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TRAGIC FATE IN MARLOWE AND CHAPMAN'S HERO AND LEANDER

Larry Tjarks

I.

Most English critics praise Chapman's completion of Marlowe's unfinished *Hero and Leander*, while many American critics find fault with Chapman's work. Concerning plot and tone, Tucker Brooke said: "There is . . . very little cohesion as regards the plot between Marlowe's fragment and Chapman's, while in tone there is no resemblance whatever."¹ Millar MacLure, however, argues that Chapman does not lose Marlowe's voice and that Chapman's "'sentences' continue (with his own difference) the irony and elegance of Marlowe's asides. . . . No one else could have done it so well."² Concerning morality, Douglas Bush says that "Chapman begins with an assurance of something 'more grave and hie', and his stern Muse will have none of the moral laxity that Marlowe glorified",³ but C. S. Lewis argues that we should not regard Chapman's continuation "as a 'cauld clatter of morality' officiously and unpoetically added to a poem which does not require it".⁴ Concerning continuity, Louis Martz seeks to "disengage Marlowe's 'amorous poem' from the frigid embraces of the 'stern Muse' of Chapman",⁵ but Stephen Orgel observes that seventeenth-century readers found Chapman's continuation appropriate, and that they considered the continuation as an integral part of the complete poem.⁶ After examining those diverging views, I tend to agree with the English critics. I will argue that Chapman aptly continued and completed

¹ *The Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910), p. 487.

² *The Poems: Christopher Marlowe* (London: Methuen, 1968), p. xxix.

³ *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), p. 213.

⁴ "Warton Lecture on English Poetry: 'Hero and Leander,'" *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 38 (London, 1952), 27.

⁵ *Hero and Leander by Christopher Marlowe: A Facsimile of the First Edition, London 1598* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, and Washington, D. C.: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1972), p. 1.

⁶ Christopher Marlowe: *The Complete Poems and Translations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), pp. 219–220.

Marlowe's frequent foreshadowing of the Fates, and that Chapman's misunderstood moralizing appropriately continued Marlowe's satiric tones. A better appreciation of Chapman's moralizing reveals that *Hero and Leander* also reflects why many cultured Renaissance people disliked excess and valued classical moderation; moreover Marlowe and Chapman's portrayals of tragic fate reflect a wider Renaissance skepticism that question the Boethian conviction that neither fate nor fortune ever impinge on free will.

II.

The Hero and Leander myth from the Greeks through the Renaissance included the consummated passion that Marlowe told and the tragic deaths that remained for Chapman to tell.⁷ The Musaeus source that Marlowe used and that Chapman had translated included those passions and deaths. On external evidence alone, it seems that Chapman appropriately completed the tragedy, for it seems as unlikely that Marlowe would have made *Hero and Leander* into a comedy as it would have been for Shakespeare to make *Romeo and Juliet* into a comedy. Nor should we follow Louis Martz's argument (p. 13), and consider Marlowe's fragment a finished comedy. Martz's evidence seems unconvincing. He argues that since Edward Blunt's preface refers to Marlowe's 818 lines as "this unfinished tragedy" that Blunt probably added *Desunt nonnulla* ("Some things are lacking") as the ending to the first 1598 edition. But since a Renaissance source (1598)⁸ confirms Stephen Orgel's observation that Renaissance readers did consider Marlowe's lines as fragmentary, and since Marlowe had chosen to work with a traditionally tragic myth, it seems more likely that Edward Blunt only reflected general Renaissance opinion when he called Marlowe's part an unfinished tragedy and that Blunt would have had no reason to introduce *Desunt nonnulla*. Since Fredson Bowers believes that "Marlowe's part . . . was set from holograph",⁹ it seems possible that Marlowe himself had written *Desunt nonnulla* or that Adam Islip, the printer, knew that he had only part of the holograph and that Islip added it.

Internal evidence also substantiates that Chapman not only continued Marlowe's basic Musaeus myth, but that when Chapman departed from Musaeus, he often followed Marlowe's fragment. For example, when the waves were about to drown Leander, Chapman has Leander appeal to the Neptune that Marlowe had introduced (II. 167-220). In both Marlowe and Chapman, Neptune struck the waves (II. 172 and VI. 198) and hurled

⁷ Bush (pp. 123-124) and Martin (p. 506) discuss many versions and translations of the tragic myth. See also John Donne's epigram on Hero and Leander (? 1587 to 1602).

⁸ In Richard Carew's "Epistle on the Excellency of the English Tongue" (? 1596), Carew referred to Marlowe's fragment. See George Gregory Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), II, 293.

⁹ *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, Eng.: University Press, 1973), II, 428.

his mace. In Marlowe, Neptune called back the mace, but in Chapman, the mace hits the stern Fate who drew Leander's thread; nonetheless Chapman drew the thread of life from Marlowe's fragment where the destinies offer Mercury "the deadly fatal knife / That shears the slender threads of human life" (I. 447-448).¹⁰

Chapman aptly completed the tragic deaths of Hero and Leander that Marlowe had so clearly and frequently foreshadowed. Marlowe's opening line, "On Hellespont, guilty of true love's blood", clearly suggested the bloody tragedy that Marlowe then portended with slain lover's blood stains on Hero's dress (I. 15-16). Harry Levin observed other omens of tragic fate in Marlowe's fragment: "Looking back to the introductory portrait of Hero, we should have perceived in it an omen; for at the feet of the Venus embroidered upon her sleeves, lies the prostrate Adonis. The lovers meet at the festival of Adonis, the dying god whose cult was so recurrent a manifestation of tragedy."¹¹ As Levin suggested, Marlowe had openly marked the meeting of Hero and Leander with tragic omens:

On this feast day, O *cursed* day and hour,
Went Hero thorough [sic] Sestos, from her tower
To Venus' temple, where *unhappily*,
As after chanc'd, they did each other spy.
(I. 131-134, my italics).

In Chapman's continuation, the Fates caused Leander's death, and Marlowe's fragment explained why. Cupid had involved the destinies in an unrequited love affair with Mercury (I. 385-484); so when Cupid sought a blessing for Hero and Leander's love from the destinies, their hatred became manifested in portents of death:

Threat'ning a thousand deaths at every glance,
[the destinies (I. 377)] answered Love, nor would vouchsafe so much
As one poor word, their hate to him was such.
(I. 382-384).

Chapman recalled this fatal hatred from Marlowe's fragment in his arguments to the fifth and sixth Sestiads, and Chapman portrayed that hatred of the Fates as causing Leander's death. When Leucote approached the Fates to calm the sea and grant Leander safe passage, their hatred caused their fatal deceit: "The Fates consent, (aye me, dissembling Fates) / They showed their favors to conceal their hates" (VI. 15-16). Chapman referred to the Destinies "sovereign will" (VI. 38), and when the Hellespont had been calmed, Leander leaped in, but "the cruel Fates with Ate hasted / To all the Winds, and made them battle fight" (VI. 178 to 179). In the tempestuous fight, Leander drowned (VI. 200-229); and Chapman immediately alluded to the Fates' hatred from Marlowe's fragment:

¹⁰ L. C. Martin, ed., *Marlowe's Poems* (1931, rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1966), p. 11. All quotations from Hero and Leander are from this edition.

¹¹ *The Overreacher: A Study of Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1952), p. 144.

O thievish Fates, to let blood, flesh, and sense
Build two fair temples for their excellence,
To rob it with a poisoned influence.

.....

O heaven and earth,
How most most wretched is our human birth!
(VI. 234-240).

Chapman, thus, makes Marlowe's famous couplet an appropriate comment on the complete poem: "It lies not in our power to love, or hate / For will in us is over-ruled by fate" (I. 167-168). Neither Marlowe's glorification of gratified human passion, nor Chapman's celebration of marriage rites, nor both their intervening gods could control the cruel and hateful Fates. Hero and Leander were to the Fates as flies to wanton boys; they killed them for their spite.

Marlowe and Chapman's portrayal of tragic fate clearly challenges the Boethian conviction that the fates never impinge on free will and that challenge reflects a wider Renaissance skepticism that questions and ponders the relationships between free will, fate, and fortune. L. C. Martin cites four sources from Renaissance love literature that exemplify that skeptical questioning and pondering (*Marlowe's Poems*, p. 36 n). Hannay denies free will and affirms fate as causing love; *Hamlet* questions whether love leads fortune or fortune love; while Castiglione and Pettie remain ambivalent.

The ambivalence about fate, fortune, and free will also figures significantly in theories about Shakespearean tragedy.¹² A. C. Bradley observes an ambivalence in our reaction to Shakespeare's tragic characters; for our reaction involves both a moral feeling that a character deserves his doom and a desperate feeling that fate victimizes the character.¹³ Theodore Spencer expresses a similar skepticism: "We never know, as we see or read *Macbeth*, whether the weird sisters control Macbeth's fate, or whether their prophesies are a reflection of Macbeth's own character. The problem of predestination and free will is presented, but is left unanswered."¹⁴

While skepticism about fate, fortune, and free will in Renaissance culture frequently becomes entangled with the stars and embedded in theological polemics,¹⁵ Machiavelli's discussions about Fortune characterize the ambivalences inherent in that skepticism. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli says that while he sometimes feels that chance governs human activities, "in order not to annul our free will, I judge it true that Fortune may be mistress of one-half our actions but that even she leaves the other half, or almost, under our control."¹⁶ In *The Life of Castruccio*, however, Ma-

¹² For a discussion of Virtue and Fortune in Marlowe and Chapman's tragedies, see Harry Levin *The Overreacher*, pp. 179-183.

¹³ *Shakespearean Tragedy*, 2nd ed. (1905, rpt. New York: Macmillan and Company, 1965), pp. 18-20.

¹⁴ *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 157.

¹⁵ D. C. Allen, *The Star-Crossed Renaissance: The Quarrel About Astrology and its Influence in England* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1941); and *Doubt's Boundless Sea: Skepticism and Faith in the Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1964).

chiavelli sees Fortune as the dominating power: "I well believe that this comes about because Fortune, wishing to show the world that she—and not Prudence—makes men great, first show her forces at a time when Prudence can have no share in the matter, but rather everything must be recognized as coming from herself" (*The Chief Works*, II, 553–554). Machiavelli expresses the other aspect of the ambivalence when he maintains that prudence and intelligence contributed more than Fortune to the Roman conquest (*The Chief Works*, I 324–327). In *Tercets on Fortune*, Machiavelli adopts the metaphor of Fortune's wheel to express the basic ambivalences that characterize Renaissance skepticism about free will and fortune. As the wheel turns, a person's power, honors, riches, and health change; and although a person has the freedom to effect his good or bad fortune by adjusting to the turning wheel, he cannot adjust quickly enough to escape completely the cruelty and violence of Fortune (*The Chief Works*, II, 745–749).

III.

Chapman's "stern Fates" (VI. 226) foreshadowed by Marlowe's stern nymphs" (I. 379) clearly caused Leander's death and that clarification also helps illumine the moral questions in both Marlowe's fragment and Chapman's continuation. Although Marlowe celebrated the gratification of physical passion, his comic amusement mutes the celebration; and Marlowe satirically chided Leander's naïveté:

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. 61–64)

Marlowe also satirized Leander's exaggerated self-esteem when Leander prays like Moses for the sea to part (II. 150–151), and Marlowe chortled at "silly" (II. 286) Hero when she makes her sheets into a secure tent (II. 264–265). Satiric wisdom even appears in the prelude to Marlowe's joyful glorification of gratified passion:

Love is not full of pity, as men say,
But deaf and cruel where he means to prey.
Even as a bird, which in our hands we wring,
Forth plungeth, and oft flutters with her wing,
She trembling strove; this strife of hers (like that
Which made the world) another world begat
Of unknown joy. (II. 287–293)

Soon, however, the comic tones reappear, for "as her naked feet were whipping out,/ He on the sudden cling'd her so about,/ That mermaid-like

¹⁶ Machiavelli: *The Chief Works and Others*, transl. by Allan Gilbert (Durham: Duke University Press, 1965), I, 90. All references from Machiavelli are to this edition.

unto the floor she slid" (II. 313–315). Although many critics have made divergent comments on those comic tones and the satiric wisdom,¹⁷ for me, the amusement and satire move between a dubious sophistication that finds comedy in other people's passions and a muted celebration of realized passion that reveals some harshness in dreamlike love. Chapman accurately continued and developed the harshness that Marlowe's muted celebration contained, when he observed: "Love is a golden bubble full of dreams, That waking breaks, and fills us with extremes" (III. 231–232).

Not only did Chapman observe the harshness of disillusionment in realizing dreamlike love; but he also observed imprudence, suffering, and rankness in Hero and Leander's consummated passion, and Marlowe's comic amusement and satiric wisdom contained enough harshness and moral reserve to justify Chapman's moral disapproval of Hero and Leander, and much of the misunderstanding can be traced to misinterpreting this line in Chapman: "Shun love's stol'n sports by that these lovers prove" (III. 16). Nowhere did Chapman say that Hero and Leander's fornication caused their deaths, rather Chapman reproved their imprudent incontinence that caused them suffering and sorrow. When referring to Leander's "double guilt of . . . incontinence" (III. 26), Chapman means that Leander was tinged with the guilt of imprudence and that Leander had been guilty of imprudence, because Leander had no way to keep the joys of consummated love: "[incontinence] had no stay t'employ / The treasure which the love-god let him joy" (III. 27). D. J. Gordon observes that even Marlowe had reproved Leander for not abstaining from publicizing his love for Hero (II. 108–111).¹⁸ Hero and Leander's "stol'n sports" prove that imprudent self-indulgence not only creates the pangs of parting and the sorrows of separation, but it also created fears of pregnancy for Hero (III. 225–229).

Not only did Chapman moralize that sensuality without rites can create suffering and fear, but he also observed that rude sensuality can be rank. Many critics, however, do not understand that Chapman rejected rank sensuality not because carnal pleasure is wrong, but because ordered sensuality is more pleasant:

What simply kills our hunger, quenctheth thirst,
Clothes but our nakedness, and makes us live,
Praise doth not any of her favours give:
But what doth plentifully minister
Beauteous apparel and delicious cheer,
So *order'd* that it still excites desire,
And still gives pleasure freeness to aspire
The palm of Bounty ever moist preserving;
To Love's sweet life this is the courtly carving.
(III. 50–58, my italics)

¹⁷ See M. C. Bradbrook, "Hero and Leander", *Scrutiny*, 2 (1935), 59–64. Bradbrook observes a "delicate mockery" and implies satire; Brian Morris, "Comic Method in Hero and Leander", *Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968), pp. 113 to 131. Morris sees the comic tones as a burlesque on the absurdities of young love; Robert Knoll, *Christopher Marlowe* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969), pp. 127 to 139. Knoll sees the comic tones as satirizing the poet-narrator; and William Walsh, "Hero and Leander", *SEL*, 12 (Winter, 1972), 33–54. Walsh sees the comic tones as mitigating Marlowe's condemnation of their lust with humor and sympathy.

¹⁸ "Chapman's 'Hero and Leander'," *English Miscellany* (Rome), 5 (1954), 91.

“Still” (1. 56) means “constantly”; thus “order’d” (1. 56) pleasure never becomes cloying and always preserves present and insures future joy. “Carving” (1. 58) means “refinement”; thus “order’d” pleasure removes rankness and insures delight.

Now we see a difference in method between Chapman and Marlowe. Chapman used ceremony to remove rankness and prevent cloying, while Marlowe, as Paul Cubeta observed, used mocking amusement to avoid “cloying sentimentality and uncontrolled sensual indulgence”.¹⁹ But only their methods differ, for Marlowe too had reproved Leander for being “rude in love and raw” (II. 61). While Chapman moralized where Marlowe satirized, Chapman’s moralizing proves to be more epicurean, because Chapman portrayed marriage as preserving the joys that Marlowe had only consummated.

While Marlowe and Chapman used different methods to express their dislike of excess, they both reflect the corresponding value that the Renaissance placed on classical temperance as derived from Aristotlian moderation.²⁰ In *The Courtier*, Castiglione praises temperance as the source of all virtues, because when temperance moderates the passions, reason can discover not only courage, justice, and prudence but also the whole happy chain of “liberality, magnificence, desire for honor, gentleness, pleasantness, affability, and many other virtues”.²¹ In *The Advancement of Learning*, Bacon also sees temperance as central to human happiness. Excess, for Bacon, not only threatens all moral virtues except charity, but excessive desire for knowledge even caused man’s fall.²² In “Of Moderation”, Montaigne advises against excessive desire for any virtue and cites cases of barbaric cruelty caused by religious and political zeal.²³ Chapman, too, sees classical moderation as a check on barbarism (III. 138), but he goes much further; for Chapman’s celebration of ordered pleasure not only corrects the gnostic tendency of Puritan dislike of carnal pleasure but also puts the Renaissance dislike of excess in a positive perspective: carnal pleasure is good and fine, but ordered pleasure is better and refined.

Chapman followed his celebration of ordered pleasure with lines that have also been misunderstood:

Thus Time and all-states-ordering Ceremony
Had banish’d all offense: Time’s golden thigh
Upholds the flowery body of the earth
In sacred harmony, and every birth
Of men and actions makes legitimate,
Being used aright; the use of time is fate.
(III. 59–64)

¹⁹ “Marlowe’s Poet in Hero and Leander”, *College English*, 26 (April, 1965), 505.

²⁰ Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, ed. by H. H. S. Croft (1883, rpt. New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), II, 325.

²¹ *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. by Charles S. Singleton (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p. 303.

²² *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. by James Spedding, Robert L. Ellis, and Douglas Heath (1859, rpt. Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann, 1963), III, 443.

²³ *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. by Donald M. Frame (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 146–149.

Since those lines immediately follow Champan's celebration of ordered pleasure, "offense" (l. 60) means rankness; but how line sixty-four, "Being used aright; the use of time is fate" comments on Hero and Leander's fates can easily be misunderstood. It does not mean that Hero and Leander's fornication caused their deaths, because we have already observed how the "dissembling" (VI. 15), "cruel" (VI. 178), "curst" (VI. 206), and "thievish" (VI. 234) Fates had killed Leander; rather the line means that marriage would have prevented them from suffering the sorrows of separation, the fears of pregnancy, and the rankness of lust. That meaning becomes even clearer when Ceremony reproves "Leander's bluntness in his violent love;/ Told him how poor was substance without rites" (III. 147-148). "Poor" means rank: "Like... desires without delights;/ Like meats unseason'd; like rank corn" (III. 148-149). Chapman then explained his views of marriage rites and the pangs of Leander's violent love:

Not being with civil forms confirm'd and bounded,
For human dignities and comforts founded,
But loose and secret, all their glories hide;
Fear fills the chamber, Darkness decks the bride.
(III. 151-154)

Clearly then the right use of time would have glorified Hero and Leander's love, but their unceremonious use of time fated them to suffer separation and fear.

In his closing lines, Chapman continued Marlowe's fragment. In the second Sestiad, love cruelly preyed on Hero as a fluttering bird, and Chapman echoed the bird imagery and the cruelty when Neptune metamorphosized Hero and Leander:

Neptune for pity in his arms did take them,
Flung them into the air, and did awake them
Like two sweet birds, surnam'd th' Acanthides,
Which we call Thistle-warps, that near no seas
Dare ever come, but still in couples fly,
And feed on thistle-tops, to testify
The hardness of their first life in their last.
(VI. 274-280)

Metamorphosis reveals a subject's essence, and for Chapman, as D. J. Gordon observes: "The essence of Hero and Leander is their love and suffering" (p. 85). Chapman, thus, continued Marlowe's fragment when he transformed Hero and Leander's devoted passion into sweet and united birds and when he transformed their cruel fates into thistle-top feed. Not only did Chapman continue Marlowe's approval of Hero and Leander's love in his metamorphosis; but Chapman's last couplet once again and finally honored Hero and Leander much as Marlowe had honored them: "And this true honor from their love-deaths sprung,/ They were the first that ever poet sung" (VI. 292-293).

TRAGICKÝ OSUD V MARLOWOVĚ A CHAPMANOVĚ BÁSNI HERO A LEANDER

Autor článku se zabývá často diskutovaným problémem adekvátnosti Chapmanova dokončení Marlowova básnického fragmentu *Hero a Leander*. Úvodem rozebírá názory současných kritiků na tento problém a přiklání se ke kritice anglické, jejíž hodnocení je kladnější než hodnocení kritiky americké. Ve dvou podkapitolách hlavní části článku pak podrobně analyzuje styčné body a rozdílnosti mezi přístupem dvou velkých alžbětinských básníků k zobrazení tragického osudu titulní dvojice básně a mezi jejich zpracováním morálních problémů s tímto osudem spojených. Na základě této analýzy dospívá k závěru, že Chapmanovo dokončení básně adekvátně rozvádí předzvěsti tragického osudu naznačené v Marlowově fragmentu a že jeho kritikou nepochopené moralizování vhodně navazuje na Marlowův satirický přístup k vytváření charakterů ústřední dvojice a k zobrazování lidských vášní vůbec. Kritické zhodnocení Marlowova fragmentu a Chapmanova dokončení umožňuje též posoudit básně *Hero a Leander* v širších souvislostech – jako dílo obražející nechuť lidí renesanční epochy k nestřídmosti, jejich kladný vztah ke klasické umírněnosti i jejich skeptický postoj k Boethiově názoru, že osud nikdy rušivě nezasahuje do svobodné vůle člověka.

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