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Angelas ad virginem

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Angelas ad virginem

A devotional Latin strophic song of the first half of the 13th century in five stanzas on the Annunciation of Mary. There is memorable testimony to its widespread popularity and longevity in England in a passage from the *Miller's Tale* introducing Chaucer's poor Oxford scholar "hende Nicholas," who sings *Angelus* in his lodging to the accompaniment of his psaltery:

And al above ther lay a gay sautrie,
On which he made a-nyghtes melodie
So swetely that all the chambre rong;
And *Angelas ad virginem* he song. (*MilT* 3213-16)

Most sources and references to *Angelus ad virginem* are insular (complete report in Stevens). One tuneful melody is transmitted in four English sources, twice monophonically and twice in polyphonic settings of the later 13th and mid-14th centuries; an entirely different melody survives uniquely in a 15th-century German source. *Angelus* was twice translated into English, once anonymously in the later 13th century ("Gabriel fram evene king," underlaid beneath the standard melody and Latin text in BL Arundel 248) and again in the early 15th century by John Audelay ("The angel to the vergyn said," without music, in Bodl. Douce 302). In a reference recently discovered by Page in the anonymous 13th-century English *Speculum laicorum* Odo of Cheriton is said to attribute the authorship of *Angelus* to Philip, the chancellor of the University of Paris (ca. 1160–1236). If this is to be credited, then perhaps it was brought to England in the first half of the century by the mendicant friars. Much later in its career *Angelus* was "taken over by liturgical officialdom" (Stevens), appearing, for example, in the ordinal of St. Mary's, York, of ca. 1400 and in 16th-century missals of Cluny and Senlis as an Advent sequence for masses of the Virgin.

Peter M. Lefferts

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