Shackerley Marmion Redux: A Second Look at *The Soddered Citizen*

*The Soddered Citizen* may have been performed by the King’s Men at the Blackfriars Theatre in or around 1630. No seventeenth-century edition appears to have been published, and until 1932, when a manuscript in the possession of E. G. Troyte-Bullock surfaced, the play was thought to have been lost.¹ There are, however, entries in the *Stationers’ Register* referencing it: on 9 September 1653, a list of plays including “The Sodered Citizen, a Comedy by Shakerley Marmion” (1603–39) was entered to Master Mosely [S.R. I. 429], and on 29 June 1660, another list including “The Sodered Citizen, a Comedy by Shakerley Marmion” was entered, also to Master Hum. Moseley [S.R. II. 271]. On the authority of the printer and bookseller Humphrey Moseley, then, some fourteen years after Marmion’s death, *The Soddered Citizen* was Marmion’s work.

John Henry Pyle Pafford, however, who edited the play for the Malone Society in 1936, attributes authorship to John Clavell (1601–42), principally known for *A Recantation Of an ill led Life. Or A discoverie of the High-Way Law …* (London: Printed for the Authors use, 1628), written from the King’s Bench Prison after the

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highwayman-turned-poet received a royal pardon (x). In these lengthy, self-serving verses, published in three editions (1628, 1628, 1634), Clavell repents his misdeeds, discloses the strategies of thieves, and offers advice to travelers. Though in his edition of The Soddered Citizen Pafford cautions against reading biographically, there and in an essay published some fifty years later in Notes & Queries for Somerset and Dorset, as well as in a full-length study of Clavell in 1993, he points to the Prologue, which, he notes, suggests that the playwright himself may be a reformed thief, familiar with the highwayman’s haunts—“Ould Sarum’s Playne, Gads, Sutors hill*/Our Poett rang’d, that course prov’d ill;/Better resolv’d, hee makes accompt/To solace, on Parnassus Mount.”

Pafford also notes two passages in the play that could be referencing Clavell. In the first, Brainsicke, in prison after being tricked by a goldsmith, as Clavell was c. 1623 by the money-lending goldsmith William Banks, announces that he will rename the goldsmith Mountayne “The lesser Bancks, or, the little Mountebancke” (1.3). (As Pafford points out, the language here anticipates a phrase in the 1634 edition of A Recantation: “Noyes flood … topping the rankes/Of the great Mountaines, and the lesser Bankes.”) In the second passage, Undermyne speaks of Brainsicke’s circumstance, which mirrors Clavell’s:

Undermyne: … him didst thou force
   By th’ Cheate of his first fortunes, to fly out,
   And pillage on the Roade, and livelyhood,
   Then didst thou seize him, …
2. Commissioner: But hee lives still,?
   Undermyne: lives, but hee’s turnd Poett, …
   (5.5)

Sometime between November 1619 and April 1621, Clavell, a financially-stressed Oxford student, was arrested for stealing silver or gold plate from Brasenose College. In 1623, his father, who had lived apart from the family with another woman, died, leaving his son the task of administering the estate. Clavell’s hope for help from his uncle, to whom he was heir apparent, vanished when William Clavell engaged in political activities that left him in financial ruin. Although Clavell received a pardon for the Brasenose College theft, by early 1625, following the machinations
of Banks and his own arrests for a series of robberies, he had been declared a felon and had lost all claim to his father’s estate. That Undermyne’s comments about the pillager-turned-poet were intended to invoke the infamous thief is confirmed by lines in the manuscript just after Undermyne’s 5.5 exchange, inserted, then deleted: “All humble thankes unto our gratious Queene/That ask’d his pardon & our Kings that gave it.” Imprisoned and sentenced to death, Clavell begged forgiveness of James I; he was granted mercy by him and, upon his coronation, by Charles I, but he was still in prison in 1627, nearly two years after the crime: Clavell’s note to the reader in A Recantation ends with “From my lonely sad, and unfrequented Chamber in the Kings Bench, October, 1627.”

The biographical connections are suggestive but not dispositive, for one could also see resonances of Marmion’s life in the play. Marmion’s younger brother, Richard (b. 1607), like Mountayne, was a goldsmith, and Sly reports to Undermyne that he found Brainsicke in prison, in “a private roome, beneath/The Chappell where they pray …” (1.1): at Wadham College, Marmion lived in “the Bottom Chamber under the Chaplains’.” Both Clavell and Marmion were familiar with medical matters, Clavell having left behind medical recipes from his later years as a physician, Marmion having disguised Aurelio, in A Fine Companion, as a doctor, prepared to anoint the mad Valeria with Helleborum: either could have created the Doctor of Phisicke in The Soddered Citizen, who administers to the distempered brain. More importantly, Marmion also knew about financial exigency, his father having been forced, in 1615, to sell their manor house in Northamptonshire to pay his creditors; Marmion himself, according to Anthony à Wood, “died … poor and in debt,” despite having “had once in his possession seven hundred pounds per ann. at least.” Clearly, the author of The Soddered Citizen knew the idiom of finance: in that play, and in the plays that are surely by Marmion—Holland’s Leaguer (1632), A Fine Companion (1633), and The Antiquary (1641)—there is much talk of usury, bankruptcy, and inheritance, and of an older son yielding to a younger, as Marmion himself did. Like Marmion, Undermyne has a younger brother and two sisters, and Brainsicke is willed only a white-faced bull, while his younger brother inherits their father’s estate. Similarly, in A Fine Companion,
there are two brothers, the younger, Careless, favored by the father, at the expense of the older, Aurelio. Allan Porter Green, in fact, after uncovering documents concerning the difficult history of Aynho, the estate the elder Marmion sold, proposes that the disinherited older son, Aurelio, “may well be the dramatist’s self-portrait.”

Marmion also had encounters with the law. Pafford speaks of the event on 2 September 1629, when “the grand jury at the Middlesex sessions returned a true bill against him for wounding one Edward Moore with a sword at St. Giles’s-in-the-Fields on the previous 11 July” (xii). Although the twenty-six-year-old would appear to have been released on bail immediately after his arrest, he failed to surrender at the court, forfeiting the £40 paid by his father and one Richard Browne and remaining “at large.” Pafford avers that “We may with some confidence dismiss the idea that Marmion was ever a highwayman” (ibid.) – this despite the fact that the event took place “in the highway of St. Giles’s-in-the-Fields” (the parish that Francis Grose, in the next century, called “the grand headquarters of most of the thieves and pickpockets about London”

But when Pafford prepared his edition of *The Soddered Citizen*, he did not have the information on the playwright’s young life that Green later uncovered. Green points to the case of Spencer Potts v. Shakerley Marmion, which indicates that five years earlier, on 14 June 1624, Marmion also failed to appear in court, causing a warrant to be issued for his arrest. Weeks before receiving his M.A. from Oxford, Marmion was an outlaw, “hiding” (as Green puts it) “in the obscurity of those suburban lanes and alleys he alludes to so frequently and knowledgeably in his plays.”

In search of a definitive authorial attribution for *The Soddered Citizen*, Pafford turns to the handwriting, meticulously isolating six hands: the principal scribe and five revisers, including the King’s Men’s bookkeeper, whose writing, he states, is also present in *Believe as you List, Bonduca, and The Honest Man’s Fortune* (viii). But even with access to a surviving medical recipe in Clavell’s italic hand and Clavell’s signature in the Oxford Subscription Register of 19 November 1619, Pafford could not identify Clavell’s writing in the manuscript – at least not in 1936. Fifty years later, having seen examples of Clavell’s handwriting in Clavell’s *Notebook*, he speaks of the manuscript as a scribal copy “with corrections in Clavell’s
hand and in that of the bookkeeper of the king’s company and possibly other hands.”

Pafford’s claim concerning Clavell’s hand may or may not be buttressed by the presence of two faded inscriptions of Clavell’s name, upside down, amid pen-trials at the foot of fol. 2r. A signature in Notebook 51, which Pafford had not seen in 1936, may match these, but the damage is such that one cannot say for sure. At the top of fol. 2r are seven lines of verse, which do not appear to match any of Clavell’s writings in the Notebook. In 1936, Pafford spoke of these lines as “written in a hand which apparently occurs nowhere else in the manuscript” (unnumbered page before the Prologue). But in 1986, he seems to assume that Clavell did, indeed, write the lines: “[he] wrote on it doggerel lines saying that if he could only get back to England he would never set foot in Dublin again.” The verse, which appears to have been written in Dublin, reads: “Oh would I were in Inglande (where)/If Such a place as this, I should finde there,/I would from thence to Spayne,/where as I would, soe long/As breath did last, remaine,/Before I would see, dublin/once againe!” Clavell lived in Ireland from 1631 or 1632 to 1633 and returned there in December 1634, remaining for three years. While in Ireland, apparently through the influence of Adam Loftus, Lord High Chancellor, his reputation was restored: he married an heiress, was admitted to the bar, and practiced medicine (though apparently without a license). The verse could, as Pafford suggests, reflect Clavell’s despondency over his situation in Ireland, but given his successes there, it is more likely that it alludes to the situation of the play and that it records the versifier’s outrage, perhaps disingenuous, at what went on in the England of The Soddered Citizen.

But even if Clavell were the author of the poem and was, at some point, in possession of the manuscript, he need not have been the author of the play. An examination of the extended samples of Clavell’s handwriting in the Notebook and Marmion’s in the dedication to his epic poem, Cupid and Psyche, reveals that neither was the primary scribe of The Soddered Citizen. Pafford believes that one of the amending hands in The Soddered Citizen is Clavell’s, but additions and changes to the text are minimal, making such an observation difficult to confirm. As Pafford himself commented in 1936, “As to the hands appearing in the manuscript itself,
there seems about as much or as little reason to identify any of them . . . with Clavell’s as with Marmion’s (xix). Yet there is one intriguing insert that he does not mention: the name of one of the characters—“Shackle,” in italic, inserted in the manuscript in the opening stage direction of 4.7—not only resembles the name “Shackerley” but also looks strikingly like Marmion’s youthful signature at Oxford. Finally, though, Pafford’s efforts—and my own—at identifying the author’s hand may be based on a faulty assumption: that the author’s hand need be present. For if the surviving manuscript is not the playwright’s copy but the copy subsequently prepared for performance, the primary hand should be that of the company scribe, with changes made by members of the company.19

The handwriting in the manuscript, then, like the biographical allusions (to both men), leaves the authorship question unresolved. But what of the attribution in the Stationers’ Register? It is important to understand that in order to establish credibility for Clavell’s authorship, Pafford had to question the reliability of Moseley, whose authority, he avers, “is not high,” and his ascription in the Stationers’ Register “carries no considerable weight” (x, xxiii). Moreover, he also had to question the veracity of John Warburton (1682–1759), the book and manuscript collector who famously claimed that his cook burned his manuscripts or used the paper for the bottoms of pies. Pafford is not so strenuous in expressing his doubt as W. W. Greg, who, in “The Bakings of Betsey,” quips, “For my own part I feel it extremely difficult to make up my mind as to whether Moseley was a knave or Warburton a liar.”20 But he does follow Greg in suggesting that the surviving list of plays that were lost at the hand of Warburton’s servant was copied from Moseley’s and others’ entries in the Register. One need only read John Freehafer’s 1970 essay on Warburton’s lost plays, however, to dismiss that claim.21 For as Freehafer points out, Warburton lists plays not entered by Moseley; specifies genre, author, and other details not in Moseley’s entries; and omits errors that appear in the entry book. Clearly, the Stationers’ Register was not Warburton’s source. Just as clearly, Warburton’s younger contemporaries and immediate successors, including Edmond Malone (1741–1812), agreed that Warburton had owned the listed plays. In independent play inventories dated 1653 and 1660,
then, both Moseley and Warburton assign The Soddered Citizen to Marmion.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation is the one that Pafford, in 1936, teased: “Is it possible,” he asks, “that Marmion borrowed his friend’s personality as a literary device, or alternatively that the two collaborated in the writing of the play?” (xxiii). Evidence that the two knew one another is, at best, circumstantial, yet there is good reason to believe that both were “sons of Ben.” Marmion’s commendatory poem to Jonson, “A Funerall sacrifice, to the sacred memory of his thrice honoured father Ben. Johnson,” for the playwright’s funeral volume, Jonsonius Viribus, is well known, as is the exchange he included in A Fine Companion, in which Careless describes the scene in the Apollo Room of the Devil’s Tavern, where Jonson and his “tribe” assembled:

Emilia: Whence come you? From Apollo?
Careless: From the heaven
Of my delight, where the boon Delphic god
Drinks sack, and keeps his Bacchanalias,
And has his incense, and his altars smoking,
And speaks in sparkling prophecies

(2.4)

Studies of the Caroline sons of Ben—Joe Lee Davis’s, for example—regularly include Marmion; Clavell, though, is not mentioned, possibly because so little of his work was known. But with Pafford’s publication of large portions of Clavell’s Notebook, we have not only letters, memos, and medical recipes but also poems, dramatic prologues, and an epilogue, nearly all in Clavell’s hand. Most relevant is a poem entitled “A gratulatory to Ben: Jonson for his voluntary Adoption of mee to bee His Son.” Though elsewhere attributed to Thomas Randolph, the poem in Notebook 11–12 has a customized title, leading Pafford to conclude that “he was indeed sealed of the tribe of Ben.” Pafford’s statement finds additional support in a poem among the “Repostes and Replies to Jonson’s ‘Ode to Himself.’” One of these poems is by Randolph; another, “Ode: to Ben Jonson Upon his Ode to Himself,” is by “J. C.” William Gifford reads “J. C.” as John Cleveland; Michael Hattaway, who also notices the poem in Jonsonius Viribus, where the
initials are “J. Cl.,” proposes James Clayton. But given the poem in Clavell’s Notebook, “J. C.” could well be John Clavell. It is not unreasonable, then, to suggest that The Soddered Citizen could have been a youthful collaboration on the part of two sons of Ben, with Clavell, in person or through his writing and reputation, providing Marmion with material for his play or, possibly, the two amusing themselves jointly in writing it. Either way, surely Moseley’s and Warburton’s attributions of the play to Marmion should not be dismissed.

Finally, a note about the title: The Soddered—or Soldered—Citizen (an unknown hand in the manuscript changed the “l” to a “d”). While playwrights had previously used the adjective in other senses—Jonson in Cynthia’s Revels 2.2, John Fletcher in The Bloody Brother 2.1—the term “soddered citizen” had not been used at all. Indeed, the term does not even appear in the text of The Soddered Citizen—unless on the final page of the manuscript or in the epilogue, both of which (along with all but a small fragment of the title-page) are lost. “Broken man” was commonly used to indicate a man in straitened circumstance, particularly financial ruin—“The Kings growne bankrupt like a broken man” (Shakespeare, Richard II 2.1)—and “broken citizen” appears in Jonson’s The New Inne: “A broken citizen … A broke-wing’d Shop-keeper? … Then breakes out Bankrupt” (4.1, 4.2); Marmion’s The Antiquary: “I’ll trust my ship to a storm, my substance to a broken citizen, ere I’ll credit any of you” (3.1); and The Soddered Citizen: “Soe pestered with your broaken Civitizens” (1.3) and “I begyn to finde, ther’s a great Antipathie in nature, betweene a Seriant, & a broaken Civitizen” (4.5). “Break” and “solder,” to indicate ruin and recovery, both appear in Marmion’s A Fine Companion: “What! should I doat upon casualities, trust scriveners with my money, fellows that will break, and all the wit in town can’t solder them up again?” (1.3) and later, with Aurelio speaking of the fickleness of women, “The golden organs of her innocence/Are broke, not to be solder’d” (4.3). Clavell does not use “broken” in this sense or “soddered” at all in A Recantation (nor does he apply the term a “broken man” to mean, as it does in the Scottish Highlands, a person living as an outlaw). Indeed, the joint use of the adjectives “broken” and “soddered,” to mean bankrupt and subsequently redeemed, as used in The Soddered Citizen to describe the crafty merchant
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Undermyne, would appear previously to have been unique to the author of A Fine Companion—suggesting, again, that Marmion should remain under consideration as author or co-author of the play.

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NOTES

1. The manuscript is now in the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 865 502/2.

2. John Henry Pyle Pafford, ed., The Soddered Citizen (Oxford: Printed for the Malone Society by John Johnson at the Oxford University Press, 1935 [1936]), on the basis of a cast list on fol. 3r, dates the play between 1626 and 1635; all references to this edition are cited parenthetically in the text. Based on further information on members of the King’s company, G. E. Bentley, The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Dramatic Companies and Players, 7 vols. (1949; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 1:71, note 37, amends the range to 1629–32. Allan Porter Green, “Shakerley Marmion, Caroline Dramatist and Poet (1603–1639)” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1974), 247–48, noting two likely references to the 1628 Parliament (1.5 and 3.1), avers that the play could not have been written before 1628. John Henry Pyle Pafford, John Clavell, 1601–43: Highwayman, Author, Lawyer, Doctor (Oxford: Leopard’s Head Press, 1993), 132, agrees, but based on the line “he’s turned Poett,” which he believes refers to Clavell’s Recantation, published in 1628. Another line—“But hee lives still?”—if alluding to Clavell, would suggest a date closer to 1634, when A Recantation was issued in a third edition following rumors of the highwayman’s relapse and death (see the Stationer’s note to the Buyer, third edition, 1634). Pafford settles on 1628–30, with a performance by mid-1631.


4. Old Sarum’s Playne is just north of Salisbury; Gad’s Hill, the site of 2.2 in Shakespeare’s 1 Henry IV, and Shooters Hill, both notorious for highway robberies, are on the Dover Road.


7. Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses. An Exact History Of All The Writers and Bishops Who have had their Education in The most ancient and famous University Of Oxford From The Fifteenth Year of King Henry the Seventh, Dom. 1500, to the End of the Year 1690. Representing The Birth, Fortune, Preferment, and Death of all those Authors and Prelates, the great Accidents of their Lives, and the Fate and Character of their Writings. To which are added, The FASTI or Annals, of the said University, For the same time,* 2 vols. (London: Printed for Tho. Bennet at the Half-Moon in S. Pauls Churchyard, 1692), 2:9.


10. Pafford is citing *Middlesex County Records: Vol. 3. Indictments, Recognizances, Coroners’ Inquisitions-Post-Mortem, Orders, Memoranda and Certificates of Convictions of Conventiclers, temp. 1 Charles I. to 18 Charles II.*, ed. John Cordy Jeaffreson (London: The Middlesex County Records Society at the Clerkenwell Sessions House, 1888), pp. 27–28. The entry reads: “11 July, 5 Charles I. [i.e., 1629] – True Bill that, in the highway of St. Giles’s-in-the-Fields co. Midd. on the said day, Shakerley Marmion late of the said parish gentleman assaulted Edward Moore, when the latter was in God’s and the King’s peace, and with a sword gave him on the left part of his head a serious wound, of which he has languished from the said 11th July to the day of the taking of this inquisition, to wit, 1 September then next following. Shakerley Marmion was at large. G.D.R., 2 Sept., 5 Charles I.”


13. Pafford provides facsimiles of both Clavell’s and Marmion’s signatures in the Oxford Register, as well as a copy of one of Clavell’s medical recipes.

14. The manuscript of Clavell’s *Notebook* is in the Wiltshire and Swindon Archives, 865 502/1, along with copies of other documents concerning Clavell (865 502A Ms).
15. Pafford, “John Clavell,” 563, note 2. Although Pafford repeats his 1935 claim concerning the King’s Men’s bookkeeper, my own comparison of this amending hand with the primary hand of Bonduca (British Library, Add. 36758) and an amending hand of Believe as you List (British Library, Eg. 2828) has not confirmed his claim.


17. Clavell married Isabel Markham in Dublin on 14 April 1635 (see Notebook 18, 23, 41, 46), when she was reputedly nine years old. Seven months later, he was made a barrister, enabling him to represent his uncle in his claim concerning property in Cork. There is no record of how Clavell came to practice medicine, but his Notebook contains numerous medical recipes as well as testimonies of those he cured. The Notebook also contains information on his first wife, whom he married in Fulham on 1 January 1625 and who probably died in childbirth in 1634. An accounting of funeral expenses and those of a midwife appears on fol. 84, an elegy to a lost lady on fol. 24. The second edition of A Recantation contains a poem to his (first) wife, whom he credits with having saved his life, for she “besought the Lords, the Queene, the King” and “got my freedome.”


24. Pafford, John Clavell, 141–205; also see “Clavell as Physician,” 228–59. Among the prologues are introductions to the Sword Dance (performed in Ireland at Christmas 1632) and to John Fletcher and Philip Massinger’s The Beggar’s Bush; the epilogue is to John Cooke’s Green’s Tu Quoque (fol. 85–86).


28. I base this statement on a keyword search in EEBO (Early English Books Online).

29. The *OED* records numerous meanings for the term “broken.” In *The Soddered Citizen*, Brainsicke, recovered from drink, and Wittworth, restored to his senses following lunacy, may also be “broken,” then “soddered,” citizens. For a description of the “character” of a broken citizen, see F. L. [Francis Lenton], Gent., *Characterismi: Or, Lentons Leasures. Expressed In Essays And Characters, Never before written on* (London, Printed by J. B. for Roger Michell. 1631).