

# OEDIPUS AND APOLLONIUS

M. BURNS

Of the two terms in the title of this paper, only the second needs introduction to an interdisciplinary audience. *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* is the traditional title assigned to the fascinating literary artifact, ubiquitous in Western culture for over ten centuries (c. A.D. 5th century-17th century) but now almost lost to view. A romance narrative, it could be described as reverse-Oedipus; its opening incident of father-daughter incest poses a problem which other father-daughter relationships in the story subsequently resolve. Thus, *Apollonius of Tyre* (the English title) deals throughout with tensions connected to paternity and patriarchy, topics which have only recently begun to be widely re-explored.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I shall summarize the narrative itself, document its earlier literary prevalence, and compare it to the story of Oedipus, especially in Freud's handling.

Simplifying the vicissitudes characteristic of romance (although *Apollonius* is noticeably more unified and less meandering than the other Greek romances, from Heliodorus through Apuleius),<sup>2</sup> the following synopsis conveys the story.

Apollonius, prince of Tyre, sets out to win as wife the Princess of Antioch, whose suitors must undergo a fairy-tale test to woo her. Unique in romance narratives or fairy/folk tale, however, is the explicit rationale for the test: the princess's father enjoys an incestuous relationship with his daughter, which he does not wish to give up.<sup>3</sup> The test itself, a riddle, presents a lose-lose situation: if the suitor fails to solve the riddle, he is decapitated, but since the answer to the riddle is the father-daughter incest itself, if he succeeds, he offends the tyrant and is decapitated anyway. In Shakespeare's *Pericles* (c. 1608), one of the more recent English versions of the story and probably the best-known version, the riddle takes the following form:

I am no viper, yet I feed  
On mother's flesh which did me breed.  
I sought a husband, in which labor  
I found that kindness is a father.  
He's father, son, and husband mild;  
I mother, wife, and yet his child.

How they may be, and yet in two,  
As you will live, resolve it you.  
(Shakespeare *Pericles* c.1608: Act I sc. i, 65-72)

The hero, Apollonius (Pericles in Shakespeare's version), betrays his knowledge of the answer, but the tyrant inconsistently temporizes, releasing him, only to set a price on his head afterward. Therefore Apollonius becomes a fugitive. In the course of wanderings by land and sea, culminating in a shipwreck, he meets another princess – whose father *pretends* to be tyrannically possessive about her, but actually furthers their wooing<sup>4</sup> – and marries her. She becomes pregnant and goes into labor on board ship (in yet another journey) in a tempest; after giving birth to a baby girl, she seemingly dies and is thrown overboard in a casket. Unbeknownst to the hero, the wife is rescued, but the hero wanders in grief for the next fourteen years, having given the baby daughter over to stepparents (who prove unworthy) to rear.

The rest of the story deals less with the father than with the daughter, in another departure from the pattern of typical Greek romance, which focused on the separation and reunification of two lovers rather than of parent and child.<sup>5</sup> The daughter, named Tharsia in most versions of the story and Marina in Shakespeare's play, grows up to become beautiful, sensible, educated and virtuous.<sup>6</sup> Her death is sought by her stepmother – jealous on behalf of her own daughter – and she is captured by pirates, who sell her to a brothel owner. With virtue and resourcefulness, however, she manages to protect her chastity and to earn a living, in the brothel and later outside it. The following passage conveys something of the tone of the story:

Two days later, she was led into the brothel, following a large [...] and accompanying musicians. Athenagora, however, was there earlier and enters [...] the brothel with his head covered. But once he had entered, he sat down. And in came Tharsia; she threw herself at his feet and said, 'Have pity on me! I beg you – you're young – don't let yourself violate me under that sordid notice. Restrain your indecent lust and listen to the accidents that brought me to my present miserable state or consider my family background'. When she had told him of all the accidents that had happened to her, the prince was distressed; indeed, because of his sense of decency, he was dumbfounded, and said to her: 'Get up. We know the quirks of fortune; we're human also. I myself have a daughter who's a virgin, and for her I can be anxious about a similar mischance'. Saying this, he pulled out forty gold pieces and put them in her virginal hand and he said to her, 'Tharsia, dear lady, look, you have more than your virginity called for. Do the same with the next customers until you get yourself freed'. The girl, of course, with flowing tears, said, 'I am most grateful for your decent behavior'. When he came out, a colleague of his came up to him and said, 'Athenagora, how did you make out with this new slave?'. Athenagora replied, 'It couldn't have been better; enough to make you cry'. (16th C: A recension in Hägg 1983: 149).

Indirectly, the brothel restores her to her father, for the local ruler, Athenagoras, is so impressed with her that he sends for her help in curing the depression of a newly-arrived stranger to the town – who turns out to be her father.

The episode which reunites father and daughter is particularly interesting: to arouse Apollonius from his grief, the girl entertains him partly by asking riddles. In answering the riddles, Apollonius enters into conversation with the girl and so recognizes her, for the riddle of her own birth and upbringing comes out. In fact, all English versions of the story compress the riddle episode here, omitting the riddles from Symposius and including *only* the broader ones of the girl's past.

In the over-all happy ending which ensues from this recognition, the father also regains his lost wife, and the daughter marries the local ruler; both father and daughter end with kingdoms to inherit.<sup>7</sup>

Already, perhaps, the resonances of *Apollonius* with *Oedipus Rex* may be apparent; before dealing with the emerging patterns, however, I wish to discuss the extensive prevalence of the Apollonius story in Western literature. There are three chief modern bibliographic sources on Apollonius: Shakespeare's *Pericles and Apollonius of Tyre* by A. Smyth (1898); *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance* by C. Gesner (1970); and *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* by G. A. A. Kortekaas (1984).

The Apollonius saga...is known to nearly every language of Europe, and persists through more than a thousand years, flourishing in extraordinary popularity. Its undiminished vitality through many centuries and its almost unaltered integrity through many languages make it an attractive subject for critical exposition. From its untraced origin in the late sophistic romance of Greece it entered the literatures of Europe through a hundred manuscripts of an early Latin version. It was popular in Italy, Russia, Hungary, Bohemia, Norway and Iceland; it is found in a Danish ballad and a Netherland drama; it was sung by Provençal poets, and beyond the Pyrenees it was borrowed from to praise the Cid; it was translated in Crete into modern Greek in the sixteenth century; it was absorbed in France into the cycle of Charlemagne, and it is the only romance in Anglo-Saxon literature. (Smyth 1898: 5)

As Smyth discusses in exhaustive detail, two phenomena characterize the history of *Apollonius*: its longevity, and its consistency. Throughout its multiple transmissions, in almost every European language and literary medium, it retained its original form intact.

In 1857, the eminent classical scholar Moritz Haupt, of Berlin, wrote that he knew of more than one hundred manuscripts of the Latin *Apollonius*, widely distributed through England, Germany, Rome, Paris and Budapest. Although this number was later challenged, Kortekaas retrospectively defends the claim, having found a greater number himself despite the intervention of

the two world wars (Kortekaas 1984: 7). In Kortekaas' discussion of the work's popularity,

even the very manner in which the text of the HA (Apollonius) was copied in the Middle Ages ties in with the regard in which it was held, and may be adduced as proof of its popularity...The copyists, at least those who did not copy the text in a merely mechanical way, felt personally involved in the gripping story, and in that way too many a scribe, sometimes followed by a corrector in his turn, turned into a 'reviser on a modest scale'. (Kortekaas 1984: 8)

It should be noted here that such revisions affected only specific passages in the story, not its main outlines.

Gesner and other sources cite a reference to Apollonius in Fortunatus (c. A.D. 566-68), and a catalog of books of the Abbey of St. Wandrille in Normandy includes Apollonius of Tyre (A.D. 747). Crusaders' writings mentioned Apollonius, whom Crusaders thought of as a historical figure, with a palace still to be seen in Tyre (Kortekaas 1984: 7 and n. 24). The popularity evinced through the manuscript history more than continues after the invention of printing; Gesner's bibliography, for example, includes twenty-five entries for books printed between c. 1470 and 1634, many with numerous reprints.<sup>8</sup> In England in particular, the work had a vital history: 'For the student of English letters *Apollonius of Tyre* is the most interesting of the Greek romances, for it has been part of the living literature during every period of the language' (Gesner 1970: 145). It was the only work of imaginative literature current in Old English, Middle English, and modern English, all three; it had at least eight appearances in England, from an Anglo-Saxon romance to a Medieval version extant only in fragments, to a c. 1510 printing by Wynkyn de Worde, to a novel and play which follow Shakespeare's *Pericles* in the seventeenth century. The printed version of 1510, incidentally, is one of the earliest literary works printed in England, and its being printed at all, at such an early date, testifies to its importance – among all the sixteenth-century works of theology, classical literature and what publishers today would call 'self-improvement'.

The inheritance of *Apollonius* in Renaissance literature throughout Europe came chiefly from its inclusion in three large works – Godfrey of Viterbo's *Pantheon* (1186), the *Gesta Romanorum* (c. 1300), and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1383-93) – which were major literary sources for the Renaissance in England as well. In England, Gower's version partly follows Godfrey's, followed in turn by Shakespeare's (also influenced by a sixteenth-century novel by Laurence Twine). Geoffrey Chaucer evidently feels that he must explain why he is *not* re-telling the story; his Man of Law refers to it as 'so horrible for to rede' and declines to repeat it – telling instead the 'patient Griselda' story sometimes associated with Apollonius (and not much less 'horrible').<sup>9</sup>

In short, the story of *Apollonius of Tyre* evidently held a vital appeal for both popular and scholarly audiences, in virtually all European countries, in both Latin and the vernaculars, in virtually every literary form or medium, for well over a millennium of European history. The conclusion is inescapable that the story's popularity must have been connected to its topic, father-daughter relationships and the evil of sexually abusing daughters; the re-working of the initial problematic relationship in subsequent successful father-daughter relationships, the emphasis on education and moral responsibility and good counsel, and the frequent inculcations of the benefits of industry, honesty and chastity all point up the same moral.

Yet, with relative abruptness, the story died as literature. Its present obscurity is probably verifiable through the audience's experience – how often is the work currently discussed? Bibliographies show the slowdown in its publication after the early seventeenth century; by any account, the spate of editions and translations in all literary media slowed down from this point. The publication history shows the turning point: Danish editions diminish to one each for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and a translation into Icelandic in 1670); Swedish editions number two for the eighteenth century and one for the nineteenth; Dutch editions diminished to two for the seventeenth century and the use of the same title for an entirely different story (1662); there are three Italian reprints for the seventeenth century and one for the eighteenth century; etc.

The same pattern is emphatically established for England. A survey of the *Short-Title Catalogue* for 1475 to 1640 shows at least 28 entries for *Apollonius* – either on its own or contained in other publications – while the earlier manuscript history, abundant in England, has already been referred to; indeed, the Anglo-Saxon version of Apollonius shows that it was current in England before the Norman Conquest brought chivalric romances there. This consistent tradition of English interest culminates in Shakespeare's *Pericles*, an immensely popular play in its early years, going through seven editions between 1609 and 1635 – the best showing for any of Shakespeare's plays aside from the histories. *Pericles* was performed as late as 1631 and was still being praised in 1646; yet it came in for heavy criticism less than a decade later, and by 1677 John Dryden was apologizing for Shakespeare's having written it, excusing it (mysteriously) as Shakespeare's 'first' play. Ben Jonson was among those who sniped at it early and often, and despite its four reprints in quarto and its proven popularity, it was not included with several spurious attributions, and Alexander Pope, among other editors, refused to include it in the canon. Lillo's *Marina* (1738), while apparent proof of its lingering popularity and influence, nonetheless leaves out all the evil parts on the grounds that Shakespeare could not have written them. Beyond *Pericles* alone, all four of Shakespeare's dramatic romances – all focused in part on father-

daughter relationships – had a significant vogue in the early seventeenth century and then fell into disfavor with both stages and scholars for three centuries. More broadly yet, the romance genre itself has suffered critical disesteem in comparison to other genres, but this topic exceeds the scope of the present paper (Felperin 1972: 3).

Since the seventeenth century, therefore, the story of Apollonius has been lost in the silence and repression of the archaic. Needless to say, the simple observation that 'tastes change' would hardly explain such a shift; for one thing, to call something 'taste' does not explain it.<sup>10</sup> Nor does the assumption of a 'progress' in taste since earlier times sufficiently explain why the barbarism of those earlier times should have manifested itself specifically in *Apollonius*; nor is the 'horror' of the story measurably worse than that of contemporary horror movies, 'splatterpunk' and 'sadoporn' – to say nothing of actual contemporary child abuse, including sexual abuse. In any case, Freud of course maintained that the very horror of *Oedipus Rex* constituted part of its appeal, because it expressed man's deepest fears about his own nature (Freud (1930) 1965: 294-6).

In my view, the rise and fall of the story pose two correlative questions, one to account for its tremendous popularity, the other to account for its rapid decline from popularity, and I believe that the two questions have basically the same answer. That is, surely the critical element in the Apollonius story – its straightforward address of some of the tensions and anxieties of paternity, through the problem of father-daughter incest – the element which sets it apart from the other Greek romances and from most other imaginative literature,<sup>11</sup> is the element also which accounts for its literary career. At this point, I wish to compare the Apollonius and Oedipus stories, partly because I think the career of the former is illuminated by that of the latter.

In a series of significant resonances, the plots of *Oedipus* and *Apollonius* are structurally congruent at every major point, sometimes directly and sometimes by a direct inversion (see Goepp 1938). Where *Oedipus* involves mother-son incest, discovered late in the plot, *Apollonius* involves father-daughter incest, discovered at the beginning. Each plot contains two riddle episodes, in effect: Oedipus confronts the Oracle's riddle with confidence because he earlier solved that of the Sphinx; Apollonius confronts his daughter's riddles in a state of depression connected to the tyrant's, earlier.

In each story, the earlier riddle episode leads through initial clarification to complication, and the second riddle episode leads through initial complication to clarification. In *Oedipus*, however, the resultant developments lead to the family's disintegration – although the daughters remain with their father, in the sequel; in *Apollonius* the resultant developments lead to the family's reunification – although the hero's daughter leaves to marry (both stories, though in very different ways, posit as a desideratum that a family

be able to dispose of its daughters in marriage). As regards the wife and mother in each story, in *Oedipus* she is present but lost at the end; in *Apollonius* she is absent but restored at the end.

From the tragedy to the romance, the story shifts from mother-son relationship to father-daughter relationship, and from an unhappy to a happy ending; the riddlers in the two stories shift from supernatural to human (Sphinx and Oracle, to tyrant and daughter); the ruler shifts from accountable son (Oedipus) to tyrannous father (Antiochus); and the saving voice of justice also shifts from supernatural to human. The importance of these shifts can hardly be over-estimated; their effect in every instance is newly to focus on, to emphasize, human agency and personal responsibility.

In each story, the male incestuous figure is a ruler, but Antiochus is also a tyrant – deliberately rather than accidentally incestuous, in a paradigm of comic 'bad law' (man-made) rather than of tragic 'bad condition' (from supernatural agency). Corrupted by his own knowing choice rather than by destiny, the tyrant creates a situation entirely human and political, in a way that Oedipus' situation seems not to be. Thus his position involves the political insecurity traditionally connected to tyranny (much greater than that of Oedipus, though Oedipus also betrays some insecurities, with regard to Creon); ultimately, indeed, in sign of the repugnance of his actions to both earth and heaven, he is destroyed by a bolt of lightning. Oedipus, on the other hand, is at least partly exculpated. Wittingly rather than unwittingly incestuous, Antiochus is a tyrant rather than a leader, guilty of crime rather than mistake. In an imaginative demotion, therefore, the ruler is no longer the protagonist but the villain, a transformation both physical and political; the ethical perspective of the story alters, from a focus on the ruler to a focus on one who witnesses and learns from him, to become a ruler (not a tyrant) himself. The nature of the ruler's authority has become less a function of power than of individual responsibility.

A homologous transformation occurs in the female roles, again with the effect of creating a different ethical perspective. In *Oedipus*, the female Sphinx is the destructive, devouring riddler, to which the male Oracle counterposes a necessary ethical clarification and authority. In *Apollonius*, the male tyrant is the destructive, devouring riddler, and a daughter later counterposes the necessary ethical clarification. The gender and political position of the person with the saving voice are thus changed, and the feminine moves from destructive to regenerative. The threatening quasi-maternal Sphinx gives way to the grotesque travesty of fatherhood presented by Antiochus, and Oedipus, the enlightened masculine ruler, gives way to Marina/Tharsia who redeems her family.

When the Sphinx asks what goes on four legs, two legs and three, and the Oracle asks who killed his father and married his mother, Freud maintains

in effect that the answer to both questions is the same: the answer is *man*. Such is the position of man (much more than woman) seen from a perspective of transcendental superiority, facing the question which a deity might pose to a mortal: who are you? In *Apollonius*, however, the central riddle (presented in two episodes) changes. When the tyrant and the daughter pose their riddles, they both ask a question posed by mortals: who am I? And from the perspective of the person being questioned, the difference between the two riddles is homologous with the difference between the Greek *sapientia* of knowing thyself and the Christian *caritas* of knowing the other as thyself; Shakespeare's use of these two myths, for example, presents them in exactly this juxtaposition – especially in *The Winter's Tale*.

The tragedy and the romance embody a Greek-to-Christian sequence progressing toward humanism, culminating in a peak period of influence for *Apollonius*, its 'period of greatest activity in the vernacular' (Deyermund 15th C) 1973: xi) – the thirteenth through the seventeenth centuries – which coincided with the peak period of humanism. The declining influence of *Apollonius* after the seventeenth century could thus perhaps be described as one in a series of footnotes illustrating the decline of humanism (although the latter has been an epideictic and disjunctive decline, not a neat linear one). The definitive explanation for the decline of *Apollonius* lies probably beyond the scope of a single paper, and perhaps beyond the scope of a single historian. In the words of John Boswell,

Conjugal relations, reproduction, and the interior life of the family are, in fact, among the most reclusive and private aspects of human existence, jealously guarded from public view in most cultures, and less likely than almost any other interpersonal activity to leave written records...

Historians have long been accustomed to playing the paleontologist – collecting, cleaning, analyzing, and arranging for display the bones of the species they study, in this case those aspects of human society which happen to leave hard remains in the sediments of time: birth certificates, death notices, tax lists, laws, records of public events. But the great bulk of any organic entity is too soft to survive as fossil...

In the case of the human family, what is missing is the 'flesh and blood' in its most literal sense: children. The fossil remains of ancient and medieval populations are almost entirely of adults; children left impressions too fragile to survive, or no imprints at all. (Boswell (1988) 1990: 4-5)

When the nebulousness of the history of ideas, or rather the history of their reception, is combined with the difficulties of demographics, the question becomes complex indeed. However, certain key phases in the decline of *Apollonius* between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries can be at least adduced; if they do not explain the decline, they do illustrate it. An early chapter is the development of a more urbanized and then of an industrialized

society, in Western culture, from the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A later chapter is the twentieth-century influence of Freud, whose pervasive Oedipal theory demonstrates the strength a myth *can* retain, in the twentieth century.

Briefly, in regard to the first, it can be shown that the decline of *Apollonius* was earliest and most rapid in countries where national consolidation, urbanization, and then industrialization also proceeded earliest – specifically, England and the interior of Western Europe (see above). Conversely, the spotty and lingering influence of *Apollonius* into the nineteenth century manifests itself only in areas with a longlasting agrarian, village society, such as parts of Greece, eastern Europe, and Finland (see, for example, Smyth 1898: 7ff). While it would be difficult to articulate all the connections here, surely at least part of the pattern becomes apparent: the decline of the story seems to be associated with the reorganization of daily life under the combined influences of urbanization and beginning industrialization. Perhaps this has to do with the story's scrutiny of the role of father and of authority figure; certainly it became unpopular at about the same time that privacy became popular. Without acceding entirely to Braudel's dashing but doctrinaire pronouncement that 'Privacy was an eighteenth-century innovation' (Braudel (1979) 1981: 308), one can still conclude that a reorganization of daily life around a more compartmentalized household would produce a different audience for a story about family.

In other words, the portrayal of families in *Apollonius* must inevitably have been given a new twist by societal changes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The relationship of an Antiochus to his daughter fuses physical force and sensual intimacy in the ugliest possible reduction of 'love' to violation, the ultimate abuse of authority because the closest to home, and the most liable to be possessively protected by the abuser. The conjunction of patriarchy and capital, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, gives particular impetus to the horror of the *Apollonius* story; inevitably, the narrative became unbearable just at the point when human warmth and mutual protection became the domain of the family almost exclusively, against perceivably inimical external forces which had appropriated the workplace and most public space (see Zaretsky 1973: 22-30).

The completeness of this turn can be seen in the work of Freud. Freud knew of the *Apollonius* story; its plot is summarized and its popularity explicitly discussed in Brandes' *William Shakespeare: A Critical Study*, a book in Freud's library (Trosman & Simmons 1973: 647-87).

Brandes, a Danish critic much admired by Freud, is emphatic on the topic of Shakespeare's *Pericles* and its popularity, outlines the history of the play and its source in *Apollonius*, and praises its poetry and its over-all quality lavishly, citing its parallels with *The Tempest* and indeed with all of

Shakespeare's last plays – no small point for Freud, a famous admirer of Shakespeare. Brandes also pours scorn on attempts to bowdlerize the Shakespeare play by attributing its brothel scenes to other authors, a claim 'made more on moral than esthetic grounds' (Brandes (1898) 1963: 282); surely this argument would have appealed to Freud. Moreover, Brandes' entire study biographizes the works of Shakespeare, also an effort which would certainly have held appeal for Freud. Brandes' essay, in short, makes so clear both the story of *Apollonius* and the plot of *Pericles*, including the incest episode, that no reader of the essay could overlook the significance of the episode in question. Indeed, on some level Freud seems to have recognized its significance, for – fascinatingly – in a 'curiously oblique reference' (Holland 1964: 70) he actually quoted a line from the story – but without being able to remember where he had read it (Freud (1930) 1962: 91 & n).

One might wonder why, with all the subtle analysis which Freud used to explicate the Oedipal structure in *Hamlet*, he could not have dealt more fully with the explicitly incestuous *Pericles* and its subtler versions in Shakespeare's three subsequent dramatic romances. Part of the answer, of course, lies in the very obviousness of the story; Freud was attracted by buried material which required his brilliance to probe – to excavate like an archaeologist, in his own metaphor (Freud (1895) 1985 III: 192). But further answers may be suggested. The Apollonius story and Shakespeare's romances deal overtly and relatively honestly with the topics of parental jealousy of children, infanticide, abandonment, parental possessiveness, incest and rape. They also embody a progression, and represent the possibility of progression, from the ruler supernaturally exculpated to the ruler mortally accountable; from man's condition opaque to responsible; and from what Freud termed man's worst fears overwhelming to avoidable.

In sum, the psychosexual progression from the tragedy to the romance poses also the possibility of a political progression and an ethical progression. With the scrutiny of the father's role, the displacement of father by daughter as protagonist, the emphasis on the accountability of rulers, and a corresponding emphasis on education and good counsel, the thrust of the Apollonius story is ultimately to interrogate the ruler-father's authority. It seems almost harsh to suggest that the very usefulness, the teacherliness, of these literary structures may account for Freud's lack of interest in them. But such is one possibility, a possibility entirely in line with Freud's rejection of the real-life narratives of his patients – mainly women – telling of parental seduction, and his turning instead to the articulation of the unconscious Oedipus complex.

Whatever homiletic in support of accountability the Apollonius myth conveys, Freud's reconstitution of the Oedipus myth redresses the balance in

favor of authority. But Freud, turning from one incest myth to the other – given an implicit choice between which of the two to revitalize – only completes what Western literature had begun before him; his refusal or inability to subject the authority figure to analysis only recapitulates and caps that of Western culture. Understandably, the Oedipal theory reflects Freud's own time: the polity-reflects-family model corresponds to nineteenth-century models of biological and historical development (organicism; phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny; 'social Darwinism', etc); his theories of drives and sublimation resemble nineteenth-century models of physical energy; etc. (Stewart 1967: 6-7). Philosophically, Freud's articulation of the Oedipus complex as concomitantly *immediate* and *universal* links the myth to the two main, superficially opposed, nineteenth-century perspectives on humanity: the underlying atomism of humanity's place in an expanded galaxy, and the overarching linearity of humanity's progress through history. In other words, it makes a synthetic connection between space and time – two terms perceptibly opposed, in the nineteenth century, in a kind of family struggle for dominance over the universe: 'which came/comes first?'. Paradoxically, despite the exasperation and derision which Freud's theories aroused, Freud thus created for Oedipus and Oedipal desires a meta-respectability, making them a monolithic paradigm, a built-in, the nuclear and universal tragedy of familial and political human development.

The significance of the Oedipal theory for twentieth-century thought has been equalled perhaps only by the insignificance of the Apollonius story. Not only has the story disappeared from the popular imagination, but its handling by editors, translators and other scholars is often characterized by glossings-over which manifest the weight of a bowdlerized tradition. Thus, for example, I have seen no English paraphrase of the original which makes clear that the initial incest – presented in the first paragraph – is a violent rape of the daughter;

one morning at dawn, being wakeful, he burst into his daughter's room and commanded her servants to withdraw out of reach, on the pretext of engaging his daughter in secret conversation; and stimulated by libidinous furor, in spite of his daughter's resistance, ripped her virgin knot and then made a rapid escape from the room. The girl stood where she was, dazed by the criminal father's villainy, while her blood started to flow inwardly; yet overtly the drops of blood pooled together on the pavement beneath her. (Laurentianus LXVI A recension (anon.) in Ed. Schmeiling 1988; my translation)

Nor do the paraphrases make clear that the daughter, distraught and suicidal, is then persuaded by her nurse to put up with the situation; when the daughter confides her situation and her wish to kill herself,

remedy, that she could only with flattery and blandishments recall her to everyday, normal conversation, so as to persuade her that death would be an enormity – excessive – and to encourage her to satisfy, reluctantly, her father's desire. (Laurentianus LXVI A recension (anon.) in Ed. Schmeling 1988; my translation)

Such overt bowdlerization is often assisted by romanticized archaization and by simple incomprehension, as in Thorpe's omission to consider that *Apollonius* could have been homiletic, despite his own notice of 'Compositions in Anglo-Saxon upon profane subjects being so few...' (Thorpe 1834: preface). Similarly, Goolden also points out the 'unique interest' of the *Apollonius* material, but fails to draw the inference of its social uses; he ranges instead into flamboyant sentiment:

*Apollonius of Tyre* is the first book of romantic adventure in English literature. Most Old English prose consists of chronicles and homilies, but the existence of *Apollonius* shows that the Anglo-Saxons did not always wish to be reminded of the world around them or to come. There was then, too, a demand for escape entertainment, a taste for the imaginative world of fantasy, excitement, and sensationalism. The break in taste between our pre-Conquest ancestors and ourselves was evidently not so radical as the bulk of the surviving records would lead us to suppose. (Goolden 1958: xiii, xxv)

This passage represents a remarkable obliviousness to the possibility that for earlier readers and hearers, *Apollonius* did in fact have something to do with 'the world around them or to come'.

Instances of glossing over are especially telling when the scholarship in question is otherwise very fine, as in the bibliographical studies by Smyth, Gesner, and Kortekaas. Smyth leaves the incest episode alone except to quote approvingly an earlier scholar's claim that it is a later and 'not particularly successful' addition to the story: in this view, the only purpose of the incest episode is to provide a clumsily interwoven motive for *Apollonius*' subsequent wanderings! (Smyth (1898) 1972: 15-17). Gesner's handling is equally mysterious: she characterizes the incest story as 'weird', but attributes its inclusion to the 'fundamentally Oriental nature' of the work (Gesner 1970: 7). And even Kortekaas' argument, while less farfetched, is considerably more inferential and less documented than the rest of his excellent research; he hazards the possibility that the incest is a sign of the influence of 'astrology', perhaps more pervasive in some lost original version of *Apollonius* (Kortekaas 1984: 127-31).<sup>12</sup>

One phenomenon remains constant, in these varying explanations: the incest episode is hardly discussed before it is, in effect, explained away. To give Freud his due, in Freudian vein this common denominator must be the genuine rationale for all such arguments as the above: they reject the incest episode, but without working through it – in enfeebled contrast to the story

itself. The chief importance of *Apollonius of Tyre* lies in the fact that it itself repudiates the incest in the initial episode, progressing to similar family situations in which the initial problem is raised again and effectively resolved – not with mythic permanence, but with human effort and explicitly hard-won, temporary success. It is this successful resolution which raises the chief question about the loss to literature of *Apollonius*, the pathos and the oddity of its rejection. Only further examination can regenerate a part, at least, of its earlier significance, and can attest to its continuing relevance.

*The American University, Washington D.C.*

## Notes

1. Incest has, of course, long interested anthropologists – although more in primitive cultures and less closer home, and less as concerned with the harm perpetrated against weaker family members and more as manifested indirectly in the putatively universal 'incest taboo'. Even so, the attention given the topic by anthropologists and others prior to about 1970 should be put into perspective: when I looked up the topic in the 'old' card catalog at the Library of Congress (pre-1970 entries), I did indeed find a page full of book titles. These were dwarfed, however, by the incommensurately larger number of titles under the nearby topic 'Incentives to Industry'. Only in the last twenty years has the topic received a space of regular investigations in several disciplines.

2. Its relative economy, compared to that of the other Greek romances, is noted by Gesner, Kortekaas, and Smyth; this economy is sometimes taken to indicate that the extant work is 'a Christian epitome of a longer pagan original' (Kortekaas 1984: 107, 238 n.589).

3. This emphasis is unique only among the extant Greek romances, of course; *Apollonius* makes an explicit, connected narrative from what is elsewhere a 'motif', cf. Thompson 1955-8: Vol. V: 411, 412. In Greek mythology, see stories of the birth of Adonis (Ovid c AD 2-10: 10.298.518); Clymenus and Harpalace; Oenomaus and Hippodamia; Side and her father; etc..

4. Repeatedly, tensions in father-daughter relationships, shown most dramatically in the initial episode, threaten to re-surface on the level of plot in the work, showing the central emphasis in *Apollonius* on the importance of working out those tensions. The episode referred to is duplicated exactly by Shakespeare's Prospero in *The Tempest*, who acts out perhaps very real problems in a histrionic fashion. See Fiedler 1972: 199-253; Kortekaas 1984: 125-6.

5. Usually, separations in the romances are separations of lovers or of spouses; this separation of parent from child is atypical. This significant difference places the daughter in the position usually occupied by the lover/wife, itself making a structural equivalence between the two; see Gesner 1970: 7.

6. Emphasis on education and good counsel is one of the story's consistencies: *Apollonius* serves as tutor to his future wife; the daughter's education is repeatedly emphasized; and the story as a whole is certainly teacherly in its focus on the morality. The role of father, while conflated on one end of the moral spectrum with the role of tyrant (and lover), is conflated elsewhere more wholesomely with the role of tutor. I presume the writer to have been some kind of teacher himself or herself, such is the insistence on the importance of good teaching.

7. One theory about the original work, although completely unproven, is that it concerned matrilineal inheritance; see Goepf, who cites the body of the 'Constance saga', with its threats of attack by the father; Goepf also links *Apollonius* to *Oedipus* in some ways. See also Deyermund 1973 Introduction: x.

8. Gesner's own bibliographic survey includes twenty-five entries for books printed between c. 1470 and 1634, with numerous reprints for many; for example, the early vernacular translation into German (Augsburg) was reissued nine times. Although Gesner was unable to examine individual texts of the *Gesta Romanorum*, the overwhelming majority at least of the earlier editions of *Gesta Romanorum* did contain *Apollonius*. I have examined the two major collections accessible to me – at the Library of Congress and the Folger Shakespeare Library – and, of seven editions of *Gesta Romanorum* in the Folger, dating from 1480 to 1517, six contain *Apollonius*; all ten editions of *Gesta Romanorum* between the same dates in the Library of Congress contain *Apollonius*. See also Kortekaas 1984: 6.

9. 'The Man of Law's Prologue', Chaucer (1387-92) 1979: 446. Interestingly, despite the Man of Law's disclaimer of such horrid matters, his heroine 'Custance' obviously has some kinship with the body of Constance folk material (above), is forced into an unwilling marriage and suffers at the hands of her evil mother-in-law. The story of 'patient Griselda', of course, reaches its crisis when the ruler threatens/pretends to remarry, and the younger bride is his own daughter.

10. For an illuminating discussion of 'taste' as culture-produced, I am indebted to a seminar conducted by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, summer 1983, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

11. See Balmory 1982, for example, on some differences between *Oedipus* and the Oedipus Complex. The most important aspect of the original Greek myth omitted by Freud is, of course, the initial offense – homosexual rape of a guest's son – by Oedipus' father, Laius.

While Sophocles also leaves out the explicit episode itself, it was presumably within the audience's memory, especially in conjunction with the curse of Laius' family. Furthermore, there still remains (in the play) the non-trifling episode of attempted infanticide when Oedipus is exposed, resulting in Oedipus' scars, recalled even in his very name, and discussed in passages in the dialogue of the play. This element of parental guilt is retained in Shakespeare's romances, in several instances of attempted infanticide and of attempted child-murder by stepparents.

12. This explanation, while unprovable, cleans up the story while allowing for some recognition of the deeper issues: 'Perhaps it is not too daring to infer from all this that in the original story Antiochus and Apollonius were set over against each other in the sense that, as the wicked king Antiochus violated his daughter, just so the stars might have coerced Apollonius to violate his' (Kortekaas 1984: 128 & n. 707).

## References

- BALMORY, M. (1982) *Psychoanalyzing Psychoanalysis: Freud and the Hidden Fault of the Father* Trans. N. Lukacher. John Hopkins.  
 BOSWELL, J. E. ((1988) 1990) *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* New York: Vintage.  
 BRANDES, G. ((1898) 1963) *William Shakespeare; A Critical Study* New York: Frederick Ungar.  
 BRAUDEL, F. (1979) 1981) *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible* New York: Harper & Row.

- CHAUCER, G. ((1387-92) 1979) *The Canterbury Tales: 'The Man of Law's Prologue'* Ed. P. Ruggiers. Norman: University of Oklahoma.  
 DEYERMOND, A. D. ((15th C) 1973) *Apollonius of Tyre* Exeter Hispanic Texts: University of Exeter.  
 FELPERIN, H. (1972) *Shakespearean Romance* Princeton University Press.  
 FIEDLER, L. (1972) *The Stranger in Shakespeare* New York: Stein & Day.  
 FREUD, S. (1930) 1962) *Civilisation and its Discontents* Trans. J. Strachey. New York: Avon.  
 – ((1930) 1965) *The Interpretation of Dreams* Trans. J. Strachey. New York: Avon.  
 – ((1895) 1985) *Early Psychoanalytic Writings* Trans. J. Strachey. New York: Macmillan.  
 GESNER, C. (1970) *Shakespeare and the Greek Romance* Lexington: University of Kentucky.  
 GOEPP, P. (1938) 'The Narrative Material of Apollonius' *English Literary History* V: 150-72.  
 GOOLDEN, P. (1958) *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre* Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
 HÄGG, T. (1983) *The Novel in Antiquity* Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
 HOLLAND, N. (1964) *Psychoanalysis and Shakespeare* New York: Octagon.  
 KORTEKAAS, G. A. A. (1984) *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri: Prolegomena* Text Edition of the Two Principal Latin Recensions. Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis.  
 OVID (OVIDIUS NASO) ((c. AD 2-10) 1986) *Metamorphoses* Trans. A. D. Melville. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
 SCHMELING, G. ((Laurentianus LXVI) 1988) (Ed.) *Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri* Leipzig: BSB B.G. Teubner Verlagsgesellschaft.  
 SHAKESPEARE, W. (1608) *Pericles*  
 – (1609) *Cymbeline*  
 – (1610) *The Tempest*  
 – (1610) *The Winter's Tale*  
 SMYTH, A. ((1898) 1972) *Shakespeare's Pericles and Apollonius of Tyre* AMS[?] Repr. Philadelphia: MacCalla.  
 STEWART, W. A. (1967) *Psychoanalysis: The First Ten Years* New York: Macmillan.  
 THOMPSON, S. (1955-8) *Motif Index of Folk Literature* Indiana University Press.  
 THORPE, B. (1834) *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Story of Apollonius of Tyre* London: J i A Arch.  
 TROSMAN, H. & SIMMONS, R. (1973) 'The Freud Library' *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 21.  
 ZARETSKY, E. (1973) *Capitalism, the Family, and Personal Life* New York: Harper/Colophon.

Author's Address: Department of Literature, The American University, Washington D.C., 4400 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington D.C. 20016, U.S.A.