

The Logic of Inconsistency: Apollonius of Tyre and the Thirty-Days' Period of Grace*

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In his study on romance as a kind of secular scripture, Northrop Frye distinguishes between two types of fictional narrative, the realistic, or 'hence,' and the sensational, or 'and then'; the former, he argues, is characterized by the author's attempt 'to keep the action horizontal, using a technique of causality in which the characters are prior to the plot'; the latter 'moves from one discontinuous episode to another, describing things that happen to characters, for the most part, externally.' A clear example of an 'and then' narrative is, according to this literary critic, the anonymous *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre* (*Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri*), a Late Latin text which is usually defined as the literary version of a traditional pagan tale that is superficially Christianised. The reader of this text is often confronted with narrative situations that are, in Frye's terminology, 'not very rhetorically convincing as an illusion of logic, but, as Coleridge remarks about the Arabian Nights, the abandoning of such logic has its own fascination, and in any case all we want to know is what will happen next.'¹

On the other hand, the rapid pace of the narrative and the disregard for motivation indicate, according to B. E. Perry and G. A. A. Kortekaas, that

* The work of Gareth Schmeling, whom I first met at the International Conference on the Ancient Novel held at Groningen in July 2000, is a milestone in modern criticism on the ancient novel. Since ICAN 2000 I have many times greatly appreciated Professor Schmeling's stimulating discussions, generosity and friendship. My contribution on inconsistency and motivation in *Apollonius of Tyre* meets our common interests. Earlier versions of this article have been presented at the 2003 APA Annual Meeting at New Orleans and at the Faculty of Classics at Ghent; I am grateful to the panel members and the audience of both occasions for discussion, and to D. Praet, D. Tsitsikli, and the editors of this volume for useful comments.

¹ Frye 1976 (quotations from pp. 47–48); Frye's criticism is expanded in Schmeling 1996, 77; 1998, 3273–3275.

either the compositional method of the Latin author amounts to a mechanical putting together of heterogeneous narrative elements, or the extant text is merely an awkward epitome of a lost (Greek) original.² To Tomas Hägg the latter of these interpretations ‘seems about as well founded as it would to maintain that modern detective stories or adventure films which are lacking in logic and characterization are really cut versions of more accomplished representatives of those genres.’³ Scholars who adopt a more productive attitude in order to explain narrative coherence in ancient prose fiction, and particularly in *Apollonius of Tyre*, include N. Holzberg, C. Ruiz-Montero, and G. Schmeling, who demonstrate that sequence and motivation are influenced both by the structural design of the narrative and its literary models.⁴ Schmeling points to the fact that the author and the reader of prose fiction may not share the same standards of motivation and probability.⁵

Additional factors that, I think, are crucial for the analysis of *Apollonius of Tyre* include the quasi-oral nature of the text, manifested in the use of formulas and scenes, and the fluidity in the manuscript tradition (the tale survives in versions, which offer more or less the same story, yet have an individual style). Narrative inconsistencies, William Hansen says, are not uncommon in the tales of oral storytellers and represent the result of a conflict between an innovation and its environment. The storyteller employs stylized narrative elements that may create redundancy, improbability, or contradiction.⁶ This statement agrees with David Konstan’s view of *Apollo-nius of Tyre* as an ‘open’ text, which he defines as ‘a particular kind of artistic entity, distinct from the works that typically constitute the modern literary canon; open texts admit a degree of variation or indeterminacy that is incompatible with single authorial control.’ Christine Thomas argues that in the transmission of an ‘open’ text the copyist ‘approaches the freedom and autonomy that we generally associate with a performer – or an author. Their relationship to an original creator is not that of redactor to author, but of author to author. The original text is not a monolith, but functions as a basis for further retellings.’⁷ I shall argue in this article that some problems in the

² Perry 1967, 296–324; Kortekaas 1984, 106–107 and 2004, 43–46.

³ Hägg 1983, 153.

⁴ Ruiz-Montero 1983–84; Holzberg 1990; Schmeling 1996.

⁵ Schmeling 1996, 81.

⁶ Hansen 1972, 2–6.

⁷ Konstan 1998, 16; Thomas 2003, 80.

plot of *Apollonius of Tyre* both relate to the striking polyphony of this Late Latin narrative and indicate the creative rewriting of the story.

The *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre* opens with the story of Antiochus, the king of Antioch, who falls in love with his daughter and rapes her. In order to perpetuate and protect his secret life, Antiochus asks his daughter's suitors to solve a riddle on penalty of death.⁸ In addition, 'if anyone happened to find the solution to the riddle through intelligence and learning, he was beheaded as if he had not answered at all' (*et si quis forte prudentia litterarum quaestionis solutionem invenisset, quasi nihil dixisset, decollabatur* rec. A 3, p.2,19–20).⁹ At this point in the story the hero enters and solves the king's riddle, which remarkably describes Antiochus' incest; 'when he had heard the riddle the young man withdrew a little from the king. He thought about it intelligently, and with God's help he found the answer to the riddle' (*iuvenis accepta quaestione paululum discessit a rege; quam cum sapienter scrutaretur, favente deo invenit quaestionis solutionem* 4, p.3,8–10). The following quotation describes both the king's response and Apollonius' reaction to it:

Rex ut vidit iuvenem quaestionis solutionem invenisse, sic ait ad eum: 'Erras, iuvenis, nihil verum dicis. Decollari quidem mereberis, sed habes triginta dierum spatium: recogita tecum. Et dum reversus fueris et quaestionis meae propositae solutionem inveneris, accipies filiam meam in matrimonium.' *Iuvenis conturbatum habebat animum, paratamque habens navem tendit ad patriam suam Tyrum.* (5, p.3,14–19)

When the king saw that the young man had found the answer to the riddle, he spoke to him as follows: 'You are wrong, young man, there is no truth in what you say. Indeed you deserve to be beheaded, but you have thirty days' grace: think it over again. And when you have come back and have found the answer to my riddle, you shall have my daughter in marriage.' The young man was disturbed. He had his ship ready, and embarked for Tyre, his home.

⁸ For tests and contests of suitors in folktale, myth and literature see Weiler 1974, 256–258, and my forthcoming commentary on *Hist. Apoll.* Ch. 3.

⁹ The text of the earliest version of the *Hist. Apoll.*, rec(ensio) A, is cited from Schmeling 1988; I give both chapter, and page and line numbers. Translations are by Archibald 1991.

As early as Erwin Rohde's monumental *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer* (1876) the opening incest episode had been considered as an addition to an earlier version of the story, its function being to motivate Apollonius' travels and adventures; this interpretation, which conforms with the view that *Apollonius of Tyre* is an artless patchwork, was soon challenged by Karl Bürger and recently convincingly refuted by Elisabeth Archibald, who argues that the initial chapters establish not only the rhetorical contrast between Apollonius and Antiochus, but also the connection between royal and paternal power, and incest that permeates this narrative.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the opening, 'Antiochene,' section contains, according to Frye, examples of the author's peculiar treatment of logic and causality; firstly, suitors meet their death whether they succeed or fail to solve the riddle; secondly, Antiochus gives Apollonius a respite of thirty days for unstated reasons, 'not impossibly connected with the need to have something to come next.'¹¹ These problems require discussion both in isolation from, and in connection with, each other.

Antiochus' foul play with respect to the treatment of the successful suitors (including Apollonius) may well be understood in the context of his characterization as a tyrant king who favours duplicity in both his public and personal life;¹² thus, 'he presented himself deceitfully to his citizens as a devoted parent, but inside his own walls he delighted in being his daughter's husband' (*Qui cum simulata mente ostendebat se civibus suis pium genitorem, intra domesticos vero parietes maritum se filiae gloriabatur* 3, p.2,14–15). The story of the mythical king Oinomaos of Arcadia, who, according to some sources, was unnaturally attracted to his daughter Hippodamia, offers an instructive parallel for Antiochus' behaviour.

He therefore wished to keep her for himself, but in order to escape the censure of men, he pretended to be willing to give her in marriage to the man worthy of her, and devised a plan even more wicked than his lust and one which he thought would easily secure him what he wished. For he would yoke the swiftest horses in Arcadia to a chariot skilfully con-

¹⁰ See Rohde 1914,³ 445–446; Bürger 1903, 21–22; Archibald 1991, 15–18 with references. Contrast the view by Kortekaas 2004, 54 n. 43: 'we cannot afford to ignore the objections raised by Rohde in view of the inorganic structure of the *HA* in its present form. The lack of motivation (...) is due to the epitome character.'

¹¹ Frye 1976, 48.

¹² See Svoboda 1962, 214; Lana 1975, 57–58; Chiarini 1983, 274.

structed to ensure the greatest possible speed and compete against his daughter's suitors, offering her to them as the prize, if they passed him, or death if they were defeated. He also insisted that she should mount the chariot with them so that they might be distracted by her and their attention wander from their horsemanship.¹³

Like Oinomaos, Antiochus gives the candidates no chance of success; his game is 'heads I win, tails you lose.'¹⁴ Immediately after Apollonius' departure, the king sends his faithful servant to arrange the hero's assassination (6, pp.3,20–4,2) and, when this plan fails, he issues the following edict of proscription: 'Whoever delivers to me alive Apollonius of Tyre, who is guilty of treason against my crown, shall receive one hundred talents of gold; whoever brings me his head shall receive two hundred' (*Quicumque mihi Tyrium Apollonium, contemptorem regni mei, vivum exhibuerit, accipiet auri talenta centum; qui vero caput eius attulerit, accipiet ducenta* 7, p.5,7–9). In comparable literary passages a live captive is worth more than a bounty for a dead body or physical proof of death.¹⁵ The message which this proclamation conveys is that Apollonius is not 'Wanted Dead or Alive,' but 'Wanted Dead Rather Than Alive.' Therefore, I find no inconsistency in the portrayal of the king, who is just as duplicitous and merciless with Apollonius as he has been with other suitors; *pace* Frye, Antiochus' show of leniency is not the result of the author's lack of inspiration, but functions as the prelude of a fierce persecution, for the enmity between the king and the hero loses its private character and acquires a national one. The question should be rephrased: how might the author have wanted Antiochus' proposal to contribute to this effect.

The exceptional behaviour of the cunning king Antiochus in the case of Apollonius features prominently in modern discussions about the 'inconsistencies' of this widely read narrative. In his classic treatment on the ancient romances, Ben Edwin Perry, echoing Rohde, comments:

¹³ Ps. Lucian. *Charid.* 19, trans. M.D. MacLeod (*LCL*). For the myth of Oinomaos as an inspiration for Antiochus' story see Chiarini 1985, 267–269; Kortekaas 2004, 53–56.

¹⁴ Perry 1967, 298. On trickery in ancient sport contests see Weiler 1974, 258–264. Konstantakos 2005 relates Antiochus' riddle to a type of enigma he calls 'the unanswerable question,' found in stories from Egyptian and Icelandic literature, and in the Romances of Aesop and Ahiqar. The answer to this type of question either refers to a secret of the person who poses the riddle, or depends exclusively upon his will.

¹⁵ See Panayotakis forthcoming ad loc.

...how could Antiochus, acting in his own interest, afford to let Apollonius go free on this occasion, when later on, as we shall see, he uses all the resources of his great kingdom to hunt down the fugitive Apollonius and kill him? Obviously Antiochus could not have acted so foolishly under the circumstances given us. Why, then, is he represented as doing so? Here again the author has brought into the story of Antiochus an episode that does not belong in it and could not have been in it originally. Where did he find the pattern of that episode? Probably not in any folktale relating to a contest, because in such tales a competitor is very rarely, if ever, given a second chance gratuitously by his opponent. We must conclude, therefore, that the Latin author introduced this self-defeating action on the part of Antiochus for no other purpose than to motivate the travels and adventures of Apollonius in exile, disregarding, as before, the requirements of the context into which he has brought it.¹⁶

It should here be said that Perry firmly acknowledges *Apollonius of Tyre* as an originally Latin, not Greek, narrative, which, nevertheless, shows all the shortcomings of the narrative art of Apuleius, and, moreover, is interpolated and related to folklore. According to Perry's idiosyncratic theory of 'contaminatio,' Classical Greek models (such as Homer and Euripides) are clumsily combined with 'high' and 'low' forms of Roman literature (epic, declamation, comedy and mime) and other obscure sources to produce the artless patchwork that is the Latin *Apollonius of Tyre*.¹⁷ This approach, on the one hand, allows for merely a narrow-focused view of the Latin Novel, and, on the other, disregards any post-Classical or late antique (including Christian) texts that might have influenced *Apollonius of Tyre*.¹⁸

¹⁶ Perry 1967, 298.

¹⁷ See Zimmerman 2003, 135–137; Garbugino 2004, 151.

¹⁸ Perry's views on *Apollonius of Tyre* were modified already by Walsh 1970, 1, who regards our text as 'Greek ideal fiction composed in Latin' and thus continues both Perry's claim of *Apollonius*' originality and *Apollonius*' link to the Greek novelistic tradition. The latter notion, which unfortunately leads Walsh to exclude the text from his magisterial discussion of the Roman Novel, is recently elaborated by Elisabeth Archibald, David Konstan and Gareth Schmeling, who judiciously reformulate the case for a Latin *Apollonius*. While these critics agree that Greek novels are in the reading agenda of the Latin author, they argue that the relationship of *Apollonius* with the Greek romances is one of asymmetry, for this narrative as a whole dwells rather more on the relations between father and daughter than upon those between husband and wife, and focuses on the issues of authority, kingship and incest.

A recent reaction to Perry's views is found in the work of Peter Dronke, who claims that 'it is defective preservation, rather than intrinsic flaws of narrative structure, that underlies at least some of the seeming illogicalities in the plot of *Apollonius*.' For the problem of the thirty days' period Dronke seeks the explanation in a middle-12th century, Old-French poetic fragment, in which it is clearly stated that Antiochus' people are present at the ordeal and hope that Apollonius would triumph; they notice the signs of guilt on Antiochus' face. Dronke concludes that a similar situation must have occurred in the lost original of this story: Antiochus cannot execute Apollonius without jeopardizing his own reign and is forced to grant him time.¹⁹ However, this explanation, on the one hand, assumes that attendants are not present in earlier suitor tests, and on the other, does not account for the reason why should Antiochus feel any guilt in front of Apollonius, whereas he showed none in front of other suitors who found the riddle and yet were beheaded. Moreover, Archibald says that only a few derivative versions care to explain away this problem; thus, Antiochus' temporary leniency is explicitly attributed by Heinrich von Neustadt (14th century) to his admiration for Apollonius' chivalric qualities, and by François de Belleforest (16th century) to Antiochus' fondness for Apollonius' late father (a figure not mentioned in most versions).²⁰

A third interpretation was given by Ulrich Wilcken, who, as early as 1901, compared the passage under discussion with a fragment from a Greek novel, dated to the first century A.D., and conventionally known as *Chione* (Snow-White) after the name of a young princess that features in the text. In that fragment an unidentified first person plural, 'they,' have granted thirty days for some people to think things over: *Chione* col. I ll. 9–11 ἔχομεν δὲ εἰς σκέψιν χρόνον ἡμερῶν τριάκοντα. Stephens and Winkler point out that the context is vague and allows for no definite interpretation; in all likelihood, the deadline of a month relates to some issue of marriage arrangements.²¹ Wilcken notices that Greek novelists like Chariton (5,3,11; 5,4,4;

¹⁹ Dronke 1994, 132–133 n. 54; on the fragment see also Archibald 1991, 188.

²⁰ Archibald 1991, 64–65.

²¹ Stephens and Winkler 1995, 289–291, offer five possible reconstructions of the episode: a) the king has announced that in thirty days he will choose a husband for his daughter; b) a group of suitors ask the king to choose one of them within thirty days; c) the king, pressed by suitors, gains thirty days' grace, hoping for the return of his own favourite candidate; d) the king has chosen someone as a husband for his daughter and given her thirty days to change her mind about the lover she has already set her heart on; e) a pow-

6,2,3) and Xenophon of Ephesus (2,13,8; 3,3,7) employ the detail of the time-limit of thirty days, and thus regards it as a novelistic cliché; this alleged topos would then survive in *Apollonius of Tyre* as an element of a lost Greek novel, which should have been used as the model for the extant Latin narrative.²² This argumentation is unconvincing for (a) it implies that ancient novels have a standard number of distinctive plot-features, according to which they can be generically identified;²³ (b) it disregards the fact that the period of thirty days, obviously related to the moon cycle, is commonly employed throughout Greek and Roman antiquity, in both the public and the private sphere, as a deadline for purposes as diverse as the payment of a financial debt, the date of a trial, the confirmation of pregnancy after divorce, or the declaration of war;²⁴ (c) it stops where it should actually begin, namely the Latin text itself.

The time-limit of thirty days is not confined to the opening episode; the author employs it for a second time in the latter part in the story, where he gives the account of the adventures of Apollonius' daughter, Tarsia; while her father is away, the girl is abducted by pirates and sold to a brothel-keeper in the city of Mitylene. The leader of the city, Athenagoras, develops a strong affection for her, and promises to redeem her from the pimp for thirty days, on the condition that she entertains Apollonius, who happens to be on the same island, unaware of the fate of his daughter (*si enim hoc potueris facere, triginta dies a lenone te redimam, ut devotae virginitati tuae vacare possis, et dabo tibi insuper decem sestertia auri* 40, p.32,11–13). This passage too has its own problems of interpretation, for scholars wonder why would the rich Athenagoras offer to purchase Tarsia's freedom for just a month's time. Callu and Schmeling understand *triginta dies* not 'for thirty days' but 'after a thirty-day waiting period to ensure that she has not become pregnant in the *lupanar*.' Archibald disagrees with this interpretation; the context, she aptly argues, makes clear that both Athenagoras and the people of Mitylene have no doubt about Tarsia's intact virginity.²⁵

None of these scholars, nor Perry, observes the significant parallel with Antiochus' grant of a thirty days' period of grace, where a character again

erful suitor sends ambassadors to the king's city with an ultimatum: I will arrive in thirty days at the head of an army to claim my rightful bride.

²² Wilcken 1901, 258; see also Garin 1914, 201.

²³ Schmeling 1999, 148.

²⁴ Düll 1939 and Litinas 1998, 70 n. 4.

²⁵ Callu 1980, 191; Schmeling 1989, 207; Archibald 1991, 69–70.

makes an otherwise unusual offer of time without an explicit motivation. The monthly period, I would argue, is a conventional temporal indication on both occasions, meaning something like ‘a long time,’ and is empty of narrative significance, since in either episode the character who fixes the deadline of thirty days simply does not intend to keep to his word: Antiochus plans to murder Apollonius, Athenagoras tacitly arranges the recognition between father and daughter. The granted period of time enables the movement of the story, for it motivates Apollonius’ flight and persecution, and contributes to Tarsia’s reunion with her father. It constitutes an organic element of a authorial design that features in the plot in order to advance it.

I have thus far argued that Antiochus’ ‘generous’ offer to Apollonius is neither an isolated nor an awkward narrative element. I would now like to examine whether any literary models may have influenced its usage in our story. Perry was categorically negative in this respect, as we noticed above, but the sources he considered were limited to folklore and Classical literature.²⁶ It is essential for my analysis that the time for reflection is granted to Apollonius only after he has given his answer. This is a crucial detail since it differentiates our story from the Old Testament story of Samson who, like Antiochus, proposes a riddle to the Philistines, but, unlike him, simultaneously gives them a period of seven days for answering it (*Judges* 14,12).²⁷ On the other hand, the offer of a *spatium deliberandi* granted to people who face imminent death in order to save their lives is a Roman judicial practice, which is primarily found in literary accounts of, and official documents concerning, trials of Christians.

In crimes concerned with ideology or convictions, Mommsen tells us in his monumental study on the penal law of ancient Rome, the admission of guilt makes further negotiation unnecessary and is sufficient for the issue of the verdict. Nevertheless, the judge has the right, under special circumstances, to offer the self-confessed criminal an opportunity to recant within a fixed time limit, which in literary sources ranges from three hours to thirty days.²⁸ As the earliest example of this practice Mommsen gives the following passage from the *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* (Carthage, 180 A.D.), the

²⁶ See, however, the story of the gnome Rumpelstilskin (Grimms’ *KHM* 55), who turns from helper to adversary of the king’s wife; he is willing to release her child only if she guesses his name; he gives her three guesses, which correspond to the three occasions he helped her.

²⁷ On Samson’s riddle (*Judges* 14,14) see e.g. Cohen 1996, 303–304.

²⁸ Mommsen 1899, 438. See also Düll 1939, 32; Freudenberger 1973, 210–212.

report of a court case and execution of a group of twelve Christians; this is ‘our earliest dated document from the Latin church and the first to make mention of a Latin Bible.’²⁹

Saturninus proconsul Sperato dixit: Perseueras Christianus? Speratus dixit: Christianus sum: et cum eo omnes consenserunt. Saturninus proconsul dixit: Numquid ad deliberandum spatium uultis? Speratus dixit: In re tam iusta nulla est deliberatio [...] Saturninus proconsul dixit: moram XXX dierum habete et recordemini; Speratus iterum dixit: Christianus sum: et cum eo omnes consenserunt (Pass. Scill. 10–13).

The Proconsul Saturninus said to Speratus: ‘Do you persist in remaining a Christian?’ Speratus said: ‘I am a Christian.’ And all agreed with him. Saturninus the proconsul said: ‘You wish no time for consideration?’ Speratus said: ‘In so just a matter there is no need for consideration’ [...] The proconsul Saturninus said: ‘You are granted a reprieve of thirty days: think it over.’ Once again Speratus said, ‘I am a Christian!’ And with him all the others agreed.

According to Jan den Boeft and Jan Bremmer, ‘it would seem that apart from the understandable tendency – which is peculiar to all authorities – to postpone nasty decisions a certain human kindness is responsible for the disinclination for a summary execution of people who have nothing in common with normal criminals.’³⁰ The chance for reconsideration is in literary accounts of martyr-acts explicitly related to the confessor’s age or status and as a rule is not taken by the Christians, who choose death over the renunciation of their faith. It should be remembered that the offer is an exceptional part of the trial process, which features among the means the Roman magistrates employ to tempt or force the Christians to renounce their belief.³¹ Examples from later Latin literature include the *Acts of Apollonius* 10 Δίδωμί σοι ἡμέραν, Ἐπολλῶ, ἵνα συμβουλευῆς σεαυτῷ περὶ τῆς ζωῆς σου; *Phileas* 2 *Do tibi dilationem, ut cogites tecum*; *Dasius* 10 ἰδοὺ ἔξεις καιρὸν διωρίας εἰ βουληθείης ἐν τῷ νοί σου διαλογισθῆναι ὅπως δυνηθείης ζῆν μεθ’ ἡμῶν ἐν

²⁹ Musurillo 1972, xxiii. Texts and translations of *Acts of the Christian Martyrs* cited in this article are by Musurillo 1972.

³⁰ Den Boeft and Bremmer 1981, 47–48.

³¹ For other means consisting in promises or threats see Delehay 1966,² 186–189.

δόξη; Euseb. *Hist.* 7,15,3 (*Marinus*) τριῶν ὥρων ἐπιδοῦναι αὐτῷ εἰς ἐπίσκεψιν διάστημα.³²

My last example is the early-fourth century A.D. Martyrdom of St. Felix, Bishop of the North African city of Thibiuca; the text is historically related to the promulgation of Diocletian's edict of 303, with which Christian bishops and presbyters were forced to hand the Scriptures over to Roman magistrates. On his return from Carthage, Felix is arrested and brought before Magnilianus.

Magnilianus curator dixit: Da libros uel membranas quascumque habes. Felix episcopus dixit: Habeo sed non do. Magnilianus curator dixit: Da libros ut possint igni aduri. Felix episcopus dixit: Melius est me igni aduri quam scripturas deificas [...] Magnilianus dixit: Intra hoc triduum recogita tecum. [...] Post tertium autem diem iussit curator Felicem episcopum ad se perduci et dixit ei: Recogitasti tecum? Felix episcopus dixit: Quae prius locutus sum et modo loquor, et ante proconsulem ea sum dicturus. (Pass. Fel. rec. N 12–20)

'Hand over whatever books or parchments you possess,' said the magistrate Magnilianus. 'I have them,' answered Bishop Felix, 'but I will not give them up.' The magistrate Magnilianus said: 'Hand the books over to be burned.' 'It would be better for me to be burned,' answered Bishop Felix rather than the divine Scriptures.' [...] Magnilianus said: 'Take three days to reconsider this.' [...] After three days then the magistrate summoned Felix and asked him: 'Have you thought it over?' Bishop Felix answered: 'I repeat what I said before, and I am ready to say it before the proconsul.'

I would like to emphasize the importance of this text for our analysis not merely for its verbal resemblance with the passage from *Apollonius of Tyre* under discussion. The Latin Martyrdom of St. Felix survives in versions, known as recensio V (I, II, III), and N, and was translated in Greek at a later stage; although originally African, it received additions that attempt to connect it with the Italian regions of Venosa and Nola; the orthodox opinion holds that recensio Venusiensis (*BHL* 2895) predates recensio Nolensis (*BHL* 2894).³³ This late antique document shares with the earliest version of

³² See Lanata 1973, 155; Den Boeft and Bremmer 1981, 48.

³³ Delehaye 1921, 241–246; J. Fontaine in Herzog 1989, 524–525 § 596.3.

Apollonius of Tyre a phrase that occurs only in those two texts in extant Latin literature, namely, *subsannium nauis*, ‘the ship’s hollow,’ a hybrid formation from Latin and Greek.³⁴ It may not be a coincidence that an offer of time for reflection before a death sentence is announced appears in both texts as well.

Moreover, the martyr-acts narrative style of brief sentences in *Oratio Recta* that are every time introduced by an indication of the speaker, will undoubtedly be familiar to any reader of *Apollonius of Tyre*.³⁵ With respect to *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, this is acknowledged to be an artificial format that characterizes the transcript and possible abridgement of trial proceedings;³⁶ the same feature can be found in Late Latin *Passions* of Saints, e.g. St Sebastian or St Agnes, which have a strongly theatrical character, and Auerbach considers the Bible (particularly the New Testament) as its earliest manifestation.³⁷ On the other hand, this style in scholarship on *Apollonius of Tyre* is said to be related either to oral tradition or the process of epitomizing of a longer original.³⁸ The effect in either case is similar to that of a lively conversation between characters on stage. Perry, followed by Schmeling, argues that our author may have had some experience in writing for the theatre.³⁹ The evidence cited here nicely conforms, I think, with what Pizarro, in his study on dramatic narrative in the early Middle Ages, defines as ‘oral prose,’ that is ‘prose of oral origin, whether or not it has known a written stage later and undergone some adaptation to literary standards. If the text remains fundamentally faithful to oral form, we shall find in it discontinuity, brief dramatic units, frequent and realistic use of direct speech, gestures and significant objects as the focus of the scenes.’⁴⁰

Elsewhere I argued that *Apollonius of Tyre*, which R. Hexter calls a profoundly, albeit never explicitly, Christian text, engages in an open dialogue with its late antique literary texts, which include the ‘genre’ of Christian

³⁴ See *Hist. Apoll.* 38, p.30,3; *Pass. Fel.* rec. N 39; and Kortekaas 1984, 100–101.

³⁵ E.g. chs. 4 *rex...sic ait ad eum...at ille ait...rex ait*; 7 *ait cuidam puero...cui puer ait*; 8 *cui Apollonius ait...Hellenicus ait...Ait Apollonius...Hellenicus ait...Apollonius ait...Hellenicus respondit*; 9 *cui ait Apollonius...et ille dixit...Apollonius ait...Stranguillius ait...Apollonius ait...Apollonius ait...Stranguillius ait...Apollonius ait...Stranguillius ait*.

³⁶ Coles 1966; De Ste. Croix 1984, 17–18.

³⁷ Auerbach 1957, 40, 77. For the theatricality of the *Passions* see Berschin 1986, 74–87.

³⁸ Svoboda 1962, 219; Kortekaas 1984, 107; Puche López 1997, 42; Garbugino 2004, 174.

³⁹ Perry 1967, 306; Schmeling 1999, 146.

⁴⁰ Pizarro 1989, 19–61 (quotation from p.53).

martyr-acts.⁴¹ The ordeal scene between Antiochus and Apollonius, in which the respite of thirty days features, echoes confrontations between a Roman official and highborn Christian prisoners in both its content and style. The exceptional wisdom of Apollonius and his God-favoured talent in solving riddles are clearly marked in the text (*quam cum sapienter scrutaretur, favente deo invenit quaestionis solutionem*) and differentiated from the ‘casual’ solving of the riddle by other suitors (*si quis forte prudential litterarum quaestionis solutionem invenisset*). This demarcation makes Antiochus’ offer easier to understand; the king’s exceptional behaviour can then be explained as part of a trial procedure that initiates the beginning of a merciless persecution. However, I would not argue that Apollonius is depicted as a Christian martyr; if anything, these literary characters do not flee in fear of the authorities, as Apollonius does later in the narrative. The author of the Latin *Apollonius of Tyre* is not writing a story about the confrontation of paganism and Christianity; nevertheless, I think, he primarily strives to acknowledge his debt to both these literary traditions.

In her excellent study on *Apollonius of Tyre* Archibald graphically pictures this text as ‘a chameleon, lacking a generic colour of its own.’⁴² My analysis views this Late Latin narrative as a crossroad, in which the notions of pagan and Christian, Greek and Latin, popular and sophisticated, diverse though they are, interact with each other in a fashion that reflects the polyphony of the late antique world. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that this interaction affects compositional method and characterization in the text. The notion of its ‘Christianisation’ cannot be seen in terms of an one-way and straightforward process,⁴³ and should ideally be related to its generic identity and place in a late antique literary context. In the words of Gareth Schmeling, ‘certain motivations are inherent in the genre, and appreciation of the genre aids in interpretation.’⁴⁴

⁴¹ Hexter 1988, 188 (but cf. Schmeling 1996, 144–145); Panayotakis 2003. For the peculiarities of the martyr-acts as a ‘genre’ see Bremmer 2002, 78–80.

⁴² Archibald 1991, 91.

⁴³ Cf. Brown 1995.

⁴⁴ Schmeling 1996, 81.

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