



**Petrarch (1304-74)**

**Themes:** “Love at first sight, obsessive yearning and love sickness, frustration, love as parallel to feudal service; the lady as ideally beautiful, ideally virtuous, miraculous, beloved in Heaven and destined to earthly death; love as virtue, love as idolatry, love as sensuality; the god of love with his arrows, fires, whips, and chains; war within the self – hope, fear, joy, sorrow.”

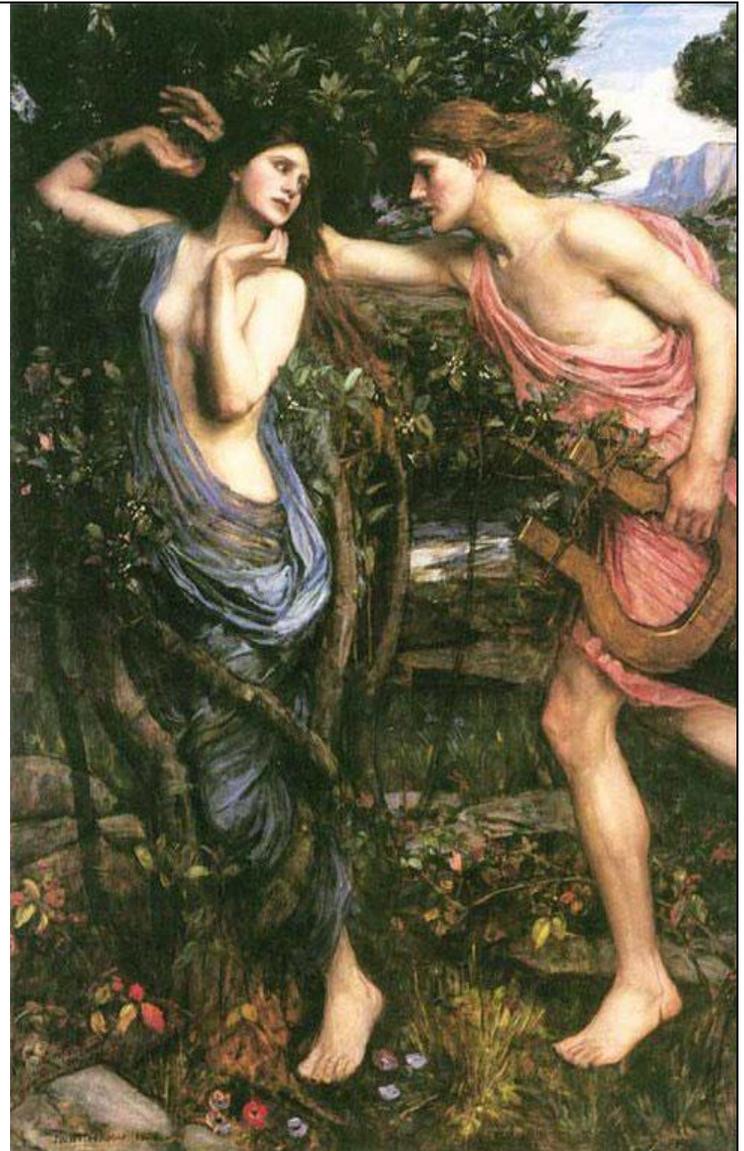
**Approaches:** “Conceits, wit, urbane cleverness; disputations and scholastic precision; allegory, personification; wooing, exhortation, outcry; praise, blame; self-examination, self-accusation, self-defense; repentance and farewell to love” [from Robert M. Durling’s *Petrarch’s Lyric Poems*]

**Laura:** Laura was idealized in 366 poems (one for every day of the year) in his *Rime Sparse* (*Scattered Rhymes*). Petrarch claimed she was real, but her name, played upon in Italian in the poems, also epitomizes poetic ideals (Laud = praise; L’aura = breath, spirit; L’oro = gold; Laurel =

**laureate:** (n.) a person who is honoured with an award for outstanding creative or intellectual achievement: a Nobel Laureate or Poet Laureate. (adj.) wreathed with laurel as a mark of honor; (of a crown or wreath) consisting of laurel. [ORIGIN: from Latin *laureatus*, from *laurea* 'laurel wreath', from *laurus* 'laurel'.] Leaves are also like the medium of the poet – l’aura put on paper.



“Daphne and Apollo” Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1622-25)



“Daphne and Apollo” J.W. Waterhouse (1908)

**Apollo and Daphne:** Daphne was Apollo's first love. It was not brought about by accident, but by the malice of Cupid. Apollo saw the boy playing with his bow and arrows; and he said to him, "What have you to do with warlike weapons, saucy boy? Leave them for hands worthy of them."

Venus's boy [Cupid] heard these words, and rejoined, "Your arrows may strike all things else, Apollo, but mine shall strike you." So saying, he drew from his quiver two arrows of different workmanship, one to excite love, the other to repel it. The former was of gold and sharp-pointed, the latter blunt and tipped with lead. With the leaden shaft he struck the nymph Daphne, the daughter of the river god Peneus, and with the golden one Apollo, through the heart. Forthwith the god was seized with love for the maiden, and she abhorred the thought of loving. Her delight was in woodland sports and in the spoils of the chase. Many lovers sought her, but she spurned them all. Her father often said to her, "Daughter, you owe me a son-in-law; you owe me grandchildren." She, hating the thought of marriage as a crime, threw her arms around her father's neck, and said, "Dearest father, grant me this favor, that I may always remain unmarried, like Diana." He consented, but at the same time said, "Your own face will forbid it."

Apollo loved her, and longed to obtain her. He saw her hair flung loose over her shoulders, and said, "If so charming in disorder, what would it be if arranged?" He saw her eyes bright as stars; he saw her lips, and was not satisfied with only seeing them. He admired her hands and arms bared to the shoulder, and whatever was hidden from view he imagined more beautiful still. He followed her; she fled, swifter than the wind, and delayed not a moment at his entreaties. "Stay," said he, "It is for love I pursue you. You make me miserable, for fear you should fall and hurt yourself on these stones, and I should be the cause. I am no clown, no rude peasant. Jupiter is my father, and I am lord of Delphos and Tenedos, and know all things, present and future. I am the god of song and the lyre. My arrows fly true to the mark; but alas! An arrow more fatal than mine has pierced my heart! I am the god of medicine, and know the virtues of all healing plants. Alas! I suffer a malady that no balm can cure!"

The nymph continued her flight, and even as she fled she charmed him. The wind blew her garments, and her unbound hair streamed loose behind her. The god grew impatient and gained upon her in the race. It was like a hound pursuing a hare, with open jaws ready to seize, while the feebler animal darts forward, slipping from the very grasp. The pursuer is the more rapid, however, and gains upon her, and his panting breath blows upon her hair. Now her strength begins to fail, and, ready to sink, she calls upon her father, the river god: "Help me, Peneus! Open the earth to enclose me, or change my form, which has brought me into this danger!"

Scarcely had she spoken, when a stiffness seized all her limbs; her bosom began to be enclosed in a tender bark; her hair became leaves; her arms became branches; her feet stuck fast in the ground, as roots; her face became a tree-top, retaining nothing of its former self but its beauty. Apollo stood amazed. "Since you cannot be my wife," said he, "you shall assuredly be my tree. I will wear you for my crown. With you I will decorate my harp and my quiver; and when the great Roman conquerors lead up the triumphal pomp to the Capitol, you shall be woven into wreaths for their brows. And, as eternal youth is mine, you also shall be always green, and your leaf know no decay." The nymph, now changed into a laurel tree, bowed its head in grateful acknowledgment.

**Source: [Online-mythology.com](http://Online-mythology.com)**