John Donne Journal
Vol. 8, Nos. 1 & 2 (1989)

Hero and Leander: Sensible Myth and Lyric Subjectivity

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If we take seriously recent work with *Hero and Leander*, we can recognize in the poem far broader implications for Marlowe and for the poetry of the 1590s than those pursued by the original scholars, who were interested in discrediting Chapman's claims on the poem. Both Roma Gill and Marion Campbell, following Louis Martz,[1] have put before us a poem that is unique, having no real heirs, in effect *sui generis* in English. Gill's edition dispenses with Chapman's continuation on editorial grounds. Campbell, not content with dismissing the "Sestiads" and their concomitant epicization of the narrative, argues firmly that Chapman's continuation constitutes an appropriation and thorough realignment of the poem toward moralized tragedy, an active interpretation by Chapman having little enough to do with Marlowe's original Ovidian erotic narrative. In what follows, I should like to elucidate some of Marlowe's achieved intentions, examining the effects of some historically uncharacteristic but poetically essential anti-Platonism in Marlowe's poetic procedures. I expect the discussion also to throw light on Chapman's success as appropriator—despite the almost universal preference for Marlowe's original as a piece of poetry.

The most successful dissenter from this consensus on the comparative value of the parts of the combined poem helps to make clear why later years maintained the publishing tradition of the "completed" story until Martz's edition. I refer to C. S. Lewis, whose fierce dislike of Marlowe is expressed in terms consistent with the Christian humanism of all Lewis's important literary opinions. Typical of the best post-war criticism, Lewis's several discussions of the poem attacked Marlowe's materialism, his lack of interest in subjectivity, and his puerile morality. For Lewis, Chapman had saved the poem, deepening its human and philosophical concerns, as is exemplified for Lewis by the five hundred lines Chapman gives to Hero's solitude and "the process of her degeneration" in the third and fourth Sestiads.[2] What Lewis over-rides here is the possibility that Marlowe's intentions were quite other than—in fact I believe, opposed to—not only those of Chapman but of what had become in the view of academics the reigning critical hegemony of the poetry of the 1590s. It remains so today, as the most recent general work on

sixteenth-century poetry witnesses—Gary Waller's self-consciously revisionist study, which, however revisionist, bases discussion of the poetry of the 1590s on ideas derived from reformation Sidney,[3] ideas which I will contend Marlowe as self-consciously rejected. In rejecting them, Marlowe put his poem into significant conflict with a tightly interconnected nexus of ideas whose erasure continues to assure his difficulties with critics as diverse as Lewis and Waller, as it did among his contemporaries. Balking against the Petrarchism of both Sidney and Spenser, Marlowe ushered himself out of our historical paradigms and their convictions.

Faced here with a typical Renaissance lack of statements regarding practical criteria, I must give as evidence primarily what I recognize are my own readings of the poem's techniques. At the opening—significantly, portraits of the principals—a rejection of the subjectivity and moralization associated with Sidnean poetics is at once striking. The extensive introductory pictures create for us a remarkably non-subjective governing perspective. That perspective—the eye of the narrator offered to us as an eye for the reader—results from the implicit commentary of one liminal description—Leander's—on another—Hero's. Though in a very literal narrative sense Marlowe is following his source with Hero, his finished portrait in fact quite departs from Musaeus: the primary notes of the Greek's description—Hero's isolation, her chastity, her devoutness—are abandoned, except as they serve as starting points for hyperbolic materializations—pictures of a surface that does indeed lack Chapman's attention to any internalized "process." Marlowe gives his attention to the unmoralized glitter of the surface itself. That offers material details for every point enunciated. The whole picture certainly is as ironically hyperbolic as critics always stress—Apollo himself courts Hero, her honey breath attracts bees, pebbles shine like diamonds about her neck—but really the picture is no surprise: beautiful women are always described as she is—if often, as in Musaeus, less materially and less hyperbolically. If her picture exaggerates all the Petrarchan pictorial excesses, so does that of Shakespeare's "Mistress" in Sonnet 130, or, from the opposite direction, Spenser's false Florimel. We can see Hero as, among other things, a subtler but similar burlesque of the Petrarchan ideal, though we cannot read her allegorically:

> She ware no gloves, for neither sunne nor wind
> Would burne or parch her hands, but to her mind,
> Or warme or coole them, for they tooke delite
> To play upon those hands, they were so white. (ll. 27-30)[4]

One could remark the lack of a subjective perceiver of these white hands, no sonneteering poet or lover to trace the percipient affect of such whiteness—simply the "fact." Its facticity is attested by the succeeding mythopoeic

invention, carefully separated from some introductory hear-say, the merely rumored hyperbole that sets it off as sober truth:

> Some say, for her the fairest *Cupid* pyn'd,
> And looking in her face, was strooken blind.
> But this is true, so like was one the other.
> As he imagyn'd *Hero* was his mother. (ll. 37-40)

The mythopoeic explanation of Cupid's blindness is not defended; we move, as rational and undeluded as the narrator, to the dying-fall bathos of the milder mythopoesis, merely a son/mother recognition error.

The real surprise of the opening descriptions is not Hero's but Leander's much more fulsome portrait, easily as hyperbolic as Hero's, though not to be compared with its source, since Musaeus gave Marlowe no liminal portrait at all. Creating his own, Marlowe maintains a comic objectivity that physically equates the two youngsters: ladies are not the only plausible ideal figures. Marlowe is insistent again upon surfaces at least as striking as Hero's and certainly more surprising, at times even troubling, given their physically painful, even (comic-)cannibalistic synesthetic overtones.

> Even as delicious meat is to the tast,
> So was his necke in touching, and surpast
> The white of *Pelops* shoulder, I could tell ye,
> How smooth his brest was, and how white his bellie,
> And whose immortall fingers did imprint,
> That heavenly path, with many a curious dint,
> That runs along his backe. (ll. 63-69)

The context will continue emphatically to include such homoerotic details among its essentially ungendered erotica.[5] They flood the opening description, accompanied by the narcissism of the beautiful Ovidian men alluded to: Hippolytus, Ganymede, and Narcissus himself have pride of place. Leander joins them as one "in whose looks were all that men desire." We probably see most clearly here how contrary to those of the contemporary model lyric poets, the sonneteers, Marlowe's procedures are, even including Shakespeare's own homoerotic masterpiece. Marlowe traces the effect of the object, whether considered as singular beloved or as ideal embodiment, on a speaking self. He maintains the object as object, avoiding all subjectifying in the specular clarity of mythological cases. That the Leander description is so thoroughly homoerotic depends on the total objectification that Marlowe practices in his insistent attention to surfaces. Leander, like Hero, will be throughout the poem an object of eros, little different from Mercury's country maid in that regard. Any object

of erotic desire, male or female, viewed as an object and deprived of subjectivity, is thereby "feminized"—at least in the western tradition. One has only to think of the lyrically beautiful Hellenistic hermaphrodite marbles to recall how long that tradition is and to recognize how remarkably close to complete self-enclosure so calmly narcissistic a sense of the body can seem. There is little surprise in Leander's friends' paragraph-closing fear: "Though thou be faire, yet be not thine owne thrall" (l. 90).

But there is no fear of such self-destructive narcissism in this poem, just as Narcissus and Hippolitus are not called up as analogues of tragic male chastity, simply the male beauty that precedes death. Hero saves Leander from both narcissism and chastity at first sight, and Marlowe's depiction of erotic beauty remains "pagan" in retaining comic objectivity within beauty's fatal penumbra. He shows no interest in pursuing romantic notions of the solipsism implicit in self-conscious narcissism. Objectively beautiful, Leander as suitably as Hero will simply become the object of a god's desire, joining Ganymede and Adonis, Endymion and Hylas in the polymorphic erotics of a singularly unabashed Renaissance classicism. It qualifies, I think, as England's version of the paganism of Leonard Barkan's pre-Christianized Ovidian tradition.[6] The poem's materialism may not be Epicurean, but it is Lucretian at the least, finding the truth of things in their material perception. That sense both derives from and necessitates non-allegorical reading of the passage, as a more instinctively tragic focus imbedded in narcissism would not.

Such objectivity as Marlowe elaborates here is consistent with his career-long avoidance of the form which embodies Sidney's most significant contribution to the poetry of the 1590's—the sonnet. That the closest Marlowe came to a sonnet was the comic pastoral, "The Passionate Shepherd to his love" is consistent with the point I want to elaborate here, for the true sonnet is not only the averted formal invitation; it is also the great proving place of the "I" in Elizabethan poetry. By ignoring sonnets throughout his work, Marlowe avoided the site so easily and so often seen as the home—perhaps even point of origin—of personal self-expression and its direct representation in English poetry. He thus rejects as poetic subject not simply the personal (Sidney's "How Ulster likes of that same golden bit / Wherewith my father once made it half tame") but also the inward ("Desire, Desire, I have too dearly bought / With prize of mangled mind thy worthless ware!")[7]—the portrait of the speaker as sufferer, as self-examiner and self-explainer. Disregarding that Petrarchan territory, he avoids the speaker as self-regarding subject experiencing the paradoxes of love and proposing as justification—in what seems now the automatic Renaissance concomitant—the love of the Idea, the beloved become that reification of the goal of desire that Sidney had imported from Petrarch, bringing Wyatt's Petrarch of age.

That representation allowed to the poet the embodiment in the beloved of whatever source of eros motivated him, be he Daniel or Drayton or anyone else in the great Sidnean line whose sonnets are subjective lyrics, moving for their subjects inward, in analyzing the effects of emotion on the speaker, and upward, to contrast that insistent self-obsession with the higher claims of the soul, of God, as in the paradigmatic internal conflict, the claims of earthly vs. the claims of heavenly love. We all have our own favorite palinodes, but "Leave me, O Love, which reachest but to dust" will make the point.

In 1593 rather than travel inward or upward, Marlowe gave us the poem that led C. S. Lewis to call him—or more accurately accuse him of being—"our great master of the material imagination" (Oxford, p. 486). From Lewis this is, as I have said, no compliment. In fact, it is enough to excise Marlowe from poetic status altogether, not simply the "golden poetry" of the 1590s, but any true work of the poet ever, other than as masterful technician. In this context, Lewis's championing of Chapman as co-adjutor of *Hero and Leander* assumes the face of more than mere consistency, for from Lewis's point of view Chapman has saved the poem from the unremitting materiality of Marlowe by bringing it into line with Golden poetics and its claim to Inspiration as well as its reverence "for God, for kings, for fathers, for authority—but not . . . our reverence for the actual" (Oxford, p. 322). While the idea of "golden poetry" was never without its critics, I have thought it reasonable to refer to Lewis's as the most prominent and articulate discussion of mid-twentieth century attitudes toward both Marlowe's context and *Hero and Leander*. His attitudes remain influential though diluted in more current criticism, as I suggested above.[8] Lewis certainly always acknowledged Marlowe's technical skills—that through his stunning control of poetic materiality (for Lewis, an oxymoron) , Marlowe gave us eros pure and sensible, if no more intelligible than in reality it usually is. *Hero and Leander*'s materiality does, he knows, flatter "our reverence for the actual"—largely on the strength of what Lewis considers its dehumanizing techniques. Predictably chief among these is the omission of subjectivity, denied to Hero, to Leander, and apparently—for lack of Lewis's comment—to the narrative voice as well (Oxford, p. 487).

But that narrative voice is precisely what Marlowe creates for this story, displacing any lyric voice resembling, say, the sonneteering "I." That loss does not mean there is no speaking voice or personality, although what is there is probably as non-subjective as Lewis thought. In place of the lyric flow of linked quatrains we have the peculiarly syncopated couplets that form the poem's comic medium and thereby its narrator. We know him only through the tale he tells, unless one were to weight unduly his ironic comments on its progress. We know him, that is, largely from his comic medium, and it is a great one. In English, only Byron, working in ottava rima, gets equivalent effects from rhyming polysyllables with monosyllables and from feminine rhyme—

the distancing effects of an easy sophistication and kindly condescension. Some of the most famous examples:

> At last, like to a bold sharpe Sophister,
> With chearefull hope thus he accosted her. (ll. 197-99)

> Nor is't of earth or mold celestiall,
> Or capable of any forme at all. (ll. 273-74)

> Long dallying with *Hero*, nothing saw
> That might delight him more, yet he suspected
> Some amorous rites or other were neglected. (ll. 546-48)

Both the feminine and polysyllabic rhyming interrupt that sense of the inevitable *rightness* of diction we anticipate in couplets and move the reader off the plane of perfection with a little lurch. We become overwhelmingly aware of the words as words, of the constructedness of the lines, and we are distanced from the subjects in the space thus cleared for irony—and for a narrator. The word is *not* the inevitable word; it is a ludicrous surprise ("but, my lord, it does rhyme!"). Exactly what one did not expect turns out to be what had to come. The poet enters the poem in these lurches from semantic to sonant expectations where satisfaction and irony remarkably reside together. As is usual with irony, we are flattered by our collusion with the speaker—flattered and distanced from the subjects. It is as a result of the peculiar humor of this device as much as of hyperbole that one is never in danger of identifying with *or* judging Hero or Leander. And the satisfaction gives us a very comfortable site from which to view them, as objectively stare at them we do. They are the objects of our gaze, objects who can remain made creatures, figures of the surface, without alienating us. The words, which in their semantically oblique rhyming call attention to themselves as sonant objects, join the poem's predominantly metaphoric metamorphosing in an insistence on the object-ness of the poem's materials. We know the controlling intelligence is the poet's, who controls words and figurations, who sees and says a world for us. Sidney may have claimed that "the skill of each artificer standeth in that Idea or fore-conceit of the work and not in the work itself"; for Marlowe the particularities of the work itself had a higher status.

Among those particularities, the most singular are what I just referred to as the metaphoric metamorphosings on which so many of the poem's major moments depend. They constitute as well a careful departure from Sidney—not so much from the fore-conceit in terms of which moralizations are undertaken as from the transformational metaphorics Sidney underwrites and Spenser fulfills most brilliantly. Where Spenser's poetic transformations depend from

his perception of the persistent parallels across the layers of our experience—in Thomas P. Roche's words, on the metaphysical basis of allegorical reading which "postulates a verbal universe at every point correspondent with the physical world in which we live"—an idea in terms of which, things *cannot* simply be things)[9]—Marlowe's metaphors maintain that conscious break with the tradition of allegorical reading of *Ovide moralise* common to the epyllion writers: things decidedly are things.

The simplest place to compare their respective approaches is in their opposed treatments of watery figures of change—a life-long theme for Spenser and a major one in *Hero and Leander*, given its material concentration. In *The Faerie Queene* such figures are also explicitly figures of art. Archimago, Busirane, and their avatars are not associated with any life-bearing properties of the element, only with its qualities of fluctuation and mirroring—mimetic deception. Thus the morally problematic status of art can be the persistent, vital question it is for Spenser, nowhere better than in the palace of Busirane, which as Gill postulates in her commentary (pp. 181, 294), Marlowe tries to overgo in alternative mythopoesis. In *Hero and Leander* the moral obliquity of aesthetic practice is not in question. Taking part in an Ovidian world of transformations, unimpeded by Augustinian or Platonic rejections of mimesis, Marlowe's poet takes part in an unambiguously lovely process, as focused on the physical, so focused on change. The watery figures, gods and all, are seen in their comic sensuosity, not their mimetic deceptiveness.

The stability of Marlowe's change is figured in the poem's reigning god, Neptune. No arch-magician, no artist who creates the illusion of change and its morally oblique aesthetic questions of the artist, Neptune is himself the changing force of water, which includes Leander in its grasp and by the inclusion makes him an equivalent part of nature—equivalent, that is, with the gods, apart from his susceptibility to drowning. Marlowe introduces Neptune at the heart of his tale, Leander's second trip to Hero, moving Neptune not up an allegorical scale from particular to abstraction but down through the more simply metaphoric one, from idea to (fictive) fact. The god had entered the poem earlier as a simple personification ("two citties stood, / Seaborderers, disjoin'd by *Neptunes* might"[3]), figural of the power of natural forces by representing the poem's dominant element, water, in its most motile form, the sea. He returns now (1. 639), retaining that figural value, and subsumes it in his physical presence, "the saphir visag'd god" entering to fall in love with Leander, not allegorically, but in the flesh. Yet his flesh being water, the ocean with all its drive and rhythmic power, he animates a world that includes Leander, mythologizing him, making him part of a nature that is vitally responsive. The splendid passage paints at once the glory of a sun-sparkling ocean tossing a swimmer on its swells and the high comedy of a lovely young man encountering a sophisticated roue. It epitomizes how the Marlovian

mythic absorbs divine figuration, in effect materializing it, making things rather *be* than *be like*, his emphasis, as Elizabeth Cook insists, on sensuous apprehension rather than on logical meaning.[10] Neptune is at once literal, if comic rather than metamorphic god—a "be like" function—and literal and metaphoric sea—where the "like" disappears. Mistaking the beautiful boy for a revolted Ganymede,

> The lustie god imbrast him, cald him love,
> And swore he never should returne to *Jove*.
> But when he knew it was not *Ganimed*,
> For under water he was almost dead,
> He heav'd him up, and looking on his face,
> Beat downe the bold waves with his triple mace,
> Which mounted up, intending to have kist him,
> And fell in drops like teares, because they mist him. (ll. 651-58)

The explicit comedy of the scene, with its ageless theatricalism of a little limp rag in the hands of one large and mighty, is not abandoned but intensified as Neptune pursues his erotic courtship, becoming not only a love-struck older man with a white beard, but the silky motion of the sea.

> He clapt his plumpe cheekes, and with his tresses playd,
> And smiling wantonly, his love bewrayd.
> He watcht his armes, and as they opend wide,
> At every stroke, betwixt them would he slide,
> And steale a kisse, and then run out and daunce,
> And as he turnd, cast many a lustfull glaunce,
> And threw him gawdie toies to please his eie,
> And dive into the water, and there prie
> Upon his brest, his thighs, and everie lim,
> And up againe, and close beside him swim,
> And talke of love: Leander made replie,
> You are deceav'd, I am no woman I.
> Thereat smilde *Neptune*, and then told a tale . . . (ll. 665-77)

which Leander, anxious to get to Hero, interrupts before it is half done. A full embedded story like the earlier "Mercury and the country maid," is not allowed to be repeated and swell to fill the narrative space of the climaxing poem, however much lascivious Neptune would like the dalliance. With what care Marlowe handles his homoerotic material can be exemplified in this omission: Marlowe only gestures at the story of Hylas and Hercules, another beautiful boy destroyed by his feminine following, who, saving him from both the

homoerotic and narcissism, drown him as surely as Hero will Leander. Rather than protract the parallel or dramatize Neptune's motives in bringing up the story, Marlowe hurries with Leander past the potentially pregnant bit of Ovid to get on with the eponymous pair to whom its sensuosity applies. Poor Neptune is, all unwisely, left out in the cold. Comedy beats down moralization as surely as Neptune's mace did the waves.

Was Neptune here god, lover, ocean, natural power, wily lecher? He was all these things come together, some sensible and some intelligible, but the emphasis is surely on the sensible, the passage making Neptune a thoroughly humanized figure and at the same time the force of some actual ocean, and as such, an instantiation of the power of physical attraction as itself a natural force. What it does not make him is an allegorical figure, unless one were to call any figure typifying natural powers "allegorical." But then to what would the dark conceit attach? This oceanic dalliance turns out to be preparatory not to Neptune's catching Leander, but to Hero's metaphorphosing into a mermaid at line 746.

Like a mermaid, then, Hero dives "down to hide" from Leander her "silver body," under the bed-clothes. That encounter proceeds, as Marlowe would have it, as such things usually do, ending with the "poor silly maiden, at his mercy"—and without chivalric aid:

> Love is not ful of pittie (as men say)
> But deaffe and cruell, where he meanes to pray. (ll. 771-72)

While feminist-effected reading today may remark the crassly masculinist attitude here,[11] as humanists of a generation ago recognized in the love expressed love "only in the narrowest sense" (Lewis, p. 238), it seems more constructive to notice that in the Ovidian stories Marlowe uses as allusive if not narrative source, the *Metamorphoses*' stories, the preying, deaf, cruel lover is usually the god himself. To escape him, the beloved regularly metamorphoses—turns into a tree, a flower, or any one of the other myriad objects *Hero and Leander* constantly alludes to in refering to the stories of "headdie ryots, incest, rapes" that are called up in its course. Where the epyllion regularly celebrates Ovid by making one of his metamorphic tales its center, Marlowe has chosen a story that includes no physical transformation. Even the Mercury digression averts that, transmogrifying the reign of the adamantine destinies for a short while, but not the destinies themselves nor the "country maid" who began it all.[12] Transformations belong to the act of seeing/saying, seeing indeed in terms of the natural objects resembled, saying the resemblance. This is so much as to say that transformations belong to the poet, whose metaphors and mythology do all the transposing that occurs. Marlowe replicates the verbal acts of his whole tradition, all the way back to those nameless ones who,

long before Ovid, looking at the sea produced the gods. This is how it is done. When Hero transmogrifies in metaphor, thereby avoiding actually growing bark (or in this case, scales), Marlowe in effect reads us a lecture on metamorphoses and mythopoesis. We find out what their roots are and, in effect, how the powerful sliding sea ever got to be "Neptune" in the first place, as the powers of nature elide with human forms before us.

What clear purpose is served by the description of Leander in the waves? Neptune is water, water sliding silkily between limbs, then cresting in small whitecaps. The effulgence of physical power, the pleasure its experience affords leads shortly to the most expressly voyeuristic sequence of the poem (731ff.), wherein Marlowe contrives to have all readers visualizing exactly what is going on as we reach the consummation. That is, he revels in sensuosity—sensuosity comically perceived and as such hardly pornographic, but sensuosity none the less. We deny that by applying Spenserian and basically allegorical expectations to the poem we have, as Rosemond Tuve most fully and responsibly did in denying the relevance of any criterion of sensuosity to Renaissance poetry, including Marlowe's.[13] We could perhaps turn instead to Tuve's contemporary, Muriel Bradbrook, whose decisive epithet for *Hero and Leander*, "an anti-Spenserian manifesto,"[14] I have tried to take quite literally and consider in respect of the poem's anti-sonneteering technology—its fictively objective narration, its peculiarly self-regarding couplets, its poet-affirming metaphors, that deprive the gods of singular transformative powers.

II

I should like now to look at the poem's wider context in order to cast Marlowe's achievement in less reactive terms. I want to consider briefly not what Marlowe was declining in refusing Sidney/Spenser poetics, but what he was proposing to substitute for them. Surely it is reasonable to look to Marlowe's understanding of the classics for such an alternative. His non-dramatic poetic production, aside from the response to pastoral, "the Passionate Shepherd," is all classical translation at one remove or another, all of it showing successful originality: *Hero and Leander* itself, the earlier *All Ovids Elegies*—his rendition of the *Amores*, which Gill can see, despite acknowledging their clumsiness, establishing the heroic couplet as "the accepted form for writing such non-lyrical love poems" (3), and the brilliantly affective rhythms of the blank verse of *Lucans First Booke*, so good that Lewis felt certain Marlowe did not write it (Oxford, 486).[15] This was the personal poetic context of *Hero and Leander*. In bringing it into contact with its broader poetic context, the world dominated by now by Sidney and Spenser, Marlowe would not have felt any need to abandon the classical ground of his earlier poems, since when he turned again to Ovid and to Musaeus, the act was in no way contrary to the

larger context. Aside from the models supplied by his education, there are the active poets around him. I will mention only Spenser himself, who, though he wrote no Ovidian epyllia,[16] used *Metamorphoses* for *Muipotmos* and more generally allusively for *The Faerie Queene*—to the extent that he is Marlowe's only peer in the adaptation and appropriation of classical mythology to English Renaissance perspectives. Spenser's has been the much more clearly "native" accomplishment, given both the substantiality and the substantial Protestant cast of his achievement. The contrarity between the two poets is not in the matter, then, but the treatment of the matter, for Marlowe puts aside the Christian aesthetic through which Spenser's allegory is rendered so full of meaning. Abandoning the Christian metaphysic that supports Spenser's allegoresis, Marlowe must supply another base for his mythopoeia. He found it in his reading of the classics.

One version of his mode of reading very relevant to my themes can be derived from Richard Baines' well-known testimony against him, testimony that Paul H. Kocher analyzed some decades ago as "Marlowe's aetheist lecture."[17] The Baines deposition stressed, as well it might given its context, the biographical and political corollaries and implications of Marlowe's Euhemerism. But there are aesthetic implications as well, and we can come to value the processes of *Hero and Leander* by recognizing that these implications are fulfilled in the poem.

To outline from Baines a plausible version of the rumored atheist lecture, Kocher analyzed the deposition into three "well compacte" main themes and a final "shaky" topic, Marlowe's proselytizing for atheists. I will follow Kocher in putting aside this segment and turn instead to the third theme—"criticism of the 'methode' of the Christian religion." That yields the material basic to a poetic: if all mythology follows Biblical mythology in having human sources and being subject to the human motives of its creators ("the first beginning of Religioun was only to keep men in awe," Baines quotes Marlowe as having said, and "it was an easy matter for Moyses being brought up in all the artes of the Egiptians to abuse the Jewes being a rude & grosse people"), it follows that no mythology can claim anything more than the production of such awe as Moses foisted upon the Jews—the affects of beauty, terror, meraviglia—but certainly not truth or explanatory powers, unless the intercession of miraculism were conceivable. Marlowe's critique of the New Testament makes clear that that is, at least for him, not the case—not in the dully unaffecting Christianity of his culture. For Marlowe, the test of a religion *is* its affect, and affect is achieved, in a rhetorically well-executed act, through arousing admiration. Thus his well-known Paterian preference for Catholicism with its ceremonies, organs, and shaven crowns. That preference, like his desire to re-write the "filthily written" New Testament, freeing it of its "rude and grosse" sources, the witless fishermen, indicates not only his lack of

sympathy with significant moral aspects of the Reformation but also his faith in rhetoric and sophisticated style—and I speak of both style of langauge and style of narrative, remembering his specific comments on the story of Jesus (comments that share a modern's "reverence for the actual" and also make the assumption of a traditional ending for *Hero and Leander* tenuous indeed). His is a rhetorical interest rising to fascination with the possibilities of affect, of the conviction engendered by sophisticated art—the art of the Egpytians overwhelming the Jews' as surely as, for Marlowe, the classics do Christianity.

And so having turned back to Rome—to Ovid's mythology, to Lucretius's ontology, to Horace's rhetoric, to shades of Lucian's gods—he approached Musaeus's story, in effect, as a chance to test his understanding of mythology by placing it in a great tradition. He translated that tradition through the creation of experimental techniques related to his time, though often oppositionally. The sophistication of his art was based on a materialization of metaphor, a demystified narration and character, and a reliance, therefore, not on empathy, but on admiration. For the poem's "admiration" I understand not "pity," one of the standard meanings deriving from discussion of Aristotle's tragic effects, but "wonder"—for example, Mazzoni's "credible marvelous," a rhetorical understanding of the term and of the end of poetry. Here, too, Marlowe opposes Sidney, for whom admiration and pity are one.[18] Sidney's concerns remain concern for literature's morally affective claims; Marlowe, by contrast, has his eye on the reader's wonderment; his poem is bent on creating literary belief through the wonders accessible to the senses in the most direct apprehension of the physical world possible. This is not to suggest that Marlowe contemplates an unmediated vision of his Lucretian universe, but then, neither did Lucretius, or poetry-hating Epicurus would never have found a home in *De Rerum Natura*. The steady awareness of the presence of the poet in the poem is basic to Marlowe's euhemeristic reading of mythopoesis, conforming to his metaphorphosed Hero, his oceanic Neptune.

Whatever the degree of mythologizing, his world probably seemed brittle to some of his contemporaries as it did to C. S. Lewis. The evidence is that temperaments tell, and the extent to which Marlowe *could* be followed in his epyllion techniques is effected by at least two temperamental factors: both the ability and the desire of follower. Their ability was a question of individual poetic skills (or their lack, e.g., Beaumont in *Salmacis and Hermaphroditus*), their desire, of poetic intentions (e.g., Drayton in *Endimion and Phoebe: Ideas Latmus*). Beaumont's failure may have had as much to do with his age at the writing (18) as with any proleptic philistine sensibility; Drayton's is, on the other hand, a choice not to follow the dramatist where he has gone.

Given what we know about Drayton's other work, the choice seems to me conscious. *Endimion and Phoebe*'s envoi associates that poem with Spenser for melodic control, with Daniel as "the sweet Museus of these times," and with

Lodge, for "merry roundelayes" rather than for *Scillaes Metamorphosis*. That Drayton is thinking in stylistic rather than generic terms may explain Marlowe's (and Shakespeare's) absence, though the poem's own hazy Neoplatonism suggests otherwise. Marlowe's poem, after all, calls into question the essence of Drayton's entire career: it is written against his idealizing, personal sonnet not only in the expansiveness of its equally closed form but also in its refusal to attribute to its glittering surfaces meanings beyond their beauty. Judging by either his epyllion or *Idea: The Shepheards Garland*, Drayton is far too committed to Sidney's principles to accept Marlowe's implicit view of poetry. Drayton's opposing view is as "reactionary" as Marion Campbell charged Chapman's with being, though like his, it is a view "that modern readers have been all too ready to accept" (262)—and, I would add, many of his poetic contemporaries as well. To Drayton one can certainly add Thomas Edwards, who also borrowed heavily from *Hero and Leander* in the particulars of *Cephalus and Procris* yet gave his couplets to a fully moralized allegory, praising as his leaders "Heroicke" Spenser and "Arcadian" Sidney (ll. 185-91), with never a mention of Marlowe.

I have chosen my comparatives from within the epyllion genre, because that initially seemed to me the obvious place to look for Marlowe's influence. Yet if we understand that group as the genre exemplified by Elizabeth Donno's highly influential collection, *Elizabethan Minor Epics*,[19] the results in general are as tepid as those I have cited. The genre itself, from other points of view than my own, has characteristics troublesome to the question. In Donno's "Introduction," the Ovidian metamorphic sources, the personal framework, the complaint motif, the feminine wooer (6-7) define a genre crowned by but curiously separate from its greatest exemplar. Among Donno's typical generic elements, only the emphasis on artifice and its attendant appeal to admiration rather than empathy are obviously evidenced in Marlowe's poem (8). If we continue to ignore Chapman's contributions to the poem, as I have been doing, even its relation to Ovid becomes thoroughly different from that of the otherwise metamorphic epyllia.[20]

Having excised God for the gods and decided for the appeal to admiration rather than empathy, Marlowe could not but limit his public espousal. That response is political, in the broadest sense. The excision of empathy which accompanies ignoring subjectivity in favor of a materially articulated story, palpable in its appeals to wonder, separates Marlowe from both Sidney's Reformation concerns and Chapman's appended Neoplatonic ones; *Hero and Leander* does not, however, become thereby merely Lewis's brilliant erotica. It does become something more like Martz's great comic love tale: it does not simply paint surfaces, it is an active celebration of surfaces that insists on their sufficiency to represent a tale free of the pre-conceived thematics that the tradition of *Ovide moralise* had made the expectation of Ovidian poetry long

before any epyllion had appeared. While the ease with which Chapman reinstituted such a thematic must call into question Marlowe's success on the point, nonetheless the poem's active celebration of surfaces stakes a claim for both the processes of this epyllion—its medium, characterization, metaphoricity—and its unique relation to classical culture. In a strange sense *Hero and Leander* is the most fully idealized anti-idealistic poem of the late sixteenth century and a perfect counter to Petrarchism in being so, for what is idealized is the material, and where the Idea or Idea's Mirror had earned a place, the mere body now stands—Hero displayd "all naked to his sight" at the stopping point.

If Sidney's notion of poetry, particularly of its relation to the world of sense— "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as diverse poets have done—neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely" (*Defense*, 607)—had ended there, and not gone on to insist on the value of the fore-conceit and then moralized the fore-conceit, *Hero and Leander* could have fit his notion eminently well (if not as well as *Endimion and Phoebe*, whose first three hundred lines of colorfully particular pastoralism follow Sidney literally by, ruefully, uniting with six hundred allegorical lines on divine inspiration and Platonic love—beauty beyond the senses). Nothing in Marlowe's poem suggests, however, that the earth is *too* much loved, nor does anything suggest that Marlowe's poem as we have it shares either such Platonism or Sidney's Reformist didacticism. While the erected wit is everywhere apparent, the infected will has been ignored. Yet that will has been resupplied by reactors to the poem from Chapman to all those modern critics, adduced by Campbell, who added or accepted the obvious conclusion to the equally obviously unfinished story that Marlowe stopped, whether or not he had completed his poem. Though Marlowe did not finish the story, he left us enough to show that his particular turn to the epyllion constitutes as conscious a rejection of the idealizing heart of Sidnean poetics as Lewis blamed it for being. He returned us instead to Roman materialism, too Roman for England in 1593 or some four hundred years thereafter.

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Notes

[1] Martz's edition is a Folger Facsimile (Washington, 1972). Gill's comments are in her edition, vol. I of her *The Complete Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987). Campbell's full case on Chapman's appropriation is in "'Desunt nonnulla': The Construction of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* as an Unfinished Poem," *ELH* 51 (1984), 241-68.

[2] I cite "Hero and Leander" from its reprint in *Elizabethan Poetry,* ed. Paul Alpers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 48. His additional discussion of Marlowe is in *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), cited henceforth internally as *Essay* and *Oxford* respectively.

[3] *English Poetry in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1986), billed as the first history of its subject in over three decades, hardly mentions Marlowe. On the other and more traditional hand, Heather Dubrow's *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) begins with a chapter on *Venus and Adonis* which contains a first-rate historical discussion of the genre it shares with Marlowe's poem. Her discussion unfortunately assesses all the genre's typical moves negatively by comparison with *Venus and Adonis*'s rich psychology, a psychology continuous with Shakespeare's dramatic practice—and the *sine qua non* of poetry for Dubrow. Her discussion of the genre outlines and negates the qualities I see as counterstatement to sonnet. Preferring the subjective mode, she, for instance, castigates epyllia writers for their attention to surfaces—Marlowe's hallmark here.

[4] I cite the poem throughout from Gill's edition.

[5] The ungendered quality is for Myron Turner, in our fullest discussion of the poem's homoerotics, "Pastoral and Hermaphrodite: A Study in the Naturalism of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*," *TSLL* 17 (1975), 307-414, indicative on the poem's ambivalence, a gauge of the amorality of a "universe in which sexual energy appears to be an undifferentiated force." Turner discerns a Fall behind this chaos.

[6] I refer to his discussion of the metamorphic Ovidian tradition in *The Gods Made Flesh* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). Barkan does not include Marlowe among Ovid's Renaissance inheritors though his notion of the "pagan" fits my sense of Marlowe precisely.

[7] Sidney is cited throughout from *The Renaissance in England,* eds. Hyder Rollins and Herschel Baker (Boston: Heath, 1954), here *Astrophel and Stella*, 30, and "Thou Blind Man's Mark."

[8] I refer to Waller and Dubrow above, but would include as well Clark Hulse. His *Metamorphic Verse: The Elizabethan Minor Epic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) shares Dubrow's subjective assumptions, though its treatment of Marlowe is direct and full.

[9] Roche's description of allegorical reading in *The Kindly Flame*'s introduction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 3-31, makes my concluding clause inevitable, I believe.

[10] *Seeing Through Words* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) contains a superb reading of the Neptune passage to establish the point. She extends it through a careful comparison of Marlowe's and Ovid's parallel presentations of the reciprocity of man and his environment, a reciprocity that she sees separating the two pagan poets from the intervening allegorists, who themselves chose to separate the presented world from its significance (pp. 99-101).

[11] Cynthia Drew Hymel, "*Hero and Leander*: A Male Perspective on Female Sexuality," *Journal of Women's Studies in Literature* 1 (1979), 273-85, is a good example.

[12] Studying the wide continental tradition of Musaeus translation, Gordon Braden, in *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry: Three Case Studies* (New Haven: Yale

University Press, 1978), sees this point separating Marlowe from the *Metamorphoses* tradition altogether. The Ovid of the poem is for Braden the Ovid of *Heroides* and *Amores*.

[13] In *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947). As part of her argument against new critical ahistoricism, Tuve adduces the Neptune passage for its undeniable sensuous appeal and goes on to prove the greater significance of its imagery's intelligibility. She does so, however, by assuming the emblematic significance of the plot as Chapman completed it.

[14] *Shakespeare and Elizabethan Poetry* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1951).

[15] Utilizing Dryden's three levels of translation, Gill discusses the distinction between the Elegies' metaphrastic translation and "imitation" in *Hero and Leander*, pp. xi ff. Given his subject, Braden's discussion is much more precise and particular on *Hero and Leander* as an act of translation.

[16] Clark Hulse disagrees completely, treatng *Muipotmos* as an epyllion and that poem and Book III of *Faerie Queene* as the quintessential Ovidian poems of the English Renaissance. His definition of epyllion as including the complaint poem seems to me problematic partly, I admit, because I think Marlowe's omission of complaint (he substitutes Leander's sophistry against chastity) a typical turn away from subjectivity into comedy and do not want to see it separating him from some ideal of the "minor epic."

[17] *JEGP* 39 (1940), 98-106. Kocher reproduces the full document, which I follow.

[18] Allan H. Gilbert, *Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962) includes the relevant documents (for Mazzoni, see p. 388) and a discussion of Sidney on pity, pp. 460-61.

[19] *Elizabethan Minor Epics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).

[20] The argument for Epicurean naturalism in Richard Neuse's "Atheism and Some Functions of Myth in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*," *MLQ* 30 (1970), 424-39, treats Ovid consistently with this fact and, I think, with my position throughout.