Ovid's Canace: Dramatic Irony in Heroides 11

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OVID'S CANACE: DRAMATIC IRONY IN *HEROIDES* 11*

Heroides 11 has long enjoyed a favourable reputation among critics, largely because Ovid appears to show a tactful restraint in his description of Canace's last moments and to refrain, for once in the *Heroides*, from descending into what Jacobson terms 'nauseating mawkishness'.[1] Despite appearances, however, Ovid's wit is not entirely extinguished in this poem, for a devastating irony accompanies the certainty of Canace's imminent death. My objective is to demonstrate the nature of this irony by adopting a methodological approach which owes much to Kennedy's analysis of *Heroides* 1 in the light of the later books of the *Odyssey*.[2] Kennedy's argument – that without knowing it Penelope is about to give her letter to its intended addressee – is based on two premises which are postulated by the epistolary mode of the poem. The first is that we are to imagine Ovid's heroines writing at a specific moment within a dramatic context; the second is that they have a specific motive for writing at that moment. In Kennedy's hands, this approach assumes the privileged position of the reader of *Heroides* 1 who, through access to the *Odyssey*, is alive to the ironies which Ovid's Penelope cannot realize. I propose to establish a similarly privileged position for the reader of *Heroides* 11, a position from which Canace's death can be seen to be both ill-timed and unnecessary. The key to identifying the ironic circumstances of Canace's death lies in reconstructing the background to the Canace and Macareus myth and the possible precedents which Ovid drew on in his treatment of the story. The situation is more complex than in the case of *Heroides* 1, however, since the literary sources familiar to Ovid and his readers have, in this instance, largely been lost to us and can only be reconstructed from fragmentary evidence.

Various precedents have been adduced for Ovid's representation of the myth,[3] but by far the most compelling possibility is Euripides' *Aeolus*. The play's surviving fragments reveal little about the course of Euripides' plot,[4] but the fragmentary hypothesis, *Pap. Oxy.* 2457, proves more helpful.[5] It seems clear from the opening lines (21–3 Austin) that the plot of the play grows out of a conflation of two earlier myths, in the older of which Canace was the daughter of the Thessalian king Aeolus and his wife Enarete;[6] but in the second, post-Hesiodic version the identification of the king of Thessaly with the ruler of the winds has resulted in Canace becoming one

* I owe a debt of thanks to Dr R. Hunter, Dr J. Henderson, Dr N. Hopkinson, Professor M. D. Reeve and Dr B. Harries for help at various stages in the preparation of this paper. All quotations follow the text of A. Palmer, *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides* (Oxford, 1898).

[1] H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton, 1974), p. 159.

[2] D. F. Kennedy, 'The Epistolary Mode and the First of Ovid's *Heroides*', *CQ* 34 (1984), 413–22.

[3] Jacobson, op. cit., pp. 160–1 and nn. 7–9 conveniently summarizes scholarly speculation on Ovid's possible sources (Hellenistic as well as Euripidean).

[4] Frr. 14–41 N². On the fragments and their possible order in the play see S. Jäkel, 'The *Aiolos* of Euripides', *GB* 8 (1979), 101–18.

[5] First published by E. G. Turner, J. Rea, L. Koenen and J. M. Fernández Pomer, edd., *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri: Part XXVII* (London, 1962), pp. 70–3 (henceforth Turner, op. cit.). See H. Lloyd-Jones, *Gnomon* 35 (1963), 443–4 and C. Austin, *Nova Fragmenta Euripidea in Papyris Reperta* (Berlin, 1968), pp. 88–9 for, respectively, a review and update of Turner's text.

[6] See *RE* 10.1853 s.v. Kanake 1 with N. Hopkinson, ed., *Callimachus: Hymn to Demeter* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 31 and n. 1.

of the latter's five daughters.[7] After Macareus seduces Canace (23–5), she feigns illness during her pregnancy and conceals the birth of her child (25–7). Meanwhile, Macareus persuades Aeolus to allow him and his brothers to marry their sisters (27–8); Aeolus calls them all together for the drawing of lots to determine who will marry whom (28–9). Disaster strikes, however; Macareus fails to draw the lot which will win him Canace (30–3). After further reference to a gathering of people (συνδραμόντες, 33), to the nurse (τροφός, 34) and, presumably, to Canace's child (τὸ μὲν γεννηθέν, 34), the fragment breaks off.

Lacking the scholarly support which the data on subject matter, performers, competing poets and comparable plays give to the hypotheses of Aristophanes of Byzantium, this hypothesis, which survives on a papyrus dated to the second century A.D.,[8] contains nothing more than a simple summary of events.[9] It is by no means clear, however, that this summary confines itself to the exact structure of Euripides' plot with no extraneous background detail added, especially in view of what looks like introductory supporting material in lines 21–3. True, even if the hypothesis begins by filling in the background, we should remember that every surviving Euripidean tragedy[10] begins with an extended prologue which also in part does this very thing. But an exact correspondence between a lost play and its hypothesis should not be assumed, as Coles is only too aware in his attempted reconstruction of the Euripidean *Alexandros* from its hypothesis, which survives, together with the fragmentary remains of a hypothesis of the *Andromache*, on a papyrus of the same roll from which *Pap. Oxy.* 2457 comes.[11] After attempting his reconstruction, Coles adds a warning: 'So runs the play – perhaps. One must always bear in mind the possibility that these hypotheses may pay less than due regard to the correct order of events, whether this be due to the composer or to later reworking.'[12] The hypothesis of the *Andromache* is so mutilated that it is scarcely possible to ascertain whether or not it gives an accurate summary of the extant play and its sequence of events, despite Coles's efforts to restore it,[13] and consequently it offers no real guidance as to the accuracy of the other hypotheses on the roll. As a result, the closeness of correspondence between the *Aeolus* and its hypothesis must remain uncertain, though the hypothesis is – as far as it goes – still the best clue we have to the possible plot of the lost play.

[7] Aeolus, ruler of the winds, is the son of Hippotes (cf. Homer, *Od.* 10.2), while the other Aeolus is the son of Hellen (cf. Hesiod, *Eoiai* fr. 9 Merkelbach–West); for more references see *RE* 1.1036–7 and 1039. There is nothing in the hypothesis or extant fragments to suggest that Euripides made a dramatic or poetic point of the conflation.

[8] For this dating and brief discussion see Turner, op. cit., p. 71.

[9] For basic discussion of the different kinds of tragic hypothesis which survive see G. Zuntz, *The Political Plays of Euripides* (Manchester, 1955), pp. 125–52, where three main categories are distinguished: the hypotheses of Aristophanes of Byzantium (but cf. A. L. Brown, 'The Dramatic Hypotheses Attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium', *CQ* 37 [1987], 427–31 on the possible misattribution of hypotheses assumed to be by Aristophanes), those of often pedantic and verbose Byzantine grammarians, and those which Zuntz terms 'Tales of Euripides', hypotheses which give a bare account of a play 'for the use of readers interested in mythology rather than in poetry' (op. cit., p. 135). *Pap. Oxy.* 2457 belongs to the latter category; on Dicaearchus as the author of this and the other Euripidean hypotheses on the same papyrus roll see M. W. Haslam, 'The Authenticity of Euripides, *Phoenissae* 1–2 and Sophocles, *Electra* 1', *GRBS* 16 (1975), 150–6; but cf. J. Rusten, 'Dicaearchus and the Tales from Euripides', *GRBS* 23 (1982), 357–67, who argues against attribution to Dicaearchus. I am grateful to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to these items of bibliography.

[10] I discount the *Rhesus* because of its disputed authorship, on which see B. M. W. Knox, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, Vol. 1. *Greek Literature*, edd. P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 342–3.

[11] R. A. Coles, *A New Oxyrhynchus Papyrus: The Hypothesis of Euripides' Alexandros, BICS* suppl. 32 (1974). [12] Op. cit., p. 32. [13] Op. cit., pp. 66–70.

The reports of the lost play given by a scholiast on the Aristophanic allusion at *Clouds* 1371–2[14] and by pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus[15] concur in essentials with the hypothesis. But neither the scholiast nor pseudo-Dionysius gives any clue to what the hypothesis does not tell us: what happened to Canace and her child after the first part of the plot as outlined in the hypothesis? At this point, conflicting representations of the myth have to be distinguished. One is portrayed on the famous Lucanian vase painting of the late fifth century B.C. which depicts Canace's suicide.[16] On the vase Canace is pictured lying sword in hand after stabbing herself. To one side of Canace Aeolus points with his stick at Macareus, who stands to the other side of Canace with his hands behind his back and with his head bowed as if in a pose of guilty shame. It appears that Aeolus is condemning Macareus for his part in the incestuous affair. But because the whole story is pictured in only one scene, iconographic evidence of this sort inevitably simplifies the intricacies of the myth as reported in the literary tradition.[17] The literary evidence which survives of the myth tells a different story about Macareus' fate – that he committed suicide on seeing Canace dead and before Aeolus knew of his daughter's death. This, at least, was Sostratus' version in his *Tyrrhenica*, as reported by pseudo-Plutarch and Stobaeus.

According to pseudo-Plutarch's report,[18] Aeolus' response to the birth of Canace's child is to send her a sword; Canace, her own judge and executioner, duly kills herself, and Macareus reacts to her death by killing himself in the same manner. Stobaeus tells the same story,[19] but with one crucial addition. Learning of Canace's incestuous

[14] *ὁ δ' εὐθὺς ἧκ' Εὐριπίδου ῥῆσίν τιν' ὡς ἐκίνει*
ἀδελφός, ὦλεξίκακε, τὴν ὁμομητρίαν ἀδελφήν.
I read *ἧκ'* ('loosed', 'let fly with') with Sommerstein in preference to *ἧγ'* (Dover/Borthwick, 'began') or the *ἧσ'* ('sang') of the MSS. The scholiast comments *γέγραπται δρᾶμα Εὐριπίδῃ οὕτω λεγόμενον, Αἴολος· ἐν ᾧ παρήγαγε τὸν παῖδα Αἰόλου Μακαρέα φθείροντα Κανάχην τὴν ἀδελφήν* (Koster I 3[1] p. 241). Aristophanes parodied Euripides' play in his *Aeolosicon* (*PCG* III. 2, pp. 33–41). In describing the violent and lustful effects of drink, Athenaeus (444c–d) cites Antiphanes' parody of the *Aeolus*: according to Antiphanes, Macareus took advantage of his sister (*ἔτυχεν ὧν ἐβούλετο*, fr. 18.6 Kock) in a drunken act of violence.

[15] *Ars Rhetorica* 9.11 (ii. p. 345 Usener–Radermacher): *ἐν τῷ Αἰόλῳ ὁ Μακαρεύς ἐστιν ὁμιλήσας τῇ ἀδελφῇ καὶ λανθάνων, καὶ συμβουλεύων τῷ πατρὶ τὰς ἀδελφὰς τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς συνοικίσαι, ἵνα τὸ οἰκεῖον διοικήσηται.*

[16] For the vase painting, dated to *c.* 415 B.C., see A. D. Trendall and T. B. L. Webster, *Illustrations of Greek Drama* (London, 1971), p. 74 with plate III. 3.4.

[17] Cf. Jacobson, op. cit., p. 160 n. 3: 'It is very difficult to draw conclusions about the literary tradition from the iconographic one'. See also A. W. Pickard-Cambridge, 'South Italian Vase Paintings and Attic Drama', *CQ* 43 (1949), 57, who disputes T. B. L. Webster's claim (*CQ* 42 [1948], 15ff.) that South Italian vases of the mid fourth century are evidence of theatrical arrangements in fifth-century Attic drama. His first objection might extend to the Lucanian vase painting depicting Canace: 'A number of scenes on the vases are not scenes presented in the plays at all, but are scenes suggested to the painter by descriptions in messengers' speeches, or, quite possibly, by the story dramatized in the play, but not by the Athenian poet's particular treatment of the story.'

[18] *Moralia* 312c–d = *Parallel. Min.* 28a: *Αἴολος, τῶν κατὰ Τυρρηνίαν βασιλεύς, ἔσχεν ἐξ Ἀμφιθέας θυγατέρας ἓξ καὶ ἴσους ἄρρενας. Μακαρεὺς δὲ ὁ νεώτατος ἔρωτι ἔφθειρε μίαν, ἡ δὲ παιδίον ἐκύησεν· τεκοῦσα δὲ καὶ ξίφους πεμφθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρός, ἄνομον κρίνασα ἑαυτὴν διεχρήσατο· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ Μακαρεύς· ὡς Σώστρατος ἐν δευτέρᾳ Τυρρηνικῶν.* Cf. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 238.3, where Aeolus is listed under the heading 'Qui filias suas occiderunt', though we are to imagine that Aeolus had Canace kill herself; Hyginus reports Canace's suicide at 243.6, Macareus' at 242.2.

[19] *Florilegium* 4.20.72 Wachsmuth = F. Jacoby, *FGrHist* 23 fr. 3: *Σωστράτου ἐν δευτέρῳ Τυραννικῶν· Αἴολος τῶν κατὰ Τυρρηνίαν βασιλεὺς τόπων ἔσχεν ἐξ Ἀμφιθέας θυγατέρας ἓξ καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν ἀριθμὸν ἀρρένων παίδων, ὧν ὁ πρεσβύτατος Μακαρεὺς Κανάκης τῆς ἀδελφῆς*

union with Macareus, Aeolus sends her the sword and she kills herself (as in pseudo-Plutarch). In the meantime, Macareus goes to Aeolus, tries to appease him (*προεξιλεωσάμενος*) and then runs to Canace's room, where, too late, he finds her dead or dying and promptly kills himself with the same sword. The important additional point in Stobaeus' abridgement of Sostratus is that now we are to envisage Macareus making two approaches to Aeolus. The first approach, which the fragmentary hypothesis tells us was incorporated in Euripides' *Aeolus*, is Macareus' successful attempt to persuade Aeolus to sanction the marriage of his sons to his daughters, so that he, Macareus, can marry Canace. The second, which may or may not have been incorporated in Euripides' play, is Macareus' return to Aeolus to plead for Canace's life after the fateful sword has been despatched. That Macareus succeeded in this second plea is strongly suggested by Stobaeus' use of *ἔδραμεν*; with the sword already sent to Canace, Macareus must run if he is to reach her before she stabs herself, tell her of her reprieve and thus save her from a needless death. Macareus' second plea then becomes eminently tragic, for he arrives too late and his efforts on Canace's behalf have been in vain.

These, then, are the threads of the Canace and Macareus myth as they can be adduced from literary, rather than iconographic, evidence – the hypothesis to Euripides' *Aeolus*, pseudo-Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a scholiast on Aristophanes' *Clouds*, pseudo-Plutarch and Stobaeus. Palmer draws these threads together in an attempted reconstruction of Euripides' *Aeolus*:

> Macareus having seduced Canace, and fearing the wrath of Aeolus for her and himself, tells Canace that he will persuade her father to allow him to marry her. He gains his father's consent after a specious argument: but meantime Canace's child is born. Aeolus, ignorant of its paternity, dooms her to die, and sends a sword to her. Macareus hearing of this goes again to Aeolus, confesses all, and implores his pardon for her and himself. He succeeds, and rushes to Canace's chamber with the news, but only to find her dying of a self-inflicted wound, on which he slays himself with the same sword.[20]

Now Palmer's claims – both his reconstruction of the lost play and his further statement that it was 'probably the only source of Ovid's epistle'[21] – deserve to be qualified in two respects. First, the hypothesis of the *Aeolus* reveals clear discrepancies between the play and *Heroides* 11 which call into question the extent of Ovid's dependence on Euripides. Ovid, for example, does not allude directly to the marriage lottery which the hypothesis states that Euripides incorporated in his plot;[22] and there is nothing in either the play's extant fragments or its hypothesis to suggest that Euripides mentioned the attempted abortion which Ovid describes (39–44). These discrepancies do not disprove the likelihood of Ovid's dependence on Euripides, but they certainly limit its extent; it would be dangerous to assume that Ovid follows

ἐρασθεὶς ἐβιάσατο τὴν προειρημένην. Αἴολος δὲ περὶ τούτων μαθὼν τῇ θυγατρὶ ζίφος ἔπεμψεν· ἡ δὲ ὡς νόμον δεξαμένη τὸν σίδηρον αὑτὴν ἀνεῖλε· Μακαρεὺς δὲ τὸν γεννήσαντα προεξιλεωσάμενος ἔδραμεν εἰς τὸν θάλαμον· εὑρὼν δὲ τὴν ἀγαπωμένην αἱμορραγοῦσαν τῷ αὐτῷ ξίφει τὸν βίον περιέγραψε.

[20] Palmer, op. cit., p. 381.

[21] Op. cit., p. 381.

[22] There is no need to infer from lines 101–8 that Canace has knowledge of the marriage arrangement which Macareus makes with Aeolus. So Jacobson, op. cit., p. 161: 'The marriage torches need reflect no more than Canace's frustrated desire for marriage, especially if we consider how frequently in the *Heroides* the presence of (wedding) torches is imagined (e.g. 6.45–6). Further, the wish expressed as an imperative "nubite felices Parca meliore sorores" may have reference to a distant and unseen future, a simple wish that her sisters fare better in "marriage" than she has.

Euripides slavishly in *Heroides* 11 when his practice elsewhere is to keep his distance from his tragic model. Outside the *Heroides* a conspicuous example of Ovid's cavalier departure from the Euripidean tradition is his portrayal of Phaethon in *Metamorphoses* 2. As Diggle has shown,[23] there can be no doubt that Ovid here drew on his Euripidean source selectively, introducing new emphases and omitting certain features of Euripides' plot. Those *Heroides* poems which have clear Euripidean precedents tell a similar story. In *Heroides* 12, for example, Medea's letter to Jason, Ovid does not follow Euripides exclusively; Apollonius is equally present, and certain sections of the poem fail to correspond not only to Euripides' *Medea*, but to Apollonius as well, indicating that Ovid departs from both by either adapting other sources or taking a path of his own.[24] In *Heroides* 4, Phaedra's letter to Hippolytus, there is evidence to suggest that he creates an amalgam of Euripides' first and second *Hippolytus* plays rather than remaining scrupulously faithful to one or the other, not to mention the possible additional influence of Sophocles' *Phaedra*.[25] These parallels for Ovid's treatment of Euripidean material suggest at the very least that while he may have drawn on the *Aeolus* in *Heroides* 11 for its *mise-en-scène*, he still retained an independence of manoeuvre in presenting his own version of the narrative.

Secondly, Palmer's claim that Sostratus reveals that Euripides had Macareus visit Aeolus twice is open to an obvious objection. Sostratus' version of the myth as reported by Stobaeus may be highly suggestive about Euripides' story, but it is no proof that in the *Aeolus* Macareus went to his father twice, first to secure the incestuous marriage arrangement, and a second time to plead for Canace's life. Sostratus' use of a Euripidean source can, in the end, only be a likely inference.[26] But even if Sostratus does not provide reliable clues to the nature of the *Aeolus*, he does at least offer a valuable insight into the form in which the Macareus and Canace myth survived down to and beyond Ovid's time. While due allowance must be made for possible variations and inconsistencies in the different versions of the story, experience of better documented myths suggests that such variations are often individual literary embellishments or modifications of a narrative whose general outline is fairly standard within the broad literary tradition. This point is well made by G. S. Kirk: 'Greek myths as we know them [*sc.* from literature] are not the kind of traditional tales that alter their emphases according to changing interests and social pressures. On the contrary, most of them are already fixed in relatively inflexible literary forms.... They still undergo changes, but the changes are of the kind determined by individual authors with unique aesthetic goals, or by the development of fresh literary techniques and new genres, and not primarily by the social, intellectual and emotional concerns of the community as a whole.'[27] The only major

[23] J. Diggle, ed., *Euripides: Phaethon* (Cambridge, 1970), pp. 182–4, 186 and 200.

[24] Cf. Jacobson, op. cit., p. 110: 'Ovid incorporates the quite different Medeas of Apollonius and Euripides into a character of his own creation.'

[25] See Jacobson, op. cit., pp. 142–6 for a demonstration and discussion of the different sources, Euripidean and Sophoclean, detectable in *Heroides* 4.

[26] The inference is supported if we accept the commonly held view that the author of the *Tyrrhenica* is the grammarian Sostratus of Nysa; for the identification see *RE* 3A 1200–1 s.v. Sostratos 7. Sostratus of Nysa was one of the city's ἀξιόλογοι ... γραμματικοί (Strabo 14.1.48); his father was Menecrates, a pupil of the great Aristarchus; his family seems to have been related by marriage to Posidonius (see E. Rawson, *Intellectual Life in the Late Roman Republic* [Oxford, 1985], p. 68). Given this educational background, it is not absurd to suggest that Sostratus would have been familiar with the plot of one of Euripides' more notorious tragedies.

[27] *The Nature of Greek Myths* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 95. Cf. J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Brighton, 1980), p. 206, stressing the changeability of a myth from one version to another while it retains 'the balance of the general system'.

'individual authors with unique aesthetic goals' known to have treated the Canace myth at any length are Euripides and Ovid, and while the Euripidean version was sufficiently notorious for it to be alluded to by Aristophanes,[28] the general outline of the story of Macareus is assumed by Plato to be as well known as that of Thyestes or Oedipus.[29] Ovid himself treats Canace's story as one of a pair with that of Hippolytus,[30] and her story was well enough known at Rome to form the basis of artistic and dramatic representation.[31] It is *a priori* likely that a broadly consistent thread runs through these different allusions, even if only in the general outline of the plot. This last point is crucial to my argument, for if Ovid inherited a tradition – whether co-extensive with the Euripidean narrative or not – which reported two visits by Macareus to Aeolus, then Canace's situation in *Heroides* 11 takes on a novel, highly dramatic and ironic dimension.

Canace's letter is contrived to be the product of a specific motive and a specific moment within the dramatic framework. We are to imagine her writing to Macareus immediately before she plunges the sword into her breast; she begins (1–4) by describing herself as holding a pen in one hand, a sword in the other, and by anticipating the bloodstained complexion of her letter. Her ostensible motive for writing is to bid a last farewell to Macareus and to leave her last instructions concerning her burial (cf. 121–8). Now Macareus played a crucial role in the chain of events which has led Canace to the point of suicide, and yet he is far removed from the scene of the death which he himself has helped to precipitate. Where is he at the very moment of her writing, and what is he doing? I propose that on the basis of the extant evidence it is possible to construct a picture of his movements in Canace's last moments.

In lines 59ff. we are to imagine that Canace was in the final stages of a near fatal labour when Macareus appeared on the scene to inspire her with fresh hope and to assure her that she was soon to be his wife:

> spes bona det vires: fratris nam nupta futura es;
> illius, de quo mater, et uxor eris. (61–2)

According to the mythical tradition outlined above, Macareus secured the incestuous marriage arrangement between his brothers and sisters in his initial approach to Aeolus. In the light of this tradition, it is not unreasonable to suppose that far from indulging in wishful thinking in lines 61–2, Ovid's Macareus has just resolved the matter of the incestuous marriages with Aeolus' consent. But then matters take a turn for the worse. Aeolus proposes to constitute the married pairs by a lottery, and not only does Macareus fail to draw the lot which will win him Canace, but – even worse – Aeolus discovers the birth of Canace's child. This latter point is reported from Sostratus by pseudo-Plutarch and Stobaeus, and Ovid faithfully follows the tradition when he portrays Aeolus' discovery in lines 73–4. After his furious outburst, Aeolus departs from Canace's chamber ('exierat thalamo', 91) and then sends her the fateful

[28] *Clouds* 1371–2, *Frogs* 850 and (more explicitly) 1081.

[29] *Laws* 8.838c, where all three are examples of sexual depravity.

[30] *Tr.* 2.383–4, where the juxtaposition with Hippolytus suggests that Ovid has Euripides in mind; but the fact that Sophocles wrote a *Phaedra* (frr. 677–93 Radt) may equally suggest a general sphere of reference in the couplet rather than specific reference to Euripides.

[31] For dramatic representation at Rome see Lucilius' epigram (*Anth. Gr.* 11.254), where Canace's role is danced, and Suetonius, *Nero* 21.3; on artistic representation see Hopkinson, op. cit., p. 31 and n. 5 for references and further bibliography.

sword by way of his servant (95–6). Aeolus, then, has left the scene, as had Macareus earlier, while Canace writes her letter just before killing herself with the sword she has just been given. Where are father and son now, and what are they doing?

The answer to these questions is not, of course, given by Ovid, but it is to be found in the Sostratean source whose narrative has been fully consistent with Ovid's up to this point. According to the myth reported from Sostratus by Stobaeus, Macareus is now making his second approach to Aeolus in order to seek a reprieve for Canace. If, as I earlier suggested could be inferred from the Sostratean account, this second plea was successful, then within the dramatic framework of *Heroides* 11 we are to imagine Macareus first pleading with his father and then rushing to Canace's chamber with the good news of her reprieve, arriving only moments too late. It follows that this chain of events has profoundly and tragically ironic consequences for Canace at the time of her writing. If Canace's letter to her brother catches the very moment when she is about to fulfil her father's instruction that she should kill herself, it also catches the very moment when Macareus is about to arrive on the scene just a little too late to save her from a needless death. The privileged reader is equipped with the fuller picture derived from the tradition of the myth; he is in a position to know what Canace cannot know, that Macareus had succeeded in his plea on her behalf; and he is left to appreciate the piquancy of Canace's situation and the tragic irony which attends the circumstances of her suicide.

Once the irony of this situation is conceded, much of the beginning of the poem appears in quite a different light. In lines 3–8 Canace bitterly portrays her abject subordination to Aeolus' will:

> dextra tenet calamum, strictum tenet altera ferrum,
> et iacet in gremio charta soluta meo.
> haec est Aeolidos fratri scribentis imago,
> sic videor duro posse placere patri.
> ipse necis cuperem nostrae spectator adesset,
> auctorisque oculis exigeretur opus.

The patronymic of line 5 confirms the significance of the 'imago' which Canace draws of herself in lines 3–4: she submits to her father's dominant influence in name as well as action. But unaware of the developments which the mythical tradition shows to be unfolding behind the scenes, Canace can make no allowance for what she cannot know, that, with a reprieve in the offing, her death might not please Aeolus quite as much as she supposes in line 6. Nor can she possibly realize how the irony of her situation is reinforced by her allusive language in line 7. At *Aen.* 10.443 Turnus taunts Pallas with the words 'cuperem ipse parens spectator adesset'. Canace's explicit evocation of Turnus' words has lost perhaps a little of the barbaric cruelty which Servius interpreted them to signify on the lips of their first user,[32] but it still suggests obvious points of comparison between herself and Pallas. Canace imagines herself, like Pallas, suffering a premature death when the security provided by faithful dependence on paternal protection is removed; and Aeolus will not be on hand to witness Canace's suicide, just as Evander was not there to see his son being killed by Turnus. But the imminence of Canace's death gives the allusion in line 7 an ironic twist for two reasons. First, unlike Turnus' merciless slaying of Pallas, Canace's death can be seen to be both avoidable and needless in view of Aeolus' change of heart.

[32] 'Aspere et amare dictum: multa enim mala graviora videntur si ante oculos nostros eveniant, quam si audiantur' (ii, p. 437 Thilo).

Secondly, Aeolus cannot be there to watch Canace die precisely because at the very moment of her death we are to imagine him elsewhere, giving in to Macareus' appeals on her behalf.[33]

If lines 5–8 reveal Canace's inevitable ignorance of the circumstances which are conspiring to save her, Aeolus' change of heart also has ironic consequences for her perception of him in lines 9–16. It is not just that Aeolus is no longer the angry and tempestuous father whom Canace portrays; rather, the fresh irony results from an inadvertent misunderstanding in Canace's choice of diction. Ovid's adoption of the conflation of Aeolus, Canace's father, with the Aeolus who rules the winds, holds the key to identifying this misunderstanding. Ovid exploits this conflation by making Canace draw an obvious comparison between what she sees as Aeolus' wild temperament and the wild ferocity of the winds:

> ut ferus est multoque suis truculentior Euris,
> spectasset siccis vulnera nostra genis.
> scilicet est aliquid, cum saevis vivere ventis:
> ingenio populi convenit ille sui.
>
> (9–12)

Because she cannot realize that at the very moment of her writing Aeolus has checked his temper sufficiently to issue a reprieve at Macareus' request, she goes on to draw a contrast between the control which her father exerts over the winds and his lack of self-control:

> ille Noto Zephyroque et Sithonio Aquiloni
> imperat et pinnis, Eure proterve, tuis.
> imperat, heu! ventis; tumidae non imperat irae:
> possidet et vitiis regna minora suis.
>
> (13–16)

Like Jacobson, I can find no other instance in which Aeolus' character is explicitly equated with the character of the winds he rules;[34] what, then, does Ovid achieve by making such a specific association? The answer is that in making one kind of association between Aeolus and the winds, Ovid has Canace overlook a different kind of association which hinges on our privileged awareness of her father's change of heart.

The crucial lines are 11–12. 'Ferus' and 'truculentior' in line 9 prepare the way for the point of resemblance – common ferocity – which Canace draws between Aeolus and the winds in lines 11–12. But Aeolus also resembles the winds in another way. Although their ferocity is a staple feature in the literary representation of storms from Homer onwards,[35] the winds are equally notorious for their unpredictable changeability. This changeability often occurs as a paradigm for human fickleness, particularly in Roman elegy, where the shifting winds form a convenient allegory for

[33] Cf. Jacobson, op. cit., p. 165 n. 22, who notes the Virgilian echo but offers a more limited interpretation of it: 'Turnus, about to kill Pallas, wishes the latter's father were present to witness the murder; but in Ovid the father is also the killer.'

[34] Jacobson, op. cit., p. 164 n. 21 cites the anonymous *De Ulixis Erroribus* (332.3 *Μυθολόγοι* Westermann), but he acknowledges that Aeolus' character as defined there (*δεινόν τινα καὶ κακότεχνον ἄνδρα*) is 'built around the etymology of the name Aeolus, not around his role as the ruler of the winds': *Αἴολον τοὔνομα ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ τὸν τρόπον*. For this etymology see n. 37 below.

[35] For the violence of the winds as depicted in the conventional *ἀνέμων στάσις*, see the extensive examples cited by Nisbet–Hubbard on Horace, *C.* 1.3.13, Bömer on Ovid, *M.* 1.58ff., Tarrant on Seneca, *Agamemnon* 476 and M. P. O. Morford, *The Poet Lucan: Studies in Rhetorical Epic* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 40–2 on 5.597–620.

the whimsical shifts in a lover's moods.[36] The *Heroides* themselves contain various examples of the phenomenon, such as Hypsipyle's address to Jason at 6.109:

> mobilis Aesonide vernaque incertior aura,
> cur tua pollicito pondere verba carent?[37]

If Jason is fickle in his changing loyalties, then Aeolus is no less fickle in his changing moods, as the etymological associations of his name indicate.[38] This fickleness of character, which is already apparent in the *locus classicus* of *Odyssey* 10,[39] is alluded to by Ovid himself at *M.* 11.430–2, where Alcyone, the daughter of Aeolus, tries in vain to dissuade Ceyx from making his fateful voyage:

> neve tuum fallax animum fiducia tangat,
> quod socer Hippotades tibi sit, qui carcere fortes
> contineat ventos et, cum velit, aequora placet!

The Aeolus of *Heroides* 11 remains true to Alcyone's characterization of him in *Metamorphoses* 11. Blind with fury at one moment, he recovers soon after – according to the Sostratean account – to heed Macareus' pleas for his sister. It turns out that Canace's words in line 12, 'ingenio populi convenit ille sui', are only too true. She is right to equate Aeolus with the winds, but she does not know enough to appreciate the full force and accuracy of the comparison. Her father's change of heart enables the privileged reader to realize the full potential of the comparison in a way which is impossible for Canace herself. The true comparison between Aeolus and the winds now lies not in their shared ferocity, but in their common changeability.

Ovid's Canace is commonly held to be an uncomprehending victim of circumstances, powerless to curb her incestuous impulse and unable to resist her father's cruel authority.[40] But Canace is also the uncomprehending victim of Ovidian irony in *Heroides* 11. Had her father turned up to become 'necis ... nostrae spectator' (7), his response would have been more complex, less self-satisfied and imperious, than the cruelly treated Canace could possibly have imagined.

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[36] See Otto, *Sprichwörter*, p. 364 s.v. 'ventus' 1, adding Propertius 2.12.5–8 and Ovid, *Am.* 2.9b.33–4. The shifting winds also proverbially scatter the forlorn lover's empty words; see Otto, op. cit., pp. 17–18 s.v. 'amare' 4 and p. 364 s.v. 'ventus' 2. Ovid applies the analogy of the fickle winds to faithless friends in the exile poetry (e.g. *P.* 4.3.33), and 'ventosus' regularly indicates human fickleness (see *OLD* s.v. 5). The comparison of man to the wind goes back at least as far as Eupolis, to whom Photius attributes the phrase *ἄνεμος καὶ ὄλεθρος ἄνθρωπος* (Eupolis fr. 406 Kassel–Austin, *PCG* V p. 519), which Photius explains as meaning that man resembles the wind as being *φερόμενον ἀνέμου δίκην καὶ ἀλώμενον καὶ ἀβέβαιον*.

[37] See also 7.51, 18.185–6, and cf. 21.75–6.

[38] The adjective *αἰόλος* defies simple explanation and was variously interpreted by the ancient lexicographers. For the various interpretations and synonyms adduced by these lexicographers (e.g. *ποικίλος/ταχύς/πολύτροπος*) see *TGL* s.v. I.i. 1015–18 with P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots I* (Paris, 1968), p. 37 s.v. The name *Αἴολος* possibly reflects the rapid, shifting movement of the winds under Aeolus' control; otherwise, or in addition, it may indicate the resourceful versatility which Tsetzes (on Lycophron, *Alex.* 4; ii. 10 Scheer) associates with the ruler of the winds. The least that may be inferred is that the etymological associations of *αἰόλος* suggest a mercurial character who is neither uniform in temperament nor predictably inflexible in character.

[39] At *Od.* 10.72–5 Aeolus' hostility towards Odysseus marks a sudden and abrupt change from the hospitality with which he first greeted him (cf. 14ff.).

[40] So H. Fränkel, *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1945), p. 191 n. 9, Jacobson, op. cit., p. 159 and Verducci, *Ovid's Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum* (Princeton, 1985), p. 234: 'She [Canace] is at best a passive accomplice in the action, at worst an uncomprehending victim of it.'