

so many assumptions—but when he set out with begging the question that Rowley wrote in all sorts of provincial dialects (which a monk confined to his convent was of all men the least likely to be conversant in) I do not believe he expected that you would discover that Rowley not only employed every *patois*, but the language of two entire centuries. This is foiling him at his own weapons. So you have in the specimens you have produced of commencements of such a series of old poems<sup>3</sup> both prior and subsequent to the supposed era,<sup>4</sup> and which no more resemble the modulation of the imaginary Rowley, than the first leathern waggons that were called coaches, are like to a modern varnished chariot. In fact, if there is any such discriminating faculty in us by which we distinguish between the hobble of a rhymmer of the 15th century, and a poet of the 18th, we cannot be in doubt a moment.

Mr Bryant and Dr Milles<sup>5</sup> have in vain resorted to the fastnesses of uncouth old story, as the Welsh did into the precipices of Wales, and thought nobody would follow them but such persevering climbers into the clouds as themselves—yet, Sir, you have baffled them there too; and I own I am flattered, that the same argument struck me in a letter I wrote to Mr Cole<sup>6</sup> of Milton, on the first publication of Mr Bryant's book, namely, that the MS the most likely to have been found in one of Canning's<sup>7</sup> six chests, was a diary<sup>8</sup>—nay, I find since that, that there was such a diary by Turgot.<sup>9</sup>

ar; author of *Observations upon the Poems of Thomas Rowley: in which the Authenticity of those Poems Is Ascertained* (in two parts), 1781. HW's copy, now wsl, is Hazen, *Cat. of HW's Lib.* No. 3690:5.6. HW's annotations in this copy are printed in CHATTERTON 351–7.

3. Malone quotes the opening lines of fifteen medieval and early Renaissance poems, beginning with *Piers Plowman* and ending with verses by Skelton.

4. The fifteenth century, when the fictitious priest Thomas Rowley was alleged to have written the poems composed by Chatterton.

5. See *ante* 20 Oct. 1767, n. 1. Milles was the editor of *Poems, Supposed to Have Been Written . . . by Thomas Rowley . . . with a Commentary in which the Antiquity of them is Considered, and Defended*, 1782. HW's copy, now in the BM, is Hazen, *op. cit.*, No. 3690:1. HW's notes in this copy are printed in CHATTERTON 331–43.

6. HW to William Cole 30 Dec. 1781 (COLE ii. 286–9).

7. William Canynge (ca 1399–1474), merchant and sometime mayor of Bristol. He rebuilt the church of St Mary Redcliff at Bristol; in Chatterton's fiction he was a friend and patron of Thomas Rowley.

8. 'It appears by the evidence that Canninge left six chests of MSS, and that Chatterton got possession of some or several. Now what was therein *so probably* as a diary drawn up by Canninge himself or some churchwarden, or wardens, or by a monk or monks? . . . Hypothesis for hypothesis, I am sure this is as rational an one, as the supposition that six chests were filled with poems never else heard of' (HW to Cole 30 Dec. 1781, COLE ii. 289).

9. (d. 1115), Bp of St Andrews, 1109. Chatterton alleged that *A Discourse on Brystowe* was Rowley's translation of Turgot's 'Saxones Latyn' history of Bristol,