In Tacitus’s *ann* 12-15 we find the most comprehensive Tacitean engagement with Seneca. This section contains his only explicit references to the philosopher.\(^{11}\) *Ann* 12-15 comprises the first mentioning of Seneca (12.8.2) – as being remitted by Agrippina of banishment – up to the philosopher’s suicide (15.60-64). James Ker\(^{12}\) has demonstrated how Tacitus all the way through depicts Seneca in a “Tacitean portrait” (p. 305), indeed, both, in his deeds or historical achievements as a statesman and in his literary activities. In terms of, both the philosopher’s image as well as the reception of his works, *ann* 15.60-64 seems to be the “hermeneutical key” to Tacitus’s interpretation of Seneca. How does Ker in general describe the profile of the “Tacitean Seneca?”

### 2.1. Remodeling the image of Seneca as a historical agent in *ann* 12-15

According to Ker (a) the Tacitean portrait of Seneca is always characterized by incidents “Tacitus does not mention” (p. 307); (b) Tacitus’s “entire narrative on Seneca exhibits the tendency toward an ‘audience-based’ portrait ..., incorporating the conflicting judgments of several internal audiences” (p. 308); (c) Seneca’s character is “pulled in different directions by certain structural pressures in the *Annals*” (p. 308); (d) already Tacitus’s “first mention of Seneca ... introduces many motifs that will recur ...” (*ann* 12.8.2; p. 313).

(e) We might add to this list of compositional principles, which Tacitus follows when reproducing “Seneca,” the fact that the historian, especially in the part on the Neronic time (*ann* 13-16), frequently makes use of forerunning historians like Cluvius Rufus (e.g., 14.2.1), Fabius Rusticus (15.61.3; 13.20.2; 14.2.2) and Pliny the Elder (15.33.3) – these authors are most likely to be Tacitus’s “triad of sources” (Quellentrias; e.g., 13.30).\(^{13}\) The bonds to his sources impact the way in which Tacitus creates his story. Even though he has shown earlier in his *Annals* a critique of F. Rusticus who was, from Tacitus’s perspective, much too close a friend of Seneca (*ann* 13.20.2), he might follow F. Rusticus (*ann* 15.61.3) especially in the report of Seneca’s death (*ann* 15.60-64), and hereby accept the pro-Senecan tendencies which he finds here. The overall portrait of Seneca in the *Annals* is thus not fully cohesive (see, e.g., *ann* 15.60.2 versus 15.45.3).

To sum up: A historian like Tacitus obviously has a concise idea of how he would like to reproduce a crucial historical protagonist. By collecting and in-

\(^{11}\) D. R. Blackman/G. G. Betts (ed.), *Concordantia Tacitea*, 1632 – Seneca is mentioned 51 times in *ann* 12-15.


vestigating literary and documentary (e.g., *ann* 15.74) sources and testimonies of a wider range, he would create his particular portrait of Seneca by (a) leaving things out, (b) taking his contemporary, partly dissenting (reading) audience into account; (c) Tacitus’s portrait of Seneca has to fit the overall narrative frame and argument of his writing – (d) the way in which the very first mentioning of the protagonist is created, might already be decisive; and (e) ultimate narrative cohesion is intended, but not achieved (s. tendencies of sources). What can we learn for our field of Acts-and-Paul-studies from how Tacitus (re)shapes the image of Seneca into his portrait?

Remodeling the image of Paul, (a) Luke does not give us a full picture of Paul’s achievements either: he intentionally leaves things out: Luke does not mention Paul’s violent death in Rome; he does not reveal particular interest in mentioning Paul’s collection mission which was so decisive for Paul’s self-understanding (e.g., 1 Cor 16; 2 Cor 8-9; but see above: Acts 20:35; see also: 24:17); and most evidently, Paul’s letter-writing activity as such is ignored. Instead, Paul is frequently shown as an orator who primarily speaks to the public instead of addressing specific communities (as he does in his letter-writing). Is the historical figure of Paul the letter-writer transformed by Luke into the image of “Paul” the orator then? And why is this? When comparing Acts 20 and Philippians a striking difference comes to light: Philippians is a *captivity letter*, while Acts 20:18ff. is composed as a *free speech* in front of an ecclesial delegation. Luke obviously wants to show Paul in his farewell scene as a free man rather than as a prisoner, when predicting his personal fortune.

(b) As we see most clearly in the prologues, Luke takes his contemporary audience into special account when composing Luke-Acts. Superficially, Acts 20:18ff. is meant to be a farewell speech in which Paul prepares the Ephesian elders for his impending leave. However, interestingly enough, Paul does not meet with the elders in Ephesus directly but at a different place: in Miletus. Macedonia as a constitutive area of Pauline missionary activities and letter-writing (Phil, but also 1 Thess) does not play any role here (last time mentioned in Acts 20:1, 3). Could this choice of topography be explained by “audience-based” expectation? Do effectively different, eventually competing places and regions of Paul’s (former) sphere of influence in and beyond *Asia Minor* have to be reconciled at the time when Luke composes Acts? Seen in light of how geography is re-modeled when Philippians is supposedly re-shaped in Acts 20:18ff., and how Luke relocates the Ephesians to Miletus, we might reconsider the situation of early Christ-believing communities at the end of the 1st century CE.

(c) The portrait of Paul in Acts 20:18ff. is shaped according to the concept of a farewell scene. Hereby, the *farewell* as such is as important as the *predicting* character (*prolepsis*) of Paul’s speech: we know the stylistic features of ancient
farewell discourses from “biblical and early Jewish literature” (e.g., Gen 27:1ff.; 49; Tob 14:1ff.; T12 Patr),\(^\text{14}\) but also from New Testament texts (see, e.g., John 14-17; 2 Tim 4).\(^\text{15}\) The farewell is expressed via speeches, treatises, or letters; according to the literary motifs and devices, which are typical of the farewell discourse. Acts 20:18ff. also provides a short construct of history (v. 18f.), followed by a reference to the apostolic integrity (v. 19-21) and a prospect on personal fortune (v. 22f.); Paul emphasizes his subordination under divine plans (v. 24) and prepares his audience/the readers of Acts for separation (v. 25); as a church-leader, Paul gives a final testimony (v. 26f.), expresses admonition and warnings (v. 28-30), encourages his audience to memorize the apostolic exhortations (v. 31) and explains the present aim of exhortation (v. 32); the speech is concluded by a final proof of apostolic integrity (v. 33-35).

The farewell discourse in Acts 20:18ff. does not function as *ultima verba*, which is – in ancient literature a “literary topos, esp. in biographic and historiographic literature, in rhetorical literature and in purely literary works” which was “intended to illustrate the character and attitude of the dying person.”\(^\text{16}\) Tacitus also portrays Seneca as expressing *ultima verba* within the report of the philosopher’s *exitus* (ann 15.60-64).\(^\text{17}\) Seneca hereby recalls his friends “from tears to fortitude” (ann 15.62), and last of all addresses his wife (ann 15.63), who wants to depart this life together with her husband. Luke’s portrait of Paul in Acts 20:18ff., by contrast, is placed in a literary context where Paul – at the same time – looks back and ahead. In both perspectives, he wants to make obvious his apostolic integrity in order to sum up earlier history and to prepare for the coming needs of self-defense (Acts 22ff.). Luke is not interested in focusing on Paul’s death as such – neither here nor elsewhere in Acts.

(d) Paul is first mentioned in Acts 8:1. The first reference to Paul, who is at that time witnessing Stephen’s martyrdom, is decisive for how Luke will shape the image of the Paul in and beyond Acts 20:18ff. Stephen’s speech and martyr-

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\(^{14}\) M. Theobald, “Abschiedsrede.”

\(^{15}\) See G. L. Parsenios, Departure, 22-31. – There are farewell motifs to be found (partly similar to Philippians) in John 14-17 also, such as: going back to the past, by only referring back un-specifically (ch. 17); Jesus preparing for his departure/leave (14:2ff.); revealing and explaining his authority (e.g., 14:10); admonition and exhortation (14:15); consolation: you are not alone (14:18), announcement of a substituting person (14:26); community and love: God, Jesus, disciples (16:27); instruction of basic commands (14:21; 15:9ff.); call for imitation 14:18; warnings (14:30); poetic, metaphoric speech (15:1ff.); exhortation/joy (e.g., 15:11; 16:20); establishing friendship by listening to Jesus’ commands (15:14); 2 Tim 4:1-9: warnings (v. 3); expressing confidence in salvation (v. 7ff.); preparing for departure and death (v. 6).

\(^{16}\) C. Englhofer, “Ultima verba.”

\(^{17}\) See F. A. Marx, “Tacitus,” 83-103, 92ff.
dom, the accusations brought up against him (Acts 6:14), and the consequences of his death for the Jerusalem community (Acts 8:1-3) intertwine the story of Acts with the Jesus-story in the gospel narrative (Lk 21:20ff.), and help implement the global missionary program (according to Acts 1:8: the early community of Christ-believers cannot stay any longer in Jerusalem but has to spread). It is Paul, whom we, certainly by Lukan intention, first meet as a bystander of Stephen’s brutal death, and who himself will only shortly thereafter be “converted” into a Jesus-follower (Acts 9), who will finally and ultimately accomplish the world-wide mission program (Acts 28:30ff.).

In his apologia (Acts 22:1) in front of the Jewish people in Jerusalem, where Paul is confronted with accusations, again similar to those earlier brought up against Stephen (Acts 21:28), he himself retells – in Hebrew language (Acts 21:40; 22:21) – his conversion story (see also Acts 26). Here Paul will explicitly refer back to his earlier role as a persecutor of Jesus-followers (Acts 22:7f., 20). To Luke, Paul is thus not only the personal paradigm of the successful global missionary, but also of a “convert” who has to perform a crucial, indeed an ultimate change of roles: the persecutor himself will get more and more into the life-endangering situation of self-defense. Can this narrative motif of a “change of roles” in Acts be seen as a Lukan echo of Phil 2:6-11? In any case, Paul becomes a role-model for those readers of Acts who engage in global mission. It is only once in Acts – indeed, in 20:18ff. – that Paul can explain his personal fortune explicitly to fellow Christians: to the Ephesian community leaders. Everywhere else in his speeches, Paul addresses non-Christian audiences. And it is only in Acts 20:18ff. that Luke would use the term ταπεινοφροσύνη – a term which, because of its ambiguous sounding in the Hellenistic-Roman world, might not belong to Luke’s favorite vocabulary.18

(e) It seems that Luke in Acts cannot draw on precedent historiographical accounts – as Tacitus, for instance, goes back to F. Rusticus. However, historians necessarily have to consult different types of sources (literary, documentary, oral) since they can – even in the case of writing contemporary history – not be constant eyewitnesses of the events narrated themselves. Even though Tacitus aims at creating a cohesive narrative account in his Annals, the seams and tendencies (e.g., ann 15.60.2, 15.65.1) of the sources are still visible. Seen against this background, we might re-evaluate how much the tendencies that can be found within the so-called “We-passages” in Acts (16:10-17; 20:4-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16) differ from other parts in the book – especially those where the usage of Paul’s letters seems likely: as it is the case in Acts 20:18ff.19

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18 See E.-M. Becker, Demut, 173.
19 See E.-M. Becker, Birth, esp. 94-95.