An Unnoticed Manuscript of Shackerley Marmion’s *Cupid and Psyche*

He was “a not obscure or uncopious Writer of English Comedy.” Thus opined Edward Philips 36 years after the death of Shackerley Marmion, the subject of his comment.¹ Shackerley Marmion (1603–39)² wrote at least three plays: *Holland’s Leaguer*, acted by Prince Charles’s Servants at Salisbury Court and published in 1632; *A Fine Companion*, acted by Prince Charles’s Servants before the King and Queen at Whitehall and at Salisbury Court and published in 1633; and *The Antiquary*, acted by Henrietta Maria’s Servants at the Cockpit and published in 1641.³ By Gerard Langbaine’s 1691 account, all “have formerly been well approv’d.”⁴ Considered a “lesser” playwright of the years leading up to the English Civil War, Marmion, who took his Master of Arts degree from Wadham College, Oxford, in 1624, is also known as the author of dedicatory poems (to, for example, his friend Thomas Heywood), an elegy to Ben Jonson, and – most relevant to this essay – *The Legend of Cupid and Psyche*, a poem presented in 1637 to Charles Louis (1617–80), nephew to Charles I. In a German library with historical connections to Charles Louis – Landesbibliothek und Murhardsche
Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel der Universitätsbibliothek Kassel – rests the manuscript of that poem (fol. 4r, fig. 1), unnoticed by scholars of the Early Modern period.

There can be little doubt concerning the authenticity of the Kassel manuscript, for in 1686, shortly after the death of Charles Louis’s son Karl Ludwig (1651–85), grandson to Frederick V and England’s Princess Elizabeth (the Winter King and Queen), the Palatine library was transferred from Heidelberg to Kassel.
Established after 1622, when Maximilian of Bavaria infamously seized the Biblioteca Palatina in Heidelberg and sent 184 boxes of books and manuscripts across the Alps to the Pope in Rome, the Jüngere Palatina, or “younger” Palatine library, consisted of 4,500 books and manuscripts. Charles Louis, who succeeded his father as Elector Palatine, undoubtedly acquired many of these, including *Cupid and Psyche*, at the English court of his uncle, where he lived for some years between 1635 and 1649 (the year of the king’s beheading). Sadly, in 1941, a British bomb landed on the Kassel library, destroying the books that had been safely shelved there for more than 250 years. In another part of the building, however, the manuscripts, some of which bear dedications to Charles Louis, as well as a seventeenth-century catalogue of the items in the Jüngere Palatina, survived.5

Marmion’s poem consists of 36 29×20 cm pages bound in parchment with gold stamping. Entitled in manuscript *The Legend of Cupid, & His Mistress*6 (2o Ms. poet. et roman. 16), it is an adaptation, in heroic couplets, of the story of Cupid and Psyche, originally told in the second century by Lucius Apuleius in Books 4, 5, and 6 of *The Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*. Alice Jones Nearing, in her study of Marmion’s poem,7 compares Marmion’s text with that of Apuleius, concluding that while the second-century poem was clearly the seventeenth-century source,8 Marmion’s work was sufficiently distinctive to be called more than a translation. A 100-line episode concerning the urgency of Cupid’s love, for example, is Marmion’s addition, as is a 40-line prelude to Cupid’s first visit to Psyche. Psyche’s visit to Proserpine expands a one-paragraph prose description of the event into 150 lines of verse that retell several legends. There are other additions and omissions as well. Moreover, Apuleius was not Marmion’s only source. Among classical writers, the poem owes debts to Fulgentius, Moschus, Homer, and Ovid; among moderns, there are borrowings from Heywood, Jonson, and Edmund Spenser. Nearing concludes that Marmion has the distinction “of choosing for his chief poetic work a story well loved and long cherished, and of lavishing upon it the greatest expression of his not inconsiderable talent.”9

Entered in the *Stationers’ Register* on 24 June 1637 [S.R. IV. 360],10 *Cupid and Psyche* was published in 1637 as *A Morall Poem, Intituled*
the Legend of Cupid and Psyche. Or Cupid and his Mistris. As it was lately presented to the Prince Elector. Written by Shackerley Marmion, Gent. (London: Printed by N. and J. Okes, and are to be sold by H. Sheppard, at his shop in Chancery lane neere Serjants Inne, at the Bible, 1637). An engraving on the title-page of some copies depicts gods at a banquet, with Psyche being kissed by a winged Cupid; at top is the title Cupid And Psiche or an Epick Poem or Cupid, and his Mistress. In print, there are complimentary poems by Richard Brome, Francis Tuckyr, Thomas Nabbes, and Heywood, all poets/playwrights, Brome and Nabbes, like Marmion, "Sons of Ben [Jonson]," as well as a dedication to Charles Louis, "The Argument," "The Mitheology," and a commencing super-title, "A Morall Poem." Of these, only the dedication appears in the manuscript.

The discovery of the Cupid and Psyche manuscript enables the question of the two versions of Signature E to be revisited. Nearing discusses the variants in this signature, comparing the Bodleian, Chapin [Williams College], and Huntington copies with those held by the Folger, Yale, and Harvard. Included among the variants she identifies is a verb in E recto 195: "Then cropt [dropt] foure Snakes out of her hayry nest." That variant, along with others such as "And was made pregnant with [by] immortal seed" (E2 verso 2) and "Turne not away sweet [my] love, I thee beseeke" (E3 recto 33), is consistent with her observation that a section of Signature E was set up twice. Based on context, Nearing decides that the Bodleian-Chapin-Huntington set was the earlier, a finding that a collation of the variants with the manuscript would appear to support. But without the manuscript, Nearing could not have realized that E recto 195, along with 23 other lines following the couplet "That whereas er'st they pittied her distresse,/None swell with Envy of her happiness," was added to the printed text. Nor could she have known that two subsequent lines shortly after those missing from the manuscript (the second line of one couplet and the first of another) are in the manuscript only. They read "In what strange shape her husband did appeare/And with faire speech importune her to learne."

In fact, a collation of the manuscript with the published text reveals a number of differences beyond word variants: at times a couplet or two in the manuscript do not appear in the published version; at times a couplet or two are added in the printed text;
and occasionally there is a substantive change. In the printed text, for example, the elder daughters are not so attractive as they are in the manuscript: "The elder two did neither much excell,/But then the younger had no parallel" (Chapin); "the elder two, though exquisite of Shape,/did not above humanitie partake./But then the yonguest, o what tongue can tell/how shee for beautie, had noe Parallel?" (manuscript). Most notable are the extended additions to the published version: there are 14 instances of extended added verse, ranging from six to 162 lines, establishing without doubt that the manuscript was revised for publication, presumably by its author. The additions are elaborations of plot or character or, more often, digressions on the classical gods. The lines from Signature E, for example, consist of 12 couplets on the goddess Ate. An addition to the third section of Book 1 reads like a catalogue of gods and goddesses: Cupid, Venus, Adonis, Jove, Laeda, Donae, Saturn, Pallas, Arackne, Tempe, etc. The longest of the additions includes a 50-line poem about Cupid borrowed from Moschus’s “Fugitive Love”15 and presented as a posted notice about the lost youth, who had wantonly strayed from his mother. All told, the published form of the poem is some 550 lines longer than the manuscript version: the Chapin copy has 2,320 lines, compared with 1,766 in the manuscript.

The dedication page (fig. 2) preceding the text of the poem records the pleasure the poet took in presenting his work to the Elector Palatine: "if this Worke shall be so happy, as to beare the Impresse of your Princely approbation, It shall then passe currant to the World, & publish the great honour done, to [me]." Marmion recites all of the Prince’s titles—"TO THE HIGH, AND MIGHTY Charles Lodowick, Prince Elector, Vicar of the Sacred-Empire, Count Palatine of the Rhene, Duke of Bavaria, and Knight of the most noble order of the Garter—High and mighty Prince”16—even though, in 1637, the Lower Palatinate had not yet been restored to him. In the body of the dedication, the poet indicates that he had planned his gift for some time, having penned the dedicatory lines even before the poem: "For this Poem, it was yours, ere conciev’d… for the Dedication was elder than the birth of it …" Marmion may have anticipated presenting his gift for the new year: the manuscript references “the newness of the yeare,” changed in publication to “the season of the yeare.” It is likely, however, that
he actually made the presentation on or shortly before 24 June 1637, the day the poem was entered in the Stationers' Register and the day the Prince, after 19 months in residence at his uncle's court, departed for Germany. The poet's awareness of the importance of this presentation and his mention of others' gifts—"so many, and rich presents"—suggest that the German Prince who married the English Princess was both respected and loved.
But the dedication page is of special interest for another reason as well: it closes with the poet's autograph—"Your Highnes most humbly devoted Shackerley Marmion" (fol. 3r). Until now, the only known Marmion autograph—indeed, the only known instance of his writing—was his youthful signature in the Oxford Subscription Register of 16 February 1620/1. The manuscript provides not only a second autograph but also an extended example of Marmion's hand. For although the writing in the dedication is not uniform—
is in both italic and roman styles—a distinctive “h” in the “Shackerley” of the autograph and the “Charles” of the Elector Palatine’s name makes it clear that Marmion not only signed the dedication but was its scribe. Moreover, it is likely that Marmion was also responsible for the title-page. Fol. 2r (fig. 3), on which “The Legend of Cupid, & His Mistress’” is written in large, elaborately drawn italic letters, uses the same open “h,” as well as a characteristic ampersand. The page ends with a flourish, a series of spiraling concentric circles that is repeated at the end of the manuscript.

Indeed, it may be that the entire manuscript is in Marmion’s hand. Birgitt Hilberg, who catalogued documents in the Kassel library in 1993, described Cupid and Psyche as “Eigenhändige Abschrift des Verf[assers]” (a writing in the author’s own hand). Because of the difference in styles, however—the text proper is in secretary hand—it is difficult to say whether the writing is Marmion’s or that of a professional scribe. But surely the dedication—and the autograph—were written by Marmion himself, the soldier/poet who, years earlier, had fought in Holland for the cause of Charles Louis’s parents, the Winter King and Queen.

Lafayette College

NOTES

1. Edward Phillips, Theatrum Poetarum, Or A Compleat Collection of the Poets, Especially The most Eminent, of all Ages . . . (1675), 170.

2. “Shackerley” (variously spelled) was the surname of the playwright’s maternal grandmother; his father also bore the name Shackerley Marmion.


4. Gerard Langbaine, An Account of the English Dramatick Poets. Or, Some Observations And Remarks On the Lives and Writings, of all those that have Publish'd either Comedies, Tragedies, Tragi-Comedies, Pastorals, Masques, Interludes, Farces, or Opera’s in the English Tongue (1691), 345.

5. The catalogue, dated 1686, was prepared by Lorenz Beger, librarian to the Elector Palatine. Interestingly, Beger, under Karl Ludwig, prepared a number of “verkleidete Aufzüge,” described by Sara Smart, 1034, as “masked processions through the castle in Heidelberg” presented during carnival or for visiting princes. “On the Diverse Duties of the Servants of Princes: Lorenz Beger (1653–1705), Librarian, Antiquarian, and Court Poet in Heidelberg,” The Modern Language Review 94.4 (October 1999): 1025–40. One such entertainment, presented on 20 January 1682, was entitled Heyrath Zwischen Cupido Und Psyche (Marriage between Cupid and Psyche).

6. This is the title on the title-page of the manuscript. The title at the top of the poem is slightly different: The Legend of Cupid and his Mistres’.


8. Nearing, 57, acknowledges that Marmion may have known William Adlington’s 1566 translation of The Golden Ass but does not believe that that early modern prose work was Marmion’s source.


11. The poem was reprinted in 1666 as Cupid’s Courtship: Or The Celebration Of A Marriage Between The God of Love And Psiche, Licensed October 29. 1666. Roger L’Estrange (1666). Modern editions include Samuel Weller Singer, ed., Cupid and Psyche. A Legend (Chiswick, 1820); George Saintsbury, The Legend of Cupid and Psyche, in Minor Poets of the Caroline Period, 3 vols. (London, 1906), 2:6–60; and Nearing, 98–188. Singer, xxii–xxiii, offers praise for the author: “The versification of the poem is in general strikingly harmonious, and free from the defects of his age, an occasional careless passage, and a few imperfect rhymes excepted ... He seems to have felt the beauty and delicacy of the fable, and the story has lost none of its pathos in his hands.”
12. On some surviving copies with the engraving, the publication date is manually altered to 1638. For a reproduction of the engraving, see Nearing’s edition.

13. Nearing, who knew of 11 extant copies, reprints the Chapin.

14. See Nearing, 41–47.


17. I thank Heather Wolfe, Curator of Manuscripts at the Folger Shakespeare Library, for her assistance with the handwriting.

18. As Peter Beal points out, “Written forms of [the ampersand] vary so widely that it is often the single feature most useful to examine first when looking for writers’ handwriting idiosyncrasies, or when comparing two examples of writing to check whether they are in the same hand.” *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology 1450–2000* (Oxford, 2008), 15.