

Complainte “Mes doulz amis” sent to the narrator by Toute Belle, in Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Livre du Voir dit*, 1356–1391.

Text ed. Imbs, presentation Cerquiglini-Toulet. Translation SK¹

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| 1356 | Mes doulz amis, a vous me veuil complaindre
dou mal qui fait mon cuer palir et taindre;
car de vous vient, si le devez savoir,
ne sans vous seul confort ne puet avoir. | 1360 | Or veuillés dont entendre ma clamour
et aveuc ce considerer l’amour
dont je vous aim; car briés seroit ma fin
se ne m’amiés de cuer loial et fin. | 1364 | Amis, je n’ai nulle joieuse vie,
ains sui tousdis en grant merancolie,
quar je ne fais nuit et jour que penser
a vous vëoir. Mais po vault mon penser
quant il n’est tour, subtilité ne voie
ne maniere que je y sache ne voie;
si qu’ainsi sont mi mortel ennemi
tuit mi pensers, et tousdis contre mi; | 1372 | si n’ai confort, amis, fors que tant plour
que je cuevre ma face de mon plour. | 1376 | Et quant ie sui saoule de plourer,
Souvenirs vient mon las cuer acourer,
quar il n’est biens ne joie qu’il m’apporte,
ainsois tousdis me grieve et desconforte;
dont souvent ay estranglé maint souspir.
Pour ce que trop profondement souspir,
apres Desirs ² ne me laisse durer,
si n’ai pas corps pour tel fais endurer,
quar flebe sui, dont piessa fusse morte
s’Espoirs ne fust, qui .i. po me conforte. | 1384 | Et si ne say que c’est de cest Espoir,
car pas ne vient, si me deçoit espoir,
et se ai cause de penser le contraire
de ce qu’il dit: pour ce ne say que faire. | 1384 | My sweet love, I wish to lament to you of the
pain that makes my heart grow pale and
colorless, for you should know that it comes
from you and can only be consoled by you
alone. So please listen to my lament and, as you
do, pay heed to the love I feel for you: my end
would be quick if you did not love me with a
true and upright heart. | 1384 | My love, I have no joy in my life, but am deeply
melancholy the whole time, for all I do, day and
night, is long to see you. But my longing has no
effect, for I know of no recourse, contrivance,
means or manner that I can see. And so all my
longing thoughts are my deadly enemies,
constantly against me, and I have no
consolation, my love, except that I weep so hard
that my face is bathed in tears. | 1384 | And when I am surfeited with crying, memory
comes and runs my poor heart through, for it
brings me neither wellbeing nor joy, on the
contrary it harms and discomfits me, and
because of this I have often stifled many a sigh.
And because I sigh so deeply, harsh Desire
makes it barely possible for me to endure; and I
am not made to withstand such an onslaught, for
I am weak and could easily have died already if
it were not for Hope who brings me some
comfort. | 1384 | But I don’t know what has happened to Hope
for he doesn’t come, and perhaps deceives me;
indeed I have reason to believe the opposite of
what he says: and so I don’t know what to do. |
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1388 Or soit ainsi com Dieus l'a ordené!
 Mais je vous ay si franchement donné
 moi et m'amour, que c'est sans departir;
 et s'il convient m'ame dou corps partir,
 1390 ja ceste amour pour ce ne finera,
 qu'après ma mort m'ame vous amera.

So let it be as God has ordained! But I have
 so freely given you my love and myself that
 there is no going back. And if my soul must
 leave my body, even then my love will not
 end for my will go on loving you after my
 death.

¹ I follow the edition in breaking up the couplets into what look like strophes. Note, however, that these are not stanzaic units but rhetorical ones, marked by the paired apostrophes of 1356 and 1364, and the parallel constructions of 1374 and 1384.

² The edition interprets *après* as the adverb “afterwards,” but I read it as the adjective *apres* (*aspres*), “harsh.” This difference affects the meaning of the surrounding construction and its punctuation, which for these lines departs from that of Imbs-Cerquiglini.