

“Ariadne,” needlepoint by Mary Frances Kelly Poh  
Poem by Deborah Schmidt

## **Ariadne**

Ever since the tongue-cut Philomela  
wove her tale into a tapestry  
and sent it to her sister, women, silenced,  
have spoken in such ways.

And Ariadne may have been a weaver.  
It may have been some yarn from her own store  
she wound into a ball to help her lover  
defeat the Cretan maze.

So it is fitting that a needlewoman  
should honor Ariadne with her work,  
a labyrinth of interlocking stitches  
in seven by seven squares:

seven for the fair Athenian maidens,  
seven for the doomed Athenian youths,  
seven for the labyrinthine courses,  
and seven for her crown.

I like to think that Theseus still loved her  
and grieved for her beneath his darkling sails.  
I hope that she found joy with Dionysus,  
who made her crown of stars.

Across the center of the piece a spiral  
is subtly pierced where ends of stitches meet  
and softly shadowed by a misty purple  
against the rose and gold.

It seems to wheel through mythic time, connecting  
our lives with those of all the women who  
have gathered up their life force and their courage  
to tell what must be told.

*Ariadne, daughter of King Minos, helped Theseus slay the Minotaur at the heart of the Cretan labyrinth and then fled with him and the fourteen young Athenians marked for sacrifice. En route to Athens, Theseus abandoned her on the isle of Naxos. Nearing home, he then forgot to change his sails from black to white, the prearranged signal that he had survived his mission of destroying the Minotaur. Later, Ariadne married Dionysus, who afterward joyously tossed the bridal wreath he had given her into the heavens, where it became the seven stars of Ariadne's Crown.*