

NAXOS  
AudioBooks

CLASSIC  
FICTION



Henry James

# The Wings of the Dove

Read by  
**William Hope**

NA339012

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1	'She waited, Kate Croy, for her father to come in...'	14:22
2	Mrs Lowder (née Manningham) – Aunt Maud – at Lancaster Gate	7:51
3	'Merton Densher, who passed the best hours of each night...'	14:31
4	'Shortly afterwards, in Mrs Lowder's vast drawing room, he awaited her, at her request...'	14:17
5	The two ladies – Milly Theale and Mrs Susan Stringham	14:14
6	Lord Mark – very neat, very light, with a double eye-glass	3:48
7	Mrs Stringham drinks deep at Lancaster Gate	4:32
8	Social circles intermingle	5:56
9	The great historic house at Matcham	1:32
10	'Have you seen the picture in the house...'	5:16
11	Ten minutes with Sir Luke Strett	11:33
12	A chance meeting at the National Gallery	4:34
13	Kate Croy and Merton Densher converse	4:09
14	An invitation to Mrs Lowder	5:13
15	Milly Theale and Merton Densher	7:42
16	Susan Stringham visits Mrs Lowder at Lancaster Gate	9:56

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17	Sir Luke gives his advice	2:57
18	In Venice – high florid rooms, palatial chambers	11:10
19	Densher's hotel – in an independent <i>quartiere</i> far down the Grand Canal	7:35
20	Merton and Kate – in the middle of Piazza San Marco	6:10
21	Five minutes with Mrs Stringham before dinner	13:13
22	In the aftermath of Kate – questions from Milly	8:28
23	Walking through narrow ways	6:16
24	Merton Densher and Susan Stringham	10:29
25	Sir Luke Stett arrives	4:57
26	In the December dusk of Lancaster Gate	7:07
27	On the edge of Christmas	3:33
28	In Sir Luke Strett's great square	25:30

**Total time: 3:57:39**

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## Henry James

# The Wings of the Dove

Henry James (1843-1916) was born in New York, the son of Henry James senior, a distinguished American philosopher. He was given a liberal education which included prolonged visits to Europe, and when he left Harvard he felt compelled to leave America for Europe, a continent which for him offered a maturity and sophistication which he felt was missing in his homeland and which, in his view, was crucial for the nurturing of the highest form of literature. He lived in Italy, France and Britain, but in 1876 he settled permanently in Britain, and in 1915 he became a British citizen.

Henry James's life spanned a time of vast literary change. He was born into the age of romanticism when Wordsworth was Poet Laureate, and yet by the time he died he was very much a twentieth century writer and, stylistically, was anticipating the modernist movement.

Henry James wrote twenty-one novels which fall broadly into three phases. The first is characterised by *Roderick Hudson* (1876). This book deals with themes that were to

preoccupy James for the whole of his career: the impact of a sophisticated European ethos on a naive American, and the insidious nature of evil. It was written as a traditional narrative with a certain picturesqueness of style. The second phase, and in the view of many critics his most accomplished, is best characterised by *The Portrait of a Lady*. The same themes are in play but stylistically James shows a maturity and complexity of style which combine observable events with inward experience.

For a time James tried his hand as a playwright, but the interior nature of his writing was not suited to the demands of theatre. In 1895 one of his plays, *Guy Donville*, failed so miserably that he determined to give up writing for the theatre and to use what he had learnt to strengthen his novels.

It is to this third phase of writing that *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) belongs, together with *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). Now James began to experiment with a much more

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labyrinthine style. He tried to express thoughts which are seldom precise, and to investigate motives which are often ambiguous, even to the protagonists. His sentences became longer, with more and more reservations and qualifications. James often dictated his work and therefore wrote as he spoke, with complex extenuated sentences. Thomas Hardy called them 'infinite sentences'; this would suggest a baggy superfluity, but in fact James was aiming for a 'deep breathing economy'.

In *The Wings of the Dove* James deals with his traditional themes. The wealthy, naive American, Milly, is used and

manipulated by Kate Croy and her vacillating lover, Merton Densher. But their duplicity is subtle, not always really understood even by themselves, and the novel deals primarily with the power of self-deception and the insidious nature of materialism. James's great skill was in withholding frames of reference, whether moral, spatial, temporal or psychological. This can at times make for a challenging read, but the end result is a book of profound insight into the human psyche.

**Notes by Heather Godwin**

Cover picture: The Marchioness of Cholmondeley, by John Singer Sargent.  
Courtesy of The Bridgeman Art Library, London.

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**Music programming by Nicolas Soames**

# Henry James

## The Wings of the Dove

Read by **William Hope**

Milly Theale is a young, beautiful, and fabulously wealthy American. When she arrives in London and meets the equally beautiful, but impoverished Kate Croy, they form an intimate friendship. But nothing is as it seems; materialism, romance, self-delusion, and ultimately fatal illness, insidiously contaminate the glamorous social whirl.



Though American by birth, **William Hope** trained at RADA and has appeared in theatre on both sides of the Atlantic throughout his career. His TV and film work have been similarly extensive and have included roles in *Aliens* (Gorman) and *The Lords of Discipline*. A former member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, he is regularly heard on radio in both plays and books. He also reads *Ethan Frome*, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Last of the Mohicans* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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Total time  
3:57:39