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Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

A Comparative Analysis of Christopher Marlowe's
"Hero and Leander." From the Classics to the
Moderns: Rome, England, and Spain.

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2013-2014

Abstract

This comparative analysis covers the myth of Hero and Leander and its reflection in authors from Classical Antiquity (Ovid), Late Antiquity (Musaeus Grammaticus), Low Middle Ages (the anonymous “Romance Judío-Español”), Renaissance (Garcilaso de la Vega, George Chapman, and Henry Petowe), Baroque (Francisco de Quevedo), and focusing on the famous poem by the English poet-playwright Christopher Marlowe: “Hero and Leander.” The historical context of England and Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is summarized as a means to give a broader scope of the influence on both literatures. Then, the analysis is divided into the literary elements that are common to most of the works in question, which are given attention in various ways; they will be compared, focusing on the differences and similarities. Love and sexuality are main themes in most of the works this analysis covers, in its many perspectives, and this is why it is treated more widely and divided into sub-topics. Other topics, however, may be less common to the works; but these are analyzed for a reason: for example, the analysis of rhetorical elements is used towards a more accurate perspective on the influence of Musaeus in subsequent works covering the myth.

Key words: Marlowe – Hero – Leander – Love – Sexuality – Musaeus – Ovid

Resumen

Este análisis comparativo estudia el mito de Hero y Leandro según cómo lo han tratado autores de la Antigüedad Clásica (Ovidio), la Antigüedad Tardía (Museo Gramático), la Baja Edad Media (el anónimo “Romance Judío-Español”), el Renacimiento (Garcilaso de la Vega, George Chapman y Henry Petowe), y el Barroco (Francisco de Quevedo), destacando a Christopher Marlowe como autor del más famoso poema basado en este mito: “Hero y Leandro”. El contexto histórico de Inglaterra y España en los siglos dieciséis y diecisiete da comienzo a la introducción, poniendo énfasis en la figura de Marlowe, para así obtener una visión general de la influencia del mito en la literatura de ambos países antes de empezar el análisis. Entonces, dicho análisis se divide entre los elementos literarios que son comunes a los textos que nos ocupan, los cuales se utilizan de varias maneras. El amor y la sexualidad son temas principales en la mayoría de los textos, desde diferentes perspectivas; en consecuencia, este tema se ha dividido en varios sub-temas. Otros temas, sin embargo, pueden ser menos comunes a todos los textos, pero se han analizado por una razón: por ejemplo, el análisis de los elementos retóricos se va a llevar a cabo para así conocer qué influencia tuvo Museo en futuras versiones del mito.

Palabras clave: Marlowe – Hero – Leandro – Amor – Sexualidad – Museo – Ovidio

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I. Contextualization and introduction to the comparative analysis

Christopher Marlowe was certainly an outstanding character whose name became ubiquitous in the words of praise from his literary contemporaries, but also in his infamous and numerous citations to court. His short life was quite turbulent: being summoned to court several times because of disputes with constables, being accused of blasphemy or even murder, which caused him a lot of trouble and social unpopularity; he was accused of heresy as well for attending a Roman Catholic seminary at Rheims (France), attended by many enemies of Elizabeth I. His sudden death was surrounded by secrecy: he was allegedly murdered by Ingram Frizer in self-defense after a discussion over a bar bill on 30 May 1593. As Sokolova suggests, his death was engineered by the Queen's Secret Service (Sokolova 393) which, interestingly enough, Marlowe had worked for not long before the tragic event.

Christopher Marlowe, one of the greatest English Renaissance playwrights and poets, 'the Muses' darling,' had just passed away at the age of twenty-nine by the time the English Renaissance was at its highest peak, when the reign of Elizabeth I was in its last years and the turn of the century was about to come. He lived in a period of relative prosperity, with England eclipsing Spain in the Anglo-Spanish War (the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was considered the grandest English triumph of the war), but also in a period of drastic religious reformations that had started with Henry VIII, Elizabeth's father, separating from the Pope and the Church of Rome in order to marry Anne Boleyn.

As for the cultural education and manifestations of the time, the predilection for Classical Antiquity was obviously present in one of the most prolific periods of English Literature, especially the Latin verse, widespread all across the country with the expansion of humanist-inspired programs of education. Therefore, Marlowe became enamored by Ovid's language, its sensuality, and his experimentation within the boundaries of human psychology and desire. In fact, it has been suggested that Ovid's naturalistic and libertine philosophy had a profound influence on Marlowe's assumedly atheistic world-view (Riggs 29). Cheney goes further and affirms that Marlowe may have deliberately imitated Ovid (Cheney 12), but in "Hero and Leander" he followed the narrative development of Musaeus' short epic, which he seems to be improvising on

(Cheney 91). Nevertheless, images used by Ovid and Musaeus are present in Marlowe's poem, but that will be discussed in the following sections of the analysis. The English author of "Hero and Leander" and *Tamburlaine the Great* was especially known for his non-conformism, for exploring the limits of artistic convention, annihilating previous conceptions of gender relations, power roles, and sexual desire, always with a hint of irony and humor; but the Church of England took him very seriously. Censorship took place in this relatively prosper England, where the fear of God was present in society. The printing press had much to do with this situation, as deliberate dissemination of unwanted printed books could lead to certain inappropriate behaviors in the English people. Marlowe, a character prone to trouble, gave himself the liberty of translating Ovid's *Amores*, and all its printed copies were burnt publicly on account of its licentiousness after an order from the Archbishop of Canterbury John Whitgift in the late 1590s (after the poet's death). Marlowe's "Hero and Leander" was not concluded, but contained potentially controversial themes such as pre-marital sex. Curiously enough, M. Morgan Holmes sees George Chapman's and Henry Petowe's continuations of "Hero and Leander" as attempts to reassert orthodoxy after this obscure situation (Cheney 286), probably to give a sense of quietude. Chapman also translated classical works such as Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which he extended to add some moral interpretations; this could be attributed to Marlowe's method of translation for Ovid's work in terms of a reinterpretation, or in the Dryden's sense of *imitation*. This is probably related to Aristotle's conception of poetry in *The Poetics*, but extended to the field of translation; the Classics, seen as the *ideal* source of human knowledge, reinterpreted through the poetry of the Renaissance. However, it is evident that Chapman and Marlowe somewhat differed from one another in terms of ideology; to the popular opinion, Marlowe was basically a transgressor, an extremist.

The slow and gradual Renaissance that characterized England could be attributed to Spain as well. By the time Marlowe published "Hero and Leander" and Francisco de Quevedo — whom I will be treating in this analysis — was born (1580), Mannerism and, later, Baroque were already established in Italy — birthplace of Renaissance. Religion dominated the English and Spanish Renaissance to a certain extent: England was Protestant, and Spain was Catholic. The Counter-Reformation — strengthened by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) — overspread Spain, and the national values were

quite affected by the defense of Catholic faith. Spain had an outward appearance of full prosperity in the sixteenth century: explorations, discoveries, conquests, war, religion, diplomacy, literature, art, and science. However, the government of Charles I of Spain was not successful, due to excessive taxes, and the unpopularity of the Emperor, which gave way to popular revolts, e.g. Revolt of the Comuneros in 1520, in which, as a matter of fact, Garcilaso de la Vega fought at the service of the Emperor, getting hurt in Olías del Rey. There was a general feeling of decadence, and of loss of virtue in the Machiavellian sense, that is, a lack of leadership, of individual initiative; fortune took over character in the Spanish society, in the sense of an “uncontrollable element that wields enough power to keep people from their desired ends,” as they have been subjected to “grave misfortune” (Enhoffer). The defeat of the Spanish Armada (1588) during the reign of Philip II of Spain did not help either, but a vital energy was found in the voices of Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Quevedo.

Francisco de Quevedo’s “Romance de Hero y Leandro” and Garcilaso de la Vega’s sonnet XXIX on Hero and Leander will be studied in this analysis, as they represent two different manners of treating a classical theme in the Spanish tradition. Garcilaso lived during the reign of Charles I, one century earlier than Quevedo, and embodied a new conception of Platonism in the Spanish Renaissance ethos by aiming at an idealized world through confessional poetry. His sonnet makes a great example of a Greco-Roman topic in the form of the traditional Spanish sonnet — Garcilaso became the first Spanish sonneteer by acclimatizing the form of the sonnet from the Italian metrical conventions — that would later be considered almost canonical (most Baroque Spanish poets did not alter its structure). He shows resignation towards Leander’s hardships, while Quevedo’s romance presents a burlesque and satirical tone that mocks at Hero and Leander’s tragic love story (which is more openly shown in his romance “Hero y Leandro en paños menores”). In Quevedo’s poem, the Baroque term “Conceptismo” is represented, characterized by witty metaphors that give a dynamic sense to the rhythm of his poems through the use of satire.

The classical myth of Hero and Leander should be given even greater credit for taking part into the oldest *romancero* of oral tradition, that of the Sephardic Jews. The Sephardic tradition continued after their expulsion from Spain in 1492, as their

romances were passed from one generation to another up until now. Actually, the Sephardic folklore gains more significance in present-time Spain, as exiled Jews have received their right to obtain the Spanish nationality that was taken off their hands five centuries ago, although it is true that the tradition has been almost lost in the latter generation of Sephardic Jews. However, there are still attempts to recover the literary tradition and the language, thanks to some authors and to the flourishing of the teaching of the language. One romance based on Hero and Leander — with no exact date, but believed to pertain to the Low Middle Ages (Armistead 230), and probably based on a Greek song — has been preserved in the Jewish-Spanish *Romancero*, and it concerns this analysis along with the rest of the works covered.

The myth of Hero and Leander is believed to be known since the early Roman Empire, by the time Augustus Caesar was emperor (27 BC – 14 AD). Ovid (Augustus' contemporary) and Musaeus Grammaticus, who was probably born in the sixth century in the Eastern Roman Empire, are the only two poets who use the story as the subject-matter for an entire work — Ovid's epistolary poems XVIII and XIX ("Leander Heroni", and "Hero Leandro"), which belong to his major work the *Heroides*, and Musaeus' short epic poem "Hero and Leander." Probably, the next most influential poem on the Greek myth was Marlowe's "Hero and Leander" (1598). Traditionally, the story concerns two lovers, Hero and Leander, one from Sestos, and the other one from Abydos. The two towns are separated by a strait, the Hellespont. Both meet at a festival that takes place in Sestos, in honor of Venus and Adonis, and they fall in love at first sight, despite the fact that Hero is a virgin devoted to her goddess Venus. Leander promises to visit her every night by crossing the Hellespont from Abydos to Sestos, only guided by a light on the tower where Hero lives. They meet night after night (depending on the version), but then one night Leander is dragged off by the sea to the shore of Sestos dead. Hero, out of grief for the death of her lover, takes her life.

As for the works concerning this comparative analysis, they present a wide variety of genres: Ovid's epistolary poems XVIII and XIX, which belong to his major work the *Heroides*, and originally written in Latin, treated in this analysis through Grant Showerman's translation to English; Musaeus Grammaticus' short epic poem, originally consisting of 340 hexameter lines in Greek, with an English translation from the

original by Edwin Miller with 425 lines with couplets in iambic pentameter; the “Romance Judío-Español” in its original language, whose 14 lines contain elements related to the Greek myth; Christopher Marlowe’s epyllion or short epic, based on Musaeus’ storyline, but ending after Hero and Leander’s first consummation of their love; George Chapman’s continuation of Marlowe’s poem, where he basically divides the original into two parts, and along with his own four last parts make six sestads (published in 1598, the same year that Marlowe’s “Hero and Leander” was printed after five years lingering in manuscript form within erudite circles); Henry Petowe’s *The Second Part of Hero and Leander, conteyning their further Fortunes*, which makes another great extension of Marlowe’s poem and represents a great homage to his admired poet (published as well in 1598); Garcilaso de la Vega’s Sonnet XXIX, and lastly Francisco de Quevedo’s “Romance de Hero y Leandro”, both in the original Spanish version.

Christopher Marlowe’s “Hero and Leander” is going to serve as the base upon which the following analysis will be structured. It is divided into major themes that are treated either similarly or differently in every version of the myth, regarding poetic diction, especially tropes, images, and the treatment of the poetic voice. The Spanish versions do not cover the myth in its entirety but instead they focus on certain scenes; this is why they will be treated only from the third section on, concerning tragedy.

II. Love and sexuality

In Marlowe’s poem, the topic of love is carried beyond the classical conventions: there is a certain dichotomy between the Petrarchan ideal of love and Marlowe’s transgression in the notion of physical love and the presence of exuberant passion all over his poem. The approaches toward love and sexuality from Ovid’s text to the subsequent versions of the myth are manifold, and some of them in particular are more characteristic to Marlowe than to anyone else. Therefore, this section will cover those topics more common to the works concerning this analysis.

II.1. Gender relations, sexuality, and the notion of beauty

Christopher Marlowe’s “Hero and Leander” has been regarded as a defiance of the Christian standards of sexual morality (White 84), and accused of having superficial,

inconsistent characters typical of the “Italianate Ovidian tradition” (Walsh 1), where they only pursue sexual satisfaction.

It is true, however, that Hero swore her chastity to the goddess Venus, but her vision or knowledge of love in the English poem expands as Leander devoutly courts her, and impels her to lose her virginity as a sacrifice, for she exceeds her worshipped Venus in grace and beauty (Marlowe: I, 380). Leander insists that Hero “Abandon fruitless cold virginity. / The gentle queen of love’s sole enemy” (Marlowe: I, 382), and even claims that if “Venus’ sweet rites are perform’d and done,” she would “[...] most resemble Venus’ nun” (Marlowe: I, 382), that is, she is being asked to abandon chastity so as to be a better worshipper to her goddess, otherwise she is acting inconsistently with Venus’ true beliefs. This is also seen in Musaeus’ poem, where Leander pleads: “The glory of thy Goddess should be thine; / She liketh not a votary cold and coy — / Love is her worship, and her service joy” (Musaeus 175-177). Musaeus’ Hero, who shows herself a strong-willed woman: “Sir, are you mad? How dare you hold me so? [...] Besides, I am a holy priestess here, / Vowed to Queen Venus!” (Musaeus 146-150), says she, proudly. She is avowing that her love pertains to the goddess she serves. This contrasts with Marlowe’s Hero, who unveils her coyness and she is soon striving so as not to be deceived by Leander’s rhetoric and insistence by harassing her, and eventually quits resisting. She “of love takes deeper sense” (Marlowe: II, 386), and finds herself fighting an “idle fight”, not offering any resistance at all, completely deceived by love in its physical sense. Here Marlowe shows Hero’s naiveté by accommodating the female character with her inner sexual desires to which she eventually yields, and at the same time showing quite a comical and disparate scene in which the love rites that Marlowe alludes to are being ignored — something that Leander later “suspects”, still ignoring said rites (Marlowe: II, 388) — and both subjects succumb to their desires. Although the consummation of their love has not been reached yet, uninhibited passion is displayed freely and precipitately. This compares to Musaeus in that Marlowe is basically ignoring the Byzantine poet’s elaborate planning for the love consummation (Walsh 49). Marlowe’s Leander is even forcing Hero to give in, seeking only sexual pleasure instead of sex towards procreation under nuptial arrangements; he is the one who “kiss’d” (Marlowe: II, 389), while Musaeus’ Leander is given “one soft kiss”

(Musaeus 272) by Hero. Marlowe's Hero preserves her "inestimable gem" this time, and we discover one cause for Hero's resistance:

No marvel, then, though Hero would not yield
So soon to part from that she dearly held:
Jewels being lost are found again; this never;
'Tis lost but once, and once lost, lost for ever. (Marlowe: II, 388)

Hero sees sexual intercourse as loss, rather than seeing it as a fruitful and rewarding experience. Her notion of virginity is contradictory: she displays a dichotomy between the Petrarchan ideal of love — in which the lovers alienate their sexual desire and attempt to achieve full understanding of the divine through the contemplation of beauty (Crawford 7) — and seeking only sexual pleasure, which proves potentially destructive and selfish (Walsh 35); this is not common for the Renaissance woman, subjected to her male counterpart. Sexual appetite has not yet been integrated with human emotions, and that confounds Hero, which is why she keeps "fearing on the rushes to be flung" (Marlowe: II, 388) and strives even harder to keep her virginity. This sexual denial gives way to Leander's sexual unfulfillment. In their second encounter, Hero is overwhelmed by the sight of Leander's naked body at her door; his physical beauty deceives her and she seeks refuge in her bed, eventually yielding to sexual intercourse. Musaeus' Hero, on the other hand, permits Leander: "Forget upon my lips the wave's harsh taste" (Musaeus 334). She says this to an exhausted Leander, who would be closer than Marlowe's Leander to the ideal of chivalry and courtly love, for at least the amorous rites of courtship and the duties of the lover towards the beloved dame are preserved; he even waits to "win" her, possibly out of humility. In fact, previously in Musaeus' poem, Leander pleads Hero to hear "My pleading lips, my earnest humble prayers!" (Musaeus 171)

Marlowe's poem would finish after this first consummation of love, when Leander swims the Hellespont back to Abydos. Petowe's *The Second Part of Hero and Leander, conteyning their further fortunes* starts with the divine judgment to Hero, as she has sacrificed her chastity on her love for Leander. Juno, the protector and special counselor of the state in the Roman mythology, appears and proclaims that "strumpet she shall die" (Petowe 3), that is, as a prostitute, for succumbing to a love different from the divine. Hero's beauty is also condemned. Nevertheless, she is eventually pardoned, and

her beauty is left untouched. Chapman's continuation begins with Thesme reproaching Leander for having used such "violent love," a love without rites. Petowe's and Chapman's poems basically serve as a Neoplatonic bridge between the profane love of Marlowe's poem and intellectual love (Serés 226), and it can be also understood as a kind of Christian moralization of "Hero and Leander."

Marlowe's Leander is not free from being a matter of debate either, as we have been seeing. He is responsible for deceiving Hero to abandon her virginity. According to William P. Walsh, in order to give us some perspective about Hero and Leander's precipitate pursuit for sex, Marlowe inserts the original mythological story of Mercury and the country maid, which might parallel Hero and Leander's story very well. Both Leander and Mercury make use of rhetoric — as "Love always makes those eloquent that have it" (Marlowe: II, 388). —, so as to deceive their loved maids and, as the struggle continues, the maids preserve their chastity. What is interesting is what Leander is aiming for, which, as Walsh suggests, is unknown to him (Walsh 42). It is sexual intercourse what Leander does not know, but he is using everything in his hands to achieve it. We do not know yet what the ending of this struggle will be, but Marlowe foreshadows it by telling how unhappily the affair between Mercury and the maid ends.

Another interesting passage concerning Leander is the following:

O, none but gods have power their love to hide!
Affection by the countenance is descried;
The light of hidden fire itself discovers,
And love that is conceal'd betrays poor lovers.
His secret flame apparently was seen:
Leander's father knew where he had been [...] (Marlowe: II, 389-390)

Marlowe suggests that love is impossible to keep hidden, as just the gods have power to hide it. This is an interesting passage which is seen in Ovid's epistles and Musaeus' poem. Ovid's epistle XVIII, "Leander Heroni," shows a worried Leander who does not embark into the waters of the Hellespont for fear that his parents realize about their love: "I could not evade my parents, as before, as the love we wish to keep hid would have come to light" (245). Musaeus, on the other hand, shows a similar image, but it is Hero who fears that their love would come to light:

My parents wouldn't give me ; and 'twere rife
With untold dangers if you lingered here
To meet me secretly; for all is ear,
All eye in Sestos! Things in silence done
Are said next morning at the market-stone. (Musaeus 225-229)

The poetic voice in Marlowe's poem also avows that love arises at first sight in this beautiful and renowned passage:

It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is over-rul'd by fate.
When two are stript long ere the course begin,
We wish that one should lose, the other win;
And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows; let it suffice,
What we behold is censur'd by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight? (Marlowe: I, 379)

Musaeus' also shows Leander enamored of Hero at first sight:

But thou, Leander ! when those bright eyes shone
One instant on thee, of the youths .alone,
Beyond wild words, beyond fond wishes felt
The heart within thee with love's magic melt. (Musaeus 96-99)

These two passages demonstrate how Musaeus' and Marlowe's Leander are not entirely different, as they fell in love with Hero at first sight. However, was Marlowe thinking about Musaeus' poem as he wrote this passage, or was he evoking Neoplatonism? Neoplatonism was strong in the Renaissance England, especially in the seventeenth century with the Cambridge Platonists, but Marlowe had already suggested this notion in his poem. As we have seen in Marlowe's "Hero and Leander", there is no clue of divine beauty from the eyes of the two lovers, but it is love at first sight, love of the visible, the bodily form, what first arises in them (especially, at first, in Leander). This kind of love, according to Plotinus, would not be possible for a Neoplatonist: "So long as the attention is upon the visible form, love has not entered: when from that outward form the lover elaborates within himself, in his own partless soul, an

immaterial image, then it is that love is born, then the lover longs for the sight of the beloved to make that fading image live again” (Plotinus, quoted by Walsh, 39).

Walsh suggests irony in Marlowe’s passage, alluding to the Neoplatonic notion of love (Walsh 39). The English poet avoids depicting anything close to transcendental love, the divine beauty of the beloved; he even puts the lover in a very shameful situation if we take into account the Neoplatonic ideal. Not that it is easy to discern Marlowe’s actual purpose, but given the previous ideas that I have suggested in this section concerning the comical and naïve curiosity of the lovers — the denial of love rituals, the clumsy behavior of the lovers —, I must agree with Walsh about the ironic intention of the author, for he may well be providing a mere depiction of the delusive avoidance of the true conception of love of that time. The lofty Neoplatonic notion of love as something ideal, spiritual, arising for the presence in the soul of divine beauty, it put against the earthly, physical, and foolish love that Hero and Leander seek.

George Chapman mentions the Neoplatonic ideal in relation to virginity and coyness in: “loathing the lower place, more than it loves / The high contents desert and virtue moves” (Chapman: V, 420). He does not specifically refer to Hero, for in that case he would be ignoring her loss of virginity in Marlowe’s poem; he is referring to love and the importance of marriage:

And Love was grown so rich with such a gain,
And wanton with the ease of his free reign,
That he would turn into her roughest frowns
To turn them out; and thus the Hymen crowns
King of his thoughts, man’s greatest empery:
This was his first brave step to deity. (Chapman: V, 420)

Chapman considers marriage — Hymen, the god of marriage ceremonies, weds the lovers in the previous passage — as a first step to achieve divinity; this would be after the subject has purged himself or herself of every desire (referring to sexual desire), thus giving way to pure love, and not the raw, sinful love of Marlowe’s lovers. This takes us to a description of Leander as “lord of his desires” (Chapman: III, 395), contrary to Marlowe’s Leander, who is not in control of his own desires; it is actually his desires which control him. Petowe’s Leander is driven by his desires in the same

way: “desire Leander driueth” (Petowe 11). Therefore, any opportunity to deify Leander banishes.

II.2. Homoeroticism and male effeminacy

Marlowe uses homoeroticism and male effeminacy as a means of “reversing the received patterns of expectation” (Sokolova 394) within the relationship between Hero and Leander. The latter has also been “reversed” previously in the section of gender roles: as we have seen, he is a lover who struggles toward love consummation — using certain manners of courting Hero unfit for the traditional Petrarchan lover —, and the superficially coy Hero is actually an “undercover agent of love’s passions” (Sokolova 394).

Marlowe’s play within the erotic ground is demonstrated when he inserts the scene between Neptune and Leander while the latter attempts to cross the Hellespont. This is an overtly homoerotic scene that is not subject of comparison with the other works that concern us, as it is unique. However, it has much to do with the male effeminacy that is found along the poems. Of course, the term ‘sexuality’ did not appear until the nineteenth century when the science of sexology instituted terms such as homosexuality and heterosexuality, the former based on male sexual object choice. It is believed that sexuality as we understand it today was much broader in the Renaissance, and there were not the same boundaries that exist today. As Crawford suggests (6), in the modern sense, interpersonal and sexual relationships are defined by identity of the individual, but in the Renaissance, the focus was on the object choice. Marsilio Ficino, an Italian early Humanist, believed that friendship based on love was very important (Crawford 7). For example, male friendship bonds were quite common in the Elizabethan era, and two men would greet with a kiss or walk holding arms. Returning to the scene of Neptune and Leander: the Roman god confuses Leander with Ganymede, who was described by Homer as the most beautiful of mortals; he realizes Leander is not Ganymede when he almost drowns under the water (Ganymede was basically semi-mortal, as he is abducted by Zeus to serve at Olympus), but this suggests that Leander shows a god-like beauty.

For Cheney, there is a kind of transvestite authorship that effeminizes itself (Cheney 117) in Marlowe's "Hero and Leander." Nevertheless, effeminacy is not just the authorial voice, but it is in the characters, specifically in Leander's "aura" and physical appearance. There is a certain "unmanning" element that repeats itself in most of the poems, creating an ambiguous representation of Leander, an idea that Cheney connects to the cross-dressed boys of the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, e.g. Shakespeare's Joan in Part I of *Henry VI*. For example, we see it in this famous passage in Marlowe's poem:

Some swore he was a maid in man's attire,
For in his looks were all that men desire, —
A pleasant-smiling cheek, a speaking eye,
A brow for love to banquet royally. (Marlowe: I, 377)

Leander is applied the conventions of female blason, and this description would perfectly parallel those directed to Hero. Petowe, Marlowe's contemporary, uses a similar passage to describe Leander:

Harmeles Leander whose all smiling face
Grac't with vnspotted faire to all mens sight,
Would force the houndes retire, and not to bite. (Petowe 5)

Musaeus is less straightforward but also gives a slight sense of effeminacy to Leander in the end. Roses are a recurring image that Musaeus uses to describe Hero: "She was all made of rose-leaves" (Musaeus 66); "Nathless her cheek was touched with tender dye / Such as new rose-buds have" (Musaeus 63-64); "Such rose-leaf arms!" (Musaeus 68); "So close, he touched her rosy open hand" (Musaeus 138). She, after inviting her exhausted Leander into her chamber, cleanses his body with "rose-essences" (Musaeus 328). Leander is obviously effeminized in the end, although not overtly. There seems to be a tendency towards male effeminacy in the tradition of the myth.

Chapman also represents Hymen, the Greek god of marriage ceremonies, as a feminine figure in *The Tale of Teras*, for he is "[...] so sweet of face, / That many thought him of the female race." (Chapman: V, 416) Hymen was traditionally represented in the Renaissance as a young man with a crown of leaves and a burning

torch. This brings to mind the Ancient Greek custom of mature men (called *erastes*) having relationships with young men (*eromenos*), mostly at the age of puberty. This has its roots in Plato's *Symposium* (Makowski 4), where there is a dialog between Socrates and a young man in which the former basically flirts with the latter.

In sum, this male feminization in the Renaissance is possibly influenced by this custom from Ancient Greece, which depicted beauty in young men in a feminine manner, very similar to those descriptions of the beauty of women.

II.3. Neoplatonic union

I must cite Plato's *Symposium* again, where Aristophanes claims that lovers have to separate from themselves before unify with the sole aspiration of love, and for humanists like Marsilio Ficino, love is the only way for "lesser forms" — earthly beings — to reach God as the source of existence (Crawford 6). This is illustrated in order to symbolize the human ambition towards the integrity of human nature (Serés 16), by which the portions of the lovers' divinity, violently separated, endeavor to build unity by fusing together. Chapman shows this idea quite well:

All her destroying thoughts; she thought she felt
His heart in hers with her contentions melt, [...]
Hero Leander is, Leander Hero;
Such virtue love hath to make one of two. (Chapman: III, 403)

Chapman's Hero and Leander demonstrate that this Platonic ideal of the unity of the souls is present in Renaissance literature. Another example can be found in this beautiful passage:

This place was mine; Leander, now 'tis thine,
Thou being myself, then it is double mine,
Mine, And Leander's mine, Leander's mine.
O, see what wealth it yields me, nay, yields him! (Chapman: III, 404)

Henry Petowe repeats this idea in the scene right before Duke Archilaus expels Leander, and he travels to Delphos:

So ioynd in one, these two together stood,
Euen as Hermophroditus in the flood. (Petowe 6)

Returning to the Ancient Rome, Ovid utilized this idea as well in his *Heroides*, though less overtly, specifically the letter from Hero to Leander: “O more firmly let our eager loves be knit, and our joys be faithful and true!” (Ovid 265)

III. Rhetorical elements

Rhetoric was a major discipline in the humanist spheres in the Renaissance; for them, it was a means for attaining both a literature and a civilization comparable to that of Augustan Rome (Trousdale 623). Marlowe’s “Hero and Leander” opens with a sensational description of Hero’s appearance; through her clothes, the poetic voice conveys all the characteristics of the *effictio*, which is a rhetorical convention of the Renaissance that describes the physical attributes of feminine beauty (female blason). It belongs to the epideictic, or the use of language to praise or blame. Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, states that all poetic discourse is all praise or blame. In this case, Hero is being both praised and blamed, as her beauty is emphasized, but we are warned that her charms may be deceitful as well:

Her veil was artificial flowers and leaves,
Whose workmanship both man and beast deceives:
Many would praise the sweet smell as she past,
When ‘twas the odour which her breath forth cast;
And there for honey bees have sought in vain,
And, beat from thence, have lighted there again. (Marlowe: I, 375)

Marlowe alludes to the stimulation of human senses through the description of physical attributes; in this case, vision, the olfactory and the gustatory. Hero is then described over her garments. This Cheney relates to the embroidered clothes typical of the Elizabethan culture (Cheney 119), and this comparison is made more evident when one thinks of the Virgin Queen and Hero’s state as Venus’ nun. Besides, there is a surprising comparison to her goddess (which would make her beauty god-like), when Cupid, Venus’ son, confuses Hero with his mother:

But this is true; so like was one the other,
As he imagin'd Hero was his mother;
And oftentimes into her bosom flew,
About her naked neck his bare arms threw,
And laid his childish head upon her breast,
And, with still panting rock'd, there took his rest. (Marlowe: I, 376)

Musaeus' seems to utilize the same effect to stimulate the senses of the reader as Marlowe when describing Hero, only that he uses the recurrent image of roses, creating a sense of visual extravagance that stimulates other senses such as the olfactory:

Nathless her cheek was touched with tender dye
Such as new rose-buds have [...]
She was all made of rose-leaves [...]
Such rose-leaf arms! [...]
So close, he touched her rosy open hand [...]
Stained with rose-essences and scented rare. (Musaeus 63-64, 66, 68, 138, 328).

This rhetorical device is present both in Musaeus and Marlowe, although Marlowe emphasizes Hero's robes to present her beauty, probably to adhere to the Elizabethan idea of a respectable woman. However, Musaeus' simile focuses on Hero's "aura," comparing her to the "the pure moon when first it swims the sky" (Musaeus 62) and her "face of alabaster all a-shine" (Musaeus 61).

Marlowe also makes use of his eloquence when Leander is courting Hero, although she does not seem awestruck or overwhelmed at all in the first place, which proves Leander's poor rhetoric. However, there is some certain playfulness in Hero that demonstrates Leander's precipitate words to be following the right path towards his sole objective, where she is "evilly feigning anger," (Marlowe: I, 383) and still striving to preserve her virginity. Then, she laughs at Leander: "Who taught thee rhetoric to deceive a maid?" right before admitting that she is actually liking these words in "And yet I like them for the orator" (Marlowe: I, 383). But Musaeus' Hero is not as coy as Marlowe's, for she even threatens Leander:

Sir, are you mad? how dare you hold me so?
Leave plucking at my gown, and let me go!
If those who loved me saw, 'twould cost you dear;
Besides, I am a holy priestess here,
Vowed to Queen Venus! are you not afraid
To stay me so, and I, an honest maid ? (Musaeus 146-151)

Musaeus' Hero, although she is somewhat deceived by Leander's "soft flood of loving argument" (Musaeus 198), she is eventually completely enamored by Leander's deeds. His eloquence seems not to be enough. In spite of Hero's struggle, she manages to stand in silence and does not yield until Leander's next visit to her tower.

Leander crossing the Hellespont is the most recurrent scene common to all of the texts that concern this analysis. Apart from Neptune chasing Leander, his unanswered prayers, or the merciless Fates acting against him, there is an interesting simile: the comparison of Leander to a ship against the waves and the winds of the Hellespont. Hard to notice, though, due to its apparent unimportance; but the fascinating thing is how this rhetorical device was chosen to be preserved in a time span of fourteen centuries.

The Sephardic romance compares Leander's arms to oars:

Varón que lo supo
al nadir se echo:
sus braços hizo remos,
al castillo arrivó. (Sephardic: 11-14)

"He made of his arms oars." This image is very similar to those from Musaeus' poem: "He steered with face set hard where that ray shone, / Ship-pilot-rower-merchant, all in one" (Musaeus 314-315); "That beam, whereto, oaring my way afar" (Musaeus 263). Ovid's Hero makes a similar image, but she is preoccupied Leander is not going to make it: "Do you think your arms more powerful than oars?" (Ovid 273) Ovid's Leander, longing to be with Hero and arrive safely, uses ship imagery as well: "Yonder with you is an apt ship-yard / for my keel, and in no water rests my bark more / safe" (Ovid 259).

IV. Tragedy and foreshadowing

Traditionally, there has been a tragic element in the myth of Hero and Leander, and foreshadowing is very commonly used in the poems that concern us, expressed through digressions (characteristic to Marlowe and Chapman), or omens. However, this has been disregarded from the original myth to some extent: Henry Petowe provides a happy ending to the love story, although he gives some hints about a possible tragic ending that, eventually, does not succeed; the “Romance Judío-Español” does not seem to consider the originally tragic ending either, and offers a similar ending to that from Petowe’s poem.

Part of Christopher Marlowe’s poem’s popularity comes from its open-ended resolution — intended, or not. This may seem contradictory, as a more exact word would be “anti-resolution.” But there is not a proved theory that explains what Marlowe exactly had in mind: some say it is unfinished, and others say he was really focusing on the lovers’ carnal and spiritual love, and that the tragic ending was deemed unnecessary. Anyway, it remains a mystery, aggrandized by the Latin expression added at the end, believed to be Marlowe’s: *Desunt nonnulla*, which would mean “something missing.” Nonetheless, there are certainly hints of an impending tragic resolution of the love story. “On Hellespont, guilty of true love’s blood” (Marlowe: I, 375), the opening line of “Hero and Leander”, proves a fatal omen if seen in relation to Hero and Leander. Of course, it could be connected to the Greek myth of Helle (to whom Hellespont owes its infamous name), in which Helle and her brother Phrixus escape from death on a flying golden ram; eventually, Helle falls off the ram into the lake and, Phrixus not being able to save her, she drowns. This “true love’s blood” from Marlowe could mean kinship love between Helle and her brother, but it actually functions as a tragic omen to the reader, as we are immediately introduced to the matter in hand, the love story between Hero and Leander. What is more, George Chapman uses the same expression in his continuation and, in this case, it is clearly an omen to the lovers’ tragic death:

The Guilty Hellespont was mix’d and stain’d
With bloody torrents, that the shambles rain’d;
Not arguments of feast, but shows that bled,
Foretelling that red night that followed. (Chapman: VI, 428)

In Garcilaso's sonnet, the Hellespont acts mercilessly upon Leander's plead. In this way, the Spanish author would make the Hellespont guilty of Leander's death as well:

Como pudo esforzó su voz cansada,
Y a las ondas habló desta manera,
Más nunca fue la voz dellas oida [...] (Garcilaso: 9-11)

Ovid's Leander is ignored by the gods as well. They do not answer to his prayers:

Vain is my petition: my prayers are met by his
murmurings, and the waves tossed up by him he
nowhere curbs. (Ovid 247)

Marlowe makes a central digression that concerns the courtship by Mercury to a country maid. He parallels Leander and she parallels Hero to a certain extent, as the former struggles greatly to get the country maid's love. He even forces her, who after successful efforts to keep her chastity, asks him to get nectar from Jove's cup. He does it, but is eventually punished after omniscient Jove notices to live in poverty:

Yet, as a punishment, they added this,
That he and Poverty should always kiss. (Marlowe: I, 386)

It is not for his "simple rustic love" (Marlowe: I, 385), however, why he is punished, as Zeus (Mercury's father in the Greek mythology) was known to have many affairs and children resulting from these, but for stealing the "prohibited" nectar from Hebe who would be her step-sister. Nonetheless, Greek gods were known for taking all human capacities to their farthest limits, e.g. as a counterpart to human desire, they would commit "heady riots, incest, rapes" (Marlowe: I, 378).

This digression, however, was included by Marlowe, and Musaeus even clarifies that Leander was sent by Aphrodite, not Mercury (Musaeus 190). This may suggest, apart from the fact that Leander was not sent by the divine emissary but by the Goddess of Love herself, that Musaeus' Leander not having been sent by Mercury bears a connotation of innocence; as if he were clarifying that it is not an illicit love.

Gods also intervene in the foreshadowing in its different forms intended by Marlowe. For example, as Leander exits the tower, there is a god-like witness:

And now the sun, that through th' horizon peeps,
As pitying these lovers, downward creeps;
So that in silence of the cloudy night,
Though it was morning, did he take his flight. (Marlowe: II, 389)

In Greek mythology, the personification of the sun is the god Helios. He pities the lovers' precipitate consummation of love, probably because he foresees its tragic conclusion. Ovid also permits the intervention of gods, in this case Ceyx and Alcyone:

The wave was radiant with the image of the reflected
moon, and there was a splendour as of day in the silent
night; no note came anywhere to my ears, no sound but
the murmur of the waters my body thrust aside. The
Halcyons only, their hearts still true to beloved Ceyx,
I heard in what seemed to me some sweet lament. (Ovid 249)

The story of Ceyx and Alcyone is quite similar to that of Hero and Leander. The mythological figures are punished by Zeus as they take the liberty to call each other "Zeus" and "Hera." Zeus threw a thunderbolt to Ceyx's boat and he drowns, while Alcyone, realizing about their fate, commits suicide. Out of compassion, they are converted into Halcyons. In Ovid's passage, as well as Helios in Marlowe's, they pity the lover's close death, showing a "sweet lament."

Quevedo, in his satirical poem, utilizes the gods to fetter Leander's crossing of the Hellespont:

Pretensión de mariposa
Le descaminan los dioses;
Intentos de salamandra
Permiten que se malogren. (Quevedo 21-24)

Leander tries to use all his strength to cross the waters, although the gods' hands take action to impede it.

Marlowe's poetic voice admits the "folly and false hope" that deludes the lovers (Marlowe: II, 392). They are credulous enough for believing that their love will endure.

This is, of course, uncompleted in Marlowe's poem. However, their impulsive consummation of love and their ignorance of a virtuous, Neoplatonic love, leads us to an impetuous use of time. Time appears in Chapman's poem as a foreshadowing response to Hero and Leander:

[...] Time's golden thigh
Upholds the flowery body of the earth
In sacred harmony, and every birth
Of men and actions makes legitimate,
Being us'd aright; *the use of time is fate*. (Chapman: III, 396)

Hero and Leander did not use time "aright," but allow themselves to fall into mere sensuality and physical love instead of aspiring to divine love. Their misuse of time results in death, as the cursive words advance. These words are included in the Chapman edition, although it is not clarified whether they belong to Chapman himself or the editor.

Now, the Fates take part in Chapman's narrative poem; the waters become tranquil, and the winds cease:

The Fates consent; —ay me, dissembling Fates!
They show'd their favours to conceal their hates,
And draw Leander on, lest seas too high
Should stay his too obsequious destiny. (Chapman: VI, 426-427)

The Fates are hiding their true intentions by appeasing the weather so Leander is not afraid to cross the Hellespont. "Destiny" should not be confused with "Fate", as the former means only Leander's precious objective and desire, not being in capital letters. Fate, on the contrary, is out of Leander's reach; it *acts* independently, and is controlled by the Fates, the three mythological figures in Ancient Greece. They act mercilessly; as Leander is swimming the Hellespont:

But now the cruel Fates with Até hasted
To all the Winds, and made them battle fight
Upon the Hellespont, for either's right
Pretended to the windy monarchy. (Chapman: VI, 430)

The “cruel Fates” act by Até’s side, the Greek goddess of folly, ruin, and disillusionment, until the sea “Hid young Leander and his agony” (Musaeus 413).

Petowe’s poem, despite the absence of a tragic ending, contains interesting images that should be discussed. First, right after Hero and Leander are reunited:

Like to a snake she clung vnto him fast,
And wound about him, which snacht-vp in hast. (Petowe: 6)

This reminds us of the snake represented in Andrea Alciato’s *Emblemata*, in which the illustration of a snake can suggest different meanings. For example, in his “Emblem 119”, two snakes appear curled about a spear, which means that “great abundance of things blesses men who are strong of mind and skilled in speaking.” However, “Emblem 132” represents a snake devouring a sparrow who had left its family upon a tree, and then the snake is turned into stone, “deserving such a death.” This image relates to that of the Garden of Eden, in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Satan, disguised as a “serpent”, creeps through Paradise and eventually deceives Eve into plucking one apple from the forbidden tree; after this, Eve, symbol of Passion, beguiles Adam, symbol of Reason, into having carnal pleasure. This time, there is a kind of exchange of roles, but the image is there: as Duke Archilaus waits for Leander to go, Hero attempts to keep him in Sestos, until the Duke banishes him. If Leander had been convinced to stay when he knew deep inside that he had to sail to Delphos in order to know his Fate from the oracle, he probably would have faced the Duke, who had all the power to defeat him.

Hero, in Petowe’s poem, is accused of killing Duke Archilaus by his heir, Duke Euristippus. She is incarcerated, and the gods know her doom. Juno asks her son Argos to defend Hero, but she “had no kinde Iove to keepe her from her foe.” (Petowe 7)

Jupiter, god of gods, stops Argos and basically says that her doom will arrive in three months time, so the Duke will do the work for him:

Argos starke dead; sweet Hero might not lieu,
For of her life the Duke will her deprive.
Her doome was thus, ere three moneths date tooke end,
If she found none, that would her cause defend:
Vntimely death should seize her as a pray,
And vnresisting life, should death obey. (Petowe: 8)

In short, Petowe never foresees the lover's death explicitly. In this case, Hero would have died if not for Leander's return from Delphos. The oracle tells him the same thing Jupiter does to Argos and Juno: if Leander does not return fast to Sestos, Hero will die.

The "Romance Judío-Español" does not end tragically, like Petowe's poem. However, as opposed to the English poet's version, it contains no bad omens or any hint of foreshadowing.

V. Conclusion

In this comparative analysis, as I stated in the introduction, I have attempted to provide a deeper understanding of the moral values inevitably tied to certain elements such as sexuality or rhetoric. Besides, adding the Spanish versions, although brief, makes a broader perspective of how the myth was being interpreted at the time (between the fourteenth and the seventeenth century), as it may have seemed a bit limited to analyze only within the sphere of early modern English literature, along with the obvious comparison to the Classic poets.

The myth of Hero and Leander has proven to be an extraordinary influence throughout the history of literature. As we have seen, it takes place in the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, England, and Spain. Disparate versions of the poem have been written, as we have been seeing. Christopher Marlowe, however, made an outstanding and unique version full of non-conformity, irony, debauchery, galvanization, with a mastery of language comparable to Francisco de Quevedo. He was hailed by his literary contemporaries and following criticism until the present time. He did not make a mere version of the myth, but created paths and interpretations unknown until then. Before and after Marlowe, versions of Hero and Leander are allegories burdened by rather standard Christian and Neoplatonic principles. Marlowe excelled them all, and demonstrated being ahead of his time, taking some liberties which sadly caused him big trouble during his short life.

His contemporary William Shakespeare probably gave Marlowe the best homage that he could deserve, by citing the "Dead Shepherd's" infamous but beautiful line in *As You Like It*:

Phebe

Dead Shepherd, now I find thy saw of might,
'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?' (III.V, 80-81)

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