"… between absolute silence and absolute sound": Orchestrating the Action in Henry James's *The Saloon*

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Based on James's 1892 ghost story "Owen Wingrave," *The Saloon* is a one-act drama that tells the story of a military cadet who has come to hate the idea of going to war. The Wingraves have a long history of military service and Owen's decision to abandon the profession deeply shocks his family and friends, including Kate Julian, a young woman who lives in the Wingrave family home and is "predestined" (*OW* 182) to Owen. To prove that his decision to leave the military is not based on cowardice, Owen is persuaded by Kate to spend the night locked in a room which is supposedly haunted by one of Owen's military ancestors, a Colonel Wingrave. Many years ago, the young son of Colonel Wingrave died following a beating from his father and is laid to rest in this room. The next day, the Colonel is found dead in the same room, with no visible signs of injury on his body. Following his own night in the haunted room, Owen too dies a mysterious death.

While *The Saloon* is much shorter than "Owen Wingrave," James changes little in terms of the plot, the central characters and the anti-war theme of the original story. If anything, James strengthens the anti-war message by explaining that the child who dies is beaten for refusing to fight a school friend. James does make a slight change to the ending of the play, perhaps to achieve

a greater dramatic effect—while Owen dies alone in the original story, in the stage version, Kate is with him. James first began working on the script for *The Saloon* late in 1907, intending it as a potential curtain-raiser for *The High Bid* which was being staged the following year in Edinburgh and the provinces by the actor-managers Henry Forbes-Robertson and his wife. However, according to James, the Forbes-Robertsons "could make neither heads nor tails of" *The Saloon* (*LL* 473). James was later advised by the playwright St John Hankin to submit the play to the Incorporated Stage Society, an English theatre society which put on private Sunday performances at London theatres such as the Royal Court, of new and experimental plays that might otherwise not be staged, often because the censor had not licensed them for public performance. The Stage Society's back catalogue includes plays by literary heavyweights such as James Joyce, Chekhov, Strindberg, Lord Byron and W.B. Yeats. At first glance then, it might appear to be an eminently suitable home for one of James's plays. However, while James certainly experimented in his drama with different genres, ranging from melodrama to murder, he did not intend the plays themselves to be experimental. Rather, he was aiming squarely at the mainstream, looking for the sort of popularity achieved by the likes of Arthur Pinero or Harley Granville Barker. James submitted *The Saloon* in 1908 but the Stage Society rejected it. The decision was conveyed to James by the Irish playwright Bernard Shaw, resulting in a protracted and on Shaw's side at least, irascible, exchange of views on art, drama, and the laying of ghosts. Shaw accuses James of writing a play that "is like a king with his head cut off" (*CP* 643) and of "giving victory to death and obsolescence" (*CP* 646) by allowing the ghost to win out through Owen's death. James's replies remain impeccably polite and reasonable in the face of Shaw's comments on "the little piece," resorting only to a "vengeance" which is peculiarly Jamesian in its cerebral intangibility: "my worst vengeance shall be to impose on you … the knowledge of a much longer and more insistent one" (*LL* 476). At the time of writing to Shaw, James was working on converting his novel *The Other House* into a three-act play, and this may have been the longer piece that James refers to.

The Saloon was eventually produced in 1911 by Gertrude Kingston, an English actor with strong links to the Stage Society who opened her own playhouse, known as The Little Theatre in 1910. Here, according to an interview Kingston gave to *The New York Times*, she would produce "only plays of artistic merit and serious bent" (Interview). Kingston, like many in

the nineteenth century, including William James and to a lesser degree James himself, had a keen interest in psychical phenomena and the supernatural. This fascination with spiritualism and the supernatural manifested itself across a broad spectrum of nineteenth-century life and culture, both in Britain and the United States. Transcending social and economic hierarchies, the paranormal excited interest from every social class, including Queen Victoria herself. Those looking for entertainment as well as potential enlightenment from the other side could visit spiritualists, take part in seances, and witness the exploits of mediums such as Cora Tappan-Richmond, the inspiration for Verena Tarrant in James's *The Bostonians* (Cruise 136). The more serious-minded could join one of the many societies dedicated to the science of the supernatural, such as the Society for Psychical Research. William James was president of the Society between 1894 and 1895 and founded the American Society of Psychical Research. In Victorian literature the influence of the supernatural is widespread, from the early gothic monsters of Mary Shelley to the subtly disquieting ghost stories of M.R. James. Henry James began writing ghost stories early in his career—"The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" was written in 1868 when James was twenty-five. Readers are more likely to be familiar with "The Jolly Corner" or "The Turn of the Screw" than the lesser-known "Owen Wingrave," but what all James's ghosts have in common is a certain delicacy, an understated menace—not for James the obvious monsters, no gore or clanking chains or headless horsemen. Seen in slow glimpses, and then only through the lens of nervous or overwrought imaginations, the ghosts of James's supernatural tales are invariably silent and deliberately ambiguous, their existence debatable for both the readers and the protagonists of James's stories.[1] They are also curiously inactive, content to merely appear rather than do. But, while passive themselves, they stir the recipients of their ghostly visitations into frantic physical or mental activity. So, we have Brydon's agonised soul-searching in "The Jolly Corner" and the increasingly frenzied, and ultimately fatal, attempts of the governess in "The Turn of the Screw" to protect her young charges. In "Owen Wingrave" the ghost is a silent menace, much spoken of and alluded to but never seen as a solid presence.

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1 For a critical analysis of James's ghost stories see, for example, T.J. Lustig, *Henry James and the Ghostly* (1994), Martha Banta, *Henry James and the Occult: The Great Extension* (1972), Anna Despotopoulou and Kimberley C. Reed, editors *Henry James and the Supernatural* (2011), Hazel Hutchison *Seeing and Believing: Henry James and the Spiritual World* (2006).

While the ghost that haunts *The Saloon* may be silent, sound is a key element in the play. The script for *The Saloon* is unusual amongst James's plays in that his stage directions contain specific references to music. In a broad sense, there is nothing exceptional in this—music was an integral part of Victorian drama, used to underscore the action and alert the audience to a character's motives or state of mind. Incidental music was also used to cover curtain-raising and scene-changing. In the earlier part of the century, stock musical pieces were associated with different character types, particularly in melodrama, where musical accompaniment was "almost continuous" (Booth, "Victorian Age" 123) throughout the whole performance. So, whatever the play, the entrance of the hero, heroine or villain would be accompanied by the same piece of music, familiar to the audience through long use. Popular music was used in a similar way, as Michael Pisani notes, both to "stimulate a sense of pleasure in recognition" and to act as an "authenticating device" for the action being played out (79). In the later decades of the century, the practice of using stock musical pieces to represent certain character types began to fall out of favour, and actor-managers increasingly began to commission original music for new plays. In an article on "Music and Drama" that appeared in *The Stage* in 1887, the writer notes this change of practice, claiming that "modern ideas of art" rendered the use of such stock pieces "ridiculous." Music was still an important element of drama however, as the writer in *The Stage* acknowledges, claiming music to be "the very wisest way of enhancing the power of the drama itself" (Review). Demand for music in the theatres remained high, despite what Pisani refers to as "changing tastes towards more realism" (72). Music was still being played live at this point and provided employment for considerable numbers of people. While the invention of the phonograph in the 1870's, and its more sophisticated successor the Gramophone a decade later, made the recording of sound possible, the techniques were still in their infancy and provided neither the quality nor the atmosphere the Victorian audience would expect. In London, the larger West End theatres had their own orchestras but smaller, less prestigious, theatres would still have one or two resident musicians (Booth, "Victorian Age" 33). At the larger West End theatres orchestras with around twenty to thirty musicians was still the norm well into the twentieth century (Pisani 81). Many of the larger theatres even had their own musical directors who kept a stock of appropriate musical passages, known as *melos*, which were used to accentuate speech and action (Pisani 83). Stage managers also played a key role in setting a performance to

music though not all were equally skilled in this area. *The Stage* notes that "All stage-managers who know their work can be fully depended upon by authors in this matter of dove-tailing music into a drama" but it goes on to warn of "woe to the author who puts his faith in a stage-manager who does not know his work. A drama overburdened with music drags most fearfully" (Review). The voices of actors were also used to musical effect and, as Booth notes, actors had to work with the musical accompaniment for any play, using it to strengthen and enhance their own performance. Actors such as Ellen Terry, Fanny Kemble and Edmund Kean were known for the musicality of their vocal delivery as much as for their acting (Booth, "Victorian Age" 121-23). Part of the role of a musical director or composer in the theatre was to ensure that the musical accompaniment did not drown out the voice of the actor. Pisani notes that the actor-manager Henry Irving was conscious of the power of his own voice, which he thought of as "a musical instrument equivalent to that of a singer," to the extent that he would carefully choose the music that was used to accompany his acting with a view to intensifying rather than distracting from, that voice (82). Irving was not alone in exerting influence over the music used in his theatre. Knowing the importance of that music in the development and understanding of their acting roles, most actor-managers would have worked closely with their musical director from the first rehearsals right through to the final performance.

James was neither actor nor manager but as a seasoned theatregoer and critic he would have been fully aware of the power that music had to either enhance or diminish dramatic effect. All of James's plays that reached production would have had the standard musical accompaniments, but what is unusual about *The Saloon* is that, rather than leave it to the judgement of the musical director, he incorporates musical references in the script himself, references that seem designed to create a sense of unease and disquiet amongst the audience, much as modern filmmakers do.[2] References to music exist in only one play other than *The Saloon*, James's first play scenario *Pyramus and Thisbe* (1869). In this two-hander the female protagonist, Catherine, is a music teacher who antagonises her male fellow-lodger with the "violence"

[2] James may also have had a more prosaic reason for introducing the piano-playing. Photographs of *The Little Theatre* show that the building is so small there is no room for even a small orchestra. Placing a piano on the stage and having one of the characters play would have provided a practical solution in addition to functioning as an atmospheric device. www.arthurlloyd.co.uk/LittleTheatreLondon.htm

of her piano playing (*CP* 75). In this play, the piano itself has a key function within the script, serving as a means for Catherine to display her annoyance at her noisy, cigar-smoking neighbour without having to resort to unladylike shouting or language. Ultimately, the piano is also a device for bringing the two young people together. In *The Saloon*, the piano has no integral role in the plot—the action of the play would unfold in the same way whether the piano was there or not. Nor does music feature in the original story of "Owen Wingrave," other than a passing reference to Spencer Coyle having the appearance of "a concert-giving pianist" (*OW* 156). In the story, James slowly introduces discordant notes by referencing the "sinister gloom diffused" throughout the old house, the strangely unnerving portraits of Owen's ancestors adorning the walls, and the "wicked and weird" (*OW* 175) impression it all makes on the dinner guests. As a one-act curtain-raiser for the main play, *The Saloon* would necessarily be of short duration, offering James scant opportunity for that slow build-up of tension which leads, in the original story, to Owen's mysterious death. Instead, the stage version begins with the last part of the story, the dinner party at the Wingrave family home that immediately precedes Owen's death. Without that additional space to develop both plot and atmosphere, James seems to be using music to create a build-up of tension quickly and subtly, without the need to resort to trickery and special effects. The play opens with Kate, her back to the audience, playing the piano, "drawing from it a low thin music" (*CP* 651). At first, the music is a quiet accompaniment to the action, as if Kate is "playing to herself" but at the same time "vaguely preluding" the horror to come (651). As Kate's "softly-incoherent playing" (653) continues behind the other characters' dialogue, the "nervous up-and-down pat" (654) of Mrs. Julian's foot and the "drum" (652) of Coyle's fingers against the furniture act as grace notes to Kate's playing, wordlessly emphasising the tension the characters feel and adding to the general atmosphere of vague unease. As the play proceeds and the subject of the family ghosts is discussed by Coyle and Owen, the piano music begins again, this time off-stage. However, as Owen's mysterious death looms closer, Kate's playing increases in both sound and intensity, becoming "a sudden gust of strange extravagant music, fantastic and exotic" which thoroughly unnerves Lechmere and Coyle. Coyle declares Kate's "wild, extraordinary music" to be "Too *hard*—on top of that story!" leading him to exclaim "it's more than I can stand. For God's sake, stop her!" (659). In the final scene of the play, hearing Kate cry out on

discovering Owen's lifeless form, Coyle rushes onstage. The play ends with Coyle's declaration that Owen has died the death of a soldier, which he makes in a voice that sounds "like the curt hard blare of a trumpet" (674).

James was not alone in seeing the musical and dramatic potential in the story of "Owen Wingrave." In 1970, the composer Benjamin Britten wrote an opera, based on James's tale. Filmed on location in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, *Paramore* was Britten's first opera written for television, and it aired on BBC2 in May 1971. While James might have appreciated the staging of "Owen Wingrave" 60 years after it was first produced there is one aspect of Britten's opera he might not have approved of. *Paramore* features not one but two ghosts, that of Colonel Wingrave and the child he kills. And, while the ghosts of Britten's opera remain silent, they are very much visible, stepping from the portraits on the walls of Paramore's stairway to escort Owen to his death. Like James, Britten seems to have been an exacting master and the singers in *Paramore* may well have sympathised with the actors in *The Saloon* trying to decipher James's complex stage directions. In an interview with cast members from the original production, they speak of Britten's precision and his insistence on detail, claiming that Britten wrote "difficult things but never impossible."[3] In 1954 Britten had also written an opera based on another of James's ghostly stories, *The Turn of the Screw*. The ghosts of Miss Jessel and Quint, though silent in James's story, and visible only to the governess, have singing parts in Britten's opera. James would surely have approved of the location for the first performance though, the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, one of James's favourite European cities.[4]

In the Victorian theatre, all musical notations and directions were included in a play's prompt book. There is no extant prompt book for *The Saloon*, and so it is difficult to judge whether James's intentions regarding music in *The Saloon* were carried out and, if so, how successful the use of music was. Newspaper reviews of the play make no mention of piano playing or music of any kind. This absence of comment was not unusual, reviews of Victorian plays rarely mention the music that would invariably have accompanied each

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[3] https://brittenpears.org/explore/benjamin-britten/music/operas/owen-wingrave/

[4] https://brittenpears.org/explore/benjamin-britten/music/operas/the-turn-of-the-screw/. At the time of writing this chapter in March 2020, a production of Britten's version of *The Turn of the Screw* was in production at The Theatre Royal in Newcastle—testament to the continuing longevity and popularity of James's work.

performance. In the case of stock musical accompaniments, which would be familiar to the audience from countless other plays, it may be that the music was simply so familiar as not to merit comment. Even reviews of so-called musical plays—lightweight fare featuring dancing and spectacular costumes aimed at the popular market—have little to say about the music that one would assume from the name was a key feature of the performance. In a review in *The Eastbourne Gazette*, the popular production *Our Miss Gibbs* for example, merits only a reference to "pretty music" (Review) while in *The Clarion* a review of *The Arcadians* at Manchester's Prince's Theatre refers to it as "the finest musical play that has ever been put on a stage" but goes on to make not a single mention of that music (Review). According to Pisani, this general lack of acknowledgement of the role music played in the Victorian theatre continues today, as least as far as the musicians are concerned: "the lives of the theatre musicians have never been documented, nor can information about them be found in musical or theatrical reference works" (79). Certainly, though James reviewed countless plays, commenting on the actors, the costume, the scenery and even his fellow playgoers, music is the one aspect of drama that he affords little attention. Nor does James mention music in relation to the production of his own plays. The playbill for *Guy Domville* lists Walter Slaughter as musical director and Slaughter is also credited with writing the play's incidental music. Slaughter was a well-known musical director and composer who worked for West End theatres including the Opera Comique, where James's play *The American* was produced in 1890, and the Prince of Wales, writing both full scores and incidental music. At the time *Guy Domville* was produced, Slaughter was musical director for the St James. Writing to Elisabeth Robins during the rehearsals for *Guy Domville*, James refers to both costumes and scenery but makes no mention of music (Robins 141). James does seem to have had an interest in the lives of theatre musicians however, even if he does not refer to them in his critical work. In *The Princess Casamassima* (1886), the character of Mr. Vetch is employed as the second fiddle in the orchestra at the Bloomsbury Theatre, where he earns "a few shillings a week" (*PC* 17) for his pains.

Music is not the only sound to feature in the script for *The Saloon*. The sound of James's own voice can be clearly heard in the long and intricate stage directions, which in turn dictate to the actors how *they* should sound, act and feel. Lengthy stage directions were not unusual in Victorian plays. James's dramatic contemporaries such as Wilde, Pinero and Shaw made extensive use of them, partly as a means of keeping control of the script throughout

rehearsals and production, but also since playscripts were often published as a means of making the dramatist some money even if the plays themselves were not performed—in fact, Cary Mazer claims that "the only way Shaw could reach an audience in the nineties was to bring out his plays in print" (214). However, the extent to which James uses stage directions in *The Saloon* is unusual. The first page of the version of the script published in the *Complete Plays*, for example, consists of nothing but directions and, further in there are two pages of directions with only eleven lines of spoken text. There are two potential explanations for why James's stage directions for *The Saloon* are especially numerous and intricate. The most obvious reason is simple expediency. At the time rehearsals began, James was spending an extended period in America during the illness and death of his brother William and had no opportunity to attend rehearsals as he would normally have done, or to speak to either Kingston or the actors. In November 1910 James sent his literary agent, James B. Pinker, a copy of *The Saloon* to give to Kingston. The letter accompanying the script makes clear James's concern that his play would be difficult for Kingston "to do full justice to" and alludes to the "drawback" of his "absence from rehearsal and preparation" (*Letters* 4: 565). Writing to Sydney Waterlow a few months later in January of 1911, James was still worried, rightly as it transpired, that Kingston would be able to successfully "interpret" his "black little play" (*Letters* 4: 570). While James's friend John Pollock, who was also a friend of Kingston, acted as James's representative during the production (*Letters* 4: 565), this was not enough to reassure James that his absent voice would be heard strongly enough. Writing to Kingston on 31 January 1911, some two weeks after the opening night of *The Saloon*, James's anxieties regarding the staging of his play are clear. James declares himself "resigned" to the production of the play in his absence, telling Kingston that he takes comfort "from the fact of my so extremely detailed & numerous indications & aids; with which my copy fairly bristled" (*LL* 497-98). Since James was not able to be physically present at rehearsals of his play, he uses the script to try and direct both the actors and the action as far as possible. There are two surviving copies of the playscript in the Houghton Library at Harvard, the first of which has extensive notes and revisions added in James's own handwriting.[5] The version that appears in the *Complete Plays* is the second typescript, incorporating James's revisions, and it could certainly

[5] MS Am 1237.10 1-2, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

be said to "bristle" with indications, some of which, such as the description of Spencer Coyle having a "grizzled, intellectual head [and] a spare, clean-shaven, pedagogical, but eminently intelligent, acute and witty face" (*CP* 652) would have provided the actors and producer with not a few challenges. The numerous pages of stage directions certainly live up to James's description of them as "extremely detailed." Every aspect of the setting for the opening scene of the play has been thought out in meticulous detail, down to the "old, pre-aesthetic papering" on the walls, the "large lamp" that "burns with an old-fashioned globe but with no smart modern shade," and the "little basket" for Mrs. Julian to place her "work and her keys" (*CP* 651). Even things that James dismisses as "not important," such as the "question of a chimney place" are covered, while his instructions for how the piano that Kate plays should look, and the place on stage it should occupy, are painstakingly detailed. Placed against the opposite wall to a "large glass case containing precious military relics," the piano must be "spare, upright… of the old-fashioned "cottage" order but with faded and fluted green silk in the front" (*CP* 651). James's finely drawn sketch is a masterclass in scene-setting, designed to create the perfect atmosphere, the right impression of faded grandeur and the Wingrave family's "diminished honours" (*OW* 163), allowing the audience an insight into the lives of James's characters even before those characters utter their first lines. However, James's intentions may have been lost on a Victorian audience looking for spectacle and splendour such as that displayed in Wilde's society comedies, and who might well have wondered at the Little Theatre's apparent lack of decent props. It was certainly lost on Shaw, who informed James that it was "a damnable sin to draw with such consummate art a houseful of rubbish" (qtd. in *CP* 643). How far Kingston was willing, or able, to dress the stage just as James wished is now impossible to judge but certainly it would have been easier for the stage-manager to find a piece of faded green silk for the piano than it might have been for the actor playing Mrs. Julian to display the "elegance of frugality" (*CP* 651) that James's directions demand of her. As well as serving to voice his intentions during his enforced absence, James's exacting stage directions may also have been motivated by accumulated experience. By 1911, when *The Saloon* was staged, James had been writing, viewing and critiquing drama for more than forty years. *The Saloon* was his fifth play to reach the point of rehearsals and the fourth to be produced at that point in time. His own experiences over the years, and that of his theatrical friends and acquaintances, would have taught James the degree to which an original playscript was subject

to revision by managers, actors and even the audience. Writing in 1890, the successful actor-manager, Mrs. Madge Kendall, acknowledged that "very few plays indeed have ever been acted before the public in the state in which they were originally brought into the theatre. They undergo a thousand changes" (qtd. in Jackson 342-43). Having experienced those enforced changes himself and become increasingly frustrated with them, it seems reasonable to postulate that the length and complexity of James's stage directions would increase exponentially over time, in an effort to circumvent radical revisions. Looking chronologically at the development of James's dramatic writing supports this theory. The stage directions in James's earlier plays are shorter and less specific than those of his later drama. James's playscript for *Daisy Miller* (1882), for example, other than instructions for entrances and exits, mainly consists of simple one or two word directions to the actors on their demeanour and tone of voice, such as "Disappointed" (*CP* 152) or "Gravely" (*CP* 156). By the time of writing *Guy Domville* (1893), while the script still contains simple one-word instructions such as "Aghast" (*CP* 496) and "Laughing" (*CP* 497), James's directions are becoming more intricate, and more demanding of the actors' skills. So, Lord Devenish is instructed to be "Smiling, urbane, successful, with the movement of complacently swinging a cane" (*CP* 497) while Mrs. Peverel is described as "Listening an instant, and as if subjugated by his returning sanctity" (516). By the time James wrote *The Outcry* in 1909, almost every line of dialogue is accompanied by a direction ranging from the basic—"staring" (*CP* 793) to the bewildering: "Theign: (coming down, worked up by the unconsciously irritating insistence of the others to something quite openly wilful and perverse now)" (*CP* 798).

From James's letter to Kingston it would appear that at least some of the "detailed and numerous" instructions set out in his script had been followed. While James was not present to see the play himself, he received reports from "three or four friends" who had seen it and he "rejoice[d] to hear that so careful account had been taken" of his instructions (*LL* 498). However, we know from a cable from James to John Pollock that Kingston cut two pages from the script, a fact which "horrified" James (*CP* 648). The real horror though was Kingston's decision to go against James's specific instructions in one critical area—the appearance of the ghost. Like the subtle shades that flit through his supernatural stories, it is clear from James's letter that he intended the ghost to be merely a suggestion, a hint that would allow the theatre audience to conjure up its own demons, unless of course, like Mrs. Wingrave in the

original tale, that audience had "too little imagination for fear" (*OW* 66). In the end, the imaginative powers of the audience were not put to the test. Far from remaining, as James intended, "invisible and inscrutable, only intensely presumable and felt" (*LL* 498) the ghost took a visible and, if the critics are to be believed, entirely unconvincing, form. James's displeasure at this departure from such a crucial part of his script is clear in his letter to Kingston: "I gather with real dismay that at the final crisis … during the momentary rush of black darkness, some object or figure *appears* on the stage … There is absolutely no warrant or indication for this in my text, and I view any such introduction with the liveliest disapproval" (*LL* 498). James would no doubt have been doubly dismayed on reading the critics' reaction to the appearance of this ghostly apparition. *The Sporting Times* mocks the appearance of a "ghost that tries hard to horrify but only succeeds in raising a laugh" (Review) while *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* describes the play as "smooth talk rudely interrupted by an incongruous episode of supernatural melodrama" (Review). Despite James's assertion that his script has "no warrant or indication" for a visible ghost, "a monster that walks" (*LL* 498), it is just possible to see how Kingston might, wilfully or otherwise, have misinterpreted James's references to the "muffling whirlwind of an Apparition" and "a Shade that passes the window" (*CP* 673). There can be no excuse however, for the single shriek of James's script translating on stage into a confusion of shouting and screaming. Between Kingston's heavy-handed approach and the incompetent acting, James's subtle and claustrophobic ghost story, with its haunting music, becomes a discordant cacophony. And, while the music that accompanied James's play, whatever form it eventually took, does not feature in the newspaper reviews, the sound of the decidedly unmusical voices of the actors certainly does. *The Globe* refers to the "awful shrieks" of those actors and derides the ending as "pitilessly theatrical." The review is not critical overall however, describing James's "development of the little horror" as "imaginative and powerful" (Review). Similarly, while the writer in *The Sketch* derides "the clumsiness of the needlessly numerous entrances and exits" he acknowledges that the play has "a thrill in it, it arrests attention and excites curiosity" (Review). Reviewing James's play in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, the playwright and critic H.M. Walbrook was scathing about the lack of acting skills that sees the ending degenerate into "a crude contest between a man yelling and a woman shouting, a sheer noise that afflicted the ear" (116). In Walbrook's view, should the actors playing Kate Julian and Owen Wingrave have "played their scene with a little more

quiet intensity and a little less uproar" they would have "got a good deal nearer to the emotional centre of the audience" (116). Walbrook ended his review by declaring *The Saloon* to be "one of the most thrilling one-act plays produced in London of late years" (116).

In *Pyramus and Thisbe*, one of the characters declares that "there is something between absolute silence and—absolute sound" (*CP* 77). In his use of music as a plot device in *The Saloon*, perhaps James is trying to reach that "something between," using music to help create an atmosphere within the confines of the stage that might be evoked in his novels by the silences between the dialogue, where James allows his characters the space to think and feel and imagine, and where we, as readers, silently use our own imaginations. On the Victorian stage the sound of James's own voice, filtered through his intensely detailed stage directions, is silenced by the shrieking of the actors and by the critics' mockery of a ghost that James never intended to be seen or heard. There is a line in the original story where Coyle declares that Owen is "of a substance too fine to be handled by blunt fingers" (*OW* 169). A fitting epitaph perhaps for Kingston's cacophonous rendering of James's quietly eerie tale.

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