

Henry James's *Roderick Hudson* : A Failure in Conduct

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The novels of James dramatize the moral tension of their heroes and heroines, because their creator regards man as a moral being who is in an uneasy equilibrium between his capacity for brotherly love and his capacity for self-love. James's heroes and heroines are often so conceived as to illustrate the virtue of unselfish concern for the good of their friends. For as one's awareness of the world increases, the greater becomes his compassion for his fellow-men—at least that is the notion Isabel Archer had of "the aristocratic life," the "union of great knowledge with great liberty," because "the knowledge would give one a sense of duty and the liberty a sense of enjoyment."¹ James must have agreed with his father, who believed that the redemption of the world comes not through revolution but through the education of men's imaginations and consciences²; such is the message Austin Warren reads in the elder James's social philosophy. Likewise, the education of men's imaginations and consciences—the relation between aestheticism and morality—is one of the major concerns in James's novels.

Looking back on his first novel to be included in the New York Edition, James wrote in the Preface to *Roderick Hudson*: "My subject ... had defined itself ... as not directly, in the least, my young sculptor's adventure. This it had been but indirectly, being all the while in essence and in final effect another man's, his friend's and patron's, view and experience of him."³ *Roderick Hudson* as the drama of Rowland Mallet's "operative consciousness," however, falls short of the organic unity which marks *The Ambassadors* (1903) or of the "architectural structure" achieved in *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881).

Even so, *Roderick Hudson* is the first successful novel by James; it dramatizes the equally interesting cases of the promising young sculptor whose genius "fizzles out" too soon, and of his friend who lives both in and for Roderick. From Roderick's example, Rowland tries to find an answer to the question that "in the long run egotism (in too big a dose) makes a failure in conduct: is it also true that it makes a failure in the arts?" (*RH*, 295). This is also the question James asks himself in the novel. Thus, in *Roderick Hudson* the relation between morality and aestheticism directly involves the essential conflict within the artist himself.

Rowland Mallet is a typical Jamesian character, who has become almost a cliché: a sensitive, highly imaginative man, a passive spectator rather than an active participant in the affairs of life. (He is a prototype of Strether in the later novel.) This man of leisure spends half of his time in Europe, because "a passive life there, thanks to the number and the quality of one's impressions, takes on a respectable likeness to an active pursuit" (*RH*, 6). For to a man of imagination, impressions *are* experience. Yet, no matter how much one may envy Rowland his self-sufficient existence, its elegance and freedom, his life remains empty. At most it has only "a respectable likeness to an active pursuit." As Rowland himself admits, he is "an awkward mixture of moral and aesthetic curiosity" (*RH*, 16). His elegant self-contained way of living may well meet the requirements of his "aesthetic curiosity," but it does not quite satisfy his "moral curiosity." "Rowland's complaint of *ennui* (to his cousin Cecilia) reveals his dissatisfaction with his condition; the complaint even carries a faint note of self-accusation: "I'm tired of myself, my own thoughts, my own affairs, my own eternal company. True happiness, we are told, consists in getting out of one's self" (*RH*, 7). His inner self has become too full; and it must find some outlet. Rowland's self-analysis sounds almost like Freud's observation that "ultimately man must begin to love in order not to get ill."⁴ At the same time, Rowland's analysis of his predicament is sufficient evidence of his moral energy, for the

good life consists in the very "tension between moral rigor and culture."⁵ "The point is," Rowland continues to his cousin, "not only to get out—you must stay out; and to stay out you must have some absorbing errand" (*RH*, 7).

His encounter with the young sculptor, therefore, offers Rowland a rare opportunity for "some absorbing errand." Rowland's "almost passionate enjoyment of pictures" (*RH*, 5) has, characteristically, remained passive, because he lacks the faculty of expression. Rowland finds in Roderick his other half, as it were, —the faculty of expression—and he takes it upon himself to let Roderick's genius bloom: in his development he will see the fulfillment of his own "moral and aesthetic curiosity." From this point onward Roderick's life will be also his life. What Rowland will offer Roderick, then, is the opportunity which Rowland thinks his young friend needs, an experience of Europe and a "sensuous education." For "to live in the lap of the incomparable sorceress [Rome]" is "an education to the senses and the imagination" (*RH*, 172). "An education to the senses and the imagination"—the implication is that the education of the sensibility is not complete unless it cultivates emotion as well as taste. And Rome, "the Niobe of nations," is an ideal place in which to receive such an education. There not only the works of art but also the streets, the people, even the beggars,⁶ speak to the mind and to the imagination as well as to the eyes, because all those things are impregnated with life; they are the results of an immemorial, a complex and accumulated, civilization (*RH*, 334).

The image of the cup of experience runs throughout James's work. Recalling his early encounters with his "father's ideas," James compared them to "so many scattered glasses of the liquour of faith, poured-out cups stood about for our either sipping or draining down or leaving alone, in the measure of our thirst and our curiosity or our strength of head and heart."⁷ In *Roderick Hudson* the image of the cup of experience appears in the bronze statue itself which Roderick has made, and which has impressed Rowland's "aesthetic curiosity."

Since the statue of "a naked youth drinking from a gourd" constitutes the central image in the novel, the following conversation between Roderick and Rowland deserves close attention :

"Tell me this," said Rowland. "Did you mean anything very particular by your young Water-drinker? Does he represent an idea? Is he a pointed symbol?"

Hudson raised his eyebrows and gently stroked his hair. "Why, he's youth, you know; he's innocence, he's health, he's strength, he's curiosity. Yes, he's a lot of grand things."

"And is the cup also a symbol?"

"The cup is knowledge, pleasure, experience. Anything of that kind."

"Then he's drinking very deep," said Rowland.

Hudson gave an approving nod. "Well, poor wretch, you wouldn't have him die of thirst, would you?" (*RH*, 26-28).

The statue *is* the representation of Roderick himself; he is "youth, innocence, curiosity," but, as we shall see, he is not "strength." Due to his innocence Roderick seems to have been satisfied with his life, at least on the surface. Nevertheless, as is natural with a promising young man who has everything yet to do, Roderick is restless, driven by "a demon of unrest" (*RH*, 20). As Cecilia says, he does "everything too fast" (*RH*, 20). "He is drinking very deep," Rowland comments on Roderick's Water-drinker. The young sculptor is pleased with the impression his statue has made on the observer, because "Thirst" is what he has intended to express in his work: "Well, poor wretch, you wouldn't have him die of thirst, would you?" Ironically, however, Roderick's insatiable thirst for experience turns out to be too great for his "strength of heart and head."

Roderick starts out well enough; his first weeks in Rome are a "high aesthetic revel" (*RH*, 92). He is prompt, impulsive, eager, young, spontaneous, and sincere; he feels and sees more things than he can possibly express. Roderick works hard with his clay in the daytime and takes to "evening parties as a duck to water" (*RH*, 100). Rowland regards this as "the happiest *modus vivendi* betwixt work and play" (*RH*, 102). Rowland feels that it is worthwhile to "allow this

rare specimen [Roderick] all possible freedom of actions" (*RH*, 101). Therefore, when Roderick tells Rowland that he means to "live freely and largely, and be as interested as occasion demanded" (*RH*, 92), Rowland does not consider such a declaration as the menace of an undue surrender to the senses because he believes in "the positive law of his companion's spirit":

In the first place there was in almost any crudity of "pleasure," refine upon it as the imagination might, a vulgar side which would disqualify it for Roderick's favour; and ... in the second place, the young sculptor was a man to regard all things in the light of his art, to hand over his passions to his genius to be dealt with and to find that he could live largely enough, even quite riotously enough, without exceeding the circle of pure delights (*RH*, 92-93).

This observation shows Rowland's perceptive understanding of an artist and his work. It gives an indication of the ideal "aesthetic adventure": one can "live largely enough, even quite riotously enough, without exceeding the circle of pure delights." The statement also realizes the necessity of selection, discrimination in the matter of art and life: "there is in almost any crudity of 'pleasure,' refine upon it as the imagination might, a vulgar side which would disqualify it for [one's] favour." Rowland's mistake, however, is that he sees Roderick as himself, as we tend to see what we choose to see in other people or in things. For all his superior experience and knowledge of the world, Rowland naively assumes in Roderick his own moral sentiments in addition to the faculty of expression which he lacks.⁸ For imagination (or love, with which Shelley identified imagination) is "a going-out of one's self to identify itself with the good and the beautiful one sees in other people and things." Good Jamesian character as he is, Rowland has this faculty in great abundance. Hence, Rowland errs, as he later tells his friend, on the side of kindness and good faith.

Rowland discovers soon enough, however, that if Roderick is young and spontaneous, he is also "unpracticed in stoicism" (*RH*, 137), and

is vulnerable to vulgar sensationalism. Because he is unpracticed in stoicism, Roderick falls an easy prey to a "grosser indulgence in sensuous delights."⁹ What Roderick has meant, then, by living freely and largely, and being as interested as occasion demanded is something different from Rowland's "relaxed acceptance of the present, the actual, the sensuous—of existence on the terms of the moment" (*RH*, 171). For experience means different things to different individuals, depending upon the natural taste,¹⁰ and on the acquired judgment. Roderick's "appetite for novelty" is insatiable, seeking ever keener sensations, and Rowland vaguely fears that the young sculptor will eat his cake "all at once and might have none left for the morrow" (*RH*, 90). As Rowland foresaw, this is exactly what Roderick's Roman experience turns out to be. For excess in anything, whether it be in diet or in sleep, is in bad taste.

If Roderick is unpracticed in stoicism, however, there has been no need for it in his native town, where there are "kindness, comfort, safety, the warning voice of duty, the perfect absence of temptation" (*RH*, 67). When Rowland proposed to take Roderick to Europe, Mrs. Hudson showed her misgivings about her son: "He is not very strong, and I'm afraid the climate of Europe is very relaxing" (*RH*, 58). What she means by "not very strong" is that Roderick is not morally strong, and that the aesthetic atmosphere of the old world will be detrimental to her son. If she is over-protective, she nevertheless understands him better than anyone else. "He is a little spoiled, of course" (*RH*, 58), she tells Rowland, the point of which, too, escapes Rowland at the moment. Against Rowland's expectation, Roderick turns out to be too lax even for the old world and sinks into a "grosser indulgence in sensuous delights." For after all, it requires self-restraint to live freely and riotously while yet keeping oneself within "the circle of pure delights."

Likewise, it takes a severe discipline of art in order to achieve and retain lucidity of vision. Despite his promising start Roderick is unable to keep balance between his work and play, and soon strikes

a shallow. It seems that he has tapped the source of inspiration all too greedily, forgetting that inspiration is not inexhaustible. This dark side of the mystery of creative energy is pointed out by Gloriani, who seems to have undergone the ups and downs of the artist's life, and have known the bottom himself: "Passion burns out, inspiration runs to seed" (*RH*, 124). Then, what the artist can do is to resort to the simple discipline of exercise. This Rowland has pointed out to Mrs. Hudson and Mary Garland, who seemed to think that the mere experience of going to Europe will necessarily bring about Roderick's success as an artist. "He must do for himself. I simply offer him the chance. He's to study, to strive, to work—very hard, I hope" (*RH*, 58). For "le travail est la loi de l'art comme celle de la vie."¹¹ At the time of his creative crisis, however, Roderick insists on travelling, an experiment to which Rowland too agrees, believing that Roderick may be "the wiser for the experiment"—"the stronger in reconsidered and confirmed purpose, in acquired will-power" (*RH*, 140-141). Rowland even welcomes the proposal as an indication of his young friend's "salubrious beginning of independence" (*RH*, 129).

The Baden-Baden experiment, however, turns out to be a drastic failure. Rowland realizes that Roderick is, after all, too weak even to toddle alone. Roderick on his part discovers that he is "susceptible, by nature, to the grace and the beauty and the mystery of women, to their power to turn themselves 'on' as creatures of subtlety and perversity" (*RH*, 142). But this realization does not help Roderick, since it only leads him to self-pity, and does not make him, as Rowland has hoped, "stronger in reconsidered and confirmed purpose, in acquired will-power." Roderick's way of life is reflected in his art, too. His production after his trip fails to satisfy Rowland's aesthetic criterion; Roderick's "Lady Conversing Affably with a Gentleman" has not the *sancta simplicitas* of his earlier works. Among the artists in Rome Sam Singleton is a good foil to this romantic, self-indulgent Roderick. While Roderick spends the summer at Baden-Baden, Singleton rambles about the country, "sleeping on straw, eating black bread and beans"

(*RH*, 144). He lacks Roderick's quick sparkle of genius, yet he produces simple water colors which please Rowland. In this simple landscape painter Rowland comes to see what his flamboyant sculptor friend lacks, the virtue of discipline and even the beauty of abstinence.

Rowland has been willing more than once to err on the side of generosity, of good faith, but he is now disappointed in his young friend—not only in terms of art but of conduct. Earlier Rowland has wondered whether Roderick is without a conscience; now he is convinced that his young friend lacks “that indispensable aid to completeness, a feeling heart” (*RH*, 220). It is a pity that one cannot be young and eager, yet old enough and wise enough to discriminate and reflect. It is indeed a hard life that one has to live; it is a ceaseless fight with oneself rather than with external forces, which, however, create situations in which one must prove one's strength and integrity. Roderick has a great gift, and he undergoes pains and difficulties as well as joys and triumphs involved in the artist's life; yet all the same he remains a selfish adolescent. In his artistic or emotional crisis, he feels terribly hurt, and then he *must* cry out, oblivious of the injuries he is thus inflicting upon his already-bewildered mother and his fiancée. For “he never saw himself as part of a whole; only as the clear-cut, sharp-edged, isolated individual, rejoicing or raging, as the case might be, but needing in any case absolutely to affirm himself” (*RH*, 429). For all his inextinguishable thirst after experience (and his great capacity for it), Roderick is, as Philip Weinstein contends, “imprisoned within the narrow possibilities of his own compulsive, melodramatic style.”¹²

Earlier we have suggested that in *Roderick Hudson* James is exploring the relation of the aesthetic and the moral, which he dramatizes in Roderick's adventure—his development and collapse. James asks the question through Rowland, who writes to his cousin, Cecilia: “I think it established that in the long run egotism (in too big a dose) makes a failure in conduct: is it also true that it makes a failure in the arts? In Roderick's case, this too turns out to be

true, even though the *immediate* cause of his disintegration as an artist is not his egotism but his lack of self-discipline. He was unable to keep up "the happiest *modus vivendi* betwixt work and play," to maintain balance between life and art.

In *The Tragic Muse* (1890), which deals with an actress and a would-be portrait painter, James implicitly affirms that the selfishness of the artist is of a different and higher order. But the question of the relation between the aesthetic and the moral—art and life—is a complex one. Provided that he is a great artist—"Roderick's standard is immensely high" (*RH*, 295)—we can forgive Roderick his self-centeredness, as Rowland at least tries to do. We can allow him "the perfect separateness of his sensibility" (*RH*, 429), which is indispensable to the pursuit of art. Despite his "extraordinary insensibility" to the feeling of others, Roderick produces a rare piece of work, which greatly impresses Gloriani. To Rowland who asks for his opinion of the marble bust of Mrs. Hudson, Gloriani exclaims, "Like it? It's a pearl of pearls" (*RH*, 362). And he does not understand that Roderick is still capable of such work: "Only if I, in his place, being suspected of having—what shall I call it?—a cold and corrupt heart, had risked that look of love, oh, oh! I should be called a pretty lot of names. Charlatan, *poseur*, *arrangeur*!" (*RH*, 363). Consciously or unconsciously, even this knowing artist associates a great work of art with good character. We can take Roderick as he is, good and bad together. We may agree with Roderick that "Shoot them [artists], the poor devils, drown them, exterminate them, if you will, in the interest of public morality ... But if you suffer them to live, let them live on their own terms and according to their own inexorable needs" (*RH*, 224). This, however, is only *their* part of the bargain. There is a certain heroism, to be sure, in Roderick's devil-take-it air of indifference that "the end of my work shall be the end of my life" (*RH*, 231). But such bravado leads him nowhere but to his own destruction.

Our discussion of Roderick's disintegration as artist and as man is not complete without considering his relation to Christina Light,

who with Mary Garland constitutes the female counterparts to Rowland and Roderick. Furthermore, Christina Light creates a whole series of situations which escalate the "gradual process" of Roderick's collapse, which begins within Roderick himself, who has a "large capacity for ruin" (*RH*, xiv-xv).

Roderick was able to do what he pleased with his mother, with his fiancée, Mary Garland—even with Rowland, who has been more than generous and understanding—because all of them were willing to sacrifice themselves for his "inexorable needs." Roderick may have been able to do what he pleased with the women in Baden-Baden; he could exploit them for his art. Now in turn Roderick falls a victim to "the mystery of their [women's] beauty, subtlety and perversity," which is embodied in the radiant beauty of Christina Light. Despite his bravado that he does not "mean to fall in love with anyone" (*RH*, 121), he falls in love with Christina; he passionately desires to possess her. And this high-minded beauty refuses to please Roderick; she too asks the world to take her on her own terms. For all her self-dramatization, however, Christina is not self-deluded: "I'm corrupt, corrupting and corruption!" (*RH*, 407). She knows that she is of the world, "a mere ornament"; she is both false and sincere.

Roderick's first reaction to this sensuous beauty personified is characteristic of an innocent, provincial youth: "She's beauty's self—she's a revelation. I don't believe she's living—she's a phantasm, a vapour, an illusion!" (*RH*, 95). In a word, he has had "a glimpse of ideal beauty" (*RH*, 96). Roderick is deeply touched by the beauty of this first of James's *femmes du monde*, her physical charm. She stimulates his creative impulse: "makes [him] see visions" (*RH*, 501), for only in beauty can one create. Thus, Christina literally becomes his Muse, but she is fickle like the Muse, and does not remain as such for long. As artist Roderick demands that there be a direct correspondence between the perfection of form and the perfection of spirit. He desires that the things of beauty be the things of truth. So Roderick reflects: "Certainly if there be any truth in faces, she

ought to have the soul of an angel" (*RH*, 164). To Roderick, who proclaims that he does not care to look at the ugly things, Gloriani insists that :

There is no essential difference between beauty and ugliness : that they overlap and intermingle in a quite inextricable manner ; that there is no saying where one begins and the other ends ; that hideousness grimaces at you suddenly from out of the very bosom of loveliness, and beauty blooms before your eyes in the lap of vileness ; that it is a waste of wit to nurse metaphysical distinctions and a sadly meagre entertainment to caress imaginary lines (*RH*, 107).

Beauty has many forms ; it is protean. Also beauty in itself is neither good nor bad, as Tennyson's poem, which is quoted in the novel, suggests : "And is there any moral shut / Within the bosom of the rose ?" (*RH*, 192).

If Roderick demands that the world take the artist as he is, he must realize on his part that "beauty is its own excuse for being."¹³ Christina is both "an angel" and "a fearful fraud." Roderick has no right to accuse her of being "a fearful fraud" simply because she fails to be "an angel" to *him*. Later, when he makes confession to Rowland by Lake Como, Roderick seems to have realized his mistake in thinking of Christina (her beauty) as his own property, with which he could do as he pleased :

It was the wonderful nature of her beauty that did it !

It was all her beauty—so fitful, alive, as subject to life, yet so always there and so interesting and so splendid. In comparison the rest was nothing. What befuddled me was to think of it as my own property and possession (*RH*, 482).

Roderick has in abundance what is required of an artist, the power of being deeply moved in the presence of beautiful objects ; and he feels acutely what it is like to lose that faculty, as he sententiously rhapsodizes among the beautiful mountains of the Alps : "Pity me, my friend ; pity me !... Look at this lovely world and think what it must be to be dead to it !" (*RH*, 466). He continues in the same melodramatic strain :

Don't say that he was stupefied and senseless, that his perception was dulled or his aspiration dead. Say he trembled in every nerve with a sense of the beauty and sweetness of life; say he rebelled and protested and struggled ... (*RH*, 466).

Yet, his love of beauty remains on the physical plane. The education he has received "in the lap of the incomparable sorceress" turns out after all to be a "questionable gain," because it never takes him beyond the level of the senses. Roderick never overcomes the "lust of the eye." When he re-encounters Christina after a three-year interval, therefore, Roderick immediately falls under her spell again. In comparison with her beauty, he has said, "the rest was nothing," and the rest *is still* nothing. After his bitter experience, he is still the same eager, impulsive youth, and has not grown "old enough and wise enough to discriminate and reflect."

Hence, Roderick cannot fully appreciate Mary Garland and her true virtue, her unselfish love for him. He cannot see the *beauty* of such devotion. In *Roderick Hudson*, Mary Garland represents spiritual beauty juxtaposed to physical beauty embodied in Christina Light. Mary is not "pretty as the eye of habit judges prettiness"; she does not have "a countenance to inspire a sculptor" (*RH*, 53). Yet she interests Rowland, who has a more comprehensive view of beauty, recognizing that beauty exists in many forms, and that beauty of character is superior to mere physical beauty. Likewise, if Roderick's interest in Christina is impulsive and uncontrolled, Rowland's is more seasoned. He is able to see Christina more objectively and understands her as she is. When Roderick denounces her as "a fearful fraud," Rowland shows his sympathy for Christina: "The poor girl did the best she could" (*RH*, 481).

As has been mentioned already, *Roderick Hudson* is the story of Rowland Mallet as well as the adventure of the young sculptor. The foregoing discussion has been centered on Roderick's adventure, which turns out to be different from what Rowland's imagination has first expected of it. Roderick's "aesthetic adventure" takes place in the world of action and proves vulnerable to mere sensationalism. Row-

land's, on the other hand, belongs mostly to the world of thought. But unlike Strether in *The Ambassadors*, he is more directly involved in the drama of the novel. And we must examine in detail the climax of the novel, in which the two heroes, so to speak, make "scenes." For their confrontation brings into focus the question which James is addressing to himself in *Roderick Hudson*: the problem of the relation between the aesthetic and the moral.

As we recall, we first see Rowland in the grip of mild *ennui*, in need of something to do or of someone to care for. His interest in Roderick is, therefore, both altruistic and selfish—selfish in the sense that he seeks the fulfillment of his desire in the young sculptor. All the same it is Rowland who has made sacrifices since the beginning of their friendship. As we have suggested, Rowland has more than a friendly interest in Mary Garland; he tells his cousin that if it were *only to please himself*, he would have liked to stay in Northampton as he had at last found someone to care for. Yet Rowland keeps his word, puts Roderick's interests first, rather than his own. Furthermore, to make up Roderick's indifference to his mother and to his fiancée, Rowland makes himself available to them in Rome. We must remember, however, that Rowland is not entirely disinterested as far as Mary is concerned. The more Roderick mistreats Mary, Rowland wishfully imagines, the greater will be the chance for him to gain Mary's esteem and eventually her love. But in this he is entirely mistaken. Roderick defiantly declares to his friend, "She idolizes me, and if she never were to see me again she would idolize my memory" (*RH*, 511). And that is the condition in which the novel leaves Mary Garland—"under the New England elms."

Both Rowland and Mary make sacrifices, one for love and the other for friendship. Such a thing is utterly unimaginable to Roderick, who is absorbed with himself. And Rowland is human enough to let himself go for once, when he is charged with insensibility by this most insensitive of men: "women for you, by what I can make out, scarce have an existence. You've no imagination of them, no sense of them, nothing in you to be touched by them" (*RH*, 504). Rowland

detects "a high insolence of egotism" in Roderick's criticism of his insensibility :

There is something monstrous in a man's pretending to lay down the law to a state of sensibility with which he's unacquainted—in his expecting of a fellow a kind of sacrifice that it has been so easy for *him* not to have the occasion to make, and of which he doesn't understand the very terms (*RH*, 505-506).

Rowland feels "the cup of his own ordeal full to overflowing, and his long-gathered bitterness surged into the simple clear passion of pain at wasted kindness" (*RH*, 506). "What do you know about my needs and senses and my imagination?" Rowland retorts, thus emphasizing the importance of educating one's sensibility so that one may see better and understand better.

Should Rowland have withheld himself? He should have, perhaps, as Isabel Archer will do at the end of *The Portrait of a Lady*. But Rowland is only human—though this does not imply that Isabel is more than human—and the charge of insensibility has goaded him, for it is, as he says, "a funny charge." "I've loved quite as well as you," he returns to Roderick, "indeed I think I may say rather better, since I've been constant. I've been willing to give more than I received" (*RH*, 506). The sacrifices Rowland has made are "sacrifices to friendship, and they were easily, eagerly, rejoicingly made" (*RH*, 507). "It's a perpetual sacrifice ... to live with a remorseless egotist" (*RH*, 508), but Rowland has forgiven his friend, he says, "Because my affection was always stronger than my resentment; because I preferred to err on the side of kindness" (*RH*, 509). Such a liberality of heart, however, is unknown to Roderick. If Rowland is incensed by his friend's charge of insensibility, Roderick too feels damned by his own lack of perception—he has been unable to notice his elder friend's interest in Mary Garland :

"My indifference, my neglect of her, must have seemed to you too base," his companion [Roderick] pursued. "Altogether I must have *appeared* simply hideous."

"Do you really care," Rowland was prompted to ask, "for what you may have appeared?"

"Certainly. I've been damnably stupid. Isn't an artist supposed to be a man of *fine perceptions*? I haven't, as it turns out, had one" (*RH*, 512. My italics).

That he has had no "fine perceptions" is to Roderick a hideous thing. He tells Rowland, "*That*, you know, damns me more than anything" (*RH*, 512-513). "I must have *appeared* simply hideous!" Roderick's outburst strikes Rowland as if the young sculptor did not care whether he is hideous or not as long as he appears graceful in the eyes of the world. Roderick will not say, "I am sorry"; he will never drop "a hint of simple sorrow for pain inflicted" (*RH*, 513). What damns Roderick is "the shock of taste, the humiliation of a proved blunder, the sense, above all, of a flagrant want of grace" (*RH*, 513). However important taste and grace may be, these should be only secondary to a "feeling heart," "a ready sympathy." Mere taste will not heal the miseries and pains of the world. The *mere* aesthetic view of life, Rowland has to acknowledge with bitterness, is a "broken-winded steed."¹⁴

Rome has offered Roderick an invaluable opportunity. It has cultivated his "lust of the eye," which, indeed, has carried him too far. His epicurean thirst for "knowledge, pleasure, curiosity" has proved too great for his "strength of heart and head." Rowland has taken Roderick to Rome so that he might have "a lick" at opportunities—knowledge, pleasure, experience. But the "lick" became a fatal gulp, which choked him to death, for Roderick was too eager and impulsive. And Rowland comes to reevaluate the virtue of self-restraint which he sees in Sam Singleton.

We have suggested earlier that Singleton makes a good foil to Roderick, a Byronic genius. This landscape painter is present at the scene of Roderick's catastrophe. Roderick's death-mask is "indescribably, and all so innocently, fair" (*RH*, 524). Singleton eulogizes on the occasion: "He was the most beautiful of men" (*RH*, 524). The eulogy is both ironic and appropriate. As we recall, when Rowland first saw Roderick's bronze statue of the Water-drinker, he associated it with romantic figures in literature—"Hylas,¹⁵ or Narcissus, Paris, or Endymion" (*RH*, 17). The association now becomes most poignant,

for Roderick shares the negative aspects of these romantic figures: Narcissus' fatal solipsism, Paris' infatuation with sensuous beauty, and Endymion's inability to consummate his love. And the echo of "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever" becomes a mockery in Singleton's eulogy, which may well be an epitaph for Roderick, who would have liked the eulogist to add, "He was also a great artist."

For two years Rowland has had an absorbing occupation. After Roderick's death, he is left just where he was two years ago. As his cousin Cecilia observes, Rowland is still "the most restless of mortals" (*RH*, 527). Such restlessness may be understood as indicative of tension or oscillation between self-love and selfless concern for others, because man as a moral being is ever in an uneasy equilibrium between these opposing forces. And as we have seen, Roderick's disintegration results from his egocentric isolation from social life and sympathies, and the education of *his* imagination and conscience is a "questionable gain."

Rowland realizes that, however good one's intentions, one lives a life of cross-purposes and one's knowledge of the world and of oneself is of necessity limited. Yet he would still say—as he had told Mary Garland—"we should not be able to enjoy ... unless we could suffer, and in anything that's worthy of the name of experience—that experience which is the real *taste* of life, isn't it?—the mixture is of the finest and subtlest" (*RH*, 457). "The mixture is of the finest and subtlest"—Rowland in this anticipates Strether, who will see in Madame de Vionnet "a fine free range of bliss and bale." In this light we find that *Roderick Hudson* is, as James's Preface explains, the drama of Rowland's "operative consciousness." The education of his sensibility is more comprehensive and more successful a one than Roderick's, for in Rowland's case both senses and sympathetic imagination are refined and expanded.

Note: This article constitutes the first half of Chapter III in my doctoral dissertation submitted to The University of Michigan (1973). For publication in *the Kobe College Studies*, the references to Walter Pater's fiction have been necessarily deleted so that the article may be read independently as an interpretation of the first novel in the James canon.

NOTES

1. Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady, The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York: Scribner's, 1961), IV, 198.
2. Austin Warren, *The Elder Henry James* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 221.
3. Roderick Hudson, *The Novels and Tales of Henry James* (New York: Scribner's, 1961), I, xvi-xvii. All quotations from *Roderick Hudson* are from this edition; hereafter the page reference is given in a parenthesis following the quotation.
4. J. H. Van den Berg, "The Subject and His Landscape," *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970), pp. 64-65.
5. Iain Fletcher, *Walter Pater* (London: Longmans, 1959), p. 5. Fletcher's comment is on Pater's conception of good life as "tension between moral rigor and culture"; but the comment, I think, applies to Rowland as well.
6. This is Mary Garland's observation of Rome that beggars are also interesting.
7. *Notes of a Son and Brother, Autobiography*, ed. Frederick W. Dupee (New York: Criterion Books, 1956), p. 331.
8. Philip M. Weinstein, *Henry James and the Requirements of the Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 22.
9. Arthur C. Benson, *Walter Pater* (London: Macmillan, 1911), p. 48.
10. We are told that Roderick's father was a Virginia gentleman who drank himself to death (*RH*, 28). The reference to Roderick's Southern background, as opposed to Rowland's New England origin, is mentioned more than once in the novel.
11. The maxim belongs to Balzac, one of Pater's favorite lines, quoted in Thomas Wright, *The Life of Walter Pater*, II, 89.
12. Weinstein, p. 27.
13. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Rhodora," *Essays and Poems of Emerson*, ed. Stuart P. Sherman (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921), p. 446.
14. Henry James, "Benvolio," *The Complete Tales*, ed. Leon Edel (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1962), p. 356.
15. Hylas, a favorite of Heracles, who accompanied him on the Argonautic expedition, was carried off by the nymphs of the spring when he went ashore to fetch water. Since that time,

the inhabitants of Kiroos each year on a certain day roamed the mountains, shouting aloud for Hylas. In a like manner, his friends search the Alpine mountains for Roderick.

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