Thomas Chatterton Manuscript Project (TCMP)

Control Page for the Work :

An Elegy on the Much Lamented Death of William Beckford Esq.

Back to Website: All Works of Doubtful Authenticity?

Back to Project Home Page



Control Panel ↓ :

Original Chatterton Manuscript : Missing presumed lost

Published Dates (Chronological) **:**

Item 1:

1. An Elegy on the much lamented death of William Beckford…, 1770 : View Panel 1
   An advert in the *Public Advertiser,* item 1 was published 30th June 1770.
2. Miscellanies in Prose and Verse by T.C. , 1778 : View online
3. Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, 31 Jan. 1829 : copy of 1770 : No View
4. Taylor, p.713, 1971, from the above : No View.

Meyerstein accepts this work as Chatterton's, as do most other editors, however, Taylor has it listed as WODA (Works of Doubtful Authenticity).
According to Taylor, Chatterton's friend Cary had the Elegy inserted in *1778, Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, by Thomas Chatterton.* He also states that the work is not up to Chatterton's standard, which is fair enough. However, if you consider that an elegy of this type needs to be produced quickly, and be the norm - in other words be derivative with no time or place for Chatterton's usual way with words, then Taylor's argument against it fails.

Note:
Abbreviations : View

Panel 1 ↓ : An Elegy on the Much Lamented Death of William Beckford Esq.





A N

E L E G Y

On the Much Lamented DEATH of

WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.

Late LORD-MAYOR of,

A N D

REPRESENTATIVE in PARLIAMENT

F O R,

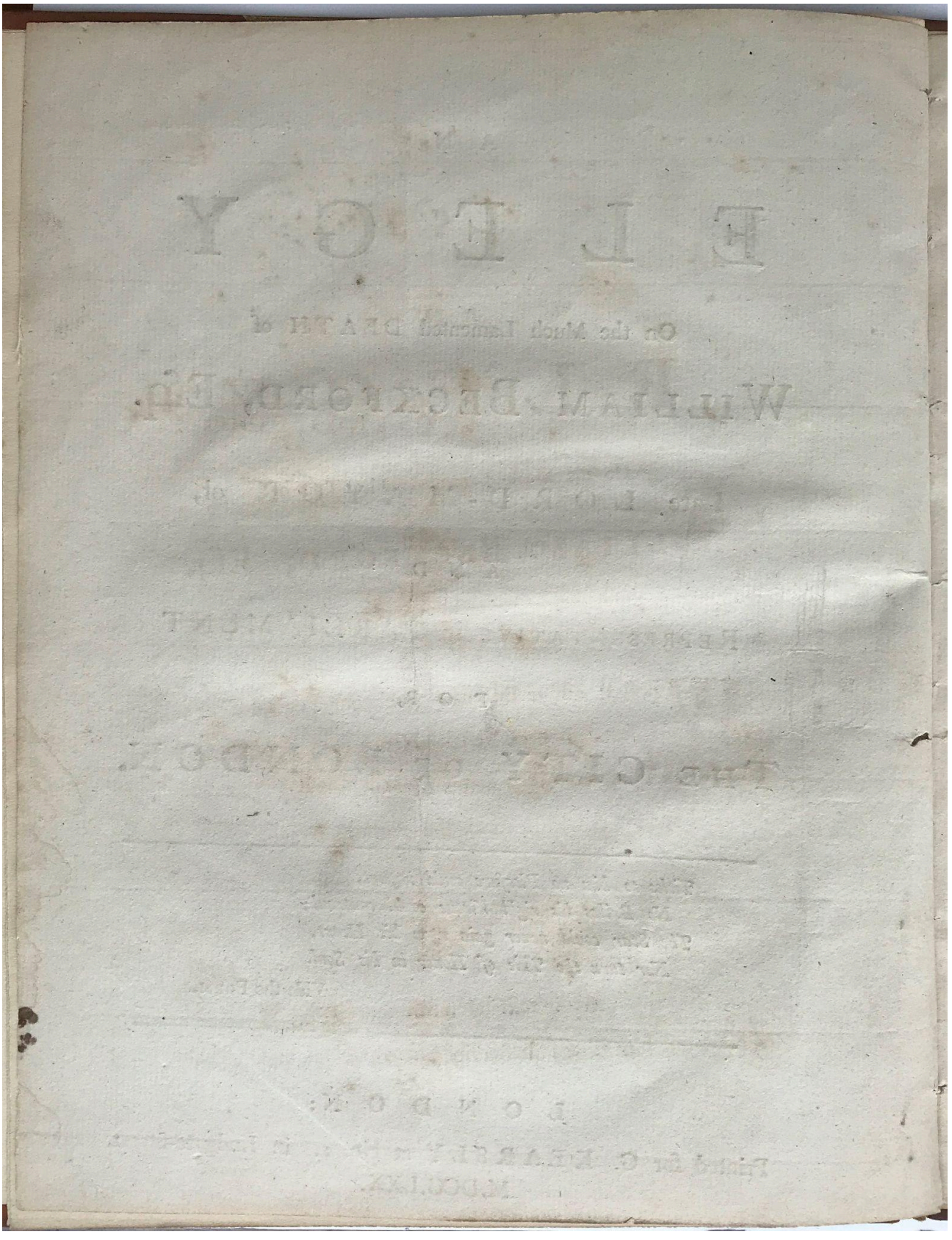
THE CITY OF LONDON.

Titles to him no Pleasure could impart,
No Bribes his rigid Virtue could controul;
The Star could never gain upon his Heart,
Nor turn the Tide of Honor in his Soul.

Vide the POEM.

L O N D O N:

Printed for G. KEARSLY at No. 1. in Ludgate-Street.
M.DCC.LXX.



AN

ELEGY

On the Much Lamented DEATH of

WILLIAM BECKFORD, Esq.

I.

WEEP on ye Britons—give your gen'ral Tear;
But hence ye Venal—Hence each titled Slave;
An honeſt Pang ſhould wait on *Beckford*'s Bier,
And Patriot Anguiſh, mark the Patriot's Grave.

II.

When, like the Roman, to his Field retir'd,
'Twas you, (ſurrounded by unnumber'd Foes,)
Who call'd him forth, his Services requir'd,
And took from Age the Bleſſing of Repoſe.

With

III.

With Soul impell'd by Virtue's ſacred Flame,
To ſtem the Torrent of Corruption's Tide,
He came, heav'n-fraught with LIBERTY! he came,
And nobly in his Country's Service died.

IV.

In the laſt awful, the departing Hour,
When Life's poor Lamp more faint, and fainter grew;
As Mem'ry feebly exercis'd her Pow'r,
He only felt for LIBERTY and you.

V.

He view'd Death's Arrow, with a Chriſtian Eye,
With Firmneſs only to a Chriſtian known;
And nobly gave your Miſeries that Sigh
With which he never gratified his own.

Thou

VI.

Thou breathing Sculpture, celebrate his Fame,
And give his Laurel everlaſting Bloom;
Record his Worth while Gratitude has Name,
And teach ſucceeding Ages from his Tomb.

VII.

The Sword of Juſtice cautiouſly he ſway'd,
His Hand for ever held the Balance right;
Each venial Fault with Pity he ſurvey'd,
But MURDER found NO MERCY in his Sight.

VIII.

He knew when Flatterers beſiege a Throne,
Truth ſeldom reaches to a Monarch's Ear;
Knew, if OPPRESS'D, a LOYAL PEOPLE GROAN,
'Tis not the COURTIERS Int'reſt HE SHOULD HEAR.

IX.

Hence, honeſt to his Prince, his manly Tongue,
The PUBLIC WRONG and LOYALTY convey'd,
While TITLED TREMBLERS, ev'ry Nerve unſtrung,
Look'd all around, confounded and diſmay'd.

X.

Look'd all around, aſtoniſh'd to behold
(Train'd up to Flatt'ry from their early Youth)
An ARTLESS, FEARLESS Citizen unfold
To ROYAL Ears, a MORTIFYING Truth.

XI.

Titles to him no Pleaſure could impart,
No Bribes his rigid Virtue could controul;
The Star could never gain upon his Heart,
Nor turn the Tide of Honor in his Soul,

XII.

For this, his Name our Hiſt'ry ſhall adorn,
Shall ſoar on Fame's wide Pinions, all ſublime;
Till Heaven's own bright, and never-dying Morn,
Abſorbs our little Particle of Time.

XIII.

Far other Fate the venal Crew ſhall find,
Who ſigh for Pomp, or languiſh after Strings;
And ſell their native Probity of Mind,
For Bribes from Stateſmen, or for Smiles from Kings.

XIV.

And here, a long inglorious Liſt of Names,
On my diſturb'd Imagination croud;
" O! let them periſh (loud the Muſe exclaims)
" Conſign'd for ever to Oblivion's Cloud.

" White

XV.

" White be the Page that celebrates his Fame,
" Nor let one Mark of Infamy appear;
" Let not the Villain's mingle with his Name,
" Leſt Indignation ſtop the ſwelling Tear.

XVI.

" The ſwelling Tear ſhould plenteouſly deſcend,
" The delug'd Eye ſhould give the Heart Relief;
" Humanity ſhould melt for Nature's Friend,
" In all the richeſt Luxury of Grief."

XVII.

He, as a Planet with unceaſing Ray,
Is ſeen in one unvaried Courſe to move,
Through Life purſu'd, but one illuſtrious Way,
And all his Orbit was his Country's Love.

XVIII.

But he is gone!——And now, alas! no more
His generous Hand neglected Worth redeems;
No more around his Manſion ſhall the Poor
Baſk in his warm, his charitable Beams.

XIX.

No more his grateful Countrymen ſhall hear
His manly Voice, in martyr'd Freedom's Cauſe;
No more the courtly Sycophant ſhall fear
His poignant Laſh, for violated Laws.

XX.

Yet ſay, STERN VIRTUE, who'd not wiſh to die,
Thus greatly ſtruggling, a whole Land to ſave?
Who would not wiſh, with Ardor wiſh to lie,
With *Beckford*'s Honor, in a *Beckford*'s Grave?

XXI.

Not Honor, ſuch as Princes can beſtow,
Whoſe Breath a Reptile, to a Lord can raiſe;
But far the brighteſt Honor here below,
A grateful Nation's unabating Praiſe.

XXII.

But ſee! where LIBERTY, on yonder Strand,
Where the Cliff riſes, and the Billows roar,
Already takes her melancholy Stand,
To wing her Paſſage to ſome happier Shore.

XXIII.

Stay, Goddeſs! ſtay, nor leave this once-bleſs'd Iſle,
So many Ages thy peculiar Care,
O! ſtay, and cheer us ever with thy Smile,
Leſt quick we ſink in terrible Deſpair.

And

XXIV.

And, lo! ſhe liſtens to the Muſe's Call;
She comes, once more, to cheer a wretched Land;
Thou TYRANNY, ſhalt tremble to thy Fall!
To hear her high, her abſolute Command.

XXV.

" Let not, my Sons, the Laws your Fathers bought,
" With ſuch rich Oceans of undaunted Blood,
" By TRAITORS, thus, be baſely ſet at Nought,
" While at your Hearts you feel the purple Flood.

XXVI.

" Unite in firm, in honorable Bands,
" Break ev'ry Link of Slav'ry's hateful Chain;
" Nor let your Children, at their Fathers Hands,
" Demand their Birthright, and demand in vain.

" Where

XXVII.

" Where e'er the Murd'rers of their Country hide,
" Whatever Dignities their Names adorn;
" It is your Duty——let it be your Pride,
" To drag them forth to univerſal Scorn.

XXVIII.

" So ſhall your lov'd, your venerated Name,
" O'er Earth's vaſt Convex glorioufly expand;
" So ſhall your ſtill accumulating Fame,
" In one bright Story with your *Beckford* ſtand."

F I N I S.

End

Location of this volume: (QE!) Bookcase