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David George
Urbana University, dgeorge@urban.edu

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Young Shakespeare: Culture, Patrons, and Connections

David George, *Urbana University*

What did Shakespeare do after he left school? Soldier, sailor, scrivener, butcher's assistant — all have been proposed and failed to gain much support.¹ Yet all modern Shakespeare biographers must try to cover the years after he left school, sometime between 1578-80, until his first canonical play, *Henry VI* (probably Part 1), appeared in Philip Henslowe's accounts on March 3, 1592; it was performed by Lord Strange's Men in London and brought in a season record of £3.16s.8d. However, apart from records of Shakespeare's marriage and the baptisms of his children (1583, 1585), very little indicates where he spent the years 1578-1590. If we can believe John Aubrey, writing in 1679-80, "This William being inclined naturally to Poetry and acting, came to London I guesse about 18; and was an Actor at one of the Play-houses and did acte exceedingly well" (Aubrey 2). But he admits he was guessing, and since Shakespeare at the age of 18 married the pregnant Anne Hathaway in November 1582, we may suspect that by a slip of the pen, he wrote 18 for 28 as the age when Shakespeare started his London career.

Tranio, since for the great desire I had
To see fair Padua, nursery of arts,
I am arrived for fruitful Lombardy,
The pleasant garden of great Italy. . . .
Tell me thy mind; for I have Pisa left
And am to Padua come, as he that leaves

A shallow splash to plunge him in the deep. (1.1.1-4, 21-3)

Lucentio (posing as Cambio, a young Latin tutor) eventually tries to translate for Bianca Minola some Latin lines from Ovid's *Heroides*, but the lesson is bogus and his English translation a declaration of his love of Bianca. She, a young unmarried woman, understands that this is a courtship game and replies with an equally fake translation. The play's source does not have anything like this episode, and indeed Shakespeare,

¹ S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, rev. ed. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993. 533-4.

as we shall see, very probably did some private Latin tutoring in his early years.

Similarly, when Hortensio asks Petruchio “what happy gale / Blows you to Padua here from old Verona?” Petruchio explains,

Such wind as scatters young men through the world
To seek their fortunes further than at home,
Where small experience grows. (1.2.50-52)

In *Two Gentlemen*, Valentine tells Proteus in Verona that

Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits. . . .

I rather would entreat thy company

To see the wonders of the world abroad,

Than, living dully sluggardized at home,

Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness. (1.1.2, 5-8)

Neither Lucentio nor Valentine heads for Rome, and the sources for these plays do not include any such rationalizations for travel. And that provincial journey has led to the so-called Lancastrian-start theory for Shakespeare’s career. Interestingly, the distance from Stratford to Preston in Lancashire is 117 miles, and the distances Lucentio and Valentine have traveled are similar, about 100 miles.

The plays provide only tangential evidence, unlike documentary sources. In 1937, Oliver Baker suggested that the “William Shakeshafte” who received a bequest in Sir Alexander Hoghton’s will (3 Aug. 1581) might have been Shakespeare. Hoghton commended the players Shakeshafte and his fellow Gillom to the service of Thomas Hoghton, Alexander’s half-brother, but if Thomas did not wish to “keppe & manteyne playeres,” then he should refer the two players to Hoghton’s brother-in-law Sir Thomas Hesketh, who had a troupe of players. In 1944, E. K. Chambers amplified the suggestion: Hesketh often visited the earl of Derby’s west Lancashire homes, and on one occasion (1587) took his players with him (Bearman 83).² Chambers repeated his remarks in his 1946 *Sources for a Biography of Shakespeare*:

² Robert Bearman doubted that William Shakeshafte was William Shakespeare; he identified “among the Preston Shakeshaftes, three or four with the Christian name of William” (89). It was unlikely “that Shakeshafte was actually the seventeen-year-old William Shakespeare who, within a matter of months of joining Hoghton’s household, had somehow secured for himself more favorable treatment than servants with longer periods of service” (92-3).

However, Shakeshafte and his fellow player Gillom were special; as Sir Alexander Hoghton wrote in his will, “And I most hertelye requyre the said Sir Thomas [Hoghton] to be frendlye unto Foke Gyllome & William Shakshafte nowe dwellynge with me & ether to take them unto his servyce or els to helpe them to some good master, as my tryste ys he wyll.” The executors

It is possible that [Shakespeare] is to be identified with a William Shakeshafte, who in 1581 was a player in a company maintained by one Alexander Houghton of Lea in Lancashire, and was commended in Houghton's will to Sir Thomas Hesketh of Rufford, in the same county. If so, William may have been using a variant of his grandfather's name Sir Thomas Hesketh had in fact players in 1587, and his relations with the Stanleys, Earls of Derby, make it not unlikely that on his death in or about 1588 Shakeshafte passed into the service of Ferdinando Lord Strange, who himself became Earl in 1593. Of Lord Strange's players there are many records. Through them William may easily have gone on into the London theatrical world, where he is found in 1592, writing probably for Lord Pembroke's men, and called by the envious Robert Greene 'the only Shake-scene in a country'. This is of course conjecture (11).³

In 1963, F. E. Halliday also examined the Lancastrian-start theory, noting that

it is just conceivable that William Shakeshafte is William Shakespeare, using a variant of his name, for in the Snitterfield records his grandfather is sometimes called Shakeschafte, and that he was a player and tutor in the service first of Houghton and then of Sir Thomas Hesketh of Rufford, near Liverpool. Certainly Hesketh had a company of players in 1587, for that Christmas they were at Knowsley, the Lancashire seat of the Earl of Derby, among whose guests were his illegitimate daughter Ursula and her husband, Sir John Salisbury, later to be celebrated in *Love's Martyr*, the volume to which Shakespeare may have contributed the poem known as "The Phoenix and the Turtle'."

But Halliday had doubts: "It is an odd series of coincidences, but almost certainly it is no more. . . the story simply does not ring true; it is the wrong shape. The brilliant and ambitious Stratford boy would scarcely bury himself more remotely in the country with a company of inferior

are not "hertelye requyre[d]" to undertake anything extra for any other servant or servants. The complete will is in *Lancashire and Cheshire Wills and Inventories: The Second Portion*, ed. J. G. Piccope (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1860), 237-41. Fulk Gillom appears in the records of the Chester Midsomerday pageant: "Oct. 15 [1595-96], Foulk Gillam s. of Thomas Gillam of Chester embroiderer [Broderer]" (Honigmann 32). Alan Keen (*Times Literary Supplement*, 18 Nov. 1955, p. 689) had claimed that father and son "were both guild-players."

³ Shakespeare's grandfather is called "Shakstaff" in a (misdated) 1533 Snitterfield manor record, which has been misread as "Shakeschafte" (Schoenbaum, p. 535).

provincial players; we do not even know that he wanted to be an actor, but we do know that he wanted to write, and his objective would be London, not Lancashire” (71-2).

Halliday was writing in St. Ives, Cornwall, obviously the wrong county to write a life of Shakespeare in. Certainly Shakespeare’s early employment in one of the English counties has its germ in 1679/80, when John Aubrey wrote, “Though, as Ben Iohnson sayes of him, that he had little Latine and lesse Greek; He understood Latine pretty well: for he had been in his younger yeares a schoolmaster in the Countrey.” Aubrey notes in the margin, “from Mr . . . Beeston.” He refers to William Beeston, son of Christopher Beeston (c. 1579/80-1638), a member of the Lord Chamberlain’s men, the company that performed *Every Man in His Humour* in 1598. Both Shakespeare and Christopher Beeston were among the cast. Aubrey’s remark indicates that Shakespeare knew Latin “pretty well” *because* he had been a schoolmaster in his youth. If Shakespeare did not get his start in the county of Lancashire, then Halliday should have proposed another county. Anyway, since Shakespeare was a schoolmaster (which included being a tutor), it might have been at Sir Alexander Hoghton’s house at Lea, near Preston, as Keen and Lubbock surmised in 1954 (81-2).

Since 1954, the Lancastrian theory has gathered support, the biggest boost being given by Ernst Honigmann in 1985 in his *Shakespeare: The “Lost Years”* (5-7, 15, 19-21, 24-9, 32-9, 59-76). Honigmann proposed that young Shakespeare, aged 15 or 16, was sent from Stratford to Lea Hall by John Cottam, Stratford Grammar School’s master from 1579 to 1581, who hailed from Dilworth, near Preston. Of course, Shakespeare’s marriage and his becoming a father in 1583 and 1585 kept him away from Lancashire, but he returned in 1585, joined Lord Strange’s men, and was acting and writing with that troupe in London by the early 1590s.

Apart from Shakespeare’s early opportunity to see Lord Strange’s Men walking in Stratford’s streets when he was 13 (they played there, probably at the Guild Hall), we have the documentary evidence provided by Honigmann and his predecessors, but more is needed to connect him with the Stanley family, earls of Derby (in west Lancashire), in his and others’ creative work. This powerful family began its rise in the late 14th century, and took another step to power in the late 15th century when

Thomas Stanley married Margaret Beaufort, countess of Richmond, mother of Henry Tudor, who became Henry VII in 1585 after the Battle of Bosworth. Henry bestowed the title “earl of Derby” on Thomas Stanley, and several forfeited estates in Lancashire. The Stanley earl who lived through Shakespeare’s early lifetime was Henry (1531-93), styled Lord Strange until he succeeded to the title of earl in 1572. He had married Margaret Clifford in 1555, granddaughter of Henry VIII’s sister Mary, and so her son Ferdinando had some claim to the crown (*Records* xxxv-xxxvii). He patronized an acting company, which became more famous as Lord Strange’s Men under his son Ferdinando, the fifth earl of Derby (*Records* 374).

In November 1586 Henry Stanley’s illegitimate daughter Ursula married Sir John Salusbury, whose estate was at Lleweni, Denbighshire, North Wales, and hence the Stanleys and the Salusburys became intertwined families (“Salisbury” 684).⁴

Ursula Stanley, 1586/87

The first Shakespeare-Stanley connection is found in Shakespeare’s 67-line poem “The Phoenix and the Turtle,” which appeared in 1601 in a collection containing Robert Chester’s *Love’s Martyr* and includes poems by Jonson, Chapman, Marston, Shakespeare, and two anonymous writers. The subtitle of *Love’s Martyr* is “Shadowing the Truth of Love in the Constant Fate of the Phoenix and the Turtle.” The section in which Shakespeare’s signed poem appears has a new title-page, which tells us “HEREAFTER FOLLOW DIVERSE Poeticall Essaies on . . . the *Turtle* and *Phoenix*. Done by the best and chiefest of our modern writers. . . . And (now first) consecrated by them all generally, to the loue and merite of the true-noble Knight, Sir Iohn Salisburie. [In Latin] *The Muse refuses to let die the praise of a worthy man*” (Burrow 60-1).

Given the second title-page for the *Turtle* and *Phoenix* poems, O. J. Campbell in 1967 claimed that “the lovers represent Sir John Salisbury, a Welsh country gentleman, born in 1566, so two years the poet’s junior; and Ursula Stanley, the illegitimate daughter of the Fourth Earl of Derby.

⁴ On the nobility in this paper: (1) The house of Derby (**Edward** Stanley, 3rd earl, 1508-72; **Henry** Stanley, 4th earl, 1531-93; **Ferdinando**, 5th earl, ?1559-94; **William**, 6th earl, ?1561-1642); **Edward** Stanley, 1562-1632, and (2) The Salusburys (Sir **John** Salusbury, 1519-78; Sir **John**, 1566-1612; Sir **Henry**, 1589-1632; Sir **Thomas** Salusbury, 1612-43). The second Sir John married **Ursula** Stanley, 1560-c.1636, a “natural” daughter of Henry, earl of Derby.)

They were early married, and separated by untimely death” (336). As for the funeral ceremony described in the poem’s first five stanzas, it seems a reminiscence of the obsequies for Thomas Salusbury, John’s older brother, in late September 1586, executed for treason that month. The phoenix is frequently thought to be Ursula Stanley, born in 1560, and married to John Salusbury. They eventually had ten children, but if “The Phoenix and the Turtle” was written before 1587, Ursula had still not borne her first child. That would point to a date in late 1586 or 1587, and account for the line in the poem’s Threnos (lamentation or dirge), which seems to imagine the couple’s untimely death: “Death is now the phoenix’ nest, / And the turtle’s loyal breast / To eternity doth rest, / Leaving no posterity: / ’Twas not their infirmity; / It was married chastity.”

If Ursula Stanley is the phoenix, she emblemizes the rare bird which is reborn from the ashes of the flames said to consume it every 500 years or so. In some way, she will survive. According to Campbell, “Here it [the phoenix] stands for the phoenix’s absolute and eternal devotion to the turtledove” (335). In *Henry VIII*, 5.5., Archbishop Cranmer similarly eulogizes the newly christened Elizabeth, the future queen, claiming that maiden honor can reproduce itself:

Nor shall this peace sleep with her; but as when
The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,
Her ashes new-create another heir
As great in admiration as herself,
So shall she leave her blessedness to one, —
When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness, —
Who, from the sacred ashes of her honor,
Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,
And so stand fixed. (40-8)

Since the phoenix is female, John Salusbury must figure as the turtledove, representing the bird’s constancy in marriage; this dove appears in the Bible and Renaissance literature as taking only one mate for life.

There are several other surmises as to the identity of the two birds, but many commentators agree that the poem refers (obscurely) to the Stanleys and to John and Ursula Salusbury.

John de Stourton and Anne Stanley (1588)

The second Shakespeare-Derby link is probably the least known, and I owe my acquaintance with it to the late Bernice Kliman, one of the editors of the New Variorum *Hamlet* (30 Sep. 2008). Readers of the play will remember that everyone can see and hear the ghost of Hamlet's father in the three scenes where it appears in Act 1 (1.1, 1.4, and 1.5); but when it reappears in Gertrude's bedchamber in 3.4, she can neither hear nor see it, though Hamlet can. According to the New Variorum editors, despite several theories, this phenomenon has never been satisfactorily explained.

There was, however, a ghost incident that occurred in 1588 and was first recorded by Bishop Henry More (c. 1586-1661). A certain Catholic baron named John de Stourton, whose mother was Lady Anne Stanley (c. 1542-1602), had died a Protestant in 1588, and expressed sorrow on his deathbed that he had not therefore received the Catholic last rites. Lady Anne was a daughter of Edward Stanley, third earl of Derby, and a sister of Henry Stanley, the fourth earl. Living in her home was Father John Cornelius, who, on hearing of de Stourton's repentance, recommended prayers for the dead. The following day, when Fr. Cornelius was standing at the church altar, de Stourton appeared beside him, and earnestly besought him to have pity on him because he was burning in the flames of Purgatory. No one else present in the church could see or hear the ghost, and indeed those nearby had to prompt Cornelius to go on with the Mass. The story obviously reminds us of 1.5 of *Hamlet*, where the Ghost reveals his current burning confinement in Purgatory; and of 3.4, where Gertrude fails to see or hear the Ghost while Hamlet sees and talks to it. From the Stanley family, Shakespeare could have copied the idea of a ghost from Purgatory and of his ability to appear to one privileged and spiritual person.

Ursula Stanley, c. 1594

The third link to Shakespeare with the Derby family is the intriguing "Denbigh Poems," found in an early 17th-century binding at Christ Church library, Oxford (MS 184). These are a collection of verses that were once at Lleweni, John Salusbury's country house, and are in Welsh, English, and Latin, mainly in praise of Salusbury and his family, datable perhaps to about 1594. Of interest are the 17 stanzas of the

“Danielle” poems, on folios 82 and 83, so-called because the first twelve stanzas and the second five are signed “finis quoth Danielle.” The handwriting is small and heavy, with frequent overwriting that obscures the original, in a hand like no other in the collection. The proper name Salusbury is always in italic script, as is frequent in printed plays. In the second section, devoted to Ursula Stanley, there is a knowledgeable compliment to her:

ffrom princely blood & Ryale stocke she came
of egles brood hatcht in a loftie nest [.]
The earle of derby & the kinge of manne
Her father was [,] her brother now possest [.]
Then hapie he but thris more hapie’s shee
To mache her self with lovely Salusbury. (Stanza 14)

The Stanley family, as noted, had two royal connections, being descended from Thomas, second Lord Stanley, and his wife Margaret Beaufort. She was the widow of Edmund Tudor, earl of Richmond, and mother of Henry VII. Thus Thomas Stanley became Henry VII’s step-father. The second and more important connection was through Henry, the fourth earl of Derby, who married Margaret Clifford, granddaughter of Mary, Henry VIII’s sister. These two connections account for the claim that Ursula was of royal stock. The “loftie nest” may refer to the Eagle Tower at Lathom, the Derby family’s main residence in Lancashire. The “eagle’s brood” may allude to the Stanley coat of arms, which has an eagle, wings outstretched, standing on a child in swaddling clothes (Jones 121, 125, 131); another version of the Stanley crest has the child suspended from the eagle’s beak. When Ursula’s father, earl Henry, died in 1593, her brother Ferdinando inherited (“possest”) the earldom. Since he died in 1594 at the early age of 34 or 35, that gives us a likely date for the poems. (Just possibly, the poet may refer to William Stanley [d. 1642], who inherited from his brother Ferdinando.)

Abruptly, the poem ends with a farewell to Anne Stanley, the daughter of earl Ferdinando and Alice, his Countess, who was presumably at Lleweni, North Wales, to stay with her aunt Ursula: “God keepe your troope both high & lowe degree / tho last not le[a]st vale m[istress] Ane Stanley.” Born in 1580, she would have been fourteen in 1594. The poet evidently knew her, and had perhaps tutored her as a very young girl at one of the Stanley houses, Knowsley or Lathom House. She was a bride in

1607, for whom a gathering of noble and gentry ladies recited verses and gave engagement gifts at a celebration in Derbyshire (Huntington 1-2; Wilkie 187).⁵

The verses of the Denbigh poems are by no means complex, giving the reader a sense of their having been written fairly hastily. However, the eminent linguist David Crystal found “the vocabulary of the Danielle poems . . . very much (97 percent) within what we know Shakespeare used at the time. On the lexical evidence, it is certainly possible that the texts could be by Shakespeare, for only a small number of usages fall outside his lexical range in 1593/4” (qtd. in Jones 132).

Sir Edward Stanley, ?1601-3

The fourth link between the house of Stanley and Shakespeare is the epitaph for Edward (1562-1632), son of Sir Thomas Stanley, and grandson of Edward Stanley, third Earl of Derby. He was therefore a close contemporary of Shakespeare (born 1564) and in his late twenties when Shakespeare may have been at Knowsley House. The Derby Household Book has a 1590 entry for Monday in the week of “the xxii of Auguste,” when “Mr Stanley of Winwicke came & Mr Edwarde Stanley, my L. Strandges came also; Tvesdaye they went awaye.” This is almost certainly the Edward Stanley mentioned above, and Lord Strange’s men were the acting company patronized by Ferdinando, Lord Strange. As noted, this company performed Shakespeare’s first dramatic success, *1 Henry VI*, in London in 1592.

Stanley was buried in Tong church, Shropshire. The epitaph on his tomb was copied and attributed to Shakespeare in a manuscript of c.1630. James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips reproduced this copy in facsimile in his *Works of William Shakespeare* (1853), having described it in his *Reliquiae Antiquae* (1845) (Keen and Lubbock 202-3).

The epitaph is headed “An Epitaph on Sr. Edward Standly. Ingraven on his Toombe in Tong Church”:

Not monumentall stone preserve our fame,

⁵ Anne Stanley was almost certainly the bride being celebrated at Ashby in 1607. The verses appear in Huntington Library MS EL34 B9 on two pages tipped in to the back of the volume. Alice, Lady Derby, Anne’s mother, spoke these lines: “As thys ys endelesse, endelesse be your ioyes, / valed the wish, and not the wishers toyes / and for one blessinge past god sende youe seven, / and in the ende the endelesse ioyes of heaven. / till then Let this be all your crosse, / to haue discomfort of your Losse.” Lady Alice probably refers to Anne’s loss of her palatial home, Lathom House, for a less comfortable one. Peter Levi assigns the gift-giving date to “late July” 1607 (6).

Nor sky aspyring piramids our name
 The memory of him for whom this stands
 Shall outlyve marbl, and defacers hands
 When all to tymes consumption shall be geaven
 Standly for whom this stands shall stand in Heaven.

This verse inevitably recalls Sonnet 55, which begins “Not marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme; / But you shall shine more bright in these contents / Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time,” and continues “Nor Mars his sword nor war’s quick fire shall burn / The living record of your memory” (7-8). “Monument,” “stone,” “memory,” “outlive,” “marble,” and “time” appear in both poems. The “sky aspyring piramids” seem an anticipation of Egypt’s “high pyramides” in *Antony and Cleopatra* (5.2.61). “Defacers hands” reminds us of Shakespeare’s gravesite in Holy Trinity church in Stratford, which has a cover stone with the inscription “Good frend for Iesvs sake forbear / To dig the dust enclosed heare, / Blest be ye man yt spares thes stones, / And cvrst be he yt moves my bones.”

Also, the word-play in the epitaph’s last line on “Standly,” “stands” and “stand” is typically Shakespearean, “stands” meaning “represents.” Since Stanley did not die until 1632, he must have bespoken the inscription before Shakespeare’s death in 1616, possibly in c. 1601-03, since Sir Edward is depicted as about forty. His effigy (on top of the tomb) is alabaster, painted silver with gilded detail applied (Moorwood 2).

Sir Thomas Salusbury, 1641

The fifth connection is the one that most concerns Knowsley House: *A Masque at Knowsley House*, performed on Twelfth Night, 1641, in that building. It is full of Shakespearean echoes and allusions, and two of its characters are of the first interest. The author was Sir Thomas Salusbury (1612-43), son of Sir Henry Salusbury of Lleweni and grandson of Sir John Salusbury, whom we have met as the husband of Ursula Stanley (*Records of Early English Drama* 252-66). According to Anthony à Wood, Thomas Salusbury had “a natural geny to poetry and romance” and became “a most noted poet of his time,” though his only other known work is *The History of Joseph* (1636) and some manuscript dramatic and

poetic pieces and verse translations. His home was in Denbighshire, but he was obviously well acquainted with Knowsley, as the *Masque* shows.

A Masque at Knowsley House is a late tribute to Shakespeare. Salusbury died about the age of 31, and so when he was a very small boy might just have seen Shakespeare. To write the masque, he looked over — or had heard and seen in performance — five Shakespeare plays: *Richard III*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *1 Henry IV*, *2 Henry IV*, and *As You Like It*, spanning dates between c. 1592 and c. 1600. These cover the years before the Lord Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men in 1604. The main source for the character Christmas, a part that

Salusbury himself acted, is Sir John Falstaff, “whose first entrance bears close resemblance to that of Falstaff in *2 Henry IV*, [who] proclaims that he has never felt better, but the Doctor borrows Romeo's lines (5.3.87-90) to inform Christmas that this merriment is ‘a lightning before death’” (Findlay and Dutton 10). Falstaff asks his page, “Sirrah, you giant, what says the doctor to my water?” to which the Page replies, “He said, sir, the water itself was a good healthy water; but, for the party that owed it, he might have mo[r]e diseases than he knew for” (*2 Henry IV*, 1.2.1-5). The Doctor in the *Masque* advises Christmas to “make good use of your tyme, then, tis but short / For by ye morrows Sunne, the whining schoole boy / shall with his satchell on his back lament / ye losse of Christmas,” a borrowing from the melancholy Jaques' speech on the Seven Ages of Man in *As You Like It*: “And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel / And shining morning face, creeping like snail / Unwillingly to school” (2.7.144-46). Christmas determines to “dy merrily,” like Hotspur in *1 Henry IV* (4.2).

However, when Salusbury came to the second “Antemasque,” he needed “leane ghost like apparitions of fasting dayes” to carry off the plump Christmas gambols. (These athletic men may have been professional actors.) “Hah,” cries Christmas, “what are these Ghostly things that looke like soe many shapes of death, come to arrest me [?]” The scene is reminiscent of the thirteen ghosts who appear in act 5, scene 3, of *Richard III*, to warn him that he must despair and die. And that is exactly what happens to Christmas; he makes his will and expires.

Of Shakespearean interest are two other characters: the Knowsley Steward William Farrington and Andrew Broome, Clerk of the Kitchen. Christmas's bequest to the Steward, whom he identifies as “a minister of

Iustice,” is the right “full to talk what he pleas, & it is my will hee be obeyd, by ye whole family as they shall see cause.” Now for *Twelfth Night*, scholars have found no literary model for Malvolio; he has been called “Shakespeare’s own creation,” but his original could have been William Farrington, the household steward of Henry, earl of Derby, from 1572 to 1593. As Alison Findlay and Richard Dutton note, “Farrington’s picture, painted in 1593, offers an early sketch of Malvolio. Over his plain russet doublet, he wears a large three-banded chain of linked gold. His silver-headed cane was probably his staff of office. As F. R. Raines, the first editor of the *Derby Household Book*, points out, ‘he looks like a man who has been more accustomed to rule than to obey’” (10). However, the William Farrington in 1641 was the grandson of the steward claimed as the model for Malvolio, and served as secretary to Lord Strange and in 1636 was High Sheriff of Lancashire. In the Civil War, he “was made colonel of the newly raised Lancashire Militia” (Farrington 1), and hence he was probably as stern and authoritarian as his grandfather.

Andrew Broome, identified by Almanack as “Clarke of the Kitchin,” prompts speculation about his literary connections. He receives from Christmas a bequest of “one new booke of Arithmeticke and one other new booke of the Poetrie of these tymes: hee may censure, and damne all as hee pleaseth: The verie Pope of the Muses, Sir, hee is infallible.” As Clerk of the Kitchen, Broome kept the accounts of provisions purchased and consumed, but his interest in contemporary poetry was obviously an extra-professional passion. He also acted the role of November in the masque.

He could have been related to a far more well-known literary Broome, the dramatist Richard Brome (or Broome) (c. 1590-1652). Though no genealogy of this Broome family is available, the indications are that Brome was born in Lancashire; his most successful play was *The Northern Lass* (1632), acted by the King’s Men around 1628. The heroine, Constance, lovelorn in London, is from the North of England. Brome was also co-author with Thomas Heywood of *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634), which has two servant characters, Lawrence and Parnell, speaking in authentic Lancashire dialect.

Richard Brome, 1638

Brome was almost certainly familiar with Knowsley and the Derbys; he seems to have been close to Lady Elizabeth Stanley (1588-1633), Ferdinando, Lord Derby's daughter. She became Countess of Huntingdon by marriage to Henry Hastings, fifth earl of Huntingdon (c. 1586-1643), who named their son Ferdinando after his grandfather. When Henry died, Brome edited a volume of elegies for him titled *Lachrymae Musarum* (1649-50). He also wrote, for an edition of his play *A Jovial Crew* (1652), a dedication to Thomas Stanley, whose father was also a Thomas Stanley, a "natural" or illegitimate son of Edward, earl of Derby.⁶

However, it is his play *The Antipodes* (1638) that clinches the connection between Shakespeare and an English earl whom Brome knew. In Act 1, scene 5, set in London, the aristocrat Lord Letoy, who is also a playwright, tells his servant Blaze what his provincial actors can do:

These lads can act the Emperors lives all over,
And Shakespeare's Chronicled histories, to boot,
And were that *Caesar*, or that English Earle,
That lov'd a Play and Player so well now living,
I would not be out-vyed in my delights. (73-7)

Letoy means that Julius Caesar would have enjoyed Shakespeare's play of that name, and *Antony and Cleopatra* also. The "English Earle," now dead, delighted in Shakespeare's history plays, and loved a play and player "so well." Brome could not have known Ferdinando Stanley, but he was familiar with Christopher Beeston, Shakespeare's fellow actor in 1598. In 1635 he borrowed money from Beeston and committed himself to write a play for him in return. However, he most likely learned of earl Ferdinando's enjoyment of "Shakespeare's Chronicled histories" from the Stanley family, though Beeston may have told him of it.

⁶ The Tom Stanley whom Christmas speaks of satirically in *A Masque* might be one of the illegitimate sons of Henry, fourth earl of Derby. He had a second family living at Hawarden Castle in Flintshire, not far south of Chester. One of this family's sons was named Thomas Stanley, of Eccleshall and Broughton in Salford, and by the time of the *Masque's* composition, Tom Stanley could be his son, with "a charge of children," whom Christmas wishes that "they bee nurtured and brought vp without any religion at the charge of the Parrish." He is accused of consorting with "the white witch," presumably a reference to a type of Mother Shipton, a suspected white witch and a clairvoyant who died at York in 1561.

Summary

These six connections between Shakespeare and the earls of Derby afford glimpses into his start as a player and dramatist. Some biographers, among them Ernst Honigmann, Park Honan (1998), Michael Wood (2003) and Peter Ackroyd (2005) have applied commonsense to the chances of a brilliant Stratford youth of a modest family climbing to the pinnacle of world drama. The young Shakespeare needed a job conformable with his grammar school education, and the best opportunity would have been as a private tutor with a noble household. Moreover, it had to be a household that patronized players since acting was a profession begun by entering it as an apprentice. As I have noted in a chapter in *Lancastrian Shakespeare*, “in all, then, four early Shakespeare plays are connected with Strange’s, Derby’s and Pembroke’s Men,” namely all three parts of *Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*. Pembroke’s Men, patronized by Henry Herbert, earl of Pembroke, were probably formed from actors in the great Strange’s-Admiral’s company in 1592, the year when plague in London drove the acting companies into touring the provinces (George 235).

What the young Shakespeare needed was time and space to write poetry, and indeed his *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Rape of Lucrece* (1594) appeared during the plague years, when the London playhouses were frequently closed. Though these poems are dedicated to Henry Wriothesley, the young third earl of Southampton, he seems not to have patronized an acting troupe. However, Southampton and Derby were friends, and if Southampton knew Shakespeare, then so did Derby. Interestingly, after Southampton rejected Elizabeth de Vere as his bride-to-be around this time, in 1595 she married William Stanley, sixth earl of Derby, instead.

The first word on Shakespeare’s rise to fame is by Thomas Nashe, who thus extolled *1 Henry VI* in his *Pierce Pennilesse* (summer, 1592):

Nay, what if I proue playes to be no extreame, but a rare exercise of virtue? First, for the subject of them (for the most part) it is borrowed out of our English chronicles, wherein our forefathers valiant acts (that have long lyne buried in rustie brass and worme-eaten bookes) are reuiued, and they themselves raysed from the graue of obliuion, and brought to pleade their aged honours in

open presence; than which, what can be a sharper reproofe to these degenerate effeminate dayes of ours? How would it have joy'd braue Talbot (the terror of the French) to thinke that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his tomb, he should triumph againe on the stage, and haue his bones new embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least, (at seuerall times) who, in the tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding? (59-60)

The “tragedian” was Edward Alleyn, whose mother was Margaret Towneley, possibly the daughter of John Towneley of Towneley Hall near Burnley in Lancashire, and his company was Strange’s (Keen and Lubbock 51-52). Alleyn led Strange’s men on their acting tour in late summer and the fall of 1593, which included stops at Chester and York; the troupe in 1592 included William Kempe, Thomas Pope, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, and George Bryan. That route meant that the company passed through southwest Lancashire, and when earl Henry died on 25 September 1593, Kempe attended his funeral at Ormskirk, the town near Lathom House.⁷

Shakespeare’s “lost years” can plausibly be connected with the Hoghtons of the Lea, the Heskeths of Rufford, and principally with the house of Stanley of Lathom and Knowsley House. Aubrey’s remark citing William Beeston is only two generations after Shakespeare’s death, and his word “schoolmaster” could cover what we would call a tutor (cf. *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1.2.134). If the Stanleys employed Shakespeare in that capacity, he could have taught the very young Anne Stanley, and other children at the Stanley houses. Very quickly Ferdinando Stanley would have realized that the young man could write, and asked him to compose a play featuring the Stanleys in favorable terms — hence *1 Henry VI*, acted in London by Strange’s men in the early 1590s. This

⁷ Knowsley Hall MS C41, f. 7^r, has this entry for earl Henry’s funeral costs on 4 December 1593: “Master William Kempe iij yeardes [of black cloth] [£]02-00[s]-00[d].” That Kempe was still in the Lathom House area in early December 1593 following Earl Henry’s death on 25 September was predictable. In “The Playhouse at Prescott,” I wrote, “In the event Strange’s men did not return to London — if they returned at all in 1593 — until after 2 December, when they played at Coventry. . . . Evidently there was a lengthy stop somewhere, and the Derby houses provide the most logical, most hospitable venue” (232). Kempe might have remained behind for a couple of days before rejoining the company.

This reference to Kempe was kindly provided by Dr. Stephen Lloyd, Curator of the Derby Collection at Knowsley Hall; the transcription was by Natasha Simonova, and permission to cite is given by the Right Honourable the Earl of Derby.

company had surpassed Derby's men in popular esteem a few years before, though both companies were patronized by the house of Derby. According to Brome, writing of Shakespeare's chronicled histories, "that English Earle . . . lov'd a Play and Player so well." The player — Shakespeare was almost certainly acting with the company early in his career — must have been a member of Lord Strange's troupe. *A Masque at Knowsley* shows incontrovertibly that the members of that household who watched the performance were expected to recognize and enjoy the several borrowings from Shakespeare's earlier plays, especially the Falstaffian character Christmas.

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