

THE MYTH OF ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE
IN WESTERN LITERATURE

by

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B.A., University of Toronto, 1953
M.A., University of Toronto, 1957

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department

of

Classics

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September, 1960

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Department of Classics

The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver 8, Canada.

Date Sept 22, 1960

The University of British Columbia

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES



PROGRAMME OF THE

FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 1960 AT 3:00 P.M.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the course of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in classical and later Western literature. Three particulars about myth serve to unify the discussion: myth evolves in literature; its meaning changes through the ages; some myths evolve art-forms in which to express themselves.

Myth evolves in literature: Chapter I examines the twenty-one references to or treatments of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in Greek and Roman authors, and attempts to show that the traditional story of Orpheus' backward glance and the second loss of Eurydice is a Hellenistic development of a story originally connected with Orphic mysteries. The fully developed myth is seen to combine elements of myth, legend and folklore.

The meaning of myth changes through the ages: in the classical period (Chapter II), the separate themes in the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, themes of death, music and love (stemming from the mythical, legendary and folk elements, respectively), are stated in the *Culex*; but Orpheus for this age is primarily a great civilizing influence, and this is the context in which Virgil places him in the *Georgics*. In the Middle Ages (Chapter III), the myth is allegorized in Boethius and romanticized in the Middle English poem *Sir Orfeo*. In the Renaissance (Chapter IV), Orpheus is once more a symbol of the civilizing force, and the descent to Hades, though often alluded to, is less important than other myths in the Orpheus-cycle. The Orpheus bequeathed to literature by the opera (Chapter V) is more human and fallible, and in the Romantic age (Chapter VI) this figure is gradually fused with the mystical Orphic poet, so that the contemporary Orpheus of Rilke and Cocteau (Chapter VII) is again a symbol, but of man in his role of artist, seeking to communicate with another world.

Myth sometimes evolves art-forms in which to express itself: Politian's *Orfeo*, a secular subject, which used music to tell its story, is seen to be the forerunner of the opera (Chapter IV); later, the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice evolved the opera, in the works of the Florentine Camerata and Monteverdi, and served as the pattern for its reform, in Gluck (Chapter V).

While the myth has meant something different to every age, there is a uniformity in its tradition: poets have always availed themselves of one or more of its three themes—the victory of death over life, the civilizing power of music, the problem of human emotion and its control.

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PUBLICATION

The New Saint Basil Hymnal, Cincinnati, 1958
(associate editor)

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ORPHEUS IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

Why the fascination of stage, screen, radio and television with the Orpheus legend? Is it a symptom of nuclear-age psychology?

This has always been among the best known of the Greek myths, but since the war its attraction seems to have become obsessive. It keeps cropping up in settings as diverse as playwright Anouilh's French railway junction and movie director Marcel Camus' carnival in Rio.

Orpheus, whose lute charms even the trees, is inconsolable at the death of his Euridice; he goes down into Hades and, with his music, softens the flinty hearts of the infernal powers; they allow her to return to earth, but on the condition that she shall walk behind him and he shall not look back; he cannot resist the yearning to see the beloved face again; he turns - only to see her recede among the shades

A poignantly simple little story of love and death - or something more?

Is it perhaps that it grates on the nerve-ends of man in the nuclear shadow?

He, like Orpheus, is dealing with a vast, dark and malevolent power and trying to control it. He, like Orpheus, is a lonely individual groping his way through a world

suddenly become unfamiliar and insecure. He, like Orpheus, knows that the decision of that world can be irrevocable.

He dare not look back.

- Editorial, The Vancouver Sun

December 8, 1959.

FOREWORD

At the end of his exhaustive article on Orpheus in Pauly-Wissowa's Real-Encyclopädie, Konrat Ziegler promised:

Über Orpheus in der Literatur, bildenen Kunst und Musik des Mittelalters, der Renaissance und der Neuzeit werde ich in der Antike handeln.

In 1950 the study finally appeared, but as a brief entry in the generally inaccessible Festschrift Otto Schmitt.

Other than this, there appears to be no attempt to collect and assess the literary treatments of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the West. The need for such a study was voiced by Walther Rehm:

Es fehlt der Forschung bislang noch die Darstellung, die das Orpheus-Symbol durch die spätantiken, christlichen Jahrhunderte durchverfolgt. Sie müsste die bald einsetzende Allegorese des Symbols auseinanderlegen... die Unwandlung des Orpheus in der mittelalterlichen Dichtung beleuchten und dann vor allen von der eigentümlichen Neugeburt sprechen, die die Gestalt des Orpheus nicht zufällig gerade im Reich des Gesangs und der Töne, in der dramatisch-musikalischen Form der Oper gefunden hat.

The myth, in one form or another, is more alive today than ever before. I began to write this thesis in Vancouver at the close of its 1959 summer festival, the central event of which was Gluck's opera Orfeo ed Euridice; at the same time, the rival Canadian festival in Stratford, Ontario, was presenting Offenbach's Orpheus in the Underworld. Early in the writing, the film society on the campus of this university held as its initial presentation a screening of Cocteau's

surrealistic film Orphée; three more cinematic treatments of the myth, Marcel Camus' Orfeu Negro, Tennessee Williams' The Fugitive Kind, and Cocteau's Le Testament d'Orphée, have just been released. The Stravinsky-Balanchine ballet Orpheus was recently telecast, while Jean Anouilh's play Eurydice became a cause célèbre when it was refused a showing on CBC-TV.

An assessment of the literature of Orpheus and Eurydice in the Western world seems, then, timely as well as overdue. This discussion deals largely with the classical period, with opera, and with English literature. Only a brief explanation seems necessary for this emphasis: I am a candidate for a degree in Classics; the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice calls the opera immediately to mind; I am not thoroughly acquainted with the languages of France, Italy, Germany and Spain, and their literatures were available to me in smaller quantity than were the English writers - but, as L.E. Marshall notes, the myth of Orpheus "has appealed more strongly to the English people than to the other nations of modern Europe."

In the vast majority of cases, the summaries and evaluations of the various works treated are based on first-hand inspection of the best available editions. When this was not possible, I have either used a reliable discussion of the work and noted this in a footnote, or else merely listed and dated the works. I am especially indebted to the researches

of Dr. Julius Wirl, who has examined little-known works on Orpheus in the British Museum.

I should like, finally, to thank the members of the Department of Classics of the University of British Columbia, particularly Geoffrey B. Riddehough, Malcolm F. McGregor, W. Leonard Grant, and C.W.J. Eliot, for their kind suggestions and assistance in the preparation of this thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

General:

A.D.	<u>anno Domini</u>
anon.	anonymous
B.C.	before Christ
<u>ca.</u>	<u>circa</u>
<u>cf.</u>	<u>confer</u> : compare
d.	died
ed.	editor, edited by, edition
<u>e.g.</u>	<u>exempli gratia</u>
esp.	especially
<u>et al.</u>	<u>et alii</u>
<u>et passim</u>	and throughout
f., ff.	the following page(s), line(s)
fig., figs.	figure(s)
<u>fl.</u>	<u>floruit</u>
frag., frags.	fragment(s)
<u>ibid.</u>	<u>ibidem</u>
<u>i.e.</u>	<u>id est</u>
introd.	introduction by
<u>loc. cit.</u> ,	
<u>locc. citt.</u>	<u>loco citato</u> (<u>locis citatis</u>)
MSS.	manuscripts
n.d.	no date (of publication)
no., nos.	number(s)
n.p.	no place (of publication)
<u>op. cit.</u>	<u>opere citato</u>
p., pp.	page(s)
pub.	published
rev.	revised (by)
St.	Saint
st.	stanza
suppl.	supplement
s.v.	<u>sub voce</u>
tr.	translated by
U.	University
vol., vols.	volume(s)

Books and Periodicals:

AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJP	American Journal of Philology
CJ	Classical Journal
CQ	Classical Quarterly
CR	Classical Review
CW	Classical Weekly

JAFa	Journal of the American Folklore Association
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LLI	La Letteratura Italiana
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MLR	Modern Language Review
ODGR	Our Debt to Greece and Rome
PL	<u>Patrologia Cursus, Series Latina</u> , ed. J.-P. Migne
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association of America
PW	<u>Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissen-</u> <u>schaft</u> , ed. A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, W. Kroll
Rom. Mitt.	Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologische Insti- tuts, Römische Abteilung
SATF	Société des anciens textes français

INTRODUCTION

MYTH AND LITERATURE

Myth is many things. It has been seen "as a primitive, fumbling effort to explain the world of nature (Frazer); as a production of poetical fantasy from prehistoric times, misunderstood by succeeding ages (Müller); as a repository of allegorical instruction, to shape the individual to his group (Durkheim); as a group dream, symptomatic of archetypal urges within the depths of the human psyche (Jung); as the traditional vehicles of man's profoundest insights (Coomaraswamy); and as God's revelation to His Children (the Church)." ¹

Myth ² is all these things and more. In after times, it has become material for the poet. In a sense, it is the

¹Joseph Campbell, The Hero with a Thousand Faces (New York, 1949), p. 382.

²Myth is here and afterwards used in its widest sense, as a traditional story, which may attempt to explain natural phenomena (myth proper), or tell of supposed happenings in the past (legend) or merely entertain (folklore). The threefold distinction so often made is more easily applied to more primitive peoples than to the Greeks, whose myths move on all three levels at once.

poet who keeps myth alive. He discovers new meanings, adds meanings of his own to myth, which can be said to live only as it exists in his writings and, over and over again, in the works of men like him. Without the poet to en flesh the myth, it might be said to be only potential, existing nowhere except at second-hand, in the summaries of the mythographers.

The meaning of any given myth may be demonstrated in two ways: by investigating its possible origin - in nature, in ceremony, in the subconscious; or by reviewing its life as it is constantly renewed in the writings of men of genius. The former method shies away from the literary; its myths are found, summarized and cross-indexed, in standard reference-works. The latter, the method of this study, finds its evidence in the artistic creations in which myth, elusive and potential, is incarnated. For "drama, the lyric and fiction live symbiotically with myths, nourished by them, and nourishing their flickering lives."³

In pursuing the latter course, we note in particular three facts about myths. First, they evolve in literature. After the natural or ceremonial or psychological meaning which perhaps prompted the myth is forgotten, the myth becomes a

³Francis Fergusson, The Human Image In Dramatic Literature (New York, 1957), p. 161.

story, takes on features from legend and from the vast store of world folklore. We note how Greek myths in particular change from Homer to the Attic tragedians to Ovid and Apollodorus.

Second, as we move through literary history, the meaning of myth changes. A Greek myth may be one thing for the Romans and quite another for the Middle Ages. It may flourish or it may wither and die in the Renaissance, in the Age of Enlightenment, in the Romantic era. It may be reborn with an entirely new meaning in our own times. In a sense, it is at the mercy of writers who endeavor to catch it, to pin it down, to display it in their own creations.

Third, some myths are so potent, so imaginative, so beautiful that they make demands on the genius who tries to grasp them, and, to secure their adequate expression, they generate new forms of expression. So it was, at some point in the dark ages of Greek history, that some myth, more than likely the vast, burgeoning story of the Trojan war, demanded for its adequate expression a new artistic form of vast scope; so myth begot the epic. Sometime afterwards, some myth was being sung, perhaps by Thespis himself, which cried out for dialogue; so the drama was born of myth.

This study is concerned with one such myth. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice evolved slowly in the literature of classical and post-classical times, and its evolution can

be traced with some certainty. It has also lived symbiotically for twenty-five centuries with the drama and the lyric, enflaming the imagination of different ages in different ways, and whatever meaning it holds within it can be demonstrated by a review of its various incarnations. Finally, the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is one of the few myths which has created, for its adequate expression, a new art-form, and this momentous event can be reconstructed, for it came not in some early dark age we know nothing of, but in the full light of the Renaissance.

This study, then, is primarily a review of the Orpheus-Eurydice theme in Western culture. In so far as it attempts to prove or demonstrate, it will endeavor, first, to trace the evolution of the myth in ancient literature; second, to estimate the meaning to be found in the sum-total of the myth's incarnations; third, to demonstrate how, to secure adequate expression, the Orpheus-Eurydice myth may be said to have generated a new art form.

Chapter I will deal, then, with the literary evolution. Chapters II-IV and VI-VII will trace the myth through literary history and endeavor to extract the meaning it has held for successive ages. Chapter V, chronologically placed, will attempt to show how the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice created and continues to lie at the heart of an art-form of its own.

A rough chronological order has seemed the best manner of approach. Hundreds of slight allusions to Orpheus

and Eurydice, from authors great and small, are mentioned as indicative of trends in the interpretation of the myth. The dozen or so significant works are discussed at greater length as they occur in the chronological scheme.

CHAPTER I

THE LITERARY EVOLUTION OF THE MYTH OF ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Orpheus was many things to the ancient world. Fundamentally he was a great singer and lyre-player,¹ and this is the general character with which he is invested in all his appearances in classical literature. By far the most frequent story told of him is that he charmed all nature by the power of his song, moving the rocks, drawing the forests after him, changing the course of rivers, enchanting all the animal kingdom.² Pindar and others dwell on the

¹See Plato, Ion 533b-c, Laws VIII,829d-e; Pausanias X,30,6.

²See Simonides frag. 27 (Diehl); Aeschylus, Agamemnon 1629-30; Euripides, Medea 543, Iphigenia at Aulis 1211-4, Bacchae 560-4, Cyclops 646-8; Plato, Protagoras 315a; Apollonius Rhodius I,26-31; Diodorus IV,25,2; Pseudo-Eratosthenes, Catasterismi 24; Conon 45; Culex 117-8; Horace, Odes I,12,7-12; Seneca, Hercules Oetaeus 1036-60, Hercules Furens 572-4; Apollodorus I,3,2; Athenaeus XIV,632c; Philostratus, Apollonius of Tyana VIII,7,162; Claudian, Carmina Minora 18,9.

part he played in the Argo-expedition.³ Virgil and Ovid tell how he descended to the underworld and cast his musical spell over Pluto and Proserpine, over the shades and the souls in torment, and thereby won back his bride, Eurydice, only to lose her by failing to observe the conditions imposed by the gods of the dead.⁴ A lost play of Aeschylus⁵ told of his dismemberment by the Thracian women, and later authors have adorned this story with fantastic miracles - how his head continued to sing, and his lyre to play,⁶ how they floated

³See Pindar, Pythian Odes IV,176 with scholiast; Euripides, Hypsipale frags. 1 and 64; Apollonius Rhodius I,23-31 with scholiast, et passim; Orphic Argonautica 1270-97; Seneca, Medea 348-60; Hyginus, Fabulae 14; Valerius Flaccus I,186-7, 470-2, II,426-7; Apollodorus I,9,16 and 25.

⁴Treatments of this portion of the myth will be discussed in detail.

⁵The Bassarae, mentioned in Pseudo-Eratosthenes, loc. cit. See also Isocrates, Busiris 11,38; Conon 45; Virgil, Georgics IV,520-7; Ovid, Metamorphoses XI,1-43; Pausanias IX,30,5. For varying details of the death see Plato, Symposium 179d, Republic, X,620a; Pseudo-Alcidamas, Ulixes 24; Diogenes Laertius, Prologue 5.

⁶See Conon, Virgil, Ovid locc. citt.; Lucian, Against the Unlearned 109-11.

downstream and out to sea to the isle of Lesbos, and were eventually glorified as stars in the heavens; how the Muses buried the other limbs near Mt. Olympus, where to this day the nightingales sing more sweetly than in any other place on earth.⁷

So the stories cluster about the legendary figure of the singer from Thrace. Orpheus becomes more than a mere musician. He has access to the secrets of all knowledge. Plato places him among the great culture-heroes.⁸ He is variously credited with the introduction of writing and philosophy,⁹ of poetry and especially the dactylic hexameter,¹⁰ of agriculture,¹¹ even of homosexual love.¹² He becomes a great reformer who spiritualizes the Dionysiac

⁷See Hyginus, Astronomica II,7; Philostratus, Heroicus V,3, Apollonius of Tyana, IV,14; Proclus, On the Republic of Plato I,174,27.

⁸See Laws III,677d.

⁹See Pseudo-Alcidamas, loc. cit.

¹⁰See Mallius Theodorus, De Metris IV,1.

¹¹See Horace, Ars Poetica 391-3.

¹²See Phanocles, Erotes 7-10; Ovid, Metamorphoses X,83-5, Hyginus, Astronomica II,17.

rites,¹³ a priest and prophet¹⁴ whose writings are carefully preserved as the basis of a mysterious cult.

There seems to have been little doubt that Orpheus actually existed, though no one was likely to have believed that one man was responsible for all his innovations. It is perhaps a case similar to that of the Spartan Lycurgus: a hero of the distant past becomes a convenient sanction for any innovation; or of Homer: the works of many anonymous poets become absorbed in a great literary tradition.

But whether Orpheus actually existed as one man or many, whether he was the sun,¹⁵ the wind,¹⁶ or an earth-deity,¹⁷ a "faded god",¹⁸ the human psyche,¹⁹ or a totem-

¹³See Euripides?, Rhesus 943-5; Aristophanes, Frogs 1032; Plato, Protagoras 316d, Republic II,7,364e; Diodorus V,64,4 et passim; Apollodorus I,3,2; Pausanias II,30,2, IX,30,4 X,7,2.

¹⁴See Horace, Ars Poetica 391-3; Strabo VII, frag. 18; Clement of Alexandria, Stromata I,21,134.

¹⁵According to Max Müller, Comparative Mythology (London, 1909), p. 160.

¹⁶According to Ralph Abercromby, "The Hermes and Orpheus Myths", Academy 24(1883), pp. 316, 399.

¹⁷According to Ernst Maass, Orpheus (Munich, 1895).

¹⁸Discussed by W.K.C. Guthrie, Orpheus and Greek Religion (London, 1935), pp. 53-6.

¹⁹According to Orphic beliefs. See R.W. Horton and V.F. Hopper, Backgrounds of European Literature (New York, 1954), p. 68.

fox,²⁰ whether or not he introduced the Orphic mysteries and wrote the poems which bear his name - these do not affect our purpose. For the sciences of mythology and comparative religion have little to do with the creations of poets and dramatists, "to whom the simplest elements of the myth have given the greatest inspiration."²¹ In his discussion of Orpheus and Orphism, W.K.C. Guthrie says in this regard: "His (Orpheus') story can be severed from all connexion with religion, and moreover the artist is thinking in every case of his own composition, his poem or his vase, not of the preservation of a consistent tradition."²² And the foremost American authority on Orphism adds: "Indeed, it makes very little difference in the history of human thought whether the great and influential personalities ever actually existed in human bodies. Personalities like Zeus, Odysseus, and Zoroaster, and even Hamlet and Don Quixote, have been more important in the world than millions of men who have lived or died. Their reality is the reality of an idea, and the best that we can know about them is what men have thought

²⁰According to Salomon Reinach, Cultes, Mythes et Religions II (Paris, 1909), pp. 85-122.

²¹Lily E. Marshall, "Greek Myths in Modern English Poetry", Studi di Filologia Moderna 5 (1912), p. 205.

²²Op. cit., p. 25.

about them. The reality of Orpheus is to be sought in what men thought and said about him."²³

As we trace the evolution of the myth in the Greek and Roman world, our discussion will be determined by what Greek and Roman writers thought and said about Orpheus, his bride and his descent into Hades.

Ibycus

The earliest extant reference to Orpheus is generally thought to be the fragment "famous Orpheus"

ὄνομα κλυτὸν Ὀρφεύῳ (frag. 17)

of Ibycus. There may be an earlier mention in Alcaeus. In his edition of Anthologia Lyrica Graeca, Ernest Diehl was tempted to restore a passage in a second century papyrus of Alcaeus thus:

τὸ γὰρ ἐμμόρμενον Ὀρ[φεύς ἐβιάσδετο]

but interposed an "ausus non sum" in his footnote.²⁴ Ibycus' two-word fragment is, however, certain, quoted by Priscian, a grammarian of the sixth century A.D., to show how the Dorians once used the ending -ης for -εως. The two words tell no story, but they do attest the important fact that

²³Ivan M. Linforth, The Arts of Orpheus (Berkeley, 1941), pp. xii-xiii.

²⁴Anthologia Lyrica Graeca (Leipzig, 1925), frag. 80, line 8, p. 425.

Orpheus was "famous of name" as early as the sixth century B.C., for we know that Ibycus was court musician to the tyrant Polycrates of Samos (533-522).

Early Orphic writings

The earliest Orphic writings are also ascribed to the sixth century, and we have evidence for at least four *Kataktōeis* is *4,500*, by Prodicus of Samos,²⁵ Cecrops the Pythagorean,²⁶ Herodicus of Perinthus²⁷ and Orpheus of Camarina.²⁸ Of these, Prodicus at least lived as early as the sixth century.²⁹ But we know nothing of any of these poems other than the titles. They may or may not have been concerned with the descent of Orpheus.

²⁵See Clement of Alexandria, Stromata I,21,134.

²⁶See ibid.

²⁷See Suidas s.v. Orpheus

²⁸See ibid.

²⁹See C.M. Bowra, "Orpheus and Eurydice", CQ 46(1952), pp. 123-4.

Early archaeological monuments

The earliest³⁰ archaeological evidence for Orpheus - a sculptured metope from the Sicyonian treasury at Delphi - is also of the sixth century. Although the monument is fragmentary, the name $\text{OP}\Phi\text{A}\Sigma$ is clearly discernible above one of two musicians who are flanked by two mounted horsemen. As the background gives some indication of being a ship, it may be conjectured that this is a depiction of the expedition of the Argonauts, and that the two horsemen are Castor and Pollux.³¹ It is often thought that Orpheus' descent was the subject of the lost fifth-century fresco painted at Delphi by Polygnotus and described by Pausanias: Orpheus was shown in Hades, holding his lyre and a willow wand, with Patroclus, Agax, Meleager, Marsyas and Charon grouped around him.³² But

³⁰The "lyre player of Pylos", recently restored by Piet de Jong from the fragments found in the throne room, may be Orpheus in a much earlier age. See Carl W. Blegen, "The Palace of Nestor Excavations of 1955", AJP 60 (1956), p. 95 and plate 41, and Mabel Lang, "Picture Puzzles from Pylos", Archaeology 13 (1960), p. 56.

³¹There is a photograph in Guthrie, op. cit., plate 2.

³²X,30,6. The willow is Orpheus' "golden bough", according to James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough (London, 1913), vol. II, p. 294.

there is no Eurydice here, indeed, nothing to indicate that this is anything other than a representation of Orpheus after his death. In fact, while Orpheus the musician, Argonaut and martyr becomes a fairly common subject for artists and vase painters in the fifth century,³³ Eurydice is always conspicuously absent. It is not until the end of the fifth century that she appears - in a famous monument we shall discuss later. In extant literature there is no reference to Orpheus' descent to reclaim her until Euripides.

Euripides

The Alcestis tells a story that is almost the reverse of Orpheus': Alcestis offers to die in the place of her husband Admetus. In the dramatic scene where Death himself comes to take her, Admetus assures his wife that if he had the tongue and the song of Orpheus so as to move Persephone and her husband he would descend to Hades - neither Cerberus nor Charon would prevent him - and restore her to life.

εἰ δ' Ὀρφέως μοι γλῶσσαι καὶ μέλος παρὴν,
ὥστ' ἢ κόρην Διμήτρος ἢ κείνης πόσιν
ὑμνοῖσι κηλήσαντα σ' ἐξ Ἅιδου λαβεῖν,

³³See, e.g., J.D. Beazley, Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters, (Oxford, 1942), s.v. Orpheus.

κατήλθον ἄν, καὶ μ' οὐθ' ὁ Πλούτωνος Κύων
 οὐθ' οὔτι κώπη ψυχοπομπὸς ἄν Χάρων
 ἔσχον, πρὶν ἐς φῶς δὸν καταστῆσαι βίον (357-62).

The passage, brief as it is, is fraught with difficulties. It is objected³⁴ that there is no basis for any descent of Orpheus here; Admetus does not actually say that Orpheus descended to Hades, only that he himself would be ready to do so, if he had the eloquence of Orpheus. The cryptic Orphic poems aside, literary references to Orpheus up to this point concern themselves with his consummate musicianship and his persuasive eloquence. Aegisthus, in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, berates the chorus for having

Ὀρφεὶ δὲ γλώσσαν τὴν ἐναντίαν (1629),

and Simonides, in three memorable lines, gives the classic picture of the Franciscan Orpheus, enchanting all nature with his music:

τοῦ καὶ ἀπειρέσιοι
 ὄρνιθες ὑπὲρ κεφαλᾶς πωτῶντ', ἀνὰ δ' ἰχθύες ὀρθοὶ
 κυανέας ἄλως ἐξέλλοντο καλᾶς ὑπ' ἰοιῶσ' (Frag. 27).

There is a possibility, then, that this is all Admetus had in mind, and that his references to the underworld have no bearing on Orpheus, but only on the imminent death of

³⁴See Jane Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (Cambridge 1908), pp. 601-5.

his wife and the problem of how he would set about rescuing her. It is possible, in short, that the entire story of Orpheus and Eurydice arose from the misconstruing of a somewhat mock-heroic passage in Euripides, aided by current representations of Orpheus in art, which indeed show him performing for the denizens of Hades, but may only mean that after his death he continued to sing and to play. We recall that Socrates expected to meet him when he arrived among the dead.³⁵ This may be all there is to the early tradition.

It is difficult, however, to accept any such theory, for several reasons. Admetus seems to be referring to a well-known story rather than indulging in fanciful speculation; the monument which first introduces Eurydice is roughly contemporary with the Alcestis; a few years later Plato, in the Symposium (179d), treats the descent of Orpheus as common knowledge.

The real difficulty in the passage from the Alcestis is that it seems to indicate that Orpheus was completely successful in regaining his Eurydice. Otherwise Admetus' point in mentioning the story is very weak indeed. He wants to imply that, given Orpheus' powers, he would restore Alcestis even as Orpheus once restored Eurydice. If the story of Orpheus' weakness and eventual loss of Eurydice was current, we should expect Euripides to have Admetus "refer not to

³⁵See Plato, Apology 41a.

Cerberus and Charon, whom Orpheus subdued, but to the disobedience which ruined him, and claim that he himself would not be so feeble."³⁶ It seems rather that the story of Orpheus and the underworld, as it first existed in the classical age of Greece, was one of success, a triumph over the forces of death, a tragi-comedy somewhat akin to the *Alcestis*-story itself. We know that the fourth-century comedian Antiphanes tried his hand at an Orpheus³⁷; the "successful" version of the story may have been his subject. There was an earlier Orpheus by the fifth-century tragedian Aristias,³⁸ but this probably dealt with the death of Orpheus, as did the lost Bassaræ of Aeschylus.³⁹ The death of Orpheus is a richly symbolic subject for tragedy; his descent seems to be viewed almost as comedy.

It seems best to regard the passage in the *Alcestis* as referring not merely to a descent but to a successful descent. The scholiast on the passage mentions Eurydice by name and states that Orpheus brought her out of Hades:

³⁶C.M. Bowra, op. cit., 46(1952), p. 119.

³⁷See J.M. Edmonds, The Fragments of Attic Comedy (Leyden, 1957), vol. 2, p. 250.

³⁸See August Nauck, Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta (Leipzig, 1856), p. 562.

³⁹See ibid., p. 7.

Ὀρφεὺς γυνὴ Εὐρυδίκη, ἧς ἀποθανούσης ὑπὸ Ὀδρεως κατ-
 ελθὼν καὶ τῇ μουσικῇ θάλζας τὸν Πλούτωνα καὶ τὴν Κόρην,
 δότῃν ἀνέγαγεν ἐξ Ἅϊδου (In Alcestin, 357).

In fact we must wait more than four centuries before we find any remains in literature which indicate that Orpheus lost Eurydice on his journey upwards to the world of light.

The Attic relief

There is, however, one piece of evidence, contemporary with Euripides,⁴⁰ which indicates that Orpheus might have failed. This is a famous Attic relief which depicts Orpheus, with lyre and Thracian cap, removing the veil from Eurydice's face; she looks into his eyes and lays her left hand on his shoulder, while her right hand is firmly clasped by Hermes, the winged escort of the dead.⁴¹

⁴⁰According to Beazley (in Bowra, op. cit., p. 121, note 1), the relief cannot be dated more exactly than between 430 and 400 B.C. Heinz Götze, "Die Attischen Dreifigurenreliefs", Röm. Mitt. 53(1938), p. 243, investigating the style, suggests 420 as a terminus post quem.

⁴¹There are copies in the Museo Nazionale in Naples, in the Louvre, and in the Villa Albani in Rome. There is also a fragment of the Hermes in the Palatine Museum in Rome. Götze gives photographs of these, op. cit., plates 32 and 33. The Naples copy is also reproduced in Guthrie, op. cit., plate 3.

The inscriptions over the heads of the figures in the Naples copy make this identification quite certain,⁴² but there is considerable debate as to what point in the story is illustrated. There is a possibility that, as the story of Orpheus' second loss of Eurydice is not found in fifth-century literature, the relief depicts the moment when Eurydice first goes off to Hades. But this moment is never treated in classical literature; we are never told that Orpheus bade Eurydice a sad farewell after she was bitten by the snake. And Jacques Huergon⁴³ remarks that it is Orpheus, not Eurydice, who is taking leave and has already turned to go.

Ernst Curtius,⁴⁴ also insisting that the story of the second loss of Eurydice did not exist in the fifth century,

⁴² The authenticity of these inscriptions, questioned by Jahn, Michaelis and Furtwängler, is now accepted. See Götze, op. cit., pp. 198-200. In the Louvre copy the figures are identified as Amphion - Antiope - Zetus; but the inscriptions are modern, and only a few particulars of the Amphion-myth correspond to the scene on the relief. This identification has not been accepted since Zoëga disproved it in 1808; see O. Gruppe, "Orpheus" in W.H. Roscher, Lexicon, vol. 3, p. 1194.

⁴³ "Orphée et Eurydice avant Virgile", Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire 49(1932), p. 36.

⁴⁴ See Gruppe, op. cit., pp. 1195-6.

holds that the scene represents the moment when Orpheus has played for the gods of the underworld and won his Eurydice back; thus he lets his lyre sink down, while Eurydice draws her veil aside and reveals herself to her bridegroom-hero. Aside from the obvious difficulty that it appears to be Orpheus who is drawing the veil aside, this explanation fails to consider Hermes' left arm, encircling Eurydice's right in a manner to indicate that he is about to lead her away. And the attitude of both Orpheus and Eurydice seems to be one of resignation and farewell.

A third possibility, admirably presented by Huergon,⁴⁵ is that, fifth century or no, this is the famous moment when Orpheus, forgetful of the gods' command, turns and looks upon the face of Eurydice; the panel shows Hermes already come to escort her back to the world of the dead. The objection often raised against this is that there is, in Bowra's words, "too little distress for so tragic a catastrophe".⁴⁶ But if the classic artist seems to have stressed the tenderness and resignation of the moment, Rainer Maria Rilke notes that "power is there in the torsoes".⁴⁷ A more convincing argument against this third possibility is that, as has been

⁴⁵Op. cit., pp. 6-60.

⁴⁶Op. cit., p. 121.

⁴⁷Noted in Jane Davison Reid, "Eurydice Recovered?", Comparative Literature 5(1953), p. 217.

mentioned, there is no literary support for it, nothing, indeed, for four centuries. And even then, no literary account introduces Hermes.

There are almost a dozen other explanations of the scene, varying as the interpreter considers the original to have been a part of a frieze, from the acropolis or elsewhere in Athens, or a grave-marker. Michaelis,⁴⁸ doubting the authenticity of the inscriptions on the Naples copy, argues that the figures are not mythical characters, but rather idealized representations of the dead they commemorate, and Jahn⁴⁹ explains the action as depicting the desire of the living to look once more upon the dead. More recently, however, the inscriptions have been taken as genuine: Heinz Götze⁵⁰ has attempted to show that the relief is one of a series of four three-figure reliefs, the others representing Medea and the daughters of Pelias, Heracles and the Hesperides, and Theseus, Pirithoüs and Heracles. The Orpheus-relief may well belong in this series; certainly the composition and execution of all four panels, even in the copies, are strikingly similar. But this does not solve any interpretative problems. Homer Thompson, in an attempt to demonstrate how Götze's series can be fitted to the parapet of the altar of

⁴⁸See Gruppe, op. cit., pp. 1195-7.

⁴⁹See ibid.

⁵⁰Op. cit., pp. 189-280.

pity at Athens,⁵¹ suggests that the four panels are thematically related, that each incident "illustrates a piteous situation induced by a reversal of fortune".⁵² But he does not make it clear how the Hesperides-panel is a piteous situation, or how the Medea and Pirithoüs-panels are reversals of fortune. As for Orpheus, Thompson makes no defense for his assuming that the moment when "he glanced back and lost his beloved forever"⁵³ would be known in fifth-century Athens. Actually, as Zuntz points out,⁵⁴ it is unlikely that the altar in question is the altar of pity, and pity is hardly a characteristic theme for a fifth-century Athenian artist.⁵⁵ But there is really no compelling reason why four stylistically related panels must be thematically related as well.

⁵¹"The Altar of Pity in the Athenian Agora", Hesperia 21(1952), pp. 47-82.

⁵²Op. cit., p. 69.

⁵³Op. cit., p. 68.

⁵⁴"The Altar of Mercy", Classica et Mediaevalia, 14(1953), pp. 71-85.

⁵⁵A more likely relationship, if one must be found, may be sought in some death-motif: two of the panels are concerned with descents to the underworld; the twelfth labor of Heracles is often thought of as such (see H.J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Mythology, [London, 1958] p. 214); death is imminent in the Medea-panel.

Thus there are no reasons which compel us to accept any of the many theories. The present consensus of opinion, however, accepts Huergon's view - that the relief depicts the backward look of Orpheus and the second loss of Eurydice. If this is true, then there are two versions of the story as early as the fifth century: one a literary tradition found in Euripides, wherein Orpheus is successful in bringing back his wife from the dead; the other a tradition found in the Attic relief and eventually in later literature, wherein Orpheus looked upon his wife and lost her.

Plato

The second treatment of the story in literature raises some new difficulties. In a way, it combines the happy with the unhappy ending in what strikes modern readers as a most unhappy third version. This is the brief passage in Plato's Symposium where Phaedrus is speaking about love being stronger than death. In some instances, he argues, the gods of the underworld have actually been so moved by the power of love that they have released certain souls from Hades. Alcestis is a shining example. But, as for Orpheus,

*Ὀρφεὺς δὲ τὸν Σιδάγρου ἀτελῇ ἀπέπεμψεν ἐξ Ἅιδου,
φάσμα δειξάντες τῆς γυναίκος ἐφ' ἣν ἦκεν, αὐτὴν δὲ οὐ
δόντες, ὅτι μαλ' ἀκίβεσθαι ἐδόκει, ἅτε ὦν κιθαριστὴς,*

καὶ οὐ τολμᾶν ἔνεκα τοῦ ἔρωτος ἀποθνήσκειν
 ὥσπερ Ἄλκηστις, ἀλλὰ διαμηχανᾶσθαι
 γῶν εἰσιέναι εἰς Ἅιδου. τοιγάρτοι διὰ
 ταῦτα δίκην αὐτῷ ἐπέθεσαν, καὶ ἐποίησαν
 τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ γυναικῶν γενέσθαι (179).

To anyone who has ever been touched by the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, this is highly unsatisfactory. Instead of overcoming Hades by the power of his love and his music, Orpheus "produces a very bad impression on the gods; in their opinion he is a poor-spirited creature, as one might expect a lyre-player to be; instead of dying courageously for his love, he has moved heaven and earth to get into Hades alive. Consequently they do not give him his wife, but only show him a phantom of her. He returns to the world without having accomplished his purpose, and the whole discreditable incident was the cause of the gods' punishing him with an ignominious death."⁵⁶

Though Phaedrus' fellow banqueters apparently accepted his version as orthodox, the tendency today is to regard Plato's version as a minor example of his own private myth-making, to say that Plato merely tinkered with the myth, influenced perhaps by his own suspicion of music and musicians and by Stesichorus' popular version of the story of Troy,

⁵⁶ Linforth, op. cit., p. 19.

with its phantom Helen. Guthrie refuses to consider the passage seriously because for him the Symposium is "a dialogue full of fancies which it would be absurd to regard as simply taken over from existing mythology".⁵⁷ Others dismiss it for the simple reason that it is barren of progeny.

We shall have to return to Plato and to the relief later. The next five authors who touch on the story write as if neither ever existed; they are all in the Euripidean "comic" tradition.

Isocrates

Isocrates is the first of these. In the Busiris he criticises the sophist Polycrates for writing an encomium on the brutal Busiris, who used to devour shipwrecked sailors, killing living men before their time. Isocrates contrasts Busiris with Aeolus, who used to send the shipwrecked safely back to sea, and Orpheus, who used to bring the dead back from Hades:

ἐξ Ἄιδου τοὺς τεθνεῶτας ἀνῆκεν (XI,8).

The use of an imperfect verb and a plural object here suggest that Orpheus made a regular practice of restoring the dead. But on only one occasion is Aeolus known to have sent sailors back to sea; so we may suppose that only once did Orpheus bring the dead back to life. Isocrates is generalizing, as encomiasts are wont to do. But the impression is given that Orpheus was successful in what he did.

⁵⁷Op. cit., p. 31.

Palaephatus (pseudo-Heraclitus)

Fragments of a *Περὶ ἀπίστων*, ascribed to a certain Palaephatus and probably dating to the late fourth century, give rationalized accounts of various myths, among them the descents of Heracles and Orpheus:

λέγεται ὡς Ἡρακλῆς κατελθὼν εἰς Ἅϊδου
ἀνῆλθεν ἀνάγων τὸν Κέρβερον, καὶ Ὀρφεὺς
ὡσαύτως Εὐρυδίκην τὴν γυναῖκα. τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς
ὅτι ὁπηνίκα τις ἐκ μακρᾶς ἀποδημίας καὶ ἐπι-
κινδύρου διαντλήσας ἐώσθη, ἐφασκεν ἐξ Ἅϊδου
αὐτὸν διασωσέσθαι. 58

However unsatisfactory this is as an explanation, it clearly indicates that the author thought of Eurydice as successfully restored to life.

Hermesianax

We pass now to the Alexandrians. The story gets its fullest treatment thus far in a fragment from the Leontium of Hermesianax, preserved in the thirteenth book of Athenaeus' Deipnosophistae. Hermesianax's work appears to have been a catalogue of amorous stories in which lovers eventually meet with punishment; it was dedicated to the courtesan Leontium,

⁵⁸Quoted from Konrat Ziegler, "Orpheus", PW 18(1939), p. 1309.

presumably with the plea that, if the famous people in the catalogue were smitten with love's arrows, surely the writer may be forgiven his passion.

Orpheus is the first lover discussed in the long fragment. His section may be quoted in full.

οἶν μὲν φίλος υἱὸς ἀνήγαγεν Οἰάχροιο
 Ἀγριόπην θρήσαν στείλμενος κιθάρην
 Ἀιδόθεν· ἔπλευσεν δὲ κακὸν καὶ ἀπειθέα χώρον,
 ἔνθα Χάρων ἀκοὴν ἔλκεται εἰς ἄκατον
 ψυχὰς οἰχόμενων, λίανης δ' ἐπὶ μακρὸν αὐτεῖ
 ψεῦμα διέκ μεγάλων ψομένης δυνάκων.
 ἀλλ' ἔτλη παρὰ κύμα μονόζωστος κιθαρίζων
 Ὀρφεύς, παντοίους δ' ἐξανέπεισε θεούς.
 κωκυτὸν τ' ἀθέμιστον ὑπ' ὀφρύσι μηνίσαντα
 ἦδὲ καὶ σινοτάτου βλέμ' ὑπέμεινε κυνός,
 ἐν πυρὶ μὲν φωνὴν τεθωμένου, ἐν πυρὶ δ' ὄμμα,
 σκληρὸν τριστοίχοις δαῖμα φέρον κεφαλαῖς.
 ἔνθεν λοιδοίων μεγάλους ἀνέπεισεν ἄνακτας
 Ἀγριόπην μαλακοῦ πνεῦμα λαβεῖν βίोटου (XIII, 597b-c).

It is not only the presence of Charon and Cerberus that places this in the Euripidean tradition; the initial *ἀνήγαγεν* and the final *ἀνέπεισεν* clearly suggest that Orpheus was successful. The author seems never to have seen the Attic relief, nor to have read the Symposium; his Orpheus dares to sound his lyre across the lawless, raving Cocytus, and bears up under the glance of terrible Cerberus.

Hermesianax is the only author to give a variant name for Orpheus' wife. She is the Thracian Agriope, "she of the wild face".⁵⁹ It is quite possible that this was the original name of Orpheus' wife. We know of a nymph named Agriope who lived in Thrace and was the mother of Thamyris.⁶⁰ There are a good dozen Eurydices in Greek mythology, but no author, unless we accept Palaephatus as genuine, applies the name to Orpheus' wife until the second century B.C.⁶¹ Gruppe⁶² suggests that it was adapted from the Cypria, where Aeneas' wife, whose ghost fades away in her husband's embrace, is called not Creusa but Eurydice. At any rate, Agriope is not mentioned again. The name Eurydice appears in our next author, Moschus, and from then on is solidly rooted in the tradition of the myth.

⁵⁹Zoëga amends Ἀργιόπη, "she of the gleaming face".

⁶⁰See Apollodorus I,3,3 and Pausanias IV,33,3.

⁶¹A third-century vase attaches the name to Orpheus' wife; see August Winkler, "Die Darstellung der Unterwelt", Breslauer Philologische Abhandlung 5(1888), pp. 27-30. For a thorough treatment of the problem of the origin of the name in view of the archaeological evidence, see Huergon, op. cit., pp. 13-27 and 54-6.

⁶²Op. cit., p. 1162.

Moschus

The pastoral poet Moschus may also be placed in the "successful" tradition. In the Epitaphios for the departed Bion,⁶³ he longs to descend to Hades, as Orpheus and others had done, to see his comrade once more:

εἰ δυνάμην δέ,
ὡς Ὀρφεὺς καταβὰς ποτὶ Τάρταρον . . .
 . . . κῆρ' ἄν ἐς δόμον ἦλθον
Πλούτος (III,115-8).

And he bids the shade of Bion play a Sicilian air (for Persephone is a Sicilian and loves music), and so win his way back to the upper world. For even as Persephone gave Orpheus back his Eurydice, so shall she restore Bion to his native hills:

ὡς Ὀρφεὶ πρόσθεν ἔδωκεν
ἰδέα φαρμίζοντι παλίσσουτον Εὐρυδίκειαν,
καὶ σὺ Βίων πέμψει τοῖς ὥρεσιν (III,123-5).

⁶³The poem is often attributed to Moschus and is certainly by some second-century disciple of Bion.

Diodorus Siculus

Next in time is Diodorus, who deals with Orpheus in the fourth book of his Library of History. After mentioning the hero's birth, parentage, musical prowess, learning and service aboard the Argo, Diodorus continues:

καὶ διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν πρὸς τὴν γυναικὰ καταβῆναι
μὲν εἰς ἄδου παρὰ δόξῳς ἐτόλμησε, τὴν δὲ φερσε-
φύνην διὰ τῆς εὐμελείας ψυχγωγῆσας ἔπεισε συν-
εργῆσαι ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις καὶ συγχωρῆσαι τὴν γυναικὰ
αὐτοῦ τετελευτηκυῖαν ἀναγαγεῖν ἐξ ἄδου παρὰ πηλείως
τῷ Διονύσῳ· καὶ γὰρ ἐκείνον μυθολογοῦσιν
ἀναγαγεῖν τὴν μητέρα Σεμέλην ἐξ ἄδου, καὶ
μετὰ δούτα τῆς ἀθανασίας Θυώνην μετονομάσαι (IV,25,4).

The reference to Dionysus is welcome to those who see the myth as an adaptation of the Dionysus-Semele story.⁶⁴ Important for our purposes is that again this is the Euripidean "successful" version. Bowra⁶⁵ thinks it non-committal, but Diodorus, when he gets thus far into the story, plainly considers it finished:

“Ἡμεῖς δ' ἐπεὶ περὶ Ὀρφέως διεληλύθαμεν, μετα-
βησόμεθα πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα (ibid.).

⁶⁴Jane Harrison, op. cit., p. 603. For a summary of this interpretation see Gruppe, "Eurydike", in Roscher, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 1421.

⁶⁵Op. cit., p. 120, note 1.

Orphic "Argonautica"

It is impossible to date the Argonautica ascribed to Orpheus with any certainty, though it seems to derive from Apollonius Rhodius and was in turn used by Virgil in the Aeneid. It too seems to indicate that Orpheus was successful in regaining his wife. "Orpheus" promises to reveal the secrets of the underworld, and says:

ἄλλα δὲ σοι κατέλεξ', ὅπῃ εἰσίδον ἢ δ' ἐνόησα,
 Τάινά μιν ἤνικ' ἔβην σκοτίην ὁδὸν Ἄϊδος εἶσω
 ἡμετέρη πίονος κιθάρῃ, δι' ἔρωτ' ἁλόχοιο (40-42).

Thus from Euripides to the end of the first century we have considerable evidence for a version of the story that did not survive Graeco-Roman times - that Orpheus was successful not only in winning Eurydice from the powers of death, but in restoring her to life as well.

"Lost Alexandrian poem"

After Diodorus and the Orphic "Argonautica", we do not read of the descent of Orpheus in literature until the fourth Georgic of Virgil and the pseudo-Virgilian Culex. In both of these, the story has been further developed: on the journey to the world above, Orpheus is unequal to the conditions imposed upon him by the gods of the underworld, and he loses Eurydice a second time. Many striking similarities between the two poems indicate, not so much identical authorship (that is largely discounted on stylistic grounds), but a common source.⁶⁶ Particularly notable is the symmetrical arrangement⁶⁷ of both poems, more than vaguely Alexandrian in appearance. It is likely that, at some time in the Hellenistic period, a poet told the version of the story which is familiar to us today. Bowra⁶⁸ demonstrates how Virgil and Ovid, in telling the story, worked independently of one another, using the same Hellenistic poem as a model, and suggests Philetas, Nicander and Euphorion as possible authors. But the important fact is that the famous version of the story, which may date back in art to the fifth century, has at last appeared in literature. The Euripidean version, however, gives evidence

⁶⁶See especially D.L. Drew, Culex: Sources and their bearing on the problem of authorship, pp. 75-9.

⁶⁷To be analyzed in Chapter II.

⁶⁸Op. cit., pp. 113-8 and 125-6.

of dying hard: it reappears in three more authors, each separated from the other by a generation. We shall consider them as they occur in our chronological sequence.

The "Culex"

In this poem from the Appendix Vergiliana, the phantom gnat tells of the souls he has seen in Hades, and repeats the story he heard from Eurydice's lips. This account makes several contributions to the tradition of the myth: it is Persephone who effects the restoration of Eurydice; both lovers are informed of the condition; Eurydice plays her part well, keeping her eyes on the path, not distracting her husband by speaking to him; it is Orpheus who fails, suddenly overcome with passion, oscula cara petens (293).

A discussion of the literary quality and significance of the Culex must be reserved for the next chapter.

Virgil

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is beautifully told in the closing portion of the fourth Georgic of Virgil. More detailed discussion of this famous treatment of the story will also be given in the next chapter. Here let it only be said that this of course is the tragic version, that Orpheus fails because he is seized by subita dementia (488); he is immemor and victus animi (491). Virgil's outstanding contribution to the tradition is his introduction of the shepherd-god Aristaeus, whose advances Eurydice was fleeing when she was bitten by the snake. By introducing this figure, Virgil locates the story in Thrace, near Mount Rhodope. He makes other geographic contributions: the entrance to Hades is at Taenarus; the exit, according to the best Italian tradition, is at Lake Avernus.

Virgil also gives passing mention to the descent in the sixth book of the Aeneid:

si potuit manis accersere coniugis Orpheus
Threicia fretus cithara fidibusque canoris
(VI,119-20),

and Thracian Orpheus and his mother Calliopea are referred to in the Eclogues.⁶⁹

⁶⁹III,46; IV,55-7; VI,30.

Horace

Virgil's contemporary Horace never tells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in detail, but in one of the Odes he addresses the lyre that charmed Charon, Cerberus and the tormented souls in Hades:

cessit immanis tibi blandienti
ianitor aulae

luridae, quamvis furiale centum
muniunt angues caput aestuatque
spiritus taeter saniesque manat
ore trilingui.

quin et Ixion Tityosque voltu
risit invito, stetit urna paulum
sicca, dum grato Danaï puellas
carmine mulces (III,11,15-24).

Horace then goes on to tell, not of Eurydice, but of Hyper-
mnestra.

In another Ode, when Horace laments that no musical power can bring Quintilius Varus back to life, he hints at the story of the descent:

quid? si Threicio blandius Orpheo
auditam moderere arboribus fidem,
num vanae redeat sanguis imagini,
quam virga semel horrida

non lenis precibus fata recludere
nigro compulerit Mercurius gregi? (I,24,13-8).

In neither poem are we told that Orpheus lost Eurydice after winning her by the power of his song, but the fact that Virgil's Georgic was already published, as well as the sentiment of the

second passage here quoted, seems to place Horace in the tragic tradition.⁷⁰

Conon

The mythographer Conon, whose Narrationes were preserved in Photius, probably should come next, as he dedicated his work to Archelaus Philopater, who ruled over Cappadocia from 36 to 17 B.C. Most of Conon's account of Orpheus is concerned with the hero's death, but he devotes a concise sentence to the story of the descent:

κατέοχε δὲ δόξα ὡς εἰς Ἅϊδου κατάβου ἔρωτι
τῆς γυναικὸς Εὐρυδίκης, καὶ ὡς τὸν Πλούτωνα καὶ τὴν
Κόρην αἰδαῖς γοητεύσας σῶπον λάβου τὴν γυναικα.
ἀλλ' οὐ γὰρ ὄνασθαι τῆς χάριτος ἀναβιωσκομένης, λαθ-
όμενον τῶν περὶ αὐτῆς ἐντολῶν (Narrationes 45).

It is the tragic version. Conon's seems to follow the fourth Georgic: his λαθόμενον recalls Virgil's immemor.

⁷⁰For references to Orpheus the musician in Horace, see Odes I,12,7-12 and Ars Poetica, 391-3.

Manilius

It may seem unlikely that anyone would revert to the "happy ending" after Virgil's fourth Georgic, but the Augustan poet Manilius appears to have the old Euripidean version in mind when he speaks of Orpheus bringing sleep to the beasts, sensation to the rocks and plants,

et Diti lacrumas et morti denique finem (V,328).

Less final than the finem in this passage, but more Euripidean than Virgilian is an earlier reference to the descent:

et Lyra diductis per caelum cornibus inter
sidera conspicitur, qua quondam ceperat Orpheus
omne quod attigerat cantu, manesque per ipsos
fecit iter domuitque infernas carmine leges (I,324-7).

Ovid

With Ovid we are firmly in the main tradition. But the seventy-eight lines which begin the tenth book of the Metamorphoses are crammed with new, imaginative details: Aristaeus is not mentioned; instead Hymen serves to connect the myth with the rest of the poem, and Eurydice is strolling with a band of nymphs when she steps on the snake; the words of Orpheus' song before Pluto are given, and the stock underworld figures - Tantalus, Sisyphus, Ixion, Tityus and the Danaids - are introduced in detail, and forever after associated with the story; Orpheus asks that Eurydice's life-thread be unravelled, and a new reason is given for his

failure:

hic, ne deficeret, metuens avidusque videndi
flexit amans oculos (X,56-7).

Though the passion of the Culex is here, Orpheus also appears to have doubted Pluto's word.

The descending Orpheus is also mentioned in the

Tristia:

bis amissa coniuge moestus (IV,1,17),

and in the Ars Amatoria, where he has power over

Tartareosque lacus, tergeminumque canem (III,321-2).

We shall have more to say about Ovid's use of the myth in the next chapter.⁷¹

Seneca

The myth is outlined in two choral passages in Seneca. In the Hercules Furens the chorus, awaiting the arrival of Hercules from Hades, are confident that he should be able to overcome the lower kingdom by strength if Orpheus was able to do so by song:

Quae vinci potuit regia carmine,
haec vinci potuit regia viribus (590-1).

Orpheus, however, loses Eurydice in the story the chorus tells, and this is due to the impatience of his passion:

⁷¹For other references to Orpheus in Ovid, see Metamorphoses XI,1-66; Amores III,9,21-2; Epistulae ex Ponto II,9,53 and III,3,41.

odit verus amor nec patitur moras:
munus dum properat cernere, perdidit (588-9).

In the Hercules Oetaeus Seneca is characteristically philosophical. As the end nears for Hercules the chorus sing that the song of Orpheus, Aeternum fieri nihil (1035), is true, and prove it by telling Orpheus' story once more. The underworld figures are dealt with again, most notably Charon, who forgets to row, while his boat, as if it too were enchanted by the song, comes to shore nullo remigio (1074). The gods are overcome, and the Fates begin to spin the thread of Eurydice's life anew. But nothing escapes death:

. . . dum respicit immemor
nec credens sibi redditam
Orpheus Eurydicen sequi,
cantus praemia perdidit (1085-8).

Orpheus turns because, as in Ovid, he is not convinced that Eurydice is really following him.⁷²

⁷²For other references to Orpheus in Seneca's tragedies, see Medea 228-9, 348-60 and 625-33.

Lucan

Seneca's nephew Lucan wrote a tragedy on the descent of Orpheus, the outline of which can be reconstructed from fragments⁷³ in Servius, the Liber Monstrorum and Aldhelmus. Eurydice is wounded by a hydra anguis armatus.⁷⁴ Orpheus descends like Hercules,⁷⁵ and, as a result of his singing,

nunc plenas posuere colos et stamina Parcae
multaque dilatis haeserunt saecula filis.⁷⁶

But Orpheus loses Eurydice, much to the joy of Hades:

...gaudent a luce relictam
Eurydicen iterum sperantes Orphea manes.⁷⁷

The shades apparently hope to be charmed by Orpheus' music once more. When the tragic hero returns to the upper world, fauni silvicolae⁷⁸ come to hear his lament, and he enchants even the pantheras⁷⁹ on the banks of Strymon.

Lucan also refers to the descent in the Bellum Civile:

Cerberos Orpheo lenivit sibila cantu (IX,643).

⁷³Collected in J.P. Postgate, Corpus Poetarum Latinorum (London, 1905), p. 145.

⁷⁴Liber Monstrorum III,3.

⁷⁵Servius, In Aeneidos VI,392.

⁷⁶Aldhelmus, De Metris 283.

⁷⁷Servius, In Georgicon IV,492.

⁷⁸Liber Monstrorum I,6.

⁷⁹Ibid., II,8.

Statius

In Statius' Thebaid, when the augur Amphiaraus appears before Pluto in the underworld, the Lord of Hades ruefully recalls the visits of Pirithoüs, Theseus, Hercules and especially Orpheus:

Odrysiis etiam pudet heu! patuisse querellis
Tartara: vidi egomet blanda inter carmina turpes
Eumenidum lacrimas iterataque pensa Sororum;
me quoque - sed durae melior violentia legis
(VIII,57-60).

Pluto is ashamed that he was moved to pity Orpheus, but consoles himself that he, in the end, won the victory.⁸⁰

Apollodorus

The myth is concisely narrated in the dull but orthodox encyclopedia of mythology compiled by the otherwise unknown Apollodorus:

... Ὀρφεὺς ὁ Ἀσκήσας κιθαρῳδίαν, ὃς ἄδων ἐκίνει
λίθους τε καὶ δένδρα. ἀπὸ θνούσης δὲ Εὐρυδίκης τῆς
γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ, ὡχθεύσης ὑπὸ ὄφρα, κατήλθεν εἰς
Ἅιδου θέλων ἀνάγειν αὐτήν, καὶ Πλούτωνα ἐπεισεν
ἀναπέρψαι. ὁ δὲ ὑπέσχετο τοῦτο ποιήσειν, ἂν μὴ
πορευόμενος Ὀρφεὺς ἐπιστροφῇ πρὶν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν
αὐτοῦ παραγενέσθαι. ὁ δὲ ἀπιστῶν ἐπιστρεφείς ἐθεόσ-
ατο τὴν γυναῖκα, ἥ δὲ πάλιν ὑπέστρεψεν (I,3,2).

⁸⁰For other references to Orpheus in Statius, see Silvae II,7,40; V,1,23-8; 3,16-8; 5,53-5; Thebaid V,343-5.

Apollodorus follows Ovid in his explanation of the tragic story: Orpheus is ἀπιστῶν.

Our last group of authors are not literary Romans but traveled and sophisticated Greeks. In one way of another, they contradict Virgil's tragic story.

Pseudo-Plutarch

In one of the works ascribed to Plutarch, De Sera Numinis Vindicta, the author mentions only that Orpheus went seeking his wife:

τὴν ψυχὴν τῆς γυναικὸς μετῆει . (22,566c).

In another, the Amatorius, he notes that Hades was vanquished by love in the three cases of Alcestis, Protesilaus and Eurydice:

σηλοῖ τὰ περὶ Ἀλκηστίου καὶ Πρωτεσίλαου καὶ
Εὐρυδίκης τὴν Ὀρφέως, ὅτι μόνῳ θεῶν ὁ Ἄϊδης ἔρωτι
ποιεῖ τὸ προσταττόμενον (17,761e-f).

Inasmuch as Alcestis was restored living to Admetus, and Protesilaus and Laodamia were united first in life and then in death, we may conclude that the pseudo-Plutarch refers to some form of the story in which Eurydice is restored to Orpheus, and love triumphs over death. This seems to fall in with the Euripidean rather than the

Virgilian tradition, though from the brief allusion it is impossible to be certain.

Pausanias

Pausanias rationalizes the myth: among the untruths that the Greeks believe about Orpheus is the story

*ἐλθεῖν δὲ καὶ ἐς τὸν Ἄϊον ζῶντα αὐτὸν παρὰ
τῶν κατὰ θεῶν τὴν γυναῖκα αἰτοῦντα (IX,30,4).*

Actually, Pausanias explains, Orpheus was a very skillful poet who came to hold great power over his contemporaries because he could cure disease and was believed to know efficacious formulae for averting divine wrath. When his wife died he went to Aornum in Thesprotis to consult the oracle there. He felt that Eurydice's ghost was following him, but when he turned he could see nothing, whereupon he killed himself for grief. At least this is the common way of interpreting Pausanias' words:

*νομίζοντα δὲ οἱ ἔπεσθαι τῆς Εὐρυδίκης
τὴν ψυχὴν καὶ ἀναπτύσσοντα ὡς ἐπεστράφη,
αὐτόχειρα αὐτὸν ἐπὶ αὐτῆς αὐτοῦ γένεσθαι (IX,30,6).*

Lucian

Our last⁸¹ author is Lucian of Samosata. In one of the Dialogues of the Dead, Protesilaus asks Pluto for permission to visit his wife in the world above, so as to persuade her to come down to Hades and live with him there. When Pluto objects that there is no precedent for this -

οὐδὲ γέγονε πώποτε

- Protesilaus reminds him:

Ὅρπει γὰρ δι' αὐτὴν ταύτην τὴν διττὴν τὴν Εὐρυδίκην
παρέδωκε καὶ τὴν ὁμογενῇ μου Ἀλκηστίδι (XXIII,2).

Lucian seems to regard the Orpheus-story as a successful one. It is true that Protesilaus was given only three hours with Laodamia, but in his plea he associates Eurydice with Alcestis, who was fully restored. Again, it is impossible to be sure. But it seems that this last reference to the story reverts to the very first we have, and bears witness to the continuance of the Euripidean tradition of a "successful" Orpheus.

⁸¹The account in Hyginus (Fabulae 164) was actually written by Fulgentius in the sixth century, and included in the edition of Hyginus published at Basel in 1535. See the edition of H.J. Rose (Leyden, 1934), p.115.

In tracing the evolution of the myth in ancient times, we note that the familiar "tragic" form of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice may date back as far as the fifth-century Attic relief, but that in extant literature it does not appear until the first century B.C., with Virgil and the Culex. Then it becomes the standard version, and appears in Conon, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, Statius and Apollodorus, while Pausanias, in attempting to explain away the story, testifies to its prominence in his day.

We note that there is a "comic" or "successful" form as well, one which was the standard version in fifth and fourth century Greece, but which yielded to the other tradition in Hellenistic and Roman times. We may place Euripides, Isocrates, Palaephatus, Hermesianax, Moschus, Diodorus and the Orphic Argonautica in this tradition. In later times, it is found, possibly, in Manilius, and then not again until the pseudo-Plutarch and Lucian.

Finally, there is a separate version found only in Plato's Symposium.

A chronological listing of the evidence, grouped according to the traditions, presents a rather strange appearance:

	<u>"Tragic" form</u>	<u>"Comic" form</u>	<u>Other forms</u>
5th B.C.	(Attic relief)		
		Euripides	
			Plato
4th B.C.		Isocrates Palaephatus	
3rd B.C.		Hermesianax	
2nd B.C.		Moschus	
1st B.C.		Diodorus <u>Argonautica</u>	
	<u>Culex</u> Virgil Horace Conon		
1st A.D.	Ovid Seneca Lucan Statius Apollodorus	Manilius	
2nd A.D.	Pausanias	Pseudo-Plutarch Lucian	

The curious appearance presented by this scheme - with Plato traditionless, the Attic relief separated by centuries from the Culex, and the "tragic" form succeeding and all but replacing the "comic" - immediately suggests that the accepted theory of two simultaneously existing traditions for this myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is itself a myth, and prompts us to re-examine Plato and the relief in the light not of later but of earlier evidence.

The first references to Orpheus mention only the great singer with strange powers over nature. But this idea was soon extended. We noted that stories of a descent to Hades may date back as far as the sixth century. Certainly in the fifth it was generally held that Orpheus had descended to Hades to play for the dead and their gods. Polygnotus' fresco tells us this much, and such a story is often told of the founder of a religious cult which claims knowledge of the after life; its secrets are then sanctioned as having come from the lips of the founder himself, returned from the dead to reveal them. But in the fifth century there is as yet no conjugal motive for Orpheus' descent. Jane Harrison observes "It may be taken as an axiom in Greek mythology that passionate lovers are always late",⁸² and indeed it is not till Euripides, or even Plato, that Orpheus the lover appears, while we wait four more centuries before he becomes a tragic lover.

By the late fifth century, when we are fairly certain the Attic relief was executed, there were several current tales of descents to and rescues from Hades. Some of these are complete victories over Hades: Dionysus braves the wrath of Death to take his mother Semele to

⁸²Op. cit., p. 603.

heaven; Heracles rescues Alcestis⁸³ and carries off Cerberus.⁸⁴ In other, in most cases older, stories, some concession is given to the rights of Hades over the dead: Heracles is able to reclaim Theseus, but Pirithoüs must remain below; Persephone, Polydeuces and Adonis spend half the year in Hades; Protesilaus is allowed only three hours above, and Odysseus does not descend, but only commands a view of the underworld as he interviews some of its inhabitants.

The only underworld-story comparable to the "tragic" form of the Orpheus myth, with a reversal due to human frailty and, in fact, the same curiosity often associated with Orpheus, is the episode in the story of Cupid and Psyche where Venus gives the heroine a box and sends her off to the world of the dead to bring back some of Proserpine's beauty; on the return journey, Psyche can not resist taking a furtive look at the charm and is overcome with lethal sleep. This story is of course quite late, found only in Apuleius.

This classification of descent-myths into the early success-story, the still earlier compromise-solution and the

⁸³In early versions (Phrynicus and Euripides) he merely waits at the tomb to fight with Death: later (Apollodorus) he descends.

⁸⁴A complete victory, as it is Eurystheus, not Hades, who asks that Cerberus be restored.

late romantic tragedy suggests that one myth, the most famous of them all, recurring as it does from the fifth century through the late Roman empire, may have evolved according to this pattern - from a myth in which Hades only compromises, to a story of triumphant success, to a romantic tale of tragic failure pivoting on human weakness. For man's early myths attempt to explain nature and the mystery of life and death; later he gains confidence in himself; still later he romanticizes,⁸⁵ and, we might add, as his culture dies, he rationalizes and lampoons.

With the Orpheus-myth we have the early triumphal version (Euripides), the romantic-tragic version (Virgil), the late rationalization (Pausanias), and the lampoon (Lucian). What we have failed to look for is the first stage, where some compromise is made with Hades. The most common compromise-story is the explanation of the pageant of the year, in which Hades allows the dead to return to earth for a time and the world is given both summer and winter months. It is possible to imagine that there existed a version of the Orpheus-myth wherein the hero was allowed to take his wife to the upper world for a specified time, at the end of which he was to relinquish her. Bowra⁸⁶ had attempted to show that the Attic relief can be interpreted in precisely this way. He cites the story of Protesilaus as a parallel,

⁸⁵Thus the division, made by Frazer and others, of myth into myth proper, legend, and folklore.

⁸⁶Op. cit., pp. 121-2.

reminding us that Plutarch associates the two stories.⁸⁷
 But he prefers⁸⁸ to insert this compromise-story between the "comic" and "tragic" traditions where there is no room for it chronologically.

It is easier to imagine a compromise Orpheus-story somewhat along the lines of Odyssey XI. Both Odysseus and Orpheus traditionally descended to Hades to discover its secrets. Odysseus used magic to force Hades to his will, and he was granted a vision and an opportunity to speak to the great men who lived below, especially to Tiresias, who knew his future. Orpheus overcame the underworld by virtue of his music, which was magic of a sort, and Orphic literature assures us he was granted a vision. Why not, then a story which gives him a vision - and only a vision - of his wife? She is not given him to take back; she is only shown to him. We recall now that the original name of Orpheus' wife was, in a possible rendering, *Ἀργιόπην* - "she of the gleaming face". We recall too that Plato's phantom does not return to the world; she is shown (*δείξαυτες*) to Orpheus, and he is sent back *ἀτελής*. This is precisely the scene we have

⁸⁷But inexplicably not mentioning Lucian. And if Eurydice was the original name for the queen of the underworld, as Robert Graves suggests, in The Greek Myths (Harmondsworth, 1955), vol. 1, p. 128, her ascent with Orpheus may be a variant of the myth of Persephone.

⁸⁸In The Greek Experience (New York, 1959), pp. 132-3.

in the Attic relief. Orpheus has finished singing; he drops his lyre and turns to look into the face of Eurydice, who is brought to him by Hermes. It is only a momentary concession, and the psychopompos has a firm hold on Eurydice, now the bride of death. The hero tenderly brushes aside the veil and she gives him a sorrowful greeting. Thus did the great Orpheus learn the secrets of the after-life.

Unless some early fragment of Orphic literature turns up to confirm this, it is at best a very tentative suggestion. But let us recall the only existing Orphic text that mentions the story:

*ἄλλα δὲ σοὶ κατέλεξ', ἅπτερ εἰσίδον ἡδ' ἐνόησα,
 Ἰδίναρον ἡνίκ' ἔβην σκοτίνην ὁδὸν Ἄϊδος εἶδω
 ἡμετέρη Πίσυνοσ κισθάρη, δι' ἔρωτ' ἀλόχοιο* (Argonautica 40-42).

It is probably quite late, but it is in the mainstream of Orphic tradition and it fits the compromise story very well. The most famous of the Orphic tablets, from Petelia, Eleuthernai, Thurii and Rome (varying from the fourth century B.C. to the second A.D.), "describe the arrival of the soul at a place in Hades where it is given a drink from the well of Memory, and greets and is welcomed by the guardians of the well, as they appear to be. No doubt the Descent into Hades, which treated of Orpheus' search

for Eurydice, handled some of this material."⁸⁹ And perhaps in the lost Descent Eurydice's only role was to welcome Orpheus on his arrival.

We may now sketch a possible evolution of the myth in later times. Once Eurydice is associated with the mystic Orpheus who learned the secrets of the after-life, the various rescue-myths prompt the further elaboration that, in addition to this being permitted to see his wife in Hades, Orpheus was actually granted permission to take her back to life with him. The speech which Euripides puts in the mouth of Admetus may or may not say this, but the Orpheus-story is at least connected with that of Alcestis, and writers from the fourth century to the first consistently regard the myth as a sort of Alcestis-story, with a happy ending. The references are more frequent now because Orpheus' descent is no longer associated with myths known only to initiates; it has become a familiar tale of rescue.

In late Hellenistic and early Roman times the myth undergoes another change. The Attic relief which originally depicted Orpheus learning the secrets of the dead now exists in copies in various parts of the world, and is everywhere

⁸⁹H.J. Rose, A Handbook of Greek Literature (New York, 1934), p. 73, n. 54. For translations of the tablets see Guthrie, op. cit., pp. 172-4.

subject to new interpretations at the very time of the influx of those romantic and folktale elements in literature which gave us the story of Cupid and Psyche. If Eurydice must depart while Orpheus removes her veil, surely it is because Orpheus has won her back under the condition that he would not look upon her. This tabu against looking back, associated with a journey to the world of the dead, is a wide-spread folk-motif that is found in the Old Testament (Lot's wife), in Japan (Izanagi), in various Asiatic races, in the South Sea islands, and, especially, in literally hundreds of versions, among the Indians of North America. A glance into Stith Thompson's index or any fair-sized world-mythology will immediately bear out the fact that the final "tragic" Orpheus story is one of the universal folk-stories. That a myth dealing with a husband's rescue of his wife from the dead would eventually be remodelled along the lines of Weltemärchen was almost inevitable, once the Graeco-Roman world established contact with the folk tales and legends of distant lands. In this connection, Guthrie says: "The element of tabu might seem at first to argue a primitive origin for this part of the story, but not only did the belief in injunctions of this sort never die out; it had a vigorous recrudescence in the superstitious Hellenistic and Graeco-Roman ages. The story of failure through looking back, therefore, may well be an addition by no means universally adopted until Alexandrian times, if

not invented by the Alexandrians. It was at all events a story well suited for exploitation in the romantic and pathetic spirit which they were the first to bring into literary favour."⁹⁰

The final stage in the evolution of the myth in Classical times is the rough treatment it receives at the hands of skeptics and unbelievers. Pausanias, not knowing that he is dealing with a story known all over the world, attempts to explain it away as a hallucinatory experience of the historical Orpheus, while Lucian and the pseudo-Plutarch bend it to suit their own sophisticated purposes.

It is possible now to re-group our authors according to the changes the myth underwent.

1. Orpheus is a famous musician with power over all nature
(earliest references)
2. Orpheus descends to Hades and learns its secrets
(Polygnotus' fresco; early Orphic *Kata Bdoeis*)
3. Orpheus is granted a vision of his wife in Hades
(the Attic relief; Plato. This is a compromise story similar to Odyssey XI)
4. Orpheus wins Eurydice, with no condition attached
(Euripides, Isocrates, Palaephatus, Hermesianax, Moschus, Diodorus, Argonautica, Manilius. This is a "successful" story similar to the Alcestis)

⁹⁰ Op. cit., p. 31.

5. Orpheus looks upon Eurydice and loses her (lost Alexandrian poem, Culex, Virgil, Horace, Conon, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan, Statius, Apollodorus. This is a romantic story similar to Cupid and Psyche)
6. Orpheus' story is rationalized or treated lightly (Pausanias, pseudo-Plutarch, Lucian)

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice can thus be said to be part legend (for it began with the legendary, quasi-historical figure of Orpheus), part myth (for it seems to follow the general lines of various sun or vegetation myths), part folklore (for it was eventually combined with one of the most popular stories of the world).

It is hardly correct to call it, in its familiar version, a Greek myth. We do not read of it until Hellenistic times. Some details - the tragedy of the wedding night, the romanticizing of Hades and its denizens - are characteristically Hellenistic; others, particularly the punishment of curiosity, belong to the whole world. The myth was never developed by the Athenian dramatists, though it might have provided suitable material, for Euripides in particular. Its main link with the great age of Greece is a Roman copy, and the interpretation of that remains a puzzle.

The important thing is, however, that the myth has evolved - a complete, satisfying story dealing with life and death, with divine justice, with love and its

proper control, with the all-pervading power of music, with the mystery of the world beyond. It has become potent material for artistic treatment.

It now becomes our concern to investigate the meaning of those treatments.

CHAPTER II

THE CLASSICAL PERIOD

Orpheus symbolizes, in all the myths connected with him, the mysterious power of music; in the myth of the descent he is a lover as well, and he comes face to face with death.

The three themes of love, death and music which give the descent-myth its unusual richness are first brought into conflict in the Culex. When the poet beholds Eurydice among the other souls in Hades, he apostrophises her, and sounds one of the perennial Orpheus themes - that there is no cheating death, for all the courage a man may show in the face of it:

quid misera Eurydice tanto maerore recesti?
poenane respectus et nunc manet Orpheos in te?
audax ille quidem, qui mitem Cerberon umquam
credidit aut ulli Ditis placabile numen,
nec timuit Phlegethonta furem ardentibus undis,
nec maesta obtenta Ditis ferrugine regna
ecfossasque domos ac Tartara nocte cruenta
obsita nec facilist†Ditis, sine iudice, sedes,
iudice, qui vitae post mortem vindicat acta (268-76).

A second seminal theme is then stated - the wondrous power of music, which holds sway over beast, river, forest

and moon:

sed fortuna valens audacem fecerat ante.
iam rapidi steterant amnes et turba ferarum
blanda voce sequax regionem insiderat Orphei;
iamque imam viridi radicem moverat alte
quercus humo, †steterunt amnes†, silvaeque sonorae
sponte sua cantus rapiebant cortice avara.
labentis biugis etiam per sidera Luna
pressit equos: et tu currentis, menstrua virgo,
auditura lyram tenuisti nocte relictā (277-85).

The tale reaches a peak of intensity as music
conquers even death:

haec eadem potuit Ditis te vincere coniunx,
Eurydicenque ultro ducendam reddere (286-87).

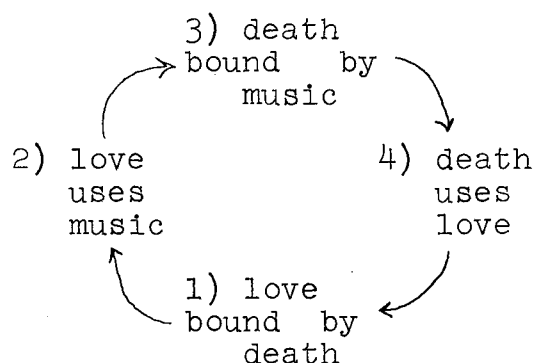
But death is inexorable, and effects its will
not over music, for it is powerless there, but over
love:

non erat in vitam divae †exorabile mortis.
illa quidem nimium manis experta severos
praeceptum signabat iter, nec rettulit intus
lumina nec divae corrumpit munera lingua.
sed tu crudelis, crudelis tu magis, Orpheu.
oscula cara petens rupisti iussa deorum (287-93).

A final theme is now woven into the poem - the
problem of the control of passion, and the nobility of human
love, even in defeat:

dignus amor venia, gratum, si Tartara nossent,
peccatum; meminisse gravest (294-5).

Despite the harshness of its language, the Culex
sounds and scores its three themes in a most artistic
fashion. Its story seems to travel upward to a climax,
then downward until at the close it has come full circle.



We first see Eurydice bound by death because of Orpheus' backward look; death, it seems, is stronger than love. We pass then to a description of Orpheus the lover, who in his anger at death aspires to reclaim his bride; this he attempts to do through music, and we hear at some length of the power of music over all nature, a power that is even personified as one of the elemental forces, Fortuna. The climax is reached as we see how music has power over death itself. But the laws of death are fixed, and the pardon exacted by music must be revoked. The poem now begins its downward motion. Death is able to reclaim its victim by virtue of its power over love. The conditions it lays down are kept by Eurydice, but prove too much for the passion-swayed Orpheus; in the very expression of love he loses to death. We return, in the last three words, to the sorrowing Eurydice, love in the grip of eternal death.

No classical writer has grasped the universal themes in the myth and woven them together so artistically

as the author of the Culex has done. If his poem has not the classic perfection of Virgil's fourth Georgic or the urbane narrative skill of Ovid's account in the Metamorphoses, it does seem to have the deepest awareness of the various levels of the story. It also has the best characterization: brief as the treatment is, both Orpheus and Eurydice remain in the memory, he for rising in god-like fury against the forces of death and for falling victim, in an excess of human passion, to his enemy; she for her unavailing fidelity to the laws imposed and for the eternity of sorrow she must endure.

The locus classicus for the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in ancient, perhaps in any literature, is the fourth Georgic of Virgil. The significance of the myth here is, however, quite different from that of the Culex.

It invariably comes as a surprise, if not a disappointment, for those who pick up Virgil after reading Bulfinch or hearing Gluck to discover that the fifty lines Virgil devotes to Orpheus are fitted into in the larger story of Aristaeus the shepherd-god, and that this whole seems to be somewhat arbitrarily stitched on to a larger poem dealing with the care of bees. We are told by Servius that an encomium on Gallus which was intended to conclude the poem was suppressed by Virgil when his fellow-poet

fell from imperial favor, and the Aristaeus-Orpheus piece substituted:

Sane sciendum, ut supra diximus, ultimam partem huius libri esse mutatam: nam laudes Galli habuit locus ille, qui nunc Orphei continet fabulam, quae inserta est, postquam irato Augusto Gallus occisus est (In Georgicon, IV,1).

and again:

fuisset autem (Gallus) amicus Vergilii adeo, ut quartus georgicorum a medio usque ad finem eius laudes teneret: quas postea iubente Augusto in Aristaei fabulam commutavit (In Bucolicon X,1).

There are reasons for doubting Servius; we need not go into them here.¹ But we must, in order to grasp the meaning the myth had for Virgil, decide whether Orpheus belongs in this context. Many critics, citing Servius, have argued that the Greek myth has no significance at the conclusion of four books on Italian husbandry, that "the links are purely formal",² that Virgil was working on book VI of the Aeneid when Gallus was disgraced, and naturally substituted an underworld-story in place of the

¹There is an excellent summary of the literature on the subject, and a case against Servius, in George E. Duckworth, "Vergil's Georgics and the Laudes Galli", AJP 80 (1959), pp. 225-37.

²E.A. Havelock, "Virgil's Road to Xanadu, (1) The poet of the Orpheus-fantasy", Phoenix 1(1946), p. 5.

former ending.³ Sellar has even gone so far as to say that the Aristaeus-Orpheus addition is "an undoubted blot on the artistic perfection of the work".⁴

The answer to this criticism is Virgil's long-standing reputation for being a careful and consummate artist. Even in the epic poem which never received his finishing touches he is always in the literary rather than the oral tradition, i.e., he is never a rhapsode, a stitcher-together of poems. And the Georgics are his most polished work. Whether originally composed as it stands or carefully inserted later, the Orpheus story belongs in the larger context of the Georgics and derives its significance from them. This should become clear after we have inspected the poem.

Virgil's account of bee-keeping concludes at line 315 with the curious statement that large quantities of bees will issue from the bodies of dead cattle. Then begins the quaint tale of Aristaeus, whose bees were touched with infection and died. He had recourse in tears to his mother, the goddess Cyrene, who lived on the ocean floor. She told him that only Proteus, the old man of the

³A. Cartault, mentioned in Duckworth, op. cit., p. 234.

⁴W.Y. Sellar, Virgil (Oxford, 1897), p. 188.

sea, could disclose to him the cause of his loss. So Aristaeus had to outwit the cunning old wizard, who tried to evade him by assuming various disguises. Finally he revealed the secret: the gods have punished Aristaeus with the loss of his bees because he has, however unwittingly, brought about the deaths of Orpheus and Eurydice. It was in fleeing his advances that she trod on the fatal serpent:

illa quidem, dum te fugeret per flumina praeceps,
immanem ante pedes hydram moritura puella
servantem ripas alta non vidit in herba.
at chorus aequalis Dryadum clamore supremos
implerunt montis; flerunt Rhodopeiae arces
altaque Pangaea et Rhesi Mavortia tellus
atque Getae atque Hebrus et Actias Orithyia (457-63).

Orpheus bewailed his loss and descended:

ipse cava solans aegrum testudine amorem
te, dulcis coniunx, te solo in litore secum,
te veniente die, te decedente canebat.
Taenarias etiam fauces, alta ostia Ditis,
et caligantem nigra formidine lucum
ingressus, manisque adiit regemque tremendum
nesciaque humanis precibus mansuescere corda (464-70).

The shadowy forms of Hell surged around him:

at cantu commotae Erebi de sedibus imis
umbrae ibant tenues simulacraque luce carentum,
quam multa in foliis avium se milia condunt,
vesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber,
matres atque viri defunctaque corpora vita
magnanimum heroum, pueri innuptaeque puellae,
impositique rogis iuvenes ante ora parentum (471-7),

and were held spellbound by his song:

quos circum limus niger et deformis harundo
Cocyti tardaque palus inamabilis unda
alligat et novies Styx interfusa coercet.
quin ipsae stupuere domus atque intima Leti
Tartara caeruleosque implexae crinibus anguis
Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora,
atque Ixionii vento rota constitit orbis (478-84).

But his victory was short-lived:

iamque pedem referens casus evaserat omnis,
 redditaeque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras
 pone sequens (namque hanc dederat Proserpina legem),
 cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem,
 ignoscenda quidem, sciarent si ignoscere Manes:
 restitit, Eurydicenque suam iam luce sub ipsa
 immemor heu! victusque animi respexit (485-91).

Hell reclaimed its spellbound victim:

ibi omnis
 effusus labor atque immitis rupta tyranni
 foedera, terque fragor stagnis auditus Averni.
 illa 'quis et me' inquit 'miseram et te perdidit, Orpheu,
 quis tantus furor? en iterum crudelia retro
 fata vocant, conditque natantia lumina somnus.
 iamque vale: feror ingenti circumdata nocte
 invalidasque tibi tendens, heu non tua, palmas' (491-8).

Already her shadowy form was drifting back across the mere
 in Charon's boat:

dixit et ex oculis subito, ceu fumus in auras
 commixtus tenuis, fugit diversa, neque illum
 prensantem nequiquam umbras et multa volentem
 dicere praeterea vidit; nec portitor Orci
 amplius obiectam passus transire paludem.
 quid faceret? quo se rapta bis coniuge ferret?
 quo fletu manis, quae numina voce moveret?
 illa quidem Stygia nabat iam frigida cumba (499-506).

Whereupon Orpheus ascended, and bewailed his lost Eurydice
 for seven full months on a lonely northern cliff (507-15),
 till he was torn limb from limb by Ciconian matrons, who
 flung into the windswept Hebrus his severed head, still
 calling upon its "miseram Eurydicen" (516-27).

Such was the story Proteus told young Aristaeus,
 who then repaired to his mother again to learn how he might
 propitiate Orpheus' shade. Cyrene counseled him to sacrifice
 four bulls and four heifers, and on the ninth day, if he

returned with funeral offerings to Orpheus and Eurydice, he would behold a sign of his forgiveness. All this Aristaeus dutifully performed, and lo! on the ninth day the decaying carcasses were alive with swarming bees.

It is an altogether charming episode, an Alexandrian epyllion along the lines of the sixty-fourth poem of Catullus. The Orpheus-section bears several striking resemblances to the Culex. Excess of passion is once more Orpheus' undoing, and again this is

ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes (489).⁵
 The three themes are all detectable, and, as in the Culex, several pivotal points of the action are only suggested: in neither poem are we really told that Eurydice died, or shown Pluto issuing his order. Rather we are presented with a series of pictures; in the earlier poem these vary in length, but in the fourth Georgic they seem to be consciously arranged in panels of approximately seven lines each. The climax of both Orpheus-stories comes with a sharp break at the fifth foot of the hexameter line. Finally, both poems are symmetrically, even spirally, constructed. Indeed, for all the verbal perfection of the epyllion in the fourth

⁵It should be noted, however, that this line is vastly superior, stylistically, to the corresponding passage in the Culex (294-5).

Georgic, its most notable feature is its underlying structure. Virgil has given us more than a mere epyllion. Working with the idea of a story within a story, he has unearthed layer upon layer in the myth, and ended with an intricate concentric structure. It will be to our purpose now to analyze this structure, if we can do so without doing too much violence to Virgil.

The epyllion necessitates treating a story within a story thus:

Aristaeus - Orpheus - Aristaeus.

But we should note that a six-line epilogue completes the fourth Georgic and restates the major themes of all four poems. Thus the epyllion is itself enclosed in the larger context of the four agricultural poems. This gives us the structure:

Georgics-Aristaeus-Orpheus-Aristaeus-Georgics.

Moreover, within the Aristaeus-story, a symmetrical arrangement is plainly discernible. Aristaeus loses his bees, appeals to his mother Cyrene and is sent by her to Proteus. Then we have the Orpheus story. Proteus dives into the sea, Aristaeus appeals again to Cyrene and, performing the sacrifice, regains his bees. The structure may, then, be viewed as

Georgics-Aristaeus-Cyrene-Proteus-Orpheus-
Proteus-Cyrene-Aristaeus-Georgics.

It is a concentric pattern - with the Orpheus story at its heart - and layer answering to symmetrical layer.⁶ But it is possible to trace the pattern still further, within the central story itself. If we reread the poem with this in mind it gradually becomes clear that Virgil has constructed his Orpheus-story symmetrically, incident answering to incident.

The story opens with the sudden death of Eurydice near the river bank, amid the wailing cries of her companion nymphs, and closes with the violent death of Orpheus, while the banks of another river resound with his cries of "Eurydice". Gilbert Norwood, who first saw some of these details, adds that both Orpheus and Eurydice meet their fate "owing to rejection of love".⁷ It is touching to note that each in death was faithful to the other.

After Eurydice's death, Orpheus breaks into lamentation, then descends alone to the lower world. Later, before his own death, he ascends alone from the underworld and resumes his lamentation.

Between these incidents lies the descent itself,

⁶An almost equally elaborate arrangement is to be found in Catullus 68b: Allius-Lesbia-Laodamia-Troy-fraterna mors-Troy-Laodamia-Lesbia-Allius.

⁷Gilbert Norwood "Notes: Vergil, Georgics IV, 453-27", CJ 36 (1941) p. 354.

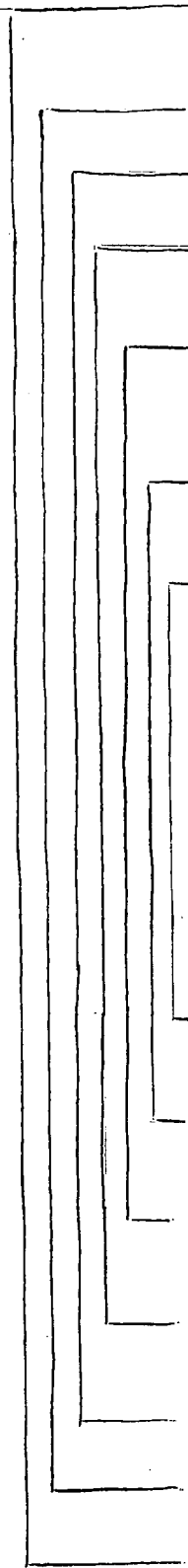
and it is even possible to trace a symmetrical pattern for the events in the lower world. Norwood has given a structure emphasizing thematic material. More striking still is the series of seven-line pictures, which seem to answer each to each.⁸ Thus lines 471-7 describe the countless shades advancing to hear Orpheus sing, and the prevailing mood is one of pathos. Virgil borrows some of the most searching lines from his Aeneid for this context. This picture is answered by the pathetic picture of the shade of Eurydice retreating from the grasp of Orpheus in lines 499-505, where another scene from the Aeneid is vividly recalled.

Further, while the power of music over death is the theme of the picture in lines 478-84, the answering panel shows the power of death over love. In the one, Hell is enthralled; in the other, it exacts its vengeance.

Within these two scenes, which serve to represent the basic themes of the Orpheus-myth, is enacted the tragic story itself, the heart of the whole structure. This is again a seven-line picture, breaking off, with an artfully dramatic effect, in the crucial fifth foot of its last line.

⁸Virgil had already demonstrated his skill in constructing pattern-repetition in the fifth Eclogue, in which the speech of Mopsus answers the speech of Menalcas thus: lines 56-9 answer lines 20-3; 60-4, 24-8; 65-71, 29-35; 72-5, 36-9; 76-80, 40-4. The arrangement is parallel, however, not symmetrical.

We may attempt to represent the whole symmetrical arrangement, which is itself almost a descent and ascent, thus:

- 
1. 281-316 Georgic proper; transition to the epyllion
 2. 317-319 Aristaeus loses his bees
 3. 320-418 Cyrene advises him
 4. 418-456 he captures Proteus, who tells the story of Orpheus
 5. 457-463 Eurydice's death near a river for rejected love, amid lamentation; geographical names (7 lines)
 6. 464-470 Orpheus' lament and descent to Hades (7 lines)
 7. 471-477 the shades approach; pathos; the Aeneid (7 lines)
 8. 478-484 Hell is enthralled - music's power over death (7 lines)
 9. 485-491 the tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice (7 lines, breaking off so as to commence the ascending movement)
 10. 492-498 Hell exacts its vengeance - death's power over love (7 lines)
 11. 499-506 the shade of Eurydice retreats; pathos; the Aeneid (8 lines)
 12. 507-515 Orpheus' ascent from Hades and lament (9 lines)
 13. 516-527 Orpheus' death near a river for rejected love, amid lamentation; geographic names
 14. 528-529 the story finished, Proteus dives into the sea
 15. 530-547 Cyrene's advice
 16. 548-558 Aristaeus regains his bees
 17. 559-566 return to the subject matter of the Georgics proper

This schematization is perhaps a cruel imposition on Virgil's epyllion. That it is not wholly satisfactory even as a scheme is evidenced by the fact that it fails to allow for one obvious answering motif in the Orpheus episode - the two bird-similes, the first of which describes the multitudes of shades which flock to listen to Orpheus, the other the nightingale-sadness of Orpheus' song after he has lost his Eurydice a second time. But that there is such a structure is undeniable. Norwood, who traces a thematic pattern, has already been mentioned. Havelock,⁹ in an extraordinary essay relating the poem to Coleridge's Kubla Khan, is sensitive to recurrent images, sounds and especially geographical names. But to find the meaning Virgil saw in the myth, his Orpheus-story must be related, not to any other poem, but to the Georgic for which it was conceived, or into which it was carefully worked.

The pattern we have traced is the traditional story-within-a-story technique of the Alexandrian epyllion artfully extended to an unusual degree. It may rightly be considered a pattern of descent and ascent; a descent from the quasi-instructive level of the Georgics to the deeper interpretative level of myth-making; a descent from the

⁹Op. cit., pp. 4-8.

adventurous story of Aristaeus to the more fundamentally tragic one of Orpheus; a descent which comes to an end as Orpheus reaches Hades itself, where a reverse upward movement is begun.

Now Smith Palmer Bovie, in an article in the American Journal of Philology, has shown this very imagery of ascent-descent to be a dominant pattern in all four Georgics. Of the fourth Georgic in particular he is able to say, "The book is a set piece for the imagery of ascent-descent. The career of the bees describes a parabola of forward flights, returns, withdrawals into the hive, and the ascent-descent pattern is constantly being adapted to the exposition."¹⁰ Virgil tells how the active bees swarm forth in the spring behind their leaders (21-4) while the loiterers are plunged into the stream by the East Wind (27-9); after tunneling deep into pumice stones or decayed trees (42-4), they float once more towards the starry sky through the clear air of a summer night (58-60); again, they rise in battle, high in the air, until, mingled in a great swirling mass, they plunge headlong, thick as a rain of hail or acorns from a shaken oak (78-81).

Virgil's Orpheus-Eurydice story is not out of place in this atmosphere of ascents and descents. It belongs in

¹⁰"The Imagery of Ascent-Descent in Vergil's Georgics", AJP 77(1956), p. 353.

the Georgics, and its meaning is deducible from its form and context. It is to be sought with reference to both the Aristaetus-story and the larger context of the Georgics in which it appears.

The Aristaetus-Orpheus epyllion is not instructive, for the "fact" which serves to introduce it, that bees are generated from the bodies of slain oxen, would win scant credit in Virgil's day. Nor is the epyllion merely decorative, for such lengthy decoration after almost two thousand lines of carefully planned instruction would be intolerable. Rather, it is interpretative. Virgil has given the reader hundreds of facts about the farmer's life and work; now he gives him, not a moral, as a medieval poet might do, but a myth. The sophisticated Roman reader may have been as baffled by this as the modern reader sometimes is. Myth for both means mere literary adornment. But Virgil was writing for the reader who was alive to the value of myth as an expression of universal truth, as the Aeneid bears out. His interpretation of the Orpheus-myth becomes clear if we keep the whole context of the Georgics in mind, and see the figures as universal types.

Aristaetus is the universal farmer. He is blessed by heaven with the goods of this world. At times he meets with difficulties, even catastrophes which threaten his livelihood. But he has divine help of which to avail himself, and he is able through human ingenuity to adapt himself to

the changing seasons, bend Nature to his will and wrest its secrets from it.

Beneath this success lies the tragic failure of Orpheus. This is the heart of the interpretative story; it is carefully prepared at some length, and, once it is told, the remaining details fall rapidly into place. Orpheus is not the worker; he is the universal artist who knows life at a deeper level and in fact comes face to face with death. In a material sense, the farmer is close to reality and comes to know many of its secrets, but the artist in his work explores the very meaning of life and love. Moreover the rest of men, the civilized world, depend on his activity. The beauty that eludes the embrace of the ordinary man is his bride, and it is his business to seek that beauty even from the great supernatural world which claims it. In this he is only partly successful. His art gives him great power, but he is after all human and cannot hope to hold beauty within his grasp forever. The artist's life is touched with failure. But he comes closer to beauty and truth than any man, and other men build their successes on his success and failure.

Failure for Virgil is implicit in every success: for the breeding of bees, there must be slaughter and sacrifice; the voyage to Italy is strewn with the tragedies of Priam, Dido, even Palinurus; the building of Rome requires that Turnus, Nisus and Euryalus and countless others be slain.

But in the wake of tragedy come peace, order, prosperity. Orpheus' tragedy, which was indirectly caused by Aristaeus' youthful passion, first brought the young farmer close to sorrow, but his realization of this tragedy enabled him to spring with confidence to his own rescue. To be truly successful, Everyman-Aristaeus must acknowledge his debt to the nobler Orpheus, who is the real symbol of civilization, whose descent is the real adventure of the human spirit.

Thus indirectly does Virgil imply that the Orpheus-story is his own, that this is his defence for writing a poem on agriculture - as an artist he is at the heart of all culture, all civilization.

Ovid provides the neat, pretty treatment of the myth that we expect from him. Where Virgil gave us a series of exquisite stills, Ovid gives the whole film, rapidly paced, nicely colored, complete with dialogue.

Hymen is invited to Orpheus' wedding, but the omens are bad: he brings no rejoicing, no laughing faces; his torch sputters out and its smoke blinds the eyes of the guests. Then, during the celebrations, the bride is bitten by a snake and dies.

How fresh, how ingenious are these details! Indeed, as the narrative proceeds there are many charming new touches. Orpheus dares (let Plato note the est ausus) to descend to Hades, and Ovid dares to give us the very song he sang. Only

after we have finished listening do we notice that others have listened too. . .Tantalus and Ixion, Tityus' vultures, the daughters of Beleus. Sisyphus has halted his stone and is sitting upon it. Tears are streaming down the cheeks of the Eumenides. Then Eurydice is led forth, limping from her fresh wound. Pluto's commands are imposed and the upward journey begins:

carpitur adclivis per muta silentia trames,
arduus, obscurus, caligine densus opaca (53-54)¹¹

and Orpheus, to reassure himself that his bride is still behind him, turns, and loses her forever. She speaks the one lonely word "vale", and drifts backward, downward to resume her place in the world of the dead.

Wilmon Brewer, in his generally helpful survey of the influence of the Metamorphoses,¹² details the dozens of new features Ovid has managed to incorporate into his story without flying in the face of Virgil's famous account. But not all of these are on the same level of excellence. How dull it is of Ovid to say:

quam satis ad superas postquam Rhodopeius auras
deflevit vates, ne non temptaret et umbras,
ad Styga Taenaria est ausus descendere porta
(11-13).

¹¹Lines Rilke was to paraphrase with terrifying effect twenty centuries later.

¹²Ovid's Metamorphoses in European Culture (Franeestown, N.H., 1941), vol. 2, pp. 311-5.

How irritating of Orpheus to remark, in his song,

vicit Amor. supera deus hic bene notus in ora est;
an sit et hic, dubito (26-7).

In fact, although Ovid deserves credit for attempting to give us Orpheus' song, and although his holding off mention of the old clichés¹³ about Ixion and Tantalus and the rest until after we have heard the song is a most telling effect, the song itself is not convincing. It is constructed like a miniature oration, with arguments neatly marshalled in order, with passion restricted to the appropriate places, with the inevitable noble resolve at the close. And later he compares the stunned Orpheus (using the inevitable stupuit) to the unidentified man who turned to stone when he looked on Cerberus, to Olenus and to Lethaea, also turned to stone, the one for love, the other for pride. These pedantic cross-references have no bearing on the Orpheus-myth, and as similes they are far inferior to Virgil's excellent nightingale in the corresponding place in his version.

In short, Ovid's treatment is blessed with his customary virtues and marred by his customary vices. The Orpheus-myth is no more, no less meaningful than any other

¹³Already found in Virgil's account; in Horace Odes II,13,29-36 and III,11,17-29; in Propertius IV,11,23-6, and elsewhere.

myth.¹⁴ It is apt material for a clever and gifted poet to use as he pleases. Orpheus has no personality: at one and the same time he is sated with mourning in the upper world and dares to descend to Hades. He represents nothing. But many pretty things can be said of him, and nothing need be taken too seriously.

From Seneca, Statius and the fragments of Lucan, we can deduce a Stoic interpretation of the myth. All three mention how the Fates must re-spin the thread of Eurydice's life, and the philosophic musings in Seneca's Hercules Oetaeus,

aeternum fieri nihil (1035),
are certainly Stoic in flavor. After Orpheus' story is told, the chorus inform us that ever after the burden of his song was:

¹⁴This seems true despite Wade C. Stephens who, in a doctoral thesis written at Princeton in 1957, relates Ovid's account to the Orphic tradition and holds that Book X, with its themes of the belief in personal immortality and the supremacy of love (expressed both in Orpheus' descent and the song he sings) is the key to understanding how the Metamorphoses itself marks a turning point in the interpretation of mythology.

Leges in superos datas
 et qui tempora digerit
 quattuor praecipites deus
 anni disposuit vices;
 nulli non avidi colus
 Parcas stamina nectere:
 quod natum est, poterit mori (1093-9).

Even the gods are bound by laws, and no mortal escapes death.

These are really the themes of the Culex reiterated. Statius is even more reminiscent:

Odrysiis etiam pudet heu! patuisse querellis
 Tartara: vidi egomet blanda inter carmina turpes
 Eumenidum lacrimas iterataque pensa Sororum;
 me quoque - sed durae melior violentia legis
 (Thebaid VIII, 57-60).

The commentator, Lactantius Placidus,¹⁵ assures us that legis here refers to Pluto's condition, which is melior, stronger than love; the god himself admits that he was overcome by the power of music, that even the Fates wept inter blanda carmina.

Thus, in the end, it is the Culex which crystallizes the meaning of the myth for Greek and Roman, poet and philosopher, Stoic and Sceptic. Borrowing from the separate strands of Euripides and Plato and the others, it states clearly the conflicting themes of love, death and music in the myth. It is this treatment and these themes which continue in the later authors. If it seems hardly credible that a poem in other respects quite unremarkable should serve as a pattern for later poets, perhaps the fact of the matter is

¹⁵Commentarius in Librum VII, 60.

that the passage in the Culex dealing with Orpheus is a literal translation of the lost Alexandrian poem which first told of the second loss of Eurydice, that later poets were using, not the Culex, but the Alexandrian original. This may well be the reason for the "curious infelicity"¹⁶ which most critics find in the Culex - that it is a literal translation from Hellenistic Greek.

Ovid's story is well-told, but for all its wealth of detail, it adds nothing to the interpretation of the myth, while the Stoics seem to have imposed a meaning on it.

Virgil stands alone. He uses the Culex; it may, after all, be his own. But he touches only briefly on its themes, transcending them to make Orpheus in his own image, identifying the mythical figure with himself as Milton, Rilke and Cocteau were to do later. It is ironic, perhaps disappointing, that in the great classical version of the myth, its basic themes are not explored; the story is stylized, its meaning is sacrificed to produce an Orpheus-figure, the universal poet and artist, the civilizer. But it is this figure, not the lover, that is, after all, the Orpheus of the ancient world. Virgil has given him to us more powerfully, but more subtly, than any other author, and Guthrie probably did not even have Virgil in mind when he summed up the ancient Orpheus, but it is Virgil's Orpheus

¹⁶W.R. Hardie, "The Culex", CQ 14(1920), p. 37.

that we think of when we read his summary:

"The influence of Orpheus was always on the side of civilization and the arts of peace... He taught men...the arts of agriculture and in this way inclined their natures towards peace and gentleness. Themistios...writes 'Even the initiations and rites of Orpheus were not unconnected with the art of husbandry. That is in fact the explanation of the myth when it describes him as charming and softening the hearts of all. The cultivated fruits which husbandry offers us have a civilizing effect on human nature in general and on the habits of beasts; and the animal passions in our hearts it excises and renders harmless'." ¹⁷

¹⁷Op. cit., pp. 40-41.

CHAPTER III

THE MIDDLE AGES

Orpheus survived the collapse of the ancient world with conspicuous ease. As early as 225 he appears with Christ and Abraham in the Lararium of the emperor Severus Alexander;¹ the figure of Orpheus charming the beasts is one of the few motifs from classical mythology which recur with any frequency in the catacombs and sarcophagi, where it becomes identified with the Good Shepherd;² another device, the fish, associated with Orpheus as the victor over death, becomes a widespread Christian symbol.³

The Fathers of the Church refer frequently to Orpheus. Usually it is the Orphic poet who is meant; but Eusebius mentions the mythical Orpheus who charmed the beasts;⁴ and Clement of Alexandria, in condemning Orpheus

¹See *Historia Augusta*, Severus Alexander, 29,2.

²See Guthrie, op. cit., pp. 264-7 and figs. 18a-c.

³See Jessie L. Weston, From Ritual to Romance (Cambridge, 1920), p. 120. But there may be no more connection between this symbol and Orpheus than the verbal similarity between Orpheus and orphôs, the sea-perch, whence a pun by the Attic comedian Alexis. See Edmonds, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 427.

⁴Oration in praise of Constantine 14,5.

and Amphion as deceivers, and extolling Christ as the heavenly musician who tames savage men and makes inanimate natures come to life, marks the beginning of a long-lived tradition which associates Christ and Orpheus.⁵

The Eurydice-story survived chiefly because it was given brief but classic treatment by one of the great minds in the history of European thought, one which bestrides the classical and medieval periods. Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius (c. 480-524) was "the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countrymen"⁶ and "for a thousand years one of the most influential writers in Europe".⁷ His most famous work, The Consolation of Philosophy, is a powerful synthesis of Greek thought, Roman expression and Christian ideals in alternating prose (approximating that of Cicero) and poetry (modeled after Seneca).

Among the most famous of the poetic passages is the story of Orpheus and Eurydice which closes Book III. Boethius has been describing the summum bonum, and now, lest his reader

⁵Exhortation to the Heathen 1,4.

⁶Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, XXXIV; in The Modern Library edition (New York, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 468.

⁷Gilbert Highet, The Classical Tradition (New York, 1957), p. 41.

be tempted to look back on less sublime matters, he adds a tale of warning:

Felix qui potuit boni
 Fontem visere lucidum,
 Felix qui potuit gravis
 Terrae solvere vincula.
 Quondam funera conuigis
 Vates Threicius gemens
 Postquam flebilibus modis
 Silvas currere mobiles,
 Amnes stare coegerat,
 Iunxitque intrepidum latius
 Saevis cerva leonibus,
 Nec visum timuit lepus
 Iam cantu placidum canem,
 Cum flagrantior intima
 Fervor pectoris ureret,
 Nec qui cuncta subegerant
 Mulcerent dominum modi,
 Inmites superos querens
 Infernas adiit domos.
 Illic blanda sonantibus
 Chordis carmina temperans
 Quidquid praecipuis deae
 Matrix fontibus hauserat,
 Quod luctus dabat impotens,
 Quod luctum geminans amor,
 Deflet Taenara commovens
 Et dulci veniam prece
 Umbrarum dominos rogat.
 Stupet tergeminus novo
 Captus carmine ianitor,
 Quae sontes agitant metu
 Ultrices scelerum deae
 Iam maestae lacrimis madent.
 Non Ixionium caput
 Velox praecipitat rota
 Et longa site perditus
 Spernit flumina Tantalus.
 Vultur dum satur est modis,
 Non traxit Tityi iecur.
 Tandem, 'Vincimur,' arbiter
 Umbrarum miserans ait,
 'Donamus comitem viro
 Emptam carmine coniugem.
 Sed lex dona coerceat,
 Ne, dum Tartara liquerit,
 Fas sit lumina flectere.'
 Quis legem det amantibus?
 Maior lex amor est sibi.
 Heu, noctis prope terminos

Orpheus Eurydicem suam
Vidit, perdidit, occidit.

The famous moral is then added:

Vos haec fabula respicit
Quicumque in superum diem
Mentem ducere quaeritis.
Nam qui Tartareum in specus
Victus lumina flexerit,
Quidquid praecipuum trahit
Perdit, dum videt inferos (III,metrum 12).

Though Boethius' moral is somewhat misapplied - for Orpheus hardly turned to look back on the Hell he had left behind - it proved to have a strong appeal for a thousand years to come. With Boethius' Orpheus we enter into a new age. Orpheus is no longer the civilizer; he is the central figure of a fascinating story, and a story which will admit of many interpretations.

The allegorizing of classical myth, so popular in the Middle Ages, began as early as the sixth century with the grammarian Fulgentius. In his Mythology, the Muse Calliope reveals to him the true sense of the famous myths of antiquity. The Orpheus-story is modeled after Virgil, but told in the briefest, plainest language. Then follows the allegory:

Haec igitur fabula artis est musicae
designatio. Orpheus enim dicitur oreafone,
id est optima vox, Euridice vero profunda di-
iudicatio (III,10,731-3).

Every art, Fulgentius continues, is comprised of a primary and a secondary art. With music the primary art is

persuasive - the effectus tonorum virtusque verborum; in the myth this mysterious power of music is embodied in Eurydice. The secondary art of music is scientific - the armonia ptongorum, sistematum et diastematum; in the myth this theoretical side of music is embodied in Orpheus. Thus the love of Orpheus for Eurydice becomes the delight of the optima vox - the talented and trained musician - in the internal secrets of the art of music, so as to sound the mystical power of the words. But the more this higher, mysterious art of music is pursued, even by the best men (Aristaeus), the more she eludes them. Rational investigation (the serpent) all but destroys her, and she takes refuge in the secret undergrounds. Only Orpheus, the vox canora, with his thorough grasp of the art of music can seek her out and lead her back - and even he unwisely seeks to discover the secret power of her effectus; though forbidden to look upon her, he turns and loses her. For no one, not Pythagoras himself, can explain the effectus, the power of music.

The seventh-century antiquarian, Isidore of Seville, in deriving lyra *ὑπό τοῦ λύριον* (Etymologiarum (III,22,8-9), tells of Orpheus receiving the lyre from Mercury, and enchanting nature with it, but makes no mention of Eurydice.

Boethius, Fulgentius and Isidore lived in the violent age of transition when Latin was refashioned in a profusion of new languages and dialects, was preserved in the monasteries, was developed in the liturgy of the Church. What Greek survived was little understood, while myth was often preserved as historical fact - ironically enough, as in some cases at least it originated as such. As the raw materials for the new culture settled into place, Virgil, Horace and Ovid lay only thinly buried beneath the surface debris; the glories of Greece lay deeper, and were concealed for centuries. Much was lost forever, but what was rediscovered was fired by the heat of new ideals, treated in fresh if unsophisticated fashion. Eventually the Orpheus of antiquity was reborn in the mazes of allegory and the aura of romance, half understood perhaps, but with new vigor and meaning.

It is possible, but not too likely, that Orpheus' story was told in early oral literature. The scant remains of old German, Spanish and Italian show no trace of him. There are two extant fragments of old French which deal with Orpheus and his descent into Hades.⁸ One of these, in a manuscript from Geneva, puts Orpheus in the power of the fiend, who guides him down to Hell and causes his ruin on his return by making a sudden noise behind him. This is

⁸See George L. Kittredge, "Sir Orfeo", AJP 7(1886), pp. 171-202.

probably a mistaken interpretation of the terque fragor of Virgil.⁹ This and the fact that the two fragments probably date only as far back as the twelfth century seem to indicate a literary rather than an oral antecedent.

It was in England, of course, that the largest amount of vernacular literature was written and preserved during these times. Anglo-Saxon poetry contains several quasi-Orphean descents, such as Beowulf's journey to the bottom of the sea to fight the monster Grendel. The myth itself came to Britain with Virgil and Ovid and especially with Boethius. When the king of the West Saxons, Alfred the Great (848-901), had staved off the Danes from his island, he translated into the common tongue the four books - of religion, of philosophy, of English and of Church history - which best preserved the traditions and culture of his people. So Boethius' Consolation was translated, expanded and expounded for ninth-century Britons, not with the scholarship Bede could have lavished upon it (for a century of war had wrought a decline in learning), but with the care of a pious monarch who kept in mind the intellectual capacities and spiritual needs of his subjects. Alfred, a musician himself, was the first to introduce Orpheus to Anglo-Saxons - and in a Christian setting:

It happened formerly that there was a harper in the country called Thrace, which was in Greece. The harper was inconceivably good. His name was Orpheus. He had a very excellent wife who was called Eurydice.... Then said they, that the

⁹A misconception that can be traced even to Monteverdi's Orfeo.

harper's wife should die, and her soul should be led to hell....Then thought he, that he would seek the gods of hell, and endeavour to soften them with his harp, and pray that they would give him back his wife....When he long and long had harped, then spoke the king of the inhabitants of hell, and said: Let us give the man his wife, for he has earned her by his harping. He then commanded him, that he should well observe that he never looked backwards after he departed thence, and said that if he looked backwards he should lose the wife. But men can with great difficulty, if at all, restrain love. Welaway! what! Orpheus then led his wife with him, till he came to the boundary of light and darkness. Then went the wife after him. When he came forth into the light, then looked he backwards towards the wife. Then was she immediately lost to him. - This fable teaches every man who desires to fly the darkness of hell; and to come to the light of the true good, that he regard not his old vices, so that he practise them again as fully as before he did. For whosoever with full will turns his mind to the vices which he had before forsaken, and practises them, and they then fully please him, and he never thinks of forsaking them; then loses he all his former good, unless he again amend it (XXXV,6).¹⁰

The Christian interpretation is natural and attractive: where Boethius had advised against losing the consolations of philosophical truth, Alfred advises against falling back into sin.

¹⁰Translated by J.S. Cardale, in King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of Boethius (London, 1829), pp. 261-5.

With the dawn of the Middle Ages, the center of the world of letters shifted to France. Orpheus was certainly well-known to the Carolingian Renaissance: Boethius was one of its favorite textbooks, and Virgil's popularity was so great that the period is often called the aetas Vergiliana. In an allegorical interpretation of Virgil's Orpheus-episode, by Remigius of Auxerre,¹¹ Eurydice typifies earth-bound desire, enmeshed in vice and unable to rise even at the eloquent persuasion of Orpheus.

By the tenth century it is clear that the story of Orpheus and Eurydice has made its way in one form or another to most of the countries of Europe. Thus the monk Froumond complains to the abbot of Tegernsee that the people are more attracted to profane and mendacious mimes such as that of Orpheus and Eurydice, than to devotional and metrically correct works.¹²

In the twelfth century there dawned, with the

¹¹Recorded by the third Vatican mythographer (Albericus). See Kern, Orphicorum Fragmenta, p. 20.

¹²Froumundi Poemata XX, 36-42, in Patrologiae Latinae, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 141, p. 1300d.

Medieval Renaissance, the aetas Ovidiana.¹³ Again, France was the center from which literary thought was communicated to the rest of Europe. The Chanson de Roland inaugurated a great era of romance, in which classical subjects were to find their way back into the mainstream of European literary tradition. The story of Troy was retold, and Aeneas' wanderings; the mythical Oedipus and the historical Alexander both became heroes of lengthy quasi-historical poems, and in the Lay of Aristotle the venerable philosopher was tricked and cajoled by an oriental maiden. These fantastic perversions, with the classical figures tricked out in medieval armor, are the harbingers of "le Moyen-Age. . . un grand enfant qui, comme tous les enfants, demande sans cesse qu'on lui conte du nouvelles histoires."¹⁴ It was this period which rediscovered Ovid, one of the great story tellers of the past, and Orpheus - along with Narcissus and Ariadne and the lovers Pyramus and Thisbe - becomes one of the stock figures of the romance. With Virgil and Boethius already well known, not the least reason for Orpheus' popularity in the Middle Ages is the fact that these three

¹³For the terms see L.K. Born, "Ovid and Allegory", Speculum 9(1934), p. 363 and Charles Homer Haskins, The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (New York, 1957), p. 6.

¹⁴A. Joly, quoted in Kittredge, op. cit., p. 183.

favorite authors had all told his story. Thus in the Flamenca, a Provençal roman d'aventure of the early thirteenth century, we read that the well-trained troubador should sing, besides the stories of the Bible and the legends of King Arthur and Aeneas,

de Pluto con emble
sa bella mollier ad Orpheu (648-9).

In the Roman de la Rose, Orpheus' unnatural vice is decried.¹⁵ Orpheus is also alluded to in some versions of the Romance of the Seven Sages, a popular collection of tales which came from the East to France and spread thence to Italy, Sweden, Wales, England, the Lowlands, Germany and Spain; in later times it is found from Iceland to the Slavic countries and Russia.¹⁶

The Orpheus-story itself was thus absorbed by France and broadcast to the rest of a keenly attuned and unified Europe in several romances, only one of which, the Middle English Sir Orfeo, has come down to us. This much admired

¹⁵Lines 19651-4.

¹⁶See Laura A. Hibbard, Medieval Romance in England (New York, 1924), pp. 174-8. In the Latin version of the romance, Orpheus is mentioned in the passage quoted from Horace, Ars Poetica, 391-2, in the section Puteus.

poem owes something to antiquity, but follows Virgil and Ovid less closely than it does any number of folk-tales which were crossing Europe during the early Middle Ages - stories of journeys to the other world and returns therefrom. Ireland's legend of Mider and Etain, for instance, told how a fairy princess married a Celtic king, was reclaimed by the fairies until her mortal husband and his warriors laid siege to the fairy hill and rescued her. The twelfth-century Welshman Walter Map, in his De Nugis Curialium, wove a Rip Van Winkle-like story around the ancient British king Herla, and told another tale of an anonymous king who sought and regained his dead wife. It is likely that one of these Celtic tales, all of which had happy endings, merged at some point with the Orpheus-myth, for Sir Orfeo has a Celtic flavor: the world of the dead becomes only a fairy world, entered through the side of a hill, enchanting, yet powerful and evil; the new Eurydice falls asleep under a fairy tree, and the new Orpheus moves the king of fairyland to make a rash promise, winning his wife back forever. But despite all the romantic changes and additions, Orpheus' claim to the story was stronger than that of his Celtic rivals, and his name and the name of his wife were preserved.

It seems likely, too, that some such Celtic-classic version of the myth made its way to France, for Sir Orfeo shows many signs of old French ancestry, and indeed, a lay of Orpheus was popular at the French courts; this fact is

witnessed three times in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries: in the Lai de l'Espine, the Prose Tale of Lancelot and in Floire et Blancheflor, the kings and their retinue are moved by the minstrel singing of Orpheus and his Eurydice.¹⁷ The passages seem to indicate that the poem in question was a Breton lay, which is not surprising, as this was the usual way in which such tales come to France.¹⁸

Thus it is possible to trace a development of Orpheus' story from the writings of Virgil and Ovid to a Celtic folktale to a Breton lay to a French romance, and, finally, to a Middle English translation.

We have three versions of the English Sir Orfeo, as it is called. The earliest of these, in the fourteenth-century Auchinleck manuscript, may be considered the standard version; the other two, contained in MSS. Harleian 3810 (Orpheo and Heurodis) and Ashmolean (King Orfew), are "Minstrel variants of a second version derived from the same source as the Auchinleck".¹⁹ The original poem is ascribed to the late thirteenth century.

¹⁷See Sir Orfeo, ed. A.J. Bliss, p. xxxi.

¹⁸For a full discussion of the problem, see ibid., xxvii-xxxix, and compare the romances of Marie de France, who used as her sources many Breton lays.

¹⁹Hibbard, op. cit., p. 195.

The Auchinleck Sir Orfeo opens with a fifty-six line prologue,²⁰ in which we are plainly told that this is a version of an old Breton lay - the story of Orfeo, a noble king and skillful harper, descended from Pluto and from Juno, who lived in Thrace (for so was Winchester yclept in those days) with his lovely queen Heurodis.

The first section of the poem tells of Heurodis' abduction by the fairies. On a warm May morning she falls asleep in her orchard, and after an unusually long slumber she awakes half crazed - for a mysterious king and a company of knights have appeared to her in a dream and marked her for taking. Orfeo is greatly distressed, and surrounds her with his own men, but to no avail - at the appointed time she suddenly vanishes:

Ac ȝete amiddes hem ful riȝt
Pe quen was oway y-tviȝt (191-2).

The most striking and perhaps the most essential feature here and, indeed, throughout the entire poem is the contrast between the goodness of the mortal world, with its warm human relationships, and the crawling evil of the other

²⁰The first lines of the prologue are almost identical with those of the Middle English Lay le Freine, and Foulet believes they were a part of the lost French Orpheus (cf. MLN 21 [1906], pp. 46-50). But he is effectively answered by Guillaume (MLN 26 [1921], pp. 458-64) and Bliss (op. cit., p. xlvii).

world which reaches out to claim its victim. Thus goodness, orderliness and virtue predominate as Orfeo calls a "parlement", appoints a steward to rule in his absence, clothes himself as a pilgrim and sets out to find Heurodis; while the eerie, magical atmosphere is again evoked as Orfeo wanders for ten years throughout the forests of fairyland, charming the wild beasts, then following the fairy hunters - bloodless creatures whose hounds and horns can make only muted sounds, who abduct mortals but cannot kill them. Some human figures are hunting, too: for a moment the sense of goodness and reality returns as Orfeo notes that the ladies hawking by the river are able to catch and kill their prey. Among them is Heurodis herself, and she gives him a pathetic glance before the others sweep her away. Orfeo follows them on through a passage in the rocks to a palace of crystal and gold with a hundred jeweled towers. Here he beholds with horror the unmasked evil of this magical world - for countless abducted mortals are held captive, fixed in the attitudes of their enchantment. Orfeo forces an entrance into the fairy-court, and there he plays so beautifully that the king bids him name his own reward. When he asks for Heurodis the king refuses to keep his word, until Orfeo reminds him:

'Gentil King!
 3ete were it a wele fouler ping
 To here a lesing of pi moupe:
 So, Sir, as 3e seyd noupe
 What ich wold aski haue y schold,
 & nedes pou most pi word hold.' (463-8).

When the evil king succumbs to a point of honor the mounting sense of evil is dissipated, and the rest of the story is played in Winchester again in an aura of goodness triumphant: though the court does not recognize Orfeo they receive him as a harper in memory of the long lost king; in a recognition-scene the faithfulness of the steward is tested and borne out; Orfeo rewards them all and lives happily ever after with his queen.

Sir Orfeo may be regarded as a true heir of the Orpheus-poems of antiquity, for its theme is after all the power of true love and music over the forces of evil. But it owes much more to the rich sources of medieval romance: what is universally admired in the poem is the charming naïveté which invests the classical story with medieval towers, Gothic dress, Celtic fairies and old English customs. Its greatest debt, however, is to the clear distinction the Middle Ages made between good and evil. For it is the artful suggestion of these two opposing worlds, with the threat of evil mounting to a climax, then being forever dispersed, that indicates that the author was touched with genius. His thoroughly medieval Weltanschauung enabled him to tell his story with conviction and loving attention. If it forbade his representing the second loss of Eurydice, so much the better; Sir Orfeo has revived, even recreated,

the myth in new terms, and that is the important fact. The tragic ending of the myth is unthinkable in romantic Christendom; Orpheus' story must be a happy-ever-after triumph of good over evil.

There may well have been an Italian Sir Orfeo, judging from the Italian form of the name in the English poem, and from the likelihood that a famous French lay would migrate to Italy as well as to England. We may be sure that medieval Italy knew Orpheus in one form or another. Virgil's Georgic was certainly well known, though the immense prestige of the "maestro e autore" rested more on his availability as a textbook of grammar and rhetoric, on the romantic Aeneid and the "Messianic" Eclogue than on his Orpheus-story. And although a celebrated critic can describe Dante as "more fortunate than Orpheus" for he "released out of the struggling night of impulses an ideal shape, the heavenly Beatrice",²¹ it is the learned Orpheus, not the Orpheus who lost Eurydice, that we meet in the Limbo of the Inferno. For the age knew no Greek and with its strong and vibrant faith in Christianity had no need for Greek myth. In the Italy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries - the times of the great Florentine, St. Francis and St. Thomas Aquinas,

²¹Karl Vossler, Medieval Culture (New York, 1929), Vol. 1, p. 318.

Giotto and the countless anonymous writers and artists - when the slow process of civilization was suddenly accelerated and the knowledge of Latin and other disciplines deepened and expanded, the driving force was not a desire to emulate antiquity - that was to come soon enough - but to penetrate to the universals, the true, good and beautiful, in life and belief. When this ideal was turned on classic myth, the inevitable result was allegory. Always a popular literary form in the Christian era, allegory became in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries "the universal vehicle of pious expression",²² "the bone, muscle, and nerves of serious medieval literature",²³ and one of its great source-books was Ovid.²⁴ Of the many allegories derived from his account of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, those in the Ovide Moralisé, probably written by Chrétien Legouais Saint-Maure, should be outlined as being particularly representative and influential.

²²Henry Osborn Taylor, The Medieval Mind (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), vol. 2, p. 395.

²³Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (New York, 1957), p. 15.

²⁴Virgil was accepted early as a Christian prophet; Ovid appeared belatedly as a saint and martyr who wrote poetry for a moral purpose: a Vie de Saint Ovide Martyr was written in Paris in 1667.

In the account of the myth itself, Ovide Moralisé follows Ovid in almost all its details, but diverges notably in introducing Aristaeus (lines 1-195). Then is given (196-219) the "historical sens" of the story: Orpheus, after losing Eurydice, turned to unnatural love, thus losing both body and soul. Two separate allegories follow. The first (220-443), very detailed and elaborate, begins:

Par Orpheus puis droitement
 Noter regnable entendement,
 Et par Euridice sa fame
 La sensualité de l' ame.
 Ces deus choses par mariage
 Sont jointes en l 'umain lignage (220-5).

While Orpheus and Eurydice thus signify two parts of the soul, Aristaeus is "noter vertu de bien vivre" (228) and the serpent "mortel vice" (242). Sensuality, having foolishly separated herself from reason, runs barefoot through the grass of worldly delights, resisting the advances of virtue, until, falling into mortal sin, she brings the soul down into darkness. The rivers and the tormented figures of Hades are then given allegorical interpretations. At last the rational part of the soul attempts to turn sensuality from its sinful path, and the sound of its harp is a movement of grace. Sensuality is moved and begins to follow, but when reason gives way and looks back upon sensuality the soul is lost forever:

Et pire est l'erreur desreniere
 Que la premeraine ne fu (435-6).

The third allegory (444-577) makes no attempt to follow the outlines of the myth, but views it as illustrative, in various details, of creation, the fall, the Incarnation, the Redemption and the final damnation of the obstinate soul.

Ovide Moralise was neither the first nor the last of the allegorical treatments of the Metamorphoses, and the very names of the authors of some other versions - Arnoul d'Orleans (fl.ca. 1175), John of Garland (ca. 1234), Alfonso el Sabio (ca. 1270), Peter Berquire (ca. 1342), Giovanni del Virgilio, Robert Holkot and Thomas Waleys (14th century) - show how widespread the practice was. Thus Ovid's Orpheus crossed and re-crossed Europe, interpreted anew for philosophers, doctors, preachers, nuns, tradesmen and school-boys. Dante uses Orpheus to illustrate the very notion of allegory: in a classic passage in the Convivio,²⁵ he demonstrates various allegorical practices by tracing different meanings in Ovid's account of Orpheus taming the beasts. And the dean of fourteenth century letters, Guillaume de Machaut, raised the Orpheus-Eurydice allegory to true literary respectability when he retold and interpreted the myth in

²⁵Trattato Secondo, 1,2.

his Confort d'ami, addressed to Charles of Navarre.²⁶

Another influential French version of the myth is in Lepistre Othea a Hector, by Christine de Pisan. Here it is one of a hundred histories, each of which is told in a quatrain, then used to illustrate some chivalric virtue, and finally allegorized. The virtue a knight may learn from Orpheus' descent is the virtue of prudence, to seek not the impossible; the moral to be drawn is that man ought not presumptuously to ask God for extraordinary favors, for these may be harmful to his soul.²⁷

It is interesting to note that while the rising culture of the West was allegorizing the Orpheus-myth, the Byzantine polymath Joanne Tzetzes was rationalizing it. In the Chiliades we read that Eurydice was not really dead, but only in a sort of trance from which Orpheus awakened her by his singing.²⁸

²⁶Lines 2277-2674. Machaut also uses the myth in his Prologue 135-46, and in the Dit de la Harpe.

²⁷LXX: Texte 1-7, Glose and Allegorie. In its English translation the Epistre was called A Lytil Bibell of Knyghthod.

²⁸II, 54, 847, summarized in Konrat Ziegler, "Orpheus", PW 18(1939), p. 1310. Tzetzes also refers to Orpheus in I, 12, 305-16.

Unmoralized Ovid found a kindred spirit in England in Geoffrey Chaucer, and deeply influenced much of his work. The references to Orpheus in Chaucer are few, however, and most of these - in The Book of the Duchess (568), The House of Fame (III,113) and The Merchant's Tale (1716) - are only brief allusions to Orpheus the skilled musician. But the heroine of Troilus and Criseyde evokes the pathos of the Eurydice story:

For though in erthe ytwyned be we tweyne,
Yet in the feld of pite, out of peyne,
That highte Elisos, shal we ben yfeere,
As Orpheus with Erudice, his fere (IV,788-91).

As we expect, the story is retold in Chaucer's Boece, a translation of the Consolation of Philosophy, but in literal and undistinguished prose. Chaucer also knows Sir Orfeo, for the poem leaves its imprint on the opening lines of The Wyfe of Bath's Tale, with its warning to women to beware the fairies in the morning hours, especially under trees, and The Franklin's Tale bears many resemblances: it purports to be a Breton lay; its heroine is approached in a garden by an unwelcome lover; its hero wins the lady back by insisting on a point of honor.

Chaucer's disciple John Lydgate, the "monk of Bury", tells the Orpheus-Eurydice story in some seventy-six lines in his enormous Fall of Princes. His version leans heavily on Ovid for this as for countless other myths. It is not without charm, especially in the celibate author's humorous remarks on marriage:

Yiff summe husbondis hadde stonden in the cas
 Ta lost her wyves for a look sodeyne,
 Thei wolde (ha(ve) suffred and nat seid allas,
 But pacientli endured al ther peyne,
 And thanked God, that broken was the cheyne
 Which hath so longe hem in prisoun bounde,
 That thei be grace han such a fredam founde
 (I, 5804-10).

In five other works - Temple of Glass (1308-9), Troybook
 (Prologue 47-53), Assembly of Gods (400-1), Reson and
Sensuallyte (5604) and Albon and Amphabel - the voluminous
 Lydgate tells of the marvelous prowess of Orpheus the musi-
 cian, and in the Testament he invokes his Lord Iesu as

Our Orpheus that from captiuyte
 Fette Erudice to his celestiall tour (158-9).

Boethius' Consolation was translated entirely into
 English verse by Lydgate's contemporary John Walton
 (Johannes Capellanus), with even less success than Chaucer's
 all prose translation achieved, although its stanzas on
 Orpheus are on the whole felicitous.

Meanwhile Sir Orfeo had passed into oral tradition
 and was revived as the Shetland ballad of King Orfeo,
 surviving nineteenth-century fragments of which suggest that
 it hardly stood on the same level as its source. Eurydice
 becomes the Lady Isabel in the two-line stanzas, which stress
 the musicianship of Orpheus, twice narrating how

first he played da notes o noy
 an dan he played da notes o joy.

An dan he played da g^od gabber reel
 Dat meicht ha made a sick hert hale.²⁹

²⁹Quoted in Bliss, op. cit., pp. 1-11.

Sir Orfeo is believed to be the only medieval romance that has survived in popular ballad form.

An otherwise unknown Orpheus, kyng of Portingal is listed among the popular stories in The Complaynt of Scotland 1549.³⁰ Concurrent with this is the work of the Scottish Bishop Gavin Douglas, who mentions Orpheus the harper in his Palice of Honour (line 398), while in the pious prologue to his famed translation of the Aeneid he calls Christ "that hevenlie Orpheus" (line 9).

The last large-scale treatment of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice in the Middle Ages is also from Scotland, and a fair index to the use and interpretation of the myth from the sixth to the sixteenth century: the Orpheus and Eurydice of the Scottish Chaucer, Robert Henryson, mixes classical with fairy-tale elements and concludes with an appropriate allegory derived from a thirteenth century monk. It is Henryson's longest and most elaborate work, but not his best, for the complex mythico-moral structure almost defeats the graceful music of his seven-lined rhymed stanzas. The story follows Virgil and Ovid, but has many original details: it takes Orpheus in his search for Eurydice through

³⁰Recorded by David Laing, Select Remains of the Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry of Scotland (Edinburgh, 1885), p. 117.

the spheres, where he learns the secrets of medieval music, though Henryson himself confesses "In my lyfe I cowth nevyr sing a noit"(line 242); it informs us that Orpheus' song before their majesties of the underworld had a bass line in the Hypodorian, a descant in the Hypolydian mode. The most memorable portions of the poem are Orpheus' lament for Eurydice, with its recurring refrain:

quhair art thow gone, my luve ewridicess? (143).
and the Dantesque vision of a hell peopled with the villains of antiquity - cesar, herod, nero and pilot and
mony paip and cardynall (338).

Henryson's poem, blending as it does the classical form of the story with the medieval atmosphere of Sir Orfeo, marks the end of the Orpheus-romances of the Middle Ages: the 240-line moralitas appended might be dismissed as an unfortunate afterthought, did we not know that this, for the medieval man, is the raison d'être of the poem, and in Henryson's case may be thought to climax the centuries of allegorizing to which Orpheus and Eurydice were subjected. As an allegory it is no better, no worse than many others: Orpheus is reason, Eurydice affection, Aristaeus virtue, the serpent sin, three-headed Cerberus death in childhood, middle and old age; it is all a story of man's affection fleeing virtue, falling into sin, but almost redeemed by reason, which proves too weak for the task. It seems a variant of the allegory in Ovide Moralisé, but Henryson

states (414-24) that he found it in the commentaries on the Consolation of Philosophy written by the painstaking and versatile Dominican Nicolas Trivet. So does the long shadow of Boethius cover the Orpheus-tradition of the Middle Ages.

Half romance, with Virgil and Ovid recreated in medieval terms, half allegory, in an attempt to penetrate to the meaning of the story as Boethius once had done, Henryson's poem marks the close of an era of Orpheus romanticized and allegorized.

CHAPTER IV

THE RENAISSANCE

Orpheus reborn with the Renaissance is a new symbol. He is no longer the romantic figure who braved the supernatural to rescue his beloved from death; for such an Orpheus the new era had little sympathy. The Renaissance Orpheus is rather the embodiment of human wisdom, the symbol of a great civilizing force, with power to bend all the harsh, contradictory elements of the universe to the humanizing spell of his art. The figure of Orpheus taming the savage beasts is thus invested with some of its original meaning.¹ His death at the hands of the Bacchantes and the new life of his harp and singing head are seen as the periodic attacks made on human wisdom by barbarism, and the providential conservation of its elements in more appreciative surroundings.² Orpheus the author of the Orphic writings

¹See Natalis Comes, Mythologiae VII,14; Erasmus, Adversus Barbaros 89-96; George Chapman, The Shadow of Night 140-4; the masques of Ben Jonson and Thomas Campion, and especially the Orfeo of Angelo Poliziano.

²See Bacon, loc. cit., John Milton, Lycidas 56-63.

gains in importance, and is held as a prophet of the true God, while mystical writers continue to associate him with Christ, the "new Orpheus".³

The Eurydice-story was too romantic, too personally tragic to support the weight of this symbolism. In Renaissance England, where we shall begin our discussion, it did not thrive as it had in the Middle Ages. This is true despite the tremendous literary production of the age; writers were simply out of sympathy with it. When it is used by a great writer who is convinced of the new Orphean symbolism - Chapman or Milton - it comes to life with striking beauty. But too often it is used as a mere literary adornment, with little originality and still less taste, at the caprice of men who availed themselves of a wealth of mythological lore, but could no longer allegorize or romanticize and lacked the ability to manipulate symbols. The inevitable result is the accumulation of symbols, most of them classical-as in one of Thomas Watson's sonnets,⁴ which alludes not only to

³See Walter Raleigh, History of the World I; Michael Drayton, notes to Polyolbion, song 1; Giles Fletcher, Christ's Victorie and Triumph 59,7,6-8; Calderón de la Barca, El Divino Orfeo.

⁴Sonnet 30, esp. lines 13-14.

Orpheus and Eurydice and Cerberus, but to Hero and Leander, Pyramus and Thisbe, Haemon and Antigone as well. When Watson refers to Orpheus in Amintas, for his Phyllis (31-2), the hero is singing "neere the Elizian springs", but the emphasis is on the ready symbol of the singing, not on the tragic story of the underworld. Orpheus' harp and song should be excellent symbols of the power of human wisdom, but with Drummond of Hawthornden,⁵ Barnabe Barnes,⁶ Richard Barnefield⁷ and John Davies⁸ they are at most artificial tags, though Davies' gusty humour redeems him in his In Philonem, where an English Orpheus "to the vulgar sings an Ale-house story" (line 8) and draws a Porter, an Oyster-wife, a Cut-purse, a Countrey clyent, a Constable and a whore to listen to him. But there is no Eurydice in this underworld. William Barnstaple prefers, in treating the Orpheus of Ovid, to tell the story of Myrrha, expanding Ovid's 220 lines to almost 900. In John Skelton's Garland of Laurell

Orpheus, the Traciene, herped melediously (272), and the references in Michael Drayton⁹ and Sir Philip

⁵Sonnet to William Alexander, in Commendatory Verses, 13-14.

⁶Parthenophil and Parthenophe, Sonnet 52, 1-12.

⁷The Praise of Lady Pecunia, 217-9.

⁸Orchestra 80, 1.

⁹Sonnets 45, 12-4; Shepherds Garland; Eclogue 4, 69; Ode to Himself and his Harp.

Sidney¹⁰ are likewise concerned with Orpheus' musical skill, though the Eurydice-story is briefly alluded to in Thomas Nashe's preface to the first edition of Astrophel and Stella.

Orpheus was understandably associated with the great musicians of the day. Purcell's songs were collected under the title Orpheus Britannicus, and William Byrd's "Come woeful Orpheus with thy charming lyre" called forth from the compiler the delightful comment that this Orpheus "not only moved inanimate nature, but even played so well, that he moved Old Nick".¹¹ Words of wisdom were given to the aspiring musician in Roger Rawlins' translation Cassius of Parma, his Orpheus, by Antonius Thylessius (1587).¹² Three other curious versions of the myth¹³ belong to the same period: A Womans Woorth, defended against all the men in the world (1599), a translation by Anthony Gibson from the French of the Chevalier de l'Escale; Of Loves complaint; with the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice (anon., 1597), and Orpheus his journey to hell and his music to the ghosts (1595), signed R.B. This last poem follows Ovid and tells the

¹⁰Sonnets; Defense of Poesy; Third Song 1-2; Two Pastorels 12-3.

¹¹Quoted in Julius Wirl, "Orpheus in der Englischen Literature", Wiener Beiträge zur Englischen Philologie 40(1914), p. 48.

¹²Listed in Bush, op. cit., p. 307.

¹³Listed ibid., pp. 309, 311, 312.

story with a minimum of ornament: Orpheus' homely complaint before the monarchs of Hades is:

For my Eurydice was dead
Before I could enjoy her bed.¹⁴

Somewhat similar treatment is given the myth in William Warner's Albion's England, but Warner has the story wrong: Orpheus is the husband of Proserpine, whom he wins from Pluto because his music makes her laugh; it is Cerberus who detects the backward glance and shuts Orpheus out of Hades once for all.¹⁵

To come to the great writers, Thomas More alludes to the myth in a Latin epigram. Advising Candidus to choose a wife who is skilled in the arts of conversation, he says:

Talem olim ego putem
Et vatis Orphei
Fuisse coniugem.
Nec unquam ab inferis
Curasset improbo
Labore foeminam
Referre rusticam (Epigram 125,74-80).

Edmund Spenser's best contribution to the literature of Orpheus and Eurydice is an effective couplet in

¹⁴Quoted in Wirl, op. cit., p. 63. Charles Crawford, "Greenes Funeralls, 1594, and Nicholas Breton", Studies in Philology, extra series (May, 1929), p. 26, gives Nicholas Breton credit for this poem.

¹⁵I,6,35-85.

An Hymne of Love which should obliterate forever the memory of Plato's weakling Orpheus:

Orpheus daring to prouoke the yre
Of damned fiends, to get his love retyre (234-5).

Another fine reference to the myth is in The Ruines of Time:

And they, for pity of the sad wayement,
Which Orpheus for Eurydice did make,
Her back againe to life sent for his sake (390-2).

Elsewhere, Spenser is disappointing. The only allusion to the recovery of Eurydice in The Faerie Queene is a brief quote from The Shepheardes Calender.¹⁶ The reference to Eurydice in the Daphnaida (464) inexplicably connects her with Demeter. Then there is Spenser's indifferent translation of the Culex. The 414 Latin lines are expanded to 688; Dan Orpheus and Ladie Eurydice have lost their personalities; the themes of love, death and music so memorably sketched in the Latin poem are submerged in the rhymed stanzas of a busy Elizabethan poet who entirely omits the crucial line:

Non erat fin vitam diuae exorabile mortis
(Culex 288).¹⁷

While Spenser concentrates on the Culex, Robert Burton quotes two lines from Virgil's fourth Georgic in

¹⁶ Compare The Faerie Queene IV,10,58,4 and October 28-31.

¹⁷ For Orpheus the Argonaut and musician in Spenser, see the Faerie Queene III,2,1; Amoretti 44,1-4; Epithalamion 16; Ruines of Rome 25,1; Ruines of Time 333,607.

The Anatomy of Melancholy.¹⁸

Francis Bacon sees the myth as allegory, but a Renaissance allegory of human wisdom:

Sententia fabulae ea videtur esse. Duplex est Orphei Cantio: altera ad placandos Manes; altera ad trahendas feras et sylvas. Prior ad naturalem philosophiam, posterior ad moralem et civilem aptissime refertur.

But Bacon's attempt to interpret Orpheus' quest for Eurydice as the inquiry of naturalis philosophia seems forced and out of touch with the spirit of the myth:

Opus...naturalis philosophiae longe nobilissimum est ipsa restitutio et instauratio rerum corruptibilium, et (hujusce rei tanquam gradus minores) corporum in statu suo conservatio, et dissolutionis et putredinis retardatio. Hoc si omnino fieri detur, certe non aliter effici potest quam per debita et exquisita naturae temperamenta, tanquam per harmoniam lyrae, et modos accuratos. Et tamen cum sit res omnium maxime ardua, effectum plerumque frustratur; idque (ut verisimile est) non magis aliam ob causam, quam per curiosam et intempestivam sedulitatem et impatientiam (De Sapientia Veterum, XI).

The sense of mystery is lost here; Eurydice is no longer the soul to be restored to the life of grace; she is only the body to be restored to health by scientific knowledge. Much more successful is Bacon's interpretation of Orpheus' later life as the victory of philosophia moralis et civilis, and of his death as the periodic destruction of the fruits of human wisdom by barbarism. This second part of the allegory became standard in the Renaissance; the first did

¹⁸Lines 455-6 are quoted in Anatomy of Melancholy III,2,3.

not.

George Chapman, for example, uses Bacon's second allegory. When Orpheus charms the rocks, forests, floods and winds,

it bewrayes the force
His wisdom had, to draw men growne so rude
To ciuill loue of Art, and Fortitude
(The Shadow of Night 142-4).

But in explaining the Eurydice-story, he reaches past Bacon to the Middle Ages:

And that in calming the infernalle kinde,
To wit, the perturbations of his minde,
And bringing his Eurydice from hell,
(Which Iustice signifies) is proued well.
But if in rights obseruance any man
Looke backe, with boldnesse lesse then Orphean,
Soone falls he to the hell from whence he rose
(ibid. 149-55).

The closing lines of this passage echo Boethius, and the burden of the interpretation comes from the mythological handbook of Renaissance writers, the Mythologiae of Natalis Comes.¹⁹

Two other authors, a generation later, use Comes and Boethius. The first of these is Thomas Heywood, who alludes to the myth in his Dialogue of Earth and Age:

¹⁹[Orpheus] igitur placatis inferis, animo perturbationibus scilicet, Eurydicen in lucem adducere conatus est, quae, ut nomen ipsum significat, nihil aliud est quam iustitia et equitas. Fuit rursus ad inferos illa retracta ob nimium Orphei amorem, quia neque iustitiae quidem opus est nimis esse cupidum, cum perturbationes animi placarentur ratione (Mythologiae VII,4).

What sorrow, musicall Orpheus, didst thou feele,
 When thy Euridice, stung in the heele,
 And dying, borne unto th' infernalle shade,
 Thou with thy harp through hell free passage made?
 (1533-6).

Heywood's annotation to this passage gives an allegory Natalis Comes attached to the myth:

Eurydice signifieth the soule of man, and
 Orpheus the body to which the soule is married...
 according to Natal. Comes (Annotations 9720-31).²⁰

The second author, Phineas Fletcher, includes in his works thirteen translations from Boethius' Consolation, no less than four of which are renderings in verse of the Orpheus - Eurydice story with its moral: A Father's Testament (22), The Purple Island (V, stanzas 61-8), Poeticall Miscellanies (A Translation of Boethius), and the chorus to Act IV of Sicelides. It is safe to say that Boethius' moral is one of his major themes. But Fletcher's work is always an odd mixture of the sensuous and the saintly, and in the Sicelides the sensuous prevails, as Fletcher is induced by the pastoral atmosphere of his subject to mistranslate his favorite meditation:

²⁰Heywood uses Comes' second allegory, which is actually that of Ovide Moralisé, Orpheus also figures in the early The Silver Age, and in a pageant Heywood composed in 1638. See Wirl, op. cit., pp. 56-7.

Thus since love hath wonne the field,
 Heaven and Hell, to Earth must yeeld,
 Blest soule that dyest in loves sweete sound,
 That lost in love in love art found (35-8).

Phineas' younger brother, Giles, still more mystically inclined, sees the Orpheus-myth as an obscure pagan type of Christ's victory: his sensuously devout, often beautiful poem Christ's Victorie, and Triumph is a characteristically Renaissance product, its Christianity resplendent with Classical figures.

Another Fletcher will serve to introduce us to the somewhat scant, superficial traces of the Orpheus-myth in Elizabethan drama.²¹ One of the characters in The Mad Lover of Beaumont and Fletcher dresses as Orpheus in a masque introduced into the play, and persuades the lover not to attempt death until he has tasted of love:

Orpheus I am, come from the deeps below,
 To thee fond man the plagues of love to show
 (IV,1,27-8).

The masque also includes a dialogue with Charon and a song to tame the beasts.

Fletcher may also be responsible²² for the lovely and justly famous song sung by Queen Katherine's maid in

²¹Before the Elizabethan age there is only an anonymous The Story of Orpheus (1547) listed in Alfred Herbage's Annals of English Drama 975-1700 (Philadelphia, 1940).

²²The authorship of King Henry VIII was questioned by James Spedding and Samuel Hickson in 1850. See The London

Shakespeare's King Henry VIII:

Orpheus with his lute made trees,
And the mountain tops that freeze
Bow themselves when he did sing.
To his music plants and flowers
Ever sprung, as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.

Everything that heard him play,
Even the billows of the sea,
Hung their heads and then lay by.
In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing die (III,1,3-14).

This picture of plants and flowers springing up under Orpheus' influence may suggest Müller's theories to mythological scientists. Unfortunately, this is as much significance as one is likely to find in any of Shakespeare's other allusions to Orpheus. The Thracian musician is only a part of his Classical stock-in-trade, though no mention of him is without its beauty. In Two Gentlemen Of Verona we hear of the power of his music:

For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews;
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stones,
Make tigers tame, and huge leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands
(III,2,78-81).

A similar reference in The Merchant of Venice is part of the classic tribute to music in the English language:

Shakespeare (New York, 1957), vol. 4, p. 1145. Hickson assigned III,1 to Fletcher, and indeed a passage in The Captain of Beaumont and Fletcher (III,1,33-9), is similar to the Orpheus-song.

Therefore the poet
 Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones and floods;
 Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
 But music for the time doth change his nature
 (V,79-82).

All these are in the Renaissance tradition of Orpheus as a civilizer. The Eurydice-story is possibly alluded to in Troilus and Cressida (V,2,151-3) and in the scene from Titus Andronicus where the maddened Titus enjoins his kinsmen to descend to hell and wrest Justice from Pluto's region (IV,9,34). There is a much more direct reference earlier in Titus Andronicus:

Or had he heard the heavenly harmony
 Which that sweet tongue hath made,
 He would have dropp'd his knife, and fell asleep,
 As Cerberus at the Thracian poet's feet
 (II,4,48-51);

and in The Rape of Lucrece, where

moody Pluto winks while Orpheus plays (553).

Akin to Shakespeare's maddened Titus is the grief-stricken Hieronimo of Thomas Kyd's A Spanish Tragedy, who resolves on a similarly Orphean descent (III,13,114-22). But the story is only half-heartedly alluded to, and in Massinger (The City Madam V,3,50), Ford (The Sun's Darling II,1) and Dekker (Old Fortunatus II,1,55-9) it is practically reduced to a catch-phrase - "to fetch Euridice from hell". However, Massinger introduces a mime into his play, in which Orpheus, Charon and Cerberus act out the story in dance and gesture.

Many of the playwrights turn to the myth in moments of leisure. Dekker gives a delightful prose burlesque of the tale:

Assist mee, therefore, thou Genius of that ventrous but jealous Musicion of Thrace (Euridice's husband), who, being besotted on his wife, (of which sin none but cockoldes should be guiltie) went alieue (with his fiddle at's backe) to see if hee could bail her out of that Adamantine prison; the fees he was to pay for her were jigs and country daunces: he paid them: the forfeits, if he put on yellow stockings and look't back vpon her, was her euerlasting lying there without bayle or mayne-prize: the louing coxcomb could not choose but looke backe, and so lost her, (perhaps hee did it, because he would be rid of her.) The morall of which is, that if a man leaue his owne busines and haue an eye to his wiues dooings, sheele giue him the slip though she runne to the Diuell for her labour
(A Knight's Coniuring).²³

John Marston, another dramatist who neglects Orpheus in his plays,²⁴ does well by the Orpheus-Eurydice story in a rather Juvenalian satire:

But let some Cerberus
Keep back the wife of sweet-tongued Orpheus,
Gnato applauds the hound (Satires V, 91-3).

Later, in defiance of the spirit of his day, he claims that it was a "bouzing Bacchus" who sent the Bacchantes to tear Orpheus limb from limb, and merely because the musician forgot to mention one of the gods in his songs (ibid. 111-20).

²³Early English Poetry, Ballads and Popular Literature of the Middle Ages (London: The Percy Society, 1841), p. 24.

²⁴There is a humorous reference in What You Will I, 1, 94-9.

Ben Jonson, too, makes only the most uninspired references to Orpheus in his plays and masques, constantly grouping him with Linus,²⁵ but in a minor work, On the Famous Voyage, he is free to give a hilarious if overworked contemporary parallel of the Orphean descent.

It is much the same case with Thomas Campion. It is true that the Renaissance Orpheus is an important figure in The Lord's Masque: he conjures up Mania and her furies, charms them with his music, then releases Entheus so as to give the wedding celebrations some breath of poetic inspiration. But Campion uses the story of Eurydice in a Latin poem of his leisure moments; in the Ad Thamesin, (205-10), the leaders of the Spanish Armada are entertained in Hades by Dis, and among the performers is Orpheus, who sings the song he once poured forth on Rhodope, when he lost his Eurydice.

Finally, Robert Greene, who put Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay on the stage, presents the Orpheus story seriously as a lyric in his novel Orpharion. In his version, Eurydice is in love with Pluto and though Orpheus, aided

²⁵Bartholomew Fair II,59; Masque of Beauty 139; Masque of Augurs 286; The Fortunate Isles 526; The Poetaster IV,1, 447; V,1,502; Underwoods; Epistle to Elizabeth Rutland.

by Theseus(!), wins her with his song, on the return journey

She slipt aside backe to her latest loue (19).²⁶

Generally speaking we must say that the Elizabethan dramatists found the subject of Orpheus' descent uncongenial; it might serve for more leisurely efforts, but otherwise it was only a standard literary motif.

The myth fared better at the hands of the lyric writers of the next generation. In When Orpheus Sweetly Did Complain, William Strode adds nothing to the tradition, but at least he gives us a serious poem about Orpheus with some genuine feeling, uncluttered by stock phrases.

Abraham Cowley makes a graceful reference in The Mistress.²⁷

Richard Lovelace has Orpheus lament the loss of Eurydice in two brief and melodious pieces, Orpheus to Beasts and Orpheus to Woods.²⁸ Robert Herrick's Orpheus tells the story with such admirable brevity that it may be quoted in full:

²⁶An idea which was to occur to Offenbach's librettists and, in a quite different way, to Rainer Maria Rilke.

²⁷See The Spring, 4,1-8.

²⁸Lovelace's poems are praised as worthy of Orpheus by John Pinchbake, John Needler and S. Ognell: see Wirl, op. cit., p. 66.

Orpheus he went (as Poets tell)
 To fetch Euridice from Hell;
 And had her; but it was upon
 This short but strict condition:
 Backward he should not looke while he
 Led her through Hells obscuritie;
 But ah! it hapned as he made
 His passage through that dreadfull shade:
 Revolve he did his loving eye;
 (For gentle feare, or jelousie)
 And looking back, that look did sever
 Him and Euridice for ever.

John Milton sums up the Orphean tradition of the English Renaissance: for him the significant portion of the myth was not the Eurydice-story²⁹ but the hero's dismemberment. The picture of a great civilizing prophet, who harmonizes all the conflicting elements of nature through the power of his art, the poet without honor torn apart by the unappreciative society he had helped to form - this was rich in meaning for Milton. This theme appears most notably in Lycidas, where it is the focal point of the entire poem,³⁰ and in the opening to Book VII of Paradise Lost. Orpheus becomes for Milton a symbol of his own turbulent artistic life - in Ad Patrem (52), Sixth Elegy (70) and the Sixth and

²⁹In Sonnet 23, Alcestis, not Eurydice, is the lost vision from the world beyond.

³⁰According to the interpretation of Caroline W. Mayerson "The Orpheus Image in 'Lycidas'", PMLA 64(1949), pp. 189-207.

Seventh Prolusions. Milton also knew and quoted the Orphic poems and recommended their study.³¹

But Milton refers to the Eurydice-story as well, and in the classic phrases:

That Orpheus self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heapt Elysian flowres, and hear
Such streins as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half regain'd Eurydice. (L'Allegro 145-50).

If the myth has been given any more famous treatment in English letters, then it can only be:

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as warbled to the string,
Drew Iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what Love did seek
(Il Penseroso 105-8).

There are two other allusions: in the Latin Ad Patrem Milton claims Orpheus brought tears to the departed shades not by the music of his lyre but by his poetry, and in the opening lines of Book III of Paradise Lost a mention of "th' Orphean Lyre" prompts an identification of Milton's poetic journey with Orpheus,

Taught by the heav'nly Muse to venture down
The dark descent, and up to reascend,
Though hard and rare (19-21).

³¹First Prolusion; Sonnets II,10; Elegy V,11; Of Education.

Milton's artistic mission is thus exemplified by Orpheus descending as well as by Orpheus rejected and martyred. If the ancient musician did not fare well at the hands of Renaissance Englishmen, in Milton he was clothed at last in glorious language and invested with symbolic significance.

The sources for classical mythology were of course much more numerous and much more accessible in the Renaissance, and though the best versions of Orpheus' descent - Virgil, Ovid and Boethius - had been available all through the Middle Ages, Renaissance writers also used the new mythological handbooks. We have noted how Chapman and Heywood use Natalis Comes' Mythologiae (1551), as Henryson had used Nicholas Trivet (ca. 1350). Other popular source-books with moral overtones were the voluminous books of Lydgate and the Epistres of Christine de Pisan, both of which, as we have seen, dealt with Orpheus and Eurydice. The first new translations of the Metamorphoses - by William Caxton (1480) and the house of Colard Mansion (1484) - actually contained bits of allegorized Ovid in the texts. And Virgil's Orpheus, too, came complete with sermon in the first French translation of the Georgics, by Michel Guillaume de Tours (1519). But later translations, and in particular the influential Metamorphoses of Boner in German (1534), Habert in French (1557), Bustamante (ca. 1546) and Viana (1589) in Spanish, Golding

(1567) and Sandys (1632) in English, left the reader to draw his own moral.

In time the Renaissance began to produce its own handbooks. Robert Stephanus' Thesaurus Linguae Latinae (1531) influenced the Orpheus of Ben Jonson's masques; Charles Stephanus' Dictionarium Historicum ac poeticum (1553) made Natalis Comes' Orpheus accessible to Thomas Heywood and fathered the Orpheus in Mystagogus Poeticus (1647) of another compiler, Alexander Ross. In England the most influential of all was the Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Brittanicae (1565) of Thomas Cooper, from which Spenser and the Elizabethans derived their Orpheuses and other mythological figures.

The giant of the Spanish Renaissance, Miguel de Cervantes, is, in his approach to mythology, not unlike the literary men of Renaissance England. He uses the Orpheus-myth in a perfunctory way. One of the lyrics in Don Quixote will serve as an example:

cantaré su belleza y su desgracia,
con mejor plectro que el cantor de Tracia
(II,69).

Cervantes indulges in classical allusions to the minimum extent expected of a writer of the period.³² Other figures of the Siglo de Oro, less universal in scope and more directly concerned with mythological subjects, use the Orpheus-myth and use it very well. Earliest of these is Garcilaso de la Vega, who "when he touches a classic theme... is of the great age: he stands for the best of the fully developed Renaissance."³³ Strongly influenced by the Italians, and especially by Politian and Sannazaro, both of whom dealt with Orpheus, Garcilaso attempted to transfer their delicate musical style to his own language. His sonnet on Orpheus is among his most representative work:

³²For allusions to Orpheus, see El Celoso Extremeño (p. 908), La Casa de los Celos (p. 259), La Galatea (pp. 613, 624, 747), in Obras ed. A.V. Prat (Madrid, 1956).

³³Rudolph Schevill, Ovid and the Renaissance in Spain (Berkeley, 1913), p. 226.

Si queixas y lamentos pueden tanto,
 Que enfrenaron el curso de los rios,
 Y en los desiertos montes y sombrios
 Los árboles movieron con su canto:

Si convirtieron a escuchar su llanto
 Los fieros tigres, i peñascos frios,
 Si en fin con menos casos, que los mios
 Baxaron a los reinos del espanto;

i Porqué no ablandará mi trabajosa
 Vida, en miseria, i lagrymas passada,
 Un corazón conmigo endurecido?

Cõ mãs piedad devria ser escuchada
 La voz del que se llora por perdido
 Que la del que perdiô, i llora otra cosa
 (4,5,1-14).³⁴

Another poetic treatment of the myth, much more sympathetic than anything to be found in Renaissance England, is the closing portion of the elegy "Si no puede razón," by Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. After telling the story of the descent, Mendoza addresses the sorrowing Orpheus:

Tu vas ahora por Tracia desterrado,
 Hinchendo tierra y cielos con tu queja,
 Y suspiros mezclando con cuidado.

Ella, vuelta en espiritu, se aleja
 Por extendido campo o yerba verde,
 Aunque no sin dolor porque te deja;

Pero no que torna a ti se acuerde,
 Porque el que pasa el agua del olvido,
 En vano lo desea quien lo pierde (208-16).

Orpheus is also the subject of four sonnets by Juan de Arguijo.³⁵

³⁴Herrera's commentary on Garcilaso applies to this sonnet the Orpheus-allegory from Ovide moralisé. Another reference to Orpheus in Garcilaso is in Canción 5,1-10.

³⁵Sonnets 24 and 25, and, dealing with the descent, sonnets 48 and 49.

In 1624 there appeared two narrative poems on the myth of the descent, one a long, artificial Orfeo by Juan de Jáuregui, the other, El Orfeo en lengua castellana, of approximately the same length and in the same meter, attributed to Juan Pérez de Montalbán. These two poems mark the famous division of seventeenth century Spanish poetry into culteranismo and conceptismo, "the greatest storm ever known in the history of Spanish literature."³⁶ The stir was initiated by Luis de Góngora, whose culto style effected by artificial phrasing and unusual word order a new poetic language. Though Jáuregui bitterly resented Góngora's innovations, his Orfeo is actually an attempt to rival Góngora's Polifemo. Typical is the passage in which Orfeo and Euridice are beset by sad forebodings on their wedding night:

Cautelar pudo al advertido esposo
 (mas el amor la providencia implica)
 de azares el ocurso temeroso,
 que ya en sus bodas breve llanto indica:
 no asiste Iuno; no loquaz i airoso
 el Dios nupcial su ceremonia esplica;
 de oscura antorcha, con desorden ciego,
 arde en su mano reluchando el fuego.

³⁶Gerald Brenan, The Literature of the Spanish People (Cambridge, 1935), p. 224.

Después quando la dulce, prevenida
 ora noturna al tálamo los llama;
 i a ocultos regozijos encendida
 luz grata admiten el amante, y dama;
 de causa procedido no advertida
 subito incurso arrebatò la llama:
 ni el discurrir contra el anuncio fiero
 hallò evasion a desmentir su agüero (I,57-72).

This is not only representative culteranismo; it is also a typically Spanish extension of a classic idea. Ovid's evil omens become agüeros - fatal forces which many Spanish authors after Jaúregui use to motivate the story.³⁷

The opponents of culteranismo used clear, idiomatic Spanish and sought their effects in more or less typically Renaissance conceits - hence their name conceptismo, and the en lengua castellana pointedly attached to their Orfeo. Menéndez y Pelayo notes³⁸ that theirs is a hastily composed work, a mere tour de force hurried into publication to rival Jaúregui. But we need not credit the statement³⁹ that it was actually written by Lope de Vega, and in four days.

Thus Renaissance Spain produced more full-scale treatments of the myth than England, and at least as many

³⁷Pablo Cabañas, in El Mito de Orfeo en la Literatura Española (Madrid, 1948) traces this theme through the Spanish treatments of Orpheus and Eurydice. See pp. 53-61.

³⁸In Estudios Sobre el Teatro de Lope de Vega, ed. E.S. Reyes (Madrid, 1949), vol. 2, p. 241.

³⁹Found by La Barrera in a copy of the first edition of the poem.

hundreds of references to the "Orphean lyre" and "Orpheus' song". To detail these is to list almost all the names of an amazing period in literary productivity.⁴⁰

From a literary cliché, Orpheus became a subject of satire - in Góngora's clever replies to Jaúregui and Montalbán,⁴¹ and in two plays, Bernaldo de Quirós' Marido hasta el infierno and Cancér's Vaile famoso de la fabula de Orfeo.⁴² It seems that the hell-braving constancy of Orpheus could easily be made ridiculous to a people who seriously cultivated a sense of honor. Lope's play about Orpheus and Eurydice, entitled El Marido Más Firme, is serious, as befits the comedia mitológica, and does not stand out in the vast corpus of its author's work. More noteworthy is the comedy Erudice y Orfeo by Antonio de Solís, which treats the myth "as a cloak and dagger comedy":⁴³ as the lovers reach the upper world, Eurydice is carried off again by Aristaeus, while Orpheus, mindful of Pluto's injunction, does not turn his head. One of the most successful burlesques of the myth in any language is the poem Califica a Orfeo para idea de maridos dichosas, by Francisco de Quevedo, which begins:

⁴⁰See Cabañas, op. cit., pp. 87-114.

⁴¹Sonnets 81 and 82.

⁴²Discussed in Cabañas, op. cit., pp. 139-44.

⁴³"Como una comedia de capa y espada." Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. 241.

Orfeo por su mujer
 cuentan que bajó al Infierno;
 y por su mujer no pudo
 bajar a otra parte Orfeo (1-4).

This satire is the source of La Descente d'Orphée, by the précieuse poetess Henriette de Coligny; the Orphée of Antoine Beauderon de Senecé (1717); the Orpheus of Lady Monck (1716); the anonymous "Fond Orpheus went as poets tell" (1724); Robert Dodsley's "When Orpheus went down"; Brockes' "Um seine Frau von neuen zu erlangen" (1725) and J. Wiederich Gries' "Orpheus stieg zum Höllenschlunden" (1824).⁴⁴ But despite the popularity of this satire, Quevedo's best contribution to the literature of Orpheus is the madrigal Contraposición Amorosa:

Si fueras tú mi Eurídice, oh señora,
 ya que soy yo el Orfeo que te adora,
 tanto el poder mirarte en mí pudiera,
 que solo por mirarte te perdiera:
 pues si perdiera la ocasión de verte,
 perderte fuera así, por no perderte (1-6).

We are not surprised to find several deeply religious treatments of the myth in Spain:⁴⁵ Baltasar Gracián, in Arte de ingenio, calls Christ "el verdadero Orfeo", drawing all things to Himself as He hangs with arms

⁴⁴See "La Bajada de Orfeo a los Infiernos", Obras Completas de Quevedo, ed. L.A. Marin (Madrid, 1952), vol. 2, pp. 1467-78.

⁴⁵For full treatment of the works mentioned in this paragraph, see Cabañas, op. cit., pp. 153-76 and 239-87.

outstretched on the lyre of the Cross; there is a similar reference in Lope's Corón Trágica; Sebastián de Córdoba "christianizes" two mythological poets in a work whose title speaks best for itself - Obras de Boscán y Garcilaso trasladadas en materias cristianas y religiosas; John the Baptist is compared to Orpheus in the Versos Sacros of Bocángel. Pre-eminent among those who treat Orpheus in this mystic light is the figure who marks the end of Spain's great literary era, Pedro Calderón de la Barca. In El auto del Divino Jason, the classical figures aboard the Argo foreshadow New Testament personages: Jason is Christ; Hercules, St. Peter; Theseus, St. Andrew, and Orpheus, again, is John the Baptist. Orpheus and Eurydice are the subject of another auto - El divino Orfeo. Here the serpent symbolizes sin; Orpheus' taking up his lyre and descending to hell signifies man taking up his cross and dying to sin; the return of Eurydice signifies redemption. A second El divino Orfeo identifies Orpheus with Christ and Pluto with the devil and ends with an apotheosis of the Eucharist. In these extraordinary plays of Calderón the allegorized myth reaches its literary apex.

Orpheus and Eurydice are among the many classical figures who find their way into the national epic of Portugal, the Lusiads of Camoens:

Qual se ajũtaua em Rodope o aruoredo
 So por ouuir o amante da donzella
 Euridice, tocando a lira de ouro,
 Tal a gente se ajunta a ouuir o Mouro
 (VII,29,5-8).⁴⁶

In Germany the spirit of the Renaissance expressed itself more in religious revolt than in artistic creation. Orpheus will not loom large in German letters for centuries still. But the Meistersänger revered his name: one of the tones they practised was an "Orphei sehnliche Klagweis".

In the Lowlands, Erasmus and Cornelius Gerard exchange references to the myth in the dialogue Adversos Barbaros (89-96; 97-120). Here again Orpheus plays his Renaissance role: he is the poet whose song civilizes all the elements both above and below the earth.⁴⁷

⁴⁶See also III, st.1-2; X, st.5-6.

⁴⁷Erasmus also compares John Skelton to Orpheus in the Carmen extemporale, 14-20; there is a brief reference in the Encomium Morias, 26.

France yielded to Italy the literary and cultural rule it had held over Europe when, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio emerged in swift succession. France was slow to assimilate the new spirit. François Villon, writing a full century after the three great Italians, is still very much a poet of the Middle Ages. His Orpheus is almost a figure from a troubador lay:

Orpheüs, le doux menestrier,
Jouant de fleustes et musetes,
En fut en dangier de murtrier
Chien Cerberus a quatre testes (Testament 633-6).

Rabelais bestrides the two ages. His references to Orpheus are more learned, but deliberately confused: Pantagruel, aboard Gaster's ship in the Glacial Sea, suggests a search for the head and lyre of Orpheus;⁴⁸ in another passage, he tells Panurge how Eurydice learned of her impending death in a dream, and cites Ennius as his authority.⁴⁹

Finally, in the generation of Ronsard, the spirit of the Italian Renaissance reached France. In Guillaume Crétin (d. 1525) Orpheus is called upon to supply a rondeau of lamentation, and does so in true Renaissance style.⁵⁰ The great Pindaric lyricist himself alludes to Orpheus a

⁴⁸Pantagruel IV, 56.

⁴⁹Ibid. III, 14.

⁵⁰Deploration Dudit Crétin 149-63. See also poems 32, 41, 46 for brief allusions.

score of times, often with the same Renaissance thoughtlessness we marked in English poetry, but many times too with loving attention: Orpheus the musician is generally given only passing notice;⁵¹ Orpheus aboard the Argo⁵² and Orpheus dismembered⁵³ are treated at greater length. The journey after Eurydice is appropriately used in the Epitaphes, treated seriously for "Claude de l'Aubespine", and humorously in the inscription for "Albert, louer de luth du Roy", as a priest and a passer-by engage in conversation before the tomb. Ronsard's longest treatment of the Orpheus - Eurydice story is in epic style, very serious and very beautiful. It leans heavily on Ovid, borrowing the songs of both Chiron and Orpheus from the Metamorphoses, as well as the following passage, perhaps the high point of the poem:

Un sentier est là bas tout obscur et tout sombre,
Entremeslé de peur et de frayeur et d'ombre:
Par ce chemin ie sors, et ja presque i 'auois
Passé le port d'Enfer, les rives et les bois,
Quand, las! veincu d'amour ie regarde en arriere,
Et mal-caut ie iettay sur elle ma lumiere,
Fautte assez pardonnable en amour, si Pluton
Scauoit hélas! que c'est que de faire pardon
(L'Orphée 285-92)

⁵¹Seconde Livre des Amours, "Elegie"; Odes I,10,V,5; Hymnes "de L'Eternité", "de Calays"; Poems 2; Epitaphes "Marguerite de France", Hugues Sabel"; Response aux iniures; A sa guiterre; A son luth; Sonnet "Quel luth"; Preface au Roy Charles IX; De L'Art Poétique Français.

⁵²Poems I, "L'Hylas".

⁵³Amours Diverses "Elegie 1".

Other poets of the Pléiade mention Orpheus, but the references are negligible.⁵⁴ The tradition was revived a generation later in Malherbe, whose elegy A.M. Colletet, sur la mort de sa soeur⁵⁵ contains a graceful reference to the myth, reminiscent of Moschus' lament for Bion. Less serious treatment was given Orpheus by the précieux poet Benserade, in his Métamorphoses d'Ovide en Rondeaux, and by Henriette de Coligny in her translation of Quevedo's satire.⁵⁶

Whatever personality the Renaissance in France sought to give Orphée was, however, lost when Italy's Orfeo began his conquest of Europe. The first signs of this are evident in the Orphée of Tristan L'Hermite (1639), plainly influenced by the gay, frivolous Orfeo of Marino.⁵⁷ Then the Orfeo of Italian opera was imported into France, unfortunately amid such over-elaborate spectacle that eventually Orphée became a stock farcical character. The success of the Paris première of Rossi's opera on Orpheus prompted the lavish (and similarly constructed) Andromède et

⁵⁴E.g. d'Aubigné, Sonnet 4-5; Les Tragiques III, 314.

⁵⁵Poésies 110, 4-8.

⁵⁶See Quevedo, Obras, p. 1470.

⁵⁷See Cecilia Rizza, "L'Orphée di Tristan e L'Orfeo del Cavalier Marino", Convivium 26(1954), pp. 429-39.

Persée of Corneille,⁵⁸ and Racine is said to have offered to write an Orphée to mark the marriage of Louis XIV.⁵⁹ But we gather that neither dramatist found the story, in its Italian version, challenging material, and La Fontaine appears to have been revolted by it.⁶⁰ We might suppose that, if Monteverdi's Orfeo, rather than Rossi's, had been imported, Orpheus might have found his way on to the French classical stage. As it happened, he joined company with Mezzetin, Arlequin and

⁵⁸Orphée appears as a character in Corneille's La Toison D'Or, and is mentioned by the heroine in Medée (II,2,440). In Poésies Diverses 26, the soul of Orphée is said to be reincarnated in the French poet.

⁵⁹See Henry Carrington Lancaster, French Tragedy (Baltimore, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 163, note 35. For other references to Orpheus in Racine, see La Renommée aux Muses 81-2; Le Banquet de Platon.

⁶⁰In Poésies Diverse 12, "Sur L'Opera". For other references to Orpheus in La Fontaine, see Poésies 21, 57-70; Lettres 23; Le Songe de Vaux IV; Contes III,13,194. It is perhaps significant that in all her letters Mme. de Sévigné alludes only once to Orpheus, and then to the dismemberment: 774 "A Madame de Grignan" (according to the index in the edition of M. Monmerqué, Paris, 1862).

Columbine for a romp through Hades.⁶¹ A serious Orphée by La Grange-Chancel (pub. 1727), written for the marriage of Louis XV, never saw a single performance; Orphée was, after all, a clown.

We may now turn from Orphée to the flamboyant Renaissance Orfeo.

The Renaissance was born in Italy, and Italian literature is the key to understanding it. A discussion of the period should begin with Petrarch and Boccaccio, but Italy has been reserved for the end of this chapter because its Orpheus has had the greatest influence on later ages.

The exciting discoveries of Poggio Bracciolini and other manuscript-finders unearthed no really new Orphean literature; we have seen that the classic treatments of the myth were accessible to the Middle Ages. The Italian Orfeo is the hero of Virgil and Ovid clothed in the new robes of

⁶¹E.g., in Regnard's La Descente de Mezzetin aux Enfers (1689), in which Mezzetin seeks Columbine in Hades; Orpheus is present and speaks in Italian. See Lancaster, A History of French Dramatic Literature, part 4, (Baltimore, 1960), pp. 650-1. An anonymous farce, Orphée ou Arlequin aux enfers, appeared in 1711.

Renaissance humanism; he is a blood-brother to the Orpheus of Francis Bacon and John Milton. As the classic embodiment of art, music, wisdom and human achievement, as a new mystery beyond the pale of medieval Christianity, Orfeo became to Italy "the herald of the Renaissance",⁶² "the great protagonist of this new reign of culture".⁶³ The foremost historian of Italian letters explains why Orpheus appealed to the humanists: "He was the founder of the humanities, for he softened the natures of beasts and men with the sound of his lyre, he softened the heart of Death and threw his enchantment over Hell; he was the triumph of art and culture over the rude instincts of Nature. And the triumph was made holy by martyrdom, when Orpheus was torn to pieces by the bacchantes in their drunken fury, for having violated the laws of Nature. And now, after the long, dark night of the second barbarism, Orpheus was reborn amid the festivals of the new civilization, and inaugurated the reign of the humanities, or to put it better, of humanism. This was the mystery of the century, the ideal of the Renaissance".⁶⁴ In Italy as in England it is the triumphant Orpheus that the Renaissance adopts: De Sanctis alludes to the story of the descent only briefly, and never hints that it is a story of failure and

⁶² Francesco de Sanctis, History of Italian Literature tr. Joan Redfern (New York, 1931), vol. 1, p. 384.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 382.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

tragedy.

Yet the Italians, with their ingrained mystical sense and their passionate love of music, were not to neglect this part of the myth, and in fact it gained in Italy the popularity it lost in England.

We know we have passed from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance when Petrarch's vision of the dead, unlike Dante's, encompasses the mythical Orpheus:

Mentre io volgeva gli occhi in ogni parte
s' i' ne vedessi alcun di chiara fama
o per antiche o per moderne carte,
vidi colui che sola Euridice ama,
e lei segue all'inferno, e per lei morto,
con la lingua già fredda anco la chiama
(Trionfo d'Amore IV,10-5).⁶⁵

With Boccaccio's Amorosa Visione we are still farther into the Renaissance. This is yet another vision of the afterlife - but now the supernatural is nowhere in evidence; all is completely human. With Dante, Orpheus was a prophet in Limbo; with Petrarch he was the mythical figure, but part of a world of shadows; in Boccaccio's Visione⁶⁶ he is completely alive, singing the praises of love. Boccaccio alludes to the myth several times: in the early Filocolo,⁶⁷ a debate on questions of love; in the

⁶⁵For other references to Orpheus in Petrarch, see Africa V, 675-8; Secretum; De Rebus Familiaribus I,9; Eclogue I,123; Rime 28,68; 187,9; 332,51-2.

⁶⁶XXIII,4-30.

⁶⁷Book 4. See p. 873 in vol. 8 of La Letteratura Italiana, ed. E. Bianci et al. (Milan, n.d.).

Fiammetta⁶⁸ where the heroine compares her love pangs to Eurydice's snake-bite, and in the Latin Carmina.⁶⁹ The predominant Ovidian tone is especially notable in the opening lines of the Ninfale d'Ameto, where the story is used thus:

Quella virtù, che già l'ardito Orfeo
mosse a cercar le case di Plutone,
allor che forse lieta gli rendeo
la cercata Euridice a condizione,
e dal suon vinto dell' arguto legno
e dalla nota della sua canzone,
per forza tira il mio debole ingegno
a cantar le tue lode, o Citerea,
insieme con le forze del tuo regno (Proemio, 1-9).

Boccaccio the scholar knows the Orphic writings.⁷⁰ But strange to say, the folk-tale element of Orpheus' myth does not turn up in the Decameron, and is conspicuously absent from the subject material of the Italian novelle.⁷¹

The pastoral poets represent Orpheus as the ideal shepherd. But the artifices of Sannazaro⁷² and Boiardo⁷³ do not prepare us for the wonder that is Poliziano's Orfeo.

⁶⁸Book 1. See p. 1064, ibid.

⁶⁹Carmina quae supersunt II, 118.

⁷⁰De Gen. Deorum XIV, 8.

⁷¹According to D.P. Rotunda, Motif-Index of the Italian Novella in Prose (Bloomington, 1942).

⁷²Orpheus is mentioned in Egloga XI, 74.

⁷³Ecloga X, in praise of the Duke of Calabria, is supposed to be spoken by Orpheus.

In 1472 Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga returned to Mantua after a prolonged absence, and to mark the occasion an entertainment was given - the Favola d'Orfeo. The text was by Angelo Ambrogini of Montepulciano, known as Angiolo Poloziano, or Politian. Only seventeen years of age at the time, Politian wrote the Orfeo in two days and, by his own admission, "in the midst of continuous disturbances, and in vulgar style so that it might be better understood by the spectators."⁷⁴

From what we know of him, young Politian, the protégé of Lorenzo de' Medici, was totally devoid of any religious or moral feeling. His professed religion was humanism. "The world of antiquity took easy possession of a soul from which every remainder of the Middle Ages had completely vanished. . .Theology, scholasticism, symbolism, the Middle Ages with their forms and their content...was a world completely extraneous to his culture and his feeling; he saw it as barbarism."⁷⁵ A humanist by vocation, he became in time a profound scholar, an eminent teacher and the author of many graceful works in Greek and Latin. In short, he epitomized the spirit of his age.

The spectators at the Orfeo were cut from a similar pattern; they were a new kind of audience. In the past, drama

⁷⁴Louis E. Lord, A Translation of the Orpheus of Angelo Politian (Oxford, 1931), p. 71.

⁷⁵De Sanctis, op. cit., p. 381.

in Europe had always been religious in character: the liturgical plays of the early Middle Ages stemmed from the dramatic element of a rich ceremonial, and appealed vividly to a living faith; the sacre rappresentazioni of later times were more complex, musically and scenically, and much more sophisticated, but the audience they reached was still attuned to the realities of mysticism and asceticism. But by Politian's day all this was changing. The forms of religious drama still existed, but the vitality had gone out of them. The fifteenth-century oligarch, a proud citizen of a flourishing, self-contained city-state, had little interest in the prophets of the Old and the saints of the New Testament. He lacked a sense of the terrible, the spiritual, one might almost say of the dramatic. His ideal world was the world of the Theocritean idyll, for therein were combined the classicism and sensuality which were the two polar forces of the new spirit.

For such an audience Politian was commissioned to compose a new entertainment. It was a crucial moment in the history of the drama. Deprived of its religious raison d'être, drama might have died a lingering death; the new audience, brilliant but superficial, might have hastened its demise. It was at this moment that Politian saved the drama by effectively secularizing it. He found a subject in pagan mythology which fitted neatly into the framework of the sacra rappresentazione but had rich symbolic significance for the new age: Orpheus the lover who confronted the supernatural,

Orpheus the martyr, was also Orpheus the civilizer, the all-compelling artist, the god of the shepherd world.

It is generally reckoned Politian's great achievement that he successfully transferred the drama from the mystique to the mondain; his Orfeo is the first secular drama in a modern language. But, almost accidentally, it is still more than this. It is the prototype of a completely new art-form. And for this Politian is less responsible than the myth itself. A brief examination of the Orfeo should enable us to see the extraordinary place it holds in the history of Western culture.

The Orfeo begins with a prologue, a résumé of the story, spoken by Mercury, whose coming from heaven is seen by the shepherds as a good omen. In the opening scene, Aristaeus tells Mopsus of his passion for a nymph he has seen only yesterday for the first time. He urges Mopsus to take his pipe and accompany him as he sings to his beloved. The Orfeo then bursts into melody, a four-stanza text of the most savory Italian, plainly marked by its author as a canzona:

Udite, selve, mie dolce parole,
Poi che la ninfa mia udir non vôle (54-5).

The second scene discloses Aristaeus pursuing the maiden. Then we are shown, in Politian's words, "Orfeo, cantando sopra il monte in su la lira e' seguenti versi latini", and we hear a long Latin hymn in praise of Mantua's cardinal. A shepherd

then announces that Eurydice is dead, bitten by a serpent as she fled from Aristaeus. Orpheus sings a song of lamentation. Then we see him singing before the gates of Hades:

Pietà, pietà! del misero amatore
Pietà vi prenda, o spiriti infernali.
Qua giù m'ha scorto solamente Amore;
Volato son qua giù con le sue ali (214-7).

It is the finest single moment of the play, when the dramatic end is served by the lyric element. Minos advises Pluto not to listen to the deceitful song, but Proserpina, delighted with the music, persuades her husband to restore Eurydice. Pluto agrees, but with the condition

Ch'ella ti segua per la cieca via,
Ma che tu mai la sua faccia non veggi
Fin che tra'vivi pervenuta sia (295-7).

On the upward journey Orpheus sings four Latin lines adapted from Ovid:

Ite triumphales circum mea tempora lauri!
Vicimus Eurydicen reddita vita mihi est.
Haec est praecipuo victoria digna triumpho:
Huc ades, o cura parte triumphae! (302-5).⁷⁶

Suddenly, Eurydice laments that his too great love has destroyed them both. She disappears, and the way back to Hades is barred by a Fury. Orpheus' lament now takes the form of a forswearing of the love of women. He launches into the praises of male companionship, counsels married men to divorce their wives and all men to flee the company of the other sex, whereupon the final catastrophe ensues, and the play ends in a bacchanale.

⁷⁶Cf. Ovid, Amores II,12,1-2,5,16.

What is this Orfeo? In its external form it is sacra rappresentazione, with the old meter - the ottava, and the old features - the angel-messenger, the shepherd prologue, heaven opening, hell gaping, the hero martyred. But all this is secularized. "Instead of kneeling in saintly prayer, as would the hero of a mystery, Orpheus appears, lyre in hand, singing in Latin sapphics the praises - of the guest of the occasion."⁷⁷ Primarily, the Orfeo is secular drama. It is hardly great drama, and Politian himself would be the last to call it tragedy. He regarded it as inferior to his Greek and Latin writings, as a child he would have preferred to expose.⁷⁸ Yet in glorifying man in his role of artist, man tragic in his living, loving and dying, Politian provided the Renaissance in Italy with a rich symbol, and came closer to classic tragedy than any of his countrymen had come for centuries.

The Orfeo is most often regarded as a dramatic eclogue, and little more. This estimate hardly does it justice. It is true that Politian, to please his audience, placed his tragic Greek story in a pastoral setting; pastoral poems were to the Renaissance what romance was to the Middle Ages. But to regard the Orfeo only as a

⁷⁷Jefferson B. Fletcher, Literature of the Italian Renaissance (New York, 1934), p. 137.

⁷⁸See Politian's introduction to the Orfeo, "A Messer Carlo Canale".

pastoral is to be bewitched by the opening scenes and various bucolic elements which have clung to the myth from Virgil to Gluck. The fact is, no pastoral poem before the Orfeo had encompassed three tragic elements, embraced heaven, earth and hell in telling the story of a hero, allowed for dramatic action, bacchic dithyrambs and set musical pieces.

Is the Orfeo an opera, indeed the first opera? Its music has not survived, and we are not even sure who composed it. But this does not really matter; the Orpheus-myth demanded music, once it was put on the stage, and music that was not incidental but essential to playing out the story. The stage directions in the text plainly indicate that portions of the play were sung, and W.J. Henderson⁷⁹ detects at least four distinct musical types in what many commentators have been pleased to call a libretto. J.A. Symonds notes that the chief charm of the text lies in its musical language, its musical movement, its "limpidity of thought and feeling, in which the very words evaporate and lose themselves in floods of sound".⁸⁰

Thus, at one stroke, Politian's Orfeo secularized the drama and initiated two new art-forms. The lesser of these, the pastoral drama or dramatic eclogue, became a standard divertissement in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century

⁷⁹Some Forerunners of Italian Opera (London, 1911), p. 101.

⁸⁰Renaissance in Italy: Italian Literature (London, 1912), vol. 1, p. 360.

Italy. Tasso's Aminta and Guarini's Il Pastor Fido are the outstanding instances of this genre, which includes new Orfeos by such celebrated Italians as Ariosto and Marino. The spirit of the pastoral drama stems, however, not from the Orpheus-Eurydice story but only from a few extraneous pastoral details in Politian's Orfeo.

The greater art-form, and the true spiritual descendant of the first dramatized Orfeo, is that secular dramma per musica which allows full scope to the heroic and the tragic, which uses music to tell its story. Whether or not the Orfeo is an opera we need not discuss; to the extent that Politian depended on music to tell Orpheus' story dramatically he may be said to be the forerunner of the great operatic composers who drew their inspiration from the myth. The first operas generally recognized as such, the Euridices of Peri and Caccini and the Orfeo of Monteverdi, are more than a century later, but they return instinctively to Politian's material for their inspiration. Also significant is the fact that opera has always been secular in spirit. Sacred subjects are invariably sensationalized, sentimentalized or left to the oratorio.⁸¹

⁸¹The religious backgrounds in Verdi (Trovatore, La Forza del Destino) and the other Italians are sensational; the French (Gounod in Faust, Massenet in Le Jongleur) prefer to sentimentalize; Wagner's Parsifal is at best pseudo-religious; Moussorgsky is genuine, but hardly in the European tradition.

Opera seems to breathe the air of the secular drama introduced by Politian.

In 1494 the Orfeo was transformed into a Senecan Orphei Tragedia by Antonio Tebaldeo. It is a dramatic improvement, stressing the tragic level in Politian.⁸² We have already mentioned Ariosto and Marino. Ariosto's Orfeo ed Aristio follows Virgil, and is one of its author's minor works.⁸³ Marino's poem, one of several idilli favolosi in his Sampogna, is closer to Ovid's account, and Ovid's gay, superficial spirit as well permeates this Orfeo, with its carefree voluptuousness, conventional myth-making and fluent musical grace. This is Orfeo of the decadence.

⁸²A translation is included in Lord, op. cit., on odd-numbered pages. It was first published in 1776 by Father Ireneo Affò. Five acts are indicated; the occasional allusions in Politian, including the Latin verses in praise of Cardinal Gonzaga, are deleted; the announcement of Eurydice's death is more skillfully presented by the introduction of a new character, Mnesillus; Orpheus is given a motive for turning - uncertainty; the praise of homosexual love and the counselling of divorce are eliminated.

⁸³See also the prologue to Il Negromanto, 1-3; Satires VI, 86; Orlando Furioso XLIII, 83, 8 for other references.

Politician's symbol is so soon dissipated; Marino marks the transition, in Italy, from Renaissance to Baroque.

Orpheus' decline in literature was coincident with, and possibly caused by, his phenomenal rise as the protagonist of the dramma per musica. In the towering musical figure who spans the Renaissance and the Baroque, Claudio Monteverdi, drama was re-animated by the spirit of music, and Orpheus again was the figurehead of the movement.

But the investigation of this will require a separate chapter.

CHAPTER V

THE EVOLUTION OF AN ART-FORM

Orpheus is the most important single character in the history of opera. His story lies at the heart of the secular music-drama and might be said to constitute the operatic ideal. In Politian, Monteverdi and Gluck the myth of Orpheus seems to have suggested, evolved and perfected an art-form of its own.

If the opera did not develop immediately from Politian's Orfeo, it was not for want of any operatic germ in that work; it was because Renaissance musicians were absorbed in the musical legacy left them by the Middle Ages. Politian's era was followed by the golden age of polyphony, and it is hard to conceive of any music less suited to dramatic purposes than that of Palestrina and his contemporaries. Some attempts were made to adapt polyphony to the drama, with the actors mouthing words sung by a multi-voiced chorus in the wings. The first of these was in 1594, the very year of Palestrina's death. But no polyphony, however intense or expressive, could delineate character or develop a situation. There is no dramatic logic in any of the madrigal

comedies, and the most famous of them, Vecchi's L'Amfiparnasso (1597), was never even intended as a drama. Polyphonic music was of course successfully adapted to quasi-dramatic biblical and morality plays,¹ but to fit music into the drama something closer to ordinary speech was required.

This musico-dramatic problem lies between the two Orfeos of Politian and Monteverdi. The solution came in two Euridices and, strangely enough, from men who were, strictly speaking, neither musicians nor dramatists, but classical enthusiasts - a group of Florentine scholars called the Camerata (from the vaulted hall in the house of Giovanni Bardi, where they held their meetings). Among their number were the poets Marino, Chiabrera and Rinuccini and the musical theoretician Vincenzo Galilei (father of the astronomer), whose Dialogo della Musica Antica e della Moderna (1581) provided a partial summary of ancient musical theory.² Musicians appear to have shown

¹E.g., the works written by Palestrina and others for the oratory of St. Philip Neri's hospital of San Girolamo della Carità, and the Rappresentazione dell' Anima e del Corpo of Emilio de' Cavalieri.

²This treatise contained, as examples of Greek music, the four hymns ascribed to Mesomedes.

little interest in Galilei's researches, but the poets and scholars of the Camerata were convinced that something beautiful could be built on the ideal, if not on the actual remains, of Greek music. The grandeur of the legendary Greek musicians - Orpheus and Amphion and Terpander, not to mention Apollo himself, the high regard and deep concern for music expressed by Plato and Aristotle, above all the indisputable fact that Greek lyrics and certainly a large part of Greek tragedy were sung - all this conspired to turn the classicizing spirit of humanism towards music as, earlier, it had turned to art and literature.

The Camerata drew their principles from what Galilei told them, rightly or wrongly, about Greek tragedy - that it consisted of monophonic music throughout, with instrumental accompaniment, that polyphonic music was alien to the spirit and the usage of the Greeks. Bardi persuaded an eminent singer in the group, Jacopo Peri, to try his hand at a new style of musical composition based on Galilei's tenets, and enlisted the services of the court Poet, Ottavio Rinuccini, for the words. The experiment was unveiled in 1594 - not Oedipus or Electra or Orestes, but Daphne. The audience was delighted at what it thought to be an authentic Greek tragedy, and the piece was repeated on several occasions. But Ovid's story was neither tragic nor dramatic, and offered little scope for musical expression. The music has been lost.

Rinuccini decided upon a more musical subject for his next libretto. Almost certainly, he remembered Politian: the new work was called Euridice. The poem is "dramatic poetry of the first water, written in a glorious language",³ and despite the fact that its prologue is spoken by Tragedy, its Orfeo is the triumphant figure of the Renaissance: the power of his music silences all opposition; there is no second loss of Eurydice. Rinuccini's poem was twice set to music. Peri's⁴ was performed in 1600, at the Pitti Palace, to celebrate the marriage, by proxy, of Henry IV of France and Maria de' Medici. Rubens was in attendance, and the composer himself sang the role of Orpheus. In general it can be said that Peri's simple approach stressed the drama rather than the music. Caccini, the father of the first prima donna, emphasized the musical line in his rival version, performed in 1602. Thus do the two Euridices mark the perennial problem of operatic composition - the relative importance of the music and the drama.

So it was that a group of amateurs, using the Orpheus-myth, restored to the drama the musical style that was essential to the creation of opera. But they were men

³Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization (New York, 1941), p. 338.

⁴A few portions of Peri's Euridice were certainly composed by Caccini. See Donald Grout, A Short History of Opera (New York, 1947), vol. 1, p. 51.

of talent rather than of genius. The monodic declamation and the musically jejune "choral odes" must have seemed painfully thin to audiences who could hear Vittoria if they went to Church. The two Euridices were neither Greek tragedy nor opera; they were only experiments, wrong-headed attempts which, rightly and fortunately for opera, restored monophonic music to the drama.

At this point a genius appeared, "one of those extraordinary individuals who create and organize a new form of art, and whose advent into the domain of thought is analogous to the appearance of a superior species in nature, after a series of unfruitful attempts."⁵ The madrigalist Claudio Monteverdi was encouraged by Vincenzo Gonzaga to try his hand at the new music-drama. He came to it unfettered by any half-understood theories of antiquity, and by unaided artistic sense achieved the Aristotelian ideal of an art-form in which all elements converge on a single purpose. Again the subject was Orfeo, produced in 1607 in Mantua, where the myth had first been dramatised over a century before. Monteverdi's work proved a milestone in the history of music, "the first music-drama, in which the poetic words, the dramatic action and the musical construction are held in creative equilibrium".⁶

⁵Lang, op. cit., p. 339.

⁶Hans Ferdinand Redlich, Claudio Monteverdi, tr. Kathleen Dale (Oxford, 1952), p. 95.

The libretto for the Orfeo was written by Alessandro Striggio, son of a famous madrigalist. It begins with a prologue, sung by Music herself:

Io la Musica son, ch'ai dolci accenti
so far tranquillo ogni turbato core,
Ed or di nobil' ira ed or d'amore
posso infiammar le più gelate mente.

The first of the five acts is a scene of pastoral rejoicing at the marriage of Orfeo and Euridice; in the second act, a messenger tells of the bride's death, and Orfeo resolves to seek her below in the Inferno; in the great third act he confronts Charon, lulls him to sleep and crosses the Styx alone, thrice repeating the impressive line

rendetemi il mio ben, tartarei numi;

the fourth act is set in Hades, where Proserpina prevails upon Pluto to restore Euridice, and where Orfeo loses her, suddenly distracted by a Virgilian fragor; in the final act, Apollo pities Orfeo's grief and takes him to his apotheosis among the stars.⁷

⁷Striggio originally wrote a scene in which the Bacchantes appear but do not dismember Orfeo. Monteverdi understandably objected to this concession to courtly taste and suggested the present ending, which is not entirely satisfactory but is perhaps better suited to his talents than a bacchanale would have been. See Joseph Kerman, Opera as Drama (New York, 1957), p. 37.

A good many composers have derived inspiration from their libretto. In the Orfeo it is more than this. It is a case of the libretto suggesting the groundwork for opera itself. Monteverdi recognized that, if Orpheus' story was to be dramatized at all, it would require monophonic solo pieces. The Camerata were correct in this particular, though for the wrong reason. It was not the historical fact that Greek tragedy had been sung, but the present dramatic exigency that his Orpheus must sing that prompted him to deal with the action of the play in single vocal lines rather than in the polyphonic writing that was his specialty. Moreover, if Orpheus is an artist capable of moving hell, a lover grieved enough to descend there, he must express himself in a more compelling strains than the bloodless, pseudo-Greek phrases of the Camerata experiments; there must be a musical correspondence to the poetic "affetto". Monteverdi attacked this problem directly, and "with a perfect genius for declamation"⁸ evolved a marvellously expressive vocal line approximating human speech but with the intensity only music can provide. Again, if Orpheus must react to emotional crises - and Striggio tries to provide one for each of the five acts - he must express himself at length

⁸Joseph Kerman, op. cit., p. 30. The vocal line is well illustrated in Chapter I, entitled "Orpheus: the Neoclassic Vision".

and with greater musical complexity. Monteverdi developed a sort of aria for this - an accompanied strophic song, of which Orfeo's "Possente Spirto" is only the best-known example.

This new Orfeo is more than an adaptation and extension of the means used by Peri and Caccini, however. Monteverdi blended the full resources of a century of Renaissance music in telling of Orpheus and Eurydice. The story begins in Arcadia: let there be the music of the pastorale, as old as Politian's play; Orpheus descends to the underworld: let the instrumentation be ecclesiastical and solemn, as in the morality plays; the chorus comments on Orpheus' joy and sorrow, his weakness and his final apotheosis: let there be the flaming trumpets of the trionfi and tornei, the tender melody of the intermedia, the splendor of the mascherata, and above all the intense expressiveness of the madrigale; Orpheus' story is the glorification of music, and Musica herself mounts the stage: let her pervading influence be expressed by repeating her ritornello after the crucial moments in the action.

Thus, Monteverdi's Orfeo synthesizes all the musical forms, from the tourney to the Florentine "Greek tragedies", which could contribute to the effective dramatization of Orpheus' story. Opera has not changed, fundamentally, since the Orfeo. Monteverdi's work contains in embryonic form the major traditions that still govern operatic

composition - aria, recitative, musical characterization, choral and dance interludes, continuity by leitmotif.

It is "a musical cosmos which peers, Janus-like, into the past of the 'Intermedium' as well as into the future of the Gluck-Wagnerian 'Birth of the drama from the spirit of music'." ⁹

The fact that tends to be overlooked in any discussion of this artistic miracle is that it was suggested and encompassed by the Orpheus-myth, the pregnant material already used in every "operatic" experiment. Always allowing for Monteverdi's genius, it is difficult to see how opera could have evolved from the courtly entertainments of the Renaissance unless Orpheus were chosen as the subject of the drama. Other stories, most of them from Greek antiquity, were presented, and often - as tragedies with incidental music, as mimes, masques, pastorals and ballets. But it was Orpheus' story effected the new art-form that was in the making; it required that music be put in the mouth of its hero in order for the drama to be enacted. It was essentially, even quintessentially, an operatic story: the ideal libretto provides a maximum of emotionally charged situations which enable the characters to express themselves in song, and the Orpheus-myth encompasses three tragic incidents, each of which calls forth a song from its

⁹Redlich, op. cit., p. 97.

hero. It has, in fact, remained the classic story for dramatic presentation through music, and over fifty different operatic treatments of it followed upon Monteverdi's classic.

With the birth of opera, the Orpheus-symbol changes. Orfeo is now an operatic hero. In Striggio's prologue we realize we are no longer in the Renaissance tradition, for it is not Tragedia who addresses us; it is Musica. This is not to be Greek tragedy; it is music - drama. The Renaissance Orpheus left the scene with Tragedia, the muse who had introduced, for the scholars of the Camerata, a hero too wise, too noble to lose Eurydice a second time. The new Orpheus who appears in the Baroque, the Enlightenment and the Romantic age is not a triumphant symbol of the civilizing wisdom of man; he is Monteverdi's passionate, fallible hero, inconceivable apart from his music, glorious in his attempt but tragically wanting in self-mastery. At the close of Act III of the Orfeo, the chorus sing that every human attempt is worthwhile:

Nulla impresa per uom si tenta invano,
 Nè contro a lui piu sa natura armarse,
 Ei de l'instabil piano, arò gl'ondosi campi,
 e'l seme sparse
 Di sue fatiche, ond' aurea messe accolse.

Then, after Act IV, we are told that a man must first master himself:

Orfeo vinse l'Inferno e vinto poi
 Fu dagli affetti suoi.
 Degno d'eterna gloria
 Fia sol colui ch'avrà di sè vittoria.

With Monteverdi "the approach to the human soul is not through classical diction but through sympathy; he tarried at the manifestations of human sorrow because in his eyes sorrow and passion are the real revelations of man. He felt that only the sufferings and indomitable passions of man make him what he is: a tragic being who can live on earth, fighting and falling heroically. 'Arianna affected people because she was a woman, and Orpheus because he was simply a man,' writes Monteverdi in one of his letters (December, 1616); but to make it possible for them to be man and woman, the master reveals them in the throes of passion. Upon hearing the message announcing the death of Euridice the whole world collapses about Orpheus. . . Peri and Caccini did not even dream of such accents, while we are still living on the heritage of the dramatic breath of the Mantuan musician, who, with Rembrandt, was the great baroque poet of the secret depths of the human soul."¹⁰

In the many serious and comic versions that followed Monteverdi, Orpheus is thoroughly human, a creature of passion. And Eurydice at last comes into her own. Her role is enlarged until poets and musicians come to tell the entire story from her point of view. The Culex will prove, in the Romantic era, the spiritual ancestor of much of the Orphean literature.

¹⁰Lang, op. cit., pp. 341-2.

Even when, with Monteverdi, the opera was solidly established as an art-form, and musical speech became credible in the mouths of Ariadne and Adonis, Jason and Ulysses, composers continued to return to Orpheus, as to a source, for inspiration. Belli's Orfeo, produced in Florence in 1616, had a libretto by one of the Camerata, the Italian Ronsard, Gabriello Chiabrera, while August Buchner supplied Heinrich Schütz with a poetic text entitled Orpheus (1638), but the music has, unfortunately, been lost. By the end of the century there were new Italian Orfeos¹¹ in Mantua (Ferrari, 1607) Rome (Landi, 1619), Vicenza (anon., 1658), Venice (Sartorio, 1672), Bologna (Sartorio, revised, 1695). Orpheus introduced opera to France, where Rossi's L'Orfeo was produced in Paris as Le Mariage d'Orphée et Euridice (1647). It was an auspicious beginning, setting the tone for centuries of Parisian opera. The production cost over 400,000 livres, lasted over six hours. The book, by Francesco Buti, is a kaleidoscope of serious and comic episodes, and Rossi's score is equally varied. But the overwhelming feature, in 1647, was the elaborate stage machinery designed by Giacomo Torelli. It was the wonder of its day, the talk of the court and the despair of the literary circles. Rossi's opera was thus the first of the many "machine plays" of the French

¹¹For the remainder of the chapter, works given only passing mention are cited by composer and date. For the sources, see pp. 269-71.

theater, and Orpheus' name, in France, England¹² and elsewhere, became associated with elaborate, Italianate stagecraft while his literary prestige dwindled.

Le Mariage was such a sensation in Paris that a play by Chapoton, La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers, was hastily equipped with music and mounted on a grand scale to compete with it. Lully's Orphée, one of his lesser works, followed in 1690.

Orpheus aus Thracien (Loewe, 1659) brought the new Orpheus to Germany, where translations of Italian works (Sartorio, 1690) as well as original German operas (Keiser, 1698, rev. 1702) proved popular. Vienna heard La Lira d'Orfeo (Draghi, 1683), and by the end of the century it appears that London had seen its first English Orpheus (Goodson, 1698).

The earliest of these operas were occasional pieces, composed for the courts of princes. But comic episodes were introduced early by Landi, the first composer to write his own libretto, and after public opera-houses were built, the dilettante interest gave way to prosperous commercial enterprise. Orpheus rode the crest of this wave of popularity, though in time Iphigeneia and Hercules

¹²E.g., Orpheus: The description of the great machines of the Descent of Orpheus into Hell, presented by a French company at the Cockpit in Drury Lane in 1661.

proved to be even more popular figures. Three of the foremost composers of the time, Charpentier, Rameau and Pergolesi, preferred to treat the Orpheus-myth in cantata form.

In the eighteenth century, Orpheus-operas often appeared as single musical pieces in larger settings - in the ballet Le Carneval de Venise presented in Amsterdam in 1699; in the English tragicomedy Solon (pub. 1705); in the French divertissement Le Triomphe de l'Harmonie (1737), in the David Garrick farce called A Peep Behind the Curtain (1767). By this time the myth became the classic vehicle for ridiculing opera - as in the French Roger-Boutons et Javotte (1775) and Le Petit Orphée (1795), the German Singspiel Orpheus (1775), the Danish Michel og Malene (1789), the Viennese So Geht Es In Olympus Zu (1813). A singspiel, Orpheus, with music by Salomon Seeman, appeared in Riga in 1734, and an Orpheus-pasticcio with airs from various composers adapted to a text by Rolli in London in 1736.

But serious operatic treatments of the myth continued, though we care little about them today - in Vienna

(Fux, 1715), London (Lampe, 1740),¹³ Berlin (Graun, 1752), Paris (Dauvergne, pub. 1770), Munich (Tozzi, 1775), Venice (Bertoni, 1776), Copenhagen (Naumann, 1786), Hamburg (Dittersdorf, 1788), Parma (Päer, 1791) and Brunswick (Bachmann, 1798). In some cities these works were succeeded by still more operas on Orpheus - Vienna (Wagenseil, 1740 Ditters, 1787, and Kanne, ca. 1810), London (Gulielmi, 1780), Berlin (Benda, 1785) and Munich (Cannabich, 1802). Other treatments appeared in Germany (Christian Bach, 1770, Asplmayr, 1780 and Dorfte-Hülshoff, 1791) and Italy (Lamberti, c. 1800).

Only two Orfeos of this opera-mad century deserve special mention, one because of the eminence of its composer, the other because it demonstrates anew that the myth of Orpheus is the operatic ideal. The first is the Orfeo ed Euridice of Franz Joseph Haydn, one of that master's few unsuccessful works. Composed in 1791, revised in 1805, it waited till 1951 for its first performance. Much of its original music was reworked by Haydn into other works. The

¹³The libretto, by Lewis Theobald, is outlined in Wirl, op. cit., pp. 74-5. It is notable for introducing Rhodope, a Thracian Queen in love with Orpheus. It is she who conjures up the snake to kill Eurydice.

other is, of course, Orfeo ed Euridice (1762), by Christoph Willibald von Gluck - a vast forward stride, from the machine-made and ephemeral Baroque opera to opera as we know it in the repertory theaters today. After Politian and Monteverdi it is the third landmark in operatic history; thus does the music-drama show again and again its indebtedness to Orpheus by turning to his myth at every major crisis.

Gluck himself was a product of the seventeenth century opera, a mammoth industry comparable only to that of the movies of today. Its music was written for the virtuoso singer - cliché-ridden, ornamental, often with no bearing on the drama or situation; its complicated libretti were so poetically finished¹⁴ that they failed to communicate anything of the essence of drama, and any hack musician could set them.¹⁵ Gluck was no hack, but as a composer he had severe limitations. To his advantage, however, was his keen dramatic sense, as well as his growing conception of the inter-relationship of composer, poet and performers in the operatic scheme. Most important of all, he was in touch with the intellectual currents of his day - with the French encyclopedists; with the ideas of Rousseau, especially the

¹⁴Metastasio's libretti are still studied by all serious students of Italian literature.

¹⁵Handel's famous judgment on Gluck was "He knows no more counterpoint than my cook".

desire for a natural expression of human feeling; with Winckelmann, in his return to ancient Greece to find the formative impulse for true artistic expression. By Gluck's day the formal order of the Baroque had declined in the face of the rationalism of Voltaire, and survived only in the capriciousness of the Rococo. New order and new feeling were beginning to emerge in the stripping away of ornament and the return to simplicity. Gluck represents this in music, and Orpheus is again the figurehead.

After composing several conventional operas with only mediocre success, Gluck came under the influence of the new artistic trend in the writings of the philosopher Francesco Algarotti and in the person of a literary adventurer named Raniero Calzabigi, who was deeply convinced of everything Algarotti had to say. Gluck and Calzabigi tested the new ideas in their Orfeo. Never was an opera chosen with such care, and mapped out along such consciously idealistic lines. Both were convinced that the drama must come first, that the music was only one of the means through which the drama was to be realized. Gluck even claimed that in composing it, he tried to forget he was a musician. He saturated himself in the Orpheus-story, reduced by Calzabigi to its simplest essence, to three characters in a series of highly charged situations.

In Act I Orfeo and the chorus mourn at the grave of Euridice. Amor appears to him and announces that the gods of

the underworld have been moved by his song, and will allow him to descend and reclaim Eurydice, on condition that he does not look upon her until he reaches the light. Act II is comprised of two underworld scenes: Orfeo silences the furies with his song, and then enters the Elysian fields (Che puro ciel), where Euridice is restored to him. In Act III, Euridice, following after Orfeo, complains that he does not look at her. Orfeo turns to console her, and she sinks lifeless to the ground. He sings of his new sorrow (Che farò senza Euridice), and again the gods are moved. Amor returns to restore Euridice to life, and the opera concludes with festivities in the temple of the god.

As the Orfeo was commissioned for the court of Maria Theresa, the libretto makes some unfortunate concessions to Rococo taste: for the Hermes of the Attic relief, a coloratura Cupid is substituted; a happy ending is tacked on; Gluck writes pretty music for the Watteau-Fragonard finale, and begins the work with a skimpy overture. But the rest is worthy of Winckelmann and the new artistic creed. Always the simplest musical means are used; ornament is ruthlessly stripped away; arias are reduced to a formal simplicity, a minimum of harmony. We hear only what the situation demands: in the opening chorus, Orfeo's grief is expressed more memorably than it has ever been before or since, by the one word, "Euridice!", thrice repeated and tearing through the texture of the choral music. This simplicity, this deliberate

austerity result in a work of extraordinary power, and neither Gluck nor Calzabigi nor even the ideals of the period quite account for it. Somehow, a spell is cast in which Gluck's music, for all its technical inadequacies, appears to be the very essence of music, and Calzabigi's characters, though they are poorly-motivated and generalized types, seem "marble statues miraculously endowed with life and motion".¹⁶ One concludes that the spell is cast by the pervading presence of the myth itself, which remains the pattern and the inspiration for operatic composition. Gluck and Calzabigi approached it with a feeling for its values, and it seems to have effected of itself the reform that was sought. Gluck never set up any canons of operatic composition, and his musical techniques have not had great influence; it is his ideal that has lasted. His classic statement:

I endeavored to reduce music to its proper function, that of seconding poetry by enforcing the expression of the sentiment, and the interest of the situations, without interrupting the action, or weakening it by superfluous ornament.¹⁷

only shows that it was the text that was uppermost in his mind, and in his revolutionary work this text was fashioned from the myth of Orpheus, the patron of the opera since 1472.

¹⁶Edward J. Dent, Opera (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1940), p. 46.

¹⁷From the preface to Alceste, quoted in Lang, op. cit., p. 557.

Ironically enough, Gluck's reforms eventually brought to an end the vogue for operas on classical subjects, for these were associated with the artifices of the declining Baroque. Haydn's Orfeo failed not only because its composer's genius did not extend to the stage but because by the turn of the century opere serie were hopelessly dated. We look in vain for Orfeos in the nineteenth century. There are fragments in the British Museum of an undistinguished Orpheus with words by the Scot, John Galt (1814),¹⁸ but before long English operatic creativity ground to a halt. Italian opera needed more melodrama than the Orpheus-myth could provide; the French turned to historical pageants; Germany's great Romanticists touched on the themes of the myth - the all-conquering power of music, the renunciation implicit in love, the priority of death over life - but Wagner found these Orphean, essentially operatic, themes in German mythology: Tannhäuser is the minstrel who descends to the court of Venus; Elsa is the inquisitive victim undone by a condition put on her love; death and love are one for Tristan and Isolde. Wagner seems to have sensed that these stories were pregnant with music and drama. Almost instinctively, the young Wagner chose as his first operatic subject an Orpheus-story in German folklore - Die Feen. But Orpheus'

¹⁸ Summarized in Wirl, op. cit., p. 82.

presence pervades his work more deeply still. Wagner, like Gluck, was a reformer who found inspiration, if not material, in the spirit of Greece. In his operatic apologia, Orpheus is reincarnated, both in the young knight Walther, who must win over by his song the infernal pedants of his day and rescue from them the captive Eva, and again in Hans Sachs, who must renounce his own love of Eva before he can win the true reward of his art. The whole conception of Die Meistersinger is like a medieval allegory of the Orpheus-myth.¹⁹

The Romantic programmists did not neglect Orpheus. But his influence flickers only fitfully in Liszt's symphonic poem Orpheus (1856); he seems to be more alive, taming the beasts, in the second movement of Beethoven's fourth piano concerto, though the "programme" here is not Beethoven's.²⁰

If serious opera was out of sympathy with Greek myths in the nineteenth century, operetta still found in Orpheus' story excellent material for musical satire. Orpheus in Dorfe by Karl Conradin, appeared in Vienna in 1867. A much more famous example, however, is Orphée aux

¹⁹In this connection, see Kerman, op. cit., pp. 48-9.

²⁰More recent symphonic poems on Orpheus are those of Conrad Ansorge (Orpheus, 1893), Jean Louis Martinet (Orphée, 1950), and Alan Hovhaness (Meditation on Orpheus, 1959).

Enfers, in which Jacques Offenbach and his librettists Halévy and Cremieux brilliantly ridiculed various levels of Parisian society in 1858. Offenbach's Orpheus is a dull conservatory musician, and Eurydice gladly forsakes him when advances are made by Aristaeus, who, it seems, is actually Pluto in disguise. Both Pluto and Jupiter show more interest in the stolen Eurydice than does her husband, who is driven to seek her in Hades only by the promptings of Public Opinion - a curious reincarnation of the Amor of Gluck and the Hermes of the Attic relief. This Orphée is a landmark in its own way: it established the genre of the Offenbachiade, and became "a token, a portent of the times"²¹ - a controversial indictment of the Second Empire which was the more devastating for its obvious appeal to Parisians of all social levels, each of which took it as a satire on the others.

In the present century there is a new interest in Orpheus, for composers are again seeking a new approach to opera. Politian's Orfeo was set to music by Alfredo Casella in Venice in 1932, and the enfant terrible of contemporary German opera has reworked Monteverdi's Orfeo

²¹S. Kracauer, Orpheus in Paris (New York, 1938), p. 182. Offenbach reduced his satire to musical pantomime in a second Orphée in 1874.

three times - in 1925, in 1931 and again in 1941 in a transcription so free, so modern in its harmony and instrumentation that it has come to be known as Orff's Orfeo. Monteverdi's work has served Orff as a kind of exercise for his ideas for a new reform in the musical theatre.

Other new operas on the myth are the dissonant Orpheus und Eurydice of Křenek and the Malheurs d'Orphée of Milhaud, both produced in 1926, the Orfeo of Vittorio Rieti (1928), the scenic oratorio Der Tod des Orpheus, by Hellmuth Wolff (1948), and the new (1955) Orphée of Hans Haug, an eclectic offering based on Politian, with excerpts from Ovid sung in Latin by a chorus in the orchestra pit.²² Orpheus appears as a character in another experiment, Malapiero's Orfeide (1915). Roger-Ducasse's Orphée (1914) is a "mimodrame lyrique"; the recent Orpheus und Eurydike of Henk Badings (1943) is a "choreographic drama" with a text; a much better-known ballet-drama (without text) is Stravinsky's avant-garde Orpheus (1947). In still another ballet, Hilding Rosenberg's, Orfeus I Stan, the statue of Orpheus outside the concert hall at Stockholm comes to life, and looks for Eurydice among the other statues in the city.

While none of these twentieth century works has achieved permanent stature, it is significant that, in a

²²Reviewed in Opera 6 (1955), pp. 528-9.

transitional period in the music-drama, recourse is had once more to Orpheus, either by fresh approaches or by a return to Politian and Monteverdi.

It should be said, finally, that Mozart incorporated Orpheus into his "amalgam of all musical civilizations."²³ Amid the fantastic assortment of Weltmärchen carelessly assembled by Schikaneder but wonderfully unified by Mozart, Orpheus, in the person of Prince Tamino, again plays and sings for the beasts (Act 1, no. 8) and escorts his Eurydice, now the Princess Pamina, through the inferno of fire and water, playing all the while on his Zauberflöte (Act 2, no. 21). This is his most curious operatic reincarnation, but it is certainly the greatest of them all.

²³Lang, op. cit., p. 645. This Orpheus-theme comes from the Abbé Tessaron's novel Sethos. See Paul Nettl, Mozart and Masonry (New York, 1957), p. 78.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

Orpheus was for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries one of the great writers of antiquity, and in Germany at least he was one of the sources of Romanticism: Goethe, Herder, Schlegel and others were steeped in the Orphic writings. At the same time, poets were reacting against the abuse of classical allusions, and Macaulay, writing in 1842, decries "Orpheus, Elysium and Acheron...and all the other frippery which, like a robe tossed by a proud beauty to her waiting-woman, has long been contemptuously abandoned by genius to mediocrity".¹

Thus there seemed to be two distinct Orpheuses - the Orphic poet, who was seen as an historical figure of rare mystical and poetic insight, and the mythological character, of small consequence, who flourished only on the musical stage.

But Gluck's masterpiece had associated this second Orpheus with the Romantic ideal, and gradually, through the periods of Revolution and Romanticism, there is an increasing if not always fully conscious tendency to invest the mythical Orpheus with the power and stature of the mystical one. In our

¹Frederick the Great, in Works, ed. Lady Trevelyan (London, 1879), vol. 6, p. 697.

own day, this Orpheus-symbol has come to its full flower - in the French symbolists and especially in Rilke.

The great cultural fact of the eighteenth century is the rebirth of the classic ideal in German genius, effected most obviously by Winckelmann's researches into classical art, by Lessing's Laocoön and by the translations of Johann Voss. This was less a Romantic than a Hellenizing movement, and as Orpheus' descent was largely associated with Latin authors and Italian opera it is not surprising to find that it is given less prominence than some of the more authentically Greek myths. Thus in Lessing's Weiber sind Weiber,² in the Anhang to his Odes, in An den Herrn Marburg,³ the descending Orpheus is only the standard late-Renaissance figure. But the Orphic poet is quoted in Lessing's more serious writings, and there are several enthusiastic pages about the Orphic "Wundermann" in the Alteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts by the leader of the Sturm und Drang movement, Johann Gottfried von Herder (II,6). Klopstock, himself dubbed the German Orpheus, sees the Orphic poet as the true type of

²I,5,10-12.

³Lines 59 and 85. Orpheus is also mentioned in a poem enclosed in a letter of Feb. 22, 1759.

German art, and Friedrich Schlegel hails him as the "Vater der Poesie".⁴ When it was beginning to look as though the Romantic Orpheus was to be the Orphic writer exclusively, that the myth of the descent would be dismissed as more suited to comedy⁵ and burlesque⁶ than to serious literature, two German Romantics appeared who, consciously or not, charged the Orpheus of the descent with some of the power of the Ur-dichter by attempting through poetry to penetrate the mystery of death. These were Novalis (Friedrich Leopold, Baron von Hardenburg) and Friedrich Hölderlin. Orpheus is for them an almost subconscious symbol; today, with Rilke, he is explicit. It is impossible here to analyse the effect of the myth on their work; it may be impossible in any case. Erich Heller, speaking mainly of Nietzsche and Rilke, says, "The attempt of scholars to unravel the complex of historical reminiscences, images, insights, feelings that make up the story of Dionysus, Apollo and Orpheus in modern German literature and thought, and then to relate it to what may be the Greek reality of these divine creatures, is as heroic as

⁴Klopstock in the Ode An des Dichters Freunde (9-16), and Schlegel in Geschichte der Poesie der Griechen und Römer.

⁵E.g., the popular schauspiel, Orpheus und Eurydice, produced by J.F. Schuck in 1777, and Klinger's Orpheus, a tragicomedy with political overtones (1778, rev. 1790).

⁶E.g., the translation of Quevedo by Brockes, and a satirical poem by Salomon von Golaw, both of which are quoted in Quevedo, Obras, p. 1473.

it is doomed to failure. For a scholar's guarded steps cannot possibly keep pace with the rush and dance of the passions of the mind swirling around those names."⁷

But at least we can repeat what others⁸ have said, that Orpheus can be found in all of Novalis' work. The references are few, but the influence is unmistakeable. The teacher in Die Lehrlinge zu Sais is only Orpheus under a different name; in the Hymnen an die Nacht, a sequence of poems often compared to Dante's Commedia, Novalis' unnamed guide through the unknown, a "Sänger aus Hellas", seems to be the Orphic poet; as for the lyric novel Heinrich von Ofterdingen, one of the monuments of early Romanticism, "the invisible hero of this novel. . . is Orpheus",⁹ whose presence

⁷The Disinherited Mind: Essays in Modern German Literature and Thought (Cambridge, 1952), p. 109. A recent "attempt" is M. Kistler, Orphism and the Legend of Orpheus in 18th Century German Literature, a doctoral dissertation for the University of Illinois, 1948.

⁸Walther Rehm, Orpheus: der Dichter und die Toten (Düsseldorf, 1950), pp. 57-66, Friedrich Hiebel, Novalis (Bern, 1951), pp. 42-50 and 190-1, and Michael Hamburger, Reason and Energy: Studies in German Literature (London, 1957), esp. p. 83. The Eurydice-motif in Novalis is studied by Joachim Rosteutcher, Das Ästhetische Idol (Bern, 1956), pp. 87-98.

⁹Michael Hamburger, op. cit., p. 83.

is felt in the four "dreams" in Chapter I, which tell of a search for "die Geliebte" in strange and far-off regions; in the first of the interpolated Märchen, the story of a poet whose art wins him a princess and a kingdom, and in the main outline of the novel itself, which traces a poet's life from the first breath of inspiration to the moment when he plucks at last the unattainable Blue Flower, the symbol of wisdom, song and love. Novalis' answer to Goethe's Wilhelm Meister is thus that the ideal of poetry is found not in human experience or in philosophic discussion, but in the magical atmosphere of the Orpheus myth.

Hölderlin was the most thoroughly Greek of the German Romanticists, and by far the best scholar. Walther Rehm says that from the writing of the Hymne an den Genius Griechenlands,

Du kommst, und Orpheus Liebe
Schwebet empor zum Auge der Welt,
Und Orpheus' Liebe
Wallet nieder zum Acheron (35-8),

the figure of Orpheus never left his side, but was constantly influencing him. "Ungennant und unsichtbar bleibt der allfühlende, allliebende Sänger im Werk des Deutschen gegenwärtig."¹⁰ Certainly Hölderlin's dream-world re-creation of Hellas, his preoccupation with the power of song and the constant threat of death owe something to Orpheus:

¹⁰Op. cit., p. 159.

Die Seele, der im Leben ihr göttlich Recht
 Nicht ward, sie ruht auch drunten im Orkus nicht;
 Doch ist mir einst das Heil'ge, das am
 Herzen mir liegt, das Gedicht gelungen,

Willkommen dann, O Stille der Schattenwelt!
 (An die Parzen, 5-9).

But the investigation of this influence must be left to the psychologist.

Schiller was able to use the Orpheus-myth with more detachment, yet it embodied for him the most melancholy remembrance of antiquity - that the beauty that once was has faded, even as Eurydice's loveliness was reclaimed by Hades:

Auch das Schöne muss sterben! Das Menschen und
 Götter bezwinget,
 Nicht die eherne Brust rührt es des stygischen
 Zeus.
 Einmal nur erweichte die Liebe den Schattenbe-
 herrscher,
 Und an der Schwelle noch, streng, rief er zurück
 sein Geschenk (Nänie, 1-4).

These lines from a short poem to the goddess of funerals repeat the theme of Schiller's great Hellenic poem The Gods of Greece - that the beautiful must perish, even as the lovely Greek divinities are gone and men are left today with only the material universe.

Goethe planned to introduce Orpheus into the second part of Faust.¹¹ His hero was to visit Proserpine and obtain from her Helen of Troy. This scene was left unwritten, but

¹¹Noted in Wilmon Brewer, Ovid's Metamorphoses in European Culture (Francetown, N.H., 1941), vol. 2, p. 317.

the Helen-episodes as they stand now are vaguely Orphean in flavor - Faust visits Helen in the after-life and twice loses her; Manto, admitting Faust to Hades, cries:

Hier hab' ich einst den Orpheus eingeschwärzt;
Benutz' es besser! frisch! beherzt!
(II,2,7493-4),

and Orpheus is described by Chiron as

zart und immer still bedächt'ig,
Schlug er die Leier allen übermächtig
(II,2,7375-6).

He is also mentioned by a Fideler in the Walpurgisnachtstraum (I,4312). But the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice does not bulk large in the immensely varied classical strata in Goethe's works. Rather, Orpheus is for Goethe an historical personage, the author of hymns rich in symbols and ideas, while Eurydice is an ideal figure for art - Goethe holds the opinion that pathos is best expressed in art by depicting the transition from one state to another, and says, for example, that Eurydice would make a subject of great pathos if the twofold state, her joyful advance through the meadow and her sudden and painful death, were expressed by the flowers she lets fall, the wavering of her limbs and the hesitant fluttering of her garments.¹²

¹²See Über Laocoön, Vol. 33, p. 132 in Works, ed. E. von der Hellen and others (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1902-12).

In eighteenth-century France there is at first a similar distinction made between the serious historical Orpheus - a concern to Voltaire¹³ and Diderot - and the slightly ridiculous Orpheus of the Eurydice-story.¹⁴ Diderot's attitude is especially noteworthy. After speaking learnedly and at length about the historical Orpheus and various aspects of his myth, he dismisses the descent into Hades with the words, "j'abandonne cette fiction aux poètes."¹⁵

Rousseau uses the myth for a satirical epigram:

Quand, pour ravoir son épouse Eurydice,
Le bon Orphée alla jusqu'aux enfers,
L'étonnement d'un si rare caprice
En fit cesser tous les tourments divers.
On admira, bien plus que ses concerts,
D'un tel amour la bizarre saillie;
Et Pluton même, embarrassé du choix,
La lui rendit pour prix de sa folie,
Puis la retint en faveur de sa voix
(Epigrammes, II,1).

Rousseau was, however, greatly impressed by Gluck's Orphée, and became a partisan and admirer of Gluck's.

¹³The twelve references listed in the index to Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Beuchot (Paris, 1885), are all concerned with the historical figure.

¹⁴E.g., the Orphée of Senecé, another translation from Quevedo. See Quevedo, Obras, pp. 1471-2.

¹⁵In the entry under Grecs. See Oeuvres Complètes, ed. J. Assézat (Paris, 1877), vol. 15, p. 53.

Orpheus was made a symbol of the Revolution by the poet André Chénier, who, born in Constantinople of a Greek mother, proudly proclaimed himself the compatriot of Orpheus:

Puisse aux vallons d'Hémus, où les rocs et les bois
Admirèrent d'Orphée et suivirent la voix,
L'Hébre ne m'avoir pas en vain donné naissance!
Les Muses avec moi vont connaître Byzance
(L'Art d'aimer, I, 5-8)

For Chénier Orpheus symbolizes the poet who deserves the honor of all great men:

Autour du demi-dieu les princes immobiles
Aux accents de sa voix demeuraient suspendus,
Et l'écoutaient encor quand il ne chantait plus
(Hermès, II, 11, 14-6).

This is not the Orpheus of the descent, but Chénier is the beginning, in Romantic French literature, of the fusing of the mythical Orpheus with the mystical one.

By the mid-nineteenth century, after the sub-conscious use of the myth by Novalis and Hölderlin and the conscious associations of Schiller, Gluck and Chénier, the story of Orpheus and Eurydice took on an allegorical meaning, but more Romantic than medieval, best stated in the forward to Franz Liszt's symphonic poem Orphée:

Orphée, c'est à dire l'Art. . . pleure Eurydice,
cet emblème de l'Idéal englouti par le mal
et la douleur, qu'il lui est permis d'arracher aux
monstres de l'Érèbe, de faire sortir du fond des
ténèbres cimmériennes, mais qu'il ne saurait, hélas!
conserver sur cette terre.

In Romantic Italy classical themes were still popular but the Orpheus-myth was considered too much a part of the operatic tradition to serve as literary material. Vico, always interested in myths, notes¹⁶ that all the founders of nations, Orpheus included, descend to Hades. A minor poet, Ippolito Pindemonte, retold the tale at some length, and with some debt to Virgil, in A Giovanni dal Pozzo.

Spanish literature suffered a long decline after the death of Calderón. Ovid's former influence dwindled rapidly, and Italian opera is doubtless responsible for the melodrama La Lira de Orfeo by Agustín de Montiano y Luyando and the baile Orfeo y Eurídice by Domingo Rosi.¹⁷

The neo-Classic period in English letters was a great age of translation, and Orpheus appeared in new versions of the fourth Georgic by Dryden, Lord Mulgrave and John Sheffield. But we note that the young Addison's translation halts at the episode of Aristaeus and Orpheus. And Ovid was largely neglected. Mythology had fallen from favor, after centuries of abuse at the hands of poetasters who specialized in accumulating dozens of frigid allusions.

¹⁶In Scienza Nuova VIII,1.

¹⁷Noted in Cabañas, op. cit., pp. 60-1.

The most frequent use of the myth in eighteenth-century England is for humorous purposes. Generally speaking, these poems are negligible. Poets who, like John Dennis, are unsuccessful in serious attempts at mythology (Orpheus and Eurydice, a masque) descend to bourgeois humor and coarseness (The Story of Orpheus Burlesqu'd) for popular success.¹⁸ There are satirical Orpheus and Eurydices by William King (1704) and William Woty (1798); there are the English translations of Quevedo's satire¹⁹; John Gay, who was himself called the "Orpheus of highwaymen", quips:

So fierce Alecto's snaky tresses fell,
When Orpheus charm'd the rig'rous powers of hell.
(Trivia, I, 204-5),²⁰

and a certain Scot named Starrat, compares Allan Ramsay's musical skill to his who

Could whistle an ould dead wife frae hell.²¹

The best of these humorous allusions to the myth is in Tom Jones. Fielding's approach to mythology is certainly not

¹⁸See H.G. Paul, John Dennis (New York, 1911), pp. 20 and 44. Paul lists three other eighteenth-century dramas on Orpheus, by Martin Bladen (1715), J. Weaver (1718) and Mr. Mallet (1731).

¹⁹By Lady Monck, anon., and Robert Dodsley. See Quevedo, Obras, p. 1475.

²⁰See also Trivia II, 393-8 for a wry and vigorous passage on Orpheus' dismemberment.

²¹Quoted in Wirl, op. cit., p. 68.

reverent, but it is always apt and witty and generally fully developed. The comparison of Tom escorting Mrs. Waters to Upton to Orpheus leading Eurydice from Hell could well serve as a model for light mythological allusions:

Thus our hero and the redeemed lady walked in the same manner as Orpheus and Eurydice marched heretofore; but though I cannot believe that Jones was designedly tempted by his fair one to look behind him, yet as she frequently wanted his assistance to help her over stiles, and had besides many trips and other accidents, he was often obliged to turn about. However, he had better fortune than what attended poor Orpheus, for he brought his companion, or rather follower, safe into the famous town of Upton (Book IX, chapter 2).

The eighteenth-century craze for opera is reflected in the dedication of Orpheus and Hecate, an anonymous Ode in the British Museum, written for Lady Brown, patroness of the Italian opera.²² The ode itself might be a condensed opera plot: Hecate falls in love with Orpheus and attempts to keep him in hell. The idol of the opera circle in London, Handel, was often called the Orpheus of his time. Addison, who violently opposed the flippant use of classical mythology, ridicules this sobriquet in a scathing attack on opera in the Spectator.²³

²²See Wirl, op. cit., pp. 75-6.

²³In No. 5 (March 6, 1710). Addison also alludes to Orpheus briefly in his epilogue to Lord Lansdowne's The British Enchanters and in The Vision of the Table of Fame (Tatler, Oct. 15, 1709).

But Orpheus really means very little to an age that could refer to him as callously as does Lady Winchilsea in her Answer to Pope's Impromptu:

You, of one Orpheus, sure have read,
 Who wou'd, like you, have Writt,
 Had He in London Town been bred,
 And Pollish'd, to his Wit;
 But He, poor soul, thought all was Well,
 And great shou'd be his Fame,
 When he had left his Wife in Hell
 And Birds, and Beasts cou'd tame (8-15).

This, says Douglas Bush, "is enough to suggest the tone of a mass of poems and allusions in writers too familiar with the classics to ignore mythology, and too sophisticated to take it to their hearts as well as their heads."²⁴

The great writers of the period, Dryden and Pope, both make graceful, even memorable use of the Orpheus-myth, without its coming to mean anything to them. To Dryden the Orpheus of English music is not Handel, but Purcell:

We beg not Hell, our Orpheus to restore
 (Ode on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell, 16).

The reference is at least sincere, and extended for several graceful lines. Orpheus predictably turns up in Dryden's gently expanded translations of the Aeneid, the Eclogues and the Georgics, but his appearance in The Cock and the Fox, a modernization of Chaucer's Nun's Priest's Tale, comes as a complete surprise: the song of the cock, which Chaucer

²⁴Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry
 (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), p. 27.

likened to that of an angel, becomes with Dryden:

A Song that wou'd have charm'd th' infernal Gods,
And banish'd Horror from the dark Abodes:
Had Orpheus sung it in the neather Sphere,
So much the Hymn had pleas'd the Tyrant's Ear
The Wife had been detain'd, to keep the Husband
there (603-7).

Finally, in the Song for St. Cecilia's Day, Orpheus' musical power over nature is gracefully contrasted to Cecilia's over supernature.

This happy inspiration is taken up by Pope with rather mixed results. It is readily conceded that lyric expression is not one of Pope's specialties, and the Ode on St. Cecilia's Day is almost universally written off as a failure. Yet it is only symptomatic of the inability of the neo-Classic era to deal adequately with classic myths, and is in fact the bravest, almost the sole attempt to do so.

Joseph Warton, in his essay on Pope, notes the many details "elegantly translated" from Virgil and "happily adapted to the subject in question",²⁵ but laments that they are followed by lines that are close to John Dennis, or "some hero of the Dunciad" or "a drinking song at a country election". There are lapses, indeed:

Dreadful Gleams,
Dismal screams,
Fires that glow,
Shrieks of Woe (IV, 56-9).

²⁵An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (London, 1762), vol. 1, pp. 54-5.

But Pope has at least attempted to tell the story of Orpheus and Eurydice with some genuine feeling and to invest it with some significance. Very successful is the closing comparison:

Of Orpheus now no more let Poets tell;
To bright Cecilia greater Pow'r is giv'n;
His Numbers rais'd a shade from Hell,
Hers lift the Soul to Heaven (VII,131-4).

This fine conclusion, with its somewhat Boethian tone,²⁶ is worth more than all the other pretty²⁷ or topical²⁸ or humorous²⁹ or conventional³⁰ references to Orpheus in the writings of a busy and urbane eighteenth-century craftsman.

The most famous allusion to Orpheus in eighteenth-century English letters does not mention him by name - but surely the opening lines of Congreve's The Mourning Bride refer to Orpheus:

Music hath charms to soothe a savage breast,
To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak (I,1,1-2).

In two more satires Orpheus reflects the changing times: an anonymous Orpheus, priest of nature and prophet of infidelity, dated 1781, tells of a British Orpheus enthroned in the Margaret chapel, receiving homage from Voltaire and

²⁶Dr. Johnson noted the Boethian strain in Pope's Orpheus in the Rambler, July 30, 1751.

²⁷Summer 81 ff.

²⁸To Mr. Lemuel Gulliver 19-20.

²⁹On Mrs. Tofts 1-4.

³⁰Temple of Fame 83-4; To the Author of a Poem, entitled, Successio 9-10.

Benjamin Franklin,³¹ while John Hookham Frere, in King Arthur and his Round Table, refers flippantly to the Orphic mysteries in connection with the Jesuits in Paraguay (III, st. 9-11).

The passing from classic to Romantic is marked by the young Thomas Moore, for whom Orpheus is a poet inspired by the genius of harmony³²; by Mark Akenside, who concerns himself with the Orphic writings,³³ and by William Cowper, who is neo-Classic in his use of Orpheus' singing head in the Ode on the Death of Mrs. Throckmorton's Bullfinch (61-6), but Romantic in the Ode on the Marriage of a Friend, where he claims that love is the strongest power of all, for Eurydice awakened sweeter strains from Orpheus' lyre than did rocks, rivers and trees.³⁴ Walter Savage Landor's finest early works are The Descent of Orpheus, a translation of Virgil which marks his break with eighteenth-century style, and The Birth of Poesy, which tells us of the loss of Eurydice and Orpheus' death at considerable length and with great skill for a man scarcely out of his teens.³⁵

³¹See Wirl, op. cit., pp. 77-8.

³²See The Genius of Harmony, an irregular ode 46, 58-72.

³³The commentator Alexander Dyce notes that Akenside uses the Orphic poems in his Hymn to the Nais.

³⁴Lines 1-18. For brief allusions to the power of Orpheus' song see also The Task III, 587 and V, 694.

³⁵There is a humorous reference to Orpheus in a lesser early work, An Address to the Fellows of Trinity College, 57-60.

In later life, Landor dubbed the Orpheus-episode "the masterpiece of Virgil",³⁶ and Dryden's translation of it "the best". His own translation "has small merit", but Wordsworth's, he says, is "among the worst". Indeed to trace the references to Orpheus through Wordsworth is to get no idea of that poet's stature or of his role in restoring mythology to the mainstream of English poetry; there is only "Orphean insight"³⁷ and "Orphean lyre"³⁸; Ossian is dubbed Orpheus,³⁹ as is a fiddler in Oxford Street.⁴⁰ This is the best the author of The Power of Music and The Power of Sound can do with the classic embodiment of music's power!

Lord Byron, predictably, finds an anonymous Orpheus in the Greece of his day:

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in these times he might have done much worse.
(Don Juan III, 87, 1-4).

The other references are standard allusions.⁴¹

³⁶Works, ed. Stephen Wheeler (London, 1935), vol. 14, p. 251.

³⁷The Power of Sound, 115.

³⁸To the Clouds, 60; The Source of the Danube, 9; Prelude I, 233.

³⁹Written in a Blank Leaf of MacPherson's Ossian, 38.

⁴⁰The Power of Music, 1. The remarks are based on Lane Cooper, A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth (London, 1911).

⁴¹Hints From Horace 663-6; The Waltz 18; The Irish Avatar; 12, 1 Stanzas written in passing the Ambracian Gulf.

Shelley's Orpheus, a dialogue between a Greek chorus and a messenger, is listed among his fragments, but it is complete in itself, and hardly seems part of any contemplated tragedy.⁴² Its picture of the blighted landscape left by Eurydice's death and then of the fresh growth that comes to life at Orpheus' song are excellent in themselves, but not representative of Shelley. Orpheus does not appear in any of the mythological lyrics, and Shelley's reference to him in Hellas (1034) is negligible. Presumably Orpheus had little to offer the early Romanticists' overblown transcendentalism. He is not mentioned in the poems of Coleridge or, later, of Tennyson.⁴³ But in Keats, each of the references is so richly and strikingly original as to warrant quotation here. In the luxuriant Endymion, Keats' imaginative way of telling us that the spirit of music pervades all nature is:

from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept
(I, 793-4).

⁴²Most scholars regard it as an impromptu jeu d'esprit in imitation of the famous improvisator Sgricci. As it is found only in the transcripts of Mary Shelley some consider it her work. See Works, ed. William Michael Rossetti, vol. 3, pp. 417-8.

⁴³According to the concordances of S.E. Logan (Indiana, 1940) and A.E. Baker (London, 1914), respectively. Tennyson tells of trees assembling to hear, not Orpheus, but Amphion (Amphion 17-56).

The same poem contains two compressed and fanciful allusions to the Eurydice-story:

by the Orphean lute
When mad Eurydice is listening to 't (II,164-5),

and:

Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death
(III,98).

And in Lamia, Lycius looks at the serpent-maiden

not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice (247-8).

Every reference is notable for suggestive power and economy.

Oliver Elton uses the Orphic fragments in re-telling the whole of the story in his two poems The Dream of Orpheus and The Song of Orpheus.⁴⁴ Various aspects of the myth appeal to some of the lesser Romanticists: Orpheus the Argonaut silences the sirens in the poem of Richard Chevenix Trench⁴⁵; in Robert Southey's Thalaba (VI,21,7-15) and in Thomas Campbell's Moonlight (40-4), the nightingale sings at Orpheus' grave; but Campbell also uses Eurydice with charming effect in his Lines on a Picture of a Girl in the Attitude of Prayer:

Like Orpheus, I adore a shade,
And dote upon a phantom (3-4).

⁴⁴For a discussion of these see "Thoughts on Orpheus" in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine 44(1838) pp. 21-33.

⁴⁵Orpheus and the Sirens. Trench also translated the fourth Georgic 452-516 into English verse, as Orpheus and Eurydice.

As we move into the late Romantic era, the descent of Orpheus proves the most popular incident in his myth. Eurydice is given as much attention as Orpheus himself, and often the story is told from her point of view. There is also a new seriousness in evidence. We move past the stage where "Orphean" is an ornamental tag, where the myth is used merely to evoke mood or add color, to a new phase in which it is applied to the deepest problems of human life. The love of the poet Orpheus for his twice-lost Eurydice now reflects the growing awareness among nineteenth-century poets of their relationship to society. Serious is the word for three new Eurydices, by William J. Linton, Coventry Patmore and Robert Browning. Linton's is a characteristically fervid lament; Patmore's is one of several odes set in a profoundly Christian context - the husband dreams he seeks his wife through the most squalid surroundings, and finds her at last, dying, neglected by all the world, most of all by himself⁴⁶; Browning's is less significant, but even more intense. Inspired by the famous painting by Lord Leighton, it is an eight-line appeal of Eurydice for one glance from Orpheus:

⁴⁶Patmore's Orpheus, a poem in Canto I of The Espousals, sees in Orpheus' subduing the Sirens the social, moral, even religious function of the poet.

But give them me, the mouth, the eyes, the brow!
 Let them once more absorb me! One look now
 Will lap me round forever, not to pass
 Out of its light, though darkness lie beyond;
 Hold me but safe again within the bond
 Of one immortal look! All woe that was,
 Forgotten, and all terror that may be,
 Defied, - no past is mine, no future: look at me!⁴⁷

The increased importance of women in society was doubtless partly responsible for Eurydice's new middle-class vogue. Edward Dowden, the biographer of Browning, expresses various distaff views on men and marriage in The Heroines: Helen, Atalanta, Europa, Andromeda and lastly Eurydice speak in dramatic monologues, Eurydice stressing self-effacement, dedication, the complete submerging of the wife's self in the husband's. The year of publication of The Heroines, 1876, also saw the appearance of the second book of Sir Lewis Morris' Epic of Hades, in which Orpheus makes the sacrifice: as a man of genius, he lives a higher life than Eurydice can know, but for love of her he renounces his career; Eurydice asks his forgiveness for the demands she makes on him, and Orpheus comforts her with stuffy Victorian sentiments. A more striking poem by another man of letters is Edmund Gosse's The Waking of Eurydice: Orpheus asks Persephone for permission to sing to the invisible Eurydice, and at his song her languid shade appears, awakes,

⁴⁷Browning mentions the Orphic poet in Easter Day VII, 23, and Orpheus expectedly turns up in the paraphrase of the Alcestis which the heroine recites in Balaustion's Adventure, 865, as well as in the Browning version of the Agamemnon, 1691.

trembles and gradually thrills with life; even Gosse's monotonous trochaic rhymes seem transformed by this poetic idea. Almost as deliberately inspirational is the passage⁴⁸ in Lord Lytton's The Lost Tales of Miletus, in which Orpheus' song brings new hope to the tormented Sisyphus.

Another dramatic monologue, Orpheus the Musician, by Robert Buchanan, expresses the poet's disillusionment in attempting to improve society. For a time Orpheus subdues the wild and bestial world, but in the end, nature asserts itself:

when I ceased to sing, the satyr-crew
Rush'd back to riot and carouse;
Self-fearful faces blushinglly withdrew
Into leafy boughs (80-3).

Orpheus learns the bitter truth that the artist's spell, however compelling, is only transitory.

The social gospel imbibed by many Victorian poets was that provided by Thomas Carlyle, who revives the Christ-Orpheus theme in Sartor Resartus:

Our highest Orpheus walked in Judaea,
eighteen hundred years ago: his sphere-melody,
flowing in wild native tones, took captive and
ravished the souls of men (III,8).

A reaction against this identification of Christ and Orpheus is seen in a series of tortured but clear-sighted sonnets by Charles Tennyson-Turner, called Christ and Orpheus. The high point in this appeal to dissociate the two figures is touching indeed:

⁴⁸Summarized in Wirl, op. cit., p. 83.

The sorrowing manhood of the King of kings,
 The double nature, and the death of shame,
 The tomb - the rising - are substantial things,
 Irrelevant to Orpheus; What hath made
 Thy wisdom match Messias with a shade?
 (Sonnet 127,10-4).

But despite this appeal, Victorian pietism and social consciousness continued to turn to mythological subjects for expression. Even the pre-Raphaelites indulge in a certain amount of this. Swinburne's Orpheus is Victor Hugo, to whom he appeals to turn and look upon Eurydice, the viper-stricken embodiment of Justice.⁴⁹ And one of William Morris' most famous passages is the series of antiphonal songs of Orpheus and the Sirens in The Life and Death of Jason; the Sirens hymn the sensual life of a materialist Utopia while Orpheus answers with pleas for what is, in effect, socialism - but the verbal texture of his song is as listless and unworldly as is that of the Sirens'. It seems the pre-Raphaelite genius is better adapted to atmospheric story-telling than to "significant" themes, and Morris' Story of Orpheus and Eurydice is a typical specimen of languorous dreaming protracted to prodigious lengths, with an underworld of hidden voices and a hero given to lyricism of the most sweetly effusive variety. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Orpheus longs only for Eurydice's lips,⁵⁰

⁴⁹See Eurydice, in Songs Before Sunrise.

⁵⁰See Sonnet 6,7-8, in The House of Life.

while George A. Simcox's laments his twice-lost love in long, dreamy musings of the vaguest philosophical substance⁵¹; Thomas Irwin's Orpheus⁵² is of the same stamp. The pre-Raphaelitism of the Homerist, Andrew Lang, was somewhat less remote: The Song of Orpheus is a translation of part of the Orphic Argonautica; the Grave of Orpheus tells again of the nightingales; later Lang satirizes his pre-Raphaelite days and the way

We twanged the melancholy lyre...⁵³
When first we heard Rossetti sing,

and this palinode is put in the mouth of The New Orpheus to his Eurydice.

A Homerist of a different sort, Matthew Arnold, longed to escape to "a primitive mythological world of simple joy and harmony,"⁵⁴ a longing clearly reflected in Thyrsis, his pastoral lament for Arthur Hugh Clough. It contains a bright paraphrase of the Orphean passage in Moschus' lament for Bion, with additional judiciously chosen images and piquant language, particularly illustrative of Arnold's paganizing Christianity.⁵⁵ At

⁵¹See Orpheus, in Cornhill Magazine 25(1867), p. 218.

⁵²In Dublin University Magazine 63(1864), pp. 528-43. Another pre-Raphaelite Orpheus is by Richard Watson Dixon.

⁵³Quoted in Bush, Romantic Tradition, p. 416.

⁵⁴Douglas Bush, op. cit., p. 247.

⁵⁵Thyrsis 81-90. See also Memorial Verses 34-40, in which Wordsworth's coming to Hades is likened to Orpheus'.

the same time, John Ruskin was rejecting mythology as a pedagogical device, in The Cestus of Aglaia. One of the figures asked to "put up (his) pipes and be gone" is Orpheus, because he represents

the sentiment and pure soul-power of Man, as moving the very rocks and trees, and giving them life, by its sympathy with them; but losing its own best-beloved thing by mere venomous accident: and afterwards going down to hell for it, in vain; being impatient and unwise, though full of gentleness; and, in the issue, after as vainly trying to teach this gentleness to others, and to guide them out of their lower passions to sunlight of true healing life, it drives the sensual heart of them, and the gods that govern it, into mere and pure frenzy of resolved rage, and gets torn to pieces by them, and ended; only the nightingale staying by its grave to sing.⁵⁶

The continuing popularity of Gluck's opera is seen in an anonymous poem (1882) dedicated to J.E.C., in the British Museum,⁵⁷ which follows Calzabigi closely; in Vernon Lee's Orpheus in Rome (1889), reflections on art prompted by Gluck's music, and in the poetic drama Armgarth, by George Eliot, which tells the Orpheus-like story of a prima donna who enjoyed great success as Gluck's Orfeo, and who sacrificed everything, including marriage, for her art; when she loses her voice, the offer of marriage is not renewed. The librettist James R. Planché provided two plays

⁵⁶Works, ed. E.T. Cook (London, 1905), vol. 19, p. 66.

Ruskin's other allusions to Orpheus (see Cook's index) are negligible.

⁵⁷See Wirl, op. cit., pp. 89-90.

dealing with the myth - Olympic Devils and Orpheus in the Haymarket - for light opera purposes. Beethoven was somewhat belatedly dubbed Orpheus by Eric MacKay in Beethoven at the Piano.⁵⁸

Two poems by Americans deserve mention at this point. Philip Freneau's The Prayer of Orpheus is a beautiful paraphrase of the plea Ovid put in the poet's mouth when he appeared before Pluto; what was conventional in Ovid is made very touching here. The Eurydice of James Russell Lowell, for all its vagueness and mediocre craftsmanship, is also a notable poem. Lowell regrets the decline of artistic feeling in his day, and the passing of his own youth, and sees these fleeting beautiful things as Eurydice, the "more tender dawn" that flees before the full moon:

At that elm-vista's end I trace
Dimly thy sad leave-taking face,
Eurydice! Eurydice!
The tremulous leaves repeat to me
Eurydice! Eurydice!
No gloomier Orcus swallows thee
Than the unclouded sunset's glow;
Thine is at least Elysian woe;
Thou hast Good's natural decay,
And fadest like a star away (67-76).

Lowell seems to have heard of Max Müller's theories.

John Witt Randall wrote a Lament of Orpheus in 1856. Another American, John Godfrey Saxe, burlesqued

⁵⁸See ibid., p. 84.

the story in 1861,⁵⁹ while Emma Lazarus gave it lyric treatment ten years later.⁶⁰ A.B. Alcott composed some cryptic Orphic Sayings in 1840. Emerson preferred the actual Orphica (in translation) to both Alcott's and Miss Lazarus' efforts,⁶¹ and relates the saying of his own Orphic bard near the close of Nature.

The descent of Orpheus was apt material for American melodrama and burlesque, as is witnessed by such stage productions as Orpheus and Eurydice, a play (Henry J. Byron, 1884); Orpheus and Eurydice, an operatic burlesque (presented in Buffalo in 1897) and Orpheus, a one act play (in Throw that light on me, by O.M. Scott and G. Ford, presented in Chicago in 1912).

Both England and America produced, at the turn of the century, so many lyric poems on Orpheus by so many relatively unimportant writers that it should be enough for our purposes merely to list them. The sheer quantity of this work is impressive, and testifies to the continued interest in Orpheus and Eurydice. But the swollen rhetoric of many of these poems has doomed them to extinction.

⁵⁹Orpheus and Eurydice, a travesty, in Poems (1861).

⁶⁰Orpheus, in Admetus (1871).

⁶¹See Letters, ed. R.L. Rusk, vol. 2, p. 291 and vol. 6, p. 114.

- 1882 Virginia Vaughan, Orpheus and the Sirens, a drama in lyrics
- 1884 Henry Niles Pierce, The Death Chant of Orpheus (The Agnostic); Eurydice (The Agnostic)
- 1885 Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Eurydice (Songs of the Silent World)
- 1887 (Charles J. Pickering), Orpheus (Metassai)
- 1886 Walter Malone, The Song of the Dying Orpheus (The Outcast); Orpheus and the Sirens (1893)
- 1888 David Atwood Wasson, Orpheus (Poems)
- 1889 Frank T. Marzials, Orpheus and Eurydice, a sonnet (Death's Disguises);
Two Sonnet Songs: The Sirens Sing
Orpheus and the Mariners
Make Answer
- 1891 Isabella T. Aitken, Orpheus and Eurydice (Bohemia)
- 1891 James R. Rodd, The Lute of Orpheus (The Violet Crown)
- 1891 Mrs. Ernest Radford, Orpheus (A Light Load)
- 1893 William Bell Scott, Orpheus (A Poet's Harvest Home);
Eurydice
- 1893 Francis W. Bourdillon, Eurydice (Sursum Corda)
- 1894 S. Wiley, Corot's Orpheus (Poems Lyrical and Dramatic)
- 1895 Lord de Tabley, Orpheus in Hades;
Orpheus in Thrace (1901)
- 1898 J.B. Dabney, Orpheus Sings (Songs of Destiny)
- 1898 E.W. Watson, The Song of Orpheus (Songs of Flying Hours)

- 1898 Florence E. Coates, Eurydice (Poems)
- 1900 Arthur S. Cripps, Eurydice (Titania)
- 1900 Annie A. Fields, Orpheus: a masque
- 1901 Laurence Binyon, Orpheus in Thrace (Odes)
- 1901 Lloyd Mifflin, Eurydice; The Last Song of Orpheus;
The Silence After Orpheus' Death (Collected Sonnets)
- 1901 Lily Thicknesse, Eurydice to Orpheus (Poems)
- 1903 Joseph Cook, Orpheus and the Sirens (Overtones)
- 1904 Ruth Young, Orpheus (Verses)
- 1904 E.L. Cox, Orpheus in Hades (Poems Lyric and Dramatic)
- 1904 T. Sturge Moore, A Lament For Orpheus
- 1905 Aleister Crowley, Orpheus: a lyrical legend
- 1906 Charles Gibson, Orpheus and Eurydice (The Spirit of Love)
- 1907 Arthur Dillon, Orpheus
- 1907 Bernard Drew, Orpheus and Eurydice (Cassandra)
- 1907 Alfred Noyes, Orpheus and Eurydice (Forty Singing Seamen)
- 1907 Louis Alexander Robertson, Orpheus and Eurydice (Through
Painted Panes)
- 1909 Edith Wharton, Orpheus (Artemis to Actaeon)
- 1910 H.V. Sutherland, Orpheus and Eurydice (Idylls of Greece,
Second Series)
- 1912 Sir H. Tree, Orpheus in the Underground, a play in two
 acts.
- 1912 Eva Gore-Booth, The Death of Orpheus (The Agate Lamp)
- 1913 Margaret Sackville, Orpheus among the Shades, a play
 (Songs of Aphrodite)

- n.d. E.S. Creamer, Orphean Tragedy
 n.d. Norman Gale, Orpheus
 n.d. Alfred P. Graves, Orpheus (Dark Blue 2:41)
 n.d. Elizabeth O. Smith, Regrets

There is also a poetic drama, of slight merit, by the Vancouver poet, E.A. Jenns, Orpheus and Eurydice (1910).

Of these, Bourdillon's is a popular but commonplace poem, in which Eurydice briefly tells of her awaking to the world at Orpheus' call, and of the sorrow she caused when she turned to look back. Alfred Noyes tells, with characteristic narrative magic, how Apollo sent the snake because Orpheus had neglected his god-given powers to woo Eurydice. The humiliated Orpheus of Plato's Symposium reappears in Edith Wharton's poem, while most of the others show their indebtedness to Browning and William Morris by their very titles. Perhaps the best of these poems - those of de Tabley, Binyon, Dillon and Moore - are those which deal with Orpheus' death, in the luxuriant, overripe neo-pagan cast of Shelley and Swinburne, a tradition which died hard in mythological poetry.⁶²

⁶²De Tabley and Dillon are analyzed at length in Wirl, op. cit., pp. 85-9 and 90-101.

Moore is better known for the play Orpheus and Eurydice, one of his many mythological dramas dealing symbolically and one might say Platonically with ideal beauty and the efforts of the human soul to grasp it. In the Orpheus, the gods of the timeless, ideal world of the spirit invite Orpheus to stay with them as their son, but Eurydice, who has refused to drink of Lethe's waters, begs him to take her back to the material world. On the terrifying upward journey she is overcome by the darkness and his apparent lack of tenderness, and brings about the catastrophe. The horror of the world of matter is unmasked in the concluding scene: a Bassarid exults over Orpheus' severed limbs. It is a fine play, one in which the ideology actually enhances the mythical story.⁶³

Eurydice also appears in Ulysses, one of the grandiose poetic dramas of Stephen Phillips, long enough to tell her brief story:

I am Eurydice,
That for one moment was so near the day,
When Orpheus backward looked, and all was night (II,2).

Yet in this wealth of English mythological poetry - so much of it deeply felt and intensely serious - the one poem which future generations are most likely to read and to

⁶³A revised version appeared in Collected Poems, vol. 3 (London, 1932). Here, when Orpheus returns a second time, Eurydice prefers to drink the potion and remain among the ideals.

associate with the myth does not mention Orpheus and Eurydice at all. In A Shropshire Lad, A.E. Housman tells how Hermes met him one morning and accompanied him on his journey through pastureland, valleys and woods:

And midst the fluttering legion
Of all that ever died
I follow, and before us
Goes the delightful guide,

With lips that brim with laughter
But never once respond,
And feet that fly on feathers,
And serpent-circled wand (42: The Merry Guide,
53-60)

Contemporary mythological poetry aspires to this state - the use of one or at most a few details of the myth, divested of any social significance and set, as it were, outside of time.

CHAPTER VII

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Orpheus was one of the Greek mythological figures adopted by the symbolist poets of France. While Baudelaire saw the poet as Icarus, Rimbaud as Prometheus, and Valéry as Narcissus, Orpheus appears in the writings of almost all the symbolists.

The supra-human characters of Greek myths, with their tragic stories, appealed strongly to men who left "human values" to the novelist and the playwright, and sought to reach poetry itself in its purest state. The symbolists approach Orpheus obliquely. In telling his story, they give the details while the essentials are only suggested. Thus the symbolist Orphée lives in an allusive, dreamy, significant world - but the allusions are not the meaningless tags of the Renaissance, the dreaminess is not the saccharine languor of the pre-Raphaelites, the significance is not explicit, owes nothing to social problems, as with the Victorians. The myth is not so much used as contemplated, and penetrated.

The Orpheus that fascinated the early symbolists was Orpheus the magician, at whose song all nature was animated. Mallarmé saw the modern poet's role as a similar one -

conjuring, altering nature in mysterious ways.¹ This concept of the poet as magician dominated the French poetry of our century. Rimbaud's Théorie du Voyant, the manifesto of this ideal, stems from the nineteenth century philosopher Ballanche, in whose vision the day would come when all the peoples of the earth would be united in the one empire of poetry, and this must be accomplished by a new Orpheus - for Orpheus himself was a voyant who understood the synthesis of the world.² That this was the meaning of the myth to Paul Valéry is clear from a letter he wrote to Debussy about their proposed collaboration on a ballet:

J'avais songé incidemment au Mythe d'Orphée,
c'est-à-dire l'animation de toute chose par un
esprit, - la fable même de la mobilité et de
l'arrangement.³

¹See Art For All, in Mallarmé, translated by Bradford Cook (Baltimore, 1956), pp. 9-13, and the note "Orphic explanation" on p. 116.

²Ballanche's Orphée (1829) is a humanitarian epic in nine books. The descent is given only cursory treatment in book III, and the mythology is highly unorthodox throughout. See Albert Joseph George, Pierre-Simon Ballanche (Syracuse, 1945), pp. 111-8.

³Quoted from Francis Scarfe, The Art of Paul Valéry (London, 1954), p. 290. The ballet never materialized, and Valéry's only Orphée is an early sonnet in which the theme of music moving mountains is rather conventionally handled. More ample treatment of this theme is given in Valéry's melodrama Amphion.

But the story of Orpheus' descent was eventually taken up and in time the image of Orpheus in the world beyond eclipsed that of Orpheus the magician. In Alain-Fournier's novel Le Grand Meaulnes, the Eurydice-story lies beneath the surface, and there is the constant hint of a disparity between the aesthetic Eurydice of Orpheus' song, of the world of light, and the actual Eurydice given him by the world of shadows.⁴ With the surrealist Paul Eluard, all poetic experience is a journey through hell, like Orpheus', which finds fulfillment in the woman who, like Eurydice, always sees the dawn of a new world emerging from the darkness.⁵ Most recently the tormented "poet of Christian myth",⁶ Pierre Emmanuel, has devoted two books of poems to Orpheus. In the Tombeau d'Orphée, sexual passion is the cause of Orpheus' suffering - both in his failure to recover Eurydice and in his death at the hands of the unsatisfied Maenads; at the close of his life he renounces human love, becomes both man and woman like Tiresias, a symbol of the whole cosmos. Eurydice too renounces human passion, preferring to remain in eternity rather than

⁴For an analysis of this theme in Alain-Fournier, see Robert Champigny, Portrait of a Symbolist Hero (Bloomington, 1954).

⁵This theme is especially notable in L'Amour du Poésie and Capitale de la Douleur. See Joseph Chiardi, Contemporary French Poetry (Manchester, 1952), p. 147.

⁶Title for Chapter 4 in Chiardi, op. cit.

return to conjugal life; she did not call to Orpheus to turn and look upon her - rather he mistook the promptings of his own desire for her voice. Both of them win redemption by their renunciation, and as the poem closes Orpheus, who has prayed for martyrdom, is surrounded with the shroud, the spear and the crown of thorns. The second book, Orphiques, tells, in the first part (Musique de la Nuit), of Orpheus the musician, with tributes to Bach and Beethoven; in the second (Aube sur les Enfers), of the descent, with homage paid to Gerard Manley Hopkins, and in the third (Invention des Ménades), of the dismemberment - all at great length and with much obscurity.

The influence of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice upon the early poems of Rainer Maria Rilke is an almost subconscious one, as it was earlier with Novalis and Hölderlin - a natural consequence of the poet's fascination with his own powers, his search for beauty and his attempt to penetrate the mystery of death. Even though they are not named, Orpheus and Eurydice seem to be the lovers Rilke speaks of in Der Tod der Geliebten:

Er wusste nur vom Tod, was alle wissen:
dass er uns nimmt und in das Stumme stösst.
Als aber sie, nicht von ihm fortgerissen,
nein, leis aus seinen Augen ausgelöst,

hinüberglied zu unbekannten Schatten,
und als er fühlte, dass sie drüben nun
wie einen Mond ihr Mädchenlächeln hatten
und ihre Weise wohlzutun:

da wurden ihm die Toten so bekannt,
als wäre er durch sie mit einem jeden
ganz nah verwandt; er liess die andern reden

und glaubte nicht und nannte jenes Land
das gutgelegene, das immersüsse -
Und tastete es ab für ihre Füße.⁷

Joachim Rosteutscher, in Das Ästhetische Idol, finds traces
of the myth in a half-dozen more of Rilke's early poems.⁸

Only one of these identifies the characters. It is called
Orpheus, Eurydike, Hermes, and was directly inspired by the
Attic relief, which Rilke saw in the Naples copy in 1904.
It is a thoroughly modern poem, however, in its sensibility,
its irregular form, and its use of symbols. It is also
characteristic of Rilke in its mystical preoccupation with
death and the maiden.

Eurydice is the focus of the poem, as of the
relief, but she is a strange Eurydice, filled with her
great death,

Wie eine Frucht von Süßigkeit und Dunkel (65).

She is not conscious that she is following her husband, for

Sie war in einem neuen Mädchentum
und unberührbar; ihr Geschlecht war zu
wie eine junge Blume gegen Abend (68-70).

⁷In Der Neuen Gedichte, Anderer Teil (1908).

⁸Das Buch von der Pilgerschaft; Worpsweder Tagebuch (28
Oct. 1900); Mädchengestalten; Das jüngste Gericht (in Das
Buch der Bilder); Das Stundenbuch III; Orpheus. Eurydike.
Hermes (in Der Neuen Gedichte, Erster Teil). See
Rosteutscher, op. cit., pp. 249-53.

Loosened as long hair, abandoned as the fallen rain, distributed as blessings abundant,

Sie war schon Wurzel (82).

Orpheus represents the human world, restless, impatient, touched with genius but cursed with self-seeking. Through the phantasmagoria of rocks, shadows, forests, "Brücken über Leeres" (8) he leads the way, his lyre forgotten, grown into his left hand, his senses wavering like a hunting dog which races ahead, then turns back to the turn of the path.

Hermes is shining-eyed and light of foot, with his slender wand held out before him and the wings fluttering about his ankles. He is a god, but he is moved by human disaster: he it is who cries in anguish "Er had sich umgewendet -". Eurydice, the bride of death, knows nothing, and asks only "Wer?" (85-6).

After this startling climax, Orpheus is forgotten. We do not hear his laments even as we did not hear of his song before Pluto. With Eurydice, we have forgotten him; we return to the world where the mysterious figure of death stands "dunkel vor dem klaren Ausgang" (87), where Eurydice has already passed,

den Schritt beschränkt von langen Leichenbändern,
unsicher, sanft und ohne Ungeduld (94-5).

This early poem of Rilke's could stand, with Housman's, as a model for the poetic treatment of classical myths, for it is no sentimental or pedantic invocation of

antiquity, but an extraordinary effort to grasp the spirit of the myth itself, a journey into pre-classic time.

Orpheus. Eurydike. Hermes was written at a time when Rilke's poetry was largely an interpretation of various objets d'art; in his mature period, Rilke turned again to Orpheus. This time Eurydice is not called forth from the better world of her new virginity;⁹ only Orpheus is invoked - and he is not the husband of Eurydice so much as the creative Orpheus who knows the mysteries of life and death, whose song permeates the whole world. The famous ideal of the Sonette an Orpheus, the culmination of a century of Orphean poetry from Novalis and Hölderlin through the French symbolists, has been compared¹⁰ to Nietzsche's Dionysus, Zarathustra and Superman: for Rilke, the poet, symbolized in Orpheus, is the redeemer and transfigurer of all existence - indeed, when he sings he calls existence into being:

Da stieg ein Baum. O reine Übersteigung!
O Orpheus singt! O höher Baum im Ohr!
(Sonette an Orpheus: I,1,1-2).

Rilke finds the secret of all poiesis in a self-identification with this powerful figure, and his later work is a constant attempt to cast himself in the mold of his Orpheus-symbol.

⁹In Sonette An Orpheus: II,12,4, Rilke speaks of being dead "in Eurydike", i.e. in the habitual death of Eurydice in the earlier poem.

¹⁰See Michael Hamburger, op. cit., pp. 105-13.

As for English-speaking symbolists, James Joyce chose Ulysses as his mythical hero, while Tiresias is the most important classical figure in T.S. Eliot's The Waste Land; but the three Sitwells have all dealt with Orpheus: Sir Osbert's Orpheus tells how the forest animals were charmed, while Sacheverell's Eurydice (in The Thirteenth Caesar) makes Orpheus the sun; the Eurydice of Dame Edith is, of the three, the poem to be reckoned with. Written in 1946, it has none of the flashing wit of the famous poems, but its symbolism, weaving in and out of irregular long lines, is gorgeous, and its approach (a new one for the myth, if not for Dame Edith, who has written many similar death-poems) is brilliant.

Eurydice begins her soliloquy with the lines:
 Fires on the hearth! Fires in the heavens! Fires
 in the hearts of Men!
 I who was welded into bright gold in the earth
 by Death
 Salute you! (1-3).

She who is now the golden bride of Death salutes the fires that light the world above. But she has another ripening sun below - Death, who has taught her heart to forgive. Then she tells how "Orpheus came with his sunlike singing" (17), and she moved to the mouth of the tomb and walked, a golden figure, across

The dark fields where the sowers scatter grain
 Like tears (26-7),

recalling Proserpine of the golden hair, hearing the golden-voiced man of god¹¹ warn her to look to the light, while in

¹¹A quotation from Meister Eckhart is paraphrased in lines 39-41 and addressed to Eurydice.

the "ferine dust" (43) that rises around her, Death bids her remember that he still has power over her. Far off she hears the sounds arise from the golden-roofed dwellings of men, and wonders why they weep for the death of golden nature, which is not lost but only changed in the sweet darkness. Still, she has cast her sweet death off for Orpheus' sake, and follows him homeward to

the small things of Love, the building of the
 hearth, the kneading of the daily bread,
 The cries of birth, and all the weight of light
 Shaping our bodies and our souls. Come home to youth,
 And the noise of summer growing in the veins,
 And to old age, a serene afternoon,
 An element beyond time, or a new climate (70-5).

But in the final stanza it is she, not Orpheus, who turns, and with startling effect:

I with the other young who were born from darkness,
 Returning to darkness, stood at the mouth of the Tomb
 With one who had come glittering like the wind
 To meet me - Orpheus with the golden mouth,
 You - like Adonis born from the young myrrh-tree,
 you, the vine-branch
 Broken by the wind of love. . . .I turned to greet you-
 And when I touched your mouth, it was the Sun (76-82).

So the themes of gold, fire and the sun thread their way through the poem. It is impossible, in a summary, to suggest as well the other themes of wheat, of the lion, the honeycomb and the maiden bearing death as a child

within her. Some of these are traditional with Dame Edith; the death-bearing maiden is borrowed, with credit, from Rilke. But the two imposing themes, the sun and the wheat, are derived from the suggested origins of the myth itself: in the last line Eurydice the golden shaft of wheat, bearing the seeds of her own death within her, awakes to Orpheus the sun.

For the rest, there are dozens of English and American poets on the contemporary scene who have written about Orpheus and Eurydice:

1918 George Rostrevor Hamilton, Orpheus (Escape and Fantasy)

Orpheus' song, in contemporary language.

1919 B.K. Van Slyke, Orpheus in the Street (Poetry 13:252)

Orpheus as a hurdy-gurdy man.

1921 Brookes More, Orpheus and Eurydice (The Beggar's Vision)

a somewhat Romantic revision of Virgil and Ovid, but original (in American letters) in associating the husband and wife and serpent of the Orpheus myth with Genesis, the close of the golden age and the coming of sorrow into the world.

1921 Laurence Housman, The Death of Orpheus;

Orpheus and The Phoenix (The Love Concealed, 1928)
only the phoenix remains aloof from Orpheus' song.

- 1924 Elizabeth Maddox Roberts, Orpheus (Poetry 24:201)
a naive treatment of Orpheus and the trees.
- 1924 F.W. Bateson, Orpheus in Thrace (Spectator 133:506)
a brief lament for Eurydice.
- 1925 Frank Kendon, Orpheus (London Mercury 11: 571)
a long narrative poem, in which Orpheus' descent
is summed up in the line:
To lose, to fight, to win, to hope, to lose
(st. 40,1,2).
- 1925 L. Hulley, Orpheus and Eurydice (Fables and Myths from
the Sibyl's Book)
- 1925 H.D. (Mrs. Richard Aldington), Eurydice (Collected Poems)
Eurydice reproaches Orpheus for his arrogance and
ruthlessness, but adds, "my hell is no worse
than yours".
- 1927 L(oyd) H(aberly), Orpheus at Hell's Gate Sings (Poems)
- 1928 D.R. Williamson, Orpheus and Eurydice (Collected Poems)
- 1929 Alice Wills, Orpheus
- 1929 Helen Gilbert, Eurydice (Sewanee Review 37:322)
an overly-Romantic narrative.
- 1935 Joseph Auslander, Eurydice (No Traveller Returns)
Eurydice urges Orpheus to look and come to death
with her.
- 1937 J. Evelyn, Eurydice and Orpheus (Poems)

- 1943 Yvor Winters, Orpheus: In Memory Of Hart Crane
(The Giant Weapon)
the loss of Eurydice and the dismemberment, in
a brief, oblique narration.
- 1944 Marya Zaturenska, The Recall of Eurydice (The Golden Mirror)
a lyric version of the story with no mention of
Orpheus.
- 1945 Edith Grabmann, Eurydice (Poetry 66:16)
a warning to Orpheus not to make his fruitless
journey to the underworld.
- 1945 W.H. Auden, Orpheus (Collected Shorter Poems)
brief and enigmatic.
- 1946 Helen Bevington, Song of Orpheus (Atlantic Monthly,
178: Nov., 74)
the shades weep at Orpheus' song.
- 1949 Muriel Rukeyser, Orpheus (Selected Poems)
a long, elaborate poem dealing with Orpheus'
apotheosis.
- 1952 E. Kroll, Orpheus (Cape Horn and Other Poems)
- 1952 Herbert Henry Marks, Orpheus, a play in verse.
- 1953 John Hearne, Orpheus (New Statesman and Nation
45:582)
Orpheus the musician, the Argonaut, the lover,
the martyr and a moral - in five brief, flippant
stanzas.

- 1953 Edwin Muir, Orpheus' Dream (Collected Poems)
 Orpheus only imagines Eurydice is restored;
 he turns and sees her
 Still sitting in her silver chair
 Alone in Hades' empty hall (17-18).
- 1954 Eli Mandel, Orpheus (Trio)
 Orpheus as a Welsh coal miner.
- 1954 Anne Goodwin Winslow, Orpheus To Pluto (New Yorker,
 30: Dec. 11, 1961)
 Orpheus, a peaceful homebody, asks for Eurydice
 because "Home was where she liked to be".
- 1955 Sidney Goodsir Smith, Orpheus and Eurydice,
a didactic poem.
 a drama in Scottish dialect, with a few random
 quotes from Henryson.
- 1956 Harold Francis Stewart, Orpheus and Other Poems
- 1956 Roy Campbell, Orpheus: for Gene Tunney
 Orpheus, in his ninth re-incarnation, retells his
 life-story in modern terms before being shot by
 the state police.
- 1959 James Dickey, Orpheus Before Hades (New Yorker 35:
 Dec. 5, 1962)
 Orpheus' lyric plea for the renewal of spring.
- n.d. Newton M. Baskett, Orpheus and Eurydice
- n.d. David Gascoyne, Orpheus in the Underworld
 Orpheus dreams of "tears and wet leaves, cold
 curtains of rock".

But despite this steady output of mythological poetry, Orpheus' abiding popularity in our century is due to his re-incarnations on the stage and in the films. Our most famous Orpheus is Cocteau's Orphée, which appeared on the stage in 1926 and, with many changes,¹² on the screen in 1951. This figure is largely the symbolist Orphée transplanted by Cocteau to the theatrical medium: he is not a musician, but a poet in contact with another world, and death is a reality which hovers over him.

Orphée himself introduces his play with a request for understanding from the audience. He and Eurydice live in a modern Thrace, surrounded by marvels of all sorts. In the opening scene, Orphée is shown detecting poetic messages from the world beyond from the hoofbeats of an oracular horse which he keeps in his house.¹³ This infuriates the conventional Eurydice, but to Orphée "la moindre de ces phrases est plus étonnante que tous les poèmes".¹⁴ He seems to be discovering himself in these messages, one of which, "Madame Eurydice reviendra des enfers", he enters in the annual poetry competition sponsored by a women's

¹²Many of the changes are introduced from Cocteau's first film, Le Sang d'un Poète (1933).

¹³The point seems to be that Orpheus, who enchanted the beasts with his song, is ironically enchanted by a beast's poetry.

¹⁴Oeuvres Complètes de Jean Cocteau (Paris, 1951), vol. 5, p. 24.

club called the Bacchantes. Eurydice is eventually poisoned by the jealous leader of this group, and Death, in the person of a beautiful young woman, comes with two surgeon-like assistants to claim her. Orphée is warned of the treachery by an angel named Huertebise,¹⁵ but he arrives too late to save his wife. Death has accidentally left her gloves behind, however, and Huertebise tells Orphée he can follow Eurydice into the next world by donning the gloves and passing through the mirror:

Je vous livre le secret des secrets. Les miroirs sont les portes par lesquelles la Mort va et vient. Ne le dites à personne. Du reste, regardez-vous toute votre vie dans une glace et vous verrez la Mort travailler comme des abeilles dans une ruche de verre.¹⁶

The recovery of Eurydice behind the mirror is accomplished in the split second it takes the postman to deliver a letter. The condition imposed on Orphée is that he never look upon his wife again. But in a quarrel he accidentally does so, and she disappears. Orphée opens the letter and discovers that his poem "Madame Eurydice reviendra des Enfers" has aroused the fury of the Bacchantes because its initial letters spell out "un mot injurieux". "Le cheval m'a joué!"

¹⁵"Huertebise", Cocteau's angel, appears often in his poetry. For the origin of the name, see Neal Oxenhandler, Scandal and Parade: The Theater of Jean Cocteau (Rutgers, 1957), p. 88.

¹⁶Oeuvres, loc. cit., p. 58.

cries Orphée,¹⁷ but he breaks the horse's spell by joyfully accepting his martyrdom. In the closing scenes, Orphée is paid the usual posthumous honors of the misunderstood poet; his severed head announces that his name is really Jean Cocteau, and then with his wife and guardian angel Huertebise he mounts to heaven.

This outline omits hundreds of details which are undoubtedly significant to Cocteau and his following, but it at least indicates some ways in which the myth has been used, as well as some of the serious, comic, analogous, and scandalous levels of the play.

In the film the horse, the poetry contest, and the severed head are gone; the tone is almost unrelievedly serious. The scope of the motion picture camera allows us to enter the world beyond several times, and the central character seems to be less Orphée than Orphée's Death, a mysterious Princess who travels about escorted by two motorcyclists. In the film, Huertebise is her chauffeur, and the poetic messages from the other world come over the short-wave radio in her Rolls-Royce. Orphée is a celebrated Parisian poet who is seeking a fresh approach to poetry. When a brilliant young left-bank writer named Cégeste is run down and killed by the Princess and her cyclists, Orphée

¹⁷Ibid., p. 74.

rides off in the car, and learns that the young poet has been receiving his inspiration through his connection with the Princess. He longs to receive the same poetic secrets he hears crackling over her car-radio. As a result of his obsession, his unloved, pregnant Eurydice is claimed by the Princess and, as in the play, Orphée is told by Huertebise to recover her by donning the gloves and passing through the mirror. But he realizes that he is making the journey to the beyond more out of fascination with his Death, the Princess, than out of love for his wife.

The judges of the world of the dead - three blue-serged businessmen - restore Eurydice to life because the Princess has claimed her prematurely. It is discovered that the two agents of death have fallen in love with mortals - the Princess with Orphée, Huertebise with Eurydice. Stern warnings are issued them to abide by the decrees of death, and Orphée is told he must never again look at Eurydice. The couple's new life is short, however - Eurydice is dispatched by Orphée's accidental glance into a mirror, and he is shot down by the Bacchantes as the supposed murderer of Cégeste.

But great poets are immortal: in the memorable concluding scene of the film, the Princess and Huertebise tell Orphée and Eurydice that they are ready to die in their stead, and go to be punished by the judges.

Both the film and the play are unconventional: Orphée was Cocteau's first important play, and the film Orphée is a compendium of his screen technique. In both media logic and convention are scorned in an attempt to surround the story with an atmosphere of unreality - ironically achieved by introducing the most realistic, even mechanical elements. But the deliberate shock element of the play has been replaced, after twenty-five years, by the marvelous and the picturesque in the film. The theater audience is startled into accepting the story; the cinema audience is drawn to do so by curious, evocative images.

Cocteau's attitude towards the myth has changed as well. In the play it is the power of poetry that is central: because he is a poet, Orphée can contact the unknown regions beyond; these seek to communicate with him in ways malevolent (the horse) and benignant (Huertebise). The marvels which surround the poet bring his destruction and his apotheosis. To an extent these ideas are also present in the film, but the emphasis has switched from the poet to the world of death, which is seen no longer as contrasted good and evil, but as a terrible world which almost absorbs the poet and his wife. The true poet (Cégeste) must contact this world; the immortal poet (Orphée) must conquer it by winning its love. Death is not cheated, however, and exacts its vengeance from its own agent, the Princess - who is the real Eurydice to Orphée.

These themes, the power of poetry in the play, the power of death in the film, are unquestionably inherent in the Orpheus-myth; they are found in the earliest literary traces - the one in Euripides, the other in Plato, both in the Culex. Unfortunately Cocteau evokes them, not through the Orpheus-Eurydice story itself, but by imposing some mythology of his own upon the classic myth. By his own admission he uses Orpheus because he feels "quite naturally drawn to a myth in which life and death meet face to face".¹⁸ But it is life and death, not Orpheus and Eurydice, that inspire him. The mythical figures are obscured, almost submerged in the concentration on the two worlds between which they are drawn. The details of the story, even the crucial backward glance, tend only to get in the way of Cocteau's erratic vision. They are eventually fitted in, but with considerable adjustment. In the last analysis, it must be said that the importance of Cocteau's Orphée is due not to the classical figure of Orpheus but to Cocteau's strangely evolving sense of style and his fascination with the power of poetry and death, which themes he conveniently finds in the Orpheus-myth.

¹⁸Jean Cocteau and Andre Fraigneau, Cocteau on the Film (London, 1954), p. 101.

Cocteau is at present at work on a new film, Le Testament d'Orphée. Meanwhile, plays and films on the subject continue. Anouilh's Eurydice¹⁹ retells the myth in the drab settings of a provincial railway station and a shabby Marseilles hotel-room. Orpheus and his father are itinerant cafe musicians and Eurydice and her mother actresses in a down-at-the-heel theatre troupe. Between trains they meet and fall in love, escape from their parents for a few hours, in which the whole world and all the people in it are transformed for them. But the sweetness in life is impermanent: Eurydice's scandalous past pursues her; she leaves Orpheus and is killed in a street accident. Then Death, in the person of the mysterious M. Henri, arranges that the grief-stricken Orpheus should meet her again in the deserted station and win her back, provided he does not look her in the face before dawn. But now Orpheus is curious about Eurydice's previous lovers, and in his longing to preserve her as he had once known her, faces her and has the truth out. Eurydice fades into the night, as her essential goodness is asserted by apparitions of all the characters in the play. In the final act, as Orpheus's father extols the pleasures and ambitions of the bourgeois

¹⁹Entitled Point of Departure in Great Britain and Legend of Lovers in the United States.

life, Orpheus is persuaded by M. Henri to meet Eurydice in death that night.

This is the disillusioned Anouilh of the years of the German occupation of France, savoring the sweetness of life and love, but convinced that it can never survive in a sordid world. For Orpheus and Eurydice, anything is preferable to the compromise their parents have made; they choose death, which promises to give some permanence to their love.

Despite its success, critics have been harsh with the play²⁰; it has been judged artistically unsound in its sentimental, pseudo-existentialist approach to serious problems and morally shabby in its self-pity, its rationalization of promiscuity, its mawkish death-wishing. But it has moments of beauty and humor and - more than Cocteau's play - it seems to have touched on, if not sounded the full possibilities of, the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.

The current film The Fugitive Kind is adapted from Tennessee Williams' play Orpheus Descending. The movie is more honest than the play as far as the title is concerned:

²⁰See Walter Kerr in Commonweal 55(1952) pp. 373-4; Joseph Wood Krutch in The Nation 174(1952) p. 44; Harold Clurman in The New Republic 126(1952) p. 23; Brooks Atkinson in The New York Times, Oct. 29, 1959, p. 37. The CBC recently cancelled a scheduled television presentation, on moral grounds.

neither has anything much to do with Orpheus. It is no credit to Williams' art that he can invest an old play with "classical significance" merely by equipping his hero with a guitar.²¹

The myth is more explicitly dealt with in another current film, Orfeu Negro (Black Orpheus). This is, again, an experimental work, almost a ballet, based on a play²² by the Brazilian diplomat Vinicius de Moraes and filmed in Brazil by the French director Marcel Camus. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is here re-enacted by the favelas, the negroes who live by the thousands in shacks made of cast-off oil-cans and perched on the steep cliffs overlooking the Bay of Rio de Janeiro. Among their number is Orpheus, whose guitar-playing, according to the favela children,

²¹Orpheus Descending is a rewrite of the unsuccessful Battle of Angels, which had no reference to Orpheus. It must be said however that in the revision the myth gives some unity to a brutal melodrama that would otherwise be merely a succession of scenes arbitrarily motivated.

²²Orfeu de Conceição. The present title may have been suggested by Jean-Paul Sartre's Orphée Noir (Paris, 1948), a collection of French negro poetry. Sartre says, "Je nommerai 'orphique' cette poésie parce que cette inlassable descente du nègre en soi-même me fait songer à Orphée allant réclamer Eurydice à Pluton (p. xvii)."

makes the sun rise every day. By occupation he is a streetcar-conductor. Eurydice is a peasant girl newly come to the settlement, followed by a rejected lover who is intent on killing her. She meets the carefree minstrel and together they descend to Rio to dance in the carnival, Orpheus costumed as the sun and Eurydice as the night. Here amid the bizarre figures and the frenzied, whirling rhythms they are separated, and Eurydice is trapped in a power plant by her pursuer, who is masquerading as Death. Ironically it is Orpheus who unwittingly causes her death when he turns on the power switch to look for her. The hells in which Black Orpheus then seeks his Eurydice are the bureau of missing persons, the spirit-conjuring rituals of the Macumba and, finally, the morgue, where he finds her body and carries it, at dawn, through the aftermath of the carnival to his home high above the city. Here, as he sings that happiness is only an illusion, he is struck by a rock thrown by a jealous "bacchant" and, with Eurydice still in his arms, he plunges over the cliff to his death. One of the children picks up his guitar to play as the sun rises on another day.

Camus' film is most effective in its fantastic array of color, rhythm and sound. Its weakness lies in the disparity between this heady atmosphere and the fragile Greek myth which is forced into it. The first half of the film is a sympathetic and imaginative re-creation of the

myth in modern terms; then suddenly various mythical details are violently and arbitrarily fitted into a context that steadily resists them. Thus the caretaker of the power plant must be named Hermes; the diabolic rituals must be guarded by a ferocious dog named Cerberus; during the incantation Orpheus must be tricked into believing he hears Eurydice's voice calling him, telling him not to look back. These devices are clumsy enough, but what eventually wreaks havoc with the myth is the social commentary abruptly introduced by Camus:

One of my themes was the denunciation of apathy: apathy in religion (as shown in the religious sect of the Macumba); apathy in public office, symbolized by the advance of red-tape bureaucracy; apathy in the face of the distress which rules those white hells of the hospital and the mortuary.²³

While Camus has something important to say, the Orpheus-myth hardly seems the appropriate vehicle in which to say it. For the details of the myth obscure the message: instead of adding an extra dimension to the work (as it did for the socially-orientated mythological poems of the Victorians) the myth makes abstract types of what should be sympathetic characters. And on the other hand, the message is never related to the meaning of the myth: the mysterious power of music over death, the problem of the control of

²³Quoted in Georges Sadoul, "Notes on a New Generation", Sight and Sound 28 (1959), p. 112.

human passion, the loss of beauty won by song - these are submerged in a swirling mass of color and misplaced social indignation. In the end, the award-laden Orfeu Negro makes no real contribution to the literature of Orpheus.

Joseph Chiardi, speaking of Cocteau in particular, makes some observations on the problem of adapting classic myths to modern drama which can be applied to Anouilh, Williams and Camus as well:

The only way of revitalizing myths is...from the source, and not by making old shapes and ancient characters speak in modern ways. The serious use of a myth in modern settings and situations involves an attempt to link together a religious and spiritual element which is no longer ours and is, therefore, difficult to experience, with events and human actions and reactions which cannot fit in it. The result is unconvincing and dangerously near the burlesque, for there is nothing which comes nearer laughter than a seriousness which cannot be grasped, or things which were once awe-inspiring and have now completely lost their aura of reverence. Orpheus' plight, for instance, can only be fully accepted within the atmosphere of Greek life and thought, and not by being transferred into our modern life. The Orpheus of Greek life, with his trail of mystery, is far more convincing than the wandering minstrel of our modern playwrights. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice still retains for us its former power and pathos, for the mystery which gave it birth is not solved... The only way in which an old myth can be given new life is, I believe, by using not its external form, but the affective tangle which gave it birth.²⁴

It remains for us now to reinvestigate that "affective tangle".

²⁴The Contemporary French Theater (London, 1958), pp. 110-1.

CONCLUSIONS

THE MEANING OF THE MYTH

We have noted three facts about myths: they evolve in literature; their meanings change or deepen as they are used by men of different ages; some potent myths generate new art-forms in which to express themselves. The first and last of these facts have been demonstrated, with regard to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, in Chapters I and V, respectively. It remains to outline the meaning of the myth as it has revealed itself in literature, as we have traced it through the Culex and Virgil to Boethius and Sir Orfeo, to Politian, Novalis, Rilke and Cocteau.

The meaning Orpheus and Eurydice have for the men of any age is largely conditioned by the way in which that age uses myth. Among primitive peoples it is customary to distinguish between myth proper (the explanation of natural phenomena), legend (traditional history) and folklore (purely imaginative narration). It is extremely difficult, however, to categorize Greek myths along these lines, as many of them partake of the nature of myth, legend and folklore at one and the same time. The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is certainly one of these. It has been assigned a number of

"mythical" origins because it fits into the general class of underworld descent-myths which express the opposition of day and night and life and death; it was treated, even in ancient times, as legend because of its association with Orpheus, the legendary founder of Greek civilization; it can be safely classed as folklore because the climax of its action - the backward look - is a part of the folklore of the world. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice meant at least three things to the ancient world: it symbolized the eternal struggle of the elements; it recounted the legendary power of a great civilizer; it told a tragic love story. Each level of myth had something to contribute to the richness of the resulting whole. And as the story continued to appear in literature, part myth, part legend, part folklore, it came to grips with three subjects: the mystery of life and death; the power of poetry over the elements of nature and the powers beyond nature; the problem of the control of emotion, necessary for the survival of love.

We noted that the Culex deals with all three of these themes. Virgil's beautiful account also shows their interrelation in the story - but, in the overall context of the Georgics, emphasizes the second, Orpheus the civilizer.

The Middle Ages approached classical myth in two ways - by means of allegory, in an attempt to penetrate to the universal meaning in the narrative, and by romance, in an attempt to recreate the narrative in new terms. If we think of myth as symbol, then we must say that these medieval phenomena are opposed to myth: allegory often brutally un-masks the symbol; romance ignores the symbol and overlays the myth with contemporary details. Myth is forced to become reality. For Boethius, Fulgentius, King Alfred and all the moralized Metamorphoses, the Orpheus-myth expresses a higher reality; in Sir Orfeo it is retold in real, if fanciful, terms. Perhaps the myth was little understood in the Middle Ages. As Douglas Bush says, "Whatever went into the capacious melting pot, the Aeneid or a tale from the Metamorphoses, came out a romance, or a sermon, or both."¹ But no one will deny that the Orpheus-myth was "a living source of culture"² as it was in almost no other age, and that it was embodied in works of beauty.

¹Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry (New York, 1957), p. 23.

²Ibid., p. 24.

For the Renaissance, myth was a revolt against reality, a symbolic return to ancient times. Classical myths were seen as powerfully suggestive. But while they were certainly better understood than in the Middle Ages, they were, on the whole, less well served. Because Renaissance authors refused to penetrate myth, preferring to use it allusively, symbolically, most of the Greek and Roman myths were exploited, then satirized, and at last discarded. In this period the tragic, romantic Orpheus of the descent is less important than the symbolic figure of Orpheus the civilizer, who is extolled in Politian's Orfeo, but exploited in hundreds of frigid allusions in all languages, then satirized and eventually discarded. Perhaps we should say that he was abandoned to the operatic stage.

Mythological poetry in the eighteenth century was still producing "plaster reproductions of the antique".³ But the Romantics saw myth in a new light. It became the defense of poetry against science, a kind of supra-scientific knowledge. The mystical poetry of the Orphic poet assumed new importance in this movement, and Novalis and Hölderlin found an insight into poetry itself in the myth of Orpheus' descent. The warmly human Orpheus bequeathed

³Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), p. 529.

to literature by the operas of Monteverdi and Gluck became an apt subject for Romantic poetry, and, as myth became a means for expressing social attitudes, the story was often told by Eurydice.

Today myth is again used symbolically, and Orpheus is a symbol of the supra-rational power of art (Rilke and the French symbolists) while his descent reflects the mission of the artist to explore uncharted regions (Cocteau).

Despite this change in the conception of and the approach to myth, the story of Orpheus and Eurydice has continued, through the ages, to express some of the most basic human truths. As embodied in the writings of poets, it has had something to say about death, about art, and about love. Invariably in the course of its literary history it has been burdened with extraneous meanings; it has been used and abused by men who had little or no sympathy with it; it has been drained of its meaning through overuse, only to re-emerge with fresh significance in a new age. Some of the best treatments of the myth do not help us understand it: with Ovid and Jaúregui and Ronsard it is chiefly a story to be well told; with Keats and Offenbach and Marcel Camus it is the occasion for some felicitous or impressive work, but work which does not reveal any of the myth's significance. A score of men have, however,

given some indication of its latent meaning. We shall treat them under three headings.

The mystery of death

The various theories of the origin of the myth of Orpheus' descent agree in explaining it with reference to life and death. Eurydice lost, regained and lost again may represent the crop-cycle, or (among the Orphic initiates) the reincarnation of the soul every thousand years, after its long purification in the afterlife. Eurydice retreating before the glance of Orpheus may be spring fleeing before summer, the night before the day, the mists of dawn before the full morning of the sun. These theories have been used by some modern poets, notably Edith Sitwell, but generally speaking poets do not view the myth as a recurrent cycle. Rather it is a story which comes to a tragic end: death claims a victory over life. In classical times, from Plato to the Stoic poets of Rome, we are warned that death is never cheated; in Christian times, from King Alfred through Ovide Moralisé to Calderón, we are warned that the state of grace can be lost forever; in the Romantic era, in Schiller and Lowell, we feel regret that the beautiful must perish. Some writers have identified themselves with Orpheus and attempted to penetrate the mystery of death: Novalis found it the ideal world of poetry; Housman went to meet it joyfully; Rilke saw it as sweet fulness and complete absorption;

for Moore it is a beautiful world of ideals; for Anouilh it means purity and permanence; for Cocteau it is fantastic and terrifying.

The power of music

The story of Orpheus and Eurydice is unique among the myths of life and death in that its hero symbolizes not only man, but man in the specific role of artist. The unifying element in all the myths connected with Orpheus is the all-compelling power of his song, which holds sway over all nature, harmonizing and transforming it. This is the contribution that legend has made to the story of the descent: it is the legendary, civilizing Orpheus who seeks his Eurydice; he overcomes Hades, not by force, as Hercules does, or by magic, as do the epic heroes Odysseus and Aeneas, but by art. In the optimism of the Renaissance, especially in Politian, Orpheus symbolizes the civilizing force of human wisdom. With the French symbolists and with the late Rilke he is more properly art, which gives meaning and even existence to all things. But Virgil reminds us that the artist, who is indeed the civilizer, must meet with failure, for he seeks truth in a world inaccessible to other men, and, though he finds it, he can never fully possess it. Cocteau realizes that the artist must enter this world, but he refuses to

admit that he is foredoomed to failure.⁴

The nature of human love

Finally, Orpheus and Eurydice are lovers, and to every age their myth has been one of the classic expressions of human love - love which is courageous enough to brave the terrors of hell to find its fulfillment. For the earliest classical writers, love is stronger than death, and overcomes it. In optimistic ages this meaning is re-affirmed: in the High Middle Ages (Sir Orfeo), in the Renaissance (the experiments of the Camerata) and, half-heartedly, in the last stages of neo-Classicism (Gluck). But in the overwhelming majority of its incarnations, the myth implies that death has the final victory. Orpheus and Eurydice are star-crossed lovers (haunted, in Spanish literature, by agüeros), flesh-and-blood creatures of passion (Monteverdi, Robert Browning). Here is the contribution of folklore - Orpheus' backward look undoes all that his art had accomplished. This tragic ending to the story has prompted poets to use it to express various aspects of human love: for Anouilh, love is impermanent; for the author of the Culex, it can survive only if passion is controlled; for the Victorians,

⁴Cocteau's forthcoming film, Le Testament d'Orphée, which he says will be his last cinematic statement, may make this admission.

husband and wife must realize their mutual obligations. Almost all the treatments conclude that human love, if it is to grow strong and deep, must be selfless.

Thus, while it is proper to say that myth means something different to every age, it is also clear that the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice has a continuing, almost uniform tradition from Virgil to the present, that it owes its perennial vitality to three strands which are beautifully interwoven in its story. Other myths tell of the cycle of life and death; other legends, of the universal power of music; other folklore, of tragically separated lovers. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice brings the three strands together. The result is a richly rewarding literary theme which is more alive today, and in the most vital art-forms, than ever before.

Myth is, in the last analysis, a beautiful way of expressing truth - not reasoned, factual, conceptualized truth, but truth as grasped by the intuition and the imagination. We must not go too far, then, in any analysis. For myths are destroyed by precision; their significance can never be documented. It can only be revealed anew each time the myth is reborn in the writings of genius.

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