

Eliza Daye

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Elizabeth Daye (1734-1829) was born in Lancaster, England. Information about her life is limited and often contradictory because she is often confused with other women of the same name.³¹⁵ Daye (the poet) was born to the first marriage of Rev. James Daye, a Presbyterian minister at the St. Nicholas Street Chapel and an unnamed mother. Her mother died early in Daye's childhood, leading Daye to grow up close to her maternal grandmother Elizabeth Roscoe. Daye had a devout belief in the church and a close relationship to the St. Nicholas Street congregation. While she never married, she was active within society and her community. She joined The Amicable Society of Lancaster, a collective library subscription service group among the gentry founded for the purpose of socializing and sharing texts through group fundraising. This group included the Armstrong and the Harrison families, who were instrumental in helping her publications.

In 1789, she published *Serious Reflections on the Death of Johannes, who was Shot by his Friend, July 12, 1789. Likewise on the Triumphant Death of Josephus, Aged Eighteen Years*, under her pseudonym Eliza. These two poems closely examine the effect that loss has had on her and the depth of her relationship with God. Daye describes the devout way to address loss, presenting her poetry as religious guidance. These poems also act as commentary on the ineffectuality of greed and envy in comparison to following the gospel.

In 1796 and 1798 respectively, she published *Poems and Fugitive Pieces* (although possibly this collection is by Eliza Day, wife of Thomas Day) and *Poems, on Various Subjects*. These collections cover a much wider range of topics and are dedicated to people of high birth. In *Poems, on Various Subjects*, she included a message to the Public on the pious intent of her works. This collection was funded and mass-produced through subscription. The Amicable Society as well as many of Daye's family friends were among her list of subscribers.

She published her two final works late in life. The first was an expansion of *Poems, on Various Subjects*, with an addendum of pieces addressing grief. Daye also published "A Poem on the Proclamation of Peace, which took place the

³¹⁵ The poet Eliza Daye is not to be confused with Eliza Day (née Crossland) who married Thomas Day in 1807.

Twentieth of the Sixth Month, one thousand, eight hundred and fourteen; the fifty-fourth year of the reign of King George the Third” which was published in tandem with “An Elegy on the Death of her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte Augusta” by T. Whitehead in 1817.

Daye’s poetry combines Romantic style with mainstream Christianity, directing readers to the path of remaining devout through her use of Greek myths and classical narratives. The overall purpose of her poems is to encourage readers in keeping faith and staying pious during times of struggle and adversity. Daye uses a rhyming couplet style in “To Anna” to celebrate the beauty of the love in confinement, and it is ambiguously iambic or trochaic tetrameter because all the lines have seven syllables.

Although her works are sometimes mentioned in literary histories, little information on Daye’s life remains aside from her legal documents. She died early in her ninety-sixth year of unknown causes and was buried in January 1829 at the St. Nicholas Street Chapel. It has since been demolished, and its graves and burial stones moved to Lancaster Cemetery. As she had no direct descendants, she bequeathed her estate to Elizabeth Daye Johnson, presumably a relative; Janet Waller, who looked after her in her old age; and John Armstrong the Younger, a descendant of her close friend.

Further Reading

- Murdoch, Brian O. “Denial and Acceptance: A Core Myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the Modern Lyric.” *Mythlore*, vol. 144 (42), no. 2, 2024, pp. 43–60.
- Prince, Cashman Kerr. “Ovid Metamorphosed: The Polymorphous Polyphony of Widl/Mozart’s ‘Apollo et Hyacinthus.’” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2012, pp. 211–239.
- The Last Will and Testament of Elizabeth Daye. *England & Wales, Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills, 1384-1858*. Ancestry.com, 2013.
- The Amicable Society. *A Catalogue of the Amicable Society’s Library in Lancaster*. Amicable Society (Lancaster, England), 1794. *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*.

To Anna³¹⁶

BASKING thus in fortune's way,
 Would you leave so bright a day?
 See the captive lover wait,
 Must you die to seal his fate?
 Hark! the poet tunes his lyre,³¹⁷ 5
 Cruel! would you damp his fire?
 Balmy zephyrs³¹⁸ court your breath,
 Not the bitter blasts of death:
 Bright in youth and beauty's charms,
 Do you seek his icy arms? 10
 Oh must friendship plead in vain,
 Can you give so keen a pain?

 Once, as ancient stories tell,
 Music prov'd its pow'r in hell;
 Music in the hand of love, 15
 E'en the ear of death could move,³¹⁹
 And its adamant³²⁰ chains
 Melted at harmonious strains.
 Live, and bloom in fortune's ray,
 While she gives so bright a day. 20

³¹⁶ *Poems, on Various Subjects*, printed by J. M'Creery, 1798, pp. 42–43; *Eighteenth-Century Poetry Archive Online*

³¹⁷ *lyre* a small string instrument with a U-shaped frame, similar to a harp and associated with several Greek figures such as Orpheus, Apollo, the Muses, and Eros

³¹⁸ *zephyr* a soft wind or breeze

³¹⁹ *E'en the ear of death could move* in Greek myth, the poetic bard Orpheus descends into the Underworld and moves the hearts of Hades and Persephone with his melodies in hopes of rescuing his deceased wife Eurydice from them

³²⁰ *adamantine* unbreakable

Live, and be the poet's theme,
 Feed the rapture³²¹ of his dream;
 Let a friendship most refin'd,
 Beam its comforts on your mind;
 Softer than a western breeze,
 It shall breathe to give you ease,
 All affection can inspire,
 Apollo's³²² wit and Orpheus' lyre.

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³²¹ *rapture* a state of delight or enthusiasm

³²² *Apollo* Greek god of music, poetry, art and dance