

ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND FORM IN THREE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES

"ROMAN CATHOLICISM AND FORM IN THREE NOVELS OF HENRY JAMES"

by

GREGORY N. MUNCE, B.A.

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AUTHOR: Gregory N. Munce, B.A. (McMaster University)

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Roman Catholic imagery and related  
imagery of form in three novels of  
Henry James: The American, The Portrait  
of a Lady and The Wings of the Dove.\*

\* See Appendix

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Religion plays an important technical and thematic role in the fiction of Henry James. It is the purpose of this study to examine the religious references which occur in The American, The Portrait of a Lady and The Wings of the Dove,<sup>1</sup> in order to gain an understanding and an appreciation of their extensive use and their essential purpose. Since so many of the references concern Roman Catholicism, and as it naturally offers the best example of institutionalized religion, I have chosen it as the central focus of this discussion. But James uses religion in many other ways, and these will be necessarily considered as well. The treatment of the novels will involve a close analysis of the text, with particular emphasis on the interrelation between and the meaning of religious metaphors and symbols in the context of the "message" of each work as a whole. In order to provide a background for this textual analysis, however, it will be necessary to consider briefly in this chapter the two important matters of James's own religious outlook and the available critical treatment of this aspect of James's work.

Because of his double awareness of both the Puritan tradition he left behind<sup>2</sup> and the Roman Catholic world

he encountered in Europe, as well as the fact that both his father and brother were religious philosophers,<sup>3</sup> James's work naturally invites an examination of the role of religion in it. In spite of these factors, however, in his letters and his autobiographical writings James himself made few statements about his own beliefs or lack of them, and has often been *singled out* by critics for his lack of philosophy, moral seriousness and religion.<sup>4</sup> For example, in a letter to his brother William, who had just published The Literary Remains of their father, Henry remarks on:

how indispensable it is that those who go in for religion should take some heed of it. I can't enter<sub>5</sub> into it (much) myself---I can't be so theological.

The "much" is an interesting qualifying parenthesis; for James was a serious man, and inevitably the questions of God's existence and the after-life must have been on his mind, as he reveals in his autobiography, Notes of a Son and Brother:

... in fine I should have been thankful for a state of faith, a conviction of the Divine, an interpretation of the universe---anything one might have made bold to call it---which would have supplied more features or appearances.<sup>6</sup>

But nowhere does he record that he has found such a "state of faith", at least not in the traditional sense of external, institutionalized religion. He does, however, in a subsequent letter to William, express a more positive solution:

One must go one's way and know what one's about,<sup>7</sup> and have a general plan and a private religion.

As much as a single, isolated statement can, this concept of a "private religion" emphasizes James's lack of belief in an historical God, his lack of sympathy with organized religious system, and his self-confidence in matters of a metaphysical nature, if not his ultimate agnosticism.

The only other direct personal comment of significance made by James about religion occurs in his 1910 essay, "Is There a Life After Death?". In it, James does not avow a belief in God, nor does he discuss such problems as salvation, worship, or prayer; rather, he confines himself to a philosophical discussion of his belief in the immortality of the individual consciousness. He finds the whole matter rather unattractive: "I began, I may accordingly say, with a distinct sense that our question didn't appeal to me."<sup>8</sup> He believes in immortality because he feels (somewhat humorously) that he has expended a lot of energy in developing his consciousness and does not want to see this effort go to waste. He desires immortality:

For I think of myself as enjoying the very maximum reason to desire the renewal of existence---existence the forms of which I have had admirably and endlessly to cultivate.<sup>9</sup>

But his ultimate belief in the immortality of consciousness is entirely independent of orthodox or institutional theology, as a careful reading of this complex passage will illustrate:

I like to think that we here, as to soul, dangle from the infinite and shake about in the universe; that this world and this conformation and these senses are

our helpful and ingenious frame, amply provided with wheels and replete with the lesson for us of how to plant, spiritually, our feet. That conception of the matter comes back, I recognize, to the theory of the spiritual discipline, the purification and preparation on earth for heaven, of the orthodox theology--which is a resemblance I don't object to, all the more that it is a superficial one, as well as a fact mainly showing, at any rate, how neatly extremes may sometimes meet.<sup>10</sup>

It is only a coincidence, then, that there is a "resemblance" between his outlook and that of one "superficial" aspect of orthodox theology. As James stresses, "extremes may sometimes meet", but the meeting does not result in complete identification, and may only be the result of chance.

These statements constitute the few references James ever made to his personal religious beliefs. They are notable more for their paucity than for their intrinsic interest. The conclusion to be derived from them, however, is not that James was irreligious and indifferent to these matters, but simply that he did not possess, or did not desire to express, a belief in God or a connection with conventional religion. He satisfied his spiritual desires in other ways, principally through artistic creation.

James's reticence to make self-revelatory comments about his religious position did not, however, preclude the possibility of using religion extensively and significantly throughout his fiction. In the form of imagery, symbolism, mythic structure, character depiction and scenic description, religion plays a significant role throughout both the novels



and the shorter works. Roman Catholicism in particular is one of the most prevalent sources for James's religious devices, and on both technical and thematic grounds, deserves close examination in order to arrive at an understanding of many key passages in terms of James's tone and *morale* intent; indeed, an appreciation of his precise attitude towards religion and the Church becomes mandatory before the meaning of certain novels as a whole can be appreciated.

This prevalence of Roman Catholic references has caused several critics to speculate that James was himself attracted to the Roman Catholic faith. Before proceeding to my own interpretation of James's use of the Church, therefore, it will be necessary to examine the validity of their contentions---contentions which one is surprised to find made at all, since James's personal comments would seem to deny any possibility of such an attraction and since his use of Roman Catholicism, however one interprets its meaning, was almost inevitable, given the fact that his novels so often are set in Roman Catholic or Anglo-Catholic countries.

Foremost among these critics is the novelist Graham Greene, whose views as a Roman Catholic immediately qualify, or at least bring under suspicion his thesis that James's intense awareness of supernatural evil, his desire that the dead be remembered in such stories as "The Altar of the Dead", and the constant visits of his characters to cathedrals, signi-

fies that "he never even felt the possibility of choice; it was membership of the Catholic Church or nothing."<sup>11</sup> Greene offers no proof of his thesis apart from these intimations and contents himself with speculation and hearsay. He relates this vague anecdote as one of his major pieces of evidence:

A friend of James once spoke to him of a lady who had been converted to Catholicism. James was silent for a long while; then he remarked that he envied her.<sup>12</sup>

Greene does not tell us the identity of either the "friend" or the "lady", nor does he tell us at what period of James's life this event took place, or how he discovered that it did take place. The evidence Greene does offer seems to me to be proof against his thesis rather than in support of it. He quotes the following passage from one of James's first letters from Rome to William, as an example of the "aesthetic appeal"<sup>13</sup> of Roman Catholicism to James. This passage, on the contrary, if read in the light of a less prejudiced eye, constitutes a mocking denunciation of Roman Catholicism. Admittedly, it may illustrate James's "aesthetic" interest in the Church, but it simultaneously decimates the practices and beliefs of its adherents, as well as criticizing its leader:

In St. Peter's I stayed some time. It's even beyond its reputation. It was filled with foreign ecclesiastics--great armies encamped in prayer on the marble plains of its pavement--an inexhaustible physiognomical study. To crown my day, on my way home, I met his Holiness in person--driving in prodigious purple state--sitting dim within the shadows of his coach with two uplifted benedictory fingers--like some dusky Hindoo

idol in the depths of its shrine . . . . From the high tribune of a great chapel of St. Peter's I have heard in the Papal choir a strange old man sing in a shrill unpleasant soprano. I've seen troops of little tortured neophytes clad in scarlet, marching and countermarching and ducking and flopping,<sup>14</sup> like poor little raw recruits for the heavenly host.

The picture of "great armies" on the "marble plains", the Pope as "some dusky Hindoo idol", the "little tortured neophytes" and the "shrill unpleasant soprano" of the old man, is hardly a laudatory image of the Church and reveals James's "aesthetic" interest in St. Peter's only if one accepts the dictum that what is supremely ugly and garish is part of the beautiful.

The other key evidence Greene cites for James's attraction to Catholicism is the scene in The Ambassadors in which Strether achieves a moment of peace and consolation by entering Notre Dame. As in *many* similar cases throughout his fiction, however, James makes it clear that Strether is not about to become a Catholic; even Greene recognizes this: "it is a rather lukewarm tribute to a religious system."<sup>15</sup> Whatever may be James's reasons for having Strether enter Notre Dame, he explicitly states that, as for Strether, "the great church had no altar for his worship, no direct voice for his soul" and that "justice was outside, in the hard light, and injustice too."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, the scene functions as a means of bringing Strether and Madame de Vionnet together; she appears to be praying before one of the altars and it is at this moment that Strether is

"converted" to her. Even though she is not an evil character, she does deceive him, and it is significant that the deception begins in Notre Dame. Greene, then, refutes himself even while presenting his evidence. He seems to realize the tenuous nature of his argument when at the end of his essay he hedges, by saying that "it would be wrong to leave the impression that James's religious sense ever brought him nearer than hailing distance to an organized system, even to a system organized by himself."<sup>17</sup>

Robert M. Slabey, in his article "Henry James and 'The Most Impressive Convention in All History'",<sup>18</sup> uses many of the same arguments as Greene to try to illustrate James's infatuation with Catholicism. Mr. Slabey writes from Notre Dame University, and thus, like Greene, *might* be suspected of stretching the point to satisfy his own doctrinal prejudices. Since many of Slabey's points repeat Greene's, since the conclusions remain only speculation and since the essay matches Greene's in its utter lack of documentation, I will not enter into it in much detail, but will examine the points which differ from Greene's. This article is fairly important, as it has been generally accepted by other scholars, in spite of its lack of documentation.<sup>19</sup> In the first place, the phrase James applies to the Church (actually to the Pope, but the passage can be read on a figurative level)---"the most impressive convention

in all history"<sup>20</sup>---evokes more than the apparent laudatory awe. For James has a rather dim view of "convention" and imposed forms. As Ralph Touchett remarks, and as James himself says in his notebook entry for The Portrait of a Lady, Isabel Archer's tragic fate is that she will be "ground in the very mill of the conventional".<sup>21</sup> That the Church is "the most impressive convention in all history", in Roderick Hudson, may be, then, one of James's most subtle ironic touches.

Slabey concentrates his examination of James's interest in Catholicism on the earlier works, whose content is largely Italian. Apart from the obvious fact that mention of the Church was almost inevitable when the setting of the stories was in such a bastion of the Roman Catholic faith, Slabey makes the mistake of identifying James too closely with his characters. A character may express a desire to enter the Church, but that does not mean that James is similarly tempted. Moreover, on at least one occasion, a character's apparent desire to become a Catholic has an ironic twist to it. Rowland Mallett of Roderick Hudson says that:

in these many months now that I have been in Rome, I have never ceased for a moment to look at Catholicism simply from the outside. I don't see an opening as big as your finger-nail, where I could creep into it.<sup>22</sup>

Slabey misses the irony, but James probably intended us to notice it, especially when one recalls the many derogatory

images in James of convents and monasteries. It is difficult to "creep into" the Roman Catholic Church, says Rowland; but that is, in a way, fortunate, because, once in, implies James, it is even more difficult to get out. At any rate, Slabey's direct equation between those characters in James who profess a desire to enter the Church and James himself is irrelevant and unsatisfactory.

Slabey also places great importance on a section from James's Italian Hours, the record of James's travels in Italy, which consists largely of descriptions of Italian cathedrals and art. He quotes James's account of a Roman carnival (itself a religious feast), during which James enters a little chapel and encounters a solitary little priest praying fastidiously while the chaos of the noisy carnival continues outside. Slabey triumphantly quotes James's admiration for the priest and offers this as strong evidence of James's attraction to the Church; but this can be considered as well to be merely admiration for the individual, not the Church itself. Moreover, James expresses the distaste that was mixed with his admiration:

Yet I confess that though I wasn't enamoured of the Carnival myself, his seemed a grim preference and this forswearing of the world a terrible game---a gaining only if your zeal never falters; a hard fight when it does.<sup>23</sup>

James, then, in spite of his admiration and pity for the priest, has no desire to undergo a similar "forswearing of

the world". Slabey neglects to interpret such passages fully; nor does he explore the rest of Italian Hours for similar "proof" of James's latent Catholicism. For if he did, he would not find much evidence in this document, which consists largely of aesthetic dissertations on Italian art and architecture. There are, however, interspersed with these, some subtle criticisms of the Church. Most of these comments typify a tourist's interests in sights and events, but occasionally James reveals that, in spite of the opulent vestiges of imperial Roman Catholicism and its exotic architecture and priestly trappings, he takes exception to its pompous materialism and to what he was later to call, in The Ambassadors, "the recruiting interests of the Catholic Church . . . the monster of bulging eyes and far-reaching quivering groping tentacles".<sup>24</sup> For example, he finds it hypocritical that a tariff should be charged at every spiritual portal through which he passes:

The Catholic Church never renounces a chance for the sublime for fear of a chance of the ridiculous--- especially when the chance of the sublime may be the very excellent chance of five francs . . . . What- ever may be the better opinion as to the future of the Church, I can't help thinking she will make a figure in the world so long as she retains this great fund of precious "properties", this prodigious capital decoratively invested and scintillating throughout Christendom at effectively-scattered points. 25

This sarcastic comment is matched by James's feelings at

the time of the Pope's illness: (James's criticism of the Church, in fact, seems to centre on the figure of the Pope, the "inaccessible idol in his shrine".)

Indeed I am afraid to speak of the Pope's illness at all, lest I should say something egregiously heartless about it, recalling too forcibly that unnatural husband who was heard to wish that his wife would "either" get well---! (p. 137)

He finds it paradoxical that "Rome, where everything ecclesiastical is, in aspect so very much of this world---so florid, so elegant, so full of accommodations and excrescences" (p. 196) and receives this impression even more intensely where one would least expect it, in the monastery of the Carthusians at Florence. The spiritual is corrupted by the material:

The paintings and gildings of their church, the gem-bright marbles and fantastic carvings, are really but the monastic tribute to sensuous delight---an imperious need for which the fond imagination of Rome has officiously opened the door. One smiles when one thinks how largely a fine starved sense for the forbidden things of earth, if it makes the most of its opportunities, may gratify this need under cover of devotion . . . . The meaner the convent cell the richer the convent chapel. Out of poverty and solitude, inanition and cold, your honest friar may rise at his will into a Mahomet's Paradise of luxurious analogies. (p. 300)

Elsewhere in this series of sketches, James comments on the "monstrous parodies" of the Jesuits (p. 189), "formal Catholicism" (p. 199), and the lack of intellect of Roman Catholic priests. (p. 203) But one of the most interesting statements and one which refutes categorically the



speculations of Greene and Slabey concerning James's nascent Catholic interest, occurs in his description of St. Peter's in Rome; it "speaks less of aspiration than of full and convenient assurance. The soul infinitely expands there, if one will, but all on its quite human level." (pp. 149--50) In other words, when James's characters enter churches for moments of respite and cogitation, they are not contemplating conversion as well, but they "expand" their spiritual selves on a "quite human level", a feeling which a person of any faith, indeed one of no faith at all, can experience.

Apart from the essays of Greene and Slabey, the only other extended consideration of James's use of religion or his beliefs<sup>26</sup> is in Robert Gale's book, The Caught Image: Figurative Language in the Fiction of Henry James,<sup>27</sup> which contains a chapter on James's religious imagery. Gale tells us that there are eight hundred religion images in James's work, and the article consists largely of lists of these, in different categories. There is little or no interpretation of these images; nor are they related to their context. About half of the chapter deals with Catholicism, and although he is not insistent, Gale accepts Slabey's thesis that James was attracted to the Church. The weakness inherent in relying only on the literal imagery and disregarding its context and the meaning of the whole novel

is evident when Gale concludes that "James's images involving Catholicism are almost uniformly respectful."<sup>28</sup>

With this in mind, Gale then criticizes James for the fact that "of the score or more women compared to saints, only half deserve the compliment."<sup>29</sup> This is true, but Gale fails to mention that when James applies the word "saint" to a character, he may be laudatory, or he may be indulging in irony. To impute, moreover, that "only one image in all of James's fiction even slightly ridicules the Catholic faith",<sup>30</sup> is to ignore not only the possibility of interpretation on a more profound level of the many religious images, but to disregard the more obvious examples throughout the novels which reveal an antipathy toward formed institutions, convents, and monasteries.<sup>31</sup> In spite of these anomalous statements, Gale correctly concludes that "James reveals a sensitive awareness of spiritual matters but no belief in any specific creed".<sup>32</sup>

It has been necessary, then, to discuss these three critics' views of James's religious attitudes in order to establish a basis for my interpretation of the role of Roman Catholicism in the novels. It is clear from James's personal comments, in spite of their paucity, that he never professed, as far as we know, a direct desire to become a member of the Church of Rome.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in Italian Hours, he is often critical of its Pope and some of its practices, and of the

anomaly which exists in Catholicism between material wealth and supposed spiritual intentions. Undoubtedly, it is possible that at times James did feel attracted to the beauty and the ritual of the Roman Catholic Church; but apparently he never succumbed to this feeling (if indeed he experienced it), and critics might be advised to avoid speculation concerning biographical matters of this importance when there is no concrete evidence. Much more interesting than these necessary biographical considerations, however, is the use James made of the Church and of religious imagery in general, in his fiction. Any light thrown on James's personal religious beliefs by an examination of such devices, will be purely incidental, as the object of this study is the work, not the man.

This study, then, will focus on the Roman Catholic imagery and symbolism in The American, The Portrait of a Lady and The Wings of the Dove, with necessary incidental consideration of the more general religious imagery. The Roman Catholic Church naturally presented itself to James as a viable institution to represent rigid, constricting form. The concept of form or enclosed consciousness is the continual antithesis in James's fiction to the one belief that he promulgates with consistent evangelical fervour--his belief in the necessary freedom of the individual consciousness. Quentin Anderson comments on the "truly metaphysical

status which James grants consciousness. It is hard adequately to convey James's piety in this matter".<sup>34</sup> Anderson goes on to call this intense belief in freedom James's "secular religion",<sup>35</sup> and F. O. Matthiessen calls it his "religion of consciousness".<sup>36</sup> Thus, James's moral concerns, held with the profound enthusiasm of a religious belief, are basically involved with the dialectic between form and freedom, convention and liberty.<sup>37</sup> The Roman Catholic Church, or as James called it in Roderick Hudson, the "most impressive convention in all history", thus afforded him with an unlimited source of opportunities to use some of his most colourful imagery and symbolism; and its role as an antithetical polarity to the Jamesian belief in the freedom of consciousness deserves a close examination as an operational thematic and technical device in his work.

## CHAPTER II

### THE AMERICAN

The American is an ideal work with which to begin a study of James's use of religion. In this early novel (1877), James's third, the opposition between American and European values is starkly melodramatic and has the simplicity of propaganda. Although James shares with Newman a sense of awe and aesthetic respect in the discovery of the cultural marvels of Europe, the novel has little of the complex ambiguity of tone which is so prevalent in his later treatment of Europe. Basically, Europe in this novel is evil, decadent, rigid and obsessed with form; and even if America itself is not always sympathetically portrayed, Christopher Newman, the new Columbus, the American of the story, is, in spite of his garish naïvety, ultimately the spotless and entirely admirable antithesis of European values. James transports this typical American businessman, who has become disenchanted with the world of capitalistic enterprise and fervent ambition, to Europe, where he hopes to find a more cultural, romantic and sensual existence. He meets an American couple, the Tristrams, the crass husband providing a contrast to Newman's sensitivity and open nature, the wife becoming his

confidante and introducing him to the woman he falls in love with, the widowed Claire de Cintre'. Newman's hopes for happiness and a new meaning in life are thwarted by Claire's mother Madame de Bellegarde and her brother the Marquis de Bellegarde, who cannot accept for Claire a husband who has no title or traditional, institutional ties. The novel ends tragically, as Claire's other brother Valentin dies in a fated duel, Claire is forced to enter a convent, and Newman is left alone, with only the memory of Claire and a new experience of life--the confrontation of his own free self with a formed society.

Religion and the metaphors which utilize religious concepts and terminology play a consistent and effective role in developing and sustaining the basic antitheses which inform the novel. For it is a novel about antithetical values and the result of their clash, and not a love-story, as it has been too often considered. James makes this point clear in a letter to William Dean Howells in 1877, who had registered the complaint of many American readers, disgruntled at the "unhappy" ending, and hoping for the marriage of Newman and Claire:

Voyons: it would have been impossible: they would have been an impossible couple, with an impossible problem before them . . . . No, the interest of the subject was, for me, (without my being at all a pessimist) its exemplification of one of those insuperable difficulties which present themselves in people's lives and from which the only issue is by forfeiture--by losing something.<sup>1</sup>

The "insuperable difficulties" involved in the confrontation of Newman with Europe and specifically with the Bellegardes were, then, vastly more interesting to James than the love-story itself; and it is on this conflict of values which critical evaluation should focus. Such an examination reveals a great deal about James's basic concerns in the whole canon of his fiction, in a simplified, more extreme manner. Richard Poirier's distinction between the "free" and the "fixed" characters<sup>2</sup> of James's work illustrates the essential contrast underlying the conflicting values. Newman, Valentin and Claire, says Poirier,<sup>3</sup> are "free" or "open" characters, and the Bellegardes are "fixed" or "closed" characters. The Bellegardes' obsession with and subjection to the forms and traditions of their society prevent them from understanding or responding to Newman's "natural and organic . . . sense of human equality."<sup>4</sup> James exploits and illustrates this opposition between the two types of characters in the novel by giving each character's religious background or lack of it. It becomes quickly apparent that James's attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church, at this stage, in spite of his admiration for its architectural wonders, was one of suspicion and deprecation. Roman Catholicism is the ultimate manifestation of rigid, constricting form. Each of the characters' relation to it reveals James's attitude to them. Newman's relaxed and natural

reaction to life in general and to his new experience in Europe in particular is evident from the first pages of the novel, when he meets Noémie Nioche in the Salon Carré of the Louvre and negotiates with her the purchase of her copy of Murillo's Madonna. His "open" nature is revealed by his lack of a "formal" outlook concerning religion: "The Madonna, yes; I am not a Catholic; but I want to buy it." (p. 4) Later James filters through to us a more complex version of Newman's attitude to religion, after his loss of Claire---a version which reveals a good deal of James's own opinion of religious observances and their relation to human conduct:

He had never let the fact of her Catholicism trouble him; Catholicism to him was nothing but a name, and to express a mistrust of the form in which her religious feelings had moulded themselves would have seemed to him on his own part a rather pretentious affectation of Protestant zeal. (pp. 281--82)

In other words, one should not counter form (Roman Catholicism) with form (Protestantism); as long as the forms are controlled by the individual and remain only "a name", rather than usurping their role and restricting freedom, they are harmless. Newman continues his reflection:

If such superb white flowers as that could bloom in Catholic soil, the soil was not insalubrious. But it was one thing to be a Catholic; and another to turn nun---on your hands! (p. 282)

Claire's Catholicism is acceptable to Newman, even attractive; but when she enters the convent, the act reveals not only her subjection to the form of Catholicism but to the form of her family and to <sup>the forms of</sup> existence itself. When James spoke of the



"impossible" marriage between Claire and Newman in his letter to Howells, this difference in religious outlook was certainly the basis of the problem.

An individual's religion (in a formal sense), therefore, plays an important part in determining the outcome of the novel. James repeatedly has his characters asking questions such as the following one of Newman's to Claire. Valentin has wondered whether Newman, who has seen four-hundred and seventy churches on his tour of Europe, is "interested in theology":

"Not particularly. Are you a Roman Catholic madam?"  
And he turned to Madame de Cintr  .

"Yes, sir," she answered gravely. (p. 81)

As James says, "Newman was struck with the gravity of her tone," (p. 81). The irony of her curt reply is one of the heaviest ironies of the novel. It is the very fact of her Roman Catholicism, or more specifically, her attitude to it (her subjection to its form), which will eventually result in their separation. Once again, Newman's quick reply to Valentin that he is not interested in theology illustrates his freedom and his open nature, his ability to encounter the form, symbolized by the four hundred and seventy churches, and remain outside of its influence.

Similarly, James is careful to indicate the religious background of the other major characters. Mrs. Tristram, in delineating to Newman the peculiar monde of the Bellegardes, deals at length with the religious strictness that permeates

the atmosphere of the family:

Her mother is the daughter of an English Catholic earl . . . . They kept such a tight rein on her that she could do very little . . . . They are terrible people--her monde; all mounted upon stilts a mile high, and with pedigrees long in proportion. It is the skim of the milk of the old noblesse. Do you know what a Legitimist is or an Ultramontane? (p. 37)

The rarity of "English Catholic" earls and the extreme religious fanaticism of the Ultramontanes show that James was definitely concerned with emphasizing the importance of the Bellegardes' Catholic background.

Madame de Bellegarde's son, Urbain, is also consistently associated with Roman Catholicism, but less explicitly, through the use of religious imagery. His conduct itself, throughout the novel, is the ultimate example of form and rigidity for their own sake and he can be taken as the epitome of the Jamesian "fixed" character. He is described in an extended religious metaphor, during the Bellegardes' party, as he performs the required social rites in the presence of Madame d'Outreville:

M. de Bellegarde stepped forward and stood for an instant silent and obsequious, with his hat raised to his lips, as Newman had seen some gentlemen stand in churches as soon as they entered their pews. The lady, indeed, bore a very fair likeness to a reverend effigy in some idolatrous shrine. She was monumentally stout and imperturbably serene. (p. 211)

Earlier, Urbain's inability to communicate to Newman the decision of the family regarding Newman's suit for Claire is described by Valentin in a religious simile which illustrates the marquis' subjection to form:

My brother seems unable to come to the point; he revolves around his announcement like the priest around the altar. (p. 151)

In these and other metaphors,<sup>5</sup> James associates the marquis with the theme of religious fixity and an obsession with form itself rather than its function. I shall try to show later how James uses the basic theme of Roman Catholic (or more generally, European) rigidity as a basis for a whole series of religious images and motifs which express the "insuperable" antithesis involved in the moral dialectic of the novel. The religious metaphors, in fact, because of their prevalence and their aptness in illustrating the contrast between Europe and America, act ultimately as a unifying theme for nearly all the imagery of the novel.

But the Marquis, Madame de Bellegarde and Claire are not the only characters to be connected with the Roman Catholic Church. Even Valentin, although he is, within the context of Poirier's definition, a "free" character, has definite connections with the Church. Just as Newman asks Claire if she is a Roman Catholic, he asks Valentin if he is religious. His reply is categorical. "I am a very good Catholic. I respect the Church. I adore the blessed Virgin. I fear the Devil." (p. 94) Moreover, he has been a militant churchman in the past, fighting for the Pope as a Pontifical Zouave. Formed by the traditions of his family, he has no profession and can only think of one solution: "I think I shall turn monk. Seriously, I think I shall tie a rope

around my waist and go into a monastery." (p. 94) But Valentin's Catholicism is a product of his family background. His "natural" vestiges of individuality tend to reject his rigid environment. As Newman reflects, "all that he was he was by instinct and not by theory". (p. 92) Finally, however, the rigidity and inflexibility of Europe overcome his moral spontaneity, as his strict European concept of "honour" compels him to participate in the duel, another example of form for its own sake.

Valentin's friends, who act as his seconds at the duel, are also given Roman Catholic backgrounds by James. M. de Grosjoyaux is, like Valentin, a former member of the Pontifical Zouaves (p. 256) and M. Ledoux is "a great Catholic" and the "nephew of a distinguished Ultramontane bishop." (p. 256) Thus, all of the European characters are carefully connected in some way with Roman Catholicism, and this fact influences, to a significant degree, the development of the conflict. Admittedly, it is almost inevitable that French characters would be Roman Catholics; but this axiom negates neither James's consistent references to religion in the novel, nor the aptness of the Catholic Church as a thematic symbol.

Newman himself, by the end of the novel, seems to become intensely aware of the importance of religion in determining one's ideas. Before his interview with Mrs. Bread, he meets her in an abandoned chapel, and his first question is, "Are you a Catholic, Mrs. Bread?" (p. 292) It is significant

that, after her negative reply, they leave the chapel and their colloquy, during which Newman learns the truth about the Bellegardes, takes place outside in the open air.

The role of Catholicism in the novel is by no means confined to the sort of stereotyped categorization of character which the foregoing discussion may imply. It merely provides the basis for a number of other uses of religion. To take a simple example of how James accomplishes this, consider Madame de Bellegarde's explanation, after she has informed Newman that the marriage will not take place: "We have used authority." (p. 244) The infallible "authority" of the Roman Catholic Church and its Pope springs to mind on reading this, especially when one remembers James's careful delineation of the Bellegardes' religious affiliations. Madame de Bellegarde is a Pope in her own social world; she speaks with the authority of the Church. If there is any hesitancy about making this thematic connection, James dispels it by mentioning that she made this declaration "in a rich, bell-like voice." (p. 244) The Bellegardes' complete immersion in the world of Roman Catholicism is further illustrated by their account to the public that Valentin's duel followed a quarrel about "the Pope's morals." (p. 349) Ironically, as Lord Deepmere observes, it was Mademoiselle Nioche, the actual reason for the duel, who "was the Pope!" (p. 349) The fact that both Noémie Nioche and Madame de Bellegarde become popes illustrates not only James's attitude toward these two women,

but to the morality of the Roman Church itself. Thus, having established in detail the basic theme of Roman Catholic rigidity, James builds up other motifs and images to concretize the conflict of freedom and fixity. The moral "message" of the novel can, in fact, be reduced to this opposition of form and freedom from form, and the use of apparently conventional religious imagery or even of ordinary imagery becomes associated with and takes its meaning from the original connotations of the Roman Catholic Church and Newman's "natural and organic . . . sense of human equality." (p. 166)

The images associated with Paris and the world of the Bellegardes, then, expand upon and originate in the rigid image of the Roman Catholic Church. Many of them, through this juxtaposition, take on an inverted and derogatory religious significance, even though they are not always specifically religious in content.<sup>6</sup> Thus just as the Bellegardes are controlled by the traditions and forms of their society and their religion, they subject the younger members of the family, Claire and Valentin, to similar formal situations, prompting Claire to say, in her attempt to explain her decision to Newman:

Mr. Newman, it's like a religion . . . . We must all bear it. I have been too selfish; I wanted to escape from it. (p. 277)

Later, Newman reflects upon her statement:

What had she meant by her feeling being a kind of religion? It was the religion simply of the family laws, the religion of which her implacable little mother was the high priestess. (p. 282)

The equation of Madame de Bellegarde with a "high priestess" and the idea of the "religion" of the family law recall the earlier identification of Madame de Bellegarde as a "pope". The forms of Catholicism have permeated the whole atmosphere and conduct of the family and ultimately result in Claire's imprisonment in the convent and in Valentin's death to the form of the duel. Newman articulates this to Claire in apt religious terms, characterizing the family as controlled by:

the feeling that your mother's looks are law and your brother's words are gospel; that you all hang together, and that it's a part of the everlasting proprieties that they should have a hand in everything you do. (p. 277)

Images of rigidity complement these religious associations and take on further connotations through the juxtaposition. Thus, Newman's vision of the "cold, unsociable fixedness in the eyes" of the elder Bellegardes, (p. 283) and his description of Madame de Bellegarde's "formal gaze and . . . circumscribed smile" which "suggested a document signed and sealed" (p. 127), add to the motif of rigidity and fixedness associated with the Bellegardes and the Church. Like the old world of Catholicism, Madame de Bellegarde's "world is the world of things immutably decreed. She walks about in it as if it were a blooming park, a Garden of Eden." (p. 127) These images of constriction and enclosed space connote aptly the nature of

her existence. Moreover, we learn that on first seeing her, Newman notices that she "wore a little black velvet hood tied under her chin, and she was wrapped in an old black cashmere shawl. " (p. 127) This monastic image seems to indicate that Valentin's ironic desire to become a monk and Claire's actual entry into a convent are unnecessary. Madame de Bellegarde, in her black hood and shawl, is already the Mother Superior of a very strict order. That her conception of the family's form and sanctity is of a religious nature is clear when she admonishes Newman for relating Valentin's deathbed comments: "Don't profane--- don't insult---the memory of my innocent son." (p. 288) Other images of rigidity complete James's condemnation of the Bellegardes' cloistered existence. At one point, says James, Urbain and his mother "exchanged a glance like a twinkle of steel " (p. 288); and early in the novel, Mrs. Tristram generalizes about Claire's family:

Her old feudal countess of a mother rules the family with an iron hand and allows her to have no friends but of her own choosing and to visit only in a certain sacred circle. (p. 38)

The confined "sacred circle" of the Bellegardes becomes a microcosmic image of the Roman Catholic Church, also ruled (by the Pope) with "an iron hand". The association created by the images is a comment not only on the Bellegardes but on the Church as well.

The religious rigidity of the Bellegardes is not



only conveyed by their adherence to the Roman Catholic faith and the formed nature of their social existence but by their various habitations as well. Consistently, images of darkness, enclosure, and coldness are associated with their home in Paris and their estate, Fleurières. When Newman first visits the Bellegarde home in Paris, he thinks it:

a queer way for rich people to live; his ideal of grandeur was a splendid façade, diffusing its brilliancy outward too, irradiating hospitality. The house . . . had a dark, dusty, painted portal, which swung open in answer to his ring. The place was all in the shade; it answered to Newman's conception of a convent. (p. 41)

The difference between Newman's and the Bellegardes' character is evoked by the contrast in attitudes toward what a house should be. Words such as "diffusing", "brilliancy", "splendid façade", "outward", "irradiating", and "hospitality" are juxtaposed with "shade", "convent", "dark" and "dusty".

Similarly, when Newman approaches the estate at Fleurières, he is confronted by a "vast, iron gate, rusty and closed" and reflects to himself that "it looks . . . like a Chinese penitentiary." (pp. 270-71) When he looks out of the window, he sees the "stiffly embanked river and the formal gardens that lay beyond it." (p. 273) In the cold world of the Bellegardes, all is form, enclosure, and style. Claire herself associates her own condition with the "stiffly embanked river," when she declares: "I am as cold as that flowing river." (p. 275) When Claire finally announces her intention to enter the convent, Newman is surprised and

laughs violently: "You--you a nun!" he exclaimed; "you with your beauty defaced--you behind locks and bars!" (p. 279) Newman forgets, however, that he has already imaginatively foreseen that this has always been Claire's condition. Her entry into a nunnery only amounts to a public confirmation of what has always privately been. Newman's original identification of the Bellegarde house with a convent and his later one of Fleurières with a penitentiary, objectify the situation in the reader's mind, if not in Newman's, and make it clear that, for James at least, the corollary to be arrived at from the imagery must be that "convent" equals "penitentiary". James at least links the images very closely.<sup>7</sup>

The fate of Valentin is also closely related to the theme of religion, and the motifs of form for its own sake and of Roman Catholicism are united in the duel itself.<sup>8</sup> Valentin, M. de Grosjoyaux and M. Ledoux, all have strict Roman Catholic backgrounds and all have correspondingly strict attitudes toward the concept of "honour" and the necessity of its defense through the ritual of the duel. Newman's relaxed, free attitude toward the "forms" of religion and society is given continuity in his reaction to the tradition of the duel when he says to Valentin: "Because your great-grandfather was an ass, is that any reason why you should be?" (p. 239) The duel is given religious sanction by the presence of the curé, who absolves Valentin: the supposed life-giver, the Church, becomes intimately associated with the death

involved in the duel. James's irony at this stage becomes bitter; for, as Valentin dies, "M. le curé reëntered, bearing his sacred vessel . . . . It was almost processional." (p. 268)

In the case of both Valentin and Claire, then, their religious outlook, founded on and controlled by a strict subservience to form, is the ultimate cause of their "death" to this world. Form cannot be worshipped for its own sake. James develops this theme, "without my being at all a pessimist"<sup>9</sup>, as he says, not to sentimentalize on the tragedy of the loss of Valentin's life and of Claire's love for Newman, but to exemplify a moral situation. The existence of Newman in the novel, therefore, is not to be explained in terms of a tragic hero who loses his beloved, but as an individual who devolves or has devolved a different attitude (whether spontaneous or consciously thought out) toward form and its manifestations. The "insuperable difficulties" which make Claire and Newman an "impossible couple"<sup>9</sup>, then, are to be discovered not so much in the tragedy of their love and in the differences of their backgrounds, as in their antithetical attitudes to life---in Poirier's words, one is a "free" character, one "fixed". It is Newman's solution to the problem of form which constitutes the sententious dénouement of the novel.

As in the case of the Bellegardes, James uses much religious imagery to evoke Newman's confrontation with form.

Images or symbols which are not specifically religious nevertheless derive their significance or at least are given added connotations by their relations to the rigidity of the institutional imagery which James uses for the Church, such as the convent, Notre Dame and the Pope. Newman's development throughout the novel is a constant struggle with the temptations of form. In fact, he has left America to escape the constriction of the formed life of business. He writes to Mrs. Tristram that "in America I conducted my correspondence altogether by telegrams."<sup>10</sup> Newman soon discovers, however, that he has found in Europe an even more rigid form, ultimately symbolized, as we have seen, by the institutional nature of the Roman Catholic Church. The atmosphere in the Bellegarde home is contaminating, Newman feels: "Newman for the first time in his life, was not himself; . . . he measured his movements and counted his words." (p. 151) The concept of "measuring" and "counting" one's existence is an image of subjection to form --not being oneself, or in Sartrean terms, not creating oneself. Ultimately, Newman exclaims, in an apt image of restriction, that the Bellegardes "stole behind me and pushed me into this bottomless pit, where I lie howling and gnashing my teeth!" (p. 296) After losing Claire, he nearly succumbs completely to a life of form. He desires to make a relic of his memory of her:

He had a fancy of carrying out his life as he would have

directed it if Madame de Cintre had been left to him--- of making it a religion to do nothing that she would have disliked. In this, certainly, there was no sacrifice; but there was a pale oblique ray of inspiration. (p. 351)

The "good identity" that James has given Newman, however, prevents this sin against his individual integrity. Newman is a "free" character, not a "fixed" one, and he remains one. In religious language, Newman imaginatively rejects this temptation:

... he was extremely glad he was rich. He felt no impulse to sell all he had and give to the poor or to retire into a meditative economy and asceticism. (p. 352)

Similarly, to indulge in revenge on the Bellegardes would be as much of a loss of freedom as to venerate religiously Claire's memory. It would be a "form" of comportment foreign to his "good identity", and hence would mean his subjection to that form. James ingeniously has Newman make this final decision inside Notre Dame, the symbol of the very form that has caused the loss of Claire. Newman is thus able, symbolically, to exist within forms, without being controlled by them. At this point, aptly, he feels that "somewhere in his mind, a tight knot seemed to have loosened." (p. 357)<sup>11</sup> He feels that "now he must take care of himself." (p. 357)

Newman's freedom from form, his "open" character, has never really been threatened, however, and perhaps this is the weakness of the novel. The Bellegardes are all, ultimately, "fixed" characters.<sup>12</sup> Newman is almost entirely a free one. James gives his characters identities which do not

allow for development or change. Throughout the novel, it is apparent that James has no doubt concerning the outcome of Newman's confrontation with the Bellegardes. He is established immediately as a figure entirely opposed to the form-obsessed Bellegardes. For example, we see him indulging in "formless meditations" (p. 70), and remarking that "there are so many forms and ceremonies over here". (p. 32) His innate desire to break out of form into freedom and the open air is continually reiterated: "I seemed to feel a new man inside my old skin, and I longed for a new world." (p. 23) James shows the extent to which Newman is free not only from the forms of the Bellegardes (the old world) but from the forms of his own civilization as well, by including Babcock, the Unitarian minister. To Babcock, Newman is an "unregulated epicure." (p. 64) In an image which combines the motifs of form and religion, James shows that the rigid forms of the Roman Catholic Church are not the only forms he is attacking in the novel. Babcock "often tried . . . to infuse into Newman a little of his own spiritual starch, but Newman's personal texture was too loose to admit of stiffening." (p. 65) Newman's parting gift to Babcock of the statuette of the "grotesque" (p. 69) monk illustrates his attitude toward him and his attempt to "stiffen" his "moral texture", as well as neatly connecting, through symbol, the two religious outlooks of Europe and

America. It is certain, as the narrator speculates, that Newman "intended a satire upon Babcock's own asceticism". (p. 69) Babcock is thus thematically equated with the Bellegardes.

James's use of religion in The American, then, is as a symbol of form, fixity and rigidity. He is referring exclusively, of course, to institutionalized religion--its form, not its content. The "insuperable difficulties" in the confrontation of Newman with Claire, her family and Europe, are evoked primarily through many images of rigidity and constriction, most of which are based on the Bellegardes' Roman Catholic faith. The novel almost becomes a roman à these<sup>13</sup> because of the stark nature of the antithesis between America and Europe, and between Newman and the Bellegardes. But in spite of this weakness, The American provides a good early example of James's use of religion as a technical and thematic device. He uses the Roman Catholic Church extensively as a symbol of form, and as a means of depicting the Bellegardes. Newman's realization in Notre Dame, at the end of the novel, that "now he must take care of himself" (p. 357) represents James's denial of traditional forms such as the Church and his belief in the necessary freedom of the individual consciousness. James's later novels, as will be seen in the following discussions of The Portrait of a Lady and The Wings of the Dove, develop on a much more complex level this basic

antithesis between form and freedom, while still employing extensive religious imagery.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY

Although only four years separate The American and The Portrait of a Lady (1881), James's use of the Roman Catholic Church and of religion in general is much less transparent and more complex in the latter work. The most important factor is that the extreme antithesis between America and Europe has been modified. James is less concerned with contrasting the two cultures than with exploring more metaphysical problems such as the meaning of freedom, the nature of the self, and the proper attitude toward form. In The American, Newman confronts the values of Europe, represented by the Bellegardes, who are all Europeans and who symbolize in a stereotyped manner the old world and, who as we have seen, are associated with the Roman Catholic Church. The novel explores the "insuperable difficulties" which result from this clash and only tentatively begins to examine the more philosophical questions of freedom and form through the juxtaposition of "free" and "fixed" characters. It is quite obvious that James wishes to underplay this conflict of cultures in The Portrait of a Lady, for he makes all of the major characters American. The Roman Catholic element and religious

and institutional metaphors still play essentially the same role, however, except that one's affiliation with the Church is no longer naturalistically predetermined by one's cultural background. Thus the role of the Church is more external.

Isabel Archer, the heroine of The Portrait of a Lady, undergoes the same type of experience as Christopher Newman of The American---the journey to Europe. Discovered by her aunt, Mrs. Touchett, in the stultifying atmosphere of her home in Albany, Isabel is taken by her to England, where James "frees" her through her inheritance of a fortune from her uncle, Mr. Touchett. Her subsequent experience in Europe consists largely in her relationships with the various suitors who surround her. She rejects the American Caspar Goodwood and the English earl Lord Warburton, and ignores her sickly cousin Ralph Touchett, who loves her deeply and who is the most sympathetic and "free" character of the novel. Her choice of Gilbert Osmond, an expatriated American who collects objets d'art and controls the existence of his young daughter Pansy, and also possesses a mistress, Madame Merle, results in the tragedy of this novel of a "young woman affronting her destiny".<sup>1</sup> This summary of the content of the novel would seem to imply that The Portrait is concerned with the love affairs of a young American girl; but, as in The American, James is much more interested in the

conflict of characters who have opposing outlooks on life. For this reason, he marries Isabel, a free-spirited, imaginative, "open" individual, to Gilbert Osmond, a "fixed", "closed" character who, as Tony Tanner points out, is Isabel's "anti-self".<sup>2</sup> This marriage of opposites, then, forms the basic problem of the novel, the working out of which involves to a significant extent, Roman Catholicism, religious metaphor and the Jamesian concept of form.

Since most of the Roman Catholic references accrue to Osmond and his daughter Pansy, and since the essential conflict of the novel is between the consciousnesses of Isabel and Osmond, most of this discussion will deal with Osmond, in an attempt to trace further James's use of the religious motif, its development since The American, and its relationship to the general concept of form. From this will evolve an examination of Isabel's temptation by form during her "essentially spiritual quest"<sup>3</sup>, as Richard Chase calls it.

Chase's phrase is significant in that it underlines the fact that James employs in his novels what may be termed a "religious structure", as well as the basic religious imagery and symbolism I have examined to this point. Most religious archetypes involve the themes of the quest, exile, or the Promised Land. For example, the Garden of Eden, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, the journey of the magi, and the Crusades are all stories which consist essentially

of movement from one place to another in search for truth. In James, this religious structure is extremely important, the quest of the young American in Europe representing an inversion of the earlier Puritan voyage to America, an event in which religion played an important role. In The Portrait, Isabel's confrontation with Europe, and in particular with Gilbert Osmond, the Roman Catholic, provides the basic thematic content of the novel, and constitutes its religious structure. The motif of the "fall", which James develops through Isabel's relationship with Osmond, and which I shall discuss at the end of this chapter, indicates James's awareness of the seductive and powerful nature of the temptation of form and illustrates his tendency to use basic religious motifs to examine moral situations as well as to emphasize their seriousness. An examination of Gilbert Osmond, the representative of form as well as the Church, will therefore constitute the first step toward a definition and an understanding of James's use of Roman Catholicism in this novel and of the nature of Isabel's experience.

Ralph Touchett, in his final confrontation with Isabel, declares to her: "you were ground in the very mill of the conventional."<sup>4</sup> The phrase sums up incisively the essence of Isabel's fate and its importance cannot be over-emphasized. In his notebooks, James relates the germ of The Portrait, and uses the identical phrase:

The idea of the whole thing is that the poor girl, who has dreamed of freedom and nobleness, who has done, as she believes, a generous, clear-sighted thing, finds herself ground in the very mill of the conventional.<sup>5</sup>

The "conventional" in The Portrait of a Lady refers principally to Gilbert Osmond, what he represents, and his outlook on life and people.<sup>6</sup> As in the case of the Bellegardes, James carefully constructs a whole series of associations, metaphors and symbols relating to Roman Catholicism around Osmond to denote the extent to which he is "conventional". Once again, as in The American, the references reveal at once James's attitude to form for its own sake and to the Church, and they constitute a valuable atmospheric and symbolic technique for depicting character. The effect, then, is both artistic and philosophical.

Oscar Cargill says that "Osmond is Henry James's most completely evil character",<sup>7</sup> and proceeds to justify this assertion by quoting Lyall H. Powers who states that evil characters in James are:

typically represented by those conventions and institutions whose nature is dehumanizing. In The Portrait this representative function is filled principally by the institutions of the Roman Catholic Church . . . . In order to impress the point, James has Osmond surrounded with the marks of the conventional, of addiction to the institutionalized.<sup>8</sup>

The evil "identity" of Osmond is made even more absolute because of the fact that he is aware of his "conventional" associations and has no qualms about asserting them. To Isabel, before their marriage, he confesses:

You say you don't know me, but when you do you'll  
 discover what a worship I have for propriety . . . .  
 I'm not conventional: I'm convention itself. (p. 311)

This "worship" of "propriety", connects ingeniously the concepts of form and religion, as do many other references to Osmond's "conventional" obsession. For example, Ralph says that "he's the incarnation of taste", (p. 344) and the Countess Gemini that "as for Osmond, he has always appeared to believe that he's descended from the gods." (p. 270) Later, during Isabel's quarrel with him, as Osmond defends the form of their marriage, the narrator observes that "he spoke in the name of something sacred and precious--the observance of a magnificent form." (p. 536) Isabel herself, when she first begins to suspect Osmond's good faith, recalls, in a phrase which succinctly unites the concepts of form and religion, that at one time "there was no charitable institution in which she had been as much interested as in Gilbert Osmond." (p. 426) Everything about Osmond is connected with form. He even writes "correct and ingenious verse" (p. 304) in his poem, "Rome Revisited", and gives himself the public identity of an "inveterate Italian", even though he is in reality an American. (p. 503) When Isabel begins to realize what Osmond is really like in the fireside scene, she remembers that "he had told her he loved the conventional". (p. 428) She goes on to connect this memory to Osmond's religious conception of the aristocratic life:

But for Osmond it was altogether a thing of forms, a

conscious, calculated attitude. He was fond of the old, the consecrated, the transmitted; so was she, but she pretended to do what she chose with it. (p. 430)

Their antithetical reaction to form indicates not only the basis of their conflict, but James's own attitude to form as well. Isabel appreciates, like James, the beauty and the 'sacred' nature of form, but is unwilling to be controlled by it.

The presumptuous nature of Osmond's attitudes toward form and his selfish superiority with regard to other people is indicated by the repeated identifications, both explicit and implicit, of Osmond with the Pope.<sup>9</sup> The repeated equation of Osmond with "convention", by the way, confirms my contention in Chapter I that James's description of the Roman Church as "the most impressive convention in all history" is more ironic than laudatory. (pp. 8-9) During Isabel's first extended conversation with Osmond, he declares:

There were two or three people in the world I envied--- the Emperor of *Russia*, for instance, and the Sultan of Turkey! There were even moments when I envied the Pope of Rome---for the consideration he enjoys. I should have been delighted to be considered to that extent . . . .(p. 264)

When they meet later on in St. Peter's, and Osmond claims that the vastness of the church "makes one feel like an atom", (p. 294) and expresses his distaste for such a feeling, Isabel exclaims: "You ought indeed to be a Pope!" (p. 295) Osmond replies: "Ah, I should have enjoyed that!" The next day, Isabel asks again, "You'd like to be the Pope?" and Osmond again replies: "I should love it---but I should have gone in for it earlier."

(p. 301) These explicit comments escape being facetious and merely jocular by their prevalence and by a number of other less obvious devices built around them by James.<sup>10</sup> For example, one of the key scenes of the novel, Isabel's meeting with Osmond in St. Peter's, adds to the identification of Osmond with the Pope. St. Peter's, the church of the Pope, does not receive entirely laudatory treatment from James, and this assists our understanding of the persistent linking of the Pope with Osmond. James says that "there is something almost profane in the vastness of the place, which seems meant as much for physical as for spiritual exercise." (p. 293) Immediately after this slighting reference, Osmond "approached with all the forms---he appeared to have multiplied them on this occasion to suit the place." (p. 294) It is in St. Peter's that Osmond declares his desire to be the Pope and we are given a final impression of the intimate connection between him and this "most impressive convention in all history" when James says that instead of leaving Rome, Osmond "would loiter a little longer in the cool shadows of St. Peter's." (p. 305)

Osmond may not possess St. Peter's, but a close examination of the descriptions of his two habitations reveals that he tends to make them his personal papal palaces. His famous "ancient villa" (p. 224) in Florence is much like a monastery: its windows "seemed less to offer communication with the outer world than to defy the world to look in." (p. 225)



The height of the hill on which it rests, its age, and the derogatory description James offers of it, ("It was the mask, not the face of a house." [p. 225]) seem once again to link the concepts of form and constriction with Roman Catholicism, especially when we discover that nuns frequently visit this enclosed house and that inside, its "vaulted antechamber" is "as high as a chapel". (p. 231) The Palazzo Roccanera, Osmond's and Isabel's home in Rome, is similar to the villa in Florence. Oscar Cargill points out that the name of the palace itself may be significant. It is a "high house in the very heart of Rome", (p. 363) like the Pope's Vatican, and literally means "the Black Rock Palace", "which may be an allusion to the Church founded by Peter upon a rock."<sup>11</sup> That Osmond's palace is a "black" rock is no surprise. Other inverted religious connotations accrue to this structure to complete the association. To Ned Rosier, it "seemed of evil omen" and "smelt of historic deeds, of crime and craft and violence"; and he "was haunted by the conviction that . . . young girls had been shut up there . . . and then under the threat of being thrown into convents, had been forced into unholy marriages." (pp. 363-64) The "unholy" marriage of the novel is, of course, Isabel's, and the mention of "convents" is also apt, since Pansy's fate is exactly the one Rosier envisions.

Whatever James's attitude to the Pope as head of the Roman Catholic Church may be (and one receives the impression

that it is not sympathetic from the continual association of evil characters and derogatory imagery with the Church), the thematic association of Osmond throughout the novel with the Pope in particular, and with Roman Catholicism and the concept of being a "high-priest" of art in general, is extremely important for an understanding of James's attitude to form, freedom, and once again, to the Roman Catholic Church, the symbol he uses so consistently to synthesize his preoccupation with these metaphysical problems. The most immediate impression one receives when one thinks of the Pope is of absolute power and authority. If exercised properly, James, I suppose, would have little objection to allowing the Pope to possess these, as long as an individual's personal integrity and freedom were not destroyed. Osmond, because of his attractive qualities (at least to Isabel) and his position of authority over Pansy, possesses, in his own little papal court, the power of a Pope. But he grossly abuses it. He commits the unpardonable Jamesian sin of controlling other people's fates, possessing their consciousness and preventing the exercise of their freedom. In the explicit connection of Osmond with the Pope, James, perhaps unconsciously, reveals his ultimate attitude toward the Roman Catholic Church, or any repressive institution. An examination of Osmond's "possession" of other people, his subjection of them to his own form (for he is symbolically "convention itself" [p. 311]),

will illustrate more fully the sacriligious nature, to James, of his moral position, and will help to define further James's conception of what relationships between individuals should or should not be like. Once again, as in The American, James has used Roman Catholicism, in the form of connecting Osmond with the "conventions" of religion, the Pope, and the Church, as a thematic basis for the underlying meanings of his novel.

Oscar Cargill points out that "it is in The Portrait that James first took a clear-cut position against 'art for art's sake', against pure connoisseurship and aestheticism."<sup>12</sup> Osmond, of course, is the principal butt of James's attack, although Ned Rosier and Madame Merle are similarly preoccupied with collecting objects d'art. To Osmond, art is a religion, and perhaps this attitude toward art partly explains James's persistent identification of him with the Pope. As Tony Tanner states, "in the appearance of living for the spirit in disregard of the material, Osmond has in fact simply spiritualized the material."<sup>13</sup> Osmond's desire to "possess", however, goes beyond the mere acquisition of things, to the acquisition of people. Maurice Beebe says that for James:

nothing is worse than the exploitation of a human soul. James called it 'emotional cannibalism' . . . the worst of sins because it is the one most likely to blunt the freedom of the individual consciousness.<sup>14</sup>

Osmond's consistent attempts to form people to his own ends are associated effectively by James with the more basic motif of his Roman Catholicism, in his relationship with his daughter

Pansy, the "convent-flower". (p. 255) In Pansy, then, the concepts of religion and form are once again brought together.

Pansy begins and ends the novel in a convent, and in reality, never really escapes its confinement. As we have seen, Osmond's villa in Florence and the Palazzo Roccanera in Rome are both described in images of darkness and impenetrability, and Osmond sends Pansy back to the more literal convent in Rome whenever his control over her existence weakens. Pansy says to Isabel as they part at the door of the villa in Florence, "I may go no further. I've promised papa not to pass this door." (p. 317) The extent to which the combination of the convent and her father's strict control have atrophied her into a mere extension of her father and her society, a work of art, "formed" and "finished", (p. 277) as Isabel first naively considers her, is evoked by a constant reiteration of images of form, passivity, rigidity and art. For example, Isabel reflects to herself that "if he regarded his daughter as a precious work of art, it was natural he should be more and more careful about the finishing touches." (p. 532) Pansy speaks with "a trace of asceticism", (p. 234) and is variously referred to as "a little saint in heaven" (p. 265) and "a childish martyr decked out for sacrifice", (p. 467) who lives in "a virginal bower", (p. 467) does a "conventual curtsy", (p. 252) and is virtually displayed by Osmond with his "Correggios and crucifixes". (p. 265)

In The American, James associated Madame de Bellegarde

with the Pope in a number of ways, the most striking of which was to have her use her infallible authority to forestall the marriage of Claire and Newman by simply asserting: "We have used authority." (p. 244) In The Portrait, James adds to the thematic equation of Osmond and the Pope by delineating Pansy's subjection to him in much the same way as Claire is shown to be powerless before the authority of her mother. Hence, on her first encounter with Pansy, Isabel observes that she "stood there as if she were about to partake of her first communion." (p. 254) Before her father, she is like an uninitiated penitent kneeling before a priest. The key word "authority" occurs on two other occasions, illustrating her lack of identity, possessed as she is by her father and Madame Merle. The first occurs at the villa in Florence as her two nuns take their leave and she is told to remain with Madame Merle:

She was evidently impregnated with the idea of submission, which was due to any one who took the tone of authority; and she was a passive spectator of the operation of her fate. (p. 233)

Later, when Pansy has given in to her father, lost Ned Rosier, and returned to the convent, Isabel visits her and realizes the extent of Pansy's negation by Osmond: "She bowed her pretty head to authority and only asked of authority to be merciful." (p. 556)

The convent itself, apart from its importance as a symbol of convention,<sup>15</sup> form, and the denial of individuality, functions ideally as a focal point to illustrate the difference

in outlook between Isabel and Osmond. To the latter, the convent is just one of the many "forms" under his control and present for his "use". He submits Pansy to its authority, placing her within it in much the same way as he displays his objets d'art in cases or gilt frames. He is not averse to declaring this openly to Isabel in what must be one of the most hypocritical speeches in literature:

The Catholics are very wise after all. The convent is a great institution; we can't do without it; it corresponds to an essential need in families, in society. It's a school of good manners; it's a school of repose. Oh, I don't want to detach my daughter from the world . . . . I don't want to make her fix her thoughts on any other. This one's very well, as she should take it, and she may think of it as much as she likes. Only she must think of it in the right way. (p. 531)

That Pansy could, simultaneously, in Osmond's view, think of the world "as much as she likes" and "in the right way" reveals his lack of logic and his essential hypocrisy. The speech shows Isabel the extent to which Osmond's earlier exclamation, "I am convention itself", is really true.<sup>16</sup> Isabel, however, represents James's point of view, in her abhorrence of the convent, as did Newman in The American. When she visits Pansy in the convent, her reflections synthesize neatly the concept of convent as prison:

It produced today more than before the impression of a well-appointed prison. (pp. 548-49)

and:

All these departments were solid and bare, light and clean; so, thought Isabel, are the great penal establishments. (p. 553)

Inside the convent, Madame Catherine, the nun who supervises

Pansy, says to her in Isabel's presence: "We think of you always--you're a precious charge." To Isabel, the remark "seemed to represent the surrender of a personality, the authority of the Church." (p. 554) The repetition of the word "authority" in this context recalls the connotations the word has developed with reference to Osmond's priest-like function, his possession of objects and people.<sup>17</sup>

Isabel Archer's relationship to and ultimate involvement in this world of form and rigidity represents the essential meaning or purpose of the novel. As we have seen, James, in the delineation of Osmond and his world, has used images of form, many of them explicitly related to Roman Catholicism, to evoke the stultifying nature of Osmond's outlook. In her confrontation with Osmond, Isabel, in a novel which portrays a process of learning, must realize what this world represents and how to react properly to it. James makes clear to the reader that "form" (Osmond) can offer a most attractive and seductive temptation to the innocence of the American consciousness. By sending Isabel back to Osmond at the end of the novel, he illustrates emblematically the tremendous power of form. Richard Poirier points out that "the progress of the action of The Portrait of a Lady is in the direction of making Isabel . . . into a representative or 'fixed' character."<sup>18</sup> And Quentin Anderson comments perceptively on the emblematic conclusion:

Isabel's return is a return to the struggle with herself,

to the contention with that group of impulses in her of which Osmond is the ultimate expression.<sup>19</sup>

The basic structure of the novel, then, or what I referred to earlier as its "religious structure", is built around the conflict between freedom and form, and the ultimate question James is asking is at which altar one is to worship, or, in terms of the antithesis which constitutes the geographical symbolism, whether one is to choose the "garden" of Garden-court and freedom or the "garden" of Rome and form. The extensive religious imagery makes it clear that, for James, the choice becomes a religious one. The derogatory religious imagery and symbolism used with reference to the formed existence in the world (or garden) of Osmond reveals James's view of a condition in which one is subjected to form; and his decision to send Isabel back to Italy illustrates symbolically the power of that form over the individual consciousness. In The American, as I pointed out in Chapter II, James was less concerned with the "love affair" between Claire and Newman than with presenting the "insuperable difficulties" which arise in the relationship of characters who have differing attitudes toward form, and with positing what the proper attitude should be. Similarly, in The Portrait, in spite of the great critical debate over the reasons for Isabel's final rejection of Caspar Goodwood and her return to Osmond, James himself cares little for this matter, and is much more interested in what Isabel learns in Europe and her final conception of form and freedom.



The two altars or gardens mentioned above, form and freedom, are described by the use of imagery with religious connotations or by more general imagery of rigidity or the lack of it. This involves an explicit use of motifs which form a religious, mythical pattern, based on the idea of the Fall. Dorothy Van Ghent, for example, discusses the theme of the novel in terms of the Fall and posits the general problem James works out for Isabel: "After eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, how is one to gain access to the tree of life?"<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Lyall H. Powers refers to Isabel's "fortunate fall" on her return to Garden-court.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Isabel's relationship with Osmond represents her temptation by form. Just as he possesses his objets d'art, Pansy, and Madame Merle, Osmond attempts to possess Isabel, and to a large extent he succeeds. The narrator explicitly states Osmond's equation of Isabel with an artistic acquisition:

We know that he was fond of originals, of rarities, of the superior and <sup>the</sup> exquisite . . . . he perceived a new attraction in the idea of taking to himself a young lady who had qualified herself to figure in his collection of choice objects . . . . (p. 303)

Osmond also reflects that Madame Merle had "made him a present of incalculable value", with "a polished elegant surface." (p. 349) And on discovering Isabel's only drawback to be "too precipitate a readiness", he reflects, in another image of artistic rigidity, that:

It was a pity she had that fault, because if she had not had it she would really have had none; she would have been as smooth to his general need of her as handled ivory to the palm . . . . (p. 304)

Isabel succumbs temporarily to Osmond's control and this is her Fall. She eventually realizes her error, her total loss of freedom, and expresses it in identical imagery to that of Osmond: "She had been an applied, handled hung-up tool, as senseless and convenient as mere shaped wood and iron." (p. 552) She "felt older . . . and as if she were 'worth more' for it, like some curious piece in an antiquary's collection." (p. 325) Like Newman with the Bellegardes, Isabel's "free" character, her spontaneity, is somehow contaminated by the constricting atmosphere of Osmond's habitation. When she first visits him,

She was very careful, therefore, as to what she said, as to what she noticed or failed to notice, more careful than she had ever been before. (p. 262)

Her "careful" behaviour in the presence of Osmond represents an immediate loss of her freedom. She accepts his premise, the philosophy by which he "religiously" lives, that people are things, entities, or in Sartrean terms, given essences rather than "néants", free to create their own essence. As Richard Chase states, she "responds to Osmond's talk about how 'one ought to make one's life a work of art' without being aware of the withering aestheticism such an idea may imply."<sup>22</sup> For James, there is nothing wrong in Osmond's idea; it is when you make other people's lives into works of art for your own use, however, that you are acting

incorrectly. Isabel's Fall, then, is presented as a loss of freedom and spontaneity and a condition of subjection to a "formed" existence. The religious imagery of Roman Catholicism which James has so carefully developed around Osmond serves ideally to evoke not only the nature of Osmond's world, but the meaning of form and how one should use it. The fallen condition of man is a state where form controls man rather than one in which man controls form. To James, quite paradoxically, Adam and Eve, inhabitants of the "old world" of Eden, are imprisoned in the Garden, enclosed within its form. They are fallen before the Fall. To be free, man must, like Isabel, experience the world as a whole, without allowing himself to be <sup>unduly</sup> influenced by exterior forces (forms). One creates one's own freedom.

Osmond belongs to the "old" world, the "fallen" garden of form. Countess Gemini says that "we're dreadfully fallen, I think." (p. 355) Osmond solemnly declares that "I've brought up my child, as I wished, in the old way." (p. 352) And Madame Merle aptly comments: "I belong to the old, old, world." (p. 194)---a statement which takes on added significance when one remembers that in fact, like Pansy and Isabel, she "belongs" to Osmond. The imagery of Eden<sup>23</sup> and the fallen state is used ironically, to illustrate at once the beauty and the evil of Osmond's world. Isabel herself envisions her future "career" with Osmond as like a "formal Italian garden", (p. 276) forgetting an important reflection she made to herself back

at Gardencourt:

But she was often reminded that there were other gardens in the world than those of her remarkable soul, and that there were moreover a great many places which were not gardens at all---only dusky pestiferous tracts, planted thick with ugliness and misery. (p. 52)

As she later discovers, Osmond's "formal Italian garden" is one of these "tracts", a place with a "rigid system", the "odour of mould and decay" and of "darkness and suffocation". (pp. 430-31) To complete this religious-mythical situation, she realizes that this "garden" is not without its snake, for Osmond's "egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers", (p. 429) and his sting is bitterly effective, though subtle; he has "a faculty for making everything wither that he touched." (p. 423)<sup>24</sup>

The other altar or garden which Isabel encounters in Europe is that of freedom, represented by Ralph Touchett and Gardencourt. As Isabel eventually realizes, there is "something sacred in Gardencourt". (p. 496) Since James continually refers to it as a place of freedom, the obvious implication of this is that freedom is sacred. Isabel's return to Gardencourt is symbolically a return to freedom, an escape from form. James has her symbolically kneel before the character in the novel who is most free, Ralph: "She seemed for a moment to pray to him." (p. 576) Ralph is the high-priest of freedom as Osmond is that of form. Although she returns to him, Osmond has lost control over her consciousness, and she has regained her freedom, fulfilling Ralph's earlier advice that to see the "ghost" of Gardencourt (to see

into the deeper reality of life) "you must have suffered first". (p. 47) In other words, her fall is a fortunate one, and her rejection of form signifies a return to the unfallen state (hence the name Gardencourt), though a much more meaningful one. Poirier states that throughout the novel, Isabel shows a "detachment from social system".<sup>25</sup> As we have seen, this is true only at the end and this "detachment" is James's ultimate message: the importance of complete independence from the sort of formed existence depicted by the use of Roman Catholicism and other images of constriction.

The function of religion in The Portrait of a Lady, then, although much more complex and less starkly presented, is basically the same as in The American. Using the conventional connotations of the Roman Catholic Church as symbols and connecting them to his general exploration of the problem of form, James endows Osmond with a "fixed" character. The myth of the Fall serves as a complement to the more institutional religious imagery to emphasize the spiritual nature of Isabel's situation, and the tragic ending, in spite of her final escape from form, illustrates the power and extent of its influence. Both the imagery of the Roman Catholic Church and the motif of the Fall, however, serve basically technical purposes, to concretize the antitheses and replace the need for authorial intrusion.

Finally, the extensive religious imagery and the

"religious structure" of the novel contribute to the effect of making a basically moral situation attain a "religious" significance. The ultimate effect is, as F. O. Matthiessen puts it, the revelation of James's "religion of consciousness".<sup>26</sup> James's intense belief in the free consciousness--a moral outlook--takes the place of traditional religious beliefs. Morality replaces religion, then, or at least becomes a new religion, as the following discussion of The Wings of the Dove will illustrate.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WINGS OF THE DOVE

James's use of the religious metaphor in general and of Roman Catholicism in particular in his early fiction performed the dual function of delineating the various characters' concepts of form and of emphasizing, by playing on the reader's natural appreciation of the importance of religion to mankind, the serious nature of his moral and philosophical intentions. In The Wings of the Dove, religion plays a somewhat different role, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, a larger role, since many of its earlier functions are maintained. The story of Milly Theale, the wealthy but doomed American heiress who confronts European society, is, on the basic literal level, one of intense simplicity, if not inanity. She enters English society with her companion and confidante Susan Stringham, and is subsequently "worked" upon by Mrs. Maud Lowder, who attempts to marry her off to the Englishman Merton Densher. At the same time, Kate Croy, Maud's niece, who cannot marry Densher, although they are lovers, because he has neither money nor position, works toward the same end, so that when the dying Milly finally succumbs, Densher will be rich and they will be free to marry. The only other major character

is Lord Mark, the rejected suitor of Kate, who falls in love with Milly, and who reveals the "plot" of Kate and Merton to her, with the result that she "turned her face to the wall", rejecting society. Upon Milly's subsequent tragic death, Densher receives the coveted inheritance anyway, but rejects both the money and Kate, and carries out his repentance by loving the "memory" of Milly.

This summary, which sounds so much like the outline for a commercial soap-opera, and which indeed, on its literal level, is no more than that, forms the basis for what must be James's most "religious" novel. For The Wings of the Dove is religious in a way that The American and The Portrait of a Lady are not. Instead of merely showing a character's confrontation with another society and illustrating this conflict by imagery of form and religion, James goes beyond this by having Milly Theale confront the form and after rejecting it, as Christopher Newman and Isabel Archer also do, creating her own form, her own identity. The form she creates, ironically, is replete with religious associations and has, in fact, marked similarities to Roman Catholicism itself. But the important distinction is that she does this, as she says, by "option", by "volition".<sup>1</sup> In a very real sense, then, she creates her own religion.

In order to arrive at an understanding of exactly how this novel is "religious" in mood and intent, and how James is still essentially dealing with form through the use



of religious imagery and symbol, but going beyond it to promulgate a more complete metaphysical outlook, it is necessary to examine the extent to which religious metaphors, symbols, language, and situations pervade the work, before tracing the process of Milly Theale's confrontation with form, her rejection of it, and her creation of a new form, which, in spite of her tragic death, expresses the epitome of what Quentin Anderson calls James's "secular religion":

To be able to believe, in his age, that the possibilities of triumph and defeat, of good and evil, of fellowship and hatred, all lay within the human spirit, was his great strength, his secular religion.<sup>2</sup>

F. O. Matthiessen noticed the extensive religious content of The Wings of the Dove two decades ago. Commenting on the scene in the Swiss Alps in which Susan Stringham observes Milly on a precipice overlooking the Brünig Pass, apparently "looking down on the kingdoms of the earth" (p. 106) as Christ did during his three-fold temptation by Satan, Matthiessen mentions the existence of other religious language in the novel and states that:

one thing notably absent from such a compelling image is any apparent awareness by James of its full religious implications . . . at no point in the novel does he wish to suggest that she is tempted by the devil in her choice of this world.<sup>3</sup>

The latter part of Matthiessen's statement is correct in the sense that Milly is not tempted by the devil, but exposed to the temptation of constricting forms not of her own creation and of possession by other people. However, to deny that James is aware of the "full religious implications" of such

a passage or of the many other passages, is not only to impute to him an ignorance of his very heritage as an artist in the Western tradition where "the Bible has been the greatest single influence on our literature" and in which "our writers, almost without exception, have been steeped in Biblical imagery, phrasing and rhythms"<sup>4</sup>, but also to miss the point of the novel.

At the other extreme from Matthiessen's conservative attitude to the religious content of the work is Quentin Anderson's imaginative but far-fetched identification of Milly Theale as a literal Christ-figure, who, through her ascension on Christmas, redeems mankind:

In her, an individual recapitulates a function which in the days of the novelist's grandfather had been performed for all Christians by a designated and presumably historical character, Jesus.<sup>5</sup>

Anderson's equation of Milly with Christ is essentially correct and, as I shall presently show, is borne out by the religious references in the novel. But the equation is too literal and Anderson fails to make clear why James makes this repeated thematic identification; for Anderson is more concerned with proving his thesis that James was influenced to a great extent by the transcendental "bootstrap myth" of his father than with examining closely how James uses the Christian imagery to emphasize the serious nature of Milly's experience. Other critics have mentioned the religious imagery,<sup>6</sup> but no one has fully traced its development (as most of the comments occur in general studies); nor has any

one explored the reasons for and the effect of this extensive use of religion. Perhaps Oscar Cargill comes the closest to an accurate statement of its purpose:

There is a thickening of Christian imagery in the book . . . . the reader may even be excused for thinking he is dealing with allegory; however, it is not allegory but figurative insinuation and embellishment.<sup>7</sup>

The words "insinuation" and "embellishment" are apt as a means of characterizing the nature of the identification of Milly Theale with Christ, and the development of themes of salvation, martyrdom and redemption. For James is not establishing a new religion through Milly, but promulgating a moral outlook which has the intensity and importance of a religion, without its institutional elements. Before proceeding to an analysis of how his outlook is presented and what it means, I shall examine some of the religious references which form a basis for its development and intensify its significance.

## I

The first point to note is that one of the sources for Milly Theale was the saint-like Hilda of Hawthorne's The Marble Faun.<sup>8</sup> Hilda, who like Milly was called a "dove", tended the flame at a Roman Catholic shrine in Rome, even though she was a Protestant. The dove-image which connects the two heroines immediately establishes a religious connotation as well, doves traditionally being associated with the Holy Spirit and spiritual feelings in general. Unlike Hilda, however, Milly is not in the employment of the Roman Catholic

Church; James makes her a free spirit, controlled by no outside forms, at least at the beginning of the novel. Add to this important literary echo the other major source for Milly, James's deceased cousin Minny Temple, and one has a clear idea of the importance of James's heroine as an expression of his deepest feelings and his most spiritual ideas.

Our first information about Milly is received through the consciousness of her companion, Susan Shepherd-Stringham. Admittedly, Susan has an active imagination and is decidedly prejudiced in favour of Milly, but from the outset, her impressions of the girl are filled with religious language and stress Milly's "greatness", as well as the strong emotional impact she has on her confidante. Since leaving New York, Susan feels she has had "an education in the occult". (p. 92) Her first impression of Milly was like "a revelation" (p. 94), a "vision" (p. 93), a "striking apparition" (p. 93), and three times she calls Milly "the real thing". (pp. 93-5) She is "the potential heiress of all the ages" (p. 95) and "the charm of the creature was positively in the creature's greatness". (p. 98) One wonders if James is creating his own Moby Dick, his own great symbol, when, after many images of size are applied to Milly, Susan reflects that Milly could "stir the stream like a leviathan". (p. 98) This propitious and reverent introduction of Milly is followed by the famous scene in which Milly overlooks "the kingdoms of the earth" in a Christ-like manner, an image which, for Susan Shepherd,

"kept the character of revelation". (p. 107) Unlike Christ, however, Milly's consideration of the earthly kingdoms "wouldn't be with a view of renouncing them" (pp. 106-7), but of encountering them and experiencing all they have to offer. This will be her form of Christ's necessary descent into hell. As she says to Susan: "I want abysses." (p. 149) The abyss, the hell into which she descends, is that of the formed society of London, and her rejection of it, as well as her simultaneous destruction by it, completes the loose analogy to Christ, in her crucifixion and her eventual redemption of Densher.

Other biblical and Miltonic echoes complete Susan's first portrayal of Milly. The effect of her companionship is for Susan like "the taste of honey and the luxury of milk" (p. 103), and they move through Europe "with the world all before them". (p. 109) Although we never get as complete an idea of how Susan feels about Milly as in this opening description, her continuing devotion to Milly, or one might say her "discipleship", is evident throughout the novel and is expressed periodically in religious terms. For example, at Mrs. Lowder's dinner-party, the absent Milly is being somewhat crassly discussed by those present and the narrator expresses the effect of this on Susan, who that evening was "confined to the function of inhaling the incense" (p. 254) of Milly's spirit, in a religious simile:

Milly's anxious companion sat and looked--looked very

much as some spectator in an old-time circus might have watched the oddity of a Christian maiden in the arena, mildly, caressingly martyred. (p. 257)

That Susan's devotion to Milly is of a religious nature is clear when she remarks in a definite Christian echo to Densher: "I've given up all to follow her." (p. 375) Similarly, the narrator remarks that "Susie glowed in the light of her justified faith" (p. 135) on Milly's entrance into society. Susan Shepherd, then (her very name implies some sort of religious connotation), establishes early in the novel the spirituality of Milly Theale, her beauty and impressiveness of character.

Milly's effect on the other characters of the novel is also expressed in religious language and metaphor. The most important instance of this, of course, is the continual characterization, by Mrs. Lowder, Kate Croy and Merton Densher, of Milly as a "dove". Generally, they do this because she strikes them as timid and harmless; but as Densher finally realizes and as the traditional connotations of the dove as Christian symbol imply, the term "most applied to her spirit".<sup>9</sup> (p. 382)

It is Merton Densher whom Milly eventually "saves", and the delineation of his relationship with her adds a great deal to the religious atmosphere that comes to surround her. (Once again, it is worth pointing out that neither James in the novel nor I in my interpretation of it are attempting to equate Milly with Christ.<sup>10</sup> The religious imagery, as I

shall show later, has an intensifying, emphasizing role; it makes an analogy, not an equation. The important thing at this point is to appreciate the pervasiveness of the religious imagery; its purpose will be explored later in this chapter.) Early in their relationship, while Milly is still in London, Densher makes a comment which is ironically proleptic of what will eventually be the truth, and the comment is typical of the effect she has on those around her: "What we shall feel for you will be much nearer worship." (p. 287) Similarly, her effect on him at her party in her palace in Venice becomes a religious moment: "he felt her as diffusing, in wide warm waves, the spell of a general, a kind of beatific mildness". (p. 378) The reason for this "beatific" appearance is that Milly is dressed for the first time in the novel in white, "like Christ at the moment of transfiguration."<sup>11</sup> Later, Densher, alone in Venice with her, feels that she is "divine in her trust, or at any rate inscrutable in her mercy", and one of his "transcendent motions" at this time is that "she had already more than once saved him". (pp. 398-99) Densher's feeling at this time that in spite of the deceptions and falsities of his relationship with Milly, "something outside, beyond, above" Kate and him had "purged" him (p. 396), reveals the essentially spiritual nature of her effect on him: "Milly herself did everything." (p. 396) Moreover, even after Milly has discovered the plot against her and "turned her face to the wall", Densher is forgiven by her and on his return to

London, his state of mind is given by the narrator in explicit religious language:

The essence was that something had happened to him too beautiful and sacred to describe. He had been, to his recovered sense, forgiven, dedicated, blessed. (p. 469)

That Milly, through her generous forgiveness and the gift of money, has somehow "saved" Densher, or at least has had some sort of profound spiritual effect on him, is clear from a passage late in the book in which he considers the "thought" that he has been left with by her:

. . . he took it out of its sacred corner and its soft wrappings; he undid them one by one, handling them, handling it as a father, baffled and tender, might handle a maimed child. (p. 506)

An image which works on several levels, the "maimed child" or "thought" which Densher treats so tenderly and keeps in "its sacred corner", is not only an expression of his veneration for Milly's memory, but implicitly connects her to Christ, who was born on the day she died. Finally, the letter from Milly which he never reads, comes to be a "revelation" to him (p. 506), and he maintains a "sacred hush" in his rooms while attempting to "heal the ache, in his soul". (p. 506)

In addition to the spiritual nature of her effect on the other characters in the novel (principally on Susan Shepherd and Densher), the narrator's description of Milly, the symbolism of the Bronzino and Veronese paintings, and some of her own comments, add to this religious impact. When Milly descends to go out with Densher after their first talk in London, she is dressed all in black, wears "an



infinite number of yards of priceless lace" and "heavy rows of pearls", the lace hanging "down to her feet like the stole of a priestess". (p. 296) Throughout the novel, she is dressed in this monastic black manner, except, as mentioned earlier, at her party in Venice, where she appears "in a wonderful white dress" and has such a "happily pervasive" effect on Densher. (p. 379) Once again on this occasion she wears the long pearls, which make Kate reflect that "one somehow doesn't think of doves as bejewelled". (p.382) But this apparent materialistic contradiction in her costume is not what Kate thinks it is. The pearls have been carefully chosen by Milly as a symbol for her existence, and, in one of James's most subtle strokes, tie together many of the associations already developed. For example, in the famous Bronzino scene, where Milly is compared to the beautiful lady in the painting who is "dead, dead, dead", and during which Milly has her intense moment of self-realization, James mentions that the lady in the portrait wears "recorded jewels". (p. 171). Miriam Allott has traced the original Bronzino that James is using as the portrait of one Lucrezia Panciatichi, and maintains that, in the portrait, the lady is indeed wearing beads, and that there is an inscription carved into the beads: "Amour dure sans fin."<sup>12</sup> Every time Milly is described for the rest of the novel she is wearing her pearls, in an obvious attempt to express not only her feeling of identification with the Bronzino, but her "everlasting love"

as well. An interesting addition to this skilful symbolic technique is the fact that Kate and Densher remark at the party on the fact that Milly's pearls hung down "so far . . . that Milly's trick, evidently unconscious, of holding and vaguely fingering and entwining a part of it, conduced presumably to convenience." (p. 382) The fact that these pearls express a spiritual meaning (at least to Milly) through their association with the lady in the Bronzino and the inscription; the generally religious appearance of Milly in this scene as some sort of priestess; and the ironic Jamesian "tone-words" "evidently" and "presumably"---indicate that Kate's judgment is perhaps incorrect, and that what Milly is really doing is saying her own form of spiritual rosary as she fingers the pearls.

The second symbolic painting, the Veronese, with its dwarf (Susan Shepherd), and its young man (Densher) holding the wine-cup to Christ (Milly), is really a fusion of two Veronese paintings,<sup>13</sup> "The Supper in the House of Levi" and "The Marriage Feast at Cana"; but the important fact is that James has once again associated Milly with the Saviour and evoked a religious atmosphere for her party in Venice. (Also, it is interesting that James chooses to associate religion, art, and morality so closely with his heroine, in one symbol, such as the Veronese painting or the rosary-like pearls: all three elements seem to coalesce in Milly.)

Finally, Milly herself seems almost unconsciously to

assume religious language on various occasions. Early in the novel, after doubting momentarily Susan's devotion to her, she reflects that "she knew . . . why she had 'elected' Susan Shepherd". (James's italics, p. 170) On another occasion, she seems to use the classic Christian paradox in remarking to Susan: "Since I've lived all these years as if I were dead, I shall die, no doubt, as if I were alive." (p. 158) And after her visit to the doctor, Sir Luke Strett, (note the name---Paul's physician, Luke) in his "brown old temple of truth" (p. 186), she evokes the almost sacramental nature of their talk by saying: "I feel---I can't otherwise describe it---as if I had been on my knees to the priest. I've confessed and I've been absolved." (pp. 180-81)

There are many other examples of religious imagery and situation in the novel, many of them applied to other characters or to settings such as Milly's Palazzo Leporelli, St. Mark's Square, Aunt Maud's home or London itself. These will be discussed later in the chapter. But the purpose of the foregoing has been to establish firmly the extensive religious imagery which accrues to Milly Theale. It is evident, then, that James is using religion as a means to emphasize her importance, and Christ as an analogue to her actions in a very explicit manner. This impression is strengthened when one remembers, as Quentin Anderson suggests, that "Milly's death falls, for an apparent emblematic reason, on Christmas",<sup>14</sup> and when one notices her generally unconventional,

indirect and symbolic presentation, in which James allows us to enter her consciousness only twice during the whole novel. It remains to be seen, however, why James develops so completely these connotations, what kind of "saviour" he considers Milly to be, and how her confrontation with form and other people's consciousnesses differs from the similar experiences of Christopher Newman and Isabel Archer. To this point, the one thing that has become clear is that, contrary to Matthiessen, James is very much aware of the "full religious implications" of the pervading Christian imagery.<sup>15</sup>

## II

The society which Milly Theale confronts in England is remarkably similar to the one that Christopher Newman and Isabel Archer enter on the continent, though it is less fully drawn. It is a formed existence, where people are controlled by the very forms they once created, and where most of the characters attempt to "possess" or control the consciousness of their fellow human beings. The basic struggle, then, as in The American and The Portrait of a Lady, is between "free" and "fixed" characters. Although James no longer uses the Roman Catholic Church as a symbol of form and fixity in The Wings of the Dove (with one exception), he still uses secular imagery of form itself to describe England and the "fixed" characters, as well as a more general type of religious and institutional imagery, which evokes the earlier

use of Roman Catholicism. After all, England is not a Roman Catholic country.

Milly images England from the beginning as a "packed society" (p. 138), and the country-house at Matcham is described, in similar terms of fixity, as having a "largeness of style" and "an appointed felicity", where, aptly, the most popular drink is "iced coffee". (p. 162) When Kate is explaining English society to Milly, she uses a mechanical image which evokes its formed nature:

The worker in one connection was the worked in another; it was as broad as it was long--with the wheels of the system, as might be seen, wonderfully oiled. (p. 143)

Later, when Milly and Kate visit Kate's sister, Marian Condrip, who lives in comparative poverty, Milly receives the impression of a "state of things sagely perceived to be involved in an hierarchical, an aristocratic order." (p. 152) James, then, uses the same imagery to describe England that he formerly has used to describe France and Italy.

Similarly, he creates in Aunt Maud Lowder the same type of fixed character as Madame de Bellegarde, the Marquis de Bellegarde, Madame Merle and Gilbert Osmond. Aunt Maud is the great symbol of form in the novel; she controls the other characters' fates and becomes an almost melodramatic arch-fiend. Kate makes this clear early in the novel when she compares her to a lioness, ready to devour those who enter her "cage", and continues by reflecting that:

. . . the cage was Aunt Maud's own room, her office,

her counting-house, her battlefield, her especial scene, in fine, of action, situated on the ground floor . . . and figuring rather to our young woman on exit and entrance as a guardhouse, or a toll-gate. (p. 39)

The economic, military and dramatic imagery of this passage illustrates the powerful nature of Aunt Maud, as well as her rather inhuman attitudes, her tendency to treat people as objects and possessions. She becomes, to Kate, a "Britannia of the Market Place", and Kate also mentions Maud's "arranged existence". (p. 39)

Other characters receive similar impressions of Maud. For example, another animal image completes the lioness metaphor when Kate mentions Mrs. Lowder's "wonderful gilded claws" and Densher perceptively retorts: "You speak . . . as if she were a vulture." (p. 70) Kate's reply to this illustrates the possessive, predatorial aspect of the old lady:

Call it an eagle---with a gilded beak as well, and with wings for great flights. If she's a thing of the air, in short---say at once a balloon---I never myself got into her car. I was her choice. (pp. 70-1)

When Densher visits Aunt Maud, he comments on the furniture of her house as "massive, florid . . . the immense expression of her signs and symbols" (p. 72), and concludes that "never . . . had he seen anything so gregariously cruel." (p. 73) Similarly, like Kate, he sees Mrs. Lowder as a lioness (p. 73), and after his visit, remarks to Kate that Aunt Maud is:

. . . on the scale . . . of the car of Juggernaut . . . . The things in your drawing-room there were like the forms of the strange idols, the mystic excrescences, with which one may suppose the front of the car to bristle. (p. 82)

The reference to the car of Juggernaut is apt as Mrs. Lowder is much like the mythological Hindu idol under whose wheels devotees threw themselves.<sup>16</sup> She demands worship, controls people's existence, and sets up in her drawing-room the "idols" of her religion. As J. A. Ward states,

. . . the frozen code of manners institutionalized by Aunt Maud's society only inhibits and dilutes human intercourse. It not only debases language; it provides approved formulae for the telling of lies. The basic action, Kate's plot, comes to epitomize the conspirational quality of Aunt Maud's England.<sup>17</sup>

Milly's entry into English society, then, is a confrontation with form, and with the attempt on the part of Aunt Maud and eventually Kate Croy as well to possess her consciousness.<sup>18</sup> As in the earlier novels, James illustrates effectively the powerful nature of this temptation by form; and the fact that Milly's end is a tragic one, shows that it is difficult to overcome such fixity. However, her ability to recognize her peril, to escape it, and to construct her own form, represents James's answer to the whole problem of imposed forms and the question of possession. Milly, almost from the first moment of her entry into the world of Aunt Maud and England, becomes aware that she is being controlled and "formed" in some way by those around her, and she uses images of size and impenetrability to express this feeling.

At Maud's first dinner-party, where the Bishop of Murrum, symbolizing the Church as institution, sits at Maud's right hand, (p. 121) Milly mistakenly feels

Mrs. Lowder as a person of whom the mind might in two or three days roughly make a circuit. She would

sit there massive, at least, while one attempted it.  
(p. 122)

It is impossible, of course, to "make a circuit" of this lady, as Milly soon discovers: one either submits to her "massive" self or rejects her completely. Milly rapidly commences to apply more and more images of form and control to Aunt Maud and feels that "Mrs. Lowder grew somehow more stout and <sup>more</sup> instituted." (p. 130) This, of course, is exactly what Aunt Maud is---an institution, formed by tradition and restraint. Other impressions follow these. Milly sees Maud as "a capacious receptacle, originally perhaps loose, but now drawn as tightly as possible over its accumulated contents---a packed mass . . . of curious detail." (p. 136) The "packed mass" of Maud recalls the earlier reference to England as a "packed society". (p. 138) At Matcham, Milly observes the way Maud seems to control those around her, almost like a weaver, blending different colours into a finished artifact entirely of her own design, and she marvels in particular at the passive acceptance of this by Lord Mark:

Aunt Maud's free-moving shuttle took a length of him at rhythmic intervals; and one of the intermixed truths that fluttered across to Milly was that he ever so consentingly knew he was being worked in. (p. 166)

Milly, however, begins to feel the pressure of Aunt Maud's "looming 'personality'" (p. 39) on her own freedom and to rebel against it:

Milly herself . . . was . . . really conscious of the enveloping flap of a protective mantle, a shelter with



the weight of an eastern carpet. An eastern carpet, for wishing--purposes of one's own, was a thing to be on rather than under. (pp. 167-68)

Milly has already felt as if Lord Mark wanted to deprive her of her freedom. It has seemed to her "as if she and her like were the chief of his diet" (p. 124), and "she was more and more sharply conscious of having been popped into the compartment in which she was to travel for him." (p. 128) When Maud's behaviour strikes her as similar to Lord Mark's, the sensitive young girl is insulted and she asks herself sarcastically, on perceiving that Aunt Maud "too wished to take care of her", "wasn't it à peu près what all the people with the kind eyes were wishing?" (p. 171) These images of form and possession, then, build up until Aunt Maud's "polished pressure" (p. 206) brings Milly to the point where she must give in or rebel.

Her full awareness of her manipulated existence comes when she realizes that "she was still in a current determined . . . by others; that not she but the current acted and that somebody else, always, was the keeper of the lock or the dam." (p. 209) Twice she reflects that "she knew herself dealt with" (pp. 210, 223), "handled". (p. 223) It is after her visit to Sir Luke Strett, the physician, where she receives the advice to "be as active as you can and as you like" (p. 190), that she summons the strength to escape this controlled state and decides to reverse the roles: "she would affirm, without delay, her option, her volition." (p. 191) It is

significant, with reference to the religious imagery discussed earlier in this chapter, that after this active decision Milly says, " I feel . . . as if I had been, on my knees, to the priest. I've confessed and I've been absolved." (p. 180) From this point, Milly possesses her freedom and controls her own fate.<sup>19</sup> It is what she does with this freedom, or what she is, paradoxically, forced to do (because of her illness and the vulgar intentions of English society), that is worth a close examination and which will constitute the remainder of this chapter.

Milly's forced retreat from England seems at first to represent a surrender to, or at least a defeat by, the world of form that exists there. In that sense, it is analogous to Christopher Newman's solitary sadness after his loss of Claire de Cintr  and his defeat by Madame de Bellegarde, and to Isabel Archer's return to Italy and the fixed world of Gilbert Osmond. The Wings of the Dove is similar to these earlier novels in its "unhappy" literal ending and in the apparent defeat of its American protagonist. Indeed, it seems even more tragic in that instead of the loss of a loved one, or an unhappy marriage, the result is that Milly dies as well as losing Densher and being betrayed by Kate and Densher. But James's novels have not only a literal, "plot" level, but an emblematic one as well. (Even in The American and The Portrait this level exists, and balances to an extent the apparent defeat of Newman and Isabel.) The pervasive

Christian imagery discussed earlier supports this contention, and at this point the meaning of Milly's deliberate and conscious seclusion in Venice demands consideration; for it does seem to represent a more positive solution to the problem of form and it is evident even from the literal dénouement of the novel that her action is not without positive results, as, eventually, it somehow "saves" Densher and acquires an intensely symbolic spiritual significance.

The images associated with Milly's home in Venice, the Palazzo Leporelli, are almost all religious or "form" images and a close examination of their context and significance may help to define what James is emblematically promulgating in using the palace as an important symbol. The point to keep in mind is that Milly freely and consciously secludes herself in the palace, as a means of maintaining a state of freedom from possession by others.

In the first place, the name "Leporelli" itself has a certain meaning, as does Osmond's Palazzo Roccanera in The Portrait of a Lady.<sup>20</sup> The sound "lepor" at the beginning is a pun on "leper", and this association synthesizes neatly the fact that Milly is a dying person and the religious stories commonly evoked, such as Christ's healing of the lepers.<sup>21</sup> The palace is continually described through religious imagery. Lord Mark exclaims, on entering: "What a temple to taste . . .!" (p. 331) And Susan Shepherd states that it is "one of the courts of heaven, the court of an angel . . . beyond any book",

calling Milly "the great and only princess" (p. 377), as she does throughout the novel. The palace has "gothic arches" (p. 333), and has been "preserved and consecrated" by its former tenants. (p. 323) It becomes a cloister for Milly, with all the characteristics and atmosphere of a church, in which Milly is a sort of nun-priest, as this passage makes clear:

Palazzo Leporelli held its history still in its great lap, even like a painted idol, a solemn puppet hung about with decorations. Hung about with pictures and relics, the rich Venetian past, the ineffaceable character, was here the presence revered and served . . . awkward novice though she might be, Milly moved slowly to and fro as the priestess of the worship. (pp. 323-24)

Milly carries out her role of "priestess" in an almost ritualistic manner. While Lord Mark visits her, she falls to her knees (p. 333) in an attitude of prayer, trying to regain both physical and spiritual strength against the onslaught of this representative of the exterior world of form. On the night of her party, where she appears for the first time dressed, as the Dove, in white, and when she is compared implicitly to the Christ of Veronese's "Marriage Feast at Cana", her guests notice that there "were even more candles than their friend's common allowance" and that they "lighted up the pervasive mystery of style". (p. 371) The symbolic candles illuminate an evening during which, with all the religious imagery used, "Milly has become", as Laurence Holland says:

the sacrament, the sacred thing, prefigured in the

temple, histories, and legends which the novel evokes, but embodied now in its stricken heroine, the treasure dove and muse of James's imagination.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, R. W. B. Lewis discusses the ethereal nature of Milly's appearance on this occasion and evokes the mystical nature of the whole scene, when he mentions Milly's smiling glance at Kate and Densher across the room:

If inanimate things are the elements by which James renders what Dante called the tropological or moral meaning of his story; and if the historical or allegorical dimension is revealed in what the conflict of consciousness can do to revitalize institutions historically drained of importance; then Milly's smile, like that of Beatrice, gives a piercing glimpse of the anagogue.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, James emphasizes that Milly is aware of this spiritual, mystical element in her existence in Venice, when he gives one of the rare glimpses into her consciousness during this time:

. . . the idea became an image of never going down, of remaining aloft in the divine, dustless air, where she would hear but the plash of the water against stone. (p.332)

She no longer descends from her symbolic second-floor room. Finally, to complete the religious imagery connected with the palace, the narrator comments that "she was in it, as in the ark of her deluge." (p. 329) This extremely apt simile connotes the theme of death as well as that of baptism, and associated with the continual Christian imagery applied to Milly, it is evident that James wants to emphasize the fact that, like Noah and Jesus, Milly will, in a spiritual sense at least, survive the "deluge" because of her "ark", the Palazzo Leporelli.

Milly, then, has created in the Palazzo Leporelli her own church, religion and salvation. The institutional imagery associated with the palace, however, is no longer pejorative, as was the imagery of Roman Catholicism and institutions in The American and The Portrait; for Milly has created her own form, independently and freely and has not allowed it to be imposed upon her from outside. She typifies, in spite of her illness and the tragedy of her manipulation by Kate and Densher, the Jamesian "paradox of personal limitation as the only ground for personal freedom."<sup>24</sup> She becomes, to a greater degree than James's other heroines, the exemplar of his persistent theme of the "young girl as the arbiter of values formerly watched over by organized religions."<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the use of institutional, religious imagery to describe the meaning of the Palazzo Leporelli and Milly's retreat into it, James uses more secular imagery of form as well. Milly says to Lord Mark in reference to the palace: "This is more, as you say *there*, my form." (p. 335) She also comments to Susan Shepherd: "It will become my great gilded shell." (p. 336) Moreover, the narrator states that she saw her existence in the palace as one of deliberate maintenance of forms: She "wore it as a general armour." (p. 328) To dispel any feeling that the Palazzo Leporelli is more like a prison than a place of freedom, the narrator reiterates Milly's paradoxical state of independence explicitly: "it wasn't therefore, within such walls, confinement,

it was the freedom of all the centuries." (p. 351) Milly's existence, then, like Christ's, is one of healthy paradox--- life in death, freedom in confinement. When the narrator characterizes succinctly her state as one of "caged freedom" (p. 346), James shows a deep insight into the paradox of the human situation: even though we appear to be deterministically controlled and imprisoned by fate, there remains the possibility of freedom. As Mathieu in Sartre's L'Age de Raison exclaims, in a classic Sartrean paradox: "Je suis dans une cage sans barreaux."<sup>26</sup> (a statement remarkably reminiscent of Milly's "caged freedom")

The result, then, of Milly's "confinement" in the Venetian palace is a paradoxical freedom from form through the active creation of a personal form. She escapes the restrictions inherent in Maud's fixed society, and as Jean Kimball says, her life is "justified, not by the use which others make of it, but by her own entirely subjective, entirely inward development of her self."<sup>27</sup> Her rejection of convention epitomizes what Quentin Anderson explains as the important Jamesian concept that:

there were two ways of taking . . . experience, the selfish way and the loving way, and those who took it in the former, accepted conventional forms, while those who took it in the latter, made their own forms, and arrived at a style which was a worthy container of all that was worthy and noble.<sup>28</sup>

The extensive Christian imagery traced at the beginning of this chapter, which has the effect of making an analogy between Milly and Christ, emphasizes therefore, as it does in

The American and The Portrait, the seriousness of Milly's action, elevating the moral content of the book to a sort of "secular religion".<sup>29</sup> But the analogy to Christ and Milly's creation of her own form have a second role---the effect she ultimately has on Merton Densher. For the very structure of the novel involves Densher's movement from a "worship" of Kate Croy to a "worship" of Milly, and this movement is also catalogued through the use of imagery of form and fixity, as well as the occasional use of religious symbolism and metaphor.<sup>30</sup>

Kate Croy, though in a much more complex and less transparent manner,<sup>31</sup> is ultimately associated with Aunt Maud and Lord Mark (the world of form), for she attempts to "possess" Densher and use Milly for her own purposes. The imagery makes this clear, as Densher gradually becomes aware of his "so extremely manipulated state", Kate's "management of him", and the fact that he is "perpetually bent to her will". (p. 352) Twice he mentions that he is confined in "a circle of petticoats" (pp. 376, 432), and that "they all came together round him". (p. 386) The "wondrous silken web" (p. 273) of intrigue into which Kate persuades him to enter, will eventually alienate him from her completely. He begins to notice the characteristics she possesses that bind her to a society of fixity and restriction---"her imperturbable consistency", "the finest shade of studied serenity" (p. 471), her "decorum" and "self-command" (p. 449). She



speaks, as do Madame de Bellegarde and Gilbert Osmond, "with a beautiful authority" (p. 461), and has "the cold glow of an idea". (p. 385) This "formal" behaviour is not the freely created form of Milly; on the contrary, as Densher realizes, it has been "imposed by tradition". (p. 251) Stage metaphors are continually applied to Kate to complete this effect. The result of this realization is that Densher "ceased to be free with Kate". (p. 465)

In spite of this, however, Densher remains tied to Kate, and continues to love her, as well as participating with her in the plot against Milly, "the effort to dehumanize another person by imprisoning and isolating him in the Beautiful".<sup>32</sup> James stresses that the attraction between Densher and Kate is exclusively a physical one, and in Kate's case, that she is motivated by materialistic concerns. This is symbolized by the fact that Kate has intercourse with him in his rooms in Venice, and his worship for Kate is conveyed by means of suitably religious language as he venerates the memory of that event: "What had come to pass within his walls" (p. 393) becomes "a treasure, kept at home, in safety and sanctity". (p. 394) His rooms become a "worn shrine" (p. 420), and the growing antithesis between the spiritual Milly and the worldly Kate is indicated by the fact that Densher cannot stand the idea of Milly coming there: "he couldn't, for his life, have opened the door to a third person. Such a person

would have . . . profaned his secret." (p. 395)

The nature of their relationship is emblematically typified by the only specific use of Roman Catholicism in the novel. The morning they spend in St. Mark's Square in Venice, with the great cathedral of St. Mark's looming above them, is rich in evocative meaning. It is during this scene, first of all, that Densher asks Kate to come to his rooms, and as Cargill states, "we must note the element of blasphemy in their assignation",<sup>33</sup> as they have just left the church itself. Later in the novel, James describes the piazza as "like a great drawing-room, the drawing-room of Europe". (p. 412) This simile reveals his attitude to the scene as well as recalling the fact that Maud's drawing-room has been described in terms of form and rigidity. Thus Kate never leaves the formed existence of the English drawing-room, and the great "form" of the Roman Catholic Church looms above them, symbolizing the way she and Densher are controlled by, and subject to, form. St. Mark's also provides an effective contrast to the independent form created by Milly nearby in the Palazzo Leporelli.

Thus, Densher remains, nearly to the end of the book, possessed by Kate. In their last scene, he feels that he "might have been swaying a little, aloft, as one of the objects in her poised basket". (p. 505) But, at the same time he has begun to change to the more spiritual worship of Milly, because of her Christ-like actions. He has two different kinds

of love, as Anderson points out:

When they meet in London, Kate says that Densher has fallen in love with Milly, but this is not the fact, since it implies that he has fallen out of love with Kate. Rather, he has found another kind of love.<sup>34</sup>

James chooses not to portray exactly how Densher changes from physical love for Kate to a form of spiritual love for Milly, as he does not include the final scene between the dying Milly and Densher in the Palazzo Leporelli. But Densher's gradual realization about Kate's "fixed" character and his feeling that she controls him, are clues to at least the reasons for his rejection of her. His "salvation" by Milly, is however a more mystical event, and a precise understanding of its nature arises only on close examination of the religious imagery of the latter part of the novel. (This movement toward Milly and away from Kate is also indicated by more literal facts, such as Densher's refusal to lie to Milly any longer [p. 343], his depressed mood in Venice, his talks with Maud in London, and, of course, his refusal to take Milly's inheritance.) Milly's character has given him a feeling of "purification" (p. 415), and her memory becomes "something I feel as sacred". (p. 499) His final interview with Milly takes on added significance when the narrator states that:

the essence was that something had happened to him too beautiful and too sacred to describe. He had been, to his recovered sense, forgiven, dedicated, blessed." (p. 469)

This feeling, combined with the Christian imagery applied to

Milly, evokes the intense nature of his "conversion" to Milly. Finally, the "revelation" (p. 476) of Milly's death, which symbolically arrives on Christmas morning, results in a sort of rebirth, as he is finally freed by Milly and refuses both Kate and the inheritance. The same morning, he enters the Brompton Oratory ("The Oratory, in short, to make him right, would do.", [p. 482]), where a Christmas service is taking place. This apparently paradoxical action (for it seems that he is once more submitting to form) does not imply that he is becoming a convert to institutionalized religion; on the contrary James simply "uses this visit as a symbol of his dedication to a new way of life."<sup>35</sup> The Oratory "would do", but the memory of Milly is the important factor in his life at this point.

Milly's ability to make her own form, her own institution, then, is not the only positive element of the novel. Her freedom generates more freedom, as Densher finally is able to escape Kate. For once, James allows morality and spirituality to triumph over greed and form, at least on the emblematic level, although the death of Milly, and Densher's apparent unhappy future imply that James's pessimistic tendencies make the victory only a moral one.

The Wings of the Dove is a "religious novel" because of the positive spiritual-moral values that James develops through Milly Theale. Whereas in The American and The Portrait of a Lady, he uses religion primarily for symbolic purposes

to contrast moral outlooks and national characteristics, in this novel, he so pervades it with religious elements that it attains the level of "secular religion". The basic movement of the novel is the same as the other two works--the confrontation with form of an innocent American, and the problems which arise from that conflict. However, in Milly's case, form is defeated through the construction of a new form---James's answer to conventions such as the Roman Catholic Church. Cargill considers the novel "a sort of modern equivalent of the Divine Comedy"<sup>36</sup>; the comparison is just in that Milly combines the redemptive qualities of Christ (on an entirely moral level, let me once again stress) with the spiritual beauty of Beatrice.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study has been to explore the extent, the effect, and the intent of James's use of Roman Catholicism and religion in general, as well as the important relationship between Roman Catholicism and the Jamesian concept of form, in three of James's major novels. Similar treatment and attitudes are manifested in the rest of James's novels, as well as in the short stories.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the limited scope of this discussion it is possible to posit a few conclusions, with the understanding that a more complete examination of James's relationship to and use of religion is needed, especially in the context of the Puritan tradition and the essentially "mythic" nature of American literature.

The three novels examined reveal a chronological development in both James's attitude toward form and his use of religious imagery to convey it. In The American, the antithesis between form and freedom is stark and Roman Catholicism is used simply as a means of characterizing European social manners. James emphasizes the powerful, seductive nature of form in this early work, as the Belle-garde family, the symbols of form and staunch Roman Catholics, are able to control the fate of Claire de Cintre and

Christopher Newman. The novel ends tragically, with Claire in a convent, and Newman alone, enjoying only a moral victory. Similarly, in The Portrait of a Lady, Isabel Archer's confrontation with the formed society of Europe ends unhappily; but although form is shown to be even more powerful and destructive in the rigid figure of Gilbert Osmond, Isabel's free spirit, as well as the independence and selflessness of Ralph Touchett, effectively counter it. Milly Theale of The Wings of the Dove, however, completes a process which James chose only to show as a nascent possibility in the other two novels. She confronts form, learns its rigid power and is able to defeat it ultimately, by the free and independent construction of new forms. For James, form can only be defeated by the establishment of new form.

In all of these novels, James associates the Roman Catholic Church, along with other symbols, with the concept of restrictive form, or the old form, the one which must be destroyed. In the cases where new forms are created and convention defeated, he invests the whole process with Christian imagery to balance the institutional religious imagery connected with form. Images of Roman Catholicism, then, constitute a continuing basis for the depiction of form, and thus are central to the concept which stands as an antithetical polarity to James's idea of the free consciousness, and hence are central as well to the whole question of James' moral ideas.

This study has traced James's use of Roman Catholic imagery and symbol in The American, The Portrait of a Lady and The Wings of the Dove, in an attempt to define more fully the Jamesian concept of form, to illustrate the effects achieved by the utilization of religious imagery, and to develop Quentin Anderson's idea of James's "secular religion", the result of an individual's independent establishment of personal forms. To repeat, even though it is apparent that he objected to at least the institutional aspects of the Church, James's own attitude toward Catholicism per se is irrelevant in this examination; what is important is the practical use James made of Roman Catholicism and other forms of religious imagery within the novels themselves.

Three basic uses have been distinguished: (1) The criticism of conventional form by associating pejorative, restrictive connotations with Roman Catholicism and those characters who are subjected to it and other social and religious institutions. (2) James's creation of his own "secular religion" by investing such characters as Isabel Archer and Milly Theale with Christian imagery. (3) The emphasizing of moral situations and character through the use of analogous Christian imagery.<sup>2</sup>

James's intense belief in the freedom of the individual consciousness is his optimism, his hopeful message; it is balanced, however, by a realistic and stark presentation of the powerful influence of form and convention in



society, as one realizes when one recalls the tragic fate of many of his heroes. This double awareness of the possibilities and realities of man's condition is existential in nature and seems proleptic of Sartre's concept of man's "caged freedom".<sup>3</sup> The rigid forms which control James's protagonists are the "cages" from which they must escape into a condition of freedom.

## FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER I)

<sup>1</sup>The choice of novels is based on three factors: (1) Chronological development. (2) The use of religious imagery and the hero's attitude toward form both undergo explicit development from one novel to another. (3) Studies have already been published on the religious imagery of The Golden Bowl and The Princess Casamassima. (see n. 1, Conclusion.) The easily available texts chosen are identified on p. 107.

<sup>2</sup>See Marius Bewley, The Complex Fate (London, 1952), for a discussion of James's debt to Hawthorne.

<sup>3</sup>"All the Jameses were religious." William Troy, "The Altar of Henry James", The Question of Henry James, ed. F. W. Dupee (London, 1947), p. 274.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. T. S. Eliot: "He had a mind so fine that no idea could violate it." "On Henry James", The Question of Henry James, p. 125.

<sup>5</sup>Henry James, The Letters of Henry James, ed. Percy Lubbock (New York, 1920), p. 111. (January 2, 1885)

<sup>6</sup>Henry James, Notes of a Son and Brother (London, 1914), p. 158.

<sup>7</sup>Letters, p. 170. (July 23, 1890)

<sup>8</sup>Henry James, "Is There a Life After Death?", The James Family, ed. F. O. Matthiessen (New York, 1961), p. 608.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 611.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 613.

<sup>11</sup>Graham Greene, "Henry James: The Religious Aspect", The Lost Childhood (London, 1951), p. 33.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

- <sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 32.
- <sup>14</sup>Letters, p. 25. (October 30, 1869)
- <sup>15</sup>Greene, p. 33.
- <sup>16</sup>The Ambassadors (Cambridge, 1960), p. 179.
- <sup>17</sup>Greene, p. 38. I will try to show later that James did, in fact, organize his own system, or at least that he held very firm beliefs, with a "religious" fervor, about the nature of man's freedom.
- <sup>18</sup>American Literature, XXX (1958), 89-102.
- <sup>19</sup>See Robert Gale, The Caught Image: Figurative Language in the Fiction of Henry James (Chapel Hill, 1964), p. 157.
- <sup>20</sup>Quoted from Roderick Hudson by Slabey, p. 99.
- <sup>21</sup>The Portrait of a Lady (New York, 1966), p. 577; and The Notebooks of Henry James, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1961), p. 15.
- <sup>22</sup>Quoted from Roderick Hudson by Slabey, p. 99.
- <sup>23</sup>Henry James, Italian Hours (New York, 1959), p. 144.
- <sup>24</sup>The Ambassadors, p. 39.
- <sup>25</sup>Italian Hours, p. 90. All other quotations will be from this edition and page references will follow the quotations.
- <sup>26</sup>Excluding, of course, Quentin Anderson's book, The American Henry James (New Jersey, 1957). Anderson's treatment, however, originates in the philosophical beliefs of Henry James senior, and only arrives at a definition of James's "religion" through Swedenborgianism and transcendentalism, with no mention of Roman Catholicism.
- <sup>27</sup>(Chapel Hill, 1964), pp. 148-66.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>31</sup>For example, the imagery of imprisonment associated with the convents to which Claire de Cintre of The American and Pansy Osmond of The Portrait of a Lady are condemned.

<sup>32</sup>Gale, p. 166.

<sup>33</sup>In contrast to the views of Slabey, Greene and Gale, and illustrating the muddle that exists concerning James's religious outlook, are those critics who feel that James was a Protestant, firmly entrenched in the American Puritan tradition: Randall Stewart, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge, 1963), pp. 16-7; C. B. Cox, The Free Spirit (London, 1963), p. 39; and J. I. M. Stewart, Eight Modern Writers (Oxford, 1963), p. 76. J. I. M. Stewart, in spite of saying that James is a Puritan, feels simultaneously that James paid no attention to religious matters:

For James the Christian religion appears to have meant little more than cathedrals and mild social convenience; it certainly figures most frequently as a means of withdrawing unwanted members of a house-party from the scene on a Sunday morning and it seldom plays much part on the occasion of more definite exits. (pp. 107-8)

Cf. also F. R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (New York, 1964), p. 163: "There was nowhere in his work that preoccupation with ultimate sanctions which we may call religious."

<sup>34</sup>The American Henry James, p. 8.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>F. O. Matthiessen, Henry James: The Major Phase (New York, 1963), p. 131.

<sup>37</sup>This is not to say that James objects to the form itself. It is the individual's relationship to form which is significant. The person who is controlled by external forms is no longer free. Cf. Frederick Crews, The Tragedy of Manners (New York, 1957), p. 83: "There is no reason why social forms cannot be worked for good as well as evil ends."

## FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER II)

<sup>1</sup>Selected Letters of Henry James, ed. Leon Edel (London, 1956), pp. 98-99.

<sup>2</sup>The Comic Sense of Henry James (London, 1960), p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Later in this chapter (see p. 33 and n. 12) I will question whether any character in the novel beside Newman is really a "free" character.

<sup>4</sup>The American (New York, 1966), p. 166. All other quotations will be from this edition and page references will follow the quotation.

<sup>5</sup>For example: "The marquis walked up and down in silence like a sentinel at the door of some smooth-fronted citadel of the proprieties." (p. 174) This is not a specifically religious metaphor, but it still betrays the same obsession with form and "appearances". Also, phrases such as "attitude of formal expectancy", (p. 147) when applied to Urbain, contribute to this effect of rigidity. One's expectancy is not usually "formal", but either relaxed and hopeful or at least fearful.

<sup>6</sup>James, of course, is not writing a "religious novel" by any means, except in so far as he possesses and explores in his characters what Matthiessen calls a "religion of consciousness"; he is, on the other hand, using a convenient and concrete image to illustrate a moral situation, and although he does not attack religion as such, he is incisively critical toward the worship of form itself, which is typified in the Bellegarde's attitude to their Church. At this stage, James is a combination of social satirist, moralist, and defender of Americanism; his "religious novels" have yet to be written.

<sup>7</sup>With respect to Claire's decision to become a nun, Oscar Cargill exclaims that it is James's:

greatest failure in the book . . . . Least of all did James properly prepare us for Claire's decision to

seek refuge in a convent . . . . James should have early given us intimation of her spiritual dedication, of her propensity toward asceticism. It is as though . . . the novelist lacked a sense of the convent as refuge and the religious life as a vocation. Newman, who had not been deeply disturbed at the prospect of marrying a Catholic--which would have been a very momentous issue with most of his Protestant contemporaries in 1868, reacts from her announcement . . . with characteristic Protestant horror, not unshared, seemingly, by his creator.  
 (The Novels of Henry James New York, 1961 pp. 51-2)

On the contrary, I believe, James carefully prepares the reader, and as we have seen, Newman himself, for Claire's decision. Newman has already imagined the Bellegarde house and estate respectively as a convent and a penitentiary, and in the very scene in which Claire makes her announcement, images of stiffness, form and coldness are prevalent. Moreover, Newman, on first entering Fleurières, notices the "monastic rigidity in her dress" and that "her touch was portentously lifeless". (p. 271) As we have seen, James has been careful throughout the novel to delineate the Roman Catholic background of the whole Bellegarde family and of Claire in particular. She spent her childhood in a convent and our only image of her outside the Bellegarde home is of her meeting with Mrs. Tristram as Claire leaves confession at the Church of St. Sulpice. Her brother Valentin confirms her religious tendencies when he says that "unhappiness is according as one takes things and Claire takes them according to some receipt communicated to her by the Blessed Virgin in a vision". (p. 102) There are other attestations and images of Claire's religious nature. (cf. pp. 75, 102) As for Cargill's accusation that James's attitude is one of a "general anticlericism" (p. 52), it would be more precise to say that James is against the subjection of any individual to form and that within the context of The American, Claire is forced by her background and the traditions of her family to become a nun. As for what Cargill calls the "Protestant horror" of Newman and James, it must be reiterated that, in spite of James's general derogatory outlook toward Roman Catholicism, it is the subjection to form, not the religious life itself, which James abhors. Newman himself seems to recognize this: "But it was one thing to be a Catholic, and another to turn nun . . ." (p. 282) Cargill correctly perceives James's skepticism regarding the Church, but fails to see the reasons for it, and for James's use of the Church as metaphor and symbol for part of man's spiritual condition.

<sup>8</sup>"Duelling, which kills Valentin, is a mystery to Newman just as are the social customs which deprive him of Claire and both are founded upon history and tradition." (Poirier, p. 91)

<sup>9</sup>Selected Letters, pp. 98-9.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. E. M. Forster's use of telegrams as symbols of restriction, anger and lack of imagination in Howard's End.

<sup>11</sup>Other images of form are completed in the scene at Notre Dame. Early in the novel, Newman had said that he had never read a novel. Immersed in the Bellegarde situation, he feels that "he had opened a book and the first lines held his attention." (p. 79) The plot of the novel has been concerned with whether Newman will ultimately be controlled by the form of the book, held within its pages. In Notre Dame, however, he feels that he "could close the book and put it away." (p. 357)

<sup>12</sup>This contradicts Poirier's statement that Claire and Valentin are "free" characters. (Poirier, p. 44) But, as we have seen, even though they exhibit free characteristics, they are ultimately destroyed by the forms of their society and family, specifically the Roman Catholic Church, the ritual of the duel, and the rather abstract concept of the nobility of the family "name".

<sup>13</sup>As an example of how clear James was, from the beginning, about the outcome of the novel, how "the end is in the beginning", consider Newman's attitude to the two paintings he confronts in the Salon Carré of the Louvre. The two paintings are Murillo's "moon-borne" Madonna and Veronese's "Marriage-feast at Cana". It is significant that Newman buys Noémie's copy of the Madonna, rather than the Veronese, for Claire eventually becomes a madonna of sorts herself, when she enters the convent. (She is once described as a "woman young and pretty, dressed in white" [p. 39]) Newman, of course, never gets a painting of a marriage (even though at least two of the paintings he later orders from Noémie are "marriage" paintings, [pp. 54-6]), let alone a marriage itself. What he does get is a copy of a Madonna and neither Murillo's madonna nor the "madonna" of the convent, Claire. Ironically, he later writes to Mrs. Tristram that "I know more about Madonnas than I supposed any man could." (p. 71)

### FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER III)

<sup>1</sup>Henry James, Preface to "The Portrait of a Lady", (New York, 1966), xxxiv.

<sup>2</sup>"The Fearful Self: Henry James's The Portrait of a Lady", Critical Quarterly, VII (1965), p. 210.

<sup>3</sup>"The Lesson of the Master", Perspectives on James's The Portrait of a Lady (New York, 1967), p. 162.

<sup>4</sup>Henry James, The Portrait of a Lady (New York, 1966) p. 577.

<sup>5</sup>The Notebooks of Henry James, ed. F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1961), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup>Typically Jamesian, however, is the fact that although Isabel confronts the conventional in her husband Osmond, she has also fled from it on leaving Albany with its restricting, Puritan atmosphere. The Jamesian hero (cf. Strether, Newman, and Milly Theale) is often left stranded between two formed societies at the end of the novel, because they both refuse to allow freedom.

<sup>7</sup>The Novels of Henry James (New York, 1961), p. 87.

<sup>8</sup>"The Portrait of a Lady: The Eternal Mystery of Things", Nineteenth Century Fiction, XIV (1959), 146-7.

<sup>9</sup>This is mentioned by Powers (op. cit.), but not fully developed.

<sup>10</sup>Consider for example Ralph's extended imaginative examination of Osmond later in the novel. If one substitutes the word "pope" for Osmond, one gets a very close analogy between the two figures, revealing not only James's attitude toward Roman Catholicism, but his outright condemnation of Osmond and the reasons for it:



He recognized Osmond, as I say; he recognized him at every turn. He saw how he kept all things within limits; how he adjusted, regulated, animated their manner of life . . . . To surround his interior with a sort of invidious sanctity, to tantalize society with a sense of exclusion, to make people believe his house was different from every other, to impart to the face that he presented to the world a cold originality---this was the ingenious effort of the personage to whom Isabel had attributed a superior morality. Ralph had never met a man who lived so much in the land of consideration. His tastes, his studies, his accomplishments, his collections, were all for a purpose. His life on his hill-top at Florence had been the conscious attitude of years . . . . His ambition was not to please the world, but to please himself by exciting the world's curiosity and then declining to satisfy it. (p. 393)

<sup>11</sup>Cargill, p. 114, n. 33. James is quite capable of using Italian names of villas symbolically, as seen in the choice of "Palazzo Leporelli" for Milly Theale's habitation in *The Wings of a Dove*. "Leporelli" has connotations of "light" in Italian, as well as the possible pun on "leper".

<sup>12</sup>Cargill, p. 96.

<sup>13</sup>Tanner, p. 213.

<sup>14</sup>Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce (New York, 1964), p. 206.

<sup>15</sup>The semantic relationship between "convent" and "convention" is perhaps one of the reasons James used the convent so often as a symbol, especially when one recalls Osmond's statement: "I am convention itself." (p. 311)

<sup>16</sup>Richard Poirier argues that Osmond "is a man without social identity." (*The Comic Sense of Henry James* [London, 1960], p. 218.) It is true that he has apparently renounced the normal connections with society, but his complete identification with Roman Catholicism and the worship of art for its own sake gives him a unique but just as stultifying "social identity".

<sup>17</sup>Quentin Anderson sees another possibility in James's use of convents in his work, one which may be applicable in Pansy's case, if one considers the convent as the lesser of two evils (Osmond being, of course, the greater): "They

may save subject women from appropriation." (The American Henry James [New Jersey, 1957], p. 189.)

<sup>18</sup>Poirier, p. 239.

<sup>19</sup>Anderson, p. 189.

<sup>20</sup>The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1961), p. 214.

<sup>21</sup>Powers, p. 153.

<sup>22</sup>Chase, p. 160.

<sup>23</sup>Although this sort of imagery may be considered archetypal and inevitable in Western literature, and is perhaps apparently unrelated to the more institutional religion with which this study is essentially concerned, one may see it as important for two reasons. First, it emphasizes the importance James places on the morality he promulgates, the religious references serving as evocations of this. Secondly, it complements the extensive use of imagery associated with institutionalized religion.

<sup>24</sup>This extensive use of Eden imagery will perhaps help to dispel J. I. M. Stewart's remark that "no apple is ever eaten in James's garden"! (Eight Modern Writers [Oxford, 1963], pp. 76-7)

<sup>25</sup>Poirier, p. 212.

<sup>26</sup>Henry James: The Major Phase (New York, 1963), Title of Chapter VI.

#### FOOTNOTES (CHAPTER IV)

<sup>1</sup>Henry James, The Wings of the Dove (New York, 1965), pp. 190-91. All other quotations will be from this edition and page references will follow the quotations.

<sup>2</sup>The American Henry James (New Jersey, 1957), p. 27.

<sup>3</sup>Henry James: The Major Phase (New York, 1963), p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>Randall Stewart, American Literature and Christian Doctrine (Baton Rouge, 1963), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Anderson, pp. 241, 236.

<sup>6</sup>For example, Leo Bersani stresses the "allegorical level of the drama". ("The Narrator as Center in The Wings of the Dove", Modern Fiction Studies, VI 1960, p. 141) And Joseph J. Firebaugh implicitly acknowledges the presence of religious connotations in stating that "if she [Milly] is an archetypal saviour, the facts must be made clear and her intention unambiguous". ("The Idealism of Merton Densher", University of Texas Studies in English, XXXVII [1958], p. 142) Finally, R. W. B. Lewis mentions the "sacramental sensibility" of the novel. ("The Vision of Grace: James's The Wings of the Dove", Modern Fiction Studies, III [1957], p. 34.)

<sup>7</sup>The Novels of Henry James (New York, 1961), p. 345.

<sup>8</sup>Cargill discusses this relationship in more detail. p. 348.

<sup>9</sup>Other examples of Milly being called a dove: pp. 215, 382, 478, 511.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Anderson, p. 241, who does equate Milly with Christ.

<sup>11</sup>Laurence B. Holland, "The Wings of the Dove", ELH, XXVI (1959), p. 562.

<sup>12</sup>Miriam Allott, "The Bronzino Portrait in The Wings of the Dove", MLN, LXVIII (1953), p. 24.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Holland, p. 565, for a full discussion of the Veronese painting and its meaning.

<sup>14</sup>Anderson, p. 277.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Matthiessen, p. 64.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. The Concise Oxford Dictionary (Oxford, 1964), p. 657.

<sup>17</sup>The Search for Form: Studies in the Structure of James's Fiction (Chapel Hill, 1967), p. 183.

<sup>18</sup>I shall discuss later, while examining the character of Densher, the images of form associated with Kate Croy.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Jean Kimball, "The Abyss and The Wings of the Dove: The Image as a Revelation", Nineteenth Century Fiction, X (1956), 281-300. This study stresses Milly's active nature, as does Cargill in his book; whereas F. O. Matthiessen and others say that she is a passive character. For example, Joseph Firebaugh (op. cit.) states that "she makes a choice, a passive choice to submit herself to the current of events which is beginning to carry her along." (p. 144) This is not precisely the case. As we have seen, her choice is by "volition", by "option" (pp. 190-1), and she later feels that "it was the air she wanted and the world she would now exclusively choose" (p. 218) when she visits the National Gallery. She escapes, by her own choice, the "current determined by others". (p. 209)

<sup>20</sup>See the foregoing chapter on The Portrait, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup>Nathalia Wright interprets the name somewhat more literally: "Its name . . . is presumably the diminutive of lepore, which may be translated 'gracefulness' or 'sprightliness'." These words are not apt as descriptions of what the Palazzo Leporelli comes to symbolize. American Novelists in Italy (Philadelphia, 1965), p. 232.

<sup>22</sup>Holland, p. 563.

<sup>23</sup>"The Vision of Grace: James's The Wings of the Dove", Modern Fiction Studies, III (1957), p. 37.

<sup>24</sup>Stephen Koch, "Transcendence in The Wings of the Dove", Modern Fiction Studies, XII (1966), p. 93.

<sup>25</sup>Anderson, P. 49.

<sup>26</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Age de Raison (Paris, 1945), p. 164.

<sup>27</sup>Kimball, p. 300.

<sup>28</sup>Anderson, p. 82.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. chapter on The Portrait, in which the concept of the "religious structure" of James's novels is discussed.

<sup>31</sup>James provides, in the naturalistic beginning of the novel, a motivation for Kate's reprehensible behaviour in the poverty of her home life, and she does have certain redeeming qualities. But, in the Jamesian moral system, her treatment of both Densher and Milly is an unforgiveable sin.

<sup>32</sup>Koch, p. 99.

<sup>33</sup>Cargill, p. 370.

<sup>34</sup>Anderson, p. 273.

<sup>35</sup>C. B. Cox, The Free Spirit (London, 1963), p. 65.

<sup>36</sup>Cargill, p. 352.

## FOOTNOTES TO CONCLUSION

<sup>1</sup>Articles have been published on the religious imagery of two other novels: D. G. Halliburton, "Self and Secularization in The Princess Casamassima", Modern Fiction Studies, XI (1965), 116-28; Ruth T. Todasco, "Theme and Imagery in The Golden Bowl", Texas Studies in Literature and Language, IV (1962), 228-40.

<sup>2</sup>"By enlarging his characters through religious analogies he introduced the whole Christian system as an available means of moral judgment." Frederick Crews, The Tragedy of Manners (New York, 1957), p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, L'Age de Raison (Paris, 1945), p. 164: "Je suis dans une cage sans barreaux."

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## APPENDIX

### FORM

The word form is used in this study as a metaphor to describe situations and states of being in James's fiction which have been deprived of their natural, free and imaginative aspect and which have accordingly become rigid, conventional and limited: form for its own sake. This specific use of the word is not without precedent. J. A. Ward, in The Search for Form, defines James's concept of form as a "synthesis of the natural and the artificial" (p. 11), and states that this organic approach to form, like "organicism in architecture", is "opposed not only to order for its own sake, which is necessarily lifeless, but also to orderlessness" (p. 11). Thus, form or the "artificial" element in art and life must be infused with the natural, the free and the imaginative in order to produce the ideal Jamesian form. Although form is a constant concern of James's, and a positive goal, (cf. the "search for form") it cannot exist by itself; when it does, it acquires pejorative connotations, as in this passage from "The Art of Fiction":

The tracing of a line to be followed, of a tone to be taken, of a form to be filled out, is a limitation of that freedom and a suppression of the very thing that we are most curious about. The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact . . . .

(1884)