The travels of a tune: Purcell’s ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ and the cultural translation of 17th-century English music

As Rebecca Herissone has noted, the reception of Purcell’s music is a rarely studied subject.1 While there has been some work on the posthumous uses of some of Purcell’s instrumental music and dramatic operas, the dissemination of his theatre songs beyond so-called authoritative sources has attracted little scholarly attention outside straightforward bibliographic lists.2 This article uses Purcell’s ‘If love’s a sweet passion’, from the 1692 dramatick opera The Fairy Queen, as a case study, analysing the different formats in which the song was published in the 1690s, its transmission in England and abroad, the creative adaptations required by each format and its associated audience, and the new meanings arising from such transmission and adaptation.3 The article aims to show mechanisms of popularization and translation in late 17th-century English vocal music, as a way of suggesting a fruitful course for future Purcell studies and inspiring performers to imagine Purcell’s music in new ways.4 Beginning by outlining the formats in which ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ was disseminated in late 17th-century England, the discussion then moves to its dissemination on the Continent. This English context serves as a backdrop depicting the song’s status at home, against which the second part of the article argues that the popularity of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ in England affected its dissemination abroad.

From theatre tune to broadside ballad

‘If love’s a sweet passion’ is one of Purcell’s most popular theatre songs (ex.1). The song itself is French-flavoured, and rhythmically and melodically complex; its initial anacrusis, large intervals and chromatic passages add significantly to the emotional impact of the text. It is nevertheless highly singable, which perhaps partly explains its enduring popularity. ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ was published in a variety of formats (Table 1). Each of these had its own infrastructure, conventions and practices, and each required adaptations to the music. The idea of translation can help to explain these metamorphoses in a positive way: instead of being misunderstood or distorted, the song was translated from its original theatrical context to fit the new formats, with their associated idioms, readership and audience.

At the premiere of The Fairy Queen in 1692, Purcell himself published a collection of songs under the title Some Select Songs as they are Sung in the Fairy Queen (1692), which was sold at the Dorset Garden theatre and in the shops of Henry Playford and John Carr.5 Purcell adapted the songs to the market for recreational music: the folio volume was printed by John Heptinstall in moveable type with round note-heads, the preludes and choruses performed in the play were cut, and the headings referred directly to the original performance and its performers: ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ is presented as the ‘First Song in the 3d: Act Sung by Mrs. Dyer’. Purcell adapted other songs in the volume as well: as Bruce Wood and Andrew Pinnock note, Mopsa’s part in ‘Now the maids and the men’ was transposed from G to F and presented in the treble instead of the alto clef, making it easier for women to sing than the top B originally sung (an octave lower) by tenor John Pate.6 Songs published and adapted in this way served both as performance materials adapted to enable performance by non-professionals, and as souvenirs from a particular theatre performance.
Ex. 1 Henry Purcell, 'If love's a sweet passion', from The Fairy Queen (1692), transcribed from Some Select Songs (1692)

Table 1 Sources of 'If love's a sweet passion' from the 1690s (not including single-sheet songs or broadside ballads)

Manuscript sources

Great Britain: London, British Library Add. Ms. 30839 and Mss. 39565–7
London, British Library Add. Ms. 39569 (Babell Harpsichord Book, c.1700)
London, British Library, manuscript addition to print Youths Delight (1690), shelfmark k.4.a.8
London, Royal College of Music Ms. 1144
Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mus.sch.g.614

Sweden: Public Library of Norrköping, Ms. Finspång 9096:7
Public Library of Norrköping, Ms. Finspång 9094

United States: Yale University, Music Library, Ms. Osborn 9

There are also early 18th-century manuscript sources of 'If love's a sweet passion', for instance in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, the Music School Collection at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and at the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

Printed sources

The Fairy Queen, an Opera (London, 1692) [without music]
Some Select Songs as they are sung in the Fairy Queen (London, 1692)
Apollo's Banquet (1693)
The Compleat French-Master (1694) [without music]
A Collection of Ayres Composed for the Theatre, and upon Other Occasions (London, 1697)
Recueil d'airs a 4 parties tirez des opera tragédies & comedies de Monsr. Henry Purcell (Amsterdam, 1699)
Wit and Mirth, or, Pills to Purge Melancholy (1699)
‘If love’s a sweet passion’ also began making a strong mark among London’s balladeers. As early as 1692, Charles Bates published the song as an expanded broadside ballad called ‘The Young Lover’s Enquiry’, with the tune given in musical notation. Bates translated the two stanzas of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ from the language and conventions of the theatre into that of the workshop, tavern, street or home, adding five new stanzas that give the poem a narrative character closer to that of the ballad idiom. The additional stanzas concretize the abstract ideas of the original song and place them in an easily recognisable context: the result is not so much an ‘enquiry’ into the nature of love in general as a thinly veiled proposal from the young lover to his Celia (illus.1). The introvert reflection on a tentative and confusing romantic experience becomes a panegyric of love and beauty with an underlying narrative. This appears to have been a relatively common way for balladeers to attempt to profit from the songs in a new play: several of Purcell’s songs were transformed into broadside ballads in the 1680s and 90s (see Table 2). That these ballads adapt the original song texts, when ballads typically set completely new words to well-known melodies, seems to suggest that they were published soon after the premieres of the plays concerned.

Over 30 ballads sung to ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ were published after ‘The Young Lover’s Enquiry’. The majority are traditional black-letter ballads, with themes ranging from unrequited love, lovesickness and infidelity, to reports of miracles, and news of Queen Mary’s death in 1694. Christopher Marsh has argued that apart from the most popular melodies, which could be used for any type of ballad, most tunes were typically used for ballads expressing similar themes. The variety of ballads sung to ‘If love’s a sweet passion’, therefore, and the fact that none after ‘The Young Lover’s Enquiry’ exploited the oxymoronic bitter-sweetness of the original song, together suggest that ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ was one of the most popular ballad tunes of the 1690s.

The 1690s also witnessed the beginnings of the production and marketing of the single-sheet song prints that would irritate music publishers for many decades to come. Thomas Cross began production probably at some point in the 1690s, engraving popular songs on copper or pewter plates and printing them on single folio or bifolio sheets (although some surviving songs have smaller sizes). As John Higney has pointed out, single-sheet songs constituted a common bibliographic format for music in the early 18th century. This musical format remains significantly under-researched, though Rebecca Herissone and Sandra Tuppen have both recently investigated aspects of Cross’s production and its implications for scholarly understandings of musical sources around 1700.

As in the case of Purcell’s volume of Select Songs, single-sheet songs required musical literacy and functioned as souvenirs from theatre performances (or perhaps as consolation for those who could not go), featuring titles referring to the play, playwright, composer, performer and theatre. They enabled domestic recreational performance (which does not preclude the possibility that they were also used occasionally by professionals in other settings) by virtue of their format and of adaptations such as changes of clef and the removal of choruses and instrumental parts. Stephanie Carter has identified such changes as standard for late 17th-century printed songbook anthologies.

A number of songs from The Fairy Queen were published as single-sheet engravings (see Table 3). ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ survives as a small sheet published with the title ‘A song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Dyer’ (illus.2). The reference to the ‘new opera’ and the performance by Mrs Dyer would suggest that the sheet was published soon after the premiere of The Fairy Queen. This sheet contains the solo section of the song, and transmits only the lyrics and melody line (unlike some later Cross sheets, which are vocal scores with accompaniment, and occasionally instrumental obbligatos). The appeal of single-sheet songs was arguably their versatility: priced around 2d, they were cheap enough for people with limited money for music and entertainment, and also allowed music-lovers to create their own collections of popular songs. Francis Horton’s collection of 103 theatre songs in a lavish, gold-tooled binding is an example of this latter use.

Another engraving transmits the melody of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ together with the ‘mock’ text ‘If wine be a cordial’. Unlike some new texts
The Young Lovers Enquiry:

OR;

The Batchelors Question to Cupid.

To an Excellent New Ayre, Sung at the Play-House.

[Verse]

E. Love's a Sweet Passion, why does it Torment? If a Bitter, O tell me, whence comes my Content? Since I suffer with Pleasure, why should I Complain, Or grieve at my Face, when I know its vain? Yet so pleasing the Pain is, to sit at the Door, That at once it both Wounds me, and tickles my Heart.

As soon as the Mornings bright Rays I behold,
(Like a Bride deck'd with Roses, and Rubies, and Gold)
Straight I think on fair Cupid, Divine and to sweet,
And long for to see her, and light at her Feet;
Every moment I am absent, I languish and dye,
And I love by the Sweetness and Beams of her Eye.

Then grant, O ye Powers, that her I may find
Always yielding to Love, and melt Charmingly kind;
That at last by Entreaties, she may be my Bride,
And I have the Honour to live by her side:
Oh! the Pleasures that Beauties can give when they please,
They can Wound and can Cure a poor Lover with ease.

I'll envy no Princes, but sweeter will live
Reft contented with Pleasures that Celia can give;
From all Rivals and Fears, may we both ever live free,
And for ever be Happy, and ever agree:
Thus in Sweetness and in innocent Freedom, we'll prove
All the Joys that kind Heav'n gives to those that do Love.

Printed for C. Bates, next door to the Crown-Tavern near Duck Lane-end,
in Westminster, 1692.

1 'The Young Lover's Enquiry', sung to 'If love's a sweet passion' (Magdalene College, Cambridge, Pepys Library, Pepys Ballads 5.173; published by permission of the Pepys Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge)
Table 2  Theatre songs by Purcell expanded (retaining all or part of the original song text) into broadside ballads in the 1680s and 90s

| Song title                      | Play                             | Ballad title                                                                 | Format                                      | Copy consulted          |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ah cruel bloody fate           | *Theodosius* (1680)              | *The True Lovers Tragedy* (P. Brooksby, [1680])                               | Landscape, black-letter print with woodcut pictures | Pepys 3.9               |
| Ah cruel bloody fate           | *Theodosius* (1680)              | *The Faithful Lover's Downfall, or the Death of Fair Phillis* (T. Vere [1680]) | Landscape, black-letter print with woodcut pictures | Bodleian Library, Douce Ballads 1 (74) |
| Now, now the fight's done      | *Theodosius* (1680)              | *Love's conquest, Or, The Powerful force of Beautyes Charms* (E Cole, T. Vere, J. Wright J. Clark, W. Thackery, and T. Passenger, [1680?]) | Landscape, black-letter print with woodcut pictures | Pepys 3.105             |
| Let the soldiers rejoice       | *The Prophetess*, 1690           | *The Royal Conquest, or, The happy Success Against a Potent Enemy*             | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Houghton Library, E 655 B.4664 7006b |
| Let the soldiers rejoice       | *The Prophetess*, 1690           | *Royal Courage, or, King William's Happy Success in Ireland*                   | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.65              |
| Still I'm wishing, still desiring | *The Prophetess*, 1690         | *The Contented Lovers, or, Dioclesian's Wish Obtained* (J. Bissel, [1690])   | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.232             |
| For Iris I sigh                 | *Amphitryon*, 1690               | *The indifferent lover, or the Roving Bachelor* (C. Bates, [1690])             | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.197             |
| Celia that I once was blessed  | *Amphitryon*, 1690               | *Coy Celia's Cruelty or, the Languishing Lovers Lamentation* (J. Bissel, [1690]) | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.301             |
| Your hay it is moved           | *King Arthur*, 1691              | *New Play-House Song of the Husbandman's delight* (J. Chapman, 1691)          | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.410             |
| How vile are the sordid intrigues | *The Marriage-Hater Match'd*, 1692 | *The Discontented Lady* (C. Bates [1692])                                    | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | National Library of Scotland, Crawford.E.B.353 |
| No, no poor suff 'ring hear    | *Cleomenes*, 1692                | *Cruel Celia, or the Lover's Complaint* (C. Bates, [1692])                    | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.302             |
| Sing, sing whilst we trip it   | *The Fairy Queen*, 1692          | *The Fairy Queen, or the Merry Companions* (P. Pelcomb, [1692])               | Portrait, white-letter print with nonsense music | Pepys 5.157             |
for broadside ballads, this ‘mock’ text very much exploits associations with the original lyrics:

If wine be a cordial why does it torment,
If a poison oh! tell me whence comes my content?
Since I drink it with pleasure why should I complain,
Or repent e’vry morn when I know ’tis in vain?
Yet so charming the glass is, so deep is the quart,
That at once it both drowns and enlivens my heart.16

In particular, this ‘mock’ text draws on the original theme of something being simultaneously pleasant and unpleasant. The structure of the new text follows the original, with the if–why in the first line, exclamations of ‘oh!’ in the same places as in the original, and a climax that closely follows the lyrics and music of ‘If love’s a sweet passion.’

Despite being cheap and musically unsophisticated, these engravings were arguably used by a much smaller group of people than broadside ballads. They present the song with correct musical notation and unaltered lyrics, or ‘mock’ lyrics drawing heavily on the original text. This presupposes a musically literate audience with some awareness of the original context of the song. Of course, someone with no knowledge of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ could laugh at the morning-after regret in ‘If wine be a cordial,’ but the real joke is the pun on the original lyrics, which requires users to be familiar with that song. Although broadside ballads and single-sheet songs could both be produced very rapidly and cheaply, the conventions of the single-sheet format arguably excluded some ballad users. The level of musical skill, and knowledge of the origins of a song, required by users of single-sheet engravings arguably presupposed an audience of economic means; users who could pay for music lessons, perhaps owned an instrument, and moved in social circles where the names of singers and plays had some significance. As Robert D. Hume has shown, this would have been a very small proportion of the English population.17 The same could be said about didactic books of instrumental music, such as Apollo’s Banquet (1693) which includes the melody of ‘If love’s a sweet passion.’ That a piece of printed music was relatively

---

Table 3 Songs from *The Fairy Queen* published as single-sheet engravings

| Song title                  | Single-sheet title                                                | Copy consulted                                      |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| I am come to lock all fast  | A Song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Dyer | Joyful Cuckoldom, London, The British Library k.5.b.15 |
| Sing whilst we trip it      | A Song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Aliff | —“”—                                               |
| If love’s a sweet passion   | A song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Dyer | —“”—                                               |
| Thus happy and free         | A Song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Aliff | —“”—                                               |
| Here’s the summer           | A Song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mr. Pate | —“”—                                               |
| Sing whilst we trip it      | A Song in the New Opera call’d, The Faiery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Aliff | —“”—                                               |
| Now the maids and the men   | A Dialogue in the Opera, call’d the Fairy Queen Set by Mr. Henry Purcell Sung by M’. Reading and (M’. Pate in Womans habit) and exactly engrav’d by Tho: Cross | Cambridge, King’s College Library, Rowe 110.22.022. Duet with accompaniment, probably published later in the decade. Cambridge, King’s College Library, Rowe 110.22.81. Duet with accompaniment, probably published later in the decade. |
Song in the New Opera call’d,
The FAIERY QUEEN. Sung by Mrs. Dyer:

If Loves a sweet Passion, why does it torment, if a bitter
oh tell me whence comes my content? Since I suffer with
Pleasure why should I complain, or grieve at my Fate when I
know ‘tis in pain ’yet so pleasing the Pain is, so soft is the Dart,
that at once it both wounds me and tickles my Heart.

I press her hand gently, look languishing down,
And by Passionate silence I make my Love known;
But oh! how I’m blest when so kind she does prove,
By some willing mistake, to discover her Love;
When in striving to hide, she returns all her Flame,
And our Eyes tell each other, what neither dare Name.

2 ‘A song in the New Opera call’d, The Faery Queen. Sung by Mrs. Dyer’ (published by permission of the British Library, © British Library Board: k.5.b.15, p. 13)
cheap, or adapted for beginners, does not mean that it was widely accessible.

Broadside ballads, by contrast, were widely accessible. The ballad format stimulated oral culture and renditions of the song that did not require musical notation. It enabled someone on a low income, with no musical training, no experience of the theatre or knowledge of the original forms of the song, and even limited literacy, to access and use the songs in a meaningful way.\(^{18}\) This does not mean that such people were the only, or necessarily the primary users of this format, but turning theatre songs into broadside ballads arguably made the songs accessible to their largest possible audience.\(^{19}\)

That broadside ballads offered competition to other forms of music publishing is suggested by John May and John Hudgebut's preface to their pirated edition of Purcell's songs for *The Indian Queen* in 1695, in which they excused their enterprise by claiming to save Purcell's songs from the balladeers:

> But in regard that (the Press being now open) any one might print an imperfect Copy of these admirable Songs, or publish them in the nature of a Common Ballad, We were so much the more emboldened to make this Attempt, even without acquainting you with our Design.\(^{20}\)

Similarly, the issue at stake in Playford's claim that single-sheet songs hinder 'good Collections,' as well as in Purcell's oft-cited complaint that his songs from *The Prophetess* (1690) were 'already common' by the time the score was published in 1691, seems to be profit rather than cultural snobbery.\(^{21}\) This should perhaps caution scholars against underestimating the role of cheap printed music in the dissemination of theatre tunes: broadside ballads, along with their accompanying infrastructure and conventions of use—hawkers performing them on markets and street corners, people singing collectively in taverns and on workshop floors, gentlemen collecting and pasting into albums—clearly played a large part in making their associated tunes known in different layers of society. The strong oral practices surrounding broadside ballads also meant that the tune of 'If love's a sweet passion' was disseminated orally, and to some extent independently of the printed ballad sheets.

The early dissemination of 'If love's a sweet passion' is also reflected in later attitudes towards it. John Hawkins, who made heavy use of available printed music for his *General History* (1776), explicitly categorized 'If love's a sweet passion' as a ballad:

> Other compositions of his [Purcell's] are of a class different from those above mentioned, as ballads and catches, of which he made many. The air 'What shall I do to show how much I love her' from the opera of Dioclesian; 'If love's a sweet passion' in The Fairy Queen; and another printed in Comes Amoris, book IV. song I. to the words 'No, no poor suff'ring heart', are ballads, and perhaps the finest of the kind ever made.\(^{22}\)

The notion that Hawkins and his contemporaries thought of 'If love's a sweet passion' as a ballad is further supported by the 18th-century life of the song in Thomas Durfey's musical miscellany *Wit and Mirth: or, Pills to Purge Melancholy* (published by Playford 1699–1710), and in ballad opera. However, the inclusion of an instrumental arrangement of 'If love's a sweet passion' in *Ayres, Compos'd for the Theatre* (1697)—a set of four partbooks for strings published posthumously by Frances Purcell—and the many 18th-century copies thereof, suggests that 'If love's a sweet passion' was also used in more genteel contexts. The tune also appears in four manuscript partbooks (London, British Library Add. Mss. 30389 and 39565–7, c.1695), which Shay and Thompson have suggested were compiled by a French musician for Queen Anne's wind band, further implying the wide use of the tune.\(^{23}\)

The publication of 'If love's a sweet passion' in different formats in the 1690s shows the varied uses of Purcell's music by contemporary audiences, and also calls into question the idea that 'elite' and 'popular' music were separate spheres.\(^{24}\) Performers in the 17th century would have known this piece in a variety of guises: as a theatre song performed on stage with a chorus, continuo and perhaps orchestral accompaniment, as a song sung or played alone, or performed before friends at home, as a drinking song mocking the debilitating effects of too much wine, or as a narrative ballad, perhaps sung together with others while working. It could have been accompanied by any or no instruments. The variety of uses shows the creativity of 17th-century music lovers: instead of being misunderstandings or distortions, the versions of such songs preserved in broadside ballads or single-sheet songs cleverly and pragmatically accommodated the original songs to the requirements and conventions of each particular format. This invites
modern-day performers and scholars alike to reimagine the sounds and settings of Purcell’s song.

A French version of an English song, in a Dutch book

Unusually, ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ also crossed social and cultural borders beyond the British Isles. Unlike much English vocal music, it traversed the physical, cultural and linguistic barriers of the North Sea and English Channel to appear in a Dutch manuscript songbook now in the Finspång Collection in the public library of Norrköping, Sweden. The French contrafactum preserved in the Finspång manuscript appears to have first circulated in England in Abel Boyer’s French grammar book The Compleat French-Master (1694). This, I argue, required processes of mediation and adaptation that were different from, and yet interrelated with, the song’s English popularization.

The Finspång collection belonged to a Dutch family named De Geer at Finspång castle in Östergötland: the first member of the family to settle in Sweden was one Louis de Geer (1587–1652) from Liège, who purchased the ironworks at Finspång in 1641. The Finspång collection today contains mainly 17th- and 18th-century songs and instrumental dances, including excerpts from French operas, apparently arranged to be performed by smaller ensembles in intimate contexts. ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ appears in the small oblong manuscript songbook Finspång 9096:7, which is part of the 18-volume set Finspång 9096. Most of the volumes date from the late 17th century or early 18th century, and contain French instrumental music. Several of the books, for instance 9096:7, 9096:3 and 9096:10, include elementary music theory such as the gamut, instructions for solmization, note values and rests, clefs and time signatures, suggesting they were intended for less-expert performers or instruction. An inscription in Finspång 9096:11, ‘Ludovicus de Geer est possessor’, implies that the material was for the family’s use.

The De Geers’ ties with the Netherlands remained close, with several generations of family members moving between Sweden, Utrecht and The Hague. The musical sources suggest that at least some parts of the family’s music collection had equally strong connections to the city of Utrecht: an engraving at the front of each of Finspång 9096:7, 9096:6 and 9096:9 shows a group of putti making music above the colophon ‘Tot Utrecht By Arnoldus vanden Eynden’ (illus.3). Arnold van den Eynden was a...

3 Public Library of Norrköping, Sweden, Ms. Finspång 9096:7: engraved frontispiece (published by permission)
Catholic bookseller in Utrecht from about 1660 to 1700; similar title-pages can be found in manuscripts originating with other Dutch booksellers, such as Paulus Matthyss in Amsterdam. Finspång 9096:7 is copied on paper with the Dutch Lion (also known as Seven Provinces) watermark, countermark HTC, which is common in Dutch, English and Swedish late 17th-century musical sources. Furthermore, several items in Finspång 9096:7 feature dates, probably of concert performances, which suggest that the manuscript was created in a local musical context. It seems likely that the music was brought from the Netherlands to Finspång at some point in the early 18th century.

The songbook Finspång 9096:7 contains approximately 110 French songs and arias by composers such as Jean-Baptiste de Bousset (1662–1725), André Campra (1660–1744) and Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–87), the latter including excerpts from operas predominantly copied without accompaniment. In addition to the French songs, the manuscript contains Purcell’s ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ and ‘Take not a woman’s anger ill’ (from The Rival Sisters). The French style of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ fits well into this mix. Both Purcell songs were copied in single-line versions, with the original English lyrics underlaid. Both were also evidently copied by non-native English speakers, as suggested by the tendency to spell ‘I’ as ‘ï’, and the misplaced apostrophes at ‘w’ont’, ‘dos’ and ‘t’is’. In addition to the English lyrics under the music, the copy of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ has a French version without music on the opposite page (illus.4). A singer could thus either sing the English lyrics as they are laid out under the melody, or read the melody from one page and the French text from the other. Keeping musical notation and lyrics separate was a common layout in 17th-century printed books.

The French version of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ also appears among the ‘New French Songs’ at the back of the vastly popular French grammar book The Compleat French-Master, published in London in 1694 by the Huguenot journalist, historian and lexicographer Abel Boyer (1667–1729). Boyer arrived in England, via the Netherlands, in 1689, and soon became French and Latin tutor to the eldest son of Sir Benjamin Bathurst, Comptroller of the Household of the Princess Anne and Prince George.
After his first publication of *The Compleat French-Master*, Boyer proceeded to make a living as a writer and translator, and soon became a well-known figure in contemporary debate.\(^{28}\) He fulfilled an important function as a cultural go-between, making French works and news accessible in England, and English texts available in France.\(^{29}\)

*The Compleat French-Master* consists of a grammar, a vocabulary with texts and dialogues on various subjects, and a third part resembling a contemporary miscellany, which contains jokes, letters, stories, proverbs and songs.\(^{30}\) The *Collection of French Songs to the Newest and best French and English Tunes* was printed in London by William Onley for Thomas Salusbury and appended to the back of *The Compleat French-Master* (pp.115–26). It consists of eight French songs with musical notation, some of which are identifiable as excerpts from operas by Lully, and four songs meant to be sung to the English tunes ‘Rigadoon’, ‘Why are my eyes still flowing’ and ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ (see Table 4). The latter has two contrafacta of one strophe each, with lyrics presumably by Boyer himself:

Helas! jeSoupire la Nuit & le jour,
je me plains, je desire, je brûle d’Amour;
Il faut bien que je meure Si sans differer;
je ne trouve une heure pour me déclarer:
Mes soins & ma Constance n’obtiendront ils rien?
Ah! Qu’un peu d’esperance, me feroit grand bien.

[Alas! I sigh both Night & Day, / I complain, I desire, I burn with love; / I shall surely die without delay if / I cannot find a moment to declare [my love]; / My cares & my constancy, have they achieved nothing? / Ah! but a little hope would do me good.]

L’Amour nos engâge pour nous rendre heureux,
C’est un doux Esclavage d’etre amoureux,
Quel que soit le chagrain que l’on souffre en aimant,
Les plaisirs effacent les plus grands tourments.
La plus cruelle Chaine je change en douceur,
Quand l’objet que l’on aime n’a plus de rigeur.

[Love captures us to make us happy, / It is a sweet Slavery to be in love, / Whatever worries one suffers when in love, / The pleasures outshine the greatest torments. / The cruellest chain I change into softness, / When the object of one’s loves no longer resists]\(^{31}\)

| Table 4 Songs in Boyer’s  
*The Compleat French-Master* (1694) |
|------------------|
| 1. ‘Si l’amour nous éclaire’ (unidentified) |
| 2. ‘Suivez le penchant’ (unidentified) |
| 3. ‘Que n’aimez vous? Cœurs insensibles’ (Lully, from *Persée*) |
| 4. ‘Dans nos Bois Sylvandre’ (Lully, from *Trios de la chambre du roi*) |
| 5. ‘Suivez l’amour c’est lui qui nous mene’ (Lully, from *Amadis*) |
| 6. ‘Quand Cloris prend plaisir’ (unidentified) |
| 7. ‘Cessez de Craindre les Alarves’ (unidentified) |
| 8. ‘Ah! Qu’il est doux de revoir’ (unidentified) |
| 9. ‘Etre Discret, Gènêrex, & Sincère’, sung to ‘Rigadoon’ |
| 10. ‘Pourqoy mon Coeur toujours fidele’, sung to ‘Why are my eyes still flowing’ |
| 11. ‘Helas! Je soupire’, sung to ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ |
| 12. ‘L’amour nous engage’, sung to ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ |

Boyer was known for his ability to translate French texts to make them suit English tastes; if the French lyrics to ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ are by him, they show this ability in translation from English to French as well. Boyer’s French lyrics follow the bittersweet love theme of the original English text. They also follow the metre and character of the song carefully, with the most poignant lines in the French lyrics coinciding with the melody’s climactic rise to a high F in the penultimate phrase (see ex.1).

The popularity of the song in England suggests that Boyer provided new French lyrics for an audience already familiar with the original English text and melody. The fact that the appendix to *The Compleat French-Master* supplies musical notation (melody without accompaniment, printed in movable type) for the first eight songs, but simply gives the names of the tunes for the last four, illustrates the importance of oral/aural transmission even among social groups who could be expected to read musical notation. ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ must have been sufficiently well known for people to know it by heart, thus explaining why no one involved in the publication of *The Compleat French-Master* considered it necessary to include musical notation for the tune. This further implies that learning melodies by
heart rather than relying on musical notation was not a practice confined to the lower social strata, but also had a place among the elite social circles wherein Boyer aimed his grammar.

The idea that aural dissemination of the tune had a place also in middling contexts is further supported by the inclusion of the tune of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ in sets of manuscript teaching materials, such as the Elizabeth Segar songbook (Yale University, New Haven, CT, Osborn Ms. 9, fol.17r–v) and Anne Burrow’s octave flute book (Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ms. Mus.Sch.g.614, fols.33v–34r), and as a handwritten addition to James Macadam’s copy of Youth’s Delight on the Flagelet the second part (1690). These copies are probably instances in which a teacher would have written down the piece from memory into a student’s book, as Graham Freeman has argued was common with music in manuscript teaching materials for the lute. Similarly, Rebecca Herissone has argued that Daniel Henstridge copied much of his pocket-book London, British Library, Add. Ms. 29397 by ear, which suggests that aural dissemination played an important role beyond broadside ballads. The inclusion of an ornamented arrangement of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ in the Anglo-French keyboardist William Babell’s harpsichord book (London, British Library, Add. Ms. 39569), copied by his father Charles, also has an instructional element to it. In this case, Shay and Thompson have suggested that the song was copied from a printed source. Furthermore, its style brisée ornamentation provides a glimpse of how a French musician brought his performance practice to bear on ‘If love’s a sweet passion’.

By the time of Boyer’s death in 1729 The Compleat French-Master had reached its 10th edition. It continued to be reprinted throughout the 18th century, and was widely disseminated in the rest of Europe and North America. Boyer’s work was especially well known in the Netherlands: editions of both The Compleat French-Master and The Royal Dictionary (1699) were published in several Dutch towns during the 18th century, and the book was said to have been easily available at Dutch booksellers. A copy of the 1699 edition of The Compleat French-Master is preserved in the Bielke library at Skokloster castle, Sweden, suggesting that the book may have been known in the De Geers’ musical environment as early as the end of the 1690s. This, then, is one possible explanation—and a likely one at that—for the inclusion of the French text from The Compleat French-master in Finspång 9096:7.

There were strong links between England and the Netherlands in the 1690s, through the rule of William III over both countries, that explain the transfer of English music to the Netherlands in general. Another possible specific link between the English environments of Purcell and Boyer and the musical milieu of the De Geers in the Netherlands is the Scottish Catholic singer and lutenist John Abell (1653–after 1716). Abell was Groom of the Bedchamber to Mary of Modena at St Germain between 1689 and 1697, but was permitted to tour Europe extensively during this time. He returned to England in 1699. Through his travels, Abell became a well-known performer in Europe. Johann Mattheson, for instance, suggested that Abell was an admired performer in the Netherlands and in Germany. There is some evidence that Abell spent significant time in the Netherlands after leaving St Germain in 1697: Finspång 9096:7 contains Abell’s song ‘Que je Chéris’ (p.136) which is annotated ‘1697. Decembre. Air par Monsr Abel Anglois, sur le Concert a Utrecht.’ Abell himself claimed that he had sung before William III in the Netherlands, writing in the dedication of A Collection of Songs in Several Languages (1701) that the king had been ‘so Gracious as to hear em [the songs] both in Holland, and on my return home’, and Edward Corp has suggested that Abell indeed visited William at Het Loo after leaving St Germain. Abell thus seems to have been present in the Netherlands at about the time that Finspång 9096:7 was copied.

That Abell was part of the De Geers’ musical environments towards the end of the 1690s is further suggested by a printed book of two French airs commemorating a concert in the Dolenzaal in Amsterdam in 1696: Airs pour le Concert de Mecredy, le 12 Decembre. Au Doule. Composes par Jean Abell Anglois, advertised by Estienne Roger in Amsterdam as Les Airs d’Abel pour les concerts du Doule in several catalogues between 1697 and at least 1744. The book contains three songs—‘Soyns toujours inéxorable’ (pp.1–2), ‘Je croyois que la colere’ (pp.3–4) and Quoyque l’amour paroisse’ (pp.5–8)—is printed in moveable type, and has no imprint. The only known
copy of this book survives in the Finspång collection, again suggesting some connection between the De Geers and Abell. Although the printed music in the Finspång collection (and in the Leufsta collection, another Swedish collection preserving items from the De Geer music library) demonstrates that the De Geers bought music from Roger in any case, the Abell print is so clearly commemorative of a specific event that it is difficult to see why the De Geers would have purchased this particular item if they had not attended the concert, or at least been otherwise aware of Abell as a performer.

Purcell the international composer?

The appearance of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ and ‘Take not a woman’s anger ill’ in Finspång 9096:7 would seem to demand a more nuanced version of the common view that Purcell’s music did not spread outside England. Charles Burney held that this supposed insularity was partly due to the English language:

Purcell was so truly a national composer, that his name was not likely to be wafted to the continent; and the narrow limits of his fame may be fairly ascribed, not only to the paucity and poverty of his compositions for instruments, for which the musical productions are an intelligible language to every country, but to his vocal compositions being solely adapted to English words, which rendered it unlikely for their influence to extend beyond the soil that produced them.44

Apart from ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ being preserved in Finspång 9096:7, Peter Holman has recently noted that more English music than previously thought crossed the channel to appear in books printed for Roger in Amsterdam.45 This music includes Purcell’s posthumous Ayres for the Theatre (1697), which contains an instrumental arrangement of ‘If love’s a sweet passion.’ The first violin part to music from The Fairy Queen published in Ayres was also copied into Finspång 9094, titled ‘Musick by Mr Henry Purcell in the Opera call’d the Farÿ Queen. First Trebles,’ indicating that there was at least some manuscript dissemination of Purcell’s music abroad.

Nevertheless, the extensive adaptation of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ indicates that its dissemination was facilitated by translation, and by the mediation of go-betweens such as Boyer and Abell.

Roger’s editions suggest that processes of translation and adaptation were also involved for instrumental music: Ayres for the Theatre was called Recueil d’airs a 4 parties tirez des opera tragédies & comédies de Monsr. Henry Purcell and featured French titles such as ‘Musique de la Reine de Fees’ for The Fairy Queen, and ‘Musique de la Reine des Indes’ for The Indian Queen.46 Roger also removed Frances Purcell’s dedication to the Duke of Somerset, which was both personal and local, and thus inappropriate for Roger’s more international market. This, and the lack of other known English songs in continental sources, suggests that Burney may have been right, and that the English language of Purcell’s songs was a greater barrier to their dissemination abroad than the French or Italian languages were for the dissemination and popularization of French and Italian vocal music in England. Yet, the appearance of the untranslated ‘Take not a woman’s anger ill’ in Finspång 9096:7 shows that the English language barrier was not always insurmountable.

The Finspång collection mainly contains music by French composers, and it is probable that the French style of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ made it easier to assimilate into this context than other Purcell songs might have been. Thus, it is not a representative example, but rather serves to elucidate more general processes of musical transfer in the early modern period. As Peter Burke comments, ‘Translations reveal what one culture (or group within that culture) finds interesting in another’.47 The case of ‘If love’s a sweet passion’ highlights the need for a common point of reference in terms of language and musical convention for one culture to take an interest in the music of another at all. If it does take an interest, it is likely to bring its own practices, tastes and prejudices to bear on whatever it imports. In other words, the sound of a song or tune changes depending on who plays it in what context: Purcell’s music, when performed in a French musical and linguistic context, would have acquired aspects of French performance practice, from the interpretation of rhythm, to the ornamentation, to the grip on a bow or vocal technique used. In this way, performances of translated works have the potential to let us reimagine the musical sounds of early modern Europe.
Conclusion

This article aimed to elucidate mechanisms of popularization and translation in late 17th-century English vocal music, in order to suggest a fruitful future course for Purcell studies. It has shown that 'If love’s a sweet passion' spread rapidly in printed formats that enabled the song to reach a much wider audience than those few who had originally heard it performed at the theatre; broadside ballads, single-sheet engravings, instrument books and miscellanies. The French adaptation of 'If love’s a sweet passion' in Abel Boyer’s The Compleat French-Master also implies processes of translation between England and the Continent. This to some extent suggests greater reciprocity in the exchanges between England and the Continent than hitherto acknowledged, though it also shows that language and musical convention constituted barriers to such reciprocity.

The article has also shown the importance of many sources customarily overlooked by scholars who favour manuscripts and printed editions close to the composer—sources including a small Anglo-French grammar book containing sloppily printed music, and broadside ballads with no music at all. How the interaction between oral, written and printed dissemination continued to operate beyond the 17th century is yet to be studied, and the varied circulation of Purcell's 'If love's a sweet passion' was dependent on a wide variety of factors. Although this article has discussed only a few of these factors, it does suggest that tracing the intersections of social hierarchy, material culture and sound can fruitfully elucidate the reception of Purcell's theatre songs in the 17th century and beyond.

---

Ester Lebedinski was a doctoral student at Royal Holloway, University of London, and later a Research Fellow at the Department of Musicology, Uppsala University, where the present article was completed. She is now a Senior Lecturer at the School of Music, Theatre and Art, Örebro University, Sweden. She works mainly on the 17th and early 18th centuries, and her research interests include music as a social and cultural practice, music collecting, music and cultural exchange, and the popularization and appropriation of music. ester.lebedinski@oru.se

1 R. Herissone, ‘Performance history and reception’, in The Ashgate research companion to Henry Purcell, ed. R. Herissone (Farnham, 2012), pp.303–51, at pp.303–5.
2 See D. Hunter, 'English opera and song books, 1703–1726: their contents, publishing, printing, and bibliographical description' (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 1989); on the nature of Purcell reception more generally, see J. Higney, 'Henry Purcell: A reception / dissemination study, 1695–1771' (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 2008); S. Tuppen, 'Purcell in the 18th century: music for the "Quality, Gentry, and Others", Early Music, xliii/2 (2015), pp.233–45; A. Howard, Compositional artifice in the music of Henry Purcell (Cambridge, 2019), pp.5–19.
3 On this methodological approach, see D. F. McKenzie, Bibliography and the sociology of texts (Cambridge, 1999); J. Sterne, MP3: the meaning of a format (Durham, NC, 2012); G. Goodman, Transatlantic contrafacta, musical formats, and the creation of political culture in revolutionary America, Journal of the Society for American Music, xi/4 (2017), pp.392–419; J. A. Owens, 'You can tell a book by its cover: reflections on format in English music “theory”, in Music education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. R. E. Murray Jr., S. Forscher and C. J. Cyrus (Bloomington, 2010), pp.347–85.
4 For the idea that translation entails more than a simple change of language, see P. Burke, 'Cultures of translation in early modern Europe', in Cultural translation in early modern Europe, ed. P. Burke and R. P.-C. Hsia (Cambridge, 2007), pp.7–38.
5 Henry Purcell, Some Select Songs as They Are Sung in The Fairy Queen.

---

Set to Musick, By Mr. Henry Purcell

(London: Printed by J. Heptinstall, for the Author; and are to be Sold by John Carr, at the Inner-Temple Gate near Temple-Barr, by Henry Playford at his Shop in the Temple, and the Theatre in Dorset-Garden, 1692).

6 B. Wood and A. Pinnock, “The Fairy Queen”: a fresh look at the issues, Early Music, xxii/1 (1993), pp.45–62, at p.49. On publication strategies for different music markets, see R. Herissone, ‘Playford, Purcell, and the functions of music publishing in Restoration England’, Journal of the American Musicological Society, lxiii/2 (2010), pp.243–89, at p.281; S. Carter, ‘Music publishing and compositional activity in England, 1650–1700’ (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 2010), pp.124, 147.
7 On Purcell sources, their dates and locations, see R. Shay and R. Thompson, Purcell manuscripts: the
principal musical sources (Cambridge, 2000); R. Charters, ‘A checklist of the manuscript sources of Henry Purcell’s music in the University of California, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles’, Notes, lii/2 (1995), pp.407–21.
8 Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys balls 5.173. A similar expanded ballad is also preserved at the British Library, call no. c.121.g.9.(34).
9 C. W. Marsh, Music and society in early modern England (Cambridge, 2013), pp.299, 320–21.
10 Many, though not all, are listed in C. M. Simpson, The British broadside ballad and its music (New Brunswick, 1966), pp.359–60. The majority have also been listed and digitised by the English Broadside Ballad Archive (EBBA), https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu.
11 Higney, ‘Henry Purcell’, p.32.
12 S. Tuppen, “‘Whole reams of single Songs become our Curse’: the role of music engraver Thomas Cross in the commercialisation of English music’ presented at Musicians, Publishers and Pirates of the mid-Baroque, study day at the British Library, 29 June 2016; R. Herissone “‘Exactly engrav’d by Tho: Cross?’ The role of single-sheet prints in preserving performing practices from the Restoration stage’, presented at the 17th Biennial International Conference on Baroque Music, Canterbury, UK, 15 July 2016.
13 Carter, ‘Music publishing’, pp.199–200. See also D. W. Krummel, English music printing, 1553–1700 (London, 1975), p.169.
14 This engraving is preserved in the spurious anthology Joyful Cuckoldom (London, British Library, call no. k.5.b.15) purportedly printed by Heptinsall in 1671, but in fact a much later conglomerate of quarto-sized 17th-century single-sheet engravings. See Krummel, English music printing, p.166 n.50.
15 London, British Library, call no. k.7.1.2. See also Hunter, ‘English opera and song books’, pp.3, 96.
40 Johann Mattheson’s Der Vollkommene Capellmeister: a revised translation with critical commentary, trans. E. C. Harris, Studies in Musicology (Ann Arbor, 1981), p.241; See also Spink, ‘Abell, John (i)’.

41 Norrköping, Public Library, Finspång 9096-7, 136–37.

42 Corp, ‘The exiled court’, p.220; John Abell, A Collection of Songs, in Several Languages (London: William Pearson, 1701).

43 Catalogues attached to the fifth volume of Recueil d’airs sérieux et a boire (1697), Étienne Loulié’s Éléments ou principes de musique (1698), L’histoire des empereurs Romains … écrite en Latin par Suetone, & nouvellement traduite par Mr. du Teil (Amsterdam, 1699). See further R. Rasch, ‘The music publishing house of Estienne Roger and Michel-Charles Le Cène 1696–1743’, Part Two: Catalogues in Facsimile (2012), https://roger.sites.uu.nl/part-two-catalogues/ (accessed 7 February 2018); also F. Lesure, Bibliographie des éditions musicales publiées par Étienne Roger et Michel-Charles Le Cène, Amsterdam, 1696–1743 (Paris, 1969), p.36.

44 Charles Burney, A general history of music: from the earliest ages to the present period (1798) (New York, 2/1957), ii, p.404.

45 P. Holman, ‘Estienne Roger and English music’, contribution to round-table ‘National traditions and international connections’ at Musicians, publishers and pirates of the mid-Baroque, study day at the British Library, London, 20 June 2016. Holman built his conclusions on Rudolf Rasch’s catalogues of music published by Roger (see Rasch, ‘The music publishing house’).

46 Henry Purcell, Recueil d’airs a 4 parties tirez des opera[s], tragédies & comédies (Amsterdam: Roger, 1699), facsimile ed. P. Holman (Alston, Cumbria, 1999).

47 Burke, ‘Cultures of translation’, p.20.