and resistance from various anonymous characters on the other.\textsuperscript{44} The writer makes no reference to sources throughout the narrative, and is closely involved with the story.\textsuperscript{45} The peculiar weave of a story, with several implicit stories in the Acts narrative, is told to give hope for the future,\textsuperscript{46} for how the past is remembered is significant in shaping the future. What problems and issues might a fledgling movement face and successfully negotiate? If certain issues precipitated factions, how might the stories of origins be retold? How might they be remembered and written up if the writer or collator is seeking to reconcile factions that dated back to these issues? How might the success and failure of its heroes be remembered? In these dynamics, too, we have some ingredients to begin to comprehend a possibility, a spectre that haunts the narrative—the murder of Stephen—with the complicity of some in the Christian community. While a division between Christians and Jews has been sustained within a long history of supersessionist sensibilities, the diversity of both Jewish and Christian movements and communities at that time, makes such a neat division in complicity most unlikely. The case with which this divide occurs, however, can be seen when Esler's observation of "conflict within the Christian community" (6:1) shifts to "a conflict between Jews and Christians which culminates in the martyrdom of Stephen..."\textsuperscript{47} This constitutes a haunting of Acts (double genitive) in contemporary engagement: Acts is haunted by stories other than the story that is explicitly presented (objective genitive), and in turn, Acts' rendering of Christian origins is a haunting story for those cognisant of the complexities of Jewish Christian origins (subjective genitive).

That Acts is a literary work depicting an idealised memory of Christian origins is widely recognized.\textsuperscript{48} That it is also a haunting ideological work might not be so acceptable. Acts is a theological

\textsuperscript{44} Acts' ecumenical development of Peter does not indicate the intensity of conflict between Jewish and Gentile Christian movements reflected in Pauline correspondence (e.g., Antioch conflict). The ecumenical Peter is depicted by the later Acts writer as having forged the ground for Jewish-Gentile commensality (Esler, Acts, 105-109). Is the writer, however, seeking to ameliorate the memory of Peter’s stance on ambivalent commensality with Gentiles at Antioch?


\textsuperscript{46} Kee, Acts, 95.

\textsuperscript{47} Esler, Community and Gospel, 136. Esler suggests that only the [Christian] Hellenists were expelled, but also suggests that "Jews" expelled them (139).

\textsuperscript{48} Various registers of Acts' literary impetus are cited by Powell, Acts, 9-13.
story of the paradigmatic birth of the church and its providential success in the world, but with difficult (apostolic) memories suppressed. Gentile ascendency within the church is depicted as a smooth, and therefore providential transition, and not as a sustained conflicted issue. There is always an efficient resolution of conflict over the Gentile mission, and the story is a commendation of the church’s legitimacy in the wider political world. In short, Acts provides a theological prism for the historical transition from Judaism to Gentile Christianity (the refrain of turning to the Gentiles also marks Jewish rejection—13:46; 18:6; 28:28). Ancient Israel finds its true destiny in empire friendly Christianity, with Acts projecting an image of a church on good terms with the Roman administration, while “the Jews”—and this is the particularly disturbing feature of Acts—are frequently depicted as the real troublemakers. These idealised and ideological images are haunting from a contemporary ecumenical stance. Disturbances, riots, opposition, and persecution are created by “the Jews” against Christian proclaimers of the Word [6:12; 13:44-51; 14:1-7; 17:5, 13; 24:17-19; 28:19]. The rhetorical implications of the narrative are clear—Christians do not cause these riots: first, they are the result of “Jewish jealousy” and underhandedness—inciting others to stir up riots; and second, they are also the result of Jewish misconception and an inability to argue a cogent case. That is, since the leaders of the messianist community debate their case with superior skill and justification, “the Jews” have to resort to unlawful, underhand tactics against Paul and other leaders.49

Acts sustains an idealised memory, in order to establish an ideology of unified mission for the future—with factions amellowed, and a consolidated central message (kerygma) of the church in the face of diversity—hence the Acts’ speeches are all one kind.50 The speeches function to create a homogenous story

49 See Powell, Acts, 68-72; Augusto Barbi, “The Use and Meaning of (Hoi) Ioudaioi in Acts,” in Luke and Acts, Gerald O’Collins and Gilberto Marconi, eds. (New York/Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1991), 123-142. Sanders notes that Acts, “with its general tendency to make Jews the enemies of Christianity... gives the picture of universal Jewish persecution, stonings, and scheming against the church” (Schismatics, 9). Dunn notes that the “message for Greeks as well as Jews... offends the majority of the Jews in many centres [12:3, 11; 13:50; 14:2, 4, 19; 17:5; 18:6, 12, 19:9; 20:3, 19; 22:36; 23:12]” (Acts, xx). What was the composition, however, of these centres in terms of Jewish (Christian) believers?

50 Marion L. Soards, The Speeches in Acts: Their Content, Context, and Concerns (Louisville, Kentucky: WJKP, 1994), 3. Nearly one-third of Acts consists of speeches, providing a homogenous theological perspective through which all the apostles speak (see Powell, Acts, 30-32). For example, chapters 1-7 are virtually
throughout Acts, out of the loose ends that always emerge in human movements, however well marshalled toward a particular purpose.\(^{51}\) The story depicts a proclamation that triumphs in the face of pagan religion, magic, and philosophy.\(^ {52}\) It also depicts Christian heroes in a world of heroes and hero gods—essentially two apostles and several evangelists as heroes of the faith, who, seeking to survive the threat of persecution—are depicted as peace-loving, not trouble-makers.\(^ {53}\) This has implications for the church enduring in the world of empire politics amid the apocalyptic fervour of some groups at that time.\(^ {54}\) Finally, the narrative reflects traces of an early traumatic schism within the Christian church, interpreted through Stephen’s speech,\(^ {55}\) which provides a theological explanation for the eventual emergence of a Christian identity distinct from contemporary Judaism, even if it acknowledges its roots in ancient Israel. The far relationship is assimilated favourably, while the near relationship presents unassimilable difficulties, and is therefore rejected through incremental stages in the narrative. Stephen’s speech is a prism through which a negative portrayal of Jews is to be read in the remainder of Acts.\(^ {56}\) At the conclusion of Acts, the ancient Isaianic apoca-

\(^{51}\) Scardis notes that “diverse personalities, ethnic groups, communities, geographical regions, and historical movements are unified in Acts largely through the repetitive occurrence, form, and contents of the speeches” (Speeches, 15).


\(^{53}\) For example, Gallo’s position vis-à-vis Christians is a perspective the writer commends to the Romans—noninterference, because Christian theology is outside imperial jurisdiction (18:12-17). Is the incremental understanding of Paul by a Roman centurion (21:33-34, 38; 22:24-30; 23:28-29) an allegory of general education of the Roman administration about Christians (Tannehill, Acts, 227, 273-274)? The Acts narrative is heavily nuanced toward a portrayal of the Christian community as law abiding (in harmony with Pax Romana), and able to trust Roman protection: see Kee, Acts, 65-69, 92-93.

\(^{54}\) Compare the relationship between church and empire reflected in The Apocalypse of John.

\(^{55}\) Stephen’s speech functions to cast the rejection of the Jews as the culmination of a long history of rejection going back to Moses (see Tannehill, Acts, 85-97).

\(^{56}\) The writer’s speech, delivered by Stephen, hinges on two main points of critique: first, God gave the law, but your ancestors disobeyed it; and second, God did not need nor ask for a house (6:13-14, 7:38-39a, 47). Stephen’s speech amounts to charging the nation with idolatry for its allegiance to the temple (7:41-50), by equating the golden calf with the temple as “the works of their hands”—neither being wanted by God (see Dunn, Acts, 90-91). Stephen cites Isa 66:1-2 to
lyptic rationale is invoked and directed against contemporary Judaism (28:25b-28).

The writer of Acts tells an idealised story of the past from an ideological perspective, in order to galvanise unity for the future. Yet in doing so, the text is in tension with itself, with the explicit claims of the story being contested by seemingly anomalous, innocuous factors within the text. These factors betray at least one alternative perspective that is eclipsed in the text’s production. A text is always haunted by its other—and other stories it has not told, which nevertheless, cannot be extricated from the seams of a text. Reading does not need to eschew contradictions or ambivalence in a text, but rather, can allow these to unsettle solidified interpretations, introducing the possibility of alternative readings (pace Derrida above). The rhetorical world of a text is therefore under review, not an objective world it might be addressing, for such a world is now inseparable from a text’s theological overtures. Theological rhetoric is inevitable, but one must question whether the presenting rhetoric is the complete story of the circumstances and world it seeks to depict. The textual representation of a slice of human experience or communal life can never fully gather all the relevant threads in its attempt to represent that experience. It is always haunted by traces of otherness that are not represented.

The spectre of Stephen

The article has proposed that at least two uncomfortable memories emerge from the Acts writing: first, an uneasy memory for contemporaries of the writer—the murder of Stephen, and second, an ineluctable memory concerning some early Christian evaluations of Judaism. The spectre of Stephen lingers over many explicit and implicit debates of New Testament writings, and Acts has retained a haunting memory of internal schism, culminating in murder and persecution—one faction (at least by complicity) of the church by another. That the story is later written up, with Stephen being a victim of Christian versus Jewish conflict, is a quest to ameliorate a terrible memory of an early internal schism and its enduring tensions, with an implicit plea for unity and cohesive identity nearly a century

delineate God’s “transcendence” beyond human temples (Tannehill, Acts, 93). The charge of profaning the temple is also raised against Paul (21:28).

later, in an ever expanding movement in society. The plea for unity, however, comes at the cost of casting all the apostles on one side—despite their historical differences, with a rabble of anonymous Jewish characters and positions—aligned against the divinely inspired, guided, and prevailing church, on the other.