

The Clerk who would see the Virgin

Traduction française de Florence BOURNE, Maître de conférences, Université Paris-Sorbonne.

Traduction en anglais moderne de Sheryl SAVINA, Maître de conférences honoraire, Université Paris-Sorbonne.

Manuscrit Auchinleck		Traduction française	Traduction en anglais moderne
<p>[An an]gel sche sent to him anon. {f.37vb} [He g]ret þe clerk wiþ milde steuen. [Into] þe chamber when he gan gon, [He was] briȝter þan ani leuen. Leuen] no no sonnes bem [In so]mers day nas neuer so briȝt, [Þan] þat angel, when he doun kem [Into] þat hous about midniȝt. [He þo]uȝt his hert schuld tospring, Þo h]e gan on þat angel sen. [‘Mi] clerk, drede þe noþing, [Grace] of God be ous bitven. [Tidan]des now y þe bring [Fram M]arie, our heuen-quen; [I þe] telle certain tiding: [If þou] wilt hir bodi sen, [If sen] þou wilt þat leuedi briȝt, [Þis p]enaunce þou most chesen:</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10</p> <p>15</p>	<p>Elle lui envoya aussitôt un ange. Il salua le clerc d’une voix douce. Dans la chambre lorsqu’il entra Il brillait plus qu’un rayon de soleil. Aucun reflet ni rayon de soleil Ne brillait l’été davantage Que cet ange, lorsqu’il descendit Dans cette demeure vers minuit. Il crut que son cœur allait se briser Lorsqu’il posa les yeux sur cet ange. « Mon clerc, n’aie pas peur, La grâce de Dieu nous unit. Je t’apporte maintenant des nouvelles De Marie, notre reine céleste ; Je vais te dire une chose certaine : Si tu souhaites la voir en personne, Si tu veux voir cette illustre dame, Tu dois choisir ta pénitence :</p>	<p>Soon she sent him an angel. He greeted the clerk with a soft voice. When he came into the room He was brighter than any flash of lightning. Neither lightning flash nor sunbeam On a summer’s day was ever as bright As the angel when he came down Into that house around midnight. He thought his heart would burst, When he came to look at the angel. ‘My clerk, do not be afraid, The grace of God is with us. I bring you now a message From Mary, our heavenly queen; I tell you, truly: If you wish to see her body, If you want to see our radiant Lady, You must choose your penance :</p>

<p>[Pou m]iʒt be siker, þine eiʒesiʒt Oper þ]i liif þou schalt forlesen.’ [Pe cler]k anon gan him biþink: [ʒet y] can anoþer croke: [Wiþ] min on eiʒe y schal wink, [& wiþ] mi noþer y schal loke; Mi wa]risoun y schal biswink [Til y] may sen opon a boke, [& haue] anowe mete & drink. [Gode] comfort to him he tok. [He tok] to him anon gode hede: [Iwis, m]in on eiʒe may me seruen [Per to] do wiþ al mi dede; [It is] ynouʒ til y schal steruen. [Pe cl]erk him fair answerd oʒain [‘Ich] do me alle in her manay. [Sch]eu now what y schal mene [To] Mari, as y þe say. [Hir s]eriaunt ichaue long ben; [Wiþ a]ll loue now ich [h]ir pray [Pat] ich mot hir ones sen [Aper]tliche, er þan y day. [Whe]n y dye, sche ʒiue me grace [To come] to hir wiþ gode entent, [To sen] hir bodi & hir face.’ [Pe an]gel oʒain to heuene is went. Fram heuen into þe clerkes bour, {f.38ra} Riʒt doun biforn his beddes fet, þe angel aliʒt wiþ gret honour, & wel fair he gan him gret. ‘Mari, þat bar our saueour’ He seyð ‘þou schalt sen as sket.’ Wiþ him þer com a gret odour; Nas neuer no smel half so swete. So swete a smal nas neuer non,</p>	<p>20 25 30 35 40 45 50</p>	<p>Tu dois assurément, ou bien la vue Ou bien la vie y perdre. Le clerck commença à réfléchir : Je peux trouver essayer une ruse : Je peux cligner de l’un de mes yeux Et de l’autre regarder ; J’effectuerai ma pénitence Jusqu’à ce que je puisse lire un livre Et avoir assez à boire et à manger. Il en retira grand réconfort. Il y réfléchit soigneusement : En vérité, mon œil unique peut me servir À tout ce dont j’aurai besoin ; Il me suffira jusqu’à ma mort. Le clerck répondit en retour poliment « Je me mets entièrement en son pouvoir. Fais savoir ce que je veux dire À Marie, comme je te le raconte. J’ai longtemps été son serviteur ; Je la prie désormais avec tout mon amour De me laisser la voir une seule fois En face, avant ma mort. Lorsque je mourrai, qu’elle m’accorde De venir à elle en toute honnêteté, Pour voir son corps et son visage. » L’ange retourna au ciel Du ciel à la chambre du clerck Juste au pied de son lit L’ange se posa dignement Et le salua courtoisement. « Marie, qui porta notre sauveur, dit-il, tu la verras bientôt. » Avec lui vint une puissante odeur, Il n’en était pas d’aussi douce de moitié. Il n’était pas d’odeur aussi douce,</p>	<p>Make sure, for you will have to abandon Either your eyesight or your life.’ At once the clerk began to think: I still know another trick: I shall wink with my one eye, And look with my other one; I shall obtain my protection So that I can still read a book And have sufficient food and drink. Thus he comforted himself. And so he considered the situation : Indeed, a single eye may serve me To do everything I need to do. It will be enough until I die. The clerk answered him courteously, ‘I put myself entirely in her hands. Tell Mary what I mean, As I say to you. I have long been her servant; With all my love now I pray to her That I might see her clearly Face to face before I die. When I die, may she give me the grace To come to her with good intent , To see her body and her face.’ The angel returned to heaven. From heaven back into the clerk’s abode, Right down at the foot of his bed, The angel alighted with great dignity, And greeted him respectfully. ‘Soon,’ he said, ‘you shall see Mary, who bore our saviour,’ A wonderful fragrance accompanied him, Never had there been a smell half so sweet. So sweet a smell there never was,</p>
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<p>Of rose no of no spicerie, As com into þat leueli won Befor þat leueliche compeynie. Wip angel song & miri play Our leuedi adoun sche li3t Into þe chaumber þer he lay, & seyð ‘clerk, drede þe nowi3t.’ Þei a man biþou3t him ay, No schuld he reden a poin[t] ari3t Hennes vnto domesday Hou fair sche is, þat maiden bri3t. Hou bri3t sche is no tong may telle – Yblisced mot hye euer ben. Of heuen, of erþe & of helle Sche is emperice & quene. A mantel our leuedy vnfeld, Bri3ter þan sonne þat schineþ schire. ‘Clerk, drede þe nou3t, bot be nov beld, For þou schalt haue þi desire; Þerwhiles þou hast þine eizen in weld, Aviser þe wele of min atire, Apertliche þou me biheld, Bodi & face, brest & swire.’ Swire & al hir bodi he sei3e, When sche hadde to him spoken: He loked on hir wip his on ei3e – þat oþer he held stille yloken. O3ain to heuen our leuedi went Wel stillelich out of þat clos. Þe clerk held him foulely schent, Amorwe, when þat he aros. His 3alu here he haþ al torent, & in his hert sore him agros; Al þus he seyð & him biment ‘Þis ni3t y saued on of mi fos;</p>	<p>— Ni de rose ni d’épice — 55 Que celle qui entra dans cette admirable demeure, Devant cette compagnie digne d’adoration. Avec des chants angéliques et une belle musique Notre dame descendit aussitôt Dans la chambre où il se tenait couché, 60 Et dit « Clerc, ne crains rien. » Un homme pourrait y penser incessamment, Il ne pourrait réussir à percevoir, D’ici jusqu’au jugement dernier, À quel point cette vierge est belle. 65 Nulle langue ne peut dire comme elle est belle — Elle est à jamais bénie. Du ciel, de la terre et de l’enfer Elle est l’impératrice et la reine. Notre dame déploya un manteau 70 Qui brillait plus vivement que le soleil flamboyant. « Clerc, ne crains rien, sois brave, Car ton désir va être exaucé ; Tant que tu peux jouir de ta vue, Contemple la richesse de ma mise, 75 Regarde-moi en face, Le corps et le visage, le sein et la gorge. » Sa gorge et tout son corps il vit Lorsqu’elle lui eut parlé : Il l’a regarda d’un seul œil — 80 Il tenait l’autre bien fermé. Notre dame retourna au ciel Tout doucement depuis cette demeure. Le clerc se trouva cruellement trompé Le lendemain lorsqu’il se réveilla. 85 Ses cheveux blonds il avait arrachés, Et il était triste en lui-même ; Il dit ainsi et se plaignit : « Cette nuit j’ai sauvé l’un de mes ennemis ;</p>	<p>Neither of roses nor of spices, As what came into that lowly dwelling Before such a humble person. With angel song and merry playing Our Lady descended Into the room where he lay, And said; ‘Clerk, do not be afraid.’ However long a man may think, From now until Doomsday He can never properly describe How beautiful the illustrious maiden is. How radiant she is, no tongue may tell – Blessed may she ever be. She is empress and queen Of heaven, of earth and of hell. Our Lady unwrapped her mantle Brighter than the sun that shines so clearly. ‘Clerk, do not be afraid, now rather be fearless, For you shall have your desire; While you still have the use of your eyes, Look well at my apparel, Observe me fully, Body and face, breast and neck.’ Her neck and all her body he saw, When she had spoken to him: He looked at her with one eye – Still holding the other one closed. Straight to heaven our Lady went Leaving the place without a sound. The clerk felt miserably shamed In the morning, when he arose. He had all torn out all his golden hair And in his heart he shuddered with painful horror; And he said to himself thus and lamented his lot: ‘Tonight I saved one of my foes;</p>
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<p>Mi fo y spard, allas þat while! {f.38rb} Sori icham & wele ich owe: Min eiʒe doþ mi soule gile, & often bringeþ it ful lowe.’ Riʒt in his chaumber, þer he stode, Him þouʒt his liif was him ful loþ, He wepe sore wiþ dreri mode, & out of his chaumber he goþ. ‘Þat me no deined, ich was wode, To loke wiþ min eiʒen boþe Opon þat leuedi fair & gode; Y wot þerfore þat sche is wroþ. Wroþ sche is, & wele sche may, Wiþ me, þat am sinful chaitif, Þat y schuld hir so bitraye, Þat ichaue loued in al mi liif. Euer me may rewe þat ich while Þat y schuld for ani drede Do Marie þat gret gile. Allas, what schal me to rede? Mi soule y brouʒt in gret periil. A, leuedi, for þi maidenhed Forʒiue me mi sinnes vile, & help me in þis muchel nede. In þis nede þou me saue, Þat y no be neuer forlorn; Graunt me þat y þe craue, For his loue þat of þe was born. A, leuedi, to me þou liþe, For care min hert wil toriue; Michel loue ichil þe kiþe & worþschip þine ioies fiue. Lene me grace, anoþer siþe To se þi bodi wiþouten striue Bi so, ichil be bliþe</p>	<p>90 Mon ennemi est sauf, hélas ! Je suis désolé et à juste titre : Mon œil trompe mon âme, Et souvent l’avilil. » Là dans sa chambre, où il se trouvait, Il lui parut que sa vie le dégoutait, 95 Il sanglota, en proie au désespoir, Et sortit de sa chambre. « Je n’ai pas daigné — j’ai été fou — Regarder de mes deux yeux Cette belle et bonne dame ; 100 Je sais désormais que je l’ai fâchée. Elle est fâchée, et à juste titre, Contre moi, qui suis un pauvre pécheur, Car je l’ai ainsi trahie, Moi qui l’ai aimée toute ma vie. 105 À tout jamais je puis regretter, à tout moment, D’avoir sans crainte Ainsi m’être rendu coupable envers Marie. Hélas, que puis-je faire ? Mon âme est placée en grand péril. 110 Oh, dame, au nom de ta pureté Pardonne-moi mes infâmes péchés, Et aide-moi dans mon besoin. Sauve-moi dans ce besoin, Pour que je ne sois plus perdu ; 115 Accorde-moi ce que je recherche Pour l’amour de celui qui est né de toi. Oh, dame, viens à moi Ou de chagrin mon cœur se brisera ; De grand amour je t’aimerai 120 Et adorerais tes cinq joies. Accorde-moi la grâce, à nouveau, De revoir ton corps sans entrave. Alors j’accepterai volontiers</p>	<p>My enemy I spared, alas the day! I am full of sorrow and well I ought to be: My eye beguiles my soul And often brings it down low.’ As he stood there in his room He felt that his life had become loathsome to him, He wept bitterly with a doleful heart, And he went out of his room. ‘I was reckless not to think it fit To look with both my eyes Upon my Lady so lustrous and good; I believe therefore that she is angry. Angry she is, and well should she be With me, who am a sinful wretch To have betrayed her so, She whom I have loved all my life. I will always regret what I did: That because I was afraid I should Have done such great treachery to Mary. Alas, what shall I do now? I have put my soul in great danger. Ah, Lady, for your maidenhood Forgive me my vile sins, And help me in my great need. In my trouble save me, So that I will not be doomed; Grant me what I beg of you, For the love of Him that you bore. Ah, Lady, return to me, My heart will break from grief, Great love shall I bring you And worship your five joys; Grant me the grace, one more time Without delay to see your body. With this, I will be content</p>
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<p>To be blinde in al mi liue. In al mi liue ichil be glad In swiche penaunce for to ben, Bi so þou graunt þat y þe bad: Efsones y mot þe sen.’ Alday he was in sorwe strong; & afterward þat com þe niȝt; His white honden hard he wrong, He ne may for wo slepe nowiȝt. He herd þan a miri song {f.38va} Of angels þat were so briȝt; Our leuedi com hem among, & seyde ‘clerk, drede [þe] nowiȝt.’ Sche spac þe clerk so fair vntille ‘Ich forȝiue þe al þi gilt; þi praier y schal fulfill: Loke on me, ȝif þat þou wilt. þerwhiles þat þou art hayl & quert, Biheld me wele euerich a bon. Biþenche in þine owen hert þat warisoun no hastow non; þine axing sore schal þe smert, ȝif þou be blinde as ani ston; þou most liue in gret pouert, [W]hen þou hast þine eiȝen forgon. When þou forȝos þi warldes wele, & loue of frendes, fremed & sibbe, Angwis þou most suffri fele, In alle time þat þou schalt libbe.’ þe clerk answerd, & louȝ ‘Min hert is ful of gret solas; Icham bliþer þan brid on bouȝ þat ich haue seyn þine holy face; Of al ioie ichaue anouȝ, Sende me now, leuedi, of þi grace –</p>	<p>125 De rester aveugle toute ma vie. Toute ma vie je me réjouirai D’accomplir cette pénitence, Accorde ce que je t’ai demandé : Il faut que je te voie bien vite. » Tout le jour il demeura en proie à ce cruel chagrin ; 130 Ensuite quand vint la nuit Il tordit violemment ses blanches mains, Il ne pouvait dormir tant il était triste. Il entendit alors le beau chant D’anges éclatants ; 135 Notre dame était venue avec eux Et dit « Clerc, ne crains rien. » Elle s’adressa fort courtoisement au clerc. « Je te pardonne ta faute ; J’accomplirai ta prière : 140 Regarde-moi si tu le souhaites. Tant que tu es vif et en bonne santé, Regarde-moi en entier. Sache en ton cœur Que tu n’as plus de pénitence ; 145 Ta requête te fera souffrir, Quand tu seras aveugle comme une taupe ; Tu devras vivre dans une grande pauvreté Lorsque tu auras abandonné la vue. Lorsque tu abandonneras les biens de ce monde, 150 L’amour de tes amis, de tes frères et de ta famille, Tu endureras de grandes souffrances, Durant toute ta vie durant. » Le clerc répondit en riant « Mon cœur est empli de douce consolation ; 155 Je suis plus joyeux qu’un oiseau dans le taillis D’avoir contemplé ton saint visage ; J’ai suffisamment de joie, Tu peux me renvoyer de ta grâce —</p>	<p>To remain blind all my life. For all my life I shall be glad To do such penance. Therefore, grant me what I have asked of you : That I may soon see you once more.’ All day he was in great sorrow; And afterwards when the night arrived He wrung his white hands hard, And he could not sleep at all for worrying. Then he heard a merry song Of angels so bright; Our Lady came among them And said, ‘Clerk, do not be afraid.’ She spoke so sweetly unto the clerk ‘I have forgiven you all your sins; Your prayer I shall fulfill: Look at me if you wish. While you are hale and hearty, Behold me well, every bone. In your heart know that You have yet to do penance., Your request will cause you great pain; If you become as blind as a stone, You must live in great poverty When you have given up your eyes. When you give up your worldly riches, And love of family, both close and far removed, You will suffer cruel anguish For all the time that you shall live.’ The clerk answered laughingly, ‘My heart is filled with great comfort; I am happier than a bird on a branch Now that I have seen your holy face; This joy is enough, Give me now, Lady, your grace –</p>
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<p>To suffren wo mi body is touz, Bi so ich mot hauen a place. A place graunt me, Marie, Pat mi soule mot wone, Wiþ ioie & wiþ melodye; In heuen bifor þi swet sone.’ Sche seyð ‘mi clerk, no wepe þou nouzt, No make no mornand chere. Pi bon þou hast me bisouzt, Ich graunt þe in al maner; Into þat ioie þou schalt be brouzt, When þou hast laten þi liif here, Pat mi swete sone haþ wrouzt To hem þat ben him leue & dere. Dere þou art to me, ywis. Ozain to heuen now ich mot wende Pou schalt com into þat blis, When þou hast laten þi liues ende.’ Vp into heuen anon sche steyze, {f.38vb} Ber sche is quen & leuedi corn. Be clerk his eizen fast he wreiþe, He wende his sizt were forlorn. When it was day, ful wele he seiþe Pis warldes pride al him biforn. ‘Merci, leuedi’ he crid on heiþe ‘Wele be þe time þat þou were born. Pat þou were born of o wiman, Blisced be euer þe day. Ber liueþ no wiþt þat telle can Be ioie þat of þe springeþ ay.’ Leuedi, flour & frouf of Iesse, þou art maiden, gode & hende, Godes moder, mild & fre; Michel þou helpest al mankende: On þi seruaunt haue pite,</p>	<p>160 165 170 175 180 185 190</p>	<p>Mon corps robuste pourra endurer le chagrin Si ainsi j’y gagne une place. Accorde-moi une place, Marie, Pour que mon âme puisse demeurer Dans la joie et dans la mélodie ; Au paradis devant ton doux fils. » Elle dit « Mon cher clerk, ne pleure pas, Ne porte plus le deuil. Cette grâce que tu m’as réclamée, Je te l’accorde entièrement ; Dans cette joie tu seras mené, Dès que tu auras quitté ta vie ici-bas, Que mon doux fils a préparé À ceux qui lui sont proches et chers. Tu m’es cher, en vérité. Je dois maintenant retourner au paradis ; Tu viendras dans cette joie, Lorsque tu auras achevé la fin de ta vie. » Elle remonta aussitôt au ciel, où elle est reine et dame bénie. Le clerk plissa les yeux bien fort, Il crut que sa vue était perdue. Lorsqu’il fit jour, il vit clairement Toute la splendeur de ce monde devant lui. « Merci, ô Dame, s’écria-t-il, Vive le temps de ta naissance ! Que de ta naissance d’une femme Le jour soit béni à jamais. Nul homme qui vive ne saurait dire La joie qui toujours de toi sourd. » Dame, fleur et fruit de Jessé, Tu es vierge, bonne et noble, Mère de Dieu, douce et gracieuse ; Tu aides beaucoup l’humanité : Aie pitié de ton serviteur,</p>	<p>So that my body has the strength to suffer the calamity, And by this action may I have a place. Grant me a place, Mary, So that my soul may live, Before your beloved son in heaven, Surrounded by joy and sweet music. She said, ‘Clerk of mine, do not weep, Nor make a mournful face. The favour you have asked of me, I grant it to you in its entirety. When you have departed your life on earth, You shall be brought into the joy That my beloved son has prepared For those who are loved and dear to him. And truly, you are dear to me Now I must return again to heaven. You shall come into that bliss When you have finished the end of your life. Then immediately she ascended into heaven Where she is queen and blessed Lady. The clerk shut his eyes tightly, He believed his sight was lost. When day arrived, he could still see All the splendour of the world before him. ‘Thank you, Lady,’ he cried to the heavens. ‘Happy be the moment when you were born. When you were born of a woman, Blessed forever be that day. No living being can describe The joy that springs from you continually.’ Lady, flower and fruit of Jesse, You are the Virgin, good and gracious, The mother of God, noble and mild; You give all mankind great help: Have pity on your servant,</p>
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<p>& saue ous, lord, fram þe fende & graunt ous, 3if þi wille be When we schul of þis warld wende When we schal wend out of þis liue. Here our prayer & our steuen: Bring ous, for þine ioies fiue, Into þe swete blis of heuen. Amen.</p> <p><i>Explicit</i></p>	<p>195</p> <p>200</p>	<p>Sauve-nous, Seigneur, du démon, Et entends-nous, si telle est ta volonté, Lorsque nous devrions quitter ce monde Lorsque nous quitterons cette vie. Écoute-notre prière et notre voix : Amène-nous, pour l'amour de tes cinq joies, Dans la douce joie du ciel. Amen.</p> <p><i>Explicit</i></p>	<p>And save us, Lord, from the devil And requite us, if it is your will, When we must take leave of this world, When we leave this life. Hear our prayer and our voice: Bring us, for the sake of your five joys, Into the sweet bliss of heaven. Amen.</p> <p><i>Explicit.</i></p>
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