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OVID'S APOLLO AND DAPHNE: A FOOLISH GOD AND A VIRGIN TREE

by

Mary E. Barnard

In his legend of Apollo and Daphne (*Metamorphoses* 1.452-567) Ovid deforms and degrades the sun-god, lowering him to the level of a comic figure. He strips the Olympian of his divine powers and solemnity and transforms him into a human lover [1]. Foolish in his urgency to capture the elusive Daphne, the deity enters more and more into the realm of comedy. Phoebus appears next in the guise of a predatory hound and lastly as a mechanized figure clutching a tree. Descending, as in a chain of being, the god Apollo becomes human, animal, and machine. Ovid deprives the narrative of all qualities which might have endowed the sun-god with human pathos or tragedy. Apollo is clearly the foolish lover in contrast to Daphne who is not comic and who acts to mend the "split" between her alluring body, which had attracted Apollo, and her virgin self. To preserve her identity, her conception of herself as virgin, she surrenders her body to metamorphosis [2].

In Ovid's hands the Hellenic legend becomes a serio-comic tale of unrequited love, couched in the tradition of Roman erotic poetry. All the

[1] BROOKS OTIS, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. 102-104, sees as the basis of Ovid's humor in the tale the incongruity which results when Apollo's divine majesty is touched by love.

[2] HERMAN FRÄNKEL has touched on the subject of identity and metamorphosis in *Ovid: a Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1945). Fränkel suggests that the theme of metamorphosis gives "ample scope for displaying the phenomena of insecure and fleeting identity, of a self divided in itself or spilling over into another self" (p. 99). I intend to take this interpretation one step further; not only does a metamorphosis display an insecure and fleeting identity, but it serves to mend the divided self and achieve unity. For some details on the question of identity and transformation see G. Karl Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses. An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), pp. 45-51.

ingredients of the world of elegiac love are there: love as a madness which overrides reason and common sense, the wanton little Cupid, the rejected suitor, the inaccessible *domina*. And, as in his elegies, Ovid's treatment is that of *Stilmischung,* the mixture of "jest and earnest," "the contrast between the serious and the frivolous Muse" which is to become a commonplace from the Augustan period onward [3]. However, the light, ironic treatment of the erotic adventure in Ovid's amatory poetry gives way to caricature in his tale of the god and the nymph.

At the outset, Ovid places his story in the conventional world of Augustan erotic poetry by presenting Amor as the arbiter of the fate of both the god and the maiden. The son of Venus is the active agent who sets the stage for the Latin poet's half-humorous tale of unrequited love, for the little god pierces Apollo with a sharp, gold-tipped arrow and Daphne with a blunt, leaden dart producing two conflicting and unyielding postures. It is the antithesis of these two stances that provides the framework for the comic perspective of the tale; the maiden, relentless in her *severa virginitas,* confronts Apollo who has been plunged into a state of erotic madness.

Amor pierces Daphne with his leaden shaft and the *dura puella* emerges; chastity becomes her guide and the pursuits of Diana, the virgin goddess of the hunt, her sole concern. The maiden rejects all suitors and seeks the safety of the woods far from love and wedlock. Her beauty, however, remains a threat. Cupids dart has caused a scission in Daphne, a split between her seductive body and her real, virgin self. The former, the expression of her sexual possibilities, lies outside the core of the self and is thus viewed as alien and an intruder in Daphne's scheme of things. The maiden's desire for perpetual virginity, a shield against male intrusion, is denied, not by the river-god Peneus, who yields to her plea, but by her own physical charms which provoke her suitors and soon lead her to lose her human form when, through metamorphosis, she becomes the laurel. In an apostrophe to the girl, Ovid explains it thus: "te decor iste, quod optas, / esse vetat, votoque tuo tua forma repugnat" (488-489)[4]. Structurally, Daphne's posture as a recalcitrant virgin serves as a foil against which Apollo's comic nature is revealed, for the god's single aim is to overcome the nynph's chastity.

The encounter between Phoebus and Cupid introduces the *topos* of love as war, a motif which characterizes Ovid's attitude toward the erotic adventure. After rebuking the son of Venus for usurping his weapon, the bow, the god of archery is smitten with the vengeful golden shaft becoming a prisoner in Amor's camp. The hubristic slayer of Python is overcome by an obsessive love for Daphne and now he must endure the vicissitudes that typically plague the human lover. The poet defines

[3] E. R. CURTIUS, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* trans. Willard R. Trask, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 418.

[4] All references to the *Metamorphoses* will be to the edition of M. Haupt, O. Korn, J. Müller and R. Ehwald, revised by M. von Albrecht (Zurich and Dublin: Weidmann, 1966).

Phoebus' craving as an unrequited passion and as a longing desire which is deceived by a misguided hope: "quodque cupit, sperat, suaque illum oracula fallunt" (491). Ovid utilizes the conventional images of Amor's consuming fire to describe the god's state:

> utque leves stipulae demptis adolentur aristis,
> ut facibus saepes ardent...
> sic deus in flammas abiit, sin pectore toto
> uritur... (492-496).

As Phoebus' newly proclaimed master, however, Cupid has not only placed the vanquished Apollo in an erotic frenzy, but has also paralyzed his divine powers. The solar deity is dismayed at the sight of his debasement. His skills with the bow are of no avail and the god of archery is defeated at his own game ("certa quidem nostra est, nostra tamen una sagitta / certior, in vacuo quae vulnera pectore fecit!" 519-520); his gifts of prophecy deceive him ("suaque illum oracula fallunt" 491); and the god of healing can do nothing to cure the wound inflicted by Amor ("ei mihi, quod nullis amor est sanabilis herbis / nec prosunt domino, quae prosunt omnibus, artes!" 523-524)[5]. As in the elegies, Cupid emerges as the all-powerful force which governs the will of gods and mortals, converting Apollo into a human lover chained to his passion.

Apollo had fallen in love at first sight ("Phoebus amat visaeque cupit conubia Daphnes" 490). This convention is intimately connected with the motif of the eyes as vehicle of the experience, an important element in the erotic doctrine of the Latin elegists[6]. The maiden becomes Phoebus' *domina*. Like the conventional elegiac mistress — Lesbia, Cynthia — the virgin is praised and revered by her lover. Apollo, however, concentrates his attention solely on her physical appeal. He gazes at her unkempt hair, a sign of her life as a savage huntress, and wonders in anxious anticipation " 'quid, si comantur?' " (498). Except for a stellar conceit, Ovid omits the traditional figures utilized by Roman love poets, including himself, in their celebration of the lady. It is as if Ovid had sacrificed the conventional catalogue of charms—which would have brought about an idealization of Daphne— for the sake of bringing to the fore Apollo's carnal concerns. For the deity is reduced to somewhat of a voyeur, pleasurably studying his beloved's body:

> videt igne micantes
> sideribus similes oculos, videt oscula, quae non
> est vidisse satis; laudat digitosque manusque
> bracchiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos;
> si qua latent, meliora putat (498-502).

[5] This is not the first time that Apollo has been subjected to such degradation. Both Tibullus in his elegies (2.3.11-28) and Ovid (*Ars Amatoria* 2.239-242) utilize the Apollo-Admetus myth as *exemplum* to depict love's slavery. Cf. *Metamorphoses* 2.676-685. On this question see F. O. Copley, "*Servitium amoris* in the Roman Elegists", *TAPA*, 78 (1947), 292-293.

[6] For details on this image, see M. B. Ogle, "The Classical Origin and Tradition of Literary Conceits", *American Journal of Philology*, 34 (1913), 138-140.

This is the poet's first step in revealing the Olympian's fall from godly dignity.

Fearing the deity's gaze, Daphne flees. It is then that Phoebus turns from a passive observer into a most threatening persecutor. Apollo's subjection to Cupid has rendered him the helpless victim of *furor*, the erotic madness which divests the lover of self-mastery and reason [7]. Driven by this malady, Phoebus loses all moderation and restraint. His desire to ravish the unwilling, *dura puella* culminates in a chase which epitomizes the urgency and frustration of the unsatisfied lover. It also brings into focus Ovid's humorous treatment of the *amator*, for the god's obsession to gain access to Daphne's body places him in a ludicrous position. Apollo's plea to convince the girl to acquiesce is given while the god is pursuing the fleeing virgin. Furthermore, he does not retain the mastery and dignity which befit a deity; as the slave of Amor he humbles himself and pleads to Daphne for attention.

The chase takes place in the thickness of the woods; what could have been a *locus amoenus* for the enjoyment of love becomes the setting of conflict and discord. Phoebus' entreaty is a long monologue, a dramatic technique which makes the discomfiture of the sun-god all the more vivid. First, he implores Daphne to stay and in an anaphoric construction attempts to convince the maiden that she is mistakenly fleeing from him as from a deadly foe: "sic agna lupum, sic cerva leonem, / sic aquilam... columbae" (505-6). Apollo's words not only convey the urgency of the plea, but are a prolepsis of the final stages of the chase when Phoebus, having lost all patience and urged on by lust, does become Daphne's avowed enemy. The dramatic irony of the situation lies in the fact that unknowingly Apollo has become a most fearful threat to the virgin. Next, he explains that love is the cause of his pursuit: "amor est mihi causa sequendi! / me miserum!" (507-8). In this passage, the word *miserum* defines the god's surrender to the dictates of *amor*, for in the context of the literary erotic affair, the term is inextricably bound to the motif of love as *furor* and it indicates the lover's total self-pitying submission to his malady [8]. The god's woes, however, fail to evoke the reader's empathy, for in his chase Apollo is depicted in a state of ludicrous impatience.

7 For an analysis of this *topos*, see Archibald Allen, "Elegy and the Classical Attitude toward Love: Propertius I.1", *Yale Classical Studies*, 11 (1950), 255-271. Allen defines the elegists' concept of love as "a violent passion, a fault which destroys the reason and perverts the will, but a power which the lover is helpless to control and from which he can find no release. This kind of love is the subject matter of elegy" (p. 264). For the tradition of this figure, see J. L. Lowes, "The Loveres Maladye of Hereos", *Modern Philology*, 11 (1913-1914), 491-546.

8 Allen (above, note 7) points out that in the Latin love elegy the term has an almost technical meaning, for it defines the lover as the victim of a violent and irrational passion. He suggests that in Propertius the word *miser* "seems to announce the theme of his poetry: Propertius declares that he is subject to that passionate love which makes the lover its helpless victim..." (p. 260). The poet declares: "Cynthia prima suis miserum me cepit ocellis, / contactum nullis ante cupidinibus" (1.1.1-2). Cf. Catullus 76.19, and Ovid's *Amores* 1.1.25 and 1.4.59.

As the pursuit continues, Apollo fears that the girl will trip and he be the cause of pain to her. Apollo's words are ambivalent, for they may express genuine concern for Daphne's safety or may be a maneuver to instill fear in the maiden, thus forcing her to abandon her flight. Ovid interjects a note of irony in the monologue when Apollo begs the nymph to slow down and tells her that he would follow suit: "moderatius, oro, / curre fugamque inhibe! moderatius insequar ipse" (510-511). The god's apparent naiveté stands in comic incongruity against his real motives, namely, to have Daphne as close as possible to his grasp.

All else having failed, Phoebus, in an outburst of braggadocio, attempts to impress the maiden by speaking of the nobility of his birth and the dignity and power of his lofty position as deity:

> mihi Delphica tellus
> et Claros et Tenedos Patareaque regia servit;
> Iuppiter est genitor; per me, quod eritque fuitque
> estque, patet; per me concordant carmina nervis (515-18).

In this mock-heroic scene, Apollo emerges as a lowly, laughable figure. His attempt to reach Daphne as a man while evoking his impotent godly powers make his predicament comic; the serious, dignified tone of the hexameters placed in juxtaposition to the lover's foolish demeanor reinforcing the comedy. At the end of the entreaty, however, Phoebus, in a moment of candor, reveals that he has been stripped of his divine might as Apollo, for he admits his defeat at the hands of the god of love, his inability to heal the wound inflicted by Cupid's unerring shaft (519-520).

Apollo's eloquent plea proves futile. The nymph, uttering no word of acknowledgement to Phoebus' plea, continues her panic-stricken flight. As the maiden escapes, her sensual beauty is again brought into focus:

> nudabant corpora venti,
> obviaque adversas vibrabant flamina vestes
> et levis impulsos retro dabat aura capillos,
> auctaque forma fuga est (527-530).

Enchanted by the sight, Apollo pursues the virgin in earnest. Heeding Ovid's dictum that *militat omnis amans,* the god wages his private war against Daphne. Driven by the power of *furor amoris,* Phoebus turns into a veritable foe. The Latin poet dramatizes the situation by presenting the roles of Apollo as aggressive assailant and of the nymph as his helpless prey in terms of a hound-hare chase:

> ut canis in vacuo leporem cum Gallicus arvo
> vidit, et hic praedam pedibus petit, ille salutem
> (alter inhaesuro similis iam iamque tenere
> sperat et extento stringit vestigia rostro,
> alter in ambiguo est, an sit comprensus, et ipsis
> morsibus eripitur tangentiaque ora relinquit):
> sic deus et virgo; est hic spe celer, illa timore (533-538).

The intensity of the god's desire to seize his victim is vividly depicted

by the poet in this powerful metaphorical passage of animal imagery [9]. The maiden's predicament is defined by the terms *leporem* and *praedam*; in an ironic twist Daphne, the huntress, has herself become the object of a vicious hunt. Furthermore the backdrop for the stage of this wild chase is *in vacuo arvo*. This lays emphasis on the helplessness of the girl; she is totally alone in her plight and there are no possibilities of rescue in sight. Ironically, the solitude which the nymph had so diligently sought before is presented here as the setting of her possible undoing. Apollo's posture as menacing pursuer is given by means of a simile in which Ovid compares the god to a threatening *canis Gallicus*. The imminent danger posed by the "hunter" is heightened by the poet's concentration on the hound's deadly means of attack: *extento rostro, ora* and *morsibus*. This scene brings to the fore the psychological complexities of love. Like the traditional elegiac *amator*, Apollo experiences love as the paradoxical and ambivalent feeling so dramatically depicted by Catullus in *Carmen* 85:

> Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?
> nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior [10].

Daphne, the object of the god's admiration and reverence, now excites feelings of impotent anger and repressed hostility. However, Ovid parodies the sexual urgencies of the victim of *furor* by making him appear as a fierce, blood-thirsty hound eager to catch his succulent prey. Needless to say, in this scene Phoebus' dignity as deity has been totally shattered, for his lust has further debased him from human lover to predatory animal.

9 This scene bears some resemblance to Aeneas' pursuit of Turnus in Book 12 of Vergil's *Aeneid*. The former is assimilated to a vicious hound chasing his defenseless prey:

> Nec minus Aeneas, quamquam tardata sagitta
> interdum genua impediunt cursumque recusant,
> insequitur trepidique pedem pede feruidus urget
> inclusum ueluti si quando flumine nactus
> ceruum aut puniceae saeptum formidine pennae
> uenator cursu canis et latratibus instat;
> ille autem insidiis et ripa territus alta
> mille fugit refugitque uias, at uiuidus Vmber
> haeret hians, iam iamque tenet similisque tenenti
> increpuit malis morsuque elusus inani est (746-755).

Opera, R. A. B. Mynors, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969). Furthermore, at the outset of the pursuit, both poets utilize the same wind metaphor to depict the escaping victim. In the Aeneid Turnus "fugit ocior Euro" (733); in the *Metamorphoses* Daphne "fugit ocior aura" (502). Vergil's chase takes place in the battlefield and is meant as a serious exposition of the encounter between two enemies. (Turnus, the defender of Lavinium, runs from Aeneas in terror after having faced him courageously.) In Ovid the chase has a less than noble purpose. The poet shows Apollo rabidly pursuing his obdurate lady who, like an ancient Richardsonian heroine, is fleeing from him to safeguard her "most treasured possession", her chastity. Placed in the context af a seduction scene, the pursuit becomes amusingly ludicrous.

10 In *Carmina*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon, 1958).

The nymph is overcome by fear and the arduous flight. About to be caught, she sees her father's waves and prays to him for help:

'fer, pater,' inquit 'opem! si flumina numen habetis,
qua nimium placui, mutando perde figuram!' (545, 547).

In order to be delivered from Apollo who seeks her body feverishly, the maiden begs for a metamorphosis *(mutando perde figuram)*.
What may seem as a destructive impulse in Daphne is but an attempt to preserve her identity, her virgin self, by casting off her sexuality. Peneus, acting as *deus ex machina,* complies with her prayer and the girl is transformed into a laurel tree:

vix prece finita torpor gravis occupat artus,
mollia cinguntur tenui praecordia libro,
in frondem crines, in ramos bracchia crescunt
pes modo tam velox pigris radicibus haeret,
ora cacumen habet: remanet nitor unus in illa (548-552).

Daphne's transformation enables her to discard a body which was a threat to her identity as virgin and achieve a personal kind of unity. The metamorphosis mends the split caused by Cupid's shaft, for when her alluring body becomes the laurel, the maiden is endowed with the physical form which suits her intentions: the virgin is changed into a non-human form, into tree life, incapable of passion[11] Furthermore, by escaping into her arboreal citadel, Daphne achieves the ultimate withdrawal from the world of men and thus succeeds in barring further threatening contacts with overly zealous males. However, the laurel not only "protects" the maiden's identity, as it were, but retains and exhibits the basic aspects of the human Daphne. The nymph's metempsychosis allows her to escape Phoebus and, paradoxically, enables her to retain the characteristic physical feature which had attracted the god, her fairness, now preserved in a sexually unassailable form. In like manner, the obduracy of the maiden, her trademark as *dura puella,* remains, for, as will be seen later, even as a tree Daphne shrinks from Apollo's kisses (556).

Even though the scene of Daphne's transformation strikes us as somewhat calculated and rhetorical, Ovid executes the plight of the virgin with dramatic immediacy. The Ovidian ekphrasis conveys the metamorphosis both in its plastic and dynamic qualities. The scene is a highly visual spectacle, a concrete, physical representation of the assimilation of the human form by the laurel. The nymph is caught in mid-flight, as it were, and the sense of impending rigidity is imparted by the ominous clause *torpor gravis occupat artus*. Even though the process of transformation is rendered

11 By choosing transformation for Daphne, Ovid sidesteps a moral solution —such as acquiescence or tragic death— to the attempted seduction. Charles Segal, "Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid's Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV", *American Journal of Philology,* 90 (1969), 266, elaborates the notion of metamorphosis as a means of avoiding moral solutions for passion and lust. Instead, "the passions work upon the personality of the character involved until he is changed into the bestial or elemental equivalent of that passion: the cruel Lycaon into a wolf, the lustful Jupiter into a bull..." In Daphne's case, her desire for virginity dictates her metamorphosis into the "unfeeling" tree.

as a dynamic, rhythmic flow, it is carried out with smooth equipoise. The expression of movement, the progressive conversion into the tree, is translated by the verbs and by antithetical constructions. The beginning of the encroachment by the plant is given by the verb *cinguntur,* the passive voice emphasizing the idea of paralysis. The slow progress of the metamorphosis is subsequently communicated by the actives *crescunt, haeret,* and *habet.* The antitheses reinforce the sense of motion of the physical event. And except for the one antithesis which conveys the paralysis of the nymph, how her swiftness *(pes velox)* is slowed down by the sluggish roots *(pigris radicibus),* the remaining ones stress the similarity between her body and the laurel. Daphne's soft flesh *(mollia praecordia)* is begirt with delicate bark *(tenui libro),* her hair becomes leaves, her arms branches, and her head the laurel's top. The uninterrupted rhythm of the conversion conveys the sense of a blending of one form into the other rather than of a brutal physical overtaking of the maiden by the tree.

The human Daphne offers no resistance to the change; thre is no convulsive gesture, no struggle to either impede or disrupt the continuity of the transformation. This smooth passage, as it were, corresponds to the unity and harmony that Daphne is achieving; the nymph is leaving a body divided by opposing forces of beauty and chastity and is acquiring the physical shape which conforms to her conception of herself as virgin. This harmony is translated stylistically by the symmetry of the design, for the aforementioned antitheses offer a sense of balance and equilibrium to the composition.

Phoebus' immediate reaction to Daphne's metamorphosis brings to its culmination Ovid's parodic treatment of the deity. Apollo had been dwelling on the idea of catching the girl for so long that when the change occurs and the nymph is immobilized, the god's impulse is to seize her:

> hanc quoque Phoebus amat positaque in stipite dextra
> sentit adhuc trepidare novo sub cortice pectus
> complexusque suis ramos ut membra lacertis
> oscula dat ligno (553-556).

The humor of the passage is derived from what Henri Bergson calls "raideur de mécanique" or "automatisme". Bergson suggests that "les attitudes, gestes et mouvements du corps humain sont risibles dans l'exacte mesure où ce corps nous fait penser à une simple mécanique" [12]. Under the power of *furor amoris,* Apollo has become like a machine, for his will is totally dominated by one compulsive drive, to gain possession of Daphne's body. This rigidity makes Phoebus laughable. Even after the transformation, the god's mental obstinacy compels him to act like an automaton in his craving for the maiden; once he has caught Peneus' daugh-

12 *Le Rire. Essai sur la signification du comique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), pp. 22-23. Bergson, following the doctrine of the *élan vital,* finds at the root of the comic, the lack of a certain physical and mental elasticity, "une raider d'un certain genre, qui fait qu'on va droit son chemin, et qu'on n'écoute pas, et qu'on ne veut rien entendre" (p. 141). This automatism forces the individual to act according to a preconcieved idea or behavior when the circumstances warrant something else.

ter, he stubbornly presses upon the tree the amorous caresses meant for the girl. This *raideur* prevents us from empathizing with Apollo in the loss of his beloved, for his mechanization detaches us from his plight and creates the aesthetic distance which is the matrix for laughter.

But even as a laurel, Daphne rejects the god's touch: "refugit tamen oscula lignum" (556). It is then that Phoebus realizes that the nymph is unattainable and immediately proceeds to deliver his paean:

> 'at, quoniam coniunx mea non potes esse,
> arbor eris certe' dixit 'mea ! semper habebunt
> te coma, te citharae, te nostrae, laure, pharetrae;
> tu ducibus Lattis aderis, cum laeta Triumphum
> vox canet et visent longas Capitolia pompas;
> postibus Augustis eadem fidissima custos
> ante fores stabis mediamque tuebere quercum,
> utque meum intonsis caput est iuvenale capillis,
> tu quoque perpetuos semper gere frondis honores!' (557-565).

In this passage the ceremonial solemnity of Apollo's words is suspect, for it stands in incongruous juxtaposition to his ridiculous behavior both during the chase and after the maiden's transformation. Taken from this perspective, Phoebus' gesture of making the laurel his attribute is not a manner of establishing a union with Daphne, as he would have us believe, but a way of saving face; the nymph is now beyond his grasp but the god is not about to admit his defeat. On the contrary, he makes this a moment of triumphant self-assertion. He voices a solemn pronouncement in which he asserts his position as deity and his divine powers, which he was helpless tocall upon during the chase, by endowing the laurel with a sacred character and proclaiming it as the eternal symbol of honor and victory. Phoebus' paean strikes us as a way of achieving a graceful retreat, a means of dignifying his exit from a most foolish adventure. Apollo's solemn gesture, however, fails to extricate him from the comic perspective established by the poet, for the reader cannot but chuckle at the duped lover who is forced to accept the laurel wreath in place of his beloved's body. The laurel of victory becomes paradoxically a symbol of his defeat.

After Apollo's paean, Ovid tells how the laurel shakes its top as in assent to the god's words. This gesture ends the tale with a final comic touch, for now that Daphne is safely behind the walls of her bark, she grants Phoebus her full, if meaningless, consent. Unlike little Cupid who is able to alter lovers, Apollo, as god or man, cannot reach Daphne. He fails. And his failure —unlike that of Orpheus— is deprived of real pathos or drama. The comic figure alone remains.

In this tale Ovid characterizes Apollo as a type of *exclusus amator*, the shut-out lover who is denied access to his obdurate lady[13]. Like the

[13] On the theme of the *exclusus amator*, cf. F. O. Copley, *Exclusus Amator. A Study in Latin Love Poetry* (Madison: American Philological Association, 1956) and Elizabeth H. Haight, *The Symbolism of the House Door in Classical Poetry* (New York: Longmans & Green, 1950).

traditional excluded lover's futile *conclamatio,* Phoebus' plea for "admission" meets with failure. And even though the closed door, symbol of both the "exclusion of the lover" and the mistress's relentless will, is absent, the god finds himself in a very real sense "locked out" the moment Daphne is transformed into the laurel. Phoebus is then forced to sing his song before the bark of a tree which excludes him as completely as the strongest door. The rejected suitor, however, does not sink back into despair and apathetic despondency; the god does not admit his failure in his love affair and accordingly his *paraclausithyron* is not a lament, but a paean. There is no *vigilatio,* no tears, no apparent suffering. Unlike the conventional *exclusus amator,* Apollo does not leave the garland "on the threshold", as it were, the symbol of the lover's defeat and sorrow, but places it on his head in a stubborn, haughty gesture to regain his badly bruised dignity.

The Ovidian tale possesses a tight organic unity in which the thematic elements are arranged in a carefully structured contrapuntal composition. The motif of the leaden and golden shafts creates the antithesis which orients the account ang gives it its dualistic perspective. Both Daphne and Apollo are grounded in unyielding, opposing postures; the maiden's compulsion to safeguard her chastity is placed in contrast to Apollo's obsession to satisfy his lust. Presented through the distorting prism of caricature, Phoebus' plight, his "descending" psychic metamorphoses from god to human lover to predatory animal to "machine", results in comedy and ends in defeat. Daphne's "descending" physical transformation from human to vegetable is serious and a triumph for the virgin, since it is a fulfillment of her inner self and a means of outwitting the lover, excluding him forever. The physical rigidity in the maiden's metamorphosis corresponds to the mental *raideur* in Apollo; her dehumanization parallels his mechanization, as it were. The former, however, produces a harmony in the virgin, whereas the latter brings a comical disharmony in the god. Furthermore, the disfigurement which Daphne undergoes during her conversion into the laurel corresponds to the comic deformation of Apollo. But while Daphne's metamorphosis endows her with a form which is salutary, Phoebus' transformation dresses him in a ludicrous guise which results in loss of dignity and in ridicule.

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