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than...”: The Music of Sound in Fielding’s and Joseph
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“Not Handel’s sweet music more pleases the ear, than...”: the Music of Sound in Fielding’s and Joseph Reed’s *Tom Jones*

By the time Fielding’s *Tom Jones* came out, in 1749, James Harris had already published his famous *Three Treatises*, in which he questioned the idea of the mimetic power of music. This was restricted by Harris to the mere, and imperfect, imitation of natural sounds and motions, therefore challenging the baroque conception of the possible existence of a system of correspondences between a given musical sound and its matching emotion: “Music, passing to the Mind thro’ the Organ of the Ear, can imitate only by Sounds and Motions”.¹ The fundamental rejection of the mimetic power of music was later taken up in Britain by such writers as Charles Avison (1752) and James Beattie (1776), both authors considering, in the wake of the trend initiated by Harris, that music was more a matter of expression than imitation. For them, it could have its own independent existence, liberated from the constraint of various analogies, be they with other art-forms on the one hand or with the workings of the human mind. Even though the analogical principle was somehow being rejected, however, it was still acknowledged that there could be some indefinable link between certain musical sounds and certain mental affections, as suggested, for example, by James Beattie: “After all, it must be acknowledged, that there is some relation at least, or analogy, if not similitude, between certain musical sounds, and mental affections.”²

If music can therefore still be regarded as a fairly appropriate means of imitating and reproducing some of the sounds of ordinary life, and if it can still be related to certain effects and emotions, one might also wonder to what extent the analogical process can be reversed. How far can the noises and sounds of everyday life imitate music? Or, if we consider the context of eighteenth-century fiction, what are the limits of the potential analogies between the necessarily chaotic and *negative* noises of ordinary life,³ as they can be described in literary production, and the systematically organised, supposedly harmonious sounds of music that are occasionally used in fiction to render certain unwanted acoustic realities. If the issue of such an organisation mainly concerns the material and concrete production of sounds evoked in musical metaphors, it can also include the presentation of various characters, such as literary entities also likely to be defined and delineated by their own relation to music. This paper, therefore, aims to address the double issue of the possible existence of a form of sound-structure, and that of a discourse of music, such as that of Fielding’s *Tom Jones* – a novel particularly rich in its evocation of sundry noises and sounds, and which does seem to establish particular connections between the chaotic universe of the text, and an organised metaphorical system in which noises and sounds are arranged into a musical ‘score’. The paper will also explore how explicit references to the musical world of the time somehow organise this text, with our final examination into the way Joseph Reed’s stage adaptation of Fielding’s novel, as staged at Covent Garden in January 1769, actually recycles and re-actualises some of the elements of the discourse that can be found in its literary hypotext.

Even though the self-conscious narrator of Fielding’s *Tom Jones* successively compares himself, in the various opening chapters to the eighteen books that make up the novel, to a *restaurateur*, a law-maker, a historian, a literary connoisseur (if not a critic), an inventor, a soothsayer, a scholar, and a traveller among others, at no stage does he explicitly compare

¹ James Harris, *Three Treatises. The first Concerning Art. The Second Concerning Music, Painting, and Poetry. The Third Concerning Happiness* (London: Woodfall, 1744) 57.

² James Beattie, *Essays. On Poetry and Music, as They Affect the Mind. On Laughter, and Ludicrous Composition. On the Utility of Classical Learning*, 1776, *Musical Aesthetics: a Historical Reader, Vol.1: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Edward Lippman (New York: Pendragon P, 1986) 225.

³ See Paul Hegarty, *Noise/Music: a History* (New York: Continuum, 2008) 5.

himself to a musician, or to a provider of sounds. And yet, the novel abounds in depictions of various noises and sounds, whether it be due to the notorious rows kicked up by some of the most colourful and boisterous characters, or the expression of the divine or earthly harmony that occasionally marks some of the pages of the novel. In each case, the sometimes excessive, inflated description of a given sound performs a particular function, as is the case, for instance, in Book 13, Chapter 4, when a mere knock at the door takes up extravagant, apparently inordinate proportions:

He [Tom Jones] had scarce finished his story when a most violent Noise shook the whole House. To attempt to describe this Noise to those who have heard it, would be in vain; and to aim at giving an Idea of it to those who have never heard the like, would be still more vain: For it may be truly said,

*Non acuta
Sic geminant Corybantes Aera. [Horace, Odes l.xvi.7-8]
The Priests of Cybele do not so rattle their sounding Brass.*

In short a Footman knocked, or rather thundered at the Door. Jones was a little surprised at the Sound, having never heard it before.⁴

Here, the ominous, apparently indescribable noise signalling the first meeting between Tom and the formidable, debauched Lady Bellaston – ironically compared, through the quotation from Horace, to the awe-inspiring goddess Cybele – does indeed appear as a harbinger of the many complications to come. The light, bantering, futile conversation that immediately follows the reference to the knock is in sharp contrast with the initial, thunderous noise.

The sheer performative force of a sound is also demonstrated at other stages in the novel, such as in Book 7, Chapter 5, when the narrator explicitly compares the impact of a mere sound to that a bullet in one's head, as if the weight of an idea that is contained in a couple of words could be physically represented by the sound used to convey such a thought, or as if the vocal signifier used to suggest a given idea might be, through the force of the analogy made by the narrator, the exact correspondent of the signified idea:

Whether *Sophia* intended it or no, I shall not presume to assert; but certain it is, these last Words penetrated very deep into the Ears of her Father, and produced a much more sensible Effect than all she had said before. He received the Sound with much the same Action as a Man receives a Bullet in his Head. He started, staggered and turned pale. After which he remained silent above a Minute. . . (7.5.221)

Here, the idea contained in Sophia's speech – the rather naïve suggestion that Mrs. Western would never be so mean as to disinherit her own brother – is thus translated into a mere acoustic reality further actualised through the comparison with the bullet. The comedy of the passage is no doubt reinforced by the contrast made between the strong impact of apparently innocuous words uttered by sweet Sophia, and the usual ineffectuality of the old Squire's perpetual vociferations, in which the novel abounds (see for example 6.9.196-97, 10.8.359, 12.2.402-03).

Fielding's novel is, of course, notorious for its description of hilarious dins, uproars, rackets and tantrums, which usually allow the narrator to give free reign to his taste for the mock-heroic vein. The next passage, an appropriate illustration of this, also shows how noise can be personified ("there arrived [...] a Noise"; "it at last entered"), the vociferous Mrs. Honour being metonymically reduced to the deafening sounds she makes, through a synecdoche that fuses both the noise produced in the text and its human source into one. Notably, the narrator, in his evocation of the geographical place-name "Billingsgate", makes a pun on the word "bilingual". The verbal game is suggested by the reference to the fishwives' "Duplicity of Tongues", something that also suggests the considerable impact of

⁴ Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*, 1749 (New York: Norton, 1995) Book 13, chapter 4, page 451. Further references to this edition subsequently appear within parentheses under the following format: 14.4.451.

the sounds of speech one can produce, which is here seen as a factor of alienation. The oyster-sellers, for example, to whom Mrs Honour is eventually compared, are completely reduced to the inarticulate noise and sounds they produce:

Just as Sophia arrived at the Conclusion of her Story, there arrived in the Room where the two Ladies were sitting, a Noise, not unlike, in Loudness, to that of a Pack of Hounds just let out from their Kennel; nor, in Shrillness, to Cats, when caterwauling; or, to Screech-Owls; or, indeed more like (for what Animal can resemble a human Voice?) to those Sounds, which, in the pleasant Mansions of that Gate, which seems to derive its Name from a Duplicity of Tongues [Billingsgate, London's fish-market on the Thames], issue from the Mouths, and sometimes from the Nostrils of those fair River Nymphs, ycleped of old the *Naiades*; in the vulgar Tongue translated Oyster-Wenches [...].

Such was the Noise, which now burst from one of the Rooms below; and soon the Thunder, which long had rattled at a Distance, began to approach nearer and nearer, 'till, having ascended by Degrees up Stairs, it at last entered the Apartment where the Ladies were. In short, to drop all Metaphor and Figure, Mrs. *Honour* having scolded violently below Stairs, and continued the same all the Way up, came in to her Mistress in a most outrageous Passion [...]. (11.8.390)

Even though the narrator obviously revels in such descriptive excesses, he can also analyse, from an almost scientific point of view, the impact of various human emotions on the production of sundry noises and sounds. He thereby inverts the theory of musical affects, according to which a certain type of music automatically produces a certain type of emotion. Such is the case with the narrator's highly distanced, quasi-analytical, account of the way various characters of the novel react, vocally, to the news of Captain Blifil's death in Book 2, Chapter 9. Here, the same event, first signalled by the news of the Captain's demise and later by the sight of his body, can produce either complete silence, or – to use another set of metaphors – an avalanche or a shower of sounds:

His [Allworthy's] Countenance sufficiently shewed the Consternation he was under, which, indeed had a good deal deprived him of Speech; but as Grief operates variously on different Minds, so the same Apprehension which depressed his Voice, elevated that of Mrs. *Blifil*. She now began to bewail herself in very bitter Terms, and Floods of Tears accompanied her Lamentations [...].

Here the curious Reader may observe another Diversity in the Operations of Grief: for as Mr. *Allworthy* had been before silent, from the same Cause which had made his Sister vociferous; so did the present Sight, which drew Tears from the Gentleman, put an entire Stop to those of the Lady; who first gave a violent Scream, and presently after fell into a Fit. (2.9.74)

Here, the sounds produced by the various characters are once again the genuine signifiers of their respective emotions, functioning as the exact correspondents of the "mental affections" conceded by James Beattie. An idea, or an emotion, finds its proper expression through a given vocal channel, just as in music a given musical phrase can supposedly be used to raise a certain emotion. Here, there seems to be a direct correspondence between the effect arising from a particular situation, and the noise it produces; each set of correspondences are variable according to the mental, emotional and psychological framework of the character in question.

In some cases, sounds and noises can also make up for the various characters' incapacity to give voice and meaning to their emotions, as is the case in the next example, when Mrs. Western's anger literally stifles all manifestations of articulate speech: "Mrs *Western* spoke, or rather thundered, in Answer; but as she was hardly articulate, we cannot be very certain of the identical Words: We shall, therefore, omit inserting a Speech, which, at best, would not greatly redound to her Honour" (7.8.231).

At times, the acknowledgement of the powerlessness of words is furthered by the rejection of all sounds and noises: silence is the only appropriate setting for certain evocations, such as the arrival "onstage" of Sophia Western. In this other mock-heroic

passage, marked by the hushing of “every ruder Breath”, and the disappearance of “noisy Boreas”, the newly-obtained silence gradually gives way to an organised musical setting provided by “the feather’d Choristers of Nature” – apparently the only possible background for the apparition of such a combination of virtues:

Hushed be every ruder Breath. May the Heathen Ruler of the Winds confine in iron Chains the boisterous limbs of noisy *Boreas*, and the sharp-pointed Nose of bitter *Eurus*. Do thou, sweet *Zephyrus*, rising from thy fragrant Bed, mount the western Sky, and lead on those delicious Gales, the Charms of which call forth the lovely *Flora* from her Chamber, perfumed with pearly Dews, when on the first of June, her Birth-day, the blooming Maid, in loose Attire, gently trips it over the verdant Mead, where every Flower rises to do her Homage, ‘till the whole Field becomes enamelled, and Colours contend with Sweets which shall ravish her most. So charming may she now appear; and you the feather’d Choristers of nature, whose sweetest notes not even *Handel* can excel, tune your melodious Throats, to celebrate her Appearance. From Love proceeds your Music, and to Love it returns. Awaken therefore that gentle Passion in every Swain: For lo! adorned with all the Charms in which Nature can array her; bedecked with Beauty, Youth, Sprightliness, Innocence, Modesty, and Tenderness, breathing Sweetness from her rosy Lips, and darting Brightness from her sparkling Eyes, the lovely *Sophia* comes. (4.2.101-02)

In this extract, the reference to the singing birds that even Handel’s music cannot match – and we shall see to what extent references to Handel’s music constitute a consistent touchstone for the quality of sound – paves the way for a discourse on the possible analogy between a certain musical discourse and the sounds of everyday life.

The novel does indeed multiply instances that highlight the porosity of those boundaries, separating the “unwanted noise” of ordinary life from more articulate musical systems. In several cases, the characters of the novel actually find themselves in an ‘intermediary’ stage between these two areas, as is the case with the passage at the end of Book 12, when Tom and Partridge find themselves approaching the gypsies’ camp:

... as they approached nearer to this Light, (or Lights as they now appeared) they heard a confused Sound of Human Voices; of singing, laughing and hallowing, together with a strange Noise that seemed to proceed from some instruments; but could hardly be allowed the Name of Music! Indeed, to favour a little the Opinion of *Partridge*, it might very well be called Music bewitched. (12.12.430)

The indistinguishable noise heard by the two travellers thus appears as a form of magmatic musical matter, resulting from the combination of an organised musical system – however exotic it may be – and the sounds of various human voices. Conversely, in Book 5, Chapter 9, the groans and the “violent snoring” of Allworthys’ nurse are compared, by the narrator, to a “thorough bass, whose music he [Tom] feared might disturb Mr Allworthy” (5.9.164). Similarly, the uproarious noise produced by a company of soldiers in Book 7, Chapter 11 is indirectly compared to the sound of the last trumpet, another example of the noises of everyday life being suggested in terms that are evocative of an organised musical entity:

... a violent Thundering at his outward Gate called him [the landlord] from his Seat, and obliged him to open it; which he had no sooner done, than his Kitchin was immediately full of gentlemen in red Coats, who all rushed upon him in as tumultuous a Manner, as if they intended to take his little Castle by storm.

The Landlord was now forced from his Post to furnish his numerous Guests with Beer, which they called forth with great Eagerness [...] for it may easily be believed, that the Arrival of so much good Company should put an End to any Sleep, unless that from which we are to awakened only by the last Trumpet (7.11.238).

Similarly, the indefinable sounds produced during one of the novel's mock-heroic battles, listing the various victims of Molly Seagrim's indomitable strength, is also evoked in terms reminiscent of various musical ventures:

Recount, O Muse, the Names of those who fell on this fatal Day. First *Jemmy Twiddle* felt on his hinder Head the direful Bone. Him the pleasant Banks of sweetly winding Stour had nourished, where he first learnt the vocal Art, with which, wandring up and down at Wakes and Fairs he cheered the rural Nymphs and Swains, when upon the Green they interweave'd the sprightly Dance; while he himself stood fiddling and jumping to his own Music. How little now avails his Fiddle? He thumps the verdant Floor with his Carcass. Next old *Echepole*, the Sowgelder, received a Blow in his Forehead from our Amazonian Heroine, and immediately fell to the Ground. He was a swinging fat Fellow, and fell with almost as much Noise as a House. [...] *Tom Freckle*, the Smith's Son, was the next Victim of her Rage. He was an ingenious Workman, and made excellent Pattins; nay the very Pattin with which he was knocked down, was his own Workmanship. Had he been at the Time singing Psalms in the Church, he would have avoided a broken Head. (4.8.118-19)

The character of Jemmy Twiddle seems little but an extension of his own fiddle, and Tom Freckle might have escaped his sad fate if he had been more musical: these references, combined with direct allusions to real, concrete noises, such as the hilarious one produced by old Echepole's deafening fall, make up a cacophony of sounds vaguely and distantly related to an organised musical system. A similar occurrence takes place in Book 10, Chapter 2, when the screams of Mrs. Waters, whose room at Upton Inn has been intruded upon by too many gentlemen, are also described in terms directly and openly evocative of music:

And now Mrs. Waters [...] began to scream in the most violent Manner, crying out Murder! Robbery! and more frequently Rape! which last, some, perhaps, may wonder she should mention, who do not consider that these Words of Exclamation are used by Ladies in a Fright, as Fa, la, la, ra, da, &c. are in Music, only as the Vehicles of Sound, and without any fixed Ideas. (10.2.340-41)

Here, one can first see that the narrator's allusion to musical language, easily recognizable through the reference to the sol-fa system of musical notation, is seen as being deprived of any "fixed Ideas" – as mere "Vehicles of Sound" apparently devoid of any semantic value, thus reducing musical sounds to the mere status of "conveyer[s] of emotion". It is also notable that the slight verbal distortion of the musical notes "fa, la, re, do" – here transformed into "fa, la, ra, da" – further deprives the musical system of its referential value, the code on which musical notation rests being slightly obfuscated through misquotation. This, of course, must be considered alongside Mrs. Waters' own rather idiosyncratic use of the linguistic code; the mature woman deprives the usual signifiers of language of their signified. [deprives the usual linguistic signifiers of their meaning??]. Indeed, in such a context, the word "rape", as uttered by the middle-aged female, must be seen as completely divorced from its genuine meaning – a tactful reminder that, at the time of the interruption thus lamented by Mrs Waters, when she was clandestinely enjoying the company of the much younger Tom Jones, she was precisely *not* being raped.

Elsewhere, the musical metaphor, as presented in the text, is the only way of approaching what might be called the language of the heart – "From Love proceeds your Music, and to Love it returns" (4.2.101-02) –, sound and music being again fused when it comes to expressing what mere words apparently fail to do. Such is the case with Squire Western's genuine affection for his daughter, which can only be given expression – however sorely he may plague the young woman – through a somewhat incongruous simile, unflatteringly linking up Sophia's voice to the barking of a pack of dogs: "Why wout ask, *Sophy*?" cries he, 'when dost know I had rather hear thy Voice, than the Musick of the best Pack of Dogs in *England*'" (16.2.545). The association between a genuine musical discourse and other sounds exalted to the status of music is again made at the very end of the novel, when the

evocation of Squire Western's eventual bliss is achieved through the reunion of two types of "music", the sound of his daughter's harpsichord on the one hand, the tattling of his granddaughter, again rather incongruously compared to "the finest Cry of Dogs in England", on the other:

He hath here a Parlour and Anti-chamber to himself, where he gets drunk with whom he pleases; and his Daughter is still as ready as formerly to play to him whenever he desires it (18.13.640-41).

...he [Western] declares the tattling of his little Grand-Daughter, who is above a Year and half old, is sweeter music than the finest Cry of Dogs in *England* (18.13.641).

In this novel, the frequent practise of music, such as sweet Sophia's harpsichord-playing in the mentioned above, also lends itself to a dichotomy between various types of music, all of which find particular resonance throughout the text.

In *Tom Jones*, musical taste functions as a strong marker of the various characters' aesthetic, but also political, leanings. In the context of the novel, Mrs. Western's genuine and explicit attachment to the reigning dynasty, to say nothing of her notorious "Skill in Politics" (6.2.178), is thus mediated, despite the narrator's scathing irony, through her own, apparently sincere taste for the music that is promoted by the court of Hanover: "She had considerably improved her mind by study; she had [...] read all the modern plays, operas, oratorios, poems, and romances; in all which she was a critic" (6.2.178). Conversely, Squire Western's inordinate love of the noises and sounds of fox-hunting, not to mention his relish for rather lewd old English ballads such as "Old Sir Simon", "Bobbing Joan" and the like (see 5.2.141-42), is implicitly related to his strong Tory, anti-Hanoverian inclinations (see 6.14.209-10, 7.5.221, 16.2.543, etc.). It is certainly no accident that Mr. Western's musical tastes, as described by the no-less ironic narrator, explicitly exclude George Frederic Handel, the Hanoverian musician *par excellence*, the very provider of those operas and especially oratorios the old Squire's sister seems to be so very partial to:

It was Mr Western's custom every afternoon, as soon as he was drunk, to hear his daughter play on the harpsichord, for he was a great lover of music, and perhaps, had he lived in town, might have passed for a connoisseur; for he always excepted against the finest compositions of Mr Handel. He never relished any music but what was light and airy; and indeed his most favourite tunes, were *Old Sir Simon the King*, *St George he was for England*, *Bobbing Joan*, and some others. (4.5.111)

In this respect, young Sophia's immoderate and explicit taste for Handel's music,⁵ no doubt instilled in her since early infancy by the Whig aunt in charge of her education, naturally matches Tom's Hanoverian sympathies, as made manifest by his spontaneous, patriotic decision to fight the Jacobite rebels in the second part of his adventures.

The novel thus creates a pattern of musical elements that are made up of various references, which oppose the traditional noises, sounds and music of old Tory England. These are marked by sounds such as the blowing of a horn, the barking of dogs and various old English ballads, as well as the more polished sounds of a new, modern universe in the process of being constructed. The end of the novel, which combines the sound of Sophia's "polite" harpsichord-playing with the tattling of her young daughter, seems to suggest the outcome of a new, modern world, whose organisation is suggested by the way sounds and music are handled/Handel-ed.

⁵ "His daughter, tho' she was a perfect mistress of music, and would never willingly have played anything but *Handel's*, was so devoted to her father's pleasure, that she learnt all those tunes to oblige him. However, she would now and then endeavour to lead him into her own taste, and when he required the repetition of his ballads, would answer with a 'Nay, dear sir;' and would often beg him to suffer her to play something else" (4.5.111).

It is interesting to note that it is precisely this pattern of musical opposition which seems to be at the basis of the musical organisation of the pasticcio-opera *Tom Jones* that was performed at Covent Garden in the late 1760s, the result of a textual adaptation by the playwright Joseph Reed and a musical compilation made by either Samuel Arnold or Thomas Augustine Arne.⁶ The score of this opera, a combination of fashionable extracts from some of the Italian operas performed at the King's Theatre – including pieces by Handel, Piccinni, Hasse, Galuppi, Pergolesi, John Christian Bach –, to which were added a few traditional English songs such as “Roast Beef”, “O my kitten”, “Peggy's Mill”, “Sir Simon the King”, “Sir Roger de Coverly”, *etc.*, appears as the musical transposition of the dichotomy presented in Fielding's novel. The opera's opening aria, with music by Samuel Arnold, is thus set to the following words: “Not Handel's sweet music more pleases the ear, / Than that of the hounds in full cry”,⁷ a statement, sung by Tom, which apparently advocates, at the beginning of the play, the superiority of the genuine, ‘life-like’ sounds of England over the elaborate music that opera, as a genre, is supposed to be based on. Somewhat paradoxically, this pasticcio-opera seems to reject the very recipes it is made of. Similarly, the last song of the opera – a passage in which each character successively sings their final cue, each with a different type of music – also establishes a form of hierarchy between various musical genres and origins. The “lofty” protagonists, the socially promoted Tom and sweet Sophia, thus sing music composed by the *opera seria* composer Johann Adolph Hasse; Nancy and Nightingale – socially slightly lower in Fielding's novel – sing music by the English musician Samuel Arnold; while old Nightingale and Squire Western, the upholders of the solid, traditional values of English country life, are provided with an old, traditional English song: “Old King Cole”. The lyrics assigned to Western, the anti-Handelian lover of the sounds of everyday life, express his strong disapproval of the supposedly elevated, polished type of singing promoted by Italian opera of the period:

Western

If I must chant a stave at all,
 I'll sing in Nighty's [i.e. Nightingale's] tune:
 I hate Italian shake and squall,
 Tho' they're in such renown:
 I love a song, short or long, jolly jolly songsters;
 I love a song, short or long, jolly jolly songsters;
 Which goes to a fal, lal, lal, lal, lal,
 Or a down, down, hey derry down. (59)

In short, the opera contains its own comment on the British musical situation of the period, still torn by a strong opposition between the Italian party and a growing movement towards the development of a truly English genre of the comic opera. The operatic transposition, in its treatment of dichotomy between two types of musical origin, thus recycles some of the themes of Fielding's novel, including the discourse on music and sound.

In the preface to his work, Joseph Reed made some comments on his “deviations” from Fielding's novel. His intention was clearly to “polish up” some of its rougher aspects, notably by “purging” some of the characters of their “coarseness and indelicacy” so as to make them “more amiable and interesting”, “in conformity to the refined taste of the present age”. He may have “stripp'd [the novel's] hero of his libertinism” and “diverted [the characters of Western and Mrs. Honour] of their provinciality”; indeed he may have domesticated or done away with Mr. and Mrs. Western's endless, hilarious rows, concentrating instead upon on the

⁶ Roger Fiske, in his *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford UP, 1973) attributes the compilation to both composers (see p.341). Eric Walter White, in his *Register of First Performances of English Operas* (London: The Society for Theatre Research, 1983), gives the main credit to Arne (see p.42).

⁷ Joseph Reed, *Tom Jones. A Comick Opera: as It is Perform'd at the Theatre-Royal in Covent Garden* (London: Becket, de Hondt, Richardson and Urquhart, 1769) 1. Further references to this edition will appear in the text, within parentheses.

witty, amorous conversation conducted between Mrs. Western and Mr. Supple in a dialogue obviously redolent, in its metaphorical network based on political (if not military) strategy, of the recently-sung amours of Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman. For all that, however, in his preservation of the basic dichotomy between the natural noises and sounds of English life and the supposedly lofty accents of a type of music still regarded by many as slightly exogenous, he did manage to remain faithful to his literary source.