

# The Politics of Transgenericity: Pierre Du Ryer's Dramatic Adaptations of John Barclay's *Argenis*

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## Abstract

John Barclay's *Argenis* (1621) was an immediate smash hit in France, not least because the hero Poliarchus is a Frenchman. Indeed, it is rumored that *Argenis* was Cardinal Richelieu's favorite novel, particularly because of the political dimension of this alleged *roman à clé*. Numerous French translations appeared between 1622 and 1630, and Nicolas Coeffeteau's abridged version (1624) made the novel even more accessible to French readers. Taking advantage of the novel's success, Pierre Du Ryer (1606-1658), one of the most popular playwrights of his generation, wrote two adaptations of Barclay's novel: *Argenis et Poliarche, ou Théocrine, tragicomédie* (1630), focusses on the first encounter between Argenis and Poliarchus, whilst *L'Argenis du sieur Du Ryer, tragi-comédie, dernière journée* (1631) attempts to recount the entire plot.

This article explores, through the prism of Du Ryer's two plays, the poetics of adaptation of the neo-Latin novel to French tragicomedy. It approaches this question from narratological and performance viewpoints, and reflects on the politics of transgenericity, defined broadly as both the inscription of a genre in another and the passage from one mode of representation to another. This dual operation is political, in the sense that such a generic transformation is never insignificant, objective, or unmotivated. In fact, Du Ryer's choice to adapt *Argenis* complicates the politics of spectacle at this time, especially since the dramatist's patrons were not allies of Cardinal Richelieu, who was implementing reason of state policies and building an absolutist state.

## Keywords

Pierre Du Ryer; transgenericity; narratology; performance history; tragicomedy; absolutism

## Resumen

*La política de la transgenericidad: Pierre du Ryer y su adaptación dramática de Argenis de John Barclay*

*Argenis*, de John Barclay (1621), fue un exitazo inmediato en Francia, en parte porque el héroe Poliarchus es francés. De hecho, se decía que *Argenis* era libro de cabecera del

cardenal Richelieu, y que le fascinaba la dimensión política de este supuesto *roman à clé*. Aparecieron numerosas traducciones francesas entre 1622 y 1630, y la refundición abreviada de Nicolas Coeffeteau (1624) difundió la novela a un público lector aun más amplio. Aprovechándose de su éxito, Pierre Du Ryer (1606-1658), uno de los dramaturgos más populares de su generación, adaptó la novela dos veces: *Argenis et Poliarque, ou Théocrine, tragicomédie* (1630) se centra en el primer encuentro entre Argenis y Poliarachus, mientras que *L'Argenis du sieur Du Ryer, tragi-comédie, dernière journée* (1631) intenta narrar la historia entera.

Por medio de estas dos adaptaciones, este artículo explora la poética de la adaptación de la novela neo-latina a la tragicomedia francesa. Se aborda el tema desde la perspectiva de la narratología y la teoría de *performance*, para reflexionar sobre la política de la 'transgenericidad', definida en términos generales como la inscripción de un género en otro y el cambio de un modo de representación a otro. Esta operación doble tiene implicaciones políticas, porque dicha transformación genérica nunca carece de consecuencias y no puede ser objetiva ni inocente. De hecho, la decisión de adaptar *Argenis* complica la política del espectáculo en esta época, sobre todo porque los mecenas del dramaturgo no eran los aliados del cardenal Richelieu, empeñado en poner en práctica los principios de Razón de Estado y crear un estado absolutista.

#### Palabras clave

Pierre Du Ryer; transgenericidad; narratología; historia de *performance*; tragicomedia; absolutismo

In the late 1620s, a new generation of young playwrights was changing the face of French professional theatre.<sup>1</sup> In particular, they began to abandon Senecan, tragic subjects and chose to adapt for the stage more contempo-

1. I would like to thank my colleagues at Wesleyan University for their comments and suggestions on this article, notably Marco Aresu, Antonio González, Catherine Ostrow, Paula C. Park, Catherine Poisson, Meg Furniss Weisberg, and especially Jeff Rider. I am also indebted to Jacqueline Glomski, Anna Linton, and Julian Weiss, my former colleagues at King's College London, for including me in the Barclay project.

rary stories such as Honoré d'Urfé's *Astrée*,<sup>2</sup> as well as Spanish literature<sup>3</sup> and the Italian pastoral.<sup>4</sup> Tragicomedy reigned supreme while tragedy virtually disappeared from the repertoires of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, the only official theatre in Paris until 1634.<sup>5</sup> The result was a more "romantic" theatre where love stories dominated at the expense of political and philosophical concerns. One notable playwright who went against the grain of this apoliticizing trend is Pierre Du Ryer (c. 1600-1658), a leading figure of his generation and an influential promoter of "irregular" tragicomedy. Du Ryer's first few plays, notably *Arétaphile*<sup>6</sup> and his two-part adaptation of John Barclay's novel *Argenis*, titled *Argénis et Poliarque, ou Théocrine* (1630) and *L'Argénis* (1631),<sup>7</sup> put politics centre stage.

2. To cite a just few examples of the success of *L'Astrée* in the theatre: Jean Auvray wrote two tragicomic adaptations of d'Urfé's romance: *La Madonte* (1631) and *La Dorinde* (1631). Jean Mairet also wrote two plays inspired by d'Urfé's novel: *Chryséide et Arimand* (1630), and *Sylvie* (1628). Pichou (whose first name is unknown) adapted the story of Rosiléon from d'Urfé's *Astrée* (Book 10, part 4), but the play is not extant. Pierre Du Ryer would adapt this story in 1634 (printed in 1636), under the title *Cléomédon* (Lancaster 1929: 291). For a complete list of dramatic adaptations of *Astrée*, see Reure (1910: 297-301).

3. Pichou's first play, *Les Folies de Cardénio* (performed c. 1628, printed 1630), was inspired by Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. Pichou's third play, *L'Infidèle confidente* (performed c. 1629, printed 1631), was taken from a translation of Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses's collection, titled *Historias peregrinas y ejemplares* (1623), translated into French by Nicolas Lancelot in his *Nouvelles* (1628). See Pichou (1991: 10).

4. For example, Jean Mairet, *La Sylvanire, ou La Morte vive* (1631). The impact of Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il pastor fido* (performed 1585, printed 1590) on French drama of the seventeenth century cannot be overstated.

5. On the "death" of French tragedy and its rebirth in the mid-1630s, see Forestier (2003). On the history of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, see Deierkauf-Holsboer (1968).

6. *Arétaphile* was performed in 1628 at the Hôtel de Bourgogne but it was never printed during Du Ryer's lifetime. According to the preface to the manuscript, this tragicomedy was very successful and Gaston d'Orléans (the brother and oft-rival of King Louis XIII) called it "his" play, possibly because the hero takes up arms to recover his throne that has been usurped, a method that Gaston subsequently used unsuccessfully to regain his influence with his brother, the king. See Lancaster (1929: 299). More on Gaston d'Orléans and his allies will follow. *Arétaphile*, taken from Plutarch's *De Mulierum Virtutibus* XIX, was Du Ryer's first play but it was not printed, and neither was his second, *Clitophon* (also performed c. 1628), an adaptation of Achilles Tatius's Greek romance, *Clitophon and Leucippe*. For more on these plays and their manuscripts, see Lancaster (1912: 33-44). *Argénis et Poliarque, ou Théocrine* and *L'Argénis* were Du Ryer's third and fourth plays, and the first ones he had printed.

7. A modern transcription exists online of *Argénis et Poliarque, ou Théocrine*, but it must be noted that the editors chose not to include the dedicatory letter to Louis de La Châtre, the address to the reader, and the preliminary poems by Pichou, Auvray, Colletet, and others. <[http://www.theatre-classique.fr/pages/programmes/edition.php?t=../documents/./documents/DURYER\\_ARGENISPOLIARQUE.xml](http://www.theatre-classique.fr/pages/programmes/edition.php?t=../documents/./documents/DURYER_ARGENISPOLIARQUE.xml)> (accessed 11 March 2016). This online transcription does provide some quantitative information (e.g., number of lines per scene) and lexical statistics; however, there are, unfortunately, typographical errors throughout the text. No modern edition exists for *L'Argénis*, online or otherwise. Citations from the plays will come from the original editions, and all translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

Indeed, as Liliane Picciola has observed in her comparison of the dramatic adaptations of Du Ryer and Pedro Calderón, while the Spanish play creates a sense of distance between spectator and stage, Du Ryer's version increases proximity between them, by placing overtly political events directly onstage.<sup>8</sup> These two aspects of Du Ryer's play are certainly linked, for the proximity between spectator and stage on the one hand, and the physical staging of rebellions, assassination attempts, and violent combats, on the other, conform to the poetics of French tragicomedy of the 1620s and 1630s, before the likes of Jean Chapelain, Hippolyte-Jules Pilet de La Mesnardière, and the Abbé d'Aubignac rediscovered, reconfigured, and theorized Aristotle's *Poetics* for the French theatre.<sup>9</sup> When Du Ryer was writing his first tragicomedies in the late 1620s, the three unities (time, place, action) and the notions of decorum and verisimilitude – precepts that would become trademarks of French neoclassical theatre – had not yet been codified,<sup>10</sup> and one of the dominant “rules” for the proponents of irregular tragicomedies was spectacularity.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, at the turn of the 1630s, the Parisian seventeenth-century professional stage was finding itself more and more controlled by the king's Chief Minister and political mastermind, Cardinal Richelieu, who was implementing reason of state policies and building an absolutist state. In turn, Du Ryer's choice to adapt *Argenis* complicates the politics of spectacle at this time, especially since the dramatist frequented circles that were not directly allied with Richelieu. This assertion is particularly relevant when considering *Argénis et Poliarche, ou Théocrine* (hereafter referred to simply as *Théocrine*), a play that revolves around Poliarche's disguise as a woman in order to seduce the heroine Argénis.<sup>12</sup>

8. Picciola (2001: 128). It should be noted that Picciola analyses Du Ryer's *L'Argénis* and not *Argénis et Poliarche, ou Théocrine*, although she includes a bibliographic reference to the latter play in her introductory remarks (2001: 122). For the political implications of Calderón's staging, see the essay by Julian Weiss in this cluster.

9. Chapelain (2007); La Mesnardière (1639); d'Aubignac (2001). Although d'Aubignac did not publish *La Pratique* until 1657, he undertook the writing of his text in the 1630s.

10. The theoretical debates on theatrical poetics in the late 1620s and early 1630s pivoted on the rhetorical concepts of *elocutio* (style) and *dispositio* (arrangement). The groups were divided into three major camps: the “ancients”, represented by Alexandre Hardy – one of the most prolific playwrights of the early seventeenth century and “poète à gages” of the “Comédiens du Roy” at the Hôtel de Bourgogne – argued for free *elocutio* and *dispositio* imitated from Antiquity; the modern “irréguliers”, including Du Ryer, defended ordered *elocutio* and free *dispositio*; the modern “réguliers” such as Chapelain wanted ordered *elocutio* and *dispositio*. See Forestier (2003: 35–41, 54). (The terms “ancient” and “modern” should not be confused with the later quarrel in the seventeenth between the Ancients and the Moderns.)

11. As Lancaster confirms, “[t]he play [*Argénis*] depends for interest on the spectacular. Several combats, the return of victors with the head of the vanquished leader, a sacrifice to the goddess, and fireworks are among its attractions” (1912: 50).

12. To avoid confusion, when referring to Barclay's text, I will use the Latin names of characters (Poliarchus, Argenis, Selenissa, Lycogenes, Meleander, and so forth), but the French names when referencing Du Ryer's adaptations (Poliarque, Argénis, Sélénisse, Lycogène, Méléandre).

In Barclay's novel, Selenissa, Argenis's governess, tells this backstory as a third-person limited narrator;<sup>13</sup> *Théocrine* however is a more original and freer adaptation of the novel than *L'Argénis*, as Du Ryer changes the position of Barclay's narrative and offers, significantly, Poliarque's own point of view to the spectators.

In so doing, I argue that Poliarque metatheatrically embodies the creative, transgeneric *process* that Du Ryer is undertaking by adapting Barclay's novel for the stage. The term "genericity" refers to the dynamic interplay between the composition of a text, its reception-interpretation, and its edition (notably the front matter: identification of a *genre*, dedicatory letters, preliminary poems, and so forth).<sup>14</sup> Poliarque's transvestism is a metaphor for transgenericity, defined broadly as both the inscription of one genre in another and the passage from one mode of representation to another. This dual operation is political, for the inscription of one genre (tragicomedy) in another (prose fiction), and the passage from one genre (prose romance) to another (tragicomedy) is never insignificant, objective, or unmotivated. In turn, the play reflects, or distorts, the spectators' realities, and by analyzing the text and paratext of Du Ryer's plays, particularly in terms of his adaptations of Barclay's political and allegorical novel for the stage, we can attempt to read *Théocrine* and *L'Argénis* politically.

Du Ryer was surely drawn to Barclay's *Argenis* thanks to its massive success throughout Europe, especially in France where several translations existed as well as an abridged version penned by Nicolas Coeffeteau,<sup>15</sup> not to mention that the hero of the romance, Poliarchus, is a French king.<sup>16</sup> It is unclear which version(s) Du Ryer relied on for his dramatic adaptations, since he was a trained classicist and the dialogue is nearly completely of his own invention.<sup>17</sup> Indeed,

13. *Argenis*, 3.7-10, 3.16-19. See Jacqueline Glomski's Introduction for a plot description of this backstory.

14. See Adam and Heidmann (2006).

15. The first French translation appeared in 1622, by Pierre de Marcassus; a revised version was printed in 1626 and dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu. An anonymous translation was published in 1623; the editors of the 2004 English translation of Barclay's novel suggest N. Guibert as translator. Numerous reprintings and re-editions would follow these two translations. Coeffeteau's abridged translation first appeared in 1624 and would be reprinted in 1626, 1628, 1641, and 1662. For a complete list of French translations, see Barclay (2004: 56). Sylvie Taussig has recently translated the novel into French (2016).

16. In his address to the reader, Du Ryer comments on the success of Barclay's novel, indicating that it was not necessary to give a summary of the play as the story was already well known ("il n'estoit pas nécessaire de vous donner l'argument d'une chose que vous scavez desia" (Du Ryer, 1630: à viii)). It is likely a rhetorical strategy to flatter Du Ryer, yet not insignificant, that Bonnet, in his preliminary poem to Du Ryer's *Théocrine*, writes that Argenis was just a stranger in France whose name was barely known until Du Ryer came along to quash this ignorance by making her remove her disguise ("Argenis, tu n'estois qu'une estrangere en France, / Ton nom n'estoit cogneu que bien confusement: / Mais Du Ryer auiourd'huy dompte cette ignorance / En te faisant sortir de ton desguisement") (Du Ryer, 1630: à vi'). On the interplay between disguise and authorship, see below.

17. As Lancaster states, "Little attempt to follow the original verbally is made in this play [*Théocrine*], and many conversations are introduced which Barclay merely suggests. The song in the

Du Ryer would dedicate the majority of his time later in life translating Greek and Latin texts at the expense of writing plays,<sup>18</sup> so he may have simply relied on the neo-Latin original.<sup>19</sup> Du Ryer also invented several elements, such as the power of Argénis's portrait to distract Poliarque from his role as king and to set sail from his kingdom to Sicily (*Théocrine*, 1.2).<sup>20</sup>

Du Ryer chose to divide Barclay's *Argenis* into two discrete but thematically connected plays, or *journées*, a practice that had some currency in the first decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>21</sup> Both plays contain five acts with scene divisions. The two plays were performed on the professional stage of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, most likely during the 1629-30 season, and they were printed in 1630 and 1631, respectively.<sup>22</sup> The first *journée*, *Théocrine*, is a tragicomedy that centres on the first encounter between Poliarque and Argénis. It represents the hero's disguise as a female character, named Théocrine, in order to penetrate the castle walls behind which latter's father Méléandre is keeping her held captive, away from all men. The second part ("*dernière journée*"), titled simply *L'Argénis*, follows Barclay's narrative from start to finish and attempts to adapt the entire

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first scene of the second act is developed from the statement that Argenis was amused in various ways. Lycogene's encouraging remarks to his soldiers and Poliarque's curses in the fourth act are among Du Ryer's additions" (1912: 48). Several of the conversations that Du Ryer invents deal with political action, as we will see.

**18.** Du Ryer's reputation as a translator helped in his election to the French Academy as its nineteenth member on 21 November 1646, over his more famous contemporary, Pierre Corneille. See Lancaster (1912: 15-16). Either his renown as a translator, or a simple confusion between the novel and Du Ryer's dramatic adaptation (*Argénis*), would explain why the Bibliothèque Nationale de France still lists Du Ryer as one of the translators of Barclay's novel (ed. 1623), though some have contested this attribution. See Barbier (1822: 87).

**19.** Like Coeffeteau, Du Ryer offers a chronological account of the story rather than beginning *in medias res* (as does Barclay), since the first *journée* provides the backstory to the start of the second *journée*. However, upon close examination of the unraveling of events in Du Ryer's *Argénis* and Coeffeteau's abridged translation, it becomes evident that Du Ryer's organization of the plot diverges quite significantly from Coeffeteau's version.

**20.** This invention allows Du Ryer to insert political discourse on the effects of a ruler abandoning his kingdom. I will return to this expository scene below. For a general yet rather detailed analysis of Du Ryer's modifications of Barclay's novel, see Lancaster (1912: 44-50).

**21.** Jean de Schélande famously rewrote his five-act tragedy *Tyr et Sidon* (1608) and changed it into a ten-act tragicomedy in two *journées* (1628). The new version includes François Ogier's preface that pleads for modern, "irregular" drama. André Mareschal, Du Ryer's immediate contemporary and later Gaston d'Orléans's *bibliothécaire*, wrote his tragicomedy in two *journées*, titled *La Généreuse Allemande*. This play was, according to Hélène Baby, a practical manifesto of irregularity ("*manifeste pratique de l'irrégularité*"). Consequently, as Baby claims (2001: 106), Du Ryer's choice to divide his adaptation of *Argenis* into two *journées* indicates that the playwright was aligning himself with the irregular moderns. Lancaster (1929: 306) also mentions Joachim Bernier de La Brousse's *Les heureuses infortunes* (1618), Alexandre Hardy's *Théagène et Cariclé* (divided into eight *journées*, 1623), and other lost plays of Hardy, *Pandoste* and *Parténie* as plays that are divided into *journées*.

**22.** It is unknown how successful these two plays were, as is the case with most plays performed at this time – Corneille's *Le Cid* would be a notable exception (first performed in January 1637).

novel into a single tragicomedy – a nearly impossible feat given the length and complexity of the novel. As might be expected, at 2604 lines, the second *journée* is 30% longer than the first (1824 lines). Du Ryer might have rewritten *L'Argenis* for publication, since each act is preceded by a summary, contains numerous stage directions, and it is much longer than most plays being produced at this time.<sup>23</sup> It could also be true, as Henry Carrington Lancaster has speculated, that *Théocrine* was only performed at its original creation while the second *journée* was performed alone in later performances. Lancaster bases this deduction on the fact that *L'Argenis* includes the analeptic episode from Barclay's novel of the encounter between Poliarque-Théocrine and Argénis, told from the point of view of Sélenisse (*Argenis*, 3.4); however, as I have already mentioned and will demonstrate further, the inversion of perspective in *Theocrine* – from Selenissa's point of view to Poliarque's – is of critical importance.

Whereas no concrete proof exists that *Théocrine* was performed, we do find the stage setting for *L'Argenis* in the *Mémoire de Mahelot*, a record of sketches and descriptions of stage designs for plays performed at the Hôtel de Bourgogne (see Figure 1).

23. Lochert considers the stage directions in the printed text of tragicomedies, which are often influenced by novels and thus full of action, as an intrusion of the *romanesque* in order to help the reader understand the action (discouraged later by theoreticians of tragedy such as d'Aubignac). On the other hand, the performed text is intended to surprise, confuse, and astonish the spectator, with its many turns of events (kidnappings, pirate ships, shipwrecks, battles, disguises). Lochert suggests that the introduction of narrative elements into the dramatic text to facilitate the reading could be a sign of its inadaptability to the stage (Lochert, 2010: 167-80). Although it is unlikely that the printed text was the actual text performed, it is nonetheless possible that actors cut scenes and "inadaptable" elements from the longer version of the printed play for performance.





The description reads as follows:

Il faut au Milieu du theatre, un Autel fort riche, deux flambeaux et des Lumieres, un rehaut, de Lencens, a un des costez du theatre, un feu d'artifice dans une Mer, et caché, de lautre costé une grotte, une lance, une teste feinte et des trompettes.<sup>25</sup>

The scenery and props appear to refer to *L'Argénis*, since there is mention of the altar where Argénis prays to Pallas and where she secretly meets with Poliarque (2.5); the fireworks, which are set off at the start of act 4 as an attempt by Radirobane to seduce Argénis (4.1); the cave refers to Poliarque's hiding place (2.3); and the fake head will be Lycogène's, which Arcombrotte carries onstage with a lance (3.1). The boat in the bottom right corner of the sketch could be reused in several scenes, such as Poliarque's arrival in Mauritania (4.4).

Although only the entry for *L'Argénis* remains in the *Mémoire de Mahelot* manuscript, we must not assume that *Théocrine* was not performed, as it, too, contains spectacular elements and stage props. For instance, Poliarque first appears onstage "tenant le portrait d'Argénis" (holding the portrait of Argénis) (1.2), Poliarque makes many direct references to his clothing when he decides to dress up like a woman (3.1), Poliarque-Théocrine gives Sélenisse a letter that explains her (invented) misfortunes (3.1.734),<sup>26</sup> and the violent, bloody combat between Poliarque-Théocrine and Lycogène's men in the fortress occurs onstage (4.2-3) and again at the end of the play on the battlefield between Poliarque's and Lycogène's armies (5.4). Poliarque opens the play in France, ready to set sail for Sicily (1.2), arriving there in the next act (2.2), and fifth act presents a scene the altar (5.3). Hence, with so many similar props and sets (the boat, the sea, the altar), and despite the scenographic description in the *Mémoire* that seems limited to *L'Argénis*, the same stage design would function for both *Théocrine* and *L'Argénis*.

As Jacqueline Glomski points out in her introductory essay, despite the novel's complexity it does in fact lend itself easily to dramatic adaption, thanks in large part to its symmetrical five-part structure, its romantic and political themes, the numerous tension-filled moments and plot twists, the multiplication

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et Poliarque (2005: 95n.337), whereas he later states that the description refers to *Argenis, seconde journée* (2005: 278n.165). Pasquier (2005: 99) also refers to the boat sticking out in the sketch and identifies it as *Argenis et Poliarque*, not *Argenis*. This confusion may be due to the similar scenography and stage props necessary for both plays. Moreover, the title of the description, "Poliarque et Argénis", seems to conflate the two plays, as it does not cite the accurate title of either play.

25. "Is needed: in the middle of the stage, a very richly decorated altar, two links [large wax candles] and candles, a stove, some incense; on one side of the theatre, fireworks in a sea; and hidden, on the other side, a cave, a lance, a fake head and trumpets" (F° 37°).

26. On the use and staging of letters in Du Ryer, see Baby (2001: 116).

of obstacles to overcome,<sup>27</sup> and the noble characters. In the seventeenth century, too, writers articulated the close relationship between novels and theatre. For instance, Charles Sorel writes,

On quitte tous les autres Livres pour ceux ci [les romans]; C'est ce qui donne sujet aux pieces de Theatre, et qui excite les applaudissements et les acclamations du Peuple; les Tragedies ou Trage-Comedies, qui sont des romans faits pour la représentation, en sont souvent tirées, ou inventées à leur exemple.<sup>28</sup>

Irregular tragicomedy such as Du Ryer's, with its freer and more flexible *dispositio* (arrangement), lends itself more readily to the adaptation of romance novels.<sup>29</sup> One need not stray so far from Barclay's novel, however, to find similar comparisons. In a meta-narrative section of the novel, speaking about the story that he will write, Nicopompus, the court poet of Barclay's novel who is often interpreted as a stand-in for the author himself, declares:

Oblectabit legentes insita mortalibus vanitas, eoque studiosiores inveniam, quod non quasi docentem severumque in manus accipient. Pascam animos contemplatione diversa et veluti pictura locorum. Tum periculorum imagine excitabo misericordiam, metus, horrorem; suspensos deinde sublevabo serenisque diluam tempestates.<sup>30</sup>

The arousal of "pity, fear, and horror" ("misericordiam, metus, horrorem") through the illusion ("imagine") of danger ("periculorum") mimics precisely the theatrical poetics for tragedy, while "cheer[ing] up all doubts and graciously allay[ing] the tempests" ("suspensos deinde sublevabo serenisque diluam tempestates") intimates comedy. Nicopompus thus offers a model for tragicomedy, a genre that was just beginning to dominate the French stage in 1621 (the date of publication of the first edition of Barclay's *Argenis*) and whose popularity would continue into the 1630s.

What is more, Nicopompus, with a hint of tongue-in-cheek irony, seems to challenge playwrights to adapt his story by claiming that his readers "will love my book above any stage-play or spectacle on the theatre" ("[a]mabunt tam-

27. Baby (2001: 106) counts a total of seventeen obstacles, eight in *Théocrine* and nine in *L'Argenis*.

28. "We have foregone all other books for novels, which have provided the subjects for plays, and which incite the applause and acclamations of the people. Tragedies or tragicomedies, which are novels made for performance, are often drawn from novels, or invented following their example" (Sorel 1974: 131).

29. Lochert and Thouret (2010: 15-16).

30. "The readers will be delighted with the vanities there shown incident to mortal men. And I shall have them more willing to read me when they shall not find me severe or giving precepts. I will feed their minds with divers contemplations and, as it were, with a picture of places. Then with the show of danger, I will stir up pity, fear, and horror, and by and by cheer up all doubts and graciously allay the tempests" (*Argenis*, 2.14.5, translation slightly modified). I cite book, chapter, and paragraph numbers according to Barclay (2004). The Latin quotations, with English translation, are taken from this edition.

quam theatri aut arenae spectaculum"; *Argenis*, 2.14.5). It would certainly prove to be quite a feat to convert *Argenis* into a play, though Du Ryer's friends, in a series of flattering poems, found his adaptation to be superior to the original. For example, Guillaume Colletet, in his preliminary poem of *Théocrine*, indirectly addresses this challenge by claiming that *Argenis* is more beautiful in Du Ryer's verse than she is in Barclay's prose.<sup>31</sup> J. Villeneuve, too, compares the two: Barclay created *Argenis*'s beautiful body but this body had no soul; Apollo has given Du Ryer on the other hand the power to animate her beautiful body and to make her forever immortal.<sup>32</sup> Jean Auvray is even more explicit by opening his *Stances* with the following apostrophe: "Rauissante et chere *Argenis* / Doux objet de tant d'Idolâtres, / Dont les merites infinis / Ne meritoient que des Theâtres!"<sup>33</sup> Du Ryer and his contemporaries were thus very aware of the process and the stakes of adaptation. This self-consciousness plays out in the tragicomedies, too, especially in the case of *Théocrine*.

That Du Ryer wrote an entire play about Poliarque's and *Argénis*'s backstory is significant, especially since this analeptic narrative includes the hero's decision to cross-dress as a woman. To my knowledge, only John D. Lyons has studied in depth the dynamics of gender and identity in this play.<sup>34</sup> He argues convincingly that, despite the undermining of the system of sexual identity imposed by the social order, *Théocrine*, like other plays in which characters cross-dress, reconfirms this very system (Lyons, 1978: 61). While Lyons claims that "vestimentary change is potentially a synecdoche for the total message of identity" (1978: 64), I would like to consider Poliarque's transvestism as a metatheatrical metaphor for the process of transgeneric adaptation from the page to the stage.

In Barclay's novel, Selenissa betrays *Argenis* by telling the backstory of her and Poliarque's first encounter to Radirobanes, the King of Sardinia, and, in so doing, Selenissa attempts to vilify Poliarque. Because a third-person limited narrator is telling the story in the novel, readers remain unaware of Poliarque's motivations, emotions, and desires. In *Théocrine*, Du Ryer provides this information, for the spectators see Poliarque in France, ready to leave for Sicily, and they learn that Poliarque has been enamored by *Argénis*'s portrait (Du Ryer's addition) (1.2). It is not until the next act, however, when Poliarque arrives in

31. "nous voyons *Argenis* / Plus belle dans tes vers qu'elle n'est dans sa prose" (Du Ryer, 1630: â iiiij').

32. "Barclay fit autrefois le beau corps d'*Argenis* [...] Et ce corps neantmoins estoit un corps sans ame" [...] "Apollon [...] Luy donna le pouuoir d'animer ce beau corps, / Et de rendre à iamais *Argenis* immortel" (Du Ryer 1631: â iiiij')

33. Ravishing and dear *Argenis*, sweet object of so many idolaters, whose infinite merits were deserving only of theatres! (Du Ryer 1631: â v'). This phrasing is odd and its meaning obscure. Might Auvray be denigrating Barclay's prose to suggest that *Argenis*'s true (and only) place is the theatre?

34. According to Lyons (1978: 81), only fourteen out of 240 plays that he studied about mistaken or disguised identity include the theme of man's disguise as a woman. The small number of plays of this kind makes Du Ryer's play that much more noticeable.

Sicily and learns that Argénis has been enclosed in the fortress, that Poliarque devises his plan to take on a female identity, expressed in rather enigmatic terms:

L'amour ingénieux presente à ma pensee  
 Le moyen d'adoucir ma douleur insensee;  
 Et cette inuention, qui n'a rien de pareil,  
 Me promet une place ou reluit mon Soleil.<sup>35</sup>

In neo-Platonic and *précieux* terms, personified love (“L’amour”) is leading and inspiring Poliarque to disguise himself as a woman, to be able to be near his beloved (“mon Soleil”). It is of note, moreover, that Poliarque’s strategy of dissimulation is directly juxtaposed to Lycogène’s: the latter frets (“depité”), rages (“enrage”), and, he declares, “l’amour offensé / Demande à se venger de ce pere insensé”.<sup>36</sup> Lycogène will deploy vengeful, brute force to show “[q]u’il ne faut pas choquer la colere d’un Prince”.<sup>37</sup> The spectator witnesses two opposing political reactions to an affront: one is cunning and transgressive, while the other is violent and forceful, without any clear answer as to which one is more virtuous or praiseworthy. The spectator, however, has been conditioned since the previous act to side with Poliarque, not only because he is the French hero, but also thanks to his *ethos* as a just ruler, in contrast to Lycogène’s tyrannical character.

When Poliarque appears again, directly following Lycogène’s rant, he is dressed “en fille” (as a girl) (Du Ryer, 1630: 3.1). Yet his transformation into Théocrine is not complete, for he still speaks as Poliarque dressed in woman’s clothing. He is hyperaware of his role-play, which gives the play a metatheatrical dimension. Indeed, Poliarque opens the third act with fifty-six lines of monologue addressed to his advisor Gelanore, but he also appears to be speaking directly to the audience, to explain and defend his decision to cross-dress:

Ne sois pas estonné de voir ce changement  
 Que la fidelité nous permet aysement.  
 Depuis le premier iour que les attraitz des belles  
 Donnerent a l’Amour, du pouvoir et des ayles,  
 Depuis que cet aueugle, auteur de nos tourmens,  
 Se baigne dans les pleurs que versent les Amants,  
 Et depuis que ces traitz dompterent toutes choses  
 Sa force a fait voir bien des metamorphoses.  
 Les Dieux assujctis monstreent autrefois  
 Qu’ils n’ont point de pouvoir qui ne cede à ses lois [...]

35. “Crafty love shows me how to quell my great suffering, and this invention, which has nothing like it, promises me a place where my Sun shines” (Du Ryer 1630: 2.2.513-16).

36. “love demands to take revenge against this unreasonable father” (Du Ryer 1630: 2.3.543-44).

37. “that one must not offend a prince’s anger” (Du Ryer 1630: 2.3.590).

Et l'amour qui les rend sensibles à ses maux,  
 En a formé de l'or, et fait des animaux! [...]  
 C'est luy [l'amour] qui me fournit un habit de la sorte,  
 Qui fait ressusciter mon esperance morte. [...]  
 Je scay que maintenant tu te dis à toymesme  
 Que mon aueuglement passe iusqu'à l'extresme,  
 Alors qu'il fait choisir à mon affection  
 Un habit si contraire à ma condition [...]  
 Non, non, ne pense pas que le Destin desrobe  
 La force, et la vertu, lorsqu'on prend ceste robbe,  
 Hercule en cet habit fit voir à la rigueur,  
 Qu'il n'auoit pas perdu sa premiere vigueur.<sup>38</sup>

In this monologue—in which Poliarque figuratively and literally uses the word garment (“habit”) four times, to dress (“habiller”) and naked (“nuds”) twice, and dress (“robbe”) once, highlighting ironic distance with his choice to dress as a woman for/because of love (Lyons, 1978: 63)—Poliarque goes to great lengths to draw attention to his disguise. Poliarque is playing a role onstage and is aware of his own performance. This onstage transformation disrupts surprise, for the audience witnesses Poliarque’s transformation, but it increases dramatic irony, all the while maintaining suspense— will Poliarque be ‘found out’? Will he succeed, or fail, in his attempt to seduce Argénis?

Furthermore, and more importantly for my argument, as the cited text above shows, Poliarque defines his transvestism as a literary construct based on mythological texts, notably Jupiter who turned into gold to seduce Danaë and into a bull to ravish Europa (3.1.611-12), and Hercules who dressed as a woman to please the barbarian queen Omphale (3.1.647-48). He directly addresses what one might consider extreme blindness caused by passionate love in order to explain lucidly that he knows exactly what he is doing, that he has a precise and thought-out strategy to penetrate the walls of the forbidden fortress.

As transgressive as cross-dressing was in real life—the transgression of gender roles was certainly more dangerous than the transgression of heteronormative sexuality— as a literary convention it would not shock a spectator in the

38. “Do not be surprised/afraid to see this change that loyalty easily allows us. Since the first day that the feminine charms of beautiful women gave power and wings to Love, since this blind one, author of our torments, bathed in lovers’ tears, and since his arrows subjugated all things, his power has shown us many metamorphoses. The subjected gods showed in times past that they have no power that does not yield to his laws [...] And love who makes them sensitive to his sorrows, turned them into gold, and made them into animals! [...] It is he [love] who gives me this kind of garment, who brings back my dead hopes. [...] Now I know that you are saying to yourself that my blindness has gone to the extreme, for it has chosen for my passion a garment that is so different from my condition [...] No, no, do not think that Fate is stealing my force and virtue when one takes this dress. In this garment Hercules showed in a pinch that he had not lost his original strength” (Du Ryer 1630: 3.1.599-608; 611-12; 617-18; 621-24; 645-48).

seventeenth century.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the act of cross-dressing for the stage is an age-old practice. On the other hand, Poliarque's transvestism goes beyond the text and we find traces of this creative process in the preliminary poems in the play's 1630 edition. For instance, the author expresses his awareness of the transformative effects of cross-dressing in a prosopopeial poem spoken by Daphnide, addressed to the author of Poliarque:<sup>40</sup>

Ces vers si doux et si charmans  
 Vont faire voir deux changemens,  
 Dont l'amour approuve les ruses;  
 Poliarque en fille changé  
 Pour estre en ses maux allegé:  
 Et l'auteur en l'une des muses.<sup>41</sup>

The transformation of a prose narrative into a dramatic poem, this short poem suggests, metamorphoses both the hero into a woman and the author into a muse. The "auteur" is difficult to locate, however, for it is not clear whether the poem is addressed to Barclay or to Du Ryer, and whether the "auteur" referenced within the poem is the author of the novel or the playwright. This confusion is accentuated because the poem is titled "pour l'auteur de Poliarque", yet the novel's title is *Argenis* and neither play carries the simple title *Poliarque*. It seems logical to suggest that the "auteur" in the title of the poem refers to Du Ryer and the "auteur" in the poem is Barclay, for the latter has provided the material to inspire the former. But whatever the case, it is apparent that Du Ryer, if he is indeed the author of the short poem, is playing with the notion of transvestism as metamorphosis, and he uses it as a metaphor for the adaptation of Barclay's novel into a tragicomedy.

This "dressing up" of Barclay's novel, however, is not insignificant, objective, or unmotivated, and I would argue that it has political implications.

39. See Crawford (2007: 143-147). While not my focus here, it should be noted that Poliarque's successful seduction of *Argenis* as a woman would not have shocked a spectator—at least not as much as a male-male seduction—for the mechanism of lesbianism was often interpreted, from the male perspective at least, as "preparation" for a woman's love for a man (Crawford 2007: 206-214). On the dynamics of lesbianism in late sixteenth-century memorialist Brantôme, see Ferguson (2008: 272-284).

40. "Vers de Daphnide pour l'auteur de Poliarque" (Du Ryer, 1630: ā v<sup>r</sup>). Du Ryer addresses Daphnide in other poems that accompany the edition of *Théocrine*: "L'Aurore (Dawn), à Daphnide" (1630: 124-128), "Le Soir (Evening), à Daphnide" (1630: 132-36), "Sur le degel (On the thawing weather), Sonnet, à Daphnide" (1630: 163), and an "Elegie, à Daphnide" (1630: 170-172). However, it is unclear whom Daphnide references. It could either be the mythological character Daphnis, said to be the inventor of pastoral poetry, or the hero of Longus's Greek romance, *Daphnis and Chloe*, which Jacques Amyot translated into French in 1559.

41. "These verses, so sweet and so charming, will show two transformations, whose tricks love does approve: Poliarque changed into a woman to be relieved of his suffering, and the author into one of the muses" (Du Ryer 1630: ā v<sup>r</sup>).

Despite the risks of hunting for speculative allusions to link the events on stage to real life, we cannot ignore, as Richard Hillman recalls, that “topical allusiveness and aesthetic impact were mutually imbricated for contemporary spectators by way of the perceptual codes linking spectacle and audience”. At the same time, however, it is particularly difficult to connect with certainty the political intentions and resonances that a play could produce because of its “elusive double functioning”. In other words, a play can give mixed messages by encoding, obscuring, and modifying reality so as to be able to deny any possible allusion to reality.<sup>42</sup>

The court poet Nicopompus expresses a similar strategy when describing the kind of story he will write:

Dum legent, dum tamquam alienis irascentur aut favebunt, occurrent sibi ipsis agnoscentque obiecto speculo speciem ac meritum suae famae. Forte pudebit eas partes diutius agere in scena huius vitae, quas sibi cognoscent ex merito contigisse in fabula. Et ne traductos se querantur, neminis imago simpliciter exstabit. Dissimulandis illis multa inveniam, quae notatis convenire non poterunt. Mihi enim non sub religione historiae scribenti libertas haec erit. Sic vitia, non homines, laedentur, nec cuiquam licebit indignari, nisi qui vexata flagitia in se turpi confessione recipiat. Praeterea et imaginaria passim nomina excitabo, tantum ad sustinendas vitorum virtutumque personas, ut tam erret qui omnia, quam qui nihil, in illa scriptione exiget ad rerum gestarum veritatem.<sup>43</sup>

Using the commonplace (and biblical) mirror (“speculo”) and *theatrum mundi* metaphors (“agere in scena huius vitae”), the poet not only implies ethical implications to his story, but he can also take the liberty of concealing or modifying historical truth, which protects him, in a way, from accusations of slander (“ne traductos se querantur”, “so that they may not say that they are traduced”). One could attempt to superimpose the story onto real life, but because of the distortions, it would be impossible to pinpoint confidently events and characters. Still, as much as the self-preserving strategy has a didactic message, it also has a political one. It would not be a great leap to suppose that Du Ryer,

42. Hillman (2015: 268-69). Hillman is drawing on Couton (2008).

43. “While they read, while they are moved with anger or favour (as it were against strangers), they shall meet with themselves and find in the glass held before them the show and merit of their own fame. It will perchance make them ashamed longer to play those parts upon the stage of this life for which they must confess themselves justly taxed in a fable. And so that they may not say they are traduced, no man’s character shall be simply set down. I shall find many things to conceal them, which would not well agree with them if they were made known. For I, who bind not myself religiously to the writing of a true history, may take this liberty. So the vices, not the men, shall be struck. No man can take exception but those who shall reveal his own naughtiness with a most shameful confession. Besides, I will have here and there imaginary names to signify several vices and virtues, so that one who demands that everything in my writing be consistent with the facts of history shall be as much in error as one who demands that nothing be so” (*Argenis* 2.14.5).

a (dramatic) poet himself, is incorporating similar strategies in his adaptations of the novel for the stage.

Besides, choosing to adapt Barclay's novel can be seen as a political act in itself, especially since Barclay was a proponent of hereditary monarchy, absolutist politics, and reason of state policies, all of which Richelieu was attempting to implement in the 1620s. It has often been stated, too, that Richelieu read and admired Barclay's novel.<sup>44</sup> Whether or not this was true, it remains a fact that the revised translation of *Argenis* by Pierre de Marcassus in 1626 was dedicated to Richelieu, and Barclay dedicated the novel to Louis XIII. It is thus not insignificant, politically, that Du Ryer would choose to adapt this particular novel.

Du Ryer, however, dedicates *Théocrine* to Louis de La Châtre, governor of Berri and Marshal of France; *L'Argénis* (1631) was dedicated to his daughter, Louise Henriette, as Louis de La Châtre died in 1630. It would appear that Louis de La Châtre commissioned Du Ryer to adapt the novel, as the playwright humbly explains that he is not offering La Châtre the fruits of his study but the effects of La Châtre's orders that Du Ryer has attempted to obey.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, in his dedicatory letter to Louise Henriette de la Châtre, Du Ryer recalls that her father gave a second life to the Princesse Argenis.<sup>46</sup>

The La Châtre family came into prominence during the Wars of Religion thanks to Louis's father, Claude de La Chastre, a Catholic Leaguer, who gained the favor of Henri I of Montmorency, Constable and Marshal of France (Le Roux, 1996). The Montmorency family was one of the most high-ranking in France. Henri I's son, Henri II, was a prince of blood, King Henri IV's godson and brother-in-law to the prince of Condé. Henri II would become a member of the rebellious faction against Richelieu, alongside Gaston d'Orléans and the Vendôme brothers, King Henri IV's illegitimate sons.<sup>47</sup> Hence, by dedicating his plays to Louis and Louise Henriette de La Châtre, Du Ryer was firmly positioning himself on the side of Gaston d'Orléans (and not Richelieu), much like many of his other contemporaries and fellow playwrights.<sup>48</sup> At the same time,

44. This commonplace legend has been repeated since the seventeenth century and appears even in the catalogue description of the new French translation by Sylvie Taussig, which claims that *Argenis* was one of the cardinal's favorite readings ("l'une des lectures favorites du cardinal de Richelieu"). To my knowledge, the origin of this legend is not clear.

45. "Je ne vous offre donq pas les fruits de mon estude, mais les effets de vos commandements [...] que ma foiblesse s'est efforcee de vous obeyr" (Du Ryer 1630: A ii<sup>v</sup>-A iii<sup>r</sup>).

46. "donné une seconde vie à cette Princesse" (Du Ryer 1631: A ii<sup>r</sup>).

47. Henri II de Montmorency would eventually be executed in Toulouse in 1632 after having denounced Richelieu as "a disturber of the public peace, enemy of the king and the royal family, destroyer of the state", and so forth (Knecht 1991: 55-57).

48. The constellation of patronage and power relations is rather dizzying. Pichou was protected by Henri II of Condé; Auvray dedicated *La Madonte* and *La Dorinde* to the Queen Anne of Austria; Jean Mairet dedicated *La Sylvie* to the Duke of Montmorency and *La Sylvanire* to the Duchess of Montmorency; André Mareschal would become Gaston d'Orléans librarian.



Richelieu was taking more interest in the theatre as a means to promote his own agenda. As a result, the Chief Minister began sponsoring playwrights, poets, and theoreticians, such as Jean Rotrou and Jean Chapelain, and he would found the French Academy in 1634.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, Richelieu would never protect Du Ryer, and the playwright would not be chosen as one of the cardinal's "Cinq Auteurs" (society of the five authors).<sup>50</sup> Rather, and quite significantly, Du Ryer, who was "secrétaire de la chambre du roy" and "conseiller et secrétaire du roy et de ses finances" between 1621 and 1633,<sup>51</sup> would become the secretary of César, the Duke of Vendôme, in 1634. Moreover, Du Ryer would not be elected to the French Academy until 1646, four years after Richelieu's death.<sup>52</sup> By writing *Théocrine* and *L'Argénis*, it would be doubtful that Du Ryer was looking for a more influential and generous patron, such as the Cardinal Richelieu, and more likely that Du Ryer was seeking to subvert absolutist and reason of state politics that Richelieu was attempting to enforce. And, while it would be difficult to ascertain for certain Du Ryer's personal politics or strategies for patronage, it is sure that, contrary to most tragicomedies performed at the turn of the 1630s that avoided overt political discourse, Du Ryer puts on stage these topical debates.

What is more, Du Ryer's contemporaries understood *Argenis* to be a political *roman à clef*. The 1627 key provided in the Elvazier edition identifies the main characters as historical actors, mostly French, during the Wars of Religion. According to this key, which Du Ryer may or may not have known, Meleander represents the French King Henri III, Poliarchus the (future) French King Henri IV (and father of Louis XIII, Gaston d'Orléans, and the Vendôme brothers), Lycogenes the Duke of Guise (leader of the ultra-Catholic League that opposed Henri III – the latter would have the former assassinated at Blois in 1588), while *Argenis* represents the French kingdom.<sup>53</sup> Although this key situates the events in the sixteenth century, we cannot forget that, in the 1620s, the Wars of Religion from the previous century were still a sensitive subject in France, especially

49. On Richelieu and theatre, see Couton (2008). For a study on the politics of theatre after 1630, see Ibbett (2009).

50. The five authors included François Le Métel de Boisrobert, Guillaume Colletet, Pierre Corneille, Claude de l'Estoile, and Jean Rotrou. The group was formed in 1634-35 and produced plays including *La Comédie des Tuileries* (1635) and *L'Aveugle de Smyrne* (1638).

51. The "Chambre du roy" was one of the more important services in the "Maison du Roy". The secretary – a keeper of secrets – was charged with writing and transcribing letters, and sometimes signing them. As "conseiller et secrétaire du roy et de ses finances", Du Ryer had the duty of drawing up and signing the letters sent to the Grande Chancellerie, an office where the official letters were sealed with the great seal. Du Ryer seems to have inherited the post of "secrétaire de la chambre du roy" from his father, Isaac Du Ryer, who was also a poet. See Lancaster (1912: 5-8).

52. For Du Ryer's biographical information, see Lancaster (1912: 1-31).

53. See Riley and Huber (2004: 45-48).

since the real risk of political and religious conflict, even civil war, continued to lurk in the margins of French society.<sup>54</sup>

In turn, the plot twists and characters in the novel, though published in 1621, could easily be read through the prism of events occurring in the late 1620s. For example, Gaston d'Orléans, King Louis XIII's brother (known as Monsieur), was often embroiled in rebellious conflict against both the king and Richelieu. The king's half-brothers, César and Alexandre Vendôme, were also involved in recalcitrant activities against Louis XIII and his Chief Minister. The king had the brothers arrested on 13 June 1626 for having been involved in a plot against Richelieu (Blanchard, 2011: 82-83).<sup>55</sup> A spectator very well could have seen traits of the king's brother Gaston in the Poliarque or superimposed his half-brothers onto Poliarque's own half-brother, Arcombrotte. Further, the Siege of La Rochelle (1627-1628), during which Louis XIII and Richelieu's Catholic forces defeated the Huguenots and the English, was fresh in the minds of Du Ryer's contemporaries. The scene in which Poliarque and his advisor Gelanore are preparing to set sail to Sicily (*Théocrine*, 1.2), a scene of Du Ryer's invention, would have resonated with a French audience in 1629, for Louis XIII and Richelieu had just gone together to La Rochelle by sea and their voyage was greatly publicized, both textually and visually.<sup>56</sup> Thus, one could just as easily have seen the king who fights to protect his kingdom (Argénis) or his brother who fights to obtain the kingdom (Argénis) in the figure of Poliarque.

The first act of *Théocrine*, moreover, contains three politically charged scenes that introduce each main male character: Lycogène (1.1), Poliarque (1.2), and Méléandre (1.3). Lycogène debates with his advisors, who do nothing but flatter him, about how to acquire both Argénis and the throne; Poliarque argues with his faithful and honest adviser, Gelanore (Richelieu?), whether he should temporarily abandon his kingdom to pursue Argénis (though he has never even seen her in the flesh!); Méléandre discusses how to protect his daughter from

54. King Henri IV was assassinated just a decade prior, on 14 May 1610. Concino Concini, the favorite of Louis XIII's mother Marie de' Medici, was killed on Louis's order on 24 April 1617. Finally, several Huguenot rebellions took place throughout the 1620s, including the Siege of Montpellier (August to October 1622), the Battle of Blavet (January 1625), and the Siege of La Rochelle (1626-1628). The French Wars of Religion are often considered resolved with the Peace of Alais (also known as the Edit of Alès), signed by Louis XIII on 27 September 1629, just around the time *Théocrine* and *L'Argénis* were being performed.

55. César would be released in 1630 but Alexandre would die in prison in 1629, the year Du Ryer's plays were performed.

56. See, for example, "Louis XIII et Richelieu assis dans une barque" (Louis XIII and Richelieu seated in a small boat): <<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/brv1b8402067v>> (accessed 11 March 2016). Du Ryer also included poems about Louis XIII's victory at La Rochelle in the printed edition of *Théocrine*. One is an ode dedicated to the king, "Sur la réduction de La Rochelle, Ode, Au Roy" (Du Ryer 1630: 111-116), and another is a sonnet titled "Prosopopee de La Rochelle au matin du royaume" (Prosopopoeia of La Rochelle to the seditious one of the kingdom) (Du Ryer 1630: 162).

Lycogène. As a result, the play immediately establishes a triangular relationship between Lycogène, the tyrannical rebel, Poliarque, the lovesick hero, and Méléandre, the fearful king. Between two immoderate male figures, the strong and irascible Lycogène and the weak and spineless Méléandre, there is the moderate Poliarque. However, the latter is temporarily blinded by his passionate love for the ingénue Argénis, and his desire to attain Argénis at all costs sets up the dramatic tension within the play.

Now, one could attempt to search for clues to relate the characters on stage with real-life events and people. After all, the 1626 crisis during which the Vendôme brothers were imprisoned, along with the Marshal Orano (Gaston d'Orléans's governor), stemmed from a conflict over Gaston's arranged marriage with Marie de Bourbon, Duchess of Montpensier. In other words, the stakes revolved around a marriage that was beginning to take on political importance, since Louis XIII had not, at that time, produced an heir, and the queen had already had two miscarriages (1622 and 1626). If Gaston remained a bachelor, the throne would possibly revert, after his own reign, to Condé, known as "Monsieur le Prince".<sup>57</sup> Allusion hunting of this kind in Du Ryer's play might be tenuous, in relation to the 1626 events (or other, more obscure ones), but it is not implausible to suggest that the events on stage resonated with spectators and enabled them to think about their current political situation. For *Théocrine* (and *L'Argénis*) directly transport the audience into a world – recalling Barclay's *pictura locorum* – where love and politics are formidable forces that determine the course of history, yet this is also a world in which passion trumps reason, in which amorous desire determines the conduct of princes and kings.<sup>58</sup> Tragicomedy for Du Ryer is, as James F. Gaines suggests, the genre of immediacy and "whirling vortices" that reflected a "world without reasonable hierarchy" and "an environment buffeted by unceasing change".<sup>59</sup> This instability is not only poetic, but also, and fundamentally, political.

To conclude, *Théocrine* and *L'Argénis* are prime examples of Du Ryer's interest in and his dramatization of politics. In this article, I have traced the history of performance of these tragicomedies and, through the prism of Du Ryer's two plays, I have suggested a poetics of adaptation from prose romance to the French tragicomic stage. I have approached this question from narratological and performance viewpoints, which resulted in a reflection on the transgeneric process, or the creative and dynamic interplay between the production, recep-

57. See Levi (2000: 95-100). Gaston would marry Marie de Bourbon on 6 August 1626, but Queen Anne of Austria would not give birth to a male heir (Louis XIV) until 5 September 1638.

58. The conflict between reason and passion occurs again in a debate between Poliarque and Gelanore, when the former learns that Argénis is locked away in a fortress, inaccessible to Poliarque (Du Ryer 1630: 2.2.455-74). This is the moment when Poliarque thinks up his plan to disguise himself as a woman.

59. Gaines (1988: 16).

tion-interpretation, and the edition of the Du Ryer's adaptations of Barclay's novel. Poliarque's character is, I have claimed, a metatheatrical metaphor for the process of adaptation, for he disguises himself just as the author "dresses up" Barclay's original text. From there, I underscored the stakes of adapting Barclay's novel for the French stage in the late 1620s and proposed political interpretations of the plays, and in particular *Théocrine*. In turn, Du Ryer's choice to adapt Barclay's political romance complicates the politics of spectacle during a time when the king's chief minister, Richelieu, was showing interest in theatre as a means to reinforce reason of state policies and an absolutist state.

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