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Alexandria and the Second Sophistic

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ABSTRACT: Alexandria was theoretically an ideal place to become a center of sophistic activity during the period of the Second Sophistic (c. middle of the first century to the beginning of the third century AD). The fact is, however, that the centers of this cultural, educational, and intellectual activity were to be found in various cities of Asia Minor and Greece (e.g. Athens, Smyrna, Ephesus), while Alexandria is not mentioned among them. Philostratus, who gives a panoramic view of the sophistic movement of this period, does not include any sophists from Alexandria in his list, while the city itself is not mentioned at all. Moreover, Philostratus mentions four sophists from the neighbouring Naucratis, and gives the impression of a certain sophistic activity there, but not in Alexandria. Then, the questions that arise here are whether the sophistic movement had also developed in Alexandria and, if so, why Philostratus does not regard any of its sophists worthy of mention. The existing evidence shows that there was a significant development of the sophistic culture in Alexandria already from the early first century AD. As to the second question, I maintain that there was a clear incompatibility between Philostratus' political ideas and the way he understood the role of the sophists, on the one hand, and the general tenets and practices of Alexandrians and Alexandrian sophists, on the other. I argue that this incompatibility was the main reason for Philostratus' silence.

KEY-WORDS: Alexandria, Philostratus, Second Sophistic, sophists, orators, *Acta Alexandrinorum*, sophistic culture, declamation, emperors

Almost one hundred years after its foundation, Alexandria had already managed to become the greatest city in the world, and later, in Roman times, it had a vast population whose estimation varies, in modern times, from two hundred thousand or

half a million inhabitants to about one million!¹ There is a papyrus fragment of the first century BC in which the writer maintained that Alexandria was ‘a city of the (civilised) world’, while all other cities belonged to the adjacent country and seemed to be only suburbs of her!² Diodorus Siculus writes that the city has grown so much that people take it to be the first city in the civilized world and that it surpasses all others in ‘elegance and extent and riches and luxury’. He also adds about its population that, according to those who were responsible for counting the inhabitants, the free citizens were more than three hundred thousand at the time of his visit to Egypt.³ The increase of population, the growth of economic power, and the high international prestige of the city described by Diodorus were not its only assets, as we know. The cultural and scientific growth that the city experienced especially during the reign of the first three Ptolemies was also kept high far into the first three centuries of the Christian Era.⁴ As Smith puts it ‘with its two state libraries and Museum the city for centuries was the think-tank of the world, and for a while surpassed all others’.⁵

It is true that the decision of Ptolemy the Seventh to expel many intellectuals from the Museum after his ascension to the throne (145 BC), as Athenaeus informs us,⁶ must have affected Alexandria’s status as a scholarly, literary, and scientific center of the world. It is also true that gradually Rome, even before the Imperial period, became a center for scholars, philosophers and poets who were seeking patronage, and that a number of Alexandrian men of letters also moved there.⁷ Despite these new conditions, however, Alexandria kept its high position as a center of learning and research and some later developments came to favour it again. Around the middle of the first century AD Claudius showed his interest in letters by practically encouraging them in Alexandria. Thus, he built an addition to the Museum and it seems that he was in constant touch with men of letters, writers and scientists, working there.⁸ Later Hadrian, according to Philostratus, granted a membership in the Museum to some wandering sophists, who were not required to stay at the institution.

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¹ See Haas (1997) 44-45 and 374, n. 3; Delia (1988) 275-291; Tarn (1930) 185; Rostovtzeff (1941) Vol. II, 1139; Smith (1974) 5.

² Naucratis and Ptolemais, the other two important Greek cities of the area, are included in ‘the other cities’. *P. Berlin 13045*, 1.28-29; ‘The other cities belong to the adjacent country, and they are towns (*kōmai*) of Alexandria; but Alexandria is a city of the world’. It is cited in Tarn (1930) 160, 185; see also Smith (1974) 5-6.

³ First century BC. See Diodorus Siculus XVII 52. 5-6.

⁴ For a comprehensive presentation of the subject see Smith (1974) 1-19, cf. 6-13. See also Watts (2008) 143-168.

⁵ Smith (1974) 8. For Alexandria as intellectual and cultural center see also Benaissa (2012) 526-542.

⁶ Athenaeus IV 83.

⁷ Strabo, e.g., writes that in his time Rome is filled with learned men coming from Tarsus and Alexandria; XIV 5. 15. See Fraser (1972) 474-475; Turner (2007) 155-170. See also Benaissa (2012), 536.

⁸ Scaramuzza (1940) 44.

In this way he honoured them for their achievements, but at the same time the Museum itself could profit from the prestigious names of the sophists.⁹

The Museum was originally established as a research institution, in which renowned learned men were dealing with research in an atmosphere of freedom; but since young students were gathered around those scholars, the institution seems to have developed later into a kind of university undertaking teaching responsibilities.¹⁰ It is not clear whether and to what extent actual rhetorical teaching took place in the Museum. There is no decisive evidence of any rhetorical instruction, while there is clear evidence about grammarians, philologists, and poets. Besides, we do not know any rhetorical textbook that certainly emanated from the Museum.¹¹ Evidence at our disposal shows, however, that there were many occasions of various kinds for the art of public speaking to be employed in Alexandria: the rhetoric of the *boule*,¹² the embassies to the Emperors, even the traveling sophists, as well as the rhetoric of the court rooms and the advocates. If we suppose that the speeches found in papyrus fragments in other places in Egypt also reflect the political and legal speaking of Alexandria, then the knowledge of rhetorical theory on the part of the orators is obvious.¹³

Because of this economic, social and intellectual atmosphere briefly described above, Alexandria was theoretically an ideal place to become a center of sophistic activity during the period of the Second Sophistic (c. middle of the first century to the beginning of the third century AD). The fact is, however, that the centers of this cultural, educational, and intellectual activity were to be found in various cities of Asia Minor and Greece (e.g. Athens, Smyrna, Ephesus)¹⁴ while Alexandria is not mentioned among them. Philostratus, who gives a panoramic view of the sophistic movement of this period (he collected a mass of information concerning the great sophists whom he regarded as worthy of mention),¹⁵ does not include any sophists from Alexandria, not even one, in his list, while the city itself is not mentioned at all and, as far as I can tell, it is alluded to only in connection with the Museum in the

⁹Philostratus mentions two sophists who had this special privilege: Dionysius of Miletus and Polemo. Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 524, 532.

¹⁰Marrou (1958) 262.

¹¹Smith (1974) 17-18. According to Smith, it is probable that declamations which come down to us via papyrus fragments found elsewhere in Egypt were also used in the teaching rooms of the Museum, as they were used in private schools.

¹²Scholars are divided over the issue of existence of an Alexandrian senate before the visit of the Emperor Severus to the city (199-200 AD), who certainly established (or perhaps re-established?) it. There is strong probability, however, that there was a *boule* also in early Ptolemaic period. The founder of the city had equipped it with the usual institutions of a Greek polis: *ekklesia*, assembly of the people, *boule*, town council, magistrates, and other officials. During the Ptolemaic period the autonomy of the city was gradually restricted, and perhaps the Alexandrian *boule* was abolished by one of the later Ptolemies or, according to a different view, by Augustus. For a summary on the matter and relevant bibliography see Smith (1974), 42-45. See also Bowman (1971) 12-14. Smallwood also believes that 'Alexandria had no *boule* under Roman rule till the reign of Septimius Severus, and it was more probably abolished by one of the Ptolemies than by Augustus'. Smallwood (1981) 232 n. 52.

¹³Smith (1974), cf. 37-72.

¹⁴For a full list of the cities of the sophists see Bowersock (1969) 17-29, cf. 20-21.

¹⁵I am referring to his *Lives of the Sophists*, already mentioned in n. 9 above.

cases mentioned above.¹⁶ Moreover, Philostratus mentions four sophists from Naucratis (Pollux, Ptolemaeus, Apollonius, Proclus),¹⁷ and gives the impression of certain sophistic activity there, but not in Alexandria. Then, the questions that arise here are whether the sophistic movement had also developed in Alexandria and, if so, why Philostratus does not regard any of its sophists as worth mentioning.

The sophistic movement in Alexandria

The study that tried to shed some light on the subject of the sophistic movement in Roman Alexandria was that of Winter¹⁸ who examined sources that are not usually taken up, when the discussion is about the Second Sophistic. He did not confine himself to the well-known oration of Dio Chrysostom addressed to people of Alexandria,¹⁹ or to some papyrological sources to which we will come again below. He proceeded to a careful examination of Philo's work and, thus, exploiting material that had been previously overlooked,²⁰ he managed to adduce some new evidence concerning the sophistic activity in Alexandria. He first discusses the term 'sophist' in Philo and finds that it is not employed in a pejorative way and that it is consistently used to denote a 'virtuoso orator' – a meaning that, according to Bowersock, the word had acquired in the time of the Second Sophistic.²¹ Even if it is not easy to accept that the term 'sophist' is used consistently in this meaning (the meanings of 'professor' or 'expert' can also be found), it is true that the sense of 'virtuoso orator' is also there. Philo, according to Winter's account, speaks of orators and sophists in Alexandria and treats them in the way other authors of the same period (Plutarch, Epictetus, Dio) treat both groups of their time, i.e. as dealing with two correlated but discernible professional activities. Winter brings forward passages from Philo's works which

¹⁶ There is one passage more in the *Lives of Sophists* 603 in which Alexandria is probably implied, when the sophist being discussed there, Proclus of Naucratis, is presented as living in Athens and receiving regular supplies, and among them papyrus and books, from Egypt directly. The mention of regular supply of books from Egypt seems to refer to the book trade developed in Alexandria.

¹⁷ *Lives of the Sophists* 592, 595-596, 599-600, 602-604 respectively; see also *ibid.* 615. Philostratus also mentions one more sophist from Naucratis, Theomnestus, who, according to Philostratus' classification, belongs in those who were rather philosophers expounding their theories with great fluency than orators; *ibid.* 486; see also 484. If Theomnestus is not an older sophist-philosopher of whom we know nothing, then he is probably the Academician mentioned by Plutarch (*Brutus* 44) as a teacher at Athens who succeeded Aristus at Antiochus' school in the second half of the first century BC; see Dillon (1996) 60-62.

¹⁸ Winter (1997).

¹⁹ Dio of Prusa, *Oration 32 (To Alexandrians)*.

²⁰ Kennedy does not make use of Philo's works in his effort to give a picture of the first century rhetoric and sophistic movement; see Kennedy (1972), 452-453. Smith exploits evidence from Philo only to some extent; see Smith (1974). There were, however, some articles or book-length studies which were discussing Philo's rhetoric. These studies had as a common point that they were not interested in the phenomenon of the Second Sophistic, as they were coming from the field of theological or Judaic studies, and they only discussed Philo's use of rhetoric. See, e.g. Leopold (1983) 129-136; Conley (1983) 155-178; Conley (1987).

²¹ Bowersock (1969) 13; according to Bowersock, the sophist was a virtuoso rhetor with a big public reputation. This is the meaning that emanates from Philostratus' work and which is also supported by Sextus Empiricus who writes that 'the sophists were thoroughly trained in the theory of rhetorical art to the outmost point'; *Adv. math.* II 18. This meaning, as Winter does not fail to observe, does not deprive Philo of his right to 'castigate the group to which it applies albeit with traditional invective'. Winter (1997), 63.

suggest that the author speaks of first century sophists in Alexandria, and presents them at times as a professional group misusing the art of rhetoric. He mentions throng of sophists who one could observe everywhere,²² and who, as it seems, constituted a distinguishable group, different from other specific groups that were also dealing with education, art or science, such as grammarians, musicians, geometricians, philosophers, etc. This throng of sophists is also implied even when the term *hoi philosophountes* is used at some points,²³ since the latter's activities and the negative way they affect their audience are both, in Philo's judgment, of such a quality that is usually ascribed to the sophists.²⁴ Winter's discussion of Philo makes clear that there was full-scale sophistic activity in first century Alexandria, and that the sophists were a large and influential group in the city. An additional and equally important new point is that the presence of great numbers of sophists in Alexandria is also attested at a period earlier than that expected, since everything refers to the first half of the first century AD.²⁵

Forensic speaking must have been a usual legal practice in Roman Alexandria, as far as we can judge from the rather great number of papyrological references to legal advocates, as well as from some fragments of dicanic speeches or short records of them that have been preserved.²⁶ There is, however, only one papyrus from the early centuries AD which refers to sophists.²⁷ This papyrus is most probably dated to the first century AD²⁸ and includes the letter a student, Neilus, sent from Alexandria to his father, Theon. The student, who came to Alexandria to study under the guidance of a sophist, complains that it is not easy at all to find a good teacher, and that fees are very high. The picture that emerges from the letter presents the sophists as an important professional group with numerous members in the educational system of Alexandria. It seems that the shortage of suitable teachers, for which Neilus

²² Philo, *Agr.* 136-142.

²³ See Philo, *Congr.* 67.

²⁴ See Winter (1997), 17-112, cf. 60-82.

²⁵ Trapp accepts Winter's conclusions to some extent; see Trapp (2006) 113-132. He admits that Philo's works 'provide eloquent testimony to the quality of education and cultural debate available within the city'; *ibid.* 126. Moreover, he believes that there had been 'more epideictic performance in Alexandria, and a larger number of crowd-pulling Alexandrian declaimers, than Philostratus' silence would imply'; *ibid.* 126. At the same time, however, Trapp does not find Winter's position (that 'Alexandria enjoyed a vigorous and flourishing sophistic culture as early as the first century AD') convincing, because 'his (Winter's) interpretation is invalidated by its reliance on two manifestly false suppositions': that the sophistic movement was a continuous phenomenon which existed from the fifth century BC to the second century AD without any interruption or essential variation, and that the word 'sophist' has throughout (in Philo and other writers of the period) the meaning of 'a virtuoso orator with a large public following'; *ibid.* Trapp's remarks on Winter's suppositions are obviously right, but I cannot see why these suppositions wholly invalidate Winter's interpretation concerning the standing of the epideictic oratory and the flourishing of the sophistic culture in the city. There are passages in Philo in which the word 'sophist' bears the meaning of virtuoso orator. At the same time the sophists were not only declaimers, but they were usually actively involved in education (as teachers of declamation or professors of rhetoric) and to some extent in public affairs.

²⁶ See, e.g., *P. Teb.* 287. 2, 343. 75; *P. Oxy.* 33, 37. 4, 151. 2, 237 vii 21, 471, 472, 653. 9, 707. 13, 899. 21, 1089, 2464, 2690; *P. Lond.* 188.79, 354. 19, 1716. 15, 2565; *P. Amh.* 29. 10. For a discussion of some of them see Smith (1974), 50-72; see also Winter (1997), 67 n.31.

²⁷ This is *P. Oxy.* 2190.

²⁸ See Winter (1997), 38.

complains, was due partly to the fact that many of the sophists did not reach the high standards posed by advanced education, and partly to the great demand at that period for good sophistic education which must have exceeded the supply. Neilus finally decided to attend the lessons of Didymus, a teacher who had just arrived in Alexandria from the country. The sophists in Roman Alexandria, as in other places and times, also asked for high fees, and the parents were ready to pay great amounts of money acknowledging, in this way, the enormous social prestige of sophistic education.²⁹

It is a puzzling fact that we do not have names of distinguished orators/sophists in first and second century Alexandria, in contrast to the neighbouring Naucratis. In the Byzantine encyclopedia *Souda*, however, there are some pieces of information that shed some light on the subject. Philoxenus, Timagenes, Theon, and Sarapion are four men who lived in our period and are termed rhetors or sophists. Philoxenus of Alexandria is presented basically as a grammarian and his works are of a grammatical nature, but it is said that he acted as a sophist in Rome. More information is not given about him.³⁰ Timagenes, if the *Souda* is right, was an Alexandrian rhetor, probably of Egyptian origin, who was taken as a prisoner to Rome. He was bought by Faustus, Sulla's son, and later he established a school of rhetoric in Rome. He was a sophist, as the *Souda* writes, in Rome at the same time as Caecilius, but he was very outspoken and as a consequence he was expelled from his school and spent the rest of his life in Tusculum. We are told that he had written many books, but no details about them are given. The fact that he was expelled from Rome and his school indicates that he had managed to make a name for himself as a sophist and teacher of rhetoric in Rome. Another sophist from Alexandria is listed under the name Theon, also called Aelius, who wrote *Progymnasmata* and other works on rhetoric.³¹ His *Progymnasmata* are preserved³² and one can easily detect there the spirit of a sophist and teacher who by experience knows which principles must govern the teaching of declamation and which concrete successive steps should be taken on the part of teachers and students in order for the teaching and learning to be really effective.³³ It is, then, certain that Theon acted as a teacher of declamation in Alexandria, and bore the title of sophist, the echo of which is preserved in the *Souda*. It is the *Souda* again that preserves the name of one more Alexandrian orator, Sarapion, surnamed also Aelius, whose work, as it is described by the *Souda*, could place him among the sophists. He wrote treatises and declamations of a clearly sophistic character (more clearly than those of Theon who is introduced as a sophist) such as on mistakes in declamations, panegyric on the emperor Hadrian, speech in council to the Alexandrians, whether Plato was right to expel Homer from the

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of the letter see Winter *ibid.* 37-39.

³⁰ Sopatrus is a similar case, but I did not mention him above since *Souda* is not certain whether he is *Apameus* or *Alexandrus*. It is written: 'Sophist from Apamea, or rather Alexandria'. His works do not imply any sophistic activity, while there is no clue as to the period of his life.

³¹ It is generally accepted that Theon is to be placed in the first or second century AD. An effort has been made by M. Heath to date him much later to the fifth century AD. See Heath (2003), 129-160.

³² See Patillon and Giancarlo (1997). See also Kennedy (2003).

³³ See, e.g., the preface of the *Progymnasmata*.

Republic, etc. In Sarapion's case we encounter a sophist with activities and works of a Philostrataean type: he teaches declamation and declaims himself, he discusses subjects taken from the classical tradition, he does not fail to deal with cotemporary themes, and he writes a panegyric on the emperor and probably delivers it in front of Hadrian, when he stays in the city.

Apart from the *Souda's* records there are some other sources which also give us names of sophists and some information about them. There is a sophist named Iulius Vestinus, who is certainly related to Alexandria, but is obviously not of Alexandrian origin. We know of him from a copy of a lost inscription preserved in a manuscript in the library of Einsiedeln, in which he is described as High Priest of Alexandria and all Egypt, as head of the Museum, in charge of the libraries of both Greek and Roman at Rome, supervisor of education and secretary of the emperor Hadrian.³⁴ The *Souda* lists him (under Ouestinos) as a sophist whose written work was basically of a lexicographic nature. The inscription gives a short picture of his career. Everything started from Alexandria where he became known as a sophist and took the offices of high priest and the head of the Museum; then he moved to Rome where he rose to become director of the imperial secretariat.³⁵ In the manner of sophists of this age he dedicates a poem called the *Altar of Besantinus* (*Besantinou bōmos*) to Hadrian and urges him to sacrifice with the acrostich 'Olympian, may you sacrifice for many years'. It is very probable that this happens at Athens in 131/132 at the official dedication of the temple of Olympian Zeus that takes place in Hadrian's presence and in which the famous sophist Polemo delivered the celebratory speech to the assembled crowd.³⁶ Vestinus seems to make his presence felt even in Athens, even on Polemo's day! Another name of a sophist from Alexandria is preserved in Diogenes Laertius. He is called Demetrius and, according to this information, he wrote theoretical works on rhetoric.³⁷ This person is probably the same Demetrius as the one known from Galen³⁸ and also found in an inscription under the name Aelius Demetrius.³⁹ He seems to have taught rhetoric and participated in the political life of Alexandria.⁴⁰

Last in this list of individual sophists related to Alexandria Achilles Tatius should be mentioned. He is not known as a sophist but as a novelist and writer of the novel (or romance) under the title *Leucippe and Clitophon*. It is exactly this work that can grant him a place in the company of sophists. The 13th century Byzantine scholiast Thomas Magister called Tatius a *rhetor*,⁴¹ and very probably he was. His novel, generally regarded as the most 'sophistic' of all novels of the period, is a product of the intellectual atmosphere of second century Alexandria, and exhibits all

³⁴ *IG XIV 1085*.

³⁵ See Fein (1994) 267-270; see also Benaissa (2012) 526-542.

³⁶ See more on L. Julius Vestinus in Bowie (2013) 237-260.

³⁷ Diogenes Laertius V. 84.

³⁸ Galen XIV. 629 Kühn.

³⁹ *OGIS 712*; cf. Bowie (2004) 70 n. 22.

⁴⁰ See Bowie (2004), 70.

⁴¹ See Vilborg (1955 – 62) 1:168 and 2:8; Rhode (1914) 473-474.

the characteristics of the rhetorical education of its author and the sophistic *paedeia* of his readers. It is not the right place to indulge in the rhetorical and sophistic features of Tattius' novel. In a very brief description one could start from the exploitation of rhetorical tools in verbal expression, proceed to the use of persuasive speech by the characters of the novel and the apparent insertion of sophistic school exercises (progymnasmata, *mythoi*, *ekphrasis*, etc), and conclude with features like the trial scene, the transformation of *Eros* into a sophist (self taught or a resourceful and improvising one), and other points, even the first person narrative (unique in the ancient novels).⁴² Even if Achilles Tattius was not a professional sophist himself, his work is an eloquent witness of the acme of sophistic education in second century Alexandria.

The fact that sophists from other cities went to Alexandria to perform and spend some time there could be adduced as further evidence that Philostratus' silence around the sophistic activity in the city does not reflect the real situation. Dio Chrysostom and Aelius Aristides (not to mention other intellectuals of the time: Plutarch, Lucian, Galen) paid a visit to the city and certainly one of their motives was its well-established and obviously well-known sophistic *paideia*. Dio delivered a speech in Alexandria with which we will deal below. Aristides also declaimed there and was honoured with a statue on which an inscription explains that the city of the Alexandrians, and some other cities of Egypt that are also named, 'honour Publius Aelius Aristides Theodorus because of his excellence and his speeches'.⁴³

Dio Chrysostom delivered a speech to people of Alexandria at the theatre of the city. The speech has the title *To the Alexandrians (Or. XXXII, Pros Alexandreis)* and was given either in the early second or in the late first century.⁴⁴ Dio most probably tries to bridge a gap that exists between the Alexandrians and the emperor or the Roman administration. It seems that a kind of rebellious spirit was a rather permanent characteristic of the cultural, political, and social life of Alexandria. The early third century historian Herodian, trying to explain Caracalla's enmity towards the Alexandrians, writes about the people of Alexandria: 'To a certain extent it was a natural feature of the people to indulge in lampoons and repetition of many pungent caricatures and jokes belittling the authorities, since they are considered very witty by the Alexandrians, even if libelous to the victims. The witticisms that really irritate are those which expose the truth of one's shortcomings'.⁴⁵ Dio himself refers to this behaviour of Alexandrians even against the emperors,⁴⁶ and he attempts to persuade them to change their rebellious conduct before they meet serious consequences as a result. This oration, however, provides a clear picture of the activities not only of

⁴² See Anderson (1982); Anderson, (1997) 2278-2299; Webb (2007) 526-541.

⁴³ *OGIS* 709; See also Downie (2013) 12.

⁴⁴ For a dating at the beginning of the second century (105-112 AD), during the reign of Trajan, see von Arnim (1898) 435-436; Kindstrand (1978) 378-383; Sidebottom (1992) 407-419. For a date in the first century 71-75, during the reign of Vespasian, see Jones (1973) 302-309; Moles (1978) 79-100, cf. 84 n. 48; see also Harris (1991) 3860-3872.

⁴⁵ Herodian IV. 9. 2. The translation is that of Whittaker, C. R. (*LOEB*); These Alexandrian characteristics are also discussed by Ovid, *Tristia* I. 2. 80; Martial IV. 42; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 19. 2.

⁴⁶ Dio Chrysostom, *Or. XXXII* 22.

sophists and orators in the city, but also of poets and philosophers. The oration has been extensively discussed by many scholars,⁴⁷ and I will confine myself here to a very brief presentation of the sophistic movement as it emerges from the speech.

In his preface Dio almost openly says that the city lacks serious rhetoric and declamations of a deliberative kind that can reveal the weak points of a city and make 'men happier and better and more sober and better able to administer effectively the cities in which they dwell'. At the same time it is implied that there is no shortage of speakers who are ready to deliver speeches for entertainment and that these speeches are easily reproduced, so that they will always be present there. He also points out that his speech is of the former type which the Alexandrians do not often hear, and he adds 'for I do not want to say that you have never listened to such speeches'.⁴⁸ Further down he explains to Alexandrians that it is not terrible if the learned men, who appear in front of them and deliver speeches intended for display (i.e. sophists, or orators), fail in this and declaim 'unlearned' speeches. The problem becomes terrible when these sophists disguise themselves as philosophers and aim at their own profit and reputation, taking no care for people's improvement.⁴⁹ Dio corroborates the existence in Alexandria of two common traits of the Second Sophistic. The first one is that the sophists declaimed and played the role of political or ethical advisors, though in a wrong way in Dio's judgment. The second point is that they were practically interested in earning money (probably fees for declaiming in the theatre) and gaining fame (increasing reputation and prestige that could be translated into more followers and students).⁵⁰ Moreover, Dio criticizes the Alexandrians for their distorted use of music: while music was invented to calm men and bring them into harmony with nature, Alexandrians have reversed the whole thing, and they are made tense with excitement by the songs. This wider discussion on singing, however, has its own bearing on some sophistic habits. Earlier Dio had sarcastically stated that he himself has 'no sweetness of song and a voice no louder than common',⁵¹ and now he says that orators, sophists, and even philosophers noticed that people like singing and they all adopted this style of declamation. Even the court-rooms give the impression of a place where a drinking party is in progress.⁵² It seems that Dio has in mind, when speaking of singing, a form of chanting adopted by sophists, at some points in their declamations, and especially in their epilogues in which the moving presentation in a sing-song voice could be (or it was considered by the so called Asiansists to be) exceptionally effective in winning over the audience, and even a jury, as Dio clearly says.⁵³ This tendency is also mentioned in Philodemus who seems not to be fond at all

⁴⁷ Smith (1974) 24-28; Jones (1978) 36-44; Desideri (1978) 66-186; Winter (1997), 40-59.

⁴⁸ Dio Chrysostom, *Or. XXXII* 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 10.

⁵⁰ See also Winter (1997), 49-50.

⁵¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Or. XXXII* 22.

⁵² *Ibid.* 68.

⁵³ See Jones (1978), 173. See also Lucian, *A Professor of Public Speaking* 19, *Demonax* 12; Quintilian, X. 3. 57; and Cicero, *Orator* XVIII. 57.

of this practice, as far as we can judge from what he writes about Varus.⁵⁴ It is also worth noting, in these words of Dio, that he accuses the Alexandrian sophists of following the whims of their audience. It is true that this is an old accusation, employed first by Plato and then by other philosophers against oratory, to which the orators always reacted.⁵⁵ In Dio's case, however, the speaker refers to this propensity of orators addressing a wide audience, and in a rather careful way so that he will not provoke their reaction. The message that is conveyed is that the crowd of Alexandrians sets the pace and the public speakers follow. The result is what, from Dio's point of view, is seen as moral degeneracy, and social and political disorder, which needs to be healed. But, as he writes, in the city there is a great dearth of men who know how to heal such a sickness; and when the philosophers do not dare or do not want to interfere, then there spring up 'a multitude of quarrels and lawsuits, harsh cries, tongues that are harmful and unrestrained, accusers, slanders, prosecutions, a crowd of rhetors...'.⁵⁶ At any rate, Dio describes a city in which a rebellious spirit prevails, in which philosophers are not able to exert any influence, and in which sophists and other public speakers just flatter people to gain their favour.

The case of the *Acta Alexandrinorum*

In this connection the *Acta Alexandrinorum* should also be mentioned, because they are related to a basic sophistic activity, that of undertaking the role of ambassador and representing one's city in front of the emperor.⁵⁷ The successful outcome of those ambassadorial efforts depended very much on the personal acquaintance and the prestige of the members of the embassies. The *Acta Alexandrinorum* that came down to us on papyrus fragments include accounts of trial scenes in the imperial court (in front of various Roman emperors from Caligula to Commodus) where prominent Alexandrian ambassadors support the case of their city against its enemies, often in audacious ways; and all this usually ends with their executions.⁵⁸ Practically this collection of documents shows aspects of the conflict between Greeks and Jews for civic privileges and socio-political status in Alexandria in the period under discussion, and reflects the opposition of the Greek leading class

⁵⁴ Philodemus, *Lives of the Sophists* 620; 'Let those who think Varus of Laodicea worthy of mention receive no mention themselves. For he was trivial, vain, and fatuous, and such charm of voice as he had he degraded by uttering snatches of song which might serve as dance music for some shameless person. Why then should I record or describe any teacher or pupil of his, since I am well aware that one would not be likely to teach such arts, and that it would be disgraceful for his pupils to admit that they had listened to such teaching?'

⁵⁵ See the relevant discussion in Karadimas (1996). In the *Gorgias* Plato asserts that the orators flatter their audience and that oratory is a kind of flattery. In the period of the Second Sophistic Aelius Aristides replied to this and other Platonic accusations against oratory in his lengthy treatise *To Plato: in Defence of Rhetoric*.

⁵⁶ Dio, *Or. XXXII* 19.

⁵⁷ It is true that this practice (to send some of the city's *literati* on embassies to influential Roman officials in the hope that the personal relations of the ambassadors as well as their personal prestige could secure certain privileges for the cities themselves) was followed by some cities even before the period of the Second Sophistic, but during this period such embassies were mostly undertaken by well-known sophists. For the former case see, e.g., on Potamo, Theophrastus and Theophanes in Bowersock (1965) 1-13; for embassies in Philostratus see Bowersock (1969), 43-47.

⁵⁸ See Musurillo (1954); Musurillo (1961); Harker (2008).

of the city to the Romans. Although some of the texts seem to be in a protocol-form, i.e. they seem to be official records of real trials, the historicity of the documents has lately been questioned. It seems that they were rather composed on the basis of oral or written reports from real embassies, and were expanded in a novelistic spirit and with the necessary rhetorical elements.⁵⁹ Each text is composed of narrative, dialogue and court-speech or of some of these parts.

It is worth noting that the relations between sophists and emperors in Philostratus are absolutely different from those described in the *Acta Alexandrinorum*. Philostratus gives a picture of peaceful and even friendly atmosphere between the emperors and the sophists. Even when tensions arose, they were finally settled without fatal consequences for the sophists. There were clearly friendly relationships in some cases between emperors and eminent sophists, many of them were employed as *ab epistulis graecis* or were given high administrative posts in the Empire. The most important role, however, the emperors expected the most prestigious sophists to play was to keep under control the internal conflicts as well as the finances of their cities.⁶⁰

An important activity of the sophists was to act as ambassadors of their cities. There are in Philostratus many accounts, more or less detailed, of ambassadorial missions of sophists. Scopelian,⁶¹ Polemo,⁶² and Aristides⁶³ are the most known cases. Other examples of successful embassies can also be found in Philostratus: Marcus of Byzantium went on an embassy to Hadrian for Byzantium and gained the admiration of the emperor;⁶⁴ Apollonius of Athens 'was sent as an ambassador on many missions of the greatest importance', and in one of them he successfully took part in a competition in declamation before the emperor Severus in Rome;⁶⁵ Heliodorus of Celtic origin represented also successfully his country making an

⁵⁹ Bowman (1986) 43; Kuhlmann (1994) 117-118; Harker (2008), 174-178.

⁶⁰ On these relations see the chapter on sophists and emperors in Bowersock (1969), 43-58.

⁶¹ Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 520. Scopelian went on many embassies to the emperors, according to Philostratus, but his most successful one was that concerning the vine edict of Domitian, when Scopelian of Smyrna practically acted as a representative of all Asia. Not only did he persuade Domitian to withdraw the ban on vine planting, but also he gained the emperor's admiration and in Philostratus words by his oration 'he won such presents as are usually given at an imperial court, and also many compliments and expressions of praise, and moreover a brilliant band of youths loving wisdom followed him to Ionia'.

⁶² Ibid. 531. Polemo also took part in many missions, the most important being one to Hadrian who used to favour Ephesus. As Philostratus relates the story, the sophist managed to convert him so entirely to the cause of Smyrna 'that he lavished ten million drachmae on the city' and with this various buildings were erected that adorned the city. Philostratus mentions the corn-market, a gymnasium, and a temple.

⁶³ Ibid. 582. Aristides also exerted his influence on the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus in order to defend the interests of his city, Smyrna. Aristides did not travel to Rome himself, but he sent a letter to the emperor Marcus Aurelius urging him to assist in rebuilding the city that had been destroyed by an earthquake in 178. 'The emperor' Philostratus writes 'actually shed tears over the pages, and in accordance with the impulse inspired by Aristides, he consented to rebuild the city'. This oration survives; Aristides, 19 Keil. The emperor and the sophist had met two years earlier in the East.

⁶⁴ Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 529-530.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 601.

excellent impression on Caracalla.⁶⁶ The number of unsuccessful embassies is in fact limited, but they exist and are also interesting, as they show how daring the sophists could be and what kind of witty exchanges could take place between them and the emperors. Alexander of Seleukeia went on an embassy to Antoninus on behalf of his native city. It seems that the rumours about him, that he took too much care of his appearance and used artificial means to enhance it, reached the ears of the emperor who paid too little attention, when the sophist was speaking. Philostratus describes the scene that followed in this way: ‘Alexander raised his voice and said: “Pay attention to me, Caesar.” The emperor, who was much irritated with him for having used such an audacious way of address, said “I am paying attention and I know you well; you are the fellow who is always arranging his hair, cleaning his teeth, and polishing his nails, and always smells of perfume’.⁶⁷ What the outcome of this mission was is, I think, obvious, even if Philostratus does not add anything about it. Philiscus the Thessalian is another similar example. He traveled to Rome to protect his own interests against the Heordaeans (people from Heordaea in Macedonia) to whom he belonged from his mother’s side, but Caracalla did not like his dress, the way he stood, the way he walked, his effeminate voice, his incompetent declamation; he interrupted him repeatedly and, according to Philostratus, said: ‘His hair shows what sort of man he is, his voice what sort of orator!’. Finally the emperor’s decision was in favour of Heordaeans and Philiscus had to pay the taxes they demanded of him. Then, Philostratus continues as follows: ‘When Philiscus said (to the emperor) “you have given me exemption from public services by giving me the chair (of rhetoric) at Athens”, the emperor cried at the top of his voice “neither you nor any other teacher is exempt! Never would I, for the sake of a few miserable speeches, rob the cities of men who ought to perform public services”’.⁶⁸ Important in this connection is also the well-known episode between Polemo and Antoninus, when the latter, as son of the emperor, was still proconsul of Asia. The clearly insulting behaviour of Polemo towards the future emperor shows not only the unrestrained character of some of the sophists, but also their great confidence, while the fact that the emperor tried and managed to reconcile the sophist with his son has its implications for the deep human relations that could develop as well as for the serious role of the sophists in the eastern parts of the Empire.⁶⁹

The *Acta Alexandrinorum* describe similar embassies to the imperial court that took place during the same period. All these were embassies of Alexandrians. The members of each embassy were usually three, but the number could range from three to ten.⁷⁰ Isidorus, whose name is found in five papyri, was one of the Alexandrian leaders who took part in such delegations at the beginning of this period.⁷¹ Another important delegate whose name appears in papyri more than once is Appian who

⁶⁶ Ibid. 626.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 570-571.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 622-623.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 534-535.

⁷⁰ Phillipson (1911) I 321-25.

⁷¹ *P. Giss. Univ.* 46 (= *P. Giss. Lit.* 4. 7); *Chrest. Wilck.* 14; *P. Lond.* 2785; *P. Berol.* 8877; *P. Oxy.* 8 1089.

acted as a delegate towards the end of the period in question.⁷² Isidorus is known as a gymnasiarch of Alexandria and an orator who was condemned to death by Gaius at the age of fifty-six.⁷³ He is also mentioned by Philo.⁷⁴ About Appian we are informed that he was also a gymnasiarch who, representing the Alexandrians, was led to death by Commodus.⁷⁵ In other papyri of the *Acta Alexandrinorum* we find many Alexandrian representatives who had the office of gymnasiarch.⁷⁶ We know from Philostratus that many sophists held various local administrative or religious offices.⁷⁷ Another common point is the courageous or even audacious and insolent way they address the emperors. In the case of Alexandrians of course this tendency reaches its utmost limit. Isidorus, e.g., responds to Caius in this way: ‘I am neither slave nor actress’ son, but gymnasiarch of the glorious city of Alexandria. But you are the cast-off son of the Jewess Salome!’ referring to the pro-Jew (as he believed) stance of the emperor.⁷⁸ In the same spirit Appian conducts the following dialogue with the emperor: Appian: ‘...I am neither mad nor have I lost my sense of shame. I am making an appeal on behalf of my noble rank and my privileges.’ Emperor: ‘How so?’ Appian: ‘As one of noble rank and a gymnasiarch.’ Emperor: ‘Do you suggest that I am not of a noble rank?’ Appian: ‘That I know not; I am merely appealing on behalf of my own nobility and privileges’.⁷⁹ Insolence was a characteristic at least of some sophists in Philostratus, too. Hermaiscus’ reaction to Trajan constitutes a sample of sophistic insolence or bravery on the part of Alexandrian representatives. The emperor accused him of insolence and he immediately replied: ‘What do you mean, I answer you insolently, great emperor? Explain this to me’!⁸⁰

⁷² *P. Yale inv.* 1536; *P. Oxy.* 33.

⁷³ *Col. ii.* 34ff. of *P. Lond.* 2785.

⁷⁴ See Philo. *Flaccus* 135; Philo writes about Isidorus that he was ‘a man of the populace, a low demagogue, one who had continually studied to throw everything into disorder and confusion, an enemy of all peace and stability, very clever at exciting seditions and tumults which had no existence before, and at inflaming and exaggerating such as were already excited, taking care always to keep about him a disorderly and promiscuous mob of all the refuse of the people, ready for every kind of atrocity, which he had divided into regular sections as so many companies of soldiers’ and he continues ascertaining that Isidorus was the leader of them and ‘whenever it was determined to do some mischief, at one signal they went forth in a body, and did and said whatever they were told’. The translation used here is that of Yonge, C. D.

⁷⁵ When Appian is led to execution he is depicted as crying out in the middle of Rome: ‘Come up, Romans, and see a unique spectacle, an Alexandrian gymnasiarch and ambassador led to execution!’; *Col. iii.* 5ff. of *P. Oxy.* 33.

⁷⁶ Strabo, who mentions the important officials of Alexandria, does not mention the gymnasiarch, but we can suppose that, since the gymnasium was the center of the social life of a Greek city, the gymnasiarch could assume the rather informal role of a kind of leader for the body of citizens. It is true, however, that we do not know exactly which the specific official duties of the gymnasiarch were. In the gymnasium not only did male youths gather to receive athletic training, but also Greek members of the elite gathered to pursue intellectual activities and socialize. See Bevan (1927) 104; Legras (1999) 208-217.

⁷⁷ Lollianus of Ephesus, e.g., was responsible for the food supplies in Athens (*Lives of the Sophists* 526), Theodotus was an *archon basileus* (ibid. 566), Appolonius of Athens was in charge of food supplies, *eponymous archon*, as well as hierophant in Eleusis (ibid. 600-601), and so on.

⁷⁸ *Col. iii.* 9ff. of *Chrest. Wilck.* 14. see also Musurillo (1954), 128-130.

⁷⁹ *Col. iv.* 13 – *Col. v.* 8 of *P. Oxy.* 33.

⁸⁰ *P. Oxy.* 1242, 40ff.

At the same time, as mentioned already, the picture that emerges from the *Acta* is absolutely different from that depicted by Philostratus. The Alexandrian delegations are unsuccessful and their leaders are usually convicted and executed. At the same time sophists are not mentioned as leaders or members of these diplomatic missions. However, if the available evidence mentioned above suggests that there was no shortage of sophists in the city, then it is difficult to suppose that during a period of about two hundred years no one of them managed to distinguish himself and become well-known as a sophist – not even in his own city. To take Isidorus as an example, it is obvious from Philo's description that he had an enormous influence on the Alexandrians, and this must not be regarded as irrelevant to his rhetorical skills. It seems that he became a gymnasiarch because he had many followers in the body of Greek citizens in Alexandria rather than the other way around. His basic capacity was that of the orator. Of course, to undertake the duties of a gymnasiarch gave him a kind of official recognition and enabled him to extend his influence. These indications could imply that Isidorus was a sophist who was very much involved in the public affairs of his own city, even if there is no information that he traveled around to declaim or that he taught declamation. We are allowed to suppose that among the gymnasiarchs who appear in the *Acta*, Appian included, many must have been notable orators who probably met Philostratus' criteria to be termed sophists. If this is the case, then the question why sophists are not mentioned in the *Acta* comes up. The answer to this question is given by the special character of these texts. The Alexandrians appear in front of the emperor very proud of the official position they were given by their fellow citizens in Alexandria (gymnasiarchs, e.g.) as well as of the fact that they had been appointed as ambassadors by the city. When Appian is led to death he reminds everybody in Rome of the public offices Alexandria has given to him: gymnasiarch and ambassador.⁸¹ It was not the personal prestige of each ambassador that mattered but the fact that they represented the most glorious city of Alexandria. Their courage or insolence did not result from the confidence gained through their personal achievements but from the duty to represent their city and fellow-citizens in the best possible way.⁸²

Alexandria and Philostratus

There must be no doubt, in my opinion, that, as Alexandria continued to be the city of scholars, scientists, and researchers, in the period of the Second Sophistic, in the same way it was also a city of sophists and orators. This was most probably the case for Alexandria even before the rapid development of the sophistic movement in Asia Minor and the mainland of Greece described by Philostratus. If this cultural, intellectual, and learned context, as well as some of the evidence presented above does not allow us to believe that no Alexandrian sophist was worthy of mention, then

⁸¹ See n. 75 above.

⁸² For the patriotic motif and the love of Alexandria exhibited in those texts, as well as for other significant motifs in the *Acta Alexandrinorum* see also Yoon (1996) 118-137.

we have to ask why Philostratus decided not to include any sophist from Alexandria in his *Lives of the Sophists*, and actually not to mention the city at all.⁸³

Philostratus himself is obviously a part of the cultural phenomenon he describes and has called 'Second Sophistic'.⁸⁴ He was a sophist and came from a family of sophists.⁸⁵ He did not understand the sophists only as declaimers and teachers of youth, but also as public persons who are actively involved in local (at least) politics, exert their influence on local or central administration, and use their relations with the emperors themselves to the advantage of their cities. Philostratus, as many other of his sophists, moved to Athens and, as other Lemnians, had the privilege of Athenian citizenship. He obviously belonged to the higher class of the Athenian body of citizens, he was probably a member of the Athenian council and held the office of hoplite general⁸⁶ in Athens in the first decade of the third century. Moreover, he was a distinguished member of the circle of Julia Domna, the wife of Septimius Severus and the mother of Caracalla, who had taken under her protection many intellectuals of the time, and especially philosophers and sophists.⁸⁷

In his *Lives of the Sophists* Philostratus, as has been observed, does not insist so much on the rhetorical output of his sophists or on their classicism, but rather on their social and economic status, as well as on their relations to cities and emperors. This is a clear indication that, to use Swain's words, 'Philostratus did not live in the past. He was fully alive to the pleasures and pressures the contemporary world offered to the educated elite. The Greek past was simply the way of preserving one's status in the present day'.⁸⁸ Philostratus' connection with the Imperial court seems to have been very strong and to have affected to some extent his written compositions. We know that his *Life of Apollonius* was written at the request of Julia Domna who was very much interested in Apollonius of Tyana.⁸⁹ His *Heroicus* was also influenced by Caracalla's imitation of the sacrifices by Alexander the Great at Achilles' tomb in 214 AD, and exhibits a clear anti-Persian spirit that accords with Severus' campaign against enemies from the east, the Sassanids, which took place at that time.⁹⁰ Moreover, his *Life of the Sophists* was dedicated to Gordian, Proconsul of Africa,

⁸³ This question is addressed by Trapp, but he sees it as a part of a more general problem ('Why is it that we don't hear more of Alexandrian higher culture in this period?'). See Trapp (2006), 125-129. Bowie mentions the question, but he proceeds only to a general remark: 'My guess is that part of the explanation should be sought in the fact that the city's political structure and consequently the dynamic of its social and political elite were quite different from those of the Greek cities of other provinces.' See Bowie (2004), 70.

⁸⁴ See Eshleman (2008) 395-413.

⁸⁵ Anderson (1986) 291-296; Flinterman (1993) 5-15.

⁸⁶ Philostratus himself explains that 'the functions of this office were formerly to levy troops and lead them to war, but now it has charge of the food-supplies and the provision-market'. *Lives of the Sophists* 526.

⁸⁷ Jones (1989) 194-197; Flinterman (1993), 16-19; see also Anderson (1986). Especially on the circle of Julia Domna see Bowersock (1969), 101-109.

⁸⁸ Swain (1998) 380.

⁸⁹ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* I. 3.

⁹⁰ Dio Cassius LXXVIII 16. 7; see also Aitken and Berenson Maclean (2004) xx.; also Aitken and Berenson Maclean (2002) lxxii-lxxxii. The authors also maintain that *Heroicus* may 'demonstrate the Hellenic piety of the emperor Alexander Severus and his highly influential mother, Julia Mamaea'. *Ibid.* lxxix.

whom Philostratus had met in the East and who was to become emperor later (238 AD).⁹¹

Alexandria plays its part in the *Life of Apollonius*. Among the many journeys of Apollonius to the west and to the east his journey to Alexandria is also included.⁹² Philostratus describes how much the inhabitants of the city longed to see Apollonius, and listen to his message, how they received him with great respect and almost as a governor of the country, how he saved an innocent man from execution upon his arrival, and how people admired him even more for that. Then, Apollonius visited the Temple (Serapeum), where he tried to persuade people that the sacrifice of animals, which they used to practice in the Temple, as well as horseracing, to which they were very much and fanatically addicted and which led them to vandalisms, are absolutely unreasonable practices and habits.⁹³ The chapters that follow (27ff.) are dealing with Apollonius' encounter with Vespasian who also visited the city at that time and expressed his strong wish to meet the sage. The first meeting is in the Temple where Apollonius stays, and Vespasian invites him to the Palace for the next day. The discussion that takes place there between Apollonius, Dio, and Euphrates in front of Vespasian is of greater importance for us. Dio is no other than our Dio of Prusa. Euphrates of Tyre is also a sophist or philosopher, although a rather forgotten one, who here pays a visit to Alexandria. Philostratus mentions him in the *Lives of the Sophists*, but only in passing (discussing Dio and Polemo), as a philosopher, while in the *Life of Apollonius* Euphrates is obviously of high prestige like Dio of Prusa, and seems to have had great influence with Vespasian.⁹⁴

Vespasian addresses a crucial question to them: how can he return to a policy honourable and useful to mankind, and change the direction of his predecessors who made people hate and have contempt for the throne because of their tyrannical behaviour.⁹⁵ Euphrates speaks first and he concludes by proposing to Vespasian to put an end to monarchy and, thus, bestow a popular government on Romans and gain the glory of having established a reign of liberty.⁹⁶ Dio's view is that Vespasian, as an emperor, should allow Romans to choose their own polity: 'If they choose democracy', he says 'allow it to them'!⁹⁷ Apollonius, however, criticizes both these positions as out of place in this connection, and as practically inapplicable. He declares that he does not care at all about constitutions, since the life of the people is ultimately governed by the gods, and maintains that one man's government can be a popular government, if it provides for the welfare of the community.⁹⁸ Then, Vespasian, pleased with these thoughts, asks Apollonius to instruct him in all the

⁹¹ See Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 479-480. He also mentions a meeting he had with Gordian at Antioch and the discussions they held there. For the problem whether Gordian I or Gordian II is meant see Avotins (1978) 241-247.

⁹² Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* V. 24-42.

⁹³ Ibid. V. 24-26.

⁹⁴ On Euphrates see the *Lives of the Sophists* resp. 488, 536; see also Jones (2007) 328-331.

⁹⁵ Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* V. 32.

⁹⁶ Ibid. V. 33.

⁹⁷ Ibid. V. 34.

⁹⁸ Ibid. V. 35.

duties of a good king, and the philosopher proceeds to listing pieces of wise advice on the matter.⁹⁹ A simple reading of the *Life of Apollonius* makes clear that the main character is involved in politics and establishes relations with first century emperors such as Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian.¹⁰⁰ His criticism to the philosophical advice given to the emperor by Euphrates and Dio, as well as his own position show that he also has in mind a certain body of political ideas that can be put into practice in a monarchical regime. This political self of Apollonius, in its practical and theoretical side, reflects, I think, the author's political ideas. It has already been observed that the fact that Philostratus expresses these reservations about the usefulness of philosophy, despite the long tradition such ideas (supporting the usefulness of philosophy to rulers) enjoyed in Greek political thought, accords very well with the fact that even in the *Lives of the Sophists* Philostratus does not seem to have any idealized conception of the relationship between philosopher and emperor.¹⁰¹ Moreover, even if Philostratus had found indications in his sources¹⁰² that Apollonius was an opponent of tyranny, he obviously did not hesitate to portray him as a councilor of emperors, according to his own political predilections.¹⁰³ In this way Apollonius becomes a sort of sophist who would very well adapt to the atmosphere of the *Lives of the Sophists*, if we could for a moment leave aside the religious part of his activities.¹⁰⁴

I think that the answer to our initial question lies exactly in this incompatibility of Philostratus' political ideas, practices, and probably ambitions with the general tenets and practices of Alexandrians and Alexandrian sophists. The Alexandrians were never on good terms with the Romans and they did not lose any opportunity to show it. Their sophists, as we saw above, were of the same spirit and they excited their compatriots' anti-Roman feeling instead of trying to control it, as Dio and, obviously, Philostratus expected. The *Acta Alexandrinorum* show clearly, even through their exaggerations, that this spirit was widespread in Alexandria, that the Alexandrian sophists had a different mentality from that of the Philostratean ones, and that this was widely known in the Empire. Sophists existed in Roman Alexandria, and one could even find sophists who co-operated with emperors and did not clash with them, as the case of Vestinus suggests. It seems, however, that it was a conscious decision of Philostratus not to include any sophists of Alexandria. The reason was the

⁹⁹ Ibid. V. 36.

¹⁰⁰ See also Flinterman (1993) 217.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 194-216.

¹⁰² Philostratus writes that his main source was the written documents of Damis, a pupil of Apollonius; *Life of Apollonius* I. 3. It is very probable that Damis was a real person; see Dzielska (1984) 21-52; Bowie (1978) 3-41. It is obvious that the question whether Damis is a real person or an invention is not relevant to our discussion. If Damis' records did not exist, then one can reasonably suppose that Philostratus made an even freer portrait of the sage.

¹⁰³ Flinterman (1993), 162-193, cf. 189-193.

¹⁰⁴ Koskeniemi (2009) 321- 334. See cf. 331: 'Perhaps the more important part of Apollonius teaching is his political activity. In this he never contradicts himself: he wishes to influence the development of good government and cooperation between citizens...Apollonius is an influential teacher of cities, emperors and would-be emperors, and he uses several methods to push his political agenda'.

general rebellious character of the city¹⁰⁵ and the fact that its sophists did not conform to the picture he created – and which reflects a part of the reality of the time – that the sophists contributed greatly to the prosperity of their cities and, thus, to the efficient administration of the provinces and the Roman Empire as a whole. To this basic Philostratean attitude one could add the fact that this ‘notorious’ city with the greatest port in the Mediterranean and its famous Library and the Museum was rivaling Rome in population and economic importance, and, even worse to Philostratus’ taste,¹⁰⁶ Athens as a center of intellectual activity.

Philostratus had his own idea about the role of the sophists in their cities and, more generally, in the Empire, but this seems not to be the only reason for not mentioning Alexandria. When he writes the *Lives of the Sophists* the relations between the emperors and Alexandria are not marred only by the many episodes incurred between them in the previous centuries. It was very recently, during the time of Philostratus’ belonging to the circle of Julia Domna, when her son, the emperor Caracalla, visited Alexandria, and as he was enraged with Alexandrians,¹⁰⁷ ordered a general massacre of youths without any hesitation. Herodian closes the narration of the terrible slaughter with a standard rhetorical description, which, however, shows the savagery of the massive killing and the way it was perceived by the people: ‘So great was the slaughter that the mouths of the Nile (a vast area) and the whole seashore around Alexandria grew red from the streams of blood which flowed through the plain. So much for what Antoninus did to Alexandria, after which he left to Antioch’.¹⁰⁸ Under the echo of this incident, which reminded everybody in a very violent way of the long lasting enmity between Alexandria and Rome, Philostratus took sides with the emperors and ignored Alexandria.

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¹⁰⁵ I am referring to the internal conflicts between the different ethno-religious Alexandrian communities, as well as to the general anti-Roman sentiment and the fact that the Alexandrians used to ridicule men in power. Even if one accepts with Haas that ‘the typicality of Alexandrian violence appears to be more of a literary *topos*, reinforced and embellished by successive writers, than an accurate depiction of social behaviour in the city’, one has also to admit that a literary *topos* of this kind must have been created on the basis and as a reflection of a historical reality. See Haas (1997), 11.

¹⁰⁶ Even a cursory reading of the *Lives of the Sophists* makes clear that Athens and Smyrna are the two cities of sophists favoured by Philostratus. For the cities of the sophists see Bowersock (1969) 17-29, and for the clear precedence of Athens over the other cities see Jones (2009) 113-126.

¹⁰⁷ Herodian writes about the reason of the emperor’s enagement: ‘The reason for his concealed hatred was that he kept receiving reports, while he was living in Rome during his brother’s lifetime, and also after his assassination, that the Alexandrians had actually been making great fun of him.’ Alexandrians were ‘jeering at him for imitating Alexander and Achilles who were very strong, tall men, while he himself was only a small man...’. Herodian IV. 9. 1-3. See also above n. 45.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. IV. 9. 8.

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