'BEGINNING IN THE MIDDLE ...': Warwickshire Locations and Families, as Audiences for Early Modern Music and Drama

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I have been drawn into this subject because of my work on the Warwickshire records for Records of Early English Drama. This has followed hard upon the completion and publication of my *Shropshire*[1], in the course of which research I had also virtually completed the editing of the Staffordshire records. The singular and intriguing aspect of Warwickshire (apart from its famous theatrical native son) is that it is 'central' in a number of ways — hence my title. It contains a village, Meriden, a few miles from Warwick, whose name conveys the belief that it is the geographical centre of England. Its major city, Coventry (subject of a separate *REED* volume) was located as a major crossroads for trade and travel and was a major stopping–place for travelling performers throughout the period, as well as providing the widely–known annual performances of its civic religious cycle in the streets at Corpus Christi. Warwickshire also was the home of a remarkable number of landed families whose social status covered a wide range.

Why should it be, I began by wondering, that these three virtually contiguous counties were so unlike in their social hierarchies? The surviving family records from Shropshire are (as one reviewer has judiciously put it) 'slight stuff' — a comment that is as just when applied to the family records as a whole as to the extracts concerning entertainments. The large estates in the county were managed by stewards, and residential households were not established or maintained there. Another factor may also have operated: how far do you have to be from London before you are (or feel you are) isolated from the capital? A factor which must have increased Shropshire's sense of isolation was its eastern neighbour, Staffordshire. That county's phenomenal urban growth during the Industrial Revolution has obscured its severe under–population in the early modern period. A significant acreage in the county was forest — the large royal preserve, Cannock Chase, was only one such large tract — the population was low, and its two main urban centres, Stafford and Lichfield, were small and relatively poor. As with Shropshire, extensive searches for household papers have yielded little of interest to illuminate the lives of Staffordshire families.

In Warwickshire (which abuts Staffordshire's southern border) are vastly different circumstances. The county is itself remarkably various, from the Cotswold uplands on the south–west to the flat arable lands and coal mines of the north–east. The town of Birmingham had not begun its expansion to industrial dominance by 1642, but the city of Coventry was an important trading centre. Among the great and titled we may include the Beauchamps, Nevilles, and Dudleys, Earls of Warwick, along with a branch of the family of Buckingham, at Maxstoke Castle. For these people, living did not merely include public performance and ceremonial, it consisted of public performance and ceremonial. Lower on the social scale we find gentry families such as the Berkeleys of Caludon Castle, the Throckmortons of Coughton, the Lucys of Charlecote, the Sheldons of Weston–sub–Edge, the Ferrers of Baddesley Clinton, the Puckerings of Priory Park, Warwick, and the Newdigates of Arbury. Such families were mercantile or landowning and controlled assets mainly although not exclusively concentrated within the county. They often exercised considerable power within Warwickshire. As becomes evident from study of their documentary remains, the maintenance of certain styles of living, of keeping up appearances, was an abiding preoccupation among this group. Might we infer from this cluster of gentry estates that Warwickshire was considered to be 'in' (or 'cool' as my teenagers would say), but that Staffordshire or Shropshire were not? One advantage was that it was a day's ride closer to London, and we find that traffic to the capital was fairly frequent from Warwickshire families. Of course, not all the families have left surviving records, so we will concentrate on those that remain.[2] My argument, in brief, is that there appear to be identifiable characteristic modes of behaviour amongst these influential families as regards their employment of entertainers, and that these behaviours vary according to economic status and political power. For the rich and powerful, entertainments were occasions of display and opportunities to strengthen bonds of patronage and power.

The earldom of Warwick (and Warwick Castle) was the most influential establishment in the county, and its successive holders preserved an extensive collection of records. When the castle was sold to Madame Tussaud's these passed to the Warwickshire County Record Office. Edmund Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, was an influential baron who spent 1430–31 in France (among other things, he was organizing and participating in the coronation of Henry VI as King of France, and was involved in the trial of Joan of Arc); a 'Household Book' survives and is of

great interest as a record of the household year at Rouen and elsewhere. Its records admittedly do not illuminate entertainments in England, but it is safe to assume that the household activities and regimen at Rouen were similar to the Beauchamps' usual practices. Each day, a fresh leaf in the volume was used to record details of expenses, including provender for horses, and a list of household members and guests participating. I have transcribed a leaf [fol 47^{v}] from the book, pertaining to 11 June 1431, as a typical example of how the household conducted itself, or 'performed', while in residence.[3] As we would expect, each day's expenses are meticulously recorded as is the use of household supplies purchased previously. But for each day, a varying list of persons heads the page. 'Madame Talbot' almost invariably leads the list, here of forty–six identified participants. She was daughter to Edmund Beauchamp and wife of John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury (who was at the time a French prisoner–of–war); as Beauchamp's wife was in England, his daughter assumed the role of châtelaine. I puzzled over these daily lists of persons in attendance, because it is apparent from the lists at the left margin indicating the numbers of persons who ate at each meal that the persons identified were not the only ones present. I wonder if those named were either the high–table guests, or perhaps those who took part in a ceremonial procession into the hall? Whatever may be the explanation, these records make clear the public, performative nature of noble mealtimes: to eat was to be on display. It would be an interesting and valuable project to identify each person named, to illustrate the ties of kinship and alliances of mutual self–interest that operated among this group.

The Dudleys (Robert and his younger brother Ambrose) were elevated by Queen Elizabeth to the earldoms of Leicester and Warwick respectively, and with these titles came the royal gifts of Kenilworth and Warwick Castles. These honours established these newly–created noblemen and necessitated, in turn, the performance of sumptuous lifestyles. The anger with which these (and no doubt other) noblemen would respond to the smallest hint of neglect or insult demonstrates the degree to which, for the aristocracy, life was display, was obeisance, was honours. Royal processions, entries, and progresses had been for over a century a means for display of royal munificence and grandeur, and Queen Elizabeth developed these activities into a high art. Duke Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* alludes to the 'premeditated welcomes' accorded to him, and his sense of his obligation to accept the spirit of the gift bestowed: '… what poor duty cannot do, noble respect / Takes it in might, not merit …'

(5.1.91–2). As well, one remembers from Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* the anger of Octavius Caesar when his sister returns not like Caesar's sister but like 'a market–maid to Rome', thereby denying the possibility of displaying 'the ostentation of our love' (3.6.41–55). The desire for display trickled down from royalty to aristocracy. Grand receptions and entries seem to have become, during Elizabeth's reign, the order of the day for the more important nobility, who presumably were taking their cue from Queen Elizabeth. One finds in the records of boroughs fairly frequent payments for processions, wine, dainties, orations and such what bestowed on notable aristocrats. An example of aristocratic displeasure when fitting accolades were not forthcoming proves that they were expected. The Earl of Leicester visited Warwick in 1568 and was not welcomed in a manner befitting his sense of dignity. After lengthy debates (recorded in the Black Book of Warwick, a town chronicle), the Bailiff and Council decided that there would be no welcoming procession, but only a gift of an ox delivered to the Earl after he was in his rooms. Not amused at this snub, the Earl responded by keeping the Bailiff and Council (and the ox, one supposes) waiting in the cold for several hours, before admitting them to his presence for a stern lecture about their failings, and his expectations of public ceremony.

Leicester's anger reflects, I think, some insecurity as a parvenu creation by the Queen, besides his wounded dignity. Certainly the monarch and her new noblemen mutually participated in public demonstrations of honour at Kenilworth and Warwick in the 1570s. In fact, few records from Kenilworth or Warwick at this period have survived other than those relating the entertainments mounted at Warwick and Kenilworth Castles for Queen Elizabeth, eyewitness descriptions of which have been preserved in other documents. The Black Book of Warwick contains a full account of Queen Elizabeth's visit to that town in 1572, organised by Leicester. Many details attest to the Queen's skills in self–presentation.

The eyewitness accounts often emphasise the spontaneity and fervour of these royal entertainments, but the reality was otherwise: notification far in advance, and careful advance planning ensured that everyone knew their parts. In 1572 the burghers of Warwick were advised in advance by the Earl of Leicester and had sufficient time to change their houses 'from their old naked bareness into a more fresh show'. This is only what we should expect, but it is important that in preparing the stage in this way, the burghers of Warwick betray their recognition that they are to be 'on stage'. The town's gift, at the first entrance of the Queen into the borough,

afforded a fine opportunity to the royal recipient to respond, to perform acts of royal gratitude, or to display a resolve to exercise royal powers to the advantage of the borough. Queen Elizabeth was adept and convincing at performing these royal actions. She exhibited a touching reluctance to accept the town's gift of £20, saying:

> it is not the maner to be alwayes presentid with gifts: and I am the more unwilling to tak any thing of you, because I know that a myte of their haunds is as much as a thowsand pounds of some others ...

However, she went on to accept it anyway, as she protested, 'because you shall not think that I mislike of your good willes, I accept it with most hearty thanks to you all'. And she also undertook 'to perform such benefit as is hoped' (Nichols *Progresses 1*: 315). Probably the most impressive entertainment during the Queen's visit was the mock fight, a 'fort–holding' pageant including spectacular fireworks and cannonades, staged by the Earls of Oxford and Warwick, in the course of which four houses in the town were accidentally set afire, and one burned down (Oxford and Fulke Greville were among the volunteer fire–fighters who prevented the spread of the flames). The fire provided a striking and spontaneous opportunity to perform a royal benefit; Queen Elizabeth donated (along with the other courtiers) £25 12s 8d to the victims whose dwelling had been burnt. As well they were brought into the Queen's presence, and 'recomforted very much' by her. You could dine out on that experience for years! In its main events (and even in its unscripted ones), this royal visit was an occasion for public display, public wonderment.

For 1575, I could easily spend the remainder of my allotted space giving details of the most lavish entertainment of Queen Elizabeth's reign, the 'princely pleasures' at Kenilworth, but since these are well known,[4] I will survey only a few details about how these entertainments were explicitly made into occasions of public display, and what they imply about their participants. The full accounts in Robert Laneham's *Letter* and George Gascoigne's *Princely Pleasures* impress us with the splendour of the various presentations and the attention in many of them to mythological detail as the basis for compliment. Reading descriptions of the 'Lady of the Lake' pageant, or that of 'Savage Man all in Ivie' makes one realize how grotesquely inept was the 'mess of Russians' (Navarre and his fellows) who attempted to entertain the Princess of France and her attendants in *Love's Labours Lost* 5.2. While some of Leicester's entertainments at Kenilworth were wholly private in nature, others were intended to involve the wider

public as spectators and/or performers; notably these were staged on Sunday afternoon, when the populace could be expected to attend, watch, and participate. On 17 July was staged a mock bride–ale with a morris, and a martial feat–at–arms with 'many gay gamez'. Laneham does not record the royal reaction but gives his own instead: 'I believe it would have mooved sum man to a right merry mood, though it had be told him hiz wife lay a dying'.[5] This was followed by even more marvellous matter, the Coventry Hock Tuesday Play that commemorated the defeat of the Danes by the women of Coventry in 1002. The play took the form of a mock–battle and was staged annually since at least 1416 (when the earliest record occurs). It climaxed in the 'Danes' being beaten and led in triumph by the 'women' of the city (although actually the performers were 'Coventry men' as the city annalist describes them). It is admirably related in Laneham's *Letter*, capturing the flavour of the occasion well — here is a sample:

> Eeuen at the first entree the meeting waxt sumwhat warm: that by and by kindled with corage abothsidez, gru from a hot skirmish vnto a blazing battail: first by spear and shield, outragious in their racez az ramz in their rut, with furious encoounterz that togyther they tumbl too the dust, sumtime hors and man: and after fall too it with sworde & target, good bangz a both sidez ... az it waz handled, made mooch matter of good pastime ... *REED: Coventry* 274–5

But alas, the Sunday performance took place too early. While the Coventry men performed in the great court, under the Queen's window, the queen was engaged within, watching what Laneham calls 'delectabl dancing', and she saw little of their play. Elizabeth made of this slip–up a wonderful occasion of royal munificence, by changing her itinerary: she 'commanded thearfore of the Tuisday folloing to haue it ful oout: az accordingly it waz presented, whearat her Maiestie laught well' (*REED: Coventry* 275). 'Great thanks, great Pompey' — even to be an audience was a performance, conferring obligations to be performed. The success of their efforts certainly pleased the players:

> they [the players] weare the iocunder, and so mooch the more becauz her highnes had giuen them too buckes and fiue markes in mony to make mery together: they prayed for her Maiesty, long, happily to reign & oft to cum thither that oft they mought see heer: & what, reoicyng vpon their ampl reward, and what, triumphing vpon the good acceptaunce: they vaunted their play waz neuer so dignified, nor euer any players afore so beatified ...

REED: Coventry 275

'Sixpence a day for Pyramus', indeed! £3 6s 8d, as well as the makings for a handsome feast of venison, was a very generous reward for playing, more than the payments generally made to the leading professional companies at the time. Elizabeth seized upon an opportunity to perform her part as the gracious monarch before an appreciative and enthusiastic audience; to do so was to underline her royal favour to the Earl of Leicester in the eyes of the Warwickshire populace.

II

When he came to sum up his impressions of this visit, Laneham laid on superlatives to convey his wonderment at the splendours he had witnessed 'so rich, so rare, and in such abundauns ... so bountifully bestoed and spent', and he concludes with a panegyric that could only have pleased Leicester, his patron:

> what may this express, what may this set oout untoo us, but only a magnifyk minde, a singuler wizdoom, and prinsly purs, and an heroical hart. If it were my theam, Master Martyn, to speake of hiz Lordship's great honor and magnificens ... yet coold I say a great deal more.[6]

But why, I wonder, did Laneham next proceed to give an account of himself, his relationship to the Earl of Leicester, and his own quotidian lifestyle? Why did he think we should we be interested in learning that he rose ordinarily at seven o'clock and breakfasted on left–overs and stale beer? As we read through his pages, we realise that these humble details are part of a calculated process of self–definition, and that he will proceed to matters more important to his carefully fashioned portrait: his abilities at languages, at the performing arts, and in matters of love. Only quotation can give the flavour:

> In afternoons and a nights, sumtime am I with the right woorshipfull Sir George Howard, az good a Gentleman as ony livez: And sumtime, at my Lady Sidneis chamber, a Noblewooman that I am az mooch boound untoo, as ony poore man may bee unto so gracyous a Lady; and sumtime in sum oother place. But alwayez among the Gentlewomen by my good will; (O, yee kno that cumz alwayez of a gentle sprite): And when I see cumpany according, than can I bee az lyvely too: Sumtyme I foote it with dauncing: noow with my gittern,

> and else with my cittern, then at the virgynalz: Ye kno nothing cums amisse to mee: then carroll I up a song withall; that by and by they com flocking about me lyke beez to hunny: And ever they cry, 'Anoother, good Langham, anoother!' Shall | I tell yoo? when I see Misterz — (A, see a madde Knave; I had almost tollde all)! that she gyvez onz but an ey or an ear; why then, man, am I blest; my grace, my corage, my cunning iz doobled: She sayz, sumtime, 'She likes it'; and then I like to mooch the better; it dooeth me good to heer hoow well I can do ... By my troth, Cuntreman, it iz sumtim hy midnight ear I can get from them ... 482–3

Having related, over many pages, how the Queen and the Earl of Leicester defined themselves through performance, Laneham here proceeds to self–fashioning, albeit on a lower level, appropriating to himself what he takes to be a proper genteel style. That his portrait reminds us of the boasts of Sir John Daw and Sir Amorous LaFoole in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene* does not alter the point. For Laneham, the publicly performed royal/aristocratic style provides a point of reference to develop his own. 'What great ones do, the less will prattle of', the Sea–Captain remarks to Viola (*Twelfth Night* 1.2.34); beyond prattle lies imitation, and of course *Twelfth Night* contains Sir Andrew Aguecheek's comically inept attempts to ape the behaviours of his betters (i.e. everyone around him). I think that an analogy to Laneham's strategy of imitation is to be detected in what we know about other Warwickshire families, as revealed by their household accounts, when such survive. We detect, in their lifestyles, careful decisions about fitting behaviour that imitate, on a lower level of grandeur, the grandiloquent activities of the higher nobility and the monarch.

Survival of household accounts and other private records is largely a matter of chance, as we know from scattered bits and pieces which I will pass over here.[7] I will concentrate on three remarkably complete household accounts and what they tell us. Sir Thomas Puckering, Bart., son of Sir John Puckering (Queen Elizabeth's Attorney–General), lived for a number of years at Priory House, Warwick. A small part of the house still stands, in Priory Park, adjacent to the Warwickshire County Record Office, while antiquarian drawings remind us of the once–handsome original edifice. The famous antiquary, Sir Simon Archer, was Puckering's executor, and among Archer's papers at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office there survives a detailed inventory of Puckering's possessions, valued at a little above £5000 (without, alas, a single book or musical instrument listed).[8] There is also at Stratford a folio manuscript volume containing a

detailed set of Puckering's autograph personal and household accounts for just a single year, from Lady Day 1620 until 24 March 1621; by 'detailed' I mean that the book contains 142 folios measuring 290 mm x 185 mm, few of which are blank. His records are entered under various classifications, and the regularity of his sorted entries indicates that this volume was written up at some point, from earlier versions now lost; it contains approximately a half–page of detail per day. (I have appended, for a sample, a transcript of a page of the accounts, to give something of their style and inclusiveness.) Everything in the volume suggests that nothing remarkable was happening that year in the Puckerings' lives, so we may take this as a chance survival of a typical account. Accounts also survive for Ralph Sheldon, member of a prominent family of dyers and tapestry–weavers, who had seats at Beoley, Worcestershire, and Weston–sub–Edge, Warwickshire. He was a well–known Recusant, examined on several occasions for his beliefs, and was married to a daughter of the Throckmortons of Coughton Court. A volume of accounts, containing Sheldon's household accounts from two years (1586–88), is now in the Warwick Record Office. The accounts were compiled and submitted at the end of each year by Sheldon's steward. While not as voluminous as Puckering's, these accounts are also impressively detailed, in a volume of 110 leaves measuring 330mm x 215mm. From these two sets of accounts we may see that a budget for entertainments would have been the norm among gentry households at this date, and can regularly be found if one is lucky enough to have available the accounts of the family steward during periods when the family was resident at home, or in accounts of the family itself while travelling.

My chief source of household records has been the Newdigate family, who acquired its Warwickshire holdings in 1585 as an exchange for more valuable lands in Middlesex. Arbury is an estate of some one thousand acres, a respectable holding; the family's wealth placed it among the upper middling gentry in the shire, but its members faced continuing and irksome financial difficulties, which need not concern us here but which prove that the family was not among the leading families of the area.[9] Among family members were some remarkable people, including Lady Anne Newdigate (1574–1618), sister to Queen Elizabeth's disgraced lady-in–waiting, Mary Fitton, and Sir Richard Newdigate (1610–78), Lady Anne's second son, for a time Lord Chief Justice, and eventually Baronet. The family has left us a treasure–trove of papers — accounts, diaries, letters, list of books, etc. etc. — which extend from late in the sixteenth century through to the lease

of Arbury in 1636 and beyond. Their preservation was apparently initially due to the methodical habits of Sir Richard Newdigate, who at some point carefully identified and dated each set of accounts in a collection of paper booklets which extends to 1643. Thereafter, the descent of the house within the family helped to ensure the survival of the collection in remarkably good condition. Chiefly of interest among the MSS so far examined are a series of household account booklets that extend from 1594–5 until 1643. To generalise, the leaves measure approximately 400mm x100mm (i.e. they are broadsheets folded vertically), and are stitched together serially into booklets containing varying numbers of leaves, usually between twenty and forty. Many of them are in the hand of William Whitehall, longtime steward to the family, some are autograph and others are as yet unidentified.

III

Besides furnishing individual fascinating details, these three sets of accounts are interesting because they record activities in three families from approximately the same socio–economic bracket, all living in Warwickshire towns or countryside. What, taken as a group, do they show us? First, when the families were at home they regularly spent money on travelling entertainers; usually these were musicians of various types, but there were some payments to troupes of actors as well, particularly among Puckering's entries. He rewarded the Prince's Players on 2 August, one 'Cuespe, a Rimer' on 16 September, the King and Queen of Bohemia's Players on 27 November, the King's Players on 23 December, the Lord Dudley's Players on 28 December, and the Queen of Bohemia's Players on 11 January. There is an intriguing cluster of activities at Christmas, and a total silence ('Lenten entertainment') during Lent 1621. The amounts vary widely; some of the smaller payments might have been rewards to depart, or more likely these were Puckering's contributions towards performances which took place elsewhere than in his house. The borough accounts are lacking, so we cannot tell if there was a town reward paid as well in these cases. But two companies (Lord Dudley's Men, and the Queen of Bohemia's Men) are specifically mentioned as 'playing a play in my house this night', with payments over £1. One assumes that companies of players, paid handsome amounts to perform privately, did not face an audience comprising only a few family members and close retainers — surely such an expenditure would be the occasion for invitations far and wide, an opportunity for the display of largesse. As well, to underwrite or

contribute to a performance by a company would no doubt ingratiate one with the company's patron. Another safe inference from the occurrence of such private household payments to travelling players concerns the players' repertoires. As we shall see, these gentry regularly travelled to London, were familiar with the fare offered by London theatres and even, in Puckering's case, were acquainted with patrons of these players. We can assume with confidence that the repertoire offered by the players on tour represented their best efforts and not, as has been often assumed, patched–up or cut–down versions (such as bad quartos) adapted for provincial suitability, the grounded judgements of hicks and yokels.

Some musical and other entertainments took place under Puckering's window (implying that the entertainers were admitted to his park), while others happened outside: for examples, two companies of morris dancers were paid for dancing before his gate on 10 June, and fiddlers at his gate were paid on 13 July. Performances at the gate must have been public in nature, because the gates to Priory Park once stood at the meeting of three main roads, including a main route into Warwick, and they were at least one hundred metres from Puckering's house. (The Warwick Police Station now stands on the site.) Puckering's Priory House, second only to Warwick Castle in eminence, must have been a local venue of some importance, and here we find its owner paying for public festivities occurring on or near his property. The Sheldon accounts record no payments to actors, which is not entirely surprising, considering their situation near a tiny Cotswold village. However, on over ten occasions troupes of visiting musicians were paid to entertain the family (and perhaps visitors?) during 1586–88. I have not completed transcribing the Newdigate records, but the pattern seems to be predominantly like the Sheldons', with a great many payments for musical entertainments of all kinds, including visiting waits and morris dancers.

A striking similarity between the Sheldon and Newdigate families (although not the Puckerings) is the regularity of entries recording expenses for musical instruments (virginals wire, lute strings, tuning and repair of instruments, purchase and carriage of instruments, etc.). Other music–related activities were the purchases of paper ruled for songs, binding of music books, and payments for dancing lessons. These all point out that the two families welcomed visiting musicians and dancers because music was regularly a part of their own lives, and a talent for music was highly regarded among them. Lady Anne Newdigate was particularly careful to nurture and encourage musical talents among her five children, as many

entries in the family accounts up to her death in 1618 make clear. From 1618–27 the family employed a musician, one William Plumley, as a regular household retainer, and he undertook such tasks as performing, musical instrument repairing or tuning, instructing the children, and arranging performances by visiting professional musicians. During his years in the family's employ, Arbury must have been a notable centre for music. Other performers, employed *pro tem*, included 'Charles, the dancer', who was regularly paid for several weeks of dance instruction. Similarly, another Warwickshire family, the Verneys of Compton Verney, are known to have employed a dancing teacher, because he was examined for suspected recusancy by the court of High Commission. An ability at such arts was, apparently, part of family 'style'.

I used above the phrase, 'when the families were at home'. We are accustomed to royal progresses and to the peripatetic habits of the great titled families with their multiple seats in various parts of the country. We are prone to think that the less well–off gentry managed within more limited locales. However, if my three gentry families (and others) are indicative, nothing could be further from the truth. Members of these families travelled frequently and, more to the point, they were in the habit of paying for entertainment when they were away from home, presumably at overnight stops or more extended stays in inns. Examples are Puckering's payments to fiddlers at Towcester (17–18 January 1621), fiddlers at Dunstable (19 January), the Prince's trumpeters (20 January), and the Lords' trumpeters at Whitehall (23 January). Similarly Ralph Sheldon paid for musicians at Didington (20 August 1587), at Abingdon (21 August), and singers and musicians at Worcester (11–13 September).[10] One may presume that hiring a group of fiddlers, or a noise of trumpeters, meant that the travelling gentry planned more than an intimate entertainment within their own rooms at an inn; these travelling gentry presumably wished to impress and entertain others through their largesse — a way of announcing 'the Newdigates (or Sheldons, or Puckerings) are visiting town'.

With all this travelling, to what degree can one properly write of the Puckerings 'of Warwick', the Sheldons 'of Weston', or the Newdigates 'of Arbury'? As closely as is possible one must attempt to trace the itineraries of the travellers to discover the considerable periods when they were from home, their purposes for travelling, and their destinations. This work is under way, so I offer here only one tentative conclusion: it is remarkable how regularly members of these families were to be found in London, and how varied were their recreations there. To what degree, then, were they

'provincial', when their experience of London music and London theatres was frequent and regular?

Another way to read these records is to note how much can be learned from travellers to London of the day–to–day details about entertainments in the capital: provincial visitors augment our details about London theatres. For example, Thomas Puckering paid 1s 10d 'for boathire to the Bank side, and in seeing the dancing upon the ropes etc. for my self, and Hicks [his servant]' on 28 March 1620, and a few days later, on 6 April, he paid 2s 6d 'in seeing a play for my self, Hicks, and my Footman'. At ten pence per admission, it is likely that Puckering attended a private, 'élite' theatre — with his manservant and footman, making us wonder about supposed divisions in audience–composition between 'public' and 'private' theatres. The Newdigate family accounts record frequent and regular payments for attendance at plays and other entertainments — the family members were often in London because of, among other things, the need to attend the deliberations of the Court of Wards. Lady Anne Newdigate also appears to have organised a 'season' in 1616–17, to introduce her children to London. However, the most remarkable among their accounts dealing with London living is the one kept during John's minority for John and Richard Newdigate when they were at the Middle Temple and Gray's Inn respectively, after their two–year preparatory sojourn at Trinity College, Oxford, detailed in the same document at the Warwick Record Office, CR 136/B602 (1618–20). The accounts preserving details of their expenses give a detailed insight into the young men's activities, and show that one powerful link between provinces and capital was the education of children.[11] John afterwards returned to Arbury, while Richard remained in London to pursue a brilliant legal career, thus forming a permanent kinship link between London and Warwickshire. This account does raise some puzzles. For example, one is tempted to interpret an entry for a payment of five shillings for boat hire 'by water to the Ould Swan & backe' (April 1620) as a reference to the Swan Theatre, by this time apparently just a memory. Such entries are frequent in the accounts — was the old playhouse still in use? But a payment by Ralph Sheldon on 15 February 1587 for boat hire from the Savoy to the 'old Swan' makes one pause. Was the theatre named after a famous public house? Or do we not have to be careful in assuming that landmarks familiar to us from our theatre–history texts were actually the landmarks by which Elizabethans established their geographical bearings? An entry for a journey to 'Black Freares & Ould Swan' (fol. 9: 14 May 1621) is similarly tantalising. But alas, to allay

curiosity, the Old Swan apparently referred to the stairs up–river from London Bridge, and it is most likely that the Swan Theatre was named after them, not the other way around. Our appetites are also whetted by general entries such as: 'Item Mr Newdigate & Mr Richard at a playe 0–1–0', Item Mr Newdigate at 2 more 0–2–0' (fol 6; 20 February 1620), or 'Item Iuly the xj to you going to a playe 1–0–0' (fol 13^{v}). Slightly more illuminating: 'Item by you [i.e. John Newdigate] a play Blacke Freres 0–1–6' (fol 5; 2 February 1620). Entries that mention performances of named plays included '*Lusty*' (unidentified, but interesting) on 3–9 May 1635, *The Shepherd's Holiday* on 25–31 January 1635, and the '*Loyal Subject*' on 4–10 May 1634. Most intriguing of all was a performance attended by Newdigate with his wife and friends, 'of a sight presented by little figures & other motions from the creation to Diues & Lazarus' on 11–17 January 1635.

One could multiply examples of the Newdigates' theatre–going activities in London, just as much other evidence from all three families is available to illustrate their recreations while at home. For the Newdigates much evidence is also available about their reading habits, in the form of later auction catalogues of the contents of the Arbury library, early commonplace books, and account–book entries for book purchases. Play–texts formed a not inconsiderable part of this collection (including the First Folio). Particularly intriguing are several surviving manuscript plays in the Arbury library collection; whether these are by John Newdigate himself or are copies of plays written by others remains unproven.[12] The family accounts, taken together, trace John's boyhood, education, adolescence, and maturity in sufficient detail to show how an enthusiasm for theatre–going in London might well have grown into a passion for collecting, and perhaps writing, play scripts. Was this, one wonders, a way in which John Newdigate fashioned himself as a gentleman, as did Robert Laneham through his skills in music, dancing, and charming the ladies?

For all three families, one may offer some conclusions to these anecdotes, excerpts, and reflections. Travelling troupes, whether musicians, town waits, actors, or other entertainers, apparently found welcomes not just in town halls or the palaces of the great; the middling gentry families, at least in Warwickshire, also welcomed their periodic appearances. Companies of actors apparently appeared at such homes less frequently when the households in question were not in or near towns of reasonable size, whereas musicians travelled everywhere. The audiences that these performers found, finally, were cultured, often practised in the performance

of music and dance, very likely reasonably well–read, and proud of the aura they projected as cultured and moneyed families.

A PAGE OF THE PUCKERING HOUSEHOLD ACCOUNTS (fol 28)

The summe of these expenses from the 1 of Iune to the 8 of the same is 1 s. 4 d.

10 Giuen to 2 companys of Morris dancers dancing before my gate 5 s.

The summe of these expenses from the 8 of Iune to the 15 of the same is 5 s.

17 Giuen to a handsome yong man saying himself to bee a gentleman 1 s.
18 Giuen to Philips his boy bringing mee a posie of flowers 4 d.
19 Giuen to a poore blinde woman at my gate 4 d.

The summe of these expenses from the 15 of Iune to the 22 of the same is 1 s. 8d.

24 Giuen to a poore scoller who had trauailled 1 s.

The summe of these expenses from the 22 of Iune to the 29 of the same is 1 s. Iuly

2 Giuen to Philips his boy bringing mee a posie of flowers 4 d.
3 Giuen to the Prisoners upon the bridg 6 d.

The summe of these expenses from the 29 of Iune to the 6 of Iuly is 10 d.

10 Giuen to Fidlers this day at Killingworth 1 s.
11 Giuen to a poore blinde woman at my gate 6 d.
13 Giuen to Fidlers at my gate 2 s.

The summe of these expenses from the 6 of Iuly to the 13 of the same is 3 s. 6 d.

16 Giuen to Philips his boy bringing me a posie of flowers 4 d.
17 Giuen to Edward Collins who looketh unto Cherrett Coppice for mee 1 s.

The summe of these expenses from the 13 of Iuly to the 20 of the same is 1 s. 4d.

22 Giuen towards the keeping of certaine of the Prisoners in the gaole reserued to goe to the warres in Bohemia 2 s. 6 d.
Giuen to 3 Tumbling boys 1 s.
Giuen to Forter my brother Ferrers his Fidler 5 s.
23 Giuen to my Cousin Twyrell beeing come out of Yorkshire to see mee 5 s.
Giuen to Fidlers at my gate 2 s.

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NOTES

1. *Records of Early English Drama*: *Shropshire* (University of Toronto Press, 1994).
2. The Nevilles, Earls of Warwick (the most famous of whom, Warwick the King–Maker, appears in Shakespeare's *Henry VI*), left no records. The Grevilles, in the person of Lord Brooke, left a few bits and pieces of interest dating from early in the Civil Wars. The Middleton family papers, because of the family's removal from Middleton Scriven to Wollaton, Nottinghamshire, are to be included in the *Nottinghamshire REED* volume. The Lucys of Charlecote (notorious from deer–stealing anecdotes) left many papers but nothing of interest, nor did the most famous Recusant family of the county, the Throckmortons of Coughton Court: a half–year account among the Throckmorton papers (the only surviving account) turned out to be a kitchen and laundry account. Surveying such collections of family papers brought me to realise that relevant materials occur in only a small range of types of accounts; there is little use in going through manorial leases, estate papers, rentals, and such like, because nothing ever turns up in them.

3. Fol 47 of the Beauchamp Household Book (not exact layout):

11 juin

Venerunt Madame Talbot, cum 1 damicella, 1 scutifero; Nanfan, cum 1 valetto, 1 pagio; Willyngham, cum 1 pagio; Berkeley; Mountford; Blyth, cum 1 pagio, Raulyn de pantria; Robert de chapelle; Marten; 1 scutiferis de Mewys; Hakanet, cum 1 pagio; Magister Iohannis Upton; Warton, cum 1 pagio; Burgoynon; Haux Cordener; Hethe; ffrench; 1 valettus regis; Sir William Peyto, cum 1 scutifero, 1 pagio ad prandium et cenam et recesserunt. Item venerunt 2 valetti dominus de Stafford ad prandium et recesserunt. Item venerunt Ricardus Curson, cum 2 valettis, 1 scutifero; dominus de Audeley; 2 trumpetts ad cenam et recesserunt. Item venit 1 scutiferis regis, cum 2 valettis ad cenam et recesserunt. Item venit 1 damicella cum 1 valetto ad cenam et recessit.

Iantaculum: 6
Prandium : 82
Cena : 87
Faciunt :175

Tr : 24
R : 11
Lib : 12
Pot : 4
Coquina 6
Elemosina 1
———
Preter : 58

Die lunde, 11 die iunij

Pantria. Expense: 223 panes de precomputato. Item expense in serisis, strauberyes et creyme emptis Nayleston 9 s. Item.

Buttellaria. Expense: 18 lagenae vini rubei de precomputato. Item expense: 75 lagenae bere de precomputato

Coquina. Expense: 1 quarterium 3 ronds bovis, 3 casse et dimidium multonis deprecomputato. Item

Pulletria. Expense: 7 capita vituli empta Asshern 5s 3d. Item expense: 1 kede emptus eodem 20 s. Item expense: 4 capones empti eodem 15s. Item expense: 12 pulcini empte eodem 15 s. Item expense: 12 columbells empti eodem 10s. Item expense in pisis, fabis emptis Duffield 4s 6d. Item in cirpis emptis Asshern 5d. Item expense: 3 lagene lactis empte eodem 2s 3d. Item expense: 100 ova de precomputato.

Garderobia. Expense: 3lb candelarum paricensium et 4lb cere de precomputato. Marchalchia. Expense: fenum et litera de precomputato pro 52 equis et expense in prebenda eorum 1 quarterium 4 bushelli avenarum de precomputato.

Summa: 4£ 17d. unde per Asshern 63s 11d.

(See Marie–Véronique Clin–Meyer *Le Registre de Comptes de Richard Beauchamp, Compte de Warwick* (*14 mars 1431–15 mars 1432*) (Memoire de diplome présenté à L'Ecole des Hautes Etudes et Sciences Sociales, Mai 1981).

4. Robert Laneham's *Letter* (1575) and George Gascoigne's *The Princely Pleasures at the Courte of Kenelworth* (1575) are both transcribed in John Nichols *The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth 1* (London, 1823) 420-523.
5. Quoted in Nichols *Progresse* 446.
6. Nichols *Progresses* 479.
7. Performances were occurring throughout the period before 1642, as is illustrated by scattered evidence. Maxstoke Castle (the Buckinghams) and the monks of Maxstoke Priory both paid entertainers in the fifteenth century, as did an as–yet unidentified household at Kingshurst (from which a miscellaneous loose account roll for 1433–4 somehow found its way into the papers of Sir Simon Archer). In the seventeenth century, Henry Ferrers of Baddesley Clinton, an antiquarian known to William Dugdale and Sir Simon Archer, kept a voluminous diary of day–to–day events, only two portions of which are preserved. Ferrers writes about fiddlers playing in his kitchen, neighbourhood wakes, and other activities.
8. Absence of musical instruments may not be unusual, when one considers that among all the surviving inventories post mortem for Stratford–on–Avon, only two persons owned instruments. Even a professional musician, John Harding, left no instruments when he died in 1626–7.
9. Vivienne Larminie *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: the 17th–Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World* (Boydell and Brewer for the Royal Historical Society, Woodbridge, 1995) 17. This meticulous book contains a wealth of detail about the family's history and the fortunes of its various members.
10. Another traveller, this time in perhaps surprising circumstances, sought solace and self–display in entertainment. Lord Brooke, Parliamentary general, was in Stratford–on–Avon in June 1642 at 'the settling the Militia', and among his personal expenses was a payment of 7s 'to the Musicioners' — the amount suggests that a considerable concert must have taken place. Brooke went on from Stratford to Lichfield, where he was killed by a musket ball through the eye at the siege of Lichfield Cathedral, putting his Parliamentary sympathies beyond doubt, for all his enjoyment of music.
11. 'The Undergraduate Account Book of John and Richard Newdigate, 1618–21' edited Vivienne Larminie *Camden Miscellany 30*: Camden Society, 4th Series, *39* (1990) 151–269.
12. Professor T. H. Howard–Hill argues for Newdigate's authorship in 'Another Warwickshire Playwright: John Newdigate of Arbury' *Renaissance Papers 1988* (Southeastern Renaissance Conference, 1988) 51–62.