



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS  
Advancing Knowledge, Driving Change

---

Homosociality and the Aesthetic in Henry James's Roderick Hudson

Author(s): Michèle Mendelssohn

Source: *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (March 2003), pp. 512-541

Published by: University of California Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/ncl.2003.57.4.512>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



University of California Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Nineteenth-Century Literature*

JSTOR

# Homosociality and the Aesthetic in Henry James's *Roderick Hudson*

MICHÈLE MENDELSSOHN

**T**HE yoking of art and life was one of the fulcra of Henry James's fiction. In an oft-cited letter to H. G. Wells dated 10 July 1915, James contends: "It is art that *makes* life, makes interest, makes importance, for our consideration and application of these things, and I know of no substitute whatever for the force and beauty of its process."<sup>1</sup> If art "*makes* life," can art therefore palliate for deficiencies in one's own life? My interest in this essay is in James's treatment of homosociality and aesthetics in *Roderick Hudson* (1875), particularly the relationship between the wealthy art patron Rowland Mallet and the sculptor Roderick Hudson, and the ways in which this relationship duplicates the novel's aesthetic concerns.<sup>2</sup> I examine James's insistent intertwining of

*Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 57, No. 4, pp. 512–541. ISSN: 0891-9356.

© 2003 by The Regents of the University of California/Society. All rights reserved.

Send requests for permission to reprint to: Rights and Permissions, University of California Press, Journals Division, 2000 Center Street, Suite 303, Berkeley, CA 94704-1223.

<sup>1</sup> Henry James, *Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1974–84), IV, 770.

<sup>2</sup> A note on terminology is in order here. According to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "the word 'homosexual' entered Euro-American discourse during the last third of the nineteenth-century" (the time when James wrote *Roderick Hudson*), and it refers to a fixed notion of sexuality (*Epistemology of the Closet* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1990], p. 2). In this essay I prefer the terms "homosociality" and "homoerotic," with "homoerotic" indicating same-sex desire or sexual pleasure, and "homosociality" describing same-sex social bonds and a range of relations—including, but not limited to, homosexuality. In *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial De-*

aesthetics and homosociality in the novel and show how he uses these concepts to affirm that art, in its many and varied incarnations, makes life and vice versa.

In recent readings of same-sex relations in James's works, critics have skirted the issue of the aesthetic implications of homosociality;<sup>3</sup> likewise, in discussions of Jamesian aesthetics, critics have not considered James's homosocial artistry.<sup>4</sup> The novel's latent and patent homosexuality has not been linked to James's aesthetic concerns within it. In this essay I want to suggest that James's aesthetic views are encapsulated in his interpretation of homosocial bonds and Catholicism. I argue that in *Roderick Hudson* James uses aestheticized Catholicism and the homoeroticized patron-artist relationship as means of palliating psychological and sexual fragmentation. Unable to act, Rowland is a failed *flâneur* and an incompetent entrepreneur who is psychologically and sexually fragmented because he is alien-

---

*sire*, Sedgwick demonstrates that there is a host of affective relations between men that are not always genetic and that homosociality is not homosexuality. She traces a continuum between the homosocial and homosexual, between varieties of male bonding and homosexual behavior as "a strategy for making generalizations about, and marking historical differences in, the *structure* of men's relations with other men" (Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985], p. 2).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Kelly Cannon, *Henry James and Masculinity: The Man at the Margins* (London: Macmillan, 1994); Hugh Stevens, *Henry James and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998); Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*; Wendy Graham, *Henry James's Thwarted Love* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999); Michael Moon, "A Small Boy and Others: Sexual Disorientation in Henry James, Kenneth Anger, and David Lynch," in *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text*, ed. Hortense J. Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 149; Robert K. Martin, "The 'High Felicity' of Comradeship: A New Reading of Roderick Hudson," *American Literary Realism, 1870–1910*, 11 (1978), 100–108; and Katherine V. Snyder, *Bachelors, Manhood and the Novel, 1850–1925* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Stephen Donadio, *Nietzsche, Henry James, and the Artistic Will* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978); Viola Hopkins Winner, *Henry James and the Visual Arts* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1970); Linda M. Lohn, "An Abyss of Abysses': Will, Morality, and Artistic Imagination in James's *Roderick Hudson*," *Henry James Review*, 12 (1991), 93–100; Peter Jones, "Philosophy, Interpretation and *The Golden Bowl*," in *Philosophy and Literature*, ed. A. Phillips Griffiths (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 211–28; and Wendy Lesser, *His Other Half: Men Looking at Women through Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1991). Jonathan Freedman, in contrast, emphasizes the moral implications of homosexuality and British aestheticism (see *Professions of Taste: Henry James, British Aestheticism, and Commodity Culture* [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990]).

ated from his sensitive, aesthetic side. For Rowland patronage serves as a brace for his internal disjunctions—or, to paraphrase T. S. Eliot's speaker in *The Waste Land* (1922), as a means of shoring up his fragments against his ruin. Patronage allows Rowland the possibility of evading the morality and work ethic of his Puritan kith and kin; likewise, aestheticized Catholicism permits modes of being that Protestantism does not condone.

Roderick does for Rowland what Rowland cannot do for himself—thus making Rowland a creator, as it were, at one remove. In this sense Rowland Mallet is a Pygmalion figure: initially enamored of Roderick's statue, Rowland brings it to life (through his patronage) and becomes equally fond of its human incarnation, Roderick. (Roderick, then, is Rowland's Galatea.) James had rehearsed a version of the Pygmalion theme in "The Last of the Valerii" (1874)—a story whose plot J. Hillis Miller succinctly summarizes as "Italian Hubby Betrays American Heiress in Love Affair with Statue."<sup>5</sup> The story appeared in the January 1874 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*, exactly one year before *Roderick Hudson* began its serial run in the magazine's January 1875 issue.<sup>6</sup>

As a patron Rowland not only acquires someone who can create for him, but he also acquires what I term the "right to sight": a socially and contractually sanctioned justification for watching his ward. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Sigmund Freud argues that scopophiles reify the objects of their gaze, and that sexually tinged looking "offers them a possibility of directing some proportion of their libido on to higher artistic aims."<sup>7</sup> By watching Roderick, Rowland can fulfill both his artistic interests and his sublimated homoerotic drive, and this in turn provides him with the psychological vinculum he requires. In this sense, the shorthand for Rowland's unifying strategy might be "veni, vidi, *vinxi*."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Miller, *Versions of Pygmalion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990), p. 212. See Henry James, "The Last of the Valerii," in his *Complete Stories, 1864–1874*, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1999), pp. 798–827.

<sup>6</sup> *Roderick Hudson* ran in twelve installments from January to December 1875.

<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey, et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953–74), VII, 157. Further references to Freud are to this edition.

<sup>8</sup> "I came, I saw, *I linked/I bound*."

Although Rowland is self-critical, he is unable to act on his observations. His days are “broken into a dozen conscious devices for disposing of the hours, and intermingled with sighs, half suppressed, some of them, for conscience’ sake, over what he failed of in action.”<sup>9</sup> Rowland Mallet’s inaction and psychic fragmentation are central to *Roderick Hudson*, for from the first chapter Rowland is depicted as a paragon of the split soul: he has an “aptitude for beneficence” but easily woos himself “to egotism” (*Roderick*, pp. 168, 170); he has no artistic talent but is fond of the arts and wants to go abroad to bring back pictures to donate to an American city.<sup>10</sup> Early in the novel the narrator emphasizes this duality:

[Rowland] had frequent fits of extreme melancholy, in which he declared that he was neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring. He was neither an irresponsibly contemplative nature nor a sturdily practical one, and he was forever looking in vain for the uses of the things that please and the charm of the things that sustain. He was an awkward mixture of strong moral impulse and restless æsthetic curiosity, and yet he would have made a most ineffective reformer and a very indifferent artist. (pp. 176–77)

Rowland’s ambivalence and concurrent inability to act result in phlegmatism. Max Weber (quoting Friedrich Schiller) famously defined modernity as “the ‘disenchantment of the world’” and charged modern man’s reliance on reason as the chief cause of this malaise.<sup>11</sup> In this sense modernism can be understood, in Ross Posnock’s words, as “a return of the repressed.”<sup>12</sup> Rowland is a precursor of Weberian disenchantment—his repressive pu-

<sup>9</sup> Henry James, *Roderick Hudson*, in his *Novels, 1871–1880*, ed. William T. Stafford (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1983), p. 227. Further references are to this edition and are included in the text.

<sup>10</sup> Rowland mentions wanting to acquire paintings by Botticelli and Ghirlandaio in order to donate them to a city for the benefit of the American public (see *Roderick*, p. 170). In this respect, Rowland Mallet is a precursor for Adam Verver in *The Golden Bowl* (1904), a connoisseur who, having made his fortune, wants to collect every perfect artifact in order to establish a museum in American City.

<sup>11</sup> Max Weber, “Science as Vocation” (1919), in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1946), p. 155; see also p. 51.

<sup>12</sup> See Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), p. 56.

ritanical upbringing is at the root of his dissatisfaction and “eminently rational view” of life (*Roderick*, p. 344).

Brought up according to puritanically influenced ascetic strictures, Rowland’s father had a “will of steel” and “was not a sentimental” man (pp. 175, 174). Rowland’s mother teaches him that sentiment is a “private” thing, literally to be kept in an inner sanctum, and in this respect she is paradigmatic of Rowland’s own split psyche and restrained sentiment. “Mrs. Mallet was a woman of an exquisite moral tone” whose marriage to Rowland’s father was “an immitigable error,” and Rowland, as an adolescent, discovers that “his mother had been for fifteen years a perfectly unhappy woman” who hid her true emotions (pp. 174–75). On her deathbed she admits to Rowland that her only solace was to “cultivate . . . a little private plot of sentiment, and it was of this secluded precinct that, before her death, she gave her son the key” (p. 175).

The object-relations school of psychoanalysis, associated with Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, and Margaret S. Mahler, offers an explanation of the child’s relation to the mother that elucidates Rowland’s emotional paralysis. Indeed, this theory emphasizes the centrality of the primary relationships between the child and its objects (particularly the mother) and reveals that they significantly shape the child’s personality and self-identity. Julia Kristeva concurs that the mother “mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations and becomes the ordering principle.”<sup>13</sup> Rowland’s discovery that his mother wore “a mask . . . by her husband’s order” (*Roderick*, p. 175) is a “momentous one” because it iterates and mirrors his own restraint. The fact that Mrs. Mallet gives her son “the key” to the secret garden of sentiment limns his own emotional strategy, repression. This containment is symbolized by the “secluded precinct” of emotion, which the Mallets kept under lock and key. Thus, Rowland’s ambivalence and consequent lethargy can be read as the result of the repression of his sentiments and his failure to acknowledge his true nature.

Rowland’s failure to accept his split nature is apparent in his conversation with the Cavaliere Giacosa. In chapter 10 the Cav-

<sup>13</sup> *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1984), p. 27.

alieri confesses: "I have two hearts, . . . one for myself, one for the world. . . . One suffers horribly at what the other does." Rowland blankly responds, "I don't understand double people, Cavaliere" (p. 435). Although Rowland is double, he has suppressed his sentimental side to such an extent that he can no longer acknowledge it in himself or others. This schizoid structuring of the self engenders a hypotonic existence: as a result of his psychoemotional splitting, Rowland is emotionally paralyzed: he cannot choose between "either/or" and "and"; he prefers to remain on the boundary of indecision and decision. Rowland is all fear and trembling and is therefore unable to act.<sup>14</sup>

Although critics have tended to construe Roderick and Rowland as opposites on the basis of passion—the former as *tout feu tout flamme*, the latter as a wet blanket—such an interpretation is unnecessarily reductive and confuses the symptom with its cause: Rowland is passionless because he is plagued by indecision. It is crucial to understand the finesse of James's point here: Rowland's inability to act has, as its logical consequence, a *laissez-faire* life of inertia. Rather than having Rowland *choose* a life of indolence (which to James's sense would have been morally objectionable), James sensitively portrays the way in which the *dolce far niente* has been foisted upon "poor Rowland" (p. 183). Indeed, James repeatedly indicates that such a life, because it is not led by personal choice and does not involve self-realization, is ultimately a living death. "Lotus-eating" increases one's "liability to moral misery" (p. 171).

Rowland is aware, nevertheless, that action and production are fundamental elements of life, for "it seemed to him that the glow of happiness must be found either in action, of some immensely solid kind, on behalf of an idea, or in producing a masterpiece in one of the arts" (p. 177). Able neither to act nor to produce, Rowland resolves to search outside himself for happiness, determining that he can achieve vicarious felicity by becoming a patron of the arts. Patronage provides a pretext for the realization of his own dream, since he often "wished he were a vigorous young man of genius, without a penny" (p. 177).

<sup>14</sup> Speaking to Rowland, the artist Sam Singleton says of Roderick: "Ah, there's a man . . . who has taken his start once for all, and doesn't need to stop and ask himself in *fear and trembling* every month or two whether he is advancing or not. When he stops, it's to rest!" (p. 261; emphasis added).

As Roderick's patron, Rowland essentially serves as a catalyst. He goads Roderick into action while remaining inactive himself; Rowland's "part" is "that of usefulness, pure and simple" (p. 394). Being useful, like being a catalyst, is not in itself an action, but it generates action: it is ipso facto a passive-aggressive mode of existence. When asked by Roderick's employer, the lawyer Striker, to tell Mrs. Hudson "just what [he] propose[s] to do with her son" (p. 204), Rowland makes clear that Roderick is the one who will be entirely responsible for the doing: "'Do, my dear madam?' demanded Rowland. 'I don't propose to do anything. He must do for himself. I simply offer him the chance. He's to study, to work—hard, I hope'" (p. 205).

Initially, patronage is construed as a financial investment. Wendy Graham contends that "the pecuniary relationship between the two men [Rowland and Roderick] is a variation on what [Eve Kosofsky] Sedgwick has called 'queer tutelage'" (Graham, *Henry James's Thwarted Love*, p. 105).<sup>15</sup> This argument, however, overlooks the reproductive symbolism implicit in making money. If Rowland Mallet is interested in Roderick Hudson, then it is also because the relationship provides Rowland with a mode of (pro)creation: making money is a sublimation for making love. Like a successful stockholder whose investments make money and thus work for him so that he does not have to, Rowland understands patronage to mean that the artist works, creates, and (re)produces for his patron. Rowland construes his role as that of an adoptive parent of the arts rather than a genetic one: buying art is an ersatz for creative action. Rowland's lethargy denotes that he is unproductive, but it connotes that in commissioning Roderick, Rowland is asking him to produce what he himself cannot. Rowland "could only buy pictures, and not paint them; and in the way of action, he had to content himself with making a rule to render scrupulous moral justice to handsome examples of it in others" (*Roderick*, p. 177). The juxtapositions of buying and painting, action and moral judgment reveal the intricacies of Rowland's rationale. Because Rowland sees Roderick as action incarnate, and because Roderick is a "handsome example," Rowland comes to

<sup>15</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick uses the phrase "queer tutelage" in her *Tendencies* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1993), p. 91.



believe that his role is “to render scrupulous moral justice” to Roderick. This sense of moral duty, however, is also the reason why Roderick comes to resent Rowland and angrily tells him: “You can’t feel for me nor judge for me” (p. 496).

For Rowland scopophilia is a means of palliating his inability to express himself artistically or emotionally. The scopophile, or voyeur, derives pleasure from looking at another person as an erotic object. For Freud the scopophilic drive is a component instinct of sexuality that is not governed by the erogenous zones and is revealed by a tendency to objectify people and subject them to a controlling gaze.<sup>16</sup> The scopophile’s gaze not only eroticizes but also objectifies, and in extreme cases “it can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other.”<sup>17</sup> In *The Tragic Muse* (1890) James recapitulates the theme of voyeurism: the actress Miriam Rooth is seen almost entirely through the eyes of others—particularly those of Peter Sheringham, whom Philip Horne calls “her fascinated diplomat sponsor-lover.”<sup>18</sup> By becoming Roderick’s patron, Rowland acquires a “right to sight”: his scopophilia is contractually and socially sanctioned because watching his ward becomes his duty. Rowland can actualize himself aesthetically through Roderick and thus mediate his internal disjunctions. Scopophilia is a means of palliating his inability to express himself artistically or emotionally. Secularized, aestheticized Catholicism is another means of navigating between the Scylla of the egoistic claims of the aesthetic and the Charybdis of the selfless and immoderate devotion to morality. Similarly, homosociality compensates for Rowland’s alienation.

Catholicism emphasizes the brotherhood of all believers; homosociality emphasizes the brotherhood of all men. My intent here is to consider Catholicism not as a theological entity but as a residual cultural determinant: I will examine the way in which its treatment is symptomatic of the Protestant context

<sup>16</sup> See Freud, *Three Essays*, p. 156.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 587.

<sup>18</sup> Horne, “Introduction,” in Henry James, *The Tragic Muse* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. xxv.

upon which James's novel is founded. While I am not seeking to associate the novel's aesthetic consciousness exclusively with Catholic religious iconography, it is important to acknowledge the Catholic elements as simultaneous enactments of the aesthetic and moral sense. The novel's treatment of homosociality and Catholicism reveals a chiasma between art and life, and this chiasma connotes a "crossing over" to the other sexual side, in the same sense that cross-dressing and cross-gendering do. Patronage in the novel is a pretext for the blurring of sexual lines; moreover, I perceive a second chiasmatic instance in the aestheticization of Catholicism. We can picture this as a literal "Crossing over" of art, where the Catholic Cross is brought to bear on the office of art in a manner similar to Noémie Nioche's painting of a crimson cross over one of her paintings in *The American* (1877).

James was brought up in a religious environment, but, as John T. Frederick notes: "To Henry James, religion was a matter of conduct, not of church membership or acceptance of a stated creed. Further, it was less a matter of external action than of internal attitude and motive."<sup>19</sup> In *The Catholic Side of Henry James* Edwin Sill Fussell argues that the influence of friends and contemporary writers, along with the rise of Catholicism and Catholic fiction in America, may have provided an impetus for James to explore the theme in his works.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, James's lifelong friendship with John La Farge may have influenced his writing: La Farge was a painter and writer, and in *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914) James recalled that La Farge's "being a Catholic, and apparently a 'real' one . . . , [made] perhaps by itself the greatest difference."<sup>21</sup> Although, as Fussell notes, James was always "deliciously vague" about religion (*Catholic Side*, p. 27), critics have generally assumed that he was more of a secularist than anything else. Likewise, the Catholicity of his characters in *Roderick Hudson* is subsumed by secular and humanistic allegiances and stripped of its meaning qua religious orthodoxy.

<sup>19</sup> *The Darkened Sky: Nineteenth-Century American Novelists and Religion* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 242.

<sup>20</sup> See *The Catholic Side of Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993).

<sup>21</sup> Henry James, *Autobiography: A Small Boy and Others, Notes of a Son and Brother, The Middle Years*, ed. Frederick W. Dupee (London: W. H. Allen, 1956), p. 291.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860) was the first *Künstlerroman* to explore the fate of the American artist in Europe. According to Robert Emmet Long, by the time that James began working on *Roderick Hudson*, Hawthorne's novel was already "firmly established as a 'classic' work about Americans in Rome; it was as much a part of the American traveller's equipment in Rome, James once remarked, as his *Murray*."<sup>22</sup> And Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. notes that "nearly every American who left behind a journal of his travels in Italy before 1870 recorded some degree of aversion to Catholicism,"<sup>23</sup> as does *The Marble Faun*. Like Kenyon and Hilda in Hawthorne's novel, Protestant Americans visiting Italy were shocked both by the carnivalesque, convert-hungry Catholic world they encountered and by the galleries replete with "impure pictures."<sup>24</sup> This hostile distaste, however, was commingled with Romantic adulation, and it was this tradition that James ambivalently absorbed and attacked.

According to Paul Giles, the lure of the visual arts was, for better or worse, at the heart of Protestant Americans' conception of Catholicism:

Catholicism has traditionally relied upon the allure of images—Madonnas, crucifixes, and so on—much more than Puritanism, which traditionally harbors a deep suspicion of the power of art and artifice. . . . visualization is often associated by American writers with a blind Catholic adherence to faith in contrast to the Protestant emphasis upon intelligent interrogation of superficial appearances.<sup>25</sup>

Rowland Mallet is attracted to Catholicism's aesthetic incarnation because it can provide something that patronage also pro-

<sup>22</sup> Robert Emmet Long, "James's *Roderick Hudson*: The End of the Apprenticeship—Hawthorne and Turgenev," *American Literature*, 48 (1976), 312. Long does not give a source for James's remark.

<sup>23</sup> *The Lure of Italy: American Artists and the Italian Experience, 1760–1914* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), p. 48.

<sup>24</sup> See Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni*, ed. William Charvat and Fredson Bowers, et al., vol. 4 of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 337.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Giles, *American Catholic Arts and Fictions: Culture, Ideology, Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992), p. 90.

vides: a sense of community and a justification for his aesthetic tastes. By aestheticizing Catholicism, moreover, James emphasizes the relationship between the moral and the aesthetic and, by the same token, demonstrates that such a cross-pollination can be profitable. In *Roderick Hudson* the religious dimension is transformed: secularized, socialized, aestheticized. Yet despite this spiritual stripping, Catholicism remains of value because it permits and promotes modes of being that Protestantism does not condone.



In his early stories Henry James consistently returns to the connections and disjunctions between aesthetics and ethics or religion—between the emphases of the present over those of the past—in order to inflect his prose with a new moral tone. In “Travelling Companions” (1870) the narrator Mr. Brooke and his companion Miss Evans look at Tintoretto’s *Crucifixion*, and he asks her, “What is it here . . . that has moved you most, the painter or the subject?” She replies, “I suppose it’s the subject. And you?” to which he responds: “I’m afraid it’s the painter.”<sup>26</sup> Tony Tanner hears an “apologetic note” in Mr. Brooke’s response that “indicates sufficiently that this would not have been a common answer at this time.”<sup>27</sup> The passage also indicates that stripping religious icons of their religious significance in favor of appreciating their aesthetic value was a theme that James had explored elsewhere and returned to in *Roderick Hudson*. In “The Madonna of the Future” (1873), after Theobald rhapsodizes about Raphael’s *Madonna in the Chair*, H---, the narrator of the inner story, reminds him that during Raphael’s time “people’s religious and æsthetic needs went arm in arm, and there was . . . a demand for the Blessed Virgin, visible and adorable.” But, he concludes, “I am afraid there is no demand now.”<sup>28</sup> Here, as in *Roderick Hudson*, James does not

<sup>26</sup> Henry James, “Travelling Companions,” in *Complete Stories, 1864–1874*, p. 525.

<sup>27</sup> *Venice Desired* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1992), p. 162.

<sup>28</sup> Henry James, “The Madonna of the Future,” in *Complete Stories, 1864–1874*, p. 739.

suggest a return to the past or force a moralistic stance, but he nevertheless indicates that art should be infused with belief.

Rowland's visit to the Church of Saint Cecilia in chapter 7 instances the conflicting and conflating drives that I have described. Like Strether in *The Ambassadors* (1903), George Stransom in "The Altar of the Dead" (1895), and a host of other men in James's fiction who wander into Catholic churches to find women worshipping at the altar, Rowland "never passed it [Saint Cecilia's] without going in," and this time he finds a woman "at her prayers at one of the side altars" (*Roderick*, p. 345). Why would Rowland, the offspring of "a rigid Puritan stock" (p. 172), regularly attend a Catholic church? His actions elucidate his motive: "Rowland walked to the altar, and paid, in a momentary glance at the clever statue of the saint in death, in the niche beneath it, the usual tribute to the charm of polished ingenuity" (p. 345). Here the prose is exceptionally opaque: it is not clear what the "usual tribute" paid "to the charm of polished ingenuity" is. The lexicon, however (altar, momentary glance, clever statue, tribute, polished ingenuity), yokes Catholic imagery and visual appreciation thereof, clarifying Rowland's impulse. When Rowland steps up to the altar—i.e., the communion table—he is communing with the art itself, appreciating it solely on aesthetic rather than religious grounds, just as Mr. Brooke does in "Travelling Companions." The fact that the statue is referred to as "clever" and "polished ingenuity" underscores Rowland's aesthetic focus and indicates his aggressive disavowal of any religious response. Here he does not gaze but rather glances momentarily, as if fearful of the piece's power. The glance is fleeting and flirtatious and, contrary to the gaze, does not involve permanent or deeper commitment. Still, Rowland's glance is transgressive: it venerates an icon for its beauty rather than for its spiritual value. Rowland does not conflate the sign and signifier, as Protestant iconoclasts accused Catholics of doing, but instead he radically disassociates them, appreciating the icon *only* for its beauty and not for its religious or spiritual significance.

Having paid his respects to the "clever statue," Rowland finds that the woman "sitting in a listless attitude" (*Roderick*,

p. 345) against a column is none other than Christina Light, the beauty to whom Roderick is so deeply attracted. "Have you never felt in any degree," Rowland asks her, "the fascination of Catholicism?" (p. 346). His negation ("never" instead of ever) and Christina's response ("Yes, I have been through that, too!") imply that he has felt the "fascination." Christina's effusive recounting of her putative desire to become a nun fails to convince Rowland of the veracity of "her religious experience." Comparing himself to Christina, Rowland concludes: "I am afraid that I am sadly prosaic . . . for 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!" (p. 347). Fussell claims that this passage is "obscure" because "it is . . . unclear what comparison is proposed by an entity into which you would creep" (*Catholic Side*, p. 75).<sup>29</sup> But Rowland's idiom clearly associates the religious with the visual and reinforces the sense that his appreciation of Catholicism is an aesthetic one. Rowland's manipulation of the inside/outside dichotomy is most revelatory of his outlook: he is fascinated by Catholicism because it offers something to look at—as does "beautiful" Roderick—and satisfies his scopophilic desires. Rowland is interested in looking at Catholicism "simply from the outside," as an onlooker rather than a believer; he cannot "creep into it" because he is not interested in its substance, its religious core. Rowland is like Christopher Newman in *The American*, who, while looking at a painting of the Madonna, says: "I am not a Catholic, but I want to buy it."<sup>30</sup> For Rowland it is not the faith but the artifice of the Roman Church that holds "fascination."

Rowland does have some religious sentiment, even if it is not specifically Catholic. Notwithstanding his bald reply to the Franciscan *frate* in Fiesole who proposes to offer a mass for him—"I am not a Catholic" (*Roderick*, p. 373)—Rowland is not

<sup>29</sup> Fussell also suggests that Rowland may be making an oblique reference to Matthew 19:24, where Jesus says: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (see *Catholic Side of Henry James*, p. 75).

<sup>30</sup> Henry James, *The American*, in *Novels, 1871–1880*, p. 518.

an atheist, since he admits: “I believe in God” (p. 347). Like George Dane in “The Great Good Place” (1900), Rowland is one of “the great Protestant peoples,” but he finds happiness in Catholicism and its “good Brothers.”<sup>31</sup> Protestantism holds that the individual can have a personal connection to God, that he does not need the mediating power of a priest or the support of a community. Rowland, however, is alienated from himself and from the puritanical elements of the United States because of his inability to conform to social stereotypes about both economic productivity and sexual reproductivity. His urge to become a patron of the arts is a manifestation of his attempt not only to repair his internal disconnections but also to insert himself into the art scene and become part of its community. Nevertheless, when Christina says to him, “Please tell me about your religion,” he cannot describe it to her:

“Tell you about it? I can’t!” said Rowland, with a good deal of emphasis.

She flushed a little. “Is it such a mighty mystery it cannot be put into words, nor communicated to my base ears?”

“It is simply a sentiment that makes part of my life, and I can’t detach myself from it sufficiently to talk about it.”

(*Roderick*, p. 348)

Rowland cannot detach himself from his religion enough to speak about it because it is a means for him of resolving his aesthetic and moral alienation. Although Rowland’s faith is undoubtedly secularized, by adhering to both Protestant morals—manifest in his encouragement of a Protestant work ethic in others, particularly in Roderick—and Catholic aesthetics, he creates a psychological vinculum that alleviates his sense of alienation. By seeing, he is healed.

In his conversation with Christina, Rowland amalgamates two types of sentiment: the religious and the romantic. Indeed, Christina’s comment about “a mighty mystery [that] cannot be put into words” is suggestive of what Lord Alfred Douglas, in his poem “Two Loves” (1892), euphemistically referred to as

<sup>31</sup> See Henry James, “The Great Good Place,” in his *Complete Stories, 1898–1910*, ed. Denis Donoghue (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1996), pp. 162, 170.

“the love that dare not speak its name.”<sup>32</sup> It seems to me that Rowland is talking on two levels here, the religious and the romantic. In his explanation to Christina he is covertly referring to Roderick: “It is simply a sentiment that makes part of my life, and I can’t detach myself from it sufficiently to talk about it.” When he writes to Cecilia a month later, Rowland admits that he cannot look at Roderick objectively or merely as a financial investment because he is too bound up with him emotionally:

I have done my best, and if the machine is running down I have a right to stand aside and let it scuttle. Amen, amen! No, I can write that, but I can’t feel it. I can’t be just; I can only be generous. I love the poor fellow and I can’t give him up. (p. 358)

If there is anything that Rowland cannot detach himself from sufficiently, it is Roderick: Rowland clings to him for the same reasons that he clings to Catholicism. The *agape* that Rowland shows Roderick—“I can only be generous. I love the poor fellow”—is a sublimated form of *eros*. Rowland can only be generous (show *agape*) because this is a sanctioned homosocial bond, whereas love between men is not. He takes his investment in Roderick to heart because it is not merely a financial investment but also an emotional one. Catholicism provides a community of brothers and sanctions *agape*; in contrast to *eros*, *agape* is wholly unselfish and outgoing—it is Christian love proper. As a result, the homosocial bond is reinforced, even if the homoerotic one is not sanctioned or acted upon. By sanctioning homosocial interaction, Catholicism gives Rowland a means of sublimating his desire by grounding his actions in *agape* rather than *eros*.

Rowland is not only buying Roderick’s artwork but also “buying the picture,” in the sense that patronage becomes a means for him to paint himself into the *tableau vivant* of the Roman art world—or at least for him to have the right to watch it, as the following excerpt implies:

When the two ladies [Madame Grandoni and Miss Blanchard] withdrew, [Rowland] attended them to their carriage.

<sup>32</sup> Lord Alfred Douglas, “Two Loves” (1892), rpt. in *The Chameleon: A Facsimile Edition* (London: Eighteen Nineties Society, 1978), p. 28.



Coming back to the drawing-room, he paused outside the open door; he was struck by the group formed by the three men. . . . Rowland stood looking on, for the group [of artists: Roderick, Gloriani, Sam Singleton] struck him with its picturesque symbolism. Roderick, bearing the lamp and glowing in its radiant circle, seemed the beautiful image of a genius which combined sincerity with power. (pp. 246–47)

This passage adumbrates what I believe are the wider implications of patronage: homosociality, homoerotics, and the conflation of the artist and art. Why does Rowland gaze at the group of artists from the outside, as if looking at a painting? Why is it a “group formed by the three men” that arouses Rowland’s interest? Why is Roderick assimilated to a “beautiful image”? The nexus of concerns underlying these questions is encapsulated in what I term the “Pygmalion and Galatea motif.” Like Maggie Verver and her father in *The Golden Bowl* (who, as Martha C. Nussbaum has observed, “assimilate people, in their imagination and deliberation, to fine *objets d’art*”),<sup>33</sup> Rowland, through his gaze, reifies Roderick. Rowland is in effect acquiring creations as well as a creator, a person who can produce for him. In this respect, Roderick becomes one of Rowland’s creations, in the same sense that Christina Light is the product of her mother’s efforts and a work of art saleable on the marriage market.

We are now in a position to appreciate the intricacy of James’s crisscross substitution of art and life. Indeed, Roderick is not only a creator of images but also an image himself, quite literally a *tableau vivant*. The rhetorical term that describes the metamorphosis from inhuman to human, art to life, inanimate to animate, is *prosopopoeia*: “a trope consisting either of the personification of some non-human being or idea, or of the representation of an imaginary, dead or absent person as alive.”<sup>34</sup> An examination of the ways in which *prosopopoeia* plays itself out in *Roderick Hudson* reveals a deep connection between aesthetics and homoeroticism.

<sup>33</sup> *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), p. 131.

<sup>34</sup> Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), p. 180.

The most famous instance of *prosopopoeia* is the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. According to Book 10 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion was a legendary king of Cyprus who fell in love with an ivory statue that he had carved himself. He prayed to Venus that he might have a wife as beautiful as the image he had created, whereupon the goddess caused the statue to come to life. What if Pygmalion's statue had been not "a pretty girl" but "a pretty boy" (*Roderick*, p. 177)? Further, is the patron-artist relationship an instance of the creator-creature relationship? These two questions strike me as salient, for they allow us to appreciate the ways in which James is working with the materialization of desire and the amalgamation of art and passion.

In "The Last of the Valerii" James rehearses *prosopopoeia*: Count Camillo Valerio becomes infatuated with a beautiful statue of Juno excavated from the grounds of his villa and neglects his American wife, Martha. A cynical German archeologist who has come to examine the piece observes: "He keeps her under lock and key, and pays her solitary visits. What does he do, after all? When a beautiful woman is in stone, all he can do is to look at her" ("Last of the Valerii," p. 812). Later, Martha wails: "His Juno's the reality; I'm the fiction!" (p. 822). In "The Story of a Year" (1865) the wounded John Ford is visited by Lizzie, and as she sits at his bedside he sees her not as flesh but as stone: "He lay perfectly motionless, but for his eyes. They wandered over her with a kind of peaceful glee, like sunbeams playing on a statue."<sup>35</sup>

In many of James's early stories, desired women are watched and compared to statues. In *Roderick Hudson* loved men are also compared to statues, but whereas women or their sculptural representatives are hidden away, the male statue and its human incarnation can be appreciated in public under the pretext of patronage. When Christina asks Rowland, "Where is that queer friend of yours?" (*Roderick*, p. 275), Rowland tellingly replies: "You mean Mr. Hudson. He is represented by these beautiful works." Similarly, Singleton comments to Rowland: "In my memories of this Roman artist-life, [Roderick] will be the central figure. He will stand there in radiant relief, as beautiful and unspotted as one of his own statues!" (p. 439).

<sup>35</sup> Henry James, "The Story of a Year," in *Complete Stories, 1864-1874*, p. 64.

If the patron-artist relationship represents a socially sanctioned homosocial bond, then for Rowland Mallet it moves further along the sexual continuum and becomes eroticized. In the opening scene of the novel Rowland discusses his dilemma with Cecilia:

“I am 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; but the point is not only to get out—you must stay out; and to stay out you must have some absorbing errand. Unfortunately, I’ve got no errand, and nobody will trust me with one. I want to care for something, or for some one. And I want to care with a certain ardor; even, if you can believe it, with a certain passion. . . . Do you know I sometimes think that I’m a man of genius, half-finished? The genius has been left out, the faculty of expression is wanting; but the need for expression remains, and I spend my days groping for the latch of a closed door.”

“What an immense number of words,” said Cecilia after a pause, “to say you want to fall in love!” (p. 171)

This exchange elucidates Rowland’s conflation of two needs: to express himself and create, and to find an amorous outlet. Acutely perceptive, Cecilia recognizes this conflation immediately, telling Rowland: “if I refused last night to show you a pretty girl, I can at least show you a pretty boy” (p. 177). Of course, the “pretty boy” she presents him with is Roderick’s statue, “Thirst” (and, by implication, Roderick himself). By suggesting that a live “pretty girl” can be replaced by a statue of a “pretty boy” that later comes to life in the form of Roderick, Cecilia is underscoring her cousin’s sexual fluidity and, most importantly, the Pygmalion and Galatea motif at work in the novel. Just as the Church of St. Cecilia is the locale of Rowland’s *Crossing-over* of Catholicism and aesthetics, so it is through Cecilia’s agency that Rowland effects his sexual crossing-over.

Like Ovid’s Pygmalion,<sup>36</sup> Rowland has “accepted the prospect of bachelorhood” (*Roderick*, p. 167), but when he sees Roderick’s statue he is overwhelmed, for “nothing, in a long time, had given him so much pleasure” (p. 178). His reaction is de-

<sup>36</sup> See Ovid, *Metamorphoses, Books IX–XV*, rev. ed., trans. Frank Justus Miller, revised G. P. Goold (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984), pp. 81–83.

scribed as love at first sight: “he was absorbed”; he “demanded more light, dropped his head on this side and that, uttered vague exclamations”; and “he fell to admiring the statue again” (pp. 178–79). Pygmalion is equally surprised by the pleasure that the sculpture excites in him: “Pygmalion looks in admiration and is inflamed with love for this semblance of a form” (*Metamorphosis*, p. 83). J. Hillis Miller notes: “Though the birth of Galatea takes the help of a goddess [Venus], Ovid emphasizes the way it is the result of human work, even of specifically male work. The work is both sexual and at the same time simply one of manufacture” (*Versions of Pygmalion*, p. 7).

Rowland’s cognomen—Mallet—is indicative of his role as creator, as a human incarnation of a sculptural tool. Roderick is created by Rowland insofar as he owes his identity as an artist to Rowland’s patronage: had it not been for Rowland, Roderick would have remained a part-time dilettante with a day job as a lackey for the lawyers Striker and Spooner. Roderick’s first statue, “Thirst,” is a symbolic rendering of his unquenched desire for knowledge and experience. The statue is described in anthropomorphic terms: “Its beauty was the beauty of natural movement; nothing had been sought to be represented but the perfection of an attitude. This had been most attentively studied, and it was exquisitely rendered” (*Roderick*, p. 178).<sup>37</sup> Seeing the figure, Rowland asks Cecilia, “Is he [Roderick] a sculptor by profession?” Her response—“He’s a law-student”—elicits laughter from Rowland. Rowland in effect *makes* Roderick into

<sup>37</sup> There are a number of other instances where Roderick’s life imitates his art. After he arrives in Europe, he does not pace his imbibing and soon complains of “an indigestion of impressions” (*Roderick*, p. 222). As it did for his dipsomaniac father, who “drank himself to death” (p. 184), inebriation also plays a part in Roderick’s downfall, and Roderick becomes the embodiment of one of his intended but unrealized statues, “a Bacchus, realistically treated!” (p. 362). “A Reminiscence,” another of Roderick’s sculptures, is a rendering of a lady whom Roderick met at Baden, “who had reminded Rowland of Madame de Cruchecassée” and “was tremendously statuesque” (p. 258). Madame de Cruchecassée is a character in William Makepeace Thackeray’s *The Newcomes* (1854), a lady of somewhat damaged reputation. Her name, however, hints at more: “cruche cassée” literally means “broken jug,” and thus highlights Roderick’s self-destructiveness, his drunkenness, and his broken ambitions. Similarly, Roderick’s sculpture of an inebriated *lazzarone* represents the abyss into which Roderick has sunk. He has drunk life to the lees and, soused by Rome’s sensuous and sensual delights, cracked his golden bowl.

a professional sculptor, and before Roderick's death Rowland tells him so: "my affection was always stronger than my resentment; . . . I preferred to err on the side of kindness; . . . I had, myself, in a measure, launched you in the world" (p. 500). Though Mrs. Hudson feels like "the goose, or the hen, who hatched a swan's egg" (p. 209), it is Rowland who is responsible for ensuring that the ugly duckling matures into a swan. Mary Garland says as much when, while still in Northampton, she tells Rowland: "it is like something in a fairy tale. . . . Your coming here all unknown, so rich and so polite, and carrying off my cousin in a golden cloud" (p. 210).

For Rowland Mallet the patron-artist relationship is a sublimated and socially sanctioned homosocial bond. In *The Seduction of the Mediterranean* Robert Aldrich explains that until very recent times, homoerotic themes and homosexual longing were often obliged to assume a degree of coding or outright disguise:

The situations or images so coded were those in which male nudity, male-bonding or intimate friendships could be presented: . . . places overseas where usual norms of deportment were relaxed or puritanical mores suspended. Displacement was a way to bend the rules, to hide 'deviant' relationships or to excuse misbehaviour.<sup>38</sup>

Was it because "Northampton is not as gay as Rome" (*Roderick*, p. 304) that "the two young men were lounging on the sun-warmed grass" (p. 315) in Italy? This scene in chapter 6 instances the homosexual coding that Aldrich describes. When Christina and her retinue happen upon "Mr. Mallet and Mr. Hudson sleeping under a tree," Christina demands of Roderick: "Is that the way you spend your time? . . . I never yet happened to learn what men were doing when they supposed women were not watching them but it was something vastly below their reputation" (p. 318). Because it also involves creation—of artworks rather than offspring—and therefore has the characteristics of a (re)productive heterosexual relation-

<sup>38</sup> Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art and Homosexual Fantasy* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 7.

ship, the patron-artist relationship mirrors the man-woman relationship.

This interpretation is premised on the primacy of the heterosexual—i.e., reproductive—relationship over the homosexual one. Although this is admittedly a heterosexist line of argumentation, the novel itself demands such a reading. Thus, I am claiming that the homosexuality in *Roderick Hudson* is implicated in heterosexual norms where male-female relationships constitute the hegemony. Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, and Michael Moon, in other connections and contexts, have argued the reverse, and while I am not contesting their arguments per se, I want to suggest that they cannot be applied as broadly as has been assumed without risking anachronism. In “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” Butler reconsiders the charge that homosexuals “are imitations of the heterosexual real,” where “‘imitation’ carries the meaning of ‘derivative’ or secondary,’ a copy of an origin which is itself the ground of all copies, but which is itself a copy of nothing.”<sup>39</sup> In *Homographesis* Edelman argues that the gay male is a “homograph,” someone who simulates the “normality” of masculinity or heterosexuality only to displace them as grounding ontological categories. Edelman’s deconstructionist argument proposes that from the vantage point of dominant culture, homosexuality is named “as a secondary, sterile, and parasitic form of social representation” vis-à-vis heterosexual identity.<sup>40</sup> Although such reasoning seems acceptable today, these interpretations simply would not have been conceivable, let alone acceptable, to James’s mind or to his mandarin social set in the 1870s. Following Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* (1976–84), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick demonstrates in her *Epistemology of the Closet* that distinctions that we now take for granted between gender and sexuality were only beginning to emerge in the last third of the nineteenth century:

What *was* new from the turn of the century was the world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was neces-

<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 21–22.

<sup>40</sup> Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 9.

sarily assignable to a male or a female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence. (*Epistemology of the Closet*, p. 2)

Thus, Michael Moon makes a valid contention regarding James's 1891 story "The Pupil":

James's own literary explorations of the circulation of "perverse" desires are elaborate and searching, and remarkably unconstrained by contemporary standards of gentility and prudery. . . . if James were writing today, his work would look more like [David Lynch's 1986 film] *Blue Velvet* than it would like [film producers Ismail] Merchant and [James] Ivory's ponderously reverent period "recreations" of his novels.

("A Small Boy and Others," p. 149)

While Moon's argument is enticing, it cannot be extended to the entire Jamesian corpus. Although homoerotic elements are patent and latent in the early stories and in *Roderick Hudson*, James was not yet ready to be as "remarkably unconstrained" as he later would be. As a result, the novel resorts to queer coding and attempts to camouflage the same-sex relationship. In recent years there has been a considerable critical effort to "queer" James, but even though much of the insights afforded into James's sexuality are interesting, we should not lose sight of the fact that his sexual persona (as subdued as it may have been) evolved considerably, and that the sexuality espoused in the early works need not be reflective of that of the later works.<sup>41</sup> In short, I want to guard against readings that conflate and confuse the early and the late James.

The very presence of the homoerotic topos should nevertheless alert us to the fact that James was attempting (albeit cautiously) a rupture with the moralism of Ralph Waldo Emer-

<sup>41</sup> In *Henry James and Sexuality* Stevens notes the critical and biographical tendency to mistakenly assume that "James's supposed abstinence from any form of sexual activity make[s] him an unlikely author of fiction which self-consciously represents same-sex desire between men" (p. x). Stevens justly indicates that the claims he makes "for James's writing do not stand or fall on the question of James's own sexual behaviour" (p. x).

son, Charles Eliot Norton, and John Ruskin, while at the same time not giving his wholehearted assent to what he perceived as the flamboyant homosexuality of the aesthetes.<sup>42</sup> James's reaction to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) supports my claim. According to Aldrich, Pater, in taking up Johann Joachim Winckelmann's arguments and vaunting the beauty and sensuality of classical statues, "suggested a new aesthetics, openly sensual and erotic, which by implication should be free of the straitened morality of traditional cultural and religious beliefs" (*Seduction of the Mediterranean*, p. 76). James commented on Pater's book in a letter to William James dated 31 May 1873: "I see it treats of several things I know nothing about" (*Letters*, I, 391). Richard Ellmann suggests that Pater's book "played a large part in the composition of *Roderick Hudson*," but that "James took alarm" at it because "he wished to inscribe himself neither as aesthetic nor homosexual."<sup>43</sup>



In the preface to the New York edition of *Roderick Hudson* James writes: "The centre of interest throughout 'Roderick' is in Rowland Mallet's consciousness."<sup>44</sup> It is important that the novel's events be seen largely through Rowland's eyes, for his "consciousness" is intricately linked to Roderick's and is made manifest in his observation of Roderick. Rowland's eye actualizes his I: "What happened to [Rowland] was above all to feel certain things happening to others" ("Preface," p. xviii). Like Strether in *The Ambassadors*, who in the role of the innocent, inactive voyeur is reliving his youth through the Chad-Marie situation ("they're young enough, my pair. . .

<sup>42</sup> Jonathan Freedman and Viola Hopkins Winner have shown that the young Henry James was torn between his allegiances to the aesthetic moralism of Emerson, Ruskin, and Norton and the incipient art for art's sake movement (see Freedman, *Professions of Taste*; and Winner, *Henry James and the Visual Arts*). The pre-1875 stories and art criticism amply demonstrate the ways in which James sought to simultaneously assimilate and transcend both theories.

<sup>43</sup> Ellmann, "Henry James Among the Aesthetes," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 69 (1983), 210–11.

<sup>44</sup> Henry James, "Preface," in *Roderick Hudson* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), p. xvii.



The point is that they're mine. Yes, they're my youth"),<sup>45</sup> Rowland lives vicariously through Roderick. In "The 'Uncanny'" (1919) Freud suggests that narcissistic drives force the incorporation of the "other" with "all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will."<sup>46</sup> Through the gaze, Rowland can achieve a simulacrum of resolution by reifying in Roderick what he himself lacks: "surely youth and genius, hand in hand, were the most beautiful sight in the world. Roderick added to this the charm of his more immediately personal qualities" (*Roderick*, p. 226). Rowland's right to sight is challenged by Roderick, who claims he wants "a change": "You are watching me; I don't want to be watched. . . . Therefore, I say, let us separate" (p. 249). In Switzerland, when the crisis between the two men reaches its apex, Roderick speaks more bluntly: "I resent the range of your vision pretending to be the limit of my action. . . . You ask too much, for a man who himself has no occasion to play the hero" (p. 496).

For Rowland "friendship does the thing that love alone generally has the credit of"; his "affection" for Roderick "overmastered his heart and beguiled his imagination" and "never for an instant faltered" (p. 309). Earlier in the novel, Rowland's vision of Roderick is already romanticized: "Rowland, as he spoke, had an instinctive vision of how such a beautiful young fellow must be loved by his female relatives" (p. 193). At the end of chapter 2, when Rowland learns of Roderick's engagement to Mary Garland, his disappointment centers on the loss of Roderick rather than Mary, the woman he supposedly loves: "fortune had . . . given him a singularly sympathetic comrade, and then it had turned and delivered him a thumping blow in mid-chest" (p. 221). Chapter 5 opens on Rowland's experience of an undefinable "great love" (p. 278), but when the couple quarrels in chapter 6, Rowland realizes that Roderick "was

<sup>45</sup> Henry James, *The Ambassadors*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), II, 51.

<sup>46</sup> Sigmund Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" in *Standard Edition*, XVII, 236.

without a heart," despite the fact that Rowland "was a man with a moral passion, and no small part of it had gone forth into his relations with Roderick" (p. 308). James emphasizes their bond: "Rowland had implicitly offered everything that belongs to friendship, and Roderick had, apparently, as deliberately accepted it. Rowland, indeed, had taken an exquisite satisfaction in his companion's deep, inexpressive assent to his interest in him" (pp. 308–9).

Christina Light describes Rowland as "Mr. Hudson's sheep-dog" who "was mounting guard to keep away the wolves" (p. 318)—and the women. Mrs. Hudson's maid, Maddalena, is described as "a cheerful she-wolf" (p. 455). Women like Christina Light are "the stimulus of strong emotion, of passion" in Roderick, and it is perhaps in the guise of a vigilant "sheep-dog" that Rowland requests Christina to "let him alone" (p. 351). Likewise, Madame Grandoni's allegory of the failed German painter, Herr Schafgans, is not only "a warning against high-flown pretensions" (p. 245) but also against wily women. His name foreshadows his fate, since Mr. "Sheep-goose" (*Schaf-Gans*) is a silly goose who marries "a buxom, bold-faced, high-colored creature" who "used to beat him" (pp. 245–46). Without a "sheep-dog" to watch out for him, the sheep is devoured by the she-wolf. But Rowland is not as disinterested and innocuous as he pretends to be: he is clearly interested in Roderick and in keeping him for himself. Rowland wants to tell Christina "without delay" that Roderick is "not at liberty to become indefinitely interested in other women," and when Roderick protests, Rowland reminds him: "I am the cause of your separation from Miss Garland, the cause of your being exposed to temptations which she hardly even suspects" (p. 308).

When things fall apart and Roderick is no longer producing anything of value, Rowland meets Christina Light in the Church of St. Cecilia and she accuses him of not being "contented": "To begin with, you are in love. . . . And it doesn't go well. There are grievous obstacles" (p. 349). If Christina is alluding to Rowland's putative love for Mary Garland, then Roderick later reveals one of the "grievous obstacles," telling Rowland: "there are certain things you know nothing about. . . . women, principally, and what relates to women. Women for

you, by what I can make out, mean nothing" (p. 497). Christina's comment alludes to Rowland's obstructed affections for Roderick, and Rowland's supposed love for Mary Garland is a smoke screen for the Mallet-Hudson homoerotics.

In this respect, I read the relationship between Roderick, Mary, and Rowland as an instancing of René Girard's notion of "'triangular' desire."<sup>47</sup> A straight line joins the subject and object, Rowland and Roderick; Mary is the "mediator," "above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object" (*Deceit*, p. 2). Like the nude woman in the foreground of Édouard Manet's *Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), who diverts the viewer's attention from the implicit homoerotics between the two clothed men, Mary's role is to create a diversion from the novel's same-sex relationship. James acknowledged as much in his preface to the novel:

The ironic effect of [Rowland's] having fallen in love with the girl who is herself in love with Roderick, . . . the conception of this last irony, I must add, has remained happier than my execution of it. . . .

. . . Mary Garland's way doesn't, indubitably, convince us; any more than we are truly convinced, I think, that Rowland's destiny, or say his nature, would have made him accessible at the same hour to two quite distinct commotions, each a very deep one, of his whole personal economy.

("Preface," pp. xviii–xix)

When Rowland, imitating Roderick's amorous actions at the Coliseum with Christina, climbs to dangerous heights to pick a flower for Miss Garland, she "gravely" asks him, "Why did you do that?" His response shows these "commotions": "He hesitated. He felt that it was physically possible to say, 'Because I love you!' but that it was not morally possible. He lowered his pitch and answered, simply, 'Because I wanted to do something for you'" (p. 473). Rowland cannot tell Mary he loves her because it is morally reprehensible to lie, and his affections lie with Roderick. This passage also elucidates the way in which Row-

<sup>47</sup> See Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1965), p. 2.

land has demonstrated and sublimated his love for Roderick all along: by doing things for him and being useful. Rowland equates unselfishness and usefulness with demonstrating love.

In the scene in which Rowland sees Roderick's corpse, the narrator tells us: "Now that it was over, Rowland understood how exclusively, for two years, Roderick had filled his life. His occupation was gone" (*Roderick*, p. 511). James used the same phrase in other works, both before and after *Roderick Hudson*. In *Watch and Ward* (1871), during Nora's two-year absence early in the novel, the narrator says: "Roger found that he missed her sadly; his occupation was gone."<sup>48</sup> And in the final chapter of *The American*, after Christopher Newman has loved and lost Claire de Cintré, the narrator says: "He had nothing to do, his occupation was gone" (*The American*, p. 865). The phrase, reminiscent of Othello's when he believes he has lost Desdemona ("Othello's occupation's gone"),<sup>49</sup> was one of James's favorites. In *Roderick Hudson* it indicates both that Rowland no longer has anyone to take care of and that his occupation, in the sense of habitation and tenancy, is over: he can live neither vicariously through Roderick, nor with him. My reading of "occupation" as both "vocation/profession" and "tenancy/home" is substantiated in chapter 2, when Mary Garland tells Rowland: "you are unlike other men. . . . You have no duties, no profession, no home" (*Roderick*, p. 217). By becoming Roderick's patron, Rowland finds an occupation, a profession, and a home, and Roderick's artistic community effectively becomes Rowland's as well. The opening of chapter 6 confirms this reading:

One day, on entering Roderick's lodging . . . , Rowland found a letter on the table addressed to himself. It was from Roderick, and consisted of but three lines: "I am gone to Frascati—for meditation. If I am not at home on Friday, you had better join me." On Friday he was still absent, and Rowland went out to Frascati.  
(p. 307)

Why does Roderick leave a letter for Rowland in his own home, and why does Rowland enter Roderick's home when he is not

<sup>48</sup> Henry James, *Watch and Ward*, in *Novels, 1871–1880*, p. 26.

<sup>49</sup> See William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. Norman Sanders (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), p. 129 (III.iii.358).

there? Clearly, these actions indicate that Rowland feels that both Roderick and his home are equally his, by virtue of the contractual nature of the patron-artist relationship.

Roderick is also Rowland's symbolic "home," for it is with him that Rowland feels most at home. Roderick's home is where Rowland's heart is, and his strange sense of loss can therefore be attributed to the "unhoming" that Roderick's death provokes. In "The 'Uncanny'" Freud maintains that being unhomed is *unheimlich*. The resemblance between *Heim* (home) and *unheimlich* (uncanny) reinforces this sense. For Freud the *unheimlich* is the name for "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light"; to be unhomed is to expose oneself—whether consciously or not, voluntarily or not—to the mysterious, the scary secret: "this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression" ("The 'Uncanny,'" p. 241). Roderick is watched and objectified even in death: when Rowland discovers Roderick's corpse, "the thing that yesterday was his friend," he watches over it "for seven long hours, and his vigil was forever memorable" (*Roderick*, pp. 509–10). Rowland gives himself over to emotion (what Roderick had termed "necessary follies"), and "the most rational of men was for an hour the most passionate" (p. 510). The novel's ending confirms that Roderick's influence on Rowland was not only aesthetic. The degree to which their lives were intertwined is manifest in Rowland's death-wish: "he would have lain down there in Roderick's place" (p. 510).

Freud's thesis in "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) is that the bereaved's response to the loss of a beloved can be "to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object."<sup>50</sup> Yet the bereaved person's attempt to incorporate his lost love into his own identity also carries him "back to the stage of sadism" and is manifested by a "tendency to suicide" ("Mourning," p. 252). I believe that this theory can explain Rowland's reaction and his cryptic last line: "Cecilia . . . calls him [Rowland], whenever he reappears, the most restless of mortals. But

<sup>50</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *Standard Edition*, XIV, 249.

he always says to her in answer, 'No, I assure you I am the most patient!'" (*Roderick*, p. 511). Although this excerpt has been read as indicative of Rowland's undying love for Mary Garland, I think that when we bring Freud's commentary to bear on the passage, it can also be understood as signaling Rowland's undying love for Roderick: his restlessness is like a death-wish, a desire to be reunited with Roderick in death. Whereas Mary Garland was, in Girard's idiom, a "mediator" in the Rowland-Mary-Roderick triangle of desire, after Roderick's death she becomes a medium, because Rowland maintains his connection to Roderick through her. This explains why Cecilia has the "shrewd impression" that Rowland has an ulterior motive when "he comes to see Miss Garland" (p. 511). It also suggests that while Mary Garland's "loud, tremendous cry, upon the senseless vestige of her love. . . still lives in Rowland's ears" (p. 511), Roderick, through her agency, still lives in his eyes as well.

In a 1920 unpublished fragment entitled "On Love and Related Matters," Walter Benjamin correlates patience, sight, and sexuality:

As we peer into the darkness of the transformations taking place in that great flowing stream of human physicality, our sight fails as we contemplate a future for which it has perhaps been determined that though no prophet shall pierce its veil, it may be won by the most patient man.<sup>51</sup>

Similarly, patience and sight for Rowland means both pleasure and pain. Yet his sight has not failed him, for it has given him the opportunity to lift the veil that shrouded his psyche. In the novel's first chapter Rowland is described as "forever looking in vain for the uses of the things that please and the charm of the things that sustain" (*Roderick*, p. 177), yet at the novel's close one has the sense that, despite the immediate tragedy of Roderick's death, Rowland has not looked in vain. Through patronage and the right to sight that it confers, Rowland has discovered that pleasant things, such as art and homosociality, can be useful be-

<sup>51</sup> Walter Benjamin, "On Love and Related Matters (A European Problem)," trans. Rodney Livingstone, in Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1996), p. 230.

cause they provide a psychological placebo for his repressed aesthetic and sexual desires. Rowland finds in Roderick and in the objects of aestheticized Catholicism what he was looking for, and, by extension, looking at them provides him with psychological sustenance. In this sense Roderick personifies “the charm of the things that sustain” (p. 177), for he elicits in Rowland “a mingled sense of his personal charm and his artistic capacity” (p. 186). Like his statuette of the water-drinker, Roderick has given Rowland “extreme pleasure” and elucidated for him “the uses of the things that please” (p. 177). If we look beyond the melodramatics of the final chapter, we can see that at the novel’s core there is a realization of the infinite intricacies of both life and its artistic incarnations. Rowland has loved and lost, but he has also lost and found. The lesson of art is, for Rowland Mallet, as complex and bittersweet as life itself. He has lost a friend, but he has found that patronage, because it permits and promotes aesthetics and homosociality, can be a route into himself. In this respect, *Roderick Hudson* confirms that, indeed, “it is art that *makes* life.”

*Cambridge University*