A Study of *Roderick Hudson*: On What Caused the Hero's Death

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Introduction

Henry James said, "*Roderick Hudson* was begun in Florence in the spring of 1874, designed from the first for serial publication in the *Atlantic Monthly*, where it opened in January 1875 and persisted through the year." Upon examining this work, we must realize the importance the locale of Italy had for Henry James and his writings when he began to write *Roderick Hudson*. From 1873 to 1874, James stayed in Italy, especially in Rome and Florence. In learning about James' stay in Italy, we can discern that he was quite interested in Florence, more so than Rome. When we understand that he started to write this novel in Florence, we too can recognize that he began his work at a place he loved very much. It is also important to recognize the chronology of James' writing. Before he began to think about what kind of story *Roderick Hudson* would be, he had already started the work entitled *Eugene Pickering*. As mentioned above, as the author had been staying at Rome and Florence for two years, so too did the key places for *Roderick Hudson* become Rome and Florence. When we see some extracts regarding Rome and Florence from James' letters, we can also better understand exactly what the hero, Roderick Hudson, is saying. For example, in Rome, it is quite obvious that he enjoyed the atmosphere there. Furthermore, we can recognize just how pleased he truly was in Florence. He sends the hero of his work to the place he too is working at. Thus, Italy is one of the key factors in this story. It is also apparent that James considered serializing his work in one of the important magazines of the day. His aim was to write something for the *Atlantic*. A friend of his, William Dean Howells, gave him an "indispensable" opportunity, that of a chance for a serialization of a story. Now, I'd like to quote a part of one letter dated May, 1873 as evidence of the importance and transition of his favorite places in Italy.

Dearest mother—

I reached Florence last night, and the first thing this A.M. went in quest of letters. I was rewarded by the bestowal of two—yours of April 27th, and one from Aunt Kate from New York. Your letter was ten times blessed, beloved mother, and I lose not time in answering it. I wrote to Willy eight days ago from Perugia, after an
unduly long interval: but by the
time this reaches you, you will
have been reassured and com-
forted. I transacted the little
scheme with which I left Rome
and "examined" minutely after
leaving Perugia, Assisi, Cortona
and Arezzo, gathering materials
for one of my charming articles.
They are all very curious old
places and I ought to be able to
say something worthwhile about
them: but I won't expatiate now,
because you will enjoy my im-
pressions more when I put them
into better form. I find the
Tweedies departed; for the lakes,
I suppose. They have left no tid-
ings behind and I must communi-
cate with them. My own designs
are rather "mixed," and difficult
to arrange. I am divided between
an impression (not however amoun-
ting to a certainty) that I ought
before long to leave Italy: and
an inability to decide where to go.
I have already mentioned that I
left Rome rather "seedy," and
though my week at Perugia was
beneficial, the barbarous food
there and at the other lovely
spots I touched at rather took off
the edge of the benefit. I find just
now a rather heated and heavy
atmosphere in Florence which if
it continues, will not be just the
thing to tone me up. But I shall
try a few of it and then decide. . . .

Also, when we consider Roderick
Hudson in view of these two Italian
cities, there is another thing to address.

One critic, Fred Kaplan says, as an
event in Rome in 1873, that Henry
James "celebrated his thirtieth birthday.
. . . He felt himself coming of age,
though with an oddly uncomfortable dis-
junction between his opportunities and
his ability to make timely use of them."5

Around that time, James came to pon-
der how he should write his work.
James began to be influenced by the
voices of French realism. He also heard
from the inner voices of his own urging
an increased commitment to the physi-
cal basis of life, to an art that created
its structure on the building blocks of
human nature and human action. During
the winter of 1873, he lived a rich life in
Rome, which convinced him that he
should take advantage of the opportu-
nity even at the cost of his work. He
said to himself that he should increase
his experiences and improve his Euro-
pean mannerisms and social life while
he stayed in Rome, though his life as a
professional writer was just beginning.

Prior to his time in Italy, James
stayed in Paris. During that time, James
encountered a lot of Americans. They
struggled to recreate America and insu-
late themselves from European life. He
basically despised such uninteresting
people. His experiences with Americans
had been much different in Rome, and
he positively stated that the American
community in Rome seemed more var-
ied, lively, and interesting than the
American communities elsewhere in
Europe. To James, the Roman social
world was rich in attractive women, and
naturally, of course, he needed a person
of the opposite sex to fulfill the role of
partner. To the American circle in
Rome, with its single women and eligible daughters, he seemed to be an "eligible bachelor" (Kaplan, 144). Though he seemed to be such a person, part of his life was rather dubious. Therefore, there were grounds for uncertainty, expectations, confusions around him. As the Roman winter ended, he happily anticipated the end of his experiment with Roman social life. Living with Americans in Rome was as if he were in "a dark side to a brilliant picture." And he decided that he would "be a more solitary, more hardworking expatriate", and keep out of "the American colony" (Kaplan, 145).

... In mid-May, as the hot winds began to blow, he hastily said good-bye to friends and traveled northward, first to Perugia, then to Florence, then to Switzerland, with the intention of spending three months there if he found himself comfortable enough to work. He wanted a quiet life, mostly to write, partly to rest. ... (Kaplan, 146)

While pursuing the quiet life, he planned to use "the income from the travel essays" even though he did not feel like writing them. (Kaplan, 147)

... Henry followed his brother back of Florence, where, at the beginning of the new year, he felt the irony of Florence seeming "a vulgar little village and life not worth the living away from the Corso and the Pincio." He felt a happy victim of the "cruel fascination" of Rome, and joked to Howells that if he would live there for two or three years he would write such wonderful things that he would "quadruple the circulation of the Atlantic. Don't you want to pension me for the purpose?" But he did not stay a victim of his brother or of Florence for long. With his penchant for accommodation, he gradually shook off the "ponderous shadow" of Rome. "Florence is as good as need be, and I am getting reconciled to it." ... (Kaplan, 149)

For James the capital of Italy was rapidly becoming unattractive. Finally, he was forced to make some choices regarding his living arrangements. Should he stay in Europe, or return to America? It appears that in a sense he attempted to return to his hometown in America, but he was strongly convinced that for those who had been happy in Europe, even their hometown became a difficult place to live in. So for James what was the attraction of staying in Europe? He says, "The key ... was to be productively at work in a place that nurtured the sensibility and imagination necessary for interest and affection" (Kaplan, 151). He clearly noticed that when he was in Europe, he was able to work artistically. Moreover, he was reluctant to return to his parents' home. This was because he was supposedly suffering from some questions and perhaps pressures regarding an expected engagement and subsequent marriage in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
As it is obvious how important Florence and Rome and perhaps even the entire European experience was for James and the impact these locales had on his writing, I'd like to return to focus of this essay. That is James' portrayal of death and the reasons why the hero chose to kill himself. Therefore, first of all, I'd like to begin by considering an important encounter between the two main characters within the serial novel, *Roderick Hudson*, itself. I choose to examine this work because through such a study one concept of “death” as portrayed in Henry James' works could be considered. In *Roderick Hudson*, the hero ultimately has just one choice in the climax of the story: that of committing suicide. Of course, the way that the hero reaches his final decision is not so straightforward but rather quite complicated. In this story, the hero is manipulated by a wicked woman and finally commits suicide. In this accident, Christina Light plays a crucial part. She always manipulates Roderick. She becomes engaged, calls it off, and then ultimately marries her fiancé. This, of course, is an important step for her, and the ramifications of it spill over into the life of our hero.

**Chapter I**

What the encounter with Christina Light brought to Roderick

Over time, Roderick becomes frustrated with his environment in the United States because there is no atmosphere for his artistic creation. Thus, with the help of his treasurer and confidant, Rowland Mallet, Roderick is able to travel to Rome to study sculpture. Before he leaves America he creates a “small masterpiece”, and then travels to Europe where he hopes to make a name for himself within the European tradition in Rome. When Roderick travels to Europe, he meets a Europeanized girl, Christina Light. This encounter ultimately ends up to be one of the most terrible and painful experiences for the hero. Soon after his arrival in Rome and his subsequent encounter with Christina, Roderick's personality begins to change as noted below:

. . . and he thought with richly renewed impatience of Roderick's having again become acquainted with them. It required little ingenuity to make it probable that certain visible marks in him had also appealed to Christina. His consummate indifference, his supreme defiance, would make him a magnificent trophy, and she had announced with sufficient distinctness that she had said goodbye to scruples. It was her fancy at present to treat the world as a garden of pleasure, and if hitherto she had played with Roderick's passion on its stem there was little doubt that she would now pluck it with a more merciless hand and drain it of its acrid sweetness. And why in the name of common consistency—though indeed it was the only consistency to have looked for—need Roderick have gone marching back to destruction? . . . *(RH, 367)*
In this chapter, Rowland has clearly recognized how "skillfully" Christina behaved. He also notices that Roderick Hudson has "again become acquainted with" that wicked girl. In the final scene, while Rowland is thinking how terrible our hero's situation is, Roderick appears in front of him and asks a favor of him. Roderick states that he intends to meet Christina for the last time. Rowland's response is one of the recognitions of our hero's collapse and hopelessness for the situation at hand. "... He recognized a sudden collapse of our hero's moral energy; ... (RH, 367)"

Although a crucial part of the story has been presented, it seems that we need to work backwards to the beginning of the story in order to understand its importance. In Chapter 8, there is an important scene about our hero's relationship with Christina Light. Just one chapter before that, in Chapter 7, Roderick Hudson gets into trouble. We find him taking a trip in the neighborhood country in order to refresh himself. It is certain that his artistic inspiration is diminishing. He is about to face "the enormous wall", or obstacle to his creativity. When he sees a party of a mother, daughter, cavalier and little poodle, Roderick notices a ray of hope. This is his first encounter with Christina Light. Soon after he returns from this trip to Baden-Baden, a change in his work can be detected, and his mental situation greatly changes. An American dilettante in Rome, Gloriani, says that Roderick has "already come down to earth (RH, 107)". Roderick himself confesses, "I haven't a blamed idea. I think of subjects, but they remain mere idiotic names. They're mere words—they're not images. What am I to do? (RH, 109)" It seems that it is at this point in the story that the beginning of Roderick's destruction is portrayed. As noted above, toward the end of this story, Roderick tells Rowland that he wants to see Christina once again before he leaves Rome. Of course, Rowland says no, and he tries to persuade our hero to give up following Christina Light.

In Chapter 17, his mother, Mrs. Hudson, and his fiancée, Mary Garland, come to see him all the way from his hometown in America. However, they cannot prevent Roderick from getting into serious trouble, and he will not accept their advice or help. They cannot save him from the suffering situation he is in. As a good friend, Rowland says that our hero should listen to them, and return once again to the former Roderick, a person with a brilliant artistic future. Unfortunately, Roderick's Muse has gone somewhere, and he is now alone. According to Roderick, his own life as a sculptor comes to an end. The dilettante, Gloriani, judges his work "interestingly" as follows:

'I take that for an answer! But it's none of your business. 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! But he can do as he chooses! ... (RH, 268)

From this passage we realize that Gloriani
judges the latest work of Roderick's harshly.

In Chapter 16, we see that Christina Light has become engaged with Prince Cassamassima. This relationship affects Roderick seriously. His artistic imagination begins to diminish and his creative speed slows considerably. But still, he has a creative force. So he tries to make a bust of his mother. Yet his efforts are to no avail and ends in failure. He loses his inspiration, leaves his vocation and just follows Christina Light. In Chapter 19, he asks Rowland for some money, but his good mentor and advisor can not say yes. Rowland instead attempts to persuade our hero not to leave for Rome. He asks our hero to take care of two women from his hometown in America. It is to this particular scene in the story that we should pay great attention. Yet before that, we should also acknowledge Rowland's unconscious prediction of our hero's near future fate in Chapter 15.

... He has developed faster ever than you prophesied, and for good and evil alike he takes up a formidable space. There's too much of him for me, at any rate. Yes, he is hard; there's no mistake about that. He's inflexible, he's brittle; and though he has plenty of spirit, plenty of soul, he hasn't what I call a heart. He has something that Miss Garland took for one, and I suppose her a judge. But she judged on scanty evidence. He has something that Christina Light, here, makes believe at times that she takes for one, but she's no judge at all. 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? ... Roderick's standard is immensely high; ... (RH, 218)

Just after she breaks off her engagement with Prince Cassamassima, Christina marries the prince. Her decision and subsequent acts confuse our hero. This confusion and anger is quite apparent in Chapter 20. He says:

'I don't talk about certainties. I don't want to be arrogant. I don't want to offend the immortal gods. I'm keeping very quiet and behaving, I maintain, as a gentleman should. But I can't help my deep peace. I shall wait a while. I shall bide my time.' ...(RH, 292)

It is quite clear that he is upset and confused. Yet on the other hand, it can be assumed that our hero must at first be happy because initially he thinks he has a good chance of marrying Christina Light. He might think that he should prefer and choose his "artistic life" over his love, Christina. Regardless of his mental strength, he will no doubt be very depressed when hearing of the shocking news of Christina's marriage. The bad news of the marriage comes to him via Madame Grandoni. Subsequently, our confidant, Rowland imagines Roderick's state in a melodramatic way:

... He had believed that Christina
would resist; that she had succumbed was a proof that the way taken with her had had some last dire directness. . . . (RH, 308)

Roderick is further described:

. . . He had dropped upon a sofa, where he lounged like a young Pasha bored with a state seraglio; greeting Rowland with hardly more form than if he had been one of the usual guards of such penetralia. The manner of his advent had visibly not been happy; . . . (RH, 310-311)

Our hero is apparently extremely shocked. In order to understand better Roderick’s situation, it is important to also consider Christina Light.

**Chapter II**

Christina’s “coquetry”

Just after Roderick sees Christina, an “important” encounter in which our “wicked” heroine is eager to know everything about Roderick Hudson occurs. Also another event, the matter of engagement, occurs at approximately the same time. Christina’s engagement to a not so handsome nobleman frustrates our hero, and he subsequently begins to lose his own “indispensable” ability for art. He is often confused and disconcerted by her behavior. Before long, Roderick makes Christina sit for a sculpture< ch. 8>. He is able to complete that work, but as I commented above, he is losing his inspiration of art. Yet, by choosing Christina as his subject, he may be unconsciously attempting to regenerate his artistic ability. When, in fact, he finally creates a sculpture of Christina, he comes to believe that she is an ideal image for him. His attraction to her is evidenced in his accomplished art.

In Chapter 10, there’s a conversation between Rowland and Christina. She talks about her mother, her mother’s society, and how she has been raised. She complains about the rules her mother has set for her to abide by in her station in life. She states her feelings quite appropriately in the following passages:

‘Very good. I like your frankness. It’s quite true. You see I am a strange girl, and rather bold and bad. D’aboard, I’m frightfully egoistical. Don’t flatter yourself you’ve said anything very clever if you ever take it into your head to tell me so. I know it much better than you. So it is; I can’t help it. I’m tired to death of myself; I would give all I possess to get out of myself; but somehow at the end I find myself so vastly more interesting than nine-tenths of the people I meet. If a person wished to do me a favour I would say to him: “I beg you with tears in my eyes to interest me. Be a brute, if necessary, to do it; only be something positive and strong—something that in looking at I can forget my detestable self!” . . . (RH, 155)
'What do you think of this affair?' she went on as if his confession didn't matter.

'Of your ball? Why, it’s a very grand affair.'

'It's horrible—that's what it is! It's a mere rabble. There are people here whom I never saw before, people who were never asked. Mamma went about inviting every one, asking other people to invite any one they knew, doing anything to have a crowd. I hope she is satisfied. It’s not my doing. I feel weary, I feel angry, I want to cry, I want to bite. I've twenty minds to escape into my room and lock the door, and let mamma s’en tirer as she can. . . . (RH, 156)

The above scene highlights one aspect of her personality. Though she puts on airs during the various parties of her mother's, she doesn't agree to her mother's way of living or socializing. She dislikes the parties that her mother often holds in her house. Moreover, she doesn't like the people who attend these affairs.

With these quotations in mind, it becomes apparent that when we think of our hero, we also should consider Christina I have discussed as what propels our hero to kill himself. Roderick has a reason in that before he sees that "wicked" girl, he has already had a sort of "ominous" experience in Baden-Baden, in which he enjoys a good time as a pastime. One critic, Naomi Z. Sofer makes her explanation by referring to our hero's actual speech.

... The young man informs Rowland that over the course of the summer he has discovered that he possesses "an almost unlimited susceptibility to the influence of a beautiful woman" (RH, 139). . . .

Roderick confesses that as he has a weakness for beautiful women, he can be seduced by any beautiful woman. This proves to be a destructive element as Sofer observes. It is easy to say that this easily broken, touching element of his personality leads him to his own demise. Of course, he is an artist, so he is portrayed as much more sensitive than the common man. This element of his personality forces him to "face" the torment as a creator of art. He doesn't seem to overcome that crisis. Yet, it must be remembered that his experience at Baden-Baden was "indispensable" in which he was able to create something quite artistic.

Eventually, Roderick is found dead at the bottom of a valley. It is certain that he kills himself, and that his choice of suicide stems from the close relationship he feels he has with Christina Light. Clearly, she has a grip on our hero and his own personal destiny. It is "this woman" that leads him to the road to death.

Throughout the course of the narration, we see Christina skillfully manipulating Roderick. Sometimes she approaches him, and sometimes she rejects him. Every time, Roderick suffers serious, mental trouble. Also, his artistic inspiration begins to dwindle, which causes further suffering on his part.
Rowland is trying to help him not with the creation of a sculpture, but as a "comrade" of artistic creativity. It seems that Christina playing the part of "destiny-manipulator" is quite an interesting character in this story. Keeping the importance of her role throughout the story in mind, I'd like to examine her from a different point of view. That is her considerations and judgments placed on the people around her and those she encounters. Especially, there is a scene in which she criticizes Roderick's fiancée, Mary Garland. In Chapter 19 there seems to be some keys to help us better understand exactly what type of person Christina Light actually is. In this chapter, she appears to be an innocently open-minded person. Yet, she criticizes Mary Garland in a rather ruthless way. Also she examines herself in front of her hostess, Madame Grandoni.

'I had no idea', the young woman began while she surveyed the assembly, 'that you had such a lot of grand people, or I would never have come in. The servant said nothing; he took me for an invitee. I came to spend a neighbourly half-hour; you know I haven't many left! It was too dismal dreary at home. I hoped I should find you alone and I brought Stenterello to play with the cat. Since I'm here, at any rate, I beg you to let me stay. I'm not dressed, but am I very hideous? I'll sit in a corner and no one will notice me. My dear sweet lady, do let me stay! Only, why in the world didn't you ask me? I never have been to a little party like this. They must be very charming. No dancing—tea and conversation? No tea, thank you; but if you could spare a biscuit for Stenterello; a sweet biscuit, please. Really, why didn't you ask me? Do you have these things often? Madame Grandoni, it's very unkind!' . . .(RH, 276)

Christina subtly tries to place pressure on her hostess for not inviting her, while she seemingly shows her "innocent" behavior in a joking manner. In this party, she meets Mary Garland for the first time. After that crucial encounter, she comments about Mary to Rowland.

'Not that people in general should admire her, but that I should. I'm not good enough—that's what you feel. But I want to tell you; I want to tell some one; I can't tell Miss Garland herself. She regards me already as a horrid false creature, and if I were to express to her frankly what I think of her I should simply disgust her. . . . But I want to tell you that I admire Miss Garland more than any of the people who call themselves her friends—except of course you. Oh, I know that! To begin with she's extremely handsome and she hasn't the least idea of it. . . . (RH, 279)

Christina is too proud when considering her judgment of Mary. She criticizes her rival so sternly and concludes that Mary "has no imagination." This
shows how proud she is of her ability of judgment. This presumptuous girl explains that Roderick's fiancée is lacking of good imagination. This comment seems to be too straightforward, but it shows what she is like. She is quite severe when it comes to others' characteristics; meanwhile, she shows her own "poor" personality. On the other hand, she is jealous of her rival, Mary Garland. In the story, after she makes her proclamation regarding Mary to Rowland, she revokes it by making reverse statements regarding her rival. "If a woman's not to scream out from every pore that she has an appearance—which is a most awful fate—quite the best thing for her is to carry that sort of dark lantern. On occasion she can flash it as far as she likes...." 8 Especially, we should pay attention to the underlined part. She uses the metaphor, "dark lantern." She says that Mary "can flash it as far as she likes." She further tells us her opinion about her rival in the following: "But a certain number of intelligent people will find it one of the delightful things of life to look at her. . . ." She seems to understand that her rival is not good at expressing herself. In the meantime, she is attempting to praise her rival by stating Mary's strong points. 9 It becomes obvious that Christina's thoughts are incongruous. However, according to her, it is difficult to understand completely just what type of person Mary truly is. This is no doubt a weakness of Christina's.

In the same chapter, there is another point of view for which we may refer to when considering Christina Light. It is Madame Grandoni's point of view that also sheds light on Christina. The European lady comments about Christina's future wedding. She assumes that the girl's marriage will be an excellent one. Also, she says, "I think it very possible that after having kept them for a month and been the cause of a dozen cases of malaria, Christina will be married at sunrise by an old friar—in Romeo and Juliet fashion—and with simply the legal witnesses.'" (RH, ch.19, 271) Such a judgment from a European lady probably shows that Christina is a woman who always behaves in her own way at her own pace. Madame continues:

. . . she's certain to do every now and then something disinterested and sincere, something for somebody else than herself. She needs to think well of herself; she knows a fine character easily when she meets one; she hates to suffer by comparison, even though the comparison be made by herself alone; and when the figure she makes, to her own imagination, ceases to please or to amuse her she has to do something to smarten it up and give it a more striking turn. But of course she must always do that at somebody's expense—not one of her friends but must sooner or later pay, and the best of them doubtless the oftenest. Her attitudes and pretenses may sometimes worry one, but I think we have most to pray to be guarded from her sincerities. . . ." (RH, 272)

Madame Grandoni understands that
Christina does “every now and then something disinterested and sincere.” She also predicts that Christina’s marriage will end up to be unsuccessful by saying “Her attitudes and pretenses may sometimes worry one, . . .” It is because Christina always “needs to think well of herself”, because “she knows a fine character easily when she meets one; she hates to suffer by comparison, even though the comparison be made by herself alone. . . .” Still, there is another aspect of Christina that Madame Grandoni presents to the reader. She states that Christina “must always do that at somebody’s expense—not one of her friends but must sooner or later pay, and the best of them doubtless the oftnest.” In other words, she tends to depend on other people when she does something for somebody. Unfortunately, she sometimes worries them. In short, she is a coquette who embarrasses people around her.

There is one more character important for our understanding of Christina. She is Mary Garland. We have already seen how Christina behaves herself through our narrator, Rowland Mallet. Now, we can also observe what Christina is like through the responses from her rival, Mary Garland. Our center of narrative consciousness, Rowland, observes that “Mary looked a little as if she had just jumped, . . .”\(^{10}\) I think that we should take notice of the tormenting situation under which she is when she meets Christina. As we have seen above, Christina regards Mary as a “dark lantern”. Initially she thinks that she can ignore Mary because she is just a trivial creature. However, over the course of time, she finds Mary to be in a position she cannot disregard. Her judgment is in part correct, but it is incorrect in some ways. For us to see her flaws in judgment, we must look to Rowland Mallet. Here is perhaps the best skillful judgment he makes regarding Christina Light.

. . . He congratulated Miss Blanchard upon her engagement, and she received his good wishes as if he had been a servant, at dinner, presenting the potatoes to her elbow. She helped herself in moderation, but also all in profile. He had wished to be decent, but he felt the chill and his zeal relaxed, while he fell a-thinking that a certain natural ease in a woman was the most delightful thing in the world. There was Christina Light, who had decidedly too much, and there was Miss Blanchard, who had decidedly too little, and there was Mary Garland, who had decidedly the right amount. . . . \((RH, 274-275)\)

Chapter III

Roderick’s decline

From the last three chapters, 21 to 24, we can take notice of the negative changes in our hero. This begins just after Roderick makes Christina Light sit for a sculpture. He suffers so much, struggles to find the cause of his lost inspiration, and reconsiders how wrongly the situation has been changing. At the
beginning of his suffering, he begins to think about how Christina dominates him. Of course, he becomes infatuated with her behavior. Roderick can't stand her attractive element, and he understands just how wicked it is. He says "Therefore I should like to see it just once more;...<ch. 24>". Italy is no longer a haven for him to express himself creatively. A few months before Italy affords him a rich artistic atmosphere as well as many sculptures and paintings from which to learn. Unfortunately, the opposite comes to be. He says, "Switzerland made him less miserable than Italy, and that the Alps were less of a reproach to idle skilled hands than the Apennines<ch. 23>". He seeks out consolation close to Italy by traveling to Switzerland. He can also find some diversion in and around Florence. The narrator says, "Before Michael Angelo's statues and the pictures of the early Tuscans he quite forgot his disaster and picked up the thread of his old love of ideas....<ch. 22>". Naturally, it starts when he steps forward to the wicked woman.

'R not to get out of her way!' Roderick said. 'She has started on a career of her own, and she doesn't care rap for me. My head was filled with her; I could think of nothing else; I would have sacrificed everything to her—you, Mary, Mallet, my work, my fortune, my future, my honour. I was in a lovely state, eh? I don't pretend to be giving you good news; but I'm telling the simple, literal truth, so that you may know why I've gone to the dogs. . . . She led me to believe that she would send her Prince about his business and keep herself free and sacred and pure for me. . . .(RH, 316)

Roderick remembers "She has started on a career of her own, and she doesn't care rap for me. My head was filled with her; I could think of nothing else; I would have sacrificed everything to her—you, Mary, Mallet, my work, my fortune, my future, my honour". He clearly confesses his serious mistake. He admits falling in love with Christina Light soon after he meets her. Now, he understands she has treated him wrongly but skillfully. Yet, at that moment when he has fallen in love with her, he is able to see what she actually is.

'It was the wonderful nature of her beauty that did it!' Roderick kept on. 'It was all her beauty—so fitful, so alive, so subject to life, yet so always there and so interesting and so splendid. In comparison the rest was nothing. What befooled me was to think of it as my own property and possessions—somehow bought and paid for. I had mastered it and made it mine; no one else had studied it as I had, no one else so understood it. What does that stick of a Casamassima know about it at this hour? There were things I could say of her, things I could say to her—because I know, or at least did know—that made her more beautiful, put her into possession of more of her value.
Therefore I should like to see it just once more; it's the only thing in the world of which I can say so. (RH, 356)

On the other hand, he vulnerably notices that he cannot afford to leave Christina Light. He recognizes that at first he thinks she is his, but it is his own misunderstanding. She is not a just young girl he can easily understand. He always thinks that he knows her, all of her, but that is a wrong judgment on his part.

There is one more important thing we need to examine when considering just how unstable Roderick is at the end of the story.

... Roderick said frankly that Switzerland made him less miserable than Italy, and that the Alps were less of a reproach to idle skilled hands than the Apennines. He went in for long rambles, generally alone, and was very fond of climbing into dizzy places where no sound could overtake him and there, stretched at his length on the never-trodden moss, of pulling his hat over his eyes and lounging away the hours in perfect immobility. ... (RH, 348)

Italy, though rich in an artistic tradition, is no more artistically friendly to him. It no longer affords him the inspiration he needs to create his sculptures. As he says, the last place he can rely on is a normal, non-artistic country. He, in the serene, quiet atmosphere in Switzerland, enjoys mental peace. However, though unusual for him, he is willing to place himself in a dangerous area. He often treks in high altitudes though he is reluctant to walk around the places earlier. He rather prefers being still there. While spending a most blissful time in Rome, our hero takes a trip to Baden-Baden for his pastime. It is a great experience for him. Roderick, while he is taking a pleasure trip, recognizes how weak he is. It is just after this that he receives Christina at his studio. In the same chapter, there is a scene in which he and Rowland sees an elegant party comprised of an old woman, her pretty Europeanized girl with a cute dog, and their cavalier. Roderick falls in love with the pretty young girl, Christina, soon after that event. At that time, he has already passed many days in Europe, and creates several works of art at quite a quick pace. However, his artistic inspiration begins to decrease without any notice. In the meanwhile, as I mentioned above, he needs to have an "aversion" from his work of creation while at Baden-Baden. He, like so many young, talented and gifted artists, is getting involved with easily acquired joys. He has been falling into trouble. He sends a letter and asks Rowland Mallet to send back some money he needs in the resort place. Rowland is, as his guardian and mentor, reluctant to reply to this young boy's request. He "grabs" an opportunity to meet Roderick and obtain some information regarding his stay at Baden-Baden.

When he meets Christina Light for the second time, after his unexpected encounter with her, Roderick sounds fine. He again starts to struggle to do
his own "important" creative job. Christina sits for him as a model. He completes his work before long. He seems to return to being an "original" gifted man, but it is not true. It is certain that he has been losing one of the most precious, valuable gifts. Of course, this depends on how others regard his life. Some thinks that he begins to take a second step toward his life as an artist after his encounter with Christina. Others assume that he steps forward toward corruption of his artistic life. It is not that Roderick ought to leave before long for other places on the Continent. As our narrator, Rowland, best understood, Roderick needs to be soaked in the culture and civilization of the ripened European atmosphere. Certainly, soon after he lands on the Continent, Roderick makes a remarkable achievement with his sculpture, and it does appear that Europe is the right place for him to develop his talent. Nevertheless, we can't help realizing that this encounter is a turning point for our hero in this work.

In the end, Roderick commits suicide. In the last chapter (Chapter 26), we meet with Roderick's dead body at the bottom of the cliff. Of course, the cause of his death seems to be visible around the scene of his fall. As I already mentioned above, it is certain that his behavior is gradually worsening. Roderick is seen as "... very fond of climbing into dizzy places where no sound could overtake him and there, stretched at his length on the never-trodden moss, of pulling his hat over his eyes and lounging away the hours in perfect immobility. ..." We at present take notice of one phrase, 'dizzy places'. It is clear that our hero often goes to the steep parts of the higher altitudes. The narrator describes Roderick without any attention taking serious risks. He wouldn't do it at all if he was in a normal mental condition. It is the American painter, Singleton that first discovers our hero's dead body at the bottom of the cliff. The narrator displays that moment through Rowland Mallet's eyes like this 11:

... Half-way down he saw something that for a minute did make him reel; he saw what Singleton had seen. In the gorge below a vague white mass lay tumbled upon the stones. He let himself go, blindly, fiercely, to where Singleton, reaching the rocky bottom of the ravine first, had bounded forward and fallen upon his knees. Rowland overtook him and his own legs gave way for horror. The thing that yesterday was his friend lay before him as the chance of the last breath had left it, and out of it Roderick's face stared open-eyed at the sky. (RH, 387)

It is certain that Roderick commits suicide, and he has just lost his breath completely. The reason why he has to kill himself is due to his understanding of just how seriously he has become entwined and absorbed with Christina Light.

I have already examined the so-called climax of this work. We clearly see that Roderick has become unstable while he is suffering from the effects of
Christina’s somewhat complicated behavior.

Conclusion

Around 1873, Henry James experienced a turning point in his life. His interests gradually began to change. He had been living in Rome, but his interests were beginning to turn toward another famous city, Florence. That change was because of his short trip to that city with his brother, William. William encouraged him to spend some holidays and take a good rest there. In the story about Roderick Hudson, Rome is where it is mainly located. Rowland, who bumps into an excellent image of sculpture, encourages our hero to go to Rome, just as William encouraged Henry to travel to Florence. He explains that he will excel in Rome. At least, to visit the Italian capital is a much better environment for dealing with artistic work than the small town Northampton, Massachusetts. James says that he took up this work in Florence, so it is easily assumable that he intended to write of his “old favorite” place from the vantage of being an attractive one. He wrote to his family and friends about a lot of things he loved so much. Taking this all into consideration, we realize that the movements and actions of Roderick Hudson, the artist, parallel some of those of Henry James, the writer.

At first, Roderick Hudson makes a remarkable artistic achievement, but soon after the first “torrent” of his ability, he begins to experience an artistic block, and he has difficulty overcoming it. He is becoming less and less inspired. Then, the crucial encounter occurs when Roderick meet with a young, charming and seemingly innocent girl with her followers and a cute dog. It is about her, Christina Light, that I have made several comments about in this essay. She seduces Roderick, and Roderick is lost in a no-way out situation, resulting in the fact that he has no choice except for suicide.

The author, Henry James, meticulously prepares the readers for the hero’s “unhappy” death. The first step is that Rowland takes him to Rome in order to soak him into “ripened” European culture. When he begins his new life in Rome, Roderick makes some achievement in his field of sculpture, but soon after, he starts to lose his “aim” in staying on the Continent. Just before he meets with Christina Light, he goes over to Baden-Baden to acquire his inspiration again. Probably, he says to himself that he needs to take a good rest for the second step as a sculptor. During these holidays he has some important experiences. This time is filled with indispensable and necessary events for him. However, after he sees Christina, his “stable” life quickly becomes unstable. She causes him great confusion and manipulates him occasionally. She announces her engagement, quickly breaks it off and again engages herself to the same rich nobleman. Every time she acts on her own, Roderick is strongly tortured. Interestingly, he never blames his admirer. Always, he is on the side of that “mysterious” young girl.

In the last chapter of this story, Roderick’s dead body is found by a young American painter, Singleton, in
Rome. Roderick can no longer to raise his own body from the torment he experiences nor from the bottom of the deep valley. When we see him for the last time, Roderick explains that he will take a long walk through the mountains in Switzerland.

Before we reach the last stage of Roderick Hudson's story, there are several relationships between him and his artistic life, and between him and his admirer, Christina Light. Through my examinations of these relationships, I have come to realize why he is vulnerable to things around him, and also why he finally kills himself. One reason is that he is a genuine artist. He seems to be mentally weak because he is quite sensitive. Also, he 'bumps into' one girl called Christina. She is a young girl, so she must be quite innocent. It is probable that Roderick is attracted to her purity because of her youthfulness. On the other hand, she is not an ordinary young girl. She has been on the Continent for several years, and is accustomed to the European atmosphere and mannerisms. Originally, it is impossible for our hero to understand what she is truly like. It is displayed to us in what she tells "lightheartedly, but unconsciously" about herself. 12

Does our hero reluctantly struggle to do anything difficult? No. He seems to have been willing to do something to acquire Christina's love. In other words, he has found something traditionally and legendarilly Europeanized in her, and he dares to get it.

His destiny is pitiful. He chooses death after he has suffered from the things happening around him. We might consider whether he regrets his own destiny. It is presumably possible to think that he finally becomes satisfied with his life. One of the reasons why Henry James creates this type of fictional character is that on the surface, it is unmerciful and sort of crude, but in the mentality of the hero, the relationship with the wicked woman gives him a valuable experience. Roderick spends his artistic life in Rome literally flowing on the sea of Christina Light, but initially he enjoys the artistic atmosphere together with her companionship on the Continent. Of course, it is unfortunate but necessary that the Muse leaves him and he becomes lost on his road to becoming a truly great sculptor. It is probable his trip to Baden-Baden and the subsequent encounter with Christina Light was necessary. This trip shows some strengths Roderick possesses as a man, though as an artist, he is quite fragile. It is also possible to assume that in this story of Roderick Hudson, Henry James might just have been observing what might happen to himself in the near future.

NOTES
* Hereafter, this work is referred to as RH.
James says as follows: "... I suppose your Venetian tale is almost off your hands—I long to have it on mine. (I'm delighted by the way to hear you like "Eugene Pickering": do, oh do, if possible put him through in a single number.)"... (from 'To William Dean Howells' May 3d[1874])
* Hereafter, this work is referred to as LETTERS I
Dear Howells—
I received some days ago from my father the little note you had sent him signifying your acceptance of my story for next year’s Atlantic, and have had it at heart ever since to drop you a line in consequence. —I’m extremely glad—at my thing is destined to see the light in the Atlantic rather than in some other place and am very well satisfied with the terms. My story is to be on a theme I have had in my head a long time and once attempted to write something about. The theme is interesting, and if I do as I intend and hope, I think the tale must please. It shall, at any rate have all my pains. The opening chapters take place in America and the people are of our glorious race; but they are soon transplanted to Rome, where things are to go on famously ....

*This part is the beginning of the letter. There is a plan on the novel James is now thinking about. It is the very Roderick Hudson

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5 Fred Kaplan, HENRY JAMES THE IMAGINATION OF GENIUS A biography
(London, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd) 140.

*Hereafter, this work is referred to as Kaplan.


8 RH, ch.19, 279.
I quote a part involved below:
She’s not generally thought handsome,’ Rowland conscientiously said.
‘Evidently! That’s the vulgarity of the taste of the rabble. Her head has great character, great natural style. If a woman’s not to scream out from every pore that she has an appearance—which is a most awful fate—quite the best thing for her is to carry that sort of dark lantern. On occasion she can flash it as far as she likes. She’ll not be thought pretty by people in general and desecrated as she passes by the stare of every vile wretch who chooses to thrust his nose under her bonnet; but a certain number of intelligent people will find it one of the delightful things of life to look at her. . . .

9 RH, ch.19, 281.
I quote a part involved below:
. . . I told her I liked her immensely, and she glared as if I had said something disgusting. She looks magnificent when she glares—like a Medusa crowned not with snakes but with a tremor of doves’ wings.’ Christina rose with these words and began to gather her mantle about her.

... I told her I liked her immensely, and she glared as if I had said something disgusting. She looks magnificent when she glares—like a Medusa crowned not with snakes but with a tremor of doves’ wings.’ Christina rose with these words and began to gather her mantle about her. ‘I don’t often like women—small blame to me,’ she went on. ‘In fact I generally detest ‘em. But I should like to know that one well. I should like to have a friendship with her; I have never had one; they must be very delightful, good safe friendships. But I shan’t have one now—...But I appreciate her, I do her justice; that’s the most im-
portant thing. It's because I've after all a lot of imagination. She has none. Never mind; it's her only fault. Besides, imagination's not a virtue—it's a vice. I do her justice; . . .

*As she refers to the comment above, it is probable that Christina attempts to praise Mary by saying she was a special woman. However, she incongruously displays Mary's weak point.

10 *RH*, ch.19, 278.
I quote a part involved below:

. . . There were several more pieces of music; Rowland sat in a corner and listened to them. When they were over to accompany began to take leave, Mrs Hudson among the number. Rowland saw her come up to Madame Grandoni, clinging shyly to Mary Garland's arm, Mary looked a little as if she had just jumped, rather dangerously, to save her life or her honour, from some great height.

11 *RH*, ch.26, 386.
In the part of just before this quotation, there is the first part of the climax as follows:

'Come down—come down!' cried this companion [Singleton], steadily making his own way down. Rowland saw that as he moved, and even as he selected his foothold and watched his steps, he was looking as something at the bottom of the cliff. This was a great rugged wall that sloped backward from the perpendicular, and the descent, though difficult, was with care sufficiently practicable.

12 *RH*, ch.8, 113-114.
Rowland observes Christina as follows:

Rowland remembered that when their unknown visitors had passed before them, in the Villa Ludovici, with an effect that had remained oddly distinct in spite of the many revolving seasons, Roderick and he had exchanged conjectures as to their nationality and social quality. Roderick had declared that they were old-world people; but Rowland now needed no telling to feel that he might claim the elder lady as a fellow-country-woman. . . . Her young companion was therefore accountably fair, but Rowland mentally made the distinction that the mother was inordinately shallow and the daughter—also perhaps inordinately—deep. The mother had a fatuous countenance—a countenance Rowland felt himself make out to represent a fairly fantastic fatuity. The girl, in spite of her childish satisfaction in her poodle, was not a person of a feeble understanding. Rowland received an impression that for reasons of her own she was playing a part before the world. . . . If her parent had been a daughter of the great Republic it was to be supposed that she herself was a flower of the American soil; but her beauty had, in spite of her youth, an air of longer history than consorts, in general, with the rather extemporised look of American loveliness. She spoke with a vague foreign accent, as if she had spent her life in strange countries. . . .

<underlines are mine>

*As we see the part quoted above, especially the underlined part, Christina is not an ordinary girl. She is quite complicated, and Europeanized according to Rowland Mallet.
A Study of Roderick Hudson: On What Caused the Hero’s Death

Yasushi NAKAKUBO

本稿では、ヘンリー・ジェイムズの長編第一作目とされているRoderick Hudsonを題材にして、主人公の「死」に至る要因について検証することにした。

この作品は、1876年に作品として発表されたが、連載は1875年1月に開始された。当時の作者は、職業作家としてと地歩を固めることを主眼としていた。この作品も、彼と知己にしていたウィリアム・ディーン・ハウエルズの口利きで、Atlantic Monthlyに連載することができたのであった。この作品が後に改訂された際に寄せた序文の中で、作者は稿を起こしたのはフィレンツェであったと述べているが、当時の作者の生活の舞台はローマからフィレンツェに移ってきていた。それは、1873年から1874年にかけてのことである。私は、まず、「序論」としてこの作者の作品を生み出す「場」についての検証から始めた。彼の生まれた土地、アメリカ（マサチューセッツ州、ケンブリッジ）には父母がいたのだが、彼は、生活の場として、仕事の場として、イタリアを選んだ。それは、幾ばくかではあるが、作品の主人公がアメリカからローマに移り、芸術活動に専念しようとする様と符合する。

ジェイムズは、この作品の中で、自殺という形で主人公の最後を描く。「第1章」では、まず、死に向至る要因として、クリスティナという女性との関わりから生じた主人公の“変化”について述べることになった。次に、「第2章」では、主人公に多大な影響を与えたその女性、クリスティナの“性格”に焦点を当てて論を展開していった。そして、「第3章」において、もう一度、主人公の側から、主人公の“死”を考えてみることにした。主として、それは、自殺直前の主人公の感情の推移を辿る作業となった。最後に、「結論」としては、主人公の“死”を否定的に捉えるのではなく、肯定的に捉える形で締め括った。主人公は、ローランドといういわゆる“パトロン”に連れられてヨーロッパに渡るが、それは、芸術家としての主人公には必要なことであったのではないか。すでに明らかにしてきたように、ローマで、主人公は“苦難”を味わうことになる。しかし、それは、負の側面のみではなく、正の側面もあった。アメリカでは、開花しなかったであろう芸術上の「達成」を明らかに果たしたからである。一方で、この作品の中には、芸術家の危うさが描き込まれている。主人公のように、芸術家はいつの才能の枯渇に直面するか分からない。それは、作者として同じであろう。ジェイムズは、この作品で、自己の危うさをも確認したのかもしれません。