NOTES ON OVID, *HEROIDES* 9[1]

RECENTLY Mr. E. Courtney has reopened discussion on the authenticity of the last six *Heroides*, a subject which had almost universally been accepted as settled by scholars.[2] He also briefly discussed the ninth epistle and examined certain grounds for doubting whether it is rightly included in the Ovidian canon. In this he is following Karl Lachmann, who was disposed to doubt the authenticity not only of the last six but also of those of the remainder which are not mentioned in Ovid's catalogue of the epistles given at *Amores* 2. 18 f.[3] This despoliation of the canon has not generally found favour since Lachmann, and in the case of *Heroides* 9 (*Deianira Herculi*) the editors (e.g. Palmer) and other scholars working on the poems (e.g. Housman and recently Dörrie)[4] have without exception regarded the poem as a genuine specimen of Ovid's work. Arthur Palmer, the principal British editor, went so far as to write in his first edition of *Heroides* 1 to 14 that for his part he would 'as soon think of questioning the existence of the poet himself' as doubting the authenticity of the Deianira epistle.[5] Occasionally doubts have been raised concerning the poetic merits of the poem,[6] but none the less the traditional ascription has remained unchallenged.

The present writer, despite the apparent *consensus omnium bonorum*, still entertains grave reservations in accepting the Ovidian composition of the Epistle. These doubts arose originally from a feeling that the poem is markedly inferior in quality to the other genuine poems in the collection, and to Ovid's other works. Detailed analysis has confirmed these first impressions. Although it is clear that the author was well versed in Ovidian phraseology and poetic technique, and was, like his master, a keen rhetorician,[7] I maintain that sufficient traces of inferior workmanship remain in evidence to show that the poem is not authentic, or at least to make that conclusion a strong probability. There can of course rarely be a final answer to such arguments but the evidence must be carefully balanced on either side before even a tentative conclusion may be formed.

[1] I am most grateful to Mr. E. J. Kenney for reading the first draft of this paper and for making many helpful suggestions, and also to Mr. J. R. Wells for checking the statistical evidence.

[2] E. Courtney, 'Ovidian and Non-Ovidian *Heroides*', *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, xii (1965), 63 ff.

[3] Karl Lachmann, *Kleinere Schriften* (Berlin, 1876), ii. 56.

[4] Cf. H. Dörrie, *Untersuchungen zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Ovids Epistulae Heroidum* (*Nachrichten Akad. Wiss. in Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Klasse*, v, 1960), 171; 'Die dikterische Absicht Ovids in den *Epistulae Heroidum*', *A.u.A.* xiii (1967), 51 ff., for which see p. 355 n. 3 below.

[5] A. Palmer, *Ovid: Heroides XIV* (London, 1874), xvii f.

[6] Cf. E. S. Shuckburgh, *Ovid: Heroides XIII* (London, 1885), 164 ff.; Louis C. Purser in Introduction to A. Palmer, *Ovid: Heroides XXI*, (Oxford, 1898), xx f. Shuckburgh appears to have suspected extensive interpolations; Purser concluded that, despite its inferiority, 'it is difficult to believe that the poem is not by Ovid'. Cf., for example, D'Elia, *Ovidio*, pp. 157 ff.; L. P. Wilkinson, *Ovid Recalled* (Cambridge, 1955), pp. 87, 96.

[7] The *Heroides* may rightly be called Ovid's most rhetorical work: cf. S. F. Bonner, *Roman Declamation* (Liverpool, 1949), 152 ff.; T. F. Higham, 'Ovid and Rhetoric', *Ovidiana* (ed. N. L. Herescu, Paris, 1958), 32 ff.

The grounds of objection may be grouped under three heads: A. Structure, B. Style, and C. Metre. It is hoped that discussion of these points may lead to an earnest reconsideration of the poem's right to a place in the Ovidian canon.

A. Structure

The common effect of rhetoric incompetently handled was the sacrificing of the whole to the part, with the result that individual limbs of a literary work became inorganic within its entire torso; it is in particular a characteristic of Silver Age literature. This effect is quite apparent in *Heroides* 9. The other authentic epistles are satisfactory organic units and fairly well-marshalled *suasoriae*, occasionally reaching 'depth of emotion and density of poetic texture'[1] —in short the *fides* sought by a rhetorical poet.[2] There is, however a notable decline in Epistle 9, which is inorganic in structure and lacking both in emotive force and the other ingredients of *fides*. It is carelessly constructed in its general design and in the elaboration of its details. By comparison with the treatment of the same theme in *Metamorphoses* 9 and of similar themes in the first fourteen *Heroides*, it appears jejune and pretentious. Its material, which exhibits a distinct poverty of invention, is often laboured *ad nauseam*, sometimes even *ad absurdum*. The tragic possibilities inherent in the theme lie largely undeveloped; the total effect is tedious and arid; the details often seem confused and clumsily expressed. Professor Purser was correct in his stricture: 'The poem of Deianira is somewhat tiresome . . . it looks as if it might have been some studies for a Deianira run together in a hasty and inartistic fashion.'[3] And yet Ovid in *Metamorphoses* 9 could tell the same story with far greater aplomb, if not without a certain prolixity, at least with a regard for language and construction. In fact some of his material there seems to have been ineptly revamped in *Heroides* 9.[4]

This careless execution can be demonstrated by several anomalies, slight in themselves, but inexcusable in a poem of only 168 verses.

In lines 3–4, which are supposed to be written by Deianira *after* she has sent the fatal robe to Hercules, she complains to her husband that *fama decolor* had reached the *Pelasgiades urbes*, telling that he has been subdued by an infatuation for Iole. Deianira expresses the view that this *fama* 'ought to be disowned by your deeds' (*factis infitianda tuis*). This feeling of uncertainty is odd, for according to the myth Deianira first learned the story from an officious messenger and then extracted it from the herald Lichas (v. *Metamorphoses* 9); finally the truth was clinched by the identification of Iole herself among the captives from

[1] This phrase is borrowed from P. Green, 'Venus Clerke Ovyde', *Essays in Antiquity* (London, 1960), 122.

[2] *Fides* lies in meaning somewhere between 'sincerity' and 'authenticity' or 'credibility' —cf. Quint. *Inst. Or.* 5. 10. 8 and 10 ff.; cf. W. Allen, ' "Sincerity" and the Roman Elegists', *CPh.* xlv (1950), 146 ff., reprinted in J. P. Sullivan (ed.), *Critical Essays in Roman Literature: Elegy and Lyric* (London, 1962).

[3] Purser, loc. cit. xxi.

[4] Cf., for example, *Met.* 9. 134 ff., with *Her.* 9. 1 ff.; *Met.* 9. 182 ff. with *Her.* 9. 85 ff.; *Met.* 9. 149 with *Her.* 9. 151. W. Zingerle, *Untersuchungen zur Echtheitsfrage der Heroiden Ovid's* (Innsbruck, 1878), cites various parallels and imitations between *Heroides* 9 and other works of Ovid, believing that this is evidence of the poem's authenticity (pp. 21–3); it is clear, however, that the argument can be used the other way—it is not suggested that the author of the ninth Epistle was unfamiliar with Ovid's technique (Cf., for example, *Her.* 9. 73 and *A.A.* 2. 219; *Her.* 9. 68 and *A.A.* 2. 400; *Her.* 9. 136 with *Her.* 11. 4 and *Fast.* 3. 20; *Her.* 9. 102 with *Her.* 11. 82, *Am.* 1. 7. 20, *Rem.* 640, etc.).

Oechalia. By line 53 Deianira's pen has strayed to another story reported by *fama*, that of Hercules' enslavement to Queen Omphale of Lydia. This theme is elaborated *in extenso*, and, at its conclusion, as a means of returning to the main topic at issue, we find the lines (119 ff.):

> haec tamen audieram; licuit non credere famae,
> et venit ad sensus mollis ab aure dolor—
> ante meos oculos adducitur advena paelex,
> nec mihi, quae patior, dissimulare licet.

Leaving aside whether *mollis dolor* is an appropriate description of the hysterical denunciation of the Omphale episode which Deianira has just given, it is plain that this antithesis between rumours about Omphale and proven facts about Iole contradicts what was said about the Iole story in 3–4, in which the whole matter was attributed to *fama* (and as Deianira herself says here *licuit non credere famae*) and told in reported speech. No mention was made then of the factual confirmation which made doubt impossible—in fact Deianira still countenanced the possibility that the report could be scotched by Hercules' deeds. Apparently the poet had forgotten this by the time he had finished the excursus on Queen Omphale; the arrival of the *advena paelex* is not mentioned at all until 121, even though it is the crux of Deianira's grievance and the reason for her desperate resort to magical practices. Until over two-thirds of the way through the poem Deianira is portrayed as unaware of the vitally important fact that Iole, unlike Hercules' other *amours*, has actually arrived on her doorstep and is paraded before her very eyes (121 *adducitur*), proving the truth of *fama decolor* and threatening the existence of her marriage. In fact it took the narration of Omphale's story to remind her of the fact.

In addition to this anomaly, another passage in the Omphale digression spoils the theme of the first section. From lines 1 to 26 the poet labours the theme:

> victorem victae succubuisse queror . . . (2)
> quem nunquam Iuno seriesque immensa laborum
> fregerit, huic Iolen imposuisse iugum . . . (5–6)
> quem non mille ferae, quem non Stheneleius hostis,
> non potuit Iuno vincere, vincit amor. . . . (25–6)

'Nothing has yet conquered Hercules except his infatuation for Iole.' But later in the poem Deianira bewails at considerable length the fact that Queen Omphale has subdued Hercules—in fact:

> qua tanto minor es, quanto te, maxime rerum,
> quam quos vicisti, vincere maius erat. (107–8)

In point of fact Hercules had not really been subdued by Queen Omphale but had become her slave in expiation of sacrilege against the Delphic oracle. None the less the poet is so fond of his *victor victus* conceit that he drags it in again in reference to Omphale as well as to Iole. So apparently Iole was not the first to impose the yoke after all. The poet wishes to have it both ways:[1] in the first part of the poem he portrays Hercules as an unconquered hero at

[1] It can, of course, be said that rhetorical poets often wish to have it both ways—but not usually as blatantly as this.

last subdued by a foolish *amour*. But when he comes to treat of Omphale he depicts him as already a *vir mollis* (72), no longer worthy of the titles *victor* and *maximus rerum* (107), because of his having been *ancilla* to a barbarian Queen.

Another anomaly is apparent in line 17. The news of Hercules' impending death does not arrive until line 143, but in 17 Deianira speaks of *quod te laturum est caelum*. How could she know of the imminent death and apotheosis of Hercules at this stage in the proceedings? Her hopes are supposed to be fixed on his return and reconciliation. Even after the news from Oeta, his deification would have been an unwarranted assumption (Sophocles sensibly does not mention it in the *Trachiniae*): in fact, as Ovid himself says at *Metamorphoses* 9. 17, *nondum erat ille deus*. To make the assumption beforehand is a double absurdity and demonstrates a lamentable disregard for *fides* in the use of mythological material. When the tragic news from Oeta does in fact reach her in lines 143–4 (rightly characterized by Mr. E. Courtney as of 'astonishing flatness'),[1] it is attributed to *nuntia fama*. Deianira immediately decides on suicide (in fact within the couplet), forgetting her own maxim of twenty lines previously for a second time, *licuit non credere famae* (119). Despite the fact that her husband is now known to be dying in agony, she continues writing to him, explaining why she sent the robe of Nessus to him (163) and including him in her list of farewells (168). It is somewhat difficult to envisage when she intends him to read her epistle, considering that he is known *tunicae tabe perire* (144) in pain on Mount Oeta (147). These absurdities arise from the use of a technique totally unsuited to an epistle, that of direct narration. Courtney rightly points out that this dramatic development is unique in the *Heroides*.[1] It makes nonsense of the whole piece.

These anomalies are only one example of the poet's bungling. The most glaring structural blemish is the long, inorganic digression about Omphale which occupies lines 54 to 119. This is attributed to *fama* and merely the final illustration in a catalogue of illicit love-affairs. We should have supposed that more recent events would give Deianira better ground on which to assail her husband; the arrival of the *advena paelex* with its probable consequence was a more pressing problem for her. Nevertheless the poet introduces on the most tenuous of pretexts this elaborate *pannus purpureus*, redolent of the rhetorical schools, giving an allusive and obscure list of Hercules' *labores*. Deianira could probably have taken her husband's familiarity with these as read. In fact as E. S. Shuckburgh rightly asserts, the whole Omphale *ecphrasis* seems 'a clumsy contrivance to bring in an enumeration of the "Labours" '.[2] The whole excursus with its appendage is an irrelevance. The 'bridge passage' by which it is introduced is flimsy. Deianira has been bitterly complaining about her husband's long absences (36–46) and she progresses on to castigation of his *peregrinos amores* (47). By the familiar rhetorical device of *occultatio*[3] we are given a few of Hercules' illicit liaisons (including that with Thespius' fifty daughters, which occurred years before Hercules married Deianira and which can scarcely be termed a *peregrinus amor*) and tacked on the end is the last adulterous act:

[1] Courtney, loc. cit.

[2] Shuckburgh, op. cit. 164.

[3] *Occultatio* is the introduction of material by stating that there is no need to mention it —a fine example may be found at Statius, *Thebaid* i. 3 ff. (but see O. Rossbach, 'Eine übersehene Erwähnung des Antimachos', *BPhW*(1915), 253–6)—the device is common enough.

una, recens crimen, referetur[1] adultera nobis
unde ego sum Lydo facta noverca Lamo. (53–4)

This is the pretext on which the digression is introduced into the poem. Deianira warms to her subject, and, as if in the auditorium, elaborates the grotesque picture of Hercules dressed as a serving-maid and learning how to spin. As is only to be expected, the scene all too soon descends to the comic. The poet is so patently unaware of the need for keeping a fitting tone for his theme that he can with gusto perpetrate an absurdity such as 63,

ausus es hirsutos mitra redimire capillos,

and the astounding banality of 79–80,

a quotiens digitis dum torques stamina duris,
praevalidae fusos comminuere manus.

Lines more ludicrous can scarcely be imagined; nor at this juncture would we expect Deianira to show such a great solicitude for the defects of her husband's spinning. But not content even with this silliness, the poet makes Hercules *dominae pertimuisse minas* (74) and pictures him as *scuticae tremefactus habenis* (81).[2] The depths of rhetorical absurdity may, however, be thought to have been plumbed by lines 67–72:

non tibi succurrit crudi Diomedis imago,
efferus humana qui dape pavit equas?
si te vidisset cultu Busiris in isto,
huic victor victo nempe pudendus erat.
detrahat Antaeus duro redimicula collo,
ne pigeat molli succubuisse viro.

On her own reckoning elsewhere Hercules could hardly be termed *mollis vir*, by any stretch of the imagination. The weakest of 'bridges' serves to introduce the Catalogue of Labours (84–100) which, with all its quasi-epic sonorousness, is concluded by a line of unusual bathos:

haec tu Sidonio potes insignitus amictu
dicere?

[1] The reading *referetur* is extremely dubious; for a discussion cf. Palmer, op. cit., ad loc.

[2] Line 81 is rejected by Merkel, Palmer, *et al.* Palmer states (I think correctly) that it is 'too bombastic for Ovid' (1898, p. 367). In the event of the poem's not being by Ovid, it could be retained. It is relevant to the situation and was certainly in Planudes' MS. Line 82 *ante pedes dominae pertimuisse minas* is also rejected in whole or in part because *dominae pertimuisse minas* is also found at 74. It is supposed that the copyists introduced it in error for a second time at 82. I suspect that it should be excised from 74 instead and was interpolated there by mistake. It is more suitable to the context at 82. Lines 73–4 are in facts taken from *A.A.* 2. 219 f., where the pentameter reads *lanas excoluisse rudes*, which could be read at 74 here. Line 83 is justifiably excised as a meaningless and absurd interpolation. This hexameter probably dropped out at an early stage—Planudes had a lacuna in his manuscript; neither *eximiis pompis immania semina laudum* (marginal reading in P) nor *praeconia summa triumphi* (G., etc.) makes good sense: the former reading being apparently taken from Statius, *Ach.* 1. 188: cf. O. A. W. Dilke, *Statius: Achilleid* (Cambridge, 1954), 98—of course Statius was a frequent imitator of Ovid (cf. G. Luehr, *De Statio in Silvis priorum poetarum Latinorum imitatore*, diss. Königsberg, 1880; B. Deipser, *De Statio Vergilii et Ovidii imitatore*, diss. Argentor. 5, 1891). It is worth noting, in passing, that at *Her.* 1. 41 (which occurs in a much disturbed passage) the phrase *o nimium nimiumque oblite tuorum* is repeated at Statius, *Theb.* 7. 547 *nimium mitis nimiumque oblite tuorum.*

After this mass of absurdity and triviality the poet returns to his main theme by the 'bridge' of weak antithesis which was discussed earlier (119–22). The principal theme has now been in total obscurity since line 33. We are now treated to an insensitive fifteen-line description of the arrival of Iole at Trachis —a poor rival indeed to Sophocles. Even here the author cannot forget his preoccupation with Queen Omphale, but grasps the opportunity of referring to it yet again with singular ineptness:

> ingreditur late lato spectabilis auro,
> qualiter in Phrygia tu quoque cultus eras. (127–8)

Deianira is apparently more concerned about the arrogance of Iole's arrival than the danger of her being supplanted, for she only adds this imminent possibility by six clumsy lines prefaced with *forsitan et* (131–6). Surely the crisis has progressed beyond the stage of vague possibility? If not, why did Deianira take the desperate step of sending the robe of Nessus? Considering that this has already been dispatched to Hercules, it is not strictly true to say:

> mens fugit admonitu, frigusque perambulat artus
> et iacet in gremio languida facta manus.

From this point to the end, the treatment grows even more scrappy. Seven repetitive lines suffice to bring the news from Oeta and Deianira's decision to commit suicide (143–8). Lines 151–8 give us an otiose sketch of the misfortunes of Deianira's *devota domus*. 159–64, in telegram style, present the only explanation in the poem about the robe of Nessus and in lines 165–8 we find a frigid list of farewells. Considering the wealth of space devoted to other matters, e.g. to the tiresome complaints of 34 ff. and to Omphale (53–118), the space devoted to Iole and Deianira's tragic error seems extremely scanty.[1] It is quite clear that the poet is much more interested in grotesquerie and allusive mythology than in the tragic potentialities of his poem. We may compare the Ovidian treatment of, for example, the suicides of Phyllis (*Heroides* 2) or Dido (7). The Deianira poem is totally lacking in tragic intensity, although the story could have been an inspiring one. Even at the height of the disaster (the news from Oeta) the poet falls back on the inadequate device of a rhetorical question used as a refrain (unique, like so much else, in the *Heroides*): *impia quid dubitas Deianira mori?* (146, 152, 159, 164). This refrain certainly adds nothing to the effect but merely serves as a makeshift to avoid the necessity of adequately describing the grief of Deianira.[2]

The fact is that, despite the exemplar of the *Trachiniae*, the author of *Heroides* 9 has been incapable of exploiting the tragic situation offered by his story. The messenger, Lichas, the omens, are all ignored. The arrival of Iole is brutally altered so as to appear as a caricature, like Euripides' Hermione. The tortured conflict that led to the use of sorcery is quite absent. The story is, after all, really concerned with a loving wife who is stricken with frenzied grief because her husband's love for her has been replaced by an infatuation for a far younger rival. But this is not the theme of *Heroides* 9. Deianira does not say 'Alas! I have

[1] Cf. the remarks of H. Dörrie in his article in *A.u.A.* cited p. 349 n. 4: 'Ein überlang Teil des Briefes, 118 von 168 Versen (70 Prozent), sind eine von indigniertem Hohn gewürtzte Anklagerede gegen Hercules' (p. 52).

[2] The refrain can be taken as an indication of non-Ovidian authorship, but both

lost Hercules' love. How can I regain it?' but rather 'How disgusting! Hercules, hitherto unvanquished, has at last been vanquished by love and, to boot, has made a fool of himself in Lydia.' It was the forfeiture of her husband's affection, the loss of her status as wife, not the tarnishing of his reputation, that Deianira should have been bewailing. But in 27–46 Deianira gives vent to a querulous and unreasonable complaint about Hercules' long absences (which were after all unavoidable). This is quite inappropriate to the tragic situation. Equally inept is her platitudinous conclusion from her plight: *nube pari* (29–32). There is in this epistle none of Ovid's psychological insight into feminine *mores*, shown elsewhere in the series; Deianira is an unattractive figure, as Purser remarked, 'feebly querulous'.[1] In fact in some manuscripts the poem is entitled *Conquestio Deianirae*.[2] Certainly the epistolary form is thrown away completely, and the poem has become nothing but a feeble dramatic monologue, frequently overstepping the canons of common sense and propriety.[3]

I have already noted the weakness of some of the 'bridge passages'. Finally I point out the inadequate method used to introduce the Robe of Nessus in 144. It is clear that Nessus must be mentioned before the arrival of the news from Oeta. So the author, quite gratuitously, mentions at 138 the two occasions on which Hercules had fought for Deianira. In 141–2 the death of Nessus is described. Immediately afterwards we read:

> sed quid ego haec refero? scribenti nuntia venit
> fama, virum tunicae tabe perire meae.

The answer to the rhetorical question in the first line of the distich is that this was the only way that the poet could make his work cohere and draw it to a close. He was totally inefficient in marshalling his themes and on several occasions he found it necessary to use a quite arbitrary method, like this one, to bring his poem to a conclusion at all. It is merely a series of *panni purpurei* (many of them poorly executed) loosely conjoined into an unhappy form; such inefficiency is certainly unlike Ovid, who normally succeeded in integrating his poems well, as in the *Metamorphoses*.

Palmer (1874, p. 88) and Zingerle, op. cit. 24, argue that it favours the traditional ascription, as 'no imitator would have ventured to introduce anything unusual with Ovid himself'. As a parallel, however, they quote the refrain in the *paraklausithuron*, *Amores* 1. 6, with its repetitions of *excute poste seram*—so that an imitator did have some warrant. It is important to notice that the refrain in the *Amores* is far more apt and more cleverly used; in the *Heroides*, as I suggest, it is both inappropriate and unimaginatively used—in fact it seems to indicate a poverty of invention rather than anything else.

[1] Purser, loc. cit. xx.

[2] Cf. Purser, loc. cit. xx n. 3.

[3] H. Dörrie in his article in *A.u.A.* has discussed the ninth epistle at some length; he mentions Courtney's article in a footnote (52–3) and, although he recognizes the validity of metrical arguments, he suggests that they may be countered by the possibility of Ovid's experimenting or by interpolation. I hope that my views go some way to show that the objections are too integral to be dismissed as caused by interpolation and that, if Ovid is experimenting, it is a unique and unworthy attempt. However it is interesting to note that Dörrie proposes two postulates: (i) that each heroine is individually characterized by a number of small traits 'namentlich durch kleine Verstösse gegen Geschmack und Schicklichkeit'; and (ii) that in the characterization of the heroines there is regularly alteration, even downright perversion, within the poem. He admits that these cannot unfortunately be demonstrated from all the epistles; but the main example he discusses is none other than the Ninth, which he rightly characterizes as an 'ungewöhnlich dramatisch Brief' (pp. 51–2). His analysis of the poem along these lines is of much interest.

B. Style

One of the most noticeable features of the style of the *Deianira* is the tedious and unimaginative repetition of idea and detail. For example, the ideas expressed at the beginning of the poem in the lines,

> victorem victae succubuisse queror . . . (2)
> quem nunquam Iuno seriesque immensa laborum
> fregerit, huic Iolen imposuisse iugum, (5–6)

are repeated in differing words in 11–12 (*plus tibi quam Iuno, nocuit Venus*, etc.), and in 25–6 (*quem non mille ferae . . . vincit amor*) and in 129 (*Hercule victo*). The rhetorical play on various forms of *vinco* and its derivatives occur in 2 (*victorem victae*), 26 (*vincere, vincit*), 70 (*huic victor victo*), 108–9 (*vincere, vicisti*), 114 (*victor es, illa tui*), 129 (*Hercule victo*), with similar themes in lines 6, 105, 75, 113–14 and 117. The linking of Juno with Eurystheus is found in 7 (*Eurystheus . . . germana Tonantis*), 25–6 (*Stheneleius hostis . . . Iuno*) and 45 (*Eurystheus . . . Iunonis*). Similarly the idea in 19–20 is repeated three times in 23–4 and is the burden of 54–118.

As to the Labours, in whole or in part, they are monotonously scattered throughout the poem: 5 (*seriesque immensa laborum*), 14–16 (*vindicibus pacatum viribus orbem*, etc.), 18 (Atlas), 21–2 (*geminos . . . angues*), 25 (*mille ferae*), 34 (*monstraque terribiles . . . feras*), 37–8 (Hydra, Nemean Lion, Tegean boar, Cerberus), 58 (Atlas), 61 (Nemean lion), 67–8 (Diomedes), 69–70 (Busiris), 71–2 (Antaeus), 85–6 (the serpents), 87–8 (Tegean boar), 91–2 (Geryon), 93–4 (Cerberus), 95–6 (Hydra), 97–8 (Antaeus), 99–100 (Centaurs), 111–12 (Nemean Lion), 115–16 (Hydra), 117 (*ferarum*), 139–140 (Achelous), 141–2 (Nessus), 163–4 (Nessus). Such a proliferation of references to the hero's achievements gives a tedious effect.

In the Omphale *ecphrasis* the theme of Hercules' donning of feminine attire is overworked: 59 (*auro*), 60 (*gemmas*), 63 (*mitra*), 65–6 (*Maeonia . . . zona*), 71 (*redimicula*), 101 (*Sidonio . . . amictu*), 128 (*in Phrygia cultus eras*). The point is too much laboured, as is also the description of spinning in 74 ff., and Omphale's dressing in the hero's clothes (103 ff.). Repeated ideas are common in Ovid, but several uncharacteristically careless variations may be found in this poem, e.g. 13–14 is repeated by 15–16, 33–4 by 35–6, 29–30 by 31–2, 84 (*facta . . . dissimulanda*) by 101, and 105 (*fortia gesta*, cf. *facta priora*, 20, etc.).

Catalogues are a favourite device of the author and we find them at 39–40 (methods of divination), 43–4 (relatives of Hercules), 47 ff. (*peregrinos amores*), 67 ff. (defeated champions), 85 ff. (Labours), 139–42 (fights for Deianira). 153–7 (*devota domus*) and 165–8 (farewells).

Of course it may be objected that such repetition of ideas is by no means un-Ovidian; considerations of subjective taste enter into the question. It may be inelegant to bring in all the Labours, but Ovid could sometimes be tediously exhaustive, as, for example, in describing Actaeon's hounds in the *Metamorphoses*. Furthermore there is the possibility of interpolations in the text. I agree that such arguments could never be strong enough to stand alone; but together with the other indications adduced in this paper, the unpleasing repetitions seem to me to have their part to play in showing why the poem is such a resounding failure.

F. S. Shuckburgh has spoken of this Epistle as too much 'laden with learning

and allusion'.[1] While it is true that all Ovid's poetry (as befitted a *doctus poeta*) is allusive and Alexandrian, there is more otiose and inorganic *doctrina* in *Heroides* 9 than in the other epistles. The preciosity burgeons in over-profuse descriptions, in mythological trivia, in unnecessary allusiveness. The following is a list of some of the examples of pedantry: 7–8 (*germana Tonantis . . . noverca*, i.e. Juno), 9–10 (*ille . . . cui nox . . . una non tanta*, etc., i.e. Jupiter), 14 and 16 (*qua latam Nereus caerulus ambit humum* and *solis utramque domum*, i.e. *ubique*);[2] 25 (*Stheneleius hostis*, i.e. Eurystheus), 28 (*socerum rapidis qui tonat altus equis*, i.e. Jupiter), 37–8 (*serpentes*, i.e. Hydra, *apros*, i.e. Tegean boar, *leones*, i.e. Nemean Lion, *haesuros canes*, i.e. Cerberus), 43 (*deo . . . potenti*, i.e. Jupiter), 49 (Auge), 50 (*Ormeni nympha*, i.e. Astydameia), 51 (*Teuthrantia turba*, i.e. daughters of Thespius), 54 (*Lydo . . . Lamo*), 55 (*Maeandros*—a *locus* needlessly dragged in), 64 (*populus alba*), the entire Catalogue of defeated Champions and Labours (67 ff. and 84–100), 103 (*Iardanis nympha*), 131 (*Aetolide Deianira*), etc. Here again all this is not impossible for Ovid on poor form; but it is also an indication of inferior workmanship when taken into consideration in our over-all analysis of the epistle.

There are also a few minor matters which may be small evidence of non-Ovidian authorship, best discussed in our notes as too inconclusive for introduction into the main argument.[3]

[1] Shuckburgh, op. cit. 164.

[2] The use of *caerulus Nereus* is one of the themes mentioned by Persius as characteristic of the *oratio exaggerata* of rhetorical poets (*Sat.* 1. 94).

[3] (i) *decolor* (3): unparalleled in its metaphorical sense in Ovid, who always uses it in a purely physical sense. The passage in Virgil, *Aen.* 8. 326, cited as a metaphorical use, is in fact a reference to the change from the gold to the bronze age, and is wholly different from the usage here. For the normal Ovidian usage cf. *A.A.* 3. 130.

(ii) In 45 the phrase *arbiter Eurystheus irae Iunonis iniquae*, quite apart from the clumsiness of the double genitive (to avoid which Housman proposed substituting *astu* or *furto* for *irae*), is meaningless. *Arbiter* should mean 'minister' or 'manager', as Palmer remarks; in the 1874 edn. *ad loc.* he cites the phrases *arbiter bibendi* and *arbiter Hadriae* as parallels, but in 1898 he recognized that they were not really equivalent (p. 363). However, as the verse seems to be corrupt, not much weight can be put on this disparity.

(iii) *nympha* (50, 103): Palmer (1874) on *Ep.* 1. 27 suggests that 'the use of *nympha* for any young girl . . . is not classical'. Here the word is used of two females who are not strictly speaking nymphs (Astydameia and Omphale). At l. 27 we should probably read *nuptae* with Heinsius as making better sense. The word *nympha* is, however, used in its non-technical sense at *Heroides* 16. 128; but of course this may not be Ovid's work, and for this passage we rely on the *editio Parmensis* of 1477. Ovid does occasionally produce usages more characteristic of the Silver Age than of the Augustan era, and this could be regarded as an example, although two instances may be thought a little suspect.

(iv) In 9–10 the phrase *nox . . . una non tanti ut tantus* is manifestly clumsy. This is the reading of P and G and only the codex Moreti reads *tanta*. Palmer reads *tanti*, arguing that '*non tanta* can scarcely stand for *satis longa*' (1898, p. 360). *Tanti* has been condemned by Madvig (*Opusc.* ii. 194) and by Housman, who wished to read *luctanti* to obviate the difficulty; Slichtenhorst suggested *satis*.

(v) Line 18 is of dubious meaning: *Hercule supposito sidera fulsit Atlans*. Showerman in the Loeb edition produces little better than gibberish. The whole point of the story is that when Hercules bore the load Atlas did not need to *fulcire* the heavens. A verb meaning 'put down' is required. An alternative suggestion translates *Hercule supposito* 'by means of the substitution of Hercules', a curious form of expression. One would want a phrase meaning 'stood easy', but if *sidera* is sound it cannot be obtained. Bentley deleted the distich.

(vi) There appears to be a confusion of legal metaphors in lines 107–8. The words *rerum mensura tuarum* and *cede bonis* both refer to the process of *cessio bonorum*, a process akin to bankruptcy, in which a debtor handed over all his property to his creditors: it is

C. Metre

There is no doubt that the argument concerning the authenticity of this poem centres on the metrical problems. It was on metrical difficulties that Lachmann based his case; he cited the four cases of hiatus and one case of artificial lengthening in the poem:

Ut Tegeaeus aper cupressifero Erymantho (87)
Forsitan et pulsa Aetolide Deianira (131)
Eurytidosque Ioles atque insani Alcidae (133)
Semivir occubuit in lotifero Eueno (141)

Before discussing these individually it is worth stressing on *a priori* grounds that it is objectionable that such a cluster of metrical licences should occur in such a short space if the poem is Ovidian. One such instance as 87 might pass muster but the accumulation of them is suspicious. They serve no apparent motive in the poem but are merely metrical curiosities.

The two readings, *cupressifero Erymantho* and (accepting Heinsius's emendation) *lotifero Eueno*, are paralleled elsewhere in Ovid's work[1] and may be allowed, although outside this poem the licence of hiatus followed by a spondaic fifth foot is found only at *Fasti* 5. 83, *caelifero Atlante*. The hiatus in 131, however, is without parallel elsewhere in Ovid and this has led Palmer and others to suggest that *Aetolide* may be corrupt; but, as Courtney says, it can only be removed 'by violence',[2] as in Purser's *Calydonide*. The collocation in 133, *insani Alcidae*, which makes both second and third *metra* spondaic, is unique, and in conjunction with the unusual hiatus the spondaic fifth foot is particularly objectionable. (*Heroides* 8. 71, ending *et Amyclaeo Polluci*, is similar, but is, I think rightly, labelled by Platnauer as 'certainly spurious'.[3]) As the Puteaneus read *insanii* in the line, a number of ingenious emendations have been suggested,[4] of which *Aonii* has been the most popular. These are, however, avowedly attempts to improve the metre, for Palmer is quite wrong to maintain that *insani* gives 'unsatisfactory sense'.[5] It is perfectly applicable to Hercules, *furens* as he had often been, and to Deianira's emotional state at this point. There are limits to how much one can tinker with the text to conceal blemishes.

defined as *ab universitate rerum suarum recedere* (v. Palmer, 1878, p. 85). Palmer rightly argues that *mensura* is equivalent to *universitas* (cf. Juvenal, *Sat.* 14. 316). But in *heres* a slightly different metaphor enters. Palmer tried to explain it by arguing that 'it was possible to alienate the right of inheritance by the form of *cessio bonorum*'. However this is not fully satisfactory, since *laus* is not part of the *paterna bona* which would be ceded by this process of disinheriting himself; rather it is the principal part of the *bona* which by *bonorum cessio* he is said to be ceding to her as creditor. There is a slight change of metaphor here but it cannot be said to be a particularly vicious one.

(vii) Other difficulties include 38 *haesuros terna per ora canes* (*esuros* some MSS. with Heinsius, *hausuros* Postgate); 129 *ut* (or *ab*?) *Hercule victo*; 156 *vivus in igne fuit* (*situs* Housman). These may well all be the result of MS. corruption.

(viii) There are a few careless repetitions: e.g. *pacatum . . . pax* (13, 15); *irae . . . ira* (45, 46—? corrupt); *calathum . . . calathis* (73, 76); *armenti dives . . . dives ab ipsa suis* (91, 96).

[1] Cf. for example, *Her.* 4. 99, 11. 13. M. Platnauer, *Latin Elegiac Verse* (Cambridge, 1951), 58 ff.

[2] Courtney, loc. cit.; cf. Palmer, op. cit., 1898, pp. 509 ff.; Platnauer, op. cit., 58.

[3] Platnauer, op. cit. 39; Palmer, op. cit., 1898, p. 356; in favour, Purser, loc. cit. xxx; Courtney, loc. cit.

[4] e.g. *Inachii* (Bentley), *Aonii* (Merkel), *Ismeni* (Riese), *et Echionii* (Housman).

[5] Palmer, op. cit., 1898, p. 371.

The lengthening in *occubuit* is equally strange. Maurice Platnauer has written: 'All the Ovidian instances conform to one type: they all show the lengthening of the *i* in the third person singular of the perfect indicative of verbs forming their perfect in *-ii* (mainly compounds of *eo*).'[1] In consequence of this Platnauer asserts that *occubuit* 'is corrupt'.[2] Courtney rightly points out that it is difficult to suggest an alternative, and rejects various weak attempts to emend away.[3] The sense of the word is satisfactory and the manuscripts offer no clue.[4]

Another metrical feature which seems to offer an indication of non-Ovidian composition is the high percentage of caesurae after the fourth trochee, a pause which was unpopular with the elegists.[5] In this epistle we find eleven examples or 13·0 per cent. This compares with the other Ovidian epistles as follows:[6]

Epistle	*Incidence per cent of feminine fourth-foot caesura*
1	10·34
2	0·0
3	5·01
4	4·54
5	8·23
6	7·31
7	9·18
8	9·8
9	*13·09*
10	3·93
11	1·53
12	3·66
13	7·23
14	3·06

Thus it is clear that the incidence for the ninth Epistle is considerably higher than in any other. Platnauer gives the percentage average in the *Ars Amatoria* and *Remedia* as 4·4.[7] The only other epistle which seems to have as high a percentage as 9 is 15 (Sappho to Phao), which has fifteen examples, that is, about 13 per cent. Strange to say the high percentage in the *Deianira* has been used as an argument for the authenticity of 15.[8] It would seem to be a greater indication that both are spurious. Certainly the fact that the *Consolatio ad Liviam* shows the unusually high incidence of 10·55 per cent has been used as evidence that this poem is not by Ovid.[9]

A further statistical test may be derived from the incidence of spondaic beginnings for pentameters. The result is again, I think, significant. In tabular form the percentages are as follows:

[1] Platnauer, op. cit. 60.

[2] Ibid. 60 n.

[3] Courtney, loc. cit. 66.

[4] The reading *tegendo* in 126 is plainly corrupt.

[5] Cf. Platnauer, op. cit. 10.

[6] In Epistle 7 we quote 9·18 per cent, disregarding one example (17) which is a *locus desperatus*.

[7] Platnauer, loc. cit. 10.

[8] Theodor Birt first used this argument against 15 in *Rh.M.* xxxii (1877), 390. De Vries cited 9 as a similar case in favour of Ovidian authorship of 15 (*Epistula Sapphus*, 1885, p. 141), quoted in approval by Purser, op. cit. 421.

[9] Platnauer, op. cit. 118.

Epistle	*Incidence per cent of spondaic pentameters*
1	8·62
2	1·35
3	6·49
4	8·0
5	3·79
6	2·66
7	4·13
8	9·83
9	*17·76*
10	6·58
11	7·81
12	7·55
13	6·1
14	6·06

Here the position is quite clear. The incidence in 9 is significantly and strikingly higher than in any other epistle. It is a clear sign of poor workmanship.[1]

In short, in these two test counts the results are strongly indicative of non-Ovidian authorship. From all the evidence Epistle 9 is certainly metrically suspicious.

In conclusion it may be said that there is evidence to allow considerable doubt to be thrown on Ovid's claim to authorship of this poem. In such discussions there cannot, of course, be any true finality and, if it is rejected from the canon, there remains the question as to when and by whom the spurious work was produced. The problem is, to my mind, not a serious one. We may, according to choice and judgement, believe, as does Courtney, that the spurious epistles were written in Ovid's day, like the epistles of Sabinus;[2] or later, as Palmer argued, perhaps at the time when poetasters and triflers in *dia poemata* were inspiring the denunciations of Persius, when[3]

> aliquis, cui circum umeros hyacintha leaena est,
> randiculum quiddam balba de nare locutus,
> Phyllidas, Hypsipylas, vatum et plorabile siquid.

All we can profitably say is that the author was an *Ovidianus poeta* such as that posited by Mr. A. G. Lee as composer of the *Nux*, 'highly skilled in his craft, who

[1] It is worth noting perhaps that the incidence of hexameters beginning with spondees is also relatively high—9·52 per cent. Two other totals are similar to this (3 and 10) whereas the rest are lower (ranging from none to 6·6 per cent). In Epistle 3 (total incidence 9·09 per cent) one line (115) is dubious and condemned by Palmer; and in 10 (with a high incidence of 11·8 per cent), four examples may be deemed dubious—27 was condemned by Palmer, 31 is a *locus desperatus*, 95 was condemned by Bentley and van Lennep. 83 may be considered suspicious, as 85–6 were condemned by Bentley and 87–8 by Riese as interpolations, in which case 83–4 may also be dubious, being part of the same catalogue, which, it is argued, was interpolated because of 81–2. This would reduce the total percentage to 6·57 per cent. However, even if this is regarded as special pleading, the high total in 9 is still worthy of remark, when related to the high incidence of spondaic pentameters.

[2] Courtney, loc. cit.

[3] Persius, *Sat.* 1. 33 ff.

only betrays himself in points of detail'.[1] It is impossible to expect exact evidence for date and provenance. The case rests.

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[1] A. G. Lee, 'Authorship of the *Nux*', *Ovidiana* (ed. N. L. Herescu, Paris, 1958), 468–9; cf. also E. J. Kenney on *Am.* 3. 5, in *C.Q.* N.S. xii (1962), p. 12.