Package tours in Rome have not yet discovered the Museo Hendrik Christian Andersen in the Via Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, a street running briefly from the Tiber to the Villa Borghese. Swinging through the nearby Piazza del Popolo, if it is not jammed with political demonstrators or fans celebrating a soccer victory, the tourist gawks at the 3,200-year-old obelisk of Ramses II in the center, glances at the two Baroque churches at one end, and at the other dashes into Santa Maria del Popolo for the Caravaggio paintings and the Chigi Chapel designed by Raphael, before either turning into the Corso or climbing to the Pincian Hill and the Borghese garden. But straying a few blocks, expecting little, one might come with surprise upon this pink stucco “palazzina” trimmed with a frosting of carved white ornament. The quarter is a part of the pseudo-classical new Rome developed by Benito Mussolini outside the del Popolo gate, but the museum is a Renaissance Revival miniature, a pocket version of the nineteenth-century villas of the American rich admired in Newport by an immigrant boy. Wealthy Newporters had plucked Norwegian-born Hendrik Andersen and his brother Andreas out of poverty and sent them to art school and to Europe to study. The money
of one Newport woman, Andreas’s widow, Olivia Cushing, kept Hendrik fine and dandy until he died in 1940 in the building he designed as his home and as a shrine to himself and to his brother, who had been a painter.

Hendrik Andersen left to the Italian state both his little palace and its artistic contents — chiefly Andreas’s paintings and his own statuary, which he had rarely been able to sell — but the state did nothing with the bequest for more than sixty years. This past spring the building was opened to the public as a “satellite” facility in Rome’s network of public museums. A crowded company of Hendrik’s forgotten statues is now on permanent display — about two hundred, with forty full-scale in plaster or bronze. He had hoped to find places for some of them on American village greens. But despite his connections with some influential Americans, the statues had almost all remained in his studio like children who never leave home. His larger-than-life-sized, unabashed nudes, even if they were meant to personate civic virtues, were not what was wanted in American public places at the start of the twentieth century. Actually, they are hardly provocative. Their male or female bodies have an oddly androgynous sameness despite differentiating details — like the bodies of sexless angels well equipped for human passion but indifferent to it. But their effect on the viewer who comes to them after the masterpieces abounding in Rome is not artistically impressive, in any case. If you have just been looking at the Berninis in the Villa Borghese it is a mistake to come directly to Via Mancini. Yet, in the galleries of the new museum, these figures of naked men and women still prance in groups or embrace each other with defiant violence beneath deadpan faces. They fling themselves into the still interior air in ecstatic postures of impossible imbalance, their images reflected grotesquely on the polished marble floors. They are, perhaps, a little better than an inert-seeming clothed and seated Abraham Lincoln, also present, whom the sculptor had just as unsuccessfully submitted to a Buffalo jury.

Andersen grew weary of rejection, finally. From the fashioning of his grandiose figures he turned to a grandiose dream of general human fulfillment in which his sculptures would find places in a city of the future, a vast cultural capital, a meeting place of the nations. Along with models for statues by Andersen (including the
placement of a central civic fountain he had long dreamed of and a pair of colossi who would extend their joined hands across its imagined harbor entrance) the meticulously elaborated elevations for numerous buildings and the plans for a vast never-never city are hung in documentary displays on the walls of the museum. Andersen had found able collaborators, including the Belgian social utopian Paul Otlet, pioneer of the idea of a universal catalogue of all recorded knowledge and visionary forecaster of universal peace, and the architect Ernest Hebrard from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. The World Center they projected was one of many unrealized, unrealizable visions of a citadel of international concord that had begun to appear on the drawing boards of early city planners. With the help of Olivia’s funding, it was lavishly published in 1913 and sent to a long list of prominent individuals and to the rulers of all nations, including those soon to be plunged into the First – and so inevitably not the last – World War.

Henry James, who fell in love with Hendrik when he met him in Rome in 1899, never saw the Museo Hendrik Christian Andersen. The novelist had been dead for six years when it was constructed in 1922. For some time before his death, James and Andersen had been in touch only by letters spaced further and further apart, and they actually met again after the first occasion no more than a half dozen times, and then only for a few days each time. Yet something had happened to James in his relation with Andersen that lasted and lasted. A wistful tenderness persists to the end in the letters James wrote him over sixteen years. This was so even though Andersen’s career became a story that James would never have written, and Andersen’s personality less and less resembled the sort of character that would have interested him if he were imagining it for fiction. The contest between his lingering tenderness and his more and more detached judgment does, however, make an ironic tale.

Many of the letters James wrote over the years have long been familiar to scholars, though only recently have all seventy-seven that survive – now deposited in the Clifton Waller Barrett Library at the University of Virginia – been published by the Italian publisher Marsilio and edited by Rosella Zorzi. They have not, on the whole, however, received the attention they deserve, having been regarded by most scholars merely as the record of James’s
Henry James and Hendrik C. Andersen

Courtesy of Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Museo Hendrik C. Andersen, Rome
late discovery of his own capacity for personal, probably erotic, feeling for a much younger man—and even this feeling has been treated too simply. What remains to be seen is that this relationship gave occasion for James to express his most fundamental ideas about art and life. “Love” itself, in this case, was a complex self-confrontation. And quite aside from love, Andersen’s failed career and eventual metamorphosis into an apostle of world betterment elicited deep responses from James, revealed his mind as much or more than do his responses to others with whom his intellectual communion was more complete.

When they met, James was fifty-six, the bulk of his work behind him, though his final period with its climax in his last novels published early in the new century was only about to begin. Andersen, twenty-seven, had not got anywhere, though it was not yet clear that he was bound to be an utter failure either. James could even have felt a certain identification with this young sculptor. That golden Roman afternoon, they were in the apartment of the Newport painter John Elliott and his wife, Maud Howe, in the Palazzo Accoramboni. From the terrace planted profusely with flowers they could see the great square of St. Peter’s and have a view over all of Rome to the Campagna and the Alban and Sabine Hills. It was a place and a moment for James to recall how he had felt thirty years before when he came to Rome for the first of many visits. He had been almost exactly Andersen’s age. He had made the acquaintance of the expatriate American sculptor William Wetmore Story. Now Story was dead, and James had promised the family that he would do a biography, and he was in Rome to renew impressions and make some stabs at research. It was a job he had taken on a little reluctantly, partly for the money. But, as he began to write *William Wetmore Story and His Friends*, which would be published in 1903, James would remember how aspiring American artists had congregated in Story’s apartment in the Palazzo Barberini. Nathaniel Hawthorne had put that long-ago Roman art colony, and even Story’s statue of Cleopatra, into his *Marble Faun*, and his novel’s hero had been another young American sculptor seeking inspiration in Rome. James would imitate Hawthorne in his own early novel, *Roderick Hudson*, published in 1875, by also writing about such a young sculptor’s adventure of self-discovery there. And now here was Andersen, who seemed
ready to be a character in a new novel about art and expatriation. Like James's Roderick Hudson, he had come to Rome under the sponsorship of American friends. To light up the resemblance in an eerie déjà vu, he even happened to have a name that sounded like that of James's fictional hero. It was as though James had forecast the Howes’ protégé.

There were reminders, also, of the old Newport world James had lived in as a boy before the Civil War. Their hostess was the daughter of the author of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” Julia Ward Howe, whom he had often visited in Lawton’s Valley. John Elliott was working on a ceiling for the new Boston Public Library, where another of James's old Newport friends, the painter John La Farge, was engaged in its opulent decoration. Andersen, who had undertaken a bust of the famous Julia, was floating on a current of encouragement and support from these and other “cultivated” upper-class families James had always known. By coincidence, just then, too, James’s nephew, the son of his younger brother, Robertson, was soon to marry a Newport Cushing, Louisa. Her brother, Howard, was a young painter friend of Andersen’s and her sister, Olivia, would soon marry his brother, Andreas.

But all such reverberations of memory and association were only part of the attraction James felt to the willowy young man with his blond, Scandinavian good looks and air of yearning hopefulness, that day at the Elliotts’. Before going back to England, James visited Andersen’s studio in the Via Margutta and paid fifty pounds for a terra-cotta bust of a young Italian. As a work of art it was not impressive, and James did not know this Count Alberto Bevilacqua Lasize and had no curiosity about him. But after he set the bust on the chimneypiece of his dining room in Lamb House, in Rye, he wrote back to Andersen, “I shall have him constantly before me as a loved companion and friend. He is so living, so human, so sympathetic and sociable and curious, that I foresee it will be a lifelong attachment.” Was there a soft appeal in James’s whimsicality—a suggestion that he felt the need to end his habitual solitariness by companionship with someone as innocent-looking and sympathetic as Bevilacqua—or Andersen? A few weeks later, returning to America in search of commissions, Andersen stopped briefly at Lamb House, and when he had left, James wrote,
I was absurdly sorry to lose you when, that afternoon of last month we walked sadly to the innocent and kindly little station together and our common fate growled out the harsh false note of whirling you, untimely, away. Since then I have missed you out of all proportion to the three meager little days (for it seems strange that they were only that) that we had together. I have never (and I’ve done it three or four times,) passed the little corner where we came up Udimore hill (from Winchelsea,) in the eventide on our bicycles, without thinking ever so tenderly of our charming spin home-ward in the twilight and feeling again the strange perversity it made of that sort of thing being so soon over. Never mind – we shall have more, lots more, of that sort of thing!. If things go well with me I’m by no means without hope of having been able, meanwhile, to take the studio so in hand that I shall be ready to put you into it comfortably for a little artistic habitation. Rye, alas, is not sculpturesque, nor of a sculpturesque inspiration – but what’s good for the man is, in the long run, good for the artist – and we shall be good for each other.

It was the kind of invitation he had seldom in the past extended to anyone, but it had recently become a plausible idea. At Lamb House, which he had been renting for two years but would soon buy, James had two rooms for guests and a small staff of servants. Jonathan Sturgis, the charming but badly crippled son of an American banker who lived in London, someone a little like Ralph Touchett in *The Portrait of a Lady*, had stayed for six months just before Andersen arrived. James had written to a Cambridge friend of many years, Grace Norton, “I am learning the lesson that in a small country town where local society is nil, fate seeks to make the matter as broad as it’s long by arranging compensations on strictly domestic lines. In other words, whereas in London the people you know are everywhere, in the country they are all in your own house!” He urged Miss Norton herself to join “the domestic procession.” She did not visit, though, as Fred Kaplan observes, they had “long found a comfortable way to be spinsters together.”

James would continue to have younger visitors, more or less transient, without ever establishing any resident “lifelong attach-
ment” like Bevilacqua’s bust. In 1899, also, James’s relationship with Jonathan Sturgis’s younger brother, Howard, one of the deepest and most lasting of new friendships, began, and the same invitation was issued after the guest’s first overnight visit: “You were a most conformable . . . & delightful guest. I repeat, almost to indiscretion, that I could live with you.” But Sturgis would have his own live-in lover, nicknamed “the Babe,” at his own pleasant country house near Eton. James may have been only half-serious. As he told Morton Fullerton, still another member of a growing circle of admiring young men now shaping around him, even as he was issuing these invitations, “The port from which I set out was, I think, that of the essential loneliness of my life – and it seems to be the port also, in sooth, to which my course again finally directs itself! The loneliness, (since I mention it!) what is it but the deepest things about one? Deeper about me, at any rate, than anything else: deeper than my ‘genius,’ deeper than my ‘discipline,’ deeper than my pride, deeper, above all, than the deep countermining of art.”

This did not preclude sentimental attachments, which wove themselves unobtrusively into the days of a productive literary toiler. During the first decade of the new century he would write in a special manner to a small group of younger men like Howard Sturgis or Fullerton, to a young man-about-town named Jocelyn Persse, to the young writer Hugh Walpole, and to Andersen. These letters had a tone of tenderness that had not appeared in his past correspondence and would not appear, either, in letters he continued to direct outside this special group. Its members were, of course, nearly all young enough to be his sons. To all of them James showed an almost maternal readiness to cuddle and comfort and hold close, to nurse, even when the friend was not an invalid like Jonathan Sturgis. When Andreas died in 1902, James wrote the grieving Hendrik, “The sense that I can’t help you, see you, talk to you, touch you, hold you close and long, or do anything to make you rest on me, and feel my deep participation – this torments me, dearest boy. . . . I wish I could go to Rome and put my hands on you (oh, how lovingly I should lay them!) . . . I embrace you with almost a passion of pity.”

James’s language, here, has startled literalist modern readers by its tactile quality, which was not confined to such a crisis as a
brother’s death. On all occasions with these cherished friends, James was apt to exaggerate the conventional French “je t’embrasse” and make one visualize him as demonstrative beyond the Anglo-American norm — as, indeed, he was (he was prone to pat a friend on the arm, to put a hand affectionately on a shoulder, and even, to the consternation of George Bernard Shaw on one occasion, to give the Gallic kiss on both cheeks). But he had not done this with words, before. Closing his letters to Andersen, James says, “I put, my dear boy, my arm around you, & feel the pulsation, thereby, as it were, of our excellent future & your admirable endowment,” “Always grasping you hard and holding you close, I am yours, dearest Hendrik, immensely,” “I pat you on the back lovingly, tenderly, tenderly,” “Te abbaccio bene, Enrico caro, ti stringo caramente,” “I take you, my dear old Boy, to my heart, & beg you to feel my arms around you,” and variations thereof. How sexual the feeling is behind such language has been debated rather too earnestly lately by academic scholars, but it may not be so important to establish whether they are playful imaginary physicalities or a reflection of the writer’s actual behavior, past or anticipated.

We tend, today, to suppose that few closets are ever really empty, though celibacy can be the darkest of dark secrets. That James was a lifelong celibate was the conclusion of James’s first biographer, Leon Edel, who decided that the letters reveal a breakdown of barriers to a long-suppressed sexual responsiveness but that this responsiveness was a matter of feeling only, not of acts. James’s excellent recent biographer, Fred Kaplan, goes further, and finds hints in James’s writing that he was attracted to men long before this. But Kaplan, also, believes that it is impossible to say that, early or late, this “homoerotic” inclination was more than just inclination. James seems sometimes ready simply to indulge himself in an extravagance of suggestive expression. He sometimes seems even to invite — perhaps seriously, perhaps teasingly — the reciprocation he knows certain recipients capable of. Howard Sturgis was openly homosexual. Walpole was only less openly so. Fullerton was a bisexual philanderer who had an affair with Oscar Wilde’s friend Lord Ronald Sutherland Gower, a wealthy aristocratic member of Wilde’s circle who was understood to have been the model for Lord Henry Wotton in The Picture of
**Dorian Gray.** And Fullerton was also to have affairs with the socially prominent Margaret Brooke, the ranee of the “white rajah” of Sarawak, and with the novelist Edith Wharton, whom he met in 1904 — not to speak of affairs with women more obscure. But his young friends weren’t quite certain how it was with James himself. Walpole later claimed that, once, he had offered himself to the Master only to be told, “I can’t, I can’t.” Persse, to whom James wrote numerous letters full of verbal hugs and pats, would say, long afterward, “H.J. was the dearest human being I have ever known. Why he liked me so much I cannot say.”

With a certain participatory relish, it is clear, James liked to follow Fullerton’s erotic entanglements, including his difficulties with a former mistress who attempted to blackmail him in connection with his goings-on with Gower and who was bought off with James’s and Wharton’s help. About Fullerton’s affair with Wharton herself, James might have had a fascinating view of their lovemaking from her own side as well. Nothing they could tell him was uninteresting. Years before, someone remembered, James had been shown some of Lord Byron’s letters to his sister that seemed to demonstrate the incestuous nature of their relationship. James, said a more easily shocked witness, “never turned a hair. His only word for some special vileness was ‘singular’ — ‘most curious’ — ‘nauseating, perhaps, but how inexpressibly significant.’ ”

But he was equally avid of the traveler’s tales and high-life experiences of Persse, a strikingly handsome, genial socialite who was, perhaps, not homosexual at all. James’s many letters to him illustrate as strongly as those to the others how the writer’s cherishing and hypercurious nature never tired of sharing the trials and pleasures of these younger men who were more sexually active than himself. To Persse he said again and again, things like “I seem to see you roll, triumphant, from one scene of amiable hospitality and promiscuous social exercise to another, and sitting here on my side, as tight as I can, with a complete absence of personal rolling, I quite rejoice in the bright brave vision of you who are willing to do these things (that I can’t do) and to take me with you, so to speak, in thought, even while I crouch in my corner I get through you, more or less the vibration of adventure and the side-wind of the unfolding panorama.” There may be some
element of possible truth in Max Beerbohm’s famous, cruel cartoon, which shows James kneeling to peer through the keyhole of a hotel-room door outside of which a man’s and a woman’s shoes have been placed for polishing. James’s was the voyeuristic temperament; his curiosity was part of his faculty as a novelist, but also, perhaps, the most characteristic thing about him as a man.

Andersen’s own sexual character remains uncertain, and his sexual adventures, if there were any, might not have provided much entertainment for James’s curiosity. There is an early painting by his brother, Andreas, in the Via Mancini museum, that depicts Hendrik waking up in bed, the covers slipping off his naked body as another young man sits naked beside him and pulls up his socks – but there seems little to indicate that Hendrik was a committed homosexual. His most intense lifelong attachments were familial, to his brother and to his mother, and, later, in an ambiguous prolongation of fraternal feeling, to Andreas’s widow. He denied the importance of physical sex, telling worshipping Olivia, “The meeting of physical bodies is nothing and never can be. It is the meeting of mental forces that count, and that force has always been first.” But his eroticism of dependence may have found a psychic complement in James’s own desire to know and sustain another self, his eroticism of sympathy.

One can imagine that even as a child in Newport little Hendrik was already learning how to engage the kindness of strangers. His family had come almost penniless from Bergen when he was an infant, and his father, alcoholic and intermittently employed, barely supported the mother and her three sons, who grew into boyhood working at painting and carpentry in the Newport shipyards. Somehow they came to the attention of wealthy persons like the Howes and Cushings and also of Isabella Stewart Gardner, who was already becoming the greatest of American collectors and patronesses. Their early education may have been minimal (James would exclaim at the disorderly state of Hendrik’s grammar and spelling in the letters he received from him), but the two elder Andersen boys were sent to study art at the Cowles School in Boston, and help must have continued when Andreas applied himself to painting and Hendrik to sculpture and they went on to informal study of the masterpieces of the past in Europe, spending time in Paris and Florence and Rome. In 1897, Hendrik was in
Hendrik C. Andersen in his studio, Passeggiata di Ripetta, Rome, c. 1915
Courtesy of Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Museo Hendrik C. Andersen, Rome
London, where he had succeeded in attracting attention from a Norwegian aristocrat, the Baron Arild Rosenkranz, who was also a sculptor, and through him made the acquaintance of the same wealthy Lord Gower who had been Fullerton’s lover. This practiced seducer soon was openly courting Hendrik in Rome. As Olivia describes in a biographic sketch of Hendrik she later wrote, “Once he had found his way to Hendrik’s studio, he was continuously calling there, sending notes, inviting the young man to lunch or dinner, introducing him to other intellectual men, treating him, indeed, with a warmth of attention that men are wont to bestow on women.” Perhaps Andersen understood the terms of the bargain when Gower offered the temptation to which his nature was, indeed, vulnerable – that he might adopt him formally, making him his legal heir. Either Andersen declined or Gower’s fancy shifted; in 1898 he adopted someone else, and Hendrik’s big chance was gone.

Not sex so much as opportunism seems to have governed Andersen’s relationships. He must have seen possibilities of help when he met James, and the famous writer would hastily have to write him from Lamb House that he had not promised to prepare a piece for publication about the bust he had just bought: “I’m afraid I said something (accidentally) that misguided you in leading you to suppose I have written in a journal about him. I haven’t. What I meant was that sooner or later a great many persons will see and be struck with him, here.” When Andersen came for his visit, James did arm him with introductions and recommendations and advice, however. In America he was soon staying in the Brookline home of Mrs. Gardner, where Howard Cushing and another young Newport artist, John Briggs Potter, as well as Andreas, had already set up their easels. Andreas was painting their hostess’s portrait. James wrote Hendrik, “I am glad dear Mrs. Jack is being kind to you – be kind, when you can, to her.” James also had applauded Andersen’s approach to Julia Ward Howe, whose portrait bust he undertook, and to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, the queen of The Breakers, who later described him as an artist who “made colossal figures which no one wanted but which afforded him great pleasure.” She asked him to teach her to make statues, and then she went to Paris to study with Auguste Rodin. She would succeed – either because of her wealth or in
spite of it – as a maker of the public monuments Andersen failed at, and go on, as a collector who founded the Whitney Museum of American Art – which, today, contains no Andersens.

Ultimately, the patroness Hendrik needed appeared when Andreas died in February 1902 after a month of marriage to Olivia Cushing. The bereaved Olivia came to live permanently in Rome with her brother-in-law, his mother and younger brother, and an Italian girl who would become an adopted Andersen. When Olivia’s father died in 1907, leaving her a fortune, she moved them all into a finer flat with a great roof terrace overlooking the Piazza del Popolo, undertook their total support, and established Hendrik in a larger studio nearby in the Passeggiata di Ripetta along the Tiber. She made herself the custodian not only of her dead husband’s paintings, which were shipped to Rome from Boston, but of Hendrik’s accumulating sculptures, and then she dedicated her money to his further projects. One must suppose she was in love with him – and Andersen with her, perhaps, in his own peculiar, exalted way. When she died in 1917, Andersen wrote to Mrs. Gardner: “She had been a guardian angel over us since the death of my brother and we both loved and adored her all with our heart and soul. . . . There was something so pure in her, so pure that there seemed to be a halo of divinity surrounding her and guiding all her actions with a tenderness and sweetness words can never express.”

What James offered in the way of loving support was clearly less calculated to produce such gratitude – it was simply his fondness for a “dearest boy” to whom he continued to address letters that expressed his faithful goodwill but also an irrepressible intellectual honesty. James had a professional understanding of the market for aesthetic goods. He saw very soon that Andersen’s giant nudes would never sell. What were possibly vendible were portrait busts, though Andersen did not seem able to secure commissions for these either. Even the Lincoln statue, Andersen’s failed attempt to please an American committee, aroused in James, when he saw a photo, a protest expressing his deep feeling about the president who had meant so much to his own generation, something incomprehensible to Andersen. The limply seated figure with hands interlaced on its lap seems like a child at his school desk. James said merely that he was “a softer, smaller giant than
we used to see.” But he offered “tender sympathy” when he learned that it was rejected in Buffalo. He urged the stricken sculptor to come to Lamb House “to stay with me till you are wholly rested and consoled and cheered” — and returning from America, Andersen did stop for three days at Lamb House.

He had also been working on a sculpture group of oversize nude figures circling a fountain, he told James, and this, too, had failed to find sponsors. James thought he understood. “What a dismal doom for a sculptor to work for a great vulgar stupid community that revels in every hideous vulgarity and only quakes at the clean and blessed nude,” he declared. As Andersen continued to describe other projects that occupied him in Rome, James wrote encouragingly, “I call down blessings on the particular work your letter tells me of, heroic young master of the grand style that you are. It all sounds terribly beautiful and big and difficult, but I well know that therein, exactly, is the interest and the honour.” But finally, in 1904, he asked, “Have you any small photos of your new figures?” When they finally arrived, James repeated, as usual, his caressing appreciation, “Every word of you is as soothing as caress of your hand, and the sense of the whole as sweet to me as being able to lay my own upon you.” But the sculptures he was now looking at for the first time were something else.

I find them, dear Hendrik, difficult to speak of to you — they terrify me so with their evidence as of madness (almost) in the scale on which you are working! It is magnificent — it is sublime, it is heroic; and the idea and composition of your group-circled fountain evidently a very big thing. Only I feel as if it were let loose in space like a blazing comet — with you, personally, dangling after like the tail, and I ask myself where my poor dear confident reckless Hendrik is being whirled through the dark future, and where he is going to be dropped. I want to be there, wherever it is, to catch you in my arms — for my nerves, at all events, give way, with the too-long tension of your effort, even if yours don’t. And I yearn too, for the smaller masterpiece; the condensed, consummate, caressed, intensely filled-out thing.

That autumn, James was in America after an absence of twenty years, re-exploring the scenes of earlier days and gathering impres-
sions that would emerge in his book *The American Scene*. In Boston he met up with Olivia, who told him that Andersen had been suffering from attacks of vertigo, diagnosed as Ménière’s syndrome. She also showed him an album she carried with her of Andersen’s latest work — and after seeing it, James wrote to Rome in the mingled tones of solicitude and forced encouragement that the sculptor’s work now aroused. It had, he said, “quickened my conception of its greatness and beauty — of the big, brave, sustained and magnificent conception that you’re allowing to ‘chaw’ you up. Well, you are killing yourself in a splendid cause, if you are killing yourself. (If I really believed you were I would of course come and smash a few dozen statues for you — smash them for brazen Idols feeding on your flesh — smash them to clear the air).” Whether James really believed that Andersen’s dizzy spells were caused by his artistic overambitiousness or not, he may have been seriously in a statue-smashing state of mind. But he did not want to be too crushing to Andersen, who was planning to come again to America to renew his bid for buyers, “Your monuments are over the head of all the stupid here, but there are individuals who are not impenetrable. . . . The man stretching his mighty arms is a very great triumph, the finest thing, to my sense, that you have ever done.”

When Andersen arrived, they had some pleasant hours together in Boston and in Newport, before James went back to England.

Their reunion had been, as always, frustratingly brief, and Andersen didn’t stop by in Rye on his own return. James wrote his elusive young friend, “When the Devil shall we meet at this rate? The grim years pass and don’t bring me that boon!” But, finally, as though compelled to a long-delayed frankness, he added,

There are long and weighty things — about your work, your plan, your perversity, your fountain, your building on and on, and up and up, *in the air*, as it were, *and out of relation to possibilities and actualities*, that I wanted to say to you. We could have *talked* them beautifully and intimately here, these things — but now it’s as if they had to wait and wait. *Make the pot boil, at any price, as the only real basis* of freedom and sanity. Stop building in the air for a while and build on the ground. *Earn* the money that will give you the right to conceptions (and still more to executions), like your
fountain—though I am still wondering what American community is going to want to pay for thirty or forty stark naked men and women of whatever beauty—lifted into the raw light of one of their public places. Keep in relation to the possible possibilities, dearest boy, and hold on tight, at any rate, till I can get to you somehow and somewhere and have you bust me.

James himself, like so many of the greatest artists he admired, had always understood that art finds its highest expression, sometimes, in the course of serving the market. When he received a vacation postcard from Bolsena, with its pictured church altar, from Andersen, he responded, “If you could only do a Potboiler like that altar,” for had not even the great painters of medieval or Renaissance altarpieces worked to please the buyer? He had always striven to make his own work sell, and even, a decade earlier, turned to the theater, though unsuccessfully, in an effort to find a better-paying audience than he had achieved with fiction. He would continue to sound the note of parental despair when Andersen returned to his studio in Rome:

When I think of you confronted again with your horribly expensive family of naked sons and daughters, of all sizes and ages (to say nothing of prancing animals) I know not in truth what to imagine, and only lose myself in the dark and troubled vision of your having to feed and clothe them. And then I reflect that you are always (terrible fellow!) begetting new ones as fast as possible—and I do lie awake at night asking myself what will become either of them or of you. . . . I wish with all my heart that, instead of the formidable Forty, I had forty snug little pot-boilers to impose on you—or even four: how I would cram them down your throat!

James continued to protest on practical grounds, but his personal distaste for Andersen’s “progeny” became at the same time more outspoken, despite efforts to suppress it. Of Andersen’s gigantic lovers united in The Kiss, James wrote,

Noble and admirable your two Lovers united in their long embrace, and quite, to my sense, the finest of all your fine contributions to this wonderful (and interminable!) series. It
won’t, by its nature, help the great nude Army to encamp in the heart of the American city, but when I have said that, I shall have exhausted the sum of my strictures upon it with the exception perhaps of saying that I don’t find the hands, on the backs, living enough and participant enough in the kiss. They would be, in life, very participant – to their finger-tips, and would show it in many ways. . . . [M]ake the creatures palpitate, and their flesh tingle and flush, and their internal economy proceed, and their bellies ache and their bladders fill – all in the mystery of your art!

It was the aging James, evidently, rather than young Andersen, who understood the importance of giving expression in art to the physical energies of men and women; no amount of anatomic literalism could take the place of an awareness that seemed lacking in the sculptor. In further letters James expressed objection to Andersen’s banal, repetitive “types,” the blank faces, the inelegant, “stocky” arms and legs, the too “symbolic” rather than “living and felt” hair. “Also I sometimes find your sexes (putting the indispensable sign apart!) not quite intensely enough differentiated – I mean through the ladies resembling a shade too much the gentlemen (perhaps, as in the case of this last ballerina, through your not allowing her a quite sufficient luxury – to my taste – of hip, or, to speak plainly, Bottom. She hasn’t much more than her husband, and I should like her to have a good deal more.”

But James continued to complain that he saw “less and less than ever where this colossal multiplication of divinely naked and intimately associated gentleman and ladies flaunting their bellies and bottoms and their other private affairs, in the face of day, is going, on an American possibility, to land you.” In October 1906, he repeated his message, “When you speak of your Poverty . . . I could howl – howl with anguish – over your continued parti-pris never apparently to do any blessed helpful pot-boilers but only your vast stripped stark sublime Family – on whose myriads of penises and bottoms and other private ornaments how can you ever financially realize in America.” Then, in a remarkable letter written the next month, he declared that he longed to put his arms around the stubborn boy who was

piling up into the air this fantastic number of figures on which you are realizing nothing. (neither money nor
judgment — the practical judgment, practical attitude towards them, of the purchasing, paying, supporting, rewarding world;) on which you are not even realizing that benefit of friction with the market which is so true a one for solitary artists too much steeped in their own personal dreams, and which wakes them up to a measure of where they are and what they are doing and not doing — for practical value or no-value. You are attempting what no young artist ever did — to live on air indefinitely, by what I can make out, putting all your eggs in one extremely precarious and perforated basket, and declining the aid of the thing done meanwhile to live, to bring in its assistance from month to month: the potboiler call it if you like, the potboiler which represents, in the lives of all artists, some of the most beautiful things ever done by them. Stop your multiplication of unsaleable nakedness for a while and hurl yourself, by every cunning art you can command, into the production of the interesting, the charming, the vendible, the placeable small thing. With your talent you easily can — and if I were near you now I should take you by the throat and squeeze it till you howled and make you do my Bust! You ought absolutely to get at Busts, at any cost of ingenuity — for it is fatal for you to go on indefinitely neglecting the Face, never doing one, only adding Belly to Belly — however beautiful — and Bottom to Bottom, however sublime. It is only by the Face that the artists — the sculptor — can hope predominantly and steadily to live — and it is so supremely and exquisitely interesting to do! The impossible effort to ignore all this wisdom that I thus pour out on you is what is working havoc in your nerves and digestion by the abnormal sort of tension and fever (the monstrous nature of the effort,) it requires.

James’s solicitude about Andersen’s health was genuine. He had himself been suffering from severe constipation and some sort of intestinal inflammation, and Andersen’s report of his perhaps similar difficulties prompted James to recommend his own regime of “Fletcherization,” a program of prolonged slow mastication of all food to the point of swallowing everything in a liquid state. But his advice about the relation of art to the market was the gift of his
most considered intellectual reflection. All the great artists he admired most, Hawthorne, the great English realist novelists, and Honoré de Balzac, had known how to express themselves through this relation. The recognition that in some deep sense even the most refined art must respond to the expectation of reader or viewer was the basis of his instruction to Andersen. He saw Andersen’s extravagant nudes as though he was looking at a work of prose fiction, and missed expressiveness in the heads at the top of the anonymous bodies. Yet he hoped, paradoxically, that Andersen’s limited talents might compass the marketable portrait busts.

The next spring, James came to Rome and visited Hendrik in his new studio, and sat for his own bust, but when Andersen asked about the possibility of its exhibition at the Royal Academy, James told him there would no chance there for work by an unknown. The sculptor’s monumental projects continued. Andersen managed to exhibit at the Venice Biennale a small bronze model of a monument for the grave of Andreas. The enlarged statue of an androgynous angel lifting from earth the body of the dead would have a difficult future history. Intended for Andreas’s grave in Mount Auburn Cemetery, it was never accepted there because of what must have seemed to Cambridge its almost exhibitionistic nudity, and Andersen offered it, unsuccessfully, in 1912, to the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome. In 1918 it was finally placed on the family tomb in the Protestant Cemetery in Testaccio, where Andreas, as well as Andersen’s mother and Olivia, was now buried. And then, in 1933, it was removed, supposedly for repairs, and Andersen was unable to get permission to put it back, perhaps because of its size, or perhaps, again, it was thought offensive. The statue seems to have remained, “abbandonato,” at the cemetery until 1947, when the sole survivor of the family, the adopted Lucia, brought it to Via Mancini. But few of Andersen’s statues would have even this degree of adventure in the world outside the studio. As the years passed he produced Jacob and the Angel, St. George and the Dragon, The Centaur’s Wedding, The Triumph of Washington and Lafayette, a monster-chested Football Player, The Prayer, and numerous feminine and masculine allegorical nudes in every posture, standing or on horseback, embracing or parading proudly with uplifted arms, sometimes with tiny
infants held aloft, representations of War, of Victory, of The Glory of Life, of Maternity. A 1932 series offered episodes in the life of Christ, designed for an unbuilt fountain. All are residents, now, of the Andersen museum. Andersen’s long campaign to attract the interest of wealthy Americans failed, after all. Even Mrs. Gardner, who had helped him and his brother in the beginning, lost interest, perhaps with the advice of Bernard and Mary Berenson. It had been Berenson who, when Andersen first came back to Boston and New York in 1900 seeking commissions, paid for the casting of a statue so that it could be shown in New York at the Society of American Artists. But, in 1921, Mary Berensen wrote Mrs. Gardner from Vallambrosa, where they encountered Andersen on villeggiatura, “He has just done a bust of the Pope and now wants orders for Catholic monuments. He did a ghastly crucifixion (bas relief). His work is awful beyond imagination, and he pours it out endlessly, and has a huge studio filled with it, poor man.”

He was not, in fact, a poor man at all, as James already had realized on that visit to Rome in May 1907. It was his last visit to the city, and the last meeting of the two friends. James arrived after a leisurely trip from England with six weeks spent in Paris as the guest of Edith Wharton in her Paris apartment in the rue de Varenne and stops in Switzerland, Germany, and northern Italy when he made visits or took time off from travel to read proof—probably of the Scribner edition of his revised works. The first volume would be Roderick Hudson, that early novel about a young American sculptor in Rome. He had deliberately planned, as he told Andersen, to arrive in Rome “late, when the crowd of people (for I know too many), shall have more or less departed and removed the complication of their presence.” The visit would have, in retrospect, a lingering, sweet melancholy. Its final hours surface in the one of the travel essays in Italian Hours, published in 1909, when he recalls his walks with “a sculptor friend” to the foundry where his statues were cast, a glimpse of “the old Roman ‘art-life’ of one’s early dreams.” He had

another impression I was to owe to him: that of an evening meal spread, in the warm still darkness that made no candle flicker, on the wide high space of an old loggia that overhung, in one quarter, the great obelisked Square preceding one of
the Gates, and in the other the Tiber and the far Trastevere and more thing than I can say – above all, as it were, the whole backward past, the mild confused romance of the Rome one had loved and of which one was exactly taking leave under protection of the friendly lanterned and garlanded feast and the commanding, all-embracing roof-garden. It was indeed a reconciling, it was an altogether penetrating, last hour.

Yet finalities and reconciliations are never enacted in life with such poetic shapeliness. When James saw Andersen in his new studio and visited the apartment Olivia’s legacy had provided, he must have realized that he would not be hearing again about Andersen’s “poverty” and that his gospel of working for the market was more unlikely than ever to be heeded. “The thought of your grand old apartment, and your spacious settlement in it, has kept doing me, whenever I thought of you, a world of good,” he wrote later. He continued to write to Andersen from time to time as one opportunity or another for further meetings failed to present itself. In 1911 he would say, as he often had before, “Your devoted and concentrated image, in the rich old Roman picture, is dear and vivid to me, beloved Hendrik, always and always, and I wish to goodness we weren’t condemned to live so eternally beyond touch of hand and sound of voice. I needn’t wish you soundness and serenity – you are so splendidly and enviably wedded to them.” And that year, they nearly did meet again. James had returned to America with his dying brother, William, had been beside William when he died in August 1910. He had lingered on with William’s family and seen American friends like Grace Norton and William Dean Howells. Still, although Andersen and Olivia arrived for a visit of their own in Newport, James was too weary and depressed to meet them. “It’s a sad business, this passage of all the months and years without our meeting again save in this poor way [by letters],” he wrote.

But a new phase of Andersen’s career had begun that would reawaken all James’s old misgivings about this friend’s misguided grandiosity. His distaste for Andersen’s sculptural extravagance, a profligacy of bad art as well as a poor bid for economic independence, had not gone away, though he seldom expressed it now. But
Andersen was not yet discouraged. Since 1904, he had dreamed of enshrining his work in a museum or palace of his own, a “Temple of the Arts” in which the rejected statues would be preserved and displayed along with Andreas’s paintings. The plays Olivia had begun to write, though with no more expectation of seeing them produced on the stage than Andersen had of selling his sculptures, would be privately enacted there too. Then, suddenly, in 1907, there appeared prospects far more ample. Hendrik had made a new acquaintance, the French architect Ernest Hébrard, who had received the Prix de Rome and was spending the year at the Villa Medici. It may have been Hébrard’s visions of a City Beautiful of the future that meshed with Andersen’s dreams of a great center of civilization in which his sculptures would play a part as they had not yet done in the actual, unplanned world. At the conclusion of his Prix de Rome year, Hébrard went back to Paris and, financed by Andersen, rented a large studio in the rue Jacob, recruited a team of forty assistants at the nearby Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and began work on the design of a World City.

It was the cultural moment for such dreams. In those last years just before the outbreak of world war, the political air in the Western world was full of premonitions of catastrophe and pleas for the organization of international peace. The Hague Tribunal for the settlement of national differences had been established in 1899, and while Andersen and Hébrard were having their first conversations, the Second Hague Conference was taking place. Andersen began to discover diverse potential supporters among “internationalists” and philanthropists of various sorts. But the most important of these was the Belgian social philosopher Paul Otlet, who visited Hébrard’s studio in February, 1910, together with his countryman the statesman Henri La Fontaine. Now considered the founder of “information science” and the anticipator of hypertext, Otlet was, after James, probably the most interesting man Andersen would ever meet. He was a theorist of bibliography who had developed the system of Universal Decimal Classification to provide humankind with access to all knowledge and, eventually, the mutuality that would make for world peace. With La Fontaine, who in 1907 had become head of the International Peace Bureau, he had founded an International Federation of Information and Documentation. He had also recently organized the
Union of International Associations in Brussels comprising 132 international organizations of every kind, as a structure of internationalism. When Otlet contemplated Hfarid’s stately, linear avenues and the elevations of a “Tower of Progress” that was more than a thousand feet high and the stupendous Beaux-Arts buildings intended to house international centers for the arts and sciences as well as for the deliberations of statesmen, the zoological and botanical gardens, hospitals, theaters, and churches, the center of physical culture and the stadium bigger than the Circo Massimo, and the underground railway, he decided that he had found the “installation matérielle” to express the aims for a world center. He would later write jointly with La Fontaine to tell Andersen that a “curieuse convergence existe entre nos vues respectives. Par une sorte d’harmonie préétablie, une sympathie nécessaire devait s’établir entre nos deux œuvres et une vision très nette de la force que l’une apporter à l’autre.” The two Belgians arranged for the presentation of what would be called a “World Communication Centre” at the next meeting of the Union of Associations in April 1911, which they invited Andersen to address. And they envisioned the dream city rising into the sky at Tervueren, outside their native Brussels.

Of course, one might have to keep one’s options open. The finished plan would propose a site on some still undesignated sea coast and would include tracings of the city plan on the maps of various plausible places besides Tervueren — near The Hague; outside Paris; on the French Riviera, near Fréjus; at Ostia, near Rome; near Constantinople, at San Stefano on the Sea of Marmara; in Switzerland near Bern on the Lac de Neuchâtel; on the American Atlantic shore at Lakewood, New Jersey. It would, as it turned out, never be built at any of these hypothetical places or, indeed, anywhere. But the hope would linger, and Otlet and Andersen would remain connected, having collaborated in promoting a vision of the future that would have a later career of a sort as a prototype for other projects, other dreams. These would emerge after the war so soon to make a mockery of visions of universality just after the plan was published in 1913, the year that La Fontaine received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Before this, as the work progressed in Paris, Hendrik was modeling bigger and bigger statuary that might find places along the
avenues of the imaginary city. His enormous fountain, with its sculptures of Night, Day, Evening, and Morning, would suit the central plaza, and he continued to add to its crowd of figures. The “colossus of Rhodes” giants appointed to guard the harbor entrance of the city were, of course, too immense to be created to scale in the studio. But Andersen’s painting of the futuristic scene shows them looming into the sky above the harbor so distant below with its tiny boats and the boundless plain on which the city’s immense buildings seem minuscule.

In far-off Lamb House, James had hardly been aware of these developments as he rejoiced at news in January 1912 that Andersen had finished his fountain: “I am glad of your having done with the many-figured fountain, the huge bare-legs and arms (and everything else bareable – or bearable) of which seemed to me, ever, to have got you in their complicated and multitudinous grip very much as the Laocoön of the Capital (or is it the Vatican?) museum is in the grip of a squeezing boa-constrictor.” But it was then that Andersen wrote him, on 31 March, about the project that had reached its final stages with the preparation of a book, called Creation of a World Centre of Communication, to be laid at influential doorsteps throughout the world, and to James’s consternation, he asked for help. In Andersen’s letter – which survives because Olivia copied it into her diary before it was mailed – one can discover the astonishing fact that he hoped that James would review and improve the lengthy text for this book in which Andersen had set forth the argument intended to persuade the world to bring his dream city into being. There was to be a deluxe edition of five hundred copies to be sent to the most important persons everywhere. He beseeched James to help him.

Though suffering for many months with a severe attack of shingles, James managed to produce a masterpiece of grieving censure by way of reply on 14 April:

Not another day do I delay to answer (with such difficulty!) your long and interesting letter. I have waited these ten days or so just because of the difficulty: so little, (as you may imagine or realize on thinking a little) is it a soft and simple matter to stagger out from under such an avalanche of information and announcement as you let drop on me with this
terrific story of your working so in the colossal and in the void and in the air! Brace yourself for my telling you that (having, these days, scrambled a little from under the avalanche,) I now, staggering to my feet, again, just simply flee before the horrific mass, lest I start the remainder (what is hanging in the air) afresh to overwhelm me. I say “brace yourself”, though I don’t quite see why I need, having showed you in the past, so again and again, that your mania for the colossal, the swelling and the huge, the monotonously and repeatedly huge, breaks the heart of me for you, so convinced have I been all along that it means your simply burying yourself and all your products and belongings, and everything and Every One that is yours, in the most bottomless and thankless and fatal of sandbanks. There is no use or application or power of absorption or assimilation for these enormities, beloved Hendrik, anywhere on the whole surface of the practicable, or, as I should rather say, impracticable globe; and when you write me that you are now lavishing time and money on a colossal ready-made City, I simply cover my head with my mantle and turn my face to the wall, and there, dearest Hendrik, just bitterly weep for you – just desperately and dismally and helplessly water that dim refuge with a salt flood. I have practically said these things to you before – though perhaps never in so dreadfully straight and sore a form as today: when this culmination of your madness, to the tune of five hundred millions of tons of weight, simply squeezes it out of me. For that, dearest boy, is the dread Delusion to warn you against – what is called in Medical Science Megalomania (look it up in the dictionary;) in French la folie des grandeurs, the infatuated and disproportionate love and pursuit of, and attempt at, the Big, the Bigger, the Biggest, the Immensest Immensity, with all sense of proportion, application, relation and possibility madly submerged. What am I to say to you, gentle and dearest Hendrik, but these things, cruel as they may seem to you, when you write me (with so little spelling even – though that was always your wild grace!) that you are extemporizing a World-City from top to toe, and employing forty architects to see you through with it etc.? How can I throw myself on your
side to the extent of employing to back you a single letter of 
the Alphabet when you break to me anything so fantastic or 
out of relation to any reality of any kind in all the weary 
world?? The idea, my dear old Friend, fills me with mere 
pitying dismay, the unutterable Waste of it all makes me 
retire into my room and lock the door to howl! Think of me 
as doing so, howling for hours on end, and as not coming out 
till I hear that you have just gone straight out on to the 
Ripetta and chucked the total mass of your Paraphernalia, 
planned to the end, bravely over the parapet and well into 
the Tiber. As if, beloved boy, any use on all the mad earth can 
be found for a ready-made city, made-while-one-waits, as 
they say, and which is the more preposterous and the more 
delirious, the more elaborate and the more “complete” and 
the more magnificent you have made it. Cities are living 
organisms, that grow from within and by experience and 
piece by piece; they are not bought all hanging together, in 
any inspired studio anywhere whatsoever, and to attempt to 
plant one down on its area prepared, or even just merely 
projected for its use is to – well it’s to go forth into the deadly 
Desert and talk to the winds. Dearest Hendrik, don’t ask me 
to help you so to talk – don’t, don’t, don’t. I should be so 
playing to you the part of the falsest, fatallest friend. But do 
this – realise how dismally unspeakably much these cold, 
hard, desperate words, withholding sympathy, cost your ever-
affectionate, your terribly tender old friend.

This stupendous letter of nine manuscript pages crossed one of 
Andersen’s in which he called himself a poor beggar living in the 
dark alleys of Rome who has dared to ask a favor from the King of 
Writers but reminds James that the publishers of the book are 
pressing him and he is desperate for James’s literary help. Months 
passed, and he brings himself to write again, imploring the “King 
of silence” for a sign. And now he wants a blurb, a quotable 
statement to be used in promoting the plan. At last, James re-
sponds with some compunction, regretting his severity, wishing 
they could have talked face to face, but he explains again:

You see, dearest Hendrik, I live myself in the very intensity 
of reality and can only conceive of any art-work as producing
itself piece by piece and touch by touch, in close relation to some immediate form of life that may be open to it — I do this so much, I say, that I think of colossal aggregations of the multiplied and the continuous and the piled up, as brilliant castles in air, brilliant as you will, cut off from all root-taking in this terribly crowded and smothered and overbuilt ground that stretches under our feet of the for the most part raging and would-be throat-cutting and mutually dynamiting nations. I don’t, in fine, see where your vision, subject to such murderous obstruction and control and annihilating criticism, “comes in”; the very law of our difficult human sphere being that things struggle into life, even the very best of them, by slow steps and stages and rages and convulsions of experience, and utterly refuse to be taken over ready-made or en bloc.

After the book was published in 1913, Andersen and Olivia, encouraged by Otlet and others, attempted to organize support not only for the World City but for the general cause of peace among nations. They asked for subscriptions to an “international society” called “World Conscience.” Hundreds of letters were mailed and polite replies, printed in supplements to the first appeal, were received from dignitaries as different as Booker T. Washington and former Presidents William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt. But James wrote,

You take too much for granted, and take it too sublimely so, of the poor old friend who left you such a comparatively short time since making in all contentment, as he supposed, in a happy Roman studio, statues interesting and limited, even if a little alarming in scale and number, and who then at the turn of a hand finds you appeal to him and press him hard on such totally different ground altogether and as if this were what he had ever gone in for. Evidently, my dear boy, I can only give you pain that it gives me pain to be forced to give you, by telling you that I don’t so much as understand your very terms of “World” this and “World” the other and can neither think myself, nor want to think, in any such vain and false, and presumptuous, any such idle and deplorable and delirious connections. . . . I simply loathe such pretentious
forms of words as “World” anything — they are to me mere monstrous sound without sense. The World is a prodigious and portentous and immeasurable affair, and I can’t for a moment pretend to sit in my little corner here and “sympathize” with proposals for dealing with it. It is so far vaster in its appalling complexity than you or me, or than anything we can pretend without the imputation of absurdity and insanity to do to it, that I content myself, and inevitably must (so far as I can do anything at all, now,) with living in the realities of things, with “cultivating my garden” (morally and intellectually speaking,) and with referring my questions to a Con-science (my own poor little personal,) less inconceivable than that of the globe.

James’s profound dismissal of utopianism and the tyranny over life it threatens probably meant very little to Andersen, who was just then euphorically promoting the cause of his plan, finding encouragement in Brussels and rejoicing in an audience with Belgium’s King Albert. Yet James’s argument for particularity rather than universality, his distrust of the imposition of an abstract plan, an imperial aestheticism, was prophetic of the coming years. The abstract and ready-made nature of an artificially created city would always have critics, though the French writer Paul Adam had defended Andersen’s plan before the Sorbonne as early as 1914 by pointing out that cities created as a whole had been successfully achieved — Belo Horizonte in Brazil or the city of Koulouba, on the Niger. But James’s view of the organic complexity of human life anticipated a critique that would in time be made of even the most ideally motivated of universal plans. To the realist novelist in James, the irreducible individuality of men and women was all. Perhaps it is not surprising that in 1926 Mussolini gave Andersen ten minutes of conversation and told him how much he would like to see the World City established at Ostia. City planning would show its fascist face in many places in the postwar years.

The war put all such projects on hold, of course. James threw himself, with passionate sympathy, into the cause of aid to Belgian refugees organized by Edith Wharton in Paris, and for this he was ready to contribute literary aid by writing an essay, “The Long
Wards,” for a fund-raising collection, and for the American Volunteer Ambulance Corp directed by the son of his old friend Charles Eliot Norton, he wrote an “appeal.” Lamb House was lent as a refuge for war victims. To Andersen on his “grand old terrace” in Rome, he wrote, in March 1915, his hope that Italy would soon be joining the Allies. It was James’s last letter to this friend, for on 2 December he suffered a stroke and he died at the end of February 1916.

Projects such as Andersen’s and Hébrard’s would be born again in the post–armistice mood that led to the creation of the League of Nations, whose headquarters were to be in Geneva. In Brussels, an immense Palais du Cinquantenaire and a Palais Mondial housing Otlet’s Institute of Bibliography arose in 1920. But Otlet had not surrendered the idea of an urban center of all knowledge. In 1928, he approached Le Corbusier (whose design for the League Palace had been eliminated on a technicality) and asked him to plan a “cité mondiale” for Geneva. And despite the contrast between Hébrard’s Beaux-Arts buildings and Le Corbusier’s geometric towers there would be a certain resemblance between the new “radiant” city and the old. In both, monumental edifices for centralized functions were separated by vast spaces and straight-ruled avenues. In the center of his plan Le Corbusier placed a pyramidal building, a Mundaneum, or World Museum. Otlet had shown Le Corbusier the Andersen-Hébrard book, in which the ancient ziggurat temple at Khorsabad in Mesopotamia had been described as a worthy architectural prototype, and he incorporated it in his new city. But like the earlier one, the modernist urban fantasy was unrealized. Only the Mundaneum building eventually was built, and survives today at Mons, outside Brussels.

Andersen’s own World City survives in the book he sent to many major university heads in 1913. I went over to the Rotch Library at MIT recently to see the copy that had been received so long ago at the office of the institute’s president. It is about a foot wide and a foot and a half long and weighs more than ten pounds, and the pages have become so fragile that it can hardly be handled. Wearing the prescribed white gloves, I turned its pages on a lectern and viewed again the delicately drawn Tower of Progress at whose base a World Press office would “receive and rapidly distribute throughout the world all knowledge of vital importance.”