

The Temple and the Brothel: Mothers and Daughters in *Apollonius of Tyre*

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The anonymous Latin narrative entitled *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* (*The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre*, hereafter *Apollonius*) relates the fascinating adventures and wanderings of a small family (Apollonius, his wife, and their daughter Tarsia) around the Eastern Mediterranean of the Hellenistic period. This fictional tale survives in numerous versions, the earliest of which—in Latin—dates approximately to the late fifth or early sixth century AD, and ultimately derives, according to scholarly consensus, from a narrative originally composed in the third century AD. It is a matter of old and as yet unresolved debate whether or not *Apollonius* is a Greek pagan romance that has been not only abridged and translated into Latin, but also adapted and variously interpolated by Christian redactors. However, any interpretation of the diversity of style and content in *Apollonius* should also take into account the fluidity of similar popular narratives, the inventiveness and erudition of its author(s), and the cultural and religious polyphony of the late antique world in which the earliest extant versions were produced.¹

My purpose in this article is to examine the family roles of mother and daughter, as represented in the wife and the daughter of Apollonius, respectively. I am particularly interested in exploring how these roles are interrelated and redefined against the setting of two prominent locations, namely, the temple of Diana in Ephesus, and the brothel of Priapus in Mytilene. These places feature as accommodation for Apollonius' wife, and her daughter Tarsia, respectively, over a long period of time in the story. It will be

¹ Recent introductions on *Apollonius* include Archibald 1991; Schmeling 1996; Kortekaas 1998. Essential further reading is Konstan 1994, 100–113; Robins 1995. I am currently preparing a commentary on the earliest version of *Apollonius*.

shown that both mother and daughter share very similar adventures in very different environments, for, in the case of these female characters, the temple and the brothel, though traditionally representing purity and pollution, respectively, accommodate to the same extent female virginity and chastity. As it is argued below, widespread literary motifs, such as the theme of the Prostitute-turned-Priestess, earlier found in declamation, and general beliefs, such as the sexual purity of the Ephesian priestesses, serve as models after which notions of female physical and moral integrity are constructed in this narrative. Moreover, the concept of motherhood undergoes transformation during the adventures of Apollonius' wife, who apparently dies in labour (biological mother), and is reanimated to become a high priestess of the Ephesian Diana, the virgin goddess (spiritual mother). This interpretation of motherhood is significant in view of the possible Christian background of this narrative's author(s) or redactor(s), who may have been influenced in the portrayal of Apollonius' wife by the combination of motherhood and virginity as exemplified in the literary portrayal of the Virgin Mary.

The Absent Mother

"In the city of Antioch there was a king called Antiochus, from whom the city itself took the name Antioch. He had one daughter, a most beautiful girl" (*In ciuitate Antiochia rex fuit quidam nomine Antiochus, a quo ipsa ciuitas nomen accepit Antiochia. Is habuit unam filiam, uirginem speciosissimam*, A 1).² The opening of the earliest extant version of *Apollonius*, conventionally known as recension A, significantly indicates the author's focus on the relationship between fathers and daughters, which is subsequently explored in an extreme form, as the king Antiochus eventually falls in love with his own daughter and rapes her. The deflowered girl considers suicide, but her nurse readily persuades her to continue indulging her father's desire. The absence of a reference to a queen, Antiochus' wife and/or mother of the princess, puzzled ancient and modern readers alike; the earliest attempt to explain away the absence of the mother in the initial episode in recension A is found in the roughly contemporary recension B of *Apollonius*. According

² References are given by recension and chapter number(s). All quotations and translations from recension A of *Apollonius* are from Archibald 1991, 112–179. Passages from rec. B are cited from Schmeling 1988.

to this version, Antiochus' wife is explicitly said to be deceased at the very beginning of the narrative: "He had a daughter by his wife, who was dead" (*Hic habuit ex amissa coniuge filiam*, B 1).³ This piece of information—though vaguely phrased—may provide a hint about the circumstances of the queen's death, for *amissa coniunx* elsewhere in *Apollonius* refers to the hero's wife who, having given birth to a girl, apparently dies ('Scheintod') in labour (*in amissam coniugem*, A 28).

While the physical absence of the princess' mother conveniently enables Antiochus to start an incestuous affair with his daughter, it also functions as a programmatic element in the story. For the character of the mother is remarkably absent throughout this narrative that is dominated by the presence of fathers and daughters, and is substituted by the character of the nurse or the foster-mother. The mother's absence should be understood not only in terms of the mother's physical separation from her children, but also in terms of her inability to fulfil her family role that includes her involvement in the growth and education of her children. The notion of the almost extinct mother-figure is illustrated—arguably at its best—in the fatal riddle set by the incestuous king Antiochus to the suitors of his daughter: "I am carried by crime, I eat my mother's flesh" (*scelere uehor, maternam carnem uescor*, A 4). Here the elements of incest and cannibalism are impressively combined in an appropriately ambiguous phrasing that suggests both the loss of the mother and the father's 'devouring'/sexually abusing of the daughter. In her recent work on *Apollonius*, Elizabeth Archibald has persuasively argued that this narrative features a series of authoritative male figures (the kings Antiochus, Archistrates, and Apollonius, the prince Athenagoras, and the citizen Stranguillio), who combine the role of the ruler with that of the father of an only daughter. These characters exercise their paternal authority in a way that reflects their exercise of royal power; thus, Antiochus serves as a negative example of a father/ruler, Archistrates and Athenagoras provide a good one, while Apollonius is an ambivalent case. The feature of the incomplete family is also underlined by the facts that Apollonius, according to some versions (B 4), is an orphan of both parents, and that every major male char-

³ Compare Warner 1991, 27–28, on eighteenth century versions of *Beauty and the Beast* and *Cinderella*: "The absence of the mother from the tale is often declared at the start, without explanation, as if none were required"; also Warner 1994, 201–217; Archibald 2000, 54 note 14.

acter in the story, with the sole exception of Stranguillio, appears to be a widower.⁴

Stranguillio's wife, Dionysias, a mother herself, not only features in the plot, but also plays the role of the dominant wife to her husband, the cruel mistress to her slaves, and the evil foster-mother to Apollonius' daughter Tarsia. Hers is the only image in *Apollonius* of a mother walking on the street alongside her children, her own daughter (Philomusia) and her foster-child (Tarsia) (A 31). There is, unfortunately, little indication of Dionysias' virtues as a mother, for she is given the conventional literary role of the wicked stepmother. It is through the machinations of the greedy and envious Dionysias that the young Tarsia runs the risk of losing her life in the hands of a bailiff, only to be abducted by pirates, and to become a prostitute. The wicked Dionysias hypocritically justifies her murderous plans against Tarsia as the result of care for her own daughter: "My plan cannot be accomplished unless I do away with her, by the sword or by poison; and I shall adorn my daughter in her finery" (*Non potest fieri hoc, quod excogitavi, nisi ferro aut ueneno tollam illam de medio, et ornamentis eius filiam meam ornabo*, A 31).⁵ Unlike the variety and scales of paternal attitudes portrayed in *Apollo-nius*, this is the only expression of 'motherly care' we find in the narrative, and it can hardly provide a positive image.

It may thus be argued that mothers in *Apollonius* perform only their biological role as bearers of (female) children, without really being involved in their daughters' lives, because they usually die (or, as in the case of Dionysias, are egocentric). The physical absence of a biological mother has in some cases serious consequences in the life of a young girl—consider Antiochus' and Apollonius' daughters, whose fate possibly suggests that substitute mothers or other mother figures (such as nurses) are potentially harmful for their foster children.⁶ It cannot be said, however, that the presence of a bio-

⁴ See Archibald 1989; Schmeling 1998, 3287.

⁵ It is instructive to compare this sentence with the altered version Dionysias presents to her husband: "I will get rid of Tarsia and adorn *our* daughter with her finery" (32). Apollonius later rightly regards with suspicion the grief of Dionysias: "He looked at the woman and said: 'My daughter Tarsia died a few days ago. Surely her money and jewels and clothes have not gone too?'" (37). See Doody 1998, 86.

⁶ The relation between a Roman mother and her daughter was expected to be characterized by mutual support and common interest; see Dixon 1988, 210–232. For the complex phenomenon of fosterage in Roman society see Bradley 1987; Dixon 1999; Krause 1994, 61–63; cf. Bremmer 1999.

logical mother is considered vital for a young girl, as there are simply no examples of such situations. Apollonius' wife seems to be motherless too, but it is the love and support she receives from her father, the king Archistrates, that make her a talented and generous person and pave the way to a fortunate marriage (A 15–24). On the other hand, Tarsia, though in the hands of the wicked Dionysias, enjoys the care of her faithful nurse Lycoris who, as long as she lives, stays close to her nurseling (A 29–30).

Like Mother like Daughter

The romance of Apollonius is well known for its paratactic style and episodic structure, as well as for the recurrence, with variations, in it of significant themes and motifs, such as incest and riddles. Scholars have identified three major elements of narrative technique in *Apollonius*, namely repetition, parallelism, and contrast.⁷ It is worth stating the most notable parallels between the hero Apollonius and his daughter Tarsia. Both father and daughter show remarkable wisdom and expertise in fine arts and in riddling alike, and both are persecuted by malignant enemies (an incestuous king and an evil foster-mother, respectively). Likewise, both suffer extreme poverty and, in that state, meet their partner-for-life (the shipwrecked Apollonius meets Archistratis, the daughter of the king Archistrates,⁸ while Tarsia, in her capacity as prostitute, meets Athenagoras, the prince of Mytilene). However, what is of particular interest here is whether or not Tarsia, apart from being a female version of her father Apollonius, is also a child of her mother Archistratis.

The relation between the heroine and her mother in *Apollonius* has so far received little attention. Each of these female characters undergoes different adventures in the latter part of the narrative, and the author's focus is undeniably upon those of the daughter.⁹ During a sea-journey from Cyrene to Antioch, Apollonius' pregnant wife prematurely gives birth to a girl and, as

⁷ See Ruiz-Montero 1983–84, 321–324; Schmeling 1998, 3283–3288.

⁸ It should be noted that Apollonius' wife is named Archistratis only in rec. B, whereas in rec. A she is referred to as "the daughter of king Archistrates". The name Archistratis renders in Latin the Greek Ἀρχιστράτις (Kortekaas 1998, 186 note 31). In this article I often apply the name Archistratis to Apollonius' wife, but I find that the name hardly characterizes her as an individual, for it essentially relates her to her father Archistrates.

⁹ Cf. Archibald 2000, 54 note 16: "one might argue that the role of the female protagonist is divided between mother and daughter, and that they cannot both take centre stage at the same time."

a result of complications caused after the child's birth, falls in a coma. She is believed to be dead and, while lamented by her husband, she is put in a coffin and thrown into the sea. The coffin reaches the shore of Ephesus and a physician finds Archistratis' apparently lifeless body. Apollonius' wife is resuscitated thanks to the acute treatment she receives by a clever pupil of the physician, and is accordingly adopted by that same physician. She then requests to enter the temple of the Ephesian Diana, in order to spend the rest of her life in chastity among the virgin priestesses:

Post paucos dies, ut cognouit (sc. medicus) eam regio genere esse ortam, adhibitis amicis in filiam suam sibi adoptauit. Et rogauit cum lacrimis, ne ab aliquo contingeretur. Exaudiuit eam et inter sacerdotes Dianae feminas fulsit et collocauit, ubi omnes uirgines inuiolabiliter seruabant castitatem. (A 28)

After a few days, when he [i.e. the physician] learned that she was of royal birth, he summoned his friends and adopted her as his daughter. She made a tearful plea that no man should touch her. He took heed, and supported her and placed her among the priestesses of Diana, where all the virgins preserved their chastity inviolate.

Apollonius' wife stays at the temple of Diana for approximately fourteen years, a period of time during which the reader is given very little information about the life of Archistratis or the whereabouts of Apollonius (he is said to be in Egypt). The reunion of the family takes place at the temple of Diana in Ephesus, where Apollonius and his recently found daughter Tarsia travel upon advice of a supernatural messenger. The novice Archistratis has by that time become a beloved and respected high priestess in charge of the Ephesian temple, in other words, a spiritual mother (*coniunx eius inter sacerdotes principatum tenebat* "his wife was the chief priestess", A 48). She is superior among the priestesses (*maiori omnium sacerdotum*, A 48), or, as another version has it, a 'mother' to them (*matri omnium sacerdotum*, B 48). Once the recognition among the members of the family takes place, Apollonius' wife leaves Ephesus—not without difficulty (*cum planctu amarissimo, eo quod eos relinqueret* "very bitter lamenting that she was leaving them", A 49). Her social reintegration is completed when, some years later,

she gives birth to a son, a male heir to the kingdoms of her father and her husband,¹⁰ and dies having lived a peaceful life close to Apollonius (A 51).

On the other hand, her daughter, Tarsia, enjoys an altogether different life, and becomes the 'heroine' in the latter part of the narrative (A 29–36; 40–47). After the apparent death of Archistratis, she is entrusted to the care of Stranguillio and Dionysias, Apollonius' friends from Tarsus, who, out of gratitude to their benefactor Apollonius, accept to raise Tarsia together with their own daughter. Tarsia grows up believing that Stranguillio and Dionysias are her natural parents, and it is only through the last words of her dying nurse that she finds out the truth about her origins and her real parents. However, Dionysias, envious at the beauty of Tarsia and filled with greed for the wealth of the girl's father, employs a bailiff to murder the young girl; nevertheless, Tarsia survives this attack, for she is carried away by pirates and sold to a greedy brothel-keeper in Mytilene who worships the god Priapus. Now, Tarsia asks her customers to spare her virginity, and listen to her life-story; indeed, they feel pity and compassion for her misfortunes, and not only leave her untouched, but also give her money to enable her to obtain her freedom from the greedy pimp (A 34). Thus, Tarsia, through her cleverness and her eloquence, retains her virginity, and becomes a major attraction for men and women alike, who visit the public place to listen to her as she solves riddles, performs music, and narrates her life-story (A 36).

In a way, the adventures experienced by the wife and the daughter of Apollonius are both contrasting and identical. At the starting point of their parallel lives, both women have double family-identities. Tarsia, the daughter of Apollonius and Archistratis, believes herself to be the daughter of Stranguillio and Dionysias, whereas Archistratis, daughter of Archistrates and wife of Apollonius, becomes the adopted child of the Ephesian physician and a devoted virgin. Both women are given away by Apollonius. His wife is entrusted to the care of the sea and the kindness of a stranger who would find the coffin and bury the corpse, whereas his daughter is given to the care of old friends who would raise her as their own child. Both of them eventually appear to be dead in the eyes of Apollonius, and are mourned as such with equal grief by the hero.¹¹ Both of them will meet each other again

¹⁰ Archibald 2001, 95 considers this detail as the triumph of patriarchy in the story, and the solution to the problem of potential father-daughter incest.

¹¹ Konstan 1994, 103 subtly discusses the way in which these analogies influence our understanding of Apollonius as novelistic hero.

through Apollonius, who, as hero, husband, and father, is thus the agent of both separating and uniting mother and daughter.

However, the most striking similarities concern the concepts of virginity and purity, which each of these women represents. Tarsia, a prostitute and a virgin at the same time, is, at some point in the story, sent to entertain her own father, who does not recognise in her his daughter. Apollonius takes Tarsia for a common prostitute, but the girl assures him of the contrary:

Salve, quicumque es, laetare: non enim aliqua ad te consolandum ueni polluta, sed innocens uirgo quae uirginitatem meam inter naufragium castitatis inuiolabiliter seruo. (A 40)

Greetings, whoever you are, and be cheerful. I am no fallen woman who has come to console you, but an innocent girl, who keeps her virginity intact in the midst of moral shipwreck.

The highly charged language of purity and pollution, and the pointed, as well as common, metaphor of shipwreck¹² underline the integrity of the heroine, both literal and metaphorical. The author of *Apollonius* uses similar language once more in the story, when referring to the enclosure in the temple of Diana of Tarsia's mother, and to her vows of perpetual chastity (*ubi* [sc. *in templo Dianae*] *omnes uirgines inuiolabiliter seruabant castitatem*, A 27). Thus, the bodies of the mother and the daughter, emblematic though they are of the pure temple and the impure brothel, respectively, feature as inaccessible and impenetrable bodies of virgins. On the other hand, the temple and the brothel, both public places *par excellence* and mainly male territories, are in this way put on a par, for they accommodate to the same extent the untouchable and undefiled bodies of Archistratis and Tarsia.

As I will next argue, although the literary backgrounds against which each of those narrative situations may have developed, namely Roman declamation and Christian discourse on the Virgin Mary, are of a different nature, they equally communicate ideas on purity, which the author of *Apollonius* appropriates and connects with the notions of wealth and royal status.

¹² The expression *naufragium castitatis* with reference to the *lupanar* is frequently attested in Roman hagiography; see Kortekaas 1998, 180 note 8; also Robins 2000, 537.

The Prostitute, the Princess, and the Saint

Tarsia, though an alleged orphan and a prostitute, is proud of her noble origins. In her song to her (as yet unrecognised) father, she stresses the impenetrability of both her body and her reputation. "I walk among corruption, but I am unaware of corruption... / Now I have been sold to a pimp, but I have never tarnished my honour" (*Per sordes gradior, sed sordis conscia non sum ... / Lenoni nunc uendita numquam uiolauī pudorem*, A 41). Tarsia heroically raises herself from the infamous world of prostitution, and loudly proclaims her purity. Her ill-famed accommodation and profession—if she cannot be named a prostitute, she is a public performer, after all—have done no damage to her reputation, as her increasing popularity among the locals has shown. Tarsia's purity, cleverness, and strong will overcome the dangers that might incur not only upon her body but also, more importantly, upon her status. Once she has regained her royal position, she expresses her compassion for the 'girls' (*puellae*) at the brothel by granting them wealth and freedom (A 40). Her 'sympathetic' view of prostitution by no means lacks moralising tone or deviates from traditional ideas. Nevertheless, as she is given a voice of her own, she questions the established attitude towards the socially marginalized women of this profession. Tarsia claims for prostitutes the right of individuality.¹³

The narrative situation in which a virgin is kidnapped or captured by pirates, and sold to a brothel-keeper, is found, prior to *Apollonius*, both in Roman comedy (Plautus' *Curculio*, *Persa*, *Poenulus*, and *Rudens*), and in ancient fiction (Xenophon of Ephesus, Apuleius).¹⁴ However, in Plautine comedy kidnapped freeborn girls such as Planesium in *Curculio* or Palaestra in *Rudens*, who are in the hands of greedy pimps, do not normally take action themselves to obtain their freedom or escape from the brothel. They count on the (usually, meagre) financial help of their beloved ones or have to be rescued by means of the help of a scheming slave.¹⁵ Similarly, in Apu-

¹³ For the infamy related to the profession of a prostitute in the Roman mind see e.g. Herter 1960, 107–108; Edwards 1997, 81–82; Flemming 1999, 50. I do not take into account here the notion of sacred prostitution, of which the historicity and authenticity are in doubt; see Beard and Henderson 1998.

¹⁴ For the motif of the abducted heroine who preserves her chastity in a brothel, in comedy and in fiction see Klebs 1899, 303–305; Trenkner 1958, 108; Herter 1960, 79; Raffaelli 1984, 126; Schmeling 1996, 542.

¹⁵ Cf. Plaut. *Curculio* 213; *Persa* 656; *Poenulus* 100–101; *Rudens* 664–676.

leius' second-century novel *Metamorphoses*, a group of robbers who abduct the noble Charite, consider selling her to a brothel-keeper (7,9,5–6); the girl is eventually saved through the intervention of her cunning fiancée. On the other hand, in Xenophon's novel *Ephesiaca*, which is prior to Apuleius' novel and has often been compared, in terms of content and style, to *Apollonius*, the heroine Anthia is sold to a brothel-keeper. Facing the danger of losing her virginity, Anthia feigns epilepsy, and succeeds in deterring her clients (5,7). In yet another critical situation, which, however, does not involve a brothel, Anthia does not hesitate to kill her potential rapist (4,5). The otherwise passive novelistic heroine reveals her resourcefulness in words and deeds, when her virginity (rather than her life) is at stake.

The infamy and dangers involved in the life of a female common prostitute (as opposed to a, perhaps less endangered, courtesan) are best illustrated in a fictional case from Roman declamation, namely the second of the *controversiae* transcribed by Seneca the Elder and entitled *Sacerdos Prostituta* "the Prostitute Priestess". The content of this rhetorical piece is of particular interest for this study, since it reveals striking thematic similarities with the plot in *Apollonius* (that much has often been noticed),¹⁶ and explicitly deals with the issue of the reciprocal influence between space and individual, as exemplified in a brothel and a prostitute, respectively. The theme of the rhetorical exercise is as follows:

Quaedam uirgo a piratis capta uenit; emptā a lenone et prostituta est. Venientes ad se exorabat stipem. Militem qui ad se uenerat cum exorare non posset, conluctantem et uim inferentem occidit. Accusata et absoluta et remissa ad suos est. Petit sacerdotium.

A virgin was captured by pirates and sold; she was bought by a pimp and made a prostitute. When men came to her, she asked for alms. When she failed to get alms from a soldier who came to her, he struggled with her

¹⁶ Scholars usually compare the theme of this rhetorical exercise with the adventures of Tarsia. However, I would argue that this declamation, if taken as potential source of *Apollonius*, anticipates the adventures of both Tarsia (the prostitute) and Archistratis (the priestess). The adventures of the heroine in this declamation encapsulate the adventures of the two heroines in *Apollonius*.

and tried to use force; she killed him. She was accused, acquitted and sent back to her family. She seeks a priesthood.¹⁷

The Roman schools of declamation, originally instituted to train advocates in public speaking, were, under the Empire, heavily criticised by contemporaries for striving after extravagance and sensationalism, instead of cultivating the true form of pleading. Declamations were notorious for their artificial style and sensationalised themes, in which pirates, kidnappers, rapists, evil stepmothers, and poisoners featured in various situations with a marked disregard for realism.¹⁸ The *controversiae* consisted of an, often imaginary, law and a brief outline of the facts. In the case of the *Sacerdos Prostituta* the statute reads: “A priestess must be chaste and of chaste parents, pure and of pure parents” (*Sacerdos casta e castis, pura e puris sit*). The declaimers take part in a debate, in which they adopt the character of the plaintiff or the defendant, and plead for either side (*argumentum in utramque partem*), specifying the motives and circumstances underlying the argumentation of either side. It is important to note that the purpose of these rhetorical pieces is neither to come to a judicial closure nor to offer a final judgement, but to let both sides speak, to argue *in utramque partem*. The freedom provided in these ‘open-ended’ narratives gave the declaimers the opportunity to create life-like situations that touch the extreme, to employ socially marginal characters (such as prostitutes), and to define values such as (in our example) the virginity and purity of a female.

Placed at the centre of this declamation are the issues of sexual pollution and of female chastity as defined by male authorities. “Is chastity to be judged merely by virginity or by abstinence from all shameful and obscene things?” (*Vtrum castitas tantum ad uirginitatem referatur an ad omnium turpium et obscenarum rerum abinentiam*, Sen. *contr.* 1,2,13). The prosecutor in this case insists that the Prostitute Priestess is legally liable to *stuprum*, violation of her own sexual integrity. Even if she has retained her virginity, her experience has irrevocably defiled her. For the prosecutors, the

¹⁷ Text and translation are by M. Winterbottom, *The Elder Seneca. Declamations vol. I* (The Loeb Classical Library), Cambridge, Mass., and London 1974.

¹⁸ On Roman declamation during the Empire see e.g. Bonner 1969; cf. Russell 1983. The relation of the themes of rhetorical exercises with contemporary reality is a matter of continuing discussion; see e.g. Migliario 1989, especially 543–546 on rape and prostitution in declamation; and Bonner 1969, 32–33, 104; Helms 1990, 320–323 on the “*Sacerdos Prostituta*”.

pollution is primarily material, and derives from the place itself. “You offered yourself, a girl, in a brothel. Even if nobody outraged you, the place itself did so” (*Stetisti puella in lupanari: iam te ut nemo uiolauerit, locus ipse uiolauit, ibid. 1,2,7*). The sacred space of the temple and the profane space of the brothel are incompatible in this line of argument, and correspond to clearly marked definitions of the pure versus the defiled body. “It is not without reason that a lictor attends a priestess: he removes a prostitute from her way” (*non sine causa sacerdoti lictor apparet: occurrenti meretricem summouet, 1,2,7–8*). On the other hand, the advocates of the Prostitute-turned-Priestess posit an internal purity that avoids sexual pollution. Bad fortune, they argue, has forced that woman to the brothel, and, despite the harsh conditions, she has managed to preserve her chastity. Thus, while those who argue against her equate the woman’s defilement with the material circumstances of her imprisonment, her advocates stress the discrepancy between her invincible chastity and the physical conditions of the brothel (*licet illam ponatis in lupanari; et per hoc illi intactam pudicitiam efferre contigit, 1,2,20*).

The declamatory motif of the Prostitute Priestess, variations of which we find in Plautine Comedy, the Greek *Ephesiaca* and the Latin *Apollonius* (see above, p. 106–107) re-emerges in *Acts of Christian martyrs* and in hagiography.¹⁹ In these texts, a noble lady or a young virgin of noble origin is confronted with the Roman authorities, because she usually refuses to sacrifice to pagan deities, and/or declines a marriage proposal by a non-Christian. She is therefore threatened with, or is actually condemned to, being put in a brothel (see e.g. the third-century *Martyrdom of Pionius* 6,7). It is instructive to set the treatment of this popular motif as found in the account of the death of Saint Agnes (*Acta Sanctorum* Jan. XXI), herself a virgin martyr and a model for virgin ascetics, against *Apollonius* and the Senecan declamation. The choice of the specific Saint and of the account of her death is purposeful. For, on the one hand, Apollonian scholars often find similarities between the episode of Tarsia in the brothel and the legendary account of the death of

¹⁹ The classic treatment of this topic is Augar 1905. Shorter discussions include Söder 1932, 148–149; Trenkner 1958, 109 note 14; Herter 1960, 79–80 note 163; Cataudella 1981, 944; Archibald 1991, 34. My account is particularly indebted to Helms 1990 and Rizzo Nervo 1995.

Saint Agnes,²⁰ and, on the other, this late Latin account resumes the issues of pollution and purity in an infamous place.

The martyrdom of the famous Roman Saint Agnes is known from diverse accounts that were extant at the end of the fourth century, namely a treatise by, and a hymn attributed to, the bishop Ambrose, an epigram by Pope Damasus, and a poem by Prudentius. Among these early sources of the Saint's martyrdom, Agnes' condemnation to a brothel features only in Prudentius' account (*Peristefanon* 14) and may have been borrowed by a popular legend of this Saint or modelled after similar episodes referred to by Christian writers.²¹ This characteristic detail reappears in the Latin *Gesta* (Deeds) of Saint Agnes, which are incorrectly attributed to Ambrose and dated from the fifth or the sixth century.²² There the heroine, at the age of thirteen, is sent to a brothel, because she both declines the marriage proposal of the son of the Prefect, and refuses to sacrifice to the goddess Vesta. Her mere presence at the brothel causes a supernatural intervention, for an angel appears at her side and a bright light encircles her so that she can be neither seen nor touched. Those who enter the brothel remain to pray to God, and the place of infamy becomes a place of purity and prayer:

Interea lupanar locus orationis efficitur; in quo omnis qui fuisset ingressus, adoraret et ueneraretur et, dans honorem immenso lumini, mundior egrederetur foras quam fuerat intus ingressus. (Ps. Ambr. *epist.* 1,9)

Meanwhile the brothel becomes a place of prayer; anyone who entered it, adored and worshipped, and, having paid honour to the immense light, came out purer than he was when he came in.²³

The son of the Prefect, surrounded by his companions, appears and is determined to have Agnes by force. He boldly enters and, as he is about to lay hands on her, is struck dead by the devil. The young man's companions ac-

²⁰ See Kortekaas 1984, 105; 236–237 note 582, with references.

²¹ For the diverse accounts of Agnes' death see the fundamental studies by Franchi de' Cavalieri 1899 and 1908, 141–164, and by Jubaru 1907. For the relation of Prudentius' account to earlier tradition see Malamud 1989, 150 note 3, 157 note 5; Palmer 1989, 250–254, with bibliography; Burrus 1995.

²² For the issues of authorship and dating of the *Gesta* see Dufourcq 1900, 214–217; Jubaru 1907, 121–136; Franchi de' Cavalieri 1908, 157 note 1; Consolino 1984, 99–101.

²³ Text by Jubaru 1907, 358–363, at 360. The translation is mine.

cuse Agnes of having killed the son of the Prefect by magic. The Prefect hurries to the scene, and is informed of the situation from both Agnes and the companions of his son. He advises Agnes to pray to the angel who killed his son, and ask him to raise the man back to life in order that she may avoid all suspicion of being a magician. She agrees and through her prayers the youth is brought back to life. But the priests of the pagan temples, in fear of her power and thinking that she will alienate the people from the cult of the gods, condemn the girl to be burnt alive. However, the flames do not harm Agnes, and one of the guards is ordered to thrust a sword through her throat. Thus Agnes dies a virgin and a martyr.

I argued above that the motif of the Prostitute Priestess outlasted its declamatory origins and reappears in two major forms, one being the virgin martyr from Christian hagiography, the other the kidnapped heroine of the romances. The hagiographers and the romance writers adapt the rhetorical performance into their prose narrative texts, but, in doing so, they impose an one-sided interpretation on this literary figure; in other words, they take away much of the intentional rhetorical dilemma surrounding the characterisation of the virgin held at the brothel. The authors of hagiography and romance choose a clear ending for the case of the Prostitute Priestess, allowing her either to die or to get married. The Passion of Saint Agnes differs from the story of the Prostitute Priestess, as the killing of the soldier is replaced by the martyrdom of the virgin. In fact, the threat of rape features in both texts (the soldier of the declamation becomes, in the Passion of Saint Agnes, the son of the Prefect), but rape itself is avoided in a miraculous way. The Prostitute Priestess' aggressive self-defence is substituted by the Christian virtue of passive endurance, so the option of killing one's potential rapist is not raised in the hagiographic text.²⁴

The literary treatment of the theme of the Prostitute Priestess is given a new perspective in *Apollonius*: here the scenes in the brothel are significantly devoid of the judicial context of violence and death and are placed against the economic context of money and marriage. Princess Tarsia, like the Prostitute Priestess and Saint Agnes, is held in a brothel against her will. However, the violence that marks so forcefully the episodes in the declamatory piece and in the hagiographic text, is only peripheral, and gives way to an emphasis on rhetorical performance and commercial exchange. The female body in this novel is primarily a means of financial exploitation, and

²⁴ See the perceptive analysis by Helms 1990, 323–325.

this handling of female sexuality clearly echoes similar situations in Roman comedy (see above p. 106). The virgin Tarsia possesses eloquence and courage and employs her talents in order not only to preserve her virginity, but also to raise money for her freedom. The education in music and oratory displayed by Tarsia at the brothel is the means through which she is reunited with her father (and possibly echoes her mother's similar juvenile performances at the palace).²⁵ In Tarsia's story, eloquence alone is substantial and enables the daughter of Apollonius to preserve her chastity without bloodshed.²⁶ Unlike the Prostitute Priestess and Saint Agnes, Tarsia needs neither to kill nor to die to avoid rape and prostitution. Hence Tarsia does not adopt the role of the aggressor, as the Prostitute does in her act of killing the soldier. Tarsia triumphs: not only does she secure her existence but she, moreover, wins the respect and admiration of everybody. After the reunion with her father, and the punishment of her cruel pimp, the virgin Tarsia is given to the prince Athenagora. The royal marriage at the end of the story restores traditional and patriarchal order, as Tarsia regains her former social status and is bestowed to the authorities of her father and her husband.²⁷

The Virgin Mother

An important and still unresolved issue in scholarly studies regarding *Apollonius* is whether or not this narrative has been composed in a hagiographic environment, and, if so, to what extent the story has been Christianised. Does the alleged process of Christianisation of this text refer only to the use of Biblical and Patristic Latin, or, more essentially, also to the endorsement of Christian values? The present analysis is relevant to this issue too, for, as I shall next argue, the depiction of Archistratis in the temple of Ephesus shares significant features with the literary portrayal of the Virgin Mary. It should first be noted that Archistratis' decision to enter the temple of Diana and take the vows of chastity is somewhat at odds with the fact that she (unlike the

²⁵ Cf. Schmeling 1996, 523: "In Tarsia's performances of music the reader can recall to Tarsia's advantage the musical performances of her mother: Tarsia is an educated young woman, whereas her mother had simply displayed natural abilities; education is equated with royalty."

²⁶ Cf. Bradley 1984, 117: "Tarsia's ability to protect herself by eloquence, however, is not likely to have been the fate of many prostitutes in real life."

²⁷ See Helms 1990, 326.

priestesses of the Ephesian virgin goddess) is no longer a virgin herself. The adventures of Apollonius' wife, and the acceptance of a new identity after her 'Scheintod', place her in a rather similar position with a 'virgin mother', namely a Christian widow who vows sexual abstinence after her first marriage (Lane Fox 1986, 367). But more may be at play here.

Throughout antiquity the Ephesian Diana enjoyed the title of the virgin goddess and sexual purity was required of her clergy (Strabo 8,13,1). Plutarch (*an seni respubl. gerend.* 24, 795D–E) compares the priestesses of the virgin goddess to the Vestal Virgins and speaks of three classes: (in ascending order) Μελλιέρη, Ίέρη, and Παριέρη. According to Achilles Tatius (7,13,2–3; 8,6,1) and Artemidorus (4,4 p. 247,21–23 Pack), entrance to the temple of the Ephesian Artemis was forbidden, on the penalty of death, to free women who were not virgins. On the other hand, priestesses of the Ephesian Artemis were actually allowed to leave their sacred duty and marry; they would then ideally raise their daughters to become priestesses.²⁸

Archistratis in Ephesus, in an unexpected way, combines simultaneously the notions of motherhood and virginity, which are, in the Western tradition, exemplified only in the figure of the Virgin Mary, who, moreover, according to early legends, spent the last years of her life and was even buried also in Ephesus.²⁹ The nature of Christ and the virginity of Mary, with emphasis on the details of her physical integrity, have been topics of major discussion among Christian authors around the latter part of the fourth century and the early fifth century AD. The image of the sealed, closed space is often found in patristic texts as a metaphor for the intact body of Mary before and after the birth of Christ. The culmination of these discussions takes place—significantly for our argument—at the Council of Ephesus (431 AD), in which Mary is officially given the title *Theotokos* 'Mother of God'.³⁰ Among the terms Christian authors use to denote the physical integrity that paradoxically defies the laws of nature, are *inuiolabilis* and *inuiolabiliter*; the

²⁸ On literary and epigraphic evidence about the hierarchy and the required chastity of the Ephesian priestesses see *RE* V 2758 s.v. 'Ephesia' [O. Jessen]; Kukula 1906, 254, 282; Oster 1976, 28, and 1990, 1721–1722; Bammer 1984, 254; Elliger 1985, 127; Jenny-Kappers 1986, 43, 51. For the male priests of the Ephesian Artemis see Smith 1996.

²⁹ See Warner 1976, 87–88; Foss 1979, 33 and 95; Jenny-Kappers 1986, 115–126.

³⁰ For the Council at Ephesus see Jenny-Kappers 1986, 151–159; Karwiese 1995, 135–138. Cameron 1991, 165–170 sees the figure of the Virgin as Mystery and Paradox in the Christian discourse. A similar background may be related to the origin of the problematic phrase in *Apollonius*, *nodum uirginitatis eripere*; see Panayotakis 2000, 601–603.

latter term, which is not attested before the fourth century AD, is found in *Apollonius* twice, as we mentioned above (see p. 105). Examples of the specific use of these terms in patristic texts include Ambros. in *Luc.* 2,1 *seruatur itaque sanctae Mariae sicut pudore integra ita inuiolabilis opinione uirginitas*; Gaudent. *serm.* 9,11 *per inuiolabilem feminam mundi huius intrauit hospitium, claustrum uirginei pudoris ... conseruans (Christus)*.³¹ The use of these terms with reference to the preservation of female virginity/chastity in a non-Christian context is rare but not unattested. *Inuiolabilis* characterises (in metaphorical sense) the female companions of the virgin goddess Diana in Claudian (24,241–243 *socias ... pudicas et inuiolabile ... concilium* “virgin companions and ... chaste band”, transl. M. Platnauer, The Loeb Classical Library). However, if the earliest version of *Apollonius* is a substantial adaptation of a pagan text in a hagiographic environment (Kortekaas), or an altogether Christian narrative (Hexter), the aforementioned possible thematic and verbal similarities in the literary portrayals of Archistratis and Mary, may well be intentional.³²

To conclude: in *Apollonius*, Archistratis and Tarsia represent, not a mother and a daughter, respectively, but two different types of daughter. The author of this narrative, who appears to sensitively react to earlier literary tradition as well as contemporary discourse on female purity and integrity, creates these female characters as figures that achieve their goal of chastity in contrasting environments and through different means. Simultaneously, the locations that accommodate the mother and the daughter are redefined in their function under the influence of these women’s excessive will for chastity: the brothel turns into a place of purity and sexual abstinence, the temple of the virgin goddess opens its doors for a mother.³³

³¹ Further see *ThLL* VII.2 216,10–15.

³² We should also mention here lexicographical evidence, which may have similar implications. According to the evidence listed in the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, the construction of *principatus* with *inter* + accus. of noun to denote the person over whom one exercises power is rare; the instances include Hier. *tract.* p. 414,2 *quomodo Maria uirgo ... inter omnes mulieres principatum tenet, ita inter ceteros dies haec (sc. dominica paschae) omnium dierum mater est*; compare *Hist. Apoll.* A 48 *coniunx eius inter sacerdotes principatum tenebat*.

³³ A shorter version of this paper was delivered at two Seminars in Latin literature given at the Classics Departments of the Universities of Lausanne and of Neuchâtel (March 2001). I wish to thank Jean-Jacques Aubert and Danielle van Mal-Maeder for their hospitality and the helpful comments they made on those occasions. I would also like to thank Costas Panayotakis and Ioulia Pipinia for reading this version, and the editors of this vol-

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