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Cracking Antiochus’ Riddle: Caracalla and Apollonius King of Tyre

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Summary: The treatment of the consonant ‘T’ in the names Tharsus and Thartharos and some temporal clauses shows that the *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* was written by a Phoenician native speaker. Comparisons with both coins and laws issued under Caracalla suggest that this work has been written at Tarsus under this emperor. The author’s major aim was that of maintaining that both the Tyche of the city (Tharsia) and its new founder (Caracalla) were Tyrians. He wanted to argue against the contemporary ambition of his fellow citizens to be Greek.

Keywords: *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*, Tarsus, bilingualism, Severan culture, ethnic identity

1. The city of Tharsus

The renowned *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* was one of the bestselling Latin novels. It was drawn from by later works in the Middle Ages and Renaissance; even Shakespeare took inspiration from it for *Pericles*.

In this article we will study several inconsistencies and oddities\(^1\) within the plot which may have been caused by third party factors and intentions. These weaknesses provide us with important clues about hidden messages within the *opus*, as well as unveiling the historical circumstances that conditioned it. Here is a brief summary of the story, before focusing on some of those inconsistencies. I

\(^1\) These inconsistencies have been noticed by many scholars and explained either as the result of an epitome from a longer original text: see Kortekaas 1984, 106 f. and 2004, 43–51, or the result of putting together heterogeneous narrative elements: see Perry 1967, 296–324. On the problems in the plot see the detailed discussions of Archibald 1991, 63–71 and Panayotakis 2006, 211–226.

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have worked from texts recently edited by Kortekaas,2 Tsitsikli,3 Garbugino,4 and Panayotakis.5 Fortunately, our research has not depended on the specific variae lectiones.

“Antiochus, King of Antioch, who gave his name to the city, had a daughter of such uncommon beauty, that when she came of marriageable years, was sought after with the greatest eagerness. But her father began to love her with more than a father’s love and at length violence accomplished what persuasion had in vain struggled to effect. The king reflected upon the best means of freeing his unhappy daughter from the numerous suitors who honourably desired her hand. To do this, he devised a wicked scheme: he posed certain questions, attaching to them a condition, by which whosoever furnished an appropriate answer should espouse the lady; but failing, should be instantly decapitated. Apollonius, young prince of Tyre, well-lettered and rich, arrived in Antioch and, entering the royal presence, said, ‘Hail, oh king! I seek thy daughter in marriage.’ The king returned, ‘Hear, then, the question’ – ‘I am borne on crime, I feed on the mother’s flesh, I seek my brother, my mother’s husband, my wife’s son, and I do not find (them).’ Apollonius answered that the described man was Antiochus himself. The latter was furious for the correctness of the answer but denied it and dismissed Apollonius by secretly sending a killer, Taliarchus, to do away with him. Apollonius did not feel safe at Tyre and thus put on board his ships a hundred thousand measures of corn and a great weight of gold and silver, and sailed secretly to Tharsus, so that in Tyre, Taliarchus knew that he had disappeared. A poor fisherman, Hellenicus, met him and revealed to him that he was proscribed by Antiochus. A Tharsian, Strangui(l)io, informed Apollonius that the city was distressed by famine. The Tharsians gave hospitality, but secretly, to Apollonius and, as a reward, the latter granted them 100,000 free measures of grain. The city of Tharsus erected a statue of the king in the forum, standing on a chariot drawn by four horses, holding ears of corn in his right hand and his left foot on a bushel of grain. On the base they put the following inscription: ‘The city of Tharsus gave this gift to Apollonius because he relieved their famine and hunger.’ Subsequently he sailed away and a storm destroyed his fleet but he alone survived and reached Cyrene. Another poor fisherman met Apollonius and gave him half of his cloak. He entered the gymnasium and the local king Archistates marked him out for his skill. Apollonius, invited to dinner by the king, was encouraged by the latter’s daughter to narrate his adventures, even though the father acknowledged that she was awakening his long-lasting sorrow (veteres ei renovasti dolorem). Apollonius narrated and played the lyre in so fine a manner that he looked like Apollo. The king’s daughter fell in love with him and they got married. By chance a Tyrian helmsman informed Apollonius that Antiochus had been struck by a thunderbolt while lying in bed with his daughter and his realm had become Apollonius’ heritage. This latter and his wife, who was pregnant, sailed to take possession of Antioch, but the woman appeared to have

2 Kortekaas 1984; cf. Kortekaas 2004. The editors have had two main choices: that of normalising the oddities of the Latin employed (this was the choice of Schmeling 1988) or that of preferring oddities as lectiones difficiliores (this was the choice of Kortekaas).
3 Tsitsikli 1981.
4 Garbugino 2010.
5 Panayotakis 2012.
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died after giving birth to Tharsia. The wife was put in a coffin and entrusted to the sea. The coffin drifted to Ephesus, where a doctor recognised her death as fake and made her rise again. She joined the priestesses of Diana who preserved their virginity inviolate. Apollo-
nius reached Tharsus where he entrusted his daughter to Stranguilio and his wife Dionysias. He abandoned the idea of becoming King of Antioch preferring to change into a merchant in Egypt. Tharsia's nurse, Lycoris, before dying, revealed to Tharsia who her father and her mother were. Dionysias pushed Theophilus, her slave, to kill Tharsia, but some pirates seized her. Dionysias built a tomb for Tharsia, pretending to have her buried there. Tharsia, instead, was sold in Mytilene. A pimp bought her and put her in his brothel. She persuaded every customer not to touch her by arousing compassion for her misfortune. Her tears and prayers persuaded the customers to give her a lot of money. The masses of Mytilene did the same when they heard her fine songs. Athenagoras, princeps of Mitylene, fell in love with her. Meanwhile, Apollonius went back to Tharsus. Stranguilio and Dionysias showed him Tharsia's tomb. The miserable father cursed his eyes after having seen the tomb. His ship did not take him to Tyre, as expected, because a storm swept it to Mytilene where he stayed alone in his moored ship starving to death. Athenagoras introduced Tharsia to him. She entertained him by posing ten riddles and finally narrated him all of her sad story and thus he recognised his daughter. By order of Apollonius the pimp was burned alive and his wealth given to Tharsia who, in addition, set free the other prostitutes. Apollonius, grateful to the city, gave 100 talents gold to restore the city walls. The city, as a reward, cast a huge statue of him standing on the prow of a ship with his heel on the pimp's head, his daughter clasping his right arm. Apollonius gave Tharsia in marriage to Athenagoras and sailed away to Tharsus, but saw in a dream an angel ordering him to go to Diana's temple in Ephesus and narrate his story. Nobody was more pleasing to Diana than Apollonius' wife who was appointed chief priestess and looked like Diana herself. She recognised her husband after listening to him telling his own story. Athenagoras was appointed king of Ephesus in his own stead. In Tharsus Apollonius was hailed as pater patriae and Stranguilio and Dionysias were tried in front of him and found guilty. They were stoned to death by the people and their corpses thrown to scavengers. The king rebuilt the public baths and the city walls of Tharsus. In Cyrene the fisherman received their well earned prize and Hellenicus given a reward. Apollonius' wife bore him a son who inherited the realm of Cyrene, and all of them lived happily ever after."

The first point to focus on is the location of Tharsus. There are two main versions of the novel, RA and RB. Both use, as a rule, the forms Tharsus, Tharsi, Tharsia (civitas). Sometimes the form Tarsus recurs: Hist. Apoll. 8 RA: devenit Apollonius civitatem Tharsiam, whereas in RB: Subiacet nobis litus Tarsiae. Iuvenis ait: “Petamus Tarsum et erit nobis eventus.” Et veniens Apollonius Tarsum evasit ratem. Hist. Apoll. 10 RA: Cives Tharsis, and again RB: cives Tarsiae. All readers, ancient and modern, recognise Tarsus as the city referred to. The author of Version RB also refers to Tarsus. Only E. Lipiński⁶ questions this, suggesting

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⁶ Lipiński 1994.
Carthage as a better identification. He reasons that the biblical Tharsis – according to the Septuaginta, in Isaiah and Ezekiel in particular – has been identified as Carthage. The first time it is identified as such is by Eusebius of Caesarea, when he writes:

“Tharseis. The place which Solomon’s gold came from. According to Josephus it is Tarsus of Cilicia, according to Ezekiel it is Carthage which is called Tharseis in Hebrew.”

Later, the Latin translation by Jerome and the rabbinic Targumin located Tharsis in Africa. The Bible mentions Tharsis many times as a distant place, from where precious things were shipped to Israel from King Solomon’s times on (a time when Carthage did not yet exist). The quest for Tharsis by biblical scholars and archaeologists still awaits a definitive answer. On the other hand, the majority of readers of the Hist. Apoll. were unacquainted with the controversial identification of the place, but some of them, especially in Cilicia, knew of Flavius Josephus’ opinion. Josephus was a learned and prominent Pharisee, and a reliable narrator of prominent issues during first century C.E. Jerusalem. The seventy Jewish experts who translated the Bible into Greek in the third century B.C.E. rendered the Hebrew תרשיש (Tarshiysh) as Θάρσις. St. Jerome also translated it as Tharsis. For example, he translated the beginning of the Book of Jonas:

\[\text{et surrexit Iona ut fugeret in Tharsis a facie Domini et descendit Ioppen et invenit navem euntem in Tharsis et dedit naulum eius et descendit in eam ut iret cum eis in Tharsis a facie Domini.}\]

In the second or third century the grammarian Herodian knew of many stories about the early names and legends of Tarsus, including the ancient name Τερσόν. This is found on silver coins from the fifth and fourth century B.C.E. He also knew of the name Tharsis, which, according to Josephus, was that of both the Cilicians and Tarsus himself. In the passage of Josephus, quoted by Herodian, we read:

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7 Eus. On. pp. 100, 102, 118 (ed. Klostermann).
8 See for example Thompson – Skaggs 2013; and Lipiński 2004.
9 Jon 1,3.
10 Herodian de prosodia catholica 3,1,207 ed. Lentz: <Θαρσός> δὲ ἐκαλεῖτο καὶ Θαρσεῖς οἱ Κίλικες, ὡς Ἰώσηπος ἐν ἀρχαιολογίᾳ.
11 Head 1911, 730.
“Tharsus (gave his name) to the Tharsians, for so was Cilicia called of old; the sign of which is this, that the noblest city they have, and a metropolis also, is Tarsus, the tau being changed for a theta.”

Given that the author mentions other, well known, cities, such as Mytilene, Antioch, Tyre and Cyrene, Tharsis must have been among them. If the author had been speaking of Carthage, he would probably have alluded to the fact that the city was in Tyre’s colonial lands. Why should he want to call Carthage “Tharsis” if almost nobody would have understood where he was referring to?

The name of Tarsus is written in a Semitic alphabet as תרָז (TRZ) on coins of the fifth and fourth century B.C.E. We know that in many Latin names the T was usually rendered in Phoenician transcriptions as a th: Quintus: קינטס, Rogatus: רוגאטווס, Titus: טיטוס, Tiberius: תיבריווס; in Plautus the Punic BT, “daughter” was pronounced byth. This fact could account for writing Θαρσ-, for example, instead of Tars-. This would account for the identification of Tharshish with Tarsus by Josephus. A Phoenician would probably have written Θαρσός / Tharsus when rendering תרָז. For the same reason the author wrote Thartaream domum, instead of Tartaream domum, in Hist. Apoll. (RB) 50. This is not the sole influence of the Phoenician language upon the novel. In fact the novel uses dum and cum (with present indicative) as if they were equivalent; see for example chapter 28:

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12 Ios. ant. Iud. 1,127: Θάρσος δὲ Θαρσεῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐκαλεῖτο τὸ παλαιὸν ἡ Κιλικία. σημεῖον δὲ· Ταρσὸς γὰρ παρ’ αὐτοῖς τῶν πόλεων ἡ ἀξιολογωτάτη καλεῖται μητρόπολις οὖσα τὸ ταῦ πρὸς τὴν κλῆσιν ἀντὶ τοῦ θῆτα μεταβαλόντων.

13 In the third century C.E. Tyre was proud of being Carthage’s mother city, and struck coins depicting Dido building Carthage: BMCPhoenicia, nos. 439f.

14 Head 1911, 732.

15 Plaut. Poen. 930.

16 Harris 1936, 22; Garbini – Durand 1994, 75–77; Krahmalkov 2001, 26. I am grateful to my colleague Federico Giusfredi for a fruitful discussion about some problems of bilingualism in antiquity.

17 He also wrote the name Θαλίαρχος either as Thaliarchus or Taliarchus in Hist. Apoll. 6–7 RA and RB.

18 Two possible semitisms have already been identifies in the novel: the first in Hist. Apoll. 12 RB: tectum paupertatis suae (= pauper tectum): Kortekaas 2011, 674, based on the advice of Dr. A. Hilhorst; and the second in Hist. Apoll. 32 RB: iugum mortis: Klebs 1899, 273, but the reason (scarcely cogent) resides in passages of translations from the old and new Testament: cf. Jer 27,8 and 11 sub iugo regis Babylonis; 1 Tim 6,1 quicumque sunt sub iugo servi.
RA: \textit{Inter haec Apollonius cum navigat ingenti luctu, gubernante deo applicuit Tharsos [...].}

RB: \textit{Interea Apollonius dum navigat cum ingenti luctu [...].} 19

Phoenician and Punic used only an adverb for this function: \textit{ Aspect.} 20 The use of either such an adverb or the simple preposition \textit{in} for temporal expressions\textsuperscript{21} could account for an unexpected nominative absolute\textsuperscript{22} in chapter 40:

RA: \textit{Veniens autem Tharsia ad navem, videns eam Athenagoras ait ad eam [...].}

RB: \textit{Et veniente Tharsia dixit Athenagoras [...].}

Such a nominative could be considered an imperfect syntactic calque of a clause introduced by a semitic temporal preposition or adverb,\textsuperscript{23} and the numerous mistakes in temporal clauses (ablative absolute, \textit{cum} and \textit{dum}) could be ascribed, in general, to the completely different semitic constructions. In chapter 30 the RB version has:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Venit ad monumentum casus suos exponere.}
\end{quote}

The infinitive \textit{exponere} has the same final value as Phoenician and Punic wherein a \textit{Aspect} before the infinitive was used.\textsuperscript{24} Peculiarities, mistakes, and oddities in the Latin of the Hist. Apoll. were probably labelled \textit{soloecismi}, a word which was also connected with the Cilician city of Soloi.\textsuperscript{25} A Phoenician language expert may find more traces of Phoenician influence in the Latin used; I am not up to the task.

The author of the novel used the form Tharsus, and he must have had a reason for choosing such a peculiar name. The reason is not evident and only at the end of our research will we be able to uncover it, but meanwhile we should first look for some clues. We will carry on as if Tharsus corresponds to Tarsus, exactly as the author of the RB version, Josephus, Herodian, and all modern readers have done.

\textsuperscript{19} Cf. Kortekaas 2011, 7f.
\textsuperscript{20} Segert 1976, 159.
\textsuperscript{21} See, for bilingual Punic-Latin inscriptions: Levi della Vida – Amadasi Guzzo 1987, 119 f.
\textsuperscript{22} See Kortekaas 2011, 674.
\textsuperscript{23} Such an adverb could even be omitted: see Krahmalkov 1994, 78.
\textsuperscript{24} Segert 1976, 198.
\textsuperscript{25} See also the singular instead of plural in Hist. Apoll. 1 and 11. Cf. Quint. inst. 1,5,41: \textit{fiunt soloecismi per genera tempora personas modos}. 
2. Apollonius and the grain supply for Tarsus

Apart from the name of the city, the second inconsistency lies in the cargo of at least 100,000 *modii* of grain loaded on board, which happened to be at Apollonius’ disposal. As well as this, if Apollonius was allegedly in hiding in Tharsus, how come the Tharsians honoured him with a statue in the Forum? All of this is explained by Ruprecht Ziegler in an article based on numismatic evidence.²⁶ The article deserves more attention than it has received so far. He was able to date a part of the novel to the time of Caracalla because an imperial *frumentatio* in Tarsus is documented on Tarsian coins from the Emperor’s reign. On some bronze coins (fig. 1) and silver didrachms²⁷ the emperor is depicted as Triptolemus, a pupil of Demeter. It was he that introduced grain farming to the world. He is always depicted driving a chariot drawn by two snakes. The coins carry one of two inscriptions:

ΔΩΡΕΑ ΣΙΤΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΕΥΠΤΟΥ ΤΑΡϹΩ
“Gift of grain to Tarsus from Egypt”

or

ΔΩΡΕΑ ΣΕΙΤΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΑΙΓΥΠΤΟΥ ΤΑΡϹΕΥϹΙΝ
“Gift of grain to the Tarsians from Egypt”

During Caracalla’s reign Triptolemus is also depicted on coins of Anazarbus,²⁸ Hadrianopolis,²⁹ Pautalia (the god holds a serpent entwined staff, and has therefore been identified as Asclepius),³⁰ Tomis (on which he wears a crown and mantle),³¹ and Serdica.³² Nicaea and Flaviopolis, in Bithynia, issued coins with

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²⁶ Ziegler 1984. One silver didrachmon with the same iconography is also known: Price 1971, 134. An inscription of 205 C.E. bears a dedication to Caracalla by the guild of grain porters: Broughton 1938, 55–57; cf. Robert 1977, 88 and 91; see also Jones 1978, 80 and n. 77 at pp. 183f.
²⁷ SNGLevante, no. 1038; SNGvonAulock, no. 6005 and 6014; SNGFrance, no. 1499.
²⁸ SNGLevante, no. 1426.
²⁹ Varbanov 2005, no. 3591; Moushmov 1912, no. 2648.
³⁰ Moushmov 1912, no. 4235; Ruzicka 1933, pl. IV.18.
³¹ The emperor can be either Caracalla or Elagabalus; Gorny & Mosch, Auktion 224, 13 Oct. 2014, no. 350.
³² Ruzicka 1915, no. 151; Varbanov 2005, no. 2470.
Demeter on a similar chariot. 33 Apparently, the image of Triptolemos in connection with imperial *frumentationes* first appears on coins from Alexandria during the reign of Hadrian. 34 Several bronze coins from Tarsus (fig. 2), issued under Caracalla, depict a galley 35 with the legend ΑΝΤΩΝΙΑΝΗΣ ΣΕΥΗ ΑΔΡ ΜΗΤΡ ΤΑΡΣΟΥ ΣΕΙΤΟΣ Γ Β Α ΜΚ, as a commemoration of the *frumentatio* (ΣΕΙΤΟΣ = ΣΙΤΟΣ, “grain”). But the image of a galley is also in memory of the arrival of an emperor by sea. 36

Triptolemus, as the grain hero, was popular under Caracalla. In the case of Tarsus his identification with the emperor takes on a particular importance because Triptolemus was also the city’s founding father. According to Strabo:

“Tarsus was founded by the Argives who wandered with Triptolemus in quest of Io.” 37

The gift of grain to Tarsus was probably dramatised by a solemn procession of elephants. This is depicted on some Tarsian coins. The elephants either bear ears of corn, sacks of grain, or a crown symbolising the provinces under the wing of

33 Nicaea: Waddington – Babelon – Reinach 1910, 451. Nicaea struck coins with Triptolemus under the reign of Marcus Aurelius: SNGvonAulock, no. 557; Franke 1968, no. 273. Flaviopolis: SNGvonAulock, no. 7009; Franke 1968, 307.

34 RPC III.2 (2015), nos. 6134–6135; 6138–6139; Savio 2007, nos. 1848–1849.

35 BMCLycaonia, Isauria and Cilicia, 199, nos. 198–201. See Rigsby 2014, 46 f.

36 See a denarius of the young Caracalla with a galley and the inscription *Adventu(s) Augg(ustorum)* on the reverse: *RIC* V, no. 120.

37 Strab. 14,5,12 (673); cf. also 16,2,5 (750) and Dion Chrys. 33,1 and 41.
Tarsus (Isauria, Cilicia, and Lycaonia).\textsuperscript{38} Dio Cassius says that Caracalla emulated Alexander the Great and adds that:

\begin{quote}
“he even took about with him numerous elephants, that in this respect, also, he might seem to be imitating Alexander, or rather, perhaps, Dionysus.”\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Caracalla was not famous for sea travel, but many coins from Asia Minor celebrate either his \textit{frumentationes} or his visit to some cities with his fleet. The story of Apollonius’ shipwreck, close to Cyrene, is mostly drawn from the “Odyssey”; but shipwrecks were very topical during Caracalla’s reign, he himself having risked one such disaster.\textsuperscript{40} From the \textit{Codex Justinianus} we can see that Caracalla was concerned about the rights of shipwreck survivors. He abolished the imperial \textit{fiscus} on salvaged goods and conceded the wrecked ship’s owner certain rights.\textsuperscript{41}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{fig2.png}
\caption{Bronze coin of Tarsus struck under Caracalla and depicting a galley}
\end{figure}

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\textsuperscript{38} Ears: SNGLevante, no. 1047; SNGRoyal Coll. Danish National Museum. Lycaonia-Cilicia, no. 364. Sacs: SNGLevante, no. 1048; cf. SNGFrance, no. 1541; SNGMcLean, no. 9116. Crown: SNGFrance Bibl.Nat., no. 1515.
\textsuperscript{39} Cass. Dio. 77,7,4 (ed. Boissevain).
\textsuperscript{40} SHA Carac. 8: “While he was crossing over from here into Asia the yard-arm of his ship broke and he ran great danger of shipwreck, so that, together with his bodyguard, he had to climb down into a lifeboat. From this he was taken up into a trireme by the prefect of the fleet and so was rescued.” This is confirmed by a laconic statement by Dio Cassius: “not without danger” (78,16). On this event: Scheid 1998, 285 f. and 288 f.; Scheid 1998a; Scheid 1990, 297 f.; Letta 1994. On Caracalla and the cities of Asia Minor: Levick 1969.
\textsuperscript{41} Cod. Iust. 11,6,1: a law by an emperor Antoninus, probably Caracalla.
\end{flushright}
3. Apollonius and the fishermen

The novel describes Apollonius’ arrival in Tharsus as follows:

\[ \text{devenit Apollonius civitatem Tharsiam. Et deambulans iuxta litus visus est a quodam Hellenico, cive suo, qui supervenerat ipsa hora. Et accedens ad eum Hellenicus ait: \textit{“Ave, rex Apolloni!”}} \]

“Apollonius arrived at the city of Tharsus. As he was walking on the beach, he was seen by Hellenicus, a fellow-citizen of his, who had arrived at that very moment. Hellenicus approached him and said: ‘Greetings, King Apollonius!’”

Such a scene would have been easily recognisable for Tarsians, who knew the myth of Perseus well. A bronze coin of Tarsus, struck under Caracalla (fig. 3), depicts Perseus walking rightwards. He wears a Greek helmet and holds a small statue of Apollo Lykeios. He has come across a fisherman moving towards him, in one hand a rod with a fish on the end, a basket in the other.\footnote{Cox 1941, 45, no. 189. On the mythical foundation of Tarsus by Greek heroes: Robert 1977; on this fisherman: 102f.} This is a local episode from the myth of Perseus. He, too, was supposedly one of the founding fathers of Tarsus.\footnote{Lucan. 3.225: \textit{Perseaque Tarsus}; Antipater, Ant. Pal. 9,557; Dion Chrys. 33,47; cf. 1 and 45; Amm. 14,8,3: \textit{hanc condidisse Perseus memoratur}; Nonn. Dion. 18,291–294; Ioh. Mal. 2,11: Perseus sacrifices the virgin Parthenope at the moment of Tarsus’ foundation.} The detail of the fisherman is taken from ancient mythology; by order of the Argive king Acrisius, Perseus and his mother Danae were put in a coffin and set adrift on the sea. In Aeschylus’ satyr play, \textit{Diktyoulkoi}, the coffin was dragged ashore by some fishermen from the island of Seriphos, in the Aegean.

The fisherman’s name is Hellenicus, “the Greek”.\footnote{The different manuscripts and versions of the novel report this name differently; see Tsitsikli 1981, VII–IX and 19: \textit{Hellenicus, Helanicus, Elanico}.} People’s names in this novel often relate to what the person actually is.\footnote{Chiarini 1983, 278.} This is true of Tharsia, “the woman of Tharsus”, and Stranguillio, “the deceitful one”, and therefore the meaning of Hellenicus could have been that of being a true Greek, a native Greek speaker. Surprisingly though, he is labeled \textit{cive suo}, a fellow Tyrian citizen. This alludes to the Hellenisation of Tyrians\footnote{Panayotakis 2012, 139.} as well as to Phoenicians residing in Tharsus/Tarsus.
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The Argives, and the Argive heroes Heracles and Perseus, were supposed to have been the ancestors of Macedonian kings. All of this signifies that Tarsus wanted to emphasise its Greek origins. We know, thanks to Dio Chrysostom’s first Tarsian Discourse, that some of the inhabitants of Tarsus used Semitic languages. In the reign of Trajan, the Bithynian orator criticised the snore like noise to be heard all over Tarsus, exclaiming:

“you expect to hear some laudation directed at yourselves, some patriotic hymn in praise of your city, all about Perseus and Heracles and the Lord of the Trident, and the oracles that you have received, and how you are Hellenes, yes, Argives or even better, and how you have as founders heroes and demigods – or, I should say, Titans?”

Even more to the point:

“And would any one call you colonists from Argos, as you claim to be, or more likely colonists of those abominable Aradians? Would he call you Greeks, or the most licentious of Phoenicians?”

47 Hdt. 5.22 and 8.137–8; Theop., FGH 115, F 393; Satyrus, FGH 631, F 1; Diod. 7.15; Hyg. fab. 219 (based on Euripides); Iust. 7.1,7; Paus. 9.40.8; cf. Momigliano 1931, 203–210; Mastrocinque 1987, 289–307.

48 Dion Chrys. 33.1 (transl. Cohoon and Lamar Crosby).
The novel is clearly focusing on the relationship between Greeks and Phoenicians in Tarsus. At the time the fisherman coin was struck in Tarsus, Caracalla was passionate about Alexander the Great, Macedonia, Sparta, and Hellenism.\textsuperscript{49} Perseus arriving in Tarsus with a statue of the Argive god Apollo Lykeios can be taken as a symbol of the Greek, Argive origin of the Tarsians. The latter allegedly being relatives of Perseus, a supposed ancestor of Alexander the Great. Consequentially they could expect the favour of the new Alexander, Caracalla, son of Septimius Severus. He had been educated by first class Greek tutors,\textsuperscript{50} was an enthusiastic supporter of Hellenism and despised eastern barbarians. We know this thanks to the Giessen papyrus. Apart from the \textit{constitutio Antoniniana}, it also carries his decree expelling all native Egyptians from Alexandria. It includes the following lines:

\begin{quote}
“All Egyptians who are in Alexandria, and especially peasants who have fled from elsewhere and can easily be detected, are to be altogether expelled by all means [...]. For true Egyptians can easily be rooted out among the linen-weavers by their alien accents, appearance and dress; furthermore, their way of life, with customs which are the opposite of civilised behaviour, show them to be Egyptian peasants.”
\end{quote}

The anonymous author of the novel ascribed the Kingdom of Tyre to Apollonius. Even though Apollonius spoke Greek in Cyrene, Ephesus, and Mytilene, frequented gymnasia, and was recognised by Cilician readers as the new Perseus, he was, deep down, a Tyrian, in other words a Phoenician. At the very beginning of the \textit{Heroikòs}, Philostratus writes that Phoenicians, in his day, dressed like Greeks to avoid being recognised for what they were.

\begin{quote}
“Vinegrower: ‘Are you a Ionian? And from where?’
Phoenician: ‘I am a Phoenician, oh vinegrower, inhabitant of the region of Sidon and Tyre. We need to wear the local clothes of Ionia even if we come from Phoenicia.’”
\end{quote}

This was in the time of Caracalla. Xenophon’s “Ephesian Stories” are rich in similarities with the Hist. Apoll. In this novel Tyrians are classed as barbarians, and Tyre depicted as the seat of a farreaching pirate organisation.\textsuperscript{51} This is by no means the only such apparent contradiction in the novel. Later, similar contradictions, depicting Apollonius as either the best or worst of men, will be taken into account.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Cass. Dio 77,7,2–8,3; Herodian. 4,8,1–2.
\item Caracalla had among his teachers excellent Greek orators such as Aelios Antipater and Hermocrates of Phocaea: IEphesos, no. 2026; cf. Jones 2003, 129.
\item Xenoph. Ephes. 2,3–4.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The fisherman is not just another character borrowed from famous poems, such as the *Aeneid*. There is a recurring allusion to Aeneas in this sentence: *Infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem* (Verg. Aen. 2,3), whereas the story of Nausicaa and Odysseus in Book VI of the “Odyssey” is used to shape the episode of Apollonius in Cyrene. A fisherman apparently met the Greek ancestor of Tarsus, Perseus, and was therefore a character in the foundation story of the city. It may also be that the second fisherman that Apollonius met, when he went ashore at Cyrene, had something to do with the foundation of that city. In the fourth book of Herodotus’ “Histories”, he recounts the version of the citizens of Thera. According to them the Delphic oracle ordered the Thereans to found a city in Libya. A Cretan fisherman, Corobios, took a man to the island of Platea, close by the Libyan shore, where he was abandoned. The Cyreneans told Herodotus that the man left on the island was a member of the first colonial enterprise, led by Battus. The latter had left him on the island while he went to receive another Delphic oracle. He then picked the man up from Platea, and founded Cyrene. The novel thus alludes to Greek cities at their very origins, as we have seen with Antioch, whose alleged founder was Antiochus himself.

4. **Statues of Caracalla**

The glorious foundation of Tarsus was opportune celebrated by the myths of Triptolemus and Perseus. Thanks to his honourific statue, Caracalla was seen as the new Triptolemus, a new founder of Tarsus. All this signifies that Tarsus wanted to emphasise its Greek origins. Apollonius’ novel alludes to this.

That of Caracalla-Triptolemos is not the only statue mentioned in the Hist. Apoll. Another one is said to stand in Mytilene. It, too, has a historical counterpart.

Aegeae was a city East of Tarsus on bad terms with the more illustrious and superb Tarsus, the metropolis of Cilicia. Caracalla visited Aegeae early in 216 C.E. The city celebrated the Emperor’s arrival with a series of silver coins depicting Asclepius, Caracalla’s favourite god. The city also issued bronze coins depicting the Tyche of Aegeae, with the Emperor standing and posing his foot on the prow.

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52 Hist. Apoll. 12 where the man is described as an old one, poor but generous, who gave to Apollonius one half of his cloak; in chapter 51 this old man is mentioned as a fisherman.

53 Hdt. 4,151–152.

54 Dion Chrys. 34,25.
of a ship (fig. 4). One year later, in 217 C.E., Aegae struck coins with a ship and its harbour lighthouse.\textsuperscript{55}

The stance of the Emperor on the prow of a ship is described in Hist. Apoll. 47. The novel says that Mytilene, grateful for the great benefits at the hands of Apollonius,

“cast a huge statue of him standing on the prow of a ship, with his heel on the pimp’s head, and his daughter clasped in his right arm. The inscription reads:
In great affliction and as a sign of eternal honour and remembrance, the entire population of Mytilene give this statue to Apollonius of Tyre, for restoring our building, and to the most chaste Tharsia, for keeping her virginity in the face of the most demeaning misfortune.”

The similarity between the coin and the inscription raises the suspicion that either an image of this kind was interpreted as that of the emperor with his daughter, or the author of the novel saw images of Caracalla on coins or/and monuments of the two Cilician cities and took inspiration for his description of the honourific statues to Apollonius. However, the author made some minor changes in respect to the actual statues, or how they were depicted on the coins.

There is another strange feature in the novel worth discussing: the author frequently says that Apollonius gave worthy people – including fishermen – prizes

\textsuperscript{55} Haymann 2010, 159–161.
of gold sestertces.\textsuperscript{56} This is an evident exaggeration and also a mistake because sestertces were of orichalcum, copper alloy, and about five times heavier than gold aurei. We read another similar exaggeration in the famous funerary inscription of Abercius, Bishop of Hieropolis, in Phrygia;\textsuperscript{57} a fine of 3,000 aurei was to fall on anyone who violated his tomb. Caracalla and the Severan emperors that followed him struck some large and heavy gold medals as prizes for the Games known as either the Niketeria or Olympia Alexandria. We know of these thanks to the Tarsus hoard, which consists of 23 pieces. The Abukir hoard may be another example, if it is not a forgery.\textsuperscript{58} Two pieces from the Tarsus hoard depict Emperor Caracalla himself on the obverse side. If the author of the novel had these gold pieces in mind – and this is only a possibility – he was making a sort of parody of the gift of such a rare prize. In any case the parody concerned the weighty gifts Caracalla gave to some of his friends and soldiers. Caracalla was said to be exceedingly generous with several people. For example, after the murder of Geta, he gave 2,500 Attic drachms to each soldier of the legion stationed at Albano Laziale.\textsuperscript{59} He would often say: “Nobody in the world should have money but me; and I want it to bestow upon the soldiers.”\textsuperscript{60} Dio Cassius adds that he distributed money and goods to those who flattered him and gave 250,000 sestertces to Junius (or Julius) Paulinus, a jester who did nothing more than guess correctly that the emperor was trying to look angry when he had pulled a fairly savage face.\textsuperscript{61}

5. \textbf{Apollonius’ failed marriage and the conspiracy}

Given that one or two episodes in Caracalla’s life inspired the author, it seems reasonable to suppose that the same source influenced other features of the novel as well.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Hist. Apoll. 25–27; 29; 33; 40; 51.
\item \textsuperscript{57} IGR IV, 696, dating to the reign of Marcus Aurelius.
\item \textsuperscript{58} On the problem of the \textit{aurea sestertia} cf. recently Mazza 1999, 173–178; Garbugino 2004, 49–56. Gregory of Tours (Mart. 18) speaks of \textit{auri sestertias}; see Panayotakis 2012, 325. Gregory probably depended on a tradition which was established by the \textit{Historia Apollonii} itself. Panayotakis 2012, 326, suggests that \textit{auri} signified “in gold” rather than “of gold”. On the treasury from Tarsus: De Longpérier 1868; Amandry 1989, 93–96. On that from Abukir: Dattari 1953; Touratsoglou 2008. On the authenticity: Savio 2011. On the Niketeria: Bernardi 1970. The Olympia Alexandria are mentioned in two inscriptions of 242/243 C.E.: Bernardi 1970, 88, n. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{59} Herodian. 4,4,7.
\item \textsuperscript{60} Cass. Dio 77,10,4.
\item \textsuperscript{61} Cass. Dio 77,11,1.
\end{itemize}
An unexpected and odd episode at the beginning of the book concerns the first marriage scene. We know of many tales where the protagonist is the best suitor, and succeeds in winning the woman he desires, in spite of her father’s opposition. Take, for example, the myth of Oenomaus, Hippodamia, and Pelops. As Apollonius had solved the riddle, he was the one meant to marry the girl. Instead, Antiochus curses the suitor. Rather than punishing the alleged failure with death, he expels him from Antioch and, subsequently, sends a killer to get rid of him secretly. This illogical, unconventional, and unexpected end of the marriage story has an excellent parallel in the life of Caracalla.

Septimius Severus arranged the marriage of his first son, Caracalla, with Plautilla, the daughter of the guard prefect, Plautianus. After a regal ceremony, the marriage was short lived because Caracalla despised Plautilla and hated Plautianus. The latter also fell out of favour of Severus when the Emperor heard of the vices and ambition of his powerful prefect. This is how Dio Cassius tells the story:

“At home he castrated a hundred Roman citizens of noble birth – though none of us knew of it until after he was dead. From this anyone may comprehend the full extent both of his lawlessness and his power. Nor was it boys or youths alone that he castrated, but grown men as well, some of whom had wives. His purpose was that Plautilla, his daughter, whom Antoninus afterwards married, should have only eunuchs as her attendants in general, in particular her teachers of music and other branches of art. So we saw the same persons both eunuchs and men, fathers and impotent, emasculated and bearded. In view of this, one might not improperly claim that Plautianus had power beyond all men, equalling even that of the emperors themselves.”

Dio adds that, when Severus suspected his prefect,

“Plautianus became very indignant; he had hated Antoninus even before this for slighting his daughter, but now detested him more than ever as being responsible for the slight which had been put upon him, and he began to behave rather harshly toward him. For these reasons Antoninus, in addition to being disgusted with his wife, who was a most shameless creature, felt resentment against Plautianus as well [...]. Accordingly he got Euodus, his tutor, to persuade a certain centurion, Saturninus, along with two others of the same rank to bring him word that Plautianus had ordered ten specified centurions, these three being of the number, to kill both Severus and Antoninus.”

62 Cass. Dio 75,14 (transl. Cary).
63 Cass. Dio 76,2–3.
On the other hand, Herodian asserts that the conspiracy was real:

“Observing that Severus was now old and constantly racked by disease, and Caracalla a rash and reckless youth, Plautianus, in fear of these threats, elected to act first rather than to delay and suffer at his son-in-law’s hands.”

The final act of the conspiracy is described in the same way by both authors: Saturninus, entrusted with the task of killing Severus and Caracalla, revealed the conspiracy to Severus; Plautianus was summoned to the palace during the night for everyday business; he went wearing a cuirass, proof that he was up to no good. He was found guilty and executed. His daughter was exiled to Sicily and later put to death, in 212.

An ineffective marriage, a jealous father, and a failed conspiracy, with a killer unwilling to carry out his orders, are shared features of both Caracalla’s life and the Hist. Apoll.

6. Apollonius’ lyre playing

The novel narrates that Apollonius was introduced to the royal court in Cyrene, where he was invited to speak of his misfortunes. He is a shipwrecked man like Odysseus in Scheria, speaking of his adventures to the king, and the king’s cherished daughter. It is a similar tale to that of Aeneas at the court of Dido. The Queen of Carthage begs the Trojan hero to tell of his misfortunes and journeys. As well as this, the ball-game in the gymnasium of Cyrene was inspired by the ball dance in the “Odyssey”.

However, for the Phaeacean Demodochos, the poet sings and celebrates the deeds of Odysseus and Achilles, whereas at Cyrene, Apollonius sings of his wonderful self:

“Apollonius put on the costume and crowned his head with a garland, he took the lyre and entered the banquet hall. He stood in such a way that the feasters thought him not Apollonius but Apollo.”

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64 Herodian. 3,11,1 (transl. Echols).
65 Hist. Apoll. 13; Hom. Od. 8,372–380.
66 Hist. Apoll. 16. On the text of this part: Hunt 1987. On the parallel with the Odyssey: Holzberg 1989; Kortekaas 2011, 182; Panayotakis 2012, 205 and 230.
Among his favorite heroes Caracalla revered Mesomedes, the lyric poet of the Hadrianic age. Dio Cassius recounts:

“He sought out the tomb of Sulla and repaired it, and also raised a cenotaph to Mesomedes, who had made a compilation of Citharoedic modes; he honoured the latter because he was himself learning to play the lyre, and the former because he was emulating his cruelty.”

The coinage of Caracalla confirms the role of Apollo in the imperial ideology. Some denarii depict the god either seated, playing a lyre, or standing, holding a laurel branch. Dio Cassius tells us that Caracalla played the lyre and was passionate about a certain famous poet and lyre player. We know little of Mesomedes poetry, but it includes an epigram to a sponge. Without its title, this epigram would have been a riddle, like the one Apollonius’ daughter posed for her father in Mytilene.

Before recognising each other, Apollonius and his daughter sized each other up, posing and solving riddles. Tharsia tells her father:

“I am not heavy myself, but a weight of water clings to me. All my innards are swollen, extended in deep hollows. The water hides inside, and does not flow out spontaneously.”

Wise Apollonius managed to solve this riddle too, recognising a sponge as the correct answer.

Mesomedes’ fragment 9 Heitsch is another description of a sponge, though more sophisticated and rich in mythological elements. So it seems that the puzzling image of a sponge was prominent among poetical trends in the age of Caracalla, a man who so highly appreciated Mesomedes. Dio Cassius adds that Theocritus, a freedman, had taught Caracalla how to dance.
7. The Baths of Apollonius

To give this parallelism more weight, we need to understand Apollonius’ relationship with Greek athletics. Apollonius had the baths of Tharsus restored and was a fan of gymnastics, ballgames, and massages. This is apparent from a description of his stay at the gymnasium in Cyrene. These features were partially inspired by the eighth book of the “Odyssey”. We also know that Caracalla was fanatical about gymnasia, athletics and baths and probably this emperor truly built or repaired a bath or another public monument in Tarsus. Apart from the Constitutio Antoniniana, Caracalla’s most famous work was the construction of his magnificent baths in Rome. Only the baths of Diocletian were bigger, if only by a few meters. The enormous complex was probably started by Septimius Severus, but his son gave the main impulse for its completion. Its architectural measurements were based on the Anatolian and Syrian foot, as opposed to the Roman one. As well as this, its general architectural conception finds comparisons in Anatolia and in the Eastern provinces, rather than in the West.

An oddity in the novel is that Apollonius, the king of Tyre, was an excellent masseur:

\[ deinde docta manu ceromate fricavit regem tanta lenitate, ut de sene iuvenem redderet. \]

“Then he rubbed him down with wax ointment with such expertise and agility that the old man was rejuvenated.”

Anointers at the disposal of athletes in Roman baths were usually slaves or freedmen. There is a passage from Martial which hints that they were not of the highest social level:

\[ Et rapit inmeritas sordidus unctor opes. \]

“and the filthy anointer makes off with wealth undeserved.”

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73 See Rigsby 2014, 47.
74 Jenewein 2008.
75 Hist. Apoll. 13.
76 See Petron. 28,3; Mart. 7,32,6 (sordidus unctor); see Jüthner 1912, 2077–2079; Robert 1965, 167–170; Nielsen 1990, 128, 130; Panayotakis 2012, 212.
77 Mart. 7,32,6.
A passage by Seneca also shows little appreciation for a female masseuse:

\[ \text{An potius optem, ut malaxandos articulos exoletis meis porrigam? ut muliercula aut aliquis in muliercum ex uiro uersus digitulos meos ducat?} \]

"Should I desire, instead, to be allowed to stretch out my limbs for my slaves to massage, or to have a woman, or a man changed into the likeness of a woman, pull my finger-joints?"\(^{78}\)

The athletic skill of Apollonius fits his historical model, Caracalla. Dio Cassius says that Caracalla "used to be rubbed dry with oil (ἐξηραλοίφει)".\(^{79}\) This detail singles out a specific connection between Apollonius and the emperor. No other king, apart from Apollonius, has been depicted as a masseur and no other emperor, apart from Caracalla, is described as happy to be massaged. Dio Cassius also says:

"Severus, to be sure, had trained him in absolutely all the pursuits that tended to excellence, whether of body or of mind, so that even after he became emperor he attended teachers and studied philosophy most of the day."\(^{80}\)

A love of sport and gymnastics lies behind a treatise on gymnastics by Philostratus, a prominent member of the intelligentsia at Julia Domna’s court.\(^{81}\) In the Roman baths of Caracalla at Leptis Magna there are areas where people could practise sport, ballgames, enjoy a massage or other pleasures.\(^{82}\) Greek education and athletics were highly appreciated by Caracalla. An incredible number of coins struck in the provinces during his reign depict prizes for games, sitting on a table, and also athletes are depicted (fig. 5).\(^{83}\) Evidently Caracalla was happy to see such enthusiasm for athletics throughout his Empire.

Apparently, the Olympic games organised at Antioch were transferred to Cilicia by Septimius Severus. This was in punishment for Antioch’s support for Pescennius Niger, Severus’ prime opponent. They were then moved back again by Caracalla.\(^{84}\) This has not been completely proven, but what has been is that Tarsus issued coins celebrating the Severeia Olympia Epineikia games. The dedication places them within the boundaries of Cilicia, ἐν Κοδρίγαις ὅροις Κιλίκων,

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\(^{78}\) Sen. epist. 66,53 (transl. Gummere).

\(^{79}\) Cass. Dio 77,11,3.

\(^{80}\) Cass. Dio 77,11,2–3.

\(^{81}\) On the de gymnastica: König 2007.

\(^{82}\) On the baths at Leptis Magna: Fraser – Van Buren 1932, 131.

\(^{83}\) Moushmov 1926, no. 371; Moushmov 1912, no. 5358. On these games and on Caracalla as a new Alexander: Rowan 2012, 152–157.

\(^{84}\) Downey 1937.
210 Attilio Mastrocinque

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8. Apollonius, Caracalla and the *tutela minorum*

Another inconsistency concerns Apollonius. After the apparent death of his wife, he left Tharsus to work in Egypt as a merchant for 14 years. He entrusted his daughter to Stranguillio and Dionysias. The king left the Tharsian couple plentiful gold, silver, and money, and precious clothes for his daughter. She was raised along with her fosterers’ daughter. Why did the father abandon his baby and not come back to Tharsus for 14 years? Why did the girl have to pretend to be the daughter of Stranguillio? Her situation was the same as that of an orphan in need of a *tutor*. While Apollonius was mourning his wife in Egypt, his daughter was sold as a slave in Mytilene and forced to work in a brothel. A simple reason for this oddity could be the need to set the scene for the final reciprocal recognition between Apollonius, his wife, and his daughter. It may also be an imitation of Book XIV of the “Odyssey”. Here Odysseus tells Eumeus a bogus story. In it he

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85 See Downey 1937, 144.
pretends to be a Cretan leader who fought at Troy, went back home, and then sailed to Egypt to go looting. He was defeated by the pharaoh, spared by him, and then spent seven years in commercial activity.

But this does not account for the story of Stranguillio and Dionysias; a simpler plot would have had the pirates rape Tharsia immediately, without the mediation of maleficent tutores. The author obviously wanted to fit in a story of corrupt tutelage. The Roman world had a system of fosterage in the form of the tutela of minors, usually orphans. In about 30 B.C.E., the leges Iulia et Titia established that the responsibility for tutelae in the provinces should be entrusted to the governor. Just how serious a matter this was can be seen in several documents and sentences. Most of these date to the period of Septimius Severus.86

The Codex Iustinianeus carries two introductions to problems related to the tutela (tutelage) of minors. In book I there is the titulus XXV: de excusationibus tutorum vel curatorum and in titulus XXVI: de suspectis tutoribus et curatoribus. Here, rescripta (formal answers) by both Severus and Caracalla are noted down. Titulus XXVI carries some answers concerning the possibility of charging suspicious tutors and curators, and tutors who do not provide enough food for their pupils.87 These situations match the case of Stranguillio and Dionysias.

The subject of tutela was recurrent throughout the reigns of Severus and Caracalla. Another was the matter of female slaves being forced to prostitute themselves, as is the case of Tharsia in Mytilene. Apollonius makes his case against the Mytilenian pimp, and subsequently Stranguillio and Dionysias. He presided over the trials that resulted in the pimp being burned alive and a furious crowd stoning the two evil Tharsians to death.88 Severus and Caracalla banned female slaves from being prostituted. Their concern over this matter can be seen in several legal texts from the Severan Age. Ulpianus reports that among other things the praefectus urbi had the job of preventing the prostitution of slaves. It asserts that a female slave would be freed if she had been pawned under condi-

86 See Dig. 2,43 (44),1 (204 C.E.); 4,4,11,2; Cod. Iust. 9,1,2,1 (205 C.E.); 9,12,2 (213 C.E.); 9,41,2 (204 C.E.); P. Oxy. VII, 1020 (199/200 C.E.); AE 1919, 23; and the dyptic studied by Maroi 1920. On this topic: Musumeci 2006.

87 Impuberes non possunt tutores suos suspectos postulare: puberes autem curatores suos ex consilio necessariorum suspectos possunt arguere: et ita divi Severus et Antoninus rescripserunt [...] Si quis tutor copiam sui non faciat ut alimenta pupillo decernantur, cavetur epistula divorum Severi et Antonini.

88 Hist. Apoll. 46 and 50.
tion of not being exploited as a prostitute but the lender did not respect such a pact. Papinianus and Paulus confirm this law.

Concern with avoiding certain forms of prostitution is also confirmed in an anecdote by Dio Cassius. In it “a young knight carries a coin bearing the emperor’s image into a brothel. Informers report the fact and the knight is imprisoned, to await execution. Later, he is released, as the emperor had died in the meantime.” One could question the truth of this story because all coins bore an image of the emperor, but it confirms the supposition that Caracalla had an aversion to brothels and prostitution.

In the first case of misconduct, that of the *tutela minorum*, Stranguillio and Dionysias’ crime was a result of the jealousy of the latter. Tharsia had regal vestments, whereas her daughter had only common clothes. The idea was to have the foster child killed by Theophilus, her slave (*servus vilicus*). In that way her own daughter could be dressed in Tharsia’s finery. Such a story of a malevolent woman, hating an abandoned girl growing up in her house, finds a good comparison with the myth of Antiope. It is especially thanks to a tragedy by Euripides, the *Antiope*, that we know the tale. Following a relationship with Zeus, Antiope gave birth to Zethus and Amphion. She was forced to live in Thebes, in the home of Lycus, along with his wife Dirce. The latter abused Antiope, treating her as a slave. Dirce came across the house of a herdsman, who had fostered Zethus and Amphion. She summoned the two of them to kill Antiope. They were to tie her to the horns of a bull. However, their foster father revealed to them that the woman they were meant to kill was their mother. Thus it was that they tied Dirce to the bull, and it was Dirce that perished violently and not Antiope.

This Greek myth was celebrated in Caracalla’s baths by a tall statuary group. It’s now known as the Farnese Bull and is on display in the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. The masterpiece was sculptured in the Severan age for the baths, probably on Caracalla’s advice. It’s the tallest known sculpture from classical times. Caracalla’s interest in this myth matched his concerns over the

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89 Dig. 1,12,1,8: *Officium praefecto urbi a divo Severo datum est, ut mancipia tueatur ne prostitu*  
80 *antur.* Dig. 13,7,24,3: *si prostituit ancillam [...]*', *ilico pignus ancillae solvitur.*  
81 Dig. 18,7,6pr.  
82 Cass. Dio 77,16,5.  
83 Hist. Apoll. 31.  
84 On the date: Marvin 1983, 380; Kunze 1998, who quotes authors who propose different dates.
problem of tutela. It may well account for the inclusion of the story of Dionysias in the novel.

As we know from a specific statement by Severus Alexander, in 224 C.E., tutela was the concern of men and not of women: Tutelam administrare virile munus est, et ultra sexum femineae infirmitatis tale officium est (“the exercise of tutelage is a concern of men and it is a task which women are not up to because of their weakness”). Dirce and Dionysias were two examples of women interfering with the exercise of tutela. In them we have two explicit examples of the justness of the Augustan and Severan law entrusting men with this task. As a consequence of the constitutio Antoniniana, local laws in the provinces were increasingly replaced by Roman law, and many Egyptian papyri prove that a mother could no more figure as a tutrix of children.

9. Antiochus’ riddle

By recognising some traits of Caracalla in the character of Apollonius one gets the feeling that the novel was filled with praise – or well wishing – for the emperor. He was thought to be a clever thinker, a pious and righteous man, a perfect husband and father, a mighty ruler, though never greedy for power. A comparison could be made with the other Apollonius, the protagonist of the Life of Apollonius, dedicated to Julia Domna by Philostratus. It paints a picture of a perfect philosopher and a divine man. Caracalla respected Apollonius of Tyana and had a funerary monument built for him. Philostratus and Julia Domna may have hoped to please Caracalla by celebrating Apollonius as a model of perfection. From historical accounts of Caracalla’s life by Dio Cassius, Herodian, and in the Historia Augusta, we see a character totally different from both Apollonius of Tyana, and Apollonius King of Tyre. In place of a divine man, philosopher, and righteous king, we find a cruel tyrant.

The story of Apollonius King of Tyre is by no means a history of Caracalla in disguise, even if many details were inspired by his deeds. The novel itself can be

95 Cod. Iust. 5,35,1. See also Dig. 26,1,16pr. (Gaius, libro duodecimo ad edictum provinciale): Tutela plerumque virile officium est; Dig. 26,1,18 (Neratius [beginning of the second century C.E.], libro terto regularum): Feminae tutores dari non possunt, quia id munus masculorum est, nisi a principe filiorum tutelam specialiter postulent. See La Pira 1930; Crifò 1964; Masiello 1979; Gagliardi 2012, where there is a lengthy bibliography.

96 Gagliardi 2012.

97 Cass. Dio 77,18,4.
taken as a complex riddle, constantly challenging us to recognise something or somebody hidden within the plot.

There are constant risks of pitfalls because the riddles are difficult to unravel. The reader is asked to recognise someone or something, but the answer is not necessarily one thing, or another. The best solution can appear baffling. The reader immediately recognises the shipwrecked man in Cyrene as the alter ego of Odysseus at the court of the Phaeaces, but closer observation reveals an allusion to Caracalla and his love for thermal baths and massages.

There are several inconsistencies in the story. They help provide other clues. The unpredictable and wise Caracalla, disguised as Apollonius, is elusive and ambiguous. This is especially because the first, fundamental riddle was not correctly answered by Apollonius himself and it hides something else.

The inconsistency is evident because the tale presents Antiochus as the lover and quasi husband of his daughter, but the riddle refers to other vices:

\[
\text{scelere vehor, maternam carnem}^{98} \text{vescor,} \\
\text{quaero fratrem meum, meae matris virum,} \\
\text{uxoris meae filium <et> non invenio.}
\]

“I am borne on crime, I feed on the mother’s flesh,
I seek my brother, my mother’s husband,
my wife’s son, and I do not find (them).”

Many scholars see the answer to the riddle as unsatisfactory and have put forward different solutions. Some have recognised two\(^{99}\) or three riddles\(^{100}\) artificially stitched together. They have searched for a solution independent of the situation they are tied to in the novel.\(^{101}\)

Gioachino Chiarini\(^{102}\) and Danny Praet\(^{103}\) correctly recognised that the riddle was independent from the precedent account about Antiochus and resorted to Egyptian mythology to find the right answer. Chiarini thought that the original

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98 Panayotakis 2012, 99, recognizes “a translational pun from the Greek with the name of Antiochus (Ἀντίοχος). The Greek verb ἀντιοχεύομαι is found in Anth. Pal. 11,284,2 (Pallad.)” with the meaning contrario more futuo, and the pun is with ὀχέομαι: vehor. Several editors prefer the varia lectio ‘materna carne’, but the lectio difficilior with the accusative is preferable (and adopted in the editions by Kortekaas and Panayotakis) and documented in the Imperial Age with vescor. See Panayotakis 2012, 99.

99 Schmeling 1988, 3.

100 Anderson 2007, 140.

101 See a bibliography and a survey of the different points of view in Panayotakis 2012, 95–98.

102 Chiarini 1983.

103 Praet 2008.
answer was ‘Typhon’ (Seth, the Egyptian god, according to Plutarch). Praet supposed that the answer was ‘Harpocrates’ (Horus the child).

Many readers clearly recognised in the story of Antiochus, a famous story from early Hellenistic times. This was a true event that took place in Antioch, with King Antiochus as the protagonist. Shortly after the foundation of the city, Seleucus, one of Alexander’s generals, remarried with Stratonice. She was the beautiful young daughter of Demetrius Poliorcetes, King of Macedon. Antiochus, the son of Seleucus, had fallen in love with the same girl. He kept his feelings to himself, falling ill because of his hidden passion. A famous physician, allegedly Erasistratus, discovered the origin of his malaise. Seleucus appreciated the honesty and reserved nature of his son and made him king of the eastern satrapies. Seleucus also conceded Stratonice’s hand in marriage. This is the story of the foundation of the Seleucid dynasty, whose nature was outlined by Seleucus in a famous speech to his army. Many eastern cities in the Imperial Age kept the Seleucid era in their chronology, and some Ionian cities (especially Smyrna) worshipped Aphrodite Stratonikis, making it easy to see how the first two kings of the Hellenistic kingdom of Syria were still remembered in the Severan Age. This means that many readers would have easily recognised the story of Antiochus and his beloved Stratonice in the derogatory account of the incestuous Antiochus. Moreover, this Seleucid story appears at the beginning of Emperor Julian the Apostate’s Misopogon. It was originally presented as a celebration of the first two kings of the dynasty, but Julian’s intention was to criticise the bad habits of the people of Antioch, which had their roots in the city’s founder, Antiochus, and his vices.

The author of the novel alludes to a famous case of incest, although the official Seleucid account asserts that incest was actually carefully avoided by Seleucus and his son Antiochus. The outline of this Seleucid story was influenced by the model of Hippolytus and Phaedra. Here the young protagonist did not want to cheat on his father, inspiring a possible case of incest with the stepmother and not the daughter.

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104 Plut. Dem. 38; App. Syr. 59–61; Lukian. de dea Syria 17–18; Val. Max. 5,7 ext. 1; Iul. mis. 347–348; Synk. 520 Bonn; Suda s.v. Ἐρασίστρατος. Cf. Mastrocinque 1983, 11–38.

105 ISmyrna, nos. 9; 14; 573; 723a–b; 751.

106 The name of Antioch was actually given after that of Seleucus’ father (App. Syr. 295), and not his son. It is not the case of taking into account other Antiochi of the Seleucid dynasty, such as Antiochus III or IV, who are never told to have had an incestuous relationship. On hypotheses concerning Antiochus III and IV see Panayotakis 2012, 47f.
A corrupt relationship with the mother is concealed in the riddle *maternam
carnem vescor*. Here the subject is not cannibalism but incest, with *vesco*
signifying “enjoy”, just like Cicero’s: *vesci voluptatibus*.107

The answer to the riddle was similar to that of Oedipus to the Sphinx. The
challenge lay in recognising himself in the riddle, with the questioner describ-
ing the questioned man himself. Oedipus answered the Sphinx correctly but was
unable to recognise himself in the oracles. These spoke of a man who was to kill
his father, marry his mother and bring pestilence upon Thebes. He would not
believe the consequent interpretation by Teiresias, who said that this man was
Oedipus himself.

10. The solution of the riddle

By using our clues of interpretation, as always in the novel of Apollonius, we
reach a disappointing, but interesting result when we look at Antiochus’ riddle:

*scelere vehor*: Caracalla was a criminal according to all historical sources;
*materna carne vescor*: he was accused of an incestuous relationship with his
mother Julia Domna;
*quaero fratrem meum*: he did not find his brother because he killed him;
*meae matris virum*: his father Septimius Severus had died recently in Eburac-
cum; but the answer was more pointed: Caracalla did not recognise himself as
the husband of his mother, just like Oedipus. He did not recognise himself (*non
invenio*).
*uxoris meae filium <et> non invenio*: he had no sons with Plautilla, but the answer
was probably crueller: he had no sons with Julia Domna, who was as a wife to him,
or, even better: he did not recognise himself as the son of his wife. Julia Domna
was said to be both his mother and wife. He could not find the son because he
himself was the son.

107 Cic. fin. 5,57. On the different solutions of the puzzling expression *materna carne vescor* see
Panayotakis 2012, 99f.
Oedipus fits as an answer, but the missing brother is the outstanding feature which encourages us to single out Caracalla. Because of his relation with his mother Julia Domna, word was going around that he was a new Oedipus. In comparison with previous readings of many episodes of the novel, this result looks like a reversed image reflected in a mirror, equal but opposite. Apollonius looks to Antiochus when answering, and it iss as if he sees himself in a mirror. Apollonius is, to some extent, a literary decoy disguising Caracalla who, as a sole ruler, was criticised because he took his mother for his wife. This leaves the sinner Antiochus as his mirrored image, the riddle adding further sins, Caracalla’s, not Antiochus’.

In 1920 a Byzantine period inscription from Pergamon was published.\(^{108}\) It had been found near the temple of Demeter. The scripture is strikingly similar to Antiochus’ riddle.

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{Cracking Antiochus’ Riddle} & \quad 217 \\
\hline
\text{question} & \text{answer} & \text{reason} \\
\text{scele} e\text{veh} & \text{that am I} & \text{Caracalla was a criminal.} \\
\text{materna carne vescor} & \text{that am I} & \text{Caracalla had an incestuous relationship with his mother.} \\
\text{quaero fratrem meum} & \text{that am I} & \text{Caracalla killed Geta} \\
\text{meae matris virum} & \text{that am I} & \text{Caracalla was the husband of his mother.} \\
\text{uxoris meae filium & non invenio} & \text{that am I} & \text{Caracalla was the son of his wife (his mother).} \\
\end{array}
\]

Which corresponds to a classical Greek text:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{ΩΒΙΔ} & \text{ΩΒΙ ἀ-} \\
\text{ΠΩΛΕΑ μοῦ τὸν ἀδελφό(ν)}, & \text{πωλε<σ>α μοῦ τὸν ἀδελφό(ν),} \\
\text{[τὸν ἄ]νδρα τῆς μιτρός μου,} & \text{[τὸν ἄ]νδρα τῆς μητρός μου,} \\
\text{[τὸν υ]ἱὸν τῆς γυναικός μου,} & \text{[τὸν υ]ἱὸν τῆς γυναικός μου...} \\
\text{...ΙΤΟΝ...} & \text{...ΜΡ...} \\
\end{array}
\]

\(^{108}\) Hepding 1910, 488–490. See Kortekaas 1984, 112 f.; 2004, 64 f.; Panayotakis 2012, 97 f.
H. Mähler proposed a reading of the latest two lines:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{τοῦτον} & \, \zeta \tau \omega \nu \\
\text{oùx e} & \, \upsilon \rho \omicron \nu
\end{align*}
\]

“[..] I have destroyed my brother.
The man of my mother,
the son of my wife
I search,
I do not find.”

The last two lines, if integrated so, follow the Hist. Apoll. Even without them, the rest of the inscription is apparently a copy of Antiochus’ riddle. The only difference is at the beginning, where the inscription explicitly mentions the murder of a brother, in Caracalla’s case Geta. The three preserved clauses in the inscription fit the emperor like a glove.

Continuing the novel, focusing on the Severan version, we can see, once again, a representation of the negative aspects of Caracalla’s character. The generous donor of grain, friend to the poor fisherman, great athlete, and righteous judge is replaced by an incestuous and cruel emperor.

Apollonius was dismissed by Antiochus, went back to Tyre and found himself at a loose end. He consulted his secret books and the books of the Chaldean Oracles. In there he found confirmation of what he already thought he knew, that Antiochus was planning to kill him. His answer was to sail to Tharsus. Apollonius was dismissed by Antiochus, went back to Tyre and found himself at a loose end. He consulted his secret books and the books of the Chaldean Oracles. In there he found confirmation of what he already thought he knew, that Antiochus was planning to kill him. His answer was to sail to Tharsus. Apollonius was dismissed by Antiochus, went back to Tyre and found himself at a loose end. He consulted his secret books and the books of the Chaldean Oracles. In there he found confirmation of what he already thought he knew, that Antiochus was planning to kill him. His answer was to sail to Tharsus. Apollonius was dismissed by Antiochus, went back to Tyre and found himself at a loose end. He consulted his secret books and the books of the Chaldean Oracles. In there he found confirmation of what he already thought he knew, that Antiochus was planning to kill him. His answer was to sail to Tharsus.

109 In Kortekaas 1984, 244, note 623.
110 Hist. Apoll. 6. Septimius Severus also charged and tried some prominent men who resorted to Chaldeans or other prophetic means to forecast the destiny of the emperors. The SHA Sept. Sev. 15 underline that in 200 C.E. a plot to kill Severus was discovered and numerous friends of his were put to death on the charge of having asked Chaldeans or soothsayers how long he was destined to live. An inscription from Ephesus (CIL III 427: provi]/dentia domini n[osti Severus et/ /Antoninus Pii Au[gosti et Geta] / [Caesar] cum [Iulia Aug(usta) ubi vis spes] / parricidales insid[i-atorum sustulerunt]) and another from Sicca Veneria, in Africa (CIL VIII 1628: Jovi Opt(imo) Max- (imo) / Conservatori [...] ob conservatam eorum sa/lutem detectis insidiis / hostium publicorum) report that a conspiracy against the imperial family was thwarted. This case seems to correspond to the trials described by Cass. Dio 76,8–9, one among which was based on another prediction concerning the Empire: “Apronianus [...] was accused because his nurse was reported to have dreamed once that he should be emperor and because he was believed to have employed some magic to this end”. See Th. Mommsen, in CIL VIII 1628, and Levick 2007, 81. The murder of Caracalla was ordered by Macrinus, who was predicted to become emperor. Caracalla must have been informed about this, with fatal consequences for Macrinus.
“used to judge, as he said, even by the charts of the stars under which any of the prominent men about him had been born, which one was friendly to him and which was hostile; and on this evidence he honoured many persons and destroyed many others.”

Septimius Severus was an expert astrologist who sometimes consulted the Chaldean Oracles. Subsequently his son Caracalla, too, was probably an expert in the field. It was he who inherited his father’s secret books. These had been brought to Rome by his father from temples in Egypt.

This new approach, depicting a wicked version of Caracalla, will be useful because we can now use the myth of Oedipus as a clue to understanding the novel. We know that contemporaries compared Caracalla and his mother to Oedipus and Jocasta. Apart from the riddle of Antiochus, another detail probably refers to Oedipus: when Apollonius sees his daughter’s tomb, he curses his eyes:

\[ \text{maledixit oculos suos dicens: “O crudeles oculi, titulum natae meae cernitis et lacrimas fundere non potestis!”} \]

“He cursed his own eyes and said: ‘O cruel eyes, you see the inscription of my daughter and you cannot pour tears!’”

This is a literary topos. The end of Sophocles’ Oedipus rex is similarly concerned with a punishment of eyes, Oedipus’ own: he understands that he himself was the cause of the pestilence, because of his crimes, and thus blinds himself, tearing his eyes out.

11. Caracalla and Oedipus

In 1996 Gabriele Marasco put together and studied numerous testimonies of the literary transformation of the story of Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, and Geta. Their history was blended into a tragic tale, inspired by the Greek tragedies about Oedipus. Herodian reports that in 215 Caracalla visited Alexandria in

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111 Cass. Dio 78,2,3.
112 SHA Sept. Sev. 3; cf. Cass. Dio 76,11,1.
113 SHA Sept. Sev. 2,8–9.
114 See Cass. Dio 77,15.
115 Cass. Dio 75,13,2.
116 Hist. Apoll. 38.
117 See Kortekaas 2011, 629.
118 Marasco 1996.
Egypt.\textsuperscript{119} There, he ordered his soldiers to slaughter many young Alexandrians in order to punish the city for their lack of respect and mockeries. He also alludes to the murder of his brother Geta, his mother fitting into the role of Jocasta and his imitation of Alexander. He was playing Oedipus to his mother’s Jocasta. Dio Cassius alludes to voices of disapproval which apparently spread from Alexandria to Rome, reaching Caracalla’s ears.\textsuperscript{120}

There are two variants to this game of identifying personalities. Oedipus can be identified with either Caracalla, given his marriage to his mother, or Septimius Severus, with two rival sons, similar to Eteocles and Polynikes.

In Late Antiquity the first variant was reworked by various authors. The \textit{Epitome de Caesaribus}\textsuperscript{121} adds that the Dirae (Furies) persecuted Caracalla for murdering his brother, driving him mad; Eutropius,\textsuperscript{122} Hieronymus,\textsuperscript{123} the \textit{Epitome de Caesaribus}\textsuperscript{124} and Orosius\textsuperscript{125} write of Caracalla’s marriage to his stepmother (\textit{noverca}), Julia Domna. All these authors worked from the same traditional source which asserted that Caracalla was driven to marry his stepmother by his libido (\textit{impatiens libidinis}). Aurelius Victor\textsuperscript{126} and the \textit{Historia Augusta}\textsuperscript{127} add other details, namely that Julia Domna drew Caracalla into temptation, appearing naked before him. She impelled her stepson to marry her. The \textit{Historia Augusta}\textsuperscript{128} claims that Caracalla was the son of a different wife of Septimius Severus. We know that his father’s first marriage was with Paccia Marciana. If the \textit{Historia Augusta} is right, Julia would have been the second wife of the Emperor and Caracalla the lover of his stepmother. Such a story corresponds to and is a copy of that of Antiochus and Stratonice. This story emerges in the first chapters of the Hist. Apoll.\textsuperscript{129} The spread and popularity of the story could account for a transformation of the plot. Such a hypothesis presupposes that the readers...

\textsuperscript{119} Herodian. 4,12,2–3.
\textsuperscript{120} Cass. Dio 77,22,1.
\textsuperscript{121} Epit. 21,3.
\textsuperscript{122} Eutr. 8,20,1.
\textsuperscript{123} Hier. chron. 213 Helm.
\textsuperscript{124} Epit. 21,5.
\textsuperscript{125} Oros. 7,18,2. Cf. also Letta 1985–1990, 523; Langford 2013, 118.
\textsuperscript{126} Aur. Vict. Caes. 21,3.
\textsuperscript{127} SHA Carac. 10; cf. Sept. Sev. 21. The SHA Sept. Sev. 5, says that Julia Domna cheated on Severus and even plotted against him.
\textsuperscript{128} SHA Sept. Sev. 21 and Geta 7, whereas in Sept. Sev. 3 Caracalla appears as the true son of Julia.
\textsuperscript{129} See Marasco 1996, 130. This fact proves that the incestuous Antiochus of the novel took inspiration from Antiochus and his stepmother Stratonice, and not another Antiochus. According to Hohl 1950, 16, n. 11; Penella 1980, 383; Letta 1985–1990, 525 and 529, this account was an imitation of rumours concerning Nero’s relationship with his mother Agrippina. Marasco 1996,
understood the riddle and recognised Caracalla as its protagonist. The influence of Antiochus’ story on the Caracalla story can be seen in a shared specific detail. Both the *Historia Augusta* and Aurelius Victor report an alleged discussion between Julia Domna and Caracalla. The latter was hesitating over accepting the proposal of incest because it was illicit. She answered that an emperor was expected to make laws, but not to abide by them. The model was the above quoted speech by Seleucus, who gave his young wife Stratonice to his son Antiochus to marry. He justified this by saying that it was a simple matter that whatever the king ordered was lawful.

The second variant, the Septimius Severus story, focuses on Eteocles and Polynikes. It is found early on in Herodian. He reports of a plan to divide the Roman Empire into two parts and assign half each to the two rival brothers, Caracalla and Geta. A speech by Julia Domna prevented such a project from being put into action. Marasco recognised a similarity between this account and the myth of Eteocles and Polynikes, the sons of Oedipus and Jocasta. The plan was to assign to one of them, in turns, the city of Thebes for a set period. In a poem often ascribed to Stesichorus, Jocasta tried to abate the hostility between their two sons. He delivered a speech proposing a draw. Thebes and the royal palace would be left to one son, and wealth and cattle to the other. According to Marasco the comparison of Caracalla and Geta with Eteocles and Polynices had some influence on the historical account of the division of the Empire. Herodian in particular, or the sources he used, had been influenced by the story of a pact to divide the land, and Julia Domna’s subsequent speech. He also writes of armies deployed in Byzantium and Chalcedon, Caracalla’s the first, Geta’s the second. This could imply that the Empire was to be split into two parts. Dio Cassius reports that Caracalla had had his brother killed by some centurions, but Herodian depicts Caracalla himself as killing Geta. However, Dio Cassius knew that Caracalla had dedicated the knife used to murder his brother in the temple to Serapis at Alexandria, and this detail fits the myth of the two Theban brothers who killed

128, underlines that the account of Caracalla’s incest depended on Syrian traditions such as that concerning Semiramis, the queen who had an incestuous relationship with her son (Iust. 1,2,10).

130 SHA Carac. 10.

131 Aur. Vict. Caes. 21.3.

132 App. Syr. 61; Marasco 1996, 129–132, who suggested that the account concerning Caracalla was influenced by the familial relationship of Constantine, Fausta, and Crispus.

133 Herodian. 4,3,5–9.

134 Archer – Bayavol – Meillier 1976; see Marasco 1996, 124.

135 Herodian. 4,3,6.

136 Cass. Dio 77,2.

137 Herodian. 4,4,2–3.
one another.138 Marasco noticed another similarity with the myth of Jocasta in the
difference between these authors.139 Dio Cassius claims that Julia Domna wanted
to commit suicide when she heard that Caracalla had been murdered,140 whereas
Herodian says that she did actually commit suicide when she found out that both
her sons had perished in similar circumstances.141 This fits the story of Jocasta’s
suicide at the news that her sons had killed each other.

The Theban saga of Oedipus was also alluded to in an oracle of Zeus Belos
in Apamea. Severus had questioned him and he received several responses. This
was the ancient Babylonian god Marduk, worshipped in the Seleucid colony since
Hellenistic times. An oracle of Zeus suggested to Severus a comparison between
him and Agamemnon, forecasting thus his mighty power.142 Dio Cassius writes of
this oracle and, in the same passage, of another one:

“And later, when he had become emperor and consulted this oracle, the god gave him this
response:
Thy house shall perish utterly in blood.”

The Greek text, σὸς δ’ οἶκος πᾶς βήσεται δι’ αἷματος, is the same as verse 20 of
Euripides’ Phoenissae.143 This oracle was surely ex eventu because it knows of the
slaughter perpetrated by Caracalla and of the latter’s bloody end, and maybe of
the murder of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander as well. The oracle is rooted in
the ideology of the years following the murder of Geta by his brother. The Euripid-
ean verse refers to the misfortune following Oedipus’ conception. In spite of Apol-
lo’s warning, Laius had a son who later killed him, married his mother Iocasta,
who gave birth to two sons, Eteocles and Polynikes, who fought and killed each
another.

Herodian144 says that Caracalla was furious when he heard of the sniping
criticism of the Alexandrians. They gossiped about Geta’s murder and nicknamed
Julia Domna, the emperor’s mother, “Jocasta”. The mockery was born of the myth
of Oedipus, who had married his mother. The oracle of Belos was proclaimed in a
period when the Theban myth of Oedipus was popular and was a way of criticis-
ing Caracalla. The oracle was anti-Severan and may have been spread by Macri-
nus. It was he who organised the conspiracy to get rid of Caracalla. It is unlikely

138 Cass. Dio 77,23,3.
139 Marasco 1996, 126.
140 Cass. Dio 78,23.
141 Herodian. 4,13,8.
142 Cass. Dio 78,8,6. On the oracles of Zeus Belos: Balty 1981.
143 Birley 2002, 132 and 250.
144 Herodian. 4,9,2–3.
that it was conjured up by Elagabalus and Severus Alexander because they were pretending to be Caracalla’s sons.  

Apart from Antiochus’ riddle, the Hist. Apoll. does not allude to the fight between Caracalla and Geta, and the ultimate assassination of the latter. Allusions in the novel do not touch on dramatic and political arguments but instead on funny and lighthearted themes.

Oedipus solved the most difficult of riddles but was unable to recognize himself in the oracular answer, and similarly Apollonius answered every riddle correctly except the one whose answer concerned himself.

12. Apollonius at Ephesus

The novel presents Apollonius with his wife: theoretically the perfect family. He is a Tyrian, she a Cyrenaean; shortly after their marriage her apparent death separates the two and it was only after 14 years that they meet again. They recognise each other in the temple of Artemis/Diana in Ephesus. If we see Apollonius as Caracalla, here we find the emperor, his mother Julia Domna, and their connection to Ephesus. It is a well-known story.

According to the novel, Apollonius sails from Mytilene to Tharsis; an angel summons him to the temple of Diana in Ephesus. There he is asked to give a summary of his life. His wife was the chief priestess of Diana Ephesia. Apollonius sums up the decisive moments in life, and in this way his wife recognises him as her husband and he recognises her. Apollonius appoints Athenagoras King of Ephesus in his place and leaves for Tharsis.

The Hist. Apoll. says that Apollonius’ wife, in the Ephesian temple, was very similar to Diana. For his part, when Apollonius sang and played the lyre in the palace of Archistrates of Cyrene, he looks like Apollo. They are the only characters in the novel who are said to be like gods. This was a famous couple, Apollo and his sister Artemis/Diana, identified with Helios and Selene, the sun and the moon. Caracalla, as sole emperor, issued new coins known as Antoniniani. They

145 Cass. Dio 78,32,2–3; Herodian. 5,3,10; Aur. Vict. Caes. 23,1; Eutrop. 8,22; SHA Opil. 9; Heliog. 2. The oracle should be distinguished from the rumors and mockery spread by the Alexandrians, which occurred early in Rome, before Caracalla’s journey to Asia Minor and Egypt in 215; see Marasco 1996, 129, n. 60.
146 On the angels in the ancient paganism: Cumont 1915.
147 Hist. Apoll. 48.
148 Hist. Apoll. 16. An epigram on an inscription from the museum of Adana celebrates the other Apollonius, that from Tyana, by styling him: “this man, named after Apollo”: Jones 1980.
were worth two *denarii*. On the obverse side Caracalla was depicted with the radiate crown of Sol. The same issue was accompanied by others depicting Julia Domna, with a crescent moon (fig. 6).

In Pseudo-Oppian’s *Cynegetica*, a work dedicated to Caracalla and Julia Domna, there is a prayer to Artemis on behalf of Caracalla. Caracalla ordered that on their way to Asia, every governor had to pass by Ephesus. Of all the *metropoleis Asiae*, it is clear that the emperor had a penchant for Ephesus.¹⁴⁹ He also worshiped Artemis in pride of place, and we know this from an inscription from Ephesus which announces that the construction of a third temple to the imperial cult in honour of Caracalla in Ephesus had been proposed by the assembly of the province Asia, but that the emperor had transferred the honour to Artemis. The temple was to be dedicated to her instead of him.¹⁵⁰ On the same slab an epistle from Julia Domna is engraved. In it the empress wishes new honours to be bestowed on the city by the hands of her “sweetest” son.¹⁵¹ These texts were contemporary to the statues dedicated to Caracalla and Julia Domna in Ephesus.

¹⁴⁹ Ulp. de off. procons., in Dig. 1,16,4,5.
¹⁵⁰ IEphesos, no. 212, ll. 15–22. These documents were published sometimes after the death of Caracalla after the original texts in the city archives: Robert, 1967, 44–64 = 384–404.
¹⁵¹ IEphesos, no. 212, ll. 9–14.
An inscription mentions the third *neokoria* of the city and the title *Germanicus*, which was added in 213 C.E.\(^{152}\)

There are also several inscriptions and statues to Lucius Lucilius Pansa Priscillianus. He was one of Caracalla’s favourites and went on to become his *procurator Asiae*. This was the administrator of fiscal revenues, with his seat in Ephesus. There are also statues of his son in Ephesus. Priscillianus took office at the end of 214 and stayed until the beginning of 216.\(^{153}\) Perhaps Priscillianus could be seen as Athenagoras, appointed King of Ephesus instead of Apollonius.

### 13. Apollonius’ wife and the doctors

When in Ephesus, Apollonius and his wife are seen as an unmarried couple, as are Caracalla and his mother. Though not his wife, Julia Domna was considered Caracalla’s partner. This opened the way for no end of rumours and comparisons with Oedipus and his mother Jocasta.

Apollonius’ wife is the protagonist of a disconcerting episode, that of her resurrection in Ephesus at the hands of an apprentice doctor.\(^{154}\) A certain embarrassment is caused by the way the author insists on going into the details of the medical treatment that brought the young woman back from her supposed death. In actual fact she was in a coma. The description is almost like that of two lovers’ pre-coital petting:

\[
\text{At vero adulescens tulit ampullam unguenti et ad lectum devenit puellae et detraxit a pectore vestes, unguentem fudit et per omnes artus suspicosa manu retractat [...].}
\]

\[
\text{Palpat venarum indicia, rimatur auras narium; labia labiis probat; sentit gracile spirantis vitam prope luctare cum morte adultera [...].}
\]

\[
\text{Adhibitis secum viribus tulit puellam in cubiculo suo et posuit super lectulum, velum divisit,calefacit oleum, madefacit lanam et effudit super pectus puellae. Sanguis vero ille, qui intus a perfractione coagulatus fuerat, accepto tepore liquefactus est coepitque spiritus praeclusus per medullas descendere. Venis itaque patefactis aperuit puella oculos et recipiens spiritum, quem iam perdiderat, leni et balbutienti sermone ait: “Deprecor itaque, medice, ne me contin-}
\]

\[
\text{gas aliter, quam oportet contingere: uxor enim regis sum et regis filia.”}\(^{155}\)

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\(^{152}\) IEphesos, no. 300. Cf. the inscriptions referring to other statues: nos. 297; 298; see also IEphesos, no. 292 and 299. Robert 1967, 62 = 402.

\(^{153}\) Christol 2008, 216. See also Oliver 1946; Demougin 1990.

\(^{154}\) Hist. Apoll. 26–27.

\(^{155}\) Hist. Apoll. 26–27.
“And the young man took a flask of ointment, went to the girl’s bed, and drew her clothes back from her breasts. He poured on ointment and carefully examined all her limbs many times with his hands [...].

He patted, searching for pulsing veins and examined her nostrils for breathing, and tried her lips with his lips. He sensed the delicate breath of life on the point of struggling with false death [...].

Taking equipment with him, he brought the girl into his own room and put her on the bed. He opened the covers, warmed the oil, moistened some wool, and applied it to the girl’s breast. Her blood, congealed because of the extreme cold, liquefied when it was warmed, and the force of life which had been blocked began to seep into her marrow. When her veins were cleared the girl opened her eyes and recovered the power to breathe, which she had lost; in a soft and quavering voice she said: ‘I implore you, doctor, not to touch me except as is proper, for I am the wife of a king and the daughter of a king.’ ”

Modern criticism of the novel does not fail to point out the implicit ambiguity in this chapter. *Labia labiis probat* is a typically erotic expression.156 *Spiritus [...] per medullas descendere* is an expression which may be influenced by a literary description of persons (often women) falling in love.157 *Adhibitis secum viribus* could refer to the medic’s instruments, such as the oil and the wool, and is therefore often translated and explained as “taking equipment, power of drugs or other remedies, with the use of all my powers”158, but Kortekaas prefers to translate it as: “after having taken with him (other) men by way of assistance.”159 This is because confusion between *vis* (power) and *vir* (man) was common in Latin in Late Antiquity. The author of the novel concentrates on the girl’s alluring body: *puellam [...] speciosam valde [...] speciosum corpus*. “The use of an adjective may be significant, as the author goes on to describe the young man’s interest in the comatose princess by means of an erotically coloured language.”160

The girl, when she awakes from her coma, realises what an awkward situation she is in. The words she utters – *ne me contingas aliter, quam oportet contingere* – are similar to those describing the illicit love of Antiochus for his daughter: *coepit eam aliter diligere, quam patrem oportebat*.161 The relationship between a woman and her physician was exploited by some satirists to depict opportu-

156 Panayotakis 2012, 342, who writes: “The frequent use of similar expressions in an erotic context in Greek and Latin literature underlines the ambiguity of our passage: after all, probare literally suggests examination (of the lips) for approval.”
157 Panayotakis 2012, 347.
158 Kortekaas 2011, 393.
159 Kortekaas 2011, 394.
160 Panayotakis 2012, 338; see 340: “the creation of an erotic atmosphere”.
161 Panayotakis 2012, 350.
nities for female sexual misconduct. Another significant adjective was morte adultera, which is an unparalleled and odd expression, using a word usually employed to describe a woman who cheats on her husband.

Bear in mind that Apollonius was often depicted as Caracalla, and his wife as Julia Domna. The author stresses that the latter was “the wife of a king and the daughter of a king”. This would be the perfect definition of Julia Domna, daughter of a King of Emesa, wife of the Emperor Septimius Severus, and allegedly also wife to Caracalla. This empress not only stood accused of an incestuous relationship with Caracalla, but also of adultery when her husband Septimius Severus was still alive. In fact, the Historia Augusta writes:

“For all that, he was less careful in his home-life, for he retained his wife Julia, even though she was notorious for her adulteries and also guilty of plotting against him.”

Such a tradition was probably first conceived by Plautianus, the prefect of the guard who hated Julia Domna and discredited her in front of Severus. Dio Cassius writes:

“he often treated even Julia Augusta in an outrageous manner; for he cordially detested her and was always abusing her violently to Severus. He used to conduct investigations into her conduct as well as gather evidence against her by torturing women of the nobility.”

The same author reports a sarcastic remark made to Julia Domna when her husband was alive:

“Severus [...] rebuked such persons as were not chaste, even going so far as to enact some laws in regard to adultery. In consequence, there were ever so many indictments for that offence (for example, when consul, I found three thousand entered on the docket); but, inasmuch as very few persons were prosecuted these cases, he, too, ceased to trouble himself about them. In this connection, a very witty remark is reported to have been made by the wife of Argentocoxus, a Caledonian, to Julia Augusta. When the empress was jesting with her, after the treaty, about the free intercourse of her sex with men in Britain, she replied: ‘We fulfil the demands of nature in a much better way than do you Roman women; for we consort openly with the best men, whereas you let yourselves be debauched in secret by the vilest.’”

162 See esp. Iuv. 6,235–7; Mart. 11,17,7; Flemming 2000, 76; Panayotakis 2012, 350.
163 SHA Sept. Sev. 3; Levick 2007, 6–22.
164 SHA Sept. Sev. 5,8.
165 See Langford 2013, 118.
166 Cass. Dio 75,15.
167 Cass. Dio 77,16,5.
Dio Cassius reports that Julia Domna had breast cancer, which stayed latent for a long time.\textsuperscript{168} In such a condition she needed the help and treatment of physicians, who had to touch her breasts to check the evolution of the disease. The medical school of Ephesus was famous in antiquity,\textsuperscript{169} and it is possible that Julia Domna alluded to it when she wrote a letter to the Ephesians, praising them for their professional schools. The abovementioned inscription says:

\begin{verbatim}
Τιουλία Σεβαστή Ἐφεσί[οις]
πάσας μὲν πόλεσιν καὶ σύνπασι δήμοις ε[ὐεργεσίων]
tυνχάνειν τοῦ γλυκιτάτου μου νίου τοῦ α[ὐτοκράτο-]
ρος συνε[ύ]χομαι, μάλιστα δὲ τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ διὰ [τοῦ μέγεθος]
καὶ κάλλος καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν [...] οσιν καὶ τὸ παιδ[ευτήριον]
eῖναι τοῖς πανταχόθεν ε[ἰς τὸ] ἐργαστήριον [ἡκουσιν?]
\end{verbatim}

"Julia Augusta to the Ephesians.
I wish, I too, to all the cities and the peoples that they obtain benefits from my cherished son, the emperor, but especially to your city because of its grandeur and beauty, of the rest of [...] and because it is the school for all the people who comes from everywhere in the [...]."\textsuperscript{170}

As Louis Robert noticed, Ephesus was the seat of schools of sophism, philosophy, and medicine.\textsuperscript{171} Julia Domna had cancer and so it’s likely that she resorted, possibly with some success, to Ephesian physicians. This may be why she recommended the city to her son.

A series of inscriptions from Antioch of Pisidia (dating to 216 CE) celebrate the chief physician of Caracalla, Lucius Gellius Maximus, and an inscription also mentions one of his fellows, Iulius Aurelius Gellius Lucius. Gellius Maximus is said to have been a physician “of the Mouseion”, which was probably the medical school of Ephesus.\textsuperscript{172} One fragmentary inscription from Antioch in honour of Aesculapius begins with these words: \textit{[– –]AC·AVG·MATER[– –]},\textsuperscript{173} which could be read as \textit{Aug(usti) mater}. These inscriptions confirm the role of physicians in the imperial court and probably the renown of the Ephesian medical school.

\textsuperscript{168} Cass. Dio 78,23,6.
\textsuperscript{169} Keil 1905; Oster 1976, 26; Billault 1991, 133 f.; Roueché 2004, 110; Kortekaas 2011, 369.
\textsuperscript{170} IEphesos, no. 212 (with Robert’s reading of l. 13). See the translation by Robert 1967, 61 = 401: “A toutes les citée et à tous les peuples je souhaite moi aussi d’obtenir des bienfaits de mon très cher fils l’empereur, mais à votre cité surtout à cause de sa grandeur et de sa beauté, du reste de sa gloire (?) et parce qu’elle est l’école de ceux qui viennent de partout dans le [...].”
\textsuperscript{171} Robert 1967, 60 f. = 400 f.
\textsuperscript{172} Christol – Drew-Bear 2004.
\textsuperscript{173} Christol – Drew-Bear 2004, 107.
We know of widespread gossip and criticism of Julia Domna for her sexual exploits and this could probably account for the ambiguity in this chapter of the novel. The young physician delights in the girl’s physique, he strips her and lays her out a bed in a private room, kisses her lips, massages oil into her skin and rekindles the fire in her body by stimulating her down to the bone. If the expression “after having taken with him (other) men by way of assistance” really is the correct interpretation of the puzzling words: *adhibitis secum viribus*, the scene painted would have been ripe for sniggering saucy gossip. The use of another odd expression, *adultera morte*, could be explained away as an allusion to Julia Domna, said to be adulterous. Aurelius Victor and the *Historia Augusta* claim that Julia Domna tempted Caracalla by appearing naked. The two equivocal and ambiguous expressions – *adhibitis secum viribus* and *morte adultera* – seem to be a sophisticated way of suggesting something without explicitly saying it. They do not have the feel of a hypothetically Greek original, translated into Latin.

Summing up, the insertion of Julia Domna’s real life story could account for the ambiguity, oddity, and allusiveness of this part of the novel.

14. **Apollonius’ clothes**

In chapter 46 the Cyrenean fisherman divides his dirty cloak in two, giving half to Apollonius, just come ashore. This detail has often been interpreted as a clear imitation of the *Vita Martini* by Sulpicius Severus. This was written at the end of the fourth century C.E. It has been taken as solid proof of a Christian reworking of the novel in the fifth century. Several modern authors think that the Christianisation was limited to interpolations, others that the whole of Version A was the work of a Christian.

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174 Aur. Vict. Caes. 21,3; SHA Carac. 10; cf. SHA Sept. Sev. 5 and 21.
175 The Greek has no correspondent pun for *vis / vir*, and μοιχικὸς θάνατος could not signify “pretended death”, and κίβδηλος θάνατος (Kortekaas 2011, 390) can hardly refer to a woman cheating on her husband.
176 Sulp. Sev. 13,3. On the imitation see Kortekaas 2011, 168, where one can find a bibliography.
177 Many scholars have dealt with the Christianisation of the Hist. Apoll. and some of them (Klebs 1899 and Schmeling 1988) propose the removal of the Christian additions in order to reconstruct the original pagan novel. On the other hand, Robins 2000, argues that Sulpicius Severus borrowed the motif from the Hist. Apoll. Sulpicius Severus actually was inspired by biblical Latin translations: Panayotakis 2012, 197f.
Kortekaas\textsuperscript{178} underlines that the story of the shared cloak was not a specific feature exclusive to the life of St. Martin, but that it also turns up in Lucian's \textit{Toxaris}:

"he bade him have no fear, and tearing his short cloak in two, he himself put on one of the halves and gave the remainder to Antiphilus after stripping from him the filthy, worn-out rags that he was wearing."

As Lucian employs the word τριβώνιον and the novel \textit{tribunarium} one could suspect Lucian's influence on the novel\textsuperscript{179} On the other hand there may not have been the intervention of a late Christian mystifier, allegedly working some Christian elements into the plot. The author's inspiration may lie in Book XIV of the Odyssey. Odysseus narrates to Eumeus – the swineherd in Ithaca and the first person the hero meets when he comes ashore – a bogus story about himself.\textsuperscript{180} He pretends to be a Cretan prince who, after the war of Troy, goes home. A month later he sails to Egypt and is captured and spared by the pharaoh. Homer adds:

"I remained there seven years and became wealthy, since the Egyptians were generous in their gifts. But during the eighth year I met a wily Phoenician, a greedy rogue, who had already caused much trouble in the world."\textsuperscript{181}

This (false) tale is reminiscent of the 14 years spent by Apollonius in Egypt as a merchant.

Eumeus does not recognise his old master, who proposes:

"If your master returns home clothe me in tunic and cloak [...]"

As Odysseus expects Eumeus to give him his cloak,\textsuperscript{183} he tells him a story about the Trojan war, when he needed a shawl,\textsuperscript{184} begging Eumeus for the same.\textsuperscript{185} Eumeus covers Odysseus with a large cloak because the night is cold.\textsuperscript{186} The next day he promises that when Odysseus’ noble son arrives he will give him

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{178} Kortekaas 2011, 168; cf. Devos 1975.
  \item \textsuperscript{179} Panayotakis 2011, 193.
  \item \textsuperscript{180} Hom. Od. 14,165–359.
  \item \textsuperscript{181} Hom. Od. 14,285–9 (transl. Kline).
  \item \textsuperscript{182} Hom. Od. 14,395–6.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} Hom. Od. 14,459–60.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} Hom. Od. 14,469–503.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} Hom. Od. 14,504.
  \item \textsuperscript{186} Hom. Od. 14,520–1.
\end{itemize}
a tunic and cloak to wear, but until then he has to wear rags: ῥάκεα, “pieces of (old) cloth”. The recurrent theme of a shawl for a newcomer can perfectly explain the topic of the fisherman’s cloak, making the claim of reference to the St. Martin story redundant. The episode is comical because τρίβων was clothing typical of Cynic and Stoic philosophers. The Tarsian coin (fig. 2) depicting the fisherman gives an example of what the author meant: a short and worn out cloak. Tribunarium comes from τριβωνάριον, which is a diminutive, signifying “a very small worn out cloak”. Half of it would have been not much more than a small scarf.

The fishermen’s cloak was labeled tribunarium (sagum sordidum [...] sordidum tribunarium: Hist. Apoll. 12 and 14; tribunarium: Hist. Apoll. 46), and according to many scholars this word, along with others (sabanum, apodixin, aporiatus), proves that the Latin narrative of the Hist. Apoll. was a translation from a Greek original. It would have been translated after the publication of the “Life of St. Martin”. Tribunarium is the Latin rendering of τριβωνάριον, the diminutive of τρίβων, “a worn mantle”.

Such proof is far from decisive. There is one detail in particular that has never been picked up on by specialists of the novel: tribunarium does not correspond perfectly with τριβωνάριον. Instead, its Latinisation should be tribonarium. The first two verses of Ausonius’ epigram 55 (ed. Green): Pera polenta tribon baculus scyphus [...] ("A knapsack, a barley pudding, a cloak, a staff, and a cup [...]") is a replica of epigram 333 of the Anthologia Planudea by Antiphilus of Byzantium describing the paraphernalia of a Cynic philosopher: Ἡ πήρη καὶ χλαῖνα καὶ ὕδατι πιληθεῖσα / μάζα καὶ ἡ πρὸ ποδῶν ῥάβδος ἐρειδομένη / καὶ δέπας ἐκ κεράμοι. Here χλαῖνα is translated with tribon, and not tribum. The adjective of tribon would be tribonarium, whereas τριβωνάριον is not an adjectival form, but a diminutive. If the author of the novel wrote tribunarium, he wanted to suggest the word tribunus. A Latin reader would easily interpret tribunarium as a mantel for a tribunus, i.e. the commander of a cohors (miliaria). Such an ambiguity would have been impossible if the author had used tribonarium. Tribunarium suggested a military cloak, as is also the case for sagum (if we do not read it as saccum) of the Cyrenean fisherman. It is also possible that the

187 Hom. Od. 14,337–8.
188 Hom. Od. 14,512.
189 Kortekaas 2011, 162 prefers the variant saccum. On this problem see also Panayotakis 2011, 195.
190 This was proposed early in the 16th century: Welser 1595, 679; Riese 1893, XVIII; Mazza 1999, 165–175; Kortekaas 2004. See Panayotakis 2011, 185.
191 Panayotakis 2011, 186.
author did not realize that τριβωνάριον was the diminutive of τρίβων, but he recognized the Latin word *tribunus* and thought that τριβωνάριον was a sort of military mantel.\textsuperscript{192}

Apollonius dressed in mourning for years. It was only for the marriage of Tharsia and Athenagoras that he changed into clean clothes (*vestes mundissimas*: Hist. Apoll. 45).

It was unusual for a king like Apollonius to have worn a dirty cloak, a filthy garment for 14 years. Caracalla was also said to have worn dirty clothes. According to Dio Cassius, Caracalla:

> “would march with the soldiers and run with them, neither bathing nor changing his clothing.”\textsuperscript{193}

Dio Cassius describes his invention of a new military tunic, the *caracalla*:

> “He also invented a costume of his own, which was made in a rather foreign fashion out of small pieces of cloth sewed together into a kind of cloak; and he not only wore this most of the time himself (in consequence of which he was given the nickname Caracallus), but he also prescribed it as regular dress for soldiers.”\textsuperscript{194}

### 15. Tharsia’s clothes

We do not know of any other examples of the Christianisation of a pagan novel, poetry, or anything else. It is not really clear why there should have been any such intervention. If the supposed imitation of the story of St. Martin cannot be proved and is not even necessary, the Christianisation of the Hist. Apoll. becomes an unfounded claim. Moreover, some Christian (or apparently Christian) elements occur in both Versions A and B. Some occur only in the latter.\textsuperscript{195} That means that any alleged Christianisation occurred before the creation of two main versions of the text. On the other hand, there is evidence that there was no such intervention and that the apparent Christian flavour was a feature of the original Severan Age novel. There is no way that a Late Antiquity Christian could have transformed the novel, while leaving untouched the presence of Apollo, Diana, Lucina, Neptune,

\textsuperscript{192} There is another solution, as well: sometimes Hebrew Ū appears as U in Punic and Phoenician: see *sufeti* (from the Punic) vs *šofetim*, “judges”; cf. Gershenson 1998, 129.

\textsuperscript{193} Cass. Dio 77,13,1: μὴ λουτρῷ χρώμενος, μὴ τὴν ἐσθῆτα ἀλλάσσων.

\textsuperscript{194} Cass. Dio 78,3,3; according to the SHA Carac. 9, the *caracalla* was a hooded garment.

\textsuperscript{195} Hist. Apoll. 41 rec. B: *deo iubente.*
the Dei Manes, and a consultation of the Chaldean writings. For true Christians Artemis Ephesia was a major enemy of Christianity. St. Paul experienced this in Ephesus. For the Christian mind she became a demon in the form of a gigantic viper. In *de miraculo a Michele Archangelo Chonis patrato*, reworked from a chapter of the *Acta Philippi*, St. Philip and St. Peter fought and defeated her. The apochryphal *Acta Johannis* depicts the Apostle John causing thunderbolts to fall on the temple of Artemis. Part of the Artemision collapses thanks to his prayers. St. Nicolas also became an enemy of Artemis Ephesia. We have at hand a fine selection of the positive qualities of Artemis, praised by pagans, which were to undergo a form of “Christianisation”. A thin sheet of silver carries a pagan spell against migraines, calling on Artemis Ephesia to avert the arrival of a female demon. The same spell was later transformed, with Jesus taking the place of Artemis.

Moreover, it may come to mind that St. Martin was not only famous for giving half of his cloak to a beggar in Amiens, but also for setting fire to a famous temple, destroying it and some abutting houses.

The King of Tyre and his wife looked like Apollo and Diana, and the temple of Diana/Artemis was the blessed location for the reunion of Apollonius’ family.

A true Christian was the anonymous author of the *Recognitiones*. The protagonist is Clement I, the late first century C.E. Bishop of Rome. Clement is a pupil of St. Peter and the account reports twenty homilies rich in religious and philosophical discourses by St. Peter. The novel describes various miracles including the legendary confrontation between St. Peter and Simon Magus. The final part is similar to the Hist. Apoll. Clement loses his family and only after a long absence is he able to find his relatives and recognise them. Origenes knows the work, which means it was being read (and was possibly written) during the Severan Age. A Christian author wrote it between the second half of the second century and the

196 See this correct remark by Garbugino 2004, 91–98.
197 Acts 19,23–41.
198 Bonnet 1890.
199 *Acta Apostolorum apocrypha*, eds. R.A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet, II.2, Leipzig 1903, §§ 102–106, pp. 39 f.; and the new manuscript edited by Bovon – Bouvier – Amsler 1999.
200 42, p. 171 (eds. Lipsius and Bonnet). See Oster 1976, 29.
201 Anichkof 1894. Artemis was understood as an evil spirit or demon in a bronze amulet from Sofiana (Syracuse): Noy 1993, no. 159.
202 Barb 1966.
203 Sulp. Sev. 14. Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, two pagan novelists, allegedly converted to Christianity (see Dorrie 1938), but the authors of those fake news wanted to assert that even supposed magicians such as Heliodorus repented and converted to Christianity. This was a way to deal with pagan, disapproved novels according to the Christian mentality.
beginning of the third. At the time some governors were persecuting Christians, making it impossible that a hypothetical Christian remake of the Hist. Apoll. would not purge the story of any positive mention of pagan gods in the fifth century. This was a time when it was Christianity’s turn to triumph and, in turn, persecute the last remnants of paganism. If the hypothesis of a Christianised version of the Hist. Apoll. is correct, we would find all mention of pagan gods removed. Instead there are only some generic invocations to the Lord.204

Other symbolic clothes were those of Tharsia, clothes of a princess given by a king to his daughter. Dionysias was jealous of Tharsia’s finery and of the praises she received from all the Tharsians, her own daughter going unnoticed. This is why she wanted Theophilus to kill her. Tharsia’s regalia are another element that can be compared with some contemporary Christian accounts.

Regalia, journeys, kings, wisdom, and adventure are the topic of another novel of the Severan Age, the “Acts of Thomas”.205 This was probably written around 225 C.E., in or not far from Edessa.206 The protagonist is St. Thomas himself, who goes to India and meets the local king. The king’s wife and family are converted to Christianity. The most famous part of the work is the so-called “Hymn of the Pearl”, chapters 108–113 of the “Acts”. Thomas himself tells his own story in a sort of allegorical prayer. As a young man, son of an eastern king and queen, he was sent to Egypt to bring back the only pearl lying on the sea bed. It was encircled by a hissing serpent (clearly the Devil); if he succeeded, he would be able to put back on the glorious robes he had cast off during the journey. Passing through Babylonia, he arrives in Egypt. There, fearing that the people might rouse the snake against him, he imitates the Egyptians, eating their food. He forgets his mission and lives as if in a trance. His father and the other eastern sovereigns send letters to remind him of his origins and his mission. So he confronts the great serpent, charming it and sending it to sleep by pronouncing his father’s and mother’s names. He takes the pearl, returns to his father’s kingdom in the East and once again dons his glorious robes and cloak.

The topic of sacred and regal clothing was recurrent in the Severan period. For a Christian, it symbolised membership of the Christian Church and baptism. Royal robes, especially those of the daughter or son of a king, were a symbol of excellence. For pagans regal clothes could be taken as a symbol of excellence

204 On the recurring mentions of deus, such as deo gratias, favente deo, deus vult, testari dominum ..., see Panayotakis 2012, 102.
205 Acta Apostolorum apocrypha, 219–224 (eds. Lipsius and Bonnet, transl. by Guillaumont – Puech et al. 1959, 41–43); Festugière 1983, 92–96.
206 Klijn 1962, and Quispel 1967, 38–53; Quispel 1975, 82–87. The Hymn must have been written in Syriac and then translated into Greek: Klijn 1962, 273f.
and dignity even in the worst of times. This is clear in the account of the death of Cornificia, Marcus Aurelius’ daughter, by order of Caracalla:

“Antoninus, on the point of killing Cornificia, bade her choose her manner of death, as if showing her especial honour. She first uttered many laments, and then, inspired by the memory of her father, Marcus, her grandfather, Antoninus, and her brother, Commodus, she ended by saying: ‘Poor, unhappy soul of mine, imprisoned in a vile body, fare forth, be freed, show them that you are Marcus’ daughter, whether they will or no.’ Then she laid aside all the adornments in which she was arrayed, having composed herself in seemly fashion, severed her veins and died.”

Tharsia’s regalia were a symbol recurrent in the Severan Age. In both pagan and Christian environments such clothes were a symbol of one’s place of origin and dignity, even, or especially, at the very moment of martyrdom.

The novel of Apollonius was not reworked in the fifth century and its Christian features are never explicit. It is far better to read into these features a so-called pagan monotheism, also called henotheism, instead of Christianity. It is well known that during the Imperial Age the pecking order within the pantheon was reordered. The old pantheon was put under the authority of one god or of a very small number of almighty gods. Often the plurality of supreme gods was organised into a triad.

During the Severan period the tendency towards perfected monotheism was so strong that even many Christians unified the Trinity into one God alone, asserting Jesus as the father himself. This doctrinal stream is called Monarchianism. Pagans singled out several male or female gods and made them the supreme rulers of the universe. Gods such as Serapis and Asclepius are depicted on coins of Caracalla holding the cosmic sphere. Jupiter is depicted on coins of Septimius Severus entrusting the emperor with the cosmic sphere. The sun is also often represented with this globe on his hand. Such a phenomenon is well known by historians and specialists of Roman religions. An important work has recently been devoted to it. The tendency towards monotheism is also evident in the use of the number One, heis in Greek, to define a very powerful and benevolent god, even if pagan. Gods such as Isis, Core, Zeus, and Serapis were invoked with the expression heis theòs, “unique, excellent, equal to no one else”.

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207 Cass. Dio 77,16.
208 François 1957; Athanassiadi – Frede 1999; see also Versnel 1990; Mitchell – Van Nuffelen 2010.
209 See Peterson 1926; Peterson 1935; Fowden 1993. On the invocation to the “One God”: Di Segni 1994.
In Philostratus’ “Life of Apollonius of Tyana” the protagonist declares that he is a devotee of Zeus, the supreme god who is the creator of gods, humans, and the universe, whose name cannot be expressed by human words.\textsuperscript{210}

16. Overview of the comparisons

There was probably a reason why the author of the Hist. Apoll. is anonymous. It may be because the story could be read as a criticism of Caracalla. He had a reputation for being ruthless with those who spoke ill of his murder of Geta and his relationship with Julia Domna. He had severely punished the Alexandrians for some pamphlets or similar works based on those arguments. The Hist. Apoll. appears similar. It begins with a riddle describing the sins and vices of Caracalla. A pamphlet against Caracalla could only be published under a false name or anonymously. The name of the protagonist was the same as that of the “Life of Apollonius of Tyana”, published during the reign of Caracalla and dedicated to the latter’s mother. It describes the philosophical and religious traits of a holy and learned model of a man, a man honoured by the young emperor himself. On the surface, the Apollonius of the Hist. Apoll. appears to be another hero of wisdom and justice\textsuperscript{211}, but underneath he is just the opposite. Instead of being a perfect father and husband his historical counterpart was incestuous, instead of a righteous king, a cruel ruler. This veiled image of Caracalla should be taken as a reflection of reality, a comic contrast for those readers that had grasped the riddle.

Probably readers who knew that Apollonius was a substitute for Caracalla chuckled at the depiction of Apollonius massaging Archistrates, knowing full well that Caracalla loved being rubbed with oil; or at the depiction of Apollonius’ filthy shawl, bringing to mind his disgusting \textit{caracalla}. Readers would have enjoyed the idea of Apollonius’ naked wife being rubbed down by a young physician, with images of Julia Domna in mind, the famous adulteress, being visited by physicians.

Let’s take a look at the numerous similarities between Apollonius and Caracalla:

\textsuperscript{210} Philostr. Ap. 8,30.
\textsuperscript{211} Caracalla is described in his function of judge by Philostr. soph. 2,39, and in the inscription from Dmeir (Syria) studied by Roussel – De Visscher 1942, 176–194.
| Apollonius | Caracalla | differences |
|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| provides Tharsus with a *frumentatio* and is honoured by a statue on a chariot. | provides Tarsus with a *frumentatio* and is honoured by a statue on a chariot. | The chariot is drawn by horses. The chariot is drawn by snakes. |
| in a statue Mytilene depicts him on the prow of a ship, right foot on the pimp’s head, with his daughter. | Aegaeae struck a coin depicting him posing his right foot on the prow of a ship with Tyche. | The daughter instead of Tyche, and the pimp is absent from the coin. Mytilene instead of Aegaeae. |
| is a great athlete. | is a great athlete. | |
| is an accomplished masseur. | loves massages. | |
| sings and plays the lyre. | loves lyric poetry and plays the lyre. | |
| wanted to marry the wicked daughter of an incestuous and wicked king. | marries, briefly, to Plautilla, wicked daughter of a wicked and powerful prefect of the guard. | Apollonius did not marry; Caracalla married, though briefly, and loathed his wife. |
| dons a piece of the cloak of a fisherman, a dirty and worn garment. | dons a cloak made from many pieces of cloth, the *caracalla*. | |
| rescues the slave Tharsia, prostituted in a brothel. | prevents the prostitution of slaves. | |
| punishes Dionysias who cheated on Tharsia under her *tutela*. | takes care of minors entrusted to *tutela*. Orders a statue of Dirce representing her punishment for mistreating Antiope. | |
| generous with gold coins for his friends as rewards. | generous with prizes and money as rewards. | |
| detects Antiochus’ true intentions by consulting the books of the Chaldeans. | detects the true intentions of prominent men by consulting the chart of the stars. | |
| travels the eastern Mediterranean a lot. | travels the eastern Mediterranean a lot. | |
| is accompanied by his wife. | is accompanied by his mother. | Only Caracalla (and Antiochus) is accused of being incestuous. Apollonius has a daughter, Caracalla no children, apart from Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, his pretended sons. |
| Apollonius                                      | Caracalla                                      | differences                                      |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| is highly honoured at Ephesus.                 | is highly honoured at Ephesus.                 |                                                  |
| is a devotee of Diana Ephesia.                 | is a devotee of Diana Ephesia.                 |                                                  |
| is on the ball when answering.                 | is on the ball when answering.                 |                                                  |
| his wife is undressed, rubbed, kissed, and warmed up by a young physician. | his mother is said to be adulterous, tempting him by parading naked. She needed the care of physicians because of breast cancer. |                                                  |

Given that the comparison with Caracalla is sometimes derogatory, at other times full of praise, maybe ironic or completely neutral, it is hard to work out what criterion was used to make these evaluations. It is also difficult to work out how and when the author is putting forward a veiled image of Caracalla, and why in some cases the figure of Apollonius seems to be totally independent of the emperor. This is especially true in relation to his daughter, who has nothing to do with Caracalla and his family, but we will deal with this problem later on. It is tricky, too, to fathom when and why the author has chosen to use some historical events, and not others. What criterion was used to insert them into the fabric of the novel. The main framework of the Hist. Apoll. depends on the author’s imagination mixed with literary models (especially the Odyssey), and only a part on Severan history.

Focussing on the topics of the comparative table above, it is clear that for the most part it is the sexual behaviour of Apollonius/Caracalla and his wife/Julia Domna that is taken into account. Caracalla’s cruelty, tyrannical government, and murder of his brother is left out. The author was probably envisaging the life of Caracalla from a Greek point of view, from Cilicia or some adjacent province. This point of view was very different from the senatorial one of Dio Cassius. The latter influenced Herodian and, subsequently, the Historia Augusta, i.e. our main sources. We are informed that Caracalla knew of some gossip pamphlets published in Alexandria. Numerous late antique authors report gossip and false

\[212\] On Elagabalus and Severus Alexander as Caracalla’s pretended sons see above, n. 145. A denarius of Plautilla showing on the reverse side Pietas (RIC 367) holding a baby suggested the hypothesis that Plautilla had a son with Caracalla: Gagé 1934, 33–78; contra: Rubin 1976–1977; see Rowan 2011, 256.

\[213\] Tarsus has been supposed to be the cradle of the novel; see Kortekaas 2011, IX; 118; 121 and passim.
accounts about Julia Domna and Caracalla. The high number of these tales show that many were concocted during the couple’s lifetime or shortly after. Though Caracalla saw himself as the new Alexander, a true Greek, and supporter of Greek culture, he is also mocked in the novel and presented as a Phoenician in the guise of King Apollonius.

Eastern provinces and cities were little interested in discussing the real political problems of the Empire. Instead, they were more concerned with their own local and temporary issues. But they did love gossiping about the personal and private lives of emperors. Julian the Emperor’s *Misopogon* is proof of the frivolous arguments raised by Antiochians, such as the shape of a man’s beard. Dio Chrysostom’s discourses, too, are concerned with the frivolousness and inconsistency of many arguments and debates between the Greek cities of Anatolia.

From this point of view we can also understand the praise for Apollonius for wielding justice over the wicked pimp and the perverse foster mother of Tharsia. The administrator of taxes from Asia, praised in Ephesus, can also be found praised in the novel, in the shape of Athenagoras. The Roman Senate, including the senator Dio Cassius, looked at the same persons in a different light to that of the people of Tarsus, Antioch or Ephesus. Romans witnessed the slaughter of prominent men following the assassination of Geta. The eastern peoples were almost unaware of this. Instead their attention was focused on the emperor’s eventual grants to various cities, his laws and his sentences in certain trials, his local administration. Sometimes his soldiers were stationed in eastern cities. Though enthusiastic about their commander because of the good pay, they also remarked on his strange clothes and the fact that he was accompanied by his mother instead of a wife.

The veiled image of Caracalla recognisable in the *Hist. Apoll.* is different from that in our main sources. He appears as a sort of Argonaut, a friend of eastern cities of the Roman Empire, a defender of the rights of the lower classes and most vulnerable (slaves in a brothel and minors entrusted to fosterers). His sins and vices are hidden in a series of different veiled images concerning his relationship with his mother, his oddities (his patchwork cloak) and habits (massages and fortune telling).

We know little of the deeds of Caracalla and the historical sources are strongly biased. Therefore, there is the suspicion that other episodes of Caracalla’s life may be concealed within the adventures of Apollonius. His nameless wife is mysterious, and no reason can be found for the woman to be nameless. But there must have been a reason, perhaps residing in the name of Domna herself which was a shortened variant of *domina*: “a lady, a mistress”.
17. Apollonius’ daughter

It is time for the most obscure riddle, Tharsia. She cannot be Caracalla's inexistent daughter. The author of the novel provides us with a hint as to who she is, as usual, in another inconsistency. Dionysias was sure that Tharsia had been killed by Theophilus and she had a tomb built for her. In mourning, she spoke to the Tharsians, lamenting the fact that Tharsia's death was allegedly caused by a stomach ache. The Tharsians collected money and raised a funerary monument to Tharsia, the daughter of their benefactor. For Dionysias, a woman, to speak to the people was unusual. Contiones were men’s business. As Tharsia’s tutor, her husband Stranguillio should have taken care of the funeral and spoken to the people, but he did not. The inscription engraved on the monument is even more unexpected. According to the two passages and to the two versions of the text, it reads as follows:214

| Chapter 32 RA | Chapter 32 RB |
|--------------|--------------|
| DII MANES    | -----        |
| CIVES THARSI THARSIAE VIRGINI | THARSIAE VIRGINI APOLLONII FILIAE |
| BENEFICII TYRI APOLLONII | OB BENEFICIA EIUS |
| <EX AERE COLLATO FECERUNT> | EX AERE CONLATO DONUM DEDERUNT |

| Chapter 38 RA | Chapter 38 RB |
|--------------|--------------|
| DII MANES    | DIIS MANIBUS |
| CIVES THARSI THARSIAE VIRGINI | CIVES THARSIAE VIRGINI |
| APOLLONII REGIS FILIAE | APOLLONII TYRII FILIAE |
| OB BENEFICIUM EIVS, PIETATIS CAUSA | ----- |
| EX AERE COLLATO FECERUNT | EX AERE CONLATO FECERUNT |

We know of an inscription on a sarcophagus from Roman Parentium (Poreč, Croatia) by two tutors for a woman whose husband had a Semitic name:

\[ Aureliae Rufinae / uxori Aureli Iuli Zabbae / Aurelii Albanus et Castor / tutores filiorum et hered(es) / eius posuerunt. \]

This inscription shows that children’s tutores were male, and that it was they that organised the funeral and construction of the tomb of the parents of their pupils (and also, eventually, of the pupils, if they died).

214 See Kortekaas 2011, 526.
215 InscrIt X.2, no. 27, where the abbreviation is completed in this manner: hered(um).
Tharsia’s inscription is unusual because it calls the girl *Tharsia virgo*, with a stress on the word *virgo*, and uses a Θ instead of a Τ.

The author of the novel evidently chose this learned name with the aim of alluding to the origins of the city. We have already seen that the episode of the fisherman in Tharsus alluded to the arrival of Perseus, one of the supposed founders of Tarsus. The novel also alludes to the origins of Cyrene and Antioch, by describing the second fisherman and Antiochus, the founder of Antioch.

The inconsistency concerning Tharsia’s funerary monument may be explained by a local Tarsan tradition told by the Antiochian author Malalas. He narrates that Perseus conquered the hostile inhabitants of Lycaonia using to the Gorgon’s head, and then went on to found the city of Iconium.

He placed a stele outside the city gates. It showed him holding up the Gorgon’s head facing away from himself. He made a sacrifice and gave the name Persis to the Tyche of the city, after himself. The stele is still standing there. The city was called Iconium because he took the image of the Gorgon there before his victory, reaching Isauria and Cilicia, where he had to face his enemies. An oracle said that he would obtain victory if, when dismounting from his horse, he drove his heel (ταρσός) into the ground. He climbed down from his horse in a village known as Andrasos, driving his heel in the ground. He won the battle thanks to the Gorgon and transformed the village into a city which he called Tarsus after the heel of his foot, as the oracle had foretold. He sacrificed a virgin called Parthenope to purify the city.217

Malalas writes several similar stories of the Tychai of some cities in the eastern provinces. The plot is always the same: a hero founds a new city and sacrifices a virgin. Her name lives on in the city because in death she becomes its Tyche, the personification of the destiny of the city. The most famous account is that of Antioch. Malalas writes218

“After Seleucus, with the help of Amphion, the high priest and master of initiations, had sacrificed a virgin girl called Aemathe219 between the city and the river, (founded the city) on the 22nd day of the month of Artemisius which is also May, at the first hour of the day as the sun was rising, and he called the city Antioch, after the name of his son Antiochus Soter.”

216 *Eikon* in Greek.
217 Ioh. Mal. 2,11; the same story is reported by the Chr. pasch. 71 Bonn.
218 Ioh. Mal. 8,200. On these traditions see: Mastrocinque 1981, 17–19; Frézouls 1994; Garstad 2005.
219 Whose name was similar to that of the regio Aemathia, in Macedonia.
The foundations of Laodicea and Apamea are similarly described by Malalas:

“Seleucus Nicator founded another city by the coast of Syria, which he called Laodicea after
the name of his daughter [...] He sacrificed a pure maiden called Agaue, and set up a bronze
statue of her as the Tyche of the city [...]...
Seleucus Nicator founded another great city in Syria [...] and he named it after his daughter
Apama. After building a wall around it, and performing a sacrifice, Seleucus changed the
name of the city to Apamea. He also called it by the name of Pella, because the Tyche of the
city of Apamea had that name.”

Another expert in initiations was Timotheos. He was an *exegetes* (interpreter) descended from Eumolpides, priests charged with the initiations at Eleusis. He and the Egyptian Maneto, were entrusted by Ptolemy Philadelphus with the task of organising the most important cult of Alexandria, that of the gods of the dead and especially of Serapis. Lysimachus too, when he refounded Ephesus with the name of Arsinoeia in 294, gave the city mystery cults and made sacrifices.

Taken together, these episodes could account for the inclusion of Theophilus, and his orders to kill Tharsia. Though the description in the novel brings to mind some stories of Christian martyrs, the name alludes to the pagan tradition of sacrificing a virgin during the foundation of a city, and to the expert priests who were entrusted with this task.

Even in Rome, late republican depictions of the founding of a city previewed the presence of a Tyche. They can be seen on reliefs from the Basilica Aemilia and frescoes in the tomb of the Statilii.

In the funerary inscription the emphasis lies in the virginity of the buried girl. This can be explained even better by another account written down by both Ptolemy VIII and Athenodorus. The latter was a Tarsian philosopher of the Augustan Age. They narrate that Anchiale, the daughter of Japetus, founded the Cilician city of Anchiale near the Anchialeon river. She gave birth to a son, Kydnos, who gave his name to the River Kydnos, near Tarsus. He too had a son, Parthenios. The city that was to become Tarsus was originally called Parthenia, in his name.

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220 Ioh. Mal. 8,203.
221 Plut. Is. 28 = 362 A.
222 Tac. hist. 4,83.
223 Mastrocinque 1979, 48–54.
224 IEphesos, no. 26, l. 3.
225 Carandini – Cappelli 2000, 303–319 and 216 f., respectively.
226 Ptol. FHG, III, fr. 11.
227 Ptol. FHG, III, fr. 1. Both fragments are reported by Steph. Byz. s. v. Ἀγχιάλη, and the same story is also in Herodianus, *de prosodia catholica*, Grammatici Graeci, III.1, ed. Lentz, p. 320.
The names Parthenios and Parthenia show an evident emphasis on the fact that the city got its name from a virgin. The tombs of some of these virgin Tychai were famous. This was the case of the tomb of the Tyche of Antioch, as well as the tomb of the Siren Parthenope in Naples. Other Tychaea (temples to Tyche) are known of in the eastern provinces.

We have already said that Aegeae, in Cilicia, issued bronze coins depicting the Tyche of the city. On them, Caracalla stands posing his foot on the prow of a ship. Similar imagery is used in the novel, where the same iconography is described for a statue at Mytilene. The novel names the woman Tharsia, and not the Tyche of the city. This could explain the overemphasis on the virginity of Tharsia in her funerary inscription at Tarsus. The local tradition concerning the Tyche of the city, a virgin who gave her name to the city (Parthenia for example), correlates to “the city of the Virgin”. The paradoxical episode of Tharsia in the brothel is nothing more than a farfetched reassertion of her virginity.

Tharsia/Tarsia’s name can be explained thanks to the mythical traditions of many cities which had been named after their Tyche, or that of a relative of the founder. She was already called Tharsia before the ship landed at Tarsus. Apparently, this could be another inconsistency but can be explained by the fact that the author wanted to make the girl’s name correspond with that of the Tyche of Tarsus/Tharsus. He used the supposed early name of the city, Tharsus, meaning that Tharsia would have been the name of the sacrificed virgin, commemorated by a public monument. The author of the novel gave more than one hint at the similarities with Apollonius’ daughter. He writes:

*illi una voce clamaverunt dicentes: “Te regem, te patrem patriae te diximus et in perpetuum dicimus.”*

“They (the Tarsians) shouted unanimously: ‘We said that you were our king and the father of our country, and we say so forever.’”

Tarsians were used to calling the Roman emperor Π(ατήρ) Π(ατρίδος). This can be seen on Tarsian coins from the reign of Hadrian onwards. A reader from Tarsus, Cilicia, Antioch or adjacent areas could have recognised the story and would have solved the riddle. A Roman had little chance of recognising who Apollonius’ daughter truly represented: he would have thought of *pater patriae*

228 Strab. 5,4,7 = 246.
229 See Freyberger 1989. Tychae are known in many cities, such as Diokaisarea and Side. See Szilâgyi 1966, 1040.
230 Hist. Apoll. 50.
231 Head 1911, 734.
as *pater Tharsiae* and followed the logic of the Tyche as a personification of the city, allegedly sacrificed at the moment of its foundation.

The foundation of Tarsus was celebrated during the reign of Caracalla, the Tarsians becoming Roman citizens. The city struck coins depicting Romulus, Remus and the she-wolf.\(^{232}\) Roman citizenship transformed Tarsus as if it had been founded anew. This is another reason why the statue of Caracalla depicted him as the new Triptolemus, one of the founders of Tarsus. Perseus was another founder and his myth was popular in the age of Caracalla. The Aegeae coins show how the emperor was associated with the Tyche of the cities. A city’s Tyche was, from an ideological point of view, like a daughter to the emperor, given that with the transference of Roman citizenship on a city, the city was reborn. During Caracalla’s reign, another important Cilician city, Seleukeia on the Calycadnum, celebrated its predominance over smaller cities by issuing coins with its Tyche on the reverse side. She stands, posing her foot on a strong box bearing the legend *ϹΥΝΤΕΛΙΑ, συντέλεια*, meaning *contributio*: contribution. The significance of this was that the task of collecting taxes had been entrusted to the Senate of Seleukeia, this included the taxes of other minor cities such as Corycus.\(^{233}\)

Here are some lines from an interesting inscription from Ephesus, in honour of Caracalla:

> Αὐτοκράτορα Καίσαρα
> Μ. Αὔρηλιον Ἀντωνίνον [...].
> δι’ ὃν εὔτυχεστέρα καὶ ἠ τύχη
tῆς πρώτης καὶ μεγίστης
> μητροπόλεως τῆς Ἀσίας [...]. \(^{234}\)

> “The emperor Caesar M. Aurelius Antoninus [...] thanks to whom the Tyche of the first and greatest metropolis of Asia becomes more fortunate.”

In the story, after Tharsia’s supposed death (she had a tomb in Tharsus), she goes on to marry a friend of Apollonius. This transformation could have been comical for a reader who understood the allusion.

Identification of Apollonius-Caracalla with the founder of Tarsus was ambiguous and elusive, because Tarsus had a Semitic background. In spite of his passion for Hellenism and Alexander the Great, Caracalla too was a Semite:

\(^{232}\) SNGFranceBibl.Nat., no. 1503. This iconography should not be taken as a malevolent allusion to the two emperors, Caracalla and Geta. Caracalla, in a speech to the Senate, had justified the murder of his brother by mentioning the precedent of Romulus, he too guilty of fratricide: Herodian. 4,5,5.

\(^{233}\) Baschirotto 2008.

\(^{234}\) IEphesos, no. 297, ll. 1–2; 7–9.
father was born in Leptis Magna and his mother tongue was Punic. His mother was born in Emesa, Syria. Severus’ ancestors were Tyrians, Tyre being the mother city of Punic Carthage.

Stephanus Byzantinus, recalling fragments of Ptolemy and Athenodorus, says that some authors ascribe the foundation of Anchialae and Tarsus to the Babylonian King Sardanapalus, famous for his epigram:

ταῦτ’ ἔχω, ὅσσ’ ἔφαγον καὶ ἐφύβρισα καὶ μετ’ ἔρωτος
tερπνὰ πάθον. τὰ δὲ πολλὰ καὶ δόβια κεῖνα.

“I have what I have eaten, the result of my violence and of the pleasure I got with love. These things are many and illustrious.”

Different cultures, points of view, and mental skills meant that the riddles in the book could have been answered in different ways.

18. Theophilus’ trial

At the end of the story Apollonius returns to Tharsus with his wife and daughter. Chapter 50 is devoted to the trial of Stranguillio and Dionysias. Apollonius sits on the tribunal, but Tharsia takes an important role in the debate. She is described as if she has come back from the dead to force Theophilus to tell the truth. He accuses Dionysias of urging him to kill Tharsia. The people of Tarsus are furious and stone the couple to death, but Tharsia pleads in favour of Theophilus because he conceded her time to pray. Thanks to Tharsia he is acquitted and freed.

It may well be that a famous trial really did occur during the time of Caracalla because the city struck an exceptional silver coin depicting, on the obverse side, the emperor and, on the reverse, Athena casting her vote in an urn. This is an allusion to the famous myth of Orestes’ acquittal at the end of Aeschylus’ Eumenides. Augustus had the same right to absolve or condemn as Athena:

ψῆφον τινα αὐτοῦ ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς δικαστηρίοις ὥσπερ Ἀθηνᾶς φέρεσθαι.

“in all the courts his vote was to be cast as Athena’s vote.”

235 In his derogatory depiction of Caracalla Dio Cassius (77,6,1a) says that he inherited “the recklessness, the cowardice, and the arrogance of Gaul, the harshness and savageness of Africa, and the craftiness of Syria”.

236 SNGLevante, no. 1037; Prieur – Prieur 2000, no. 786.

237 Cass. Dio 51,19,7.
The act of Athena casting her vote appears on many artefacts and monuments from Augustan times. Given that it is an emperor’s judgement in question, the silver coin can only refer to a famous acquittal at Caracalla’s hand. Sadly, there’s no evidence that Caracalla’s intervention was in judgement over a slave forced to kill a pupil. Theophilus’ acquittal was thanks to a woman, the virgin Tharsia. The final words of Tharsia’s harangue are bewildering:

*Cives piissimi, nisi ad testandum dominum horarum mihi spatia tribuisset, modo me vestra felicitas non defendisset.*

“Most pious citizens, if he had not given me an interval of time to call the Lord to witness, in this moment you in all your prosperity would not have protected me.”

*Vestra felicitas* has been identified as a moniker. An equivalent is that of Venice, which is also known as “The Serenissima” (most serene). This chain of events is the opposite to the previous version of the story, in which Tharsia is kidnapped by pirates, and there is no hint of Tarsians protecting her from death. If we identify Tharsia with the Tyche of Tarsus we may come up with a better solution. *Hora* and *felicitas* are two important words in the astrological choice of a city’s birth. The horoscope of a city was supposed to be influential, or even vital for the destiny of a city. During the third century C.E. several Syrian cities struck coins depicting their Tyche with a zodiacal sign over her head, symbolic of its foundation date. Appian’s account of the foundation of Seleukeia on the River Tigris describes the choice of the very moment when construction of the city was to start. The Chaldean priests were worried because another capital in Mesopotamia could have deprived Babylon of its supremacy. So they gave false advice about the exact time for founding Seleukeia. But the gods themselves let the army start, and the city was born at an opportune moment. Crassus once advised Deiotarus on how to choose the best moment, the *hora*, when the latter was intending to found a city. Astrologists calculated the precise horoscope of Rome itself, singling out the moment when Romulus initiated.

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238 See Panayotakis 2012, 594.
239 See for example BMCGalatia, Cappadocia and Syria, nos. 483; 489; 491; 523; 535; 564 (Antioch). On the spread of the traditions concerning the Tychai during the Imperial Age: Belayche 2008, 209–228.
240 App. Syr. 58.
241 Plut. Crass 16.
242 Plut. Rom. 12.
The use of *horarum spatia* instead of *tempus* is quite an unusual choice. *Ad testandum dominum horarum* can be taken, instead, as: “the lord of hours”, “the lord of Time”, the god who rotates the zodiacal belt and rules over destiny.

Two interesting passages by Nonnus of Panopolis talk of the oldest city in the world. This turns out to be Berytus, born along with Aion, the god of Time. Tarsus, τερψίμβροτος, “delight of mankind”, came second, not preventing it from being labelled Tarsus ἀειδομένη πρωτόπτολις, “the celebrated first city”.

The fortune, or *felicitas* of Tarsus depended on its horoscope and the Tyche of the city had to be sacrificed at the best moment and with due prayers to the supreme god. *Spatium* also means “a space in time”, and the sentence means:

\[ \text{Cives piissimi, nisi ad testandum dominum horarum mihi spatia tribuisset, modo me vestra felicitas non defendisset.} \]

“Most pious citizens, if he had not given me a moment to invoke the Lord of time, your fortune would not defend only me.”

The meaning of the last clause was perhaps more intricate: “your fortune did not defend me, but only me (and the other citizens were protected)”, that is to say that the fortune of Tarsus was great and only Tharsia could not be protected by this fortune. The death of Tharsia at an opportune moment guaranteed great prosperity to Tarsus, the virgin’s personal misfortune bringing fortune to the city as a whole. In this case the oddity of the sentence has its roots in Tharsia’s puzzling role. It is only by cracking the code that we can understand its meaning.

The only allusion to Tharsia’s actual death is made by Apollonius in Version B, where the king, inviting his daughter to appear at court, says:

\[ \text{‘Domina Tharsia, nata dulcis, si quid tamen apud inferos haeres, relinque Thartaream domum et genitoris tui vocem exaudi.’} \]

“‘Lady Tharsia, sweet daughter, if somehow you linger in the underworld, leave Tartarus’ house and obey your parent’s voice.’”

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243 On this kind of supreme gods of the universe see Mastrocinque 2017, chapter 6. See an interesting parallel in PGM 13, 53–55: “Now [the great name] is [composed of] 9 names, before which you say [those of] the gods of the hours, with [the prayer on] the stele, and [those of] the gods of the days and of those set over the weeks” (transl. Smith).

244 Nonn. Dion. 41,83–85 and 355–356.

245 See for example Cic. Verr. 2,2,26 (96): *parvo dilexit spatio Theseus*, Prop. 2,24,43: *spatio brevi*, Hor. carm. 1,11,6: *in brevi spatio mutantur secla*, Lucr. 2,77; Ter. Haut. 5,2,2: *a liquid longo spatio tenere*, Cic. off. 2,23,81: *me ex comparato et constituto spatio defensionis*.

246 Version B has *modo vestra pietas*, which makes even less sense and seems to show that the author of Version B did not understand the meaning of the sentence.
It is difficult to explain why only one version carries this sentence, which is sardonic when taken at face value. However, it can be seen in a different light if we remember that Tarsus had originally been founded in a remote past by Perseus, sacrificing a virgin to become the Tyche of the city. The new birth of Tarsus as a city of Roman citizens called for either a new Tyche or a renaissance of the old. The ancient Tyche was to leave the world of the dead and live again in a new life thanks to Caracalla, proclaimed *pater patriae*, or in this case *pater Tharsiae*. It is probably no accident that Version B carries Apollonius’ address to the Tarsians as such:

*Cives beatissimi Tharsiae* [...]  

Here *Tharsiae civitatis* is intended, but an allusion to the virgin Tharsia is also possible. This is a *lectio difficilior*, and probably *pour cause*, in comparison with the *Cives beatissimi Tharsi* of Version A.  

We have seen that a Cilician or a citizen of a neighbouring province would have been able to understand the allusions, and the conclusion that the author was a Tarsian seems unavoidable. However, there are still some problems: many of the allusions to Tarsus seem to be ironic: Tharsia’s virginity is over emphasised; the stylised plot line makes the first person met by Apollonius at Tharsis a Greek, given his name Hellenicus, even if he is said to be a Tyrian. Dio Chrysostom’s XXXIV Tarsian discourse informs us that Tarsians were well known for their arrogance and consequent hostility to neighbouring cities. The XXXIII discourse is a sharp denunciation of the spread of Semitic languages in Tarsus, particularly Phoenician. The Phoenician origins of both Apollonius and Caracalla, both posing as Greeks, could potentially be taken as criticism of the self-important Greekness of both Tarsus and Caracalla. The contrast between the honest Phoenician fisherman and the deceitful and cruel Greeks, Stranguillio and Dionysias, shows that the scales of judgement are weighted in favour of Phoenicians. This could account for the peculiar name of Tharsus, known to be the ancient name of the city by a Jew such as Josephus Flavius, who probably identified it with the biblical Tharsis. In this case, reading Tarsus as Tharsus would imply a Semitic pronunciation.  

As we read in the first chapter of Philostratus’ *Heroikòs*, under Caracalla the Phoenicians had to dress like Greeks, and native Egyptians were expelled from Alexandria. It looks as if the Semitic inhabitants of Tarsus, along with their culture and language, were being suppressed by rampant Hellenism. A Tarsian

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247 Cf. Hist. Apoll. RB 8: *litus Tarsiae*. 
who chooses to write in Latin and not Greek, calls his city Tharsis instead of Tarsus, and depicts the Tarsian Tyche as the daughter of a Phoenician, could only be a Semite irritated by his Greek fellow citizens. The message he is trying to convey is this: “I am not a Greek, but a Roman citizen, I write in Latin, my city had Phoenician origins, as does the ruling emperor.”

List of Illustrations

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Fig. 3: Bronze coin of Tarsus struck under Caracalla and depicting Perseus and a fisherman (www.asiaminorcoins.com/gallery/displayimage.php?album=326&pid=8267#top_display_media)
Fig. 4: Bronze coin of Aegeae struck under Caracalla and depicting the emperor posing his foot on the prow of a galley and the Tyche of the city. (With the kind permission of the American Numismatic Society)
Fig. 5: Bronze coin of Philippopolis struck under Caracalla and depicting some male athletes (www.sixbid.com)
Fig. 6: Antoniniani of Caracalla and Julia Domna (www.sixbid.com)

Abbreviations

AE: Année Épigraphique.
IEphesos: H. Wankel et al. (eds.), Inschriften von Ephesos, 8 vols. (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 11–17), Bonn 1979–1984.
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248 On the problem of the Roman identity according to the authors of the second Sophistic: Swain 1996, 68, according to which Rome was thought of as neither Greek nor barbarian. Now it is possible to shed light on the reaction of non-Greeks regarding the claimed Greek superiority, during the crucial phase of the reign of Caracalla.
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