THE LATIN ORIGINAL OF
ROBERT HENRYSON'S ANNUNCIATION LYRIC.
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The Middle Scots poem, Forcy as deith is likand lufe, is a religious
lyric on the subject of the Annunciation.\(^1\) In the one manuscript
in which it is preserved (NLS Adv. MS 34.7.3, the so-called Gray
Manuscript) it is attributed to 'Ro. Henrisoun', and this colophon
is by general consent taken to refer to the author of the Fables, the
Testament of Cresseid and the Orpheus and Eurydice.\(^2\) More will be
said about this lyric below; the main purpose of the present
contribution, however, is to call attention to the hitherto
unknown fact that the Middle Scots poem is a direct translation
from a Latin original.

TEXTS OF THE LATIN POEM

Henryson's model, Fortis ut mors dilectio, is at present known from
four manuscripts, all of the fifteenth century.\(^3\) On the basis of the
names of the towns in which these manuscripts are found—Trier,
Utrecht, Cambridge and Edinburgh—the sigla T, U, C and E have
been awarded respectively.

T. (fifteenth century)
In Max Keuffer's descriptive catalogue of the manuscripts in the
Stadtbibliothek in Trier this codex is listed as no. 306, and is said,
without further precision, to date from the fifteenth century.\(^4\) The

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\(^1\) The Index of Middle English Verse, ed. C. Brown and R.H. Robbins (New York,
1943), no. 856.

\(^2\) The Poems of Robert Henryson, ed. D. Fox (Oxford, 1981), pp. cxv (introduc-
tion), 154-6 (text), 426-33 (notes). Fox’s text is reproduced below, by permission
of Oxford University Press.

\(^3\) Repertorium Hymnologicum [etc.], ed. U. Chevalier, 6 vols. (Louvain, 1892-
1920), no. 26761, referring to T and U. The poem is not recorded in Walther:
Initia Carminum ac Versuum Medii Aevi Posterioris Latinorum, ed. H. Walther
(Göttingen, 1959); Ergänzungen und Berichtigungen (Göttingen, 1969).

\(^4\) Beschreibendes Verzeichnis der Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek zu Trier, ed. Max
Keuffer, 10 parts (Trier, 1888-1931). The MS (now known as Hs.306/1978 8o) is
described in part iii (1894), 'Die Predigt-handschriften', 121-5. I am much
manuscript (282 ff.) was compiled by a Carmelite of Worms, who, however, had originally professed at Trier. A fifteenth-century hand has written on the first folio: 'Detur fratibus Carmelitis treverensibus', and a seventeenth-century addition reports that the possessor of the manuscript, being at Worms, bequeathed the volume to his mother house. It is a typical friar's miscellany, and consists of a collection of religious texts which, one presumes, would come in useful in connection with preaching activity. With the exception of three (not two, as Keuffer declares) poems on Our Lady (ff.174-175), whereof the first is the lyric under discussion here, the contents are in prose, and with the exception of one item (ff.48v-49v), which is in German, all the texts are in Latin. The largest items in the collection consist of a series of sermons (ff.71v-165), and an 'Alphabetum morale' of similitudes (ff.179-257) according to the moral and spiritual senses. In between these works there are sundry short items, including an alphabetical list of heretics (ff.165v-169), a jumbled list of *quaesitiones* and propositions (ff.170-174), and the three hymns on Mary (ff.174-175). The manuscript is all in one hand; however, bound in with it at the end, and beginning on f.259, we find a quite different manuscript, written in an early fifteenth-century hand.

The Trier poem has been printed, in the *Analecta Hymnica*, where seven stanzas are reproduced. This contrasts interestingly with U, C and E, and with the Scottish translation, all of which have only six stanzas, and the discrepancy prompts one to suspect the extra lines in T (see Textual Notes, below). In this context the following facts may be noted: a) whereas the first six stanzas have 12 short lines each (written out in the manuscript as six long lines), the seventh stanza has 16 short (eight long) lines; b) the rhyme scheme of the first six stanzas (which, *pace* Keuffer, is ababbaabab) differs from the (not quite perfect) scheme of the last stanza (ababababababab); c) the first six stanzas are followed by the words 'Aue Maria gratia plena', whereas the seventh is followed merely by 'Amen'. The natural conclusion is that these

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5 The folio references used here follow the modern, pencil, numbering, which differs slightly from that of Keuffer.