THE CORRESPONDENCE OF HENRY JAMES
AND ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER

It is quite astonishing that in the gold-mine of letters\(^1\) written by American novelist Henry James (1843-1916), many of those he wrote to Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840-1924) should not have been published until recently.\(^2\)

The astonishment derives from the fame of the writer, but also from that of his addressee, Isabella Stewart Gardner, a very wealthy New Yorker, who married an equally wealthy Bostonian banker, John Lowell Gardner Jr. (1837-98), in 1860. She was the creator of one of the most important museums in the United States, Fenway Court, or the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, in Boston, which opened to a gala on January 1, 1903, and to the public on February 23.

Mrs. Gardner, often judged in the Boston newspapers and in the more conservative society as an eccentric figure, which she probably enjoyed being, letting all sorts of «legends» grow around her,\(^3\) was surrounded by a «court» of musicians, painters, novelists, who revered and blandished her. John Singer Sargent caught the aura of her great power in his famous portrait of 1888, where Mrs. Gardner, in a long black dress by the famous Paris couturier Worth, is shown exhibiting the signs of her wealth: she wears the

\(^1\) The total number of extant letters by Henry James is 10,423; in spite of the various collections, starting with the four pioneering volumes edited by Leon Edel, only a fraction of this number has been published. The huge and wonderful project of *The Complete Letters of Henry James* has started with volumes I and II edited by Pierre A. Walker and Greg W. Zacharias, Introduction by Alfred Habegger, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2006. For the number of letters, see vol. I, lxviii.

\(^2\) R. Mamoli Zorzi (a cura di), *Cara Donna Isabella*, Milano, Archinto, 2004; (English edn. by E.A.: *Letters to Isabella Stuart Gardner*, London, Pushkin Press, 2010. A shorter version of this essay was used as an introduction for this volume.)

\(^3\) On the legends of Mrs. Gardner going around with a lion on a leash and such like, see *Shand-Tucci*, 25-7 and *Gondola Days*, 2004.
purest pearls around her neck and waist, rubies attached to the
pearls, and rubies glitter also on her black silk slippers. The motif
of the golden background seems to crown her within a sort of
holy nimbus, symbol of power, while her beautiful white neck and
arms underline her feminine attractiveness. In another famous
portrait, of 1894, the Swedish painter Anders Zorn caught her
extraordinary vitality, painting her as she stepped into the salon
of the Palazzo Barbaro, the magnificent Venetian palace which
Mrs. Gardner rented more than once from its owners, Daniel and
Ariana Curtis, while the moonlight shines in the background over
the Grand Canal, and her open arms and hands are reflected in
the window-panes. The Venetian setting is highly significant, as
the Barbaro was certainly an important inspiration for Isabella’s
Fenway Court, her lasting creation, where the simple exterior of
the building hides a Venetian courtyard, where gothic windows,
partly original ones, look out into a space rich in Roman mosaics,
sculptures, statues and flowers.

«Dearest Queen», «Chère charmuse», «Dear signora Isabella-
donna», «Dear Queen Isabella», are some of the different ways
in which friends of both sexes addressed Mrs. Gardner in their
letters, in adoring tones of total admiration. Isabella was respected
and blandished, admired and flattered, in her different decisions
and moves, just like a queen.

Henry James’s letters to her are different: they are also full
of admiration, but they manage to keep a distance, to proclaim
the writer’s independence in saving his precious time from too
imposing and pressing invitations. James’s affection and esteem
for Mrs. Gardner are sincere and intense and become stronger
and stronger as the years go by; the novelist recognizes openly
Mrs. Gardner’s vitality and power, but he does not obey possible
«orders», even if this can be seen as a lack of faithfulness in
their friendship: what is most important for James, in spite of

4 On the portrait, painted in December 1887 and January 1888, at Mrs.
Gardner’s 152 Beacon Street House, in nine sittings, see Ormond-Kilmurray,
Sargent. The Early Portraits, 209-11. For the late watercolours, Mrs. Gardner at
Fenway Court (probably 1903) and Mrs. Gardner in White (1922), see Ormond-
Kilmurray, 2003, no. 442, 100 and no. 386, 251-2.

7 On the collections see Goldeard 1995 and The Eye of the Beholder.

6 These expressions, for instance, were used by Ralph Curtis, painter, son of
the owners of the Palazzo Barbaro in Venice, by Mrs. Bronson, an American
lady who lived in Venice and Asolo, and a friend of Robert Browning, who
sent Mrs. Gardner a lock of the poet’s hair.

7 See also Edel, Conquest of London, 380.
his at times hectic social life, is the possibility to have time to
devote to his writing, the real «felicity» of his life.

In the spring of 1884, Mrs. Gardner is approaching Europe
and Venice by way of the Suez Canal after a one-year voyage
around the world: the Gardners left Boston on May 21, 1883, and
crossed the continent to San Francisco, from which they sailed
aboard the City of Tokio on May 29, to Japan, China, Cambo-
dia, Java, India, and via Aden and Cairo, to Crete, Zante, and
finally Brindisi and Venice. She expects to find James in Venice
in May 1884, having written to him from Agra, the seat of the
splendid Taj Majal, but her correspondent writes to her that he
will not be there. After almost throwing at her face her great
power – «You have everything, you do everything, you enjoy
everything» – James admits to broken vows, smashed promises,
necessary, however, to save something even more valuable than
friendship, his own writing. He declares that he knows too well
she will not miss him, in her «preposterously pleasant career», and
presents himself with the image of the poor patient beast:

I shall be waiting in London, & shall get into harness when you
arrive. In the meanwhile have pity on the place where the collar
rubbed. I wear a collar always: que dis-je? I wear half a dozen.
They are piled up round my poor old head, & when you see me
you will scarce distinguish the tip of my nose. I am a ruminant
quadruped, too, & I turn it over in my mind that, really, I, at least,
am too good a friend of yours to lend a further hand – or hoof
– in spoiling you.

James develops the metaphor of the poor beast in harness, to
contrast his life of hard work with that of the lady travelling
from the temples of Kyoto to Shanghai, from La Sonnambula in
Java to the mountains of Shimla, enjoying life, but at the end
he underlines he is not joining the crowd in spoiling her, as a
real friend.

A tender irony allows James to save himself from becoming
one of Mrs. Gardner’s courtiers, even if he entertains with her
a very intense relationship, testified also by his constant send-
ing her his books, the first being his long essay on Nathaniel
Hawthorne (1880), followed by The Portrait of a Lady (1881), the

\[1\] All references to Mr. and Mrs. Jack’s travels are based on their travel dia-
ries and scrapbooks, courtesy of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.
For excerpts of Mrs. Gardner’s letters from the Orient, see Carter, 59-86. See
also the forthcoming catalogue Journeys East.
novel that brings success and some fame to James. Next comes The Man of Fifty, with two other stories, which is sent in 1882, and «the dreary little Maisie book», the wonderful What Maisie Knew (1897). At the end of James’s life, we learn from these letters that he also sent her his autobiography, Notes of a Son and Brother (1914).

Not only does James send his works to Mrs. Gardner, but on one occasion he writes to her a long and detailed letter on the misprints in one of his essays, the one of 1882 on Venice, showing with this his care for what he published but also his esteem for the addressee, considered of no less standing that the well-known novelist and editor of The Atlantic, William Dean Howells, to whom, in another letter, he laments the misprints of the same article.

Finally, James writes more than once to Mrs. Gardner about his plays, his dream of success on the stage, something that never happened: while London audiences applauded Oscar Wilde’s Ideal Husband at the Haymarket, they booed James’s Guy Domville at the St. James’s on January 5th, 1895. In 1882 he writes to her more than once, trying to arrange a visit, in Boston, when he would read to her the play drawn from the short novel, Daisy Miller, A Comedy in Three Acts; in 1891 he writes to her from London, still hoping in the success of The American, which has finally been put on the stage and is touring the provinces before arriving in London. James and Mrs. Gardner love going to a play, and James invites her to go to the theatre or gives advice on something he saw, in particular the plays performed in Boston in 1883 by the Italian actor Salvini, about whose performance in Othello James is quite enthusiastic, even if he finds it odd that audiences should accept Shakespeare spoken in Italian by the great star, and in English by the rest of the company.

The world encompassed in these letters is vast, in space and time. It includes two continents, Europe and America, since Mrs. Gardner and James see each other on both sides of the Atlantic and correspond across its waters; but it also includes the Far East, where Mrs. Gardner is traveling in 1883-84, and where other friends of both Mrs. Gardner’s and James’s are, such as Percy

---

9 Edel, Letters II, 392.
10 Edel, Complete Plays, 469-71.
11 Scenic Art, 170.
Lowell or William Sturgis Bigelow; India, which the Gardners visit from north to south and where the Curtises announce they will go; the West Indies and the South Sea islands where Charles Robarts has some official post. Reading these letters one realizes how much, how often, and how far James’s circle and generation traveled. Even the Fiji islands were part of the routes, not only for Robert Louis Stevenson but also for Henry Adams. If British friends travel in the British Empire, American friends seem not to have forgotten the whaling routes of their New England forbears.

The letters cover a wide space in time: they span a period of more than thirty years, from 1879 to 1914, a period full of world events, some of which appear in the letters: the Cuba war of 1898, which is a subject amply treated in its menacing power by Henry in his correspondence with his brother William, the famous psychologist and philosopher; echoes of «economic & labour convulsions, rumours of revolution & war» in 1911, announcing the coal strikes of 1912, which left «a couple of million people» out of work, «a number that will be hugely swelled if it goes on much longer», 12 in James’s words; there is no letter for 1900, therefore neither the death of Queen Victoria nor the Boer War, which «drags its daily gloom along» 13 in Henry James’s letters to his brother William and other friends, are present.

The letters show clearly on which side James was in a case that inflamed public opinion, the famous Dreyfus case, where the trial leading to the condemnation to forced labours (1894) of a Jewish French officer charged with treason was re-opened thanks to a famous article by Emile Zola, «J’accuse», in 1898.

Among the great events of the century there was the 1893 Chicago World Columbian Exposition, where the Gardners were invited, having lent a painting, and where Mrs. Gardner saw The Omnibus, a picture by Anders Zorn. She bought the painting, and later invited the Zorns to Palazzo Barbaro, where the Swedish painter created Isabella’s wonderful portrait. James imagines Mrs. Gardner going to the Exposition, with her own building, «a more barbarous Barbaro», all of her own, among the Federal and the States buildings.

The last letter, dated April 20th, 1914, closes the correspondence, leaving out the great tragedy that made «the whole coun-

12 Letter of March 21, 1912, to T.S. Perry, 338.
13 The Correspondence of William James, William and Henry, III, 101.
try» «a huge workshop of war», a few months later, bringing a «tremendous strain».  

People and letters cross the ocean, Mrs. Gardner and James see each other in London, in Paris, in Venice, but also on the other shore of the Atlantic, in the various homes of Mrs. Gardner, at Beacon Street in Boston, at Beverly on the Massachusetts coast, at Green Hill, in Brookline, near Boston.

Several letters allow us to enter the intense and private world of the deepest family affections: James writes to Mrs. Gardner a particularly intense and moving letter on the death of his mother, other letters regard other family losses, the death of Alice (1848-92), James’s sister who died of cancer after a lifetime of psychological invalidism, of William (1842-1910), his closest brother.

To Mrs. Gardner James writes with great sympathy and affection on the sudden death of her husband on December 10th, 1898.

Other personal losses and private tragedies are not recorded or only hinted at: there is no word on the suicide of Mrs. Gardner’s nephew, Joe Gardner,  on October 16, 1886, while there is an obscure reference to the suicide of Edith Story Peruzzi’s son Bindo  in 1907, both perhaps linked to the hate for, and persecution of, homosexuals in the late 19th and early 20th century; there is no letter covering the period of Oscar Wilde’s trial in April 1895, on which James wrote to his brother William «You ask of Oscar Wilde. His fall is hideously tragic – & the squalid violence of it gives him an interest (of misery) that he never had for me – in any degree – before. Strange to say he may have a “future” – of a sort – by reaction – when he comes out of prison – if he survives the horrible sentence of hard labour that he will probably get. His trial begins today – however – & it is too soon to say». Other private tragedies are mentioned in the letters, such as the suicide of Ellen Hooper Gurney in 1887, that came only two years after her sister, Marian «Clover» Hooper, the wife of Henry Adams, killed herself drinking potassium cyanide.

---

14 Letter to Thomas S. Perry, January 15, 1915, 347.
15 See SHAND-TUCCI, 82-4.
17 The Correspondence of William James, William and Henry, II, 359 (letter of April 26, 1895, the day on which Wilde’s trial began, finishing on May 25, with the imprisonment of Wilde on May 19, 1897).
on a Sunday morning, on December 6th, 1885. James’s sister Alice’s illness is mentioned, but no hint appears of the alcoholism and psychological weakness of James’s younger brother Robertson.

Across these wide spaces and dramatic times a varied world of artists, writers, public figures, mutual friends crop up. As we shall see amazingly few letters allude to the works of art bought by Mrs. Gardner, and to her final creation, the museum.

The letter of June 13, 1879, takes us into the world of the theatre, which both James and Mrs. Gardner loved, even if on different terms; but it is the second letter, of July 1879, that takes us into the world of art, so important both for James and Mrs. Gardner, which in the late 1870s and 1880s was strongly focused on the new Grosvenor Gallery in London. The writer sends to Mrs. Gardner the address of Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98), the Pre-Raphaelite painter, whose paintings James had seen in the Grosvenor Gallery, and on which he had written, admiringly, several times. In 1878, for instance, he had written about Laus Veneris and Chant d’amour, both exhibited in Lady Lindsay’s Grosvenor Gallery (1877-90), a gallery that presented itself as a «radical-chic» innovative venue, more open to the new than the more traditional, even if highly respected, Royal Academy, and which, at the same time, was frequented by the Royalty and the upper class, since Lady Lindsay and her husband, Sir Coutts Lindsay, reserved Sunday afternoons for their own friends.

Mrs. Gardner is constantly keen to see what is new, to see with her own eyes what she hears of. She goes to see Burne Jones’s paintings, even if she eventually will not buy any work by the Pre-Raphaelite painter, not even the stained glass windows which Charles Eliot Norton offers her in 1903.

In the fall of 1886, in London, James takes Mrs. Gardner to Sargent’s studio, to see one of his masterpieces, Madame Gautreau, the portrait presented at the 1884 Paris salon as Madame X, and immediately recognized as the scandalous portrait of Virginie

---

18 For Alice James, see her Diary, and Strouse.
10 For the photo of Sargent’s Paris studio showing Mme Gautreau, see Kilmurray-Ormond, 1998, 15. On the painting, 101-3, no. 26. See also Ormond-Kilmurray, Sargent. Early Portraits, 103-4, 113-8. This is volume 1 of the fundamental catalogue raisonné of Sargent’s Complete Paintings (Ormond-Kilmurray eds.), New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, 1998—.
Avegno, an American beauty from Louisiana, married to a wealthy French banker, M. Gautreau.

James recognized the innovative characteristics of the portrait, writing about it first in 1887, and expanding the essay in 1893:

It is an experiment of a highly original kind, and the painter has had in the case, in regard to what Ruskin would call the 'rightness' of his attempt, the courage of his opinion. A beauty of beauties, according to Parisian fame, the lady stands upright beside a table on which her right arm rests, with her body almost fronting the spectator and her face in complete profile. She wears an entirely sleeveless dress of black satin, against which her admirable left arm detaches itself; the line of her harmonious profile has a sharpness which Mr. Sargent does not always seek, and the crescent of Diana, an ornament in diamonds, rests on her exquisite head. This work had not the good fortune to please the public at large, and I believe it even excited a kind of unreasoned scandal — an idea sufficiently amusing in the light of some of the manifestations of the plastic effort to which, each year, the Salon stands sponsor. The picture will always remain interesting to those who follow the artist's career and note its different stages, even though they may not clearly see the light by which some portions of it are painted. It is a work to take or to leave, as the phrase is, and one in regard to which the question of liking or disliking comes promptly to be settled. It is full of audacity of experiment and science of execution; it has singular beauty of line, and certainly in the body and arms we feel the pulse of life as strongly as the brush can give it.

The visit to Sargent's studio to see Madame Gautreau was surely of great importance for Mrs. Gardner, and perhaps made her think of having her own portrait painted by Sargent, as happened in 1888. Witness to the fact that she must have been highly impressed by this particular portrait is the fact that, very late in life (1919) she also bought an oil study by Sargent, Madame Gautreau drinking a toast (1882-3). Of course Sargent's El Jaleo, of 1882, is even now one of the most important modern paintings of Fenway Court, in the East Cloister. A very late portrait of Mrs. Gardner by Sargent, Mrs. Gardner in White, a watercolour painted in

11 «John S. Sargent» in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, October 1887, 690-1. In the 1893 version, James added the following sentences: «This superb picture, noble in conception and masterly in line, gives to the figure represented something of the high relief of the profiled images on great friezes. ... The author has never gone further in being boldly and consistently himself» (Painter's Eye, 225).


13 The painting was given to Mrs. Gardner in 1914 by Mr. T. Jefferson Coolidge; see The Eye of the Beholder, 159.
1922. 

two years before Mrs. Gardner's death, when she was 82 and had had a stroke, veils with poetry the old age and physical decay of the once so active lady: a white veil covers her figure, in an extraordinary harmony of colours. Mrs. Gardner herself loved it, as she wrote to Berenson in 1922: «Did I tell you of Sargent's wonderful sketch in water-colour of me which keeps every one's tongue wagging? Even I think it is exquisite». 

James's and Sargent's friendship continues over the years: in 1898 James takes his «paintress-cousin» Bay Emmet to Sargent's studio on «picture Sunday», writing about it to Isabella; in the same letter he praises several portraits by Sargent, in particular that of the Bond Street Jewish antiques-dealer Wertheimer, who, quite enthusiastic about his portrait, ordered ten portraits of his own family. James praises the portrait of Miss Leiter and later, in 1909, that of Lord Wemyss. In 1913, for his seventieth birthday, the final homage of Sargent to his novelist friend was his portrait of James, where the painter expressed every uncertainty and vibration and expression in James's countenance.

In these letters we also come across James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), whom Mrs. Gardner met in 1879, at a party at Lady Lindsay's Gallery, where she had gone with Henry James. In 1886 Whistler painted her portrait, called A Little Note in Yellow, which Isabella bought, together with Violet Note, a female nude, and several other pictures. In 1893 James writes to Mrs. Gardner that he had tea with the Whistlers in their house in Rue du Bac, in Paris, where there is no furniture but the painters's colours and the smile of Whistler’s wife, Béatrix. The Whistlers’ garden was the germ for the painter Gloriani’s garden in The Ambassadors (1903). With the Whistlers James mentions Howard Cushing (1869-1916), the painter from Boston, whose sister Olivia was to marry Andreas Andersen, a painter too. Olivia, a widow a month after

24 For Mrs. Gardner in White, see Ormond-Kilmurray, 2003, 251-2, no. 586.
26 On James and Sargent see Mamoli Zorzi, Sargent's Venice; Hirschler, Gondola Days, 2004.
29 For the portrait of Henry James, see Ormond-Kilmurray, 2003, no. 568, 228-31.
30 On Whistler, see the Glasgow website with the Correspondence; see also Denker 2003 and McCauley, Gondola Days 2004.
her marriage in 1902, moved to Rome, to spend all her life with
Andreas' sculptor brother, Hendrik, and their mother. In 1899,
in Rome, James was introduced by Maud Elliott to the beautiful
young sculptor and fell in love with his youth and art, without,
however, restraining from criticizing Hendrik's work harshly in
later periods. Hendrik's name, however, never surfaces in any of
the letters, even when he writes to Mrs. Gardner that he has
just returned from Italy in 1899.

Whistler's famous Venetian etchings don't seem to mark an
important moment in Mrs. Gardner's idea of a museum: only in
1890, in New York, did she buy both series, The First Set (1880)
and The Second Set (1886), after buying two the previous year.
However, Mrs. Gardner's interest in these etchings with Venetian
subjects seems a further sign of her interest in Venice, which was
eventually to produce her Venetian palace in Boston.

James shows an affectionate interest in the young painters who
are Mrs. Gardner's friends. In 1892 he sends his love to the «little
Smith», painter Joseph Lindon Smith (1863-1950), whom he has
just seen as a guest at the Palazzo Barbaro; the year after, James
learns of the tragic death of Joseph's brother and shares the Smiths'
grief, remembering also another painter guest at the Barbaro, the
«robust» Alfred Q. Collins (1855-1903), well known for liking to
have wrestling in his studio: Mrs. Gardner probably enjoyed both
his enthusiasm, his art, and his boxing, as she loved this sport.

Other painters whom James has frequented in the idyllic vil-
lage of Broadway, in the Cotswolds, in England, in 1885 and 1886,
where Sargent painted his Carnation, Lily Lily Rose, and on
whom James has written, are mentioned to Mrs. Gardner: Alfred
Parsons (1847-1920), British illustrator and painter, and Frank Millet
(1846-1912), American, an adventurous man who was not only a
painter but also a war correspondent and died in the sinking of
the Titanic. Millet's wife and children, like many other figures
appearing in these letters, from Mrs. Daniel Sargent Curtis to Mrs.
Alice Mason to Henrietta Reubell, were portrayed by Sargent.

James also writes to Mrs. Gardner to express his gratitude

31 See Beloved Boy, 66-7, 101-2 and passim.
32 On Smith, see CHONG, in Gondola Days 2004, 100-4.
33 For this painting, an example of Sargent's impressionist technique, see
34 See ORMOND-KILMURRAY, Early Portraits, nos. 165, 166, 172, 170-2, 178, and
ORMOND-KILMURRAY 2002, no. 283, 60.
35 See ORMOND-KILMURRAY, Early Portraits, n. 50, 62, no. 140, 142, no. 151, 154.
about the kindness, in Paris, shown by her to another painter, his nephew Bill (1882-1961), son of his brother William. Not only has she entertained him in Paris in 1906, but in 1911 she will also commission to him a portrait, which still hangs in the Blue Room of Fenway Court.\(^6\) Also artist Cecilia Beaux (1855-1942), who painted a portrait of Henry James in 1911, is remembered for a strange and a little mysterious episode at Gloucester, where she lived in the summer.

Many other interesting figures appear in these letters, mutual friends and public figures, such as the great Henry Adams (1838-1918), one of the most important writers of James’s generation for the deeply critical analysis of power and democracy, both in *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907) and his novel, *Democracy* (1880), and a close friend of James’s and Mrs. Gardner’s; John Hay (1830-1905), a political and literary man, Lincoln’s private assistant, ambassador to the United Kingdom and Secretary of State; Clarence King (1841-1901), geologist and writer, with Hay one of the three central figures in *The Education of Henry Adams*. No hint, of course, appears of King’s common-law wife, Ada Cope- land, a black woman, from whom he had four children. Other friends are mentioned, such as the «hyacinthine» Gaillard Lapsley (1871-1949), professor of medieval political history at Berkeley and then at Cambridge, in England, Edward L. Godkin (1831-1902), journalist and founder of *The Nation*, Thomas Sargent Perry (1845-1928), an old friend of James’s youth, writer and teacher, who married impressionist painter Lilla Cabot. But we also meet the 21\(^{st}\) President of the United States, Chester A. Arthur (1829-86); New Jersey Senator, George Maxwell Robinson and several senators’ wives and daughters. The Jamesian scene opens also to ladies who do not belong to the establishment of politics or wealth, such as Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), feminist and writer, the author made famous by *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, the lady who invited Oscar Wilde for lunch in her home in Boston, or Annie Fields and her lover-writer-friend Sarah Orne Jewett, who are mentioned as visiting James at Lamb House in 1899. In these letters, the name of Edith Wharton is not made, even if her American residence at Lenox is explicitly cited: it is well-known that Mrs. Wharton and Mrs. Gardner did not like each other.\(^7\)


\(^7\) Lewis, 114-5.

157
James’s relative lack of interest for music may explain the very few references to an art Mrs. Gardner enjoyed, going to concerts, organizing concerts in her own home, giving a piano to the Boston Tavern Club, going to the Wagner performances in Bayreuth or to operas in Venice and having Tirindelli play at the Barbaro. In fact the name of a very famous Hungarian conductor, Arthur Nickisch, appears in a letter merely as the cause of James’s not seeing Mrs. Gardner in London in 1894 («Damn Nickish!», spelt in this form).

James writes to Isabella about his meeting with Oscar Wilde in Washington, during his triumphal and discussed trip to the USA in 1882, one of the most glaring moments of the ambivalent reception of British aestheticism in America,\(^8\) declaring he has found him «repulsive & fatuous», and without telling her that the day after meeting him he went to see Wilde in his hotel, to thank him for what the Irish writer had said publicly about James’s works. A meeting, however, that did not go very well. Mrs. Gardner, instead, found Wilde quite interesting when she met him in Boston, and she kept an autographed photo of the writer.

Several other friends of James’s are mentioned, especially when James writes introductory letters, for people Mrs. Gardner will find interesting, such as French novelist Paul Bourget (1852-1927) and his wife Minnie. From their American trip a book on the USA was generated, Outre-Mer (1895), the book where Bourget described, without saying any name explicitly, Mrs. Gardner’s portrait by Sargent:

Un grand artiste, l’un des premiers de l’époque, par l’ardeur de sa recherche, la conscience de son étude et la sincérité de sa vision, John Sargent, a rendu ce que j’essaye d’exprimer dans le portrait d’une de ces femmes, dont j’ignore le nom et que j’ai vu dans une exposition, — un de ces portraits comme les maîtres du XVe siècle en ont peint, qui derrière l’individu atteignent le pays et derrière le modèle tout un monde. Elle pourrait, cette toile, tant elle est représentative, s’appeler l’Idole Américaine. La femme est debout, les pieds rapprochés, les genoux collés, dans une pose presque hybratique. Son corps assoupli par l’exercice est serré, comme moulé dans une gaine noire. Des rubis luissent sur ses souliers noirs, comme des gouttes de sang. Sa taille mince est prise dans un collier d’énormes perles, et de cette robe qui fait un fond intensément sombre au mineral éclat des bijoux, les bras et les épaules ressortent avec un autre éclat, celui d’une chair de fleur, une blanche et fine chair où court un sang

\(^8\) See Freedman.
fouetté sans cesse par le grand air de la campagne ou de l’Océan. La tête, intelligente et audacieuse, avec une physionomie d’avoir tout compris, a comme aureole le dessein vaguement doré d’une de ces étoffes de la Renaissance que les Vénitiens appellent soprà-risso. Les bras arrondis, où les muscles se devinent à peine, se rejoignant par les mains unies, des mains décidées, au pouce presque trop long, et qui doivent conduire quatre chevaux avec la précision d’un cocher anglais. C’est l’image d’une énergie, invincible à la fois et délicate, au repos en ce moment, et il y a de la Madone Byzantine dans cette face aux grands yeux ouverts. Oui, c’est une idole...."

It is difficult to imagine that Bourget would not know whose portrait this was, in spite of his initial statement.

Among the friends introduced by James to Mrs. Gardner there are Charles Robarts, British governor of Haiti, the young and beautiful Paul Harvey (1862-1948), architect Harold Peto (1854-1933). James introduces these friends telling Mrs. Gardner little stories about their lives: Robarts will arrive only if the natives will not devour him or he the natives, Paul Harvey has a «very curious history» which he promises to tell her, regarding the love between his father and a governess, Harold Peto is the son of a railway tycoon, who «made a great flash in the pan» and «then went out in (I think) some slight bad odour». Ibsen actress Elizabeth Robins (1863-1952) also is given an introduction:

39 Bourget, Outre-Mer, 147-8: «A great artist, one of the most important of his epoch, for the ardour of his research, the consciousness of his studies and the sincerity of his vision, John Sargent, has expressed what I am trying to convey, in a portrait of one of these women, whose name I ignore, and which I saw in an exhibition – one of those portraits that fifteenth century masters painted, who behind the single person express the whole country and behind the model a whole world. This canvas could be called the American Idol, so representative is it. The woman is standing, her feet closely united, her knees glued together, in an almost hieratic pose. Her body, rendered supple by exercise, is enclosed tightly, you might say molded, in a black gaine. Rubies sparkle on her black shoes, like drops of blood. Her thin waist is encircled by a necklace of enormous pearls, and from her dress, which offers an intensely somber background to the mineral splendor of the jewels, her arms and shoulders stand out with another splendor, that of blooming flesh, a white and fine flesh where runs incessantly a blood whipped up by the breeze of the Ocean or of the countryside. The head, intelligent and daring, with a countenance as of one who has understood everything, has, as an aureole, the vaguely gilded design of one of those Renaissance materials that the Venetians called soprà-risso. The rounded arms, where one can hardly perceive the muscles, are joined by the clasped hands, firm hands, with a forefinger slightly too long, which might guide four horses with the precision of an English coachman. It is the image of an energy at once delicate and invincible, at rest momentarily, and there is something of a Byzantine Madonna in that face with its wide-open eyes. Yes, it is an idol».

(The translation is mine). This passage is partly quoted in Tharp, 170.
James is a great admirer of her, not only as an actress (she was Madame de Cintré in the London production of James's play *The American*) but also as a person «so interesting & charming, & indeed remarkable, a person so a head above the low level of her vulgar profession».

At times it is James's turn to present Mrs. Gardner to his European friends, especially to two ladies, Mrs. Bronson, née Katherine de Kay (1834-1901), who has lived in Venice, in the Palazzino Alvisi on the Grand Canal since 1875, where James himself was a guest in 1887, and to the Ranee of Sawar, Alice de Windt (1849-1936). To Mrs. Bronson James wrote a touching letter, which gives us an image of Mrs. Gardner very different from that of the triumphant queen:

Please be kind & helpful to Mrs. Gardner, who is a forlorn, bereft, emaciated lady just returned from the Indies, — & so gracious as to believe that she might have found me in Venice. You will easily console her for my accidental absence ...You know all about her — or may fancy you do; but in point of fact you will not — cannot — know till you have met her — what a charming acquaintance I introduce to you... ⁴⁰

Several letters refer to the other hosts of James's in Venice, Ariana (1833-1922) and Daniel Sargent Curtis (1825-1908), the Boston friends who knew Mrs. Gardner before expatriating to Europe, and Italy, in 1880. These names are synonymous with their Venice home, the Palazzo Barbaro, ⁴¹ which Mrs. Gardner rented several times starting in 1890. For James and for Mrs. Gardner both the Barbaro became an essential source of inspiration, respectively for a palace of words, Palazzo Leporelli in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and for a palace of stones, Fenway Court (1903), as it was for Sargent, in his wonderful *A Venetian Interior* (1898). ⁴²

No doubt the Palazzo Barbaro was a fundamental source of inspiration for Mrs. Gardner's Fenway Court: in 1896 Mrs. Gardner asked architect Willard Sears to draw up a first project for a museum-house in Beacon Street, where the Gardeners lived, for their wonderful collection which included the *Hercules* by Piero della Francesca, *Presentation of the Christ Child in the Temple*

---

⁴⁰ Letter of May 2nd, 1884, Leon Edel Papers, McGill Rare Books and Special Collections.
⁴¹ See *Letters from the Palazzo Barbaro*. See also *Isabella Stewart Gardner e il suo mondo*, 2004.
by Giotto, the *Portrait of Tommaso Inghirami*, and a *Pietà* by Raffaello, *Europa* by Titian, the *Self-Portrait* by Rembrandt, *The Concert* by Vermeer, and other works by Botticelli, Crivelli, Michelangelo, Rubens, van Dyck, Guardi, the magnificent Bindo Altoviti bust by Cellini, in addition to many drawings, books, materials, sculptures, furniture, «cuori d'oro». After the sudden death of Mr. Gardner in 1898, Isabella quickly decided to buy some land in the new green area of Boston, still empty of buildings, landscaped by Frederick L. Olmsted, the famous creator of Central Park in New York and of many other parks. Mrs. Gardner’s relationship with her architect Willard Sears, however, was never passive, as one can see from the different crenellations of the building, originally inspired by the Venice Ca’ d’Oro; Mrs. Gardner was a constant presence on the work-site, showing how she wanted each capital and column placed, not allowing the works to proceed when she was absent. If many architectural elements had already been bought in Italy, during the construction work Mrs. Gardner bought other pieces, sought after, or offered to her, by various Venetian and Florentine antique-dealers.

Surely the general impression of the interior of Fenway Court is that of a Venetian courtyard, enriched with sculptures, fountains, flowers, and very often with music. Other collections, however, may have acted on Mrs. Gardner’s imagination, including that of the Layards in the Palazzo Capello in Venice. It was perhaps thinking of the Layards’ magnificent *Mehmed II* by Gentile Bellini that Mrs. Gardner bought the *A Seated Scribe* (1479-80), also by Gentile Bellini. In her many trips abroad Mrs. Gardner visited museums and mansions; some of these places, such as Hatfield House and Hever Castle, were visited in the company of Henry James. The first was the magnificent house of the Marquess of Salisbury, in Hertfordshire, built by Robert Cecil in King James I’s time, and including the «Old Palace», where Queen Elizabeth I had lived during her childhood; the second was Hever Castle, in Kent, where Anne Boleyn had lived as a child, and where her *Book of Hours* was still kept; a few years after Mrs. Gardner and James’s visit it was bought by William Waldorf Astor, who restored the castle and built a new «Tudor» village. As a girl,

---

43 On the collections, see Goldfarb and *The Eye of the Beholder*.
44 See De Appolonia, also for the Sears Preliminary Design, 186-7, in *Gondola Days* 2004.
45 See *The Eye of the Beholder*, 97. It was purchased in 1907 through Anders Zorn. See also Goldfarb, 61-2. See also Bellini and the East.
Mrs. Gardner had also visited the private museum Poldi Pezzoli in Milan.\textsuperscript{46}

The whole ensemble of Fenway Court can be seen as a real «installation», as shown by Anne Hawley,\textsuperscript{47} where Mrs. Gardner exhibited her wealth and power, her artistic taste and eros, in a creation based on an intellectual and emotional participation. «C'est mon plaisir» is the motto which marks the mission of this American lady who collected more than two thousand and five hundred objects and paintings, by the Old Masters but also by contemporary painters, coming from Europe but also from the East.\textsuperscript{48}

As hinted before, in these letters, in spite of Ms. Gardner’s art acquisitions, there are very few, if significant, references to Mrs. Gardner’s collecting: James asks her, with some humour, what she has bought when she was in Venice in 1892 («I want to know everything you have bought these last days – even for yourself. Or has everything been for me?»), and comments at least four times on Titian’s Europa in the course of 1898:

The winter has hopped from week to week as a bird on a series of twigs – & it’s difficult to believe how long it is since I sat in your high salon at the Savoy & hung on your lips while you hung your Europa before me. As she hangs now before you now (incredible woman! – I mean both of you) do tell her I languish for her (letter 65).

James’s irony in the merging of the mythological goddess of Titian’s painting with her buyer («incredible woman! – I mean both of you!») does not seem to cancel James’s admiration for the painting or its buyer.

Then James asks Mrs. Gardner to allow his friend, actress Elizabeth Robins, to «take... an impression of the Titian», and finally he figures Mrs. Gardner with her hurt back, hoping

you weren’t very bad – that it was nothing more than the Europa could bandage up with a piece of that purple of which you gave me so memorable an account

The bandage is Europa’s purple scarf flying and floating in the air, while the bull is running away, in the painting that Bernard

\textsuperscript{46} See CARTER, 15.
\textsuperscript{47} Before Peggy Guggenheim, 59-65.
\textsuperscript{48} On the acquisitions see McCauley, 11-42, in Gondola Days, 2004; Hadley 1987; The Eye of the Beholder.
Berenson offered to Mrs. Gardner in 1896 (the other one being *Sacred and Profane Love*, which Mrs. Gardner did not buy judging it too expensive).

In another letter James referred directly, and indirectly, to Mrs. Jack’s collection. Hoping she had arrived easily and safely back in the USA, James wrote on December 27, 1899:

I hope with all my heart that your homeward journey was not inconvenient beyond measure & that your own *painted halls* now again possess, undisturbed, their mistress. May every fog-demon have completely ceased to breathe on you, & may the coming time *lay nothing but soft carpets* and green lawns for your feet — with a patch or two of the old *mossy marble* thrown in. *I think of you as a figure in a wondrous cinque-cento tapestry — & of myself as one of the small quaint accessory animals, a harmless worm or mild little rabbit in the corner.*

Maybe James was projecting the figure of Mrs. Gardner and his own against an imagined tapestry, very similar — possibly — to those of the famous XVI-century tapestries of the Musée de Cluny, *La dame à la licorne*, bought by the Museum in 1882. A letter of 1904, written from Lamb House before James saw the Museum in the same year, mentions Mrs. Jack’s «recent splendid history & accomplished glory»: during that visit of 1904 to America James collected his impressions of the country he had not seen for over twenty years, and produced one of his masterpieces, *The American Scene* (1907), which also contains James’s judgement of Fenway Court.

There are no other references to art purchases in the letters to Isabella which have come down to us. We must look elsewhere to find James’s comments on Mrs. Gardner’s acquisitions. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, written from Lamb House on November 21-22, 1899, James wrote:

I have presently to take on myself a care that may make you smile, nothing less than to proceed, a few moments hence, to Dover, to meet our celebrated friend (I think she can’t not be yours) Mrs. Jack Gardner, who arrives from Brussels, charged with the spoils of the Flemish school. *

The lexical choice of «spoils» for Mrs. Gardner’s acquisition of «all her Van Eycks and Rubenses» which James «must help her

47 See Hadley, 182-4, 185-6. James knew well the Villa Borghese *Sacred and Profane Love*, as he had the protagonists of an early story, *Travelling Companions*, accept each other to be married in front of that painting.

to disembark» and see through the customs at Dover, leaves no doubt on James’s negative judgement: his novel on the passion and dangers of collecting, The Spoils of Poynton, had been published three years earlier.

But no mention of Mrs. Jack’s «spoils» is present in the letter written by James to Mrs. Jack about this very arrival. James is all kindness and generosity towards her:

I shall await you, in other words – reach out the friendliest of hands to you as you step, de votre pied léger, from the plank.

This affectionate welcome is no doubt linked to James’s deep friendship and affection for Mrs. Jack, but elsewhere this «friendliest of hands» would meet a rapacious hand.

As early as 1876, a period in which James was writing «art reports» for the Atlantic Monthly and a few other journals and newspapers, in an article published in the New York Tribune in January 1876, the novelist wrote a series of comments on «The American Purchase of Meissonnier’s ‘Friedland’» by a New Yorker, Mr. A.T. Stewart.

In this article, James, the frequenter of museums and galleries, the lover of art, the writer surely influenced by British aestheticism, the novelist and short story writer who used a number of works of art in his works, showed that he was well aware of the power of the market that had developed in those years. He also used a metaphor that seems to hover over his subsequent literary production.

James wrote:

the picture [Meissonnier’s Friedland] has been bought by Mr. A.T. Stewart of New York for the prodigious sum, as I see it, of 380,000 francs. The thing is exceedingly clever, but it strikes me as the dearest piece of goods I ever had the honour of contemplating.  

James refers to the painting as a «piece of goods», hardly an aesthetic definition of a work of art. He then goes on to discuss the cause and the effect of the high value or evaluation of the painting, underlining that its price was due not only to the actual quality of the object but to the «legend» that had been built around it, that is, «that little nebulous body of anecdotes which hovers, like the tail of a comet, in the rear of every nine days’ wonder».

ψ Painter’s Eye, 108.
The legend – what Walter Benjamin in his *Illuminations* had called the «magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of the object» — was due to Sir Richard Wallace wanting to buy the painting while Meissonnier was still working on it, then deciding not to buy it, to the dealer’s charging more than originally offered, and finally to Mr. Stewart accepting the very high price. Having told his readers the «legend» James then proceeded to declare:

it is very hard not to be rather touched with awe and to see a certain golden reflect in the performance.

James, in other words, was commenting both on the «fair value and the factitious value» of the painting, that is, the value of the painting as such, the value of the painting as blown up by the market, and the reflection this higher price inevitably had on the viewer.  

The second comment I wish to consider is the following:

One takes... an acute satisfaction in seeing America stretch out her long arm and rake in, across the green cloth of the wide Atlantic, the highest prizes of the game of civilization (my emphasis).

If the statement seems an appreciation («One takes... an acute satisfaction»), the metaphor that follows undermines the positive quality of the statement. James used the metaphor of a gambler, playing on a billiard table extending from America to Europe («the green cloth of the wide Atlantic»), «raking in» the most precious products of civilization. The obtaining of these precious prizes seems to be the casual, unmerited result of a gambling game, not of work (and this could make us thing of the ethics of work, and its opposition, the leisure class as defined by Veblen).

In this long arm stretching across the Atlantic there are, in nuce, many of the elements that one finds in James’s later fiction, in such novels as *The Golden Bowl* and *The Outcry*, but does this

52 «The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership – for the true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of this object» (Illuminations, New York, Shocken, 1969). See also for James and Benjamin, Michael Meeuwis, «Living the Dream: Benjamin’s Arcades Project and The Golden Bowl», *The Henry James Review*, vol. 27, no. 1, Winter 2006, 61-74.

53 All these elements were to appear in Veblen’s *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 1899. On the relation between consumerism and art in this period see Francescato, ch. 1.

54 Painter’s Eye, 108.
metaphor also throw some light on the relation between James and his lifelong friend, Isabella Stewart Gardner? Is there a relation between the way in which such literary figures of collectors as the aesthete Osmond in The Portrait of a Lady, the passionate Mrs. Gereth in The Spoils of Poynton, Adam Verver, the tycoon who can buy up enough art on the European market to create his «American City» in The Golden Bowl or Breckenridge Bender in The Outcry, are characterized in the fictional works  and the way in which James wrote about Mrs. Jack and her collection? Surely a totally approving and laudatory comment on Mrs. Jack's collection is the one we find in The American Scene (1907):

... no impression of the «new» Boston can feel itself hang together without remembrance of what it owes to that rare exhibition of the living spirit lately achieved, in the interest of the fine arts, and of all that is noble in them, by the unaided and quite heroic genius of a private citizen. To attempt to tell the story of the wonderfully-gathered and splendidly-lodged Gardner Collection would be to displace a little the line that separates private from public property... It is in the presence of the results magnificently attained, the energy triumphant over everything, that one feels the fine old disinterested tradition of Boston least broken.  

This comment comes at the end of a chapter devoted to Boston and the disappearance of the old Boston, both in terms of architecture (houses torn down) and inhabitants (replaced by the «alien», or immigrants, especially Italian), a chapter also devoted to the wonderful appreciation of the lonely Aphrodite in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, a building, however, due to be enlarged, and therefore subject to the obliteration of history – and memory – that James found in Boston as in New York.

The «new» Boston, where everything was too big, too new, too destructive of the past, does have a great gem: the collection of Isabella Stewart Gardner, the collection of a New York lady elevated to the honorary rank of a Bostonian, to the «fine old disinterested tradition of Boston».

This admiration is also expressed in some letters, as that of December 21st, 1905, to the French novelist and friend Paul Bourget (who had been a guest of Mrs. Gardner in 1893), where James wrote:

You must hear from me on Mrs. Gardner, who is de plus en

55 See TINTNER, PEROSA and CAGIDEMETRIO.
56 The American Scene, 255.
plus remarkable and whose palais-musée is really a great creation. Her acquisitions during the last ten years have been magnificent, her arrangement and administration of them are admirable, and her spirit soars higher still. Her spirit is immense, and proof against time and fate. It has greatly «improved» her in every way to have done a thing of so much interest and importance — and to have had to do it with such almost unaided courage, intelligence and energy. She has become really a great little personage. 97

Again, the «little lady» who made any place she was at whirl with activity is given her due of total admiration in this letter.

Is then James purely an admirer of the great collector? A comment to be found in James's Notebooks seems to throw a doubtful light on this, and seems to point back to the raking arm of the 1876 essay and to the letter to Charles Eliot Norton.

In his Notebooks, James wrote two passages, separate but contiguous:

Yesterday at the Borthwicks', at Hampstead, something that Lady Tweedmouth said about this insane frenzy of futile occupation imposed by the London season, added itself to the hideous realization in my own mind — recently so deepened — to suggest that a «subject» may well reside in some picture of this overwhelming, self-defeating chaos or cataclysm toward which the whole thing is drifting. The picture residing, exemplified, in the experience of some tremendously exposed and intensely conscious individual — the deluge of people, the insane movement for movement, the ruin of thought, of life, the negation of work, of literature, the swelling, roaring crowds, the 'where are you going?', the age of Mrs. Jack, the figure of Mrs. Jack, the American, the nightmare — the individual consciousness — the mad, ghastly climax or denouement. It's a splendid subject — if worked round a personal action — situation. [My italics]

This annotation is followed immediately by these lines:

The Americans looming up — dim, vast, portentous — in their millions — like gathering waves — the barbarians of the Roman Empire 98 (July 15, 1895).

The mere closeness on the page of the references to Mrs. Jack and the Barbarians cannot be ignored. Was this «age of Mrs. Jack», of the Fricks, the Morgans, the Havemeyers, buying Titian's Europa, Holbein's Thomas More, illuminated mediaeval manuscripts, dozens of French impressionists, was this age the age of the «Barbarians»?

97 Edel, Letters, IV, 390.
98 The Notebooks, 126.
Is James’s admiration for Mrs. Jack’s collection, expressed so very clearly almost ten years later, modified by these notes?

Maybe what conquered James in his unlimited appreciation of Mrs. Gardner’s collection as expressed in *The American Scene* was the fact that he saw in it none of the failures he saw in the ready consumption of enormous quantities of wealth for ephemeral purposes, higher and higher skyscrapers, destined to be destroyed again and again to make more money. Isabella Stewart Gardner’s collection perhaps came to represent for James the «high and helpful, as it were, civic use of the imagination» ⁵⁹ and of money, which he had hoped to see in America.

Perhaps James saw in Mrs. Gardner’s creation, the fulfilling of the promises which America had not been able to maintain. In *The American Scene* discussing a luxurious hotel in Florida, James faced the question of «the future of beauty in America».

Fifty times, already, I had felt myself catching this vibration, received some vivid impression of the growing quantity of force available for that conquest – of all the latent powers of freedom of space, of wealth, of faith and knowledge and curiosity, verily perhaps even of sustained passion, potentially at its service. These possibilities glimmer before one at times, in presence of some artistic effect expressively yet intelligently, yet ev’n charmingly produced, with the result of your earnestly saying: «Why not more and more then, why not an immense exploration, an immense exhibition, of such possibilities?» ⁶⁰

If this passage continues with what could be called a prophecy ⁶¹ of the new American art of the 1950s and 1960s, one could see in this «glimmering» the reason of James’s deep appreciation of Mrs. Gardner’s collection. Her collection came to represent the «undaunted adventure of the arts», where the private merged with the public, and where Isabella’s motto «C’est mon plaisir» was modified in her will to leave the collection «For the education and the enjoyment of the people forever».

---

⁵⁹ Preface to *The Lesson of the Master*, in *Prefaces*, 1230.
⁶⁰ *The American Scene*, 444.
⁶¹ «What you see is the space and the freedom – which at every turn, in America, make one yearn to take other things for granted. The ground is so clear of preoccupations, the air so clear of prejudget and doubt, that you wonder why the chance shouldn’t be great for the aesthetic revel as for the political and economic, why some great undaunted adventure of the arts, meeting in its path none of the aged lions of prescription, of proscription, of merely jealous tradition, should not take place in conditions unexampled.» (*The American Scene*, 445)
The achievement of one woman collector found its greatest celebration in the words of a writer who was one of the sharpest critics of his home country and of the tycoon-collectors of art of his times in his fictional works.

Works cited

Adams, Novels

*American Scene*

Aneško

*Autobiography*

*Before Peggy Guggenheim*

*Bellini and the East*
  *Bellini and the East, Caroline Campbell and Alan Chong eds., Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2005.*

*Beloved Boy*

Blanchard
  *Mary Warner Blanchard, Oscar Wilde’s America, Yale U.P., 1998.*

Bourget
  *Paul Bourget, Outre-Mer (Notes sur l’Amérique), Paris, Alphonse Lemerre, 2 vols., 1895.*

Cagidemetrio

Carter
Cecilia Beaux. Portrait.


Chong, Gondola Days


Collected Travel Writings


The Complete Letters


Correspondence of William James


Curtis Viganò, Gondola Days


Dearly Beloved Friends


Dear Munificent Friends


Denker


Edel II, Letters, Edel III, Letters, Edel IV


Edel, Complete Plays


Edel, Conquest of London

Edel, *Diary of Alice James*

Ellmann

Eye of the Beholder

Follini 2004

Francescato

Freedman

Goldfarb

Hadley

Hawley

Horne

Isabella Stewart Gardner. Guide
  Isabella Stewart Gardner. Guide to the Collections, Published by the Trustees, Boston, 1976.

Isabella Stewart Gardner e il suo mondo

Izzo

Journeys East

Kilmurray-Ormond 1998

Kossman

Lawrence

Letters from the Palazzo Barbaro

Letters to Miss Allen

Letters of Henry Adams

Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams

Lewis

Lubbock

Mamoli Zorzi 1999

Mamoli Zorzi 2002

McCaughey, *Gondola Days*

McKibbin
Monteiro


Notebooks


Ormond-Kilmurray, *The Early Portraits*


Ormond-Kilmurray 2002


Ormond-Kilmurray 2003


Painter's Eye


Perosa


Perry


Prefaces


Robins,


Roman


Sargent's Venice


Scenic Art


Selected Letters


Shand-Tucci

Douglas Shand-Tucci, *The Art of Scandal. The Life and Times of


Whistler
The Correspondence of James McNeil Whistler, University of Glasgow website.

**ABSTRACT**
In this essay the author examines which themes, characters and topics are discussed in the letters written by Henry James to Isabella Stewart Gardner, the founder of the famous Boston Museum.

**KEYWORDS**
Henry James. Mrs. Isabella Stewart Gardner.