Henry Purcell and the construction of identity: iconography, heraldry, and the *Sonnata's of III Parts* (1683)

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> '… he ought to determine with himselfe what he will appeere to be, and in suche sorte as he desireth to bee esteamed so to apparaile himselfe, and make his garmentes helpe him to be counted suche a one ...'[1]

Introduction

Scholars have long acknowledged that biographical material relating to Henry Purcell is in short supply. Eighty years ago, Jack Westrup began his classic study of the composer with the following caveats: 'A life of Henry Purcell is of necessity a slender record; … we have nothing to give us the man behind the music; … we must be content with a plain, unvarnished tale; the appointments he held, the commissions he undertook'.[2] Little has changed since then. In 1983 Franklin B. Zimmerman wrote in the second edition of his biography of the composer:

> Virtually all extant records relating to [Purcell] concern only the professional musician, on whose activities we are fairly well informed. But verifiable data relate only to the official actions he undertook, whereby Purcell emerges as a flat, two-dimensional figure, no matter how one tries to see him in the round.[3]

Faced with this dearth of documentary evidence relating to his private life, and the failure of traditional musicology by and large to illuminate Purcell the man, it is perhaps time to try alternative methodological approaches. Recent critical perspectives have raised questions about the very notion of modern biography and the stability of the genre and its forms, pointing out that early modern readers 'consumed lives in and through the texts that we assign to a variety of other genres: history, romance, travel narrative, classical translation, hagiography, biblical exegesis.'[4] Furthermore, the traditional positivist approach to the writing of history, with its emphasis on evidence and archives, has left little room for what Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker call 'the records of representation'.[5] Biographers may be familiar with Stephen Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning' – the process of constituting identity in response to competing power systems – as a defining condition of early modernity,

but it is only recently that they have begun to appreciate the important part played by the symbolic, the performative, the figured in the lives of early modern men and women.[6] Self-fashioning has become a central theme in the investigation of early modern culture generally, and has been deployed in a variety of fields, including social history and the history of art. It has long been recognized that a study of the pictorial record can complement and extend the genre of life writing in decisive ways; indeed, the parallel between biography and portraiture is one that was often drawn, both in theory and in practice, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[7] The present article therefore sets out to explore the potentially fruitful interface between image and identity-formation in the hope that some idea might emerge of how Purcell saw himself and expected others to see him. To make that task manageable within the space available, I will restrict my comments to some of the engraved portraits of the composer.

Most Purcell engravings are of dubious authenticity, but the two that date from the late seventeenth century have unimpeachable authority as images; both were used as frontispieces to musical scores whose publication was supervised either by the composer himself or by his widow Frances. The earlier portrait prefaces the first violin part of his 1683 *Sonnata's of III Parts* and records Purcell's age as twenty-four at the time (see Illustration 1).[8] [Ill. 1 near here Full Page] The other, based on John Closterman's well-known oil painting of the composer, was used posthumously as the frontispiece to Book 1 of his *Orpheus Britannicus* (1698) (Illustration 2). [Ill. 2 near here Full Page] That engraving was already two years old by then, for Henry Playford advertised it for sale as a separate item in November 1696.[9] The note beneath Purcell's name informs us that he was aged thirty-seven in 1695, the year of his death. My attention will mostly focus on the 1683 frontispiece, but before embarking upon an analysis of that image, some background information regarding the genre of the frontispiece and its rhetorical status in early modern print culture is required.

The frontispiece in seventeenth-century print culture

According to the French literary theorist Gérard Genette, the physical form of an early modern book was as crucial to the production of meaning as its contents; in other words, the work of signification began even before its pages were turned. Literary texts rarely come to readers in an unadorned state, but are accompanied by a variety of 'paratexts' – a term that Genette coined for the framing devices authors and publishers use to contextualize works and generate interest (for example, the title page, subtitle, epigraphs, dedications, prefaces, marginal notes, subscription lists, blurbs, indexes, celebrity endorsements, and so on).[10] The purpose of these pages was first and foremost to persuade the reader to buy the book, but they were also intended to assist the author and/or publisher in seeking preferment within the patronage system; in addition, they served as a means of disseminating and promoting the author's name and reputation, and of conferring cultural value and authority on the artistic endeavours contained therein.[11] Although not necessarily part of the authorial text, paratexts are important because they turn that text into a book, and play a significant role in shaping the work's reception by laying an authoritative foundation for its credibility and informing readers about its status and uses. Recently scholars have turned their attention to the prefatory materials of printed music to help us understand how they reflected and shaped contemporary notions of authorship;[12] but surprisingly little consideration has been given to the frontispiece.

Because of its prominent position at the beginning of a work, often preceding even the title page, the frontispiece is perhaps the aspect of a book's packaging that engages the reader with most immediacy; claiming a certain textual priority, it directs our experience of texts by subtly providing information regarding, for instance, their style, provenance and quality. By the middle of the seventeenth century frontispiece portraits had become a firmly established feature of English book production, and were usually associated with the collected works of

well-known writers and editions of classical texts. Frequently accompanied by a Greek or Latin epigraph, they often presented an engraved likeness of the author within a masonry roundel. Frontispieces were occasionally based on existing paintings, so they sometimes appropriate the pictorial conventions of the portrait and share in its complexities of iconography and composition. A frontispiece might therefore convey the subject's reputation using standard iconographic devices, such as a laurel wreath (see Illustrations 3, 5 and 6), attendant muses (Illustration 4) and classical garb (Illustration 6). [Illustrations 3-6 near here] Note also the coats of arms in Illustrations 5 and 6, indicating that the sitter is a 'gentleman' (certainly a member of the gentry), an assertion of social rank that further legitimizes his work and vouches for its authorial integrity. Furthermore, a text graced with a portrait of its author took on a certain cachet quality, because the inclusion of an engraving increased the production costs – and hence the price – substantially. We will presently examine how Purcell used the paratextual apparatus to mould the reader's response to his publication, but first one must consider the other major contributor to that manipulative process.

Who engraved the 1683 frontispiece?

The engraver of Purcell's 1683 frontispiece has not signed his work, nor has he identified the artist responsible for the painting or drawing on which the image is based. Until now, attempts to identify the engraver have focused on two individuals, both named Thomas Cross, who are thought to have been related. In an early article on Purcell's portraits, William A. Shaw drew attention to the claim made on the title page of the *Sonnata's* that the music plates were prepared by 'Thomas Cross Junior', and disingenuously informed his readers that 'the engraved portrait has been ascribed to his father Thomas Cross.'[13] As the producer of numerous frontispieces and title pages for London's book trade around the mid-seventeenth century, Thomas Cross the elder would certainly have been a strong candidate; but when Zimmerman finalized his thoughts on Purcell portraiture in the 1980s he passed him over in

favour of the music engraver Thomas Cross the younger, and this identification was later accepted unquestioningly by the authors of the Purcell entries in *New Grove II* and the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.[14] However, there is not a scintilla of evidence to support either of these ascriptions. The work of Cross senior, who died in 1682, is crude and lifeless compared with the 1683 frontispiece, the rather stiff portrait he did of John Gamble for his *Ayres and Dialogues* (1656) being more typical of his modest skill levels (see Illustration 7). [Illustration 7: near here] The case for Thomas Cross the younger is even weaker. From 1683 to about 1710 he qualified his signature with the word 'Junior' to distinguish himself from his older namesake. The 1683 *Sonnata's* were his first major commission as a music engraver, a trade he went on to dominate for over a decade until John Walsh established his business in 1695. If Cross junior also created the frontispiece, then it is the only example of his work in that genre to have come to light. He was many things – music seller, printer, publisher, music engraver, even music pirate – but he was no portrait engraver.

Most commentators on the 1683 portrait have been blissfully unaware that the true identity of the engraver has long been a matter of public knowledge, thanks to the efforts of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarians and art historians. As part of the celebrations marking the Purcell bicentenary in November 1895, the British Museum mounted an exhibition of music and pictures that included the 1683 frontispiece, and the official list of items on display published later by *The Musical Times* attributed the portrait to 'R. White', that is, the miniaturist and engraver Robert White (1645-1703) who was also responsible for the *Orpheus Britannicus* frontispiece.[15] However, the Museum's staff were not the first to associate the 1683 portrait with White. As early as 1793 Anthony Wilson (better known by his pseudonym Henry Bromley) made the same connection, albeit in a somewhat ham-fisted way. In his *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits* he identifies the first Purcell portrait as

the 1683 frontispiece by giving the composer's age 'æt. 24'. However, the text that follows – 'prefixed to his "Orpheus Britan."' – is a misprint, that phrase more correctly belonging after the words 'æt. 37. 1695' in the next line, which contains the entry relating to the *Orpheus Britannicus* frontispiece. Although only the 1698 portrait is signed, Wilson ascribes both to 'R. White', using the convention, later adopted by the British Museum, of placing the engraver's name in parentheses when an image is unattributed but of known authorship.[16]

If one compares the anonymous portrait with signed examples of White's other work, the stylistic similarities are so immediately striking that one wonders why musicologists have taken so long to notice them. In the 1683 and 1698 frontispieces (Illustrations 1 and 2), note, for instance, the similar style of the masonry oval and the pedestal on which it rests; the central position of the coat of arms; the lighting from the sitter's right, which allows for expressive gradations of skin tone, and subtle highlights in the drapery and wig; and the exuberant flourish of the top ribbon banner around a central knot. Illustrations 8 and 9 show just two of the many examples of White's work that share the same traits. [Illustrations 8-9: near here] I have always considered Purcell's 1683 frontispiece to be a characterful and technically accomplished piece of work, notwithstanding the disparaging comments it has attracted over the years – some of them from respected academics. In 1920 the aforementioned William Shaw wrote of it: 'The subject has suffered at the hands of the engraver, for the face looks like that of a man of fifty-four, not a boy of twenty-four'; Professor Westrup later opined that '[t]he engraving suggests a portly clubman in his prime rather than a rising young composer'; and Zimmerman found it 'crude and somewhat lifeless', and thought that it made Purcell look like

> 'a gross and complacent person – perhaps even a little surly. As Westrup remarks, the subject would seem better fitted for some mundane calling like cheese merchantry than for the role of a gifted and imaginative young musician'.[17]

Does the frontispiece really deserve such opprobrium?

Robert White was a prolific portrait engraver with a considerable reputation in late Stuart London; over four hundred plates are known to be by him, dating from between 1666 and 1702. His position as fashionable society's leading engraver is apparent from the eminence of his many sitters, who included judges, prelates, courtiers, politicians, and other high-profile establishment figures. Why he omitted to sign the frontispiece to Purcell's *Sonnata's* is anyone's guess; his technical mastery, the distinctiveness of his style and the currency of his work in élite circles would have ensured instant recognition. The inscription beneath the portrait assures us that it is a 'true likeness' ('Vera Effigies') of the subject, and there are good grounds for believing that claim to be more than merely conventional. Many of White's contemporaries testify to the high quality of his draftsmanship and his ability to capture a likeness. For instance, according to John Dunton, a prominent London bookseller of the 1690s, '[White] exceeds all I have ever met with, in taking the *Air of a Face* … He takes Faces so much to the Life, that the Real Person may be said to be where-ever you see a Face of his doing'.[18] The engraver and antiquary George Vertue (1684-1756) was equally fulsome in White's praise and paid him the following tribute:

> He ought to be remembred [*sic*] as being a Singular Artist in his way, having so vast a Genius in Drawing and Engraving a Face, and make [*sic*] the picture so like the original (which is indeed the end of this Noble Art), that, perhaps he has not left his equal in Europe behind him.[19]

In light of these glowing assessments of White's prowess as an artist and engraver, I think we can safely assume that the 1683 frontispiece is indeed an accurate record of the sitter's appearance; it may not conform to the romanticized preconceptions of Westrup and Zimmerman about what a composer of genius ought to look like, but it is the best image of Purcell in his mid-twenties we are ever likely to find. Moreover, allowing such value judgments to attach themselves to the portrait merely obscures the issue; we need to interrogate imagery as representation, not debate its merits as mimesis.

Purcell’s 1683 portrait and its meanings

It is a commonplace of social anthropology that one’s choice of garment carries meaning, and that dressing after a particular fashion is done to create a certain impression. Fashion systems are shaped by, and in turn themselves shape, social conduct; their pre-fabricated codes are used by consumers to structure, protect and project a sense of selfhood.[20] In late Stuart England, no less than today, individuals consciously used particular styles of dress as a means of self-definition. This sartorial project was a public undertaking: although initiated in the privacy of one’s dressing-room, it garnered most meaning when viewed by others in sites of wider social intercourse – in church, in the theatre, or at court – where people took the opportunity to evaluate each other’s appearance. A visible index of power and status, fashionable dress made an individual appear wealthy and in possession of refined sensibilities and tastes.

Another means of extending the visibility of the self was through the commissioning of costumed portraits. These are important sources of information about people, for they record the choices of self-presentation that each subject made for the occasion; behind each image lay decisions about dress, and the meanings that particular items of apparel embodied. In print culture, frontispiece portraits facing the title page of books and musical scores fulfilled a similar function, establishing credit and reputation for the author or composer through clothing and public witness.

The 1683 frontispiece depicts Purcell wearing a full-bottomed wig, a lace cravat and a cloak. Wigs became fashionable in England when Charles II introduced them on his return from the French court in 1660. They were soon considered an integral part of a stylish male’s wardrobe, and became virtually obligatory for courtiers and men of social rank. An essential element of masculine appearance among the élite, the wearing of a wig added decorum to the individual, even in portraits showing the sitter in informal surroundings and/or in a state of

undress.[21] Purcell's elaborate wig, composed of a mass of tight curls covering his back and shoulders and flowing down his chest, is typical of the early 1680s. Needless to say, wigs were extremely expensive to produce, and so were an immediate and obvious indicator of the wearer's social standing. But they were status symbols not just because of the initial financial outlay and the subsequent cost involved in their cleaning, re-setting and other essential maintenance; wigs could also be extremely heavy and uncomfortable, and to wear one with dignity required correct manners and deportment.

In terms of recognition the other crucial element in a gentleman's outfit was his cravat, as is apparent from contemporary art and literature.[22] Lace was worn on the most formal occasions, especially the fashionable and expensive Venetian type, which was as sculptural as the wig. The bottom of Purcell's formal perruque is on a level with the cravat, both of which extend to the middle of his chest. The disposition of the curls and the elegant arrangement of the lace have a language of their own; both speak to us as potent signifiers of status.

Purcell's upper body is shown wrapped in a *lacerna*, that is a type of Roman cloak, often of Tyrian purple, worn over the tunic or toga and fastened on the right shoulder by means of a *fibula* (clasp or buckle). Seventeenth-century editions of both classical and contemporary literature occasionally include a frontispiece depicting a portrait bust of the author wearing such a garment (see Illustrations 6 and 10). [Illustration 10 near here] The sculptural quality of the image monumentalizes the sitter, awarding him iconic status and, by association, the cultural credit of classical antiquity. Just as Purcell's wig and cravat invite a cognitive mapping of the social order and facilitate the construction of identity, so his cloak becomes yet another means of visualizing authority, drawing this time on a paradigm assimilated from ancient Rome.

The message that this sartorial image transmits about the composer's socio-economic status is graphically reinforced by the coat of arms displayed in the oval beneath his portrait (Illustration 1). The Purcells were one of many English families at the time that assumed, with varying degrees of justification, the right to bear arms. As we have already seen, it was not uncommon for such arms to appear as part of the frontispiece to a seventeenth-century literary text or collected edition. Confining oneself to the world of music, several publications spring to mind that include a portrait of the author/composer below which is appended his armorial shield; see, for instance, many editions of John Playford's *A Brief Introduction to the Skill of Musick* (later *An Introduction to the Skill of Musick*), Christopher Simpson's *The Division-Viol* (1665) and *A Compendium of Practical Musick* (1667), Thomas Mace's *Musick's Monument* (1676), and John Blow's *Amphion Anglicus* (1700) (see Illustrations 11-14).[23] [Illustrations 11-14 near here] Some of these claims to gentry status could be of very questionable validity. For instance, the coat of arms on the frontispiece to Blow's aforementioned song collection was seemingly appropriated from the family of Bloywe; and both Zimmerman and Jonathan Keates adduce evidence to suggest that Purcell's grandfather was a carpenter in the service of the Verney family.[24] However, humble origins were not necessarily an impediment to social advancement – as we know from the case of Samuel Pepys – and the courtly service of Purcell's extended family over two generations almost certainly qualified them for gentle status.

Before discussing the arms themselves, two observations should be made regarding the five-pointed star or 'mullet' positioned centrally above the shield, which has a significance hitherto unnoticed by Purcell scholars. The function of this minor charge is more than merely decorative. It is, in fact, a mark of cadency; that is, one of a number of symbols used by heralds to denote the seniority of each member of a family.[25] The star indicates that Henry was the third son, thus confirming Zimmerman's research into Purcell's genealogy

which concluded that he had two elder brothers, namely Edward and Charles. Although most subsequent biographers, either tacitly or explicitly, have followed Zimmerman's lead in this regard, he did not actually prove that a third brother, Joseph, was younger than Henry, and in 1994 Maureen Duffy proposed that the first four Purcell children were, in order of seniority, Edward, Joseph, Charles and Henry. The evidence for this revisionist view has always been flimsy, but that did not prevent the author of the *ODNB* entry on Purcell from taking it into account and suggesting that the composer was 'the third or fourth of six children'.[26] The mullet on Henry's coat of arms can be taken as incontrovertible proof that he was indeed the third son, and should settle the matter once and for all.[27] One further point on the cadency mark: because the Purcell shield appears at the front of two of Henry's publications, it has always been assumed that he was the recipient of the original grant of arms. His inclusion of the mullet demonstrates that this was not the case and that he and his brothers inherited the coat by descent from their father, Henry senior (*d.*1664), who was also, of course, a court musician of considerable status.

In heraldic language the armorial bearings on Purcell's 1683 frontispiece comprise 'barry wavy of six, on a bend three boars' heads couped close', which is to say, six undulated horizontal bars and a diagonal band charged with three boars' heads without their necks. When a coat of arms was depicted in black and white, the engraver would often indicate its colours and metals using a set of conventional hatchings; thus, 'argent' (silver or white) was represented by a plain surface, 'gules' (red) by vertical shading, 'azure' (blue) by horizontal, 'sable' (black) by horizontal and vertical, and so forth. The hatchings on Purcell's shield reveal that the boars' heads were silver on a black diagonal, with the six wavy bars alternating silver and red. These were the bearings of the Purcells of Onslow in Shropshire, from whom Henry's father evidently claimed descent.[28] The unaltered arms could only be borne by the head of the house, to which position Purcell's eldest brother Edward succeeded

after the death of their uncle in 1682. If Henry wished to establish a branch line of the original family, the onus would have been on him to 'difference' his arms by introducing a small but significant alteration, thus creating a unique coat while maintaining the family resemblance. Such an opportunity may have coincided with his entitlement to style himself 'esquire', doubtless in recognition of his royal service.[29] The *Orpheus Britannicus* frontispiece reflects this change of status by showing Purcell's arms beneath an esquire's helmet surmounted by a crest-coronet and a boar's head (see Illustration 2). To ensure the distinctiveness of his coat, Henry simply changed the tinctures of the wavy bars from silver and red to silver and blue. The engraving records this alteration monochromatically using horizontal hatching to indicate azure.[30]

Another representation of Purcell's arms, this time in colour, appears on the tablet that Lady Annabella Howard raised to the composer's memory in the north aisle of the choir in Westminster Abbey (see Illustration 15). [Illustration 15 near here] The shield, which is bisected 'in pale', that is, by a perpendicular line, combines two coats of arms side by side in one heraldic escutcheon to denote the union of husband and wife; Purcell's coat is shown in the 'dexter' half (on the right of someone standing behind the shield, so to the viewer's left), this being the place of honour.[31] The earliest description of this shield appears in Jodocus Crull's survey of the Abbey's monuments, published a mere fifteen or so years after the Howard memorial was erected. His account of Purcell's arms confirms that originally the bars alternated silver and blue, though he also records the boars' heads as gold.[32] These tinctures and metals are somewhat at odds with the current appearance of the escutcheon, which has doubtless undergone changes over the years due to discoloration and/or the misguided 'retouching' of later antiquarians. This transformation was apparently well under way by the early nineteenth century, for an authoritative survey of the Abbey's antiquities carried out at the time reported that Purcell's armorials consisted of 'barry wavy of six, or

and vert, on a bend sable three boars' heads couped or'; that is, the boars' heads were still gold, but the wavy bars had by then changed from silver and blue to gold and green![33]

If Purcell was attempting to denote a branch line of the original family by differencing his arms, he would have required the acknowledgement of the official heraldic authority, the College of Arms; however, there is nothing in the College's records that independently corroborates the Purcells' claim to be armigerous.[34] That said, the social status of Henry junior does not appear to have been questioned in court circles; on the contrary, Lady Howard's tablet begins with the words 'Here lyes Henry Pvrcell Esq.' As an eminent court functionary often in attendance on the person of the monarch, Purcell was fully entitled to use this addition, in which respect he was no different from lowly born Samuel Pepys, who signed himself 'esq.' without a blush on the basis of his position as Secretary to the Admiralty.

Purcell's use of armorial bearings to blazon gentility is not just evidence of his construction of social personality and standing; it was also an artistic and commercial imperative. In late Stuart England the projected or perceived status of a text's producer inflected its value, reception and authority, and composers and authors with the slightest claim to be of pedigree used their superior rank as a means of enhancing the cultural importance of their work. In 1683 Purcell was a young and relatively unknown composer, naturally keen to promote himself and his music. Not only were the *Sonnata's of III Parts* his first publication, which he self-published at considerable personal expense; they were also, as Bruce Wood reminds us, 'the first examples to be published in England of a chamber-music genre that would, within 20 years, prove all-conquering'.[35] To ensure some measure of commercial success for this ground-breaking and financially risky publication, Purcell needed to establish credit and reputation with the people most likely to purchase it; namely, the musically literate among society's cultivated élite. That goal could best be achieved by

exploiting the advertising potential of certain paratextual elements. Thus on the title page he proudly describes himself as 'Composer in Ordinary to his most Sacred Majesty, and Organist of his Chappell Royall', well aware that the prestige of his court appointments increased not only his cultural and social kudos but also the marketability of his collection; the short address 'To the King' that follows, meanwhile, inscribes the text with the approval, taste and authority of his royal patron, as a public marker of familiarity with social privilege. Similarly, the frontispiece image of a fashionably dressed and armigerous gentleman, from the burin of high society's leading engraver, can be seen as a further means of validation, authorizing Purcell to assert the gentry's prerogative of public voice and collective cultural hegemony.[36]

Frances Purcell

Henry was not alone in seeking to demonstrate his élite credentials. His wife Frances also felt the need to articulate, in precise visual form, external proof of her own lineage, and it is apparent from the other half of the shield beneath the Howard tablet that she claimed the Petre family as her progenitors (Illustration 15; compare Illustration 16).[37] [Illustration 16 near here] The left ('sinister') side, traditionally reserved for the paternal arms of the wife, is charged with the Petre devices – 'Gules, on a bend or between two escallops argent a Cornish chough sable between two cinquefoils azure'.[38] Frances's brother, the lawyer John Baptist Peters, had a ring with the same insignia, which he used to seal the original copy of Purcell's will in 1695.[39] The Peters clearly saw themselves as gentry, for whenever John Baptist appeared in the Court of King's Bench as a litigant, as opposed to his usual role as an attorney, he included the Latin addition 'generosus' ('gentleman') – sometimes abbreviated to just 'g' – after his name; and when Mary Peters (presumably Frances's sister) died in September 1688, her grave in the Westminster Abbey cloisters was marked with the same

coat of arms.[40] Apart from the similarity between the names 'Peters' and 'Petre', what justification did Frances have for aligning herself with the latter family?

It is perhaps surprising that the daughter of a Catholic émigré from the Low Countries should claim a connection with the Petres, who were Roman Catholic nobility originating from south Devon. The family first came to national prominence during the 1530s in the person of Sir William Petre, who went on to serve four Tudor monarchs as a high-level administrator (see Illustration 17).[41] [Illustration 17 near here] Having acquired vast estates from the dissolution of the monasteries, he settled at Ingatestone Hall, some five miles south west of Chelmsford, where he founded the Essex branch of the family, and where of course his son Sir John extended his patronage to William Byrd from the 1580s onwards. After the Reformation the Petres on the whole kept a low profile in matters of religious observance, no doubt praying for better times and relying on their position in county society to protect them from the worst effects of the penal laws. However, two members of a junior branch of the family became vicars apostolic, and William, fourth Lord Petre (1625/6-1684), had his estates sequestrated when he ended up on the losing side in the Civil War; later in life, he became an innocent victim of Titus Oates's denunciations and was imprisoned in the Tower, where he died. The Petre family's staunch adherence to the ancient faith disqualified it from royal and public service for almost a century, but on the accession of James II in February 1685 one of its representatives again found himself at the heart of government.[42] Sir Edward Petre, Jesuit and third baronet (*c*.1633-99), who had been a close confidant of the king when he was Prince of Wales, was summoned to court and made Dean both of James II's private 'Popish' chapel newly set up in Whitehall and of the Romanist foundation at St James's Palace, where Mary of Modena, James's Catholic queen, worshipped. Petre was also appointed Clerk of the Closet and a Privy Councillor, both offices that enabled him to dispense considerable patronage.[43]

Without ever identifying the pedigree to which Frances claimed to belong, Duffy asserts that '[h]er family assumed a coat of arms to which they were not entitled.'[44] This is surely too sweeping a judgment. The name 'Petre' is of course pronounced 'Peter' (not 'Pea-tree' or 'Pet-tree') and the third baronet was frequently referred to as 'Father Peeters' in contemporary correspondence and government records.[45] Frances's claim to affinity with the Petres, however distant, may have had some substance to it, since certain members of the family emigrated from England to the Low Countries during the first half of the seventeenth century to escape religious persecution, and her forbears may well have been related to one of them. The cynical view – that her genealogical connection with the Petres was entirely groundless, and that she was claiming a common ancestry with them simply to establish legitimacy of background and status that would permit her to hold up her head in courtly society – seems inherently unlikely, given how easily the family could have exposed any such unfounded pretension. Doubtless subject to the same pressures to emulate as her husband, Frances presumably wished merely to claim for herself an honour not wholly contingent on her marriage. Whatever the truth of the situation, the status of Purcell's wife was no doubt as important to him as it was to her in the formation and projection of social identity. Although we do not know precisely when the Purcell/Peters arms were conjoined, the impalement must have dated from the composer's lifetime, and I could well believe that he cultivated it as a further strategy to demonstrate his elevated social standing. Certainly at the court of James II, Frances's association with an aristocratic Catholic family like the Petres would have done Henry no harm at all.

Conclusions

The 1683 frontispiece turns out to be considerably more informative than hitherto imagined. The attention of most Purcell biographers will be drawn to the significance of the mullet on Henry's arms, which unequivocally defines his position in the family succession; but the

engraving tells us a good deal more about him than that. He was clearly concerned that others should accept him as part of the élite social group that historians have called the 'honour community';[46] and his appropriation of a self-image located firmly within the social boundaries of gentility reminds us that, for all the scholarly attention to self-fashioning and the celebration of the individual, 'individuality itself is fashioned out of collectives, typologies, and exemplars' in the most common forms of early modern biography.[47] As the publisher of his own *Sonnata's*, Purcell would have been responsible for commissioning the engraved portrait. White's services, however, would not have come cheap; according to George Vertue, he charged about £4 for a small plate, but up to £30 for a large one.[48] Purcell's investment in White suggests a decision to couple the artist's renown to the authority of the frontispiece, thereby maximizing the engraving's potential impact as a marketing ploy. The projected image with its trappings of gentility was important in Purcell's promotion of himself and his work at an early stage in his career. For men and women in late Stuart England visible affirmations to one's credit began with dress, and the choice of garment reflected deeply held views about the wearer's place in society and the ways in which he/she expected to be perceived. It may have been this need to keep up appearances in the status-conscious environment of court that led the Purcells into debt in the early 1690s with one Mordant Cracherode, a high-end linen draper with premises in fashionable Covent Garden.[49]

I see Purcell's 1683 frontispiece as a series of interconnected interpretative sites, from which it is possible to recover some of the non-verbal – but nonetheless tangible – ways in which he sought to substantiate his public persona and construct a distinctive authorial identity. Paratextual matter establishes an expectation as regards the *modus legendi* that the text itself solicits or compels, in particular, predisposing the reader of a book endowed with an engraving of the author to award it considerable status. Purcell harnesses the generic

authority of the frontispiece, which derives from established discourses in print culture, and uses it to endorse and legitimate the novel – one might even say alien – musical genre materialized in his *Sonnata's*. The image of the composer's social self, fabricated through a conscious act of portrayal and delineation, underwrites his identity as a 'gentleman' and a member of the cultural élite, lending further weight and value to his publication. The various modes of self-presentation deployed in the frontispiece should be seen precisely for what they are – evidence of the construction and projection of a social body – and not the mere visual clichés they have so often been assumed to be. If I had to distil into a single sentence the methodology underpinning this paper, I could do no better than to quote one of Oscar Wilde's most telling aphorisms from his only novel, which (as it happens) is also about a picture: 'It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.'[50]

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[1] Baldassare Castiglione, trans. Sir Thomas Hoby, *The Covrtyer of Covnt Baldessar Castilio* (London, 1561): Book 2, Sig. P1^{v}.
[2] *Purcell*. Master Musicians Series (London, 1937), pp.1-3.
[3] *Henry Purcell, 1659-1695: his life and times*. 2nd rev. ed. (Philadelphia, 1983), p.xvii.
[4] Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, 'Introducing Lives' in *Writing lives:biography and textuality, identity and representation in early modern England*, ed. Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Oxford, 2008), pp.1-26, at pp.7-8.
[5] Sharpe and Zwicker, *Writing lives*, p.9.
[6] Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance self-fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago and London, 1980).
[7] Richard Wendorf, 'Ut Pictura Biographica: Biography and Portrait Painting as Sister Arts' in *Articulate images: the sister arts from Hogarth to Tennyson*, ed. Richard Wendorf (Minneapolis, 1983), pp.98-124; Richard Wendorf, *The elements of life: biography and portrait-painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford, 1990).
[8] His age is given as 23 under 'Likenesses' in Robert Thompson, 'Purcell, Henry (1659–1695)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (henceforth *ODNB*), Oxford, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22894, accessed 25 Feb 2015].
[9] 'The Effigies of the late famous Mr. *Henry Purcell*, exactly engraved by Mr. White. Price in a frame, 18d.; in sheet, 6d. Sold by H. Playford in the Temple Change, Fleet street'; see Edward Arber, *The term catalogues 1668-1709*. 3 vols. (London, 1903-6), ii, p.604.
[10] Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris, 1987); trans. J. E. Lewin as *Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation* (Cambridge, 1997). For an interesting extension of his ideas, see Janine Barchas, *Graphic design, print culture, and the eighteenth-century novel* (Cambridge, 2003).
[11] A recent study has argued that we should read all front matter as inherently commercial; see Michael Saenger, *The commodification of textual engagements in the English Renaissance* (Aldershot, 2006).
[12] See Kirsten Gibson, 'Author, Musician, Composer: Creator? Figuring Musical Creativity in Print at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century' in *Concepts of creativity in seventeenth-century England*, ed. Rebecca Herissone and Alan Howard (Woodbridge, 2013), pp.63-86.
[13] 'Three unpublished portraits of Henry Purcell', *The Musical Times* lxi/931 (September 1920), pp.588-90; Shaw begs a number of questions here, not least the nature of the relationship between the two Thomas Crosses.
[14] Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*: Appendix Three, 'Iconography: Purcell Portraiture', pp.349-88, at p.380; *ODNB* online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22894, accessed 25 Feb 2015]; *New Grove II*, xx, p.616.
[15] See 'The Purcell Exhibits at the British Museum', *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* xxxvi/634 (December 1895), pp.797-9. The attribution was later repeated in Freeman O'Donoghue, *Catalogue of engraved British portraits preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum*. 6 vols. (London, 1908-25), iii, p.524, item 10. The brackets around White's name in the catalogue entry merely indicate that the print is unsigned, not that there is uncertainty about its ascription; see O'Donoghue, *Catalogue*, i, p.viii.
[16] Henry Bromley, *Catalogue of engraved British portraits* (London, 1793), p.194. So far as I am aware, the only twentieth-century writer on music to attribute the 1683 frontispiece to White was A. K. Holland in *Henry Purcell: the English musical tradition* (London, 1932); see his caption to the portrait which he uses as the frontispiece to his own book. Art historians have generally been more aware, with a few notable exceptions. Although the National Portrait Gallery correctly identifies the engraver on its website, John Ingamell's catalogue of *Later Stuart portraits 1685-1714* (London, 2009), which was itself published by that institution, variously describes the image as 'anon.' and by an 'unknown engraver' (*s.v.* Purcell, p.233).
[17] Shaw, 'Three unpublished portraits', p.589; Westrup, *Purcell*, p.2; Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell,* p.383.
[18] John Dunton, *The life and errors of John Dunton ... written by himself* (London, 1705), p.346.
[19] 'The note-books of George Vertue relating to artists and collections in England', *Walpole Society* xviii, xx, xxii, xxiv, xxvi and xxx (1930-55), xxiv, p.108; also quoted somewhat inaccurately in *ODNB*, *s.v.* 'White, Robert (1645-1703)'.

[20] See Joanne Finkelstein, *The fashioned self* (Oxford, 1991); Jennifer Craik, *The face of fashion: cultural studies in fashion* (London, 1994); and Susan Vincent, *Dressing the élite: clothes in early modern England* (Oxford, 2003).
[21] Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the head: portraiture and social formation in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), ch.4: 'Dangerous excrescences: wigs, hair and masculinity'.
[22] In Act III, sc. I of *The way of the world* (London, 1700), p.46, William Congreve refers to 'Becravated, and Beperriwig'd' men of fashion.
[23] The Playford portrait is the work of engraver David Loggan (1634-92), to whom Robert White had been apprenticed, which may explain the resemblance between it and the latter's Purcell engravings.
[24] Bruce Wood, 'Blow, John' (1648?-1708), *New Grove II*, iii, pp.718-27; Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, pp.335-7 and Jonathan Keates, *Purcell* (London, 1995), p.14.
[25] See *Boutell's Heraldry*, rev. J. P. Brooke-Little. (London and New York, 1973), pp.116-17.
[26] See also Maureen Duffy, *Henry Purcell* (London, 1994), p.16. In fact, Henry appears to have had only four siblings, Daniel Purcell now being regarded as his cousin (not youngest brother); see *ODNB*, *s.v.* 'Purcell, Daniel' (*c.*1670-1717).
[27] The significance of such heraldic charges to biographers is further demonstrated in Illustration 11, where a rose (the cadency mark distinctive of the seventh son) appears in the roundel directly above Playford's head.
[28] *The visitation of Shropshire taken in the year 1623*, ed. George Grazebrook and John Paul Rylands, 2 vols. (London: Harleian Society 28-29, 1889), ii, pp.411-14.
[29] In English law, 'esquire'was a title of dignity next above gentleman, ranking immediately below a knight. The historian William Camden, who was himself a herald, distinguished four categories of esquire, the last of which encompassed those who held the title by virtue of their office of trust under the crown; see William Camden, trans. Philemon Holland, *Britain, or a chorographicall description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1637), p.176, and John Logan, *Analogia honorum: or a treatise of honour and nobility* (London, 1677), p.152.
[30] The arms on the 1698 frontispiece maintain the connection with the Purcells of Onslow by adopting their crest; see Thomas Robson, *The British herald*, 3 vols. (Sunderland, 1830), ii, [n.p.] *s.v.* 'Purcell, [Ouneslow, Salop]'.
[31] Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, p.262 (plate 42) includes an engraving of the Howard tablet that has given rise to considerable confusion over the years. Originally published in the Purcell bi-centenary issue of *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* xxxvi/633 (November 1895), p.735, the engraving shows Purcell's arms with 'barry wavy of seven'. This error was repeated in a contemporary engraving of just the arms that appeared in J. F. Bridge, 'Henry Purcell', *The Church Monthly* viii/9 (1895), pp.203-6; S. Baring Gould, *English minstrelsie: a national monument of English song*, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1895-6), vi, p.ix; and Franklin B. Zimmerman, 'Purcell Iconography: Missing Items', *The Musical Times* ci/1408 (June 1960), p.369, where the author pointed out its spurious nature.
[32] 'Barry of 6 Argent and Azure, on a bend Sable, Three Boors [*sic*] Heads couped, Or', in J[odocus] C[rull], *The antiquities of St. Peters, or the abbey church of Westminster* (London, 1711), pp.272-3; see also Robson, *The British herald*, ii, [n.p.] *s.v.* 'Purcell, [Westminster]'.
[33] J. P. Neale and E. W. Brayley, *The history and antiquities of the abbey church of St. Peter, Westminster*, 2 vols. (London, 1818-23), ii, p.218. Unfortunately, the Abbey's website still relies on this source for its description of the Howard memorial. A black and white photograph of another depiction of the impaled arms is reproduced in Zimmerman, *Henry Purcell*, p.75 (plate 13), but its provenance is uncertain.
[34] Communication, dated 23 June 2014, from Christopher Vane, Portcullis Pursuivant at the College of Arms; see also Anthony R. Wagner, *Historic heraldry of Britain* (London, 1939), p.13. I am grateful to Dr Adrian Ailes of The National Archives for advice on the heraldic aspects of this paper.
[35] Bruce Wood, *Purcell: an extraordinary life* (London, 2009), p.71; see also Michael Tilmouth and Christopher D. S. Field, 'Consort Music II: from 1660' in *The Blackwell history of music in Britain 3: the seventeenth century*, ed. Ian Spink (Oxford, 1992), ch.7. On Purcell's self-publication of his *Sonnata's* see Rebecca Herissone, 'Playford, Purcell, and the Functions of Music Publishing in Restoration England', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 63 (2010), 243–90, esp. 258.
[36] Purcell's choice of engraving as the print medium for this pioneering work was a calculated one. Instrumental music, poorly served by movable type, was particularly well suited to engraving. Furthermore, a work could be reprinted economically in smaller numbers and at any time, so long as the plates were available; and the end-product was easier to read and more elegant. But most of all, engraving was a mark of prestige and particularly appropriate to a publication dedicated to the sovereign.

[37] The Petre connection was first noted in S. Baring Gould, *English minstrelsie*, vi, pp. ix-x, in a discussion of the impaled arms derived from Bridge, 'Henry Purcell'.
[38] See *The visitations of Essex*, ed. Walter C. Metcalfe, 2 vols. (London: Harleian Society 13–14, 1878-9), i, pp.264-5. The cinquefoil is a floral form with five petals. Again, it is clear that the colour of certain charges on the Howard tablet has altered over time, *e.g.* the escallop shells, which were originally silver, have now darkened to a golden brown; see Crull, *The antiquities*, p.273.
[39] The National Archives: Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills; PROB 1/8. Over the years the wax has deteriorated to such an extent that a photograph of the seal, taken in the 1970s and reproduced in Zimmerman *Henry Purcell*, p.258 (plate 39), is now the best evidence for this.
[40] Neale and Brayley, *The history and antiquities*, ii, p.290.
[41] See E. G. Emmison, *Tudor secretary: Sir William Petre at court and home* (London and Chichester, 1970).
[42] John Miller, *James II* (New Haven and London, 2000), pp.149-50.
[43] *Roger North on music*, ed. John Wilson (London, 1959), p.53, fn 6; *ODNB*, *s.v.* 'Petre, Sir Edward, third baronet, (1630x33-1699)'; 'An account of the Life of … Father Petre the Jesuit', in *The popish champion: … the life and military actions of Richard Earl of Tyrconnel* (London, 1689), pp.47-58.
[44] Duffy, *Henry Purcell*, p.89.
[45] N. B. White, 'Sir M. Beckman and Father Petre, S.J., 1687', *Notes and Queries* clxx (21 March 1936), pp.200-1. Furthermore, the surname of the abovementioned fourth Lord Petre is consistently spelled 'Peters' in the overseers' accounts of his parish, St Paul's Covent Garden. Pepys refers to Elizabeth, wife of the fourth Baron, as 'Lady Peters'; see *The diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. R. C. Latham and W. Matthews, 11 vols. (London, 1971), v, pp.109 and 129.
[46] Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke, 1994), p.18.
[47] Sharpe and Zwicker, *Writing lives*, p.4; for a study of self-fashioning as a group phenomenon, see *Scholarly self-fashioning and community in the early modern university*, ed. Richard Kirwan (Farnham, 2013).
[48] *ODNB*, *s.v.* 'White, Robert (1645-1703)'.
[49] Cheryll Duncan, 'New Purcell documents from the Court of King's Bench', *Royal Musical Association Research Chronicle* xlvii (2016), pp.000-000 [in the press].
[50] *The picture of Dorian Gray* in *Oscar Wilde–the major works* (Oxford, 2000), p.64.