Planctus ante nescia
Latin Text and Translation

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

1b. Orbat orbem radio,
me ludea filio,
gaudio, dulcore.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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. 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. Give this inconsolable woman at least his lifeless body, so that, thus lessened,
crescat cruciatus
osculis, amplexibus.

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

13b. In amplexus ruite
dum pendet in stipite! while he is hanging on the beam!
Mutuis amplexibus He readies himself
se parat amantibus for mutual embraces with those who love him,
bracchiis extensis. with his arms outstretched.

14. In hoc solo gaudeo, I take joy only in this,
quod pro vobis doleo: that I am grieving on your behalf.
Vicem, queso, reddite: I pray you, repay the favor:
Matris dampnum plangite. Weep for a mother's loss.