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Dietrich Strauss

Some Comments on the Morality of Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice"

Robert Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" is undoubtedly one of the most fascinating medieval Scottish poems that we know. In part, this fascination is derived from the impressive artistic achievement that constitutes the poem; in part, however, it is caused by its highly enigmatic nature. Consequently, scholarly criticism has offered interpretations of "Orpheus and Eurydice," which differ strikingly. Kurt Wittig suggested that "*Orpheus and Eurydice* is one of the very few poems of the Middle Ages that tells a classical tale for its own sake, with no allegorical trappings,"¹ probably led to this judgment by the evident plasticity and beauty of the Orpheus myth, as retold by Henryson.

As an answer to Wittig's interpretation John MacQueen argued that Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" should be understood as a poetic substantiation of neoplatonic ideas.² To this, in turn, Marianne Powell replied that Henryson's intention when writing the poem was not so much the literary presentation of the neoplatonic concept of emanation and purified return of the soul, but the poetic realization of the didactic objective of laying out and exemplifying important constituents of medieval morals to the reader.³ Denton

¹Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh & London, 1958), p. 44.

²John MacQueen, *Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 24ff. Henceforth MacQueen.

³Marianne Powell, "Henryson, Boethius and Trivet" in *Actes du 2e colloque de langue et de littérature écossaises (moyen âge et renaissance)*, ed. Jean-Jacques Blanchot and Claude Graf (Strasbourg, 1978), pp. 297-306. Henceforth Powell.

2 Dietrich Strauss

Fox has recommended as a new approach to understanding the enigmas of the poem, the application of the notion of poetic irony.⁴

While no opinion in favor of one or other of these interpretations is preferred as a starting point, it is held that one reason for "Orpheus and Eurydice" having received "so little in the way of perceptive formal criticism" (MacQueen, p. 27) must no doubt be the fact that the character and structure of the poem defy endeavors to arrive at a critical consensus as to the essence of its message.

In this essay I shall attempt to demonstrate that these difficulties are caused by the unique relation which exists between narrative and *Moralitas* in "Orpheus and Eurydice," and that a new assessment of this relationship will do away with most of these difficulties.

At the outset I should like to endorse without reservation Marianne Powell's judgment that "Henryson rarely follows a source slavishly, but recreates the material to such an extent that the source is often no longer clearly identifiable" (Powell, p. 297). This judgment is reinforced by Denton Fox's statement that Henryson's intellectual nature was "markedly unpedantic" (*Poems*, p. xxiv). I cannot, however, agree with Powell when she continues, "One notable exception to this is the *Moralitas* of his 'Orpheus and Eurydice' for which he mentions his source as being 'master frewit doctor nycholass'" (Powell, p. 297; quoting from the Asloan MS). On the contrary, I think the first part of Marianne Powell's judgment deserves to be further developed. Henryson was able—quite unlike so many other poets, including Burns—to maintain a high standard of diction and composition throughout his writings, always adapted to his poetic intentions. Those very few of his texts that are apparently of an inferior poetic quality should, therefore, prompt us to question their authenticity.

Before doing so in the case of the *Moralitas* in "Orpheus and Eurydice" a point must be made. The fact that Henryson was of low social and artistic standing would make it plausible, perhaps even probable, that another writer would consider tampering with his text. Evidently Henryson's name was not to be reckoned with, perhaps was not even known, when in 1508, soon after the poet's presumed death, some of his poems, including "Orpheus and Eurydice," appeared anonymously in the so-called Chepman and Myllar Prints, the oldest specimens of Scottish printing that are known to have survived. These prints are known in only one copy, now in the National Library of Scotland. In 1950 the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society published a facsimile of the collection, edited by William Beattie. Apparently, for the Edinburgh printers of the beginning of the sixteenth century, Henryson, even though he had lived in Dunfermline only a few miles across the Forth, was unknown. One should

⁴*The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. Denton Fox (Oxford, 1981), p. cix. Quotations from Henryson will be from this edition and will be cited by line number in the text. Henceforth *Poems*.

recollect that the neglect of Henryson went even further; at a later date his "Testament of Cresseid" was appended to Chaucer's "Troilus and Criseyde" and was understood to be Chaucer's own work as early as Thynne's edition of 1532.

In striking contrast to this, Dunbar is mentioned as an author in the Chepman & Myllar Prints; it seems possible that he co-operated with the printers. In the early sixteenth century printers, it must be remembered, were considered to be members of an intellectual profession. If, therefore, in 1508 Henryson was unknown as an author by those who printed his poems, this must intensify doubts as to the authenticity of texts ascribed to him from internal criteria. Thus it is safe to state that respect for the identity and integrity of Henryson's poetic output was low among the Edinburgh printers of the early sixteenth century. The consequences of this will perhaps become evident by findings of a different nature.

The sources of "Orpheus and Eurydice" are mainly Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae*, III, metr. xii and the commentary on Boethius' book by Nicholas Trivet; indirectly, of course, also Vergil, *Georgica*, IV, 315-558, and other texts in which the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is related. How are the two principal sources used? It should be said that it is reasonable to expect that the poet made free use of these two sources, exploiting them whenever his poetic creativity judged it appropriate. And we can assume that Henryson did not confine the use of one of his main sources to any one specific part of the poem and the use of the second source to another part of it, but that he blended these sources in such a way that traces of both sources may be found anywhere throughout the poem.

The poem, such as we know it, does not meet with this expectation. From line 250 to line 309 and from line 345 to line 414, Henryson's poem is based mainly on Boethius. Other details of Orpheus' journey that are given before the *Moralitas* starts were found partly in Vergil and were partly provided by Henryson's own poetic imagination. One of several proofs of Boethius being directly used by Henryson is an evident parallel. The lines

Quis legem det amantibus
Maior lex amor est sibi⁵

are beautiful and assertive in spite of the tragic end of Orpheus' journey and, what is here important, significant for the spirit that characterizes Boethius' poem. These lines are succinctly rendered by Henryson into Scots:

Quhare lufe gois, on forse turnis the ee (l. 410).

⁵Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S. J. Tester (London & Cambridge, MA, 1973), p. 310. The Loeb Classical Library. Henceforth Boethius.

4 Dietrich Strauss

Naturally, the style of Henryson's poetic diction is different from that of Boethius; but both authors express the same feeling. What Boethius wants to say of Eurydice is made perfectly clear, when he refers to her as something "praecipuum" (Boethius, p. 310). Henryson, quite in accordance with that, makes Orpheus exclaim, when he at last finds her in Pluto's realms:

Quod he, 'My lady lele and my delyte, (*l.* 352).

The negative qualities of human physical and mental existence that Eurydice is meant to stand for in Trivet's commentary are not even hinted at before the *Moralitas* begins.

The *Moralitas* in Henryson, on the other hand, follows Trivet's commentary on Boethius almost literally as far as the explanation of the supposed symbolic meaning of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth goes:⁶

TRIVET: Phebus est deus sapientie (*l.* 41).

MORALITAS: Faire Phebus is the god of sapience (*l.* 425).

TRIVET: Caliope...elloquentiam (*ll.* 37; 39-40).

MORALITAS: Caliopee, his wyf, is eloquence (*l.* 426).

TRIVET: Per Orpheum intelligitur pars intellectiua (*l.* 36).

MORALITAS: Orpheus...is the part intellectiue (*ll.* 427-8).

TRIVET: Euridices scilicet pars hominis affectiua (*ll.* 45-6).

MORALITAS: Erudices is oure affection (*l.* 431).

TRIVET: Aristeus qui interpretatur uirtus (*l.* 47).

MORALITAS: Arestyus...is noucht bot gude vertewe (*ll.* 435-6).

These examples are enough to demonstrate the striking dependence of the *Moralitas* on Trivet's commentary. However, for Boethius as a possible direct source for that part of the poem, his influence can nowhere be detected.

In the narrative portion of "Orpheus and Eurydice" Henryson drew on Boethius (and to a lesser extent on Vergil and others) but not at all on Trivet until the beginning of the *Moralitas*. The *Moralitas*, on the other hand, follows Trivet closely, without showing any direct influence of Boethius.

⁶Nicholas Trivet's *Commentary on Boethius*, Cons. ph. III, Metr. xii, in *Poems*, pp. 384-91.

We thus find the rather unusual situation of Henryson using source one (Boethius) without borrowing from source two (Trivet) for one part of the poem, then using source two without borrowing from source one for the second part of the poem. His purpose in treating these complementary sources in this manner was to create a poetically satisfying and intellectually convincing work through the fusion of logical or allegorical components, a feat that was by no means unimportant in the Middle Ages.

Is "Orpheus and Eurydice," in the form known to us, a poetic achievement of this nature? A closer look at two passages in the poem that tell us of the same persons may help. First stanzas 14 and 15:

I say this be Erudices the quene,
Quhilk walkit furth in till a Maii mornynge,
Bot with a madin, in a medowe grene,
To tak the dewe and se the flouris spring;
Quhar in a schawe, ner by this lady zing,
A bustuos herd, callit Arystyus,
Kepand his bestis, lay wnder a bus.

And quhen he saw this lady solitar,
Barfute with schankis quhytar than the snawe,
Prikkit with lust, he thocht withoutin mar
Hir till oppres—and till hir can he drawe.
Dredand for scaith, sche fled quhen scho him saw,
And as scho ran all bairfut in ane bus,
Scho trampit on a serpent wennomus (*ll.* 92-105).

This, of course, is the well known topos of a beautiful woman being surprised in loco amoenus by a herdsman, a satyr or Pan himself, an old substantive which is to be found in the Orpheus myth. However, it is given a lively and impressive new poetical shape by Henryson. These stanzas make us feel immediate compassion for Eurydice, as the herdsman's behavior is described as a brutal attack, an intended rape.

But in the *Moralitas* we discover quite the contrary:

Erudices is oure affection,
Be fantasy oft movit vp and doun;
Quhile to reson it castis the delyte,
Quhile to the flesch settis the appetite (*ll.* 431-4).

and, even more surprisingly, we read

Arestyus, this hird that coud persewe
Erudices, is noucht bot gude vertewe,
Quhilk besy is ay to kepe oure myndis clene (*ll.* 435-7).

We have seen that those lines show Trivet's direct influence, it must now be added that before the beginning of the *Moralitas* no trace can be found in the poem that provides us with a means of linking up those bluntly antagonistic characterizations of Aristeus in order to make some sense of the apparent contradiction. And what is said about Eurydice in the *Moralitas* is utterly incongruous with stanzas 14 and 15. In stanzas 11-19, which deal with Eurydice's fate, there occurs only one phrase that has a negative connotation: "Off wardlie ioye, allace, quhat sall we say?" (*l.* 89); it is used, however, in an otherwise by no means derogatory description of Orpheus and Eurydice's married life, referring not to Eurydice only, but to Orpheus as well.

To have shown the apparent incompatibility of narrative and *Moralitas* in "Orpheus and Eurydice" might seem sufficient. Things are, however, somewhat more complex. One has, of course, to bear in mind that a strict congruity of poem and *Moralitas* was not intended by Henryson. This would have made the *Moralitas* superfluous. Rather, it was the didactic purpose of Henryson's *Moralitates* to make man look behind the human scene, to make them discern, within the concepts of scholastic philosophy, truth from appearance. According to Henryson's poetic technique a narrative and its *Moralitas* are, with regard to their morals, not meant to be simply congruent, but complementary.

It is important to note that Henryson does not normally confront his readers with an explanation of the narrative in his *Moralitates* that is totally unexpected; his technique is not that brutal and crude. On the contrary, his method of driving home our understanding of what was related earlier is rather cautious, psychologically well motivated and successfully persuasive.

For instance, think of "The Cock and the Jasp." Here the jasp is explicitly referred to as possessing "vertew" (*l.* 86) in the narrative part of the poem, so that the reader is not astonished when, in the *Moralitas*, this quality is mentioned again (*l.* 129). And the essence of the *Moralitas* of "The Two Mice" can be anticipated when one has read the preceding narrative.

Surely nothing of this nature can be said about the relation of narrative and *Moralitas* in "Orpheus and Eurydice." However closely one examines them, they remain strangely isolated by a deep psychological gap that cannot be bridged.

The *Moralitas* deals at great length with all those mythological antecedents in the poem that are referred to in Trivet's commentary of Boethius, depending on Trivet's allegorical explanation. However, where Henryson introduces new persons into the myth, Trivet offers no help for corresponding passages in the *Moralitas*. In consequence, the *Moralitas* gives no comment whatever on those of Orpheus' experiences that are not also to be found in Trivet.

Can this be explained by maintaining that those experiences of Orpheus that Henryson added to the Boethian version of the myth needed no elucidation, so that consequently in the *Moralitas* it was only necessary to repeat what was already interpreted by Trivet? This is admittedly true of stanza 47:

Thare fand he mony pape and cardinall,
In haly kirk quhilk dois abusoun;
And archbisshopis in thair pontificall
Be symony and wrang intrusioun;
Abbotis and men of all religion,
For euill disponyng of thair placis rent,
In flambe of fyre were bitterly turment (*ll.* 338-44).

What Henryson was talking of here everyone reading these lines a few decades before the Scottish Reformation knew; not only did he give the ecclesiastical rank of the evildoers, he also stated their offences, which was probably as far as he could go. It would be unreasonable to expect names or longer comments on the deeds of these clerical offenders.

Can a similar argument be put forward with regard to the preceding stanzas (44-46) in which we also learn about sinners on whom Trivet did not comment? Hector's and Priamus' misdeeds are—if lines 317-320 are meant to be referring also to them—hinted at only in general terms; although comments on their offences in the *Moralitas* would have been just as appropriate as those actually given at some length on Ixion's, Tantalus', and Ticius' crimes. But Hector and Priamus are not once mentioned in the *Moralitas*. We are told explicitly—and to an extent that allows no freedom to the reader's imagination—how we are to understand these deeds, whereas we are completely left in the dark as to what moral to draw from Hector's and Priamus' offences. Although their crimes are briefly noted in stanzas 41-44, there is no mention of Ahab, Alexander, Antiochus, Caesar, Croesus, Herod, Jezebel, Nero, one Pharaoh, or Pilate in the *Moralitas*. Given the long explanations of what Ixion, Tantalus and Ticius stand for, one would think that these others and the wrongs they committed would have merited some interpretive remarks in the *Moralitas* also. Some of these could even have been linked up with the crimes that are discussed: Croesus' covetousness with that of Tantalus, Antiochus' sexual offence with those of Ixion and Ticius. To make no comment in the *Moralitas* on all these other evildoers would surely have seemed out of all poetic proportion to Henryson, as it does to us.

This justifies the statement that the *Moralitas* cannot be regarded as satisfactorily elucidating the preceding part of the poem. In the narrative, Orpheus' invocations of the planet gods and his visits to them in their spheres (stanzas 23-29) are meant to include the whole compass of pagan mythological ideas and imagery. No trace can be found in the narrative of that "superstitioun of astrolegy" (*l.* 589) which we find in the *Moralitas*. This phrase, with its medieval anti-pagan attitude, is flatly hostile to the spirit of the narrative.

Similar considerations apply to the mention of "wichcraft, spaying, and sorsery" (*l.* 588). Of these, understood literally, we hear nothing in the narrative, not even in the wider sense of pagan tradition.

Finally, the phrase “superstitioun of astrolegy” contrasts strangely with the intellectual sincerity and profundity that are characteristic of Henryson’s occupation with matters of astrology in the “Testament of Cresseid.”⁷

It is interesting also to examine the rhyme schemes used in “Orpheus and Eurydice.” There are fifty-seven stanzas in the narrative and all but five are in rhyme royal. These latter appear after stanza nineteen; each of these stanzas is in pentameter with the rhyme scheme aabaabbcbc. The c-rhyme is the same throughout these stanzas, the final word always being “Erudices,” a remarkably elaborate form and very difficult to master. This sequence is the so-called “Complaint of Orpheus,” although it does not appear likely that Henryson used the term.⁸

On the other hand, all the *Moralitas* offers is a series of couplets: aa bb cc. It should be noted here that this type of versification does not only differ strikingly from the form of the preceding part of the poem, it is nowhere else to be found in Henryson’s poetry. In almost all poems that are his or are ascribed to him, Henryson appears as a poet who worked with great care and skill at difficult rhyme patterns. He never once falls back on simple rhyming couplets. It is, therefore, hard to imagine that Henryson, having so elaborately versified the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, would have conveyed the moral message of his poem—and the *Moralitas* whether they were long or short always were to him the essence of his poems—in a rhyme-pattern that compared so poorly to the preceding stanzas.

Nor does an investigation into the use of alliteration in the two parts of the poem produce anything that suggests an intrinsic coherence between them. Whereas Henryson made ample use of alliteration in the stanzas preceding the *Moralitas*, the average and fairly evenly distributed occurrence of alliterative lines being more than three in the seven lines of each of the last ten stanzas of the narrative, we find only three alliterative lines in the first twenty-two of the *Moralitas* (*ll.* 415-436). In the following nine lines, however, no fewer than five are alliterative (*ll.* 437-445).⁹ This result in the *Moralitas* surely does not indicate the hand of a master craftsman as the stanzas of the narrative do.

⁷See Dietrich Strauss, “The opening stanzas of Henryson’s ‘Testament of Cresseid’ reconsidered” in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Scottish Language and Literature—Medieval and Renaissance*, ed. Roderick Lyall and Felicity Riddy (Stirling, 1981), pp. 301-314.

⁸The relevant gathering is missing in the Chepman & Myllar Print, but one can deduce from the amount of space that was available on that gathering that there was no room for such a heading. I owe this observation to Prof. William Beattie and to Mrs. Diane Strachan-Shafer.

⁹These figures vary, of course, slightly according to what is considered genuine alliteration in Henryson’s poetry and what coincidental sound equality.

Next, what is to be said of the stylistic expression of the notions and ideas with which the *Moralitas* is concerned? It would, of course, be unreasonable to expect a *Moralitas* not to moralize; its tone must necessarily be more sober and more factual, sometimes disillusioning, and certainly didactic. In this respect, however, the *Moralitas* of "Orpheus and Eurydice" outdoes all others that Henryson wrote. What it has to tell in its remarkable length cannot really be considered as just a sober piece of didacticism, because even didactic poetry must contain a certain minimum of liveliness if it is to serve its end successfully. This *Moralitas* is, however, little but a tedious exploitation of Trivet to which a rather uninspired passage on astrology is added—provided one does not dismiss this astrological passage as apocryphal straightaway.¹⁰

There is, admittedly, a phrase in the *Moralitas* that cannot be overlooked, as it is stylistically rather surprising, suggesting a special hand. Dwelling on the symbolic significance of Cerberus, this passage tells us:

Bot quhen our mynd is myngit with sapience,
And plais apon the harp of eloquence;
That is to say, makis persuasioun
To draw oure will and oure affection,
In ewiry elde, fra syn and foule delyte,
This dog oure saule has no power to byte (*ll.* 469-74).

The first two of the lines just cited are subsequently twice modified:

Bot quhen reson and perfyte sapience
Playis apon the harp of eloquens (*ll.* 507-8).

* * *

Bot quhen that reson and intelligence
Playis apon the harp of eloquens (*ll.* 545-6).

It is difficult to believe that all of this was written by Henryson. His poetic creativeness was not so limited that he had to use the same phrasing three times, only slightly modified, in lines that are a rather forced effort to produce something imaginative.

Finally, some remarks are in order on the composition of "Orpheus and Eurydice" as a whole. The first nineteen stanzas in rhyme royal narrate the myth up to Eurydice's death. Then five pentametric ten-line stanzas tell us how Orpheus bewails his loss. In thirty-three further rhyme royal stanzas Orpheus' journey to the Underworld is described, his endeavor to win back

¹⁰See Robert Henryson, *Poems*, ed. Charles Elliott (Oxford, 1978), p. 127, and *The Poems and Fables of Robert Henryson*, ed. H. Harvey Wood (Edinburgh & London, 1965), p. xxvii.

Eurydice, and the final failure of this attempt. Hereafter follows the *Moralitas* containing 119 lines in the Bannatyne MS.

Henryson used a similar composition pattern when he wrote "The Testament of Cresseid." In the first fifty-eight rhyme royal stanzas we are told Cresseid's fate until she is smitten with leprosy. Then we hear her complaint in seven pentametric nine-line stanzas which resemble those that form Orpheus' complaint in "Orpheus and Eurydice." The rhyme scheme is the same in the first seven lines of both poems: aabaabb, but the last two lines in Cresseid's complaint are ab. The narrative is then carried on to Cresseid's death in a further sequence of twenty-one rhyme royal stanzas. There is, however, no explicitly specified *Moralitas* in the poem. The moral impact of the poem is summed up in one line of the last stanza:

Ming not 3our lufe with fals deceptioun (*l.* 613).

To sum up, the two parts of "Orpheus and Eurydice" do not seem to be complementary to any noticeable extent: i) They draw on different sources. ii) Their psychological and moral tones contradict each other. iii) The *Moralitas* fails to comment on several allegorical figures who appear in the narrative, and whose presence there would seem to require elucidation in the *Moralitas*. iv) The phrase "superstitioun of astrolegy" in the *Moralitas* is strikingly antagonistic to Henryson's in both the narrative of "Orpheus and Eurydice" and in "The Testament of Cresseid." v) The rhyme patterns of the two parts of the poem differ substantially; in no other of Henryson's poems do we find passages in which couplets are the sole rhyming element as is the case of the *Moralitas* of "Orpheus and Eurydice." vi) The use of alliteration is not the same in the two parts of the poem. vii) The styles of the narrative and the *Moralitas* do not betray any intrinsic relation. viii) A comparison of the stanza structure of the narrative in "The Testament of Cresseid" and "Orpheus and Eurydice" reveals so close a resemblance that one must assume that in both cases Henryson composed according to the same underlying pattern. Thus, since there is no *Moralitas* in "The Testament of Cresseid," the presence of one in "Orpheus and Eurydice" is unexplained.

These results allow for only one conclusion: the *Moralitas* of "Orpheus and Eurydice" was not, or at least not in its major parts, written by Henryson; it is a later product written by someone else who appended it to Henryson's poem. The argument against this conclusion is, of course, that as early as 1508 Chepman and Myllar printed "Orpheus and Eurydice" with the *Moralitas*. However, it must be recalled that even at that early date Henryson was not credited with the authorship of the poem, his name being either unknown to the printers, or not considered worthy of inclusion.

That Henryson was forgotten so soon after his death makes it not unreasonable to assume that someone who, for some reason or other, objected to the way in which "Orpheus and Eurydice" ended and thought it appropriate to

supply the printers with a Moralitas to be added to the poem. Probably this person felt that the moral of the poem was not sufficiently outspoken. He may, theoretically, have made use of lines which Henryson had written for an intended Moralitas to "Orpheus and Eurydice," which he left unfinished, or, more likely, he may have imitated lines from other Henryson texts.

Having dismissed the Moralitas of "Orpheus and Eurydice" as at least in its major part not written by Henryson, it may reasonably be asked whether the poem, as it is known to us up to stanza 57, could be regarded as finished. The curtness of the last line of this stanza, "A wofull wedow hame-wart is he went" (l. 414), might suggest that Henryson did not mean this to be the final line of his poem. The opening of the Moralitas, "Lo, worthy folk" (l. 415) sounds Henrysonian, and one is reminded of similar phrasings in some other of the poet's Moralitates. An identical phrase, "Lo, worthie folk" appears in "The Preaching of the Swallow" (l. 1888); "Be war, gude folke" in "The Fox and the Wolf" (l. 789); "Now worthie folk" in "The Cock and the Fox" (l. 586). We find a very similar phrase, "Now, worthie wemen" (l. 610), in the opening of the last stanza of "The Testament of Cresseid." One could, therefore, conjecture that parts of the Moralitas of "Orpheus and Eurydice" were composed by Henryson and that, when he died, he left these lines which were completed and molded into something coherent, perhaps into some final stanzas, by a disciple of his.

On the other hand, the opening of the Moralitas of "Orpheus and Eurydice" is by no means sufficiently substantial support of the possibility that Henryson may have written part of it. This phrase might easily have been copied from "The Preaching of the Swallow" by someone acquainted with Henryson's poetry. It is, therefore, not unlikely that Henryson considered his poem satisfactorily ended by stanza 57. And indeed there is support for this hypothesis. If any of Henryson's poems gives occasion for a longer Moralitas, it is doubtless "The Testament of Cresseid." As we have seen, it consists of a single line in the final stanza of the poem:

Ming not zour lufe with fals deceptioun (l. 613).

Compare it to the passage in "Orpheus and Eurydice" which I believe contains Henryson's genuine Moralitas:

'Quhat art thou lufe? How sall I the dyffyne?
Bitter and suete, cruel and merciabile;
Plesand to sum, til othir playnt and pyne;
To sum constant, till othir variabil;
Hard is thy law, thi bandis vnbrekeable;
Quha seruis the, thouch he be newir sa trewe,
Perchance sum tyme he sall haue cause to rewe (ll. 401-407).

12 Dietrich Strauss

Here Henryson gives us in essence the message of his poem—poetically impressive and logically evident, corresponding to the poem's narrative.

Naturally, the question arises why Denton Fox in his edition of Henryson arrived at editorial decisions opposite to the ones which one should draw from the findings presented here.

*Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz
Germersheim*

Dietrich Strauss had been working on this article for several years, but it was left incomplete when he died in 1999. The Editor is most grateful to Professor Robert L. Kindrick for taking time out from an extremely busy schedule to read the text as my wife and I reconstructed it, and to assure me that there were no errors of fact in it. GRR