

Leones et Tigridae et Phocae, eheu! The Lod Mosaic Reimagined through the Fears of Ariadne

Having been discarded by Theseus on the uninhabited island of Dia, the Ariadne of Ovid's *Heroides 10* is consumed by irrational fears. She catalogues the many possible threats to her life: *lupos* (84), *liones* (85), *tigridas* (86), *phocas* (87), and *gladios* (88). Separated from Theseus, isolated from her family, and cut off from humanity, Ariadne's state of mind is unequivocal. Yet, it is notable that these distinctive creatures are the ones that possess the most immediate and unfathomable dangers for her.

It is without doubt that wolves, lions, and tigers would have been familiar to ancient Romans as a vehicle for public entertainment (*bestiarii* and *venationes*); and references to these types of animals certainly would have been abundant in the literary works of the Roman age (Toynbee 1973). Of peculiar interest, however, is the reference to *phocas* and *gladios*. Apart from a few passages in Pliny (NH 6.19 and 15.41), Vergil (Georgics, 432), and Juvenal (III, 238) the mention of a seal or sea-calf is limited and there are even fewer depictions in Roman art. Furthermore, the scholarly interpretation of *gladios* in line 88 as 'human beings or pirates' (Palmer 2005) represents an incongruity in the preceding zoological inventory. This paper will consider depictions of seals and sea-calves in literature and art of the Roman age in order to make sense of Ariadne's utter panic. It will then argue for another interpretation of *gladios* as it relates to sea life and aggressive behavior. Finally, using the Lod Mosaic as reference, it will contextualize Ariadne's fears and argue the merit to her terror.

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