

[Mosser]

Confessio Amantis

John Gower (ca. 1390)

Bk. 5: "Ariadne & Theseus"

5231	M ynos as telleth the Poete The which whilom was king of Crete A sone had . and Androche He hiht . and so befel that he	<i>Minos, as the Poet tells [us], Who was once king of Crete, Had a son, and Androche He was called. And so it happened that he</i>
5235	Vnto Athenes for to lere Was send . and so he bar him there ffor that he was of hih lignage Such pride he took in his corage That he foryeten hath the scoles	<i>Unto Athens, to study Was sent. And so he took himself there Because he was of noble lineage. Such pride he took in his fighting spirit, That he has forgotten the schools</i>
5240	And in riot among the fooles He dede many thinges wrong And vseth thilk lif so long Til ate last of that he wroghte He fonde the mischef which he soghte	<i>And in riot among the fools He did many things wrong, And follows this way of life so long, Until at last from that which he wrought, He found the mischief that he sought,</i>
5245	Wherof it fel that he was slain His fader which it herde sain Was wroth & al that euer he mihte Of men of armes he him dihte A strong power and forth he wente	<i>From which, it turned out, he was slain. His father, who heard about this, Was angered, and as much as he might, Of armed men he prepared A strong army, and forth he went</i>
5250	Vnto Athenes where he brente The plein contre al aboute The citees stood of him in doute As thei no defense hadde Ayein the pouer he ladde	<i>Unto Athens, where he burned The level land all about. The cities stood in fear of him, Since they had no defense Against the power he led.</i>
5255	Egeus which was there king His counseil took vpon this thing ffor he was thanne in the cite So that of pees in to tret Betuen Mynos & Egeus	<i>Ægeus, who was their king, Took counsel about this thing, For he was then in the city. And so into a discussion of a peace treaty Between Minos and Ægeus</i>
5260	Thei fel . and ben acorded thus	<i>They fell. And they reached this accord:</i>

<p>That king Mynos fro yere to yere Receiue shal as thou shalt hier Out of Athenys for truage Of men that were of mihti age 5265 Persones nyne of which he shal His will don in speciall ffor vengeaunce of his sones deth Non othir grace ther ne geth Bot for to take the Iuise 5270 And that was don in such a wise Which stood vpon a wonder cas ffor thilk tyme so it was Wherof þ^t men yit rede & singe King Mynos had in his keping 5275 A cruel monstre as seith the geste ffor he was half man & half beste And Mynotaurus he was hote Which was begete in a riote Vpon Pasiphe his oghne wif 5280 Whil he was out vpon the strif Of thilk gret sege of Troye Bot she which lost hath al Ioye Whan that she sigh this monstre bore Bad men ordeine anon therefore 5285 And fel that ilk tyme thus Ther was a clerk oon Dedalus Which had ben of hir assent Of þ^t hir world was so miswent And he made of his oghne wit 5290 Wherof the remembraunce is yit ffor Mynotaure such an hous Which was so straunge & merueilous</p>	<p><i>That King Minos, from year to year, Shall receive, as you shall hear, From Athens, as tribute, Of men who were of fighting age, Nine persons, with whom he shall Carry out his will, especially To revenge his son's death. There is no other recourse But to take the punishment. And that was carried out in a fashion That relied upon wonderous circumstances. For in that very time it was, As men still read and sing, [That] King Minos had in his possession, A cruel monster, as the story goes, For he was half-man and half-beast, And he was called the "Minotaur," Who was begotten through an attack Upon Pasiphae, his own wife, While he was out, engaged in the strife, Of the very great siege of Troy. But she, who has lost all joy, When she saw this monster born, Asked men to arrange at once, therefore [as follows]: And so it happened then There was a clerk—one Dedalus— Who sympathized with her, Because her world had gone so wrong, And he made, with his own ingenuity— And this is still remembered today— For the Minotaur a kind of house, Which was so strange and marvelous,</i></p>
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That what man þ^t w^tinne wente
 Ther was so many a sondri went
 5295 That he shuld noght come out
 Bot gon amased al aboute
 And in his hous to loke & warde
 Was Mynotaurus put in warde
 That what lif that therin cam
 5300 Or man or beste he ouercam
 And slouh & fed him thereupon
 And in this wise many oon
 Out of Athenys for truage
 Deuoured weren in that rage
 5305 ffor eueri yere thei shope hem so
 Thei of Athenys or thei go
 Toward that ilk woful chaunce
 As it was in ordenaunce
 Vpon fortune the lot thei cast
 5310 Til that Theseus ate last
 Which was the kinges sone there
 Amonges other þ^t ther were
 In thilk yere as it befell
 The lot vpon his chaunce fel
 5315 He was a worthi kniht withalle
 And whan he sigh this chaunce fall
 He ferde as thogh he took non heed
 Bot al that euer he miht spede
 W^t him and w^t his felaship
 5320 fforth in to Crete he goth be ship
 Wher that king Mynos he soght
 And profereth al that he him oght
 Vpon the point of here acord
This sterne king this cruel lord

*That whatever man went inside,
 There were so many sondry turnings,
 That he could not find his way out,
 But went amazed all around.
 And in his house, to watch and ward,
 The Minotaur was put on guard.
 And whatever came in there alive,
 Either man or beast, he overcame,
 And killed it, and fed himself thereupon.
 And in this fashion, many a one,
 Sent from Athens in payment of tribute,
 Were devoured engaging in that sport.
 For every year they arranged themselves thus:
 The youths of Athens, before they set off
 For that very woeful fate,
 As it had been arranged,
 They cast their lots to discover their Fortune,
 Until Theseus, at last
 Who was the King of Athens' son,
 Amongst the others that were there,
 In that same year, as it befell,
 His number came up in the lottery.
 He was a worthy knight, to be sure,
 And when he saw this turn of events,
 He acted as if he could care less
 But as fast as ever he might go,
 He, along with his fellowship,
 Set forth for Crete aboard a ship,
 Where he sought out King Minos,
 And proffered him all that he owed
 According to the letter of their accord.
This stern king, this cruel lord,*

5325	Took eueri day oon of the nyne And put hem to the discipline Of Mynotaure to be deuoured Bot Theseus was so fauoured That he was kept til ate last	5330	And in the mene while he cast What thing him were best to do And fel that Adriagne tho Which was the dowhter of Mynos And had herd the worthi los	5335	Of Theseus & of his miht And sigh he was a lusti kniht Hir hool herte on him she leide And he also of loue hir preid So ferforth that thei were alone	5340	And she ordeineth than anon In what maner she shuld him saue And hope so that she dede him haue A clu of threed of which w ^t inne ffirst ate dore he shal beginne	5345	To take with him that oon ende That whan he wold ayeinward wend He miht go the same wey And ouer this so as I sey Of picche she took him a pelote	5350	The which he shuld in to the throte Of Minotaure cast riht Such wepne also for him she diht That he be reson may not faile To make an ende of his bataill	5355	ffor she him tauht in sondri wise Til he was knowe of thilk emprise Hou he this beste shuld quelle	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Every day, took one of the nine, And subjected him to the discipline Of the Minotaur, to be devoured. But Theseus was so favored, That he was saved for the last. And in the meanwhile he considered What would be the best thing to do. And it happened that Ariadne at that time, Who was the daughter of Minos, And had heard of the worthy fame Of Theseus and his fellows, And saw that he was an energetic knight, Her whole heart on him she laid, And he, also, for her love prayed, And so it happened that they were alone, And she arranged then in timely fashion, In what fashion she should save him, And contrived that he should have A clue of thread, with which Once inside the door he shall begin To take with him the one end, So that when he wished to return again He might go the same way. In addition, as I say, She took him a ball of pitch, Which he should, into the throat Of the Minotaur, toss. Such weapons for him she also prepared, So that he could not reasonably fail To make an [proper] end of his battle. For she instructed him in sondry ways, Till he was fully briefed about the enterprise, How he should kill this beast.</i></p>
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And thus short for to telle
 So as this maide him had tauht
 5360 Theseus with this monstre fauht
 Smot of his hed which he nam
 And be the threde so as he cam
 He goth ayein til he were oute
 Tho was gret wonder al aboute
 5365 Mynos the tribut hath relessed
 And so was al the werre cessed
 Betuen Athene and men of Crete
Bot now to speke of thilk swete
 Whos beaute was withoute wane
 5370 This fair maiden Adriane
 Whan that she sigh Theseus sound
 Was neuer yit vpon the ground
 A gladder wiht than she was tho
 Theseus duelte a day or tuo
 5375 Wher that Mynos gret chiere him dede
 Theseus in a priue stede
 Hath w^t the maide spoke & rounde
 That she to him was abandounde
 In al þ^t euer that she couthe
 5380 So that of that lusti youthe
 Al priueli betuen hem twey
 The first flour he took away
 ffor he so fair tho behiht
 That euer whil he lyue miht
 5385 He shuld hir take for his wif
 And as his oghne hertes lif
 He shuld hir loue & trouthe bere
 And she which miht noght forbere
 So sore loueth him ayein

*And so, to make a long story short,
 Just as this maid had taught him,
 Theseus fought with this monster,
 Smote off his head, which he siezed,
 And by the thread, just as he came,
 He goes again until he was out.
 Then was there a great wonder all about:
 Minos ceased his demand for tribute,
 And thus was the war brought to an end
 Between Athens and the men of Crete.
 But now, to turn to that sweet [one],
 Whose beauty knew no bounds
 This fair maiden, Ariadne,
 When she saw Theseus sound,
 There was never yet on earth
 A gladder creature than she was then.
 Theseus remained a day or two,
 While Minos did him great honor.
 Theseus, in a private place,
 Has with the maid spoken and whispered,
 So that she was to him devoted,
 In every way that she was able,
 So that, from that charming youth,
 In secret, between the two of them,
 He took away the "first flower."
 Then he promised so courteously,
 That as long as ever he might live,
 He should take her for his wife,
 And as his own heart's life
 He should love her and bear her troth.
 And she, who could not resist,
 So fiercely she loves him in return,*

5390	That what as euer he wold sein With al hir herte she beleueth And thus his purpos he acheueth So that assured of his trouthe With him she wente & þ ^t was routhe	<i>That whatsoever he would say, With all her heart she believes. And thus his purpose he achieves, So that, assured of his troth, She went with him, and that was a pity.</i>
5395	F edra hir yong suster eke A lusti mayde a sobre a meke ffulfilled of all curtesie ffor susterhod and companie Of loue which was hem betuene	<i>Phedra, her young sister, also A charming maid, sober and meek, Endowed with every courtesy, For the sisterhood and companionship Of love that was between them,</i>
5400	To seen her suster made a quene Hir fader left and forth she wente W ^t him which al his first entent ffor yat within a litil throwe So þ ^t it was al ouer throwe	<i>To see her sister made a queen, She left her father and forth she went With him, who all of his original intention Forgot within a short space of time, So that it was all overthrown</i>
5405	Whan she best wende it shuld stonde The ship was blowe fro the londe Wherin that they seilend were This Adriagne hath mochel fere Of that the winde so loude blew	<i>When she best expected it should stand [firm/fast]. The ship was blown from the land, In [near?] which they were sailing. Ariadne had great fear, Because the wind blew so loud—</i>
5410	As she which of the see ne knew And preid for to reste awhile And so fel that vpon an yle Which Chio hiht they ben driue Wher he to hir his leue hath yiue	<i>Since she knew nothing of the sea— And prayed that they rest awhile. And so it happened that, upon an isle, Which was called Chio, they were driven. There he gave her his leave,</i>
5415	That she shal londe & take hir reste Bot þ ^t was no thing for the beste. ffor whan she was to londe broght She which þ ^t tyme thouht noght Bot al trouth & took no kepe	<i>That she should land and take her rest. But that was anything but for the best. For when she was brought to land, She who at that time suspected nothing But truth and so took no heed,</i>
5420	Hath leid hir softe for to slepe As she which longe hath be forwacched	<i>Has layed herself softly down to sleep, As one who was thoroughly exhausted from keeping watch.</i>

Bot certes she was euel macched
 And fer from al loues kinde
 ffor more than the beste vnkinde
 5425 Theseus which no trouthe kepte
 Whil that this yong lady slepte
 ffulfilled of his vnkindship
 Hath al foryete the goodship
 Which Adriagne him had do
 5430 And bad vnto the shipmen tho
 Hale vp the saill & noght abide
 And forth he goth the same tide
 Toward Athene and hir alonde
 Hath left . which lay ny the stronde
 5435 Slepnd til that she awook
 Bot what þ^t she cast vp hir look
 Toward the stronde & sigh no wiht
 Hir herte was so sore afliht
 That she ne wist what to thinke
 5440 Bot drouh hir to the water brinke
 Wher she beheld the see at large
 She sigh no ship she sigh no barge
 Als ferforth as she miht kenne
 Ha lord she seid which a senne
 5445 As al the world shal aftir hier
 Vpon this woful womman hier
 This worthi kniht hath done & wrouht
 I wende I had his loue bouht
 And so deserued ate nede
 5450 Whan þ^t he stood vpon his nede
 And eke of loue he me behiht
 It is a gret wonder hou he miht
 Toward me now to ben vnkinde,

*But to be sure, she was matched against evil
 And far from all of love's kind.
 For even more than the unkind beast,
 Theseus, who kept no troth,
 While this young lady slept,
 Succumbing to his unkind nature,
 Has thoroughly forgotten the kindness
 Which Ariadne had done to him,
 And gave orders to the sailors then
 To haul up the sail and not to abide,
 And goes forth on the same tide,
 Towards Athens, and her on land
 Has left, who lay near the shore
 Sleeping, until she awoke.
 But when she cast up her gaze
 Toward the shore, and saw no living thing,
 Her heart was so sorely anguished,
 That she did not know what to think,
 But drew herself to the water's edge,
 Where she beheld the entire sea.
 She saw no ship; she saw no barge,
 As far she she might perceive:
 "Ha, Lord!" she said. "Such a sin
 As all the world hereafter shall hear,
 Upon this woeful woman here,
 This worthy knight has done and wrought!
 I believed I had purchased his love—
 And so deserved [it] in need—
 When he was in such dire need,
 And also his love he pledged to me.
 It is a great wonder how he might
 Towards me now be so unkind,*

And so to lete out of his mynde
 5455 Thing which he seid his oghne mouth
 Bot aftir this whan it is couth
 And drawe into the worldes fame
 It shal ben hindring of his name
 ffor wel he wot and so wot I
 5460 He yaf his trouthe bodyly
 That he myn hono^{ur} shuld kepe
 And w^t that word she gan to wepe
 And sorweth more than Inouh.
 Hir fair tresses she to drouh
 5465 And with hir self took such a strif
 That she betuen the deth & lif
 Swounend lay fulofte among
 And al was this on him along
 Which was to loue unkinde so
 5470 Wherof the wrong shal euer mo
 Stond in cronique of remembraunce
 And eke it asketh a vengeaunce
 To ben vnkinde in loues cas
 So as Theseus than was
 5475 Al thowh he were a noble kniht
 ffor he the lawe of loues riht
 fforfeted hath in al wey
 That Adriagne hath put away
 Which was a gret vnkinde dede
 5480 And aftir this so as I rede
 ffredra the which hir sustir is
 He took . in stede of hir and this
 ffel aftirward to mochel tene
 ffor thilk vice of which I mene
 5485 Vnkindship where it falleth

*And thus to let out of his mind,
 Things he uttered with his own mouth.
 But after this, when it is known,
 And drawn into the world's fame,
 It will be damaging to his name,
 For well he knows, and so know I,
 He pledged his troth with his body,
 That he should protect my honor."*
*And with that word, she began to wepe,
 And grieves more than enough.
 She tears at her fair tresses,
 And within herself fought such a battle,
 That she, between death and life,
 Lay swooning.
 And all of this was due to him,
 Who was to love so treacherous.
 For which the wrong shall forevermore
 Stand in the chronicle of remembrance.
 And also, it begs vengeance,
 To be dishonest in love's cause,
 As Theseus was in this case,
 Even though he was a noble knight.
 For he, the righteous law of love,
 Has violated in every way,
 He who cast Ariadne aside,
 Which was a most despicable deed.
 And after this, as I read,
 Phedra, who is her sister,
 He took instead of her, and this
 Afterward caused much misfortune.
 For this very vice, by which I mean
 "Unkindship" [Ingratitude], wheresoever it strikes,*

The trouth of mans hert it palleth
That he can no dede aquite
So may he stonde of no merite
Towardes god and eke also
5490 Men clepen him the worldes foo
ffor he nomore than the fende
Vnto non othir man is frende
Bot al toward himself alone
ffor thi my son in thi persone
5495 This vice aboue al othir flee

*The truth in a man's heart it palls,
So that he can acquit no deed.
So may he stand, bereft of merit,
Before God, and also
Men call him the world's foe.
For he, no more than the fiend,
Is unto any other man a friend,
But only to himself, alone.
Therefore, my son, in thy person,
This vice above all others flee.*