The "Longue Durée": Identity, Place, Time
and Performative Representations of the Earls of Derby

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The idea that early-modern elite identities were performative has become a commonplace. Ernst Kantorowicz's seminal work of political philosophy from 1957, *The King's Two Bodies*, argued that the inheritance of medieval theories of divine right produced the "twin-born" identities of kings (*H5* 4.1, 231), combining the individual identity of the natural man with a performed and ritualized identity as a monarch. Famously, he described the deposition scene in Shakespeare's *Richard II* as enacting the ceremonial splitting of the personal identity of Richard from his performative identity as a monarch, as he moves thorough the extended process of being "unking'd by Bolingbroke", becoming "nothing" (*R2* 5.5.37). New historicist attention to the iconography of Renaissance monarchs and the broader aesthetics of "self-fashioning," produced from a predominantly literary perspective, might then be seen to have combined such thought with a focus on the representational operations of written and visual texts in producing self-consciously created selves (Greenblatt, *Renaissance; Representing*; and "Fifty Years"; Montrose; Tennenhouse). Through its direct and indirect influence, new historicism, along with other theoretical approaches to identity-formation (especially associated with John L. Austin's conceptualisation of performative language as comprising an act that changes a social reality), has, in turn, produced a wealth of scholarship in recent decades. This has tended to focus on the forms and content of historical, literary, dramatic and visual texts as constitutive of a broad range of–both textual and historical–performative subjectivities.

1

But if in this work there is often an elision of what is performed and what is represented, other traditions of scholarship have sought to distinguish the representational from the performative. Drama-practice theory, in particular, has explored the difference between the verbal *content* of dramatic texts (representing, say, the lives and actions of characters) and the dynamics of acting, of performance itself. In the 1960s, Jerzy Grotowski, for instance, queried the primacy of the written playscript, a representational form, by separating the authenticity of performance from any authority of the written, pre-existing text. "The core of the theatre is an encounter," he writes. He elaborates: "For me, a creator of theatre, the important thing is not the words but what we do with these words, what gives life to the inanimate words of the text" (56-58). More recently, considering first avant-garde, but then more mainstream, theatre, Małgorzata Sugiera has written:

> When the language of drama breaks free from its formerly primary function of representing the speech of the stage characters, then it becomes the proper substance of a text for theatre. It no longer represents logically organized stories, but rather attempts to stimulate particular perceptual and cognitive processes (26).

Such accounts emphasise the prime importance of relationships surrounding, and produced by, performance as an act, as acting. These are cognitive, affective and reflexive. They occur experientially between performers, text and–definitively–audiences. Importantly, they create an ever-changing present that differs from the temporalities that exist at the level of textual content or what is represented. (Gilles Deleuze's insistence on the constant presentness of time, likened to a scar, perhaps underlies the temporal play invoked by such theories: "A scar is the sign not of a past wound but of 'the present fact of having been wounded': we can say that it is the contemplation of the wound, that it contracts all the instants which separate us from it into a living present" [77]).[1] Performance, for such theatre practitioners, is not fully the same as performativity: it is distinguishable from representational elements of script and

verbal content; it exists only in the present moment; it is relational; it depends on an audience; it produces a phenomenological roundness of experience.

In this article, I want to take such thought about differences and likenesses between representation, performance and performativity as a background prompt. My aim is to revisit the role of pre-dramatic and dramatic performance *per se* as a constituent of the early-modern royal and aristocratic courtly habitus. Specifically, I will explore the relationships that inhere in, and lie behind, both identity-creating performance occasions and representational forms in the work, through several centuries, of dynastic maintenance and promotion in the history of the Stanleys, the family of the Earls of Derby. In doing this, I assume that aristocratic identities, while, clearly, not embodying ideas of divine right, mirror aspects of royal identity through nobles' self-conscious maintenance of dynastic longevity and bloodlines while, at the same time, being produced through contemporaneous performance-centered relationships. I am concerned with the contexts of performance forms that produce the ceremonial, multi-relational aspects of aristocratic identities as much as the histories and stories that are represented. The article, equally, picks up on ideas about the as-yet-unseparated nature of early modern dramatic forms that are discussed in the Introduction to this issue. It asks the question, central to thought about performativity, "What do these texts do?"

I.   Patronage Connection: Time, Place and Aristocratic Identity

It is, first of all, the operations of patronage that produce the key relationships inherent in the performance of aristocratic identities. Both an increased overall understanding of the dynamics of patronage as a "power circuit," and–in specific relation to theatre and performance scholarship–a more detailed, thickened, knowledge of the specifics of regional household drama, have emerged from the growth in attention to early-modern patronage in recent decades (Jardine 295; Westfall 263). Numerous studies have shown how patronage, as

"one of the dominant social processes of pre-industrial Europe", was a system that underpinned all political and status-based relationships in the early-modern period (Gundersheimer 3). In early-modern England, ties between patron and client not only "suffused the Court, including the Council, the royal household and central administration," but extended into all relationships between central government and the regions. It was through patronage that "the Court secured loyalty and service in exchange for position and privilege" (Peck 29). And, these relationships were, in turn, replicated in the forms of association between aristocratic patrons and their clients, so that patronage operated beyond the royal court as an extensive, cascading system of exchange between members of different socio-economic ranks. It underpins, in particular, what David Price identifies as "the cultural interdependence of the Court, the epitome of public position and private interest, and the country house" along with the regional cultural networks centred there (xv). So, the patronage system overall, central to this honor-based culture, reaches out its roots, tendrils and off-shoots into an architecture of connection across all regions of England and Wales and beyond. Typically, in a patronage relationship, the client honors the patron through service or the representation of their power, magnificence, or embodied virtue; the patron's honor is reciprocally extended to the client, elevating their status, along with the material rewards and the privileges of favor given. In spite of the inequity of economic and rank-based status underpinning the patronage relationship, then, this is an essentially symbiotic system (as Gearóid Mac Eoin has suggested of the thousand-year-tradition of patronage in Ireland before the seventeenth century and Jason Peacey has shown in relation to Lincoln's Inn in seventeenth century England [Mac Eoin esp. 5; Peacey]). It may also produce an affective mutuality: the young William Cavendish, later Earl, Marquis and ultimately Duke of Newcastle, spoke of Ben Jonson as his "gossip" (cited Donaldson 42), and William Stanley,

6th Earl of Derby seems to have sustained friendships with figures such as John Dee, for instance (Graham and Tyler 133; Dee 65).

In the particular context of North West England, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century patronage networks re-inflect the conscious sense of regional identity that had characterised Cheshire and Lancashire from at least the beginning of the fifteenth century. As the medievalist David Lawton remarked forty-odd years ago, "intricate inter-connections of a gentry community", produced through "intermarriage among the thirty or so leading Cheshire and Lancashire families", had prevailed since 1400 onward. He emphasized, "[t]hat such a social group should have been so cohesive, so anchored within one region, and so-long-enduring makes it a phenomenon exceptional in the history of medieval or Tudor England" (51-2). And the community's sense of its distinct identity is marked by specific cultural tastes, including a literary tradition reflecting its regional rootedness (stretching into its borderlands in the Midlands and Wales), that is sometimes argued to include the work of the Gawain poet.[2] Over the course of the late-fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the establishment of the Earls of Derby as the great, overall magnates of the region whose lands, influence and kinship networks extended into Wales, Staffordshire and the Midlands, as well as the Isle of Man, promoted their family, the Stanleys, to the head of this closely-knit affinity, so that, as the late-Victorian Manx antiquary, Arthur Moore, could remark: "the House of Stanley was…the head of a great feudal clan in Lancashire and Cheshire, and most of the families in those counties were either directly or indirectly dependent on it" (Moore, 33; cited Lawton 46). Barry Coward similarly writes in relation to the later-sixteenth- and seventeenth-century earls, "Given [the Stanleys'] fund of offices and favours it is not surprising that many Lancashire and Cheshire families openly acknowledged that…they had 'for the most part ever since tyme of King Henry the seaventh been belonginge unto and dependants upon that honourable house'" (118). The patronage relationships of the Earls of Derby, particularly tightly woven

across their Lancashire and Cheshire homelands, and centred in their Lancashire residences (see Shannon's article in this issue), reinforce local and regional bonds but equally, through the earls' participation in the metropolitan royal court with its national and international interests and their metropolitan presence, re-articulate regionality according to the contingencies of changing state policies and imperatives.

Set against this broad description of North-Western affinities, it is the production, maintenance and enhancement of the Derbys' dynastic concerns through a range of performance forms associated with patronage that most closely concerns me here. While successive Earls of Derby performed their own roles at Court, as international ambassadors, and as northern magnates, sometimes entering into collaborative and participatory cultural creation with their clients, I want to begin with the idea that they are, to a large extent, what might be called "dative subjects."[3] It is how their dynastic identities are brought into being, their honor and glory sustained, through their being written, sung and performed *to* and *for* that interests me, along with matters of dynastic temporality.

The duality of aristocratic identities, mirroring that of monarchs, is produced through a particular inflection of individual, private, localised lives in relation to a public being contingent on maintenance of blood lines and national, as well as regional, significance. This depends, then, on a quite particular articulation of the synchronic and diachronic. If a synchronic manifestation of identity occurs through the creation and deployment of patronage relationships and the exhibition of honor and glory produced through them, diachronic participation in the *longue durée* of history and dynasty is produced through cultural memorialisation, or the representational content, of contemporaneous cultural creation. Different aspects of these intersecting temporalities are brought about through maintenance of patronage bonds (sometimes multi-generational) and, most forcefully, though participation in

a range of performance activities that articulate national and regional, personal and private, immediate and trans-historical though various, and distinct, forms.[4]

2. The Synchronic: Performances of Splendour and Honor

In 1585, Henry Stanley, 4th Earl of Derby, was appointed by Elizabeth I as ambassador to Henri III of France, to invest him with the Order of the Garter, a political act expressing the two nations' amity in the context of the changed power struggles of the Netherlands against Spain after the death of François de France, Duc d'Anjou et Alençon (Henri III's younger brother, heir to the French throne, a Huguenot supporter, and a suitor of Elizabeth I's), and the assassination of William I, Prince of Orange, in 1584.[5] Accounts of the journey to Paris made by Derby; the permanent ambassador to France, Sir Edward Stafford; Derby's younger son, William Stanley (later 6th Earl of Derby); and their two-hundred-strong entourage, and of the investiture itself, comprise descriptions of successive ceremonial performances marking the stages of their travel and the weeks of luxurious, glorifying festivity that took place around the actual investiture itself, a ceremony of the highest magnificence, on 18th February 1585 (see Strong, "Festivals" 60-70; also Bagley 56-7; Coward 33, 149-50; Goodacre).[6] The ceremonial banquets (provided "in verie sumptuous sort" with "great intertainment…musicke and dansing" [Holinshed 558]) and celebrations that are described in English, Dutch and French accounts, highlight the centrality of codes of honor to the whole event: through it, the English Order of the Garter, used by Elizabeth I to produce national political and religious cohesion through its public ceremonies and processions, was brought into dialogue with the French Order of the Holy Spirit, created by Henri III in 1579, to draw "a group of the highest nobility into closer allegiance with the crown" in the performance of its "chivalrous and religious rites" (Strong, "Festivals" 62-3). But, on this occasion of the Garter investiture, due to the tense political atmosphere that

prevailed, the traditional forms of celebratory display–jousts, tilts and parades–associated

with these orders were replaced by indoor shows. So, the event as a whole came, almost by

accident of political circumstance, to embody an aestheticization of the old honor-based

tournament forms, themselves an abstraction of the warrior skills involved in medieval battle.[7]

In particular, a fusion of these with updated forms of masque and ballet, developed out of the

traditional noble *mascarades* of the middle ages, were promoted to a central place in the

activities. In alignment with a wider development of ballet forms within the Valois court

(especially associated with Catherine de' Medici, Henri III's mother),[8] this transposition of

the movements of the joust and tilt pre-figures the more fully developed baroque forms of

ballet, opera and masque that become widely fashionable in European royal courts half a

century later. The chivalric, tournament-based events of the past become newly theatricalized.

And it is in an extraordinarily detailed, even bedazzled, letter from Derby and Stafford to

Elizabeth I, written the day after the experience, that we see how the layered dynamics of the

whole occasion functioned, through their description of the music and dance spectacle

performed as the climax to the whole visit. They write:

> …It was devyded into .3. shows: the first company, conducted with torches, was of 8
>
> young gentlemen presenting them selues with lutes playing and dauncing all the length
>
> of the hall, leauing behynd them at the nether end therof the second company, made
>
> and compounded of all sortes of Instrumentes of musick…Then came the other
>
> company forward being in nomber what musicions, moderators and other xl persons,
>
> singing and playing all the way as they marched with such a consort and harmony as
>
> nothing cold be devised more pleasant and delightfull, as well as for the rareness of the
>
> musickk, both voyces and Instrumentes, as stranenes og th attyre and apparele. When
>
> they were come vp to the upper end of the halle and neere to the queenes, besyd whom
>
> we sat, the consort stayd and two specially aapoynted began to sing alternation, the

refrayne of euery close being sung out by the whole company…By [this] tyme that

these were returned to the nether end of the hale, the king with the mask was ready to

enter and sett forwardes 4. and 4. to the number of the 24 of that company…The

musicions having taken their places, they came on dancing, the king foremost, and

therin did expresse by the variety of casting themselues all the letters both in the King

and Queenes name…(Bodleian Tanner MS. 78, ff. 37v, 78).

Honor is enacted by personal participation of the king performing for the English

Ambassadors, displaying his prowess in dancing; by the splendour, quality and dazzling

originality of the performance; and by the formal courtesies of seating arrangements. In this

way, honor given to Henri III through his investiture into the Order of the Garter is

reciprocally personated by this thrilling theatrical show. The whole occasion, then, is

informed by a dialogic exchange of honor that is intrinsically performance-based. In this,

Derby and Stafford as Elizabeth I's representatives and proxies, are both recipients and donors

of the honor the occasion enacts and produces. Their witness account of this climactic

spectacle subsequently serves as a secondary form of transmission: the experience of honor

performed becomes a representational record, reproducing, in a different form, the gift of

honor to the queen herself.

Such an instance of the crucial role of performance in the production of nobility, honor

and international relationships exemplifies, perhaps, the way in which the individual identity

of the 4th Earl of Derby as a courtier (operating within the royal patronage system) and figure

of national and international significance is fashioned in a particular, critical moment. An

earlier performance for, and before, the Earl, can perhaps be seen to foreshadow, at the

regional level, the dynamics of such an occasion: the production of a revived version of the

Shepherds pageant in 1578 in Chester. This, as several scholars have shown, was a

performance giving a revisionary after-life to the *Shepherds* pageant, formerly a constituent of

the Chester cycle of plays, the sequence of biblical episodes performed (traditionally at Whitsun) by the craftsmen and traders who, as freemen of the city, belonging to the city's guilds, were entitled to work within Chester. The Cycle had (fairly recently) died out as a result of internal conflicts amongst the city's inhabitants and the politico-religious changes that occurred nationally through the reigns of the Tudor dynasty (Rice 319-320; REED. *Chester* liii-lviii; Clopper; Manley and MacLean 34). So, the performance of 1578 was a self-consciously re-created event, extracted from the cycle of plays of the past, and re-inserted into a spectacular sampling of typically Cestrian cultural performances: the *Shepherds* pageant was bracketed by a Chester schoolmaster's production of one of Terence's classical comedies, performed by Chester schoolboys, and an enactment of the equally traditional Chester "Triumphs", an extravaganza of acrobatic displays, flying figures and allegorical personifications (somewhat akin to Italian Commedia dell'Arte and Venetian carnival forms), staged on the Roodee–the open meadows, or ees, just outside the city walls where midsummer races were held (c.f. Rice 320; "Chester Freemen" 5-6; see Barrett 96 ff. on the early seventeenth-century Triumphs). A description of the event is included in the Chester Mayor's List 13:

> Henrye Earle of darbye: with his sonne. fardinando. Lord Strange. Came to this Cittye in August. and was honoruably received. by the mayor into his howse and did lye there two Nightes: mr parvise Scollers: plyd A Commodie out of the book of Terence before hym. The Shepeards playe played at the hie Crosse. with other Trivmphes vpon the Rode eye, Also the Two Sheriffes: had bene the mayor prenteses in former tyme / Master Maior. A citizin borne (REED. *Cheshire*, vol. 1, 182; REED: *Chester* 124).

The event, produced and performed for the Earl of Derby and Lord Strange, might be seen to mirror, at a (microcosmic) regional level, the composition and function of the more glorious Garter Embassy event. It has a political intent; it offers honor, reinforcing identity, to those

10

for whom it is performed; it enacts concordance and alliance between hosts and audience–on this occasion, between the city authorities and the Stanleys as north-western magnates. In critical commentaries on this event, reference is often made to Lord Derby's and Lord Strange's "visit"; to the aesthetics of the *Shepherds* pageant (perceived as the key dramatic text at the core of the sequence of performed pieces) in relation to those plays performed by elite theatre companies (Queen Elizabeth's Men; Derby's Men; Strange's Men; Essex's Men; and Leicester's Men) at Knowsley Hall and Lathom; to the city's motivations in providing this spectacular entertainment; and to the politico-religious implications of re-producing an episode from older play cycle, rooted in Roman Catholic liturgical cycles (see, especially, Rice 319-321; also Manley and McLean 34). But, in the context of the complex patronage relationships of the north-west region and the functions of various, not-yet-separated, performance forms that I am attempting to trace, it is possible to slant interpretation of this event rather differently.

Chester, although a city with its own authorities, forms of regulation and civic status, also operated as a part of the wider north-west region with its overlapping areas and intersecting lines of secular and religious authority. To give just one example of such complex interrelations: the diocese of Chester from 1541 onwards, extended across most of Cheshire and Lancashire, forming part of the Province of York, or the Northern Province, of the Church of England. William Chaderton, Bishop of Chester (who also was Warden of Manchester College before John Dee, a particularly warmly regarded client or associate of the 6th Earl of Derby), sat at the ecclesiastical commission's quarterly sessions with the 4th Earl of Derby and was a close family friend of both Henry and Ferdinando Stanley: he preached to the 4th Earl's household seven times in 1587-90 (including during the Twelfth Night celebrations of 28th December 1588 to 17th January 1588/9, the day after "the Plaiers plaied" [Farington 56]); preached at the 4th Earl's funeral in Ormskirk; and lent money to the family

(Haigh; Raines 31; see also Lloyd's article in this issue). Chaderton had similarly close links with the Earl of Leicester, Chamberlain of the Palatinate of Chester. The Earls of Leicester and Derby, in turn, themselves maintained a similarly close relationship, both through their roles in the royal court and in Chester and Lancashire. Both earls were together present in Chester in May and June 1584 (Mayor's Lists 5 and 9, REED. *Chester* 139) and were ceremonially received. And, of course, Leicester's Men are known to have played twice in the Stanley's Lancashire residences in the week of 7th July 1587 (a key year for Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester, when he was appointed Elizabeth I's Lord Steward of the Household.) The Earls of Derby were also, naturally, keen to nurture strong relationships with authorities in the townships and cities in their Lancashire and Cheshire home region. The patronage-based "circuits of power" that operated across the north west region certainly included maintenance of relationships with town authorities. Henry Stanley, as Lord Strange, had been appointed Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1572, at that time an executive position with authority over the wide region, including its towns and cities; Ferdinando, Lord Strange was created Alderman of Chester in 1585/6 and served as Lord Mayor of Liverpool in 1587; and, most significantly, the 4th Earl was appointed as Chamberlain of Chester in 1588, the year following the *Shepherds* event, although the 5th Earl was disappointed when the position was later given to Thomas Egerton (Manley, "Strange's Men to Pembroke's Men"; see Coward on the Stanleys' relationship with Chester, 127-41). And the 6th Earl "retired" to his home in Bidston, a few miles outside Chester, when James, Lord Strange reached his majority and took over administration of the Stanley estates and affairs. Towns and cities, and the authorities associated with them, cannot be understood as isolated entities. As Jon Stobart, following and citing Bernard Lepetit, has argued, any discrete, local-historical interpretation of a place such as Chester needs also to incorporate "a multi-polar analysis" of "a whole range of towns and their territories in a system of interrelations" (Stobart 173, citing Lepetit 97).

So, rather than seeing Lord Derby's and Lord Strange's participation in the occasion of the *Shepherds* event as involving a "visit" to Chester, as it is usually described, implying the incoming of external figures, it might be more appropriate to see it as a "visitation" that formally marks relationship. And attempts to reconcile the appeal of this event with the "apparent sophistication" of the Stanleys' tastes as evidenced by their patronage and hosting of elite companies (Manley and MacLean 34; Rice 323), might be replaced by recognition of the cultural multi-lingualism of the early modern nobility. Peter Burke's *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* established the idea that while "there was cultural as well as social stratification" in most places in the early modern period, older historiographical distinctions between "the 'great tradition' of the educated few, and the 'little tradition' of the rest" are not fully tenable (23-4). He writes:

> There were two cultural traditions in early modern Europe, but they did not correspond symmetrically to the two main social groups, the elite and the common people…[T]he crucial cultural difference in early modern Europe…was that between the majority, for whom popular culture was the only culture, and the minority, who had access to the great tradition but participated in the little tradition as a second culture. They were amphibious, bi-cultural, and also bilingual (28).

Historians have provided more granulated articulations of the two cultures in the years since Burke's influential work was first published. And, in particular, the broadening of theatre history over recent decades provides insight into the appeal of drama to overlapping social groups, further blurring absolute distinctions between elite and popular cultural participation and tastes. Burke's reference to bilingualism can also now be recognised as not simply a metaphoric expression of elite immersion in different cultural milieus, but a literal one. The linguist and language historian, David Crystal, points out that, in spite of the fact that early

modern orthoepists were little concerned with "the relation of regional speech to social class," there is some evidence of the actual bilingualism of the aristocracy and other social elites:

> Puttenham, in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), Book 4, observes "in euery shyre of England there be gentlemen and others that speake but specially write as good Southerne as we of Middlesex or Surrey do, but not the common people of euery shire, to whom the gentlemen, and also their learned clarkes do for the most part condescend" (Crystal, personal correspondence).

Crystal suggests that "condescend" here might include speaking like them. There is also, he adds, John Aubrey's well-known description of Sir Walter Ralegh's regional accent: "notwithstanding his great Mastership in style, and his conversation with the learnedest and politest persons, yet he spoke broad Devonshire to his dyeing day." Furthermore:

> if we take Shakespeare as evidence, there are several clear cases of nobles "talking down": Kent in *Lear* is clearly bidialectal, as the point is explicitly addressed when Kent goes "out of [his] dialect" (*King Lear* 2.2.107). Edgar seems to be tridialectal, as himself, Poor Tom, and the countryman who fights Oswald. Prince Hal says he can "drink with any tinker in his own language" (1 *Henry IV* 2.4.17-18; Crystal; see also Massai; and Fox, esp. Ch. 1).[9]

Such arguments for both the multi-culturalism and multi-lingualism of the aristocracy map on to the multi-layered identifications and relationships of early modern people that Christopher Lewis conceptualises as a series of concentric circles radiating outwards (35). The range of different communities which the Earls of Derby belonged to, and interacted with, and–most importantly in my context– by which their identities are called into being, gives rise to an especially extended series of such rings. For Shakespeare's Prince Hal, as the words quoted above suggest, to be able to speak to his men in their own language is an aspect of courtesy, producing personal allegiance. So, too, is the Stanleys' participation in regional

performance-based events. An occasion such as the *Shepherds* pageant festivities encodes

mutual honor between the town and the earls; most especially it re-inscribes them into a

network of geographic and historical alliances–it speaks to their regional belonging.[10] And

seen in terms of temporality, the event overall, can be recognised as enacting what today

would be termed a heritage-based evocation of regional rootedness and identity. By the early

seventeenth century, this is expressed clearly in *Roger's Breviary* (1619) which describes

itself as "A breauary or Collectiones of the moste anchant Cittie of Chester," describing the

city's traditions and the performances that enacted "homages" to its various guilds, authorities

and personages (quoted REED. *Cheshire* vol. 1, 320). This antiquarian collection of records

of historic manifestations of place-based identity serves, in a purely representational form, to

re-create Chester's heritage just as, only a few years earlier, the *Shepherds* event had

undertaken the work of articulating a regional identity for both the Stanleys and the people of

Chester through its performed enactment of present relationships and a past-present culture. It

gestured, as well, to the immediate future: one year later, in 1588, the 4th Earl of Derby was

appointed as Chamberlain of Chester. So, while the *Shepherds* pageant might appear to be a

quite different form of occasion from Henri III's Garter Investiture, both events, performed to

and for the 4th Earl of Derby, are informed by particular politico-cultural expediencies and

can be seen to share an underlying functional syntax that calls into being his public identity as

an individual incumbent of the Earldom of Derby at particular historical moments.

Seen from a long view, however, these events appear as episodes abstracted from the

protracted, longer duration of dynastic time, an equally significant temporal axis in the

production of aristocratic identity. Contemporary attention to the flow of succession, and

transitions between the lives of each earl, are crucial events. These are marked by the, again,

highly performative funeral ceremonies, accounts of which form parts of Stanley family

records: John Seacome's transcript account of the 3rd Earl's "Funeral Obsequies…ordered

with the greatest Magnificence" and the contemporary account of the 4th Earl's funeral, recently discovered in Knowsley Hall (Seacome 53-9; Knowsley Hall library, MS C41 ff. 1r-31r; see also Lloyd's article in this issue). These documents, with their lists of mourners (and their degree-related positions and actions at the funerals), funeral costs and personal and household possessions of the deceased earl (ff. 32r-56r), precisely embody dynastic concerns and the material realities of issues of succession (see also Shannon in this issue on the "placing" of members of the Stanley court at events). Aristocracy, like royalty, is directly presented as being simultaneously lived individually and as an always-successive state that has an equally strong material force (as the increasingly urgent national question of Elizabeth I's succession in the 1590s and early 1600s demonstrates.) But how the achievements of successive earls, and ways in which the personal history of each of them might be sequenced into a diachronic, dynastic continuity is the task of a rather different set of performers and creators from those mentioned so far: those minstrels, gestours, musicians, and players under Stanley patronage.

3. **Diachronic Identity: Minstrels, Ballads and the Representation of Dynastic Continuity**

As the Introduction to this Special Issue and individual articles within it reveal, the origins of the Stanley family's power can be traced back to at least the fourteenth century. A series of encomia, made up of ballads, poems or romances celebrating key moments in the Stanleys' family history, began to be written down from the period just after the Battle of Bosworth in the late fifteenth century. The series was augmented and texts were circulated, both in manuscript form and orally performed, at the Stanley court and more widely, for several succeeding centuries and were also collected, from the early-seventeenth-century onwards, by antiquarians. It is, evidently, through the written or transcribed, and later collected, versions of these ballads and romances that they come down to us.[11] Taken

collectively, these texts form a dynastic narrative that "manage[s] the reputation of the Stanleys and their regional clients, emphasizing triumphs and assuaging disasters" (Barrett 173). At the level of content, then, the poems and romances have a representational function. The formal qualities and the histories of the texts and their collection, however, might be seen to work in a different way, allowing us an entry into thought about changes in performance forms in the early modern period. And it is through the figure of the minstrel–the performer, transmitter and sometimes creator of these texts–that we can trace changing representational and play forms through the sixteenth century.

Inevitably, the Battle of Bosworth, leading to Thomas, Lord Stanley's elevation to an earldom, is the historical event that figures most frequently and emphatically in the Stanley encomia, in spite of the ambiguities of Lord Stanley's role (see Introduction to this issue). The Bosworth Field poems (*Bosworth Field* itself, *The Rose of England* and *Lady Bessy*) produced in the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth centuries, provide Stanley-centred, chivalric narratives, directly linking their dynasty to a national history. Similarly, *Flodden Field* and *Scottish Field,* celebrate the roles of the Stanleys in the Scottish border battle of 1513, fought on the banks of the River Till (a tributary of the cross-border River Tweed) in Northumberland, between the invading Scottish army of James IV of Scotland and the (victorious) troops led by the Earl of Surrey for Henry VIII of England. And further poems and romance accounts, such as the later *Sir William's Garland*, a fantastically exaggerated accounts of the travels of William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, provide a continuation of the encomium mode of earlier narratives.

Perhaps the most revealing and interesting of the series of Stanley encomia is thirteen-hundred-line text, *The Stanley Poem*, produced c. 1560-74 and named by James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, the nineteenth century editor and anthologist.[12] In the poem's first fit, this tells the story of the Stanleys from the original adoption of their name through to a romance-

inflected account of Sir John Stanley's travels, heroic deeds and fantastical adventures, serving to establish him as a dynastic originator and figure of legend (see Cooper generally on romance accounts of Bosworth). The narrative continues with descriptions of successive generations of Stanleys' heroism in the second fit, relating the mythic tale of the origin of the Stanleys' eagle crest and how the Isle of Man was endowed to them by Henry IV. The much longer third fit tells the most dynastically-important story: that of Sir Thomas Stanley, First Earl of Derby, and his roles at Court and in the Battle of Bosworth. It concludes with description of his sons, especially Edward, incumbent as 3rd Earl of Derby at the time when the poem was produced.

The Rawlinson MS version of the poem, anthologised by Halliwell-Phillips, immediately in its first nine lines, establishes its temporal scheme and purpose:

Their names be Awdeley, by very right dissent,

I shall shewe you how, if you geeve good attente,

As quickly as I can, without more delay,

How the name was changed and called Standley.

In antique tyme much more then two hundred yeare,

Was on L. Audley, by Stories does appeare,

Audley by creation, and by name Audley,

Havinge a lordshippe is yeat called Standley,

Which lordship he gave to his second sonne…(Halliwell-Phillips 208-9, ll. 1-9).

Appeals to antiquity, reference to genealogy and to name serve to provide key dynastic markers. The poem, before quickly moving to the career of Sir John Stanley (full of romance elements such as his travels to the Sultan of Turkey's court where the Sultan's daughter falls in love him), traces his Stanley line to its older Audley-Stanley family roots (records of which stretch back to the Domesday Book's references to the eleventh-century Ligulf of

Aldithley and his Staffordshire estates), so invoking a definitive moment of originating

Englishness (see Seacome 1). This, it is clear from the start, is an authenticating–even if

fabulated–narrative, delineating a line of descent that parallels, and is implicated in, a broader

English history. But the trans-temporal notion of inheritance, integral to its purpose, is

counterpointed by the framing of the historical narrative in a creative, re-creative, or

performative present through the narrator's or ballad singer's opening, and later, addresses to

his own contemporary audience. (The Harley MS version, containing an introductory

summary of the poem's intent to avoid "lying & flattery" in its account "of our anncestor*es*

good reporte", highlights most strongly the need of an audience "[in] reading or singing to

hear now & then" a record that "brings the deade to noble fame" [MS Harley, folio 183v, ll.

2, 4, 15, 18]. The encomic purpose and the overarching temporal scheme of such heroic

poems is addressed directly here; their existence as both performed and written texts in

repeated present moments is suggested.) However formulaic such balladic devices may be,

they function succinctly to articulate the synchronic concerns and relationships of the present

moment of performance with the poem's diachronic content. And it is, of course, in this

dialogue between past and present that the "deep time" of a dynasty operates. In the same way

as the witches' conjuring of a "show of eight kings" in the final act of *Macbeth,* where the

eighth in a procession of Macbeth's predecessors carries a glass showing "many more"

successors, summarises the play's pervasive concern with time, so *The Stanley Poem*

produces individual Stanleys, however heroic, as no more than contributors to the *longue*

durée of their line (*Macbeth* 5.1,107–124; cf. Kantorowicz 287). The present is revealed both

as a cumulative moment and as a temporary stasis in a succession of times, a brief halt

between past and future.

The ballad form itself also works to reproduce this through its own temporal aesthetic.

Just as the thirteen hundred lines of the poem serve both to tell of the particular deeds of

individual Stanley nobles but also to place them in an enduring line, so the poem's formal qualities enact similar patterns of constancy and change in the identities produced for members of successive Stanley generations. The narrative flow of the poem drives forward through centuries, but it is a stuttering, staccato progress, as the past is evoked through a sequence of cameos, often vivid with dialogue and specific detail, that capture history as a series of stilled, past-present moments, capturing the valor of each, successive, Stanley actant. In a similar fashion, the poem's rhythmic patterns and its uninterrupted aa bb cc… rhyme scheme produces the narration's simultaneously rapid and halting flow, its continuity delivered through repetition, stasis and progression. Most strikingly, the occasional colloquialism of its diction–instanced by phrases such as "his ould dadde", rhymed with "haulf mad" (third fit, ll. 34-5), found in the story of the young Thomas Stanley's raid on Kirkcudbright, or in use of the gloriously expressive word "dickeduckfarte" (third fit, l. 208) to describe the sudden, fearful retreat of the men in an attempted raid on Lathom Hall by Richard, Duke of York–carries traces of the voice and language both of its author-performer and its original auditors. These brief moments of linguistic informality produce experiential flashes of recognition for the modern reader of its past occasion, of the intimacy of relationship between first performer and audience. A phenomenological trace is embedded in the text, sparking instants of connective feeling between our own present and the past performance of the poem. It is possible to retrieve from this text flickering sensations of past presences, past performances that engaged performer and audience together in the immediacy of the narrative's drama, its excitements.

Authorship of *The Stanley Poem* has traditionally been attributed to Bishop Thomas Stanley, the son of Edward, Lord Monteagle. Internal evidence in the form of poem's references to Thomas Monteagle as deceased, but Edward, 3rd Earl of Derby as alive, provide a timeframe of between 1560 and 1574 for its composition. This would fit into the late years

of Bishop Stanley's life (Halliwell 254-5; Taylor 66-7). But, from decades of archival and analytic research, the medieval and sixteenth-century scholar, Andrew Taylor has assembled detailed evidence and argument, particularly in relationship to the collection of ballads and songs comprising Bodeleian MS Ashmole 84, to suggest a more plausible author and original performer: Richard Sheale, the minstrel and broadsheet ballad seller (Taylor esp. 1-6; 66ff).

As a performer, author, and possessor of a written collection of ballads, Sheale had a hybrid status, operating both as an independent travelling minstrel and peddler, and as a client of the Stanleys and other members of their affinity (Taylor 31-2). In his role as a Stanley client he was one of a series of individual minstrels, musicians and jesters ("gestour" was originally a particular term for minstrels who sang of great deeds) known to have been patronized by the 3rd and 4th Earls of Derby (see Taylor 3, 31, 56-7; and Lloyd's article in this issue).[13] This continuing support of minstrelsy appears, in a national context, unusual. Conventionally, minstrels, referring to a broad category of entertainers, but particularly musicians, have been seen as a dying breed of performer by the mid-sixteenth century, and to have been more completely replaced by other types of "players"–predominantly stage-players–by the end of the century. Timothy McGee, for instance, in considering changes in musical taste in the century, along with the legal and socio-political constraints on itinerancy produced by the Elizabethan vagrancy laws (see Bier; Slack; and Brayshay), writes explicitly:

> In 1500 the minstrel held a prominent place in all secular entertainment on all social levels. But by the end of the century that position had changed markedly, and many of the events for which the minstrel had traditionally performed were in the hands of other entertainers (McGee 98).

Several factors are usually recognized as contributing the demise of the minstrel's function. The royal court of Henry VIII had instigated a new fashion in music as a constituent of ceremonial occasion and as integral to the court's overall cultural dynamics. Tudor music

21

was increasingly influenced by the forms imported from continental European courts by immigrant musicians such as the Bassano family. Not only was individual performance replaced by that of polyphonic groups (vocal or instrumental), but composition as well as performance was elevated to a high courtly skill. And this, in turn, produced a revalorization of music's symbolic functions. As Chantal Schütz has written, music came symbolically to represent "measure and peace, social harmony and good government" in much the same way as skill in other performance arts, such as those of the manège, increasingly did (Schütz 222; on the manège, Edwards et al. passim). The distinctly-inflected cultural eroticism of the Tudor courts, in particular, was enacted through the royal household's participation in sophisticated music and dance forms. So, it can be argued, the music of the royal–and by influence, aristocratic–courts increasingly separated itself from popular, vernacular forms that had hitherto prevailed in all social contexts.

Simultaneously, the functions of itinerant minstrels themselves changed. The large number of London minstrels, as freemen of the city, organized themselves in the early sixteenth century into a formal fellowship, successfully petitioning the city council to prohibit performance by outsiders (McGee 107-8). And repeated legislation against vagrancy, of course, identified travelling minstrels not under the patronage of a noble lord with members of the mobile poor as illegal itinerants. Then, the growth of a print culture is usually cited as further contributing to the demise of minstrelsy. Emerging in competition with the oral ballad tradition, the production and sale of broadside ballads led to the replacement of the performative storytelling function of minstrels (especially minstrels as harpers) with the representational forms, and commercial processes, associated with print ballads.

Yet the influence of each of these contributing causes to the decline of minstrelsy might be modified if seen through the lens of connective or dialogic interrelation between situations and socio-cultural groups that I suggest is necessary to a focus on the north-western

culture centered in the Stanley court. The Royal Tudor Courts were not entirely isolated from their geographic and cultural environment, as the story of Elizabethan theatre and the variety of performance venues companies played in (across England, in inns, new theatres and at court) demonstrates. The lives of court musicians themselves similarly suggest a more permeable boundary between the Royal court and its surrounding cultures than is sometimes implied. Professional musicians, as Fiona Kisby has shown, were figures who, in moving between the locations of the peripatetic royal court and its environs, enacted the socio-cultural permeability of the court's boundaries: the court "merged osmotically with the societies surrounding its main locations" (199-200). Musicians might have been intimately involved in court life, but they lived, interacted and also performed–in quite different contexts–beyond the Tudor courts. Their work negotiated and bridged different cultural domains, in the same way that the traditional minstrels' performance roles always had. And the decline of minstrelsy itself is perhaps overstated at times, if primarily seen from a specifically metropolitan or southern viewpoint. In Chester, for instance, minstrelsy remained a prominent cultural form until the mid-seventeenth century, as the REED: *Chester* volume demonstrates.

So, rather than seeing Richard Sheale as late example of an itinerant minstrel–and so as an anomalous remnant of a moribund culture of minstrelsy–his life and work might be recognised as replicating those processes of cultural negotiation between old and new, region and metropolis that typify the concerns of successive Earls of Derby. As indicated by Taylor's identification of MS Ashmole 48 as a collection of ballads (including "The Stanley Poem" and the "Elegy to Lady Margaret") owned by Sheale, and his reconstruction of Sheale's life–as simultaneously a minstrel travelling distinct and traditional routes; a household entertainer and "little servant" of the Earl of Derby; and a participant in the London broadside ballad trade, this minstrel's life and work tempers notions of any absolute temporal break in performance forms.

If minstrels can generally be seen to represent a culture of mobility through the itinerancy intrinsic to their performing lives, so too they may be seen as cultural vectors enacting intermediary roles between different social ranks, geo-cultural milieus, communities, cultural forms, styles and fashions as they move between places, groups and performance or representational forms. Perceived in this way, Sheale's life might represent (in the short term at least) an intensification, rather than a diminution, of such a function. It demands recognition that broad changes in performance modes occurred as a gradual tendency, unevenly enacted in different situations, and (as so often in the story of the Earls of Derby) involving negotiation, adaptation and finessing of circumstance and change. And the continuing Stanley patronage of a minstrel such as Sheale alongside companies of stage players is entirely characteristic of their dynastic strategy. As a late sixteenth century harper and ballad singer, Sheale preserves traditional forms of performance of Stanley history, allowing these to co-exist with those newer forms of national history (often highlighting Stanley roles) that are represented in the historical dramas, especially Shakespeare's, that are gaining popularity and cultural prominence (see Manley and MacLean, esp. Ch. 9 on possible connections between Shakespeare, Strange's Men and the Stanleys). The role and place of minstrelsy, then, in relation to the Stanley encomia draws attention to a further series of temporalities informing different modes of performed identity associated with the Earls of Derby. Their long-continuing support of minstrelsy, alongside their patronage of dramatic troupes, produces a negotiated diversification of performance forms that invokes their being in a culturally changing present. Old and new, past and present not only intersect in the content and forms of their clients' texts and performances but are further balanced in the Stanleys' choices of clients.

The preservation of the Stanley ballads in a range of antiquarian collections from the seventeenth century onwards, then marks a further temporal re-inflection of the Stanleys'

dynastic history. It is through the work of these antiquarians that a changing notion of historicity, predicated on the desire to grasp and fix the past, transforming texts through the process of collection into material artefacts, is enacted. These texts become "vestiges" that, in the words of the archaeological theorist Laurent Olivier, "bear witness to a history that has vanished" (Olivier 6), rather than enacting or representing the past as an aspect of the flow of time between past, present and future, as the first composition and performance of the Stanley romances did.

4. Coda: Shakespearean Drama, Regionality and the Earls of Derby

At various moments in our own past century, metropolitan predominance in the cultural relationship between London and the English regions has been emphasized especially strongly. From the announcement of a "New Labour" vision in 1994, through the period of Tony Blair's Prime Ministership from 1997-2007, a metropolitan cultural renaissance (famously marked by the 1996 *Newsweek* magazine cover headlined "London Rules") was celebrated. Coinciding with this period of London-dominated "Cool Britannia" and the coming to fruition of work on London's Elizabethan theatres that was marked by the opening of Shakespeare's Globe in 1997, there was a broader surge in scholarly attention to both the cultural history of early-modern London and the development of England as a nation state (Linda Colley's influential *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* had been, for instance, first published in 1992 and was followed by a rapid succession of re-editions.) It was during this period that Peter Womack's influential analysis of the decline of provincial drama, the rise of a newly-unified English language that found its form in the "metropolitan centre (London, Canterbury, Oxford and Cambridge)" (105), and the role of Shakespearean history plays in imagining the nation state, appeared. In this, he traced how "two Englands–the one that descends from its hereditary rulers, and the one that which ascends from the people as a

25

whole–collide, transform one another, negotiate" in the sequence of Shakespeare's medieval histories and through the roles of Elizabethan players as both "protégés of nobleman" and as "common players, 'servants of the people'" (137-38). Through the development of the commercial London theatres themselves, and the representations of history in Shakespearean plays, he suggests, drama could "[move] out from the circumscribed past of institutional traditions (great families, the Crown) into the 'common past' of the nation as a whole," so "inviting its audience not only to contemplate the 'imagined community' but to *be* it" (138). In the light of arguments such as this, it is easy to see the traditions of regional drama, performance and literature–and the roles of the Earls of Derby–as embodying a cultural conservatism. But the more nuanced histories of regional performance made possible by recent research, as enabled by the REED project, complicate such a picture. Rather than being characterised by old-fashioned kinds of relationship, the performance forms associated with the Earls of Derby present a more complex relationship between old and new; nation, metropolis, royal court and region; and popular and elite tastes. Their patronage of theatrical troupes, Derby's Men and Strange's Men, can be seen in this broader context of patronage of, participation in, and representation as dative objects of, a range of not-fully-separated performance forms. Framed in this way, the vexed question of Shakespeare's own possible relationship to the Earls of Derby becomes a rather less important issue than might be raised by any narrative that seeks to insert Derby patronage into a narrative too-simply focalized as a history of London playhouses and the important companies that played there. While it is the relationship between Lord Strange's Men and Shakespeare, carefully and authoritatively described by Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean in their description of the history of Lord Strange's Men as constituting "the prehistory of what has been called 'the Shakespeare Company'", that provides the subtlest and most fully evidenced "grounds for a direct association with Shakespeare" (Manley and MacLean 2), understanding of the place of the

Stanleys in relation to early-modern performance is not only dependent on a Shakespeare connection. The Stanleys' roles in relation to a range of performance forms allow us to see a more complex picture of the way that performance, Shakespearean and otherwise, was integral to the dynamics of the early-modern politico-cultural world and the historical processes involved in changing national, international and regional relationships and identities. And, in particular, the forms of performance produced about, for, and in front of, various individual members of the Stanley dynasty, reveal aspects of that broad search for a means of producing a reflective subjectivity that, as Adam Smyth has put it, "resonates so powerfully in Shakespeare's plays which feature so many characters preoccupied with, and often tormented by, finding ways of registering a life, of marking their presence" (12). The variety of occasions and texts that performatively produce the identities of generations of the Stanleys, collectively serve to provide us with an entry into both the deep, and the thick, time of their being.

NOTES

[1]   My thanks to Filippo Romanello for inspiring discussions of his work on his, as yet unpublished, PhD thesis, *Theatre of Repetition: Towards the Spontaneous Interplay of Text and Performance*, Liverpool John Moores University, July 2020.

[2]   See Lawton's brief discussion of this, 52; Barrett's monograph on Cheshire's regional identity includes extensive discussion of its literary tradition from 1195, including his chapter on issues relating to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 133-70. For a range of different interpretations of Chester's identity in the long medieval period, also see essays in Clarke's *Mapping*, especially Camp's "Plotting Chester."

[3] In grammars of inflected languages, the term "dative" denotes a case of nouns and pronouns which indicates they are indirect objects, or recipients, of something. Use of the dative suggests that something is produced "to or for" a person or thing.

[4] See Robert Tittler's "Introduction" to *Portraits* for a comparable argument in relation to the significance of non-canonical, regional portraits in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

[5] William I of Orange had made François de France his hereditary heir and, after the Treaty of Plessis-les-Tours, "Protector of the Liberty of the Netherlands." This was not a popular decision in all of the states constituting The United Provinces of the Netherlands which was engaged in a sustained struggle against Spanish rule over them.

[6] Various accounts of the Embassy are found in: Bodleian Tanner MS. 78, folios 24–29v. 36–37v, 78; BM Cotton MS Caligula. E. VII, folios 233–240v. and 241–43. There is a transcript in Bodleian Ashmole MS 1109, folios 63–66. There are several other accounts, most notably in Holinshed IV, 557–560. I have primarily used the Bodleian Tanner MS here.

[7] See the parallel move towards an aesthicization of battles skills involved in the arts of the manège developed from the late sixteenth century onwards in Edwards et al. passim.

[8] See Frieda on Catherine de' Medici's life and political roles; Lee on Catherine de' Medici's role in the history of ballet; Strong, *Art and Power* 99-100 on Valois festivals and passim on Catherine de' Medici.

[9] My thanks to David Crystal for giving me his thoughts on these issues.

10   A similar reading might be made of the 1588/9 performance in Chester, for the 4th

Earl of Derby, of "the storey of Kinge Ebrauk with all his sonne" by unknown players

(REED. *Cheshire*, vol. 1, 223; Lost Plays Database, https://

www.lostplays.folger.edu/King_Ebrauk_with_All_His_Sons. Also see Stebbing 41).

11   Versions of the Stanley texts appear variously in: the mid-seventeenth-century Percy

Folio (BL Additional MS. 27879), the most important collection of Stanley encomia

(*Bosworth Field*, *The Rose of England* and *The Song of Lady Bessie*); the eighteenth-

century collections, Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet 143.II; British Library Harley MS

541 (*The Stanley Poem* and *A Briefe Journall of the Siege against Lathom*); and

British Library MS Additional 5830 (*The Stanley Poem*); and *Seacome's Memoirs* ("A

True and Genuine Account, of the Famous and over Memorable Siege of Latham-

House"); the nineteenth-century Chetham Society's *Remains Historical and Literary*

of Lancashire and Cheshire, Vol. XXIX (*The Song of Lady Bessy; Sir William*

Stanley's Garland); and Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 48 (*The Stanley Poem* and *An*

Elegy for Lady Margaret, Countess of Derby) and several other minor collections.

12   I use Halliwell's version of the poem throughout, referencing it with my own, added,

line numbers, except when other versions are specifically mentioned.

13   For further references to musicians under Derby patronage, see REED. *Lancashire*

Addenda 10, 31-3; Taylor 3, 31-37; Raines 27, 117; REED. *Chester* 227, lxix, 280;

Manley and MacLean 33.

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