In 1902, Henry Walters purchased the Massarenti Collection for the astounding sum of one million dollars. The US press declared him the premier collector of the age. Yet this collection was reputed to be an assemblage of copies, without records or outside appraisals. A few months after the collection, 1700 works in 275 crates, arrived in New York, Walters met with architects to design a palatial gallery to memorialize his father and to house their collection, on Mt. Vernon Square, Baltimore.

These actions suggest a longstanding goal to create a comprehensive art collection for the public good. But we can never be sure what motivated Henry Walters’ omnivorous collecting. An intensely private, secretive man, he left almost no documentary evidence of his life.

Thus, it was a major discovery when Stanley Mazaroff, a retired lawyer and Walters Art Museum trustee turned art history student, discovered nearly sixty letters from Walters to Berenson at I Tatti. Berenson was known to have sold paintings to Walters, but his close involvement with the gallery had never been acknowledged. Walters’ frustration with his massive collection and its uncertain attributions increased when the Gallery opened in 1910, leading him to accept Berenson’s offer to analyze the holdings and write a catalog. Berenson would assist with one catalog, but would never complete his proposed work. He would create lists of paintings to be disposed of or re-attributed. But whether he should be credited with transforming the collection, as Mazaroff proposes, is not clear. For Walters, as in all his dealings, made the final decisions of what to discard, what to add, what to display; Berenson supplied services per their arrangement.

This book covers the years of their relationship, 1910–1916. While these new details are interesting, most information is from secondary sources and does not significantly increase our knowledge. The book’s narrow scope is expanded with biographical chapters and contextual information, suggesting it is aimed at an educated but not scholarly audience.

There are two appendices, notes, a bibliography, and a well-documented list of illustrations, of which fourteen plates are in color. Appendix A is a selection of six letters; appendix B lists Italian paintings bought during this time, with updated attributions. As the letters are the primary sources, it was aggravating to find discrepancies in the total number extant in the notes and bibliography.

This work offers a detailed snapshot of Berenson’s business practices, but the portrait is familiar. It is harmed by Mazaroff’s repeated speculations on Walters’ thoughts and motives. William R. Johnston’s *William and Henry Walters, the Reticent Collectors*, from the same publishers, remains the essential work on Walters. This book is probably best appreciated as a companion piece to that full length biography.

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