

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06335-7 - The Life of Thomas Chatterton: With Criticisms on his Genius and Writings, and a Concise View of the Controversy Concerning Rowley's Poems

George Gregory

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### The Life of Thomas Chatterton

The poet and forger Thomas Chatterton (1752–70) is known today to have been the author of the Rowley poems, a series of compositions in medieval English. Chatterton claimed to have transcribed them from manuscripts written by a fifteenth-century monk, Thomas Rowley. After Chatterton's tragic early death, however, debate raged about the provenance of the poems. This biography, published in 1789, engages powerfully in that debate. Scholar and cleric George Gregory (1754–1808) makes every effort to defend Chatterton against the accusations of forgery, tackling each objection point by point, not least the question of why eighteenth-century syntax appears in the Rowley poems. Paired with Cottle and Southey's three-volume collection of Chatterton's work (also reissued in this series), this book attests to the growth of his influence and remains relevant to students and scholars of English literature.

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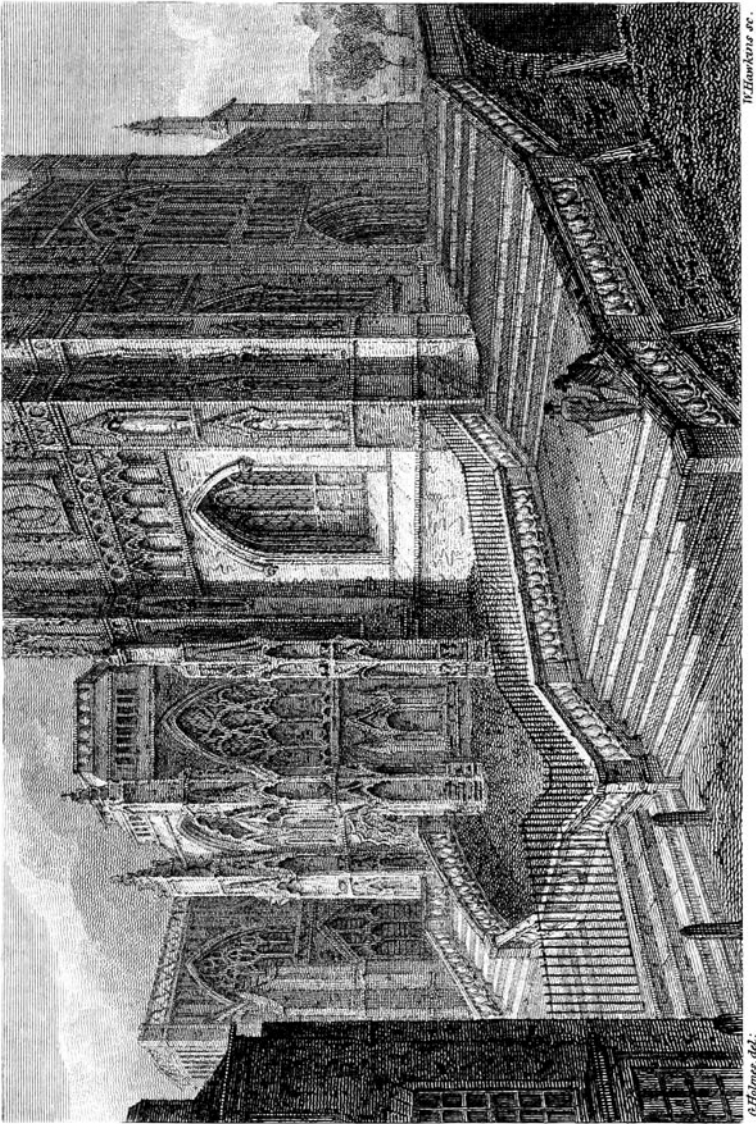
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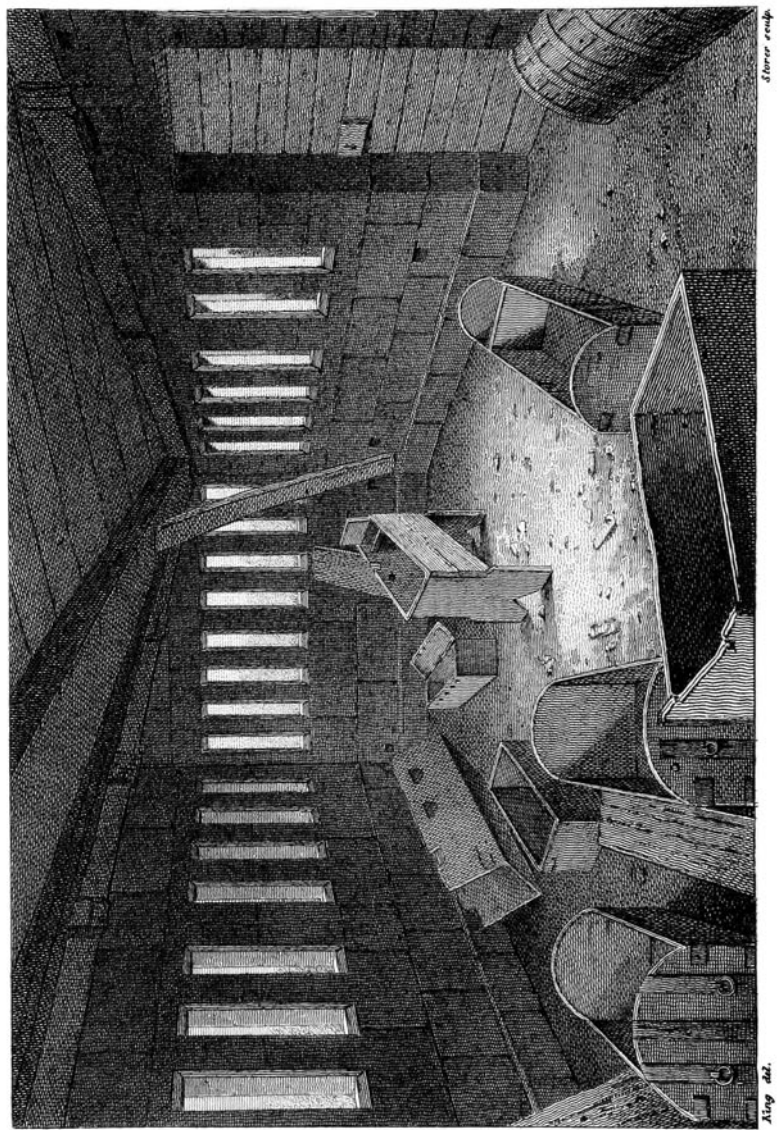
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*The View of the Tower of St. Mary's Church, with a view of the Monument Room over the North Porch.*

*Published for Longman & Ross, Decr. 20, 1801.*

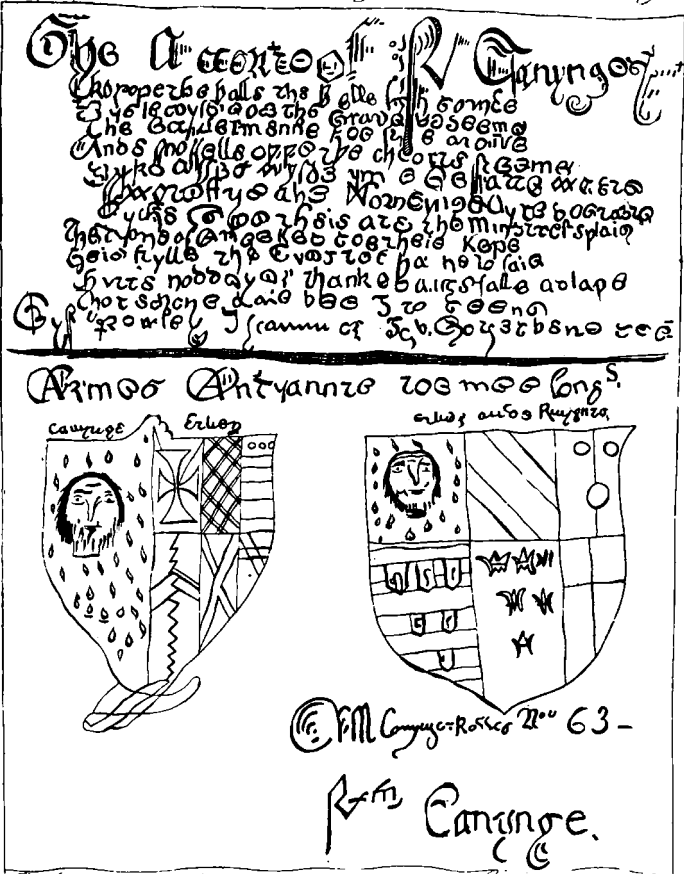
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*Interior of a Room in Radcliffe Church, where Chatterton is said to have found some ancient Manuscripts.*

*Published for Longmans & Ross Decr 31, 1882.*

*The simile of Rowley's Hand Writing.*



*Fac-simile of Chatterton's Hand Writing*  
*The Romaunte of the Bryghte.*  
*The Sunne unto Byrgyne was gotten*  
*The flowerys al arounde onprynge*  
*The woddie grafe blainched the Fenne*  
*The Lion w Ermyne arised fro Bedde*  
*Syr knyghte dyd ymou ntu openn a Storr*

Published Jan. 1803 by Longman & Rees Printmaster Row.

Reed. sculp. Stron.

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*GENIUS AND WRITINGS,*  
AND  
A CONCISE VIEW  
OF THE  
CONTROVERSY  
CONCERNING  
*ROWLEY'S POEMS.*

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BY G. GREGORY, D.D. F.A.S.  
AUTHOR OF ESSAYS HISTORICAL AND MORAL, &c.

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Agora com pobreza aborrecida,  
Por hospícios alheos degradado;  
Agora da esperança já adquirida,  
De novo mais que nunca derribado.

CAMOENS.

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LONDON.  
PRINTED FOR G. KEARSLEY, No. 46, FLEET STREET.  
1789.

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*An extract from KEW GARDENS, an unpublished MS of  
CHATTERTON being a fac simile of his hand writing*

What are the Wages of the toreful Nine,  
What are their pleasures when compar'd to mine.  
Happy Teat and toll my numerous Penw,  
Free from the Servitude of Rhime & Sense;  
Tho' singing Whithead ushers in the year,  
With Joy to Britain's King and Sovereign dear;  
And in compliance to an ancient Mode,  
Measures his Syllables into an Ode;  
Yet such the scurvy Merit of his Muse,  
He bows to Deans and licks his Lordship's Shoes  
Then leave the wicked barren way of rhime,  
Fly far from Poverty, be wise in time;  
Regard the Office <sup>more</sup> Parnassus left,  
Put your religion in a decent dress;  
Then may your Interest in the Town advance,  
Above the reach of Muses or Romance.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following pages were composed at the request of the respectable Editor of the *Biographia Britannica*, in order to be inserted in that valuable work. The author, however, requested leave to print off a small edition, in a separate state, for the accommodation and satisfaction of a few friends, to whom he was indebted on the occasion for some valuable communications.

Perhaps the admirers of CHATTERTON, and those in particular who have interested themselves in the controversy relating to Rowley's Poems, will not be displeased at seeing collected in one view all the particulars which are known concerning that extraordinary character.

The only claim to the public approbation, which the author presumes to assert in favour of this little volume, is that of authenticity, as the public may rest assured that no fact has been admitted but upon the most unexceptionable testimony. He is not at liberty to publish all his authorities, but whenever they are known he is confident in the assertion, that they will be found highly respectable. The notes marked O. were added by a most learned and intelligent friend, who honoured the manuscript with his perusal.

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TO THE RIGHT HON. THE

MARQUIS of LANSDOWN.

MY LORD,

PERMIT me to introduce the unpatronised CHATTERTON to the only statesman of our time who has manifested a genuine zeal for the promotion of literature and science. Had the unfortunate subject of these pages but known, or had he made himself known to your Lordship, there is much probability that the world would at this day have continued to enjoy the increasing fruits of his uncommon talents.

It would, however, be the extreme of injustice to confine your Lordship's commendation to the exercise of private munificence, or the admiration of learning. As one of that public, therefore, who are probably indebted for every thing which they possess or enjoy, to the  
wisdom

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wisdom and virtue of your Lordship's administration, allow me to unite with all the honest and discerning part of the community, in expressing my gratitude for the most honourable and advantageous Peace which was ever atchieved by this nation. When the little contentions of Party are no more, and the clouds of Faction are dissipated, the Friend of Mankind and his Country will stand consecrated to the veneration of posterity; and it will appear greater to have performed much within a short period, than to have enjoyed the emoluments of office for an age of inactivity.

I have the honour to be,

MY LORD,

With great respect,

Your Lordship's obliged

And faithful Servant,

*Winkworth Buildings,  
May 20, 1789.*

The Author.