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THE SCAPEGOATS AND MARTYRS OF HENRY JAMES

By Elsa Netteles

In most of his novels and tales, James dramatizes acts of sacrifice, either destructive or redemptive in effect. At one extreme are the destructive sacrifices exacted of such characters as Madame de Cintre (The American), May Bartram (“The Beast in the Jungle”), and Neil Paraday (“The Death of the Lion”), victims whose powers and hopes of life are wasted through the selfishness of others. At the other extreme is the redemptive sacrifice of Milly Theale (The Wings of the Dove), whose death effects the spiritual transformation of another person. The motives underlying sacrificial acts and the values James attached to such acts can best be studied, however, in those novels which center on the consciousness of characters impelled by a psychological need to play the part of a sacrificial victim. Among these characters, two groups may be identified: those who assume the role of a scapegoat, making themselves responsible for the well-being of others and to some extent taking upon themselves the burden of others’ suffering; and those who long to be martyrs and in whom the desire to be a sacrificial victim exists as a fact of their nature, independent of a particular situation.

James presents detailed studies of both kinds of characters in four novels written over a period of nearly twenty years: The Bostonians, The Princess Casamassima, The Ambassadors, and The Golden Bowl. The consequences of the sacrifices enacted in these novels — sacrifices of both the destructive and the redemptive kinds — differ markedly from novel to novel. All four novels, however, present central characters of complex feelings and motives, who although they often associate themselves with Old Testament or Christian rites of sacrifice differ from the traditional figures of the scapegoat and the martyr. In fact, James’s portrayal of the protagonists of these novels results in an inversion of traditional concepts. Historically, the scapegoat is a passive victim, chosen by the people to bear the burden of their sins. The martyr, in contrast, in an act of free acceptance, chooses to die that he may bear testimony as a witness to his faith. In James’s novels, however, the characters who play the part of the scapegoat usually accept of their
own choice the scapegoat’s burden, realizing in the act of sacrifice psychological benefit for themselves if not for others. On the other hand, James’s characters in their longing for martyrdom reveal themselves victims of psychological need which drives them not to acts by which freedom is affirmed but to imprisoning relationships in which they desire either to master or to be mastered by another person.

I

Of all James’s protagonists who see themselves as martyrs or scapegoats, none more completely represents the inversion of a traditional role than does Olive Chancellor, the central character of *The Bostonians*. The only protagonist of James to be presented as “visibly morbid,” Olive reveals in her fervid dream of martyrdom the egoistic craving for the exaltation and the destruction of her self. “The most secret, the most sacred hope of her nature was that she might some day . . . be a martyr and die for something” (13). The “for something” indicates that the “sacred hope” precedes commitment to any particular cause. That Olive’s sacrificial zeal reflects the repressed impulses of a malformed sexual nature is at once evident in Olive’s thirst for vengeance upon the sex she designates as “the brutal, blood-stained, ravening race” (37). The cause of women’s rights, which she champions throughout the novel, enables her to rationalize her hatred and to sublimate repressed energies; the cause also promises escape from the prison in which her fears, her shyness, and her sense of insecurity have isolated her. Until Olive takes Verena Tarrant as her protégée, her best relief from her isolated state comes in her vision of the suffering of women and of herself as their mediator and redeemer, receiving the supplications of the “tortured” and “crucified” and taking upon herself the sum of their anguish. “The ocean of tears that they had shed from the beginning of time seemed to pour through her own eyes” (37). The role of vicarious sufferer enables her to identify herself with others and at the same time to know herself preeminent, the one to suffer all; by embracing in an act of passionate commitment that misery which is in fact the projection of her own wretchedness.

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she transfigures herself. Moreover, by assuming the burden of women's suffering she can nourish and justify her desire for vengeance and at the same time assuage any sense of guilt such passion and the desires underlying it might engender.

Once Olive has met Verena, the deepest need of Olive's nature asserts itself — the need, underlying her sacrificial ardor, to secure and complete herself through exclusive possession of another woman. Olive believes of course that she seeks Verena because together she and Verena will advance the cause of women, but, in fact, Olive's desire that they be isolated, "all in all to each other" (166), springs as little from devotion to a principle as does, say, Quentin Compson's wish that he and Caddy "could just have done something so dreadful that they would have fled hell except us." Indeed, the cause, which has enabled Olive to rationalize her hatred of men now becomes the means by which she can disguise the true grounds of her attachment to Verena. How successfully Olive hides her desires from herself is evident when she can feel that her wish to exact from Verena a pledge that would "bind them together for life" (113) is perfectly compatible with her conviction that "in such a relation as theirs there should be a great respect on either side for the liberty of each. She had never yet infringed on Verena's" (293).

Olive's blindness to the nature of her motives and actions produces ironies readily apparent to the reader: that Verena lectures on the emancipation of women and yet is virtually enslaved by Olive, who, in a more terrible way, is herself enslaved, by her emotional dependence on Verena; that Olive, who would take upon herself the burden of women's suffering, is the chief cause of the anguish of Verena, the only woman in the novel, besides Olive, who suffers. (What most tortures Verena is her knowledge of the agony her defection will cause Olive.) Finally, the repeated references to the sacrifices that Olive exacts of Verena reveal that Olive's passion to martyr herself for a cause has issued in her possession of a person whom she would force to become a martyr to her, Olive's, will. Like a priest preparing the victim for sacrifice, Olive labors to transform Verena into a "quivering, spotless, consecrated maid-

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Early in the novel, James states that the important questions to be asked about Olive are: "Why was she morbid, and why was her morbidness typical?" (11). To answer these questions James does not trace the formation of Olive's personality, except to refer briefly to Olive's admiration of her mother's strong character. He does, however, explore the sources of the gratification Olive derives from the sacrifices her passion exacts of Verena. To begin with, Olive achieves through Verena's martyrdom to herself vicarious enjoyment of experiences hitherto denied her. Through Verena's sacrifice of suitors' love, Olive has the satisfaction of rejecting what she herself has never had. Beyond this, Olive can feel her own life justified when she can believe that Verena will embrace the role which Olive believes herself to play, the role of the priest dedicated to a holy cause (139). Of course Olive is deluded both in her idea of herself and in her idea of Verena, but so long as she can believe that, like hers, Verena's "only espousals would be at the altar of a great cause" (172) she can look to Verena as to a mirror that gives back a beautiful image of herself. Finally, Verena's sacrifices make her more desirable to Olive, not only because they attest to the value Verena has for others and to Olive's power over her but because the tension to which such sacrifices subject both women releases emotions which seem to bind them more tightly to each other. One also recalls the "fiercity in the joy" (112) with which Olive reflects upon the hardships Verena endured in childhood. Olive is not a sadist who gratifies herself in deliberately inflicting pain; her gratification comes when Verena, tormented by conflicting demands, surrenders herself to Olive's embrace.

Given Olive's self-delusions and the pliancy of Verena — so extreme that at one point "there was no sacrifice to which she would not have consented" (167) — it is inevitable that the religious terms in which their dedication to the cause is presented have chiefly a satiric force. References to Verena as "the young prophetess" (160), to Verena and Olive "pacing side by side, in their winter robes, like women consecrated to some holy office" (158), and to their effort "so religious as never to be wanting in ecstasy" (161) have the effect of mock-
heroic inflation which diminishes rather than exalts the characters. The relationship which Olive regards as sacred is further called into question when the same religious terms identify the ludicrous or unsavory characters: when Mrs Farrinder is revered as “the prophetess of Roxbury” (166); when Miss Birdseye exudes a “kind of aroma of martyrdom” (182); and when the rascally Selah Tarrant, of “habitually sacerdotal expression” (102) and the wife he has corrupted are said to have connived at seances, taking “the position of two augurs behind the altar” (74). Olive fully recognizes the loathsome vulgarity of Verena’s parents, and yet Mrs. Tarrant’s willingness to “sacrifice [Verena] for her highest good” (169) and Tarrant’s “grotesque manipulations” (60) of Verena are only gross exaggerations of Olive’s acts.

The intense but twisted nature of Olive’s aspirations makes it appropriate that her “sacred hope” of martyrdom should be fulfilled but in a way that deprives her of what is most precious to her. In the Boston Music Hall, a fit place of sacrifice with its “Roman vastness” reminiscent of the Colosseum (442), Olive’s antagonist, Basil Ransom, finally succeeds in forcing Verena to make what Olive has termed the “horrible sacrifice” of “purest, holiest ambitions” (390). But Olive, not Verena, is the victim who faces the mob as if “offering herself to be trampled to death and torn to pieces” (462). In her frantic rush to the stage, Olive appears to Ransom like “some feminist firebrand of Paris revolutions . . . or even the sacrificial figure of Hypatia, whirled through the furious mob of Alexandria” (462-463). But her martyrdom is not an act of choice, of free acceptance; it is an act of frenzy, and the knowledge of herself and of Verena that she has at last gained is so bitter that like the revelation that comes at the end of John Marcher in “The Beast in the Jungle” it seems not the sign of triumph but the price of blindness.

II

How deeply James’s imagination was engaged by the power-seeking woman hungering for martyrdom as she exploits others is indicated in his next novel, The Princess Casamassima. In their professions of passionate desire to give of themselves to the suffering masses and in their readiness to manipulate other
people to satisfy their own need, the Princess and Olive Chancellor, the most and the least alluring of James's heroines, are akin. When the Princess expresses to Hyacinth Robinson her longing to know "'the real London, the people and all their sufferings and passions'"\(^3\) even her rhetoric recalls Olive and her passion to "'give myself up to others . . . to know everything that lies beneath and out of sight'" (36). The Princess, yearning to perform some dangerous act for the Anarchist cause, reflects some of the same feelings expressed in Olive's longing to be a martyr and die for a cause: frustration, dissatisfaction with self, and hatred of the banal and commonplace.

The focus of *The Princess Casamassima*, however, is not the mind of the woman who craves dominance but the mind of the person held in her sway. Indeed, in Hyacinth Robinson, James presents his most detailed study of the character who is regarded by others chiefly as a person to be used and sacrificed and who sees himself from the beginning as a sacrificial victim. The illegitimate child of a French shopwoman who murdered her lover, an English lord, Hyacinth feels himself rendered powerless by the irresolvable conflict of forces symbolized by his parents. The prisoner of his heredity, Hyacinth is also the victim of his friends, Paul Muniment and Captain Sholto, whose view of him as a sacrificial pawn results in Hyacinth's making his two fatal and irreconcilable commitments: to the Anarchist leader Hoffendahl, who has requested of Muniment a "lamb of sacrifice" (V, 362); and to the Princess, whose favor Sholto hopes to win and whose appetite for novelties he hopes to satisfy with his "propitiatory offering" of Hyacinth (VI, 75).

In giving his vow of "blind obedience" to Hoffendahl (VI, 54), Hyacinth is the victim of Muniment's "superior brutality" (VI, 338), but he is also the victim of his own desire to perform an heroic, sacrificial act, to "offer an example . . . that might even survive him . . . of pure youthful, almost juvenile, consecration" (V, 343). Although unlike Olive in many respects, Hyacinth shares her and the Princess's desire to die as

\(^3\) *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York, 1907-1909), V, 222. Subsequent references to this Edition are given by volume and page numbers in parentheses.
a martyr for a great cause. The difference is that the sacrificial ardor of Olive and the Princess issues in their exercise of power over others, whereas Hyacinth's dream of martyrdom springs from and intensifies his desire to submit himself to the powerful will of others. As he had earlier "waited for the voice that should allot him the particular part he was to play" (V, 343), so, after he takes his vow, he not only surrenders to the power of the Princess — "he felt her his standard of comparison, his authority, his measure, his perpetual reference" (VI, 126); he also declares himself ready to act at Hoffendahl's command, to be one of the "many notes in his great symphonic massacre" (VI, 55). In Hyacinth, no less than in Olive, however, the intensity of the longing for martyrdom is an index of a powerful sense of deprivation and a craving for self-fulfillment. Before Hyacinth pledges himself to Hoffendahl, his sense of isolation and exclusion from the great world of power and wealth subjects him to states of "paralyzing melancholy" (V, 168), in which he feels condemned to perpetual inaction, "rooted in the place where his wretched parents had expiated" (V, 113). The glory with which his imagination invests his vow to the Anarchists is enhanced by his sensation of penetrating, for the first time, to the heart of a mystery, of moving from "the steps of the temple" to the "innermost sanctuary" where the "holy of holies" is revealed to his dazzled eyes (VI, 48).

Hyacinth's emotions are genuine, but in offering himself as a martyr he makes himself a captive, not a free witness. No less than Olive, Hyacinth inverts the traditional role of the martyr, placing himself, by his vow, in a state of "servitude" (VI, 22), as he himself perceives when, in Paris, he understands at last where his first loyalties lie. Amid scenes which recall to him the tumbrils and the guillotine of the French Revolution — the historic symbols of sacrifice with which James most often associated the sacrificial victims of his novels — Hyacinth realizes that he is dedicated not to the destruction of society but to the preservation of the social order that has produced the great fabric of European civilization — "the treasures, the felicities, the splendours, the successes of the world" (VI, 217). Beyond this, he perceives that he assumes a burden of guilt whichever side he chooses. To work for social equality is to work for the destruction of the world.
“raised to the richest and noblest expression”;4 to work for the preservation of European culture is to accept all the “‘despotisms, the cruelties, the exclusions, the monopolies and the rapacities of the past’” on which that culture is based (VI, 145). Once Hyacinth affirms this, he becomes for James the embodiment of an insolvable moral dilemma inherent in the nature of society. Hyacinth’s suicide is an act of his own will but it is also an act to which he is driven when his pledge to the Anarchists falls due and forces upon him an intolerable choice that he can escape only by death.

Olive’s final defeat is the price of her blindness; Hyacinth’s death is the price of his knowledge, but the fate of Hyacinth, no less than the fate of Olive, springs from the ardor with which the protagonist has sought fulfillment in devotion to another person. Although Hyacinth has sensed the shallowness of the Princess’s attachment to the cause — he calls her capricious rather than shallow — his last impression of her is of her radiant beauty which presents to him “‘the image of a heroism... in all the splendour it had lost — the idea of a tremendous risk and an unregarded sacrifice’” (VI, 405). As Verena seemed to reflect to Olive a beautiful image of Olive’s own ideal self, so the Princess mirrors to Hyacinth the image of what he has longed to be. But the reader cannot help feeling that Hyacinth is willfully deluding himself when he sees the Princess as a transcendent being in whom sincerity and beauty are united. It is as if he cannot allow his awareness of the Princess’s falseness and hardness to destroy the reverent devotion that has been the deepest feeling of his life. As Olive clings to her belief in Verena’s selfless devotion to the cause, so Hyacinth must continue to believe in the Princess’s power to embody the ideal of the “unregarded sacrifice,” the ideal that has long ago captured his imagination. By his suicide, he affirms his faith in the ideal and he proves himself capable of the heroism it requires. At the same time, he can also feel his death to be proof of the Princess’s power to inspire him to heroism, proof that she is worthy of the reverence he craves to give her. One may say, then, that Hyacinth is a martyr to his faith in the Princess Casamassima.

Like James’s characters who long for martyrdom, those who play the part of the scapegoat seek fulfillment through relationships with other persons. Unlike Olive and Hyacinth, however, James’s two most important scapegoat figures, Lambert Strether and Maggie Verver, play a sacrificial role that liberates rather than binds them. Not only does each character gain freedom from a constricting attachment — Strether in breaking his bond to Mrs. Newsome, and Maggie in willing the separation of her father and herself; in contrast to the traditional figure of the scapegoat upon whom society forces the burden of its sins, both Strether and Maggie welcome, even seek, the scapegoat’s office as the means by which they may realize a sense of personal worth and ease the burden of guilt their feelings and acts have imposed upon them.

In taking the part of the scapegoat, Strether, the hero of *The Ambassadors*, gratifies the deepest needs and desires of his nature. Haunted as he is by the sense that he has not “lived,” that his life has been empty of deep personal attachments, Strether is ready to surrender himself to those who would make a claim upon him and thus enable him to escape the “great desert” (XXI, 87) of his past years. In “‘taking the onus’” (XXII, 214) of Chad Newsome’s situation, he makes himself for the first time a responsible participant in Chad’s life; in this way he redeems, as far as he can, the loss of his own long-dead son, for which he blames himself. Strether’s surrender to the supplications of Madame de Vionnet also springs in part from his longing to redeem his barren past; and in this relation, too, he enjoys a sense of personal importance which even the promise of marriage to Mrs. Newsome has never given him. Although Strether’s response to Madame de Vionnet’s plea that he “save” her inspires in him the disturbing sensation of being held fast, pierced as by a golden nail (XXI, 276; XXII, 23), this crucifixion is not wholly painful; it is the price he pays for a relationship in which the woman as suppliant gratifies a need that Mrs. Newsome, the dispenser of bounty, did not fill. The result of Strether’s surrender of himself to Chad and Madame de Vionnet is to place Strether at the center of the stage, to transform into the main actor the
man who had once lamented his loss of his seat in the playhouse. By his willingness to “go to the scaffold” (XXII, 186) for Chad and Madame de Vionnet, Strether becomes the focal character, upon whom the action of the novel depends. As Miss Barrace tells him, “‘We know you as the hero of the drama, and we’re gathered to see what you’ll do’” (XXII, 179).

Not only does Strether in accepting the burden of Chad’s situation create a life for himself; in performing the office of the scapegoat he can also assuage the sense of guilt which every association and every pleasure he enjoys inspires in him. His situation is such that he can commit himself to no one without feeling that he betrays someone else. When he embarks upon his mission in Paris he is already burdened by the guilt bred of his sense of personal failure. Once in Paris, everything he enjoys — the city, the friends of Chad, the unwonted sense of release and freedom — makes him, in his own eyes, guilty of betrayal of Mrs. Newsome and his mission. For Strether, then, there is a certain relief in the vision of himself on the scaffold, as if in sacrificing himself for Chad he paid the price of betrayal. He confronts his fate not with self-pitying dread but with resolute humor and even satisfaction when he declares to Maria Gostrey that “‘the whole thing will come upon me. Yes, I shall have every inch and every ounce of it — I shall be used for it . . . To the last drop of my blood’” (XXII, 140). Comparing himself to a camel doubling up his fore legs to “‘make his back convenient, ’” Strether assures Chad, after Mrs. Newsome’s daughter and second ambassador has arrived and denounced Chad’s transformation, that he, Strether, is “‘not afraid of the burden . . . I haven’t come in the least that you should take it off me’” (XXII, 214-215).

In mitigating his sense of guilt, the role of scapegoat helps Strether, as nothing else could do, to reconcile the conflict created when the ideals of his Puritan heritage collide with the new values that Paris and Madame de Vionnet and a seemingly transformed Chad reveal to him. That Strether cannot sacrifice the whole of his New England past on the altar of European culture is made evident repeatedly — in his feeling, expressed to Little Bilham, that his sacrifices to “‘strange gods’” require action “‘constructive — even expiatory,’” by
which he may "'put on record, somehow, my fidelity — funda­
mentally unchanged after all — to our own'" (XXII, 167); in
his impulse to condemn his desire at the end to see Madame de
Vionnet in the surroundings which most enhance her value;
in his feeling that the truth revealed to him of Chad's and
Madame de Vionnet's intimacy calls for some kind of ex­
piatory payment. In playing the part of the scapegoat, Strether
can make the payment his New England conscience demands;
he can appease his longing to feel that "somebody was paying
something somewhere and somehow, that they were at least
not all floating together on the silver stream of impunity"
(XXII, 272). At the same time, by taking upon himself the
burden of payment he frees himself from any need to con­
demn Madame de Vionnet, who can thus become, in Strether's
last vision of her, a sacrificial victim like himself, recalling to
him Madame Roland on the scaffold (XXII, 275).

At times, it is true Strether regards himself with bitterness,
feeling that he has played the part of the scapegoat simply to
be exploited: "it was he somehow who finally paid, and it was
the others who mainly partook" (XXII, 186). In his own way,
however, Strether "partakes" as well as "pays." Although he
suffers the rupture with Mrs. Newsome, the loss of self-sustain­
ing illusions regarding his importance to Madame de Vionnet,
and the ever-present consciousness that he has come "to late,"
he nonetheless knows by the end the satisfaction of "having
lived." Through his imagination of what Chad's experience
has been, he creates his own drama in which Paris, Madame de
Vionnet and the whole situation assume a richness and poi­
gnancy far beyond what Chad could have given them. More­
over, although Strether comes to realize that Chad's transfor­
mation is superficial, he has the satisfaction of knowing that he
has helped Chad. Not only does Strether, by drawing upon
himself the blame of Chad's family, reduce Chad's "'personal
offence'" to "'almost nothing'" (XXII, 214); as F. W. Dupee
points out, Strether eases for Chad the tensions of the situation
by taking them upon himself: "In a priestly or scapegoat sense,
he has actually played the father."5

5 Henry James (New York, 1951), 245-246.
If Strether, as scapegoat, plays the father, Maggie Verver, the scapegoat figure of *The Golden Bowl*, plays the creator or artist. In fact, Maggie is distinguished from all James's central characters in that she alone envisages a plan of action, controls its course, and effects a change in relationships to achieve her end. She alone, in seeing herself as the scapegoat, feels herself possessed of a creator's power over the destiny of others. In executing her plan to save the marriages of herself and the Prince and of her father and Charlotte, Maggie performs an act which comes as close as any in James's novels to being analogous to the creation of a work of art. As the artist creates form so that there shall be no waste or "life sacrificed" (VII, x), so Maggie, in exercising the "constructive, the creative hand" to restore the broken bowl (XXIV, 145), acts to preserve the forms of her life and to save the identities, potential and achieved, of all the characters: she acts to save what Mrs. Assingham early in the novel describes as the "charming material" which the others were "but wasting . . . and letting . . . go" (XXIII, 388-389).

It is true that when Maggie begins to act to displace Charlotte and secure the Prince's love, she suffers a paralyzing sense of helplessness, expressed in the image of herself trapped by her antagonists in a water-filled vault: "they had got her into the bath and . . . must keep her there" (XXIV), as if she were another Agamemnon at the very mercy of adulterous lovers. But even in the first stages of her contest she knows the exhilarating sense that she can rule as well as be ruled. Whereas Strether, even when identified as the "hero of the drama," sees himself as the observer of a drama enacted by others, Maggie enjoys the sensation of being "suddenly promoted to leading lady" (XXIV, 208), and in the climactic scene, when she watches Charlotte, the Prince, Adam Verver, and Mrs. Assingham at their game of cards, she tastes the power of the creator, seeing the others as "figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author" (XXIV, 235).

It is in this scene, in which Maggie becomes conscious of "all the possibilities she controlled" (XXIV, 236), that she most explicitly defines her function as the scapegoat. Earlier,
Mrs. Assingham has declared that Maggie will not force others to take blame but will "'take it all herself . . . She'll carry the whole weight of us'" (XXIII, 380-381). Now, as Maggie meets the eyes of the card players, she feels in their gaze an appeal . . . that seemed to speak on the part of each for some relation to be contrived by her, a relation with herself, which would spare the individual the danger, the actual present strain, of the relation with the others. They thus tacitly put it upon her to be disposed of, the whole complexity of their peril, and she promptly saw why; because she was there, and there just as she was, to lift it off them and take it; to charge herself with it as the scapegoat of old, of whom she had once seen a terrible picture, had been charged with the sins of the people and had gone forth into the desert to sink under his burden and die (XXIV, 234).

Whether the other characters do in fact look to Maggie for the help she imagines they seek is never revealed. Like Maggie's other visions in which the characters speak the words and feel the impulses she attributes to them, her picture of herself as the sacrificial victim illuminates not the minds of the other characters but the complexities of her own motives and feelings. Indeed, the passage is particularly important in this respect for Maggie herself either cannot or will not analyze her own character. When she sees herself as the scapegoat, she dwells upon the wrongs committed by others, never admitting the extent to which her own behavior — notably her "possession" of her father which Charlotte at last contests (XXIV, 244) — contributes to the suffering of all the characters. It is true that Maggie denies herself the relief of accusing the Prince and Charlotte and is willing to suffer greatly to spare them the pain of an open rupture. At the same time, Maggie may well derive a certain satisfaction in feeling herself the one to suffer all. By assuming the scapegoat's role, she may assert her importance and display her power to those who had once "arranged [her] apart" (XXIV, 45). Moreover, by seeing herself as the sacrificial victim, she is able to place the burden of destructive impulse on others and at the same time atone for her own wrongs, of which she is at least dimly conscious. Without realizing what she is doing, she may be inflicting punishment upon herself which at once assuages feelings of guilt and assures her of her own innocence. In any case, the passage quoted above makes clear that Maggie of her own will assumes
the role of the scapegoat. Whereas the “scapegoat of old” had been charged with the sins of others, she will “charge herself” with the scapegoat’s burden. More completely than any other character of James, Maggie transforms the traditionally passive role of the scapegoat into an active part by which she demonstrates to her antagonists her growing strength and maturity and her power to sustain appearances as they have done.

The ambiguities of Maggie’s character militate against reading *The Golden Bowl* as a Christian allegory of sacrifice and redemption, although certain elements in the novel — notably Maggie’s willingness to suffer “for love” (XXIV, 116) and her sense of being upheld by her father’s power — support the arguments of critics who see Maggie as a Christ figure. In *The Golden Bowl*, as in the other novels considered here, however, one effect of the religious imagery and the suggested parallels to Christian sacrifice and salvation is to emphasize the inversion of the traditional roles of the scapegoat and the martyr as they are acted by James’s characters. The scapegoats are not passive victims but active seekers of their own and others’ good; the would-be martyrs are not witnesses who choose to die that they may affirm religious or political faith but victims whose mental suffering reflects the deep-seated ills of decaying societies. The sense of personal inadequacy or failure is the mainspring, the desire for self-fulfillment is the prime motive, of the sacrificial acts of all the characters considered here, from the warped and tormented Olive Chancellor to the passive and self-effacing Hyacinth Robinson. None of James’s protagonists is inspired by devotion to a religion or a political cause, nor do they seek transcendence of self through religious discipline or through the self-inflicted torments of the ascetic. They are different, too, from George Eliot’s “latter-born Theresas” of “ardently willing soul,” who, deprived of a social order in which to act, expend themselves in vague yearning for some transcendent good. James’s characters do not, like Dorothea Brooke, aspire to the “rapturous consciousness of life beyond self,” seeking the

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enlargement of their experience and the extension of their consciousness, they invest their energy and passion in relationships with other persons through whom they seek to complete themselves. Those who become scapegoats do so because of their devotion to and dependence upon particular persons; those who aspire to martyrdom are sustained by their passionate attachment to persons who present to them a glorified image of their sacrificial ideal.

It is primarily because of their attachment to others that James’s protagonists suffer. They are not, however, simply the victims of others’ weakness and selfishness; unlike the martyrs of Christian tradition, James’s sacrificial figures are in part responsible, through their blindness, egoism, and self-indulgent idealism, for what they suffer. But James does not regard their suffering primarily as punishment or atonement for error, although the characters often see their anguish in this light. Rather, he presents the suffering which accompanies the sacrificial acts of his characters as a condition necessary to their growth and enlightenment. In different ways, all four novels considered here express his conviction that knowledge and experience — all that his characters prize — must be paid for by disillusionment and pain. As the price of art is “costly sacrifice” (XXI, xvi), so “the authenticity of whatever one was going to learn in the world would probably always have for its sign that one got it at some personal cost . . . in proportion as the cost was great, or became fairly excruciating, the lesson, the value acquired would probably be a thing to treasure.” That suffering is the price of knowledge is demonstrated in all four novels; that suffering can be the “downright consecration of knowledge,” that the person who pays the price may be awakened to a new sense of life, is the conviction to which Strether and Maggie bear witness.

9 Autobiography, 560.
10 Ibid.