

Displaced Persons:
Conditions of Exile in European Culture

edited by
Sharon Ouditt

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General Editors' Preface

The European dimension of research in the humanities has come into sharp focus over recent years, producing scholarship which ranges across disciplines and national boundaries. This new series provides a major channel for this work and unites the fields of cultural studies and traditional scholarship. It will publish in the areas of European history and literature, art history, archaeology, language and translation studies, political, cultural and gay studies, music, psychology, sociology and philosophy. The emphasis is explicitly European and interdisciplinary, concentrating attention on the relativity of cultural perspectives, with a particular interest in issues of cultural transition.

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Chapter 1

From *Sir Orfeo* to 'Schir Orpheus': Exile, and the Waning of the Middle Ages

Enrico Giaccherini

In the following considerations I will assume, for brevity's sake, that the reader is familiar both with the classical Orpheus myth and, at least to some extent, with the treatment to which the theme was submitted by the unknown author of the late thirteenth/early fourteenth-century *Sir Orfeo*, and, later, by Robert Henryson in his *Orpheus and Eurydice* of the last third of the fifteenth century.¹ These authors, in turn, would have been familiar with the Orpheus tradition from the three main sources of the story for medieval audiences, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (Books X and XI), Virgil's *Georgics* (Book IV), and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* (Book III, meter xii), in the latter case directly and/or through Boethius's medieval commentators (Rémy of Auxerres, Guillaume de Conches, Nicholas Trivet and many others).

This tradition is, in itself, a composite one. Indeed, the myth owes its popularity with modern listeners and readers to what might be called its romantic, almost Tristanian quality: the tragic fate of a pair of lovers separated by death, and Orpheus's subsequent failure to rescue his beloved from the underworld due to his inability to resist the impulse to rest his eyes on Eurydice for an excess of love ('avidus ... videndi', 'eager to see her' (*Metam.*, X, 56), as Ovid put it)² – a perfect combination of *eros* and *thanatos* if ever there was one. However, both Ovid's and Virgil's versions (with Virgil, not surprisingly, much more attuned than the former to the socio-ethical implications of the myth, as Charles Segal,³ among others, has shown) still retain visible traces of a different, more ancient tradition, centred on the magic or, better, shamanic dimension inherent in the Greek Orpheus, gifted as he is with the supernatural powers of the singer and poet who brings order to the world especially through music.⁴

¹ Quotations and line numbers refer to the editions of the poems contained respectively in *Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. K. Sisam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); and in R. Henryson, *The Poems*, ed. D. Fox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

² Quotations of, and translations from, classical texts are drawn from *The Loeb Classical Library*.

³ Charles Segal, *Orpheus. The Myth of the Poet* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

⁴ In the ocean-wide bibliography on Orpheus I found especially helpful the collection of essays *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*, ed. J. Warden (Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

The clearest traces of this tradition are to be found in the episode of Orpheus's retirement into the wilderness, and of the solitary life he leads there, accompanied only by the inhabitants of the forest, before he is dismembered by the Cyconian women. But while Ovid limits himself to a passing hint at this stage of the protagonist's existence, concisely reminding the reader that Orpheus 'betook himself to high Rhodope and wind-swept Haemus' (X, 76-7), where he 'with such songs ... drew the trees, held beasts enthralled and constrained stones to follow him' (XI, 1-2), Virgil insists, at some length, not only on the divine singer's capacity to tame tigers and move trees with his art, but also on the pathos of the forlorn hero's wanderings in the harsh winter landscape of a nature turned hostile:

Month in, month out, seven whole months, men say beneath a skyey cliff
by lonely Strymon's wave, he wept, and, deep in icy caverns, unfolded this
his tale, charming the tigers, and making the oaks attend his strain; even as
the nightingale, mourning beneath the poplar's shade, bewails the loss of
her brood, that a churlish ploughman hath espied and torn unfledged from
the nest: but she weeps all night long, and, perched on a spray, renews her
piteous strain, filling the region round with sad laments. No love, no
wedding-song could bend his soul. Alone he would roam the northern ice,
the snowy Tanais, and the fields ever wedded to Rhipaeon frosts, wailing
Eurydice lost, and the gift of Dis annulled. (IV, 507-19)

Boethius, on his part, while slightly more diffuse than Ovid, did not quite follow Virgil, in that he made no mention of nature's reflection of Orpheus's despair – that Orpheus, Boethius says,

... who before had made the woods so nimbly run
And rivers stand
With his weeping measures,
And the hind's fearless flank
Lay beside the savage lions,
Nor was the hare afraid to look upon
The hound, made peaceful by his song (ll. 7-13)

Rewriting the myth at the end of the thirteenth century or shortly after, the poet of *Sir Orfeo* strategically removed the description of his griefstricken hero's life in the woods to an earlier phase of the story, following the abduction of Dame Heurodis at the hands of the King of Fairye, but prior to Sir Orfeo's meeting with the group of 'sixty leuedis' amidst which he recognizes his queen, whom he then follows into the celtic-type Otherworld she now inhabits. Given the radical (but not wholly original, as I and others have shown elsewhere⁵) reshaping of the myth's conclusion worked by the Middle English poet, he did not have much choice: Dame Heurodis *not* dying a second death, Orfeo's dismissal of his public role and withdrawal into

⁵ See especially P. Dronke, 'The Return of Eurydice', *Classica et Medievalia*, 23 (1962), pp. 198-215; also the introductory section to my *Sir Orfeo*, ed. and trans. E. Giaccherini (Parma: Pratiche, 1994).

self-imposed exile to mourn his loss in the wilderness ('her king en exile zede', says the beggar near the end of the poem [l. 493]) could be justified exclusively in relation to the woman's first and only disappearance.

The theme is thus traditional, and the anonymous English poet's treatment of it is, in many ways, equally so. Amplification of the source material is the typical literary device favoured by medieval romance writers and narrators in general – a procedure which usually goes in tandem with the other leading technique, repetition (*cum variatione*).⁶ In the case of *Sir Orfeo*, however, it seems to me that the size of, and the importance accorded to, the passage – which deserves quotation in full – have implications that go beyond even its undeniably functional aspect:

Purch wode and ouer hep
Into þe wildernes he gep.
Noþing he fint þat him is ays,
Bot euer he liueþ in gret malais.
He þat hadde ywerd þe fowe and griis,
And on bed þe purper biis,
Now on hard heþe he liþ,
Wiþ leues and gresse he him wriþ.
He þat hadde had castels and tours,
Riuer, forest, friþ wiþ flours,
Now, þei it comenci to snewe and frese,
fiis king mot make his bed in mese.
He þat had yhad kniztes of priis
Bifor him kneland, and leuedis,
Now seþ he noþing þat him likeþ,
Bot wilde wormes bi him strikeþ.
He þat had yhad plenté
Of mete and drink, of ich deynté,
Now may he al day digge and wrote
Er he finde his fille of rote.
In somer he liueþ bi wild frut
And berien bot gode lite;
In winter may he noþing finde
Bot rote, grases, and þe rinde.
Al his bodi was oway duine
For missays, and al tochine.
Lord! Who may telle þe sore
Þis king sufferd ten zere and more?
His here of his berd, blac and rowe,
To his girdelstede was growe.
His harp, whereon was al his gle,
He hidde in an holwe tre;
And, when þe weder was clere and brigþ,
He toke his harp to him wel riht,
And harped at his owen wille.

⁶ See for instance D. Brewer, 'The Nature of Romance', *Poetica*, 9 (1978), pp. 9-48.

Into alle þe wode þe soun gan schille,
 þat alle þe wilde bestes þat þer bep
 For ioie abouten him þai tep;
 And alle þe foules þat þer were
 Come and sete on ich a brere,
 To here his harping afine,
 So miche melody was þerin;
 And when he his harping lete wold,
 No best bi him abide nold. (ll. 237–80).

In an age in which the sacred nature of the office of king and ruler is felt to derive directly from God, voluntary abdication from the throne is acceptable, and indeed meritorious, in the eyes of the public only if it is brought to effect in the name of an even holier ideal – that of religion. King Orfeo does precisely that, in the fullest, medieval sense of the word 'religion'. The description of the primitive life he lives in the woods is made up of a series of commonplaces that follow the pattern of the lives of the holy hermits and anchorites that were so popular in hagiographical literature from the early Middle Ages onwards. That Sir Orfeo is likened to these, besides, is unquestionably implicit in the fact that, at the moment of leaving his kingdom, he literally divests himself of all the external insignia of his role, 'Bot a sclauin on him he toke' (l. 228), donning, that is, a simple slavin, a pilgrim's mantle. The recurrent opposition between his earlier lifestyle and the harsh conditions of his present one (the 'He that ... now ...' pattern, five times repeated) is rhetorically very effective, emphasizing his role as a penitent: and penitence – not just repentance – is the precondition for pardon and readmittance to the society of the faithful. Thus, grace will eventually be conferred again on Sir Orfeo, who will then, as a consequence, be free to start his journey back to civilization and to his kingdom, once more a legitimate sovereign. But, in this poem, the restitution of Holy Grace coincides with the restitution of the hero's lady, Dame Heurodis: a clear enough demonstration of the fusion – as well as of the confusion – of the language of the religion of God with that of the religion of Love, of the transcendent with the human, which lies at the very heart of what we currently refer to as 'courtly love'. A much debated and paradoxical notion, this is based on ambiguity; it is nothing more than a famous medievalist's hypothesis, as has often been pointed out,⁷ but one, at least, that tries to explain a literary phenomenon which is conspicuous even in such a fundamentally popular narrative as *Sir Orfeo*.

It must be admitted, though, that, whichever may have been the source, it has been expanded here to an inordinate length. The corresponding section in Virgil's *Georgics* (the most likely source) consists, as we have seen, of 13 lines, which

⁷ The allusion is to Gaston Paris's famous article 'Études sur les romans de la Table Ronde. Lancelot du Lac. II. Le Conte de la Charrette', *Romania*, 12 (1883), 459–534. See the useful *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F.X. Newman (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1972).

have been extended to no fewer than 44 – that is, over one-fourteenth of the whole poem. Of these, only ten lines deal with Sir Orfeo's power to charm the forest creatures with his music (while no mention at all is made of the trees themselves); all the rest describe the protagonist's life in the wilderness as one season succeeds another, for ten long years, as compared with Virgil's seven months and Ovid's three years. The poet has done his best here to move the audience to pity and compassion for Sir Orfeo's seemingly desperate plight, in order to provide the greater dramatic contrast, and relief for the audience, when he, and we, enter the enchanted atmosphere of the next episode – the meeting with the 'wild hunt' led by the King of Fairye, and with the ladies' hawking party amongst whom Dame Heurodis is also riding. A parallel romance-type situation might be Sir Gawain's wanderings through the Wirral in the winter season, suddenly giving way to the apparition of Bertilak's enchanted castle.

We could continue to analyse the passage at length, but what we have in the account of Sir Orfeo's exile is, in short, a splendid display of consummate descriptive and rhetorical ability, carried through with great narrative gusto: the poet is clearly enjoying telling a good story for its own sake.

If we turn now to Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*, we can see that, although traces of what has been called the 'poetic', orally-based 'minstrel' tradition of the Orpheus myth,⁸ best exemplified by *Sir Orfeo*, can be identified in the Scotsman's poem, it should be said straightaway that no conclusive evidence of direct derivation can be adduced. The poem is only very slightly longer than its predecessor – it consists of 632 lines as opposed to 604 – but the impression is misleading. Indeed, the adventure of which 'Schir Orpheus' – as the protagonist's name has now become – is the hero reaches its natural conclusion at line 410.

Some words that I have just used, such as 'adventure', and 'hero', are typical of the vocabulary of romance, but are in fact inappropriate here, as Henryson's poem, in my view, hardly belongs to the romance genre. To give an idea of the different atmosphere by which it is pervaded, it will be enough to remember that, while Sir Orfeo was 'In Ingland an heȝe lording,/ A stalworþ man and hardi bo' (ll. 26–7) who lived in the city of Traciens, 'For Winchester was cleped þ o/ Traciens witouten no' (ll. 49–50), Henryson's Schir Orpheus may well be a king, but he remains first and foremost the son of the mighty god Phoebus and the muse Calliope, daughter of Jupiter and Mnemosyne: he is, in other words, the *Greek*, classical Orpheus. But to return to the main issue, after line 410, '*Moralitas fabule sequitur*', as the rubric recites – a verse summary of the section on the Orpheus poem, which is part of the allegorical commentary on Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* written by Nicholas Trivet near the end of the thirteenth century.⁹ The *Moralitas* – the moral interpretation of the story proper – is therefore 224 lines long, thus taking over

⁸ K.R.R. Gros Louis, 'Robert Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and the Orpheus Traditions of the Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 41 (1961), pp. 643–55.

⁹ The relevant section is published by Fox as an appendix to his edition of Henryson's poems (see above, n.1), pp. 384–91.

one-third of the entire poem, while the story itself, correspondingly, has been cut down to roughly two-thirds of the length of *Sir Orfeo*. While this, as I want to suggest, does not necessarily imply that Henryson was particularly interested in the 'moral', it does add to the impression that he did not especially care for the story. On reading *Orpheus and Eurydice*, I find myself unable to concur with Kenneth Gros Louis's statement that it is the 'attractiveness' with which Henryson endowed the characters and their tragedy that makes the *Moralitas*, by comparison, so 'dull and ineffectual'.¹⁰ If there emerges, in this poem, an indisputable interest, this is aimed at its classical inheritance. A renewed concern for the classical pantheon is perhaps its most obvious feature, as the long genealogy with which *Orpheus and Eurydice* opens already suggests (and is also wholly consistent with Henryson's practice in his more famous masterpiece, *The Testament of Cresseid* – consider the splendid description of the planetary gods in Cresseid's trial, to which I will shortly return). Moreover, the association of nobility of spirit and nobility of lineage, strengthened by education, is a notion that surely belongs to the Renaissance rather than to the Middle Ages. To confirm Henryson's interest in the classical gods, one could then add the identification of the 'Quene of fary' who abducts Erudices with Proserpina (admittedly, following in Chaucer's footsteps¹¹), and, especially, the protagonist's highly formalized invocation to Phoebus and Jupiter as he is about to set off on his journey in search of Erudices:

'I the beseike, my fair fader Phebus,
 Haue pete of thi awne sone Orpheus;
 Wait thow nocht wele I am thi barne and child?
 Now heir my plant, panefull and petuous;
 Direct me fra this deid sa dolorus,
 Quhillk gois thus withoutin gilt begild;
 Lat nocht thi face with clowdis be oursyld;
 Len me thi licht and lat me nocht ga les
 To fynd the fair in fame that neuer was fyld,
 My lady quene and luf, Erudices!
 'O Iupiter, thow god celestiall,
 And grantschir to my self, on the I call
 To mend my murnyng and my drery mone;
 Thou geve me forse that I noucht faynt nor fall
 Quhill I hir fynd, for seke hir suth I sall,
 And nouthir stynt nor stand for stok no stone!
 Trou thy god-hede, gyde me quhare scho is gone;
 Ger hir appere, and put my hert in pes!' (ll. 164–81)

¹⁰ Louis, 'Robert Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*', op. cit., p. 646.

¹¹ "'And I," quod she, "a queene of Fayerye!": *Merchant's Tale*, 2316; quoted from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L.D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). It may be significant that precisely in this tale can be found one of Chaucer's not-too-frequent allusions to Orpheus (l. 1716).

The latter element is in itself highly indicative of Henryson's attitude towards his subject matter. By making Schir Orpheus decide to go in search of his wife, in fact, he resolutely marks his distance from the 'popular' tradition embodied in the previous *Sir Orfeo* romance, whose most original – or, perhaps, whose only real – innovation in terms of plot lay precisely in the fact that its hero never manifests any intention of looking for Dame Heurodis. As far as Sir Orfeo feels and understands, she is forever lost. His meeting with her during his sojourn in the forest is totally unexpected, and comes upon him as an absolute shock. Henryson's version, instead, goes back, via Boethius, to the classical source, Virgil, as is also witnessed, for example, by the restitution to his legitimate role of the character of Arystyus, totally absent in the earlier poem, and, of course, by Henryson's strict adherence to the 'received' version of the myth, with his restoration of the tragic conclusion. To quote another critic who has written on Henryson's poem, 'The narrative is classical: the characters ... are post-romance in outlook and personality'.¹² And, for me, 'post-romance' also means, in the poem's chronological and cultural context, post-medieval.

But what becomes of the protagonist's decision to become an exile in Henryson's version? The place it occupies in the diegesis is the same as in *Sir Orfeo* – it follows, that is, Erudices's maiden's report of the queen's abduction. But, in order not to miss it, one must read the text very carefully, because, strictly speaking, there is no 'episode' dealing with it. All we are told, is that the protagonist '... tuke his harpe and to the wod can go' (l. 129), where he sings the 'sangis lamentable' (l. 184). I have already alluded to the kind of formalized 'lament' that Henryson was so fond of, and which can be seen in Cresseid's two lyric passages in *The Testament of Cresseid* – the heroine's 'Complaint' based on the '*Ubi sunt*' topos, and the final 'Testament' itself. Thus, it should be within the context of Schir Orpheus's lyrical effusion that we must look for the sort of stuff corresponding, in the sources and parallel texts, to the narration of the hero's self-banishment. What we have instead of the extended, highly pathetic passage in *Sir Orfeo* (and, up to a point, in the *Georgics*), is the extremely dramatically effective device of the narrator's own voice interpolating in the second verse of Schir Orpheus's complaint, to inform us that, to alleviate his sorrow, he played a lively tune 'Quhill all the foulis of the wod can syng,/ And treis dansit with thar leves grene' (ll. 145–6), albeit to no practical consequence. The details here do nothing to further the dramatic action, nor do they add to the pathos of the scene, but are merely decorative; birds (no wild tigers here!) and trees do not participate in the protagonist's grief, but dance merrily to his tune. The spirit is that of a mask, or a pantomime, or a ballet, rather than that of a tragic narrative. Then, in the next verse, we have Orpheus's own voice resuming his complaint, in anticipation of the miserable existence that lies ahead of him, succinctly touching on a series of details which are clearly derived from the popular

¹² C. Mills, 'Romance Convention of Robert Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*', in A.J. Aitken, M.P. McDiarmid and D.S. Thompson, eds, *Bards and Makars* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 1977), p. 59.

tradition: '... welcome, woddis wyld and wilsome way,/ My wikit werd in wildernes to wair!/ My rob ryall and all my riche array/ Changit sall be in rude russat of gray;/ My diademe in till an hat of hair;/ My bed sall be with bever, broke, and bair,/ In buskis bene, with mony bustuos bes' (ll. 155–61) (which are Virgil's bees, once again).

When the narrative resumes after this lyric interval, however, the scenario changes altogether. Virgil's seven-month, Ovid's three-year and *Sir Orfeo's* ten-year exile are contracted into the brief space of time it takes King Orpheus to sing his lament. As soon as this is finished, with no transition at all, he embarks on his quest – but a radically different quest from that typical of the romance genre: 'Syne passit to the hevin, as says the fable' (l. 186). Instead of forests, temptations, enchanted castles and fights with giants and monsters, we have the Milky Way – Watling-Street – and the planetary spheres – Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury – before Orpheus is landed once again on the Earth: the parallel with the pageant of the Olympian gods in *The Testament of Cresseid* imposes itself. In one sense, the chronological extension which belonged to the traditional narratives is replaced here by its spatial counterpart: that is, the tradition Henryson resorts to is not the typically medieval one of romance, but must be looked for in the classical thread that links Plato to Cicero to later commentators such as Chalcidius and Macrobius. It is in the course of the description of Schir Orpheus's passage through the spheres that we next encounter Henryson's most extraordinary digression – the two stanzas devoted to an exposition of musical theory. These consist of a pyrotechnical display of musical doctrine, still partly obscure, possibly based on Macrobius, but with no precisely identifiable source, explicitly meant to illustrate and exemplify the Pythagorean notion of the harmony of the spheres, as well as the Platonic and Neoplatonic concept of *Anima Mundi*:

Thare lerit he tonys proportionate,
As duplar, triplar, and epetritus;
Emoleus, and eke the quadruplate;
Epogdyus, ryght hard and curius;
And of thir sex, suete and dilicius,
Ryght consonant, fyve hevynly symphonyis
Componyt ar, as clerkiss can deuise

First dyatesseron, full suete I wis;
And dyapason, symple and duplate;
And dyapente, componyt with a dys;
This makis fyve, of thre multiplycate.
This mery musik and mellifluate,
Complete and full wyth nowmeris od and evyn,
Is causit be the moving of the hevyn. (ll. 226–39)

It should be noted that this excursus too, as well as the entire passage of which it is part, is only indirectly relevant to the story: all it tells us, from the dramatic point of view, is that only when Orpheus has become fully master of his own art –

music – is he ready for his attempt to recover Erudices. What it does demonstrate, in my opinion, is the author's personal interest in the doctrinal and philosophical implications of the myth, which, for him, largely prevail over its purely narrative aspect.

All this is consistent with the renewed interest in pagan mythology, characteristic of the early Renaissance, which resulted in an effort aimed at the recovery of its classical form – a preoccupation that has an obvious parallel in the gigantic enterprise of the philological restoration of classical texts that remains the greatest achievement of that epoch. More specifically, throughout the Renaissance, and especially in the Neoplatonic Florentine circles of the second half of the fifteenth century, dominated by the figure of the humanist Marsilio Ficino, Orpheus is seen the very archetype of the artist and the musician, the civilizer, the legislator and the politician that Horace spoke of in his *Ars Poetica*: Orpheus was the one who taught '... *publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis, concubitu prohibere vago, dare iura maritis, oppida moliri, leges incidere ligni*' (ll. 397–9), ('to distinguish the public from the private, the sacred from the profane, to prohibit sexual promiscuity, to establish husbands' rights, to build fortified towns, to carve laws in wood').

I do not wish to subscribe to the opinion that Robert Henryson was a kind of Scottish proto-humanist, in the sense that Erasmus was. Professor MacQueen's assertion that *Orpheus and Eurydice* 'in fact is constructed on Neoplatonic principles to illustrate Neoplatonic doctrine'¹³ sounds to me decidedly over enthusiastic, and I remain unconvinced by his numerological analysis. Nevertheless, although possibly less pervasive and systematic than some might wish, the influence, and the interest, are undeniably there, as I hope to have shown, and they should be accounted for. The above-mentioned critic, as well as others, has convincingly argued in favour of the existence of strong cultural links between Glasgow, at whose University Henryson was incorporated in 1462, and Italy, and it is indeed possible that Henryson's knowledge of Neoplatonism, Ficino and Orphism originated after, and was the consequence of, his arrival there. This renders unnecessary the old conjecture, for which there is a total lack of evidence, that Henryson himself had studied in Italy and had thus been in direct contact with Florentine intellectual circles: other similar hypotheses – for instance, that Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo* or Boccaccio's *De Genealogia* should be regarded as direct sources for Henryson's poem – are equally untenable, being undemonstrable in the former case and unnecessary in the latter. However, scant as the external evidence may be, I remain equally, if not more, unconvinced by those critics who, especially on the basis of the *Moralitas* that accompanies the story, see in the poem nothing but 'mediaevalism'.¹⁴ My own view of the *Moralitas* coincides precisely

¹³ J. MacQueen, 'Neoplatonism and Orphism in Fifteenth-Century Scotland', *Scottish Studies*, 20 (1976), p. 74.

¹⁴ For example, J. MacQueen, *Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967); R.J. Lyall, 'Henryson and Boccaccio: A Problem in the Study of Sources', *Anglia*, 99 (1981), pp. 38–59.

with the position it occupies in the text: as I have just said, it *accompanies* the story, but is not an integral part of it. If, by a not infrequent accident of fate – ‘*habent sua fata libelli*’, – that section had been lost, the poetical value of Henryson’s *Orpheus and Eurydice*, great or small as it may be according to critical opinion, would not have been affected by the loss. From a cultural, rather than an aesthetic, viewpoint, I agree with Douglas Gray that the poem is a ‘philosophical tale’,¹⁵ and that the appendix draws attention to certain moral implications of the tale. My opinion, however, is that it remains no more than an appendix, and those moral aspects do not represent the poem’s main focus of interest, which lies elsewhere. The poem is the product of a changing intellectual climate, to which Henryson intimately adheres, as *The Testament of Cresseid* shows in a much bolder way. Here, instead, all this is expressed in a dubious, uncertain form, as if the poet did not dare to sever his ties with the conventions of the past in too explicit a manner. With the *Moralitas* – Henryson’s own little ‘Retracciouns’ – he makes a concession, or pays some sort of lip service, to these conventions as a sign of his still precarious wavering between the set of values we elliptically identify as belonging to the ‘Middle Ages’ and to the ‘Renaissance’ respectively. To the extent that the author of *Orpheus and Eurydice* may be said to identify with his protagonist, the *Moralitas* represents, in a sense, Henryson’s ‘backward glance’ – but not, in this case, a fatal one.

¹⁵ D. Gray, *Robert Henryson* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), p. 236.

Chapter 2

Spiritual Exile: Translating the Bible from Geneva and Rheims

Lynne Long

Exile, defined as expulsion or the state of being expelled from a person’s native land, involves dislocation on several levels. There is physical dislocation, intellectual separation, cultural exile and the linguistic exile of functioning in an unfamiliar language. These dislocations, as experienced by a person or group of people, are interestingly similar to the effects of the process of translation on a familiar text.¹ In the same way that, in exile, a person or group of people is uprooted and resettled in different, sometimes congenial, sometimes uncongenial surroundings, in translation a text or group of texts is removed from its familiar native context and reset in a foreign one. The subjects of this paper, religious groups in exile – one exiled to Geneva in 1553 the other to Rheims in the 1580s – were not only experiencing the physical dislocation of exile themselves, but were also engaged in the intellectual process of translating the Bible from its familiar Latin/Greek context into an English one.

One of the greatest transitional periods in European history evolved in the sixteenth century when religious change and religious polemic were at their height. Martin Luther’s publication in 1517 of 95 theses attacking the sale of indulgences, celibacy, transubstantiation, papal authority and corruption in the religious orders, marked the beginning of spiritual turmoil for countries in Europe and Scandinavia. His supporters in Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Saxony, Hesse and Brandenburg broke away from the Roman Church and established Protestant communities. In Geneva a separate Protestant movement was led by Zwingli and, later, Calvin. In a Europe where the tradition had been to follow the religion of the ruler, those who dissented were forced underground or into exile.

The cultural shift caused by the beginnings of Reformation created exiled individuals such as Martin Luther and William Tyndale and exiled communities like the Protestant one at Geneva and the Catholic one at Rheims. What is interesting about the doctrinal challenge mounted by these individuals and groups is that its authentication was sought by means of a new translation of the Scriptures into the vernacular. This happened at several points along the Reformation time-line beginning with John Wyclif and his followers in the 1380s.²

¹ The word translation comes from the Latin *transferro*, *transferre*, *transtuli*, *translatum* meaning to carry over or across and used physically and metaphorically.

² John Wyclif in the 1380s, Martin Luther and William Tyndale in the 1520s, the Geneva Community in 1560, the Rheims community in 1582.