ART, SEX, AND JEWISHNESS:
PEGGY GUGGENHEIM AS A MODERN OBJECT

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Abstract

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Today, Peggy Guggenheim (born 1898, died 1979) is remembered for her incredible collection of modern art. Beyond her collection, however, she was an interesting character. She ignited issues of art, sex, and Jewishness in her time, and her legacy remains controversial. This thesis seeks to explain why. To do so, it will rely primarily on Guggenheim's memoir, which she revisited throughout her life and published in 1946, 1960, and 1979.

The first chapter will consider how Guggenheim came to promote art and champion the avant-garde. Because Guggenheim is principally remembered as a collector, any thorough investigation of her life and legacy must discuss her art world activities. After establishing this background, the second chapter will explore how Guggenheim's gender proved both an advantage and a vulnerability throughout her lifetime. It will look at her narration of sex, abuse, friendships, and affairs within the memoir, and how this narration rankled biographers and reviewers alike. Finally, the third chapter will investigate Guggenheim's complex Jewish identity, and how this identity was further complicated by World War II and subsequent reactions to it.

To my parents for their boundless love and support

To Talia and the future ahead of her

An extra special thank you to Dr. Coffin for her insight, honesty, and friendship

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Introduction

How did an American woman who grew up in the stuffy world of upper class, German-Jewish New York come to represent the avant-garde, and become one of modern art's most important promoters? The answer to this question is all the more remarkable when considering that Marguerite "Peggy" Guggenheim did not become seriously involved in art until 1938 at thirty-nine years of age. Only eighteen years before, the then twenty-one-year-old Guggenheim left New York to visit Europe. Upon departure, she was a sheltered young woman anxious to escape the expectations of her wealthy family. With the flexibility afforded by her recently acquired inheritance, Guggenheim extended her travels abroad to a twenty-one-year sojourn—and became a new woman in the process. In Paris, Guggenheim found her new home base in bohemia, a community of idealistic artists, writers, and patrons who aligned themselves with the avant-garde and proposed to break with rule-heavy bourgeois society.[1] Her new life was replete with artists, sex, tumultuous relationships, and multinational adventures. She fell in love with modern art, identifying with and supporting painters, sculptors, and writers. In 1938, she opened her first modern art gallery. Following its dissolution, she collected, even as World War II ramped up. Finally, she transported her impressive collection of abstract modern and Surrealist art to the United States, which she promoted in parallel to the work of unknown American artists in her new gallery. In inserting herself into modern art, Guggenheim came to influence it, define its trajectory—and sometimes embody it.

Today, Guggenheim is remembered for her incredible collection of modern art. Beyond her collection, however, she was an interesting character. She ignited issues of art, sex, and Jewishness in her time, and her legacy remains controversial. This thesis seeks to explain why.

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[1] Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2000).

To do so, it will rely primarily on Guggenheim's memoir, which she revisited throughout her life and published in 1946, 1960, and 1979. The three versions of the memoir speak to the details of Guggenheim's life, but also to the ways she hoped to portray herself. Reactions to memoir in the form of literary reviews illustrate the ways her behavior and persona clashed with midcentury standards, both provoking and irritating people. The first chapter of this thesis will consider how Guggenheim came to promote art and champion the avant-garde. It will do so by consulting the relevant art historical literature of interwar Europe, as well as of post-war America. Because Guggenheim is principally remembered as a collector, any thorough investigation of her life and legacy must discuss her art world activities. After establishing this background, the second chapter will explore how Guggenheim's gender proved both an advantage and a vulnerability throughout her lifetime, and especially within bohemia. It will look at her narration of sex, abuse, friendships, and affairs within the memoir—and how this narration rankled biographers and reviewers alike. Finally, the third chapter will investigate Guggenheim's complex Jewish identity, and how this identity was further complicated by the war and reactions to it. Overall, Guggenheim was a complex individual who provoked. Understanding the ways she did so, and how people reacted, reveals much about midcentury mores and culture.

Chapter I: Art

I. Introduction

Today, Guggenheim is remembered for her role in bringing European Surrealism and abstract art to the United States, for bridging it with American art, and for fostering the American art that later became Abstract Expressionism. Along with a handful of gallerists, critics, and art teachers, art historians routinely cite Guggenheim when explaining the elements that conspired for the emergence of Abstract Expressionism. Any thorough investigation of Guggenheim's life and legacy cannot ignore her significance to the developments of modern art, nor can they ignore that her significance went beyond helping to prime the scene for Abstract Expressionism. For many reasons, understanding her art background is especially important to this thesis. Firstly, one of the principle goals of her memoir was to assert herself as a patron of abstract and Surrealist art, meaning any accurate discussion of the memoirs must explain her patronage. Secondly, her identity as a collector and patron foregrounded both her sex and her Jewishness in interesting ways, two facets of Guggenheim that are central to this study and explored in the following two chapters. Thirdly, though past accounts of Guggenheim's life have looked at her professional significance to modern art and her personal life separately, this thesis considers them together because Guggenheim did not distinguish between her personal and public life, and because they illuminate each other in interesting ways. For all these reasons, this thesis begins with an investigation of her life as a collector and patron of the avant-garde.

II. Entry into Art

Though Guggenheim's legacy is defined by her promotion of art, her involvement in modern art was never foretold. She grew up far away from the avant-garde in the staid world of

upper class, German-Jewish New York. At the same time, however, this environment provided her with the cultural currency to become bohemian, which in turn primed Guggenheim for her later relationship with modern art. Her father Benjamin sought to inculcate "good taste" through cultural education.[2] To that end, he employed tutors: with a Mrs. Hartman, Guggenheim and her older sister Benita toured some of France's preeminent cultural institutions, including the Carnavalet, the Louvre, and the Châteaux of the Loire.[3] From Mrs. Hartman, Guggenheim learned about French history, the composer Wagner, and the writers Thackeray, Scott, George Eliot, and Dickens. Guggenheim reports that as an adolescent she felt rather unstimulated by this culture, preoccupied instead by crushes and romance.[4] After relocating to Paris at the age of twenty-one, she began to educate herself about painting. She became friends with Armand Lowengard, nephew of the gallerist and art dealer Lord Duveen who counted the influential art historian Bernard Berenson as advisor.[5] In the memoir, she recalls how Lowengard told her she was incapable of comprehending Berenson's art criticism of the Renaissance; in turn, she purchased and read seven of his books.[6] Soon thereafter, she located Europe's Renaissance masterpieces and traveled to see them—even those in hard-to-reach rural areas. As she admits, however, "In those days my desire for seeing everything was very much in contrast with my lack of feeling for anything."[7] Her "desire" for "everything" was pronounced: she had a voracious appetite and passion for bohemian life. And yet, it would be nineteen years before she

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[2] Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: The Informal Memoirs of Peggy Guggenheim* (New York City, NY: Dial Press, 1946; Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2015), 8.
[3] Ibid., 12.
[4] Ibid., 12.
[5] David B. Green, "This Day in Jewish History 1869: An Art Dealer Who Catered to Rich U.S. Businessmen Is Born," *Haaretz* (Tel Aviv, Israel), October 14, 2013, Jewish World, accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.haaretz.com/jewish/.premium-1869-a-gifted-art-dealer-is-born-1.5273392.
[6] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 30.
[7] Ibid., 29, 30.

concentrated her passions on art and embarked on another peripatetic quest, this time to build a modern collection.

Guggenheim learned about modern and avant-garde art by living in close proximity to the artists of bohemian Paris. Her husband Laurence Vail was well connected. He dabbled as a novelist and painter, and frequented Paris' bohemian cafes. Through his parties, their joint travels, and increasingly through her own devices, Guggenheim met and befriended many artists, including Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, Berenice Abbott, André Masson, Picasso, Francis Picabia, Giorgio de Chirico, Joan Miró, Jean Cocteau, and Tristan Tzara—to name only a few.[8] Though she is frequently remembered as a patron of Surrealism, she was not initially interested in the movement. She was, however, present for Surrealism's development. In 1924, four years after her arrival in Paris, the French poet André Breton christened the movement that had grown out of Dada with the first "Surrealist Manifesto."[9] By the time Surrealism had reached London for its first exhibition in 1936, however, Guggenheim believed that "Surrealism was over long ago, and that we had had enough of it in the twenties."[10]

Strikingly, however, Guggenheim opened a gallery devoted to abstract and Surrealist art only two years later. In the memoir, she explains the development in terms of men: following the dissolution of her relationship with the publisher Douglas Garman, she remembers being "bored" and "rather at a loss for an occupation, since I had never been anything but a wife for the last fifteen years."[11] She recounts how her friend Peggy proposed she start either a gallery or a publishing house. As Guggenheim tells it, she opted for the gallery because she thought running

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[8] Ibid., 33, 61, 62, 81.
[9] Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-garde, 1920-1950* (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1995), xvi.
[10] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 144, 145.
[11] Ibid., 190.

a publishing house would cost too much.[12] Though she doesn't say so, it is possible she was also enticed by the challenge of starting her own gallery. Either way, she maintains that even upon opening Guggenheim Jeune in London, she "much preferred the old masters."[13]

III. Guggenheim Jeune

In 1938, Guggenheim relocated to London to open her modern gallery, establishing it as a place that would provoke viewers. It is likely that she knew more about art than she allows in the memoir: she knew enough to surround herself with experts in the field when she opened Guggenheim Jeune, a tactic she employed throughout her days as a collector. There, she relied principally on Duchamp, who had been a close friend since her early days in Paris.[14] Duchamp was not only the aloof darling of Dada but a consultant for wealthy collectors, a go-between for artists and potential patrons.[15] Guggenheim emphasizes her ignorance and minimizes her agency: "I don't know what I would have done without him. He had to educate me completely. I could not distinguish one modern work of art from another, but he taught me the difference between Surrealism, Cubism and abstract art."[16] Even if she exaggerates Duchamp's role, he was well-connected and did bring Guggenheim directly into artists' studios, including those of Jean Arp, from whom Guggenheim bought the first piece in her collection, and Wassily Kandinsky.[17] Others helped, too: the Surrealist painter, poet, photographer, and film producer Humphrey

[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 163.
[14] Melvin Paul Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century: The Surrealist Milieu and the American Avant-Garde, 1942-1947" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 1981), 22.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Peggy Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1960), 47.
[17] Ibid.; Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 193, 200.

Jennings helped her scout suitable gallery locations.[18] Her new friend Wyn Henderson, herself a militant bohemian, named the gallery (which recalled her art-involved uncle Solomon, who was based in New York), decorated the space, acted as secretary, and designed exhibition catalogs and invitations.[19] She also ran the gallery when Guggenheim was travelling.[20]

From the time she opened her gallery on January 24, 1938, Guggenheim emerged a protector of modern art. With her first exhibition, a solo show devoted to Jean Cocteau, she ran afoul of the English customs department when officials confiscated a drawing that depicted pubic hair. Guggenheim persuaded officials to let her keep the work as long as she agreed not to exhibit it. She bought it and displayed it in her office.[21] With her fourth show, Guggenheim again emerged a protector of the modern. The celebrated sculpture show featured work by Constantin Brancusi, Antoine Pevsner, Henri Laurens, Arp, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Henry Moore, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Alexander Calder.[22] Again, the art she shipped from France rankled the English customs department. Customs officers were unconvinced that the modernist sculptures truly constituted art, and so brought the case to the official arbiter, the director of England's preeminent art institution, the Tate Gallery. The then-director, James Bolivar Manson—himself a frustrated artist—believed none of the sculptures could be considered art, showing the opposition modern art then faced at the institutional level. Because of his ruling, customs classified the artworks as quantities of marble, wood, and bronze, making them subject to higher import fees that protected English stonemasons from competition from abroad.

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[18] Ibid., 190.
[19] Kenneth E. Silver and Romy Golan, *The Circle of Montparnasse: Jewish Artists in Paris, 1905-1945* (New York: Universe Books, 1985), 17.
[20] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 193.
[21] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 197.
[22] Ibid., 203, 204; Angelica Zander Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1985), 799.

Following a petition Henderson created objecting to the ruling, the House of Commons took up the case and reversed the decision. As a further result, "[From] then on any sculpture, whether abstract or not, was to be admitted into England without necessity of approval of the director of the Tate Gallery."[23] The press featured the story, the exhibit was a resounding success, and Guggenheim's gallery became well known.[24]

Guggenheim remained dedicated to the radical and provocative nature of modern art—and to the new. With her second show, she gave the highly abstract Kandinsky his first London exhibition.[25] She helped the Surrealist Yves Tanguy find commercial success in London, and she even began the gallery's second season with "Art by Children."[26] In another show, she exhibited collages that were certain to vex viewers for their perceived lack of artistry. The work was so unconventional—one collage had a kitchen grater attached to it—that "the old Picassos, Braques, Arps, and Massons" were considered "restrained."[27] In January 1939, she exhibited drawings inspired by psychological experimentation.[28] She even presented works by the then-unknown John Tunnard, who had waltzed into the gallery months prior and asked for a show.[29] She was willing to consider anything and everything art—and willing to support unestablished artists.[30]

Despite the gallery's success, Guggenheim began thinking about starting a museum of modern art in March 1939. In the memoir, she states that the gallery was losing approximately six hundred pounds each year, and "that if I was losing that money I might as well lose a lot

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[23] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 203.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 200.
[26] Ibid., 212, 219; Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 29, 30.
[27] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 222, 223; Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 30.
[28] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 30.
[29] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 220.
[30] Ibid., 227.

more, and do something worth while."[31] It is unclear why Guggenheim minimizes the importance of her gallery with this statement, and the real reason why she abandoned the gallery for a museum remains to be uncovered. The impending war may have played a part in her decision. Though Britain would not enter for a few months yet in September 1939, the war was creeping closer and closer to London. Tensions were high, and Guggenheim may have realized that war would bode poorly for the financial feasibility of art galleries. Already, the Munich Crisis had given Guggenheim a taste of this. The short-lived conflict of September 1938 had prompted her to transport the gallery's then-current exhibition out of London in case the city was bombed, and to make plans to evacuate to Ireland with her children.[32] By March of 1939, Guggenheim likely understood that people had bigger things on their mind than buying artwork.

Beyond Europe's political situation, starting a museum would amount to the next step professionally. With the gallery, she had established her clout, and she was ready for something bigger. To that end, she enlisted Herbert Read—an art historian and curator dedicated to the avant-garde—to direct this future museum, and even found a suitable location.[33] Eventually, the war derailed Guggenheim's plans for the museum, though not before Read created a list of works for the museum's first proposed exhibition, a survey of modern painting. Importantly, this list served as the blueprint for Guggenheim's future collection, the bulk of which she acquired in Paris during the war—an episode that will be covered in the following two chapters.[34]

Guggenheim officially closed the gallery in June 1939. Though it existed for less than a year and a half, Guggenheim Jeune introduced Guggenheim to the art world and launched her on a journey that would last her entire lifetime. The gallery showed her that she was a good

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[31] Ibid., 226.
[32] Ibid., 217.
[33] Ibid., 226.
[34] Ibid., 229, 230.

collector, patron, and gallerist, and it spawned ideas that she continued to explore years later and a continent away. By the time she decided to shutter the gallery, its reputation was firmly established: *The Sunday Times* remarked on May 25, 1939 that the "gallery in Cork Street has done much to advance the cause of modernist painting and sculpture."[35] Decades later in 1980, the painter and advocate of the avant-garde Roland Penrose commented that Guggenheim "was a catalyst."[36] She continued to be one, even after relocating to New York in 1941 due to the war.

IV. Art of This Century

Upon returning to the United States, Guggenheim had spent the previous two decades of her life in the place that had the leading edge on all things modern art. But the U.S. did have an art culture of its own, and it was undeniably centered in New York City. 57th Street—where Guggenheim eventually opened her own gallery—was home to an estimated 150 galleries.[37] Before opening her second gallery, Guggenheim familiarized herself with this new terrain as she continued to collect. In the process, she realized just how sorely behind the U.S. was when it came to modern art. Though New York did have important collections of European art, many were privately owned by collectors who hid them behind closed doors.[38] And the museums were lacking as a result. She describes visiting the then-leading American art institutions with Max Ernst, with whom she was then in an amorous relationship. She describes seeing her uncle Solomon's Museum of Non-Objective Painting (the precursor to his Guggenheim Museum), which was devoted to the German painter Rudolf Bauer whom history has largely forgotten: "It

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[35] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 759.
[36] Ibid., 799.
[37] "57th Street," in *Peggy Guggenheim & Frederick Kiesler: The Story of Art of This Century*, ed. Susan Davidson and Philip Rylands (New York, NY: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2004), 275, excerpt from *Fortune Magazine*, September 1946.
[38] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 221.

really was a joke. There were about a hundred paintings by Bauer in enormous silver frames which overshadowed the twenty Kandinskys…From the walls boomed forth music by Bach—a rather weird contrast."[39] Guggenheim and Ernst found New York's art museums boring, overly devoted to a single artist, or the realization of only one person's vision. In a perfect summation of their feelings about the nation's foremost institutions of art, Ernst, himself a leading artist of the European avant-garde, preferred the Museum of Natural History.[40]

Effectively, Guggenheim entered an environment where art patronage, scholarship, and galleries had a much shorter history—and where Surrealism had been misunderstood and misconstrued for years.[41] Surrealism had arrived to the States relatively late, and the U.S. remained behind as the movement progressed in Europe. Generally, critics and curators focused on the formal qualities of the artwork rather than the underlying theoretical principles.[42] Further, though the movement was primarily rooted in language in Europe, it was interpreted as visual in the U.S. Even Surrealism's American star—Dali—was located somewhere on the fringes of European Surrealism, where he was viewed as overly commercial and had been excommunicated from the movement by Breton.[43]

Though effectively a European refugee herself, Guggenheim helped the Surrealists establish themselves in New York even before opening her gallery. She provided stipends to both Ernst and Breton, and her home served as an important meeting ground for European artists and the American art world elite, including gallerists, curators, critics, and museum directors.[44] The media noticed, and a 1942 article in *Time Magazine* titled "Surrealists in Exile" explains the

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[39] Ibid., 290.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Tashjian, *A Boatload*.
[42] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 63-67, 74.
[43] Tashjian, *A Boatload*, 2.
[44] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 89, 90.

situation: “Today surrealism’s headquarters is a dignified old mansion on Manhattan’s fashionable East Side overlooking the East River.” The author went on to designate Guggenheim the owner of the mansion and “[the] group’s financial angel” who “practically supports the group by collecting its pictures.”[45] As a patron, Guggenheim proved vital to the Surrealists’ survival in New York, though it should be noted that her gatherings were not unique: they functioned as one node in a network that facilitated interaction between the Europeans and the powers of the New York art world.

The most important form of support Guggenheim provided the Surrealists was her new gallery, Art of This Century. However, the gallery’s significance went beyond its support of Surrealism. Dedicated equally to Surrealism and abstract art, Art of This Century “provided American artists and the art public with an opportunity to view the most extensive and comprehensive private collection of twentieth-century art available in New York up until that time.”[46] The gallery was preceded by a catalogue of Guggenheim’s 170 plus object collection that was designed to elicit excitement.[47] Order forms advertised the catalogue as “[an] anthology of the twentieth century’s pioneer art movements,” and the catalogue included essays by Surrealists and abstract artists alike, including Piet Mondrian and Jean Arp. Breton designed the catalogue.[48] To ensure the gallery’s presentation matched the significance of her collection, Guggenheim recruited avant-garde architect Frederick Kiesler, at the advice of another advisor, Howard Putzel.[49]

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[45] “Surrealists in Exile” in Lader, “Peggy Guggenheim’s,” 92, 93, excerpt from *Time Magazine*, April 20, 1942.
[46] Lader, “Peggy Guggenheim’s,” 1.
[47] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 763.
[48] Ibid., 770; Tashjian, *A Boatload*, 215.
[49] Tashjian, *A Boatload*, 214.

Art of This Century opened on October 20, 1942. The first show consisted solely of works from Guggenheim's collection, and the proceeds benefitted the International Red Cross.[50] To signal her impartiality between her abstract and Surrealist artworks, Guggenheim wore one Calder and one Tanguy earring on the opening night.[51] For the most part, the artworks in the show had never before been viewed in the country. The turnout and press attention were pronounced. Newspapers in more than thirteen states included articles about the opening, and most mentioned Kiesler's spectacular design.[52]

Kiesler's design subdivided the space into four separate galleries. Though each gallery had a distinct flavor, they all encouraged the viewer's direct interaction with the art, and in radical ways. Viewers were used to staid, sterile galleries that made them feel as though they were an imposition; Art of This Century challenged that notion and asked for their direct participation.[53] Kiesler designed the Surrealist Gallery to be Surrealist itself; it was perhaps the furthest afield of any of the spaces, and it generated the most press attention.[54] Photographs of the room depict two facing concave wooden walls that together formed a long hallway. Unframed paintings in turn protruded from these walls on maneuverable supports made from baseball bats. Biomorphic wooden shapes filled the space, which dually served as chairs and plinths for sculptures.[55] Periodically, the sound of a train filled the space, and lights illuminated the paintings sequentially, a schema that was soon abandoned after gallery-goers complained that

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[50] Ibid., 221.
[51] Claudia Pierpont, "The Collector," *The New Yorker*, May 13, 2002, 8, accessed September 23, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/05/13/the-collector-3.
[52] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 771.
[53] Davidson and Rylands, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 278.
[54] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 771.
[55] Ibid., 764, 765.

it made viewing the artwork too difficult.[56] All together, these arrangements sought to break down the barrier between the artwork and the viewer: Kiesler believed that frames effectively separated the paintings within from the world of the viewers.[57] Eliminating frames (which was Guggenheim's stipulation) and making the paintings more approachable for the viewer was a concrete approximation of the Surrealist desire to bring real life and dream states, or the mediated and the unmediated, closer together.[58]

The remaining three spaces similarly privileged direct interaction with art. In the Abstract and Cubist Gallery, mounted wire cables that extended from floor to ceiling held paintings suspended in midair. More biomorphic shapes occupied the turquoise floor, which was offset by undulating ultramarine walls formed by curtains.[59] In a space filled with daylight that ran along 57th Street, viewers could get even closer to the artwork by sitting in front of a specially designed wooden stand that doubled as a storage receptacle. To look at artworks more closely, viewers simply had to remove pictures from the storage bin and place them on the front of the stand. These mobile storage units were also in the Abstract and Cubist Gallery. Thereafter, the daylight gallery housed all temporary shows, where works were framed and hung on white walls. The final space was a corridor that continued the theme of interactivity.[60] By rotating an oversized and sculptural wooden wheel while looking into a peephole, viewers could see individual elements of Duchamp's 1942 *Box in a Valise*.[61] In another spot, the viewer stood in front of a motion-activated conveyor belt to see Paul Klee artworks glide past.[62]

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[56] Tashjian, *A Boatload*, 221.
[57] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 771.
[58] Ibid., 763; Tashjian, *A Boatload*, 221.
[59] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 763; Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 319.
[60] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 320.
[61] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 770.
[62] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 320.

It is difficult to convey the degree to which Art of This Century's design was unprecedented. Leo Castelli, who later opened an important American gallery, recalls how "Peggy's gallery was a sensation!...You can't realize what an impression it made.…Nothing of a similar nature has been done to compare with the exceptional space of that gallery and the extraordinary quality of Peggy's paintings."[63] Journalists were impressed, but many were also put-off—focusing on the offbeat space even more than the art within it. As Henry McBride, a popular journalist at *The New York Sun* affirmed "Frankly, my eyes have never bulged further from their sockets than at this show."[64] George Baer called the gallery a "disturbing monument to egotism."[65] In *Magazine of Arts*, another reporter perceived the gallery as "a sort of blend between an alchemist's dream, a nightmare, and a first-class hangover."[66] It was alternately described as a "decorated subway," a "whirring and blinking nickelodeon," and—a comment on the supposed moral decrepitude of capitalist culture—"a kind of archive or morgue where one can find the historical evidence of the decay of culture under capitalism."[67]

Being a patron of Surrealism was not an innocuous venture, especially in a country with a limited understanding of the movement. In a February 1943 article in *The American Mercury*, the writer Klaus Mann—a naturalized American citizen of German birth who served in the U.S. army during the war—attacked Surrealism for its destructive qualities, and Guggenheim for

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[63] Leo Castelli quoted in Virginia M. M. Dortch, ed., *Peggy Guggenheim and Her Friends* (Milan, Italy: Berenice Art Books, 1994), 112.
[64] Henry McBride, "New Gallery Ideas," *Peggy Guggenheim*, 275, excerpt from *The New York Sun*, October 23, 1942.
[65] George Baer, "Union Art versus Peggy Guggenheim," in *Peggy Guggenheim*, 276, press clipping from Art of This Century scrapbook, Peggy Guggenheim Papers.
[66] "Art That's Modern and Myseterious," in *Peggy Guggenheim*, 281, press clipping from *Magazine of Arts* in Art of This Century scrapbook, Peggy Guggenheim Papers.
[67] "Inheritors of Chaos," in *Peggy Guggenheim*, 276, excerpt from *Time Magazine*, November 2, 1942, 47; "Fabulous Fancies," in *Peggy Guggenheim*, 276, press clipping from Art of This Century scrapbook, Peggy Guggenheim Papers, November 14, 1942; Baer, "Union Art," in *Peggy Guggenheim*, 276.

promoting its artists.[68] *Art Digest* then republished part of "Surrealist Circus" in May. In the article, Mann casts Surrealism as non-art: "I am against surrealism because I am in favor of art." He criticizes the methods of its artists in the face of war: "They do not grasp that their play-acting has become silly against the backdrop of universal cataclysm." He believes it corruptive: "It cannot…be the function of art to glorify and multiply the present disorder." He equates it to the destruction the world had recently witnessed: "I am against Surrealism because I have seen what the world looks like 'with every esthetic and moral preoccupation being absent.' It looks like hell, or like a surrealist painting." He laments that the Surrealists were plucked from a dangerous European situation and transplanted to the U.S.—and believes Guggenheim responsible, distorting fact to make this point: "Shortly after Marshal Petain signed his agreement with Hitler, the American lady signed a check and the surrealist family rose into the skies…the American phase of surrealism got off to a start with one of the great American fortunes at its disposal."[69] In reality, Guggenheim paid for the passage of two Surrealists, and her inheritance was finite and disconnected from the wealth of her family.

In the June 1943 issue of *Art Digest*, Guggenheim defended herself against Mann's accusations, but curiously separated herself from Surrealism. In a letter to the editor, she refutes his statements: "As I am not the supporter of surrealism, neither am I its defender." She denies being a patron of Surrealism and transporting some of its artists to the United States. But, she also defends Surrealism against Mann's accusation of Nazi-like nihilism, recalling how many Surrealists fought in the French army and the resistance: "With regard to Surrealism, [Mann]

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[68] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 202; Duncan Fallowell, "Was Klaus Mann all Thomas Mann's fault?," *The Spectator* (London), February 27, 2016, Books, accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2016/02/was-klaus-mann-all-thomas-manns-fault.
[69] Klaus Mann, "Surrealist Circus," in *Peggy Guggenheim's*, 201, 202, excerpt from *American Mercury*, February, 1943, 174-181.

seems to be in perfect accord with Hitler, even though his own hysteria may seem at this time slightly less impressive."[70] Mann's article shows what Guggenheim was up against in promoting art in such fraught times.

In view of such criticism, what exactly did Guggenheim intend for her gallery to do, beyond show her collection and have a commercial arm? Her goals were twofold. Firstly, she intended to privilege art at a time when many thought attention should be focused on the war—as shown by Mann's article. In the gallery's first press release, published concurrently to the first exhibition, Guggenheim highlights the importance of art even—and especially—amidst a war: "Opening this Gallery and its collection to the public during a time when people are fighting for their lives and freedom is a responsibility of which I am fully conscious. This undertaking will serve its purpose only if it succeeds in serving the future instead of recording the past." She also intended for Art of This Century to act as an incubator for modern art: "Miss Guggenheim hopes that 'Art of This Century' will become a center where artists will be welcome and where they can feel that they are cooperating in establishing a research laboratory for new ideas."[71] Broadly speaking, she conceived of the gallery as a place of innovation, and as a site of progress—a way for culture to move forward. As an incubator, the gallery also fostered young talent. From the beginning, Guggenheim organized juried exhibitions to which any artist could apply.[72] Crucially, this principle came to define the gallery—and to set it apart.

Guggenheim sought to make the goals outlined in her press release a reality. She united separate geographical and stylistic realms of art within her gallery. In an odd way, and in spite of

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[70] Peggy Guggenheim, "Peggy Guggenheim Replies," in *Peggy Guggenheim's*, 202-204, excerpt from *Art Digest*, June, 1943, 4.
[71] "Peggy Guggenheim to Open Art Gallery—Art of This Century," in *Peggy Guggenheim's*, 126, excerpt from Art of This Century press release from Exhibition Catalogues Collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
[72] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 127.

her apparent indifference to the war (as outlined in the subsequent two chapters), Guggenheim's art project paralleled the Allies' endeavor. She brought the vanguard art of France and England to the United States, and put it in direct dialogue with what was happening in the U.S. Within the gallery's first year, Guggenheim was already showing European Surrealists and Americans side-by-side. She included Americans for the first time in April 1943, when the gallery organized the nation's first international exhibition of collage. Of the more than forty artists in the show, about half were American. Alexander Calder, Ad Reinhart, and the then relatively unknown William Baziotes, Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell all participated. The Europeans included Jean Arp, Ernst, Duchamp, Picabia, Picasso, Kurt Schwitters, and Juan Gris.[73] The next program also allowed Americans to show their chops. Her English advisor Herbert Read had envisaged the "Spring Salon for Young Artists" in London, but it went unrealized until Guggenheim resurrected it in New York. The gallery invited artists under thirty-five to submit work. The six-person jury—comprised in part by Duchamp, Mondrian, Putzel, and Guggenheim herself—then chose forty-three works for the show.[74] Again, Baziotes, Pollock, and Motherwell showed, with Pollock garnering press attention.[75]

Through these and other efforts, the gallery proved essential for many New York artists. It was the first to give solo shows to Baziotes, David Hare, Hans Hofmann, Motherwell, Pollock, Mark Rothko, and Clyfford Still, all of whom went on to be prominent Abstract Expressionists.[76] This gave them exposure and the financial means to continue as artists when Guggenheim and gallery-goers purchased works. Crucially, hers was the first gallery to give Pollock a contract—

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[73] Ibid., 207.
[74] Ibid., 210, 211.
[75] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 774.
[76] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 3, 4.

though it took the interference of advisors including Putzel for Guggenheim to initially give Pollock a chance.[77]

Guggenheim also provided a much-needed art education on the century's major developments in modern art, both through her all-encompassing collection and by facilitating interaction between Americans and some of Europe's most important artists.[78] The Surrealist expatriates maintained an insular group, but Guggenheim put them in dialogue with the Americans, both in person and through their paintings and sculptures.[79] Some Americans even drew inspiration from Surrealist pictures, particularly techniques of automatism, or drawing directly from the unconscious and foregoing the thinking mind. The art critic Clement Greenberg tacitly approved this occurrence in an August 1944 article in the *The Nation*. In "Surrealist Painting," Greenberg criticized depictive Surrealism while simultaneously upholding abstract Surrealism for favoring automatism.[80] At approximately the same time, Baziotes, Motherwell, and Pollock were incorporating similar techniques into their own work. The art historian Melvin Lader even suggests that Pollock's iconic drip and splatter pieces may be the fullest realization of automatism in painting.[81] Through these efforts, Art of This Century became an essential stepping stone to the later development of Abstract Expressionism.

Guggenheim also supported women artists. Throughout its existence, the gallery sponsored ten solo shows by female artists, including Irene Rice Pereira and Alice Rahon

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[77] Peggy Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict* (London, UK: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1980), 264; Davidson and Rylands, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 298.
[78] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 74.
[79] Ibid., 132.
[80] Clement Greenberg, "Surrealist Painting," in *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 1, *The Collected Essays and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 225-231.
[81] Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 85.

Paalen.[82] It also organized two all-female group shows. Especially significant was January 1943's "31 Women," defined by its press release as "testimony to the fact that the creative ability of women is by no means restricted to the decorative vein as could be deducted from the history of art by women throughout the ages."[83] Again, Guggenheim ran afoul of the critics—for supporting Surrealism, and for supporting women: McBride of *The New York Sun* wrote that "Surrealism is about 70 per cent hysterics, 20 per cent literature, and 5 per cent good painting and 5 per cent is just saying 'boo' to the innocent public." His criticism was gendered: "There are, as we all know, plenty of men among the New York neurotics but we also know that there is still more women among them. . . It is obvious that women ought to excel at Surrealism. At all events, they do."[84]

Despite the success of her gallery and the impact it was having on postwar American art, Guggenheim "loved Europe more than America, and when the war ended…couldn't wait to go back."[85] In 1947, she found galleries to take on her artist contracts and relocated to Europe, eventually installing her collection in a palazzo in Venice.[86] Again, she had cemented her legacy, and influenced the direction of American art. She had helped to encourage the artists responsible for the distinctly American art form of Abstract Expressionism, though she left before the scope and force of the movement became clear in the ensuing decade.

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[82] Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 772, 777-794.
[83] "Art by 31 Women at Art of This Century," in *Peggy Guggenheim's*, 197, excerpt from Art of This Century press release from The Peggy Guggenheim Papers.
[84] Henry McBride, "Women Surrealists," in *Peggy Guggenheim's*, 198, excerpt from *The New York Sun*, January, 1943 in The Peggy Guggenheim Papers.
[85] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 267.
[86] Ibid., 288.

V. Conclusion

In bringing her collection of abstract and Surrealist artwork to the U.S., Guggenheim made the European avant-garde approachable and accessible for American audiences. Quite literally, she placed it on the viewer's level within Art of This Century's forward-thinking galleries. Finally, she put modern European art in tandem with the work of emerging New York artists, ultimately helping to foster another politically charged movement—but one that was entirely homegrown. Even before arriving in New York, Guggenheim cast herself as a protector and promoter of art at Guggenheim Jeune, and as someone who would fight publicly for it. She gravitated towards the new and the provocative, which spoke to qualities of herself that were in turn amplified by her involvement with modern art, as will be discussed in the next chapter. And it was in this decade, beginning with Guggenheim Jeune in 1938 and ending with Art of This Century in 1947—that Guggenheim created the collection now immortalized in Venice, where she finally realized her goal of establishing a museum. Though her collection lives on in Italy, her most pronounced influence is unmistakable: Lee Krasner, a painter and the wife of Pollock, described Art of This Century as "of the utmost importance as the first place where the New York School could be seen…Her gallery was the foundation, it's where it all started to happen."[87] Guggenheim made her gallery into a conduit for European art's entry into the American scene, and in turn influenced the ensuing development of Abstract Expressionism. To be sure, Guggenheim's gallery was but one impetus that encouraged the development of Abstract Expressionism, but it was an important one nonetheless. The art historian and critic Martica Sawin calls Guggenheim "a constructor of history": Art of This Century was "the first place—long before the Museum of Modern Art—where it was possible to make a connection between

[87] Lee Krasner quoted in Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 799.

the succession of modernist styles abroad and the experiments underway in some of the cold-water flats in downtown New York."[88]

[88] Martica Sawin quoted in Davidson and Rylands, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 22.

Chapter II: Gender and Sex

I. Introduction

In assessing Guggenheim's role in transplanting Surrealism and abstract art from Europe to the United States, the first chapter deliberately avoided the charged issues of sex and gender. Yet, marriage, affairs, sex, and violence figured prominently in Guggenheim's memoir. Intertwined and sometimes difficult to disentangle, these themes defined her experience as a woman. She describes being abused by her first husband, sleeping with multiple men, and wielding her sexual power to get what she wanted. In 1946, reviewers were taken aback by Guggenheim's tone and her bald discussion of sex. Her discussion of abuse confused them. Overwhelmingly, they brushed over it, euphemizing these instances as "humiliating" episodes.[89] They devoted much more attention to her intelligence, which they questioned. Quite frankly, they were unsure what to do with her, and so they criticized her—harshly.

Biographers, too, have taken note of Guggenheim's descriptions of her friendships, marriages, and short-term affairs. In their interpretations, insecurity over her looks, daddy issues, and a deep sexual desire drove her decisions and ultimately her life's trajectory. They explain her decisions to flee her upbringing, join Bohemia, sleep with men, and champion Surrealism and abstract art using a pseudo-Freudian framework. They interpret her involvement with the avant-garde as motivated by a predilection for the provocative. Examples of this flattening approach abound. Francine Prose's 2015 biography, *Peggy Guggenheim: The Shock of the Modern*, dedicates a chapter each to "Her Money" and "Her Nose."[90] Jacqueline Bograd Weld's 1986

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[89] Greenberg writing as K. Hardesh, "Out of This Century, by Peggy Guggenheim," *Commentary*, September 1, 1946, 2, accessed September 20, 2017, https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/out-of-this-century-by-peggy-guggenheim/.
[90] Francine Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim: The Shock of the Modern*, Jewish Lives (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 36, 37.

Peggy: The Wayward Guggenheim begins with "Part I: A Gilded Cage," and progresses to "Part III: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even."[91] Anton Gill continues the trend, stating in his 2002 *Art Lover* that "What caused her to become so preoccupied with sex is an open question: But the fact remains that although she slept with many men, she was attractive to…very few."[92] Bograd Weld and Gill blame her sexual promiscuity and brashness for the abuse she suffered, insinuating that "she had it coming." Her biographers' narrow approach avoids much that was interesting in Guggenheim's life. And their apparent lack of sympathy veers close to misogyny.

They pay little mind to the abuse. Bograd Weld glides over it, introducing Vail's behavior by making his violence seem mutual: "From the beginning Laurence would have violent and frightening fights with Peggy."[93] The abuse earns one minuscule paragraph in a 443-page tome. Anton Gill characterizes Vail's violent lashings-out as "tantrums."[94] He justifies Vail's treatment: "Ample reasons for his pique at Peggy's behavior can be found in Laurence's novel *Murder! Murder!*.[95] Mary Dearborn turns Guggenheim's experience of abuse into a personal problem: "But perhaps Peggy's self-esteem, never her strong suit, made her feel she couldn't stand up to it—made her feel, quite possibly, that she deserved Laurence's abuse."[96]

Biographers, with such limited conceptions of Guggenheim's life, ignore the very real ways her gender made her vulnerable. Her life and power cannot be understood without a sustained look at how others used her gender to control her, and how she used it to her own

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[91] Jacqueline Bograd Weld, *Peggy: The Wayward Guggenheim* (n.p.: Dutton Adult, 1986), viii, ix, xi, xiii, xv.
[92] Anton Gill, *Art Lover: A Biography of Peggy Guggenheim* (2001; repr., New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 55.
[93] Bograd Weld, *Peggy: The Wayward*, 56.
[94] Gill, *Art Lover,* 89.
[95] Ibid., 90.
[96] Dearborn, *Mistress of Modernism*, 47.

advantage. This chapter seeks to provide that sustained look. Progressing thematically, it will begin with a discussion of bohemia and its strictures before considering Surrealism and its theories and practices regarding sexuality. Next, it will delve into the specifics of Guggenheim's abuse before looking at her amorous and transactional relationships with artists, many of them Surrealists. Following this will be an exploration of the ways she presents sex and abuse within the memoir. Finally, the chapter will consider how Guggenheim responded to reviewers by republishing the memoir, twice.

II. Bohemia and Surrealism

Guggenheim's life in Europe was defined principally by two avant-garde milieus: bohemia and Surrealism. Though distinct, these movements shared many similarities and often overlapped. Staunchly opposed to bourgeois society, they offered alternative ways to live. Both celebrated sexual desire and defined it in male terms. Yet, for all their similarities, they ultimately differed. Guggenheim was drawn to each for different reasons, and related to each in particular ways. They afforded her distinct liberties, and they also circumscribed her existence. Her memoir attempts to assert her significance to both.

In the memoir, Guggenheim describes bohemia as the polar opposite of her Jewish upbringing in New York. She was surely drawn to the individual freedoms that were unavailable in her life at home. But while bohemia thrived on opposing the conventions of bourgeois society, it too was governed by rules. Historian Christine Stansell's *American Moderns, a* study of 1910s and '20s Greenwich Village, helps us understand bohemia more widely, including the avant-garde milieu of interwar Paris. Stansell argues that even though the strictures of bohemia differed from those of bourgeois and conventional society, men were still the principal beneficiaries. This

was true for rules of gender and especially sex. Men and women alike were encouraged—expected—to engage in free love, which entailed having sex before marriage, keeping multiple partners, and discussing these arrangements openly.[97]

What did this mean for women? In principle, free love enabled women to control their own bodies, pursue their own sexual desires, and choose their own relationships, actions that amounted to rebellion against the bourgeois cultures they grew up in. They could pursue work. They could "use alliances with men as an avenue of mobility toward something other than marriage," including a profession, as Guggenheim did.[98] Stansell relates how the desire for "something other than marriage," whatever form it took, must also be understood in conjunction with a need to avoid the constraints and predictably narrow horizons of bourgeois femininity and motherhood. Breaking with bourgeois society meant rejecting one's mother's life and opting for an entirely different one. Women who called themselves bohemian wanted to "profoundly *matter*."[99]

Stansell's description of the writer Louise Bryant fits Guggenheim well. A devoted bohemian, Bryant was an American journalist born thirteen years prior to Guggenheim. Bryant was experienced in the complications of bohemian life. Her public and private life became inseparable as she pursued both love and writing. Writes Stansell, "For Bryant, as for other women of her generation, creative work and heterosexual drama were easily confused. Were love affairs her job? Or was journalism? Playwriting? She applied herself almost as assiduously to keeping her romantic triangles moving…as she did to her writing."[100] The same could not be said of the men in these relationships. For them, their professional accomplishments existed

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[97] Stansell, *American Moderns*.
[98] Ibid., 253.
[99] Ibid., 246.
[100] Ibid., 256, 258.

separately from their partnerships with women. But for women, their careers and personal lives were inexplicably linked as they wielded their sexuality to gain professional liberties forbidden in conventional society.[101] Forging new conceptions of womanhood while surviving in this male-dominated environment required eliminating emotion often understood as feminine. They had to "[transcend] jealousy and hurt, [repudiate] an emotional vulnerability…associated with female weakness, and [force], teeth gritted, an alliance with male sexual adventure."[102] To benefit from bohemia's freedoms, women had to ally themselves with the men who took advantage of them for sex and sometimes even for professional gain, as when writers would use their intimate personal relationships as fodder for poems. In bohemia, infidelity and convoluted love triangles had to be tolerated—and even wielded as a means to achieve what one wanted.[103] Compared to conventional society, everything was upside down—except men were still on top.

Against this backdrop, Guggenheim's decision to tell her story of sex and relationships makes more sense. Bohemia thrived on defying conventions of sexuality, and in lionizing sexual desire, it tacitly encouraged abuse. To be bohemian, Guggenheim had to live with this reality. In the memoir, she relates sex and abuse with the same tone that she relates everything else because it was part of her normal and everyday experience. One gets the sense that she even internalized the notion that abuse was normal—because in her world, it was. Given the liberalness with which sex was openly discussed in bohemia, writing about sex and relationships was but a small jump.[104]

Both gender and sexual rebellion loomed large in Surrealism. Surrealism suggested a revolutionary alternative to the bourgeois world, and one route to that world was through the

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[101] Ibid., 258.
[102] Ibid., 300.
[103] Ibid., 286.
[104] Ibid., 274.

libido. Surrealism spoke of life as an erotic dream, and the poetic exploration of love and desire as an artistic project. Sex, because it preceded reason, was seen as liberating. Unsurprisingly, Surrealism's avant-garde conceptions of sex have attracted much attention. In its heyday, this attention was almost exclusively negative: Surrealism was often perceived as morally bankrupt and violent. The Surrealists' antics didn't help this impression. They played exquisite corps, a drawing game that often yielded images of bestial human forms. They professed the benefits of automatic writing as a way to tap into the unconscious. They created spectacle: while living in a communal home in Marseilles, Breton made a table centerpiece out of praying mantises that mated and devoured one another as guests ate their dinner.[105]

Women were admitted to Surrealism, but only because men needed them to feed their libidos. They became sites of projection for erotic male fantasies and ideas about perceived female fragility. They were admitted as muses but never as autonomous individuals, and their art was paid little attention: as French scholar Susan Rubin Suleiman relates, "between 1924 and 1933, during the most dynamic and 'ascendant' period of the movement, not a single woman was included as an official member."[106] Instead, they were the models and muses for their male counterparts, whose artwork sometimes depicts violent male desire: women are bound, dismembered, violated, and performing sexual acts.[107] In short, women found themselves relegated and oppressed much as they were in bourgeois society.[108]

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[105] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 119.
[106] Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 29.
[107] Rudolf Kuenzli, "Surrealism and Misogyny," introduction to *Surrealism and Women*, ed. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995), 17, 18, 20.
[108] Gwen Raaberg, "The Problematics of Women and Surrealism," introduction to *Surrealism and Women*, ed. Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg, 4th ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1995), 7.

III. Relationships and Sex

In 1920, after she had been in Paris for a matter of months, Guggenheim married Laurence Vail. A painter and writer, he was popularly regarded as the "King of Bohemia."[109] Her account of this marriage is stunning in the details of Vail's abuse. Their six-year marriage was marked by volatility and jealousy as each vied for power over the other. Guggenheim was wealthier than her husband; as she writes, "Because of my money I enjoyed a certain superiority over [Vail] and I used it in a dreadful way, by telling him it was mine and he couldn't have it to dispose of freely."[110] Vail fought to reassert his power. To make her feel insignificant, he told her she was allowed in bohemia only because she was wealthy and that it was her responsibility to give her money to people with real artistic talent, which he told her she lacked.[111] He was physically abusive. At home, writes Guggenheim, "He particularly liked throwing my shoes out of the window, breaking crockery and smashing mirrors and attacking chandeliers. Fights went on for hours, sometimes days, once even for two weeks."[112] Unafraid of airing their dirty laundry, Vail attacked Guggenheim in roads and restaurants, at once humiliating her and proving his authority to others. Guggenheim disliked this public abuse the most, likely because it made her private humiliation everyone's business.[113]

Vail was unrelenting. He tried to drown her in a bathtub, rubbed jam into her scalp, ripped her clothes off in public, threw her, and cheated on her. He broke her prized possessions—including a dressing table set she had meticulously bought piece by piece over

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[109] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 33.
[110] Ibid., 45.
[111] Ibid., 45, 46.
[112] Ibid., 44.
[113] Ibid.

months to replace a vanished one from her childhood.[114] He was unsympathetic when her beloved older sister Benita died during childbirth. Guggenheim remembers how he "was painfully jealous of my suffering and kept insisting that I still had him in the world."[115] He threw tantrums and tore up photos of Benita. He had certain expectations regarding how Guggenheim should look and act, and he became livid when she didn't meet these. After bobbing her hair in the latest style, she avoided Vail because she knew he would be enraged: "When he finally caught me he was so furious he threw me under the dressing table."[116] These incidents are woven into the stories of Guggenheim's life with Vail, which consisted of childrearing, travelling, and parties—abuse was like these normal activities of marriage.

Guggenheim does not present herself as a victim. Rather, she describes a contentious relationship between partners with short fuses who were eager to push each other's buttons. Guggenheim too cheated on Vail. Yet, she did choose to recount the abuse. She thought her portrait of Vail was damning: recounts biographer Francine Prose, "She promised (or threatened) to write a book so honest that Laurence would never forgive her."[117] The often emotionless and blithe tone Guggenheim uses does not mask the violence Vail perpetrated. Her tone could be a calculated attempt to mask her humiliation. It might reflect midcentury views of acceptable behavior. At the time, France legally permitted inter-marital violence. Guggenheim recalls a time on the Boulevard de Strasbourg when Vail shoved her to the ground before setting fire to a hundred franc note. The French police arrested him for burning the note, but not for beating her.[118] Their marriage ended when Guggenheim ran off with the frustrated writer John Holms in

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[114] Ibid., 44, 63, 70, 92, 100.
[115] Ibid., 90.
[116] Ibid., 63.
[117] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 6.
[118] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 90.

1926. She was with Holms for eight years until he died following surgery on his arm. Guggenheim was devastated; she considered him the love of her life.[119] After this, she had a long-term relationship with the publisher-turned-Communist Douglas Garman. When this dissolved, Guggenheim established her first gallery. She implies in the memoir that it was at this point that she gained a purpose and confidence—at the exact moment she was the most alone she had ever been in her adult life. Concurrently, she entered into shorter and sometimes overlapping trysts with men who were predominantly Surrealist artists.

While planning Guggenheim Jeune, Guggenheim had a brief relationship with Humphrey Jennings, a married English filmmaker who helped bring Surrealism to England with London's 1936 Surrealist Exhibition. Jennings helped Guggenheim look for a suitable location for the gallery, but their partnership was also exploitative. Their relationship was a give and take of professional favors and sex: in exchange for introducing him to Duchamp, Jennings introduced Guggenheim to Breton. Though she participated, Guggenheim describes Jennings as an annoyance. She calls him "a sort of genius," but also remarks on his "ugly, emaciated body."[120] Eventually, Guggenheim ended the arrangement. She believes Jennings' interest in the relationship was partially based in unreality, and that he "had hopes of some kind of a wonderful life with me, surrounded by luxury, gaiety, and Surrealism," which Guggenheim believed differed greatly from the life she actually live.[121]

True to bohemia, Guggenheim maintained little separation between her public and private life. As she became more deeply involved in Surrealism at the gallery, so did she become involved with more of its artists. She had an affair with the married Jean Arp, and also with Yves

[119] Ibid., 153.
[120] Ibid., 191.
[121] Ibid., 192.

Tanguy following his July 1938 solo show at her gallery.[122] After the show, Guggenheim determinedly rearranged her schedule—quickly placing her children in the care of others—and returned to Paris to see Tanguy. They eloped. After returning, Guggenheim kept the Paris apartment of Samuel Becket, another long term lover, for better proximity to Tanguy.[123] Guggenheim took no pains to hide the affair. Open marriages and extramarital sex came with the territory of bohemia, and she was familiar with this fact. Given this, her preoccupation with Tanguy's wife Jeanette Ducrocq is unexpected; it is one of the few times in the memoir that she expresses remorse for a slighted spouse. Perhaps she felt badly for Ducrocq, or guilty about their public run-ins. Perhaps she thought the anecdote made for a better story. Either way, she wrote "I really liked her and did not want to make her unhappy. I never meant to take her husband away from her, and he had had many other affairs."[124] In yet another way, bohemian power dynamics favored men. Free love made alliances between women difficult and frequently impossible; too often, the quest for love and sex in male-privileging bohemia pitted women against one another.

Guggenheim had affairs in the midst of affairs. While promoting and selling Tanguy's work, she began a relationship with the British gallerist, historian, and painter Roland Penrose whom Guggenheim designates "the great promoter of Surrealism in England."[125] The relationship had violent undertones. He had a single odd quality, according to Guggenheim: "when he slept with women he tied up their wrists with anything that was handy."[126] She tells how once "he brought out a pair of ivory bracelets from the Sudan…[that] were attached with a chain and [Penrose] had a key to lock them. It was extremely uncomfortable to spend the night

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[122] Ibid., 202; Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 29.
[123] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 213, 214, 217.
[124] Ibid., 215, 216.
[125] Ibid., 221.
[126] Ibid.

this way, but if you spent it with [Penrose] it was the only way."[127] She ignores how concerning this exercise of authority really is.

Guggenheim casts this encounter with Penrose as something of a Surrealist performance, with its erotic experimentation and cultivation of the erotic unconscious. She emphasizes this connection when she describes sleeping at Penrose's house beneath her favorite painting by Paul Delvaux, a Belgian Surrealist. To describe the painting, she compares it to another piece by Delvaux that she later purchased, which depicts a quadruplet of half tree, half human women. She relates how she "was so thrilled; I felt as though I were one of the women."[128] Guggenheim's self-presentation suggests that she is living out a Surrealist image in real time. She revels in the memory, despite its misogyny and objectification—the very qualities that make the image Surrealist. Handcuffed, she recognizes herself in the painting of the immobile tree-women. She has become the site of Penrose's desire, who forces his lovers to approximate his fantasy conception of a woman. Guggenheim also notes that Delveaux always painted his wife "whom he adored."[129] It seems that being Penrose's captive makes her feel like Delveaux's painted wife—that she feels, or pretends to feel, wanted and adored.

Sometimes, Guggenheim's relationships were purely exploitative. She describes courting Brancusi for *Bird in Space*. She pursued him even as bombs fell near his home in the Paris suburbs during the war, indifferent to the seriousness of the moment. Apparently, she was willing to become even further entangled with him in order to get his artwork: Vail "suggested jokingly that I should marry Brancusi in order to inherit all his sculptures. I investigated the possibilities, but soon suspected that he had other ideas, and did not desire to have me as an

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.

heir."[130] And when she did succeed in purchasing the artwork, Brancusi cried. She feigns ignorance, suggesting she was unsure why he cried, though supposing it had to do with losing one of his most prized artworks.[131] Her love for specific artworks made some of these relationships with artists almost entirely transactional.

Perhaps the ultimate realization of Surrealist desire was her marriage to Max Ernst. She met him during the war, after he had spent time in three French camps because he was a German national. His "degenerate" art also made him an enemy of the Nazis.[132] Guggenheim met him in Marseilles and agreed to pay for his escape. Soon after they began a relationship. It progressed quickly. Ernst was a darling of Surrealism with a complicated relationship history, a beautiful and tragic figure known for his attraction to women decades younger than him. Guggenheim once said "There are three reasons why I love Max; because he is so beautiful, because he is such a good painter and because he is so famous," though perhaps the fourth reason should have been his Surrealist tendencies.[133] She believed he had an ability to paint the future, and she loved witnessing his paintings as he made them because it felt "like being present at their birth."[134] Sometimes, they lived Surrealist tableaus: Guggenheim recalls how when in Portugal awaiting their departure to the States, they saw two girls combing their hair through a window. At the girls' insistence, Ernst and Guggenheim made their way toward them. After navigating a courtyard and a number of closed doors, they finally reached the place where the girls had been—only to discover they had vanished, replaced by a Trappist monk.[135]

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[130] Ibid., 245.
[131] Ibid., 244-246.
[132] Ibid., 265, 268.
[133] Ibid., 304.
[134] Ibid., 282, 295.
[135] Ibid., 279.

Ernst was often involved with multiple women at once. In Lisbon on their way out of Europe, Ernst discovered that his former lover Leonora Carrington was there, too, though she was engaged to wed a Mexican man, which would allow her to leave the continent. He wanted her back; though she refused, they spent all their time together. Guggenheim, for her part, contemplated marrying an Englishman she had met on the train so that she could remain in Europe.[136] In the memoir, she seems almost resigned to her fate, upset and hurt but not angry at Carrington. Her descriptions of Carrington are sympathetic and tender: "Beatrice was beautiful…She had just come out of an asylum, where she had been confined for months, long after she was well. She had written about all her adventure and they were really terrifying."[137] Though the popular narrative is that Guggenheim seduced Ernst, it seems that Ernst was playing both women, unwilling to relinquish one for the other. Carrington made her own decision to end the relationship. In Guggenheim's words, Carrington "felt that her life with Max was over because she could no longer be his slave, and that was the only way she could live with him."[138] She married the Mexican when they were all in Lisbon, and soon set off for the States. Only then did Ernst return to Guggenheim, though this too was short lived.

After returning to the U.S., Ernst and Guggenheim married because Guggenheim "did not like the idea of living in sin with an enemy alien."[139] Their relationship continued to be tumultuous throughout their four-year marriage. They fought all the time, and their rows were dramatic. She seemed on the verge of a breakdown. Guggenheim admits she put more effort into her newly formed gallery than into their relationship: she told her friend Emily Coleman "I

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[136] Ibid., 274, 275.
[137] Ibid., 276.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid., 306

would rather risk breaking my marriage than give up Art of This Century."[140] Their relationship was distant and formal; she was never his muse. She was nearly his equal in age, and she had her own ideas about how to live her life. In due time, Ernst began seeing Carrington again, and then Dorothea Tanning, with whom he would spend the rest of his life. Guggenheim had affairs too. Eventually, their marriage dissolved. Guggenheim entered a relationship with a gay man, and Ernst had Tanning.[141]

These passing sexual relationships and long term amorous ones carried different risks for Guggenheim as a woman than for the men. She describes two abortions in the memoir. One was done in a convent by a Russian doctor.[142] The other occurred in 1939 after she became pregnant by a married English artist. Her English doctor declined to perform an abortion because it would be too risky for his career. Eventually, Guggenheim found a refugee German doctor in London who believed Guggenheim's age made the pregnancy risky and agreed to do the abortion. She remembers how she "was greatly relieved to find some one to end my troubles."[143]

Guggenheim's memoir presents her as a champion of European abstract art and Surrealism. It would be antithetical to this self-presentation to cast herself as a victim of Surrealist men, expose the abusive sides of these relationships, and question Surrealist thinking on sex and gender. At the same time, it is unclear how deliberate her choices were; she seems to have internalized many of bohemia and Surrealism's ideas about women. Lacking any vocabulary or concepts to understand her circumstance within a different theoretical framework, she promoted the same ideas that limited her for decades. She was a freewheeling, passionate,

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[140] Ibid., 328.
[141] Ibid., 287-339.
[142] Ibid., 118.
[143] Ibid., 225, 226.

resilient bohemian who embraced all of her passions. And indeed, she often took advantage of others, a fact that biographers never miss and which defines her public perception to this day.

IV. Reviewers React

Out of This Century tells the story of a female rule-breaker. It establishes Guggenheim's bohemian credentials, reintroduces her to the American scene, and differentiates her from her New York family. Guggenheim offered much to which reviewers could object. First, the memoir is told as a history of relationships with men. Reviewers expected a treatise on art, but instead learned more about sexual encounters with artists. Second, she comes across as daffy. The combination of what she is saying and how she says it is indeed disconcerting; many conclude she is simply dimwitted. A few recognize her intent to shock, and it provokes them. Third, she is seen as out of touch and insulated from reality by her wealth. She discusses current events, including the Second World War, only to the extent that they inconvenienced her. While she is not averse to self-criticism, she never criticizes those aspects of her self that most irk reviewers: the privilege of wealth, her sometimes neglectful parenting, and her heedless sexual exploits—whether she is manipulating someone else or seemingly allowing herself to be mistreated. Reviewers may expect her, as a woman, to be apologetic, emotional, or caught up in romance but she never is. In reading the reviews, it becomes clear that the critics are reiterating rules about how women should both act and feel. Rather than have wanton sex or pursue their own professional ventures, women are expected to provide love and support for their husbands, and take pains to ensure their self-image reflects these values. Because reviewers have internalized these gender standards, they may not realize just how gendered their language and criticism is. Very few reviewers mention the abuse Guggenheim chronicles. Perhaps they believe it ordinary,

or think it merits little attention because of her tone, which is glib throughout. However, the omission is striking. The links between bohemianism, Surrealism, misogyny, and gendered violence escape them.

Aaron Bohrod of the *Chicago Tribune* hints at this link in titling his March 31, 1946 review "Surrealism and Sex à la Guggenheim," though he fails to address it further. The son of Jewish immigrants, Bohrod was a social realist painter who spent time in New York and later served in the Army War Art Unit.[144] He presents Guggenheim as a dimwitted gossip: "Without a trace of inhibition, and in racy, readable prose, the author reveals all the facts of her life among the millionaires, dilettantes, and surrealists." He trivializes: "No detail, pertinent or otherwise of Miss Guggenheim's personal life is omitted: The insults and beatings she received: the miscarriage and childbirth pains she endured." He does not share what on this list he deems "pertinent" and what he considers "otherwise," though his condescension towards her as a woman is unmistakable. He seems undisturbed by the violence. He comments on her relationships: "Nobody need come away from this book with an unsatisfied curiosity about the author's sexual life. A catalog of participants would include two legal husbands, a handful of long term lovers and innumerable tentative ones." This makes her "nymphomaniacal" in his eyes, and he advocates for the book to instead be titled "Out of My Head."[145]

Reviews adjacent to Bohrod's in the book section of the *Chicago Tribune* are telling about midcentury standards of femininity. A column over, the poet and playwright Paul Engle

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[144] Bernard Friedman, "Aaron Bohrod," Modernism in the New City: Chicago Artists, 1920-1950, accessed May 9, 2018, http://www.chicagomodern.org/artists/aaron_bohrod/.
[145] Aaron Bohrod, "Surrealism and Sex a la Guggenheim," *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1946, Magazine of Books, PDF.

reviews Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*."[146] Misreading the novel's darkness and weight, he compliments McCullers for her "Warm, Poetic, Live Story of a Little Girl." Simultaneously, he disparages other women writers: "After the sentimental and impossible novels turned out by the recent popular lady writers, the books in which women retain their beauty and purity (at least of mind) thru the most artificially manufactured situations, it is a pleasure to read a story that seems very warm and real and actual." Like Bohrod, he interprets McCullers' work against established expectations for female writers. As reviewers misunderstand Guggenheim's writing style and tone, so does Engle misunderstand McCullers'—taking her work to be far less complex than it really is: "There is an almost perfect harmony between the theme of this book and the prose in which it is expressed, for the prose is lyrical and sensitive and always fresh."[147] Women's writing—even that of accomplished, established novelists—was misread and oversimplified in postwar America.

Bernard Winebaum, a playwright who wrote for *The New York Times*, is overwhelmed by the intimate details of Guggenheim's life.[148] Titled "Mechante–and de Trop," his review states that "To hide a singular lack of grace and wit, she loads her sentences with italics and parentheses." He finds her memoir pornographic. While grace is a quality expected of women, frankness is not, especially when it comes to sex. Winebaum characterizes her chronicles as a "personal and informal world's series of love affairs," writing that "Miss G. in unburdening herself [of these relationships] has probably done everybody justice." He implies that the memoir

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[146] Tom Cox, "Overlooked classics: The Member Of The Wedding by Carson McCullers," *The Guardian* (London), June 21, 2012, Books, accessed May 9, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2012/jun/21/overlooked-classics-member-wedding-carson-mccullers.

[147] Paul Engle, "Warm, Poetic, Live Story of a Little Girl," *Chicago Tribune*, March 31, 1946, Magazine of Books, PDF.

[148] *Periodicals: January-June 1954*, Catalog of Copyright Entries 3 (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1955), 71, digital file.

is a kind of therapy or ritual cleansing, and insinuates that she is taking her revenge. In his account, she simply appears "mean"—unreasonably spiteful. He makes her into a case study of *women's* inability to handle the emotional toll of sexual freedom. At the same time, however, Winebaum casts her as a wily seductress and credits her with trapping the reader as well as male "victims": "To be shocked is to fall flailing into the trap laid so carefully and knowingly by the author."[149]

Female reviewers of Guggenheim's memoir were also ferocious defenders of midcentury codes of sexual conduct. Elizabeth Hardwick of *The Nation* delivered one of the most barbed reviews. Hardwick, a prominent novelist and literary critic, positions herself as a gatekeeper to high culture. Her words are angry: Guggenheim is tarnishing by association the reputations of serious women of letters, including Hardwick. Hardwick is disdainful that Guggenheim inherited her position in the New York upper class, while Hardwick had to work for it as a Southern transplant. In short, Guggenheim possessed all the qualities that Hardwick wanted and worked so hard to get, but none of the seriousness.[150] Hardwick thinks the book "an unconsciously comic imitation of a first-grade reader," and that Guggenheim possesses a "slumbering mind and soul that shock the reader rather than the amorous incidents she is so fond of describing." Rather than elucidate the wonders of the bohemian intellectual world of which Hardwick is so fond, Guggenheim "deals with herself and her extensive relations with artists and bohemian life

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[149] B. V. Winebaum, "Mechante–and de Trop," *The New York Times*, May 26, 1946, accessed September 21, 2017, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1946/05/26/121025048.html?pageNumber=41.
[150] Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Elizabeth Hardwick, Writer, Dies at 91," *The New York Times*, December 4, 2007, Obituaries, accessed September 29, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/04/obituaries/04cnd-hardwick.html; University of Texas at Austin, "Elizabeth Hardwick: An Inventory of Her Papers at the Harry Ransom Center," Harry Ransom Center, accessed September 29, 2017, http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/fasearch/findingAid.cfm?eadid=00051.

in…primer fashion." For Hardwick, even Guggenheim's grief following her older sister's death is inadequate, a criticism specifically rooted in standards of femininity. She ends by questioning Guggenheim's merit and place in the art world: "It is an unfortunate thing that the uncreative who associate with artists seem to write their memoirs more frequently than the artists themselves."[151] Like Guggenheim, Hardwick didn't have it easy in the male-dominated world of letters. Her love life and career often intertwined. Though confident and opinionated in her writing—she was known for her biting criticism—she was often relegated to traditional female roles in her personal relationships. Perhaps she saw herself in Guggenheim's writing. Or perhaps she was angry that Guggenheim didn't manage her relationships better, or convey them with more intelligence.[152]

The art critic Clement Greenberg wrote a different kind of review. Both her friend and a detractor, Greenberg presents Guggenheim as a martyr to bohemia. In his September 1946 *Commentary* review, he writes that "[she] accepts [bohemia] on its own terms and claims, questioning and doubting nothing, incredulously grateful to be part of it, and therefore resigned to being victimized by it." He continues: "Giving the details of this victimization with a helpless literalness, omitting nothing that might be humiliating, drowned in a self-absorption that flows from her total failure to solve either her environment or herself, Miss Guggenheim displays her career, unconsciously, as a martyrology." Greenberg suggests that Guggenheim was welcomed into a community of artists for her money, and that this made her apprehensive about whether she truly belonged. By Greenberg's lights, Guggenheim was a victim of her wealth, her

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[151] Elizabeth Hardwick, "Out of Bohemia," *The Nation*, April 6, 1946, OpinionArchives (13427552).
[152] Michelle Dean, "Love, Actually: Robert Lowell adored intelligent women and treated them terribly," *The New Republic*, February 4, 2016, accessed May 9, 2018, https://newrepublic.com/article/128999/robert-lowells-tainted-love.

Jewishness, and her gender. Her gender made her a literal and metaphorical punching bag; the abuse was a constant reminder that as a woman in bohemia, she existed to pleasure and support the celebrated men around her.[153] Though radical in many ways, bohemia was ultimately a man's world, and Guggenheim found that out the hard way.[154]

Reviewers bristled at her bald and unapologetic narration of sex, and the fact that she neither sugarcoats these experiences nor expresses guilt. They believed her tone offhand, missing the fact that it was really a thin mask for the deep hurt and humiliation she suffered in bohemia—and that the memoir was the only place she could process these experiences in a society that offered no time or space to reflect on abuse. Her declaration of sexual power and desire, privileges typically reserved for men, rankled reviewers. In part because she is a woman, they viewed her sexual behavior as reckless, addictive, and exploitative. They offered no sympathy for the verbal and physical abuse she withstood, instead blaming her for it. They used her love life against her and suggested she was little more than a consort to famous artists: a wealthy woman who owed her success to seductive wiles, or her willingness to let herself be exploited. To support this claim, they insisted she lacked any talent as a collector, declaring her assessments of specific artworks within the memoir infrequent and insufficient. A whole arsenal of gender and sexual stereotypes and judgments could be mobilized against her. In a sense, reviewers of the memoir sought to put Guggenheim back in her place. They made fun of her, treating her as a dotty dimwit too dumb to edit out embarrassing life details.

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[153] Clement Greenberg writing as Hardesh, "Out of This," 1, 2.
[154] Stansell, *American Moderns*.

V. Guggenheim Responds

As shown by the number of reviews it garnered, Guggenheim's first memoir made a splash. Sales were good, though it was only printed in a single run of six thousand copies.[155] *Art Digest* reported that the book was ubiquitous on 57th Street, which was home to Guggenheim's gallery.[156] By all accounts, Guggenheim was excited about her book. She signed copies in a bookstore, and entreated her friends to buy the $2 memoir.[157] It was published in at least three countries.[158] Yet, Guggenheim does seem to have heard the reviewers. In 1960, she rewrote and republished her memoir after an English illustrator and editor named Nicolas Bentley prompted her to combine a shortened version of *Out of This Century* with an account of her life since 1946.[159] Upon the 1960 publication in London by André Deutsch, New York by the Macmillan Company, and Germany by Kindler, Guggenheim was sixty-two years old and sixteen years removed from the first book.[160] She had a different narrative to tell: "I seem to have written the first book as an uninhibited woman and the second one as a lady who was trying to establish her place in the history of modern art."[161]

She changed the memoir drastically. While 1946's *Out of This Century* is 365 pages in length, 1960's rerelease *Confessions of an Art Addict* is only half that.[162] This second version amounts to a more refined account of herself and her story. In it, she restores the names of the

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[155] Gill, *Art Lover*, 339.
[156] Dearborn, *Mistress of Modernism*, 245.
[157] Bograd Weld, *Peggy: The Wayward*, 347.
[158] W. A. Bradley to Peggy Guggenheim, October 8, 1976, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX; André Deutsch to W. A. Bradley, February 8, 1977, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX.
[159] Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict*, 271.
[160] W. A. Bradley to Peggy Guggenheim, October 8, 1976, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX; Peggy Guggenheim to W. A. Bradley, February 8, 1977, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX.
[161] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 271.
[162] Ibid.

friends and family members she previously identified through pseudonyms, while simultaneously eliminating their more questionable or provocative deeds.[163] She omits most of the sex. The ceaseless string of relationships and infidelities among the members of her milieu receives no mention. She drastically reduces her own list of lovers to four total, describing three of them within a five-page chapter entitled "Marriages."[164] The fourth relationship receives a full chapter, "Life With Max Ernst."[165] Though she refers to John Holms and the unnamed Douglas Garman as her husbands, she does admit that she married neither.[166] Sex exists, but within the context of these "marriages," which makes it seem acceptable. Her marriage to Vail receives fewer than three pages. She vaguely alludes to his abusive nature, writing "This marriage to Laurence Vail, which was extremely stormy, in fact, often much too much so, lasted for seven years."[167] A summary of what she reaped from the marriage follows: it took her away from her bourgeois Jewish background and into the "intellectual world of the 'twenties"; it gave her a son and a daughter, and a "lifelong friendship with Laurence."[168] She concludes with a tempered final judgment of Vail: "I have always found husbands much more satisfactory after marriage than during."[169] Devoid of conflict, complexity, and sexual tension, her life seems much smoother.

The second version is more focused than the first. She summarizes and categorizes her life into ten self-contained chapters, including "Serious Collecting" and three devoted to her life and museum in Venice. *Confessions of an Art Addict* is still conversational, but it lacks nearly all

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[163] Dearborn, *Mistress of Modernism*, 243.
[164] Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict*, 39.
[165] Ibid., 85.
[166] Ibid., 41, 44.
[167] Ibid., 41.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid., 41.

of the unexpected details that populate the first book. Its title notwithstanding, it is far less confessional in style than the prior text. In a way, the title serves as a disappointing substitute for the detail she omits. It puts the emphasis on art, not the artists. It received little fanfare, and soon went out of print. It seems that no one was much interested in a version without the rendition of sex that animated the first book, and for which Guggenheim was so doggedly criticized.[170]

In 1979, only two months before she died, Guggenheim republished the book in a third version.[171] A few years prior, Universe Books had approached her with the idea of combining the previous two memoirs. Writes Guggenheim in the final version, "[at] the time I did not feel like it, but not several years later I came round to thinking of it" after the French consul André Tronc approached her about revamping the memoirs.[172] His idea was to tape-record Guggenheim, and then turn these recordings into a book, though his plan failed because Guggenheim could not be persuaded to abandon her original tale.[173] Tronc objected that the "French would not like" the first memoir, but she wanted to do things her own way. She contacted Jenny Bradley of the William A. Bradley Literary Agency in Paris in 1975, and the two began the long process of combining the first and second editions together in a third book.[174] First, Guggenheim had to reacquire the rights she had sold to the companies that published the 1960 edition, which she accomplished in 1977. Then, she had to find a publisher. André Deutsch, the publisher of the 1960 edition, agreed if allowed to "do a proper editorial job on her

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[170] Ibid.; Gill, *Art Lover*, 342, 348.
[171] Gill, *Art Lover*, 427-430.
[172] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 315.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 315; André Deutsch to W. A. Bradley, February 8, 1977, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX.

manuscript."[175] In a letter to Guggenheim's literary agent dated February 8, 1977, Deutsch expresses how "Peggy does not want a word to be cut so I am afraid we cannot proceed with [the book]."[176] The French publisher Albin Michel also turned down the project. In a letter alerting Guggenheim to that fact, Bradley admits "I frankly do not see any great chance for it at present here."[177] Eventually, Guggenheim did succeed. Universe Books published the memoir in New York, and André Deutsch ended up publishing it under Guggenheim's terms in London. It is the only version of the memoir still in print. The years after her death saw the publication of the work in Italy, France, Germany, and Spain, all of which remain in print except the French edition.[178]

Consisting of the first book, four chapters from the second book, and new content about her life in Venice, *Out of This Century: Confessions of an Art Addict* is 322 pages and approximates the length of the first book.[179] It reads much like the first publication. In it, she acknowledges the poor critical reception the first edition received in 1946: "Many of [the reviewers] took the opportunity to display their own cleverness by attacking me." She then quotes liberally from three vicious reviews, and one that is much more fair.[180] She lets reviewers speak for themselves, offering no further analysis or insight into how they may have affected her. If she wrote the first version, as noted earlier, as an "uninhibited woman" and the second version "as a lady who was trying to establish her place in the history of modern art," in the third,

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[175] André Deutsch to W. A. Bradley, February 8, 1977, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX.
[176] Ibid.
[177] W. A. Bradley to Peggy Guggenheim, United States, March 25, 1977, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX.
[178] Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, "Bibliography," Peggy Guggenheim Collection, accessed May 9, 2018, http://www.guggenheim-venice.it/museum/bibliografia_peggy.pdf.
[179] Ibid.; Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 8-10.
[180] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 269-271.

Guggenheim reverts to her "uninhibited" self, perhaps knowing that she has already established her place within history—and no longer caring what reviewers think.[181]

VI. Conclusion

Guggenheim pushed against the limits of what was allowed in both bohemian and bourgeois society—and both pushed back. Bohemia told her to be a seductive free spirit, but ultimately to inspire men and be an object for their fantasy; bourgeois culture told her to be respectable, to restrain herself, and to never make sex into a dangerous game. She was treated poorly as a woman in bohemia, both physically abused and drawn into her male lovers' complicated love triangles. In playing the games of bohemian culture, she violated those of bourgeois culture, evidenced by the 1946 reviews that questioned her intellect and denigrated her life choices. There are many ways to think about Guggenheim, her romantic relationships, and her memoir. Was she a victim, and unaware that she was one? Did her complicity and the ways she took advantage of others make her less of a victim? Was she deliberately taking revenge by publishing her annals of love? The answers to these questions are not clear-cut. What is clear is that by the time she published the third memoir, she knew exactly how she wanted to portray herself. She tells everything—sex, abuse, love, family, art—and uses the same tone. Equally, sex, abuse, love, family, and art made her life what it was. With this decision to finally, once and for all tell everything, she seems more deliberate than daffy. One gets the sense that she doesn't much care what others think, nor does she worry about the past. A newspaper obituary quotes

[181] Ibid., 271.

her: "'I have no regrets,' she once said. 'A lot of it was a lot of fun. Painful, too, but love is always painful anyhow.'"[182]

[182] "Peggy Guggenheim, Art Collector, Dies," December 23, 1979, William A. Bradley Literary Agency, Harry Ransom Center, Austin, TX.

Chapter III: Jewishness

I. Introduction

Guggenheim tried to leave her bourgeois, Jewish past in New York. But Jewishness, and the different meanings and constraints attached to that identity, followed her throughout her career. In bohemian artistic circles in Europe, her Jewish identity became a justification for demeaning insults. When the Second World War broke out, her Jewishness put her in physical danger, even if she chose to ignore this fact for two years. Her Jewishness complicates how we now view her wartime collecting. Through time, people have used her Jewishness as a magnifying glass to focus on those aspects they most dislike. She has been pinned with nearly every anti-Semitic trope; to detractors, friends and biographers alike, she was both wealthy and frugal, oversexed, conniving, and unattractive—with a big nose. In short, her Jewishness has become a shorthand for everything people most hate about her; it embattled her during her lifetime—along with her patronage of modern art and her gender—and it colors how we think of her today.

II. A Martyr to Bohemia

Jewishness defined Guggenheim's upbringing. When her grandfathers immigrated from Germany and German-speaking Switzerland in the mid 1800s, their religious and ethnic affiliation provided a community. With time, this community grew into a sizeable and wealthy contingent of business-oriented families based in New York. This German-Jewish milieu provided one's social circle, business partners, and potential spouses.[183] By the time Guggenheim was born in 1898, Jewishness continually defined this ever-expanding group,

[183] Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Berkley Books, 1984), 11, 48.

though as a cultural tradition more than a religious one. But, it was a particular kind of Jewishness intended to differentiate the group's members from other Jews by asserting their status as wealthy and important Americans. The rituals of daily life they adopted—which adapted those of gentile New York—especially set them apart from the more recent influx of poor Russian Jews.[184] In Guggenheim's memoir, this community—insular, moneyed, dictated by upper class mores—makes for a stifling upbringing. Even growing up almost exclusively around Jews, Guggenheim got a taste of how others saw her. Once when vacationing away from New York, for instance, the family was "politely but firmly turned out of a hotel in Vermont for being Jewish."[185] Previously, in 1912, the family watched with "great delight" as a New Jersey hotel that forbid Jewish entrants burned down. These incidents gave Guggenheim "a new inferiority complex," leaving an impression that lasted long enough for her to include them in her memoir over thirty years late.[186]

Guggenheim describes her departure for Europe at the age of twenty-two as motivated by a desire to escape her confining and structured childhood. Because cultural Judaism defined her upbringing and her family's social group, breaking with her past necessitated breaking with this identity. Yet, she moved from one country with a history of anti-Semitism to another. In France, anti-Semitism enjoyed an established political platform; invariably, her new peers saw her as Jewish. It was in moving away from her ethnically homogenous community and entering the group that most differed in values that Guggenheim's Jewishness became salient—salient despite the fact that she left behind Jewishness as she knew it in New York. In reality, she was a minority among gentiles, and her ethnic identity mattered to people whether or not she

[184] Ibid., 289-297.
[185] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 23.
[186] Ibid., 17.

performed the customs of her family's specific brand of Jewishness. Her surname preceded her, and once people knew she was Jewish, they never forgot. For better—or often for worse—it became a lens through which people viewed her.

Guggenheim's adventures in bohemia must not be explained solely as a desire to escape her Jewish family. To do so would be to flatten her identity into something one-dimensional—into something explainable by her ethnic makeup alone. Many of her friends and biographers alike are guilty of this. European expatriation was common among members of her generation.[187] Guggenheim knew others, both Jewish and gentile, who had relocated, and the inheritance she received at twenty-one made her own move possible. What's more, she did not intend to stay in Paris for as long as she did. Rather, she realized the freedoms that living in Europe could afford her: she could travel widely, pursue sexual relationships, share a community with artists and intellectuals, and—eventually—pursue a profession. This new life differed drastically from what her life could be at home, and her entry into bohemia happened very quickly.

Yet, entering bohemia also had its downsides, which Clement Greenberg addresses in his 1946 review of *Out of This Century*, introduced in Chapter II. His review is the only one to foreground Guggenheim's complicated Jewishness. He believes that upon entering bohemia and leaving behind her upbringing, Guggenheim forfeited the moral code she learned in the bourgeois Jewish world of New York. Bohemia rejected traditional morals, and to Greenberg, Guggenheim had a difficult time navigating this new world because she was unwilling to draw upon the only principles she had ever known, those of her structured upbringing. Rendered without morals and thus unable to critically respond to what was happening around her, "she

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[187] Hilton Kramer, "Peggy Guggenheim as History," *The New Criterion*, April 1, 1986, 3, http://ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1300649560?accountid=711.

became an object," "as every one of her simple declarative sentences…should make clear," in Greenberg's words. As an "object," he continues, she "[accepted Bohemia] on its own terms and claims, questioning and doubting nothing, incredulously grateful to be part of it, and therefore resigned to being victimized by it." He believes that she gave herself wholly and uncritically to bohemia, and that bohemia took advantage of her: "Giving the details of this victimization with a helpless literalness, omitting nothing that might be humiliating…Miss Guggenheim displays her career, unconsciously, as a martyrology."[188]

Greenberg is unsettled by Guggenheim's story because he believes she enabled her own victimization by casting off her Jewish identity: he writes, "As a Jew I am disturbed in a particular way by this account of the life of another Jew. Is this how naked and helpless we Jews become once we abandon our 'system' completely and surrender ourselves to a world so utterly Gentile in its lack of prescriptions and prohibitions as bohemia really is?" He believes Jews are especially susceptible to victimization within bohemia: "In the list of martyrs of bohemia, Jewish names stand out, and the names of gifted Jews, too, not merely aberrated [sic] ones." Though Jews comprise a small proportion of bohemia, he believes "the martyrs are too many, and examples like Miss Guggenheim's too frequent." He names Jules Pascin, Amedeo Modigliani, and Chaim Soutine as examples.[189]

Greenberg was an interesting figure, and he elucidates the range of Jewish identities that existed in midcentury America. Unlike Guggenheim, he was unable to relinquish the moral code that defined his own Jewish upbringing. Because he held onto his Jewishness so staunchly, complete assimilation into the gentile intellectual crowd in which he lived and worked as an art critic was impossible. Like Guggenheim, Greenberg had a structured childhood, though it was

[188] Greenberg writing as Hardesh, "Out of This," 1, 2.
[189] Ibid., 2.

middle-class rather than stiflingly upper-class. The secular Jewish worldview of his socialist Lithuanian parents mandated they be "more correct, more staid, more provincial, more commonplace, more inexperienced" than any other people. Their Jewishness was "a code of behavior" that would allow them to succeed in America as immigrants by "[protecting them] from the ravages of Bohemianism"—or disorder. Greenberg sought to escape his immigrant family and this code but feared for his ability to navigate the rule-free world without its prescriptions. He clung to the structure that defined him at his core, but hated how it "otherized" him, preventing him from ever truly belonging to gentile society. It is of no surprise that he both envied and loathed Guggenheim for her ability to shed her heritage and the expectations that came with it.[190]

In his review, Greenberg highlights the presence of Jews in bohemia. Guggenheim was far from the first Jew living in bohemia. Indeed, by the early twentieth century, Paris had become a hub for immigrant Jewish artists. The city attracted artists of all stripes, and beginning much earlier; however, it was not until the twentieth century that Jewish artists had any real presence in Western art, owing to religious dictates forbidding image-making and the fact that the Western tradition had been Christian for centuries. Even before these artists, many Jews were involved in Parisian art as collectors. Guggenheim was preceded by the Wildensteins (who became established as early as the 19th century) and Bernheims (whose Galerie Bernheim-Jeune may have inspired the name of Guggenheim's first gallery), the de Camondos (who had their own museum and whose donations bolstered important museum collections, including the Louvre), Berthe Weill (who showed Picasso and Modigliani, and also published her memoirs), Daniel-

[190] Clement Greenberg, *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, ed. John O'Brian, vol. 1, *The Collected Essays and Criticism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 176-179.

Henry Kahnweiler, Adolphe Basler, and the Rosenbergs, all prominent and influential collectors in their own right.[191]

Jews were a minority in the art world of Paris, but even among their small numbers, their backgrounds and Jewish identities varied. Yet, Guggenheim differed from all of them. The notable Jewish artists who immigrated before World War I settled primarily in the neighborhood of Montparnasse and hailed from all over. They included the German Pascin, whom Gertrude Stein mentions in *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, the Austrian Walter Bondy, the Polish-born, American-raised painter Max Weber, the Italian Modigliani, the Lithuanian Jacques Lipchitz, and the Russians Sonia Delaunay, Ossip Zadkine, Marc Chagall, and Soutine. After the war came the American-born Russian Man Ray and the Romanian Victor Brauner, both of whom became Surrealists. Many of these individuals overlapped with Guggenheim. Of those listed, Guggenheim definitely knew Pascin, Man Ray, Brauner, Chagall, and Delaunay.[192] She may have known more through her first husband Vail.[193] And yet, Guggenheim and these artists differed drastically: overwhelmingly, they were struggling male artists whose ethnicity prohibited them from pursuing art in their Eastern European homes. They had little in common with Guggenheim and the particular brand of Jewishness that defined her upbringing. Despite this fact, they were all viewed as Jewish. And for their Jewishness, they were often cast as poseurs in bohemia.[194]

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[191] Silver and Golan, *The Circle*, 10, 17.
[192] Ibid., 10, 13, 15-17, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33; Lader, "Peggy Guggenheim's," 16.
[193] Silver and Golan, *The Circle*, 71-73; Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 33.
[194] Daniel Cottom, "Bohemian Poseur Jew," in *International Bohemia: Scenes of Nineteenth-century Life* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), PDF.

Let's return to Greenberg's assertion that "In the list of martyrs of bohemia, Jewish names stand out."[195] Greenberg wrote the review in 1946, and he was undeniably alluding to the recently concluded war. An estimated eighty Parisian Jewish artists died during the Holocaust after first spending time in French deportation camps. Many entered hiding before Guggenheim fled the continent in 1941. Greenberg includes Soutine in his list of martyrs. One of the most popular Jewish artists of his day, he left Paris and went into hiding in 1941. A year before, he had received medical treatment for an ulcer and declined an opportunity to flee to the United States. In 1943, he defied the Nazis by returning to Paris, only to die the day after he arrived when the journey complicated his fragile health. Pointedly, Soutine had enlisted and dug trenches for the French during World War I despite only having lived in the country for five years. Only two decades later, his adopted country failed him.[196]

Greenberg also compares Guggenheim to another prominent Jewish collector of bohemian Paris: Gertrude Stein. Many scholars have searched for and detected no outward signs of Jewishness in Stein's life, citing her collaboration with the Vichy government as the ultimate evidence that she cannot be regarded as Jewish.[197] And yet like Guggenheim, she was "an American of German Jewish descent…[who] fled the *lares and penates* for Paris," in the words of Greenberg. "Miss Stein…succumbed uncritically, if on a different level, to international bohemia, becoming one of its most loyal citizens, faithful inhabitants, and assiduous celebrators."[198] What about Stein made her able to float above the fray? For one, Stein made herself into the "Queen of Bohemia," and she could afford to push back against some of the most

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[195] Greenberg writing as Hardesh, "Out of This," 2.
[196] Silver and Golan, *The Circle*, 30, 53, 114, 115.
[197] Maria Damon, "Gertrude Stein's Jewishness, Jewish Social Scientists, and the 'Jewish Question,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 42, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 489, 490, https://muse.jhu.edu/.
[198] Greenberg writing as Hardesh, "Out of This," 2.

blatant instances of anti-Jewish prejudice she encountered. Scholars suspect that Stein abruptly terminated her friendship with Ernest Hemingway because of his virulently anti-Semitic portrayal of Guggenheim's cousin Harold Loeb in *The Sun Also Rises*.[199] But Stein's Jewishness manifested in complex and contradictory ways: remaining in France for the duration of the war, she translated thirty-two speeches written by Chief of State Marshal Pétain, many of which outlined Vichy's anti-Semitic policies. Though plainly damning, this act could also be viewed as a survival tactic.[200]

Guggenheim and Stein even shared analogous relationships to collecting and writing, and to Paris. Like Guggenheim, Stein continued her artistic pursuits as the situation in Europe grew increasingly tense, collecting even after France had fallen. Perhaps more telling, her memoir *Paris France* hit the shelves on June 14, 1940, the day the Nazis seized Paris. Like Guggenheim, Stein subscribed to the very French idea that "writers' and artists' work just goes on… mostly in indifference to the headlines" to quote columnist Adam Gopnik of *The New Yorker.*[201] As Guggenheim was criticized for choosing not to discuss the war in her memoir, so was Stein. They were seen as elitist and out of touch, able to weather any storm with their wealth—including a world war. Others see this choice differently, even finding it admirable. Gopnik holds that "[real] artists and writers write out of images and conviction that are mostly immune to the specifics of the political moment. There's something moving, even valiant, in Stein's determination to celebrate French civilization in the face of its imminent collapse."[202] The same could be said of Guggenheim's memoir. Some even thought their writing styles similar. The

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[199] Pierpont, "The Collector."
[200] Columbia University, "Unlikely Collaboration: Gertrude Stein, Bernard Faÿ, and the Vichy Dilemma," Columbia University Press, accessed April 24, 2018, https://cup.columbia.edu/book/unlikely-collaboration/9780231152631.
[201] Adam Gopnik, "Understanding Steinese," *The New Yorker*, June 24, 2013, 6, PDF.
[202] Ibid.

American writer and cultural critic Gore Vidal stated about Guggenheim "I admire her style which was unaffected but effective. She was almost as good as Gertrude Stein…And a lot funnier."[203] Claudia Pierpont of *The New Yorker* believes Guggenheim based the "Surrealistically naïve tone" of her memoir on Stein's 1933 memoir *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, though a direct influence has yet to be identified.[204]

Despite their similarities, their differences were stark. No one questioned Stein's credence as a collector of provocative art; no one believed she over-relied on advisors. And she wrote about her art, which Guggenheim herself didn't do much of—and for which reviewers criticized her. Stein's life was not easy, but her openly lesbian identity may have insulated her from some of the dynamics of male sexual power that so often ensnared and hurt Guggenheim. Unlike Stein, Guggenheim did not cement her status as a leader in the art world until she returned to New York, leaving bohemia and its sexual and ethnic politics behind.[205]

Guggenheim's writing, perhaps unintentionally, conveys her pronounced vulnerability as a Jewish woman. She describes her encounters with anti-Semitism in the same casual tone that we have already seen in her writing about sex. Her first husband Vail plainly indulged in anti-Semitic stereotypes, though Guggenheim shrugged them off in her signature way. In the memoir, she minimizes his personal and anti-Semitic attacks by saying he was "snobbish about my family."[206] She writes about his behavior while living in Capri soon after marrying: "He did not like the Guggenheims, and was perpetually making fun of them."[207] One day, he told Guggenheim he would like to toss her uncles off the same cliff where Tiberius slayed his

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[203] Gore Vidal quoted in Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 9.
[204] Pierpont, "The Collector," 11.
[205] Adam Gopnik, "Understanding Steinese," *The New Yorker*, June 24, 2013, PDF.
[206] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 42.
[207] Ibid.

adversaries.[208] Vail further filleted Guggenheim in his 1932 novel *Murder! Murder!*, where he blames her Jewishness for their extremely dysfunctional marriage. He especially focuses on her wealth: "There was a certain quality about a Jewish argument about money which no Christian like Martin could possibly understand: he saw the sordid facts, the mean details, not the rich human emotion."[209] As biographer Prose notes, the unabashed anti-Semitism of Vail's hero and fictional stand-in Martin comes from the author himself. Horrifyingly, his first draft was even crueler: Guggenheim objected to her portrayal when Vail showed her the draft, whereupon Vail became so outraged that he destroyed it with fire."[210] She maintains that he then toned down her portrayal in the final version.[211]

Was Guggenheim entirely clueless and resigned to anti-Semitic treatment? She did, after all, decide to record these episodes, and in this way publicly confronted her friends. More often, though, she did nothing when she was the brunt of prejudiced remarks. She recalls a party she and Vail threw in Paris: "Kiki, Man Ray's mistress, hit him in the face and called him a dirty Jew." Though Guggenheim did not object, her mother did, and confronted Kiki about her remarks.[212] Even Guggenheim's close friends described her in ways that employ stereotypes about wealthy Jews. Take, for instance, Mary McCarthy's 1948 short story "The Cicerone," which she wrote the same year Guggenheim's first memoir was published.[213] In it, Guggenheim appears as Polly Herkimer Grabbe, a name at once suggestive of greed and unmistakably

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[208] Ibid.
[209] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 63.
[210] Ibid., 83.
[211] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 83.
[212] Ibid., 59.
[213] "Mary McCarthy, The Art of Fiction," interview by Elisabeth Sifton and Mary McCarthy, *The Paris Review*, conducted 1962, accessed April 24, 2018, https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4618/mary-mccarthy-the-art-of-fiction-no-27-mary-mccarthy.

Jewish.[214] The following description exploits these same ideas, while also emphasizing miserliness: "Miss Grabbe's intelligence was flighty…but her estimates were sharp; no contactor or husband had ever padded a bill on her; she always put on her glasses to add up a dinner check."[215] McCarthy's assessment reinforces some of Greenberg's own. Writes McCarthy, "An indefatigable Narcissa, she adapted herself spryly to comedy when she perceived that the world was smiling; she was always the second to laugh at a prat-fall of her spirit."[216] Greenberg relates her martyrdom to her Jewishness, explaining that "it was for fear of being recaptured and returned to [bourgeois Jewish society]—the unconscious conviction that she would be, simply because Jews are forced to remain bourgeois in spite of themselves—that she threw herself so unreservedly into bohemia and has dwelt in it so unqualifiedly, recklessly, and gullibly."[217] To Greenberg, she is simultaneously tarred for being Jewish and an easier target for having relinquished her Jewishness and its structure. Guggenheim's experiences in bohemia suggest that her Jewishness was both determined from within by her upbringing, as well as from without by the expectations and prejudices of others.[218]

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[214] Frances Kiernan, *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 281, digital file.
[215] Mary McCarthy, "The Cicerone," *Partisan Review*, February 1948, 164, 165, 172, 173, accessed April 24, 2018, http://www.bu.edu/partisanreview/books/PR1948V15N2/HTML/files/assets/basic-html/index.html#149.
[216] Ibid., 164.
[217] Greenberg writing as Hardesh, "Out of This," 1, 2.
[218] Jill Fields, "Was Peggy Guggenheim Jewish? Art Collecting and Representations of Jewish Identity in and out of Postwar Venice," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 25 (Fall 2013): 56, doi:10.2979/nashim.25.51.

III. The War

The war made Guggenheim vulnerable in a different way. Following the invasion of France, everyone feared for their safety. But Guggenheim's Jewish identity and defiance of reality made her especially susceptible. This fact is palpable even though she hides behind a veneer of indifference in recounting her life during the war. As discussed in Chapter II, she does not present herself as a female victim; neither does she present herself as a Jewish one. Practically, this translates to downplaying the danger she was in, sometimes even adopting a certain coyness in her retelling. We must also remember that Guggenheim wrote the memoir to establish her bohemian credentials and her prominence as a modern art patron. Within this framework, the war was a glitch in her rise as a prominent collector—an impediment, but nevertheless something she eventually overcame. For this reason, she contains the war within a single chapter of the memoir, declining to relate harrowing details or voice the very real ways she must have feared for herself and for her family. Even within this chapter, entitled "My Life During the War," Guggenheim appears to privilege her collection over her own safety; she seems more concerned with exhibiting it than with what is happening in her adopted country. This preoccupation with her collection appears to insulate her from the war as she pours her energy into art instead of acknowledging how increasingly dangerous it is to be Jewish. And yet, being the patron of a degenerate art collection only makes her more vulnerable.[219]

Guggenheim spent the months leading up to the war in a fever of collecting; oscillating between a cultivated obliviousness to the increasingly worrisome European situation and an awareness that the situation created opportunities. She devotes the first half of "My Life During the War" to her art quest, alluding to the war sparingly. In her words, "All winter I went to

[219] Guggenheim, *Confessions of an Art Addict*.

artists' studios and to art-dealers to see what I could buy. Everyone knew that I was in the market for anything that I could lay my hands on. They chased after me, and came to my house with pictures. They even brought them to me in bed, in the morning before I was up."[220] She famously stated "The day Hitler walked into Norway, I walked into Léger's studio and bought a wonderful 1919 painting from him for one thousand dollars."[221] Mostly, she purchased directly from artists, though she visited dealers when artists declined to sell her what she wanted. She gathered works by Man Ray, Brancusi, Dali, Ernst, Miró, Tanguy, Pevsner, Kandinsky, Klee, Picabia, Braque, Gris and Giacometti, to name only some of the artists.[222]

"My Life During the War" stresses the idea that Guggenheim valued her collection above everything else, including her own safety. In this way, she continued to deny the imminent threat and instead sought a place to display her ever-growing collection. She obtained an apartment in the Place Vendôme for this purpose right before the Germans invaded France in 1940. "The owner did everything in his power to discourage me," but she was adamant and began drawing up plans to have it remodeled.[223] The risks were growing ever clearer as the Germans moved closer to Paris; eventually, she removed the collection a barn near Vichy owned by her friend Maria Jolas. And yet, again privileging her artworks' security over her own, Guggenheim remained in Paris. Her eventual flight was precipitated by a dream of entrapment in the city that nearly foreshadowed her actual situation. She tells how soon after the dream, she was unable to obtain a new traveling permit when her old one expired. Though her papers were not in order, she departed with her friend Nellie van Doesburg a mere three days before the German army

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[220] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 244.
[221] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 181, 182.
[222] Kramer, "Peggy Guggenheim," 4; Nicholas, Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 87; Pierpont, "The Collector," 1.
[223] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 252; Pierpont, "The Collector," 1.

overtook the capital—at which point people were more concerned with surviving than with having proper papers. Using gasoline she had been hoarding for weeks, they drove south along a road crammed with two million refugees. When everyone else turned west for Bordeaux, Guggenheim and van Doesburg turned east for Megève. They repeatedly defied advice in order to do so: the Italians had begun their invasion, and the mountain village was located frighteningly close to the Italian border. Instead of recalling any fear she may have felt, Guggenheim notes how much lighter the traffic became once everyone else turned towards Bordeaux. While driving, they heard that Paris had fallen. They had cut their escape extremely close.[224]

As Europe descended further into chaos, Guggenheim spent the summer "bored." Her descriptions of the war are laconic, though it had ripped her from her normal life and landed her in Lake Annecy, a town just west of Megève where she relocated during the summer. Living with her children and Jean and Nellie Arp, who were unable to return to their home in the occupied part of the country, she describes dying her hair "a different color every few weeks to amuse myself" and beginning a relationship with the hairdresser. Here, Guggenheim alludes to the war only so far as it affected her collection.[225]

The collection never was far from her mind. Though she lacked a place to keep the pictures, she had Giorgio Joyce send them from the château in Vichy. For months, they lived dangerously close to a leaking ceiling on the public quay of Lake Annecy as Guggenheim searched for a proper place to store them—and for somewhere to exhibit them. One gets the sense that she would have already exhibited the works if not for her ethnicity: "Being Jewish, I

[224] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 253, 254.
[225] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 184.

could not go back to Paris, but I wanted to exhibit the pictures somewhere."[226] She was persistent. Through van Doesburg, she connected with the director of the Museum of Grenoble, Pierre Andry-Farcy, who agreed to house the collection in the museum. She even sought approval for the transfer and requested an exhibition from the city's mayor, who agreed as long as the museum was not made liable, according to van Doesburg. Andry-Farcy was a noted supporter of the avant-garde, having transformed his museum into France's first devoted to modern art. Yet, accepting Guggenheim's collection was risky; his directorship made him an official of the French government, and he was responsible for honoring even those policies that condemned degenerate art.[227] He had already run afoul of the authorities previously, and was nearly removed from his position. Nonetheless, though Marshal Pétain was scheduled to visit the museum, Andry-Farcy concealed the museum's modern collection in the cellar and gave Guggenheim a room of her own, where she could look at her pictures and bring her friends to see them. Even so, her show remained illusive after six months, and she decided to send the works to the States—though she lacked a plan for transportation and Andry-Farcy wanted her to leave them with him.[228] Later in the war, Andry-Farcy was sent to Compiègne concentration camp in northern France, likely for his museum's very modern works and for housing Guggenheim and Sonia Delaunay's collections.[229] He survived. In her own description of these events, Guggenheim does not mention her collection's role in his ending up there.

Guggenheim remained dedicated to her collection even as the European situation worsened. She describes the increasingly challenging environment: "we had difficulty renewing our passports. We had the children to consider and the possibility of being cut off from America

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[226] Ibid., 186.
[227] Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 65.
[228] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 186, 187.
[229] Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 66.

with no money. Worse still was the prospect of being put in a concentration camp." Despite these very real threats, she spent the winter typing the catalogue to her collection in a freezing room, planning to travel to Vichy to enlist the American ambassador's help to transfer the artwork to New York. Snowbound, she was forced to remain and finally found someone to help ship the work: René Lefebvre Foinet, whose family ran an art materials and shipping store in Paris. Together, they consolidated the pictures into five cases that they shipped with household goods to elude the authorities, including Guggenheim's car. Again, she mixed love and work. She is calculatedly oblivious in recounting the affair. Though by this point the consul had been telling Americans to leave France for more than a year and a half, she revels in her description of the passing relationship: "All this lasted for two months and it was very enjoyable. So there was really no hurry about getting the cases packed."[230] Again, however, she was not the only one benefitting from the arrangement. Though Guggenheim neglects to mention it, Foinet was able to ship his own family's collection to safety in the U.S. thanks to Guggenheim's American citizenship.[231]

Even after shipping her collection, Guggenheim remained in Europe. She did recognize the danger that others faced and actively helped refugees escape the continent. From Grenoble, she traveled at least three times to Marseilles, which by then teemed with refugees, profiteers, and the black market. There, she worked with the Emergency Rescue Committee, a private American venture devoted to helping at-risk artists and intellectuals relocate to the United States

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[230] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 188, 189.
[231] "Notes from Underground: The Lefebvre-Foinet Collection," Sotheby's, accessed April 24, 2018, http://www.sothebys.com/en/news-video/blogs/all-blogs/notes-from-underground/2015/10/lefebvre-foinet-collection.html.

and Cuba.[232] The organization was principally run by the young and dogged Varian Fry, though he relied heavily on others for help, including Guggenheim. The organization operated a lodging, negotiated with Vichy and foreign authorities, and sifted through about eighty refugee applications each day to determined who was most in need of an American visa.[233] These included the Surrealists. Either at Fry's request or that of Tanguy's soon-to-be second wife Kay Sage, Guggenheim partially paid for Lipchitz and Chagall to evacuate and completely paid for the passages of Ernst, Breton and his wife and child, and André Masson and his family.[234] She also tried to aid Brauner after he wrote her for help.[235]

When Fry had to briefly return to the United States, he asked Guggenheim to run the operation in his stead. Guggenheim balked. Before her most recent trip to Marseilles, Fry, two of his helpers, and Breton were arrested and held offshore in a boat in advance of Marshal Pétain's visit to the city. They were only released after secretly conveying a message to the American consul, who then stepped in. Guggenheim "was frightened by the fact that they had been arrested and by the general black-market atmosphere of Marseilles and all the strange goings-on." She did consider the offer, turning to the American consul for advice.[236] She claims that she was unaware of all that the organization did, though she had previously helped monetarily. As she writes, "Living in Grenoble and thinking only about art I was completely unconscious of the underground and had no idea what all this was about."[237] The consul discouraged her from

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[232] Nicholas, *The Rape*, 149; Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 189; "Holocaust Encyclopedia: Varian Fry," United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005740.
[233] Nicholas, *The Rape*, 149.
[234] Ibid., 150; Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 118; Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 189.
[235] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 189.
[236] Ibid., 189, 190.
[237] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 263.

participating, and she ultimately declined Fry's offer.[238] Again, focusing on her artwork appears to have blinded Guggenheim to the realities of the war and to Jewish vulnerability—though she did agreed to provide financial help when asked earlier. Perhaps her professed obliviousness regarding Fry's committee is a matter of presentation in the memoir, though this choice is jarring.

Even if Guggenheim was playing coy when avowing how little she understood Fry's operation, it would be unwise to fault her for declining to assume his role. In 1941, the situation across Europe was becoming increasingly unsteady, and Jews in France were no longer safe. During a subsequent return to Marseilles, "Jews were being combed out of the hotels…and were being sent to live in special places." She herself had a dicey encounter with the police: early one morning, a plainclothes police officer arrived at her hotel when she was alone. After determining that she had altered the date on her expired traveling permit, failed to register her stay in Marseilles, and had a Jewish surname, he searched for any Jews concealed in her room before insisting he take her to the police station. Fortunately, he failed to find the bundle of black market cash hidden in the room, to connect her to Ernst, whom she was by then dating and who was forbidden from being in Marseilles, or to connect her to Vail, who lacked a traveling permit. Eventually, the police chief stepped in and apologized for the officer's behavior. To the first officer, Guggenheim had insisted that she was American rather than Jewish, and she attributes the chief's act to the fact that Americans were well-liked in France following a recent shipment of food aid. There is no denying that Guggenheim got very lucky—though the protection afforded by her American passport cannot be overstated.[239]

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[238] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 190.
[239] Ibid., 194, 195

When recounting the hotel episode in her memoir, she credits Ernst rather than her own smarts with her survival: "Max told me not to admit that I was Jewish if the police came to question me, but that I should insist I was an American. It was a good thing he had warned me," because when the policeman arrived, "I insisted that I was an American and said I was leaving soon for America."[240] Surely she already knew to foreground her American identity over her Jewish one. By her telling, her tale appears much less perilous than it really was. She was close to real suffering, including that of Ernst, who spent time in three concentration camps before they were lovers.[241] Given the intensity of her own experiences and of those she was close to, danger lurks in the narrative despite her nonchalant tone.

Soon thereafter, Guggenheim decided it was time to leave. Her departure from the continent was fraught, though she tells it in her characteristically unbothered tone. She had difficulty obtaining her cash from the bank before leaving France, and she was strip searched at the border before reconvening with Vail, their children, Vail's new wife, and Ernst in Spain. Eventually, the group departed Portugal on a clipper, arriving in New York on July 14, 1941. They were greeted by reporters. A picture from that moment captures Guggenheim strolling off the plane in an impressively wide-brimmed straw hat purchased during a layover in the Azores, a huge smile animating her face. The smile, whether sparked by genuine relief or nervousness, did not last long. Because he was a German citizen, Ernst was immediately seized as an enemy alien and transported to Ellis Island. After three days and multiple letters from American museum directors and gallerists attesting to his character, Ernst was released—and Guggenheim began her new American life.[242]

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[240] Ibid., 194
[241] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 265.
[242] Ibid., 265-286.

She acknowledges in retrospect that she could have done more for more people. Before she left Paris, she spent two months with a man named Bill. They would drink in cafés as anxious refugees disembarked trains in Paris. She writes that "[it] is really incomprehensible now to think of our idiotic life, when there was so much misery surrounding us… I can't imagine why I didn't go to the aid of all these unfortunate people. But I just didn't; instead I drank champagne with Bill."[243] Perhaps she did nothing because she was in denial, like many Europeans. She did help others, but even some of these efforts had an unsavory side. Beyond buying artwork cheaply from artists desperate for cash to flee the continent, she negotiated to receive art in return for paying Ernst's passage to the States. She writes that Vail and Lefebvre encouraged her to ask for paintings as repayment; she and Ernst reached an agreement, whereby Guggenheim received many paintings for two thousand dollars minus the expenses Ernst owed her. She notes that Ernst "was very generous," and the arrangement does appear to have been mutual.[244]

It is difficult to pinpoint why Guggenheim devoted so little real discussion to the war. Likely, her reasons were many. For one, doing so may have diminished one of the central goals of the book: to establish her bohemian credo and her prominence as a modern art patron. Over-focusing on the war would have distracted from this central theme. Further, given the severity of the war, recounting such episodes would have dampened the practiced lightheartedness that permeates much of the book. Third, we cannot forget how well-assimilated, secular European Jews often felt the war would never touch them, until it did. Take, for example, Hélène Berr, who was twenty-one and studying English at the Sorbonne when the conflict started. Her posthumously published journal registers her shock as France slipped further into the war and became increasingly anti-Semitic. Berr was deported and died at Auschwitz at the age of twenty-

[243] Ibid., 253.
[244] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 190, 191.

four.[245] Or Irene Némirovsky, a Russian-born writer who also attended the Sorbonne. Married with two children by the time the war reached France, Némirovsky didn't "[save] herself, even though she had every possibility for doing so" according to her daughter Elisabeth.[246] Remaining in the Occupied Zone, she was deported to Auschwitz in July of 1942, where she died a month later.[247] But ultimately, Guggenheim was an American, and this identity made her far less vulnerable than either Berr or Némirovsky. Additionally, Guggenheim began writing the book while the war was still occurring, and it was published a mere six months after the war concluded. As such, she lacked any real critical distance from her final months in Europe; it is likely she was still processing exactly how she ended up back in New York. And as a European refugee in her own right, it is possible that the fear, uncertainty, and danger of the occupation were too fresh and too painful to recount. To complicate the situation further, Guggenheim may have harbored guilt for surviving, and for not doing more for those who were less fortunate. Whether Guggenheim was as purposefully detached from the war as she maintains is also difficult to determine. What does seem clear is that she privileged her collection over her own security, effectively blinding herself to the dangers of being a Jew in Europe, and putting herself at even greater risk.

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[245] Hélène Berr, *The Journal of Hélène Berr*, trans. David Bellos (New York: Weinstein Books, 2008).
[246] Susan Rubin Suleiman, *The Némirovsky Question: The Life, Death, and Legacy of a Jewish Writer in Twentieth-Century France* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 37, 127, 129.
[247] Ibid.

IV. Changing Perceptions of Wartime Collecting

Today, we react differently to Guggenheim's descriptions of wartime collecting. No longer are we impressed by her avowed goal of buying "anything I could lay my hands on."[248] Now, we find such a preoccupation crass, distasteful, and even exploitative. To this day, much of the art taken during the war has yet to be restituted, and much remains lost. Europeans of all allegiances took advantage of Jewish artists, art collectors, and auction houses, forcing them to sell for next to nothing, then often reselling the artwork for huge gains.[249] Many people sensed an opportunity to get rich, and many took it. Compared to such machinations, Guggenheim's activities look benign, fueled as they were by the desire for an outstanding modern collection rather than a get-rich-quick mentality. Legally speaking, her purchases were kosher. And yet, her efforts make us queasy.

Her wealth, her Jewishness, and her American passport affect how we approach her collecting decades later. Did she take advantage of artists who were desperate for cash to flee the continent? Was it plainly wrong to focus on art when so many people—especially so many of her ethnic kin—were suffering? In 1941 when Guggenheim was preoccupied with her collection, 400,000 Polish Jews were forced into the Warsaw ghetto and rationed to only only 183 calories a day.[250] Or was she a Jewish hero for daringly smuggling her "degenerate" collection out of Europe right under Hitler's nose—for rescuing artwork that otherwise may not exist today? Was it wrong to wield her American citizenship, to count on it as a last resort and safe haven for both her self and her collection?

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[248] Guggenheim, *Out of This*, 244.
[249] Nicholas, *The Rape*.
[250] Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of the Holocaust* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1993), 52.

It is difficult to answer these questions. Today's perspective complicates how we see Guggenheim. We have access to information about the Holocaust, refugee displacement, and destroyed artworks. We have read and watched countless individual tales of loss, death, and unimaginable suffering. Our understanding of the war is monolithic: it was anguish and misery. Or so we thought, but then we encountered Guggenheim. Her breezy account contradicts our accepted understanding. She continues her life rather as she pleases before spiriting herself off the continent, not a painting or sculpture left behind. We know that leaving was not this simple, but her experience seems truly charmed compared to that of many Europeans at the time.

A fair assessment of Guggenheim's actions must take into account how others were interacting with the art market at the time. She was not the only one concerned with art while the war was on. Paris' Hôtel Drouot auction house continued its operations under German occupation, selling more than a million objects between 1941 and 1942, the firm's best showing that century.[251] The market teemed with middleman acting on behalf of French sellers too ashamed to do their bidding publicly. People were anxious to buy—including the Nazis. Throughout the war, Hermann Goering spent about one hundred million francs on artwork, earning the appreciation of French dealers because he paid with money that could not be tracked.[252] According to author Lynn Nicholas, "[thousands] of works of art changed hands without receipts or any kind of record."[253] Soon, the European art market extended beyond the borders of the content, reaching as far as South America and the Caribbean as people sought to safeguard their collections or avoid legal difficulties.[254] In the U.S. in 1941, dealers sold

[251] Nicholas, *The Rape,* 153.
[252] Ibid., 157.
[253] Ibid., 155.
[254] Ibid., 164.

"hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of paintings per month."[255] It was Europeans who were buying—Europeans who ostensibly should have been worried over what was happening in their home countries.[256]

Jewish collectors were especially vulnerable to Nazi art interests. Recall the Parisian Jewish families who were well established in the art market even before Guggenheim entered bohemia. Less than two months after the German invasion of Paris, the Nazis began seizing work from fifteen different Jewish collectors, which they gathered in the German embassy. These collectors, including the Wildensteins, Rosenbergs, and Bernheims, had already sent some of their work out of the city, but the Nazis sent the rest to Germany or sold it to fund the war.[257] By war's end, over four hundred works in Paul Rosenberg's collection had disappeared.[258] Georges Wildenstein even entered a deal with the Nazis, exchanging some of his paintings for Nazi-owned degenerate ones. As Nicholas points out, "the French dealer was as anxious as [the Nazis] to make the most advantageous arrangements possible."[259] All this in mind, Guggenheim's collecting appears less sinister given how widely shared her opportunism was. Clearly, the fact that she was not yet an established collector worked to her advantage, as neither Nazis nor business savvy French people approached her. Guggenheim had wealth and American citizenship working to her advantage, but her success in transporting her collection appears all the more important when we consider what otherwise may have happened to these paintings and sculptures.

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[255] Ibid., 165.
[256] Ibid.
[257] Ibid., 125.
[258] Ibid., 415.
[259] Ibid., 159.

Guggenheim's friends had mixed reactions to her collecting, and these assessments changed with time. At the time, Guggenheim's friend Nelly van Doesburg helped her locate works for her collection. When asked to comment decades later, she judged Guggenheim's activities as ruthless and opportunistic. Van Doesburg, who was an artist, dancer, and the widow of Surrealist Theo van Doesburg, attested that Guggenheim purchased five paintings from her, including two by her husband. She remembers how "I was forced to sell them because I had no money."[260] Despite this cutting assessment, van Doesburg ultimately chastised Guggenheim for buying too little: "In looking back, I am convinced that she could have bought more paintings and helped other artists."[261] Virginie Pevsner felt differently. The wife of the Jewish sculptor Antoine Pevsner, in the 1970s she stated that "Some people say that Peggy did not pay enough but at that time Pevsner had no money."[262] At least one friend objected in the moment to Guggenheim's preoccupation with getting her collection to safety. Mary Reynolds was the longtime partner of Marcel Duchamp. Guggenheim tells how "One night at Mary's there was an awful row about my saving my paintings. Mary said that it was indecent to think of anything except the refugees. She intimated that if we managed to get a *camion* we would run down the refugees with the paintings."[263]

Biographers also have mixed feelings about Guggenheim's wartime collecting. Francine Prose calls this episode "one of the less attractive" sections in the memoir. She wonders whether Guggenheim had "second thoughts about the bargains she was getting, momentary pricks of conscience that would have seemed to her too dull and serious to include in the lively narrative of how she simultaneously outfoxed the Germans and put together a major art collection?" Prose

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[260] Dortch, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 64-67.
[261] Ibid.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Guggenheim, *Out of This Century: Confessions*, 181.

concludes her assessment with the following: "What does seem evident is that…she genuinely believed that she was helping the artists."[264] Anton Gill, whose biography treats Guggenheim so negatively elsewhere, finds little wrong with her collecting activities. While "some have accused her of profiteering…it doesn't seem reasonable to suppose that she did so consciously." Rather, "It was a buyer's market, and she was able to take advantage of that." He highlights how artists were eager to make the sales, and how Guggenheim could not have known how valuable the work would become in a few years' time.[265]

The art critic Hilton Kramer sees her involvement differently. He reminds us that the profession of collecting is viewed as suspect even when taken out of the morally fraught context of war: wealthy collectors have power, which "induces feelings of powerlessness—and thus of resentment, envy, and even outright hatred—among those who are excluded from its immediate benefactions."[266] Guggenheim, he concedes, fit this mold: "[she] certainly pressed her advantage where Max Ernst was concerned, acquiring an important cache of pictures for relatively little money." At the same time, he believes "the sale undoubtedly saved his life, enabling him to escape arrest by the Nazis."[267] Perhaps more telling is his assertion that the prices Guggenheim paid were not absurdly low as many have maintained, but actually standard for the time. He believes it "inevitable that Peggy Guggenheim's wholesale assault on the French avant-garde art market at that dire historical moment would be resented," but calls her feat something out of a novel and believes she harmed no one along the way.[268] The inequalities of the art market were compounded by the cruelties of the war. Guggenheim was opportunistic, and she did exploit her

[264] Prose, *Peggy Guggenheim*, 112.
[265] Gill, *Art Lover*, 220.
[266] Kramer, "Peggy Guggenheim," 1-4.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Ibid.

privilege. She saved lives as well as art—though sometimes she received art in exchange for saving these lives. Even her relationships are thrown into a different light by these activities. Was her decision to help Ernst escape France truly virtuous? Was she enticed by the prospect of receiving his work in exchange? Or was their marriage her attempt to collect Ernst, much as she collected his artwork? Inescapably, these ambiguities have attached themselves to Guggenheim's collection, and affect how we view her artwork to this day.

V. Conclusion

Guggenheim's Jewishness, like her gender, made her vulnerable, though she deliberately played this down. Yet she also took advantage of others during the war, especially the artists whose work she bought. It is impossible not to view her collecting spree through the prism of the Holocaust and World War II: we view her as both as a profiteer and as a savior. In the end, her wealth and American passport allowed her to escape the continent, while many Jews were not so lucky. Ironically, biographers have employed anti-Semitic stereotypes to criticize Guggenheim for surviving. The Holocaust was a Jewish tragedy, but given the wide variety of Jewish experience, all were not equally vulnerable. Greenberg believes "Her story is sadder than I can express," though it was less sad than many.[269]

[269] Greenberg writing as Hardesh, "Out of This," 2.

Conclusion

Guggenheim's memoir tells a very particular story about her life. It emphasizes how she became bohemian, fell in with artists, and began to promote their work. She depicts herself as attracted to novelty, to artists, and to their art. She sought companionship, counsel, love, and sex, and she was sometimes reckless in pursuit of these. As a defender of modern art, she made European art accessible to the American public, and supported American artists in a time of need. Embedded in this tale, however, is the story of a vulnerability. Her gender and her Jewishness made her vulnerable to prejudice, contempt, and danger. At the same time, she flaunted the rules of bohemia, as well as those of traditional society. She wielded her gender to move forward professionally, sleeping with artists because she found them interesting, to gain access to their art, and to live differently. She remained dedicated to her collection even as Europe collapsed around her. Her memoir is complex. It broaches all these topics and more, but most importantly, it tells the story of how she aligned herself with the avant-garde.

Greenberg believes Guggenheim's story provides a window into a particular time. He regards Guggenheim as an object, and believes that her objecthood makes the memoir more culturally significant. In his 1946 review, Greenberg states: "it is the self-contented naiveté with which she confesses her role as an object that makes her autobiography the true historical-social-cultural document it is, a piece of 'modern evidence' indispensable to those who may want to investigate the state of mind of international culture and dissipation in the the 1920's and 1930's."[270] By Greenberg's reasoning, Guggenheim is an unthinking, unfeeling, passive entity entirely determined by those around her. In inserting herself into the cultural hotspot of interwar Paris, Guggenheim absorbed the customs, attitudes, and behaviors of this culture. Effectively,

[270] Ibid., 1.

her memoir serves as a record of these times, and one that Greenberg believes is unmediated and unthinking.

I, too, believe Guggenheim's book to be a modern document, and I believe that she casts herself as a modern object. Yet, I disagree with many of the assumptions attached to Greenberg's determinations. He sees Guggenheim as wholly susceptible to the whims of those around her, and as completely shaped by her bohemian environment. In contrast, I have tried to show the ways Guggenheim curated and performed her self. She was a self-determining individual, if hardly an autonomous one. Her life was shaped and constrained by gender dynamics and the rules of midcentury society, but she was also self-acting. She made choices. Telling her story was one of them.

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