

“Adina”: Henry James’s Roman Allegory of Power and the Representation of the Foreign

By Pierre A. Walker, *Salem State
College*

Leonardo Buonomo, in his study of pre-1870 American representations of Italy, argues that American writers of the period were, for many reasons, hard pressed to write about Italy as it really was: “the impression is, at times, that what is depicted by certain American writers is not a country inhabited by real people, with concrete . . . problems and needs. It is rather a gigantic picture, or a stage where a performance is continually held for the sake of a foreign audience” (15). In other words, what these writers represent is not something real but something literary.

As part of his far-ranging study of nineteenth-century tourism and travel writing, James Buzard argues (173–77) that guidebooks presented only one side of Continental Europe and therefore excluded any representation of the more prosaic—but certainly very real—parts of everyday European life. Naturally, tourists traveling great distances had no special wish to visit “‘butchers’ stalls, grocers’ shops, [and] pedlars’ booths,” but at the same time any attempt to experience and represent authentic foreign life would be doomed if it excluded “such mundane presences” (174).

The problem of representing the foreign other, then, becomes complex and problematic, and it is because of this, according to Buzard, that so much of Henry James’s writing “describing the desired American behaviour towards Europe . . . would be ambivalent to the core” (223). On the one hand, “‘Europe’ hovers . . . before James as a ‘poetic or fairy precinct’” (196), but on the other, his early travel writing “registered a conflict of perspectives between a ‘visitor’s’ or ‘tourist’s’ viewpoint that gives priority to aesthetic (picturesque, poetical) appearance and an ‘engaged’ perspective that puts a premium on local, pragmatic (prosaic)

interests" (197). Buzard is not arguing that James *did* represent Continental Europe as it really was, but that James "grasped, and harboured in his own texts, the critic's or satirist's suspicion that picturesqueness had the effect of turning a *real* Continent into mere pictures" (192). James's texts betray a certain self-awareness of the artifice inherent in contemporary English and American travel writing's representation of the foreign (192–212) and contain an "attempt" to break the generic limitations of English-language travel prose, to "smash . . . his own picturesque fancies" and "to enable . . . the 'Other'—the operatic Italian, the stereotyped image of the foreigner—[to] speak in the discourse that constructs it" (210). Similarly, Buonomo ascribes to James the partial capability "of looking at the Italian scene from a different perspective—of going, as it were, to the other end of the traveler's gaze" (97).

Buzard suggests that the ambivalence—"the instance of tension" (198)—he finds in the texts he examines exists too in much of James's fiction, including the subject of this essay: the 1874 story "Adina" (211–12, 225, 259). Buzard's cue is worth taking, since "Adina," one of James's more neglected and obscure stories,¹ provides a means of exploring precisely what are the limits of James's ability to represent, to use Buonomo's phrase, "the other end of the traveler's gaze" (97). And since little is ever simple in James, exploring how "Adina" addresses the problem of representing the foreign other requires considering how the story invokes other, overlapping issues: the story's political content and its reference to a more famous contemporary intertext that represents an analogous conflict: Richard Wagner's operatic tetralogy, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*.

Although James "had made himself the acknowledged master of the international theme in fiction" (Buzard 223), fully developed European characters are few and far between in his representations of European life. In fact, the "Europeans" in James's "international" fiction are almost always expatriated Americans. In the major novels set in France, Marie de Vionnet of *The Ambassadors* stands alone as a significant, fully developed Continental European character. In James's Italian-set texts, and especially those set in Rome, the fiction focuses almost exclusively on expatriates, with only a few exceptions. James's Roman often makes significant use of specific Roman settings (Block), but the Romans we do meet in his stories and novels are usually flat characters, and only rarely do they have a significant role in the text's plot. As a result, Agostino Lombardo writes that in James's work,

Italy . . . is not a real country—if by real we mean a country composed not only of landscapes and works of art and relics of the past, but of social classes, political problems, and daily life. . . . One thinks, too, of the almost complete lack, in his fiction, of Italian characters that are not conventional, "literary," or indeed operatic. . . . [T]here is no doubt that the Italy of the Unity, the Italy still living and creating its *Risorgimento*, does not really exist for James. (230)

James's Italian fiction confirms Lombardo's point. The only Italian of any importance in *Roderick Hudson* is the Cavaliere Giacosa, the companion of the mother

of Christina Light (note, by the way, that Christina's name is not spelled the Italian way). None of the important characters in *The Portrait of a Lady* is Italian, and the same is true of "The Aspern Papers." In "Daisy Miller," Giovanelli is central to the plot, as it is he who accompanies the title character to the Colosseum, where Daisy catches the fever that kills her. But Giovanelli is a flat character, and other than him, the "Roman" society of the second part of "Daisy Miller" is all expatriate American. "The Solution" (1889), which is James's last Roman short story and is about a group of expatriates and foreign diplomats residing in Rome, has no Roman characters in it. Count Valerio of "The Last of the Valerii" would seem to be an exception, but his Roman-ness manifests itself more through his connection to the ancient Roman past than as an identifiably contemporary Roman. James's one truly fleshed-out fictional Roman—Amerigo of *The Golden Bowl*—is set in England, not in Italy, perhaps as compensation for the degree to which James develops him. The point remains true: for all his significance as an author of "international" fiction, James rarely portrays real international exchanges in his "international theme" stories and novels.

One clear exception to the rule is the 1874 story "Adina."² One of the story's characters is Angelo Beati, a peasant from the Roman countryside³ and a far less flat character than Giacosa in *Roderick Hudson* or Giovanelli in "Daisy Miller." In fact, Angelo plays a central role in the story's plot, which tells how the American Sam Scrope hoodwinked him out of the precious, ancient jewel Angelo had discovered and why and how he obtains his revenge on Scrope. The principal matter of this story is, therefore, the struggle between a leisure-class American expatriate and a local peasant, and as such "Adina" is a rare example of an American fictional text of the period that represents something of the Roman side of the American cultural encounter with Italy.

Several things interest me about this story. First and most obviously, a Roman—Angelo—is central to its plot, and furthermore, that Roman's character receives sympathetic and detailed treatment. Second, this story's representation of the intercultural class struggle between Angelo and Scrope is a striking example of just how political a writer James could be. Third, "Adina" explores but appears not to transcend the limits to which its expatriate narrator can perceive the native Angelo as a fleshed-out human being and not as simply a literary trope, and in this respect, the story presents the kind of ambivalent representation of alterity that Buzard finds elsewhere in James. Finally, while "Adina" is a political story whose plot touches on class conflict and contemporary actualities such as the *Risorgimento* and American imperialism,⁴ it is political in a problematic way. "Adina" has much in common with Wagner's far better-known political allegory, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*. In fact perhaps the most striking similarity between these two similar works is the degree to which Wagner's and James's texts, in spite of their political content, rely on allegory to make their political points.

But a comparison of "Adina" and Wagner's *Ring* does show that James's neglected story, for all its use of prolepsis and symbolism to convey its political message, is in fact far more realistically political than is the much more idealistic *Ring*. And yet from George Bernard Shaw (esp. 424–30, 442–47, 496–508) to Patrice Chéreau, the *Ring* has always been acknowledged as full of political content, while such has usually not been the case with James's published writings.

“Adina” presents a confrontation in which the wealthy, educated, leisured foreigner (Scrope) takes advantage of the ignorance and poverty of the working-class native (Angelo)—a clear example of the exploitation of the poor by the rich, of the ignorant by the educated (Scrope is a scholar), of the native by the imperialist. As a result, “Adina” has certain markers that we generally associate with late nineteenth-century realism: a major character of humble origins, a contemporary setting (granted, in a cityscape full of historical reminders), and political and class struggle. Furthermore, the political conflict in “Adina” has local, contemporary relevance, since the confrontation between the native, working-class Angelo and the foreign, upper-class Scrope is analogous to the *Risorgimento*, the goals of which had been to unite all of Italy and to free it of foreign domination. (One need only recall that a French army occupied Rome from 1848 to 1870, that Austria ruled much of northern Italy from 1815 to 1866, and that until 1861, the Spanish Bourbon royal family ruled southern Italy.) Angelo’s anger and struggle with Scrope, then, parallel the anger and struggle of the Garibaldis and Mazzinis with Italy’s foreign rulers. And Scrope’s attempt to exploit Angelo’s naïveté while ignoring his claims for justice corresponds to the Austrians’ domination of northern Italy at the same time that it evokes the United States’ own growing tendency to throw its weight around overseas.⁵

While “Adina” does include these typical markers of realist fiction, it also shares many elements with Wagner’s *Ring*, which also treats class conflict but relies heavily on mythology and allegory. Comparing the two texts provides a way of considering the limits of “Adina”’s representation of political actuality and foreign reality.

The *Ring*’s first complete staging would not occur until 1876, at Bayreuth, two years after the publication of “Adina” in *Scribner’s Monthly*, but the first two operas in Wagner’s tetralogy had already been performed in Munich, *Das Rheingold* in 1869 and *Die Walküre* in 1870, and Wagner had published the libretto of the entire cycle in 1863. The basic thematic and plot elements of the *Ring* were, by 1874, already public knowledge, and of course, Wagner’s sources were in classic early medieval Germanic and Nordic literature.

James, too, could not help but have known about Wagner and his *Ring* cycle, even before “Adina”’s 1874 publication (his famous refusal to let Paul Zhukovsky introduce him to Wagner happened later, in 1880). Wagner’s *Ring* would not be staged in the United States until the next decade,⁶ but his music had been performed in the United States, especially in Boston and New York, for some time. The initial Wagner orchestral performances in Boston took place in 1852 and 1853, with the first all-Wagner concert in 1854. The New York Philharmonic Orchestra began to perform Wagner in 1855 and continued to play orchestral excerpts from Wagner operas throughout the 1860s and 1870s. The Central Park Garden’s first Wagner night was in September 1871 and its orchestra’s first all-Wagner program, including the “Ride of the Valkyries,” from *Die Walküre*, took place a year later. The conductor of that September 1872 performance, Theodore Thomas, immediately founded a New York Wagner society to raise money to contribute to Bayreuth’s first *Ring* cycle, and, in 1873, the society donated \$10,000 to Bayreuth. The original American translation of a text by Wagner appeared in 1853.

Not only was Wagner's music performed in the American cities where the young Henry James resided, but the magazines that James read and to which he regularly contributed also published articles on Wagner in the period preceding the publication of "Adina." The same February 1872 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly* published an art review of James's ("Art") and an article on Wagner that mentions the *Ring* tetralogy and the first performance of *Das Rheingold* (Asbury), and an issue of the same magazine of exactly two years later contains both an article on Wagner (Apthorp) and James's travel essay, "A Chain of Cities." John Knowles Paine's long article on Wagner, which mentions the *Ring* tetralogy, appeared in the same April 1873 issue of the *North American Review* as a lengthy review by James's close friend, Thomas Sergeant Perry, of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.⁷ The *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which James often read, frequently published articles on Wagner, including one in the 1 January 1873 issue (Lagenevais), which also contains the first installment of Victor Cherbuliez's novel, *Meta Holdenis*, which James read in serial form while he was in Rome (*HJL* 1: 348).⁸ It may not be possible to prove definitively that, when "Adina" appeared in the May and June 1874 issues of *Scribner's Monthly*, James was familiar with the plot of the *Ring*, but the circumstantial evidence is overwhelming that James would have been hard-pressed to avoid any knowledge whatsoever of Wagner and his tetralogy.

That James was conversant with Wagner, at the least with what Wagner signified in Western culture at the time, is confirmed by James's calling Wagner "the musician of the future" in a letter describing his 1880 visit to Zhukovsky (*HJL* 2: 283). James's use of this phrase clearly indicates James's familiarity with the terms of debate about Wagner in musical and operatic circles. While Wagner's many detractors criticized what they perceived as the lack of harmony and melody in Wagner's music, his partisans hailed his music as the "music of the future" and considered Wagner's opponents stuck in the past.

The similarities between "Adina" and the *Ring* are numerous. Both works feature a precious jewel as the major prop: the magic ring that bestows unlimited power on its owner in Wagner, and a huge topaz of infinite value that once belonged to the Emperor Tiberius in James. In both texts the major characters struggle for possession of this jewel, with one using his power to take it from another, and others using or attempting to use subterfuge either to regain it or at least to take revenge.

In both works there is an important relationship between possession of the precious jewel—the ring or the topaz—and the loss of a loved one, for in each text, the possessor of the jewel loses or has to sacrifice the character most dear to him or her. In the *Ring*, the connection between the loss of love and the power of the ring is clear from the very beginning of the first of the four operas, *Das Rheingold*, when Alberich learns that if he forswears love he can steal the gold from the Rhinemaidens and fashion it into a magic ring that will give its bearer unlimited power. In *Die Walküre*, Wotan, the leader of the gods, in his efforts to reclaim the ring (which he held briefly during *Das Rheingold*), has to allow the death of his human son, Siegmund, and the desecration of his Valkyrie daughter, Brünnhilde. And in the final opera, *Götterdämmerung*, the love of Brünnhilde and Siegfried

(the heroic son of Siegmund) is betrayed as a direct result of their possession of the ring.

In “Adina” there is a similar interplay between possession of the precious jewel and the loss of love: when Angelo naively sells the topaz to Scrope for a ridiculously low price, his girlfriend, Ninetta, rejects him for his stupidity (231–32). In turn, Angelo gains his revenge on Scrope by wooing away from the rich American his fiancée, the title character, Adina Waddington. Angelo, who discovered the topaz, loses his lover, and Scrope, who bought, polished, and identified Angelo’s discovery as a priceless intaglio once belonging to Emperor Tiberius, loses his bride-to-be.

In both “Adina” and the *Ring* cycle, the precious jewel becomes a curse upon all those who possess or even covet it (James’s narrator explicitly calls the topaz “a curse” [257]). In both cases, the curse arises because of the theft of the jewel, and in both cases the curse ends when the jewel falls into a river: in the *Ring* cycle when the Rhinemaidens recover the ring, and in “Adina” when Scrope drops the topaz into the Tiber.

Finally, in both works, the precious jewel is the symbol of world power. In Wagner’s *Ring*, the ring magically conveys absolute power on its wearer, and the topaz in James’s story is the emblem of world power, for it bears a Latin inscription which acknowledges its bearer, the “Divus Tiberius Caesar,” as “totius orbis imperator” [emperor of all the world] (222).

That absolute power is absolutely corrupting is the point, for the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor cited in the topaz’s inscription, was believed in James’s day to be full of intrigues, corruption, and assassinations. Adina herself suggests as much when she asks about Tiberius: “Wasn’t he one of the bad emperors—one of the worst?” (236). The corruption of power—of even the desire for power—is clear throughout the *Ring*, as the ring leads brother to kill brother (the giants, Fafner and Fasolt), grandfather to fight grandson (Wotan, disguised as the Wanderer, and Siegfried), and father to abandon sons and daughters (Wotan and Siegmund, Sieglinde, and Brünnhilde). The topaz certainly has its corrupting effect on those who possess it in James’s story: Scrope’s life, we learn from the beginning of the story (211), came to an early end.⁹ In the meantime, he became increasingly eccentric and “the most intolerable of the friends we did not absolutely break with”; the discovery of the topaz “seemed to have corrupted him” (221), says the narrator. And Angelo has been shaken from his initial state of naive, innocent ignorance (one critic [Jones 98–99] has argued that in carrying out his elopement with Adina, Angelo demonstrates that he has gained knowledge of evil).

Perhaps the most obvious point of comparison between the *Ring* and “Adina” is that both tell of class conflict. In James’s story we have not just two people at odds over the discovery of an ancient jewel and the love of the same woman, for the native, working-class Angelo and the leisured, American Scrope are disputing who, in justice, has the rights to one of the local resources. The fight over the topaz, in other words, is an argument over who can keep the wealth of the land and what kind of recompense the native gets if the foreigner keeps it. It is this fight over whether the foreigner can profit from the wealth of Italian history

that constitutes the parallel to the *Risorgimento*. By the same token, the story raises the questions of whether it is appropriate for Americans to exploit foreigners and their heritage and of what constitutes appropriate behavior in foreign lands. In Buonomo's view, when American authors write about Italy they really write about their own country (11–14), sometimes expressing dismay at “the current evolution of the United States as a moving away from the nation's democratic origins” (12). In this sense, one can read “Adina” as questioning American expansionism.

Since at least Shaw's 1898 *The Perfect Wagnerite*, Wagner's *Ring* has been recognized as an allegory about power and class conflict in the Industrial Age. This conflict is clear, for instance, when Alberich forges the ring and uses its supernatural power to tyrannize and exploit his fellow Nibelungs. The musical accompaniment for the Nibelungs at this moment rhythmically mimics the repetitive sound of hammering, thus underscoring an association between the Nibelungs and factory labor. The scene where Wotan seizes the ring from Alberich (which is not unlike Scrope's taking of the topaz from Angelo) is another instance of class struggle and exploitation, since Wotan and Alberich live in a stratified world with the gods living above ground and the Nibelungs below.

There are numerous other similarities between the *Ring* and “Adina,”¹⁰ but more significant are the differences between them, the most important of which are Wagner's and James's different endings. The *Ring* cycle concludes with the destruction of the gods and the birth of a new world order, all made possible by the redemptive force of love (Brünnhilde's loving self-sacrifice for Siegfried's sake, at the end of *Götterdämmerung*). Alberich's forswearing of love made the creation of the ring possible and thus brought into the world the curse implicit in possession of the ring, which in turn symbolizes power. Thus only love can break the cycle of power, exploitation, and envy (envy which leads to the theft of the means of power and thus more exploitation, etc.) that results from the existence of a means of world domination. By representing the *Götterdämmerung*, or “twilight of the gods,” and with the return of the magic ring to the Rhinemaidens, the tetralogy's conclusion suggests that the cycle of power and exploitation can be broken and that a classless society without such power struggles really can occur.

The conclusion of “Adina” suggests something very different, for there is no redemption in James's tale. In the last paragraph of the story, Scrope drops the topaz into the Tiber, but power relations do not disappear as a result. In fact, the story makes it clear that such relations remain firmly in place, for the bridge from which Scrope drops the topaz into the river is the “bridge of St. Angelo” (257), which lies directly in front of one of Rome's most notorious monuments to tyrannical power, the Castel Sant'Angelo, “the prison of Beatrice Cenci” (Rowe 128) and, later, of Victorien Sardou's and Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*. Of course the irony here is multiple. The prominence of the castle serves as a reminder that simply submerging the topaz and its inscription, “emperor of all the world,” does not eliminate the impulse to world power, since the repression the castle represents still dominates the scene. And, of course, the bridge and the castle also share the name of Scrope's nemesis, Angelo.¹¹ But whereas Angelo Beati was the “blessed angel” (and also the “naively ignorant” one, for the Italian *beato* has several meanings), the Castel Sant'Angelo is an altogether different sort of angel.

Though we generally think of angels only in positive terms, there are of course bad angels too, and the ironically named castle is an appropriate emblem of the dark side of the angelic.

So does power so thoroughly corrupt that even the naive, beatific Angelo Beati can be a “bad” angel? This is what Adina’s stepmother wonders when she learns about Adina’s elopement and secret marriage to Angelo, it is what the narrator seeks to learn when he last sees (the now married) Angelo and Adina, and it is what the text, ultimately, can never reveal. The scene near the end of the story in which the narrator visits Angelo and Adina, in hopes of learning something of the nature of their marriage, bears close attention, for it is here that the text tests the expatriate American narrator’s ability to perceive sympathetically the foreign Angelo as a person.¹²

Of all the American characters in the story (other than Adina herself), the narrator is the only one to have shown any sympathy for Angelo. Scrope and Mrs. Waddington see the native Angelo as nothing more than a category or as less than human or as the stereotyped “operatic Italian” (Buzard 210). In Scrope’s view, in fact, Angelo is not even entitled to an opinion; Scrope simply dismisses the young Italian out of hand. From their very first encounter, Scrope is thoroughly contemptuous of Angelo and never appears to acknowledge that Angelo may have had a justifiable claim on himself. When Scrope learns of Adina’s elopement and Angelo’s revenge, he even then refuses to consider Angelo anything more than “An Italian beggar!” (253). In other words, Scrope remains as dismissive of Angelo as at their first meeting, when the American called the Italian a “giggling lout” (217) and a “pretty-faced simpleton” (220).

Mrs. Waddington, Adina’s stepmother, also shows no sympathy for Angelo and no desire to know anything particular about him: “it was enough for her that he was a friendless, picturesque Italian” (256). This reaction to Angelo is as dismissive as Scrope’s, for the phrase shows clearly that nationality comprises a neat category whose attributes are pre-established. To Mrs. Waddington, Angelo Beati is an Italian, therefore the elopement “was odious” (253) and the Beati couple must be living in insalubrious conditions (254). (In fact, they are not.) Since, according to Buzard, “the picturesque and pictorial were signs of a superficial and imitative (‘touristic’) attitude” (192), then in seeing Angelo only as “picturesque,” Mrs. Waddington represents the tourist, whose perspective turns “a *real* continent into mere pictures” (Buzard 192) and whose deficiencies James is attempting to transcend.

The narrator, however, does feel sympathy for Angelo. When Scrope forces Angelo to take a measly eleven scudi for the priceless topaz, the narrator wonders at Scrope’s “off-hand justice. . . . I scented sophistry in Scrope’s double valuation of Angelo’s treasure. If it was a prize for him, it was a prize for Angelo, and ten *scudi*,—and one over,—was meager payment for a prize” (219–20). In other words, the narrator recognizes that a principle of equality should operate in Scrope’s dealing with Angelo, whereas Scrope concludes that since eleven scudi represent to the lowly Angelo an enormous sum the young Italian has nothing to complain of: “I get my prize; the ingenious Angelo gets a month’s carouse,—he’ll enjoy it,—and goes to sleep again” (220).

After Angelo realizes how Scrope has tricked him, the narrator encounters the wronged Italian. He observes Angelo's disappointment "with poignant compassion" (230), and when he arranges a meeting between Scrope and Angelo, "incline[s] to believe" that Angelo would live up to his promise to reason dispassionately with Scrope. In other words, the narrator trusts Angelo's word (235).

The narrator does feel compassion for Angelo, listens to his complaint, recognizes that principles of justice and fairness should apply to him, and trusts him, all of which mark the American's ability to recognize Angelo as a human being. However, there is a limit to the narrator's ability to recognize Angelo's humanity, and this limit becomes clear in the scene when the narrator visits the married Angelo and Adina. During this visit, the narrator still tends to give Angelo the benefit of the doubt: "I was no more disposed than I had been a week before, to call him a bad fellow" (255). At the same time, and in spite of all that the narrator has come to know of the injustice Scrope has caused Angelo, the narrator again describes the young Italian in literary terms, as he had done at the beginning of the story when he called Angelo "our rustic Endymion" (214) and when he was "impressed . . . with something picturesquely tragic in the poor boy's condition" (234). When he sees the now-married Angelo, the narrator describes him as "looking quite the proper hero of his romance" (255).

This description of Angelo in literary terms is not too surprising at first; at the beginning of the story, the narrator had been at great pains to emphasize his own Romantic, literary outlook on things (212). But seeing Angelo in literary terms is also troubling, for it is another way of categorizing him (as well as a turn to allegory), which is a convenient way of denying this Italian man his particular humanity. Although calling Angelo "the proper hero of his romance" is surely less insulting than calling him "An Italian beggar!," a "giggling lout," or a "pretty-faced simpleton," it is still dismissive of his individual humanity.

What James's text dramatizes at this point is that even the most sympathetic expatriate cannot relate fully to the foreign other, cannot go completely "to the other end of the traveler's gaze" (Buonomo 97). The narrator is certainly a model of sympathy; after all, he remains Sam Scrope's friend for another twenty years, and at the same time he had won the trust of Angelo Beati (in comparing Scrope and the narrator, Angelo had said to the latter, "Your friend's a rascal . . . I like your face, and I believe that, if you can, you'll help me" [233]). But even this model of sympathy has its limits; the expatriate, even the most sympathetic one, cannot follow the native all the way. At some point the perception of the other's individuality gives way to convenient categorization and/or to literariness. The difference between Scrope and the narrator in this respect is one of degree, of how great a reserve of sympathy manifests itself before the inevitable turn to categorization occurs. Of course the narrator does make Angelo the "*hero* of his romance," which is more than James usually does for his Italian characters.

My point is not to show the narrator to be a scoundrel (though it would not be wrong to question the narrator's reliability, a matter that space precludes exploring here). Rather, James's story shows that the idea of a thoroughly open cultural encounter between expatriate Americans and Romans is unrealizable and unrepresentable. The effort of one foreigner to encounter, to know, to relate to

another foreigner ultimately comes up short against the turn to literariness—to trope and cliché—just as James's and Wagner's attempts to write about political actuality fall back, in the end, on allegory. Not only does the narrator, in his final visit to the married couple, turn Angelo into a literary figure, but the narrator also concludes, as a direct result of talking this last time to Angelo, that “at the bottom of every genuine Roman heart . . . you'll find an ineradicable belief that we are all barbarians, and made to pay them tribute” (255).

This quote does present a moment of profound role reversal between Angelo and the narrator, in which the narrator actually sees for himself how the native other perceives the foreign visitor. However, at the same time, the narrator is here stereotyping and attributing to the individual native Roman his own sense (however well- or ill-informed) of what Romans as a whole must think. In other words the narrator is saying: all Romans think this way; they think all others are barbarians. Such dismissive stereotyping is certainly far more innocuous than Scrope's swindling of Angelo, but it is dismissiveness all the same. It does not change anything that the stereotype is that Romans have a stereotypical vision of foreigners; in fact that is the point, for there comes a moment in the intercultural encounter when there is no getting beyond stereotyping.

And yet, at the same time, the narrator probably *had* perceived Angelo's true thoughts, for according to Buonomo, “the idea that foreigners were all . . . uncivilized” was—and to some extent still is—“deeply rooted in the Italian collective imagination” (19). This is the moment of ambivalence, akin to what Buzard pinpoints in the travel writing, for on the one hand, representation, when pushed to its limit, yields only stereotypicality, but at the same time that stereotype may in fact be the ultimate reality. In other words, in “Adina” James seems to be saying: representation represents only representations, but at the same time, James is clearly trying to break this hermeneutic circle, to actually represent reality—a real signified—but a reality that is only a stereotype (though a stereotype that may in fact be true).

One final point about this last quotation. The narrator's logic would have Angelo thinking that since all foreigners are barbarians, the foreigners should pay tribute. The circumstances of pre-reunification Italy could justify a belief that foreigners are barbarians, but that the barbarians should pay tribute only follows in a world in which all relations are primarily power relations. We do not know that Angelo actually holds the belief which the narrator attributes to him, but we do know from this allusion to “tribute” that the narrator perceives Angelo as now implicated in relations of power as he never was before. And certainly the narrator now sees things in general less in Romantic, literary terms and more in terms of power relations than before.

Of James's Italian fiction, I am arguing, “Adina” is the one whose subject matter is most ostensibly political; for all its allegorical and “literary” elements, “Adina” *does* represent contemporary characters in a power struggle that *does* bear comparison to local, contemporary political and historical events (the *Risorgimento* and American expansionism). By comparison, Wagner's famous political allegory appears at least as allegorical as James's “Adina” and certainly far more idealistic (and yet surely critics today would consider James a far less political

writer than Wagner). But the similarities between Wagner's mythological operatic cycle and James's story also foreground the reliance of both texts upon the allegorical to present the political. In fact, just as James's story shows that even the most sympathetic expatriate cannot always get at the reality of the foreign other and ultimately has to turn to stereotyping, so too it shows that even as political a text as "Adina" cannot otherwise represent the intercultural encounter of working-class Romans and leisured Americans except as the melodrama of an unfair bargain for an ancient jewel and the wooing away of a man's fiancée in revenge. At least the Italian becomes the "hero" of that melodrama.

"Adina" is a rare example of James's representing how Romans encounter American expatriates (rather than how the expatriates encounter each other while in Rome). It bears remarkable similarity to an acknowledged political cultural work that all of Europe and North America was talking about at the same time; in fact, I have been reading "Adina," in part, as James's response to the idealism of Wagner's *Ring*. The point of "Adina" is that people live in a world where struggles for power and domination over others are unavoidable. They are a fact of life, and they are a central fact of James's story and its representation of Rome. Closely linked to the fact of power struggles is the other unavoidable fact of cultural encounters, which is that even in the best of circumstances they are limited, and this is because people are limited in their ability to see others as more than stereotypical categories. But in representing a moment of ambivalent recognition of sorts on the part of the narrator of Angelo's individuality, James's "Adina" pushes the power of representation as much as possible against the limits of stereotypicality.

NOTES

¹Albers's comprehensive bibliography of secondary literature on "Adina" (12–13) lists only twenty-four items, to which one can add Geoffroy-Renoux's and Rowe's recent articles.

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²In James's earlier (1871) and even more obscure "At Isella," there is also an important Italian character, who comes straight out "of Stendhal" (Kelley 116). But in terms similar to those of Buzard and Buonomo, MacDonald writes of the mysterious Italian woman in "At Isella" that, "If she begins as the embodiment of Italian beauty and drama, she ends as the representative—for narrator and reader—of an Italy which cannot be fully contained or known by a newcomer" (70).

³I call Angelo a "peasant," and later I describe him as "working class." It is difficult to be precise about the level of society to which he belongs. We never see him working for his living, but he is clearly not well off (he takes naps during the day to avoid the pangs of hunger [216]). The only relative we learn of is his uncle, a local priest.

⁴The limitations of space preclude a thorough exploration of "Adina" as an allegory of the *Risorgimento*, which would have to move beyond the obvious parallels of the foreign Scrope exploiting the native Angelo and take into consideration, among other things, the heterogeneity of the movement for Italian unification, the problems posed by the conflicts within the movement between republicans and constitutional monarchists, and the evolving role of the church.

One can also see in James's portrayal of Scrope's treatment of Angelo an allegory of the growingly imperialistic tendencies of the United States in the late nineteenth century. It is this facet of the story that confirms Buonomo's view that nineteenth-century American writers' "efforts to describe otherness" are not so much of interest for what they say about Italy but for what they betray of these American authors' "insecurity about their own cultural identity" (14). Unfortunately, space also rules out proper development of this aspect of James's story.

A longer study of "Adina" would also take into consideration the question of religion, for in marrying Angelo, Adina apparently leaves the Protestant and joins the Catholic congregation, since

it is Angelo's uncle, the priest, who marries them (254). In fact, shortly before she elopes, the narrator finds her in a local Catholic chapel, immersed in grave and solitary reflection; the narrator even wonders if "she was turning Catholic and preparing to give up her heretical friends," which indeed she was (245). The perceived differences between American Protestantism and Italian Catholicism were often an important subject in nineteenth-century American writing about Italy, as Buonomo demonstrates (22–23, 40–41, 43–44, 55–57, 78–80).

⁵In a parallel argument, Rowe writes that, "Adina" criticizes the Americans who invaded Italy in the last half of the nineteenth-century and commodified classical civilization" (125).

⁶*Die Walküre*, the *Ring's* second part, premiered in the United States in 1877, and New York's Metropolitan Opera gave the first performances of the other three parts in the late 1880s. See Horowitz (esp. 34–88, 347–50) for information about the early American reception and performances of Wagner, which I draw on in this paragraph.

⁷Harlow attributes this review to Perry (366).

⁸For other contemporary articles on Wagner, see Miles, Ferris, White, and Hueffer.

⁹Scrope's death is mentioned in the story's frame, which takes place "eighteen years" (211) after the events of the story, which occur when Scrope "was young" and around "twenty" (213). The story does not suggest a direct connection between Scrope's experience with the topaz and his early death, but the narrator introduces the history of the topaz and Scrope's broken engagement to Adina with a discussion of the subsequent development of Scrope's character, as though the tale that follows accounts for it. Nevertheless, in the sense that his life is cut short, for Scrope the "curse" of the topaz has no end.

¹⁰James's text describes Scrope, who steals the topaz, as distinctly disagreeable and ugly (211, 213), and so is Alberich, who steals the gold of the Rhine. In another parallel, the name of James's title character is an anagram for naiad, a water nymph-like creature like Wagner's Rhinemaidens. Nationalism also has a role in James's and Wagner's political allegories, for clearly Wagner's *Ring*—whether intentionally or not—helped create a cultural environment that supported the unification of the German empire, while James's story could be read as about American expansionism and oppression—both, at least arguably, the results of nationalistic fervor—of foreign societies.

In respect to the names, Horrell points out that Adina is an anagram for Diana and argues that James's story parallels parts of the myth of Diana and Endymion (208–09). Rowe provides two different readings of Adina's name: it is the name of the heroine of Donizetti's 1832 opera, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and it "derives from a Hebrew word meaning 'full of menstrual fluid' and more generally 'rejuvenation.' It is the answer God gives Sarah . . . when she asks how she can still be fertile at more than 100 years old" (122); it is also a Biblical male name "associated with David and the tribe of Reuben" (132 n. 25). Scrope is, of course, an anagram for corpse.

¹¹Rowe points out that "Angelo is also one of the given names of Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, Margaret Fuller's husband" and argues that "'Ossoli's extraordinary good looks and his lack of intellect' . . . are crucial to the characterization of Angelo Beati" (123).

¹²We know that the narrator is American, for at the beginning of the story, he refers to his aunt's "mansion in Mount Vernon street" (212), and he compares the sunshine of the Roman early-winter and the New England June (213).

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