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The Matter of Peloponessus

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The Matter of Peloponessus

The Matter of Peloponessus by
Joe R. Christopher

"Success in Circuit Lies"

Apollo knew that odes were rhetoric,
polished with love for form, for verbs and
nouns, for ev'ry lovely adjective besides,
 and all the tonal glitz in Greek;
he struck his lyre and sang of Daphne fair,
her olive skin, her laughing mouth, her eyes,
her youthful breasts, her walk with natural
sway-- all this he praised as eros' cause;
desire last not, and so he changed his tone,
lamenting love will pass, attraction gone,
as if the woman's wooden, flesh is barked--
 as if she were no more than tree;
no more to him, of course he meant to say,
for eros catches ev'ry god betimes,
but gods (he sang) get bored through
centuries, and eros casts its net anew.

Daphne's Lament

Iieee! all male gods are rapists!
Women's "no" they take as gaming,
feminine prevarication!
 "No, Apollo, no!" I'm crying;
still he's grasping, sure I want him,
sure I never could refuse him.
Pray'r is all I have 'gainst forcing!—
pray'r that I may somehow 'scape him!—
tears are all I have 'gainst vi'lence!—
tears and screams and finger clawing!—
as I struggle, grows his anger!—
death is better! far, far better!
Suddenly my arms are branches,
suddenly, my fingers leafing,
my toes are rooting, my body trunking.
Better loss of reason quickly,
better moving but to breezes,
than Apollo's brutal raping . . .

Apollo and Daphne

After the epigram by Maffeo Barberini

The man whose breast with passion heaves
Will wrest dead branches and dry leaves.