

Gary Cunningham
HPLA 7004
Non-Assessed Assignment 4
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Translation, *Heroides* 10. 1-12

*1 Mitius inueni quam te genus omne ferarum;
credita non ulli quam tibi peius eram.
3 quae legis, ex illo, Theseu, tibi litore mitto
unde tuam sine me vela tulere ratem.
5 in quo me somnusque meus male prodidit et tu,
per facinus somnis insidiate meis.
7 tempus erat, uitrea quo primum terra pruina
spargitur et tectae fronde queruntur aues;
9 incertum vigilans ac somno languida moui
Thesea prensuras semisupina manus.
11 nullus erat! referoque manus iterumque retempto,
perque torum moueo bracchia: nullus erat!*

1 I have encountered all kinds of wild beasts tamer than you;

In none of them was I less trusting than of you.

3 What you read Theseus, I send to you from the shore,

from whence sails carried your ship without me.

5 On which my sleep and you wickedly betray me,

ambushing my sleep through your villainy.

7-8 There was a time when the first glassy frost spread out upon the land

and the birds grieved as the green land was covered;

9 I stirred half awake and with sluggish sleep,

reclining, I seize Theseus with my hands.

11 There was no one! I bring back my hand to try a second time,

and move my arm across the bed. There was no one!

Commentary. *Heroides* 10.119-30

119 *Ergo ego nec lacrimas matris moritura uidebo*
 nec, mea qui digitis lumina condant, erit?
121 *spiritus infelix peregrinas ibit in auras,*
 nec positos artus unguet amica manus?
123 *ossa superstabunt uolucres inhumata marinae?*
 haec sunt officiis digna sepulcra meis?
125 *ibis Cecropios portus, patriaque receptus,*
 cum steteris urbis celsus in ore tuae
127 *et bene narraris letum taurique uirique*
 sectaque per dubias saxea tecta uias;
129 *me quoque narrato sola tellure relictam;*
 non ego sum titulis subripienda tuis.

In this passage from Ovid's *Heroides* X, Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, writes to her love Theseus, as he has just departed the island of Naxos without her. It is altogether unclear as to how Ariadne believes her letter will get into Theseus' hands since she is on a deserted island, and Theseus is sailing off, probably for his home in Athens. Having left her home on the island of Crete, Ariadne is now completely alone. The epistle contains frequent allusions to Catullus' sixty-fourth poem, in which Ariadne and Theseus appear in the ecphrasis of the tapestry on the wedding couch of Thetis and Peleus.

The first part of this text focuses largely on Ariadne's lament about being left to die alone. She complains to Theseus that she shall never see her mother again, and will die on Naxos with no one to shut her eyes upon her death (*'Ergo ego nec lacrimas matris moritura uidebo, nec, mea qui digitis lumina condant, erit?'*) (119-20). Ovid uses a bit of irony here in that Ariadne voluntarily left her family behind to go away with Theseus to Athens. She could not have expected to return to Crete, having taken part in Theseus' killing of the Minotaur, a direct act of defiance against her father. Ovid uses the word *'lumina,'* typically meaning a light,

daylight, or a torch, to refer to Ariadne's eyes. We could think of her feeling as though she might already be slipping into darkness as Theseus disappears over the horizon.

At 121, Ovid's Ariadne uses imagery when writing, '*spiritus infelix peregrinas ibit in auras,*' to convey her sorrow at the thought of her spirit escaping from her, being caught up by the winds. The winds are *peregrinas* because she is abandoned here on Naxos, a strange and deserted island, far from her home. Her spirit is *infelix*, which indicates her unhappiness, but also alludes to the barrenness of the island on which she is marooned.

A particularly interesting verse from the epistle is Ariadne's expressed disappointment, phrased in the form of a question, that no familiar hands will be there to anoint her corpse, '*nec positos artus unguet amica manus?*' (122). Knox points out the anachronism here since Ariadne, a character from the archaic Greek world, seems to expect a typically Roman funeral if she were back home on Crete.¹ She continues to vent her disappointment over her impending lack of proper burial writing, '*ossa superstabunt uolucres inhumata marinae?*' (123). We might suppose she has images of these marine birds swooping down to pick the flesh off her unburied bones.

This portion of the epistle concludes with Ariadne imagining that Theseus will tell of his exploits upon arriving back in Athens. She conveys a sense of disdain for Theseus and the Athenians as she says, '*cum steteris turbae celsus in ore tuae.*' Ovid's use of *turbae* could be to convey Ariadne's view of the Athenians as a mob of common people, whereas she is the daughter of a king, descended from the gods.

¹ Know 1995: 254.

References

Ancient Sources

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