

Planctus ante nescia
Latin Text and Translation¹

1a. *Planctus ante nescia*
Planctu lassor anxia,
crucior dolore.

1a. I, who never knew lament before,
Am now distraught and exhausted with lament;
I am racked with grief.

1b. *Orbat orbem radio,*
me Iudea filio,
gaudio, dulcore.

1b. Judea is robbing the earth of its light,
me of my son,
my joy, my sweetness.

2a. *Fili, dulcor unice,*
Singulare gaudium,
Matrem flentem respice,
Porrige solacium!

2a. Son, only sweetness,
singular joy,
look at your weeping mother,
offer some solace!

2b. *Pectus, mentem, lumina*
torquent tua vulnera.
Que mater, que femina
tam felix, tam misera!

2b. My chest, my mind, my eyes
are tormented by your wounds.
What mother, what woman
so fortunate, so miserable!

3a. *Flos florum,*
dux morum,
venie vena,
quam gravis
in clavis
est tibi pena.

3a. Flower of flowers,
model of virtue,
vein of forgiveness:
how severe
from the nails
is your punishment.

3b. *Proh dolor!*
hinc color
effugit oris!
Hinc ruit,
hinc fluit
unda cruoris.

3b. Alas!
The color
is draining from his face!
There rushes forth,
there flows forth
a wave of blood.

4a. *O quam sero deditus,*
quam cito me deseris!
O quam digne genitus,
quam abjecte moreris!

4a. O how recently given,
how soon you leave me!
O how nobly born,
how abjectly you die!

¹ The *Planctus* is no. 22 in *Songs in British Sources c. 1150-1300*, ed. Helen Deeming, *Musica Britannica* 95 (London: Stainer and Bell, 2013), reproduced by permission; a few readings from John Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle Ages: Song, Narrative, Dance and Drama, 1050-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 131-6. Some punctuation has been adjusted. The translation is Prof. Otter's, aided by both Deeming's and Stevens's.

4b. O quis amor corporis
tibi fecit spolia!
O quam dulcis pignoris
quam amara premia!

4b. O what love
has robbed you of your body!
O what a sweet pledge
and what a bitter price to pay!

5a. O pia gracia sic morientis!
O scelus, o zelus invade gentis!

5a. What benign grace in one dying in this way!
What crime, what zeal in the thankless people!

5b. O fera dextera cruxifigentis!
O lenis in penis mens patientis!

5b. How fierce the hand of the crucifier!
How mild in his pain the mind of the sufferer!

6a. O verum eloquium
iusti Symeonis!
Quem promisit gladium
sencio doloris!

6a. How true the pronouncement
of honest Simeon!
The sword of sorrow that he promised—
I feel it now!

6b. Gemitus, suspiria
lacrimaeque foris
vulneris indicia
sunt interioris.

6b. The groans, the sighs,
the tears on the outside
are only the sign
of an inner wound.

7a. Parcito proli,
mors, mihi noli!
Tunc mihi soli
sola mederis.

7a. Spare my child,
death! Do not spare me!
Then you will earn
my unique gratitude.

7b. Morte beate
separer a te,
dummodo, nate,
non crucieris!

7b. In death I would gladly
be separated from you,
if only you, child,
were not being tortured!

8a. Quod crimen, que scelera
gens commisit effera!
Vincla, virgas, vulnera,
sputa, spinas, cetera
sine culpa patitur.

8a. What crime, what atrocities
have the savage people committed!
The shackles, the rods, the wounds,
the spitting, the thorns, all the rest
he suffers without guilt.

8b. Nato, queso, parcite!
Matrem interficite!
Aut in crucis stipite
nos simul affigite!
Male solus moritur.

8b. I beg you, spare my child!
Kill the mother!
Or on the beam of the cross
hang us together!
He should not die alone.

9a. Reddite mestissime
Corpus vel exanime,
ut sic minoratus

9a. Give this inconsolable woman
at least his lifeless body,
so that, thus lessened,

crescat cruciatus
osculis, amplexibus.

the torment may grow
with kisses and embraces.

9b. Utinam sic doleam,
ut dolore peream,
nam plus est dolori
sine morte mori
quam perire citius.

9a. If only I could grieve so much
that I would die of pain!
For it is greater pain
to die without death
than to perish immediately.

10a. Quid stupes, gens misera,
terram se movere,
Obscurari sidera,
languidos lugere?

10a. Why are you surprised, miserable people,
that the earth is shaking,
that the celestial bodies are darkening
and are weakened by mourning?

10b. Solem privas lumine:
quomodo luceret?
Egrum medicamine:
unde convaleret?

10b. You rob the sun of its light:
how is it to shine?
You rob the sick man of his medicine:
how can he heal?

11a. Homicidam liberas,
Jesum dans supplicio!
Male pacem toleras:
veniet seditio.

11a. You free a murderer
and give Jesus up to execution!
You cannot stand peace:
Unrest is on its way.

11b. Famis, cedis, pestium
scies docta pondere
Jesum tibi mortuum,
Barrabamque vivere!

11b. Famine, slaughter, pestilence:
you will learn under their weight
that Jesus is dead to you
and Barrabas is alive!

12a. Gens ceca, gens flebilis,
age penitentiam
dum tibi flexibilis
est Jesus ad veniam.

12a. Blind people, lamentable people,
do penance
while Jesus is inclined
to forgive you.

12b. Quos fecisti, fontium
prosint tibi flumina,
sitim sedant omnium,
cuncta lavant crimina.

12b. Those fountains that you made—
may their streams benefit you.
May they quench everyone's thirst,
and wash away all crimes.

13a. Flete, Syon filie,
tante grate gratie.
Iuvenis angustie
sibi sunt deliciae
pro vestris offensis.

13a. Weep, daughters of Zion,
for so much grace so freely given!
The young man's anguish
is a delight to him
for the sake of your offenses.

13b. In amplexus ruite

13b. Rush into his embraces

dum pendet in stipite!
Mutuis amplexibus
se parat amantibus
bracchiis extensis.

14. In hoc solo gaudeo,
quod pro vobis doleo:
Vicem, queso, reddite:
Matris dampnum plangite.

while he is hanging on the beam!
He readies himself
for mutual embraces with those who love him,
with his arms outstretched.

I take joy only in this,
that I am grieving on your behalf.
I pray you, repay the favor:
Weep for a mother's loss.