

Bordesholmer Marienklage – Dramatic Performance

St Hugh's College, Oxford, [Workshop](#) 'The Sorrowful Virgin' on 24 March 2025

Translations by Monty Powell

Introitus: Response for Palm Sunday for the 9th reading at Matins. Cf. Ps 21:12

Circumdederunt me viri mendaces, sine
causa flagellis cecliderunt me; sed tu,
domine defensor, vindica me!

Quoniam tribulacio proxima est
et non est qui adiuvet.

Mendacious men have surrounded me,
without reason they have struck me down
with whips, but you, Lord defender,
vindicate me!

For tribulation is near
and there is none to help me.

1. John the Evangelist. M4-7, T50-52

*Sanctus Johannes cantat et vertit se ad
populum:*

Tristor et cuncti tristantur
De tua tristicia
Tecum lacrimantur
Eructant suspiria.
Hic rubescit oculus
Flet fidelis populus
De Cristi mesticia.

Maria, moder vnde maget reyne,
Yk byn dyner suster kynt.
Dyn grote scrygent vnde dyn weynent
Klagen alle, de hijr synt.
Hijr wert vyl mennich oge rot
Vmme dynes kyndes dot,
Dat hijr hanget ver uns blot.

*Johannes ultra dicit ad Mariam, matrem
Cristi:*

Maria, leve medder, he scholde eyn
steynen herte dragen,
De dynes kyndes dot nicht kunde helpen
beklagen;
Wart gy mynsche so steynen,
De nu myt uns nicht kunde weynen?
Maria, leve medder, we nu wyl rechte
ouerdencken,
Vnde ok in syn herte sencken
Dyn weynent, dyn scrygent, dynes reynen
herten not
Vnde dynes leuen kyndes bytter dot,
De mot myt dy trurent han
Vnde aller werlde valsche vrowde lân.

Saint John **sings** and turns to the people:

I grieve and all are grieving
for your grief,
with you they weep
and utter sighs.
Here the eye reddens,
the faithful people cry
for Christ's sorrow.

Mary, mother and maiden pure,
I am your sister's child.
All who are here
bewail your great crying and weeping.
Here very many eyes turn red
for the death of your child
who hangs here naked for us.

John further **says** to Mary, the mother of
Christ:

Mary, dear mother, he must carry a heart of
stone
who would not help to grieve the death of
your child.
Were ever people so stone-cold
who would not weep with us now?
Mary, dear mother, who now should ponder
fully
and also sink into their hearts
your weeping, your crying, your pure heart's
distress
for your beloved child's bitter death,
they must lament with you and leave behind
the false happiness of all the world.

2. Mary Magdalene and the Mother of John. Cf. *Stabat Mater*, v. 3 and v. 6

*Sancta Maria Magdalena et mater Johannis
ewangeliste simul cantant:*

O quam tristis et afflicta
Fuit illa benedicta
Mater unigeniti!

Quis est homo, qui non fleret,
Matrem Christi si videret
In tanto supplicio?

Mater Johannis dicit ricmum:

Ach, ach, wo sere
lyde we grote swere
Vmme dy, o leue truten here?

*Mary Magdalene and the Mother of John
the Evangelist sing together:*

O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed
mother of the only-begotten!

Who would not weep
on seeing the mother of Christ
in such suffering?

The Mother of John says this rhyme:

Alas, alas, how much
do we suffer great pain
for you, our dear beloved Lord!

3. Virgin Mary, M5-7, T51-52

*Sancta Maria cantat et vertit se ad
occidentem:*

We helpet klagen myn grote leyt?
Myn yamer de ys worden breyt.
Wo kan ik arme dat nu dragen,
Went yk in alle minen dagen
Ny vornam sulke swere!
Horen noch seen yk enkan;
So grot leyt ny wyf gewan,
So yk arme nu dulce,
Went he steruet ane schulde;
Dat komet van syner lere.

*Hic Maria virgo inspicit filium et elevat
manus ita cantans:*

Trut sone myn,
De moder dyn
An desser stunt
Vt herten grunt
Dy byddet ynnichliken:
Giff my dynen dot
In desser not!
Myn herte, brich,
Went ik see dich
Hangen so yammerlyken!

Holy Mary sings and turns to the west:

Who can help to lament my great
suffering? My suffering has become
immense. Where can I, poor one, take my
suffering since I in all my days
never experienced such sorrow!
I cannot bear to listen or watch;
No woman has ever had so great a pain
as I, poor one, now suffer,
since he dies without guilt
because of what he taught.

*Here the Virgin Mary looks at her son and
raises her hands, singing thus:*

My beloved son
your mother
at this hour
from the depths of her heart
asks you devoutly:
Give me your death
in this distress!
Break, my heart
for I see you
hanging there so wretchedly!

4. Jesus, John and Mary, M10, T57-58

Dominus Jhesus cantat

Ecce mater tua!

The Lord Jesus sings

Behold, your mother!

et dicit ad Johannem:

Johannes, junghere ghute,
See nu an dyne leuen moter!
Ik mot nu van hynnen varen,
Dar vmme schaltu see wol vorwaren.
Ik mot nu wedder keren
Tho mynem hemmelschen vader vnde
heren;
See schal nu wesen de moder dyn,
Plech erer else myn!
Johannes, do dorch dyne gote:
Nym se an dyne hode,
Troste se leflyken in erer not,
Wan ik hebbe geleden den bytteren dot.

Johannes respondet:

Here vnde meyster, dat schal my
ghetemen,
Ik wyl se gerne to my nemen
Vnde vor myne leuen moder vntfån;
Ik wyl se nummermer vorlån.
Gherne wyl yk se nehmen an myne hute.
Wat yk er ok kan dõn to gute,
Dat wil ik van herten gerne don
de wyle dat ik leue.
O leue here got, nu gheue
Vns beyden den dot,
Wente yd ys vns warlyken not!
Ach leyder, de spegel wyl vns entgån,
Dar alle de werlt kan by bestån!
We kan nu syn trurent lån,
O hemmelsche god,
van allen luden, de hijr vmme stån?

Jhesus cantat post hoc:

Pater, dimmite eis!

[*et dicit*]

Nu schal ok eyn ende syn
Der groten, bytter marter myn.
O hemmelsche vader, yk bydde dy,
An mynem ende twyde my:
Vorgiff nu ghanslyk
Den, de my so yamerlyk
Myn leuent hebben ghenomen!
Dat ende mynes leuendes ys nu ghekomen.

Jhesus cantat post hoc:

Consummatum est.

and says to John:

John, my good disciple,
behold now your beloved mother!
I now must go from here,
therefore you shall take care of her.
I must now return
to my heavenly father and lord;
She will now be your own mother,
look after her as if it were me!
Johannes, do this though your goodness:
Take her in your care,
comfort her dearly in her distress,
when I will have suffered the bitter death.

Johannes answers:

Lord and master, that will be fitting for
me,
I will gladly take her to me
and receive her as my dear mother.
I will never desert her.
I will gladly take her into my protection.
Whatever good I can do her,
that will I do from my heart
all the while I live.
O dear Lord God, now give
death to us both,
for we are in true distress!
Alas, our mirror will leave us,
by which all the world can endure!
O heavenly God,
who of all the people who stand around
can now cease mourning?

Jesus sings after this:

Father, forgive them!

[*and says*]

Now shall there be an end
to my great and bitter passion.
O heavenly Father, I ask you
to grant me this at my end:
Forgive now fully
those who so sorrowfully
have taken away my life!
The end of my life has now come.

Jesus sings after this:

It is finished.

[*et dicit*] Aller prophetet sproke synt nu
vullenbracht,
De van des mynschen sone gy worden
bedacht.

Dominus Jhesus clamat valida voce dicens:

In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.

Ik bevele na de hende dyn
Mynen geyst, o hemmelsche vader myn!

*Sancta Maria audiens hoc cantat valida et
lacrimabili voce prosternendo se ad
terram, plangendo manibus:*

Owe, owe, nu ys he dot! (x3)

[*and says*]: All of the words of the prophets
are now fulfilled,
which ever were said of the son of man.

*The Lord Jesus shouts with a loud voice,
saying:*

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

I commend now into your hands
my spirit, o my heavenly father!

*Holy Mary, hearing this, sings loudly and
with a sorrowful voice, prostrating on the
ground, lamenting with her hands:*

Alas, alas, now he is dead!

M and T numbers refer, respectively, to the music and text sections of *Die Bordesholmer Marienklage*, ed. by G. Kühl, in *Jahrbuch des Vereins für niederdeutsche Sprachforschung, Jahrgang 1898*, XXIV (Norden und Leipzig: Dieder. Soltau's Verlag, 1899).k

Text and a different English translation available at the [Stanford Medieval Sourcebook](#), the full facsimile is online; [digitised by Kiel University Library](#)