THE ROMANCE OF APOLLONIUS OF TYRE

BY

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In addition to the witty story of Petronius, the brilliant work of one of the greatest writers of world literature, and the captivating romance of Apuleius “The Golden Ass”, a third story in Latin literature has been handed down to us, the story of Apollonius King of Tyre. Although from a literary point of view it is of less value than the two first mentioned tales, the “Historia Apollonii regis Tyri” has, throughout the ages, found many readers and imitators or adapters, and amongst the latter no less a writer than Shakespeare, for the second part of the drama “Pericles prince of Tyre” (1609) is ascribed to the great English poet. Already in the Gesta Romanorum, which originated in the first half of the fourteenth century, the story of Apollonius is related in number 153. Further, there exists an old French adaptation Appollin roy de Thire, three Italian prose adaptations of the fourteenth century, a poem I storia d'Apollonio di Tiro in ottava rima, and a middle Greek poem Διήγησις πολυπαθοῦς Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Τύρου.

In English literature there existed an Anglo-Saxon translation of the tenth or eleventh century of which two large fragments have been preserved and were edited by Thorpe in 1834. Also John Gower, the friend and contemporary of Chaucer, dealt with the story of Apollonius in his Confessio Amantis, which he completed in 1392–1393. Gower’s sources were the Pantheon, written in the fourteenth century by Gotfried of Viterbo, in which a poetical version is given of Apollonius, and the Latin prose text of the Historia. Although Gower’s adaptation has no particular poetic merit, it was so well-known in England that the previously-mentioned drama introduces Gower at the beginning of the first act:

“To sing a song that old was sung
From ashes ancient Gower is come.”

Chaucer, too, in his Canterbury Tales recalls Apollonius (Introduction to the Man of Law’s Prologue verse 80 f.f.).
In more modern English literature we find a prose version of the story of Apollonius adapted by the printer Robert Copland: Kynge Appolyn of Thyre. A much better known English adaptation is that of Lawrence Twines, which was first printed in 1576. On this adaptation and on Gower’s story the drama of Pericles Prince of Tyre is based. The name Pericles in place of Apollonius may have been borrowed from Sydney’s Arcadia.

In Germany Heinrich von Mener-Neustadt (a doctor of medicine) treated the story of Apollonius in 20,640 lines. In the middle of the tenth century Apollonius was three times translated into German prose; one of these translations, that of Steinhöwel, became a popular book. It was printed at Augsburg in 1471.

In the Netherlands the work was twice adapted in dramatic form, the first time by Pieter Bor (Christiaenz). The edition of 1634 bears the following title: “Twee Tragi-comedien in prosa, d’Eene van Apollonius Prince van Tyro, Ende d’ander van den selven, ende van Tharsia syn Dochter. Wesende niet alleen lustigh ende vermakelyck om lesen: maer oock vorderlych om weten, hoe men hem in voorspoet ende teghenspoet behoort te draghen. Nu van nieus oversien ende verbeterd door P. B. C. In ’s Gravenhage, Ghedruckt bij Aert Meuris Boeckverkooper, woonende inde Papestraat inden Bijbel, Anno 1634.” (two tragi-comedies in prose, the one of Apollonius Prince of Tyre and the other of the same, and of Tharsia his daughter being not only merry and amusing to read, but also edifying to know how a man ought to behave in prosperity and adversity. Now revised and improved by P. B. C. Printed at the Hague by Aart Meuris, bookseller, in the Papestraat in the Bybel, Anno 1634).

A second dramatic version was published in Amsterdam in 1662 with the title Appolonius, “Koningh van Tyrus. Treurspel”, with a preface by D. Lingelbach. This work has nothing in common with the Historia except some names which are here applied to quite different persons.

I mentioned this list of later adaptations beforehand, in order to give a clear insight into the literary-historical significance of this story for the literature of modern languages.

I will now confine myself to the Latin romance itself. The latest