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A REAPPRAISAL OF ROBERT HENRYSON'S ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

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ABSTRACT

Robert Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice must be reappraised because critical thought has not grasped the complexity and accompanying message contained in the poem. Much of this thought concentrates on the adequacy of the Moralitas. Chapter One, therefore, examines critical attitudes towards the Moralitas, and the relations of the Moralitas with the body of the poem. The chapter finds that the Moralitas is superficially adequate as a moral lesson for Orpheus and Eurydice, but is at a deeper level insufficient. The conclusion of the chapter suggests that this insufficiency may be due to the presence of a narrative persona in the poem.

Chapter Two examines the poem in the light of a possible narrator, finding substantial textual evidence for such a concept. The narrator's voice alternates with a different, authorial tone until the Moralitas is reached, and the narratorial tone predominates.

Music is emphasised to an unprecedented degree in Orpheus and Eurydice, and the narrator is most obvious in l 240-242 where he emphatically denies any musical expertise. Chapter Three, therefore, acknowledges the importance of music in the poem and for the Orpheus myth itself by making a brief examination of the growth of musical and cosmological theory in the Middle Ages. The chapter ends by assessing the accumulation of musical detail in the most central versions of the Orpheus story prior to Sir Orfeo.

Chapter Four examines Sir Orfeo in detail because it provides a significant contrast with Henryson's poem. For the first time Orpheus' music is able to rescue his wife permanently from her plight, and music in Sir Orfeo is found to be inextricably intertwined with the concepts of universal and temporal order.

Chapter Five ties these strands of thought into a coherent whole. The role of music in Orpheus and Eurydice

places much more emphasis on the divinity and excellence of Orpheus' musical ability and on the singing of the spheres (an indication of cosmic order) than does Sir Orfeo, thus heightening the irony and tragedy when Orpheus' music is unable to prevent him looking back and losing his wife. We must conclude that Henryson is using this incompatibility between the emphasis on divine music which orders the universe and its ultimate impotence to point the way to a deeper issue.

Chapter Five relates this musical conflict to the insufficient Moralitas and its overbearing narrator, and finds that many traditional 'Medieval' aspects of the story are undermined by Henryson as author. Henryson is using Orpheus and Eurydice as a vehicle, not to deny, but to wistfully question his inherited Medieval world view.

Orpheus and Eurydice, then, reveals Henryson's disquiet with the Medieval cosmological model through the narrative persona (and the insufficient Moralitas) and the role of music in the Orpheus story.

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PREFACE

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complains of cares to come...

...But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

(Sir Walter Raleigh, The Nymph's
Reply to the Shepherd)

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CHAPTER ONE

Robert Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice has been the subject of some critical debate and misunderstanding. It is not unusual for critics of Henryson to all but ignore Orpheus and Eurydice in favour of Henryson's works whose meanings are more accessible (e.g. Testament of Cresseid, Fables and Robene and Makyne).

Of those critics who do take the time to pause over Orpheus and Eurydice, some are fundamentally dissatisfied with the poem, others find it satisfactory, but limited. Many claim it is puzzling and enigmatic, others that it is disunited and disappointing. For almost all, the poem falls far short of the quality of Henryson's other works. Those critics who praise the Henryson of the Fables and the Testament of Cresseid for his 'Chaucerian' qualities find little of that dry wit and ironic understatement in Orpheus and Eurydice. Even the vivid and effective characterisation found in the poem is strangely blunted and muted by the officious moral lesson of the *Moralitas*.

Examples of this critical uneasiness are not difficult to find. Kindrick quotes Kinghorn's denunciation of the poem as inferior to Sir Orfeo and lacking in human interest¹, while Gros Louis states that the poem contains 'discordant echoes'². Gray finds that Orpheus and Eurydice is 'a bold and original work ... but its long *Moralitas* does its best to drag it down into the mass of those poems which are simply typical of their age'³.

Gray's comment provides an insight into the identity of the most common bone of contention for almost all critics of Orpheus and Eurydice: the *Moralitas*. A long commentary attached to the end of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, the *Moralitas* follows closely a standard allegorical interpretation of the myth found in Nicholas Trivet's commentary on Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy⁴. The *Moralitas* provides in searching detail the allegorical significance of every character within the Orpheus story and

every event contained in the poem, together with one or two didactic digressions.

Most of the critics who study Orpheus and Eurydice, then, focus their attention upon the Moralitas and its allegorical significance. Opinion can be separated into three branches of thought: that branch which endorses the commentary and its moral lesson; that which rejects it partially or totally and that which treats the commentary as of little consequence.

Those critics who belong to the first category include Kindrick⁵, Friedman⁶ and MacQueen⁷. All agree that the Moralitas holds the key to Orpheus and Eurydice, that it is satisfactory as a piece of writing, and that its moral lesson is both viable and appropriate to the story told in the body of the poem. All imply, or state overtly, that Henryson intended that the poem should be seen thus. MacQueen says:

Henryson's Moralitas is enough to show that he accepted [Trivet's] interpretation, but even in his narrative there is evidence to show that he intended Orpheus to represent intellectual, and Eurydice appetitive power⁸.

He also asserts in an earlier comment:

Moreover, it is almost certain that Henryson used the De Genealogica Deorum of Boccaccio as the source at least of his description of the nine Muses ...In the Genealogica, Boccaccio, it is well known, attempted to defend classical mythology by a moral interpretation in allegorical terms - a third point which suggests allegorical intention on the part of Henryson⁹.

MacQueen's claims, however, are seriously damaged by Allen Wright¹⁰. In her studies, Allen Wright finds little evidence to support MacQueen's statement that Henryson used Boccaccio as his source for the description of the Muses in

Orpheus and Eurydice. Instead she presents evidence to prove that Henryson's source for his description of the Muses is quite different. She says:

His true source, the Graecismus, offers a medley of Fulgentian and non-Fulgentian interpretations... Of allegory in the proper sense - a system of interpretation, not an arbitrary collection of interpretations - it contains no trace. Admittedly Henryson could still have tried to impose an allegorical purpose on his refractory material, had he so wished. Of such a wish, however, I can find no evidence; on the contrary, as we have seen, his adaptation is rather more eclectic and unsystematic than its original¹¹.

Kindrick sees the story of Orpheus as 'cleanly symmetrical'¹² and the major thrust of Orpheus and Eurydice as psychological. While he admits that the *Moralitas* is somewhat 'intrusive'¹³, Kindrick endorses it, seeing its moral lesson as fundamental to the point of the poem. He says:

...Henryson emphasizes the tropological level of interpretation, using the Orpheus legend to explore the human mind and to explain how to live a good life¹⁴.

Friedman, too, agrees that the *Moralitas* is a satisfactory and relevant end to the poem:

Though the relations between the story and the *Moralitas* are uneasy...it is plain that Henryson meant for them to be taken together, and saw them as a unified work¹⁵ [my italics].

MacQueen's whole chapter about Orpheus and Eurydice in his book Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems is a defence of the poem interpreted according to the *Moralitas*.

From this branch of thought we move to the second branch of critics, those who take little account of the Moralitas. Very few writers adopt this sort of stance. Most critics, whether they disagree or agree over it, cannot ignore the Moralitas. McDiarmid¹⁶ manages to do so almost completely - he devotes a whole discussion to an analysis of Orpheus and Eurydice while including only one fleeting remark on the Moralitas. Towards the end of his discussion he says that the Moralitas is 'very much an organic part of the poem'¹⁷ although its concluding prayer for grace is by implication unattainable. McDiarmid provides no further detail for these statements and makes no attempt to justify his claim about the nature of the Moralitas. The main body of his criticism is carried out with reference only to the Orpheus and Eurydice story; thus he has largely ignored the issue of the Moralitas.

The third branch of thought encompasses many writers. All are dissatisfied with the Moralitas and most question not only its relevance to the Orpheus story, but its effectiveness as a literary device. We will take Gros Louis¹⁸, Allen Wright¹⁹ and Gray²⁰ as examples of this trend.

Gray says:

...the whole Moralitas is much more elaborate and extended than anything in the Fables. As is the case there, it is not a final definition of meaning, but a queue which draws attention to some...moral aspects of the philosophical tale²¹.

He continues:

It makes a fine and eloquent ending, but the reader cannot suppress his doubts about the artistic success of the Moralitas as a whole²².

Gray also notes inconsistencies between the characters in the poem and their supposed moral counterparts in the Moralitas. He ends his discussion by voicing doubts about

the efficacy of the moral lesson and the success of the Moralitas as a purely literary device.

Gros Louis finds himself in a similar predicament:

[Henryson] makes the characters and their tragedy so attractive that the Moralitas, by comparison, becomes dull and ineffectual. His primary interest is clearly not the Moralitas at all...²³.

He continues:

What critics have not noticed is that Henryson apparently forgot his moral when he was writing the actual poem²⁴.

Gros Louis' main complaint is that the Moralitas is at odds with the Orpheus story because the strength of the poem lies in its portrayal of the protagonists. Orpheus and Eurydice have such human appeal and stature that any attempt at rationalising their dilemma is not only shallow and clinical, but totally inadequate.

Allen Wright, as we have seen, disagrees with MacQueen's statement that the Moralitas holds the key to the entire poem:

At one point at least, therefore, an allegorical reading of Orpheus and Eurydice must break down. Two inferences are possible: either Henryson has wavered uneasily between an allegorical and a non-allegorical method or, (as I prefer to believe) he intended the Moralitas to provide an optional and added level of meaning, not the obligatory key to the entire poem²⁵.

We have, then, these three modes of thought regarding the story of Orpheus and its succeeding Moralitas. A closer examination of the Moralitas itself and its relations with the Orpheus story will prove that the only branch of thought which is tenable is the third branch - that which questions the adequacy of the Moralitas.

The first thing we notice about the Moralitas of Orpheus and Eurydice is that it comes from a long medieval tradition, both as an allegorical, didactic interpretation per se and as a derivative of the attempts of previous writers to provide a fitting moral for the story of Orpheus and Eurydice²⁶. The writers of the Middle Ages had a partiality for allegory and complex systems of Biblical interpretation. Allegorical interpretation could range from the purely allegorical level (expressing New Testament truth) to the tropological level (signifying moral truth and doctrine) and on to the anagogical level (the reference to things to come in the last days of Christ's judgement) and often all three types of allegory could exist at once²⁷. Allegorical interpretation, then, came as naturally as eating and drinking to the writers of the Middle Ages, so it is not surprising or strange to find a system of moral allegorical interpretation attached to Orpheus and Eurydice.

Again it is not unprecedented to provide a moral for a poem of the Orpheus tradition. The tale of Orpheus and Eurydice is derived from Boethius who includes it in his Consolation of Philosophy²⁸, and the lengthy Moralitas is heavily drawn from the commentaries of Trivet and William of Conches upon the Boethian story.

Does this adherence to a long tradition guarantee that the moralising explanation and lesson and its vehicle will be pertinent and satisfactory? A closer examination of the Moralitas reveals that while it has relevance, that relevance is limited and in some aspects completely inadequate.

Is it enough for us as readers that Orpheus is representative of the intellectual power of the soul and Eurydice is the appetitive power of the soul as the Moralitas tells us? Is Aristaeus the herder credible as the representative of moral virtue, attempting to restrain the appetitive power from its foray into the world of carnality and passion (the green meadow)? Does the Moralitas match the full tragedy of the story by claiming that Eurydice is

made captive to the powers of Hell by the sting of sensuality and that the attempt of the intellectual power to rescue the appetitive is quickly thwarted by the 'fleschly lust' of the intellectual for the appetitive? All these questions must be considered as we examine the adequacy of the Moralitas.

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is linked with the Moralitas in several ways, some quite specific. For example, the description of Eurydice, who falls in love with Orpheus and takes the initiative in bringing about their marriage, fits well with the narrator's identification of her as the appetitive portion of the soul. It is Eurydice, not Orpheus, who becomes enamoured after hearing of Orpheus' fame and, seeing him for herself, makes the first move. Again, it is Eurydice as Queen of Thrace who asks Orpheus to be her husband and with 'wordis sueit, and blenkis amorouss' offers that Orpheus shall in her province be both 'king and lord'. Orpheus regards himself as a servant of Venus²⁹, so it would be entirely in keeping for him to approach Eurydice in order to make a declaration of love, yet the reversal of roles here fits much more neatly into the moral scheme of the Moralitas. There are also specific verbal echoes linking the story with its allegorical explanation. For instance, the word 'oppress' in l 102 echoes its use again in the Moralitas at l 443. The same is true of the words 'pusoun' and 'posownis' (l 107 and l 442), and 'wedow' (l 414 and l 627). These recurrences help to connect the moral and the story verbally as well as allegorically, but beyond that their potential for ironic foreshadowing and contrast is not exploited.

The poem contains a foreshadowing of the unhappiness in store for the unfortunate couple:

Betuix orpheuss and fair erudices,
fra thai wer weddit, on fra day to day
The low of lufe cowth kyndill and incress,
with mirth, and blythness, solace, and with play
off wardly Joy; allace, quhat sall I say?

Lyk till a flour that plesandly will spring,
quhilk fadis sone, and ends with murnyng. (l 85-91)

The transience of the metaphor links in with the description in the *Moralitas* of Eurydice as '...our effectioun,/Be fantasy oft movit up and doun' (l 431-2) so that the inherent fickleness and restlessness of human affection is mirrored in the uncertainty and brevity of Orpheus and Eurydice's matrimonial joy.

All this is perfectly right and proper use of technique (if a little uninspiring) for a poet endeavouring to explain and clarify his moral concerns, and so far as we have seen, the *Moralitas* is perfectly acceptable and consistent in its allegorical justification. Yet a closer inspection of the poem reveals flaws and inadequacies which indicate that the *Moralitas* is not totally satisfactory.

The most obvious inconsistency between the story and the lesson lies in the character of Aristaeus. According to the *Moralitas*, Aristaeus is representative of:

...gud vertew,
That bissey is to keip our myndis clene (l 436-7)

and therefore his pursuit of Eurydice is Virtue's pursuit of passion run wild. When we look at the story, however, a strange thing happens. There we find a very different Aristaeus:

quhair in a schaw, neir by this lady ying,
a busteouss hird callit arresteuss,
kepend his beistis, Lay undir a buss.

And quhen he saw this Lady solitar,
bairfut, with schankis quhyter than the snaw,
preckit with lust, he thocht withoutin mair
hir till oppress, and to his cave hir draw:
Dreidand for evill scho fled, quhen scho him saw
(l 96-103).

In this case it seems we can hardly blame Eurydice for her flight. This Aristaeus is hardly virtuous or even good, but

rather merely lecherous and violent.

Many critics, even those who find the *Moralitas* satisfactory, have difficulty in explaining Aristaeus' character. Friedman says:

Though the relations between the story and the *Moralitas* are uneasy, with the *Moralitas* sometimes contradicting the fable itself (for example, the 'busteouss hird', Aristaeus, becomes 'gud vertew'), it is plain that Henryson meant for them to be taken together³⁰.

Some critics, notably Elliott³¹ and MacQueen, have tried to circumvent the problem. MacQueen says:

Aristaeus is not shepherd, cowherd or goatherd; he is simply a 'hird' who keeps 'beistis'... Allegorically, beasts are the carnal passions, the usually uncontrolled appetitive power of the soul...³²

He attempts to solve the problem thus:

Aristaeus, who sees Eurydice on a May morning, behaves in a way directly opposite [to the usual courtly tradition]. He is a ravisher, whose allegorical function as Virtue is combined with his literal role in a stylistic yoking of apparent incompatibles very characteristic of medieval allegory...The startling combination may well have been regarded by Henryson and his contemporaries as a satisfactory amalgam of wit and imaginative truth³³.

We must be wary of falling into the trap of intentional fallacy. The incongruity of Aristaeus' character may or may not have been pleasing to Henryson's contemporaries, but we cannot know, nor should it affect our analysis of the poem. It is equally possible that Henryson intended the character of Aristaeus to be an indication of the inadequacy of the *Moralitas*.

Elliott picks up MacQueen's first point and expands it, saying:

Allegorically, beasts are the sensual passions, and here such types of carnality are governed, 'kept', by Aristaeus. The narrative innovation serves the sentence...³⁴.

Valid as it may be, this is no explanation of the lusty, passionate imagery used to represent 'gud vertew'. Indeed, if we take the argument one step further, it seems decidedly odd to have a 'busteouss hird' who is 'preckit with lust' in charge of a herd of beasts representing just such carnal passions. Surely this is the same as setting one cow to stand guard over a herd of cows, or a blind man to lead other blind men? Aristaeus' carnality matches his herd's rather than restrains it. Gray writes:

The most difficult case is that of Aristaeus. In spite of what some commentators say, it really does seem that in the fable Henryson is insisting on his lustfulness...Aristaeus is an extreme, enigmatic allegory, 'per contrarium', and we are left with the sense of a somewhat awkward mixture of allegorical levels³⁵.

This is the most satisfactory portrayal of the situation with regard to Aristaeus. He is an enigma who simply does not fit his allegorical mould.

Aristaeus is not the only inconsistency between character and allegorical counterpart. Orpheus, too, can create problems when we try to reconcile him with his supposed moral quality. In the *Moralitas* Orpheus is:

...the pairte intelletyfe
Off manis saule, and undirstanding fre,
And seperat fra sensualitie (l 428-430),

yet upon hearing of the loss of his wife, his response does not accord with one representing perfect wit and reason. His is no mere session of mourning and grief. What we have

is full-blown hysteria startlingly similar to an outburst of extreme rage:

This noble king inflammit all in yre,
and rampand as a Lyoun rewanuss,
With awfull Luke, and Ene glowand as fyre,
Sperid the maner... (l 120-123)

Quhen scho had said, the king sichit full soir,
his hairt neir brist for verry dule and wo;
half out of mynd, he maid no tary moir,
bot tuke his harp, and on to wod cowth go...(l 127-130).

This is indeed a dramatic and extreme response for a man who is supposed to be a type of reason and intellect. The Moralitas comments that upon the loss of the appetitive, 'perfyte wisdome weipis wondir soir' (l 445), but this depth of reaction, almost to the point of insanity, also becomes 'an awkward mixture of allegorical levels'. Indeed, here, Orpheus is not so far removed in his rage and grief from the carnal beasts which Aristaeus guards; he is even described as a lion, one of the wildest of beasts. If this is grief, it is grief emotionally unrestrained and therefore far better suited to Eurydice, the power of passion.

Notwithstanding these 'specific' inadequacies, there is also a more general feeling of insufficiency about the Moralitas which worries some critics. Gros Louis, especially, finds that the characters have so much attraction and human appeal that in comparison the moral lesson appears weak and anaemic. He says:

Henryson...returns to Orpheus and Eurydice
the human appeal they called forth in Ovid,
Virgil, Sir Orfeo...³⁶.

The characters in the story completely overshadow their allegorical personalities simply because they themselves are so compelling. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice has, as in Sir Orfeo, been given another dimension which lifts it out of the purely allegorical or even the purely classical and

makes it a contemporary and immediate human drama. Thus we are affected by the grief and sorrow of Orpheus upon the loss of Eurydice as we would be by a real happening. The characters assume a magnitude and tragic depth which makes any attempt at classifying them shallow and spurious. They are what they are, and their tragedy is ours because they are human and we are so closely involved with it. Eurydice, for all her compliance with the Moralitas, is quite simply much more than just the appetitive out of control; she is a tragic Queen in her own right, unable to be reduced completely and satisfactorily to a part of a moral equation.

There is a sense in which this inadequacy is mirrored in the form of the Moralitas. It is separated from the body of the story by a heading marking it out as different and disjunct. The metre changes noticeably, as does the tone. It becomes pedantic, labouring to ensure that points are made clearly and that the audience understands how each tiny piece of evidence fits into the whole moral structure and interpretation. Not only that, but like a good medievalist, the poet cannot resist digressing along the way to tell us of the dangers of witchcraft and astrology, and of his own opinion regarding those whom we have seen languishing in Hell for their particular sins. The whole addition is much more ponderous, elaborate and extended than the tale itself. Gray says of the Moralitas:

Sadly, it is its ambitious scope and its ingenuity which are the source of its weakness³⁷.

Gros Louis feels essentially the same:

Henryson's allegory is so elaborate that his moral is not very powerful, and the fact that he separates it from the body of his poem has made critics feel it is gratuitously tacked on³⁸.

What, then, is the outcome of all this speculation? It is that if the Moralitas is to be seen as the only key to Orpheus and Eurydice, it is woefully limited. This is not to say that it has no relevance at all, or that it is better

simply disregarded. As far as it goes, the Moralitas is a good, sound, medieval explanation of the fable it deals with. The problem lies in the phrase 'as far as it goes', for the Moralitas just does not go far enough; it is plainly shallow. If Henryson's, the Moralitas reveals him to be an insensitive poet with a limited vision, incapable of realising what he had created in his story.

Such an examination as we have just made of the Moralitas and its relations with the story of Orpheus, though unavoidably brief, must bring us down firmly on the side of those critics who find the Moralitas inadequate. Too many inconsistencies and mixtures of tone exist for us to truly approve the poem as united and satisfactory. Nor is it possible to analyse Orpheus and Eurydice without reference to the Moralitas - the Moralitas takes up approximately one third of the total poem and cannot be denied. To attempt to do so is naive and shortsighted.

Insofar as we agree that the Moralitas is inadequate and limited we are in accord with critics such as Gray, Allen Wright and Gros Louis. Where we must differ from them is in their sometimes unspoken conclusion - that such inadequacy is testimony to Henryson's incompetence as a poet. We must not so lightly dismiss the Henryson of the Fables and the Testament of Cresseid without an in depth exploration of the possibilities, and such an exploration has not yet been made.

One likely and satisfactory explanation for such a disunity between story and moral lesson is the active presence of a narrative persona within the poem. Such a literary device could be entirely deliberate on Henryson's part and the nagging insufficiency of the Moralitas would point the way to more complex ironies lurking beneath the surface of the poem. The next chapter will examine the evidence for the presence of a narrative persona within the body of the poem, and the full significance of the Moralitas as it fits in with this theory will be discussed in Chapter Five.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Robert L. Kindrick, Robert Henryson (Twayne's English Authors Series 274, Twayne, 1980), p.149.
2. K.R.R. Gros Louis, 'Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" and the Orpheus Traditions of the Middle Ages' Speculum, 41 (1966), 655.
3. Douglas Gray, Robert Henryson (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p.240.
4. See J.B. Friedman Orpheus in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 205; Kindrick, p.152; Gray, pp. 236-37 and John MacQueen, Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p.27.
5. Kindrick, Robert Henryson.
6. Friedman, Orpheus in the Middle Ages.
7. MacQueen, Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems.
8. MacQueen, p. 31.
9. MacQueen, p. 28.
10. Dorena Allen Wright, 'Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" and the Tradition of the Muses' Medium Aevum, 40 (1971), 41-47.
11. Allen Wright, p. 46.
12. Kindrick, p. 152.
13. Kindrick, p. 159.
14. Kindrick, p. 152.
15. Friedman, p. 203.

16. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'Robert Henryson in His Poems', in Bards and Makars, Scottish Language and Literature: Medieval and Renaissance, ed. Adam J. Aitken, Matthew P. McDiarmid, Derick S. Thomson (Glasgow: Univ. of Glasgow, 1977), pp.27-40.
17. McDiarmid, p.34.
18. Gros Louis, 'Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" and the Orpheus Traditions of the Middle Ages'.
19. Allen Wright, 'Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" and the Tradition of the Muses'.
20. Gray, Robert Henryson.
21. Gray, p. 236.
22. Gray, p. 240.
23. Gros Louis, p. 646.
24. Gros Louis, p. 654.
25. Allen Wright, pp. 46-47.
26. The two most obvious examples of this trend are Nicholas Trivet and William of Conches, see note 4.
27. M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms 4th ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1981) p. 88.
28. Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy trans. V.E. Watts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), pp. 113-115.
29. l. 205-209. All quotations from, and references to Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice follow the text of H. Harvey Wood's The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson (1933; rpt Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1978).
30. Friedman, p. 203.
31. Ed. Charles Elliott, Robert Henryson: Poems 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

32. MacQueen, p. 34.

33. MacQueen, p. 34.

34. Elliott, p. xviii.

35. Gray, p. 238.

36. Gros Louis, p. 646.

37. Gray, p. 240.

38. Gros Louis, p. 654.

CHAPTER TWO

We have seen in the previous chapter the nagging insufficiency of the *Moralitas* which is attached to Orpheus and Eurydice, and raised the possibility that such inadequacy could be due to the active presence of a narrative persona within the poem. This chapter provides an opportunity to examine such a claim and the evidence for it in detail, in the hope that the result will lead us closer to an understanding of the complexity of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Comparisons between Chaucer and Henryson abound in critical literature, and Elliott says in the introduction to his edition of Robert Henryson's poems:

If the expression 'Scottish Chaucerian' is to be applied to Henryson, it must connote qualities of control and urbanity, an impressively fluent narrative technique, ironic juxtaposing, assurance of metre and diction, and the engaging presence of a persona fully conscious of an audience¹.

It is the last part of this extract that holds the key to an understanding of the narrative technique of Orpheus and Eurydice in all its complexity and Chaucerian subtlety. The reason for the diversity of critical opinion about the poem is that many critics have not grasped what Elliott calls 'the presence of a persona', or, taking the concept further (which Elliott fails to do), the presence of an active narrative persona very different from the character of the author himself and fully conscious of his audience. In other words, it is distinctly possible that Robert Henryson as the author of Orpheus and Eurydice is not the same person as the narrator of Orpheus and Eurydice, but that they are two fundamentally different characters whose relationship to one another and to the poem can provide a great deal of very fine irony and insight, and a key to much which seems inexplicable otherwise.

Before exploring the idea further, it is appropriate to note that this is not a new literary device, either in medieval literature, or in Robert Henryson's other works. Many readers and critics are now aware of the concept of the narrator as persona in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. The richness and subtlety of the Tales are vastly limited if we suggest that all are strictly Chaucer's opinion and viewpoint. However, in acknowledging the gap between, for example, the Wife of Bath as narrator, Chaucer the pilgrim as reporter and Chaucer the author, there is a great deal of subtle irony and ambivalence to be gained. To do away with this multiplicity of personae would be to seriously underestimate and limit the ironic potential of Chaucer's art. One has only to think of the wealth of narrators in the Canterbury Tales, along with such poems as Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Parliament of Fowls and Troilus and Criseyde to realise how deeply ingrained in medieval literary tradition was the device of filtering events and narrative through the character of a narrator.

Henryson himself has used a more obvious narrative persona in his Testament of Cresseid. Although critics differ on the nature of the character of this narrative persona, they seem to have little difficulty in agreeing that one exists. Denton Fox says:

Yet the Testament, if immediately attractive, is also a more intricate poem than it may seem at first sight, since Henryson's characteristic method is to work by indirection and to conceal a considerable amount of complexity underneath an apparently simple surface².

His next comment is even more pertinent:

The most pervasive surface disguises of the poem, however, are its apparently rambling style and its imbecilic narrator. A fifteenth-century reader, trained to recognise conventions and to value poetry for its rhetoric and, in the best sense,

its contrivance, would not be likely to confuse the narrator with the poet...³.

Fox does not explore the idea of an ironic gap between narrator and poet, instead he proceeds to elaborate on the nature and character of the Testament narrator. McDiarmid differs markedly from Fox on many points regarding the Testament and the character of its narrator, but he, too, is aware of the narrator as a separate and individual persona whose presence is a filter through which we see the events of the poem⁴.

If, then, Henryson has used a narrator in an obvious way in the Testament of Cresseid, it appears equally possible that he has set up a less obvious narrative character in Orpheus and Eurydice, whose presence also acts as a kind of filter for the events of the poem.

We have established that Henryson's use of a distinct narrator would not be strange or out of place in a literary tradition which abounds with such devices and which Henryson himself has made use of elsewhere in his works. Now, however, the evidence for such a claim must be examined in detail.

As we have already seen, the inadequacy of the *Moralitas* and the didactic lesson it expounds point to the possible presence of a narrator at work within the poem (the significance of the *Moralitas* in the whole scheme of the poem will be examined in Chapter Five). Nevertheless, other evidence also exists within the body of the poem for such a claim.

The opening stanzas of Orpheus and Eurydice reveal clearly the presence of a narrative persona at work, often demonstrating a twisted, perverted (and impotent) example of medieval doctrine in action. Stanzas 1-4 are good examples of the narrator's assumed naivete. We have in these stanzas a narrator who uses twenty eight lines merely to inform us of one 'fact': that virtue and moral goodness are inherited through the lineage of a noble and high ranking family. The

doctrine is taken a step further when the narrator claims:

It is contrair the Lawis of nature
 A gentill man to be degenerat,
 Nocht following of his progenitour
 The worthe rewll, and the lordly estait.

(l 8-11)

Not only does noble birth confer moral virtue, but according to the 'Lawis of nature', a highly born man is capable of nothing else.

What should be obvious to all who have observed human nature is that such an assertion is utterly unfounded. It is a total misunderstanding and misapplication of standard medieval philosophy; exactly what we would expect to find in an unreliable narrator. It is the same sort of misunderstanding and perversion as that which renders the overbearing didacticism of the *Moralitas* unfit to match the tragedy of the Orpheus story.

The treatment of such an idea is entirely different in a predecessor of the poem, Sir Orfeo:

Orfeo was a kinge,
 In Jnglond an heize lording,
 A stalworþ man & hardi bo;
 Large & curteys he was al-so.
 His fader was comen of King Pluto,
 & his moder of King Juno,
 þat sum-time were as godes y-hold
 For auentours þat þai dede & told.

(l 39-46)

The tone here is matter of fact, and no explicit connection is drawn between Orfeo's parentage and his moral virtue and proper behaviour. The unspoken implication is, however, supported and validated by the poet's description of Orfeo's status and reputation, which comes before the description of his parentage. Before we are told of his lineage we are already aware that Orfeo is a good man and highly esteemed.

Here we know already that the unspoken premise has held true; the poet does not claim it will do so in all cases, he merely states the facts in this particular instance. Beside the reticence of Sir Orfeo the clumsiness of the narrator of Orpheus and Eurydice is clearly shown. It is even more obvious when we realise the incredible irony implicit in Henryson's poem: Orpheus comes of the highest lineage and therefore (according to the narrator's reasoning) possesses the greatest moral virtues of any man, yet he is unable to rescue his wife from the Underworld because he succumbs to purely human temptation.

As we know, many comparisons are drawn between Henryson and Chaucer, earning Henryson the title of 'Scottish Chaucerian'. Many similarities do exist between the two authors, and it therefore seems strange to attribute these opening stanzas to Henryson the poet, for their subject is completely at variance with the words that Chaucer puts into the mouth of the Wife of Bath. In the Wife of Bath's Tale the 'olde wyfe' speaks at length on the very same subject that the opening stanzas of Orpheus and Eurydice deal with, but the conclusion is markedly different:

Looke who that is moost vertuous alway,
 Pryvee and apert, and moost entendeth ay
 To do the gentil dedes that he kan;
 Taak hym for the grettest gentil man.
 Crist wole we clayme of hym oure gentillesse,
 Nat of oure eldres for hire old richesse.
 For thogh they yeve us al hir heritage,
 For which we clayme to been of heigh parage,
 Yet may they nat biquethe, for no thyng,
 To noon of us hir vertuous lyvving,
 That made hem gentil men ycalled be,
 And bad us folwen hem in swich degree...
 For, God it woot, men may wel often fynde
 A lordes sone do shame and vileynye;
 And he that wole han pris of his gentrye,
 For he was boren of a gentil hous,
 And hadde his eldres noble and vertuous,

And nel hymselfen do no gentil dedis,
 Ne folwen his gentil auncestre that deed is,
 He nys nat gentil, be he duc or erl;
 For vileyns synful dedes make a cherl.

(Canterbury Tales III (D), 1113-1124; 1150-1158)

Henryson, both as a Chaucerian writer and as a keen observer of humanity, would be foolish indeed to contradict the argument put so cogently here. The moral characteristics of courtesy, nobleness, truthfulness, loyalty and graciousness that make up the concept of 'gentillesse' are unrelated to genetic inheritance. If the opening stanzas of Orpheus and Eurydice are the work of Henryson the author, the poem itself must be regarded as unsound, based on an untrue premise. However, it is equally possible that the opening stanzas belong to the narrator, and an examination of the narratorial tone adds weight to this possibility.

Just as the narrator of the opening stanzas has only partially grasped the subject of inherited nobleness, so too the tone of those stanzas misjudges its audience. It is obsequious and fawning, fulsome and intrusive in its servility:

The nobilnes and grit magnificens
 of prince and lord, quhai list to magnifie,
 his ancestre and lineall discens
 Suld first extoll, and his genologie,
 So that his harte he mycht inclyne thairby
 The moir to vertew and to worthiness,
 herand reherss his elderis gentilness.

It is contrair the Lawis of nature
 A gentill man to be degenerat,
 Nocht following of his progenitour
 The worthe rewill, and the lordly estait;
 A ryall rynk for to be rusticat
 Is bot a monsture in comparesoun,
 had in dispyt and full derisioun.

(11-14).

Far from being convincing, the tone only serves to underline the unsoundness of the argument. Stanza after stanza become more and more uncomfortable as the self conscious note continues, at once servile and pompous, using overblown imagery and hyperbolic comparisons.

If the whole of Orpheus and Eurydice were delivered in this sort of pseudo-naive tone there would be very little to recommend it to critical examination. However, as we proceed to examine the poem we find two kinds of tone existing side by side: the fulsome servility of the narrator and the simple, effective, moving tone of Henryson the author.

The narrator intrudes once more in stanza ten:

No wondir wes thocht he wes fair and wyse,
gentill and gud, full of liberalitie,
his fader god, and his progenetryse
a goddess, finder of all armony:
quhen he wes borne scho set him on hir kne,
and gart him souk of hir twa paupis quhyte
The sueit lecour of all musik perfyte.

(l 64-70)

The same illogical, patronising assumptions recur. Even the movement from narratorial assumption to statement of 'fact' is questionable. If Orpheus' mother has imparted to him the 'sueit lecour of all musik perfyte' we would expect Orpheus to embody Boethius' concept of an individual at harmony within himself⁵; instead he easily overbalances into hysterical rage and grief at the loss of his wife.

Stanza thirteen reveals the narrator's derivative, ineffective literary style:

Betuix orpheuss and fair erudices,
fra thai wer weddit, on fra day to day
The low of lufe cowth kyndill and incress,
with mirth, and blythness, solace, and with play
off warldly Joy; allace, quhat sall I say?

Lyk till a flour that plesandly will spring,
 quhilk fadis sone, and endis with murnyng.

(l 85-91)

The deliberate naivete of the narrator is shown in l 89, and the simile of the transitory flower is neither original nor effective. It is exactly the sort of banal, unimaginative statement that Chaucer's Nun's Priest puts in the mouth of Chaunticleer the cock:

"The sonne," he seyde, "is clomben up on hevene
 Fourty degrees and oon, and moore ywis.
 Madame Pertelote, my worldes blis,
 Herkneth thise blisful briddes how they synge,
 And se the fresshe floures how they sprynge;
 Ful is myn herte of revel and solas!"
 But sodeynly hym fil a sorweful cas,
 For evere the latter ende of joye is wo.

(Canterbury Tales VII (B²), 3198-3205)

The similarities between the two extracts are obvious, and the narrator of Orpheus and Eurydice impresses us no more than does the Nun's Priest. Both comparisons are little more than insincere platitudes, devoid of any depth of feeling or originality. The very self-consciousness of both narrators draws attention to their hypocrisy - the narrators are more impressed with their own style than their respective stories.

Orpheus and Eurydice, then, is not a simple dramatic monologue. Rather, it alternates between the narrator's pomposity and Henryson's simple but eloquent sincerity, which serves to highlight the narrator's superficiality. Stanza twenty and the stanzas that follow contain our first real taste of Henryson's effective, authorial tone:

O dulful herp, with mony dully string,
 turne all thy mirth and musik in murning,
 and seiss of all thy sutell songis sueit;
 now weip with me, thy lord and cairfull King,
 quhilk lossit hes in erd all his lyking;

and all thy game thow change in gole, and greit,
 Thy goldin pynnis with mony teiris weit;
 and all my pane for till report thow preiss,
 cryand with me, in every steid and streit,
 "quhair art thow gone, my luve ewridicess?".

(l 134-143)

Here the tone is one of simple tragedy. The language is plain and unadorned (note the abundance of monosyllabic words). There are no highly wrought sentences, no contrived imagery, no rhetorical questions. The skilful, elegaic tone is strengthened by the competent and effective alliteration and assonance, and they combine with the rhythm to communicate Orpheus' grief, not to draw attention to the verse itself.

The stanzas that follow describe Orpheus' exile in the wilderness, and the simple, highly skilled style remains. The words are short and powerful and the rhythm contributes to the pathos by emphasising words which describe what Orpheus once had, and what he has now as an exile. The writing is masterly, appealing not to the intellect, but to the common human emotions.

This tone predominates throughout Orpheus' wanderings, both on earth and in the heavens, and his acquisition of musical skill, until we are brought down to earth suddenly as the narrator steps in to make a comic denial of any musical knowledge (to be enlarged upon later in this chapter), and the masterful style is superseded again by the narrator's artificiality. Nowhere is this artificiality shown more clearly than in stanza forty three:

O dully place, [and] grundles deip dungeoun,
 furness of fyre, and stink intollerable,
 pit of dispair, without remissioun,
 Thy meit wennome, Thy drink is pusable,
 Thy grit panis and to compte unnumerable;
 Quhat creature cumis to dwell in the
 Is ay deand, and nevirmoir sall de.

(l 310-316)

Not only do we have the return of the inflated tone, but the narrator reveals himself to be unreliable, for we know that Eurydice, who has come to dwell in the Underworld here described, is not dead, but in a 'deidly swoun'. We are back in the camp of the narrator, among the melodramatic apostrophes and the self-conscious artifice. It is a performance, composed of all the 'proper' medieval rhetorical devices but producing only bathos. What we are most aware of is the narrator, for he is never fully at one with his work.

Stanza fifty seven, and the beginning of the Moralitas that follows it, provide perhaps the clearest example of the juxtaposition of the two levels of tone:

'Now find I weill this proverb trew,' quod he,
 '"hart on the hurd, and handis on the soir;
 Quhair Luve gois, on forss mone turne the E."
 I am expart, and wo is me thairfoir,
 Bot for a Luke my lady is forloir.'
 Thus chydand on with luve, our burne and bent,
 A wofull wedo hamewart is he went.

Moralitas

Now, wirthy folk, boece, that senatour,
 To wryt this fenyeit fable tuk in cure,
 In his gay buke of consolatioun...

(1 408-417)

Orpheus' final lament in stanza fifty seven is skilfully done. Simple and elegaic, it is powerful and moving because of its very understatement. It sums up, without the least hint of self-consciousness, Orpheus' tragedy and the tragedy inherent in the human condition. The proverb quoted is apt and to the point, while the simple word 'expart' (experienced) conveys the whole scope of the tragedy in sad irony. Orpheus is 'experienced', but has paid the price. The phrase 'Bot for a Luke' conveys ironically how small a thing a glance backward is, yet its result is devastating for Orpheus.

The final line of the stanza caps it all off. The alliteration of the 'w' sound, the uncomplicated, measured rhythm, the finality of the word 'wedo' and the tragic irony of the word 'hamewart' (where is Orpheus' home without Eurydice?) all contribute to the sadly ironic ending of the story, and pay tribute to Henryson's brilliance as poet.

What follows in vivid contrast, is the narrator, with all his inflated rhetoric, self-importance and coy obsequiousness. The whole tone of the Moralitas, as well as the moral lesson it contains, is totally inadequate in comparison with the story preceding it.

We should note that such changes from narratorial to authorial tone are not haphazard. It is the narrator who sets the background for the story and explains the significance of Orpheus' parentage. However, Henryson as author takes over as Eurydice is bitten by the snake, and he takes us through Orpheus' grief and exile in the wilderness, leading finally to his journey through the heavens. The narrator returns with a disparaging remark about his own musical knowledge immediately after Orpheus' heavenly journey, and continues with us until Orpheus plays before Pluto in order to gain his wife's release. Then we have Henryson as author, in his skilful, unobtrusive style, who takes us through Orpheus' momentary success, his look backwards and his concluding tragic cry. Hard on the heels of this comes the Moralitas, and with it the narrator, who remains with us until the end of the poem. This is most likely why Gros Louis feels that the human appeal of the characters themselves outshines the lesson of the Moralitas: every time the characters are directly 'on stage' we see them through the eyes and superior verse of Henryson the author. All background, linking and didacticism are left for the clearly inferior narrator.

Having identified the presence of a narrative persona within Orpheus and Eurydice and examined that persona at work, we can start to build up some sort of list of characteristics belonging to the narrator.

In The Discarded Image, Lewis observes that the medieval literary attitude was of an overwhelmingly bookish quality. Every author based himself on authors and books that had gone before him, following an 'auctor'. It was not the originality of a piece of work, but its 'pedigree', how well it retold what had already been said by someone else (with the correct amplification added in) which was most important. Equally important to the medieval mind, however, was a love of order. Lewis says:

At his most characteristic, medieval man was not a dreamer nor a wanderer. He was an organiser, a codifier, a builder of systems. He wanted "a place for everything and everything in the right place." Distinction, definition, tabulation were his delight. Though full of turbulent activities, he was equally full of the impulse to formalise them⁶.

This impulse is easily seen in so many of the rules and unspoken guidelines which dominated Medieval life and behaviour. War was formalised by the art of heraldry and the rules of chivalry. Knightly conduct was delineated in order to produce the ideal man, and sexual passion regulated by an elaborate code of courtly love. The Arts of Rhetoric stipulated every way a poet should or should not write, and the classification of these methods was carefully thought out. The medieval mind had a label or a name for everything, and liked nothing better than to categorise various psychological profiles according to which humour was in preponderance. As Lewis puts it:

There was nothing which medieval people liked better, or did better, than sorting out and tidying up⁷.

The medieval love of books, mentioned earlier, amounted to almost a reverence for the written word. The medieval writer was extremely credulous of books; he could not 'believe that anything an old auctor has said is simply untrue'⁸. Its claim to authority was a work's greatest

claim. Anything written by a medieval writer should be merely a retelling of an old truth, because all truth had already been expounded by those who had gone before. (This did not prevent many enterprising writers from telling an old truth while slipping in a new bit of their own under the guise of authority; however, the appeal to authority was always there). All the authors and works which existed prior to the Middle Ages offered a rich opportunity for this 'sorting out and tidying up'.

These two medieval characteristics can provide us with a rich insight into the character of Henryson's narrator in Orpheus and Eurydice. It seems that what Henryson has done is to provide us with a narrator who is the very archetype and exemplum of a medieval storyteller. The narrator is the bookish, ordered medieval man throughout the Orpheus story, and especially so in the *Moralitas*.

If we examine the poem in the light of this, we will find many medieval poetic devices at work. Gros Louis says:

At first, Henryson seems another typical medieval commentator who relates a classical myth and follows with an allegorical explanation of its moral significance. Ovidian and Boethian commentators did exactly the same thing...The *Moralitas* contains all the elements one would expect - at times it is specifically moral, at times theological, at times even contemporary⁹.

The comment, if applied to the narrator and not to Henryson, is extremely useful. It reminds us of the fact that as far as the medieval poetic tradition goes, the poem contains everything necessary and desirable. The medieval traits of orderliness and precedent are evident in many places. The beginning of the poem contains the elaborate genealogy of Orpheus, typical of the medieval penchant for cataloguing,

explaining and family trees. The pedigree of a hero was important, and as Gros Louis says:

[Henryson's] listing and description of the nine muses is equally typical of the desire to be compendiously learned at every opportunity¹⁰.

Aristaeus appeared originally in Virgil¹¹, the emphasis on the lovers' joy followed by Orpheus' excessive grief is Ovidian¹² and the brief similes related to the shifting and impermanent nature of man's existence in a world dominated by Fortune are Boethian in origin¹³.

Perhaps the most important point to be made here is that the Moralitas can now be seen to be the most central of medieval cataloguing devices available to the narrator. He has satisfied his narratorial requirements by tying the whole story up in what is to him a neat, perfectly satisfying allegorical interpretation which leaves everything catalogued, systematised and in its right place. So far as the medieval narrator is concerned, he has given us a unified, satisfactory fable, with all loose ends neatly tied into place.

What creates the tension and uncertainty therefore, is Henryson as author working underneath the narrator, drawing attention to the latter's limitations. The significance of this point will be seen in Chapter Five.

If the Moralitas is one instance in which the narrator reveals himself directly, the other instance appears in l 240-242. Following a passage describing in great technical detail the music Orpheus learns while he visits the heavens (l 219-239) we find the following lines of dismissal:

Off sic musik to wryt I do bot doit,
Thairfoir of this mater a stray I lay,
For in my lyfe I cowth nevir sing a noit (l 240-2).

Critics have difficulty in explaining this apparent anomaly. It is puzzling for its change of tone in the midst of the

reworking of a classical myth, and for its apparent negation of what has so carefully and fully been explained in the previous stanzas.

McDiarmid says:

Henryson's wry remark as he leaves [the musical] description, 'Of sic musik to wryte I do bot dote... For in my lyf I couth never syng a note' (l 240-242), is probably something more meaningful than the humorous aside that it has been assumed to be¹⁴,

but he does not elaborate on this point any further. This is a common problem among critics when dealing with these lines. Gray refers to the offending lines as '...a witty Chaucerian gesture'¹⁵, yet sees the musical description as 'accurate...and strictly relevant to the story'¹⁶. Gros Louis agrees with Gray in calling the lines a 'humorous admission'¹⁷ to recall himself from what is clearly a digression from the main story. MacQueen sees the admission as a device to draw attention to the musical treatise:

As narrator, Henryson disclaims any share in the music he describes... The remark is to be taken rhetorically rather than personally; the effect is to emphasize the importance of the passage¹⁸.

Kindrick is not quite sure what to make of it all:

After this digression on music, Henryson introduces a bit of biographical information which makes his intrusion into music theory almost comic... [l 240-242 are] a strange admission for a man who goes into so much detail in his description of the music of the spheres¹⁹.

If we consider the disavowal of musical knowledge as Henryson's, he becomes incredibly limited and naive. The catalogue of musical terms which has gone before is so detailed and technical that to disclaim any musical learning

on Henryson's part, while superficially witty, is rather unnecessary. It becomes even more so when that very same music and technical brilliance will bring about Eurydice's temporary release from Hell. Such critical confusion, however, springs from a lack of recognition of the narrative persona. If the interjection is the narrator's, it both adds to our conception of him as a character, and enables Henryson as author to work on more than one level to achieve a subtle, ironic detachment. The narrator can then be seen as the one who feels he has been too long-winded and tedious in giving us a very medieval catalogue of musical terms, and attempts to return to his story with the least amount of difficulty. Henryson, however, can be working in a completely different way behind this comment, while at the same time drawing our attention to the fact that there is a distinct narrative persona present.

The lines of musical disavowal are particularly pointed in their revelation of the narrator at work, and deal with music. Music in Orpheus and Eurydice is important to a proper understanding of the poem, and will be examined in the next chapter.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. Ed. Charles Elliott, Robert Henryson: Poems 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1974), p.xx.
2. Testament of Cresseid ed. Denton Fox, (London: Nelson, 1968), p.1.
3. Fox, p.2.
4. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'Robert Henryson in His Poems', in Bards and Makars, Scottish Language and Literature: Medieval and Renaissance, ed. Adam J. Aitken, Matthew P. McDiarmid, Derick S. Thomson (Glasgow: Univ. of Glasgow, 1977), p.35.
5. i.e. Musica Humana, or the blending of rational soul and irrational body into an harmonious whole. See Henry Chadwick, Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) p.82.
6. C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (1964; rpt Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), p.10.
7. Lewis, p.10.
8. Lewis, p.11.
9. K.R.R. Gros Louis, 'Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" and the Orpheus Traditions of the Middle Ages' Speculum, 41 (1966), 646.
10. Gros Louis, p.647.
11. Virgil, Georgics 4, 457.
12. Ovid, Metamorphoses Book 10.
13. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy Book 3, Metre 12.

14. McDiarmid, p.33.
15. Douglas Gray, Robert Henryson (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p.233.
16. Gray, p.233.
17. Gros Louis, p.650.
18. John MacQueen, Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), p.43.
19. Robert L. Kindrick, Robert Henryson (Twayne's English Authors Series 274, Twayne, 1980), p.156.

CHAPTER THREE

Music is essential to the Orpheus story in almost any version, and Orpheus and Eurydice contains many technical musical terms and a narrator who emphatically denies any knowledge of such detail. This is an important lead which should be pursued, as an examination of the central role of music in Orpheus and Eurydice will assist us to resolve the enigmatic quality of the poem. It is important, therefore, that we make a brief study of the development of the Medieval musical theory which Henryson calls upon in Orpheus and Eurydice. Only when we have examined the growth of such a theory from its origins, and its ramifications, and have assessed the role of music in preceding versions of the Orpheus myth are we in a position to observe how the role of music has been altered in Orpheus and Eurydice.

The development of musical practice in the Middle Ages was accompanied by the transmission and expansion of a large body of musical theory made up of various conflicting, confused and garbled shreds of Greek musical theory and accounts of musical practice inherited from a comprehensive succession of writers and commentators. The Middle Ages also inherited successive layers of growths and changes in the development of vocal and instrumental music¹.

The accumulation of such a 'patchwork' of overlapping, interlocking, sometimes conflicting detail had two results: the formation of basic harmonic and rhythmic theory (detailing stylistic conventions and ancient and contemporary musical practice); and the circulation of scraps of a larger philosophy, accounting for the fabled effects of music in the Classical myths, detailing the place of musical phenomena in the general course of Nature, and locating musical practice in the ethical and theological processes of a Christian world view².

Obviously, then, we are dealing with a vast collection of pieces of musical theory and practice gathered from numerous sources and authorities. We must begin with the

Ancient World as our point of origin, and work our way onwards to the Middle Ages.

In the Ancient world three branches of musical speculation existed. The first branch consisted of the mathematical study of tonal sequences and intervals. The second branch entailed the study of the psychological effects that music was thought to have on its listeners through an analysis of various tonal styles and combinations. The third consisted of the assessment of the overall place of music in society³. Subsequently, a huge rift developed between Western practical music and its classical inheritance. Western music gravitated towards polyphony at the expense of monody (a feature of classical music), and the development of the organum in the chant of the church in the ninth and tenth centuries was the beginning of a series of steps which would lead the musical practice of succeeding centuries so far away from its classical origins that it was impossible for those later ages to understand the writings handed down from the Ancient world. Yet if the Ancient world and its Western successors differed about musical practice and theory, the same cannot be said about the third branch of classical study; that of music and its overall place in society. The general speculation about the nature of music and its effect upon humanity, society and the universe that filtered down through the late Roman writers became increasingly incorporated into a developing Christian world picture, which only accentuated the widening of the gap in the other musical areas.

We will concentrate, therefore, upon this third branch of musical speculation, for it is relevant for our purposes and traces the development of a long-standing musical philosophy. We are not so much interested in technical music-making, but in music as it relates to the way man sees society and the universe around him. We can follow this sort of speculation through from Ancient times into the Middle Ages, and from there we will assess Henryson's use of such musical theory in Orpheus and Eurydice.

We begin our brief study with Pythagoras and his followers, who were renowned for their research into numbers, ratios and music⁴. They discovered that the relative pitch of musical sounds depends on the length of string or pipe, so that the ratio for the octave is 2:1, for the fifth 3:2 and for the fourth 4:3. These results, although related mainly to practical music-making and theory of musical production, were also the basis of the Ancient study of the relation of music to the individual psyche and the surrounding cosmos.

Plato's Timaeus picks up this notion of numerical ratios and transfers it to the universe. Ratios are the basic principle, according to the Timaeus, by which the world soul is immanent in the cosmos, and they give the world its ordered structure⁵. The Timaeus insists that sight was given to humanity in order that mankind might observe the harmonious motions of the heavenly planets and by that observation of celestial examples, regulate their own internal harmony. Similarly, poetry and music, the arts directed at hearing, must also express the orderly patterns of the heavens.

Plato returns to these ideas in the Republic. Whereas in the Timaeus the world soul rolls on its eternal path without emitting any sort of sound, according to the myth of Er at the end of the Republic, each of the eight planets gives out a sound, as do the fixed stars around them, so that their total harmony (consisting of eight notes) results in a vast concord. The eight heavenly planets whirl around the spindle of Necessity. On each sphere a siren sits, singing a single note, and the whole blends into a single cosmic harmony⁶.

Aristotle's De Caelo is the next work to tackle these notions of cosmic harmony, but in a different way. Aristotle ridicules the arguments put forward by Plato in the Republic because they hold that the heavenly spheres emit sound as they travel. The Pythagoreans also believed that the heavenly bodies were so big that they must produce

a considerable volume of sound as they moved. Aristotle thinks the whole idea beautiful and poetic, but absurd. A principal feature of the heavenly bodies, he says, is their silence. It is likewise ridiculous, he claims, to assert that we do not hear this cosmic music only because we are accustomed to hearing it from the time we are born⁷. Although attempting to discredit these notions of cosmic harmony, Aristotle actually helped to disseminate them because his works were so widely read.

The poetic qualities of the idea of cosmic harmony, combined with the reassurance that it gave mankind that the universe operated on principles of order (despite the apparent surrounding chaos), ensured its survival.

The Platonic idea of planetary music was incorporated into Church teaching by St Augustine. In his homily on Psalm 42 he declares that when a man comes close to his death, his mind becomes detached from this world and he hears an 'intellectual music':

A sound from above so strikes in silence, not on the ears but on the mind, that whoever hears that melody is filled with loathing on corporeal sounds, and all human life becomes in comparison a din interrupting the incomparable, ineffable song from heaven⁸.

Augustine advocates music and number as keys to unlock Scripture in his tract on Christian Instruction, and in his City Of God says:

We must not despise the science of numbers, which, in many passages of Holy Scripture, is found to be of eminent service to the careful interpreter. Neither has it been without reason numbered among God's praises, "Thou hast ordered all things in number, and measure and weight"⁹.

In a letter to Jerome, Augustine presents God as a musician who measures out the universe, and creation as a melody:

If a man who is skilled in composing a song knows what lengths to assign to what tones, so that the melody flows and progresses with beauty by a succession of slow and rapid tones, how much more true is it that God permits no periods of time in the birth and death of His creatures...to proceed either more quickly or more slowly than the recognized and well-defined law of rhythm requires, in this wonderful song of succeeding events¹⁰.

So the Augustinian tradition of Christian Platonism adopted, domesticated and legitimised within the Christian Church a whole section of the Platonic language concerning numbers and harmony as roads to the true God and his identity.

Macrobius' commentary on Cicero's Somnium Scipionis was the next link in this series of works regarding the nature of cosmic harmony. Macrobius' work was one of immense reputation and long-lasting influence. In fact, the whole Ancient tradition of musical thought was summed up and transmitted to the Middle Ages by this work. It was Macrobius who communicated most effectively the theory of heavenly music and its earthly implications to the Medieval world. Scipio is shown the heavens:

Thanne shewede he hym the lytel erthe that here is,
 At regard of the hevenes quantite;
 And after shewede he hym the nyne speres,
 And after that the melodye herde he
 That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,
 That welle is of musik and melodye
 In this world here, and cause of armonye.

(Chaucer, Parliament of Fowls l 57-63)

Scipio enquires about this music 'passing all instruments musicall':

'That' replied my grandfather, 'is a concord of tones separated by unequal but nevertheless carefully proportioned intervals, caused by the rapid motions of the spheres themselves. The high and low tones

blended together produce different harmonies...the earth...always clings to the same position in the middle of the universe. The other eight spheres... produce seven different tones, this number being, one might almost say, the key to the universe. Gifted men, imitating this harmony on stringed instruments and in singing, have gained for themselves a return to this region, as have those who have devoted their exceptional abilities to a search for divine truths. The ears of mortals are filled with this sound, but they are unable to hear it...¹¹

Not long after, the eight sirens populating the spheres in the vision of Er became identified with the nine Muses of another tradition, and the Muses were given charge of celestial music.

We come finally to the last author to be considered in this necessarily brief historical overview: Boethius. Boethius' works were fundamental, essential sources of authority for the Middle Ages, and he, too, devoted himself to a study of music and cosmic harmony. In his De Institutione Musica, Boethius outlines three sorts of music: *Musica Mundana* (cosmic harmony), *Musica Humana* (human music) and *Musica Instrumentalis* (instrumental music)¹². Boethius holds that the origin of music is always God, who has unchanging laws of numbers in his mind. Music is 'the joining together of several things and the consent of contraries'¹³.

Musica Instrumentalis is the least important kind of music, and refers to any kind of music made by man. It imitates, according to Boethius, the harmony of the spheres (to a greater or lesser extent) and follows the laws of ratio and proportion of that cosmic harmony. It can include string music, wind, percussion and the human voice in song. *Musica Instrumentalis*, though, is not just the practical production of sound; it also has a moral effect on the hearer. If the music produced is morally good, it can cure

sickness as well as fostering virtue. Immoral music has the opposite and destructive effect.

Musica Humana is the harmony within the microcosm of man himself. It is the concord and unity of the body and soul; a perfect blending of insubstantial soul and physical body. This type of music is perceived only by introspection, for through it we are aware of being compounded of a mixture of rationality and irrationality. Musica Humana is linked with, and parallels (to a lesser extent) the cosmic music. The individual is concordant within himself, and in being so, repeats the concordant pattern of the universe, thus participating in the harmony of creation.

Both Musica Instrumentalis and Musica Humana point to Musica Mundana, the highest form of music for Boethius. Again a Pythagorean concept, it deals with the fitting-together of the heavens. Cosmic music is harmony expressing itself in numerical ratios; it is the ordering or blending of the four elements (earth, air, water and fire), and the movements of the stars and the seasons. The relations of all these things are drawn from the unchanging laws of numbers in God's mind. This cosmic harmony can be produced in three ways: in the movements and harmonies of the spheres (which are sonorous, totally coordinated and tightly knit, though inaudible to human ears), in the binding of the elements (which brings about an inaudible harmony of diversities and opposing forces) and in the variation of the seasons (where no part is useless or superfluous, nor is any part able to destroy another by its excess). Like Plato in the Timaeus, Boethius says that the principle which controls the distances between the planets is one of harmonic ratios and intervals.

Boethius' threefold division of music was central for his time, and lasted to become crucial for the Middle Ages, especially the concept of cosmic harmony.

What we have been examining is the accumulation of a whole body of inherited thought and theory which

encompasses a view of music profoundly different from that of modern thought. It is impossible to examine the role of music in Orpheus and Eurydice, or to understand its centrality in the Orpheus story without first examining this background and understanding the importance of music in relation to the cosmos for Medieval man.

What, then, did the Medieval writers and thinkers who inherited this body of thought do with it? How did it influence their concept of the world around them?

Lewis speaks of the process of assimilation of all this theory in this way:

...the medieval synthesis itself, the whole organisation of their theology, science, and history into a single, complex, harmonious mental Model of the Universe¹⁴.

In fact, the building and formulating of this Model had begun long before, as we have seen. Prior to the Middle Ages many writers were, consciously or unconsciously, collating and harmonising a medley of very different views and formulating a Model of the universe which combined not only Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoical elements, but also pagan and Christian ones. The Middle Ages had a chance to adopt and perfect this Model¹⁵.

The Model (which, though not universal, was common and well-known) is ordered and harmonious, extending upwards in a great hierarchy, in a perfect, spherical shape, containing various components in an orderly composition. All power and movement originate in God, and are transmitted to the spheres, causing them to rotate. The universe represented by the Medieval cosmological Model is not only orderly, hierarchical and perfectly proportioned, it is intricately and completely bound up with music, especially cosmic music as Boethius described it. Music is both an integral part of this Model of the universe, and simultaneously, a metaphor for it.

According to the Medieval mind, this vast Model is not silent. Although our ears cannot hear the music produced by the movements of the spheres, if they were able to, we would hear, as Henryson has it;

...everilk Planet in his proper Spheir,
In moving makand Harmonie and sound¹⁶.

This 'Harmonie and sound' is the singing of the spheres. In their daily movement, according to the Medievals, the spheres produced this music, which permeated the whole universe, bringing order and harmony into chaotic situations. This music of the spheres represents the concept of order as it is established in the heavens; it assures of a divine plan in control of the universe. The harmony of the spheres is the harmony of God in his heaven prevailing over all creation:

Above Saturn, which is the last plainest and highest from us of all the seven planets, is the heaven that men see so full of stars as it were sown, when it is clear time and weather. This heaven that is so starred is the firmament which moveth and goeth round. Of which moving is so great joy, so great melody and so sweet, that there is no man that, if he might hear it, the never after should have talent ne will to do thing that were contrary unto our Lord in anything that might be; so much should he desire to come thither where he might alway hear so sweet melody and be alway with them. Whereof some were sometime that said that little young children heard this melody when they laughed in their sleep; for it is said that then they hear the angels of Our Lord in heaven sing, whereof they have such joy in their sleep. But hereof knoweth no man the truth save God that knoweth all, which setted the stars on the heaven and made them to have such power. For there is nothing within the earth ne within the sea, how diverse it be, but it is on the heaven figured and compassed by the stars;

of which none knoweth the number save God only, which at his pleasure numbeth them and knoweth the name of every each of them, as he that all knoweth and all created by good reason¹⁷.

Celestial harmony, then, is a powerful agent which modulates the items of nature and binds them together as well as affecting human nature and action. It reaches through the whole of creation (no place is immune to it) and holds together all the universe from 'mute stones to the choirs of angels'¹⁸. In De Musica Boethius says:

The music of the universe is especially to be studied in the combining of the elements and the variety of the seasons which are observed in the heavens. How indeed could the swift mechanism of the sky move silently in its course?...Now unless a certain harmony united the differences and contrary powers of the four elements, how could they form a single body and mechanism? But all this diversity produces the variety of seasons and fruits, and thereby makes the year a unity¹⁹.

Perhaps the single most important feature of cosmic music is its ability to achieve and maintain order, and in doing so, work out the divine plan for the universe. Although the word 'harmony' in Greek classical music theory meant the ordering of ratios of quantities to each other, by the Middle Ages the word 'harmony' had assumed the original meaning of the Greek word 'harmonia'; a fitting or joining together of discrete and disparate entities into a harmonious whole. Indeed, the word still has a similar connotation today.

For the Medieval mind, music was implicit in all aspects of life, and all practical music related back to its higher originator - cosmic music. The music of the universe was a powerful agent always associated with complete concord and harmony. Whether Christian or not, Medieval man knew that the seemingly chaotic universe which surrounded him had

an underlying order and stability brought about by and expressed in music.

This, then, is the musical, cosmological train of thought which Henryson inherited. Any Medieval writer would be virtually unable to deal with music (especially cosmic music) without recognising its associations with order, stability and universal harmony. Before we deal with music's role in Orpheus and Eurydice, then, it is also appropriate for us to examine some forerunners which tell of the Orpheus myth, to study briefly the role of music in those fore-runners. We then have a useful guideline with which to compare the role of music in Henryson's version of the myth.

Ovid²⁰ has Orpheus make his way to the underworld unaided after Eurydice is bitten by a snake. The first time we hear of Orpheus' great musical ability is when Ovid describes his speech to Pluto, which he accompanies with the music of his lyre. Orpheus' words, combined with the lyre music are enough to cause the bloodless ghosts to cry, and gain him his wife on the condition that he does not look back at her as they leave the underworld. He does so, and loses Eurydice.

Virgil enlarges the role of Orpheus' music in his Orpheus and Eurydice²¹. After Eurydice has been bitten by the snake, Orpheus sings an elegy for her before setting out for the Underworld (again unaided by any divine assistance). There, again, his music has power to charm the inhabitants of Hades, and releases his wife to him, but again Orpheus looks back and Eurydice is lost.

Following upon Virgil we turn to Boethius, who adds yet again to the role of music in the Orpheus myth²². Orpheus, here, mourns for his wife after her loss, and the beauty of his music has the power to make the trees move and the rivers cease to flow, and to subdue the wild beasts. When Orpheus, unaided, reaches the Underworld we have the first hint of any sort of divine power in his music:

There on sweetly sounding strings
 Songs that soothe he plays and sings;
 All the draughts once drawn of song
 From the springs the Muses throng...²³

Again the inhabitants of Hell are arrested and charmed by the power of his music, and again Orpheus leaves with his wife, only to lose her as he glances backwards.

Chaucer's Boece enlarges once more upon the divine musical inheritance of Orpheus:

He wente hym to the houses of helle, and ther he
 tempride his blaundysschinge songes by resounynge
 strenges, and spak and song in wepyng al that evere
 he hadde resceyved and lavyd out of the noble welles
 of his modir (Callyope), the goddesse.

(Chaucer, Boece Book 3 Metre 12, l 18-24)

The accumulation of musical detail can clearly be seen in these brief accounts of the Orpheus myth. No doubt numerous variations and offshoots of the myth existed. These however, are the main authorities the Middle Ages relied upon.

We have seen that Medieval musical tradition was inherited from centuries of musical thought, and that music was inexplicably and unavoidably connected with cosmological harmony and order for many Medieval writers and thinkers. In addition, we have briefly examined the build-up of musical detail in the stories which transmitted the Orpheus myth to the Middle Ages. It is now appropriate and timely to examine these notions in action in the culmination of the Orpheus tradition: Sir Orfeo. Here the two strands of our study come together, and music is not only indicative of a powerful universal order, but effects that order so that the Orpheus figure, for the first time, is able to rescue his wife permanently from her fate. We will find Sir Orfeo a vast contrast with Henryson's later Orpheus and Eurydice.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. J. Hollander, The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry 1500-1700 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1961), p.14.
2. Hollander, pp.14-15. In the following study of the transmission and development of Medieval musical and cosmological theory, I am heavily indebted to Hollander, Henry Chadwick, Boethius: The Consolations of Music, Logic, Theology and Philosophy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) and S.K. Heninger, Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1974).
3. Hollander, pp.15-16.
4. Chadwick, pp.78-79.
5. Chadwick, p.79.
6. Heninger, p.179.
7. Chadwick, p.79.
8. Augustine, Enarr. in Psalmos 42, 7. Cited in Chadwick, p.80.
9. Augustine, City of God 11, 30. Cited in Heninger, p.243.
10. Augustine, Letters [166, '13]. Cited in Heninger, p.292.
11. Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio. Cited in Douglas Gray, Robert Henryson (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979) pp.231-32.
12. Chadwick, p.81.
13. Boethius, De arithmetica, 2, 32. Cited in Heninger, p.104.

14. C.S. Lewis, The Discarded Image (1964; rpt Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971), p.11.
15. Lewis, p.12.
16. Henryson, Fables 1 1659-1660.
17. Caxton, Mirroure of the World. Cited in E.M.W. Tillyard, Poetry and Its Background (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955), p.20.
18. Heninger, p.181.
19. Cited in Heninger, p.181.
20. Ovid, Metamorphoses Bk 10, trans Mary M. Innes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1955).
21. Virgil, Georgics 4, 457, trans C. Day Lewis, ed. Michael Grant, in Roman Readings (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967).
22. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, trans V.E. Watts (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), Bk 3, Metre 12.
23. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, p.114.

CHAPTER FOUR

Having acknowledged that the role of music is an important one in Orpheus and Eurydice, and examined the history and metaphysical significance of music from its classical sources through to the Middle Ages, we are now in a position to usefully consider the poem's predecessor, Sir Orfeo, where music can be seen in action as an agent of order and justice. This examination will lead the way in the next chapter to a relevant comparison of Sir Orfeo with Orpheus and Eurydice and illuminate the difference between the two regarding the role music plays in the Orpheus story.

Sir Orfeo is a poem based upon the same Orpheus myth as Orpheus and Eurydice, but written perhaps 150 years earlier. To examine the treatment of the Orpheus myth and the role of music in Sir Orfeo is to illumine the essential difference in attitude between the Orfeo-poet and Henryson writing over a century later. It is possible that Henryson knew of the story of Sir Orfeo; whether he did or not does not invalidate the light shed upon Orpheus and Eurydice by a study of Sir Orfeo. Sir Orfeo is an example of the medieval cosmology and ideology in action; it is the medieval view of the universe in a microcosm, and music within the poem is as essential to the story as the singing of the spheres to the medieval universe.

Sir Orfeo is written in the form of a Breton Lai, a form popular in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially in France. The lai was a form developed in order to commemorate 'auntures' or marvellous events, so that they should not be easily forgotten. Lais were primarily songs, in fact Bliss says 'the music was at least as important as the words'¹. Some lais were purely instrumental, having no words at all, but the normal form was words sung accompanied by the harp.

Sir Orfeo is extant in three manuscripts; the Auchinleck MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, British Library MS. Harley 3810, and Bodleian MS. Ashmole 61. According to

Bliss, the Auchinleck MS. is not far removed from the original and represents it with reasonable accuracy. The first thirty eight lines are missing from the MS.; twenty-four of them reappear elsewhere in the manuscript, the remaining fourteen must be reconstructed from Harley and Ashmole. In this examination of Sir Orfeo, Bliss's use of the Auchinleck MS. and its reconstructed early lines is followed.

The primary source of the Breton lai of the Orpheus story was (as for Henryson) the classical version inherited from Virgil, Ovid and Boethius, and well known in the Middle Ages. Fused with this foundation were elements from a popular Celtic story, though no particular version can be associated with any certainty with Sir Orfeo; the Celtic elements appear to be general and non-specific. Perhaps the two greatest departures from the classical myth as it is told in Sir Orfeo (although minor variations are numerous in the poem) concern the nature of the place to which Heurodis (Eurydice) is snatched away, and the final outcome of the Orpheus story. Contrary to classical myth, Heurodis does not die, nor does her spirit descend to Hades. Instead, she is snatched away from the midst of an armed guard and taken alive to the land of faery, a very Celtic world which is clearly not Hades, but exists just around the corner from the real world, and from which faeries often make very real and threatening forays into the human world.

The final outcome of the story is the other area in which the poem differs radically from its predecessors (and, significantly, from Henryson as well). Orfeo's music is proved to be effective and powerful. It wins Heurodis back from the land of faery, when combined with Orfeo's bargaining power, without even the condition that Orfeo must not look back. From this point the poem knits itself up into a joyful, ordered ending in which Orfeo and Heurodis live 'happily ever after'.

However, such an ending should not deceive us into assuming that Sir Orfeo is a simplistic poem. It is in its

own way highly sophisticated, made up of many complex and varied components which are interlocked into a wholeness which can be deceptive. The artistic unity of the poem can beguile the reader into overlooking the finer points of the story. In this way Sir Orfeo is similar to Orpheus and Eurydice: both conceal complexity under apparently simple surfaces, and both therefore have been vastly underrated or misunderstood by critics.

Perhaps because the poem (unlike Orpheus and Eurydice) contains no specific moral statement or Moralitas, critics have offered widely varying interpretations of the meaning of Sir Orfeo. It is not necessary for our purposes to examine in detail each interpretation in order to find or formulate a satisfactory one. Our focus is upon the role, function and importance of music in Sir Orfeo because it is vitally important to the poem itself (and its role in Sir Orfeo has been largely downplayed or ignored by critics of the poem), and because it makes an interesting and significant contrast to the way Henryson uses music in his version of the Orpheus myth. It will be sufficient, then, to examine a few critics who typify the main thrusts of critical opinion about Sir Orfeo, test the validity (or otherwise) of their interpretations and examine the role music plays in their view of the poem. From there an examination of music in Sir Orfeo, both thematic and structural, will lead us not to a definitive interpretation, but at least to an important underlying assumption within the poem: that of a divine, transcendent order.

Gros Louis² is part of a school of critics who see Sir Orfeo as primarily a Christian allegory with Orfeo either the representative of Christ, or a good Christian man who learns something important about himself and is therefore rewarded by God with the return of his wife (almost a medieval equivalent of the Biblical story of Job). For Gros Louis, the poem as a Christian allegory rests upon the meaning of Sir Orfeo's self-imposed exile for ten years upon the disappearance of his wife. Orfeo's purpose in this exile and what he learns through it provides the key to the

poem itself. It is this which sets Sir Orfeo apart from the rest of the Orpheus tradition, Gros Louis says. The self-exile of Orfeo illustrates the author's intention to his audience.

Citing Orfeo's speech upon his departure, Gros Louis states that Orfeo's motive in his exile is one of acceptance of his situation, not a desire to change it:

For now ichaue mi quen y-lore,
 þe fairest leuedi þat euer was bore,
 Neuer eft y nil no woman se.
 In-to wildernes ichil te,
 & liue þer euermore
 Wip wilde bestes in holtes hore;
 & when ȝe vnder-stand þat y be spent,
 Make ȝou þan a parlement,
 & chese ȝou a newe king
 -Now doþ ȝour best wip al mi þinge (l 209-218).

Orfeo spends ten years in self-imposed exile in the wilderness, but Gros Louis says that in all that time he does not deliberately search for Heurodis. When he does come upon her, it is an entirely accidental meeting on Orfeo's part.

Gros Louis takes pains to make it clear that this change to the traditional Orpheus myth is not a gratuitous one. He says that the ten years of exile are a substitute for death; that Orfeo experiences life at its lowest level of existence, in increasing isolation, so that he is like a dead thing both to the beasts charmed by his music and to the faery army and troupe of dancers which he encounters in the wilderness. The purpose of this 'death' is a process of purification for Orfeo, who learns how little it really is to be a king. Having left his court because of his great love for Heurodis, Orfeo learns of a greater kind of power and wealth. He learns the proper role of man on earth, but in his sacrifice asserts to the universe the dignity of man and the strength of man's love; love based on charity rather than passion. Such humility and sacrifice, says Gros Louis,

do not go unrewarded. Because Orfeo has accepted the loss of his wife, and not struggled against it, the gods (or God) are merciful, and return Heurodis to him.

The result of all Orfeo's experience is that both he and Heurodis undergo a kind of rebirth. Orfeo himself has passed from king to hermit, and has learned what values men should cherish. When he returns to his kingdom, it is not the quantity of power he is interested in, but the quality of it, that is, the loyalty of his subjects and his steward. Orfeo has learnt of faith and is rewarded for practising it.

Gros Louis' interpretation throws some interesting light on the poem. It is certainly true that Orfeo goes into self-imposed exile without making any attempt to search for Heurodis, and it is just as true that this is a significant departure from the Orpheus myth which has been overlooked by most critics of the poem. Yet there are flaws to be found in regarding the poem in this way. Gros Louis overlooks the fact that one of the astonishing characteristics of Sir Orfeo is its total refusal to provide any kind of moral or spiritual development in the course of the story. Nowhere does the poem suggest that Orfeo has become any different a person or a king at the end of the story than he was at the beginning, and this applies to the other characters in the poem as well. Not only that, in his eagerness to account for Orfeo's self-imposed exile, Gros Louis seems to have missed the pivotal point of the whole poem. If Sir Orfeo presents us with a 'significant'³ and innovative departure from the Orpheus tradition in terms of Orpheus' exile, is it not equally significant and innovative for his music to enable him to rescue Heurodis, not temporarily, but permanently from the faery world?

Gros Louis does admit that Orfeo's gift of song enables him to complete the reversal of his fortunes, and says:

He would never have had the opportunity
to use his art for something that really
mattered had he not first shown his worthiness
as a Christian man⁴.

This is not a very perceptive acknowledgement of the central role of music in the poem, however. It is merely a grudging afterthought. The Sir Orfeo tradition is the only one of its kind to have a happy and successful ending, which is to a large extent brought about by the power of Orfeo's music. However many Christian virtues and insights Orfeo may have gained in his self exile, they would avail him little on their own in the land of faery. The crucial factor which brings about both Orfeo's admittance into the land of faery and the faery King's release of Heurodis is his skill as a harper. Orfeo gains his prize not by meekly allowing the gods to grant him his wife, but by his tough minded determination to use his musical skill to the best of his ability⁵. Nor can we argue that Orfeo's music or his skill is significantly altered or improved by his stay in the wilderness, which Gros Louis sees as a deepening of character. One of the first things the poet describes about Sir Orfeo right at the very beginning of the poem is his musical skill:

Him-self he lerned for-to harp,
 & leyd per-on his wittes scharp;
 He lerned so, per no-ping was
 A better harpour in no plas.
 In al þe warld was no man bore
 þat ones Orfeo sat bifore
 (& he miȝt of his harping here)
 Bot he schuld þenche þat he were
 In on of þe ioies of Paradis,
 Swiche melody in his harping is. (l 29-38)

Subsequently, during his self-exile, Orfeo hides his harp in a 'holwe tre' and only brings it out to play when the weather is 'clere & briȝt'. When he does so, the birds and beasts congregate to hear his 'harping a-fine'. The poet does not mention any change in the quality of Orfeo's music, or any improvement resulting from his supposed change of character. In fact, when he plays for the faery King, the effect of his music is the same as it was with the beasts and birds in the wilderness:

Bifor þe king he sat adoun
 & tok his harp so miri of soun,
 & temprep his harp as he wele can,
 & blisseful notes he þer gan,
 þat al þat in þe palays were
 Com to him forto here,
 & liggeþ adoun to his fete,
 Hem þenkep his melody so swete. (l 435-442)

In the same way the man in l 33 'sat bifore' Orfeo to hear his harping, and the beasts and birds in the wilderness flocked to him; the beasts 'For ioie abouten him...tep' (l 274) and the birds 'Come & sete on ich a brere/ To here his harping a-fine' (l 276-7). There is no appreciable difference in the description of Orfeo's music, either in its potency or in its effect on the hearer. In fact, many of the phrases and images used to describe Orfeo's harping are repeated whenever Orfeo plays on his harp throughout the poem.

If, then, it is Orfeo's music which is chiefly responsible for Heurodis' release, and this music remains unaffected by whatever it is that Orfeo endures in his exile, what of Gros Louis' assignation of a God or gods to the poem, who reward Orfeo with his wife when he has learnt humility? Here again, Gros Louis reads too much of his own theory into the poem. The poet gives us no hint of any specific divine guidance or presence in Sir Orfeo. Orfeo's musical skill certainly has no divine origin. The poet makes it quite clear that Orfeo's skill is due solely to his assiduous learning (l 29-32), and at no stage during the poem is mention made of any kind of divine musical inspiration. Sir Orfeo just refuses to allow a claim to any sort of divine causation or influence. It deals with Orfeo as a man dealing with seemingly irrational events which he is incapable of predicting or avoiding. Even the supernatural element of the faeries is humanised. The world of faery is the exact counterpart of Orfeo's courtly world, complete with castles, hunting parties and troupes of dancers.

Gros Louis' criticism and interpretation is representative of the work of many critics, especially those who see the poem as some kind of Christian allegory or moral lesson. While it is quite true that Orfeo's is a self-imposed exile and not a deliberate search for his wife, we have absolutely no indication of any moral or character development. Orfeo's period in the wilderness should not be allowed to obscure the fact that without his superior harping skill no amount of supposed humility would have gained admittance to the land of faery, let alone released his wife. Neither can we claim any kind of direct supernatural influence in the poem, especially when Orfeo's musical skill is so emphatically due to human perseverance and learning (unlike Henryson's Orpheus who gains his musical superiority from his visit to the gods). We must beware of attaching our own interpretations to the poem without supporting evidence from the text.

Knapp⁶ focuses on Sir Orfeo in a different way altogether. Rather than seeing the poem as relevant to our interior development of character, he sees it as having a wider, more external relevance to society as a whole. Sir Orfeo is, he says,

...a poetic representation of the Orpheus story which raises by implication the most serious questions concerning the conditions of man's life in this world⁷.

For Knapp, the poem's vision is one of the universal human condition and the world in which we live. Sir Orfeo, he says, describes a world governed by the Boethian view of nature, that is, subject to the shifting, indifferent nature of Fortune and characterised by the futility of obsession with earthly things.

Knapp sees a striking resemblance between the character of Orfeo and that of the Boethius character in the Consolation of Philosophy. Both suffer reversals of Fortune, both endure enormous deprivation and both feel

utter despair, longing for death when they are thus afflicted. Even the vagueness of the reason for Heurodis' abduction serves only to reinforce the sense of man's helplessness in the face of an apparently irrational and capricious destiny. The faery King brings death and darkness with him; he is the sudden, unanticipated evil which blights man's happiness at its peak.

Knapp is insistent that it be understood that the story is not merely mythical or abstract, but that it is a Boethian examination of the conditions of our own world. Superimposed, he says, upon the classical and Celtic threads of the story is the contemporary medieval social setting:

Thus...what we are witnessing is not the [seasonal] ritual, but a human society confronted by the same forces that the ritual describes⁸.

Knapp claims that Sir Orfeo describes a human society, tests it by Boethian standards, and approves it.

Like Gros Louis, Knapp falls into the critical trap of assuming that Orfeo's exile brings about some moral development in his character. Knapp says that this development involves an extension of Orfeo's perception about the world in which he lives:

[Orfeo comes away from his exile] with a deeper awareness, not of God, but of the fragile beauty of that human world for which he is willing to suffer so much pain⁹.

Orfeo's material wealth is transitory; in fact, Orfeo's wealth and that of the faery King are identical (l 245-246 and l 159-60). Mortal possessions are not only unstable and evanescent, but when they are also mirrored in the Faery world further doubt is cast on their value. This, according to Knapp, is what Orfeo learns during his exile.

Knapp comments that the faery world has a grim reality

concealed behind its beauty; that the faeries are a hostile, potentially Satanic threat¹⁰. However, he stresses the affirmative element present in Sir Orfeo. The festive atmosphere at the close of the poem is in no way ironic, and the restoration of both his kingdom and his queen to Orfeo is a source of genuine joy to him.

The qualities thus affirmed in the poem for Knapp are human love (demonstrated in the love of Orfeo and Heurodis) and loyalty (shown again between Orfeo and Heurodis, and also in the loyalty of the steward). Knapp sees the poem as a representation of the perilous quality of man's earthly happiness: man's affairs lie in Fortune's hands, and Fortune is not to be trusted. Yet we also have an affirmation of values, too. We see the conditions of this world as they affect human society and are shown a great human love, a willingness to undergo any sacrifice for that love, and the loyalty of a lord and subjects to their king unshaken by the temptation of wealth or power.

Knapp's view is not invalid, but it is limited and inadequate, both in its view of a Boethian society, and once again in its underestimation of the importance of the motif of music.

Knapp's only mention of Orfeo's winning of his wife fails to even mention his musical skill:

But loyalty in love is not the only
virtue with which this poem deals.
Whereas the classical Orpheus won back his
Eurydice through the enchanting beauty of
his song, his English counterpart succeeds
by invoking the honor-bound duty of a king
to keep his word¹¹.

This is no more than splitting hairs. Certainly Orfeo succeeds in gaining Heurodis' final release through his insistence upon the sworn word of the faery King, but without his musical skill the situation could never even have arisen. Orfeo's music clearly sets him apart from

other men, and it alone has the power to bring him to a place where he is able to hold the faery King to his word. In addition, Knapp can hardly speak of the 'enchanting beauty' of the classical Orpheus' song and completely ignore l 439-446 where the whole faery palace comes to a standstill while the faeries come to lie at Orfeo's feet to hear his 'melody so swete'.

This underestimation of the power of music and its ability to restore order and rightful unity contributes in part to another inadequacy in Knapp's argument. It is valid and logical to say that Sir Orfeo does not only deal with mythological happenings but also with issues affecting contemporary human society. There is indeed a very strong medieval social factor in the poem - a profusion of contemporary social detail. Orfeo is 'an heize lording' in Winchester, England, with a typical medieval court including a queen, knights, earls, lords and barons. Even the faeries in the wilderness hunt with hounds, dance as knights and ladies and slay their prey with falcons. The poem is a concrete part of medieval society even as it also has a Celtic 'otherness' about it. Knapp is justified in pointing this out. His explanation becomes inadequate when he explains what constitutes a Boethian society.

Knapp speaks of the social setting of Sir Orfeo as 'Boethian', and elaborates on it as a world of unpredictability and inexplicable reversals of Fortune. He sees Orfeo's world as one of peril in which the only affirmations we are given are those of human love and loyalty. Knapp has failed to read his Boethius carefully enough, if he sees these affirmations as all a Boethian society has to depend on. Certainly there is much in the Consolation of Philosophy about the vicissitudes of Fortune, but the point is equally strongly made that, random as they may seem, these vicissitudes are bearable because they themselves are part of a larger order. Thus Philosophy says in Book 4:

In the high citadel of its oneness, the mind
of God has set up a plan for the multitude of

events. When this plan is thought of as in the purity of God's understanding, it is called Providence, and when it is thought of with reference to all things, whose motion and order it controls, it is called by the name the ancients gave it, Fate...Providence is the divine reason itself ...Fate, on the other hand, is the planned order inherent in things subject to change through the medium of which Providence binds everything in its own allotted place...So this unfolding of the plan in time when brought together as a unified whole in the foresight of God's mind is Providence; and the same unified whole when dissolved and unfolded in the course of time is Fate...God in his Providence constructs a single fixed plan of all that is to happen, while it is by means of Fate that all that He has planned is realized in its many individual details in the course of time¹².

Later in Book 4 Philosophy says:

It is because you men are in no position to contemplate this order that everything seems confused and upset¹³.

This kind of comment from the Consolation of Philosophy makes it clear that the Boethian view of the world consists of more than just the precariousness of worldly joy and the sudden, inexplicable turning of the wheel of Fortune. Beyond that, Philosophy says, lies a transcendent, divine order which exists as a unified whole, even though it is unfolded before us in time, and therefore we, as men, cannot perceive the whole of this plan.

If Knapp is going to speak of Sir Orfeo in Boethian terms, then he must take this sort of comment into account, because without it the world of the poem is dark, and the merriment at the end not only forced but savagely ironic. Without this overall plan, the Boethian universe is chaotic, and Orfeo only a puppet at the mercy of blind chance.

Here, then, Knapp's disregard of the musical motif in Sir Orfeo becomes important, for it is an unavoidable feature of the poem that music is both an indication of this transcendent order, and the agent of that order. Orfeo's music is a reassurance that there is a force at work beyond the chaos which he sees around him, even though (as Philosophy says) mortal men cannot perceive it. Orfeo does not develop morally within the poem; it is not his perception of the nature of the human condition which is expanded, but it may be ours which is, as we come to realise the order beyond the seeming chaos in the poem.

We have examined two critics and discovered certain features about Sir Orfeo, but even more we have seen what the poem is not. Longworth¹⁴ makes the point (and it is a valid one) that we as critics cannot draw a pointed moral lesson from Sir Orfeo. Not only is no attached Moralitas given, but the poem contains no hint within the text of an explicit moral lesson, either. As we have seen, no character can be said to develop morally or spiritually; Orfeo, for example, is no better a king and a harper at the end than he was at the beginning of the poem. It is an extremely reticent poem, giving no basis for a consistent allegorical reading. Longworth does point out that many critics have attempted to draw moral lessons, ranging from Riddy¹⁵ (who sees the poem as profoundly Christian) to Gros Louis and so on down the critical line. However, he holds that the very multiplicity of views on the moral point of Sir Orfeo arises from the total absence of a lesson in the poem itself.

If, then, we cannot draw a definitive allegorical or moral reading of the poem, we can at least note certain features which do exist within the text and which are unavoidable in whatever reading we make of it. An important feature which has been completely overlooked (as Gros Louis and Knapp bear witness) is the motif of Orfeo's music and its connection with a transcendent order beyond human understanding. It is appropriate to enlarge upon this point here, as it has only been hinted at earlier in the chapter,

and because the relationship of order and music throws valuable light at a later stage on the contrasting Orpheus and Eurydice. Two critics whose work is useful in examining this area are Longworth and Nicholson¹⁶. Both include in their criticisms ideas about order in Sir Orfeo, both in the story itself and as an external structural feature.

In examining this idea of order, disorder and music, it is helpful to divide our discussion into four areas: the juxtaposition of two opposing worlds in the poem; the linking of music and good social order in the poem; the power of music to effect order in the poem; and the structural order given to the poem by its musical framework. In the world of Sir Orfeo we will see all the medieval cosmological ideas of order and harmony at work.

The first area concerning the idea of order in the poem involves the Orfeo-poet's juxtaposition of two opposing worlds. Nicholson says:

...the poem finally sets in exhilarating opposition two worlds, that of the rational, humanly social, and that of the irrational, which veers through mystery into nightmare¹⁷.

This type of description could never be made of Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice, where the Underworld (although dark and forbidding) does not inspire the same sense of chaos. Its very strangeness sets it apart as something identifiably different. There is none of the dislocation experienced in Sir Orfeo, none of the overt sense of malice and disorder which the very randomness of the faery world's cruelty creates. In a way, what we have is the juxtaposition of two worlds, one representative of true order and one of disorder (which looks startlingly like the first world). The faery country and castle appear not only more pleasant and full of natural beauty than we would expect, but also seem gentler and more hospitable than the wilderness that Orfeo has just left. Yet the faery castle, which appears hospitable, noble and courtly conceals grim desolation, mutilation and destruction.

Longworth says:

This technique of counterposing the expected and the unexpected is not merely a stylistic whim... It permits the poet, in a fresh and delicate fashion, to shape the poem skilfully about that most obsessive of medieval themes, the assertion of order in an apparently disordered universe¹⁸.

One of the few things we can say about the poem is that we are given two worlds; a rational, ordered, human world and an irrational, chaotic, non-human world. It is in the contrast of these two worlds that we see what real and false order are, and true order is asserted as certainly as Orfeo regains his wife, his subjects and his kingdom.

The second point in this discussion of order within Sir Orfeo deals with music within the poem and its connection with good social order. The poet stresses the right and proper behaviour for a king, and the resultant prosperity for the kingdom. Nicholson comments:

What is unusual about this lai is not that Orfeo is a king, but that that fact is not merely incidental, a way of contriving a happy ending, but of central thematic importance. As the hero of its stories, as much as by his emblematic virtue, royal Orfeo represents good order¹⁹.

Indeed, in the very beginning of the poem Orfeo's kingly credentials are laid down. First of all, he is a harper (l 25-6), and straight after this, he is a king, a 'heize lording' descended from the kings Pluto and Juno. He commands a city of 'noble defens' (l 47-8) and possesses a queen of inestimable beauty and goodness (l 51-5). All the attributes for a great king are here, each in their proper order and all strongly associated with Orfeo's musical skill, which is what sets him apart from all other men. Nicholson also finds this significant:

The introduction, then, forms a conjunction between music (especially harping) and good order in society which is indeed figuratively familiar, but here proves to be the very ground of the romance²⁰.

To try to separate these two strands of music and good social order is only to bring confusion. Orfeo's victory in freeing Heurodis is incomplete until he is installed back in his rightful kingly place (significantly with 'menstraci' and 'grete melody').

The poet reinforces our sense of Orfeo's good rulership when Orfeo leaves his kingdom to go into exile. It is made abundantly clear to us that Orfeo is not merely abandoning his realm. His proper conception of kingship has not altered since the introduction, despite the loss of his wife. He takes great care to inform his highest subjects of his departure and his reasons for it in person. Orfeo then arranges for good rule to continue in the person of his steward, and even provides for the succession of another ruler upon his death.

This insistence upon the way of good and proper order for a king is further highlighted by the contrast of Orfeo as king and the faery King himself. As Knapp has already mentioned, both kings have 'castels & tours/Riuer, forest, frip wip flours' (l 245-6), yet the faery King's realm offers a frighteningly different reality to that of Orfeo's kingdom. His subjects are described in a horrific catalogue of pain and misery:

Sum stode wip-outen hade,
 & sum non armes nade,
 & sum purth þe bodi hadde wounde,
 & sum lay wode, y-bounde,
 & sum armed on hors sete,
 & sum astrangled as þai ete;
 & sum were in water adreynt,
 & sum wip fire al for-schreynt.

Wiues per lay on child-bedde,
 Sum ded & sum awedde,
 & wonder fele per lay bisides. (l 391-401)

This menace behind the glittering facade of the faery world is truly the worst kind of disintegration (or perversion) of order. The stark contrast with Orfeo's benevolent and prudent rule is unmistakeable, and the irrational chaos underlying what appears to be social and kingly order serves to reinforce the true order of Orfeo's kingdom governed by Orfeo, king and harper.

Not only is music intertwined with the theme of social order in Sir Orfeo, but it is by itself a powerful agent of order in the poem, and this brings us to the third stage of our exploration of order and music in the poem. Music is the only force which retains its identity and potency when Orfeo's whole comprehensible world has fallen apart, and it is responsible for restoring order out of the chaos wrought by the faery King.

Longworth sees the whole poem as movement; a descent from order into chaos and back to order again. He notes the progressive unravelling of the strands of rationality and order into the irrational during the first part of Sir Orfeo. The controlled, blooming horticulture of the orchard where Heurodis sleeps gives way to the uncultivated wilderness of Orfeo's exile; the social and domestic comfort of Orfeo's court becomes the anti-social, alien discomfort of exile; and the natural connectedness of everyday affairs becomes disjointed, and fragments under the supernatural intervention into these affairs. Longworth notes that from the moment when Heurodis wakes in a distraught and hysterical state, disorder encroaches persistently. Only the poetry retains order and the music within the poem. Longworth says:

Orfeo's harp has throughout the poem the power to bring into harmony nature, society, and other temporal powers. And when at last this power

reaches to the heart of the disorder that conceals itself in successive layers of seeming order, the poem reverses itself abruptly and knits up into natural, domestic, and civil harmony the ravelled threads of dissonance within the poem²¹.

While Longworth's statement is not adequate as an interpretation of the poem as a whole (as we have noted, the poem defies such attempts), it is valuable in pointing out to us what is undoubtedly present in the poem - the obvious power and centrality music has as an ordering agent in Sir Orfeo. In the introduction, music is closely associated with Orfeo's kingly rule and order. Orfeo's music has the power to convince a man that he is hearing 'on of þe ioies of Paradis' (l 37); and Orfeo's assiduous acquisition of this music, upon which he has 'leyd...his wittes scharp' (l 30), prepares us for the later combination of beautiful music and sharp wits which will free Heurodis. When Orfeo leaves his kingdom to venture into exile for the loss of his wife, he takes nothing but a 'sclauin' (a pilgrim's mantle) and his harp. In fact, his harp is so important that he takes it with him, yet goes 'barfot' out of the gate, leaving behind even his shoes. The harp is precious to Orfeo, perhaps it is all he has left of what was once an ordered, harmonious life.

Once in the wilderness, Orfeo loses all trace of kingly rank or lordship which was his proper station in life. He goes hungry, cold, lonely and shelterless. It is only when he brings out his harp and plays on it that he regains any kind of kingly status; the birds and the beasts flock to him just as his court retinue used to surround him. Just as the man in the beginning of the poem thought Orfeo's music one of the joys of Paradise, so too the beasts gather around him for 'ioie'. Music restores to Orfeo briefly a kind of ironic echo of his true and former status.

As we know, music is the key to the release of Heurodis, and the beginning of the knitting up of chaos into order. Orfeo gains admittance to the faery world because he is

a harper. Once inside the faery palace, the reaction to his music is the same; the inhabitants of the castle flock to sit at Orfeo's feet. His music has lost none of its potency; it has retained its power despite the fluctuation and disintegration around it. The loveliness of the music, backed up by Orfeo's sharp wits, wins him his wife.

Finally, music has the power to identify Orfeo as true king to his steward, and enables him to test his subjects' loyalty. Orfeo has changed so much in appearance that his subjects do not know him, but his music is powerful, not subject to change, and unmistakeable. It outshines all the 'tromptours & tabourers/Harpours fele & crouders' (l 521-2) and proclaims Orfeo as rightful king. It is fitting that Orfeo's return to his throne is celebrated 'wiþ al maner menstraci' and 'grete melody' (l 589-90). Music has enabled Orfeo to triumph over the faery world and has helped restore rightful order and rule.

We come to the fourth and final section in our examination of music and order in Sir Orfeo. This section involves us in a look at music as a structural agent of order. Here we find part of the unity of Sir Orfeo, for music plays the same part structurally as it does thematically.

As we know, Sir Orfeo is a Breton lai, and as such was set to music, a vital part of any lai. Therefore, we have the minstrel who is telling the story acting as a kind of framework or scaffolding, using the agent of music to hold all the components of the story together. He introduces himself and his craft quite deliberately at the start of the poem, drawing our attention straight to the form of the lai. Nicholson has noted this:

Sir Orfeo is a poem of several beginnings.

It begins formally, as it ends, by reference to its genre, the lai first 'wrouȝt' in 'Breteyne'...The poet-performer at once calls for attention - he will tell the tale of Sir Orfeo. At the tale's

end he signs off in similar terms. The framing account of lai composition is meshed with the history of Orfeo...His story includes, indeed encloses, the romance of Dame Heurodys which begins in familiar fashion - 'Bifel so in pe comessing of May'. To recognise a designed structure of enclosed and enclosing tales is to perceive at once, it seems to me, something of the mechanics of our involvement...²²

Thus we can see that we have a lai which is constructed both lineally and concentrically at the same time. The lineal movement of the narrative takes us from order to chaos, and back to order again. The structure of the poem, though, is concentric, like the layers of an onion, with each beginning enclosing another tale within the last. We have two ways of seeing the poem; each has music at its centre. A story dealing with the disintegration and reintegration of social and domestic harmony is enclosed and given expression and order in song. Interestingly enough, Nicholson's view of the poem as a series of enclosed and enclosing tales parallels the Medieval view of the cosmos, with each planet in its enclosing sphere; and the music of the Orfeo-poet parallels the singing of the spheres, which is indicative of the whole cosmos being held together in divine order.

Longworth also has something to say about the musical form of the poem:

If the structure of Sir Orfeo exemplifies the ability of a skilfully-made tale to retain its power through the changes to which oral performance and oral transmission must have subjected it, the subject of Sir Orfeo is delectably an assertion of that same power. After all, the hero of the work is a minstrel, and the instrument of his heroism is minstrelsy. The minstrel's art is at once subject to the forces of change and capable of compelling change - as all art can be both the fragile victim of and the potent victor over the

dissolution wrought by reality upon illusion or by things upon the appearance of things²³.

The minstrel's art, namely music, reflects the power given it in the Orfeo tale, and has the strength to continue to communicate and transmit Orfeo's story in an ordered, unified and highly complex way despite the opposition of time and reality. Just as Orfeo's music can be the agent of change and restoration of harmony, so can the Orfeo-poet's music. It is music which enables Orfeo to regain his rightful status and his beloved wife, and it is music which gives his whole story structure and order too.

What has been said in the foregoing reappraisal of Sir Orfeo cannot make any claim at all towards formulating a new, definitive interpretation of the poem. However, the theme of the power of music and its associations with the restoration and perpetuation of order has often been overlooked or ignored. We have seen here that this theme is undoubtedly a feature of Sir Orfeo. Although there is no evidence within the poem of any sort of personal God at work, music is subtly representative of a transcendent order beyond that which we see, very like Philosophy's argument from the Consolation of Philosophy. What we cannot avoid when looking at Sir Orfeo is the radical change to the Orpheus myth; that Orfeo's music is completely effective in winning back his wife. The Orfeo-poet has allotted unprecedented power to Orfeo's minstrelsy. It is this musical power and ability to restore order which contrasts so unavoidably and so ironically with Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice, where Orpheus' music (even though it is of divine origin) cannot achieve what Orfeo's earthly music can.

Perhaps the final word on the world of Sir Orfeo and the eventual regeneration which comes about in the poem through so much pain and suffering (including those who are never released from their sufferings in the faery world) should be left to Dame Juliana of Norwich: 'It is sooth that sin is the cause of all this pain, but all shall be well, and all shall

be well, and all manner of thing shall be well²⁴. In the same way, the Orfeo-poet acknowledges humanity's pain, giving no explanation for it, but hinting at a transcendent order which we as humans cannot comprehend, which ensures that eventually, all shall be well. There is an essential optimism and wholeness about the poem which Henryson in his later poem has lost.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Ed. A.J. Bliss, Sir Orfeo 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p.xxviii.
2. K.R.R. Gros Louis, 'The Significance of Sir Orfeo's Self-Exile' Review of English Studies, 18 (1967), 245-52.
3. Gros Louis, p.251.
4. Gros Louis, p.250.
5. This point is argued forcefully and persuasively in Lewis J. Owen, 'The Recognition Scene in "Sir Orfeo"' Medium Aevum, 40 (1971), 249-53.
6. J.F. Knapp, 'The Meaning of "Sir Orfeo"' Modern Language Quarterly, 29 (1968), 263-73.
7. Knapp, p.265.
8. Knapp, p.269.
9. Knapp, p.270.
10. Knapp, pp.263-64 and pp.267-68.
11. Knapp, p.272.
12. Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy trans. V.E. Watts (Middlesex: Penguin, 1969) pp.135-36.
13. Boethius, p.137.
14. Robert M. Longworth, '"Sir Orfeo" the Minstrel, and the Minstrel's Art' Studies in Philology 79 (1982), 1-11.
15. Felicity Riddy, 'The Uses of the Past in "Sir Orfeo"' Yearbook of English Studies, 6 (1976), 5-15.

16. Longworth, '"Sir Orfeo" the Minstrel, and the Minstrel's Art', and R.H. Nicholson, '"Sir Orfeo": A "Kynges Noote"' Review of English Studies, 36, No. 142 (1985), 161-79.
17. Nicholson, p.161.
18. Longworth, pp.7-8.
19. Nicholson, p.163.
20. Nicholson, p.164.
21. Longworth, p.8.
22. Nicholson, p.162.
23. Longworth, p.6.
24. Juliana, Revelations of Divine Love, ed. Grace Warrack (London: Methuen and Co., 1934), p.57.

CHAPTER FIVE

It is now appropriate and useful to examine the treatment of music in Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice, having examined both the inheritance of musical thought which Henryson worked with and the powerful example of that thought in action in Sir Orfeo. Such an examination of Orpheus and Eurydice will lead us to a resolution of the central dilemma of the poem and enable us to fit the *Moralitas* and the narrative persona into their proper places.

Perhaps the first feature of Orpheus' music which attracts our attention is its divine origin. As we have seen, Sir Orfeo quite explicitly states that Orfeo's music owes nothing to any kind of divine aid, rather it is a human accomplishment painstakingly learnt¹.

Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice is unprecedented in its emphasis on the divine origin and power of Orpheus' music and the divine nature of his parentage. Picking up from Boece, and Chaucer's mention of Calliope, Orpheus' god-given gift for music and his divine lineage is not only presented but firmly reiterated:

Caliope, that madin mervalouss,
The ferd sistir, of all musik maistress,
and mother to the king schir orpheouss...
quhen he wes borne scho set him on hir kne,
and gart him souk of hir twa paupis quhyte
The sueit lecour of all musik perfyte.

(l 43-45 and 68-70)

In addition to this picture of Orpheus imbibing music with his mother's milk, Henryson's narrator gives a full catalogue of each of the other eight muses and their spheres of influence.

As well as his extraordinary acquisition of musical skill and his divine lineage, the narrator manages to work

in a trip to the heavens for Orpheus, something unheard of in the Orpheus myth before. In the heavens Orpheus adds a detailed technical catalogue of musical attributes to his already formidable musical inheritance:

Thus from the hevin he went onto the erd,
Yit be the way sum melody he lerd.

In his passage amang the planeitis all,
he hard a hevinly melody and sound,
passing all instrumentis musicall,
causit be rollyn of the speiris round;
Quhilk armony of all this mappamound,
Quhilk moving seiss unyt perpetuall,
Quhilk of this warld pluto the saule can call.

Thair leirit he tonis proportionat,
as duplare, triplare, and emetricus,
enolius, and eik the quadruplait,
Epoddeus rycht hard and curius;
off all thir sex, sueit and delicius,
rycht consonant fyfe hevinly symphonyss
componyt ar, as clerkis can devyse.

ffirst diatesserone, full sueit, I wiss
And dyapasone, semple and dowplait,
And dyapenty, componyt with the dyss;
Thir makis fyfe of thre multiplicat:
This mirry musik and mellefluat,
Compleit and full of nummeris od and evin,
Is causit be the moving of the hevin. (l 217-239)

What Orpheus has gained 'is not only detailed technical expertise, but a knowledge of and proficiency in the very harmony which moves the heavens and the earth. In other words, he has the divine knowledge of God, the Prime Mover himself. Little wonder that it is both significant and highly ironic that whereas Chaucer's Troilus gains enlightenment when he joins the planets and hears the singing of the spheres, Orpheus' knowledge of the same thing will eventually avail him nothing.

The effectiveness of Orpheus' music in Orpheus and Eurydice should also be examined, both for its temporary power and its final achievement. As in Sir Orfeo the birds and the trees respond to Orpheus' music, and sing and dance around him. Music restores to Orpheus an ironic parallel of his former status. Yet, again as in the Orfeo-poem, Orpheus cannot be consoled or comforted by the birds, the trees or even his own music. The knowledge gained in his heavenly wanderings stands Orpheus in good stead, though. Use of his musical expertise gains Orpheus admittance to the Underworld:

Than orpheus began to be agast,
 Quhen he beheld that ugly hellis hound;
 he tuk his harp and on it playit fast,
 Till at the last, throw sueitnes of the sound,
 This dog slepit and fell down on the ground. (l 254-8)

From here, Orpheus is able to free various tortured inhabitants with his harp: Ixion escapes from his wheel, Tantalus gains a drink, and the vulture which has been tormenting Titius flies away.

When Orpheus comes before the King and Queen of the Underworld, Eurydice is with them. Again the complex musical terminology arises:

Than orpheus befoir pluto sat down,
 And in his handis quhit his herp can ta,
 And playit mony sueit proportioun,
 With baiss tonis in Ipotdorica,
 With gemilling in yporlerica;
 quhill at the last for rewth and grit petie,
 Thay weipit soir, that cowth him heir or se. (l 366-372)

It seems that, unlike Ovid's Orpheus, this one does little or no singing, his music alone speaks for itself (which highlights the importance of music even further). Like Sir Orfeo he gains permission to return with his wife, but Henryson's Orpheus is bound by the traditional condition that he must not look back at her as they leave the Underworld.

Tragically, all Orpheus' musical knowledge is in vain:

Thus orpheus, with inwart lufe repleit,
 So blindit was with grit effectioun,
 pensyfe in hart apone his lady sueit,
 Remembrit nocht his hard conditioun.
 Quhat will ye moir? in schort conclusioun,
 he blent bakwart, And pluto come annone,
 And on to hell with hir agane is gone. (l 386-393)

Just as the text gives no hint that the respite gained by Ixion, Tantalus and Titius from their sufferings is anything other than temporary, so in the final analysis, Orpheus' music is unable to counterbalance the inherent tragedy of the human condition, and Eurydice is lost to him forever. This is the reason for the tragic tone of the last part of the story, and the sad irony encapsulated in the words 'blindit was with grit effectioun'. All the divinity and learning of Orpheus' music cannot overcome the essential blindness of humanity.

The most striking and significant difference, then, between the role of music in Sir Orfeo and Orpheus and Eurydice is in its potency - the musical power of Orfeo works, and wins him his wife, but Orpheus' musical power fails him, and his wife is lost.

Henryson's Orpheus and Eurydice could pass as merely another version of the Orpheus myth were it not for the place and importance of music in the Medieval world view (coupled with the poem's deliberate mention of the singing of the spheres), the precedent of the Sir Orfeo version of the story, and the insistence upon the unparalleled divinity and excellence of Orpheus' harping. However, these factors only serve to emphasise the final impotence of Orpheus' musical powers, so we must conclude that Henryson is using this incompatibility to test and question the Medieval concept of the universe. It is paradoxical that Sir Orfeo placed so much emphasis on the human skill of Orfeo's music and avoided nearly all mention of gods and

goddesses and yet affirmed the cosmic and divine order of the universe (which may not be readily apparent to us as humans), yet Orpheus and Eurydice with all its hierarchy of gods and Orpheus' divine parentage, questions the existence of that very same order. What was implicit in the world view of the Orfeo-poet is no longer implicit in Henryson's poem.

If this is what Henryson as author is pointing to through the ultimate failure of Orpheus' musical powers, can we usefully relate it to the problem of the Moralitas and the narrative persona?

The poem and Moralitas leave us with an unavoidable dilemma: if the Moralitas is not all there is to be said about the story, how are we to respond to it? Critical responses to the problem of the Moralitas are varied. Kindrick, taking his cue from the Moralitas sees the thrust of the poem as psychological; an illustration of how the human mind works². MacQueen agrees with him, seeing Orpheus and Eurydice as 'interior allegorical drama'³ though connected in places with the exterior universe.

Friedman begins to branch out from these two critics, and he sees Orpheus and Eurydice both as moral abstractions (i.e. as the Moralitas sees them) and simultaneously as people, caught up in their human predicament⁴. Here Friedman begins to connect up with Gros Louis, who says that the strength of the poem lies not in the Moralitas but in the characters, in their human appeal and interest. For Gros Louis, Orpheus and Eurydice have an almost three-dimensional quality. Gros Louis rejects the lesson of the Moralitas, claiming its morality is patently inadequate to explain so great a human tragedy. He grapples with the poem's dilemma by saying:

No one is really to blame for what happened.
Orpheus cannot be condemned, nor can Eurydice -
what can any man do? - the wheel turns, and he
is given the bitter or the sweet according to
some hard, but indefinable law⁵.

Gray also sees the poem in this way, recognising it as a human tragedy⁶. He, too, concentrates upon Orpheus and Eurydice as compelling characters, finding the Moralitas insufficient (though not entirely inappropriate). Gray sees primarily the human tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice, and its accompanying strains of melancholy and pathos. He says of the poem:

It is a human failure, and the hero is left with his sorrow and our 'reuth'. If we were to have a moral at this moment we might wish to set the admiration for human love and for the noble spirit of man...against its recognition of its limitations... In fact, Henryson leaves us with an open ending, the sorrowful return of the hero. Law not love seems to have triumphed - but love, itself, has a law which is as hard as that of Pluto...⁷

McDiarmid also sees the tragedy inherent in the poem, but for him it is less of a human tragedy and more a general, spiritual tragedy⁸. He sees Henryson as a man haunted by the tragedy of sin and says that Orpheus and Eurydice:

...gives the clearest and most instructive statement of the concepts that governed Henryson's thinking about literature as about life. In both cases they are religious⁹.

Henryson's Orpheus, he says, is everyman. Man's usual lot is the experience of Orpheus and Henryson's intense concern for people and his pity for their tragic spiritual loss or waste is shown in the poem. McDiarmid comments that Henryson 'is a man of the world who despairs of it'¹⁰.

All of these responses to the dilemma of Orpheus and Eurydice are to differing degrees relevant and appropriate. Those agreeing with the Moralitas have some validity because the Moralitas is not wrong, only limited and therefore insufficient. Those responses dealing with the poem on the level of a human or spiritual tragedy are not wrong either,

for the poem is undoubtedly tragic, and the characters do have more appeal and impact than any amount of allegorical justification contained in the *Moralitas*. Yet none of the responses deals with the dilemma of the poem in its entirety; they somehow do not reach to the heart of things. Anything said could be said about any version of the Orpheus myth that ends sadly.

In order to arrive at a satisfactory response to the poem, we must return to the point of Chapter Two. There the possibility of the existence of an active narrative persona within the poem was raised and confirmed.

How does this help us in our search for an adequate answer to the dilemma of Orpheus and Eurydice? If we can identify the nature of interplay between author and narrator, we may be able to shed some light on levels of irony and conflicting viewpoints in the poem that were invisible before.

If we see the *Moralitas* as primarily the work of a narrative persona, the first trait we might notice about that persona is that he is a true Medieval storyteller, satisfying the formal literary code which specified what should be included in a 'good' piece of work. Thus in the *Moralitas* we find the intrusive moralising didacticism inherited from Trivet; the appeal to the authority and precedent of previous writers; the cataloguing, ordering and classifying of various natural phenomena and the elaborate digressions into non-related subjects (such as astrology). Examining the rest of the poem, we find the same things: the Medieval love of genealogy (Orpheus' lineage is somehow reminiscent of the opening of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight) and the didactic purpose behind it; the systematising of various phenomena; the appeals to authority (including the highly ironic 'as sayis the fable' in parts where we can find no precedent for Orpheus' actions); and digressions upon the sufferers in the Under-world and the reasons they are there.

Yet what is so surprising about this is that although all the technical requirements for a good Medieval poem have been met, the poem as a whole falls flat. Somehow the didacticism does not ring true - it is not large enough to cope with the human stature and appeal of Orpheus and Eurydice. As Gros Louis points out, the characters and their tragedy are really what hold our attention. The Moralitas and the narrator come off 'second best'.

Contrary to critical thought, this is not just an avoidable flaw in an otherwise good poem. It is a deliberate effect on the part of Henryson the author. He has set up the narrator as a character in order that we, the audience, might see the limited nature not only of his technique, but of his very raison d'etre. It is important to note that Henryson is not rejecting entirely the Medieval tradition from which his narrator springs, rather he is pointing out its limitations and its outdated relevance to the world in which he lives. On one level, the Moralitas is a perfectly satisfactory moral explanation, but at a deeper level it is unacceptable.

We have said that the Moralitas is a product of the narrative persona, not of Henryson the author, therefore the insufficiency of the Moralitas should come as no surprise to us, for everything the narrator does and says falls short. In fact, all the truly Medieval romance characteristics of the poem are subtly undermined by Henryson. Thus the narrator's bombast is unpleasant, his reasoning faulty, his imagery unoriginal, his attempts at humour uncomfortable and his moral lesson limited. In the same way Mills can say:

There is still, however, a possible exception to the descriptive function of the courtly elements, namely, the passive wooing of Orpheus. Friedman sees the calling of Orpheus to marry the Queen of Thrace as an instance of 'love by reputation' ...But the acceptance of this interpretation entails the rejection of the interesting alternative, that Henryson here is deliberately reversing the active

and passive roles in the courtship for his own reasons...If [Orpheus] is a partner in love by reputation motif, then he is conforming with a variation on the courtly love code, and is therefore a true and honourable knight. If, on the other hand, he and Eurydice conduct their courtship by the reverse of classical courtly love rules, then his 'chivalry' is suspect, indeed 'humanised' away from that of a conventional romance hero. In the first case the implications of the action are those of straightforward romance: in the second the implications of the action are those of a stage beyond romance¹¹.

Later she also says:

The 'fary' remarks are all in the reported speech of the maid. Henryson is downgrading the 'fary' notion - it is the fancy of a terrified girl, and not an observation by the narrator. The notion that Eurydice was taken by fairies is thus implied to be not entirely trustworthy, indeed naive - and this may well reflect Henryson's own attitude to the narrative of the romance tradition with its stewards, fairies and happy endings¹².

Both quotations point to Henryson's ironic undermining of all Medieval aspects of the poem. Henryson as author questions and finds lacking the Medieval romance values of the story and of the narrator. His is not a total rejection of such things but rather a recognition of their limitations and outdated relevance. All the main Medieval characteristics of the poem are, in the end, flawed and inadequate - the narrator, Orpheus' musical power and the didactic Moralitas.

What can we make of all this speculation? We have seen that Orpheus and Eurydice contains the voice of a narrative persona, and the voice of Henryson the author, who undermines and simultaneously outclasses the voice of the narrator. We

have also seen that the *Moralitas* contains a limited, pedantic moral lesson, adequate to a point but ultimately insufficient to deal with the human tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice. Finally, we have seen that Orpheus and Eurydice places unprecedented emphasis on the power of Orpheus' music, stressing its divine nature and technical brilliance, yet in ironic contrast with Sir Orfeo, Orpheus' music cannot prevent him from glancing back at his wife and losing her. We would expect music which is powerful enough to order the whole universe to enable Orpheus to rescue Eurydice, but it is not so. In all these things Henryson as author is at work, undermining the expectations and traditions of all that has gone before him. This observation must lead us to the declaration that Henryson is undergoing a disintegration of sensibility, that is, he is testing and finding insufficient the very foundations of Medieval thought and writing which he has inherited. This is at the heart of the dilemma of Orpheus and Eurydice.

It is interesting that both Gros Louis and Gray interpret Orpheus and Eurydice in terms of some kind of law or laws. Gros Louis speaks of 'some hard, but indefinable law'¹³, while Gray talks about 'Law, not love [which] seems to have triumphed...but love, itself, has a law which is as hard as that of Pluto'¹⁴. In reality, Henryson's position is exactly the opposite. The anguish of Orpheus' last cries and his 'wofull' progress home are magnified and ironised by Henryson's loss of faith: he implies that Orpheus is not the victim of 'some hard...law', but of no law - a kind of cosmic anarchy. For Henryson is doubtful whether there are any ultimate laws. What creates the irony is that his narrator believes there are. It is the narrator who believes in a natural law which ensures that all those who spring from ancient and noble lineages will possess virtuous moral attributes. In the same way it is the narrator who, in his *Moralitas*, states that had Orpheus (the power of reason) and Eurydice (the appetitive power) been in right relationship with one another (i.e. conformed to universal laws) then all would have been well with them. However, by

his superficially witty disavowal of musical knowledge the narrator unwittingly focuses our attention on Henryson's real point, that the cosmic music which holds all things together, and orders all of creation in the Medieval cosmological model, is here present, yet impotent. There is no clear concept of right and wrong. If the music of creation, which puts into practice the laws and ordinances of God, is helpless to bring about right order in the lives of Orpheus and Eurydice, then cosmic anarchy must prevail. This is the real tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice. Henryson is no longer able to hold to the inheritance he has gained; he can no longer see the cosmos with that essentially Medieval optimism. The Medieval world view may hold temporary answers, but it is powerless to affect the final tragedy of the human condition.

Let us not make Henryson into an unrelieved pessimist, however. Like Chaucer, Henryson sees very clearly the value of human life in the everyday sense. Orpheus' music is good and can charm the birds and the trees as well as alleviate suffering temporarily, and perhaps if any moral is to be gained from this it is that we must do what little we can during our lives to help those in need. Yet, in the eternal or supernatural sense this moral is as futile as Orpheus' music was to rescue Eurydice. Despite the apparent order of the singing of the spheres, the divine hierarchy, Orpheus' parentage and his heavenly musical skill, all things have come to naught by the end of the story. The falsity of things divine is underlined by their final helplessness to compensate for human mutability.

Henryson's Orpheus is a type of everyman, and the poem is a recognition of the tragedy of man's flawed, mutable nature which even music has no power to affect other than temporarily. Music, for centuries symbolic of, and synonymous with, divine order and justice is powerless; hence the whole concept of the order of the cosmos and the eternal is called into question. It must be understood that Henryson is not an 'agnostic', denying Medieval values, rather his attitude is one of wistful questioning, similar to the tone of Raleigh's The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd.

In the light of this essential doubt we must question Muir's assessment of Henryson and his milieu. Muir says:

It was one of those ages when everything, in spite of the practical disorder of life, seems to have its place; the ranks and occupations of men; the hierarchy of animals; good and evil; the earth, heaven and hell; and the life of man and of the beasts turns naturally into a story because it is part of a greater story about which there is general consent. Henryson, like Chaucer, exists in that long calm of storytelling which ended with the Renaissance, when the agreement about the great story was broken¹⁵.

Muir continues on to say that the virtue of this 'great story' was that all things, including tragedy, were natural and part of an overall order, so that:

while pity had a place, there was no place for those outcries against life which fill the tragic drama of the next age¹⁶.

The poet, says Muir, not only accepts his life and that around him, but he is resigned to it.

Tolliver is similarly mistaken. Speaking of the Testament of Cresseid he says:

Cresseid's excursion into chaos, however, ultimately serves more than moral order; it indirectly justifies and reaffirms the general order without which moral order could not exist... It is such confidence in an order beyond the capricious whim of the planets, I think, which makes possible the sympathetic irony with which Henryson views human shortcomings¹⁷.

Nor can we countenance Elliott when he says:

Henryson accepts, and assumes in his audience, the medieval ethos. The paths of right and wrong, towards bliss or bale, are clear and distinct.¹⁸

Looking at Orpheus and Eurydice as we have, neither Tolliver, Muir nor Elliott is credible. The poem expresses in no uncertain terms the tragedy and pity of the human condition, and the helplessness of the ranks of gods. While the narrator may indeed be part of the 'long calm of storytelling', while he may be resigned to the pity of life around him, and while he certainly does have confidence in a general order, we must bear in mind that he is not Henryson. Henryson as author questions and undermines each of these inherited positions, casting doubt upon their validity and ultimately questioning the whole order of the Medieval cosmos. If we use Muir's classification, then Henryson belongs in the Renaissance. Perhaps he was a man ahead of his time.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Sir Orfeo, ed. A.J. Bliss 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 1 29-32.
2. Robert L. Kindrick, Robert Henryson (Twayne's English Authors Series 274, 1980), p.152.
3. John MacQueen, Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.38.
4. J.B. Friedman, Orpheus in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p.210.
5. K.R.R. Gros Louis, 'Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" and the Orpheus Traditions of the Middle Ages' Speculum 41 (1966), 653.
6. Douglas Gray, Robert Henryson (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1979), p.235.
7. Gray, p.235.
8. Matthew P. McDiarmid, 'Robert Henryson in His Poems' in Bards and Makars Scottish Language and Literature: Medieval and Renaissance. Ed. Adam J. Aitken, Matthew P. McDiarmid and Derick S. Thomson (Glasgow: Univ. of Glasgow, 1977), p.33.
9. McDiarmid, pp.31-2.
10. McDiarmid, p.27.
11. Carol Mills, 'Romance Convention and Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice"' in Bards and Makars Scottish Language and Literature: Medieval and Renaissance. Ed. Adam J. Aitken, Matthew P. McDiarmid, Derick S. Thomson (Glasgow: Univ. of Glasgow Press, 1977), p.54.
12. Mills, p.55.

13. Gros Louis, p.653.
14. Gray, p.235.
15. Edwin Muir, Essays on Literature and Society (London: Hogarth Press, 1965), p.10.
16. Muir, p.10.
17. H.E. Tolliver, 'Robert Henryson: From Moralitas to Irony' English Studies, 46 (1965), 309.
18. Ed. Charles Elliott, Robert Henryson: Poems 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.xii.

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