I. Canace’s lovesickness

Starting at Ovid, *Heroides* 11.21, Canace recalls the beginning of her incestuous relationship with her brother, Macareus (*Her.* 11.21-26):

> o utinam, Macareu, quae nos commisit in unum, uenisset leto serior hora meo! cur umquam plus me frater quam frater amasti, et tibi, non debet quod soror esse, fui? ipsa quoque incalui qualemque audire solebam, nescio quem sensi corde tepente deum.

There follows a list of the symptoms of lovesickness: pallor, thinness and lack of appetite, insomnia and groans (27-32):

> fugerat ore color, macies adduxerat artus, sumebant minimos ora coacta cibos; nec somni faciles et nox erat annua nobis, et gemitum nullo laesa dolore dabam; nec, cur haec facerem, poteram mihi reddere causam, nec noram, quid amans esset; at illud eram.

*) I am indebted for help at various stages to Alessandro Barchiesi, Gian Biagio Conte, Luigi Galasso, Mario Labate, Jim McKeown, Gianpiero Rosati, and above all to Gareth Williams for many valuable suggestions. A first version of this article was written during my National service as a conscientious objector at the ‘Centro di Igiene Mentale’ of Alba in Summer 1996: I wish to thank the staff (especially Mrs Patrizia Franco, Mrs Patrizia Miozzo and Mrs Cecilia Dalcielo), my colleagues (Mr Alberto Fabbbrini and Mr Luca Pezzotta), and the patients of the Center, for having let me study in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.


2) Canace’s lack of appetite is probably particularly noticeable in the house of Aeolus: in the *Odyssey* (10.8-9) οἱ (the sons and daughters of Aeolus) ἀδελφοὶ ταῖς ἀδελφοῖς καταλύονται: παρά δὲ σαν ὀνείρα μυρία καταθήκη (‘they always banquet with their dear father and their loving mother; unending quantities of food are set before them’).

It is her old nurse who realises that Canace is in love: ‘Aeoli’ dixit ‘amas!’ (34). Canace blushes and lowers her eyes (35-36).

Ovid’s Canace is a wholly innocent creature. Love is a god about whom she has only heard, never met: qualem... audire solebam, 25 (“implying complete innocence beforehand”, P.E. Knox ad loc., 264). Love grows inside her, but she does not recognise it. This romantic version of the relationship between Canace and Macareus is an Ovidian innovation. In saying ipsa quoque incalui, Canace denies the current version of the myth. In Ovid, Canace falls in love with Macareus, whereas all the other sources agree that Canace was seduced by Macareus, without any hint that she might possibly have responded to his love: thus, for example, the hypothesis of Euripides’ Aeus in POxy 2457, lines 24-25 Austin (δι' θείην ['seduced']) or [Plut.] Mor. 312c = Parallel. Min. 28a (ἐθείην ['seduced']). Now, θείηο or δι' θείηο are fairly ‘neutral’ verbs, but in Stobaeus, Florilegium 4.20.72 Wachsmuth = FGHist 23 F 3 Jacoby, we read that Macareus ἐρασθεις ἔβισσεν την προερήμενην (‘fell in love with his sister and raped her’). It is true that quoque implies that Macareus took the first step: but this does not detract from the atmosphere of tender romanticism and virginal innocence in the pathetic memory of 21-36: “the power of passionate love [...]—which is an enigma for her—suddenly explodes in the innocent young girl. She is not seduced or raped as in the other ancient descriptions, but she is immediately feels attracted to him”.

4) There is a good discussion in H. Jacobson, Ovid’s Heroides (Princeton 1974), 162-163; cf. S. Jäkel, The Aiolos of Euripides, GB 8 (1979), 101-102; F. Verducci, Ovid’s Toyshop of the Heart: Epistulae Heroidum (Princeton 1985), 199. But see also M. Labate, La Canace ovidiana e l’Eolo di Euripide, ASNP 7 (1977), 589-590, who believes it is possible that the Canace of Euripides did not limit herself to submitting to her brother’s initiative, even if he considers it likely that little space was devoted to the theme of love in the tragedy.
6) θείηο also in schol. Aristoph. Nab. 1371, προερήμενο in Tzetzes on Aristoph. cit. [βείον ['to have sexual intercourse'] in Aristoph. cit., ομίλεα ['to have sexual intercourse'] in Ps.-Dion. Halic. Aris Rhetorica 9.11 = II 345 Usener-Radermacher].
7) Cf. Jacobson (above, n. 4), 163: “Ovid maintains the dominant role of the brother”. Jäkel (above, n. 4), 102 exaggerates somewhat: “there is no notion of seduction, nor is there any hint that Macareus seduced the sister”.