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The Shepherds' Court (La Cour bergère)

by André Mareschal

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

Introduction to *The Shepherds' Court, or the Arcadie of Sir Philip Sidney: Tragicomedy*
by André Mareschal

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Introduction

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André Mareschal (c. 1601-c. 1648), despite his authorship of at least nine plays (in addition to some minor works in non-dramatic genres), is a relatively unimportant figure in French literary history and virtually unknown outside it. Only the broad outline of his career is documented, including his legal training and his association with the rebellious prince Gaston d'Orléans until some time in the early 1630s. Subsequently, like a number of men-of-letters—and others—he switched his allegiance to Gaston's increasingly powerful arch-opponent, Cardinal Richelieu.¹ As will be seen, these facts are not without relevance to his tragicomedy, *The Shepherds' Court, or the Arcadia of Sir Philip Sidney* (*La Cour bergère, ou L'Arcadie de Messire Philippes Sidney*), which was performed in 1638 and published in 1640.²

Whether Mareschal chose to adapt Sidney's pastoral romance on his own initiative or not, and regardless of the political implications, he produced an accomplished, even compelling

1 See Lionel Charles Durel, *L'Œuvre d'André Mareschal, auteur dramatique, poète et romancier de la période de Louis XIII*, The Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literatures and Languages (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1932), pp. 15-16, whose study remains the most substantial treatment of Mareschal. See also Richard Hillman, "Et in Arcadia alter egos: Playing Politics with Pastoral in Two French Baroque Dramas", *French Renaissance and Baroque Drama: Text, Performance, and Theory*, ed. Michael Meere (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2015), pp. 280-81.

2 There is as yet no modern edition of the text. I translate and cite from the 1640 Paris printing by Toussaint Quinet, which is available on Gallica (<<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k703696.r>>). This edition has also been reproduced in fac-simile in Lucette Desvignes, éd., *La Cour Bergère ou l'Arcadie de Messire Philippes Sidney*, by André Mareschal, 2 vols. (Saint-Étienne: Université de Saint-Étienne Institut d'études de la Renaissance et de l'âge classique, 1981), vol II. The line-numbering is my own.

piece of theatre on its own terms. Probably it did indeed receive the favourable reception claimed by the author (who cannot be accused of false modesty on the point):

the reports that the French theatre has made of it are sufficient, and the applause it has received serves as a witness, independent of me, of its worth. (*The Shepherds' Court*, Dedicatory Epistle, p. 5)

Certainly, Mareschal's dramatisation relies on highly conventional elements with respect to both plot and character—some inherited from his source, others derived from the intellectual fashions of the day. He deploys and manages these, however, with dexterity and ingenuity within a tightly constructed framework. The effect is to concentrate the sprawling, digressive and densely populated material of the source into two distinct yet tightly imbricated intrigues: a main plot impelled by affairs of the heart and a sub-plot foregrounding affairs of state.³

The engagement with affairs of state implies the play's political dimension, to which I will be returning. First, however, it may be useful to say a word about the theatrical implications of the play's declared genre, tragicomedy, in its time and place. Historians of French seventeenth-century drama have long since moved beyond the judgemental obsession with "regularity" that once dominated the field, but its legacy lingers among more casual comparatists, accustomed to contrast the freedoms of the early modern English stage with the theory-driven rules and restrictions of the French classical one. The fact is that Mareschal produced his work during the last years of the baroque fashion in French theatre, whose most characteristic genre was a highly permissive form of tragicomedy. Not only was such tragicomedy generically mixed (by definition), but it was generally indifferent to the neo-Aristotelian "unities" of time, place and action, and frequently sensational in what it staged and how. Thus, while the playwright's language is formally prescribed—the entire play is composed in Alexandrine couplets with the exception of the intricate "stanzas in dialogue" of Act Two, Scene Two⁴—his dramaturgy is freely disjunctive with regard to place, time and action, as well as hospitable to con-

3 On Mareschal's adaptation of Sidney, see also the brief account of Lucette Desvignes, "De l'Arcadie de Sidney à la Cour Bergère, ou du roman pastoral à la tragi-comédie", *Le genre pastoral en Europe du XV^e au XVII^e siècle. Actes du colloque international tenu à Saint-Étienne du 28 septembre au 1er octobre 1978*, ed. Claude Longeon *et al.* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 1980), pp. 311-18

4 I translate the Alexandrines into iambic pentameter couplets, which are more natural in English, at the risk of occasionally compressing the original unduly. (It is surprising how much meaning can be contained within an additional verse-foot.)

flicting generic markers: both broad (if never quite vulgar) comic effects and spectacular tragic ones are accommodated.

The former include the ignorant blustering of the cowherd Daméτας, invested with authority in King Bazyle's household,⁵ who is rendered not less clownish but more isolated than Sidney's original (whose family are part of the more varied grotesque picture)⁶; they extend to the farce-like sexual encounter engineered by Zelmane (the Amazon persona assumed by Pyrocle) between the King (Bazyle) and Queen (Gynécie). Both husband and wife suppose they are committing adultery with "her" (though Gynécie has at least perceived that "she" is a man), and the comedy is enriched by their singularly undignified passions and pretences. The business can be more lightly handled than it is by Sidney because Mareschal eliminates the complicating detail of Bazyle's apparent death as a result. Thus the dramatist not only (in moderation) "mingl[es] kings and clowns", contrary to Sidney's own strictures concerning drama in *An Apology for Poesie*,⁷ but makes kings behave like clowns (in the sense of fools).

As for the staged action that carries a tragic stamp, it includes the kidnapping of Pamèle, Phyloclée and Pyrocle/Zelmane, as well as armed combat, notably the wounding of Amphyale by Lyzidor. (The latter is Mareschal's name for Musidorus, whose assumed identity is also changed from Dorus to Lycas.) More sensationally, spectators witness the feigned beheading of Pamèle in front of her horrified sister—a play-within-the-play which exploits the medium so as to take in the audience, since there is nothing to signal a different level of theatrical "reality". The tragic trajectory culminates in an extremely vivid representation of the violent confrontation between Amphyale and his mother Cécropie, which leads to both their onstage deaths, hence to the purging of the evil forces threatening happiness in Arcadie.

There are also, in keeping with the original, successive encounters with a lion and a bear (sent, it turns out, by Cécropie), which are killed by the princes (II.iv.631 ff.). Whether either of these beasts (necessarily by way of theatrical imitators or mechanical devices) actually appears on stage is uncertain from the text, but the use of props (if

5 In order to retain something of the French flavour of the text, I keep the characters' names in their original forms but add accents in conformity with modern practice.

6 Deméτας merely mentions his wife at one low-comic point (I.vi.385). In the *Arcadia*, Kalander remarks at length on the foolishness of Dametas and his grotesque household and (with a satirical glance at the tendency of great men to advance those most unworthy) deploras the vain stupidity of Basilius, who "hath in a manner put the life of himself and his children into his hands" (Philip Sidney, *Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans [Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977], p. 79 [bk. I, chap. 3]). References to the *Arcadia* are taken from this edition.

7 Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), p. 135.

not actors) to represent animals is well documented in contemporary French drama.⁸ (I would surmise, from the combination of external and internal stage directions, that the lion was probably evoked only through the dialogue—until Zelmane enters with its head—whereas the bear made an spectacular entry and exit before an offstage combat with Lycas, who returns with its paw.⁹)

Many other specimens of French baroque drama produce effects that the *âge classique* would judge to be unacceptable. But of course Mareschal had further warrant for his extravagance in the *Arcadia* itself, where any rules specific to drama, and in particular the so-called “unities”, yield to the nearly infinite possibilities of narrative romance. His comment in the dedicatory epistle that he has “followed [Sidney] quite closely in the most appealing details, and [has not] departed from him except as constrained by the decorum [*bien-seance*] and strictures [*rigueurs*] of the theatre” (*The Shepherds' Court*, Dedicatory Epistle, p. 5; *La Cour bergère*, sig. ~aiii^{r-v}) might suggest that he has such a defence in mind. The main point here, however, is evidently moral, since “*bien-seance*” is the standard term for decency on stage, and Mareschal introduces his statement by affirming that he has striven “not at all to shame my author, and not to be shamed by him either [de ne faire point de honte à mon Auteur, & de n'en recevoir non plus]” (Dedicatory Epistle, p. 5; *La Cour bergère*, sig. ~aiii^r).

As far as morality is concerned, the claim is actually somewhat disingenuous. It is true that Pyrocle and Philoclée, unlike their originals, do not sleep together, and that Lyzidor would never come close, as Musidorus does, to raping his beloved. On the other hand, the sexual appetite of Mareschal's Queen receives franker expression, from her anticipation of her tryst with Zelmane (Vi.I482 ff.) to her subsequent reproach of her husband's lacklustre performance (V.v.I625 ff.). That nearly comic reproach, moreover,

8 Some of this documentation has been assembled and analysed by my colleague Pierre Pasquier, from whose generous erudition I am accustomed to benefit. See the Introduction to his edition of *Le Mémoire de Mabelot: Mémoire pour la décoration des pièces qui se représentent par les Comédiens du Roi*, Sources Classiques, 58 (Paris: H. Champion, 2005), pp. 97-98, where he proposes the use of artificial devices to simulate the animal combats in Mareschal's play; see also pp. 96-97 on the staging of Pamèle's feigned execution.

9 See *The Shepherds' Court*, II.v and n. 33. No doubt fortuitously, this treatment of the “same” bear would closely match that in the perennially popular English *Mucedorus* (anonymous, c. 1590)—a dramatic gallimaufry loosely based on the *Arcadia* whose composition dates from around 1590 but which was performed throughout the seventeenth century. Cf. *Mucedorus, The Shakespeare Apocrypha: Being a Collection of Fourteen Plays Which Have Been Ascribed to Shakespeare*, ed. C. F. Tucker Brooke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), Iii-iii, where the employment of an actor in a bear-skin is confirmed by way of a joke (Iii.3-6). The episode evidently inspired Shakespeare in *The Winter's Tale*; see John Pitcher, ed., *The Winter's Tale*, by William Shakespeare, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ser. (London: The Arden Shakespeare, 2010), p. 143, n. to “The Names of the Actors”, l. 34.

takes the place of the moral lesson delivered by Sidney's conscience-stricken and more profoundly disillusioned original.¹⁰

Before turning to some of the more distinctive aspects of the play's treatment of comedy and tragedy, I wish to put in place the issue of its political engagement. The key point here is the work's composition and staging under the auspices of Richelieu. Behind Mareschal's fulsome dedication of the printed version to Robert Sidney, Earl of Leicester, the nephew of Philip and currently ambassador extraordinary to France, may reasonably be detected a veiled admonition against anti-Richelieu interference by the English in French affairs. The broad context is Richelieu's use of the theatre for political purposes, and more specifically relevant may be James Shirley's very different dramatisation of the *Arcadia* (also published in 1640) under the opposing auspices of Queen Henrietta Maria of England (the daughter of Marie de' Medici). The background will not be developed here, since I have given it considerable attention elsewhere.¹¹ To the extent that the French affairs in question are shadowed within the action of the play, however, they must be taken into account when considering Mareschal's transformation of his source.

That source, it should be stipulated, was particularly well known in French literary circles, having been the object of competing translations, themselves carrying divergent political and religious charges.¹² Intriguingly, Mareschal seems to have assumed the broad familiarity of his public with the *Arcadia*, since, as indicated in the notes, several plot elements left unexplained within the play depend on background knowledge of the novel.

¹⁰ Cf. Sidney, *Arcadia*, pp. 725-27 (bk. IV, chap. 2).

¹¹ Hillman, "Et in Arcadia", pp. 267-93, esp. 280-84. Otherwise, the political relevance of the play has received scant attention, except for a passing remark by Desvignes in her edition (I: 132, n. to II: 68, l. 1. By contrast, the political and ideological resonances of Sidney's romance in England have been much discussed. See notably Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation: The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 23-43 *et passim*, who points out the "political coloring that the vogue for pastoral romance acquired under Henrietta Maria" (p. 171).

¹² See Albert W. Osborn, *Sir Philip Sidney en France* (1932; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974), pp. 70-145. In addition, a tragedy adapting the amorous entanglement of Helen, Queen of Corinth, Philoxenus and Amphialus in Book I (Sidney, *Arcadia*, pp. 121-29 [bk. I, chap. 11]) had been composed as early as 1598-1600. See Jean Galaut, *Phalante*, ed. Alan Howe, Textes Littéraires 94 (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1995). Remarkably, this was probably prior to any French translation, even that undertaken (but never published) by Jean Loiseau de Tourval; on the possible channels of influence, see Howe, ed., *Introd.*, pp. xxii-xxv. If Mareschal knew Galaut's work, in which the hero, the counterpart of Amphialus, is unflinchingly loyal and kills himself out of guilt over his unintentional killing of his friend and the suicide of the woman who mistook the body for his own, the later playwright would have found it contrary to his purposes. These required recuperation of Sidney's political plot, as well as suppression of the return of the loving Helen in an attempt to heal Amphialus after his self-wounding (Sidney, *Arcadia*, pp. 576-79 [bk. IV, chap. 25]).

In terms of literary fashion alone, Sidney's work possessed particular status as a pioneering example of the pastoral romantic fiction currently much in vogue, of which Honoré D'Urfé's *Astrée* was the ultimate expression.

The translation used by Mareschal is that of Jean Beaudoin (published in 1624-25), who had originally been commissioned to undertake it by Marie de' Medici.¹³ While Beaudoin was an early member of Richelieu's Académie Française (founded in 1635), the Queen Mother had well before then become Richelieu's arch-enemy, and it is she, I believe, who is pointedly evoked by Mareschal in his representation of the villainess Cécropie. Quasi-sorceress though she is, Cécropie remains politically focussed, indeed obsessed, to a degree beyond Sidney's Cecropia, as she plots to obtain the throne on behalf of her hapless son, Amphyale. A cherished example of the Queen Mother's favourite genre is thus, in effect, being ironically turned against her. Mareschal's play drastically streamlines the multiple political aspects of the original, where matters are not nearly so clear-cut, and gives the Cécropia-Amphyale intrigue far greater prominence and centrality. Both their characters in themselves and the relation between them are skewed so as to suggest the perennial machinations of Marie in more-or-less luke-warm combination with her son Gaston. Sidney's Amphialus is a relatively sympathetic figure, whose death is invested with intense pathos. In the place of the tender lament of the "fair queen Helen" (a figure omitted by Mareschal) over the dying man she loves,¹⁴ the playwright serves up a scornfully dismissive epitaph:

Lyzidor. What end had fate for them reserved?

Zelmane. One that they dealt each other—and deserved. (ll. 1423-24)

Gaston was heir to the throne until the unexpected pregnancy of the queen, Anne of Austria, resulted in the nearly miraculous birth of the future Louis XIV ("Dieudonné") in 1638—the year of *La Cour bergère*. The legend attributing these events, which settled the vital question of the succession, to a fortuitous (or divinely programmed) sexual encounter between the estranged royal spouses¹⁵ must certainly have resonated for a con-

13 Philip Sidney, *L'Arcadie de la comtesse de Pembrok, mise en nostre langue, de l'anglois de Messire Philip Sidney* trans. Jean Beaudoin, 3 vols. (Paris: T. Du Bray, 1624-25). As the title confirms, Beaudoin's original was necessarily based on one of the numerous editions of the (evolving) composite text now known as the "New Arcadia".

14 See Sidney, *Arcadia*, pp. 576-77 (bk. III, chap. 25).

15 The conception was popularly attributed to a storm which compelled Louis to take shelter in his wife's lodging. This event is usefully placed in the context of the more complex personal and political realities by A. Lloyd Moote, *Louis XIII, the Just* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 273-82 (though with an unconvincing emphasis on psychological factors).

temporary public with the physical reunion of Bazyle and Gynécie, which produces offspring in a metaphysical sense to assure Arcadie's glorious future. The parallel is at once reinforced and kept at a safe distance—a standard practice in political allusion-making under Richelieu¹⁶—by Mareschal's ironic development of the conjunction between Pyrocle's comic machinations and the serious fulfilment of the Oracle.

As he drastically reduces the plot complications concerning the politics of Arcadia to focus on the essential issues of rebellion thwarted and stable succession secured, so Mareschal concentrates and intensifies the erotic theme. That theme is now invested with a spiritual force matching the contemporary cult of Platonic love that had become attached to neo-chivalric romance. Sidney's princely lovers, however admirable, are less inspired to heroism and virtue, hence less exalted, more down-to-earth. This makes for a wider gap between the noble love of Mareschal's two princes (Lyzidor and Pyrocle) for the two princesses (Pamèle and Phyloclée), which lacks the carnal dimension present in Sidney, and the degrading and deluded infatuations for Zelmane of both Gynécie and Bazyle. Instead of Sidney's lightly ironic scorn, which the narrative mode enables him to express, Mareschal makes the most of the farcical possibilities of Zelmane's manoeuvre.

Such comic exploitation might seem at odds with the contemporary political resonances of the play's resolution, but this is not necessarily the case. After all, Mareschal's management of the action here strengthens the parallel with the recent reconciliation of Louis XIII and Anne of Austria, since he eliminates the apparent death of Sidney's king and presents the renewed conjugal relation as the key to a flourishing and peaceful future for the country. Suppressed along with the seeming death are the considerable consequences that prolong and complicate the plot in the original. By contrast, and to good dramatic effect, Mareschal produces his denouement concisely, by having the princes' identities revealed by way of testimony, letter and messenger in a single scene. Arguably, even the comic energy generated by the dramatic treatment, complete with the exposure of royal folly, swells the concluding harmony on the political level.

The concluding thematic chord of *La Cour bergère*—the irresistible power of love—is actually sounded by Bazyle, who seems at least half-conscious of the irony at his own expense. Moreover, it is cued, somewhat surprisingly, by the simple-minded Damétas, who shows himself capable of being, not merely mystified, but struck with wonder at the revelations, especially the discovery that his erstwhile valet is a prince:

¹⁶ See Georges Couton, *Richelieu et le théâtre*, 2nd ed., ed. José Sanchez, Théâtre du monde entier (Paris: Eurédit, 2008), pp. 75-85.

Damétas. What force could change—or eyes of change
convince—
That woman to this man, shepherd to prince?
Bazyle. Love, who directs the course of human lives,
And wedded bliss twice in one day contrives. (V.vii.1733-36)

Indeed, in a way not remote from the all-encompassing wonder that concludes Shakespearean romances—one thinks especially of the Clown in *The Winter's Tale* becoming a “gentleman born”¹⁷—even Damétas is gathered, however absurdly, into the sense of dreams coming true; he is even given the privilege of speaking the final lines:

I feel my mind to new worlds awake.
Some province seems to bow beneath my sway.
I must be king, with a prince as valet! (1766-68)

The transformative power of love is thus actually pushed further by Mareschal than it is in the *Arcadia*, whose happily-after-ever conclusion is a more diffused matter of many more facts, and which overtly makes light of the revived Basilius' resistance to truth: “Many garboils passed through his fancy before he could be persuaded Zelmane was other than a woman”.¹⁸ There is a touch of the *commedia dell'arte pantalone* about the character in both works, but Mareschal does more to redeem him at the end in the cause of miraculous revelation and harmony.

Such a conclusion points up the stronger affinity of Mareschal's version with the romance tradition as influenced by the antique Hellenistic novel. The latter, in its approach to amatory relations, tends to show the triumph of constancy, with some form of divine assistance, after alienation and tribulation, rather than to celebrate changefulness and variety. Around 1630, in *L'Inconstance d'Hylas*, Mareschal had already adapted, from the *Astrée*, a complex plot of the second kind. It seems significant that, in his dedicatory epistle to *The Shepherds' Court*, he praises the *Arcadia* as “the English Heliodorus” (p. 4)—that is, the *Aethiopica*—which exemplifies instead the sort of wondrous conclusion he contrives.

The romance of Heliodorus was not alone in this respect—the anonymous narrative of Apollonius of Tyre notably follows a similar trajectory¹⁹—but the romance of Heliodorus was especially well known and influential. In France, it had been trans-

17 William Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale, The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans, J. J. M. Tobin *et al.*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), V.ii.128 ff.

18 Sidney, *Arcadia*, p. 846 (bk. V, chap. 8).

19 The French version most readily available was the prose retelling by François de Belleforest (1530-83) in volume seven of his *Histoires tragiques*, a collection first published in 1582 and reprinted several times, most lately in 1604 (Rouen: Adrian de Launay, 1604); see “Histoire CXVIII”, pp. 109-206.

lated by Jacques Amyot (1547) and frequently reprinted; Alexandre Hardy had staged a marathon eight-play adaptation of it, seemingly around 1601, which was published in 1623.²⁰ Important English imitations of the model include Robert Greene's *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (1588, and multiply reprinted), which was Shakespeare's primary source for *The Winter's Tale*, as the Apollonius story was for *Pericles*. *Pandosto* had also been (freely) translated into French twice and twice dramatised (once by Alexandre Hardy, in a version never published or now lost; once by Jean Puget de la Serre [pub. 1631]).²¹

Such an inflection of Sidney's romance is also tellingly apparent in Mareschal's treatment of the Oracle—in itself a common feature of pastoral romance—which induces the fearful Basilius and Bazyle to go into rustic retirement. In the *Arcadia*, a great deal of scepticism is expressed about it before its contents are actually revealed (only in Book II):

Thy elder care shall from thy careful face
 By princely mean be stolen, and yet not lost.
 Thy younger shall with Nature's bliss embrace
 An uncouth love, which Nature hateth most.
 Both they themselves unto such two shall wed,
 Who at thy bier, as at a bar, shall plead
 Why thee (a living man) they had made dead.
 In thine own seat a foreign state shall sit.
 And ere that all these blows thy head do hit,
 Thou, with thy wife adultery shall commit.²²

These enigmas finally prove quite down-to-earth. Except for the mention of “a foreign state”, they bear only on the family plot (including Basilius' supposed death), and they will be duly resolved on that level.

By comparison, Mareschal's version of the oracle, which is disclosed in the first scene and so imparts immediate impetus to the action, is far more sensational—indeed apocalyptic—as well as politically pointed:

20 Alexandre Hardy, *Les chastes et loyales amours de Théagène et Cariclée, réduites du grec de l'Histoire d'Héliodore en huit poèmes dramatiques* [sic] *ou théâtres consécutifs* (Paris: J. Quesnel, 1623). The date of 1601 is given by Antoine de Lérès, *Dictionnaire portatif historique et littéraire des théâtres* (Paris, 1763), p. 423. That Sidney himself consulted Amyot's Heliodorus in revising his original narrative is argued by Victor Skretkowitz, Jr., “Sidney and Amyot: Heliodorus in the Structure and Ethos of the New Arcadia”, *Review of English Studies* 27 (1976): 170-74; Mareschal, in effect, extends the influence of this source at a deeper level.

21 On these points, see Hillman, “*Et in Arcadia*”, pp. 270-80 *passim*. Cf., on the popularity of *Pandosto*, Lori Humphrey Newcomb, *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 77-129.

22 Sidney, *Arcadia*, p. 395 (bk. II, chap. 28).

*Your fruitful Arcadie, great king,
Unless a timely remedy you bring,
Will splash with blood all the flowers it grows—
Your House, all in flames, beweeeping its woes,
Your heir on no throne but a scaffold seen,
Your son-in-law burning you and the Queen;
A Prince triumphant will count you his gains:
Father, Mother and the child who remains. (I.i.87-94)*

Richelieu's frequent and severe warnings about subversive disorder in the French state and the horrors of (renewed) civil war are unmistakably echoed here. Also evoked, however, is the operation of a divine power which threatens catastrophe, but which in the end, according to the romance pattern, reveals itself as benevolent. The oracle in *Pandosto* and *The Winter's Tale* provides a close analogy. And the hinge on which this cosmic force pivots from menace to blessing, again according to the pattern, is love and constancy.

The point of transition is clear. As, for the audience, the Oracle's positive fulfilment waits palpably in the wings, pending only the revelation of the princes' identities, the short-sighted Bazyle addresses them and his children in despair:

*Bazyle. I see and hear the Oracle spoke true:
My miseries pour forth, and flow from you!
Disorder reigns here, unknown men now stray—
Lyzidor. Borne on the wings of Love they made their way.
(V.vii.1591-94)*

As soon as the proof is furnished, the King's despair gives way to faith and wonder: "The gods, I know, / Through you decree my glory here below" (1611-12); "these miracles... / That bring the Oracle's meanings to light" (1645-46). He thereby seconds the Queen's remark: "This day its wonders multiplies!" (1605).

The transformative power of love is an idea well established in early modern culture; its romance and pastoral expressions draw both on Ovidian mythology and Christianised neo-Platonism—symbolic structures, of course, that themselves often coincide. It is an idea that can be played with and parodied, even as it is taken seriously, and which lends itself to theatrical exploitation.²³ The romantic comedies of Shakespeare, with their cross-

23 The ultimate self-conscious parody, since the character is not in love at all, may be Falstaff's soliloquy as, in a stag costume, he anticipates a sexual encounter in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*: "Now the hot-blooded gods assist me! Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa, love set on thy horns. O powerful love, that in some respects makes a beast a man; in some other, a man a beast..." (*The Riverside Shakespeare*, V.v.3 ff.).

dressed heroines, effectively illustrate this potential, and Mareschal evidently saw it also in the *Arcadia*. When Zelmane, loving Pyroclée and being loved by both Bazyle and Gynécie, feels trapped by his Amazon disguise, his reaction is not far from those of Viola-Cesario in *Twelfth Night* or Rosalind-Ganymede in *As You Like It*:

Love, should I praise you or complain?
I'm served and harmed here by your potent sway;
Your grace attends me, and it flies away.
That the Queen should love me—O strange obsession!
So, tyrant, are our minds in your possession?
Phyloclée has my heart, and cares accrue,
For Bazyle would have it, Gynécie too.
How these clothes procure me both joy and pain:
They draw the King; the Queen they can't restrain.
(III.ii.838-46)

One corollary of developing the power of transformative love in Mareschal—as indeed at times, and to a lesser extent, in Shakespeare—is the subordination of characterisation to comic (or tragicomic) pattern. In such play-worlds, to be possessed by love is to be obsessed, as may be glimpsed even in the contrast between Rosalind and her teasing friend Celia (before the latter becomes amorous in her turn). This context alone would mitigate Albert W. Osborn's complaint that Sidney's subtly portrayed princesses are reduced by Mareschal to indistinguishable victims of love-sickness.²⁴ Yet neither is his remark wholly justified. Phyloclée's beauty actually does convey "sweetness", compared with Pamèle's "majesty" (I.i.54) and "pride" (66): so the two love-inspiring portraits establish in a scene that Mareschal modeled closely on his original.²⁵ Moreover, except when overwhelmed by distress, Phyloclée is capable of an irreverent humour that contrasts with the dignified reserve and anxiety of Pamèle—"more severe and firm than I" (III.ii.815), as she says. She teases her sister when they discover their lovers' identities in Act Three, Scene One, and in the final scene, while their father is reading the revelatory letter, she initiates *badinage* that at once heightens and dispels the suspense (1629 ff.). In pushing the character in this spirited direction for the sake of dramatic effect, Mareschal notably departs from the original, where Philoclea is described as "bashful" and "humble".²⁶ As for the princes, they are at least as

²⁴ Osborn, p. 148.

²⁵ Cf. Sidney, *Arcadia*, p. 76 (bk. I, chap. 3). "Sweetness" and "majesty" are also Sidney's terms ("*douceur*" and "*majesté*" in Mareschal's text [sig. Aiii^r]). Sidney (through Kalandar) effectively intimates that Pamela is proud while avoiding "pride" (p. 76); Mareschal sees no reason why Lyzidor should not admire her "*orgueil*" (sig. Aiii^v).

²⁶ Sidney, *Arcadia*, p. 76 (bk. I, chap. 3).

distinctly drawn, thanks in part, again, to Lyzidor's somewhat superior status, and with the help of Pyrocle's disguise (of which he is sometimes ashamed but which he comes to relish manipulating, once he is sure of Phyloclée).

In the case of Amphyale, even as he simplifies the political picture, Mareschal arguably develops nuances of character beyond his original. Both Amphyale and Sidney's Amphialus are stricken with guilt and anger over their mother's sadistic treatment of the princesses; their own hopeless love for Phyloclée/Phyloclea is crucial to this response. Amphyale's self-loathing, however, is increased by his weakness in accepting Cécropie's offer to win Phyloclée for him. The equivalent encounter in Sidney shows Amphialus resisting his mother's blandishments, and he is never less than noble and loyal in his fashion.²⁷ The difference on this point may itself carry, as I have suggested, a political insinuation aimed at the chronically weak-willed Gaston d'Orléans.²⁸

But there is another difference which appears politically gratuitous, hence purely psychological. When the desperate Amphialus in the *Arcadia* initiates the confrontation with Cecropia that precipitates both their deaths—"Thou damnable creature, only fit to bring forth such a monster as I am"²⁹—we are informed that, while he "intended to kill himself in her presence", he actually meant her no harm. Indeed, after her fatal accidental fall, he laments,

And was I not enough miserable before... but that before my end I
must be the death of my mother, who, how wicked soever, yet I would
she had received her punishment by some other!

The equivalent confrontation between Amphyale and Cécropie is from the outset framed in terms of matricide; when she sees her son approaching with his sword drawn, she cries out, in terror and defiance,

Approach, madman, see—the way's open wide!
Let your furor be on my breast relieved;
Come, carry death here where life you received.
(IV.viii.1320-22)

And when Amphyale stabs himself instead, it is clear that he is symbolically killing her in himself: "I'll expiate your crimes against my mistress; / The evil blood you gave me I'll expel" (1326-27). Far from regretting his role in her ensuing death, he triumphs vindic-

27 See Sidney, *Arcadia*, pp. 532-34 (bk. III, chap. 17).

28 Hillman, "Et in *Arcadia*", p. 283.

29 Sidney, *Arcadia*, p. 573 (bk. III, chap. 24).

tively in it: “Avenged, then, Phyoclée and I—and well!” (1329). What we witness in his suicide, then, is the son’s ultimate act of revenge against a hated parent—the destruction of the being to whom she gave life.

This dynamic may be related to the presentation in Alexandre Hardy’s tragedy *Coriolan* (c. 1607) of the onstage suicide of the hero’s mother, Volomnie, after she learns of her son’s murder. For this she holds herself responsible—with good reason, since, by exerting emotional blackmail, she had induced him to relinquish his campaign of vengeance against Rome, thereby assuring his destruction by his erstwhile allies, as he was well aware. Now she imagines his spirit demanding a vengeance that will, in a grotesque parody of affection, reunite mother and son: “Not with my complaints can your shade be satisfied: / You require me to be below at your side”.³⁰ I have suggested that Hardy’s spectacular addition of her suicide to his source—the *Life of Coriolanus* by Plutarch—intertextually invites a similar reading of Shakespeare’s treatment of the same material. Through this lens, the equally suicidal behaviour of the protagonist of *Coriolanus* (1608) appears as an indirect vengeance directed against the suffocating Volumnia, the woman who at once gave him life and deprived him of it.³¹ In this light, it is tantalisingly suggestive that Mareschal lends Cécropie, beneath her professed care for her son, a destructive selfishness more redolent of Shakespeare’s Volumnia than of the equivalents in either Hardy’s or Plutarch’s version:

Cowards, who to a mother’s name defer!
His honour to his life I far prefer.
To toughen him with work, see him in fights,
Would pain all others: they are my delights. (IV.i.1087-90)

This element is quite without warrant in the *Arcadia*, where we are informed only that “His mother...had confined all her love only unto him”.³²

It may at least be argued that in thus nuancing the mutual destruction of Amphyale and Cécropie, Mareschal stages a psychological supplement—at once subtle and sensational—to the more straightforward confrontation depicted by Sidney. This is to add an especially sophisticated dimension to a mother-son dynamic which, given its political application, might well have been left on a superficial level. Indeed, its political appli-

30 Alexandre Hardy, *Coriolan*, trans. Richard Hillman, Publication online, Centre d’Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, project Scène Européenne “Traductions Introuvables”, et Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, (<<http://pufr-editions.fr/renaissance/coriolan>>), 2011, ll. 1349-50.

31 Richard Hillman, Introduction to the Translation, *Coriolan*, by Alexandre Hardy, unpaginated.

32 Sidney, *Arcadia*, p. 546 (bk. III, chap. 19).

cation is somewhat clouded as a result. The conclusion may be drawn that Mareschal followed his dramatic instinct in deepening the tragic component of *The Shepherds' Court* much as he did the comic—in effect, taking tragicomedy to be more than a conjoining of formally differentiated elements. The generic whole emerges as greater than the sum of its parts because of the way the parts themselves have been expanded, given dimensions beyond formality. This confirms Mareschal's transformation of *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* as a creation in its own right, rather than a pale imitation, or even a *pièce à clef*—a creation, moreover, which, while inevitably diminished in many respects from its original, in others actually goes beyond it.