

AN UNRECORDED COPY OF CHATTERTON

this elaborately documented volume. George Catcott, a Bristol pewterer in partnership with Henry Burgum (for whom Chatterton provided a fake pedigree and coat of arms in 1767) was presented with many of the Rowley manuscripts, including *The Bristowe Tragedie* and the *Songe to Aella*, from 1768 onwards, and lacking the scholarship to detect the forgeries he fell a willing victim to such gratifying attention. Soon he and William Barrett (Bristol surgeon, would-be Bristol historian) were deluged with 'ancient documents,' poetical for Catcott and antiquarian for Barrett, and in spite of the scholarly disclaimers by Thomas Gray and William Mason (to whose opinion Horace Walpole deferred in time to save his own repute) and the rout of the Rowley supporters in the subsequent controversy, Catcott and Barrett clung resolutely to their faith in their documents, many of which Barrett used in his discredited *History of Bristol* (1789).

Catcott was less unlucky perhaps because he printed less, but the volume under discussion shows how completely he was taken in. Chatterton's Rowley poems were first printed in 1777 in a volume edited by the scholarly Thomas Tyrwhitt, *Poems, supposed to have been written at Bristol, by Thomas Rowley and others, in the Fifteenth Century: the greater part now first published from the most authentic copies, with a specimen or one of the MSS.* The second edition was a duplicate of the first, but next year (1778) appeared the third edition to which Tyrwhitt added a new *Appendix containing some observations upon the language of those Poems, tending to prove that they were written, not by any Antient Author, but entirely by Thomas Chatterton.* The indignant Catcott had a copy of this third edition rebound to include copious documentary evidence to substantiate the authenticity of the Rowley poems, and this volume with insertions and manuscript annotations by Catcott is now part of the Chatterton collection in the Library.

The additions to the volume fall into two sections: 1. A preliminary twenty-eight pages which contains a detailed list of "Directions to the Binder," virtually a table of contents of the additions, with a vindication of Chatterton and of Catcott's advocacy, dated and signed "George Catcott, July 18, 1781."