

# The Sound of James: The Aural Dimension in Henry James's Work

*Papers from the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Henry James Society  
Trieste, 4-6 July 2019*



EUT

edited by  
Leonardo Buonomo



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# Listening to/and James: A Look Back at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Henry James Society

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In the course of 2019, scholarship in the field of Henry James' life and work saw attention paid to a vast range of diverse topics, with numerous contributions from all over the world. In particular, 2019 saw the consolidation of a specific focus on "the aural dimension in Henry James's work," to quote the title of the 8th Henry James Society International Conference. Held in Trieste, the 8th edition of the window *par excellence* on Jamesian international scholarship was the most visible occasion in which James' sensibility toward music, sound, and the acoustic found new spaces of critical assessment. It was the opportunity to take stock of a trend that in recent years has added the dimension of sound to the well-established scholarly interest in James' complex relationship with the visual and his acute sensibility for the visual arts—sculpture, architecture, and especially, painting.

In a 2017 essay on the role of Italian opera in literature across the Atlantic, Andrea Mariani wrote: "James knew his limits and how hard it was for him to feel through music. However, precisely because of this, his rare 'incursions' in the realms of sounds, his whimsical reports of fleeting contacts with the

universe of hearing—with its metaphoric potentialities—as well as his few, but apt references to opera, acquire a special significance and must be carefully analyzed” (145). Furthermore, taking its cue from seminal inquiries in the field of James studies and literary criticism (e.g. Buonomo “Listening”; Halliwell; Hanna “‘unlyrical’”), as well as musicology (e.g. Kramer “Dangerous;” Vanderbilt “Complicated Notes”), recent scholarship is bringing to light James’s profound awareness of the classical musical scene and his interest in and engagement with opera, as well as the importance of the acoustic dimension in his work. From the early tales of the 1860s to his major novels, from his travel narratives to his autobiographical writings, criticism and correspondences, music plays a key role in capturing social and physical settings, characters and personalities. A non-rhapsodic attention appears to be paid to aural elements as significant of geographical, social, and cultural differences and transformations, including speech as a marker of ethnic and/or class identity, varieties of the English language and their rendering on the page, as well as the presence of foreign expressions, language and accents, and noises as part of the experience of modernity and technological progress.

Moreover, James’s relationship with music and sound is proving to be an excellent observation point from which to revitalize the study of James’s fortunes and legacies both during his lifetime and after, informing new original research on James’s adaptations on the stage as well as in audio-visual media, and on James’s echoes and refrains in subsequent literature. This essay aims to give an overview of these issues in Jamesian scholarship, organized around thematic clusters, and to take stock of seminal published works as well as more recent publications.

## JAMES AND MUSIC

James’ works is full of musical moments, and as Pierre A. Walker has shown, they are used in just as complex ways as pictorial art is used. One might start with an obvious example of music thematization, such as that found in *The Portrait of a Lady*, when Isabel comes upon Serena Merle playing the piano. Walker points out that having her play Schubert in the New York Edition (replacing Beethoven in the original edition) serves to underscore other references in the novel to young men dying of tuberculosis (such as Ralph Touchett and Richard Parkes Bonington), and bears witness to James’s knowledge of some

of the more obscure aspects of the contemporary European musical scene (on James and Schubert, see also Matthiessen).

Laura Hodges also has occasion to reflect on the piano scene of *The Portrait*, while Natasa Markovic highlights the seductive role played by Serena's voice. Catherine Marquette considers possible real-life sources for the voice of Gilbert Osmond and the sound and structure of the language used by Osmond and the other characters in James's Italian-based fiction. *The Portrait* is also at the center of Shuqin Fu's exploration of auscultation and soundscapes in James's narrative, focusing attention on auditory imagery including the sound of music as well as the presence and function of silence and speech on the page. According to Fu, the example of James may well help to cure what she sees as the "deafness" of literary studies in a society dominated by visual culture, and may serve as a starting point for a broader re-listening of literary canons. In Julie Beth Napolin's view, too, sound is fundamental in *The Portrait*, and she scrutinizes the representation of music floating through the halls of Gardencourt, where Isabel first meets Madame Merle as a sound. In her original take on *The Portrait of a Lady*, Victoria Coulson looks at the characters' relation to music and their figurative roles as musicians as significant indicators of their sexuality and desire.

Other characters "can claim a certain level of musical proficiency": music "delimits the status" of Charlotte Stant in *The Golden Bowl*, another of those women, who, like Serena, "stand outside the familial orbits [... and is] met by the unmusical, amateur appreciation of others" (Hannah, "'unlyrical'" 131). In chapter 13 of *The American*, as Walker points out, Claire de Cintré's vehement playing of the piano for her own self characterizes her restlessness and her state of frustrated repression, offering another example of James's use of music to carefully delineate the personality of his characters.

Hannah also considers figures of professional musicians in James's fiction (e.g. Anastasius Vetch in *The Princess Casamassima*, Vincent Adney in "The Private Life," Mrs. Ryves in "Sir Dominick Ferrand," and Herman Heidenmauer in "Collaboration") to argue that "the relationship between predominantly male professional musicians and the public becomes an important analogue for James's own professional (and theatrical) ventures in these texts, but it is an analogue cut through with uncertainties about the extent to which literature and music can claim each other as sister arts" ("unlyrical" 131 and *passim*).

James's complex relationship with German classical music, as revealed by the above-mentioned scene in *The Portrait*, as well as by earlier travel writings in *Transatlantic Sketches*, is read by Misun Yun also in connection with his professional relationship with *Macmillan's Magazine*, where *The Portrait* was serialized in Britain. The editor of this magazine was George Grove, later to become the first principal of the Royal College of Music, and the publication featured musical scores and frequent essays on German composers.

A reading of *The Sacred Fount* put forward by Joseph O'Leary highlights how, in chapter 9, the characters are attuned to the pianist they are listening to, and how the fruition of music provides a correlative objective of spoken and unspoken social dynamics, as well as almost a meta-commentary on the novel construction of relationships in carefully balanced choreographies and tableaux, to the point of suggesting that the novel itself be analyzed as a musical composition. Hannah ("unlyrical") also proposed a reading of this scene, along with the musical performance in "The Velvet Glove," as an example of how musical performance makes a significant contribution to the structure of relations between characters, and between the narrative voice and James's own audience.

In Larry Gray's opinion, the sounds which accompany visual impressions are key in the singular effects of the portraits in "The Liar," and he shows how sound helps to reveal the dark nuances in Oliver Lyon's character, and in his transposition of his subjects onto canvas, subjects which audiences react to almost as if the portraits had spoken. "A very singular sound" (James, "The Liar" 360) marks in fact the climactic moment in which the Colonel, his wife, and Lyon react to the Colonel's nearly-completed portrait, or to the reaction of others.

Jan Zieliński suggests solving the mystery of "The Figure in the Carpet" by investigating the aural aspect of the novella, including the enigma itself, as something not to be spoken about. He also focuses on the oral character of the secret and the relationship between the spoken and written word (e.g. Corvick's exclamation "Eureka! Immense" and its wired transmission).

Sound is all the more central in the 1909 drama *The Saloon*, based on James's 1892 ghost story "Owen Wingrave," argues Dee MacCormack. In this play, music is used as a plot device to create a sense of unease and anticipation, and the sound of James's own voice is represented, in the text, by long and intricate stage directions.

## JAMES'S VOICE(S)

Written scenes composed as musical pieces, making their melody visible (or audible) through “an abundance of dashes, exclamation points, question marks, repeated words and phrases, and phonetic echoes” are analyzed by a renowned musicologist such as Lawrence Kramer (e.g. *Expression*: 103), keynote speaker together with Donatella Izzo and Matthew Rubery at the 2019 Henry James Society conference. Kramer brings together previous scattered contributions in the field of musicology, e.g. the fascinating argument made by Jordan and Kafalenos about similarities between “Owen Wingrave” and Brahms’s *Intermezzo*, op. 119, no. 1 in their use of systematic ambiguity (see also Vanderbilt [“Notes”] for an analysis of musical analogies in the structures of “Fordham Castle” and “Four Meetings”). Kramer’s work extensively documents and reflects upon James’s sensibility for the acoustic, and his careful construction of his own voice on the page (e.g. see Kramer’s *Expression*: 100 and ff., as well as other works in which James provides material for Kramer to discuss his own theory of ‘melodic speech’), also in terms of fruition on the part of readers, imagining James’s voice as author in their own mind’s ear. In his keynote lecture “Music, Voice and the Sound of Henry James,” Kramer draws from his own experience as composer, in 2006–2007, of a song cycle based on prose passages from Henry James, to argue that setting James to music might give us important clues as to the sound of his voice.

Drawing on Gert Buelens’s seminal work on James’s use of alliteration, Mark Fogel focuses attention on James’s inclination for verbal sound effects, such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, and even rhyme within elaborate prose. According to Buelens (*James and the “Aliens”*), alliteration in James is “a ubiquitous phenomenon,” that “weaves together the text in a ‘continuous and congruous’ manner that is distinctly at odds with the penetrative thrust of the analysis to which that text purports to submit the American scene” (2). Fogel highlights the increased use of alliteration in the later work, in revisions of novels such as *The Portrait* (e.g. the description of Lord Warburton) and *The Ambassadors*.

In “Henry James and the ‘unprovoked harsh note’ of Experience,” Donatella Izzo, taking her cue from the subtitle of the conference, focuses on the aural dimension in *The Ambassadors* and considers it in relation to the treatment of other sensorial experiences in the novel. She shows how tracing and exploring sound offers new insights into James’s major-phase writing.

Philip Horne gives further emphasis to just how receptive James's prose is "to the language of poetry" ("Among the Poets" 72), and other studies on how James's prose can be "felt as 'poetic'" (80) highlight how James's commas might have the same function as line breaks (Dobyns 127). Moreover, to paraphrase Hannah ("Hearing"), the poetics of Jamesian syntax are especially noticeable after he began using dictation when writing, with sentences and paragraphs often being deliberately constructed as formally evocative poetic units.

Dictation and sound in James's late non-fiction and memoirs have also been extensively studied by Oliver Herford, who devotes specific attention to difference as an audible phenomenon, including plays with typographically identical words that mean and sound differently in different languages: this focus raises interesting questions on James's relation to print media and his sense of the variability of language (*Style of Retrospect*, esp. ch. 7; "Sound of Difference"; see also Nabae on dictation, the use of voice, and sound effects in the 1885-1900 stories).

To go back to non-fiction, Melanie H. Ross, relying on Peter Elbow's *Vernacular Eloquence* acquisitions on speech-into-writing, makes an analysis of James's *Notebooks* as a form of free writing that moves from the desire to infuse the page with the liveliness of speech, and channels into writing what might be called "the voice in the head." Connected to deeply conversational elements in the author's letters, Ross argues that "writing as talking"—literally and figuratively—is a crucial part of James's composition process, that dictation explicitly enacts.

Fresh ideas about James's ability to put his own voice on the page also emerge from Willie Tolliver's considerations of the part played by the characters' voices and the construction of soundscapes in *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*. Moving back and forth between the *Hawthorne* biography, works of fiction such as *The Wings of the Dove* and writings by contemporaries, Greg Zacharias investigates the "music of negation," i.e. negative description and the language and syntax that give it structure.

James Lello is working on James's auditive intelligence, and his discrimination of tone as an essential part of this (see, for example, the remarks in "The Question of Our Speech"), and more generally on the theme of intonation in James.

On a different textual level, the presence of musical metaphors was explored by Patrick Jones in his reflection on the role of 'life' in James's aesthetics, reading "The Art of Fiction" alongside passages from Bergson's *Essai sur les*

*données immédiates de la conscience* (1889) in order to show James's relationship with *Lebensphilosophie*.

## JAMES AND VOICE(S)

As Anna Despotopoulou reminds us, transferring the characters' voices to the page can also include inner voices and monologues. In works such as *The Portrait* and "The Turn of the Screw," the complex interactions between the sounds of the outside world and interior mental dimensions of vocal thoughts, questions, and exclamations need investigating in order to understand how the protagonists situate themselves in their worlds and in their relationships; also of interest is the relationship between privilege and voice in James's fiction (e.g. who has the right to speak), as well as the cosmopolitan and transnational nature of his writing. Teckyoung Kwon also works on language as sound in the ears of Miles in "The Turn of the Screw," while Yuehong Wang focuses on the narrator's voice in the same novella: its ambiguities and hesitations, and its relationship with multi-level narrative subjects.

On the rendering of dialogue and conversation on the page, Philip Horne ("Attending") starts his analysis with *The Awkward Age* to describe certain features of James's changing treatment of conversation, in the broader context of James's most intense period of involvement with the theatre.

Sonoko Saito reflects on *The American*, drawing parallels with "The Question of Our Speech" and James's attempt to render American English on the page. Fulvia Sarnelli makes an analysis of "In the Cage," starting from Vericat's statements about "the replacement of the voice in the novel by the aural performance of the writing's own sounds," as a means of liberating the novel from the idealized elocutionary performance of a British authorial voice, and opening it up to the reinvention of its acoustics.

According to Mary Ann O'Farrell, dithering is a characteristic shared by many of James's characters and narrators, and intrigued by the quirky and discordant aspects of James's style, she considers how the habits and practices of wavering are rendered audible in characters' speech and in the language of narration.



## LISTENING TO LANGUAGE(S)

Following in the footsteps of reflections such as Buonomo's ("Listening") on James's response to foreign idioms and the variety of accents in his perception of New York's soundscape, scholarly attention is increasingly drawn to the role of other languages rendered on the page. This happens with the occasional intrusions of words from missing French and German source-texts, and the representation of speech and sound differences, and of a British-American (dis) connection in "A Bundle of Letters" (Buchholtz "Henry James the Translator" and "Setting the Scene"). Adopting a similar perspective, Elzbieta Lubelska suggests that the ambivalent French expression "femme du monde" in *The Ambassadors* is not just an appropriate description of the morally ambiguous character of Madame de Vionnet, but with its mysterious romantic sound, is also a figure in tune with the metaphor of the world as the totality of possible experience in Kantian philosophy.

As Agnese De Marchi points out, vocal patterns (such as speech and accent) together with sounds, convey "the latent poetry of the South" (James, *The American Scene* 657), in representations often connected to the Civil War and to post-war social and cultural tensions, as epitomized by Basil Ranson in *The Bostonians*, and she stresses the synesthetic approach to be found in James's depictions of physical and metaphorical Southern spaces.

Following on from scholars such as Eric Sundquist, Jennifer Cook and Henry Wonham, Kathleen Lawrence argues that the excessive use of frontier vernacular markers such as "ain't" in "The Siege of London" and "Lady Barbarina" signals borderline subjectivities, having much in common with wilderness settings and untamed characters, and harking back to the very idea of "the West." Lawrence looks at the phonic diversity of the characters in order to make a connection between the shift toward greater diversity embodied in Nancy Beck's seduction of Sir Arthur ("The Siege") and Herman Longstraw's capture of Lady Agnes ("Lady Barbarina"), and James's interrogations of his own identity in the years he was writing the two stories 1882-1884—and extending his network of friends into queer circles.

## JAMES AND THE SOUND OF PLACES

The edition of *The Complete Letters of Henry James* provides the opportunity to take stock of James's aural experiences (such as the concerts heard at Pauline Viardot's in Paris) enriched by the painstaking research done by editors such as Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias into the factual, biographical and cultural details and settings (see vol. 3: 18, 37, 106).

The letters offer the starting point for cross-cutting readings of works of non-fiction as well as novels and short stories, such as Rebekah Scott's, moving from a letter to Violet Hunt (16 March 1909) to survey James "in the minor key." Or again, as shown by Sarah Wadsworth, private messages can offer golden opportunities to eavesdrop on James's communications with and about women, and rather than position ourselves in line with an authoritative voice, adopt an oblique approach.

Joshua Parker illustrates how computational stylistics can be useful to provide new evidence about the role and distribution of diegetic sounds in James's fiction, by mapping words and phrases that draw attention to sounds and connecting them to areas of interest such as setting and position in terms of narrative plot structure.

Leonardo Buonomo ("Soundscapes") explains how sound connotes New York and London in "An International Episode," and serves to underscore the contrast between American and English manners, with the different conventions followed in social conversation, especially between the sexes (as shown by the character of Bessie Alden). Drawing on examples from James's depictions of modern London, as well as from *The Golden Bowl* and other works, David McWhirter does a fine job of showing how both linguistic and non-linguistic imagined and metaphoric sounds help to constitute the broader soundscape of James's fiction.

The importance of soundscapes in the description of places is also emphasized by Rosella Mamoli Zorzi in her examination of silence and voices in Venice, while Lisa Nais draws particular attention to the voices of Venice in James's construction of modern women figures including silences and silencing, changes of speech patterns, and changes in voice.

As Carmine Di Biase shows, there is a complex interaction between the sound of the setting and the construction of the characters in the Venice of "The Aspern Papers." There, the quietness of the city appears to be functional to the incantatory power of the characters' voices, under the Shakespearian

spell cast by the allusions to *Macbeth* scattered throughout the text as early as the first edition of 1888.

In James's representation of Niagara Falls in his travel piece "Niagara" (first published in *The Nation* in 1871, then revised in *Portraits of Places*, 1883), Sarah Chambré shows the vital role played by the acoustic dimension in pinning down the experience of a distinctive American landscape to challenge the sublime treasures of Europe. At the corresponding stylistic level, poetic devices such as rhythm, alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia are used by James to craft his landscape, and his use of pacing and silence contribute to the dramatic construction of the Falls, described and rewritten in a vast number of travel writings and fiction in the course of the nineteenth century.

Ivana Cikes makes some interesting points about the sounds present when imagining place and national identities in her analysis of the impressions of James's American visit in 1904-05 and his memories of the America of his childhood, focusing on the differences in the soundscapes of the locations he had grown up in and then returned to years later.

#### JAMES'S SILENCES

The silences present in James's writing have also been listened to as being full of significance for the construction of individual and collective identities, and social life and dynamics. Ki Yoon Jang's investigation into scenes of persistent silence between the two sisters in "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes," is conducted against the backdrop of the characters' opposing dispositions and what they might reveal as regards the period of the story's composition and publication.

In "The Jolly Corner," Li Chen sees the combination of speech and silence as a pivotal factor interacting with the visual dimension to construct horror: there, sound is used to reinforce or relieve ghostly effects, and the ghost, deprived of speech, represents Spencer's depressed unconsciousness, or his Lacanian other. Similarly, according to Linda Raphael, silence in *The Wings of the Dove* is associated with the identity of the stranger or outsider. Building on critical contributions such as Buonomo's "Listening," Raphael reflects on the signs associated with silence in James's novels, starting with Eugenio in *The Wings of the Dove*.

As a way to approach the reading of “The Beast in the Jungle” in the classroom, Michael Anesko proposes an examination of silence together with the other forms of discourse present in that tale, and how they shift progressively in tone, value, and volume as the story evolves (see also Halpert for the teaching of James using digitalized sources). Phyllis van Slyck ably shows how Maggie’s unspoken, imagined words in part two of the *The Golden Bowl* are crucial to her retrieving of Amerigo in the end.

#### JAMES AND THE SOUNDS OF TECHNOLOGY

Fascinated by how James’s techniques were inspired by new communication technologies, Matthew Rubery, in an article published in 2006, describes “The Papers” as being among the first works of fiction to bring onto the page “changing conceptions of intimacy brought about by new communication technologies that had only recently become a part of everyday life” (“Unspoken” 347), during a time, the late nineteenth century, described by James as “the age of interviewing” (*Novelty* 109 and ff.), when a person’s individual voice was rapidly winning society’s favor as “the most effective way to know a person’s ‘true’ self” (“Unspoken” 344). Rubery points out that celebrity is repeatedly characterized in “The Papers” as “insistently verbal” (“Unspoken” 359), and fame is presented as a voice able to attract attention above the crowd, represented as a “great murmur.” What is left unspoken between the two lovers, on the other hand, “might be taken to express the story’s conception of intimacy as a form of speechlessness defined in opposition to the confessional voice of the interview” so that “in a plot devoted to the confessional manner associated with the interview, Howard and Maud’s relationship develops almost entirely without speech” (363), and their discussions of their own life are deliberately located far from the noise of Fleet Street (see also Buonomo, “Listening” on the loudness of New York in *The American Scene*). In “The Master’s Voice,” Rubery delves into the implications and challenges of rendering James’s voice actually audible, as was done in 1942 when “The Turn of the Screw” was first recorded for the visually impaired. Given James’s well-documented fondness for reading aloud, or listening to readings of, literary works, it seems likely, Rubery contends, that he would have appreciated this new way of experiencing his writing.

For Rory Drummond, the noise-filled city of London at the turn of the twentieth century seems to resonate with aural devices such as alliteration, onomatopoeia and rhyme, and similes and metaphors centered on music imagery exploited in the prose of “The Papers,” as well as with celebrity gossip and newsy chatter, while the capital’s background hum is provided by newspapers and magazines.

In a fascinating paper delivered by Cheng Xin, attention is focused on the telegraph in “In the Cage,” not simply with regard to the telegraphist’s role (and proposed overlappings with the author, the typist/text, and the reader), but also to how she uses the power of the sounder and telegraphic code to form her own vision of upper-class society and intervene in the affair between Lady Bradeen and Captain Everard. In Cheng Xin’s opinion, the role of the sounder is not only and not so much a metaphor, but rather a part of a network of relations which includes non-human entities. Dongshin Yi also stressed the role of technology and “the noise of code” in this novella as signs of James’s anxiety about (and fascination with) the coming of non-linguistic, electronic forms of communication, drawing on Katherine Hayles reading of the novella as a “prequel to the story of information in the twentieth century” (71).

June Hee Chung’s paper highlighted the characterizations of technology’s role in shaping practices for communication and aesthetics in “In the Cage” and *The Wings of the Dove*. There are similarities in how the sounder and the telegram are represented in “In the Cage,” and electrical currents and alarms, ships, trains, photographs, and newspapers are represented in *The Wings of the Dove*, with their links to important moments in the novel and their production of noises which in turn help to produce meaning and shape the quality of messages (“Sounders,” see also *Henry James and the Media Arts*, ch. 3).

Furthermore, Merle Williams’ parallel reading of “In the Cage” and *The Awkward Age* shows how conversation, technology, and community interact in James’s take on *fin-de-siècle* “revolting daughters.”

#### THE AURAL DIMENSION, QUEERNESS AND GENDER ROLES

Paul Fisher explores James’s relationship with the portrait-painter John Singer Sargent from an aural perspective: the two men met in Paris in the early 1880s and Sargent was soon introduced into James’s London circle. Sargent’s habit of playing the piano in social settings, and his passion for

modern, experimental, and ethnic music—including his interest in exotic dancers—unsettled James, who criticized Sargent’s painting *El Jaleo* (1882) for the “want of serenity” represented by the female dancer at its center. According to Fisher, James’s negative opinion of *El Jaleo*, when he was usually laudatory of Sargent’s work, is a good example of the two men’s contrasting attitudes toward musical, theatrical, rule-breaking women and the queer transgressions they sometimes embodied (“Want of Serenity”; on James, Sargent, and Henrietta Reubell’s salon as a queer cultural space see also Fisher’s “The Dear Little Tobacconized *Salon*”).

New insights can be found when queer echoes are located from unexpected perspectives in James’s work, thereby revitalizing established academic positions, such as in Christopher Stuart’s proposal to read May Bartram as the Jamesian stand-in in “The Beast in the Jungle,” arguing in favor of intentionalism as regards the transmutation of homosexual romance in the tale.

Brendan Whitmarsh argues that the aural dimension has a vital role to play in engendering new readings of sexual disquiet in *The Wings of the Dove*, where dislocations in spoken language are distinct from those manifested on the scriptural planes of James’s texts.

Mercedes García Palma’s contrastive study of “Julia Bride” (1908) and “Mora Montravers” (1909) uses Lacan’s theory of *jouissance* and the pleasure principle to throw light on the moral implications of femininity and reflecting upon how the eponymous characters change in the course of the narrative, on the role of male voices, and ultimately on connections between the issue of misplaced voices and gender agency.

#### JAMESIAN ECHOES ON STAGE, PAGE, AND SCREEN

In 2005, Michael Halliwell remarked that “the current plethora of films based on the work of Henry James finds something of a parallel in the number and range of operatic adaptations of James’s fiction. During the last forty years there have been at least ten full-scale operas based on his fiction, ranging from the early Benjamin Britten work, *The Turn of the Screw* (1954), to the more recent versions of ‘The Aspern Papers’ by Philip Hageman and Dominick Argento (1988).” He quite rightly described this series of adaptations as “one of the more bizarre coincidences in operatic history” (“Voice” 11), and proceeded to outline the operatic settings and scenes in James’s work, and

discuss the relationships with Jamesian texts of composers and librettists in ten adaptations (an analysis fully developed also in Halliwell's *Opera*, with specific attention devoted to Jamesian narrators and melodramatic aspects in the metaphrastic process).

Taking into account the techniques of adaptation in Britten's version of "The Turn of the Screw," Beverly Haviland focuses her analysis on how music and sound contribute to the transposition of the ambiguity of the tale and the register of the queer, as opposed to film versions such as Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* (1961), and Tom McLoughlin's *The Haunting of Helen Walker* (1995), in which the scores tend to reinforce the heteronormativity implied in the conventional resolution of the Gothic genre. Taeko Kitahara attempts to show how comparing the use of sounds in "The Turn of the Screw" and *The Innocents* gives us a better understanding of James's emphasis on silences, and his use of theatrical techniques on the page.

Chip Badley explores the *acoustmètre*—the off-screen acousmatic sound-track made up of voices, music, sound effects (as defined by Michel Chion)—in Babette Mangolte's avant-garde film *What Maisie Knew* (1975) and points out its pivotal role in dislodging the scopophilic visual gaze of James' novella. In the film, the aural dimension therefore makes it possible for the child to resist heteronormative adult sexuality, by giving representation to the sonic disturbances of a young person struggling to reconcile sound and image, and curating a feminist/queer sonic practice of listening to the *acoustmètre*.

Speech and sound play their part in Jamesian re-uses, imitations of his style, and parodies on the written page, such as in John Banville's *Mrs. Osmond* (2017), Colm Tóibín's *The Master* (2004), and Cynthia Ozick's *Foreign Bodies* (2010), as well as in shorter works analyzed by Mary Burns and Paula Marantz Cohen (see also *Tales from a Master's Notebook*, the recent anthology edited by Philip Horne). Michael Gorra, Philip Horne, and Julie Rivkin also reflect on Banville's novel, and more broadly on the novelist's choice to take up another writer's characters, as opposed to using the characters of myth, the common stock of a culture, and look at the ethical and aesthetic questions raised by such a choice (see also Gorra, "The Lady Lives;" Horne "What Isabel Knew").

Banville's uncanny ability to reproduce the sound of James's style and his narrative voice on the page also caught the attention of Bethany Layne ("Sounds"): this ability is all the more impressive when compared with

other parodies and exaggerations of James's late style, including Max Beerbohm's *The Mote in the Middle Distance* (1912), Theodora Bosanquet's "Afterwards" (1915), and the untitled manuscript of Michiel Heyns's fictionalised Bosanquet (Frieda Wroth in *The Typewriter's Tale*, 2005). In "Henry," Layne shows how in Cynthia Ozick's "Dictation," a work of biographical fiction, James's style in relation to dictation, and a reading of queer desire over the narrative restoration of compulsory heterosexuality take center stage.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

To summarize, the interest in the acoustic dimension in Henry James can be traced back to a handful of seminal works published in the last twenty years, but this interest has grown rapidly in recent times, and has culminated in the 2019 Henry James Society conference.

Let us now try to outline some of the main directions of critical inquiry that this—most certainly incomplete—overview might have helped to identify. The study of Henry James's own voice, and the acoustic dimension of his prose has given rise to research into the stylistic techniques affecting the rendering of sound on the page, the relationship between speech and writing, and dictation in particular, as well as sound and/or music metaphors, and analogies with music in composition techniques.

Much fruitful work has focused on the complex relationship in James's fiction that connects the narrator's voice with those of his characters, especially as regards speech and sound as signifying (or being closely connected to) individual and collective agency, including representation of gender and queerness, and of ethnic and national identities.

Recent appraisals have shed new light on the explicit use of music and musicians in James's fiction, and have unearthed important testimonies concerning his awareness, knowledge, and frequentation of musical performances and performers, as portrayed in autobiographical writings and correspondences.

The attention paid by James to the acoustic dimension of places have led to fresh studies into both the registration of soundscapes in the places he visited and put on the page in his memoirs, letters, and travel writings, and their fictional counterparts in his novels, tales and novellas.



Just as the aural approach is helping to revitalize academic investigations of James's major fiction as well as his less well-known private texts and communication, it is also being used to revisit Jamesian adaptations and re-uses on the page, stage and screen, in which the rendering or parodying of James's voice(s) and its interaction with the acoustic dimensions proper to the performative arts provides fertile ground for further inquiry.

## ABBREVIATIONS

SoJ—*The Sound of James: The Aural Dimension in Henry James's Work: Henry James Society 8th International Conference*, Trieste, Italy, 4-6 July 2019.

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