

Apollonius of Tyana's Passage to India

Christopher P. Jones

PHILOSTRATUS' *Life of Apollonius* (to give it its conventional title), and its central character, continue to provoke interest; indeed, because of the many streams which meet in this extraordinary work, spiritualism, history, biography, historiography, and in general its "New Age" atmosphere, it has become one of the most discussed texts of later antiquity.¹ Criticism is complicated by the questions of its genre and source. How is it meant to be read, and is Damis, who supplies most of Philostratus' information, his own creation? If he is, is the device to be "taken seriously" or as something less, a hoax or literary trope?

In the search for answers to such questions, Apollonius' visit to India has been many times discussed. Here the subject received its first impulse from nineteenth-century Indologists who wanted to determine, for example, whether the "wise men" of Philostratus' text were Brahmins or Buddhists. The debate continues, though a recent study by Paul Bernard is highly unfavorable to Philostratus: "Il n'est rien que Philostrate n'ait pu tirer de ses souvenirs personnels ou qui ne soit de son invention, une invention nourrie de réminiscences littéraires."²

¹ In the growing bibliography, E. L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," *ANRW* II.16.2 (Berlin/New York 1978) 1652–99, still stands out; more recently, P. Robiano, "Apollonius de Tyane," in R. Goulet, ed., *Dictionnaire des Philosophes antiques* I (Paris 1994) 289–294; J.-J. Flinterman, *Power, Paideia and Pythagoreanism* (Amsterdam 1995), with excellent bibliography (244–254).

² P. Bernard, *TOΠΟΙ* 6 (1996) 475–530, at 512, *cf.* 503, 518–519. Contrast I. Puskás, *ACD* 27 (1991) 123, "Apollonius of Tyana had really visited India [and] Philostratus was a very intelligent editor."

By contrast, Apollonius' "passage to India," from Zeugma on the Euphrates to his crossing of the Hindu Kush, has not been subjected to the same degree of scrutiny, and those specializing in the ancient Middle East tend to have few reservations about Philostratus' account. Thus the *Cambridge History of Iran* in 1983:

An interesting sidelight is provided on the reign of Vardanes by the journey across Babylonia at this time of the itinerant Greek philosopher, Apollonius of Tyana. Confidence in the reliability of this account is strengthened by the fact that its later description of the Indo-Parthian city of Taxila was subsequently confirmed by excavation. The tale of the journey across Babylonia conveys a certain tone of credulity, but is avowedly based on the diary of the philosopher's companion, the simpleton [*sic*] Damis. Its details are, however, convincing enough.³

Yet as Benjamin Isaac has observed of Malalas and Zosimus, "Anyone who uses such literary sources ... without further understanding of their limitations is likely to be seriously misled."⁴ This paper takes five passages in this section of the *Life*, arguing that they combine to reveal a consistent pattern. Philostratus makes Apollonius meet Damis in Syrian Hierapolis, just before he crosses the Euphrates, and the author's geographical knowledge drops off sharply after the party leaves Upper Mesopotamia, which in his own time (though not in Apollonius') lay within the Roman Empire. Thereafter he relies on a vague knowledge of history and geography, supplemented by wide reading in classical authors. The conclusion is similar to that of Paul Bernard on Apollonius in India: "une invention nourrie de réminiscences littéraires."

³ A. D. H. Bivar, *Camb. Hist. Iran* III.1 (1983) 76. For a less flattering opinion of Philostratus on Taxila, Bernard (*supra* n.2) 513–518.

⁴ B. Isaac, *JRS* 78 (1988) 139.

1. The meeting with Damis

In Philostratus' account, Apollonius while staying in Syrian Antioch decides to visit "the country of India and the wise men there, who are called 'Brachmanes' and 'Hyrceanians', ... though he regarded the Magi who live in Babylon and Sousa as a bonus" (1.18). He sets off with two attendants, a shorthand writer and a "calligrapher": we should perhaps understand that the former made notes which the second then wrote out in fair, though the biographer does not say whether such notes formed part of his sources for the subsequent journey.

As his first stop after Antioch, Apollonius arrives in "ancient Ninos" (ἀρχαῖα Νῖνος) where he meets his faithful companion-and biographer-to-be, a native of the city called Damis (1.19). Philostratus also uses the expression "ancient Ninos" when he mentions Damis for the very first time near the beginning of the work (1.3). Translators (including myself) have usually rendered the phrase as "ancient Nineveh," and the city in question has often been taken to be the Assyrian capital on the left bank of the Tigris, near modern Mosul. Thus N. C. Debevoise discussing Vardanes, the Parthian king at the time of Apollonius' visit: "The account of Philostratus suggests that Vardanes' territory was limited in extent, for Apollonius passed into Parthia after leaving Nineveh, which evidently belonged to Adiabene and hence to the kingdom of Gotarzes."⁵

Yet there is a geographical difficulty. Apollonius has yet to cross the Euphrates, which he does at Zeugma (see below). Thereafter, he proceeds down the river to Babylon, and the author gives no indication that he crossed the whole of Mesopotamia and the river Tigris to visit Nineveh. So also on the party's return they sail up the Euphrates, re-visit Babylon, and then proceed to "Ninos" and Antioch (3.58). Unless Philostratus

⁵ N. C. Debevoise, *A Political History of Parthia* (Chicago 1938) 168–169; similarly, J. R. Reade, *Iraq* 60 (1998) 71, discussing the survival of Greek in Nineveh.

tus is hopelessly muddled even about the geography of the Roman Empire, he should refer to a city between Antioch and the Euphrates, and the city in question was long ago identified by Theodor Noeldeke.⁶ Syrian Hierapolis, the seat of Lucian's Syrian Goddess, lay on the main road from Antioch to Zeugma. It had another name, Mambog or Bambyke, which survived in common usage, though not in high literature.⁷ But it also had the name of "Old Ninos," as appears unambiguously from Ammianus Marcellinus. He designates the Syrian city by the expression *Hierapoli, vetere Nino* (14.8.7), the exact equivalent of Philostratus' "ancient Ninos," while later referring to the Assyrian capital both as *Nineve* and as *Ninos* (18.7.1, 23.6.22). "Old Ninos" is therefore the better way to translate ἀρχαία Νῆνος in Philostratus, and the city in question is not Assyrian Nineveh but Syrian Hierapolis. The same city will also be the "Ninos" which Philostratus later compares to Taxila in size (2.20).

Even those who made the correct identification have not usually interrogated the adjective "Old," which seems too persistent to be a mere *epitheton ornans*, and here Philostratus may have something to contribute to the antiquities of Hierapolis. When applied to cities, the adjective ἀρχαία often implies that another city with the same name still exists, whereas παλαιά implies that a previous site has been abandoned. This usage has been discussed with reference to Colophon in Ionia, for example.⁸ Philostratus uses a similar expression of Cádiz, when he says that the headland that begins at Calpis (near Gibraltar) "ends at Old Gadeira" (τὰ ἀρχαία Γάδαιρα, 5.1). Here again the adjective might appear

⁶ *Hermes* 5 (1871) 464; cf. E. Honigmann, "Νῆνος ἀρχαία," *RE* 17 (1936) 643; a full statement now in Bernard (*supra* n.2) 503 n.73.

⁷ J. L. Lightfoot, *EpigrAnat* 33 (2001) 113–118.

⁸ L. Robert, *RevPhil* III.10 (1936) 158–159 n.6 (= *Opera Minora Selecta* II 1237–38).

purely decorative, but Strabo reports that the citizens “originally (κατ’ ἀρχαίς) lived in a very small city, but Balbus the Gaditane, who held a triumph, built them another one which they call ‘New’, and the combined city they call ‘Twin’” (Διδύμη).⁹ When visiting Cádiz, therefore, Apollonius confined himself, at least in Philostratus’ imagination, to the antiquities of “Old Gadeira” and ignored the new.

How exactly Hierapolis came to be called “Old Ninos” is not clear, but the name presupposes that the more famous one on the Tigris was built later. According to Diodorus Siculus, following Ctesias, Ninos, a great king of Assyria, subdued all of Asia between the Tanais (Don) and the Nile, and then, to thank the gods for his success, founded a city named after himself beside the Euphrates; it later emerges that Diodorus, and perhaps Ctesias too, identified this city with the celebrated Nineveh. The confusion may have arisen precisely because of the other name of Syrian Hierapolis, since authors sometimes locate this on the Euphrates, when in fact it is some twenty-five miles away.¹⁰ Lucian records a tradition that the temple of the Syrian Goddess at Hierapolis had been built by “the Babylonian Semiramis” in honor of her mother Derketo: he (or his *persona*) does not accept this latter identification, though conceding that the temple might be due to Semiramis, “who constructed many works in Asia” (*Syr.D.* 14). Since the legendary Semiramis was the wife of Ninos, this constitutes another link between the two authors.

Other details in Philostratus may connect with Lucian’s much more reliable and circumstantial account. Just after referring to “ancient Ninos,” Philostratus adds, “in which there is set up an idol in the barbarian style. This is in fact Io the daughter of

⁹ Strabo 3.5.3 (169); on the topography of ancient Cádiz, A. Tovar, *Iberische Landeskunde* II.1 (Baden-Baden 1974) 37–48.

¹⁰ Diod. 2.3, cf. 2.7 (Nineveh) = Ctesias *FGrHist* 688 F 1. For this suggestion, E. F. Weidner, *RE* 17 (1936) 634.

Inachos, with little horns projecting from her temples and just breaking through." He must be referring to the famous cult-statue of "the Syrian Goddess," though Lucian's description is much closer to the copies found in other cities such as Dura-Europos.¹¹ Nor does Lucian suggest an identification with Io, though he mentions several other ones, and opts for a goddess who like Io is closely associated with Argos, Hera. Many cities of the Roman period and earlier claimed Argive origins, for example Tarsus in Cilicia and the capital of Syria, Antioch, and similar claims may have been made for the celebrated "Holy City."¹² Another detail in Lucian's account may find an echo in Philostratus, his opinion that the name "Holy City" "did not come about when the city was founded, but the ancient name (τὸ ἀρχαῖον) [possibly to be understood adverbially, "originally the name"] was different" (*Syr.D.* 1). Presumably he refers to the Syrian name "Bambyke," but perhaps to "Ninos."

A similar tradition to those of Hierapolis existed in Caria, where according to Stephanus of Byzantium Aphrodisias had once been named "Ninoe" in honor of Ninos. Aphrodisian reliefs dated to the third century show Ninos and Semiramis together, and confirm that the legend still persisted in the age of Philostratus. On the other side of the Maeander, coins from the insignificant town of Anineta also portray Ninos in the imperial period. Such claims may well rest on older traditions, but they are symptomatic of the Hellenism of the later empire, which cheerfully cultivated non-Greek origins. It would be entirely in character for Philostratus to suppress the more familiar name of Hierapolis in favor of "Old Ninos," which evoked an exotic and legendary past.¹³

¹¹ On the copies, Susan B. Downey, *Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report III.1.2: The Stone and Plaster Sculpture* (Los Angeles 1978) 172–177.

¹² For claims of Argive or Achaean origin, see now P. Weiss, *Chiron* 30 (2000) 617–639.

¹³ Aphrodisias as Ninoe: Steph. Byz. 438.10, 476.8. Reliefs: *LIMC* IV.2 (1988) 162, Gordios 1. Anineta: L. Robert, *A travers l'Asie Mineure* (Paris 1980) 332–334; *LIMC* VI.2 (1992) 609, Ninos 4.

2. Zeugma

Philostratus makes Apollonius and his party cross the Euphrates τῷ Ζεύγματι (1.20). This is surely not “a Zeugma,” as understood by Debevoise but, as the article indicates, the historical Zeugma, the “junction” that joined Seleuceia on the right bank of the Euphrates with Apamea on the left.¹⁴ In Philostratus’ narrative, a tax-collector (*telônês*) questions Apollonius, and mistakes the virtues which the sage declares, Prudence, Temperance, and the like, for female slaves. This is surely a detail borrowed from life, if not necessarily from the life of Apollonius. The Palmyra tax-law of the reign of Hadrian similarly lists slaves as the first commodity on which the local customs-collector, here called *dêmosiônês*, is to levy dues.¹⁵

Philostratus then proceeds to a geographical excursus on Mesopotamia, in which he places the nations (*ethnê*) of “Armenia” and “Arabia.” The second name would imply another gross error if it referred to the Trajanic province or the Arabian peninsula generally, but here again Philostratus is following contemporary usage: he means north-western Mesopotamia, which authors such as Bardaisan also call “Arabia.”¹⁶ Philostratus also notes two traditions about the Euphrates, one that it “disappears into marsh,” the other that it “flows underground to Egypt and is mingled with the Nile.” The first at least takes account of the marshes noticed already by Alexander’s admiral Nearchus, though the tradition that the river “disappears” is first found in Polybius. Philostratus’ other explanation also appears in Pausanias, and seems to reflect the state of Greek knowledge before Alexander.¹⁷

¹⁴ Debevoise (*supra* n.5) 169. See in particular J. Wagner, *Seleukeia am Euphrat / Zeugma* (Wiesbaden 1976).

¹⁵ J. F. Matthews, *JRS* 74 (1984) 175–176.

¹⁶ G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1983) 79 n.12; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1993) 456–457.

¹⁷ Polyb. 9.43, Paus. 2.5.3. Cf. F. H. Weissbach, *RE* 6 (1907) 1200–06.

The author is however more interested in Apollonius' courage in crossing into northern Mesopotamia, a region "not yet under the Romans." The reference is presumably to Septimius Severus' conquest of this region in the later 190's,¹⁸ one of the author's rare allusions to his own time. He also credits Apollonius with learning the language of birds from the Arabs, and this too corresponds to a widespread belief about them. In Book IV, Apollonius interprets the utterance of a sparrow.¹⁹

3. Ctesiphon and "the borders of Babylon"

After Zeugma, Apollonius "passes Ctesiphon" to arrive at "the borders of Babylon," where he finds a guard-post superintended by a "satrap," who is also a eunuch (1.21). The explanation is that the king, a "Mede," has just ascended the throne and is prey to "fears and trembling." As the story progresses, we learn that his name is Vardanes and that he recovered his throne just over two years before (1.28). Apollonius remains with him for one year and eight months (1.22), and he is still ruling in Babylon when Apollonius re-visits him after his visit to India, which included four months spent with the "wise men" (3.50, 58).

Vardanes is certainly a historical character. He was a son of the powerful king Artabanus II, and on his father's death about 36 had difficulty in establishing his claim to the throne; his rival was his brother Gotarzes, who finally had him assassinated about the year 45.²⁰ Philostratus is therefore correct in stating that he had to recover his kingdom, but the one brother whom he mentions, a certain Megabates who had met Apollonius in Antioch, is unattested and usually thought fictitious (1.31). Others details of the account are a similar mixture of fact and

¹⁸ Cf. Millar (*supra* n.16) 124–126.

¹⁹ VA 4.3, *cf.* the very similar story in Porphyry *Abst.* 3.3.6. On Arabian augury, L. Robert, *Hellenica* II (Paris 1946) 46–47.

²⁰ R. H. McDowell, *Coins from Seleucia on the Tigris* (Ann Arbor 1935) 225–227; R. Hanslik, *RE* 8A (1955) 368–372; Bivar (*supra* n.3) 75–76.

fantasy. First, Greek and Roman authors from Diodorus Siculus onwards are almost unanimous in representing contemporary Babylon as nearly desolate, and Ctesiphon had long since become the Parthian capital.²¹ It has been suggested that the revolt of Seleuceia on the Tigris, immediately opposite Ctesiphon, had caused Vardanes to make Babylon his residence, but the coinage of Seleuceia shows that he recovered it soon after the beginning of his reign, apparently in 42.²² Vardanes was later to become a feared and powerful king (Tac. *Ann.* 11.10.3), and it is at best odd that Philostratus should place his capital in Babylon when he had been ruling for nearly four years. In this treatment of Babylon, Philostratus seems to be thinking of the early history of the Persian empire, with Cyrus' capture of the city and its subsequent role as the winter residence of the Achaemenids.²³

Another oddity is Philostratus' use of the word "Mede." Throughout this part of the work he uses only this adjective or "Median" for the Parthian kings and their realm (1.24, 25), and Vardanes speaks as if his power did not yet extend either to Persia or to India (1.33). Certainly, Josephus says that Vardanes' father Artabanus had ruled Media Atropatene before ascending the Parthian throne, while Tacitus makes him a Hyrcanian from east of the Caspian.²⁴ But the Parthian kings claimed to be the true successors of the Achaemenids and their empire, and Vardanes would surely not have called himself "Median" rather than "Persian." This sounds like another reminiscence of Philostratus' reading.

²¹ For a review of the sources, S. A. Pellis in *Studia orientalia Ioanni Pedersen septuagenario dicata* (Copenhagen 1953) 290–293 (not mentioning Philostratus); cf. M. A. Dandamayev, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 3 (1988) 329–330.

²² McDowell (*supra* n.20) 226; cf. G. Le Rider, *Suse sous les Séleucides et les Parthes* (Paris 1965) 172–173.

²³ R. Schmitt, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 1 (1985) 419.

²⁴ Jos. *AJ* 18.48, Tac. *Ann.* 2.3.1, 6.36.4; K. Schippmann, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 2 (1986) 648.

4. Apollonius in Cissia

After passing "the borders of Babylon," and being close to the city itself, Apollonius enters the "Cissian land." Here he has a dream about fish on dry land, gasping for air and begging him for help. He explains to Damis that the fish symbolize the Eretrians who had been settled in Cissia by Darius five hundred years before (1.23). The party therefore leaves its path and finds the Eretrians by asking about a well near their settlement. The Eretrians turn out to live "in the country of the Medes, not far from Babylon, about a day's journey for a fast traveler." The party duly visits them, and hears details about their ancestors' capture in 490, and about the early history of their community, down to the time of "Daridaïos" eighty-eight years later. Apollonius and his party also inspect the Eretrians' tombs, and Philostratus cites an elegiac poem that they found on one of them. To verify this incident he adduces a letter written by Apollonius to the sophist Scopelian of Clazomenae (1.24).

This story raises even more difficulties than the account of Vardanes. The greatest of these is the location of the Eretrian settlement. Cissia is in fact nowhere near Babylon, still less immediately north of it, but is a region between Babylonia and Susiana, equivalent to modern Khuzestan in western Iran.²⁵ The story of the Eretrians and their deportation by Darius I is told by Herodotus, who places their settlement in Cissia at an unlocated village called Ardericca, two hundred and ten stades (about forty kilometers) from Susa; another forty stades away is a well which yields a mixture of bitumen, salt, and oil (6.119). It is clear that this well is identical to the one in Philostratus, though he or his manuscripts make the three elements bitumen, oil, and water.

It has been suggested that Philostratus is confusing the Cissians with the Cossaeans of modern Luristan, though that

²⁵ Weissbach, *RE* 11 (1921) 519–521.

would not reconcile him with Herodotus.²⁶ There is a simpler solution. As already observed, the historian locates the Eretrians at a village called Ardericca near Susa. But much earlier in his work he had mentioned a village of the same name on the Euphrates above Babylon (1.185).²⁷ A Babylonian queen called Nitocris dug canals (διώρυχες) which made the river so circuitous that it passed this village three times, and those sailing downstream took three days to pass it. Now Philostratus says of the Eretrians that “the river” (by which he clearly means the Euphrates) runs right round their village, since they had diverted it by means of a ditch (τόφος) in order to form a defense against the surrounding barbarians. He must therefore have amalgamated the two homonymous villages in Herodotus, the Ardericca north of Babylon where the river made three separate turns, and the one near Susa that was the real site of the Eretrian settlement. If that is correct, it is not favorable to the idea that Damis was an eye-witness companion of Apollonius; this is an error resulting from the misunderstanding of Herodotus, either on Philostratus’ part or on that of an earlier writer equally dependent on classical literature.

Yet another curiosity of this passage is Apollonius’ statement that the Eretrians had erected altars to Darius, Xerxes, and “Daridaïos,” up to whose reign, eighty-eight years after their capture (and so in 402 or thereabouts), they had continued to write “the Greek way” (1.24). In 402 the reigning king was Artaxerxes II, brother of the rebel Cyrus. Philostratus must be thinking of Darius II Ochus, and it so happens that Ctesias, who served at the court of this king’s father, called him Ὀχος ὁ Δαρειάϊος, probably a rendering of the Persian form “Dariyavaus,” while reserving the form “Dareios” for the first

²⁶ F. Grosso, *RivFil* 86 (1958) 361; on the Cossaeans, P. Briant, *Histoire de l’Empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris 1996) 749–752.

²⁷ On these two villages, R. Schmitt, *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 2 (1986) 385.

of that name.²⁸ The confusion is compounded a few pages later, where Apollonius conversing with a Persian official refers to "Darius the father of Cyrus and Artaxerxes" who "occupied these palaces for sixty years, I think" (1.28). This time the passage bears some similarity of phrasing to the opening lines of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, so that Philostratus has switched sources without noticing the discrepancy of nomenclature.

Two other items in his account of the Eretrians have long excited suspicion. An epigram that Apollonius finds on one of the tombs (1.24) occurs with slightly different wording in the *Greek Anthology*, where part of the tradition ascribes it to Plato. It contains a geographical oddity in that it places the Eretrians in the plain of Ecbatana, about three hundred kilometers north of Susa. The reason, it has been suggested, is that the author regarded Ecbatana as interchangeable with Susa to signify a Persian capital, so that he is not likely to be an exiled Eretrian, but instead a Hellenistic epigrammatist. Philostratus is again playing with literature, in this case taking a literary epigram and using it to sentimentalize his account of the Eretrians.²⁹

The other oddity in this passage is that his encounter with the Eretrians reminds Apollonius of "the Clazomenian sophist," and he writes him a letter about their plight. Philostratus gives a verbatim citation from this just below, naming the sophist Scopelian as the recipient, but here Apollonius talks of having made his visit as a "young man," as if the letter was written in his maturity or old age. In fact, such a date would be necessary if the letter were genuine, since Scopelian flourished in the reign of Domitian and even later, at the very end of Apollonius' life or beyond. In the *Lives of the Sophists* Philostratus talks of him as celebrated for his declamations on Persian subjects, and also

²⁸ *FGrHist* 688 FF 15.56, 16.57; R. Schmitt, *Die iranischen und Iranier-Namen in den Schriften Xenophons* (SBWien 692 [2002]) 51–53. For Darius II, Briant (*supra* n.26) 605–629.

²⁹ *Anth.Pal.* 7.256 = D. L. Page, *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge 1981) 171–173, "Plato" XII, with this explanation of "Ecbatana."

of Apollonius' admiration for him; it happens that a letter of Apollonius to him survives in the extant correspondence. Here again therefore we have a compound made up of Philostratus' wide reading, rather than his transcription of Damis' travel account.³⁰

5. Damophyle

A last example does not involve geographical or other errors of Philostratus, but deserves notice as an illustration of his literary methods and their unintended consequences. As Apollonius approaches the king, he resumes a conversation that he had been having with Damis about Damophyle, a Pamphylian poetess who "associated" (ὁμιλῆσαι) with Sappho and composed hymns still sung at Perge in honor of the local Artemis (1.30). Just as she is a hitherto unknown associate of Sappho,³¹ though the evidence for Artemis of Perge and her cult is now very extensive, so Damis is a hitherto unknown student (προσφιλοσοφήσας, 1.3) of Apollonius. Similarly the vine-grower who is the main speaker in Philostratus' *Heroicus* lives on the friendliest terms with the dead hero Protesilaus, and has much new information about the Trojan War to impart to a Phoenician visitor, and through him to the readers of the work.

Damophyle was to enjoy an unexpected resurrection, which curiously echoes the literary technique of Philostratus. In 1895 the French symbolist Pierre Louys published a volume of *Chansons de Bilitis*, allegedly translated from Greek originals. As the prefatory Life explains, the poems were found in Bilitis' tomb at Amathus in Cyprus, and had been published in the previous year by Professor G. Heim. Bilitis was a Pamphylian, the daughter of a certain Damophylos; after leaving her homeland, she had gone to join Sappho's circle in Mytilene, and there

³⁰ For Scopelian, Philostr. *VS* 1.21; G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford 1969) 44, 91; for his correspondence with Apollonius, R. J. Penella, *Athenaeum* 52 (1974) 295–300.

³¹ Cf. O. Crusius, *RE* 4 (1901) 2079, "schwerlich historisch."

became the lover of a certain Mnasidica (whose name indeed appears in a fragment of the genuine Sappho). Though not identical with Damophyle, the fact that she is of Pamphylian origin, a poetess of Sappho's circle, and the daughter of a Damophylos, shows that Louys spun her existence out of this very passage of the *Life of Apollonius*. His hoax, if it can be called that, went on to enjoy a considerable success, notably in the famous setting by his friend Claude Debussy, though it did not amuse Wilamowitz.³² Philostratus' purpose in inventing Damophyle is irrecoverable, but was perhaps no more serious than Louys': that is, he invited the sophisticated reader to recognize her as imaginary, but left others free to think otherwise. Modern authors continue to produce works playfully balanced on the edge between fact and fiction, for example letters of Pontius Pilate published with scholarly annotation in 1991.³³ In the same class as Bilitis and the epistolary Pilate we may perhaps place the vine-grower in the *Heroicus* and Damis of "Old Ninus."

Philostratus' account of Apollonius "passage to India" reveals patterns of interest to the work as a whole. It is as he approaches the *terra incognita* of the Parthian empire that Philostratus' hero first meets his faithful companion, a native of the last city through which he passes before reaching the Euphrates. The author's geography is accurate so far as "Arabia," but becomes vague and literary once the party has left Upper Mesopotamia for Babylonia and beyond. His account should not be taken as "an interesting sidelight" on this region in the mid-first century, but rather as a romance of travel,

³² I have used the fourteenth edition, published in 1898, in which the bibliography begins with Professor Heim's edition and includes Wilamowitz's review in *GGA* 1896 and Debussy's setting of 1898. Wilamowitz republished his review in *Sappho und Simonides* (Berlin 1913) 63–78.

³³ *Pontius Pilatus: Briefwechsel*, übersetzt, annotiert und eingeleitet von Jörg von Uthmann (Hamburg 1991).

with homage to Herodotus as well as lost authors such as Ctesias. Though this can never be proved, Damis is surely a vehicle originally invented to carry this part of the work; not a lost author, but one conjured into existence by Philostratus.³⁴

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Department of Classics
Harvard University
Cambridge, MA 02138
cjones@fas.harvard.edu

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