HERO AND LEANDER

—— Marlowe's Own Elegy ——

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In trying to appreciate Marlovian plays and poems, we are confronted with various problems ; the date of composition, and the textual problems. In the case of *Hero and Leander,* many critics agree that it belongs to Marlowe's last work.[1] Especially William Keach tells us its date of composition minutely : "*Hero and Leander* seems to have been written at the same time as *Venus and Adonis.* Although Marlowe's epyllion was not entered in the Stationers' Register until 28 September 1593, almost five and a half months after Shakespeare's (18 April), and of course not published until 1598, it must have been written by the spring of 1593, since Marlowe was killed at Deptford on 30 May of that year. The plague of 1592–1593 had interrupted Marlowe's career as a dramatist much as it had Shakespeare's ; he probably worked on *Hero and Leander* during his stay at Sir Thomas Walsingham's house at Scadbury, near Chistehurst in Kent, where he had gone to wait for the plague to subside in London and the theatres to reopen. He may well have contemplated a poem like *Hero and Leander* during his Cambridge days, when he was translating Ovid's *Amores.* But the confident virtuosity of the couplets of his epyllion suggests that the stylistic development manifested in the plays intervened between *All Ovids Elegies* and *Hero and Leander.*"[2] When we put all accounts together, it may be said that *Hero and Leander* belongs to the end of Marlowe's career.

As for the publications of *Hero and Leander,* we can trace the history of its publications minutely with the help of the critics. *Hero and Leander* was "entered in the Stationers' Register on 28 September 1593 by John Wolf. The first surviving edition is that of 1598 issued by Edward Blount, who dedicated it to Sir Thomas Walsingham, in memory of Sir Thomas's patronage of the poet. Only one copy of this edition survives and is in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington. To 1598 also belongs the editions of Paul Linley, containing Chapman's continuation of the poem. One of this last is in the British Museum."[3] Generally grave textual problems make our interpretation of Marlovian plays and poems more difficult. But there has been little argument among the critics about collaboration or revision. Ingram, on behalf of the critics, warrants the authorship of the poem : "Happily, there is no cause for doubting the authorship of Marlowe's masterpiece, his exquisite poem of 'Hero and Leander.' This fragment, as it is styled, really concludes where one would wish it to."[4] Thus his opinion will enable us to appreciate Marlowe's intention and meaning in the poem.

In writing *Hero and Leander,* Marlowe seemed to have relied heavily on a story and some poems ; "The story of Hero and Leander had been told by Abraham Fraunce in his Third Part of the Countesse of Pembrokes Yvychurch (1592), where it is offered as a tale already enjoying great popularity. Marlowe had already alluded to it in *The Tragedie of Dido* . . . . He also knew Musaeus' Greek poem, translated into French by Climent Marot (1541) and into Latin by F. Paulinus (1587) ; it was the latter version he probably used."[5] Moreover, Marlowe exerts his another ingenuity in his sources ; Poirier continues, "Marlowe's

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purpose was to compose a very free adaptation of that poem. Interrupted by his death, it was completed by Chapman. The two cantos or 'sestiads' he had time to write include 818 lines, which correspond approximately to Musaeus' first 265. Marlowe borrowed the main facts from him, but dealt with the story in his own way, adorning and embellishing it. He lengthened it by means of descriptions and two mythological episodes."[6]

So far we have argued various problems we are confronted with when we appreciate *Hero and Leander.* In addition to these problems, many critics are divided in opinion as to the appreciation of *Hero and Leander.* F. S. Boas, calling *Hero and Leander* "a narrative poem," praises it highly : "Indeed the two Sestiads of *Hero and Leander,* which he lived to complete, are, for sustained beauty and consummate workmanship, the most perfect product of his pen. The Renaissance spirit is there in its very quintessence : it leaps and glows in every line. Its frank Paganism, its intoxication of delight in the loveliness of earthly things, especially, the bodies of men and women, its ardour of desire, the desire that wakens 'at first sight' and that presses forward impetuously to possession—all these find here matches utterance."[7] In opposition to such romantic readings of the poem, some critics say that it dramatizes the comedy and absurdity of young love, and disregards the way in which Marlowe preserves in muted form an awareness of the final tragedy. Brian Morris says : "Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* is a great comic fragment .... It suggests an attitude to human love which is neither the celebration of rarified passion nor the simple enjoyment of the flesh ; it asks us to believe that Marlowe deliberately denied the lovers what his exemplars, Ovid and Musaeus, had considered their true decorum."[8] On behalf of such critics, J.B. Steane puts it : "What everybody seems to agree about is that it should not be taken too seriously."[9] In addition to such interpretations concerning the poem, Philip Henderson tells us about the unity and tone of the poem : "*Hero and Leander* is an unequal work. It has little of the dramatic unity evident in *Venus and Adonis,* and it varies in tone from a baroque over-elaboration of detail to a subtle and, at times, epigrammatic clarity."[10] Furthermore, C. S. Lewis offers harsh criticism on this poetry : "Marlowe's part of the poem is the most shameless celebration of sensuality which we can find in English literature."[11]

As above-mentioned, there are many opinions about the interpretation of the poem. Moreover, *Hero and Leander,* in which Marlowe handles the heroic couplet, is left unfinished probably because of his sudden death, and in his dying moments, it is said, Marlowe charged Chapman, his friend, with the task of completing the poem, so Chapman in his turn completed the poem, adding Marlowe's part to his own four Sestiads. Thus Marlowe narrates only a fragment of the entire story. This fact makes our appreciation of the poem more difficult. Therefore, in this paper we will deal with Marlowe's Sestiads alone, making no mention of Chapman's, and at the same time we will appreciate the poem not by a one-sided view, but in the light of the opposite opinions. When we read the poem, we will find various verbal images and emblems, mythical allusions and ironies spoken by the main characters and the narrator. These elements, it seems, are the signs to realize Marlowe's intention of the poem. Therefore, by paying attention to the unity of the poem and the actions and speeches of the main characters as well as to these signs and Marlowe's technique and artistic presentation, we will investigate Marlowe's real intention of the poem in the following chapters.

I

Before narrating the First Sestiad, Marlowe tells us about the argument of the Sestiad:

Hero's description and her love's;
The fane of Venus, where he moves
His worthly love-suit, and attains;
Whose bliss the wrath of Fates restrains
For Cupid's grace to Mercury:
Which tale the author doth imply.[12]

Structually the Hero portrait (11.5-50) resembles the Leander portrait (11.51-90) quite well: both contain descriptions of Hero's and Leander's beauty with mythological conceits, telling of the effect their beauty has upon those who see them, including gods.

When we read the first line of his epyllion—"On Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood" (I. 1), we will deepen the impression that Marlowe wanted to make us aware of the tragic ending of the story. But we will be struck by the unreality of Hero on Marlowe's first introduction of her, compared with the livingly concrete description of Leander's male beauty. Here Marlowe begins preparing for the irony of "Venus' nun" by referring early in Hero's portrait to the story of Venus and Adonis:

Her wide sleeves green, and bordered with a grove,
Where Venus in her naked glory strove
To please the careless and disdainful eyes
Of proud Adonis that before her lies. (I. 11-14)

Venus's nakedness stands in direct contrast to Hero's elaborately designed costume; Venus's behaviour stands in direct contradiction to Hero's vows of chastity. At the same time, the passage foreshadows the end of the poem of how Hero "trembling strove" in Leander's arms (II. 291) and of how Leander lay in bed looking at the naked Hero much as Adonis looks at Venus in this passage. The narrator continues to describe Hero; her kirtle is blue and stained with the blood "of wretched lovers slain" (I. 16); she wears "a myrtle wreath" on her head; her veil reaches the ground and is so realistically embroidered with artificial leaves and flowers that the "workmanship both man and beast deceives" (I. 20); round her neck hangs a chain of pebbles; her buskins are made of shells, "branch'd with blushing coral to the knee," (I. 32) where sparrows, made of pearl and gold, perch. These birds are filled with water, "Which as she went would cherup through the bills." (I. 36). As above-mentioned, Hero's extraordinary costume contains "a myrtle wreath" and "sparrows." They are "attributes of Venus specifically associated with her erotic power."[13] Hero is, in a sense, surrounded with the outward symbols of sexual love. Therefore, Hero's extraordinary costume suggests "the superficiality and falseness of her pose as a chaste nun of Venus."[14] Furthermore, at the end of Hero portrait, the narrator says, "So lovely fair was Hero, Venus' nun." (I. 45). "Venus' nun" was "Elizabethan slang for prostitute."[15] So the word in the poem may represent a perversion of the idea of chaste virgins. The picture of Venus and "Venus' nun" will foreshadow Hero's eventual surrender to Leander with a double ironies. Thus the narrator's ironic portrait of Hero is extravagantly artificial and gives us only a vague sense of her physical beauty because he refers to Hero's costume, not to her body; the only reference to her body in the portrait is to her "naked neck" (I. 42) which Cupid is said to have embraced, mistaking her for his mother. In the whole passage the description of her costume contrasts steeply with her almost unremarked flesh.

The description of Leander is quite opposite; it is concretely sensual and erotic. He is pictured naked, and the narrator dwells sensuously on his body:

His body was as straight as Circe's wand;
Jove might have sipt out nectar from his hand.
Even as delicious meat is to the taste,
So was his neck in touching, and surpast
The white of Pelops' shoulder: I could tell ye,
How smooth his breast was, and how white his belly,
And whose immortal fingers did imprint
That heavenly path with many a curious dint,
That runs along his back; ...
. . . . . .
Some swore he was a maid in man's attire,
For in his looks were all that men desire. (I. 61–69; 83–84)

Harry Levin points out the difference between Hero's portrait and Leander's "The opening description of the lovers is primarily visual, with both of them; but, with Hero, it also appeals to smell and sound; while, with Leander, the appeal is to touch and taste—both the tactile senses."[16] At any rate, the gorgeous outside, the splendid costume is Hero's; the beautiful body belongs to Leander. "The inverted pattern is completed by the public judgement on Leander's beauty."[17]: "Some swore he was a maid in man's attire, / For in his books were all that men desire." (I.83–84). But Leander's behaviour is never effeminate; in the passage Morris quotes, the reference is to Leander's countenance rather than to his body and the emphasis is on what the narrator says "some" other men see in him. This fact is proved by the Neptune episode, where Leander is compelled to respond to Neptune's wooing by saying "You are deceiv'd, I am no woman, I" (II. 192). Leander is wooed by men as if he were a woman, but he is not effeminate. In addition, the narrator makes all this quite clear at the end of the portrait: "And such as knew he was a man would say, / Leander, thou art made for amorous play" (I. 87–88). At any rate, the significant of the homoerotic motif in the Leander portrait does not become clear till the Neptune episode in the Second Sestiad. However, we will find that the homoerotic motif is prepared for by another remarkable line in the Leander portrait: "His body was straight as Circe's wand" (I. 61). Morris, quotating Sandys' commentary on *Ovids Metamorphosis Englished,* argues that Circe's wand "would suggest sinister pleasure to any alert Renaissance reader."[18] His argument will imply that in spite of fascinating charm, Leander's beauty, like Circe's wand, has the power to convert men and gods into beasts. Here we will recall the imagery of the Ganymede and Pelops allusion. The narrator's attitude towards Leander is already becoming more ambivalent.

After the introductory scene, Marlowe extends his conceptions of Hero as "Venus' nun" and of Leander as "made for amorous play." The citizens of Sestos are celebrating the Feast of Adonis, and Hero goes to perform rites in the Temple of Venus. Venus' temple is decorated with images of "the gods in sundry shapes, / Committing heady riots, incest, rapes" (I. 143–144). It seems that Venus to whom Hero has pledged herself in virginity gives her wild sexual license. In the midst of the lusts of the gods depicted on the walls (I. 145–156) "a silver altar stood," and we see "there Hero sacrificing turtles' blood" (I. 157–158). Here we will find the muted tragic overtones mentioned previously; we cannot help recalling the "true lover's blood" of the first line in the poem. But these tragic overtones reveal the silliness and irony of what Hero is really doing; in the role as "Venus'nun" she is sacrificing the blood of turtle doves, but her real sacrifice to Venus leads to sacrifice of a different kind—the loss of virginity, and at last the loss of her and Leander's lives.

As soon as Hero rose from the sacrifice on Venus' altar, she looks at Leander and both are struck by "Love's arrow with the golden head" (I. 161). Leander's response to this exchange of looks shows the religious imagery:

He kneel'd, but unto her devoutly pray'd;
Chaste Hero to herself thus softly said:
'Were I the saint he worships, I would hear him';
And as she spake those words, came somewhat near him. (I. 177–180)

Her initial words, "Were I the saint he worships," seem like a confession that she is not the chaste nun she pretends to be. And her action in coming nearer Leander cuts off the reluctance expressed in the line. Here we see Marlowe achieve the irony through Hero's conflicting thoughts and more deeply expressive gestures. When Leander begins to "display Love's holy fire" (I. 192–193), the narrator asserts Hero's craftiness in a crisp couplet:

... sighs and tears,
Which like sweet music enter'd Hero's ears;
And yet at every word she turn'd aside,
And always cut him off as he replied. (I. 193–196)

In spite of this display of feminine reluctance, Leander seduces Hero like "a bold sharp sophister" (I. 197):

My words shall be as spotless as my youth,
Full of simplicity and naked truth. (I. 207–208)

Sophistically, he uses all sophistry. As the narrative develops, we will notice the contrast between the sophistication of his words and the naivety of his actual love-making. It seems that Marlowe's two Sestiads, contrasting the proposal with the consummation, connect innocence with experience. As sophistical seducer, Leander expresses the time-honoured arguments against virginity. In a practically uninterrupted speech he continues analogical arguments for about one hundred and thirty lines. The points he makes are few; chastity invites calumny; virginity is sacrilege in one who is "Venus' nun." Yet, at his climax, the narrator clips Hero's response into a couplet:

These arguments he us'd, and many more,
Wherewith she yielded, that was won before; (I. 329–330)

Dominated by love and yet capable of exerting a certain degree of control over the situation, Hero struggles:

Hero's looks yielded, but her words made war;
Women are won when they began to jar.
Thus having swallow'd Cupid's golden hook,
The more she striv'd, the deeper was she strook:
Yet evilly feigning anger, strove she still,
And would be thought to grant against her will. (I. 331–336)

As Keach points out, Marlowe repeats the word "strive," and "Hero strives to retain her security and at the same time to insure the continued ardor of her suitor."[19] Moreover, in her indirect invitation to Leander to visit her tower, Hero shows her determination of the course of the affair and at the same time reveals her weak point:

A dwarfish beldam bears me company,
That hops about the chamber where I lie,
And spends the night, that might be better spent,
In vain discourse and apish merriment.
Come thither! As she spake this, her tongue tripp'd,
For unawares 'Come thither' from her slipp'd;
And suddenly her former colour chang'd, (I. 353–359)

The two asides here is worth paying attention to. The first, "that might be better spent" is Hero's coquettish remark, while the second, "Come thither" is an unconscious slip of tongue. Indeed it exposes her curiosity and desire. Therefore, these lines can be said to reveal Hero's fundamental emotional conflict on a small scale.

As we have seen, Leander is a man thoroughly versed in the rhetoric of love but as unacquainted with love's reality as Hero. Hero and Leander are really contrasted in terms of innocence and experience; Hero's pose as a chaste nun of Venus hides her awakening sexual curiosity and sophistication, while Leander's pose as an experienced orator of love hides his "spotless youth." Both Hero and Leander reveal their true character by the pressures of immediate erotic desires and confront the doubtful realities of sexual love.

Marlowe ends the first meeting between Hero and Leander with the myth of Mercury. Marlowe "invents a whole new myth to account for the enmity between Mercury and the Fates, and hence for the sad luck scholars have in the world."[20] Cupid, seeing Hero's tears, eventually feels sorry for what he has done and visits the Destinies to secure at least a happy outcome for the lovers. But the Destinies hated Cupid: "Harken a while," says the narrator, "and I will tell you why" (I. 385). The story began when Mercury fell in love with a girl who would have him. However, she was ambitious, and asked him for a draught of Nectar, so Mercury had to steal it from Jove. Jove was very angry when this was done, and banished him from heaven. He complained to Cupid and Cupid took his side, making the Destinies to fall in love with Mercury. With their help, Mercury got rid of Jove from heaven and put Saturn in his place. But after accomplishing his end, he neglected the Destinies, and they, frustrated and furious, reserved the order of things once again. Thus Jove returned to heaven, Mercury, the scholar–god, was condemned to everlasting poverty, and the Destinies will do all they can to worry Cupid. So it foreshadows a dark outlook for Hero and Leander.

The interlude offers a series of interpretative parallels to the Hero–Leander story: Mercury's initial verbal wooing of the country maid, it seems, is clearly meant to recall Leander's remark of "Love's holy fire, with words, with sighs and tears, / Which like sweet music enter'd Hero's ears (I. 193–194):

And sweetly on his pipe began to play,
And with smooth speech her fancy to assay. (I. 401–402)

Mercury follows up his "smooth speech" too quickly with aggressive physical gestures (I. 403–410) and is compelled to retreat and resort again to verbal wooing. Like Mercury, Leander, after his long conversation, was rejected when he tried to embrace Hero and was compelled to press his suit and prove himself further (I. 341. ff.). But unlike Hero's, Mercury's embrace is more aggressive; it is the embrace of "an insolent commanding lover" (I. 409) who "often stray'd / Beyond the bound of shame, in being bold / To eye those parts which no eye should behold" (I. 406–408). Thus Mercury's act establishes the irony of Leander's naivety in the next meeting with Hero.

The country maid resembles Hero in her pretended innocence, but her freshness and naturalness contrast

Hero's artificiality. In point of behaviour, the country maid reveals many of the motives working in Hero, but it has a slight difference; like Hero she values her virginity, but far more practical reasons—her "only dower was her chastity" (I. 412). The country maid's shyness resembles Hero's but she is more ambitious and self-centered in her demands.

As we have seen, the Mercury episode has some resemblance and relation to the main narrative to satisfy our expectations of unity. Marlowe deliberately contrives the new myth, just as he contrives the foreshadowings of eventually tragedy. The antagonism between Love and Fate foretells that "Cupid's desire that the relationship of the two lovers "be bless'd" will not be fulfilled, both in the sense that their love will be tragically terminated and in the sense that under the "Stygian empery" of Jove love is inevitably and inherently troubled and tormented."[21]

II

The first meeting of Hero and Leander ends with Hero shyly delaying her departure and yet afraid "In offering parley, to be counted light" (II. 5–9). The transitional line to the second meeting (II. 17–102) forecasts the exposure of Leander's lack of experience. Hero drops her fan to give Leander a concrete reason to visit her, but "He being a novice, knew not what she meant" (II. 13). At any rate, Hero receives Leander warmly, though she is more worried than ever by her inner conflicts whether she should yield to Leander or she should protect "her name and honour" (II. 35). She begins to fear that her own misgivings will make her less charming, but at last, "like light Salmacis," she throws herself on him. In doing so, she reverses her previous religious offering to Venus and "offers up herself a sacrifice" (II. 44–48). But as he is a "Novice," Leander cannot understand this sort of sacrifice.

> Like AEsop's cock, this jewel he enjoyed,
> And as a brother with his sister toyed,
> Supposing nothing else was to be done,
> . . . . . .
> Albeit Leander, rude in love, and raw,
> Long dallying with Hero, nothing saw
> That might delight him more, yet he suspected
> Some amorous rites or other were neglected. (II 51–53; 61–64)

At last Leander begins to suspect that "some amorous rites or other were neglected" and embraces Hero passionately. Though she encouraged Leander's passion, Hero must stand on the defensive in her turn. Her resistance only excites Leander more, but her artfulness saves her once again:

> She, with a kind of granting, put him by it,
> And ever, as he thought himself most nigh it,
> Like to the tree of Tantalus she fled,
> And seeming lavish, sav'd her maidenhead. (II. 73–76)

At last the morning breaks and Leander departs "fearing to be miss'd" (II. 91), leaving Hero to fight another day. This meeting shows the total failure of Leander's seduction because his seductive words give place to actions. Leander has yet to learn the techniques of persuasion. In the three attempted seductions, the comments of the narrator seem to condition our response. He deals more satirically with Leander in this meeting than in the first, and it seems that he has begun to deal somewhat more sympathetically with Hero.

Marlowe seperates the second and third meetings of Hero and Leander with a brief account of Leander's return to Abydos (II. 95–154) and with the episode of Neptune's wooing of Leander. Marlowe prepares us for the Neptune episode with his account of Leander's homoerotic appeal and with his descriptions of the lechery of the gods, especially of Jove's dallying with Ganymede (I. 148) and of Sylvamus's love for Cyparissus (I. 154–155). As Leander dives naked into the Hellespont, Neptune mistakes Leander for Ganymede, and his actions speak for him:

> . . . therefore on him he seiz'd.
> Leander striv'd, the waves about him wound,
> And pull'd him to the bottom, ...
> • • • • • • •
> The lusty god embrac'd him, call'd him 'love,'
> And swore he never should return to Jove. (II. 158–160; 167–168)

The description is prolonged. And Ganymede is said to have been an Elizabethan slang term for "homosexual." Indeed the episode includes several touches of homosexuality. Neptune here is indeed a lusty paederast who feels no need of words to manifest his intentions:

> He clapp'd his plump cheeks, with his tresses play'd,
> And smiling wantonly, his love bewray'd.
> He watch'd his arms, and as they open'd wide,
> At every stroke, betwixt them would he slide,
> And steal a kiss, and then run out and dance,
> And as he turn'd, cast many a lustful glance,
> And throw him gaudy toys to please his eye,
> And dive into the water, and there pry
> Upon his breast, his thighs, and every limb,
> And up again, and close beside him swim,
> And talk of love . . . . (II. 181–191)

But Leander remains innocent. In spite of Neptune's frenzied activity, he is made futile by Leander's complete inability to understand what is going on, and begins the story of a shepherd sitting in a vale and playing with a lovely boy. Yet Leander remains virtuous. He interrupts the tale after only eight lines with a cry "Aye me," and a roundabout announcement to the effect that time's getting on (II. 202). The whole attempt ends in failure for Nepture. His activity is powerless; his eloquence is unable to convince Leander. After all he is reduced to searching the Ocean for gifts, in a last attempt to change Leander's mind:

> 'Tis wisdom to give much, a gift prevails,
> When deep persuading Oratory fails. (II. 225–226)

The last attempt, however, is prevented by Leander's safe arrival on shore at Sestos.

J. B. Steane sees in the Neptune episode "a presentation in mythological terms and pantomime style of the nightmare intrusion of the homosexual into a normal man's life."[22] There is indeed something dream–like, but when Steane says that the episode "implies . . . a sympathy with the homosexual's frustrated, hopeful, importunate, and often luricrous state . . . ,"[23] he seems to get closer to the truth about the episode. Therefore, it may be that we must see "the homoeroticism of the Neptune episode as part of the entire vision of erotic experience."[24] At the same time, we must notice that Marlowe suggests a violent,

threatening force inherent in love and plants the seeds for future tragedy ; for example, Neptune has already given Leander Helle's bracelet. At first sight, it seems to be the thing Leander needs to insure his safety. Helle was the maiden who escaped with his brother Phrixus from their wicked parents on the back of a golden ram, but she fell into a part of the sea thereafter called the "Helespont." Indeed Neptune has given Leander a token of the maiden who lost her life in the Hellespont. Therefore, the fact that Neptune presents Helle's bracelet as an assurance of safety from the sea seems to foreshadow that Neptune will seek vengeance upon Leander when he sees his love for Leander frustrated. So we cannot help thinking that as the Destinies in Marlowe's first interlude refuse to bless Hero and Leander because of their frustrated love for Mercury, so Neptune will refuse to assist the lovers because of his frustrated love for Leander himself.

Marlowe offers over a hundred lines to the final meeting of Hero and Leander. The meeting begins rather comically, and Hero receives Leander for the first time without the artificial costume in which she was dressed in the First Sestiad:

> She stayed not for her robes, but straight arose,
> And drunk with gladness, to the door she goes;
> Where seeing a naked man, she screech'd for fear,
> Such sights as this to tender maids are rare. (II. 235–238)

Indeed she looks more attractive, but she also looks more vulnerable. The more aggressive Leander becomes, the more vulnerable Hero gets : "The nearer that he came, the more she fled, / And seeking refuge, slipt into her bed" (II. 243–244). Apparently Hero wants Leander to make love to her, but at the same time she is uneasy and afraid. She wavers between fear of sex and sexual curiosity, between the desire to use her attractiveness in order to stand at advantage over Leander and the desire to surrender a passionate lover. As for Leander, he has one short, simple speech when he reaches the tower, in which the arts of persuasion are firmly abandoned; they are not necessary any longer:

> At least vouchsafe these arms some little room,
> Who hoping to embrace thee, cheerly swum.
> This head was beat with many a churlish billow,
> And therefore let it rest upon thy pillow. (II. 249–252)

The hyperbolic words are gone, the appeal is a simple plea for pity, and Leander does not speak another word in the poem. His actions speak for him. The lovers' union is accomplished through metaphors of battle and strategy :

> And every limb did as a soldier stout
> Defend the fort, and keep the foeman out.
> For though the rising ivory mount he scal'd,
> Which is with azure circling lines empal'd,
> Much like a globe (a globe may I term this,
> By which Love sails to regions full of bliss),
> Yet there with Sisyphus he toil'd in vain,
> Till gentle parley did the truce obtain. (II. 271–278)

The breast becomes a globe, the assault becomes a journey, the image is further complicated by the allusion to Sisyphus. Hero's strategic handling of the changing situations, her art in retaining social modesty without sacrificing any pleasure, are revealed in contrast with Leander's innocence. But finally "the truce was

broke, and she alas, / Poor silly maiden, at his mercy was" (II. 285–286). The emphasis is shifted gradually to "a sort of sexual brutality."[25]

> Love is not full of pity, as men say,
> But deaf and cruel where he means to prey. (II, 287–288)

The actual union of lovers is introduced with a hyperbolic epic simile; Hero is, as it were, victimized:

> Even as a bird, which in our hands we wring,
> Forth plungeth, and oft flutters with her wing,
> She trembling strove; . . . . (II. 289–291)

As this passage goes on, we cannot help thinking that Hero's trembling is due to fear alone:

> . . . this strife of hers (like that
> Which made the world) another world begat
> Of unknown joy. Treason was in her thought,
> And cunningly to yield herself she sought. (II. 291–294)

The "unknown joy" of sexual passion finally changes Hero's fear into a desire to be a cunning lover, but it is obtained only after an internal conflict more violent than the external physical conflict with Leander.

After the union, uneasiness and shame interrupt Hero's sense of joy. She fears the coming of day ; it will mean an end to their night of love (II. 301–302); the sunlight will display them "like Mars and Erycine" (II. 305) and will mean that she must confront Leander:

> Again she knew not how to frame her look,
> Or speak to him who in a moment took
> That which so long, so charily she kept,
> And fain by stealth away she would have crept,
> And to some corner secretly have gone,
> Leaving Leander in the bed alone. (II. 307–312)

In spite of Hero's attempt to leave him alone, Leander snatches her, making her slide to the floor and exposing her nakedness. Thus Hero is standing beside the bed, naked and blushing, because Leander gazes on her with the admiration of Dis contemplating a heap of gold (II. 317–326). In a sense, Hero herself has become what was ironically suggested in the word "Venus' nun." Indeed the allusion to Venus' shameful exposure in the arms of Mars in line 305 foreshadows Hero's final situation. At any rate, Hero has finally come to know part of the experience of love. In order to become a true lover, she must experience not only the joyful rapture promised by Leander but also the tangle and uneasiness of love. At the same time, she must run the risk of becoming a sexual object; the fate of the prostitute symbolized by "Venus' nun" waits for Hero as an implied threat.

III

As we have seen, Marlows tells us only a "fragment" of the entire story, but "he treats this fragment with a remarkable unity of conception and execution."[26]; the story begins with a critical exposure of the artificiality

and superficiality of Hero's pose as "Venus' nun" and with almost limitless praise of Leander's "spotless" masculine beauty. And Marlowe invents the myth of Mercury at the end of the first meeting of Hero and Leander. The episode has some resemblance and relation to the main narrative to satisfy our expectations of unity. The Neptune episode in the Second Sestiad seems to foretell Leander's tragic fate, and to contain the irony toward divine behaviour. As some critics point out, the dominant tone sometimes becomes comic, and the detached narrator, at first sight, seems to assert a comic control over narrative, so Morris concludes that "Marlowe's bias is increasingly towards the full burlesque, and away from the impending tragic end of the story."[27] But it seems that Marlowe is not much interested in the familiar tragic dimension, but is much concerned with the living relationship of Hero and Leander. Therefore *Hero and Leander* "includes both the comedy and the pathos of youthful romance—and it also includes more."[28] Indeed this fragment contains the risks, limitations, and disappointments of romantic love. Marlowe, it seems, tells us a double meaning about this fragment; one is that the young lovers, when stripped of their artfulness and naivety, are admirable in their incompromising passion, and the other is that they are sensitive and insecure when facing the reality of actual sexual experience.

Marlowe is called the Muses' darling, and his spokesman says that "the fragment has merrits far outweighing any shortcomings that may be laid to its charge, many moments of marvellously wrought description and imagery, many lines of appropriate and telling comment, and a pervasive and thrilling magic of cadence and rhythmical modulation."[29] In a sense, this fragment may be said to show Marlowe's "passionate quest of a lavish, sumptuous beauty."[30] In this poem, Marlowe tells us about his view of love:

> Where both deliberate, the love is slight;
> Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight? (I. 175–176)

Shakespeare makes a decent acknowledgement in *As You Like It*, when the sphepherdress comments and quotes:

> Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
> 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'[31]

It is said that *Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage* is an early work and was composed, at least for the most part, before Marlowe left Cambridge, while *Hero and Leander* belongs to the end of Marlowe's career. Both deal with passionate love. Beginning with a play about mature love, Marlowe depicts romantic love of the young as if his student days in Cambridge had come again. But *Hero and Leander* was left unfinished because of his sudden death. Marlowe lay dead in Deptford in 1593, and for him, as for his Hero and Leander, "Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight."[32] From this point of view, it may be said that Marlowe was writing an elegy upon himself in *Hero and Leander*.

NOTES

1. Michel Poirier in *Christopher Marlowe* (Chatto and Windus, 1968) says, "The fact that *Hero and Leander* has been left unfinished, together with the artistic maturity of the poem, allows us to infer that it was the last of Marlowe's writings" (p. 193). Philip Henderson in *Christopher Marlowe* (Longmans, London, 1592) tells us about the date of composition and the relation to revision of *Dido*: "Marlowe may have begun *Hero and Leander* at Thomas Walsingham's house at Scadbury during the plague, when the theatres were closed in the spring of 1593. If so, it is his last work, interrupted by his death in May of that year. Certainly there is no other work of his in which he is so serene, so at ease with

himself.... The versification is, in fact, far more modern than Shakespeare's in *Venus and Adonis*, which was probably written about the same time, or perhaps shortly before, being entered in the Stationers' Register on 18 April 1593. Altogether, there is a maturity in *Hero and Leander* which argues powerfully against the theory which would give it to the Cambridge years, although its mood is in some respects a return to the attitude implicit in the Ovid translations. Its verbal parallels with *Dido* can, on the other hand, be accounted for on the supposition that Marlowe took up his earliest tragedy and began to revise it at that time" (p. 138). Frederick S. Boas in *Christopher Marlowe ; A Biographical and Critical Study* (Oxford U.P., 1960), refers to internal evidence of the epyllion : "As Hero and Leander was left unfinished, it has been natural to assign it to the end of Marlowe's career. Blount's dedication of it to Sir Thomas Walsingham may even suggest that the poet was engaged on it while he was visiting Scadbury. And internal evidence in the main favours a late date.... Marlowe's verbal artistry is more mature" (p. 225). John H. Ingram in *Marlowe & His Poetry* (The Folcroft Press, 1969) also draws inferences from facts : "'Hero and Leander,' certainly one of the most beautiful narrative poems in the language, had probably been germinating for some time in the author's brain, for in the first known edition of 'Doctor Faustus' he speaks of "sweet Musaeus," the somewhat mythical Greek poet from whom the basis of the story is derived. The poem was evidently the production of Marlowe's latest life, and its completion prevented, as Blunt points out, 'by the stroke of death'" (p. 138). On the other hand, Harry Levin in *The Overreacher ; A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Harvard U.P., 1592) states an opposing opinion : "From that progression *Hero and Leander* stands somewhat apart ; it does not necessarily come at the end. Though it is fragmentary, we need not infer that Marlowe was deeply immersed in it when he died. Though the material connects it with his early immersion in Ovid, it is much more highly polished than his academic exercises. Since his production span was so short and his habits were so irregular, he may have been making at it intermittently over several years" (pp. 138–139).

2. William Keach, *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives ; Irony and Pathos in the Ovidian Poetry of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Their Contemporaries* (The Harvester Press, 1977), p. 85.
3. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
4. Ingram, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
5. Poirier, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 195. In addition to Poirier's opinion, Boas, *op. cit.*, refers to Marlowe's ingenuity : "Leander's father and Hero's jealousy are equally absent from the main source of Marlowe's poem, the *Hero and Leander* of Musaeus, whether in the original or in a translation" (p. 227).
7. Frederick S. Boas, *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (Gordian Press, 1968), p. 60.
8. Brian Morris, *Comic Method in Marlowe's Hero and Leander*, ed. by Brian Morris, *Christopher Marlowe*,(Ernest Benn, 1968), p. 115. In addition to Morris's opinion, Clifford Leech in *Marlowe's Humor, ed. by Clifford Leech, Marlowe ; A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Prentice–Hall, 1964), claims : "Hero and Leander as a major comic poem" (p. 178). Paul H. Kocher in *Christopher Marlowe ; A Study of His Thought, Learning, and Character* (Russell & Russell, 1962), contends : "His imagination is delightedly busy in holiday mood, yet with real effort to create something as beautiful as may be.... And so arises a form of humor which is largely whimsy, indulging in escapades of playful exaggeration" (pp. 294–295). Furthermore, M. C. Bradbrook in *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry ; A Study of His Earlier Work in Relation to the Poetry of the Time* (Cambridge U.P., 1979) puts it : "It may be argued that to take a notorious tragedy as basis for a comedy is insolent, but such insolence is exactly what might be expected of Marlowe" (p. 60). But Keach, *op. cit.*, holds a slightly different opinion and takes *Hero and Leander* as "a self–sufficient poem" (p. 115).
9. J. B. Steane, *Marlowe ; Critical Study* (Cambridge U.P., 1965), p. 302.
10. Philip Henderson, *And Morning in His Eyes ; A Book about Christopher Marlowe* (Hashell House Publishers, 1972), p. 339.
11. C. S. Lewis, *Hero and Leander*, ed. by Paul J. Alpers, *Elizabethan Poetry ; Modern Essays in Criticism* (Oxford. U.P., 1967), p. 236.
12. L. C. Martin, *The Works and Life of Christopher Marlowe ; Marlowe's Poems* (Gordian Press, 1966), The Argument of the First Sestiad. Subsequent quotations from *Hero and Leander* will refer to this edition.
13. Keach, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
15. Henderson, *Christopher Marlowe*, p. 139.
16. Levin, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
17. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 117.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

19. Keach, *op. cit.*, p. 99.
20. Kocher, *op. cit.*, p. 295.
21. Keach, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
22. Steane, *op. cit.*, p. 327.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Keach, *op. cit.*, p. 107.
25. Steane, *op. cit.*, p. 331.
26. Keach, *op. cit.*, p. 115.
27. Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
28. Keach, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
29. Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
30. Poirier, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
31. *The Annotated Shakespeare (Vol. I): As You Like It*, ed. by A. L. Rowse (New York : Charkson N. Poter, 1978), Ⅲ.v. 81−82.
32. *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. by Frederick S. Boas (Gordian Press, 1966), Epilogue, 1.

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