

Joachim Du Bellay

Selected Poems, mainly from *Les Regrets*,
and *L'Olive augmentée*

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Translator's Introduction

Du Bellay's *L'Olive*, a collection of sonnets written in close imitation of Petrarch, first appeared in 1549, and forms the first significant sonnet collection in French. The emblem of the olive-tree replaces Petrarch's laurel, adopted by the Italian poet to represent his lady, Laura. In Du Bellay's second edition, *L'Olive augmentée*, of 1550, the dedication to *his* lady is exchanged for one to Marguerite de Valois, sister of Henry II. In 1558 he published the poems he had brought back with him from Rome, including the *Antiquités de Rome*, and the sonnets of *Les Regrets*.

D'un vanneur de blé aux vents

(The Winnower to the Winds)

To you, fleeting things,
That on passing wings
Through the world fly free,
And with murmuring sigh
The green shade passed by,
Sweetly shake the tree,

I pledge these violets,
Lilies, mignonettes,
And these roses new,
With each crimson rose
Only now disclosed,
And these wild pinks too.

With your breath so sweet
Cool the plain complete,
Cool this space and stray,
While I labour again
As I winnow my grain
In the heat of the day.

'La nuit froide et sombre'

(Chanson)

The night cold and sombre
With dark shadows covers
The earth and the sky,
Like honey, as sweet,
On heavenly feet,
Comes sleep to the eye.

Then day, renewing,
Its labour pursuing,
Discloses the light,
And with glow diverse
Weaves this universe,
A vast poem bright.

'Quand ton col de couleur rose'

(Baiser)

When your neck like a rose
You offer me,
When eyes cloud sweetly,
Eyelids half-close,

My soul melts with desire
Fills with ardour again,
Can scarce suffer such pain
The force of that fire.

When your lips approach mine,
And, close to the bower,
I could gather the flower
Of your breath divine,

When the sigh of that odour,
Where tongues, entwined,
Moistly frolic, and wind,
Fanning my sweet ardour,

It would seem I dine
With the gods, all is gracious,
I drink long, and delicious
Draughts of their wine.

If the good that is near
Greater good, may so take,
Or leave me, why make
Mine forever the greater?

Do you fear that your light
Might make me divine
And without you I'll climb
To eternal delight?

Sweet, you've naught to fear
Wherever you are,
My heaven, afar,
And my paradise is near.

Sonnets from L'Olive augmentée

'Je ne quiers pas la fameuse couronne,'

(L'Olive augmentée: 1)

For that famous crown I feel no longing,
That sacred wreath, gold-haired Apollo wore;
Nor that of the god in India, they adore:
A simple hat round my head goes circling.

Still less do I wish for the palm they bring,
That soft branch adorning Cyprian shore:
One alone, that Athens honours more,
I wish for, which Heaven has in its granting.

O happy bough, that the wise Goddess
Chose to keep, to grace her sacred altar,
And honour her, the bough that she held dear!

Then, let mind grant me the skilfulness
To sing of you, for now I hope to render
You the equal of immortal laurel, here!

Note: The olive is taken to be an emblem, as Petrarch adopted the laurel as an emblem of Laura, and may refer to his lady's name.

'D'amour, de grace, et de haulte valeur'

(L'Olive augmentée: 2)

With love, with grace and with noble value
The divine fires were bound, and the sky
Clothed with a precious mantle, on high,
Of ardent rays of every tint and hue.

All was filled with beauty, goodness too,
The tranquil sea, the gracious winds that vie,
When she was born here, where we sigh,
She to whom all Earth's honour does accrue.

She took her colour from the lily white,
Her hair from gold, her lips from the rose,
And from the sun her eyes glowing bright.

The heavens employed their liberality
And in her spirit their seed did enclose,
From the gods her name won immortality.

'Loyre fameux, qui ta petite source'

(L'Olive augmentée: 3)

Famed Loire, who swell your little source
With a host of streams and mighty rivers,
And who, from afar, send your clear waters
Down to the Ocean, in your lively course,

Your royal head lifts itself with force
Among the finest of all the others,
Like a bull among his lesser brothers,
Though envious Po in his anger roars.

Command then the gentlest of Naiads
To leave their deep and humid quarters,
With you, whom their paternal flood I name,

To celebrate with joyous *aubades*,
She, who you, and your flowing daughters,
Has deified with her eternal fame.

'Me soit amour ou rude, ou favorable,'

(L'Olive augmentée: 35)

Whether love is harsh to me or favourable,
Whether Fate sets me higher or lower,
All that I feel in my heart for love of her,
Till death, and beyond, will prove durable.

I am the rock of faith, not mutable
As the sea, or sky, or winds that blow,
And whether to me the seasons show
Themselves foul or fair, I am indomitable.

Sooner would diamond learn to soften
Of its own will or, carved with a burin
Of lead by some engraver, take new form,

Than, through fresh good or ill, my heart,
In which rests the true subject of my art,
Your great worth, its own self transform.

'Or' que la nuit son char étoilé guide'

(L'Olive augmentée: 54)

Now that Night her starry chariot plies,
She who brings silence and sleep again,
I'll loose the bridle, to relieve my pain
And welcome tears, and cries, and sighs,

O Earth! O liquid Element! O Skies!
O winds! O woods! Rock, plain, and mountain,
All desert land, each riverbank and fountain,
All that is full and all that empty lies,

O demigods! O nymphs of the trees!
O water-nymphs, and every creature,
If ever you have felt true sympathy,

Deign sorrowfully to hear my sad pleas,
Since my faith, my verse, and my amour,
Can in my Lady find no trace of pity.

'Que n'es-tu las (mon desir) de tant suyvre'

(L'Olive augmentée: 58)

Are you not weary (my desire) of following,
That which is so lively in its flight?
Do you not see it, at my slow suit, delight
To fly from the snares of love, itself freeing?

That false hope, its sweetness intoxicating,
Will halt me, in an instant, then excite,
Raise me on high then plunge me into night,
Slay me, and then return me to the living.

So carried here and there, from place to place
By Love, I never think to halt the race,
My mad desire, and end so wild a ride.

Thus have you made me a prey to danger,
If I cannot of my own will restrain you,
Now that I take the blind boy as my guide.

'Déjà la nuit en son parc amassoit'

(L'Olive augmentée: 83)

Already night has gathered in her train
The wandering stars in vast array,
And to deep caves, fleeing from the day,
Drives her dark horses onwards, once again.

Already the sky in India shows a stain
Of pale red, from Dawn's blond tresses stray
A hail of pearls, enriching the display
Of her treasures, with their precious rain.

When, in the west, like a living star,
My river, on your grassy shore, afar,
A smiling Nymph, appears to my sight!

Then, seeing Aurora appear anew,
The day blushes with a double hue,
Of both Angevin, and Oriental light.

'Dieu qui reçois en ton giron humide'

(L'Olive augmentée: 95)

River-god who receives in your humid flow,
The dual stream from my weeping eyes,
That to your waters endlessly supplies
Its flood to swell your liquid course below.

When was it, River-god, that, as your waves go
Tasting the wind, you saw waving tresses rise
In the empty vault of your lovely skies,
Unbridled, voyaging there, to and fro?

It was then a hundred Nymphs or more,
Captive in your arms, attained the shore,
Leaving the pale hollows of your prison.

It was then that the gods and the year,
Renewed, in my happy country here,
The bright gold of their ancient season.

'Ny par les bois les Driades courantes,'

(L'Olive augmentée: 96)

Not Dryads running lightly through the trees,
Nor squadrons in the field, proudly armed,
Nor great ships that sail the seas unharmed,
Nor among the flowers the wandering bees,

Nor forest tresses waving in the breeze,
Nor birds among the branches becalmed,
Nor night with glowing torches charmed,
Nor the curves of mountain sinuosities,

Nor gilded pillars in holy temples,
Nor marbled palaces' elaborate lines,
Nor even gold, or pearl embroidery,

Nor all the beauty of the arching skies,
Nor sweet pleasure could delight my eyes,
Not seeing the bright Sun that shines on me.

'S'il a dict vray, seiche pour moy l'ombrage'

(L'Olive augmentée: 98)

If he spoke true, then parch for me the shade
Of the holy tree, ornament of my verse,
My name be unknown to the universe,
And Heaven's angry rains on me cascade.

If he spoke true, of stormy sighs I'm made,
Their cruelty the harsh cliffs shall rehearse,
In the abyss of despair let me immerse,
And to shipwreck's peril be conveyed.

If he lied, may the white hand of ivory
Crown my brow with the leaves I honour:
May the stars be the limits of my glory:

May skies benign, to me, reveal their trace:
May your two eyes, the flames that I adore,
Guide my ship to the harbour of your grace.

'Esprit divin, que la troupe honorée,'

(L'Olive augmentée: 105)

Spirit divine, whom the honoured band
Of the twin mount admires on hearing,
New-born swan, that soars in its singing,
From temperate shores to Hyperborean:

If my Liré, enamoured by what this land
Knows of your glory, fails in its retelling,
I love, admire, adore yet, the inspiring
Flight of the golden pen in your hand.

The proud Arno worships on its shore
The sacred Laurel, alive for evermore,
And your Délie enhances your slow Saône.

My Loire too, a demigod through my art,
Extends his open arms, with burning heart,
To the olive shoot that on his banks I've sown.

Note: The poem is to Maurice Scève (c.1500 –c.1564), poet of Lyon and the River Saône, whose *Délie, objet de plus haulte vertu* (1544) is the first French poetic collection modelled after Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, a series of love poems addressed to a Lady, though composed of epigrams and emblematic mottoes, not sonnets as in Du Bellay's *L'Olive*.

'Si nostre vie est moins qu'une journée'

(L'Olive augmentée: 113)

If our life is less than a single day
In eternity, and the year in its turn
Wastes our days, without hope of return,
If everything is born to decay,

Why my captive soul your dreams display?
Why for the shadow of our day so burn,
If for flight to a clearer one you yearn,
Graced with wings to help you on your way?

There, is the good, every soul's desire.
There, the rest to which all men aspire,
There, is the love, there the delight in store.

There, O my soul, in highest heaven clear,
There you may realise the Idea
Of the beauty, that in this world I adore.

Sonnets from *Les Regrets*

'Je ne veux point fouiller au sein de la nature,'

(Les Regrets: 1)

I'll not delve to the heart of nature,
I'll not search the universe's soul,
I'll not sound the abyss down below,
Nor devise celestial architecture.

I paint not, in my art, so rich a picture,
Those noble themes are absent from my verse,
But to write, for better or for worse,
The diverse happenings here, I'll venture.

I moan to my verses, when I feel regret;
I laugh with them; tell them every secret,
As to the closest confidants of my heart.

Therefore I've no wish to adorn the same,
No need to dress them in a finer name
Than news, scraps of the commentator's art.

'Je ne veux feuilleter les exemplaires Grecs,'

(Les Regrets: 4)

I'll not trawl the Greek seas with my nets,
Nor Horace's fine lines will I retrace,
Less do I aspire to Petrarch's grace,
Or Ronsard's voice, in singing my *Regrets*.

Those who are Apollo's true sacred poets
Will grant their verse a bold fiery face:
I, filled with an inspiration low and base,
Am not so learned in their deepest secrets.

I'll content myself with writing anything
That passion itself summons me to sing,
Without seeking any other argument.

Thus I've not sought their claims to rehearse
Who boast that they'll live on in their verse,
And so survive the grave's dark monument.

'Las, ou est maintenant ce mespris de fortune?'

(Les Regrets: 6)

Alas, where now is that contempt for fate?
Where is that heart fit for adversity,
That honest craving for immortality,
And that fine flame that scorned the second rate?

Where are those sweet joys of darkness late
The Muses gave me, when at liberty,
On some far shore's sweet verdant tapestry,
I'd lead their dance, and moonlight celebrate?

Destiny and fate's my mistress now,
My heart, her master, to which she would bow,
Is slave to a thousand dull regrets instead.

I give no thought now to posterity,
That divine ardour, is long gone from me,
And the Muses, like strangers, now are fled.

'Ne t'ébahis, Ronsard, la moitié de mon âme,'

(Les Regrets: 8)

Don't be astonished, you, who are half my heart,
Ronsard, if France reads nothing more of me,
If, breathing the atmosphere of Italy,
Its burning ardour fails to fire my art.

Holy rays from your lady's sweet eyes dart:
The holy favour that your prince showed me,
And, Ronsard, you: that alone, is worthy
And can its living fire to the soul impart.

But I, who lack the rays of my bright sun,
How can I feel the warmth as does one
Who is so close now to his flame divine?

The sunlit slopes here their vines disclose,
But, from the Hyperborean, eternal snows
Bring winter's chill: and rain and sleet are mine.

'Ce n'est le fleuve tusque au superbe rivage,'

(Les Regrets: 10)

It's not the Tuscan river with its proud shore
Nor the Latin air, Ronsard, nor the Palatine,
Requires Latin to grace this tongue of mine,
Making my native language strange once more.

It's the tedium of living, three years and more,
Like some Prometheus, chained to the Aventine,
Where cruel fate brought me to serve and pine,
Not love's sweet yoke, wretched here and poor.

What then, Ronsard: if, to far exile subject,
Ovid was forced to claim a barbarous dialect,
To gain a hearing, for this happier change who could

Now, blame me? None, since the French I speak,
Though you may be equal to Roman and Greek,
On these Latin shores is scarcely understood.

‘Après avoir longtemps erré sur le rivage’

(Les Regrets: 17)

After long wandering on the darkened plain,
Where hosts of wretched shadows grieve below,
You’ve reached that place, to which we all must go,
Fleeing from servile poverty’s dull pain.

We, along those same banks, stray in vain,
Arms outstretched towards the steersman so,
Who drives us back; we lacking, to our woe,
The fee, a verse, to summon him again.

So you enjoy sweet ease, without a care,
And as the learned in sweet love do there,
Lost with your lover on that leafy shore,

You drink forgetfulness, to past toil blind,
No longer dreaming of those left behind,
Wailing to cross, or labouring at the oar.

'Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage,'

(Les Regrets: 31)

Happy, the man who finds sweet journey's end,
Like Ulysses, or he of the Golden Fleece,
Returning home, well-travelled, wise, to Greece:
To live life out, among his own again!

Alas, when will I see the soft smoke rise
From my own village, in what far season
Shall I gaze on my poor house and garden,
Which are my province, and the greater prize?

My love's deeper for what my fathers' built,
Than Roman palace-fronts of marble, gilt;
My love's deeper for good slate; more rare

My love for my French Loire than Latin Tiber;
My Liré than the Palatine Hill; and more
Than the sea breezes, the sweet Angevin air.

'Ô qu'heureux est celui qui peut passer son âge'

(Les Regrets: 38)

Oh, happy is he who can pass his days
Among his equals! And without deception,
Free of fear, or envy or ambition,
In his own home pursue his own quiet ways!

That wretched need to garner more praise,
Never tyrannises over free affection;
His deepest desire, devoid of passion,
Never far from our true heritage strays.

He never delves in the business of another,
He is court, king, favour, and his own master.
His expectations rest on himself alone.

He'll not eat in a far land, as a stranger,
Nor for another place himself in danger:
Richer, in that there's nothing more he'd own.

'J'aime la liberté, et languis en service,'

(Les Regrets: 38)

I love liberty, and I languish in service,
I hate the court, yet I'm a courtier,
I hate pretence, yet masked I appear;
I love honesty, find only malice.

I dislike property, and serve avarice,
I loathe honours, yet towards them steer,
I would keep faith, yet must break it here,
I seek virtue, and find only vice.

I seek rest, but find there's none for me,
I grasp at pleasure, and only find ennui,
I don't like discourse, reason's my thing:

I'm ill, yet forced to be a traveller,
I'm born for the Muse, yet they make me labour,
Am I not, Morel, a most sorry being?

'Vivons, Gordes, vivons, vivons, et pour le bruit'

(Les Regrets: 53)

Let's live, let's live, Gordes, and ignore
The mutterings of the old, their long defeat:
Let's live, since this life's so short and sweet,
And even kings have use of it, no more.

Day ebbs to twilight, light dawns as before,
And season after season still we greet,
But when sweet light is gone, the dark complete,
Death brings eternal night, sleep evermore.

Like creatures then should we live and die?
No, raising our heads towards the sky,
To taste of pleasure's sweetness life aspires.

He's a fool, who, exchanging certainty
Of present good for dubious futurity,
Would always contradict his own desires.

'Je ne découvre ici les mystères sacrés'

(*Les Regrets*: 77)

The sacred mysteries of holy Roman
Priests, I'll not uncover here, I'd not write
To make a modest virgin blush on sight,
I only touch on vices barely hidden.

But, you say, my *Regrets* are badly planned,
Seeing that my words are often light:
The sea, I say, can't always roar its might,
Phoebus often kept his arrows in hand.

If you encounter aught that's facile still;
If not yet christened with the mask of ill,
Is the verse I sigh on Ausonian shore:

The moan I make, Dilliers, is genuine:
If I laugh, it's as one does above the wine,
It's sardonic, as they say, nothing more.

'Je n'écris point d'amour, n'étant point amoureux,'

(Les Regrets: 79)

I write not of love, not feeling amorous,
I write not of beauty, having no mistress,
I write nothing sweet, am wed to rudeness,
I write not of pleasure, being dolorous:

I write not of joy, since I'm lugubrious,
I write not of favour, lacking my princess,
I write not of wealth, devoid of riches,
I write not of health, I'm somewhat languorous:

I write not of court, far from my prince,
I write not of France now, in this province,
I write not of honour, here they're beasts:

I write not of friendship, all is feigned,
I write not of virtue, here's none, again,
I write not of knowledge, among priests.

'Si je monte au Palais, je n'y trouve qu'orgueil,'

(Les Regrets: 80)

If I climb to the Palace, I find only pride,
Vice disguised, nothing but ceremony,
The noise of tambourines, strange harmony,
And red robes flowing in a crimson tide:

If I go down to the bank, I'm well supplied
With novelty, new faces, infinite usury,
Rich exiled Florentines, are there, in plenty,
And the poor Siennese, to grief allied:

If I wander, somewhere I'm bound to pass
The hordes of Venus, in lascivious mass,
Flaunting a thousand amorous charms the while:

If from new Rome I resolve to cross over
And enter the old Rome, there I discover
Only dead monuments, a vast stony pile.

'Veux-tu savoir, Duthier, quelle chose c'est Rome?'

(Les Regrets: 82)

Duthier: would you know what this Rome is?
Rome is a public scaffold to all the Earth;
A scene, a theatre, where there's no dearth
Of what proceeds from man's activities.

Here's the play of Fate: just as she may wish
To cast us down or make us men of worth,
Here each will show, regardless of his birth,
As he is, with the name the crowd makes his.

Here of false and true, the news is brought,
Here the courtesans make love, hold court,
Here ambition and finesse are rife,

Here freedom makes the humble audacious,
Here idleness renders the good man vicious,
Here the vile wretch repeats the facts of life.

'D'ou vient cela, Mauny, que tant plus on s'efforce'

(Les Regrets: 87)

How is it, Mauny, that the more one tries
To escape this place, the more some spirit,
(And what is that, but some god within it?)
By some sweet force holds us in its ties?

Is it a sign of love, that bait in sweet disguise,
Or some other poison, which we admit
Only to feel our souls depart, bit by bit,
Like a body changed to a tree before our eyes?

A thousand times I've tried to quit this place,
But now I sense my hair the leaves embrace,
My arms long branches, deep roots my feet.

In short, a living trunk of wood, no more,
Bewailing my transformation on this shore,
English myrtle, Alcina's isle as sweet.

Note: The English knight transformed to myrtle, by the sorceress Alcina on her enchanted island, appears in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

‘Qui choisira pour moi la racine d’Ulysse?’

(*Les Regrets*: 88)

Who’ll search out Odysseus’ root for me?
Who’ll guard me from the present danger,
Of Circe altering me to her creature,
A slave to vice for all eternity?

With Mélisande’s ring, who’ll encircle me,
And disenchant me like a second Roger?
What Mercury shall my poor self deliver,
So my life’s not lost to love’s slavery?

Who’ll let me pass by in perfect silence,
Deaf to the feigned sweetness of the Sirens?
Who’ll chase away those voracious Harpies?

Who’ll steal for me some power from the skies,
To recall my senses, and restore my eyes?
Who’ll guarantee I’ll eat my bread in peace?

Note: The legend of Mélisande is well known from Maeterlinck’s play *Péleas and Mélisande*, and Debussy’s opera. Roger, or Ruggiero, is the knight in Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* whom Bradamante freed from an enchanted castle.

'En mille crespillons les cheveux se friser,'

(Les Regrets: 92)

The hair frizzed, a thousand curls in place,
Plucked eyebrows, choice scents above, below,
Perfume her tainted flesh from top to toe,
With white and crimson hiding her whole face:

To go masked at night, masked speech embrace,
Feign to be seized by love at every throw,
Hiss all night through from jealousy so,
And taken by one man, show another grace:

To dance, to sing, to play, to romp in bed,
Two tongues in the mouth, it's often said,
Here the courtesans are common game.

But what need have I to teach you this?
If you want to know such, Gordes, and wish
To know still more, then ask La Chassaigne.

'Que dirons-nous, Melin, de cette cour romaine,'

(Les Regrets: 101)

What shall we say, Melin, of this court,
Where each takes a different road to gain,
And highest honours here the least attain,
With vice, virtue, work, no pain, reach port?

One finds advancement cannot be bought,
Another's that same means must explain,
One by severity does himself maintain,
Another wins hearts by sweetness unsought:

One's seen to be advanced to no advantage,
Another gains from seeming disadvantage,
One man's darkness is another man's light:

Who knows if wisdom leads us to success,
Who knows if ignorance wins happiness:
Which of the two, Melin, is the more right?

'Voici le carnaval, menons chacun la sienne,'

(Les Regrets: 120)

It's the Carnival, let each do as he may,
Let's dance in masks, and let's go walking,
View Mark Antony, see the Zany clowning,
With Il Magnifico, in Venetian play:

Let's see the Palio run, the ancient way,
And see the foolish ox, his nose bleeding,
Let's see the fierce bull proudly fighting,
And see what skill Italian arms display:

Let's see a storm of perfumed eggs let fly,
And fiery rockets whistling through the sky.
And then, let's hurry onwards to confession:

Tomorrow we'll visit the saints in holy wise,
There we'll make love, but only with our eyes,
For the law allows but minor indiscretion.

‘Scève, je me trouvai comme le fils d’Anchise’

(Les Regrets: 137)

As Aeneas did, I found myself likewise,
Leaving hell, Scève, entering Elysium,
After those ice-covered peaks, to come
Down to sweet Lyon, Lyon that I prize.

Its long point of land, the Saône divides,
Breeds a thousand artisans, a mighty hum.
No ill to London, Venice, Anvers whom,
Lyon still equals in its merchandise.

I was surprised to meet so many couriers,
To see so many bankers, gunsmiths, printers,
Thicker there than flowers in the meadow,

But I was more astonished by the bridges
Over which one passes, to mount the ridges,
So many fine houses, such fine farms below.

'Devaux, la mer reçoit tous les fleuves du monde,'

(Les Regrets: 138)

The sea receives the rivers of the world,
Without increase, Devaulx, and like the sea
Is peerless Paris, where one drowns in plenty
In all that, there, on every side's unfurled.

Paris in learning is a Greece impearled,
A Rome in grandeur Paris now, we see,
An Asia in riches, and in rare novelty
A second Africa, about us whirled.

In short, Devaulx, on seeing this great city,
My eyes, long-exercised previously,
In not marvelling at stranger things: I stood

There dazed. Though what displeased my eye,
Was what entrances the idle passers by,
The crush of carts, the manners, and the mud.

‘Autant comme l'on peut en un autre langage’

(Les Regrets: 148)

As well as in our tongue we can convey
Another tongue; as readily as Nature
Can be revealed in art; or portraiture
Our own face, true to life, can yet portray,

So, even more skilfully, you display
With the pen, in learned literature,
The grace, the manner, bearing and stature,
Of him who wrote of Aeneas, in his day.

That same candour, that grace divine,
That same sweetness and majestic line,
Seen in your Virgil, that self-same grandeur,

French renders, by your heavenly power.
Des Masures, it is, no Caesar at this hour
Or Maecenas, who does those virtues honour.

Note: Louis Des Masures (c1515-1574) published his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* progressively from 1547 to 1560.

‘On donne les degrés au savant écolier,’

(Les Regrets: 153)

They grant the wise scholar a degree
They grant a state to the man of justice,
They grant the courtier a rich benefice,
The general a gold chain for bravery,

They grant the brave explorer his booty,
They grant officials the rights of office,
They grant the servant pay for his service,
And the poet garlands from the laurel tree.

Why then make Calliope lament anew,
At the little that men grant her noble crew?
Jodelle, you must choose another labour,

Than that of the Muse, to remedy indigence.
What wages are you owed for your pleasure,
Since the pleasure itself is our recompense?

‘Dans l’enfer de son corps mon esprit attaché’

(Les Regrets: 174)

In the hell of my body, my chained spirit,
(And that hell, Madame, has been my absence)
For four years and more, has done penance
For the old crimes with which it was sullied.

Now, the gods be thanked, you release it
From that painful hell, and by your presence,
Reduced to the first state of its divine essence,
It has discharged the weight of sin upon it.

Now captured by the grace your favour yields
It takes sweet rest in these Elysian Fields,
Nor would it leave the place where it grows well.

Then, Madame, send it not to Lethe, drinking,
Lest, doing so, it be fired with fresh longing,
To return once more into the body’s hell.

'Si la vertu, qui est de nature immortelle,'

(Les Regrets: 177)

If virtue, that's born from immortal nature,
As immortal things are the seeds of Heaven,
Showed itself to our eyes, as to our spirits, then,
If our dazed senses could yet take its measure,

Not only those who imagine it so to be,
And those to whom vice is monstrous, odious,
But one would see even the wholly vicious
Held by its beauty, loveliest of beauties.

If that virtue would be such as left them dazed,
All who might see it, Venus, are you amazed,
That the image of my princess fills my heart?

If I adore her virtue, and from affection,
Speak so frequently of her perfection,
Does that same virtue from her eyes not dart?

'Celui qui de plus près atteint la déité,'

(Les Regrets: 184)

He who comes closest to divinity,
Soars, Bouju, to the skies, on noblest wing,
Is he who, immortal virtue following,
Least feels the weight of our humanity.

He whom the gods deny such felicity,
But admires it ever, as a beautiful thing,
Honours those who have it, virtue-loving,
He deserves the second rank, surely.

Since for the first my flight's too weak and base,
Among the second I hope to find a place:
And how better might I that status claim,

Than by praising that flower, whose great flight
Shining amongst the first, their noblest light,
Leaves none behind who might attempt the same?

