

THE PROEMIUM IN HISTORIA APOLLONII: A POSSIBLE SOURCE FOR THE DECAMERON?

1. THE PROEMIUM IN HISTORIA APOLLONII

The *Proemium in Historia Apollonii* provides a fascinating glimpse into the reception of the story of Apollonius of Tyre in Italy at the turn of the fourteenth century, for it gives unusually explicit instructions for interpreting the ancient *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* in a moral and literary key. In this article I present the text of the *Proemium*, evaluate the evidence it provides about the circulation and reception of the *Historia Apollonii*, and raise the possibility that this text might lie behind Boccaccio's description of the narrative structure of the stories recounted in Day Two of the *Decameron*.

The late-antique Latin romance known as the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* circulated widely in medieval Italy.¹ At least five prose translations into Italian were produced between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries.² Vernacular poetic adaptations, all in ottava rima, include: the *Cantari di Apollonio di Tiro* by Antonio Pucci (circa 1310-1388), which circulated widely in both manuscript and print; an adaptation from circa 1470 by a central Italian poet named Silvestro; and a *rifacimento* of Pucci's poem by Paolo da Taegio, first printed in 1492.³ As for the Latin text, of its more than a hundred extant manuscripts some two dozen are of Italian provenance.⁴ Two of these manuscript witnesses of the *Historia Apollonii* – both copied in Italy during the fourteenth century – include a brief introduction to the story of Apollonius,

¹ For the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, besides the editions of Kortekaas 1984, Schmeling 1988 and Kortekaas 2004, see the commentaries in Archibald 1991, Schmeling 1996, Garbuigno 2004, Kortekaas 2007, and Panayotakis 2012. For the work's reception in Italy, see the essays in Beggiano–Marinetti 2002, and especially Sacchi 2009.

² Sacchi 2009; Sacchi 2014.

³ Pucci (Rabboni); Rabboni 1998; Sacchi 2015. I am preparing an edition of Silvestro's poem.

⁴ The known manuscripts are listed in *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Kortekaas 1984): 14-22, with a few more added in *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Schmeling): ix-xix.

an introduction which in the older of the two witnesses bears the title *Proemium in Historia Apollonii*.⁵

The earlier of the two witnesses is Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS N 227 sup (*Ma*), a manuscript which thus far has remained unknown to students of the *Historia Apollonii*.⁶ This codex was written in Milan during March of 1311, according to a coeval note (now difficult to decipher) at the top of the opening folio: «MCCCXI de mense martii scripsi librum istum [quo tempore tunc erat p] vii. mediolani» (f. 1r). There is also an item in the codex datable after the beginning of November 1311, a letter from Emperor Henry VII to Matteo I Visconti, «Datum Ianuae kalendis nouembris anno domini MCCCXI Regni uero nostri Anno tercio» (f. 107va). The contents of *Ma* are primarily of a religious nature. The *Historia Apollonii* (ff. 11r-24r) is one in a series of moral biographies occupying most of the first two gatherings of the codex: this series also includes the *Historia de penitentia Ade et Eve* (7r-11r), Jerome's *Vita sancti Pauli* (24v-25v), the *Vita Amelii et Amici* (27r-31v), the *Vita Albani* (32r-35v), Jerome's *Vita Hilarionis* (37v-39r), and the *Vita Isidori presbyteri Alexandrini* (39r-39v).

Considering that the codex also contains a defense of the Dominican Order (ff. 34ra-36r; the text begins: «[Q]uidam emuli nostri impingunt nos dicentes quod ordo predicatorum non seruat formam apostolorum»), it seems plausible that *Ma* was copied within a Dominican context. The presence of this pro-Dominican treatise together with the imperial letter to Matteo Visconti suggests that the codex may have been written by someone associated with the basilica of Sant'Eustorgio, the Milanese seat of the Dominican Order. Closely aligned with the Visconti family, Sant'Eustorgio was where Matteo Visconti began constructing his grand private chapel in 1297.⁷ The chronicler Galvano Fiamma describes the state of the convent in 1299 thus:

Eodem anno dominus fr. Nicholaus de Treviso, nuper factus cardinalis, transiens per Mediolanum [...] dixit quod conventus Mediolani omnes alios

⁵ Kortekaas 1984: 160-1, n. 33, transcribes a portion of the *Proemium* from *Vf*.

⁶ Not listed in *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Kortekaas 1984) or *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Schmeling), the manuscript and its contents are summarily described in Revelli 1929: 102-4 (n° 264), and *BPA*. I would like to thank Leah Faibisoff for drawing this manuscript to my attention and for her help in examining the codex and its texts.

⁷ See Tomeo 1993; Lopez 2010.

conventus ordinis in tribus excedit: primo propter presentiam corporis beati Petri martiris, secundo propter numerositatem fratrum, quia centum quadraginta fratres in illo conventu erant, tertio propter optimam religionem illius conventus, que famosa habetur per omnes mundi partes.⁸

In the period when *Ma* was copied, Sant'Eustorgio was establishing itself as an important center of intellectual activity. In 1315 the teaching of logic, rhetoric and theology was supplemented by a regular course in moral philosophy, and by around 1320 the convent housed the *studium generale* for the Dominican order in northern Italy.⁹ Between 1304 and 1311 the library had been moved to more spacious quarters to accommodate its growing collection, which in subsequent years provided a rich resource of historical sources for Galvano Fiamma's chronicle writing. An inventory of the library from 1494 lists 72 items, including several miscellaneous volumes; *Ma* does not seem to correspond with any of the items listed.¹⁰

Ma offers a striking example of late medieval readers paying close attention to the story of Apollonius of Tyre. The text of the Latin *Historia Apollonii* has been supplemented by hundreds of textual variants drawn from other witnesses recorded in the margins and interlineally, demonstrating sustained philological interest in the *Historia Apollonii* at Sant'Eustorgio or wherever *Ma* was produced. This philological interest was complemented by an interest in literary adaptation: the song that Tarsia recites to Apollonius in chapter 41 of the *Historia Apollonii* has been recast into a separate poem, entitled the *Versus Tarsie*, copied into *Ma* a few folios after the end of the text (f. 21r). This poem builds upon phrases from the song as presented earlier in the manuscript, introduces new phrases drawn from different branches of the tradition, and adds considerable new content as well. The manuscript also contains the *Proemium in Historia Apollonii*, an interpretive summary that fits well with this intense activity of engaging with the story of Apollonius of Tyre. It seems likely that the *Proemium* was composed in the milieu in which *Ma* was copied, a milieu which was a laboratory for scrutinizing and re-interpreting the *Historia Apollonii*.

⁸ Galvano Fiamma (Odetto): 337.

⁹ Airaghi 1984.

¹⁰ Kaeppli 1955; Tomea 1997.

The second witness, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Vaticanus Latinus 1961 (*Vf*), a large codex copied in northern or central Italy around the middle of the fourteenth century, contains a lengthy chronicle of world history, the *Historie* of Riccobaldo of Ferrara.¹¹ The *Historia Apollonii* has been inserted into the chronicle at an appropriate chronological juncture (ff. 373v-385v). The *Proemium* is included, but its title has been dropped and new opening words have been added to smooth the transition from the chronicle: «Appollonius rex tiri et sydonis pro hec tempora seleuco scilicet dicto sother regnante qui fuit filius anthioci magni regis syrie et egipti agnoscitur» (f. 373v). While *Vf* evidently considers the story of Apollonius to be historical, it also announces the story's exemplary qualities in the rubric: «Incipit ystoria apollonii Regis tyri et sidonis, de infortunio et patientia et naufragio» (f. 373v). The codex is copied by a single main scribe writing a southern textualis bookhand datable on palaeographical grounds to perhaps the 1340s or 1350s; rubrications, marginalia, and occasional corrections are added in a coeval, more cursive script. Lending notes recorded on a pastedown on the final folio (f. 211r) indicate that in 1397 *Vf* was in the possession of Giacomo di Giovanni Orsini, the Fifth Count of Tagliacozzo (ca 1380-post 1436), forming part of the family library at the castle of Vicovaro outside of Rome. Nogara has suggested that many of the volumes in that library may have come from Giacomo Orsini's uncle, also named Giacomo Orsini (ca 1340-1379), a cardinal and apostolic protonotary who studied law at Perugia.¹² It may be that *Vf* made its way from north-central Italy to Rome in this way.¹³

The form of the *Historia Apollonii* in *Ma* and *Vf* belongs to a branch of the tradition known as *RSt* (the "Stuttgart Recension", so-named by Elimar Klebs after a twelfth-century manuscript in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, MS Hist. fol. 411 [*S*]); within that branch it belongs to a group of manuscripts that Klebs calls the "Paris Group" (after two manuscripts, both originally Italian, now in the Bibliothèque

¹¹ The manuscript is described briefly in Nogara 1912: 3.374-5; and more fully in an edition of the *Vf* text of the *Historia Apollonii* that I am preparing for the Toronto Medieval Latin Texts series. For Riccobaldo's *Historie*, a text which has not been edited, see Zanella 1980 and Hankey 1996: 61-71.

¹² Nogara 1908.

¹³ Hankey 1996: 22 suggests *Vf* may have originated in Bologna.

nationale de France).¹⁴ The *Ma* and *Vf* texts of the *Historia Apollonii* are intimately related, sharing several features not found in any other witness, as can be seen in the following table, which gives the text of the opening of chapter 4 of the *Historia Apollonii* according to *S* (the Stuttgart manuscript), *Ma*, *Ma'* (the variants recorded in *Ma*), and *Vf*:

<i>S</i> :	Sed cum tantas crudelitates exerceret rex Antiohus,
<i>Ma</i> :	Sed cum tantas crudelitates exerceret rex Antiochus,
<i>Ma'</i> :	\al. Cumque has /
<i>Vf</i> :	Cumque has crudelitates exerceret rex Anthiocus,
<i>S</i> :	interposito breui temporis spacio quidam iuuenis Tyrius,
<i>Ma</i> :	interposito breui temporis spacio quidam iuuenis Tyrius
<i>Ma'</i> :	\al. adolescens /
<i>Vf</i> :	interposito breui temporis spacio quidam adolescens Tyrius,
<i>S</i> :	princeps patrie sue locuples immensum , Apollonius nomine,
<i>Ma</i> :	princeps patrie sue locuplex Apollonius nomine,
<i>Ma'</i> :	\+ immensum /
<i>Vf</i> :	patrie sue princeps ac uehementer locuplex, Apollonius nomine,
<i>S</i> :	fidens in habundantia litterarum,
<i>Ma</i> :	fidens in abundantia litterarum, consilio Diogenii magistri sui ,
<i>Ma'</i> :	
<i>Vf</i> :	fidens abundantia litterarum, consilio Dyogenii magistri sui ,
<i>S</i> :	nauigans attingit Antiochiam.
<i>Ma</i> :	nauigans attingit Antiochiam. Cum maximo igitur apparatu
<i>Ma'</i> :	\al. [...]orit/
<i>Vf</i> :	nauigans attingit Antiochiam. Cum maximo igitur apparatu
<i>S</i> :	Ingressusque ad regem salutauit eum
<i>Ma</i> :	magnaue militum copia ingressus ad regem sic salutauit eum
<i>Ma'</i> :	
<i>Vf</i> :	magnaue militum copia ingressus ad regem sic salutauit eum

The information that prince Apollonius has a teacher named Diogenius is found in no other witnesses besides *Ma* and *Vf*, and the same is the

¹⁴ Klebs 1899: 80-105.

case for the description of Apollonius entering King Antiochus's palace with an entourage of knights. Of the numerous variant readings recorded in *Ma*, several have entered into the text of *Vf*, as in the above example with «Cumque has» and «adolescens» (readings typical of the *RB* recension); others have prompted the copyist of *Vf* to introduce new readings, as is the case with the insertion of «vehementer» instead of «immensum». While more philological investigation of these features needs to be carried out, the text of *Vf* seems to depend upon both the main text and the textual variants presented in *Ma*. As for the *Proemium in Historia Apollonii*, the Milan manuscript preserves an earlier form of the text, which *Vf* has altered in order to fit within its historiographical program. *Vf* has also cleaned up a few minor mistakes, such as otiose abbreviation marks, that occur in *Ma*'s text of the *Proemium*.

2. THE TEXT

The edition of the *Proemium in Historia Apollonii* offered here follows the orthography of *Ma*, with abbreviations expanded and with punctuation and capitalization modernized.

Proemium in Historia Appollonii.¹⁵

Omnis historie descriptio¹⁶ idcirco per litteras memorie traditur, ut in ea unusquisque se recognoscat et de preteritis per exemplum cogitet quid de se preuideat in futurum, cum cognouerit¹⁷ se de uere proprietatis uirtute gloriam recipere et per mortem uiuere, et quod de iniqua et dolosa <uita> cognouerit obprobrium¹⁸ in abiettionem presentialiter sentiat, et ignominiam sit habiturus eternam. Historia, inquit, itaque Appollonii Tyri utriusque retributionis meritum patenter agnoscitur; et unusquisque probitatis filius <cognouerit> quantam in aduersitate debeat habere pacientiam, et quantum possit post tribulacionem solatium spe certissima prestolari, cum perceperit illum Appollonium regia de stirpe

¹⁵ *Heading is only in Ma.*

¹⁶ Omnis historie descriptio *Ma*] Appollonius rex tiri et sydonis pro hec tempora seleuco scilicet dicto sother regnante qui fuit filius anthioci magni regis syrie et egipti agnoscitur. Cuius hystorie et cuiuslibet acti descriptio *Vf*.

¹⁷ cognouerit *Vf*] cognoueri(n)t *Ma*.

¹⁸ obprobrium *Vf*] ob|p(ro)p(ri)u(m) *Ma*.

progenitum, forma decorum, fortitudinis uirtute prestantem, omnium artium peritia peditum, et tribulacione ac calamitate multipharia multa sustinuisse, et in ipsa postmodum mortis et periculi desperatione <ad> spem insperate redisse, et sicut eum decebat honorem et gloriam recepisse mirabilem. Quod qualiter fuerit, ipso ordine¹⁹ prosequamur.

[Introduction to the *Historia Apollonii*.

Every account of history is imparted to memory by means of written letters for this purpose: so that anybody might recognize himself in that account, and might deduce from the example of past events what to expect for himself in the future, since he will have learned that in return for the virtue of true integrity he receives glory and gains life through death, and that in return for a wicked and dreadful <life> he at first suffers shame in his degradation and later will have eternal disgrace. Accordingly, it is said, in the *Historia Apollonii Tyrii* the reward of both kinds of retribution is plainly revealed; and anyone who is a child of probity <will have learned> how much patience he should maintain during adversity, and in the aftermath of suffering how much solace he might be able to expect with confident hope, once he has seen how Apollonius – born of royal stock, handsome in appearance, distinguished by the virtue of courage, endowed with knowledge of all the arts – endured many things in tribulation and calamity of various kinds, how later in the course of these events from despairing of danger and death he unexpectedly returned <to> hope, and how, as was fitting, he attained marvelous honor and glory. All of this we will recount in the same order in which it happened.]

This short Latin text, written as Kortekaas puts it «in a somewhat botched Latin», presents several awkward passages.²⁰

1) *de iniqua et dolosa <uita>*. A feminine noun in the ablative is missing. I have supplied *uita*, but of course many other solutions are possible (the collocation of the adjectives *iniquus* and *dolosus* is biblical, as in Psalms 42.1 and 119.2)

2) *unusquisque [...] cum cognouerit [...] {cognouerit} [...] unusquisque probitatis filius <cognouerit>*. The second *cognouerit* in *Ma* is misplaced (better

¹⁹ ordine *V*] ordine(m) *Ma*.

²⁰ *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Kortekaas 1984): 160, n. 33.

would be «[...] et cognoverit quod de iniqua et dolosa [...]») and unnecessary (given the parallelism of the basic construction: *cum cognoverit se gloriam recipere et uiuere et quod obprobrium sentiat et ignominiam sit habiturus*). My suspicion is that in the next sentence the subject *unusquisque probitatis filius* originally governed a main verb now missing, that this verb was likely *cognoverit* (given the parallel with the preceding *unusquisque [...] cum cognoverit*), that this word may have been added in the margin by a corrector then incorporated in the wrong place of the text by a later copyist (inserting *cognoverit* at the place where a substantive like *uita* needed to be added, a place which a corrector may have marked for an insertion); Kortekaas, who also suspects a missing verbal construction here, conjectures *agnoscere potest*.²¹

3) *Historia, inquit, itaque Apollonii Tyri utriusque retributionis meritum patenter agnoscitur*. The pleonastic *inquit* here has an indefinite subject: ‘one says’, ‘it is said’. If *historia* is taken as a nominative, then the verb should perhaps be amended to *agnoscit{ur}*, as proposed by Kortekaas.²² I prefer a solution proposed by an anonymous reviewer of this article, taking *historia* as an ablative of figurative place (along the lines of *libro legitur*). It is possible that *agnoscitur* is an impersonal, transitive passive taking *meritum*, *quantam*, and *quantum* as objects, but here I propose taking it as a true passive with *meritum* as its subject.

4) *cum perceperit illum Apollonium [...] multa sustinuisse, et [...] <ad> spem insperate redisse, et [...] honorem et gloriam recepisse mirabilem*. The three indirect statements that depend upon *cum perceperit* clumsily move from *Apollonium sustinuisse*, to *spem redisse*, to [*Apollonium*] *recepisse*. The awkward move from *Apollonium* to *spem* then back to *Apollonium* suggests that an earlier version of the *Proemium* probably had *Apollonium* as the subject of the second infinitive, *redisse*, as well, with *ad spem* instead of *spem*.

3. THE NARRATIVE LOGIC OF ROMANCE

During the Middle Ages, the story of Apollonius of Tyre was frequently interpreted as a moral exemplum. To take just one example from four-

²¹ *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Kortekaas 1984): 160, n. 33.

²² *Ibid.*

teenth-century Italy, the colophon in a manuscript from northern Italy sums up the tale thus: «Hic fuit infelix iuuentutis tempore sue. | Finis uero felix, prout hic describitur esse. | Ergo uelit prudens securam ducere uitam». ²³ In *Ma*, an exemplary interpretation is implied by the inclusion of the *Historia Apollonii* alongside hagiographic and exemplary biographies. In *Vf* it is made explicit through the opening rubric: «Incipit ystoria apollonii regis tyri et sidonis, de infortunio et patientia, et naufragio» (f. 373v).

Many modern scholars consider such moralizing interpretations to be ill-suited to the story of Apollonius of Tyre. G. A. A. Kortekaas, even as he acknowledges that such interpretations were common, admits to finding them curious: «However curious it may sound, there is quite an amount of evidence to the effect that by some Apollonius was not only considered a historical figure, but also a person worthy of imitation by Christians, a kind of Christian Job, who remained patient in the face of great calamity». ²⁴ Elizabeth Archibald also emphasizes the oddness of such accounts: «the lack of any explicit religious or moral theme makes it hard to read it as an *exemplum*». ²⁵ These scholarly judgments register the disparity between, on the one hand, a lack of explicitly moral and religious content within the tale itself, and, on the other hand, a medieval imperative to interpret the story as an exemplum of Christian virtue.

The *Proemium* can be seen as providing a solution to this problem. It argues that the exemplary essence of the tale is to be found not in its themes but in its structure. The well-endowed prince, Apollonius, endures multiple incidents during a period of tribulation and is brought to the point of near despair; yet he is restored to an un-hoped for hope, and finally to a happy ending. This plot, the exemplary interpreter tells us, shows that we should maintain patience in adversity and even hope confidently in a (heavenly) reward.

Apollonius suffers through many trials with patient endurance, and at the end is rewarded with an unanticipated restoration of wealth and status. According to the *Proemium*, this narrative structure is analogous to the pattern of moral logic by which a person of upright character can expect to be rewarded in both the temporal world and the afterlife. Au-

²³ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Latin 8502, f. 27r.

²⁴ *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Kortekaas 1984): 9.

²⁵ Archibald 1991: 91. See also Archibald 1990.

thoritative Christian doctrine tended to hold that earthly rewards were not necessarily to be expected for good behavior, as is clarified, for instance, by Thomas Aquinas in his commentary on the book of Job: while Job's friends believe that providence rewards men with earthly prosperity and punishes them with earthly adversity, «Job was not of this opinion, but he believed that the good works of men are ordered toward a future spiritual reward after this life and, similarly, that sins are to be punished by future punishments».²⁶ The *Proemium* gives priority to otherworldly rewards, yet, like much medieval moralizing, it continues to posit that a moral logic operates in this world as well. The pattern of worldly recompense on view in the *Historia Apollonii* is presented as an analogy to the more certain pattern of spiritual recompense.

In this respect, the *Proemium* bears remarkable similarities with the perspective of the twentieth-century literary critic Northrop Frye, for whom the story of Apollonius of Tyre exemplified the “romance” mode of narrative. For Frye, the mode of romance is a displacement of a mythic pattern of storytelling: the course of the protagonists is traced from an initial point of stability, “down” through a series of misfortunes, then back “up” to a restoration of stability, according to a U-shaped structure which replicates a mythic pattern of death and rebirth, of descent into and ascent out of Hell, common to many religious traditions, including Christianity.²⁷ The *Proemium* likewise describes how the structure of the story of Apollonius maps onto a religious narrative pattern of trials and salvation. As the *Proemium* puts it, Apollonius is seen «tribulacione ac calamitate multipharia multa sustinuisse, et in ipsa postmodum mortis et periculi desperatione <ad> spem insperate redisse, et sicut eum decebat honorem et gloriam recepisse mirabilem». Such a move from the multiplicity of trials to a state where one's true identity is reaffirmed, is identified by Frye as a hallmark of the romance mode:

Identity means a good many things, but all its meanings in romance have some connection with a state of existence in which there is nothing to write about. It is existence before “once upon a time”, and subsequent to “and they lived happily ever after.” What happens in between are adventures, or

²⁶ Thomas Aquinas (Damico): 96.

²⁷ Frye 1976.

collisions with external circumstances, and the return to identity is a release from the tyranny of these circumstances.²⁸

It is worth remembering that the story of Apollonius of Tyre plays a central role in Frye's theorization of the core structure of such a romance mode of narrative.

This pattern of romance has been diagnosed in a similar manner by Mikhail Bakhtin, who identifies it with what he calls the "adventure time" of ancient Greek romances. Where Frye puts more stress on the final recovery of identity, Bakhtin emphasizes the generic significance of the periods of misfortunes during which the protagonists of a romance are subjected to the contingencies of chance: the plot advances through a logic of random contingency, as one episode leads to another through the arrival of unforeseen and unpredictable events, both those which bring loss, separation and estrangement, and those which bring recovery and reunion. The characters are subject to chance, fortune:

Moments of adventuristic time occur at those points when the normal course of events, the normal, intended, purposeful sequence of life's events, is interrupted. These points provide an opening for the intrusion of non-human forces – fate, gods, villains – and it is precisely these forces, and not the heroes, who in adventure-time take all the initiative. Of course the heroes themselves act in adventure-time – they escape, defend themselves, engage in battle, save themselves – but they act, as it were, as merely physical persons, and the initiative does not belong to them.²⁹

The question of initiative poses a conundrum for the *Proemium*. How does one account for Apollonius's final recovery? The *Proemium* combines three answers. First, it suggests that suffering in patience is rewarded for its own sake, according to a moral logic of retributive justice. Secondly, it suggests that Apollonius prevails because of how his character was formed during his privileged youth; the list of his virtues and noble qualities shows not only from what heights Apollonius plummeted, but also the acquired habits that allowed him to persevere. Finally, running counter to the emphasis on his personal qualities (whether a moral disposition of patience or acquired habits of virtue) is the *Proemium's* acknowledgement that Apollonius in fact did enter into despair, from which he was rescued only because of an unexpected, ex-

²⁸ *Ibi.* 54.

²⁹ Bakhtin 1981: 95.

ternal change of events. Such an intermixture of narrative motivations is typical of romance narratives. While a story of ordeals may seem to present the characters as playthings of fortune and thus empty them of agency (as Bakhtin suggests), nevertheless at the same time such a story also focuses on some aspect of identity that the protagonists hold onto even in the depths of misfortune, a core identity that continues to define them even after everything else has been taken away, and thanks to which they eventually emerge victorious from their calamities (as Frye emphasizes).

Exemplary reasoning is characteristic of medieval interpretations of historical, biographical narratives. Petrarch, to take just one example, explains biography's exemplary purpose in his *De viris illustribus*:

Illustres quosdam viros quos excellenti gloria floruisse doctissimorum hominum ingenia memorie tradiderunt, in diversis voluminibus tanquam sparsos ac disseminatos [...] locum in unum colligere et quasi quodammodo stipare arbitratus sum [...]. Apud me nisi ea requiruntur, que ad virtutes vel virtutum contraria trahi possunt; hic enim, nisi fallor, fructuosus historicorum finis est, illa prosequi que vel sectanda legentibus vel fugienda sunt.³⁰

The *Proemium in Historia Apollonii* likewise argues that historical stories have been written down to provide readers with material for moral reflection: by identifying with the protagonist, the reader can interpret the story by applying prudential reasoning, postulating possible futures for himself based on analogies between the tale and his own affairs.

Yet the author of the *Proemium* is not only interested in purveying traditional notions of exemplarity, or drawing attention to a model of patient suffering. He is also interested in identifying a structure of narrative emplotment, one that can be transposed between a heavenly and a secular key. In this respect, the *Proemium* also can be seen as offering a theorization of the romance structure of the *Historia Apollonii*.

4. FILOMENA'S PROPOSAL FOR THE TALES OF DAY TWO OF THE *DECAMERON*

Giovanni Boccaccio was a close reader of the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*. As Francesco Mazzoni first showed, an episode in the ancient romance

³⁰ Petrarca (Martelotti): 3-4.

in which Apollonius's wife Archistrata is resuscitated from apparent death by a diligent medical student (*HA* 25-27) served Boccaccio as a model for one of the questions of love included in Book 4 of his *Filocolo*.³¹ This question of love Boccaccio subsequently repurposed as the fifth novella of Day Ten of the *Decameron*. Boccaccio continued to find narrative models in the *Historia Apollonii* when crafting the tales of the *Decameron*, especially those told in Day Two. The clearest case of borrowing in Day Two occurs in the story of Madonna Zinevra (*Dec.* 2.9; cf. *HA* 31-32).³² Other tales likewise include episodes that present analogies with scenes from the story of Apollonius, including the shipwreck and survival of Landolfo Ruffolo (*Dec.* 2.4; cf. *HA* 26) and the love story of Gianetta and Giachetto (*Dec.* 2.8; cf. *HA* 18). Familiarity with the ancient Latin novel could have affected Boccaccio's handling of the stories of Madonna Beritola (*Dec.* 2.6), Alatiel (*Dec.* 2.7), and Madonna Bartolomea (*Dec.* 2.10), in which, as many critics have pointed out, Boccaccio conducts sustained experiments with the narrative structure that we associate with ancient Greek romance, a genre not known in the West except through intermediary texts like the *Historia Apollonii*.³³ If, as I believe, these narrative similarities register direct textual influences, then it would appear that the *Historia Apollonii* served as a paradigmatic source text for Boccaccio when, for the novellas for Day Two (especially for those set around the Mediterranean Sea) he shaped stories about the subjection of protagonists to the unpredictable downs and ups of fortune.

The tales in Day Two experiment with different unfoldings of a common narrative logic. The queen for the day, Filomena, proposes that all the stories of the day follow the same basic narrative pattern:

acciò che ciascuno abbia spazio di poter pensare a alcuna bella novella sopra la data proposta contare. La quale, quando questo vi piaccia, sia questa: che, con ciò sia cosa che dal principio del mondo gli uomini sieno stati da diversi casi della fortuna menati, e saranno infino al fine, ciascun debba dire sopra

³¹ Mazzoni 1950. See also Forni 1996: 79-83; Robins 2007: 112-3.

³² Robins, in c. s.

³³ For discussions about the role of Fortune, and the mode of romance narrative, in the tales of Day Two, see: Shklovskij 1969; Giannetto 1981; Segre 1982; Fido 1988; Bardi 1989; Barolini 1993; Sipala 1994; Picone 1997; Zatti 2004; Ciabattini 2013.

questo: chi, da diverse cose infestato, sia oltre alla speranza riuscito a lieto fine.³⁴

This formulation proposes not so much a theme as a narrative mode. If Boccaccio's *De casibus* gathers biographies whose storylines are all «parabolic graphs» of rise and fall,³⁵ Filomena's *proposta* calls for stories with the inverse parabolic shape, ones that chart an individual's fall into adversities followed by a rise to a happy ending. The requirement to focus on a protagonist who is «da diverse cose infestato» invites a prolongation of the part of the narrative devoted to calamities; while the requirement to focus also on how the protagonist «sia oltre alla speranza riuscito a lieto fine» entails relying upon a sudden, unexpected reversal as the principal mechanism of closure.

Giancarlo Alfano describes these aspects of Filomena's proposal well:

Convenzionalmente, questo lungo titolo è riassunto nella formula “fortuna”. C'è però da osservare che l'indicazione della regina Filomena è molto più cogente: per rispondere alla prescrizione, occorre raccontare vicende in cui si passi da una situazione negativa al lieto fine (per cui le novelle saranno incentrate sulla peripezia), ma tale conclusione deve superare le aspettative del protagonista (per cui il rivolgimento sarà inaspettato). Da ciò si evince l'importanza in questa giornata della costruzione dell'intreccio, che ne diventa elemento strutturale portante, con dirette conseguenze anche sulla lunghezza del racconto.³⁶

In theorizing a genre of stories according to their common narrative logic, Boccaccio identifies the same basic elements which Northrop Frye points to as characteristic of the mode of romance, and which Mikhail Bakhtin associates with the chronotope of the ancient Greek novel.

Boccaccio's diagnosis of this narrative mode bears some striking similarities to the analysis of the plot of the story of Apollonius of Tyre provided in the *Proemium in Historia Apollonii*.

Decameron: ciascun debba dire sopra questo: chi, da diverse cose infestato, sia oltre alla speranza riuscito a lieto fine.

³⁴ *Dec.* 1.concl.11; cited from Boccaccio (Quondam–Fiorilla–Alfano): 276.

³⁵ Marchese 2013: 249.

³⁶ Alfano 2013: 281-2.

Proemium: cum perceperit illum Apollonium [...] tribulacione ac calamitate multipharia multa sustinuisse, et in ipsa postmodum mortis et periculi desperatione <ad> spem insperate redisse et [...] honorem et gloriam recepisse.

The *Proemium* does not specifically mention fortune, but the subjection of Apollonius to the whims of fortune was very much part of how the story was understood; the description of Apollonius in the text as «qui naufragium passus est et a fortuna deceptus in mari» (*Vf*, f. 377v; HA 20) is taken up in the way *Vf* announces the theme of the story in its opening rubric, «de infortunio et pacientia et naufragio» (*Vf*, f. 373v). In the *Decameron* Filomena proposes that the stories told should follow a narrative logic of fall and rise, through which the subjection of human beings to fortune might be displayed. As with the *Proemium*, Filomena focuses on individual persons, positing that biographical narratives can illustrate the subjection of humans to external, contingent forces beyond their control. The essential features she mentions echo the three clauses of the *Proemium*'s concluding tricolon:

calamitate multipharia multa sustinuisse	>	da diverse cose infestato
<ad> spem insperate redisse	>	oltre alla speranza
honorem et gloriam recepisse	>	sia riuscito a lieto fine

Both Filomena's proposal and the *Proemium* stress the U-shaped parabola of romance. In both, the initial stage of stability is not directly mentioned; the period of trials is understood as a series of multiple misfortunes; the sudden reversal towards restoration is understood in terms of un hoped-for hope;³⁷ and the happy ending is understood as conclusive. Furthermore, both emphasize the enunciation of these narratives as stories: «Quod qualiter fuerit, ipso ordine prosequamur» and «ciascun debba dire sopra questo».

These similarities are striking. Nevertheless, because we are here dealing with commonplaces of medieval thought, and because the similarities do not reveal exact translation (which, however, Boccaccio u-

³⁷ Boccaccio restates this in related terms (including the collocation *oltre speranza*) at the end of the first novella of Day Two, the tale of Martellino, Marchese and Stecchi: «oltre alla speranza di tutti e tre di così gran pericolo usciti, sani e salvi se ne tornarono a casa loro» (*Dec.* 2.1.33); Boccaccio (Quondam–Fiorilla–Alfano): 320. Here the use of the word *pericolo* resonates with *periculi* in the phrasing in the *Proemium*: «mortis et periculi desperatione <ad> spem insperate redisse.»

sually avoids when adapting his source texts), there is no definite clue that can conclusively demonstrate Boccaccio's direct use of the *Proemium*. There is also a difference in purpose: the *Proemium* homes in on this specific structural pattern in order to posit analogies between a romance-like story and a religious pattern of salvation, whereas Boccaccio focuses on this structural mode as an opportunity to explore similarities among a cluster of tales about humans in this world, without positing any allegorical potential. Nevertheless, given that Boccaccio seems to have had the story of Apollonius of Tyre on his mind when putting together Day Two of the *Decameron*, and given that the *Proemium* could have provided a ready-made synopsis of the structural logic of romance narrative, we have to take seriously the possibility that the *Proemium in Historia Apollonii* may have been a text known to Boccaccio.

This possibility is strengthened by other philological evidence. As Teresa Hankey has pointed out, there are only three extant witnesses of the *Historie* of Riccobaldo of Ferrara. One of them is *Vf*, which contains the *Proemium in Historia Apollonii*. The others are two sets of extracts, one of which is a florilegium in Trento, while the other is Boccaccio's *Zibaldone Magliabechiano*. This *zibaldone* is a paper manuscript in which over the course of several years (1330s-1350s) Boccaccio gathered historical information from numerous sources, including ample material from Riccobaldo's *Historie*.³⁸ Because Riccobaldo's writings circulated primarily in northeastern Italy, it has been plausibly suggested that Boccaccio encountered Riccobaldo's *Historie* in the period of 1346-1348 when he was residing in the cities of Ravenna and Forlì.³⁹ The copy of the *Historie* to which Boccaccio had access may, like *Vf*, have contained the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* preceded by the short *Proemium in Historia Apollonii*. If this was the case, then Boccaccio may have encountered the *Historia Apollonii* in at least two different forms: one form which he used in Naples in the 1330s when he adapted an episode from the story of Apollonius of Tyre in his *Filocolo*; and another which he may have come across in the late 1340s, close to the period when he composed the *Decameron*. We may never know just which text(s) of the

³⁸ Boccaccio's *zibaldone* is Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS Banco Rari 50; the other witness is Trento, Castello del Buonconsiglio, Monumenti e Collezioni Provinciali, MS 1358. On the witnesses of the *Historie*, see Hankey 1958; Hankey 1996; Rizzi 2008.

³⁹ Petoletti 2013: 296.

Historia Apollonii Boccaccio had at his disposal, but we should take seriously the possibility that, when working on the *Decameron*, he had access to a form of the text that included the *Proemium*, and that he had its theorization of a romance mode of narration in mind as he assembled the novellas for Day Two.

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ABSTRACT: The *Proemium in Historia Apollonii* is a short introduction to the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* extant in two manuscripts from fourteenth-century Italy. It constitutes an unusual instance of medieval theorizing about the narrative structure of the genre of ancient romance. In this article I present the text of the *Proemium*, evaluate the evidence it provides about the circulation and reception of the *Historia Apollonii*, and raise the possibility that this text might lie behind Boccaccio's description of the narrative structure of the stories recounted in Day Two of the *Decameron*.

KEYWORDS: *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, Boccaccio, *Decameron*.

RIASSUNTO: Il *Proemium in Historia Apollonii* è una breve introduzione all'*Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* conservata in due manoscritti copiati in Italia nel Trecento, la quale costituisce un raro esempio di teorizzazione medievale della struttura narrativa del genere del romanzo antico. In quest'articolo presento un'edizione del *Proemium*, valutando le prove che offre rispetto alla circolazione e ricezione dell'*Historia Apollonii*, e formulando l'ipotesi che questo testo possa aver condizionato la descrizione offerta da Boccaccio della struttura narrativa delle novelle della seconda giornata del *Decameron*.

PAROLE CHIAVE: *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, Boccaccio, *Decameron*.