

IN DEFENCE OF *HEROIDES* 9

BY

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Although I am unwilling to renew the dispute over the authenticity of *Heroides* 9,¹⁾ there are certain unifying thematic elements of this letter which have been overlooked and which might help to salvage some of Ovid's technical reputation vis-à-vis this letter and lend credence to its authenticity. D.W.T.C. Vessey has recently written about the serious doubts he has concerning the authenticity of *Heroides* 9 on the basis of its metrical anomalies and lack of structural integrity²⁾. Although the metrical anomalies will remain an area for discussion, like Howard Jacobson, I do not find them, in and of themselves, convincing arguments against authenticity³⁾. In terms of the structural integrity of the letter, I would like to suggest that *Heroides* 9 does show a coherent unity and is organized on the basis of a developing crescendo of events and emotions. This crescendo is formed from Deianira's response to her life with Hercules and it uses the figure of Iole as a catalyst. The refrain in the final lines of the letter arrests the movement of the crescendo and serves as a method of self-recrimination and persuasion.

Jacobson realized that one of the main difficulties with Vessey's arguments against authenticity was that Vessey interpreted the *Her-*

1) For the major points of the debate see K. Lachmann, *De Ovidii epistolis*, Scripta Minora 2 (1848), 5-61; E. Courtney, *Ovidian and Non-Ovidian Heroides*, BICS 12 (1965), 63-6; D.W.T.C. Vessey, *Notes on Ovid, Heroides 9*, CQ 19 (1969), 349-61 (hereafter cited as Vessey); H. Jacobson, *Ovid's Heroides* (Princeton 1974), 228-42 (hereafter cited as Jacobson).

2) Vessey, p. 354. K. Lachmann (p. 60) and E. Courtney (p. 66) had earlier pointed out the metrical anomalies of lines 131-3 and 141 and their emendation difficulties. Shuckburgh mentions others briefly in his commentary, *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistulae XIII* (London 1896), 165.

3) Jacobson, 231. Jacobson points out that the metrical anomalies all occur in lines in which there is a Greek word, metrical problems, or both. For further support, see H. Dörrie, *Die dichterische Absicht Ovids in den Epistulae heroidum*, A&A 13 (1967), 52.

oides as *suasoriae*, and from this stemmed his arguments concerning the inorganic structure of the poem⁴). Many of the difficulties about the structure of the letter disappear if one does not seek to shape *Heroides* 9 into a false rhetorical form. The more elastic nature of the *Heroides* as a whole allows for considerably more latitude in expressions of time and in the organization of events than a *suasoria* might perhaps allow, and what Vessey sees as inorganic is actually a deliberate arrangement of Deianira's priorities.

The first section of the letter (1-26) begins with Deianira congratulating Hercules on the defeat of Oechalia and chastising him for having succumbed to the charms of Iole (1-2), information which is reported to her by *fama* (3)⁵). Vessey finds it difficult to accept the credence which Deianira gives to *fama* in lines 3-4, given that these rumours concerning Hercules' subjugation to Iole should have been discounted (*infitianda* [4]) by his heroic deeds. Vessey links these lines with Deianira's statement at line 119 that rumours could always be discounted⁶). He also takes exception to the fact that Deianira did not hear of Iole through *fama* in other accounts, but relates that "according to the myth" Deianira received the information from a messenger and from the herald Lichas, before speaking with Iole herself⁷). Although Vessey speaks of "the myth", he does not define what he views as the principal source of *Heroides* 9, nor does he discuss the possibility of a multiplicity of sources. As well, Vessey's insistence that Ovid must follow some variant of "the myth" denies the poet the liberty of independent artistic variation. The omission of the details regarding the provenance of information is to my mind a deliberate ploy on Ovid's part to concentrate

4) Jacobson, 229. For discussion on the genre of the *Heroides*, see E. Oppel, *Ovids Heroides. Studien zur inneren Form und zur Motivation*, Ph.D. diss. (Nürnberg 1968), 82; A.-F. Sabot, *Les Héroides d'Ovide: Préciosité, Rhétorique et Poésie*, ANRW 31.4 (1981), 2553.

5) It is not until line 121 that we learn of the actual arrival of Iole, which has prompted Deianira's recourse to magical love potions and her letter. And it is only at 143 ff., that we realize that Deianira has already sent Nessus' robe to Hercules and that her letter is written in the interim between sending the robe and receiving the news of Hercules' poisoning.

6) Vessey, 352.

7) Vessey, 350.

attention on the power of *fama*⁸⁾ and to reshape the Hercules/Deianira story as he sees fit. I agree with Vessey that the arrival of Iole is the crux of Deianira's grievance, but I submit that Vessey is incorrect when he suggests that at lines 3-4 Deianira is unaware of Iole's almost triumphant arrival on Deianira's doorstep⁹⁾. This letter is nominally written to persuade Hercules to return to Deianira's arms, so it would hardly be good psychological tactics to launch from the start into a vituperative tirade like the proverbial fishwife. Now is not the time to harangue Hercules for sending an *advena paelex* home, since this might have the effect of 1) making Hercules throw away the rest of the letter unread or 2) hardening his heart to any further epistolary appeals¹⁰⁾. Instead, Ovid has placed the reader in the first measure of his slowly developing crescendo. Hercules is first disarmed by congratulations on his victory at Oechalia, and only then is Iole mentioned with an unaggressive *victae*, which in itself is a challenge to Hercules' traditional role as *victor*. The paranomasia of *victorem victae succubuisse*¹¹⁾ is a first attempt to confront and startle Hercules with the realities of his actions: Hercules the hero has somehow been conquered. This is the first of a series of consistent antitheses which Ovid has set up between the past and the present Hercules, and which are used to pointed effect throughout the letter to remind Hercules of the consequences of his amorous actions on his reputation¹²⁾. These antitheses are used to

8) *Fama* occurs at four distinct places in this letter (3, 41, 119, 144), marking significant and reverberating events (S. Viarre, *La rhétorique et l'imagination dans la IX^e Héroïde [Déjanire à Hercule]*, Helmantica 28 (1977), 551. Hereafter cited as Viarre). References to second-hand information (either rumour or a report) abound in this letter (9, 19 f., 21, 27, 74) and the early occurrence at line 3 would suggest the importance of *fama* as a primary source of information to the letter as a whole. Contrast Sophocles *Trachiniae* 248-90, Apollodorus *Bibl.* 2.7.7, and Hyginus *Fabulae* 31, 33-6. For a discussion of the sources of *Her.* 9 see Jacobson, 235-7.

9) Vessey, 351.

10) It is quite usual for the women of the *Heroides* to begin their letters in a cautious and somewhat conciliatory manner. Compare *Her.* 3.1-4; 4.1-6; 6.1-8; 7.1-6; 12.1-4; 13.1-3; 15.1-4; 16.1-10; 18. 1-14; 20. 1-4; 21.1-12.

11) The wordplay of *victorem victae* is a characteristic of this letter. Cp. *vincere*, *vincit* (26); *nubere*, *nube* (32); *victor*, *victo* (70).

12) Viarre has found a similar antithetical order between the past and the present, the real and the unreal (555).

mark the developments of the letter's internal progression and an escalation of tone.

The whole issue of *fama* is, as Vessey suggests, linked to Deianira's generalized statement at 119, *licuit non credere fama*, but it is also dependent upon the importance which *fama* plays in Deianira's life. Generally speaking, for a wife whose husband is often absent (33), *fama* is a source both of information and of anxiety. At this early stage of her letter, Deianira is unwilling to engage battle directly with regard to Hercules' actions. Rather, she introduces the fact of Iole in a rather circuitous fashion, not yet openly admitting her physical presence, but acknowledging her existence with the supposition that Hercules' deeds must surely discount such rumours. The gerundive *infitianda* suggests 1) that Hercules' amorous adventures are usually surpassed by his heroic endeavours, 2) that this does not seem to have occurred in the case of Iole and 3) that Hercules should do something to repair this anomaly¹³). She is providing an opportunity for Hercules to respond with some sort of explanation or rebuttal, which might repair Deianira's peace of mind and re-establish her role as *Herculis uxor*¹⁴). It would be technically unsound for Ovid to establish the case of Iole more definitely at this point, since it would pre-empt any sense of unfolding events in the letter. We are left with a carefully reserved statement: *huic Iolen inposuisse iugum* (6).

Vessey¹⁵) sees a contradiction between Deianira's statement that Hercules succumbed to Iole when nothing else could break him (5-6) and Hercules' (chronologically) earlier subjugation to Omphale (107-8). However, the mention of Iole at line 6 followed by the extended description of the power of Venus over Juno, suggests rather that it was *amor* which first defeated Hercules, and that Iole **and** Omphale figure as the physical manifestations of the power of love¹⁶). It is significant that Ovid has omitted any reference to the

13) The force of obligation, necessity or propriety of the gerundive suggests a usual course of events which has not been upheld.

14) A. Palmer defines Deianira as the wife and legitimate partner of Hercules' glory (*P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides* [repr. Hildesheim 1967], 359-60). See also Jacobson, 239.

15) Vessey, 351.

16) Palmer sees Iole merely as part of the overall subject of the poem, "that Hercules can conquer all things but love" (Palmer, xxi).

tale that Hercules became Omphale's slave as a cure for the disease of madness which caused him to kill Iole's brother Iphitus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.6.2). The absence of this tale suggests that Hercules' sole reason (in Deianira's opinion) for the affair with Omphale was *amor*, which effectively denies Hercules a feasible and honourable excuse for his behaviour.

With line 6 and the introduction of the theme of love, the emotional temperature of the crescendo has increased. *Amor* brings us closer to the heart of Deianira's problems with Hercules and provides the link between Hercules' past and present actions. The distinction between Hercules as *puer* and Hercules as *vir* (24) lies in a pejorative contrast between Hercules' actions before and after the effects of *amor* and forms the substance of Deianira's complaint¹⁷).

In the second section of the letter (27-82), Deianira pauses to situate her own experiences within the stories of Hercules' other exploits (27-48). Her difficulty in maintaining a separate role in the face of other rivals, both of the female and of the monstrous kind, is tacitly acknowledged in the bitter irony of Deianira's words, *At bene nupta feror, quia nominer Herculis uxor* (27). Yet her relationship with Hercules must inevitably involve his associations with other women, his *peregrinos amores* (47), since this is another inescapable element of their marriage. Hercules' reputation is, in part, dependent upon his sexual escapades and so Deianira inevitably finds herself part of this reputation, regardless of whether Hercules' affairs occur-

17) In this section, Vessey points to *laturum est caelum* (17) as another anomaly. Since Deianira does not hear of Hercules' impending death until line 143, he finds it inconceivable that she should anticipate here Hercules' death and apotheosis (352). He remarks that Sophocles "sensibly" does not mention Hercules' apotheosis in the *Trach.*, and that even in the *Met.*, Ovid writes only *nondum erat ille deus* (9.17). It was, of course, not incumbent upon Ovid to follow the same course of events as described by Sophocles, and indeed Ovid is recognized for his different approaches to traditional tales, see Dido in *Her.* 7 and *Met.* 14. It seems to me that the future sense of *laturum est* and *nondum* can be equated. The adverb *nondum* does not deny the impossibility of the event, but suggests that an event is still to come. Similarly, *laturum est* points, not to impossibility, but to probable or likely action. In both cases, Ovid seems to suggest that it would be usual to expect the son of Jupiter to become a god himself, particularly after such a triumphant life. The *laturum est* is therefore not an inconsistency, but an accepted belief on Deianira's (and Ovid's) part. If this assumption shows a lack of *fides* on the poet's part, then it is an omission which is present in both the *Her.* and the *Met.* and cannot be used as an argument against the authenticity of *Her.* 9.

red before or after their marriage. With this extension of the field of reference, the emotional temperature of the letter increases and we move ever closer to the unveiling of the essence of Deianira's letter, the existence of Iole.

Deianira prepares the ground by listing Hercules' earlier misdemeanours (49-82). The reference to Omphale in lines 53-4 is, to my mind, not just tacked on at the end¹⁸), but the last in a series of affairs of increasing significance. Deianira pauses over this affair because it is a concrete example of the contrast which she has been trying to establish between the past and present Hercules. With Omphale, the distinction between Hercules the hero and Hercules the vanquished is abundantly clear, and it allows Ovid a wide open field to develop his temporal and gender antitheses. The tone of the lines suggests that Hercules should feel shame at his past behaviour and that this shame should prompt him to alter his present conduct¹⁹). The affair with Iole has not yet provided Deianira with such excellent fuel. Vessey is quite right when he suggests that "the scene all too soon descends to the comic"²⁰), but I propose that this is not a flaw in the letter, but rather the point of the whole exercise. Hercules does indeed look like a fool, all dressed up like a female servant, and this is exactly what Deianira is trying to tell him. He has shattered his reputation as a fierce and triumphant enemy of evil and replaced it with that of a silly, weak woman²¹). The more ridiculous Deianira can make Hercules look, the more he should feel shame at his actions.

The antithesis continues in the next section of the letter (83-100) as Deianira describes Hercules' past Labours. Vessey decries this passage, saying "Deianira could probably have taken her husband's

18) Vessey, 352.

19) Words such as *recens crimen* (53), *puclit* (59), *ausus es* (63), *puclit* (66), *puclendus* (70), *pigeat* (72), *pertinuissc* (74, 82), *non fugis* (75) and *infelix* (81) reinforce the idea of disgrace.

20) Vessey, 353. Jacobson, 238 recalls Hercules' transformation in Greek mythology from a tragic to a comic figure in the late fifth century and suggests that Ovid was influenced by this trend in his depiction of Hercules and Omphale.

21) I am at a loss to account for Vessey's statement that "the poet is so patently unaware of the need for keeping a fitting tone for this theme," (353) since this presupposes that there is one tone deemed suitable for these letters. This may again be due to Vessey's assumption that these letters are *suasoriae*.

familiarity with these as read"²²), which seems to me to ignore the purpose of these letters as a whole. It is characteristic for the women of the *Heroides* to recount past events²³). The heroines write as much for themselves as for their lovers, and the recounting of events is an effective tool in establishing commonality and responsibility. For Deianira, it is immaterial that Hercules probably remembers his Labours better than she does herself. She is trying to remind him of what he once was, and a list of successful, perilous exploits is one way of doing so. Indeed, the longer the list, the more convincing is Deianira's argument about Hercules' degeneration.

Hercules' Labours are placed between two passages (47-82 and 101-18) which emphasize his degeneration and assumption of female traits. Effectively, the 'masculine' passage is placed between two 'feminine' passages and so suggests the vanquishing and dissipation of the so-called stronger sex by the weaker. This image is summarized in two instances, one in each 'feminine' section. At line 72 Deianira says, *ne pigeat molli succubuisse viro*. The verb *succubuisse* recalls the second line of the letter, and carries with it a pejorative quality of submission. The unusual antithesis of *mollis* and *vir* stresses the outlandish figure which Hercules has become, a mixture of softness and toughness, qualities which are obviously not deemed suitable by Deianira for someone of Hercules' reputation. *Mollis* refers to Hercules' present standing, while *vir* harks back to what Hercules once was. This distinction between past and present is reiterated in the second 'feminine' passage (106-8), in which the hint implied in *mollis vir* is made explicit. The lines itemize a precise list of contrasts between Hercules and Omphale, underscoring the theme of the soft man. So we find *aspera* vs. *molle* (112), *feri victor* vs. *illa tui* (114), *femina tela* (115) vs. *gravem lana ... colum* (116), and the list culminates in the appalled statement: *vidit et in speculo coniugis arma sui* (118)²⁴).

The length of the Omphale passage generally suggests that Deianira was exasperated by Hercules' affair, and the incredulous tone of the passage tends to heighten the emotional crescendo.

22) Vessey, 352.

23) See, for example, Penelope, *Her.* 1.37-46; Dido, *Her.* 7.77-96; Ariadne, *Her.* 10.71-4, 99-110; Medea, *Her.* 12.29-114, 129-32; Hypsipyle, *Her.* 6.9-16, 31-8, 55-70.

24) See also Viarre, 556.

Deianira seems particularly concerned with the subservient role which Hercules played in this relationship and the concomitant divesting of his manhood (as Deianira saw it) epitomized by his mode of dress. Such subordination and cross-dressing affects Hercules' heroic reputation and therefore Deianira's status as the wife of a hero. The fact of the affair, or even that *mater de te quaelibet esse potest* (48) does not seem to concern Deianira as much as Hercules' 'unmanliness'. That appearances are important to her is suggested by the use of *credar* (150) and *videar* (160)²⁵).

This brings us, finally, to the second reference to the power of *fama* and the beginning of a new section (119-42): *Haec tamen audieram; licuit non credere famae*. The words provide a pause in Deianira's crescendo, and the suggestion that perhaps Deianira will once again play deaf as she has so many times before when she has heard of Hercules' amorous escapades. It is striking that Ovid has used the perfect *licuit* at this point. We are about to hear of Iole's arrival, and it is her appearance that prevents Deianira from writing *licet*. This is a decisive turning point in her approach to rumour, since Iole's physical entrance destroys Deianira's comfortable capacity to overlook unwelcome news; she now writes *nec ... licet* (122). This is why she has now turned to magical practices in an attempt to salvage the situation. Desperate times call for desperate measures²⁶).

The briefly arrested crescendo begins once again, cautiously, with the words, *et venit ad sensus mollis ab aure dolor* (120). Although Vessey questions whether *mollis dolor* is "an appropriate description of the hysterical denunciation of the Omphale episode"²⁷), I find none of the hysteria which Vessey sees in this passage. Rather, the phrase echoes the antithesis between softness and toughness established in the previous lines and suggests the insidious and treacherous quality of rumour²⁸). The phrase also serves as a brief warning to the

25) For a similar idea, see Jacobson, 239-42 and Dörrie, *Die dichterische Absicht Ovids in den Epistulae heroidum*, A&A 13 (1967), 51-3.

26) Deianira shows a lack of confidence in her cloak's magical properties. Compare also Medea (*Her.* 12.97-100) and *Met.* 7.134-8, where Medea is so apprehensive about the power of her drugs, that she adds an extra prayer at a crucial moment. Deianira's letter is like Medea's extra prayer.

27) Vessey, 351.

28) Compare Vergil's description of *fama* at *Aen.* 4.173-99; see also Ovid, *Met.* 12.39-63.

reader before Deianira's main attack on Hercules, the arrival of the *advena paelex* (121-2). The possibility of ignoring Hercules' unfaithfulness because of the duplicity of rumours in general proves futile for Deianira in the case of Iole, for this young woman appears *ante ... oculos* and it is therefore impossible to ignore her existence. *Fama*, introduced as a concept in lines 3-4, has taken on real, physical, and so irrefutable, form at line 121. Iole's demeanour and dress, hardly that of a captive²⁹, suggest to Deianira that she might literally be displaced from Hercules' household (131-4). Her physical response to Iole's arrival (she loses her senses, cold runs through her veins, she becomes languid [135-6]) indicates that we have reached the peak of the crescendo. Physical and mental states meet in crisis. The rumour of Hercules' humiliation at the hands of Omphale caused no such reaction, but the appearance of Iole did.

The penultimate section of the letter (143-64), a combination of five-line verses and a one-line refrain³⁰, sustains the crescendo as Deianira describes, in dramatic flashes, Hercules' battles with Achelous and Nessus (137-42). Her account is interrupted at a critical juncture, just before she tells of Nessus' gift of the love potion and her trusting acceptance of it. We read, instead, of the news of Hercules' torment on Mount Oeta. The words *scribenti nuntia venit / fama virum tunicae tae perire meae* (143-4), are indeed, as Courtney suggests, rather flat, but they are perhaps not so astonishing as he has concluded³¹. The words suggest the flatness of absolute despair and hopelessness. The emphatic final position of *meae* identifies Deianira's sense of culpability and the cause of her despair. She accepts this rumour and believes its authenticity because she herself had sent the cloak. The cloak, like Iole, is the tangible reality of *fama*. Unable to openly confess her recourse to magic to her husband, Deianira tortures herself with guilt and cries her despair at line 145. From being an intangible element which can be ignored at will,

29) Iole parades (123-4) into the city with her hair (probably) attractively arranged (*nec ... incultis ... capillis* [125]), happy or at least content (*nec ... decete* [125-6]; I accept van Lennep and Palmer's emendation of *tegente* to *decete*), resplendent in gold (127), just as Hercules *victor* was dressed in Phrygia, and proud of her victorious actions (129).

30) The first verse/refrain combination is an exception, since it contains only three lines (143-5) before the refrain appears (146).

31) E. Courtney, *Ovidian and Non-Ovidian Heroines*, BICS 12 (1965), 63.

fama becomes an unavoidable material element with the arrival of Iole, and finally a destructive element through Deianira's own innocent efforts. Seen in this manner, *fama* then becomes an organizing and contributing feature of the crescendo of emotions in *Heroides* 9.

The refrain draws attention to Deianira's despair (146, 158, 164), highlights her anguish and inability to act³²), and stands as her response to an event which effectively nullifies her epistolary efforts to regain her husband's interest. This echoing of self-recrimination demonstrates Deianira's frantic anxiety to punish herself for her temerity. She sees herself as *impia* and the position of *impia* as the first word in each refrain further emphasizes her obsession with her guilt³³). This guilt is thematically and psychologically linked to death by the last-place position of *mori* and points the way to Deianira's suicide³⁴). That she continuously returns to the same thought suggests her obsession with *impietas* and her inability to find any other end to her pain, and she seems to find strength to accomplish her resolution by her thrice-repeated exhortation. Ovid has used the refrain as a method of allowing him to strengthen his picture of a Deianira for whom her own reputation and the reputation of her household is paramount. Deianira, the *Herculis uxor*, sees her reputation crumbling around her as she becomes known as the living *sceleris tanti causa* (148). She determines that her only means of regaining her credibility as Hercules' wife is by her death (150). Her bridal bed, which she had once held up to Hercules as a symbol of pride (137-8), has now become the source of destruction because of her acceptance of the centaur's potion (159-63). She must admit her guilty participation in Hercules' torment, no matter how innocently she had conceived her plan, or under what misapprehension or compulsion she had acted³⁵). Her guilt is even more bitter because

32) F. Spoth, *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* (Munich 1992), 95.

33) It is interesting to note that *Her.* 9 is the only letter in which *impius* refers directly to an individual. All other references (7.129, 132; 10.100; 14.26) refer to hands, land and incense respectively. This may then indicate Ovid's attempt to underscore Deianira's direct condemnation of herself and her actions.

34) See also Viarre, 554.

35) Spoth has also recognized the contradiction between the external conception of Deianira and her own image (F. Spoth, *Ovids Heroides als Elegien* [Munich 1992], 95). It is when these two pictures collide at Hercules' poisoning that Deianira decides to commit suicide.

Deianira can no longer excuse her fault to Hercules. All that is left is to see herself as part of a doomed family (151-7). Her farewell to her family and to her son Hyllus becomes then a list of those who have been afflicted by the madness of love. The cessation of the refrain denotes that Deianira has accepted her self-imposed task and that death is at hand. We are confronted with a second, sudden climax as the letter ends with this abrupt farewell.

In defence of Ovid's use of a refrain, Jacobson suggests that Ovid himself would have been more likely to have ventured on such a daring innovation than an imitator, and that this innovation reflects an awareness of the static nature of the letter form³⁶). Spoth identifies the refrain not only as a technique of delay, but also as a division between action which has already occurred (*feci* 145) and that which has only been decided (suicide)³⁷). By combining the *fama* of Hercules' demise with a refrain, Ovid has emphasized the overwhelming effect of the report on Deianira's life. With her innocent action, her life has changed irrevocably and she can no longer look to Hercules' past actions as the cause of her distress. The abruptness of the refrain emphasizes the breach which has occurred and the sharp division which exists between the past and the present. The repetitious nature of the refrain also maintains the emotional level of the final lines of the letter at the same pitch, since the reader is continually returned to the starting point of the crisis. Deianira's confession of Nessus' dying words (162), which she had intended to admit to Hercules after line 142 of her letter, now reads as a dismal realization of Nessus' treachery. Similarly, Deianira's final farewell to her family, husband and son continues the sense of desolation without any extraordinary sense of outrage or grief. Her

36) Jacobson, 229. Viarre points to the presence of a refrain in *Amores* 1.6, so although the refrain is unparalleled in the *Heroides*, its existence in Ovidian poetry is not unknown (Viarre, 554). Theocritus 1 and 2, Vergil *Eclogue* 8, Catullus 61 and 62 are evidence of some prior knowledge of the technique. J.C. McKeown, on *Amores* 1.6.23-4, emphasizes the use of refrains in *komoi* and the effect of magical incantations. He suggests that Ovid had used the refrain to "create an impression of time passing, and to emphasise Ovid's desperation and helplessness." (*Ovid: Amores*, II [Leeds 1989], 135-6). Although the passage of time is perhaps not completely appropriate in *Her.* 9, the feeling of desperation and helplessness is identical as is the theme of magic.

37) F. Spoth, *Ovid's Heroides als Elegien* (Munich 1992), 95.

energies had been used to defend herself and to castigate Hercules, and so when the positions are reversed, she does not seem to find the need or the heart to fight.

Heroides 9 displays its coherence through Deianira's emotional responses which, although triggered by Iole's arrival, seem to have their roots in Hercules' early involvements with other female figures. She uses these figures as preparation for her main attack on Iole, who then also becomes an unwitting partner (with Hercules himself) in the events leading to Hercules' death. The refrain of her letter stands as a measure of Deianira's emotional temperature, controlling and moderating her final words. Without this control, the crescendo of the letter would need to increase beyond believable or logical bounds in order to suggest a contrast between Deianira's disturbance at the arrival of Iole and her greater agitation at the advent of the infamous *nuntia fama*. Ovid has chosen to solve this dilemma by using a refrain, a daring and innovative attempt to play with the norms of the epistolary form.

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