the narrator describes his relationship with the Damis source:

1.2.3 I have gathered my materials from the many cities that were devoted to [Apollonius], from the shrines that he set right when their rules had fallen into neglect, from other people's reports about him, and from his own letters. These he wrote to kings, sophists, philosophers, Eleans, Delphians, Indians, and Egyptians, on the subject of gods, about customs, morals, and laws, setting upright whatever had been overturned among such people.

1.3.1 But my more detailed information I have gathered as follows. There was a certain Damis, not devoid of wisdom, who once lived in Old Ninos. This man became a disciple of Apollonius (τῷ Ἀπολλωνίῳ προσφιλοσοφήσας) and wrote up (ἀναγέγραφεν) not only his journeys, on which he claims to have been his companion (κοινωνῆσαι), but also his sayings, speeches, and predictions.

The notebooks containing the memoirs of Damis (τὰς δέλτους τῶν ὑπομνημάτων) were unknown until a member of his family brought them to the attention of the empress Julia. Since I was a member of her salon (for she admired and encouraged all rhetorical discourse), she set me to transcribe (μεταγράψαι) these works of Damis and to take care over their style (καὶ τῆς ἀπαγγελίας αὐτῶν ἐπιμεληθῆναι), since the style of the man from Ninos was clear but rather unskillful (σαφῶς μὲν, οὐ μὴν δεξιῶς).

1.3.2 I have also read the book of Maximus of Aegeae, which contains all that Apollonius did there, and the will written by Apollonius himself, which gives an idea of how inspired he was in his philosophy. Moeragenes does not deserve attention: he wrote four books about Apollonius and yet was greatly ignorant about the Master. So much for the way I gathered these scattered materials and for my care in assembling them. May my work bring honor to the Master who is its subject, and profit to those with an inclination to learning, for they really might learn things quite new to them.

The historicity of this passage and the Damis source have been heavily debated, and scholars remain divided on the issue (see Meyer 1917; Bowie 1978). Regardless of its historical value, however, this passage fulfills a key role in Philostratus' project, as it creates the elaborate fiction of an eyewitness account of Apollonius' journeys and deeds, which was hidden



until it was recovered by the empress Julia Domna. She, in turn, assigned Philostratus with the task of editing Damis' notes into a book. In this passage, the importance of eyewitness testimony in historiography and the evocation of a book known only by title combine to support Philostratus' claim to have exclusive access, through Damis, to a source as close to Apollonius as anyone could be.<sup>24</sup> This claim bolsters Philostratus' credibility as a biographer of Apollonius and that of *Life* as an authoritative account of this sage's wisdom.

At the same time, Philostratus is explicit on the fact that Damis' alleged notes do not constitute a finished literary writing. In *V A* 1.3.1, Philostratus describes them as a collection of writing tablets or "notebooks" (δέλτος) containing "memoirs" (ὑπόμνημα). This description matches *V A* 1.19.2, where Philostratus narrates how Damis met Apollonius and, awed by the sage's wisdom and linguistic abilities, decided to follow him on his journeys. In Apollonius' company, Damis produced an "account" (ὑπόμνημα) of the sage's actions and words. The phraseology in these two passages is telling given the meaning of the noun ὑπόμνημα, which occurs only in these passages in *Life*. The Greek word refers to a broad range of textual productions, including commentaries, of which the common factor is their less-than-finished status (see Gribomont 2012; Hartog 2017, pp. 1–4; Larsen and Letteney 2019, pp. 394–99).<sup>25</sup> By using this Greek term, Philostratus thus ascribes preliminary status to his main source: Damis' notes may be a reliable (for their eyewitness testimony) and unique (for their having been preserved through the hand of the empress) point of access to Apollonius, but they are not yet an authored work of literature (cf. Dorandi 1991 on ὑπόμνημα and literary production). They are in need of a critical editor-author (in the handling of sources, the two cannot be easily distinguished) for them to become a literary account of Apollonius' travels, words, and deeds.

Philostratus assumes this authorial role by offering evaluative comments on Damis' work. In the passage quoted above, Philostratus credits Damis with a "clear but rather unskillful" style. In *V A* 1.19.2, Philostratus describes Damis' "language" as being "of a mediocre quality,"<sup>26</sup> due to the Assyrian's lack of "elegance of style." Thus, when Philostratus characterizes Damis' endeavors across *Life* with the verb ἀναγράφω, this verb connotes Damis' recording of Apollonius' words and deeds in such a manner as requiring future editing and authoring by Philostratus' hands.<sup>27</sup> In contrast, Philostratus depicts his own work with the verb μεταγράφω, which here indicates a creative process in which one improves on one's sources (cf. Schirren 2009, p. 165).<sup>28</sup> The only other occurrence of the verb in Philostratus' corpus is in *V A* 2.14.4, where Apollonius responds to Damis quoting a line from Euripides that stresses human care for their children by saying that Euripides' line is "wise and inspired" but "would be wiser and truer if the praise concerned all living things." Damis concludes thereupon that Apollonius "seem[s] ... to rewrite (μεταγράφω) the verse." In this passage, the verb refers to the same creative yet critical attitude with which Philostratus claims to approach Damis' notes. Philostratus' self-portrayal as an author captures the ambiguous attitude that he exhibits vis à vis his source: on the one hand, Damis underlies Philostratus' entire project and bolsters its reliability; on the other, Damis' note-taking remains preliminary and needs the hands of an expert editor and author to reach the level of literature. The result of Philostratus' self-presentation as an author is what Tim Whitmarsh has dubbed an "embedded narration," whereby "the entire text is the product simultaneously of primary (by 'Philostratus') and reported narration (by the sources)" (Whitmarsh 2004, p. 431; cf. Gyselinck and Demoen 2009, pp. 104–8). In *Life*, Philostratus' claims are mediated by Damis', and the information we gather about Apollonius is often third-hand (Philostratus says that Damis says that Apollonius said).

Philostratus' self-presentation as an author is not restricted to *V A* 1.3, 19, and 8.29. Throughout *Life*, Philostratus treats his readers to meta-remarks about his handling of Damis, admitting openly to omitting from or adding to his source.<sup>29</sup> These "narrator interventions" (Katsumata 2017; cf. Katsumata 2016) have the effect of distancing the implied reader from the story as Damis has it: in addition to following alongside Damis in Apollonius' footsteps, readers of *Life* are also to wonder about the reliability and truth of what Damis has on offer, just as the narrator Philostratus does. An illustrative passage in this

regard is *V A* 3.45.1, where Philostratus urges his readers to suspend their judgment on Damis' reliability as a recorder of Indian *thaumata*:

3.45.1 Damis also wrote up the following conversation that they had on the subject of the fabulous beasts, springs, and men of India. I should not therefore leave it out, since one might do well neither to believe nor to disbelieve all the details.

Romm points out that Philostratus is indebted to ethnographical tropes, which invite his readers to take Apollonius' journeys and the wonders he encounters en route as allegories for his wisdom (Romm 1992, pp. 116–19, followed by Elsner 1997, p. 29). Yet the import of this passage, I would suggest, concerns not only allegory: an exhortation to neither believe nor disbelieve does not amount to an allegorical interpretation of the information Damis provides. Instead, Philostratus urges his readers to develop a critical attitude, just as he, as editor-author, exhibits in his authoring of *Life*. Apollonius' journeys may instill a sense of wonder in Philostratus' readers and contribute to Philostratus' portrayal of Apollonius as an ideal sage, but Philostratus reminds his readership that the wonders that Damis describes must not be taken at face value (cf. Whitmarsh 2004; Gyselinck and Demoen 2009, pp. 108–14). The implied readers of *Life* are given a share in Apollonius' wondrous world, but the wonders they encounter in Damis must be mediated by Philostratus'—and, ultimately, his readers'—critical faculty, which allows them to distinguish between what to believe and what to disbelieve.

Against this backdrop, Apollonius' journeys in *Life* can be understood as contributing to the critical faculty Philostratus aims to inculcate in his readers. On the one hand, Apollonius' travels define the protagonist of *Life* as a sage whose wisdom, acquired at the earth's easternmost extremity, surpasses the wisdom of the Greek or Roman worlds.<sup>30</sup> By virtue of his journeys, therefore, Apollonius appears as a universal fount of wisdom—a “superman's superman,” as Anderson (1986, p. 129) has it. On the other hand, the phenomena Apollonius encounters en route are often wondrous and exotic. Philostratus shows himself indebted to other authors, such as Herodotus, outlining the *thaumata* of India and other localities (Whitmarsh 2012; Abraham 2014). These *thaumata* raise the critical issue of credibility (Whitmarsh 2004, pp. 433–35; cf. Elsner 1997, pp. 23–24, 28–29). When confronted with phenomena almost too wondrous to accept, what is one to believe? A key passage is *V A* 7.22.3, which Whitmarsh translates as: “[W]isdom renders awe-struck (ἐκπλήσσω) that which meets with it, but itself is awestruck by nothing” (Whitmarsh 2004, p. 433). This remark by Apollonius triggers a reply by Damis, who fears for their fate as the emperor that holds them prisoner “thinks that nothing should exist that renders him awe-struck.”<sup>31</sup> Precisely these features make this emperor “foolish” and a “tyrant,” according to Apollonius. The sage, in contrast, distinguishes critically between what is credible and what is not. After all, writes Whitmarsh, “*thauma* suggests, as well as wide-eyed wonder, a sceptical disbelief in the face of the incredible” (Whitmarsh 2004, p. 433). The journeys of his protagonist thus enable Philostratus to instill in his readers the attitude of critical discernment which he attributes to Apollonius and claims himself to exhibit vis à vis the Damis source.

The end of *Life* taps into the same theme. Not only does Philostratus make a point of Damis' lack of a “proper ending” (*V A* 8.29)—suggesting that he will fill the gap Damis left—but when he treats Apollonius' age and end, Philostratus does not have any clear account to offer himself. Instead, Apollonius' fate remains a mystery:

8.30.1 Some say he died in Ephesus in the care of two maid servants, for the freedmen whom I mentioned at the beginning were now dead. When he set one of these women free, and he was reproached by the other for not doing the same favor to her, he said, “You should even be her slave, since that will bring you luck.” So at his death the one became the other's slave, until her mistress for some petty reason sold her to a trader, and someone bought her from him, though she was no beauty. Even so, this man fell in love with her, and being a smart businessman made her his wife and acknowledged his children by her.

8.30.2 Others say that he died in Lindos after passing into the sanctuary of Athena and vanishing inside. Another version is that he died in Crete even more miraculously than is related at Lindos. Apollonius was staying in Crete, admired even more than before, when he visited the sanctuary of Dictynna at dead of night. Protection of the sanctuary is entrusted to dogs that guard its treasures, and the Cretans consider them nothing short of bears or other animals equally savage. But they did not even bark when Apollonius arrived, but ran up and greeted him even more than they did those they were fully accustomed to.

8.30.3 The officials of the sanctuary put him in chains as a sorcerer<sup>3</sup> and a robber, claiming that he had thrown something to the dogs to pacify them. But at about midnight he set himself free, and after calling his jailers so that they would notice, he ran to the doors of the sanctuary, which flew open. As he entered, the doors returned to their original position, and there emerged the sound of girls singing, and their song went, "Proceed from earth! Proceed to heaven! Proceed!" In other words, "Ascend from earth."

This passage is all the more striking when one takes into account Apollonius' final words to Damis (V A 8.28). According to Philostratus, these came down to an exhortation to follow Apollonius' example when seeking wisdom. Had Philostratus intended his implied readers simply to walk into his hero's footsteps, a more fitting ending could hardly be imaginable. Rather than leaving his account where Damis left his, however, Philostratus adds these three alternative scenarios for Apollonius' death. The fact that the Cretan story is the longest of the three and is the only one that describes Apollonius' ascension (which appears to be implied in the story of the youngster) might suggest that Philostratus preferred this account over the others, but this remains implicit.

Philostratus' purpose of the ambiguity in this passage, I would suggest, is to trigger the critical faculties of his readers. Presenting his sources as contradicting each other, Philostratus is content with giving his readers the different options and, as a result, inciting them to form their own judgments. "The fact that at this crucial juncture Philostratus resorts to recording different stories," writes Mendelson, "is indicative of [the fact that] the author was well aware of the extent to which rumor and myth had pervaded his sources" (Mendelson 1992, p. 514). For Mendelson, the fact that Philostratus calls attention to the amount of mythography in his sources is related to his unease with traditions that may suggest Apollonius' divine status, including his ascension. Instead of presenting his protagonist as divine, Mendelson argues, Philostratus refers to Apollonius with terms that indicate his intermediate status between humans and gods. Mendelson is right that Philostratus plays with Apollonius' divine status—sometimes suggesting his protagonist's joining the ranks of gods, sometimes emphasizing his human nature—but I am not sure that this is Philostratus' main concern in this passage. Rather than contrasting the story of Apollonius' ascension with the more mundane accounts of his death to prevent straightforward identifications of Apollonius as divine, Philostratus seems to offer his readers alternative accounts to drive home the need for critical reading. Hence, just as Philostratus poses throughout *Life* as a critical reader of Damis, so he predisposes his readers in this passage to adopt a critical attitude towards any claims about Apollonius they may encounter. This includes the claims of those members of the Severan dynasty who had appropriated Apollonius' image for their own aims but also, apparently, Philostratus' *Life* itself.

## 5.2. Apollonius beyond Time and Space

In addition to underlining the need for critical reading, Philostratus' lack of clarity on Apollonius' age and the location of his death portrays his protagonist as being located beyond time and space. In this way, Philostratus picks up on themes that he had developed elsewhere in *Life* and which are closely related to Apollonius' earthly and supra-earthly journeys.

To start with space, it has often been noted that Philostratus portrays Apollonius as transcending the boundaries of the Greek and Roman spheres of influence (Whitmarsh

2012; Abraham 2014; Hägg 2018). The sage's journeys to India and the Pillars of Hercules lead him to the extremities of the γῆ and define his wisdom as being of a global scope. As a result, Philostratus' Apollonius can confidently claim: "All the world (πᾶσα ἡ γῆ) is mine,... and it is open to me to voyage (πορεύεσθαι) through it all" (V A 1.21.2). Thus, when Philostratus fails to commit to a specific locality where Apollonius would have died and claims nowhere to have laid eyes on "a tomb or cenotaph of the Master" (V A 1.31.3), these elements underscore Apollonius' global reach, which cannot be pinpointed to one specific earthly locality. What is more, Apollonius not only transcends earthly boundaries—such as that between the Greek and Roman worlds and other localities—but also earthly space itself. Due to their wisdom, Apollonius explains, the Indian sages he encounters are "living on the earth and not on it, walled without walls, owning nothing and owning everything" (V A 3.15). Confronted with the Brahmins' unsurpassable teachings, Apollonius, too, transcends earthly wisdom and obtains a share in its heavenly counterpart. "I came to you by land," Apollonius proclaims in the presence of Iarchas and the Brahmins, "and you have given me the sea; but you also shared your special wisdom with me, and showed me a path through heaven (διὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πορεύεσθαι)" (V A 3.51). Given the global and trans-earthly qualities Philostratus ascribes to Apollonius' wisdom, the ascension of his protagonist in the final sections of *Life* serves as a fitting conclusion to the narrative, emphasizing that Apollonius cannot be contained by any specific locality on earth, or even earth itself.

Philostratus' mention of Apollonius' "sanctuary ... at Tyana" (V A 8.31.3) may be somewhat surprising in this light. Read together with Philostratus explicitly locating the appearance of the skeptical youngster in Tyana (V A 8.31.1), the mention of the sanctuary may suggest that Apollonius' post-ascension presence can be enjoyed in Tyana in particular. Yet, two elements in Philostratus' account suggest that his mention of the sanctuary is meant to downplay rather than highlight its locality. First, Philostratus draws no connection between the shrine and appearances of Apollonius or pilgrimage. Instead, the shrine in Tyana is a sign of the honor bestowed upon Apollonius by the Severan imperial family.<sup>32</sup> Rather than stressing Tyana as a place of pilgrimage or fixing Apollonius' ongoing activity as a philosopher there, Philostratus' mention of the shrine of Apollonius recalls the beginning of *Life*, where Philostratus identifies the Severan empress Julia Domna as the one commissioning his work. Second, Philostratus adduces the Tyanean shrine as an exception that proves the rule of Apollonius' being beyond earthly space. "As for a tomb or cenotaph of the Master," Philostratus remarks, "I do not remember ever having met with one anywhere, although I have crossed most of the present world, but I have met with unearthly accounts (λόγοις ... δαιμονίοις) of him everywhere" (Philostr., V A 8.31.3; cf. Flinterman 2009, pp. 229–30). In this way, Apollonius' shrine in Tyana embodies the critical attitude Philostratus expects from his readers and symbolizes Apollonius' departure from earthly space.

Apollonius, in *Life*, also transcends time. Just as Apollonius' lack of spatial constraints concerned both his earthly and his supra-earthly existence, Apollonius' lack of temporal restrictions has an earthly and a supra-earthly side to it. In V A 1.2.1, Philostratus locates Apollonius beyond time by asserting that his protagonist "lived in times that were neither ancient nor modern (κατὰ χρόνους οὐτ' ἀρχαίους οὐτ' αὖ νέους)." The story that Philostratus narrates, on this view, is one of all times; similarly to the notion in V A 8.31 that Apollonius continues to teach philosophy after his ascension, this remark by the narrator bridges the gap between Apollonius' times and those of *Life*'s readers, lending a timelessness to the Tyanean sage. Moreover, the notion of metempsychosis or reincarnation, which is assumed as a given throughout *Life*, adds a supra-earthly quality to Apollonius' being beyond time. Apollonius shares the experience of having lived a previous life (V A 3.23) with sages and heroes such as Pythagoras (V A 1.1.1; 3.19.1), Palamedes (V A 3.22), and the Indian Iarchas (V A 3.19–21). Upon Apollonius' ascension, his metempsychosis comes to an end, and Apollonius transforms into a supra-earthly teacher of philosophy beyond tem-



poral bounds, as Philostratus' story of the skeptical youngster illustrates (cf. [Flinterman 2009](#)).

It is at this juncture that the motif of travel returns. In *V A* 1.21.2 and 3.51, as we have seen, Apollonius himself travels (πορεύεσθαι) the earth and heaven—a symbol of his lack of spatial constraints. The immortality of the soul, which Apollonius teaches and embodies, also positions Apollonius beyond time. Building on this image, *V A* 8.31.3 presents this sage beyond time and space as the perfect travel companion for travelers in the present of Philostratus' readers:

The youth said, "It seems that he has come to talk to me alone about the things I failed to believe, so let me tell you how he immortalizes the doctrine:

Immortal is the soul, and is not yours  
 But Providence's (πρόνοια). When the body wastes,  
 The soul starts like a racehorse from the gate,  
 And nimbly leaping mingles with light air,  
 Hating its fearful, heavy servitude.  
 For you, what use is this? When you're no more  
 You will believe it: why then while alive  
 Pry uselessly into such hidden things?"

This is Apollonius's clear pronouncement on the mysteries of the soul, enabling us with courage and knowledge of our own natures to journey (πορεύεσθαι) to the place where the Fates (Μοῖραι) station us.

The shift to the first person in the final sentence of this passage involves Philostratus' implied readers in the narrative.<sup>33</sup> They are to think of themselves as travelers, guided by the Fates on their journeys. Given the context of this passage, reference is probably not merely, perhaps not even primarily, to earthly journeys but to the journeys of the soul in this life and the next. Across *Life*, Philostratus depicts Apollonius as being intimately acquainted with the Fates and living his life in accordance with them (*V A* 6.43.2; 7.8–9; possibly also 4.16.4). This, Philostratus remarks, is precisely what sets his protagonist apart from magicians and wizards: unlike the latter, Apollonius accepts his fate and does not try to change it (*V A* 5.12; 8.7.7–8). The example Apollonius poses to Philostratus' readers, therefore, encourages them also to embrace their fate and journey with him in this life and the next.

## 6. Conclusion and Reflection: A Shared Intellectual Background

The comparison of the narrative endings of Acts of the Apostles and Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* has yielded both similarities and differences. The main similarities lie in the literary themes these writings engage and the ends to which these are put. The theme of travel is central to both Acts and *Life*, and the journeys of the protagonists in these writings underscore the global scope of their message. By emphasizing the journeys of their protagonists, both Acts and *Life* aim to craft a space for their respective messages within the structures of the Roman Empire. In the final sections of Acts and *Life*, the movements of their protagonists come to a halt. At the same time, the narrative endings of Acts and *Life* turn the implied readers of these writings into travelers, who are to continue the journeys of the protagonists in their own times.

The main difference between Acts and *Life* lies in how these writings envision their implied readers to continue the journeys of their protagonists. In the we-passages, Acts casts its readers in the role of fellow travelers with Paul. When Paul's travels end, Acts' readers are to emulate the example of the apostle and continue his work "with all boldness and without hindrance." Acts' implied readers become characters in the story and, in that capacity, are in the position to extend the work of the apostles beyond the boundaries of the Acts narrative. *Life*, in contrast, casts its implied readers not simply in the role of travel companions to Apollonius but as critical readers who sift accounts of Apollonius' journeys and activities—even when these are allegedly written by his closest pupil and companion—for their reliability. This difference in attitude comes to the fore in the meta-remarks by the



narrator in *Life*: unlike Acts' we-passages, these meta-remarks prevent the implied reader from identifying with Damis' gaze. A distance remains between Philostratus' putative source and his implied readership.

Given the notable differences between these writings, their similarities should not be taken as pointing to a direct historical or literary connection between Acts and *Life*. Rather, Acts and *Life* should be taken as representatives of a shared intellectual context in the Roman Empire, in which the nexus between travel, identity, and worldview was a central concern. One such context is the so-called Second Sophistic, of which Philostratus (who also coined the term) has long been taken as a prime representative. In many authors classified as belonging to this movement, such as Pausanias, Lucian, and Aelius Aristides, the theme of travel correlates with a focus on the Greek past and attempts to represent and re-discover that past within the Roman Empire (see, e.g., Goldhill 2001; Jones 2004; Nasrallah 2005; Pretzler 2013). Yet many of the themes in Second Sophistic literature are not unique to these authors, and many scholars have pointed to the problems involved with taking the Second Sophistic as an all too strictly defined intellectual movement (recently de Jonge 2022). Second Sophistic literature shares interests and literary themes with other writings, including Luke's, Paul's, and Philo's (see Winter 2002; Nasrallah 2010; Niehoff 2018, pp. 21–22). The interplay of travel, identity, and worldview, to which both Acts and *Life* testify, points, therefore, to a broader intellectual climate than Philostratus' understanding of the Second Sophistic suggests.

Given the social location of Acts' and *Life*'s implied readers, the similarities between these writings can be taken as evidence for a common intellectual climate amongst intellectuals in the Roman Empire, regardless of their ethnic, legal, or cultural affiliations. Be they Jews, Christians, or Greeks, elite inhabitants of the Roman Empire would participate in intellectual debates that transcended clear-cut self-definitions. The comparison in this article demonstrates, therefore, that discourses on travel and self were rife among intellectuals in the Roman Empire in the first three centuries of our era, irrespective of their ethnic, legal, or cultural affiliations.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data is contained within the article.

**Acknowledgments:** I am grateful to Elisa Uusimäki for her kind invitation to the Nils Klim Symposium "Travel and Religion in the Ancient Mediterranean" and to the participants in the symposium for their stimulating questions and suggestions. I also thank Eelco Glas and the anonymous reviewers for *Religions* for their helpful feedback.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> On the importance of Hezser's work for the study of ancient Jewish travel, see (Hartog and Teugels 2021).
- <sup>2</sup> See below (Section 2) on my use of the terms "travel narrative" and "implied reader."
- <sup>3</sup> The centrality of travel as a literary motif has been recognized for both Acts and *Life*. See, e.g., (Filson 1970; Robbins 1978; Alexander 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Hartog 2023a on Acts and Elsner 1997; Whitmarsh 2012; Abraham 2014; Eshleman 2017; Hägg 2018) on *Life*. Comparative treatments of the travel theme in these two writings are rarer (but cf. the brief comments on Acts in Elsner 1997, p. 27), as comparisons of Acts and *Life* tend to focus on other aspects, most notably miracles and magic (Koskenniemi 1994; Reimer 2002). Troftgruben (2020, pp. 61–113) offers an extensive comparative analysis of ending in ancient literature but does not discuss *Life*.
- <sup>4</sup> On Acts' genre, see (Sterling 1992; Adams 2012, 2013a; Smith and Kostopoulos 2017). On the genre of *Life*, see (Bowie 1978; Boter 2015; Abraham 2017).
- <sup>5</sup> See also (Bale 2015) on Acts.
- <sup>6</sup> On Apollonius' travels as a Philostratean invention, see (Bowie 1978; Elsner 1997).
- <sup>7</sup> Philostratus, the narrator in *Life*, must be distinguished from Philostratus, the historical author of *Life*. See (Whitmarsh 2004).
- <sup>8</sup> The prologue to the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1–4) might confirm this image, but it is methodologically problematic to use that prologue to characterize the narrator in Acts: I am inclined to accept the idea of Acts having been written as a sequel to the

Gospel of Luke but not necessarily by the same author as the gospel. I am sympathetic to the argument that Acts' final sections conclude not just the book of Acts but a narrative development that began already in Luke (cf. Dupont 1978; Alexander [1999] 2005c), but I will not discuss this issue elaborately here.

9 See the preceding note on my approach to the relationship between Luke and Acts. On the broader debate, see (Bird 2007).

10 This is not to suggest, incidentally, that the purpose of Luke's prologue is entirely evident. Whilst it has often been related to historiography, (Alexander 1993) argues that, in its structure, Luke's prologue resembles that of scientific treatises rather than that of history-writing. For reactions to Alexander, see (Sterling 1992, pp. 339–46; Adams 2006; Moles 2011; Dawson 2019).

11 With  $\varphi\omicron\beta\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  in Acts 10:2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26; with  $\sigma\acute{\epsilon}\beta\omicron\mu\alpha$  in Acts 13:43, 50; 16:15; 17:4, 17; 18:7, 13. On the two expressions being synonymous, see (Esler 1987, pp. 38–42).

12 Translations of *Life* follow C. P. Jones (LCL), unless otherwise indicated.

13 Philostratus does not name the addressees of his critique. Based on Orig., *C. Cels.* 6.41, many have assumed that those who portrayed Apollonius as a magician included Moeragenes, but cf. (Bowie 1978).

14 Cf. in this regard Philostratus' mention of a shrine of Apollonius erected by Caracalla (*V A* 8.31.3). See further below.

15 NRSVUE: "gentiles."

16 (Smit 2017, p. 20) argues that "the end of the earth" in Acts refers in a general sense to "everything that is not Jerusalem" and so includes Rome. While I am sympathetic to Smit's observation that Acts consciously looks beyond Rome, I am less convinced that Jerusalem remains the center for Acts' author and Rome becomes the periphery. Rather, both Jerusalem and Rome appear as significant stages in the emergence of a global movement.

17 On the location of the Pillars of Hercules, see, e.g., Strabo 3.5.5; Plin., *HN* 3.4; Philostr., *V A* 5.1. The relationship between Paul's letters and Acts of the Apostles is a vexed issue in New Testament scholarship. On the indebtedness of Acts' portrayal of Paul to the Corpus Paulinum, see, e.g., (van Eck 2003, pp. 21–22; Walker 2008; Moessner et al. 2012).

18 (Omerzu 2001, p. 152, note 119) refers to Cadbury as suggesting that Luke's source had come to an end, but Cadbury leaves open other possibilities, including the possibility that Luke had once written a third volume to Theophilus that is now lost (Cadbury [1927] 1961, pp. 320–24).

19 On Paul as an exemplar in Acts, see (Kurz 1990). Specifically, on Acts 28:17–31, see (Zmijewski 1994, p. 889).

20 Pao's (2003) suggestion that Acts speaks of disagreement amongst the Jews but did not really expect any Jews to accept Paul's message has no clear basis in the text and is therefore not particularly probable.

21 The expression "lord of all" ( $\pi\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\nu$   $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ ) reflects Pauline vocabulary, as Paul employs the term in his letters to refer both to Christ (Rom 10:12) and to the believer (Gal 4:1). Already in Paul, the term resonates not only with other usages of the term in cultic contexts within and outside Judaism but also with claims in non-Judean sources such as Polybius and Strabo, which depict the Romans as "rulers of all" (e.g., Polyb. 36.4.4; Strabo 9.2.2) as well as with Roman sources that portray the emperor in these terms (references in Conzelmann 1987, p. 83; Rowe 2005, pp. 292–94). The combination with "peace" in Acts 10:36 brings to mind the Roman connection even more explicitly. The book of Acts knows the Romans as bringers of peace (Acts 24:2), and the combined use of the terms "peace" and "lord of all" puts Jesus' work and the peace he brings on a par with the famous *pax Romana*. Cf. (Hartog 2023a, p. 105).

22 As the starting point of the Acts narrative, Jerusalem remains significant in Acts but as a point of departure and a reference point throughout the narrative, not as a locality to which the eschatological community will return. I am hesitant, therefore, to accept Smit's argument that "Acts is remapping the world by presenting Jerusalem as its centre and the rest as periphery" (Smit 2017, p. 18). I do think Acts looks beyond Rome, but that is not the same as defining Rome as the periphery.

23 Authorship came with the responsibility of providing proper endings wherever one's sources lacked them. Cf. in this regard how New Testament manuscripts, as well as the authors of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, offer various endings for the Gospel of Mark (which Larsen and Letteney 2019 argue was treated as a  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\mu\eta\mu\alpha$  not unlike Damis' putative notes).

24 On the importance of  $\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\psi\acute{\iota}\alpha$  in ancient historiography, see, e.g., (Schepens 1980, 2007; Alexander 1993, pp. 34–41; Marincola 1997, pp. 63–86; Hartog 2021a). On the importance of books "known only by title" and their literary function in a variety of Jewish and Christian writings from the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see (Lied et al. 2023).

25 At the meeting in Aarhus, Mark Letteney drew my attention to the implications of the term  $\acute{\upsilon}\pi\omicron\mu\eta\mu\alpha$  for how Philostratus presents his own activity as "authoring" sources that hold a more preliminary status. I am grateful to Letteney for his suggestions, which have shaped my thinking on this issue and made their way into the pages of this article. See, in addition to (Larsen and Letteney 2019; Larsen 2018).

26 Translation Conybeare (LCL). Jones (LCL) translates more freely: "The Assyrian's Greek was mediocre." Even if the implication is that Damis wrote in Greek, Philostratus does not explicitly state this.

27 On  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\varphi\omega$  to describe Damis' work, see Philostr., *V A* 1.19.3; 1.24.1; 2.28.1; 3.45.1; 5.7.1; 6.3.1; 6.4.1; 6.7; 7.42.1; 8.29. The verb carries a range of meanings, and this semantic variety is also reflected in *Life*. In Philostr., *V A* 5.37.3  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\varphi\omega$  refers to Apollonius' recounting of the wonders of India, and in Philostr., *V A* 8.6.1, the verb describes Philostratus' work. It is therefore only in connection with Philostratus' overall depiction of Damis' writing in Philostr., *V A* 1.3 and 1.19 that  $\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\varphi\omega$  defines the Assyrian's recording as preliminary in comparison to Philostratus' own work.

- <sup>28</sup> Jones' translation "transcribe" may suggest that Damis' notes had been written in an Assyrian script, which Philostratus transcribed into Greek. While μεταγράψω can bear this meaning (see, e.g., Thuc. 4.50), it is probably not in view here. Not only would it fail to correspond with the only other occurrence of the verb in *Life*, but it would also be inconsistent with Philostratus' claim that Damis' writing was "clear (σαφῶς) but rather unskillful": a work in another script than Greek could hardly be considered "clear."
- <sup>29</sup> Omissions: Philostr., *V A* 1.20.3; 7.28.1; additions: Philostr., *V A* 8.29.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. Philostr., *V A* 2.43, which describes how on the banks of the river Hyphasis, Apollonius encounters a stele reading: "Alexander stopped here." As Apollonius crosses the Hyphasis, he leaves Alexander's Hellenistic world behind him and enters unexplored territory (at least from the perspective of *Life*). On the symbolism of Apollonius' crossing of the Hyphasis, see (Romm 1992, pp. 116–18; Abraham 2014, pp. 469–70; Whitmarsh 2012, p. 464; Hartog 2021b, pp. 136–37).
- <sup>31</sup> Jones has "that scares him"; the translation given here has been adapted in line with Whitmarsh's translation of ἐκπλήσσω.
- <sup>32</sup> Cass. Dio 78.18.4 mentions that the shrine was erected by the emperor Caracalla, Julia Domna's son. Cassius Dio adds, however, that Caracalla's fascination with Apollonius was caused by his "delight in magicians (μάγος) and jugglers (γότης)" (trans. Cary [LCL])—precisely the association that Philostratus combated. By presenting this shrine in the context of Apollonius' ascension and his location beyond earthly space, Philostratus seems to downplay its relevance, thus offering a subtle criticism of the symbolism Caracalla attached to the shrine according to Dio. On the politics of Philostratus' writing in relation to the Severan dynasty, see (Kemezis 2014a; 2014b, pp. 150–95).
- <sup>33</sup> Cf. the we-passages in Acts.

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