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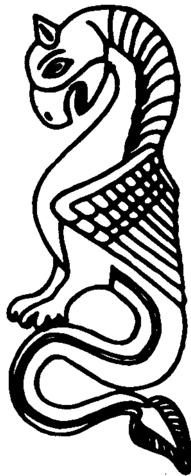

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The Stanley Poem and the Harper Richard Sheale

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The Stanleys, earls of Derby and virtual rulers of Cheshire and Lancashire, were the subject of numerous laudatory ballads and verse histories. There was, in particular, a strong tradition celebrating their part in the victories of Bosworth and Flodden, a ballad tradition that the family probably actively promoted.[1] As David Lawton has argued, the concern with family ties in the Stanley encomium reflects both the Stanley hegemony in Lancashire and Cheshire and 'the intricate inter-connections of a gentry community around them', a community 'of property, business interests, religious observance, kinship and local pride'.[2] These connections were reinforced by intermarriage, by joint military service in what was still in many respects a feudal levy, and by sharing numerous legal and civic responsibilities. The same men who sat together as judges and justices of the peace, who acted as executors for each others' wills, and who arranged suitable marriages to link their estates, also joined each other at banquets and processions and in hunting and cockfighting. Their patronage of drama and music was a further means of reinforcing these social bonds and preserving the sense of community, kinship, and tradition extolled in the poems.[3]

Among the surviving Stanley encomia there is a family history in rhyming verse of some 1300 lines which was given the title *The Stanley Poem* by its editor, James Orchard Halliwell.[4] The poem begins with the origins of the family name and ends with the deeds of Thomas Stanley, the first earl (1435?-1504), and his three sons. Throughout it emphasizes the family's deeds of valour and their defiant speeches, and it borrows many of its conventions from romance, especially in its earlier parts. Since the poem is relatively little known, it is worth giving a brief account of it before proceeding further.

The poem is divided into three fits. The first fit tells how John Stanley journeys abroad and visits the Sultan of Turkey, whose daughter falls in love with him:

> So visited all the countreys of Christendom,
> And to the Turkes courte personallye did come,
> Still getting great honor, therof did not faile
> Against all those that in armes durst him assayle;
> And in the Turkes pallace abode haulf a yeare,
> Till with the Turkes daughter he became most deare:
> Being yong with child, she secretly did saye
> And privily gave warning to Sir John Standeley,
> Said, 'Valiaunte knight, the case with me thus standes,
> Thoughe thou gett honor dayly with harte and handes,
> Hit is not that my deare love cann save thy life,
> Thou hast me yong with child, and I not thye wife.
> Which, if my father knew, I dare well saye
> For no good ne riches might you skape awaye.
> My father loves you well, and in the meane tyme
> Take leave and go hence, while unknowne is your crime'.
> (pp. 211-12)

She vows not to marry for seven years and to wait until he sends for her; but he never does, and we hear no more of the Sultan's daughter after John Stanley returns to England.

The second fit tells of Lord Lathum, a man of eighty who has no heir. One day an eagle brings a baby boy back to her nest in the nearby woods:

> More myracle then marvaile seemed to have bene,
> For the like so straunge a thing hath not beene seene.
> This name Lathum was before the Conquest,
> And in Tarlesco wood an egle had a nest,
> With her three fayre byrdes that were even ready fligge,
> She brought to them a goodly boy, yonge and bigge,
> Swadled and cladde in a mantle of scarclette. (p. 217)

Hearing this, Lord Lathum hurries to rescue the child and brings him to his wife. They christen him Oskell and make him their heir. Oskell in turn has a daughter, his only heir, who hears of the famous John Stanley and resolves to marry him:

> When shee cam to womanhood and lawfull age,

As other women be lustie of courage,
Devising what way som maters to aswage,
Bethought herselfe on a pleasante mariadge.
She harde the noble bruite of Sir John Standley,
And condiscended in her harte even straite way,
To have him to husband, if she might him gette,
Secretely send him a token did not let,
Then rewarded ye messenger worthilye,
The which token he received lovinglye. (p. 218)

Much against her father's wishes, they marry. Oskell is eventually reconciled to his son-in-law and Stanley prospers, receiving the Isle of Man for his service to Henry IV at the battle of Shrewsbury.

The third fit, which at 977 lines is by far the longest, recounts the fortunes of Thomas, the first earl of Derby, at the court, his role at Bosworth, and the noble behaviour of his sons, including Edward (1509-72), the current earl when the poem was composed. While the chronology is now more or less historically accurate, and we no longer encounter Sultans' daughters or children found by eagles, the shape of the tale still owes much to romance, both in its themes and in its triadic structure of repeated challenges. Edward must first appear before Queen Margaret to answer an anonymous and unspecified charge, which he does proudly:

'I cry deffiaunce to any earthly mann,
Hereto I cast my glove, reprove me who can'. (p. 227)

The glove lies there for three days but none dare touch it and in the end the Queen herself picks it up and returns it to Edward, assuring him that false tongues will hurt him no more.

The second challenge comes when Edward is hoping to marry Lady Margaret Beaufort, daughter of the Duke of Somerset and mother of the future Henry VII. As with the Sultan of Turkey and Oskell, it is once more the father of a fair and wealthy lady who obstructs a Stanley's advance. The Duke of Somerset sends overseas for a French champion, 'a man of armes called most dangerous,/ That had destroyed and killed many a knighte' (p. 229), who challenges Stanley to a joust. The challenge leaves Stanley undaunted:

The Lord Standley tooke the message in good worth,

> Bad point the time and place where he will henceforth.
> 'He is comen from farre, I redd rest him a while,
> Lest his foolish enterprise do him beguile,
> And longer then him list let him not forbeare,
> I would he should knowe hit, I do him not feare,
> But send him defiance with all my harte,
> And all his maintainance, the king set a parte'. (p. 230)

Stanley kills the foreigner ('thoutlandish man') at the first run, and presents himself to the king.

> . . . 'My liege lord, your grace not offended,
> Whoso is angry with my deede let him come amend it,
> Christened or heathen, whatsoever he be,
> I here defie him, excepting no degree'. (p. 231)

The Queen calls him back and offers him a golden ring with a diamond, which the poet tells us he wore all his life. Seeing his worthiness and courage, the Duke is reconciled to the marriage, and Stanley is made the Earl of Derby at the next parliament – the author's most noticeable deviation from the history of the real earl.

Edward's third enemy is Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who takes umbrage over a dispute between their tenants.

> The melancholicke duke tooke to much grievaunce,
> And sware 'By cockes bludd', quod he, 'Shortly I shall
> Kill the Earle of Darby and burne Lathum Hall'. (p. 233)

Richard's plots against the Stanleys are complex and he refuses to abandon them despite repeated failures. The entire remainder of Edward's career, as told by the poet, revolves around Richard's treachery. It is a plot by Richard that lures Stanley into the war with the Scots, where he is triumphant, taking first Edinburgh and then Berwick in 1472 'or neere thereaboute' (p. 246). Having treated the Scottish wars at length, the poet moves quickly through the events leading up to Bosworth field, but he does mention Richard's use of Lord Strange as a hostage and how Thomas crowns Henry on the field – famous moments in the Stanley family tradition. He also notes in passing the unfortunate fate of William Stanley, whom Henry VII executed years later, adding the sage reflection that 'Good service may be soone lost with a fonde woorde' (p. 250).

The poem then turns to safer ground, the hospitality, charity, and courage of Thomas's sons and grandsons, avoiding any reference to current religious controversies or any further mention of the court's intrigues. It concludes with a detailed account of the rebuilding of Lathom by the first earl.

One of the central themes of the third fit is the courage and loyalty of the men of Cheshire and Lancashire to their lord and his concern for their welfare. Their mutual reliance is displayed repeatedly against the machinations of Richard and above all against the Scots. Edward's benevolence is a matter of conscious policy, for the love of his neighbours is the source of his strength:

> When Lathum manor was made after not longe
> A gentlemann sayd, 'My Lord, this howse is stronge,
> And enemies came neare, they would fall on quaking'.
> Quod he, 'I have a stronger wall a making,
> That is my neighbours to get theyre god willes all,
> To love me truelly, that is a stronger wall!'. (p. 269)

The poet ends by calling on the audience to pray for the soul of Thomas and the continued union of neighbourly love and Stanley property:

> Pray we charitably for each others soule
> And specially for this soule nowe let us praye,
> Of this honorable earle Thomas Stanley,
> Who in honor and love hath ended this life,
> With truth ever in wedlocke to God and his wyfe. MS lyfe
> The love which he wann with liberality,
> God keepe it so styll with the same propertye! (p. 271)

This is the poem I believe may have been composed by the minstrel Richard Sheale.

The Stanley Poem survives in three manuscripts: Bodl. MS Rawlinson Poet 143.II, which is copied in a single sixteenth-century hand and was the version Halliwell chose to print; BL MS Harley 541, which Halliwell judged to be a later and defective copy and is found in a collection of diverse pieces gathered by John Stow; and BL MS Add. 5830, which is an antiquarian collection, copied in the eighteenth century by N. M. Cole, whose signature appears on the first folio.[5] In addition, in his *Memoirs* John Seacome, who was the Stanley family steward, offers a transcription based on a manuscript sent to him by a donor he leaves un-named.[6] The early

provenance of the Rawlinson manuscript is unknown, as is that of the relevant section of the Harley manuscript.

The four texts correspond closely for the much of the poem: Harley contains a thirty-eight-line introduction on the dangers of flattery which also appears in Cole's transcription and in Seacome's version, although in the latter it is slightly altered and set down as prose. These lines are omitted from Rawlinson. On the other hand, Harley ends after the death of Thomas Mounteagle, while Rawlinson continues for nearly three hundred more lines. Since the opening lines of the Harley manuscript have never appeared in print, I offer them here:

> Amonge all delyghtes & most worldlie comfort
> Ys to hear of our anncestor*es* good reporte
> Þ*a*t pleasethe & raisethe a naturall harte
> So þat lying & flatterie be sett aparte
> But onelie the truth here shalbe moved
> As by due record iustlie maye be p*ro*ved
> Not as some croniclers falslye flattering
> Renownes þe vnworthye w*i*th a clattering
> I would such wryters for their vniust smatteringe
> Should offer them selves to St Thomas Watteringe
> But w*i*th truth no man owght to be offended
> No truth of right owght to be reprehended
> But in martiall feates allowe true declaringe
> Hardie harte for such stories be ofte waytinge
> In Readinge or singinge to hear nowe & then
> The stowte valiant prowes of noble men
> And great pitie þ*a*t should not be in recorde
> First þat bringes the deade to noble fame & [re]ward/ fol. 183v
> And also to the hearers being on lyue
> Raiseth their harte lyke enterpryse to atchyve
> In their prynces servise taryinge for no coste
> But adventure thowgh lyfe & lande should be lost
> And of land or lyfe makes no comparison
> To a valiant acte right manfullie done
> True recorde of wrytinge ys necessarie
> As appeareth by manye goodlie storie
> W*i*thowt wryting all fame should be lost at once

> Than stowt hardye men myght as well lose their sence
> The ienitor*s* [i.e., genitors or ancestors] ys thuss cause of
> hardynes
> & hope of fame ys thuss cause of forwardnes
> As stories doe specifye & mention make
> What hardie men have done for their ladies sake
> Wryting of ould knowledge ys well p*re*served
> Yf dame fame follow w*i*th truth*e* deserved
> As I intend honestlie w*i*th truthe to praise
> The valiant prowes of the stowte Stanleys.[7]

The Stanley Poem is widely attributed to Thomas Stanley, bishop of Sodor and Man (d. 1570) on the authority of Thomas Heywood, the noted Cheshire antiquarian. As Halliwell puts it, 'The most antient metrical account of the Stanleys Earls of Derby, observes Mr. T. Heywood, is contained in some uncouth rhymes supposed to have been written about the year 1562, by Thomas Stanley, Bishop of Sodor and Man, and son of that Sir Edward Stanley, who for his valour at Flodden, was created Lord Monteagle'.[8] The date of 1562 appears to be based only on the reference in the poem to Thomas Monteagle (d. 1560) as deceased.[9] The attribution of the poem to Bishop Thomas is credited by A. F. Pollard in his 1909 entry in the DNB (s.v. Stanley, Edward, first baron Monteagle), and by the editors of the Bodleian *Summary Catalogue* of 1895 (no. 14637). There has, however, been a discreet murmur of scepticism on the attribution, since neither the Harley nor the Rawlinson manuscripts make any mention of the author. Margaret Crum, for one, in her first-line index of Bodleian manuscripts, omits the attribution altogether.[10]

In fact, the tradition that Bishop Thomas was the author is almost certainly false. Quite apart from the question of whether these hackneyed tag-lines would suit an Oxford graduate who, 'had the character, when young, of a tolerable poet of his time',[11] there are several passages in the poem that make it clear that its author cannot have been the bishop himself and must have held a considerably humbler position. After praising the courage of Edward Stanley, the author is quick to insist that he is no mere flatterer:

> In all kind of daungers he was ever on,
> And still wann worshippe, honor I may it call,
> Whie not being so hardy and liberall;
> I flatter not nor looke for meade or living,

All byrdes of that neast may rejoyce his doing. (p. 265)

It is just possible to read this line as an ironic piece of self deprecation by the bishop, who obviously could not hope to gain further preferment by flattering himself or his father, but such irony seems out of keeping with the poem's general tone. And if there were still any doubt, the author elsewhere makes it quite clear that he was not one of Edward's sons:

As Edward that righte noble Earle of Darby,
Greate houskeeper of all England is he,
God save his life, for as longe as he doth live,
Condigne laud and praise my penne may him not give,
Nor of his children ther noble worthinesse,
Being yeat living I may it not expresse,
For feare it should be thought a flattering parte,
I must stay my penn contrary to my harte,
And laud them litle or nothing at all,
Lest it chaunce my doing be judged partiall.
I referre to those that live when I am donne,
To make a full end of that I have begunne. (p. 259)

Unless the author is being deliberately disingenuous or engaging in elaborate literary play, he was not himself one of Edward's children, whose worthiness he declares himself incapable of expressing, but was instead a Stanley dependant or supporter.

The probable source for the legend of the bishop's authorship is Seacome's *Memoirs*. Seacome's version begins with what would seem to be a badly contaminated version of the Rawlinson introduction, set out as prose, at the end of which we find the following attribution:

agragated & compiled by *Thomas Stanley* by the permission of God Bishop of *Man* alias *Sodor*, in the Year of Our Lord 1562.[12]

Quite what is meant by 'agragated and compiled' is not clear; it need not necessarily have meant composed, although Seacome himself understood it this way.[13] It is perfectly possible that a copy of the eulogy of John Stanley and Edward, the bishop's father, had been made at the bishop's orders, or that he had been assembling other materials related to the family history, or even that he had commissioned or received

the original poem. All this might account for the suggestion that the bishop *compiled* the poem. As the marred rhymes of his version make clear, Seacome was not working from a reliable early copy, but when he was assembling the material a certain oral tradition lived on, and there may therefore be some basis of truth in his claim that the bishop played a role in the poem's compilation.[14]

The poem has moments of informality, as when it says of young Thomas Stanley and his raid on Kirkcudbright 'There was a noble child to venge his ould dadde' (p. 225), but for the most part it is obsequious. It never has anything but praise for the Stanleys, retells the most improbable legends without any scepticism, and showers fulsome gratitude on the family for their acts of charity. One possibility, therefore, is that it was composed by a family retainer, perhaps a private secretary, such as the cleric William Peeris, secretary to Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland, who composed a metrical history of the Percies, or a household steward, like Seacome.[15] It might also have been composed by a household squire, but if the author had himself played any role in the family's military exploits one might expect there to be some allusion to this role in the poem and in *The Stanley Poem* it is only the members of the immediate male line whose deeds are mentioned. In this regard, a useful comparison is the long ballad-history *Lady Bessy*, which recounts the arrangements that Elizabeth of York, the future wife of Henry VII, made to be reunited with her husband and to bring him the assistance of his allies, the Stanleys, using the indefatigable and courageous squire, Humphrey Brereton as a messenger. Humphrey Brereton, who may well have been one of the Breretons of Malpas, a family closely allied to the Stanleys, is considered the probable author of the ballad for obvious reasons.[16]

If we search among those Stanley followers whose humbler status would seem to match *The Stanley Poem*'s humble tone, we find several possible candidates. One is Henry Parker, a yeoman servant attached to the Wardrobe at Lathom, who in 1577 designed a marvellous screen to be painted by the heraldic artist Thomas Chaloner. Both Parker and Chaloner composed verses, which are preserved in one of Chaloner's notebook, British Library MS Harley 1927.[17] Parker wrote a lament for his old age to which Chaloner prefixes a short introduction:

> henry parkers olde age in paper pale dothe tell
> to worlde to welthe to woe to want and weark
> Farewell 1576 august.

Parker's lines follow:

Nature dothe mee denye
    of wounted sporte and play
And crookednes one mee dothe lye
    as all things must decay

My handes withe palsey shake
    Myn eyes are blerede and dyme
My wyt dothe mee heare quit forsake
    And favor non can wynne. (fol. 20v)

He continues in this vein for a further twenty-five stanzas.

Chaloner too wrote verse, and added many lines to accompany Parker's under the heading 'A coppie of the demo[n]nstrationes of parkers worke to the right honorable my good l. Earle of Derbie' (fol. 10v). After appealing to the Earl, he describes Parker's work:

No trifflinge toyes for titld heades
    no name of vaine delight
Hath parkers pains and practise put
    in view of evri sight
That heare beeholdes A blossome braue
    from out the garnisht grownde
As[t]ronomye and astrologie
    that parkers pains hathe fownde
No keper of a parke hee is
    but parker by his name
whome fownde mee fourthe in forme and facte
    & put mee heare in fframe.

He then continues in rhyming couplets to describe Parker's service at Lathom and the screen to be found there.[18] Parker's long association with Lathom would put him in an ideal position to compose Stanley encomium, and Chaloner, as a Cheshire herald, might well be expected to take an extensive interest in the Stanley family history. But in neither case does their surviving verse closely resemble the style or interests of *The Stanley Poem.*

A better match can be found in the works of Richard Sheale, a harper who lived in Tamworth, on the Shropshire/Staffordshire border, and appears to have had

connections with the London ballad market, while also enjoying the patronage of the Stanleys.[19] The major source of information on Sheale's career is a long lament describing how he was robbed while riding down to London to pay off his debts. Sheale's wife was a silk woman, i.e., a pedlar of cloth, ribbons, buttons, and the like, who visited the markets at Tamworth, and Lichfield and Atherstone, each about ten miles away. At the end of the season, Sheale changed his money, over £60, into gold to make it easier to carry, and headed down to London, trusting to his harp, the sign of his profession, to protect him, 'for minstre[l]s offt with mony the [they] be not much infecte' (fol. 96r). Unfortunately, someone spied his wallet. Four men ambushed and robbed him on Dunsmore Heath and he returned to Tamworth distraught. Several of his neighbours suggested that he organize a help-ale as a means of fund raising and he did so, raising five pounds. He also drew on the help of his patrons, Edward, earl of Derby and his son Henry Stanley, Lord Strange.

Considered as a witness to an actual minstrel's career, this lament is surprising but quite credible. Sheale's account of his wife's trade corresponds to what is known about early-modern pedlars, who generally followed regular beats and depended on extensive credit.[20] Although £60 seems an immense sum, many pedlars would have amassed debts of this size by the end of each season. Help-ales were a common means of raising funds in an emergency.[21] Quite why the earls of Derby should have patronized a minstrel living in Tamworth is unclear, but there are other contemporary examples of lords extending a loose patronage to minstrels who were not actually part of their household.[22] There is even possible independent confirmation of Sheale's connection to the family. In his diary for 1561 the London merchant Henry Machyn records that 'The v day of June dyd hange ym-selff be-syd London stone (blank) . . . lle a harper, the servand of the yerle of Darbe.'[23]

Sheale was associated with several poems in praise either of the Stanleys, or of their allies, or of their illustrious ancestors, all of which are found in Bodl. Ashmole 48, a plain paper manuscript consisting in large part of copies of ballads that also appeared in broadside. The only works in this collection that are at all personal are those associated with Sheale, such as a speech of thanks for dinner which contains the memorable line 'Both mutton & veille/ Ys good for Rycharde Sheill' (fol. 98v). There is thus a strong *prima facie* case that this manuscript actually belonged to Sheale.[24] If it did not, it almost certainly belonged to someone who knew him.

Of the poems in Ashmole 48 that praise the Stanleys or their allies, one is famous, the ballad 'The Hunting of the Cheviot,' which begins 'The Perse owt off Northombarlonde and avow to Good mayd he' and describes the murderous battle between Henry Percy and the earl of Douglas on the hills near Otterburn. Sheale was

certainly not the original author of this ballad, whose language is older and in a predominantly northern dialect, but the addition of his name may well indicate that he included it in his repertoire.[25]

After his lament, however, the poem that may offer the most information about Sheale's career is a short speech of praise for the lords who fought in the border wars. Although the poem is not attributed, it is very much in Sheale's style and appears within a few folios of poems that definitely were composed by Sheale. It is little more than a list of names and runs to a mere thirty-six lines:

> W*ith*in þe northe contre
> Many noble men ther be;
> Ye shall well vndd*er*stande;
> Þer ys þe yerle off Westmorland,
> Þe Quyn*es* lyffeteanant,
> A noble man & a valyante.
> Then þ*er* ys þe yerle off Co*m*barlande,
> & þe yerle off Northo*m*b*er*land
> & S*er* Harry P*er*se his brothar,
> As good a man as a nothar,
> He ys and hardy knight,
> & hath ofte put þe Skott*es* to flyght.
> Þ*er* ys my lord Ivars and my lord Dacars,
> W*ith* all þ*er* p*ar*tacars
> Noble men & stowte
> I do put youe owt off dowte.
> Yfe þe Skott*es* one looke owte
> Þe will rape them ath ye snowte
> For northarne men wyll fight
> Bothe be day & nyght
> Þer enymyes when [they may]
> As y hawk vppon her pray
> Ther ys also S*er* Harry Leye,
> Which dar both fight & fray,
> Wheþ*er* it be night or day,
> I dare be bold to say,
> He wyll not rone away;
> He ys both hardy & fre.

Þ*er* ys also S*er* Rychard Lye,
W*hich* ys both war & wice,
& of polityk device.
All thes well do I knowe;
Yet ys þ*er* many moo,
The which I cannot nam,
Þ*at* be men of mickle fame.
God save þe yerle off Shrowesbyrry. (fol. 101)[26]

We have here what would appear to be an occasional poem of some kind, an example of the heraldic song or military speech of praise which is often thought to have formed a standard part of a minstrel's repertory.[27] The poem is in effect a roll call of the great English lords and champions of the north who fought against the Scots, but it also includes two names that were less familiar, Richard Lee and Sir Henry Lee, and their inclusion allows this work to be dated quite precisely. Although Lee or Legh was a famous Cheshire name, these two Lees were southerners, and do not appear to have had any close Cheshire connection. Richard Lee was an experienced military engineer who had served at the siege of Calais and in 1558 was supervising the defences at Berwick. Henry Lee was a young knight, who was later to become famous as Elizabeth's champion in the Accession Day tilts, and as the subject and possible author of one of the most beautiful of Elizabethan lute songs, 'Time Hath His Golden Locks to Silver Turned'. In 1558 Henry Lee won his first military honours, holding together the English infantry when they were on the verge of breaking.[28] The piece flatters Henry and Richard by inscribing them among the old chivalry of the north, among men whose names were hallowed in border warfare. A poem that devoted such attention to these two relatively minor figures would most likely be intended for an audience where they or their followers were present, and since the two men were not related and there is no indication their careers crossed on any other occasion, the implication is that the poem was performed during the campaign itself. Sheale could certainly have been in attendance as part of the Stanley retinue, and his financial misfortunes would have given him an added incentive to join the campaign. This, then, is the minstrel I believe may have composed *The Stanley Poem.*

Although 'The Hunting of the Cheviot' and 'Within the Northe Contre' share their interest in the glorified genealogy of border heroes with *The Stanley Poem*, neither is particularly close to it in style. But Sheale was also the author of a long eulogy for the countess Margaret Stanley, beginning 'O Latham, Latham thowe maste lamente for thowe hast lost a floware' (fols 107v-09v) and of a moral ballad on the

vicissitudes of fortune beginning 'Remember Man Thy Frail Estate' (fols 35v-37r). These two poems, along with Sheale's lament for his robbery and his thanks for dinner, are in rhyming couplets of varying metre; their diction is generally commonplace, but is supplemented by Latinisms.[29] All four resemble *The Stanley Poem* closely.

Both Sheale and the Stanley-Poet are prone to digressions on the lamentable state of the world. *The Stanley Poem* contains lines such as these:

> At these dayes who did well was rewarded,
> Of late who does well is but smally regarded. (p. 242)

or

> Nowe for there most travayle poore rich and all
> And for the most parte greate fishe devoures small;
> Thus walkes the world forthward and apace doth go,
> Stedfast in no pointe, it shal be proved so. (p. 270)

The Stanley-poet also bemoans at some length the decline in English archery (p. 241) and notes that 'Good service may be soone loste with a fonde woorde' (p. 250). Sheale has a similar tendency. His lament begins with a general complaint:

> O God what a world ys this now to se!
> Ther ys no man content w*ith* his degre. (fol. 95r)

He goes on in the same poem to complain that the world is filled with hate and spite and to offer numerous moral aphorisms such as the following:

> Ther ys no man lyvyng þ*at* in this world doth dwell
> But mysfortune on hi*m* may fall thoughe he gyd hi*m* neu*er* so
> well. (fol. 96r)

As might be expected of minstrels or household eulogists, both Sheale and the Stanley-poet add to these moral reflections a strong emphasis on the importance of fame. In 'Remember Man Thy Frail Estate', Sheale sees the instability of the world as a further incentive for trying to maintain one's reputation:

> But suche as lyve I thus advis ther doyng*es* so to frame
> As the may well desarve to haue a well reportyde name.
> A good name dothe wynne renoune, & shall not be for gotten,
> But fame shall sounde it forthe a brode when we be ded &
> rotten . . .
> But fame hathe brutede owt a broade þ*at* nought may be for
> gotten,
> Our chyldrens chylde shall hear as moche when we be ded &
> rotten.
> No bettare frut ys founde on yerthe, no wyght þ*at* bearythe
> brethe,
> Cane bear hime bolde off worldly ioyes, for all consume be
> dethe. (fol. 36r)

The Stanley Poem echoes these sentiments. The parallels are particularly close in the opening lines of the Harley version cited above, but they reappear later in the poem as well:

> Nowe againe with the first earle I make ende,
> To tell truth of the dead should no man offend,
> For there is no doubte when low layd is the heade,
> If we deserve such reporte dame Fame will spreade. (p. 265)

The two writers clearly have a similar taste in platitudes.

Both Sheale and the Stanley-poet appeal to their listeners to complete their testimony. The Stanley-poet 'refers' to those who come after:

> I referre to those that live when I am donne,
> To make a full end of that I have begunne. (p. 259)

In his eulogy for Countess Margaret, Sheale similarily 'refers' to others to complete his story:

> Moche mor ther was spoken, the whiche I ou*er* pas,
> & rephar yt to the hearars that then present was,
> Þat the may mayke reporte accordynge to the same,
> & so declare the deddys wyll, or els the be to blame. (fol. 108v)

The family connection is seen most clearly in *The Stanley Poem* when the poet invites his audience to pray for the souls of the various Stanleys he is praising or declares his inability to praise or thank the family members enough:

> I beseech God longe in honor him preserve.
> I may not so praise him as he did deserve. (p. 262)

Sheale does much the same, calling on his audience to pray for Countess Margaret and noting in his lament that it is his duty to pray for his benefactors:

> Þ*er* goodnes showyde to me I cannot worthely prayse,
> But I am det bownden to pray for them all my lyff days.
> (fol. 97v)

Both Sheale and the Stanley-poet are anxious not to give offence and rhyme repeatedly on the word 'offended'. In Sheale's lament we find the following:

> Truth oft tymys a mong su*m* may be blamde,
> But I am sur & sartayne it can neu*er* be shamde.
> All men þ*a*t lovis truthe owght to be co*m*mendyde,
> All thoughe su*m* wickede p*er*sons ther at be offendyde. (fol. 97r)

A few lines later Sheale notes that not all his neighbours approved of the idea of raising money by an ale:

> How be hit su*m* off my neabors ther at wear offendyde,
> & sayd the mony myght moch bett*er* haue ben spendyde.
> (fol. 97v)

The Stanley-Poet uses similar phrases, as in the reference to earl Thomas cited above, or when the first Earl Stanley complains to the King of the behaviour of his brother, the Duke of Gloucester:

> . . . 'My liege lord, your grace not offended.
> Who so is angry with my deede let him come amend it.
> (p. 231)

The two poets share other rhymes as well. The Stanley Poem makes recurring use of the rhyme *heart: part* (pp. 215, 221, 230, 237, 242, 248, 269 etc); only once rhyming *heart* with a different word: *heart: halbart* (248). The *heart: part* rhyme is used by Sheale in both his lament and in his after-dinner thanks, and in his eulogy for Countess Margaret he uses the rhyme *depart: heart. The Stanley Poem* frequently uses the rhyme *praise: days* (p. 257 twice, pp. 258, 262, 266), a rhyme Sheale uses in both his eulogy and in his lament. *The Stanley Poem* makes much use of the rhyme *life: wife* (pp. 212, 213, 218, 221, 271), which Sheale uses in both 'Remember Man Thy Frail Estate' and in his eulogy. *The Stanley Poem* makes considerable use of the rhyme *tell: well* (pp. 224, 227, 244, 257), while Sheale uses *dwell: tell* three times in his lament and *dwell: well* once. One crucial line of Sheale's lament uses the rhyme *purse*: *worse*:

> I skapyd wythe my lyffe, but in dede I lost my purs,
> & seying yt was my chance, I thank God yt was no wors.
> (fol. 96r)

This too is found in *The Stanley Poem*:

> He wold not so doe by the crosse in my purse,
> And yeat I trust his soule fareth never the worse. (p. 257)

The Stanley Poem makes considerable use of the rhymes on *grace*, *face*, and *place*: *grace: apace: face: place* (p. 217), *grace: face* (p. 226), *apace: grace* (p. 231), *place: pace* (p. 234), *pace: grace* (p. 261) and once, in desperation, *grace: was* (p. 239). Sheale uses the rhyme *grace: place* in his lament and the rhymes *grace: space* and *grace: place* in his eulogy. Sheale makes use of a cluster of rhymes based on *fame*: he uses *fame: name* twice in 'Remember Man' and once in his eulogy, *fame: same* twice in 'Remember Man' and *same: blame* once in his eulogy. *The Stanley Poem* makes uses of a similar cluster based on *name*: *name: same* occurs three times (pp. 208, 243, 254), *shame: name* once (p. 248) and *same: shame* once (p. 269).

Sometimes the matching extends to full phrases. *The Stanley Poem* makes use of the couplet *doubt: thereabout*:

> A thousand four hundred lxxij. no doubt
> Barwicke was made Englishe, or neere thereaboute. (p. 246)

as does Sheale in his lament:

> For a bushell off malt I do put youe owt off dowte,
> I had fyv pownd off mony or nyghe ther a bowte (fol. 97v)

and his eulogy:

> To the poor off viij p*ar*isshis next joynynge þ*er* a bowte,
> Which was a very godly dede, I put youe owt a dowte.
> (fol. 109v)

These phrases resemble those found in systems of standardized poetic tags. If we compare Sheale's plaint:

> But the worlde nowe a days ys so full of hat & spyte
> Þ*at* to speak yle off all thing*es* su*m* haue a great delyte,
> (fol. 97v)

we can see that it not only uses the same rhyme but also follows the same underlying pattern as two lines from *The Stanley Poem*,

> For which they bare John Standley malice and spite
> But to reconter with him non had delighte. (p. 211)

Here the pattern would appear to be *malice/ hate + spite*: *to have (great) delight.*

Of course, much of this language is sufficiently predictable and hackneyed that it might have circulated among a wide range of balladeers. When Sheale assures us that 'to tell youe the trewthe now I wyll not lete', and the Stanley-poet assures us that 'To saie something to his praise I will not let', the phrase is too commonplace to be significant, and any number of poets rhyme *name* with *fame*. The repetition of specific phrases, however, and the sheer extent of the overlap surely goes beyond this.

To summarize the case: Sheale composed eulogistic verse for the Stanleys in 1558; he was under their patronage, although probably not a liveried retainer, and might easily and justifiably have been accused of flattery; he appears to have been in occasional attendance on the family and to have made it his business to learn about

their memorable deeds, their acts of charity, and their speeches; in his eulogy for Countess Margaret he provided what sounds like an eye-witness account of her funeral in 1558 and he may have accompanied the earl and his son on the border campaign that summer; like many minstrels before him he stressed the importance of reputation and the traditional chivalric virtues of prowess and largesse, but he added to this a moralizing streak; and he used of many of the same rhymes, and even some of the very expressions found in *The Stanley Poem*. On these grounds, Sheale would seem a strong candidate for its authorship.

But the case should not be pushed too far. Much of the appeal of family encomium lay in its familiarity; the sentiments and the language, as well as the stories themselves, must have been in continual circulation not just among the members of the immediate Stanley household but all among those who identified themselves with its traditions. The call on family members to complete the story is not merely a casual flourish, but implies that these poems were ultimately a common heritage. Many would follow such injunctions, not simply retelling stories, but adopting and poems as their own and then modifying them, much as Sheale appears to have done with 'The Hunting of the Cheviot'. Under these circumstances, the more precise methods for establishing authorship on the grounds of stylistic similarity become difficult to apply and the notion of 'authorship' itself loses much of its force.[30] The presence of Sheale's name at the end of 'The Hunting of the Cheviot' is a reminder of how freely minstrel songs could circulate.

It may be impossible to establish definitely who the author of *The Stanley Poem* was; perhaps it had several. It is suggestive, for example, that the first two fits are so much shorter, as if they were genuinely designed for recitation, whereas the last is roughly four times as long, as if the needs of oral delivery had simply been forgotten by a later writer who was reworking old family traditions. What is clear is that *The Stanley Poem* served the same community in the same language as the poems associated with Richard Sheale.

NOTES

I am grateful to David Klausner and Michael Chesnutt for their valuable suggestions on this essay.

[1] David A. Lawton, '*Scottish Field*: Alliterative Verse and Stanley Encomium in the Percy Folio', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 10 (1978), 42-57 and *Scotish Feilde and Flodden Feilde: Two Flodden Poems*, ed. by Ian F. Baird (New York, 1981). Earlier studies include *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, ed. by F. J. Child, 5 vols (Boston, 1882-98), III, 331 ff.; C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1913), p. 250; D. C. Fowler, *A Literary History of the Popular Ballad* (Durham, North Carolina, 1968), pp. 94-124; Charles H. Firth, 'The Ballad History of the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3rd ser. 2 (1908), 23-28; Thomas Heywood, 'The Earls of Derby and the Verse Writers and Poets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', ('The Stanley Papers. Part 1') Chetham Soc. o.s. 29 (1853), p. 5. On the family in general, see B. Coward, 'A "Crisis of the Aristocracy" in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries? The Case of the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, 1504-1642' *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 54-77 and 'The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672: The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family', Chetham Soc. 3rd ser. 30 (1983). Fowler suggests that these ballads were the work of minstrels in the Stanley employ (p. 147).

[2] Lawton, 'Alliterative Verse and Stanley Encomium', p. 51.

[3] For evidence of dramatic and musical activity linking major households in the north, see *Records of Early English Drama: Lancashire*, ed. by David George (Toronto and Buffalo, 1991).

[4] *Palatine Anthology: A Collection of Ancient Poems and Ballads Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (-Phillipps) (London, 1850). I have added some capitalization and quotation marks around speeches but otherwise reproduce Halliwell's text, which is generally an accurate transcription of Bodl. Rawlinson Poet 143.II.

[5] BL MS Add. 5830 consists of miscellaneous entries, many of them related to the antiquities of the west Midlands, all copied in neatly by Cole. On fol. 105r is the following entry:

> The History of the Family of *Stanley, Earls of Derby*, wrote in Verse about the Reign of *King Henry the 8th*: from a *MS* now in the Hands of *Lady Margaret Stanley*: copied for me by a Person who has made many mistakes, & sent to me by my Friend *Mr: Allen, Rector of Torporley* in *1758*. I copied a few verses from the original *MS* in *1757*. which see at *p. 79* of this

volume.

At this earlier entry he has written:

> Meeting with an old MS History of the Family of *Standley* in Verse, wrote before or in the Beginning of the Reign of *Queen Elizabeth*, from the Manner of the Writing & Spelling, formerly belonging to *Sir John Crewe of Utkinton* & given by *Mr: Arderne* 1757 to the *right Honourable the Lady Margaret Standley*, I extracted the following Account of *James Bishop of Ely*, & would have transcribed the whole, had I the Time: tho' it is a very long Performance. (fol. 80r)

[6] John Seacome, *Memoirs; Containing a Genealogical and Historical Account of the Ancient and Honourable House of Stanley from the Conquest to the Death of James, late Earl of Derby in the Year 1735 etc.* (Liverpool, 1741).

[7] I have supplied capitalization but otherwise left the text unaltered. When y represents the interdental fricative, I have transcribed it as Þ or þ.

[8] Halliwell's source is Heywood's monograph *The Earls of Derby and the Verse Writers and Poets of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries* (London, 1825), which was republished in 1853 by the Chetham Society (see n. 1 above).

[9] *Palatine Anthology*, p. 254.

[10] Margaret Crum, *First-Line Index of English Poetry 1500-1800 in Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1969), entry I 244.

[11] A. A. Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 3rd ed. (London, 1815), II, 808.

[12] Seacome, *Memoirs*, p. 193.

[13] Seacome, *Memoirs*, p. 191.

[14] Seacome says of the origins of this manuscript only that it 'was sent to me by a Private Hand before my closing of the present History now before me' (*Memoirs*, p. 191). His memoirs contain numerous references to the oral transmission of various family legends.

[15] On Peeris, see A. G. Dickens, 'The Writers of Tudor Yorkshire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser. 13 (1963), 49-76 (p. 57).

[16] Lawton, 'Alliterative Verse and Stanley Encomium', p. 49.

[17] As H. Idris Bell, 'The Welsh MSS. in the British Museum Collections', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, 29, pamphlet 415 (1937 for 1936), 15-40 notes, the Thomas Chaloner in question was in all probability the Thomas Chaloner who was Ulster King-of Arms and a citizen and arms painter of Chester and who died in 1598 (p. 29).

[18] Heywood offers a partial transcription in 'The Earls of Derby: Verse Writers and Poets', pp. 21-25.

[19] See Andrew Taylor, 'The Sounds of Chivalry: Lute Song and Harp Song for Sir Henry Lee', *Journal of the Lute Society of America*, 25 (1994), 1-21 and Michael Chesnutt, 'Minstrel Poetry in an English Manuscript of the Sixteenth Century: Richard Sheale and MS. Ashmole 48', in *The Entertainer in Medieval and Traditional Culture*, ed. by Flemming G. Andersen, Thomas Pettitt, and Rheinhold Schroeder (Odense, forthcoming). Tessa Watt makes a strong case for Sheale's connection to the London ballad market in *Cheap Print and Popular Piety: 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 16-21.

[20] See Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Atlanta, 1981), esp. chapter five 'The Distributors: Pedlars, Hawkers and Petty Chapmen' and *The Great Reclothing of England: Petty Chapmen and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1984), esp. chapters five 'The Chapman's Suppliers and Customers' and six, 'The Chapmens' Stock in Trade'.

[21] Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London, 1983), pp. 80-81 and Judith M. Bennet, 'Conviviality and Charity in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, 134 (1992), 19-41.

[22] James Wharton, lord Russell's minstrel, examined in Norwich in 1555 on the charge that his apprentices had sung songs against the mass, may be one example. See *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich, 1540-1642*, ed. by Peter Galloway (Toronto and Buffalo, 1984), pp. 34-35.

[23] *The Diary of Henry Machyn, Citizen and Merchant-Taylor of London, from A. D. 1550 to A. D. 1563*, ed. by John Gough Nichols, Camden Soc. 42 (London, 1848), p. 259. I am grateful to Thomas Pettitt for providing this reference.

[24] Ashmole 48 has been edited by Thomas Wright as *Songs and Ballads Chiefly of the Reign of William and Mary* (London, 1860). This edition, which forms the basis of much discussion of Sheale's work, provides accurate transcriptions of individual poems but gives a misleading impression of the manuscript, silently omitting several items and failing to distinguish between the various hands. The most accurate account of the manuscript is Chesnutt, 'Minstrel Poetry in an English Manuscript of the Sixteenth Century.' It has often been assumed that Ashmole 48 was Sheale's personal notebook, but the question remains open. Cf. Taylor, 'Lute Song and Harp Song', pp. 16-19, supporting this possibility, to Chesnutt, rejecting it.

[25] The early transmission of 'The Hunting of the Cheviot' is discussed by Olof Arngart, *Two English Border Ballads: The Battle of Otterburn, The Hunting of the Cheviot*. Acta Universitatis Lundensis: Sectio I Theologica Juridica Humaniora 18 (Lund, 1973) and Robert S. Thomson, 'The Transmission of Chevy-Chase', *Southern Folklore Quarterly*, 39 (1975), 63-82.

[26] As with the transcription of the Harley prologue to *The Stanley Poem*, I have

supplied capitalization but otherwise left the text unaltered.

[27] See further Andrew Taylor, 'Songs of Praise and Blame and the Repertoire of the *Gestour*' in *The Entertainer in Medieval and Traditional Culture.*

[28] *Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland,* 6 vols. (London, 1807-1808) V, 583-84.

[29] S. W. May, 'Richard Sheale and the Ballad of "Chevy Chase"', *American Notes and Queries*, 9 (1970-71), 115-16.

[30] Cf. Donald W. Forster, *'A Funeral Elegy*: W[illiam] S[hakespeare]'s "Best-Speaking Witness"', *PMLA*, 111 (1996), 1080-1105, esp. p. 1083 on methods of computer-assisted attributional research focusing on rare words.