GENDERED GRIEF:

THE RHETORIC OF RITUAL LAMENTATION IN *HEROIDES* X

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Introduction

My purpose in this paper is to consider *Heroides* X in the context of funeral elegy and lamentation ritual in the ancient world. The allusive language employed in the *Heroides* has been analyzed many times in regards to Ovid's rhetorical education and the conventions of love elegy; however, this linguistic strategy has not been sufficiently investigated in regards to the many customs of mourning featured throughout the tenth epistle. I will establish the conventions of funerary ritual evident throughout *Heroides* X; the thematic contrast associated with ancient lamentation between past community and present isolation that Ariadne emphasizes in her narration; and the alternating inertial and hysterical behaviors that grip Ariadne, relating once again to Greco-Roman funeral tradition. In order to establish a framework for this analysis, I will first provide some context about Ovid and his sources for *Heroides* X.

Ovid's *Heroides* ("The Heroines") is a collection of verse epistles in elegiac couplets written from the perspective of individual mythological women to the men who have abandoned them. This collection of poems is unique among surviving ancient elegy for combining features from several genres of literature and oratory: Roman love elegy and elegiac verse, of course, but also dramatic monologues; rhetorical proofs ("*sententiae*"); *ethopoeia*, a Greek rhetorical term for impersonating someone else's character; and *suasoriae,* exercises taught in Roman schools in which students write speeches from the perspective of historical or mythological figures. As Peter Knox, a recent editor of the collection, puts it, *Heroides* "may represent the most interesting example in Roman poetry of innovation in genre."[1]

[1] Knox 1995: 15.

Born on March 20, 43 BC, Publius Ovidius Naso grew up in a wealthy household and studied rhetoric with famous professors in Rome, presumably in order to become a lawyer and perhaps eventually obtain high public office. To his father's disappointment, Ovid turned to poetry. The *Heroides* were written between 20 BC and AD 2, a period prior to his mature works, in which Ovid mainly wrote elegy. During the last ten years of his life (AD 8-17/18), Ovid was exiled by the emperor Augustus and lived on the Black Sea. It was during this time that he wrote some autobiographical poetry, from which modern Classicists draw their knowledge of much of Ovid's biography.[2]

All of Ovid's *Heroides* are based on mythology and texts that were widely known in Augustan-era Rome. *Heroides* X, a letter from Ariadne to Theseus, has roots in Hesiod and Homer. Hesiod wrote that Theseus abandoned Ariadne while she slept on Naxos, where Dionysus discovered her.[3] In Book 18 of the *Iliad,* Ariadne is mentioned as a figure on Akhilles's shield.[4] All ancient myths exist in multiple iterations, but the most important features of the myth surrounding Ariadne, as Ovid's audience would have understood them, are as follows: Ariadne's father, King Minos of Crete, breaks an oath to Poseidon. As punishment, his wife is cursed and falls deeply in love with a bull. Their mating results in the horrifying Minotaur, a monstrous half-man half-bull, to whom fourteen Athenians per year (seven boys and seven girls) are sacrificed as compensation for the murder of Minos' son Androgeus.[5]

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[2] *Ibid*. 2-3.
[3] Hes. *Th.* 949.
[4] Hom. *Il.* XVIII.590-92.
[5] Apollod. 3.1.3-.4; 3.15.8.

Theseus, a Greek warrior, volunteers as an offering in order to kill the Minotaur.[6] Ariadne falls in love with Theseus and chooses to assist him in his quest, offering Theseus a thread that allows his escape from the complex labyrinth that houses the Minotaur.[7] In aiding Theseus, Ariadne betrays her father and her homeland. Ariadne and Theseus escape to the island of Naxos, planning to marry in Athens; instead, Theseus leaves her on Naxos without a ship or anywhere to flee. Most versions of Ariadne's story end with the god Dionysus finding her on Naxos and making her his bride, and some also include her consequent deification.[8]

In addition to being a version of the Ariadne myth, most scholars understand *Heroides* X to be a direct response to Catullus 64, a famous poem on the same subject.[9] This direct connection is evident in several specific passages where Ovid's language echoes Catullus'. For instance, Ariadne in Ovid recounts running along the shore of Naxos, calling out Theseus' name: *interea toto clamanti litore, Theseu!* (21) ("all the while [I shouted] along the whole shore, 'Theseus!'").[10] This is clearly a reinterpretation of the same scene in Catullus 64.124-5: *saepe illam perhibent ardenti corde furentem / clarisonas imo fudisse e pectore voces* ("And oft, so they say, she, raving with a burning

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[6] Most ancient sources agree that Theseus volunteered for this dangerous task (see Eustathius on Hom. *Od.* xi320, p. 1688; Scholiast on Hom. *Od.* xi.322, and II. xviii.590; Hyginus, *Fab.* 41; Lactantius Placidus on Statius, *Achill.* 192.) However, a Scholiast on Hom. *II.* 118.590 speaks as if Theseus had been chosen by lot, and according to Hellanicus, cited by Plut. *Thes.* 17, Minos traveled to Athens and chose the victims himself.

[7] Apollod. *Epit*. 1.8.

[8] In *Fasti,* a later work by Ovid, he includes a section about Ariadne after she has been abandoned by Theseus. In *Fasti,* Ovid writes about Dionysus' rescue of Ariadne, her abandonment by Dionysus, and Ariadne's transformation into a star.

[9] Ferguson 1960: 344.

[10] The Latin text is from *Heroides: Select Epistles* compiled by Peter E. Knox (1995). All translations of Ovid are my own, phrased to elicit literal and grammatical understanding.

heart, poured out clarion cries from the depths of her bosom").[11] The cries that Catullus describes are expressed in Ovid's poem as a direct quotation by Ariadne (*'Theseu!'),* thus the similar language and phrasing in these two poems provides clear evidence that Ovid refers to Catullus in *Heroides* X. However, as I shall show below, Ovid's decisions to use elegiac verse and the use of first person, neither of which are employed by Catullus, are the primary features that allow for an analysis of *Heroides* X within the context of lamentation rituals. Therefore, my paper will largely avoid discussions of Catullus' influence on *Heroides X.*

Ovid's epistle, written in Ariadne's voice, transports us to the moment of her desertion on Naxos. Through Ariadne's telling of her own experience, Ovid both invites a sincere empathetic response and plays an intellectual game involving genre. Ovid's educated audience would have expected such multiple layers, and attempting to identify those upon which this audience would have interpreted *Heroides* X enables a deeper appreciation of Ovid's masterful work. Accordingly, I will argue in what follows that *Heroides* X functions both as an erotic love poem and as a funerary lament by Ariadne for her own death, the latter of which is apparent through Ovid's knowing use of gendered conventions of mourning. Focusing on this under-explored aspect reveals a further dimension of rhetorical intricacy to the text, allowing the elegiac form, Ariadne's experience and description of her abandonment, the emphasized contrast between untroubled past and miserable present, and Ariadne's shifting between inertia and hysteria to be understood as informed by Greco-Roman lamentation rituals.

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[11] Knox 1995: 238.

I. Conventions of Funerary Lament in *Heroides* X

In order to understand how *Heroides* X functions as a funerary lament both by and for Ariadne, we must first identify the ways in which the poem references mourning rituals. Ovid accomplishes this through specific references to gendered conventions of mourning and overarching themes that connote lamentation. Most directly, the poem includes an actual funeral scene, which I will treat first. This sepulchral passage, in which Ariadne envisions her death and the lack of burial ceremony that she will receive, is extremely important in establishing Ovid's interest in archly referencing and mimicking funeral rituals. It appears near the end of the epistle, and therefore requires a brief overview of the hundred plus lines that precede it.

Ariadne begins by providing the context of the epistle: *quae legis, ex illo, Theseu, tibi litore mitto, / unde tuam sine me vela tulere ratem* (3-4), ("These things that you read, Theseus, I send to you from that shore / from where your sails carried your raft without me"). She then proceeds to describe waking up on the morning after Theseus abandoned her, running along the shore and, as seen, screaming his name. Ariadne further recounts climbing a cliff and seeing his ship sail away until it disappears completely from view. Afterwards, she returns in tears to the bed they once shared.

It is here that Ariadne begins imagining her fate, which will inevitably include her lonely death on the island. Ariadne seems regretful of her own actions that led her to betray her family and have left her stranded, and she is angry at Theseus for leaving her after all that she has done for him (most notably, providing him with an escape route after he slays the Minotaur). Ariadne states multiple times that she does not deserve her fate,

and places blame on every other conceivable object, animate or inamate:[12] *in me iurarunt somnus ventusque fidesque; / prodita sum causis una puella tribus* (“sleep, and winds, and his vow have conspired against me; one girl, I was betrayed by three causes, 117-8”). It is a pathetic and morose expression of her truly dismal situation.

Directly following this statement is the section in which Ariadne imagines her own funeral, where she indicates that no one will be present to mourn her. It is the only time that funerals are mentioned explicitly:

> *Ergo ego nec lacrimas matris moritura videbo,*
> *nec, mea qui digitis lumina condat, erit?*
> *spiritus infelix peregrinas ibit in auras,*
> *nec positos artus unguet amica manus?*
> *ossa superstabunt volucres inhumata marinae?*
> *haec sunt officiis digna sepulcra meis?*
>
> And therefore will I, who am about to die, not see the tears of my mother,
> nor will there be someone there to close my eyes with their fingers?
> Will my unhappy spirit go into foreign winds,
> and will no friendly hands anoint my arranged joints?
> Will sea birds stand over my exposed bones?
> Is this tomb worthy of my services? (119-24)

As Ariadne considers this lack of a proper burial, her questions become increasingly distraught as does the poem’s pacing, her questions moving from occupying a couplet to individual lines. Her final question leaps from the striking, morbid image of birds standing over her body to the decidedly philosophical reflection: do I deserve my fate? According to Knox, this line, beginning as an abstract plea, is ironized by the simple fact that Ariadne is plainly without any physical grave.[13]

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[12] Examples include lines 91-2, 117-8, 141-5, and 149-50.
[13] Knox 1995: 255.

In addition to imagining and detailing a funeral scene, Ariadne also processes her grief in funerary terms, focusing on specific anxieties that have to do with her absence of a funeral: that her mother will not be present (119), that her eyes will not be closed (120), and that her bones will not be annointed (121). In this way, Ariadne channels her anguish (stemming from her abandoment by Theseus, the betrayal of her family, and her grim situation) into a fear of improper burial and a lack of mourners. Catullus' Ariadne also pictures her own funeral and expresses the same fear that she will die alone and unburied. However, what occupies one line in Catullus' poem—*neque iniacta tumulabor mortua terra* ("dead, I will not even be buried, no earth thrown on me")—is expanded into an entire scene in Ovid's epistle, emphasizing the lack of mourners.

The fear of an improper burial, mentioned casually in Catullus 64 and developed further in *Heroides* X, reflects the common idea in antiquity that the inhumation of the body is what allows the spirit rest after death.[14] In *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition,* an investigation into funerary practices of Ancient and Modern Greece, Margaret Alexiou emphasizes that dying involved "the struggle of the soul to break loose", or ψυχορραγεῖν.[15] The lack of a decorous burial prevents this process, condemning the soul to a state of eternal unrest. The importance of funeral ceremony and the profound consequences of dying without mourners is demonstrated in many ancient literary sources: for instance, in Book XI of the *Odyssey,* Elpenor drunkenly falls from a rooftop and goes unnoticed until he visits Odysseus as a spirit and admonishes him:

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[14] *Ibid*. 254.

[15] Alexiou 1974: 4. Greek funeral ritual is an appropriate lens through which to analyze *Heroides* X, as the myth of Ariadne (and Ariadne herself) is Greek. Furthermore, many Greek conventions of mourning are present in Ancient Rome.

> *μή μ' ἄκλαυτον ἄθαπτον ἰὼν ὄπιθεν καταλείπειν,*
> *νοσφισθείς, μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνιμα γένωμαι.*
>
> Don't abandon me, don't leave me behind, unwept and unburied,
> lest I become a visitation upon you from the gods.[16] (*Od.* 11.72-3)

As a spirit, Elpenor wishes for burial to conclude his attachment to the material world.

In addition to situations where there was no burial, the process of the soul breaking loose could be impeded if the deceased had broken a vow or if familial responsibilities were left unresolved.[17] Ariadne certainly falls into this category as well, as she betrayed her family and her home, the kingdom of Crete, in helping Theseus. Guilt, represented by her "unhappy spirit," would thus explain Ariadne asking about her mother's hands. This is otherwise a logically incoherent statement, since Ariadne's mother would not be present at her funeral whether or not Theseus had left her alone on Naxos. Ariadne's inability to receive a proper funeral, which prevents her soul's peaceful migration, is a result of her betrayal of her family and homeland as much as her abandonment on Naxos. She seems powerless in her regret over this disloyalty and has no means in which to alter her fate.

Worse for Ariadne even than a lack of proper burial and mourners is the possibility of postmortem disfigurement, evident from the mention of sea birds standing over her bones. Physical mistreatment of the dead in Ancient Greece was believed to be far more than a bad omen: it was a monstrous act that would practically guarantee eternal anguish for the mistreated corpse. In Book 22 of the *Iliad*, the famed Trojan warrior Hektor loses his life to Akhilles. Prior to their combat, Hektor begs Akhilles not to

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[16] Translation of Margaret Alexiou.
[17] Alexiou 1974: 5.

mistreat his body, but shockingly, Akhilles refuses: "*οὐδ᾽ ὧς σέ γε πότνια μήτηρ / ἐνθεμένη λεχέεσσι γοήσεται ὃν τέκεν αὐτή, / ἀλλὰ κύνες τε καὶ οἰωνοὶ κατὰ πάντα δάσονται.*" ("'…not even so shall thy queenly mother lay thee on a bier and make lament for thee, the son herself did bear, but dogs and birds shall devour thee utterly'" *Il.* 22.352-4).[18] Once Hektor is dead, Akhilles slits Hektor's heels, binds them to his chariot, and abuses his body, dragging Hektor through his camp for twelve days. Aphrodite and Apollo protect Hektor's body during these twelve days, but eventually can no longer stand to watch, and send two messengers to seize possession of Hektor's body. The horror of the gods in response to Akhilles' actions provide insight into how unspeakable a deed this was.

The line in which Ariadne expresses a fear of sea birds standing over her exposed bones also recalls earlier passages in the epistle, further highlighting her dread of postmortem mutilation. This is most prominent in line 96: *destituor rabidis praeda cibusque feris* ("I am abandoned as prize and food for wild animals"). But though her fate may be sealed— her soul may struggle eternally and wild animals may eat her body— she informs Theseus in the very first line of the letter: *mitius inveni quam te genus omne ferarum* (1), ("kinder than you I have found every type of wild animal"). Ariadne is aware that her own actions have led to a death without ceremony, but it is Theseus's betrayal that led her to a death truly unbefitting of her once royal status and of her kindness: an anonymous skeleton, known only to the beasts that prepare to devour her corpse.

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[18] Translation of A.T. Murray.

Beyond the funeral passage, Ovid makes several obvious allusions to Greek funerary practices throughout the epistle: Ariadne describes beating her breasts (16, 37-8, 146), tearing out her hair (17), and frantically screaming and crying (21, 55, 138, 148), to name several of the most extreme examples that are all part of documented funerary ritual in Ancient Greece.[19] Through these clear references to funerary rituals, Ovid suggests an interpretation of the entire epistle as a ritual lament. In doing so, we are able to understand Ariadne's grief to be performing two roles that Alexiou sees as central to traditional lamentation:

> The close connection between ritual and lamentation… suggests that the traditional lament for the dead fulfils a dual function: objectively, it is designed to honour and appease the dead, while subjectively, it gives expression to a wide range of conflicting emotions.[20]

If we understand Ariadne as mourner, this quote describes precisely what Ariadne attempts to do throughout the epistle. First, Ariadne desperately wants to honor and appease herself and her soul through proper funeral rituals, but is unable to do this to any level of satisfaction. Second, the letter is clearly a vehicle for Ariadne to express her many opposing emotions, which span from terror: *conterrita surgo* (13: "I arose, terrified"), to extreme sadness: *incumbo, lacrimisque toro manante profusis* (55: "I lie, the bed drenched with my pouring tears") to angry, cynical humor: *nec pater est Aegus, nec tu Pittheidos Aethrae / filius; auctores saxa fretumque tui!* (131-32: "Your father isn't Aegus, and you are not the son of Aethra, daughter of Pittheus, / the creators of you are rocks and fjords!")[21]

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[19] Alexiou 1974: 6-8.
[20] *Ibid*. 55.
[21] Spentzou addresses these emotional reversals in *Readers and Writers in Ovid's Heroides* throughout the chapter "The Heroines in the Chora of Writing".

More specifically, many of Ariadne's actions fit gendered conventions of lamentation present in both Ancient Greece and Rome. The actions already mentioned (screaming, crying, beating breasts, tearing hair) indicate the type of frenzied motions that were specific to female mourning. Thus, for Alexiou:

> The ritual formality of the men, who enter in procession… with their right arm raised in a uniform gesture, contrasts sharply with the wild ecstasy of the women, who stand round the bier in varying attitudes and postures… Most frequently both hands are raised above the head, sometimes beating the head and visibly pulling at their loosened hair.[22]

In lines 33-38, Ariadne describes grief that galvanizes her in a similarly animated way:

> *nec languere diu patitur dolor; excitor illo,*
> *excitor et summa Thesea voce voco.*
> *'quo fugis?' exclamo; 'scelerate ruertere Theseu!*
> *flecte ratem! numerum non habet illa suum!'*
> *haec ego: quod voci deerat, plangore replebam.*
> *verbera cum verbis mixta fuere meis.*
>
> But grief did not allow me to feel languid for a long time; it rouses me
> to call for Theseus at the top of my voice.
> "To where do you flee?' I shout; 'turn around, wicked Theseus!
> Turn your ship around! She does not have her full crew!"
> Thus I called; what I lacked in my voice I supplied by beating my breast.
> The lashes I gave myself were mixed with my words. (33-38)

This passage is equal parts devastating and humorous, as Ariadne suggests that Theseus left her out of simple forgetfulness. Comical, too, is the wordplay present in the phrase *verbera cum verbis* ("lashes with words", an untranslatable pun), Ariadne's ironic description of her own frantic behavior. Ariadne's cries and strikes are literally "mixed," and the paired words accentuate this connection to the point that the words and concepts are themselves confused.[23] For all the wordplay and gallows humor, though, Ariadne is

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[22] *Ibid*. 6.
[23] Knox 1995: 240-41. Later in *Heroides* X, Ariadne uses a similar figure of speech: *mora mortis* ("delay of death") links the idea of waiting with the end of her own life.

clearly aware that Theseus abandoned her, and her description of grief has a distinctly female and funerary character. The description of anguish spurring her to action is clearly reminiscent of the ecstasy Alexiou describes in Greek female mourning; as is, especially, Ariadne's account of beating her breast.

There are also subtler references to women's roles in funerary practice, as well as overarching themes throughout the epistle that suggest female mourning. For instance, in line 137, Ariadne demands that Theseus look at her hair *demissos lugentis more capillos* "that is let down by the custom of mourning," or as Knox translates *lugentis more,* "like one in mourning."[24] This convention is specific to women, at least in Ovid's time: it was customary in the Augustan period for men to wear their hair short.[25]

Additionally, there are two lines in the epistle that connect to a specific role that women performed in Ancient Greek funerals when their male relatives died, noteworthy despite the fact that Theseus is not dead or dying. First, Ariadne poses the question: *quid vetat et gladios per latus ire meum?* ("and who prevents even swords to go through my side?" 88) indicating that the protection once guaranteed by Theseus is gone. Without him, Ariadne claims, strangers could simply kill her. Similarly, several lines later, Ariadne claims that *multa mihi terrae, multa minantur aquae* ("many things on land and sea threaten me" 94). These pathetic appeals link Ariadne to a frequent sepulchral Greek practice that Alexiou documents:

> It was common in the ancient lament for the mother, sister or wife to complain to the dead of the hope and comfort of which his death deprived her, and the wretched prospect of her old age without his protection.[26]

[24] Knox 1995: 255.
[25] Sherrow 2006: 333.
[26] Alexiou 1974: 193.

Ariadne does not communicate a belief that Theseus will die in the near future, but clearly expresses her distress that Theseus is not around to protect her. She is scared and alone, frightened of imaginary dangers that did not concern her when Theseus was present to keep her from harm. Despite the ambiguity in regards to who is being mourned, or the possible contradictions thereof, these lines are further evidence of female mourning present in *Heroides* X.

The sequence of events in Greek funerals generally occurred as follows: "First the eyes and mouth were closed by the next of kin, and the body was washed, anointed and dressed by the women of the house, usually in white".[27] This provides context for another symbolic moment that alludes to funerals in *Heroides* X: the *candida … velamina* ("white cloth", 41) that Ariadne uses to gesture to Theseus. Therefore, the white cloth implies funeral attire and Ariadne's lack of such clothing. Moreover, although it is not mentioned in Ovid's version of the myth, Theseus forgets to raise a white sheet on his journey home, causing his father to believe that Theseus is dead and subsequently kill himself. Through these references to Theseus' father and funerary traditions, Ovid's mention of the white cloth accentuates associations with death, Ariadne's (lack of) funeral attire, and her symbolic surrender to death and the island.

The history of elegiac verse makes the reading of *Heroides* X based in Greco-Roman funerary ritual more compelling. In the ancient world, elegiac verse— alternating lines of hexameter and pentameter— was widely thought to have descended from lamentation rituals, and was thereby associated with death and mourning.[28] An example

[27] *Ibid*. 5.
[28] *Ibid*. 104.

of the connection presents itself in Euripides' *Andromache*, in which the title character mourns the loss of her husband, Hektor. Andromache does this by singing a mournful song, composed in elegiac meter; here lamentation and elegy exist in perfect union.[29]

Furthermore, there are many surviving gravestones with elegiac epigrams, a further connection between elegiac poetry and death.[30] Ovid and his audience would have been highly aware of both associations, sepulchral and erotic. This allows for an interpretation of *Heroides* X based in ancient funeral traditions, and all the more so when combined with the funeral scene and copious allusions to funeral ritual throughout the poem discussed above.

II. Past Union and Present Isolation in *Heroides* X

Female funerary lamentation in ancient Greece often included sections centered around the disparity between past and present. *Heroides* X's frequent juxtaposition of Ariadne's current isolation to an earlier, happy state of union with Theseus intentionally evokes funerary lament through creating such a contrast. Through the repeated use of *ambo, duo/duos, sola,* and the prefix *semi-*, Ariadne conveys a notion of herself and Theseus as two parts of a now divided whole. In her description of the island, Ariadne builds a similar contrast, at first relating pleasant details; soon, though, she transitions into an account of Naxos as barren and threatening, inhabited only by creatures that mean her harm. In these passages, Ariadne draws connections between Theseus and the island, emphasizing her current isolation from him. Repeated mention of pairs and absence, I will argue, function both as a tool for Ariadne to disgrace Theseus and as a network of

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[29] Nagy 2010: 26-27.
[30] Alexiou 1974: 105-6.

allusions for Ovid that further conjures funereal imagery through lament's language comparing present and past.

Of Ovid's heroines, Ariadne is perhaps the most profoundly isolated. As M. Catherine Bolton has argued, Ariadne is utterly alone in three distinct ways: she is without Theseus, without her family, and without any other human life on the island.[31] Throughout the epistle, Ariadne constantly refers to these multiple ways that she is alone. In line 4, Ariadne stresses that Theseus sailed away *sine me*, ("without me"); in line 59, *vacat insulta cultu* ("the island is devoid of inhabitants"), and in line 61, the phrase *navita nusquam* ("nowhere a sailor") again underlines the lack of human habitation or sailors. This is also true in line 119 when Ariadne imagines her funeral: *ergo ego nec lacrimas matris moritura videbo* ("and therefore will I, who am about to die, not see the tears of my mother"). Yet, more than simply Ariadne's frequent mention of her solitary state, Bolton argues that it is Ovid's specific use of *sola* ("alone") that emphasizes this separation. *Sola* is used three times throughout the epistle, twice in reference to Ariadne and once in describing the island.[32] The use of this word connects Ariadne's separation from Theseus to the barrenness of Naxos, drawing attention to Ariadne's lack of ability to escape her solitary imprisonment.

In a particularly striking passage, *sola* is juxtaposted with *ambo* ("together") and *duo* ("two"), both referring to Ariadne and Theseus, which further emphasizes Ariadne's isolation by suggesting a time when Ariadne and Theseus were together. After Ariadne has described seeing Theseus's ship disappear, she laments:

saepe torum repeto, qui nos acceperat ***ambos,***

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[31] Bolton 1994: 45.
[32] *Ibid*. 42. "*Sola"* appears in lines 47, 59, and 129.

> *sed non acceptos exhibiturus erat,*
> *et tua, quae possum, pro te vestigia tango*
> *strataque quae membris intepuere tuis.*
> *incumbo, lacrimisque toro manante profusis*
> *'pressimus', exclamo, 'te* ***duo****: redde* ***duos****!*
> *venimus huc* ***ambo****; cur non discemus* ***ambo****?*
> *perfide, pars nostri, lectule, maior ubi est?'*
> *quid faciam? quid* ***sola*** *ferar?...*
>
> Often I return to the bed which accepted us **together**,
> but was never going to show us together again,
> and I touch the remnants of you, which is all I am able to touch instead of you,
> and the blankets that were warmed by your limbs.
> I lie, the bed drenched with my pouring tears and shout,
> "we, **two**, laid upon you—return the **both** of us! make us two!'
> We came here **together**; why not depart **together**?
> Deceitful little bed, where is the better part of us?
> What am I to do? Where can I travel **alone**?… (51-59, emphases mine)

In this passage, as in the entirety of *Heroides* X, Ariadne is focused on the lack of Theseus' presence. Ariadne focuses on the bed that will never hold them both again; the imprint of Theseus' body; the blanket that grows colder every minute that he is gone. Even the words *duo* and *ambo* are written in pairs, heightening their meanings by literalizing it in an example of Ovid's dexterous wordplay. *Pars nostri… maior* ("better part of us") reveals Ariadne's view of Theseus as not merely identified with her but also her "better half." However, it is likely that the meaning of this line is not simply equivalent to the contemporary cliché. In fact, it probably hints that Ariadne thinks of Theseus as the greater half, possessing more agency and authority than she, while underscoring the sense that Ariadne and Theseus are two parts of one whole.

While *sola* is used to accentuate Ariadne's isolation directly and *duo* and *ambo* focus on Ariadne's current solitary state through contrast, *pars* and the prefix *semi-* operate by expressing Ariadne's sense of a missing part: without Theseus, she feels as if she is only half of one entity. Ovid anticipates this sentiment by using *semi-* even before

Ariadne knows that Theseus is gone, and emphasizes her experience by using it again later in the poem. *Semi-* is used twice in the poem: *semisupina* ("half-lying down") in line 10, as Ariadne recounts waking up to find herself alone, and again in line 32 in the word *semianimisque* ("half-alive"), as Ariadne watches Theseus' ship leaving Naxos and describes herself as "half alive and colder than ice." Although not directly related to the concept of Ariadne and Theseus as a pair, the prefix *semi-* furthers the theme of a lost greater unity present throughout *Heroides* X both by its meaning and placement in scenes where Ariadne's abandonment is made manifest.

The consequence of Ariadne thinking of Theseus and herself as two halves of one prematurely-split whole is clear in the final lines of *Heroides* X. Ariadne is so desperate to be reunited with her lover that she ends the letter by imagining them together in a marriage of morbid character:

> *per lacrimas oro, quas tua facta movent,*
> *flecte ratem, Theseu, versoque relabere velo!*
> *si prius occidero, tu tamen ossa feres.*
>
> Through tears, which your deeds compel, I pray:
> turn your ship around, Theseus, glide back with your sail turned!
> If I have already fallen, then you will carry my bones. (148-50)

Though it exists in Ariadne's imagined future, the image of Theseus holding Ariadne's corpse sharply contrasts with the past, connoting a time when Theseus would have held the living Ariadne. The last line of the epistle envisioning Theseus carrying her bones also implies burial, and the possibility that Ariadne will not suffer the fate she fears most: a death unwept and unburied. The placement of this sentiment as the concluding line again indicates the profound importance of funeral tradition in Ovid's rendition of Ariadne's tale.

The final lines of *Heroides* X also reveal a comparison between Ariadne's past and present, inextricably connected to the contrast between togetherness and isolation within the poem. This contrast was common in antiquity, found in practically all types of lament, including funerary dedications and epigrams.[33] As Alexiou states, "Inseperable from the contrast between past and present in the ancient lament was the contrast between mourner and dead."[34] Alexiou illustrates this point with an example from Iliad 19 when Briseis finds Patrokles dead:

> *Πάτροκλ' ἐμοὶ δειλῇ πλεῖστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ,*
> *ζωὸν μέν σε ἔλειπον ἐγὼ κλισίηθεν ἰουσα,*
> *νῦν δέ σε τεθνηῶτα κιχάνομαι, ὄρχαμε λαῶν,*
> *ἂψ ἀνιοῦσ' ὥς μοι δέχεται κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεί.*
>
> Patroklos, my soul's delight! Woe is me!
> I left you alive when I went out of the tent,
> and now I come back to find you dead,
> leader of people. My life has brought one grief after another.[35] (*Il*. 19.287-90)

There is a comparison between the past and present as well as a separation between Briseis and Patrokles.

Often, a woman's introductory address during funeral ceremony contained questions, as well as a reflection of the despair that he has caused by dying and the misery of those left behind.[36] Ariadne performs these rituals in *Heroides* X with inquiries such as the three in the funeral passage quoted in Chapter I that ends with "Is this tomb worthy of my services?". Ariadne's despair over her lack of protection now that Theseus

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[33] Alexiou 1974: 165-6.
[34] *Ibid*. 171.
[35] Translation of Margaret Alexiou.
[36] Alexiou 1974: 165.

is gone, apparent in lines also quoted in the previous chapter, are good examples of Ariadne's reflection of her own misery.

The comparison of past and present in *Heroides* X is also employed through the change in Ariadne's description of her landscape. At the start of her letter, Ariadne writes matter-of-factly about her natural surroundings. This transitions into a view of the island as pitying Ariadne, even attempting to help her summon Theseus. However, once Ariadne observes Theseus' ship, too far to sea to reach physically or vocally, her portrayal of Naxos becomes empty and inhospitable, eventually transforming into a description of the island as merciless and deadly.

Near the opening of letter, Ariadne describes her natural setting in a somewhat affectionate manner but seemingly without exaggeration or any strong emotional overtones: *tempus erat, vitrea quo primum terra pruina / spargitur et tectae fronde queruntur aves* ("it was the time of day when the earth is first sprinkled with glassy hoar-frost / and birds, hidden in a leafy branch, begin their lamenting," 7-8). Critically, this illustration of frost and bird-song appears in the narrative before Ariadne realizes that Theseus has left her, and the birds "lamenting" forshadows the misfortune and subsequent grieving that she will undergo, as well as the shift in Ariadne's perception of Naxos.

A short time later, when she is extremely upset but has not yet spied the sails of Theseus's ship, Ariadne anthropomorphizes Naxos and describes the landscape as wanting to help her:

> *interea toto clamanti litore "Theseu!"*
> *reddebant nomen concava saxa tuum*
> *et quotiens ego te, totiens locus ipse vocabat;*
> *ipse locus miserae ferre volebat opem.*

> All the while I shouted along the whole shore "Theseus!":
> The concaved rocks returned your name
> and as often as I called you, so did the island itself call to you;
> the island itself wishes to comfort the miserable woman. (21-24)

Ovid's use of mirrored repetition, known as a chiasmus, in the phrases *locus ipse… ipse locus* imitates the sound of the echoing rocks, confirming that the only voice Ariadne hears is her own and thereby reinforcing Ariadne's solitary state.[37]

A characterization of Naxos as desolate then comes to the forefront starting in the next line: *apparent frutices in vertice rari* (25) ("the sparse bushes were visible on the peak") followed a short time later by phrases mentioned earlier, such as "the island is devoid of inhabitants" and "nowhere a sailor." Efrossini Spentzou interprets these shifts as being tied to Ariadne's realization that Theseus is gone: "As Theseus's departure sinks in, the landscape abruptly changes in Ariadne's view of it".[38] Ovid plays with the idea that Theseus is so important to Ariadne that his leaving becomes symbolic of all life disappearing from the island.

As Ariadne's letter progresses, she starts characterizing Naxos as not just empty, but openly hostile towards her:

> *iam iam venturos aut hac aut suspicor illac,*
> *qui lanient avido viscera dente lupos.*
> *forsitan et fulvos tellus alat ista leones?*
> *quis scit an et saevas tigridas insula habet.*
> *et freta dicuntur magnas expellere phocas;*
> *quis vetat et gladios per latus ire meum?*

> At this very moment I suspect that wolves will come either here or there,
> the type which might mangle my innards with greedy teeth.
> Who knows whether this dreadful land nourishes tawny lions?
> Perhaps the island has cruel tigers, too.

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[37] Knox 1995: 238.
[38] Spentzou 2003: 70.

> The water is said to cast up mighty seals.
> And who prevents even swords to go through my side? (83-88)

Ariadne's fears are fairly ridiculous, but her panic seems to intensify throughout this section as she imagines animals that might kill her. The suspense builds as she waits, within the narrative of the poem as well as linguistically: *lupos*, meaning wolves, does not appear until the end of the first couplet. This leaves the reader anticipating what type of beast Ariadne might be speaking of, and this waiting mirrors Ariadne's tension. As Ariadne continues to list animals that she fears, she ends on a surprising one: seals. Peter Knox interprets this as a humorous moment that reveals how little Ariadne knows about the ocean.[39] This line also returns to the theme of mutilation of the dead, so significant in funerary lament.

In reality, Naxos has been inhabited since the Neolithic period. It flourished during the early Bronze Age and in the Archaic and Classical period, dominating commerce in the Cyclades.[40] In *The Histories,* Herodotus writes that in roughly 500 BC, Naxos was the most prosperous of the Greek islands (5.28).[41] Its central location in the Cyclades likely made it an appealing place in antiquity, and its mountainous landscape, transparent cyan water, lush sandy beaches, and panoramic views of a dozen other Greek islands are certainly alluring today.[42] Ovid's illustration of Naxos as uninhabited is not based in history or myth, but instead serves as a vehicle for pathetic fallacy and the focus on Ariadne's solitude.

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[39] *Ibid*. 248.
[40] Cartwright 2013.
[41] Translation of A. D. Godley.
[42] This description of Naxos is my own, made possible by a grant from the Colorado College Classics department that allowed me to travel to Herculaneum and Knossos in Crete and around the island of Naxos.

III. Ariadne's Inertia and Hysteria

Throughout the first third of *Heroides* X, Ariadne oscillates between extreme movement and an extreme lack thereof.[43] This peculiar behavior has been interpreted by scholars in several ways, often with a focus on what it reveals about Ariadne's experience of her predicament. I will argue that Ovid created this contrast between psychological opposites in order to maintain the connection to funeral ceremony through characterization of Ariadne as both the object of lament and the lamenter at her own burial service.

A telling instance occurs when Ariadne describes her initial realization that Theseus is no longer beside her. She focuses on a moment of sleepiness that rapidly becomes frantic motion:

> *incertum vigilans ac somno languida movi*
> *Thesea prensuras semisupina manus:*
> *nullus erat. referoque manus iterumque retempto*
> *perque torum moveo bracchia: nullus erat.*
> *excussere metus somnum; conterrita surgo*
> *membraque sunt viduo praecipitata toro.*
>
> Waking uncertainly and languid from sleep
> half lying down, I moved my hands, about to grasp for Theseus:
> he was not there. I pulled back my hands and again I tried
> moving my arms across the bed: he was not there.
> Fears banishing sleep, I arose, terrified;
> my limbs were thrown from the deserted bed. (9-14)

As discussed in Chapter II, absence is an important theme in *Heroides* X, and it is this absence of her significant other that suddenly envigorates Ariadne and prompts her to throw herself from the bed in fear.

[43] In addition to the passages included, this oscillation is present in lines 19- 34.

Ariadne describes a similarly polarized set of responses about a third of the way through the poem:

> *aut ego diffusis erravi sola capillis,*
> *qualis ab Ogygio concita Baccha deo;*
> *aut mare prospiciens in saxo frigida sedi,*
> *quamque lapis sedes, tam lapis ipsa fui.*
>
> I have wandered alone with disorderly hair,
> either as a Bacchant spurned by the Theban god,
> or I sat chilled on a rock looking into the sea,
> and I was as much a rock as the rock I sat upon. (47-50)

The juxtaposition shows that Ariadne is aware of her reversals, since it is implied that Ariadne, as author of the epistle, placed those two examples against each other. Spentzou interprets these reversals as representative of Ariadne's inner psychology, claiming that Ariadne feels petrified in her entrapment but also has a fervent desire to live.[44] Sara Lindheim, meanwhile, recognizes that Ariadne, like other of Ovid's heroines, is totally preoccupied with her male counterpart and dedicates significant sections of her epistle to highlight her own relative unimportance. Breaking with Spentzou, Lindheim accordingly explains Ariadne's emotional back-and-forths as either a "means toward disempowerment" or as a "decietful rhetorical strategy" through which Ariadne attempts to establish herself in a position of strength.[45] In this latter interpretation, Ariadne purposefully portrays herself as helpless and inert in order to manipulate Theseus by casting herself as that which she imagines he desires, intending for Theseus to take pity on her.

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[44] Spentzou 2003:

[45] Lindheim 2003: 110-3. Verducci: 1985: 249, use of passive voice in *Heroides* X

I propose instead that Ariadne's shifting registers of movement are part of a narrative strategy that Ovid employs by casting Ariadne as both corpse and mourner in her own funeral. This does not necessarily contradict Spentzou or Lindheim's readings of *Heroides* X, since, as Lindheim claims, Ariadne may have multiple and complex emotional responses to Theseus's departure that motivate her to action in certain moments and silence in others. My analysis, rather, focuses on Ovid's authorial wit and the continued connection throughout the poem to funeral ceremony.

I have maintained throughout this paper that Ariadne acts as a mourner throughout *Heroides* X. This is evidenced through Ariadne's grieving process, including physical gestures such as hysterical weeping, breast-beating, and hair tearing, as well as textual references to ancient Greco-Roman female mourning ritual such as Ariadne's fear of the island without Theseus to protect her and the contrast between past union and present isolation. I will now provide evidence that Ariadne also behaves as a corpse.

Ariadne mentions her own death constantly throughout the poem, often through descriptions in which she portrays herself as neither fully alive nor fully deceased. This includes moments such as *frigidior glacie semianimisque fui,* (32), "I was half alive and grew colder than ice"), as Ariadne first sees the sails of Theseus's ship sail away from Naxos. Later, Ariadne reminds Theseus of his broken promise, and questions her own existence:

> tum mihi dicebas: "per ego ipsa pericula iuro
> te fore, dum nostrum vivet uterque, meam."
> Vivimus, et non sum, Theseu, tua, si modo vivis,
> femina periuri fraude sepulta viri (73-76).

> then you said to me: "I swear, through these dangers themselves,
> that you will be mine as long as we both live."
> We both live, Theseus, but I am not yours; if a woman,

buried by deceit of a lying man, really lives.

In the first she states that she is "half-alive", while "colder than ice" connotes stillness and death. In the second quote, Ariadne questions whether or not she is truly alive, and compares her plight to that of all abandoned women. Interestingly, she uses the word *sepulta,* a participle that translates to "having been buried." Buried by deceit is not ordinarily the way one would describe being lied to, and it is clearly figurative language: Ariadne feels buried by Theseus's betrayal, emotionally and as her literal cause of death.

Just before the passage seen earlier, where Ariadne describes all of the menacing wild beasts she fears will kill her, she explains that waiting to die is worse than the act of dying itself: *occurrunt animo pereundi mille figurae, / morsque minus poenae quam mora mortis habet* ("A thousand images of dying dash through my mind;/ and death has less punishment than the delay of death" 80-81). Clearly she is afraid, as the entire following section demonstrates. It is unlikely that lions, tigers, or deadly seals will be the cause of death for Ariadne awaiting her fate on a Greek island; yet she waits in fear for something to kill her. It does not seem as if she wants to die, but that she believes death is inevitable. In this passage, although she continues to refer to her own death, for the moment she acknowledges her existence.

In the funereal passage near the end of *Heroides* X, Ariadne calls herself *moritura* ("I, who am about to die" 119). This is the most directly Ariadne speaks about dying. The very last line of *Heroides* X, *si prius occidero, tu tamen ossa feres* (150), ("If first I will have fallen, then you will carry my bones") is not merely symbolic of Ariadne's desperation to be re-united with Theseus, it also clearly demonstrates the degree to which Ariadne's imagining of her own death is central to the epistle. Though these quotes

contradict each other and none, save the very last, explicitly to refers to Ariadne as a corpse (and even the last one is an imagined future scenario), it gives weight to the theory that Ovid is playing with the idea of Ariadne as both corpse and lamenter.

This also provides an explanation for how *Heroides* X functions as a lament, both "designed to honor and appease the dead… [while giving] expression to a wide range of conflicting emotions."[46] If Ariadne is the corpse and mourner at her own funeral, several lines can be read as Ariadne wishing but unable to appease herself or honor her remains, since she is unable to perform the funeral rites. This includes the funeral passage in which Ariadne asks questions about her fate without anyone to perform a funeral, quoted in Chapter I and mentioned again in Chapter II. The contradictions between Ariadne's multiple roles at the funeral, as well as passages in which she refers to herself as alive, half-alive, or questions exactly how alive she is, are not a concern. After all, this is poetry, and the ambiguous and associative nature allows cumulatively for a more forceful thematization of the myth in funerary terms. The inconsistent and varied parts that she plays also comment specifically on Ariadne's particular isolation.

Conclusion: Narrative Layers

As I mentioned earlier, there are multiple layers of narration present in *Heroides* X. Ariadne is the implied author of the epistle, and Theseus is the implied reader, or perhaps more accurately, the intended reader. There is a level of unreliability present in all first-person narratives, since each word and phrase is chosen instead of infinite other possibilities, and one must theorize as to the intention behind each choice. This is the

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[46] Alexiou 1974: 55.

concept Sara Lindheim explores in her theory that Ariadne is intentionally portraying herself as desirably helpless for Theseus within the letter. From this angle, focusing on Ariadne's authorship, it is impossible to tell to what degree *Heroides* X is as honest a description of Ariadne's experience as she was able to recollect and articulate and to what degree it is manipulative rhetoric. Her unreliability as a narrator increases if you consider ancient Greek female mourning to be performative and ritualistic in nature. The fact that Ariadne has no means in which to send her letter to Theseus, since she is stuck on Naxos and he has already sailed away, calls her motives further into question, and leads us naturally to the next level of narration.

Ovid is, of course, the true author of the epistle, and his implied audience comprised educated Roman men. Ovid the rhetorician, witty and precise, occupies the second layer of the authorial cake. The wordplay, alliteration, chiasmus, and other metrical and poetic devices can all be understood in this register of Ovid's writing, as well as the allusions to and use of *ethopoeia* and *suasoriae* that Ovid's educated Roman audience would have percieved and appreciated as part of his rhetorical education. If Ariadne's inconsistent emotions are analyzed through this lens, they may be understood as virtuoso rhetorical exercises that explore diverse but not necessarily consistent aspects of Ariadne's suffering, which include Ovid's knowing use of funeral imagery.

The third level of narration is also Ovid, this time not as rhetorician but the Ovid who is passionately interested in human psychology. This register provides potential interpretations regarding Ovid's search for emotional truth. If Ovid were not interested in human psychology, and particularly in the characteristics and experiences of women, it would be difficult to understand why he would choose women to be the implied authors

of the *Heroides.* This draws attention back to the uppermost level of *Heroides* X, Ariadne as implied author. The disparate and ever-changing feelings that Ariadne expresses through the letter, strange and illogical as their progression may seem, may in fact stem from a sincere attempt to portray profound misery. Grief is not linear and often is not easily understandable to those on the outside. There is a certain emotional truth to the frenetic energy and extreme variation of Ariadne's actions and emotions. Human beings are strange and complicated, and in moments of intense loss, hysteria can become despair which can in turn become cynical dark humor. For all the rhetorical devices that are clearly present within the epistles, and despite the problematic elements some scholars have seen in Ovid's portrayal of women[47], the *Heroides*—and *Heroides* 10 in particular—are a vivid and moving depiction of the complex emotional experience of grief.

[47] In regards to *Heroides* specifically, critique of Ovid's representation of women is present throughout Sara Lindheim's book *Mail and Female: Epistolary Narrative and Desire in Ovid's Heroides*, most specifically in the concluding chapter "Male and Female: Ovid's Illusion of the Woman". Similar concepts are addressed in a distinct manner in Laurel Fulkerson's *The Ovidian Heroine as Author: Reading, Writing, and Community in the Heroides*, most prominently in the Caveat Lector: "Thoughts on Gender and Power." These issues are also present in the articles "Gendered Spaces in Ovid's Heroides" and "The Isolating Effect of Sola in Heroides 10" by Catherine M. Bolton. There is additional scholarship on Ovid's depiction of agency or lack thereof, of desire in his female characters, as well as his treatment of rape scenes in *Metamorphoses, Fasti,* and other works.

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