1

Introduction: manuscript sources and Purcell's music

PURCELL MANUSCRIPTS: A LIFE IN MUSIC

Beyond the outline of his professional career and a few details of his private life little is known about Henry Purcell.[1] No surviving parish register records his baptism, his date of birth in 1659 being inferred from the ages given in the flyleaf portrait of the 1683 sonatas and on his memorial tablet in Westminster Abbey; subsequent documentary evidence tells us hardly more than that he was successful at his work, married in about 1680, had children and died prematurely at the age of thirty-six.[2] Against the background of this biographical anonymity, the man himself often emerges more clearly from music manuscripts than from any other kind of material.

The composer's parents are now thought to have been the elder Henry Purcell (d. 1664) and his wife Elizabeth,[3] though the younger Henry's uncle Thomas undoubtedly played a major part in his upbringing and referred to him in a surviving letter as 'my son'.[4] Both of the elder Purcells were musicians in Charles II's Restoration court,[5] and young Henry must have shown enough natural ability to gain a chorister's place in the Chapel Royal, from which he was discharged when his voice

[1] Biographical information can be found in Zimmerman, *Life*; Maureen Duffy, *Henry Purcell* (London, 1994).

[2] For details of Purcell's family life see Duffy, *Henry Purcell*, 63, and J. L. Chester, *The Marriage, Baptismal and Burial Registers of the Collegiate Church or Abbey of St Peter, Westminster* (London, 1876).

[3] Apart from biographies already cited, see J. A. Westrup, 'Purcell's Parentage', *MR* 25 (1964), 100–3, and Robert Thompson, review of Margaret Campbell, *Henry Purcell, Glory of his Age* (London, 1993), in *Chelys* 22 (1993), 49–50.

[4] In a letter to John Gostling dated 8 February 1679 preserved in the Nanki Library, Tokyo: reproduced in Westrup, *Purcell*, between pp. 80 and 81.

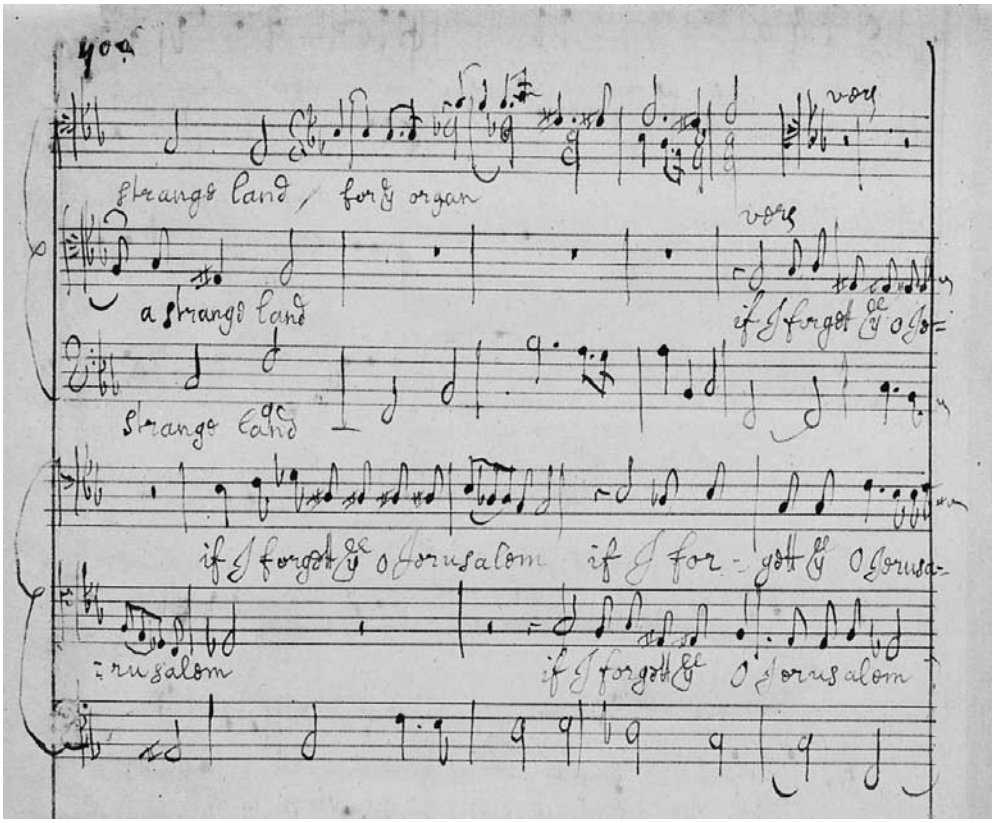
[5] *RECM*, I, 38–40 and passim.

broke in 1673.[6] The customary sum of £30 a year for 'keeping' him was paid to Purcell in person rather than to the Master of the Children, John Blow, so he probably lived at home while pursuing his musical studies at Whitehall until Matthew Locke's death in 1677 made the court post of Composer for the Violins available for him.[7]

A number of manuscripts in Purcell's hand date from before the end of 1677, all distinguished by a hook-shaped bass clef broadly similar to that of Pelham Humfrey, who as Master of the Children from 1672 to 1674 was responsible for some of his training. The guardbook Lbl Add. 30932, a miscellaneous collection of originally unbound scores, contains Humfrey's anthem *By the waters of Babylon*, transcribed and probably arranged by Purcell with the string symphony and ritornelli replaced by somewhat inept passages for organ;[8] in places Purcell uses a form of treble clef quite different from his characteristic pattern, and this manuscript may be the earliest surviving example of his copying (Illus. 1.1). Other autographs written in a relatively awkward, unformed style include a few bass parts bound in US-NHb Osborn 515 (not unexpectedly showing that Purcell's first attempts at instrumental composition were influenced by Locke), an anthem, *Who hath believed our report*, in Lbl Add. 30932[9] (see Illus. 5.3) and the incomplete score of the Funeral Sentences in Lbl Add. 30931.[10] This last work may be connected with Humfrey's burial in 1674, for by the time of the next major musical funeral, that of Christopher Gibbons in 1676, Purcell's writing had acquired many of its mature characteristics. Slightly later autographs featuring the reversed bass clef are the symphony anthem *My beloved spake* in Lbl Add. 30932 (Illus. 1.5) and an organ part of Blow's *God is our hope and strength*, Och 554, fol. 3, inscribed on the reverse by the Chapel Royal organist Edward Lowe (see Illus. 5.4).

Secondary sources such as the partbooks copied by William Tucker (d. 28 February 1679) for Westminster Abbey and the Chapel Royal[11] confirm that well before 1680 Purcell had a number of works to his credit including at least three symphony anthems composed for performance in the king's presence:[12] Tucker never credits John Blow with the doctorate conferred upon him on 10 December 1677, so his copying was probably completed before that date. Purcell's appointment as Composer for the Violins appears to have been a nominal one to provide him with an

[6] Ibid., 131–2. [7] Ibid., 173. [8] Fols. 52r–55v. [9] Fols. 94r–98v. [10] Fols. 81r–84v.
[11] Purcell works copied by Tucker are found in Lbl R.M. 27.a.1-8, Lbl Add. 50860, Lwa Triforium Set I and J-Tn N5/10.
[12] See Christopher Hogwood, 'Thomas Tudway's History of Music', in *Music in Eighteenth-Century England: Essays in Honour of Charles Cudworth*, ed. C. Hogwood and Richard Luckett (Cambridge, 1983), 25.



Illus. 1.1 Pelham Humfrey, *By the waters of Babylon*, copied by Purcell. British Library Add. MS 30932, fol. 53v

income, because hardly any of his movements for string band were composed in the late 1670s; the principal document of his work at this period, the great autograph scorebook Cfm 88, suggests that his first major responsibility at court was the editing and composition of Anglican sacred music in the distinctly conservative style that provided the mainstay of the Chapel Royal repertory on weekdays and when the king did not attend the Chapel in person.[13] It is perhaps surprising that the youthful composer of *My beloved spake* was apparently steered away from the prestigious symphony anthem, but until Purcell's twenty-first birthday his superiors in the royal service seem to have subjected him to quite rigorous discipline, at first putting him to work revising and correcting earlier music and only in 1680 allowing him to

[13] *RECM*, I, 162–4.

contribute a court ode, *Welcome vicegerent of the mighty king*. The perception of Purcell as a junior partner to John Blow and the late Pelham Humfrey is underlined by the contents of Och 628, a presentation manuscript copied by Blow *c.* 1678, in which the older composers are mainly represented by symphony anthems written for the court but Purcell by domestic sacred songs. At about the same time, working initially on loose sheets, Purcell began the collection of vocal and instrumental chamber music bound together in 1680 to become the volume now Lbl Add. 30930: this scorebook, which contains revised versions of the sacred partsongs copied by John Blow, emphasises the seriousness of Purcell's study of counterpoint, culminating in 1680 in his anachronistic but musically fascinating series of fantazias.[14] Though mentors such as Blow may well have encouraged Purcell to compose the partsongs and sonatas, his exploration of the outmoded fantazia form is more likely to have arisen from his own interest, inspired perhaps by some of the ancient vocal music he edited in Cfm 88.

The third of Purcell's great autograph scorebooks, Lbl R.M. 20.h.8, which was started around the beginning of 1681, marks a new stage in the composer's career. Whether on account of the attainment of his majority or because of a perceived development in his abilities, from 1680 or 1681 onwards Purcell's professional duties involved the composition of the most elaborate forms of court music: the symphony anthem, the court ode, and, for more private occasions, the symphony song. A new type of ode, the 'Welcome Song' to celebrate the king's return to Whitehall after his summer progress, appears to have been added to the established New Year and birthday odes to exploit Purcell's abilities without disadvantaging Blow and other senior composers.[15] With Purcell's appointment in 1682 to Edward Lowe's place as an organist of the Chapel Royal his status as a court musician received final confirmation,[16] and his works of the period 1681–5, mostly preserved in his own hand in R.M. 20.h.8, reflect complete absorption in his occupation as a servant of an absolutist but highly sophisticated court in which his art was evidently appreciated: Charles II's reputation as a lover of trivial and superficial music is belied by many of the works written for him by Humfrey, Blow and Purcell, and it is interesting to speculate how Purcell's career might have developed had secure Stuart rule lasted longer. But Charles died in 1685, and although at first his

[14] See Robert Thompson, 'The Sources of Purcell's Fantasias', *Chelys* 25 (1996–7), 88–96.
[15] Regular annual performance of welcome songs took place only from 1680 to 1687, in which period all were composed by Purcell. See Rosamond McGuinness, *English Court Odes, 1660–1820* (Oxford, 1971), 1, 12–23.
[16] *RECM*, V, 80.

Catholic brother James's accession was happily accepted by a nation eager for stability[17] Purcell's musical reaction suggests that he may have had some idea of what lay ahead.

James II's rationalisation of court musical appointments, in which Purcell was designated as harpsichordist in what was in effect a modern baroque ensemble of strings, wind players and vocal soloists,[18] cannot in itself have caused a real reduction in Purcell's status, and the Anglican Chapel Royal continued to function even though the new monarch attended Catholic devotions:[19] on 21 October 1687 Nicholas Staggins, Master of the Music, was reproached for failing to ensure that string players attended, and Purcell was named as one of the organists in the sixteenth (1687) edition of Edward Chamberlain's *Anglia Notitiae*.[20] But according to a petition submitted by Purcell on 12 February 1688 the Chapel Royal organ was by then 'so out of repair that to cleanse, tune and put in good order will cost £40',[21] and Lbl R.M. 20.h.8 reveals a change of attitude on Purcell's part after the death of Charles II: he failed to transcribe anthems he had already listed in the manuscript's index, and apart from the great coronation anthem *My heart is inditing* entered no more sacred music in the scorebook even though a number of symphony anthems were in fact composed during James II's reign. Much of the secular music copied in the scorebook from 1685 onwards is in the hands of assistants, and few works for informal occasions were added; songs and ensembles already composed for the court began to appear in print, as if Purcell no longer regarded them as belonging to a special repertory dedicated to the secular life of the court in the same way as the symphony anthem was dedicated to the king's public worship at the Chapel Royal. Two retrospective collections started by the copyist London D around 1685, Lbl Add. 33287 and Lcm 2011, suggest that the death of Charles II was seen as a watershed by at least some court musicians, and the implication of Purcell's altered approach to R.M. 20.h.8 is that security had given way to an uncertainty which can only have grown worse as the political situation deteriorated until James was finally ousted by William and Mary in 1688.

Though Purcell continued to be employed by the new Protestant monarchs, court music was never again to be the vocation it had been under Charles II. When in England William III preferred to live away from Whitehall, and the court ceased to

[17] See J. R. Jones, *Country and Court* (London, 1978), 225–7.
[18] *RECM*, II, 2–3; Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers*, 415–20.
[19] Holman, *Four and Twenty Fiddlers*, 411. [20] *RECM*, II, 15–16; V, 284–5.
[21] Lpro T27/11, p. 314. See *RECM*, VIII, 275–6 and W. A. Shaw, ed., *Calendar of Treasury Books 1685–1689*, III (London, 1923), 1763–4.

be a self-contained musical centre, drawing instead upon the range of professional expertise available in the commercial world of London music.[22] It is unlikely to be a coincidence that in 1689 Purcell undertook two ventures connected with education: the composition of the ode *Celestial Music*,[23] performed at Lewis Maidwell's progressive academy in Westminster,[24] and a production of the opera *Dido and Aeneas*, possibly a revival of an earlier work, at Josias Priest's school for young gentlewomen in Chelsea.[25] At around the same time, Purcell began a close association with the London theatres which lasted until his death, involving the composition of large numbers of songs, incidental instrumental movements and extended musical scenes as well as the four long dramatic operas *Dioclesian* (1690), *King Arthur* (1691), *The Fairy Queen* (1692, revived 1693) and *The Indian Queen* (1695). Source material for these works is often problematic, only the *Fairy Queen* score in Lam 3 containing a few passages in Purcell's own hand. Other late autographs similarly reflect a practical function rather than the partly archival purpose of the great court score-books of earlier years: the keyboard volume Lbl MS Mus.1 contains teaching material, and the Gresham songbook, possibly related to Purcell's court employment, appears to be a repertoire collection for an accomplished soprano. Lbl Add. 30934 includes a score of Purcell's last court ode, the birthday song for the Duke of Gloucester *Who can from joy refrain*,[26] and is clearly a composing draft: the systematic collection of court odes in a single fair-copy manuscript had been finally abandoned with the exile of James II, and none of the fine odes for the birthday of Queen Mary survives in an autograph.

Purcell's manuscripts provide considerable insight into his working methods and his thoughts about music.[27] Composing drafts show numerous corrections and

[22] Holman, *Henry Purcell*, 18–20.
[23] A partial autograph survives in Lbl R.M. 20.h.8, fols. 125v–117r INV.
[24] In 1687 Maidwell established a boarding school in King Street, Westminster, offering a comprehensive curriculum including modern subjects such as mathematics and European languages as well as the gentlemanly accomplishments of dancing, fencing and horsemanship. See F. H. W. Sheppard, ed., *London County Council Survey of London*, XXXI (London, 1963), 177–9.
[25] Josias Priest (d. 1734) was a leading dancer and choreographer from the mid-1670s onwards: see S. J. Cohen, 'Theory and Practice of Theatrical Dancing', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 63 (1959), 541–54 (reprinted in Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, Selma Jean Cohen and Roger Lonsdale, *Famed for Dance: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Theatrical Dancing in England, 1660–1740* (New York, 1960), 22–33); Richard Semmens, 'Dancing and Dance Music in Purcell's Operas', in *Performing the Music*, 180–96; Richard Ralph, *The Life and Works of John Weaver* (New York, 1985), 662–4. For Priest's school in Chelsea see W. H. Godfrey, *London County Council Survey of London*, IV (London, 1913), 45 and plates 1 and 22.
[26] Fols. 80–93.
[27] See Rebecca Herissone, 'Purcell's Revisions of his Own Works', in *Purcell Studies*, 51–86.

changes of mind, and his unfinished manuscripts, or scores completed in differently coloured ink, reveal that he composed the outer parts first. More surprisingly, the incomplete score of the anthem *Rejoice in the Lord alway* in Lbl R.M. 20.h.8 suggests that he made fair copies in the same order, either to facilitate revision or to ensure that the most important details of the music were written down first. Four R.M. 20.h.8 anthems for which closely contemporary draft copies survive are similar in both autograph sources, but in other cases, perhaps when a slightly longer period had elapsed between initial composition and fair copying, Purcell regularly made significant alterations, as in the successive versions of the Funeral Sentences.[28] In later manuscripts, most notably the *Fairy Queen* score Lam 3, he demonstrably worked closely with one or more assistants, checking and correcting their work and returning to unfinished movements to add missing sections: certain sections of *The Fairy Queen*, and a set of string parts of *My song shall be alway* in Och 1188/9, indicate that Purcell sometimes gave partially completed material to an assistant to be copied while he composed the rest of the music, added subsequently in his own hand. The later autographs imply that much of Purcell's work was carried out at the last minute, in contrast to the ordered planning generally reflected in his major scorebooks of the period 1678–85.

The difference between Purcell's manuscripts of the Stuart period and those dating from after 1688 reflects far more than a development in his own musical interests or in his approach to his work. During the period in which the three great autograph scorebooks were mostly compiled, Purcell's principal task was the glorification of a monarch who claimed to rule by Divine Right; after 1688 he lived under a monarch who ruled by the invitation of Parliament, and his role at court and in society was that of an entertainer, albeit of an elevated kind, competing with all the other distractions the capital could offer. At first a dedicated court servant whose music seems to have been consciously reserved to the precincts of Whitehall, he had to become a freelance musician in the modern sense, earning his living wherever he could find the opportunity and satisfying a constant public desire for novelty. Purcell's short career began in a world which for all Charles II's preference for modern music adopted essentially conservative values; it ended in a world that looked forward, and his continued success is a measure of his resilience and strength of character as well as of his musical genius.

[28] Detailed analyses of some of Purcell's revisions are contained in Adams, *Henry Purcell*: see, for example, the discussion of the Overture in G, pp. 118–19.

PAPER, BOOKS AND BINDING IN LATE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MUSIC

During Purcell's lifetime English music manuscripts invariably consisted of continental paper, until the late 1680s mostly imported from the Angoumois region of southwestern France where, with the help of substantial Dutch investment, an advanced paper industry had developed, but thereafter often from Holland. Although the process of making paper by hand has been expertly described in a number of works,[29] a brief account is necessary here to provide a background to the detailed discussions of sources that follow and a justification of the use of features of paper as historical evidence.

The craft of papermaking

In the seventeenth century, and indeed throughout the history of European handmade paper, white paper for writing or printing was made from linen rags. These were cut into convenient sizes, left partially to decay, and then subjected to a long process of washing and beating to separate the linen fibres and reduce the rags to a pulp, known as 'stuff', from which paper could be made. Beating was traditionally carried out in a stamping mill using large hammers driven by water power, and a supply of pure water was required for the continuous washing to which the rags were subjected during the earlier stages of the process. The ideal site for a paper mill had access to a fast-flowing river for the waterwheel and a smaller stream or spring to supply the washing water, so paper industries generally developed in hilly areas, although the Zaanland of Holland lacked all such geographical advantages and its wind-powered mills pulped rags with a rotary machine known as the 'hollander'. Technical developments in the hollander were essential to the flowering of the Dutch white paper industry after 1670.

Whichever method of beating was employed, the process ended with the transfer of the now liquid stuff to a vat. Each individual sheet of paper began its life when a mould consisting of an oblong lattice of fine metal wire supported on a wooden frame was dipped into the vat by a craftsman known as the 'vatman'. To prevent the stuff from running off the mould, an oblong wooden edge or 'deckel' was fitted over it:

[29] See in particular Dard Hunter, *Papermaking: the History and Technique of an Ancient Craft*, 2nd edn (London, 1957); J.-L. Boithias and C. Mondin, *Les moulins à papier et les anciens papetiers d'Auvergne* (Nonette, 1981).

when mould and deckel were taken out of the vat, the vatman allowed the stuff to drain, removed the deckel, and slid the mould along a board to his colleague the 'coucher', who at the same time returned an empty mould to him. This second mould was covered with the deckel and in turn dipped into the vat, while the coucher was transferring the partly formed paper to a stack made up alternately of similar sheets and pieces of felt. When this stack, known as the 'post', was large enough, it was mechanically pressed to remove as much water as possible and the paper and felt were separated. The felts were returned to form another post and the new paper went on to be dried, sized with animal glue, pressed again, and finished by processes such as polishing with a smooth stone. When all was complete, the paper left the mill packed into a ream wrapper, which was often elaborately printed with a description of its contents.

The characteristics of handmade paper

Each sheet of handmade paper exactly reflects the characteristics of the mould on which it was made. The oblong wooden frame of the mould had ribs running in one direction only, to which relatively heavy wires or 'chains' were attached: when the paper is lit from behind, the marks left by these wires are visible as evenly spaced 'chain lines', between *c.* 20 and 40 mm apart, parallel to the shorter edge of the sheet (see Illus. 1.2 and 1.3). In the 'antique laid' paper of the seventeenth century the chains were sewn directly to the ribs of the mould, resulting in shadows visible on either side of the chain lines. At either end of the mould there was a more closely spaced extra wire parallel with the edge: these wires, variously known as edge wires, water bar wires or tranchefiles, were not attached to wooden ribs and did not cause shadows. Their presence in a sheet of paper is a reliable indication that the edge they parallel has not been heavily trimmed. At right angles to the ribs and chain lines were the finer and much more closely spaced 'laid' wires, perhaps one millimetre apart, which created the 'laid lines' visible in paper. Finally, a watermark of some kind was almost always provided in the centre of the left half of the mould, sometimes with a countermark in the corresponding position on the right. Every handmade paper mould was unique, the complexity of its construction being such that no mould-maker could produce two identical in every respect: only sheets of paper made in the same mould can properly be described as 'identical', and even they will show changes as the mould ages, deteriorates, and is repaired. The uneven 'deckel edges' left when the stuff seeped between the mould and the deckel were not

removed at the paper mill; edges might be cut by the stationer or bookbinder, but many musical sources still have all or some of their deckel edges intact. The presence or absence of such edges, the dimensions of pages relative to the original sheet size, the possible division of watermarks between different pages, and the direction of the chain lines all provide valuable evidence of the way in which a manuscript was assembled.

Watermarks

In the finished paper, letters in the watermark and countermark can usually be read with the countermark on the left and the watermark on the right, forming a mirror image of the pattern in the mould. The presence of countermarks was to some extent a regional feature: in the Angoumois the countermark often represented the initials of the papermaker,[30] and some mills which stood on Jesuit land used the symbol 'IHS',[31] either alone or with the craftsman's initials beneath (Illus. 1.2). In Angoumois paper, any initials or monogram beneath the watermark itself belonged to the merchant or 'factor' for whom the paper was made: factors' marks do not become common in English music sources until the late 1670s, though examples can be found in Dutch archives as early as 1658.[32] The involvement of Dutch factors in the Angoumois industry ultimately went far beyond the purchase of paper when it was offered for sale and led some, notably the Janssen family, to settle in the area.[33]

Although there is considerable variation of detail between the marks in different moulds, the number of broad types of watermark found in music manuscripts of Purcell's period is relatively small. Between the Restoration and the late 1680s most

[30] An *Arrêt de conseil* of 21 July 1671 laid down that paper should bear a mark identifying its maker: see J. Savary de Bruslons, *Dictionaire universel de commerce* (Paris, 1723), II, 969–71. Surviving paper suggests that manufacturers often ignored this regulation in material intended for export.

[31] In *Hollandse Mercurius* (1672), p. 30, it is claimed that the return to Holland of Dutch citizens caused disruption to the paper industry of Angoulême, where the Jesuits had made 'the finest paper the world had ever seen'; quoted in W. E. J. Berg, *De réfugiés in de Nederlanden na der herroeping van het Edict van Nantes* (Amsterdam, 1845), 142.

[32] A monogram dated 1658 which may belong to the van der Ley family is shown as a factor's mark in Voorn, *De papiermolens*, no. 79, pp. 133 and 164.

[33] For evidence of the early development of this relationship see J. G. van Dillen, ed., *Bronnen tot de geschiedenis van het bedrijfsleven en het gildewesen van Amsterdam*, III (The Hague, 1974), 426; Jean Louis Guez de Balzac, *Lettres de feu Monsieur de Balzac à Monsieur Conrart* (Amsterdam, 1659), 48; Henri Lacomb, 'Guez de Balzac, fabricant de papier de l'Angoumois', in *Contribution à l'histoire de la papeterie en France*, X (Grenoble, 1945), 72–89. The industry depended on overseas business to the extent that the loss of the export trade during the Nine Years War (1688–97) caused its temporary collapse; see W. C. Scoville, *The Persecution of Huguenots and French Economic Development, 1680–1720* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), 185, 230–1.